Shared retentions cannot support subgrouping in Algonquian: Against Goddard (2018)

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3 Aug 2022

Overview

- Recent argument in Goddard (2018) that Blackfoot is a sister to the rest of the Algonquian family
  - Blackfoot split first from a putative Proto-Algonquian-Blackfoot
  - Remaining Algonquian languages form a subgroup

- Two claims supporting this argument

- This paper: neither claim provides evidence for subgrouping
  - Today: just the first claim

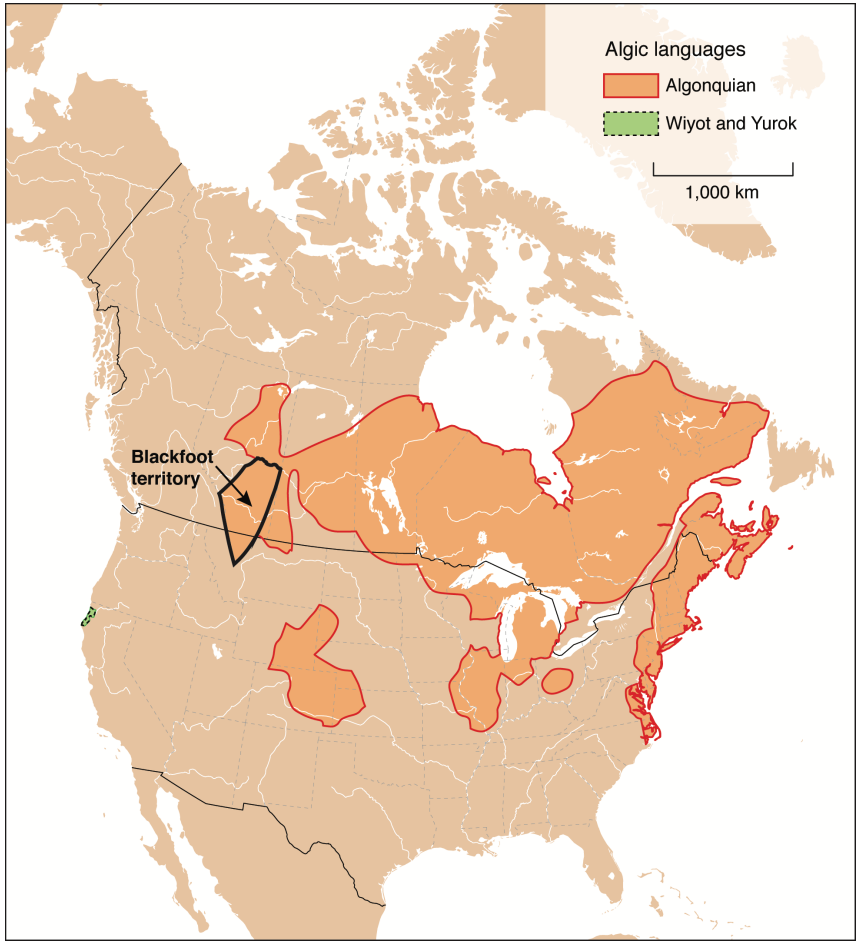
Outline

1. Blackfoot's position in Algonquian

2. Claim #1: Shared innovation in Proto-Algonquian
   - Goddard's (2018) proposal
   - Problems with the proposal
   - An alternative analysis

