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Walam Olum, I, 17: A Proof of Rafinesque's Integrity

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Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Aug., 1957), pp. 705-708

Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/666107>

Accessed: 11/06/2010 09:14

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longed. But Burkill is surely anticipating that part of the Castilian sound-change when he says of the form *aji*: "An English writer might perhaps have written the sound of the word as *ahhee*"; and there can be little doubt but that Taino *hage*, Goajiro *haiši*, Lokono *haliti*, etc., Yavitero *kaliti*, Carutana and Arequena *kariri*, and other Arawakan words meaning "sweet-potato" are cognates.

It seems possible that these Arawakan names for the sweet-potato may have arisen from verbs transformed into substantives; for Yavitero *kaliti* resembles Lokono *kaleti* and Dominican Island-Carib *keleti*, which are attributive denominal verbs derived respectively from Lokono *ole* "tannia (*Xanthosoma*) or dasheen (*Colocasia*)" and Dominican Island-Carib *ule* "(any) edible tuber," and meaning "it (or he) has edible tubers." But if so, their different phonetic evolution makes it clear that they long ago became dissociated from such verbs.

The Island Carib equivalent of Taino *hage* as cited by Chanca, *nabi*, was borrowed from Kalina (which today has *napi* "sweet-potato") and evolved (probably by assimilation of the initial nasal to the labial stop) to *mabi* "sweet-potato" (so in Breton's dictionary, published in 1665), a form and meaning that have remained unchanged in this language since that time.

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#### WALAM OLUM, I, 17: A PROOF OF RAFINESQUE'S INTEGRITY

Although known for more than a century, under the title of *Walam Olum*, this important tribal chronicle of the Leni Lenape, or Delaware Indians, is still strangely unfamiliar to many American anthropologists. Roughly between 1825 and 1835, the French-born scientist and scholar, Constantine S. Rafinesque (1783-1840), with dependable native aid, first assembled a series of 183 pictographs. He carefully reproduced these on paper from the originals, which had been drawn with red paint on wood or tree bark but no longer exist. However, their continuity is not lost: it started with the Lenape notions about the creation of the world and, subdivided into five unequal parts, covered the Delaware Indians' tribal migrations from the extreme west to the North American east, ending with the arrival of the white man on the Atlantic coast. Again with competent native help, Rafinesque further established the aboriginal song text line accompanying each pictograph and recorded the results, together with a conscientious English translation. Thus formulated by Rafinesque, this tribal chronicle of the Lenape has since been known as *Walam Olum*, "red-paint record" in English, and there cannot be any doubt that it had been adopted from incontestable native sources. However, the time for an unbiased reception of Rafinesque's important discovery could hardly have been worse. Although fully vindicated several decades later, some insufficiently documented facts in his special field of botany, published off and on by Rafinesque, had so thoroughly aroused the orthodox circles of science that he was openly branded as an impostor to whom the columns of all scholarly periodicals were

automatically closed. Rafinesque's French fellow-national, S. P. Duponceau, executive secretary of The American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia, would not even look at Rafinesque's *Walam Olum*, let alone publish it. Why should a man with no integrity in his chosen field be credited with honesty when pursuing a sideline?

Apart from his *Walam Olum* translation, published in 1836 in *The American Nations*, a second-rate magazine, Rafinesque's great discovery had not appeared in print at the time of his death in 1840.

The cruel irony is that the guardians of American science and scholarship, such as Duponceau and the Harvard botanist, Asa Gray, from the standpoint of their day were not even unjustified in condemning Rafinesque on the grounds of his poorly supported statements. Nobody is to be held responsible for finding the words and actions of a genius beyond his reach. Yet the sad fact remains that it took longer than a full century to bring the lasting merits of Rafinesque, the anthropologist, into proper focus and to act accordingly.

However, eight years after Rafinesque's death the first feeble reaction set in: with a few unessential changes, Rafinesque's *Walam Olum* translations were printed, in 1848, by E. G. Squier in his *Historical and Mythological Traditions of the Algonquians*. Then, after another silence of thirty-seven years, there appeared the first new edition and translation of Rafinesque's *Walam-Olum* by D. C. Brinton (1885:169-253). The latest and most comprehensive publication of and about the *Walam Olum* is the collective University of Indiana volume (Voegelin et al. 1954:XIV, 1-379). It contains a facsimile edition of Rafinesque's *Walam Olum* manuscript, divided into its five original parts; each of the 183 pictographs and Delaware lines, accompanied by Rafinesque's translation and followed on each page by C. F. Voegelin's new interpretation (9-207); and some of his and J. E. Pierce's new translations (216-225).

Vaguely assured of the impossibility of a white man committing a forgery by "manufacturing" a tribal document such as the *Walam Olum* in its original language from fragmentary Moravian vocabularies, Brinton (1885:155) was the first to insist that the evidence for its genuineness "must come from the text itself." He himself followed this principle and so did Voegelin, both of them conscientiously but not always quite convincingly, as the following concrete case will show.

In Rafinesque's manuscript of the *Walam Olum* (Voegelin et al. 1954:25), the 17th line of Part I appears in the following spelling and punctuation: *Kiwis, wunand, wishimanoak essopak*. This version was adopted unchallenged by Brinton (1885:175) and Voegelin (Voegelin et al. 1954:25).

