"Christianity as a Positive Transforming Influence on Traditional Indigenous Communities: The Schaghticokes and the Wangunks in 18th Century Connecticut"

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Abstract

Christianity is often portrayed as a negative influence on traditional indigenous community life. This was not always the case, particularly in New England, as a number of researchers have verified. Ongoing research into tribal histories in Connecticut west of the Connecticut River reinforces those findings. "Conversion" often resulted in free goods for tribal members, a white authoritative figure in close residency who could prevent white neighbors from stealing reservation resources or selling liquor to community members, and a school for learning English language, customs, and law. Most importantly, the processes and results of conversion could create a revitalization movement that promoted community cohesion and enhanced cultural identity. In this paper, I will present two case studies of the positive effects of Christianity on tribal peoples: the Schaghticokes in northwestern Connecticut, and the Wangunks in central Connecticut. Interestingly, the end result was two distinctive forms of Native American identity, tribal and supra-tribal.

Introduction

Good morning everyone. Today I am going to talk a bit about Christianity and how indigenous leadership used it as a survival strategy, particularly as a transforming tool to invigorate their communities, and sustain -- and reinforce -- their indigenous identity. Specifically, I will discuss two case studies of Christianity's positive effects on tribal peoples – Moravian Christianity among the Schaghticoke tribe in northwestern Connecticut, and English Congregationalism among the Wangunk tribe in central Connecticut. **[Slide 2 = map of tribal homelands]**

Christianity has often been portrayed as a negative influence on traditional indigenous community life -- a tool used by Anglo-Americans to assimilate Native Americans into the dominant white colonial society. And this is true. For example, Christianity was used at 19th

century government and church-run Indian boarding schools to forcibly erase the memory of tribal traditions and lifeways.[1] **[Slide 3= boarding school photos]**

This was not always the case, however, particularly in 18th century southern New England, where Christianity became a major means for Native American social survival -- as other researchers have noted. See for example the writings of Joanna Brooks (2010), Linford Fisher (2012), Daniel Mandell (2010), and David Silverman (2005, 2010).[2] This paper contributes to this area of research through its study of tribal entities living in northwestern and central Connecticut. Their use of Christian ideology and ritual helped sustain their indigenous identity, yet in very different ways.

Economic and Political Functions

At the beginning, Christian conversions among indigenous peoples had little to do with religion, and everything to do with economic and social resilience. Native Americans were sometimes paid by a minister to attend church services, because if that minister did not have a large indigenous congregation, the gospel society who appointed him would fill his position with someone who could. Indian congregants often received gifts of blankets and other material goods from those gospel societies. The minister often provided a school for teaching English, an important survival strategy for indigenous peoples. It allowed them to read the various documents the English wished them to sign without the aid of an English interpreter, and avoid being cheated or defrauded. It also allowed them to understand the tenets of English law, and

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[1] For example, see *Education for Extinction* by David Wallace Adams (1995), Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. For other examples of Christianity as a negative influence on indigenous community life and identity, see Bruce G. Trigger (1985) *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*, 2nd ed. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal; Andrew L. Knaut (1995) *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth Century New Mexico*, University of OK, Norman. See also David J. Silverman (2005), pp.9-10 in *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600-1871*, Cambridge University Press, New York, who cites the latter two publications and a number of others as well.

[2] Joanna Brooks (2010) "Hard Feelings: Samson Occom Contemplates his Christian Mentors", pp. 23-37 in Martin and Nicholas (Eds) *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. Linford D. Fisher (2012) *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America,* Oxford University press, NY. Daniel Mandell (2010) "Eager Partners in Reform: Indians and Frederick Baylies in southern New England, 1780-1840" pp. 38-66 in Martin and Nicholas (Eds) *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas (Eds) (2010) *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape,* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. David J. Silverman (2005) op. cit.; (2010) "To become a Chosen People: the Missionary work and Missionary Spirit of the Brotherton and Stockbridge Indians, 1775-1835", pp. 250-275 in Martin and Nicholas (Eds) *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

avoid the hefty fines and imprisonments for unknowingly breaking a law. Additionally, the minister was a leading authority figure in contemporary English society. In many cases, he was the most powerful man in the town. Political influence allowed him to provide a degree of physical protection to his indigenous flock. His proximity to a Native American community could prevent white neighbors from stealing reservation resources or selling liquor to community members.[3]

