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AMERICAN LANGUAGES
Indians, Ethnology, and the Empire for Liberty

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
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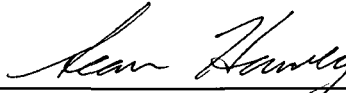
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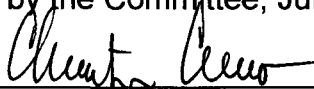
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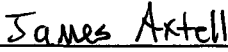


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ABSTRACT PAGE

"American Languages: Indians, Ethnology, and the Empire for Liberty" is a study of knowledge and power, as it relates to Indian affairs, in the early republic. It details the interactions, exchanges, and networks through which linguistic and racial ideas were produced and it examines the effect of those ideas on Indian administration. First etymology, then philology, guided the study of human descent, migrations, and physical and mental traits, then called ethnology. It would answer questions of Indian origins and the possibility of Indian incorporation into the United States. It was crucial to white Americans seeking to define their polity and prove their cultivation by contributing to the republic of letters.

The study of Indian languages was both part of the ongoing ideological construction of the "empire for liberty" and it could serve practical ends for the extension and consolidation of imperial relations with the native groups within and on the borders of the United States. Administrators of Indian affairs simultaneously asserted continental mastery and implicitly admitted that it was yet incomplete. Language could be used to illustrate Indian "civilization" and Indian "savagery," the openness of the U.S. nation and its exclusivity, Indian affinities to "Anglo-Saxons" and their utter difference. Language was a race science frequently opposed to understandings of race defined through the body alone.

The War Department repeatedly sought linguistic information that it could use as the basis of policy, but philology was not a discourse of scientific control imposed upon helpless Indians. On the contrary, Indians lay at the heart of almost all that was known of Indian languages. This was especially true once European scientific interest shifted from the study isolated words to grammatical forms, which happened to coincide with debates over Indian removal in the United States. This meant that Indians were in an unprecedented position to shape the most authoritative scientific knowledge of "the Indian" at the moment that U.S. Indian policy was most uncertain. Native tutoring, often mediated through white missionaries, led Peter S. Du Ponceau to refute the notion, shared alike by apologists for removal (e.g. Lewis Cass) and European philosophers (e.g. Wilhelm von Humboldt) that the American languages indicated Indian "savagery."

Yet in attempting to prove that Native American languages were not "savage," Du Ponceau defined Indian grammatical forms as unchanging "plans of ideas" that all Indians, and only Indians, possessed. Henry R. Schoolcraft, Indian agent, protégé of Cass, and husband to the Ojibwa-Irish Jane Johnston, extended this line of thought and defined a rigid "Indian mind" that refused "civilization." Such conclusions suggested that Indians possessed fixed mental traits. This conclusion largely agreed with those that ethnologists of the "American school" would advance years later, but those scientists argued that language could offer no information on physical race. The rapid (but brief) rise of the American school undermined the ethnological authority of the philological knowledge that Indians, such as David Brown (Cherokee) and Eleazer Williams (Mohawk) had produced in the preceding decades.

After decades of debate over Indian "plans of ideas," "patterns of thought," and whether Indian languages were a suitable medium for teaching the concepts of Christianity and republican government -- debates intensified by the invention of the Cherokee alphabet and the understanding that Sequoyah, its author, intended it to insulate Cherokee society from white interference -- the federal government began moving toward a policy of English-only instruction. Even after the strident opposition of the American school, language remained a key marker of civilization and nationhood.

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AMERICAN LANGUAGES:
INDIANS, ETHNOLOGY, AND THE EMPIRE FOR LIBERTY

INTRODUCTION

“*Wahyashkud sah keahyah owh Ekedoowin.*” Peter Jones, or Kahkewaquonaby (Sacred Feathers), used those Ojibwa words in 1831 to convey the opening of the gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word.” Translation was the key to his missionary work among the Missisauga Ojibwas, his mother’s people. It was “difficult work” because of the “impossibility of conveying the whole meaning of one English verse in to the same measure in Indian.” He also found English “a *dry* study,” and the more he used it, the more he lost his “former fluency in my own native tongue.” Yet, in the eight years that had elapsed since his converted to Christianity at a Methodist camp meeting in 1823, Jones had already prepared an Ojibwa spelling book, a translation of some Wesleyan hymns, and the gospel of Matthew.¹ Jones saw no contradiction between such work and the broader study of language. He hoped his chapter on “The Indian Languages,” in the *History of the Ojebway Indians* (1861), which included a conjugation of “to walk,” a translation of the Lord’s Prayer, and short Algonquian and Iroquoian comparative vocabulary, would add to the science then called philology.²

In the beginning was the Word. Linguistic skills were the foundation of missionary work as well as trade and diplomacy, and, through eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries, language guided the scientific study of humanity. Work such as Jones’s was crucial to it all. Scholars at the time recognized this; their modern counterparts have forgotten. Joseph Howse, former Hudson’s Bay Company trader and “white Indian,” “fortified” his grammar of the related Cree language with over 2000 references to Jones’s gospel of John. It was “a foundation—a rock

¹ John Jones and Peter Jones, *Menwahjemoowin kahezhebeegaid owh St. John. Aneshenahba anwaid keezhe ahnekahnootahbeung owh Thayendanegen, kiya owh Kahkewaquonaby, ahneshenahba kekenooahmahga wenenewug* [*The gospel according to St. John. Translated from the Chippewa tongue by John Jones, and revised and corrected by Peter Jones, Indian teachers.*] (London, 1831); Peter Jones, *Life and Journals of Kah-Ke-Wa-Que-Nā-By* (Toronto, 1860), 61, 148, 187, 219. On Jones’s life, see Donald M. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) & the Missisauga Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

² Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), *History of the Ojebway Indians; with especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity* (London, 1861) 180-83, 189-90.

that cannot be shaken.”³ The U.S. Indian agent and philologist Henry R. Schoolcraft, still learning the language from his wife, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and her Ojibwa family, offered a similar assessment in “Mythologies, Superstitions, and Languages of the North American Indians” (1835). Schoolcraft praised its “strict grammatical concord,” “pure dialect,” and the “elementary...mode of its notation,” as well as its demonstration of the existence of the substantive verb “to be,” then a point of philological contention, its exclusion of “foreign idioms and words,” and its avoidance of “materialism” through its rendering of the mysteries of Christianity. Jones was a “remarkable” figure, who, unlike Pontiac and others, sought to use his talents to further evangelization and perhaps assimilation. Writing in the context of Cherokee removal, Schoolcraft stressed that this was the “great practical end of translation,” which became more imperative, as their trials, mental and spiritual, multiply.” Like Jones, Schoolcraft, in 1835, thought that philology and missionary work were “independent, but not at variance. Attainments in the one may, interchangeably, precede or follow attainments in the other.”⁴

Schoolcraft pursued language as the key to ethnology, which was the study of human descent and migrations, and of the physical, cultural, and intellectual traits that were thought to have resulted from that history. He was typical among educated whites in privileging language, supporting Indian conversion and civilization, and insisting on Indian capacity to achieve those goals, for which he pointed to individuals like Jones as proof. Yet he did as much as any writer to replace scientific notions of a generic and improveable “savage mind,” shared by the world’s uncultivated peoples, with that of an “Indian mind,” exclusive to the native peoples of North America and in some ways fixed. He did this by expanding upon the ideas of the philologist Peter S. Du Ponceau, who had spent much of the removal debates of the 1820s in a contest for public opinion with Schoolcraft’s superintendent and mentor, Lewis Cass, and with the prominent

³ Joseph Howse, *A Grammar of the Cree Language; with which is Combined an Analysis of the Chippeway Dialect* (London, 1844), viii. While Jones was in England, he wrote to Howse and provided him with some “specimens” of Ojibwa. See Jones, *Life and Journals*, 322, 339.

⁴ Henry R. Schoolcraft, “Article V. Mythology, Superstitions and Languages of the North American Indians,” *Literary and Theological Review* 2.5 (March 1835): 96-121, at 110-12, 115, 117.

European scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt. He investigated this “Indian mind” first through grammatical studies and later through a more enlarged philology that included Indian mythology and pictography as derivative pursuits, believing they shared the same epistemological features.

Although Schoolcraft depended on his wife, her family, and upon other educated Indians such as Jones, it was Schoolcraft who was recognized as the philological authority. In a successful bid to win the Prix Volney, France’s most illustrious philological prize, Du Ponceau translated an essay by Schoolcraft and included it as an appendix to his memoir. After decades of debate over the character of this “Indian mind” and what it may have indicated of a distinct “American race” and the possibility of their incorporation into the United States, the War Department appointed Schoolcraft in 1847 to resolve contradictions in what was “known” about “the Indian” and compile reports for Congress. That body demanded authoritative information upon which it could base a newly rational policy, which was especially important in the 1840s for two reasons. First, with territorial expansion, the United States claimed jurisdiction over thousands of Indians little known in the East. Second, a new “American school” of ethnology had arisen, asserting, upon the basis of strictly physical evidence, that Indians were a truly indigenous race and incapable of civilization.⁵

Jones and Schoolcraft, Du Ponceau, Cass, Humboldt, and diverse others, of native and European descent, corresponded, exchanged information, and published their various speculations about Indian languages. Their work defined Indian philology, the field’s dominant form in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. Indians and whites, missionaries, the federal Indian department, military officers and former captives, as well as private scholars from the frontier, from eastern U.S. cities, and from Europe all sought, created, and disseminated knowledge of the American languages, though they did so for disparate reasons and they put that

⁵ Here Schoolcraft once again praised Jones’s work. See Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: collected and prepared under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, per Act of Congress of March 3d, 1847*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, 1851-57), 4: 531-32.

knowledge to divergent uses. Practical issues of translation – how an English word or phrase could be conveyed in a native language – provoked countless musings on whether those languages could express *concepts* central to a republican society, reflections, which, in turn, frequently led inquirers to even loftier conjectures on the abilities and capacities of native persons and the possibility or impossibility of their moral and intellectual improvement. Pondering Indian languages became a means to speculate upon their state of social development society (then defined as “savage,” “barbarous,” or “civilized”). Philology was a race science in the sense that it aimed to describe the unifying features of the diverse peoples of a continent, and to isolate those traits that were inherently “Indian” and independent of environmental factors. Yet, although philology could support hardening conceptions of racial difference, it could also challenge dominant discourses of biological race (especially that of the American school).

“American Languages” is a study of knowledge and power in Indian affairs and ethnology in the early republic. Sinister scholars and effectual officials never imposed a scientific discourse of control upon Indians helpless before the power of philology: far from it. No unified discourse existed to describe Indian languages, much less control Indians. Different scholars analyzed language to illustrate Indian civilization or Indian savagery, the openness of the U.S. nation or its exclusivity, Indians’ affinities with “Anglo-Saxons” or their utter difference. Notions that “savages” could ascend to “civilization” or that an unchanging biological race prevented them from doing so were each prominent in the early republic and antebellum eras. However, they were not the only ways in which whites and Indians understood historical descent or psychological difference. Philology provided an alternative mode, sometimes reinforcing, other times refuting developmentalist *and* essentialist categories.

Practical linguistic efforts and more rarified flights into language philosophy each took place against a backdrop of the successive phases of conquest, “civilization,” removal, and confinement to reservations that defined U.S. Indian affairs until the end of the nineteenth century. The administrators of Indian affairs repeatedly sought philological information and

attempted to implement policies on the basis it provided. This was natural because considering the need to communicate assertions of power and “benevolence,” philology was the branch of ethnology most immediately useful to the administration of the empire for liberty. Language study not only helped white Americans understand “the Indian” abstractly, but helped them communicate with actual Indians on the ground. The tangle of interactions, exchanges, and publications, that produced philological knowledge almost invariably had native consultation at its heart, which allowed Indians a unique degree of influence over the formulation of scientific knowledge of Indians, even when that influence went unacknowledged (as Henry always erased the role of his wife, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft). In addition to providing whites with much of the material that allowed them to claim ethnological authority for themselves, educated Indians also repeatedly resisted white misrepresentations by joining these discussions themselves.

An analysis of philology, of how its practitioners obtained and used linguistic information, provides a crucial perspective on “race” in the years between Independence and the Civil War, as well as upon the relationship between knowledge and power in the republican empire more generally. Unlike characteristics like skin color, hair type, or skull shape, language in the early republic was much more than an index of similarity or difference. It was also a practical barrier to communication and interaction that needed to be transcended. Linguistic knowledge, whether for commercial, diplomatic, or religious purposes, was central to a variety of private and collective aims. This made the missionary societies and the War Department eager consumers, who studied language and then employed the knowledge gained in specific contexts and for particular purposes. Moreover, Indians were never merely victims in some process whereby the study of language created a body of scientific information to facilitate control. Rather, Indians were the very foundation of both the practical knowledge that allowed mundane communication and the scientific knowledge of native languages that could either support or undermine prevailing views of race, the nation, and progress. Looking over the shoulders of the people who contributed to the study of native North American languages in the early decades of

the United States shows how Indians, missionaries, travelers and traders, federal officials, and both American and European scholars produced linguistic knowledge. They did so through encounters on the ground, exchanges of written information, and the formal and informal institutions of churches and state, commerce and intellectual life. The relentless Euro-American settlement of the American west, as well as international rivalry and scientific collaboration shaped the questions that inquirers asked, the answers that individuals provided, and the significance that scholars attributed to them.

* * *

Colonial Americans in the British Empire paid intermittent attention to native languages and there were significant carryovers from the earlier period into the philology of the new nation. Interest in native languages was largely confined to missionaries, traders, and administrators who collected vocabularies, although there was a steadily broadening interest in languages as the crucial means to trace a natural history of man.⁶ However, the efforts to collect and classify that

⁶ The fullest studies of Indian philology in this period, by Julie Tetel Andresen and Edward Gray are stimulating and “American Languages” builds on their insights; but they are ultimately insufficient for a full understanding of the practice and significance of Indian language study. Although each author recognizes the importance of American conceptions of national identity, each fails to demonstrate the importance of philology to the construction of an empire and to the contested emergence of anthropology. Just as critically, each fails to integrate into their narratives the natives that contributed to the debates they trace. See Julie Tetel Andresen, *Linguistics in America, 1769-1924* (London: Routledge, 1990), chs. 1-3; Edward G. Gray *New World Babel: Languages and Nations in Early America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), chs. 4-6. For the best short histories of this period of Indian linguistics written by linguists, but which also fail to address specific contexts in which language study emerged, see Mary R. Haas, “The Problem of Classifying American Indian Languages: From Duponceau to Powell,” in *Language, Culture, History*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978); Dell Hymes, “The Americanist Tradition” in Wallace L. Chafe, ed., *American Indian Languages and American Linguistics: Papers of the Second Golden Anniversary Symposium of the Linguistic Society of America, Held at the University of California, Berkeley, on November 8 and 9, 1974* (Lisse, Netherlands: Peter de Ridder Press, 1976); Ives Goddard, “The Description of the Native Languages of North America Before Boas,” in Goddard, ed., *Languages*, vol. 17 of William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1996). For the colonialist implications of those studies, see Stephen J. Greenblatt, “Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century” in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990); Kathleen J. Bragdon, “Native American Languages as Spoken and Written: Views from Southern New England,” in Edward G. Gray and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Language Encounter in the Americas, 1492-1800: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000). On the relationship between language study and the conversion of natives, see also David J. Silverman, “Indians, Missionaries, and Religious Translation: Creating Wampanoag Christianity in Seventeenth-Century Martha’s Vineyard,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 62 (2005): 141-74; Laura J. Murray, “Joining Signs with Words: Missionaries, Metaphors, and the Massachusett

emerged in the 1780s exceeded in scale and differed in administrative, ideological, and scientific context from the linguistic projects that occurred in the years before the revolution.

Independence produced new institutions for managing Indian affairs, new possibilities for westward expansion and contact with different native groups, and it demanded that Euro-Americans forge relationships with linguistically skilled mediators that were loyal to the new national, rather than the old imperial, government.⁷ Independence also created a surge of cultural nationalism that led U.S. citizens to enter the republic of letters by choosing and extolling properly “American” subjects.⁸

Language,” *New England Quarterly* 74.1 (March 2001): 62-93. French Jesuits had placed even greater importance on this study, which contributed to their missionary success through the nineteenth century. See James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford, 1985), ch. 5, especially 81-83; Margaret J. Leahy, “Comment peut un muet prescher l’évangile?: Jesuit Missionaries and the Native Languages of New France,” *French Historical Studies* 19.1 (Spring 1995): 105-31. Laura J. Murray, “Vocabularies of Native American Languages: A Literary and Historical Approach to an Elusive Genre,” *American Quarterly* 53. 4 (December 2001): 590-623, offers an insightful interpretation of that linguistic tool in British and French North America. On views of native languages in New Spain, see Tzevetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* [1982] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 28-33, 98-103, 123, 219-21; Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), ch. 4; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, & Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), chs. 1-2. For a comparative perspective, see the various essays in Gray and Fiering, eds., *Language Encounter in the Americas*.

⁷ On the uses of linguistic intermediaries, see Jane T. Merritt, “Metaphor, Meaning, and Misunderstanding: Language and Power on the Pennsylvania Frontier” in Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: Norton, 1999); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* [1998] (New York: Vintage, 1999), chs. 1-2. For an excellent synthesis of the ethnohistorical research on Indian communities and older studies of U.S. Indian policy in the new nation, including the various native responses to federal implementation of Indian education in the ways of civilization as a major component of Indian policy, see the essays on the Mississippi Valley, Great Plains, greater Southwest and California, and Northwest in Bruce G. Trigger and Wilcomb E. Washburn, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 1: *North America*, Parts 1-2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For older, more detailed studies of U.S. policy, see Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967); Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975); Robert A. Trennert, Jr., *Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Beginnings of the Reservation Period* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

⁸ John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1984), 5 notes: “To Americans living in this period of exploding scientific inquiry, the fundamental fact conditioning every thought and deed was the consciousness that they were now an independent nation.” For the broader cultural context, see Jean V. Matthews, *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture, 1800-1830* (Boston: Twayne, 1991). D. Graham Burnett, *Trying Leviathan: The Nineteenth-*

As a national pursuit, philology narrated frequently contradictory visions of the American past, present, and future. Scholars used Indian languages both to illustrate the nation's distinctness and its connection to old world sites of civilization and sacred history; to defend what was "American" from European insults and justify the status of peoples excluded from the polity.⁹ Lacking the vast collections of books and scientific instruments available to learned Europeans, natural history and ethnology were among the few studies that U.S. citizens were well positioned to pursue.¹⁰ The meteoric ascent of philology to scientific and literary prestige in the opening decades of the nineteenth century presented a unique opportunity to establish an international scientific reputation by contributing to a broader European linguistic project. Yet, considering as "national" subjects precisely those people excluded from the polity illustrates the

Century New York Court Case that Put the Whale on Trial and Challenged the Order of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 5, has rightfully called for studies that qualify the notion that sees U.S. science as *only* an expression of "nature-nationalism."

⁹ The literary scholar Susan Scheckel, *Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3-4. For accounts of European genealogies of savagery, see Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* [1964] (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); idem, *European Encounters with the New World*; Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). For accounts of civilization, and the hypothetical developmental "time" that separates it from the anthropological "other," see, respectively, Bruce Mazlish, *Civilization and its Contents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). The scholarship on the relation of these ideas to U.S. national identity is vast. The classic accounts are Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, revised ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965); Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973); Robert F. Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1979), each of which emphasize that portrayals of "the savage Indian" justified dispossession and served as mirrors into which white Americans could be affirmed in their own "civilization." More recent work has emphasized that the savage foil to justify dispossession competed with the native "American" identity. See Eve Kornfeld, "Encountering 'the Other': American Intellectuals and Indians in the 1790s," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 52 (1995): 287-314; Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Elise Marienstras, "The Common Man's Indian: The Image of the Indian as a Promoter of National Identity in the Early National Era," in Frederick E. Hoxie et al., eds., *Native Americans in the Early Republic*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999); Annette Kolodny, "Fictions of American Prehistory: Indians, Archaeology, and National Origin Myths," *American Literature* 75.4 (Dec. 2003): 693-721.

¹⁰ See Kariann Yokota, "'To pursue the stream to its fountain': Race, Inequality, and the Post-Colonial Exchange across the Atlantic," *Explorations in Early American Culture* 5 (2001): 173-229; Joyce E. Chaplin, "Nature and Nation: Natural History in Context," in Sue Ann Prince, ed., *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n.s., 93.4 (2003).

tortuous interweaving of national identity and colonialist logic, even among those whose science was widely considered to support “philanthropy,” a common epithet for assimilation and the destruction of Indian languages and cultures.

The nineteenth century was a “golden age” for linguistic scholars. In Europe, language was intimately tied to emergent nationalisms. But because most citizens of the United States spoke England’s mother tongue and not the continent’s native vernaculars, a similar language-based nationalism was impossible in the United States.¹¹ Although language study was undertaken in different ideological contexts in Europe and the United States, scholars in the old and new worlds communicated with one another and their researches followed similar trajectories. In the mid-to-late-eighteenth century, the dominant historical mode of language study focused on comparing words etymologically. The dominant epistemological mode understood the relative cultivation of languages to be the products of their speakers’ social condition. But by the early nineteenth century, philology displaced etymology, assigning primary importance to grammatical forms for historical studies (the relation of those forms to the social state of their speakers was unclear).¹² The abstruse nature of the necessary study and the esoteric

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 144-46. Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (London: Verso, 1995), attempts to understand the emergence of nationalism in Europe alongside European ethnology and linguistics. On nineteenth-century ideas of national identity more broadly, see Anne-Marie Thiesse and Catherine Bertho-Lavenir, “Folk Culture and the Construction of European National Identities between the 18th and 20th Centuries,” and Alain Dieckhoff, “Culture and National Identity” in Dieckhoff and Natividad Gutierrez, eds., *Modern Roots: Studies of National Identity* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001). For uses of native languages in the construction of British colonial identities, see Matthew Lauzon, “Savage Eloquence in America and the Linguistic Construction of a British Identity in the 18th Century,” *Historiographia Linguistica* 23 (1996): 123-58.

¹² For increased scientific interest in Indian grammatical forms, see Haas, “Problem of Classifying American Indian Languages”; Andresen, *Linguistics in America*, 45; Gray, *New World Babel*, ch. 6. For the increasing interest in grammatical forms and the increasingly clear distinction between what kinds of information could be extracted from words and forms in language study generally, see Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* [1967] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), chs. 4-6; Henry M. Hoenigswald, “Descent, Perfection and the Comparative Method since Leibniz” in Tullio de Mauro and Lia Formigari, eds., *Leibniz, Humboldt, and the Origins of Comparativism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990); R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Longman, 1997), 189-205; David B. Paxman, *Voyage into Language: Space and the Linguistic Encounter, 1500-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), ch. 8; Lia Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, trans. Gabriel Poole (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), chs. 6-7. For the shift from words to grammar and the emergence of a science of linguistics as but one manifestation of a broader epistemological transformation

erudition that it seemed to imply made philology a more specialized field of ethnological knowledge than had hitherto existed. This exalted philologists above the station of mere collectors or observers at home and placed more of a premium upon access to the linguistic tutors that could be found only in North America. Thus U.S. inquirers could claim authority over Europeans, as could scholars on the frontier over those in eastern cities.¹³

However, intensifying speculation about what native languages revealed of their speakers, especially of Indians' "plans of ideas" or "patterns of thought," prompted increasing concern on the part of U.S. policy makers that those languages could not be cultivated and, thus, led to an ever more rigid insistence that English alone could provide a path to civilization and eventual incorporation.¹⁴ Sequoyah's Cherokee alphabet, purposefully designed to insulate Cherokee society from white interference, only exacerbated those concerns. European and U.S.

likewise resulting in the emergence of biology and economics, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1970] (New York: Vintage, 1994). Thomas R. Trautmann, *Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), ix, notes the "coexistence of...two logically distinct historicisms," which he identifies as "stepwise evolutionism" through stages and "treelike...differentiation" over time, and which he finds "quite general in nineteenth-century Euroamerican thought."

¹³ As Andrew J. Lewis, "A Democracy of Facts, An Empire of Reason: Swallow Submersion and Natural History in the Early American Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 62 (2005): 663-96, has demonstrated, scientific inquiry in the early republic emphasized a strict empiricism against what early republican Americans considered the overconfident theoretical system building of European science. The combined emphases on the authority of first-hand observers and a modesty that should suspend final judgment of an inquiry led to a "democracy of facts" that threatened the domestic authority of the elite who considered themselves far more qualified to pass judgment in scientific matters. For the increased role of "theory" by the middle of the nineteenth century, after decades of proliferating "facts" had created chaos from a once-ordered natural history, see George H. Daniels, *American Science in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

¹⁴ The existing literature affords too little attention to the role of ideas concerning Indian languages in shaping U.S. "civilization" policy. Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 181, 184-86, has demonstrated that English education was among the earliest goals of English missionaries and that seventeenth-century English colonials increasingly demanded that Indians learn English in an effort to hasten native "reduction to civility." The eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries was a moment of flux and the debates they contained led to an eventual stipulation of English-only education at native schools, but only near the end of the nineteenth century. See James Park, "Historical Foundations of Language Policy: The Nez Percé Case," in Robert St. Clair and William Leap, eds., *Language Renewal among American Indian Tribes: Issues, Problems, and Prospects* (Rosslyn, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1982); and Ruth Spack, *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), ch. 1, which nonetheless neglect the debates of the crucial period that is the subject of "American Languages." Robert F. Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* [1965] (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 33-34, 48-49, 87-88, mentions debates about the role of Indian languages in education, and gives short discussion to views of their deficiency.

philologists devoted similar care to dictionaries and grammars in this period, and for each those texts aided a form of national cohesion. The processes operated in divergent ways, however. For Europeans, linguistic study demonstrated historical ties and national continuity and aimed to preserve vernaculars; in the United States, philology largely demonstrated how different Indian languages were from English, aimed to facilitate Indian adoption of English, and extinguish the native languages of America.

Philology, even more than other forms of ethnology, played a crucial role in the extension, consolidation, and administration of the republican empire, both practically and ideologically. By establishing networks of exchange and publishing dictionaries, grammars, and linguistic treatises, U.S. administrators and more informal representatives of republican empire such as missionaries (whose efforts to save a heathen soul used linguistic study to transform native beliefs and native societies, thus contributing to larger federal efforts to impose colonial relations on subject peoples) created an apparatus for learning and classifying native languages. They simultaneously asserted mastery over the continent and its people and implicitly admitted that U.S. dominion was incomplete.¹⁵ Linguistic study was crucial to the process of “translation”

¹⁵ Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage*, xii, noted that the “missionary seemed to spearhead the drive for acculturation” in this era. On missionaries, anthropology, and colonialism more broadly, see Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, “Introduction: Locating the Colonial Subjects of Anthropology” in Pels and Salemink, eds., *Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 29-31. Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 249, acknowledges that the effect of ethnology on government policy is “difficult to assess,” but he concludes that it was “indirect and minimal.” Ibid., Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, and Berkhofer, *White Man’s Indian*, have each addressed “the image” of the Indian and suggested that at certain points it had some bearing on the policy decisions being made, but “American Languages” emphasizes that the War Department not only used ideas already in circulation, it manifested a consistent intention to collect and produce its own ethnological knowledge and that this was itself a consistent feature of federal Indian policy. Plus, the works of Bieder, Sheehan, and Berkhofer, neglect to consider how ethnological information was collected and transmitted and how different modes of studying “the Indian” competed for authority. Alan Taylor, “Jefferson’s Pacific: The Science of Distant Empire,” in Douglas Seefeldt et al, eds, *Across the Continent: Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and the Making of America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2005) is an insightful consideration of science and imperialism in the early republic. John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Richard Drayton, *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the ‘Improvement’ of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) offer useful considerations of science and imperialism in the British context. Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire:*

of what was unknown or unfamiliar into what could be comprehended and manipulated, a process that was the foundation of colonialism itself.¹⁶ Knowledge of Indian languages promised easier communication (and, theoretically, fewer misunderstandings) with native groups, a means to understand complex Native American political relations, and ways to consolidate Indian groups to simplify administration of Indian Territory. Language promised insight into a people's past experiences and mental operations. Etymology and philology served as an authoritative way to define Indians as unfit citizens, justifiably subject to the country's political control, but outside of the embrace of "the nation." It was often used as a colonial instrument.¹⁷

Linguistic research, conversion, and incorporation were intertwined, and the authority of U.S. ethnologists and philologists rested solely on their access to Indians that colonialism

Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850 (New York: Knopf, 2005), 313, suggests collection as an admission of incomplete control.

¹⁶ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4-5, 21-22. Said had also suggested this, and even some of his critics conceded the applicability of this view to anthropology generally. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 12, 39, 123; James Clifford, review of *Orientalism*, in *History and Theory* 19.2 (Feb. 1980): 204-23, at 207, 216. This view has since been frequently utilized. David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) emphasizes the ideological significance of both effacing the process of translation and of claiming something is untranslatable. Eric Cheyfitz, *Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan*, expanded ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), emphasizes the centrality of translation, actual and metaphorical, for conquest and appropriation. Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), has placed problems of linguistic and cultural translation at the center of her work on nineteenth- and twentieth century China. However, among the sources she cites for the incommensurability of languages and cultures are the Americanist scholars Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, who themselves drew upon ideas that had their roots in the very studies that are the focus of "American Languages."

¹⁷ My understanding of the colonialist functions of language study is most indebted to anthropological literature. See Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, ch. 2; Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation" in Paul V. Kroskrity, ed. *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2000); Joseph Errington, "Colonial Linguistics," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 19-39; Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Historian Sara Pugach, "Carl Meinhoff and the German Influence on Nicholas van Warmelo's Ethnological and Linguistic Writing, 1927-1935," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (2004): 825-45 is valuable for its illustration of many similar concerns in a different context. Literary scholars have also provided provocative and insightful interpretations. See Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse," and Henry Schwarz, "Laissez-Faire Linguistics: Grammar and the Codes of Empire," *Critical Inquiry* 23.3 (Spring 1997): 509-35. My understanding of the colonialist relationship between the United States and the Indian nations within its borders has been informed by the insightful discussions in Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1763-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xi-xiv; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-5.

provided and which mirrored U.S. assertions of political authority. U.S. citizens and Europeans, writers in eastern cities and on the frontier, philologists and ethnologists, missionaries and Indian agents, whites and natives collaborated and competed to produce scientific knowledge of “the Indian.” Yet, for the variety of colonialist functions that it served, language study was simultaneously the form of ethnology in which the colonized played the most active role. This was especially true once grammatical forms became the focus of study. Mounds could be excavated and skulls measured without substantial Indian participation, but acquiring an unknown tongue required native cooperation.¹⁸ While white traders or missionaries occasionally served as linguistic intermediaries for federal officials, natives themselves lay behind all linguistic information at one degree of remove or another. Indian consultants could facilitate intercultural exchange or stymie white efforts to increase their knowledge of native societies, depending on which course each potential informant thought wisest for themselves, their nation, or Indians in general. This participation occurred in varied forms: by questionnaire; by scholars taking the opportunity to question Indian delegations as they visited eastern cities; by Indian agents, missionaries, or army explorers obtaining linguistic information from those tribes they encountered in their travels or among which they worked; or through the studies of young Indians at missionary schools.

For native participants, these situations presented both peril and possibility. On the one hand, fluent whites could stamp the colonial power’s taxonomic systems with the authority of science, even when the classifications were at odds with different Indian groups’ own orderings of native America. However, participating in the construction of information about Native

¹⁸ Pels and Saleminck, “Introduction,” discusses the co-production of anthropological knowledge by the scholar and the colonial subject, but assigns language study no privileged place in this regard. For an engaging study of native roles in natural history in British America, see Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2006). Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* [1981] (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 12, and Gray, *New World Babel*, 33-35, each specify that Indians acted as instructors, but this is not central to their studies.

American languages also afforded acculturated Indians the opportunity to shape the contours of public discussion. At the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, debates raged over divergent conceptions of Native American histories and societies, the mental and moral constitutions of native peoples, and the policies of the United States in dealing with them. This very indeterminacy regarding the Indian languages and what they revealed presented educated native writers with the opportunity to enter and shape the terms of debate. Many Indian authors of the period, educated in white ways, drew on philological ideas then current to present their own narratives of “American” history, their own opinions of the virtues of native languages and the commensurability of native and English words, and their own ideas for the future course of Indian policy. They did so with the full realization that such scholarly activity was *political* because knowledge about Native Americans that whites controlled could not be truly objective.¹⁹ Indeed, missionary education and U.S. “civilization” policy created a cohort of educated Indians who worked as religious translators and linguistic intermediaries and who challenged, in speech and print, the ethnological misrepresentations that expansionists propagated to justify removal. Though they did so in smaller numbers than white participants and in a field of unequal power-relations, their information was acknowledged as necessary even when their conclusions were disregarded. Indians participated in and resisted the production of philological knowledge that was neither exclusively white nor exclusively native.

The study of native languages was never unaccompanied or unchallenged by other modes of knowing “the Indian,” and philology influenced the development of other fields. Physiologists separated mental traits from social condition and insisted that empirical study suggested no links

¹⁹ Scott Michaelsen, *The Limits of Multiculturalism: Interrogating the Origins of American Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) emphasizes the role of Indian authors in shaping anthropology. Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) emphasizes that native intellectuals were not concerned merely with “culture,” but with political sovereignty. These authors, however, neglect to give attention to the field of knowledge in which natives played the largest role in shaping the knowledge that whites considered authoritative. Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), demonstrates analogous black participation in ethnology.

between natives of America and Asia at mid-century; but philologists introduced these ideas decades earlier. In the hands of some scholars, philology was a race science. Alongside debates over whether physical and mental characteristics developed with societies or were racially fixed, and whether all races descended from a common ancestor or were representative of separately created primitive types, the third major debate in nineteenth-century ethnology was over which mode of study was most authoritative.²⁰ As such, few practitioners of either archaeology or physiology, the ascendant modes of ethnological enquiry by mid-century, acknowledged their debt to philology. Attention to physical remains promised a more perfect objectification of “the Indian,” silencing the Indian voices that had been crucial to the production of philological and ethnological knowledge in the preceding decades.²¹ However, the ascendance was short-lived.

²⁰ Previous studies have recognized debates over developmentalism versus fixity and monogenesis versus polygenesis, with advocates of the latter positions being identified as the “American school of ethnology,” but have largely ignored the debate over what mode of study yielded the most authoritative information. The classic statement is William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, alludes to some overlap between the conclusions of philology and physiology, but he ignores the role of philology in shattering the assumed correlation between environment and the mind and he neglects to explore the significance of the philological conclusions being published two decades before the physiological ones. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981) suggests the role played by Indo-European scholarship to U.S. racial ideas and demonstrates how such ideas related to American expansion, but ignores U.S. philology. More recent treatments, such as Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind*, and Barry Alan Joyce, *The Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), repeat much of this standard narrative. Fascinating studies of British anthropology and philology, such as George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987) and Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* [1997] (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2003), recognize the competition between a language-based ethnology and physiological race science, but neglect to explore the ways in which the modes of study could be complementary rather than oppositional and argue that British ethnology reached a crisis in the 1850s, about a decade after this began in the United States. Formigari, *History of Language Philosophies*, 143, notes that the classification of languages into families influenced the development of anthropological and racial theories, but goes into little detail. Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalistic Ideas in Europe* [1971], trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974); Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* [1989], trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992); Ulrich Ricken, *Linguistics, Anthropology and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment: Language Theory and Ideology*, trans. Robert E. Norton. (London: Routledge, 1994); Tuska Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), chs. 2, 5, give more sustained attention to the place of linguistic ideas in the development of broader anthropological conceptions.

²¹ Steven Conn, *History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9-10, emphasizes the emergence of an increasingly “object-based” anthropology that was defined against the new discipline of “history,” but does not consider

The linguistic interests of Schoolcraft, Albert Gallatin, and Lewis Henry Morgan defined the ethnology that the new Smithsonian Institution, the official organ of government science, would pursue.²²

* * *

“American Languages” begins in the Ohio Country of the 1780s-90s, where warfare between U.S. settlers and a confederation of western Indians continued well beyond the treaty that ended U.S. warfare with Britain. Chapter 1 focuses upon the conversion efforts of the Moravian missionary David Zeisberger; the contributions of Richard Butler and Jonathan Edwards, Jr., on behalf of then-private citizen George Washington, to the “universal dictionary” of Catherine the Great of Russia; and the linguistic mediation of the Mahican chief Hendrick Aupaumut. These efforts represented a continuation of older colonial patterns (in missionary work, a mercantilist exchange of knowledge in which American raw materials were transported to Europe for intellectual production, and Indian diplomacy). While each project centered on language in a different way (religious, scientific, and diplomatic), each undermined the racial dichotomies, propagated by settlers and nativist Indians alike, that kept frontier war raging.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the figures most often associated with the earliest study of Indian languages in the United States: Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Smith Barton, who, like

this in light of silencing earlier Indian participation in philology. *Ibid.*, ch. 3, recognizes that language was a major way to study Indians, though he takes no pains to discuss major divisions and debates within the field and he erroneously suggests that philologists were outside of the mainstream of a developing science of man.

²² Hinsley, *Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 29, notes that anthropology was already established as a discipline unified in its object, rather than its methods, in the United States in 1850; but he emphasizes that under the leadership of Joseph Henry, the Smithsonian came to ignore physical ethnology and even Smithsonian archaeology and linguistics pursued non-racial “scientific” classifications that eschewed questions of history and psychology. William Y. Adams, *The Philosophical Roots of Anthropology* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 1998), 243-45, follows this interpretation and emphasizes that the “four-field model” was already a well-established paradigm by the late nineteenth century and that Franz Boas merely institutionalized a pre-existing “Indianology” as discipline in the academy. On the development of ethnology and its gradual transformation into anthropology in Europe, see Han F. Vermeulen, “Origins and Institutionalization of Ethnography and Ethnology in Europe and the USA, 1771-1845” in Vermeulen and Arturo Alvarez Roldán, *Fieldwork and Footnotes: Studies in the History of European Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1995); Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*.

Catherine, attempted to compare words etymologically to construct a natural history of man as well as an American antiquity in their researches, which occurred through the American Philosophical Society and spanned the 1780s and 1810s. Chapter 2 traces the networks each man established to collect Indian vocabularies and contrasts the divergent conclusions they drew from what they received. While Jefferson found that the astonishing linguistic diversity of North America suggested that it was truly the “old world” and that its inhabitants had colonized Asia, Barton argued that Indian languages were not radically distinct at all, since each retained traces of resemblance with one another and with the languages of Asia, their scriptural cradle. Once he attained the presidency, Jefferson institutionalized the collection of Indian languages in federal exploration as a scientific and commercial-diplomatic imperative, which finally consummated a longstanding private ambition. His successors followed this model through the first half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 3 illuminates the varying stances of Jefferson and Barton toward the notion that Indian languages, like the Indians themselves, were “savage” and it investigates their mutual abandonment of etymology in the early years of the nineteenth century. While Barton pointed to the surprising complexity of Indian languages as proof of their former civilization (further confirmed by the mounds of the Ohio Valley) and their capacity for “improvement,” Jefferson was initially silent on the subject, but after initiating removal with the Louisiana Purchase, facing the failure of his Indian policy in the Indian wars of 1811-14, and reading more deeply in European language philosophy, he used Indians’ languages as a crucial marker of Indian savagery and national difference. This and the loss of all of the vocabularies he had collected, led Jefferson to abandon etymological studies, while the unanswerable criticisms of European ethnologists Alexander von Humboldt and Johann Severin Vater led Barton to do the same.

The criticisms of Humboldt and Vater grew out of the transformations in European philology and ethnology stemming mainly from the linguistic researches of Sir William Jones in

India, and Chapters 4 through 7 deal with the emergence and significance, peak and decline of the new science of language in the United States between 1816 and 1857. Chapter 4 outlines the collaboration of Peter S. Du Ponceau and the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder and traces the epistolary networks at home and abroad that the former used to collect his materials and communicate his conclusions. His other most significant domestic correspondent was John Pickering, who furthered the reach of Du Ponceau's studies through reviews in popular journals and publishing new editions of the work of early missionary-linguists. This chapter examines the philosophical and ethnological bases for his ideas as well as the intercultural exchanges with Indians passing through Philadelphia that made his work possible. Finally, it demonstrates the significance of Du Ponceau publishing his conclusions regarding the uniform complexity of the American languages in 1819, the same year Congress began allocating an annual sum strictly for Indian "civilization."

Chapter 5 studies the counter-project, in both its motivations and practice, which Michigan governor and superintendent of Indian affairs Lewis Cass initiated to oppose the philology of Du Ponceau and Heckewelder; the furious debate Cass unleashed when his rebuttal coincided with James Monroe's call for Indian removal, a debate which involved not only Du Ponceau, Pickering, and Cass, but also European philologists, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, and philanthropists and Indian agents, such as Cass protégé Henry R. Schoolcraft, who relied for his ostensible expertise upon the Ojibwa family of his wife, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. This debate, premised on Indian languages and their possible uses in knowing a "savage" or "Indian" mind, also prompted retired statesman Albert Gallatin and the War Department to collect lexical and grammatical information on all of the Indian tribes within the United States in the midst of national discussion over Indian removal.

Indian removal and its aftermath also provides the backdrop for Chapter 6, which focuses on Sequoyah's invention of the Cherokee alphabet and the myriad ways in which Indians and

whites used it, practically and ideologically, in the removal years. Many Indians, and some whites, used it as a symbol of Indian resistance to U.S. assimilation. Several Cherokees, such as John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, followed eighteenth-century language philosophy and held up the invention of writing as proof of Cherokee civilization. The enthusiastic ethnologist Constantine S. Rafinesque envisioned its connection with the glyphic writing of ancient Mesoamerica. White scholars and policy makers mainly debated its utility, but they reached no consensus on whether it would facilitate or inhibit Cherokees learning the English language and assimilating into U.S. society. Some ethnologists even denied that the syllabary was “Indian” or an “invention.” Sequoyah had made Cherokee a written language and, with an eye to philology and philanthropy both, the Cherokee David Brown and the Mohawk Eleazer Williams devised grammars of their languages. Yet after a wave of interest in the potential of philology, its inability to answer questions of history and psychology conclusively led to its decline. By mid-century, ethnology became more focused upon modes of study less dependent upon Indian participation.

Chapter 7 examines the confrontation of philology and race science at mid-century, amidst the rapidly expanding philological and ethnological knowledge that resulted from U.S. commercial and territorial expansion into the southwest and the Pacific. Philological ideas prepared the ground for notions of Indian fixity and separate creation, but the “American school” of ethnologists, who advocated those very things, repeatedly attacked the role of philology in the study of race. The practitioners of the different fields came together in the American Ethnological Society, which nearly split along monogenetic and polygenetic lines, with those respective banners held aloft by Gallatin and Samuel G. Morton. This debate reached its peak in the years during and following the Mexican War, as the United States faced the prospect of administering to thousands of new, little known, and linguistically and ethnically diverse Indians, without recourse to pushing them beyond a frontier line. Citing the chaos of contradictory information, much of which threatened revelation and “philanthropy,” Congress appropriated

funds for a massive ethnological study of the “condition, history, and prospects of the Indian tribes of the United States” that would establish a body of authoritative facts upon which the government could base sound policy. Just before ceding Indian affairs to the new Department of the Interior, the War Department named Schoolcraft to write and organize the six resulting volumes, the thousands of pages of which attempted to defend both the capacity of Indians and the priority of philology against the American school. The result was labored and uncertain. It defended orthodox views of creation and “philanthropy,” and it reinforced the need for Indians to learn English, providing scientific justification for previous prejudices, which were duly enacted in at least one state constitution. Yet, it had little effect upon the immediate course of anthropology. Those who advocated the study of race as a physical trait alone, and free from a philologist’s dependence upon an Indian consultant, rejected any role for language in studying race. Yet, precisely because of the previous decades’ speculations upon plans of ideas and patterns of thought were so entangled with race science, those Indians and whites most concerned with immediate justice, had little use for philology in their arguments.

CHAPTER 1.

LANGUAGE AND THE AFFINITY OF NATIONS

The study of Indian languages in the postrevolutionary Ohio Country was neither a disinterested scientific pursuit nor a concerted effort on the part of the American state to know the people it would control. Diverse individuals, influenced by currents of thought long predating American independence, investigated native tongues in this physically and intellectually contested territory as parts of projects that transcended national boundaries. Unsurprisingly, different motivations molded the representations of Indian languages that resulted. The missionary David Zeisberger led the Moravian effort to convert the Delawares, interpreting for them the divine word by translating Christian texts and preaching in their tongues. George Washington sought to contribute to the republic of letters by soliciting information for a European monarch, and the responses he received led him ponder to antiquity and peace. Stockbridge chief and U.S. commissioner Hendrick Aupaumut used his native Mahican language to earn a position as a mediator between the U.S. and the western confederacy, to distinguish between his own people's leadership and that offered by the Six Nations, and ultimately to translate U.S. political economy and religion for different Indian groups, though he was ambivalent about the commensurability of Mahican and English words.

By the mid-eighteenth century European settlers and nativist Indians had exaggerated perceived physical differences – skin color in particular – in an effort to define themselves against the other.¹ As settlers' and natives' attitudes hardened and they relied increasingly on force to

¹ Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), ch. 6, has made racial attitudes her explicit focus. Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chs. 5-6; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: Norton, 2008), have each made similar claims about the frontier in this era. Joyce E. Chaplin, "Natural Philosophy and an Early Racial Idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian Bodies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. Ser., 54 (1997): 229-52, discusses the development of one strand of these ideas from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

achieve political goals, they became less willing to try to understand and accommodate each other's metaphorical and conceptual differences.² Yet language remained crucial to actual negotiation, to an understanding of similarity and difference, and to each side's intellectual construction of the Ohio country. For missionaries dedicated to converting heathens, for educated statesmen committed to orderly settlement, and for Indian headmen who saw the best hope for native survival and prosperity in the selective adaptation of white ways, language offered a way of understanding less destructive to the peace their varied goals required than settlers' and nativists' notions of "race."

* * *

At independence, one white American had studied Indian languages longer and in greater depth than any other: David Zeisberger, whose duties as a Moravian missionary demanded familiarity with the languages of those to whom he would preach. Moravians, or the *Unitas Fratrum*, were pietist Protestants who traced their origins to the Bohemian followers of John Hus, who had attempted reformation a century before Martin Luther. Zeisberger began his instruction in native languages under Johann Christian Pylaeus in 1744, at the Brethren's North American center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. By the following year, he showed such promise that an older missionary, Frederick Christian Post, took him as an assistant to the Mohawk village of Chief Hendricks. Zeisberger first took charge of a mission among the Onondagas of central New York. Then he went to the Delawares, first in western Pennsylvania, later in the upper Ohio Valley.³

After a "Pentecostal moment" in August 1727, missionary work became central to the Moravians. Achieving a "Unity of the Brethren" and preparing the way for Christ's return

² See Jane T. Merritt, "Metaphor, Meaning, and Misunderstanding: Language and Power on the Pennsylvania Frontier" in Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 86-87.

³ Edmund de Schweinitz, *The Life and Times of David Zeisberger: the Western Pioneer and Apostle of the Indians* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1870), 13-27, 119-21; Earl P. Olmstead, *Blackcoats among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 4-8. For brief details on Pylaeus as student and teacher, see George Henry Loskiel, *History of the mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America* (London, 1794), Part 2, 52-54, 71, 103.

required evangelizing all the nations of the earth. Moravians particularly looked to those peoples who had been thus far neglected by missionaries, attempting to avoid conflict with other Christian denominations and heeding the message contained in the fifteenth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans for inspiration: "To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see, and those who have not heard, shall understand."⁴ The Brethren sent their first missionary in North America, Christian Henry Rauch, to the Mahicans at Shekomeko, New York, "to observe whether any of the heathen were, by the grace of God, prepared to receive, and believe the word of life." According to Nicholas von Zinzendorf, the Brethren's spiritual leader, temporal benefactor, and "architect of the missions," any heathen nation that accepted a mission must have already heard God's call, but had not yet understood it. Thus the duty of the Moravian missionary was to "interpret to them the meaning of the words He had spoken."⁵

Because the punishment for Babel was not merely a dispersal of nations but also a confusion of their tongues, "interpreting" the divine Word to different nations required conveying the gospel message in unfamiliar languages. Conversion of heathens required translation on at least two levels. Alluding to Enoch, whom God "translated," while still living, into heaven, Zeisberger's younger colleague John Gambold recorded: "it is God's work to convert a man, or to

⁴ For a description of the Pentecostal moment of August 1727 and its lasting importance, see Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, 59, 78, 80. For Heckewelder's description of Rauch's mission, see John Heckewelder, *Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians, from its Commencement, in the Year 1740, to the Close of the Year 1808; comprising all the remarkable incidents which took place at their missionary stations during that period; interspersed with facts, speeches of Indians, and other interesting matter* (Philadelphia: M'Carty and Davis, 1820) [New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971], 20. On the importance of missionary work to Moravian theology, see Vogt, "Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf," 219. The early missionary Christian David recorded turning to Romans 15:21 as he began his missionary work in Greenland. See Christian David, "Christian David, Servant of the Lord, being a translation of the Memoir of Christian David as written by Zinzendorf and translations of selected letters and reports written by Christian David or pertaining to him. Transld. by Rev. Carl John Fliegel. Edited by Rev. Vernon H. Nelson, *Publications of the Archives of the Moravian Church*, no. 2 (1962), 48.

⁵ [Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf], "Zinzendorf's Narrative of a Journey from Bethlehem to Shamokin in September of 1742" in William C. Reichel, ed., *Memorials of the Moravian Church*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1870), 87. Saying that Zinzendorf was the primary theologian of the Brethren speaks more to Moravian de-emphasis of theology in favor of intense experiential religion than it does to his thoroughness in explicating theological matters. See Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf." On Zinzendorf as the driving force and main organizer of the early missionary efforts of the Moravian Church, see A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 87-94.

Translate him out of Death and into Life.” To facilitate this, a missionary need only “go their way weeping, & so carry in their Hearts the precious Seed of the sweet words concerning the Crucified Jesus among the Heathen.” Conveying these “sweet words,” however, was no simple task “since when they come thither, they cannot Speak with them.”⁶ Divine translation depended upon a more mundane human counterpart.

Learning native languages was an arduous process. Because Moravians went “properly to such Heathen, where Christ has not been preach’d as yet,” they possessed “no other Helps to arrive at the Language, except Conversation.” By the time he began his mission to the Cherokees, Gambold was already middle-aged (“a time of life ill suited to the acquirement of a language such as this”). He found his attempt “abortive” and felt his linguistic deficiencies keenly. Missionaries in isolated locations had to spend their time cultivating fields if they were to eat and, often, the only Indians with whom they had regular contact were “children of 8 to 12 or 13 years old, who had not acquired a habit of thinking, [and] were inadequate to the task” of teaching the language. Even in better conditions, the method was necessarily slow, “for they advance after no other manner in Learning, than as Children do at first.” Christian David, struggling to grasp Greenlandic Eskimoan, put it bluntly: “If we are supposed to learn this language God will have to grant us a special grace.”⁷

Nor could Moravian missionaries turn to interpreters, whether native or European, for the knowledge of even the best interpreters, Gambold reasoned, “goes no further than such things

⁶ John Gambold, “A Short Account concerning the Labours of the Brethren among the Heathen in general. Translated into English” [n.d.], Box 3500, folder 17, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA. Because of this association with the Adamic language, Enoch (the son of Jared, not the son of Cain) was associated with writing and science, particularly esoteric knowledge. For a contemporary identification of Enoch, see John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible, containing a historical account of the persons... and an explication of the appellative terms mentioned in the Old and New Testament* (London, 1769), 426-27. For the Rosicrucian link between the language of Adam and that of Enoch, see “Confessio Fraternitatis or The Confession of the Laudable Fraternity of the Most Honorable Order of the Rosy Cross, Written to All the Learned of Europe,” in the Appendix to Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 257.

⁷ John Gambold to Peter S. Du Ponceau, 20 October 1818, Historical and Literary Committee, Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages, American Philosophical Society; Gambold, “Short Account”; David, “Christian David,” 48.

as occur in Commerce, & the utmost they can do is to express themselves about the Necessaries of Life.” Just as critically, relying on an interpreter, when one lacked the linguistic proficiency to detect errors, was dangerous. There was always the chance that a mischievous or malicious intermediary would “on Purpose give things a different and wrong Turn, in order to hinder the Brethren’s views.” In short, “nothing is to be done thro’ Interpreters who are themselves dead in Sins.” A missionary’s best hope was to convert a native to Christianity, one who understood the language and “not only a Conception, but a Feeling of what concerns our Saviour.” These, Gambold concluded, “are certainly very useful, & can do great service.”⁸ They were also hard to come by. Overall, “the learning of these difficult languages was greatly impeded by the total want of the proper means of instruction.”⁹

One can imagine the commitment and patience such a process required, from native teachers and missionary pupils alike. Yet the Brethren insisted that it was rewarding and that potential converts enjoyed teaching them, especially since Moravians were known to bear some strange message. Gambold thought that Indians began “to feel the Brethrens Principle & Intention, & feel a desire of knowing soon what they have to say. This makes them willing to help them to the words, whereby they express this & and the other thing, & it is a Pleasure to them when a Brother first begins to stammer in their language.” Another missionary, John Heckewelder, confirmed this: “The Indians are very proud of a white man’s endeavouring to learn their language; they help him in everything that they can.” The time learning foreign tongues aided them in the long run. Months of listening and repeating – acquiring “an Indian ear,” in words of one Indian – and tentatively uttering verbal fragments, allowed missionaries time to demonstrate that they were uninterested in land, trade, or women.¹⁰

⁸ Gambold, “Short Account.”

⁹ Loskiel, *History*, 154-55.

¹⁰ Gambold, “Short Account”; John Heckewelder, “An Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations who once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 1 (1819), 318. On Moravians as “a separate people, and from other white people quite different,” see James Merrell, *Into the*

But earning the trust of their Indian tutors was only where linguistic labors began. Moravian missionaries were to be the first to record native languages in writing and to create texts that would make learning a language easier. As Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg explained: “[Missionaries] are obliged therefore, to shew this and the other thing to the heathen, if they want to speak with them, to observe well the name that they hear and write it down.” Then, “when they have properly noted down the words which belong to the connection of speech, and which denote this or that action,” they could begin to systematize their lists of words and grammatical rules. Dictionaries and grammars were not compiled in haste or with ease. “All this is a tedious affair,” Spangenberg admitted, “but not without its usefulness.”¹¹

Zeisberger was diligent in his linguistic duties. Zeisberger’s familiarity with the Delaware language and his ability to convey Christian ideas in intelligible conversation surprised Delawares who were strangers to the mission community.¹² Moreover, Zeisberger meticulously compiled the needed texts. In his first mission, he had prepared a seven-volume Onondaga-German lexicon and an Onondaga grammar. During his second mission, he published an *Essay of a Delaware-Indian and English spelling-book: for the use of the schools of the Christian*

American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier (New York: Norton, 1999), 84-87, at 85. On the importance of Moravian efforts to learn native languages for their relative success among Protestant missionaries, see Jane T. Merritt, “Dreaming of the Savior’s Blood: Moravians and the Indian Great Awakening in Pennsylvania,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. Ser., 54 (1997): 723-46, at 737; Maia Turner Conrad, “‘Struck in their hearts’: David Zeisberger’s Moravian Mission to the Delaware Indians in Ohio, 1767-1808” (Ph.D. Diss., College of William & Mary, 1998), 68-75.

¹¹ August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *An account of the manner in which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, preach the Gospel* (London, 1788), 50. For the process of “religious translation” in a different context, see David J. Silverman, “Indians, Missionaries, and Religious Translation: Creating Wampanoag Christianity in Seventeenth-Century Martha’s Vineyard,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser., 62 (2005): 141-74.

¹² Herman Wellenreuther and Carola Wessel, eds., *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger, 1772-1781*. Trans. by Julie Tomberlin Weber. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 95-96. Zeisberger relied on his proficiency of Delaware as a spoken language, but many interactions involved a combination of the written and the oral. Abel, a potential convert at Fairfield in Ontario, where the Moravian mission to the Delawares had moved in 1792 to avoid the conflicts in the upper Ohio Valley, opened a “searching correspondence and exchange of letters” in which he “disclosed the condition of his heart completely.” Many Delaware mission youths, Abel included, could “better express themselves in writing than by speaking, and all this in Indian.” Those who had to communicate weighty, and still slightly unfamiliar, matters of “eternal welfare” probably preferred the time writing allowed them to organize their thoughts. Thus, Zeisberger revealed: “They often come, bringing the letter themselves, sit down, and get their answer by word of mouth.” See Zeisberger, *Diary*, 435-36.

Indians on Muskingum River (1776), which was an alphabetical listing of Delaware words, with their English equivalents, grouped according to the word's total number of syllables. As war broke out in the Ohio country, he preparing a manuscript grammar of Lenni Lenape (Delaware), as well as translations of Moravian hymns and a chronological collation of the gospels.¹³

Such texts served multiple purposes. They provided a means of instruction for Americans or Europeans who were potential donors to the Moravian missionary effort or who were philologically interested. They also possessed symbolic importance as a tangible representation of the missionary's commitment.¹⁴ Most immediately, published translations provided a means to teach native students and to keep the skills they had acquired sharp over time. Zeisberger was impressed with the Delawares' "peculiar spirit in learning." They learned quickly and continued to read throughout their lives. The Moravian board could not afford to keep pace with demand. Zeisberger was certain that "the story of our Lord's passion, outpouring of blood, and death will not have been published in vain here among these blind heathen. Here and there a seed falls, which in its own time will spring up and come to sight." In the meantime, Zeisberger and his assistants copied out materials by hand.¹⁵

In a broader view, dictionaries, grammars, and other written materials could instruct future missionaries, not only for the language a text particularly concerned, but potentially for any

¹³ Zeisberger's published literary labors include: David Zeisberger, *Delaware Indian and English spelling book, for the schools of the mission of the United Brethren; with some short historical accounts from the Old and New Testament, and other useful instruction for children* [2d. ed.] (Philadelphia, 1806); David Zeisberger, *A Collection of hymns for the use of the Christian Indians of the missions of the United Brethren in North America* (Philadelphia, 1803); David Zeisberger, *Sermons to Children* (Philadelphia, 1803). Two of his grammars were published posthumously. See David Zeisberger, "A Grammar of the Language of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. Translated from the German ms. of the late Rev. David Zeisberger, for the American Philosophical Society, by Peter S. Duponceau." in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* [n.s.] 3 (1830); idem, *Essay of an Onondaga Grammar, or a Short Introduction to the Language of the Onondaga al. Maqua Indians* (Philadelphia, 1888). For a list of Zeisberger's vast manuscript works, see de Schweinitz, *Life and Times of David Zeisberger*, 690-92.

¹⁴ Heckewelder, *Narrative*, p. 155. For Netawatwes's invitation, see Olmstead, *Blackcoats among the Delawares*, 7, 10.

¹⁵ Zeisberger, *Diary*, 2: 4, 28. On the importance of the imagery of blood and torture to Indians' reception and syncretic adaptation of Moravian Christianity, see Merritt, "Dreaming of the Savior's Blood"; Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, 84; Conrad, "Struck in their Hearts," 25-26. On the broader importance of these to Moravian theology, see Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf," 213-14, 218.

cognate language as well. Zeisberger was particularly attentive to the linguistic similarities and differences of the Indians whom he encountered. He explained such distinctions at length in an essay he penned in between sermons to his small community of converts and conversations with Delaware chiefs regarding the benefits of peace and neutrality, as the violence of the War for Independence threatened to engulf the small community of Moravian Indians at New Schönbrunn.¹⁶ He began his account with a physical description of the natives, whom he found to be “brown, but of different shades”; some were “light brown, hardly to be distinguished from a brown European, did not their eyes and hair betray them...others are so dark that they differ little from mulattoes.” Most fell somewhere in between and he believed brownness to be of no great importance to believing Christians.¹⁷

Unlike their myriad complexions, Zeisberger easily classified the languages of the “northern nations.” He thought it “safe to affirm that there are two principal languages spoken by the Indians of North America, namely the Mingoes and the Delaware.” Two of the latter’s three tribes, the Unamis and the Unalachtgos, spoke languages that “differ but little” and he noted that if not for geographical proximity and “constant contact in recent times they would hardly understand each other”; the Munsees, separated from them by the Blue Mountains, spoke a tongue “quite different.” Yet, he stressed, each was only a dialect and “the three grew out of one

¹⁶ This essay was composed for unknown reasons, but it became the basis of the introductory essay to George Henry Loskiel’s history of the Moravian missions. The editors of David Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, ed. by Archer Butler Hubert and William Nathaniel Schwarze, *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society Quarterly* (Jan.-April 1910) state that Zeisberger wrote it in the winter of 1779-80. See *ibid.*, p. 1. De Schweinitz, however, variously places Zeisberger’s writing of the manuscript in the winter of 1778-79 and 1780-81. See de Schweinitz, *Life and Times of David Zeisberger*, 29 n. 2, 478. Christain F. Feest, “Moravians and the Development of the Genre of Ethnography,” in A. G. Roeber, ed., *Ethnographies and Exchanges: Native Americans, Moravians, and Catholics in Early North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 26, says that internal evidence proves that it was written in the second half 1780 and perhaps into 1781.

¹⁷ Zeisberger, *History*, 12. To refute the nativist challenge that Christianity was meant only for whites, Zeisberger, following Zinzendorf, once preached that Jesus and disciples “had a brown skin like the Indian, & certainly did not resemble the nations of white people.” Quoted in Conrad, ““Struck in their hearts,”” 82-83. Similarly, Zinzendorf recorded, with equal parts derision and disbelief, a “desperate quarrel” between a Moravian and a Lutheran missionary in Greenland that brought the mission to the brink of ruin “on what Adam looked like before the Fall and on similar silly stuff to which we pay no attention in the Church.” See David, “Christian David,” 24-25.

parent language.” Moreover, these languages were closely related to that of the Mahicans and the Shawnees, and, though less closely, to the languages of the Miamis, Ottawas, Ojibwas, and other nations further west. Conversely, the “language of the Delawares...differs so much from that of the Six Nations, that they cannot understand each other.” Regarding the latter, the Onondagas, Mohawks, Senecas, Cayugas, Oneidas, and Tuscaroras each “has its language,” but “all these dialects form one speech and the Indians of the Six Nations are all able to understand one another.” Those six tongues, as well as those of the Wyandots and Mingos, who were not joined to the confederacy, “were dialects of one and the same language.”¹⁸ Taxonomy was not the missionary’s primary goal, but he thought such classification could be accomplished more definitively and more usefully, since it identified groups for whom linguistic materials had already been compiled, by language rather than color.

Varying levels of communication were possible, but more difficult, with Indians who spoke languages related to Delaware. For instance, in 1800 Christian Frederick Dencke spent three months at Goshen, learning the Delaware language from Zeisberger to prepare for opening a mission among the linguistically-related Ojibwas.¹⁹ Yet, when two Ojibwas – “quite wild, raw heathen, [who] have yet heard no word of God” – visited the mission at Pettquotting (New Salem, Ohio) in July 1787, Zeisberger could not speak to them and had to rely on the linguistic skills of members of his mission community. The visitors overheard Abraham, a native convert, preaching to his son Gegaschamind. They asked the son, who knew Ojibwa, to relay what his father had told him. Zeisberger was impressed to hear Gegaschamind interpret it for them, “and was not

¹⁸ Zeisberger, *History*, 9, 27, 41, 141-42. What Zeisberger identified as “tribes,” have also been called “phratries.” See, for example, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 16, 399-400, 437. How the Unamis, Unalachtgos, and Munsees increasingly identified themselves as “Delaware” in the eighteenth century is the subject of Amy Schutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Zeisberger’s “Mingoes” and “Delaware” represent the modern linguistic classification of the Algonquian and Iroquoian language families. See “Table 3. Consensus Classification of the Native Languages of North America” in Ives Goddard, ed., *Languages*, vol. 17 of William C. Sturtevant, ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 4-8.

¹⁹ Elma E. Gray and Leslie Robb Gray, *Wilderness Christians: The Moravian Mission to the Delawares* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1956), 183.

afraid, a rare thing for a savage to do, who usually will not translate nor speak any such thing.” Though all souls were equal before God, some minds and mouths were especially valuable to a missionary. Zeisberger reflected: “If this man should be converted he would be a useful man, for he understands five Indian tongues, and can speak to many a one the words of life.” He was soon baptized “Boaz.” Shortly thereafter, Zeisberger exulted that the Ojibwas would soon discover that Jesus would “yet be known to them and prayed to, and his name will be glorified by them and in their tongue in spite of all the hindrance and opposition of Satan.”²⁰

Zeisberger was likely prepared for the linguistic situation he found in eastern North America, with its small number of distinct languages but significant dialectical variation. The Holy Roman Empire, of which his native Moravia was a part, contained substantial linguistic diversity. Jacob Boehme, an important early influence on the religious and linguistic thought of Zinzendorf, also emphasized this. The “Teutonic theosopher” asserted that the world contained “seventy-two Head Languages,” within which “*collateral Affinities*” tended to “alter and change every fifteen to eighteen miles.”²¹ Out of the ruins of Babel arose “*seventy-two Languages* out of

²⁰ See Zeisberger, *Diary*, 2: 317, 354, 438, 447, 449. Earl Olmstead identifies Boaz as the son of Abraham formerly known as Gegaschamind. See Olmstead, *Blackcoats among the Delaware*, 77. The Moravians opened a mission to the Chippewas of Canada in 1800 under the direction of Frederick Dencke, who had learned Delaware from Zeisberger. The mission closed in the face of sustained opposition. See Gray and Gray, *Wilderness Christians*, 183-96. Dencke went on to publish a Chippewa spelling book and a translation of the three epistles of John into Delaware, and he composed a Delaware dictionary and grammar in manuscript. See James Constantine Pilling, *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 110-12.

²¹ Jacob Behmen [Jacob Boehme], *Mysterium Magnum, or An Exposition of the First Book of Moses called Genesis: Concerning the Manifestation or Revelation of the Divine Word through the Three Principles of the Divine Essence, and of the Original of the World and the Creation; wherein the Kingdom of Nature and the Kingdom of Grace are Explained* vol. 3 [1623] (London 1772), 198. Andrew Weeks has noted that the *Mysterium Magnum* “encompasses the full Corpus of Boehme’s works...[it] recapitulates its themes and resolves the tensions.” See Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 196. The notion of 72 languages resulting from the confusion of tongues goes back to Isidore of Seville. See Arno Borst, “The History of Language in European Thought” in *Medieval Worlds: Barbarians, Heretics and Artists in the Middle Ages*, trans. Eric Hansen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 16-18. Zinzendorf came into contact with the ideas of Boehme through the man who tutored him in biblical languages, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, and through contact with England’s Philadelphia Society (some of whose members later migrated to Pennsylvania), which served as an example for Herrnhut and exerted a “lingering influence.” See Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Jane Ward Leade (1624-1704) and the Philadelphians”; Peter Vogt, “Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)”; and Martin Weyer-Menkoff, “Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782),” in Carter Lindberg, ed., *The Pietist Theologians* (London: Blackwell, 2005), 129, 141, 208, 229 n. 2, 242-44. In his enthusiastic ecumenism,

one only sensual Tongue, wherein *all* Speeches and Languages are contained, and each Tongue and Language fell upon its People, according as every *Family* of the Stock of the human Tree had a Property out of the formed Word.”²² Languages no longer expressed the essences of things, as did “the language of nature,” but they divinely corresponded to the nations for whom they were created. People had cooperated to erect the tower, but since the tower fell, “the People neither *know* nor understood one another’s Property; and each *People* or Nation has...looked upon the other to be *strange* in the Power of the Understanding of the formed Word.” This led to contempt of different religions, rather than an attempt to understand their variation as different facets of the divine word. Linguistically, this also had led individuals to make “each Tongue’s Property, a Self-hood, or a Selfish Desire to Arrogation, Self-Apprehension, and Assumption.”²³

The *Unitas Fratrum* – the “Unity of the Brethren” – saw itself not as a separate church, *per se*, but rather as the medium through which fragmented faiths, each of which possessed a different aspect of divine truth, could be reunified.²⁴ Moravian faith would always be mediated by the vehicle through which stories designed to excite the senses and stir the emotions of the

Zinzendorf also absorbed several independent pietist religious societies in England in the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century, among these were several in Yorkshire that had begun as “groups meeting to read the works of Jacob Boehme.” See Colin Pomdore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 99.

²² Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, 197. For Boehme, crucial events of sacred history were recorded in the second and eleventh chapters of Genesis and the first chapter of the Gospel of John, the events of which he condensed into a mystical phrase that combined the Word that had dwelled with God from the beginning and the command “Let there be” that brought everything in creation into existence: “*Verbum Fiat*.” God had breathed the Word into Adam, which endowed His greatest creation with a soul that could grasp the essences of things through the natural language. This “In-Speaking, or *Inspiration of the invisible Word*” was the source of “*Men’s Science or Knowledge*.” The “Language of Nature” was originally spoken in the Garden of Eden, “whence *Adam gave Names to all Things*, naming each from its Property”; but, Boehme emphasized: “Of *such* a Gift (as the Understanding of the Language of Nature) Mankind was *deprived* of at *Babel*.” Men’s speech still ultimately derived from the “divine Word,” but their confused languages were now “a *dumb* Form” because they no longer articulated the essences of things. God’s chastisement at Babel denied human beings an understanding of both the natural language and of each other’s languages. See Behmen, *Mysterium Magnum*, 7, 188-89, 197, 200. For an explanation of the significance of the “*Verbum Fiat*,” see Weeks, *Boehme*, 197.

²³ Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum*, 197, 199-200, 203. The writings of both Boehme and Comenius emerged from the early early 17th-century Rosicrucian enthusiasm to extend learning in a Protestant kingdom of Bohemia. To some, would only be accomplished by mystically uncovering the natural language in which signs revealed the essences of things or by creating a new universal language that created such correspondences between signs and things. See Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 99, 162-63, 178-80.

²⁴ Vogt, “Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf,” 215-16.

listener had to pass and Moravian missionaries like Zeisberger worked to bring those fragmented faiths together by making fragmented languages intelligible to one another.

The languages of the North American Indians posed particular challenges. After limited contact with Indians, Zinzendorf “felt pity for these poor people, whose language is inadequate for the expression of their new experiences, and of their views and wishes, as assistants in the Saviour’s work. Our language is divine in comparison with theirs, and yet how unsatisfactorily can we give utterance to the emotions and aspirations of our hearts!”²⁵ John Amos Comenius, an influential pedagogue and former bishop of the Bohemian Brethren, a group through whom the *Unitas Fratrum* traced their lineage, similarly apprehended “a fairly common fault in the languages of America.” Drawing from Johann de Læet, Comenius found that “their words are either so long or so hard to pronounce or so full of anomalies and distortions that there is little hope of reducing them to simple phrases and elegant style.”²⁶

Comenius supported the missionary effort to the “the many barbarous uneducated peoples with whom we trade in the two Indies,” his *Janua linguarum* was used by Indian students as a linguistic textbook at Harvard College, and he was a formative influence upon the Moravian missionary effort. But he was inconsistent regarding the possibility of improving unpolished languages. He charged civilized peoples to “purify, cultivate and ennoble” the languages of any neighboring rude nations as an aid to their evangelization. In *The Great Didactic*, Comenius stressed: “If any language be obscure, or insufficient to express necessary ideas, this is the fault, not of the language, but of those who use it.” He pointed to early Greek and Latin, in which advances in learning required frequent coining of new words. At first, these may have “seemed so obscure and so rude that their authors were uncertain if they could ever serve as a vehicle for thought.” Now that they are “universally accepted,” however, they are considered “sufficiently expressive.” From this, Comenius drew one conclusion: “No language, therefore, need lack

²⁵ [Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf], “Narrative of a Journey to Shecomeco, in August of 1742” in Reichel, ed., *Memorials*, 55.

²⁶ Comenius, *Panglottia*, 14.

words unless men lack industry.”²⁷ Yet in his “Panglottia,” Comenius argued that “some languages are not suitable for full development,” and so recommended using “more popular and adaptable languages” or even invent a universal language that would combine the best features of the world’s different tongues.²⁸

Zeisberger demonstrated some of this ambivalence himself. According to him, the language possessed flaws, but these were not insuperable. “In things relating to common life the language of the Indians is remarkably rich,” Zeisberger found, but in “spiritual things, of which they are totally ignorant, there was utter lack of expressions.”²⁹ Zeisberger expected this. As Spangenberg instructed, missionaries inevitably perceived that “the heathen want words to express this or the other thing, with which they are either not acquainted, or have never before thought of.” Gambold emphasized this as well: “As soon as they are put to translate words relating to the Salvation of Men, they are as unfit for it, as a poor Peasant, who has been occupied all his Life with plowing and threshing, would be to translate a treatise on Navigation. For they

²⁷ John Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*. Trans. and ed. by M. W. Keatinge [1896] (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 65-66, 271. On Comenius’s influence on Moravian education, see Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, 171; for his influence on the Moravian missionary effort, see Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 43-44. For Comenius’s support for missionary work and the use of text by Indian students, see Robert Fitzgibbon Young, *Comenius in England* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971), 61. Sarah Rivett, “Empirical Desire: Conversion, Ethnography, and the New Science of the Praying Indian,” *Early American Studies* 4.I (2006): 16-45, at 22-31, discusses Comenius’s linguistic ideas as the backbone for a “grammar of grace” that would reveal the conversion process.

²⁸ See John Amos Comenius, *Panglottia, or Universal Language* (Warwickshire, UK: Peter I. Drinkwater, 1989), 10. Comenius gave a concise version of his plan for a universal language in John Amos Comenius, *The Way of Light*, trans. E. T. Campagnac (Liverpool: University Press, 1938), ch. 19. For a discussion of this universal language, see John Edward Sadler, *J. A. Comenius and the Concept of Universal Education* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 153-58. Patrick Erben, who first drew my attention to the importance of Boehme and Comenius for understanding Moravian linguistic thought and whose views have influenced my own, has written that Zeisberger, along with other Moravian missionaries, Comenius, and Boehme, sought to repair the damage of the *confusio linguarum* that resulted from Babel by creating a perfect spiritual language. See Patrick Erben, *A Harmony of the Spirits: Multilingualism, Translation, and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming). There are important differences between even Boehme and Comenius, however. The former sought to uncover, through mystical insight, the correspondences that continued to exist between words and things, and so reconstruct the natural language; the latter sought to create a universal language in which words did correspond to the essences of things, which was decidedly not the case in the world’s spoken languages. On the linguistic views of Boehme and Comenius, see Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (London: Blackwell, 1995), 182-85, 214-16; Weeks, *Boehme*, 76-78, 188-98; Sadler, *Comenius and the Concept of Universal Education*, 143-58.

²⁹ Zeisberger, *History*, 143.

not only want the words requisite for expressing such Matters, but they even have not Ideas & moreover are Scarce able to frame accurate ones.”³⁰ This meant that either natives or missionaries had to invent a new word or give a new meaning to one already familiar.

Indians spoke heathen languages that needed only to be converted, so Zeisberger set about the task of refining the Delaware language to make it a suitable medium for Christianity. The Indians were “a free people and not subject to the rule of any one,” so he coined *Ne hil la lid*, “my Lord.” Previously, Indians “had no idea of the devil” and they “knew nothing of Hell.” Understandably, they had “no proper term for such a place.” Zeisberger took “*Machtando* meaning the Evil One,” and used it as the stem for *Machtandonwinek*, which meant “with the devil.” He also thought that certain words must be changed for those concepts that his converts had previously possessed partially, but incorrectly. The extent of a person’s conversion could be measured by the words he or she used. Unconverted Indians believed that each person possessed a soul, or “an invisible being and a spirit,” but they also believed that other animals possessed one as well. He found it “remarkable” that “savages who had been cut off from association with other nations for no one knows how many centuries should have so much knowledge of the Deity that is handed down from generation to generation,” but the Indians’ confused ideas regarding the human soul, provided evidence for their corruption of once-pure religious knowledge and posed linguistic problems of association. “Formerly,” Zeisberger wrote, “they used the word *Wtellenapewoagan* to describe it, meaning the ‘Substance of a Human Being.’ Savages use this word to the present day. Now they have accepted the word *Wtschitschunk*, that is, ‘Spirit.’” Just as other Brethren had realized, Zeisberger reassured himself and his reader, “since the gospel has been preached among them, their language has gained much in this respect.”³¹

On the one hand, his experience with Indian languages led him to a much more favorable assessment than those Comenius and Zinzendorf had reached. Zeisberger’s study led him to

³⁰ Spangenberg, *An Account*, 50; Gambold, “Short Account.”

³¹ Zeisberger, *History*, 92, 129-31, 143. For the term for “my Lord,” see Zeisberger, *Delaware Indian and English Spelling Book*, 58.

conclude that Delawares were able to “express themselves with great clearness and precision, and so concisely that much circumlocution is required to convey the full meaning of their expressions in an European language.”³² A language with the clarity, precision, and concision of Lenni Lenape promised a uniquely powerful way to reach the heart. All languages were divinely endowed, suited to their lives and suitable for expressing the divine word, once translated. To think any less of those languages would be to fall victim to the selfishness that Boehme saw epitomized in the aftermath of Babel. “Whoever will speak Indian must learn to think in Indian.” He thought this was possible, desirable, and necessary for a missionary’s work. “The language has no resemblance to any of ours,” Zeisberger admitted, but he stressed that “it has...its own fixed rules, to which those must conform who will speak intelligibly.”³³ He did not intend his grammatical differentiation of Delaware and European languages to be invidious.³⁴ Mastering those rules required a thorough knowledge of how Indian languages combined stems of several words, corresponding to several parts of speech, into long compound words that could express complex ideas with ease. One had only to provide those languages with the necessary words. However, it is noteworthy that he never composed a Delaware dictionary because he thought it “would be more proper for those few Converts, to learn English, when they then might read English writings & books.” His friend and fellow laborer Heckewelder recalled that by the end of Zeisberger’s career “the prospects...with regard to Civilization was too discouraging, for [him] to spend so much time and labour for the benefit of so few.”³⁵

As a missionary, Zeisberger focused on practical linguistic issues and was silent on the “logomystical” issues that entranced Boehme. He may not have had the time or inclination to ponder the divine mysteries hidden in the language of his native Brethren and potential converts.

³² Zeisberger, *History*, 143.

³³ Zeisberger, “Grammar,” 97. For a fuller description of Zeisberger’s grammatical analysis of the Delaware language, particularly in the context of Peter Stephen Du Ponceau’s use of it, see chapters 5-6.

³⁴ Comenius, *Great Didactic*, 206, noted that “stress may be laid only on the points in which they differ. To call attention to points they possess in common is not merely useless, but actually harmful.”

³⁵ John Heckewelder to Peter S. Du Ponceau, 3 September 1818, Heckewelder, Letters to Peter S. Du Ponceau, American Philosophical Society.

Even if he did ponder the place of Delaware in the divine Word, the pedagogical tradition of which he was a part barred him from including such musings in his linguistic writings. As Comenius, the avatar of linguistic instruction and late bishop of the Brethren, instructed those who would follow his educational reforms: “The subtler investigation into the causes and connecting links, the similarities and dissimilarities, the analogies and anomalies that exist in things and in words, is the business of the philosopher, and does but delay the philologist.”³⁶ Heckewelder confirmed this: “Our Missionaries have, indeed, compiled grammars and dictionaries of those idioms, but more with a view to practical use and to aid their fellow labourers in the great work of the conversion of the Indians to Christianity, than in order to promote the study of the philosophy of language.”³⁷

Like others before him, Zeisberger may have sought what Comenius’s called “a universall antidote against the confusion of BABEL.” Such an antidote would bring peace. It was perhaps especially dear to a man forced to flee from religious violence in Europe and who lived in the midst of decades of war between innumerable combinations of natives and whites in North America. However, to achieve this, he did not rely on mystical insight into the Word, like Boehme, nor did he seek to create a universal language out of the most advantageous elements of the world’s spoken languages that would aid in converting the heathen, as did Comenius. His goal was, perhaps, more modest. He sought to learn the Delaware language so well that he could convince the Lenni Lenape of their own sinfulness and Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, and to record his knowledge so that others could further the work he had begun.³⁸

³⁶ Comenius, *Great Didactic*, 206.

³⁷ Heckewelder to Du Ponceau, 22 July 1816, in Peter S. Duponceau, “A Correspondence between the Rev. John Heckewelder, of Bethlehem, and Peter S. Duponceau, Esq., ... Respecting the Languages of the American Indians,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* 1 (1819), 389.

³⁸ John Amos Comenius, *A Pattern of Universal Knowledge, in a plaine and true Draught; or a Diatyposis...In an Ichnographicall and Orthographicall Delineation*, trans. Jeremy Collins (London, 1651), 42.

Reclaiming heathens from savagery required introducing new concepts, renaming concepts that had been corrupted with heathenish association, and being able to convey all of this in the native language of the potential converts. Such a task was made slightly easier with knowledge of which native languages possessed similarities of vocabulary and construction, which the Brethren compiled and systematized in dictionaries, grammars, and the like. The linguistic expertise that Zeisberger and his colleagues acquired, however, attracted attention outside Moravian missionary circles. In the 1780s and beyond, Americans – both private citizens and federal officials, for science and for diplomacy – sought the aid of Brethren in understanding native languages or in conveying the meaning of European words to Indians.

* * *

The Unity of the Brethren sought the salvation of souls and the United States sought the orderly sale and settlement of land; each depended upon peace in the Ohio country. But peace was precarious in the late eighteenth century. Confident from its victory over the world's mightiest empire, aware that its cost had placed the confederacy in dire financial straits, and recognizing that any land policy required a complementary Indian policy, between 1784 and 1786, the Confederation Congress imposed three separate treaties upon the various Indian groups who claimed the Ohio country, which declared the signing Indians to have been conquered and demanded title to vast tracts of land in return for peace. The cumulative effect of these treaties cemented the western nations in firmer union to resist U.S. claims. By the end of 1786, the representatives of all of the principal nations west of the Ohio River, as well as those of the Six Nations, convened a grand council at Brownstown, near Detroit, where they reinforced an alliance begun in 1783 and declared that the "United Indian Nations" rejected the terms of the conquest treaties. It was to be the peak of pan-Indian resistance east of the Mississippi River.³⁹

³⁹ See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 413-21, 440-45; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 90-103; and Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the*

In the winter of 1786-87, Zeisberger feared renewed hostilities between the United States and the western Indians, since he understood that at Brownstown “war had practically been decided upon.” The mission could not operate effectively in the midst of war, as he bluntly told his mission board in Bethlehem: “Peace is for us a chief consideration, upon which all depends...may the Saviour grant us this!”⁴⁰ He hoped that Richard Butler, newly appointed superintendent of Indian affairs in the northern district, could “do something in our behalf with the Indian Chiefs, so that they may permit us unmolested to proceed to the Muskingum,” which they had fled after American soldiers had massacred the ninety native Brethren of Salem and Gnadenhutzen in March 1782. Recognizing the role the Moravians had played in keeping the Delawares neutral for most of the war (and recognizing that if they had not, it “might have proved fatal to the cause”), he offered what services he could. They amounted to little, but he asked for something in return.⁴¹

George Washington, Butler’s former commander-in-chief, had requested his aid in collecting as much linguistic information on the Ohio Indians as possible. Butler, in turn, approached Zeisberger for “help...with regard to the Delaware tongue.” Zeisberger contributed a copy of his recently published Delaware-English spelling book, assuming that it would “serve

Ohio Valley, 1673-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 226-36. These three historians each emphasize that the ensuing conflicts were not as simple as the U.S. versus “the Indians.” The conflicts transformed relationships within and among the multiethnic villages of the Ohio Valley and the U.S. attempted, usually unsuccessfully, to restrain its own settlers.

⁴⁰ “Letter of David Zeisberger to the Brethren of the Helpers’ Conference – On the Cayahaga River, 25 Feb 1787,” Box 153, No. 14, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

⁴¹ See Zeisberger, *Diary*, 2: 81; Butler, “Journal,” 509. Butler’s thoughts on the Brethren quoted in de Schweinitz, *Life and Times of David Zeisberger*, 444-45 n. 2. For Butler’s request, see “Diary of the Small Indian Company in a Night Lodge on the Cayahaga,” 14, in Box 153, No. 8, Moravian Archives. The details of this account are not found in Zeisberger’s published diary, where it only records that Butler sent them a “friendly letter” containing “his good intentions in offering us his services.” See Zeisberger, *Diary*, 1: 313. For an account of the massacre at Gnadenhutzen, see John Heckewelder, *The Travels of John Heckewelder in Frontier America*, ed. Paul A. W. Wallace (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 189-200. A recent account seeks to go beyond attributing the massacre to merely a murderous motive; see Rob Harper, “Looking the Other Way: The Gnadenhutzen Massacre and the Contextual Interpretation of Violence,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser., 64.3 (July 2007): 621-44. On the revolutionary experience of the Moravians Indians more broadly, see de Schweinitz, *Life and Times of David Zeisberger*, chs. 27-38. For Zeisberger’s request, see “Zeisberger to the Brethren of the Helpers’ Conference,” 3.

their purpose.” It might have seemed a small price to pay in return for U.S. assistance for the mission, but Zeisberger did not comply without reservations. He trusted Butler, so this single request was “tolerable,” but, Zeisberger told his mission board, “commonly the matter does not stop there.” His gravest concern was that things would be “asked of us that could not be done without damage to ourselves.” Just what those things were he left unsaid, but he made clear that they had been “demanded of me, also, this time and which I had to decline absolutely.”⁴²

Zeisberger recognized that his reasons for studying the language differed from those of Butler and Washington. As a missionary, Zeisberger’s foremost priority in studying native languages was to obtain a medium to preach the gospel and to convert Indians to Christianity. Butler and Washington did not oppose this mission – Christian Indians were thought to be peaceful Indians – but that was not the reason Butler and Washington sought vocabularies. Catherine the Great had sent the Marquis de Lafayette a vocabulary and had asked him to have it “filled up with indian Names,” which she needed for “an Universal dictionary to be made of all languages.” Lafayette was in no position to fulfill the request, so he turned to Washington, saying only that “it would greatly oblige her to collect the words she sends translated into the several idioms of the Nations on the Banks of the Oyho.”⁴³

⁴² “Diary of the Small Indian Company in a Night Lodge on the Cayahaga,” 14; David Zeisberger to the Brethren of the Helpers’ Conference – On the Cayahaga River, 25 February 1787, Box 153, No. 14, 3, Moravian Archives. Interestingly, Butler does not appear to have forwarded the Delaware dictionary to Washington; at least, the editors of the *Papers of GW* do not record it among the enclosures Butler included in his response. See W. W. Abbott, ed., *The Papers of George Washington, Confederation Series* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992-), 5: 456-58.

⁴³ Lafayette to George Washington, 10 February [1786], in *Papers of GW*, 3: 555. Lafayette sent a similar request to Benjamin Franklin, who contacted Josiah Harmar, who in turn contacted Zeisberger, who sent another copy of the Delaware spelling book. See Lafayette to Franklin, 10 February 1786; Harmar to Franklin, 19 March 1787; Franklin to Lafayette, 17 April 1787, in *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedNames.jsp>. Franklin provided no commentary on the project or its results. See also Zeisberger to Harmar, 13 January 1788, Misc. MSS. Collection, American Philosophical Society. The U.S. was friendly to Moravian missionaries, especially after Spangenberg brought the Brethren into closer conformity with other Protestant faiths. See Peter Vogt, “Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760),” 219. The same could not be said of Catherine’s Orthodox Russian empire. In the mid-eighteenth century Catherine discovered that two Moravian missionaries were preaching to the Samoyed peoples of northern Siberia. She expelled them and threatened them with execution by burning if they dared to return. See A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 87-88.

The Ohio was but a branch of Empress Catherine's much larger ambition to trace the descent and migrations of the world's peoples and perhaps discover the original language. Since the Renaissance, when scholars became increasingly aware of the similarities of European vernaculars to Latin and Greek, the idea that languages changed over time and that one could trace descent through language was widely accepted. This use of etymology to trace the history of peoples before their written histories commenced supplemented the traditional focus of etymology on the search for the meanings of words in the Adamic language. The famed philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who had suggested a project similar to Catherine's to her predecessor, Peter the Great, decades before, was the most prominent to articulate the methods and benefits of this new etymology. Instead of attempting to reconstruct the Adamic language, Leibniz simply took its former existence as the premise from which he explored what he considered to be demonstrable issues of linguistic and national descent. He pointed out that "since the names of rivers ordinarily come from the earliest known times, they indicate the old form of language and the ancient inhabitants." To Leibniz, this antiquarian commonplace indicated a crucial fact: "Languages in general, being the oldest monuments of peoples, older than writing and the arts, best indicate their origins, kinships, and migrations. This is why etymologies rightly understood would be interesting and important."⁴⁴ Leibniz also emphasized that "one

⁴⁴ G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Ed. and trans. by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), III.i.5, III.ii.1, on 277, 281, 284-85. For instance, he pointed to "Ah," which was "an emission of air making a sound which begins fairly loudly and then fades away." To Leibniz it was clear that "this sound naturally signifies a mild breath." Thus Leibniz could link the Latin *aura* (air) and the German *Wehen* ("wind"). Since the same sound could be likened to water as well as air, he link with those the English *water*, and since ideas of water became linked naturally with isolated bodies, one could derive from the same ultimate source, the French *oeil* and the Greek *omma* (each meaning "eye"), and the Hebrew *Ai* ("island"), among many others. He rejected, however, the mystical musings of Boehme. My understanding of Leibniz's etymology have been shaped by Aarselff, "The Study and Use of Etymology in Leibniz"; Robert H. Robins, "Leibniz and Wilhem von Humboldt and the History of Comparative Linguistics" in de Mauro and Formigari, eds., *Leibniz, Humboldt, and the Origins of Comparativism*; and Hoenigswald, "Descent, Perfection and the Comparative Method since Leibniz." Leibniz composed his *New Essay* as a refutation of the John Locke's rejection of innate ideas and espousal of the arbitrariness of words, which the latter had put forth in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke passed away before Leibniz's essay was prepared for publication, so Leibniz chose not to publish it during his lifetime. It did not appear in print until 1765. See Aarselff, "Leibniz on Locke on Language," in *From Locke to Saussure*.

should not make too many leaps from one nation to another remote one unless there is sound confirming evidence – especially evidence provided by intervening peoples.”⁴⁵ To do otherwise risked deducing false etymologies and decreased the likelihood of finding true harmony between two languages, which would likely be missed unless one could trace it through its succession across peoples: “if the first change of language brings forth other dialects among neighboring tribes, the second and third changes will result in another language.”⁴⁶

The languages of Asia and America held special places in Leibniz’s vision of an etymologically-based natural history of man. As he told the “Very august, very powerful, very indomitable Czar” Peter the Great, the vast and diverse Russian empire was better positioned than any other to “light up the history, geography, origin, and migrations of peoples” because it encompassed the necessary links in the chain of languages that stretched from the ancient Asian Paradise to modern Europe. Leibniz was almost convinced that “there is nothing which conflicts with – indeed there is nothing which does not support – the belief in the common origin of all nations and in a primitive root-language.”⁴⁷ America, however, threatened his hypothesis: “when we pass to America and to the extremities and distant places of Asia and Africa, the languages

⁴⁵ Leibniz, *New Essays*, 281, 285. Aarsleff notes Leibniz’s preferences for what kinds of linguistic information should be collected in Hans Aarsleff, “The Study and Use of Etymology in Leibniz” in Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 93-94. Leibniz urged the common collection of the Lords Prayer for the languages of Asia in a letter to Ludolf dated 17 April 1692. Circa 1430, Johan Schiltberger published translations of the prayer into the languages of Turkey, Armenia, and Tartary after spending more than thirty years as an Ottoman captive, thereby inadvertently establishing a tool for language comparison. See David B. Paxman, *Voyage into Language: Space and the Linguistic Encounter, 1500-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 119. Thoughts on the languages of the Americas were exchanged in letters dated 5 September 1691 and 12 March 1698. See John T. Waterman, trans. and ed., *Leibniz and Ludolf on Things Linguistic: Excerpts from their Correspondence (1688-1703)*, *University of California Publications in Linguistics* 88 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 22, 42.

⁴⁶ Leibniz to Ludolf, 5 September 1691, in Waterman, ed., *Leibniz and Ludolf on Things Linguistic*, 22.

⁴⁷ Leibniz, *New Essays*, 280-81; “On an Academy of Arts and Sciences (Letter to Peter the Great, 1716)” in Philip P. Wiener, ed. and trans., *Leibniz: Selections* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 596-99. For Leibniz’s call for such work, see Aarsleff, “Study and Use of Etymology in Leibniz,” 93; R. H. Robbins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Longman, 1997), 194. On Peter the Great and later Catherine the Great’s turn toward Europe, see W. Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight: St. Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 22, 45, 53-58. For the continuing nineteenth-century association of German philologists and Russian tsars, see Tuska Benes, “Comparative Linguistics as Ethnology: In Search of Indo-Germans in Central Asia, 1770-1830,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 24.2 (2004): 117-32.

seem to be so different among themselves and from ours that one would say it is another race of animals.”⁴⁸ Catherine hoped to lay such mysteries to rest.

So, inspired by the intellectual currents of the day and interested in cataloguing the diversity of her vast empire, Catherine began work on a vocabulary that she could distribute to compare the words of the world’s languages. Over the course of nine months, from the autumn of 1785 into the spring of 1786, the tsarina composed a list of two to three hundred “radical words” and had them “translated into every tongue and jargon” she knew. According to Peter Simon Pallas, a Prussian-born natural scientist in Catherine’s employ who was the project’s ultimate compiler, Catherine included not only “such words as were the most essential, and generally in use even among the best civilized nations” but also “substantives and adjectives of the first necessity...which are common to the most barbarous of languages, or which serve to trace the progress of agriculture or of any arts or elementary knowledge from one people to another.” The vocabularies also included “pronouns, adverbs, and some verbs and numerals, whose great utility in the comparison of languages is acknowledged.” She directed her secretary of state to request vocabularies from the powers of Europe, Asia, and America; but in time, Catherine “grew tired of this hobby.” Rather than leave her efforts to destruction or obscurity, she made “a full confession” to Pallas and directed him to complete the work. About its ultimate utility, Catherine was philosophical: “Whether the reader shall or shall not find in the work striking facts of various kinds, will depend upon the feelings with which he enters upon the subject, and is a matter of little concern to me.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Leibniz quoted in Aarsleff, “The Study and Use of Etymology in Leibniz,” 99n. 39.

⁴⁹ Quotations from Catherine’s letter to Zimmerman and from Pallas’s remarks, in John Pickering, “On the Adoption of a Uniform Orthography for the Indian Languages of North America,” *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 4.1 (January 1818), 321-22. For discussions of this project, see Gray, *New World Babel*, 112-15; Harriet E. Manelis Klein and Herbert S. Klein, “The ‘Russian Collection’ of Amerindian Languages in the Spanish Archives,” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 44.2 (April 1978): 137-44, at 137; Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz, “Quechua for Catherine the Great: José Joaquín Ávalos Chauca’s Quechua Vocabulary (1788),” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 72.2 (April 2006): 193-235, at 196; Henry M. Hoenigswald, “Descent, Perfection and the Comparative Method since Leibniz” in Tullio de Mauro and Lia Formigari, eds., *Leibniz, Humboldt, and the Origins of Comparativism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), 123; Peter Simon Pallas, *Travels through the*

With his nation struggling with an ineffectual confederation of their own state governments in the East and a startlingly effective Indian confederacy in the West, Washington might have ignored a request that seemed little more than a royal whim, but from a mixture of obligation, courtesy, and curiosity, he delegated the task to former associates whose situations would allow them to accomplish the empress's aims. Washington initially turned to George Morgan, a former trader, land speculator, and Indian agent during the Revolution, whose skills as a cultural intermediary had earned him the honorable title *Tamenend* from the Delawares and the distrust and enmity of many frontier settlers. He also approached Thomas Hutchins, the newly appointed Geographer of the United States then in the Ohio Country surveying land ceded at Fort McIntosh under the terms of the Land Ordinance of 1785.⁵⁰ Washington noted the advantages and abilities of each and offered only two suggestions: "extend the vocabulary as far as, with the aid of your friends, you conveniently can," and know that the "greatest possible precision & exactitude will be indispensable in committing the Indian words to paper, by a just orthography."⁵¹ Three months later, when he discovered that Butler had been appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northern District, Washington passed along a similar

Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire, 2d. ed., [1812] (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1970). The Russian empire's imperial-administrative use of ethnography, but not Catherine's linguistic project, is discussed in Han F. Vermeulen, "Origins and Institutionalization of Ethnography and Ethnology in Europe and the USA, 1771-1845" in Vermeulen and Arturo Alvarez Roldán, eds., *Fieldwork and Footnotes: Studies in the History of European Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1995), 43-44.

⁵⁰ Washington sent these requests 20 August 1786. See GW to Thomas Hutchins and GW to George Morgan. See *Papers of GW*, 4: 222. On Morgan, see White, *Middle Ground*, 380-87; and Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 166-68, 209-10. Heckewelder mentions the Delaware nickname Heckewelder, *Narrative*, 150. On Hutchins, see Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 240, 242. For a consideration of the two confederacies side-by-side, see White *Middle Ground*, ch. 10.

⁵¹ Washington sent these requests 20 August 1786. See GW to Thomas Hutchins and GW to George Morgan. See *Papers of GW*, 4: 222. On Morgan, see White, *Middle Ground*, 380-87; and Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 166-68, 209-10. Heckewelder mentions his Delaware nickname in his *Narrative*, 150. On Hutchins, see Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 240, 242. Laura J. Murray, "Vocabularies of Native American Languages: A Literary and Historical Approach to an Elusive Genre," *American Quarterly*, 53 (2001): 590-623, at 591-92, 600, 607, emphasizes that the structure of vocabularies "graphically embody an essentially metaphorical conception of translation in which languages may be switched but never mingled" and simultaneously reflect the "same implied claims of objectivity as the ledger book, the ship's log, or translation tables for codes"; while Sue Ann Prince, ed., *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860*. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 93.4 (2003), 2, compares the Indian vocabulary to Linnean classification, each of which allowed their creators "to organize and compare selected attributes of their objects of study."

request. Having no spare vocabulary to give to Butler, Washington thought it “sufficient” to inform him that “it was no more than to insert English words & the names of things in one column--& the Indian therefor in others on the same line, under the different heads of Delaware, Shawanese, Wiendots, &c.”⁵²

Washington met with mixed results. Hutchins reflected “on the difficulties unavoidably attending to the fixing a Criterion to Systematize a rude Language” and he admitted that he was “overwhelmed...with the business of my department.” He professed that he was “anxiously solicitous... to contribute my Mite to the service of the republick of letters.” He assured the general that he would make the vocabulary “as extensive and perfect as my avocations...allow,” but he provided no vocabularies to Washington.⁵³ Morgan never received the request. Several years later, as he was going through the late Hutchins’s papers, he came across Washington’s letter. Morgan immediately forwarded a copy of the Lords Prayer in Shawnee, and he promised more materials if Washington desired. He could pass along copies of Zeisberger’s Delaware vocabulary and grammar as well as a vocabulary and grammar of the Shawnee that had been composed by Alexander McKee, the British agent at Detroit whose mother and wife were Shawnee (his mother had been a white woman taken captive and adopted). Although McKee advocated Indian opposition to the United States, and his son fought for that cause, Morgan assured Washington that McKee was the man “to whom the best Speakers of the Nation recur for Instruction in all doubtfull Words and Expressions in their own Language.” That he was “a good English scholar” and had “a very fair Hand” only added to the “Certainty and Value of these Performances.” Morgan needed only to retrieve these materials from his son, to whom Morgan had given them when “he began as a cadet in first United States Regiment.”⁵⁴ The ability to communicate reliably was a valuable asset to a young officer on the frontier.

⁵² *Papers of GW.*, 4: 222; Washington to Richard Butler, 27 November 1786, *ibid.*, 398-400.

⁵³ See Hutchins to GW, 8 November 1786, *ibid.*, 343-44.

⁵⁴ See George Morgan to GW, 1 September 1789, *Papers of GW, Presidential Series*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987-), 3: 591-92. On McKee, see White, *Middle Ground*, 402, 455.

Of the men Washington had contacted, Richard Butler provided the most thorough response. The new Indian superintendent admitted that since the work was on behalf of Lafayette and “the August Empress Sovereign of all the Russias,” Butler had been especially eager to oblige. He provided the international project with copies of a Cherokee and Choctaw vocabulary that he copied from Benjamin Hawkins as well as a vocabulary of Delaware that Butler had acquired from John Killbuck, who had been Zeisberger’s crucial partner in maintaining Delaware neutrality through much of the War for Independence, which was “Spelled according to his own Idea of that Idiom.” Killbuck had only recently returned to the Ohio Country after a six year absence. He had postponed joining the mission community at Zeisberger’s recommendation to do what he could to promote Christianity and neutrality during the early part of the revolutionary war, before he lost influence for his unpopular stance. After being educated at the College of New Jersey at the expense of the Continental Congress in 1789, Killbuck converted, took the name William Henry, and lived at Goshen.⁵⁵ When Washington forwarded Butler’s materials to Lafayette, he declared that the portion that Killbuck had provided (a fact Washington left unsaid) was “less copious” than the other materials, so he sent along Zeisberger’s spelling book to fill the deficiency.⁵⁶ Killbuck could not have known that, but he had already learned that the role of cultural intermediary was thankless.

Butler also forwarded a number of materials on Shawnee, for which he relied on his own knowledge of the language.⁵⁷ First was the vocabulary, which provided “the full Sence” of

Hutchins had passed away on April 28, 1789 in Pittsburgh. Heckewelder, passing through on his way to Pettquotting, conducted his funeral according to Anglican rites. See “Abraham Steiner’s Account of his Journey with Johann Heckewelder from Bethlehem to Pettquotting on the Huron River near Lake Erie, and Return. 1789,” in Heckewelder, *Travels*, 242-43.

⁵⁵ Butler to GW, 30 November 1787, enclosure 1, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 5: 456, 458, 460 n.1. On Killbuck, see Olmstead, *Blackcoats among the Delaware*, 221-23; White, *Middle Ground*, 400.

⁵⁶ Washington to Lafayette, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 6: 30.

⁵⁷ In the journal he kept as commissioner preceding and during the negotiations at Fort Finney, Butler refers several times to speaking Shawnee. See “Journal of General Butler,” *Olden Time* 2.10 (Oct. 1847): 433-64, 481-525, 529-31, at 451, 488, 490. It was not the first time he had provided a vocabulary to the curious. While in Philadelphia in 1782 he had scribbled a Shawnee vocabulary, on the reverse of proceedings of Benedict Arnold’s court martial, for Pierre Eugene Du Simitiere, the polymath artist and

Shawnee, and for many words, was “as nearly literal as possible *adhering to the Idiom.*” But he admitted that “to reduce or combine Single words to form of...this kind of Vocabulary is nearly impossible.” He followed this with a dialogue illustrating the differences in the Shawnees’ “*council* or business language,” which Butler found “Strong & impressive—full of Rhetorical flowers and fine Allegory,” and the language they used for their “Dialogue & common conversation,” which was “plain, to the point, and simple in the mode of expression.” Butler apologized that he could not provide more; he had been ailing with a broken leg and there were “so few of our people or Uropeans among the Indian tribes who have perseverance and understand a Sufficiency of their own tongue to be able to Translate the Indian into it.”⁵⁸ Washington, however, was surprised that Butler could “compleat a work of such difficulty and magnitude” in the brief year that elapsed between his request and the superintendent’s response.⁵⁹

Born in Ireland, where the native tongue had been prohibited and the English one imposed, Butler may have been particularly sensitive to issues of language and history. He envisioned a remarkable future for the Ohio Valley, where the “industrious and broken hearted farmer” could “lay down his burthen and find rest on these peaceful and plenteous plains” and “cultivate the arts and sciences to such perfection as to become rivals not only of Athens and Rome, but be the patterns of mankind throughout the globe for learning, piety and virtue.” This could not be rushed, and he opposed what he saw as Hutchins’s aggressive and high-handed surveying methods. Butler possessed a wealth of experience from years of trading, military, and diplomatic interaction with the Shawnees and other western nations, and he had been one of the U.S. commissioners at each of the three conquest treaties. He possessed definite ideas on what was needed to “manage these people”: regular posts, properly regulated trade, halting British

founder of the first American Museum. [Richard Butler], “No. 11/ Vocabulary/ of the Shawano/ Tongue-- 1781,” Scraps No. 134, Pierre Eugene Du Simitiere Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia.

⁵⁸ Richard Butler to GW, 30 November 1787, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 5: 464 and note.

⁵⁹ GW to Butler, 10 January 1788, in *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 6: 26-27.

interference.⁶⁰ He advocated firmness. When a Shawnee speaker presented a belt of black wampum in the days leading up to the council at the mouth of the Great Miami, Butler became so enraged that he “dashed it on the table” and declared that “this country belongs to the United States—their blood hath defended it, and,” he prophesied, “will forever protect it.”⁶¹

Perhaps philosophical about how the Indians had come to this pass, Butler added, in addition to the vocabulary and dialogue, an extensive commentary on the historical implications of his studies. As a rule, Butler discounted their traditions regarding their ancient past, which he thought “both poor & Shallow,” but in this case they seemed to contain a hint of truth. It suggested the Shawnees were originally from an island. The historical record confirmed that they previously resided further south. Butler concluded, “they were originally from the Island of Cuba,” and fled only in response to “the severity of the Spanish settlers there.” However, their languages suggested an original home elsewhere. Like “the Oriental languages,” the “languages of our modern Indians,” demanded speakers “to go deep into the Spirit of any of these languages in order to obtain a Sufficient knowledge of the Strength of expression & a proper Idea of the Sence attending both Single and compound words to come at or gain that point.” He sent the Shawnee vocabulary to Charles Nisbet, president of Dickinson College, whom Butler thought qualified “judge of the Oriental and other languages.”⁶²

The “great extent westward which this language [Shawnee] is *partly understood* & is still useful in traveling,” suggested to Butler that “many of our western tribes are from the same, or other Islands in the Mexican Gulph & that quarter of the world.” However, these languages, which he supposed linked from “the Lakes Southward to the sea,” differed “very considerably

⁶⁰ “Journal of Richard Butler,” 433, 445-46, 502. On Butler’s Irish birth and ancestry, see Wiley Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 30, 148.

⁶¹ “Journal of Richard Butler,” 490, 516, 522-24. On this period as the peak of western Indian unity, see *White Middle Ground*, 436-43.

⁶² Butler to Washington, 30 November 1787, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 5: 464. This was part of a prefatory note that Butler had prepared, but had excised before he sent the materials to Washington. For the eighteenth-century designation of “Orient” to the region containing biblical lands, and possibly India, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 4.

from those nations which inhabit Northward and Eastward to the Sea.” This pointed inescapably to one conclusion: “this *certain* difference of people has been the cause of the latter, as well as the former wars which have once depopulated the Ohio & other parts of the Western Country of its ancient inhabitants.” Butler considered these things in light of the prevalence of the Ohio Country’s “Fortifications” and other “traces of antiquity.” Drawing on two centuries of scholarship, beginning with Joseph de Acosta and the Englishmen Edward Brerewood and Samuel Purchas, Butler concluded, with near consensus behind him, that the Iroquois “may be of Tarter origin or descent I think not improbable.”⁶³ Pointing to Cadwallader Colden’s history of the Five Nations, Butler noted that “their language differs exceedingly from all the Southern Indians” and that, since the Iroquois “were a very warlike people, and Conquerors of all the Indian Nations” of the Ohio Valley, they may have driven off the region’s original inhabitants, who in turn went on to form the Mexican empire. Butler’s version of the ancient Ohio Valley stressed the diversity among Indian origins, explained the mysterious mounds, only then becoming better known, and made the Shawnees recent arrivals who had barely settled the Ohio Valley before U.S. citizens and with a claim that was no more just.

Washington also received unsolicited contributions for Catherine’s project. Even as he was preparing for an upcoming convention of delegates from the several states in Philadelphia, James Madison, who had heard Washington discuss Catherine’s plan, went out of his way to pass along vocabularies of Cherokee and Choctaw, which Benjamin Hawkins had made while he had been serving as a U.S. commissioner to treat with the southern nations in 1785.⁶⁴ Another

⁶³ Butler to Washington, 30 November 1787, *ibid.*, 5: 456-64. See Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada which are dependent on the Province of New-York, and are a barrier between the English and the French in that part of the world*, 2 vols [1747] (New York: Allerton, 1922). On the development of this tradition, from Joseph de Acosta’s *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (Sevilla, 1590), which was translated into English by Edward Grimston in 1604, to Edward Brerewood’s *Enquiries Touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions Through the Chief Parts of the World* (London, 1614) and Samuel Purchas’s *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrims* (1625). Brerewood, however, considered the Tartars themselves to be the Lost Tribes. See Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492-1729* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 48-54, 114-17, 126.

⁶⁴ James Madison to Washington, 18 March 1787, in *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 5: 92.

unrequested contribution came from the pen of Jonathan Edwards, son of the famed theologian. Edwards sent him a recent treatise that he had written on the Mahican language, which had been published by Connecticut Society of Arts and Sciences after he presented it in October 1787.⁶⁵ In its explanation of the grammatical structure of Indian languages and in its comparative linguistic knowledge (among Indian languages and between Indian languages and those of Europe and the Near East), it was by far the most sophisticated response that the general received.

Edwards possessed a long familiarity with the “Muhhekaneew” language, then usually presented in its corrupted Anglicization “Mohegan.”⁶⁶ When young Jonathan was six years of age, his father took a position as minister to Stockbridge, one of the last of the New England “Praying Towns,” under the patronage of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. While the younger Edwards resided there, according to his own memory, the community was composed of about 12 white families and about 150 Indian families of mainly Mahican, Houstatonic, and Wappinger descent.⁶⁷ Since his father’s primary duty was to act as missionary to these Mahicans, young Jonathan lived nearer to Mahicans than to the community’s white people and, he remembered, “their boys were my daily school-mates and play-fellows.” Edwards “seldom heard any language spoken, beside the Indian.” He acquired “a great facility” in speaking it and it “became more familiar” to him than his “mother tongue.” He “knew the names of some things in Indian,” which he did not know in English; he acquired “the true pronunciation” of the language, which “as they said, never had been acquired before by any

⁶⁵ Edwards’s letter to Washington is no longer extant, but Washington’s response can be found in Washington to Edwards, 28 August 1788, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 6: 479-80. On the date JE presented this treatise, see Jonathan Edwards, *Observations on the Language of the Muhhekaneew Indians* (New Haven, 1788), [1]. JE Jr’s biographer, Robert Ferm, relates a story that suggests while JE Jr. might have been eager to solicit Washington’s (and Europe’s) literary esteem, he was not awestruck by the general. On one occasion, Washington attended services at White Haven on a day that Edwards’s had previously decided he would address his sermon to the congregation’s children. He did not alter his plan. See Robert L. Ferm, *A Colonial Pastor: Jonathan Edwards the Younger* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmann, 1976), 85.

⁶⁶ Although Edwards was undoubtedly correct that people confused “Mohegan” and “Mahican” in his day, as they are often confused today, current linguistic classification considers them distinct languages. See “Consensus Classification of the Native Languages of North America,” 5.

⁶⁷ Rachel Wheeler, “Hendrick Aupaumut: Christian-Mahican Prophet,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25 (2005): 187-220, at 193.

Anglo-American”; and he half-admitted, half-boasted, “even all my thoughts ran in Indian.”⁶⁸ Edwards insisted that his “skill in their language I have in a good measure retained to this day,” but he sent a draft of his treatise to Captain Yoghum, “a principal Indian of the tribe, who is well versed in his own language, and tolerably informed concerning the English,” nonetheless.⁶⁹

Despite his father’s wishes, Edwards had no desire to put his linguistic proficiency to use as a missionary.⁷⁰ In 1767, with a degree in divinity from the College of New Jersey, Edwards was offered his father’s old position in Stockbridge at a crucial time. With the Mahicans “in a deplorable state” and their ostensible missionary wanting nothing more than to preach solely to the town’s burgeoning white population, the leaders of the town turned to Jonathan Edwards Jr, whom they knew possessed “their Language Perfectly” and still retained “a Great Interest in the Indians Affections.” As they told Samuel Hopkins, it was “not Long since” that the Indians had “Mentioned they had a Great Desire for him & asked why they might not have him for their Minister.” Samuel Brown thought that he was “Better Qualified for a missionary for our Indians than any man whatsoever.” It seemed to be unanimous; only Edwards himself was opposed. Edwards thought that his education and connections had opened “a prospect of greater

⁶⁸ JE, *Observations*, [3]. On Edwards’s time at Stockbridge, where he wrote his greatest theological works (*Freedom of the Will* and *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*, published then, and *The End for which God Created the World* and *The Nature of True Virtue*, published posthumously), see Kenneth Pieter Minkema, “The Edwardses: A Ministerial Family in Eighteenth-Century New England” (Ph. D. Diss., University of Connecticut, 1988), 357-59; Rachel Wheeler, “Lessons from Stockbridge: Jonathan Edwards and the Stockbridge Indians,” in Harry S. Stout, ed., *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005). Edwards was selected as missionary over Ezra Stiles despite being thought too severe in religion and too old to learn the Mahican language. See Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 90-94.