Rafinesque translates I, 17, as follows: *kiwis* thou being, *wunand* a good god, *wishi* good, *manitoak* spirits, *essopak* were; or, as it would read in a continuous passage, "Thou being a good god, there were good spirits." As a statement of the reason for peace prevailing on earth (I, 16), despite the destructive efforts of the evil spirit (I, 14-15), this interpretation makes good

sense; however, as separate units neither can *kiwis* possibly mean "thou being," nor can *wunand* mean "a good god." More about this later.

Brinton (1885:175), likewise embarrassed by *kiwis* and *wunand*, interprets the line in this manner: "Truly the manitos were active and kindly." In his vocabulary (1885:238), he connects *kiwis* with *kitschiwi* (Zeisberger) "truly, verily," while he adopts Rafinesque's "a good god" for *wunand* (1885:253), omitting the comma following it and thereby making *wunand* an adjective qualifying *wishimanitoak*, with a meaning of either "kindly" or "active"; *wishi-*, which Brinton defines as "good" (1885:252), may likewise be "active" or "kindly." Take your choice.

If Brinton's English version of the line is an act of etymological desperation, Voegelin's interpretation and "modern" translation (Voegelin et al. 1954:25, 220) are sheer acrobatics. The former reads, ". . . and was happy, staying with the manitos"; the latter, "the Delaware clan hunted and stayed with the manitos." He establishes a connection between *kiwis* and Ojibwa *kiiwossee* "he hunts," which, to say the least, is far-fetched and, as will be demonstrated, entirely unnecessary.

All that is needed for this Delaware line to make perfect sense is (1) the deletion of the comma between *kiwis* and *wunand*, and (2) the combination of *kiwis* and *wunand* into *kiwiswunand*. The need for this corrective operation becomes apparent when the line is analytically rewritten, as follows:

*k'/wis'w'/uún/'nt, wishi'/mantto/ak es/oóþ/ak.*

The initial term *k'/wis'w'/uún/'nt* is a Unami form for Munsee *k'/wis'w'/oákan/'nt*, a personal-actor noun composed of second-person possessive prefix *k'*- "thy, thine"; Unami *-wis'w'/uún-* "fatness" (Munsee *-wis'w'/oákan-*; *wisuwoágan* "fatness" [Zeisberger 1887:72]; *wisuwagan* "fatness" [Brinton 1889:163]); and personal-actor noun-final *-nt* (*-ant*, *-unt*, *-ent*) "doing, making, causing (that very thing, or condition)." Hence, the composite meaning of *k'/wis'w'/uún/'nt* is "he who is causing thy fatness," that is, "he who makes three prosper"—in this case, the Great Spirit, sustainer of human life and welfare.

The term *wishimanitoak*, immediately following in Rafinesque's manuscript, makes excellent sense: *wishi-* again is Unami for Munsee *witchi-*, spelled *witschi* by Brinton (1889:164) who defines it as "with; at the same time." Beyond "being with (a person)," Munsee *witchi-* (Unami *wishi-*) implies "helping, assisting (a person)" (*cf.*, Munsee *witchinke* "help" [noun], spelled *witschinge* in Zeisberger [1887:92]). For this reason, *wishi/mantto/ak* unmistakably signifies "helping fellow-spirits."

The final word of the line, *essopak*, analytically written *\*esopþ/ak*, remains unaffected by all this; it means "they were (there)."

In English, the entire line therefore reads: "He who causes thy prosperity and his helping fellow-spirits were there."

This appears to be a sensible interpretation of a sensible Unami phrase;

its Unami character is attested by the two forms pointed out above: *k'/wis'w'/wûn-* and *wîshi-*.

But most essential of all, this line proves beyond doubt that Rafinesque's text of the *Walam Olum*, far from being a forgery, was written by him as heard from the lips of an Unami informant. Had he compiled it from the Moravians' word lists available to him, as charged by insufficiently informed critics, Rafinesque would hardly have split a perfectly intelligible Unami compound, *kiwiswunand*, into two senseless halves, also dividing it in the wrong place and then trying to translate the resulting nonsense as separate units. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how much closer his translation came to the intended meaning of the phrase than did Brinton's or Voegelin's.

There is only one possible explanation for this: Rafinesque had correctly heard the Delaware phrase and had understood its general meaning, but had blundered in writing it down. He failed to identify *wis'w'/wûn-* as the Unami parallel to Munsee *wis'w'/oâkan* "fatness," which he may have known from a Zeisberger word list. In contrast to Brinton and Voegelin, however, Rafinesque was on the right track in identifying *ki-* (*k'-*) in *kiwiswunand* as a proclitic second-person prefix, as is evident from his translation, "thou being a good god," cited above.

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#### MESCALISM AND PEYOTISM

The article by James H. Howard, "The Mescal Bean Cult of the Central and Southern Plains: An Ancestor of the Peyote Cult?" (AA 59:75-87) requires some comment on its method and its conclusions.

In discussing my summary of the "mescal bean" pharmacology, he writes:

Quoting T. A. Henry (1924:395) [there is no quoting of this authority, only citation and summarizing] he states [if he is quoting, how can it be La Barre who "states"?] that the mescal bean resembles nicotine in physiological action, and that the contents of one bean are capable of causing nausea, convulsions, and even death by asphyxiation.

The original says "are said to," "Havard, quoting one Bellanger, says," and "according to Dr. Rothrock's informant." It points out that "in any case, a rupture of the hard, leathery coat of the bean would be required for the release of the alkaloid in the bean-flesh"—an important consideration, since any num-