As a result of their Christian conversion, the Wangunk and Schaghticoke communities enjoyed these and other socio-economic benefits. Even more so, Christianity was the catalyst for their transformation and renewal.[4]

The Schaghticoke Case

Tribal revitalization was particularly important at Schaghticoke because it was a heterogeneous Indian community. Its members – and leaders -- derived from various tribal societies that were displaced as a result of the devastating economic and political upheavals and subsequent land losses that followed English settlement.[5] **[Slide 4 = Pishgatikuk to Schaghticoke, locational map]**

The Schaghticoke were a relatively new tribe, created sometime in the late 17th/early 18th century, when the Weantinock tribe of western Connecticut had suffered heavy land losses. Many members moved to Pishgatikuk at the northern edge of their homeland.[6] In the Eastern Algonquian dialects of southern New England, "Pishgatikuk" means "place at the meeting of two

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[3] Lucianne Lavin 2013a, *Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History, and Oral Traditions teach us about their Communities and Cultures*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, page 341. The liquor trade and subsequent alcoholism of indigenous imbibers often led to debt, imprisonment, and tribal land losses.

[4] Lucianne Lavin 2001, "The Schaghticoke Nation and the Moravian Movement" in *Archaeology of the Appalachian Highlands*, edited by L.P. Sullivan and S.C. Prezzano, U. of Tenn. Press, pp. 252-263; Lucianne Lavin 2013. "The Moravian Mission at Schaghticoke: Indigenous Survival Strategies and the Melding of Christian-Indian Ideologies". Paper presented at The Society of American Archaeology's 78th Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii April, 2013.

[5] Paulette Crone-Morange and Lucianne Lavin 2004, "The Schaghticoke Tribe and English Law: A Study of Community Survival", Connecticut History, 43(2): 132-162.

6 *Ibid*. Lucianne Lavin 2014, "In the Ground and in the Documents: Reconstructing Native American Communities", paper presented at the symposium "Beyond the Margins of Memory: Using the Documentary Record to Recover Native History," Annual Omohundro Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 12-15, 2014.

waters”,[7] because the main settlement was located near the confluence of the Housatonic and Scatticook rivers. The Scatticook River is presently called Macedonia Brook. The German Moravian Brethren called the community Pachgatgoch, while the English mispronounced it as Scatacook (AKA Schaghticoke).[8]

The Weantinock were joined by others who had suffered huge land losses. They included members of the adjacent Pootatuck tribe, with whom they were allied through marriage, as well as other displaced indigenous peoples.[9] The Weantinock were already residing in this area of southern Kent when their leadership petitioned the colony of Connecticut for a reservation -- because Englishmen were rapidly encroaching upon their tribal homelands. The colony granted them a 2000 acre reservation in the same year, 1736.[10] Between 1738 and 1741 English colonists laid out, auctioned off and settled seven towns in northwestern Connecticut, including the town of Kent on the east side of the Housatonic River, directly across from Schaghticoke.[11] **[Slide 5 = 1736 public record of reservation, location shown on 1739 proprietors' map of Kent]**

Historical Setting for Mission Development

Some of these land transactions are questionable. Others were contracted with Indian communities under duress. For some there are no known deeds. “The Public Records of Connecticut” contain numerous petitions from tribal peoples complaining about fraudulent land losses or outright encroachment by the English.[12] **[Slide 6 -- 18th indigenous stressors]**

Native communities were undergoing other stresses besides land losses: English farming techniques, hunting methods, & industry were rapidly destroying the traditional indigenous

7 This definition was given by W.C. Reichel, quoting Schaghticoke culture keeper Eunice Mauwee, the granddaughter of the tribe's first known sachem Mauwehue, aka Gideon Mauwee, in A Memorial of the Dedications of Monuments Erected by the Moravian Historical Society (New York: C. B. Richardson and Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1860), pg. 75.

8 *Ibid*; Lavin 2013, *op. cit.*, pg. 341.