3. Discussion

Blackfoot's position in Algonquian



Algonquian

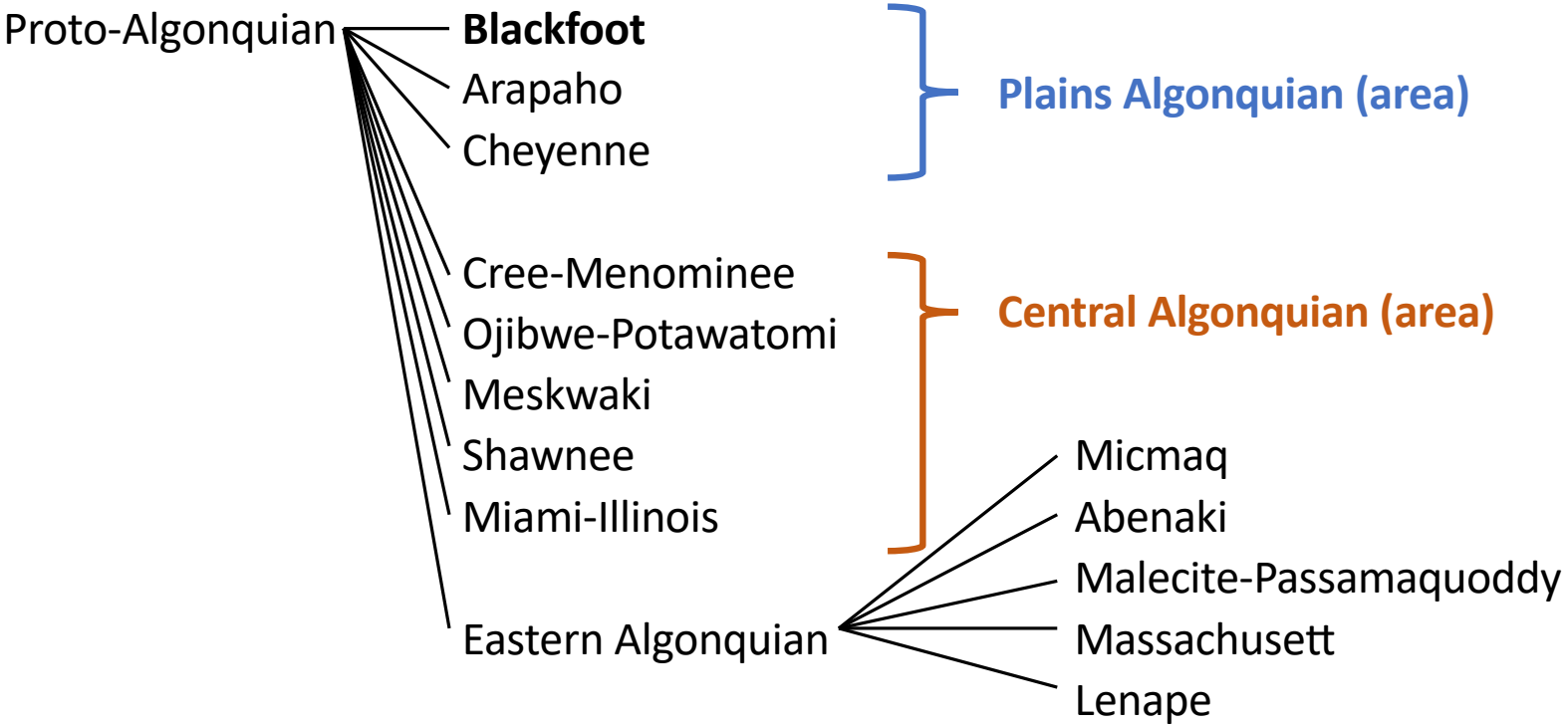
- Blackfoot = westernmost language
- Spoken in:
  - Alberta, Canada
  - Montana, USA

- [Map by Eric Leinberger]

Blackfoot

- Four sovereign Nations
  - 3 reserves in Canada
  - 1 reservation in USA (“Blackfeet”)
- [Map by Kevin McManigal]

Proto-Algonquian (subset of languages shown)



Proto-Algonquian

- Proto-Algonquian is well-established (cf. Aubin 1975; Bloomfield 1925, 1946; Goddard 1979; Hewson 1993; Hockett 1942; Michelson 1935; Miller 1959; Pentland 1979; Siebert 1941, 1975; Silver 1960; Voegelin 1941)
- Internal structure is rather flat
  - Only Eastern Algonquian is a subgroup (Goddard 1974, 1980)
  - But contested (Pentland 1992; Proulx 1984)
- Areal groupings (cf. Mithun 1999)