⁶⁹ Edwards, *Observations*, [3].

⁷⁰ In 1755, when his son was only ten, the senior Edwards sent him to Ohnoquaga with the young missionary Gideon Hawley to learn the Mohawk language, but the experience was cut short by the war with France; they stayed only six months. See Minkema, “The Edwardses,” 399. The father never learned Mahican. For the extent of his tenure at Stockbridge he relied on John Wauwaumpequunaunt as his translator and interpreter. See Frazier, *Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 93-94. He offered no comment on David Brainerd’s considerable linguistic deficiencies in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, edited by Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, John E. Smith, gen. ed., vol. 7 (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985).

usefulness” than he could reach if he settled at the frontier town.⁷¹ Instead, Edwards took a position at the White Haven church in New Haven, where he was active as a theological writer and eventually was named president of the new Union College in Schenectady, New York. In his last years he served as corresponding secretary to the Connecticut Missionary Society, but this association was more focused on frontier whites than Indian communities and only looked west after the Treaty of Greenville finally ended overt hostilities in the Ohio Country in 1795.⁷²

Edwards studied Mahican not as a missionary, but as a man of letters, and possibly specifically to contribute to Washington’s efforts to compile linguistic information.⁷³ He

⁷¹ James Wilson et al. to Samuel Hopkins, 27 March 1767; Samuel Brown to Andrew Eliot, 29 March 1767; Samuel Hopkins to Andrew Eliot, 30 March 1767; Stephen West to Andrew Eliot, 17 October 1767, Miscellaneous Bound MSS, Massachusetts Historical Society. See Minkema, “The Edwardses,” p. 415.

⁷² Of the nine missionaries that the General Association of the State of Connecticut sponsored in its first year, only one, Samuel Eells, appears to have spent any considerable time in Indian communities, but he apparently received no education on the subject from Edwards. Eells mistakenly informed his board that he visited the “Mohawk Tribe” of New Stockbridge, in an effort to repair a rift in the community that had emerged between supporters of the Mohegan preacher Samson Occom and the white preacher John Sergeant Jr. See Rev. Samuel Eells to Revd. Ezra Stiles et al., Committee of the General Association of the State of Connecticut, 1793, Missionary Society of Connecticut Papers, reel 4, no. 77. See also *A narrative of the missions to the new settlements according to the appointment of the General Association of the State of Connecticut*, published in New Haven in 1794, 1795, 1799, 1800. The Connecticut missionary societies published similar reports in 1795, 1799, and 1800. On the CMS looking to missionize to the western Indians, see John Sergeant to [unknown], 27 June 179[8?], Missionary Society of Connecticut Papers, 1759-1948, Yale Divinity School Library, reel 9, no. 237. On this society’s missionary work and JE’s role in it, see Minkema, “The Edwardses,” 497-502; Ferm, *Colonial Pastor*, 91-93.

⁷³ Kenneth Minkema, “The Edwardses,” 496-97, has suggested that one must understand JE’s *Observations* within the context of his interest in the missionary effort, comparing this tract to the work of John Eliot. This is unlikely. Edwards published no known scriptural translations into the Mahican language; he declined a missionary position that was both prominent and among men he ostensibly would have called his former friends; and the later missionary effort he helped to organize did not focus on Indian missionizing at all. Further, Edwards did not seem to consider the Indians as particularly interesting “heathen.” In those instances when he focused on “heathen” at all, he lavished his attention on classical Greece and Rome. See Edwards, “The Belief of Christianity Necessary to Political Prosperity” and “The Salvation of the Heathen,” in Tryon Edwards, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, D. D. Late President of Union College. With a Memoir of his Life and Character* [1842] (New York: Garland, 1987), 2: 192-201, 465-66. No relevant letters on *Observations* from Edwards are extant. He presented it to the Connecticut Society of Arts and Sciences in October 1787, more than a year after Washington had sent out his initial requests. He may have presented “Observations” to the CSAS to have its publication supported by the society. A published tract was sure to appear more authoritative, to Washington and potentially to European savants, than one in manuscript. Edwards may or may not have continued his linguistic studies after he sent his tract to Washington. One author recorded that Edwards sent him in a letter in 1788, while he was still “prosecuting his inquiries.” See “Language of the Moheagans,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 9 (1804), 93. It is possible that he was mistaken by a year or that Edwards continued his studies after his *Observations* were published. The latter seems likely since Haughton passed along some information on the Choctaw language, which was unmentioned in *Observations*. In 1793 Ezra Stiles, a fellow board member of the Connecticut Missionary Society,

esteemed Washington and, desiring a literary reputation, the promise of royal readership must have been enticing.⁷⁴ Edwards essayed Mahican and how that language was similar to and different from other languages of the new and old world, which he knew had not yet been well done. In his widely read history of the Iroquois, Colden had lamented that he had “not met with any Person who understands their Language, and also knows any Thing of Grammar, or of the learned Languages.”⁷⁵ Edwards stressed the desirability “that those who are informed, would communicate to the public what information they may possess” and so facilitate “a comparison of the languages of the North-American Indians, with the languages of Asia.”⁷⁶

Edwards was quick to correct what he saw as common misconceptions about the language. His father had thought that Indian languages were “barbarous languages... exceedingly barren, and very unfit to express moral and divine things,” but the younger Edwards provided the Mahican equivalent for religion (*peyuhtommauwukon*), among other abstractions. Edwards admitted some “peculiarities” in which the language differed “from all languages which have ever yet come to the knowledge of the learned world,” particularly involving their verbs and pronouns. He also thought that they lacked independent parts of speech exactly corresponding to those found in other tongues (he thought they had no adjectives and few prepositions), but he stressed that they suffered “no inconvenience” from this in their own language, though it affected the way Indians spoke English.⁷⁷

The thrust of Edwards’s essay, however, dealt with how certain grammatical features of Mahican resembled those found in other languages. He emphasized that Mahican and other languages of New England (including that found in John Eliot’s Massachusetts Bible),

introduced Edwards to seven Indians from the Mississippi who were visiting eastern cities. These assured the two that rumors of “Welsh” Indians in the area were false. Edwards determined, to his satisfaction, that they spoke a language related to that of the Mahicans. See Edmund S. Morgan, *The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 437.

⁷⁴ Minkema, “The Edwardses,” 438-40, 477-78; Ferm, *Colonial Pastor*, 90.

⁷⁵ Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, xxxv.

⁷⁶ Edwards, *Observations*, 17.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *Observations*, 10-11, 13-16.

Pennsylvania, and the Ohio Country, were “mere dialects of the same original language.”⁷⁸ He was hesitant to “hazard any particular critical remarks” on the Mohawk, since he only lived among them for a year of his childhood, but after examining a Mohawk translation of the Lords Prayer, Edwards concluded that while the words of the Mohawks and Mahicans showed no more evidence of shared relation “than there is of a derivation of either of them from the English...yet their structure is in some respects analogous, particularly in the use of prefixes and suffixes.”⁷⁹

Even more startling, in the use of these affixes “the structure of the language coincides with that of the Hebrew” and that in that particular, Hebrew “differs from all the languages of Europe, ancient or modern.” He admitted that the grammatical mechanisms were not identical, since Hebrew used only suffixes. However, Edwards pointed to other similarities as well. In Mahican, Mohawk, and Hebrew, as speakers added these affixes while “increasing” the word, they altered vowel sounds for the sake of euphony. Further, Edwards pointed to the “remarkable analogy between some words in the Mohegan language and the correspondent word in the Hebrew,” particularly in those very affixes and in pronouns. For instance, Edwards pointed to words for “we,” which were *Neaunuh* in Mahican and *nachnu* or *anachnu* in Hebrew. While the Hebrew used *ni* as a suffix for “me,” the Mahican used *n* or *ne* as the first-person prefix. Edwards had studied Hebrew in college, but he was no Hebrew scholar. It was for “the judgment of the learned” to decide whether “the North American Indians are of Hebrew, or at least Asiatick extraction.” He suggested, however, that anyone making a vocabulary should pay particular attention to affixes and pronouns, especially since in asking questions of speakers of another language, it is difficult to make clear whether one is asking, for instance, for the words for “my

⁷⁸ Edwards, *Observations*, 8. Edwards mistakenly included Winnebago, a Siouan language, in the Mohegan group. It was a mistake that originated with Lahontan. See Edwards, *Observations*, 5; Louis Armand de Lom d’Arce, Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North-America, Containing an account of the several nations of that vast continent...* (London, 1703), 231.

⁷⁹ Edwards, *Observations*, [4], 8-10. Lyle Campbell, *American Indian Languages: The Historical Languages of Native America* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 30, suggests that comparative linguistics in the Americas began with Jonathan Edwards, who began his work before Sir William Jones had published his famous comparison of Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit. Ives Goddard, “The Description of the Native Languages of North America Before Boas,” in Goddard, ed., *Languages*, 23, has said that Edwards published the most significant work on the grammar of an Indian language of the eighteenth century.

hand” or “his hand.” Still, it was in these kinds of questions that would decide “not only from what quarter of the world, but from what particular nations, these Indians are derived.”⁸⁰

Edwards’s views differed from Butler’s. While the latter suggested possible links between Hebrew and the languages of the Shawnees and related eastern Indians, a group possessing languages completely distinct from the Iroquois, he did not think grammatical information would be of much use in deciding the question. He had contemplated making a Shawnee grammar, but concluded that it would take too long and go too “deep into A matter which does not promise to give much light into the Origin or Ancient history” of the Indians.⁸¹ Edwards, on the other hand, seized on common grammatical structure to suggest Mohawks and Mahicans shared an ancestor with each other and with Hebrews.

Each drew on a rich tradition, prominent since the sixteenth century, that the inhabitants of the Americas were the “Lost Tribes of Israel,” now found. Among American puritans alone, this view was held by John Eliot and Roger Williams.⁸² James Adair, a Scot engaged in the backcountry trade with the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, had published the most recent, and lengthiest, defense of this position the year before the colonies declared their independence.⁸³ As one of his twenty-three arguments, Adair stressed that the “*Indian language, and dialects, appear to have the very idiom and genius of the Hebrew.*

⁸⁰ Edwards, *Observations*, 12, 16-17. Edwards elsewhere demonstrated a willingness to think of ethnology within Mosaic bounds. He refuted one argument in favor of slavery by denying that all slaves were descended from Ham. He did not deny the existence of Ham or his descendants. See Edwards to Ebenezer Baldwin, [17 January 1774], Jonathan Edwards Collection, General MSS 151, Series V. Edwards family Correspondence, Folder 1413.

⁸¹ Richard Butler to GW, 30 November 1787, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 5: 464 and note.

⁸² Lynn Glaser, *Indians or Jews? An Introduction to a Reprint of Manasseh ben Israel’s The Hope of Israel* (Gilroy, Calif.: Roy V. Boswell, 1973), 34, 41-42. *Ibid.*, 51, notes Edwards’s role in sustaining this theory.

⁸³ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, edited by Kathryn E. Holland Braund (1775; Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005). Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians*, 9, 33-40, 60, 128-34, discusses the genealogy of the theory, and *ibid.*, 114-15, notes that the Tartar origin theory was not incompatible with it. For an example, see Nicholas von Zinzendorf and Daniel Gookin believed precisely this. See [Nicholas von Zinzendorf], “Zinzendorf’s Observations concerning the Savages in Canada.—1742. (Copy of an old Translation preserved in the Archives in Bethlehem)” in Reichel, ed., *Memorials of the Moravian Church*, 18-19; Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England; of their several Nations, Numbers, Customs, Manners, Religion and Government, before the English planted There* (Boston, 1792), 4-6.

Their words and sentences are expressive, concise, emphatical, sonorous, and bold.”⁸⁴ Edwards never cited Adair, but he echoed several of his arguments, though they differed in evidence, since Adair focused on Cherokee.⁸⁵ To Adair, the complexity and structure of the Indians’ language, as well as their preservation of ostensible Hebrew beliefs and rites, suggested that “they were not in a savage state, when they first separated, and variegated their dialects, with so much religious care, and exact art.” They were fallen, but “though in a great measure they may have lost their primitive language, not one of them expresses himself by the natural cries of brute animals.”⁸⁶

The idea of degeneration possessed powerful explanatory power for orthodox intellectuals: contemporary savagery (and human difference more broadly) was the result of peoples falling away from the laws God had established in the ancient past.⁸⁷ To the younger Edwards, true virtue could not exist outside of Christianity: “Nor does it appear, that ever any of the heathen had just ideas of virtue or true moral goodness, as existing in men.”⁸⁸ Edwards, author of the most sophisticated published treatise on an Indian language in this period, who grew up speaking (and if we are to believe his own testimony, thinking in) the Mahican language, associated it in his own mind with sin. In the diary he kept for self-examination between his

⁸⁴ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 93.

⁸⁵ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 95-97, 102-03, 117-122; Edwards, *Observations*, 16.

⁸⁶ Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 119.

⁸⁷ On the idea of degeneration, see Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* [1959] (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 129-32; Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), ch. 7. For a concise view of this how whites applied this view to Indians, see Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to Present* [1978] (New York: Vintage, 1979), 36-38. Ives Goddard and Bruce Trigger point to Lafitau as the eighteenth century’s main proponent of the idea of degeneration. See Wilcomb E. Washburn and Bruce G. Trigger, “Native Peoples in Euro-American Historiography” in Trigger and Washburn, eds., *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, 72. Ironically, he rejected that the idea that Indian languages shared any similarities with Hebrew, then or ever. See Joseph Francois Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians compared to the Customs of Primitive Times* [1724], edited by William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, vol. 2 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977), 255.

⁸⁸ Jonathan Edwards, “The Salvation of the Heathen,” *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 466. Edwards’s own father also thought savagery was the result of degeneration. As he explained to Mohawk listeners in 1751, eschewing the Babel story and conveying only that “when man sinned against God, he lost his holiness, ...and his mind was full of darkness. But the consequence was that the world of mankind sank down more and more into darkness, and most of the nations of the world by degrees quite lost the knowledge of the true God.” Jonathan Edwards, “To the Mohawks at the Treaty, August 16, 1751” in Wilson H. Kimnach et al., eds., *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 105.

junior and senior years at college, he repeatedly recorded his moral failures in Mahican words: “Oh! I have again & again fallen into Sin, this week *machy annannahkaw*, O when shall I be free from this body of sin and death!”⁸⁹ Edwards’s *Observations* offer scientific proof for the Indians’ Hebrew descent and for the “barbarism” into which Indians had fallen, which justified civilized whites’ greater claim to the land at the same time it intensified the imperative to convert and civilize the Indians.⁹⁰ Washington also understood Butler’s narrative in terms of degenerationist ideas. He congratulated Butler for throwing light upon “the original history of this Country” and its previous habitation by “a race of people more ingenious, at least, if not more civilized than those who at present dwell there.”⁹¹

Washington had asked his contributors to send only a vocabulary, the raw material of linguistic study, from which European savants could draw conclusions regarding the American peoples and past that white Americans could then consume as scientific knowledge.⁹² Perhaps recognizing that such a relationship smacked of the mercantilism that American revolutionaries had overthrown, both Butler and Edwards instead offered lengthy conclusions (insightful and unfounded) about linguistic affinities among Indian nations and between Indian nations and the nations of Asia. Both accounts took up the question of Indian origins only to obliquely address

⁸⁹ Jonathan Edwards, “Diary / 1764 May-December,” Jonathan Edwards Collection, General MSS 151, Series IV Edwards Family Writings, Folder 1357. The quote is taken from the entry for September 22. See also entries for May 25 and July 22. Ives Goddard has translated *machy anetauhawwonqken wonk anannakkhun* as “bad thought and deed.” See Minkema, “The Edwardses,” 406.

⁹⁰ William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 38, suggests that not only did Cotton Mather think that the Indians might be the Lost Tribes but also that the imperative to convert the Indians/Jews lent a millennial inflection to Protestant missionary work in the early nineteenth century.

⁹¹ Washington to Butler, 10 January 1788, *Papers of GW, Confederation Series*, 6: 26-27. The “connection” between northwestern North America and northeastern Asia had been suspected since Acosta and verified by Captain Cook.

⁹² For metropolitans’ attempts, and failures, to impose these kinds of relationships, see Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For an interpretation of U.S. natural history in the early republic that emphasizes its continuity with the colonial era, see Kariann Yokota, “‘To pursue the stream to its fountain’: Race, Inequality, and the Post-Colonial Exchange across the Atlantic,” *Explorations in Early American Culture*, 5 (2001): 173-229.

the North American present in terms that ignored common racial distinctions.⁹³ Butler denied that Indians descended from a single nation, but he linked all American natives with nations of Asia, and he assigned particular importance to linguistic divisions, suggesting that these were the source of past conflicts in North America. Edwards offered demonstrations of the grammatical similarities between Mahican, Mohawk, and Hebrew. In doing so, Edwards implied the common descent of all Indians, only to further imply that these were descended from the Lost Tribes.

The conclusions that Washington drew were far more profound. While Washington had only undertaken the task to oblige Lafayette and the Russian empress, Butler's and Edwards's accounts of Indian languages revealed to him the lessons of the past and hinted at the possibilities of the future. Although Lafayette saw "very little purpose" in Catherine's project, Washington discerned major benefits to human knowledge and human relations.⁹⁴ Thanking Edwards for his work, Washington used the language of "salvage ethnology" that was prominent already in the late eighteenth century. He regretted that "so many Tribes of the American Aborigines should have become almost or entirely extinct, without leaving such vestiges, as that the genius & idiom of their Languages might be traced." That savagery should pass away in the face of civilization was proper, but philosophers had yet to extract from the myriad Indian tongues the necessary materials for a natural history of man. As he told Edwards, "from such sources, the descent or kindred of nations, whose origins are lost in remote antiquity or illiterate darkness, might be more rationally investigated, than in any other mode."⁹⁵ Even more, he told Lafayette, Washington "heartily wish[ed]" Catherine's universal dictionary success because to "know the

⁹³ This distinction, equating peoples with continental land masses, originated with Linnaeus and was confirmed by Blumenbach. For a concise and insightful presentation of Enlightenment classifications of peoples, see Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1996): 247-64.

⁹⁴ Lafayette to Franklin, 10 February 1786, Papers of Benjamin Franklin.

⁹⁵ Washington to Jonathan Edwards [Jr.], 28 August 1788, *Papers of GW*, 6: 480. Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* [1981] (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), has described "salvage ethnology" as a "unique blend of scientific interest, wistfulness, and guilt" that lent urgency to the Victorian era's collection of Indian materials. Gray, *New World Babel*, 113-14, has stressed that this motivation figured prominently in the etymological projects even of the late eighteenth century.

affinity of tongues, seems to be one step towards promoting the affinity of nations.” Although he feared being considered “visionary and chimerical,” Washington hoped that the project of the “great Potentate of the North” might “lay the foundation for that assimilation of language, which, producing assimilation of manners and interests, should one day remove many of the causes of hostility from amongst mankind.”⁹⁶

Peace and assimilation – in the Ohio Country and on the U.S. frontier more broadly – were precisely the goals of U.S. “expansion with honor,” the euphemism under which future-President Washington sought to conduct U.S. Indian policy, after Indian warfare along the northern and southern frontiers pressured the United States into abandoning the conquest policy. In the words of Henry Knox, who as Washington’s Secretary of War was responsible for directing Indian affairs, “Policy, humanity, and Justice” demanded fair treatment of the Indians. This required acknowledging the Indians’ possessory right to the soil, taking only that land that was voluntarily ceded, and, in return, offering them the benefits of education. Knox pondered a future historian looking back on a United States that had, “instead of exterminating a part of the human race by our modes of population...persevered through all difficulties and at last imparted our Knowledge of cultivation, and the arts to the Aborigines of the Country.” For Knox, this required, mainly, instilling “a love for exclusive property.” According to Timothy Pickering, U.S. commissioner to the Iroquois and the western nations, to whom Washington offered the northern superintendency, one thing more was needed: “The English language only to be taught in the Schools. The Indian tongue is the great obstacle to the civilization of the Indians. The sooner it is removed the better.”⁹⁷ The “assimilation” of language became an important part of

⁹⁶ Washington to Lafayette, 10 January 1788, *ibid.*, 6: 30. Edward Gray, *New World Babel*, 113 has suggested that this reflected Washington’s hopes for a “philosophical or perfect language.” There is nothing to support this. Washington expected civilization to bring the English language and he hoped not for peace not abstractly, but for the hostilities that threatened to engulf the Ohio Country at that very moment.

⁹⁷ Henry Knox to GW, 7 July 1789, *Papers of GW, Presidential Series*, pp. 138-39; [Timothy Pickering], “A Plan for introducing among the Five Nations (to wit, the Senekas – Onondagas – Cayugas – Oneidas & Tuscaroras who live within the territory of the United States and the Stockbridge Indians, -- the most useful arts of civil life,” Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. This document is undated,

U.S. Indian policy in the nineteenth century, as countless officials and ethnologists emphasized the importance of the Indians learning English. Peace had to be achieved more immediately.

* * *

White stereotypes held that “ideas of union and submission” were inimical to the savage state; yet the western Indians established an effective confederacy in the years following the Treaty of Paris (1783).⁹⁸ The western confederacy twice defeated American armies, the first one led by Josiah Harmar in 1790, the second one by the Arthur St. Clair the following year. Butler met his end while serving as St. Clair’s second-in-command; his heart was eaten, as befitted a respected warrior, and his scalp sent to the Mohawk chief and advocate of Iroquois-directed Indian unity and British alliance, Joseph Brant.⁹⁹ These losses threatened the very credibility of the new federal government, whose assertions of control over Indian lands were disproven by the twice victorious western confederacy, and whose assertions of control over the country’s Indian affairs were being questioned by New York and other states. These defeats threatened the Moravian missions as well. The Brethren were pacifists, but were partisans too, whose time in the colonies and experiences in the revolution had made them sympathetic to the United States and to its avowed hopes of “civilizing” the Indians. The decimation of St. Clair’s army jeopardized that. In Zeisberger’s words: “We had hoped that not the whole army was beaten, but

but it is with the materials for March 1792. On Pickering and his views on Indian “civilization,” see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* [1969] (New York: Vintage, 1972), 218-20. Reginald Horsman, “The Indian Policy of an ‘Empire for Liberty’” Frederick E. Hoxie et al., eds., *Native Americans in the Early Republic*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 45, emphasizes that this was essentially a return to the policies attempted by Britain in the years following the Seven Years War, with the substantial addition that the government had a responsibility to civilize the Indians, which in turn became its own justification for expansion. For a discussion of the era’s Indian policy that incorporates ethnohistorical scholarship to present how such policies were received, responded to, and influenced by natives, see Green, “Expansion of European Colonization to the Mississippi Valley,” 461-98; and Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 223-35.

⁹⁸ Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, 14 September 1788, in William Henry Smith, ed., *The St. Clair Papers: The Life and Public Services of Arthur St. Clair; Soldier of the Revolutionary War, President of the Continental Congress, and Governor of the North-Western Territory, with his Correspondence and Other Papers*, (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1882), 2: 89.

⁹⁹ For the postmortem travels of Butler’s heart, see Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War*, 188; for those of his scalp, see Kelsay Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 457.

only a part thereof, but it becomes plain that...all has been lost.”¹⁰⁰ After these humiliations, the federal government sought renewed negotiations. These would highlight the new government’s more just policies to the western confederates and its ability to stabilize the frontier to its own skeptical citizens. Even if they did not result in acceptable terms, negotiations would at least provide Anthony Wayne the necessary time to assemble and train a new army.¹⁰¹

To make peaceful overtures more convincing, the U.S. sought intermediaries who would instill more confidence than ordinary officials, by virtue of their own or their group’s reputation, or because they could communicate with the western Indians in one of their languages. One observer to negotiations at Detroit in 1793 recorded an Indian speaker demanding that a U.S. commissioner, who had “so much Rascality” about him use his own language rather than an Indian since, “your colour bespeakes deception and your Tongue a Ly.”¹⁰²

White men, even missionaries familiar with native languages and able and willing to convey their sentiments in those idioms, could not always gain the confidence of native listeners. Pickering, whose previous work as an Indian commissioner had aimed primarily at preventing Senecas, Oneidas, and others from joining Brant’s Mohawks in alliance with the western confederacy, had experienced this too: “Indians have been so often deceived by white people, that *white man* is, among many of them, but another name for *liar*.” Color may have indicated more essential difference for nativist Indians and white settlers, than for missionaries for whom the distinction of Christian or heathen trumped that between white and red, or for educated white

¹⁰⁰ Zeisberger, *Diary 3*: 228-29. Reaching generalizations about the relationship of Moravians to British and later U.S. expansion is treacherous. As Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 180 has observed: “It is possible to regard the Moravians either as the shock troops of empire, or as a buffering force that offered the Indians of the upper valley important adaptive skills and values.” Similarly, Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 84-85, notes that Zeisberger and Heckewelder were noncombatants, but that they were still partisans of the U.S. in the war, giving military advice on how to best subdue Indian populations. They were recognized as such by U.S. officers and by nativist leaders, who sought to capture missionaries and disrupt and destroy mission towns.

¹⁰¹ See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ch. 10; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, ch. 6; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 2006), ch. 8.

¹⁰² John Parrish Journals, William H. Clements Library, University of Michigan, journal 2, 6-7.

men whose reading had led them to consider savagery, if not color itself, as but a passing stage to be succeeded by civilization.¹⁰³ Although this offended Pickering, who was “not indifferent to a good name, even among Indians,” he made obtaining the services of a trustworthy and influential Indian to negotiate with the western confederacy a priority.

U.S. officials had originally hoped to enlist the services of a weighty Iroquois. They considered Joseph Brant, Cornplanter, and the Oneida chief Peter, “one of the most eloquent men among the Six Nations,” who was both linguistically skilled and devout. In the previous years he had assisted the missionary Samuel Kirkland in translating the gospel of Mark and a selection of Psalms into the Oneida language, although Kirkland had been initially skeptical that their grammar was “reduceable to rule.”¹⁰⁴ While negotiating with the Iroquois at Newtown Point, however, Pickering received the unexpected offer of services from one of his interpreters, Hendrick Aupaumut, a Mahican sachem, like the younger Jonathan Edwards raised in Stockbridge and likely baptized and preached to by his father.¹⁰⁵ With his proposal, Aupaumut presented Pickering several references that attested to his character and to his suitability and skill as a mediator. Kirkland advised Knox that “the Mahicans “had formerly more influence with the Miamies, Shawanese, Delawares and Chippiwias than all the five nations” and he assured the secretary that Aupaumut, who was “little inferior to Cornplanter,” would be an excellent mediator

¹⁰³ For Pickering’s comments, see Pickering to Washington, 21 March 1792, in Charles W. Upham [Octavius Pickering], *The Life of Timothy Pickering* (Boston, 1783), 3: 33. On Indian views of race, see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, pp. xiii, 27, 30; Nancy Shoemaker, “How Indians Got to Be Red,” *American Historical Review* 102:3 (June 1997): 625-44.

¹⁰⁴ On considering Peter as a mediator, see Henry Knox to Samuel Kirkland and Henry Knox to Timothy Pickering, both dated 11 May 1791, TPP, 61: 202-03, 204-05. For the description of Peter’s eloquence and for the role of “good Peter the catechist” as a scriptural translator, see “A Short Account of the Late Spread of the Gospel, Among the Indians,” which was published as an appendix to Samson Occom, *A Sermon at the execution of Moses Paul, an Indian; who had been guilty of murder, preached at New Haven in America* (New Haven, 1788), 24. On Kirkland’s reservations on the Oneida language, see his journal entry for 14 January 1789, in Walter Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th-Century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College* (Clinton, NY: Hamilton College, 1980), 158. On U.S. consideration of using an Iroquois intermediary, see Alan Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut: The Dilemmas of an Intercultural Broker,” *Ethnohistory* 43 (1996): 431-57, at 435, but he makes no mention of the intent to use Peter.

¹⁰⁵ Rachel Wheeler, “Hendrick Aupaumut: Christian-Mahican Prophet,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25 (2005): 187-220, at 194.

on behalf of the United States. Cornplanter observed that “the voice of Congress, could never reach those western Indians” and he judged Aupaumut “a proper person for an embassy to the westward.”¹⁰⁶ Before Aupaumut would accept a U.S. commission, however, he demanded answers from Pickering on a number of crucial issues, including whether the U.S. was “sincerely desirous of making peace with them” and whether “if the Western Indians consent to make peace, the United States will not, as a condition of peace, oblige them to give up part of their lands.” Pickering assured him that the U.S. was sincere and that no land would be demanded. He added that if Aupaumut was successful, the president would “generously reward” him.¹⁰⁷

In presenting his qualifications as an intermediary, Aupaumut balanced his appeal as an Indian generally with reminders of his particular Mahican identity and what distinguished his people from the rival Six Nations. As he told all assembled at Newtown Point in June 1791, he had always been a “sincere friend to the United States” as well as “a true friend to the people of my own colour.” Aupaumut assured Pickering that “the hostile Indians are sensible that I, my nation, know more of the white people than any other Indians.” The Mahicans had no history of war or deceptions with the United States or with the Indians of the Ohio Valley, and that the same could not be said for the Iroquois. “For some time past,” Aupaumut had “felt a disposition to use my endeavours to effect an accommodation; seeing the Shawanees are my younger brother – the Miamies my fathers – the Delawares my grandfathers – the Chippawas my grandchildren – and so on: They have always paid great respect to my advice” He assured Pickering that he knew the “distinction between the bad people on the frontiers, and the great body of the people of the

¹⁰⁶ “The Speech of captain Hendrick Aupaumut” in “Newtown Point, on the Tioga River, state of New York,” TPP, 60: 71A; Kirkland to Knox, 22 April 1791, TPP, 61: 201. Other references included a letter from Timothy Edwards, brother of the author of *Observations* on the Mahican language, as well as a letter signed by three missionaries then resident at Stockbridge: John Sergeant, son of the first Stockbridge missionary and Jonathan Edwards Sr.’s predecessor in that position; Samson Occom, the renowned Mohegan missionary and preacher, who had been educated at Eleazer Wheelock’s Indian school; and James Dean, whom Gideon Hawley had found as a boy and who had been raised to be a missionary.

¹⁰⁷ “Queries Proposed by captain Hendrick Aupaumut, Chief of the Muhheconnuk (or Stockbridge) Indians, and the Answers to those Queries, by Timothy Pickering, commissioner in behalf of the United States for holding a treaty with the Six Nations of Indians, at Newtown, in the State of New-York, June 27. 1791,” TPP, 60: 89-90. For a promise of compensation, see Pickering to Aupaumut, 11 July 1791, TPP, 60: 96.

United States,” and he was confident that he could “make the Indians sensible of this distinction; and then induce them to listen to offers of peace.” The Mahicans also possessed ties, phrased in terms of kinship, to other western nations such as the Wyandots, Mingos, and Winnebagos, but Aupaumut was silent on this. In this speech, in which he first suggested to Pickering the particular suitability of the Mahican nation to act as intermediaries between the U.S. and the western nations, Aupaumut, inadvertently or by design, named only those ties Mahicans possessed with nations to whom they were linguistically related.¹⁰⁸

Pickering understood that Aupaumut’s ability to speak the western languages would be his particular strength. To Henry Knox, he acknowledged Kirkland’s argument that the Mahicans held special influence with the western nations; but Pickering stressed the “circumstance that will facilitate his negotiations: Altho’ the Stockbridge Indians do not understand the language of the six nations, yet they understand the languages of the Delawares, Shawanees, and others of the Western Indians.” As promising as traditional ties of influence were, Pickering was convinced that Aupaumut’s linguistic skill would make him “the voice of peace.” He told then-commander of the army in the west, Arthur St. Clair: “The long continued friendship between the Muhheconnuk & western Indians... augurs well of his undertaking: and the circumstance of their language bearing a great resemblance to each other, will facilitate his negotiations.” Pickering thought that it was “remarkable” that nations as distant as Mahicans and Miamies and Ojibwas could be so closely aligned, yet with the Mohawks, living much closer to the Mahicans,

¹⁰⁸ “Speech of Captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” 72. Alan Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut, 443, has suggested that Aupaumut’s linguistic skills was one of his advantages to Pickering and to the U.S., but he does not comment on whether Aupaumut deliberately offered those skills to Pickering from the beginning or whether it was a skill set others imbued him with. Aupaumut did mention these ties at other times. See [Hendrick Aupaumut], “A Narrative of an Embassy to the Western Indians, from the original manuscript of Hendrick Aupaumut, with prefatory remarks by Dr. B. H. Coates” in *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 2 (1827), 76-77. There is a growing literature on Aupaumut, but none of it treats his diplomacy as largely linguistic. Besides Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” and Wheeler, “Hendrick Aupaumut,” which are the best, see also Jeanne Ronda and James P. Ronda “‘As They Were Faithful’: Chief Hendrick Aupaumut and the Struggle for Stockbridge Survival, 1757-1830,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3 (1979): 43-55; Bernd C. Peyer, *The Tutor’d Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 110-16; Hillary E. Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Early Community in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), ch. 3.

Aupaumut “cannot converse...without an interpreter.”¹⁰⁹ Pickering valued Aupaumut’s as a mediator because he was at once an Indian, fluent in diplomatic protocols, in the languages of the western confederacy, and in the ways and language of the United States. That Aupaumut could speak to western Indians and U.S. whites, but not the Iroquois, without an interpreter seemed to reinforce simultaneously Aupaumut’s claims of linguistic virtuosity and Iroquois isolation. It was no surprise to Pickering that President Washington, who sought “the earliest possible notice of peace,” deemed it “very important to get Capt. Hendrick off...with great dispatch.”¹¹⁰

In his work as an Indian commissioner, Pickering had become interested in some aspects of native idioms, particularly what scholars in the nineteenth century would call phonology and orthography.¹¹¹ Through his contact with Aupaumut, Pickering also developed an interest in genetic relationships between languages and how they could benefit U.S.-Indian relations. Although Pickering found these linguistic lines remarkable, or at least that Indians knew those lines, that the native languages of northeastern North America were divided into two broad groups corresponding to Algonquian and Iroquoian had been widely observed in the eighteenth century, most recently by Jonathan Carver, whose work was “in the hands of almost every person who is the least studious of the Indian affairs of this country.”¹¹²

It is unclear whether Aupaumut had initially intended to capitalize on white knowledge of linguistic affinities in eastern native America to make his case for his own and for Mahicans’ special value to the United States. Aupaumut never explicitly mentioned those linguistic ties in

¹⁰⁹ Pickering to Henry Knox, 1 July 1791; Pickering to Arthur St. Clair, 8 July 1791, TPP, 60: 77, 88A.

¹¹⁰ Timothy Pickering to Israel Chapin, 14 May 1792, 59: 22.

¹¹¹ He recalled late in life: “in my intercourse with the Indians, I took some pains to obtain the exact pronunciation” of Indian words, particularly names of persons and places, and used a system in recording Indian languages “so as to express the sounds of syllables letters, agreeably to our English pronunciation,” which required not only assigning English letters to “Indian” sounds but also “dividing the word into syllables” so as to make the words more easily pronounceable to uninitiated Anglos. See [Timothy Pickering], “Notes for Mr. Duponceau,” TPP, 62: 259.

¹¹² Lahontan, *New Voyages to North-America*, 16, 201; J. Carver, *Travels through the Interior Parts of North-America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London, 1778), 414, 417. Benjamin Smith Barton, *New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America* (Philadelphia, 1797), xxx, commented on the ubiquity of Carver’s *Travels*. For Pickering’s at least knew of it. See Jasper Parrish to Timothy Pickering, 28 March 1792, TPP, 62: 14-15.

his formal speech at Newtown Point. Linguistic affinity was not the exclusive criterion of how natives traditionally defined relationships of alliance; even if he had intended to imply the invaluable services he could perform as an interpreter for the multiple nations of the confederacy, mentioning them in a formal oration would have been out of place. Regardless, Aupaumut pressed home this advantage to Pickering once it was clear that Pickering valued it so highly. In a report to Pickering of his unsuccessful journey to the western confederacy in February 1792, he stressed that Brant could not speak to the western nations directly.¹¹³ Aupaumut also understood the fears of linguistically ignorant U.S. commissioners that something would be rendered incorrectly, either inadvertently or to stoke smoldering resentment into flames of violence. When Pickering asked: “Where can interpreters for the Western Indians be found, independent of those employed by the British?” Aupaumut reassured him: “As I understand the Delaware Language & shall mix with them, I shall know whether they rightly interpreted the Commissioner’s Speeches, and can correct what they mistake.”¹¹⁴ Late in life Pickering remembered him saying something similar about the westernmost nation of the confederacy: “I particularly recollect his telling me, that his language and the languages of the Chippeways and others of the western tribes were so similar, that he could converse with them.”¹¹⁵

The ability to converse with the western nations was crucial, for to control language was to control representation, and the United States saw the influence of British intermediaries as its gravest threat. Tawalooth, Brant’s nephew and messenger, told his “friends of the whole

¹¹³ “Captain Hendrick’s Narrative of his journey to Niagara & Grand River, in February 1792,” TPP, 59: 19A.

¹¹⁴ “Questions relative to the proposed Indian Treaty – and Hendrick’s Answers. Feby. 24, 1793,” TPP, 59: 55. James Merrell, *Into the American Woods*, 211 notes “the heart of translation’s mystery, where words become malleable and imprecise, prey to the skills, schemes, and memories of those doing the talking.”

¹¹⁵ Timothy Pickering to B. H. Coates, 15 April 1826, TPP, 16: 117. Pickering made a similar statement to Peter Stephen Du Ponceau at about the same time in “Notes for Mr. Duponceau,” TPP, 62: 259. It is possible, though, that Aupaumut may have been exaggerating his linguistic skills, or that Pickering confused Delaware and Chippewa (Ojibwa). Zeisberger, his contemporary, recognized the affinity of the two languages, but when several Ojibwas visited the Moravian Delawares in August 1786, he noted that it was “a pity we cannot speak directly to them. See Zeisberger, *Diary*, 2: 287. Similarly, Peter Jones, an educated Ojibwa, recalled hearing a Moravian preach in 1828, but he “could not understand Mr. L.’s discourse, being in the Delaware language.” See Peter Jones, *Life and Journals of Kah-Ke-Wa-Quo-Na-By* (Totonto, 1860), 122.

Confederate nations, who has one colar, attend....do not believe what Message the Muhheconneew brought to you.” He “could speak the Shawany tongue, also some other languages,” and according to Aupaumut, “he told many lies against us.”¹¹⁶ According to the testimony of William Henry (formerly John Killbuck, who had given a Delaware vocabulary to Richard Butler), Alexander McKee, the British agent at Detroit who had provided a Shawnee vocabulary to George Morgan, “whispered in the ear of the Shawanese, not to believe a word” of U.S. appeals to peace or promises of generous treatment and encouraged continued hostilities.¹¹⁷ In Aupaumut’s opinion, McKee’s Shawnee skills and connections made him “an exceeding good instrument for the British” and he advised the Indians in council: “there is Muhheconneew talking continually among you...Do not mind what he says, for he is sent by the Big Knifes.”¹¹⁸ While he could emphasize his color and his language in favor of his and his people’s role as mediators, the extent of his acculturation, one of the very traits that made him so attractive to U.S. officials, made him suspect to many of those Indians to whom he sought to bring to peace.

As Aupaumut and Kirkland both had told Pickering, Mahicans had a long history of building alliances among different Indian nations. As the Stockbridge Indians adopted Christianity, literacy, and male agriculture, Mahicans extended this function to relations between Indian nations and Anglo-American settlers. Yet the very abilities that Aupaumut possessed to pass between cultures, of which linguistic facility was paramount, signaled not affinity to his

¹¹⁶ Aupaumut, “A Narrative of an Embassy,” 112-13. Richard White has emphasized that native-white relations in the “middle ground” were dependent on images that each side had of the other: “Part of the history [shared by Indians and whites] was the stories these various peoples invented about each other. Both sides had no choice but to respond to the versions of themselves the other side invented, and in responding, they blurred the line between invention and actuality, between the people who existed in the minds of others and those who acted on their own behalf, between objects and subjects.” See Richard White, “The Fictions of Patriarchy: Indians and Whites in the Early Republic,” Frederick E. Hoxie et al., eds., *Native Americans in the Early Republic*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 64. I would only add that this exchange was not only between whites and Indians, but between competing Indians, Aupaumut and Brant for example, as well. On Matthew Elliott and Simon Girty were often linked with McKee in a triumvirate of Tory-white-savagery in the U.S. frontier imagination, see White, *Middle Ground*, pp. 380, 393, 403, 455-56.

¹¹⁷ John Heckewelder, “Memorandum, for the information of the Commissioners, Rover LaTrenchée, from June 17. to June 23. 1793.,” TPP, 59: 185-185A.

¹¹⁸ Aupaumut, “A Narrative of an Embassy,” 105, 112.

Indian opponents, but improper connections to an enemy race.¹¹⁹ Upon meeting the men of the various western nations, Aupaumut assured Pickering “we immediately begun to speak together as our fathers & forefathers use[d] to do.” Yet those same Indians thought that the Mahicans “were surrounded by Yankees in arms, who would not suffer us to go abroad, but that we were shut up like so many hogs in a pen.” Aupaumut had to tell them that “such birds were liars: that [we] were an independent people, and could go where we pleased.”¹²⁰ Even if he could persuade western Indians of this, Aupaumut still had to deflect accusations that he was a Yankee spy who came only to discover how many warriors the western confederacy possessed. Aupaumut assured them that the United States already had that information from their requests for presents in previous years, yet he submitted a tally, to which Heckewelder added his own estimates.¹²¹

Some U.S. whites also distrusted Aupaumut, for reasons related to his role in the town politics of Stockbridge and to his first two western embassies being frustrated by Brant and British officers. Within a year of his recommendation of Aupaumut to Knox and Pickering, Kirkland warned the latter that “you will be disappointed in your expectation of Capt. Hendrick.” Since his first trip westward in the summer of 1791, Kirkland thought Aupaumut had “greatly altered – he has become a lover of the intoxicating draught – & duplicity begin to mark many steps of his conduct...I impute this to his intercourse with Captain Brant.” Brant supported the Christianization of the Iroquois: he aided the translation of the Book of Common Prayer into Mohawk and translated the gospel of Mark and an explanation of the catechism himself. Distrustful of Indians who asserted their independence from white patrons too loudly. Samson Occom, the Mohegan missionary, was to blame as well. To Kirkland, “there is not an Indian in the compass of my knowledge (Capt. Brant excepted) who has more inalterable prejudices against white people than Mr. Occam.” Aupaumut, believed it “to be our duty Since we have felt and

¹¹⁹ See Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” 446.

¹²⁰ Aupaumut, “Captain Hendrick’s Narrative of his journey,” TPP, 59: 11.

¹²¹ For Aupaumut’s denial of this, see Aupaumut, “A Narrative of an Embassy,” 130. For the list itself, which explicitly states that men only are counted, with Heckewelder’s glosses, see “Captain Hendricks Estimates of the Indians who may attend the Treaty at Sandusky,” TPP, 60: 30.

Experienced the goodness of God, for Raising and fitting one of our own Collour, to be Instrumental to build up the Cause and the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,” was among the leaders of a small group who invited Samson Occom to be their minister in 1787. Aupaumut refused to yield to the preferences of most of New Stockbridge in removing Occom as their minister and hiring John Sergeant, and he expressed “some disgust” at Kirkland’s interference. Kirkland feared that under such influence, Aupaumut was “not so friendly to the cause & character of the white people as formerly.”¹²²

While he was willing to capitalize on his own abilities as a linguistic and cultural broker in the service of the United States, Aupaumut considered having a minister of his people’s “own Collour” to be more important than one of a different color who could speak his language. Although Occom aspired to be a spiritual leader to Christian Indians, he could not transcend the language barrier in New Stockbridge. He was a native speaker of Mohegan, a language related, but not wholly intelligible, to native speakers of Mahican. When he preached in Stockbridge, Occom had to preach in English, from which Aupaumut or another capable Indian would translate into Mahican. Aupaumut’s Stockbridge Indian opponents, led by John Konkapot, objected to Occom’s separatism and preferred John Sergeant, a white man who had grown up in Stockbridge (just as Edwards had) while his father was the town’s first missionary. He spoke Mahican fluently and could preach to the Stockbridge Indians without an interpreter.¹²³

¹²² Kirkland to Pickering, 31 May 1792, TPP, 62, 47-48A; “Mahican-Stockbridge Tribe to Samson Occom,” 27 August 1787, in Joanna Brooks, ed., *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 153-54. It may have been Occom’s sustained interaction with Aupaumut, a man as familiar with white and Indians worlds as himself, that led him to believe that future missionary efforts to Indians would be unsuccessful unless undertaken by other Indians. Only after spending several years among Aupaumut and the Mahicans was Occom’s “now fully convinc’d, that the Indians must have Teach[ers] of their own Coular or Nation.” Occom to [James Sprout?], November 1791, *Collected Writings of Samson Occom*, 133. For a brief statement of Kirkland and Brant’s changing relations, see Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 3-7. On Brant’s translations, see Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 133-34, 387, 534.

¹²³ Whereas Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 90-101, presents Occom as a figure of “Pentecostal speech,” but Occom’s journal entries in *Collected Writings of Samson Occom*, 373, 375, 378, record the practical difficulties Indian linguistic diversity presented for making himself understood. For more on Occom, see Peyer, *The Tutor’d Mind*, ch. 3; Wyss, *Writing Indians*, ch. 4. In the sermon that both

Konkapot, like Aupaumut, worked with white men to make the Mahican language more intelligible to interested whites.¹²⁴

Aupaumut could not but have been annoyed that his loyalties were being questioned by U.S. officials when it was his perceived loyalty to them that lowered his standing among the western nations. In the speech at which he had put himself forward to Pickering, he reminded the commissioner that even though “I had no territory to fight for; nor had I to fight for liberty; for liberty I always possessed,” still he and other Stockbridge Indians joined Americans in their fight against Britain, did more for the U.S. than any Indian nation in that conflict, and did so out of “pure friendship.”¹²⁵ In response to rumors of disloyalty, Aupaumut penned a long narrative that both explained his 1792 mission and defended his own conduct. In the closing pages of the “Narrative,” Aupaumut hinted that perhaps he had been more loyal to the federal government than it deserved, since the U.S. did nothing to right wrongs committed against the Mahicans by the people of New York. He pointed out that in all of his arguments to the western nations he had been obliged “to say nothing with regard of the conduct of the Yorkers, how they cheat my fathers, how they taken our lands Unjustly, and how my fathers were groaning as it were to their graves.” Likewise, he could have mentioned “how the white people artfully got their Deeds confirm[ed] in their Laws.” If he had told any of this to the western nations, “it would aggravate their prejudices against all white people,” but he had remained silent on these things. In an

made Occom famous among whites and marked his emergence as a pan-Indian leader, Occom alluded to Shakespeare’s Caliban in noting that the Indian had fallen from a higher state: “His language is also corrupted. Whereas he had a pure and holy language, in his innocency, to adore and praise God his maker, he now curses, swears, and profanes the holy name of God, and curses and damns his fellow-creatures.” See *A Sermon at the execution of Moses Paul, an Indian; who had been guilty of murder, preached at New Haven in America* (1772), 9. This sermon was reprinted, in New Haven and in London in 1788 in a joint edition with Jonathan Edwards, *Observations on the Language of the Muhhekaneew Indians*. Edwards himself delivered two sermons at the condemned Paul’s request, but these were never published. See Edwards, Jonathan, *Sermons, 1766-1800*, vols. 225, 242, Hartford Seminary. My thanks to Ken Minkema for pointing this out to me.

¹²⁴ Aupaumut to Pickering, [n.d.], TPP, 61: 244-45; Konkapot gave a specimen of Mahican to Rev. William Jenks. See “Language of the Moheagans,” 97-99.

¹²⁵ “The Speech of captain Hendrick Aupaumut” [20 June 1791], TPP, 60: 71.

interview with Pickering, Aupaumut stressed that the confederation was “in fact divided, in consequence of the speech I had delivered.”¹²⁶

Between his own testimony and the support of Sergeant (perhaps unexpected in the midst of the Occom controversy), Pickering was convinced.¹²⁷ Yet, Aupaumut’s hopes for peace, and his hopes to make the Mahicans the “front door by and through which you can go through all the different tribes” in the future interaction of whites and western Indians, failed.¹²⁸ Tawalooth’s “lies,” Aupaumut’s unconvincing assurances of U.S. trustworthiness, and both sides’ unwillingness to concede crucial points led to war.¹²⁹ Aupaumut served in Wayne’s Legion of the United States, which defeated the western Indians at Fallen Timbers. He acted as mediator as Wayne, but a mouthpiece for Timothy Pickering, who had been recently appointed Knox’s successor as Secretary of War, dictated the terms of the peace that followed. These included U.S. promises to aid the “civilization” of the western nations.

Even after the failure of his embassies in 1791-93, Aupaumut continued to cultivate a mediating role for the Mahicans, in the dual hopes of increasing the influence of his nation and by encouraging the western nations to adopt the trappings of U.S. civilization they could prevent their own physical and cultural deterioration. After establishing control over coveted land and the

¹²⁶ Aupaumut, “A Narrative of an Embassy,” 128. Aupaumut’s defense of his conduct in 1792 is his “Narrative.” The nineteenth-century editor of the “Narrative” identifies it as being written in 1791, but this is inaccurate. Aupaumut, giving the aforementioned speech, refers to the U.S. as the “15 sachems” and Kentucky was not admitted as the fifteenth state until June 1792. See *ibid.*, 93. For the controversy, see Pickering to Israel Chapin, 14 May 1792; Aupaumut to Pickering, 11 December 1792; “Feby. 5 1793. In conversation with Capt. Hendrick”; “Examination of the Seneca Chiefs respecting Hendricks proceedings last year among the Western Indians”; Pickering to Knox, 13 February 1793,” TPP, 59: 22, 26-27, 38-42, 45-46, 51. Alan Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” 443, has emphasized that Aupaumut’s primary diplomatic concerns in these years was not the relationship between the Stockbridge Indians and the United States, but the state of New York, whose citizens were even then working to divest Indians of land claims, and the Six Nations, under whose influence the Mahicans had been subject for most of the eighteenth century.

¹²⁷ While some officials were questioning Aupaumut’s loyalty, Sergeant told Pickering that he believed Aupaumut “has done much good in removing the prejudices from the minds of the hostile Tribes and laying the foundation for peace.” See John Sergeant to Pickering, 15 July 1792, TPP, 62: 65.

¹²⁸ See “Extracts from Mr. Sergeant’s Journal,” *Panoplist* 1: 10 (March 1806), 465.

¹²⁹ Ronda and Ronda “As They Were Faithful,” 49-50, 44-45. The only acceptable terms of peace to the confederacy was a permanent boundary (either the Ohio River, or as was later suggested, the Muskingum River), neither of which the U.S. would have accepted. See White, *Middle Ground*, 460-65.

nation's Indian affairs, the federal government no longer needed those services after the Treaty of Greenville, but Aupaumut thought Mahicans could perform similar services for other entities. In 1798, Edwards's Missionary Society of Connecticut wrote to John Sergeant asking him whom the western nations, now at peace, would be willing to accept a missionary. Sergeant passed along Aupaumut's counsel: since the missionary society needed to "gain the confidence of the Indians," they should send "forward some friend by Indian to [intro]duce the subject of Missions." Aupaumut nominated himself and Sergeant supported his candidacy.¹³⁰

Members of the Connecticut missionary society approved the idea, but they wanted only "a pious guide and interpreter" and refused to consider Aupaumut for the role. Sergeant admitted that "he is not a man of piety," since he was fond of women and alcohol, but still he "understands and believes the doctrines of the gospel" and he would control himself in his role because he had no wish to bring religion into disrepute. Aupaumut was "greatly attached to the happiness and prosperity of his kindred and...wishes them to embrace Christianity." Sergeant assured the society that Stockbridge possessed "but one man completely capable of answering your purpose." Aupaumut was healthy, fluent in English, comfortable with Indian customs, and acquainted with the headmen of each of the western nations; in short, he was "a man of uncommon talents." Sergeant reminded the society that "on account of our long acquaintance with white people on us they depend for Council in both a civil and religious view" and he assured them that "there is not a man in America whether white or black with whom the Chiefs of those Tribes to whom you wish to send your Missionary would place more confidence than in Hendrick." In summing up Aupaumut's particular talents, Sergeant stressed his linguistic skills and came close to reprimanding the society: "Aside from piety an Interpreter must have a thorough knowledge of

¹³⁰ John Sergeant to [unknown], 27 June 1798[8]; John Sergeant to Jonathan Edwards, [n.d.]; Jonathan Edwards to [Benjamin Trumbull?], 21 August 1799, in Missionary Society of Connecticut Papers, reel 9, no. 237.

the most important doctrines of Religion. And have a talent to communicate the Ideas in an easy and intelligible manner.”¹³¹

In a different attempt to convey Christian themes to his own people, Aupaumut translated selections from the gospels and psalms into Mahican. The first psalm he included in a new edition of *The Assembly's Shorter Catechism* was the Fifth Psalm, which opened with the plea: “Give ear to my words, O LORD,” a request perhaps particularly poignant in Mahican. The first gospel passage Aupaumut included was from the third chapter of John, but he stopped with verse 21. Continuing may have delivered the wrong message; the thirtieth verse proclaimed: “He must increase; but I *must* decrease.”¹³² Aupaumut believed in Indians’ equality, he thought Christian revelation merely confirmed the beliefs of his people before they had become corrupted through contact with immoral whites, and he knew Mahican could convey the Christian faith. But he was as ambivalent about the English language as we was about U.S. intentions to treat his people justly. He did not think that all Mahican concepts could be perfectly conveyed in English. In his “History of the Muhheakonnuk Indians,” he used Mahican words time and again, suggesting that English renderings of Mahican concepts were insufficient. His people were not “Mahicans,” but “Muhheakunnuks”; they planted not corn, beans, and squash, but “scommonum”; they used not an axe, but “uthennetmuhhecon”; if one refused to help those in need, as the Great and Good Spirit “Waunthut Mennitow” commanded, then one was “uhwautheet,” or hard-hearted.¹³³

¹³¹ Benjamin Trumbull to the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, 20 May 1800; Sergeant to Messrs. Strong & Flynt, 18 June 1800; Sergeant to Abel Flynt, 2 September 1800, in Missionary Society of Connecticut Papers, reel 9, no. 237.

¹³² *The Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, [Hendrick Aupaumut, trans.] [1818], 32, 26-28. James Constantine Pilling, *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 416, concluded that Aupaumut translated these selections at the request of John Sergeant. I have taken translations from the unnumbered pages of *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments translated out of the original tongues and, with the former translations diligently compared and revised* (Philadelphia, 1782).

¹³³ Aupaumut composed this “History” in manuscript in the early 1790s. Three different versions were published in the period covered here. The first published appearance was “Extract from an Indian History,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 9 (1804), 99-100. Its second published appearance was as “History of the Muhheakunnuk Indians” in *First Annual Report of the American Society for Promoting the Civilization and General Improvement of the Indian Tribes in the United States* (New Haven, 1824), 41-45. It was here that it was identified as “written about 30 years ago, by Capt. Hendrick, their present

Aupaumut rejected the “assimilation” of language Washington and Pickering had favored. Responding to Aupaumut, Pickering pushed Mahicans to adopt English because it was the “most useful” in that it would ease “communication & doing business with neighbours of the U.S.” Furthermore, “all books of knowledge as well as revelation” were in English and there was “no expectation that science or arts can be translated into their tongue.” To close, Pickering chided Aupaumut and the Mahicans for their “Pride of native tongue.”¹³⁴ Focusing on Indian pride, particularly regarding language, Pickering linked the sin that led to the destruction at Babel to Indians’ ostensible refusal to fully “civilize.” However, Aupaumut continued to encourage other Indians to adopt European-style agriculture, Christianity, and knowledge of English, “what our white brothers call the A B C, which is the foundation of learning.” Doing so, Aupaumut thought, had saved his people and allowed better relations with the whites who surrounded them. In one instance, Aupaumut presented the Delawares with a “white belt of wampum with a piece of paper, sewed on one end, on which was written, A B C. 1 2 3.”¹³⁵

In attempting to mediate Indians and whites by mastering the language of the other, Aupaumut made his own way along a path that been traveled by other Indians before him –

chief.” It was from this edition that I have taken all quotations. See *ibid.*, 41-43. For Aupaumut’s account of traditional Mahican beliefs, see *ibid.*, 42-44. A third version, slightly different from each of the other two, was included in Electa F. Jones, *Stockbridge, Past and Present; or, records of an old mission station* (Springfield, Mass., 1854), 14-23. Sandra Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power*, 259 has suggested that Aupaumut employed native words to emphasize his authenticity, which otherwise might have been questioned due to his degree of acculturation. This is true, but it is incomplete. Brant also considered penning a history of the Indians in this period, but he gave it up after, by his own account, he had failed to unite all the Indians in the western confederacy. See Brant to Kirkland, 8 March 1791, TPP, 61: 207A-08. Alan Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” 445, has remarked on how Aupaumut and Brant effectively competed to play the role of diplomat and “intercultural broker.” However, Taylor ignores their similar services as spiritual-linguistic mediators and their apparent understanding of both these translations and of the genres of history and natural history as venues for cultural brokering.

¹³⁴ “Responses to Hendricks Speech, Saturday 6 December 1794,” TPP, 62: 117A-118.

¹³⁵ See “Extract from the Indian Journal, being the Sixth Speech that was delivered to the Delaware Nation residing at Waupekum mekut, or White River, on the 15th day of April, 1803,” in “Letter to the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, of Salem,” *Massachusetts Missionary*, vol. 1 (April 1804), 9-10. For these efforts at promoting “civilization,” Thomas Jefferson directed the War Department to pay Aupaumut \$50. See Henry Dearborn to John Sergeant, 10 February 1804, War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, A: 438. Ironically, in emphasizing the necessity of learning to read and write English, Aupaumut was following a Stockbridge policy that had been established by John Konkapot, father of this rival for influence, in the mid-eighteenth century. See Marion Johnson Mochon, “Stickbridge-Munsee Cultural Adaptations: ‘Assimilated Indians,’” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 112 (1968): 182-219, 193.

Joseph Brant, Captain Yoghum, John Killbuck, and countless more. In putting forward himself and the Mahican nation as the “front door” through which the U.S. and the western nations should pass in their relations with one another, Aupaumut capitalized on the linguistic differences between Mahicans and the Six Nations that Pickering had seized on to show that, linguistically, and thus as cultural brokers, there were meaningful distinctions between Indian groups and that the U.S. would do well to make the most of those differences. Yet Aupaumut did not always consider language to be the primary index of difference. In the late 1780s he preferred for his nation’s minister Samson Occom, a man who shared his color but for whom he had to translate, to John Sergeant, a white man who shared with him the Mahican language.

Aupaumut continued to advocate Indian adoption and adaptation of Protestant Christianity, the English language, European civilization (meaning male agriculture), and involvement with, but not assimilation into, U.S. society. In 1791, he had reminded the United States, through their commissioner Timothy Pickering, that the Stockbridge Indians were patriots in the Revolution and “My blood has been spilt with yours.”¹³⁶ He lived until 1830, by which time Pickering had forgotten the details of their partnership, although he managed to pass along an interest in Indian languages to his son, who became one of the most prominent philologists of nineteenth-century United States.¹³⁷ Also by this time, the U.S. had disappointed Aupaumut and his people. The Monroe administration had reneged on a deal that Aupaumut had made with Jefferson, to settle along the White River in Indiana. Instead, Aupaumut lived to see the Stockbridge Indians migrate as far as Wisconsin, after Aupaumut renewed the “ancient covenants” that still bound the Mahicans to the western nations.¹³⁸

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¹³⁶ “The Speech of captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” 71.

¹³⁷ Pickering remembered Aupaumut and his mission, but he denied remembering that he had been the source of instruction. See Pickering to B. H. Coates, 15 April 1826, TPP, 16: 115-17.

¹³⁸ See Taylor, “Captain Hendrick Aupaumut,” 452; Ronda and Ronda, “As they were Faithful,” 51-53.

Race seemed real to many on the frontier in the early years of the republic, and while its lines offered seductive explanatory power to some, they were never the only way to understand similarity and difference in the Ohio Country in these years. For those Americans, European and Indian, who rejected the stark demarcation between worlds white and red, language offered an alternative way to understand the different groups competing for autonomy on their own terms in the late eighteenth-century Ohio Country. Knowledge of Indian languages could be wielded in different ways: to further conversion and civilization, to explain differences and to work toward bringing peoples together. Those uses paralleled the hopes of their respective authors for the terms under which the Indians and United States would interact. For Zeisberger, this meant furthering the salvation of heathen. Reading the linguistic speculations on Indian origins that Butler and Edwards intended for Catherine the Great, Washington contemplated the passing of savagery and what this said of the “original history of this Country.” More grandly he thought that understanding Indian languages could lead to the eventual assimilation of their languages and perhaps of the people themselves, which he attempted later to implement through his Indian policy. Aupaumut used his linguistic ties to the Indians of the western confederacy to assert his people’s status as the proper mediators, linguistic, political, and religious, between whites and Indians. Each sought peace, one way or another, as the condition for those interactions.

These were individual projects and, with the exception of but one part of Aupaumut’s work, were not sponsored by the United States. Only in the nineteenth century – in federal exploration, on the eve of removal, and when confronting the problem of formulating an Indian policy without an Indian frontier – would the U.S. War Department begin to collect, systematize, and attempt to use the resulting information to refine their approach to Indian affairs.

CHAPTER 2.

ETYMOLOGY, EXPLORATION, AND AMERICAN ANTIQUITY

The linguistic studies of Richard Butler and Jonathan Edwards, Jr., were not explicitly undertaken as exercises cultural nationalism. Nor were they linked with extensive projects of federal exploration within and beyond national borders that were inextricable from imperial rivalries. Nor did they pivot around an understanding of native languages and native societies as “savage.” In each of these ways, the work of Butler and Edwards differed from the longer, similar projects undertaken by Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Smith Barton, which began roughly contemporaneously, but extended well into the nineteenth century.

Jefferson and Barton shared intellectual interests in etymology and ethnology as well as an institutional base in the American Philosophical Society. Their conclusions, however, were dramatically different. Jefferson concluded that North American linguistic diversity suggested that the continent had been inhabited longer than Europe and Asia and that the former must have, in fact, populated the latter two. Jefferson’s emphatic assertion of ancient American independence from the so-called Old World complemented his equally emphatic declaration of political independence: the United States would not be defined by a colonial past, whether of the ancient Asian or more modern British variety. Ultimately, however, his was a vision of American antiquity that persuaded few. It contradicted the Bible. Whether one considered that book’s testimony to be revelation or merely an ancient chronicle, it posed problems even for Americans eager to demonstrate their independence and imagine a national history. Benjamin Smith Barton undertook an elaborate comparison of the languages of America and rest of the known world and came to conclusions diametrically opposed to Jefferson’s. Barton’s studies convinced him that not only had the New World received her population from the Old but also that previous speculations about American linguistic diversity were mistaken. All languages retained

fragments of their once common source, but these could only be recognized if Americans extended their field of inquiry beyond America itself.

Yet Jefferson focused his interest closer to home as well. He institutionalized the collection of Indian vocabularies as part of a broader effort at federal exploration of North America. He remained committed to answering these questions and clung to his heterodox suspicions regarding their resolution. Yet he sought other ends as well through linguistic collection, ends which he had suggested in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. The vocabularies Jefferson instructed his explorers to collect would provide evidence of exploration and thus of claims to discovery. Further, they would be currency to exchange in the republic of letters and thus proof of the republican empire's responsible imperial stewardship. The words the vocabularies contained could also facilitate the administration of his "empire for liberty." They offered improved communication; a way to gauge the vitality, waning or continuing, of the natives groups the U.S. sought to engage; and a possible scientific guide to the complex and confusing political relations that U.S. officials encountered in native America.

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Jefferson was a man who imbibed his interests early in life and pursued his inclinations with impressive energy. From a young age, Jefferson was interested – intellectually and financially – in western lands. By the age of fourteen, he had inherited a portion of his father's shares in the Loyal Land Company; at the age of twenty-six he made his own investment in land-company stock, which would provide increased dividends as it sold land. When he was governor, some of his opponents accused him of neglecting coastal and tidewater defenses – almost disastrously – so he could concentrate Virginia's resources on prosecuting an Indian war in the west that could have brought him personal profit. However, the Virginia general Assembly exonerated his conduct and he did not profit from these ventures.¹ Jefferson became interested in

¹ See Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 21, 39-40, 46-49.

Indian languages at a young age as well, recalling a childhood fascination with Outassete, a Cherokee “warrior and orator” who was “always the guest of my father” when he traveled to Williamsburg. Jefferson vividly remembered, “His sounding voice, distinct articulation, animated action, and the solemn silence of his people at their several fires, filled me with awe and veneration, altho’ I did not understand a word he uttered.”²

As Jefferson grew older and read more widely, his fascination became more focused. Late in life, Jefferson recalled that during his “public life, and from a very early period of it,” he had “omitted no opportunity of procuring vocabularies of the Indian languages.” The purpose of this collection was “to show not only what relations of language existed among our own aborigines, but by a collation with the great Russian vocabulary of the languages of Europe and Asia, whether there were any between them and the other nations of the continent.” Jefferson may have misremembered.³ In December 1783, in the midst of expanding a set of responses for a questionnaire on America’s civil and natural history sent by a secretary of the French legation, François Barbé de Marbois, Jefferson sent requests for vocabularies to Benjamin Hawkins, Thomas Hutchins, and Bernard Moore, a colonel in the Virginia militia who had lived along southeastern Virginia’s Mattaponi River.⁴ Even before Washington and his correspondents sought to contribute to the republic of letters under European direction, Jefferson began his own

² See Jefferson to John Adams, 11 June 1812, in Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 307.

³ Jefferson to Peter Wilson, 20 January 1816, in Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols. (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903-05), 14: 404. Hereafter this collection will be cited as *Writings of TJ*. It is possible that Jefferson had heard about the call for vocabularies issued by J. C. Bacmeister, a member of the St. Petersburg academy, in 1773. On the failure of this project, which inspired Catherine’s own, see Harriet E. Manelis Klein and Herbert S. Klein, “The ‘Russian Collection’ of Amerindian Languages in Spanish Archives,” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 44.2 (April 1978): 137-64, at 137.

⁴ None of these letters are extant, but TJ recorded sending them in his “Short Journal of Letters.” See TJ to Benjamin Hawkins, 28 December 1783; TJ to Bernard Moore, 28 December 1783; and TJ to Thomas Hutchins, 29 December 1783, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 6: 427. For Moore’s landholdings, see “Notice of Sale of Bernard Moore’s Property,” in *ibid.*, 1: 59-60. On the questionnaire and its background, see TJ to Marbois, 4 March 1781, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 5: 58-59; TJ to Marbois, 20 December 1781; TJ to Charles Thomson, 20 December 1781, *ibid.*, 6: 141-43. See also, Silvio A. Bedini, *Thomas Jefferson: Statesman of Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 84-94.

project certain that “the Indian of North America being more within our reach,” American whites, and not Europeans, should be the ones to study “him.”⁵

Jefferson had two major historical interests in Indians. The first was political and taxonomic. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he provided a view of native Virginia before English colonization, describing a land divided among over forty tribes allied in three major confederations. The largest of these was the Powhatans, who occupied the land between the coast and falls of the tidal rivers. Beyond the falls of the James were the Monacans and beyond the falls of the Potomac and Rappahannock were the Mannahoacs, who combined to wage “joint and perpetual war” upon the Powhatans. Jefferson hypothesized how these Indian groups had drawn their lines of alliance. “We are told that the *Powhatans*, *Mannahoacs*, and *Monacans* spoke languages so radically different, that interpreters were necessary when they transacted business.” Since “this was not the case between all the tribes, and probably that each spoke of the nation to which it was attached; which we know to have been the case in many particular instances.” Looking for a key to understand lines of native amity and enmity, Jefferson looked to native linguistic relationships. “Very possibly,” Jefferson thought, “there may have been antiently three different stocks, each of which multiplying in a long course of time, had separated into so many little societies.”⁶ Jefferson assumed that people in the hunting stage of society were

⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, edited by William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 59.

⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. by William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 92. He admitted that the Monacans and Massawomecs “spoke languages...so different that the intervention of interpreters was necessary between them,” but he reasoned that “their dialects might, by long separation, have become so unlike as to be unintelligible to one another.” See *ibid.*, 97. Jefferson was mistaken in this regard. Both the Monacans and Mannahoacs spoke Siouan languages. See John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, *Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology*, Bulletin 145 [1952] (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 61, 63. Jefferson had received this information from Charles Thomson, who told Jefferson, “As far as I have been able to learn, the country from the sea coast to the Alleghaney, and from the most southern waters of the James river up to Patuxent river, now in the state of Maryland, was occupied by three different nations of Indians, each of which spoke a different language, and were under separate and distinct governments.” See “Appendix No. 1,” in TJ, *Notes*, 202. This view could be found in the War Department as well. Dearborn reflected that language was one of the more likely causes of factional divisions within the Creek confederation: “The Creek nation being a collection of several Tribes their local disputes may originate in the difference of

particularly vulnerable to linguistic fragmentation. If “stocks” could be identified, Indian diplomacy could be simplified; native politics could perhaps be reduced to a science.

His second historical interest, like Empress Catherine’s, concerned the question, “Whence came those aboriginal inhabitants of America?” Geographers had long known of navigation from Norway to Labrador, via Iceland and Greenland, and the voyages of Captain Cook confirmed that one could coast from Kamchatka to California. He also observed that excluding the “Eskimaux,” whom he supposed identical with the Greenlanders and from the northernmost parts of Eurasia, the “resemblance between the Indians of America and the Eastern inhabitants of Asia, would lead us to conjecture, that the former are descendants of the latter or the latter of the former.” But Jefferson insisted on moving beyond the “conjecture” that mere physical resemblance could support. Ascertaining linguistic affinities between native Asians and Americans could lead instead to historical knowledge as sure as the known common descent of the Germanic languages. The English, Dutch, Germans, and Norwegians all spoke different languages, not always intelligible to speakers of the others, but attention to etymology revealed their shared ancestry. Thus, for Indians, “knowledge of their several languages would be the most certain evidence of their derivation which could be produced. In fact, it is the best proof of the affinity of nations which can ever be referred to.” It did not, however, reveal which language descended from the other, or as he put it to a later correspondent, “it will not decide which is the mother country, and which the colony.” Still, Jefferson recommended collecting vocabularies “of all the languages of spoken in North and South America, preserving their appellations of the most common objects in nature, of those which must be present to every nation barbarous or civilized, with the inflections of their nouns and verbs, their principles of regimen and concord, and these deposited in all the public libraries,” where they could be compared to old world tongues “to construct the best evidence of the derivation of this part of the human race.”

descent, of manners or language.” See Secretary of War [Henry Dearborn] to Benjamin Hawkins, War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, B: 26.

Jefferson acknowledged that linguistic information on the Americas was far from complete, yet he was certain that from the knowledge available, one “remarkable fact” was undeniable. If scholars would classify each of the native languages of America into families of “radical languages,” and then do the same for those tongues spoken by the “red men of Asia,” Jefferson was confident that they would find “twenty in America for one in Asia.” By “radical languages,” Jefferson meant those languages (such as Mahican and Mohawk) with lexicons that bore no traces of shared ancestry with other languages. This did not necessarily mean that those tongues shared no ancestry, only that “if they ever were the same, they have lost all resemblance to one another.” Dialects could drift apart in “a few ages only,” as had the Germanic languages, but for them to become so transformed as to lose “all vestiges of their common origin, must require an immense course of time; perhaps not less than many people give to the age of the earth.” That he saw particular significance in the radical difference in the words of Indian languages explains why he ignored “inflections” and “principles of regimen and concord” in the vocabularies and requests. He derived an inescapable conclusion from his premise of Indian linguistic diversity: “A greater number of those radical changes of language having taken place among the red men of America, proves them of greater antiquity than those of Asia.”⁷ This suggested that the “New World” was not new at all; it must have been settled first and America must have colonized the “Old World.” Jefferson left this implicit in *Notes*, but he said it explicitly to Yale president Ezra Stiles in 1786. Unlike Stiles, who speculated upon the mysterious mounds of the western country, Jefferson knew of “no such thing existing as an Indian monument.” Thus, Jefferson based his opinion on the “single fact” of Indian linguistic diversity. The overall “similitude” between the peoples of the Americas and Asia “renders it probable that ours are descended from them, or they from ours. The latter is my opinion.”⁸

⁷ TJ, *Notes*, pp. 100-02; TJ to John Sibley, 27 May 1805, in Lipscomb, ed. *Writings of TJ*, 11: 81.

⁸ TJ to Ezra Stiles, 1 September 1786, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 10: 316; TJ, *Notes*, 97. Jefferson conducted what is frequently considered the first “systematic and carefully reported excavation” in North

Jefferson was not alone in suggesting a route of migration contrary to the one commonly assumed and biblically prescribed. In 1775, after traveling through the Floridas and the lands of the Chickasaws and Choctaws on a British surveying expedition, the Dutch immigrant Bernard Romans concluded that “God created an original man and woman in this part of the globe, of different species from any in other parts.” He did not rule out that there might be some people in Asia that shared an ancestry with the American Indians, but he thought it “more natural to think they were colonies from the numerous nations on the continent of America, than to imagine, that from the small comparative number of those Russian subjects, such a vast country should have been so numerously peopled.”⁹ In the decade following Jefferson’s *Notes*, the French scholar and traveler Constantin-François Volney recorded the similar opinions of Little Turtle, who had led Miami warriors against Josiah Harmar in the early 1790s, but who came to support the U.S. civilization policy after the Treaty of Greenville. Volney showed the Miami chief a map that displayed the proximity of Asia and America, suggesting a possible path from the former to the latter. Little Turtle did not deny that he may have had unknown kinsmen across the world, but he saw in that no reason to think that America was not their original home: “Why...should not these Tartars, who are like us, have gone first from the American side? Are there any proofs to the contrary? Why should not their fathers and our’s [have] been born in our country?”¹⁰

Such a theory upended commonly accepted European philosophy as well as Mosaic history. One of Jefferson’s central motivations for writing *Notes* was to refute philosophical

America. See Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 2d. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 117.

⁹ Bernard Romans, *A Concise History of East and West Florida* [1775], ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), 110. For the biographical information, see *ibid.*, 1, 6-7.

¹⁰ C. F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America; with Supplementary Remarks upon Florida; on the French Colonies on the Mississippi and Ohio, and in Canada; and on the Aboriginal Tribes of America*, trans. C. B. Brown (Philadelphia, 1804), 363. On nativist beliefs in separate creation, see Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 13, 30. For Little Turtle’s shifting stances toward the U.S., see *ibid.*, 106, 114. Using native figures to critique Christian assumptions possessed a respectable lineage in French literature, perhaps expressed most clearly through Montaigne’s “cannibal” and Lahontan’s “Adario,” the latter of whom formed the basis for subsequent eighteenth-century noble savages. See Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 121-25.

aspersions cast by George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, on the climate and character of the Americas. In his *Natural History*, Buffon surveyed a series of travel narratives that described the flora and fauna of America as smaller and weaker than their counterparts in the eastern hemisphere. He explained this by suggesting that America was literally a “new world.” Only recently emerged from the depths, America was still immature, possessing an insalubrious climate that bore inferior natural productions. Contrary to Buffon’s own opinions, the abbés Corneille de Pauw and Guillaume Thomas François Raynal extended this assessment to America’s transplanted Europeans.¹¹

As president, Jefferson told an Indian delegation that although whites were descended from Europeans, “we consider ourselves no longer as of the Old Nations beyond the Great Water, but as united in one family with our red brethren here.” Throughout *Notes*, Jefferson’s natural history revealed a similar desire for a distinct American identity. He referred to the “Man of America, both aboriginal and emigrant,” as if he was a discrete unit separate from inhabitants of the no-longer-considered “old” world. Defending his choice to use the Algonquin name “whabus” to label the North American rabbit, Jefferson emphasized the need “to keep it distinct” from its European counterpart.¹² Jefferson’s use of American linguistic diversity to refute Buffon’s premise revealed similar motivations. The greater linguistic diversity of North America than of Asia demonstrated that the former had been populated longer than the latter, which could not be the case if the continent and its people possessed a truncated existence. In the interest of a great national future, Jefferson denied that America’s past was colonial from the beginning. She

¹¹ For a description of this debate, see Gilbert Chinard, “Eighteenth Century Theories on America as a Human Habitat,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 91 (1947): 27-57. Bernard Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 66-71, 85-87 has noted that Buffon’s thesis challenged Jefferson’s hopes for America’s new society by acknowledging the transformative power of American environment, only to deny that any such transformation would be positive. Harold Hellenbrand, “Not ‘to Destroy But to Fulfill’: Jefferson, Indians, and the Republican Dispensation,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1985): 523-49, at 535-38 has suggested that an equally important context was that Jefferson felt compelled to refute claims that could have just as easily been directed at white Virginians: they had failed to fully cultivate the land, exploited “drudges,” and their culture was underdeveloped.

¹² “My Friends & Children, Chiefs of the Osages, Missouri, Kansas, Ottos, Ayowas & Sioux,” 4 January 1806, in War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, B: 145; TJ, *Notes*, 55, 65.

sent out colonies long before she ever received them. That he penned such a reply countered De Pauw's and Raynal's insinuation that America could not contribute to European letters.

This impulse to use Indians to simultaneously establish American antiquity and to contribute to the republic of letters fit comfortably with the impulse to missionize and civilize the Indians. In *Notes*, Jefferson proposed an alternative method of fulfilling the mission of the Brafferton, the part his now disestablished alma mater, the College of William & Mary, dedicated to converting the Indians to Christianity. Jefferson suggested "maintaining a perpetual mission among the Indian tribes" that would "collect their traditions, laws, customs, languages, and other circumstances which might lead to a discovery of their relation with one another, or descent from other nations." When a missionary completed this task for one tribe, he would move on to the next.¹³ In 1797, inspired by Jefferson's comments in *Notes* regarding Indians and their languages, the New-York Missionary Society adopted Jefferson's vocabulary, 280 words in English which Jefferson had printed and distributed, and instructed their missionaries to collect vocabularies from the tribes they settled among.¹⁴

Jefferson continued to seek vocabularies long after he published *Notes*. James Madison, who considered himself no student of Indian languages, passed along the *Observations* of Jonathan Edwards. Jefferson recorded an Unquachog vocabulary on his journey to New York with Madison in 1791 to see the sights and to devise a strategy for confronting Hamilton's ambitious financial plan for the federal government. William Vans Murray, a Maryland Federalist, passed along a vocabulary of the Nanticokes. Although they had "dwindled almost to extinction," they still possessed over 5000 acres of land," much to Murray's irritation. Murray noted that they "speak their language exclusively among themselves," yet he reasoned (and

¹³ TJ, *Notes*, 151.

¹⁴ "Instructions from the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society, to the Missionaries among the Indians," *New-York Missionary Magazine, and Repository of Religious Intelligence*, January 1800, 18. The director sent TJ a letter requesting his help in acquiring information; see William Linn to TJ, 25 May 1797, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 29,: 400. The NYMS also published a circular letter requesting any assistance in compiling these materials; see *The TimePiece and Literary Companion*, 19 May 1797, 118.

perhaps hoped) that “a few years must totally extinguish the remains of this Tribe, and it will be owing to you Sir if a trace is left of their language.”¹⁵

Benjamin Hawkins assured Jefferson that he was “particularly attentive” to native languages during his residence in Indian country. Aware of Jefferson’s interest in linguistic similarities and differences among Indian groups, Hawkins told him that between Cherokee and Choctaw there was “not the least affinity,” but that the latter and Chickasaws were “radically the same, and they converse together with ease together without the intervention of interpreters.” Hawkins warned Jefferson that obtaining linguistic information through interpreters was perilous because they were “unacquainted with the principles of grammar,” and thus it was “difficult to understand the variation in nouns and verbs, their agreement and Concord.” Hawkins suggested that Jefferson contact the Creek chief Alexander McGillivray, “a half-breed” and “a man of good sense, well versed in our Language and customs.” McGillivray had received a classical education in Charleston and possessed large plantation holdings, so he had “leisure to attend to the quer[i]es” and he had a “taste for natural history with a good library which he has collected will make that attention amusement for him.”¹⁶ Jefferson never followed Hawkins’s suggestion. Perhaps he shared the opinion of Henry Knox, who thought that McGillivray’s “abilities and ambition appear to be great,” but added that “his resentments are probably unbounded” against Georgia for confiscating the land of his Loyalist Scottish father.¹⁷

¹⁵ James Madison to TJ, 21 September 1788; William Vans Murray to TJ, 18 September 1792, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 13: 624-26; 24: 390. “Jefferson’s Vocabulary of the Unquachog Indians,” in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, vol. 20, pp. 467-70. Peter Stephen Du Ponceau labeled a Delaware vocabulary at the APS as being taken by Jefferson, but Boyd concludes that this is incorrect. This may have been a Delaware vocabulary recorded by Madison in Philadelphia in 1792. For this vocabulary, see Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, vol. 3 (1853), 424.

¹⁶ Benjamin Hawkins to TJ, 14 June 1786, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 9: 640-41; see also *ibid.*, 11: 201, 414; “Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1806,” *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* 9 (1916), 82, 84-85. *e Transformation of the Creek Nation, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 83.

¹⁷ For Knox’s opinion of McGillivray, see Henry Knox to George Washington, 6 July 1789, in W. W. Abbott, ed., *Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series*, 3: 124. Jefferson met McGillivray when the latter was attending the Treaty of New York. See “Creek Indian Chiefs whom Jefferson met at the Treaty of 1790,” in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 17: xxix.

Few commented directly on Jefferson's conjecture about New World antiquity. Edward Rutledge, a fellow delegate to the Second Continental Congress from South Carolina, advised Jefferson against jumping to such hasty conclusions, but he forwarded a friend's elaborate speculations as an alternative. "You seem to consider the quarter of the Globe from whence America was peopled, and the Manner, as now reduced to a certainty." Rutledge disagreed. "A Gentleman" of his acquaintance, who possessed "a great deal more learning, and a great deal more Sense than I have, is convinced that America was peopled from Carthage" and pointed to the "words of both, sounding alike, and conveying the same meaning." Jefferson tactfully admitted that there was "nothing impossible in his conjecture" and he was glad that the gentleman meant "to appeal to the similarity of language." Yet, even if affinities were found, "still a question would remain... which is the stock and which the shoot?" Further, if "there is a much greater number of radical languages among those of America, than among those of the other hemisphere, it would be a proof of superior antiquity which I can conceive no arguments strong enough to over-rule."¹⁸ Charles Thomson and Ezra Stiles, with whom he exchanged opinions regarding Indian origins, and the latter of whom had collected Indian vocabularies in the past, remained silent on Jefferson's theory.¹⁹ So did much of the rest of the republic of letters, at least initially. Possibly bored, possibly consumed with the avocations of government and retirement, Jefferson abandoned his vocabularies for much of the 1790s.

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Only one person attempted to refute Jefferson's heterodox position by undertaking an etymological collection and comparison of his own: Benjamin Smith Barton, whose early experiences acquainted him with Indian affairs and ethnology. He was born on the banks of the

¹⁸ Edward Rutledge to TJ, 23 October 1787; TJ to Edward Rutledge, 18 July 1788, 18 September 1789, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 12: 263-64; 13: 377-78; 15: 451-53.

¹⁹ See TJ to Ezra Stiles, 1 September 1786; Ezra Stiles to TJ, 14 September 1786; TJ to Charles Thomson, 20 September 1786, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 10: 316-17, 385-87; 12: 159-61 Edmund S. Morgan, *Gentle Puritan: The Life of Ezra Stiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 136-39, mentions that Stiles collected specimens of the languages still spoken at Groton and Barnstable.

Conestoga, near the site where Paxton Boys massacred a village of peaceful Indians in the aftermath of the Seven Years War. His father, the Anglican minister Thomas Barton, defended this slaughter as the self-defense of “*Freemen*” and “*King’s Subjects*” against “*Savage Traytors*” and “*cruel Monsters*.”²⁰ In 1785, Barton had accompanied his uncle, the astronomer David Rittenhouse, on a survey of Pennsylvania’s western boundary. On this journey, Barton witnessed the “stupendous eminence” of the mound at Grave Creek as well as negotiations between confederation officials (including Richard Butler) and Delawares, Wyandots, Chippewas, and Ottawas at Fort McIntosh, where the “general opinion” of the American officers was that “the Indians were, in a manner, ‘compelled’ to sign the treaty.”²¹ Silent on the Paxton Boys, later in life, Barton felt the “pride of a Pennsylvanian” because “a larger portion of this state was actually purchased of the Indian tribes than of any other state.”²²

Barton traveled to the University of Edinburgh to further his medical education and arrived at the height of Scottish Enlightenment, in which the most prominent studies were of man and society. During his time in Edinburgh, Barton devoted considerable attention to ethnological matters. He composed a set of *Observations on some Parts of Natural History* (1787) as well as “An Essay towards a Natural History of the North American Indians” (1789). Jefferson ordered a copy of the former for himself, perhaps after speaking with the young natural historian in person. While he was in Edinburgh, Barton also arranged to publish Samuel Stanhope Smith’s *Essays on*

²⁰ [Thomas Barton], *The Conduct of the Paxton-men, impartially represented* (Philadelphia, 1764), 12, 30. While Thomas Barton repeatedly vented along the above lines, he directed most of his resentment toward the “PHARASAICAL BOSOM OF QUAKERISM” in Philadelphia and Benjamin Franklin’s support of it. See *ibid.*, 9. On the transformation of Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania from the 1680s to the 1760s, see James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: Norton, 1999); Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). On Barton’s childhood, see Edgar Fahs Smith, “Benjamin Smith Barton,” *Historical Papers and Addresses of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 28 (1924): 59-66, at 59.

²¹ Benjamin Smith Barton, “Western Boundary Survey,” 12-26, 43-44; in “Journals” (1786-1805), typed and annotated by W. L. McAfee, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, American Philosophical Society [APS]. He uses the phrase “stupendous eminence” to describe Grave Creek in BSB, *Observations of some parts of Natural History; to which is prefaced an Account of several remarkable Vestiges of an ancient Date, which have been discovered in different parts of North America* (London, 1787), 19.

²² “Benjamin Smith Barton—Journal Fragments,” [undated], 21, in “American Indian Materials,” Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, Series II. Subject Files, Miscellaneous Notes and MSS., APS.

the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species. To which are added, Strictures on Lord Kames's Discourse on the Original Diversity of Mankind (1788).²³ When remembered at all, Smith is most often recalled as a proponent of an extreme version of environmentalism, which he used to explain how and why human beings descended from a common ancestor were physically different. However, the concluding portion of this book – the “Strictures” – targeted Henry Home, Lord Kames, and attempted to explain another kind of human difference: language.

In *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), Kames laid out what he thought was the most plausible explanation for the facts of human difference. “God created many pairs of the human race,” each possessing only their “natural talents,” from which each race would “gather knowledge from experience, and... form a language for itself.” However plausible, this explanation directly contradicted revelation. This left Babel, as “real history” and not as allegory, as “the only known fact that can reconcile sacred and profane history.” “That deplorable event reversed all nature: by scattering men over the face of all the earth, it deprived them of society” and reduced them to a state of savagery from which different nations emerged only gradually. If not for Babel, or the heterodox belief in primitive savagism, human beings would not be presently dispersed. Man’s natural sociability would have prevented social, and with it linguistic, separation. Both Smith and Barton believed Kames advocated primitive savagism. For support, Kames pointed to the “general embarrassment American origins has caused the learned.” Kames, like others, considered the “decisive” question to be “whether they speak the same language.” He cited “late accounts from Russia” that showed that “there is no affinity between the Kamskatkan

²³ For Barton’s visit and the subsequent book order, see Thomas Mann Randolph to TJ, 14 April 1787; TJ to Thomas Payne, in *ibid.*, 11: 292-93, 13: 651. On Barton bringing the book to press, see Winthrop D. Jordan, “Introduction” to *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species* by Samuel Stanhope Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), xvi-xvii.

tongue, and that of the Americans on the opposite side of the strait.” Thus, “the original inhabitants of American are a race distinct from all others.”²⁴

Smith, who would succeed his father-in-law John Witherspoon as president of the College of New Jersey in Princeton in 1795, rejected this account. He was certain that Kames “devoutly and fervently disbelieves all miraculous interposition of the Deity,” so Smith set out to prove that “in *the nature of things*, man would become savage, and language would become divided.” Smith argued from the historical record that all nations, at their earliest appearance, were civilized, the result of divine gifts. However, not all men remained so. Many would have wearied from the toil of agriculture and felt drawn to the forests to pursue pleasure and provision from the chase. This would have overpowered the “attachment” they may have once felt for society and it was thus that men became dispersed “through a boundless wilderness.” Smith needed only point to the American frontier, where “the descendents of Europeans...adopted the manners of the natives Indians, along with their mode of procuring subsistence.” Thus scattered, and savage, human beings would have neglected and at length forgotten any art but that of hunting. What words were passed down would be subject to “the usual flux of language” and each “new region, and every new climate,” which would have been many among a scattering people, “will present different ideas, and create different wants, that will naturally be expressed by various terms.” In short, “Diversity of language necessarily springs out of the savage state.”²⁵

Barton chewed on these issues even after his studies in Edinburgh came to an ignominious close amid rumors of embezzlement. He received no degree, but the University of

²⁴ Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1774), 1: 24, 38-44; 2: 70-74.

²⁵ Samuel Stanhope Smith, *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species. To which are added, Strictures on Lord Kames's Discourse on the Original Diversity of Mankind* (Edinburgh, 1788), 206, 210-11, 214-15. For the best close reading of Smith's *Essay*, though which neglects to consider the place of the “Strictures” (or Indians, or language) within it, see Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), chapter 2. For Barton's similar take on Kames, see Benjamin Smith Barton, “An Essay towards a Natural History of the North American Indians: being an attempt to describe, and to investigate the Causes of the Varieties in Figure, in Complexion, &c. among Mankind,” *Dissertations read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, vol. 23 (1789-90), 15.

Pennsylvania offered him the newly created professorship of natural history and botany upon his return to Philadelphia in 1789. Shortly thereafter, the American Philosophical Society, of which his uncle had succeeded Benjamin Franklin as president, named the twenty-four-year-old a member. He was active in the society for the next two decades, and among the interests he pursued most avidly in these years were his researches into ancient America.²⁶

Just as he had while in Edinburgh, Barton capitalized on his presumed ability to speak authoritatively on America, its people, and their antiquities from first-hand knowledge. He continued to cultivate ties to prominent European natural historians and to emphasize his own youthful steps to bring knowledge of American nature to the learned world. One such correspondent was Thomas Pennant, who had “all my life sought for a literary friend in North America.” Barton told him “that immense portions of the vast continent of America...remain to be explored.” He was proud of the accomplishments of Franklin and Rittenhouse, but he admitted: “We Americans are, as yet, but infants in Natural History. We have given birth to an Astronomer, and an Electrician; -- but providence has not, hitherto, given us a Linnaeus.” Barton himself aspired to the role of the great taxonomist, and by 1792 he informed Pennant, author of *Arctic Zoology*, that he was “labouring” at a work on “the Americans.”²⁷ Little more than a decade later, Barton could look back with satisfaction that “Many of the American languages have, however, been classed or arranged, and we begin to approach a systematic view of them.”²⁸

Barton turned to etymology because it was regarded as the most certain proof of ancient ties between distant nations. Only through language could Barton provide empirical evidence to refute Kames and other supporters of polygenetic theories, which denied at once Mosaic history

²⁶ On BSB being offered a position at the University of Pennsylvania, see Smith, “Benjamin Smith Barton,” 62. BSB is listed as a curator of the APS by 1793. See “List of the Officers,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s., 3 (1793), xxviii.

²⁷ Thomas Pennant to BSB, 17 October 1790, BSB Papers, Correspondence, 2, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; BSB to Thomas Pennant, 30 August 1790; BSB to Thomas Pennant, 25 June 1792, in BSB Papers, Series I. APS.

²⁸ BSB, “America,” in John Pinkerton, *Modern Geography. A Description of the Empires, Kingdoms, States, and Colonies; with the Oceans, Seas, and Isles; in all Parts of the World: including the most recent Discoveries, and Political Alterations* (Philadelphia, 1804), 2: 504 n.

and ancient ties between America and the old world. “Notwithstanding all the labours of the learned,” Barton declared in his first ethnological publication in 1787, “we are still much in the dark concerning the origin of the American nations.” He hoped that it was “reserved for the genius of some future American” to solve the puzzle of “the ancient history of the American nations.” The United States had only just “taken her station among the empires of the world” and her soil offered an “ample field” for natural history. It should be an American, he urged, who learned the “languages of the natives, compare them with those of the nations of the old world...It is thus only he can redeem the history of the origin of a people.”²⁹ Of the authors he cited, he found that opinion most clearly stated in Jefferson’s *Notes*, though in the coming years he found it supported and given philosophical justification in two books, which he cited prominently in his mature work.

Especially important to the development of Barton’s ethnology was Philip John von Strahlenberg’s account of his captivity among the nations northern and central Asia, which had been composed and translated into English several decades earlier. Strahlenberg provided the epigraph to Barton’s *New Views on the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America* (1797; 1798), the major result of his etymology: “The Transmigration of Nations is indeed a nice and ticklish Point to touch upon; But certain it is, that many difficulties would be removed, were the Advice of Leibniz followed, and a competent Knowledge obtained of the Languages of North-Asia.” In Strahlenberg, Barton discovered a vocabulary of the “Kalmuck-Mungalian” language that ran to more than 1400 words as well as a polyglot table that possessed a title as cumbersome as its leaves of folding pages. It was “*Harmonia Linguarum, or Specimen of some of the Numbers, and other Words of the Nations descended from the Tartar-and Hunno-Scythians, inhabiting the North-Eastern Part of Europe and Asia; from which, among other historical Circumstances, the Reader may see how they were formerly united, either among themselves, or with other Western nations.*” This stressed similarities in northeastern European and Asian words

²⁹ BSB, *Observations*, ii-v.

“especially in natural and original Things, before so many Arts, and such different Fashions arose” in distant nations and he hoped that future inquirers would make use of the table in their studies. He told his readers that these languages of Asia, along with their speakers’ manners and customs, “which these Nations have had, from Times immemorial, are not so liable to Change as those in Europe,” since their societies had not shared in scientific or commercial progress. Thus etymology, carefully undertaken, demonstrated the common descent of diverse nations; even “the *Franks* and the *Turks* were one and the same People.”³⁰ He also emphasized that he could have “added two Languages, used in *Nova Suecia*, or *Pennsylvania*,” which he suspected were related to those of “*Kamtschatki*,” but he had run out of room.

Another influential work, which Barton quoted at length in his *New Views* was Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, a Jesuit who argued that “Knowledge of the principal Languages of *America*” and comparing them with old world languages offered the “Way of ascending to the Original of nations, which is the least equivocal.” Barton found assurance that linguistic comparison was “far from being so difficult as might be imagined.” Since “Travellers and Missionaries” formed grammars and vocabularies, all one had to do was compile the available materials and compare them with the languages of the old world. Manners, customs, religion, and traditions, undergo “sudden, frequent...surprising Revolutions,” to a much greater degree than speech. In “Spite of the Changes, introduced by Custom” in language, “they have not lost

³⁰ Philip John von Strahlenberg, *An Historico-Geographical Description of the North and Eastern Parts of Europe and Asia; but more particularly of Russia, Siberia, and Great Tartary; both in their Ancient and Modern State: together with an entire New Polyglot-Table of the Dialects of 32 Tartarian Nations: and a Vocabulary of the Kalmuck-Mungalian Tongue. As also, a large and accurate Map of those Countries; and a Variety of Cuts, representing Asiatick-Scythian Antiquities* (London, 1738), facsimile edition (New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1970), iv-v, 59-61. 80. Epigraph quoted in BSB, “Preliminary Discourse,” *New Views*, i. In his enlightening account of the study of language in the eighteenth century, Hans Aarsleff has emphasized that Leibniz’s linguistic work was not as influential as it might have been because his *Nouveaux Essais* was not published until 1765. This ignores the fact that Germanic explorers and writers were using Leibniz’s etymological ideas in publications that were translated into French or English before his own writings. See Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 69, 95. Barton also found useful non-linguistic information in Strahlenberg, particularly relating to albinism. See Frank Spencer, “Two Unpublished Essays on the Anthropology of North America by Benjamin Smith Barton,” *Isis* 68 (1977): 567-73, at 572.

every Thing by which they are distinguished from others.” Thus, “from the Rivulets arising from the principal Springs, I mean the Dialects, we may ascend to the Mother Tongues themselves.” Drawing on Jean-Baptiste Abbé Du Bos’s *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, Charlevoix argued that “Mother Tongues” were “formed from nature” and thus “contain a greater Number of Words imitating the Things whereof they are Signs.” Because these mother tongues were made up of natural signs, they were more “nervous” (meaning “forcible”) than dialects that had diverged from them, and thus they resisted to alteration by custom. This led Charlevoix to conclude that “if those characteristic Marks are found in the *American* Languages, we cannot reasonably doubt of their being truly original; and, consequently, that the People who speak them have passed into that Hemisphere, a short Time after the first Dispersion of Mankind; especially if they are entirely unknown in our Continent.”³¹

Barton acknowledged that he thought physical characteristics and manners were more lasting, and thus more important, than Charlevoix allowed. Barton especially stressed the value of Indian traditions, which, although they could not be “preserved long in a pure, unvitiated stream, still retained crucial evidence of from whence they came.” This was particularly important because Barton thought, like Jefferson, that although language was the crucial test for determining if two nations were related, language alone “tells us not which was the parent stock.”³² Yet, from 1787 onward, he “endeavoured to discover, whether there was any resemblance between the American and Asiatic languages. But although I devoted a good deal of time to the inquiry, I met with but little success.” Though languages could be the means to ascertain national affinities, one needed a wealth of specimens: “a solitary word, although the very same in the refined courts of BRITAIN and FRANCE, and in the rude society of an

³¹ See P. de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America. Undertaken by Order of the French King [1761]* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966), 49-50, 52. For the source of Charlevoix’s idea of natural “Mother Tongues,” which he explicitly cites, see [Jean-Baptiste] Abbe Du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music. With an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Theatrical Entertainments of the Ancients* (London, 1748), 1: 251-55. Charlevoix quoted in BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” vii-viii, xi-xii.

³² BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” xii, xv.

ESQUIMAUX tribe, is certainly of no importance whatever in elucidating the origin of either one or the other.”³³ The materials he had at hand were insufficient, until, upon his return to Philadelphia, he obtained access to old, “very mutilated vocabularies of the languages of some of the American tribes” and began seeking out new linguistic information from the frontier and from Indians as they passed through the city.³⁴

One of his earliest opportunities arrived in the form of the Creek chief Alexander McGillivray, who, along with more than a score of other Creeks, passed through Philadelphia in July 1790 on his way to negotiations. The resulting Treaty of New York (1790) allowed the federal government to focus its resources in prosecuting war against the western confederacy north of the Ohio, it asserted federal responsibility for Indian affairs in lands next explicitly under federal territorial government, and it established the pattern for U.S. encouragement of “civilization.” McGillivray was a man both powerful and marginal. At the time of his death, he possessed a huge estate, amassed through slave plantation agriculture and politically granted monopolies in trade (and possibly through defrauding the Creek nation at the Treaty of New York); but those very possessions symbolized and exacerbated divisions within the Creek nation regarding the desirable extent of social change. Through his mother, he was a Creek of the Wind clan; yet he lacked the tattoos of a hunter and warrior that marked other Creek men, and while he spoke flawless English, he may have needed an interpreter to address other Creeks.³⁵ Ignorant of such things, Barton was excited by the prospect of speaking to a man who “spoke the sentiments of the Indians,” requested an introduction to McGillivray, and “had a good deal of conversation with him,” from which Barton likely obtained Muskogee words and traditions.³⁶

³³ BSB, *Observations*, 45-46. BSB cited TJ twice in this, his first publication. See *ibid.*, 22-23, 70.

³⁴ BSB, *New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America*, 2d. ed. (Philadelphia, 1798), xxiii.

³⁵ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69-70, 75-79, 83, 192. On the significance of the Treaty of New York (1790), see *ibid.*, 80-81, 167-69; Green, “Expansion of European Colonization to the Mississippi Valley,” 474-75.

³⁶ See “Barton, New Views, misc. notes # 3, Folder 6” in BSB Papers, Series II. American Indian Materials, APS. In this same undated fragment filed with other notes that appear to have been kept for his

Barton also sought vocabularies from northern nations. He realized that officers in the army, stationed in or on the fringes of Indian country, possessed good opportunities for collecting information. Among the officers from whom Barton profited was “General Gibson, of Fort-Pitt,” who provided Barton with a Shawnee vocabulary. This was probably John Gibson, an Indian trader and state and federal official who was thought by many to be the authority on Shawnees among U.S. officials.³⁷ But military officers were not the only reliable sources of information on the frontier. Barton wrote to the Moravian bishop Charles Gotthold Reichel, commenting that “some of the Brethren have had considerable intercourse with the Indians of our continent, and, I doubt not, are in possession of vocabularies of their languages. Every thing of this kind I should be happy to receive, and to acknowledge.”³⁸ It was probably through the Reichel’s offices that Barton opened a correspondence with John Heckewelder.³⁹

The subjects of their correspondence were varied. They ranged from the difficulties of preserving rattlesnakes in rye whiskey; the “great curiosity: a white negro” then in Philadelphia and his analogy to the Cherokee tradition of encountering “a race of dwarfish white people” when they first settled in their current location; to the coveted secret to “the Indian method of making Huckleberry-Bread.” They became friends and Heckewelder “more than once pictured us

never-finished capstone work, Barton recorded meeting McGillivray in July 1780. This cannot be correct, since Barton would have been only 14 years old and McGillivray would have been attempting to lead his people during the war. He must have meant 1790, when McGillivray would have passed through Philadelphia sometime around July of that year on his way to the negotiations at New York, which produced a treaty that was signed on August 7. I say “likely” obtained Muskogee words and traditions from McGillivray at this time because there is no record of a written responses from the Creek chief, yet Barton cites him as providing a Creek tradition in *New Views* and in the same text, he includes a “Muskohge” word among those he himself recorded. See BSB, *New Views of the Tribes and Nations of America*, “Preliminary Discourse,” lxviii.

³⁷ On “General Gibson” sending Barton a vocabulary, see BSB, *NewViews*, x. On John Gibson, see TJ, Notes 228, 300-01, n. 3-4. Albert Gallatin noted: “Gibson, with whom I was well acquainted, the interpreter of Logan’s speech, an old Indian trader, and who had lived for years with a Shawnee woman as if his wife, was considered as the American best acquainted with that dialect.” See Albert Gallatin to Peter S. Du Ponceau, 3 July 1838, Du Ponceau Correspondence, Box 2, Folder 9, HSP.

³⁸ BSB to Charles Gotthold Reichel, 2 September 1793, Correspondence, 18, BSB Papers, HSP.

³⁹ For BSB’s citation of Sergeant and his acknowledgment of Heckewelder’s crucial role in his researches, see BSB, *New Views*, “Preface,” ix; and “Appendix,” 16.

together traversing the Western Wilderness.”⁴⁰ As importantly, Heckewelder was happy to serve as an intermediary between the United Brethren and the American Philosophical Society, and more broadly, between the religious and scientific uses of Indian language study. It was role that he would continue to play well into the nineteenth century, long after Barton had passed on and his methods had been replaced. Heckewelder was convinced that it was to missionaries that the men of science should look for accurate information about Indians, since they lived among them and were free, he insisted, of partiality. Missionaries “ought...[to be] credited above all,” and without them no author could offer “the Public any authentic accounts.”⁴¹

In early 1794 Heckewelder sent several manuscripts to Barton, and at least four times in the following year Barton requested linguistic information from him, specifically on the languages of the Catawbas and Nanticokes, and further north, those of the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, and Six Nations.⁴² Through Heckewelder, Barton came into contact with the work of John Christopher Pylaeus, who had compiled a Mohawk vocabulary earlier in the century, and with the work of his most prolific student, Zeisberger.⁴³ Heckewelder also was the medium through which Barton hoped to gain access to the United Brethren’s increasing linguistic knowledge. The missionary mediated requests, both of which proved abortive, that Barton made to Christian Dencke among the Chippewas of Canada and John Gambold among the Cherokees.⁴⁴ Barton acknowledged: “My work will owe much to your knowledge, and liberality.”⁴⁵

Barton had collected the requisite materials through a network of correspondents, by poring through the published accounts of travelers and missionaries (including obscure tracts

⁴⁰ For the miscellaneous topics, see, respectively, BSB to Heckewelder, 6 September 1795, 29 August 1796, 17 April 1800, Letters of Scientists, 1655-1812; Heckewelder to BSB, 9 April 1798, in Series I, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, APS.

⁴¹ Heckewelder to BSB, 4 March 1805, BSB Papers, Series I.

⁴² For the linguistic inquiries, see BSB to Heckewelder, 22 March 1794, 15 August 1795, 6 September 1795, 2 December 1795, 13 January 1796, in Letters of Scientists.

⁴³ BSB to Heckewelder, 11 February 1798, 14 February 1798, Letters of Scientists; “Zeisberger, D. – Onondaga Dictionary,” BSB Papers, Series II, American Indian Materials.

⁴⁴ Heckewelder recalled his role in facilitating Barton’s requests from these two missionaries later in life. See Heckewelder to Peter Stephen Du Ponceau, 3 September 1818, 13 September 1821, in Heckewelder-Du Ponceau Correspondence, American Philosophical Society.

⁴⁵ BSB to Heckewelder, 15 January 1794, Dreer Collection, Physicians, 1: 25, HSP.

dealing with the Mahican language and history by the younger Jonathan Edwards and the Mahican chief and erstwhile U.S. commissioner, Hendrick Aupaumut), and by taking his own vocabularies from Indians passing through Philadelphia.⁴⁶ Barton was sure that by comparing the words of the American languages, one with another, he could demonstrate that there were only a few radically distinct languages and that they shared a common descent. Using a comparative vocabulary, which consisted initially of fifty-four words and later expanded to seventy, not all of which matched the words contained in Jefferson's much lengthier vocabulary, Barton compared the American languages with those found in Asia. He could do this more fully when, in 1796, Joseph Priestley gave him a copy of the comparative vocabulary Pallas had compiled for Catherine the Great.⁴⁷ He published *New Views* hastily in 1797 and substantially enlarged it in a second edition the following year.⁴⁸

In his preface, Barton noted that "religious prejudices... have only tended to obscure the question" of Indian origins.⁴⁹ However, he targeted writers such as Bernard Romans who had

⁴⁶ On his use of Edwards and Aupaumut, see BSB, *New Views*, "Preliminary Discourse," xxi, xciii; "Appendix," 29. In some journal fragments from a journey to New Stockbridge and elsewhere circa 1797, Barton noted: "Captain Hendricks, the principal Indian chief of the village, whom I had formerly known in Philadelphia, received me with kindness, and treated me with hospitality." See *MSS. Notes*, Page [Folder] 113, 98. In the preface to *New Views*, BSB informs his readers that any words that are italicized, he has taken from a published source or from what friends had provided him; any foreign words in roman type he had collected himself, "the greater part of them as they were pronounced by the Indians themselves." See BSB, *New Views*, "Preface," viii. By this criteria, BSB collected vocabularies (or at least "specimens") at some point in time from Cherokees, Mohawks, Creeks, Potawatomies, Unami Delawares (whom he called the "Wunaumeeh tribe"), Wyandots, Oneidas, Cayugas, Senecas, Tuscaroras, Choctaws, Catawbias, and "Cochnewagos," or at least from whites who claimed first-hand knowledge of that language. See BSB, *New Views*, "Preliminary Discourse," lxiii, lxvii, lxviii, lxxxii; "Appendix," 5, 13, 20, 22, 26.

⁴⁷ See Joseph Priestley to BSB, 9 June 1796, 17 November 1800, BSB Papers, Correspondence, 27, 46, HSP; BSB to TJ, 25 October 1796, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 29: 201. Whereas Jefferson's own vocabulary was 280 words, Barton compared only 54 in the first edition of *New Views* and 70 in the second edition. Of these 70, 19 words did not correspond to words Jefferson had included in his much larger list: God, Heaven, Virgin, Forehead, Skin, Flesh, Love, Morning, Evening, Leaf, River, Dog, Bird, Fish, Bread, Horn, House, Thou, There. Instead of "Virgin" and "Thou," Jefferson used "Girl" and "You." For the rest, there were no correspondences. John Greene has noted that Barton's word list followed the word order in Pallas's *Lexicons*, but only for those 70 words. See Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 379.

⁴⁸ Because Barton expanded on the second edition so considerably in such a brief elapse from the initial publication, I ignore the first edition, which he kept mostly verbatim, only enlarging the preface by about ten pages and adding about thirty pages of explanatory notes in an appendix. See BSB, "Preface," *New Views*, xxi. For Barton's dissatisfaction with the first edition, see BSB to Heckewelder, 4 December 1798, Letters to Scientists, APS.

⁴⁹ BSB, *New Views*, "Preliminary Discourse," civ-cvii, cix, iii.

suggested that “the Americans are in strict language the aborigines of the soil, and not emigrants from other parts of the world.”⁵⁰ Barton also turned to the two men who had given the most recent sustained attention to what Indian languages revealed of Indian origins: Jefferson and the Spanish-American Jesuit Francisco Xavier Clavigero, each of whom Barton quoted at length. The latter described the “American languages” as entirely distinct from the languages of Asia; the former described them as entirely different among themselves. Both presented those descriptions to refute the assertion of Buffon and his followers that America was a literal “new world.”⁵¹ Whereas Jefferson had suggested that American linguistic diversity relative to that of Asia suggested that the former had colonized the latter, Clavigero argued that this linguistic diversity proved that the ancient inhabitants of America were “descended from different nations, or from different families, dispersed after the confusion of tongues.” Clavigero suggested that it was impossible for a nation to “alter its primitive language to such a degree, or multiply its dialects so variously, that there should not be...an affinity between them, or some traces left of their origin.” This was especially true since “the Americans...shew great firmness and constancy in retaining their languages.” From this, Clavigero concluded: “The Americans do not derive their origin from any people now existing in the ancient world, or at least there [are] no grounds to affirm it,” and so, authors would “labour in vain” to use language to seek the affinities of nations.⁵²

Barton was sympathetic to the impulse that prodded both Jefferson and Clavigero to make their claims for American antiquity. Indeed, he called the “physical infancy of America,”

⁵⁰ BSB, “Preliminary Discourse,” in *New Views*, iv-vii.

⁵¹ Cañizares-Esguerra refers to this critique of European philosophy as a “patriotic epistemology” in which “the foreign observer appeared as nemesis of the learned clerical witness.” He mistakenly claims that Jefferson, among other British American writers failed “to offer any comprehensive methodological response to the negative views of America proposed by authors such as Buffon, de Pauw, Raynal, and Robertson.” See Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 206-10. The “nemesis” was the U.S. citizenry, whose observations would overthrow the corruptions of European philosophy as surely as they did those corruptions of the political system. For general context, see Andrew J. Lewis, “A Democracy of Facts, An Empire of Reason: Swallow Submersion and Natural History in the Early American Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 62 (2005): 663-96, at 677-79.

⁵² BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” xx-xxiii. For the original remarks, see Clavigero, *History of Mexico*, 2: 208-10. BSB quoted the section from *Notes*, discussed above, in which TJ suggested an American origin in BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” xviii-xx.

asserted by Buffon and Erasmus Darwin, “among the many dreams of the slumbering philosophers of our time.”⁵³ Like Jefferson, Barton intended to correct the “errors and extravagancies” that had been heretofore presented. While in medical school, Barton gave an address in which he lumped “the elegant Principal of this University,” William Robertson, whose “history of America is, after its eloquence, remarkable for nothing so much, as for its errors in Natural History,” with the speculations of Buffon and the rest. Those philosophers had not made any first-hand observations and instead relied upon men who been blinded by their religious and material interests. “It is not,” Barton was adamant, “from the writings of Jesuits and Buccaneers, that we can expect to derive much real information concerning the Natural History of Man.”⁵⁴

Yet he rejected the conclusions of both Jefferson and Clavigero. In response to Clavigero’s assertion that there were no traces of affinity between the languages of the old world and the new, Barton argued that “the comparative vocabularies which are published in this memoir, seem to render it certain, that the nations of America and those of Asia have a common origin. I flatter myself that this point is now established with some degree of certainty.”⁵⁵ He claimed to have discovered in America words belonging to the Caucasian tribes of Asia’s southwestern mountains, the Semoyeds of arctic Asia, the Tartars and Mongols of the steppes, the Boureti, Toungoosi, and Tschuktschi of Siberia, the Japanese, the Gypsies, “the Yolofs (one of the blackest nations of Africa),” as well as Jews and Chaldeans, Arabians and Armenians, Syrians and Assyrians. Barton could not contain his enthusiasm: “Unequivocal vestiges of the languages of all these nations, so celebrated in the ancient annals of mankind; so interesting to the historian

⁵³ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” cviii. Among the other fantastic philosophical misrepresentations Barton confronted in his linguistic work was the notion that the Indians were descended from the Welsh prince Magog. Thomas Pennant was looking for affirmation that a number of his countrymen were deluded in this regard. Barton put him at ease: “Be assured, it is a fable.” See Thomas Pennant to BSB, 14 June 1792, BSB Papers, Correspondence, 8, HSP; BSB to Thomas Pennant, 12 September 1792, 26 May 1793, BSB Papers, APS.