9 Crone-Morange and Lavin 2004, *op. cit.*; Lavin 2001 *op. cit.*

10 See *The Public Records of Connecticut* dated May, 1736 in volume 8, pages 38-39, edited by C.J. Hoadley in 1850.

11 Canaan, named May, 1738 and incorporated Oct., 1739. Goshen, named May, 1738 and incorporated Oct., 1739. Kent, named May, 1738 and incorporated Oct., 1739. Sharon, named and incorporated Oct., 1739. Cornwall, named May, 1738 and incorporated May, 1740. New Fairfield, settled and named May, 1728 and incorporated May, 1740. Salisbury, named May, 1738 and incorporated Oct., 1741 (as listed on the Connecticut State Library web site (http://www.cslib.org/cttownsy.htm).

12 For example, see the discussion of the 1747 Mohican petition seeking redress for what they believed was an illegal seizure of their homelands in present Sharon, Connecticut in Timothy Binzen 1997. “Mohican Lands and Colonial Corners: Weataug, Wechquadnach, and the Connecticut Colony, 1675–1750.” MA thesis, University of Connecticut, Storrs,

economies of hunting, gathering and fishing. Overkill of game animals and clear-cutting of the landscape resulted in loss of game and their habitats, and of important plant foods. English livestock was allowed to run loose and destroy Native gardens. Streams were clogged with silt due to farmland erosion, and polluted by the runoff from mills. English dams impeded the passage of whatever fish were left.[13] Most demoralizing of all were the huge population losses Native Americans suffered from European diseases and wars.[14] Many of those taken were elders with special knowledge of tribal affairs, including political leaders, religious leaders, crafts people, and healers, but also warriors -- the protectors of the tribe, and children, who were its future generation.

Many Native Americans opted to remove themselves from English towns and moved west or north. But many refused to leave their homelands, which were sacred to them. The land was given by the Creator to the tribe. Their ancestors lived and were buried in the homelands. The spirit world revolved about them, and the landscape was filled with objects that signified important events and persons in tribal history, and commemorated sacred stories.[15] And so it was that many tribal leaders sought ways in which their communities could survive the social and cultural upheavals caused by English settlement, yet still remain within their sacred homelands.[16]

This was the historical backdrop for northwestern Connecticut when Schaghticoke leadership petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly for an English minister and school in 1742. **[Slide 7—petition, map of Moravian missions]** The Colony agreed but was not forthcoming in their agreement. The Schaghticoke sachem Mawehue and other tribal leaders actively sought out a minister, attending various colonial church services, which included the Congregational mission among the Mohican at Stockbridge, Massachusetts and the Moravian mission at the Mohican village of Shekomeko in present Pine Plains, New York.

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[13] For examples, see William Cronon's 1983 *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang.

[14] See Kathleen J. Bragdon's 1996 *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, pg. 27; Spiess, Arthur E., and Bruce D. Spiess's 1987 "New England Pandemic of 1616-1622: Causes and Archaeological Implications." *Man in the Northeast* 34:71-83.

[15] Lucianne Lavin (2013a) *op. cit.*, pages 213, 214, 321, 335; Crone-Morange and Lavin (2004) *op. cit*., pg. 141; Lucianne Lavin (2011) "Stockbridge Mohicans Past & Present: A Study of Cultural Survival", A Scholar-in-Residence Project supported by Mass Humanities, state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, dated February, 2011, report on file at the Stockbridge Mission House museum, Stockbridge, MA, pages 23-28.

[16] The preceding three paragraphs were excerpted from Lavin (2013) pages 3-4, *op. cit*.

The Moravian Church emphasized education and missionary work. One of their early leaders was the Catholic revolutionary Jan Hus, who advocated “giving lay people a more prominent role in the church and having masses said in vernacular languages”.[17] Moravian missionaries encouraged indigenous leaders to play major roles in church activities, promoted hymn singing in indigenous languages, and actively discussed religious concepts with their Indian congregants in non-church settings.

The Moravian Mission at Schaghticoke

The Schaghticoke were drawn to the evangelical Moravian ministry for these and other reasons. Of prime importance was the humane, brotherly, equitable way Moravian ministers treated indigenous peoples: they lived among them, invited them into their homes, broke bread with them, and even married them. In general, the Moravians treated Native Americans as equals. And so, the Schaghticoke leadership invited them to plant a mission at Schaghticoke. The Moravians did so in 1743. Several tribal members were baptized, including sachem Mawehue, who was given the Christian name Gideon.