Innovations and archaisms in Blackfoot

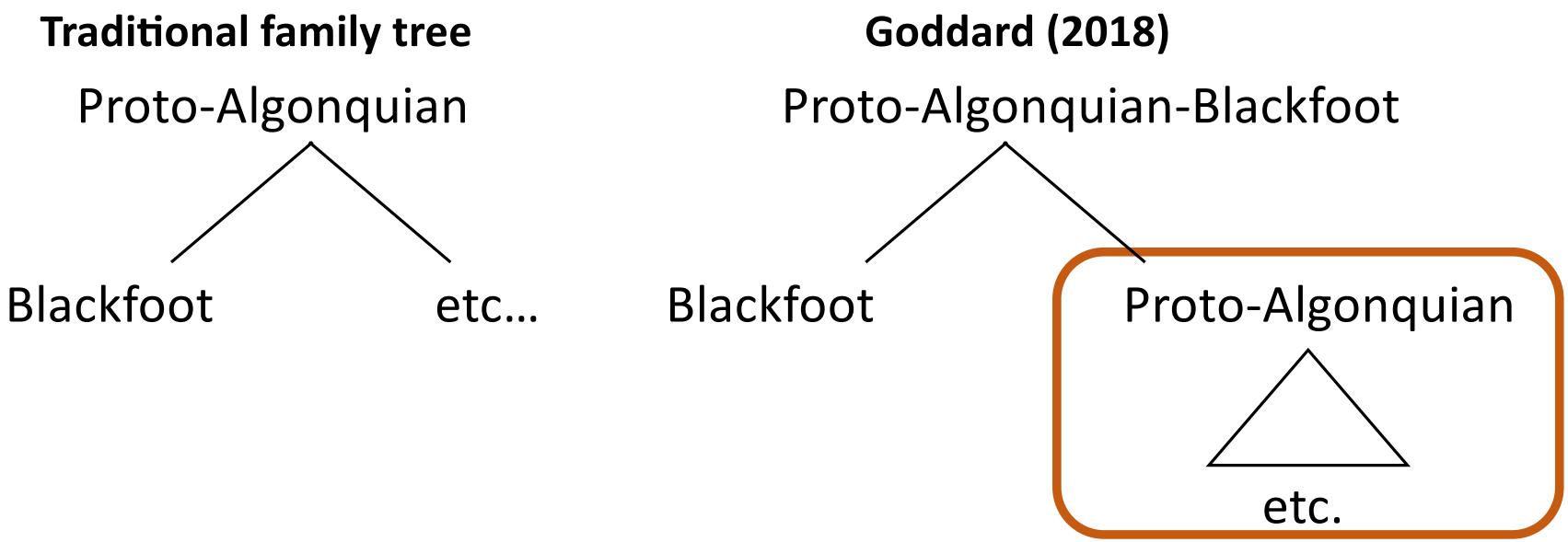
- Innovative sound changes "all contribute towards making Blackfoot vocabulary as a whole **appear as un-Algonquian**" (Michelson 1935: 142-143).
- "There are some apparent **lexical archaisms** in Blackfoot" (Goddard 1994: 188)
- "Blackfoot is clearly the most **divergent** language in the Algonquian family" (Goddard 2018).

Blackfoot's position is contested!

- Various relationships have been proposed:
  - A branch of its own (Michelson 1912)
  - Grouped with Cree and Cheyenne (Hayden 1863)
  - Grouped with Conoy and Beothuk (Pentland 1979)
  - Oldest dialectal layer of Algonquian (Goddard 1994)

- "Blackfoot is by far the most **divergent** of the Algonquian languages […] and it remains to be shown whether […] Blackfoot is a **sister language of PA** rather than a daughter" (Proulx 1980)

Goddard's (2018) proposal



Two arguments for shared innovations

1. Proto-Algonquian deletes #i / __C
2. Proto-Algonquian restructures an older paradigm of “post-inflectional suffixes” into the so-called absentative paradigm

This talk: just the first claim

Shared innovations in Proto-Algonquian

Roots with initial *iC

Blackfoot has many stems and roots in #iC

- PA *po·n- ‘cease’
  - cf. Meskwaki *po·nikegwa* ‘he pays his debt’

- Blackfoot *ipon*- ‘terminate, end, be rid of ’
  - ponihtáát ‘pay!’
  - nitsipónihta ‘I paid’
  - iipónihtaawa ‘he paid’

“Independently, under synchronic conditions that have not been described, word-initial Bl |iC-| is sometimes realized as C-” Goddard (2018).

Blackfoot has many stems and roots in #iC

- PA *ketem- (root)
  - Meskwaki *ketem**i**naw*- ‘take pity on, bless with supernatural power’

- Blackfoot *ikimm*- TA ‘show kindness to, bestow power on’
  - ikímmisa! ‘bestow power on him!/care for her!’
  - ikímmiiwa ‘he bestowed power on him’
  - nitsíkimmoka ‘he bestowed power on me’

Initial*i is rare in Proto-Algonquian

- No PA short *i in the first syllable, except:
  - before consonant clusters (some but not all);
  - before PA *r — only reconstructible in PA *iren- ‘ordinary’
  - in demonstratives — e.g. *iyog ‘this (inan.)’, *ini ‘that (inan.)’
  - and in relative roots — e.g *iθ- ∼ *iš- ‘{so}; to {somewhere}’

- But no lexical roots begin in *ip-, *ič-, *it-, *ik-, *is-, *iš-, *im-, or *in-.

