

THE COVENANT CHAIN OF PEACE:
Metaphor and Religious Thought in
Seventeenth Century Haudenosaunee Council Oratory

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ABSTRACT

The phrase ‘Covenant Chain’ is unique in the English language and along with its antecedents—‘linked arms’, ‘the rope’, and the ‘iron chain’—the Haudenosaunee established relationships with the Europeans. The ‘Covenant Chain’ has been the subject of extensive discussion since the mid-1980s when a group of scholars in Iroquois Studies published several volumes on the diplomacy of the Haudenosaunee during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most studies focus on the political aspects of the Covenant Chain and the role it played in creating and sustaining alliances. This study examines the meaning of the word ‘covenant’ and related ideas in the context of Haudenosaunee cosmology, history, culture and religious traditions. The numerous metaphors employed by the Haudenosaunee in council oratory and the many meanings associated with these different metaphors are discussed with a view to better understanding the Covenant Chain in relation to what Mohawk scholar Deborah Doxtator calls ‘history as an additive process’.

In order to facilitate this discussion, the religious dimensions of covenant in European thought during this period are examined. While the basis of post-Reformation covenant theology differs radically from Haudenosaunee ideas of covenant, points of convergence do exist particularly in the area of political theory making. Johannes Althusius’ (1557-1638) concept of ‘symbiosis’ is one such example. Surprisingly, Europeans who were involved in or who had knowledge of the Covenant Chain provide no theological discourse on it. Philosophical and theological discussions of the chain come from the Haudenosaunee themselves.

These relationships went well beyond contractual obligations and along with the idea of the ‘middle line’ which separates people and at the same time joins them together. Contrary to the widely accepted scholarly view that the chain—either the ‘Covenant Chain’ or the ‘Iron Chain’—was associated only with alliances between the Haudenosaunee and the British, this study shows that the Haudenosaunee used the same expressions in their alliances with the French as well.

RÉSUMÉ

L'expression 'Chaîne d'Alliance' est quelque chose d'unique en anglais. Les Haudenosaunee utilisaient aussi d'autres expressions telles que 'prendre par la main', 'chaîne de fer', ou le terme 'corde' dans leurs rapports avec les Européens. La 'Chaîne d'Alliance' a fait l'objet de nombreux débats depuis le milieu des années 1980, alors que des spécialistes en études iroquoises publièrent plusieurs monographies sur la diplomatie des Haudenosaunee au cours des 17^e et 18^e siècles. La plupart de ces études son centrées sur les aspects politiques de la Chaîne d'Alliance et de son rôle dans la création et le maintien d'alliances. La présente étude analyse la signification du terme 'alliance' et d'autres termes connexes dans le contexte de la cosmologie, de l'histoire, de la culture et des traditions religieuses des Haudenosaunee. Les nombreuses métaphores utilisées par les Haudenosaunee dans les palabres durant les conciliabules et les rassemblements, ainsi que les différentes significations reliées à ces métaphores sont analysées dans le but de mieux comprendre la Chaîne d'Alliance en rapport avec ce que la spécialiste Mohawk Deborah Doxtator appelle 'le processus cumulatif de l'histoire'.

Afin de faciliter la discussion, la dimension religieuse de la notion d'alliance dans la pensée européenne aux 16^e et 17^e siècles est analysée. Bien que les fondements de la théologie de l'alliance dans la période qui suivit la Réforme diffère radicalement des idées d'alliance des Haudenosaunee, il y a des points de convergence concernant tout particulièrement le domaine de la théorie politique. Le concept de 'symbiose' élaboré par Johannes Althusius (1557-1638) en est un bon exemple. Par ailleurs, il est étrange de constater que les Européens concernés par le cérémonial entourant la Chaîne d'Alliance ou qui en avaient pris connaissance n'élaborent aucun discours théologique sur cela. Les réflexions philosophiques et théologiques sur le sujet proviennent en fait des Haudenosaunee eux-mêmes.

Les relations entre les Haudenosaunee et les Européens dépassaient de beaucoup le domaine des obligations contractuelles et s'inspiraient de cette 'ligne de partage' qui, *à la fois*, sépare et unit les peuples. Contrairement à l'acception courante aujourd'hui dans la recherche spécialisée voulant que la chaîne, qu'elle soit d'alliance ou de fer, soit associée le plus souvent aux alliances conclues entre les Haudenosaunee et les Anglais, cette étude fournit des témoignages historiques indubitables à l'effet que les Haudenosaunee comprenaient leurs alliances avec les Français à l'aide des mêmes expressions.

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ABBREVIATIONS*

Glossary See pp. 267-269.

JAAR *Journal of the American Academy of Religion.*

JRAD *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1610-1791.* Ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Cleveland, OH 1-74, 1896-1967.

NYCD *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York.* Ed. by E. B. O'Callaghan and Berthold Fenrow. Albany, NY 1-15, 1853-1887.

OED The Oxford Dictionary of the English Language.

* See bibliography. — See also Siegfried M. Schwertner, *International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992, xli + 488 p.

INTRODUCTION

For a period of one hundred years beginning in 1677, the Haudenosaunee of the Five and then the Six Nations Confederacy gathered in council with European colonial officials to polish the Covenant Chain of peace. This polishing was purely metaphorical—no actual chain is known to have existed—and in the process the parties established or renewed friendships, agreements and alliances. The chain was one of several metaphors employed by the parties to council proceedings; others included the path, the tree, and the fire. Together with reciprocal exchanges of wampum, words of wampum and the words of The Condolence, the use of these metaphors helped create and sustain relationships based—ideally at least—on mutual trust and respect. This dissertation discusses the metaphorical language of Haudenosaunee council oratory in relation to religious thought and intercultural communication. The aim here is to better understand the meaning of these metaphors in Haudenosaunee cosmology, culture, history and religious traditions and how they crossed the cultural divide and aided in establishing relations between two peoples of vastly different historical and religious heritages.

The councils of the Haudenosaunee were highly structured events which followed a formal pattern of exchange and discussion. Indeed, Haudenosaunee diplomatic protocol required that parties to a council enter into sustained dialogue before concluding agreements and councils could last a day, a week, or even months. These councils were modelled on those developed by the nations of Iroquois Confederacy to establish and maintain friendly relations first with one another, and then with other Native peoples. As highly skilled

orators, the Haudenosaunee carried this metaphorical language across the boundaries of space, place and time, to employ it in their relations with Europeans. Typically, during the course of a council the attending parties metaphorically ‘kindled the council fire’, ‘planted a tree of peace’ and ‘polished the Covenant Chain’ of friendship. In the Condolence Ceremony, they metaphorically ‘cleared the paths’ to the senses of hearing, seeing and speaking, thereby removing any obstructions which might interfere with constructive dialogue. Another ‘path’, the one through the forest along which visitors travelled, was also metaphorically cleared of debris and obstacles. In the process, the parties opened the lines of communication between one another and smoothed the way to a common understanding. Specific agreements were confirmed with exchanges of wampum.

In the context of Haudenosaunee council oratory, metaphor should not be taken as allegory and it should not be understood simply as a rhetorical device in communication. To disregard metaphor on the grounds that it is ambiguous and unrelated to the actual ‘business’ of any given council, is to exclude major portions of council proceedings. The Haudenosaunee interpreted metaphors through a structure of thought and ways which emphasized the idea of process. This concept of process is especially evident in two major epic narratives; the story of origins and the story of the Confederacy. In council proceedings, metaphor was fundamental to the process of establishing and maintaining communication between two parties and in attaining consensus.¹

With some important exceptions, scholarly discourse on the Covenant Chain has focused on the pragmatic nature of Haudenosaunee–European relations and on the utilitarian

¹ M.K. Foster, “Another Look at the Function of Wampum,” *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, Francis Jennings, et. al, eds. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985) 114.

character of their alliances. Much less attention has been given to the meaning and interpretation of covenant in Haudenosaunee thought and as it emerged in councils. In recent years, efforts to integrate Haudenosaunee cosmology and epistemology into historical accounts have begun to emerge. The recent works of the late Deborah Doxtator (Mohawk) on Haudenosaunee concepts of place, time, history and change, constitute a turning point in Iroquois studies. She interprets Haudenosaunee relational structures from the Haudenosaunee perspective. This is to say, she finds in Haudenosaunee concepts of place, time, history and change, the foundation for historical analysis and interpretation. In effect, she has integrated both oral tradition and oral history into her work. According to Doxtator, history is not simply a series of segmented events or discontinuous ruptures, but a process of organic accumulative growth and change that subsumes within it the structures of the past. For Doxtator, "History is an additive process building upon what has gone before in a kind of consciously constructed continuity."² The Covenant Chain is a very fine example of this process of subsuming past structures into present developments.

In Europe, during the period under discussion, covenant theology was already well established in Protestant circles on the Continent and in the British Isles. Theologians and philosophers found in the concept of covenant a new way to understand and describe the nature and the structure of human relations. As is well known, covenant theology reached the shores of North America with the English Puritans. Much less recognized, however, is the blooming of the covenant motif in another context, that is, in the Covenant Chain councils.

² "Inclusive and Exclusive Perceptions of Difference: Native and Euro-based Concepts of Time, History and Change," in *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700*, Germaine Warkentin et. al. eds. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 39.

In the first chapter I will discuss the existing literature on the Covenant Chain and the councils of the Haudenosaunee. The focus of this discussion will be on four volumes published in the mid 1980s. I will discuss the different ways in which scholars have approached the chain under the following headings: The Covenant Chain as a Political Principle; The Covenant Chain—its Origin and Essence; One Chain or Many Chains; The Chain as a Literary Form; the Chain and Structure; and the Chain and Metaphor. In the final section of the chapter—A Model for Understanding Haudenosaunee History—I will discuss the work of Deborah Doxtator and the important contribution she makes to the present study.

In the second chapter I will discuss the metaphorical language of Haudenosaunee council oratory through the words of one speaker—Kiotseaeton—and his address to a council held at Trois-Rivières, Québec in July, 1645. Kiotseaeton's address is recognized as one of the earliest recorded examples of Haudenosaunee oratory and of the Condolence. On close reading, we can see the many multiple parallel meanings of the numerous metaphors he employs in his address.

In the third chapter I will discuss metaphor as it is defined and interpreted by Sallie McFague and Paul Ricoeur. Their insight into the meaning of metaphor is helpful for the discussion which follows on different aspects of Haudenosaunee metaphor. Included in this chapter is a discussion of kinship metaphors and the meaning of gendered metaphors.

The fourth chapter—a discussion of the religious dimensions of covenant in European thought—is of central importance to this work. In this chapter I discuss covenant in the Judaeo-Christian tradition; the history of post-Reformation covenant theology; and the development of political philosophy based on covenant. I also discuss the works of two

important thinkers of the early seventeenth century, Hugo Grotius and Johannes Althusius, and the contribution they make to furthering our understanding of covenant in international law and political philosophy. In particular, the Althusian notion of ‘symbiosis’ fits well with Haudenosaunee concepts of covenant. I will also discuss the work of contemporary scholar Daniel J. Elazar, on covenant as a theo-political concept.

In the fifth chapter I will discuss concepts of covenant as found in Haudenosaunee cosmology—the Thanksgiving Address; Skywoman and the Animals; and the Three Sisters—and in the symbols and metaphors of the Iroquois Confederacy. The different symbols of the Confederacy each bring the Haudenosaunee together in a different way. How these symbols create bonds of unity will be discussed. In addition, I will discuss Daniel Elazar’s theory of covenanted polities and the question of factionalism in the Confederacy.

In the sixth chapter I will discuss the Covenant Chain proper. The historical record indicates that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Europeans did not engage in theological discourse on the Covenant Chain. Almost all the philosophical and theological discussion came from the Haudenosaunee themselves. Their reflections on the Covenant Chain will be discussed, as will the relationship between the Covenant Chain and ‘arms linked together’.

In the concluding remarks, I will discuss Deborah Doxtator’s idea of the ‘centre’ as it relates to the Covenant Chain and I will discuss some key concepts associated with it. I will close with a point of clarification on iron chain alliances between the Haudenosaunee and the French.

CHAPTER 1

THE COVENANT CHAIN AND IROQUOIS STUDIES

The mid-1980s was a prosperous and prolific time for scholars in Iroquois studies: in the space of four years, four volumes were published. Taken together, these works were intended to set new directions for the subject area. They quickly became among the most widely read and cited works in the field, and remain so even today. Three of these volumes are collections of essays by both established and new scholars in Iroquois studies. One is the work of a single author. Many other interesting and important publications appeared before, during and after this period, but these four volumes are particularly noteworthy. They are, in order of the year of publication (see bibliography): *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its beginning to the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744* by the late Francis Jennings (1984); *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, edited by Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi and Marianne Mithun (1984); *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, edited by Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke and David R. Miller (1985); and *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*, edited by Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (1987). As suggested by the titles, diplomacy and the Covenant Chain are the pre-eminent themes in three of these works. Some other influential works which appeared in the mid-1980s should also be mentioned: *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier, 1701-1754*, by Richard Aquila (1983); *The Invasion Within: The Context of Cultures in Colonial North*

America by James Axtell (1985), and Bruce Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (1985). The focus of Trigger's study is on archaeology and on social and religious contact between Native people and the Europeans. A major difference between Aquila's, Axtell's and Trigger's studies and the volumes presently under discussion turns on the question of self-awareness and intentionality.

The scholars who penned these studies were all in the mainstream of disciplines which then dominated—and for the most part still dominate—Native studies across North America: anthropology, history, archaeology, and linguistics. The majority held professorships at universities in Canada and the United States, or research positions at museums and libraries in these two countries. As a group, these authors hoped to broaden the scope of Iroquois studies on the one hand, and infuse a high degree of historical precision into the field on the other hand. The two interdisciplinary works on Iroquois diplomacy and extending the rafters attempt to transcend the boundaries which separate disciplines in order to create an integrated approach to research and writing on the Haudenosaunee. In the latter case, the editors purposely chose an Haudenosaunee metaphor for the title. “To the Iroquois, ‘extending the rafters’, meant adding onto the longhouse, both in the literal sense of making room for new family and in the figurative sense of adding adopted individuals or nations to the Confederacy”. In using this metaphor, say the editors, “we want to call attention to the fact that the [...] contributors are unquestionably breaking new ground in the areas of Iroquoian pre-history, linguistics, ethnology and ethnohistory”.¹

On the question of historical accuracy, the following reflections by Wilcomb E.

¹ “Preface,” *Extending the Rafters*, xiv.

Washburn sum up a sentiment shared by the different contributors to all these volumes: in the preface to *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, he raises the question of myth and reality concerning the existence of what came to be known as the 'Iroquois empire'. He notes that nineteenth-century American historians and writers viewed it as "the stuff of myth and legend, in the fashion of the ancient Greeks".² Washburn adds that in "recent years the mythical view of the Iroquois has given way to more careful analysis of the original data on which the nineteenth-century image rested". He praises those scholars who were working toward "a more perceptive understanding of the sophistication of Iroquois diplomacy", and with reference to the Covenant Chain in particular, he notes that recent works are "elevating it from the level of metaphor and imagery to an expression of a formal link between the Iroquois and various Indian and European nations".

While the contributors to *Beyond the Covenant Chain* expose and subsequently dispel the widely held belief in the existence of an Iroquois empire, Francis Jennings goes to the heart of the matter in his *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*. He attributes the myth of an Iroquois empire to the writings of three scholars: Lewis Henry Morgan, the nineteenth-century anthropologist; Francis Parkman, the nineteenth-century historian; and Cadwallader Colden, the eighteenth-century historian and chronicler of Silver Covenant Chain and other councils.

² W. Washburn, "Preface," *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, xiii. — Comparing the Haudenosaunee to the Greeks was not at all new. For example, almost from the time they arrived on this continent, the Jesuits repeatedly likened the oratorical skills of Native North Americans to the Greeks. For a discussion see James Axtell's *The Invasion Within*, Chapter 5: "When in Rome." See also, William Clements, "The Jesuit Foundations of Native North American Literary Studies": *American Indian Quarterly* 18/1 (1994) 43-59, as well as his *Oratory in Native North America* (Tucson AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2002). See also, Joseph-François Lafitau's seminal work *Customs of the American Indians as Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, 1724. William Fenton & Elizabeth Moore, eds. and trans. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974, 2 vols). As the title indicates, Lafitau compares the Haudenosaunee and other Native people to the Greeks, Romans, and other ancient peoples. Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*, 1877 (Tucson AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985), is another comparative study and in many respects is a sequel to Lafitau's work.

With the characteristic bluntness for which he was so well known, Jennings writes: “The whole corpus of this mythology is false [...] Like all enduring myths, the foundation of this one lay in tendentiously selected data, and its factual contradictions have been ignored or suppressed by various interested parties—among whom were keepers of Iroquois traditions of the Golden Age of Iroquois glory”.³ As Jennings sees it, the myth, “having diverged in two directions in the eighteenth century—through Anglo-American historiography and Iroquois tradition—converged again in the 1850s”.⁴ Thus, Jennings’ work is an important corrective to historical writings which tended to view human history in terms of grand schemes—the grand scheme in this instance being the existence of an Iroquois empire.

Scholarly reviews of these four publications, while generally complimentary, were not uniformly laudatory. Some critiques went so far as to address the state of Iroquois studies as a whole. For example, one contributor to *Extending the Rafters*, Fred Voget, gently chides Iroquoianists for being somewhat insular. For him the “thrust of Iroquois research from 1880 to the present has remained cultural and historical in orientation”, and “special theoretical developments in anthropology have not influenced Iroquois research in any major way”; this is “true for structural-functionalist theory as well as the trend toward theoretical differentiation and specialization which began around 1940”.⁵ Here, Voget is referring to such subdisciplines as economic anthropology, political anthropology and cultural ecology. Voget attributes the persistence of cultural-historical objectives and methodology to “the vast number of documents available on the Iroquois because of their

³ F. Jennings, “‘Pennsylvania Indians’ and the Iroquois,” in *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 75.

⁴ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 17.

⁵ F. Voget, “Anthropological Theory and Iroquois Ethnography,” *Extending the Rafters*, 357.

historic role in the Northeast”, and to the influence of William Fenton who developed the methodology of ‘historical upstreaming’ in the 1940s and early 1950s.

What is upstreaming? In 1957 Fenton published an article in which he coined the term ‘historical upstreaming’ and discussed its meaning. To go ‘upstream’ is to go back in time. Upstreaming operates on three assumptions: “1) that major patterns of culture remain stable over long periods of time, producing repeated uniformities; 2) these patterns can best be seen by proceeding from the known ethnological present to the unknown past, using recent sources first and the earlier sources; 3) those sources which ring true at both ends of the time span merit confidence”.⁶ Thus, upstreaming presupposes that “modern ethnographic sources can be drawn on to afford a perspective for evaluating earlier written sources”.⁷ As a methodology upstreaming is useful, writes Michael K. Foster, as a “heuristic guide to problems of reconstructing earlier patterns which may be detectable in only fragmentary form in earlier sources”.⁸ The method, Fenton himself admitted in 1957, contains a “built-in fallacy [...] the doctrine of uniformitarianism, which infers the past from the present”.⁹

Fred Voget was not the only scholar concerned with the isolationist tendencies of Iroquois studies. Daniel Richter, himself an Iroquoianist and one of the editors of *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, notes that “functionalist assumptions, nomethetic perspectives and

⁶ Voget quoting Fenton, “Anthropological Theory,” 347. For a discussion on the historiography of Fenton’s ‘historical upstreaming’, see Voget, 347-57.

⁷ M. K. Foster, “On Who Spoke First at Iroquois-White Councils,” *Extending the Rafters*, 197-98.

⁸ M. K. Foster, “On Who Spoke First,” 197-98.

⁹ F. Voget, “Anthropological Theory,” 357

grandiose theorizing characteristic of much recent anthropology have made scant impact on the Iroquoianist literature”; he adds that “an older tradition of concrete empiricism and cultural particularism holds sway”.¹⁰ Like Voget, Richter questions the widespread use of ‘upstreaming’ by Iroquoianists, particularly for the study of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Richter, difficulties emerge when cultural streams of the past dry up, that is, when they “do not lead toward the present”.¹¹ Richter encourages his colleagues to “move beyond upstreaming to adopt theoretical perspectives from fields outside Iroquois studies”, so that “a wider body of theory could be used in the cautious interpretation of documentary and archaeological evidence [...]”.¹²

Of all the four publications under discussion here, Francis Jennings’ *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* precipitated the most response from reviewers, the greater part of it unfavorable. While critics praised Jennings for his dogged determination in remaining faithful to the documentary source material, they were concerned, even perplexed, with one particular aspect of Jennings’ analysis. In his work, Jennings emphasizes the bilateral/bicultural nature of the Covenant Chain, describing it as a confederation of nations of Native peoples *and* English colonies. Yet, as several reviewers point out, the voice of the Haudenosaunee is virtually silent in his writings. James Merrell, for one, notes that: “Compelling as this chronicle is, it is marred by a tendency to slight the Indian side of the story [...] It is ironic that the explication of that remarkable ‘bicultural’ organization is so

¹⁰ D. Richter, “Up the Cultural Stream: Three Recent Works in Iroquois Studies”: *Ethnohistory* 32/4 (1985) 365.

¹¹ D. Richter, “Up the Cultural Stream,” 367.

¹² D. Richter, “Up the Cultural Stream,” 368.

one-sided”.¹³ Stephen Saunders Webb agrees: “Neither the sway of the Iroquois sachems nor the spirit of the Longhouse People is of concern to this author, although both underlay a vision of ‘Peace and Power,’ [...]”; in his view Jennings omits the “sophisticated internal polity and ideology that gave structure and meaning to Iroquois authority [...]”.¹⁴ Similarly, Neil Salisbury feels readers would come away from Jennings’ study “recognizing the culture of Machiavelli and Hobbes but not that of Deganawidah and Hiawatha, the role of political power but not of sacred power, the workings of the European state but not of the Indian community”.¹⁵

The severest criticism of Jennings’ work came from outside the inner circles of Iroquois studies. At the close of his lengthy commentary, Calvin Martin echoes the thoughts of other reviewers when he notes that Jennings’ title, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, was apt because “the author has explored that phenomenon really only from within a Western system of thought. The genuine Native point of view is missing”.¹⁶ Martin’s critical evaluation goes even further. As discussed above, Jennings is determined to dispel the myth of an Iroquois empire. For Martin, Jennings disregards the ‘mythic complex’ of the Haudenosaunee in the process. He “dismisses the mythic world of the American Indian as falderal” writes Martin adding: “The folly is his, more poignantly because he never seems

¹³ J. Merrell, “Review: The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire”: *Journal of American History* 71 (March, 1985) 854.

¹⁴ S. S. Webb, “Review: The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire”: *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 42/1 (1985) 126.

¹⁵ N. Salisbury, “Francis Jennings and the State of American Indian History”: *Reviews in American History* 17/3 (1989) 382.

¹⁶ C. Martin, “The Covenant Chain of Friendship Inc. America’s First Great Real Estate Agency”: *Reviews in American History* 13/1 (1985) 20

to grasp what scholars mean when they invoke the mythic complex”.¹⁷ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, continues Martin, the “ideals and mode of action, phenomenology, ontology, and epistemology” of the Haudenosaunee and other Native peoples “differed radically from that of Europeans [...] We know this from ethnohistorical inquiry”; the Europeans “lived in a very different thought-world (cosmos) from that of the Native Americans they encountered [...]”.¹⁸

Calvin Martin, himself no stranger to controversy, raises an important question concerning areas of omission in the scholarship on the Haudenosaunee. How, in the enterprise of writing history, do we account for the cosmology, the ideals, and the modes of action of the other? To be sure, a number of Iroquoianists were attempting to address these very matters, for example, Michael Foster or Mary Druke in *Iroquois Diplomacy* and in *Extending the Rafters*: they interpret the councils of the Haudenosaunee with the Haudenosaunee perspective in mind. In 1992 with the publication of *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, Daniel Richter made another tentative step in this direction.¹⁹ He begins by recounting a version of the story of origins and then goes on to discuss the cultural history of the Haudenosaunee in terms of this story. But the first real marriage of historical theorizing with cosmology came not from an Iroquoianist, but from an Haudenosaunee woman, the Mohawk scholar Deborah Doxtator in her 1996 dissertation on the Iroquois

¹⁷ C. Martin, “Covenant Chain Inc.,” 19.

¹⁸ C. Martin, “Covenant Chain Inc.,” 20.

¹⁹ D. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization*. Chapel Hill, NC. University of North Carolina Press, 1992

clans.²⁰

Perhaps the greatest contribution the four volumes under discussion here have made to Iroquois studies is to bring long neglected dimensions of the historical relationship between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans to the attention of the scholarly community. The Covenant Chain and its antecedents—the rope, the iron chain and linked arms—is one such example. In very general terms, historical writing on the Covenant Chain can be divided into two periods. During the first period, from 1677 to 1776, European colonial officials, missionaries, travellers and interpreters produced a mass of handwritten and printed reports documenting their relations with, and observations of, the Haudenosaunee. Records of councils include *verbatim* accounts of addresses made by Haudenosaunee orators and European colonial officials. In these councils speakers polished the Silver Covenant Chain and in so doing renewed relations with one another. Records of councils prior to 1677 include references to the rope, the iron chain and to linked arms, all of which must be integrated into any discussion of the Covenant Chain. In fact, an understanding of the metaphors of linked arms, the rope and the iron chain, is absolutely necessary for any discussion of the Covenant Chain. These documents provide the primary source material for the discussions of the second period, which began in the 1980s with the publication of the aforementioned volumes. Subsequent works (see bibliography) on the political history of the Haudenosaunee include, Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse* (1992); Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace* (1993); Jose Antonio Brandao, *Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies in 1701* (1997); Jon

²⁰ D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Iroquois Clans?: A Study of Clans in Three Nineteenth Century Rotinohsyonni Communities" Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1996.

Parmenter, "Pontiac's War: Forging New Links in the Anglo-Iroquois Covenant Chain, 1758-1766": *Ethnohistory* 44/4 (1997) 617-54; and his "At The Wood's Edge: Iroquois Foreign Relations, 1727-1768". (1999); and last, but most certainly not least, William Fenton *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (1998). How the Covenant Chain has been interpreted in these writings requires further discussion.

1.1 The Covenant Chain as a Political Principle

As noted above, the contemporary debate over the meaning and interpretation of the Covenant Chain began in 1984 with the publication of Jennings' *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*. Earlier, in 1971 Jennings published "The Constitutional Evolution of the Covenant Chain," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. In this article, he describes the chain as "a unique institution created by contract for eliminating violence and reducing conflict between Indians and Englishmen within specified and bounded territories".²¹ He carries this basic definition forward to his discussion of the Covenant Chain in *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* where he describes the chain based on historical sources and the documentary evidence available to him (more on this below, # 6). To his very great credit, Jennings combed through several hundred records and ultimately summarized his findings on the Covenant Chain as follows:

The Chain was a confederation between English colonies and Indian tribes. It came into existence in 1677 through two treaties negotiated in Albany, New York [...] The Chain is the reason why there was peace between colonies and tribes in the 'middle' colonial region during the long

²¹ F. Jennings, "The Constitutional Evolution of the Covenant Chain" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115/2 (1971) 89.

period from 1677 to 1755. The Chain organized trade between Indians and colonials over a vast region, sometimes openly, sometimes clandestinely. It recruited warriors in joint struggles of Indians and English colonials to conquer New France. It organized systematic retreats of Indians from defeats [...] And Chain arrangements opened the west to English settlements.²²

Jennings then describes how the Europeans interpreted the Covenant Chain.

Contemporary European statesmen and their colonial deputies recognized the Covenant Chain as a political, military, and economic power capable of tipping the scales of dominance in North America, and they entered into formal treaties with the Chain's tribes in the form of contracts between peers [...] The Chain was conceived and gradually tacked together through a painful learning process, with an amoebalike change of shape during its century of existence.

Jennings also draws a distinction between the political structure of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy and that of the Covenant Chain. The two are not to be confused, he says:

From its beginnings, the Chain's membership simultaneously included governments in both tribal and state forms. But the Iroquois immediately recognized the Chain as a means of enhancing their own status and power, and they maintained propriety management of it throughout its wobbly life. To tell the history of the Chain, therefore, is to tell the external political history of the Iroquois Five Nations and much of the history of New France and the English colonies.²³

He notes further that "the Chain underwent great changes in structure and function over the

²² F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, xvii-xviii. —Scholars in the United States are accustomed to using the terms 'Indian' and 'tribes' in their writings. In Canada, scholars tend toward such terminology as 'Native people', 'Aboriginal people' or 'Amerindian people', and 'nations'. The word 'nation' is used when referring to specific linguistic groups. The term 'band' refers to administrative bodies, such as band councils. However, even the use of the term 'band' is now disappearing from the literature. The present study retains the terminology used by the authors under discussion.

²³ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, xviii.

years”.²⁴

Critiques of Jennings’ work notwithstanding, he did indeed attempt to take the Haudenosaunee perspective into account. In the closing pages of his work Jennings writes about that perspective:

Because of its bicultural membership it was dual in aspect and must be defined twice. From the Indian point of view, it was an organization of peers, unequal in real power, but equal in responsibility. The Iroquois saw the Chain as a fundamental institution of cooperation for apportioning tasks and rewards [...] In their view, instead of the Chain’s being part of the British empire, the empire’s colonies were part of the Chain [...].

Neither colonials nor Indians conceived the Chain as an altruistic organization. It is quite clear that the English regarded it as an instrument to serve their purposes and then to be “given law.” From the Iroquois point of view the Chain was also a means of temporizing, of slowing down the inexorable advance of Europeans whose numbers increased swiftly while Indian populations declined.²⁵

Jennings concludes that “Considered in one way, the Covenant Chain was a by-product of the development of the modern nation-state in America. Because it was not integral to that political development, it became invisible to scholars whose attention has been fixed narrowly on how present-day institutions of government came into being”.²⁶ At the same time, continues Jennings, the Chain “was also an example of accommodation and cooperation between peoples of different ethnicity, different cultures, and different social

²⁴ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, xix.

²⁵ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 373-74

²⁶ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 374-75

and political structures”. While Jennings discusses the chain at length, he does not discuss the meaning of covenant in this particular context.

Thus, for Jennings, the Silver Covenant Chain can and indeed should be interpreted in terms of political and to some extent legal expediency. Treaties were a “means for reconciling interests and combining efforts” and while specific obligations “altered from treaty to treaty”, the “commitment to alliance continued”.²⁷ It is worth noting that Jennings describes the treaty itself in terms of contract: “A treaty is a contract and it presumes parity of status and responsibility between the contracting parties”; for the English these treaties and the Chain were “an expedient to be maintained until the empire could muster enough local power to actualize the crown’s pretensions to sovereignty”.²⁸ In theory, once sovereignty was achieved, treaties would become irrelevant since—as Jennings observes in Hobbesian fashion—“Subjects do not sign treaties with their rulers”. The Haudenosaunee for their part did not then and do not now see themselves as ‘subjects’ to any ruler or to the British crown. Whether or not the Haudenosaunee interpreted treaties and the alliances which grew out of them as merely contractual in nature will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Suffice it to say for the moment that the very phrase ‘Covenant Chain’ suggests a relationship which goes well beyond any contractual obligation.

1.2 The Covenant Chain—its origin and essence

In 1981 Gunter Michelson, then a Mohawk-language linguist with the Canadian

²⁷ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 372-73.

²⁸ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 373.

Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, published an article on “The Covenant Chain in Colonial History”, in *Man in the Northeast*. This article is rarely cited in the secondary literature on the Covenant Chain and is barely mentioned in the four volumes now being discussed. Michelson addresses certain questions regarding the origin and essence of the Covenant Chain. He notes that the “documentary records of the Province of New York under British rule are replete with references to the Covenant Chain between the colonial administration and the Iroquois Confederacy”²⁹; customarily, “the two sides pledged to keep the Chain bright and inviolable and to come to each other’s assistance should need arise. This solemn pledge was then sealed by Wampum belts”. For Michelson, these records are “testimony to one of the first, most consequential and durable alliances” between Native peoples and Europeans in North America.³⁰ “Nowhere in the old records do we find a complete text which expressly refers to the Covenant Chain treaty, nor is the date of its initiation given anywhere”.

According to Michelson, as the relationship between the Iroquois Confederacy and various colonial administrations evolved and changed, so did the essence of the Covenant Chain. The “prime motive behind the first treaties between the Dutch and the Iroquois was free trade”; “however, when the English took over, this consideration lost much of its significance. In the power struggle between the English and the French in North America the military aspect became dominant. The Covenant Chain between the English and the

²⁹ G. Michelson, “The Covenant Chain in Colonial History”. *Man in the Northeast* 21 (1981) 115

³⁰ G. Michelson, “Covenant Chain in Colonial History,” 126

Iroquois evolved into a mutual assistance pact”.³¹ The chain for its part, began as a rope, then became an iron chain and was finally transformed into the Silver Covenant Chain. For Michelson, the Covenant Chain’s essence reflected shifts in the nature of relations between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans.