The Moravians immediately set about building a church, school, and housing with the help of their Schaghticoke congregation. They introduced new economic pursuits, such as house gardens with European crops and fruit trees, and encouraged wider trading networks with expanded trade goods. Missionaries’ diaries, letters to Bethlehem, and baptismal lists show a successful Christian community with daily church services, occasional love feasts, and numerous religious conversations between ministers and members. Schaghticoke leaders held positions in the Church, gave sermons, and “testified’ to their love for Jesus and the teachings of the brethren. Hymns were translated into the native dialects.[18] The Moravian school taught English reading and writing. Tribal leadership and many tribal members appeared to have embraced the Moravian version of Christianity with fervor, and the resident brothers wrote uplifting letters of the mission’s successes.[19]

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[17] “Hidden Nearby: Sharon’s Moravian Monument”, anonymous article posted on the web site entitled “Hidden in Plain Sight, the public history of one Connecticut town”; ttps://hiddeninplainsightblog.com/2014/02/12/hidden-nearby-sharons-moravian-monument/, Blog accessed March 14, 2016.

[18] Carl Mastay (1980) *Mahican-language hymns, biblical prose, and vocabularies from Moravian sources, with 11 Mohawk hymns,* St. Louis, Missouri: published by the author.

[19] Corinna Dally-Starna and William A. Starna (2009) *Gideon’s People, Being a Chronicle of an American Indian Community in Colonial Connecticut and the Moravian Missionaries who Served There*, Volumes 1 & 2. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, pages 5-6 in Volume 1. Most of this excellent work consists of the diaries of the ministers who resided at the mission

The tribe's acceptance of Christianity was made easier by the permissive attitudes of the missionaries. Unlike conventional English ministers, they were most accepting of traditional indigenous lifeways. The Moravian ministers lived among the Schaghticoke. Brother Martin Mack and his wife Johanna lived in Gideon's house prior to the building of their own. They invited tribal leaders to supper and vice versa. One Moravian minister, Brother Post, married a Schaghticoke woman. The Brethren exhibited a high tolerance for Schaghticoke cultural traditions, even those of which they disapproved, such as the matchmaking by older women, lenient child-rearing practices, and the frequent divorce and remarriage of tribal members.[20]

Permissiveness extended to traditional native spirituality. **[Slide 8 -- examples from Moravian Archives on sweat lodge ceremonies impeding Christian services]** For example, the resident minister frequently called off or curtailed services because Schaghticoke members were conducting sweat lodge ceremonies, such as the ritual cleansing of hunters prior to a game hunt.[21] They apparently tolerated the presence of ceremonial stone monuments overlooking the main path through the tribe's winter village. Stone and brush monuments are traditional indigenous mnemonic devices for remembering important tribal events, sacred stories, and spirit beings, and for conducting ritual. Like other non-western converts, Schaghticoke Christianity appears to have included elements of traditional indigenous thought.

A mutually satisfying relationship between the brethren and tribal members continued for 28 years. **[Slide 9 – Moravian influences on tribal revitalization]** During that time, the tribe thrived. Moravian records clearly demonstrate that many Schaghticoke had become good Moravian Christians and were deeply attached to their resident ministers. Tribal community, cultural traditions, and inter-tribal politics, however, continued to be key forces in the lives of tribal members.[22]

Christianity strengthened the tribal community by uniting members around a new ideology with the common goal of attaining a wonderful afterlife with Jesus, the symbol of universal love. These commonalities reforged and strengthened intra-tribal bonds. The new doctrine and its

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village of Schaghticoke, a wonderful window into the everyday lifeways of the members of a mid-18th century Christian Indian village in southern New England.

[20] Lavin (2013) page 6, *op. cit*.

[21] Dally-Starna and Starna (2009) *op. cit*. I counted 29 instances in ministers' diaries where sweat lodge ceremonies impeded religious services, but with no mention of ministerial anger or subsequent chiding of the Schaghticoke.