Initial syllables in PA are weak

- No true consonant clusters
- No contrast between *i and *e
- Relative roots beginning in *t, e.g. PA *taθ- ‘somewhere’

	PA	**Unami Delaware**	
Initial	*taθ-	té·kəne talá·wsu	‘he lives in the woods’
Non-initial	*entaθ-	ntəntalá·wsí·ne·n	‘for us to live there’
Changed[†]	*e·ntaθ-	yú entala·wsíenk	‘here where we live’

[†] initial change = morphological ablaut of initial syllable (Costa 1998)

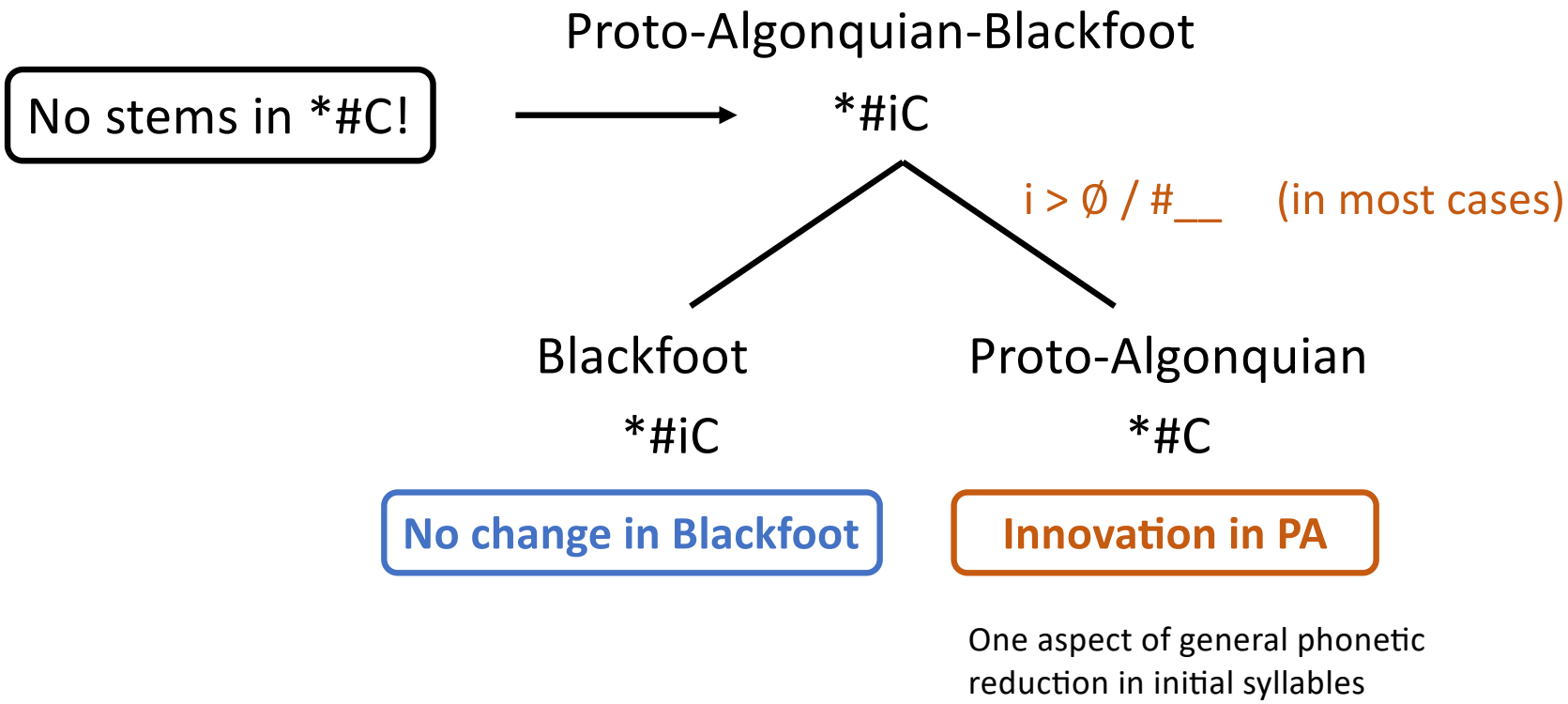
Motivation for proposal

- Case study: PA *taθ- ‘somewhere’

	PA		**pre-PA**
Initial	***taθ-**	<	*entaθ-
Non-initial	*entaθ-	<	*entaθ-
Changed†	*eˑntaθ-	<	*eˑntaθ-

reduction

Proposal: innovation in Proto-Algonquian



Problems with proposal

1. Blackfoot *also* has initial weak syllables
2. Blackfoot has C-initial nouns (and other non-verbal categories)
3. Blackfoot has C-initial verbs (sometimes)