1.3 One Chain or Many Chains

In “Covenant and Consensus: Iroquois and English, 1676–1760,” Richard L. Haan argues the case for multiple chains and sounds a cautionary note on the “danger of considering the Covenant Chain to be a single entity”.³² Writing in 1987, Haan noted that recent studies still “emphasize European understandings of cross-cultural relationships”, and “even the most sensitive descriptions of the Covenant Chain tend to build upon the errors of colonial times and adopt a European posture, whether English, French or Dutch”.³³ One error, he says, is to view the Covenant Chain as a single entity which evolved over time and with changing conditions. Haan questions whether the Haudenosaunee saw it in quite the same way. According to him, there is not just one Covenant Chain, but many different chains. He goes on to say colonial recorders tended to use the English metaphor of the ‘chain’ and the Haudenosaunee metaphor of ‘clasped hands’ interchangeably. At times, the two terms were used in the same phrase. For example in 1684 a Seneca orator acknowledged the Governor of New York and said, ““there are foure arms which wee lock together in a

³¹ G. Michelson, “Covenant Chain in Colonial History,” 122.

³² R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus: Iroquois and English, 1676-1760,” *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 52

³³ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 41

Covenant Chain’”.³⁴ For Haan, the metaphor of clasped hands “applied to *any* recognized alliance of friendship [between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans], whatever the particular conditions”.³⁵ He adds: “And this is also how the English used it”. Haan also associates clasped hands with kinship. In 1677, he says, the Haudenosaunee grasped arms with Maryland and Virginia “in the fictive kin ties of ‘Brethren’”.

In Haan’s view, the phrase ‘Silver Covenant Chain’ came to “denote a *particular* relationship” between the Five Nations and New York. Even here, however, Haan notes there were three different Silver Covenant Chains. Haan also wonders if the Chain’s origins are necessarily to be found in the councils of 1677. In addition, he questions whether the Chain stemmed from an English invitation in that year, as Jennings implies, or from the Onondaga leader Garakontié.³⁶ The existence of many chains as opposed to a single Chain suggests to Haan a fluidity in relations between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans. Multiple chains also demonstrate to him that the Haudenosaunee did not always act as a unified Confederacy of Five Nations, but sometimes as separate nations each with their own alliances and covenant chains. Finally, the “prevailing notion of a monolithic Covenant Chain” cannot adequately account for Haudenosaunee attempts—either as the Five Nations or as individual nations—to forge chains with the French, or in Pennsylvania and Ohio country as well.³⁷ In effect, Haan is raising the question of continuity and discontinuity.

³⁴ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 47.

³⁵ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 45

³⁶ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 43

³⁷ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 56

Whether or not Haan adequately describes the Haudenosaunee perspective can be questioned; his portrayal of the Confederacy as being in a state of disarray, as deeply divided and as incapable of controlling their own diplomatic future,³⁸ may reflect yet another new scholarly tendency on the rise in the mid 1980s, viz. that ‘factionalism’ was the normal state of affairs within the Confederacy, (more on this below, #5.6). This being said, Haan does introduce an element of openness to approaching the historical documents and to the interpretation of the Silver Covenant Chain.

1.4 The Chain as a Literary Form

In his contribution to *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy* (1985), William Fenton looks at the treaty councils of the Haudenosaunee as a literary form. In so doing, he wants to “remove the charge that the treaties are ‘a neglected literary type that arose without conscious artistic design from the conflict between two distinct civilizations on the same soil’”.³⁹ He notes that Cadwallader Colden and Benjamin Franklin both admired the oratorical and literary style of Haudenosaunee council proceedings. For Fenton, “The purpose of the treaties was to make alliances and maintain them; but in performance [...] they were ‘diplomatic dramas in the form prescribed by Iroquois ritual’[...].⁴⁰ Fenton is personally particularly interested in, even taken with, the Condolence Ceremony. As he sees

³⁸ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 57.

³⁹ W. Fenton, “Structure, Continuity and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making,” in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 6, quoting Lawrence C. Worth “The Indian Treaty as Literature,” published in the *Yale Review* 17 (1928) 749-66.

⁴⁰ W. Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 6

it, the ceremony “imparted its structure to treaty protocol”, and he describes the purpose of Haudenosaunee–European councils as follows:

In the crucible of Indian and White relations the patterns that had governed Iroquois life for centuries became compelling and forced the White people to approach the Indian in a highly ritualized way that was completely foreign to European ways and thinking. The Indian idea that alliances once made had to be constantly renewed was equally alien to European thought.⁴¹

The metaphorical polishing of the Silver Covenant Chain was one of the ways by which tensions were resolved and alliances renewed. The chain, observes Fenton, “was perhaps the most famous metaphor of treaty literature”; moreover, the “Chain concept was the umbilical cord of the Five Nations”, and brightening the Chain “was accomplished by renewing the Covenant”.⁴² The inverse—renewal of the Covenant by brightening the Chain—may in fact be closer to the way in which the Haudenosaunee perceived the process, but Fenton’s comment can stand for the moment. Like Jennings, Fenton does not explain the meaning of ‘the Covenant’ in the context of Haudenosaunee–European relations.

As concerns literary form, Fenton describes treaty councils as “a species of drama in which the Iroquois were the playwrights, the directors and teaching actors, and the joint producers with the colonial hosts”.⁴³ Elsewhere in the article, Fenton depicts the story of the Iroquois Confederacy as the “charter myth of the founding of the Great Peace”, and of the central figures he says: “Deganawidah is the playwright and Hiawatha the leading

⁴¹ W Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 6.

⁴² W Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 22.

⁴³ W Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 7

actor”.⁴⁴

In assigning the status of ‘myth’ to the story of the Confederacy, Fenton is transforming the real world events which led to the formation of the Confederacy into legend, and Deganawidah and Hiawatha into fabled characters. The story of the Confederacy is an historical account, albeit one recounted in story form. As is widely recognized and understood, oral cultures pass history from one generation to the next in the form of stories. Stories facilitate oral memory and, along with material expressions such as wampum belts, are often the primary mode of preserving historical milestones and transmitting them through the generations. For sure Deganawidah and Hiawatha looked to the cosmology or mythic complex (to use Calvin Martin’s terminology) of the Haudenosaunee. For example, in his discussion of the Confederacy story John Mohawk (Seneca) writes that in bringing the message of peace, power and righteousness of the Great Law, Deganawidah had “some powerful cultural assistance” in the creation story.⁴⁵ Seen in this light, the creation cosmology plays a vital, even crucial role in the Confederacy story and indeed in the formation of the Confederacy itself. All Five Nations share the same story of origins; all were familiar with the imagery, the symbols, the events and the ceremonies associated with the story.

In his analysis of the chain as a literary form, Fenton extends the analogy of theatre to the actual Condolence Ceremony. The Condolence, he says, “in its purest form was

⁴⁴ W. Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 14.

⁴⁵ J. Mohawk, “Origins of Iroquois Political Thought,” in *New Voices of the Longhouse*, Joseph Bruchac, ed Greenfield Center (NY: Greenfield Press, 1989) 222. This article was first the “Preface” to a reprint edition of Paul A.W. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace* (1946). Saranac Lake, NY: The Chauncy Press, 1986.

celebrated at the great drama festivals held each fall at Onondaga where it is said the ceremony originated”; the condoling council “developed into a drama in which the actors were Indian sachems and colonial governors. With different casts and slight changes in the script it ran for more than a century”.⁴⁶

Again, we must question if this commentary is a reflection of Haudenosaunee thinking or of the Western imagination. In this article and in his many other publications, Fenton seems fascinated—even preoccupied—with what can aptly be described as a Platonic world of forms and ideals. For example, he endeavours to “reconstruct an ideal pattern of treaty protocol,”⁴⁷ and he constructs from colonial records the “ideal paradigm” of a Condolence Council, even though “it is much too elaborate as a guide to actual practice”.⁴⁸ At the same time as he strives to create the quintessential council, he is critical of today’s Haudenosaunee for whom “the program of the Condolence Council has become fixed and [with whom] there is a fanatical insistence on adhering to it forms”.⁴⁹

Fenton is quite correct in saying the Europeans recognized from the outset, the high literary style of Haudenosaunee council oratory. The Jesuits and both French and British military administrators were mightily impressed with the oratorical presentations of speakers, and the Europeans learned early on that they had to adopt both the style and the protocol of Haudenosaunee councils if they were to make alliances with them. To say that

⁴⁶ W. Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 18.

⁴⁷ W. Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 28.

⁴⁸ W. Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 36, n. 60.

⁴⁹ W. Fenton, “Continuity and Change,” 28.

these councils and the Condolence were ‘theatre’, however, raises a whole other matter which needs to be examined more closely. Nowhere in his text does Fenton discuss what he means by the term ‘theatre’ except to say councils were ‘diplomatic dramas’ and ‘drama festivals’. In general, Fenton’s discussion forces the performative aspects of Haudenosaunee councils into a Western theatrical model when in fact the councils are not analogous to European drama festivals. As will be discussed at some length in the next chapter, the idea that the councils of the Haudenosaunee were good theatre has a long history dating to at least the mid-seventeenth century.

1.5. The Chain and Structure

For Mary Druke the chain is related to the concept of relationships and by extension to the cosmology of the Haudenosaunee. She discusses this structure in terms of ‘linked arms’. Relationships of alliance and reciprocity “were inextricably tied to leader/follower interactions within Iroquois villages [...]; these “relationships—which orators dramatized by the linking of arms—extended through Iroquois society and beyond to form the structural basis of diplomacy”.⁵⁰ As Druke sees it, an alliance “was a goal desired by Iroquois people in relationships with everyone in their universe”, which included humans and other-than-human persons who, more often than not, were considered kin to the Haudenosaunee. “To the Iroquois alliances were dynamic, ongoing relationships and if they were not kept alive [...] friends might turn to enemies over minor differences, just as animal beings might send

⁵⁰ M. Druke, “Linking Arms The Structure of Iroquois Intertribal Diplomacy,” in *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 33.

illness if not regularly solicited for good health”.

Druke states that “Kinship ties were fundamental in Iroquois society and were the basis of many leader/follower alliances”.⁵¹ As is now recognized and generally understood, “kinship ties did not refer only to blood lines; indeed biological ties were not essential”. Kinship ties even extended well beyond marriage, genealogical and clan links to include personal relationships and international connections as well. In councils, Haudenosaunee orators employed kinship terms such a ‘uncle’, ‘nephew’ and ‘brother’, when addressing representatives from other nations. Other parties reciprocated by also addressing the Haudenosaunee with kinship terms. Thus, to link arms was to reinforce kinship bonds and in the process, alliances. Therefore, “the linking arms imagery [...] best captures the structure of Iroquois diplomacy, because it so graphically points to the pervasive personal [...] relationships upon which alliances were built”.

1.6 The Chain and Metaphor

The chain, says Michael K. Foster, retired ethnologist from the Canadian Museum of Civilization, is one of many metaphors employed by the Haudenosaunee in councils. Taken together, these metaphors served to establish and renew alliances. For the Haudenosaunee, “the metaphors of the fire, the path, and the chain, reveal a set toward the alliance which recognizes a degree of entropy in the system”.⁵² In order to avoid such

⁵¹ M. Druke, “Linking Arms,” 39. All other quotes in this paragraph are taken from p. 39.

⁵² M.K. Foster, “Another Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils,” in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 110.

entropy, the Haudenosaunee kindled and rekindled the council fire, repeatedly cleared the path, and continually polished the Covenant Chain. These metaphors, says Foster, “serve to condense and polarize complex ideas and situations, thereby constituting a sort of code by which the participants could evaluate the state of an alliance”.⁵³ For example, at any given moment the condition of the Covenant Chain indicated how an alliance was faring. The “covenant chain, either of iron or silver, might be in a high state of polish, or covered with dust, or even pitted with rust. Restoring the chain to its former luster might require anything from some judicious wiping with a cloth to hard work with a metal file!”⁵⁴ In the process of polishing the chain, alliances were renewed.

Foster makes a distinction between ‘product’ and ‘process’ in council proceedings. He explains that the *process* of kindling the council fire, of clearing the forest path of obstructions and of polishing the Silver Covenant Chain, were, for the Haudenosaunee, vital to maintaining relationships with other parties. The concept of process is closely bound up with the idea of renewal, a theme which “runs deep in the Iroquoian world view [...] In the Iroquoian view the alliance was naturally in a state of constant deterioration and in need of attention”.⁵⁵ For the Haudenosaunee the process of reaching an agreement was just as important as the agreement itself. Foster contrasts this with the European view of councils; they “were generally more concerned with the council’s outcome--the product (‘treaty’)

⁵³ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 108.

⁵⁴ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 109.

⁵⁵ M.K. Foster, “On Who Spoke First,” in *Extending the Rafters*, 194

rather than the process ('holding the council')).⁵⁶ Thus, Europeans tended to "assume that once a treaty had been signed it would remain in effect—more-or-less in a steady state—until definite action was taken by one or both sides to change it".⁵⁷

Another observation by Foster concerning the use of wampum further illustrates how the Haudenosaunee conceived of their relationship with the Europeans. Strings and belts of wampum were regularly exchanged by the parties during council proceedings; according to Foster wampum was "regarded as a kind of recording device".⁵⁸ However, the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans interpreted this exchange of wampum slightly differently: "The common thread running through the non-native accounts is a focus primarily on the *retrospective* uses of wampum, i.e., as a device for recalling past events"—here we are reminded of the European focus on a product; but for the Haudenosaunee, wampum functioned "prospectively, i.e., as a device for organizing present and future events". Thus, for the Haudenosaunee, the "motive in presenting wampum was [...] to elicit a response, and this is a forward-looking rather than a backward looking activity".⁵⁹ Here we are reminded of the Iroquoian idea of process. Foster concludes: "It is important to realize that the Iroquoian emphasis on the process of establishing and maintaining contact goes well beyond the use and design of wampum belts to include the essential meaning of an alliance or covenant itself—a notion to some extent recoverable from the phrase [...] 'what was agreed

⁵⁶ M.K. Foster, "On Who Spoke First," 194.

⁵⁷ M.K. Foster, "The Function of Wampum," 110.

⁵⁸ M.K. Foster, "The Function of Wampum," 105.

⁵⁹ M.K. Foster, "The Function of Wampum," 108.

upon, it joins their arms””.⁶⁰

1.7 A Model for Understanding Haudenosaunee History⁶¹

While historians have worked to separate the Silver Covenant Chain from the myth of an Iroquois empire, and while anthropologists have sought to situate the Covenant Chain in Haudenosaunee ceremonial life and practices, little attention has been given to the meaning and interpretation of covenant as it was employed in councils held between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans. The concept of covenant in both Haudenosaunee and European thought, and many of the other themes raised in this chapter, will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters. For the moment, I will focus on methodology, that is, on how best to approach the study of the chain and for this I will turn to the writings of Mohawk scholar Deborah Doxtator.

In her 1996 Ph.D. dissertation, “What Happened to the Iroquois Clans?: A Study of Clans in Three Nineteenth Century Rotinohsyonni Communities,” and in an article published posthumously in 2001, “Inclusive and Exclusive Perceptions of Difference: Native and Euro-Based Concepts of Time, History and Change,” Deborah Doxtator presents a set of premises which provides the foundation for her research on the clans.⁶² I will briefly

⁶⁰ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 110.

⁶¹ This sub-title is modeled after one employed by Deborah Doxtator, “A Model for Understanding Clan History,” in her dissertation “What Happened to the Iroquois Clans,” 1.

⁶² Doxtator uses ‘Rotinohsyonni’, the Mohawk word for ‘People of the Longhouse’. I am using Haudenosaunee, which also means ‘People of the Longhouse’, since it is more widely used throughout the Confederacy.

summarize each premise.

First, Euro-based concepts of time and history differ dramatically and fundamentally from Native conceptualizations. “European history is based on a tradition that stems from Thucydides’ emphasis upon retelling events in a chronological sequence as part of one universal history”.⁶³ Western notions of time focus on “separate segments joined in a chronological sequence”.⁶⁴ *A* happens, then later *B* occurs, and then as a consequence *C*. In keeping with this tradition, the history of North America has been written as a narrative. History can be and is rewritten over time as perspectives of the past change.

Second, Native conceptualizations of history are focused on episodes or different time periods, and “Native concepts of history find no gulf between different segments of time. Each time is different, but this does not mean there is an impenetrable wall because of that difference”⁶⁵; to the contrary, there is a high “degree of temporal continuity and unity underlying Native concepts of history”. In effect, this means there is no separation between “what is called ‘myth’ and what is determined ‘historical observation’”.⁶⁶ Doxtator points to the Tuscarora historian, David Cusick, and his 1825 *History of the Six Nations* as an

⁶³ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive Perceptions of Difference: Native and Euro-Based Concepts of Time, History and Change,” in *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700*, Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny eds. (Toronto ON: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 35.

⁶⁴ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 36.

⁶⁵ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 37.

⁶⁶ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 36. —Barbara Mann refers to these as the First Epoch of Time (creation), the Second Epoch of Time (story of the Confederacy), and the Third Epoch of Time (*Gai:wiiio* or the Code of Handsome Lake). See listings under these headings in *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)* Bruce Johansen and Barbara Mann, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).

example. “The resulting history, although organized chronologically from the beginning of the world to the arrival of Columbus, is still much more focused on cultural structures than on the English calendar”; in order to understand Cusick’s work, “one has to be literate enough about Rotinohsyonni culture to understand the allusions to ‘stone-coats,’ ‘lake serpents,’ ‘flying heads,’ or the ‘tree of peace’”.⁶⁷

Third, though Native “concepts of time present no gulf between time periods, they do not imply a static lack of change [...] In fact, in Rotinohsyonni thought there is continual movement, not stasis”.⁶⁸ Anyone at all interested in Native concepts of history has heard the phrase ‘cyclical time’. Doxtator illustrates this with an example from the Haudenosaunee story of origins:

The creation story itself emphasizes this continual movement. For a while there is movement toward enlarging life (Spring) by Sapling, the elder brother of the twins. This is followed by movement for a time back towards contraction (Winter), brought about by Flint, the younger of the twins. Although this cyclical movement is balanced, it is not productive of stasis. Each seasonal cycle is never exactly the same and the overall result is the gradual growth, layering and development of the earth.

Doxtator makes an important point concerning this passage: the “continual state of change and transformation is brought about by balanced forces [Sapling/Flint; Spring/Summer; expansion/contraction; internal/external] interacting with one another”.⁶⁹ In the nineteenth century the clans, and indeed all Haudenosaunee social institutions, had “within them two

⁶⁷ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 42.

⁶⁸ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 38.

⁶⁹ For a discussion on the relationship between Sapling and Flint see Appendix 3.

balanced elements or ‘sides’” and Doxtator sees the history of clans “within the context of the Rotinonhsyonni philosophy that the world is made up of reciprocal relationships between two sides”.⁷⁰ That is, father/mother; elder/younger; men/women; the forest/the clearing. “The spatial concept of dividing things into two parts,” writes Doxtator, “is related to the idea of ‘the middle of things’ or the center. It exists in virtually all elements of Rotinonhsyonni culture from longhouses to music to language construction. Even the day itself has two parts or ‘sides’”.⁷¹ Doxtator then goes on to describe various dimensions of the two sides:

In Rotinonhsyonni [condolence] rituals, two sides who sit opposite one another, each require the other to condole the death of a clan member or raise a new chief [...] The idea of two sides corresponds to spatial divisions as well. Just as the point between the two sides or parts of the day has significance, so Rotinonhsyonni thought marks the point where two different ‘places’ meet. In condolence rituals certain songs and speeches must be performed at ‘the wood’s edge’ signifying the transition from forest to settlement clearing”.

Fourth, history is an additive process. History builds on what has gone before in “a kind of consciously constructed continuity” between time segments. “Continuity without separating gaps is central to this view of history”.⁷² As noted above, change occurs, but this change is not replacement; rather, “change incorporates and subsumes the structures of the

⁷⁰ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 11.

⁷¹ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 52.

⁷² D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 39.

past”.⁷³ This means that no “level of organization [...] disappears: each is incorporated within institutions with larger and larger spatial contexts”.⁷⁴ On the question of history as an additive process, Doxtator notes in the story of origins when the clans are introduced, nothing else is displaced. Similarly, when Sky Grasper returns to earth and established the Four Ceremonies nothing is lost or taken away:

In the creation story, the descendants of the first man and woman, follow repeatedly the instructions of Sky Grasper, until there were a great many people on earth and it became apparent that an uneasy ‘unfinished’ situation has arisen in their relationships with one another. There was absolute silence. They had no ceremonies to perform. Sky Grasper returned to earth and established the Four Ceremonies. In adding these four ceremonies, nothing is lost or taken away, all is incorporated within the next addition.

Here, Doxtator herself is demonstrating the idea of a consciously constructed continuity between ‘myth’—the creation story—and the history of clan relationships as well as the historical origins of the Four Ceremonies.

Fifth, concrete metaphors have multiple meanings in parallel.⁷⁵ Therefore, “To explain or discuss using metaphors requires one to think in ways that emphasize multiple meanings in parallel [...] As a concrete, spatial way of explaining change and how the world works, successful metaphors must also integrate their varied expressions into a variety of contexts”. She gives the following example:

⁷³ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 40.

⁷⁴ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 39.

⁷⁵ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 45.

In the seventeenth century the Rotinonhsyonni people often referred to their leaders, territories and social units such as clans by the same name. For instance the leader of a prominent Oneida wolf clan village was known simply as ‘the wolf’ [...] The royaner (Six Nations Confederacy chief) clan titles themselves incorporated more than just reference to a single individual, since the title could refer to an individual, to the clan, or to an entire group of people and their lands.

Doxtator demonstrates the interplay between metaphor, place and identity. “The matrix of Rotinonhsyonni cultural identity has always been rooted in place and territory”; and “each of the Five and then the Six Nations called themselves names that describe their territories.” For instance “the Seneca called themselves Nundawaono or ‘Great Hill People,’ the Cayuga Guengwehoni or ‘People of the Mucky land’, and the Mohawk, Kahnye’kehaka or ‘People of the Place of the Flint’”.⁷⁶

These many conceptual gems are key to understanding how Doxtator was able to ‘see’ that which other scholars could not—what happened to the Iroquois clans in the nineteenth century. She goes well beyond the widely held view of clans as static and rigid in structure and as unconnected with place or land.⁷⁷ In the nineteenth century, the clearing and the forest literally underwent enormous change, she says. Metaphorically, the clearing (women) and the forest (men) responded to this change and the clans, because of their “fluidity and subsuming nature” survived and continued to exist.⁷⁸

In the following study on metaphor and council oratory, I will employ Deborah

⁷⁶ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 42-43.

⁷⁷ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 39.

⁷⁸ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 40.

Doxtator's observations on the nature of Haudenosaunee concepts of time, place and history to locate, illustrate and accentuate aspects of the Covenant Chain which have not yet been discussed in the literature or have been only partially developed. Her writings have been both a guide and an inspiration to this study. I will begin with a discussion many metaphors employed by the Mohawk speaker Kiotseaeton in his address to a council at Trois-Rivières in July of 1645.

CHAPTER 2

“HE CLEARED THE PATH AND MADE THE WAY SMOOTH”:

METAPHOR AND MULTIPLE MEANINGS IN PARALLEL

The eighth [belt of wampum] performed the whole journey that had to be made on land. You would have said that he felled trees; that he lopped off branches; that he pushed back the bushes; that he put earth in the deepest holes. ‘There,’ said he, ‘is the road, quite smooth and quite straight.’ He bent toward the ground, looking to see whether there were any more thorns or bushes, and whether there were any mounds over which one might stumble in walking. ‘It is all finished. We can see the smoke of our villages, from Québec to the extremity of our country. All obstacles are removed.’

Kiotseaeton, Trois-Rivières, July 12, 1645

Every one admitted that this man [Kiotseaeton] was impassioned and eloquent.

Barthelemy Vimont, S.J., July 12, 1645

To explain or discuss using metaphors requires one to think in ways that emphasize multiple meanings in parallel, and not in ways that focus on separate distinct segments [...] As a concrete, spatial way of explaining change and how the world works, successful metaphors must also integrate their varied expressions in a variety of contexts.

Deborah Doxtator, Mohawk, 1996¹

Taken literally, this portion of Kiotseaeton’s well-known address to Wendat, Montagnais, Algonquin and French delegates to a peace conference at Trois-Rivières in July of 1645, indicates he and his two fellow Mohawk travellers had performed a considerable amount of hard physical labour on their way to the council site. This was not what Kiotseaeton intended listeners to conclude—the idea of clearing the path was meant to be

¹ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 45.

taken metaphorically.² In metaphorical terms, much can be said about this passage. In one sense, when Kiotseaeton felled trees, cut away branches and bushes and filled the holes with earth, he was indicating the forest path along which the delegates travelled to the council had been rough and full of obstructions. On their journey, they may have stumbled and fallen or scratched and bruised themselves. In clearing the path of debris, Kiotseaeton soothed their aches and pains.³

Along with these obstacles, delegates may have faced other dangers such as violent storms or threats from the many animals who inhabited the forests of the northeast woodlands. With his words, Kiotseaeton removed the worries encounters of this kind had created. In addition to physical hardship, the delegates may have been beset by other

² The original French text of the council includes two spelling variations—*Kiotseaeton* and *Kiotsaeton*. The former is used here.

³ The proceedings of the entire council were recorded by Barthelmey Vimont, S.J. The original French text with an English translation of the 1645 “Treaty of Peace Between the French, the Iroquois and Other Nations,” can be found in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1601-1791*, Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. (Cleveland OH: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 27:247-53. (Hereafter, *JRAD*). Vimont became superior of the mission in New France in 1639 and except for a three-year absence remained there until 1659. A second record of the council was made by Marie de L’Incarnation in a letter to her son and is reprinted in English in *Word From New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de L’Incarnation*, Joyce Marshall, ed. & trans (Toronto ON: Oxford University Press, 1967), 135-63. Germaine Warkentin (see citation, this note) raises the question of whether or not Marie de L’Incarnation actually attended the council. Unless otherwise indicated, the following discussion of the speech is taken from the Vimont text.

For discussions of the council and for a reproduction of the English text of the council see “The Earliest Recorded Description: The Mohawk Treaty with New France at Three Rivers, 1645,” in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, 127-53. This article includes commentaries by William Fenton, Mary Druke and Francis Jennings. For a discussion of Kiotseaeton’s use of wampum see Germaine Warkentin, “In Search of ‘The Word of the Other’: Aboriginal Sign Systems and the History of the Book in Canada”: *Book History* 2:1 (1999) 1-27. For a discussion of the speech in relation to the legal history of the United States see Robert A. Williams Jr., *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), *passim*. For a discussion of Kiotseaeton’s address as an oratorical performance, see William M. Clements, “The Jesuit Foundations of Native North American Literary Studies”: *American Indian Quarterly* 18:1 (1994) 54-56 and *Native American Verbal Art: Texts and Contexts*. (Tucson AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1996). For a discussion of Kiotseaeton’s use of irony, see Harry W. Robie, “Kiotsaeton’s Three Rivers Address: An Example of ‘Effective’ Iroquois Oratory”: *American Indian Quarterly*, 6 (1982) 238-47.

problems. Perhaps they saw shadows around them as they travelled or heard rumours about one another. They may have passed scenes of bloody confrontations and been reminded of past strife. Indeed, on their way to the council, Kiotseaeton and his fellow Mohawk delegates reported they had seen “the place where the Algonquins massacred us last Spring”. At that site, said Kiotseaeton, “I turned away my eyes for fear of exciting my anger [...] then striking the earth and listening, I heard the voice of my Forefathers [...] When they saw that my heart was capable of seeking revenge they called out to me in a loving voice: ‘My grandson, my grandson, be good; do not get angry’”(JRAD 27:257).⁴ As he spoke, Kiotseaeton removed all bitterness and relieved their troubled minds. At the same time, Kiotseaeton’s words dispelled any apprehension the delegates might have had with the council itself.

Their uneasiness was justified since in the three-year period preceding the council hostilities had broken out between the Mohawks and the French, and their Wendat and Algonquin neighbours as well. This council occurred at a time when relations between the Mohawks, the Algonquins, Wendat and Montagnais were strained almost to the limit. By 1645 a shift in relations brought about by French trading practices was already well

⁴ These were some of the words Kiotseaeton spoke as he presented the fourth belt of wampum. In 1883 Horatio Hale published *The Iroquois Book of Rites* in which he included “The Ancient Rites of the Condoling Council.” These ancient rites begin with “The Preliminary Ceremony: Called ‘At the Wood’s Edge’”. A portion of the ceremony reads as follows: “Great thanks now, therefore, that in safety you have come through the forest. Because lamentable would have been the consequences had you perished by the way, and the startling word had come, ‘Yonder are lying bodies, yea, and of chiefs!’ And they would have thought in dismay, what had happened, my offspring.” (H.E. Hale, *The Iroquois Book of Rites and Hale on the Iroquois by H.E. Hale*, 1881 (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Iroquois Reprints 1989), 193).

According to William Fenton, Hale translated a Mohawk manuscript which dated to 1832. It in turn was a copy of an older text in the Anglican orthography of the Mohawk prayer book. (W. Fenton, “Horatio Hale,” *The Iroquois Book of Rites and Hale on the Iroquois by H.E. Hale*, 15-16). According to Fenton the 1832 copy is attributed to Chief David of Schoharie who wrote down the proceedings and rituals of the Condolence Council as an act of cultural preservation. This text and its predecessor in the Anglican orthography were written down at a much later date than the council under discussion here.

underway. The Mohawks, fearful of French expansion and influence, had raided forts and attacked Algonquin and Wendat canoes heading to French trading posts on the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers.⁵ Warriors on all sides had died in various encounters and others had been taken captive. Previous efforts to negotiate an end to the strife had failed and bitter feelings abounded on all sides. Clearly, then, this council was crucial for a peace settlement and a considerable amount of preparation had gone into ensuring its success. In the days prior to the public event, private councils were held to begin what turned out to be a long and formidable negotiating process.⁶

In another sense, as he smoothed the path and made it straight, Kiotseaeton was metaphorically removing all obstacles to open and constructive dialogue. He was making the way clear to mutual understanding and agreement. The record indicates Kiotseaeton “bent toward the ground, looking to see whether there were any more thorns or bushes and whether there were any mounds over which one might stumble in walking” (*JRAD* 27: 259-61). Often, in councils of this kind, Haudenosaunee speakers bent over and brushed the ground either metaphorically with the Wing or Dust Fan wampum belt or literally with a feather, in order to sweep away the dust and dirt from the council fire. Such dust and dirt signified discord and in the process of sweeping it away, all emotional and intellectual impediments to peace were removed. As concerns the council of 1645, peace was indeed first and foremost on the minds of the delegates since without it their very survival was in question.

⁵ M. Druke, “Unanswered Questions,” 133.

⁶ For discussions and interpretations of the historical context of this address see, Francis Jennings, “Multiple Intrigues,” and Mary Druke, “Unanswered Questions,” in *Iroquois Diplomacy* (1985) 131-37.

The metaphorical clearing of the path had ceremonial significance as well. In terms of ritual, it helped lift the thoughts of the delegates and in so doing prepared them for the long and difficult task ahead of reaching consensus on a number of important, highly sensitive issues and questions. Kiotseaeton was also helping them shed any feelings of ill will which clouded their vision and burdened their minds. His words were part of a process to open the lines of communication among the parties attending the council so they could become of 'one mind', meaning they agree. When Kiotseaeton made "the road quite smooth and quite straight," he was metaphorically working to ensure these lines of communication were as direct and as free of encumbrances as possible.

Finally, Kiotseaeton employed some vivid spatial imagery to convey his message. "We can see the smoke of our villages, from Québec to the extremity of our country," he said. Taken metaphorically, smoke rising from the village fires indicated people across the land were at peace with one another. Fires of this kind were also a sign of welcome. The idea that the delegates could see a great distance was yet another reference to the trees and bushes which had been cleared away, but it was also an appeal to the imagination: if the mind's eye was free to see and envision the possibility of a peace settlement, peace itself would surely follow. As he spoke Kiotseaeton held a belt of wampum. He was, in fact, speaking words of wampum and the belt made his words true.⁷

⁷ For a discussion wampum and words see M.K. Foster "On who Spoke First at Iroquois White Councils," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 99-114 and "A New Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils," in *Extending the Rafters*, 183-208. —For a detailed discussion of wampum and words see below #2.9.