[22] Dally-Starna and Starna (2009) *op. cit.*

rituals transformed indigenous self-identity and revitalized tribal solidarity. By 1750 the multi-ethnic Schaghticoke saw themselves as a Christian Schaghticoke nation, welcoming all Christian red brethren into their midst.[23] **[Slide 10 – ex. Of tribe welcoming all Christian Indians as brethren]**

By 1771, the tribe's English neighbors finally succeeded in forcing the Moravians to close the mission and withdraw permanently to their center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.[24] Although there was some indigenous movement out of the area,[25] the tribe remained entrenched on the Reservation, as its residential center. Some families joined the local Congregational Church and Christianity continued to be one of the common denominators bonding tribal members.[26] **[Slide 11 – James Harris on the 1890 Reservation]**

In the later 19th century Schaghticoke James Harris, a direct descendant of sachem Gideon Mauwee, became a local Christian minister who successfully led a mixed congregation of Indians and whites.[27] When the tribe's white overseers sold off its most livable portions, the rez became the social and political center for the tribe, as it is to this day. During the ensuing centuries Schaghticoke became a major refuge for all Native American peoples attempting to escape Anglo-American domination and discrimination. **[Slide 12 – 20-21st cc at Schaghticoke]** The Schaghticoke tribe has been continuously recognized by the colony and state of Connecticut as an American Indian tribe, with 400 acres of the original reservation at Pishgatikuk. [28]

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[23] For example, when the Christian Mohican community of Shekomeko (in present Pine Plains, New York) was forced to leave their village by neighboring whites, Schaghticoke sachem Gideon Mauwee invited them to move to Schaghticoke: "This morning, I returned home again and heard how they have sold their things. The man had not dealt with them honestly and wanted to give both of them only 200 Pound New England gulden for their work. In the evening, brother Samuel came over from Pachgatgoch [Pishgatikuk] with brother Gidion's message: those who are not planning to go to Bethlehem should come to him rather than go to Wanachquatogog, because he believed it would be better for them, and he would like to take them in" (Moravian Archives Box 114, F. 1, April 18, 1749).

[24] Dally-Starna and Starna (2009) *op. cit*.

[25] Such as leader Samuel Cocksure's relocation to the mission village of New Stockbridge in western NY.

[26] Several members had joined the First Congregational Church in Kent (as noted in church records).

[27] Lavin (2013a) *op. cit*., pg. 346.

[28] Crone-Morange and Lavin (2004) *op. cit*.; Lavin 2013a, *op. cit.,* pp. 339-360.

The Wangunk Case

The Wangunks were a populous tribe with extensive homelands on both sides of the Connecticut River in present Connecticut. Over a dozen of their villages are mentioned in the colonial literature. **[Slide 13 -- location of homelands & major villages]** Because of their location along a navigable river that was a major trade route for the 17th century fur trade, the Wangunks were one of the first indigenous peoples to feel the deleterious effects of European colonization described previously. The earliest recorded European contact was with the Dutch trader Adriaen Block in 1614—over a hundred years before Schaghticoke encounters with Europeans. Brisk trade relationships with both the Dutch and English developed soon after, and in 1633 both of those countries planted settlements on Wangunk lands in Suckiog (present Hartford) and in Matianuck (present Windsor).[29]

The lower Connecticut Valley contains some of the richest agricultural lands in New England. Coves, along which the Wangunk villages were located, were ideal for shipping and shipbuilding industries. And so, the English hungrily ate up Wangunk homelands, forcing tribal members onto a number of reserves that shrank and disappeared well before the end of the 18th century. By 1734, all but the reservation at Wangunk (present Portland) were gone. By 1785 it too was sold off by Middletown officials to repay the town for the debt of providing for Mary Cushoy, the elderly widow of the former sachem. She passed sometime before 1771[30], which strongly suggests that English officials used their care to her as an excuse to relieve the Wangunk of their final remnant of homeland.