⁵⁴ BSB, “An Essay towards a Natural History of the North American Indians: being an attempt to describe, and to investigate the Causes of the Varieties in Figure, in Complexion, &c. among Mankind,” *Dissertations read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, vol. 23 (1789-90), 4-6. Jefferson expressed similar opinions about this quartet; see TJ to Chastellux, 7 June 1785, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 8: 184-85.

⁵⁵ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” lxxxviii.

of the revolutions and fortunes of his species, are to be found in the languages both of North and South-America!!”⁵⁶ He did not think that all Indians came from a common source. As he noted to himself in 1797: “I have, long since, been persuaded that it is a folly to suppose, that any American tribe is exclusively descended from any one tribe or nation of the world.”⁵⁷

So too did Barton reject Jefferson’s opinion that America possessed great linguistic diversity. It was “universally admitted, that the language of the Six-Nations and that of the Delawares and their brethren are radically different,” but, Barton insisted, he had “grounds for asserting that these languages are not radically different.”⁵⁸ While “it is not easy to point out any languages which are more distant from each other as these,” he took inspiration from Pallas, who had found similarities in the languages as far apart as those of the Semoyads and the tribes of the Caucasus Mountains. Barton pointed to two important affinities. First, was the resemblance in their terms for the number six, which in Pampticough was called *Who-yeoc*, and in Tuscarora, *Houeyoc*. Secondly, Barton pointed to the heavens. Taking words for “star,” he found the end of the Onondaga word (*Otschischtenochqua*) to be quite similar to that of the Narragansetts (*Anockquus*). He concluded, along with many of his readers, no doubt, that “these affinities are neither numerous nor very striking,” but they were affinities nonetheless.⁵⁹

Barton did not stop there. He also found that these now-related northern nations were also related to the languages of the southern United States: “I now find many words in common to the languages of the Muskhohge or Creeks and the Cheerake. We shall immediately see that the affinities between the Creek and Tuscarora language are very striking, so that in this way, independently of the others, we show that the Cheerake language is not radically different from that of the Six-Nations.” David Zeisberger had commented on his belief that Cherokee was

⁵⁶ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” lxxv- lxxvii, lxxxi-lxxxii, lxxxv ; “Appendix,” 25, 28-29.

⁵⁷ BSB, MSS. Notes, Page [Folder]126, 229-30, BSB Papers, HSP

⁵⁸ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” lxv-lxvi.

⁵⁹ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse, lxvi-lxvii; “Appendix,” 17-18. BSB also included a comparative table, entitled “Specimen of a comparison of the languages of the Delaware-Stock and those of the Six-Nations.” See BSB, *New Views*, “Appendix,” 20.

similar to Iroquois. Captain John Norton, the son of a Cherokee father and white woman who was raised in Scotland became a scriptural translator and protégé to Joseph Brant, recorded in 1809: “Some old Cherokees say that Nottowegui or Five Nations, and their Ancestors, as also the ancient Cherokees spoke a similar language; but, separating, it gradually varied until it finally became unintelligible to each other.”⁶⁰ When two Catawba Indians came through Philadelphia in 1798, Barton took the opportunity to take down a vocabulary. Not surprisingly, he was not surprised by the results. He found that their words “radically the same with the Delaware” and related to words in Cherokee, Muskogee, and Woccon. Even more significantly, Barton stressed that “the Katahba and Mexican words for the hair of the head have some affinity to each other. In the language of the former, it is Nee-skonse; in that of the latter, it is *Tzontli*.”⁶¹

Barton admitted that “the reader will readily discover the great chasms, or desiderata, of my vocabularies.” He also recognized the skepticism with which some might approach his work and acknowledged the difficulty of finding affinities in the fragments of innumerable languages.⁶² So he proposed two solutions. Since “nothing is more common than for Indian traders, interpreters, or other persons to assert, that such languages bear no relation to each other: because, it seems, that the persons speaking them cannot always understand one another,” Barton urged “candour, as well as caution” in drawing conclusions from vocabularies, since “the affinities of languages are not to be discovered by a superficial view of them.”⁶³

⁶⁰ BSB, *New Views*, “Appendix,” 21; Duane H. King, “Who Really Discovered the Cherokee-Iroquois Linguistic Relationship,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 2 (1977): 401-04, at 403. Barton is recognized as the first to publish this opinion. See Lyle Campbell, *American Indian Languages: The Historical Languages of Native America* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 34. The accomplishment is tempered by the fact that he saw common descent between all the world’s languages. It was not accepted as scientifically demonstrated until the work of Horatio Hale late in the nineteenth century, which recognized an Iroquoian “grammatical skeleton” that abounded with words borrowed from other, neighbor, nations. See Mary R. Haas, “The Problem of Classifying American Indian Languages: From Duponceau to Powell,” in *Language, Culture, History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), 146-47.

⁶¹ BSB, *New Views*, “Appendix,” 22-23. Ives Goddard has stated that this was the first published information on the Catawba language. See Ives Goddard, “The Description of the Native Languages of North America Before Boas” in Ives Goddard, ed., *Languages*, vol. 17 of William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 23.

⁶² BSB, *New Views*, “Preface,” xi-xii.

⁶³ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” lxxxiv-lxxxv.

Even more dramatically, Barton emphasized that his “principal argument” for the common origin of the different American languages could not be found in the Americas. U.S. inquirers would have to transgress the traditional division of labor in the republic of letters. Barton pointed to the old world: “in Asia the language of the confederates [Six Nations] and the languages of the tribes of the Delaware-stock may all be traced to ONE COMMON SOURCE.” This led Barton to an “obvious and interesting” inference: “HITHERTO WE HAVE NOT DISCOVERED MORE THAN ONE RADICAL LANGUAGE IN THE TWO AMERICAS.”⁶⁴ Similarly, Barton stressed the affinities between Mexican words and those in the languages of the Sioux (whom he called “Naudowessies”), Acadians, Catawbas, and the Indians of the isthmus of Darien. “After all, the resemblances between these languages,” Barton admitted, “are very inconsiderable.” This could only be overcome by “an examination of the sources of these languages in Asia.” Barton was confident: “We shall here find, that the language of Montezuma may be traced to the languages of the Persians, the Curdi, the Arabs, the Tartars, the Vogoulitchi, and other nations, from whence are derived considerable portions of the languages of the Delaware-stock, the Six-Nations, the Cheerake, the Creeks, the Chikkasah, Choktah, and many other tribes, in North and South-America.”⁶⁵

Barton acknowledged that there was greater apparent linguistic diversity in America than in Asia. He thought it was “a circumstance extremely interesting, and difficult to account for” that the Mexican language appeared more similar to Asian languages than it did to other American languages. Nor was it unique in this regard: “many of the languages of America, which can be shown to be radically the same, have lost more of their parental resemblances than the Asiatic languages,” particularly those “from which the languages of America appear to be more especially derived.” However, Barton pointed to a flaw in the logic Jefferson had used to argue for the Americans’ greater antiquity. Simply because there was greater linguistic diversity

⁶⁴ BSB, *New Views*, “Appendix,” 18-19.

⁶⁵ BSB, *New Views*, “Appendix,” 24-25.

in America than in Asia did not necessarily mean that America had been populated at a more ancient date or that the native population of Asia was descended from the Indians. “It would seem to prove no more,” Barton argued, than that “the Americans...have been longer separated from each other in America, than the Asiatics...have been separated from each other in Asia.” That the Americans were descended from Asians, Barton thought proven by Indian traditions (including Aupaumut’s written history), which recounted a western migration and by the movement of the Toltecs and Shawnees, among others, detailed in the historical record.⁶⁶

Drawing on Clavigero’s observation of the “firmness and constancy” of the Indians in retaining their languages, and implicitly contradicting Jefferson’s emphasis on linguistic separation in America, Barton asserted that the many American languages had changed less in a century and a half than did “the generality of the polished languages” spoken in Europe. From this, Barton drew an important conclusion: “Since, then, the languages of America are so gradual in their change, it will appear probable that many hundred, perhaps three or four thousand, years have been necessary to produce the difference of dialects, which we observe between many American and Asiatic nations.” Barton acknowledged Clavigero’s arguments for the remoteness of American settlement: the absence in America of useful arts known in Asia; the presence of traditions regarding the Deluge and the confusion of tongues, but none of later events; and the absence in Asia of any knowledge of America or any tradition relating the migration of others into an unknown land. However, Barton thought it was best to “rest their antiquity upon...the little resemblance that is to be found between their languages and those of the old-world.”⁶⁷ Despite his prefatory remark, he offered an account of American antiquity that not only confirmed the scripturally sanctioned account of human origins in Asia but also confirmed the traditional dating of the world to six thousand years. He offered tortured etymological

⁶⁶ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” xc-xciii

⁶⁷ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” cvi-cvii, cix. For the biblical chronology, calculated by the Norman-Irish archbishop James Ussher, see Thomas R. Trautmann, “The Revolution in Ethnological Time,” *Man* 27 (1992): 379-97, at 386.

similarities to argue for the Asian origin of Americans, then claimed that the obvious dissimilarity of words in those scattered languages proved America's great antiquity.

* * *

Barton's publication spurred Jefferson to renewed efforts in collecting vocabularies. Jefferson had sent out an initial flurry of requests for vocabularies, with limited immediate success, while he was preparing *Notes* for publication, but there are no extant requests for vocabularies by Jefferson in the decade following 1786. The years between 1785 and 1797 were busy for Jefferson, encompassing his eventful years of diplomacy and distractions in Paris and in opposing what he saw as Alexander Hamilton's systematic plan to consolidate and anglicize the federal government in Philadelphia.⁶⁸ Jefferson renewed his researches almost immediately upon Barton's publication of *New Views* and attempted to use the American Philosophical Society to facilitate his studies. Then serving in Philadelphia as vice-president of the United States and president of the society, Jefferson organized a committee of the latter "to collect information respecting the past and present state of this country." Noticeably absent from the committee was Barton. As president of the society and chairman of the committee, it is possible that Jefferson

⁶⁸ Barton presented Jefferson with a copy of *New Views* on 16 May 1797; see TJ to BSB, 17 May 1797, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 29: 367-68. Although there are no written requests in the preceding decade, TJ did record his own vocabulary and receive packets for which there are no extant requests in these years. See James Madison to TJ, 21 September 1788; "Vocabulary of the Unquachog Indians," 14 June 1791; William Vans Murray to TJ, 18 September 1792, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 13: 624-26, 20: 467-70, 24: 389-90. Barton had disagreed with Jefferson as early as his "Observations and Conjectures," but although this was read before the society in May 1796, it was not published in the society's *Transactions* until 1799. Jefferson did not return to Philadelphia, to take his seat as Vice-President, until March 1797, so it is unclear whether Jefferson knew about this essay before he knew about *New Views*. On when Barton gave that paper, see BSB, "Observations and Conjectures concerning certain Articles which were taken out of an ancient Tumulus, or Grave, at Cincinnati, in the County of Hamilton, and Territory of the United-States, North-West of the River Ohio, in a letter from Benjamin Smith Barton, to Joseph Priestley," in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s. 4 (1799). Ironically, this was the same issue in which the historical committee published its circular letter. For Jefferson's return to Philadelphia, see Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 560.

opposed Barton's participation. Considering Jefferson's sensitivity to public criticism, Barton's attempted public refutation of Jefferson may have been grounds enough for excluding him.⁶⁹

The historical committee published a circular letter in the society's 1799 *Transactions*. Despite the committee's assurances that "the American Philosophical Society have always considered the antiquity, changes, and present state of their own country as primary objects of their research," in reality the society, founded in 1745, had already begun its sixth decade before members established a committee devoted to historical pursuits. The committee's objects were fourfold: procuring skeletons of mammoths and other "unknown animals"; obtaining drawings of the fortifications, tumuli, and "Indian works of art"; studying the physical history of the earth; and inquiring into the "Customs, Manners, Languages and Character of the Indian nations, ancient and modern, and their migrations." The committee offered suggestions on collecting fossils and excavating the "mounds," but it offered no such advice for collecting ethnographic or linguistic materials. Despite the testimony of many who had tried recording Indian vocabularies, the committee believed that any curious American was competent to observe and record the phenomena of nature, including the arts of savage life. It assured any would-be contributors that "the best methods of obtaining information...will naturally suggest themselves to you."⁷⁰

Jefferson also encouraged others to prosecute similar enquiries, especially in the south and west. Apologizing for interrupting his attention to national affairs "at this alarming and

⁶⁹ Anthony Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 151-60, notes that Jefferson's organization of the historical committee was an attempt to regain prominence in studying Indians. In hindsight, the committee had other notable absences as well. John Heckewelder, Nicholas Collin, Peter Stephen Du Ponceau, and Albert Gallatin each indulged interests in inquiries centered on Indian languages (for the latter two, mainly later in life) and none of them were on the historical committee, although each of these men were members of the society at the time. For the society's membership rolls at the time, see *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s. 3 (1794), xxviii-xxxii; 4 (1799), xv.

⁷⁰ "Circular Letter," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s. 4 (1799), xxxvii-xxxix. For Barton's and Charlevoix's belief that taking vocabularies would be easy, see BSB, *New Views*, "Preliminary Discourse," viii. Andrew Lewis has described this confidence in Americans to faithfully observe natural phenomena, not shared by all, as a "democracy of facts." See Lewis, "A Democracy of Facts, An Empire of Reason." Jefferson had suggested to Charles Thomson that the APS should publish theory-free descriptions of the mounds in an effort to decide whether they were related to the teocalli of Mexico, but he still expressed the opinion that language was a more definitive test. See TJ to Thomson, 20 September 1787, Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 12: 159.

eventful period,” as drums beat for war against France, William Linn, director of the New-York Missionary Society, asked about ethnology. Jefferson used the occasion to recommend the use of his printed form. He even asked his son-in-law to send him two of his blank vocabularies, which were “either in a box on the floor of my study in the right hand as you enter, or in the Walnut presses standing on the top of my desk” at Monticello. Perhaps thinking of Barton’s competing word collecting, which used a different vocabulary, he stressed, “[uni]formity in the vocabularies is essential” to the object.⁷¹ Linn politely observed that Jefferson’s “opinion as to the languages of the Indians differs from what is asserted” elsewhere. The younger Jonathan Edwards and George Henry Loskiel (repeating Zeisberger), identified “only two languages radically different.” Linn admitted that there were “a great variety of dialects,” but stressed that “that information comes chiefly from illiterate captives, traders & interpreters--& that petty tribes are known to affect to be a distinct nation and have a distinct language.” Jefferson avoided contradicting his present, and he hoped future, correspondent. His opinion about the American origins of Asians did not rest “on such foundations as to give me entire reliance on it,” but he did not withdraw it.⁷²

The directors of the society issued their missionaries copies of Jefferson’s blank vocabulary and instructed them to “take pains to acquire, as soon and as much as you can, a knowledge of the Indian language, that so you may not be subjected to the inconvenience, and, perhaps, to the unskillfulness or unfaithfulness of interpreters,” for all that related to Indians possessed “real utility.”⁷³ Although the missionaries of the NYMS were expecting much less linguistic diversity to result from a collection and study of the vocabularies than was the man who

⁷¹ William Linn to TJ, 25 May 1797; TJ to William Linn, 5 February 179[8]; TJ to Thomas Mann Randolph, 15 February 1798 in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 29: 400; 30: 81, 114. In the first letter, Linn also included a circular letter requesting any assistance in compiling these materials, which was published in *The TimePiece and Literary Companion*, vol. 1, 19 May 1797, 118.

⁷² See William Linn to TJ, 8 February 1798; TJ to William Linn, 2 April 1798; William Linn to TJ, 4 April 1798, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 30: 86-87, 238, 243. Although Barton had Priestley’s copy of the *Linguarum totius orbis vocabularia comparativa* (or *Comparative Lexicons*), Jefferson never saw it. See Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 379, 384, 458 n.18.

⁷³ “Instructions from the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society, to the Missionaries among the Indians,” *New-York Missionary Magazine*, 1 January 1800, 18, 20.

devised the printed form, the society's efforts promised to augment the materials that Jefferson could draw on to make his comparisons.

He received other linguistic materials from western and southern states and territories as well. David Campbell sent a Cherokee vocabulary and Benjamin Hawkins sent others from the South. The latter had consulted the Creek chief Oche Haujo, or Alexander Cornells, whose father had been a Scottish trader. Hawkins considered him "the purest source" for the language and "one of our greatest orators." In the endeavor he was assisted by other chiefs and by Timothy Barnard, Hawkins' assistant and interpreter. The Chickasaw words came from a man of that nation "who has resided several years among the Creeks," and Hawkins had taken down the Choctaw words "some time past from a lad of that nation who spoke English." Daniel Smith also recorded a Chickasaw vocabulary. He did not have Jefferson's printed form, but he "took down as many as could think of in the time the Indian family was with me one evening."⁷⁴

Demonstrating the interest and importance of the project, Jefferson sent this series of requests in June 1799 and March 1800, as he was occupied in trying to direct opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts, grow the Republican coalition, and prepare for the election of 1800. Fortunately, he was vice-president, so he had the time.

Jefferson continued to believe language offered the best means to trace history, and thus support his theory of America's more ancient population, and he still found no affinities among various Indian languages, despite the "proofs" Barton had introduced. He explained that "some others in this quarter," had already collected materials from the nations nearer at hand to the federal government and that "the Chickasaws and Choctaws are the most remote of those whom our inquiries have reached." He informed William Dunbar, who lived at Natchez in the Mississippi Territory, that "we possess little which can be relied on relating to the part of the continent you inhabit." He enclosed several blank vocabularies and asked them to be filled from

⁷⁴ TJ to David Campbell, 14 March 1800; TJ to Benjamin Hawkins, 14 March 1800; Daniel Smith to TJ, 6 July 1800; Hawkins to TJ, 12 July 1800, 6 November 1800, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 31: 433-37; 32: 44, 50-52, 243.

“such tribes of the Missisipi as are within our reach.” Even before he had acquired Louisiana, Jefferson looked beyond the Mississippi as the rightful sphere of American expansion, ethnological as well as territorial.⁷⁵ It was the “*terra incognita* of our continent.”⁷⁶

He had unsuccessfully encouraged exploration of the continent’s interior several times in the previous decades, first by George Rogers Clark, then by the adventurer John Ledyard, and finally by the controversial French revolutionary sympathizer André Michaux.⁷⁷ Ledyard’s intended overland journey from St. Petersburg to St. Louis to compare the natives of Asia and America seemed especially promising. He was educated at Eleazar Wheelock’s school, considered Buffon’s natural history arrogant, and expressed patriotic motivations for exploration. He recorded vocabularies from both continents while serving on Captain Cook’s final voyage, knew that scholars thought such texts held the key to tracing descent, was willing entertain heterodox opinions regarding Indian origins, and even had the opportunity to dine with Pallas before setting off.⁷⁸ He was too good to be true.

Early in his journey Ledyard concluded that natives of Asia and America “are the same people—the most antient, & most numerous of any other.” Ledyard speculated that “had not a small sea divided them, they would all have still been known by the *same name*.” He was not basing these conclusions on comparison of vocabularies. Several months later, Ledyard admitted that he “not as yet taken any Vocabularies of the Tartarian Languages & if I take any they will be

⁷⁵ TJ to William Dunbar, 24 June 1799, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 31: 137-38.

⁷⁶ TJ to William Dunbar, 12 January 1801, in Boyd, *Papers of TJ*, 32: 448-49.

⁷⁷ George Rogers Clark to TJ, 8 February 1784; TJ to André Michaux, 30 April 1793, in Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 654-55, 667-69. On Ledyard, see Chapter 3, below.

⁷⁸ Jared Sparks, *The Life of John Ledyard, the American Traveller; comprising Selections from his Journals and Correspondence*, 2d. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 6; John Ledyard, “A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage” [1783], in James Zug, ed., *The Last Voyage of Captain Cook: The Collected Writings of John Ledyard* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2005), 34, 64, 108, 133, 142. For Ledyard presenting Jefferson with a vocabulary comparing Chippewa, Nadowessioux, and Nootka, see James Zug, *American Traveler: The Life and Adventures of John Ledyard, the Man who Dreamed of Walking the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 151. On Ledyard, see also Edward G. Gray, “Visions of Another Empire: John Ledyard, an American Traveler Across the Russian Empire, 1787-1788,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24 (2004): 347-80; idem, *The Making of John Ledyard: Empire and Ambition in the Life of an Early American Traveler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

very short ones.” Vocabularies were “very delicate things.” He recognized that “men of scientific Curiosity make use of them in investigating questions in philosophy as well as History,” but he thought that they did so “with too much confidence.” He believed that transcribing an “uncultivated Languages” in an appropriate orthography was an “insurmountable difficulty” and even gesture was uncertain. If he patted his head, and his consultant responded with a word, Ledyard would have no idea if he was giving the word for “*the head, my head, the top of the head* or perhaps the *hair* of the head.” Ledyard concluded that “to judge the analogy of Languages it is best to form an opinion from the tone & inflexion of the voice, from sound only & to give an opinion accordingly without risking a thousand dangers & difficulties that attend to the reduction of it to orthography.” This phonological, rather than etymological, test for linguistic affinity Ledyard thought superior because he thought that sound varied less than orthography; sound “is nature, the other art.” Thus the “Sound of any Language is more characteristic of it than it[s] orthography.” In short, Ledyard thought that a “few vocabularies...lead astray those who would wish to find real Information.”⁷⁹ After reaching Yakutsk, an impressive 5500 miles in two-and-a-half months, he informed Jefferson that he was “imprisoned and banished” by Catherine the Great. Personally, Ledyard was “satisfied...that America was peopled from Asia” and that for all mankind “this common origin was such or nearly as related by Moses & commonly believed among all the nations of the earth.”⁸⁰

Once in office, even before Louisiana had been acquired, Jefferson used the expiration of the Trade & Intercourse Acts, which regulated Indian affairs, as the occasion to deliver a secret message to Congress calling for exploration. “The interests of commerce” made Congressional funding of this expedition constitutional, “and that it should incidentally advance the

⁷⁹ Ledyard, “The Siberian Journal and Letters, 1787-1788,” in Zug, ed., *Last Voyage of Captain Cook*, 157, 160, 188-89, 209. Ledyard did record his phonological impressions in his journal, recognizing, he thought, similarities in the languages of Tartars to the language of China and to the language of Tahiti. See *ibid*, 179, 206. Zug also notes that he recorded specimens of the Sahka language, namely: “To a girl to go with me—will you go and live with me at Kamschatka. I want a woman to go and live with me at Kamschatka.” Quoted in Zug, *American Traveler*, 200.

⁸⁰ Ledyard, “Siberian Journal and Letters,” 243-44.

geographical knowledge of our own continent, cannot but be an additional gratification.”⁸¹ Just as in his Indian policy as a whole, Jefferson blended the pursuit of commerce and the intent to “civilize” the Indians in his official instructions to Meriwether Lewis. Besides the names and numbers of the various nations, the extent and limits of their possessions, their relations with other nations, and standard ethnographic queries on their means of subsistence and customs, Jefferson instructed Lewis to record each nation’s “language, traditions, monuments.” Considering “the interest which every nation has in extending & strengthening the authority of reason & justice among the people around them,” Jefferson instructed Lewis to “acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion & information among them, as it may better enable those who endeavor to civilize & instruct them, to adapt their measures to the existing notions and practices of those on whom they are to operate.” The expedition was also instructed to “allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey, satisfy them of its innocence, make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceable & commercial dispositions of the U. S., of our wish to be friendly & useful to them; confer with them in the points most convenient as mutual emporiums, & the articles of most desirable interchange for them & us.”⁸²

Each of those instructions pivoted on language. U.S. citizens could use the same linguistic materials to extract information on American antiquity and to gain access to Indian “notions” to allay jealousies, confer on matters of trade, and facilitate instruction in U.S. civilization. Yet, the federal officials who were expected to conduct Indian affairs had little knowledge of most Indian languages east of the Mississippi, let alone those beyond its banks. This lack of linguistic information was potentially dangerous for U.S.-Indian relations.

⁸¹ TJ, Secret Message to Congress, 18 January 1803, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 10-14.

⁸² TJ to Meriwether Lewis, 20 June 1803, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 61-66. The connection of commerce and civilization was an eighteenth-century commonplace, especially among Scottish thinkers. For example, see James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 2d. ed., [1774] (New York: Garland, 1970), 1: 451. Jefferson’s Attorney General, Levi Lincoln advised the president to place more emphasis on “civilization.” He thought that the president could marshal greater, and more lasting, public support if he placed more emphasis on “those articles which have for their object the improvement of the mind.” See Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 35.

Jefferson's Secretary of War, Henry Dearborn, put it simply. The "want of intelligent Interpreters may lead to the most serious consequences."⁸³ Jefferson sent Lewis to Philadelphia to learn from Barton and others, and he issued copies of his blank vocabularies to the explorers.⁸⁴

From the beginning of their journey, the captains attended to their linguistic task.⁸⁵ They were especially aware of the political usefulness of a given language and making to effort to use language, as Jefferson had suggested, as a key into Indian politics. At both Fort Mandan and Fort Clatsop, where the Corps of Discovery spent their first and second winters and had the most extended opportunities to collect information, Lewis and Clark paid particular attention to linguistic similarities and divisions, and discerning how these corresponded to alliances and enmities. This could answer questions of descent and political connection. Speaking of the Sioux, Clark noted: "Their language is not perculiar to themselves as has been Stated, a great many words is the Same with the *Mahas, Ponckais, Osareg, Kanzies &c.* clearly proves to me those people had the Same Oregean." Even more, he speculated that they were "at Some Period

⁸³ Secretary of War [Henry Dearborn] to Samuel Mitchell, 27 November 1802, War Department, Secretary's Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, A: 295.

⁸⁴ TJ to BSB, 27 February 1803, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 18-19. Despite his stress of "uniformity" in collection, Jefferson ignored the prize winning "Universal Alphabet" invented in Philadelphia the previous decade. See [William Thornton], "Cadmus, or a treatise on the Elements of Written Language, illustrating, by a philosophical division of Speech, the Power of each Character, thereby mutually fixing the Orthography and Orthoepey. With an Essay on the mode of teaching the Deaf, or Surd and Consequently Dumb, to Speak," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 3(1793)

⁸⁵ The linguistic aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition has received scant attention relative to the quantity of volumes that the Corps of Discovery has inspired. Albert Furtwangler, *Acts of Discovery: Visions of America in the Lewis & Clark Journals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), ch. 8, at 87, 162, has attempted the most serious analysis of Lewis and Clark's linguistic efforts, mainly by juxtaposing their attempts to collect Indian vocabularies with their attempts to find adequate expression for their discoveries of the West's nature, but he mistakenly refers to Jefferson's printed vocabulary as "a random selection of words" and "a Jeffersonian stress on the structure of language." James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 116, 126, 156, 175, 217, has given the subject sporadic discussion. Elijah Harry Criswell, "Lewis & Clark: Linguistic Pioneers," *University of Missouri Studies*, vol. 15 (1940), focuses solely on their contributions to the English language. through These neglect to show how science, commerce, and diplomacy were intertwined. See Jackson, *TJ and the Stony Mountains*, 126-27; Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 247; Taylor, "Jefferson's Pacific," 38-39. The philosophical pairing of linguistic discovery and the exploration of space is the subject of David B. Paxman, *Voyage into Language: Space and the Linguistic Encounter, 1500-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

not more than a century or two past...the Same nation.”⁸⁶ Of the “Saukees [Sacs or Sauks] and Renars, or Foxes,” Clark thought that “these nations are so perfectly consolidated that they may, in fact, be considered as one nation only. They speak the same language.”⁸⁷ Jefferson also expected his Indian agents such information. In this regard, John Sibley, at the agency in lower Louisiana was the most valuable. Through the expertise of Francis Grappe, his assistant and interpreter, Sibley identified more than thirty Indian groups, including Caddos, Comanches, and Apaches, among others, speaking almost twenty different languages.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 3: 27, 32. There were also times, ironically, that the captains should have heeded the linguistic evidence more than they did, rather than adhering to preconceptions. For instance, studying the language of the Nez Percés, Clark noted that “their dialect appear verry different from the <flat heads> Tushapaws although origineally the Same people.”⁸⁶ Clark was correct; the Sahaptian language of the Nez Percés is entirely unrelated to the Salishan language of the Flatheads. He offered no clues for why he thought they shared a common descent. See *ibid.*, 5: 222, 225 n.18.

⁸⁷ Moulton, ed., 3: 402. For similar observations, see Lewis to Jefferson, 7 April 1805, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 232; Lewis, *History*, 1: 441, 2: 36, 44-45; Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 6: 164, 430-31. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 206-07, emphasizes that the captains had far more access to Indians willing to provide information at Fort Mandan, since the expedition had few objects to trade by the time they reached Fort Clatsop.

⁸⁸ John Sibley, “Historical Sketches of the several Indian tribes in Louisiana, south of the Arkansas river, and between the Mississippi and river Grande,” in *American State Papers*, in *American State Papers, Class II. Indian Affairs*, vol. 2 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 721-25. See also TJ to John Sibley, 27 May 1805, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 11: 79-81; John Sibley to TJ, 2 September 1804, 9 August 1805, 27 August 1805, 14 December 1805, 17 September 1807, in Thomas Jefferson Papers Series I. General Correspondence. 1651-1827, Library of Congress, American Memory; “The Agent for Indian Affairs in the Territory of Orleans [John Sibley] to the Secretary of War” [1807], in War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Received, A: 41, 57, 63; William Dunbar to Henry Dearborn, 24 June 1806, in Dunbar, *Life, Letters, and Papers*, 348. Jefferson urged Albert Gallatin to place Sibley’s materials on an ethnographic map he was then beginning. It would be published, the first of its kind for North America, in 1836. See TJ to Albert Gallatin, 29 May 1805, Gallatin Papers, New-York Historical Society. I consulted the microfilm version of these papers at Swem Library, College of William & Mary). This exchange supports the idea that Gallatin’s influence on the planning for the Lewis and Clark expedition extended beyond mere geography, as has been suggested – with admitted uncertainty – by Donald Jackson and James Ronda. See Jackson, *Jefferson and the Stony Mountains*, 105, 128-29; Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 2, 261 n. 3. For similar work by others in Indian country, see Secretary of War [Henry Dearborn] to Benjamin Hawkins, War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, B: 26; James Wilkinson to TJ, 23 December 1805, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 272-73. Illicitly copying the cartography of Alexander von Humboldt and plagiarizing Jonathan Carver, Zebulon Pike was attentive to language as well. See Major Z. M. Pike, *An Account of the Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, to the Sources of the Arkansas, Kans, La Platte, and Pierre Juan, Rivers; performed by the order of the Government of the United States during the Years 1805, 1806, and 1807. And a Tour through the Interior Parts of New Spain, when Conducted through these Provinces, by order of the Captain-General, in the Year 1807* (Philadelphia, 1810), “Appendix to Part I,” 58-59, 64-65; “Appendix to Part II,” 8-17; and the breakdowns of each Indian nation’s “Primitive Language” are found in “Abstract of the Nations of Indians on the Mississippi and its confluent streams, from St. Louis, Louisiana, to its source, including Red Lake and Lower Red River,” on unnumbered pages following “Appendix to Part I”; and

It was not always straightforward, however. As Lewis and Clark ascended the Missouri, they gathered more and more information about the dominant group on the upper Plains, “great nation whose primitive name is Darcota,” but who were called Sioux. The Missouri country, in particular, was occupied by two “tribes” of this nation, the Tetons and Yanktons, who were themselves subdivided into “bands.” North of the Tetons were two bands of Assiniboins, who “are recognized by a similarity of language, and by tradition as descendents of seceders from the Sioux; though often at war are still acknowledged as relations.” Perhaps because of their low opinion of Indians’ political development, they used “nation” inconsistently. Referring to the Lucktons, Lewis noted that they “speak the same language as the Killamucks, but do not belong to the same nation.”⁸⁹ Yet, they considered each of the various communities around Wappato Island to be Multnomahs, not because they were politically subordinate to that nation, but rather because they were “linked by a similarity of dress and manners, and houses and language, which much more than the feeble restraints of Indian government contribute to make one people.”⁹⁰

Collection was difficult. According to the British fur trader Charles Mackenzie, to communicate with the Siouan-speaking Mandans, someone had to speak in Gros Ventres, which Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman who had been captured by a Hidatsa war party and later sold to Toussaint Charbonneau, understood but partially. She had to pass this on to Charbonneau, now her husband, a French Canadian working as an interpreter for the Corps of Discovery, but who knew no English. This, in turn, had to be conveyed to “a mulatto,” who “spoke bad French and worse English.” Lewis and Clark heard the final message from him. Other times, the chain of translation became more complicated. Before they left Fort Mandan, after spending several months among the villagers, the captains attempted to record a Mandan vocabulary, an attempt jeopardized by frequent exchanges between Charbonneau and René Jusseaume, who, like

“Statistical Abstract of the Indians who inhabit that part of Louisiana visited by Captain Z. M. Pike in His Tour of Discovery in the years 1806 and 1807,” following “Appendix to Part II.”

⁸⁹ Lewis, *History*, 2: 118.

⁹⁰ Lewis, *History*, 2: 227.

Charbonneau, was a trader with ties to the British North West Company, but who had been living among the Mandans for fifteen years and was fluent in their language. “The two Frenchmen,” as Mackenzie related it, “had warm disputes upon the meaning of every word that was taken down by the expedition. As the Indians could not well comprehend the intention of recording their words, they concluded that the Americans had a wicked design upon their country.”⁹¹ Although this was an account written by a British trader for a British audience, only too happy to relate American missteps, it is possible that his interpretation of the event was accurate. Taking vocabularies was a difficult and strange process, not easily appreciated by Indians already wary of strangers.

In early September, Lewis and Clark attempted to address a council of the Ootlashoots, or Flatheads. They “assembled the chiefs and warriors, and informed them who we were, and the purpose for which we visited their country.” But they confessed that it was “conveyed to them through so many different languages, that it was not comprehended without difficulty.” They had to rely upon the “more intelligible language of presents.” Even if they could not understand words, they heard sounds, and certain sounds struck them as particularly noteworthy because they were less familiar. Although similar in appearance to Shoshones, the expedition was impressed with the Flatheads’ “very extraordinary pronunciation.” On the basis of their “most curious language,” John Ordway thought they were the “welch Indians if their is any such.” Lewis was more cautious in his conclusions, thought this “peculiarity” made their language even harder to understand because it made their voices “scarcely audible, except at short distance, and when many of them are talking, forms a strange confusion of sounds.” As Lewis described it, “Their

⁹¹ Charles Mackenzie, “The Missouri Indians: A Narrative of the Four Trading Expeditions to the Missouri, 1804-1805-1806, for the North-West Company” in L. R. Mason, ed., *Lew bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest: Récits de voyages, Lettres et Rapports inédits relatifs au Nord-Ouest Canadien*, vol. 1 [1887] (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), 336-37. One of Mackenzie’s section headings was “The Americans disliked by the natives.” Ronda relates this encounter, but he says that it was a Hidatsa vocabulary the captains were attempting to acquire. See Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 116-17. Mackenzie explicitly says it was Mandan, if he is to be relied upon, and these are distinct languages in the Siouan family. Hidatsa is a Missouri River Siouan language, closely related to Crow, while the Mandan, is a related, but independent language of the Siouan family. See “Table 3. Consensus Classification,” 8. On Sacagawea, see Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 256-59.

words have all a remarkably guttural sound, and there is nothing which seems to represent the tone of their speaking more exactly than the clucking of a fowl, or the noise of a parrot.” Despite chains of translators and unfamiliar sounds, the captains recorded matter-of-factly that the next morning, “we purchased two more horses and procured a vocabulary of their language.”⁹²

These difficulties reflected larger problems of communication on an expedition that took the voyagers across thousands of miles and through more than a score of distinct languages. Even when the expedition spent considerable time among native groups, they could not learn enough of the language to ask the questions Jefferson and his advisors thought so important. After being encamped at Fort Clatsop for more than two months, Clark noted the mounted culture, but could not discern “whether the horses [were] originally a native of the Country or not,” since he could not “understand the language of the natives sufficiently to ask the question.” Similarly wondering at the custom, shared by several of the Pacific Northwest tribes, of placing deceased members within canoes, Lewis admitted that “with the religious opinions of these people we are but little acquainted, since we understand their language too imperfectly to converse on a subject so abstract.”⁹³ Only their stay among the Mandans and Hidatsas the previous winter was longer than their time among the tribes of the Pacific Northwest. Words to fill a vocabulary were comparatively easy to come by. Learning the language was another matter.

A couple of weeks later the captains paused to negotiate peace and trade with the “Choppunish,” or Nez Perce Indians. They gathered several chiefs and expected “to explain to them the intentions of our government.” The captains drew a charcoal map of the United States to impress the council-goers with “the nature and power of the American nation,” which, intended

⁹² Lewis, *History*, 1: 441. Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 9: 218. “Flathead” is a dialect of the Kalispel language, a part of the Interior division of the Salishan language family. See “Table 3. Consensus Classification,” 6. The theory of Welsh Indians had recently reasserted in John Williams, *An Enquiry into the Truth of the Tradition Concerning the Discovery of America by Prince Madog ab Owen Gwynned about the Year 1170* (London, 1791); “Benjamin Smith Barton – Misc. Indian Notes,” in “American Indian Materials,” BSB Papers, Series II, APS; John Heckewelder, “To the Editor,” *American Universal Magazine*, 15 May 1797, 258-59. The British-born explorers for Spain, James MacKay and John Evans, thought the Mandans were among the most likely candidates for the Welsh Indians. See W. Raymond Wood, *Prologue to Lewis & Clark: The Mackay and Evans Expedition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 44.

⁹³ Lewis, *History*, 120-21.

to establish trading posts in the area. They also stressed the importance of maintaining peace with “all red nations.” The captains admitted, however, that they conveyed all this “not without difficulty” and they feared that much of what they said “might have been lost or distorted” before it reached Nez Perce ears in comprehensible form. The captains had to speak “in English to one of our men, who translated it into French to Charbonneau; he interpreted it to his wife in the Menetarra [Hidatsa] language, and then put it into Shoshonee, and the young Shoshonee prisoner explained it to the Choppunish in their own dialect.” Despite this “circuitous route,” Lewis and Clark were unduly confident: “at last we succeeded in communicating the impression they wished.”⁹⁴ These kinds of difficulties made linguistic familiarity with the continent’s diverse peoples appealing. U.S. officials could only be certain they correctly conveyed U.S. intentions if they themselves stated them to the Indians, and they could only learn of their moral condition if they could converse on moral subjects. The future of diplomacy and the civilization effort, bookends of U.S. Indian policy, required linguistic knowledge.

Acquiring knowledge of Indian languages was not the primary purpose of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Yet, the captains recorded substantial lexical information. In all, Lewis and Clark recorded fourteen vocabularies by the end of their first winter and twenty-three overall, each of “distinct Indian languages.”⁹⁵ It was crucial to Jefferson’s vision for federal exploration of the continent, which his successors continued. “Lewis was instructed to take those of every tribe beyond [the Mississippi], which he possibly could: the intention was to publish the whole, and leave the world to search for affinities between these and the languages of Europe and Asia.”

⁹⁴ Lewis, *History*, 2: 281. Ronda relates an account of this council; see Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 225-27. For a similar game of “telephone,” see Lewis, *History*, 2: 287.

⁹⁵ As recorded in the “Conrad Prospectus,” the publisher’s outline for the first, failed attempt to publish an account of the expedition, enclosed in John Conrad to Meriwether Lewis, [c. 1 April 1807], in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 396. There are also references to taking vocabularies of the Salishan language of the “Ootlashoots,” or Flatheads in September 1805, of “Sokulk” (Wanapum) and Chinnapum (Yakima), two as well as of “Echeloot” (Wishram) and Eneeshur, and of Wahcclellas and Chinooks in spring 1806. These explicit references to taking or comparing vocabularies, however, represent only a fraction of the vocabularies they allude to, or of the total they were recognized at the time as having collected. See Lewis, *History*, 1: 441; 2: 12, 44, 238; Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 3: 27, 319; 5: 189, 292-94, 345, 347. For the contemporary designations of these nations, see Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 155, 164-66, 170, 217.

As Jefferson recalled late in life, Lewis “was very attentive to this instruction, never missing an opportunity of taking a vocabulary,” and Jefferson was “certain he contemplated their publication.”⁹⁶ In the narratives of their exploratory expeditions, Carver, John Long, and Alexander Mackenzie had each published Indian vocabularies.⁹⁷ This was the final, most important, and could be the most perilous stage of an expedition. By providing evidence to the international community that the exploring government had fulfilled the goals and obligations of exploration, it demonstrated and justified imperial claims. Barton had agreed to arrange and publish these materials, but, in Clark’s words, “he failed to perform.”⁹⁸

* * *

Future scholars and administrators of Indian affairs would seize on Jefferson’s ideas of language, descent, and political relations. However, neither Jefferson nor Barton received much support for their etymological hypotheses of American antiquity, although commentators often lauded Barton’s work for compiling linguistic material that had been previously scattered if not entirely unknown. A New York author dismissively numbered “some speculations on Indian languages” among the nation’s paltry literary productions. Despite Barton’s call for U.S. etymologists to extend their views beyond the continent, “Candidus” thought that, like analogous

⁹⁶ TJ to José Correa de Serra, 26 April 1816, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 611-13.

⁹⁷ For such vocabularies, see Jonathan Carver, *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768*, 2d. ed. (London, 1779); John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader describing the Manners and Customs of the North American Indians; with an Acct of the Posts Situated on the River Saint Lawrence, Lake Ontario, &c. April 10 1768-Apring, 1782 [1791]* in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, vol. 2 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904); Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence, through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; in the Years 1789 and 1793. With a preliminary account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Fur Trade of that Country [1801]* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966).

⁹⁸ On the missing vocabularies, see William Clark to Albert Gallatin, 31 March 1826, in Gallatin Papers. Other letters seem contradictory without this. See TJ to Jose Correa de Serra, 26 April 1816; TJ to Clark, 8 September 1816; TJ to Peter Stephen Du Ponceau, 7 November 1817, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 611-13, 619, 631-33. Robert A. Saindon, “The Lost Vocabularies of the Lewis & Clark Expedition,” in Saindon, ed., *Explorations into the World of Lewis & Clark: 194 Essays from the Pages of We Proceeded On* (Great Falls, Mont.: Lewis & Clark Heritage Foundation, 2003), devotes the bulk of his article to tracing the events surrounding Lewis’s death. For Jefferson’s sentiments on Barton’s lagging, see TJ to Alexander von Humboldt, 6 December 1813, in Helmut de Terra, ed., “Alexander von Humboldt’s Correspondence with Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103 (1959): 783-806, at 794.

American works, etymology thus far added merely “a loop or a nail to the wall, but the structure is carried forward and raised higher only by European hands.”⁹⁹ Others criticized the kind of etymology that each man proposed. In 1798, the same year Barton published the second edition of *New Views*, the author of “Etymology” in the American *Encyclopaedia*, observed that “the etymologist, by seeking the true and original reason of the notions and ideas fixed to each word and expression, may often furnish an argument of antiquity, from the traces remaining thereof, compared with the ancient uses.”¹⁰⁰

In 1799, Nicholas Collin delivered a paper entitled “Philological View of some very Ancient Words in several Languages” to the American Philosophical Society. Although he cited Barton as his source of information on the American languages, he rejected Barton’s conclusions. Collin created a miniature comparative vocabulary as his most conclusive evidence. It consisted of the numerals 1 through 5 – because they must have been “a part of early language” and “it would have been absurd to call any by more than one name” – in several Indian languages as well as Anglo-Saxon, Hebrew, Persian, and several other languages of Europe and Asia. To him, it “confirm[ed] the great improbability of all languages having a common source.” Linguistic polygenism did not trouble Collin because “the confusion of tongues...gives full permission to seek new origins” for different languages. Moreover, Collin remarked that etymology could be used to “trace many families from totally different roots, see the manner of their early growth, and how they gradually entwined with numerous important objects of human life.” While he urged future enquirers to discover mankind’s “infant thoughts and lisping accents,” Collin cautioned them against simplistic dichotomies in linguistic and ethnological studies: “A true

⁹⁹ Candidus, “On American Literature,” *Monthly Magazine, and American Review*, August 1799, 341.

¹⁰⁰ “Etymology,” *Encyclopaedia; or a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature...*, vol. 7 (Philadelphia, 1798), 14. This brief article is in no way a translation of Turgot’s “Etymologie” in the French *Encyclopédie*, vol. 6 (1756).

philologist is not misled by general complexions of languages, as oriental and occidental, maternal and filial, ancient and modern, savage and civilized.”¹⁰¹

The most widely known proponent for this epistemological etymology was Constantin François Chasseboeuf, comte de Volney, who arrived in the United States in the late eighteenth century already famous from his travels in Syria and Egypt. Volney had initially intended to stay among the Indians and learn their languages and customs, as he had among the “Bedwins,” but he chafed at the hostility of U.S. citizens during the “quasi-war” and at the “savage” manners of his intended subjects. Savage nations, by definition, lacked monuments because they had to focus their attention on necessities, so knowing their past required listening to what they said. Their traditions were unreliable, but not so their words: “each language is a complete history, since it is a picture of all the ideas of a people.” Thus, gathering linguistic information would “enable us to ascend farthest in the genealogy of nations: by successively deducting what each nation has borrowed or supplied.”¹⁰² Despite U.S. citizens’ “strong prejudice against affording any public or political encouragement to literature,” he advised the federal government to “institute a college or society of five or six accomplished linguists, to be employed solely *in collecting and forming vocabularies and grammars of the Indian languages.*” Charles Brockden Brown, his U.S. editor and translator, could only patronize the count: “The American citizen will smile at this proposal. The *great* importance here bestowed on the business of collecting the dialects of barbarous tribes,

¹⁰¹ Nicholas Collin, “Philological View of some very Ancient Words in several Languages,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 4 (1799), 476, 478, 482-87, 490.

¹⁰² C. F. Volney, *Lectures on History delivered in the Normal School of Paris by C. F. Volney* (Philadelphia, 1801), 34-35, 38, 163. Volney referred readers of C. F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America: with Supplementary Remarks upon Florida; on the French Colonies on the Mississippi and Ohio, and in Canada; and on the Aboriginal Tribes of America*, trans. C. B. Brown (Philadelphia, 1804) to Lecture V for an elaboration of the importance of etymology, but it is in Lecture VI that he gives the clearest statement of the usefulness of language study for the history of a people with no other monuments. Interestingly, Volney suggested that one section (out of seven) of a proposed historical academy be devoted exclusively to “the comparison of the languages of the east of Asia with those of the west of America, in order to prove the communication of the inhabitants of those continents.” See Volney, *Lectures*, 163.

who are hastening to oblivion...will hardly be felt by the busy merchant, artizan, or farmer.” It would seem less ludicrous a few decades later.¹⁰³

Volney had been almost disappointed in his own linguistic efforts in North America, since even for those who knew anything of Indian languages “their pronunciation is so bad, and their ignorance of all grammatical distinctions so great, that they could afford him no aid.” In Philadelphia, however, he met Little Turtle, a Miami chief who had been instrumental in the western confederacy’s defeats of the U.S. armies under the command of Josiah Harmar and Arthur St. Clair, but who had strongly advocated accommodation in the years since Fallen Timbers, and his interpreter and adopted son, William Wells, who had led war parties for both the western confederacy and the United States in the years between the Treaty of Paris and the Treaty of Greenville. “By this accident,” Volney related, he was “furnished not only with a skillful interpreter, but with the mouth of a native to afford the true primitive words.” For the “principal purpose” of obtaining a vocabulary, the philosophical traveler interviewed the pair in nine or ten sessions. Volney was inclined to trust the information he received, since it was “given accidentally, and without design” and since he suspected that Little Turtle had fond remembrances of the French. He may have been less confident some years later, when Henry Dearborn fired Wells from his position as Delaware agent after he was accused of deliberately mistranslating speeches to favor his and Little Turtle’s interests, among other offenses.

Volney was satisfied with his Miami vocabulary, which led him to speculate on the association of ideas, the cornerstone of the “ideology” that was gaining ascendancy in the France of the Directorate. Noticing that words etymologically unrelated in French or English shared roots in Indian languages, Volney reflected that it was “peculiar to the northern tribes to associate the three ideas of sleep, cold, and death.” From such observations, Volney was affirmed in the conviction, widely shared among the group of French materialist intellectuals known as the “Ideologues,” with whom Volney was associated, that “Without sound notions of the nature of

¹⁰³ Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States*, 424-26.

human understanding, its progress, and the causes that model the man of nature, we are not fit to investigate the history of nations.” He cited Barton’s “curious dissertation” and acknowledged that his “disquisitions have led him to several important conclusions,” but Volney doubted if all of them “were equally well founded.” Although he stayed at Monticello for some time before undertaking his voyage westward (he had met Jefferson while the latter served as U.S. minister in Paris), and that very Miami vocabulary was recorded using one of Jefferson’s own printed forms, here Volney was silent on Jefferson’s theory.¹⁰⁴

Overall, Jefferson’s conjecture received, at best, only tepid acknowledgement. The western traveler and antiquarian Henry Marie Brackenridge, in an 1813 letter to Jefferson published by the Philosophical Society, acknowledged that “the number of primitive languages, greater perhaps than all the world besides” was proof enough to refute the newness of the continent; but he was silent on the possibility of American origins.¹⁰⁵ Conversely, New York naturalist Samuel L. Mitchell thought it possible that “America was the cradle of the human race,” but he did not think that etymology would decide the question.¹⁰⁶ An anonymous satirist

¹⁰⁴ Volney, *View of the Soil and Climate of the United States*, 356-59, 423-24, 432. In response to the criticisms, the Philadelphia publisher of Volney’s work allowed Barton space to refute the French count in an appendix to that very edition, which means that Barton must have seen this work some considerable time before it was officially published in English, which was one year after it was published in French. Wells is an interesting figure. So incomparable were Wells’s talents that the United States continued to keep him on as an interpreter until nativist Indians divided and ate his heart after killing him as he defended Chicago in 1812. On Wells, see Wiley Sword, *President Washington’s Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 215-18, 270; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 500-01; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 132. On Volney’s stay at Monticello and his ethnography in light of Jefferson’s views, see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 113-20. On Volney’s scholarship more broadly, see Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (London: Verso, 1995), 40-45, 142-49, 255-57; Joan Leopold, “The Life and Work of Constantin-François Chasseboeuf, Comte de Volney,” in Leopold, ed., *The Prix Volney*, vol. 2a. *Its History and Significance for the Development of Linguistic Research* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 8-37; Anne Godlewska, *Geography Unbound: French Geographical Science from Cassini to Humboldt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 195-209. For more on ideology, see the discussion of Peter S. Du Ponceau, in chapter 6, below.

¹⁰⁵ Henry Marie Brackenridge, “On the Population and Tumuli of the Aborigines of North America. In a Letter from H. H. [sic] Brackenridge, Esq. to Thomas Jefferson.—Read Oct. 1, 1813,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 1 (1818): 151-59, at 159.

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Latham Mitchell, “Communications,” *Archaeologia Americana: Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society* 1 (1820): 331-32.

for the *North American Review*, from “Naumkeag,” mocking Jefferson and Mitchell both, quipped: “That America was the oldest continent, and its inhabitants the most ancient people on the globe, is now fairly proved.” The rudimentary state of U.S. learning proved the point!¹⁰⁷

While the most severe criticism that Barton received was typically disagreement on particular points of etymology, Jefferson’s theory was denounced as but one manifestation of his radical and dangerous infidelity. The Massachusetts minister Elijah Parish thought that Jefferson’s speculation on the reasons for linguistic fragmentation in North America a “bold, unnecessary and wanton denial of revelation,” which he supposed must have been meant to assist “the opposers of Christianity... ‘to crush’ the Son of God.” If Jefferson would make such a claim “in the face of the Bible,” Parish referred his readers to the 29th Psalm, which was the text for his sermon: “When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”¹⁰⁸ To Clement Moore, Jefferson’s “pretty Eastern tale” regarding American antiquity, was but one example of “the wildest absurdities, and grossest impiety” contained in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and based on nothing so much as the premise that “Moses knew no more about the age of the world than a Mohock.” American linguistic diversity did not prove the greater antiquity of the American population. Over time, Moore suggested, languages would increasingly intermingle, rather than diverge. Moore concluded that Jefferson’s linguistic speculation was pure “modern French philosophy,” which sought nothing more than “to persuade themselves and others, that man is of the same nature with the rest of the animal creation; that he is not rendered distinct from them by an immortal soul, but merely by the superiority of his faculties; that he is to all intents of the same

¹⁰⁷ “Memoir on the Antiquity of the United States,” *North American Review* November 1816, 65-66.

¹⁰⁸ Elijah Parish, *A Discourse, delivered at Byfield, on the Annual Thanksgiving, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, November 29, 1804* (Salem, Mass., 1805), 3, 17-18.

genus with them, but only of a higher *species*.”¹⁰⁹ Ironically, Jefferson’s conjecture had not been included in the French edition of *Notes*.¹¹⁰

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As Jefferson solicited the aid of Campbell and Hawkins in the spring of 1800, he remarked on a sense of foreboding regarding the extensive materials he had thus far collected and on his intent to publish what he had managed to compile, but not before he had added the “great southern languages,” which he hoped they would provide. He confided to Hawkins, as he was “afraid to risk it any longer, lest by some accident it might be lost, I am about to print it.” To Campbell, he was even more specific: “I propose to prepare the whole of my materials early this summer.”¹¹¹ That was not to be. It was late in the season before Jefferson received Hawkins’s vocabularies of Chickasaw and Creek, and early winter before he received the Choctaw.¹¹² By then, both Jefferson and Aaron Burr had been elected president and considering the controversies and distractions and preparations of the succeeding months, Jefferson chose to postpone the long-awaited compilation and publication. It is possible, too, that with the realization that he would be the nation’s executive, he became more ambitious to extend the scope of his comparison. As president, Jefferson must have hoped that would be in a position finally to realize his hopes for an exploration of, and collection from, the American interior. In so doing, he transformed continental exploration in the United States from private enterprise to federal priority.

¹⁰⁹ Clement C. Moore, *Observations upon certain Passages in Mr. Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia, which appear to have a Tendency to Subvert Religion, and Establish a False Philosophy* (New York, 1804), 16-19, 31.

¹¹⁰ Gordon S. Barker, “Unraveling the Strange History of Jefferson’s *Observations sur la Virginie*,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 112 (2004): 135-77, at 143, 146, has noticed this. He suggests: “Given that Jefferson never criticized them [this and other editorial excisions], it is plausible that they had his approval.” It seems unlikely that Jefferson approved this deletion. He spent the next decade arguing in favor of it in private correspondence and he spent the decade after that insisting that the question had yet to be decided. It seems more likely that Jefferson was so eager to see his *Observations* published, that he remained silent on edits directed at those matters that he could not conclusively prove.

¹¹¹ TJ to Hawkins, 14 March 1800; TJ to Campbell, 14 March 1800, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 31: 433-37.

¹¹² Hawkins to TJ, 12 July 1800, Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 32: 50-52. Hawkins was also preparing to send TJ another Creek vocabulary; see Hawkins to TJ, 1 March 1801, in *ibid.*, 33:109.

Barton hoped that future researches would find ever more evidence that all the American languages belonged to a single stock as men became more familiar with “the vast countries...unknown to philosophers; but traversed by traders and Jesuits.” At present, for Barton, language provided merely “a light, glimmering and perhaps somewhat illusive.” He fully admitted the shortcomings of his work—in evidence, but not in conclusions. Future researches would uncover what he had not. Barton begged the reader to consider that “the path I tread is almost entirely new. I may, without vanity, compare myself to the new settler in the wilderness of our country.” Barton likened a science of languages to the settlement of land. It is proper that he did; both required the appropriation of what Indians considered rightfully theirs and what whites claimed undisputed possession of, if not in title, then in their exclusive prerogative to acquire, shared by no European nation.

But even before a country could be settled, it had to be known; Barton recognized his researches as a crucial part of this process. Philosophically inclined Americans were fortunate enough to live in “a country unexplored by science...a country which, with respect to the progress we have hitherto made in examining its riches, may with strict propriety, be called NEW.”¹¹³ Exploration of the continent, within and without national boundaries, emerged as a national imperative in the years following Barton’s *New Views*, years which overlapped with Jefferson’s attainment to a position where he could direct such expeditions. On these expeditions, the collection of Indian vocabularies and the speculation of which groups possessed affinities to each other were constant inquiries. Both Jefferson and Barton hoped that the results would aid a natural history of man and bolster their accounts of Indian origins.

¹¹³ BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” lvi-lvii; “Preface,” xxiii-xxv.

CHAPTER 3.

ETHNOLOGY, LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY, AND THE AMERICAN NATION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Smith Barton, the two leading U.S. ethnologists, had shared a conviction that Indian languages held the key to tracing Indian origins. By 1815, each dramatically altered his earlier opinions regarding the native languages of North America. Jefferson, who had previously ignored the prevailing idea that savage Indians necessarily spoke a savage language, came to embrace this view in the years following the Louisiana Purchase. As Jefferson amended U.S. Indian policy by conceiving of Indian removal, language took on added importance in the demarcation of civilization and savagery, especially after the wars against nativist Indians in the old Northwest and Southwest in 1811-14, and his notion of the Indians' savage languages stood in stark relief to his enthusiastic praise of the old world past and new world future of the English language. Barton explicitly rejected that Indian languages were savage, and the prospect of removal seems to have reinforced his conviction that all Americans shared a common descent, traceable through language. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, however, responding particularly to advances in European philology and ethnology in the years just before his death, Barton rejected his previous reliance on etymology in favor of enquiries into native bodies, artifacts, and costume.

While Jefferson's interest in language shifted as he focused less on the Indian past and more on the possibility of Indians incorporating into U.S. society, Barton equivocated over the primary importance of language itself. As its two leading proponents backed away under the disparate influences of U.S. Indian affairs and European science, etymology plummeted from its former scientific prominence in studying "the Indian."

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Every now and then Thomas Jefferson changed his mind. Over the years, Jefferson inserted several manuscript notes into his personal copy of *Notes on the State of Virginia* as

potential revisions for a future edition. One of these retracted his earlier conclusion, that the greater linguistic diversity of North America indicated that it must have been populated longer than linguistically less diverse Asia, and thus that the “New World” had actually first populated the old. “But it must be confessed,” Jefferson amended later in life, “that the mind finds it difficult to conceive that so many tribes have inhabited it from so remote an antiquity as would be necessary to have divided them into languages so radically different” (i.e., different in lexical roots). So he proceeded to “hazard a conjecture” that diverged sharply from his previous one. Pointing to colonial and U.S. experiences with Indians at treaty councils, Jefferson asserted that Indians refused to negotiate in English even if they knew the language and that they demanded an interpreter even if that person knew neither language as well as they did themselves. Thus, Jefferson stated as a premise that “Indians consider it as dishonorable to use any language but their own.” Since Indians (like all savages) possessed no governments as such, simple disagreements among members of society could lead to political schism. If that occurred, Jefferson reasoned that it could “be the point of honor among them not to use the language of those with whom they have quarreled, but to have one of their own.” This would be no difficult task, Jefferson concluded, since they spoke undeveloped languages: “They have use but for few words and possess but few. It would require but a small effort of the mind to invent these and to acquire the habit of using them.”¹

As late as 1805, Jefferson told John Sibley, his Indian agent in lower Louisiana, that the “question whether the Indians of America have emigrated from another continent, is still undecided” and he looked to “their languages as the only remaining monument of connection with other nations, or want of it, to which we can now have access.”² Two years later, Barton publicly contradicted the sitting president’s heterodox views, which suggests that if Jefferson had

¹ Thomas Jefferson [hereafter TJ], *Notes on the State of Virginia*, edited by William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 282 n. 12.

² TJ to Doctor John Sibley, 27 May 1805, in Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1903-04), 11: 79.

changed his mind before this time, despite their exchanges on ethnological topics, Barton was unaware.³ In 1813, Jefferson advised John Adams that “Ignoro” was the only certain answer to the question of Indian origins. But he explicitly rejected Barton’s contention that all languages bore traces of affinity to all others.⁴ In addition, Jefferson’s only other expressions of the savage language idea came in his retirement. This suggests that Jefferson only turned to the supposed savagery of Indians’ languages to explain the natural history of the continent and its indigenous inhabitants after he reconceived the terms of U.S. Indian policy by introducing federal removal. Indians who refused to comply with the dictates of republican political economy and American civilization would exchange lands east of the Mississippi for new western lands. The Louisiana Territory (acquired 1803) would be, temporarily, a savage space.⁵

The idea that language could be “savage” stemmed from the epistemology of John Locke, which held language to be a human convention. He rejected the notion that languages contained traces of the divine language bestowed upon Adam, arguing instead that human beings attached sounds to ideas arbitrarily in an effort to communicate those ideas with others. No ideas were innate, so any idea that a person possessed must have been directly perceived through the senses, and if that idea was to be intelligible to other speakers in a community, it must bear an accepted name – like society, language was founded in compact. If a people had not experienced a given thing, they would possess no idea of it and have no word for it.

³ Benjamin Smith Barton [hereafter BSB], *Discourse on some of the principal desiderata in natural history, and on the best means for promoting the study of the science in the United-States, read before the Linnean Society, on the tenth of June, 1807* (Philadelphia, 1807), 17-18, 78:

⁴ TJ to John Adams, 27 May 1813, Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 323-24. Jefferson’s criticism of Barton’s approach to language study was similar to his rejection of “the no-system of Buffon” regarding taxonomy in natural history; see TJ to John Manners, 22 February 1814, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 14: 101. Christopher Looby, “The Constitution of Nature: Taxonomy as Politics in Jefferson, Peale, and Bartram,” *Early American Literature* 22 (1987): 252-73, at 261-62, emphasizes Jefferson’s opposition to Buffon’s classification more than his belittling of America.

⁵ Edward Gray, *New World Babel: Languages and Nations in Early America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 130-32, discusses this change of tack. He makes no attempt to date the fragment, but suggests, sensibly, that it was due to the distance from his dispute with Buffon, and far less convincingly, to the persuasiveness of Barton’s and others’ critiques and his uneasiness with biblical heterodoxy.

On this foundation, Etienne Bonnot de Condillac built a theory of linguistic origin and development which dominated the remainder of the eighteenth century. Condillac suggested that language was necessary not only for communication but also for systematic thought itself. Language had its roots in animalistic cries and in gestures, through which human beings gave voice to passions and struggled to convey meaning to others. Yet, they attached labels to perceptions not only so that they could be shared with others, but so they could be manipulated in one's own mind. Sense perceptions were of little use unless they could be put into the service of ordered thought. The creation and manipulation of signs transformed the passive reception of sensory stimuli into an active process. Language provided the means to analyze what the mind perceived in a flash by decomposing perceptions into discrete components and imposing logical order on the disassembled parts, which in turn sharpened reasoning. New signs could be continually introduced, not only as speakers encountered new objects and experiences but also as their improving intellect created improved signs that allowed for clearer and more precise manipulation of the ever-widening circle of available information.⁶

The savage language idea found its widest circulation in the work of the Scottish historian of America William Robertson and its most thorough exegesis in the work of his countryman, James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, but it was adopted and glossed by most eighteenth-century writers upon epistemology, rhetoric, natural history, and travel. Robertson explained that while the senses were a source of knowledge for all human beings, for savages it was practically the only source. Sense perception would produce an idea in the mind of a savage, but it would wrest his attention only insofar as it could satisfy his passions. The thoughts of a "naked savage"

⁶ For my understanding of Locke and Condillac I am most indebted to the work of Hans Aarsleff. See, in particular, Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1850* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), ch. 1; "The Tradition of Condillac: The Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century and the Debate in the Berlin Academy before Herder" in *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and "Introduction" in Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, translated and edited by Hans Aarsleff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Gray, *New World Babel*, 85-96.

would “extend not beyond what relates to animal life, and when they are not directed towards some of his concerns, his mind is totally inactive...the rational faculties continue almost dormant and unexercised.” A savage would not combine ideas into general classes, abstract qualities from things themselves, or analyze his own mental processes: “Thus he is unacquainted with all the ideas which have been denominated *universal*, or *abstract*, or *of reflection*.” Pointing specifically to the “ruder nations of America,” Robertson emphasized that “their languages...have not a word to express any thing but what is material or corporeal. *Time, space, substance*, and a thousand other terms which represent abstract and universal ideas, are altogether unknown to them.”⁷

In these conceptions, early attempts at language were usually imprecise. In the words of Hugh Blair, professor of rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh and widely read for his commentary on the supposedly ancient Celtic epic poetry of Ossian, “the manner in which men at first uttered their words, and maintained conversation, was strong and expressive” for two reasons. First, “the want of proper names for every object, obliged them to use one name for many; and of course, to express themselves by comparisons, metaphors, allusions, and all those substituted forms of Speech which render language figurative.” Secondly, for “the savage tribes of men,” each new experience or object “surprises, terrifies, and makes a strong impression on their mind,” and “governed by imagination and passion, more than by reason...their speech must be deeply tintured by their genius.” Like the Gaelic of the invented Ossian, whose most

⁷ George Henry Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America*, Part I (London, 1794), 20; William Robertson, *The History of America* [6th ed., 1792] (London: Routledge, 1996), 2: 93-94. Du Ponceau explicitly cited the claims of these two authors for refutation. See PSD to Heckewelder, 19 September 1816, HLC Letter Books, 1: 48-51. PSD included extracts from Robertson in his Philological Notebooks, 3: 28-32. On savage languages generally, see Gray, *New World Babel*, ch. 4; Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World*, 126-40; Rudiger Schreyer, “‘Savage’ Languages in Eighteenth-Century Theoretical History of Language,” and Lieve Jooen, “Descriptions of American Indian Word Forms in Colonial Missionary Grammars,” in Edward G. Gray and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Language Encounter in the Americas, 1492-1800: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000). For the insight that eighteenth-century philosophy was shaped by the strategic actions of shrewd traders and negotiators, see Ives Goddard, “The Use of Pidgins and Jargons on the East Coast of North America” in *ibid.*, 66. On abstraction in particular, see David B. Paxman, “Language and Difference: The Problem of Abstraction in Eighteenth-Century Language Study,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993): 19-36.

authoritative commentator and defender was Blair himself, the “American and Indian languages” were “bold, picturesque, and metaphorical; full of strong allusions to sensible qualities.”⁸

Buffon invoked these ideas in support of his theory that America was literally a “new world.” He anticipated criticism and asked, “If this continent is in reality as ancient as the other, why did so few men exist on it? why were the most of that a few wandering savages?...As their society was in its infancy, so were their arts; their talents were imperfect, their ideas unexpanded, their organs rude, and their language barbarous.”⁹ Raynal, whom Jefferson targeted alongside Buffon for refutation in *Notes*, similarly described the “infant mind” of the Indians of Canada, whose “speeches in public assemblies...were full of images, energy and pathos” precisely because of the immaturity of the language: “For want of terms agreed upon to denote certain compound or complex ideas, they made use of figurative expressions,” which had to be supplemented by gesture and intonation to be understood.¹⁰ According to Blair, “greater experience, and more cultivated society,” particularly from “intercourse among mankind” in time would “abate the warmth of the imagination, and chasten the manner of expression” to achieve greater precision.¹¹

⁸ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, [2d. ed., 1785] (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 60-62. On Blair and Ossian, see Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 177-85; Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 130-32. For different takes on the association of Indian languages with metaphor, see David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 41, 44; Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 32-34; Matthew Lauzon, “Savage Eloquence in America and the Linguistic Construction of British Identity in the 18th Century,” *Historiographia Linguistica*, 23 (1996): 123-58; Laura J. Murray, “Joining Signs with Words: Missionaries, Metaphors, and the Massachusetts Language,” *New England Quarterly*, 74 (2001): 62-93, at 63.

⁹ [George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon], *Barr’s Buffon: Buffon’s Natural History, Containing a Theory of the Earth, A General History of Man, of the Brute Creation, and of Vegetables, Minerals, &c., from the French*, 10 vols. (London, 1792), 7: 46-47. For a description of this debate, see Gilbert Chinard, “Eighteenth Century Theories on America as a Human Habitat,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 91 (1947): 27-57. As Bernard Sheehan has noted, Buffon’s thesis challenged Jefferson’s hopes for America’s new society by acknowledging the transformative power of American environment, only to deny that any such transformation would be positive; see Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 66-71, 85-87.

¹⁰ Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, translated by J. Justamond (London, 1777), 4: 435-36, 447.

¹¹ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, 170.

Despite his interest in etymology, Ossian, and several correspondents' invocation of the idea, Jefferson kept a surprising silence on whether Indian languages were "savage."¹² This silence can be traced all the way back to his *Notes*, in which he attempted to defend American nature against the calumnies of Continental philosophy. Although Buffon and Raynal had each cited the barbarism of Indian languages in their list of evidence for the degeneracy of American nature, Jefferson chose not to address those portions of their works. He did, however, include an example of "Indian eloquence" by a Mingo of Cayuga descent named Tachnedorus, or John Logan, whose family had been slaughtered by frontiersmen. Logan led several successful war parties in response, providing one of the sparks for Dunmore's War. Explaining why he refused to sign the treaty concluding peace, Logan offered a speech to Dunmore that Jefferson considered superior even to "the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero."¹³

Logan spoke with paternal affection, stoic resolve, and unadorned eloquence, but his oratory did not possess "savage" characteristics. Aside from the "beams of peace," at which Logan rejoiced, his lament lacked the reliance on metaphor that should have been necessary for an uncivilized speaker.¹⁴ Jefferson explicitly introduced "Logan's Lament" not to provide a specimen of savage eloquence, but to prove that Indians were "formed in mind as well as in body, on the same module with the 'Homo sapiens Europaeus,'" and so prove that America had not

¹² On TJ and Ossian, see TJ to Charles Macpherson, 25 February 1773; James Macpherson, to Charles Macpherson, 7 August 1773; and Charles Macpherson to TJ, 12 August 1773 in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 1: 96-97, 100-01; Gilbert Chinard, ed., *The Literary Bible of Thomas Jefferson: His Commonplace Book of Philosophers and Poets* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1928), 189, 192-93, 202-04; Marquis de Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782*, edited and translated by Howard C. Rice, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 2: 392.

¹³ TJ, *Notes*, 63. John Gibson, a trader who had married Logan's sister, one of the victims, translated Logan's words. On Logan, the Yellow Creek massacre, Gibson, and Dunmore's War, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 356-65. On TJ's construction of Logan as a Mingo "chief," see Edward G. Gray, "The Making of Logan, the Mingo Orator," in Gray and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Language Encounter in the Americas, 1492-1800: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).

¹⁴ Bernard Sheehan has noted that Logan's Lament contained "only one mildly allusive phrase ('beams of peace')," but he accounts for this by suggesting that since Logan possessed white ancestry, the "civilized" characteristics of the speech were the result of "cultural infiltration." See Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 109-10, n. 50.

“degenerated...the moral faculties of man.”¹⁵ Jefferson also pointed to Indian oratory to suggest Indians’ mental superiority to Africans. Jefferson did not deny that Indians spoke “savage” languages; but he selected from among many circulating examples of Indian eloquence available for reproduction, the “specimen” that contradicted philosophical expectations. By the end of the eighteenth century, many of Jefferson’s opponents challenged the authenticity of Logan’s Lament, in part because it contradicted expectations of how “Indians” were supposed to speak. Some charged Jefferson with forging the oration to support his contention that Indians were equal in capacity to Europeans. More concerned with their shared national-continental identity, in this instance, than in demarcating civilization and savagery, Jefferson retorted: “Whether Logan’s or mine, it would still have been American.”¹⁶ The weight of those concerns, in Jefferson’s mind, would not remain so balanced.

Jefferson neither denied that Indian languages were barbarous, nor did he argue that they were evidence of their civilization. On the one hand, it was not central to Jefferson’s project of refuting American degeneracy. While he would have admitted that language reflected intellectual development, U.S. citizens spoke English, as would the civilized Indians incorporated into U.S. society. That Indians continued to speak underdeveloped languages was only one manifestation of the incomplete civilization that a well directed U.S. Indian policy could remedy. Jefferson ignored the “savage language” idea in *Notes* because, within the confines of Lockean epistemology and Scottish stadial theory, if they were poor and not yet fully formed, they suggested incomplete American development. But if they were copious and complete, they

¹⁵ TJ, *Notes*, 62-63, 140. He went to stress that he did “not mean to deny, that there are varieties in the race of men, distinguished by their powers both of body and of mind. I believe there are, as I see to be the case in the races of other animals. I mean only to suggest a doubt, whether the bulk and faculties of animals depend on the side of the Atlantic on which their food happens to grow, or which furnishes the elements of which they are compounded. Whether nature has enlisted herself as a Cis or Trans-Atlantic partisan?”

¹⁶ Jefferson to Henry, 31 December 1797, in TJ, *Notes*, “Appendix No. 4,” 227, 230. See also TJ to BSB, 21 December 1806, in Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, American Memory, <http://rs6.loc.gov/>. Some Americans thought Logan did speak with savage eloquence. See, for example, Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West: A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, preparatory to their return to their beloved city of Jerusalem* (Trenton, 1816), 92, 95-96; Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 1812), 431-32.

suggested that the speakers had transcended savagery. Faced with adding ammunition to European aspersions of the American continent or undercutting the justification for the primacy of U.S. settlers' claims to its land, in his depictions of Indian languages Jefferson turned away from the present and instead gazed into the continental past by emphasizing the etymological value of Indian languages for discovering Indian origins, which illuminated, and contained Indians safely in, an American antiquity.

Indian origins was a question apart from American origins for Jefferson. That is not to say that Jefferson limited his conceptions of national history to the imperial crisis or even to the first English colonization of Virginia. As Jefferson told the Republican publisher William Duane: "Our laws, language, religion, politics, & manners are so deeply laid in English foundations, that we shall never cease to consider their history as a part of ours, and to study ours in that as it's origin."¹⁷ Though his father's family claimed Welsh decent, Jefferson drew on the scholarship of John Fortescue-Aland and John Horne Tooke to glorify the Saxon roots of English civilization. According to Jefferson, the former had proven the Saxon derivation of "our ancient common law, on which as a stock, our whole system of law is engrafted." The latter demonstrated that "although since the Norman conquest [English] has received vast additions and embellishments from the Latin, Greek, French, and Italian languages, yet these are but engraftments on its idiomatic stem; its original structure and syntax remain the same."¹⁸

¹⁷ See TJ to William Duane, 12 August 1810, in J. Jefferson Looney, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004-), 3: 5.

¹⁸ Thomas Jefferson, "Essay on the Anglo-Saxon Language," in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 18: 366-67, 388. For the Welsh descent, see TJ, Autobiography Draft Fragment, 27 July 1821, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. For Jefferson's justification of the study of Anglo-Saxon at the University of Virginia to the state legislature, in which he cited Fortescue-Aland and Horne Tooke, see *Proceedings and Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia. Presented December 8, 1818, read and referred to a Select Committee* (Richmond, 1818), 18-19. The body of this was presented as a letter to a committee of the Virginia State Legislature, to which Thomas Jefferson's name was the first signatory. For the sources themselves, see John Fortescue-Aland, "Preface," *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy; as it more particularly regards the English Constitution* (London, 1714); and John Horne Tooke, *Epea Iheroenta. Or, Diversions of Purley. Part I.* (London, 1786). For Jefferson's study of Anglo-Saxon, see Raymond George Lacina, "Thomas Jefferson's 'Essay on the Anglo-Saxon Language' in Context: A Study of Jefferson's Analytical Method" (Ph.D. Diss.: University of Toronto, 2001). For the broader attention to the Anglo-Saxon language in the United States, see David Simpson, *The Politics of*

Jefferson was prone to gush over the “copiousness” of English, both in the number of its terminations and in the number and versatility of its roots. At the end of the eighteenth century, Jefferson thought that French was the world’s most cultivated language. But as he told John Waldo, author of *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1811), English was “founded on a broader base, native and adopted, and capable, with the like freedom of employing its materials, of becoming superior to that in copiousness and euphony.”¹⁹ For that reason, Jefferson proudly admitted that he was “a friend to *neology*.”²⁰ Jefferson informed Joseph Milligan, the publisher of his translation of Destutt de Tracy’s *Treatise on Political Economy* (1817), that he had coined several new words: “Where brevity, perspicuity, and even euphony can be promoted by the introduction of a new word, it is an improvement to the language.” Jefferson ridiculed the “preposterous idea of fixing the language,” and he observed that had Chaucer or any other of their “Saxon ancestors” been misguided enough to attempt such a thing, “the progress of ideas must have stopped with that of language.” He thought that “nothing is more evident than that as we advance in the knowledge of new things, and of new combinations of old ones, we must have new words to express them.”²¹

Expansion across an unknown continent by an enterprising people possessed of a copious language would be an event of singular importance. “Certainly so great growing a population,” Jefferson predicted to Waldo in 1813, “spread over such an extent of country, with such a variety of climates, of productions, of arts, must enlarge their language, to make it answer its purpose of

American English, 1776-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 85-86; and for the fullest discussion of “the Saxon myth” within the context of “the revolutionary use of history,” see H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 158-84, 196-98. Jefferson’s and Horne Tooke’s views of the predominantly Saxon roots of English were neither unique nor unchallenged. For a similar view, see Noah Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language; with Notes Historical and Critical* [1789] (Gainesville, Flor.: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1951), 38. For an opposite view, see the Swedish minister Nicholas Collin, “Philological View of some very Ancient Words in several Languages,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 4 (1799), 481.

¹⁹ TJ to John Waldo, 16 August 1813, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 13: 344-45.

²⁰ TJ to Adams, 15 August 1820, in Cappon, ed., *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 567. Jefferson did, however, fear neology in matters of classification, fearing that it would fragment the international scientific community. See TJ to John Manners, 22 February 1814, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 14: 97-103.

²¹ TJ to Joseph Milligan, 6 April 1816, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 14: 463.

expressing all ideas, the new as well as the old. The new circumstances under which we are placed, call for new words, new phrases, and for the transfer of old words to new objects.” In short, an “American dialect will therefore be formed.” But this was not all. The United States and Britain’s various settler colonies had extended the language “from the latitude of London into every climate of the globe,” the consequence of which would be the idiom’s continual enlargement, and “the greater the degree the more precious will it become as the organ of the development of the human mind.”²² Even in the midst of war with the former colonial power, Jefferson envisioned U.S. citizens engaged in a common Anglo-Saxon endeavor to enlarge and extend the English language and to make it the instrument for the world’s intellectual and moral improvement by means of colonization. However, the United States would lead the way. As he told John Adams: “if in the process of this neologisation, our transatlantic brethren choose not to accompany us, we may furnish a second example, after the Ionians, of a colonial dialect improving on its primitive.”²³

From its beginning, in Jefferson’s mind, colonization lay at the very root of the English language. He rehearsed its history in the opening paragraph of his “Essay toward Facilitating Instruction in the Anglo-Saxon and Modern Dialects of the English Language,” which he composed to aid students of the University of Virginia. The “native language” of Britain was Celtic. Although the Romans had claimed Britain for almost five hundred years, “it was a military possession chiefly, by the soldiery alone, and with dispositions intermutually jealous and unamicable. They seemed to have aimed at no lasting settlements there, and to have had little familiar mixture with the native Britons.” For those reasons, there was “little incorporation” of the Roman into the native language.” When the legions withdrew, so did their language. If it had not, the Celtic Britons would have carried resulting linguistic changes with them as they were pushed into Wales and Cornwall by the later invasion and occupation of the Germanic Saxons.

²² TJ to Waldo, 16 August 1813, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 8: 340, 345.

²³ TJ to Adams, 15 August 1820, in Cappon, ed., *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 567.

Anglo-Saxon became the “language of all England” from the sixth century until the thirteenth century. “Having driven out the former inhabitants,” Jefferson tellingly explained to John Cartwright, “they became aborigines.” Jefferson concluded that the language’s success must have been assisted by the language’s remarkable flexibility in “combining primitive words so as to produce any modification of the idea desired.” In its “frame and construction, its declensions of nouns and verbs, and its syntax,” Jefferson emphasized, this language was “full formed.”²⁴

Jefferson’s ancient Britain was a mirror of America’s past and future. Anglo-Americans aimed not at outposts manned only by a few soldiers; rather, they had established settlements, ever growing. Jefferson’s Indian policy, following the precedent set in the Washington administration, centered on neutralizing “jealous and unamicable” feelings through fair purchases and education in the ways of civilization. This would bring peace, justify U.S. possession of the land, and alone, U.S. policymakers insisted, could save Indians from extinction. Although Jefferson’s plan of Indian removal resembled Saxons forcing the linguistically separate native inhabitants into remote havens, the U.S. “civilization” program would bring whites and Indians together. “Incorporating themselves with us as citizens of the United States,” Jefferson defensively insisted to his southern Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins in 1803, “this is what the natural progress of things will, of course, bring on.” White Americans would “become aborigines” not by conquest, but because Indians would want “to intermix and become one people” with those of European descent.²⁵ Before the second decade of the nineteenth century, Jefferson kept silent as to whether Indian languages were “full formed.”

²⁴ TJ, “Essay on Anglo-Saxon,” 365-66; TJ to John Cartwright, 5 June 1824, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 16: 42. Peter Onuf has also drawn attention to the ways in which Jefferson’s depiction of the Saxon past mirrored the United States, but he has connected them through Jefferson’s ideas on African Americans rather than Native Americans. Onuf emphasizes that TJ’s “Saxon myth,” which emphasized the natural right of emigration as a basis for nationhood, was opposed to and incompatible with Africans’ involuntary enslavement and forced migration. Thus, the latter were a “captive nation,” bearers and victims of enmities and prejudices that made their membership in the American nation impossible. See Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 154.

²⁵ TJ to Benjamin Hawkins, 18 February 1803, Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 9: 363. For Jefferson’s views on the natural right of colonization and the policy of civilization, see, respectively, TJ, *A Summary*

Incorporation demanded adoption of the English language. Education in English was the centerpiece of “civilization” for all of Jefferson’s predecessors, from England’s seventeenth-century colonies through the Federalist administrations.²⁶ Even those of diverse interests and differing politics come together on their expansive visions of the New World future of English. Noah Webster had predicted in 1789, that “within a century and a half, North America will be peopled with a hundred millions of men, *all speaking the same language*,” which would allow “one quarter of the world...to associate and converse together like children of the same family.”²⁷ Moving beyond the constricting confines of country and continent, Jefferson’s imperial imagination gazed across hemispheric vistas. “However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits,” Jefferson confided to James Monroe, “it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern, if not southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed by similar forms, and by similar laws; nor can we contemplate with satisfaction either blot or mixture on that surface.”²⁸

The author of the most emphatic statements on both Indian linguistic diversity and Indian incorporation into U.S. society eagerly anticipated the linguistic homogeneity of the Americas. It would be but one more manifestation of the progress of civilization in the Americas and the means by which Americans would contribute to human intellectual and moral improvement. As such, Jefferson sought to promote its achievement more aggressively than his predecessors.

View of the Rights of British America. Set forth in some resolutions intended for the inspection of the present delegates of the people of Virginia. Now in convention. By a native, and member of the House of Burgesses [Williamsburg, 1774], 6; TJ, Second Inaugural Address, in Philip S. Foner, ed., *Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Willey Book Company, 1944), 360-61.

²⁶ See the discussion of George Washington and Timothy Pickering in ch. 1, above. See also James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 181, 184-86; Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 278; Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 6.

²⁷ Webster, *Dissertations*, 18-22.

²⁸ TJ to James Monroe, 24 November 1801, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 10: 296. The immediate context of this remark was the colonization of emancipated slaves and the unsuitability of even then Spanish-speaking portions for their destination. On Jefferson’s contribution to the terms under which the United States undertook hemispheric relations, see Eldon Kenworthy, *America/Américas: Myth in the Making of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 3, 18, 23-27.

Easily scaling any theoretical “wall of separation” between church and state, in 1803 Jefferson instructed Return J. Meigs to provide \$200-300 from his Indian agency’s funds to assist the Presbyterian missionary Gideon Blackburn in establishing a mission among the Cherokees. Secretary of War Henry Dearborn told Blackburn that the president was particularly solicitous of the missionary’s “laudable plan” for establishing an English school among the Cherokees.²⁹

A uniform and ever improving speech would benefit national attachment by facilitating intercourse and acting more subtly to bind the thoughts and sentiments of Americans. Webster had stressed what he called both “the connection between language and logic” and, paraphrasing a prize-winning essay to the Berlin Academy by Johann David Michaelis, “the influence of language on opinions, and of opinions on language.”³⁰ Similarly, Jefferson sensed that language possessed a subtle but important influence. In *Notes*, Jefferson cautioned against accepting overwhelming numbers of immigrants who had lived under absolute monarchy, fearing that the sudden liberty would quickly devolve into licentiousness for those unprepared for its

²⁹ Secretary of War to Return J. Meigs, 1 July 1803, War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs. Neither Blackburn nor his teachers attempted to learn the Cherokee language; rather they expected Indians to become Christianized through learning the English language. In 1805, Blackburn graduated his first class and held a ceremony where Cherokee children demonstrated their new abilities to read from English books and sing English hymns. By 1815, he had taught these skills to some 200 of their brethren. See William G. McLaughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 56-67; Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 287-88; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 159. Edwin S. Gaustad, *Sworn on the Alter of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 99-102, discusses Jefferson’s views of missionary work within the context of separation of church and state.

³⁰ Webster, *Dissertations*, 18-22. See also Noah Webster, “A Dissertation concerning the Influence of Language on Opinions, and of Opinions on Language,” in *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings. On Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects* (Boston, 1790), 222, where Webster attributed the “title and many of the following ideas” in that essay to Johann David Michaelis, *A Dissertation on the influence of opinions on language and of language on opinions... Together with an enquiry into the advantages and practicability of an universal learned language* (London, 1771). On Michaelis, see Aarsleff, “The Tradition of Condillac,” 189-91; Tuska Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 30-34. Jefferson’s vision of the American past and future, inextricably bound with the English past and English language, mirrored that published in 1789 by the widely maligned Federalist lexicographer, though Jefferson never cited his influence or even mentioned his work. The only major difference between their accounts of the origin of English, its anticipated progress in North America, and its gradual divergence from that spoken in Britain, was that Webster thought “intercourse with tribes wholly unknown in Europe, will introduce new words into the American tongue,” whereas Jefferson never enumerated this as a factor. See Webster, *Dissertations*, 17-61, at 22.

responsibility. “These principles,” Jefferson feared, “with their language, they will transmit to their children.”³¹ More positively, Jefferson boasted to English parliamentary reformer John Cartwright that students learning Anglo-Saxon at the University of Virginia would “imbibe with the language their free principles of government.”³²

Although the eventual incorporation of Indians into U.S. society remained the avowed goal of U.S. Indian policy throughout his term as president, Jefferson, at least in part, seized the opportunity to acquire Louisiana because it promised the possibility of removal and national consolidation. As Jefferson told John Breckenridge months before the purchase was official, “the best use we can make of the country for some time, will be to give establishments in it to the Indians on the East side of the Mississippi, in exchange for their present country.”³³ At least for some, achieving linguistic unity was one of the crucial benefits that the purchase and Indian removal would confer. College of William & Mary law professor St. George Tucker emphasized that this exchange of lands, which he thought could be easily accomplished, would “strengthen and cement our union beyond any other event of which I am able to form an idea” because it would concentrate on one side of the Mississippi those “who are already civilized, who speak the same language with us, and who will be ready and willing to harmonize and become one people with us.”³⁴ As Jefferson described it to the governor and superintendent of Indian affairs of the Indiana Territory, William Henry Harrison, by banishing those who opposed assimilation and forcing accelerated accommodation upon those open to incorporation, Indian removal would “finally consolidate our whole country to one nation only.”³⁵

³¹ TJ, *Notes*, 85.

³² TJ to John Cartwright, 5 June 1824, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 15: 51.

³³ TJ to John C. Breckenridge, 12 August 1803, in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Putnam, 1897), 8: 244. TJ devoted most of his draft of a constitutional amendment, which would have given the executive the explicit power to acquire territory, to this issue. See “Drafts of an Amendment to the Constitution,” in *ibid.*, 241-49.

³⁴ Sylvestrus [St. George Tucker], *Reflections on the cession of Louisiana to the United States* (Washington City, 1803), 23-27.

³⁵ TJ to William Henry Harrison, 27 February 1803, Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 10: 373. Here TJ urged Harrison to lure leading Indians into crushing debt, which could only be cancelled through sale of lands. He reversed the logic of federal civilization policy. Under Washington, it was thought that once

* * *

Unlike Jefferson, whose scholarly speculations drifted toward what would become of the Indian languages in their competition with English, Benjamin Smith Barton's began to focus on language in competition with other modes of studying "the Indian." Drafting a letter to an unknown correspondent in 1813, Barton revealed that in his decades of ethnological studies he had found one "polar star...which guides us with safety through the long night of American history." All evidence pointed to the fact that America, until European discovery, was "almost exclusively inhabited by a race of men not essentially different in their physical features" and who dressed similarly. Likewise, "all the monuments of American labor and ingenuity," Barton stressed, whether in Peru, at Palenque, or outside of Pittsburgh, "bespoke a common original." He reasoned that the builders of the mounds of the North American interior were of the same nation as the Toltecs, but they had branched off from the main group before they had settled the Vale of Mexico. At the end of his life, Barton attributed particular importance to the physical evidence found within the monuments themselves. Human and artistic remains, Barton asserted

Indians were civilized, they would willingly sell lands; Jefferson sought to accelerate land sales in an effort to force Indians to become civilized. This point is made most clearly in Michael D. Green, "The Expansion of European Colonization to the Mississippi Valley, 1780-1880," in Bruce G. Trigger and Wilcomb E. Washburn, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 1: *North America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 490. However, Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 245, emphasizes that although Jefferson was the first to negotiate a removal treaty, which only became possible after the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, removal beyond the Mississippi had been contemplated by U.S. policymakers (e.g. Timothy Pickering) for some time. The work of Sheehan and Prucha has emphasized the continuities between the civilization and removal policies and thus of U.S. Indian policy before and after the War of 1812. See *ibid*; and Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Taking the opposite stance, that Jefferson rejected removal after an initial interest in the possibility that the Louisiana Territory posed and that the War of 1812 ended the first phase of U.S. Indian policy is Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and Indian Policy 1783-1812* [1967] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 113, 170. Anthony Wallace sees removal as apart from the civilization policy, but the War of 1812 as the logical culmination of Jefferson's land acquisition policies; see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 229, 275. More recently, Robert Owens has shifted the focus. Similar to Prucha, Owens acknowledges the conflict between ideals and frontier settlers' interests, but contra Prucha, Owens emphasizes that Jefferson was aligned with the latter, though he explained this as a "far-seeing kindness" since he thought it would accelerate Indian civilization. See Robert M. Owens, "Jeffersonian Benevolence on the Ground: The Indian Land Cession Treaties of William Henry Harrison," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (2002): 405-35, at 406, 435.

with confused conviction, “uniformly represent[ed] one species, I was going to say one variety of men. Every where the American (or rather I would say the Asiatic) face and features are seen.”³⁶

Language – in both its vestiges of resemblance to other tongues and in its relative degree of refinement – had once been Barton’s “polar star.” From the very beginning of his ethnological studies, Barton had attempted to reconcile different forms of evidence – linguistic, archaeological, physical, cultural – to understand the “*American Antiquities*” and to solve the puzzle of “the ancient history of the American nations.” This evidence came mainly from wide reading and from diverse correspondents, each of whom passed along linguistic information and suggested some kind of lapse from a previous degree of cultivation. These included frontier officer Jonathan Heart, philosophical traveler William Bartram, Mahican chief Hendrick Aupaumut, and Moravian missionary John Heckewelder offered Indian traditions as well.³⁷

Even after publishing *New Views*, Barton continued collecting linguistic information. In March 1802, Jefferson granted permission to Barton to visit Cherokee territory “for the recovery of your health, and for the purpose of obtaining some usefull information relative to the language & natural history of the country.” The president was “a prisoner of state” and could not join

³⁶ See BSB to [unknown], March 1813, in “Smith, Benjamin Smith, 1766-1815: 1783 May 27 – 1815 Feb. 1,” BSB Papers, Series I, APS.

³⁷ For Heart, see “A letter from Major Jonathan Heart, to Benjamin Smith Barton, M. D. Corresponding member of the Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland, Member of the American Philosophical Society, and Professor of Natural History and Botany in the University of Pennsylvania,--containing observations on the Ancient Works of Art, the Native Inhabitants, &c. of the Western Country,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s., 3 (1793): 214-22, at 216-18, 220-21. Heart had already published “Account of some Remains of ancient Works, on the Muskingum, with a Plan of these Works. By J. Heart, Capt. In the first American Regiment,” *Columbian Magazine*, May 1787, 425-27. For biographical information, see Jonathan Heart, *Journal of Capt. Jonathan Heart on the March with his Company from Connecticut to Fort Pitt, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from the Seventh of September, to the Twelfth of October, 1785, Inclusive*, ed. Consul Willshire Butterfield (Albany, 1885), vii-x. For Bartram, see William Bartram, “Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians” [1789], in *Travels and Other Writings*, edited by Thomas P. Slaughter (New York: Library of America, 1996), pp. 527, 529-30, 532, 534. This manuscript was unpublished until the mid-nineteenth century, when archaeologist and ethnologist Ephraim G. Squier edited it for publication in the *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*, vol. 3 (1853). Bartram included even more linguistic opinions in William Bartram, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, and East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Choctaws* [1791], in *ibid.*, 374, 412. On Zeisberger, Aupaumut, and Heckewelder, see chs. 1-2, above.

him.³⁸ In late 1803 and early 1804 Barton received two more Catawba vocabularies, one of which was provided by an Indian named Nettles, “a decent man, discreet & sensible” who had learned to read and write many years before at the College of William & Mary. The other Catawba vocabulary was, mysteriously, “set to music to suit the pronunciation of the words, in an ingenious manner” by a local colonel who also sent along an Oneida vocabulary that had been taken from his Indian servant.³⁹ In December 1804, Barton received an Osage vocabulary from Constantine S. Rafinesque, who had earlier suggested himself to Jefferson as an explorer.⁴⁰ In June 1805, Barton took a “Kaigani” [Haida] vocabulary from a “Mr. Swift.” Barton was struck by the resemblance between the words for “dog” in this language, spoken on the coast of southern Alaska, and in the Oneida: *Har* and *Er-har*, according to Barton, respectively.⁴¹ As late as 1807, Barton obliquely targeted the “feeble and illusory” arguments of an individual “of high reputation and high in the confidence of the country.” Ironically, considering it was Jefferson who made it possible, exploration held the key. “We should lose no time in collecting vocabularies,” both from “those with whom we have long been acquainted” and from “those who have recently become known to us through...Mr. Mackenzie, Captains Lewis, Clark, Freeman, and others.”⁴²

³⁸ Henry Dearborn to Col. R. J. Meigs, Dearborn to BSB, 26 March 1802; TJ to BSB, 29 March 1802, in BSB Papers, Correspondence, 50-51, HSP. .

³⁹ John Drayton to BSB, September 1803, 11 February 1804, in BSB Papers, Correspondence, 61, 67, HSP. On Nettles, see James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and their Neighbors from European Contact* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 240-42.

⁴⁰ For Barton's receipt of the vocabulary, see “Rafinesque, C. S. – Osage Vocabulary,” Series II, American Indian Materials, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers. For Rafinesque's application to Jefferson and the latter's response, see CSR to TJ, 27 November 1804; TJ to CSR, 15 December 1804, in Edwin M. Betts, “The Correspondence between Constantine Samuel Rafinesque and Thomas Jefferson,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 87 (1944): 368-80, at 369. He provided no vocabulary, but see also, Samuel Preston to BSB, 15 December 1804, in “Preston, Samuel – On the Origin of the Indians,” Series II, American Indian Materials, BSB Papers, American Philosophical Society.

⁴¹ “BSB – Kaigana vocabulary note,” Series II, American Indian Materials, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers. For the identification of “Kaigani” as Haida, see Swanton, *Indian Tribes of North America*, 570. Haida is unrelated to the Iroquoian Oneida language; see “Table 3. Consensus Classification,” 5, 8.

⁴² Benjamin Smith Barton, *Discourse on some of the principal desiderata in natural history, and on the best means for promoting the study of the science, in the United-States, read before the Linnean Society, on the tenth of June, 1807* (Philadelphia, 1807), 16-18. Barton labeled Jefferson by name in an accompanying endnote, see *ibid.*, 79. Barton requested the vocabularies Lewis and Clark had collected. All Jefferson could send him was one of the Mandan. See BSB to TJ, 14 September 1809, in Jackson, ed. *Letters*, 463-64, and below.

He did what he could to promote this himself. In the spring of 1810, Barton directed the aspiring botanist Thomas Nuttall to go to Chicago, by way of Pittsburgh and Detroit, and thence westward. Nuttall was to spend “fifteen or twenty days” living among and “with an ear to the Winnebagoes” so he could provide “a good specimen of their language.”⁴³

In 1803, Barton presented “Hints on the Etymology of certain English Words,” determined to defend and extend his previous etymological work, which had come under fire from Constantin François Volney and Nicholas Collin, among others, and perhaps also to respond to the proposed removal of willing tribes beyond the Mississippi. Describing the course of Delaware migrations in 1798, Barton had reflected that sometimes “caprice,” but more often necessity – especially “the ravages of tyrants” – impelled nations to migrate. He predicted that the United States was “about to contemplate an immense change in the geographical situation of our tribes. They seem incapable of prospering in the neighbourhood of the whites, especially the enterprising Anglo-Americans.”⁴⁴ He composed “Hints” as a letter to Thomas Beddoes, like Barton a trained physician, who had written the Tookian *Observations on the nature of demonstrative evidence...and reflections on Language* (1793). Although Beddoes was an outspoken proponent of using etymology to trace words to their earliest forms in an effort to demonstrate their origin in sense perceptions, Barton offered an explicit defense of the different kind of etymology he had employed in *New Views*: “etymology (though it has often been abused), is susceptible, in innumerable instances, of the greatest certainty” in revealing the ancient affinities of nations.⁴⁵

Barton set out to demonstrate that during the course of his “inquiries into the languages of the Americas,” he had “discovered many instances of affinity between the words of Asiatic and

⁴³ See BSB to Nuttall, 22 April 1810; BSB to Nuttall, [n. d.], in “Nuttall, Thomas, 1786-1859”; and BSB to Albert Gallatin, 14 March 1810, in “Gallatin, Albert, 1761-1849,” Series I, BSB Papers, APS.

⁴⁴ BSB, *New Views*, 10-11.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Smith Barton, “Hints on the Etymology of certain English Words, and on their affinity to words in the languages of different European, Asiatic, and American (Indian) nations, in a letter from Dr. Barton to Dr. Thomas Beddoes,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 6 (1809), 145.

American nations, and those of English.”⁴⁶ He often achieved this by linking Saxon words with Indian ones. Barton found what he thought was his most convincing etymology – surprisingly, considering that the Indians within the boundaries of the United States were a nonliterate people – in words relating to “book.” He instructed his readers that “the Saxon word, *Boc*, with very little variation, is preserved in America.” Barton noted that the Delaware *Wuni-pak*, a similar Mahican word, and the Kurdish *Pak*, each denoted “a leaf” and, moreover, the last was a synonym for a book’s page. Where the *Wuni* came from, Barton was uncertain, but he did offer the fact that *Vaunoo* referred to a “stem” or “trunk” among the Semoyads of northern Asia. The consonant difference did not bother Barton, since among Indians “we find numerous instances of the change of P into B, and of B into P.” Barton also confronted directly one of the foremost linguistic scholars of Europe. Giving his version of the etymology of *Democratical*, Barton noted that *demo* meant “men,” in the ancient Persian language and commented: “I find a great number of English, French, and American (Indian) words in this old language, which Sir William Jones has shown to be Sanscrit.”⁴⁷ He meant this to reinforce his claim in *New Views* that “the Americans are not, as some writers have supposed, specifically different from the Persians and other improved nations of Asia.”⁴⁸

Jones transformed language study in Europe. A jurist and man of letters, he was respected across the learned world the breadth of his erudition and loved in the United States for his support for colonial whigs during the revolutionary crisis. The historical study of Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic as necessary to his administration of law in British India and his studies led him to the unexpected conclusion, delivered before the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1786, that Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, was so similar to Greek and Latin, as well as to the Germanic, Celtic, and Persian languages, “both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of

⁴⁶ BSB, “Hints,” 150.

⁴⁷ BSB, “Hints,” 148, 150-151.

⁴⁸ BSB, *New Views*, Dedication, v. Barton remained committed to emphasizing Indian uniformity – linguistic, physical, and cultural – but he also remained committed to the idea that the Americas could have been populated from multiple Asian sources.

grammar” that each must have descended from a common ancestor, no longer existing. He identified the speakers of these languages as a “distinct race,” descended from Ham, who had invented writing, astronomy, and mythology, and established colonies throughout the world, even venturing into Mexico and Peru.⁴⁹

Jones’s ethnology was basically compatible with Barton’s own; his methods, however, were not, and Jones’s approach to languages transformed historical linguistic studies in Europe. Hindus, Arabians, and Tartars, whom Jones had concluded were the three principal nations of Asia, shared a common ancestor, but Noah’s language was no more. “No mode of reasoning,” therefore, was “weaker or more delusive” than “etymological conjecture.” “As a philologist,” Jones felt compelled “to enter my protest against the licentiousness of etymologists in historical researches, and principally...in transposing and inserting letters, in substituting at pleasure any consonant for another of the same order, and in totally disregarding the vowels.” When comparing two languages, one should not conclude their affinity based on a “great multitude of identical words, but (which is far stronger proof) from the similar grammatical arrangement of the several idioms.” To extract historical information from language, one had to master syntax and morphology – languages’ mechanisms for modifying words and connecting them – rather than rely on superficial comparison of words themselves.⁵⁰

Barton had given some attention to grammar in an earlier work. Indeed, it had been crucial to the interpretive framework he had established in 1796 to provide an account of “the

⁴⁹ [William Jones], “The Third Anniversary Discourse, delivered 2d February, 1786. By the President,” in *Asiatic Researches; or, transactions of the society, instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the history and antiquities, the arts, sciences, and literature, of Asia...Printed verbatim from the Calcutta Edition* (London, 1799-), 1: 423-24. For his historical view of the Bible, see [William Jones], “Discourse the Ninth. On the Origin and Families of Nations. Delivered 23 February, 1792. By the President..” *Asiatic Researches*, 3: 486. Jones’s fullest account of the lineage and migrations of nations is in this address. For Jones’s inclusion of Mexicans and Peruvians into the great Hamian family of civilization, see Jones, “Eighth Anniversary Discourse,” 3: 490-91. For an analysis of Jones’s “Mosaic Ethnology,” see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* [1997] (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2004), ch. 2. On U.S. enthusiasm for Jones, but which neglects his philological and ethnological work altogether, see Robert A. Ferguson, “The Emulation of Sir William Jones in the Early Republic,” *New England Quarterly*, 52 (1979): 2-26.

⁵⁰ [William Jones], “Ninth Anniversary Discourse,” 3: 488-89; Jones, “Eighth Anniversary Discourse,” *ibid.*, 3. On Jones’s philology and its influence, see Aarsleff, *Study of Language in England*, chs. 4-5.

physical, or natural and the moral history of the native inhabitants” and to make sense of the mounds of the Ohio Valley, which he considered to be self-evident proof that North America had once been more polished and more densely populated.⁵¹ As early as 1787, after reading Francis Xavier Clavigero’s *History of Mexico*, the English translation of which had appeared that year, Barton had been “imboldened” to suggest that the mounds must be connected to the “Toltecas.” Mexican traditions, published by Clavigero, identified this group as having come from the north, settled the valley of Mexico, and founded Mesoamerican civilization. In his early work Barton had suggested that the Toltecs were the descendants of Danes who had landed on Labrador,⁵² but by the time he offered his “Observations and Conjectures” to the American Philosophical Society in 1796, Barton explained: “I do not suppose that these more polished nations of America have entirely passed away... Their descendents are still scattered over extensive portions of this continent.” Some may have been “extinguished,” but for most, it was only “the strength and the glory that are no more.”⁵³

⁵¹ BSB to Charles Gotthold Reichel, 2 September 1793, BSB Papers, Correspondence, HSP.

⁵² BSB, *Observations on Some Parts of Natural History; to which is prefaced An Account of Several Remarkable Vestiges of an Ancient Date, which have been Discovered in Different Parts of North America, Part I* (London, 1787), i, 50-51, 65. In 1787 two other U.S. citizens also attempted to link the Toltecs and the “Mound Builders.” In February of that year, John Cleves Symmes told Charles Thomson that it had “long been settled and fully agreed” that the builders of the mounds were no longer in the Mississippi Valley. Symmes speculated that the more savage and warlike ancestors of the Indians had driven them off, which could be seen in the earthen fortifications, and that the builders were none other than the ancestors to the civilized Mexican nations, as could be seen with a comparison of the mounds and their contents with descriptions that had been offered of the ancient Mexicans in Robertson’s history of America. See John Cleves Symmes to Charles Thomson, 4 February 1787, “The Thomson Papers,” *New-York Historical Society Collections* 11 (1878): 233-39, at 233. Thomson forwarded the relevant extract of this letter (see Thomson to TJ, 28 April 1787, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, American Memory), but BSB, then at Edinburgh, had visited TJ in Paris in February of that year. See Thomas Mann Randolph to TJ, 14 April 1787, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 11: 292-93. So, by the time TJ encountered Symmes’s views, he may have already heard them from BSB. In his response to Thomson, TJ replied that the APS should include exact descriptions of the mounds to solve the question of whether the builders were a colony or the ancestors of the Mexicans and whether both were Asian descendents; yet in this letter, Jefferson also suggested that language would be, ultimately, a better indicator than tradition. See TJ to Charles Thomson, 20 September 1787, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 12: 159.

⁵³ BSB, “Observations and Conjectures concerning certain Articles which were taken out of an ancient Tumulus, or Grave, at Cincinnati, in the County of Hamilton, and Territory of the United-States, North-West of the River Ohio, in a letter from Benjamin Smith Barton to Reverend Joseph Priestley,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s. 4 (1799), 187-88.

To support his claims, Barton attempted to demonstrate two things: links between Indians and Mexico and a level of advancement among ancient Indians that surpassed what was known of Indians since European contact. For the former, Barton compared artifacts and pointed to the “fragments” of Asian mythology and Aztec astronomy that could be found in the Ohio Valley. For the latter, Barton relied not upon the mounds themselves, but rather upon the historical record, Indian “traditions” (including Hendrick Aupaumut’s written history of the Mahicans), and especially Indian languages, which combined to refute “the invective *Recherches* of De Pauw, the eloquent puerilities of Buffon, or the soft systematic tissue of Robertson.” In so doing, language became crucial to the “myth of the Mound Builders.”⁵⁴

Barton’s goal was to refute the commonplace assumption that Indians spoke savage languages. In contrast to the “falsehoods or the errors of De Pauw,” Barton argued that “many of these languages are much more fertile than has been commonly supposed.” Barton found diverse evidence to refute De Pauw from the Moravians and in the sources he cited elsewhere. Aware of common misconceptions concerning the poverty of Indian languages and fearing that Barton might think that David Zeisberger had exaggerated the abundance and precision of the language, when John Heckewelder forwarded the manuscript Onondaga dictionary to Barton, he assured him that “the Words put down above are true.”⁵⁵ Regarding Huron and Algonquian, Charlevoix had wondered at “a richness of expression, a variety of turns and phrases, a propriety of diction,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 189-91, 197. Barton cited a communication from a “Capn Hendrick.” See BSB, *New Views*, “Preliminary Discourse,” xciii; “Appendix,” 29. For the earliest version of Aupaumut’s history, see “Extract from an Indian History,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 9(1804), 100. Although fully half of Barton’s evidence was linguistic, no scholarship acknowledges the centrality of language to establishing BSB’s interpretive framework for understanding the mounds. For a description of the emerging “myth of the mound builders,” see Robert Silverberg, *The Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), chs. 1-2. Because he ignores language, Silverberg concludes that “Observations and Conjectures” had “nothing of importance to offer. See *ibid.*, 48. At *ibid.*, 32, Silverberg says that BSB was the first to link the Mound Builders and the Toltecs. This is true if one considers only published accounts, but he ignores Symmes’s speculations. See the shorter, but in some ways more insightful accounts in John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames: University of Iowa Press, 1984), ch. 13; and Andrew John Lewis, “The Curious and the Learned: Natural History in the Early Republic” (Ph.d. Diss.: Yale, 2001), ch. 3, although they also ignore the place of language study in the developing myth.

⁵⁵ “Zeisberger, D. – Onondaga Dictionary,” Received 7 March 1797, BSB Papers, Series II. American Indian Materials, APS.

and a regularity, which are perfectly astonishing...amongst Barbarians.” Considering the “copiousness, regularity, and beautiful modes of speech” of the Mexican language, Clavigero had been impelled irresistibly to the conclusion that “such a language cannot have been spoken by a barbarous people.” Also against conventional wisdom – here he targeted William Stith’s *History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia* (1747) – Barton asserted that Indians retained their languages over long periods, which he doubted would be true if those languages were in some way underdeveloped. From these accounts, he inferred that the “structure of the languages of many of the American tribes is favourable to the idea, that these people were, formerly, much more improved than they are at present.”⁵⁶

Barton did not abandon the idea that an uncivilized people must speak an uncivilized language, he relied on it. He argued that the Indian languages were remarkably cultivated; therefore, the speakers must have achieved civilization in the past. To supplement this cursory glance at the structure of Indian languages, Barton cited William Robertson, Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz, and Jonathan Carver, each of whom provided evidence that different Indian languages revealed social differentiation in Indian communities, a remarkable fact for those who thought distinctions began only with the institution of property. He also noted that several Indian nations possessed “vestiges of... hieroglyphicks,” which were a necessary stage in the development of a written language achieved by the “improved nations of the Mexican empire”

⁵⁶ BSB, “Observations and Conjectures,” 191-92. He did not cite anyone in particular for these remarks, but he could have found those opinions in those works, which he cited elsewhere. For those original comments, see David Zeisberger, “History of the North American Indians,” ed. by Archer Butler Hubert and William Nathaniel Schwarz, in *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society Quarterly* (Jan-April 1910), 143; P. de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America. Undertaken by Order of the French King* [1761] (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966), 1: 299-300; Abbé D. Francesco Saviero Clavigero, *The History of Mexico, collected from Spanish and Mexican Historians, from Manuscripts, and Ancient Paintings of the Indians...to which are added, critical dissertations on the Land, the Animals, and the Inhabitants of Mexico. Translated from the original Italian, by Charles Cullen* (London, 1787), 1: 391, 394; 2: 197. Charlevoix, *Journal*, 52, 302; and Clavigero, *History*, 106, 391, also discuss linguistic retentiveness. For the comments that BSB was responding to, see Corneille De Pauw, *Philosophical Investigations of the Americans* (1768), in Henry Steele Commager and Elmo Giordanetti, eds., *Was America a Mistake: An Eighteenth-Century Controversy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 93, 98-99; William Stith, *History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia* (1747), 13.

and which resembled those found in Asia.⁵⁷ Perhaps most importantly, Barton argued that contrary to popular and learned opinion and to Jefferson in particular, “the radical languages in America are but few.” He would go on to demonstrate this – at least to his own satisfaction – in his *New Views on the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of North America* (1797) shortly thereafter. Here Barton said only that there were countless dialects, but many of those had “receded so little from the parent stock, that we cannot hesitate to conclude, that the period is not very remote when the tribes who speak them were one and the same people.” Barton suggested that one need only look to the previous centuries, which had witnessed Indians separating as they moved west, and their languages splitting into dialects as they did so. This indicated “the great consolidation of the Americans, in former ages.” Thus they must have been “much more cultivated than we have ever known them: for extensive associations of men cannot be formed, or, at least, cannot long subsist, in the savage state.”⁵⁸ While words best revealed the descent and

⁵⁷ BSB, “Observations and Conjectures,” 192-93, 195-96. For the sources in which Barton found evidence for social differentiation, see William Robertson, *The History of America*, 6th ed. [1792] (London: Routledge, 1996), 2: 165-67; Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina: containing a description of the countries that lye on both sides of the river Mississippi: with an account of the settlements* (London, 1763), 1: 170-71; J. Carver, *Travels through the interior parts of North America, in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London, 1781), 260-61. On the importance of property in the Scottish stadial scheme, see John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks: Or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances Which Give Rise to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society*, edited by Aaron Garret. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 85-86. BSB never cited him, but Millar provides an exceptionally clear statement for how distinctions develop with social “advancement.” For the evidence for “hieroglyphicks” to which Barton referred, see William Johnson, “Extracts of some Letters, from Sir William Johnson Bart. to Arthur Lee, M. D. F. R. S. on the Customs, Manners, and Language of the Northern Indians of America,” *Philosophical Transactions* [Royal Society], vol. 63 (1773-74): 142-48; Pehr Kalm, *Travels into North America; containing its Natural History, and a circumstantial Account of its Plantations and Agriculture in general, with the Civil, Ecclesiastical and Commercial State of the Country, the Manners of the Inhabitants, and several curious and Important Remarks on various Subjects*. Translated into English by John Reinhold Forster, 2d. ed. (London, 1772), 2: 279-81. Linking these Indian “hieroglyphicks” to Asia, Barton cited Philip John von Strahlenberg, *An Historico-Geographical Description of the North and Eastern Parts of Europe and Asia; but more particularly of Russia, Siberia, and Great Tartary; both in their Ancient and Modern State: together with an entire New Polyglot-Table of the Dialects of 32 Tartarian Nations: and a Vocabulary of the Kalmuck-Mungalian Tongue. As also, a large and accurate Map of those Countries; and a Variety of Cuts, representing Asiatick-Scythian Antiquities* [1738] (New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1970). On conjectural histories of writing, see ch. 7, below; see also Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 94-111; Nicholas Hudson, *Writing and European Thought, 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ch. 3.