2.1 “He Calmed the Waters”

This was the eighth belt Kiotseaeton presented to the council and he was about midway through his address when he spoke these particular words of wampum. With three of the previous seven belts he addressed problems the delegates might have come across as they travelled along the various water routes leading to Trois-Rivières. With the fifth belt, Kiotseaeton cleared the river of “the enemy’s canoes, which might impede navigation,” wrote Barthelemy Vimont, the Jesuit father who recorded the council proceedings (*JRAD* 27: 259). Vimont further commented that Kiotseaeton “made use of a thousand gestures, as if he had collected the waves and had caused a calm, from Québec to the Iroquois country”(*JRAD* 27: 259). With the sixth he smoothed the rapids, the waterfalls and the strong currents. “I thought that I would perish in those boiling waters”, said Kiotseaeton, “and with his hands and arms he smoothed and arrested the torrents”. As he presented the seventh belt, Kiotseaeton produced a profound calm on Lac St. Louis. “‘Here,’ he said, ‘is something to make it smooth as ice, to appease the winds, and to allay the anger of the waves’”(*JRAD* 27: 259).

As with the clearing of the forest path, Kiotseaeton meant for his words to be taken metaphorically and they served much the same purpose: he was calming the minds of the delegates, smoothing out their troubled thoughts and allaying their fears. Kiotseaeton’s desire to calm the waters also had a specific cultural meaning.⁸ In the creation cosmology of the Haudenosaunee, Tharohyawako, the elder of the twin brothers born to the daughter of Awenhai or Mature Flowers, helped make life easy for humankind when he created

⁸ J.N.B. Hewitt raises the question of references to mythic thinking and specifically to Tawiskaro in the story of the Iroquois Confederacy, in “Legend of the Founding of the Iroquois League”: *The American Anthropologist* 5 (1892) 131.

smooth flowing rivers, and, for ease of transport, gave them “double currents, the one running in one direction, and the other in an opposite one”.⁹ Tawiskaro, the younger twin, sought to outdo and possibly undo Tharohyawako’s creation by throwing rocks into the waters and by putting falls and cascades in the rivers and streams. In calming the waters Kiotseaeton was addressing the question of difference. If Tawiskaro’s creations made life laborious for humankind, Kiotseaeton, like Tharohyawako, worked to see that it was just a bit less difficult. As for the council, rough waters could make for jealous minds among the delegates, in much the same way as Tawiskaro suffered from a jealous mind. Jealousy could imperil the process of peace making.

The fact that Kiotseaeton dedicated a total of three belts to calming the waters may seem somewhat excessive to our eyes, but he could well have been thinking metaphorically himself. As the principal Mohawk emissary and speaker to the council, Kiotseaeton was a diplomat and the wampum belts he presented served an important diplomatic purpose. In the Mohawk language such belts were called *kaionni* or *kahionni*. *Kahionhonni* (the superlative of the word) was employed literally to refer to a constructed watercourse, usually straight, such as a canal. *Kahionni* was employed metaphorically to describe diplomatic wampum belts. In his 1882 *Lexique de la langue iroquoise*, Jean André Cuoq, noted that wampum belts—*kahionni*—resemble canals—*kahionhonni*: both are long and straight. As well, wrote Cuoq, the individual beads of which the belt is made represent waves. Metaphorically, *kahionni* is “a navigable water course which facilitates mutual relations among nations”. It is also “the sign of an alliance, of harmony and friendship; it serves to

⁹ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Tawiskaron” and “Teharonhiawagon”, *Handbook of the American Indians North of Mexico, Part 2*. (F.W. Hodge, ed., Washington DC: Bureau of American Ethnology) Bulletin 30 (1912): 707-11 and 718-23.

bring together divided minds, it is the binding feature of the hearts”.¹⁰ *Kahionni* can also refer to an agreement, and agreements—like rivers—are meant to run forever.¹¹ Thus, Kiotseaeton’s efforts to calm the waters may have been doubly nuanced: not only was he smoothing the way to constructive negotiations, he was illustrating the essence of the belts he presented.

2.2 “He Gazed at the Sun”

At the beginning of his address when he presented the very first belt, Kiotseaeton cleared the sky of any clouds and gazed at the sun to ensure it was shining. “When all had assembled and had taken their places,” wrote Vimont, “Kiotseaeton who was high in stature, rose, and looked at the Sun, then cast his eyes over the whole Company; he took a collar of porcelain beads in his hand and commenced [...] ‘Onontio, lend me ear. I am the mouth for the whole of my country; thou listenest to all the Iroquois, in hearing my words. There is no evil in my heart; I have only good songs in my mouth’”(JRAD 27: 253).¹² In the

¹⁰ J.A. Cuoq, *Lexique de la langue iroquoise: avec notes et appendices* (Montréal: J. Chapleau, 1882) 9, 160-61. English translation mine. —Cuoq (1821-1898) was a Sulpician priest who served at the mission of the Lake of Two Mountains for most of his adult life. He was also a linguist and published the *Lexique* and several other works on the Mohawk and Algonquin languages.

In the text, Cuoq uses the word ‘Iroquois’, though the language is actually Mohawk. Since he lived and worked among the Mohawks of Kanehsatake, his discussion likely reflects the language as it was used and spoken in the community in the nineteenth century and perhaps even earlier. An English translation (mine) of his entire discussion on *kahionni* or *kaionni* is included in Appendix II.

¹¹ My thanks to Kanerahtenha:wi Hilda Nicholas, director of the Tsi Ronterihwannhnha Ne Kanien’kéha Owén:na Orihwa’shon:’a Kanehsata:ke language centre, and Skewanades, elder and Mohawk language speaker, both of Kanehsatake, for the insight they shared with me. In our conversation, Skewanades mentioned that her father used the word *kahionni* or *kaionni* to describe an agreement and a treaty belt. She also pointed out that wampum beads, which are made of quahog and whelk shells, come from the water. Both Kanerahtenha:wi and Skewanades agree the word is very old and not used very much nowadays.

¹² The title ‘Onontio’, given to Huault de Montmagny by the Haudenosaunee, was itself a metaphor meaning ‘Great Mountain’, and all subsequent governors of New France were given this same title.

metaphorical language of Haudenosaunee council oratory, clouds were said to cast a shadow over the proceedings. “To *dispel the clouds* was to remove the cause of trouble” (Glossary, ‘clouds’). A shining sun held promise for the discussion to follow. With the second belt, he cast down the weapons of war—an indication he was declaring peace—and released a French captive, Guillaume Couture, who had been taken earlier in the year. In so doing Kiotseaeton offered tangible proof of his desire for peace. With the third belt he acknowledged presents given by the French saying they would cause “the weapons and paddles to fall from the hands of those who were embarking to go to war”(JRAD 27: 257). With the fourth belt he acknowledged those who had died in past encounters between the Haudenosaunee and the Algonquins. Kiotseaeton then proceeded to present the other belts of wampum, including the set with which he cleared the forest path and calmed the turbulent waters.

2.3 “He Kindled the Council Fire”

The councils of the Haudenosaunee were formal, highly structured events which could last a day, a few days, weeks or even months. The parties to this particular council met publicly twice in July and twice again in September before an agreement was concluded. At the penultimate session more than four hundred people attended the proceedings (JRAD 27: 279). As a rule, a council was held at a mutually agreeable site, in this case Trois-Rivières,¹³ suggested by the party who called it, in this instance the French under the auspices of governor Huault de Montmagny, referred to as Onontio by Kiotseaeton. According to the

¹³ According to Francis Jennings, the Mohawks “later tried to establish Three Rivers as the exclusive location for Iroquois councils with the French. (Jennings, “Multiple Intrigues,” 132). Other council fires included Albany, Montreal and of course Onondaga, where the Central Fire of the Confederacy burned.

diplomatic protocol of the Haudenosaunee, the party who called the council was said to ‘kindle the fire’ (both literally and figuratively) and thus spoke first at the proceedings. The rule was not a hard and fast one, however, and on occasion the hosting party deferred to a visiting party. Such was the case for this council. The aim of the French in calling the council was to demonstrate to the Mohawks that they were kindly disposed toward peace and, even more importantly, that they wanted to reestablish peaceful relations among the various nations present at the council.¹⁴ The Mohawks were key to establishing peace; this probably explains why Kiotseaeton was invited to kindle the fire and to speak first. In fact, the entire council was conducted according to the customs of the Haudenosaunee. This may seem surprising since the other parties present—the Wendat, Montagnais, Algonquins and even the French—each had their own forms of protocol. More often than not, however, councils followed the procedures of the Haudenosaunee when they were present.

As it turned out, the council fire which Kiotseaeton kindled was purely metaphorical—no actual fire burned and before he began his address, he prepared the hearers for the words he was about to speak. The record indicates the parties had arranged

¹⁴ In his discussion of this council, Gilles Havard gives the following negative assessment: “The peace treaty concluded with the Mohawks at Trois-Rivières in 1645 by Governor Montmagny, for example, was a sham; the four western nations of the League [the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga and the Seneca] did not take part in it, and among the Wendat, Algonquins, Montagnais and Attikameks only the baptized Amerindians were covered. Furthermore, this peace, which was really nothing more than a truce, was broken by the Mohawks the following year.” (G. Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*, Phyllis Aronoff & Howard Scott trans. (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 54). Havard’s critique should be seen in light of his larger discussion on the treaty of 1701 and those leading up to it, which he describes as “general peace agreements” (Havard, *The Great Peace*, 52). He does not count the council of 1645 as preliminary to such agreements. While Havard is correct in pointing out that the Confederacy as a whole was not represented at the council, this does not detract from the importance of the council or of Kiotseaeton’s address. When Kiotseaeton said he could see “the smoke of our villages, from Québec to the extremity of our country,” he may have been referring to Mohawk country and not to the Confederacy as a whole.

themselves in the courtyard of the fort.¹⁵ The Mohawks sat next to the French and opposite them were the Algonquins and the Montagnais. The Wendat and other French delegates sat on the other two sides. It must have been one of those sweltering July days for the transcript shows large sails had been hung over the area to keep off the heat of the sun. In the meantime, Kiotseaeton and his fellow Mohawk delegates made the necessary arrangements for the Condolence Ceremony. “In the centre,” wrote Vimont, “was a large space, somewhat longer than wide, in which the Iroquois caused two poles to be planted, and a cord to be stretched from one to the other on which to hang and tie the words that they were to bring to us,—that is to say, the presents they wished to make, which consisted of seventeen collars of porcelain beads, a portion of which were on their bodies”(JRAD 27: 253).

2.4 The Condolence

Kiotseaeton presented seventeen belts of wampum in all. The process would have been lengthy and likely took the whole day to complete. According to William Fenton, this is the earliest recorded full description of a council held between the Haudenosaunee and a European nation. Other treaties of trade had earlier been established between the Mohawks and the Dutch and Mohawks and the French, but in the vast array of documents from the period, this is the first full written account which has survived to this day. This particular council record is of additional interest and importance because, according to Fenton, it is

¹⁵ JRAD 27:253. —The French seemed to have adopted Haudenosaunee custom here. For example, when Jacques Cartier arrived at Hochelaga in October 1535 he was taken inside a palisaded settlement and was seated in a central square where the speeches took place. See Gilles Thérien, “*Memoria* as the Place of Fabrication of the New World,” in *Decentring the Renaissance*, 2001, 76.

also the first recorded account of the Condolence Ceremony.¹⁶ The Condolence Ceremony, one of the most moving and beautiful of all Haudenosaunee rituals, addresses questions of grief and anger.¹⁷ In essence, the Condolence aims to establish or reestablish in the individual, a balance between reason and emotion. People overcome with such emotions as grief and anger are unable to think clearly or logically. The Condolence directly addresses these emotions and in so doing brings reason back to its proper 'seat'. Clear thinking is

¹⁶ W. Fenton, "The Earliest Recorded Description," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 127-28.—Fenton has written extensively on the Condoling Council. See for example "Structure, Continuity, and Change," *Iroquois Diplomacy* 3-36, and discussions in his *The Great Law of the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Fenton's writings deal almost exclusively with the full longhouse Condoling Council for raising a new chief, where fifteen or more strings of wampum are presented.—For a discussion of the most recent such Condoling Council see Ross Montour, "The Gathering of Five: Condolence at Akwesasne": *Eastern Door* 9/16 (May 19, 2000). Some additional notations are useful here. As my colleague Brian Deer of Kahnawake has pointed out, the Condolence can be and is employed in many different situations when a person is in grief or anger. This is true both historically and in the present.

The historical record offers accounts of how the Condolence was employed in contexts other than raising a chief. The council under discussion here is one example. Also, in September of 1770 Daniel Claus (1727-1787), deputy to Sir William Johnson, travelled to Kaneshatake to discuss various matters. After an arduous journey across the Lake of Two Mountain in a late summer storm, an exhausted Claus finally arrived at his destination. He condoled with the chiefs of the community on their loss of one of their own. They then condoled with him. ("Journal of Daniel Claus," *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 8: 947-48). In February of 1801 at Fort George, Joseph Brant condoled William Claus (1763-1826, son of Daniel), upon the death of his mother Ann Johnson Claus ("Condolence Speech," in *Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, Daniel David Moses & Terry Goldie, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2nd ed), 16).

For a discussion of a family condolence see Frank Speck, "Family Condolence Rite of the Sour Springs Band," in *Midwinter Rites of the Cayuga Long House*, 1949 (Lincoln NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 159-63.

Brian Deer notes the Condolence is employed for purposes of personal and community counselling. See also Mike Myers, "Frozen Thoughts, Frozen Feelings," in *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples*, (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1993) 4:35-50.

In 2001 the people of Kahnawake held a community Condolence to address grief brought on by a number of tragic events including the destruction of the World Trade Center. Iron workers from Kahnawake had worked on its construction and then on its removal. See Teyowisonte (Thomas Deer), "Releasing the Burden: Haudenosaunee Concept of Condolence": *Eastern Door* 10/35 (September 28, 2001) 14-15.

restored in the process.¹⁸ This metaphorical restoration of reason takes on concrete form in the Condoling Council when the bereaved party, seated on a mat, is actually ‘taken by the hand’ to the council fire.

In the oral memory of the Haudenosaunee, the Condolence originated with Hiawatha and Deganawidah or the Peacemaker. On his journey to spread Deganawidah’s message of peace, power and righteousness, Hiawatha learned of the death of his three daughters and his wife at the hands of Atotarho, an Onondaga warrior and a man of great power. Stricken with grief, he wandered aimlessly through the forest. Each evening he stopped, hung three strings of wampum from a cord tied between two poles and waited to be consoled. So numb was Hiawatha with grief he could neither see, nor hear, nor speak clearly. Deganawidah found him and taking each of the three strings of wampum in his hand he condoled with him. With a fine doe skin, Deganawidah wiped the tears from Hiawatha’s eyes so he could see again; with a feather he brushed away the obstructions which blocked Hiawatha’s ears so he could hear clearly; with water he washed away the obstructions from Hiawatha’s throat so he could speak normally. Deganawidah’s words lifted the grief from Hiawatha and he was restored to wholeness. He then went on to assist Deganawidah in his work to spread the message of peace.¹⁹ This ritual has come to be known in the anthropological literature as the Three Bare

¹⁸ In *For An Amerindian Autohistory*, Sheila Fischman, trans. (Montreal Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), Georges Sioui consoles the reader for a past history of relations which has produced guilt and hatred. He speaks of the role of reason as follows: “When wampums have been offered to all who are touched by history—to all human beings—whether to wipe away the tears that interfere with their vision, to ease their breathing, to render their ears sensitive again, or to smooth the paths of meetings until the beauty of life illuminates the eyes of all and reason, soothed ‘comes back to its seat,’ then shall we be able to listen to and understand Amerindian autohistory.” (page 7)

¹⁹ For versions of the story which recounts the origins and founding of the Iroquois Confederacy see David Cusick, *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations* (Lockport, NY: Turner & McCollum, 1848); J.N.B. Hewitt, “Legend of the Founding of the Iroquois League”: *The American Anthropologist* 5 (1892) 131-48; Arthur C. Parker, *The Constitution of the Five Nations or The Iroquois Book of the Great Law* (1916).

Words or the Requickenings Address. The Haudenosaunee often refer to it as the First Three Strings of the Condolence. In a full Condolence, fifteen strings are presented.²⁰

In his discussion of Hiawatha, Deganawidah and the first Condolence, John Mohawk observes the exchange between them was a powerfully emotional transaction:

The Peacemaker approached Hiawatha and extended an offer to pull from the older man the grief which had frozen his thinking and plunged him into despair [...] By countering the grief, by showing caring and commitment to brotherhood, the Peacemaker brings Hiawatha from a place of despair eventually to a place of hope.²¹

Mohawk further observes that the “message in this transaction is a very important one which needs attention in the area of political theory”, and he notes that Hiawatha and Deganawidah both seem “conscious of the fact that human beings reach places of psychological pain”, and “recognize that at such times it is difficult to reach clear thinking and they direct a considerable amount of attention to the pain which is being felt”. In effect, then, the Haudenosaunee integrated healing into their political philosophy and gave mental health a place in the political process.

Michael Foster discusses the psychological and physiological import of clearing the

(Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1991). Parker’s volume contains versions by Seth Newhouse (Mohawk, Six Nations Reserve, 1910) and by the Committee of Chiefs at the Six Nations Reserve, (1900). The most detailed version by far is: John Arthur Gibson, *Concerning the League: The Iroquois League tradition as dictated in Onondaga by John Arthur Gibson*. Newly elicited, edited and translated by Hanni Woodbury; in collaboration with Reg Henry and Harry Webster, on the basis of A.A. Goldenweiser’s manuscript (Winnipeg: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics, 1992). The above text is paraphrased from Paul Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace*.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the full Condolence see Hanni Woodbury, *Concerning the League*, xxxvi-lv. The first part consists of three burdens “in which the moieties reciprocally perform the restorative actions of drying each other’s tears, clearing the ears, and removing obstructions from the throat.” (xl) The other strings restore the organs of the body and smooth out twists in the body; remove bloodstains caused by injury; restore the daylight; dispell the clouds; clear the sky; restore the sun and rekindle the fire.

²¹ J. Mohawk, “The Origins of Iroquois Political Thought,” 222.

eyes, ears and throat. He begins with a description of the process:

In words only, the speaker first ‘wipes the eyes’ of the weary travelers with soft buckskin (their eyes are full of things they have seen on their journey, things which might have distracted them from their mission); now, he declares, they will be able to see normally again. Next he ‘clears their ears’ of all the things they have heard on their journey, things which might cause them to alter the message; they have normal hearing again. Then he ‘clears the obstructions from their throats’ so that once more they will be able to breathe and speak normally (their throats were filled with dust from the forest path). Finally, he removes the briars from their legs and offers them a ‘walking medicine’ [...] to settle their inner organs which have been dislocated by the rigors of the journey.²²

In many respects, the First Three Strings, with its emphasis on removing obstructions, serve as a complement to the idea of clearing the path of all obstacles. Both, to repeat once again, aim to open up the lines of communication between the parties. “Now it is manifestly obvious,” writes Foster, “that the first three ‘words’—the eyes, ears and throats—are the physiological organs of speech perception and production. They are the primary channels of communication in the human organism. The successful transfer of a verbal message from a sender to a receiver depends upon their proper functioning”.²³

In his address, Kiotseaeton did not (so far as we can tell) speak the first three strings of the Condolence. However, in clearing the path, smoothing the waters and dispelling the clouds, he was lifting away grief and anger and was seeking to find a set between reason and

²² M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 106.—From time to time, rubbing down the body also involved a metaphorical washing with water. For example, in 1761 at a council in Montreal between the English and the Kanehsata'kehró:non and Kahnawa'kehró:non, Sir William Johnson presented a belt of wampum which, he said, was to “cleanse and purge your bodys and theirs of all ill humours which might have been lodged there, and wash you with that pure Water which your Ancestors made use of on all such occasions ” (*The Papers of Sir William Johnson*. 10: 445).

²³ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 106.

emotion. A decade or so later in his *Relation* of 1655-1656, the Jesuit Jean de Quen observed this very process at work during a council held at Québec in the late summer of 1655. The Onontaeronnon Iroquois had come to make peace with the Algonquins and Wendat and they presented some twenty-four belts and words of wampum. With the first belt the speaker wiped the tears from the eyes of the Algonquin and Wendat delegates. With the second he wiped away blood shed in vengeance and with the third he cast away the weapons of war and all thoughts of war. The fourth belt is of special interest since de Quen discusses the relationship between reason and emotion. He speaks in terms of the soul and interprets the words as follows:

[They] believe that sadness, anger, and all violent passions expel the rational soul from the body, which, meanwhile, is animated only by the sensitive soul [...] That is why, on such occasions, they usually make a present to restore the rational soul to the seat of reason. Such was the purpose of the fourth present.²⁴

In his account of Kiotseaeton's address, Vimont made no mention of the soul, of reason or of emotion—an indication, perhaps, that he had not familiarized himself with Haudenosaunee thinking on these matters. Kiotseaeton made no explicit use of 'reason' or 'emotion' either (again so far as we can tell), an indication he understood implicitly the process his words were performing.

In his discussion of the Condolence, diplomatic protocol and treaties, Michael M. Pomedli focuses on the ideas of human fellowship and transcendence: treaties and the Condolence are religious rituals which “move beyond mercenary concerns to that of human

²⁴ “Embassy of the Onontaeronnon Iroquois who ask for some Fathers of our Society to Convert them to Christianity”: *JRAI* 42:51.—Whether or not they were in fact asking to be converted to Christianity is not conclusively established in the text.

fellowship”.²⁵ These meetings, says Pomedli, “transcended mere friendship-making and problem-solving to become sacred celebrations of important linkages”,²⁶ and he goes on to say that treaties “are not preeminently legal documents, for these minutes are replete with an obvious and extended concern for others, that is, for those who have journeyed, those who suffer and those who have died”.²⁷ There is, he says, “a progressive sense of transcendence in the treaties”; a move from the everyday world of trade and politics to the Condolence rite, the exchange of wampum, narrative, prayers and celebration.²⁸

2.5 Calling the Council

The process of calling a council was as formal as the council itself. According to custom, runners for the hosting party carried invitational wampum to the other party, and then carried back a response. In his account, Vimont makes no mention of the procedures for calling the council at Trois-Rivières, but in her discussion Marie de L’Incarnation describes how the French sent a Mohawk man, Tokhrahenehiaron—who was being held prisoner by them—back to his people with proposals of peace and an invitation to meet. He was laden with presents, she wrote, and as he set off made a promise to return in two months.

²⁵ M.M. Pomedli, “Eighteenth-Century Treaties: Amended Iroquois Condolence Councils,” *American Indian Quarterly* 19/3(1995) 319. (Proquest edition: <http://proquest.umi.com>)

²⁶ M.M. Pomedli, “Amended Iroquois Condolence,” 7.

²⁷ M.M. Pomedli, “Amended Iroquois Condolence,” 7

²⁸ In focusing on the religious nature of the councils and on the ideas of human fellowship and transcendence, Pomedli raises many interesting questions. It is important to note that the councils were not religious services as such. In addition, while not all council records are legal documents, many are, and are recognized as such by the judicial systems of both Canada and the United States. There is a real aspect of human fellowship to the councils, but not in the Christian sense—fellowship could and did develop between individuals, but relations between nations cannot be described as ‘fellowship’. On the question of transcendence, it is important to note that the transcendence which occurred in the councils was aimed at overcoming barriers to communication rather than celebrating universal brotherhood or forgiveness.

True to his word, he returned forty days later with a reply. According to Marie de L'Incarnation, when Tokhrahenehiaron arrived home, "the most prominent men of the villages assembled to deliberate" and "all agreed to accept the proposals and to send two of their principal chiefs".²⁹ In effect, Tokhrahenehiaron was acting as a 'runner'; and in sending him to meet with Mohawk elders, the French were demonstrating an awareness of Haudenosaunee diplomatic protocol.

According to protocol, upon arrival, the guest party was greeted at some distance from the site of the council proper for the ceremony 'At the Wood's Edge' at which time their bodies were ceremonially rubbed down. Refreshed, they continued on to the council fire. Neither Vimont nor Marie de L'Incarnation specifically mention a ceremony At the Wood's Edge, though for Mary Druke, Kiotseaeton's arrival at the water's edge was most likely equivalent to the ritual.³⁰ Clearly, however, Kiotseaeton knew what was expected of him and he came fully prepared. Barthelemy Vimont was mightily impressed with the sight before him as Kiotseaeton arrived for the council: "He was almost completely covered with Porcelain beads," recalled Vimont. "He stood up in the bow of the Shallop that had brought him from Richelieu to three Rivers," and "motioning with his hand for silence he called out: 'My Brothers, I have left my country to come and see you. At last I have reached your land. I was told, on my departure, that I was going to seek death, and that I would never again see my country. But I have willingly exposed myself for the good of peace'"(JRAD 27:247-49). As agreed, Kiotseaeton had brought Guillaume Couture, the French captive to be released. He and his fellow delegates then spent the next few days preparing for the council.

²⁹ Marie de L'Incarnation, *Word from New France*, 138.

³⁰ M. Druke, "Unanswered Questions," 136, n 2

2.6 The Necessary Psychological Connection

In Kiotseaeton's address, the presentation of the first eight belts was in fact preparatory to the actual negotiations and was part of the invitational portion of the council. These 'preliminaries', as Michael Foster describes them, were important for establishing what he and others call a "psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee".³¹ By the middle of the eighteenth century, says Foster, the Europeans tended to find this introductory phase of councils somewhat tedious and often simply dropped descriptions of it from the written documentation. In 1645, however, the whole council process was still relatively new to the Europeans and so a fairly complete record was taken of the proceedings. In addition, the actual questions under negotiation were important enough to warrant a detailed account. As scholars of the early twenty-first century, we work from written records and in so doing can easily overlook the many different ways in which the spoken word—in this instance the abundant use of metaphorical language—helped to create a rapport among the parties to the council. This was precisely Kiotseaeton's role and he faced an awesome task, given the historical circumstances.

Thus, the difficulties Kiotseaeton faced in establishing the necessary psychological connection among these parties were enormous. He was fully aware of the dynamics of the moment and he knew his address would establish the tenor of the whole proceedings. He was obliged to address some fairly deep-seated hostilities brought on by protracted political strife. He had to do so in a climate of mistrust and just as importantly, he had to communicate his message across cultural, linguistic and religious boundaries. The fact that

³¹ M.K. Foster, "The Function of Wampum," 104.

he dedicated so much time and effort to the ‘preliminaries’ is an indication of just how seriously he took the council. Kiotseaeton was a powerful presence and a compelling, persuasive speaker. He had to dispel any doubts others had over his desire to mend relations. As he presented the next four belts, Kiotseaeton continued the invitational phase of the council and worked to further solidify relations with the other parties.

2.7 “He Joined Their Arms”

Returning to Kiotseaeton’s address, once all obstacles to open communication had been removed, he turned to the task of building a relationship among the delegates and the nations they represented. With the ninth belt he told “us that we would find fires all lighted in their houses; that we would not have the trouble of seeking for wood,—that we would find some already cut; and that the fire would never go out, day or night” (*JRAD* 27:261). The idea of a perpetually burning fire was often applied to the actual council fire. Once kindled it would be kept burning for the duration until agreement was reached and a peace settlement concluded. In this instance Kiotseaeton was also referring to fires kindled in different communities and nations. They too would burn without interruption for the duration of the council. Such fires were by way of being a vigil and were, in this sense, an expression of hope. A perpetually burning fire is also part of the very structure of the Iroquois Confederacy. According to oral tradition, Deganawidah—the Peacemaker—kindled the Central Fire of the Confederacy at Onondaga, and gathered around it the Grand Council of fifty Condoled Chiefs and Clan Mothers. The Onondaga were named the keepers of this fire. Once kindled, Deganawidah instructed that the Central Fire was to be kept burning so long the Confederacy existed. So long as the fire burned the Confederacy would be alive and

vice-versa. It was the 'Fire That Never Dies'.³²

The tenth belt presented by Kiotseaeton was of special significance. It "was given to bind us all very close together," wrote Vimont (*JRAD* 27:261). He then went on to describe how Kiotseaeton placed the arm of one of the French delegates in his own. With his other arm Kiotseaeton clasped that of one of the Algonquin delegates. "Having thus joined himself to them, 'Here,' he said, 'is the knot that binds us inseparably; nothing can part us [...] Even if the lightning were to fall upon us, it would not separate us; for if it cuts off the arm that holds you to us, we will at once seize each other by the other arm'".³³ The act of holding hands or linking arms was a physical representation of the chain which was, in this particular instance, a metaphor for a bond of peace. In the languages of the Haudenosaunee the word for 'chain' means *arms linked together* (Glossary, 'chain'). In joining hands with the other delegates, Kiotseaeton was signaling his desire to live in friendship with them.

Lest the delegates have any doubt as to the veracity of his intentions, Kiotseaeton presented the eleventh belt and invited them to eat together. "Our country is well stocked with fish, with venison and with game," he said. It is "everywhere full of deer, of Elk, of beaver". Not only was game plentiful, "the road is cleared; there is no longer any danger,"

³² P.A.W. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace*, 35.

³³ *JRAD* 27: 261.—In his discussion of the tenth belt, Fenton writes: "When the Mohawk speaker took a Frenchman and a Huron on each arm, sang the 'peace song' in a loud voice, and marched them the length of the council space and return, to the accompaniment of his native auditors, he was dramatizing their adoption". (Fenton, "The Earliest Recorded Description," 129). Neither Vimont nor Marie de L'Incarnation mention that Kiotseaeton sang or walked around the council site at this point in his address. Concerning adoption, this may or may not have been the case. The Haudenosaunee could 'link arms' with peoples of other nations or 'take them by the hand' and in so doing form an alliance. An alliance did not necessarily result in the adoption of foreign peoples.

he said.³⁴ Kiotseaeton may well have intended for his words to be taken literally—perhaps even humourously—as well as metaphorically. In a reference to European eating habits he gave a recommendation for the French to give up “those stinking hogs [...] and come and eat good meat with us”(JRAD 27:261). His assurance that there is no longer any danger likely referred to a series of specific altercations among those attending the council. In the three years prior to the council, the Mohawks had been arresting Wendat and Algonquin canoes which were transporting furs to French forts.³⁵ This practice would now stop.

Kiotseaeton did not use another familiar metaphor for shared hunting grounds, ‘a dish with one spoon’, but the effect was virtually identical. His words indicated that peaceful relations now existed among all the nations present at the council and that they could share hunting grounds without fear of reprisal. As for feasting, this was integral to the council process. In the days between the arrival of the delegates and the formal council proceedings, Vimont noted the different parties had invited one another to feast together. In so doing, wrote Vimont, “they gradually accustomed themselves to converse together”(JRAD 27:249). Typically, during a daylong council, delegates retired for a time to discuss proposals and to feast. Metaphorically, such phrases as ‘to eat out of the same dish’, ‘to eat with one spoon’ and ‘to eat across the fire from one another’, were all expressions of unity (Glossary, ‘eating’).

³⁴ JRAD 27: 261.—Kiotseaeton apparently did not indicate that trade in beaver pelts for the European market was decimating the population of this species. Thus, he seems here to be speaking of game in terms of sustenance rather than as trade goods. The French beaver trade was carried out with the assistance of the Wendat and Algonquins (the Haudenosaunee traded furs with the English), a practice which contributed to hostilities among these nations. Thus, he also seems to be speaking of deer, elk and beaver as a common source of food rather than as a source of division.

³⁵ M. Druke, “Unanswered Questions,” 133

Finally, as he approached the moment for discussing the actual questions to be negotiated, Kiotseaeton once again sought to ensure the sun was shining brightly: “He lifted the twelfth collar, to dispel the clouds in the air, so that all might see quite plainly that our hearts and theirs were not hidden; that the Sun and truth might light up everything”(JRAD 27:261-63). In so doing, Kiotseaeton removed all sources of trouble and all impediments to agreement. With the twelfth belt of wampum Kiotseaeton drew the invitational phase of his address to a close.

2.8 The Agreement

Kiotseaeton’s efforts notwithstanding, no peace agreement was reached at the sitting of July 12. The next day, on July 13, Governor de Montmagny held a feast and according to Vimont exhorted the parties to “banish all distrust that might set them at variance”(JRAD 27:267). On July 14 de Montmagny responded to Kiotseaeton’s address. Again, in so doing he was following the diplomatic protocol of the Haudenosaunee. As a general rule in councils of this kind, the first speaker rose, delivered an entire address and then retired. A delegate from the party on the ‘other side’ of the fire then rose and responded. “The form of the answer was closely tied to the form of the original proposals,” writes Foster, and so words, phrases and ideas introduced by the first speaker were repeated, albeit loosely, by the second who then elucidated on them.³⁶ Only rarely did respondents raise new issues or questions. Sometimes, the first speaker would rise again and offer some concluding remarks.³⁷ Proposals, along with belts of wampum, were passed back and forth ‘across’ the

³⁶ M.K. Foster, “On Who Spoke First,” 184.

³⁷ M.K. Foster, “On Who Spoke First,” 184.

council fire with the aim of reaching a “perfect understanding”.³⁸ This reciprocal exchange of proposals and wampum offered parties to a council the opportunity to express their views. If agreement could not be attained in one sitting, the delegates reconvened for one or more sessions. In this way parties to a council made a concerted effort to reach a consensus.

