

Hanni WOODBURY in collaboration with Reg HENRY and Harry WEBSTER, eds. and trans., *Concerning the League: The Iroquois League Tradition as Dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson* (University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics, Memoir 9, 1992, lxi+755 p., ISBN 0-921064-09-8)

Jennifer S.H. Brown

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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This massive paperback volume is the latest in a series of linguistics memoirs published over the last decade under the editorship of John D. Nichols and H. C. Wolfart. In 1912, a few months before his death, Chief John A. Gibson dictated the story of the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy (The League) and its laws and ritual usages to the anthropologist Alexander A. Goldenweiser, who transcribed Gibson's words by hand. In 1934, Goldenweiser passed the resulting manuscript of over 500 pages to the Iroquoianist William N. Fenton, who cooperated in the following years with Chief Gibson's sons and nephew to produce a translation of the Onondaga text. Fenton, in turn, passed the work to linguist Hanni Woodbury. From 1978 to 1990, she worked with four Onondaga speakers to check and correct the Goldenweiser text. Re-eliciting it from them in oral form, she undertook the lengthy process of retranscription, morphological analysis, and translation.

The result is a linguist's labour of love, a model of how most accurately and completely to convey a spoken language and its analysis to the printed page. Each line of the text is rendered in five versions. A phonemic transcription appears at the top of each page, then below it, each word is segmented into morphemes. Third, the morphemes are analyzed as to grammatical function or lexical meaning; and fourth, a gloss of each word gives a close, literal translation. At the bottom of the pages runs a freer translation, providing an intelligible version in English; this usually amounts to four or five lines of prose.

The work appears likely to satisfy the needs and hopes of the most exacting Iroquoian linguist, and surely constitutes the most definitive publication of the League Tradition and the Condolence Council rituals that will see the light of day. The patient non-linguist reader may read this magnificent cultural document in sequence by focusing on the linear translations at the foot of every page, following the story of Tekanawita (Dekanawidah as he is often known in English), Hayehwatha (Hiawatha), and the bringing of the Good Message and the Power and the Peace on the basis of which everyone was to "become related to one another... a single family consisting of every tribe" (p. 128).

The words of condolence that cemented and reaffirmed the ties among members of the Confederacy when a chief died are among the most moving. As the chief's own moiety mourns his passing, the condoling ("clearminded")

moiety gathers to proceed to the mourners' longhouse. Its speaker's prologue reminds his kin (and us) that knowledge is always vulnerable and being lost, within as well as across cultures, as the generations pass. It is a lament for the loss of the ritual knowledge which the founding ancestors have taken back with them, "using it as a pillow in their graves to cushion their heads", and a plea for the ancestors to help revitalize the laws of the Confederacy (p. xxxvi, 547).

Although the text was dictated, not performed, its oral qualities emerge in the language rhythms and repetitions, and the substantial introductory discussions and textual annotations provide rich details that help readers envision the power of the Tradition and the ceremonies at which it was recited. For all that, non-linguists are likely to be deflected from the book by its size, price (\$80) and format. It much needs a smaller companion volume publishing the English text in connected form, and presenting the data and contextualization needed to bring the text to non-specialist scholars and students. Then, perhaps, the monumental efforts of Chief Gibson and his anthropologist amanuensis to record his Tradition eight decades ago will find the wider appreciation that they deserve.

Jennifer S. H. BROWN  
University of Winnipeg  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Pascal BOYER, *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1990, 154 p., ISBN 0 521 37417 0 (coll. "Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology", 68).

*Tradition as Truth and Communication opens new possibilities for investigating oral communication and the criteria by which privileged speakers of traditional truths are evaluated in ritual contexts. In this slim, densely-argued book, Pascal Boyer brings the rigour of cognitive psychology to bear on conventional anthropological discussions about tradition. He clarifies the linkage between people's actions and their mental representations of that action.*

The book begins by noting the absence of any coherent theory about tradition within the social sciences. Often treated as self-evident, "tradition" may be used to gloss implausible (in terms of any psychological theory) assumptions about what occurs in people's minds. Although "theories of tradition necessarily imply some claims about mental representations and processes" (p. 108), rarely