⁵⁸ BSB, “Observations and Conjectures,” 194. BSB’s ideas went on to influence how explorers could interpret the linguistic diversity and affinities they encountered across North America. While wintering at

relation of nations, grammatical forms, complemented by linguistic evidence for social differentiation and efforts at writing, revealed civilization, at least to Barton.

Although Barton found support for his opinions in his reading, he would have found contradictory testimony as well. The Scottish historian James Dunbar, whose words provided Barton with the epigraph of his first ethnological essay, rejected the correspondence between language and civilization. He observed that the “connexion of language and manners is an obvious connexion... Yet language, from various causes, may arrive at a pitch of refinement, unauthorized by the tone of public manners.”⁵⁹ Barton had explicitly asked William Bartram: “Which of the tribes of Indians, visited by you, are the most polished in their *Religion*, in their *Manners*, in their *Language*, in their *Government*, etc., etc.?” The naturalist informed Barton that if one considered “polish” to be the adoption of white ways, it was the Cherokees; if one considered it the “pure” practices of “the first families of mankind,” then it was the Creeks. Yet Bartram ignored language alone in this portion of his response, suggesting that he did not think it developed as did other human institutions.⁶⁰ A few years after he published “Observations and Conjectures,” an Onondaga, “giving an account why he thought the Six-nations were originally one stock, said their language varied so fast, that all the present difference of dialects might, by the aid of accidental circumstance, be not very long in accomplishing.”⁶¹

Despite such objections, Barton had created a useful national past. It confirmed the Scriptural account and reestablished the traditional ties with the old world that had been jeopardized by political independence and, perhaps even more startlingly, by Jefferson’s bold hypothesis concerning American origins. It also challenged European philosophy by denying that

Fort Mandan, William Clark grouped the Indians of the Missouri Valley into four “great nations” and inferred that it was “probable from the Similarity of maney of those nations that they were at Some period embodied in a more civilized State, perhaps the descendents of Several Great nations,” a possibility that TJ never discussed in writing. See Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, edited by Gary E. Moulton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 3: 485.

⁵⁹ James Dunbar, *Essays on the History of Mankind in Rude and Cultivated Ages* (London, 1780), 109.

⁶⁰ Bartram, “Observations,” 534.

⁶¹ MSS. Notes, Page [Folder] 126, 234, BSB Papers, HSP.

America had always been a savage wilderness, imagined an epic antiquity that linked the “savage” nations then inhabiting U.S. territories to the more advanced Americans who had built the empires of Mexico and Peru, and it urged federal officials to commit themselves to Indian civilization.⁶² That the present Indians had degenerated from more civilized forebears did not discourage Barton because from it “we learn that the Americans are susceptible of improvement,” and he urged “the good and wise to extend the empire of civility and knowledge.” Among Barton’s main inspirations was Dunbar, exceptional among the Scottish social theorists of this period in his de-emphasis of the determining influence of a people’s mode of subsistence in shaping the institutions that characterize “rudeness” and “cultivation,” and his alternative stress on human directed change. An optimistic and philanthropic U.S. citizen such as Barton would have been soothed by the thought. Addressing Jefferson, to whom *New Views* was dedicated, Barton concluded that conveying civilization was “of sufficient importance to engage the attention of whole nations; and it is peculiarly worthy of the notice of the United States.”⁶³

Since the early stages of his research, Barton had observed a connection between natural history and national sentiments regarding Indians and Indian affairs. Requesting information on the Creek confederacy from Alexander McGillivray, Barton stressed that the chief’s aid was

⁶² For Barton’s comment on the new American empire, see BSB, *Observations*, v. For a demonstration that U.S. revolutionaries turned their back on the British empire in particular, and not on imperial possession in general, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Dis-Covering the Subject of the ‘Great Constitutional Discussion,’ 1786-1789,” *Journal of American History* 79.3 (Dec. 1992): 841-73.

⁶³ BSB, *New Views*, iii-vi. In his first work of ethnology, Barton chose a quotation from Dunbar as his epigraph: “Well then may it be inferred, that there are large chasms in the annals of many countries; and that we have obtained but an imperfect acquaintance with the fortunes of governments, and the vicissitudes of the species.” See BSB, *Observations*, i. Barton was quoting from Dunbar, *Essays*, 186. In *ibid.*, he also would have found Dunbar’s caution that “degeneracy, as well as improvement, is incident to mankind.” On Dunbar’s place among the era’s other Scottish historians, see Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 189-91. Of ethnologically inclined U.S. inquirers in this period, the physical ethnologist Samuel Stanhope Smith provided the most comprehensive statement of human beings’ natural degeneration from primitive civilization to savagery, as embodied by the Indians, focusing in particular on the natural processes of linguistic diversification after Babel. See Samuel Stanhope Smith, “Strictures” in *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species. To which are added, Strictures on Lord Kames’s Discourse on the Original Diversity of Mankind* (Edinburgh, 1788; rev. ed. New Brunswick, 1810). Against this view, Jefferson may have believed in human beings’ “original barbarism”; see TJ to Madame Noailles de Tesse, 20 March 1787, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, American Memory.

essential to “an object...of great importance and curiosity...an history of the Americans,” which Barton insisted he had undertaken “to rescue from the prejudices of European writers the character of these nations, whose preservation & whose happiness, I most ardently pray for.”⁶⁴ Barton admitted to “shudder at the idea of their destruction, or passage into the wretched condition into which so many of them have been brought by the vicious part of our countrymen.” He urged Heckewelder to endeavor “to convince the world whether Christians or Philosophers, that the man of America, possessing intellectual powers of the highest kind, is capable of arriving at, and of enjoying, the blessings of civilized life.” Barton confessed his hope to Heckewelder that “by your assistance, the unhappy Indians of our Country shall be brought to a better state.”⁶⁵

Barton’s etymology, as elaborated in *New Views* and extended in “Hints” attempted to bring together Indian and English pasts, a convergence that Jefferson never considered.⁶⁶ A year after he delivered “Hints,” Barton informed readers that English was “the prevailing language that is spoken in every part of the United States...it requires not the gift of prophecy to discover, that in the term of fifty years or less, the English will be the exclusive language of this great tract of country.”⁶⁷ Nonetheless, as Jefferson was conceiving the physical separation of the savage from the civilized elements in the United States and musing over the future linguistic ties of Americans throughout the hemisphere, Barton’s etymologies seemed to reveal a connection between Indians

⁶⁴ BSB to Alexander McGillivray, 29 July 1792, BSB Papers, Series I, APS. Barton had suggested this link between ethnology and popular attitudes toward Indians in private communications with the Creek chief Alexander McGillivray and the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder as well. On McGillivray, see Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), ch. 3.

⁶⁵ BSB to John Heckewelder, 17 April 1800, *Letters of Scientists, 1655-1812*; APS.

⁶⁶ Instead, Jefferson saw America’s role in Saxon study to be one of “reform.” Americans could purify the language of the foreign “rules and distinctions” that had been imposed and reduce “the infinite diversities of its unfixed orthography to single and settled forms,” just as the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution (and perhaps too the Revolution of 1800) had restored what was best of the ancient Saxon constitution by casting off the accretions of feudal titles and monarchical laws and fixing fundamental republican principles in written constitutions. See TJ, “Essay on Anglo-Saxon,” 363, 385, 387.

⁶⁷ BSB, “America,” in John Pinkerton, *Modern Geography: A Description of the Empires, Kingdoms, States, and Colonies; with the Oceans, Seas, and Isles; in all the parts of the world; including the most recent discoveries, and political alterations. Digested on a new plan*, (Philadelphia, 1804), 2: 451. Here Barton was specifically discussing the future viability of German in his home state of Pennsylvania, but Indian languages rarely strayed far from his attention.

and U.S. citizens closer and more lasting than mere common descent by demonstrating that “many English words do, unquestionably, exist...among the Indian nations of America.”⁶⁸

Yet, by the early nineteenth century, Barton faced criticism not only of his etymologies, but of an etymologically centered ethnology altogether. William Dunbar had been born and educated in Scotland and had spent time as an Indian trader in the region of Fort Pitt and as a surveyor for Spain when he moved to the region then known as Spanish West Florida. Although he sent Jefferson several vocabularies from lower Louisiana, he did not think etymology was the best means to discover Indian origins. Dunbar had discovered a “language by signs,” on the Plains and he believed this system of gestures, which he thought shared a common origin with written Chinese characters, since they seemed to share methods of formation. This affinity suggested Asian relations to the Indians “without being involved in the ambiguity arising from the imperfect resemblance of words.”⁶⁹

The famed explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, who drew from materials he himself collected in his travels throughout Spanish America, addressed the place of Barton’s researches within the broader ethnological project. Like Barton, Humboldt thought that even American languages of “barbarous” nations “seem[ed] to be wrecks of languages, once rich, flexible, and belonging to a more cultivated state.” Barton’s etymologies had shown analogies between particular words,” but they seemed to reveal that “no American idiom” possessed “an exclusive correspondence with any of the Asiatic, African, or European tongues.” American civilization, occupying “an intermediate place between those of the Scythian tribes, and the

⁶⁸ BSB, “Hints, 154.

⁶⁹ William Dunbar, “On the Language of Signs among certain North American Indians. By William Dunbar, Esq. of the Mississippi Territory, communicated by Thomas Jefferson, President of the Society” in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s., 6 (1809), 2-4. See William Dunbar to TJ, 14 July 1800; TJ to William Dunbar, 12 January 1801, in Boyd, *Papers of TJ*, 32: 54-55, 448-49; William Dunbar to TJ, 5 January 1803, Thomas Jefferson and Early Western Explorers, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, American Memory. “Dunbar, William – to Gov. Sergeant about Natchez Indians,” Series II. American Indian Materials, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, American Philosophical Society. On Dunbar, see *Life, Letters and Papers of William Dunbar, of Elgin, Morayshire, Scotland, and Natchez, Mississippi: Pioneer Scientist of the Southern United States*, edited by [Eron Rowland] (Jackson: Mississippi Historical Society, 1930), 9-12.

ancient monuments of Hindostan” illustrated “the uniform progress of the human mind,” but it was “stamped with the savage nature of the Cordilleras” and so it “assumes a character of individuality, that almost effaces the primitive type of their national physiognomy.” That “primitive type” could not be discerned in their languages. Dismissing the researches of Barton and other etymologists, Humboldt concluded: “If languages supply but feeble evidence of ancient communication between the two worlds, this communication is fully proved by the cosmogonies, the monuments, the hieroglyphics, and institutions of the people of America and Asia.”⁷⁰

The German philologist Johann Severin Vater, profiting from materials collected by his countryman Humboldt and from those which Americans had sent to Catherine the Great years earlier, offered the most devastating critique. He agreed with Jefferson’s assessment that there were twenty radical languages in America for every one in Asia, but that fact alone did not demonstrate that the Indians had existed longer than any old world nation. First, “we cannot easily calculate the number of centuries that may be required to efface entirely from the languages traces of a former connexion.” In addition, Vater suggested, the Indians’ “local circumstances,” wide dispersal, and “want of intercourse” accounted for linguistic divergence

⁷⁰ Alexander de Humboldt, *Researches concerning the Institutions and Monuments of the Ancient Inhabitants of America, with Descriptions and Views of some of the most Striking Scenes in the Cordilleras!* [1810] trans. Helen Maria Williams (London, 1814), 11, 20-22, 38, 102, 358. In idem, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* [1811] (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 175, Humboldt also says that some tribes of New Spain “possess languages of which the mechanism proves an ancient civilization.” Michael Anthony Wadyko, “Alexander von Humboldt and Nineteenth-Century Ideas on the Origins of the American Indians” (Ph.D. diss., West Virginia University, 2000), 34, 80, 117, correctly, cites Humboldt’s “minimal faith in forms of evidence that were living and changing” and that he “often downplayed linguistic techniques,” and thus he lauds Humboldt’s role in setting “a trend that led to archaeology coming to the forefront of scientific investigations by the mid-nineteenth century”; yet he also claims, all but ignoring the work of Du Ponceau and other U.S. students of language, that Humboldt “rescued philology from oblivion as a useful means to assess origins.” In discussing the mound builder thesis, only a few other scholars have discussed AVH, and these do not seem to appreciate fully his centrality to the emerging myth. See, for example, Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America*, 73; Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 350-53, 368-69 Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 125, 131. Works that do appreciate AVH’s influence in the United States, all but ignore his ethnology. See, for example, William H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: American and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 52-60, 150-93; Brad D. Hume, “The Romantic and the Technical in Early Nineteenth-Century American Exploration” in Edward C. Carter II, ed., *Surveying the Record: North American Scientific Exploration to 1930*. Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 231. (1999); Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (New York: Viking, 2006).

more easily than assuming an American cradle of the human race.⁷¹ Since Jefferson had never submitted any attempted etymologies to the learned world, he could go no further in his critique. That was not the case for Barton. Vater praised him for clearing a path that would lead to greater investigation of the Indian languages, but he leveled devastating criticism. He stressed that Barton confused affixes with word roots, which was merely one aspect of his larger inattention to advances in philological methods. Vater emphasized that the “similarity of grammatical forms is a sure guide” to tracing descent because “it shews itself not only in the expression of the same idea, but in expressing it in the same manner; & the coincidence of these two circumstances can hardly be ascribed to the mere effect of accident.” Vater admitted that degeneration could “efface” grammatical forms – though Barton did not argue this – and in those cases “there remains nothing but the radical sounds to attend to.” But even in his comparison of sounds, Barton pulled far too selectively from nations far too widely scattered. In short, the “similarities are too trifling, the languages compared are infinitely too many, & yet the words between which even a distant resemblance is shewn, are very few indeed. These resemblances have been much too seized upon; & a theory too hastily built upon them.”⁷²

Vater also pushed even deeper into the heart of Barton’s methodology: philologists and physiologists did not always concur in their conclusions. Drawing on the work of Jones and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Vater raised the example of Europeans and “Hindoos,” whose languages shared a common ancestor, but who nevertheless “do not belong to the same race.” Vater stressed that ethnologists must grapple with “the Entire difference which exists between the languages of those whose skulls are formed on the same mould...& the affinity between the languages of those whose skulls are differently formed.” The problem would perplex

⁷¹ Johann Severin Vater, “An Enquiry into the origin of the population of America from the old Continent” [1810], 85-86, 88-89. This is a ms. translation by Peter S. Du Ponceau from the German *Untersuchungen über Amerikas Bevölkerung aus dem alten Kontinente* (Leipzig, 1810), APS.

⁷² Vater, “Enquiry,” 44-56, at 56, 130-31. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 382-83, 385-88, discusses Vater, noting that he reviewed *New Views* for a Gottingen journal, but Greene does not recognize his importance to Barton’s late career.

ethnologists until mid-century. Vater stressed, “all traces of their origin do not always lead back to the same point,” though common grammatical forms seemed to indicate a common origin.⁷³

Vater had requested that Jefferson forward a copy of his essay to Barton, which he did. Revealing his discomfort with continuing colonial patterns of exchanging knowledge, or perhaps simply a stingy scientific spirit, Barton told Jefferson, “we should not be too liberal in sending our collections of vocabularies abroad; I mean before we shall have published them here.”⁷⁴ More importantly, Barton noted to himself: “I was anxious to have some Indian Crania.” He had never relied solely on linguistic evidence and he demonstrated an interest in what today would be identified as physical anthropology from the beginning, particularly in skin color and different races’ varying susceptibility to diseases, but the interest in crania was new. This is especially striking since, having spent time at Göttingen, he was aware of the work of Blumenbach at an early period in his ethnological researches.⁷⁵ When he congratulated William C. Claiborne on his

⁷³ Vater, “Enquiry,” 59, 110, 118-19, 123. Vater thought that closer investigation of the grammatical forms of the Indian languages alone would demonstrate the diversity of their descent. See *ibid.*, 161-62. Attempts to reconcile physical and linguistic differences were open to especially contradictory interpretations, even among ethnology’s most highly respected practitioners. The British doctor and synthesizer of ethnological ideas, James Cowles Prichard, thought that the “elaborate comparison” that Barton had made of the languages of America and eastern Asia had “discovered many strongly marked traces of affinity between them” and that “the same notion receives confirmation from the resemblance which subsists in the osteological characters of the skull between the native American and Mongolic tribes.” Conversely, Humboldt described “the latest researches of M. Barton Smith” as showing that the “analogy” between the languages of Asia and America “extends only to a small number of words,” and despite common misperceptions of the physical similarity between American Indians and Asians, “osteology teaches us that the cranium of the American differs essentially from that of the Mongol.” See James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man* [1813], edited by George W. Stocking, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 154; Alexander de Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (New York, 1811), 1: 102, 115.

⁷⁴ BSB to TJ, 16 October 1810, in Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 561-62. The budding language scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt hoped to open a correspondence with Barton, but to my knowledge never did. See Wilhelm von Humboldt to W. Smith, 11 April 1803, Misc. MSS. Collections, APS. Though she is silent on linguistic study, Kariann Yokota, ““To pursue the stream to its fountain”: Race, Inequality, and the Post-Colonial Exchange across the Atlantic,” *Explorations in Early American Culture*, 5 (2001): 173-229, describes Barton’s place in these continuing colonial patterns. John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 257, 384, 458n.18, details the perception in the United States that Barton was reticent in sharing his botanical specimens and notes that Barton had a copy of Pallas in his possession in Philadelphia in the late 1790s, yet Jefferson appears never to have seen it.

⁷⁵ “Barton – New Views, misc. notes # 1, Folder 1,” American Indian Materials, BSB Papers, Series II. This was an undated fragment, kept with his materials for the always forthcoming opus, but the only other reference to crania that I have come across is from 1812. Barton bequeathed impressions of a Delaware, a

recent election as governor of Louisiana, Barton reminded Claiborne of his earlier promise to collect ethnographic and linguistic information. Barton assured him that he was “sensible...how much more important must be your engagements than inquiries concerning the Savages,” yet he impressed upon Claiborne that he was “anxious to procure two or three Indian skulls.”⁷⁶

As late as 1803, the year he offered his “Hints,” Barton had insisted that although the “study of the physical history, that is of the figure, complexion, &c.” was important, the “most finished *Anthropologia*...will be constructed, in a considerable degree, upon the affinities of languages.”⁷⁷ Humboldt’s and Vater’s criticisms unmoored Barton’s ethnology, prompting him to cast about for a new “polar star.” It is possible that he was intimidated by their grammatical knowledge. Perhaps Barton did not know what to make of the advances of natural history, a field becoming increasingly differentiated under practitioners who employed new methodologies that produced conflicting results. Language study too had passed Barton by. With the work of Jones and the meteoric ascent of philology centered on grammar to scientific authority on the Continent, historical linguistic studies were effectively closed to him as well.⁷⁸ “Hints” was his final linguistic work.⁷⁹

Chickasaw, and an Osage crania, along with his American fossils (including that of the megatherium) to the French anatomist Cuvier. See [Bequest to Cuvier], 8 November 1815, BSB Papers, Correspondence, HSP. BSB, “Hints,” 145, asserted that “either that all the existing nations of the earth are specifically the same, or (for I do not positively contend, with Blumenbach and Camper, that all mankind constitute but *one species*), that the ancestors of all the present races of men, were once much more intimately associated together than they are at present.” For an example of lists of queries focused on Indian bodies (an interest he shared with Benjamin Rush), but absent a particular interest in skulls, see the questionnaire he sent to the Delaware missionaries David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder just before *New Views* was published and that which he sent to Jasper Parrish, an Indian agent to the Iroquois at Canandaqua, shortly before he encountered Vater. See [BSB], “Queries,” 31 March 1797, in Historical and Literary Committee, *Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages*, No. 44; “Exact copy of the queries sent, March 25th, 1806, to Mr. J. Parrish, of Canandaqua,” in “Barton – Queries concerning Indians,” *American Indian Materials*, BSB Papers, Series II; APS. Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 58, notes that Barton returned to America with a copy of Blumenbach’s *Natural Variety of Man*, which went through three Latin editions in 1775, 1776, and 1781 for Samuel Stanhope Smith, but it is unknown which Barton brought back with him.

⁷⁶ BSB to William Claiborne, 17 August 1812, BSB Papers, Series I.

⁷⁷ BSB, “Hints,” 157.

⁷⁸ Hans Aarsleff has emphasized the division between philosophical and historical modes of language study; see Aarsleff, *Study of Language in England*. While it is helpful to note the divergence these two, one should still realize that Lockean epistemology (in recognizing language as conventional) was still a

In the years immediately following Barton's death in 1815, etymology continued to be challenged. In *Researches on America* (1817), which was dedicated to Jones's Asiatic Society, the army physician James H. McCulloh penned a lengthy preface for the sole purpose of arguing that the "common method of tracing a nation or people by means of etymological inquiries appears defective." Gesturing to elicit the correct names of things was unreliable. Besides, researchers could not make the most use even of well done vocabularies because words so "compounded of consonants" were difficult to pronounce and scholars were usually insufficiently aware of vowel differences among European languages. With such "impediments," it was no wonder that "setting out from the wrong premises, their conclusions must either be false or imperfect." Ignoring Jefferson and aiming at Barton, McCulloh despaired, "The Mind, instead of coming to any conclusion is lost...in an endless labyrinth of conjecture." "Etymology offers little or no help in investigating the origin of the American Indians, and we must therefore have recourse to other means that appear more auspicious."⁸⁰

Joseph Doddridge, in *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars* (1824), also dismissed the usefulness of etymology for understanding Indian origins. He thought that Barton's "laborious research has resulted in nothing very conclusive" and Jefferson had reached the "gigantic conclusion!" of the American origin of the Asian Tartars less from facts than from "a zeal for the

crucial part of Jones's theoretical framework, providing an explanation for how languages descended from a common ancestor (Noah), could retain no common traces. See, for example, Jones, "Eighth Anniversary Discourse," 2; William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 2d. ed. (London, 1775), xviii-xix. Here, the avatar of the new comparative philology echoes the philosophical materialism and conjectural linguistic histories of Turgot and Volney.

⁷⁹ Barton was planning a large work, but it was unclear what kind of work this would be. In 1805 he informed Jefferson that he was preparing an "Indian geography," which as he described it, was an examination of American place names derived from Indian words, with explanatory etymologies, truly Leibnizian in conception. In 1809 he told Jefferson that he had then in the press "a new edition of my book on the dialects of the American Indians." See BSB to TJ, 12 June 1805, 14 September 1810, in Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, American Memory.

⁸⁰ James H. McCulloh, *Researches on America; being an Attempt to Settle some Points Relative to the Aborigines of America*, 2d. ed. (Baltimore, 1817), vii-xi. However, McCulloh does cite Barton's observation of "strong analogies...between the languages of the Pacific Islanders, and the American Indians," since it supports his thesis. See *ibid.*, 41. This work was much expanded and revised from the first edition, published anonymously as *Researches on America; being an attempt to settle some points relative to the aborigines of America, by an Officer of the United States' Army* (Baltimore, 1816)

honor of the aborigines of his native country...to confer upon them the priority of claim to individual and national existence.” Those men had sought answers in the wrong place since, “among wandering barbarians, constantly forming new tribes, and seeking new habitations, languages, so far as the mere sound of words is concerned, furnish, after the lapse of several thousand years, but a poor test of community of origin.”⁸¹ He did not cite Vater, or Peter S. Du Ponceau, the American who most extended Vater’s work, but Doddridge, advised that “There is one feature of language much more permanent than its sound, and that is the arrangement of its sentences...it does not appear likely that any people ever made any change in their mode of expression: because it is the arrangement of the members of a sentence which fixes the regular succession of ideas.” He despaired that a qualified inquirer could “be found before the Indian languages have vanished from the earth.” After the recent “wars with the Indians in the western regions,” in which Indians “fought for their native country” as much as for “a savage thirst for blood,” Doddridge believed that the vanishing of Indian languages, with the Indians themselves, was immanent: “The Indian nations are now a subjugated people, and every feature of their former state of society must soon pass away.” Like other peoples before them, the Indians would “perish, or lose their national character and existence by admixtures with their conquerors.”⁸²

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The Indian wars of 1811-14 affected the two leading U.S. ethnologists differently. At some level, Barton was ambivalent about Indian adoption of white “civilization.” Touring the Christian Indian community of Brothertown, New York, around 1797, Barton observed: “They all speak the English language; very few of them speak the Indian dialects. They dress like the

⁸¹ Joseph Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars; Of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania from 1763 to 1783, inclusive, together with a Review of the State of Society and Manners of the First Settlers of the Western Country* [1824] (Pittsburgh: John S. Ritenour and Wm. T. Lindsey, 1912), 40, 42.

⁸² Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars*, 8-10, 42-44. Doddridge thought the monuments in the Ohio Valley were the work of the antediluvian race, which was common across the world. See *ibid.*, 50-51. His views about sentences reflecting the organization of ideas in nationally or racially specific ways echoed the researches of Du Ponceau, whom he did not cite. See ch. 5, below.

whites, and seem to have a great deal of white blood in them. In short, they are no longer Indians, or in that state of society which we call savage.” Yet, according to Barton, they compromised their dignity and they lived in poverty, and so “they do not appear to me to be more respectable for having relinquished the savage state.”⁸³ In 1814, the second-to-last year of his life, Barton told Jefferson that he did not despair at “the wars in which we are engaged, and are likely to be engaged with them.” The efforts of Jefferson and “a few other good and influential men, will place a remnant of the vast Indian population of the United States, where it ought to be placed, by the side of their brethren of another colour.” Barton hoped that just and wise policies, properly pursued, would fulfill U.S. obligations and raise the “Americans” to civilization.⁸⁴

Those conflicts, however, shattered Jefferson’s confidence in the possibility of peaceful assimilation. In his last year in office, Jefferson addressed the Mahican chief and occasional U.S. agent Hendrick Aupaumut. In 1808, Jefferson told Aupaumut that if Mahicans, Munsees, and Delawares adopted agriculture, domestic arts, and private property, then the Indians would “mix with us by marriage. Your blood shall run in our veins and spread with us over this great island.” In short, “we shall all be Americans.”⁸⁵ After two full terms, Jefferson still spoke of Indian incorporation into U.S. society, though he placed it in a hypothetical future that could come to pass only if Indians did what the United States demanded of them. There was reason to hope that the Indians would do so, especially if the U.S. could enlist the support of influential Indians; Jefferson even thought his hated embargo might speed the process by confining capital within national boundaries. Jefferson acknowledged no possibility that his policies sparked the Indian

⁸³ MSS. Notes, Page [Folder] 118, 154-55, BSB Papers, HSP.

⁸⁴ BSB to TJ, 12 April 1814, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, American Memory. Joseph S. Lucas, “The Course of Empire and the Long Road to Civilization: North American Indians and Scottish Enlightenment Historians,” *Explorations in Early American Culture* 4 (2000): 166-190, emphasizes this tradition’s ambivalence about the possibility of one group raising another to civilization.

⁸⁵ See “Extract from the Indian Journal, being the Sixth Speech that was delivered to the Delaware Nation residing at Waupekum mekut, or White River, on the 15th day of April, 1803,” in “Letter to the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, of Salem,” *Massachusetts Missionary*, April 1804, 9-10. For Jefferson directing Aupaumut’s payment, see Henry Dearborn to John Sergeant, 10 February 1804, War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, A: 438. Jefferson’s remarks can be found in TJ, “My Son Capt. Hendrick and my children the Delawares Mohiccons and Munsies” (1808), War Department, Secretary’s Office, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, B: 395-96.

wars that engulfed the old northwest and southwest a few short years after he left office.⁸⁶ In December 1813, perhaps affected by the failure of U.S. invasions of Canada, conquest of which he considered crucial for the possibility of peace and Indian civilization, Jefferson told Alexander von Humboldt that the Indian-British war had “defeated all our labors for the salvation of these unfortunate people.” In the tensions of war, Jefferson could only bring himself to assure the baron: “They *would have* mixed their blood with ours, and been amalgamated and identified with us within no distant period of time.”⁸⁷

What Jefferson knew of missionary work at the time only reinforced the view that Indians were not assimilating. In 1814, Jason Chamberlayne informed Jefferson that many of the Iroquois around Burlington, Vermont, could read in “Iroquois” and he sent the retired president copies of an Iroquois spelling book and *Good News to the Iroquois Nation*, each composed by the young missionary Eleazer Williams, the great-grandson of Eunice Williams, the “unredeemed captive” of colonial Deerfield.⁸⁸ Jefferson dismissed work such as Williams’s. As he did in an exchange with Peter Wilson, Jefferson could deride both Indian languages and orthodox Christianity with one stroke: “Their barren vocabularies cannot be vehicles for ideas of the fall of man, his redemption, the triune composition of the Godhead, and other mystical doctrines considered by most Christians of the present date as essential elements of faith.”⁸⁹ More importantly, however, missionary work was “improving” and perpetuating Indian languages rather than providing an alternative to allow for their expiration.

⁸⁶ On Jefferson’s linking of the embargo and Indian civilization, see TJ, “Eighth Annual Message,” in Foner, ed., *Basic Writings*, 393, 395.

The U.S. acquired more than 200,000 acres in Jefferson’s administration; see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 239. For the summary of causes of the northwestern Indians’ alliance with the British in the War of 1812, see White, *Middle Ground*, 511-12; Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 123-47; for the causes of the Creek civil war in the old southwest, see *ibid.*, 167-90; Saunt, *New Order of Things*, 249-72.

⁸⁷ TJ to Alexander von Humboldt, 6 December 1813, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 14: 23-24; emphasis added. For the equation of civilization and peace, and the importance conquering Canada, see TJ to John Adams, 11 June 1812; Adams to TJ, 28 June 1812, in Cappon, ed., *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 307-08, 311.

⁸⁸ TJ to Jason Chamberlayne, 16 March, 1 July 1814.

⁸⁹ TJ to Peter Wilson, 20 January 1816, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 14: 403.

Forwarding Williams's work, at Chamberlayne's request, to the American Philosophical Society, Jefferson told Barton that teaching Indians to read their language was "beginning at the wrong end for the improvement of their faculties and conditions." For Jefferson, transforming the Indians' social state had to begin with the arts of subsistence (using domestic animals, agriculture for men, and spinning and weaving for women). From these, "the acquisition of property" would follow, so next he advocated teaching the use of money and the basic numeracy and literacy necessary for calculating and recording transactions. Only then should Indians be taught "reading printed books, & first those of a popular character, and least of all those of religion as distinguished from morality." Since those texts were unavailable in translation, Jefferson implicitly reiterated his conviction that English was the endpoint of Indian "improvement." Thinking of Blackburn's program among the Cherokees, Jefferson concluded that that particular educational "order of progression" had "best succeeded in developing their faculties, enlarging their understandings, and advancing their physical happiness."⁹⁰

Jefferson's pessimism regarding Indian incorporation was only deepened by the period's language study. Dugald Stewart, whom Jefferson considered to be one of the finest minds of the age, had, in the second volume of his *Elements of Philosophy* (1814), reasserted the Lockean notion that complex ideas were in effect a number of simple ideas grouped together and understood in a single word. He emphasized, however, that this meant that a speaker of modern English perceived things "not as they occur to the senses of the untaught savage, but as they have

⁹⁰ TJ to BSB, 3 April 1814, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, American Memory; TJ to James Jay, 7 April 1809, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 12: 270-71. I conclude that the tracts Chamberlayne sent TJ were those by Williams on the basis of Chamberlayne's correspondence with Peter S. Du Ponceau [PSD] several years later in which he offers an introduction to Williams. See Jason Chamberlain to PSD, 28 August 1817, PSD Collection, American Philosophical Society [hereafter APS]. For the pamphlets, see Eleazer Williams, *Good News to the Iroquois Nation: A Tract, on Man's primitive rectitude, his fall, and his recovery through Jesus Christ* (Burlington, Vt., 1813) and idem, *Gaiatonsera ionteweiensakwa, ongewe onwe gawennontakon* [A spelling-book in the language of the seven Iroquois nations] (Plattsburgh, NY, 1813). Williams was raised in the Canadian Mohawk village of Kahnawake, but he labored mainly among the Oneidas. Later commentators upon his translations concluded that he in some measure blended the two languages (which were more closely related to each other than to any other Iroquoian languages). See James Constantine Pilling, *Bibliography of the Iroquoian Languages* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1888), 168-69. For a brief sketch of Williams's extraordinary life, see John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* [1994] (New York: Vintage, 1995), 243-46.

been arranged and distributed into parcels or assortments by the successive observations and reflections of our predecessors.” Language, passed down from generation to generation, was not merely the vehicle through which intellectual improvements were conveyed, but, as a system for organizing the world’s phenomena, was itself one of those improvements. The “obvious tendency of the progressive reason and experience of the species,” Stewart concluded, “is to diminish more and more the imperfections of the classifications which have been transmitted from ages of comparative ignorance; and of consequence, to render language more and more a safe and powerful organ of truth.”⁹¹ Civilization was more than external actions and trappings and a given language was more than one mode of communication among other equals. Savage languages could express only savage thought and unless human beings spoke the same language, they could have no hope for conceiving the world in the same way. From Jefferson’s view, how could they then “unite in one heart and one mind” with other Americans?⁹²

The new research into the grammatical forms of Indian languages brought this into even starker relief.⁹³ When John Pickering, a student of Indian languages and son of the former Indian commissioner, Secretary of War, and Jefferson foe Timothy Pickering, sent Jefferson the early sheets of a Cherokee grammar that he had composed under the unacknowledged solicitation and

⁹¹ Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1814), 124-25. For Jefferson’s praise of Stewart, see TJ to Adams, 15 August 1820, in Cappon, ed., *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 568-69; TJ to Robert Walsh, 9 January 1818, Library of Congress, American Memory.

⁹² The phrase is from Jefferson’s first inaugural address. See Foner, ed., *Basic Writings*. For Jefferson’s emphasis on shared values and sentiments for national unity, see Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire*. Jefferson ignored Horne Tooke’s argument that “the Savage languages are upon an equal footing with languages (as they are called) of art.” See Horne Tooke, *Diversions of Purley*, 451.

⁹³ Despite expressing interest in “the inflections of their nouns and verbs, their principles of regimen and concord,” in *Notes*, and despite having been presented with grammatical materials for Indian languages repeatedly since he began his linguistic researches, he was silent on Indian grammatical forms until his exchange with Pickering. For such grammatical information, see Madison to TJ, 21 September 1788, in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 13: 624-26; Johann Severin Vater to TJ, 4 November 1809, in J. Jefferson Looney, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2004-), 1: 651-52; PSD to TJ, 17 February 1817; PSD to TJ, 14 February 1818, in Historical and Literary Committee Letter Books, APS. Andrew Sachs notes that when Alexander von Humboldt visited Washington City along his return from Spanish America, he and Jefferson discussed “the sophistication of Indian languages,” among other topics, but he offers no apparent citation for this remark. See Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (New York: Viking, 2006), 4.

aid of the educated Cherokee David Brown, Jefferson drew important conclusions. In 1813 Jefferson had rejected as practically useless Barton's contention that all languages bore traces of one another; "convenience" dictated that "we distribute languages, according to common understanding, into Classes originally different." However, after perusing the Cherokee grammar in 1824, Jefferson determined that linguistic classification reflected more than convention: "if man came from one stock, his languages did not." In terms that evoked Stewart, Jefferson instructed the younger scholar that since a complex idea was "a fasciculus of simple ideas bundled together, it is rare that different languages make up their different bundles alike." However, while Stewart had explained difference strictly in terms of stages of civilization found in countries across the globe, the retired statesman Jefferson, who had expressed his desire for national consolidation years before, emphasized national distinctions unrelated to levels of social advancement. While "long intercourse" between different European nations had "approximated their complex expressions much toward one another," this had not been true, and Jefferson doubted if it ever could be true, between English and the Indian languages. He concluded bluntly: "I believe we shall find it impossible to translate our language into any of the Indian, or any of theirs into ours."⁹⁴

Jefferson amended Stewart's scheme by stressing national differences because he filtered his interest in the progress of civilization through his conception of the United States as a voluntary political community, which demanded shared sentiments to be true nation. However, contrary to much scholarship on Jefferson and race, he did not think that linguistic characteristics

⁹⁴ TJ to John Pickering, 20 February 1825, in Thomas A. Kirby, ed., "Jefferson's Letters to Pickering," in Kirby and Henry Bosley Woolf, eds., *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1949), 262-63. Pickering sent the grammar in Pickering to TJ, 10 February 1825, in Mary Orne Pickering, *The Life of John Pickering* (Boston, 1887), 334-35. Locke commented on the ultimate impossibility of translating from one language to another, but for him it was no reason to despair. Even between two people speaking the same language an individual's particular ideas were always imperfectly conveyed from his or her mind to another's because speech was an imperfect medium. Thus, the technical impossibility of translating from one language to another would not necessarily be an insuperable barrier. See John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 2: 43-97 [Book III, chapters v-vi]. On Locke, see Aarsleff, *Study of Language in England*, ch. 1.

reflected inherent intellectual differences between Indians and whites. Jefferson believed, following Locke and eighteenth-century philosophy more broadly, that language was a social convention and so it changed as peoples progressed along the scale of civilization. This fit easily with his broader commitment to view Indians through the lens of “savagism”: social and intellectual (and perhaps even physical) traits were mutable and corresponded to levels of social development.⁹⁵ In the same letter to Pickering, Jefferson suggested that the highly polysyllabic Indian languages disproved the notion that languages were originally monosyllabic. The Cherokees, according to Jefferson’s understanding of Pickering’s analysis of their “grammatical devises,” seemed to “have formed their language, not by single words, but by phrases,” just as Jefferson claimed to “have known some children to learn to speak.” This was paternalistic imagery, but Jefferson did not confine such views to Indians. If he did not in his early years, when he was silent on the savage language idea, Jefferson came to believe that all languages developed over time.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ascribing more essentialist views to Jefferson than he actually held is frequent in the historiography. As that mistake specifically relates to language, see Gray, *New World Babel*, 132, who suggests that by attributing “inherent intellectual limitations” to Indians in the passage, Jefferson could justify the failure of Indian incorporation; and Peter Thompson, “‘Judicious Neology’: The Imperative of Paternalism in Thomas Jefferson’s Linguistic Studies,” *Early American Studies*, 1 (2003): 187-224, at 190, who oddly blasts Jefferson’s “propensity to ascribe to particular languages essential and immutable characteristics.” Perhaps the clearest statement of Jefferson’s belief in a static nature, but which is silent on his human taxonomy, is Looby, “Constitution of Nature.” Alexander Boulton, “The American Paradox: Jefferson, Equality and Racial Science,” *American Quarterly* 47 (1995): 467-92, admits more ambivalence between Jefferson’s views of order and change in the human species, but ultimately charges Jefferson with adhering to a form of idealism. For the fullest discussion of TJ and savagism, see Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), chs. 1-4. Jefferson’s views of African Americans were far more rigid. See Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), ch. 1.

⁹⁶ TJ to Pickering, 20 March 1825, in Kirby, ed., “Jefferson’s Letters to Pickering,” 262. Thompson, “‘Judicious Neology,’” 187-93, 216-20, is ambivalent about whether TJ’s paternalism was racialized. For another example of Jefferson’s belief in linguistic evolution, see his exchange with Edward Everett, just one week after the above cited letter to Pickering, in which he admitted that the Bostonian’s studies of ancient Greek and Destutt’s “ideology” of Basque and Quechua, convinced him that languages initially, in their early stages, expressed the relations between things through case inflections, and only after development through subsequent stages, were those relations expressed through prepositions. See TJ to Edward Everett, 24 February 1823, 27 March 1824, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 15: 412; 16: 20-22. Thus, I disagree with Alicia M. Gámez, “Making American Nature: Scientific Narratives of Origin and Order in Visual and Literary Conceptions of Race in the Early American Republic” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford

He might have found indications of this in reports from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Near Fort Mandan, Lewis and Clark noted that there were five villages home to three different nations, which they identified as Mandans, Ahnahaways, and Minnetarees. Each lived in “harmony” with the others. They noticed that the “Ahnaways understand in part the language of the Minnetarees: the dialect of the Mandans differs widely from both.”⁹⁷ However, the captains also noticed that “their long residence together has insensibly blended their manners, and occasioned some approximation in language, particularly as to objects of daily occurrence and obvious to the senses.”⁹⁸ Jefferson even acknowledged that this was the case for systems of numbers. Comparing a vocabulary of the “Wahclellas” (Watlalas) with that of the Chinooks, the captains “found that the names for numbers were precisely the same, though other parts of the language were essentially different.” In his personal copy of *Notes*, he observed that “there is a remarkable resemblance in the numbers when there is not a trace of it in other parts of the languages. When a tribe has gone farther than its neighbors in inventing a system of enumeration, the obvious utility of this will occasion it to be immediately adopted by the surrounding tribes with only such modifications of the sounds as may accommodate them to the

University, 1999), 69, who notes that that TJ rejected the “pursuit of any inquiry that tended toward developmentalism.” For more on “ideology,” see the discussion of Du Ponceau in ch. 5, below.

⁹⁷ Meriwether Lewis, *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis & Clark to the Sources of the Missouri, thence across the Rocky Mountains and down the River Columbia to the Pacific Ocean. Performed during the Years 1804—5—6. By the Order of the Government of the United States*, edited by Paul Allen, 2 vols. (1814), 1: 133.

⁹⁸ Lewis and Clark identified the Minnetarees as part of “the great nation of Fall Indians,” also known as Gros Ventres. The explorers probably confused some of this information. The Minnetarees of the Plains (or, of the Prairies) were also known as Fall Indians or Gros Ventres. These spoke an Arapahoan language in the Algonquian language family. However, in these villages lived Minnetarees of the Missouri (or, of the River), who were also known as Gros Ventres, but who spoke a Hidatsa language in the Siouan language family and who were not known as Fall Indians. So, it would seem that the captains were unaware of the common appellation of “Minnetaree” and “Gros Ventres” for speakers of completely distinct languages and when they identified one of the languages being spoken in the villages surrounding Fort Mandan as Minnetaree, they misidentified it with the Minnetaree language spoken farther west. See John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology*, Bulletin 145 [1952] (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 275, 389. Ronda identifies the Minnetarees there as Hidatsas, but ignores the problem of the captains’ identification of them as Fall Indians. See Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians*, 70.

habitual pronunciation of their own language.”⁹⁹ If languages merged, communities could grow, especially since it was traits like language, rather than “government” in Indian societies, that the explorers thought defined the boundaries of “nations.” If they were overcoming linguistic, and thus social, fragmentation, they were ascending the scale of civilization.

Jefferson’s ultimate doubt that English could ever be fully translated into an Indian language stemmed from his belief that U.S. settlement, the progress of civilization, and the importance of national linguistic uniformity precluded the further development of Indian languages. Nature dictated and the U.S. demanded that Indians must quickly assimilate or face extinction; there could be no centuries of conceptual convergence, as Europe had enjoyed. This was the underlying significance of Jefferson’s use of “copious” and “barren,” respectively, to describe English and Indian languages. The former possessed many word-ideas and could yield ever more; the latter possessed but few and would produce no more. The extant comments for the vocabulary he collected on the “northern journey” – the only one he ever recorded himself – from two women of the Unquachogs, who were a mere “20 souls” inhabiting the southern end of Long Island, do not address the relation of their language to other languages of North America and Asia, which had been the avowed purpose for compiling this vocabulary and for collecting the dozens of others that he acquired in his lifetime. Rather, they speculate on what the size of the speech community revealed of the tribe’s future “There remain but three persons of this tribe now who can speak it’s language. These are old women.” Despite Jefferson’s acknowledgement that “a young woman of the same tribe was also present who knew something of the language,” he saw only impending extinction.

He had said something similar, inaccurately, of the Indians in Tidewater Virginia in *Notes*. The Mattaponies had “more negro than Indian blood in them” and had “lost their language.” The Chickahominies had blended with them and with the Pamunkies, who were “reduced to about 10 or 12 men, tolerably pure from mixture with other colours. The older ones

⁹⁹ Lewis, *History*, 2: 238; TJ, *Notes*, 101-02.

preserve their language in a small degree, which are the last vestiges on earth, as far as we know, of the Powhatan language.”¹⁰⁰ Civilization demanded English and the spread of each precluded the persistence of savagery, and thus of savage languages. The extinction of Indian languages, in turn, demonstrated the extinction of Indian title to the land. As he told his Indian superintendent William Henry Harrison, with the “Cahokias extinct, we are entitled to their country by our paramount sovereignty.”¹⁰¹ Of the hundreds of Indians he met while serving as a government official, including the scores who came from distant parts of the continent as a result of the Corps of Discovery, Jefferson never recorded a single vocabulary.

Jefferson discontinued his etymological efforts after a Ned, slave and “Noted Villain” according to a Lynchburg alderman, threw his vocabularies, including those collected by Lewis and Clark, into the James River in his search for valuable contents among trunks that were making their way from Washington to Monticello. All but one that was recovered – a Pawnee vocabulary, which he sent to Barton – was destroyed by mud and water.¹⁰² He intended to systematize what he had collected and compare it with what he found in Pallas’s comparative lexicon, a copy of which he had finally obtained in 1806. In the vocabularies’ ordered columns, Jefferson had hoped to contain specimens of American antiquity, but human passions and the inexorable course of nature had rendered them useless or vanished altogether. If Jefferson recognized in the event a metaphor for his views of the future of the Indians’ languages

¹⁰⁰ “Jefferson’s Vocabulary of the Unquachog Indians,” in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 20: 467-70. Du Ponceau labeled a Delaware vocabulary at the American Philosophical Society as being taken by Jefferson, but Boyd concludes that this is incorrect. Ironically, he had no copy of his blank printed vocabulary with him, so he recorded the vocabulary on a letter or invitation. See the editorial note accompanying “The Northern Journey,” in Boyd, ed., *Papers of TJ*, 20: 449-50. For Jefferson’s comments on the Pamunkies, Mattaponies, and Chickahominies, see *Notes*, 96. His Indian agent in the Red River region shared a similar observation regarding the Washas in his report to the War Department in John Sibley to Henry Dearborn, 10 April 1805, in *American State Papers, Class II. Indian Affairs*, vol. 2 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 725.

¹⁰¹ TJ to Harrison, 27 February 1803, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 371.

¹⁰² For the offense, Ned’s left hand was burned and he was publicly lashed on his bare back 39 times. For the details of the loss, subsequent search, capture and punishment, see TJ to George Jefferson, 1 May, 18 May 1809; George Jefferson to TJ, 12 June, 26 June 1809; Samuel J. Harrison to Gibson & Jefferson, 16 July 1809; TJ to BSB, 21 September 1809, in Looney, ed., *Papers of TJ, Retirement Series*, 1: 180-81, 204-05, 269, 346-48, 555-56. For the advertisement in which Jefferson offered a \$20 reward, see “A Reward... Gibson & Jefferson,” in the *Richmond Enquirer*, 30 May 1809.

themselves, he was silent. Although Jefferson lived for more than a decade after Barton's passing, he made no attempt to confront the new mode of language study other than in his remarks to Pickering. Despite the conclusions he drew from Pickering's work on Cherokee, Jefferson thought that "grammar... unconnected with its use in teaching us languages, is not a science of itself, it is a branch of Metaphysics, a region of fog...in which we have neither star nor compass to guide us, nor a harbor of usefulness in which to expect remuneration for the time and labor of our misty pursuit if it."¹⁰³ Perhaps grammatical studies rested uneasily with his conviction in the savagery of Indian languages. In 1819, distantly encouraging Peter S. Du Ponceau, the U.S. scholar who inspired Pickering and others to study the grammatical forms of the "American languages," Jefferson told the philologist that he "rejoice[d] to see the history of the aborigines...so ably commenced before their final extinction, or their amalgamation with us."¹⁰⁴ Indian scholarship revealed only the past and assimilation was but an afterthought.

* * *

In the years between the ratification of the Constitution and the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Smith Barton were the Americans acknowledged, at home and abroad, as the leading U.S. students of ethnology, which, they approached through etymology. Barton was primarily concerned with using Indian languages to unlock the

¹⁰³ See TJ to Pickering, 27 October 1825, in *ibid.*, 266-67. Compare this preference for the ostensible self-evidence of the words of a vocabulary over the "metaphysics" of grammar with his advocacy for the taxonomy of Linneaus over those offered by Cuvier and Blumenbach on the grounds that it was "better to adopt as much as possible such exterior and visible characteristics as every traveller is competent to observe, to ascertain and to relate." See TJ to John Manners, 22 February 1814, in Lipscomb, ed., *Writings of TJ*, 14: 101. These passages suggest both TJ's belief in the possibility and the benefit of a democratic natural history in the United States and largely support the claims for an epistemic shift from surface characteristics to internal (and historical) ones in language and natural history, as set out in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966] (New York: Vintage, 1994). However, Foucault overstates the rigid temporal boundaries and mutual unintelligibility of these epistemes and the case of Jefferson seems to suggest the importance of political events, which Foucault ignores.

¹⁰⁴ TJ to Du Ponceau, 14 March [1819], Jefferson Papers, APS. On one occasion, Jefferson conjured the possibility of the American people opposed to a voluntary society dedicated to civilizing Indians. See TJ to Jedediah Morse, 6 March 1822, in *First Annual Report of the American Society for Promoting the Civilization and General Improvement of the Indian Tribes in the United States* (New Haven, 1824), 20-23. Madison told him he was overreacting. See TJ to Madison, 25 February 1822; Madison to TJ, 5 March 1822, in James Morton Smith, *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison 1776-1826* (New York: Norton, 1995), 3: 1837-39.

mysterious mounds, which would supplement U.S. citizens' truncated national history, prove the "civilization" of U.S. men of letters, and connect American development into traditional old world patterns. Hoping to mollify the views of frontier settlers or federal policymakers, who emphasized differences between red and white, savage and civilized, Barton chose to stress their common capacities, as evidenced in Indians' previous civilization and current linguistic connections. Explicitly in his speculations on American antiquity, and implicitly in his oppositional understanding of the capacities and destinies of Indian languages and Anglo-Saxon, Jefferson confined Indians to the American past. After the Louisiana Purchase allowed him to conceive of a United States that need not hasten the progress of civilization to achieve national unity, and especially after the Indian wars of 1811-14, Jefferson viewed Indian languages as markers of savagery, which could not persist in the face of English, destined to be the vehicle of an American civilization continental in scope.

The cumulative effects of the Louisiana Territory making removal possible, the violence of the War of 1812, and European dismissal of etymology shifted U.S. scholarly attention away from a previously predominant focus on the Indian past to an expanded attention to their possible future, which was assumed to be short-lived, if Indians were unable rather than unwilling to adopt civilization and join the American nation. For U.S. citizens, etymology could say nothing about the Indian future. There was the possibility, however, that other ways of studying Indian languages could. As the third decade of the nineteenth century began, some continued to rely on eighteenth-century philosophers and their explanations for savage languages, while others continued to excavate the mounds and to erect the myth of the mound builders. But increasing numbers of inquirers, inspired by the Continental revolution in language study, turned to a study of Indian grammar to address lingering questions of Indian origins and difference.

CHAPTER 4.
PHILOLOGY AND PHILANTHROPY

“The science of languages, in its present extent,” Peter S. Du Ponceau explained in an article on “Philology” for the new *Encyclopaedia Americana* (1832), “is of very late date.” Authors had attempted to uncover a universal grammar in the seventeenth century, but, since few languages besides those of ancient and modern Europe and the Holy Land were known, their materials had been far too constricted. Philology had only begun “to extend its bounds...about the period of our revolution.” At that time, Catherine the Great undertook a collection of vocabularies from all the world’s languages: “Then, and not till then, philology began to be a science.” Yet, even then, “etymology alone was the only object...in view.” The honor of providing the world with a “scientific classification of all the known languages, and a correct description of each idiom, particularly with regard to its grammatical structure” went to the authors of the *Mithridates*, Johann Christoph Adelung and Johann Severin Vater, the latter of whom had so effectively critiqued the complacent etymology of Benjamin Smith Barton. With Catherine’s vocabulary and especially with the *Mithridates*, the “progress of philology...particularly since the general pacification of 1814, is hardly to be conceived.”¹

Du Ponceau’s own linguistic studies contributed to the explosion of philological knowledge. Peace on the U.S. frontier following the Indian wars of 1811-14, as well as the peace in Europe following the defeat of Napoleon, aided his work. Through the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society, which he conceived and drove, Du Ponceau opened a correspondence with the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, and the pair’s subsequent investigations produced remarkable results, refuting a century of European

¹ [Peter S. Du Ponceau], “Philology,” in Francis Lieber, ed., *Encyclopaedia Americana: A Popular Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Politics and Biography; brought down to the Present Time; including a copious collection of original articles in American Biography; on the basis of the seventh edition of the German Conversations-Lexicon*, vol. 10 (Philadelphia, 1832), 82-84. [Hereafter, Du Ponceau will be cited as “PSD.”]

philosophy and discarding the etymological investigations of U.S. scholars in the preceding decades. Du Ponceau concluded that the American languages were complex, beautiful, and ordered; that all Indians shared the same grammatical structure, or “plan of ideas”; and that this was shared by no old world nation. Those conclusions appeared in 1819, the same year Congress initiated an annual “Civilization Fund” to finance the education of Indians in European agricultural and manufacturing arts. Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s views of the “American languages,” disseminated not only in Du Ponceau’s philological work but also in religious newspapers and missionary magazines, Heckewelder’s popular history of the Delawares, and a series of articles and editorial contributions by John Pickering, also inspired the philanthropically minded, who interpreted them as well timed proof of the Indian’s intellect.

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Pierre Etienne Du Ponceau was born on Île de Ré, off the western coast of France, in 1760. By the age of six he had memorized a Latin-French vocabulary and shortly thereafter taught himself English from a neighbor’s grammar, drawn by his “strong philological curiosity.” Neither Catholic nor a courtier, Du Ponceau spent an involuntary stint training for the priesthood and unsuccessfully sought an appointment at Versailles. Instead, Du Ponceau became secretary to “the celebrated philologist” Court de Gébelin. Although he was then “at the zenith of his fame” and was “as a father” to the young Du Ponceau, the secretary stayed in the philologist’s employ only five months. Court de Gébelin was then in the midst of writing his monumental *Monde Primitif* (1773-82), a nine-volume study of the ancient world, exceeding five thousand pages, which explicated Physiocratic ideas of the primary importance of agriculture, detailed the ways in which barbarous religions allegorically represented divine truth, and claimed to have recovered the primitive tongue. Far from being man-made, as Locke and his successors had suggested, “God...made Man a speaking being” and so language was “a portrait, which can never be arbitrary”; there was a “necessary connection” between the sounds of human vocal organs and the essential properties of things. Court de Gébelin used the term “languages” only colloquially

because “all Languages could only be Dialects of a single one.” Traces of the primitive language were recognizably preserved in the common sounds that all languages seemed to share as a “universal grammar” that animated each particular grammar. Study of the most distant languages would assemble ever more missing pieces. Du Ponceau “sincerely loved him, and admired his talents,” but he “considered as impossible” Court de Gébelin’s search for the primitive language.²

Instead of accepting Court de Gébelin’s offer to place his name with his own on the title page of the succeeding volumes of *Monde Primitif*, Du Ponceau chose instead to pursue adventure, which appeared before Du Ponceau in the form of Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who was then searching Paris for a private secretary fluent in English to serve him in the United States. Although Du Ponceau “was born a republican,” political principles did not decide his fate. As he confessed: “My most anxious desire was that of travelling...and above all, to learn different languages.” He was already fluent in French, English, and Latin; able to understand German, Spanish, Low Dutch, Italian, and Danish; and beginning to learn Greek; North America’s native languages remained to be learned.³ The position cast Du Ponceau into the midst of the War for Independence. He spent the famous winter at Valley Forge with Steuben, where he met his first Indian, Nia-man (or Colonel Louis), a Jesuit-educated Abenaki who fought with the Continental Line and whose “supernatural voice” Du Ponceau heard singing French opera as he walked in the woods. Du Ponceau became a Pennsylvania citizen in 1781 and briefly worked

² PSD, “The Autobiography of Peter Stephen Du Ponceau,” edited by James L. Whitehead, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 63 (1939): 189-227, 311-43, 432-61; 64 (1940): 97-120, 243-69, at 63: 195-96, 331; 64: 97-99, 260-61; Court de Gebelin, *Histoire Naturelle de la Parole, ou Précis de l’Origine du Langage & de la Grammaire Universelle; extrait du Monde Primitif* (Paris, 1776), pp. 7-8, 15-17, 33-37, 141-42. Du Ponceau owned a copy of this one-volume distillation of Court de Gébelin’s philosophy of language, which had been spread throughout the nine volumes of *Monde Primitif*. See Murphy D. Smith, “Peter Stephen Du Ponceau and his Study of Languages: A Historical Account,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 127 (1983): 143-79, at 174. On Court de Gébelin, see Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* [1959] (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 250-58, 272-75; Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, translated by James Fentress (London: Blackwell, 1995), 93-95.

³ For his linguistic range, see PSD, “Autobiography,” 63: 195-96; 64: 98-99; James Lovell to Robert Livingston, October 1781; Richard Peters to Robert Livingston, 19 October 1781, in Peter S. Du Ponceau Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Historical Society of Pennsylvania [HSP].

for the Continental Congress's committee for foreign affairs.⁴ He then took the bar and built a successful Philadelphia practice the years of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars by using his linguistic skills to specialize in commerce and international law.⁵

A mere month after receiving the news of peace, Du Ponceau and American Philosophical Society president Caspar Wistar convinced that body, "which had long been slumbering," to create a committee for history, moral science, and general literature. Du Ponceau thought that even after the War for Independence, Britain had attempted to keep the United States in a state of "mental dependence." Until the Treaty of Ghent legitimized U.S. success, "a colonial spirit had prevailed throughout this Country, that had checked all efforts at literary enterprise." That moment truly ended the colonial era in all realms but the political. Du Ponceau, through the Historical and Literary Committee, called on Americans to contribute materials or publish their own works and thus shake the country's perceived cultural provincialism and silence echoes of the older fear that the American wilderness would overwhelm civilization.⁶ Besides, "unhappy is the country where annals are committed to the pen of hostile or rival historians." As he advised Benjamin R. Morgan: "A nation, however powerful and great, however distinguished by feats of arms, will never be able to assume her due rank among the political societies of the earth, unless she possesses able writers to make known and assert her claims." Yet the new committee made

⁴ PSD, "Autobiography," 63: 199, 207, 221-23, 225-26, 261, 323-24, 330-31, 334, 337, 340, 446-47.

⁵ For more biographical information, see John Pickering, "Peter S. Du Ponceau, LL. D." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 2 (1844): 161-70.

⁶ PSD to John Pickering, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 3; PSD to Thomas J. Wharton, 3 June 1837, Society Collection, HSP; PSD, *A Discourse on the necessity and means of making our national literature independent of that of Great Britain, delivered before the members of the Pennsylvania Library of Foreign Literature and Science, on Saturday, Feb. 15, 1834* (Philadelphia, 1834), 16. On PSD as the impetus for the new historical committee, see Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), 1123. On the "problem of republican culture" and the explosion of cultural nationalism after the War of 1812, see Jean V. Matthews, *Toward a New Society: American Thought and Culture, 1800-1830* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), ch. 3. For the continuation into the early republic of colonial patterns in scientific exchange, see Kariann Yokota, "'To pursue the stream to its fountain': Race, Inequality, and the Post-Colonial Exchange across the Atlantic," *Explorations in Early American Culture*, 5 (2001): 173-229.

Indians a primary object of study, just as they had been in Thomas Jefferson's earlier historical committee, which had become defunct when Jefferson left Philadelphia for Washington.⁷

Caspar Wistar, Society president and the only member of both the first and second historical committees besides Jefferson, emphasized the importance of "a fair view of the mind and natural disposition of the savage, and its difference from that of civilized man." Whereas the previous committee paired Indians with the nation's fossils and mineral deposits, the new historical committee directed its energies instead to the "History of America in general, and of Pennsylvania in particular." Du Ponceau especially sought: "Accounts of the various nations of Indians which have at different times inhabited Pennsylvania, their numbers, origin, migrations, connexions with each other, the parts which they took in the English and French wars and in the Revolutionary War, their manners, customs, languages, and religion" to place Indians in a national history as well as in a natural history of man.⁸

By Wistar's recommendation, Du Ponceau sought this information from John Heckewelder, the Moravian missionary who had assisted David Zeisberger, twice served as a U.S. commissioner to the western confederacy, and superintended 12,000 acres of land on the Tuscarawas branch of the Muskingum River, which Congress had granted in trust to the Moravian Delawares in compensation for the massacres of the Revolution. He had also provided authentication of Logan's speech for Jefferson and ethnological information to Benjamin Smith Barton. In Heckewelder's opinion, Barton, who had died in 1815, had been "too much inclined to

⁷ PSD to Benjamin R. Morgan, 2 December 1815, Historical and Literary Committee Letter Books, 1: 7-8, APS. For other appeals to patriotism, see PSD to Elias Boudinot, 17 November 1815; PSD to Charles Thomson, 28 March 1816, in *ibid.*, 7-8, 32-33. For similar perceptions of Indian vulnerability to unsympathetic history, see John Dunne, "Notices Relative to Some of the Native Tribes of North America," *Port-Folio*, March 1818, 230; Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West: A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, preparatory to their return to their beloved city of Jerusalem* (Trenton, 1816), vi.

⁸ PSD, "A Correspondence between the Rev. John Heckewelder, of Bethlehem, and Peter S. Du Ponceau, Esq.,... Respecting the Languages of the American Indians," *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, 1 (1819), 358-59. [Hereafter, this journal will be cited as *HLC Trans.*] For the first historical committee, see "Circular," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 4 (1799): xxxvii-xxxix; for the second historical committee, see "Report of the Historical and Literary Committee to the American Philosophical Society.—Read, 9th Jan. 1818," *ibid.*, n.s., 1 (1818): xi-xii. [Hereafter this will be cited as HLC, "Report of the HLC to the APS."]

draw a similarity in point of Words to the Languages spoken by the different Tribes and Nations on this Continent, & comparing these with the Oriental, in order to discover from whence the Aborigines of this Country had sprung.” Those limited and misguided ends frustrated the aging missionary, who felt that Barton had not made “proper use” of his letters by publishing a work that would counter prevailing prejudices. Had Barton not suggested that he would produce such a work “so repeatedly,” Heckewelder himself would “long since have tried to correct many gross errors, written and published, respecting the character and customs of the Indians.”⁹ He finally did in *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations, who once inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States* (1819), which Heckewelder hoped would “give the public an opportunity of judging...who of the two, the Indians or the frontier White People with many others (& such too, who would wish to be considered as Christians;) were the greatest Savages.”¹⁰

⁹ PSD, “Correspondence,” 355, 362; John Heckewelder to Peter S. Du Ponceau, 7 February 1819, 267, in John Heckewelder, *Letters to Peter Stephen Du Ponceau*, APS; For a brief sketch of Heckewelder’s life, see William C. Reichel, “Introduction” [to Heckewelder’s History], *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 12 (1876). His early biographer state that Heckewelder composed his *History* at the “repeated request” of philosophical society president Caspar Wistar. See Edward Ronthaler, *Life of John Heckewelder*, ed. B. H. Coates (Philadelphia, 1847), 147. [Hereafter, the committee will be cited as “HLC” and its publication as “*HLC Trans.*”]

¹⁰ Heckewelder to PSD, 11 January 1817, in John Heckewelder, *Letters to Peter Stephen Du Ponceau*, c. 1816-1822, American Philosophical Society [hereafter “APS”]. For various subversions of the “undefined words” of savagery and barbarism and his indictment of “the *whole* conduct of the white people,” see John Heckewelder, “An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations, who once inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States,” *HLC Trans.*, 8, 327-29, 345 [hereafter this will be cited as Heckewelder, *History*]; idem, *Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians, from its Commencement, in the Year 1740, to the Close of the Year 1808; comprising all the remarkable incidents which took pace at their missionary stations during that period; interspersed with facts, speeches of Indians, and other interesting matter* [1820] (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971), x-xi. To Heckewelder, whites had corrupted Indians and their languages. See PSD, “Correspondence,” 405, 413. As he stated in Heckewelder, *History*, 5, his praise of the Delawares was in part a reaction against Anglo-American elevation of the Iroquois at their expense, from Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Nations of Canada, which are dependent on the Province of New-York in America*, 2d. ed., (London, 1750), through De Witt Clinton, “A Discourse before the New-York Historical Society, at their Anniversary Meeting, 6th December 1811,” *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, 2 [1814] (New York: AMS Press, 1974). The literature on the role of missionaries in the development of ethnology and anthropology is uneven. C. L. Higham, “Saviors and Scientists: North American Protestant Missionaries and the Development of Anthropology,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 72 (2003): 531-59, suggests that missionaries cultivated ties with learned societies only in response to decreasing funds in the antebellum era. Sarah Rivett, “Empirical Desire: Conversion, Ethnography, and the New Science of the Praying Indian,” *Early American Studies*, 4 (2006): 16-45, however, shows that

The first major work that Heckewelder forwarded to the historical committee was Zeisberger's manuscript grammar of the Lenni Lenape language, but only for transcription since the elder missionary had willed that the grammar rest in the Moravians' archives. As corresponding secretary, Du Ponceau exchanged frequent letters with the former missionary and claimed the honor of translating the manuscript from the German as part of his official duties, edging out the etymologist Nicholas Collin, who was "particularly anxious" to undertake it as well. It was the first of several Moravian grammars, dictionaries, and other materials which "being intended merely for the use of their young ministers... would have remained forever buried in obscurity, had not the exertions of the Historical Committee brought them to light, and rendered them more generally useful." Du Ponceau eagerly used such materials to investigate history and philosophy, and Heckewelder, intermediary between the United Brethren and philosophical society once again, was determined to assist in the endeavor, although he warned the committee that he would, "in some points, differ from what others have said and written."¹¹

From the moment he received Zeisberger's grammar from Heckewelder, Du Ponceau turned the historical committee's attention almost exclusively toward collecting further linguistic information and materials. Indeed, Heckewelder was surprised at the attention: "pray! what will your Committee say, when instead of receiving from me historical accounts concerning the Indians, as probably they expected: they see nothing but questions and answers to a Language – and words in the same, perhaps not in the least interesting to them – a Language indeed dead to them."¹² Heckewelder was pleased, however. Previous colonial powers had been negligent. Britain and France ignored linguistic study (and thus forfeited potential contributions to ethnology and the philosophy of language), except, as Du Ponceau said, what might "encrease

seventeenth-century New England missionaries played a role in the constitution of the Royal Society's "new science."

¹¹ PSD, "Correspondence," 355-56, 361, 389; PSD, "Report of the Corresponding Secretary to the Committee, of his Progress in the Investigation committed to him of the General Character and Forms of the Languages of the American Indians, -- Read 12th January, 1819," *HLC Trans.*, 20.

¹² Heckewelder to PSD, 5 October 1816, in Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS.

their Trade or warlike alliances.” Heckewelder emphasized that “it was not too late for independent Americans to retrieve the neglect of their forefathers.”¹³ More significantly, linguistic knowledge was the only possible source of “correct ideas” in ethnology because only that could allow whites to interrogate Indians themselves. Heckewelder sought to “represent the ‘Man of Nature,’ just as he is – and then let Men pass judgment on them. Travellers, that cannot themselves speak an Indian Language, are often imposed upon, & sometimes their Interpreters have been guilty of misleading.”¹⁴

Du Ponceau never emphasized that language study could lead to more definitive ethnographic knowledge. His own motivations stemmed from his philosophical interest in language and his desire to carve out a distinct place for himself and his nation in a science then sweeping Europe. Full of “Patriotick Zeal,” Du Ponceau was determined to “convince the world that the true, full and correct knowledge of America and all that belongs to it, can only be obtained in and from America.”¹⁵ Thus, he thought that “the first duty of an American Scientific Association is to occupy themselves with the objects that relate to our own country. It is on these subjects that the world has a right to expect instruction from us.”¹⁶ The astounding construction of the American languages made it “impossible to resist the impression...that we are among the inhabitants of a *New World*.” Du Ponceau was certain that the “field is rich and new” and he hoped that it would “lead to the discovery of some great *desiderata* of Science.”¹⁷

Du Ponceau envisioned Americans as producers and arbiters of linguistic knowledge. Using the advantages of empire for the advancement of world science (preserving memorials of a vanishing race) supported the legitimacy of U.S. power. Citizens could use this access to colonial

¹³ Heckewelder, *History*, 114; PSD to Daniel S. Butrick, 7 September 1818, HLC Letter Books, 2: 16-18. Du Ponceau also articulated a salvage philology motivation. See PSD to Eleazer Williams, 17 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 2: 3.

¹⁴ Heckewelder to PSD, 2 December 1817, in Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS; Heckewelder, *History*, 4. However, Du Ponceau does make clear that he did some editing of this section, so the strong statement of correlation between philology and ethnography may owe something to Du Ponceau. See PSD to Heckewelder, 30 September 1818, Peter S. Du Ponceau Letters, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

¹⁵ PSD to Jefferson, 11 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 1: 61-63.

¹⁶ PSD, “Correspondence,” 415.

¹⁷ PSD to Adelung, 16 December 1817; PSD, “Report,” xxxvii-xxxviii.

subjects – asserting authority to speak on “the Indian” against Indians themselves as well as Europeans – to gain a specific place in the republic of letters. Reviewing essays on Russian and Sanskrit and on English and Persian in 1818, Du Ponceau was proud to observe the “literary curiosity, that two works, one of which was written on the banks of the Neva, and the other on those of the Ganges, should be reviewed for the first time at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill,” by “the tribunal of a third, the self-created judge of their comparative merits.”¹⁸ To the Orientalist Joseph Von Hammer, Du Ponceau wryly commented that accustomed as European scholars were to more refined languages of the old world, “you will not find much interest in examining the Structure of the barbarous idioms of our Savages.” But, “as we cannot in America be expected to add much to the existing knowledge of the concerns of the old Hemisphere, it is best we should apply ourselves to those things that are near us.” In short, he told the Austrian student of Turkish, “it is best for each country to attend most particularly to those studies which may be properly called national.”¹⁹

To pursue these studies, Du Ponceau consulted available written material. In one category were the various grammars, dictionaries, and descriptions that could be found in works relating to Spanish America, Brazil, the Caribbean, and Greenland, details from which Du Ponceau cited repeatedly throughout his publications. In a category by itself was the *Mithridates*, a large, multivolume attempt to compile all the available information on all the world’s languages, which was both a successor to and yet crucially different from Catherine the Great’s projected “universal dictionary.” In addition to lists of words, it delineated languages’ “forms,

¹⁸ [PSD], “For the Port Folio,” *Port-Folio*, April 1818, 276-77. For Du Ponceau’s authorship, see Levette Harris to PSD, 23 April 1818, PSD Collection, APS.

¹⁹ PSD to Von Hammer, 25 April 1822, HLC Letter Books, 3: 10-12. On the philosophical connection between bias and first-hand knowledge, see Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 83-87. On the contested nature of these exchanges of knowledge in the colonial era, see Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosities: Culture of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). On the persistence of colonial patterns of transmission, see Yokota, “To pursue the stream to the fountain.” On the aggressive assertion of empiricism as the only way to gain true knowledge of America, and the social repercussions of this, see Andrew J. Lewis, “A Democracy of Facts, An Empire of Reason: Swallow Submersion and Natural History in the Early American Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser. 62 (2005): 663-96.

syntax, construction, and general grammatical character,” most often illustrated through specimens of the Lords Prayer with interlineal translations and succeeding commentaries that parsed sentences and explained grammatical functions. Johann Christoph Adelung, who conceived the project, passed away after the publication of the first volume, which addressed the languages of Asia and the Pacific. Johann Severin Vater, whose critiques had confounded Barton, carried forward. Relying on his countryman Alexander von Humboldt as well as Barton, Zeisberger, Richard Butler, Jonathan Edwards Jr., Hendrick Aupaumut, Lewis and Clark, and others, Vater devoted almost nine hundred pages to the languages of the Americas.²⁰

Du Ponceau was deeply ambivalent about this impressive book. He conceded that it was “the most stupendous work that has ever appeared on the comparative science of languages.” But, he confessed to Jefferson, he was “mortified as well as astonished that so much knowledge respecting the languages of the Aborigines of our Country should be possessed at the furthest end of Europe, while we know so little.”²¹ As he told a correspondent some years later, “those who make researches into the Indian languages without first studying the *Mithridates*, will often find their discoveries forestalled in it.”²² At the same time, Du Ponceau realized that the explosion of interest in linguistic studies in Europe, which had accompanied the polyglot compilations of Pallas, Lorenzo Hervas y Panduro, and Adelung-Vater, as well as the “Indo-European” scholars who succeeded Sir William Jones, presented U.S. scholars with a singular

²⁰ Johann Christoph Adelung and Johann Severin Vater, *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde mit dem Vater Unser als Sprachprobe in beynahe fünfhundert Sprachen und Mundarten*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1816), 26, 247, 268, 349, 372. The last volume of this work was compiled by the late Adelung’s son, Frederick Adelung and the young Wilhem von Humboldt. Du Ponceau discusses *Mithridates* in PSD, “Report,” xix-xx, xxxii. R. H. Robins characterizes the work, which was named for the ancient ruler of Pontus who was said to have mastered each of the more than twenty different languages of his empire, as occupying “the borders between the older unsystematized periods of speculation and collection and the later epoch of the organization of genetically related families.” See R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 4th ed. (London: Longman, 1997), 59-60, 194.

²¹ PSD to TJ, 11 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 1: 61-63. On the significance of the early nineteenth century for comparative linguistics, see Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 194-201. The Spanish polyglot was Lorenzo Hervas, *Catálogo de las Lenguas de las Naciones Conocidas, y numeracion, division, y clases de estas segun la diversidad de sus idiomas y dialectos*, 6 vols. (Madrid, 1800).

²² In John Pickering, “Doctor Edwards’ Observations on the Mohegan Language,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2d ser., vol. 10 (1823), 133.

opportunity to find a significant place in European literature and science. That claim rested on turning U.S. proximity to its colonial subjects into knowledge for European science.

Du Ponceau attempted to extend his studies beyond what Europeans had achieved by establishing a vast network of domestic and international correspondents. In the early years of his research, Heckewelder was his most important source of information on the Indian languages. He provided a range of textual materials and through him, Du Ponceau received substantial information from the Moravian missionaries Christian Dencke and Theodore Schulz, on the Ojibwa and Arawak languages, respectively.²³ Most importantly, Heckewelder provided expertise on how the Delaware language was spoken, which was crucial to clarify those parts of Zeisberger's grammar that were unclear or seemed to contradict either itself or other linguistic materials to which Du Ponceau had access. As the retired missionary admitted to his younger friend concerning the Delaware language: "My not having learnt it by Grammar rules, prevents me from giving explanations in that way, altho I once believed myself competent to understand every word they said, & yet, can plainly see the necessity of every syllable in a word for to explain themselves properly."²⁴ So, he explained by piling example upon example.

Du Ponceau fully absorbed the shift in European linguistic study away from etymology in the years following the work of Sir William Jones.²⁵ He stressed that "the study of languages has

²³ For the vocabularies, see HLC, "Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers pertaining to Indian Languages," nos. 19-21, APS. For these exchanges, see PSD, "Report," xxxiii; PSD, "Correspondence," 427-28; and PSD to Theodore Schulz, 29 June 1819, HLC Letter Books, 2: 25. Though Du Ponceau requested Dencke's address, Heckewelder suggested himself as an intermediary between the two. Later, he explained that it was because of reservations about Dencke's character. See Heckewelder to Du Ponceau, 21 March 1819, in Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS.

²⁴ Heckewelder to PSD, 25 October 1821, Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS.

²⁵ Not all prominent students of language did so. Noah Webster told John Pickering: "The reason why the affinity of languages has not been better understood is that the primary sense of the root has rarely been discovered." See Noah Webster to John Pickering, December 1816, in Harry R. Warfel, ed., *The Letters of Noah Webster* (New York: Library Publishers, 1953), 282. Interestingly, Webster shifted positions on the origin of language in this period. Early in his career, he advanced a rather materialistic view, for which he cited John Horne Tooke: "Languages are not formed by philosophers but by ignorant barbarians.... The formation of language, therefore, is at first the work of necessity and chance." See *ibid.*, 174, 177. Later in life, however, fearing that "our philology" had fallen into "degradation," Webster's stance became more orthodox: "*language*, as well as the faculty of speech, was the *immediate gift of God*." He posited that the "primitive language of man" was Chaldean, which when given was not "copious," and so required invented

been too long confined to mere ‘word hunting’ for the sake of finding affinities of sound. Perhaps a comparison of Grammatical forms of the different nations may produce more successful results.” Diplomatically, Du Ponceau asked Jefferson, former society president and philological enthusiast, for “any hints that might throw further lights upon the subject.” He expected little grammatical information from the one-time collector of vocabularies, but Jefferson could still provide useful materials. He did not disappoint. If the historical committee would “digest and publish” them, Jefferson offered his remaining vocabularies, and he declared that the American Philosophical Society would be the depository of the three volumes of manuscripts from the Lewis and Clark expedition that were in his own possession, with the authority to obtain and hold the rest, if they were ever recovered from Barton’s estate.²⁶

Du Ponceau also cultivated ties with individuals who could further the reach of his linguistic researches. Leonard Hicks, a Cherokee student passing through Philadelphia on his way to the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, informed him that the American Board missionary Daniel S. Butrick was working on a Cherokee grammar. Butrick provided

words for new ideas. Yet, “All the words of the several great races of men, both in Asia and Europe [he ignored America and Africa]...must have been derived from the common Chaldee stock.” See Noah Webster *An American Dictionary of the English Language* [1828] (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), “Preface,” [3]; “Introduction,” [1-2].

²⁶ PSD to Jefferson, 17 February, 5 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 1: 57-59, 60-61; TJ to PSD, 14 March 1819, Thomas Jefferson Papers, APS; TJ to PSD, 7 November 1817, in Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 631-33. Among Jefferson’s vocabularies that survived to be passed on to the HLC were his own of Unquachog (as well as one of Delaware falsely attributed to him); Duralde’s of Chetimachas and Atacapas; several of Cherokee by Campbell and Hawkins, with the latter providing ones of Choctaw and Creek as well; Smith’s of Chickasaw; Murray’s of Nanticoke; and Thornton’s of Miami. See PSD, “Indian Vocabularies Collected September 1820,” nos. 1-3, 5-11; HLC, “Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers pertaining to Indian Languages,” no. 3, APS. Jefferson also forwarded to Du Ponceau a Nottoway vocabulary by John Wood, a former mathematics professor at the College of William and Mary; see PSD, “Indian Vocabularies,” no. 12. Barton’s estate also lost several manuscripts that Heckewelder had provided him. See Heckewelder to PSD, 3 September 1818, Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS. While his primary concern was Indian grammatical structures, Du Ponceau was interested in vocabularies because he was “anxious to know, in the first instance, whether the American idioms differed as essentially from each other as those of the nations who inhabit the Old Continent.” Thus, although vocabularies themselves did not provide the grammatical information Du Ponceau thought most important, he recognized their etymological uses: “languages which their etymology shows to be derived from the same stock, partake of the forms and construction of the mother tongue and of each other.” Even meager vocabularies from far flung tribes, if they proved related to groups more proximate and more known in their grammar, would show the extent of a language’s spread, and “by pointing out the various families and connexions of Indian nations, may, perhaps, lead to the discovery of their origin.” See PSD, “Report,” xviii, xxxvii.

detailed specimens of the language's verbal forms.²⁷ From another American Board missionary, the mixed-descent Mohawk Eleazer Williams, he sought and received information on the Iroquois languages.²⁸ Du Ponceau looked to federal officials such as Secretary of State John Quincy Adams to recommend useful correspondents, possibly Indian agents, and he requested the use of official channels, since it was "in a manner of a public nature for the promotion of national science."²⁹ When army officer George Izard was named Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Arkansas Territory, Du Ponceau sketched a long list of linguistic and ethnographic queries to which Izard replied with an essay on the Quapaws, with a vocabulary.³⁰ Nor did Du Ponceau limit himself to men, if he heard there was "a Lady in our Country, who to considerable knowledge of the languages unites the talents that are necessary to make a proper use of it." He found at least two such ladies: Eliza C. Tunstall, of Greenville, Mississippi, and Emma Jane Gardiner, of Maine.³¹

The American languages stretched beyond national boundaries, so Du Ponceau endeavored for his philology to do the same. For information on languages north of the United States, he wrote to the Vicar-General of Quebec.³² As early as 1822, Du Ponceau anticipated that the "independence of the Spanish Continental Colonies, will open here a fruitful Source of information as to the languages of the Southern Indians."³³ Through the offices of the U.S.

²⁷ Memo, Monday, 27 July 1818; PSD to Butrick, 7 September 1818, HLC Letter Books, 2: 15, 16-18.

²⁸ PSD to Eleazer Williams, 17 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 2: 3. Williams had been introduced to Du Ponceau through the offices of Jason Chamberlain. See Chamberlain to PSD, 28 August 1817, PSD Collection, APS. Williams again came to his philological assistance a few years later; see Williams to Samuel F. Jarvis, 19 April 1820, Eleazer Williams Papers, 1634-1964, Wisconsin Historical Society [microfilm], 2: 427-28.

²⁹ TJ to PSD, 17 January 1817, Thomas Jefferson Collection, APS; PSD to John Quincy Adams, 16 February 1818; PSD to John Crowell, 27 October 1821, HLC Letter Books, 2: 9; 3: 3, 4-5. PSD, "Report," xxi. The letter to Crowell suggests that Du Ponceau was under the misperception that the State Department handled Indian affairs. If so, it could suggest a rather expansive view of Indian sovereignty, upon which he comments explicitly nowhere in his writings, but this is purely speculative.

³⁰ HLC, Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages, nos. 27-34.

³¹ PSD to Eliza C. Tunstall, 11 January 1819, HLC Letter Books, 2: 23; PSD, "Indian Vocabularies," no.45.

³² PSD to Monsieur le Vicar general du Diocese du Quebec, 30 March 1818, HLC Letter Books, 2: 10-11; Robert to PSD, 2 August 1818, HLC Vocabularies.

³³ PSD to Johann Severin Vater, 20 October 1822, Historical and Literary Committee Letter Books, 3: 15-17, American Philosophical Society [hereafter APS].

minister, Joel R. Poinsett, the Mexican Minister of Grace and Justice would distribute queries among the nation's missionaries."³⁴ In 1832, Du Ponceau "laid a plan" with "Col. Acosta, a Columbian Gentleman" to make the "American Philos. Society, the Center of scientific communication between the new world and the old." He was convinced that "if steadily pursued" the plan would "certainly succeed" because there were "no learned societies in South America, or in Mexico." Echoing the Monroe Doctrine, Du Ponceau suggested that Latin American independence would open markets and provide opportunities for U.S. mediation between the former colonies and Europe in ethnological as well as commercial realms. Du Ponceau sought to make his philosophical society more expansively "American."³⁵

Du Ponceau's philology was never simply a matter of perusing pages of vocabularies, grammars, and letters. As useful as such textual materials were, Du Ponceau stressed that he "neglected none of the opportunities that have fallen in my way of conversing with Indians, interpreters, and other persons practically skilled in the different languages." "Living instructors" possessed knowledge that books "do not, and...cannot communicate."³⁶

* * *

In January 1818, Du Ponceau drafted a report, briefing the Philosophical Society on the progress that the historical committee had made thus far in gathering materials relating to

³⁴ PSD to Joel Roberts Poinsett, 9 November 1826; 3 March, 15 August 1827, Poinsett Papers, 3: 164; 4: 39, 125-26; Poinsett to PSD, 10 January 1827, Gratz Collection, 2: 20, Historical Society of Pennsylvania [hereafter HSP].

³⁵ PSD to John Vaughan, 21 May 1832, APS Archives, Record Group III, APS. Though his focus is South America rather than Mexico, my understanding of what could be called cultural corollaries to the Monroe Doctrine has been especially informed by Ricardo D. Salvatore, "The Enterprise of Knowledge: Representational Machines of Informal Empire" in Gilbert M. Joseph et al., eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 76, who suggests that U.S. citizens consistently constructed the nations to its south as a field for U.S. capital and fantasy, which required a "rhetoric of informal empire" in which "there was always a layer of South America's reality insufficiently understood or known, a vacuum of knowledge that authorized the presence of more scientific explorers, collectors, photographers, statisticians, and business promoters." On broader cultural assumptions of western hemispheric relations, see Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). On the political and diplomatic context, see James E. Lewis, Jr., *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 177-87, 195-98.

³⁶ PSD, "Report," xxi.

Pennsylvania and U.S. history. He admitted that there had been a meager response to the general call, but direct correspondence had been quite successful. He brought to the society's special attention Zeisberger's grammar, the most complete such text "of any one of those languages which are commonly called *barbarous*." The missionary's work outlined the "comprehensive grammatical forms" of the Indian languages, which Du Ponceau suggested prevailed throughout native America. It demonstrated "how little the world has yet advanced in that science which is proudly called *Universal Grammar*."³⁷ That report was published in the first volume of the new series of *Transactions*, begun because the early issues could no longer be found, but suitably reflecting the sense of new beginning that Du Ponceau and others felt in the aftermath of the War of 1812. In that same issue, Du Ponceau published his first linguistic work. Although its subject was phonology rather than grammar, and its object was English rather than the Indian languages, he offered a preview of themes that would recur in his philology again and again. Pointing to the Delaware consonant that is "produced by a soft whistling," Du Ponceau emphasized the variety of "sounds, which our ears have never heard," but which nonetheless "exist in nature, since there is at least one nation to which they are familiar." He cautioned his audience: "The epithet *barbarous* is much too soon and too easily applied, when we speak of sounds and of languages that we do not know."³⁸

The following January, the Historical and Literary Committee published the first volume of their own *Transactions*. It held Du Ponceau's report on "the General Character and Forms" of the Indian languages; Heckewelder's *History*, which contained extensive linguistic remarks; and a highly polished version of the correspondence between the two men, edited by Du Ponceau, which featured Heckewelder as a learned, patient teacher and himself as a precocious, far-seeing

³⁷ HLC, "Report of the HLC to the APS," xi-xii.

³⁸ PSD, "English Phonology; or an Essay towards an Analysis and Description of the component sounds of the English Language," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s. 1 (1818), 230. In 1826, after several more publications, Du Ponceau still considered it "(if any one of them can be called good) as the best Philological work I have ever written." See PSD to Albert Gallatin, 6 April 1826, Gallatin Papers, New-York Historical Society. I have looked at the microfilm edition of this collection at Swem Library, the College of William & Mary.

student.³⁹ Implicitly acknowledging that the question of Indian origins still provided the primary interest of linguistic study, Du Ponceau insisted in his “Report”: “Whether the Indian population of this country took its origin from the Tartars, or from any other race of men; whether America was peopled from any of the countries of the old hemisphere, or those from America, are questions upon which I have never employed my mind.” His “sole object has been to endeavour, by means of the study of the Indian Languages, to collect some facts of which Philosophy might avail itself to extend the bounds of our limited knowledge of the all-important history of man.”⁴⁰ Du Ponceau, from very early on in his studies, recognized the value of Indian philology for both the philosophy of language and tracing past connections and migrations among nations.

While he assured his fellow committee members that he began his studies with “no favourite hypothesis or theory to support” and that throughout his investigations he “endeavoured to keep my mind free of preconceived notions,” he also informed them that he had found nothing “to induce me to change the view which I first took of the subject.”⁴¹ Though long interested in languages, Du Ponceau must have been unprepared for what he found in Zeisberger’s German script. Court de Gébelin had asserted that the “diverse languages of northern America have great

³⁹ Describing this editing in 1826, Du Ponceau disclosed: “You have no idea of the difficulty I had with Mr. Heckewelder. You must not think that his letters as they appear in our printed correspondence were written by him. I wrote them up for the press. I extracted them from a vast number of letters wch. he wrote to me, and in which he gave me successive explanations—I had to elicit it all from him as well as I could, and afterwards I gave it form.” See PSD to Gallatin, 18 April 1826, Gallatin Papers. Most of the originals of Du Ponceau’s half of the correspondence can be found in HLC Letter Books and most of the originals of Heckewelder’s half can be found in John Heckewelder, “Letters to Peter S. Du Ponceau,” American Philosophical Society. I have used both the published and unpublished versions of these letters, depending on whether I am treating their private exchanges or the public face that Du Ponceau wanted to provide to the new comparative science of languages.

⁴⁰ PSD, “Report,” xviii. His claim never to have employed his mind on such questions seems disingenuous. His personal notebooks are filled with material from diverse languages, many of which some commentator or another had at one point suggested were the Indians’ ancestors. It is difficult to accept that he did not compare the forms of these languages with those of the American languages. For just a few examples, see discussions of the languages of the Tartars, Mongols, or central Asian tribes (1: 48; 2: 23-28) and of the Pacific islands (1: 96-98; 3: 32, 67-69; 8: 43). This ignores his lengthy notes on Coptic and Berber as well as on Chinese, which attracted his attention in the 1820s-30s. See PSD, *Philological Notebooks*, APS.

⁴¹ PSD, “Report,” xviii, xxii.

connections with the languages of the North of Asia.”⁴² Late in life he recalled: “All that I knew in fact, on my arrival in this country respecting the United States, and other parts of this continent, is what is contained in the Abbé Raynal’s history of the European Colonies.”⁴³ In Raynal’s work, Du Ponceau found a typical expression of eighteenth-century language philosophy, in which the vocabularies of uncivilized peoples must reflect the limited range of experiences that corresponded to uncivilized existence. Du Ponceau was skeptical of Court de Gébelin’s claims regarding the observable connections between all the world’s languages, and if he ever accepted Raynal’s description of savage languages, he rejected it in the face of the astonishing evidence to the contrary he found in Zeisberger’s grammar and Heckewelder’s correspondence.

Du Ponceau informed Frederick Adelung, the son of the original author of the *Mithridates*, that he was particularly focused on “Grammatical forms, or the manner in which the various nations of the earth combine ideas together in the form or words.” This had been “rather hinted at than treated by the learned Professor Vater” and he intended to begin the investigation where Vater “left it, and extend...the enquiry to the whole grammatical system.”⁴⁴ Based on his first two years of study, Du Ponceau offered three “propositions or rather questions”, which he denied were “positive facts,” since available knowledge on the Indian languages was “very limited” and his own knowledge “extremely so.” As Du Ponceau reported them to the learned world, these were:

1. That the American languages in general are rich in words and in grammatical forms, and that in their complicated construction, the greatest order, method, and regularity prevail.
2. That these complicated forms, which I call *polysynthetic*, appear to exist in all those languages, from Greenland to Cape Horn.
3. That these forms appear to differ essentially from those of the ancient and modern languages of the old hemisphere.

⁴² Court de Gébelin, *Monde Primitif, analysé et compare avec le Monde Moderne, considéré dans 'Histoire Naturelle de la Parole; ou Origine du Langage et de l'Écriture; avec une reponse á une critique anonyme, et des Figures en Taille-Deuce* (Paris, 1775) 3: 362-63.

⁴³ PSD, “Autobiography,” 53: 449.

⁴⁴ PSD to Adelung, 16 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 2: 1-2.

Du Ponceau recognized that “facts ought to be collected and observations multiplied long before we venture to indulge in theoretical inferences” and that “general conclusions” were the “most fruitful sources of error in the moral as well as in the natural sciences.” But, he could not hold back. Each of the three statements marked a radical departure from anything he would have found in the work of Court de Gébelin, Raynal, or almost any other eighteenth-century writer on Indian origins, the science of man, or the philosophy of language.⁴⁵

The pair had to demonstrate that Indian languages were not the “savage languages,” an idea that Jefferson was just turning to as Du Ponceau and Heckewelder strove to refute it. Besides theories of Indians’ deficient vocabularies, the friends also confronted the widespread misconception that the structure of the language, in addition to the words that composed it, indicated Indian barbarism. Eighteenth-century writers on the origin of language had explained this by emphasizing that savage languages expressed in a jumbled mass the jumbled images they received from nature because they had not yet analyzed their perceptions through the use of signs.⁴⁶ In his six-volume *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773-92), Lord Monboddo

⁴⁵ PSD, “Correspondence,” 399; “Report,” xxii-xxiii, xxx-xxxi. On empiricism and modesty as a nationalistic stance against European philosophy, see Lewis, “Democracy of Facts, Empire of Reason.”

⁴⁶ For early, but different, versions of this idea, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Men” [1755], in *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 123-24; Adam Smith, “Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, &c. &c.” in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J. C. Bryce (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 203-07, 211, 215-18. Du Ponceau cited Smith in PSD, “Correspondence,” 418-19. Du Ponceau did not cite Rousseau by name, but he found an argument (“I cannot recollect in what book”) that closely paralleled Rousseau’s. See PSD, “Correspondence,” 398. He did cite Rousseau in PSD to Adelung, 16 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 2: 1-2; and in PSD, “Philological Notebooks,” 1: 36. While they agreed that savage words expressed their unanalyzed perceptions, Smith and Rousseau drew different conclusions from this. Rousseau used this premise (that savage languages express unanalyzed perceptions) to assert, “the more limited the knowledge, the more extensive the dictionary.” To organize things into categories (i.e. to develop general names, rather than name each particular thing), “observations and definitions were necessary—that is to say, much more natural history and metaphysics than the men of those times could have had.” Without abstraction, which recognizes similar traits in distinct objects, names for things would multiply quickly. One tree would be called A, another B, and so on. Smith, on the other hand, asserted that rudimentary abstraction would have to occur early. Thus, savages would name “the cave” and “the tree” as they came across them, and when their experiences acquainted them with other, similar things, they would rely on the name they had given the previous thing, which the new one resembled (i.e. in early language, several different trees would be named “the tree”). See Rousseau, “Discourse,” 123-24; Smith “Considerations,” 204-05. Du Ponceau never explicitly rebutted Rousseau, but he did urge Heckewelder to refute Smith. Du Ponceau thought that

explained the “property common to all barbarous languages...the extraordinary length of the words” by asserting that Indians and other barbarous peoples failed to distinguish substances from qualities and they conflated actions, their agents, and their objects because they had not yet learned to decompose their sense perceptions. “Those primitive languages are natural cries, a little varied and distinguished by articulation, signifying things as they are conceived by savages; that is, mixed together as they are in nature, without being divided into certain classes, commonly known by the name of *parts of speech*, and without being connected by syntax.” The Huron language, in particular, was “the rudest and most imperfect,” of any that he knew. Monboddo asserted that it had no syntax, lacking gender, case, number, prepositions and conjunctions. It was “impossible to form a grammar of it; that is, to reduce it to any rule.” Because the language lacked such a standard, and since “there was no such thing in this language as derivation or composition” so that related ideas would be expressed by related sounds, it would “be differently spoken by the different families or tribes of which the nation is composed, and must also be constantly changing and fluctuating.” Monboddo thought that it was fortunate that savages’ “sphere of life was very narrow,” for human memory could not retain thousands of words that bore no predictable relation to one another.⁴⁷

All the more maddening to Du Ponceau was the fact that U.S. citizens repeated such assertions. William Thornton, deviser of a universal alphabet, in the very essay for which the Philosophical Society had awarded him a prize, had found “among some savage nations such a

the latter’s theory was “ingenious; it is only unfortunate that it does not accord with the facts.” Concerning Smith’s deduction that general terms preceded particular ones, Heckewelder told Du Ponceau that “Indians make more use of *particular* than *general* words.” When he was first trying to learn the language, Heckewelder had tried to learn the word for “tree”; later examination revealed that his vocabulary held more than a dozen terms that supposedly represented the object. He later deduced that “when you ask an Indian the name of a thing, he would always give you a specific and never the general denomination.” See PSD, “Correspondence,” 417-19, 437.

⁴⁷ James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*. 6 vols., 2d. ed. [1774] (New York: Garland, 1970), 1: 482-84, 496, 532-38. Interestingly, his opinion of Delaware was much more generous. He considered it “the most artificial, if not the most perfect language, of any [barbarous language] I have hitherto mentioned.” However, this was not a suggestion that the language was civilized. Monboddo speculated that a language would become overly artificial, resembling “the invention of a machine...with so many springs and movements, that it is not easily used,” as an intermediate stage between being barbarous and becoming a language of art. See *ibid.*, 558, 568-69.

paucity of expression, that they cannot be said to have a more extensive language than some beasts...a few syllables compose their whole vocabulary, and express all that their appetites crave.”⁴⁸ Benjamin Lincoln, who served alongside Timothy Pickering as a U.S. Indian commissioner, thought that this posed challenges for communication, for he had experienced “the greatest difficulty in conveying any new ideas to their mind from the barrenness of their language, and in many instances it has been impossible to convey to them the sentiments attempted.” The underlying problem was “savage life,” which precluded the possibility of “a copious language.” “Their distance, by their habits, from the enlightened world, gives them few opportunities to extending their ideas; consequently, their language will not expand; and without ideas, they cannot have language.”⁴⁹ An anonymous antiquarian seized on related syntactic problems in his halting attempts to transcribe a Montagnais vocabulary taken from Gabriel, servant to a Micmac. The transcriber feared that “immense difficulty” must accompany any attempt to learn the language, since its “irregularity” made it “almost impossible to reduce them to the rules of grammar...the same words in different situations, often become totally different; and the declination of verbs is yet more exceptionable.”⁵⁰ “Reducing” their languages to grammar could seem as difficult as reducing Indian bodies and minds to “civility.”⁵¹

The philologist and the missionary set out to disprove such theories. Du Ponceau stressed that their words “are not, as many suppose, confined to the expression of things relating to their usual occupations and physical existence.” Du Ponceau drew his audience’s attention to

⁴⁸ [William Thornton], “Cadmus, or a treatise on the Elements of Written Language, illustrating, by a philosophical division of Speech, the Power of each Character, thereby mutually fixing the Orthography and Ortheopy. With an Essay on the mode of teaching the Deaf, or Surd and Consequently Dumb, to Speak,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s., vol. 3 (1793), 297-98. On his architectural design, see I. T. Frary, *They built the Capitol* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1940).

⁴⁹ “Observations on the Indians of North-America; containing an answer to some remarks of Doctor Ramsay, published in the Collections of the Historical Society for 1795, page 99; in a letter from General Lincoln to the Corresponding Secretary,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 5 (1798), 11.

⁵⁰ [anon.], “Specimen of the Mountaineer, or Sheshatapooshshoish, Skoffie, and Micmac Languages,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 6 (1799), 16-17.

⁵¹ On the significance of this Anglo-American phrasing, found from the seventeenth into the nineteenth centuries, see James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), ch. 7.

two sets of Iroquois expressions: “He is a bankrupt, or has become bankrupt” (*Ohne hawahje; Ohne jachstenehote hoje*)” and those which expressed the idea of “inward,” specifically “a quiet conscience” (*Scoeno agonochtonnie gajatacu*) and “what is inwardly concealed” (*Nonahote nacune wachsechta*).⁵² Heckewelder, too, emphasized Indians’ lexical capacity, even for the incorporeal, with words “beautiful and...expressive” and “at the same time so formed as to please the ear.” He pointed to several related expressions that Delawares applied to God, including *eluwiwulik* (“the most blessed, the most holy, the most excellent, the most precious”) and *Eluwantowit* (“God above all).” He returned to this theme in his *History*, where he recounted that he had frequently asked Indians who were fluent and fully literate in English and German if either of those languages allowed them to express ideas more clearly than their own and they “always and uniformly answered that they could express themselves with far the greatest ease in their own Indian, and that they were never at a loss for words or phrases in which to clothe every idea that occurred to them.” “How can it be doubted,” Heckewelder asked, “when we see our ministers...preach to them without the least difficulty on the most abstruse subjects of the Christian faith.”⁵³

Demonstrating that Indian languages did indeed have laws was a more complex task. But the pair detailed the American languages’ intricate grammatical structure, which Du Ponceau called “polysynthesis.” Indian words were long, but that was because the language could combine a variety of ideas into one word by “interweaving together the most significant sounds or syllables” of different simple words, at times making alterations for euphony, to form a compound word that expressed subject, verb, object, and accompanying qualities or relations. That this could be done with all the parts of speech meant that a word’s “various forms and

⁵² PSD to Heckewelder, 19 September 1816, HLC Letter Books, 1: 48-51; PSD, “Report,” xxviii. Colden’s original remarks can be found in Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 15.

⁵³ PSD, “Correspondence,” 422, 436; Heckewelder, *History*, 116-17. Both men pointed to John Eliot’s seventeenth-century translation of the entire Bible into Natick (and Du Ponceau added David Zeisberger’s more recent collection of hymns translated into Delaware, and might have added Joseph Brant’s translation of the gospel of Mark and Church of England Book of Common Prayer, which he later cited) as textual proof for their claims.

inflections will express not only the principal action, but the greatest possible number of the moral ideas and physical objects connected with it.” They could even combine multiple verbs and their associated ideas, for instance the Delaware word *n’schingiwipoma*, “I do not like to eat with him.”⁵⁴

Du Ponceau and Heckewelder relied on – yet transformed and provided a grammatical explanation for – longstanding stereotypes of Indian eloquence. Eighteenth-century commentators had claimed that Indian eloquence derived from their reliance on metaphor, which itself signaled an incompletely developed power of analysis. Heckewelder admitted Indian use of metaphor, which was “to their discourse what feathers and beads are to their persons, a gawdy but tasteless ornament.” Indian eloquence, on the other hand, derived from a mode of expression “natural and simple...without art and without rule.” He acknowledged that “their oratorical powers have been strongly controverted, and this is not astonishing, when we consider the prejudice that exists against their languages.” He pointed to Logan’s lament to assert that “it possessed a force and expression in the Indian language which it is impossible to transmit into our own.” Du Ponceau explained that it was polysynthesis that allowed this eloquence, which he thought was perhaps best displayed in the Delaware *Wulamalessohalian*, “Thou who makest me happy!” Instead of the five discrete and tedious words that the English language required, in the Delaware “the lover, the object beloved, and the delicious sentiment which their mutual passion inspires, are blended, are fused together in one comprehensive appellative term.” He marveled: “it is in the languages of savages that these beautiful forms are found!”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ PSD, “Correspondence,” 415-16, 419-20, 423; PSD, “Report,” xxvi. Though he had used *n’schingiwipoma* in his “Report,” in later publications, after some commentators had focused on the fact that Hebrew, Greek, and other languages could form words expressing subject, verb, and object, he emphasized that it was the ability of Indian languages to compound multiple verbs with intermediate ideas that was especially unique. See PSD, “A Grammar of the Language of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. Translated from the German ms. of the late Rev. David Zeisberger, for the American Philosophical Society, by Peter S. Du Ponceau.” [1827] in *APS Trans.*, n.s. 3 (1830).

⁵⁵ Heckewelder, *History*, 119-20, 125; PSD, “Correspondence,” 417. For the tradition of Indian eloquence, see Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 33-39, 75-139. De Witt Clinton, in a widely cited address, claimed that a “most remarkable difference existed between the Confederates and the other Indian nations

Refuting the notions of Monboddo and the like, Heckewelder demonstrated that the Delaware language possessed roots that allowed for the derivation of analogous words for analogous concepts. He provided thirty-four different words that derived from the root *wulit*, and all of which “imply in general the idea of what is good, handsome, proper, decent, just, well, and so pursuing the same general object to *happiness* and its derivatives.”⁵⁶ Reflecting on the precision the Lenni Lenape language allowed, Du Ponceau thought of the status usually accorded ancient Greek: “May we not exclaim here with the great Goethe... ‘O how a nation is to be envied, that can express such delicate shades of thought in one single word.’”⁵⁷ Because the method for forming words was so complex, Du Ponceau deduced that it would be useless unless it was remarkably consistent in its rules. Far from lacking syntax, as Monboddo had suggested was the case in Huron, Du Ponceau found that it had a “perfectly regular order and method, and with fewer exceptions or anomalies” than in any other language. Du Ponceau confided: “it is with the greatest difficulty that I can guard against enthusiastic feelings.”⁵⁸

Du Ponceau lampooned Lord Monboddo through a hypothetical Huron “writing a treatise on the origin of language,” who commented on how imperfectly analogy operated in English: “year” and “annual,” “house” and “domestic,” “king” and “royal,” “city” and “urban” were all

with respect to eloquence. You may search in vain in the records and writings of the past, or in the events of the present times, for a single model of eloquence among the Algonkins, the Abenakis, the Delawares, the Shawnese, or any other nation of Indians, except the Iroquois. The few scintillations of intellectual light; the faint glimmerings of genius, which are sometimes to be found in their speeches, are evidently derivative, and borrowed from the Confederates.” See Clinton, “Discourse,” 70-71.

⁵⁶ PSD, “Correspondence,” 393.

⁵⁷ PSD, “Correspondence,” 421.

⁵⁸ PSD, “Report,” xxx-xxxi; “Correspondence,” 415. As R. H. Robins has noted, “polysynthesis” thus referred to two different mechanisms by which words were formed. First is what Robins calls “polysynthesis proper” in which several independent roots are combined to form a single word. This is not confined to Indian languages. Second, is the “*incorporation* of pronominal and adverbial elements, marking, subject, object, location and other related concepts, as bound morphemes” within the verb, which is “more generally typical,” though not universal, in American Indian languages. See Robert Henry Robins, “Du Ponceau and General and Amerindian Linguistics,” in Joan Leopold, ed., *The Prix Volney: Early Nineteenth-Century Contributions to General and Amerindian Linguistics: Du Ponceau and Rafinesque* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 5. This essay and Pierre Swiggers, “Americanist Linguistics and the Origin of Linguistic Typology: Peter Stephen Du Ponceau’s ‘Comparative Science of Language,’” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 142 (1998): 18-46, have been crucial for my understanding of the more technical aspects of Du Ponceau’s linguistic work as well as the accuracy and later impact of his ideas.

unlike. The “pride of pompous ignorance” would lead the Huron philosopher to conclude, just as Monboddo had done, that “Such another irregular, unmethodical dialect never existed...on the back of the great tortoise!”⁵⁹ Du Ponceau was thoroughly versed in eighteenth-century language philosophy, particularly of the French and Scottish varieties, and he devoted considerable effort to addressing the ignorance and arrogance of the “pretended philosophers” of Europe, who “courted fame” by claiming to know “exactly what words were first uttered” and “how the various parts of speech, in perfect regular order, were successively formed.”⁶⁰

Interviews with Indians provided Du Ponceau with more crucial data, and may well have been the inspiration for Du Ponceau’s satire. Early in his investigations, he had a philological conversation with the Huron interpreters Isaac Waler and Robert Armstrong. Ironically, he did this with the aid of a dictionary that had been compiled by the seventeenth-century French Recollect, Gabriel Sagard: the very book that had convinced Monboddo of the Hurons’ linguistic savagery. Du Ponceau concluded that Sagard had been “perfectly bewildered” by Huron forms must have drawn the “very common conclusion that what he could not comprehend was necessarily barbarous and irregular.”⁶¹ Yet that dictionary provided Du Ponceau with the words he needed to conduct his interview. Du Ponceau “ventured to ask them some question in the Huron, several of which I had the satisfaction to find they understood and answered.” Refuting Sagard’s contention that the language was in constant flux because it lacked rules, Du Ponceau observed that “amidst its numerous errors and mistakes, which they easily discovered and pointed out, they gladly recognized the language of their own nation.” Waler and Armstrong proved that their language was stable and durable and they gave Du Ponceau “several examples of simple and compound verbs, with their various forms,” which “fully satisfied” him that “Huron is

⁵⁹ PSD, “Correspondence,” 383-86. As can be seen in this portion of the “Correspondence,” Monboddo seems to have riled Du Ponceau more than any other language philosopher. In his first philological notebook, which he kept while beginning his studies, Du Ponceau excerpts, cites, or addresses Monboddo’s ideas repeatedly. See PSD, “Philological Notebooks,” 1: 29-32, 35-38, 41, 44.

⁶⁰ PSD, “Correspondence,” 384.

⁶¹ PSD, “Correspondence,” 386.

constructed on the same plan with the other North American languages, and is equally rich and copious.”⁶² That was especially important, since Zeisberger’s Onondaga grammar did not show that Iroquoian language to be polysynthetic.⁶³ Conversation with the two Hurons provided evidence to refute Monboddo and supported Du Ponceau’s theory, arrived at earlier by Jonathan Edwards Jr., that even unrelated American languages such as Delaware and Huron possessed a common grammar.

Besides providing a general description of polysynthesis, Du Ponceau and Heckewelder further demonstrated how Indian languages differed from European languages and emphasized that these differences did not indicate linguistic inferiority. Because of Zeisberger’s grammar and Heckewelder’s expertise, most of Du Ponceau’s specifics came from the Delaware; but he also generalized. The “American languages” lacked the verbs “to have” and “to be,” and as far as he knew there were “no words...in any American idiom to express abstractedly the ideas signified by those two words.” But they could express the ideas that those auxiliary verbs entailed. Indeed, Du Ponceau thought that “in every language, there are more ideas, perhaps, understood, than are actually expressed.”⁶⁴ Du Ponceau noted that in some of the languages of the Caribbean, Mexico, and South America, “the language of the men and that of the women differ in great degree,” in either inflections or whole words. Heckewelder informed him that the inflections of Delaware nouns, “which we call *genders*, are not, as with us, descriptive of the *masculine* and *feminine* species, but of the *animate* and *inanimate* kinds.”⁶⁵ These were “curious facts, and a discovery of their causes would lay open an interesting page in the great hidden book of the

⁶² PSD, “Report,” xxxiv-xxxv.

⁶³ PSD to Samuel F. Jarvis, in Jarvis, “A Discourse on the Religion of the Indian Tribes of North America: delivered before the New-York Historical Society, December 20, 1819,” *Collections of the New-York Historical Society* 3 [1821] (New York: AMS Press, 1974), 247.

⁶⁴ PSD, “Report,” xxxix-xli; PSD, “Correspondence,” 372

⁶⁵ PSD, “Correspondence,” 367-68; Heckewelder, *History*, 247-48. Heckewelder may have been the source of this fact for Du Ponceau, though Charlevoix had suggested it; Zeisberger had not commented on it. See Jarvis, “Discourse,” 247; Jarvis to PSD, 11 January 1820, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, HSP. It is possible, however, that its conjectural significance was as much Du Ponceau’s speculation as Heckewelder’s. See PSD to Heckewelder, 22 September 1818, Peter S. Du Ponceau Letters, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

history of man,” but those classifications were no better or worse than what was found in other languages. They also introduced the learned world to the “particular plural,” an additional form of the first-person plural by which one could distinguish if “we” included or excluded the listener (with the latter comparable to the French *nous autres*). Zeisberger had been silent on this, but Dencke, who was about to publish a translation of the epistles of John, explained it to them. Du Ponceau was impressed. The distinction was “founded in nature, and ought to have a place in a system of Universal Grammar.”⁶⁶

The question of universal grammar was crucial. It originated with scholastic grammarians who emphasized that all men carried out the same mental operations and that all languages attempted to communicate these the same way. These ideas were furthered in the mid-seventeenth century by scholars at the Port-Royal monastery in Paris. Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot argued that although words bore no natural resemblances to things (i.e. words were arbitrary signs, authorized by convention), sentences reflected thought. Indeed, they must, for if the purpose of speech was to communicate our thoughts, it could only do so if it reflected them: “Hence, it follows, that men having occasion for signs to express what passes in the mind, the most general distinction of words must be this, that some signify the objects, and others the form or manner of our thoughts.” To the monks of Port-Royal, nouns (which, following classical practice, were either substantive or adjective), articles, prepositions, participles, and adverbs composed the former class; verbs, conjunctions, and interjections the latter.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ PSD, “Correspondence,” 428, 434-35, 439; PSD, “Report,” xxxvi. For Dencke’s translation, see C. F. Dencke, *Nek nechenawachgissitschik bamblik naga geschiechauchsitpanna johannessa elekhangup* [The Three Epistles of the Apostle John] (New York, 1818).