In his response, de Montmagny did indeed follow the form of Kiotseaeton’s address, though to begin, he turned to some Christian imagery. Guillaume Couture, who was fluent in Mohawk and who had been held captive by the Mohawks, spoke on behalf of the Governor. “This is to thank the One that made heaven and earth for being everywhere, and for seeing into our hearts, and for now uniting the mind of all peoples”.³⁹ The governor then delivered three Mohawk prisoners and thanked Kiotseaeton for Couture’s safe return. He wiped out “the thought of the dead and the memory of past evils”. He made “the river easy, the lake firm and the way free so that some of the fires of the French and the Algonkins may be seen”. He invited the Mohawks to “eat with us, fish in our rivers for brill, sturgeon and beaver, and hunt moose in our forests”. Like Kiotseaeton’s fire, de Montmagny’s would “always be ready and will endure forever”. He invited the Mohawks to “eat together in peace”, with the French and the Algonquins. He also urged them to let the Wendat, Iroquets and Upper Algonkins speak. The question of other captives held by the Haudenosaunee was also discussed. Finally, de Montmagny made an overture to the Confederacy. “To assure them that we consider the Santoneroons [Senecas] [...] and other nations that are allied with them, as their kinsmen and ours”. De Montmagny then ordered three cannon shots fired in

³⁸ My thanks to Joe Deom of Kahnawake for explaining this idea of a “perfect understanding”

³⁹ Marie de L’Incarnation, *Letter from New France*, 147. All quotes in this paragraph are from pp. 147-48 of this letter.

celebration to “drive away the contagion of war and rejoice at the good fortune of peace”.

At first glance, de Montmagny was participating in the reciprocal exchange of wampum so characteristic of, indeed central to, the diplomacy of the Haudenosaunee. Germaine Warkentin questions if this in fact occurred, however, since in her reading of de Montmagny’s response, only one wampum belt was actually presented: de Montmagny’s presents, she says, “seem to have been simply that—gifts. There were fourteen of them, and the symbolism of each was carefully explicated, but there is no mention of a ‘line’ on which to hang them [...], and only one, the twelfth, is said to be a *collier*”.⁴⁰ Warkentin describes this as ‘unequal reciprocity’ and observes that the “entire event exploited the discourse of gift-exchange to which Marcel Mauss has famously drawn our attention”.⁴¹ Be this as it may, Kiotseaeton and his Mohawk colleagues apparently registered no protest.

Before turning to more detailed questions on the meaning and interpretation of wampum, one other portion of this council is worth discussing. It involves the concept of ‘twoness’ and the contrast between light and dark. According to both Vimont and Marie de L’Incarnation, a Mohawk—possibly Kiotseaeton, but no name is given—was approached by a Wendat delegate, who “sought to inspire him with distrust of the French”. In response to the provocation the Mohawk replied:

‘My face is painted and daubed on one side, while the other is quite clean. I do not see very clearly on the side that is daubed over; on the other side my sight is good. The painted side is towards the Huron, and I see nothing; the

⁴⁰ G. Warkentin, “The Word of the Other,” 7.

⁴¹ Note 28 of her paper reads as follows: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* [1925], trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990); see 19-20 on reciprocity and fear.

clean side is turned toward the French, as I see clearly, as in broad daylight.⁴²

With this, the Wendat delegate was said to have been silenced.

In his discussion of this passage, William Fenton observes the “dialogue contains some interesting cultural items”. The “face painting”, he says, portrays the “divided face or split personality concept, that is later encountered in Iroquois masks”.⁴³ He continues: “The contrast of light and dark, as in sunlight and darkness of night, in life and death, war and peace runs through a symbolic dyad”.⁴⁴ Matthew Dennis interprets the face painting and the man himself as the embodiment of a good/evil dualism. “We observe the Iroquois opposition of clarity/obscurity, light/darkness, peace/war, which they saw within people and which they sought to balance and control”.⁴⁵ Several questions arise from these observations and from the passage itself. For example, whether or not the man actually painted his face is not at all clear since neither record indicates how he made the necessary preparations, how he did the painting, or what materials and colours he used.⁴⁶ Was he speaking in

⁴² JRAD 27: 269 and Marie de L’Incarnation, *Letter from New France*, 148.

⁴³ Concerning the masks, in 1941 Fenton published *Masked Medicine Societies of the Iroquois* [Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute; Ohsweken, Ontario: Irocrafts: Iroquois Reprints, 1991], based on previously published ethnological writings and his own research in 1935. Fenton’s credibility among the Haudenosaunee was greatly diminished by his decision to publish numerous detailed photographs of ceremonial masks. For discussions of this see, “Fenton, William N”. and “Grandfathers (False Face masks),” in *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, 80-2; 132-33.

⁴⁴ W. Fenton, “The Earliest Recorded Description,” 128-29.

⁴⁵ M. Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 91. —His interpretation takes place within a larger discussion of magic and witchcraft.

⁴⁶ Joseph-François Lafitau discusses the practice of body painting and tattooing among Native peoples at some length. Since he takes a comparative approach, it is sometimes difficult to tell when he is speaking of the Haudenosaunee and when he is describing other Native people. However, he notes that Iroquois men greased their hair without putting any colours on it. He adds: “They did not put any even on their body or faces except in war time so that it was a sort of declaration that they were going to look for the enemy”. (J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 2: 41) Elsewhere, Lafitau notes that young men used vermilion and other colours dipped

metaphorical terms only? Metaphorically, face painting of this kind does not necessarily represent a split personality, or a good/evil dualism. For sure the Haudenosaunee have the concept of twoness, but this twoness is not a dualism in the Western sense. Kiotseaeton—if indeed it was he who daubed his face—may have simply been demonstrating to the Wendat warrior that his agreement to keep peace with the French would stand, for the moment at least. In keeping with the whole thrust of his address, Kiotseaeton was looking toward the daylight, toward the sun, toward the way which had been cleared of encumbrances. In so doing he was looking away from darkness. This was a forward-looking activity.

2.9 Words of Wampum

Exactly how much understanding of all the metaphorical nuance in Kiotseaeton's address Barthelemy Vimont took away with him is difficult to ascertain. He offers no comments in this regard and he makes no attempt to interpret the different passages. He confines his thoughts on Kiotseaeton's address to a single observation: "Every one admitted that this man was impassioned and eloquent". The absence of commentary may be due to the fact that Vimont was relying on an interpreter in whom he did not put much trust.⁴⁷

in oil or mixed with tallow and fat, which they spread on the face and head in general. (J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 2:42)

⁴⁷ The name of the interpreter for this council is not given. In her discussion of interpreters, Yasuhide Kawashima notes: "Most of the interpreters appearing in the Jesuit Relations [...] were anonymous, and no interpreter was given ... any political and diplomatic authority in dealing with the Indians". She goes on to say: "Among the most important French interpreters in Canada were Olivier Le Tardif in the 1620s, Jean Nicolet in the 1630s, Charles de [sic.] Moyne, Pierre Boucher, and Jean Amyst in the 1640s, and Jacques Godfray de Marfoeuf [sic.] in the mid-eighteenth century". (Y. Kawashima, "Forest Diplomats: The Role of Interpreters in Indian-White Relations on the Early American Frontier": *American Indian Quarterly* 13/1 (1989) 7). —For additional discussion on interpreters see Nancy L. Hagedorn, "Brokers of Understanding: Interpreters as Agents of Cultural Exchange in Colonial New York": *New York History* (October 1995) 379-408. See also, Wynn Reynolds, "Persuasive Speaking of the Iroquois Indians at Treaty councils 1678-1776: A Study of Techniques as Evidenced in the Official Transcripts of the Interpreters' Translation," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1957), Appendix, 353-412.

However, at some level, Vimont seemed to understand that Kiotseaeton was using metaphor to convey a message. He captured and expresses this insight when he describes how, in preparation for the council, the Mohawk delegates arranged the wampum belts or “the words that they were to bring us”(JRAD 27:253). Vimont then goes on to describe the wampum belts presented by Kiotseaeton as presents, which indeed they were, but first and foremost they were ‘words’ and he understood them as such.

As a trained speaker, Kiotseaeton followed in a long tradition of Haudenosaunee council oratory; when he delivered his address he spoke from memory, both his own and that of his forebears. For an event such as the council of 1645, messages were read into wampum belts and strings by sachems or elders, and ambassadors or messengers then spoke the words.⁴⁸ This was likely Kiotseaeton’s role: recall that he began his address by saying he was the ‘mouth’ of the whole of his country. Speakers such as Kiotseaeton bore a heavy burden. They had a duty to convey not only the substance of a message, but its intent and its spirit as well. According to Foster, sachems drilled the speakers until they had the message down cold. This repetition was, he says, “believed to increase the ‘power’ of the wampum rather than to improve the messengers’ memories”.⁴⁹ In the early eighteenth century, Joseph-François Lafitau noted that speakers were carefully coached on what they were to say. “As if the (words) were written, they are given instructions by their wampum belts or with little sticks of different designs which have different meanings, so that, on the

⁴⁸ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 104-105.

⁴⁹ M K Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 105

one hand, they will forget nothing and, on the other, they will not exceed their orders”.⁵⁰ For the Haudenosaunee, wampum belts served as a record of councils and the “presentation of wampum served as confirmation of words spoken”, writes Mary Druke.⁵¹ In addition, “wampum also served as a mnemonic device to remind speakers of the symbolized agreements by recalling the speeches associated with the wampum”.⁵² In the councils proper, says Michael Foster, wampum was an instrument for conveying messages from a sender to a receiver or from speakers to hearers.⁵³

The wampum belts of the Haudenosaunee consisted of white and purple cylindrical beads carved from quahog and whelk shells. During the eighteenth century they often featured highly stylized human and animal figures; diamonds, squares, rectangles, ovals, hexagons and houses as well as straight and slanted lines. The Covenant Chain itself was often represented by a row of human figures with joined hands. Speakers presented wampum with each major proposal and then received other belts in return. Belts were passed ‘across the fire’. The figures on belts presented during treaty councils came to “stand for the parties to an alliance or the locations of principle fire, while the line connecting them stand for either the path or the covenant chain”.⁵⁴ Some belts, continues

⁵⁰ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1:173.—The “little sticks” he refers to could have been Condolence Canes.

⁵¹ M. Druke, “Iroquois Treaties,” 88.

⁵² M. Druke “Iroquois Treaties,” 89.

⁵³ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 105.

⁵⁴ M.K. Foster, “The Function of Wampum,” 109.—Here Michael Foster is referring to the Two Row Wampum or Guswentha belt, which has two parallel rows of purple beads set on a background of white beads. The three rows of white beads which join the two purple rows represent the covenant chain, with three links symbolizing peace, friendship and mutual respect. The second belt he describes is the Friendship Belt. Foster discusses these belts in “The Recovery and Translation of Native Speeches accompanying Ancient Iroquois-White Treaties”: *National Museum of Man, Canadian Studies Report* No 5 (Ottawa: 1978) 4p. See illustrations, Appendix I.

Foster,

particularly feature the path by showing a wide row of beads running the length of the belt [...] or sometimes two parallel rows of beads signifying the separate jurisdiction of the Indian's and White man's sovereignties. On the other hand, two or more stick-like figures whose arms are joined by a longitudinal row of beads usually refers to the covenant chain.

The meaning of these designs and figures and how they can or should be interpreted has long been the subject of scholarly discussion, but for Deborah Doxtator the patterns and pictographs employed by the Haudenosaunee constitute intellectual imagery: "Knowledge was stored in symbolic form using images on wampum belts, birchbark and fur pelt drawings, utilizing images that evoked concepts rather than reproducing spoken language".⁵⁵ In this way, the Haudenosaunee employed both verbal and nonverbal modes of communication to convey their message. Sadly, Vimont does not give a description of the belts presented by Kiotseaeton, save one—the tenth which was "given to bind us all very closely together"; this belt, he wrote, "was extraordinarily beautiful"(*JRAD* 27:261). Typically, writes Doxtator,

contemporary seventeenth-century record keepers failed to recognize that wampum belts and pictographs were valid kinds of recording systems. In the minutes of innumerable council meetings with Native nations only passing mention is made of wampum belts, and although the writer may indicate that they were hung up during a speech, they are almost never described in any

The Friendship Belt can be seen as representation of the Two Row Wampum from the dimension of depth. That is, when visualized with depth perception, the two figures holding on to the covenant chain become the two rows.—My thanks to Philip Deering of Kahnawake for pointing this out to me. For a discussion of the Two Row Wampum see Richard Hill, "Oral Memory of the Haudenosaunee: Views of the Two Row Wampum" in *Indian Roots of American Democracy*, Jose Barreiro, ed. (Ithaca, NY: Akwe:kon Press, 1992), 149-59. For a discussion on recent critiques of the Two Row Wampum, see Appendix I.

⁵⁵ D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 40

detail or given much consideration in the written record.⁵⁶

In general, she adds, “references to wampum are more concerned with quantity than in the patterns or intellectual imagery of the belts and strings”. Certainly this is true of Marie de L’Incarnation’s account: she was most impressed with the *amount* of wampum presented by Kiotseaeton: “These presents consisted of thirty thousand grains of porcelain that they had reduced to seventeen collars”, she wrote in a letter to her son.⁵⁷ Like Barthelemy Vimont, she describes just the one belt and again, like Vimont, does so only in very general terms.

If indeed thirty thousand beads of wampum were woven into these seventeen belts, one is awestruck at the enormous amount of labour dedicated to manufacturing such a large number of beads and belts. By 1645 the ancient method of hand carving each bead had likely already given way to drilling with tools introduced by the Europeans. Even so, the process would have been long and labour intensive. Many questions arise. Where did these beads come from? Had the Mohawks produced them? Had they traded for them? If so, with whom?⁵⁸ What of the sinew used to weave the beads into belts? Who had produced it? Perhaps it was the men since they were the hunters. The actual belts? In keeping with the

⁵⁶ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 41.

⁵⁷ Marie de L’Incarnation, *Letter from New France*, 141.

⁵⁸ Warkentin notes that beads drilled with European instruments began to appear in archaeological sites in the late sixteenth century (“The Word of the Other,” n. 19). The Pequots of Long Island made the “true wampum” and Warkentin estimates an individual person could produce between thirty-six and forty-eight beads a day. She estimates that the beads in the seventeen belts represent, in economic and labour terms, four years of work by one person. She writes: “Like other Native sign systems, Kiotseaeton’s wampums evidently had a complex cultural history even before we examine what use he made of them” (“The Word of the Other,” 6). For discussions on the production of wampum beads and wampum belts in the Northeast see Lynn Ceci, “The Value of Wampum Among the New York Iroquois: A Case Study in Artifact Analysis”: *Anthropological Research* 38:1 (1982) 97-10; see also, U. Vincent Wilcox, “The Manufacture and Use of Wampum in the Northeast,” in *The Second Coastal Archeology Reader: 1900 to the Present*, ed. James B. Truex (Lexington, MA: Ginn Custom Publishing, 1982), 296-99.

idea of gender balance which so characterized Haudenosaunee life, perhaps the belts were made by the women who were the weavers.⁵⁹ How long did all this take? Who decided on the arrangement of the beads, on the patterns, the size of each belt? Who decided on the messages read into the belts: the Peace Chiefs? The Clan Mothers? The two together? What other duties and obligations did the members of Kiotseacton's community sacrifice in order to create these belts? The council took place at the beginning of July. In the weeks leading up to it as the belts were being made, did the community forego calendrical and seasonal events, for example the annual strawberry festival? Were the belts made in just one community, or did different communities participate? If so, were they also part of the council? How did the people physically arrange themselves as they produced these beads and belts? Were they in a kind of assembly line? Were they seated in a circle? Can the process of making the wampum belts be described as somehow 'sacred'? Were ceremonies performed? We may not know as much as we would like of the council itself, but of the seventeen wampum belts and their thirty thousand beads we know virtually nothing.

An observation made by Mary Druke sheds some light on why Europeans tended to omit descriptions of wampum belts from the written record. "Euramericans never developed a system for transmitting oral tradition associated with wampum belts, so the specific meanings of the belts were lost to them".⁶⁰ Another important key to understanding why Europeans failed to record the imagery on belts can be found in retrospective versus prospective function of wampum. These different ways of perceiving the role of wampum

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the concept and practice of gender balance among the Haudenosaunee see Gretchen Green, "Gender and the Longhouse: Iroquois Women in a Changing Culture," in *Women and Freedom in Early America*, Larry D. Eldridge, ed. (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 7-25.

⁶⁰ M. Druke, "Iroquois Treaties," 89.

reflect a deeper difference in the way the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans understood a council itself, i.e., in terms of process or product. The fact that colonial secretaries tended to leave out the introductory portions of council proceedings is reflective of this product-oriented view. For the Haudenosaunee, on the other hand, the very *process* of presenting belts and speaking words of wampum was fundamental to establishing and maintaining a relationship with other parties to a council.

2.10 Individual and Collective *Memoria*

In effect, the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans each approached councils with what Gilles Thérien calls different *memoria*. *Memoria*, says Thérien, is “the foundation of all expression” and “is the faculty that contains images and permits thinking”.⁶¹ In the context of rhetoric, *memoria* and *inventio*—the process by which discourse is constructed—work together. Rhetoric, says Thérien, is the art of oratory and the practice of eloquence, but even more importantly, he continues, it is “a way of expressing what comes from within”.⁶² What comes from within is related to *memoria* and it has two meanings: *memoria* “is both the individual, personal memory, which is unique, and also, in each of us, a collective memory, one shaped by social context”.⁶³ *Memoria*, he continues, is “fertilized by *inventio* and by the imagination”.

Thérien goes on to discuss a council held at Sillery in May, 1653. The Jesuit François le Mercier recorded the proceedings, and something about the document has piqued

⁶¹ G. Thérien, “*Memoria*,” 72-73.

⁶² G. Thérien, “*Memoria*,” 72.

⁶³ G. Thérien, “*Memoria*,” 73.

Thérien's curiosity. According to Le Mercier's record, the speaker hung wampum belts on a cord (Here we are reminded of Kiotseacton). "The assembly was held in a hall of our little house", wrote Le Mercier. "It was opened by the exhibition of the presents, which were stretched upon a cord extending quite across the hall. They consisted [...] of porcelain collars of a great size, of bracelets, and ear-rings; and of calumets, or tobacco-pipes". Again like Kiotseacton, the speaker cleared the path and calmed the waters: "'There,' he said, 'are the lakes, there are the rivers, there are the mountains and valleys that must be passed; and there are the portages and waterfalls. Note everything to the end that, in the visits that we shall pay one another, no one may get lost. The roads are easy now, and no more ambuscades will be feared'".⁶⁴

Thérien observes that Le Mercier (like Vimont) remains silent on the meaning of the wampum belt. Continues Thérien: "It seems to me that we have here an example of very concrete aspects of *memoria* that are totally indecipherable for the Jesuits". Is this also the reason why Barthelemy Vimont made no comment on Kiotseacton's address? In other words, according to Thérien, the Jesuits simply did not understand the message or the *memoria* the wampum belts held. Thérien goes on to speculate on the contents of these particular *memoria*—was the speaker attempting to resurrect a long forgotten alliance? Was he reestablishing a balance between the two groups? Was he trying to re-create an actual map, albeit very abstract, of a faraway country?⁶⁵ While the exchange of wampum belts was not part of the *memoria* of either Vimont or Le Mercier, at least one aspect of these two

⁶⁴ *JRAD* 40:203-205 cited in G. Thérien, "*Memoria*," 83.

⁶⁵ In his discussion of the message which accompanied the belt, Thérien does not seem to be aware of the metaphorical meaning of clearing the road and smoothing the waters.

addresses could have rung true with the Jesuits. For example, they could have drawn some kind of analogy between the metaphorical clearing the path and biblical passages from Isaiah wherein the crooked is made straight and the rough places made smooth (Is 40:4; Luke 3:5). Is this an instance of cultural and/or religious blindness at play?

2.11 The Performative Element

Among the Haudenosaunee wampum was, and still is, a mode of discourse and this has been discussed by Germaine Warkentin. She is interested in aboriginal sign systems—marks painted on, woven into or carved upon a material base or support—in relation to book history, writing, material forms and “written culture”.⁶⁶ Warkentin asserts that book history must broaden its horizons to include “every type of testimony produced in its period”, including manuscripts, documents, and forms of material sign making other than the written word.⁶⁷ In the case of the council at Trois-Rivières, Warkentin says Kiotseaeton’s use of wampum belts constitutes one such material form. The Native peoples of North America, she says, “possess a rich legacy of material sign-making, attested to in the archaeological record, in the linguistic evidence, and in early North American history as Europeans have recorded it”.⁶⁸ and non phonetic writing systems, including wampum belts, have for too long been excluded from the canons of literacy.⁶⁹ To classify Native cultures as ‘simply oral’ is too easy.

⁶⁶ G. Warkentin, “The Word of the Other,” 4.

⁶⁷ G. Warkentin, “The Word of the Other,” 3.

⁶⁸ G. Warkentin, “The Word of the Other,” 4.

⁶⁹ G. Warkentin, “The Word of the Other,” 5.

Basing her interpretation of Kiotseaeton's speech on Marie de L'Incarnation's account of it, Warkentin notes he was not merely an orator; he literally enacted the meaning of the belts. For example, Marie de L'Incarnation described how Kiotseaeton sang, walked about, and stumbled against stones.⁷⁰ To this list can and should be added the actual act of speaking. The performative element of Kiotseaeton's speech cannot, says Warkentin, be separated from the wampum belts he presented or vice-versa: a wampum belt alone does not communicate a message; an orator must convey its message, and at the same time, the orator's message is not communicated without a wampum belt.⁷¹ The "mediating element of performance is required to communicate the message".⁷² All this makes for a "persisting and systematic relationship between material base, social intention and performance".⁷³

Both Marie de L'Incarnation and Barthelemy Vimont made reference to the physical movements of Kiotseaeton. For example, after he had presented the first belt, Vimont describes Kiotseaeton's actions: "Thereupon he began to sing; his countrymen responded; he walked about the great space as if on the stage of a theatre; he made a thousand gestures; he looked up to heaven; he gazed at the Sun; he rubbed his arms as if he wished to draw from them the strength that moved them in war".⁷⁴ The song he and his fellow Mohawk delegates

⁷⁰ G. Warkentin, "The Word of the Other," 7.

⁷¹ G. Warkentin, "The Word of the Other," 15.—This may or may not be the case. According to Mary Druke, "Wampum as a physical substance was not the essential thing in confirming speech or agreement." (M. Druke, "Iroquois Treaties," 89). Nevertheless, Warkentin's point is well taken. She goes on to note that in his response to Kiotseaeton's address, de Montmagny presented many 'gifts', but likely only one actual wampum belt. As Warkentin sees it, this was something of a 'faux pas' on his part (G. Warkentin, "The Word of the Other," 7).

⁷² G. Warkentin, "The Word of the Other," 10.

⁷³ G. Warkentin, "The Word of the Other," 12.

⁷⁴ *JRAD* 27:139 —Marie de L'Incarnation uses almost this exact phraseology indicating she had read Vimont's account of the council (*Letter from New France*, 142). On this see G. Warkentin, "The Word of the Other," 2.

sang was likely the ‘peace song’.⁷⁵ When he presented the belts to calm the waters and clear the path, Marie de L’Incarnation noted that Kiotseaeton “began to act out these difficulties”. She was less than complimentary in her appraisal of his movements: he did so “in such an unstudied way that no actor in France acts out so naively [...] those things he wished to express”. She later conceded, however, that “it would not be possible to see anything better expressed than this action, the movements of which were accompanied by words that told what he was representing”.⁷⁶ Vimont, for his part, concluded that Kiotseaeton “sang some songs [...] danced for joy; in a word, he showed himself to be a very good Actor, for a man who has learned but what nature has taught him, without rule and without precept”.⁷⁷ Finally, when the day’s proceedings had drawn to a close, both Vimont and Marie de L’Incarnation wrote that everyone, the French included “danced and rejoiced with much gladness” (*JRAD* 27:142).

2.12 Ceremonies of Possession

These references to Kiotseaeton as an actor, to his speech as acting and to the council site as a theatrical stage beg further discussion, especially since it is not at all clear whether or not Kiotseaeton himself viewed the council or his actions as theatre. For sure, Kiotseaeton would have been trained in the art of oratorical presentation, but whether or not he considered himself an actor in the modern sense, or even in the context of seventeenth-century French theatrical performances, is very much open to question.

⁷⁵ W. Fenton, “The Earliest Recorded Description,” 129.—Fenton adds: “Of all surviving Iroquois rites, the Adonwa, or Personal Chant ranks among the four most sacred. It is also pre-Columbian.”

⁷⁶ Marie de L’Incarnation, *Letter from New France*, 142-143

⁷⁷ *JRAD* 27:142.—Again, Marie de L’Incarnation used the same phraseology (*Letter from New France*, 146).

In her discussion on “The Theatrical Rituals of French Political Possession,” Patricia Seed notes that unlike the English who took possession of the New World by establishing property lines and rights, the French took possession by mounting highly formal ceremonial events; compared to other Europeans, French ceremonies were the most elaborate, lengthy and rigidly structured. Seed recounts in considerable detail the extensive set of ceremonies carried out by the French as they took possession of the Amazon in 1612: “Planning and undertaking such an elaborate event to legitimate a European presence in the New World was highly distinctive”.⁷⁸ Processional ceremonies involving formal attire, trumpet and drum voluntaries and sung litanies accompanied the French as they walked through communities. “Theatrical rituals often created French possession of the New World through carefully choreographed steps by costumed participants bearing carefully chosen props, accompanied by music, and culminating in the climactic moment of cross—or standard--planting”.⁷⁹ Celebratory volleys of gun shots might then be discharged and gifts distributed. This “repertoire of gestures marked nearly all the peaceful French establishments of power in the New World through the mid-seventeenth century”.⁸⁰ According to Seed, the ceremonies enacted by the French in the Americas were near replicas of coronation ceremonies in France, which were regarded as vital for legitimizing the political power of new monarchs and for establishing general political order and stability.⁸¹ By the mid-

⁷⁸ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46.

⁷⁹ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 67.

⁸⁰ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 46-47

⁸¹ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 54 —In addition, in France, as a coronation procession moved through the country, “elaborately staged plays or *tableaux vivants* [were] presented on ornate stage sets near the bridges at the city entrance” These plays replaced “formerly rowdy receptions for newly crowned kings”, and as

seventeenth century, however, the importance of such grand public observances waned “when succession to the crown became an automatic dynastic right [...] Elaborate rituals to reestablish political order were no longer needed and soon thereafter fell into disuse”.⁸² According to Seed, all this theatrical and ritual energy metamorphosed into ballet and other theatrical performances of the French court.⁸³

Seed also discusses the word ‘ceremony’ and its usage in different European languages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For the Dutch, English and Spanish the word ‘ceremony’ connoted a stiffness associated with formal or solemn occasions and in general had “slightly pejorative overtones of awkwardness”.⁸⁴ Among the French, however, ‘ceremony’ had four unique meanings. First, it “implied a parade or procession”. Second, it referred to the “clothes used to carry out the event”. Third, ‘ceremony’ meant *complicated*; “While the opposite of ceremonial in English and Dutch was informal, the opposite of ceremonial in French was simple, uncomplicated” and this meaning was uniquely French. Fourth, “beyond the complexity, a procession, and a specified form of dress, ceremony in French alone signified order. To do something ceremoniously meant to do it according to the rules”.

When the French travelled to the Americas they brought the multiple meanings of ‘ceremony’, the actual ceremonies and the necessary accouterments as well. Just as

rituals they were united in “color, music, stages, costumes, props and processional order.” Also, civic officials made speeches to establish “the allegiance of a particular city and its citizens to the crown” (P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 53).

⁸² P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 54

⁸³ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 66.

⁸⁴ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 49

ceremonies in France served to consolidate the power of the monarch, in the Americas they became the primary means by which the French took peaceful possession of new lands. In addition to choreographing their own performances, French officials “closely monitored the repertoire of gestures, facial expressions, and emotions” of Native peoples. A favourable reception was taken as an unambiguous sign Native peoples wished to have the French rule over them.⁸⁵ They would then strike treaties and enter into alliances with Native peoples. Where ceremony and treaty making failed, military force succeeded. Seed concludes that for the French, “the motions, sequences of gestures, costumes, and above all physical actions, not words, enacted colonial authority”.⁸⁶

When seen through the lens of seventeenth French ceremonial custom, the observations made by Marie de L’Incarnation and Barthelemy Vimont take on new significance. Their ambivalence toward Kiotseaeton and his address also begins to make some sense. If, by the middle of the seventeenth century, the processional ceremonies had become redundant in France, this was not necessarily the case on the other side of the Atlantic where ceremonial representations continued to thrive, albeit in a quite different form. In their separate accounts of the 1645 council, Marie de L’Incarnation and Vimont paid close attention to Kiotseaeton’s actions. The council was not a processional ceremony as such, but to the French delegates the whole ambiance echoed the theatrical qualities of those grand past events. This may explain, in part at least, why both Marie de L’Incarnation and Vimont went to some length to describe the ‘staging’ of Kiotseaeton’s address and why they made frequent references to his ‘acting’ abilities. Marie de L’Incarnation, for her part,

⁸⁵ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 66.

⁸⁶ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 68.

seems to see Kiotseaeton's actions as more important than his words—the latter “accompanied” his movements and “told what he was representing”.

In recounting the address, both Vimont and Marie de L'Incarnation describe Kiotseaeton's arrival at the council site in considerable detail. They were mightily impressed with the numerous wampum belts which covered him, with his ability to command silence as he announced his intentions and with the cannon shots fired from the brow of his boat. For Vimont, this was a sign of great rejoicing: at the conclusion of his address, Vimont reports that Kiotseaeton was “going to spend the remainder of the summer in my country in games, in dances, in rejoicing for the good of peace”, and that he urged the Wendat present at the council to do likewise (*JRAD* 27:265). For the French, these and other words and actions were clear signs the Mohawks were on the verge of entering into an alliance with them and with the Wendat as well. Seed notes the French used the word ‘joy’ repeatedly when describing the emotional state of Native peoples and interpreted joy according to their own categories, that is, as joy at the French arrival and political presence.⁸⁷ Whether or not Kiotseaeton, or any of the other Native peoples seated at the council were ‘joyful’ at the presence of the French is, of course, very much open to question.

2.13 Mats and Thistledown

One gesture made by the Mohawk ambassadors—as Vimont called Kiotseaeton and his colleagues—was particularly telling with regard to a possible alliance with the French.

⁸⁷ P. Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession*, 60.—Seed further notes that the word ‘joy’ is repeated over and over again in French accounts of Native peoples they encountered and their emotional states. “That so many Frenchmen, encountering so many diverse peoples in the Americas, could have nearly always encountered joy should create considerable suspicion ”

Vimont recounts how the delegates seated themselves as they prepared for the council:

Their places were thus arranged: on one side was Monsieur the Governor, accompanied by his people and by Reverend Father Vimont, Superior of the Mission. The Iroquois sat at his feet, on a great piece of hemlock bark. They stated before the assembly that they wished to be on his side, as a mark of the affection they bore to the French (*JRAD* 27:253).

While we cannot speculate on what Kiotseaeton did or did not say prior to the council, the act of sitting on a mat at the feet of the governor was not necessarily a sign of deference to French authority, as suggested by Vimont's commentary. Another often cited example of a French colonial official exacting submission of the Haudenosaunee is the case of the Comte de Frontenac demanding that they address him as 'father' rather than 'brother'. Among the Haudenosaunee, of course, the term 'father' had quite a different connotation.⁸⁸ Again *memoria* comes into play here. First, and most simply, the French governor was likely sitting on a chair, while the hemlock mat on which the Mohawk delegates sat, was on the ground. The metaphorical significance of the mat in Haudenosaunee culture is rather more complex than Vimont realized. Looking at just this one action, we can see it had quite different meanings for the two parties involved. For the French it was close to an act of submission. For the Haudenosaunee sitting on a mat was intricately intertwined with councils and with the whole concept of Condolence. For example, Lafitau included a pictorial representation of a typical Haudenosaunee council. Though highly romanticized (the speakers are dressed in Roman-like togas), Lafitau accurately represents the council

⁸⁸ See Peter Cook, "Vivre comme frères: Le rôle du registre fraternel dans les premières alliances Franco-Amérindiennes au Canada (vers 1580-1650)": *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, 31/2 (2001) 55-65 and "Kin(g)ship: The Ideological Foundations of French-Native Alliances in Northeastern North America, 1534-1629" Paper Presented to the Champlain-St Lawrence Seminar, Plattsburgh, NY, Feb 17, 2003.

delegates sitting on a mat listening to a speaker.⁸⁹ Concerning the Condolence, when a new chief is raised up, the Clear-minded begin by condoling the mourners, who are sitting on a mat. Once condoled the person representing the mourners is 'taken by the hand' to the council fire. In more general terms the fire is a symbol of domesticity and hospitality. "To prepare a mat was to make ready to receive a person in the home. To smoke on one's mat was to be profoundly at peace" (Glossary, 'mat'). In the story of the Confederacy, a mat of white thistledown is placed under the Tree of Peace (the Great White Pine). On this Great White Mat of the Law, sit Atotarho and other Condoled Chiefs, those with the responsibility to uphold the Great Law of Peace.⁹⁰ The practice of sitting on thistledown may be very old indeed. For example, in Mohawk and Onondaga versions of the Haudenosaunee story of origins, children in the Skyworld (the world beyond the sky which, in virtually all versions, has always existed) were down-fended, meaning they were secluded from the community and raised by a guardian. These children were understood to have special gifts which were developed with the assistance of the guardian. In a note to the Mohawk version which appeared in the first volume of *Iroquois Cosmology*, Hewitt writes that in accordance with this ancient custom "the [downy] spikes of the cat-tail were carefully sprinkled about the place of seclusion, the disarrangement of which would indicate an intrusive visit".⁹¹ Different versions of the Confederacy story indicate Deganawidah, the Peacemaker, was down-fended. According to the story, a woman and her daughter left the Wendat village north of what is now Lake Ontario, to escape the war and bloodshed which plagued their

⁸⁹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 312. Illustration opposite.