[29] Timothy H. Ives (2001) "Wangunk Ethnohistory: A Case Study of a Connecticut River Indian Community", Unpublished Master's thesis, College of William and Mary, Virginia; Ives 2004 "Expressions of Community: Reconstructing Native Identity in Seventeenth-Century Central Connecticut through Land Deed Analysis", paper presented at the Fifth Annual Algonquian People's Conference, Albany, March 14, 2004; Yale Indian Papers Project (YIPP), "Wangunk", http://yipp.yale.edu/tribe/83, accessed June 16, 2016.

[30] YIPP, "The Wangunk Reservation", http://yipp.yale.edu/wangunk-reservation, accessed June 16, 2016.

Christianity and the Wangunk

One of the Puritan priorities was Christian conversion of the Indians, and so the Wangunk were early introduced to Christianity. The First Church of Christ in Suckiog (present Hartford) was planted in 1636.[31] The First Church in Mattabeseck was organized in 1668.[32]

Substantial success in indigenous conversions, however, did not appear to occur in the region until the early to mid-18th century. Not fortuitously, this is also the time that ministers opened schools for Indians, teaching not only Christianity but also English reading and writing.[33] In other words, the initial indigenous draw to Christianity at this time was education, not religious conversion. This is supported by the fact that, during the middle and late 1700s, Wangunk land transactions and official petitions are signed in English by indigenous leaders. Prior to that time period the documents only contained their "marks".[34]

The Wangunks were closely allied to the Tunxis through marriage[35] and through Christianity. A number of Wangunks removed to the Tunxis communities in Farmington and New Hartland after the 18th century land sales to the English.[36] The Wangunk John Mettawan –originally from Middletown -- was schooled by a Farmington minister. Mettawan later became a school teacher at Tunxis.[37] Joseph Johnson, a Christian Mohegan and the son-in-law of the Mohegan

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[31] "Historical Catalogue of the First Church in Hartford 1633-1885", published in 1885 by the Church (First Church of Christ), Hartford, pg. x.

[32] Reginald Bacon "The settlement of Middletown, Connecticut, and a brief history of the town & city, 1650-2000", pg. 1. Web site of the Society of Middletown First Settlers Descendants, http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ctsmfsd/BriefHistory.html, accessed June 9, 2016.

[33] According to Katherine Cotuc, the First Church of Christ, Congregational, of Farmington began a "Sabbeth School" in the 1700s to teach Christianity to local Tunxis youth. "....in 1706 the General Assembly of Connecticut prepared a plan to assimilate the Tunxis Indians. In 1727 it was ordered that all Tunxis Indian parents had to teach their children how to read in English and catechize them", Katherine Cotuc (2015) "Joseph Johnson and the Farmington Indian School (ca. 1772/3)", on the Digital Farmington Blog entitled Farmington 1625 to the Present, Digital Farmington Project | Tagged: Farmington, Indian school, Joseph Johnson, mohegan, native american history, samson occom , http://digitalfarmington.org/digital-farmington-project/joseph-johnson-and-the-farmington-indian-school-ca-17723/, accessed June 2, 2015). The order suggests that at least some of the Tunxis adults were literate Christians themselves.

[34] For examples, see YIPP, "The Wangunk Reservation", http://yipp.yale.edu/wangunk-reservation; "Tunxis" http://yipp.yale.edu/tribe/22. According to YIPP, during the Protestant religious revival known as the "Great Awakening" (ca. 1730-1750), missionary efforts in the lower Connecticut Valley were funded primarily by the Church of England's missionary arm in Boston.

[35] See YIPP for examples of spouses or offspring of inter-tribal marriages between Tunxis and Wangunk, i.e., they include Moses Sanchuse, James Wawowos, David and Sarah Towsey, James Cusk.

[36] YIPP, "Wangunk"; YIPP bibliography/commue-gideon; *ibid* robin-samuel;

[37] YIPP, op. cit. "Wangunk".

Presbyterian minister Samsom Occom, was also a school teacher at Tunxis.[38] Johnson actively promoted Christianity because he believed that only educated, Christian Indians could succeed in a white world. He opened and closed the school day with prayer, and spent a good deal of time making hymnbooks for his students. Christian hymnody (hymn singing) was one of a number of indigenous transformations that were tools for continuing the persistence and networking of indigenous communities.[39] **[Slide 14 – page from a Brothertown Indian tunebook]**

Religious scholar Joanna Brooks[40] refers to indigenous hymn singing as "pan tribal", and considers it a significant tool in the creation of the Brothertown movement and its product, the Christian Indian town of Brothertown in western New York. Hymn singing occurred not only during Sunday services but also at indigenous social gatherings several nights a week "devoted to singing and prayer"[41].