⁶⁷ Messieurs de Port-Royal [Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot], *A General and Rational Grammar, containing the Fundamental principles of the Art of Speaking* [1660] (London, 1753), 22-24. On the modistae and universal grammar, and the continuities and divergences of the Port-Royal version, see Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 100-01, 142-43. Foucault emphasized that it was Port-Royal’s identification of a word as an arbitrary sign for a thing, thereby establishing a merely binary relationship with the signified, replacing the more complex ternary relationship in which a signature revealed a natural resemblance between sign and signified, which ushered in the Classical episteme in place of its Renaissance predecessor. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966] (New York: Vintage, 1994), 42. Although they have been identified as “Cartesian” thinkers by the linguist Noam Chomsky, and as such as forerunners to his own work on generative

Despite the Lockean-Condillacian domination of language study in the eighteenth century, in which different languages revealed different stages of what Monboddo had called “the progress of the human mind in the art of thinking,” interest in describing a universal grammar persisted.⁶⁸ The most influential eighteenth-century universal grammarian in the English-speaking world was James Harris, whose *Hermes* went through five editions between 1751 and 1794. Harris argued that in classical antiquity and “in periods still more barbarous and depraved...the SAME REASON has at all times prevailed.” Unlike the Port-Royalists, Harris argued that parts of speech were mere “Variations, which can hardly be call’d necessary, because only some Languages have them.” Instead, Harris argued that “Universal Grammar” was found in common processes of “intellection,” which, along with sensation, were the two powers of human perception. Intellection was “a mere CAPACITY or POWER” to classify what one experienced, to see “one in many” and “many in one.” Languages were similar insofar as human nature was universal and capable of distinguishing between substance and accident; they were diverse insofar as different substances would be found in different places. “Nations, like single Men, have their peculiar Ideas,” which in turn shaped “THE GENIUS OF THEIR LANGUAGE.” Harris’s

grammar, they did not think of grammar as a structure underlying all languages, but rather as rules (of logic and rhetoric) to follow in any language for the most effective communication. See Roy Harris and Talbot J. Taylor, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought: The Western Tradition from Socrates to Saussure* (Routledge: London, 1989), 98-101, 106.

⁶⁸ Monboddo, *Origin and Progress of Language*, 1: 539. Ideas on just what constituted “universal grammar” were diverse. Court de Gébelin searched for the “Universal Grammar” in common sounds, which for him expressed the essential nature of things: “It is from this common sound that Universal Grammar is formed: anterior to all particular Grammar, it is the foundation of the others, it animates all of them.” See Court de Gébelin, *Histoire Naturelle de la Parole*, 141. James Beattie rejected this, noting that the “words of different languages differ greatly in sound,” but, Beattie argued, against the grain in late eighteenth-century Scotland, that “the thoughts of men must in all ages have been nearly the same.” Since Babel confused only men’s tongues, not their minds, there must be “in all human languages some general points of resemblance, in structure at least, if not in sound.” He conjectured that every language must possess “nine or ten species of words,” granting adjectives a separate classification, “each of them...necessary for expressing certain modes of human thought.” Thus “Universal Grammar” would trace “those powers, forms, or contrivances, which, being essential to language, must be found in every system of human speech that deserves the name.” See James Beattie, *The Theory of Language. In two parts. Part I. Of the Origin and general nature of language. Part II. Of universal grammar* (London, 1788), 105, 125-26. Sometimes the phrase “universal grammar” was used to refer to a philosophical language that had yet to be invented; see Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language, and Universal Grammar* (Warrington, UK, 1762), 8.

Universal Grammar studied the common ways in which diverse languages attempted, with only varying success, to express universal human reason.⁶⁹

Study of the American languages convinced Du Ponceau of “how little the world has yet advanced in that science which is proudly called *Universal Grammar*”; but Harris’s exposition was largely compatible with Du Ponceau’s ideas. For Du Ponceau, the mind possessed no innate ideas; yet he believed that all languages expressed a “natural logic,” those “powers of feeling and discrimination, and of that innate sense of order, regularity and method which is possessed even by savage nations.” Du Ponceau may not have acknowledged that nations possessed “*peculiar* ideas,” but he appreciated the “admirable variety of modes of conveying human thoughts by means of the different organs and senses with which the Almighty has provided us.”⁷⁰

Du Ponceau understood this diversity in light of the thoughts of Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis regarding the “plans of ideas” of different languages. Maupertuis had found “some languages, especially among peoples exceedingly distant, which seem to have been formed on plans of ideas so different from ours, that one almost cannot translate into our languages that which was once expressed in those.” He posited that this must be due to the different origins of language among different peoples of the world. There was no “diversity in their primitive perceptions,” but there was great diversity in the signs that were applied to those perceptions.

⁶⁹ J. H. [James Harris], *Hermes: or, a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (London, 1751), x, 25-26, 348, 359, 367-68, 374, 407-08. On Harris, see Stephen K. Land, *The Philosophy of Language in Britain: Major Theories from Hobbes to Thomas Reid* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 194-214. Du Ponceau owned *Hermes*; see Smith, “PSD and his Study of Languages,” 175. Robins interprets Harris as having “defended the concept of innate ideas against the prevalent English empiricist attitudes.” But Harris never discussed innate ideas, only the mind’s “innate Powers,” by which he meant, as Robins notes, “the capacity to frame universal or general ideas.” See Harris, *Hermes*, 306; Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 158. Several prominent historians of language philosophy de-emphasize the distinction between “empiricists” and “rationalists” in the eighteenth century. See Hans Aarsleff, “The Tradition of Condillac: The Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century and the Debate in the Berlin Academy before Herder,” in *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 9, 165-69; Lia Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, trans. Gabriel Poole (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 103; Land, *Philosophy of Language in Britain*, 195; Ulrich Ricken, *Linguistics, Anthropology and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment: Language Theory and Ideology*, trans. Robert E. Norton (London: Routledge, 1994), 227.

⁷⁰ PSD, “Report,” xiv; PSD, “Autobiography,” 64: 114-15; PSD, “Correspondence,” 421.

Signs were arbitrary and could have been made in any one of a number of ways, but “once made, in such and such a way, cast...such and such proposition, and has continual influence on all our knowledge.” “What we call our sciences depends so intimately upon the ways by which we have helped ourselves by designating perceptions,” Maupertuis explained, “the questions and the propositions would be completely different if we had established some other expressions for the first perceptions.” Because “languages once formed can lead into several errors and alter all our knowledge,” he recommended an examination into “the origin of the first propositions” by studying the tongues of uncivilized peoples.⁷¹

Du Ponceau praised Maupertuis for recognizing “the necessity of studying the languages even of the most distant and barbarous nations.” He understood Maupertuis’s “plans of ideas” to mean “the various modes in which ideas are combined and associated together in the forms of words and sentences.” Words, thus “shew in what order of succession the ideas were conceived, and in what various groups they arranged themselves before utterance was given to them.” Since Du Ponceau thought it was “natural to suppose that they were conceived as they are expressed,” the fact “that many combinations of ideas may take place in the human mind” was plainly demonstrated, which “bid defiance to our rules or canons of universal grammar.” In the polished correspondence, Heckewelder agreed: “there must be in the world many different ways of connecting ideas together in the form of words, or what we call *parts of speech*, and...much philosophical information is to be obtained from the study of those varieties.”⁷²

Du Ponceau was convinced that there was nothing savage about Indians’ grammatical forms. Epistemologically, those grammatical forms did not illustrate barbarous, mythologically

⁷¹ [Pierre-Louis Moreau de] Maupertuis, “Réflexions Philosophiques sur l’origine des langues et la signification des mots,” in Ronald Grimsley, ed., *Maupertuis, Turgot et Maine de Biran sur l’origine du langage* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1971), 31-32, 36, 40. On Maupertuis’s debate with Anne Robert Jacques Turgot on this subject, see Aarsleff, “Tradition of Condillac,” 179-83; David Beeson, *Maupertuis: An Intellectual Biography. Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, no. 299 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1992), 154-62; Ricken, *Linguistics, Anthropology and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment*, 183-84; David B. Paxman, *Voyage into Language: Space and the Linguistic Encounter, 1500-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 209-10.

⁷² PSD, “Correspondence,” 370-72, 377-78.

tainted modes of thought. The American languages approached linguistic perfection precisely because of the plans upon which they were organized. As he told Heckewelder, “the perfection of language consists in being able to express much in a few words; to raise at once in the mind by a few magic sounds, whole masses of thoughts which strike by a kind of instantaneous intuition.” He recalled a story in which a group of Roman gladiators, just before mortal combat, greeted Claudius with “*Ave Imperator, MORITURI te salutant.*” The emperor “was so moved, or rather struck” with the expression, he freed them. Du Ponceau was certain that this was because their expression presented the “terrible idea of death” foremost. If those gladiators had attempted the same salutation in English, in which “five insignificant words” began their remark, the emperor would have had time to prepare himself and disregard the emotion they had meant to evoke. In his private notes, Du Ponceau returned to this theme more than once. As befitted one who would succeed Benjamin Franklin in the presidency of the American Philosophical Society, Du Ponceau mused: “The electricity of language / Flash at once upon the mind.” Later, he reflected, that there is “an intuitive language which Man speaks only to himself” in which “crowds of ideas rush at once upon the mind” with “no time to clothe them in words....such probably will be the mode of communication of immortal minds when freed from the shackles of our earthly bodies.”⁷³

In the Indian languages “the mind is awakened to each idea meant to be conveyed, by some one or other of the component parts of the word spoken,” which earned for those languages Du Ponceau’s classification of them as “syntactic.” Du Ponceau came to see “Syntax, in its most enlarged Sense, the manner in which ideas are combined or arranged together in a language, &

⁷³ For the exchange regarding linguistic perfection, see PSD, “Correspondence,” 417, 419-20. For the private note, see PSD, *Philological Notebooks*, American Philosophical Society, 1: 55; 3: 3. For similar statement, see *ibid.*, 3: 48. These sentiments closely ally with George Staunton’s remarks on Chinese: “tho’ a sentence consists of several ideas, to be rendered by several words, those ideas all exist and are connected together in the same instant: forming a picture or image, every part of which is conceived at once.” Du Ponceau quotes this (though without explicit connection to American Indian languages) in *ibid.* 4: 36-42. For Staunton’s original remarks, see Sir George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, 2 vols. (London, 1798), 2: 571. Interestingly, Du Ponceau’s stress upon the slowness of speech, as compared to thought, contrasted with the remarks of others. For instance, Harris urged his readers to consider “the Ease and Speed, with which Words are formed (an Ease which knows no trouble or fatigue; and a Speed which equals the Progress of our very Thoughts).” See Harris, *Hermes*, 334.

conveyed to the mind thro' the ear or thro' the eye in the form of words," as the crucial criterion by which to compare the languages of America to each other and to those elsewhere in the world. Du Ponceau suggested, inaccurately, that a classification of the world's languages according to their grammatical forms – what is now called a typological classification – had only been attempted once before. In the *Encyclopédie*, Nicholas Beauzée distinguished between “those idioms in which inversions are allowed, and those in which they are not.”⁷⁴ Du Ponceau rejected this “meagre classification” as far too narrow because it had been based only on a comparison among Greek, Latin, and the modern European languages. Crucially, he also noted that the “analysis of ideas & the transposition of words are not correlations.” Syntax was about more than word order for Du Ponceau, he placed central importance on languages’ “plans of ideas,” upon which he based his classification of languages. That classification, along with the creation of a standard alphabet with which to record the sounds of the unwritten Indian languages, were the two “instruments” Du Ponceau determined, almost from the start, were necessary for a scientific study of language.⁷⁵

In “plans of ideas” Du Ponceau found the key to understanding Indian ethnology as well as epistemology. The significance he thus attributed to Indian grammatical forms, which, he stressed, presented a new philological phenomenon to European savants, was also a source of his originality. Du Ponceau was not the first writer to detail the grammatical forms that he called polysynthetic. How they worked had been detailed for the Delaware, and much less for the Iroquois, language in the work of Zeisberger and in the *Mithridates*, and Du Ponceau found

⁷⁴ On Beauzée, see Formigari, *History of Language Philosophies*, 103-06; Ricken, *Linguistics, Anthropology and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment*, 123-26, 146; Eco, *Search for the Perfect Language*, 107-08. Du Ponceau and Beauzée similarly postulated a universal internal logic that underlay all languages. For the latter's view, see Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 144. David Paxman, *Voyage into Language*, 231-32, identifies several other limited typological classifications before this, by Gabriel Girard (which Beauzée followed), Adam Smith, William Jones, and Adelung.

⁷⁵ PSD, “Correspondence,” 399; PSD, *Philological Notebooks*, 2: 8-9. Foucault notes that Silvestre de Sacy's *Principes de grammaire générale* (1799) was the first work to distinguish between the logical analysis of the proposition and the grammatical analysis of the sentence. See Foucault, *Order of Things*, 101. Du Ponceau never cites this work in particular, but in 1826 he did refer to the “luminous principles” he had found in Silvestre de Sacy's work. See PSD to AG, 2 May 1826, Gallatin Papers.

similar grammatical forms of other Indian languages described in that impressive work as well as in the various grammars he consulted. Du Ponceau was the first to argue that all of the American languages possessed the same grammatical forms. Indeed, just ten years before Du Ponceau began his researches, the Jesuit Juan Ignatius Molina had described the “Araucanian” [Mapudungun] language of Chile and noted that its speakers “convert[ed] all the parts of speech into verbs,” which produced others, “modifying themselves in a hundred different ways.” He stressed that the process was “regulated with a geometrical precision... unvarying in its grammatical rules;” and he extolled the “copiousness and elegance” of the language. Yet, he claimed that the “Chilian differs from every other American language, not less in its words than in its construction.”⁷⁶

Even Vater, to whom, Du Ponceau thought, “too much praise cannot be given” for his attention to the American languages, had fallen into this trap. He stressed that the grammatical forms of the Indian languages belonged naturally to those languages and were not the inventions of European missionaries. How could they be when those forms were so different from what the missionaries spoke in their own languages. Yet, Vater did not think all the American languages possessed polysynthetic forms. In the Chippeway (Ojibwa) language, Vater suggested, “almost every grammatical form was wanting,” even though the related Delaware language possessed sophisticated forms.⁷⁷ Du Ponceau and Heckewelder suspected that “the learned Professor” was mistaken, an opinion vindicated by Christian Dencke, a Moravian residing among the Chippewas

⁷⁶ J. Ignatius Molina, *The Geographical, Natural and Civil History of Chili* (Middletown, Conn., 1808), 2: 5-6, 299, 301-02.

⁷⁷ Johann Severin Vater, “An Inquiry into the Origin of the Population of America from the old Continent” [1810], trans. Peter S. Du Ponceau [c. 1820], ms. at APS, 96, 177. Vater thought that the different American nations must have already spoken different languages when they arrived in the new world. Although tribes could become dispersed, and their languages diverge, in the American wilderness, such a scenario could not account for the linguistic diversity of Mexico and Central America, “which at the time of conquest, had a civil constitution.” See *ibid.*, 156-57.

at Fairfield in Upper Canada, who explained that Delaware and Ojibwa had “one and the same grammatical structure, and rich in forms.”⁷⁸

Du Ponceau was aware that “most of the [Indian] languages are unknown to us, and many are yet imperfectly known.” Yet he admitted that the “idea that the languages of the Indians are all constructed on merely the same model, occurred to me early in the course of the studies.” Although Heckewelder and Zeisberger’s grammar detailed only the construction of the Delaware language, and the Six Nations Iroquois languages were the only unrelated North American tongues for which there was anything approaching adequate written information to use as a basis for determination, Du Ponceau drew the much broader conclusion that those grammatical forms were found in all of the native languages of the Americas. He based this largely upon missionary grammars of languages spoken at the opposite ends of the Americas, “from Greenland to Cape Horn.” However, his other crucial source of information was from conversations with Indians.

Similar to his interview with the Huron interpreters Waler and Armstrong, Du Ponceau met with two Chickasaws, Ibbaryou Klittubbey (also known as Martin Colbert) and Killpatrick Carter, interpreters for their nation and both “intelligent men,” who provided Du Ponceau with “numerous examples, by which I was convinced that that language as well as that of the Choctaws is highly polysynthetic.” Du Ponceau’s insistence, following European trends, that grammatical information was the most certain form of linguistic knowledge, opened a space for Indians to shape scientific linguistic knowledge. Although Indians had themselves been sources for vocabularies in the eighteenth century, the role that collection of strictly lexical collection offered them was far more limited than the one promised by the new attention to grammar.⁷⁹ Thus Du Ponceau could be both modest and boastful about his erudition: “I profess to know

⁷⁸ PSD, “Report,” xxxiii; “Corresp,” 373, 380-81, 430-31.

⁷⁹ Regarding Iroquois, Du Ponceau was also familiar with the work of Jonathan Edwards Jr. While he discussed Edwards’s conclusions regarding the Mahican, he was silent on his comment that Mahican and Mohawk shared principles of grammatical construction. See PSD, “Correspondence,” 403-04.

nothing except the little I have acquired in the solitude of the closet.”⁸⁰ That was not the case. He did not always teach himself. Time and again he had recourse to educated natives who taught him their languages, knowledge which Du Ponceau, Pickering, and others then conveyed to a wider audience.

Vater’s “naked supposition” about the Ojibwa language could only be explained, according to Du Ponceau, by the fact that as a European, he “had not the same means of ascertaining facts that we possess in this country.” If Vater had “lived among us, he would not so easily have been persuaded there was such a difference between the different languages of the American Indians; that some of them were exceedingly rich in grammatical forms, and appeared to have been framed with the greatest skill, while others were so very poor in that respect that they might be compared to the idioms of the most savage nations in north eastern Asia and Africa.” Du Ponceau insisted that he did not “positively assert” the grammatical identity of the American languages. Nonetheless, “When we find so many different idioms, spoken by nations so entirely different in their etymology that there is not the least appearance of a common derivation, yet so strikingly similar in their forms, that one would imagine the same mind presided over their original formation, we may well suppose that the similarity extends through the whole of the language of this race of men, at least until we have clear and direct proof to the contrary.” Indeed, Du Ponceau reflected, “this point, should it ever be settled, may throw considerable light on the origin of the primaeval inhabitants of this country.” Whereas previous authors, even those as philosophically opposed as Corneille de Pauw and Thomas Jefferson, had asserted the linguistic diversity of the Americas as the continent’s most fundamental philological fact, Du Ponceau argued the opposite. All of the American languages were similar, but not, as

⁸⁰ PSD, “Notes and Observations on Eliot’s Indian Grammar,” in JP, “John Eliot’s *The Indian Grammar Begun*,” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2d ser., vol. 9 (1822), xxix.

Barton had desperately contended, in their words. Rather, there was a grammar, a plan of ideas, that all Indians possessed.⁸¹

Nowhere in the *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* did either Du Ponceau or Heckewelder attempt to explain how such a grammatical system could have arisen, or even how a grammatical system could change over time. Du Ponceau refused to “venture to search into remote causes” to explain the world’s different grammars; he accounted for it only “by looking up to the GREAT FIRST CAUSE.”⁸² In his “Report” to the historical committee, Du Ponceau’s comments suggested the fixity of grammatical forms. For that very reason, Du Ponceau saw ethnological value in the grammatical forms of the Indian languages, especially, as he suggested that those forms were found among all, and only among, the “race of men” native to North America.⁸³ Recognizing the implications of Du Ponceau’s second and third hypotheses, Joseph Von Hammer nudged Du Ponceau to reveal his opinions on Indian origins, but the Philadelphia philologist insisted that he tried “to keep my mind perfectly open upon the subject.” He did, however, admit that others had inferred “from what I have written on their languages, that they certainly did not originate from Asia. I can only say that I have never drawn this inference.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ PSD, “Correspondence,” 431-32. Du Ponceau cites De Pauw on Indian linguistic diversity in his notes; see PSD, *Philological Notebooks*, 2: 7-8. It is interesting to consider Du Ponceau’s hypotheses on the grammatical unity and uniformity of the American languages in light of the conclusion of Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* [1978] (New York: Vintage, 1979), xv: “the essence of the White image of the Indian has been the definition of Native Americans in fact and fancy as a separate and single other.”

⁸² PSD, “Report,” xxvii-xxviii. In his first linguistic publication, Du Ponceau had acknowledged that “Oral language is subject to change,” but he added only that “the pronunciation of words” underwent natural “variations which...are slow and gradual.” See PSD, “English Phonology,” 234.

⁸³ PSD, “Correspondence,” 432. Swiggers, “Americanist Linguistics and the Origin of Linguistic Typology,” 34-35, labels this aspect of Du Ponceau’s thought as the “inertia” of the linguistic form, which combined with typological diversity, precluded his acceptance of linguistic monogenesis. He is silent on the reception of this idea in broader ethnological circles. Peter P. Pratt, “Peter Du Ponceau’s Contributions to Anthropology,” *Ethnohistory* 18.2 (Spring 1971): 147-58, at 152, evaluates Du Ponceau’s contributions to anthropology, is likewise silent on the ethnological implications of Du Ponceau’s philology, and incorrectly states that Du Ponceau’s grammatical analysis supported ideas of Asian origins of the Indians.

⁸⁴ PSD to Von Hammer, 7 July 1819, HLC Letter Books, 3: 10-12. Du Ponceau kept abreast of advancements in non-linguistic ethnology. When he first read Heckewelder’s relation of the Delaware tradition of the mighty nation they and the Iroquois had defeated when they crossed the Mississippi, the

Although he was realistic of the quantity and quality of scholarship that professional men (as all American scholars were) could produce in their limited leisure, Du Ponceau was optimistic that a scientific study of Indian languages would lead to important ethnological and philosophical considerations and he was certain that it would be U.S. scholars who brought these to light. This was the true importance of the “hypotheses” or “conclusions” that he had presented in his “Report.” He hoped that they would give “a precise, and at the same time an interesting direction to the study of the Indian languages”⁸⁵ Heckewelder, too, thought that their work would lead “to the opening of fountains on the Indian Languages.”⁸⁶ Du Ponceau recognized his success. As he told Vater: “a great excitement has been produced respecting our Indian languages, & I hope you will see the fruits of it by & by.”⁸⁷

Du Ponceau took primary responsibility of notifying the learned world of American philological discoveries by devoting substantial time and energy to establishing the Historical and Literary Committee in an international network of exchange, mainly with German philologists and particularly those who specialized in non-Indo-European languages, with whom he exchanged opinions and publications. While he rejected almost all eighteenth-century philosophy, he did all he could to be accepted by nineteenth-century philology. As he told one correspondent: “German Literature is duly appreciated in this country, & becomes every day more & more the object of our attention.”⁸⁸ As was the case in the American Revolution, he thought it best that Americans should seek “foreign alliances” to achieve literary independence. Germany was foremost because it enjoyed a growing reputation for scholarly precision

philologist asked the missionary: “Who were the Talligewis?...Is there any proof of their existence except this tradition & the existing Mounds or remains of fortifications?” Du Ponceau also forwarded to Vater and to Alexander von Humboldt the first volume of the *Archaeologia Americana*. See PSD to Heckewelder, 31 July 1816; List of Books sent to Vater, by Brig Enterprize, Capt. Visser, for Hamburg, 16 February 1821, in HLC Letter Books, 1: 39-40; 2: 41

⁸⁵ Contemporary scholars have concurred that it was the direction to subsequent Indian philology that Du Ponceau provided, which was among his greatest accomplishments. See Swiggers, “Americanist Linguistics and the Origin of Linguistic Typology,” 22.

⁸⁶ Heckewelder to PSD, 5 December 1818, in Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS.

⁸⁷ PSD to Vater, 9 September 1821, HLC Letter Books, 2: 54-55.

⁸⁸ PSD to Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt, 28 July 1821, HLC Letter Books, 48-49.

(especially in, but not limited to, philology), and, besides Britain, it was closest to the United States in language and intellectual interests.⁸⁹ Notably, Germany also lacked a history of American colonization. The most significant German correspondents were Vater, Hammer, the younger Adelung, Julius Klaproth, and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Through the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia became a conduit through which the new German learning passed into the United States.⁹⁰

Du Ponceau was cognizant of Germany's position at the fore of linguistic science; yet he did not follow it in all of its particulars. After Du Ponceau's initial work, Vater sent him a translation he had made of one of the works of Rasmus Christian Rask, who claimed that the most accurate indication of historical affinity was *not* grammar, but rather constant laws of phonetic change in which one specific sound shifted to another specific sound in many different words in two related languages. This focus, elaborated by Jakob Grimm, came to define comparative philology on the Continent.⁹¹ Du Ponceau thought it was "an excellent performance" and after encountering that work, Du Ponceau was aware of the value of phonetic differences among related languages: "changes of the consonants *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r* for each other are very frequent in the various dialects of American languages," an observation for which he cited Barton and John Eliot, and "these variations are very necessary to be attended to in the comparative study of our

⁸⁹ PSD, *National Literature*, 24; PSD to John Pickering, 4 September 1828, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 3, HSP. Du Ponceau turned to "German Literature" in his study of the "American languages" because it represented the vanguard of the study of languages, which had so long fascinated him. Gray, *New World Babel*, 140-41, 143-45, has contended that Du Ponceau found an "American poetics" in the Indian languages, and he cites Du Ponceau's essay on national literature as evidence of his desire for this. This essay, however, contains no discussion of Indian languages as such a basis.

⁹⁰ The traditional view of how the new German learning entered the United States is that it began with Edward Everett studying at Gottingen and returning as Harvard's professor of Greek in 1819, and continued through a line of Harvard students. See Carl Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship, 1770-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Du Ponceau argued that he and a few other gentlemen of Philadelphia and New York cultivated the exchange of English- and German-language literature with the literati of Gottingen, Leipzig, and Halle, which was at least simultaneous to, if it did not precede the Harvard circuit. See PSD, *National Literature*, 24-25. For insight into this Pennsylvania-New York project, see the letters from Frederick Christian Schaffer, editor of the short-lived *German Correspondent*, to Du Ponceau, in Du Ponceau Papers, Folders 2-4, HSP. For Schaffer's editorship, see *North American Review*, January 1822, 128.

⁹¹ PSD to Vater, 20 October 1822, HLC Letter Books, 3: 15-17. On the place of Rask in the development of linguistics, see Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 196-99.

aboriginal idioms.” But this did not direct his subsequent work.⁹² The American languages were either unwritten or recorded in uncertain terms by persons whose several languages, varying orthographies, and widely divergent qualifications made such a system impossible. As importantly, Du Ponceau was not interested exclusively in questions of history.⁹³

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Opinion was divided about the historical committee’s *Transactions* and about the philology in particular. A London reviewer considered Du Ponceau’s work “so profound and abstruse, that we are reduced to confess our utter inability to comprehend any part of it.”⁹⁴ A reviewer in the *Port-Folio*, in the Society’s own city, was skeptical of Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s claims: “we cannot help but think...that these gentlemen have overrated the power and excellence of the Indian language; for it seems impossible that nations without civilization, without science or arts, without books, not having even an alphabet, should possess a language so far superior to their wants.” However, if the pair was correct, the reviewer sarcastically called for his countrymen to adopt an “*American Language!*” that would “destroy every vestige of our ancient colonial dependence, and break away from the bondage of language,

⁹² PSD to Vater, 20 October 1822, HLC Letter Books, 3: 15-17; PSD, “Notes and Observations on Eliot’s Indian Grammar,” vii. See also Henry R. Schoolcraft, “Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Michigan,” in *Historical and Scientific Sketches of Michigan: Comprising a Series of Discourses Delivered before the Historical Society of Michigan, and other Interesting Papers Relative to the Territory* (Detroit, 1834), 95. Swiggers, “Americanist Linguistics and the Origin of Linguistic Typology,” 33, notes that Du Ponceau “does not seem to have assimilated (or taken notice of)” the technical work of Bopp et al. Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 198, emphasizes that as early as Turgot, philologists were aware of such sound changes among particular languages.

⁹³ Joyce Chaplin has asserted that despite U.S. fascination with South Asia and its people, “Sir William Jones’ *Asiatic Researches* was not the model for examinations of Native American languages” because this comparison “would confer too much dignity on America’s aboriginal peoples.” See Joyce E. Chaplin, “Nature and Nation: Natural History in Context,” in Sue Ann Prince, ed., *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 93.4 (2003), 85. American scholars did in fact follow the model that Jones laid out by emphasizing the study of grammatical forms over etymology in linguistic study, even after the science of language moved beyond it. See Robins, *Short History of Linguistics*, 196-97.

⁹⁴ “Art. V.,” *Quarterly Review* 31 (1825): 76-111, at 80-81.

as we have from the tyranny of trans-atlantic government.”⁹⁵ Satire aside, nearly all subsequent works that took Indians as their subject grappled with Du Ponceau’s conclusions.

Preparing for an exploratory expedition to the Rocky Mountains, John C. Calhoun consulted the APS, just as Jefferson had done. The society recommended that the expedition collect vocabularies, being careful to maintain a consistent orthography, as well as specimens of the Lord’s Prayer and “the conjugation of one or two verbs, to ascertain the construction of the language.” It also desired to know “Whether the Indian of the Missouri appears susceptible of civilization, or of being improved in his general condition and habits – and if so, what means likely to be most efficacious?” Only a few items were essential to carry: Jefferson’s “excellent Skeleton of a Vocabulary”; the historical committee’s *Transactions*; Barton’s *New Views*, for its comparative vocabulary; Jonathan Carver’s *Travels*, for its Sioux vocabulary; and a manuscript Osage vocabulary that Du Ponceau had received from a correspondent.⁹⁶

Thomas Say, a Philadelphia naturalist who was made curator of the American Philosophical Society upon his return, acted as the expedition’s primary ethnologist. He provided none of the grammatical information that the philosophical society had recommended, but Say thought that he collected a “considerable mass” of linguistic information, mainly vocabularies.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ “For the Port-Folio” [Review 2], *Port-Folio* 8.3 (September 1819), [259]. “Aristarcus,” in the same journal nearly two decades earlier, had pointed a similar remark at Noah Webster: “If the Connecticut lexicographer considers the retaining of the English language as a badge of slavery, let him not give us a *Babylonish dialect* in its stead, but adopt, at once, the language of the *aborigines*.” Quoted in Andresen, *Linguistics in America*, 67. On the reviewers of the *Port-Folio* specializing in satire and consistent in their attempts to preserve traditional ties with Britain, see Catherine O’Donnell Kaplan, *Men of Letters in the Early Republic: Cultivating Forums of Citizenship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 9, 140-83, 223-25.

⁹⁶ “Concerning Inquiries to be made by major Long of the Indians,” APS Archives, Record Group III. For the request, see John C. Calhoun to S. H. Long, 8 March 1819; John C. Calhoun to Robert Walsh, 11 March 1819; Robert Walsh to John C. Calhoun, 30 March 1819, in W. Edwin Hemphill, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1967), 3: 639-40, 655-56, 711. .

⁹⁷ Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, performed in the Years 1819, 1820... under the command of Maj. S. H. Long* [1823], in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, vols. 14-17 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1905), 16: 210. For linguistic encounters, see James, *Account*, 16: 210-11, 235. For a more recent narrative of the Long Expedition, see Howard Ensign Evans, *The Natural History of the Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1819-1820* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For how the Long Expedition fit into the United States’ larger imperialist plans for understanding the West, see William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the*

Those from the mountain Indians were stolen when three “worthless, indolent, and pusillanimous” men deserted with horses and saddlebags in the dead of night. Edwin James, the expedition’s chronicler, concluded that the vocabularies “being utterly useless to the wretches who now possessed them, were probably thrown away upon the ocean of the prairie, and consequently the labour of months was consigned to oblivion by these uneducated vandals.”⁹⁸ Say returned with considerable material on the Plains Indians, however, and was careful to record the kinds of information on linguistic affinity and possible descent that Jefferson had thought so important, even if his lexical conclusions contradicted Indians’ own traditions.⁹⁹ He also included substantial information on Indian “hieroglyphics,” sign language, and their “several methods of telegraphic communication,” which included “raising a sudden smoke” as signal.¹⁰⁰

Say rejected the “delicate trains of thought and reflection attributed to them by writers who have attempted to enlarge our acquaintance with the Indian character,” which he thought most often originated “in the ingenuity of the writers themselves.”¹⁰¹ Pointing to “their natural indolence,” Say concluded that the “arts of civilized life, instead of exciting their emulation, are generally viewed by the Indians as objects unworthy of their attention.” Those arts seemed to extend to language itself. Say found that the “free and independent spirit of the Indian is carried even into their language, and may be recognised there by its absolute destitution of a single word drawn from the language of a civilised people.”¹⁰²

Much of the immediate interest focused on the question of Indian origins. In the preface to the account of his 1819 travels in the Arkansas Territory, significantly Thomas Nuttall noted

Scientist in the Winning of the American West [1966] (New York: History Book Club, 2006), 57-64, 182-84; for how it fit into larger intellectual streams of romantic and scientific sensibilities, see idem, *New Lands, New Men*, 119-26. On Say, see Patricia Tyson Stroud, *Thomas Say: New World Naturalist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

⁹⁸ James, *Account*, 16: 263-64.

⁹⁹ James, *Account*, 16: 211; 17: 152-53, 156. For another discussion of linguistic relationships, but which does not contradict Indian assertions, see *ibid.*, 15: 115-18, 130-35. In the narrative James admits that for remarks on Indians he relied on Say. See *ibid.*, 17: 158.

¹⁰⁰ James, *Account*, 17: 164; 15: 58-59, 329-46; 16: 149.

¹⁰¹ James, *Account*, 17: 163, 159, 162.

¹⁰² James, *Account*, 17: 160; 15: 136; 17: 170-71.

that while “aboriginal languages of America” had been “hitherto so neglected and unjustly consigned to oblivion as the useless relics of barbarism,” he speculated that Du Ponceau’s historical committee was “perhaps destined to create a new era in the history of primitive language.” Eerily anticipating the archaeologically inflected theology of Joseph Smith, Nuttall mused: “In their mazes is unfolded a history of morals, of remote connections, of vicissitudes and emigrations, which had escaped the circumstantial pen of history; and yet, however strange it may appear, are more durably impressed than if engraven upon tablets of brass, and possessed of an intrinsic veracity nothing short of inspiration.”¹⁰³

Like Barton before him, John D. Clifford turned to Indian languages to find evidence for the identity of the mound builders. In his series “Indian Antiquities,” which appeared in the Lexington, Kentucky, *Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine*, Clifford posited a race of Hindu-Toltec mound builders distinct from the North American Indians.¹⁰⁴ That Du Ponceau asserted the grammatical uniformity of the American languages did not impede Clifford’s theory: “The words which compose the various Indian tongues are allowed by Mr. D. to be totally different, and as he only refers to grammatical construction, in which the languages of Asia and Europe generally agree, I have as much right to consider the Mexicans and our northern Indians distinct races of people, as we have to distinguish the English from the Arabians.” In addition,

¹⁰³ Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory during the Year 1819* [1821], edited by Savoie Lottinville (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 8-9, 302, xix. Nuttall assured his readers that a subsequent volume would contain a “*general view and description of the aboriginal antiquities of the western states, and some essays on the languages of the western Indians, and their connection with those of other parts of the world, involving, in some measure, a general view of language, both oral and graphical.*” Like his mentor, Nuttall promised work that he never completed.

¹⁰⁴ Charles Boewe suggests that Clifford’s only predecessor to incorporate Hindus into an American past was Hugh Williamson, Hugh Williamson, *Observations on the Climate in different parts of America compared with the climate in corresponding parts of the other continent; to which are added, remarks on the different complexions of the human race, with some account of the Aborigines of America* (New York, 1811), 103, 112-18, 128, which had argued for a Hindu origin for the Peruvians in particular. John D. Clifford, *John D. Clifford’s Indian Antiquities; Related Mater by C. S. Rafinesque*, edited by Charles Boewe (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 134-35 n. 11. For descriptions of the emerging “myth of the mound builders,” see Robert Silverberg, *The Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), chs. 1-3; John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames: University of Iowa Press, 1984), ch. 13; Andrew John Lewis, “The Curious and the Learned: Natural History in the Early Republic” (Ph.D. diss.: Yale University, 2001), ch. 3.

Clifford challenged the supposed uniqueness American languages: “I cannot help thinking, from what I have read in the Asiatic Researches, that the compound form of Sanscrit and other ancient languages of Asia, together with the affixes and suffixes to their verbs, corresponds in some measure with the form of our Indian languages.”¹⁰⁵ Though Clifford challenged one of Du Ponceau’s main conclusions, he did so only to gain the authority of philology and connect American antiquity to the illustrious Indo-Europeans.

The minister Samuel Farmar Jarvis turned his attention to language after a “short but very interesting conversation” with Du Ponceau at the home of philosophical society president William Tilghman. Jarvis aimed to compare the American languages with Hebrew and finally disprove the notion that the Indians were the Lost Tribes of Israel, which had been “lately been revived and brought before the public, by a venerable member” of his own New-York Historical Society.¹⁰⁶ In *A Star in the West* (1816), Elias Boudinot had devoted a chapter to language as one of many types of similarities between Indians and Israelites. He marshaled diverse evidence, including questionable etymologies and the languages’ supposed shared metaphorical character. Most importantly to Jarvis, Boudinot drew on Jonathan Edwards’s account of the similar grammatical construction of Mahican, Mohawk, and Hebrew to declare that the Indian languages “in their roots, idiom, and construction, appears to have the whole genius of the Hebrew.” This was of the utmost importance, since “Blind chance could not have directed so great a number of

¹⁰⁵ Clifford, *Clifford’s Indian Antiquities*, 9-10. William Jones emphasized that “the *Sanscrit*, like the *Greek*, *Persian*, and *German*, delights in compounds, but in a much higher degree,” and this distinguished it from “the *Arabic*...and all its sister dialects,” which “abhor the composition of words, and invariably express very complex ideas by circumlocution.” See [William Jones], “The Fourth Anniversary Discourse, delivered 15 February, 1787. By the President.,” *Asiatic Researches*, 2: 5. Edwin James, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, U.S. Interpreter at the Saut de Ste. Marie, during Thirty Years’ Residence among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (London, 1830), 383-84, also notes resemblances between the Indian languages of North America and those of the subcontinent. Albert Gallatin, “Hale’s Indians of North-West America, and Vocabularies of North America; with an Introduction,” *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*, vol. 2 (1848), cxxi, noted: “It seems there is at this time a discussion between two of the great German philologists. The justly celebrated Bopp is said to contend for the analogy of the American languages with the Sanscrit; whilst Mr. Buschmann insists that they are altogether distinct.”

¹⁰⁶ Jarvis, “Discourse on the Religion of the Indian Tribes,” 186. Du Ponceau had called on an American to study the grammatical forms of Hebrew and the American languages to finally prove or disprove “the Hebrew to be the root or fountain of all existing languages.” See PSD, “Report,” xlii.

remote and warring savage nations to fix on, and unite in so nice a religious standard of speech, and even grammatical construction of language, where there was no knowledge of letters or syntax.”¹⁰⁷

Even those who had spent significant time among them learning their languages and culture were susceptible to the theologically comforting belief that Indians were the Lost Tribes. As Heckewelder privately told Du Ponceau: “When I set out to write for you, I took the resolution, to be silent on all matters which I could not positively prove to be so. I wrote with caution, & tho I, & I believe our Society generally do believe that the Indians are the descendants of those 10 lost Tribes, yet it requires something more than belief to prove the fact.” Heckewelder confided: “I presume Mr. Boudinot expected, that I would have said something in support” of his theory. Citing Adair, but likely thinking of Barton as well, he continued: “There is something more wanting to prove the Origin of the Indians of this Country than bare sounds of Words.” Du Ponceau told his friend: “I have no opinion as to the origin of the American Tribes, I wait until I am further enlightened.”¹⁰⁸

Jarvis thought this myth unduly exalted Indians above their station and he turned to philology for an authoritative refutation, providing tables of words and grammatical forms in Delaware, Onondaga, and Hebrew, with occasional words in southern languages. Jarvis pointed

¹⁰⁷ Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West: A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, preparatory to their return to their beloved city of Jerusalem* (Trenton, 1816), 89-92, 95-96, 99-104, 106. For the place of Boudinot in keeping alive the Lost Tribes tradition, see Lynn Glaser, *Indians or Jews? An Introduction to a Reprint of Manasseh ben Israel's The Hope of Israel* (Gilroy, Calif.: Roy V. Boswell, 1973), 54-56. For the development of the Lost Tribes theory, see the footnote to Edwards in chapter 1.

¹⁰⁸ Heckewelder to PSD, 6 August, 25 November 1818, Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS; PSD to Heckewelder, 19 September 1816, HLC Letter Books, 1: 48-51. See also Heckewelder, *History*, 8-9; Heckewelder to PSD, 12 August 1818, Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS. Du Ponceau asked Heckewelder about any known Delaware use of “Hallelujah,” which Boudinot had claimed as a universal Indian usage, “tho’ he has no authority for it but Adair and his Creek Indians,” but Du Ponceau added that he could have also cited Lescarbot and Charlevoix. See PSD to Heckewelder, 27 August 1816, HLC Letter Books, 1: 47-48. Whether Moravians, en masse, believed the Indians to be the Lost Tribes, Zinzendorf did. He considered them to be “partly mixed Scythians, and partly Jews of the 10 lost Tribes, wch. thro’ ye. great Tartarian wilderness wandered hither by way of hunting, and so they came farther and father into ye. country.” He based his conclusion on their complexion, their customs, and on their “innumerable” words that were “pure Ebrew.” See “Zinzendorf’s Observations Concerning the Savages of Canada.—1742,” in William C. Reichel, ed., *Memorials of the Moravian Church*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1870), 18-19.

to both the American languages' differences among themselves and their differences to other languages to make his case. Emphasizing that Hebrew possessed no distinction between animate and inanimate things, Jarvis thought that it was "impossible to conceive that any nation, in whatever circumstances they might be placed, could depart, in so remarkable a manner, from the idioms of their native language." Besides Du Ponceau's work and a borrowed copy of Zeisberger's Delaware grammar, Jarvis's major source was Eleazer Williams, who acted as a translator in Albany while Jarvis interviewed several Onondaga chiefs there conducting business with the state government. As he entered his thirties, this descendent of puritans and Catholic Mohawks, had already published several religious translations and was then a lay Episcopal missionary and candidate for Holy Orders. Jarvis considered him to possess "a very good education; is acquainted with Greek and Latin; and speaks French fluently." Williams showed that the Iroquoian languages, unlike the languages cognate to Delaware, had the masculine and feminine offering *ranonwes* ("he loves") and *ganonwes* ("she loves"). This accorded with Zeisberger's Onondago grammar, but Du Ponceau had been expecting the classification system found in Delaware to be common throughout the American languages, like its polysynthetic forms. Williams's contribution only reinforced Jarvis's conclusion that there were languages even in North America, which were, lexically, "so distinct, as to have no perceivable affinity. All, therefore, cannot be derived from the Hebrew."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Jarvis, "Discourse," 188-89, 234, 246-47. Jarvis to PSD, 11 January 1820, Du Ponceau Papers, HSP. As attentive as Zeisberger was to Indian languages, Du Ponceau emphasized that his Onondaga grammar did not reveal the language's polysynthesis and his Delaware grammar divided nouns into masculine, feminine, and neuter (it had been Heckewelder that brought the animate-inanimate distinction to Euro-American attention). Du Ponceau, silent on the Mohawk Williams's opinion, declared: "The truth is that the writers of Indian Grammars, most of them at least, have tried too much to assimilate their rules to those of their own language." See Jarvis, "Discourse," 247. For Williams's various translating work, see Eleazer Williams, *Good news to the Iroquois Nation: A tract, on man's primitive rectitude, his fall, and his recovery through Jesus Christ* (Burlington, Vermont, 1813); *Gaiatonsera ionteweienstakwa, ongwe onwe gawennontakon* [A Spelling-book in the language of the seven Iroquois nations] (Plattsburgh, New York, 1813); *Ronwennenni nok ronwathitharani* [An Address, delivered to the Oneida Indians, September 24, 1810. By Samuel Blatchford, D.D.] (Albany, 1815); *Iontatretsiarontha, ne agwegon ahonwan igonrarake, ne raonha ne songwaswens* [A caution against our common enemy] (Albany, 1815); *Prayers for Families and for particular persons: selected from the Book of Common Prayer* (Albany, 1816). Relevant remarks

Yet, Jarvis also stressed that “in their plans of thought, the same system extends from the coasts of Labrador to the extremity of Cape Horn”; the American languages were “a separate class in human speech.” He concluded, “with regard to the descent of the Indians from the Hebrews,” that “although resemblances in grammatical construction will not prove a common origin, yet *differences in grammar*, afford the strongest evidence of the converse of the proposition.” The grammatical uniqueness of the American languages was no cause for theological alarm. Taking shelter beneath Babel, Jarvis suggested that “when God confounded the languages of men, *for the very purpose of dispersing them throughout the Earth*; He... planned the systems of speech, as to make similar grammatical forms characterize the great divisions in the human race.”¹¹⁰

Others sought linguistic support even as they ignored what Jarvis declared to be the results of the new philology. Daniel Butrick, a missionary and student of Cherokee language and traditions, ignored Jarvis’s work and asked, if it could be “possible, unless a miracle is acknowledged, that so many Indian words should be purely Hebrew, and the construction of what little we know of their language, founded on the same principles, if there had never been any intercommunication between the two peoples?”¹¹¹ The Pequot William Apess likewise ignored the new philology, though he attempted to marshal linguistic evidence. The “complicated ills to which my brethren have been subject, ever since history has recorded their existence—their wanderings, their perils, their privations, and their many sorrows, and the fierceness of that persecution which marked their dwellings and their person for destruction” led Apess “to believe that they are none other than the descendants of Jacob and the long lost tribes of Israel.” In *A Son*

can be found in, Eleazer Williams Papers, 1634-1964, 2: 26-27, 32-33, 308-09, Wisconsin Historical Society [Microfilm]; Eleazer Williams Papers, Newberry Library, 1: 1, 2: 14 (15-16).

¹¹⁰ Samuel Farmar Jarvis, “Discourse,” 267; Samuel F. Jarvis to PSD, 11 January 1820, in Du Ponceau Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, HSP. Jarvis’s philology was “merely introductory” to his study of Indian religion, in which he made the comforting discoveries of similarities between old and new world beliefs and rites, that Indian “idolatry is of the mildest character,” and so “this unfortunate race may be brought within the verge of civilized life, and made to feel the...cheering and benign, influence of Christianity.” See Jarvis, “Discourse,” 221.

¹¹¹ “Daniel S. Butrick on Jews and Indians. Part I. [1840?],” Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 18.3.3, 3: 5, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

of the Forest (1829) Apess extracted Boudinot at length and in other places he paraphrased him. Apess also inserted his own, unique linguistic ideas. He was aware that there were only “two mother tongues...among the northern Indians”; but he declared, perhaps hoping to support a pan-Indian unity not premised on heathen beliefs and rites, that between the Huron and Algonquian, there was “not more difference... than between the Norman and the French.”¹¹² Apess knew neither Hebrew nor Pequot. His nation’s puritan conquerors had attempted to erase the Pequots from creation and from history. What guns had failed to accomplish, assimilation into other native nations and into the dominant New England society achieved. As a result, Apess “knew nothing about the dead languages, except that the knowledge thereof was not necessary for us to serve God.” He had to turn to Boudinot if he was to buttress his claim to Hebrew descent by presenting the authoritative evidence of language.¹¹³ Though they diverged from Jarvis on philology, Boudinot, Apess, and Butrick, agreed that Indian conversion and civilization was an urgent duty. In Apess’s words, if the Indians were the Lost Tribes, “have not the great American nation reason to fear the swift judgments of heaven on them for nameless cruelties, extortions, and exterminations inflicted upon the poor natives of the forest?”¹¹⁴

¹¹² William Apess, *A Son of the Forest: The Experience of William a Native of the Forest*, 2d ed. (1831) in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. by Barry O’Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 53, 74-75. Apess was not alone among linguistic inquirers after the emergence of comparative philology to see connections between Hebrew and Indian languages. See also Thomas Roberts to Jedediah Morse, 2 April 1822, in [Morse], *First Annual Report of the American Society for Promoting the Civilization and General Improvement of the Indian Tribes in the United States* (New Haven, 1824), 58; “The Outcasts of Israel,” *Religious Intelligencer* 11.16 (16 September 1826), 243.

¹¹³ Apess, *A Son of the Forest*, 40. See O’Connell, “Introduction,” *ibid.*, lx-lxi. On Apess, see O’Connell, “Introduction”; Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), ch. 2 at 112-16, on this appendix.

¹¹⁴ Apess, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon* [n.d.], in *ibid.*, 106. Boudinot similarly asked: “Who knows but God has raised up these United States in these latter days, for the very purpose of accomplishing his will in bringing his beloved people to their own land.” See Boudinot, *Star in the West*, 297. Though he disagreed on ethnology, Jarvis shared these philanthropic sentiments. Apess, like Hendrick Aupaumut, was ambivalent about assimilation. In *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* (1831), he chastised the United States: “America has utterly failed to amalgamate the red man of the woods into the artificial, cultivated ranks of social life”; but the *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836), after holding up the Wampanoag leader “to the everlasting disgrace of the Pilgrims’ fathers,” offered readers “his language in the Lord’s Prayer” without translation. Apess, *Increase in the Kingdom of Christ* (1831), *ibid.*, 107; Apess, *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston* (1836), *ibid.*, 308.

Du Ponceau's work had its greatest effect on John Pickering, whose publications through the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Massachusetts Historical Society ensured that those institutions would not trail their Philadelphia rival. Pickering was a practicing lawyer in Salem and had already made a philological name for himself through work on English and Greek.¹¹⁵ Having read these efforts, Du Ponceau sent Pickering copies of "English Phonology" and his report to the historical committee, flattering him: "I should be very happy if I could draw your attention to this interesting subject, which your talents are so well calculated to elucidate." Though Pickering had earlier derided efforts to transform English into an "*American tongue*," and, quoting an English reviewer, denounced "*the torrent of barbarous phraseology*" that "threaten[ed] to destroy the purity of the English language," in which category he listed several words of Indian etymology, Du Ponceau inspired him to study the American languages. At his death, just a few years after Du Ponceau himself, he was one of the two most prominent philologist in the United States.¹¹⁶

Pickering became swept away, as much as his legal commitments allowed, by his philological researches. Perhaps he was aided by childhood talk of Indians with his father, the one-time Indian commissioner Timothy Pickering. As befitted his family's roots in Salem, he began his Indian linguistic studies in seventeenth-century New England, first by attempting to alphabetize (presumably by root, ignoring pronominal affixes) the Narragansett words he found in Roger Williams's vocabulary, then by examining John Eliot's translation of the Bible into the Natick dialect of the Massachusetts language as well as his *Indian Grammar Begun* (1666), and

¹¹⁵ See John Pickering, *A Vocabulary, or Collection of Words and Phrases which have been Supposed to be Peculiar to the United States of America. To which is prefixed an Essay on the Present State of the English Language in the United States* (Boston, 1816); John Pickering, "On the Pronunciation of the Greek Language," *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 4 (1818). For a long reply to Pickering's vocabulary, see Noah Webster to John Pickering, December 1816, in Harry R. Warfel, ed., *Letters of Noah Webster* (New York: Library Publishers, 1953), 341-94. For details of Pickering's life, see Mary Orne Pickering, *Life of John Pickering* (Boston, 1887). [hereafter, John Pickering will be denoted as "JP" and his daughter's biography simply as Pickering, *Life of JP*.]

¹¹⁶ PSD to Timothy Pickering, 28 October 1817, Timothy Pickering Papers, 31: 229, Massachusetts Historical Society; Pickering, *Life of JP*, 281; JP, *Vocabulary*, 10, 13 for the quotations; among the Indian words he lists are: *moccason*, *netop*, *papoose*, *samp*, *squaw*, and *succotash*; see *ibid.*, 134, 138, 148, 168, 180, 185.

studying the French Jesuit Sebastien Rasle's manuscript dictionary of the Abenaki language, which Pickering assured Du Ponceau was a "dialect, like the others... polysynthetic."¹¹⁷

In the *North American*, Pickering successively reviewed the "Report" and Du Ponceau's and Heckewelder's "Correspondence" (the latter's "History" was reviewed separately), Jarvis's discourse, and, when it appeared in 1822, the younger Adelung's survey of the world's languages. Like Du Ponceau, Pickering was eager to acknowledge German and Russian accomplishments and inspiration, but he also emphasized that Adelung acknowledged his debt to the exertions of Du Ponceau's historical committee. In these reviews, Pickering endeavored to convey the excitement of Du Ponceau's discoveries to a wider audience. He stressed the same themes that Du Ponceau had. These researches represented "the epoch of a *new science...the comparative science of languages,*" which was inductive and recognized the importance of distant, non-civilized languages, which could illuminate both "the great and long contested question, whether America was peopled from the Eastern continent or not" as well as "the *philosophy of language.*" Against expected critics who would question the utility of such studies, "when there is no literature to compensate us for our labor," Pickering countered that studying human speech as a science must be approached as any other science would be: "by ascertaining all the facts or phenomena, and then proceeding to generalize and class those facts for the purpose of advancing human knowledge...if what is called philosophical grammar is of any use whatever, then it is indispensable to the philologist of comprehensive views to possess a knowledge of as many facts or phenomena of language as possible." Indian languages, presumed savage but thought to be one-third of the world's total, had previously been neglected. "In the American languages we have a subject peculiarly our own, and in respect to which the learned of Europe are eager to obtain all possible information."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Pickering, *Life of JP*, 282.

¹¹⁸ In chronological order, see JP, "Article XI," *North American Review*, June 1819, 179; "Art. VII," *ibid.*, July 1820, 113; "Art. IX," *ibid.*, January 1822, 129-30, 132-33, 143.

Pickering's first original contribution to Indian philology was in the branch of orthography, or how to use letters to transcribe sounds consistently. It was quickly adopted by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to aid their linguistic travails. Pickering recognized that there were different reasons for studying the American languages. Some approached the Indian languages to compare with exactness "different varieties of human speech." Others sought the more practical end of "possessing the means of communication with the various tribes on our borders, either with a view to the common concerns of life or the diffusion of the principles of our religion among them." Success in either approach required "penetrate[ing] into this unexplored region of languages as barbarous and foreign to our modes of thinking, as the manners of the uncivilized people who use them." His uniform orthography was an essential first step. He told Du Ponceau that he considered his essay "only an application of the general principles of your excellent Essay on English Phonology." Du Ponceau, the author of that essay, thought that was overstating things: "it would be very difficult in most cases to separate my ideas from your own."¹¹⁹ They collaborated for decades and their collaboration bloomed into a warm and intimate friendship.

Besides the reviews and the essay on orthography, Pickering's main contribution to American philology was editorial. Though they continuously shared their linguistic ideas in the subsequent decades, the only text to which they each signed their name was to the republication of the first grammar for a native language north of Mexico, which had been prepared by "the Apostle," John Eliot. The new edition of *Indian Grammar begun; or, an Essay to bring the Indian Language into Rules, for the Help of such as desire to learn the same, for the furtherance of the Gospel among them* (1666) became the first in a series of "Indian tracts" – "all rare and valuable memorials of the Indian languages" – devoted to "this part of American history." Pickering prepared a set of introductory and concluding observations, with Du Ponceau providing still more observations as well as notes. The following year, Pickering published a new edition of

¹¹⁹ For who deserved credit for their ideas, see Pickering, *Life*, 286-88.

Jonathan Edwards's Mahican essay. Hoping to promote philology, Du Ponceau and Pickering also endeavored to publish sources that had previously existed only in manuscript. The historical committee planned to publish Zeisberger's Delaware grammar, though its appearance was delayed, and in the 1830s, Pickering published a Wampanoag vocabulary compiled by Josiah Cotton and the full French-Abanaki dictionary of Sebastien Râsle.

This editorial program functioned in several ways. Besides the archival sources, which had an obviously limited audience, Heckewelder commented that even the tracts previously published had either "long been out of print" or did "not appear to have had much circulation."¹²⁰ In addition, as Du Ponceau told Pickering, such editorial contributions testified "that our country has taken part in a branch of scientific investigation, which as to us may be considered as truly national." He continued: "Let others (those of the Old World) attend to Persian, Arabic, Celtic, and other Eastern antiquities: to us it belongs to work the rich mine which lies at our feet; and the world will applaud us as it always applauds those who are in their proper place, do their own business, and whose conduct is within the line of propriety."¹²¹ Further, publishing materials that corroborated Du Ponceau's conclusions, but which had been prepared up to a century and a half earlier, also demonstrated that those claims were not the manifestation of "any favourite theory or philological enthusiasm." Pickering stressed that "however extraordinary" these facts appeared, they were not new.¹²²

¹²⁰ Heckewelder, *History*, 111.

¹²¹ Pickering, *Life of JP*, 312.

¹²² JP, "John Eliot's *The Indian Grammar Begun*," 224, 234; JP, "Doctor Edwards' Observations," 81. Pickering's other editions can be found in JP, "Josiah Cotton's Vocabulary of the Massachusetts (or Natick) Indian Language," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3d ser. 2 (1830); "A Dictionary of the Abnaki Language, in North America; by Father Sebastian Rasles," *Memoirs of the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences*, January 1833. William H. Prescott, *Memoir of the Hon. John Pickering, LL.D.* (Cambridge, Mass., 1848), 27, attributes to Pickering an 1827 edition of Roger Williams's *Key into the Language of America*; but apart from this, I have found no evidence for this. The preface to that edition states that Zachariah Allen had provided the manuscript for the *Key*, which the Rhode-Island Historical Society decided to publish, "At this time, when philosophers are engaged in searching for the origin, and philanthropists, in meliorating the condition, of the aborigines." See *Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society* 1 (1827), 4.

The essays and notes that accompanied these republications also presented the opportunity to expand upon earlier ideas and to clarify points that had been left obscure in the historical committee's transactions, especially questions of classification and their bearing on theories of migration and whether Lenni Lenape traits were found in other Indian languages. For instance, the Cherokee David Brown corrected the mistaken notion that his language possessed the "American plural" (the exclusive plural) rather than the dual.¹²³ More difficult to resolve was the question of whether the American languages possessed the substantive verb *to be*. As in the case of the particular plural and the dual, answers seemed to vary by language. Pickering noticed that Eliot said the Natick languages lacked a distinct word for the verb substantive, yet he still translated passages of scripture where this was used, for example, when God told Moses, "I am that I am." Pickering had asked the superintendent of the Foreign Mission School, Herman Daggett, to ask his Cherokee, Choctaw, Mahican, Oneida, Tuscarora, and Caughnewaga students to translate that and similar passages. Daggett replied that their attempts were "not very satisfactory." While "Some of them have a word, or a part of a word, which, they say, signifies AM or WAS in *connexion*; but they say it has not the meaning *by itself*. Their translation, they say, is good Cherokee or good Choctaw, &c., but when I try to bring them to explain and analyze, they are at a loss." This corroborated the testimony of Zeisberger and Heckewelder (as well as Edwards). However, Du Ponceau interviewed Don Pedro Perez, a "native Peruvian Indian...a sensible man and a man of good education," who informed him that Quechua possessed the verb substantive. Upon Du Ponceau's request, he translated "I am that I am" into Quechua as "noca cani, pitac cani, or pichu cani," which Perez told him it was closest to *Yo soy quien soy*. Du Ponceau considered this theologically "equivocal," since it signified "I am the same person that I am," but it answered the question of the verb substantive for at least one of the American

¹²³ JP, "Doctor Edwards's Observations," 126, 132-33; PSD, "Notes and Observations," xix-xx. For Brown's correction, see *Life of JP*, 331. For relevant exchanges on classification in manuscript, see TJ to PSD, 7 July 1820, Thomas Jefferson Papers; PSD to TJ, 12 July, 18 July, 12 September 1820, and PSD to Heckewelder, 20 July 1820, HLC Letter Books, 2: 32-37; Heckewelder to PSD, 15 July, 2 August, 18 August, 7 October 1820, in Heckewelder, Letters to PSD; each ms. collection is at the APS.

languages.¹²⁴ But, differences within the polysynthetic forms of the American languages did not affect their overall similarity: “absolute uniformity is not to be found in any of the works of nature; and there is no reason why languages should be excepted from this universal rule.”¹²⁵

However, the motivations for Pickering’s editorial program transcended merely extending the availability of old and new materials, signaling U.S. accomplishments to European eyes, or clarifying previous oversights. It was a powerful reminder of previous missionary efforts and their incomplete success. Edwin James, chronicler of the Long Expedition and U.S. military surgeon in Michigan, thought that the work of Zeisberger and others only offered bitter reminder that those would be “memorials more considerable, it is to be feared, than the present generation will leave of similar labours. When will this country again exhibit a spectacle so gratifying, as that of the seven churches of native Indians, under the care of Eliot?”¹²⁶ This reminder came at a pivotal moment in Indian affairs. In 1819, the year the historical committee published their transactions, Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act, which established the first annual appropriation (\$10,000) for the education of the Indians in “reading, writing and arithmetic” as well as in “practical knowledge” (agriculture and “mechanic arts” for boys; spinning, weaving, and sewing for girls). In an effort to make the “Civilization Fund,” as it became known, “as extensively beneficial as possible,” President James Monroe and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, chose not to create new federal institutions and instead distribute it through benevolent

¹²⁴ JP, “John Eliot’s Indian Grammar Begun,” xli; PSD to Vater, 20 October 1822, HLC Letter Books, 3: 15-17; JP, “Doctor Edwards’ Observations,” 112-17. In between the publication of the HLC’s *Transactions* and this partial resolution, was a lengthy exchange on this topic. See JP, “John Eliot’s Indian Grammar Begun,” xxiv-xliv, with particularly revealing moments in their original in Heckewelder to PSD, 8 April, 25 August 1819; 9, 13, 18, 25 October 1821; 28 April 1822, in Heckewelder, *Letters to PSD, APS*. David Simpson, *The Politics of American English, 1776-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 200-21, has suggested that Indians’ lack “I am” indicated to educated whites that Indians recognized no distinction between self and world, and in turn possessed a society without alienation or exploitation, a romantic projection that Transcendentalists would elaborate in their own visions for English. I have found no evidence to support his view.

¹²⁵ PSD, “Notes and Observations,” xix-xx.

¹²⁶ [Edwin James], “Article V.,” *American Quarterly Review* 3.6 (June 1828), 418.

and missionary societies that had already established schools, or who would establish such schools, “within the limits of those Indian nations, who border on our settlements.”¹²⁷

Eliot was the “Apostle” to the Indians, working to convert them as well as to teach them to read, which would allow them unmediated access to the divine word. Edwards had stressed his father’s mission as the basis of his knowledge of Mahican and his childhood training to continue that missionary work. Cotton was a renowned missionary on Martha’s Vineyard and, though Rasles was comparatively less known, the success of the Jesuits was not.¹²⁸ Heckewelder indulged deeply in the tropes of noble savagery by emphasizing Indian virtues, which shone through in the form of a natural republicanism that needed no political institutions and a natural, though degenerated, adherence to divine law that would make conversion to Christianity and civilization simple, if only whites would devote themselves to the task. The Moravian’s *History* demonstrated that white practices and white ideas of Indians were equally unjust. Pickering noted that Heckewelder’s “favorable picture” of “Indian character” made him “feel more kindly towards that unfortunate race whom we ourselves have helped to corrupt and degrade.”¹²⁹

The congruence of the publication of the historical committee’s transactions and the Indian Civilization Act, as well as the content within Heckewelder’s and Du Ponceau’s pages, led to the assumption that the pair’s work proceeded from philanthropic, as much as philological, motives. This was true for Heckewelder; he forwarded six copies of the historical committee’s *Transactions* to the Brethren’s missionaries in the vicinity of Salem, North Carolina.¹³⁰ Walter Bromley, who directed a Micmac school in Nova Scotia and was working to “reduce” the language to “the rules of grammar,” had been aware that the “character of the Indians had been

¹²⁷ For Monroe’s statement to War Department officials and would-be educators, see “Civilization of the Indians,” 3 September 1819, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, D: 319-20. For discussions of this policy, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), ch. 5; Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America’s Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1974), 32-46; . Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 119-29.

¹²⁸ For example, see Jarvis, “Discourse,” 268.

¹²⁹ JP, “Art. XI,” *NAR*, June 1819, 186.

¹³⁰ Heckewelder to PSD, 5 December 1818, in Heckewelder, Letters to PSD, APS.

grossly misrepresented by travellers.” As he told Thomas Wistar in a letter asking him to forward linguistic materials to Du Ponceau: “I have never read any work of the kind which has given me so much satisfaction, because I have a thorough conviction that it is in substance strictly true – May God bless the labours of all such benevolent men.”¹³¹ Similarly, the missionary Noah Worcester told Du Ponceau himself: “On reading your Correspondence with Mr. Heckewelder, I was impressed with a belief, that you possessed not only talents, but a disposition favorable to the objects of Peace Societies.”¹³²

However, it is significant that several of the commentators who interpreted the most strongly pro-Indian sentiments behind Du Ponceau’s work, never truly understood the work at all. Peter S. Chazotte, a professor of French in Philadelphia who had fled Haiti with the revolution, noticed the importance of the historical committee’s transactions reaching the public “at so interesting a moment” and he emphasized that the “citizens of the United States, and the nations of Europe are become the instructors of the Aborigines of America.” Yet, Chazotte interpreted Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s exposition of polysynthesis as confirmation of his own idea that in the language that God taught to man, “a modulation of the voice, or perhaps a simple articulation, was then expressive of a whole body of thought.” Through the American languages, Chazotte implied, the “first and most perfect of languages” could yet be recovered.¹³³

John Adams thanked Du Ponceau for his “profound researches concerning our Country-men, the Indians....This great work has increased my Esteem and veneration for human nature and diminished in some measure certain prejudices I had conceived especially against the Indians of North America.” Not grasping the difference between Du Ponceau’s grammatical studies and

¹³¹ Walter Bromley to Thomas Wistar, 26 April 1819, HLC Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages, APS.

¹³² Noah Worcester to PSD, 9 August 1819, Gratz Collection, Case 9, Box 23, HSP. As discussed in chapter 1, above, peace and missionary work were inextricable. As Heckewelder lamented to Worcester: “The Cruelties committed during wars – the Calamities, Misery, Poverty & wretchedness....Do not wars frequently hinder the spreading of the Gospel, nay operate in a direct way against this part of Christian duty?” See Heckewelder to Worcester, 16 November 1818, John Heckewelder Letters, Newberry Library.

¹³³ See Peter S. Chazotte, *An Introductory Lecture on the Metaphysics and Philosophy of Languages; being the first number of a philosophical and practical Grammar of the English and French Languages* (Philadelphia, 1819), 38-39, 41, 44.

the eighteenth-century etymological seekers of primitive languages, Adams suggested that Du Ponceau consult the work of Court de Gébelin as well Jacob Bryant and Charles Francois Dupuis. He suspected “there had been many Augustine ages in the History of the Globe, and of mankind before that of Nebuchadnezzar – and that some of those Augustine ages if you had the history of them, might explain to you the mysteries you find in the Indian languages.” Du Ponceau shared with the former president that he had known Court de Gébelin many years before, but withheld their difference of opinions.¹³⁴

Similarly, the New York minister Frederick Christian Schaffer congratulated Du Ponceau on producing a work “which does so much honor to the talents and philanthropy of the writers, is a credit to the country, and a most powerful plea in favour of the claim which the American Indians have to humane, to respectful treatment, and to all possible justice at the hands of their white countrymen.” He had just submitted a petition to Congress (one of many by religious societies in favor of the bill supporting Indian education): “Had your book previously appeared, I should have used no other argument than a reference to it.” He went on to share some of his ideas on Indian origins, which, due to the “the analogy of languages, or rather of words,” Schaffer thought clearly Tartar.¹³⁵ When he discovered that an unscrupulous captain had kidnapped Eskimos and put them on display, Schaffer assured Du Ponceau that men there had “taken up the

¹³⁴ John Adams to PSD, 23 June, 5 July 1819, PSD Collection, APS. To gauge the extent of Adams’s refreshment after Du Ponceau’s researches, consider what he told Jefferson in 1812: “Whether Serpents Teeth were sown here and sprung up Men; whether Men and Women dropped from the Clouds upon this Atlantic Island; whether the Almighty created them here, or whether they immigrated from Europe, are questions of no moment to the present or future happiness of Man. Neither Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, Fisheries, Science, Litterature, Taste, Religion, Morals, nor any other good will be promoted, or any Evil averted, by any discoveries that can be made in answer to those questions.” At that point he was “weary of contemplating Nations from the lowest and most beastly degradations of human Life, to the highest Refinement of Civilization. I am weary of Philosophers, Theologians, Politicians, and Historians. They are immense masses of Absurdities, Vices and Lies.” However, looking back to his childhood acquaintance with a family of “Punkapaug and Neponsit Tribes,” he did admit that he had “felt an Interest in the Indians and a Commiseration for them from my Childhood.” See John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 28 June 1812, in Lester J. Cappon, *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 308-10. Court de Gébelin had called for a civilizing effort in one of the many volumes of *Monde Primitif*. See Manuel, *Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*, 273.

¹³⁵ F. C. Schaffer to PSD, 2 April 1819, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, HSP. On the flood of petitions supporting Indian civilization, encouraged by McKenney, see Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney*, 42.

cause of the Indians nobly....We have the man and woman and child dressed as New Yorkers,” and, with the help of a Moravian Eskimo gospel, “we are not idle as regards collecting information concerning the language.”¹³⁶

Shortly thereafter, “on the subject of Indian affairs,” he warned Du Ponceau that a certain “Gov. Cass has exerted himself very much to procure information relative to the Indians of North America” and charged that the “joint labours of Mr. H. and yourself are...unsuccessful in furnishing a true statement!” Schaffer “confess[ed], that Cass’ declarations have startled some literary Gentlemen in this quarter.”¹³⁷ Skeptical of, if not opposed to the civilization program, Cass realized the effect Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s science could have on public opinion and determined to counter it. Cass publicized his exertions at a crucial moment a few years later.

Others, however, discerned in philology a threat to the missionary effort. Even apart from the tangled question of whether native students should be instructed or made literate in their own languages or forced to learn English alone, questions of whether either the pursuit of philology or the knowledge it produced truly aided supporters of federal philanthropy remained. Early in his researches, Heckwelder had referred Du Ponceau to fellow Moravian John Gambold, who had lived among the Cherokees for years. Initially, Gambold responded to Du Ponceau’s request with a mixture of explanation and apology because he had never learned the language. It was “hardly attainable by any foreigner” and he had been busy, with the only available assistance that of children, who were of no help in analyzing a language. Besides, he explained to Du Ponceau, he wanted to do nothing that might encourage the preservation of their language. “Unless the Cherokee Indians adopt our Language, our Laws & our holy Religion, they will at no very distant Period either become extinct, or else degenerate into a kind of Gypsies.” Mere months later, however, with pressures on the Cherokee nation growing ever stronger and nationalists fearing that a large migration of Cherokees to Arkansas would irreparably sunder the

¹³⁶ Schaffer to PSD, 12 February 1821, Du Ponceau Papers, I: 4, HSP.

¹³⁷ Schaffer to PSD, 21 November 1821, Du Ponceau Papers, I: 4, HSP.

nation, Gambold chastised Du Ponceau: “What can the preservation of their Language Customs & so forth avail if themselves become extinct, which, without a Miracle, they must, if continually pushed from Place to Place, and never suffered to strike root and thrive.” Such were “the Expressions of a wounded Spirit.”¹³⁸ To Gambold, philology and similar pursuits only distracted American citizens from the crucial issue of removal.

* * *

Philology attacked the conjectures of eighteenth-century writers on the origin of language and the development of society, promising future answers to the problem of Indian origins. Du Ponceau was conscious of his innovations as well as his debts to other scholars, European savants and long-dead missionaries to the Indians alike. His and Pickering’s work trumpeted the value of studying the American languages, for individual and national fame as well as for philosophy. As his tireless correspondence with European scholars suggests, Du Ponceau was more concerned with developing a scientific reputation abroad than he was with providing intellectual justification for advocates of Indian civilization at home, although he was well aware of the invaluable assistance that an experienced missionary such as Heckewelder could lend to a philologist. Supporters of Indian civilization also saw no inherent conflict between the two programs.

Notwithstanding occasional sartorial coercion, such as Schaeffer inflicted on the “rescued” Inuit, the study of Indian languages was widely assumed to proceed from philanthropic intentions, stemming more from a coincidence of timing and from the publications of Heckewelder and Pickering than from Du Ponceau’s own words. In succeeding years, it became clear that the study of Indian languages was inextricable from wider debates concerning Indian removal and that there was no consensus on the place of those studies in the broader missionary effort. The subtlety of Du Ponceau’s conclusions complicated the debate. He clearly argued that

¹³⁸ John Gambold to PSD, 20 October 1818; 18 December 1818, in HLC Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages, Folder 39, APS. Pressures that the Cherokees faced in this period peaked in December 1818. See William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 252.

the American languages were uniform throughout the Americas, were unique to the Americas, and that some ill-defined state of incomplete civilization did not account for their grammatical structure. Coupled with his interpretation of grammatical forms as the “plans of men’s ideas,” Du Ponceau’s new science of languages disproved a “savage mind” mutable to the effects of social condition, only, at least to some, to establish an unchanging “Indian mind” in its place possessed by a people perhaps truly indigenous to America. Philology dominated other modes of studying “the Indian” in the 1820s precisely because of the access it promised into the mind of “the Indian” – in the present and perhaps the future, rather than merely the past – at the very moment when U.S. Indian policy was most uncertain. Du Ponceau assured Vater, “I shall avoid forming any theories, but merely give the facts, that the learned world may afterwards theorize upon them.”¹³⁹ Not all who read the philologist’s work were so restrained.

¹³⁹ PSD to Vater, 9 September 1821, in HLC Letter Books, 2: 54-55.

CHAPTER 5.

SAVAGE LANGUAGES, THE INDIAN MIND, AND REMOVAL

A “crisis in Indian affairs,” according to superintendent Thomas L. McKenney, erupted in the 1820s. A booming American population confronted Indian nations who were militarily weak, but who, in the South, had successfully adapted the markers of white civilization, had experienced nationalist awakenings, and increasingly refused to sell more land. Worsening the situation, Georgia threatened to act on its own unless the federal government removed the Cherokees from the state’s borders.¹ In response, in his final message to Congress, December 7, 1824, and in a special message on removal a month later, President James Monroe declared that Indians must be removed beyond the Mississippi – beyond the vice and violence of the frontier – merely to avoid extinction, let alone become civilized. Dispute and deliberation followed, in the midst of which the War Department turned to the collection of linguistic information.² At the very moment civilization and removal were the focus of debate, so too was the character of native languages, and what these revealed of the native mind.

In 1819, Peter Stephen Du Ponceau and aging Moravian missionary John Heckewelder had made remarkable and widely praised claims for the copiousness, organization, and eloquence of the “American languages.” In that same year Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act, which appropriated \$10,000 annually for Indian education in English, agriculture, and useful

¹ McKenney quoted in Michael D. Green, “The Expansion of European Colonization to the Mississippi Valley, 1780-1880,” Bruce G. Trigger and Wilcomb E. Washburn, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 1: *North America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ.Press, 1996), 510.

² The logic of “Jeffersonian philanthropy” suggested that Indians could best ascend beyond barbarism or semi-civilization away from the deleterious influence of the frontier. Monroe suggested that the solution was properly funded and organized removal to the lands beyond the Mississippi, rather than the makeshift attempts that had characterized U.S. policy since Thomas Jefferson had purchased the Louisiana Territory. The subject was heavily debated. When the War Department sent its circular in May 1826, removal bills had been introduced in Congress twice, but both failed to pass. On the debate over removal in the 1820s, see Bernard Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (New York: Norton, 1973), 243-75; and Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), ch. 7.

arts.³ The coincidence, along with Heckewelder's outspoken denunciations of perfidy on the frontier, led philanthropists to interpret the pair's work as a crucial scientific contribution to their cause. More than six years later, but within months of Monroe sparking the removal debates, Lewis Cass, governor and superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Michigan Territory (who would soon go on to direct Indian Removal as Andrew Jackson's Secretary of War), declared that the Indians' languages were as barbarous as their modes of life and that they revealed a mental capacity insufficient to truly grasp American civilization. Just a month after Cass's statement appeared, with educated Americans questioning the conclusions of philology as well as the philanthropy of removal, statesman Albert Gallatin urged the War Department to acquire a definitive body of philological facts. Various Americans claimed authoritative knowledge of native languages, but they offered contradictory assessments. This was especially true for Cherokee and the other native languages found in the U.S. South, where cries for removal were loudest. In the 1820s those languages were largely unknown to eastern philologists and even to some of those nations' missionaries; most U.S. citizens and statesmen knew nothing of them.

From the 1820s to the mid-1830s, philological debates became inextricable from debates over the character of Indians, frontier settlers, and U.S. Indian policy as well as over what role the federal government should play in promoting and utilizing science. For those charged with handling Indian affairs and, implicitly, with knowing "the Indian," at a moment when the future course of Indian policy was uncertain, language-focused ethnology seemed promising. Linguistic knowledge promised more than merely discovering Indian origins, or even confirming scriptural accounts of creation and antiquity. Indian languages could convey assertions of U.S. power and benevolence as well as divine truth. They suggested ways to organize and even reorder native

³ For Monroe's statement to War Department officials and would-be educators, see "Civilization of the Indians," 3 September 1819, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, D: 319-20. For discussions of this policy, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), ch. 5; Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1974), 32-46; . Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 119-29.

groups to simplify Indian affairs. Most importantly, it promised access to a “savage mind” temporarily halted in the progress of civilization, or perhaps to an “Indian mind,” fixed and impervious to philanthropy. A fuller understanding of how the Indians combined their ideas into words and sentences could reveal how the natives thought. To many it seemed the only way to determine the progress, potential, or perhaps impossibility of the Indians’ civilization.

* * *

Inspired by broad attention to the American languages, diverse inquirers sought multifarious objects in Indian languages. Stephen Harriman Long, a U.S. Army Topographical Engineer, saw their utility in solving native land disputes. If two peoples spoke related languages, he deduced that the smaller one must be merely a “branch” of the larger, and thus possessed no claims of their own.⁴ Moses Greenleaf hoped for economic gain based on the fact that uncivilized peoples named places descriptively, which could lead to valuable knowledge of mineral deposits and other natural resources in yet unexplored land.⁵ Most obviously, the possibility of successful negotiation hinged on the ability to communicate. The Indian commissioner C. A. Harris lamented the meager salary that the United States offered to interpreters, which was but a fourth of what talented young men could earn performing the same services for a private traders or firms. The result was that the United States employed men of dubious ability and honesty. “Yet the intercourse with the Indians must be maintained through

⁴ S. H. Long to the Secretary of War, 30 January 1818, Letters Received by the Office of the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800-1823, 2: 2. On Quapaw envy of U.S.-Osage relations, see Kathleen Du Val, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 188-89.

⁵ Moses Greenleaf to Jedediah Morse, 28 November 1823, in [Morse], *First Annual Report of the American Society for Promoting the Civilization and General Improvement of the Indian Tribes in the United States* (New Haven, 1824), 48-49. Possibly for similar reasons, the geologically inclined George W. Featherstonough called for “occasional papers on the aboriginal antiquities of this country, and on the structure of the Indian languages. All communications which aim at tracing the physical and moral progress of our own species will be favourably received.” See “Prospectus,” *Monthly American Journal of Geology and Natural Science* 1.1 (July 1831), 3. Besides interest in grammatical structures, he also had lexical interests and pondered undertaking “a Philological work in which the Metaphysical relation of things as it is now understood, was examined through the real meaning of words; it is a curious subject, and capable of exciting great interest.” See G. W. Featherstonough to PSD, 11 January 1823, Du Ponceau Papers, 1: 6, HSP.

them. The right understanding and successful issue of every negotiation depend upon their fidelity and ability. The fair representation of the wishes of the Indians to the government, through their agents, is contingent upon their personal interests and biases. True policy demands that the compensation allowed...should be sufficient to remunerate capable men, and place them beyond the reach of temptation to do wrong.”⁶

Most of the immediate commentators had been impressed with the new philology. John Pickering set the tone when he praised “the most extensive views of Mr. Duponceau...and the practical knowledge of Mr. Heckewelder.” This unique combination freed their American readers from “the mere opinions of philosophical writers, who are utterly ignorant of the languages whose defects they have thus proclaimed.”⁷ To some, however, whether Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s work was free of philosophical speculation remained at issue.

Their essays prompted Lewis Cass to begin a philological and ethnological project of his own. Born in New England, Cass rose to prominence as a western Jeffersonian: he made his reputation by denouncing the Aaron Burr conspiracy, for which Jefferson made him a marshal; he led the landing party of the first invasion of Canada in the War of 1812, where he called for a “war of extermination” against the Indians there and was able to avoid implication in the surrender of Detroit; and as governor and superintendent of Indian affairs of the Michigan Territory (1813-31), Cass eagerly extinguished Indian title to the northern portions of the Old Northwest.⁸ Beginning in 1821, hoping to collect information concerning the “constitution of their [the Indians’] minds, or their moral habits,” he printed *Inquiries, respecting the History, Traditions, Languages, Manners, Customs, Religion, &c. of the Indians, Living within the United States*. John C. Calhoun, then directing Indian affairs as Secretary of War, approved of the

⁶ C. A. Harris to the Secretary of War [Joel R. Poinsett], 1 December 1837, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 23: 20-21.

⁷ [John Pickering], “Art. XI.,” *North American Review*, 9.24 (June 1819), 181-82.

⁸ Willard Carl Klunder, *Lewis Cass and the Politics of Moderation* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 7-14, at 10; Francis Paul Prucha, “Lewis Cass and American Indian Policy,” in *Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

superintendent's plan. Anticipating, with the rest of his era, the Indians' imminent extinction, Calhoun reflected that Indians were "fast receding and disappearing before us, and will in a few years become extinct unless proper measures are devised & adopted by the government to arrest their fate. To do this with any prospect of success it is necessary that the government should have the most satisfactory information respecting the Indians that can be obtained." So encouraged, Cass requested permission "to employ a person, with the compensation of an interpreter, for the purpose of being sent among the different Indian villages, & when necessary to the respective Agencies, to procure information respecting the actual situation of the Indians & upon all subjects connected with a general view of their past & present condition."⁹

Cass distributed this pamphlet to Indian agents and sub-agents under his direction in the Michigan Territory as well as to missionaries (such as Abraham Luckenbach, a Moravian missionary among Delawares in Canada) and traders (such as Ramsay Crooks, an American Fur Company official) in the surrounding vicinity.¹⁰ In the first essay to result from these researches, he stated that whites possessed "the most ample details" of Indians' "external habits," but close to nothing of their less tangible traits.¹¹ Early on, Cass appreciated the importance of empirical investigation for the proper conduct of Indian affairs, and *Inquiries* contained standard ethnographic questions about customs and political organization, and he showed atypical interest

⁹ Secretary of War [John C. Calhoun] to Cass, 11 February 1822; Cass to Secretary of War, 15 May 1823, in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, vol. 11, *The Territory of Michigan, 1820-1829* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 225, 363.

¹⁰ [Lewis Cass], *Inquiries, respecting the History, Traditions, Languages, Manners, Customs, Religion, &c. of the Indians, Living within the United States* (Detroit, 1823), unnumbered front matter. [Hereafter, Lewis Cass will be cited as "LC"]. Cass had published a shorter edition of *Inquiries* under the same title in 1821, then followed these with *Additional Inquiries* the following year, and published the combined set under the original title in 1823. Ronald Gregory Miriani, "Lewis Cass and Indian Administration in the Old Northwest, 1815-1836" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1974), 74-83, gives an account of Cass's research project.

¹¹ [Lewis Cass], "Article V," January 1826, 55.

in Indian stories and mythology. Over two-thirds of the pamphlet, however, addressed language. He excerpted Du Ponceau and Heckewelder at length.¹²

Cass instructed those to whom he sent *Inquiries* that what he intended was “not merely an inquiry into the language of the Indians, but it is also an examination into the state of their knowledge respecting the mind.” He urged particular attention to those facets of language that might reveal the most of native mental capacity. Accordingly, Cass stressed that his agents analyze each compound word they recorded, for “no process can reflect more light upon the Indian languages generally, than a separation of all the compound words into their primitives.” Likewise, since he doubted Indians could understand abstract terms, Cass instructed his agents to take care they were not recording a concrete noun in place of a term abstracted from person and circumstance: “They can readily perceive that such a man may be a coward, but the passion of fear, abstracted from its operation upon any person, may be beyond their comprehension.” In short, he had “doubts... whether their languages can express such ideas.”¹³

To Cass, fear was universal and primal. Indians had come to know guns and Christ only recently, but they had long since created or adopted words to convey those ideas. Fear they had experienced for countless generations. If they had no word for that or other abstract ideas, perhaps they were incapable of abstraction. Corneille De Pauw, historian and critic of European colonization of the Americas, who thought everything relating to Indians was as underdeveloped as the rest of American nature, had put it simply: “There is a test by which we may be assured whether such or such a people have had such or such ideas; we have but to examine whether they

¹² Miriani, “Lewis Cass and Indian Administration,” 74, notes Cass’s stress upon empirical investigation and administrative attention to scientific “facts,” and he rightfully interprets Cass’s *Inquiries*, in this light; but he misses that it was designed to refute Heckewelder and Du Ponceau.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36, 24-25. This is an example of what current linguistic anthropologists call “iconization,” presenting a linguistic difference (a result of social convention and historical accident) as indicative of an essential difference. See Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal, “Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation,” in Paul V. Kroskrity, ed., *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2000), 37-39.

have words in their language to express those ideas.”¹⁴ De Pauw’s linguistic views paralleled Cass’s own and the latter relied on the philosopher’s book as he prepared his refutation of Du Ponceau, going so far as to ask Eleazer Williams, a missionary to the Oneidas, to bring him a copy as he passed through Detroit.¹⁵

Cass took his interpretations from European philosophy, but he received the raw material for his refutation from Indian agents in his superintendency, such as Alexander Wolcott at Chicago; Henry Rowe Schoolcraft at the Sault Ste. Marie and Mackinac, who was just beginning his studies after marrying the Ojibwa woman Jane Johnston; and Charles C. Trowbridge at Green Bay. The first three served on an unsuccessful Cass-led expedition to find the source of the Mississippi River in 1820, which Cass had conceived within the paradigm for federal exploration begun by Jefferson. For prodding the men in his superintendency to exert themselves in exploration and ethnological research, Schoolcraft praised Cass for “extending the dominion of science over...the Mississippi valley.”¹⁶ It also provided a route to employment for industrious men seeking preferment early in their careers.¹⁷

¹⁴ [Webb], *Selections from Les Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains of M. Pauw* (Bath, 1789), 79.

¹⁵ LC to Eleazer Williams, 13 July 1825, Lewis Cass Papers, vol. 3, William H. Clements Library, University of Michigan. De Pauw was one of several titles Cass requested, others included, but were not limited to, the colonial works by Kalm, Charlevoix, Lafitau, and the Jesuit Relations.

¹⁶ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley: Comprising Observations on its Mineral Geography, Internal Resources, and Aboriginal Population. (Performed under the Sanction of Government, in the Year 1821.)* (New York, 1825), iv. [Hereafter, Schoolcraft will be cited as “HRS.”] For information on the 1820 expedition, which involved Cass, Wolcott, Schoolcraft, and Trowbridge see the editor’s introduction to HRS, *Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, extending from Detroit through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820*, ed. Mentor L. Williams (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1953). For information that Cass collected besides that contributed by Schoolcraft, Trowbridge, and Wolcott, which is treated below, see William N. Fenton, ed., “Answers to Governor Cass’s Questions by Jacob Jameson, a Seneca [ca. 1821-1825],” *Ethnohistory*, 16 (1969): 113-39. This article contains the answers only to the non-linguistic portions of Cass’s queries by Jameson, an educated Indian who opposed Red Jacket, acted as a U.S. interpreter, and hoped to remove the Senecas across the Mississippi and beyond the reach of whites. There was also an English-Seneca-Mohawk vocabulary, but no grammatical information; see “Answers to Governor Cass’s Questions by Jacob Jameson,” I4Se, Charles C. Trowbridge’s Misc. Indian Research Materials, Charles C. Trowbridge Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library. Fenton also mentions a substantial and relatively accurate Sauk and Fox response recorded by “Forsyth”; see Fenton, ed., “Answers to Governor Cass’s Queries,” 114. This must be Cass’s young private Secretary Robert Forsyth, his father Thomas Forsyth, U.S. Indian agent to the Sauks and Foxes, and a former Indian trader, or the work of the two in tandem. There is a Sauk vocabulary in the Trowbridge Papers, but no information on grammar, manners, customs, or legends;

Fulfilling Cass's ambitious goals was no easy matter. Wolcott told the superintendent that his "interminable string of 'Inquiries' ...could not be answered properly by a philosopher, till after at least ten years' study." He lamented that it could not "be accomplished by power of steam" and stressed that "to find a person well acquainted with the Indian tongue who knows any thing about any other language on the face of the earth, or who can be made to comprehend its most simple principles, is a *pretty impossible* sort of an affair." Wolcott's "pitiful gleanings" led him to conclude that it was "a very singular language; a strange mixture of rudeness and refinement." All told, it "cost infinite questionings and cross-questionings, and more mental labour than I have been guilty of before for many years." He agreed with Cass, however, language was the most important branch of inquiry. What he had learned had "excited...a strong desire to proceed farther," but he was "glad to escape" Indian languages.¹⁸

After serving as assistant topographer on the 1820 expedition, in the next few years Trowbridge became Indian agent at Green Bay, where he served mainly Menominees and Chippewas, but he also spent winters with the Miamis and with a group of Delawares, recording the information Cass so eagerly sought.¹⁹ Recording was not always easy. Any new linguistic

see "Sauk Vocabulary," 14Sa, CCT's Misc. Indian Research Materials. Other linguistic material gathered for Cass and found in this collection are: "Sioux Vocabulary," 14Si; "Winnebago Vocabulary," 14Wi; "Wyandot Vocabulary," 14Wy. Besides these, other responses to Cass's inquiries, in particular Trowbridge's accounts of Miami and Shawnee traditions, the latter of which came from the mouth of Tenskwatawa, were published by William Kinietz; see William V. Kinietz, ed., "Meearmear Traditions," *Occasional Contributions from the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan*, 7 (1938); idem, "Shawnese Traditions," *ibid.*, 9 (1939). C. A. Weslager has also published two sets of Delaware responses that were solicited on behalf of Cass by the Indian agent at Piqua John Johnston (one anonymous, the other by a "Capt. Chipps"), each of which contains limited linguistic information; see C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indian Westward Migration: With the Texts of Two Manuscripts (1821-22) Responding to General Lewis Cass's Inquiries About Lenape Culture and Language* (Wallingford, PA: Middle Atlantic Press, 1978), 132-54, 191-204.

¹⁷ A. G. Ellis to Charles C. Trowbridge, 3 March 1826, Trowbridge Papers.

¹⁸ [Alexander Wolcott], "History and Language of the Pottowattomies," in HRS, *Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley*, 381-82, 384, 386.

¹⁹ CCT to Lyman C. Draper, 12 July 1822, quoted in "Answers to Governor Cass's Questions by Jacob Jameson," 114. Trowbridge and Cass even interviewed Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee prophet. Although his religious message of separate creation and the need for purification against white ways inspired the pan-Indian resistance to the United States in the Old Northwest from 1811-13, after its collapse the Shawnee prophet was discredited among his people and he attempted to form a relationship with Cass in an effort to increase his influence. For his part, Cass was more than willing to cultivate one whom he hoped would serve as an agent of Shawnee removal across the Mississippi. On Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh, see Richard

information that Trowbridge or someone else sought had to be coaxed from an Indian. According to Heckewelder, Indians preferred to spend time teaching white men their languages than responding to condescending “pestering” about their “heathenish customs.”²⁰ Yet, this was not always the case. Inquirers could easily perceive when Indians were “suspicious, that there may be some design in proposing these questions.”²¹ The experience of Trowbridge with the Miamis fell somewhere in between. His consultant, Le Gros, was hesitant to begin, “even under the stipulation that no information would be required of him which he felt reluctant to give.” Once they began, Le Gros was evasive. Instead of refusing to answer, Le Gros offered only “*N’kikelindasoa*” (“I don’t know”), “the most perplexing course and at the same time the most provoking one, which he could take.” His honest but philologically incompetent interpreter could do no better. Trowbridge confessed “that I sometimes despair of obtaining any important facts on the subject of language.” A gift of thirty dollars eased communication.²²

At Cass’s suggestion, he began his investigation by reading the work of Du Ponceau and Heckewelder. Trowbridge felt no need to hide his “astonishment.” He had supposed that “many erroneous representations had been innocently made” by the pair, and “confess[ed] the receipt of this opinion” from Cass himself. Nevertheless, as he learned more, Trowbridge “became convinced of the wonderful regularity and order which pervades the structure” of Delaware. Trowbridge was sure Du Ponceau had taken “great pains” to obtain correct information; yet still he had committed some mistakes. Some of these were from his “deficiency in a practical knowledge of the language,” but most were due to the “impureness of the fount from whence he

White, *Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 502-23; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 123-47, 181-85, 193-99.

²⁰ Heckewelder to PSD, 21 September 1818, Heckewelder-Du Ponceau Correspondence, APS.

²¹ Communication by Major Alexander Cummings in Jediaiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs* [1822] (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), 140.

²² CCT to LC, 22 January 1825; and 6 March 1826, in “Account of the traditions, manners, and customs of the Twaatwaa or Miami Indians, by C. C. Trowbridge,” I4mi, Charles C. Trowbridge’s Misc. Indian Research Materials. “Le Gros” was very possibly the man Richard White identifies as “La Gris,” who was the civil chief of the Miami village of Kekionga in the 1790s and brother-in-law to Little Turtle. See White, *Middle Ground*, 450-51, 495.

derived his ideas.” Du Ponceau received his information from Heckewelder, who had acquired his in forty years of missionary work among members of several tribes of Delawares who chose to live among the Moravians. Trowbridge concluded that “a kind of mixed language resulted from the intimacy of the United Brethren with the members of the different tribes of the Lenapee stock.” But Trowbridge emphasized that these errors were not such as to “give an improper impression with regard to the general construction of the language.”²³

Cass’s most important source of information was Schoolcraft. Cass had given him a copy of his *Inquiries* with his official instructions when Schoolcraft was appointed Indian agent at the Sault in 1822. Although the immediate impetus to his researches was Cass, after his appointment, Schoolcraft had resolved to study the Ojibwa language and customs in order to cultivate “the best understanding of this powerful and hitherto hostile tribe.” He could not turn to his interpreter for help since that man “could not tell a verb from a noun, and was incapable of translating the simplest sentence literally. Besides his ignorance, he was so great a liar that I never knew when to believe him. He sometimes told the Indians the reverse of what I said, and often told me the reverse of what they said.”²⁴ Schoolcraft thought “this imperfect state of oral translation” explained much. Two decades after he began his studies, he reflected: “Distrust and misapprehension have existed by the century together. And it is, therefore, no cause for astonishment, that the whole period of our contemporaneous history should be filled up with so many negotiations and cessions, wars and treaties.”²⁵

Cass urged the “aboriginal scholar” to pursue his studies with zeal. The governor was “extremely anxious” to secure the help of John Johnston, a trader from County Antrim in northern

²³ CCT, “Account of the traditions, manners, and customs of the Lenee Lanaupée Indians...and, Language of the Delawares, ca. 1825,” 1-2. The original is at the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. I consulted the microfilm copy at the APS.

²⁴ HRS, “Difficulties of Studying the Indian Tongues of the United States” in HRS, *Summary Narrative of an Exploratory Expedition to the Sources of the Mississippi River, in 1820: Resumed and Completed, by the Discovery of its Origin in Itasca Lake, in 1832. By the Authority of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1855), 441-42.

²⁵ HRS, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* [1851] (Middlesex, UK: Echo Press, 2006); HRS, *Algonic Researches, comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (New York, 1839), 1: 11, 36.

Ireland who had married Ozhaguscodaywayquay, the daughter of an Ojibwa chief. As he told Schoolcraft, there was “no quarter from which I can expect such full information upon these topics as this....A perfect analysis of language is a great desideratum.”²⁶ Cass had good reason to hope for success at the Sault. Johnston had learned Ojibwa, and according to Thomas L. McKenney, Ozhaguscodaywayquay had eyes that were “black and expressive, and pretty well marked, according to phrenologists, with the development of language.”²⁷ In 1823, Schoolcraft married their daughter Jane, or Bamewawagezhikaquay (Woman of the Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky), a “northern Pocahontas” with a “silvery voice” who had been educated in Ireland. She spoke Ojibwa and English equally well, but the former was her “language of infancy,” in which “her first conceptions had been expressed, and she retained a perfect mastery of its rules, and was an adept in the flow of its stately...syllables.”²⁸ Herself a poet, it was Jane Johnston Schoolcraft who would be her husband’s greatest source of Ojibwa oral literature. As Du Ponceau remarked to Gallatin, who questioned Schoolcraft’s philological authority in 1835, “he has got a Chippeway wife, and that is a great help to an Indianologist.”²⁹

Despite these benefits, learning the language was a challenge for a variety of reasons. His dog (“Ponty,” short for Pontiac) found conjugations tasty. Schoolcraft also “generally felt...like a mechanist who is required to execute a delicate and difficult work without suitable implements.” In philology, the tools were “technical words,” but there was “such a paucity of terms, in our common systems, to describe such a many-syllabled, aggregated language as the Indian” that he was “half-inclined to put my manuscripts in the fire.” More seriously, he worried

²⁶ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 75-76, 109.

²⁷ Thomas L. McKenney, *Sketches of Tour to the Lakes, of the Character and Customs of the Chippeway Indians, and of Incidents connected with the Treaty of Fond du Lac...*; also, *a Vocabulary of the Algonic, or Chippeway Language, formed in part, and as far as it goes, upon the basis of one furnished by the Hon. Albert Gallatin* (Baltimore, 1827), 182.

²⁸ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 140-41; HRS, “Dawn of Literary Composition by Educated natives of the Aboriginal Tribes,” in Robert Dale Parker, ed., *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 242. For a description of the Johnstons and Sault Ste. Marie, see Parker, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*; Richard G. Bremer, *Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar: The Life of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft* (Mount Pleasant: Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, 1987), chs. 3-4.

²⁹ PSD to AG, 22 April 1835, Gallatin Papers, Supplement Reel 4.

his absorption in study “withdrew my mind from, or, rather, had never allowed it properly to contemplate and appreciate the character of God.”³⁰

Despite these obstacles, Schoolcraft established a method. During the business season, he resolved to “interrogate all persons visiting the office, white and red, who promise to be useful subjects of information during the day, and to test my inquiries in the evening by reference to the Johnstons.” The father’s “ripe experience” as well as his knowledge of the “curious philosophical traits of the language” was “refreshing,” especially after his “intolerable” conversations with “traders and interpreters here, who have, for half their lives, been using a language without being able to identify with precision person, mood, tense, or any of the first laws of grammatical utterance.” His studies went deeper as he whiled away northern Michigan’s long winter months. According to his own testimony, only after he collected material for several years did he then “revise and extend my early studies, and to rummage such books on general grammar and philology as I could lay my hands on.” With Jane, he also pursued studies in Latin and Hebrew.³¹ Benjamin H. Stickney, a fellow laborer in the project who was studying the Wyandots, urged Schoolcraft to loftier thoughts. Philology concerned the “operations of the human mind, wherein a portion of the human race, living apart from the rest, have independently devised means for the interchange of thoughts and ideas... so widely different from all our European forms that it forces the mind to a retrospective view of first principles.”³²

After some months of study, Schoolcraft concluded that it “scarcely seems possible that any two languages should be more *unlike*, or have fewer points of resemblance, than the English and Ojibwa.” Nonetheless, “considered as the material of future improvement,” Schoolcraft noted that “it is entirely homogenous, and admits of philosophical principles being carried out, with very few, if any, of those exceptions which so disfigure English grammar.” He recalled the

³⁰ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 82, 85, 129.

³¹ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 60, 66, 178, 463. His claim about only turning to general grammar late is undermined by the fact that he cites James Harris and John Horne Tooke in his memoirs for 1823-24. See *ibid.*, 79, 91, 95, 127.

³² HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 125; Miriani, “Lewis Cass and Indian Administration,” 78

apostle's admonition to the Corinthians: "'There are, it may be,' says Paul, 'many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification,'" which he took to apply to grammatical forms as well as words.³³ Indeed, in the responses he presented to Cass in 1823, Schoolcraft laid out rules for conjugating verbs that explained tense, mood, number, gender, and voice, as well as guidelines for euphony and accent.³⁴ Upon its receipt, Cass expressed frustration and appreciation, owing to the expanding quantity, but poor quality of what he had received to that point. He lamented the "obtuseness of intellect manifested in both collector and contributor...there is no systematic arrangement—no analytical process, and, in fact, no correctness of detail." Cass could "safely say" what he received from Schoolcraft (through the Johnstons) was "more valuable than all my other stock."³⁵

Cass determined to use their materials in a series of articles for the *North American Review*. That venue may not have been what Cass originally had in mind. Schoolcraft, for his part, was anticipating "an elementary work upon the aborigines, which every person who has directed his thoughts to the subject has admitted to be a desideratum in our vernacular literature."³⁶ Although as early as May 1823, Cass told Calhoun that he had "already hoped before now to lay it before the government in the form of a report," Cass later confessed to a friend: "Indolence, constitutional or habitual or both, presses upon me." As late as spring 1825, Cass informed Thomas L. McKenney that he needed at least two more years before he could fully digest what he had collected.³⁷

Cass, however, could not patiently synthesize his materials. In 1825 the London *Quarterly Review* published "a most virulent article," which, according to Cass "disseminat[ed]

³³ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 87, 126.

³⁴ HRS, "Examination of the Odjibwa," enclosed in HRS to LC, 31 May 1823, in HRS, *Summary Narrative*, 442-47.

³⁵ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 124.

³⁶ HRS, *Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley*, 382-83.

³⁷ Cass to Calhoun, 15 May 1823, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, 363; Cass to D. B. Douglass, 3 August 1822, Lewis Cass Papers, vol. 2, William H. Clements Library, University of Michigan; Miriani, "Lewis Cass and Indian Administration," 79.

crude notions” respecting Indians and “displayed a peculiar malignancy” toward the United States and its people. Reviewing a “captivity” narrative written by John Dunn Hunter, whom both Cass and Du Ponceau claimed to have proven an impostor, the *Quarterly* repeated Hunter’s assertions of noble savagery; affirmed that nowhere was “a race of men so utterly abandoned to vice and crime—so devoid of all fear of God and regard toward man, as the out-settlers of Kentucky, Ohio, and the other back states than the settlers of the western states”; and declared that “nothing short of extermination will complete the views of the American government.”³⁸ A U.S. official told Cass that “this article had seriously affected our Character in Continental Europe.”³⁹

Cass precisely timed his first essay to appear in January 1826 to coincide with Congress sitting to consider Monroe’s call for removal. The ostensible titles being reviewed were Hunter’s book and another; but Cass had placed the *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee* as the lead title on his manuscript (excised by the editor because the *North American* had already reviewed it, with acclaim) and removal provided the subtext to the whole. Decisions regarding this new path in Indian affairs had to be based on accurate understandings of “the Indian.” Those rendered by Hunter, Heckewelder, or Du Ponceau were less faithful than most, according to Cass, who thought his own eastern education and frontier experience prepared him perfectly for correcting public misperceptions.⁴⁰ Experience “in the depth and solitude of our primeval forests, and among some of the wildest and most remote of our Indian tribes,” gave his testimony authority, at least according to Cass himself. Heckewelder, too, had spent time among Indians,

³⁸ “Art. V.,” *Quarterly Review* 31 (1825): 76-111, at 94, 101. A reviewer of the life that was thought to provide Hunter his model thought that Du Ponceau’s use of philology to expose Hunter’s hoax proved that “this science has not yet been sufficiently appreciated, at least by men of the world.” See [anon.], “Art. V.—*A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner*,” *American Quarterly Review*, 8.15 (September 1830), 114. Richard Drinnon, *White Savage: The Case of John Dunn Hunter* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), chs. 4, 6, covers Cass’s and Du Ponceau’s accusations of imposture, but misses philology’s centrality. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 41-49, at 41-42, emphasized that Cass’s studies “gave intellectual respectability” to removal policies and “rationalized” popular attitudes, but gives only one sentence of attention to the philological substance of his reviews.

³⁹ Cass to Sparks, 16 December 1826, Letters to Sparks, vol. 153, Sparks MSS.

⁴⁰ See LC to Sparks, 30 July 1825, in Letters to Sparks, vol. 153, Sparks MSS.; LC to HRS, 6 February 1826, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, 11: 945. Drinnon, *White Savage*, 66, stresses this.

but he was “a man of moderate intellect, more moderate attainments; of great credulity, and with strong personal attachment to the Indians.” Du Ponceau, he thought, “began these inquiries apparently with a strong predisposition for admiration, and with expectations, that new and important principles would be developed.”⁴¹ Thus, Cass suggested that Du Ponceau was guilty of the same theorizing as the eighteenth-century philosophers who had been the object of his scorn.⁴² Publicly, Cass said that Du Ponceau displayed “much philological acuteness”; privately, he was less generous, expressing the opinion that Du Ponceau was “a visionary and an enthusiast,” even a “quack.”⁴³

Precisely because detailed grammatical information depended upon the tutoring that few but educated Indians such as Jane Johnston Schoolcraft could provide, Cass’s agents had not found precisely what he had expected they would find. Chastened, Cass narrowed his criticism of their work. Rejecting Du Ponceau’s conclusion that polysynthesis was the Indian languages’ most distinctive characteristic, and seizing on one of Heckewelder’s speculations, in 1828 Cass asserted that “the distinction between animate and inanimate objects is a pervading principle in all our Indian languages, and it is probably the feature, by which they are most distinctly marked.”⁴⁴ This confusion of “gender,” in Cass’s mind, paralleled that which existed in the social relations between the sexes in Indian communities. For proof of savagery, Cass needed look no further

⁴¹ Cass, “Article V,” 54, 65. As published, this review ostensibly was of works by John Dunn Hunter and John Halkett, but Cass placed the HLC’s transactions as the lead title of his manuscript copy. Jared Sparks, the *NAR* editor, cut this from the titles being officially reviewed, presumably because the journal had lauded the work in the review written by John Pickering in 1819. For this manuscript copy, see Lewis Cass Papers, vol. 18, William H. Clements Library. For the “unlimited authority” Sparks enjoyed in editing this manuscript, see CCT to HRS, 23 January 1826, in Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers*, 11: 937. Sparks preserved his numerous letters from Cass in this period in which the general submitted four articles on Indian affairs and philology; see letters from 30 July 1825 through 14 April 1830 in Sparks MSS., vol. 153, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁴² For the vigorous opposition to “theory” and the valorization of empirical observation as the defining traits of natural history in the early republic, see Andrew J. Lewis, “A Democracy of Facts, An Empire of Reason: Swallow Submersion and Natural History in the Early American Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 62 (2005): 663-96.

⁴³ See LC to David B. Douglass, 7 June 1821, David Bates Douglass Papers, William L. Clements Library; LC to HRS, 6 February 1826, in Carter ed., *Territorial Papers*, 11: 945. It was likely the editor Sparks who included the positive evaluation of Du Ponceau. See HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 164, 166.

⁴⁴ Cass, “Article III” (1828), 395.

than Indian men's refusal to labor in the fields and their imposition of this male duty upon their women.⁴⁵ The "structure of the Indian languages is a subject of interesting speculation" because of "the intimate connexion between the powers and process of the mind, and the means by which its operations are disclosed."⁴⁶ He also pointed out the "strange poverty, in languages abounding with many useless variations," which meant that the Delaware language could not distinguish between "in," "out," "under," or "over." Cass denied the beauty and clarity of the languages too. To Du Ponceau's *Wulamalessohalian*, Cass quipped: "if it sounds to the Muses as it does to our dull ears, [it] would put to flight every poetical effusion." He dismissed what Du Ponceau and Heckewelder had called the richness of polysynthesis as "useless appendages, adding no precision to the language, condensing its phraseology but little, and perplexing it with an almost infinite variety of combinations."⁴⁷ Despite the assurances of Schoolcraft and others, Cass implied that laws were as lacking in Indian languages as in Indian society: "Words, and parts of words, are detached and attached, so as to form others, conveying simple or complex ideas, and sometimes without any apparent connexion between the new word and its roots."⁴⁸

Cass's criticisms extended beyond philology itself to implicate even the ideas that Indians had ostensibly received from missionaries. He criticized Heckewelder's and Du Ponceau's refusal to translate literally. According to the general, the task of a philologist was not to capture the spirit of a speaker, but to analyze a language to convey accurately the component parts of a

⁴⁵ Cass, "Article III" (1828), 369. Cass likely got this idea from Schoolcraft. See below. For a concise statement of this idea of savage despotism of men over women, see William Robertson, *The History of America*, vol. II (London: Routledge, 1996 [facsimile of 6th ed. (1792)]), 103. In the final of his reviews, which took up removal as its explicit subject, Cass praised the "faithful portrait" of Indians drawn by Robertson; see [Lewis Cass], "Article III," *North American Review*, January 1830, 74

⁴⁶ Cass, "Article III" (1828), 387

⁴⁷ Cass, "Article V," 75, 77-80. Here Cass seems to be invoking the materialist etymologist of English, John Horne Tooke, whom he cited in *ibid.*, 64; "Article III" (1828), 388, 398, 400. The reference was to John Horne Tooke, *Epea Pteroenta. Or, Diversions of Purley. Part I.* (London, 1786). On Horne Tooke, see Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* [1966] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), chs. 1-2; Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 122-33. For Tooke's reception in the United States, but particularly in relation to Noah Webster, who cited him approvingly in the late eighteenth century, see Simpson, *Politics of American English*, 81-90.

⁴⁸ [Lewis Cass], "Article III," *North American Review*, April 1828, 388.

word or phrase. To Cass, their languages proved that the “range of thought of our Indian neighbors is extremely limited.” He pointed to Heckewelder’s translation of the Delaware *Eluwantowit* as “God above all.” Cass countered: “The word should be *Aloo wontoowit*... ‘more God.’”⁴⁹ Thus he hinted that Indians, unaccustomed if not incapable of intellectual functions beyond mere sense perception and overly proud in their savage independence, could not conceive of an incorporeal God absolute in his dominion. Instead they could only express the confused notion of a god merely larger in quantity or stature. “The Indians are more prone to action than reflection, and this trait in their character has produced a corresponding effect upon their modes of speech,” Cass asserted in his second philological essay, and thus Indian languages “partake essentially of the character of the people, who use them. They are generally harsh in the utterance, inartificial in their construction, indeterminate in their application, and incapable of expressing a vast variety of ideas, particularly those which relate to invisible objects.”⁵⁰

Cass insisted that language and social condition were inseparable: “powerful causes, physical and moral, operating upon the condition and disposition of a people, may give a particular direction to their thoughts, and a particular modification to the vehicle, by which they are conveyed.”⁵¹ He was uncertain that Indians’ social condition would ever improve. Indian languages revealed not only barbarous ideas, but ways of thought unsuited to U.S. society. He concluded his initial review with an extended discussion of the U.S. civilization program. Cass advocated reservations and a temporary doubling of congressional funding, but he reflected: “We

⁴⁹ Cass, “Article V,” 78. The equivalent for “God” is *pahtamáwaas*, for “above” is *waxküichi*, and for “all” is *weemi*. The equivalent for “more” is *hálüwii*. Interestingly, the word for a “Christian Indian, Moravian convert” is *kéendüwees*, which suggests the compound of which parts Cass said he was ignorant. See John O’Meara, *Delaware-English/English-Delaware Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 477, 383, 386, 533, 81, respectively.

⁵⁰ Cass, “Article III,” 387-88. This is just one example of many challenges to Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s translations in Cass’s essays; the majority do not deal with spiritual matters.

⁵¹ Cass, “Article III” (1828), 387. The reference was to J. H. [James Harris], *Hermes: or, a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (London, 1751). On Harris, see Stephen K. Land, *The Philosophy of Language in Britain: Major Theories from Hobbes to Thomas Reid* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 194-214.

have taught them neither how to live, nor how to die” and neither “fabulous nor authentic history” revealed exactly *how* a people became civilized. “Our fears are stronger than our hopes.”⁵²

He was even more blunt in 1830. After generations of contact, he asked, what about Indians had become civilized? “Not his attachment to sedentary life; not his desire of accumulation; not his moral principles, his intellectual acquirements, his religious opinions.” As John Marshall revealed in *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823), the U.S. Supreme Court’s most important case touching on Indian affairs before the Cherokee decisions, the definition of Indians as “savage” was the basis of U.S. sovereignty and individual property rights. Cass cited the opinion twice. Ignoring Cherokee, Ojibwa, and others’ adaptations, or dismissing them as the imitations of a few “half-breeds,” Cass declared that in “their moral and their intellectual condition” Indians had remained “stationary” due to some “inherent difficulty.” Initially he had been skeptical that removal would create improved conditions; but by 1830, he had concluded that the time had come for a change in policy.⁵³

Cass and those of like mind knew that it was necessary to refute the picture of the Indians Heckewelder and Du Ponceau had conveyed, which “elevates the Indian character far above its true standard,” and “depresses that of the frontier settlers as far below it.”⁵⁴ Schoolcraft thought that Cass had laid “the foundation of a better and truer philological basis” than what Du Ponceau had attempted to raise on “the original literary mummerly and philological hocus-pocus” of Heckewelder. The missionary had passed away in 1823 and romanticizations of the Indians as noble savages, by impostors or by novelists such as James Fennimore Cooper, whose *Last of the*

⁵² Cass, “Article V,” 113-115; Miriani, “Lewis Cass and Indian Administration,” 76, 85.