⁹⁰ P. A. W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 33

⁹¹ J. N. B. Hewitt, "A Mohawk Version," in *Iroquois Cosmology: First Part* (Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report 21, 1903), 255, note b

community. One day, the woman discovered her daughter was pregnant and in due course, she gave birth to a boy. The Grandmother named him Deganawidah and together the two women raised him in seclusion.⁹²

Returning to Kiotseaeton's speech, it may have been good theatre (or not) from the French point of view; but for the Mohawks and the other Native peoples at the council, it was an event of major cultural significance. This being said, the Haudenosaunee and the French did in fact share some important common ground, that is, both placed considerable value in the idea of ceremony. The difference came in how they interpreted ceremony, the meaning of words spoken and the movements enacted. If—in a general sense—ceremony was seen by the French as a metaphor for possession taking, the question arises, how did the Haudenosaunee see ceremony. Were they taking possession of the French? What exactly was being communicated? For Warkentin, the “process of signification was organized in a single cohesive system that united wampum belts and performance to achieve a common objective, the communication of authorized diplomatic information”; for the Mohawks—Kiotseaeton and his two colleagues, the sachems who read the messages into the belts and those (most likely the women) who had actually made the belts—“something significant in their culture was taking place”.⁹³ Indeed, the address he gave and the belts he presented were part of a far greater process of preparation, consultation and consensus making among the Mohawks and possibly within the Five Nations Confederacy.

⁹² According to Hanni Woodbury, *Concerning the League*, xix, the name Deganawidah and its various spellings, is unanalyzable. According to some traditions, the Grandmother was instructed in a dream to name him Deganawidah. While some traditions say he was a man with a handsome face, others say he had a double row of teeth and a speech impediment and Hiawatha became his spokesman. Hiawatha, or Hayehwatha, is often called “He Who Combs,” meaning he who combed the snakes from Atotarho's hair

⁹³ G. Warkentin, “The Word of the Other,” 8.

At the opening to this chapter I quoted Deborah Doxtator's words:

To explain or discuss using metaphors requires one to think in ways that emphasize multiple meanings in parallel, and not in ways that focus on separate distinct segments [...] As a concrete, spatial way of explaining change and how the world works, successful metaphors must also integrate their varied expressions in a variety of contexts.

In this chapter I have shown how many metaphors of Haudenosaunee emphasize multiple meanings in parallel; clearing the path for example. Kiotseaeton's now famous address to the delegates of the 1645 council at Trois-Rivières further illustrates how different metaphors complement and reinforce one another. The metaphors Kiotseaeton employed in his address came out of a specific context—Haudenosaunee history and experience. However, as a highly skilled orator, Kiotseaeton was able to communicate his message across linguistic, cultural, cosmological and religious boundaries. In this way, his use of metaphor was successful—Kiotseaeton ably “integrated their varied expressions” in a new context.

CHAPTER 3

THE LOGIC OF PLACE:

METAPHOR AND HAUDENOSAUNEE COUNCIL ORATORY

But it is principally in the public councils and solemn transactions that the orators appear brilliant [...] This role is not easy to sustain. It demands a great capacity, the knowledge of councils, a complete knowledge of all their ancestors' ways, wit, experience and eloquence. It is rare to find persons who fill this role worthily.

Their style is [...] full of figures of speech and quite metaphorical.

Joseph-François Lafitau, 1724¹

One metaphor, in effect, calls for another and each one stays alive by conserving its power to evoke the whole network.

Paul Ricoeur, 1976²

Joseph-François Lafitau was one of many Jesuits who held orators and their abilities in high esteem. Time and time again the Jesuits commented on the eloquence, the flow of language, the figurative tropes and the variety of rhetorical methods employed by speakers. The use of metaphor by speakers especially impressed the Jesuits. In commenting on the Huron, Paul LeJeune writes in 1634: "Metaphor is largely in use among these Peoples; unless you accustom yourself to it, you will understand nothing of their councils, where they speak almost entirely in metaphors" (*JRAD* 10:219). According to William M. Clements, the *Jesuit Relations* and related writing, "contain a multitude of first-hand descriptions of

¹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 297-98.

² P. Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol," in P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth TX: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 64.

oratorical performances and of translated textualizations of speeches”. He adds that the “bulk of the material outweighs all the other literary data combined”.³ Clements and his researchers have combed the *Jesuit Relations* for records of councils, and for discussions on the figures of speech and the presentation styles employed by speakers. Such references abound, he says. The Jesuits noted the use of allegories and metaphors, comparisons and proverbs, figurative expressions and personifications, as well as various circumlocutions and other rhetorical methods, by Native orators.

In the previous chapter I discussed Kiotseaeton’s use of metaphor and how, on close reading, each metaphor can be seen to have multiple meanings in parallel. This discussion focused on ‘clearing the path’ as perhaps the best and most obvious example of such meaning. In this chapter I will discuss metaphor itself and the context within which different Haudenosaunee metaphors developed.

3.1 What is Metaphor?

What exactly is metaphor and how can we better understand the role of metaphor in Haudenosaunee council oratory? The English word ‘metaphor’ comes from the Greek *meta*, meaning ‘beyond’ or ‘over’ and *pherein*, meaning ‘to bring, bear, or carry’. “The initial meaning was that merely of carrying a burden from one place to another”.⁴ In literary terms, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or a phrase ordinarily and primarily used for one thing, is applied to another. “Most simply”, writes theologian Salli McFague, “a metaphor is seeing one thing as something else, pretending ‘this’ is ‘that’ because we do

³ W.M. Clements, “The Jesuit Foundations,” 52.

⁴ *Dictionary of Philosophy & Religion*, “Metaphor,” 352.

not know how to think or talk about ‘this’, so we use ‘that’ as a way of saying something about it”. Thinking metaphorically, she continues, “means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objects, events, or whatever, one of which is better known than the other, and using the better-known one as a way of speaking about the lesser known”.⁵

Looking back once again at Kiotseaeton’s address, we can see that this is precisely what he did. For example, in removing all the physical encumbrances from the forest path, Kiotseaeton used a well-known way of speaking in an effort to clear the paths to mutual understanding between human beings. For Kiotseaeton, this task would be lengthy, especially given the strained climate in which the parties gathered for the council: not only did he clear the forest path, he smoothed the rapids and waterfalls, the lakes and the rivers, and removed the clouds from the sky. Kiotseaeton could simply have dispensed with all the metaphors and merely stated his desires—these wars must stop; we need to establish fair trading practices; we need to live in peace with one another. In so doing, however, he would have subverted an important element, perhaps *the* most important element of his opening words—the very *process* of opening the lines of communication and establishing a relationship among the parties to the council. Would the hearer(s) have taken his message to heart otherwise?

McFague’s observations accord well with discussions by Iroquoianists on the use of metaphor in Haudenosaunee council oratory. “The basic principle of Iroquois metaphor is the projection of words about familiar objects and relations into the fields of politics and diplomacy [...] Most Iroquois political metaphor can be deciphered when this principle is

⁵ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 15.

applied to a few clusters of concepts and when the terms are taken as seriously as they were meant".⁶ Indeed, the vast majority of metaphors employed by the Haudenosaunee were drawn from daily life and from the surrounding landscape. Clearing the forest path, smoothing the waters, gazing at the sun, dispelling the clouds, kindling the fire, sitting on the mat and eating are good examples. Other metaphors which have yet to be discussed include the tree, the house, kinship and the chain. In the realm of diplomacy, then, metaphors were central to the process of understanding as well as communicating a message. In a sense, good speakers who employed metaphors well, 'distilled' them out of the varied experience of Haudenosaunee life. We have already seen how the metaphor of clearing the path has multiple meanings in parallel. Other metaphors were even more complex.

3.2 The Tree of Peace

In 1946 Paul A. W. Wallace published *The White Roots of Peace* in which he recounts the story of the Iroquois Confederacy and its origins. His is a composite version based on several other accounts recorded around the turn of the twentieth century.⁷ Sometimes referred to as a 'gloss', *The White Roots of Peace* is all but ignored by the academic community, perhaps because it is seen as lacking in original content. Be this as it may, Wallace did put a considerable amount of thought into the meaning of the symbols and the metaphors associated with the Iroquois Confederacy. All of Wallace's discussion is framed by the story itself and in his version Deganawidah is the central figure. To him is attributed

⁶ Anonymous, "Glossary of Figures of Speech in Iroquois Political Rhetoric," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 115.

⁷ In the "Acknowledgments," Wallace says his version is based on the Newhouse version published in 1916, the Chiefs' version compiled by chiefs of the Six Nations Reserve in 1900 and published in 1911, and the Gibson version dictated by Chief John Arthur Gibson to J.N.B. Hewitt in 1899. (P.A.W. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace* (1946), (Saranac Lake, NY: The Chauncy Press, 1986), vii).

the development of what Wallace describes as symbols of “aggressive moral wholeness”.⁸ He further describes the symbols as “poetic”,⁹ and “inspiring”.¹⁰ Words are associated with each symbol, and each symbol brings the five separate nations together in a different way. All the symbols come from the everyday lives of the Haudenosaunee; all are natural features of the landscape or common occurrences, or part of daily living. Wallace further observes that the symbols are not static, but dynamic.¹¹ In one way or another they involve growth, movement or action. All are also part of the metaphorical language of Iroquois council oratory. There is, of course, considerable debate about which came first, the symbols of the Confederacy or the use of metaphor in council oratory. Since it is impossible to date the origins of the Confederacy, the debate cannot be resolved and no attempt will be made to do so here. A long, often tortured discussion on dating the origins of the Confederacy began in the 1990s.¹²

Take the tree for example. The Great White Pine is a common feature of the

⁸ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 38.

⁹ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 37.

¹⁰ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 9.

¹¹ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 37.

¹² In “The Second Epoch of Time”, in the *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, p. 265, Barbara Mann notes that “Some European-American scholars, including Paul A.W. Wallace, have placed the founding of the league in the fifteenth century before the landfall of Columbus, that is, within a few years of contact with Europeans”. She concludes, correctly, that “in fact, the foundation of the league occurred much earlier and was caused entirely by Iroquoian internal pressures”, and she goes on to say: “The *Jesuit Relations* of 1654 and 1691 recorded the Haudenosaunee telling Catholic missionaries that the league had existed ‘de tout temps (from the earliest times)’ (Thwaites, 41: 86-87) and ‘de toute ancienneté (from all antiquity), (Thwaites, 64:100-1)”.

The question of symbol and metaphor is further complicated by the fact that the earliest known written account of the Confederacy story by the Moravian minister Christopher Pyrlaeus, did not appear until the 1740s. For a historiography of written versions of the story see Elisabeth Tooker, “The League of the Iroquois: Its History, Politics and Ritual,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 15: *Northeast*, Bruce Trigger, ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 418-22.

landscape in the Northeast. It is distinctive in shape and easily recognizable. Trees are also part of the daily life of the Haudenosaunee. Bark from trees is used to build longhouses; wood from trees is used for fire; and canoes are made from trees. With the Great Law, the Great White Pine is the Tree of Peace which ‘pierces the sky’ and ‘reaches the sun’. Its branches, Wallace says, “signified shelter, the protection and security that people found in union under the shadow of the Law”.¹³ The roots—the White Roots of Peace—“which stretched to the four corners of the earth, signified the extension of the Law, the Peace, to embrace all [hu]mankind”. People and nations followed the White Roots of Peace to the tree and took shelter under its branches. In flight just above the tree is the eagle who sees afar and signifies watchfulness. The eagle guards the White Roots of Peace and warns of approaching danger. The eagle is also a reminder that the price of peace is eternal vigilance. The Peacemaker metaphorically planted the Great White Pine at Onondaga, the centre, capital or ‘heart’ of the Confederacy. Once planted, Deganawidah then temporarily uprooted the tree and in the hole created, cast in the weapons of war. He replanted the tree and declared the people of the Five Nations would no longer take up arms against one another.

Tree imagery is a recurring motif in the culture of the Haudenosaunee and has cosmologic as well as symbolic and metaphorical significance. In the story of origins a tree—the Celestial Tree—grows in the centre of the Skyworld. It is covered with flowers of light and is topped by a luminous orb. The Celestial Tree lights up the Skyworld. On learning that his new young wife was pregnant, the Chief of the Skyworld, who believed the child was not his, grew jealous and fell into a troubled sleep. When he awoke he gathered

¹³ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 7-9, and all other quotes in this paragraph.

the villagers around and instructed them to guess his dream.¹⁴ They did so in due course and, as per the dream, they uprooted the Celestial Tree. Skywoman, who was curious, went to the edge of the hole it left in the crust of the Skyworld and either by design or accident, she tumbled into the hole. So began her descent from the Skyworld to this world. At the time, this world was little more than a watery globe. As she fell, she grabbed the root of the Celestial Tree. Some seeds fell into her dress. Below, various water creatures saw this stranger coming and they immediately took council and decided on how best to help her. The geese agreed to bring her down gently on their wings. The great tortoise agreed to provide his back as a place for her to land. They carried out the plan, and in order to give her sufficient space to live, the diving animals then agreed to bring up soil from the bottom of the ocean. Many animals tried, but only the muskrat (otter) succeeded. In some versions of the story, these diving animals die in the process of retrieving the soil. This soil was smeared on the turtle's back and soon it began to grow.¹⁵ When Skywoman awoke, the seeds and the root of the Celestial Tree spilled from her dress and began to grow. Eventually, a great beautiful tree with flowers of light and a luminous orb grew—it was called the World Tree and it closely resembled the Celestial Tree. Here we see a continuity between the Skyworld and this world.

¹⁴ For a discussion dreams and dream guessing see Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Dreams and the Wishes of the Soul: A Type of Psychoanalytic Theory am the Seventeenth Century Iroquois": *American Anthropologist* 60 (1958) 234-48. For more recent discussions see several articles by Lee Irwin including "Contesting World Views: Dreams among the Huron and Jesuits": *Religion* 22 (1992) 259-69; "Cherokee Healing: Myth, Dreams and Medicine": *American Indian Quarterly* 16 (Spring 1992) 237-57; "Dreams, Theory, and Culture": *American Indian Quarterly* 18/2 (Spring 1994) 229-45.

¹⁵ It should be noted that the 'literal' fall of Skywoman from the Skyworld is not analogous to the 'metaphorical' fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In Haudenosaunee thought, the concept of sin entering the world is not associated with Skywoman's fall. Some Haudenosaunee see Skywoman's descent as her destiny. My thanks to Shirley White of Kahnawake for pointing this out. Skywoman's descent is also seen as a new beginning and the beginning of a new world. The idea of 'punishment' is absent from the story. For example, the animals who come to her aid, could just as easily have refused to do so.

In an article first published in the *American Anthropologist* in 1912, Arthur C. Parker (Seneca) wrote about “Emblematic Trees in Iroquoian Mythology”.¹⁶ He describes the World Tree as “a tree whose branches pierce the sky and whose roots run down into the under-ground waters”; and he also notes that references to the tree are found in various ceremonial rites.¹⁷ For example, the Hadui mask worn by healers is carved from living trees as per the instructions of Hadui himself. In carving his likeness from living trees, Hadui’s power to heal is transferred to the mask and then to the wearer of the mask.¹⁸ Parker goes on to describe highly stylized representations of the Celestial and World Trees in quill and beadwork embroidery designs.

Returning to the story of the Confederacy, references to trees abound. In addition to the Great White Pine as a symbol, the tree appears as a sign. After being raised in the bush by his mother and grandmother, Deganawidah announced that he was leaving to begin a journey to bring the news of Peace, Power and Righteousness to the different peoples of the Five Nations. He instructed his mother and grandmother as follows: “Don’t look for me to return [...] for I shall not come again this way. Should you wish to know if all is well with me, go to the hilltop yonder where stands a single tree. Cut at the tree with your hatchets, and, if blood flows from the wound, you will know that I have perished and my work has

¹⁶ A. C. Parker, “Emblematic Trees in Iroquoian Mythology,” *American Anthropologist* (Oct-Dec., 1912); reprinted in *Seneca Myths & Folktales* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 431-44.

¹⁷ A.C. Parker, “Emblematic Trees,” 434.

¹⁸ For a discussion on the Hadui masks and their origins, and for observations on the healing powers of the ceremonies associated with Hadui see Hope L. Isaacs and Barbara W. Lex, “Handling Fire: Treatment of Illness by the Iroquois False-Face Medicine Society,” in *Studies in Iroquoian Culture*, Nancy Bonvillian, ed. (George’s Mills, NH: Man in the Northeast, 1980), 5-13.

failed. But if no blood flows, all is well, my mission is successful”.¹⁹ Elsewhere, the tree serves as a test. On his journey, Deganawidah came to a village of Mohawks. News of his message preceded him and the chiefs eagerly awaited him. They immediately accepted his message of Peace, Power and Righteousness, but the warriors were not so confident everyone would abide by it. They wanted to test the veracity of his word. The Peacemaker offered to climb a tree overhanging a waterfall. The warriors were to cut it down and if he survived the fall, they would accept his message as true. The plan was duly executed and the Peacemaker disappeared into the roiling waters of the river. The warriors searched for a time, but he was nowhere to be found. The next morning, however, someone spotted smoke rising in the woods and the Peacemaker was found, sitting by a fire he had made. Thus, the warriors accepted his message. The tree in this instance is often called the Challenge Tree.²⁰ Finally, near the end of his journey, once he had put the symbols of the Confederacy in place, named the fifty chiefs and introduced the mechanisms for maintaining peace, Deganawidah gave the following instructions. If the time ever comes when discord divides the Haudenosaunee and a “high wind”, meaning war, uproots the Tree of Peace, the chiefs are to look for a Great Swamp Elm, ““with large roots extending outwards, bracing outwards from the trunk””. The people are to take shelter beneath this tree.²¹

In general terms then, the tree is associated with place—the Skyworld, the Earth World and Onondaga—and with the centre of these different places. The tree is associated with strength and with rootedness. It is also associated with new beginnings: The uprooted

¹⁹ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 13.

²⁰ My thanks to Laura Norton of Kahnawake for sharing this insight.

²¹ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 43

Celestial Tree marks the beginning of a new life; the uprooted Tree of Peace marks the beginning of peace among the Five Nations. There is continuity between the Celestial Tree and the World Tree (the latter grows from the former), but also with the Tree of Peace. Both the World Tree and the Tree of Peace are said to pierce the sky and reach the sun.

The Tree of Peace remains a central symbol of the Confederacy to this day. Throughout Iroquois country today, artistic impressions of the Tree of Peace are reproduced in jewelry and on canvas. The flowers of the Celestial and World trees have found their way into embroidery and beadwork designs. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, highly stylized depictions of the Tree of Peace were reproduced on wampum belts. In councils, Iroquois and European speakers alike metaphorically planted trees of peace and in so doing made clear their intention to live in peace with one another. This brief discussion of the ‘tree’ is but one example of the intricate interplay that exists between what we call ‘myth’ and ‘history’.

In his address to the delegates at the 1645 council in Trois-Rivières, Kiotseaeton made no mention of the Tree of Peace. However, other speakers did employ this metaphor. For example, in July 1684, in an address to Lord Effingham, a Mohawk speaker agreed to certain proposals of peace saying: “We now plant a Tree who’s top will reach the Sun, and its Branches spread far abroad, so that it will be seen afar off, & we shall shelter ourselves under it, and live in Peace, without molestation”. In a footnote, Cadwallader Colden, who published the record of this council in 1727, writes: “The Five Nations always express Peace under the Metaphor of a Tree, in this manner”.²² In that same year, the Onondaga speaker

²² C. Colden, *The History of the Five Nations*, Parts I & II, 1727 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 37.—A.C. Parker made reference to Colden’s comment in his discussion of emblematic trees, 431

Garangula (Otreouti), in a response to proposals of peace made by the Governor General of New France Le Febvre de la Barre, sounded the following cautionary note:

Hear, Yonondio, Take care for the future, that so great a Number of Soldiers as appear here do not choak [choke] the Tree of Peace planted in so small a Fort. It will be a great Loss, if after it had so easily taken root, you should stop its growth and prevent its covering your Country and ours with its Branches. That our Warriors shall dance to the Calumet of Peace under its leaves and shall remain quiet on the Mats, and shall never dig up the Hatchet.²³

Decades earlier, in 1655, the Jesuits likened the Tree of Peace to a church spire. An embassy of Onontaeronnon Iroquois came to Québec to confirm peace.

The eighteenth present was a May-tree, which they erected in front of that new house of sainte Marie, so high that it reached the clouds. By this they meant that the center of the Peace, and the place for general reunions, would be in that house, before which should be erected this great May-tree, so lofty that it could be seen from every direction, and all the Nations, even the most distant could come to it (*JRAD* 42:55).

The Jesuits seem to have interpreted this to mean the Onontaeronnon Iroquois wished to be converted to Christianity and implied that if they did so, others would follow. However, planting a Tree of Peace in this manner could also have meant the Iroquois were keeping peace with the Jesuits and were doing so for everyone to see.

Both French and English colonial officials themselves became accustomed to planting the tree of peace.²⁴ In so doing they were employing one of the most important

²³ "Mr. De La Barre's Expedition, and some Remarkable Transactions in 1684," in C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 56.

²⁴ In his 1957 dissertation "Persuasive Speaking of the Iroquois Indians at Treaty councils 1678-1776 A Study of Techniques as Evidenced in the Official Transcripts of the Interpreters' Translation" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1957), Wynn Reynolds suggests that the Tree of Peace was

metaphors of Haudenosaunee council oratory. The meaning and interpretation of the metaphor could vary depending on the context and the parties to a council. Some examples have already been cited. In general terms, however, to plant the tree of peace was to “extend protection over some location or people”. In addition, to plant the tree of peace “*on the highest mountain* was to make a general peace”; and when applied to an individual, “the tree metaphor was a symbol of peace chiefs. The chief, who was a protector of his people, *was raised up*”(Glossary, ‘tree’).²⁵

Here, with the Tree of Peace, we see an interplay between symbol and metaphor. In her 1982 essay *Metaphorical Theology*, Salli McFague observes that for Paul Ricoeur, “symbols unite us harmoniously to our roots in the world while metaphors redescribe reality, creating tension between oneness with existence and alternative ways of being in the world. They are on a continuum, with metaphor the interpretive aspect of symbol [...]”²⁶ Symbols, she says, are

nonlinguistic bonds uniting us to the cosmos [...] Symbols need metaphors, for without them they are dumb; metaphors need symbols, for without them they lose their rootedness in life [...] Thus, metaphor constitutes the first stage of interpretation and hence is intrinsically connected, on the one hand, to its depths in symbol and, on the other hand, to emerging

associated with the French, and the Covenant Chain with the English (page 230). This is true only in a limited sense. The English routinely planted the tree of peace and the French, as certain points, were associated with the chain.

²⁵ For a discussion of the Marquis de Beauharnois and his use of the tree metaphor, see Louise Johnston, “Onontio, le grand arbre et la chaîne d’alliance: Le discours du marquis de Beauharnois aux Kanehsata’kehronon, août 1741”: *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, 29/2 (1999) 11-22. In his address Beauharnois raised himself up as a chief.

²⁶ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 213, n. 23.

conceptualization.²⁷

As a symbol, the Tree of Peace is 'rooted' in the cosmology of the Haudenosaunee. As noted above, it is part of a recurring theme—an important motif—in the culture. As a metaphor, the Tree of Peace provides us with a way to envision peace, not to mention carry it out. In metaphorically planting a Tree of Peace, burying the weapons of war and sitting on a mat under its branches, speakers were 'redescribing reality'. The new reality would be peace, not war. William Fenton observes that the "enduring symbolism of the League is couched in a series of metaphors", ²⁸ the Tree of Peace being one of the most important and most frequently used. He goes on to say that the Tree of Peace is one of a number of metaphors which "express the ideas of maintenance and extension"; planting the Tree of Peace was "the sign of a well-established relationship".²⁹ Perhaps this explains why Kiotseaton did not plant a tree of peace: in 1645 the relationship of peace between the Mohawks and the French was not yet well established.

3.3 Whiteness, Light and Life

Discussions of metaphor in Haudenosaunee life and culture took on a new and interesting turn in the 1980s with the writings of George R. Hamell.³⁰ He looks at metaphor

²⁷ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 120.

²⁸ W. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity and Change," 16.—In his discussion of metaphors in council oratory, Fenton notes they "fall into categories of structure, process, action, unity, continuity and identity". Though he does not clearly explicate each of the categories he seems to associate clearing the path with process, kindling the fire with action, and the Tree of Peace with unity.

²⁹ W. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity and Change," 22

³⁰ G.R. Hamell, "Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads, Another Perspective Upon Indian-European Contact in Northeastern North America," *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference* [Research Records No. 16]. Rochester, NY: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1983; "Metaphor, Myth and Contemporary Iroquois History": *The Iroquoian* 9 (Fall 1984) 24-31; "Strawberries, Floating Islands, and

in relation to colour and the meaning of colour in Iroquoian and Algonquian culture. “Metaphors”, he says, “allow us to think about abstract concepts in concrete terms”. Using an actual metaphor to illustrate this point, he continues: “Rather than being a vestigial flower upon the tree of linguistic understanding, metaphors are in fact its roots [...] Metaphors provide us with the means to mentally grasp ideas and concepts”; he speaks of “key metaphors” which “are at the heart of a culture’s rational system, or how that culture projects rationality upon life, existence and reality”.³¹ He goes on to say that “most key metaphors are probably cross-culturally shared—the products of universal human analogical and metaphorical conceptualization”.³² Hamell is especially interested in the cultural significance of colour and its relationship to material objects. Colour and the colour of specific things, he says, hold certain meaning and function in all cultures and religious traditions. For example, “humans are phototropic: they grow toward the light [...] As sentient biological organisms, humans understand that light is life, and that light is the prerequisite to animacy and sentience”.³³ Light is life and Hamell believes this is a “universal cultural axiom that has generated parallel dependent corollaries manifested cross-cultural in human thought and behavior, linguistic and physical”; thus for humans, “Light (sources), bright (reflective), and white things are tangible metaphors for abstractions of greatest cultural value; for life itself and for positive states of physical, social, and spiritual

Rabbit Captains: Mythical Realities and European Contact in the Northeast during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”: *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 21/4 (1987) 72-94; “The Iroquois and the World’s Rim: Speculations on Color, Culture, and Contact”: *American Indian Quarterly* 16 (1992) 471-84.

³¹ G.R. Hamell, “Metaphor, Myth,” 25.

³² G.R. Hamell, “Metaphor, Myth,” 26.

³³ G.R. Hamell, “The Iroquois and the World’s Rim,” 455

well-being". They are, he says, "good to think".

Among Northern Iroquoian peoples, white and bright are associated with the celestial tree and its luminous orb, as well as with its flowers of light. White, bright and blue are also associated with the elder of the twins boys, Holder of the Sky or Sapling. Daylight is also associated with Sapling, since whenever he walked things grew. Colour, says Hamell, also reflects social states of being. "For example, white (-ness), the color of (day) light and thus of life itself, is the most potent color, and the most highly evaluated color if that potency is consecrated to socially constructive purposes".³⁴ Material objects which are white, light and bright are similarly associated with socially constructive states of being and with well being.

Hamell also looks at the Silver Covenant Chain through the lens of what he calls "mythical realities" and colour. "Within ritual contexts these concepts of well-being have traditionally constellated about white shell, and more recently about another, bright, light-reflective, white substance: a 'white metal', silver".³⁵ White shell—which the Iroquois styled into white beads for use in wampum strings and belts—function "as a metaphor for light, and thus for life itself".³⁶ Similarly with silver.

In contrast to the high economic and ideational value placed on gold by Europeans, Hamell has found indirect evidence that the Haudenosaunee associated the colour yellow and hence gold with ill health. Yellow is the colour of bile and of the jaundiced person. "Further corroboration is found by the end of the seventeenth century in the Iroquois' selection of silver, or 'white metal', and not gold, as the substance of which the symbolic, brightly

³⁴ G.R. Hamell, "Speculations on Color," 456.

³⁵ G.R. Hamell, "Speculations on Color," 455.

³⁶ G. R. Hamell, "Speculations on Color," 457.

polished ‘Covenant Chain’ was forged and that linked them and their Indian and white neighbors in peace and trade”. Hamell concludes that in councils, “the silver Covenant Chain manifested itself in the form of a white-grounded wampum belt, within which were frequently represented, in purple wampum, human figures linked in social relations”.

Hamell’s work on colour is helpful for interpreting different non-verbal aspects of council oratory—wampum belts for instance. As noted in #2.11 Germaine Warkentin describes wampum belts as communicating social intention as well as a diplomatic message. Hamell speaks in terms of ‘social-states-of-being’; with such states,

white shell, whether freshwater or marine in origin and regardless of its natural or manufactured form, functions as a metaphor for light, and thus for life itself [...] White shell is a material metaphor for the biological continuity of life in general, and for the biological and social continuity of human life in particular”.³⁷

While wampum belts contain both white and purple beads, white is most often the dominant colour. Similarly with strings of wampum. So, in council oratory, wampum carries or holds words and these words in turn are associated with both light and life.

Hamell’s observations on metaphor and colour provide further insight into Kiotseaeton’s words and actions. When he began his address, Kiotseaeton held a belt of wampum in his hand, gazed at the sun (light) and spoke of good songs in his heart (life). Later, in order to ensure the hearers were of one accord with him, he dispelled the clouds so “the Sun and the truth might light up everything”. Hamell’s discussion of white wampum and metaphor fits well with Michael Foster’s idea that the presentation of wampum is

³⁷ G.R. Hamell, “Speculations on Color,” 457.

essentially a forward-looking activity. While Kiotseaeton acknowledged the war which had been fought between the Haudenosaunee and the Algonquins, he kept pressing ahead, burying the weapons of war, calming the waters, clearing the path and lighting the perpetual fire. The Mohawk speaker of 1684 whose Tree of Peace reached the sun was, similarly, thinking in terms of light and life.

William Clements, for his part, takes a more pragmatic view of metaphor. In his discussion of oratory among Native peoples he summarizes how metaphor and other figures of speech communicate a message:

[...] the use of figurative language in Native American oratory served several fundamental purposes: to make clear otherwise nebulous concepts [...]; to create memorable impressions not only of the conveyed message but also of the speaker [...]; to cloak ideas, sometimes unpleasant or inflammatory, in as pleasant a format as possible [...]; to ground what is said in the authority of tradition; to move the referent through quality space with as much subtlety as possible [...]; and to integrate the diverse phenomena of the experienced environment into a satisfying whole.³⁸

Kiotseaeton's use of metaphor did indeed serve all these purposes. For sure he created a memorable impression of both his message and himself. In addition, his address seemed to move the referent through quality space with considerable subtlety. Clements goes on to note that the "public nature of oratory" was one of the reasons why the Jesuits took such interest in them and were able to make extensive records of speeches. "Traditional contexts for oratory in Native American cultures had been the assembly and council", where speakers were "interacting publicly".³⁹ To this observation can and should be added the following:

³⁸ W. Clements, *Oratory*, 86.

³⁹ W. Clements, "Jesuit Foundations," 52.

oratory was accessible to hearers because it was *meant* to be so. Native people *intended* their message to be readily understood, even when that message was framed within the particular languages, oratorical styles, speech patterns and protocol of any given nation. The very structure and content of councils were designed to bridge the communication gap. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Haudenosaunee had been interacting in councils with other Native peoples and had ably traversed the linguistic and cultural divide with them. So long as the Europeans had interpreters or could themselves speak the appropriate languages, they too could participate. This was diplomacy after all and negotiations between nations was a serious affair.

