Missionary documents still do not have their deserved place in ethnographic research. Their marginal treatment has limited the use of a bountiful source of ethnographic data, based on bookkeeping and report-writing habits required of missionaries in the field by their superiors in Europe. The perception of missionaries as biased and destructive of native institutions still persists. In order to correct this only partly true view, I will describe a valuable piece of missionary ethnography: a calendar produced by the Jesuit priest Eugene Vetromile for use with Indian (mostly Penobscot) communities in Maine.

Father Vetromile was born in Gallipoli in southern Italy on 22 February 1819. After finishing the local seminary, he became a priest and received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Georgetown in Washington, D.C., in 1846, and subsequently settled with the Etchemins and Abnakis of Maine (Pilling 1891:512). In 1866 he left the Jesuit order to serve as apostolic missionary dependant of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. He died in 1881 in his native town, on the last of his three major journeys which had interrupted his work in Maine, but requested to be buried among the Passamaquoddy Indians. He wrote many publications in different Indian languages, as well as larger works on native peoples (Bryant 1884).

Calendars of this type are not unknown, but they have rarely been reproduced or studied so far. Judging from our limited access to the lit-

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1This paper is part of a larger research project support for which has come from the Minister of Cultural Affairs of Luxembourg, the Rotary District, and the Fulbright Foundation. I would like to thank the Houghton Library at Harvard for the permission to reproduce a calendar, as well as Rachel B. Rachstein of Boston for valuable help given. Parts of this article have been published as “Sande Awikhigan” in Krieger (1987b). I thank the editor for permission to reprint parts of it here.
erature, they seem to be used only by the Algonquian-speaking peoples of northeastern North America. In 1640 the Jesuits at St. Joseph’s church in Sillery, near Québec, experimented by handing out calendars “. . . at random, . . . to see if they could use it. . .” (Thwaites 1896:18:167). All Christian Indians received a paper on which the months, feasts, etc., but most importantly the Sundays were marked, “. . . so that they could make their prayers somewhat longer on those days.”

Current research on Christian Kauder, a Luxembourg missionary among the Micmac of Cape Breton from 1856 to 1871 (Krieger 1987a, 1987b), has revealed that he had sent at least two of Vetromile’s calendars back to Europe with his fund-raising letters. The Luxembourg copy has disappeared, with only an extensive description of the symbols remaining (Kauder 1858), but the Munich copy is extant, and has been found among Kauder’s correspondence (Kauder 1862). Intensive contact between Kauder and Vetromile must have existed from 1857 to 1862. The Micmac catechism (Kauder 1866), for which Kauder is best known, however, was printed in 1866 without the preface Vetromile had written in 1862 at Kauder’s request (Pilling 1891:511).

Research for this paper deals with Native and European missionary time concepts in Algonquian-speaking North America. I have already mentioned Catholic missionary activities which focussed as early as the 17th century on the introduction of calendars. I now turn to a good example from the 19th century, used by Christian Kauder in his Micmac missions in Cape Breton:

I am also sending you herewith . . . an Indian calendar which I had made in the States. These calendars are very useful for the forest people who by continually roaming in the woods easily forget the Sundays and Holy Days, as well as the fast and feast days. They know its contents well and make use of a thorn which they put into it and move daily as a sign to mark the day. (Kauder 1862)

A similar description is to be found in his letter to the Luxemburger Wort in 1858 (Kauder 1858).

This is the calendar he had received from Eugene Vetromile, the Jesuit missionary who worked in Maine from 1854 to 1881. The calendar reveals a missionary in the midst of his pastoral work, trying to change native conceptions step by step, in order to finally shape and change them into accepted European forms. Even though he was not their first missionary,

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2 A reproduction of this calendar of 1863 was part of the exhibition “Christian Kauder, a Luxembourg Missionary with the Micmac Indians, 1856–1871” in April 1987 at the Bibliothèque Nationale of Luxembourg. The calendar was published in Krieger (1987b:14).
Vetromile must have felt that the Penobscot communities were far from being converted Catholics.

The title of the calendar, *Sande Awikhigan*, reveals a major function and aim, which was to establish Sunday, and thus the week, as the basic time unit in Penobscot time reckoning. The relatively large number of 38 Lent and 55 feast days imposed an even tighter basic grid over the native life rhythm, by comparison with which the question of lunar or solar months or years was secondary. This, however, does not mean that Vetromile’s lunar calendars are of no interest. On the contrary, they are unique pieces, documenting a frozen moment in the effort for intentional culture change undertaken by Vetromile. How much it actually did change Penobscot time reckoning is hard to determine, but the process itself is already quite revealing.