⁵³ Cass, “Article III” (1830), 78, 72, 95-96. For a discussion of the case that stresses that Marshall’s opinion recognized Indian right to occupancy as a system of land tenure separate from state or federal systems, see the editorial note accompanying the case in Charles F. Hobson, ed., *The Papers of John Marshall*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 9: 279-84; for a discussion that emphasizes that Marshall denied absolute title to the Indians, which could only be held by civilized and Christian nations, see Robert A. Williams, Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 231, 312-17. The latter interpretation corresponds with that which Cass held.

⁵⁴ Cass, “Article V,” 67, 94.

Mohicans appeared the year of Cass's initial review and drew on Heckewelder's work, could be parried easily enough. But Cass perceived Du Ponceau's philology to expound those very ideas wrapped in the authority of science – a science then dominating Europe – which made them much more dangerous because they could become the foundation of future policy. In 1828, Cass stressed that “a correct estimate should be formed of the situation and prospect of our aboriginal neighbors,” which was crucial “in its application to the great moral problem, whose solution attracts the attention of the American government and people, and upon which must depend the renovation or extinction of this devoted race.”⁵⁵ With Jackson about to take office, Cass was hopeful, and with good reason. As Schoolcraft noted, he had “attracted a good deal of exterior notoriety during the last year.”⁵⁶ Jackson named Cass his second Secretary of War in 1831.

His views remained persuasive to many. Despite admitting that Cass's knowledge may have been “superficial,” Congressman Daniel Webster stressed that he was “a total unbeliever in the new doctrines about the Indian languages” and “believe[d] them to be the rudest forms of speech...there is as little in the languages of the tribes as in their laws, manners, and customs, worth studying or worth knowing. All this is heresy, I know, but so I think.”⁵⁷ Despite Du Ponceau's philological guidance as he prepared *Researches, Philosophical and Antiquarian* (1829), and his admission that it had been “the most perplexing and unsatisfactory part of our researches,” James H. McCulloh speculated that “peculiarities of contraction” were “characteristic of the savage state almost universally” and that in the “earliest history of our race...every language decidedly belonged to the agglutinated form.”⁵⁸ As late as 1860, the

⁵⁵ Cass, “Article III” (1828), 366.

⁵⁶ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 225.

⁵⁷ Daniel Webster to George Ticknor Curtis, 1 March 1826, in Ticknor, *Life of Daniel Webster* (Boston, 1870), 1: 260.

⁵⁸ This was part of a larger defense of monogenesis. See J. H. McCulloh, *Researches, Philosophical and Antiquarian* (Baltimore, 1829), viii, 13, 42, 56, 60-61, 416-18. It should be noted that this book retracted some of the more fanciful claims that McCulloh had made in the two editions of *Researches on America*. On McCulloh's contribution to ethnology, see George E. Stuart, “The Beginning of Maya Hieroglyphic Study: Contributions of Constantine S. Rafinesque and James H. McCulloh, Jr.,” in Charles E. Boewe, ed., *Profiles of Rafinesque* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 278. For some of McCulloh's

historian George Bancroft, who had introduced Wilhelm von Humboldt to U.S. philology, acknowledged that a language's organization was "not the work of civilization, but of nature." Yet, he stressed that those who spoke in "one continued, universal, all-pervading synthesis" must have been "still in that earliest stage of intellectual culture where reflection has not begun."⁵⁹

* * *

Cass and Du Ponceau could agree that much remained unknown. Cass admitted that "In our Indian languages, we have almost everything yet to learn" and Du Ponceau assented that there were "too many unsettled opinions" to reach fixed conclusions.⁶⁰ The languages of the mid-Atlantic, New England, and Old Northwest (with the exception of the Siouan Winnebagos) were each related either to those of the Delawares or the Six Nations, and they were becoming gradually more familiar as grammars, dictionaries, and spelling books proliferated. Between that work and the materials Cass was compiling for a Sioux grammar, interested Americans were creating an "apparatus" for learning and systematizing many Indian languages.⁶¹ But the languages of the still-large nations in the South remained only crudely known. Heckewelder told his readers that "we know very little about these southern Indians, and on the subject of their languages we have nothing to guide our enquiries, but a few words given us by Adair, and some that have been collected from various sources by Barton." He remained hopeful, however, expecting diligence from U.S. Indian agents and missionaries.⁶² Du Ponceau echoed this in his first philological "Report," alerting his readers that he and the historical committee were

letters to Du Ponceau, see McCulloh to PSD, 3 December 1822, 2 December 1826, 21 September 1828, in Du Ponceau Papers, 1: 5, 8, 10; McCulloh to PSD, 24 October 1827, 14 November 1826, Gratz Collection, 6: 34, HSP.

⁵⁹ George Bancroft, *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent*, 16th ed., (Boston 1860), 3: 263-265. For an analogous statement, though far less developed, see Francis Parkman, *Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada, to the Massacre at Michillimackinac* [1851] (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 1: 43.

⁶⁰ Cass, *NAR* 1826, 79; PSD, Preface to Zeisberger, 68.

⁶¹ On Cass's Sioux grammar, see Albert Gallatin to PSD, 24 April 1826 and PSD to AG, 2 May 1826 and 19 May 1826, Gallatin Papers. Bernard Cohn suggests that the creation of an apparatus for language study was the crucial first stage of colonialism. See Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 22.

⁶² Heckewelder, "Account," 114.

“desirous of ascertaining the character of the Southern or Floridian languages (as yet so little known to us).”⁶³ Even Cass, rarely inclined to admit ignorance, had to acknowledge that, of those languages, “we know far too little to hazard an opinion.”⁶⁴

Previous attempts to learn about the languages of the Cherokees and other southern groups had been unsuccessful. The lexical compilations of the likes of James Adair, Benjamin Hawkins, and Benjamin Smith Barton were no use to struggling missionaries such as Moravian John Gambold, who after decades among the nation was still ignorant of the Cherokee tongue. Both Gambold and Leonard Hicks, a Cherokee student, suggested that Du Ponceau consult Daniel Butrick, a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who was then immersed in studying the Cherokee language. The missionary complied with Du Ponceau’s request, and, apparently aware of the pernicious effects of land pressures on salvation, enclosed conjugations of two verbs: “to take” and the negative of “to redeem.”⁶⁵ Butrick knew the idiom, but his *Cherokee Spelling Book* (1819) used an orthography too unfamiliar to be useful to the uninitiated. Heckewelder confessed to Du Ponceau that he was “altogether at a loss to understand any thing of it.”⁶⁶ The educated Cherokee David Brown had approached John Pickering for aid in compiling a Cherokee grammar; but the results were uncertain and incomplete. As late as 1823, the American Board missionaries thought that Brown’s and Pickering’s work on Cherokee would throw light upon the other major southern languages, hoping the grammar would “render important aid in systematizing all the kindred dialects, viz. the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, &c.” Following Du Ponceau’s speculation, taken from Jonathan

⁶³ PSD, “Report,” xxxiii.

⁶⁴ Cass, *NAR* 1826, 73.

⁶⁵ Dan[ie]l S. Butrick, “Conjugation of a verb in the Cherokee language” [29 Oct 1818] and “Remarks on the Verbs of the Cheroke lang” [n.d.], items 41-42, HLC, Vocabularies and Misc. Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages, APS.

⁶⁶ Heckewelder to PSD, 4 March 1820, Heckewelder-Du Ponceau Correspondence, APS.

Carver, that all of the “Southern or Floridian languages” were related, missionaries and Indian agents expected extensive work on one to facilitate study of the others. They were mistaken.⁶⁷

It was against this backdrop of uncertainty, regarding philology and policy, that the War Department – at the urging and with the guidance of retired statesman Albert Gallatin – determined to acquire a definitive body of philological facts within months of Cass’s initial review. The plan occurred to Gallatin while he was availing himself of the auspices of a Creek delegation, then in the capital negotiating a redefinition of the nation’s boundaries, to gather materials which he had initially intended only to send to Alexander von Humboldt. Although Gallatin had assisted in planning the Lewis and Clark expedition while serving as Jefferson’s Secretary of the Treasury, it had been Humboldt who redirected Gallatin’s attention to ethnology in 1823. While Gallatin was serving in Paris as U.S. minister to France, Humboldt requested from him a “synopsis” of the Indian nations north of Mexico, which the baron would include in the new edition of his *Political Essay on New Spain*. In 1826 Humboldt invited Gallatin to contribute a linguistic classification to the new volume of his *Personal Narrative*.

At first, Gallatin approached language merely as an “auxiliary” that would allow him an accurate classification of North American tribes, sufficient materials for which he found wanting. Indeed, he found that not only for the “Indians of the Red river & South of it, but even with our Southern Indians east of the Mississippi” they were “as to language terra incognita.” Despite his initial intention, Gallatin noted that the sudden public attention to the subject made this a particularly “opportune time” to urge the War Department to take a more active role in ethnology. Thus, Gallatin resolved: “When at Washington, for the purpose of obtaining southern

⁶⁷ “Mission among the Choctaws,” *The Missionary Herald, Containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* 19.9 (September 1823), 285. Gallatin’s *A Table of Indian Tribes of the United States, East of the Stony Mountains, arranged according to languages and dialects; furnished by Albert Gallatin* (1826) lists Cherokee as a distinct family from “Muskhogue” and “Choctaw.” He also included notes that suggested there were affinities between the “Muskhogue” language of the Creeks and Seminoles and the language spoken by the Choctaws and Chickasaws. He likewise noted a suspicion that Cherokee and the Iroquois languages were related. Subsequent linguistics has confirmed both. See “Table 3. Consensus Classification of the Native Languages of North America” in Ives Goddard, ed., *Languages*, vol. 17 of William C. Sturtevant, ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 4-8. On the Cherokee grammar, see chapter 7, below.

vocabularies...to press on Govt. the propriety of collecting and publishing at the public expense” Indian vocabularies and grammars. As he told Du Ponceau, “all that belongs to human knowledge and its progress, to the formation of languages & to political institutions is connected together and belongs to us.” So, he intended to compile every available vocabulary of an Indian language – those already printed, available in manuscript, and what might be collected in the coming months at federal impetus – as well as one grammar for each of the linguistic families and have “the whole published at the expense of Govt. on a large scale and as a national work.”⁶⁸

Du Ponceau provided consistent aid to Gallatin’s efforts to craft a vocabulary and a list of sentences to elicit the desired lexical and grammatical information; yet he was ambivalent about the course that the government was pursuing. Du Ponceau hoped to forge ties between his society and the U.S. government analogous to those which existed between the Royal Society and the British government. He suggested to Gallatin, unsuccessfully, that the War Department should instead patronize the American Philosophical Society. It was a considerable task to prepare materials that would be both sufficiently comprehensive to be useful to philologists, statesmen, and military men, yet sufficiently accessible to be clear to those Indian agents and missionaries who had to collect most of the information. As he reminded Gallatin: “We cannot always have metaphysicians to ask questions of savages.”

To aid the Indian agents and missionaries who would be collecting the materials, Du Ponceau suggested that the individuals in Washington or the government itself provide funds for the publication of a second volume of the historical committee’s transactions, which would contain Zeisberger’s grammars of Lenni Lenape and Onondaga and other linguistic materials the committee had obtained since 1819. One hundred copies, distributed to those who would collect

⁶⁸ AG to PSD, 20 March 1826; 3 April, 4 April, 12 April 1826, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 1: 8, HSP; AVH to AG, 22 February 1825, and AG to AVH, 23 February, 24 March 1826, in Ingo Schwarz, ed., *Alexander von Humboldt und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika Briefwechsel* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 169, 173, 175-79. The editorial notes for this are in German, but the correspondence is in the original French. See also PSD to John Vaughan, 17 July 1823, Gallatin Papers, supplement reel 4. On Gallatin’s ethnology, see Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), ch. 2.

information in Indian country, would cost the government a paltry \$3.50 each, Du Ponceau calculated. He stressed that “the publication of all the vocabularies and at least the substance of the grammars of some of the tribes is expected of us from the learned world.” Since philological expertise was lacking within the government, Du Ponceau suggested that the historical committee systematize and publish the results: “The work should appear as that of the Government, as a national work, committed to and executed by a scientific institution, the oldest existing in the United States, founded by Franklin, illustrated by Rittenhouse, Rush, and Jefferson, and of which the present President and his father are illustrious members.” Mindful of John Quincy Adams’s call for internal improvement in its most enlarged sense, including federal promotion of literature and science, Du Ponceau stressed that this kind of government support “would do honor to the country—and come within the purview of the President’s message.”⁶⁹

Ultimately, Du Ponceau and Gallatin diverged over the proper role the government in science. The possibility that the government would collect and publish materials that belonged to the historical committee Du Ponceau found unacceptable. Pleading not only for his own philosophical society, he stressed that all “*learned societies*...only want some encouragement from above, to arouse from their present apathy, and make exertions, in which the latent knowledge and talents every where dispersed thro’ this country will be displayed in a manner that will redound to the fame of the nation and the administration.” Du Ponceau feared that if Gallatin’s plan was adopted, those who would have sent materials to his or other learned bodies would now send them instead to the national work: “the Government are thus making a monopoly

⁶⁹ PSD to AG, 20 March, 22 March, 2 April, 6 April 8 April 1826, Gallatin Papers, reel 36. John Quincy Adams, like Gallatin, possessed rather conventional ethnological ideas: “Speech is the instrument of reason—the vehicle of intelligence,” and “From the dispersion of mankind which followed the confusion of languages at the building of Babel, their subsequent associations have followed the course of Nature,” from a hunting stage, through shepherding, through agriculture, and culminating in commerce.” See “John Quincy Adams, “Society and Civilization,” *American Review* 2.1 (July 1845), 81. On Adams’s call for “internal improvement” in its most comprehensive sense, as related to projects of the intellect as much as infrastructure, see Matthews, *Toward a New Society*, 149-50.

of science.”⁷⁰ Gallatin, however, had different ideas: “I want their vote and assent for a public expense and not their own money.” He told Du Ponceau that the “President approves the plan, will give it his countenance and seemed disposed, if necessary in order to defray the expense, to recommend the subject to Congress.” Gallatin added that this “must be avoided on account of the too visible state of parties in that body.” In the end, he assured Du Ponceau, the “administration betrays no wish to encroach on the field of science. On the contrary, there was rather an apathy which I tried to surmount by presenting every motive for assisting in carrying on the work.”⁷¹

Besides John Quincy’s Adams’s presidential call for federal promotion of literature and science, the thrust of Gallatin’s project coincided not only with debates on philology and policy but also with the War Department’s larger effort in this period to order the administration of Indian affairs. In March 1824, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun established an unofficial (i.e. functioning, but not congressionally recognized) Indian office within the War Department and he immediately instructed the director, Thomas L. McKenney, to systematize the information in its possession and to standardize the information it demanded from its Indian agencies and the schools it supported through the “civilization fund.”⁷² As McKenney told Calhoun’s successor, James Barbour: “To control and direct these various concerns requires both an intimate knowledge both of the character of the Indians themselves, of their relations with each other, and to the Government and Laws of the United States.” This meant “daily observations and comparisons,” which only became “more delicate, and responsible, since several of the Tribes bordering our settlements have been improved in Civilization and the arts, and feel themselves,

⁷⁰ PSD to AG, 5 April, 6 April, Gallatin Papers, reel 36; PSD to AG, 8 April, 15 April 1826, HLC Letter Books, 3: 46-51, APS.

⁷¹ AG to PSD, 4 April, 5 April, 12 April 15 April 1826, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 1: 8, HSP.

⁷² See Thomas L. McKenney to Superintendents of Schools in the Indian Country, 22 May 1824; McKenney to Indian Agents, 21 June 1824; John C. Calhoun to S. S. Hamilton, 9 February 1825, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 1:70-80, 117, 347. On the establishment of the Indian office, see Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America’s Early Indian Policy* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1974), ch. 6.

intellectually and morally, advanced.” Moreover, McKenney had already expressed interest in collecting linguistic material through Indian agencies and schools.⁷³

In May 1826, after Gallatin made several trips to Washington and “devoted all the time I had in the last five weeks,” Barbour and McKenney distributed to each Indian superintendent and agent, and to the missionaries with whom the War Department corresponded, a circular explaining that it was “the intention of the Government to collect and preserve such information as may be obtained concerning the Indian languages.” Gallatin also enclosed a “Table” that classified all known Indian groups into their linguistic families, an explanation for John Pickering’s standardized method of transcribing the unwritten languages, and lists of English words and sentences to be translated, which Gallatin devised in collaboration with Du Ponceau. The 600-word vocabulary was devised “to prevent substantive nouns, adjectives, and verbs, from being confounded one with another.” The sentences were intended “to ascertain what are their [the languages’] general features and peculiarities; to what extent they resemble each other; in what particulars they differ from the English, and other languages familiar to us.” The instructions stressed the importance of a “literal translation.”⁷⁴ When Gallatin’s work was complete, Du Ponceau congratulated him: “the execution of it will be easy, and it must be a bungling hand, indeed, that will not be able to follow...the road which you have traced.” Less

⁷³ McKenney to James Barbour, 15 November 1825, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 2: 240-41. McKenney had already expressed linguistic interest. See Thomas L. McKenney to Superintendents of Indian Affairs, 9 August 1824, *ibid.*, 1: 173-74. He also had already received multiple requests relating to Indian language and oratory. See McKenney to Samuel S. Conant, 5 January 1825; McKenney to the Supts. of Indian Affairs, Indian Agents, and Supts. of Indian Schools, 22 August 1825; McKenney to Caleb Atwater, 16 February 1826; 5 May 1827, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 1: 284; 2: 129-31, 433-34; 4: 47-48.

⁷⁴ AG to McKenney, 29 April 1826, Gallatin Papers, reel 36; Department of War, 15 May 1826; AG to James Rochelle, 29 May 1826, Gallatin Papers. Gallatin proposed this plan to the Thomas L. McKenney, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on February 17, 1826. See Thomas L. McKenney to AG, 18 February 1826, Gallatin Papers. John Pickering to Andrew Stewart, 6 April 1826; John Pickering to AG, 26 June 1826, Gallatin Papers. Du Ponceau had brought Pickering to Gallatin’s attention; see PSD to AG, 22 March 1826.

sanguine, Pickering had tried to warn Gallatin that the government should “not rely upon what can be effected by their own corps of office clerks, agents & interpreters.”⁷⁵

Gallatin intended for the instructions to be sent by the head of the Department & not by any inferior officer, and should be given in the name of the President & without any allusion to the request of any private individual as this might in some quarters be injurious to the object in view.”⁷⁶ He hoped this would set this apart from the earlier requests of Rafinesque and others. Still, there was confusion over whether this was an official project. Samuel S. Hamilton, McKenney’s assistant, told James Rochelle that it was a “private undertaking.” Gallatin, on the other hand, told him that it was not “of a private nature, but connected with what is intended to be a National work” and it was only “at my suggestion that the Secretary of War has, with the approbation of the President,” undertaken the linguistic project. He added, to Edward Lincoln, that it was “so unprofitable that Govt. alone can do it.” Another time, Hamilton acknowledged that the “Department feels interested in the investigations now making by Mr. Gallatin and others, in relation to our Indians, their Languages, &c.” It was a “literary enterprise,” but “one in the success of which the public and government could not but be interested.”⁷⁷ Considering the magnitude of the task as well as the confusion attending its status, it is unsurprising that Gallatin was disappointed in its results.

Cherokee and the other southern languages were not the sole object of collection and study; but those languages were the only ones east of the Mississippi that remained a mystery to philologists and statesmen. Likewise, comprehensive Indian removal extended beyond the “civilized tribes,” but settlers coveted their land most and public attention fixed on their resistance. Even before he had urged the government to begin to collect an exhaustive file of

⁷⁵ PSD to AG, 13 May 1826; JP to AG, 26 June 1826, Gallatin Papers.

⁷⁶ AG to PSD, 12 April 1826, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 1: 8, HSP.

⁷⁷ Samuel S. Hamilton to James F. Watson, 22 June 1826; Hamilton to James Rochelle, 14 August 1826; Hamilton to Eleazer Harris, 18 August 1826, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 3: 131-32, 147, 150; AG to [Edward Lincoln], 29 May 1826; AG to James Rochelle, 29 May 1826, Gallatin Papers, reel 36.

linguistic information on Indians, Gallatin's attention had been drawn to Cherokee. In April 1825, he had requested that McKenney pass along a letter to John Ridge, son of the Cherokee chief Major Ridge, who had been educated first under the Gambolds at Spring Place, later at the American Board's school at Brainerd, and finally at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall. Upon his return to the Cherokee nation, John Ridge became active in public life, mainly as an interpreter and agent, and "exerted great influence" in negotiations, to such an extent that McKenney thought he was "a dangerous and meddling man."⁷⁸ Close to a year later, with the "National work," as Gallatin called it, underway, he had received no reply. Gallatin reminded McKenney to tell Ridge, who was then working for the Creek confederacy at Washington, that he needed information on the Cherokee language and asked Ridge to procure information on Yuchi and Natchez as well, the little known languages of that confederacy.

Further, Gallatin requested that Ridge submit an essay describing Cherokee progress in civilization, which he hoped to send to Alexander von Humboldt. He emphasized the "favourable effect" that such an "essay written by a native Indian may have on public opinion both here and abroad." Compliance would also offer Ridge the means to acquire "a general reputation." Knowing that his assistance was indispensable, Gallatin promised Ridge publicity for his nation and fame for himself.⁷⁹ He need not have worried; Ridge had penned a reply that week, including both an essay on Cherokee civilization (which as Ridge described it, mirrored that of the United States in its laws, Christian religion, gender roles, and slave agriculture) and a Cherokee vocabulary, though he kept his thoughts on his native language to himself.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ See the biographical sketch in Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *The Indian Tribes of North America; with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principal Chiefs*, 3 vols. [1836-44], ed. Frederick Webb Hodge (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1933), 2: 326-31; Thomas L. McKenney to Cols. Folsom and Liflore, 13 December 1827, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 4: 177.

⁷⁹ Thomas L. McKenney [TLM] to AG, April 1825; AG to TLM, 4 March 1826, Gallatin Papers. On AG's friendship with Alexander von Humboldt, which began on the naturalist's U.S. tour in the aftermath of his Spanish American travels, and deepened while Gallatin served as U.S. ambassador to France for nearly a decade following the War of 1812, see Raymond Walters, *Albert Gallatin: Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 216, 300-01.

⁸⁰ John Ridge to AG, 26 February 1826, Gallatin Papers; AG, "A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains, and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America,"

Others too, tried to contribute to the national work. Lewis Cass was surprised to learn that “without the opportunity of much personal intercourse with Indians,” Gallatin had imposed order on what had been a mass of confused materials. Cass offered the what he had already in his possession, boasting: “there are circumstances, connected with my official and local situation, which are favourable to these investigations.” But because he was too busy with the affairs of his governorship (and disseminating his views on Indian affairs in the *North American Review*), there was “no immediate prospect of my doing much on the subject.” Mary Randolph, who lived near the Nottoways on Virginia’s Southside, contributed a vocabulary taken from “an old Indian woman named Edie Turner.” McKenney purchased a “valuable Vocabulary of the Creek language,” with translations of the requested sentences, from the missionary Lee Compere for \$100. He also received a Choctaw vocabulary that was “so full, and so well executed” that the director could not contain his surprise. McKenney himself recorded an Ojibwa vocabulary, “as far as it goes,” while serving with Cass as a commissioner at the Treaty of Fond du Lac (1826).⁸¹

It proved difficult to collect much more. Astor’s fur agents were silent. Du Ponceau was reluctant to share what belonged to the historical committee. William Clark, now serving as Indian superintendent in St. Louis, had to inform Gallatin that the vocabularies collected by the Corps of Discovery had disappeared after Barton’s death. Even more damaging, McKenney found that the agents and interpreters under his direction, chosen for reasons of politics more often than for useful experience, were unequal to the investigations they were being asked to conduct. As he disclosed to Gallatin: “I saw enough of those to whom the Vocabulary was sent to

Archaeologia Americana: Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society 2 (1836), 1. For an analysis of Ridge’s essay on Cherokee civilization, see Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 57-59.

⁸¹ LC to AG, 3 October 1826, Gallatin Papers; Barbour to Mrs. Mary Randolph, 17 October 1826, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 3: 197; 4: 163. McKenney’s vocabulary can be found in McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes*, 487-93.

satisfy me that they are wholly incompetent.”⁸² Understandably, only a few correspondents provided Gallatin with the grammatical information that he had sought: Compere; Jehiel Brooks, Indian agent at Natchitoches, in Louisiana, for the Caddos; Samuel Worcester for the Cherokees; Edward Lincoln for the Passamaquoddies; and he received a full Choctaw response as well.⁸³ Despite an appropriation of \$2000 (a sum equal to one-fifth of the annual civilization fund), and despite obtaining some important materials, the project lost momentum when Gallatin departed to serve a brief term as minister to England, just a few months after initiating it.

Still, it was not a total loss. As he told Du Ponceau, Gallatin thought Cass was “mistaken, in considering the situation of the Indians as desperate, and that they can never emerge from the hunting state and its accompanying barbarism.” He thought that “Hecklewerder,” as Gallatin consistently misnamed him, “fell into a contrary extreme in believing & representing that savage state as far more tolerable than it really is.” Decades later, Schoolcraft recorded that Gallatin thought Du Ponceau should have given their correspondence unedited: “we should then, in fact, have had *Indian* information. For Heckewelder thought and felt like a Delaware, and believed all their stories.” Still, Gallatin told Du Ponceau, his “book, while very bad as a historical document, has the effect of producing an interest in favour of the Indians, which is what is most wanted.” Gallatin thought “of their present state nearly as Gen. Cass does,” but he “differ[ed] entirely as to what may be done and above all what is our sacred duty to attempt.” He thought that “their faculties are equal to ours...their stationary state during probably 30 centuries can all be traced to one single cause ‘the hunting state.’” If Indians could be made to farm in the European manner, all would be right, and he stressed, the “history of the manner in which this has begun and makes daily progress amongst the Cherokees is particularly interesting and not yet

⁸² William Clark to AG, 31 March 1826; AG to Edward Everett, 5 June 1826; McKenney to AG, 5 January 1827; Gallatin Papers.

⁸³ Elbert Herring to Col. Jehiel Brooks, 12 July 1833, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 11: 44; AG to PSD, 10 March 1835, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 2: 6; AG, “Synopsis,” 1. He never revealed the source for the Choctaw or Passamaquoddy vocabularies, but a letter to Edward Lincoln expresses hope that he will provide the latter. See AG to Lincoln, 29 May 1826, Gallatin Papers, reel 36.

fully explained.” He confided: “I was sincerely employed in the research of facts, for the purpose of applying them to useful purposes in the encouragement of an uniform & general plan. This was one of my reasons for connecting myself with Govt. in Indian affairs, for which language offered a favourable opportunity.” In Gallatin’s estimation, “the immediate effect of research had its utility, both in a general point of view, and even as having a connection with plans for the welfare of our red brethren.”⁸⁴

Gallatin’s material eventually appeared, but only in curtailed form. His account never made its way into Humboldt’s *Personal Narrative*, but the baron passed it on to the geographer-ethnologist Adrien Balbi for his *Atlas Ethnographique du globe* (1826). It was praised in Europe and inaccessible in the United States. The American Antiquarian Society offered to publish it in this country, but Gallatin kept no copy for himself. Instead, he wrote a new historical-ethnographic essay to accompany his classification. It was that essay that the society mainly wanted, but Gallatin would only furnish it if the society published the linguistic material as well. Eventually they compromised on publishing a substantial amount, but far from all, of the philology. Gallatin only resorted to this because of the refusal of the Jackson administration to have anything to do with it. As he told Du Ponceau, who was offended that Gallatin did not offer a manuscript to the APS before agreeing to allow the antiquarian society to publish it, Gallatin was disciplined in his work, but unenthusiastic: “I had been discouraged...by the change of administration and the apparent reluctance to assist me on the part of the War department, and because, for the same reason, there was no prospect that it would, as had been intended under Mr. Adams’s administration, publish the work at the public expense.”⁸⁵ The result finally appeared, a decade after Gallatin prodded the War Department to philological exertion, as “A Synopsis of the

⁸⁴ AG to PSD, 17 May 1826, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 1: 8, HSP; HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 447.

⁸⁵ AG to PSD, 10 March 1835, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, HSP; George Folsom to AG, 13 November 1834, 6 March 1836, Gallatin Papers; AG to W. L. Marcy, 17 March 1846, in Henry Adams, ed., *The Writings of Albert Gallatin*, (Philadelphia, 1879), 2: 624. On Balbi, see Anne Godlewska, *Geography Unbound: French Geographic Science from Cassini to Humboldt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 221-32.

Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains, and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America” (1836).

* * *

While Gallatin and the War Department awaited their materials (mostly in vain), philological and philanthropic debates intensified. With a mixture of enthusiasm, pique, and resignation, Du Ponceau returned in early 1826 to his translation of Zeisberger’s grammar of the Delaware language, which he had worked on earlier in the decade. But Cass’s review, and his failure to obtain Gallatin’s offices in persuading the federal government to sponsor a second volume of the historical committee’s transactions, spurred Du Ponceau only now to publish the cumbersome work in its entirety in the American Philosophical Society’s *Transactions*. It was accompanied by a lengthy preface that served two main purposes. First, the philologist had to defend the reputation of his now deceased friend, though he knew that, to an extent, Cass had a point. He admitted to Gallatin that Heckewelder “was an enthusiast of the Delaware tribes among whom he lived,” but in the interest of philology and friendship, Du Ponceau never raised this with Heckewelder himself: “I did not like to cross the good man, it would surely have made a breach between us.”⁸⁶ Second, he had to address the criticisms of Cass and others directly, clarify his views of the Indian languages and what they revealed of savagery or civilization, and elaborate his expansive view of philology as a science.⁸⁷ Du Ponceau felt that he had demonstrated that the American languages were “rich in words and regular in their forms, and...they do not yield in those respects to any other idiom.” Yet a “vague idea” persisted that “the idioms of barbarous tribes must be greatly inferior to civilized nations.” The hubris of civilization, felt by laymen and

⁸⁶ See PSD to AG, 24 March 1835, *ibid.*, reel 41.

⁸⁷ For how Du Ponceau began to translate this, see PSD to AG, 8 May 1826 and 16 May 1826, Gallatin Papers, reel 36. See PSD, “A Correspondence b/t the Rev. John Heckewelder, of Bethlehem, and Peter S. Duponceau, Esq...Respecting the Languages of the American Indians,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* 1 (1819), 355-56.

linguists alike, was reluctant to admit “how little philosophy and science have to do with the formation of language.”⁸⁸

Du Ponceau had “no great opinion” of Cass’s learning and dismissed “the *border-spirit*” that had inspired Cass’s criticisms.⁸⁹ It seemed to him that it was “with these poor people as it is with the negroes, two opposite sentiments prevail respecting them in all parts of the country. The Carolinian and Louisianian will hardly allow the blacks to be human creatures.... Similar feelings prevail as to the Indians, and I am sorry to say, produced by similar causes.”⁹⁰ He easily perceived that Cass’s review “labours hard to deprecate the unfortunate Indians, and make them appear the most stupid as well as the most barbarous race of men, and their languages of course as corresponding with that degraded character.” Cass’s “strong expression of unpleasant feeling” was “not natural to one who is conversant with a particular idiom.” If he did not know the language himself, he must have received his information from elsewhere. “If he derived his information from Indian traders and interpreters, he is not probably aware that they are not the proper sources from which the knowledge of the grammar is to be obtained; they do not pretend to be men of science.”⁹¹

Similarly, European philosophers seemed “disposed to disparage every thing that belongs to the American Indians.” As he scratched his pen across the page, Du Ponceau could only wonder how Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the leading linguistic scholars in Europe, could admit that the languages of Native Americans were “rich, methodical, and artificial in their structure, yet...not allow them to possess what he calls genuine grammatical forms,” simply because “their words are not inflected like those of the Greek, Latin, and Sanscrit.” For that

⁸⁸ PSD, “A Grammar of the Language of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. Translated from the German ms. of the late Rev. David Zeisberger, for the American Philosophical Society, by Peter Stephen Du Ponceau.” In *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 3 [n.s.] (1830), 77-78. [Hereafter, this essay is cited as “Zeisberger’s Grammar.”]

⁸⁹ PSD to AG, 18 April 1826; PSD to AG, “Letter 26th of March,” enclosed in letter dated 22 March 1826 Gallatin Papers, reel 36.

⁹⁰ PSD to JP, 23 January 1826, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 3, HSP.

⁹¹ PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 78-81.

reason, “the learned baron” had assigned them “an inferior rank in the scale of languages, considered in the point of view of their capacity to aid the development of ideas.” Du Ponceau regretted that such prejudices continued to exist, especially among the learned, and he candidly admitted that it was “particularly with a view to remove them from the minds of such men, that this grammar is published.” Du Ponceau was confident that anyone who examined Zeisberger’s grammar would find the “inflected forms” that Humboldt and others “justly admire...which our Indians employ in the combination of their ideas and the formation of their words.”⁹² Du Ponceau had to assert his authority to speak on native languages against the frontier philology of Cass and the assertions and aspersions of Europe.

In the 1820s, Humboldt was interested in the American languages and had already amassed a considerable amount of relevant linguistic material, both through his brother’s American travels as well as through his “own exertions” while serving as a Prussian minister at the Vatican, where he had access to a large store of Jesuit materials. He became acquainted with the exertions of U.S. citizens in this field through George Bancroft, an American who was pursuing studies in Berlin. Aware of Humboldt’s interest in languages, Bancroft lent him a copy of one of John Pickering’s reviews. Impressed especially with Pickering’s recognition that to study language scientifically, it had to be studied in its varied aspects, which required studying diverse and distant tongues and only generalizing by accounting for all the “facts or phenomena,” Humboldt initiated a correspondence with Pickering and requested books on the American languages that were impossible to procure on the Continent. He meant to determine whether all of the American languages possessed “peculiarities so striking, natural beauties so surprising, and such a richness of forms” and whether “they appertain to a certain train of thought and intellectual individuality altogether peculiar to the American nations, or rather, whether that which distinguishes them from the social state.” Implicitly disagreeing with Du Ponceau, he admitted that the latter idea had “often struck” him: “it has seemed to me sometimes that the character of

⁹² PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 77-78.

the American languages is perhaps that through which all languages in their origin must at some time have passed, and from which they have departed only by undergoing changes and revolutions with which unfortunately we are too imperfectly acquainted.”⁹³

Humboldt emphasized both the creative potential of national tongues as well as the limitations a given language’s historical development imposed upon the perceptions of that language’s speakers. Even after exchanging numerous letters with Pickering and several with Du Ponceau, Humboldt was uncertain if what he judged to be the Indians’ inferior lexicons and grammar were due to the fact that they were at the mercy of their “*more youthful* stage of language” or if it revealed “the mental tendency of the nation.” Either way, he was certain that the process of “agglutination” (roughly “polysynthesis”) was “a defective variety of means for expanding the sentence in a suitable way.” He assured Du Ponceau and Pickering both that he was not prejudiced against the American languages and he did not think that the languages of uncivilized nations were necessarily inferior to those of civilized nations. But he insisted that the Indo-European languages were best for allowing both analytical and creative thought. Du Ponceau and Pickering doubted the distinction.⁹⁴

⁹³ Wilhelm von Humboldt to John Pickering, 24 February 1821, in Mary Orne Pickering, *Life of John Pickering* (Boston, 1887), 301-02. See also, PSD to JP, 8 October 1821, in *ibid.*, 313. Pickering had introduced this idea of the “phenomena of language” in his review of Jarvis; see [JP], “Art. VII.,” *North American Review* 11.28 (July 1820), 113. [Hereafter, Wilhelm von Humboldt will be cited as “WVH”; John Pickering will be cited as “JP.”]

⁹⁴ See Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, ed. Michael Losonsky, trans. Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 229; WVH to PSD, 21 September 1827, in PSD *Philological Notebooks*, 5: 40-45, APS; WVH to JP, 27 October 1831, in Kurt Müller-Vollmer, ed., “Wilhelm von Humboldt und der Anfang der amerikanischen Sprachwissenschaft: Die briefe an John Pickering,” *Universalismus und Wissenschaft im Werk und Wirken der Brüder Humboldt* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Kolsterman, 1974), 311-12. The editorial notes for this work are in German, but the correspondence is in the original French. Pickering noted in 1831, in an article that he hoped would reach wide domestic circulation, that Humboldt had, “upon further examination, yielded, in a great degree, if not entirely, to the opinions of Mr. Du Ponceau.” See [JP], “Indian Languages of North America,” Appendix to Francis Lieber, ed., *Encyclopaedia Americana: A Popular Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Politics and Biography; brought down to the Present Time; including a copious collection of original articles in American Biography; on the basis of the seventh edition of the German Conversations-Lexicon*, vol. 6 (Philadelphia, 1831), 582.

That this line of argument was to be found even among the most linguistically learned incensed Du Ponceau. They were not savage tongues; they were American languages. They used inflections, as did the Indo-European languages, and were every bit as worthy of study as those which inspired the Continent. Both Humboldt and Du Ponceau accepted the fundamental premise of Lockean epistemology (that the mind possessed no innate ideas) and they could not but struggle with how to reconcile that assumption with grammars that seemed complex to the point of belying conventional origins and typologically distinct in ways that seemed to parallel ancient national affinities. Humboldt suggested the possibility of intrinsic intellectual differences, but he leaned toward developmental theories that were more erudite than, but similar in spirit to, those who philosophized upon savage languages in the eighteenth century.⁹⁵

Du Ponceau's philology was also a language philosophy and it was tied intimately to epistemological questions regarding how different peoples organized thought. As he defined

⁹⁵ Paul R. Sweet, *Wilhelm von Humboldt: A Biography* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 2: 399-406, 466, 472, emphasizes the importance of the Americans' correspondence with Humboldt and notes that Humboldt never resolved the contradiction that Du Ponceau and Pickering discerned, but Sweet also emphasizes that "race" was not a factor in his thinking. Hans Aarsleff, "Introduction" to Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, ed. Hans Aarsleff, trans. Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), lxi-lxv, also stresses the importance of Humboldt's correspondence with Du Ponceau and Pickering, whom he sees grappling with similar linguistic problems (he even suggests that Humboldt was also drawing on Maupertuis), but argues that Humboldt's linguistic philosophy was essentially "racist." It should be noted that Aarsleff traces the roots of Humboldt's thought to the tradition of Condillac and the Ideologues, much to the consternation of other linguistic scholars, who emphasize Humboldt's debt to Hamann, Herder, and a particular engagement with German Idealism. For the traditional view of Humboldt's intellectual influences, see: Lia Formigari, *Signs, Science and Politics: Philosophies of Language in Europe, 1700-1830*, trans. William Dodd (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1993), 174-88; Pieter A. M. Seuren, *Western Linguistics: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 109-19; Tuska Benes, *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 54-60. Pierre Swiggers, "Peter Stephen Du Ponceau's *Memoire sur le système grammatical des langues de quelques nations indiennes de l'Amérique du Nord* (1837): In Search of a Typology of Grammatical Form," in Joan Leopold, ed., *The Prix Volney, vol. 2. Early Nineteenth-Century Contributions to General and Amerindian Linguistics: Du Ponceau and Rafinesque* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 108-12, also discusses Du Ponceau's and Humboldt's disagreement, but without discussion of their respective views regarding language and race. Lyle Campbell, "The History of Linguistics," in Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller, *The Handbook of Linguistics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 94, is silent on Du Ponceau and race, but notes: "For many, following Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), the typological categories – isolating, agglutinative, flexional, and incorporating – were taken as reflecting the level of social evolution attained by the speakers of the language." George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 24, also notes the "ambiguously progressivist character" of typological classification along lines established by Schlegel and Humboldt.

“*Universal Philology*,” the science was “of immense extent,” but was composed of three distinct pursuits. Phonology dealt with the sounds that human vocal organs could produce. Etymology focused on the comparison of words. Du Ponceau, however, was most interested in philology’s third facet, which he called “IDEOLOGY, or the comparative study of the grammatical forms and idiomatic construction of languages, by which we are taught to analyze and distinguish the different shapes in which ideas combine themselves in order to fix impressions in our minds, and transmit them to those of others.”⁹⁶ Du Ponceau took the term “ideology” from Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy, successor to Condillac, who sought to discover, through rigorous study of language, the origin and relation of ideas, which alone could provide a reliable foundation for a science of man and society. Du Ponceau narrowed Destutt’s definition of “ideology” to the study of human beings’ plans of ideas through their grammatical forms; but he nonetheless cited Destutt as precursor. He admitted to Gallatin that “Ideology is philosophical throughout, and therefore is my favorite; because, perhaps, it allows me to muse and dream more than any other, and its *rapprochements* and inferences are highly attractive.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 75. This was the first time Du Ponceau’s classification of the science of language appeared in print, but he had articulated this division in manuscript, to the French Academy and to the philological novice Gallatin, a couple of years before this. See PSD, “Essai de Solution du Problème Philologique proposé en l’année 1823 par la Commission de l’Institut Royal de France, chargée de la disposition du legs de M. Le Comte de Volney” [1826], in Leopold, ed., *Prix Volney*, 40; PSD to AG, 2 April 1826, in Gallatin Papers, reel 36. He also returned to the subject and extended his observations twice more, in an article that he hoped would reach large domestic readership and again in an essay for the French Academy. See [PSD], “Philology,” in Lieber, ed., *Encyclopaedia Americana*, 10: 84-93; PSD, *Memoire sur le système grammatical des langues de quelques nations indiennes de l’Amérique du Nord* [1837], 98-115, in Leopold, ed., *Prix Volney*, 158-63. In the former, he proudly noted that Noah Webster had used this definition for philology in his *American Dictionary* (1828). See PSD, “Philology,” 82.

⁹⁷ PSD to AG, 4 May 1826, in Gallatin Papers, reel 36. He cited Destutt de Tracy in PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 74. On Destutt de Tracy, see Emmet Kennedy, *A Philosopher in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of “Ideology.”* *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, no. 129. (1978); Emmet Kennedy, “‘Ideology’ from Destutt de Tracy to Marx,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40. 3 (July-September 1979): 353-68; Brian William Head, *Ideology and Social Science: Destutt de Tracy and French Liberalism* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985). On ideology more generally, see Julie Andresen, “The Ideologues, Condillac, and the Politics of Sign Theory,” *Semiotica* 72 (1988): 271-90; Ulrich Ricken, *Linguistics, Anthropology, and Philosophy in the French Enlightenment*, trans. Robert E. Norton (London: Routledge, 1994), 206-20; Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 181-246.

While Du Ponceau feigned reluctance to “wander...in the field of metaphysical disquisitions,” and suspected that the “science is not yet ripe for a complete and correct classification of all existing idioms and dialects,” he nonetheless offered one, according to the languages’ plans of ideas, in his correspondence with Heckewelder.⁹⁸ Du Ponceau arranged the world’s languages along a spectrum, marking five main linguistic categories, each of which “form[ed] a genus in a general classification of human speech,” determined by “their grammatical forms.” For example, the Lenni Lenape language was a species within the American syntactic genus, since multiple ideas were combined into single words. At the opposite end from the American languages, was the “asyntactic” language of China, in which, as Du Ponceau explained it, monosyllabic words “convey to the mind only the principal or leading ideas of the discourse, unconnected with many of those accessory ideas that are so necessary to give precision to language.” Between those classes, the Romance languages, “mixed” through conquest, stood at the center; the “analytic” Germanic languages (including English) were closer to Chinese; and the Semitic and Indo-European languages (minus the Germanic tongues), in which “the principal parts of speech are formed by a synthetical operation of the mind, and in which several ideas are frequently expressed by one word,” were closer to the polysynthetic American languages.⁹⁹

Frederick von Schlegel had offered a different, invidious typological classification of the world’s tongues in *Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808). Schlegel stressed that languages’ “internal structure,” analogous to the anatomy of an organism, must be compared to decide taxonomic questions. He identified only “two principal branches”: those that possessed systems of inflection like Sanskrit, a language he thought nearly perfect, and those that did not. The latter class included Chinese, which used no inflections whatsoever as well as other languages of “an inferior class,” like those of the Americas, in which an “appearance of inflection

⁹⁸ PSD, “Correspondence,” 401-02; Philological Notebooks, 1: 85; “Report,” xxxvi.

⁹⁹ PSD, “Correspondence,” 399-402. On the different ways in which nineteenth-century scholars attempted to classify Indian languages, see Mary R. Haas, “The Problem of Classifying American Indian Languages: From Duponceau to Powell,” in *Language, Culture, History*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).

is sometimes produced by the incorporation of the annexed particles with the primitive word.” Later, Schlegel linked this bifurcation to the story of Cain and Abel. According to Schlegel, who had received grammars and dictionaries from Alexander von Humboldt, the American languages possessed “no living productive germ, but seem like an agglomeration of atoms, easily dispersed and scattered by every casual breath.” Schlegel concluded that the “study of the American dialects,” proved the “utter impossibility of deriving every language in its primitive roots and construction from one common stem.” Moreover, their only “internal connexion” even with each other, was the merely “mechanical adaptation of particles and affixes,” and so not even connections between American languages, Schlegel asserted, could be traced, as they could within the Indo-European family. Of the American languages, Schlegel concluded: “their derivations are poor and scanty, and an accumulation of affixes, instead of producing a more highly artistic construction, yields only an unwieldy superabundance of words, inimical to true simple beauty and perspicuity.” In short, their “apparent richness is in truth utter poverty.”¹⁰⁰

Although Du Ponceau never referred to Schlegel’s work, his typological classification seems to have been designed to refute Schlegel’s own.¹⁰¹ He and Heckewelder denied the poverty of the Indian languages, defined the regular modifications of the verb to denote case, tense, and person as “inflections,” and placed the American and Chinese languages “in direct opposition...they are the top and bottom of the idiomatic scale.” Further, he emphasized that the languages of America were more similar to those of ancient India, Greece, and Rome than were

¹⁰⁰ Frederick von Schlegel, “On the Indian Language, Literature, and Philosophy” [originally translated as *The Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808)], in *Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works*, translated by E. J. Millington (London, 1860), 429, 439, 446-50, 452. In a later classification, Schlegel added a third class, occupied solely by Hebrew. See Frederick von Schlegel, *The Philosophy of Life, and Philosophy of Language* [1847] (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 405. On Schlegel’s mosaic philology and Franz Bopp’s reclassification of the world’s languages (which rejected inflection as the criterion, but which retained designations of “organic” for Indo-European languages and “mechanical” for others), see Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow*, 71-83.

¹⁰¹ Johann Severin Vater, “An Inquiry into the Origin of the Population of America from the old Continent” [1810], trans. Peter S. Du Ponceau [c. 1820], ms. at the American Philosophical Society, 122, cited this essay, so Du Ponceau was at the very least aware of it. It should also be noted that Schlegel’s work was not among those he bequeathed to the APS, but that does not rule out his familiarity with it. Maupertuis was also absent. For the list, see the appendix to Murphy, “PSD and his Study of Languages.”

the Germanic languages. Like those classical tongues, the syntactic American languages were “‘*synthetic*’ in their forms, but to such a degree” that they “richly deserved” their own genus. Thus, he more often described the American languages as polysynthetic. Du Ponceau suspected that the “learned of Europe” would agree in the beauty of such grammatical forms if those traits were found solely in the classical languages. However, North American Indians employed those forms even more fully, so “Philosophers have therefore set themselves to work in order to prove that those admirable combinations of ideas in the form of words, which in the ancient languages of Europe used to be considered as some of the greatest efforts of the human mind, proceed in the savage idioms from the absence or weakness of mental powers in those who originally framed them.”¹⁰² Even if those forms had been found “in some ancient Ba[b]ylonish dialect,” Du Ponceau speculated: “What superior wisdom, talents and knowledge would they not ascribe to nations whose idioms were formed with so much skill and method!” But this could not be admitted since they were but the “barbarous dialects of savage nations.”¹⁰³

As he began his studies, Du Ponceau had had his own misgivings about the American languages. They did not demonstrated Indians to be incapable of abstraction, but the languages’ grammar highlighted potentially problematic lexical associations. The implications of Maupertuis’s “plans of ideas” seemed especially significant. How sentences were formed reflected how ideas were arranged or bundled together, which, as propositions, could, in turn, influence subsequent patterns of thought. If a single Delaware verb “*n'dellauchsi*” meant “‘I live, move about,’ or ‘I so live that I move about,’” did this mean that the Indians had “no idea of

¹⁰² PSD, “Correspondence,” 384, 417-18. Heckewelder expressed similar sensitivity regarding European fascination with old world civilizations at the expense of Indians. Relating the fact that Delawares regarded the first men to be born from the womb of the earth itself, the missionary said: “This fabulous account of the creation of man needs only to be ascribed to the ancient Egyptians or the Brahmins of India, to be admired and extolled for the curious analogy which it observes between the general and individual creation; but as it comes from the American savage, I doubt whether it will even receive the humble praise of ingenuity, to which, however, it appears to me to be justly entitled.” See Heckewelder, *History*, 241-42.

¹⁰³ PSD, “Correspondence,” 399, 402.

‘life,’ but when connected with ‘locomotion?’”¹⁰⁴ If “*nihillatamen* [‘I own, I am master of’]” was derived from the same root as “*nihilla* [‘I kill, or strike dead’],” so that “right, power, and force [were] confounded together, as if there was no difference between them,” did this mean that Indians could not recognize an authority founded on anything other than coercion?¹⁰⁵ Such linguistic questions went straight to the heart of native capacity for settled agriculture and republican government, just as Cass’s emphasis on the difference of Delaware “gender” marked their savagery and his literal translation “more God” ostensibly illustrated natives’ muddled understanding of Christian theology.

Du Ponceau’s studies existed within the same context as Cass’s, and he grappled with a similar concern: what did Indians’ languages reveal about their current and potential understanding of concepts critical to American civilization? The two men reached very different conclusions. Du Ponceau recognized that Americans would be troubled by the ostensible evidence of mental associations that such words seemed to imply, so he confronted them directly only to dismiss their implications. Delawares could express “life” independent of movement and all languages revealed questionable etymological associations. He granted that Indians might be savage, but his studies did not suggest they were incapable of intellectual and moral progress.¹⁰⁶

Because Indian languages abounded with grammatical forms, governed by regular laws, which gave the American languages precision, beauty, and force, Du Ponceau noted that some

¹⁰⁴ Heckewelder said of course they have a way to express “to live” apart from movement, and suggested that Zeisberger had only chosen a particularly figurative expression, perhaps analogous to “To walk humbly before the Lord.” See PSD, “Correspondence,” 388, 392. The verb “live” is rendered *pūmáawsuw*; the verb “move” is rendered *kwchúkwiiv*. Coming closest is seemingly the verb *taláawsuw*, which means “live there” or the term *ndalūmóoxwe*, meaning “I walk away.” See O’Meara, *Delaware-English/English-Delaware Dictionary*, 519, 534, 307, xxi, respectively. An anonymous contributor to [Morse], *First Annual Report*, 62, may have attempted to suggest a similar relationship: “In the Language of the Seneca Indians are seven kinds of words, or parts of speech....4th.VERBS, words to express being or action: as *guo-heh*, live; *goh-tein-de*, walk.”

¹⁰⁵ Du Ponceau pointed to the English word “caitiff” (meaning “base”), which was derived from the same root as “captive,” thus showing that here, misfortune was conflated with baseness. PSD, “Preface to Zeisberger,” 141. The verb “own someone” is *nihláaleew* and “own something” is *nihláatam*. The verb “kill someone” is *nihleew* and “kill something” is *nihtoow*. See O’Meara, *Delaware-English/English-Delaware Dictionary*, 549, 504, respectively.

¹⁰⁶ PSD, “Correspondence,” 399.

“considered as a proof...that this continent was formerly inhabited by a civilized race of men.”¹⁰⁷

Barton had made this claim decades before to explain the mounds of the Ohio Valley. The theory’s prevalence had only grown, repeated in the works of Johann Severin Vater, Juan Ignatius Molina, and, most influentially, Alexander von Humboldt.¹⁰⁸

To Du Ponceau, the American languages neither facilitated nor inhibited cultivation and they revealed neither civilization nor savagery. In 1819 he had stated unequivocally that there was no “necessary connexion between the greater or lesser degree of civilisation of a people, and the organisation of their language.” Though he admitted that their grammars “would rather *appear* to have been formed by philosophers in their closets, than by savages in the wilderness,” he believed that rational reflection did not produce language.¹⁰⁹ This had profound implications, for it suggested, against the Humboldts, that one type of grammar – one “plan of ideas” – would not evolve into another in the course of time. Indeed, he believed that more general acceptance of this view would be the “principal result which...the publication of this Grammar will produce.” In his preface to that work, Du Ponceau targeted the prevailing notion that the “grammatical forms of languages have been produced or essentially modified by *the arts of civilization*” and emphasized that “the facts which this Grammar exhibits...all point to nature and not to art as the source from whence have proceeded the various grammatical forms of the language of men.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 85.

¹⁰⁸ Vater, “Inquiry,” 97; J. Ignatius Molina, *The Geographical, Natural and Civil History of Chili* (Middletown, CT, 1808), 4-5; Alexander de Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* [1811] (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 175-76; idem, *Researches concerning the Institutions and Monuments of the ancient Inhabitants of America, with Descriptions & Views of some of the most striking Scenes in the Cordilleras!* (London, 1814), 20-21. Du Ponceau thought highly of Alexander von Humboldt’s talents, and was surprised to see that the naturalist’s views of the American languages came near to his own. “Had I written a little later, I should have been considered a plagiarist.” See PSD to AG, 2, 8 May 1826, Gallatin Papers. It is not that remarkable; each was drawing on Vater. Du Ponceau did not, however, have a particularly high opinion of Alexander von Humboldt’s work: “I consider him much in the light of a Book maker...he has knowledge and talents of which he might make a better use.” See PSD to Joel R. Poinsett, 15 August 1827, Poinsett Papers, 4: 125, HSP.

¹⁰⁹ PSD, “Report,” xxvii [emphasis added]; “Correspondence,” 399.

¹¹⁰ PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 248-49.

So, in the midst of his debate with Cass and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Du Ponceau clarified and elaborated his stance, even as he conceded a connection between language and logic:

Language is the instrument of thought and must always be adequate to its object Like everything else in nature, the forms of language are various, and in that variety consists the chief beauty of the works of the Almighty Creator. A language, it is true, may be more or less adapted to certain objects. Some are more poetical than others, while there are those which are better suited to the perspicuity of logical reasoning.... Who can say what Homer could have produced if he had for his instrument the language of the Lenni Lenape? This, however, we may with safety assert; that he would have been able to say more in fewer words, than even in his own admirable Greek. Every mode of speech has its peculiar qualities, susceptible of being developed and improved by cultivation; but like flowers and plants, all languages have a regular organization, and none can be called *barbarous* in the sense which presumption has affixed to that word.... Grammatical forms, therefore, are as necessary to human languages as the organs of life and vegetation are to animals and plants. Neither could exist without them.¹¹¹

As he made clear by linking the prejudices of European philosophy and the North American frontier, Du Ponceau challenged voices dominant in the learned world (though much of Continental philology ignored the question altogether since it was concerned more with historical descent than epistemology). Rather than see grammatical forms as the result of savagery or civilization, it was “more natural to suppose that the Almighty Creator has endowed mankind with a natural logic which leads them, as it were, by instinct, to such methods in the formation of their idioms as are best calculated to facilitate their use.”¹¹²

Du Ponceau adapted eighteenth-century “ideology” to nineteenth-century philology and biology. Indeed, it may have been the resonance of Maupertuis’s “plans of ideas” with George Cuvier’s “plans” of anatomy, then transforming natural history, which added to the profundity Du Ponceau discerned in the eighteenth-century mathematician’s conjectures. Each represented underlying structures, heretofore ignored

¹¹¹ PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 95-96. See also *ibid.*, 249.

¹¹² PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 85.

in favor of more superficial observation.¹¹³ In the same essay in which he offered his typological classification, Schlegel had explicitly connected the two emergent sciences: “There is...one single point, the investigation of which ought to decide every doubt, and elucidate every difficulty; the structure or comparative grammar of the language furnishes as certain a key to their general analogy, as the study of comparative anatomy has done to the loftiest branch of natural science.”¹¹⁴ Du Ponceau’s emphasis on the ideas of Maupertuis, alone among eighteenth-century authors, seems a deliberate adaptation of eighteenth-century French philosophy to nineteenth-century science. Indeed, it may have been attempt to give philology a pedigree through his native country.

Du Ponceau had a more ambiguous relationship toward Indian affairs than did the unapologetically expansionist Cass. He repeatedly expressed sympathy for the missionary effort. Du Ponceau proposed to Pickering to have his essay on orthography distributed to missionary societies.¹¹⁵ To Heckewelder and Pickering, Du Ponceau expressed admiration for the

¹¹³ For a concise, lucid discussion of Cuvier and the significance of his “plans” in classification, see D. Graham Burnett, *Trying Leviathan: The Nineteenth-Century New York Court Case that Put the Whale on Trial and Challenged the Order of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 10-13, 52-58. Though not concerned with philology, *ibid.*, 47, suggests that 1818-19 – the very years Du Ponceau prepared and published his first studies of Indian languages – “represented the very cusp of...change” from Linnaean natural history to Cuvier’s new philosophy. Though Du Ponceau may have intended to adapt Maupertuis to Cuvier, those men’s natural histories were opposed; the former was an evolutionist, while the latter was its most prestigious opponent. Whether Du Ponceau knew of Schlegel’s gloss on Cuvier is unknown, but the latter was well known at the APS. See John C. Greene, *The Death of Adam: Evolution and its Impact on Western Thought* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1959), 169-73, 230-32, 352 n.32.

¹¹⁴ Frederick von Schlegel, “On the Indian Language, Literature, and Philosophy” [*The Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808)], in *Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works*, trans. E. J. Millington (London, 1860), 439. The U.S. historian William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico, with a Preliminary View of the Ancient Mexican Civilization, and the Life of the Conqueror, Hernando Cortés* (New York, 1843), 395-96, noted Du Ponceau’s crucial role in dissecting the “comparative anatomy of the languages of the two hemispheres.” Roger Langham Brown, *Wilhelm von Humboldt’s Conception of Linguistic Relativity* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), ch. 3; Stephen G. Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image: Language, Race, and Natural Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), ch. 1, examine the period’s organic metaphors of language. Extending his inquiry beyond mere metaphors, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966] (New York: Vintage, 1994), ch. 8, argues that linguistics and biology in this period (along with economics centered on the labor theory of value) were similar, historicized, modern ways of knowing applied to different objects.

¹¹⁵ PSD to JP, 7 July 1820, in Pickering, *Life*, 287.

“disinterested zeal of men,” such as Eliot and Zeisberger.¹¹⁶ “Indian languages have been studied as a means of converting the Savages to the Christian faith, & science must rejoice in being admitted to a participation of the light which so high & so noble an object had procured, and by that means to be able to offer to the world an additional proof that true Religion as well as true Science, help, instead (as has been falsely asserted) of destroying each other.”¹¹⁷ The work of Eliot, “the *Augustine* of New England,” led Du Ponceau to exalt seeking the City of God through contemplation of nature. Studying the “noble faculty, which distinguishes him from the rest of the animal creation; the faculty of ‘holding communication from soul to soul’” provided a “foretaste of celestial life....It makes us feel that our soul is immortal.”¹¹⁸ But so too did it provide a perspective on the City of Man. At the end of his life, he reflected: “The study of different languages has led me to a more impartial view of the character of different nations of the world, of their virtues, and their foibles.”¹¹⁹

Responding to Gallatin’s opinion on the possibility of Indian “civilization,” Du Ponceau said only that “I have never yet reflected seriously upon it...my mind is a *tabula rasa*.”¹²⁰ Yet, he expressed sympathy, publicly and privately, for a generous Indian policy. Du Ponceau viewed early Pennsylvania as an arcadian past, pleasant to contemplate after more than half a century of trans-Appalachian conflict and useful as a rallying point for the philanthropists who demanded an Indian policy more concerned with benevolence than acquiring Indian title. “No country on earth ever exhibited such a scene of happiness, innocence and peace, as was witnessed here during the first century of our social existence.” Unlike the lawgivers of antiquity, who had taught their citizens “to consider their fellow men as barbarians, and themselves as alone worthy to rule over the earth,” William Penn sat “peaceably with his followers in the midst of savage nations, whose

¹¹⁶ PSD to Heckewelder, 19 September 1816, HLC Letter Books, 1: 51-52. For similar statements to Pickering, see Pickering, *Life*, 310, 313.

¹¹⁷ PSD to Daniel S. Butrick, 7 September 1818, 2: 16-18.

¹¹⁸ PSD, “Notes and Observations on Eliot’s Indian Grammar,” i-ii, xiii.

¹¹⁹ PSD, “Autobiography,” 53: 450.

¹²⁰ PSD to AG, 19 May 1826, Gallatin Papers, reel 36.

only occupation was shedding the blood of their fellow men.” Offered peace, the Indians were pacified. He had negotiated a singular treaty with the Delawares: “the only one that was never sworn to and never broken.” At least, it was not broken while he lived, but “Afterwards, indeed!”¹²¹ On the eve of what became known as the Trail of Tears, Du Ponceau and a coauthor stressed that Penn’s famous treaty with the Delawares was meant to “prevent their being cheated or otherwise aggrieved in their persons or their property.” It was unconnected with the purchase of land and was one of “amity and friendship” only.¹²²

Du Ponceau avoided explicit public reference to the removal controversy, presumably to preserve his claim to scientific objectivity, which was the basis of his philological authority. Still, he recognized that philology was inextricable from Indian affairs. His “Philological Notebooks” contain extracts of Indian orations in which natives chastised their white listeners for failing to live up to treaty agreements and to the commands of their common God, who, in the ominous words of the Winnebago chief Natawpindawqua, “protects us as well as you.”¹²³ Yet one of the reasons he published a translation of Zeisberger’s grammar was that “several gentlemen, particularly of the army” had requested it to aid their communication with Ojibwas, Menominees, and other western groups.¹²⁴

Even as he extolled their languages, he implicitly admitted the “savagery” of the Indians: whether “savages have or have not many ideas, it is not my province to determine: all I can say is,

¹²¹ PSD, *A Discourse on the Early History of Pennsylvania; being an Annual Oration delivered before the American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia, for Promoting Useful Knowledge; pursuant to their appointment, in the Hall of the University of Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, the 6th of June, 1821* (Philadelphia, 1821), 10, 12, 25-26. In his autobiography, Du Ponceau compared William Penn to the Indians’ “French *fathers* as they used to call them” in light of the “violent prejudices, which under the English government had taken such deep root” among the Indians. He drew a slightly conceited conclusion: “The French excel all other nations in the art of making themselves agreeable when they think proper to do so.” PSD, “Autobiography,” 63: 441-42.

¹²² PSD and J. Francis Fisher, “A Memoir on the History of the Celebrated Treaty made by William Penn with the Indians, under the Elm Tree at Shackamaxon, in the year 1682” in *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 3.2 (1836), 153, 185.

¹²³ See PSD, *Philological Notebooks*, 2: inside flap; 3: 51, APS.

¹²⁴ PSD, “Zeisberger’s Grammar,” 77-78. These “gentlemen” were Edwin James and John Kinzie. See Edwin James to PSD, 16 June 1827, Gratz Collection, 7: 23, HSP. They received copies of Zeisberger’s grammar in mid-January. See James to PSD, 19 January 1828, Michigan Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

that if it is true that their ideas are few, it is not less certain that they have many words to express them.”¹²⁵ His view of the republican empire was sensitive to frontier prejudice and abuses, but he still thought that the recession of savagery was both inevitable and desirable. Du Ponceau intended his philology to assist the advance of civilization in North America, meliorate frontier conditions, aid the army, and acquire for himself and his country a scientific reputation.

While Du Ponceau was unclear on the full significance of Indians possessing ostensibly different “plans of ideas” and inexplicit on the connection between Indian affairs his philology, regarding who should study Indian languages, Du Ponceau never wavered and was never ambiguous. Even Pickering, who shared Du Ponceau’s partiality for philology as well as his nationalism, sometimes conceded a lesser share than Europe in the world’s intellectual labors. He thought that “while learned foreigners” were “devoting themselves to the more general views of the American languages, the scholars of our own country should not neglect to employ the means, which their local situation affords them, of carefully collecting all those details of the various dialects, which will be essential to the formation of an exact classification of them, and to the ultimate object of these inquiries – a just theory of language.”¹²⁶ Du Ponceau would not accept second-class citizenship in the republic of letters, however. The American languages were a properly American pursuit and it belonged to U.S. citizens to both collect materials for their study and offer expositions of their significance for the learned of Europe.

Twice from 1825 to 1835 Du Ponceau competed for the illustrious Prix Volney of the Institut de France. To Du Ponceau, the topics that the committee had posed for their premium demonstrated that the “subject which we have first started in this country, begins to find favor in Europe.” He confessed: “I should dearly like that an American should get it.” Yet, in the midst of his debate with Cass, he had second thoughts: “I begin to think I have done wrong in seeking reputation through any but the legitimate channel, the press of the United States.” Even after he

¹²⁵ PSD, “Report,” xxvii-xxviii.

¹²⁶ JP, “Doctor Edwards’ Observations on the Mohegan Language” *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2d. ser., 10 (1823), 150.

failed in his initial attempt, an essay on the irrelevance of writing to grammatical forms, he submitted a treatise on the Algonquian languages for a subsequent prize. Between his writing “French like an Iroquois” after long citizenship in the United States and his suspicion that Wilhelm von Humboldt would try for the prize as well, Du Ponceau feared that it was “a foolish undertaking.” His second attempt, however, won the prize for 1835, defeating the sole competitor, an essay by the eccentric ethnologist and naturalist Constantine S. Rafinesque. It was published two years later as *Memoire sur le système grammatical des langues de quelques nations indiennes de l’Amérique du Nord*.¹²⁷ The tome demonstrated the structure and relations of the American languages as Du Ponceau conceived them, and he included a translation of an essays by Schoolcraft on the Ojibwa verb. It also rehearsed the views on the philosophical significance of philology that Du Ponceau had articulated during the removal debates.

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The publication of Cass’s severe criticisms and Du Ponceau’s rebuttal in his translation of Zeisberger’s grammar led to a flurry of exchanges on the character of Indian languages and much more. Among the first to respond to Cass directly was William Rawle, like Du Ponceau a Philadelphia lawyer prominent in the city’s cultural life. Rawle had “never felt an inclination to study evanescent forms, or to keep alive a variety of languages, which, from every motive of national and beneficent policy, he would wish to see absorbed in one general tongue.” But in mid-February 1826, little more than a month after Cass’s review appeared, Rawle offered “Vindication” of Heckewelder’s research before the newly formed Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Fearing that a good man would be counted an impostor like Hunter because of Cass’s invective, Rawle dissented from “the literary dictators” who exercised “supposed unlimited sovereignty over what we sometimes affect to call the republic of letters.”

Heckewelder was “a man of probity incapable of wilful deception,” everyone knew that he “had

¹²⁷ PSD to JP, 24 August 1823, 27 September 1825, 23 January 1826, 28 August 1834, Du Ponceau Papers, Box 3, HSP. Wilhelm von Humboldt never entered the contest. For both of Du Ponceau’s Prix Volney treatises as well as essays on their place in the history of linguistics, see Leopold, ed., *Prix Volney*.

the best means of information,” and his studies were “not too abstruse or profound for the compass of his mind.” Rawle was less convinced about Indians’ philological qualifications: “Language, with them, is the act of necessity not the result of critical study or refined combination. Although a grammar may be traced and formed for them, they themselves know little or nothing of grammatical forms.” Despite his “vindication” of Heckewelder, Rawle had no love for philology and was skeptical of its conclusions; but he admitted that it held “high interest to those who delight to trace the powers and operations of the mind.”¹²⁸

Rawle was the first president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, an institution established in growing frustration with the limited researches of the American Philosophical Society’s Historical and Literary Committee. This was partially due to the fact that only members of the exclusive society could participate, but it was also because Du Ponceau, the committee’s driving force, devoted his attention to philology.¹²⁹ Although he would go on to serve as its second president, Du Ponceau recognized the new society as “a kind of *opposition line*.”¹³⁰ An author for the Philadelphia *Friend* expressed similar views, even as he objected to removal and defended the work of Du Ponceau and Heckewelder against the criticisms of Cass:

¹²⁸ William Rawle, “A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Heckewelder’s History of the Indian Nations,” *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 1 (1826), 269, 271, 273, 280-81; William Rawle to PSD, 17 March 1827, Gratz Collection, 4: 1, HSP.

¹²⁹ William Rawle, “An Inaugural Discourse, delivered on the 5th of November, 1825, before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania,” *HSP Memoirs* 1 (1826), 39, recognized exclusivity as the problem. Simon Baatz, “Philadelphia Patronage: The Institutional Structure of Natural History in the New Republic, 1800-1833,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 8 (1988): 111-38, at 118, sees similar reasons behind the establishment of the APS’s rival in Philadelphia science, the Academy of Natural Sciences. PSD, *Discourse on the Early History of Pennsylvania*, 5, traced the eventual failure of APS’s historical committee to the fact that no one stepped forward to use the materials that the committee had collected. Hampton L. Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1940), 1: 38-43, discusses the HLC’s lethargy and notes Du Ponceau’s “heavy and unusual” interests, but suggests, ignoring Jefferson’s earlier historical committee, that history was an unnatural subject for a body traditionally focused on the physical and mathematical sciences.

¹³⁰ PSD to AG, 22 March 1826, in Gallatin Papers, reel 36. Du Ponceau was committed to recording the history of Pennsylvania as well. In his lifetime he wrote PSD, *Discourse on the Early History of Pennsylvania*; cowrote PSD and Fisher, “Memoir on the History of the Celebrated Treaty”; and translated *A short description of the province of New Sweden. now called, by the English, Pennsylvania, in America, compiled from the relations and writings of persons worthy of credit, and adorned with maps and plates, by Thomas Campanius Holm, translated from the Swedish, for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. by Peter S. Du Ponceau* (Philadelphia, 1836). At the time of his death, Du Ponceau was president of both the APS and the HSP.

“great as must be the interest attaching to Indian languages, and the history of Indian life, it is but natural that we should feel a more direct and immediate curiosity, to know the characters and adventures of those by whom they were supplanted and overrun.” It was “to the development of this story...that the volumes of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania are devoted.”¹³¹

The reviewer who most effectively challenged Cass’s linguistic knowledge was the philologist John Pickering, who began his article in William Cullen Bryant’s *New York Review and Athenaeum Magazine* with a Lenape translation of verse from the fifth chapter of Jeremiah: “A nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.” “Kass-ti-gator-skee, or the Feathered Arrow,” as Pickering punningly signed the review, established his own authority. He claimed that he too had had “intercourse with natives of different tribes, and have seen many specimens of the ‘red man,’ from the pure and uncontaminated nations of the West, to the mongrel and sluggish remnants of our Eastern frontier.” Pickering had two major criticisms of Cass’s review. First, Cass possessed “quite indistinct conceptions in respect to some of the questions which are under discussion, among the philologists of the present day.” Cass was too unfamiliar with how the science of languages had advanced in Europe and in the United States. He had remained focused on words, ignoring the greater scientific importance (according to ideas dominant in the early nineteenth century) of grammar. The Indian superintendent had dismissed the linguistic usefulness of Indian grammatical constructions, but he had not denied that they existed. To demonstrate the continued savagery of the languages and people, he instead focused on decomposing various words that would demonstrate, to his mind, Indian stasis.

Pickering knew that Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s work produced increased respect and sympathy for the Indians, regardless of Du Ponceau’s intentions. That Cass felt otherwise proved that he was no disinterested observer. Pickering noted that the “whole tone” Cass’s

¹³¹ J R T, “The Indian Languages and Pennsylvania History,” *The Friend; a Religious and Literary Journal* 4.32 (21 May 1831), 250-51; 4.33 (28 May 1831), 258-60; 4.34 (4 June 1831), 267-68, at 267. He expounded on suitable subjects of Pennsylvania history in *ibid.*, 4.35 (11 June 1831), 275-76.

“laboured article indicates its origin to have been on our Indian frontier,” where “abominable frauds...murders, and other nameless atrocities” were “so often connected” with purchases of land. “So powerfully, indeed, do these frontier feelings operate upon the temper of the author, that he transfers his dislike of the Indian race to the very languages which their beneficent Creator has given them.” Pickering granted that Cass may have had no personal interest in Indian land, but that did not matter. It was the frontier itself that was the problem. There one was surrounded by “perverted sentiments and importunate cupidity...by men who hate every thing that is Indian, and unless he is something more than human, he must hate with them.” Mostly, Pickering feared that casual readers would accept Cass’s assertions and believe the historical committee’s transactions to be nothing more than “an octavo volume of missionary credulity and philological ecstasies.” He advised the unknowing that Cass’s “acquaintance with general philology is extremely limited” and his “dogmatical and confident tone” merely indicated “charlatanism.”¹³²

Pickering’s review sparked others, which, like his, extended the debate beyond Indian languages and into the mind those idioms reflected and the character of the frontier itself. The army officer and poet Henry Whiting joined the fray on behalf of Cass, who had provided notes and recommended to friends Whiting’s *Ontwa; the Son of the Forest* (1822), an epic poem about the Erie Indians’ extinction at the hands of the Five Nations. Cass, Schoolcraft, and Trowbridge would each provide notes for the subsequent *Sanillac* (1831). Whiting doubted “whether an Indian ever thought of expressing so abstract an idea, as would require the use of a phrase like *I am loved*.” He focused his aim, however, at Pickering’s “distempered fancies,” which painted in false shades “the Indian character” as well as that of the settlers who had “long stood sentinels upon the outskirts of our population.” Neither Pickering, nor Du Ponceau, nor any other “inhabitants of the elder settlements, who have been born and brought up in all the security of a

¹³² [John Pickering], “Examination of an article in the North American Review, for January, 1826, respecting the Indians of America, by Kass-ti-ga-tor-skee, or The Feathered Arrow,” *New York Review and Atheneum Magazine*, May 1826, 405-08, 414-15, 419. Pickering’s daughter assigned this article to him in her biography. Mary Orne Pickering, *Life of John Pickering* (Boston, 1887), 351 n.1.

dense population,” had the authority to comment on Indians or pioneers. They possessed “but a faint concept of the disquietudes, and even horrors, which have mingled in the lot of those whose hardihood and perseverance, the wide-spreading prosperity of the West is mainly due.”¹³³

Edwin James, chronicler of the Long Expedition and assistant army surgeon at Sault Ste. Marie, also determined to oppose Cass’s review. He detected that Cass had “little of the philologist about him” and he thought that he and Schoolcraft both “must acquire much of acumen and much of a philosophical spirit before they can do more than trifle” with the work of Zeisberger and Heckewelder.¹³⁴ In the space of weeks, James seethed. He told Du Ponceau that he was “not surprised at the flippancy and impudence” of Cass’s review, though he was with its “crudeness.” Stationed at the Sault, where Schoolcraft was Indian agent, James knew that Cass received his information from “the admirers and toad-eaters of this would-be philosopher.” James did not expect that Cass would “ever acknowledge his errors or blush for his effrontery, much less that he will confess his obligations to those from whom he has gleaned the scanty knowledge he possesses or ever will possess of the Indian languages.” His tone was harsh; but James was “by no means ashamed at the indignation” he felt since it was “excited by a feeling of compassion...for the Indians who are suffering the greatest evils from the ungoverned cupidity of these very men.” Insistence that Indian degeneration and extinction were natural and unavoidable was just one piece of a larger campaign by which Cass and others had been “misleading public opinion and misinforming the public mind.” James feared that a lone review would not “do justice to either branch of the subject, either the philology or the Indian relations.”¹³⁵

¹³³ [Henry Whiting], “Cursorial Remarks upon an Article in the *New York Review*” *New York Review and Atheneum Magazine*, May 1826. For the poems, see [Henry Whiting], *Ontwa, the Son of the Forest* (New York, 1822); Whiting, *Sanillac, Poem; with Notes, by Lewis Cass and Henry R. Schoolcraft* (Boston, 1831). Edwin James had thought that the review was the work of Trowbridge, but a letter from Cass to Sparks makes Whiting appear to be the more likely author. See Cass to Sparks, 13 January 1827, Sparks Correspondence, vol. 153, Sparks MSS., Houghton Library; Edwin James to PSD, 16 June 1827, Gratz Collection, 7: 23, HSP.

¹³⁴ James to PSD, 19 January 1828, Michigan Papers, William I. Clements Library.

¹³⁵ James to PSD, 10 May 1828, Du Ponceau Papers, 1: 10, HSP.

Nevertheless, James entered the lists with a review of Du Ponceau's edition of Zeisberger's grammar. U.S. policy "in all times past, has been humane and generous," but the "rancorous enmity of the frontier settlers" undid the government's best plans and provoked Indians to violence. To his mind, the "dispute concerning the powers and capabilities of the Indian dialects, gives occasion to remark, that we are apt to underrate the characters and qualities of those of whom we know little, and despise what we do not understand particularly, if any accident has connected it with the epithets *savage* and *barbarous*." He thought that Du Ponceau may have responded "with more care and explicitness than the case required." But in James's estimation, the American languages were entitled to "more respect than Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt and the North American Reviewers have seen fit to give them." He counted himself among those who were "disposed to admire the flexibility and compass of the Indian languages, rather than those who despise their poverty."¹³⁶ James became a philologist of note himself, translating educational and religious tracts, often in collaboration with the U.S. interpreter and former white Indian, John Tanner (*Shaw-shaw-wa ne-ba-se*, or The Falcon). They found an influential opponent in Schoolcraft, who considered Tanner "a realization of Shakespeare's idea of Caliban" and viewed their translations skeptically, since "neither the Doctor nor his pundit were, or professed to be, vital Christians."¹³⁷ Yet, James used his science as a platform to remind his readers of the obligations of the nation assuming Indians to be in a "state of pupilage."¹³⁸

¹³⁶ [Edwin James], "Article V.," *American Quarterly Review*, 3.6 (June 1828), 397, 401, 403, 406. James revealed his authorship in James to PSD, 10 May 1828, Du Ponceau Papers, 1: 10, HSP.

¹³⁷ Henry R. Schoolcraft, "Article V. Mythology, Superstitions and Languages of the North American Indians," *Literary and Theological Review*, 2.5 (March 1835), 113-14, 116; Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: collected and prepared under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, per Act of Congress of March 3d, 1847*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, 1851-57), 4: 536-37. For Schoolcraft's literary allusion regarding Tanner, see Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* [1851] (Middlesex, UK: Echo Press, 2006), 240.

¹³⁸ Edwin James, "Essay on the Chippewa Language. Read before the American Lyceum, at the third annual meeting, in the city of New York, May 3rd, 1833," *American Annals of Education* 3.10 (Oct. 1833), 440. For his other philological work, see Edwin James, "Some Account of the Menomonies with a Specimen of an Attempt to form a Dictionary of their Language, by Edwin James, an Assistant Surgeon of the U. S. Army" (1827), [16]; A.P.S., Report of Committee on Dr. Edwin James's communication of the Menomonie Indians, c. February 1827, APS Archives, Record Group III, APS; Edwin James, Appendix to

With questions of civilization and incorporation in stark relief during the removal debates, disparities between English and Indian languages were eagerly sought and their significance interrogated closely. On the Long Expedition, Thomas Say took a vocabulary of the language of the Yankton Sioux, from J. B. Dorion through the U.S. interpreter John Dougherty, but the first person singular pronoun halted his progress. He concluded that there was “no word for I.”¹³⁹ Edwin James believed “it would be difficult or impossible for the ablest interpreter to translate ‘Judge not that ye be not judged,’” since “before they can be fairly said to comprehend this passage, they must form some idea of the judicial proceedings in the governments of civilized nations.”¹⁴⁰ Ethan Allen Hitchcock, traveling through Cherokee country, noted that a Mr. Payne, a Cherokee of mixed descent educated at the Dwight mission, told him that there was “no word in the Cherokee language, answering to our English word *ought*.” As Hitchcock reflected, Kant, Cousin, or another moralist would have found it noteworthy.¹⁴¹ Perhaps considering the critique Cass had leveled at Du Ponceau and Heckewelder, the Cherokee missionary Samuel A.

A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, (U. S. Interpreter at the Saut Ste. Marie,) during Thirty Years Residence among the Indians in the Interior of North America (London, 1830). James also made a half-hearted effort for the Prix Volney; see AG to PSD, 10 March 1835; James to PSD, 12 December 1835, Du Ponceau Papers, 2: 6, HSP. James sent his work to other philologists as well. See James to JP, 20 March 1827, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 350-51; James to AG, 24 January 1832, Gallatin Papers, reel 40. On James’s translating work, see James Constantine Pilling, *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 256-58. John T. Fiest, “Strange Eloquence: Another Look at the *Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner*,” in Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996), gives context on the James-Tanner collaboration, but ignores the philological and ethnological appendix to the *Narrative*. For Tanner’s troubled life, see HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 220-21, 420, 430; John Tanner to Cass, 14 September 1831, Lewis Cass Papers. William L. Clements Library; Gregory Evans Dowd, “Michigan Murder Mysteries: Death and Rumor in the Age of Indian Removal,” in R. David Edmunds, ed., *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

¹³⁹ PSD, Indian Vocabularies collected September 1820,” no. 25, 87. For Du Ponceau’s advisory report, see “Concerning Inquiries to be made by major Long of the Indians,” APS Archives, Record Group III.

¹⁴⁰ James, “Article V,” 402-03.

¹⁴¹ Ethan Allen Hitchcock, *A Traveler in Indian Territory: The Journal of Ethan Allen Hitchcock, late Major-General in the U. S. Army*, ed. Grant Forman [1930] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 160.

Worcester replied bluntly: “Literal translations, *word* for *word*, from English into Cherokee, are beyond the limits of possibility.”¹⁴²

Philology repeatedly found seeming discrepancies between Indian languages and the concepts of American civilization. Many inquirers, following the implications of Du Ponceau’s emphasis that grammatical forms indicated a people’s plan of ideas, questioned whether such linguistic problems hinted at a deeper epistemological problem and whether distinct Indian grammatical forms indicated a distinct mode of thought. Benjamin H. Coates considered the Indians’ polysynthetic forms “a quality apparently derivable from a peculiar and characteristic turn of mind.”¹⁴³ Francis Lieber, a German émigré litterateur and professor of history and political economy at South Carolina College, believed that in studying the way different peoples separated and combined ideas, philologists could “discover a different affinity and affiliation of thoughts and notions, a different perception of things and a consequently different ramification of ideas—in short a different logic of nations.”¹⁴⁴

No man articulated the notion of a distinct “Indian mind” more clearly than Schoolcraft, who thought that “We are ever at fault when we undertake to reason for the Indians. Neither our premises nor conclusions can be the same.” As late as 1825, Schoolcraft described a “savage mind” that was merely “dormant under a life of wandering and hardships; but the same means which have exalted us, will exalt them.” Education would overcome habit.¹⁴⁵ Two years later,

¹⁴² Samuel A. Worcester, “Cherokee Language. Answers to Professor Rafinesque’s Questions,” in Jack Frederick Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick, eds., *New Echota Letters: Contributions of Samuel A. Worcester to the Cherokee Phoenix* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1968), 26.

¹⁴³ B. H. Coates, “Annual Discourse delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, on the 28th Day of April, 1834, on the Origin of the Indian Population of America,” *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 3.2 (1836), 37.

¹⁴⁴ Francis Lieber, “Remarks on some Subjects of Comparative Philology, and the importance of the study of Foreign Languages especially of the classic Tongues—in a letter to Albert Gallatin,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 3.3 (March 1837): 161-72, at 163-66. On Lieber, see Michael O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1: 172-78.

¹⁴⁵ HRS, *Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley*, 76, 132, 387. Narrating the Cass expedition, Schoolcraft described a “savage mind” needing only be “roused into a state of moral activity.” See HRS, *Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, extending*

and about five years after beginning his studies for Cass's project, however, Schoolcraft had become convinced of "The Unchanging Character of the Indian Mind," which he described in a February 1827 essay in *The Literary Voyager, or Muzzeniegun*. "Philanthropy cannot console itself that its efforts to meliorate their condition have produced any important changes in their mental habits – that it has led them to adopt any new trains of thought, or more refined and methodical rules of action." Even those who became educated and converted (he named Hendrick Aupaumut and Eleazer Williams among others), were unable to alter "the native constitution of his mind" which remained in its "primeval character essentially unchanged." Although the achievements of his wife Jane should have demonstrated how wrong he was, Schoolcraft insisted that there was some "principle in the Indian mind, which has enabled it to resist intellectual culture." The key would not be found in the physiological researches of Johann Blumenbach or James Cowles Pritchard. As he tentatively explained later that month in "Language Links Mankind in Families," Schoolcraft "doubt[ed], whether the sounds of the human voice, be not more permanent and reliable, than the color of a man's skin, or the shape of his face, the length of his arms, or the prominence of his cheek bones." Language, not color or crania, provided the best indication of "the intellect of races."¹⁴⁶ By 1835, Schoolcraft saw only "dark and gloomy clouds...gathering over the prospects of the Indians."¹⁴⁷ He admitted to himself that "Business and science, antiquities and politics are curiously jumbled along in the same path," though he insisted that this did not make "turbid the stream of inquiry."¹⁴⁸

from Detroit through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820 [1821], ed. Mentor L. Williams (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1953), 70.

¹⁴⁶ [HRS], "The Unchangeable Character of the Indian Mind," *Literary Voyager* 9 (16 February 1827); idem, "Language Links Mankind in Families," *ibid.*, no. 11 (February 1827). The entire short run of this journal is published in HRS, *The Literary Voyager or Muzzeniegen*, ed. by Philip P. Mason (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1962), at 108-09, 125. On Schoolcraft's ethnology, see Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, ch. 5.

¹⁴⁷ HRS, "Article V. Mythology, Superstitions and Languages of the North American Indians," *Literary and Theological Review*, 2.5 (March 1835), 110, 118, 120.

¹⁴⁸ HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 142, 164. Cass had cited Cooper as an offender in Cass, "Article III," 373. Cooper's place in the world of ideas propounded by Heckewelder, Cass, and Schoolcraft is the subject of Barbara A. Mann, "Forbidden Ground: Racial Politics and Hidden Identity in James Fennimore Cooper's

In his philology, Schoolcraft noted the common elements of what Du Ponceau called polysynthesis in the Indian languages and he seemed to think that this held epistemological significance. However, echoing what he had told Cass years before, he believed that the “most important distinction...which belongs to the language, and that which most rigidly pervades its forms,” was the division of words of “*animate* and *inanimate*, or personal and impersonal, carrying also the idea of noble or ignoble,” which “merges the ordinary distinctions of gender.” He reflected that this feature was “freely resorted to, in their oral tales and mythological fables.”¹⁴⁹ That was the direction his research took him. As he told readers of his *Algic Researches* (1839), “Language constituted the initial point of inquiry, but it did not limit it.” Schoolcraft found it “necessary to examine the mythology of the tribes as a means of acquiring an insight into their mode of thinking and reasoning, the sources of their fears and hopes, and the probable origin of their opinions and institutions.” For this too, he relied upon his wife, her brother George, and other Indians who resided near the Sault.¹⁵⁰

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Cass began his inquiries in the immediate aftermath of Du Ponceau’s and Heckewelder’s claims for the beauty, clarity, and regularity of native grammatical constructions, confident that he could refute them. With Monroe’s call for removal and the debates that followed, Cass

Leatherstocking Tales” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toledo, 1997). On Cooper’s linguistic ideas, see David Simpson, *The Politics of American English, 1776-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 205-16; Lawrence Rosenfeld, “*The Last of the Mohicans* and the Languages of America,” *College English* 60.1 (January 1998): 9-30.

¹⁴⁹ HRS, *Schoolcraft’s Expedition*, 62.

¹⁵⁰ HRS, *Algic Researches*, 1: 11-12. On Schoolcraft’s work on oral literature, see Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, ch. 5; Scott Michaelsen, *The Limits of Multiculturalism: Interrogating the Origins of American Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), ch. 1; Joshua David Bellin, *The Demon of the Continent: Indians and the Shaping of American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), ch. 5; Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5; Parker, “Introduction” to Parker ed., *Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky*. Compare Schoolcraft’s ideas to those of Walter Channing, who believed, since “national literature seems to be...the legitimate product, of a national language,” as long as Indians resisted linguistic assimilation, citizens could not access native tradition and “American Language and Literature” would remain “barren”. See [Walter Channing], “Essay on American Language and Literature,” *North American Review*, September 1815, 307, 313-14. Schoolcraft cultivated an “American” literature despite what he saw as the Indians refusal to assimilate.

compiled his materials and published his views, which only led to more debate, philological and political. Besides Du Ponceau and Cass, Gallatin and Schoolcraft, countless others took up the questions of just what traits marked Indian languages as different and whether these reflected Indians' current social condition or something more fundamental, and perhaps even innate to Indians alone. What did their languages, if anything, reveal of Indians' potential civilization? These were formidable questions made more pressing by the fact that the Southern languages (Cherokee and others), the languages spoken by the Indians at whom removal was immediately directed, were the least known of those east of the Mississippi. At that point, the War Department – for the first time, but not the last – sought a definitive body of philological facts that could potentially inform the government's policies. But this they could not achieve. Natives educated enough to provide detailed grammatical information were few and not always cooperative; U.S. interpreters were rarely capable of providing the linguistic analysis required; and the imperatives of imperial rivalry demanded that the U.S. employ one of its most talented students of language to negotiate with Britain. The United States claimed sovereignty over Indians tried to strengthen this through mastery of their languages, but dominion was far from complete.

Even more so than in the debates over what grammatical structures revealed of a “savage” or “Indian” mind, the Cherokees became the focus of another, parallel debate in these same years. Just as Cass was preparing his initial review, U.S. officials received startling news that a Cherokee named Sequoyah had invented an alphabet. Its reception became inextricable from larger contests over Indian languages and intellect, civilization and incorporation.

CHAPTER 6.

SYLLABARY, ASSIMILATION, AND AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

Thomas L. McKenney sat down to write to John Pickering in April 1826, about a year after Charles Hicks, the Moravian-educated Second Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, had forwarded to the Office of Indian Affairs a syllabic alphabet that an unlettered Cherokee by the name of Sequoyah (also known as George Guess, Guest, Guyst, or Gist), had designed for the Cherokee language. Pickering was an interested observer. Years before he had devised a uniform orthography that would standardize the recording of unwritten Indian languages, and at that very moment was working with David Brown, a Cherokee student at Andover, under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, to compose a grammar for the language. He sent copies of each to McKenney, since they pertained to Indian affairs. It was enough to convince McKenney that Pickering deserved to “rank high as a Philologist.”

The former also shared that he had “always...esteemed language to be the very centre of the power which is to reform and bless our Indians – language I mean, not only of the right sort, itself, but rightly applied.” “Prefer[ring] ours to be put into their hands, than any other,” McKenney envisioned English as the means “to effect the change in the character and destiny of these people” by providing “the lever by which they are to elevate themselves into intellectual and moral distinction.” While English was necessary for Indians to “find their way into privileges, intellectual, and moral, and religious,” McKenney saw this as but “one end of the great avenue.” Calling to Pickering’s attention to Lewis Cass’s review and Albert Gallatin’s project, he revealed that the opposite terminus was “knowledge of their Language, and it is that which we must enter if we would become familiar with their origin, (if you please) at least with their

wonderful history, and with those, doubtless, interesting and striking signs by which they have expressed, and do yet communicate their thoughts to one another.”¹

The work of philologists demonstrated the increasing efforts to master the historical and psychological significance of Indian languages. However, Sequoyah’s invention suggested that the Indian nation that had most fully adapted white agriculture and arts was unwilling to travel the “great avenue” that would abandon their native language as a vestige of the past and adopt English to become “civilized.” Precisely because language was a crucial ground for determining the possibility of incorporation and the progress of civilization, the syllabary became an object of rapt attention and considerable controversy during and after the removal controversy of the 1820s-30s. Its significance was unclear. Sequoyah and other traditionalist Cherokees hoped that the syllabary would allow for Cherokee improvement while insulating the nation from missionary attempts to undermine the Cherokee language and their religious and social institutions. Yet others insisted that by dramatically increasing Cherokee literacy the syllabary could be a boon to education and conversion.

Besides the problem of Indian incorporation, the knot that the syllabary most clearly exposed in these years was the tortuous tangle of language, civilization, and race, as philologists, ethnologists, policy makers, and citizens debated three discrete, but interrelated questions. First, did writing cause or even signify civilization, and more deeply, what was the relationship between language and the evolution of group from one stage of society to another? Second, what were the relative linguistic merits of Sequoyah’s system and were its traits in some way distinctly “Indian”? Third, was the inventor (if, indeed, it was, strictly speaking, an “invention”), who possessed white ancestry, as did its most prominent boosters, properly “Indian” at all?

The syllabary became a mirror, which returned to gazing inquirers a reflection of exactly what they expected to find. Thus, like the Cherokees themselves, white philanthropists,

¹ Thomas L. McKenney to John Pickering, 18 April 1826, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 3: 39-40. For Charles Hicks having transmitted the syllabary, see McKenney to Hicks, 29 March 1825, *ibid.*, 1: 432-33.

philologists, and physiologists largely used the syllabary for their own ends. Fissures regarding the pace and extent of acculturation within the Cherokee Nation; among missionaries, federal officials, and educated Indians regarding the place of the English language in Indian “civilization”; and among philologists and ethnologists over the connection between language and social condition merged between 1825 and 1840. Neither ethnology nor philology offered scientific support of the syllabary as proof that civilized Cherokees should remain on their lands. The definition of true “Indians” came to exclude “half-breeds” and those of “alphabet” and “civilization” to exclude what was not English. While never central to removal, debates over Sequoyah’s syllabary constituted crucial moments in the struggle over what Indian “civilization” could mean and in the shift from an ethnology focused on what language could reveal of Indian history and psychology to one focused on biological factors. The latter silenced educated Indians who had gained increasing prominence in political opposition and ethnological authority.

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Sequoyah was raised by his mother, who spoke only Cherokee, and, although his father or grandfather was a white man (presumed to be a Scottish trader), he was raised among full-bloods. Beyond the age of schooling when the first mission to the Cherokees was established in 1801, he never learned English, but he became a craftsman, a shepherd, and a renowned metalworker and artist. He was among the Indian warriors who defeated the U.S. army under St. Clair (1791); he was prominent in the controversial attempt by some Cherokees to sell the southern portion of Cherokee lands, thus heeding Jefferson’s call for removal in an attempt to separate themselves from whites altogether; and he fought under Andrew Jackson against the Red Stick Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814). Since he had found a letter on the body of a prisoner taken at the Battle of the Wabash (St. Clair’s defeat), he wondered over the mystery and power of writing, but for many years gave the subject only sporadic attention. According to a Cherokee’s account in 1835, recorded by Major George Lowrey, second principal chief of the nation, Sequoyah’s immediate inspiration came while visiting friends in Sauta, a Cherokee village

along the Tennessee River, in 1820. Conversation turned to whites' ability to read marks on paper and understand it as if they heard spoken words. To most of the company, it seemed beyond belief. After silently listening to the conversation's turns, Sequoyah told his company: "I can see no impossibility in conceiving how it is done. The white man is no magician." Indeed, the principle seemed easy. "It is said that in ancient times when writing first began, a man named Moses – made marks upon a stone. I, too, can make marks upon a stone. I can agree with you by what name to call those marks and that will be writing and can be understood." He picked up a small stone and began scratching it with a pin; but his friends laughed and told him that he "would find stones very unentertaining company."

Sequoyah then began to devote considerable thought to how one might convey speech to the eyes. Sequoyah initially attempted to use pictures, but quickly decided that arbitrary characters could represent speech more easily. First, he tried to represent entire sentences, then words, and finally had the insight that a limited number of sounds composed all words in the Cherokee language. At that point, his task became to isolate each sound and designate it by its own character, a process in which his wife and daughter assisted him. He caught sounds by listening to conversations and speeches among his people and either invented characters or used those he found in Bibles, spelling books, and newspapers scattered through the country. The Cherokee syllables he assigned to each character had no relationship with the phonetic value that a given letter possessed in English or any other language. Despite opposition from other Cherokees – on grounds ranging from foolishness to witchcraft – he and Ayohkah, his daughter, eventually reduced the entire language to eighty-five syllabic characters, which Sequoyah put to political use in an account of Cherokee boundaries with the states of Georgia and Tennessee, the first composition in his syllabary.²

² Quotations from Major George Lowrey [Cherokee] and John Howard Payne [1835], "Notable Persons in Cherokee History: Sequoyah or George Gist," *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, 2 (1977): 385-93, at 388. Other details are taken from other contemporary accounts. See Samuel L. Knapp, *Lectures on American Literature, with Remarks on some Passages of American History* (New York, 1829), 25-29; Thomas L.

Most, at first, were skeptical that Sequoyah had invented what he claimed. According to In an effort to convince Cherokees that he had truly invented Cherokee writing, Sequoyah turned to George Lowrey, a cousin and prominent man, and suggested the usefulness of having a record of men's words in council. Lowrey suspected that Sequoyah's memory fooled him into thinking he was reading when he was only recalling. Sequoyah offered Lowrey and others a demonstration with his best student. He handed Ahyokah, his daughter, a page containing each character, the names of which she rattled off instantly. This got his attention, but Lowrey was not fully convinced; it sounded to him more "like Muscogee" than Cherokee. McKenney concluded that Lowrey "was not sufficiently skilled in philology."³

Sequoyah then summoned more of the nation's distinguished men and offered them an explanation as well as a demonstration. He sent Ahyokah out of earshot and asked them to say the name of an object or sentiment, which he wrote down and had one of the other men take to his daughter, who thereupon read it. Sequoyah then repeated this, but with himself walking away, Ahyokah transcribing another's word, and having it brought to him. Those assembled "were

McKenney and James Hall, *The Indian Tribes of North America; with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principal Chiefs* [1836-44], 3 vols., ed. Frederick Webb Hodge (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1933), 1: 130-45. See also Willard Walker and James Sarbaugh, "The Early History of the Cherokee Syllabary," *Ethnohistory*, 40 (1993): 70-94; Grant Foreman, *Sequoyah* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938); and Stan Hoig, *Sequoyah: The Cherokee Genius* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1995).

William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), ch. 17, presents the syllabary alongside the acculturationist education offered by missionaries as rival paths to cultural "revitalization" in the 1820s; Jill Lepore, *A is for American: Letters and other Characters in the Newly United States* [2002] (New York: Vintage, 2003), ch. 3, adds a cursory examination of prominent philological ideas; and Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 78-96, views Sequoyah's invention and Cherokee accounts of it as political refutations of white notions that Indians could not be civilized. This chapter adds a fuller picture of prevailing linguistic ideas and debates, especially in 1820s, demonstrates the multifarious ways in which philologists and ethnologists used the syllabary as demonstrations of their own theories, and shows how an ascendant ethnological methodology undermined the significance of the independent practice of "philology" by Sequoyah and excluded Indian participation. Other ethnohistorical works that treat writing (but not the syllabary), are Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), ch. 3, and Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), ch. 8.

³ McKenney and Hall, *Indian Tribes of North America*, 139-40. On Ross's possible participation, which is ultimately unclear, see Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1974), 263, 268.

wonder struck; but not entirely satisfied.”⁴ Sequoyah suggested the tribe select several promising boys (despite his daughter’s abilities) to learn it, a group that included John Maw, one of Knapp’s interpreters. After several anxious months, they were examined and proved the viability of Sequoyah’s system. Most could learn the syllabary and begin teaching it to others in mere days.⁵

In 1824 Sequoyah left for the Arkansas country, joining a portion of the Cherokee people who had migrated there in an effort to distance themselves from white settlement. His syllabary allowed them to maintain regular contact with their friends and relations in the “Old Country,” since by the middle of that decade a majority of Cherokees could read and write their language. In 1828, a traveler through the main body of the Cherokee nation found “Cherokee letters painted or cut on the trees by the road side, on fences, houses, and often on pieces of bark or board lying about the houses. Cherokees taught one another and cut or drew the letters with whatever materials were at hand.” In 1832, Principal Chief John Ross sent Sequoyah a silver medal that the nation had awarded him, inscribed on opposite sides in English and Sequoyan, as the syllabary was called. The Cherokee council hoped to confer it upon the inventor in a formal council, but he never returned. Ross congratulated him on his “transcendent invention” and predicted that Sequoyah’s name would “serve as an index for the aboriginal tribes, or nations, similarly to advance in science and respectability.”⁶

The syllabary’s remarkable appeal in the Cherokee nation was largely due to the alternate path it offered to education, bypassing English and Christian instruction. Sequoyah had intended precisely that. He had long advocated separation from white society and many others in the nation opposed Cherokees’ rapid adaptation of the objects and behaviors of what U.S. citizens

⁴ Knapp, *Lectures*, 27

⁵ “Cherokees. Syllabic Alphabet Invented by a Native,” *Missionary Herald*, 22.2 (February 1826), 48.

⁶ Evarts to Anderson, 11 March 1828, in Ebenezer Carter Tracy, *Life of Jeremiah Evarts* (Boston, 1845), 306; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 352-53, discusses the use of Sequoyan uniting east and west; “Description of the Cherokee Alphabet,” *American Annals of Education*, April 1832, 184; John Ross to George Gist, 12 January 1832, in Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Papers of John Ross* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 1: 234-35. For a description of the medal, see McKenney and Hall, “Sequoyah or George Guess,” 142.

called “civilization,” which had steadily accelerated among the elite since the end of the eighteenth century. Men, including Sequoyah himself, had taken to raising livestock and learning trades such as blacksmithing and carpentry; women began spinning and weaving; and the wealthiest owned slaves. The Cherokees established an elective legislature as the nation’s government, supplemented with an independent judiciary in 1821. In 1827 a written constitution, printed in the syllabary and in English, declared the Cherokees an independent nation. While this transformation was a cause for joy for those Cherokees seeking change and for whites hoping to “civilize” the Indians, it was a source of friction within the Cherokee community. The syllabary provided a nationalist symbol of a Cherokee culture that did not need Christianity or English, thus deepening divisions between traditionalist and acculturated Cherokees, the latter of whom feared that the former’s linguistic and religious intransigence would cost them their ancestral lands. It also provided the technological means for the majority who opposed assimilation into U.S. society to remain united, east and west of the Mississippi, while shielded from the prying eyes of whites and the acculturated Cherokee elite.⁷

This was not lost on federal officials. An Indian’s soul could be saved without English, but to be incorporated into U.S. society required knowledge of the dominant language. Thomas McKenney, heading the Office of Indian Affairs, most directly confronted the contradiction within the “civilization” program: the quickest mode of education was in native languages, yet this made learning English less necessary. Since Washington’s administration, learning the English language was one of the foremost goals of Indian education, and the possibility of Indian incorporation into U.S. society always proceeded from the assumption that those Indians would

⁷ For the role of the syllabary, see William G. McLaughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 184-86; idem, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 350-54, at 352. For the development of Cherokee society more broadly in these years, see *ibid.*; Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville University of Tennessee Press, 1979), ch. 4; idem, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), chs. 5-7; Fay A. Yarborough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), chs. 1-2.

shed their language along with tribal identity and a hunting subsistence.⁸ When McKenney first learned of the syllabary, he told the Secretary of War that the “Cherokees...are in advance of all other tribes. They may be considered as a civilized people.” However, he continued, this was not the issue. The crux was whether they could be incorporated into U.S. society.⁹

When he first learned of the invention, McKenney decided to make “the public acquainted with the extraordinary discovery,” and used a portion of the civilization fund to publish a copy. Even then, he stressed that “the English is the language the Indians should be taught,” since their “rights in a great measure depend on their knowledge of it, and all their intercourse must be carried on by means of it.” English was necessary to incorporation and must be the means of civilization. He feared that the syllabary would provide the rising generation of Cherokees with an alternative. He “admire[d] the genius and perseverance of Guess,” but despite the amazing reports of more than half of the nation becoming literate in the space of five years, he was “not yet clear whether it may not prove an evil, rather than a good to these people.”¹⁰

The syllabary concerned not only policy makers but many missionaries too. The study of Indian languages was widely perceived to proceed from philanthropic motives. The work of Heckewelder, Du Ponceau, and Pickering celebrated the beauty, strength, and regularity of the Indian languages. Heckewelder’s other writings praised Indian virtue and condemned white treachery; and the pair’s publications appeared, coincidentally but importantly, the same year

⁸ For this stance in the formative years of U.S. policy, see the comments of Washington, T. Pickering, and Jefferson, in chs. 2, 3, 7, above. See also Jedediah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs* [1822] (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), 113-14, 226, 356-57.

⁹ See McKenney to Barbour, 13 December 1825, 499-500. McKenney recommended voluntary removal and the incorporation of the new land as an Indian territory on the path to statehood. He continued to advocate for this, even after he denounced the coercive removal of the Jackson administration. See Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney*, ch. 11.

¹⁰ TLM to William Chamberlain, 25 July 1825; TLM to Thomas Henderson, 30 January 1829, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 2: 103; 5: 285-86. For expressions of the syllabary as an aid, rather than an impediment to incorporation, see “The Cherokees,” *Religious Intelligencer*, 10.6 (9 July 1825), 87-88; [no title], *Daily National Journal* [Washington, D.C.], 2.585 (1 July 1826), [3].

Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act. However, there was no consensus on the place of those studies in the broader missionary effort.¹¹

While Pickering, Du Ponceau, and Heckewelder saw John Eliot's seventeenth-century texts as monuments to formerly great missionary work, the Calvinist minister Lyman Beecher, saw it only as a monument to misplaced effort: "By how few had Eliot's Bible ever been read!" Since the Bible was "a revelation of *new* truths, previously unknown to mankind," translation into the seemingly countless different Indian languages and dialects required the invention of countless new words, "a Herculean labor." Giving an ordination sermon for a group of American Board missionaries in 1818, Beecher instructed that they were "not to be employed in translating the scriptures, nor, to any great extent, in the ungrateful labor of learning the barbarous and barren languages of the Indian tribes." Instead, he advised: "Let the Indians of our country be taught to read and speak the English language, and it will effect more towards civilizing and Christianizing them, than all human means besides."¹² Beecher spoke the sentiments of the American Board at that time. Although it had initially supported "translation and publication of the Bible in languages spoken by unevangelized nations," in 1816 it declared that English was the

¹¹ For an example, see the attitudes of the New-York Missionary Society and its advisors in *The First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society, presented May 8, 1817* (New-York, 1817), 18; *Second Annual Report of the American Bible Society, presented May 14, 1818* (New-York, 1818), 15-19. See also the favorable opinions of native language education in Evan Jones, "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Evan Jones to a friend in this city, dated Valley Towns, Cherokee Nation, Aug. 17. 1822," *Latter-Day Luminary*, October 1822, 310-13. William McLaughlin studies Jones in depth; see William G. McLaughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), chs. 7, 11. See also James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 181, 184-86; Robert F. Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* [1965] (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 33-34, 48-49, 87-88; James Park, "Historical Foundations of Language Policy: The Nez Percé Case," in Robert St. Clair and William Leap, eds., *Language Renewal among American Indian Tribes: Issues, Problems, and Prospects* (Rosslyn, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1982); Ruth Spack, *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), ch. 1.

¹² Lyman Beecher, *The Bible a code of laws; a sermon, delivered in Park Street Church, Boston, Sept. 3, 1817, at the ordination of Mr. Sereno Edwards Dwight, as pastor of that church; and of Messrs. Elisha P. Swift, Allen Graves, John Nichols, Levi Parsons, & Daniel Buttrick, as missionaries to the heathen* (Andover, 1818), 63-64. Ironically, the group included Daniel S. Buttrick, who would become a devoted student of the Cherokee language, but who thought it was "no part of my duty as a missionary to the heathen, to defend their temporal and political rights." See Buttrick to the Corresponding Secretary, 19 April 1833, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 18.3.3, 2, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

key to the missionary effort: “Assimilated in language, they will more readily become assimilated in habits and manners to their white neighbors.” Thus, the “necessity...of making translations of the Scriptures, and of elementary books, into the vernacular languages, is superseded, and the labor and time and expense of doing it are saved.”¹³

Other missionaries disagreed. The Stockbridge missionary John Sergeant advised that would-be missionaries “learn the language of the natives,” since it was “not so barren, but that every doctrine of the gospel can be communicated to them in their own language.” Pointing to the Christian Brotherton Indians, he argued that if “they lose their own language, they will lose with it their national pride and respectability.” Sergeant also lauded the success enjoyed among the Oneidas as a result of Eleazer Williams’s extensive translations. A missionary among the Osages, Benton Pixley, lamented the “laborious undertaking of becoming master of the Indian language,” but insisted that he approached it with “desire,” not “dread.” He thought the translation of Scripture and other works “a most valuable method of advancing the mass of the nation in knowledge, and of improving their morals.”¹⁴

Jedediah Morse, the minister, geographer, and proponent of a robust civilization effort, thickened the ambiguity enveloping philology and philanthropy in a report to the War Department that he submitted following his tour of Indian Territory in the summer of 1820. Morse printed the opinions of Beecher, Sergeant, and Pixley. But despite these and his own praise of the new philological researches, Morse opposed spending resources on these investigations. While he thought that “correct specimens” of Indian languages should be preserved by learned societies, Morse advised: “I should not think it desirable to employ means to preserve any of these Indian languages among the living languages.” He declared himself

¹³ See *Third Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1812), 30; *Seventh Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1816), 12-13; *Ninth Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1818), 23.

¹⁴ Jedediah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs* [1822] (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), 113-14, 226. On this tour and report, see Prucha, *Great Father*, 155-58.

“opposed to the idea of making any very laborious or expensive translations of the Bible, or of any other books, into any of the Indian languages.” Morse concluded: “As fast as possible let Indians forget their own languages, in which nothing is written, and nothing of course can be preserved, and learn ours, which will at once open to them the whole field of every kind of useful knowledge.” In support, he cited a translation of the nineteenth psalm into the Mahican language, which had been prepared by students at the Foreign Mission School, presumably to illustrate the complexity of translation.¹⁵

John Pickering, however, rejected this. In his edition of Edwards’s *Observations*, Pickering cited Morse, and reprinted the same Mahican psalm, seemingly only to reiterate that the languages allowed such translation. The last of its fourteenth verses entreated: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.” Pickering considered his philology not only a contribution to language philosophy and ethnology, but to the missionary effort as well. This work, for Pickering, began with his creation of a uniform orthography, inspired by a conversation not with an Indian, but with a native Hawaiian in 1819. Hiram Bingham of the American Board solicited Pickering’s advice on how to write the language spoken on what were then called the Sandwich Islands. To assist, Bingham brought Thomas Hopoo, a student from the board’s Foreign Mission School. Pickering was interested in the immediate subject as well as its potential implications. The missionary returned to the Hawaiian islands with Pickering’s orthography.¹⁶

Pickering published his thoughts in the *Memoirs* of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. At the most basic level, he argued two points. First, was “the expediency of adopting a *uniform orthography* for the Indian, as well as other languages which have no written characters.” This had been argued at the end of the eighteenth century by Sir William Jones, whom Pickering studied, and more recently by Volney. Pickering did not even acknowledge William Thornton’s

¹⁵ Morse, *Report to the Secretary of War*, 356-57.

¹⁶ Mary Orne Pickering, *Life of John Pickering* (Boston, 1887), 291-92.

“universal alphabet,” winner of the American Philosophical Society’s Magellanic Prize in the early years of the new nation. That Indian languages had no written alphabet that scholars could use to guide them presented both difficulty and opportunity, since “we have only to ascertain...every elementary sound, and then arrange the letters, by which we may choose to represent sounds, in the order of our alphabet.” This would make standardizing a system easier. He also thought it would be “best to adopt as the *basis* of our Indian orthography, what we call the *foreign* sounds of all the vowels.” This was for two reasons: the pronunciation of vowels in German was far more definite than in English, the orthography of which Jones had declared “disgracefully and almost ridiculously imperfect,” and it would facilitate the cooperation of Europeans and U.S. citizens in the study of the American languages.¹⁷

Du Ponceau was impressed with the system that Pickering had devised. He believed that such an orthography, with a classification of languages according to their plans of ideas, were the two “instruments” most necessary for a scientific study of language. In his essay on English phonology, which he read to the APS in May 1817, Du Ponceau had expressed the fear that there may be “no man on earth who has ears to discriminate, and vocal organs to execute all the varieties of sound that exist in human language,” which implied “the great difficulty, if not

¹⁷ JP, “On the Adoption of a Uniform Orthography for the Indian Languages of North America,” *American Academy of the Arts and Sciences Memoirs*, 4.1 (January 1, 1818), 319-20, 325, 327-29, 331. Pickering cites Jones’s “Dissertation” in the first sentence of this essay. For the piece of that paper quoted, see [Sir William Jones], “A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters. By the President,” *Asiatic Researches; or, transactions of the society, instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the history and antiquities, the arts, sciences, and literature, of Asia...Printed verbatim from the Calcutta Edition* (London, 1799), 1: 6-7. Du Ponceau sent Pickering a copy of C.-F. Volney, *L’Alphabet Européen appliqué aux Langues Asiatiques* (Paris, 1819) in July 1820. See Pickering, *Life of JP*, 286-87. For Thornton’s list of invented characters, see [William Thornton], “Cadmus, or a treatise on the Elements of Written Language, illustrating, by a philosophical division of Speech, the Power of each Character, thereby mutually fixing the Orthography and Ortheopy. With an Essay on the mode of teaching the Deaf, or Surd and Consequently Dumb, to Speak,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, o.s., vol. 3 (1793), 277-78. It should be noted that Pickering was also silent on another attempt at a standardized alphabet: William Pelham, *A System of Notation: Representing the Sounds of Alphabetical Characters by a New Application of the Accentual Marks in Present Use* (Boston, 1808) used a complicated system of accent marks, which may have led Pickering, if he knew of it, to reject it also. For the place of Thornton, Jones, Volney, and Pickering in orthographic studies, see Alan Kemp, “Transcription, Transliteration, and the Idea of a Universal Alphabet,” in Joan Leopold, ed., *The Prix Volney: Its History and Significance for the Development of Linguistic Research*, vol. 1b (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 477-99.

impossibility, of representing a universal alphabet.” Yet Du Ponceau told Adelung later that year that “the formation of an universal Alphabet of Sounds” was among the objects the historical committee had in view.¹⁸ Whereas other European countries succumbed to “national honour... forcing their own orthography upon the learned world,” Du Ponceau pleasantly observed in the preface to Zeisberger’s grammar, that the “liberality of American science” made it “free of this prejudice.” He hoped that American philology would “have the honour of giving an example which it is hoped will be more generally followed.”¹⁹ By 1826, Pickering’s system seemed triumphant. The American Board had adopted it in its North American and Pacific missions and the War Department recommended its use in Gallatin’s project.