Historian Daniel Richter has noted that “the same principles and ceremonies of peace that sustained amicable relations among the Five Nations applied when leaders of Iroquois villages or nations dealt with peoples outside the League”.⁴⁰ While there was some room for varying interpretations—when irony was employed, for example⁴¹—the aim of speakers was to convey a message for the purpose of reaching agreement. In the words of Paul Ricoeur: “Rhetoric is a means of influencing an audience through the use of means of discourse which are not those of proof or violence. It aims at making the probable more attractive”.⁴² If, in 1645 peace was a possibility, it was not at all a certainty. Kiotseacton was aiming to make it so. As Richter says, “[t]hroughout the process of external diplomacy the nature and status of peaceful relations and good thoughts themselves, rather than the

⁴⁰ D. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 41.

⁴¹ See Harry W. Robie “Kiotseacton’s Three Rivers Address: An Example of ‘Effective’ Iroquois Oratory”: *American Indian Quarterly* 6 (1982) 238-47.

⁴² P. Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 49.

mundane business details of what seventeenth-century Europeans called international relations, counted most”.⁴³

3.4 Metaphor and History

Metaphor has not always enjoyed a happy place in the history of Western thought, religion and culture. The Jesuits themselves exemplify this well. Clements notes that while the Jesuits held orators in high esteem, they sometimes expressed concern over what they considered as an excessive use of metaphor.⁴⁴ They assumed (wrongly) that Native peoples lacked abstract thought. The Jesuit Pierre Biard, who arrived in Acadia in 1611, expresses this sentiment as follows:

[...] all their conceptions are limited to sensible and material things there is nothing abstract, internal, spiritual or distinct. *Good, strong, red, black, large, hard*, they will repeat to you [...]; *goodness, strength, redness, blackness*—they do not know what they are. And as to all the virtues you might enumerate to them, *wisdom, fidelity, justice, mercy, gratitude, piety*, and others, these are not found among them at all except as expressed in the words *happy, tender love, good heart*.⁴⁵

As men schooled in biblical texts, thought and language, the Jesuits would have had a comprehensive understanding of metaphor and its role in religious thought. At the same time, however, they followed in the philosophical tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas who

⁴³ D. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 41.

⁴⁴ W. Clements has catalogued Jesuit commentaries on the use of metaphors and other figures of speech by North America's Native people. "The Jesuit Foundations of Native North American Literary Studies". See for example pp. 52-53.

⁴⁵ *JRAD* 2:11, cited in W. Clements, *Oratory*, 83. —Francesco Bressani "wrote of the Hurons that they 'have no abstract nouns, and few substantives, and these indeclinable,—using for adjectives verbs instead of nouns, which last among them are conjugated not declined.'" *JRAD* 39:121, cited in W. Clements, *Oratory*, 83.

tended to see metaphor as ambiguous and relating more to feelings than to thought. Sallie McFague sums up the Aristotelian view of metaphor and its historical influence:

The history of efforts to understand the nature of metaphor begins with Aristotle whose view constitutes one of the two major perspectives on it. In spite of his appreciation for its importance, his relegation of it to the mark of genius indicates he saw it principally as a rhetorical device rather than as central to language as such. His view can be called 'substitutable' while the other major view sees metaphor as 'unsubstitutable'. That is, Aristotle's understanding of metaphor, and the opinion that prevailed until the nineteenth century [...] was that what metaphor said could be said some other way. But, increasingly, over the last two centuries, that opinion has been reversed and metaphor has been seen not as a trope but as the way language and, more basically, thought works.⁴⁶

In general, Aquinas—himself an Aristotelian—discouraged metaphorical language on the basis that it obscured truth. Sacred doctrine, he said, "should not record divine things under the form of corporeal things". He also recognized, however, that metaphor could stimulate thought. Since knowledge begins from sense experience. "Hence spiritual things are appropriately given to us by Scripture in material metaphors".⁴⁷

In the seventeenth century then, the Western debate over the role of metaphor in language and thought and the Aristotelian 'substitutable' theory came up against the highly metaphorical discourse of Haudenosaunee council oratory. The copious use of what Deborah Doxtator and others call "concrete metaphors" elicited praise in some quarters and skepticism, even contempt, in others. The use of metaphorical language could cut both

⁴⁶ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 37

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, "Whether Sacred Doctrine Should Use Metaphors," *Aquinas on Nature and Grace*, A M Fairweather, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1954), 46-47.

ways, says Clements. On the one hand, many European commentators saw it as a sign of genius, but others felt “the tendency to rely heavily on figures of speech represents a ‘poverty of language’”.⁴⁸ Clements chides the detractors saying that those who criticized the “‘overtopped’ diction” of Native speakers were “[i]gnoring the facts that even the deepest of European thinkers might use similar images to present their philosophical and theological points and that virtually all discourse relies to some extent on figurative speech”.⁴⁹ Indeed, the Jesuits themselves frequently employed concrete language to illustrate theological concepts, sometimes with less than successful results. James P. Ronda offers one such example: “Because the Jesuits described heaven in European material terms, the Hurons concluded that heaven was only for the French. When one Huron was asked why she refused to accept the offer of eternal life, she characteristically replied, ‘I have no acquaintances there, and the French who are there would not care to give me anything to eat’”.⁵⁰

In truth, the problem was not a lack of abstraction, as the Jesuits and others supposed; it was, initially, an inability on their part to understand the reasoning behind or underlying the use concrete metaphors and other figures of speech. If, as Hamell says, “metaphors allow us to think about abstract concepts in concrete terms”, and if they “provide the structure and orientation with which to think about something in a consistent and coherent

⁴⁸ W. Clements, *Oratory*, 80.

⁴⁹ W. Clements, *Oratory*, 16.

⁵⁰ J.P. Ronda, “‘We Are Well As We Are’: An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions”: *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 34/1 (Jan 1977) 70. —In addition, some of the ways in which the Jesuits developed their own metaphors are questionable. As John Steckley notes: “The way in which the Jesuits usually employed Iroquoian images of warfare and torture was to make Christian spirit figures follow the ideal role model of the Iroquoian warrior. This made God, Jesus, and the other Christian spirits easier to understand and respect, or to fear when their superior powers were described and emphasized”. J. Steckley, “The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity”: *Ethnohistory* 39/4 (1992) 485.

manner”,⁵¹ how then should we look at the metaphors of the Haudenosaunee? For Deborah Doxtator, “The descriptive, visual nature of the [Iroquoian] languages, the evocative power of the multiple meanings of concrete metaphors and the means of recording knowledge such as wampum belts, all support this kind of concrete, experientially-based knowledge”.⁵²

Taken together, the metaphors used in council oratory constitute what Ricoeur calls a “metaphoric network”. “One metaphor, in effect, calls for another and each one stays alive by conserving its power to evoke the whole network”.⁵³ Thus in council oratory each metaphor could stand alone and ably convey multiple meanings in parallel; but taken together, metaphors evoked the power of the whole. Lafitau noticed the importance of groups of metaphors in the mourning councils of the Haudenosaunee, especially when murder was involved. He notes that everyone was interested in thwarting all forms of vengeance. At the mourning council “up to sixty presents [wampum belts] are supplied which one of the chiefs himself presents, making a speech on offering each one [...] Of the sixty presents, the first nine are put into the hands of the kin to remove from their hearts all bitterness and desire for vengeance [...] The first nine are the most considerable and consist sometimes of a thousand beads of wampum each”.⁵⁴ Lafitau then goes on to describe each of these nine belts. They were almost identical to those Kiotseacton first presented in his address.

The Haudenosaunee, says Hamell, have several key metaphors, namely, ‘one head,

⁵¹ G.R. Hamell, “Metaphor and Myth,” 24.

⁵² D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 45.

⁵³ P. Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 64.

⁵⁴ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 2: 303.

one heart, one mind'; 'Grandfather Wind', 'Mother Earth', and 'Elder Brother Sun'; the 'Great Tree', the 'bundle of five arrows'; the 'Longhouse'. In the context of council oratory, the key metaphor of "one head, one heart, one mind", raises some interesting questions. At one level, it suggests that the parties to a council become 'one'. However, as Hanni Woodbury points out, "The metaphors of the 'single mind' and the 'single person' allude to the Iroquois system of reaching consensus on an issue before taking action of any kind".⁵⁵ These key metaphors are in turn based on what Sallie McFague and others call a root-metaphor. "A root-metaphor is the most basic assumption about the nature of the world or experience that we can make when we try to give a description of it".⁵⁶ For McFague, "each root-metaphor is a way of seeing 'all that is' through a particular key concept".⁵⁷

3.5 A Logic of Place

Turning to yet another aspect of council oratory, if we take Kiotseacton's address as the 'text', then McFague's discussion of the relationship of speaker and hearer to the text, provides a way to approach the metaphorical language of council oratory from the viewpoint of both the Haudenosaunee and of the Jesuits.

A text is not a bit of language we take in like food, but, as contemporary hermeneutical critics have insisted, it is discourse—someone speaking out of one complex context to someone else who also inhabits a complex context. The focus of the attention of both speaker and hearer is the text, to be sure,

⁵⁵ H. Woodbury, "Preface" to J.A. Gibson, *Concerning the League*, xxv, n. 50.

⁵⁶ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 28. Page 201, n.27: "The term 'root-metaphor' is Stephen Peppers's from his book *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: Univ of California Press, 1942).—The quotation is from Earl R. MacCormac, *Metaphor and Myth in Science and Religions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1976), 93.

⁵⁷ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 28.

but in order to understand that text appropriately and with any degree of accuracy, the basic metaphors or ‘prejudices’ [...] must be taken into account. To say that both speaker and hearer have [...] basic organizing metaphors is not a negative statement; it means only that no eye is naked, that texts are interpretations by speakers and that hearers come to texts with interpretive frameworks of their own by which they prejudice what a text means.⁵⁸

The Haudenosaunee and the Jesuits each occupied a complex context and neither came to the text with a naked eye. This much is clear enough. McFague is not suggesting here that texts are only interpretations and nothing more. She is saying, rather, that a text is an interpretation of *something*, of some fundamental notion of reality. For the Haudenosaunee, place and the land itself are basic organizing metaphors. “In Mohawk the word for clan, *otara*, means land, clay and earth”, so when “one asks an individual what clan they belong to (oh nisen’taroten’), one is literally asking ‘what is the outline or contour of your clay?’”⁵⁹ The association of clan names to clay may have cosmological significance since in the Haudenosaunee story of origins, Tharonhiawagon, the elder twin, fashioned the original human beings out of clay and then breathed life into them.

The clans are very old, ancient in fact, and the names come from the creatures of the natural world. Since the lives of the Haudenosaunee “revolved around the woods, the clans were based on the animals in the woods”, such as turtle, bear, wolf, or deer.⁶⁰ The word

⁵⁸ S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 56. —Here, McFague does not take into account the disagreement on “prejudice” between Hans-Georg Gadamer (prejudice is ‘positive’) and Paul Ricoeur (prejudice is ‘negative’). The ‘positive’ understanding of prejudice—which McFague does emphasize here—goes along with Martin Heidegger’s and Rudolf Bultmann’s notion of “preunderstanding” (“Vorverstehen”) as a dynamic tension of “selfunderstanding” (“Selbstverstehen”). See Maurice Boutin, “Réponses / Responses to John C. Robertson / 1”: *Studies in Religion* 8/4 (Fall 1979) 379-88, particularly p. 380, n.3.

⁵⁹ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 42.

⁶⁰ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 38, quoting Sam Cronk, “Reg Henry’s Cultural Discussion at Cayuga Language Class,” May 15, 1990, Six Nations, Ontario.

‘Haudenosaunee’ or ‘Rotinonhsyonni’ itself, is associated with place: these words mean ‘people of the extended lodge’ or ‘people of the longhouse’—the place where they lived. This logic of place extends to the names of different nations of the Haudenosaunee. It also extends to the metaphors of council oratory—the path, the fire, the tree and the mat, for example.

3.6 Kinship

The councils of the Haudenosaunee for sure presented the Europeans with a new reality. If, as Ricoeur and McFague say, “metaphors redescribe reality, creating tension between oneness with existence and alternative ways of being in the world”, then councils held between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans were a way of ‘being in the world’. In fact, the whole experience of North America was a new reality for the Europeans. For Paul Ricoeur a metaphor places two terms in tension with one another, for example, ‘mantle of sorrow’: “The metaphor is the result of the tension between two terms in a metaphorical utterance”.⁶¹ What is at stake in a metaphorical utterance “is the appearance of kinship where ordinary vision does not perceive any relationship [...] It is, in effect, a calculated error, which brings together things that do not go together and by means of this apparent misunderstanding it causes a new, hitherto unnoticed, relation of meaning to spring up between terms that previous systems of classification had ignored or not allowed”.⁶² Therefore, “It is precisely from this tensive apprehension that a new vision of reality springs

⁶¹ P. Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 50.

⁶² P. Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 51.

forth, which ordinary vision resists because it is attached to the ordinary use of words".⁶³

In short a metaphor "tells us something new about reality".⁶⁴

Ricoeur did not have Haudenosaunee council oratory in mind when he wrote this—he may or may not even know about the oratorical skills of North America's Native peoples. This being said, his observation speaks volumes of the councils as a whole. One of the most important metaphors of council oratory not discussed thus far is that of kinship. Kinship terms were employed regularly by the Haudenosaunee in their addresses, the term brother was one of the most common. Others included father, cousin or brethren and nephew. This form of address posed certain problems, since among the Haudenosaunee, "family relationships and responsibilities did not correspond to those among western Europeans" (Glossary, 'kinship'). For example, the term 'brother' applied not only to siblings, but to other nations as well. The five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy were brothers to one another. The Mohawk, Onondaga and Seneca were elder brothers while the Oneida and Cayuga were the younger brothers. "They were all peers, but the elders might be said to be a little more equal, at least as regarded deference behaviour" (Glossary, 'kinship'). In councils, the Haudenosaunee extended "symbolic usage of kinship terms" to nations beyond the Confederacy, and to the Europeans as well.⁶⁵ This kind of bilateral or horizontal conceptualization of relationships did not always accord well with European thinking on the way in which diplomatic relations could and indeed should be structured.

Getting back to Ricoeur's observation that a metaphorical utterance causes a new,

⁶³ P. Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol," 68.

⁶⁴ P. Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Symbol," 53.

⁶⁵ W. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity and Change," 11.

unnoticed relationship to spring up where none was thought to previously exist, this was certainly the intended effect of Haudenosaunee councils. When the Haudenosaunee addressed parties on the other side of the council fire as brothers, they were creating kinship where ordinary vision did not perceive any relationship. This was a bold step on their part and they prepared the way well. For example, at the 1645 council, before Kiotseaton clasped the hands of the other delegates he worked to ensure all encumbrances to the idea of kinship had been removed. For Max Black, a “memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate for the one as a lens for seeing the other”; this allows a metaphor to function like a model and “reveal new relationships”.⁶⁶ In a sense, then, councils functioned like a model to reveal new kinship relations. Max Black also says that a model constitutes the referential dimension of a metaphor. This referential value is a part of the heuristic function, that is, the aspect of discovery, of a metaphor and a model, of a metaphor as a model.⁶⁷ As noted in #1.6 Michael Foster describes the presentation of wampum by the Haudenosaunee as a forward-looking activity, as functioning prospectively, as concerned with organizing present and future events. Seen in this light, wampum and words of wampum possess heuristic qualities.

The new relationship revealed in the councils of the Haudenosaunee went well beyond traditionally defined notions of kinship, both then and now. Among the Haudenosaunee, the notion of kinship exceeded European concepts of same. For the Haudenosaunee, kinship was highly nuanced and highly dynamic. The Europeans most

⁶⁶ Quoted in P. Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 67.

⁶⁷ Quoted in P. Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 66.

certainly had an understanding of the metaphorical meaning of ‘brother’ (for example) through the more abstract concept of brotherhood. Some Europeans accepted this idea, others did not, but in terms of cross-cultural communication, it worked. In other words, the Europeans got the message. When Kiotseaeton clasped the French and Algonquian delegates by the hand he was expressing, in very concrete, non-verbal terms, a similar idea, one which had yet to find full expression. Clearly, Kiotseaeton was indicating that a relationship of some kind now being established between the Haudenosaunee and the French—he was, as Clements observes, “communicating cross-culturally about the inchoate”.⁶⁸ As councils between the Haudenosaunee developed over the ensuing century, the metaphor of linked arms came to be associated with another metaphor—the chain, which in turn was a metaphor for covenant.

3.7 Kinship Metaphors and the ‘Women’

None of the best known metaphors employed in council oratory directly speak of, refer to, or bear on women. While the metaphors of ‘brother’, ‘nephew’, ‘uncle’, and ‘father’ were in common usage, ‘sister’, ‘niece’, ‘auntie’, and ‘mother’ were rarely employed. However, metaphorical references to ‘women’ do appear in the record, not so much as kinship terms but as gender related terms. For example, in the council of 1645 at Trois-Rivières, Kiotseaeton urged the Huron delegates “to make haste to speak,—not to be bashful, like women”, when he presented the fourteenth belt. Interpreting this phrase is difficult since among the Haudenosaunee women are not now and have not in the past, been known to be bashful. Perhaps Kiotseaeton was using irony to make his point. In her lengthy

⁶⁸ W. Clements, *Oratory*, 94.

discussion of gender metaphors in eighteenth-century diplomatic relations, Nancy Shoemaker offers an explanation. She notes that Native peoples East of the Mississippi, “commonly used gender metaphors and gendered kinship metaphors, either as insults aimed at enemies or as structures for international alliances”.⁶⁹ The reference to bashful women in the 1645 council seems to fall into the first category. Why employ a gender metaphor to insult another party or people? Shoemaker attributes the tendency to commonly held views on women. “Throughout the eighteenth century Indians and Europeans understood each other’s gender metaphors, for they shared some of the same ideas about gender difference”; and she wonders if some gender constructions are human universals.⁷⁰ The question of power also comes into play here. “Similar to how eastern Indians categorized enemies as food by calling war captives ‘broth’ and ‘meat’, one party dominated another. Men dominated women”.⁷¹ She continues: “Whether ‘women’ or ‘eunuchs’ was the insult of choice, one nation declared power over another by making military conquest akin to sexual conquest. The concrete social relations of everyday life thus became the means to explain abstract relations between nations”. Gender metaphors could be, and were, used also positively—“‘women’ could be highly regarded as advocates for peace”⁷²—but the focus of Shoemaker’s discussion is on metaphorical use of ‘women’ as a term of derision.

Shoemaker’s two presuppositions—Native people and Europeans shared some of the same ideas about gender difference; among Native peoples the social relations of everyday

⁶⁹ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance between Men: Gender Metaphors and Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi”: *Ethnohistory*, 46/2 (1999) 239.

⁷⁰ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 240.

⁷¹ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 241.

⁷² N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 245.

life were expressions of the sexual conquest of women by men—need to be considered more carefully. Historically, it is not at all clear that in the case of the Haudenosaunee, they shared the same ideas as the Europeans about gender difference. For example, Gretchen Green points out that gender difference in Iroquoia does not denote the inequality characteristic of gender relations in European or Euroamerican societies; the roles of women and men exhibited a complementarity “as opposed to hierarchically based relationships”.⁷³ Green refers to the question of marriage as an example: the “Iroquois pattern stood in stark contrast to marriage in colonial America, in which the bride was virtually a piece of property being transferred from her father to her husband”. Among the Haudenosaunee women were not “literal equals”, but they “were full social persons ‘with their own rights, duties, and responsibilities, which were complementary and in no way secondary to those of men’”.⁷⁴

Whether or not the sexual conquest of women was characteristic of social relations among the Haudenosaunee is also open to question. Shoemaker’s discussion traverses the entire eighteenth century, and in that time period the social structures of the Haudenosaunee faced many, many challenges. Thus, what may have been true for the beginning of the century did not necessary apply at the end of the century and vice-versa. The change in living accommodation is a good example. By the middle of the eighteenth century in almost all the different communities throughout Iroquoia, the Haudenosaunee shifted from longhouses to single family dwellings. The impact, if any, this had on social relations is one

⁷³ G. Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” 14.

⁷⁴ G. Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” 8, quoting Eleanor Leacock, “Women’s Status in Egalitarian Society: Implications for Social Evolution,” in *Myths of Male Dominance: Collected Articles on Women Cross-Culturally*, Eleanor Leacock, ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981), 152.

of the most understudied areas of Iroquois history.⁷⁵ Haudenosaunee society was matrilineal and matrilocal. In the longhouses, women were the head of the household. In addition, the elder women and clan mothers decided who their daughters would marry, and as a rule a husband moved into his wife's extended longhouse (not the reverse), and they were considered 'guests' of the women.⁷⁶ In commenting on this John Mohawk observes that rape and sexual abuse were rare. He notes with a splash of humour that the criteria elder women used to decide who their daughters would marry was somewhat different from that used by the young women themselves. On the question of abuse, Mohawk says any man who beat his wife was doing so in front of her sisters, mother, aunties and grandmother. "This was not a good idea", says Mohawk, repeating, "*Not a good idea!*"⁷⁷ Mohawk's commentary may be something of a longhouse legend (in the style of an 'urban legend'), but in general terms his observations hold true.

In describing the status and place of women in early eighteenth century Iroquois society, Lafitau writes that in "them resides all the real authority: the lands, fields, all their harvest belongs to them; they are the soul of the councils, the arbiters of peace and war; [...] they arrange the marriages; the children are under their authority; and the order of succession

⁷⁵ Green notes that even with this change in living arrangements, "gender balance remained characteristic of Iroquoia." "Gender and the Longhouse," 8. Shoemaker herself carried out a study of the shift in "From Longhouse to Loghouse: Household Structure Among the Senecas in 1900": *American Indian Quarterly* 15 (1991) 327-38. Much of her study is based on census data. She notes that in 1900 "Seneca family structure [...] characterized by complex families and especially high vertical extension, was more like that of other Indian groups than like U.S. family structure." 334-35.

⁷⁶ G. Green, "Gender and the Longhouse," 10

⁷⁷ J. Mohawk in "The Great Debate II: Perspectives on Iroquois History", video recording, Kahnawake Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center, October, 1993.

is founded on their blood [or clan names]”.⁷⁸ The clan mothers, “choose the chiefs in their families to represent them and be, as it were, the repositories of this authority”. Lafitau then describes who is chosen: “The women choose their chiefs among their maternal brothers or their own children and in the latter’s brothers or their nephews who succeed them in the mother’s household”.⁷⁹ Is there some relationship here between the selection of brothers and nephews as chiefs and the metaphorical use of ‘brother’ and ‘nephew’ in council oratory? Perhaps, perhaps not, but a further comment made by Lafitau sheds more direct light on why the use of kinship terms was so prevalent in council oratory. They “do not willingly hear themselves called by the name given them and an inquiry as to what it is, is a kind of affront which causes them to blush”. He continues: “In addressing each other, they call each other by names of kinship, brother, sister, uncle, nephew, etc. observing [...] all the proper age relationship unless there is a real relationship by blood or adoption”. Finally, he says, “They practice the same civility to strangers to whom they give, in addressing them, names of consanguinity as if there was a true blood connections, close or distant, in proportion to the honour which they wish to do them”⁸⁰ In light of Lafitau’s description, employing kinship terms rather than proper names was integral to, and almost embedded in, Haudenosaunee social relations and social structures. Shoemaker observes that in diplomacy, “Kin metaphors *were* gender metaphors”, since Native people “usually addressed other nations as male relatives”.⁸¹ This is true enough, but the complex context out of which these male

⁷⁸ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 69.

⁷⁹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs* 1: 70.

⁸⁰ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 71-72.

⁸¹ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 249.

kinship metaphors developed did not exclude women.

The women chose the chiefs—the *Roiander Goa*, and the sub-chiefs—the *Agoianders*, as well. The *Agoianders* checked the *Roiander Goa* when or if the latter attempted to usurp too great authority. Lafitau notes that women often held this position themselves and their duty was to “watch more immediately over the nation’s interest”. These women sub-chiefs did not, it seems, attend international councils. “When they have been chosen, they are recognized in the councils but they are not shown before the allied nations as is the custom and practice for the chiefs”.⁸² Their absence from international councils did not mean they had no voice, however, and elsewhere Lafitau notes that the women sometimes chose “an orator among the men who speaks as if he were a woman and sustains that role”.⁸³

All this commentary on the role of women has some important implications for Shoemaker’s presuppositions. The gender metaphor of ‘women’ may in fact have been used as a term of derision in council oratory, but we cannot conclude that the root or origins of this usage came from concrete social relations, at least not at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Moreover—and even more importantly—in international councils we do not see the complete picture; we do not see the full complement of concrete social relations. Gretchen Green notes that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, information on women was “scanty and at times conflicting”.⁸⁴ She continues: “Virtually all who observed

⁸² J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 294.

⁸³ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 298-299. —Lafitau notes that otherwise, “women have their orators who speak for them in public councils”.

⁸⁴ G. Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” 8-9.

and recorded information were men, and men from a male-dominated (European) background. They filtered all they saw through the lens of their own culture's gender relations [...] Also, since European men of the time believed implicitly that nothing women might have to say would be important (a belief specific to European culture), they spoke almost exclusively to men". The documentary evidence surrounding the council of 1645 may be just such an example. Whether or not women were present is unknown. No explicit reference—other than the one cited above—is made of them. At the last sitting of the council in September when some five hundred people attended, women may well have been present, but again, we do not know this for sure. It is accepted wisdom among the Haudenosaunee that clan mothers, at least, attended councils and sat behind the sachems. According to Shoemaker these women beaded wampum belts and listened to council speeches.⁸⁵ This suggests a kind of passivity on the part of women, which was likely not the case.

Even with the enormous pressures placed on Haudenosaunee society throughout the eighteenth century, women continued to carry out the duties and responsibilities, even when their views did not accord with those of the men. The instance of women vetoing warfare in August of 1794 is a case in hand. Fenton recounts the episode as follows:

[The Seneca Chief] Cornplanter, having been worsted by the women and old men, went home unhappy at the Buffalo Creek council's decision. The debate had gone on for several days before the dire news of Fallen Timbers came in. Tired of the women's obstinacy, he argued for abolishing the supernatural sanction that give women the right to veto warfare. He held that men had submitted too long to the ancient custom handed down from

⁸⁵ N. Shoemaker, "An Alliance Between Men," 246.

their ancestors—that it was time to change the rule and let men decide for themselves [...] He knew the women would never give in. Indeed, the matrons had taken the measure of the most famous war chief of the Senecas. He never recovered from this humiliation. He would prove difficult at Canandaigua.⁸⁶

In this instance the negative view of women did not stem from them being weak or cowardly or fearful, as Shoemaker suggests in her interpretation of gendered metaphors,⁸⁷ but from their strength in opposing war and advocating peace.

Back in 1915 in his study of “Some Esoteric Aspects of the League of the Iroquois”, J.N.B. Hewitt offered an alternate and evidently much less known tradition among the Haudenosaunee. He refers to the Confederacy as a “vast sisterhood of all tribes [...], dwelling in harmony and peace”, made up of “two constituent members”, the Female Group and the Male Group, “respectively representing the mother and father sides, the female and male principles, the whole representing the union of fatherhood and motherhood for the promotion of the life-force and welfare of the community”.⁸⁸ This was a complementary relationship and the “mother or female complex [...] and the father or male complex [...] were held together by the exercise of certain rights and the performance of certain duties and obligations of the one to the other side”.⁸⁹ Hewitt likened the Confederacy to a human person: It is, he says, an “organic unity”, and as an institution “was conceived at times as

⁸⁶ W. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse*, 659. My thanks to Brian Deer for pointing out this passage to me.

⁸⁷ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 245.

⁸⁸ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects of the League of the Iroquois,” in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Americanists* 19 (1915) 322 & 325.

⁸⁹ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 326.

a bisexed being or person, i.e., as an organic unity it formed by the union of two persons of opposite sexes”.⁹⁰ It was “an animate being, endowed with definite biotic properties and functions”. In terms of gender metaphors, Hewitt notes there “were three tribes which constituted the male or father side [...], namely, the Mohawk, the Onondaga and the Seneca; and two tribes, the Oneida and the Cayuga, originally constituted the female or mother side”.⁹¹

Whatever happened to the mother’s side? During the eighteenth century and beyond, did it become submerged to the pressures of dealing with patriarchally-oriented European colonial officials? Is the fact that by the early eighteenth century when the women were sending men as speakers at international councils a sign that already the mother’s side was having to adapt to a new reality? Were the seemingly basic concepts of Confederacy as a sisterhood—of women as one half of a biotic whole, and the Oneida and Cayuga as the female side—all forced to become a private or internal matters kept alive within the Confederacy, but excluded from the public domain? Shoemaker does not cite Hewitt’s article or any of his other works on women and so she does not account for the ‘disappearance’ of the mother’s side from council oratory and the documentary evidence.⁹²

Shoemaker bases much of her discussion on the well-known, tumultuous relationship between the Delaware and the Haudenosaunee. Between about 1600 and the beginning of the Seven Years’ War in 1754, the two parties alternately cooperated and sparred with one

⁹⁰ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 325.

⁹¹ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 326.

⁹² Other articles by J.N.B. Hewitt on women include: “Clan and Gens”: *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 30/1:303-304; “Status of Women in Iroquois Polity before 1784,” in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents for the Smithsonian Institution for the year ending June 30, 1932*, 475-88

another. The Delaware, whether voluntarily or for lack of choice, became ‘women’ who wore ‘petticoats’; according to Shoemaker and various primary sources, they lost status in the process. For example, they were excluded from diplomatic missions. She notes that both “the Delawares and the Iroquois manipulated the metaphor [of ‘women’] to pursue separate diplomatic objectives [...] The Iroquois disparaged the Delawares as ‘women’ to shame them into fighting; the Delawares embraced their role as ‘women’ to keep from fighting”.⁹³ This case, as Shoemaker herself acknowledges, was probably unique; “Although conceiving of alliances as gendered partnership was rare among eighteenth-century eastern Indian—so rare that the Delaware-Iroquois alliance may be the only example—this gender metaphor entails such complexity that it deserves special scrutiny”.⁹⁴ Francis Jennings, for his part, points out that the Delawares’ status as women was intermittent.⁹⁵ After 1736 they were addressed as either ‘nephews’ or ‘grandfathers’, while the Haudenosaunee were ‘uncles’. “In this case”, writes Jennings, “there was no contradiction. Grandfathers deserved veneration and ceremonial deference but could not give orders. Nephews were obliged to give heed to their uncles’ wishes. Both metaphorical roles could easily be assigned to the same persons”.⁹⁶

Shoemaker also notes the Haudenosaunee handed the Delaware “a corn-pestle and hoe”, indicating they either belonged at home in the fields or as a matter of choice decided

⁹³ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 242.

⁹⁴ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 241

⁹⁵ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 302, n. 37.

⁹⁶ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 344.

to stay home rather than participate in warfare.⁹⁷ The reference to a corn-pestle may itself have been metaphorical and had quite a different meaning than the one implied by Shoemaker. According to Barbara Mann (Wendat), “‘Pounding out the corn,’ i.e., the metaphorical process by which judgments were made or disputes mediated, was one such exclusively ‘female’ power”.⁹⁸ Thus, the reference to the corn-pestle did not necessarily relegate women to the home and fields. It could well have been a metaphorical description of their role in political decision making. In any event, Mann offers quite a different interpretation of the relationship between the Haudenosaunee and the Lenâpé (Delaware) and the role of the latter as women. She quotes John (Johann) Heckewelder’s words: “As men they had been dreaded; as women they would be respected and honored; none would be so daring or so base as to attack or insult them; as women they would have a right to interfere in all the quarrels of other nations, and to stop or prevent the effusion of Indian blood”.⁹⁹ According to Mann, between 1600 and 1700 the traditional lands of the Lenâpé were taken over by European settlers and they in turn moved “into the homeland of their former rivals, the Haudenosaunee”, and between 1661 and 1677 the Haudenosaunee sought to adopt the Lenâpé into the Confederacy.¹⁰⁰ Mann adds:

The decision was arranged and instituted *by the women of both sides* for the good of themselves and their families. At the time the agreement was

⁹⁷ N. Shoemaker, “An Alliance Between Men,” 241.

⁹⁸ B. Mann, “Governmental Functioning and Powers of the Haudenosaunee League,” in *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, 123.—Unfortunately Barbara Mann does not cite Shoemaker’s article on gender metaphors and neither Mann nor Shoemaker cite Gretchen Green’s article on gender and the longhouse.

⁹⁹ B. Mann, *Iroquoian Women: Gantowisas of the Haudenosaunee League* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 173, note 174.

¹⁰⁰ B. Mann, *Iroquoian Women*, 173. Her emphasis.

reached, no man, League [Confederacy] or Lenâpé, harbored the slightest sense of discomfort over the prospect of being ‘made a woman.’ Chagrin did not settle in until later, as Europeans seized ever great control of the continent.