1. Blackfoot *also* has initial weak syllables

- No true consonant clusters
- No contrast between *i and *e (> B *i*)
- Relative roots show reduction, e.g. *oht-* ‘instrumental, source’

Initial	tsítskixpissi	‘when he danced by’
Non-initial	áxkuxtsitokoopsskaaʔwa	‘so she can make broth with (them)’
Changed	ixtsítsksspaiʔwa	‘he is looking past’

[Blackfoot Words: word-AT1969-0758, word-AT1969-0016, word-AT1969-0293]

1. Blackfoot *also* has initial weak syllables

- Case study: *oht-* 'instrumental, source'

	Blackfoot[†]		**pre-Blackfoot**
Initial	**ts-**	<	*oht-
Non-initial	uxts-	<	*oht-
Changed	ixts-	<	*eˑht-

reduction

† /t/ → [ts] / __{i, j}

2. Blackfoot has C-initial nouns

- Nouns begin in C, not iC
- Unexpected if Blackfoot reflects PAB forms in *iC!

Blackfoot		**Proto-Algonquian**	
kóóna	‘ice’	*ko·na	‘snow’
mííni	‘berry’	*mi·ni	‘berry’
miistsísa	‘tree’	*mi·twiya	‘quaking aspen’
ksísskstakiwa	‘beaver’	*ki·šk-	‘cut, chop, sever’
pisstóóhtsi	‘inside’	*pi·nt-	‘inside’

3. Blackfoot has C-initial verbs (sometimes)

- Imperatives and subjunctives (with no prefixes)
  - PA *po·n- ‘cease’
  - B ponihtáát ‘pay!’

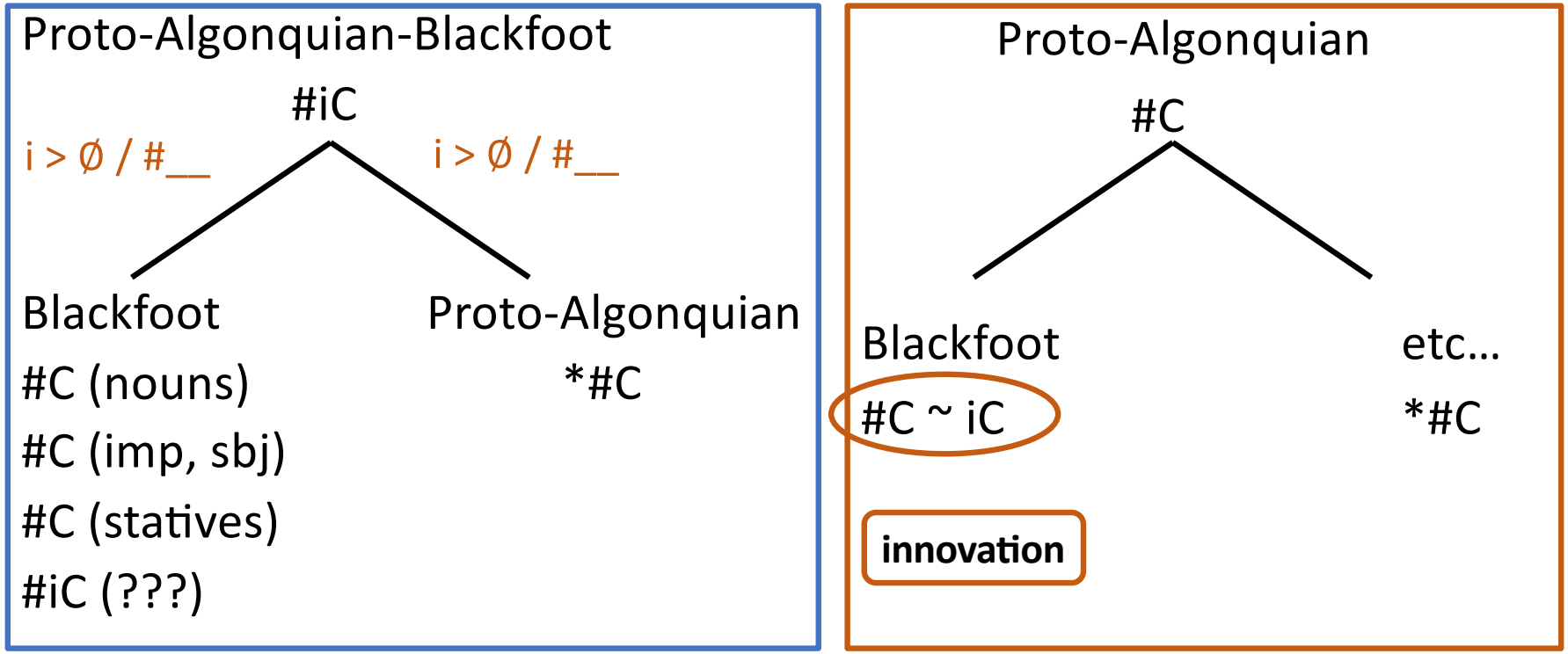
- Statives (with no prefixes)
  - PA *ra·nk- ‘light in weight’
  - B saahksstssímma anná pookááwa ‘the child is light in weight’ (Frantz & Russell 2017: 232)