In the summer of 1823, the young Cherokee David Brown recruited Pickering’s assistance to create a grammar of the Cherokee language that he, the American Board (which may have shifted again following the emergence of the new philology), and other missionaries could use to spread the word to his countrymen. Brown began his white education at Brainerd in the Cherokee Nation, where he and another convert named John Arch (or Atsi), assisted Butrick in creating a Cherokee spelling book.²⁰ From there, Brown traveled to the American Board’s Foreign Mission School, in Cornwall, Connecticut, where he heard “many different heathen youths” speak twelve different languages. In published letters and public lectures, the latter sponsored by the American Board, he challenged whites to accept his own progress as an embodiment of what Cherokees and others could achieve. The only people who would still assert “that an Indian cannot be civilized” were those “eager to help in the destruction of Indians, rather than to aid in reclaiming them from their degra[da]tion.”²¹ He seldom enjoyed the luxury of concentrating solely on his studies. While there, he served as an interpreter for multiple

¹⁸ PSD to Adelung, 16 December 1817, HLC Letter Books, 2: 1-2; PSD, “English Phonology,” 230.

¹⁹ PSD, “A Grammar of the Language of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. Translated from the German ms. of the late Rev. David Zeisberger, for the American Philosophical Society, by Peter Stephen Du Ponceau.” In *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 3 [n.s.] (1830), 89-91.

²⁰ Phillips and Phillips, eds., *Brainerd Journal*, 145, 151.

²¹ *Fifteenth Annual Report of the ABCFM* (Boston, 1824), 94; David Brown, “Letter to the Treasurer,” *Roanoke Religious Correspondent*, November 1821, 63-64.

delegations of the Arkansas Cherokees to Washington, helping them negotiate land claims. However, any thoughts white Americans had that the main body of Cherokees removing west of the Mississippi were misguided: “you as well attempt to send them to Greenland or to Africa... unless the gigantic United States should fall, sword in hand, upon the innocent babe of the Cherokee Nation, the Indian title to this land will remain so long as the sun and moon endure.”²²

Pickering invited Brown to his home repeatedly to collaborate in their composition of a Cherokee grammar. This would fulfill an important goal for philology and missionary work, which acquired greater importance with Monroe’s call for a comprehensive removal policy. While he was attending to his studies, his lectures, and his diplomatic work, Brown had little time for the linguistic assignments Pickering needed to accomplish work on the grammar: “You have no doubt been anxious to hear from me, and receive answers to your questions in relation to the Cherokee Grammar. Many things prevented me from attending to the questions.” Brown felt harried: “Perpetually am I going from one place to another, -- which of course renders it impossible for me to study. But I am determined to find time for the Cherokee Grammar.” Eventually Pickering succeeded in compiling enough material to begin printing his grammar in 1825, but difficulties remained.²³

Brown longed to be a missionary, to send “the word of redeeming life” to Cherokees and others, by which alone they could be “translated from the dominions of darkness unto the glorious

²² David Brown wrote two letters to the *Richmond Family Visitor*, dated 27 April and 2 September 1825. I have not been able to find these in the original, but I have examined the published transcriptions in “Cherokee Nation,” *Christian Watchman*, 2 July 1825, 1 (and reprinted as “The Cherokees,” *Religious Intelligencer*, 9 July 1825, 87), and in McKenney to Secretary of War, 13 December 1825, which was extracted in *The Western Luminary*, 12 April 1826, 625-28. On Brown’s education, see Joyce B. Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips, eds., *The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 152-56, 489 n.60. On the role of the Brown family in the Cherokee missions, see Mary Alves Higginbotham, “The Creek Path Mission,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 1 (1976): 72-86.

²³ David Brown to John Pickering, 4 September 1823; and Brown to Pickering, [undated], in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 332-33. The result of Pickering’s and Brown’s collaboration was JP, “A Grammar of the Cherokee Language” [1825]. Smalls Special Collections, University of Virginia. This was the unbound, but printed, work that Pickering sent to Thomas Jefferson. In this work, Pickering offered a list of abstract words that Cherokee could express, including, among others, hardness, life, and anger. But because many nouns in the language incorporated an inseparable pronoun, for the word *Utahiyusv*, he was left with a translation of “truth (his).” See *ibid.*, 33.

kingdom of Christ.”²⁴ After joining the Arkansas Cherokees as a missionary, he proudly told the American Board: “On the Sabbath, I interpret English sermons, and sometimes preach myself in the sweet language of *Tsallakee* [Cherokee].”²⁵ Brown was proud of his tongue, believing that “our native language, in its philosophy, genius, and symphony, is inferior to few, if any, in the world.”²⁶ He labored tirelessly to produce Cherokee texts that would facilitate the conversion process. Besides his work on the Cherokee spelling book and Cherokee grammar, Brown was also working on a translation of the New Testament into the Cherokee language with Lowrey, his father-in-law. There was no Cherokee dictionary and his and Pickering’s grammar was still incomplete, so the work went slowly, even more so since the translation itself was a process with multiple stages. They began with the consultation of both the English translation as well as the original Greek New Testament, which Brown transcribed first according to Pickering’s uniform orthography, a plan that Brown considered “not without its defects,” and then into the syllabary, which had been “universally adopted in the nation.” The syllabary too, in Brown’s mind, could be improved: “I would not rob this distinguished Cherokee of the honour justly due him for his philosophical researches, but if he or any other person, does not engage to improve the system, I must tender my humble services to the subject.” He never had the time. Not living to see that Cherokee title to their ancestral lands would prove insufficient to prevent their coerced removal, Brown died of consumption in 1829.

Pickering avidly followed the steadily deteriorating political situation of the Cherokee Nation throughout the 1820s. As he told Wilhelm von Humboldt, the plight of the Cherokees was especially “embarrassing” because the United States had been encouraging the Cherokees “to adopt the condition of a civilized people.” As in philology, Pickering was mindful of U.S. reputation in Europe and he feared that the government might “stain its character.” Despite his

²⁴ David Brown, “Foreign Mission School,” *The Roanoke Religious Correspondent*, November 1821, 63; David Brown, “Extract of a Letter to a Lady in Wilmington,” *Circular*, 1 October 1824, 87

²⁵ David Brown, “David Brown,” *Zion’s Herald*, 2 February 1825, 2.

²⁶ Brown to *Richmond Family Visitor*, 2 September 1825, enclosed in McKenney to Secretary of War, 12 December 1825, in *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 2: 499-500.

political sympathies, however, Pickering dismissed the syllabary as a setback. He told Humboldt, a man who had given similar attention to the American languages: “Guest...who is called by his countrymen ‘The Philosopher,’ was not satisfied with the alphabet of letters or single sounds which we white people had prepared for him...but he thought fit to devise a new syllabic alphabet, which is quite contrary to our notion of a useful alphabetic system.” Pickering acknowledged that Sequoyah had created the syllabary “by his own analysis,” but he concluded that the result was “much to be regretted,” both in how it would impair “communication between these Indians and the white people” and because the syllabary itself was “very unphilosophical.” Regardless, “either by force of national pride” or because of the “greater convenience” of the syllabary, its use had spread “in the most inconceivable manner....So strong is their partiality for this national alphabet, that our missionaries have been obliged to yield.”²⁷ Once Pickering learned that the Cherokees “have got a whim of having a *syllabic* alphabet,” he told Du Ponceau that the “Cherokee Grammar is stopped.”²⁸ It was never completed.

Pickering and the American Board had hoped for the practical utility of a grammar and for the adoption of a standardized method of writing unwritten native languages around the world. The syllabary threatened that plan and the American Board wavered over the propriety of using it at all. When the American Board, the largest missionary society in the United States, reported the invention of the syllabary, it acknowledged that it was “likely to exert considerable influence on the national intelligence,” but this was not an unmixed good. The board warned “the

²⁷ JP to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 27 November 1827, 29 March 1830, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 352-53, 379-80. Pickering gave a more impartial account of the syllabary, along with a grammatical sketch of the Cherokee language, in [John Pickering], “Indian Languages of America,” in the Appendix to Lieber, ed., *Encyclopaedia Americana*, 6: 581-600. Interestingly, he sent a copy to the man who was then in the midst of preparing the prosecution’s case in *Worcester v. Georgia*. See William Wirt to JP, 5 August 1831, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 379-80, 385.

²⁸ Pickering to PSD, 5 December 1825, excerpted in Thomas A. Kirby, “Jefferson’s Letters to Pickering,” in Kirby and Henry Bosley Woolf, eds., *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1949), 262, n. 19

intelligent Cherokees” that the “general use of this alphabet, so unlike to every other” would shut out the “respect and sympathy of other nations.”²⁹

Working among the Cherokees, Samuel A. Worcester had to convince the board to use the syllabary to its advantage. In addition to bearing imprisonment to allow the Cherokees’ voice to be heard by the Supreme Court, Worcester was the most prominent white authority on the syllabary and on the Cherokee language in these years. That was only the case after he learned it from the educated Cherokees David Steiner and Elias Boudinot (born Buck Watie, and taking the name of the prominent philanthropist and author of the *Star in the West*).³⁰ Worcester was “not insensible” of the advantages of a standardized orthography, and he did not think it would be impossible to teach English using it. “In point of simplicity,” Worcester emphasized, “Guess has still the pre-eminence; and in no language, probably, can the art of reading be acquired with nearly the same facility.” Whether the national alphabet was superior was immaterial, for it was the “impression they have, and it is not to be eradicated.” To even attempt an orthographic substitution, the board would “have to overcome strong feelings of disappointment, to kindle enthusiasm in the place of aversion, and by the assiduous labor of years, to attain, probably at best, what... is already attained.” In sum: “If books are printed in Guess’s character, they will be read; if in any other, they will be useless.” In 1827, Worcester was adamant that the Cherokee nation faced a “crisis” and the mission must educate as many and as quickly as possible: “a few

²⁹ “Cherokees. Syllabic Alphabet Invented by a Native,” *Missionary Herald*, 22.2 (February 1826), 49.

³⁰ On his initial foray into linguistic studies, see *Seventeenth Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1826), 56. For his “systematic arrangement” (i.e. ordered according to the English ideas) of the syllabary, see Samuel A. Worcester, “Cherokee Alphabet,” *Cherokee Phoenix*, 21 February 1828, reprinted as “Explanation of the Sequoyah Syllabary,” in Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick, eds., *New Echota Letters*, 5-9; at the time this was disseminated to a wider audience as “Description of the Cherokee Alphabet,” *American Annals of Education*, April 1832, 181-84. Willard Walker and James Sarbaugh have debunked the idea that Worcester devised some of the characters themselves, see Walker and Sarbaugh, “Early History of the Cherokee Syllabary.” For his contribution to the War Department’s effort to compile philological information, see Gallatin, *Synopsis*, 1. For a linguistic exchange with the ethnologist of dubious repute, see “Dialogue with Constantine Samuel Rafinesque,” in Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick, eds., *New Echota Letters*, 14-33. For a description of his encounter with the Cherokee language and working on the Cherokee press, see Althea Bass, *Cherokee Messenger* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 31-50, 69-89; on his imprisonment and lawsuit, see *ibid.*, 115-60.

years may decide its fate: those few should be occupied in the diligent use of means the most efficacious towards their moral and intellectual improvement.”³¹

Even more alarming to policy makers and many missionaries, others were attempting to extend the method that Sequoyah had established. The American Board missionary to the Choctaws, Loring S. Williams, lobbied for the mission to abandon the system devised by Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, and the Choctaw David Folsom, which was based on Pickering’s orthography. Instead, after witnessing the “invention & successful experiments of Mr. Guess,” Williams suggested his own “Plan for writing the Choctaw Language with Characters denoting Syllabic Sounds,” which he “venture[d]” to assert could teach Choctaw to read their language in six weeks, which would be superior to the “long course of instruction in the use of the English characters” of the Pickeringian system. “Who can but admire what the Lord is doing in the Cherokee Nation by means of the Syllabic System!,” he exclaimed to the board, and added a reminder: “a system that would answer for the Choctaws, would also apply to the Chickasaw language with very little variation.”³²

Other Indians, too, looked to the Cherokee syllabary and attempted to apply Sequoyah’s lessons. The Ojibwa missionary and translator Peter Jones also came to embrace a syllabary by the 1850s. Jones, who had initially used Roman letters to record the Ojibwa language had second thoughts after witnessing the remarkably rapid extension of the syllabary. He pointed not only to the system’s obvious success in the Cherokee nation but also to James Evans’s and Thomas Hurlbert’s successful application of a syllabic alphabet to the Cree language, which was cognate to Ojibwa. Jones became convinced that “new characters should be invented, something like the Cherokee....All that the Indian has to do is to learn the characters, and when he has done so he

³¹ “Cherokees. Progress of Religion,” *Missionary Herald*, 23.7 (July 1827), 212-13

³² Loring S. Williams to [Corresponding Secretary], 28 December 1825; “A Plan for Writing the Choctaw Language with Characters denoting Syllabic Sounds,” *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 18.3.4, 3: 57; 4: 283. On Choctaw language study and the successful non-syllabic orthography, see *ibid.*, 3: 76, 283, Houghton Library, Harvard University. On Choctaw missionary philology in this period, see Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 83-91.

can read and write the language.”³³ Unrecognized at the time, another instance of the syllabary’s spread beyond the Cherokees could be found on Mount Hope Rock in Bristol, Rhode Island. Referring to the seventeenth-century Wampanoag “King Philip,” whose opposition to whites was idealized in the removal era, someone, perhaps Zereviah Gould Mitchell, a Wampanoag descendent of Philip, or her Cherokee husband, Thomas Mitchell, carved Wampanoag sounds into the stone using Sequoyan characters. It read “Metacomet, Great Sachem.”³⁴

The Cherokee alphabet also attracted at least one speaker of the distantly related Iroquoian languages: the philologically and politically ambitious descendent of puritan settlers and Catholic Caughnawaga Mohawks, Eleazer Williams. Likely after learning of the Cherokee alphabet’s success, he experimented with a syllabary of his own. Because Mohawk syllables did not necessarily end in vowel sounds, as did their Cherokee counterparts, Williams was left with a far more cumbrous task than Sequoyah. He devised close to two hundred characters and attached them to distinct syllables before discontinuing the effort. It may have seemed a Sisyphean task, considering that when he had revised Joseph Brant’s translation of the Book of Common Prayer years before, he had reduced Mohawk sounds to a mere eleven Roman letters.³⁵

Joining Cherokees in the use of a syllabary must have seemed a poor trade, even for one, who, like Williams, attempted to use language to bring different Indian groups together, albeit under his own leadership. According to a scholar at the turn of the century, Williams’ translations mingled Mohawk and Oneida, the languages in which he raised and among whom he labored.³⁶ According to his associate Albert G. Ellis, his power lay in his linguistic skills: “it was this thorough knowledge of the Mohawk, his mother tongue, and the captivating, forcible, elegant

³³ Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), *History of the Ojebway Indians; with Especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity* (London, 1861), 187-90, at 190.

³⁴ Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and Origins of American Identity* [1998] (New York: Vintage, 1999), 227-32.

³⁵ Gen. Albert G. Ellis, “Recollections of Rev. Eleazer Williams,” *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 8 (1879): 322-52, at 330. For a ms. syllabic orthography, see Eleazer Williams Papers, Newberry Library, 2: 28.

³⁶ William Martin Beauchamp, quoted in James Constantine Pilling, *Bibliography of the Iroquoian Language* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1888), 168.

use he made of it, that gave him such a hold on the Oneidas, and all other Indians who heard him.” Accepting payments from the Ogden Land Company, which was doing all it could to extinguish Indian title in the regions surrounding the Erie Canal, Williams put that his linguistic power to use by effecting an emigration of New York Indians to the region surrounding Green Bay in the Michigan Territory, which, in the eyes of some was a noble plan for “the social regeneration of the aborigines,” to others a daring scheme to establish “an Indian empire” with himself at the head.³⁷

Williams also undertook another daunting linguistic labor. Besides David Brown, Williams was the only person of native descent to undertake to compose a grammar of their language in these years. Williams alone completed one, using Roman letters rather than syllabic characters. In June 1838 Williams sent Du Ponceau “the Indian Grammar which I had promised,” offering that the philosophical society president was “at full liberty to make such alterations or put in such a form as you may think proper.”³⁸ Shortly thereafter, Du Ponceau laid the grammar before the society’s Historical and Literary Committee, which resolved that it was “worthy of publication in the next volume” of the committee’s transactions.³⁹ Yet, more than a decade later, it still had not reached the learned. By the time he brought the Mohawk grammar again to the committee’s attention in 1854, he had become widely ridiculed for his claims to be the “Lost Dauphin,” son of the deposed Louis XVI, who had been spirited away to North

³⁷ Ellis, “Recollections,” 331-33; Hanson, *Lost Prince*, 295.

³⁸ Eleazer Williams to PSD, 24 June 1838, Gratz Collection, Case 8, Box 20. Laurence Hauptman characterizes Williams as “a charismatic but unbalanced ecclesiastical leader of Mohawk ancestry.” See Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests*, p. 27. On the Oneida migration, see Reginald Horsman, “The Origins of Oneida Removal to Wisconsin” [1987], in Laurence M. Hauptman and L. Gordon McLester III, eds., *Oneida Indian Journey: From New York to Wisconsin, 1784-1860* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

³⁹ An annotation on the grammar itself says that the title was read at a general meeting of the APS on 5 October 1838. See the title page of Eleazer Williams, “Grammar of the Mohawk Dialect of the Iroquois Language, of the Five Ancient Confederated Nations. Containing rules and exercises, intended to exemplify the Indian syntax, according to the best authorities, preceded by succinct rules relative to the pronunciation,” 168-71, ms. at Missouri Historical Society. [I consulted the microfilm copy at APS.] The committee resolved it worthy of publication twice. See Minutes of the Historical and Literary Committee, 10 July 1840, 8 January 1841, APS. At the latter meeting, the committee also pronounced “Notions sur la langue des Sioux,” a manuscript by the French émigré and U.S. topographical engineer Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, worthy of publication, but which was likewise unacted upon.

America to escape impending execution during the French Revolution.⁴⁰ Williams had asked Du Ponceau to present the grammar to the society on “the express condition that it should be published—this being my sole object in making the donation.” Realizing that “there appears to be no prospect of its present publication,” and since he had “present use for it,” Williams “regretfully” requested that the society return the manuscript to him.⁴¹

Just as he had offered proof that Iroquoian languages, unlike Algonquian languages, possessed male and female genders, so in his grammar did he address, elliptically, similarity and difference. Williams demonstrated his authority in the language of philology by stressing the importance of “the decomposing of words” by “analysis.” Explaining how to form an abstract noun from a verb, Williams took “yontroryatha, (histories) from katroris,/ (to say or tell) yeyatonkwa, (a writing desk) from kyatons (I write yekaratonkwa, (fables) from kharatons, (I relate tales) &c.” Williams undermined the very distinction between orality and literacy that underlay the period’s social theory and the U.S. “civilization” effort.⁴² Some may have seen him, and his grammar, as living proof that a change of language brought with it a change of thought; to

⁴⁰ The claim first appeared in the anonymous “History of the Dauphin,” *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review*, July 1849, 11-16. Kenny A. Franks, “Eleazer Williams,” *American National Biography Online*, suggests that the author was Williams himself. For other contemporary accounts of this controversy, apparently fanned by Putnam publishing, see “Have we a Dauphin among Us?,” *Putnam’s Monthly*, February 1853, 194-217; John H. Hanson, *The Lost Prince: Facts tending to Prove the Identity of Louis the Seventeenth, of France, and the Rev. Eleazer Williams, Missionary among the Indians of North America* (New York: Putnam, 1854); “The Last of the Bourbon Story,” *Putnam’s Magazine*, July 1868, pp. 90-101; “Louis XVII. and Eleazer Williams,” *Putnam’s Magazine*, September 1868, 331-39.

⁴¹ Eleazer Williams to the Secretary of the A.P.S., 18 April 1854, APS Archives, APS.

⁴² Eleazer Williams, “Grammar of the Mohawk Dialect of the Iroquois Language, of the Five Ancient Confederated Nations. Containing rules and exercises, intended to exemplify the Indian syntax, according to the best authorities, preceded by succinct rules relative to the pronunciation,” 168-71, ms. at Missouri Historical Society. [I consulted the microfilm copy at APS.] Perhaps thinking of his failure, after a promising beginning, of establishing himself as a pan-Indian leader, or perhaps of his failure to convince the world of his Bourbon descent, Williams also demonstrated, while ostensibly showing the ease and regularity with which one could create for abstract words from Mohawk verbs, how closely related were Mohawk words for hatred, calumny or hasty judgment, and confession (“atatswenhon,” “atatewennotahon,” and “atateronkwanni,” respectively). Taking a shot at philology’s (and Du Ponceau’s) fascination with the recorded length of Indian words, Williams offered *Tethon-wa-tya-ta-wi-tse-rah-ni-non-se-ron-yon-ton-hatyes* as a Mohawk translation of “‘They come here again (expressly) to buy for him afresh all sorts of clothing with it.’ (That is to say, with money).” He quipped: “We may readily believe that such long words are not often met with – If they were of frequent occurrence, we should be under the necessity of renouncing the use of speech, or else incur the danger of losing our breath.”

others he represented a designing “half-breed.” Though a few cited his assistance to their philology, Williams himself was never acknowledged as a philologist.

In 1826, defending the necessity and propriety of education in Indian languages, Cyrus Byington, an American Board missionary who compiled a Choctaw grammar and who had been one of the several who devised a non-syllabic system for writing the language, complained: “Something has been wanted to give an impulse to the untutored mind....to take children from the forest and put them upon learning to read a strange language, as the first exercise of their intellectual faculties, is a greater trial than most people are aware of.” The “readiest way to teach an Indian child the English language,” Byington shared, “is to make him able to read and write his own.” According to the missionary, “in every separate community, in which a hitherto unwritten language is the medium of thought, the missionary should prepare himself to make use of that medium, and introduce into it some of the elements of knowledge.” Then an Indian child could “apprehend...the nature and benefits of alphabetical writing.”⁴³

However, those Cherokees who embraced the syllabary, despite the wishes of Byington and others, did not do so as a first step in some ascent to English. In a letter to Albert Gallatin, John Ridge stressed that a third of the Cherokee nation was literate in English, though he admitted that the syllabary was “very much esteemed” by the remaining two-thirds of the nation that were “unacquainted with the English.” Modern estimates of the nation’s English literacy at that moment are much less expansive: only 15 percent of the nation could speak English and even fewer read it. Yet, the highly acculturated Cherokee elite declared English the official language of the nation, realizing that to reject English officially would have been seen as rejecting

⁴³ *Seventeenth Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1826), 63-64. Byington also composed a grammar; see George Grant Mac Curdy, “American Linguistics in 1852,” *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 2 (1918): 74-75; Daniel G. Brinton, ed., “Grammar of the Choctaw Language. Prepared by the Reverend Cyrus Byington, and Edited by Dr. Brinton,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 11 (1869): 317-67.

incorporation, a politically dangerous perception during the removal controversy.⁴⁴ Georgia Representative Richard Wilde made this clear. Defensive about his state's Indian affairs, he ignored the results of the new philology and defiantly asked Congress: "When gentlemen talk of preserving the Indians, what is it that they mean to preserve?...Their language? No. You intend to supersede their imperfect jargon by teaching them your own rich, copious, energetic tongue."⁴⁵

* * *

Many educated Euro-Americans viewed writing to be so crucial to the development of societies that it alone could mark civilization. According to eighteenth-century philosophers, written characters enhanced each of the functions that philosophy assigned to language itself. Writing allowed people to examine their ideas again and again, which allowed greater understanding of differences and connections among various ideas. This facilitated reflection (which to many defined humanity itself) and allowed knowledge to be transmitted across distances and across generations, as Sequoyah had realized. In *The Origin of Laws, Arts, and Sciences, and their Progress amongst the most ancient Nations* (1761), Antoine Yves Goguet argued that savages remained savage precisely because of "their ignorance of the art of writing....Let this art be introduced amongst these ferocious people, let them once apply themselves to the cultivation of letters, they will be instantly humanized."⁴⁶ In the decade following Sequoyah's invention, the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, pithily described the significance of an alphabet: "the art of writing—the great source of civilization."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ William C. Sturtevant, ed., "John Ridge on Cherokee Civilization," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 6 (1981): 79-81, at 86-88. See also McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 350-54, estimate at 352.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* [1975] (New York: Vintage, 1976), 210-11.

⁴⁶ [Antoine Yves] Goguet, *The Origin of the Laws, Arts, and Sciences, and their Progress amongst the Most Ancient Nations* [1758], 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1761), 1: 190. Though nestled snugly in obscurity at present, he was considered among the "chief writers on government and politics" in the late eighteenth century. See, for example, the account of James Witherspoon's famous lectures on moral philosophy, in Francis L. Broderick, "Pulpit, Physics, and Politics: The Curriculum of the College of New Jersey, 1746-1794," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser., 6 (1949): 42-68, at 65-66 n.68.

⁴⁷ [anon.], "Writing," in Francis Lieber, ed., *Encyclopaedia Americana: A Popular Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Politics and Biography, brought down to the Present Time; including a copious Collection of original Articles in American Biography; on the basis of the seventh edition of the*

Those who considered writing to be a human convention expected it to emerge as society advanced and anticipated that it facilitate progress along the scale of civilization. Looking to contemporary evidence of “savage” nations in America and elsewhere, the English clergyman William Warburton had explained the origin of writing as a natural progression, which mirrored that of language and the mind. As human beings sought greater ease and precision, they advanced from the rude paintings of savages, which represented things; to the “hieroglyphics” of Egypt, Mexico, and China, which metaphorically evoked the characteristics of things; to the alphabetical writing of Europe and western Asia, which represented the component sounds of words rather than the things that words represented.⁴⁸ Even when individuals conceded the existence of “hieroglyphics” of some kind among the Indians of North America, it was difficult to conceive how savages could make the transition from representing things to representing sounds.⁴⁹ Indeed, James Beattie seized on this very difficulty to argue for the divine origin of letters: “Savages articulate their mother tongue, without troubling themselves about the analysis of sentences, or the separation of words; of resolving words into the simple elementary sounds

German Conversations-Lexicon (Philadelphia, 1829-32), 12: 273. For a similar sentiment, see Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Logic*, edited by J. R. de J. Jackson; *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, no. 13 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 15.

⁴⁸ See William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses demonstrated, on the Principles of a Religious Deist, from the Omission of the Doctrine of a Future State of Reward and Punishment in the Jewish Dispensation*, 2d. ed., (London, 1742), 66-154. On eighteenth-century conjectural histories of writing, see Nicholas Hudson, *Writing and European Thought, 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chs. 3-4. For the fullest explication of different varieties of conjectural histories, see Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

⁴⁹ Even politically and philologically opposed Americans of the early nineteenth century, such as the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder and the Indian superintendent Lewis Cass, saw hieroglyphics in North America. See John Heckewelder, “An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations, who once inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, 1 (1819), 117-19; Lewis Cass, “Extract of a Letter from Gov. Cass to the Secretary of War,” *The Philanthropist*, 6.1 (5 May 1821), 3-8. George Catlin, “Dighton Rock,” *New-York Mirror* 16.27 (29 December 1838), 213, denied a “regular system of hieroglyphick writing,” but admitted “vague and unsystematic” modes of “recording dates and historical facts, by symbolic marks and inscriptions.” See also B. H. Coates, “Annual Discourse delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, on the 28th Day of April, 1834, on the Origin of the Indian Population of America,” *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 3.2 (1836); PSD, *A Dissertation on the Nature and Character of the Chinese System of Writing, in a Letter to John Vaughan, Esq.* (Philadelphia, 1838), xiii; Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: collected and prepared under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, per Act of Congress of March 3d, 1847*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, 1851-57), 6: 604-07, 671.

they have no idea: how then should they think of expressing those simple sounds by visible and permanent symbols!”⁵⁰ Others, however, suggested a path by which uncivilized men could achieve this feat. Noting that “the Ethiopians, and some people of India... used only one character to express each syllable of which a word was composed,” Goguet added an intermediate “*syllabic*” stage between hieroglyphics and alphabetical letters, which was “the first step men made to express and represent words, otherwise than by painting objects.” In *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), the book that provided U.S. citizens of the early republic the most authoritative explanation of savage eloquence, Hugh Blair also noted that devising characters to represent component syllables rather than each word allowed language to be “reduced within a much smaller compass.”⁵¹

From the first, white Americans became fascinated with the idea that an Indian had invented writing and two men who had the opportunity to interview Sequoyah, when he was in Washington as part of a delegation of Arkansas Cherokees in the winter of 1828, strove to understand the accomplishment within the terms of philology and civilization, subjects interwoven and especially prominent in light of debates throughout the decade concerning what Indian languages revealed of “the Indian mind.” Samuel L Knapp gave the earliest detailed account of Sequoyah’s invention in his *Lectures on American Literature* (1828), where he exclaimed his amazement that “the Indians themselves are becoming philologists and grammarians.” Knapp wanted to know “as minutely as possible, the mental operations and all the facts in his discovery.” Sequoyah said that he knew “feelings and passions were conveyed by different sounds,” so “the thought struck him to try to ascertain all the sounds in the Cherokee

⁵⁰ James Beattie, *The Theory of Language. In two parts. Part I. Of the Origin and general Nature of Language. Part II. Of universal Grammar* (London, 1788), 109.

⁵¹ Goguet, *Origin of Laws, Arts, and Sciences*, 1: 177-78; Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* [1783], ed. Linda Ferreira-Buckley and S. Michael Halloran (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 72. In 1839, an author for the *Christian Review* placed “syllabical” written languages at a stage between hieroglyphics and “the arbitrary forms of our own,” though this article makes no explicit mention of the Cherokee syllabary; see [anon.], “History of the Progress of Language,” *Christian Review*, 4.15 (1 September 1839), 333-55, at 338.

language. He first “attempted to use pictorial signs, images of birds and beasts” to convey these sounds, but he realized that this was “difficult or impossible and tried arbitrary signs.” Knapp emphasized that Sequoyah began in “the rude state of nature” and only made progress once he was forced to abandon “the excitements of war, and the pleasures of the chase.”⁵²

The prominent missionary organizer Jeremiah Evarts first asked Sequoyah *why* he had invented an alphabet, to which the inventor replied that he had “observed that many things were found out by men, and known in the world; but that this knowledge escaped and was lost for want of some way to preserve it.” Evarts emphasized that Sequoyah had begun by trying to designate a character for each word, but he realized that the limits of memory prohibited such an approach, so “he began to analyze the words, and noticed that the same character would answer for the parts of many words.” Presumably enlightened by Sequoyah or his interpreter, David Brown, Evarts emphasized that a syllabary was feasible in Cherokee because each syllable ended in a vowel sound, which dramatically limited the language’s total number of syllables, and that Sequoyah had further limited the number of signs by designating a common *s* sound with its own character, arriving at a final number of eighty-five. Evarts considered it “one of the most remarkable achievements of the human mind.” Just four days later, Evarts, corresponding secretary of the American Board, recorded that after considerable thought he had decided to oppose removal, which he did in a series of essays signed, “William Penn.”⁵³

Knapp and Evarts emphasized details such as the progression from pictures to arbitrary characters and from attempting to denote whole words to analyzing component sounds, because these confirmed notions of how alphabets might have been invented in the past. Journals went

⁵² Knapp, *Lectures*, 25-26, 28-29. For another references to Sequoyah’s work as philology, see “The Cherokee Alphabet,” *Literary Gazette*, 1.11 (5 December 1834), 84; Thomas L. McKenney to James Barbour, 13 December 1825, *American State Papers. Class II. Indian Affairs*, vol. 2 (Washington, 1834), 499-500; McKenney and Hall, “Sequoyah, or George Guess,” 1: 140. Others thought philology was but the effect of divine inspiration: “The introduction of their alphabet was by the providence of God,” who “no doubt, influenced” Sequoyah “to study out all the different sounds in the Cherokee language”; see “Cherokee Nation,” *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 9.36 (1 May 1835), 143.

⁵³ Evarts to Anderson, 11 March 1828, in Tracy, *Life of Jeremiah Evarts*, 304-07. On Evarts’s opposition to removal, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 200-08.

on to repeat them, emphasizing that a “savage” had invented an alphabet and, in the words of Thomas L. McKenney, “spontaneously caught the spirit...of the civilised man.”⁵⁴ While the white authors who recorded their versions of Sequoyah’s invention may have embellished details to bring Cherokee reality into closer alignment with the conjectures of philosophy, it was the very resonance of those accounts with whites’ preconceived ideas that raised the hopes of Cherokees and others that they could manipulate white notions of writing and civilization during the removal controversy. For instance, the Seneca Ga-I-Wah-Go-Wah, or Nicholson H. Parker, brother of Ely S. Parker, gave an address at the Albany State Normal School in which he cited Sequoyah as evidence of “the superiority of the Indian mind.” He asked his audience: “You hold up Cadmus the inventor of letters as a glorious ornament of the Caucasian race, and justly too; but has not the Indian his Cadmus? What superiority have you over him?” Writing more than a decade after the Trail of Tears, Parker could only wonder what might have been if “his invention had been given a fair trial among redmen in a time of peace and prosperity.”⁵⁵

The most prominent – and the most personally invested – of the Indians who attempted to capitalize on the potential ethnological significance of the syllabary were John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, each a highly educated Cherokee interpreter and statesman. Ridge praised the invention of the “untutored Philosopher, who has succeeded in a few months as it were to educate a Nation” in the essay he wrote for Albert Gallatin and Alexander von Humboldt in 1826, hoping to publicize to U.S. citizens and Europeans alike the progress and plight of his nation. The same year, Boudinot, who was also a religious translator and first editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, emphasized that several recent events “must certainly place the Cherokee Nation in a fair light,

⁵⁴ McKenney and Hall, “Sequoyah, or George Guess,” 130, 132-35. For popular accounts stressing the “savage” origin of the Cherokee alphabet, see “Cherokee Alphabet,” *The New-York Mirror*, 3.47 (17 June 1826), 374; “On the General Diffusion of Knowledge,” *Illinois Monthly Magazine*, 2.23 (August 1832), 488; “The Invention of Letters,” *Niles’ Weekly Register*, 44.1139 (20 July 1833), 349.

⁵⁵ Nicholson H. Parker, “The American Red Man,” in Arthur C. Parker, *The Life of General Ely S. Parker: Last Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant’s Military Secretary* (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919), 266, 268-69. In “Traits of Indian Character,” *ibid.*, 271, Parker found that despite the efforts of “certain learned societies” and the U.S. government, the “current opinion of Indian character...is too apt to be formed from the miserable hoards that infest the frontiers.”

and act as a powerful argument in favor of Indian improvement.” First among these was the “invention of letters,” which had, with a translation of scripture into Cherokee, “swept away that barrier which has long existed, and opened a spacious channel for the instruction of adult Cherokees.”⁵⁶ In 1832, each emphasized the syllabary in separate attempts to invoke sympathy or outrage at a crucial moment. In an oration at Boston’s Old South Church, where Pickering announced that *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) had declared Georgia’s extension of state laws into Cherokee territory unconstitutional, Ridge told his audience that “The Cherokees...were once a nation of savages,” but now “were the only modern nation, who could claim the honor of having invented an Alphabet.”⁵⁷ One month later, Boudinot expressed his “regret...that this remarkable display of genius has not been more generally noticed in the periodicals,” for, he continued, it had raised Cherokees “to an elevation unattained by any other Indian nation.”⁵⁸

Neither set of efforts to link the Cherokee alphabet with Cherokee civilization, however, had the desired effect. Only one ethnologist attempted to hold up the syllabary as a justification for the nation to remain on their traditional lands.⁵⁹ Constantine S. Rafinesque alerted the scientific world that the Indians of North America possessed a long history of writing and

⁵⁶ William C. Sturtevant, ed., “John Ridge on Cherokee Civilization,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 6 (1981): 79-81, at 86-87; Elias Boudinot, *An Address to the Whites; delivered in the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, on the 26th of May, 1826* (Philadelphia, 1826); reprinted as “Address, &c.” in Theda Perdue, ed., *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 73-74, 78-79. On Ridge and Boudinot, see Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People* (New York: Macmillan, 1970). For a list of Boudinot’s numerous translations, see the bibliographic entry in Theresa Strouth Gaul, ed., *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriet Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823-1839* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 206.

⁵⁷ “Speech of John Ridge, a Cherokee Chief,” *Liberator*, 2.11 (17 March 1832), 44. On the significance of this case, see the editorial notes in Charles F. Hobson, ed., *The Papers of John Marshall*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 12: 41-56, 151-58; Prucha, *Great Father*, 208-13; and Sidney L. Harring, *Crow Dog’s Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ch. 2.

⁵⁸ Elias Boudinot, “Invention of a New Alphabet,” *American Annals of Education*, 1 April 1832; reprinted in Perdue, ed., *Cherokee Editor*, 49.

⁵⁹ The British ethnologist James Cowles Prichard argued that Sequoyah’s invention proved that the “native races of America are capable of receiving and appropriating the blessings of Christianity and true civilization,” but was silent on political matters, and besides, this defense was published several years after the Trail of Tears. See James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, 3d. ed. (London, 1841), 5: 540, 544-45. On Prichard and British ethnology in this period, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), ch. 2.

civilization. Within a year of the syllabary becoming known, he informed Peter S. Du Ponceau that he had discovered at “Otolum” (Palenque) in southern Mexico, “several ancient alphabetical Glyphic inscriptions,” in which “appearances of syllabic combinations are often evident.”⁶⁰ Five years later, he hoped to stir European opinion through Jean-François Champollion, the man who had deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphics and proven them to be partially phonetic. Rafinesque had discerned twelve different types of “Graphic Systems of America,” among which was the “syllabic alphabet of the Cherokees, and many graphic inscriptions found in North and South America, similar to the syllabic alphabets of Asia, Africa, and Polynesia.”⁶¹

Rafinesque was determined to link Cherokee past and present into a politically useful narrative. According to “The Atlantic Nations of America,” which appeared alongside the letter to Champollion, the Cherokees were descended from a primitive Atlantic race that included the Berbers of northern Africa (whose tongue Du Ponceau and other Americans were then studying) as well as the “most conspicuous and civilized” American nations, which included both the Chontals (Mayas), the builders of Palenque, and the Tarascans, the nation that first asserted Mexican independence. Rafinesque thus linked Cherokee descent to both classical greatness and contemporary revolt.⁶² He was determined to bridge archaeology and philology, fields that had diverged since Benjamin Smith Barton had first linked Indian languages and their past civilization, and, as Rafinesque told the *Cherokee Phoenix*, he was saving his Cherokee materials for a large work, which was to demonstrate that the Cherokees were in fact the “Talagewis,” which John Heckewelder’s Delaware legend had identified as the mound builders.⁶³ Rafinesque

⁶⁰ C. S. Rafinesque, “Important Historical and Philological Discovery. To Peter Duponceau,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 6.285 (13 January 1827), 2.

⁶¹ C. S. Rafinesque, “Philology. First Letter to Mr. Champollion, on the Graphic Systems of America, and the Glyphs of Otolum or Palenque, in Central America,” *Atlantic Journal, and Friend of Knowledge*, 1.1 (Spring 1832), 4-5.

⁶² C. S. Rafinesque, “The Atlantic Nations of America,” *Atlantic Journal, and Friend of Knowledge*, 1.1 (Spring 1832), 8-9.

⁶³ “Dialogue with Constantine Samuel Rafinesque,” in Jack Frederick Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick, eds., *New Echota Letters: Contributions of Samuel A. Worcester to the Cherokee Phoenix* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1968), 14-33, at 17. An early attempt to synthesize philology and archaeology ordered American antiquity into 3 successive races of mound builders, reduced

was explicit that his work was not mere antiquarianism; he declared that a “historian must also be a philosopher and philanthropist.” Evoking the words of John Marshall in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), Rafinesque chastised the federal government. Although they were “under a sort of pupillage” the United States “refuse[d] to amalgamate the native tribes...but compel them to submit to laws not understood, in a language untaught...[and] compel them to remove.”⁶⁴

In his last publications, in verse and prose, Rafinesque more explicitly linked ethnological themes to his belief in the larger evolution in all things. He wrote a “didactic and philosophical...Epic” poem, *The World, Or Instability* (1836), “to prove that *Instability* is as much a law of nature, as attraction or gravitation; that it rules both the physical and moral worlds” and that it was guided by a “divine hand” that was “equally wise and beneficent.” He titled one of its twenty parts “Mankind and Society: Languages, Civilization, and Equality.”⁶⁵ In the “The Ancient Monuments of North and South America” (1838), Rafinesque offered a sketch of Indian graphic systems that resembled earlier conjectural histories. He pointed to Mesoamerican inscriptions, Andean quipus, North American “painted symbols or hieroglyphics” (including the fabricated *Wallam-Olum*, a fraudulent pictographic and poetic record of Delaware migration that he “translated,” entered in the same Prix Volney contest that Du Ponceau won, and printed in *American Nations*), and finally to the syllabary: The “late successful attempt of the Cherokees to obtain a syllabic alphabet for their language, proves that the Americans were not devoid of

2000 American dialects to 25 “principal mother Nations,” and encompassed the entire world’s linguistic diversity within 10 “mother languages,” each of which were derived from a single “Primitive language divided in 3 branches.” See C. S. Rafinesque, “CLIO No. I. Ancient History of North America,” *Cincinnati Literary Gazette* 1.8 (21 February 1824): 59-60. In this series of articles, Rafinesque also provided a popular audience with archaeological accounts and snippet comparative vocabularies from little known western nations, such as the Pawnees, Mandans, Shoshonees, and Comanchees. For the latter, see idem, “CLIO, No. VI. On the Panis Language and Dialects,” *Cincinnati Literary Gazette* 2.7 (14 August 1824): 50-51. A later publication found the “key to American Ethnology, Philology, and History!” and reduced the above mentioned 25 American nations to 18. See “American History. Tabular View of the American Generic Languages, and Original Nations,” *Atlantic Journal, and Friend of Knowledge* 1.1 (Spring 1832): 6-8.

⁶⁴ C. S. Rafinesque, *The American Nations; or, Outlines of a National History; of the Ancient and Modern Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia, 1836), 1: 16, 110-11, 115.

⁶⁵ C. S. Rafinesque, *The World, or Instability. A Poem. In Twenty Parts, with Notes and Illustrations* (Philadelphia, 1836), 5, 8, 114.

graphic ingenuity.” This record, as much as physical monuments, bore witness: “Every thing on earth follows the universal law of terrestrial mutations, monuments and arts, as well as languages and human features! they rise and fall like the nations, mingle or blend as our modern English nation and language formed out of many others.”⁶⁶ Rafinesque was a poor ally, however, for Boudinot, Ridge, and others who might have made more direct links between the syllabary and civilization. He possessed little standing among the guardians of U.S. science because of his dubious character, his general pugnacity, and his then-disturbing evolutionism in natural history, which insisted that new species appeared continually. According to Henry R. Schoolcraft, Rafinesque “spoiled, historically and scientifically, everything he touched.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ C. S. Rafinesque, “The Ancient Monuments of North and South America, Compared with the Eastern Continent,” *American Museum of Science, Literature, and the Arts* 1.1 (September 1838), 21-22. Rafinesque similarly pointed to “the great universal law of PERPETUAL MUTABILITY” in zoology and botany and he held a personal “Philosophy of Religious Mutations.” See idem, “Principles of the Philosophy of new Genera and new species of Plants and Animals,” *Atlantic Journal, and Friend of Knowledge* 1.5 (Spring 1833): 163-64, at 164; *Genius and Spirit of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia, 1838), 193. Rafinesque, as well as Gallatin (below) and Morgan (Chapter 6), make problematic George Stocking’s claim that the governing “principle of temporal change was degenerationist,” even before the anonymous publication of the controversial evolutionary synthesis, [Robert Chambers], *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (London, 1844), even if Rafinesque and others still saw a clear divide between humanity and other animals. On the premise, see Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 12. On *Vestiges*, see *ibid.*, 41-45. On the work’s little impact in the United States, see William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 24, 89.

⁶⁷ Henry R. Schoolcraft to E. G. Squier, 16 February 1849, in C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* [1972] (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 470. Leonard Warren, *Constantine Samuel Rafinesque: A Voice in the American Wilderness* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 30-33, discusses the scientific establishment’s refusal to publish Rafinesque’s work and the consequent necessity to “go over their heads...to seek a broad audience, learned or not,” in popular journals or in magazines of his own creation. On Rafinesque’s philology, see *ibid.*, 127-55; David M. Oestreicher, “Roots of the Walam Olum: Constantine Samuel Rafinesque and the Intellectual Heritage of the Early Nineteenth Century,” in David L. Browman and Stephen Williams, *New Perspectives on the Origins of Americanist Archaeology* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Charles Boewe, “The Other Candidate for the 1835 Volney Prize: Constantine Samuel Rafinesque,” in Joan Leopold, ed., *The Prix Volney*, vol. 2. *Early Nineteenth-Century Contributions to General and Amerindian Linguistics: Du Ponceau and Rafinesque* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999); and the articles in Charles Boewe, ed., *Profiles of Rafinesque* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003). For contemporary discussions of (and allusions to) the Walam Olum, see CSR, *American Nations*, 1: 121-61; SGM, “An Inquiry into the Distinctive Characteristics of the Aboriginal Race of America,” *Boston Journal of Natural History* 4 (1843-44), 216-17; Ephraim G. Squier, “Historical and Mythological Traditions of the Algonquins; with a Translation of the ‘Walam Olum,’ or Bark Record of the Linni-Lenape,” *American Review* 3.2 (February 1849): 173-93; HRS, *Information*, 6: 176-77. For more on the Walam Olum, see Terry A. Barnhart, *Ephraim George Squier and the Development of American Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), ch. 6. I would also like to thank Andrew Newman for sharing his “From the Far Side of the Great Divide: The Walam Olum and Indigenous Literacy,” an article in progress.

Albert Gallatin had probably devoted as much thought to Indian “civilization” as any U.S. citizen. As early as 1825, he had asked John Ridge for an essay on Cherokee society in addition to a Cherokee vocabulary. A decade later, knowing that two Cherokee delegations were in Washington (one favoring removal, the other opposing it), Gallatin requested that Theodore Frelinghuysen, who had been a staunch defender of the Cherokees in the Senate, approach the Cherokee delegation for information. Gallatin specifically requested the “good offices” of Elias Boudinot, who was a leader of the pro-emigration party, to translate a 250-word vocabulary and a sheet of sample conjugations and sentences. Not appreciating the dual threat to the Cherokee nation from the pressures of federal negotiations and internal fissures, Gallatin reasoned: “what would be very difficult for one of our interpreters to execute, must be to him extremely easy.” Gallatin also requested information on two major topics: the “syllabic alphabet...perhaps the fact best calculated to give a higher opinion of Indian intelligence than has been generally entertained” and, a “more important point...the state of agriculture and of free man labour amongst the Cherokees.”⁶⁸

Fittingly, as a former Treasury secretary, Gallatin reduced Indian “civilization” to a question of political economy, particularly what factors were most likely to lead to an increase in population and an accumulation of capital, each of which a subsistence by hunting denied. The Cherokees demonstrated that the “American race” was fully capable of improvement given the right circumstances (and he suspected that the Five Nations may have done the same, had they not been interrupted by European colonization). Yet Cherokee civilization could not be a model for other Indians because it was based on slavery, as, he problematically pointed out, was every society that history recorded in its first ascent to agriculture. Gallatin suggested only “to teach them the English language; but this so thoroughly that they may forget their own.” But even that “would be useless” without “the early habit of manual labour.” Despite the invention of the Cherokee alphabet, Indian languages would have to be forgotten and English adopted. The

⁶⁸ AG to Theodore Frelinghuysen, 14 February 1835, Gallatin Papers, reel 41.

syllabary was ingenious and could be used to spread civilization; but it was not civilization itself. Only the agriculture of free men could provide that.⁶⁹

Language and civilization were still linked. Considering the implications of Indian polysynthesis, however it may have emerged, Gallatin noted: “the character of the language adopted...has a strong influence on the progress and knowledge & civilisation of that people.” Tempering his language philosophy with practical experience, he added: “judging more from the result than from an investigation of the several classes of languages, I am thankful that the analytical plans d’idees should have fallen to our shore, rather than the Chinese, or our Indian languages.”⁷⁰ Gallatin honed this view at the end of his life. Determined to address the previous two decades’ outpouring of philology addressing savage languages and the Indian mind, native education and the Cherokee alphabet, Gallatin unambiguously addressed the connections he discerned between linguistic and social development in his final ethnological work. He maintained that language itself evinced Indian capacity to ascend to civilization. Since Indians were fully capable of creating new words for new things, “they had within themselves the power of progressive improvement.” Languages improved as knowledge increased, but this was but the reflection of a more essential process: “Without denying some reciprocal action between the language and the mental development of a people, or that there may be some difference in degree between the several languages, I believe that that their improved powers are the result and not the cause of the progress of knowledge and civilization.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ AG, “A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States east of the Rocky Mountains, and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America,” in *Archaeologia Americana: The Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society* 2 (1836), 93, 156-59. Gallatin first broached many of these ideas in AG to PSD, 17 May 1826, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 1: 8, HSP.

⁷⁰ AG to PSD, 3 July 1837, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 2: 9, HSP.

⁷¹ AG, “Hale’s Indian Tribes of North-west America, and Vocabularies of North America; with an Introduction,” *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* 2 (1848), cxliii-cxliv. Compare this to the ideas of his friend, Alexander von Humboldt. He had once stressed that the grammars of the American languages indicated previous civilization of their speakers. But in *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, during the Years 1799-1804*, vol. 3 (London, 1818), 270-71. he stressed, following his brother, that the human mind follows imperturbably an impulse once given; that nations enlarge, improve, and repair the grammatical edifice of their language, according to a plan already determined; finally, that there are countries, the languages, the institutions, and the arts of which, have

The syllabary itself seemed evidence of this. Gallatin thought that Sequoyah had demonstrated the “native intelligence of his race” and proven that “the superiority of Guess’s alphabet is manifest” in languages with relatively few syllables.⁷² Though he considered it less important as an index of civilization than the farming of free men, Gallatin envisioned the syllabary as a vehicle for spreading American civilization across the Pacific, traveling the same route as U.S. commerce. Pausing at Polynesia (where syllables also ended in vowel sounds), Gallatin aimed for China, where “the magnitude of the field of improvement is unparalleled” and where the written language, composed of thousands of individual characters, “may have impeded, or at least been unfavourable to the full development of the intellectual faculties and to the progressive increase of knowledge and true civilization.” This was especially true since those characters, so unlike Roman letters, had “rendered them almost impenetrable to the introduction of knowledge from foreign quarters.” Imposing an elementary alphabetic system would be in “direct opposition to deeply rooted national habits,” so, as a middle path, Gallatin suggested “a plan less innovating, more congenial to the Chinese language...a syllabic alphabet, which has been suggested to my mind by its success in the Cherokee and by its applicability to the Polynesian languages.” He considered the characters that Sequoyah had chosen “arbitrary and uncouth” and thought a syllabary should “recall to the mind the sounds which it is intended to represent” (i.e. Anglicized). If “an unfortunate system of writing has contributed to keep China in comparative darkness,” Gallatin asked: “whether a remedy cannot be found in philology itself?”⁷³

remained invariable, we might almost say stereotyped, during the lapse of ages.” Unlike the Indo-European tongues, the American languages, “formed principally by aggregation seem themselves to oppose obstacles to the improvement of the mind...unfurnished with that rapid movement, that interior life, to which the inflexion of the root is favourable.” But, he insisted, civilization was attainable, if given from without: “nations, once awakened from their lethargy, and tending toward civilization find in the most uncouth languages the secret of expressing with clearness the conceptions of the mind, and of painting the emotions of the soul.” In *ibid.*, 263-65, Humboldt contrasted these views with Schlegel’s.

⁷² AG, “Synopsis of the Indian Tribes,” 92-93.

⁷³ AG, “Hale’s Indians of North-West America,” clx, clxiii, clxvi-clxviii. Samuel Worcester had also suggested the applicability of a syllabary to the languages of the Pacific islands; see Worcester, “Explanation of Sequoyah’s Syllabary,” 9.

Other scholars considered Sequoyah's philological analysis extraordinary, but rejected that there was any link between the syllabary and civilization. Du Ponceau "positively den[ie]d" the prevailing opinion that "every alphabet should consist exclusively of simple sounds." He thought that Sequoyah had "with great propriety invented a syllabarium," which was "excellent for that language....It is suited to its genius."⁷⁴ In such alphabets, characters were few, so they could be "easily retained in the memory," so it was "not...necessary to carry analysis farther." Syllabaries actually possessed "considerable advantages": spelling was unnecessary, learning to read was an easier process, and writing itself consumed less time and space. Du Ponceau was convinced that the invention was "highly important, and it will be much thought of in Europe."⁷⁵

Indeed, the syllabary provided him with "invaluable" evidence to disprove the assertions of prominent European philologists, such as Abel Rémusat, who had contended that writing gave laws to spoken language. Du Ponceau insisted that the "example of our savage presents to us nature caught in the act in the invention of writing" and it proved that "accident," not writing, produced a language's grammatical forms."⁷⁶ Du Ponceau was sympathetic to the Cherokees, but that did nothing to change his opinion that the "principal effect" of his research on the American languages was to prove that language and state of society were unconnected.⁷⁷ He told Pickering in 1835, the "poor Cherokees are driven from their ancient seats, to make room for the diggers of gold," but the syllabary could show only "the advantage of learning by preserving at

⁷⁴ PSD to AG, 26 March 1826, enclosed in PSD to AG, 2 April 1826; PSD to AG, 17 May 1826, Gallatin Papers, New-York Historical Society. [I consulted the microfilm edition of these papers at Swem Library, College of William and Mary.]

⁷⁵ PSD, *A Dissertation on the Nature and Character of the Chinese System of Writing, in a Letter to John Vaughan, Esq.* (Philadelphia, 1838), xii; PSD to AG, 22 March 1826, Gallatin Papers.

⁷⁶ PSD, *Mémoire sur le Système Grammatical des Langues de quelques Nations Indiennes de l'Amérique du Nord* [1838], 45-48. This book, as well as Du Ponceau's earlier "Essai de Solution," along with excellent articles on Du Ponceau's two submissions by Pierre Swiggers and Robert H. Robins, respectively, can be found in Joan Leopold, ed., *The Prix Volney*, vol. 2. *Early Nineteenth-Century Contributions to General and Amerindian Linguistics: Du Ponceau and Rafinesque* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999).

⁷⁷ "A Grammar of the Language of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians. Translated from the German ms. of the late Rev. David Zeisberger, for the American Philosophical Society, by Peter Stephen Du Ponceau." In *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 3 [n.s.] (1830), 248-29.

least some remains of the much abused Cherokee Nation.”⁷⁸ That Sequoyah invented writing was remarkable; but it was neither the result, nor a demonstration, of civilization.

Not all philologists were as effusive in their praise of the syllabary as Gallatin and Du Ponceau. Seconding his correspondent John Pickering’s opinion, Wilhelm von Humboldt maintained that a syllabary was “certainly less convenient and less philosophical, but more natural than ours.” He meant that leaving syllables whole implied less analysis than if they had been decomposed into their constituent sounds. Still, Humboldt admitted that it was “an extremely remarkable thing and a new phenomenon to see some of the indigenous languages of America maintain themselves in the midst of...European civilization...fixing themselves by an alphabet entirely different from ours.” He was so curious, he requested that Boudinot add his name to the list of subscribers for the *Cherokee Phoenix*.⁷⁹

The Indian agent and ethnologist Henry R. Schoolcraft pointed out deficiencies that he thought mirrored those of spoken Indian languages. As he told Charles C. Trowbridge, a former Indian agent and collaborator on Lewis Cass’s linguistic researches, who had sent Schoolcraft a copy of the Cherokee alphabet, Schoolcraft considered it “a good deal worse than nothing.” To his mind, it was “very inartificially constructed, and for all practical purposes, about as useful as it would be to convert an almanac into metre....If the Cherokee has no greater number of primary sounds, than are provided for by these 86 characters, it must indeed be a barren language, and one, in which I will venture to predict, that poets will never sing, or historians write.”⁸⁰ In the midst of the Cherokee removal crisis, he cryptically described an alternative orthography that he was devising. It was “purely a mathematical one...based, as a principle, on divisions and

⁷⁸ PSD to JP, 14 March 1835, Du Ponceau Correspondence, Box 3, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁷⁹ Wilhelm von Humboldt to John Pickering, 12 July, 28 November 1828; Wilhelm von Humboldt to Elias Boudinot, 15 November 1828, in Kurt Müller-Vollmer, ed., “Wilhelm von Humboldt und der Anfang der amerikanischen Sprachwissenschaft: Die Briefe an John Pickering,” *Universalismus und Wissenschaft im Werk und Wirken der Brüder Humboldt* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1974), 303-04, 307-08. The editorial commentary in this book is in German, but Humboldt’s letters to Pickering are printed in the original French.

⁸⁰ Henry R. Schoolcraft to Charles C. Trowbridge, 4 December 1825, in Charles Christopher Trowbridge Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

combinations of a cube, circle, quadrangle, &c.”⁸¹ Just as Indian words did not divide complex ideas into discrete component words, neither did the syllabary divide words into their discrete component sounds. Ever attentive to “facts” that would illustrate his belief in Indian intellectual stasis, Schoolcraft also suggested that Sequoyah’s syllabary developed naturally from “the Indian mind, accustomed to view and express objects in the gross or combined form.” Yet even this was merely the result of missionary work among the Cherokees, which had “stimulated the vital spark of inventive thought, which led a native Cherokee to give his people an original alphabet.”⁸²

Ultimately, the issue of whether an Indian could lay full claim to the invention of an alphabet hinged on understandings of linguistic and racial assimilation. John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, caught between the majorities of the Cherokee Nation and the United States, who each rejected assimilation, were personally sensitive to issues of incorporation. Though each possessed some amount of white ancestry, they considered themselves “full-blooded Cherokees.”⁸³ Moreover, while at the American Board’s Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, Ridge courted and married a white woman, the daughter of the school’s steward, Sarah Bird Northrup. Shortly thereafter, Boudinot married Harriet Gold, also white. The matches produced flames – burning effigies of the transgressors and a controversy that consumed white residents of New England, the region ostensibly most firmly committed to Indian civilization and assimilation. Ultimately it closed the school’s doors and caused Ridge, Boudinot and others,

⁸¹ “Extract of a Letter from Henry R. Schoolcraft,” *American Annals of Education*, August 1835, 356-57.

⁸² HRS, *Information*, 6: 673. Schoolcraft had emphasized the “concreteness” of the language from his earliest studies. See Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* [1851] (Middlesex, UK: Echo Press, 2006), 85.

⁸³ See Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 4n. For an ethnohistorical deconstruction of the myth of the half-breed,” see Theda Perdue, *“Mixed Blood” Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), which argues against works (such as McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, and Saunt, *New Order of Things*) that divide Indian groups into full-bloods and “mixed-bloods” or “mestizos,” reifying lines that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century whites recognized and imposed on a matrilineal Cherokee society in which paternity was irrelevant. If one was born of a Cherokee mother, one was Cherokee; half-Cherokees did not exist in traditional lines of descent. Her point is compelling, but it seems to grant traditionalist Indians sole authority to determine descent, delegitimizing Indians who recognized their own white ancestry regardless of their society’s matrilineality. For the lives and stereotypes of Indians of mixed descent in this period, see Thomas N. Ingersoll, *To Intermix with our White Brothers: Indian Mixed Bloods in the United States from the Earliest Times to the Indian Removals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

Cherokee and white alike, to question the possibility of full incorporation, notwithstanding the avowed hopes of U.S. policy makers.⁸⁴

Boudinot warned that “if the Cherokee Nation fail[ed] in her struggle” against Georgia, thus “falls the fabric of Indian civilization.”⁸⁵ Grammars, scriptural translations, even invented alphabets would provide little recourse. The intersection of politics and philanthropy, philology and biology made it difficult for Boudinot and other educated Cherokees to fully capitalize on Sequoyah’s astonishing invention in their negotiation with U.S. public opinion. To fully emphasize the creative independence of the invention, and the intellectual independence that it offered, was to raise fears that assimilation, and accommodation to U.S. political economy, would not necessarily follow Indian “civilization.” For Ridge or Boudinot to hold up themselves as models of Cherokee civilization and incorporation was to invite questions of why those seemingly the most civilized were those who possessed white blood. Ignoring personal and linguistic considerations, Ridge closed his essay to Gallatin and Humboldt with a melancholy reflection: “In the lapse of half a Century if Cherokee blood is not destroyed it will run its courses in the veins of fair complexions who will read that their Ancestors under the Stars of adversity, and curses of their enemies became a civilized Nation.”⁸⁶

Writers such as Lewis Cass used that very mixture of Cherokee blood and fair complexions to deny that “Indian civilization” ever existed. Cass had spent years organizing and directing the collection of information, and communicating the result to a national audience, to prove Indians’ persistent savagery, explicitly as a scientific refutation of philanthropic misrepresentations contained in the philology of Du Ponceau and Heckewelder. In 1830, Cass penned what became Indian removal’s most important justification, reversing his earlier stance

⁸⁴ For Jeffersonian hopes of intermixture, see chapter 4, above; Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (New York: Norton, 1973), 174-80.

⁸⁵ Boudinot, “Address,” in Perdue, ed., *Cherokee Editor*, 73-74, 78-79.

⁸⁶ Sturtevant, ed., “John Ridge on Cherokee Civilization,” 86-88. On the experiences of Ridge or Boudinot at Cornwall, see Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, ch. 6. McKenney and Hall included a biographical sketch of “John Ridge (Cherokee Interpreter)” in McKenney and Hall, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, 2: 326-31. On Boudinot’s marriage, see Gaul, ed., *To Marry an Indian*.

that had rejected both its practicality and utility. In that 1830 essay Cass addressed the syllabary only elliptically. Cherokees shared “the same external appearance and the same general traits of character which else mark the race of red men...in all the essential characteristics of mind, manners, and appearance, they are one people.” Like all Indians, he insisted, Cherokees were *not* civilized. Cass claimed, ignoring all reports to the contrary, that the alphabet, like other changes “in opinion and condition,” was “confined, in a great measure, to some of the *half-breeds* and their immediate connexions.” As for the future of the Cherokees, they could “derive no aid from exaggerated representations.”⁸⁷ Philology had cornered Cass. Du Ponceau had convincingly demonstrated that language did not reveal “civilization.” To continue to press eighteenth-century ideas that language revealed social condition would have highlighted Sequoyah’s syllabary as the signal of civilization. Instead, Cass elevated race to a position of preeminent explanatory power. Other popular accounts followed suit.⁸⁸

That same year, the year of the Indian Removal Act, the ethnologist Charles Caldwell offered the fullest dismissal of the syllabary’s implications. Among ethnological subjects, only “race” – bones, skin, bodily fluids; not language – could be studied with scientific certainty. He argued that “the Caucasian race” alone had invented the arts of civilization. The “Cherokee alphabet” offered only further support: “The author of that has much Caucasian blood in his veins. His father was a Scotchman. He is, therefore, a half breed. Nor is this all. The train of thought, which led to the invention, was first awakened by a letter written by a whiteman. Without the influence of that ‘speaking leaf,’ the alphabet would yet have had no existence. It is virtually, therefore, a Caucasian production.” With the syllabary thus dispatched, Caldwell argued that “the stationary condition of the Africans and Indians, contrasted with the rapidly improving one of the Caucasians, constitutes between the races a distinction as characteristic and

⁸⁷ [Lewis Cass], “Article III,” *North American Review*, 30.66 (January 1830), 70-72. The increasing importance of biologically defined race is the subject of Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁸⁸ See, for example, “The United States,” *North American Quarterly Magazine*, 9.37 (March 1838), 117-18.

strong, and much more important, than the differences in the form of their features, and the colour of their skins.” To Caldwell, the experiences of the Cherokees and other southern tribes spoke “oracularly of the extinction of the aborigines.”⁸⁹

Caldwell, who as a young man had provided an English translation of the work Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a founder of physical ethnology, again cited Sequoyah as evidence for white superiority in his glowing review of Samuel G. Morton’s *Crania Americana* (1839), the central text of the “American school of ethnology,” a close but informal group which proselytized the separate creation of multiple races with unequal and fixed intellectual traits that philanthropy could do nothing to alter.⁹⁰ Other reviewers who cited Sequoyah as proof of the inaccuracy of that proposition did nothing to alter the stance of Morton’s polygenist associates, who realized that Sequoyah’s status as an Indian and the syllabary’s as an invention threatened the legitimacy of their science.⁹¹ The physician Josiah Nott dismissed the use of Sequoyah “as an instance to prove the equality of the Indian with the Caucasian race.” Nott acknowledged that Sequoyah had invented and implemented an alphabet, which “was certainly a very remarkable effort of genius; but the father of this Cadmus, was a Scotchman,—a very important fact which has been omitted by most of those who have discoursed so pathetically about Indians.”⁹² Egyptologist George Gliddon, later used Sequoyah to demonstrate that the independent line of development of the American race ceased with European colonization: “The post-Columbian influences, break all

⁸⁹ Charles Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (New York, 1830), 136, 139, 142-45. One reviewer of this work excerpted the portion on the syllabary in its entirety; see “Art. XV.,” *North American Medical and Surgical Journal*, October 1831, 363-91, at 387. This was echoed in “Literary and Intellectual Statistics,” *New-England Magazine*, December 1831, 406-07. On Caldwell generally, see Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots*, 19-23; John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1984), 332-33; Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 72-74.

⁹⁰ C. C., “Art. V.—Crania Americana,” *Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, July 1840, 35-56, at 45. William Stanton identifies this as Caldwell; see Stanton, *Leopard’s Spots*, 39. On Blumenbach and Caldwell’s translation, see Dain, *Hideous Monster of the Mind*, 59-65, 73.

⁹¹ For a reviewer who invoked Sequoyah in an attempt to refute Morton, see “Origin and Characteristics of the American Aborigines,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 11.54 (December 1842), 614-15.

⁹² Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races* (Mobile, 1844), 39.

links, paleographically, with the past,” as was demonstrated by the syllabary, merely “the invention of a half-breed Scotchman.”⁹³

Physical ethnology ascended, briefly, to preeminent authority in the United States after 1830. It was independent of the participation of living Indians in the production of its knowledge and had no native practitioners. To paraphrase Samuel Knapp, “the Indians themselves” never became physical ethnologists, as they did “philologists and grammarians.” Previous scholars have understood this shift to be the result of an increasing orientation within the developing discipline of anthropology toward physical objects, which could be studied, supposedly, more objectively. The American school concentrated on crania and artifacts, but *what* they studied was no more important than *how* they studied it and *who* they were dependent upon to understand the subject. The ascent of physical ethnology (and, as an initial adjunct, archaeology as well) in the 1830s-40s represented decreased influence not only for the discipline of philology, but for those Indians whose participation shaped the production of philological knowledge and for educated natives who published their own philological work.⁹⁴

* * *

Sequoyah’s philological investigations led him to invent a syllabic alphabet for the Cherokee language, making it the first Indian language written independently of Europeans. The result swept through the Cherokees, making them a literate society in a matter of years and simultaneously dividing and more closely uniting portions of the nation. Although Ridge and Boudinot were sensitive to U.S. public opinion and to the intellectual heritage of Euro-Americans, they were unable to use the invention to much effect during the removal debates.

⁹³ George R. Gliddon, “Paleographic Excursus on the Art of Writing,” in J. C. Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches* (Philadelphia, 1854), 630. On Gliddon and Nott, see Staunton, *Leopard’s Spots*; Dain, *Hideous Monster of the Mind*, ch. 7.

⁹⁴ For a recent articulation of the “object-orientation” view that I seek to supplement, see Steven Conn, *History’s Shadow: The Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9-10. Crucial for my understanding of anthropological knowledge as co-produced by scientist and ostensible “subject,” but which elides the differing degrees of native influence among different modes of anthropological study, see Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, “Introduction: Locating the Colonial Subjects of Anthropology” in *Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

They could not emphasize its proof of Indian capacity when physical ethnology claimed that they and the syllabary's inventor were "mixed-bloods"; they could not draw on the authority of philology to validate it as an orthography when that same science denied there was any link between language and civilization; they could not demonstrate its use for conversion and civilization when whites suspected that it would only prolong Indian attachment to a language that symbolized the refusal of Indians to assimilate themselves into a society that was at best ambivalent about that very incorporation.

In August 1832, Boudinot resigned as editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, where he had offered articles on, among other things, the Cherokee language, U.S. politics and, Christianity. In its alternating but uneven use of Sequoyan and English (the latter predominated), the newspaper made tangible the difficulties of influencing Cherokee and U.S. audiences at once. Ross barred him from publishing his views after it became clear that Jackson would not use federal force to protect Cherokees from white settlers, and so the Cherokees faced either being destroyed on their traditional lands or removing and possibly prospering in a new home.⁹⁵ He could not, however, stop Boudinot from serving as interpreter at the Treaty of New Echota in which he and Ridge led the unauthorized exchange of ancestral Cherokee lands for those west of the Mississippi. In that new world, Boudinot and Ridge were killed for their role, the latter as his wife and children looked on helplessly.⁹⁶ Cherokee and U.S. societies in these years resembled

⁹⁵ See Elias Boudinot to John Ross, 1 August 1832; John Ross to the General Council, 4 August 1832, in Moulton, ed., *Papers of Chief John Ross*, 248, 250. Boudinot included Worcester's grammatical explanations to Rafinesque and his "systematic arrangement" and explanation of the syllabary (see above); he also printed in the translations of the Lords Prayer and the first five chapters of genesis into the syllabary, which were in turn reprinted as evidence of the progress of religion among the American Board missions; see "Printing Press and Types for the Cherokee Nation," *Missionary Herald*, 23.12 (December 1827), 382; "Invention of the Cherokee Alphabet," *Missionary Herald*, 24.10 (October 1828), 331-32. Perdue stresses that Boudinot's opposition national consensus demonstrated the degree of his acculturation, see Perdue, ed., *Cherokee Editor*, 26. See also idem, "Rising from the Ashes: The *Cherokee Phoenix* as an Ethnohistorical Source," *Ethnohistory*, 24 (1977): 207-18; Ann Lackey Landini, "The *Cherokee Phoenix*: The Voice of the Cherokee Nation, 1828-1834." (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1990), 3.

⁹⁶ On Boudinot acting as interpreter, see John Ross to John Howard Payne, 5 March 1836, in Moulton, ed., *Papers of Chief John Ross*, 390. On the murders, which traditionalists saw as a legal execution, see Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, ch. 14. On the Trail of Tears generally, see Prucha, *Great Father*, ch. 8;

each other in important respects, as did the letters of the Cherokee syllabary and English alphabet, but that very resemblance masked differences that Ridge and Boudinot could not accommodate simultaneously. The attempt cost them their lives.

At the end of the nineteenth century, federal ethnologist James Mooney reported that Sequoyah's cousin James Wafford recalled that after Sequoyah worked to reunite the Cherokee nation after the Trail of Tears, he "became seized with a desire to make linguistic investigations among the remote tribes...with a view of devising a universal Indian alphabet." Years before, Sequoyah had invented his alphabet to improve the transmission of knowledge among his own people in a way that shielded the nation from U.S. influence; he might have hoped to offer the same gift to other Indians facing the ever stretching, ever closing grasp of the United States. But, "disappointed in his philologic results," Sequoyah set out with a son and several of his countrymen sometime in the early 1840s to search for a lost band of Cherokees who were believed to reside somewhere in northern Mexico. He "engaged awhile in teaching the Mexicans his native language," but he passed away in solitude.⁹⁷

Pickering had preceded Sequoyah in the attempt to create a universal alphabet for Indian languages, but Sequoyah's creation of a Cherokee national alphabet led him to put his Cherokee studies aside. Ethnologists and the U.S. military followed Sequoyah toward the Southwest. Du Ponceau, Rafinesque, Gallatin, and many more turned their gaze to Mexico; first asserting that European investigation of the origins of "American civilization" along the Cordillera was as unwelcome as their political intervention in the American hemisphere, and later expecting that the men of science who accompanied marching U.S. troops would provide hitherto inaccessible information on American antiquity and on the myriad tribes now within U.S. borders.

Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), ch. 4.

⁹⁷ Only James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* [1891] (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publications, 2006), 109, 147-48, mentions Sequoyah's late-life attempts to devise a universal Indian alphabet. For his attempts to reunite the nation and to teach Cherokee to Mexicans, see "Se-quo-yah, or George Guess," *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer*, 1.46 (8 February 1845), 366. On this period in Sequoyah's life, see Foreman, *Sequoyah*, 48-71; Hoig, *Sequoyah*, chs. 8-9.

CHAPTER 7.

AMERICAN LANGUAGES AND THE AMERICAN RACE

Ephraim G. Squier described the state of “American Ethnology” to readers of the *American Whig Review* in 1849, the year after the Smithsonian Institution, the long-awaited official organ of government science, published his and Edwin M. Davis’s *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* as its inaugural volume. Ethnology was “the study of man, physically and psychically,” and as the field necessarily considered human “wants...capacities, limitations and ambitions,” it held the “first claim upon the statesman, the reformer, and all those who by position or endowments are placed among the leaders of men.” This was especially true in the United States. “Nowhere else,” Squier stressed, “can we find brought in so close proximity, the representatives of races and families of men, of origins and physical and mental constitutions so diverse.” These “conjunctions” promised answers to the science’s most pressing questions: “the course and progress of development among a people separated from the rest of the world, insulated physically and mentally, and left to the operation of its own peculiar elements”; the true grounds for evaluating racial superiority; whether assimilation or repulsion were natural processes among different races and families; the effects of intermixture among them; and “how their relations may be adjusted to the greatest attainable advantage of both.” Ethnology was “not only the science of the age, but also...an *American science*.”¹

For many, however, this American science seemed to offer views that rested uneasily with the scriptural version of antiquity and with the asserted obligations of guardians to educate

¹ E. G. S., “American Ethnology,” *American Review, A Whig Journal Devoted to Politics and Literature* 3.4 (April 1849), 385-86. For his place in the development of scientific archaeology in the United States and the in pernicious myth that the mounds were built by a people other than the Indians, see Robert Silverberg, *The Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 109-34; Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 2d. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 161-64. Squier is a fascinating figure who advocated separate creations but opposed views of fixed traits. For a broader look at Squier’s ethnology, see Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), ch. 4; Terry A. Barnhart, *Ephraim George Squier and the Development of American Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

their native wards, to use the paternalist imagery of *Cherokee Nation*. While most scholarship either ignores the role of language study in race science or paints it as its methodological opponent, Squier made clear that philology had contributed to this state of affairs. The conclusions of Peter S. Du Ponceau, Albert Gallatin, and, indeed, “every philologist of distinction,” in demonstrating the uniformity and uniqueness of an American type of grammatical form, were “substantially the same with those arrived at by Dr. Morton,” the physical anthropologist. That the Indians were a separate race, sharing no common descent with another, seemed the obvious conclusion to Squier. Yet, he bemoaned, “few have ventured to make public the deductions to which they inevitably lead” because it was “generally esteemed... a heresy.”²

Although there was much truth to what Squier said, he glossed over crucial points of divergence among those he cited. When Du Ponceau suggested that the astonishing etymological diversity among the American languages could not be easily reconciled with their origin from a common ancestor within the scriptural confines of about six thousand years, Gallatin responded defensively. He confessed his “fear...not that of offending theologians, but of shaking any body’s faith, which I am sure would not make them happier or better. And that may perhaps lead me to be more cautious than I ought to be.”³ Du Ponceau himself would have been uncomfortable with

² Squier, “American Ethnology,” 390-92. Squier included these views in his most speculative ethnological work. See E. G. Squier, *The Serpent Symbol, and the Worship of the Reciprocal Principles of Nature in America* (New York, 1851), 25-28. It is notable that Squier’s stance was diametrically opposed to the anonymous evolutionist (biological and social) synthesis that caused a sensation in Britain. [Robert Chambers], *Vestiges of Natural History of Creation* (London, 1844), 294, cited Americanist scholarship and argued that “physiology and philology...seems to me decidedly favorable to the idea of a single origin.” J. L. Cabell’s *The Testimony of Modern Science to the Unity of Mankind* (New York, 1859), similarly argued that “comparative philology,” in which he cited the work of Pickering among others, “shows conclusively...that the theory of a diversity of languages is untenable.” See “Art. III.—Unity of Mankind,” *De Bow’s Review and Industrial Resources* 5.4 (April 1861): 407-10, at 408.

³ AG to PSD, 14 March 1837, Du Ponceau Correspondence, 2: 8, HSP. For Gallatin’s earlier alignment of his ethnology with the biblical account, see AG, “Synopsis of the Indian Tribes within the United States East of the Rocky Mountains, and in the British and Russian Possessions in North America,” *Archaeologia Americana* 2 (1836), 142-45. The practical effects of scholarship upon morality was a consistent concern for Gallatin. To one who was planning to write an essay on “Morals, Politics and Economy,” Gallatin observed: “One of your propositions or inferences is that ‘mind is only a property of the body.’ I believe otherwise, and if perchance your opinion is erroneous, is not its promulgation injurious to the moral conduct and welfare of man and of society?” See AG to Edward C. Cooper, 18 November 1834, Gallatin Papers.

his researches being linked with those of Morton's, whose work leaned heavily on phrenology. He told John Pickering that "phrenology makes me tremble. What will become of us, if the world should believe, that our actions depend entirely on our physical organization? I shudder at the idea of such a Doctrine being prevalent; it would entirely destroy morality & virtue."⁴ For his part, Morton rejected the notion that philology could either confirm or undermine the craniological establishment of a distinct American race. Nor did he allow moral imperatives to impede his science. His earliest biographer, Henry S. Patterson, stressed this. It was "manifest that our relation to and management" of different races "must depend, in a great measure, upon their intrinsic race-character," which Morton and his successors defined as fixed and unequal.⁵ Squier sought to synthesize the ethnological data of the previous decades. Many of those who had produced the information Squier hoped to bring together rejected the match.

The relative value of linguistic and physical evidence in tracing race had been disputed in U.S. ethnology since at least Johann Severin Vater's critique of Benjamin Smith Barton.⁶ Scholars who believed that language provided an index to race, could conclude that the physical anthropology of Morton and others ratified what Du Ponceau and others had said decades before. Those who dismissed any necessary connection between language and race, could therefore dismiss philology's relevance, especially since those who advocated a linguistic approach to ethnology tended to be more theologically conservative and more hostile to the findings of freethinking science. Others, like Henry R. Schoolcraft, seemed to navigate between the currents.

⁴ PSD to JP, 1 March 1834, Du Ponceau Papers, 3, HSP.

⁵ Henry S. Patterson, "Memoir of the Life and Scientific Labors of Samuel George Morton," in J. C. Nott and Geo. R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind: or, Ethnological Researches, based upon Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History* (Philadelphia, 1854), xxxiii.

⁶ Current scholarship emphasizes the 1850s, under the dual effects of Sanskrit scholarship and the "revolution in human time" that accompanied the discovery of human (Neanderthal) bones in the same strata as the fossils of long-extinct animals, as the crucial moment when language became detached from race and when physical anthropology assumed sole authority to speak on race. See George Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 62-77; Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans in British India* [1997] (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2004), ch. 6; Tuska Benes, *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 204-21. However, in American ethnology, criticisms that language did not indicate "race" were current by the 1830s, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Debates over the character of the American languages, what those idioms indicated of the ultimate unity or diversity of the human race, and about which modes of studying “the Indian” yielded the most conclusive evidence, took place within an exploding body of ethnological information in the 1830s-50s. Evidence, methodologies, and interpretations – in the period’s landmark publications on the oral literature and ethnography, astronomy and agriculture, craniology and archaeology of the Americas – were often at odds, both with previously established theories and with each other. To order the fractured and contradictory nature of available ethnological information, Congress commissioned Schoolcraft, protégé of Lewis Cass, to compile all that was known of the history, condition, and prospects of “the Indian” of the United States. Schoolcraft hoped that this project would refute the heterodox assertions of separate creations and fixed racial types championed by the group of scholars known as the American school as well as provide the basis for future Indian policy. However, his opponents had much of the most highly regarded linguistic and ethnological work behind them and his own work flirted with the notion that there was a distinct “Indian mind,” knowable through language, which possessed traits that could not be assigned merely to the hunter state.

Philology was not a philanthropic scholarship. In some hands, philology could provide a scientific counterweight to the more inegalitarian claims of craniology and other fields. That was why American school ethnologists worked so diligently to undermine philology’s ethnological authority, even when its conclusions seemed to corroborate their own. Unlike American school supporters of polygenesis and fixed racial types, philologists often (but not always) operated from the premises that all peoples shared a common origin and that language in some way correlated with social condition, whether it was defined according to heathenism or the hunter state. While these views tended to allow for the possibility of Indian “civilization” and assimilation, those very possibilities entailed the destruction of Indian languages and cultures. Moreover, philology suggested a means to control Indian groups to facilitate those very ends to implement U.S.

political economy most easily. This is why statesmen like Jefferson, Cass, and Schoolcraft stressed philology's taxonomic potential.

Even more deeply, Du Ponceau's and Schoolcraft's insistence that Indian grammatical structures provided unique insight into a distinct Indian mind was crucial to the development of a more essentialist ethnology in the nineteenth-century United States. Du Ponceau argued that grammatical forms reflected a natural and fixed organization of ideas, in no way related to the progress of arts and sciences among its speakers, which only Indians possessed. This suggested, two decades before *Crania Americana*, the founding text of the American school, that certain mental traits were fixed and that human science would be unable to demonstrate humanity's common origin. Du Ponceau rejected the notion that some plans of ideas were better than others and he ultimately argued that despite the separate creation of languages after Babel, humanity still shared a common origin, even if philology could never demonstrate it. Those who built on his ideas, however, were not as cautious. Schoolcraft did the most to construct an "Indian mind" (paradoxically of "Shemitic" type), in place of the previous "savage mind." It would be impervious to philanthropy as long as language, its patterns of thought, remained unaltered. Even as Schoolcraft urged the incorporation of Indian bodies and the salvation of Indian souls, he cast "the Indian mind" as intrinsically inferior, utterly different, and inassimilable. Philology, too, was a race science.

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Du Ponceau seemed to many to have delineated the "plans of ideas" of an distinct American race. In 1819, Du Ponceau had concluded that the each of the American languages throughout the hemisphere shared the same grammatical structure and that that structure could be found nowhere else in the world. Much of the immediate interest in the new philology concerned what those conclusions meant for understanding the origin, descent, and migrations of the Indians. At the beginning of their partnership, Du Ponceau privately assured John Heckewelder that he did "not mean to enquire by the comparison of words from different idioms that are

similar or nearly similar in sound, whether the aboriginal population of this country, comes from Tartary, or any other place.” That was not to say that Du Ponceau was uninterested in what philology could say of history. If “something may be discovered by the mere similarity of words, how much farther may we not proceed by studying and comparing the ‘plans of men’s ideas,’ and the variety of modes by which they have contrived to give them body and shape through articulate sounds.” Du Ponceau realized that the “most generally established opinion seems to be, that the Americans are descended from the Tartars.” Catherine the Great had compiled vocabularies from the region, but “before we decide on the Tartar origin of the American Indians, we ought, I think, to study the grammars of the Tartar languages, and ascertain whether their languages are formed by similar associations of ideas, with those of their supposed descendents.” Du Ponceau allowed no ambiguity. Dissimilar modes of bundling ideas together into words and sentences would not only undermine ideas of descent of one from the other; they would exclude such notions altogether: “If essential differences should be found between them in this respect, I do not see how the hypothesis of Tartar origin could afterwards be maintained.”⁷

This manner of philological investigation could naturally be applied to other theories of Indian origins, as Samuel Jarvis had demonstrated in his comparison of the American languages with Hebrew. Even before this, Johann S. Vater’s essay on Indian origins had suggested slight resemblances between the grammatical forms of the languages of the Basques, the Tschuktschi,

⁷ PSD to Heckewelder, 5 August 1816, in Historical and Literary Committee Letter Books, 1: 43-45; PSD, PSD, “A Correspondence between the Rev. John Heckewelder, of Bethlehem, and Peter S. Du Ponceau, Esq.,... Respecting the Languages of the American Indians,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, 1 (1819), 432. [Hereafter, this journal will be cited as *HLC Trans.*] Vater had also expressed a conviction similar to Du Ponceau’s regarding the importance of grammar over words. Although he never cited Maupertuis in his essay on Indian origins, Vater stated: “The similarity of grammatical forms is a sure guide, when it is found in the language of two different nations. For where it takes place, it shews itself not only in the expression of the same idea, but in expressing it in the same manner; & the coincidence of these two circumstances can hardly be ascribed to the mere effect of accident. The bond which connects two such languages, is a close bond, & indeed a bond which connected those Nations before their Separation.” See Johann Severin Vater, “An Inquiry into the Origin of the Population of America from the old Continent” [1810], trans. Peter S. Du Ponceau [c. 1820], 130, ms. at APS. Elsewhere, Du Ponceau does not seem to hesitate to credit Vater, so it seems reasonable to conclude that Maupertuis, whom Du Ponceau does cite, was the source for this line of Du Ponceau’s thought.

and of the inhabitants of the Congo. Du Ponceau rejected the last, commenting that it would be “a strange and curious fact, if the idioms of the black and red races of mankind should be constructed on a similar plan of grammatical forms.” The second name often labeled two distinct groups, one of which spoke a Tartar dialect and the other Du Ponceau considered merely a colony of North American Eskimos. He emphasized: “As far as we are acquainted with the languages of the Siberian Tartars, and of the Samoyedes, who inhabit the northern parts of Asiatic Russia, we do not find there is any connexion either in etymology or grammatical forms between them and those of the American Indians.” The language Vater thought most shared a common construction with many American languages was the Basque. Vater argued that this, the sole language of western Europe that philology had excluded from the Indo-European group, possessed “precisely this manner of expressing the pronominal accusative governed by a Verb.”⁸ At first, Du Ponceau was inclined to agree with Vater’s supposition of a linguistic affinity between the American languages and the Basque. He feared, perhaps thinking of James H. McCulloh’s *Researches*, that one would have to “revive the story of the Atlantis and believe that the two continents of Europe and America were once connected together” to account for it. But, subsequent study of Vater’s and Wilhelm von Humboldt’s separate accounts of the language convinced Du Ponceau that “the difference in their arrangement is so great that it cannot be said that those languages are connected with or derived from each other.”⁹

Du Ponceau also explored languages that Vater had not suggested were linked to the American languages and what he knew of Basque likely inspired his interest in other alpine

⁸ PSD, “Report of the Corresponding Secretary to the Committee, of his Progress in the Investigation committed to him of the General Character and Forms of the Languages of the American Indians, -- Read 12th January, 1819,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, xli-xliii; Vater, “Enquiry into the Origin of the Population of America,” 177.

⁹ PSD, “Correspondence,” 432-33; “Report,” xxxix-xli. “The Atlantis” was on Du Ponceau’s mind in this period. Pasted onto the inside cover of the first Historical and Literary Committee letter book was an undated newspaper clipping from the *New York Gazette*, in which Samuel L. Mitchell provided mocking “Notice of the Ancient Atlantides.” See HLC Letter Books, 1 [inside cover]. As late as 1822, Du Ponceau was still “occupied with the Basque language,” but by then he was refuting some of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s claims. See PSD to Von Hammer, 25 April 1822; PSD to Vater, 20 October 1822, in HLC Letter Books, 3: 10-12, 15-27.

nations, since “mountainous countries are known to be the repositories of ancient languages.” In the *Mithridates*, Du Ponceau found a specimen of the language of Georgia – radically different from the other languages of the Caucasus, Turkey, and Persia – that he thought evinced “a striking resemblance in some of the forms of its verbs to those of the American Indians.” Perhaps thinking of the work of Julius Klaproth, who assigned the Caucasus prime importance in the origins of the family he called “Indo-Germanic,” Du Ponceau found this especially “remarkable, as that part of Asia is considered as having been the cradle of the human race”¹⁰ He corresponded with Klaproth, author of the *Asia Polyglotta* (1823), on this topic and he may have inspired the renowned Orientalist Abel Rémusat in similar inquiries. Du Ponceau prodded William Shaler, the U.S. consul at Algiers, to begin studying the language of the Berbers, a “white race of men” who lived in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa and who, “like our ultra-Mississippian Indians...live in a state of savage independence.” From what Shaler told him of the language, Du Ponceau admitted that its structure bore “a strong affinity to those curious discriminating forms which prevail in the languages of our American Indians.”¹¹ Yet Du Ponceau never retracted his insistence that the grammatical forms of the American languages were both uniform and unique.

Although it never became the hemispheric institution that Du Ponceau envisioned, the society received an important essay on the Otomi language of central Mexico from Manuel de Naxera, “a Mexican savant...well skilled” in his nation’s native languages and possessing “a

¹⁰ PSD, “Report,” xlii-xliii. Years later, John Pickering emphasized that Du Ponceau’s statement of affinity between the forms of the language of Georgia and those of the American languages inspired Continental efforts. See John Pickering, “Address,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 1 (1843), 25. Regarding this language, Berber, and Basque, Du Ponceau exchanged letters with Jules Klaproth, author of the *Asia Polyglotta*, the successor compilation to Adelung and Vater’s *Mithridates*. See PSD to Klaproth, 1823, HLC Letter Book, 3: 28-29; Klaproth to PSD, 20 June 1824, MAV Collection, Academy of Natural Sciences [microfilm copy at APS]. On Klaproth’s philology, see Tuska Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 65-66, 83-88.

¹¹ William Shaler, “On the Language, Manners, and Customs of the Berbers, or Brebers of Africa. Communicated by William Shaler, Consul of the United States to Algeria, in a Series of Letters to Peter S. Du Ponceau, and by the latter to the Society,” *APS Trans.*, n.s., 2 (1825), 438-39, 442-43. Du Ponceau became so intrigued with this language, he inserted a vocabulary of it into his collection of Indian vocabularies; see PSD, “Indian Vocabularies collected September 1820,” no. 51. Du Ponceau’s correspondence with Shaler can be found in HLC Letter Books, 3, APS; and Du Ponceau Papers, HSP, Box 1, Folders 5-7, 9-10.

clear and well organized head.” Naxera examined a grammar composed by De Neve y Molina, “an Otomi by birth.” Although he knew Spanish better than Otomi, he was reliable precisely because “he was no philosopher” and so had laid down the language according to “no theory.”¹² Visiting Philadelphia in 1835, Naxera unexpectedly informed Du Ponceau that Otomi was a monosyllabic language, similar in that respect to Chinese, and unlike other known native languages of the Americas. He realized that Naxera would “diminish” his “theory of the polysynthetic character of all the Indian languages.” Du Ponceau was a scholar of Chinese as well as the American languages, being among the first Europeans to provide evidence that its writing represented sounds of the spoken language rather than pure ideas, and although he alerted the Mexican scholar of grammatical distinctions between Chinese and Otomi, he thought that Naxera had proven, “beyond all contradiction,” a “great affinity” between the two languages. Still, Du Ponceau resented that upon Naxera’s work “theories will be built...without end, & we shall be told of the road by which the Chinese emigrated to America, which I think is not yet demonstrated.”¹³

Du Ponceau also was “very anxious to know whether a language analogous to the Malay is spoken in some part of *Tierra Firme*,” since it was already known to stretch from Madagascar to the Malacca Peninsula to the furthest reaches of Polynesia; but in 1822 he was “not very

¹² PSD to AG, 12 March, 2 April 1835, Gallatin Papers, New-York Historical Society, reel 41 [I have used the microfilm version of this collection at Swem Library, College of William & Mary]; AG, “Notes on the Semi-Civilized Nations of Mexico, Yucatan, and Central America,” *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* 1 (1845), 35.

¹³ PSD to AG, 12 March, 2 April 1835, Gallatin Papers, reel 41; PSD to AG, 22 April 1835, Gallatin Papers, Supplement Reel 4. In the first letter, Du Ponceau had crossed out “system” and replaced it with “theory.” For Naxera’s publication, see “De Linguâ Othomitorum Dissertatio; Auctore Emmanuele Naxera, Mexicano, Academie Litterariae Zacatecarum Socio,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 5 (1837): 249-96. In 1821, L. Bringier had suggested a linguistic relation between Otomi and Cherokee in Silliman’s journal, which may have served as the inspiration for Rafinesque’s later comments to that effect. See “Art. IV.,” *American Journal of Science and Arts*, 3.1 (1 January 1821), 35-36. For Du Ponceau’s opinions on Chinese, see PSD, *A Dissertation on the Nature and Character of the Chinese System of Writing, in a letter to John Vaughan, Esq.* (Philadelphia, 1838). He confirmed his opinion of Othomi being a monosyllabic language in that letter, which was dated 24 November 1836; see *ibid.*, 38. Today, linguists reject any connection between Otomi and Chinese. See Lyle Campbell, *American Indian Languages: The Historical Linguistics of Native America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157.

sanguine in his expectations” since it differed so thoroughly from the American languages.¹⁴ John Pickering, however, stressed the ethnological value of a naval exploring expedition to the Pacific. Like Du Ponceau, John Pickering devoted an increasing amount of his philological attention to the languages of Asia and Oceania. In 1842, already president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he became the first president of the American Oriental Society.¹⁵ Pickering thought that Naxera “compelled” scholars to “re-examine...the connection between the inhabitants of the two continents, and their connection respectively with the intermediate people of the South Sea islands.”¹⁶ In a public letter he wrote to the expedition’s main booster, he rehearsed the practical advantages philology provided to commerce, civilization, and conversion. However, Pickering also emphasized the surprising results of linguistic science, especially in showing that nations “geographically so far apart, and so different in social condition” could be “intimately allied to each other.” Further, he instructed the jury of his readership on what evidence could be allowed in particular ethnological questions: “the affinities of the different peoples of the globe, and their migrations in ages prior to authentic history, can be traced only by means of language.” Hoping to seal his case, and perhaps aware that his evidentiary claim was increasingly questioned, he also asserted: “If there is, as all admit, any utility in studying *man*, then it is quite evident, that we must study his distinguishing characteristic.”¹⁷

¹⁴ PSD to Vater, 20 October 1822, HLC Letter Books, 3: 15-17.

¹⁵ Mary Orne Pickering, *Life of John Pickering* (Boston, 1887), 460, 487-88. [hereafter, John Pickering will be denoted as “JP” and his daughter’s biography simply as Pickering, *Life of JP*.] For a description of what he envisioned as the society’s objects, see JP, “Address,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 1 (1849): 1-78.

¹⁶ [JP], “Article 1.,” *American Quarterly Review* 20.39 (1 September 1836), 23. On Pickering’s authorship of this article, see JP to PSD, 8 May 1836, Du Ponceau Papers, HSP. Pickering changed his tune a few years later. In 1839, he claimed that on the basis of an Otomi catechism published in 1826, he “always had a little doubt as to the true character of that language.” He relayed the opinion of Johann Karl Eduard Buschmann, a budding German philologist then engaged in editing the papers of the recently deceased Wilhelm von Humboldt, who had “resided in Mexico three or four years, & is well acquainted with both the Mexican and the Othomi languages,” that “the Othomi is not monosyllabic.” Pickering reflected: “So here we have a point to settle over again.” See JP to PSD, 8 May 1839, Du Ponceau Papers, 3, HSP.

¹⁷ JP to Reynolds, 30 July 1836, in J. N. Reynolds, *Pacific and Indian Oceans: or, The South Sea Surveying and Exploring Expedition: Its Inception, Progress, and Objects* (New York, 1841), 136-40. William Stanton noted that an appeal to national pride was the only hope for refuting those who used a strict construction of the Constitution and popular unwillingness to devote tax revenue to sponsor science. See

Though he rejected the core of Du Ponceau's and Pickering's philology, the prodigal and prolific Constantine S. Rafinesque agreed that only language could provide the basis for ethnology. The notion that the American languages possessed a "common exclusive grammatical structure" was simply "erroneous," according to Rafinesque, since among them were "many mixt forms, and even monosyllables" and "the amalgamation of words prevails more or less in Europe and Africa."¹⁸ He described his "Anthropology" in 1832. "Syntax and Grammar or the modes in which words are modified and combined are subservient to the radical or elementary words, and thus of much less relative importance." Silently lifting an idea from the British polymath Thomas Young, Rafinesque appealed to the queen of sciences.¹⁹ Between two languages, the number of similar words, "taken almost at random," divided by the total number of words compared would yield a percentage of affinity between two languages. Thus, Rafinesque believed he had "almost reduced Philology and Ethnology to a *mathematical demonstration* of combined or compound

William Stanton, *The Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 6-7. Reynolds had formerly been a disciple of John Cleves Symmes, Jr.'s idea of a hollow earth and he still believed that there was a temperate region between the poles and the surrounding ice; but he only achieved credibility as an advocate for polar and Pacific exploration, and status as mouthpiece for commercial interests, when he abandoned Symmesian theories. See William H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 258-73.

¹⁸ C. S. Rafinesque, *The American Nations; or, Outlines of a National History; of the Ancient and Modern Nations of North and South America*, (Philadelphia, 1836), 1: 8-9. In those pages, he classified all languages into "1. Regular, 2. Resupinate, 3. Mixt," according to their "epithetic structure, or relative position of ideas." Since each class could be found in the Americas and elsewhere, linguistic structure did not indicate affinity and "roots [were] more important than grammar." That same year, Rafinesque versified a rebuttal to Du Ponceau's theories of the primacy and fixity of grammatical forms: "No language ever was, nor ever can / Become quite fixt and permanent: in spite / Of vain conceit, or nations learned pride. / ... Some things in former times by two or more / Small words were nam'd, which kept, or dropt, or changed, / Soon gave to tribes or nations peculiar / Forms in their speech. These words when mixt or used / In sport, or whim, or choice, became the types / Of all the languages we know or hear. The rules of each were subsequent to speech, / By care and skill were found, in Elements / Or sounds, next roots, the complicated words / Divided were; the Grammars made long after." See C. S. Rafinesque, *The World, or Instability. A Poem. In Twenty Parts, with Notes and Illustrations* (Philadelphia, 1836), 116-18.

¹⁹ In the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* for 1819, Thomas Young suggested a way of applying the "doctrine of chances" to "investigating the relations of two languages to each other, with a view of determining how far they indicated a common origin from an older language, or an occasional intercourse between the two nations speaking them." See Thomas Young, "Remarks on the Probabilities of Error in Physical Observations," in George Peacock, ed., *Miscellaneous Works of the Late Thomas Young, M.D., F.R.S., &c.*, 3 vols. (London, 1855): 2: 15-18. Rafinesque ignored Young's acknowledgement that identical words could indicate origin or intercourse as well as his warning that slight similarity was a far cry from identity.

affinities” that he called the “*Synoremic formula*, or the Numerical and Analogical Rule.” This would lead to important results: “That all the languages have a greater or lesser affinity with all the other languages...can now be proven mathematically.” Rafinesque found that he had “hereby confirmed the unity of the human race.” He concluded, citing Klaproth for support, that “languages are even of more importance than features and complexion to distinguish or assimilate human families: thus the speech of man, peculiar to him, shall be found to take the lead even of physical forms and deviations.”²⁰

Du Ponceau also believed that language was the best guide to the descent of nations, but, ultimately, he concluded that philology could not support monogenesis. He aimed his fullest discussion of the subject at a popular audience in “Language” (1831), an article for the *Encyclopaedia Americana*. Examining a historical record that stretched back some 4000 years, Du Ponceau contrasted what he regarded as the opposite poles of human speech, the monosyllabic and isolating Chinese and the polysyllabic and polysynthetic American languages: “they may be traced back so far, and have continued so long that it is impossible to suppose that

²⁰ CSR, “Anthropology. The Fundamental Base of the Philosophy of Human Speech, or Philology and Ethnology,” *Atlantic Journal, Friend of Knowledge* 1.2 (Summer 1832), 49-51. Although he later admitted the possibility that all men were not descended from Adam, “the unity of mankind as a genus of beings, would not be impaired.” He continued to trace the world’s languages to Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Chinese. See CSR, *Genius and Spirit of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia, 1838). On Rafinesque’s self-financed publishing, see Francis W. Pennell, “Life and Work of Rafinesque,” in Charles Boewe, ed., *Profiles of Rafinesque* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), 42. On the scientific establishment’s refusal to publish Rafinesque’s work, and the consequent necessity to “go over their heads...to seek a broad audience, learned or not,” see Leonard Warren, *Constantine Samuel Rafinesque: A Voice in the American Wilderness* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), 137. “Determined that one American nation at least, should be traced philologically to its real origin,” Rafinesque claimed to “restore” the “Extinct Language of Hayti and the West Indies” and compare it to “*all the languages of the earth*.” “Decompos[ing] the compound words,” he found more than 1500 analogies that had been previously hidden. “By a careful analytical process,” Rafinesque compared 200 “Haytian” words with those of the European ancestors of the Greeks and Italians and claimed to have found a “Mutual affinity of 80 per cent!...Therefore the Haytians are of Pelagic origin!” Thus, supported by the Haytian tradition that ostensibly recorded an Atlantic crossing, Rafinesque asserted the “Atlantic origin” of the natives of the West Indies and predicted that the “Haytian shall now become one of the touchstones of other American languages.” See CSR, *American Nations*, 181, 215, 217, 219-20, 225. Years before, he had sent Du Ponceau vocabularies of the “extinct Haytian or Taino” and the “Contal” (connected with Mayan glyphs) languages. As in other cases, Du Ponceau scrupulously avoided any public recognition of Rafinesque and his speculation, but he did copy those vocabularies into the historical committee’s collection and the accompanying letters into his personal philological notebooks. For the vocabularies he sent Du Ponceau, see Historical and Literary Committee, *Vocabularies and Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to Indian Languages*, Nos. 25-26; PSD, *Philological Notebooks*, 6: 29-38, both are at APS.

they may have been successively produced.” A philologist could not accept that “language should have suffered so many changes in its organic structure as to form new languages, so essentially and entirely different from each other” in the 2000 years that preceded recorded history. Rather, he concluded that “in all languages there is a strong tendency to preserve their original structure.” From this, Du Ponceau was “forced into the conclusion, that all the languages which exist on the face of the earth are not derived from one, but that they must be divided into classes or genera, to which must be assigned separate and distinct origins.” Later that decade, pondering the possibility of physical change, Morton denied change in that first 2000 years for similar reasons.

Du Ponceau did not consider it his “business to reconcile this theory with the mosaic records”; nonetheless it could be easily done. At the “confusion of tongues, the primitive language, its words and forms, were entirely effaced from the memory of man, and men were left to their own resources to form new ones.” Whereas years earlier Samuel Farmer Jarvis had ascribed fixed grammatical structures and plans of ideas to divine will, Du Ponceau ascribed them to the “the various capacities of the human mind.” He explained: “the eye of the mind receives ideas or mental perceptions, according to its various capacities, and to different attending circumstances. What we call ideas are rapid perceptions, continually flitting before the mental eye. Like objects viewed through the kaleidoscope, they pass before us in ever-changing shapes.” One individual might describe the shifting scene in a single word; another might try to fix each successive perception with its own label. “In this manner, syntactic and atactic idioms have been respectively formed” and none was more artificial than another. Languages “received various organic or grammatical characters and forms...according to the tempers and capacities of the nations that first formed them, and of the men that took the lead in that formation.” As he reminded his readers, perhaps thinking of the sitting president, Andrew Jackson, then executing Indian removal, leaders were not always “the most sensible of the whole band.” Regardless, a

language's speakers followed the "impulse first given."²¹ This accommodated revelation and empirical evidence of linguistic diversity. Thus Du Ponceau dispatched facile theories of the evolution of grammatical forms and the possibility that philology could trace the world's languages and peoples to a common point of origin, even as he implied the tenacity with which Indian plans of ideas would persist without white intervention.

In part because philology had not led to certain knowledge of the common descent of all language; in part because the Babel story relieved belief in humanity's common descent of the burden of proof, other forms of ethnological inquiry attempted to establish what philology could not. As early as 1820, the recently formed American Antiquarian Society published its first volume, *Archaeologia Americana*, which leaned heavily on the work of Heckewelder, John D. Clifford, and Alexander von Humboldt. In direct conversation with the best of contemporary European ethnology and joining the excitement sparked by Indo-European philology, it vividly narrated a North American antiquity that was inseparable from old world civilization, painting the ancestors of the North American Indians as savage "Tartar" invaders who destroyed a preexisting "Hindoo" civilization and forced the American ancients into Mexico and beyond, where they became ever more civilized and built ever grander structures along their route. "Who knows," Caleb Atwater wondered, "but that the Muskingum, the Scioto, the Miami, the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Mississippi, were once deemed as sacred, their banks as thickly settled, and as well cultivated, as are now the Indus, the Ganges, and the Burrampooter."²²

²¹ [PSD], "Language," in Francis Lieber, ed., *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 7 (1831), 412-14. To his delight a few years later, Du Ponceau found that "so great a Philologist" as Dante Alighieri had expressed a similar opinion about the origin of language, through Adam, in the 26th canto of the *Paradiso*. See PSD to JP, 23 June 1833, in Du Ponceau Papers, 3: 88, HSP.

²² Caleb Atwater, "Description of the Antiquities discovered in the State of Ohio and other Western States," *Archaeologia Americana: Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* 1 (1820), 188-90, 209-13, 238-41, 244-50, 251-67, at 213. He based his theories on excavations in Ohio; Delaware tradition, found in Heckewelder's history; a "Triune idol or vessel" unearthed in Tennessee, supposedly representing "the three chief gods of India, Brahma, Vishnoo and Siva," of which Clifford's wife provided a sketch; and descriptions of step pyramids in Mexico and the Louisiana Territory. Invoking the celebrated philosophical travelers of the Arctic, Spanish America, and Egypt, Atwater wanted "to produce a work, which may be placed on a shelf with Pennant, Humboldt & Denon." Quoted in Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 360. Trigger, *History of Archaeological Thought*, 161, places Atwater among those

Coming just one year after the *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society*, the two volumes galvanized ethnological studies in the United States. The volumes suggested, however, competing rather than complementary modes of studying “the Indian.” The antiquarian society was established “to preserve...relics of American antiquity” and the volume privileged physical remains (bodies and artifacts), interpreted through knowledge of Indian beliefs and practices.²³ Humboldt had advised his readers: “Neither the analogy nor the diversity of language can suffice, to solve the great problem of the filiation of nations; they afford only simple probabilities.” Instead he urged the study of “hieroglyphical paintings, buildings of hewn stone, and works of sculpture still in preservation” to fully understand a people’s character.²⁴ Philology was unnecessary since, as Atwater put it, the American monuments spoke “a language as expressive as the most studied inscriptions of latter times upon brass and marble,” even though memories of the events they were meant to commemorate were “lost in oblivion.”²⁵

who practiced a “gradually...more systematic archaeology”; and Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America*, 60, recognizes his fantastic conclusions, but concludes that “his work is nevertheless a landmark in the history of American archaeology, being the first serious and comprehensive survey of the antiquities of a single region.”

²³ “Origin of American Antiquarian Society,” *Archaeologia Americana* 1 (1820), 18, 30. Andrew John Lewis, “The Curious and the Learned: Natural History in the Early Republic” (Ph.D. diss: Yale University, 2001), ch. 3, discusses antiquarian archaeology, and its locus in Worcester, Mass., between the death of Barton and the establishment of the Smithsonian, specifically in the context of competing forms of methodologies and evidence used by its practitioners, but he ignores philology as itself a competitor. Perhaps part of the resulting surge in ethnological interest, John C. Warren, *Comparative View of the Sensorial and Nervous Systems in Men and Animals* (Boston, 1822) was the first treatise on comparative anatomy written in the United States, published just two years after the antiquarian society’s first transactions. He cited osteological evidence that the builders of the mounds were a distinct race, and he cited Heckewelder’s tradition as corroboration. For a discussion of this work, see Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 337-42.

²⁴ Alexander de Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* [1811] (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 140; Alexander de Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent, during the Years 1799-1804*, vol. 3 (London, 1818), 285-86. Michael Anthony Wadyko, “Alexander von Humboldt and Nineteenth-Century Ideas on the Origins of the American Indians” (Ph.D. diss., West Virginia University, 2000), 34, 80, 117, wavers on Humboldt’s stance vis-à-vis philology.

²⁵ Atwater, “Description of the Antiquities,” 133, 195. The Indian agent John Johnston, provided the one exception to *Archaeologia Americana*’s neglect of language by including a Shawnee vocabulary and a “specimen” of Wyandot phrases. Johnston noted that the Wyandot “language is entirely distinct from that of any other tribes of Ohio. Many words are pure Latin,” a fact he ascribed to the influence of Catholic missionaries. See John Johnston, “Account of the Present State of the Indian Tribes inhabiting Ohio. In a Letter from John Johnston, Esq., United States Agent of Indian Affairs, at Piqua, to Caleb Atwater, Esq.,”

Samuel L. Mitchell, a physician, natural historian, and former chairman of the committee on Indian affairs in the U.S. Senate, whose contributions to *Archaeologia Americana* were second only to Atwater's, inferred that since "the same peculiarity" characterized all Indian languages, "an original tribe or people" must have "excogitate[d] such intricate formations of language as could not be effaced by thousands of years, nor by the influence of zones and climates." Yet he, who had supported Jefferson's idea of an American cradle of the human race years before, likened Du Ponceau's theory to the antiquarian fantasies of Charles Leopold Mathieu of France, who ascribed both the "hieroglyphics" on Dighton Rock and the languages of Mexico and Peru to "the primitive Atlantides!" "What need is there," Mitchell demanded, "of all this etymological research and grammatical conjecture?" As he told the antiquarian society, he thought that philology should be "properly confided" to Du Ponceau and his committee. Mitchell stressed that "physiognomy, manufactures and customs" were the key to American antiquity. Since the voices of mound builders had been silenced, some doubted philology's ethnological value.²⁶

The work of Du Ponceau and other comparative philologists even troubled those who were inclined to look to philology for support. In the first edition of *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1813), James Cowles Prichard used Benjamin Smith Barton's etymologies

Archaeologia Americana, 271, 287-99. Johnston was a repeat provider of ethnological materials. He also gave a Wyandot skull to Daniel Drake to compare, according to methods of Camper and Blumenbach, with one taken from an Ohio mound. See Daniel Drake, *Natural and Statistical View, or Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country* (Cincinnati, 1815), 207-08.