Many of the Wangunk who were living in Tunxis communities eventually joined with them and other mainly New England tribal peoples in the Brothertown Movement, a pan-tribal religious movement founded by Mohegans Joseph Johnson and Samsom Occum, and Montauk David Fowler. The Movement advocated the creation of a separate Christian Indian town independent of and geographically removed from white society.[42] The town, aptly named Brothertown, was originally located in Oneida territory in western New York. White encroachment eventually forced its sale, and community members moved westward to Wisconsin in the 1830s. The Brothertown Indian Nation is presently a state-recognized tribe located in Wisconsin.

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[38] Katherine Cotuc (2015) *op. cit*.

[39] *Ibid*; Gabriel Kastelle (2012) "Brothertown Indian Singing Legacy: Diasporic Practice and Tools for Portable Communities through the Generations", unpublished Ms. in possession of the author. Paper was originally a final paper for the course MUSC 296/510, fall semester at Wesleyan University, where Mr. Kastelle was a music graduate student; Gabriel Kastelle, personal communication February 19, 2016.

[40] Joanna Brooks (2003), *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[41] Gabriel Kastelle personal communication dated February 19, 2016, citing journals and letters of leaders of the Brothertown movement – Samuel Occom, Joseph Johnson and David Fowler, as well as other 18th century observers such as Joseph Fish, a minster to the Narragansetts (Kastelle cites Laura Brooks 2003, Laura Murray 1998, McCallum 1932, and William and Cheryl Simmons 1982for the 18th century citations). Kastelle noted that Richard Cullen Rath reported that indigenous war songs also bridged tribal boundaries (2003:155).

[42] Johnson, Joseph (1998) *To Do Good to My Indian Brethren the Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751-1776*, ed., Laura J. Murray. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press 1998; David J. Silverman (2010) *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Craig Cipolla (2013) *Becoming Brothertown: Native American Ethnogenesis and Endurance in the Modern World*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

After their exodus to Brothertown after the American Revolution, Wangunks were considered politically extinct by the Connecticut government.[43] Wangunk leaders apparently presaged this scenario. Rather than lose their "Indianness", the Wangunk transformed from a single tribal entity into a pan-tribal indigenous Christian community which, as archaeologist Timothy Ives has noted, "does not necessarily signify the end of a Wangunk identity but does evidence dynamic reintegration within a broader, preexisting social network".[44] Indeed, members of the present Brothertown community do acknowledge the Wangunk tribe as one of its multiple genealogical sources.

Conclusions

In conclusion, although Europeans viewed Christianity as an assimilative tool to eradicate Native American cultures, indigenous leadership effectively used conversion to achieve the very opposite goal. Christianity could be a potent transforming tool in indigenous revitalization. It was utilized as such by the 18th century Schaghticoke and Wangunk tribes. In both cases, the sharing of Christian ideology and ritual strengthened the bonds of membership and helped sustain their indigenous identity.

That identity took very different cultural forms. The end result for the Schaghticoke, who still retained 2000 acres of their homeland on what was then the Western Frontier, was the creation of significant commonalities that bonded its multi-ethnic membership and invigorated its Schaghticoke tribal community. For the dispersed and virtually landless Wangunk, however, the most prudent path for continued indigenous identity was union with a supra-tribal organization – the pan-Indian Brothertown Movement that eventually morphed into the Brothertown Indian Nation of Wisconsin.[45]

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[43] There were – and still are – tribal descendants living in the state. According to indigenous genealogist Vicki Welch, there are over 800 Wangunk descendants in just one lineage she has researched, many living in Connecticut (personal communication 2016).

[44] Ives (2011) pg. 78 in "Reconstructing the Wangunk Reservation Land System: A Case Study of Native and Colonial Likeness in Central Connecticut", *Ethnohistory* 58 (1): 65-89.

[45] See their official web site at http://www.brothertownindians.org/?id=53.