Summary: Problems with proposal

- Blackfoot shows synchronic reduction in initial syllable
  - This was motivation for *i > Ø / #__ in Proto-Algonquian
  - So why doesn't Blackfoot delete…?

- Blackfoot must delete in many cases
  - Nouns and non-verbs
  - Imperatives and subjunctives
  - Statives

An alternative analysis



Synchronic analysis: roots in #C ~ #iC

Initial	**Non-initial**	
<u>poni</u>htáát	áaksi<u>poni</u>htaawa	*After C*
‘pay!’	‘she will pay’	
	ákái<u>poni</u>htsiwa	*After V*
	‘he is dead’	

(Frantz & Russell 2017: 91)

Synchronic analysis: non-alternating roots

Initial	**Non-initial**	
ipótsimatsísa!	áaksipótsimatsiiwa	*After C*
‘poison him!’	‘she’ll poison him’	
	(none found)	*After V*

(Frantz & Russell 2017: 92)

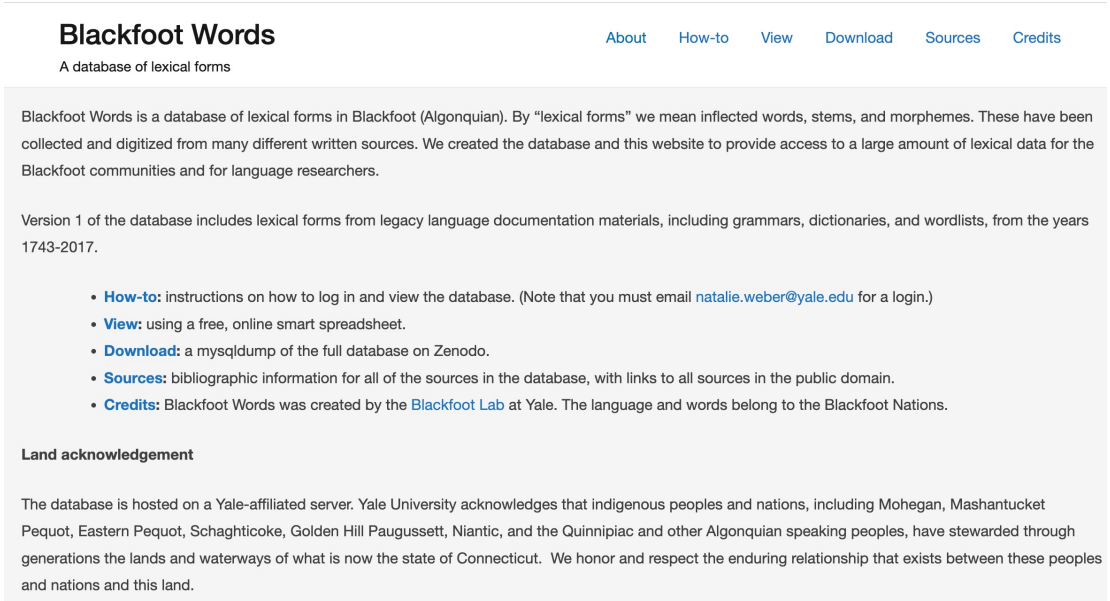
Synchronic analysis: two groups of roots

Initial	**Non-initial**	**UR**	**Gloss**
pon-	-**ip**on-	/pon-/	‘cease’
ipotsim-	-**ip**otsim-	/ipotim-/	‘poison’
*p	*-p		

- NB: very few roots in #iC under this analysis
- Similar to Proto-Algonquian

Historical record

- For roots with invariant #i, often possible to show this is a recent addition by looking at the historical record.
- Tool: Blackfoot Words database (https://www.blackfootwords.com/)



Blackfoot Words

A database of lexical forms

About How-to View Download Sources Credits

Blackfoot Words is a database of lexical forms in Blackfoot (Algonquian). By "lexical forms" we mean inflected words, stems, and morphemes. These have been collected and digitized from many different written sources. We created the database and this website to provide access to a large amount of lexical data for the Blackfoot communities and for language researchers.