He designed his calendars as mission tools, with picture drawings, denoting fast and feast days for his recent converts, so they could observe the rules. But they also represent unique documents of compromise, integrating native concepts of time, and changing the European solar year into an intermediary time system. Vetromile initiated and directed the change of time concepts, which he discussed with native leaders, thus creating a consensus for slowly altering traditional time concepts:

For this object I held several conferences with the oldest and most talented Indians about their astronomy, and we have agreed to fix the commencement of the new year permanently on the new moon preceding Christmas. This will facilitate them the intelligence of the moveable festivals of Christianity. (Vetromile 1859a:344)

Father Vetromile then goes on:

It is to be observed that the months of the Indians cannot correspond with ours, because ours are established upon the system of the revolution of the earth around the sun, whereas those of the Indians are grounded upon the motion of the moon around the earth. It is also to be remarked that as in some years there are thirteen moons, so then the Indians enumerate, also, thirteen months in one year; but in order to avoid astronomical confusions, they skip the moon between July and August, which moon they call Abonamwikizoos, let this moon go. The month Wikkaikizoos then, will commence from the new moon entering in August. This correction in their calendar will bring

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3 Micmac time reckoning also knew a 13 month lunar year (Hoffman 1955:246–247), which unlike its Penobscot counterpart set the intercalary moon in mid-winter. I suggest that the month known as Big Moon was the intercalary month for the same reasons Vetromile gives for his choice of the summer. For contemporary Micmac calendar use, see Battiste (1986); month names are very similar, and Kauder’s hieroglyphs are rarely used.
the year back to end just at the new moon of Ketchikizoos, which is the commencement of the new year. The reason why they skip the moon between July and August, rather than any other moon, is because the Indians do not take much notice of the season having very short nights, and especially when it is not their hunting season, and when the berries are already ripe. However before the publication of my Indian almanac the Indians could not know that such a year was to have thirteen moons, till they had arrived to the long moon, Ketchikizoos, or near to it; it was only then, and not before, that they could discover it, and in their backward calculations they skipped the moon after that in which the berries were ripe. (Vetromile 1859a:345-346)

In this description of a year count, Vetromile tried to make his idea of a native year, which won out eventually, more appealing to the Penobscot.

Let us now take a closer look at his calendars to see how his system works. I have looked at the calendars in the Maine Historical Society, in Houghton Library of Harvard University, in Munich, and the list in Pilling (1891:509). Only a few of them allow me to follow his original sequence. Houghton Library owns 11 calendar sheets, the Maine Historical Society owns 9 sheets, of which all are identical except one for 1869. Pilling lists them from 1858 to 1876, all printed in different numbers and layouts for nearly every year.

Here is the sequence of calendars to which I had access:

1861 No annotations.
1862 Note: “This year has 13 months. It commences on 1st of December 1861; terminates on 21st of December 1862. The Indians skip the month Abonamwikizoos in order to avoid astronomical confusions.”
1863 12 months; from 22 December 1862 to 10 December 1863.
1866 12 months; from 18 December 1865 to 6 December 1866.
1867 12 months; from 7 December 1866 to 25 November 1867. All major feasts carry names in Penobscot.
1869 No annotations.
1870 13 months; from 3 December 1869 to 21 December 1870. All major feasts carry names in Penobscot.
1871 Note: “According to the astronomical computations of the Indians, this year has 12 months. It begins on the 21st day of December, 1870, and terminates on the 11th day of December, 1871.” Names of major feasts appear in Penobscot.

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4See Erickson (1987) for Penobscot as a ritual language, as well as for the problems related to continuous copying of documents from previous missionaries and some well-known linguistic identification problems.
1873 13 months; from 30 November 1872 to 18 December 1873. Note: “In-tercalary month between July and August Abonamwikizoos (let this moon go), but in Astronomical Calculations it is omitted, reckoning the month of August from the New Moon of Wikkaikizoos, to follow immediately the moon of Atchittaikizoos. Correction necessary to make the year finish at the New Moon of Ketchikizoos.”

1874 12 months; from 19 December 1873 to 8 December 1874.
1875 12 months; from 8 December 1874 to 27 November 1875.
1876 13 months; from 27 November 1875 to 15 December 1876.

All the calendars consist of a single large sheet with 12 vertical rows for each month, starting on 1 January and ending on 31 December. The lunar periods are indicated. Symbols, small drawings and some Penobscot names denote up to 93 feast and fast days per year. As can best be seen in the sequence from 1873 to 1876, Vetromile’s computation needs an intercalary moon-month every third year in order to correspond to his own lunar system.