Quoting Paul A. W. Wallace, Mann goes on to say that “the Lenâpé had been ‘happy enough’ as ceremonial women, until the settlers ‘taught’ them ‘to be ashamed’ of their status”.¹⁰¹

3.8 The ‘Clearing’ and the ‘Forest’

Yet another set of metaphors not discussed in the mainstream Iroquoianist literature is that of the ‘clearing’ and the ‘forest’. These metaphors do not appear explicitly in council oratory either, but I am raising them here in order to shed slightly different light on the role women place in councils. The absence of women from the written texts of council proceedings (Vimont and Marie de L’Incarnation included) is glaring given their high stature in daily life and in the political structure of the Haudenosaunee. Understanding the metaphors of the ‘clearing’ and the ‘forest’ can help us see the unseen. Gretchen Green looks at the clearing and the forest with relation to spatial orientation in the world of the Haudenosaunee:

In spatial and to some degree functional (as well as religious) terms, Iroquois society and culture was divided into the center and the periphery. The center was the village and the cleared fields nearby; these were primarily female in orientation, as the earth itself was female. The forest beyond [where hunting and diplomacy took place] was primarily male.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ B. Mann, *Iroquoian Women*, 173, note 175 quoting Paul Wallace, “Cooper’s Indians,” 74.—Again it should be noted that Mann does not cite Shoemaker’s article. In addition, Shoemaker does not cite either Paul Wallace or John Heckewelder.

¹⁰² G. Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” 14

Green goes on to note that no hard and fast rules applied: “Women accompanied men on hunting trips and diplomatic forays, activities that were symbolically linked to the forest space, and men cleared the fields, built longhouses, and erected palisades within the village”. This spatially oriented structure was not based on segregation or the separation of powers, but on balance, interdependence, complementarity and reciprocity. The one complemented the other. Both were necessary and played a vital role in society. Green cites a beautiful and well-known example to illustrate the idea of interdependence and reciprocity: the exchange of marriage baskets whereby the woman presents the man with a basket holding cornbread (the produce of the village and the fields), and the man presents a basket holding venison (the produce of the hunt and the forest).¹⁰³

In her study of Iroquois clans in the nineteenth century, Deborah Doxtator transforms the ideas of the clearing and the forest into a pair of elegant metaphors.¹⁰⁴ Together, the clearing and the forest provide the structure for her discussion of Iroquois matrilineal clans (the clearing) and radical changes to the land bases (the forest) of the Haudenosaunee. She “presents the transformation or history of clans within the context of the Haudenosaunee philosophy that the world is made up of reciprocal relationships between two sides”.¹⁰⁵ She looks to the clearing and the forest as the basic spatial and organizing metaphors for Haudenosaunee life and for her discussion. The metaphorical pairing of the clearing and the

¹⁰³ G. Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” 13.

¹⁰⁴ In her dissertation, “To the Reserve and Back Again: Kahnawake Mohawk Narratives of Self, Home and Nation,” (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Montreal: McGill University, 2003), Audra Simpson (Mohawk) applies Doxtator’s metaphors of the clearing and the forest to her own research and to the Kahnawake:ronon who travel to and work in large urban centres such as New York. Kahnawake is the clearing, New York the forest. In travelling from Kahnawake (the clearing) to various urban centers (the forest) to interview Kahnawake:ronon, Simpson describes the effect this transition has on her and others personally.

¹⁰⁵ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 11

forest is not suggestive of a dualism, but of a ‘twoness’ in which a relationship of reciprocity, complementarity and interdependence exists. “This metaphor of two mutually-dependent sides or principles, had a spatial basis in the demarcation between village or clearing, representing local agricultural resources and local concerns, and the forest representing external hinterlands, connections and resources such as game, trade and warfare”.¹⁰⁶ To the list of forest concerns can be added diplomacy. Continues Doxtator: “The co-operation, reciprocity and balance between these two sides was essential to the Rotinohsyonni economy and political system of decision-making. Each side in this metaphor [...] is dependent upon the other”. She goes on to note that the Haudenosaunee “could accomplish nothing—from warfare to planting—without cooperation between the two genders, the two spatial areas (internal village and external forest) and consequently, the two ‘sides’”.

I have raised this discussion of the clearing and the forest for two reasons. First, let us cast our minds back for a moment to the council of 1645. Kiotseaeton was on a diplomatic mission, one of the forest concerns. When he spoke of the villages and smoke rising from the village fires, was he referring to the concerns of the clearing? To the women? Was he acknowledging the place of women in Haudenosaunee culture and society? Was he acknowledging the contribution the women had made to the council and the peace process? Was he also demonstrating respectful deference to their role as Clan Mothers who raise up and dehorn chiefs? Does this add yet another ‘row’ to Doxtator’s idea of multiple meanings in parallel?

Second, Doxtator’s detailed explication of the clearing and the forest is, without

¹⁰⁶ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 69.

question, the finest illustration ever to be written on the meaning of such concepts as co-operation, reciprocity and balance in Haudenosaunee philosophy and life. Her discussion is especially meaningful for another reason: it comes from within the culture, i.e., Doxtator develops a theoretical and methodological framework by looking internally. She does not ‘observe’ the Haudenosaunee from afar and then critique them for what they did or did not do. She does not separate herself or put distance between herself and the culture of the Haudenosaunee. Quite the opposite, she immerses herself in it. Her lengthy explication of the forest and the clearing (only a small portion of which has been discussed thus far) reflects detailed knowledge of Haudenosaunee customs—how did the women and the men act, what were their separate and shared roles in daily life. Moreover, she looks to the epic narratives of the Haudenosaunee—to oral history and cosmology—and she gives us a new, imaginative, and comprehensive reading of these narratives, most particularly of the story of origins.

Historians invariably rely on written records; as Germain Warkentin says, we are a ‘book culture’. The accuracy and reliability of these records are often called into question, but they still provide the basis for much of the scholarship on the Haudenosaunee. This is not necessarily all bad, especially now that the academic community has worked hard to separate sound observation from idle speculation. Nevertheless, these records come from outside the life experiences of the Haudenosaunee. Some scholars have tried to integrate what are generically called oral traditions (epic narratives, stories and oral histories) into their writings,¹⁰⁷ but almost invariably a radical break occurs between these oral traditions and the ‘facts’ as presented in the written record and, again, almost invariably the written

¹⁰⁷ For example, Daniel Richter’s use of the story of origins as discussed above #1.

record is taken as the point of departure. Where there is a conflict between the written record and oral accounts of past events, the written record holds sway. Doxtator takes a different tack altogether: she takes the clearing and the forest, for her a familiar way of seeing things, as a way of saying something about the written record which suggests that by the nineteenth century the Iroquois clans had become static entities. In the process the written record speaks as it never has before. Rather than use oral tradition as the proverbial straw dog, Doxtator employs it as a *mode* for interpreting the written record. In so doing she takes the scholarship a very long way down the path to a better understanding of the relationship between oral tradition and the written record.

The metaphorical pairing of the clearing and the forest will be discussed in more detail in # 7.1. For the moment we will now look at the concept of covenant. The following section of this study begins with a discussion of post-Reformation European/Christian concepts of covenant. The intent here is to give the reader an overview of the covenant motif as it was employed by Europeans in both the religious and the secular spheres. This discussion will then be followed by one on Haudenosaunee concepts of covenant. The aim here is not to play European concepts of covenant against Iroquoian concepts of same. Today, scholars shudder when confronted with the comparative approach, especially a comparative approach involving Europeans and North America's Native peoples. As a descendant of Europeans who settled in North America, I will begin with the better known (covenant in post-Reformation thought), and from there I will discuss the lesser known (covenant in the thought of the Haudenosaunee). The aim here is not to *prove* that the Haudenosaunee had and do have a concept of covenant. The aim here is to better see what the Haudenosaunee meant when they polished the Silver Covenant Chain. There are points

of contact and points of departure in European and Haudenosaunee conceptions of covenant.

CHAPTER 4

RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF COVENANT IN EUROPEAN THOUGHT

Politics is the art of associating [humans] for the purpose of establishing, cultivating and conserving social life among them. Whence it is called 'symbiotics'. The subject matter of politics is therefore association, in which the symbiotes (those who live together) pledge themselves each to the other, by explicit or tacit agreement, to mutual communication of whatever is useful and necessary for the harmonious exercise of social life.

The end of political 'symbiotic' mankind is holy, just, comfortable and happy symbiosis (living together), a life lacking nothing either necessary or useful.

Johannes Althusius, 1603¹

One of the Protestant Christian grand designers [Johannes Althusius] straddled the Reformation and the opening of the modern epoch [...] What emerges from the Politics is a biblically-informed theory of the polity and the society it serves, presented in the systematic fashion of Western political philosophy [...] Althusius' Politics was the first book to present a comprehensive theory of federal republicanism rooted in a covenantal view of human society, but not dependent on, a theological system.

Daniel J. Elazar, 1994²

In this chapter I will discuss several flowerings of the covenant motif in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century post-Reformation continental Europe, Great Britain, and North America. My aim here is to examine the relationship between covenant theology and the development of what we today call political philosophy or political theory. This

¹ J. Althusius, *Digest of Politics Methodically Explained*, Frederick S. Carney, trans. & introduction, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 12.

² D.J. Elazar, *The Multi-faceted Covenant: The Biblical Approach to the Problem of Organizations, Constitutions, and Liberty as Reflected in the Thought of Johannes Althusius* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Workshop in the Covenant Idea and the Jewish Political Tradition, 1994), 6-7

discussion may seem very far removed from metaphor and Haudenosaunee council oratory, but it is included here for an important reason: it will provide us with an overview of the many different ways in which the concept of covenant manifested itself in European thought. Covenant theology came to North America with the Pilgrims. This is well known. Much less well known or understood is another flowering of the covenant motif on this continent: the Covenant Chain.

I will begin with a discussion of the concept of covenant in the Old and New Testaments. Then we will enter something of a time machine and travel forward to sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. I will give an overview of the first ‘students’ of the biblical covenant and discuss how covenant or federal theology developed within the Reformed tradition. I will then discuss federal theology in the “Lowlands” (the Netherlands) in the seventeenth century. From there I will look more closely at the concept of covenant in the writings of the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1582-1645) and the German-born political thinker Johannes Althusius (1557-1638). My aim in discussing the various flowerings of the covenant motif is to demonstrate the many diverse ways in which it was employed in both the theological and political spheres.

Of all the theologies now recognized and studied, covenant theology can truly be called a child of the Reformation. In the history of Christian thought it had few progenitors prior to the sixteenth century. The notion of covenant was not, for instance, in the mainstream of Early Church doctrine. The covenant motif was present in medieval Nominalism, but from Augustine to the early sixteenth century the idea of covenant did not

play a central role in Christian thought.³ Covenant theology came into its own only after the initial stages of the Reformation. Nevertheless, it can be considered part of the Reformation inasmuch as it was discussed and developed by reformed theologians—‘reformed’ in the broadest sense of this word. Of course, it became central in Reformed theology. In the sixteenth century, and particularly the seventeenth century, covenant theology became widespread in Western Europe and the British Isles and ‘emigrated’ to the New World with the Pilgrims. The many different ways in which the covenant theology took hold and was employed is quite remarkable. From the Swiss theologians Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), and Jean Calvin (1509-1564), to the English Puritans, the Westminster Confession and the rebel Scots ‘Covenanters’; from the Heidelberg Catechism, to German, Dutch and British intellectuals and law makers, to New England’s Puritan communities, the idea of covenant had broad appeal. In a sense, a kind of dialectic existed between theology and what we now call ‘secular’ thought. As the church historian H. Richard Niebuhr has noted, the source of covenant theology is unquestionably biblical, but “it was suggested and influenced [...] by the development of contract law and commercial companies”.⁴ To this we can add the development of political states as well. The interplay between the idea of covenant and the development of contract law, commerce and political theory is an intricate one.

4.1 The Old and New Testaments

Volumes upon volumes have and can be written on the notion of covenant in the

³ David N.J. Poole, *The History of the Covenant Concept from the Bible to Johannes Cloppenburg* (San Francisco, CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 61.

⁴ H. R. Niebuhr, “The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy”: *Church History* 23 (1954) 130

Scriptures and the following is a vastly condensed summary of this idea. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the concept of covenant is as old as the first books of the Old Testament and the notion of Yahweh's covenant with the people of Israel permeates the Old Testament writings. The English word 'covenant' is derived from the Latin verb *convenire* (see Old French *covenir*), meaning 'to agree'. The *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language* (OED) defines covenant as a mutual agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing certain acts. According to the dictionary, covenant is a compact, contract or bargain. But this, as we will see, gives us only a very limited way of thinking about this idea.

English language versions of the Old Testament translate the Hebrew word *berit* into covenant. *Berit* "seems to have the root meaning of 'bond, fetter,' indicating a binding relationship".⁵ In the New Testament or the New Covenant the Greek *diatheke* is also translated as covenant. The word 'testament' itself means covenant as it is the Latin translation of the Greek *diatheke*. In the Old Testament, we find more than three hundred references to covenant, in the New Testament, only about thirty.

As biblical scholars seem to agree, there is no uniform concept of covenant in the Old Testament. "The translation 'covenant' is merely one attempt to render the term [*berit*] in English [...] The basic aspects of *berit* range over the semantic elements 'promise,' 'decree,' 'obligation,' [and] 'agreement'".⁶ Among the Israelites, *berit* variously described a solemn contract, a peace pact, the bond of marriage or a solemn treaty. In the Old Testament "humans make covenants with one another that shape economic, political, and familial

⁵ *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 1993 ed s.v. "Covenant," 138-39.

⁶ Hans Joachim Kraus, "God's Covenant: Old and New Testaments," in *A Covenant Challenge to Our Broken World*, Allen O. Miller, ed. (Atlanta, GA: Darby Printing Co., 1982), 79.

relations. The relation of [...] [Yahweh] with creation and with humanity is depicted in covenantal terms. [Yahweh] makes a covenant with Noah, all humanity, and nature after the flood, with Abraham and his descendants, and with the Hebrew people after the deliverance of bondage in Egypt”.⁷ For Biblical scholars the meaning of covenant,

is not determined primarily by etymology but by how these and related terms function in various literary contexts. In general, covenant signifies a relationship based on commitment, which includes both promises and obligations, and which has the quality of reliability and durability. This relationship is usually sealed or solemnized by a rite—for example, an oath [...]—which makes it binding.⁸

Yahweh’s covenant with the Hebrew people was “intended to create and to maintain a pattern of life”,⁹ and this pattern or code of life is one “in which peace, justice and right govern the relationship between two parties”.¹⁰

The life-relationship of God and humanity took on new meaning in the New Testament with a new covenant established through the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This new covenant was, and still is, celebrated in the eucharist. In the New Testament the majority of occurrences of the word ‘covenant’ refer to the covenants of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, “two meanings can be applied to the [Greek] word *diatheke*: either [...] decree or ordinance [...] or testament, last will”.¹¹ In Classical Greek, *diatheke* stands first and foremost for decree, but it also has the meaning of ‘last will’ and ‘testament’.

⁷ Charles S. McCoy & J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 12.

⁸ *Oxford Companion*, 138.

⁹ H.J. Kraus, “God’s Covenant,” 79.

¹⁰ H.J. Kraus, “God’s Covenant,” 79.

¹¹ D.N.J. Poole, *The History of Covenant*, 28

The covenant idea is, then, an important one in both the Old and the New Testaments.

While dictionary definitions tend to see covenant as analogous to compact and contract, the three terms are not precisely synonymous. Of the three, contract is the most narrowly defined. According to political scientist Daniel J. Elazar, contracts are expressions of private law and “tend to be interpreted as narrowly as possible so as to limit the obligation of the contracting parties to what is explicitly mandated by the contracts itself. Contracts normally contain provisions for unilateral abrogation by one part of another under certain conditions”.¹² Elazar goes on to note that covenant is tied in an “ambiguous relationship” to compact and contract. Covenants and compacts are public in character and, he says, both are broadly reciprocal. “Those bound by one or the other are obligated to respond to each other beyond the letter of the law [...] Hence, covenants and compacts are inherently designed to be flexible in certain respects as well as firm in others”. The two differ, however, in one important respect: A covenant has a “morally binding dimension [which] takes precedence over its legal dimension”. When the term ‘compact’ is used, “moral force is only indirectly involved”—in other words, “compact is a secular phenomenon”. While contracts can be unilaterally abrogated, covenants and compacts “generally require mutual consent to be abrogated, designed as they are to be perpetual or of unlimited duration”. As Richard Niebuhr once cautioned: “Contract always implies limited, covenant unlimited commitment; contract is entered into for the sake of mutual advantages; covenant implies the presence of a cause to which all advantages may need to be sacrificed. The tendency of the covenant idea to degenerate into the limited contract idea is evident in all the later

¹² D.J. Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth: From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation* [The Covenant Tradition in Politics, Vol. 2], (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 2

religious and social history”.¹³

4.3 Covenant or Federal Theology

Biblical scholars and historians seem to agree that although the concept of covenant was central to the ancient Israelites and the first Christians, it waned in importance after the biblical period. For Elazar, the covenant of the Hebrew Bible is a theo-political rather than a strictly theological concept: the ancient Israelites drew “no distinction between its religious and political dimensions”.¹⁴ Elazar goes on to note that following the rise of Christianity, the political dimension of covenant was downplayed in Judaism: “Jewish legists simply took the basic covenantal framework of Judaism for granted and concentrated on the fine points of the law as applied to daily living or the expected messianic redemption”; later “in the Jewish world, the political dimension of covenanting received new impetus in the eleventh century to provide a basis for constituting local Jewish communities throughout Europe”.¹⁵ In the Christian world, as already noted, covenant did not play a central role until the Reformation. With the Protestant Reformation, however, reformed scholars (in the broadest sense) across Western Europe turned to the biblical covenant and found in it the basis for building a theology. In essence, covenant theology took the idea of covenant and developed a system in which it “forms the basic framework and acts as the controlling idea in that

¹³ H.R. Niebuhr, “The Idea of Covenant,” 134.

¹⁴ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions* [The Covenant Tradition in Politics, Vol. 1], (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 5.

¹⁵ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity*, 5.

theological system”.¹⁶

In his study of the covenant in the Reformed tradition, David Weir maps out two schools of thought, one coming from Calvin and the Genevan theologians, the other from Zwingli, Bullinger and the Rhineland theologians. According to Weir the two schools had quite different conceptions of the Biblical covenant. For Calvin and the Genevan theologians the covenant was unilateral: it is God’s unconditional promise to humankind; the burden of fulfilling the covenant rests on God; the covenant is fulfilled in Christ’s Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection. The other school of Zwingli, Bullinger, and the Rhineland theologians proposed that the covenant is bilateral: it is God’s conditional promise to humankind and humankind’s response, thus making it a mutual pact or treaty; the burden of fulfilling the covenant rests on humankind, the covenant is fulfilled in the obedience of the individual.¹⁷ The two key terms in this comparative chart which seem to be important in the development of covenant or federal theology are ‘unilateral’ and ‘bilateral’.

Two scholars, Charles McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, question the degree to which Calvin can be considered a covenant theologian. He was not, they assert, “a covenant theologian, despite the fact that he often referred to the covenant and spent many, many pages in his *Institutes* [second edition] writing about the covenant” and like so much else in Calvin’s theology, his use of covenant seems to be the subject of considerable debate.¹⁸

¹⁶ D.A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3.

¹⁷ D.A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology*. 26.

¹⁸ C. McCoy & J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 23.

McCoy and Baker go on to note that “Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination and election, which carefully protected both *sola fide* and *sola gratia* [...] tended to preclude any concept of a conditional or bilateral covenant”. On the other hand, Bullinger’s “entire theological system was organized around the idea of a bilateral conditional covenant [...] a covenant that would endure until the end of the world”.¹⁹

Theologically, this discussion becomes incredibly complex, but we can see how Bullinger’s thought gave rise to federal theology; when we think of ‘federalism’ we tend toward the idea of a bilateral rather than a unilateral relationship. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), we should remember, would have been familiar with the history and the bilateral structure of the Swiss cantons (1291). The terms ‘covenant theology’ and ‘federal theology’ are used interchangeably by scholars. The English word ‘federalism’ comes from the Latin *foedus*, meaning covenant, and while it has only secular meaning today, federalism was employed by sixteenth-century theologians in both the religious and the political contexts. Bullinger is generally credited with ‘founding’ Reformed federal theology.²⁰ McCoy and Baker sort out the Bullinger-Calvin problem by noting that the differences between the two “formed the basis for the two alternative, though related, strands within the Reformed tradition—Federalism and Calvinism”.²¹ Historians have tended to give Calvinism and Calvinist theology preference in the Reformed Tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but McCoy and Baker find in Bullinger and his successors the ‘other’ reformed

¹⁹ C. McCoy & J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 24.

²⁰ For a discussion of Bullinger’s contribution to the development of federalism see C. McCoy and J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*. See also J. W. Baker, “Faces of Federalism: From Bullinger to Jefferson”: *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 30/4 (2000) 25-41.

²¹ C. McCoy & J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 24.

tradition—a tradition which led to the development of federal theology.

David A. Weir's mapping is helpful, but it does not give us a very good sense of the dynamics of the covenant idea among the Reformers. In his article "The Concept of Covenant in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Continental and British Reformed Theology", William Klempa presents an overview of the covenant idea in early Reformation thought. I will quote at some length from this overview.

The [Zurich and] Rhineland Reformers were the first to make full use of the covenant idea. Their covenant theology represented an advance on medieval scholasticism in that they tried to understand the work and Word of God dynamically as an historical event unfolding from creation to the day of judgment rather than statically as a system of self-evident truths. Oecolampadius [...] argued that the eternal covenant of God with humanity was the law of love which was inscribed on the human heart at creation and was later expounded by the written law of the Bible. Wolfgang Capito, the Strasbourg reformer, made use of the covenant in his commentaries.

Zwingli employed the covenant concept in his theology chiefly as a way of defending the practice of infant baptism. The Anabaptists, against whom he argued, liked to call themselves 'Bundesgenossen' (covenant members) [...]

From Heinrich Bullinger [...] on, the covenant became an increasingly important mode of Reformed thought. Bullinger took over the covenantal aspect of Zwingli's thought and broadened it. He published the first specific treatise on the covenant, *De Testamento sive foedere Dei* in 1534. In *The Decades* (1550) Bullinger defined God's covenant as follows:

God, in making of leagues, as he does in all things else, applies himself to our capacities, and imitates the order which men use in making confederacies [...] And therefore, when God's mind was to declare the favour and good-will that he bore to [hu] mankind, [...] it pleased him to make a league or covenant with [hu]mankind [...]

Zwingli and Bullinger spoke of one covenant of grace. So did John

Calvin [...] According to him the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was already the *foedus evangelii* of which Christ was not only the fulfilment but the eternal basis [...] Calvin's discussion of the covenant displays something of the living dynamism of history [...] Calvin took Luther's sense of history and transformed it into a sense of destiny. He united creation and redemption in a special way by seeing the Kingdom of God as the special end of creation. Unfortunately at this point as at others, his theology was compromised by the *decretum absolutum* of double predestination.

Following Zwingli, Bullinger and Calvin, the covenant became a prominent feature of the theological-exegetical works of Wolfgang Musculus... of Augsburg and Bern; Martin Bucer [...] and Peter Martyr [...] both of Strassburg; and Andrew Hyperius [...] Yet the two most influential theologians with regard to covenant theology in [the sixteenth century] were Caspar Olevianus [...] and Zacharius Ursinus, the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism [1562].²²

In this quote we can see how, from the 1530s to the 1560s, the idea of covenant was employed in several different ways, from its initial application in baptism, to the making of leagues and confederacies, to a theory of history, to a confession of faith. Covenant theology crossed the English Channel when Peter Martyr (1499-1562), Martin Bucer (1491-1551) and others travelled to England. According to Klempa, the "idea of the covenant was known to Chaucer and Caxton and appeared in 1549 in the English marriage service where it still remains". William Tyndale (1494-1536) used "the covenant concept as an interpretative principle for the understanding of Scripture". The earliest Scottish monograph on the covenant was published in 1596 by Robert Rollock (1555-1598), but it was William Ames who "gave the idea of covenant systemic form in his *Medulla Theologiae* (1623)".²³

²² William Klempa, "The Concept of Covenant in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Continental and British Reformed Theology," in *A Covenant Challenge to our Broken World*, 133-35.

²³ W. Klempa, "Continental Theology," 135-36

Covenant theology crossed the English Channel once again as Ames and other English Puritans sought sanctuary in Holland. After 1590, writes Weir, the covenant idea began to blossom all over Europe with such fecundity that “it is impossible to keep track of the manifold uses and conceptions of the covenant motif”.²⁴

In 1620 when the Pilgrims began emigrating to North America, they employed the concept of covenant as the basis for building their communities, and so on the other side of the Atlantic, in Britain’s North American colonies, the covenant motif saw yet more flowerings. The best known examples are the Mayflower compact of the first Puritan settlers and the covenants on which the early Puritan communities of New England were founded. According to Elazar, the covenant idea also crossed the Atlantic with Dutch, Scots Presbyterians, Quakers, German Sectarians and Huguenot immigrants. The covenantal tradition and covenantal language became the foundation of state (commonwealth) constitutions and ultimately of the American Constitution itself.

4.3 Covenant and Political Philosophy

Concomitant with theological discourse on the covenant were numerous philosophical applications of the concept. In the late sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century, political philosophers turned to federalism in their theory building. According to Baker, Johannes Althusius (1557-1638) was the person most responsible for clarifying the connection between the religious covenant and political federalism.²⁵ Subsequent political philosophers who employed the concept of covenant included Thomas

²⁴ D.A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology*, 115.

²⁵ J.W. Baker, “Faces of Federalism,” 30.

Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), Hugo Grotius (1582-1645), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694), and the Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was to give it yet another form of expression in the *contrat social*.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then, covenant or federal theology constituted one of the major strains of thought in Protestant circles. The extent to which the tradition shaped political developments during this period is most clearly evident in the history of the Low Countries which saw one of the most influential flowerings of covenant theology in the post-Reformation era. Three Dutch reformers, Johannes Anastasius Veluanus (n.d. converted to Reformed Church in 1550), Gellius Sneecanus (1520-?) and Cornelius Wiggertz (ca. 1550-1624) all advanced federal theology and Bullinger's writings to congregations, both from the pulpit and in publications. "Among these theologians the conditional character of the covenant was strongly emphasized, with faith and love as its conditions, and this view [...] led them more and more toward an Arminian universalism with respect to the divine offering of salvation [...] Wiggertz explicitly expounded these views... and for this was excommunicated in 1598 by the Dutch Reformed Church".²⁶

Two intellectual centres, the universities of Leyden, founded in 1575 by William of Orange for the study of the Reformed religion, and Franeker (1580) were pivotal in fostering the development of federal theology. Some important thinkers associated with these two institutions include Johannes Cloppenburg (1592-1652) and the German-born theologian

²⁶ John Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 195. —Arminianism was a theological reaction against the deterministic logic of Calvinism. The Arminians insisted that Divine sovereignty was compatible with a real free-will and that Jesus died for all, not only for the elect. Jacobus Arminius and the Arminians were condemned by the Dutch Reformed Church at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). However, by 1630 a more tolerant policy was adopted toward them.

Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669). As is well known, both Leyden and Franeker gave refuge to the English Puritans including William Ames, and from 1609 to 1620 provided hospitality to the Pilgrims before they emigrated to North America. While Cloppenburg, Cocceius and later Hermannus Witsius (1636-1708) were concerned primarily with theology, “they emerged within a thoroughly Calvinistic, federal political climate and their work had a wide and varied influence”.²⁷

According to Elazar, the covenant ideas which these theologians developed and refined in the seventeenth century, were already in play by the 1560s at the beginning of the Eighty Years’ War. During the long revolt against Spanish rule in the Low Countries covenantal language “was reflected in the common political vocabulary of the times”: for example, the “1566 covenant among the nobles that initiated serious resistance to Philip II was known as a *compromise* [from the Latin *compromissum*, to promise mutually] or common oath”.²⁸ During the revolution itself, Elazar adds, terms such as “confederation and alliance, confederates, or simply confederation to show that these were relations among equals” became commonplace; “all of these were introduced by oaths”, which “emphasized the Dutch equivalent of *hesed* [Hebrew meaning covenant love] to characterize relationships in the Netherlands”. In 1579, when the independent United Provinces were established, “representatives of the seven northern provinces adopted the Union of Utrecht, a covenantal political constitution, and established the United Netherlands in the north. In response, the southern Netherlands provinces adopted their covenant, the Union of Arras”.²⁹ The Union

²⁷ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 209.

²⁸ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 222.

²⁹ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 216.

of Utrecht remained in force until the fall of the Dutch republic in 1795.

The Union of Utrecht was not a modern constitution, says Elazar. It “was more like a treaty among the provinces and had the curious ambiguity of confederal constitutions, pointing at one and the same time toward a league of provinces and, on the other hand, toward some form of perpetual union”. Covenantal language characterized this relationship. “The partners in this union were *bondgenoten*, literally parties bound by covenant”.³⁰ Allies were designated *geallieerden*, those who are faithful to one another. “In international matters the phrase used was *traite ye confederation*, treaty and confederation. In short, an appropriate language of covenant developed along with the application of covenantal principles in Dutch nation building”.³¹ For Elazar, “The seventeenth century was the heyday of the United Netherlands. During that century, it was the best example in the world of a functioning federal system”.³²

4.4 Hugo Grotius

With Dutch independence from Spanish rule, merchants set about establishing two great trading companies: the Dutch East India Company, which was chartered in 1602, and the Dutch West Indies Company, chartered in 1621. In order to pursue their trading interests abroad and in the face of fierce competition from Spain, Portugal, England and France, the Dutch had to defend the principle of freedom of the seas.³³ In 1609 Hugo Grotius, the Dutch

³⁰ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 216.

³¹ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 222-23.

³² D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 220.

³³ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 221.

humanist, jurist and philosopher, published anonymously, *Mare Liberum* (*The Freedom of the Seas*) in which he argued “that the liberty of the sea was a key aspect in the communications amongst peoples and nations”. In so doing, he denied the legality of monopoly held by other European powers in international trade. Grotius came from a line of distinguished public servants and scholars and in 1591, at age eleven, he enrolled at the University of Leyden where he studied theology, the classics and Roman Law. He received his doctorate from the University of Orleans in 1598. In that year he accompanied Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the prime minister of the United Netherlands, on a diplomatic mission to France where he was introduced to Henry IV as the ‘miracle of Holland’. In 1601 he began to practice law with the Dutch East India merchants and in 1604 began work on *De Jurae Praedae* (*Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty*), from which Chapter 12 was published as *The Freedom of the Seas* in 1609. In 1625 he published *De Jure Belli et Pacis* (*The Law of War and Peace*), in which he set forth the fundamental principles of international law. The first edition was published in Paris, during his exile. The treatise was translated into Dutch the next year and was subsequently published in Amsterdam in 1631, 1632, 1642 and 1646.³⁴ It was translated into English in 1654.

In his writings, Grotius emphasizes that all law is divided into divine and human. He makes a distinction between the primary law of nature and the secondary law of nature. The primary law of nature “derives its authority from the expressed will of God”; the secondary law of nature or the primary law of nations, describes “the rules of law which rest on

³⁴ Edward Dumbauld, *The Life and Legal Writings of Hugo Grotius*, (Norman, OK University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 58 n. 5.

reason”.³⁵ He drew on a wide range of sources including primarily the Old and New Testaments, the Church Fathers, classical Greek and Roman texts, and also on his contemporaries as well. He also looked to Dutch custom and history and to the events of his time, namely the Eighty Years’ War and the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648). Indeed, it was the horrors stemming from what he saw as lawless war which motivated him to “produce a systematic and comprehensive treatise on laws which could govern ‘the mutual relations among states and rulers of states’”.³⁶ Hence *The Laws of War and Peace* whose theme is “the law common to all [hu]mankind, the law of the universal human society which prevails on earth”.³⁷ Grotius “recognized that just as no national state can exist without law, so also the broader international society cannot exist without law”. In *The Laws of War and Peace*, he developed the ‘just war’ theory for which he is now so well known. If, under certain conditions war could be justified, peace was preferred and where a choice could still be made Grotius “recommended strongly that a decision be made against war”.³⁸ In pursuing this theme, “Grotius suggested three methods by which disputes could be prevented from breaking into wars”. The first method,

is that of conference. For, in the words of Cicero, “there being two methods of deciding quarrels, the one by discussion and the other by force, the former, a peculiar characteristic of man, and the latter, of the brute creation: when the first of these methods fails, men are obliged to have recourse to the latter.” Mardonius, in the Polyhymnia of Herodotus, blames the Grecians, who, being united in one language, might settle their quarrels by messengers of peace,

³⁵ E. Dumbauld, *Writings of Grotius*, 37-40.