Version 1 of the database includes lexical forms from legacy language documentation materials, including grammars, dictionaries, and wordlists, from the years 1743-2017.

- **How-to:** instructions on how to log in and view the database. (Note that you must email natalie.weber@yale.edu for a login.)
- **View:** using a free, online smart spreadsheet.
- **Download:** a mysqldump of the full database on Zenodo.
- **Sources:** bibliographic information for all of the sources in the database, with links to all sources in the public domain.
- **Credits:** Blackfoot Words was created by the Blackfoot Lab at Yale. The language and words belong to the Blackfoot Nations.

Land acknowledgement

The database is hosted on a Yale-affiliated server. Yale University acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.

Historical record: Blackfoot Words

- relational database of inflected words and phrases, and their subparts
- 63,493 lexical forms have been digitized to date from 30 sources
- timespan: 1743–2017 (almost 300 years!)
- Version 1.1 includes 9 of 30 sources

- F&R 2017 = Frantz & Russell (2017)
- word-AB1234-000789 = unique id from the database

Historical record: kimm- ‘pity’

- ikímmisa! ‘bestow power on him!/care for her!’ [F&R 2017: 46]

- kímmisa! pity thou him! [word-AT1969-1405]
- kǐm’ǐs pity him! [word-JT1889-6231]

- kǐm’okǐt pity me! [word-JT1889-6232]
- kímmokit pity me! [word-CU1938-13981]

Morphological ablaut ("initial change")

- Initial change = morphological ablaut of first syllable (Costa 1996)
- In C-initial stems, initial change has been restructured:
  - Archaic: first vowel ablauts (~100 stems; Taylor 1967)
  - Novel: add an initial *i-* or *ii-*

- Archaic changed forms can diagnose whether a syllable is initial
- Not all stems have archaic changed forms

(aspects of Blackfoot initial change in Berman 2006; Frantz 2017; Proulx 2005; Taylor 1967, 1969)

Root: ipotsim- ‘poison’

Plain:	ipótsimatsísa!	‘poison him!’	[F&R 2017: 92]
	ipótsimatsiiwáyi	‘she poisoned it’	[F&R 2017: 92]
Changed:	**ii**potsímatsiiway	‘he poisoned him’	[word-AT1967-105]
	nääpotsimatsiiway	‘he poisoned him’	[word-AT1969-2978]
	niipotsímatsisa	‘poison thou him!’	[word-AT1967-107]