²⁶ Samuel Latham Mitchell, "Communications," *Archaeologia Americana* 1 (1820), 313-14, 338-40, 347. Mitchell's "faith in the transatlantick doctrines" regarding Indian capacities and Indian origins "began to be shaken" when, he heard Osage poetry and Cherokee song in Washington in 1805. A Kentucky mummy, wrapped in fabric "perfectly resembling" that used by Pacific islanders, convinced him that Malays built the mounds. Still, he was open to the possibility that "America was the cradle of the human race" and he conjectured that the white and black races had diverged from an original tawny race, which he partially explained through a "generative influence" in reproduction. See *ibid.*, 313, 331-32. On Mitchell's physical anthropology, see Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson*, 330-32. Du Ponceau never opened a correspondence with Mitchell on behalf of the historical committee, although he pasted a clipping from the *New-York Gazette* in which Mitchell passed along Mathieu's "discoveries" inside the front cover of HLC Letter Books, vol. 1, APS. The Malay and Hindu theses were not mutually exclusive. See Hugh Williamson, *Observations on the Climate in different parts of America compared with the climate in corresponding parts of the other continent; to which are added, remarks on the different complexions of the human race, with some account of the Aborigines of America* (New York, 1811), 129-32; C. S. Rafinesque, "Three Letters on American Antiquities, directed to Thomas Jefferson, late President of the United States," *National Register*, 10.9 (26 August 1820), 141. Mitchell found this "convincing" in his review of this work in *Medical Repository of Original Correspondence and Intelligence* 3 (August-October 1811), 160-71.

to support his view that humanity shared a common origin and that a mixture of environmental factors and abnormal births explained physical difference.²⁷ By 1826, when Prichard published a second edition, he was much less certain of the relationship between language and physical race. He was inclined to believe the former was more durable, since Indo-European scholarship showed the linguistic similarity, but physical difference, within that family. Such evidence suggested that languages, “since the most remote period of time to which the antiquity of nations and the history of mankind enable us to refer, have not in general lost their distinctive characteristics or their affinities.” After considering the work of Du Ponceau and Klaproth, who each proffered versions of linguistic polygenesis, Prichard confessed that languages were “so imperfectly known, and facts of late discovered have turned out so contrary to previously entertained opinions” that “we are not authorized to draw any positive conclusion as to their origin.” He tepidly suggested that languages degenerated with people after the dispersal from Babel and that marks of linguistic affinity “become evanescent in proportion to the degree of barbarism” a nation had sunk.²⁸ Prichard, Britain’s preeminent ethnologist, had attempted to parry the potentially polygenist uses to which theories of grammatical diversity and fixity could be put; but he effectively undermined philology as the basis for ethnology.

Multiple attitudes toward philology converged in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. Some became increasingly frustrated with philology’s uncertain results. Congressman Edward Everett, who studied some philology in Germany, had hoped that language would furnish “the best clue...to unravel the hard problem of the peopling of this Continent. And yet what has already been discovered seems to show the fallacy of this hope.”²⁹ In an address

²⁷ James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man* [1813], edited by George W. Stocking, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 154, 548-49.

²⁸ James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, 2d. ed. (London, 1826), 1: 5; 2: 342-43, 347, 351-52, 584-89, 610, 613.

²⁹ Edward Everett to AG, 27 June 1826, Gallatin Papers. He also thought that Du Ponceau’s studies disproved Alexander von Humboldt’s idea that that Indians came to Americas 1200-1300 years ago, since that was “by no means a period of time long enough to obliterate the traces of a community of languages.” See Edward Everett to [PSD], 5 January 1834, MAV Collection, ANS [microfilm at APS].

before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the physician Benjamin H. Coates, who suspected that America had been populated from multiple sources, stressed that philology had yet to demonstrate any affinities: “Scarce any department of knowledge exhibits so large a mass of literary labour with so small a result produced.”³⁰ John Russell Bartlett, an ethnology enthusiast then living in Providence, told the Franklin Society in 1836 that the American languages “do not give us any aid to unravel the mystery which envelopes them.” Indeed, “without historic annals, traditions, or sculptured monuments...every step we take, instead of bringing us nearer to the object of which we are in search, only throws new obstacles in our path.”³¹

Other writers, despite Du Ponceau’s own views, sought to attach deeper ethnological significance to what philology was defining as the essential difference of the world’s linguistic types. A *Yankee and Literary Gazette* author knew that those who studied “the style, spirit, and structure of the language” (the “soundest philologists”), found that the “languages of the New World...are as remote from all other, as they could possibly be, and if entire difference of language supposes a difference of origin, the question respecting the origin of America, is settled forever.” Although he admitted that this did not prove that Indians “sprung up on the soil from an entirely distinct stock,” a *Southern Literary Journal and Magazine of the Arts* writer went further: “as far as language is conclusive of the point, it justifies the inference, that the Indians are an original people and not of European, Asiatic, or African extraction.”³²

Still other scholars thought that language was in no way conclusive of that point because they rejected the complacent blurring of peoples and their languages altogether. In *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (1830), Charles Caldwell – who had used Sequoyah’s

³⁰ B. H. Coates, “Annual Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, on the 28th Day of April, 1834, On the Origin of the Indian Population of America,” *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 3.2 (1836), 6, 9, 21, 38, 42-50, at 21.

³¹ John Russell Bartlett, “On the Indian Languages, read before the Franklin Society February 1836,” Bartlett Papers, Box 13, John Carter Brown Library. Interestingly, the same box contains “On the Variety of the Human Race, read before the Franklin Society Nov. 27. 1833,” wherein Bartlett makes no mention of language. This suggests that he began paying attention to philology only in the intervening years.

³² “The Aborigines of America,” *Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette*, 2.1 (July 1829), 18-19, 21; “Customs and Peculiarities of the Indians,” *Southern Literary Journal and Magazine of the Arts*, 4.6 (December 1838), 433.

syllabary to argue for Indian stasis and Caucasian monopoly on civilization – attacked both monogenesis and the ethnological value of language. Linguistic similarities demonstrated, at most, only previous intercourse. But it may not represent even that, because people can form only a limited number of sounds with their vocal organs. Further, language represented “in articulate sounds...things and their relations, as they appear to the human mind.” Since nature and the human mind were constant, “all languages resemble each other...because from the nature of the case, it must be so.” It was “unsound logic” to infer that similarities indicated the common descent of the languages, much less the common descent of the speakers.³³ Coates thought that “if we permit our imaginations to revert to a period so ancient as to be prior to the formation of language, we may easily refer the earliest origin of the race to a Mongolian,” thus suggesting that physical race preceded language.³⁴ John Pickering’s own nephew, Charles Pickering, challenged the philologist’s insistence that man was best studied by the characteristic that distinguished him from other animals. Natural history was the “looking glass” through which to study man, especially as commerce and conquest disrupted natural geographic distributions. “The tact of an experienced naturalist might detect points in the physical aspect of the natives, that would have escaped the notice of the Philologist, the Ethnographer, or even the Anatomist.”³⁵

Such critiques reduced philology’s prestige and, in the words of John Pickering, threatened “the shipwreck of our Philology” on a projected exploring expedition to the South

³³ Charles Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (New York, 1830), 166-69. On Caldwell’s ethnology, but none of which discuss his views on language, see William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 19-23; John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames: University of Iowa Press, 1984), 332-33; Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 72-74.

³⁴ Coates, “Annual Discourse,” 13. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, 82, mentions Coates as a possible influence on Samuel G. Morton. Though not usually numbered among the “American school,” Coates wrote on the natural distinction, though not the separate creation, of races more than once. See “Comments on some of the illustrations derived by Phrenology from Comparative Anatomy,” *Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences* 7 (1823); “On the Effects of Secluded and Gloomy Imprisonment on the Individuals of the African Variety of Mankind, in the Production of Disease,” *Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* 3 (1843).

³⁵ Charles Pickering to Reynolds, 15 August, 1836, in Reynolds *Pacific and Indian Oceans*, 153-55.

Seas, though he suspected that the appointment of a separate physical ethnologist was secure.³⁶ Supporters of federally sponsored science faced hostility on several fronts: from Congressmen with constitutional scruples; from naval officers convinced that a separate scientific corps would reap praise for performing tasks which they were fully qualified to perform and that belonged rightfully to them; and from a broader public that disdained subsidizing the esoteric leisure of an intellectual elite. Supporters of philology, in particular, had it worse. To John Pickering, this was but another manifestation of the woeful state of learning in the United States. Despite the remarkable, and acknowledged, contributions of U.S. scholars to the European science of languages, the masses were indifferent. The fault lay not with the people alone; blame fell also on the editors of newspapers and journals, who refused “to instruct the public how they ought to think on the subject of literature...because it cannot be made a subject of party divisions.”³⁷ Still, philology had its supporters. The expedition’s main booster, J. N. Reynolds, implored Secretary of the Navy, Mahlon Dickerson, who considered the subject “abstruse and intricate”: “Sir, you must not dismiss the philologist!”³⁸ Du Ponceau argued that ethnographic as well as linguistic responsibilities should be properly confided to a philologist.³⁹ Josiah W. Gibbs, Yale Divinity School’s professor of sacred languages, argued for distinct positions for an anthropologist and a philologist, with the former responsible for studying physical and psychological characteristics, and the latter for studying the relations, descent, and migrations of nations.⁴⁰ Eventually, the

³⁶ JP to PSD, 23 May 1838, Du Ponceau Papers 3, HSP.

³⁷ JP to PSD, 18 April, 5 July 1838, Du Ponceau Papers 3, HSP. For his part, Pickering admitted that he “never expect[ed] to write any thing, that our countrymen will want to read – Chinese philology and Indian dictionaries are not their taste.” See JP to PSD, 18 April 1838, Du Ponceau Papers 3, HSP. Du Ponceau, who published his *Memoire* in France, agreed. Their correspondence returned to the theme of scholarship, popularity, and the relative fortunes of writers in Europe and United States repeatedly in 1837-38.

³⁸ Mahlon Dickerson to JP, 21 November 1836, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 441; [Reynolds], “Letter XI,” in *Pacific and Indian Oceans*, 434.

³⁹ PSD, “Ethnography,” in Edwin G. Conklin, “Connection of the American Philosophical Society with our First National Exploring Expedition,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82 (1940): 519-41, at 536. For his longer report on “Philology,” see *ibid.*, 533-36. This continued the federal precedent established by Jefferson of consulting the nation’s learned societies on required reading and scientific desiderata before federal exploration.

⁴⁰ Josiah W. Gibbs to Reynolds, 24 August 1836, in Reynolds, *Pacific and Indian Oceans*, 145-47. Gibbs intended a clear demarcation between the positions’ duties, but he blurred them by stressing that the

“Great U.S. Ex. Ex.,” as it was called, appointed a separate philologist; but debates over the discipline’s utility, even as the appointment of a distinct physical ethnologist seemed certain, demonstrated the extent to which philology’s authority had fallen.

* * *

For many ethnologists, “race” denoted more than the merely the body in the early nineteenth century. While customs and beliefs were widely discarded as representing nothing intrinsic to persons, the same was not the case for speech. The belief that language had been a divinely endowed gift persisted, and the suggestions of Du Ponceau and others that linguistic types followed national and continental lines, and that these types did not change over time, only reinforced the tendency to conflate the language a people spoke with the people themselves. Yet, by the mid-1830s, philology had failed to establish connections among the world’s many languages. The nation’s most distinguished philologist had argued that languages were formed independently of one another in the aftermath of Babel, so there was no common origin to find. Some scholars interpreted this as support for the distinct origins of different races. Others criticized the very blurring of language and race that made such an interpretation possible.

At this point, the Philadelphia physician Samuel G. Morton presented his *Crania Americana* (1839), a work that Prichard declared “by far the most splendid work on ethnography yet published, if I am not mistaken, in any land.”⁴¹ Morton was interested in race and he believed, following Johann F. Blumenbach, that it could be determined by the shape of the skull alone. Morton believed that neither climate, social condition, or any other environmental factors would change its form. This ostensibly unchanging osteology demarcated the world’s people into five *races*. After measuring the internal capacity of crania, Morton concluded that the “American” was a race distinct from the “Mongolian” and “Malay,” that it was intellectually and morally inferior to the “Caucasian” (though superior to the “African”), and that racial

anthropologist should study languages for a people’s “state of rudeness and civilization” and that the philologist studied them as different “development[s] of the human mind,” the “moving principle in man.”

⁴¹ Prichard to JP, 3 June 1840, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 468.

characteristics had gone unchanged in recorded history. His craniology drew on several assumptions of phrenology: skulls conformed to brains, the size and form of which indicated dispositions and talents, and this was as true for races as for individuals.⁴²

Morton subdivided those physically unchanging races into twenty-two *families*, which were groups united in similarities of customs, character, and speech. He counted himself a member of the “Anglo-American” branch of the “Germanic Family” of the “Caucasian Race” and he split the “American Race” into two families similar in physical, but different in intellectual, traits. Mesoamericans, Peruvians, and possibly North American Mound Builders, each of whom had achieved “demi-civilization,” comprised the “Toltecan” family; “all the barbarous nations of the new world,” except the Eskimos, comprised the “American” family.⁴³ Concerning the mental and physical character of the American family, Morton echoed Lewis Cass and found “scarcely any appreciable change in their mode of thinking and manner of life” since European contact, which revealed a “structure of his mind...different from that of the white man” and, ultimately, the “inaptitude of the Indian for civilization.”⁴⁴ In his conclusion, Morton explicitly dismissed the “the feeble analogies of language” that suggested that the American race could be connected with another.⁴⁵ He elaborated a few years later that the American race was “essentially separate and peculiar” with “no direct or obvious links between the people of the old world and the new.”

⁴² Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, a Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia, 1839), 4-5, 260. Further highlighting the phrenological basis of his craniology, Morton included an essay by the famed phrenologist George Combe as an appendix. For discussions of Morton’s Indian ethnology, see William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), ch. 3; Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, ch. 3. For his studies of African Americans and Egypt, see Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), ch. 7. For a scientific evaluation of Morton’s science, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1996), 82-101.

⁴³ SGM, *Crania Americana*, 4, 17, 63.

⁴⁴ SGM, *Crania Americana*, 81-82.

⁴⁵ SGM, *Crania Americana*, 260. In support of his opinion that language provided no indication of race, Morton cited Alexander von Humboldt. Pointing to the debated status of the Celts in European ethnology, Morton “inquire[d] whether the term *Indo-European* is not more applicable to certain *languages* of Europe, than to the inhabitants themselves.” See *ibid.*, 17-18.

The “races were as distinctly stamped three thousand years ago as they are now” and were “coeval with the primitive dispersion of our species.”⁴⁶

At the end of 1842, Gallatin and Bartlett organized the American Ethnological Society, and the former, president of the new society, proposed Morton for membership almost immediately. Living in Philadelphia, Morton did not attend the fortnightly meetings. At Bartlett’s request, however, he sent the society an account of his well-known collection of more than four hundred crania in 1846.⁴⁷ It gave the most explicit statement yet of his ethnological views. He clarified that by “race” he did not mean to suggest that all Indians were descended from a single pair. “On the contrary,” he believed “that they originated from several, perhaps even from many pairs, which were adapted, from the beginning, to the varied localities they were designed to occupy.” “Race” did not necessarily mean all were descended from a common ancestor for Morton. It denoted only “their indigenous relation to each other” and their similarity as a human type, “as shown in all those attributes of mind and body which have been so amply demonstrated by modern Ethnography.” As late as 1842, Morton suggested fixed racial types dispersing from a primitive center; but here he stated that each of the “American nations,” by which he explicitly excluded the Eskimos, were “the true *autochthones*, the primeval inhabitants of this vast continent.”⁴⁸ Like Jefferson, Morton had discovered an American volk, a people who possessed

⁴⁶ SGM, “An Inquiry into the Distinctive Characteristics of the Aboriginal Race of America,” *Boston Journal of Natural History* 4 (1843-44), 222-23.

⁴⁷ John Russell Bartlett to SGM, 25 January 1843, SGM Papers, Series IV, APS. In this letter, Bartlett revealed that less than two months after the AES’s organization, its membership included John Pickering, the recently retired (from his Indian agency) Schoolcraft, eastern Mediterranean and Central American travelers John L. Stephens and Frederick Catherwood, antiquarian Alexander Bradford, Orientalist Dr. Robinson, historian of the Spanish empire William H. Prescott, and Francis L. Hawkes, a minister who would go on to act as historian of the Perry Expedition to Japan. Du Ponceau was not a member. By 1843 he was almost blind, walked only with difficulty, and was no longer active in scholarship; he died the following year. For a short account of its founding and its subsequent tensions, which ignores the methodological disputes that underlay the debates over conclusions, see Robert E. Bieder and Thomas G. Tax, “From Ethnologists to Anthropologists: A Brief History of the American Ethnological Society,” in John V. Murra, ed., *American Anthropology: The Early Years* (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing, 1976).

⁴⁸ SGM, “Account of a Craniological Collection, with Remarks on the Classification of some Families of the Human Race,” *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* 2 (1848), 219. In *ibid.*, 218-19, he flattered the AES president by remarking that Indians’ “multitudinous tribes are not only linked by a common physiognomy and complexion, and by the same moral and mental attributes, but also, as the

immemorial connection with the land. Against the grain, Morton defined it not by language but by craniologically determined race.⁴⁹

Morton's dismissal of philology and explicit endorsement of polygenesis, in Bartlett's words, "led to a debate between our venerable President and other gentlemen" who agreed with Morton. "Infirmities" prevented Gallatin from writing to Morton in early 1847, but he requested Bartlett do so on his behalf. Gallatin reiterated his belief, which followed Du Ponceau and Vater, that the "Esquimaux" were related to Indians. He had stated this clearly in his "Synopsis" years earlier. Identity of grammatical forms indicated a common origin of the peoples and the "entire similarity of the structure and grammatical forms of their language with those of various Indian tribes...affords an almost conclusive proof of their belonging to the same family of mankind."⁵⁰ To Morton, he suggested that "climate, habits, or local causes might...produce a material change in the physical characteristics of a people" and cited the "historical fact, supported by an analogy of language, that the Finns and Laplanders are the same race; yet they differ greatly in their

learned and justly distinguished Mr. Gallatin has shown, by the structure of their languages, and by their archaeological remains....All point to one vast and singularly homogenous race." This is a clear statement of a "four field" view of studying "the Indian," which scholarship usually attributes to practitioners only later in the century. Regna Darnell, who emphasizes an "indigenous Americanist tradition" that acknowledged ethnology, linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology as 4 legitimate means to study Indians existed before Franz Boas, traces it no further back than the last quarter of the nineteenth century. See Regna Darnell, "Toward Consensus on the Scope of Anthropology: Daniel Garrison Brinton and the View from Philadelphia," in Murra, ed., *American Anthropology*.

⁴⁹ Edward G. Gray, *New World Babel: Languages and Nations in Early America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 165, notes that the U.S. citizens' lack of connection between land, language, and land inspired the philology of Du Ponceau and those who followed him. Helen Carr, *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender, and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789-1936* (1996), 108-09, 119, has also noted that Herderian cultural nationalism was confusing for Americans because Indians represented the true American "folk" and she suggests that literary Anglo-Saxonism resolved this problem by providing an alternative to the "impossible" task of crafting an American literature from a native past. Yet Carr ignores Anglo-Saxonism as a racialized national identity (as opposed to a merely literary choice), as does David Simpson, *The Politics of American English, 1776-1850* (New York: Oxford, 1986); and Kenneth Cmiel, "'A Broad Fluid Language of Democracy': Discovering the American Idiom," *Journal of American History* 79. 3 (Dec. 1992): 913-36. The necessary corrective in this regard, which also treats the American school, is Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981). For Jefferson's use of Saxonism, see chapter 4, above.

⁵⁰ AG, "Synopsis," 14, 142. Gallatin had inadvertently opened a space for physical ethnology in his work. The ease of passage across the Bering Strait or from Japan or Kamchatka by way of the Aleutian Islands "would alone, if sustained by a similarity of the physical type of man, render the opinion of an Asiatic origin, not only probable, but almost certain." See AG, "Synopsis," 142.

physical conformation.”⁵¹ Moreover, Gallatin had been “gratified” when he learned that Manuel de Naxera had found affinities between Otomi and Chinese because it supported what he had long suspected: there was “nothing more probable with respect to Asiatic migrations to N. America than the communication by the Japanese Archipel and the Aleushian islands to the Alaskan peninsula.”⁵² Philology suggested that the Eskimos provided the evidence.

Morton was impatient in his reply. He referred Gallatin to his “Inquiry into the Distinctive Characteristics of the Aboriginal Race of America” (1843-44), where he had devoted rebutted the “prevalent opinion” that “the Eskimaux of our continent...who obviously belong to the Polar family of Asia, pass insensibly into the American race, and thus form the connecting link between the two.” Morton emphasized that the Eskimos and the Indians possessed “widely different characteristics,” physical and ethnographic. Determined to avoid “the fathomless depths of philology,” however, Morton said only that “the Asiatics having arrived at various and distant periods, and in small parties, would naturally, if not unavoidably, adopt more or less of the language of the people among whom they settled, until their own dialects finally merged in those of the Chepewyan and other Indians who bound them on the south.”⁵³ To Gallatin, Morton reiterated his conviction that “climate & other physical agents...never efface the essential or typical character of the race.” “As to the Laplanders,” Morton was “satisfied” that they had acquired linguistic features “by long proximity to the Finns,” and he pointed to Madagascar, populated by “three races of men, Mongols, Hindoos & Negroes,” two of which were “exotic, yet

⁵¹ Bartlett to SGM, 21 December 1846, Samuel G. Morton Papers, 3: 4 LCP. Bartlett and Gallatin were close in this period. As Bartlett recalled: “With the venerable Albert Gallatin I became acquainted about the time I commenced the book business, and as our tastes were much alike for geographical research, antiquities, philology, etc. we became intimate.” See John Russell Bartlett, *Autobiography of John Russell Bartlett*, ed. Jerry E. Mueller (Providence, RI: John Carter Brown Library, 2006), 24.

⁵² AG to PSD, 14 April 1835, Society Collections, HSP.

⁵³ SGM, “An Inquiry,” 211-14. He had addressed the Eskimos in the same vein, but in lesser detail, in *Crania Americana*, 63. In “An Inquiry,” 219, too, Morton cited linguistic evidence when it suited his purposes, stressing the “complete philological disparity” between the American and Malay languages. Gallatin had inadvertently opened a space for physical ethnology in his work. The ease of passage across the Bering Strait or from Japan or Kamchatka by way of the Aleutian Islands “would alone, if sustained by a similarity of the physical type of man, render the opinion of an Asiatic origin, not only probable, but almost certain.” See AG, “Synopsis,” 142.

they all speak the same language. Mere proximity, the necessity of the case, has fused their totally diverse tongues into a single language.” Languages could merge, rather than neatly descend, and individuals often acquired languages from convenience or necessity. What people spoke did not necessarily indicate where they were from or what they were like. Morton confidently dismissed most of the century of ethnology that preceded him. “You may rely upon it Philology, however important in Ethnography, is not unfrequently a broken reed.”⁵⁴

Gallatin was focusing increasingly on language and he hoped to use the new American Ethnological Society as the center from which to extend his reach. In 1826-36, philology served him merely as a taxonomic device to order his investigation of history and political economy. In 1842, however, Gallatin told Du Ponceau that his “principal want” was a comparison of the “features of the languages of the Aborigines of Mexico and South America, which are common to all of them and also to the languages of our own Indians.”⁵⁵ Gallatin never completed the “comparative grammatical review” that he hoped, mainly because he had weakened considerably in the previous year.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, he included a section on philology in his “Notes on the Semi-Civilized Nations of Mexico, Yucatan, and Central America,” which appeared in the initial volume of the *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* (1845). Hoping to convince the War Department to support the society’s publications, he forwarded that work to Secretary

⁵⁴ SGM to Bartlett, 28 January 1847, John Russell Bartlett Papers, John Carter Brown Library. William Stanton mentions this debate briefly, but gives no attention to philology as a competing, and to that point, prevailing methodology. See Stanton, *Leopard’s Spots*, 97-98. Another AES member, Alexander Bradford, concluded: “Similarity of language is not sufficient to indicate the common origin of nations, for by conquest and other causes, native languages have sometimes been adopted by the conquerors, and at others been eradicated and supplanted.” See Alexander W. Bradford, *American Antiquities and Researches into the Origin and History of the Red Race* (New York, 1841), 246.

⁵⁵ AG to PSD, 1 November 1842, Society Collection, HSP. He turned his particular attention to these in 1841 after John Lloyd Stephens, U.S. Special Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Central America, returned with “special information” that Gallatin had asked him to collect from Central America, where Stephens, at Bartlett’s urging, had explored Mayan ruins and the possibility of an isthmian canal. On Bartlett’s inspiration for the future ethnological society member’s trip, see Bartlett, *Autobiography*, 27-30.

⁵⁶ AG to JP, 21 June 1843, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 491. In that same letter, Gallatin congratulated Pickering for having “enlarged the sphere of your philological researches” by establishing the American Oriental Society.

William L. Marcy in 1846 and stressed the value of philology, since it was “the most difficult branch” of Indian study “and that to which our society is naturally drawn.”⁵⁷

Gallatin clearly perceived connections between ethnology and imperialism, but he did not see his own role. He vehemently opposed the Mexican War and, in *Peace with Mexico* (1847), asked his fellow citizens if it was “compatible with the principle of Democracy, which rejects every hereditary claim of individuals, to admit an hereditary superiority of races” to justify “iniquitous aggression.”⁵⁸ Yet, he hoped to use the war to further his ethnological project. He forwarded his “Notes,” which contained “all we know with certainty of the languages, history, astronomy, and progress in art” of those peoples, to Winfield Scott. Gallatin told the general that “the occupation of the city of Mexico by the American army may...be highly useful to those who occupy themselves with ethnological, antiquarian, and philological researches.” He informed Scott that he particularly wanted vocabularies and grammars, and he was willing to spend up to \$400 for collection or copying.⁵⁹ He also corresponded with the army topographical engineer, William H. Emory, then reconnoitering New Mexico. Gallatin particularly hoped that Emory could provide crucial information regarding the linguistic affinities among the nations north and south of the border, which could illuminate the history of the “insulated semi-civilized population” of the Pueblos, settled farmers living in adobe houses, whom he considered “a phenomenon...difficult to be explained.”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ AG to W. L. Marcy, Secretary of War, 17 March 1846, in Henry Adams, ed., *The Writings of Albert Gallatin* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1879), 3: 625-27.

⁵⁸ AG, *Peace with Mexico* (New York, 1847), 13, 15. This was primarily a moral opposition to the war. He also published a second tract, *Expenses of the War* (New York, 1848), which attempted to demonstrate the fiscal undesirability of the conflict. Since his support for the Louisiana Purchase and his emphasis to Jefferson of the importance of the Missouri country, Gallatin had opposed aggressive territorial aggrandizement. See also, AG, *The Oregon Question* (New York, 1846).

⁵⁹ AG to Gen. Winfield Scott, 2 November 1847, in Adams, ed., *Writings of AG*, 2: 650-52.

⁶⁰ AG to Emory, 1 October 1847; Emory to AG, 8 October 1847, in W. H. Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnoissance, from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, including parts of the Arkansas, Del Norte, and Gila Rivers* (Washington, 1848), 127-34, at 128. Gallatin had earlier stressed the importance of collecting linguistic information from the “south-western portion of the country, between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains,” but, as Schoolcraft emphasized, “the letter was not, I believe, even answered.” See AG to W. Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 21 July 1846; HRS, “A Reply to some of the Historical and Philological Topics of Investigation brought forward in the foregoing letter of Mr.

Gallatin took up this theme in his final ethnological work, "Hale's Indians of North-West America, and Vocabularies of North America; with an Introduction" (1848), which provided the primary article for the ethnological society's second volume. Much of it updated the linguistic classification in his "Synopsis," based on an influx of information on the West. From his first ethnological publication, Gallatin had addressed the independent origins of civilization in the Americas and speculated on connection between the ancient "semi-civilizations" of Mexico and the Mississippi Valley. In the accounts of the new U.S. Southwest, the Pueblos provided an intermediary, though problematic, geographic link in the chain of civilization, just as he saw the Eskimos as a link in the chain of migrations from Asia to America. He had no vocabularies, but Gallatin thought "the probability is against a similarity of languages" between the Indians found there and the Aztecs. The former "were utterly unknown to the Mexicans." Moreover, "Although the agriculture of the inhabitants of New Mexico, and of the basin of the Rio Colorado, was evidently derived from that of Mexico, they appear to have been altogether unacquainted with the subsequent advances, in arts and science, of the Mexicans." Nonetheless, they lived in equality and "conjugal fidelity," possessed "respect for property" and were governed by "public opinion," all of which bespoke "a far higher standard of morality than that of any other American nation." After his debate with Morton, Gallatin ignored physical characteristics, but was untroubled by language failing to provide the connecting link. The limited diffusion or selective adoption of ideas could explain the Pueblos and he stressed the evidence they provided of "the progress which a people may make, when almost altogether insulated, and unaided by

Gallatin," in Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: collected and prepared under the Direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, per Act of Congress of March 3d, 1847*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, 1851-57), 3: 397-407, at 399, 403. When Bartlett was named to the Mexican Boundary Commission after the war, he used his time for ethnological research. For especially interesting glimpses of his vocabulary collecting, see John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua, connected with the US and Mexican Boundary Commission, during the years 1851, '51, '52, and '53* (New York, 1854), 1: 451-53, 464; 2: 7-8, 56-57, 82, 92. For great expressions of the unclear boundaries between what was properly "philology" and what "ethnology," see *ibid.*, 2: 277-78, 283.

more enlightened nations.” After decades of philological and ethnological studies, Gallatin reflected that it was “almost the only refreshing episode in the course of my researches.”⁶¹

Before Gallatin died in 1849, he concluded his ethnology by reaffirming the possibility of cultural evolution, in even stronger terms than before, now that he had seen the possibility of an ascent to civilization independent of slavery. Gallatin exposed the connections between “manifest destiny” and a race science that argued that different races were unequal and unrelated to whites, and he passionately articulated the possibility of Indian civilization in opposition. Yet, even that defense depended upon materials obtained only through U.S. invasion and expansion.

* * *

Debates over the relative value of philology for determining race, paralleling those in Europe, took place as the objects of U.S. ethnology expanded with the emergence of a scientific defense of slavery and with growing U.S. commercial and literary-scientific ambitions. It was the return of the U.S. Ex. Ex. that had provided Gallatin with the occasion for his final remarks. Although one of the goals of the expedition had been to showcase U.S. liberality as a patron of science, Congress appropriated quite limited funds for publication, so the numerous resulting volumes were lavishly produced, but exceedingly rare.⁶² Ranging from the coasts of South America, to Antarctica, to Australia and the Pacific islands, to North America’s Pacific Northwest, the expedition’s subjects, and methods, varied. Exposing fractures in the science of man, the philologist claimed ethnography as one of his duties and the ethnologist took it upon himself to comment upon language. After the five volumes of the expedition narrative appeared, the first official report to be published was Horatio Hale’s *Ethnography and Philology* (1846), four years after the expedition’s return. Containing a wealth of new information and largely conforming to prevailing views of monogenesis and the scale of civilization, Hale’s work was

⁶¹ AG, “Hale’s Indians of North-West America, and Vocabularies of North America; with an Introduction,” *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* 2 (1848), liii, lxxx, lxxxiii-lxxxv, xcv-xcvii. Robert Bieder discusses Gallatin’s view of the Pueblos in Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, 50-53.

⁶² See AG to the Honourable Committee on the Library of Congress, 2 April 1846, in Adams, ed., *Writings of AG*, 2: 637-38.

highly acclaimed. At times opaque, asserting a unique version of polygenesis, and articulating ambivalent views of civilization, Charles Pickering's *The Races of Man, and their Geographic Distribution* (1848) was dismissed. Debates over what kinds of evidence could best determine lines of relation among peoples were most evident in their differing stances toward the peoples of the Oregon Territory, then jointly administered with Great Britain, and Fiji.

Horatio Hale had been appointed as the expedition's philologist upon the recommendation of John Pickering and others. Though only 19, he was already proven, having earlier published a vocabulary based on interviews with a group of Maine Indians.⁶³ Hale found that the Columbia River divided Oregon, philologically, into two. North of it, Indians spoke languages of "extraordinary harshness," while south of it, languages were characterized by "softness and harmony." Yet the "exuberance of inflections and a great aptitude for composition" in both groups were "precisely the same" as those found in the other American languages.⁶⁴ Noting tradition, known southern migration among interior groups, and his own limited observations of linguistic dispersal, he wondered whether there was any connection between the nations of Oregon and Mexico; but, insisting on the value of philological rigor, Hale admitted that this would be "mere speculation, until it shall be confirmed by the discovery of a resemblance between the languages."⁶⁵ Reaching beyond North America, he classified the "Feejeeans" as "a mulatto tribe, such as would be produced by a union of Melanesians and Polynesians," between whom they were located geographically. Their physical characteristics and arts suggested as

⁶³ JP to Dickerson, 5 December 1836, in Pickering, *Life of JP*, 442; Jacob W. Gruber, "Horatio Hale and the Development of American Anthropology," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 111 (1967): 5-37, at 9.

⁶⁴ Horatio Hale, *Ethnography and Philology*, vol. 6 of *United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842. Under the Command of Charles Wilkes, U.S.N* (Philadelphia, 1846), 533-34. Among proofs for this poor social state, Hale noted that the "word for *god* was...found impossible, with the assistance of missionaries, and of interpreters well skilled in the principal languages," which demanded an alteration of the Gallatin vocabulary and rendered it "doubtful" that "they have any idea of a supreme being"; rather, their "chief divinity is called *the wolf*, and seems, from their descriptions, to be a sort of compound being, half beast and half deity." Hale was struck by the moral resemblance between the aborigines of Australia and Oregon, the former of whom seemed "an exaggerated and caricatured likeness" of the latter. Hale tentatively wondered whether similar superstitions and dispositions had "arisen from a similarity in their position and circumstances." See *ibid.*, 199-200.

⁶⁵ Hale, *Ethnography and Philology*, 223-25.

much; yet philology definitively established that they were “a race of mixed origin”: the “composition of the language not only supports the opinion of their hybrid origin, but can in no other way be explained.”⁶⁶

John Pickering’s nephew, Charles Pickering, served as the expedition’s ethnologist. During the expedition and on a personal voyage to Egypt immediately thereafter, Pickering came to unorthodox views. Pickering believed that there were eleven distinct races; but, contra Morton, “No portion of the human family was ever originally planted in America.”⁶⁷ “With a slight exception all aboriginal America” was Mongolian; but Pickering was convinced that the Indians of California were Malayan at “first glance,” and he admitted the possibility of “remnants” elsewhere.⁶⁸ Pickering believed that a “hybrid race (or a new race) cannot now originate, or be continued,” so he numbered the Fijians as Papuan. He could do this because denied philology indicated race. He ridiculed the idea that entire “nations went about in masses” and imposed their languages on the vanquished. Unless a group possessed “some clannism,” its people would adopt the language of the numerical majority out of convenience. He pointed to the obvious example of African Americans who spoke English, but were not from England. Speech

⁶⁶ Hale, *Ethnography and Philology*, 174-75. Hale estimated that 20% of the words and the grammatical structure of the language were Polynesian (a remarkably extended and homogenous branch of the Malay language family), but the remaining 80% of the tongue’s words were of unknown origin. Many of the Polynesian words were altered according to consistent phonological rules; but even more were found in the language unchanged and they comprised about half of the language’s earliest words (e.g. “father” and “ear” were Polynesian, but “son” and “tooth” were not). For an account of the expedition’s stay on Fiji, see Barry Alan Joyce, *The Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Expedition, 1838-1842* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), ch. 4.

⁶⁷ Charles Pickering, *The Races of Man; and their Geographical Distribution* [1848], new ed. (London, 1851), 1-5; Charles Pickering to SGM, 8 August 1840, SGM Papers, Series IV, APS. In that letter, Pickering further indulged his heterodoxy. He remarked that although history had never recorded the white race in a state of savagery, its monuments were inferior to those Asia and Egypt and he believed that its most striking trait was that “it has always been a race of plunderers, delighting in destruction,” from the “soul inspiring works of Greece to the simple grave of the American Indian.” While the title of the book is *Races of Man*, the map is tellingly entitled “The Races of Men.”

⁶⁸ Charles Pickering, *Races of Man*, 7, 99, 114.

indicated only membership in a social or political community: “Although languages indicate national affiliation, their actual distribution is... independent of physical race.”⁶⁹

Debates over language and race reverberated among the pyramids as well. Du Ponceau had dubbed William B. Hodgson, a Georgia planter and former interpreter at Constantinople and consul at Tunis, an “American Champollion” for tracing the Berber language into Egyptian antiquity. Exaggerating his mentor’s theories, Hodgson initially placed considerable weight on grammatical structures, believing “the Author of the Universe has made as great a distinction in the Speech, as in the Skins of men. There are black and white languages; the former have no grammatical forms of number & gender.”⁷⁰ As late as 1844, relying on what “the philosophic Herder terms...the eternal band of men,” Hodgson nodded at Morton and the “recent science...of craniology,” but he insisted that “Comparative philology is the modern science, which chiefly guides the classification of tribes and nations.” Mere words were deceptive, but similar syntax – plans of ideas – “establishes the connection of the *people* speaking such languages, if it does not prove that of the languages themselves.”⁷¹ Likely prodded along by the Egyptologist George Gliddon, who was apt to give advice such as “beware the Philologist!,” Hodgson lost faith in his discipline. As Gliddon told Morton, “Philology is a guide – the best perhaps – to intercourse amongst distinct Races; but little beyond; and your science appears the only satisfactory index[?], although it upsets the preposterous Unity of man.” Later in 1844, after receiving a copy of Morton’s *Crania Aegyptiaca* (1844), which argued that black slavery existed in a white Egyptian civilization, Hodgson became convinced that “Hierology from monuments and craniology from

⁶⁹ Charles Pickering to SGM, 8 August 1840, SGM Papers, Series IV, APS; Charles Pickering, *Races of Man*, 146-47, 149, 286-87.

⁷⁰ PSD to JP, 5 August 1829, in Du Ponceau Papers, 3; Hodgson to John Quincy Adams, 29 June 1829, Du Ponceau Papers, 1: 11, HSP. Around the same, Hodgson remarked that the Berber “may in many respects be compared to those of our American Indians; at least, it appears to me that it possesses many of their polysynthetic forms.” See William B. Hodgson, “Grammatical Sketch and Specimens of the Berber Language: preceded by four Letters on Berber Etymologies, addressed to the President of the Society by William B. Hodgson,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 4 (1834): 1-48, at 1-2.

⁷¹ William B. Hodgson, *Notes on Northern Africa, the Sahara and Soudan, in relation to the Ethnography, Languages, History, Political and Social Condition, of the Nations of those Countries* (New York, 1844), 60-61, 67-68. On Hodgson, see Michael O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1: 172-78.

the tombs, are far more positive sciences than Philology in earliest Egypt.” He thanked the author, since now, “in the South, we shall not be so much frightened hereafter by the voice of Europe or of Northern America.”⁷²

The relation of the American languages to the American race was inextricable from the scientific defense of slavery, even though devout masters preferred to accept biblical support for human enslavement.⁷³ As sectional politics intensified in the 1850s, so too did denials that language could provide any index to race, especially among the cadre of scholars and polemicists known as the American school, which received theoretical support from the zoology of Louis Agassiz. The Swiss émigré and Harvard professor opposed any kind of evolutionism and asserted that every different species was a divine “manifestation of a special thought,” specially created to be perfectly adapted for specific environments. Similarities among different species did “not indicate a development one from another,—but reveal only the ideal relations in the mind of the Creator.” Agassiz, Morton, and their acolytes found this theory of separate creations in the animal world seemingly confirmed in human beings by craniology, the American school asserted the primitive diversity and immutability of different races, which they considered different species of the genus *homo*.⁷⁴

⁷² George R. Gliddon to SGM, 28 October 1843, Samuel George Morton Papers, Series IV, APS; Hodgson to SGM, 29 March 1844, SGM Papers, 1: 27, LCP. The relative value of these forms of evidence was a running theme among Hodgson, Morton, and Gliddon. See also Hodgson to SGM, 22 April 1843; Gliddon to SGM, 21 October 1843; Gliddon to SGM, 3 December 1843, SGM Papers, Series IV, APS. In 1843, Morton presented, “Observations on Egyptian Ethnography, derived from Anatomy, History, and the Monuments,” which was published in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., vol. 9 (1846): 93-159. It was published separately first, however, as *Crania Aegyptiaca; or, Observations on Egyptian Ethnography, derived from Anatomy, History, and the Monuments* (Philadelphia, 1844). On Morton’s and Gliddon’s Egyptology, see Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), ch. 7.

⁷³ As a *De Bow* reviewer put it, “it is only weakening the argument on domestic slavery, to contend for the negro as a separate creation. There is no necessity for it, and to sustain it you must discard revelation.... ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ is far more potent in convincing men of the path of duty, or of right, than all the reasoning based upon supposed hypothesis.” See “Art. III.—Unity of Mankind,” *De Bow’s Review and Industrial Resources* 5.4 (April 1861): 407-10, at 410. Stanton, *Leopard’s Spots*, 194, argues that the American school, ultimately, was not that influential precisely because it undermined Christianity.

⁷⁴ L. A., “Art. I.—Contemplations of God in the Kosmos,” *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* 50.1 (Jan. 1851): 1-17, at 4, 10. Agassiz developed the ethnological ramifications of his theory most fully in “Art. VIII.—The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races,” *Christian Examiner and Religious*

Supporters of this view had to refute the philological concept of descent with modification. Agassiz, who in a few years would become the scientific world's most prestigious opponent of natural selection, argued that God created through "specific thoughts," which "excludes forever the idea of a natural development from law." Thus, to confront the outpouring of scholarship that suggested that languages did indeed develop naturally according to discernible laws, he controversially argued that human speech was different from the sounds of other animals only in degree. The "brumming of the bears of Kamtschatka is akin to that of the bears of Thibet, of the East Indies, of the Sunda islands, of Nepal, of Syria, of Europe, of Siberia, of the United States, of the Rocky mountains, and of the Andes; though all these bears are considered as distinct species, who have not any more inherited their voice one from the other, than the different races of men."⁷⁵

The Mobile physician Josiah Nott explicitly targeted Gallatin's philology. He was "not disposed to deny the close *affinity* of these languages, but we cannot agree that this affords any satisfactory proof of the unity of their linguistic derivation." Nott continued: "The aboriginal races of America, though not identical, display a certain similarity in their physical and intellectual characters... it is probable that their primitive languages would in consequence, more or less, resemble each other." This resemblance would only have been reinforced by the

Miscellany 49.1 (July 1850): 110-45. On Agassiz's zoology and its relation to the American school, see Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 100-12; Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 74-82.

⁷⁵ Agassiz, "Contemplations of God in the Kosmos," 4; Louis Agassiz to Nott and Gliddon, 1 February 1857, in J. C. Nott and Geo. R. Gliddon, eds., *Indigenous Races of the Earth; or, New Chapters of Ethnological Inquiry; including Monographs on Special Departments of Philology, Iconography, Cranioscopy, Palaeontology, Pathology, Archaeology, Comparative Geography, and Natural History* (Philadelphia, 1857), xv. For earlier, less fully developed versions of his opposition to reasoning from language in ethnology, see L. A. [Louis Agassiz], "Art. VIII.—The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races," *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, July 1850, 139; "Sketch of the Natural Provinces of the Animal World and the relation to the Different Types of Man," in Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, lxxii. Stephen Alter emphasizes that comparative philology made the notion of descent with modification – conceptually distinct from natural selection, but likewise central to Darwinism – biologically convincing because it explained a controversial idea through what had already been demonstrated. See Stephen G. Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image: Language, Race, and Natural Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 4. *Ibid.*, 40-42, discusses Agassiz's views on philology's place within ethnology. Compare Agassiz to Emerson, who argued that what we see in nature must "preëxist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God"; yet described the history of language as development from an original poetic stage. See R. W. Emerson, *Nature*, new ed. (Boston, 1849), 27, 32.

amalgamation of peoples through wars, captivity, and migrations, through which languages “would necessarily become fused into one heterogeneous mass.”⁷⁶ Nott and others would not admit any linguistic evidence to questions of race because the linguistic connections that European philology had demonstrated between racially different peoples jeopardized this view. Although students of the American languages had demonstrated no such links to races overseas (indeed, there was much in philology to support the new ethnology), the American school attacked the philological basis for American Indian ethnology as part of their larger insistence on physical race and on scientific inquiry independent of scripture.

In *Types of Mankind* (1854), the most important of the American school’s works after *Crania Americana*, Nott and Gliddon emphasized that Egyptological discoveries demanded a complete revision of human chronology. This “much higher antiquity for nations and languages ... is entirely irreconcilable with the Jewish date for the ‘confusion of tongues.’” Squier’s Smithsonian-sponsored archaeology seemed to indicate an equal antiquity, and equal permanence of physical type, in North America as well. To Nott’s mind, this demolished Babel as an explanation that could get “clear of the radical diversity of languages which philology has not yet been able to overcome.” So, American school ethnologists, like Morton before them, emphasized the greater value of crania, which Morton had argued demonstrated marked and permanent racial differences. To Nott, who as early as 1844 had pointed out the fallacy of a future philologist concluding that black Liberians were from England, believed “stronger than all other reasonings” supporting polygenesis, “not excepting the antithesis of languages, is that drawn from the antiquity of skulls.”⁷⁷ In 1856, Josiah Nott edited Arthur de Gobineau’s notorious *Moral and*

⁷⁶ Nott, *Types of Mankind*, 106, 283-86.

⁷⁷ Nott, *Types of Mankind*, 285, 289. When toppling Babel, Nott targeted Nicholas Wiseman, *Twelve Lectures on the Connexion between Science and Revealed Religion. Delivered in Rome* (London, 1836), vol. 1, lectures 1-2, for particular refutation. For Nott’s earlier remark on Liberians, see Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races* (Mobile, 1844), 40. On the importance of Karl Richard Lepsius’s *Chronologie der Aegypter* (1849), see Dain, *Hideous Monster of the Mind*, 221-24. Morton’s successor “cranioscopist,” agreed with Nott and his predecessor: “while the language of an ante-historic people may be lost, the discovery of their skulls will afford us the means of

Intellectual Diversity of Races. Determined to exclude even supportive philology, Nott cut the final chapter from the American edition even though its title declared: “The Different Languages are Unequal, and Correspond Perfectly in Relative Merit to the Races that Use Them.”⁷⁸

Gliddon, who had distinguished philology’s value for tracing intercourse among nations rather than as a guide for physical race years before, was more ecumenical in his ethnology than Nott. Like Squier, he sought a polygenist synthesis. Gliddon, it is true, ridiculed the “transcendental *philology*” that could reduce the known diversity of languages, “like unity in trinity... into one primeval speech.” He blasted the “philological monogenism” that supported the “modern evangelical hypothesis of the *unity* of all languages” by “slur[ring] over, or suppress[ing]...those numerous cases where the *type* of man, now found speaking a given language, bears no relations physically, or through its geographical origin, to the speech which, derived from a totally distinct centre, it employed as its vernacular.” Always ethnologically au courant, Gliddon cited in support the brothers Humboldt, on the impossibility of language proving human unity (though Gliddon was silent that Alexander accepted that unity nonetheless); Jean Frédéric Waldeck, whose study of the Yucatan had conjectured linguistic centers out of which languages spread and merged; and the writing (if not the practice) of philologist Friedrich Max Müller, which urged philology to stay within its legitimate sphere. Gliddon was certain that “history, comparative physiology and philology, will harmonize completely with the zoological theory of several centres, and prove Prof. Agassiz’s view to be irrefragable, viz: that mankind and certain mammalia were originally subject to the same laws of distribution.” Radiating out from

determining their rank or position in the human scale....Physiology is superior to Philology as an instrument of ethnological research.” See J. Aitken Meigs, “The Cranial Characteristics of the Races of Men,” in Nott and Gliddon, *Indigenous Races of the Earth*, 224-25.

⁷⁸ See Count A. de Gobineau, *The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races, with particular Reference to their Respective Influence in the Civil and Political History of Mankind*, translated by H. Hotze (Philadelphia 1856). I take the title of the excluded chapter 15 from a different edition: Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of the Human Races* [1854], translated by Oscar Levy (New York: Howard Fertig, 1967). Robert E. Bonner, “Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy, and the Racialist Mission of Henry Hotze,” *Civil War History* 51 (2005): 288-316, at 290-94, discusses Nott sponsoring this translation but is silent on the excised philology. Reginald Horsman, *Josiah Nott of Mobile: Southerner, Physician, and Racial Theorist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 204-07, though silent on philology, discusses Nott’s editing and Gobineau’s dissatisfaction with it.

primitive centers (“less, I think, than a dozen”), languages became amalgamated at the outer boundaries of their natural distribution, as did races. The true task of “antiquarian *philology*” was to discern the primitive from what was mixed. Reinforcing a stance that was as central to the American school as their arguments for separate creations and the fixity of racial types, Gliddon stressed that philology was merely “the handmaiden, not the mistress, of ‘Ethnology.’”⁷⁹

Ethnologists of the American school found unlikely allies for their views in Indian traditions, as recorded by educated Ojibwa historians. Like Nott’s belief in separate American races all conforming to a single type, Peter Jones recorded that “aged sachems of the Ojebway nation” believed that “when the Great Spirit made the different nations of the earth, He gave them various languages, complexions, and religion, as well as divers customs, manners, and modes of living.” Moreover, tradition told that “the Benevolent Spirit, created the Indians, and placed them on the continent of America,—that every nation speaking a different language is a separate creation.” The federal and fur company interpreter William W. Warren related that the Ojibwas had “given to their race” the name *An-ish-in-aub-ag*. It did not mean “Common People,” as Schoolcraft had mistakenly asserted, but rather “Spontaneous Man” because the “belief of the Algics is, as their name denotes, that they are a spontaneous people.” These Christian Indians did not adhere to the traditions of their fathers. Jones believed that all Indians came from northern Asia via Bering Strait, and he recommended sponsoring “a few of the most enlightened Indians” to do linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork there to confirm this. Warren agreed that the rival

⁷⁹ Gliddon, “The Monogenists and the Polygenists: Being an Exposition of the Doctrines of Schools professing to sustain dogmatically the Unity and Diversity of Human Races; with an inquiry into the antiquity of mankind upon earth, viewed chronologically, historically, and palaeontologically,” in Nott and Gliddon, eds., *Indigenous Races of the Earth*, 403, 409, 466, 575-76, 578, 586-87. Gliddon cited Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos: A General Survey of the Physical Phenomena of the Universe*, vol. 1 (London, 1845), 387-88; Jean-Frédéric Waldeck’s *Voyage pittoresque et archaéologique dans la province d’Yucatan pendant les années 1834 et 1835*; and Max Müller’s “Ethnology v. Phonology,” found in Christian Karl Josias Bunsen’s *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History, Applied to Language and Religion*, 2 vols. (London, 1854): 1: 349-53. Citing Ernest Renan as his authority, Gliddon was irked that Max Müller violated his own precept and asserted, following Bunsen, a “Turanian” family that included every language that was neither Indo-European nor Semitic, which he had done in Max Müller, *The Languages of the Seat of War in the East, with a Survey of the Three Families of Languages, Semitic, Arian, and Turanian*, 2d. ed. (London, 1855). For an analysis of Max Müller and Renan “eliminat[ing] biological race from their considerations of linguistic difference,” see Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow*, 211-28.

Dakotas likely descended from the “roving sons of Tartary,” but he thought that his people “bear a close affinity or analogy to the chosen people of God... the lost tribes of Israel.”⁸⁰ Yet, the traditions they recorded agreed fully with other Indian traditions that Schoolcraft had assembled, and with the scientific inductions of Morton and Agassiz.

* * *

As early as 1819, the Philadelphia *Analectic* was “at a loss to comprehend why we have yet to lament the want of a full and standard work on the aborigines of North America.”⁸¹ The situation had worsened in the intervening years; information had proliferated and burst beyond the bounds of order. This was especially problematic as Indian affairs approached a crossroads at mid-century. By early 1847, the United States had annexed Texas, settled the Oregon boundary dispute, and, while still waging war, had already won major victories in California and northern Mexico. The United States assumed jurisdiction of a vast number of little known Indian groups, multiplying the responsibilities of the Office of Indian Affairs. What was known of those peoples indicated that they possessed an ethnographic and linguistic diversity unknown in eastern North America. The federal government would attempt to manage those peoples in a way that allowed for the safest and most efficient settlement of the Pacific coast, a problem made urgent after the

⁸⁰ Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby), *History of the Ojebway Indians; with especial Reference to their Conversion to Christianity* (London, 1861), 31, 36-38; William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway People* [1887] (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 56-57, 63. Regarding Indian origins, Copway offered only that “All appear to adopt the belief that most of the Indians came from the west.” See Kah-ge-gah-boh, *Traditional History*, 20. For biographical accounts, see Donald M. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) & the Mississauga Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); Theresa M. Schenck, *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters, and Times of an Ojibwe Leader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). These writers, with Copway, have been increasingly studied by literary scholars. See Michaelsen, *Limits of Multiculturalism*, ch. 4; Bernd C. Peyer, *The Tutor’s Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), ch. 6; Joshua David Bellin, *The Demon of the Continent: Indians and the Shaping of American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), ch. 7; Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), ch. 3.

⁸¹ “Art. IV.,” *Analectic* 13 (April 1819), [304-05]. Ironically, it was the same journal which printed the one review that dismissed the ethnological implications of the HLC’s *Transactions*, which thought Du Ponceau’s propositions concerning the grammatical uniformity and uniqueness of the American languages “less strikingly novel and important” than the proposition concerning the richness and regularity of those forms. See “Art. XI.,” *Analectic* 13 (March 1819), [253].

discovery of gold in California in 1849. The reservation system emerged in faltering steps, determined to concentrate Indians in smaller areas, separated from whites and supervised by the military, until they would adopt white ways. Whether it could be accomplished alongside an effective civilization program remained, ethnologically as well as practically, an open question.⁸²

In November 1846, members of the Ethnological Society petitioned Congress, expressing their regret at “the imperfect and fragmentary character of our present knowledge of the Indian race” and stressing that more authoritative information was “necessary, to enable government to perform its high and sacred duties of protection and guardianship over the weak and still savage race placed by Providence under its care.” It was persuasive. An Act of Congress on March 3, 1847, required the Secretary of War “to collect and digest such statistics and materials as may illustrate the history, present condition, and future prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States.” Secretary of War William L. Marcy appointed Henry Schoolcraft to execute the unenviable task of imposing order on the varied ethnological insights and misrepresentations circulating since European contact and reaching critical mass in the mid-nineteenth century.⁸³ He was burdened by no concern over government involvement in science, as Du Ponceau had been, and he eagerly accepted the opportunity to compile the definitive body of information on “the

⁸² Schoolcraft continually addressed the problems then facing Indian affairs throughout the course of the project’s six volumes. For the fullest discussions, see HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 546-60; 4: 449-73; 5: 459-86; 6: 623-25. On the expansion of the 1840s complicating U.S. Indian policy, see Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 142-52. On the emergence of the reservation system in this context, see Robert A. Trennert, *Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Emergence of the Reservation System, 1846-51* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975), 3, 10-14, 25-31, 46-47, 59-60.

⁸³ “To the Honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States,” 30 November 1846, in HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 3: 617-19; HRS to L. Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 22 July 1850, in *ibid.*, 1: iv. The *Literary World* noted that a plan for a large federal project “had for a long time engaged the attention of the Society, and particularly of its venerable president.” Yet, Schoolcraft believed that Gallatin was “opposed, secretly, to my plan, and declined, as you know, to do any thing directly to promote it.” See “American Ethnological Society,” *Literary World* 9 (3 April 1847), 205; HRS to Bartlett, 3 April 1856, John Russell Bartlett Papers, John Carter Brown Library. Gallatin supported philology, monogenesis, and federal involvement in ethnology, so if he opposed this project, it is likely because he rejected Schoolcraft’s insistence on the similarity of Indian languages to Hebrew. See Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers* [1851] (Middlesex, UK: Echo Press, 2006), 447.

Indian” when the future of ethnology and policy were each in flux.⁸⁴ He boasted that once complete the project would guide the “mode of treatment and policy to be pursued by the U.S. govt. towards this unfortunate race, who appear to be destined to go down before the Anglo Normans.”⁸⁵ As he elaborated in 1851, it was “due to the character of the government, and to a peculiar variety of the race of man,--for such we must regard the Indian tribes, to place the record from which both their and its actions are to be judged, on grounds of authentic information.” Only then could the United States best exercise its “paternal as well as official policy.”⁸⁶

Following Congressional instructions to include all that was known about “the Indian,” Schoolcraft sent out massive questionnaires consisting of about three-hundred and fifty questions over more than fifty pages.⁸⁷ He also invited scholars in fields outside what he considered his own specialty (language, mythology, pictography, and history) to contribute articles to the project. Morton, before his death in 1851, sent an article on physical ethnology. Schoolcraft rejected, however, the lessons Morton intended his ethnology to teach. “Craniological deductions,” Schoolcraft admitted, “if not warped by imaginative theories, may denote varieties of development, which arise from various causes, without overturning the fundamental fact, that

⁸⁴ The death of his wife, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, in 1842, may have added to the project’s appeal. Years before, citing domestic duties, he had declined an offer to direct the scientific corps of the U.S. Ex. Ex. As early as 1826 he recommended himself to Thomas McKenney as a government ethnologist, and he recommended that a “Library of Philology” be established alongside a “Museum of Mankind” as the best way to spend the funds that went on to establish the Smithsonian. See HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 117; “Preliminary Remarks to some Considerations on the Geographical Positions Occupied by the Various Stocks of Tribes in the Present Area of the United States, at the Close of the 15th Century, and their Subsequent Migrations,” in *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 655-61, at 659-60. Schoolcraft did not hold the Smithsonian, once established, in high regard. It was “an abortion of academical & popular knowledge” and its director, Joseph Henry, was “uncommonly deficient...in ethnology.” See HRS to R. Wilmot Griswold, 13 August 1853, Gratz Collection, 7: 9, HSP. For how Schoolcraft came to the project, see Richard G. Bremer, *Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar: The Life of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft* (Mount Pleasant: Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, 1987), chs. 12-13.

⁸⁵ HRS to R. Wilmot Griswold, 4 August 1847, Gratz Collection, 4: 1, HSP.

⁸⁶ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1: iv-v, viii.

⁸⁷ For the questionnaire, see *Inquiries respecting the History, Present Condition, and Future Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* [n.p., n.d.], also included as an appendix to HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1.

man was designed to separate into varieties, which are adapted to every climate of the globe.”⁸⁸ Schoolcraft did not refer to Morton’s followers explicitly, but he denounced those “who believe, that our duties to the unenlightened aboriginal nations are overrated; persons, whose intellects or fancies are employed in the contemplation of complicated and obscure theories of human origin, existence, and development—denying the very chronology which binds man to God, and links communities together by indissoluble moral obligations.”⁸⁹ Of course, Schoolcraft rejected native tradition that supported the American school’s racial theories. “They believe themselves generally to be aborigines. Pure fables, or allegories, are all that support this.” Moreover, Indian leaders such as Tecumseh had manipulated such beliefs toward destructive ends.⁹⁰

Against the backdrop of the American school’s rising prominence, Schoolcraft used the six volumes of *Historical and Statistical Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (1851-57) to assert, time and again, that only philology provided a certain path to understanding Indian history. Manners and customs depended upon environment, architecture and inscriptions were few, and language was a “more enduring monument of ancient affinities than physical type.”⁹¹ In earlier writings, Schoolcraft had suggested, despite Du Ponceau’s vehement insistence to the contrary, that “vacillation between barbarism and refinement, poverty and redundancy, a method strictly philosophical or purely accidental” in Indian grammatical forms suggested that the Indians “were formerly in a more advanced and cultivated state,” but that the language, “partaking of the fortunes of the people, degenerated further and further into barbarism and confusion, as one tribe after another

⁸⁸ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 5: 129-30. He refuted Morton by relying on the ostensibly more scientific physical ethnology of Samuel Forrey and P. A. Brown and by calling attention to Morton’s problematic measurements of Peruvian skulls, which were smaller than supposedly less intelligent northern Indians. See HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 3: 374; 4: 353; 5: 243, 247.

⁸⁹ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: ix.

⁹⁰ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1: 13, 17-18. For one such Oneida tradition, as given by the adopted white James Dean, see *ibid.*, 6: 666-670.

⁹¹ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 660; 6: 672-73. For similar statements, see *ibid.*, 1: vii; 2: 341; 6: 614..

separated from the parent stock.”⁹² He reinforced the Indians’ scripturally prescribed descent from a single pair, along with all other “separate types...regarded by physiologists and theologians as essential moral and physical races” in his federal volumes. Confirming a literal interpretation of the bible, Schoolcraft stressed, against Gallatin’s suggestion of social evolution and the American school’s insistence on stasis, that Indians and other “sub-races or re-developed types declined (after departing from the unity of language) into barbarism” from their creation “in the industrial or civilized state, though he admitted, “we know not” when or how.⁹³

Language indicated Indian origins for Schoolcraft. There were “not only striking principles of agreement in the plan of utterance of the Indian with the Shemitic, but some apparent vestiges of the vocabulary.”⁹⁴ Schoolcraft, heedless of the American school, conflated language and race to suggest that Indians were descended from the Lost Tribes. Mythology and pictography, which Schoolcraft conceived as lines of investigation derivative of philology, since he believed each to develop from a people’s language, seemingly offered further confirmation.⁹⁵ Indians shared this “oriental origin,” Schoolcraft emphasized, with “other races, who have exercised great and controlling influence, and attained a high rank in Europe—as all the tribes speaking the Indo-Germanic type of languages.” The Indians had not achieved analogous heights

⁹² HRS, *Schoolcraft’s Expedition to Lake Itasca: The discovery of the source of the Mississippi* [1834], ed. Philip P. Mason (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993), 62.

⁹³ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 44; 5: 132-33. Bremer, *Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar*, 323, emphasizes the importance of Schoolcraft’s “religious fundamentalism” to the interpretations he offered in the project. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, 1176-77, 186, stresses that Schoolcraft believed it his duty to “rally science to the defense of mongenism” and suggests the influence of Bradford’s *American Antiquities* in formulating a comprehensive degenerationist argument

⁹⁴ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 5: 82, 86, 132-33. He acknowledged that Samuel Jarvis’s paper showed “sound induction,” but thought it rested on an insufficient base. For similar statements on Indian-Hebrew similarities, see 1: v; 2: 342; 4: 667; 5: 298; 6: 675. Schoolcraft was relying mainly on his own observations, but Thomas Hurlbert and William Hamilton, missionaries to the Chippewas and Iowas, respectively, supported them. See *ibid.*, 4: 287, 297. Schoolcraft began studying Hebrew in 1837 and claimed to have taught Jane Johnston Schoolcraft Hebrew “principles of formation” alongside English and Latin in a “perfect course of philological training.” See HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 397, 463.

⁹⁵ He had earlier suggested Hebrew origin in HRS, *Algie Researches, comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (New York, 1839), 1: 45, 49, 120-21, 174.

of civilization because they “found a stimulus to their barbarism” in the “immensity” of America itself, which provided game enough to encourage nomadism and discourage settled agriculture.”⁹⁶

Yet, Schoolcraft’s philology over the previous decades had suggested a linguistic-mental problem underlying the hunter state, not strictly a product of it, inhibiting Indian civilization. Indian languages possessed monosyllabic roots (he cited Ojibwa and a Pueblo tongue), but they were “connected instantly with person, quality, position, or some other secondary phenomenon.”⁹⁷ After all, the “separation of the elementary from the concrete, in language, pictography, and whatever denotes mental development in the hunter races, does not appertain to the hunter state, but is, at once, one of the proofs of the possession of a logical intellect by civilized man.”⁹⁸ The problem, recognized since the days of Eliot and affirmed in Francis Lieber’s contribution on the “Plan of Thought of the American Languages,” was that “the Indian tongues are so connected with the reminiscences and practices of barbarous rites and ceremonies, the bloody laws of revenge, and the manners of the forests, that they are calculated to keep the mind under false impressions, and hinder it from a just appreciation of holiness in God or man.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 3: vi-vii. For supporting evidence, Schoolcraft cited the use of pyramids and pictography, the worship of the Sun and fire, dualism, the “deification” of animals, and the despotism of “Magii.” See HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1: 345, 421; 5: 29-31; 6: 626-30. Much of this material was furnished by Indians, such as the mythological accounts of Jean-Baptiste Ducoigne (Kaskaskia) and David Cusick (Tuscarora), though he ridiculed the latter’s “ignorance of general chronology, and of the very slow manner in which the dialects and languages of the human race must have been formed.” Most important was Chingwauk (Ojibwa), a former Meda, orator, and war chief during the War of 1812 who converted to Christianity. For his commentary on ancient inscriptions and modern picture writing, Schoolcraft referred to him alternately as the “aboriginal archaeologist” and the “Algonquin pictographer.” See HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1: 112-18, 125; 3: 85; 5: 87; 6: 629. It should be noted that Ephraim Squier, Schoolcraft’s ethnological rival, rejected that such correspondences in belief and practice indicated descent and he argued instead that they demonstrated merely the psychological unity of separately created species of the human race, which was led to particular modes of worship through the observation of nature. He said this explicitly in EGS, “American Ethnology,” 343, which he elaborated in EGS, *Serpent Symbol*.

⁹⁷ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 371-72. For various references to the Indian languages’ monosyllabism, see 2: 341; 3: 406; 6: 679.

⁹⁸ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 6: 606.

⁹⁹ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 476. For a fascinating confrontation with this issue in the Pacific Northwest, see the journal of Henry Perkins, in Robert Boyd, *People of the Dalles: The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, Appendix I (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 274-75, 281-83, 300-01. Still, Schoolcraft believed that “God could reveal himself perfectly, in the most jaw-breaking Wyandot or flat chopping Sioux, and that it is, by no means necessary to infer that he should inspire a perfect & and flowing set of

This was especially problematic because, as he wrote in 1836, “Mutable as everything is, connected with those tribes, there is less mutability in their languages, and particularly in their grammatical principles, than any other point in their history and condition.”¹⁰⁰ He explicitly acknowledged his debt to Du Ponceau’s adaptation of Maupertuis’s “plans of ideas.” “Language is one of the most reliable aids to the student of the mental organization of the Indians” because grammars revealed “mental laws, older than letters, prescribing the practical bearing of one idea upon another.”¹⁰¹ Those laws were lasting and uniform. Despite lexical diversity, all Indians were “found to think, if they do not speak alike.” Their “plan of thought” “differs the farthest possible from that which an Englishman, or an American, employs”¹⁰² Against the American school’s assertion of their separate creation, he insisted that it was a “Shemitic plan of thought.”¹⁰³ Yet, his philology seemed to support their argument for Indian stasis. “The Indian” had “adhered to his original modes of distinction” in grammar and so possessed a “fixed theory of language” that matched their “general fixity of character, and indisposition to change, or adopt any new traits, or abandon any old ones.”¹⁰⁴ On one page he referred to the “the structure and capacities of the Indian mind” and on another to the “plan of thoughts” that their languages revealed. Both Morton’s phrenology and Du Ponceau’s “ideology,” however philosophically opposed to one another, led Schoolcraft to the “indomitable fixity” of the “mental type of the aborigines,” which explained “why the race has so long and so pertinaciously resisted, as with

words to do it in.” See HRS to Francis Lieber, 24 May 1851, HRS Papers, Huntington Library [I consulted photocopies in the Schoolcraft Papers at Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library]. For Lieber’s contribution to the project, which extended the themes he put forward in his open letter to Gallatin in 1837, but now argued that the “holophrastic” features of the Indian languages were similar to languages spoken in the Pacific, Burma, and India, see Lieber, “Plan of Thought of the American Languages, in *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 346-49. Schoolcraft became especially convinced about native linguistic capacity for Christianity after witnessing the Ojibwa preacher Mongazid, or John Sunday. See HRS, *Personal Memoirs*, 307, 317. John Sunday impressed Peter Jones as well. See Peter Jones, *Life and Journals of Kah-Ke-Wa-Quo-Na-By* (Toronto, 1860), 58-59, 67, 72-73, 104, 219; idem, *History of the Ojebway Indians*, 199-200.

¹⁰⁰ [HRS], “Article II.,” *North American Review* 45.96 (July 1837), 34-35.

¹⁰¹ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 355-58; 6: 671. See also, *ibid.*, 1: 37.

¹⁰² HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 228.

¹⁰³ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1: v.

¹⁰⁴ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 342, 1: 412.

iron resistance, all the lights and influences which Europe and America united have poured upon their mind, through letters, arts, knowledge, and Christianity.”¹⁰⁵

As early as 1827, Schoolcraft had written on “The Unchanging Character of the Indian Mind,” so Schoolcraft’s contemporaries may have expected him to support the ethnology of the American school. Moreover, at mid-century, the notion of an uncivilized, natural, and distinct “Indian mind,” proliferated. The French physician and theorist of the unconscious, Alfred Maury, contributed a monograph on the ethnological bearing of philology for *Indigenous Races of the Earth* (1857), the yet more cumbersome sequel to Nott’s and Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind*. He offered a sophisticated version of the savage language theory that blended traditions of Condillac and Wilhelm von Humboldt. “Primitive man endeavored to imitate everything that surrounded him,” Maury explained, citing Ernest Renan’s study of Hebrew, and thus “analogies” between “the word and the perception...were more decided when man lived in closer contact with nature” because “he lived altogether externally.” “The “history of languages is but the continual march from synthesis towards analysis,” but “human intelligence did not arrive in every language to the same degree.” Du Ponceau’s and Gallatin’s researches, to Maury, confirmed this. Although he denied August Friedrich Pott’s contention that philology was superior to physiology as a guide to a race’s intellectual achievement, he insisted that, even where the American languages had attained “a remarkable degree of elaboration, they have been unable...to overcome the elementary forms upon which they had been scaffolded.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 1: viii; 6: 673. Robert Bieder recognizes that Schoolcraft saw “racial patterns of thinking,” but underestimates the extent that grammatical study remained at least coequal in importance with mythology in Schoolcraft’s mind. See Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, 189-93, at 191.

¹⁰⁶ Alfred Maury, “On the Distribution and Classification of Tongues,--their Relation to the Geographical Distribution of Races; and on the Inductions which may be drawn from their Relations,” in J. C. Nott and Geo. R. Gliddon, eds., *Indigenous Races of the Earth; or, New Chapters of Ethnological Inquiry; including Monographs on Special Departments of Philology, Iconography, Cranioscopy, Palaeontology, Pathology, Archaeology, Comparative Geography, and Natural History* (Philadelphia, 1857), 29-30, 32-33, 35-36, 82-83, 85. On Maury, see Ian Dowbigger, “Alfred Maury and the Politics of the Unconscious in Nineteenth-Century France,” *History of Psychiatry* 1 (1990): 255-87; Stefanie Heraeus and Deborah Laurie Cohen, “Artists and the Dream in Nineteenth-Century Paris: Towards a Prehistory of Surrealism,” *History Workshop Journal* 48 (1999): 151-68, at 154-56.

Other philologists, native and white, seconded Maury's view that their language was closer to nature. Peter Jones evoked ideas of an Adamic language by stressing that the "Ojebway language...possesses great strength, and is full of imagery, as the words express the nature, use, or resemblance of the things spoken of."¹⁰⁷ Finding that in words such as "owl" (*koo-koo-ko-oooh*) and "rapids" (*sah se-je-won*), the "pronunciation of the names of animals, birds and trees are the very sounds these produced," Jones's former collaborator, George Copway, likewise believed that that Ojibwa was "a natural language." "A language, derived, as this is, from the peculiarities of the country in which it is spoken, must, necessarily, partake of its nature."¹⁰⁸ The missionary Stephen R. Riggs judged Dakota syntax to be "eminently primitive and natural....This method of expressing ideas, so entirely different from that to which our minds have been accustomed, makes it difficult to learn to think in Dakota."¹⁰⁹

Indians and missionaries did not think this made translation, of language or of civilization itself, impossible. Other scholars drew different conclusions. Samuel F. Haven, reviewing the state of ethnology for the Smithsonian and addressing theories of racially distinct minds seemingly shared by Du Ponceau and the American school, admitted language could develop over time, but he conjectured that "the system of progression has been determined by the laws of intellectual and physical organization peculiar to the race." He believed, "the philosophy of American speech, the phenomena constituting its genius, will not be fully comprehended until the metaphysical, physiological, and possibly phrenological traits of the aborigines are accurately determined."¹¹⁰ Drawing on the ideas of Humboldt and Francis Lieber to defend slavery, J. W. Miles went furthest in philology and policy, though he was silent on Indian languages in

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians*, 179.

¹⁰⁸ Kah-ge-ga-gah-boh [George Copway], *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (London, 1850), 126-27.

¹⁰⁹ S. R. Riggs, "The Dakota Language," *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* 1 [1851] (St. Paul, 1872), 104-05.

¹¹⁰ Samuel F. Haven, "Archaeology of the United States: Or Sketches, Historical and Bibliographical, of the Progress of Information and Opinion Respecting Vestiges of Antiquity in the United States," *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge* 8 (1856), 53, 55, 70-71.

particular. Grammatical traits, once stamped on a language, were permanent precisely because of the “immutable” laws of the human mind. Miles rejected the “wild schemes of pseudo-philanthropy and politics” that “vainly endeavour to violate those appointed boundaries of providence for each race.”¹¹¹ Even as the American school effectively refuted its ability to trace racial descent, philology increasingly provided evidence for racially specific minds.

Yet, even as Schoolcraft defined his own version of an “Indian mind,” his philology pulled back from the essentialism of the American school. Morton and his followers declared cranial capacity to be unchanging. Plans of thought, however, could be altered through learning another language, though he stressed that “No people take up or lay down a language at will. It descends with their blood, and is altered only by a process of mutation which is so slow, that it is wholly imperceptible at the time.”¹¹² As such, he withdrew his support for missionary philology. Whereas in 1836 Schoolcraft had emphasized the complementary roles missionaries and philologists would play, in 1854 he dismissed the time spent on translations into Indian languages. “The philologist indeed gains in his researches by these systems. He is pleased to behold every schoolmaster a philologist, and every missionary a philosopher. But how is practical teaching advanced thereby?”¹¹³ Departing from the model of John Eliot, David Zeisberger, and others, Schoolcraft denied that one could simply convert a heathen language to Christianity by providing it with Christian concepts. “All history bears testimony against the

¹¹¹ [J. W. Miles], “Art.V.—Lieber, Nordheimer, and Donaldson on the Philosophy of Language,” *Southern Quarterly Review*, 4.8 (October 1851), 402-04. See also J. W. Miles, *The Student of Philology: annual oration delivered before the literary societies of South-Carolina College* (Charleston, 1853). On Miles’s philology, see Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image*, 42, 159 n. 59; O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 2: 1098-1114. University of Virginia Professor M. Schele de Vere, *Outlines of Comparative Philology, with a Sketch of the Languages of Europe, Arranged upon Philologic Principles; and a Brief History of the Art of Writing* (New York 1853), ch. 39, similarly discusses differences in grammar and thought and, citing Humboldt and Schlegel, the absence of historical evidence for one type of grammatical form developing into another, although he does not discuss Indian languages in particular.

¹¹² HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 5: 666.

¹¹³ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 354.

human invention and designed alteration of language.”¹¹⁴ The existing grammatical system could not be consciously improved, only replaced.

Several of Schoolcraft’s contemporaries thought similarly of the absolute necessity of English, not only to incorporation into U.S. society, but to civilization itself. Edwin James, who opposed Cass’s manipulation of philology to undermine the civilization effort, stressed the importance of “the structure and temperament of their minds; their modes of thinking and acting; and indeed, in all physical and mental peculiarities, which set them apart from the remainder of the human family, as a peculiar people.” Modes of thinking were revealed through language. James concluded that “they should not only learn the English language, but, at the same time, lay aside and forget their own, and with it their entire system of traditional feelings and opinions on all subjects.”¹¹⁵ Ojibwa author George Copway, in an 1849 article for the *American Review*, encouraged missionaries to abandon laborious translations “into our language... in this are perpetuated his views, ideas, and feelings.” Copway believed that “the sooner he learned the almost universal English and forgot the Indian, the better.”¹¹⁶ Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, put it simply. English was a “prerequisite to their civilization.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 5: 132. As an interesting counterpoint, see George Bancroft, *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent*, 16th ed., (Boston 1860), 3: 265, which asserted that “Progress, in the organic structure of a language” came through “intermixture.” Since missionaries had “carried the habit of analysis, and enriched the speech of the barbarians with the experience of civilization,” Bancroft claimed that “half-breeds” became “unwilling to indulge in diffuse combinations, but are ready to use each word distinctly and by itself; and the wild man understands, if he does not approve.”

¹¹⁵ Edwin James, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, (U. S. Interpreter at the Saut Ste. Marie,) during Thirty Years Residence among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (London, 1830), 21, 339-40. A reviewer despaired at the prescription, since to “change a nation’s language is the most arduous of all undertakings...if the suppression of the Indian idioms be indispensable, we may as well, we think, immediately throw up the task as utterly unattainable.” See “Art. V.—*A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner*...By Edwin James,” *American Quarterly Review* 8.15 (Sept. 1, 1830): 108-20, at 131.

¹¹⁶ Kah-ge-ga-gah-boh, a Chief of the Ojibwa Nation [George Copway], “The American Indians,” *American Review*, June 1849, 634. He was even more explicit a decade later. “Our language perpetuates our ideas of civilization, as well as the old usages in our Nation.” See idem, *Indian Life and Indian History, by an Indian Author; embracing the Traditions of the North American Indians Regarding Themselves, Particularly of that most important of all the Tribes, the Ojibways* (Boston, 1860), 245.

¹¹⁷ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 2: 554. Schoolcraft included “The English language a means to civilization” as one of the Queries the Office of Indian Affairs distributed in preparation for this project” and he included the supporting opinion of D. Lowry, missionary and teacher in a Winnebago

By extending Du Ponceau's conjectures on an Indian "plan of ideas," Schoolcraft came to articulate an "Indian mind," reflected in grammatical forms, that was impervious to change. This was not the physical brain and its cranium. Schoolcraft studied only Indians' distinct patterns of thought and the language used to express them (to oneself and others), which could be known through studies of grammatical forms as well as of oral literature and graphic systems, each of which supposedly manifested the language's peculiarities. By defining these patterns of thought as basically fixed, Schoolcraft's ethnology came dangerously close to the essentialism of the American school. Yet, he rejected polygenesis and insisted on the possibility of Indian civilization. Their languages were in a savage state, but they ostensibly demonstrated Indians' Semitic origin, and while those languages reflected a fixed plan of thought, incompatible with U.S. society, that plan need not be the only one "the Indian mind" knew. English would provide new patterns of thought, patterns already adapted to American civilization.

Philology remained central to Schoolcraft's vision of a rational Indian policy. While he believed that "the most powerful source of influence which affects the Red Man is his religion," it was not only this, or even the grammatical forms that structured this "superstition," that kept Indians in the hunter state.¹¹⁸ Believing each "little difference in language...a radical difference of tribe," Indians refused, according to Schoolcraft, to "run into groups—groups into great families or ethnographical circles." This, he insisted, "kept the tribes in a state of anarchy."¹¹⁹ Since the "languages of the tribes simulate a historical chart, upon which we can trace back the

school. See *ibid.*, 3: 474-75. In 1837, Speaking generally, Francis Lieber believed that it was the "different division of ideas which renders the study of foreign languages so salutary to our mind. We enter a new logic." See Francis Lieber, "Remarks on some Subjects of Comparative Philology, and the importance of the study of Foreign Languages especially of the classic Tongues—in a letter to Albert Gallatin," *Southern Literary Messenger* 3.3 (March 1837): 161-72, at 165.

¹¹⁸ Bremer, *Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar*, 247, notes that from his early work, which posited that Indians were pagan because they were savage, by the Congressional project, Schoolcraft shifted to believing that they were savage because they were pagan. Bremer neglects to address how language, in Schoolcraft's mind (particularly their plans of thought), underlay both.

¹¹⁹ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 482.

tribes to the period of their original dispersion over this continent,” however, philologists could bring order to this linguistic and social chaos.¹²⁰

Faith that such “ethnographical circles” would aid the administration of Indian affairs was as old as the republic. Thomas Jefferson had suggested the importance of linguistic relationships for understanding native alliances and enmities, and he instructed his federal explorers and Indian agents to collect information along these lines. Albert Gallatin’s “correct arrangement of the tribes” reduced the continent’s vast dialectical variation to a much smaller number of distinct languages, which could be further grouped into a small number of “families” or “stocks.” Each etymologically determined relation indicated a shared common ancestor.¹²¹ Such knowledge was useful, since, in the words of Edwin James, “inveterate and interminable hostility exist[ed], time out of mind, between the people of the different stocks.” Ojibwas and Dakotas, Osages and Cherokees, pushed together by western settlement, were already at war and, with Indian removal, “nothing but mutual destruction could be the consequence of crowding them together into a region already more than filled with warlike and jealous hunters.”¹²² Thus, to simplify administration in Indian Country in removal’s aftermath, Lewis Cass, while Secretary of War, attempted to “bring together bands, which are connected by language & habits” as well as “kindred tribes... connected by blood and language.”¹²³ While groups that had severed political

¹²⁰ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 6: 673.

¹²¹ AG to Theodore Frelinghuysen, 14 February 1835, Gallatin Papers, reel 41; AG, “Synopsis,” 3-4. For an explicit statement of his criteria for linguistic classification, see AG to PSD, 29 March 1826, Du Ponceau Papers, 1: 8, HSP. Although, he later admitted that distinctions between language and dialect was “not easily drawn.” See AG to PSD, 21 March 1835, Du Ponceau Papers, 2: 6, HSP.

¹²² James, *Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner*, 18.

¹²³ Lewis Cass to William Carroll, Montfort Stokes, and Roberts Vaux, 14 July 1832, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 9: 33, 35-36. He suggested this to Andrew Jackson in LC to the President of the United States, 16 February 1832, *ibid.*, 8: 267. As early as Cass, *Inquiries, respecting the History, Traditions, Languages, Manners, Customs, Religion, &c. of the Indians, Living within the United States* (Detroit, 1823), 43, he believed that “the affinities of language furnish the most unerring indications of the connexion of different nations.” For an example of a discussion of future consolidation that did not privilege language as the means, see John H. Eaton to Greenwood Leflore, 1 June 1831, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 7: 261-64. Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 102-03, 136-37, 227, discusses this plan in passing (making no mention of its basis in the period’s philological research) and stresses that this plan of “amalgamation” led to increasing hostilities by the late 1830s and early 1840s.

relationships with one another did not submit to the tyranny of taxonomy willingly or peaceably, others saw advantage. A native speaker of one of the largest languages within one of the largest linguistic stocks on the continent, Copway stressed that Ojibwa was the “great family language of all the Algonkin tribes....Tradition says we were all one people once, and now to be reunited will be a great social blessing. Wars must then cease.”¹²⁴

Even after detailing why Indian languages “should be considered as dead languages” for Indians to reach “civilization,” opposing further missionary translation, Schoolcraft continued to advocate the importance of philology for future Indian incorporation.¹²⁵ Language was the best guide to history and since it offered such clear advantages to Indian administration, Schoolcraft suggested that the “true object” of philology should be to “group and classify them into families on philosophical principles.” This would “restore” their “ancient relations.” In our future policy,” Schoolcraft concluded, “they should be removed or colonized in reference to this relationship, and foreign groups not be commingled with the cognate tribes.”¹²⁶ Reports of astonishing linguistic diversity along the Pacific coast did not worry him. He suspected that it was “by no means probable that the number of generic families is as great as it is represented” and he insisted that “discrepancies” would “melt away under the power of analysis.”¹²⁷

Ultimately, Schoolcraft believed that Indians’ “strong partiality for their own tongues...retarded

¹²⁴ Kah-ge-gah-boh, *Traditional History*, 124, 275. Peyer, *Tutor'd Mind*, 247-48, 263-71, notes language as a component in Copway's plan for Indian Territory and his deliberate engagement with ethnology, but does not put the two insights together through any attention to philology. For an opposite native view of such consolidation, see Ethan Allen Hitchcock's conversation with Sloan Love, a Chicksaw chief and U.S. interpreter. Love stressed that “there was a considerable difference between the Choctaw and Chickasaw languages.” Even after Hitchcock, who had read Pickering's essay on Indian languages in the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, drew his attention to the languages' similar structures and to the fact that etymological differences were found only in words, such as those for European things, coined since their separation, Love conceded only that it “might be so.” See Ethan Allen Hitchcock, *A Traveler in Indian Territory: The Journal of Ethan Allen Hitchcock, late Major-General in the United States Army*, ed. by Grant Forman [1930] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 84-85, 172-73.

¹²⁵ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 476.

¹²⁶ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 523. Schoolcraft emphasized the role that increased translations could play in this process. See *ibid.*, 529.

¹²⁷ HRS, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 3: 407. For the most official such report, see Hale, *Ethnography and Philology*, 197, 223. Gallatin addressed this in AG, “Hale's Indians of North-west America,” cx.

the efforts to instruct them” in more ways than one.¹²⁸ It inhibited learning English, which perpetuated a savage plan of ideas, and it led to social fragmentation, which prevented Indian communities reaching the critical mass for social advancement. Philology, for Schoolcraft, diagnosed the epistemological problem of Indian civilization, necessitating the adoption of English; it offered scientific means to consolidate Indian groups, in a manner ostensibly agreeable to Indians, thus facilitating their transition to agriculture as well as the economical administration of Indian affairs; and it proved, against the claims of American school ethnology and native tradition alike, that Indians were not a separate race or a “spontaneous people.”

* * *

Reviewers praised the opening volumes of *Historical and Statistical Information*. Lippincott’s quartos of soft leather and heavy paper, about ten pounds each, filled with elegant typeface, engravings, and lithographs, were considered the finest works that an American press had yet produced. The material those beautiful books contained, on the other hand, was panned.¹²⁹ The *New York Herald* bemoaned the nearly \$200,000 “drawn from the pockets of the people to pay for the... ‘whimabams’ of some garrulous old man, who should have been left to mumble his rubbish to the urchins at the fireside, or under the porch of the corner grocery.”¹³⁰ Francis Bowen, in the *North American Review*, recognized it as “an abuse of government patronage” and feared that this “ill-digested and valueless compilation” would cast “reproach on American science” abroad and “discredit the whole system of publishing works at the government expense.”¹³¹

No reviewers commented upon its elaborate defense of philology. Doing so would have been difficult given the problematic place of language in the previous decades’ debates between

¹²⁸ HRS, “Notes,” in Henry Whiting, *Sannillac, A Poem; with Notes, by Lewis Cass and Henry R. Schoolcraft* (Boston, 1831), 129.

¹²⁹ [Francis Bowen], “Art. XI.,” *North American Review* 77.160 (July 1853): 245-62, at 245; Bremer, *Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar*, 333.

¹³⁰ “Wasteful Extravagance of Public Printing,” *New York Herald*, 17 January 1858, 5.

¹³¹ Bowen, “Art. XI.,” 261-62.

supporters of monogenetic savagism, whether defined as primarily the product of progressive modes of subsistence (e.g. Gallatin) or the end result of gradual degeneration into pagan superstition (e.g. Schoolcraft), and the advocates of polygenetic fixed racial types. Ultimately philology could not trace the world's languages to a common ancestor and the linguistic diversity of western America rendered dubious the confident assertions that the science could provide a simplified taxonomy for Indian administration. Plus, its practitioners repeatedly stressed that Indians possessed distinct plans of ideas or patterns of thought that posed an epistemological obstacle to American civilization. If this did not demonstrate phrenological stasis (though some thought that), at the very least it reinforced the demand that Indians learn English. In short, philology was a dubious ally to opponents of the American school and proponents of a rational and benevolent Indian policy.

The fundamental ambivalence of American philology at mid-century is best seen in the differing reactions of four men to debates on the relationship between language and race. They were a young ethnologist, a missionary and a judge, and a native legislator-historian, each invested in the period's ethnology as they witnessed its effects on the Senecas, Dakotas, and Ojibwas. Respectively, they ignored philology, grasped at its opposite and unraveling strands, and refuted it. Each represents a path that would be taken in the succeeding years.

Especially against the background of the American school's assertion of separate creations and fixed racial types, the legacy of Du Ponceau's plans of ideas was problematic for those working for Indian improvement and incorporation. The young Lewis Henry Morgan drew only upon Adam Smith's mid-eighteenth-century conjectures to describe to Gallatin, in 1847, that the Iroquois spoke "primitive or uncompounded languages in the early stages of their formation."¹³² Interestingly, Morgan's collaborator on these researches was the Seneca Ely S.

¹³² [Lewis H. Morgan], "Letters on the Iroquois, by Skenandoah: Addressed to Albert Gallatin," Letter XI, *American Review* 5.5 (May 1847), 455-56, 460. For the source, see Adam Smith, "Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, &c. &c." in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. by J. C. Bryce (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 203, 206-07, 213-15.

Parker (Hasanoanda), who went on to serve as the first native Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Contemplating “The Study of Man” as a student in 1845, Parker concluded that “when we attempt to solve the question how the immaterial thinking being is connected with the physical past of man we are introduced into a labyrinth of mystery which defies all human wisdom and skill to expound.”¹³³ Parker and Morgan seem to have thought it better to ignore decades of scholarship that merely complicated the view that only the hunter state, not “plans of ideas” or mental structures, kept Indians from civilization and incorporation, especially as the Senecas endeavored to stave off the Ogden Land Company, which was aggressively seeking to expel them from land made valuable by the Erie Canal. In his monumental *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity in the Human Family* (1871), published by the Smithsonian, Morgan turned to the comparative study of native kinship terminology to accomplish what philology could not by demonstrating that Native Americans shared the same system of kin relations as the peoples of the Pacific and southern India. Morgan ignored physical ethnology and the epistemological philology of Du Ponceau and Schoolcraft for the remainder of his career. Although the idea that language created incommensurable epistemologies resurfaced in the speculations of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf early in the twentieth century, it was Morgan’s comprehensive articulation of cultural evolution that became the guiding theory of the federal Bureau of Ethnology in its early years (the last quarter of the nineteenth century).¹³⁴

¹³³ [ESP], “Study of Man,” [1845], ESP Papers, Box 1, APS. Yet, at the same time, Parker expressed considerable ambivalence over “civilization” and the United States. See ESP to Spencer Coane, 8 June 1846, ESP Papers, Box 2; “Savage Life,” [1845], ESP Papers, Box 1, [3], APS. On the Morgan-Parker collaboration, see Scott Michaelsen, *The Limits of Multiculturalism: Interrogating the Origins of Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), ch. 3; Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), ch. 3; Arthur Caswell Parker, *The Life of General Ely S. Parker, Last Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant’s Military Secretary* (Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919), ch. 7. A thorough account of Morgan’s ethnology, but which does not examine its production as collaboration, see Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, ch. 6. For the Ogden Land Company controversy and its relation to U.S. security and commercial imperatives, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), chs. 1, 7-12.

¹³⁴ For information on Morgan’s broader ethnological views vis-à-vis philology, see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship* [1987] (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 6-8, 73-74. *Ibid.*, 18, 20, stresses his interest in the “scale of the mind” and his almost complete neglect of

In June 1861, the American Board missionary Stephen Riggs took nine full blooded male members of the “Hazelwood Republic” – a community of Dakota converts who had broken their tribal ties, adopted white ways, and formed a small representative government around the mission station – to Mankato, Minnesota, to acquire a district court certificate affirming that they met the requisite criteria for citizenship. For Indians without white descent that meant they must have “adopted the language, customs and habits of civilization.” In a decision that the town *Record* pronounced “too lengthy to admit of our publishing even a satisfactory synopsis,” the court granted the certificate to Lorenzo Lawrence, the only one who “possessed a knowledge of and spoke freely the English language.” The other eight were denied citizenship because “the Sioux was a barbarous language; and the State constitution evidently considered it as such.”

Riggs pleaded with the judge that this was not the case. The Dakota language had “been reduced to a system and was capable of use in the printing of books, in writing, and for all other practicable purposes.” The Smithsonian Institution had just published his Dakota grammar and dictionary. In addition, a third of the scriptures had been translated and two hymn books, John Bunyan’s *A Pilgrim’s Progress*, and a monthly newspaper (*Dakota Tawaxithu Kin*) were available. That the men spoke their native language while adopting Christianity, clothing, and cultivation of the soil, apart from the rest of the Dakotas, should satisfy the Minnesota constitution, which could also be read in Dakota. It had “ceased to be the language of a barbarous nation, but was that of a community, living in every respect as white or civilized people.”

physical ethnology. The Americanist roots of this tradition have been altogether ignored in favor of an ostensible genealogy through Wilhelm von Humboldt alone. See, for example, Lia Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, trans. Gabriel Poole (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 130-34. E. F. Konrad Koerner, “Towards a ‘Full Pedigree’ of the ‘Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis’: From Locke to Lucy,” in Martin Pütz and Marjolijn H. Verspoor, eds., *Explorations in Linguistic Relativity* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000), 10, even notes that around the time that Humboldt was formulating his ideas he was in frequent communication with Pickering and Du Ponceau, but makes no further acknowledgement of the extent that they had elaborated important parts of this complex of ideas regarding the American languages. On the centrality of Morgan to the anthropology of J. W. Powell, the BAE’s first director, see Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* [1981] (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), ch. 5.

The judge was unconvinced. While he congratulated the obvious success of Riggs's efforts thus far, he noted that Dakota was still "not a language or literature by which these people could gain a knowledge of our system of government," and he urged Riggs to convince the Dakotas that learning English was necessary.¹³⁵ The Minnesota constitution considered physical race important in so far as it provided different criteria for "mixed bloods" and "full bloods," but ultimately physical race was less important than customs and language. For the judge, the latter's importance was paramount; adopting the customs without the language of civilization was insufficient. It mattered not that Riggs and others had systematized the language, stamped with the authority of the federal government, and begun a written literature. After decades of debate over distinct Indian plans of thought and the role of native language education in American civilization, the Minnesota judge rejected the possibility that otherwise acculturated Dakotas could comprehend U.S. republicanism in an Indian language. The Office of Indian Affairs similarly believed that Dakota was "not suited to convey the ideas necessary to, and resulting from, a state of cultivation." Thus, despite the "universal testimony" that native languages were

¹³⁵ "Application of the Sioux Indians to become Citizens," *The Record* [Mankato, MN], 21 June 1861, enclosed in "Dakotas applying for Citizenship," Papers of the American Board of commissioners for Foreign Missions, 18.3.1, 14: 176, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Stephen R. Riggs, *Mary and I: Forty with the Sioux* (Chicago, 1880), 133. On the place of this constitutional provision relative to others of the time, see Deborah Rosen, *American Indians and State Law: Sovereignty, Race, and Citizenship, 1790-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), ch. 5. On the broader political and social environment, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), chs. 7-12. For the list of publications, see Tamakoche [Riggs], "Learning English," *Minnesota Weekly Times*, 5 March 1859, in ABCFM Papers, 18.3.7, 3: 47. For contemporary accounts of the Hazelwood Republic, see Henok Mahpeyahdenapa, "Declaration of the Dakotas," 24 February 1857, unknown newspaper clipping in ABCFM Papers, 18.3.7, 3: 46; North American, "An Indian Republic," *Friends' Review; a Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, 10.24 (21 February 1857), 381. For Riggs's efforts to learn Dakota, see *Mary and I*, 31-32, 37, 40-41, 53, 55, 105-06. On the Dakota grammar, see *Mary and I*, 117-21; "Prospectus for Publishing a Dakota Lexicon, Under the Patronage of the Historical Society of Minnesota" (January 1851), in ABCFM Papers, 18.3.7, 3: 45; S. R. Riggs, ed., *Grammar and Dictionary of the Dakota Language, collected by Members of the Dakota Mission*, in *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge* 4 (1852), xiii-xiv.

the best means to begin education, the United States began to stipulate that English should be the sole medium of education in schools receiving government funds.¹³⁶

William Warren, a Minnesota territorial legislator who counted chiefs and Pilgrims among his ancestors, confronted the American school and Schoolcraft both in his *History of the Ojibway People*, written in the winter of 1852-53. Actually, it had been Schoolcraft's *Inquiries* soliciting material for *Historical and Statistical Information*, which inspired Warren's ethnology.¹³⁷ The question of Indian origins "would be no difficult matter" if one "admit[ted] the new belief...that the human family are derived originally from a multitude of progenitors, definitely marked by physical differences." Warren would not do this, for it would "throw down the testimony of the Bible" and leave people alone to weigh the "conflicting testimony of ages past, descended to him in manuscript and ancient monuments" as well as "the physical formation of all the races of men and the geological formation of the earth."

Just as he attempted to illuminate the troubling prospect of depending solely upon the researches of craniology, archaeology, or another field of human knowledge to study human origins and descent, so too did he confront philology. There was no evidence that "all the tribes of the red race inhabiting America have ever been...one and the same people, speaking the same language, and practicing the same beliefs and customs." Ojibwa tradition confirmed only an ancient "concentration or coalition under one head, of the different and now scattered tribes belonging to the Algic stock." Against the deductions common since Du Ponceau, Warren had "every reason to believe that America has not been peopled from one nation or tribe of the human family." Resisting the homogenizing tendency of American ethnology, Warren insisted that

¹³⁶ Riggs, "Learning English." On this shift in policy, see Ruth Spack, *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

¹³⁷ Schneck, *William W. Warren*, 46, 54-56, 166-68. Warren told Schoolcraft that since the latter had used one of his articles in *Information*, he should get a copy of the work and requested that Schoolcraft send it "by express." Schoolcraft, for his part, was glad to see a man interested in the Ojibwas and reflected: "We are not responsible for the opinions of the Indians, but are so for putting them accurately on record." Quoted in *ibid.*, 166, 168. Warren completed the manuscript for his history in the winter of 1852-53, but died suddenly, only 28 years old, before he could get it published. For this and a brief genealogical sketch, see Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 9-11, 18.

differences among Indian groups were “as marked and as fully developed as are to be found between European and Asiatic nations.” He distinguished especially between the Ojibwas and the Dakotas, whose decades of sporadic warfare had brought the Indian agent Schoolcraft to more than one treaty council. They “assimilate in color and in their physical formation,” Warren admitted, but Dakotas lacked the totem, the Ojibwa’s central social institution. Moreover, he stressed, echoing Hendrick Aupaumut decades before and silently dismissing claims of common polysynthesis, they “cannot differ more widely than they do in language.”

Even more importantly, however, Warren “assert[ed] positively” that the linguistic separation of the Algics, or the Algonquian language family, from their common ancestor, was “but a secondary division.” “The first and principal division, and certainly the most ancient, is that of blood and kindred, embodied and rigidly enforced in the system which we shall denominate Totemic.” Warren gave the lie to philological claims that all Indians shared a common descent or even that a linguistic classification would provide a scientific basis for a more effective Indian policy after removal. He was justifiably skeptical of the “the so-called humane policy of our great and enlightened government.” Removal had made other tribes “easier victims of...the licentious dregs of civilized white men who have ever been first on our frontiers... hovering around them like buzzards and crows over a deer’s carcass, whom the wolves have chased, killed, gorged upon, and left.” Warren identified the Treaty of Fond du Lac (1826), negotiated by Lewis Cass and Thomas McKenney, as the beginning of the end of Ojibwa sovereignty and society, as he knew it. He felt increasing white pressure, which was to culminate, the year after he finished his manuscript, in the Treaty of La Pointe (1854), which was one of the first federal treaties to confine an Indian group to a reservation. It is unlikely that Warren would have trusted a philologically sanctioned consolidation to improve the situation.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 30-35, 56-63. On Ojibwa society and the social pressures it faced in these years, see Edmund Jefferson Danzinger, Jr., *The Chippewas of Lake Superior* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), ch. 5. Robert Alun Jones, *The Secret of the Totem: Religion and Society from McLennan to Freud* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 7, traces the first mention

Lewis Henry Morgan, Stephen Riggs and the Minnesota judge who decided the fate of the men seeking citizenship, and William Warren, each confronted the implications of the epistemologically and racially inflected philology of Du Ponceau and Schoolcraft. Together, they demonstrate the complex legacy of philology in the early republic. Morgan neglected it altogether, choosing to dust off the conjectures of Adam Smith, then a century old, rather than entangle himself in more erudite, and more problematic, theories of Indians' distinct and unchanging plans of ideas or patterns of thought. Smith offered a vision of social progress that was more amenable to Morgan, to advocates of a robust "civilization" effort, and to Senecas facing the prospect of losing their land. Following in the tradition of Eliot, Zeisberger, and Du Ponceau, Riggs stressed that Dakota could be and, indeed, had been developed, systematized, and used to begin a written literature among a people otherwise living as whites. It was a "civilized" language. Disregarding the fact that the language possessed none of the features by which eighteenth-century theorists defined a savage language, the anonymous judge declared that it was savage nonetheless and could never be used as a vehicle for American civilization. Warren rejected philology's claim to provide the most ancient and authoritative guide to Indian antiquity alongside the polygenist ethnology of the American school. Indian languages were not uniform, Ojibwa tradition insisted that they shared descent only with other Algonquian groups, and even linguistic divisions among the latter were less ancient and less important than totems. Warren realized that philology was no more reliable a guide, or an advocate, than physical ethnology or archaeology in U.S. Indian policy.

of the totem (referring to a guardian spirit among the Ojibwas that took the form of a particular animal) to John Long's *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader* (1791), which was assumed to be found among American Indians exclusively until Sir George Grey's *Journals of Two Expeditions in North-west and Western Australia* (1841).

CONCLUSION

The “American languages” were a medium for trade and negotiation, education and evangelizing, from the moment of first contact between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Communication between English and native speakers remained indispensable in the early United States, unless one was willing to rely strictly upon force to achieve desired ends. Whites sometimes relied on that, but they could not always do so, in part because the United States lacked sufficient power, and in part because it rested so uneasily with the republican belief that just government rested upon consent. Languages needed to be learned, and they were, to varying degrees. Traders could provide little more than the names of common phrases and names of everyday things, and few explorers could be relied upon even for those. It was feared that white interpreters, frequently former captives, knew little more, or that they knew too little of European languages to be very useful. Government officials who gained a degree of proficiency were the exception rather than the rule. Experienced missionaries, like David Zeisberger, who had taken the time to learn the language of their charges, were the clearer and deeper founts. Only rarely, however, could missionaries be found whose linguistic abilities matched those of Indians, who were fluent in their native tongue as well as in English, and often had some knowledge of classical languages as well. Such Indians, like the Cherokee David Brown, often combined political and religious roles and were also the usual instructors of those rare whites who approached practical fluency or philological insight. Because educated Indians, aware of U.S. politics and culture, were most often the source of linguistic ideas, especially when science sought grammatical information, they and white allies could utilize linguistic ideas as a foil to definitions of racial difference founded on physical difference.

The study of Indian languages in the United States emerged from these practical needs. It became ever more necessary as an expanding empire for liberty claimed jurisdiction over more peoples and scores of distinct languages. For this reason, the federal government made repeated

efforts to collect linguistic information through federal exploration, inaugurated by Thomas Jefferson, and circulated questionnaires. In the eighteenth century, the desire to collect material (or “specimens”) to contribute to a natural history of man took its place alongside older commercial, diplomatic, and missionary motivations for the study of Indian languages. Etymology, comparing words from one language to another, held out the possibility of tracing even distant tongues to a common ancestor, perhaps even to the common ancestor of all. Since no ideas were innate, according to the ascendant epistemology, words could only represent the things that a people had experienced. Similar sounds with similar meanings indicated shared experience in the past. Taxonomically, such information could be administratively useful. In the 1780s, Jefferson suspected that language was a sign of political alliance and, assuming linguistic relationship indicated shared ancestry, Lewis Cass, as Secretary of War in the 1830s, sought a scientifically justifiable means to consolidate Indian groups into more easily managed units. Grammatical forms, how ideas are linked together in speech, were thought to provide little help in tracing descent in the eighteenth century, but philosophers speculated that they did reflect their speakers’ state of society.

However, even as the notion that grammars were “savage” or “civilized” stubbornly persisted, by the beginning of the nineteenth century an increasing number of scholars in Europe, particularly in Germany, believed that different grammars revealed the patterns by which different peoples linked together ideas and that this provided a still more certain indication of descent, or lack thereof. Philology, a comparative science of language, supplanted the earlier etymology. These were the advances in the science of man that propelled U.S. participation in a broader European ethnology. Yet linguistic efforts were never merely literary. In disparate ways, various U.S. citizens approached Indian languages to sate nationalistic desires, to indulge colonialist prerogatives and prejudices, and to compete for a share of scientific authority in the domestic marketplace of ideas. Indian languages became a natural means for U.S. men of letters, impelled by cultural nationalism and visions of fame, to establish literary and scientific

reputations for their country and themselves, a fame that rested fundamentally upon their access to those people over whom the United States asserted imperial authority. Indians' very subordination to the United States made them naturally "American" subjects. Accusing European scholars of denigrating "American" things, whether natural productions, its native peoples as a subset of that, or those of European descent who wrote about them, was a common theme of U.S. literary and scientific scholarship in the early republic.

For instance, Lewis Cass based his ethnological authority upon his status as a pioneer and Indian superintendent and he used it to challenge what he considered the pseudo-scientific noble savagism of Peter S. Du Ponceau and John Heckewelder. For his part, the latter felt his authority besieged from east and west, by the frontier prejudice of Cass and the refashioned philological savagism of the famed European philologist Wilhelm von Humboldt, who acknowledged Indian grammatical forms even as he insisted that they were incompletely developed and inferior to European tongues and their Asian sisters. In the midst of international debate over American philology and policy, Heckewelder and Cass recognized that scholarly disputes could determine the future course of U.S. Indian affairs. The outcome depended not only upon what was said about Indian languages, but by whom, and with what authority, a contest that pitted the competing claims of scholars in eastern cities, frontier settlements, and in Europe.

Crucially, the philological counter-argument to Cass's virulent speculations about Indian inferiority only existed because educated Indians had provided missionaries and philologists with linguistic information. Cass himself had expected Henry R. Schoolcraft to provide the most reliable information to refute Du Ponceau and Heckewelder, but because his wife, the Ojibwa-Irish Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and her family, taught him what he knew. Cass did not receive a report of a savage language that he expected. Moreover, educated natives time and again used the study of Indian languages to oppose colonialist policies and ideologies. In a remarkable coincidence, at the moment of greatest uncertainty in U.S. Indian policy – the removal crisis – shifts in scientific opinion in Europe toward the greater importance of grammatical structure gave

Indians an unprecedented opportunity to shape scientific opinion of “the Indian.” The Ojibwa Peter Jones and the Mohawk Eleazer Williams offered verb conjugations to philologists seeking to understand their languages’ principles, and the latter, along with the Cherokee David Brown, composed full grammars to prove that Indian languages, and Indians themselves, could, linguistically, do all that their European counterparts could do. By “becoming philologists and grammarians,” in the words of the astonished Samuel Knapp, Indians were able to resist particular ethnological misrepresentations.

Different individuals, Indian and white, used philology to illustrate the success of existing educational efforts or the failures of those very programs, to plead for a more benevolent Indian policy or to assert the need for a more coercive one, to reflect upon what civilized society lacked or to demonstrate what savages could never have. These debates were always the understood backdrop against which philologists conducted their work. Some philologists chose to eschew discussion of Indian affairs in their scientific work in the hopes of preserving claims to disinterested empiricism, yet most still supported the military’s or the Indian office’s efforts at linguistic collection and hoped for the implementation of policy upon the supposedly sound footing of ethnology. White students of Indian languages shared in the general sentiments of the era. Citizens expected Indian assimilation, if extinction could be avoided, under terms that did not hinder U.S. settlement and economic growth. While U.S. citizens diverged on the best means to achieve the end (e.g. whether removal would aid or hinder it), they rarely questioned the premise that civilization would and should supersede savagery, bringing ever more soil under cultivation and leading to new states of the Union, was rarely questioned. It was the very definition of republican progress; this was how the “empire for liberty” extended its dominion. When Du Ponceau decided to publish his translation of Zeisberger’s Delaware grammar, he railed against Cass, but happily cited the intention of several military men to use the grammar to their advantage among the related Ojibwas and others. Du Ponceau’s object was to demolish outdated

notions that the language of “savages” must be “savage” too; yet he freely admitted the savagery of the Indians then speaking it.

In denying the connection between civilization and language, Du Ponceau convinced most of the era’s learned that the “plan” by which all Indians, and only Indians, had always ordered their ideas had nothing to do with mode of subsistence, spiritual beliefs, or absence of writing. Ignoring Du Ponceau’s own reluctance to do more than point to Babel and the vagaries of human faculties to explain this, some scholars extended the implications of his studies. They concluded that he had offered a compelling argument that mental traits were fixed, following racial lines and independent of broader environmental factors. They nodded as other branches of ethnological investigation seemed to confirm those views, even as other ethnologists they drew upon, such as Albert Gallatin, continued to rely on philology to defend more socially and religiously orthodox views. Still other commentators denied that philology was relevant to the study of race at all, despite their agreement with its most prominent conclusions. Led by Samuel G. Morton, ethnologists of the American school asserted the separate creations of different races, possessing fixed and unequal moral and intellectual traits, about which only physiological studies, such as those of crania, could provide evidence. By discounting philology’s ethnological authority, the ascendant American school effectively silenced the most significant Indian participation in the production of ethnological knowledge. Indians never became craniologists or archaeologists as they had philologists and grammarians. The result was a more racist ethnology than that which had been philologically based.

For Indian policy to be benevolent and effective, which officials insisted is what they intended, it had to be informed. They wanted an accurate understanding of the people upon whom that policy would operate. In the midst of philological and ethnological debates, the administrators of Indian affairs found a confused and contradictory assessment of “the Indian” as he was and as he could be. Not coincidentally, the moments of most intense scholarly debates corresponded to those of particular policy uncertainty. The Cass-Du Ponceau-Humboldt debate

occurred against the backdrop of Congress' commencement of an annual "civilization fund" and the Monroe administration's call for that body to fund a standardized plan for Indian removal just a few years later. In its midst, Albert Gallatin convinced the War Department to begin an ambitious collection of lexical and grammatical information, far surpassing what Jefferson had initiated among federal explorers and Indian agents at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The most important consequence of the Removal era's contentious debates over philology and policy was the increasing articulation that Indian languages reflected a distinct "Indian mind" rather than a generic "savage mind," articulated most clearly by Cass's protégé Henry R. Schoolcraft. Grappling with this brought notions of language and race into direct collision. Hendrick Aupaumut adroitly managed the shifting relative positions that race and language could hold, depending upon the allies and aims of a given moment; Johann S. Vater understood that debates over the relative ethnological value of philology or physiology (with archaeology providing the latter's temporal depth) were as old as the science itself. Acrimony over these issues, however, peaked during the bitter national debate over expansion and its effects in the 1840s-50s. European philology had discovered that the languages of nations widely separated by land and stage of society shared a common ancestry and had become gradually differentiated, seemingly by a natural process, over thousands of years. Although the study of the American languages had provided no links to the old world, and although proponents of polygenesis were more concerned with defending slavery than Indian policy, the American school fervently attacked the premises of Indian philology because it threatened their racial typology. Attempting to bring the existing ethnological chaos to order and hoping to forge a rational Indian policy at the moment the United States claimed jurisdiction over thousands more Indians in the former Mexican territory, Congress ordered the War Department to deliver a comprehensive report on the history, conditions, and prospects of the Indians of the United States.

To order the existing mass of ethnological materials, the War Department chose Schoolcraft, Indian agent, widower of an Ojibwa woman, and "vital Christian." Schoolcraft

offered the public a nearly impenetrable tangle that attempted to refute the heterodox religion and negligent social policies of the American school while drawing on Du Ponceau to argue for a distinct and fixed “Indian mind,” of a “Shemitic” type, which could best be known, historically and psychologically, through philology (expansively defined to include mythology and pictography as studies derivative of those more properly linguistic). This “Indian mind,” nothing more or less than the linguistic patterns that ordered Indian ideas, was essentially fixed, but Indians themselves could be educated and incorporated. Learning English, and with it new patterns of thought already accommodated to American civilization, was necessary. Separated by the debates from the 1820s-50s over plans of ideas, the syllabary, and whether Indian languages were proper vehicles of instruction, the heterodox Jefferson and the orthodox Schoolcraft came to strikingly similar conclusions, stemming from similar concerns over the incommensurable association of ideas in different languages. Drawing on intellectual traditions as opposed as Lockean epistemology and German philology, which the latter found connected in Du Ponceau’s adaptation of Maupertuis, Jefferson and Schoolcraft asserted the necessity of linguistic homogeneity for national unity. The federal government followed suit.

In the broadest view, debates over what kinds of historical or psychological information could be learned from Indian languages, and over just what in fact was extracted, demonstrates that “race,” if understood to mean immutable biological characteristics, such as skin color or skulls, was far from unchallenged even at mid-century. Barton’s etymology conflated America and Asia, Indian and Saxon, and the work of Zeisberger and Aupaumut in the Ohio Country had the same muddling effect. Many among the educated sought to use language to undermine the pernicious division of white and red that had produced so much recent violence. Even in the nineteenth century, Du Ponceau’s and Schoolcraft’s theoretical explanation of an “Indian mind” was not essentialist in the manner of the American school’s ethnology. The grammatical forms of a given language represented a people’s plans of ideas or patterns of thought, but these would be altered when one learned a new language. Languages may have inescapable essences (this too

was debated), but even if they did, philologists stressed that people did not, because they could learn to speak, and so think, differently. Such research promoted the extinction of Indian languages as a necessary precondition for assimilation into the American nation, but “race” was not the deciding factor.

Philological studies of the American languages were always imperialist, but they were never *only* imperialist. Regardless of the context in which U.S. philology emerged and the ideologically and administratively self-serving uses to which it was repeatedly put, that physical race was not the unchallenged, or even primary way to understand Indians through the mid-nineteenth century, is largely due to the ethnological authority that European science accorded to philology (from Lockean epistemology and its closer alignment to mosaic history) and the substantial influence that this accorded to those educated natives who provided the most reliable source of philological information. Scholars of the early republic and antebellum era who wish to study scientific definitions of race must come to terms with language. Those who wish to study linguistic ideas must confront the series of intercultural encounters, epistolary exchanges, and institutions through which such knowledge emerged.

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