I suggest that exact time reckoning was of no major importance outside of harvest seasons, because different harvest periods already determined a time frame for economic activities. They would shift every year, according to climate and other factors not necessarily related to calendar days or lunar periods. Even Vetromile himself suggests this when he talks about how to fit in his intercalary moon. Therefore, the adequate time reckoning schedule within a moon month were its periods of growth and decay. More was not needed in Penobscot life. The names of these periods were as follows:

1) Nangusu ‘she is born’, (the new moon)
2) Nenaghil ‘she grows’, (from the fifth to the sixth day of the moon)
3) Kegan-Demeghil ‘soon full’, (from the eleventh to the twelfth day)
4) Wemeghil ‘she is full’, (full moon)
5) Pekinem after being full, (sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth days)
6) Utsine ‘she commences to die’, (twenty-second and twenty-third day)
7) Pebassine ‘she is half dead’, (when commencing to disappear)
8) Sesemina ‘she is entirely dead’, (when nearly disappearing)
9) Nepa ‘she is dead’, (no moon)

The seven-day week, Vetromile’s most important introduction, was absolutely new. The Penobscot used nine lunar subdivisions, but these were of different lengths, and not marked by a specific day in between. Sunday is the most crucial innovation in this whole time system: a regularly re-
turning day which marks exact time periods, no matter what happens, and not specifically attached to any event.

Thus, when Vetromile asks for a translation of ‘the first day of the week is Sunday’, the Penobscot translated it as etsi tanbawanskeessughenakkiwiwighi sannt, for which Vetromile gives a literal translation as ‘from seven to seven days it is the festival of Sunday’ (Vetromile 1862a:346). It shows how new and unaccustomed the idea of the week was; each time it had to be first defined and established as such. The intent of the missionary is followed by anchoring it on the concept of Sunday. As with many other things in missionary teaching, Vetromile states: “The Indians had no idea of it, but such introduction was necessary for their spiritual and temporal welfare.”

The new weekdays introduced by Vetromile were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Penobscot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Sande, ‘Sunday’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Tkissande, ‘after Sunday’ or Amskawassolokke, ‘first work day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Nissidaalokka, ‘second work day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>N’setaalokka, ‘third work day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Teotaalokka, ‘fourth work day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Skehewattook, ‘the day of the cross’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Katausande, ‘the day before Sunday’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However successful Vetromile was in introducing these day names, he states that he could not change the Penobscot way of thinking which kept day and night separate. The Indians found it impossible to accept a 24-hour day (1882:347).

This leads me to believe that this calendar at best corresponds only vaguely to Penobscot time, if at all. At this place I will not go into the topic of the many different existing month names, except for quoting Vetromile, who notices a historical change in the terminology of month names. In the case of January, the name was changed from Mekwas’que, ‘the cold is great’, to Onglusamwessit, ‘it is hard to get a living’. He writes that after the destruction of Norridgewock, where the land was rich and firewood was plentiful, the Indians had to move to Pleasant Point, where in January he witnessed them suffering for lack of firewood. (Vetromile 1862:348–349). In general it might be more appropriate to call these “moon months” seasons or harvest times of local importance, without rigid standardization of either names or dates.5

The calendar’s value lies in the fact that Vetromile attempted to graft the native time concept onto the solar year. He did this by trying to make it correspond to the lunar calendar. Its impact can hardly be measured, but

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5 For literature on these terminologies, and their comparison, cf. Cope (1919), Speck (1940), Ray (1983). The last author especially seems to misunderstand the nature of these so-called Indian calendars.
as he was not able to convince them of the unity of day and night in a 24-hour day, it remains questionable whether calendars had been completely accepted, even if they were a well-liked gadget since early missionary times. The motivation to keep track of days must not necessarily have meant a replacement of their own schedule.

Even so these calendars, filled as they were with symbols that caught and measured time, were considered by the Indians to have some magic power. They were accordingly treated with high respect. This also may have been a factor that helped the missionary in his conversions. Thus the work of Father Vetromile figures prominently among work done by missionaries who attempted compromise scheduling in order to facilitate what is most crucial to their aims, the introduction of Sunday. This day, a regularly scheduled feast, demanded an absolute break in the rhythm of native life; and quite extraordinarily it also was required to be a time of absolute rest.

Such calendars allow us glimpses at the tools which were employed to facilitate culture change, and the ways one missionary went about to do use them. They are only one facet of the manifold activities of Catholic missionaries to introduce and incorporate their changes within native structures. It never changed the final aim of missionary work, which strives to begin and further a basic change in native life organization, incurring consequences on the socio-economic level, by introducing agriculture and moving native ways closer to European values and life-style, under the control of the Catholic church.

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