Root: pon- ‘cease’ is C-initial

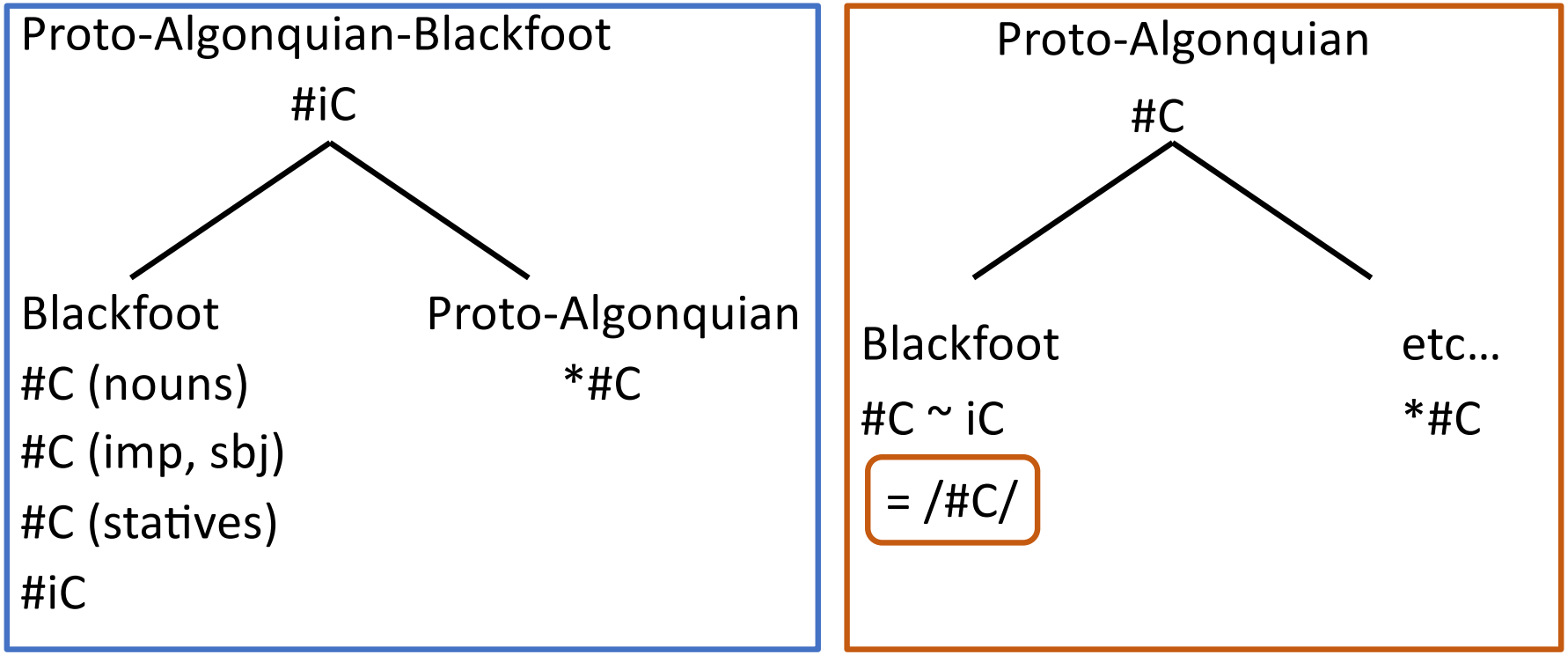
Plain:	ponihtáát!	‘pay!’	[F&R 2017: 91]
	poonixtátsisa	‘pay thou him!’	[word-AT1967-112]
Changed forms:			
• Archaic:	p**aa**nixtátsisa	‘pay thou him!’	[word-AT1967-111]
• New:	iipónihtaawa	‘he paid’	[F&R 2017: 91]

- If this root were /ipon-/, it should pattern with other *i*-initial roots
- Initial change only affects first syllable, showing that *p* is initial

Summary

- Evidence that Blackfoot roots begin in *C
  1. Synchronic analysis — explains roots in #C ~ #iC
  2. Historical record — explains roots in invariant #iC
  3. Morphological ablaut — additional evidence

An alternative analysis



An alternative analysis

- Blackfoot roots are **shared retentions from PA** with additional innovations within the verbal system
  - Roots in non-initial position have initial #i
  - Some roots reanalyzed as truly #i-initial, contrasting with C-initial roots
  - Initial change in C-initial roots was restructured

- Shared retentions cannot support subgrouping (cf. Atkinson & Gray 2005; Koch & Bowern 2004).

Discussion

Synchronic analysis

- Synchronic analysis is necessary!
  - Morphophonological alternations
  - Phonological underlying forms
  - Internal reconstruction

- Cannot look at words in isolation without considering their place in the system.

Historical record

- Digitizing and annotating the historical record is necessary!
  - Blackfoot Words aims to do this (Weber et al. 2022)
  - Huge task!
  - Two years and counting…

Comparative method

- New cognate sets are needed!
  - Many papers on historical phonology in Algonquian compare forms in a language to the established Proto-Algonquian reconstructions
  - But new data might reveal new things!
  - Need new cognate sets and correspondence sets

Summary

- No evidence for Proto-Algonquian-Blackfoot
  - No major prevalence of #iC roots in Blackfoot
  - Determined by synchronic analysis
  - Alternative: Blackfoot continues PA roots in #C

In memoriam

Donald Frantz (d. 2021)

David Pentland (d. 2022)

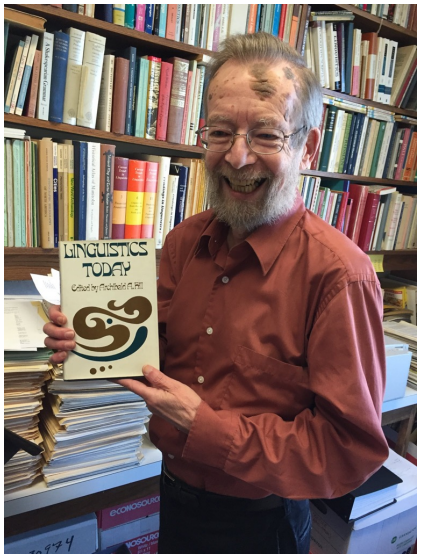


Photo by Arden Ogg

Nítohtsikaahsi’taki! Thank you!