³⁶ Charles S. Edwards, *Hugo Grotius: The Miracle of Holland*, (Chicago, IL: Nelson Hall, 1981), 96.

³⁷ E. Dumbauld, *Writings of Grotius*, 59.

³⁸ C.S. Edwards, *The Miracle of Holland*, 125.

by heralds, and negotiations, rather than by war. (*Laws*, II, 23, vii)

Edwards comments that “Regarding conference, negotiations were to take place among parties to a dispute to the exclusion of third parties. Any solution was dependent upon bilateral obligations which embodied the risk of unilateral violation”.³⁹

According to Elazar, Grotius’ argument in *The Laws of War and Peace* “was based upon the law of God and the law of nations, emphasizing that international trade was ‘the most praiseworthy bond of human fellowship’ that provided ‘opportunities for doing mutual service’”.⁴⁰ Here, the language of the covenantal tradition seems clear and unmistakable and Grotius did indeed appeal to the covenants of the Old and New Testaments in his treatise (see for instance *Laws*, I, ix, xvi or ix). Invariably, Grotius discusses oaths and covenants within the context of the law, be it Mosaic or Christian. He also speaks of contracts and mutuality in Roman law and of Greek treaties and alliances. In his discussion of covenant and federalism Thomas O. Hueglin describes the relationship among these different terms as follows:

But the great scholars of that period were [...] not only theologians, but also jurists. Therefore, covenant came to be expressed in terms of Roman law, as *mutua obligatio*, a mutual obligation which requires partnership and allows the resistance of one partner, if the other does not fulfill his part. Covenant also came to be expressed in terms of natural law, which entailed a rediscovery of the Aristotelian dimension of politics which defines humans as social animals by nature. It is together with the contractualism of Roman law and the humanism of Greek *polis* that the covenant idea must be seen in

³⁹ C.S. Edwards, *The Miracle of Holland*, 125-26. —The second method is arbitration or compromise. The third method is by lot.

⁴⁰ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 221.

its historical context.⁴¹

In the section ‘On Promises’, Grotius makes a general comment concerning covenants. “But it is through favour of the laws alone, which give the efficacy of obligation to what is only fair and equitable in itself, that obligatory agreements, such as express covenants and other things of that kind, derive their force”. (*Laws* II,11,i)

The importance of Grotius’ writings for the present discussion lies in the proposals and procedures he set forth for good conduct by both nations and individuals in their relations with other nations and individuals. If Grotius found ample legal grounds for a just war, for the capture of prisoners and booty and so forth, he also looked to a more fundamental concept of justice. “The sense of obligation was necessary, for only by fulfilling the obligation could a person feel that he [or she] was acting justly”. This, he says, is common to all humanity. “Natural law, he argues, consisted of the dictates of right reason. Rational beings in natural society recognized binding natural obligations [...] Thus, the general principles known [...] through reason constituted the basic laws governing human behavior in all its aspects”.⁴² Grotius’ universalism will not find favour today, but in the early seventeenth century it served to demonstrate that all societies were equal in nature if not in fact.

4.5 Johannes Althusius and Symbiotics

In 1603, as Grotius was beginning to develop a systematic approach to international

⁴¹ T. O. Hueglin, “Covenant and Federalism in the Politics of Althusius,” in *The Covenant Connection: From Federal Theology to Modern Federalism*, D.J. Elazar and J. Kincaid, eds., (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 35.

⁴² Edwards, *The Miracle of Holland*, 53-54

law, another Reformed thinker, Johannes Althusius (1557-1638) was formulating a theory of federalism which addressed the internal structures and the societal and political associations of local communities. In that year he published *Politicia Methodice Digesta* (*Digest of Politics Methodically Explained*). Like Grotius, Althusius looked to the philosophers of antiquity, to the Old and New Testaments, to his theological forebears and to Roman law in his theory making. He also drew on his contemporaries, for example Philippe Duplessis-Mornay who had written on the right of people to resist tyrants. Althusius was born in Westphalia and studied civil and ecclesiastical law at Cologne and Basle. He taught law for a number of years at the Reformed Academy in Herborn. The Academy was founded in 1584 and he was its first professor of jurisprudence. He became its rector in 1597. In 1603 he gave up this position to accept an appointment as chief magistrate of the Calvinist city-state of Emden in the northwest corner of Germany near the Dutch border. Emden was a flourishing seaport in eastern Frisia. He lived and worked there until his death in 1638. Althusius had a keen interest in the Dutch and watched political developments in the Lowlands closely. He was no less interested in the Swiss Confederation. During his years as chief magistrate, Emden was sometimes called the ‘Geneva of the North’.⁴³

Althusius was a self-described political scientist, who, in the words of Elazar “built a systematic political philosophy [...] by synthesizing the political experience of the Holy Roman Empire with the political ideas of covenant theology”. He was, says Elazar, one “of the Protestant Christian grand designers”, who “straddled the Reformation and the opening

⁴³ T O Hueglin, “Covenant and Federalism,” 32-33

of the modern epoch”.⁴⁴ In Elazar’s view, “What emerges from the *Politics* is a biblically-informed theory of the polity and the society it serves, presented in the systematic fashion of Western political philosophy”; Althusius’ *Politics* “was the first book to present a comprehensive theory of federal republicanism rooted in a covenantal view of human society, but not dependent on a theological system”. Scholars agree that Althusius’ work cannot be understood outside the religious tradition with which he identified so closely, that is, Calvinism: “Only a brief look at the biography of Althusius will establish that his life was closely linked to the ideals of Calvinism and that his *Politica* cannot be adequately interpreted without taking this context into consideration”.⁴⁵ The federal principle developed by Althusius was “implied in the political views of John Calvin. Partial to the self-contained republic of the Genevan model, Calvin’s thought [...] favoured the federation of such republics for defense and other common concerns”.⁴⁶

In the “Introduction” to the first English translation of the *Politics* in 1964, Frederick S. Carney notes that “Althusius opens [...] with a general proposition that indicates the fundamental insight regarding the nature of political science that will be pursued throughout this inquiry”.⁴⁷ “Politics”, writes Althusius,

is the art of associating [humans] for the purpose of establishing, cultivating and conserving social life among them. Whence it is called ‘sympiotics’.

⁴⁴ D.J. Elazar, *The Multi-faceted Covenant: The Biblical Approach to the Problem of Organizations, Constitutions, and Liberty as Reflected in the Thought of Johannes Althusius* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Workshop in the Covenant Idea and the Jewish Political Tradition, 1994), 6-7.

⁴⁵ T.O. Hueglin, “Covenant and Federalism,” 32.

⁴⁶ Carl J. Friedrich, “Preface,” in *Politics* (<http://www.constitution.org/ath/ath.htm>), no page numbers indicated.

⁴⁷ F.S. Carney, “Introduction,” *Politics*, (<http://www.constitution.org/ath/ath.htm>), no page numbers indicated.

The subject matter of politics is therefore association, in which the symbiotes (those who live together) pledge themselves each to the other, by explicit or tacit agreement, to mutual communication of whatever is useful and necessary for the harmonious exercise of social life.

The end of political 'symbiotic' mankind is holy, just, comfortable and happy symbiosis (living together), a life lacking nothing either necessary or useful. (*Politics* 1964, 12).

This general proposition guides and controls the entire work. "By referring to politics as symbiotics (the art of living together), and to social life as symbiosis (or living together), Althusius means to include all human associations in his study", be it the family, collegium, city, province or commonwealth.⁴⁸ Further, says Carney, "Althusius is led to say that an association is initiated and maintained by a covenant among the symbiotes setting forth their common agreement about the necessary and useful purposes to be served by the association, and the means appropriate to fulfill these purposes. If there is no explicit covenant, then an implicit one is assumed in the continuing consent of those who live together".⁴⁹

The question of an implicit and explicit covenant is also addressed by other commentators. In the preface to this same volume, Carl J. Friedrich notes that the *pactum feoderis* or *Bund* (bond of union) is "the outward form, the institutionalized framework of an existential communal reality"; this reality, he continues, "consists in the sharing of values, interests, and beliefs [...] i.e., it is existential community. As such, it transcends the wilful determination of the participants; it comes into being as part of their very nature, and merely needs to be recognized and consciously organized in the *pactum* or bond of union which

⁴⁸ F.S. Carney, "Introduction," *Politics*.

⁴⁹ F.S. Carney, "Introduction," *Politics*.

makes it explicit”.⁵⁰ Friedrich goes on to say that the “extension of government by consensual federation”, is “the basic solution to ever-widening political cooperation”, and that Althusius’ federal construction of the political order is “pluralistic to the core”, and assigns “a central role to the law”.

In their translation of Althusius’ text, McCoy and Baker use the word ‘linking’ rather than ‘associating’. Thus, “Politics is the art of *linking* humans together in order to establish, develop and conserve a social life among them”.⁵¹ It would seem, then, that for McCoy and Baker such words as ‘associating’ or ‘linking’, ‘symbiotics’, ‘symbiotes’ and ‘symbiosis’ are all analogues for the root idea of covenant and they interpret Althusius’ definition of politics as follows: “Politics for Althusius was based on the covenanted linking of people in symbiotic relationship, bound together in social existence, focused on a common purpose, and committed to a mutuality of interaction that would enhance their life together”, the covenant “and its agreements may be either explicit or implicit. As people come to increasing self-awareness in society, the implicit covenants that shaped them may become more explicit”.⁵² The Althusian concept of a federal or covenantal bond extends to all human associations: “Humans as symbiotes belong by nature to families as the most immediate and basic covenantal grouping. But people also form many kinds of private associations through agreements and compacts--craft guilds, academic societies, businesses and commercial associations”⁵³; public organizations such as towns, cities, provinces,

⁵⁰ C.J. Freidrich, “Introduction,” *Politics*.

⁵¹ C.S. McCoy and J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 55, my emphasis

⁵² C.S. McCoy and J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 55-6.

⁵³ C.S. McCoy and J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 58.

confederations and the commonwealth “come together by covenant”, and are comprehensive symbiotic groupings of humans.

The term ‘symbiotic’ seems to have made its first appearance in political philosophy with Althusius and it may be one of his most original and enduring contributions to political thought. While the word is almost always used with reference to biological symbiosis—the *OED* lists ‘living together’ and ‘social life’ as the primary meaning—in the context of the *Politics*, symbiotic means the mutually beneficial interdependence of human beings (the particular) whose aim is to establish a holy, just and comfortable life (the general). Symbiotics has two dimensions, kinship and consent. In such private associations as the family, the symbiotic relationship is based on kinship. In the collegium, the symbiotic relationship is based on consent. The concept of covenant is present inasmuch as those who live together—the symbiotes—‘pledge’ themselves to one another. This they do through communication. “The symbiotes are co-workers who, by the bond of an associating and uniting agreement, communicate among themselves whatever is appropriate for a comfortable life of soul and body [...] This mutual communication [...] involves (1) things, (2) services, and (3) common rights (*jura*) by which the numerous and various needs of each and every symbiote are supplied”. (*Politics* 1964, 14)

For Elazar, symbiotics and communication are the central elements of Althusius’ thought. “Communication for Althusius is the sharing of things, services and rights [...] Like all covenantal systems it emphasizes the relationships first and foremost, that are secured through their embodiment in proper institutions”.⁵⁴ A relationship based on consent is

⁵⁴ D.J. Elazar, *Multi-faceted Covenant*, 10.

realized and sustained through communication. Simply put, “politics is symbiotic in communication”.⁵⁵ One sees a high degree of process involved in the Althusian conception of politics. Through the process of living together (symbiosis) and communication, humankind can realize the purpose of establishing, cultivating and conserving social life. Politics serves the function “of utilizing the varied gifts of humans for the benefit of all”.⁵⁶ As Althusius writes: “God therefore willed that each needs the service and aid of others in order that friendship would bind all together, and no one would consider another to be valueless [...] Everyone therefore needs the experience and contributions of others, and no one lives to himself alone” (*Politics*, 1964, 18). Althusius sees rights as facilitating symbiosis. Thus, “The communion of right (*jus*) is the process by which the symbiotes live and are ruled by just laws in a common life among themselves” (*Politics*, 1964, 14). For Althusius rights involve process. No matter the entity—the family, the guild, the city, the province—rights are exercised, communicated and administered with a view to enhancing symbiosis.

For Elazar, “Althusius’ dual emphasis on federalism as a relationship and on sharing as the basis of federal relationships has turned out to be a basic axiom of federalism. While there can be different forms of federal relationship and sharing can be expressed in different ways, federalism remains essentially a relationship and sharing its guiding principle”.⁵⁷ Elazar notes that as “a result of his emphasis on covenant and communication, Althusius essentially rejected the reified state and with it, statism”. Like some of his contemporaries,

⁵⁵ D.J. Elazar, *Multi-faceted Covenant*, 18.

⁵⁶ C.S. McCoy and J.W. Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 56.

⁵⁷ D.J. Elazar, *Multi-faceted Covenant*, 17.

Althusius called for resistance to tyrants. The covenants of humanity exist within the covenant of God, and for this reason political sovereignty is not absolute. Rulers who violate their covenant with the people also transgress the covenant of God and in so doing, lose their authority since power “is established for the utility of those who are ruled, not of those who rule, and the utility of the people [...] does not in the least require unlimited power” (*Politics* 1964, 117). What is power? “The less the power of those who rule, the more secure and stable the imperium remains. For power is secure that places a control upon force, that rules willing subjects, and that is circumscribed by laws, so that it does not become haughty and engage in excesses to the ruin of the subjects” (*Politics* 1964, 116).

The last edition of the *Politics* was published in 1614 and “while Althusian thought had its exponents until the latter part of the century, after that it subsequently disappeared”.⁵⁸ In many respects Althusius “was the theoretical godfather of modern federalism, but was never recognized as such because of what were deemed archaic elements of his thought”. His understanding of politics as a covenantal relationship based on communication was rejected by modern political thinkers and his writings sank into obscurity for three centuries.⁵⁹ Althusius was likewise ignored in theological and church history circles.⁶⁰ He was rediscovered briefly in the latter part of nineteenth century by Otto von Gierke who was seeking the unification of Germany along federal principles. A Latin version of the *Politics*

⁵⁸ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 331.

⁵⁹ According to Elazar Althusius’ views lost out to Jean Bodin (1529/30-1596) and statism. “As a result of his emphasis on covenant and communication, Althusius has essentially rejected the reified state and with it, statism. His ideal of vesting sovereignty in the people through their associations counters the argument of Jean Bodin that there must be a single point in which sovereignty is concentrated: in Althusius’s time the monarch and, later, the reified state” (D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 323).

⁶⁰ One is hard pressed to find mention of Althusius in works on church history or the history of Christian thought. Althusius is likewise absent from the major reference works and encyclopedias on Christianity.

was published in 1932 by Carl J. Friedrich and the English translation in 1964 by Frederick Carney.⁶¹ In recent years, thanks largely to the interest of scholars such as Elazar, McCoy and Baker, Althusius has enjoyed a revival.

4.6 Covenanted Polities

Daniel Elazar, who died in 1999, dedicated a large portion of his scholarly career to the study of covenant, covenant theology and covenanted societies. As a political scientist his main interest was in the application of covenantal ideas to political structures and life. In so doing, Elazar has interpreted history through the lens of covenant and related concepts. If at times Elazar pushes the envelope a little too far, he has set forth one of the very few integrated, contemporary approaches to the role of covenant in Western history. He is a synthesizer. In addition, his writing is *very* accessible. In many respects, Elazar thinks in terms of ideals—he quite clearly sees covenant-based societies as superior to other forms of societal and political organization and as the solution to the world’s problems. Nevertheless, Elazar’s efforts to develop a theoretical perspective provide us with a much needed framework for increasing our understanding of the Covenant Chain from the perspective of Western thought. In the introduction to volume two of *Covenant and Commonwealth*, Elazar comments on balance and dialectic tension in covenantal polities.

More than anything else, cultures, systems, and humans informed by the covenantal perspective are committed to a way of thinking and conduct which enable them to live free while being bound together in appropriate relationships, to preserve their own integrities while sharing in a common whole, and to pursue both the necessities of human existence and the

⁶¹ Carl J. Friedrich, ed. *The Politica Mehodice Digesta of Johannes Althusius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).

desiderata of moral response in some reasonable balance. There is a dialectic tension between each of these dualities which adds the requisite dynamic tension to covenant-based societies, one which makes such societies covenant-informed as well as covenant-based. This dialectic tension is an integral element in covenant systems, one which provides such systems with the necessary self-corrective mechanisms to keep them in reasonable balance over the long haul, at least so long as covenantal principles continue to inform and shape the polities concerned.⁶²

Elazar's observations on the fundamental principles and relations in the body politic are also helpful. "Every body politic is founded on its own principles of organization, power and authority relationship, and fundamental tensions, explicit or implicit".⁶³ These implicit tensions, he says, need "to be bridged in order for the body politic to come into existence" and because they "are only bridged and not resolved, they are built into the very fabric of the body politic", and must be reconciled "anew in every generation as long as the body politic exists in the same form". Elazar also discusses the importance of what he calls a 'political vocabulary': "The key words in any political vocabulary are what [Max] Kadushin has referred to as value concepts, that is to say, terms whose precise definition may be difficult or well nigh impossible, but which are understood to have a common core meaning within a particular culture".⁶⁴

Based on the secondary source literature on covenant theology presented and discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, a number of observations can be made at

⁶² D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 7. —He goes on to say that hierarchical and organic ideas and systems compete with covenantal ones.

⁶³ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth*, 6.

⁶⁴ On page 6, Elazar refers to Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1938) and *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1952).

this point. Covenant theology and the use of covenant terminology and related concepts were widespread in Protestant Western Europe in the early part of the seventeenth century in church circles at both the parish and administrative levels; among reformers in their theological teachings and their more political endeavors; among religious and political reformers in search of liberty from unjust rule; and among political philosophers seeking to develop theoretical structures or models to account for ongoing historical developments. While it may be an exaggeration to say that covenant terminology was ubiquitous, it is quite accurate to conclude that the language of the covenant theology figured prominently in the religious and political thought of the day at virtually all levels of society. This is especially true of the Low Countries, and particular attention has been given to the different manifestations of the covenantal tradition among the Dutch and by Althusius, who had a special interest in political developments in the Netherlands.

A second reason for discussing the Dutch bears more directly on the main discussion of the present study. Dutch traders were among the very first Europeans to have sustained contact with the Haudenosaunee. This contact began as early as 1613 and continued until the end of the Dutch colonial empire in North America in 1665. The degree to which the works of Hugo Grotius' influenced the activities of Dutch traders in North America cannot be established conclusively, and a great deal of further research is needed on this issue. And yet, one cannot discount the influence of Grotius' writings. Both *Mare Liberum* (1609) and *De Jure Belli et Pacis* (1625) were widely read. Both were written for the benefit of the country for which Grotius held great passion and both were meant to address the pressing questions surrounding the right of free passage and trade and the relations between individuals and states. *De Jure* was especially important because its publication was

received with “prompt and universal applause”.⁶⁵ Grotius is generally credited with being the first to set forth a comprehensive and systematic body of international law. He himself made this assertion in the opening lines of *De Jure Belli et Pacis*. Scholars have long debated his claim and while they differ on many aspects of his work, all agree he drew on ideas which had been advanced by others and on customs already in play. In 1928 L.F. Oppenheim observed: “Grotius and his forerunners would not have been able to create international law, had not the conception of a community of law between Christian states enjoyed a general recognition, and had not international discourse before their day evolved already a large number of rules of intercourse, which were based on custom and in part on very ancient usages”.⁶⁶ Perhaps the most influential aspect of Grotius’ thinking vis-à-vis international law was in combining “the legal principles derived in theoretical reasoning from the fundamentals of the law of nature with the practical rules created by [...] positive, customary practice”.⁶⁷ Thus, Grotius both drew on and influenced trading practices and relations between individuals and states. Grotius, who served as a diplomat for many years, was more than familiar with the rules of conduct, so to speak, between such parties. Anyone who reads *De Jure* will see an interplay between the philosophical and speculative aspects of his thinking and the practical recommendations and guidelines he sets forth for furthering, as he wrote, “mutual relations among states or rulers of states”. Covenantal thinking does not exactly permeate Grotius’ works, but it is without question present in his writing.

⁶⁵ T.A. Walker, *A History of the Law of Nations* (London: C.J. Clay & Sons, 1899), 336, quoted in C.S. Edwards, *The Miracle of Holland*, 19.

⁶⁶ L.F. Oppenheim, *International Law* (London: Longmans, Green, 1928) 2, quoted in C.S. Edwards, *The Miracle of Holland*, 20.

⁶⁷ C.S. Edwards, *The Miracle of Holland*, 21.

In concrete terms it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much influence Grotius' writings had on the Dutch traders who travelled to North America. However, despite his exile from the Netherlands, *On Law and Peace* was addressed primarily to the Dutch and it was widely read in his homeland. He had worked with the Dutch West Indies Company and had been instrumental in developing its charter. Grotius' ideas of human bonds and mutual service found a fit thousands of miles away on the other side of the Atlantic, in Mohawk country. In 1624, a year before Grotius published *The Law of War and Peace*, the Dutch West Indies Company established a trading post at Fort Orange (now Albany, New York) and soon became "fully engaged in a lively and profitable fur trade" with the Native peoples of the region. "This followed the earlier explorations of Henry Hudson in the valley that now bears his name and the short-lived Dutch settlement at Fort Nassau. Within a brief period of time the Dutch convinced the Mohawks, who controlled the major trading route through the Mohawk Valley, that they were not a threat, forming a bond of friendship and mutual interest that was to endure for many years".⁶⁸ These observations on the relationship established between Dutch traders and the Haudenosaunee were made in 1995. They echo the principles set forth by Grotius for governing international trade.

⁶⁸ *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People*, Dean R. Snow, et.al eds. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) 1.

CHAPTER 5

HAUDENOSAUNEE CONCEPTS OF COVENANT

The creature-beings knew that a new body was coming to them and that here below there was no abiding place for her [Skywoman]. They took council together and sought to devise a way to provide her.

It was agreed that the duck-creatures should receive her on their interknit wings and lower her gently to the surface below. The great turtle from the under-world was to arise and make his broad back a resting-place. It was as has been agreed and the woman came down upon the floating island.

“How the World Began”, Arthur C. Parker (Seneca), 1923¹

At this time we turn our attention to our relatives the four-legged whose leader is the deer. Since the time of creation, the four-legged have agreed that from time to time they would give up members of their families to support our families with food clothing and other necessities.

*So at this time we gather our minds together as one mind and we extend our greetings and thanksgiving to our relatives the four-legged. So be it in our minds.*²

In her article published posthumously in 2001, Deborah Doxtator addressed the very important and sensitive question of how the early Europeans thought of Native peoples. Almost from the time of first contact, she writes, Europeans compared themselves to the Native peoples of North America, including the Haudenosaunee, and in so doing emphasized the differences between themselves and the ‘other’. Invariably, she says, Native peoples were regarded as inferior and lacking in reason, law, religion and so forth. Observations of this kind are more than familiar to anyone interested in the history of relations between

¹ Arthur C. Parker, “How the World Began,” in *Seneca Myths and Folktales*, 1923, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 62.

² Opening Address of Greetings & Thanksgiving, published as “The Words Which Come First,” in Brenda Katlatont Gabriel-Doxtator & Arlette Kawanatatie Van Den Hende, *At the Wood’s Edge: An Anthology of the History of the People of Kanehsata:ke* (Kanesatake: Kanesatake Cultural Centre, 1995), v-vii.

Native North American peoples and the early Europeans, but Doxtator takes us well beyond the usual critique of sixteenth and seventeenth European ethnocentrism. “It wasn’t that Renaissance explorers and observers did not see that Native groups had organized customs, languages, and beliefs. Nor were they unaware that indigenous information and knowledge was valuable to their survival on the continent and even had real parallels with their own intellectual traditions”. Creating a separation between “Native ideologies, forms of government, and religious beliefs”,³ was, Doxtator adds, essential for the Europeans whose aim it was to take possession of North America.

Doxtator’s interest lies not so much in examining the process by which Europeans accomplished the goal of conquest, as in questioning how the early notions of intellectual, social and religious difference and separation have influenced the way in which history was and continues to be written. The history of Canada, she says, “remains firmly based in European, not indigenous ways of seeing the past. By this I mean that although both Native perspectives and voices have been incorporated, the history of Canada remains firmly based in European deeds and actions [...] Indigenous participation is at best viewed as marginal to the telling of Canadian history”.⁴ Doxtator goes on to ask some important questions:

How could two groups of people have lived together for 500 years and not have influenced one another’s thinking or have communicated with one another? Is the ambivalence of the Renaissance writer who painstakingly describes Native ideas and customs only to dismiss them as unimportant and uninfluential to their own thinking, part of the contemporary problem of

³ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 34. — In *Ethnophilosophical and Ethnolinguistic Perspectives on the Huron Indian Soul*, (Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), Michael Pomedli discusses at length, a series of parallels between the beliefs and customs of the Huron and the Haudenosaunee and those of the Jesuits, especially Brébeuf.

⁴ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 46.

perceiving how Native intellectual concepts relate to the writing of history in North America? Although not an intellectual impossibility, a true synthesis of traditions does not appear to have been historically sought out by either side.

According to Doxtator's understanding, seventeenth century life "was in many ways broadly bi-cultural, or at least syncretic, with both sides incorporating both Native and non-Native ways of thinking and being".⁵ Why, she wonders, is this not reflected in the way history is written? "Colonial documents bear testimony to the influence of Native names and languages, and their concepts of seeing North America and living within it". More often than not, however, historical writings reflect "the effects of colonial powers on Native cultures [...] rather than the other way around".⁶ She asks another question: "Why is it that attempts to incorporate Native versions of seventeenth-century events by attending to Native oral traditions and stories have proved to be so frustrating to scholars who seek to write within the western tradition of history writing?"⁷ As Doxtator sees it, Native "intellectual traditions and Euro-based traditions need not operate in isolation because they are deemed mutually unintelligible to each other. If one looks at the Renaissance it's possible to conclude that Europeans and Native peoples successfully communicated ideas and concepts across cultures". Her observation most certainly applies to the diplomatic relations between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans. On this subject she writes:

Although seventeenth-century North American history has been written within the tradition of Thucydides' idea of the historical narrative, many of the actual intellectual forms operating during this time period were

⁵ D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 36

⁶ D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 36.

⁷ D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 46.

in fact enmeshed with Native intellectual constructs. Initially treaties and diplomacy with Native groups in the Northeast took Native, not European forms. Even though they sought to manipulate the process to their own gain, British and French officials learned and used the requisite Native protocols and metaphoric rhetoric that were based in Native religious/cultural conceptualizations of trade and military alliances [...]⁸

Citing the *Jesuit Relations*, Doxtator notes that the “fundamental element of Rotinohsyonni diplomacy was the political necessity to achieve integrations so that at least ideologically Europeans and Iroquoians could perceive themselves to be brothers, one and the same people [...]”.⁹ By happy coincidence this reference is to Kioteseaton’s address at the 1645 council in Trois-Rivières.

Finally, says Doxtator, the “legacy of past definitions of difference as separate and exclusionary, instead of as inter-connecting and inclusive, requiring incorporation into a whole, may have helped to obscure points of possible rapprochement between two different ways of ordering knowledge and conceptualizing the past”.¹⁰ For Doxtator, then, ‘difference’ seems closer to the idea of diversity than incompatibility. The ability to recognize difference and acknowledge the vast diversity of human thought means that Doxtator approaches history with an eye to inclusivity rather than exclusivity, that is, with the idea of integration and synthesis in mind, rather than separation and dualism. For the Haudenosaunee and the Western scholarly community alike, her approach is bold and highly innovative.

5.1 History as an Additive Process

⁸ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 35

⁹ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 33

¹⁰ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 34.

As mentioned in #1.7, Doxtator's theory of history is based on Haudenosaunee concepts of time and different 'times':

Native concepts of history find no gulf between different segments of time. Each time is different but it does not mean that there is an impenetrable wall because of that difference [...] Although Rotinonhsyonni concepts of time present no gulf between time periods, they do not imply a static lack of change any more than Euro-based concepts do. In fact in Rotinonhsyonni thought there is continual movement, not stasis [...]¹¹

Doxtator illustrates these observations with examples from the story of origins including the relationship between the twin boys, Sapling and Flint. While the scholarship tends to interpret the twins in terms of a good/evil dualism, Doxtator looks to them as a dynamic balanced pair in which there is continual movement toward spring with Sapling, then toward winter with Flint, and toward spring and winter once again. History "is an additive process building upon what has gone before in a kind of consciously constructed continuity"; in this paradigm "No level of organization actually disappears but is incorporated within institutions with larger and larger spatial contexts".¹² She illustrates this theoretical observation with another example from the story of origins. The descendants of the first woman and man followed the instructions of the Elder Twin, *De'haen'hiyawa'kho*, 'Sky Grasper' or the 'Creator' or 'he who finished our bodies'. Eventually there were a great many people and everything became neglected. All was silent. *De'haen'hiyawa'kho* returned to earth and instructed the people in the Four Ceremonies—the Peach Stone Game, the Personal Chant, the Feather Dance and the Skin Dance. These ceremonies, says Doxtator, did not displace

¹¹ D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 38.

¹² D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 39.

others; they were added to the lives of the Haudenosaunee. Moreover, the ceremonies are centered on “the concept of complementary differences between groups of people, between men and women and between winter and spring. In adding the four ceremonies, nothing is lost or taken away but all is incorporated within the next addition and differences actually function not to separate but to unify groups”.¹³

This basic idea of complementary differences between groups is also found in the social organization of the Haudenosaunee. Society,

is organized on the idea of unified difference on many different levels from the family to the moiety. Reciprocal relationships among family members are not repudiated by the larger clan moiety structure but rather subsumed by it. Change, in this conceptualization of time and history is not replacement, but incorporation and subsuming the structures of the past. Continuity without separating gaps is central to this view of history.¹⁴

These same phenomena—continuity without separating gaps and the incorporation and subsuming of past structures into present realities—hold true for councils held between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans as well as for the Silver Covenant Chain and its metaphorical polishing. (More on this #6.)

Doxtator’s theory of history provides a foundational framework with which to view covenant from the perspective of the Haudenosaunee. In discussing the history of covenant ideas among the Haudenosaunee one must often, though not always, rely on voices from outside their history, culture and religious traditions. In addition, whether in discussing relational structures in general or specific relations among parties in particular, one must

¹³ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 39.

¹⁴ D. Doxtator, “Inclusive and Exclusive,” 40.

look beyond the actual word ‘covenant’, since early European writers—both French and English—only rarely use it to describe relationships among the Haudenosaunee. If in the Western Christian context the word covenant works around a cluster of ideas related to promise, agreement, obligation, renewal and bond (see #4.1), then these are the kinds of ideas we can look for in the traditions of Haudenosaunee, at least to begin with. Fundamental to the concept of covenant is a relationship. Thus, one must also look for and at relationships—not in the abstract sense, but literally—actual relationships, more specifically as reciprocal relationships between two sides. One must also think of history as an additive process which subsumes past structures into present realities. With these principles in mind, let us now turn to a discussion on Haudenosaunee concepts of covenant.

5.2 The Thanksgiving Address

Whenever the Longhouse people gather, be it for religious, social, business or diplomatic purposes, a speaker is appointed to deliver what is known in English as the Thanksgiving Address. In the Address, the speaker—on behalf of the assembly—extends greetings and thanksgiving to the different beings and elements of the natural world “from the earth to beyond the sky”.¹⁵ The speaker will recite the Address from memory and, depending on the event, will speak for just a few minutes or for up to forty minutes.¹⁶ The Address is one of the few rituals of the Haudenosaunee which is performed at venues outside

¹⁵ M.K. Foster, *From the Earth to Beyond the Sky: An Ethnographic Approach to Four Longhouse Speech Events*, (Ottawa, ON: National Museum of Man Series, 1974).

¹⁶ M.K. Foster, “The Iroquoian Thanksgiving Address,” in *Coming to Light: Contemporary Translation of the Native Literatures of North America*, Brian Swann, ed., (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 476. —For a detailed discussion of the Thanksgiving Address and its variations see M.K. Foster, *From the Earth to Beyond the Sky*.

the Longhouse, for example, in classrooms, during conferences and at meetings with provincial and federal government officials. The Address is imbued with the idea of happiness; happiness in the sense of well being. The only occasion at which the Address is not recited is during the Feast of the Dead funeral rite, since for the Haudenosaunee the death of one of their numbers is not an occasion for thanksgiving. As Michael K. Foster notes, among the Haudenosaunee, “the coming together of a group of people in a cooperative enterprise is sufficient reason to share in mutual rejoicing”.¹⁷ In addition to greeting and extending thanks to the natural world, the speaker aims to bring the gathering of people together as ‘one mind’. Among the Haudenosaunee, the Address is often called ‘The Opening’ or ‘The words which come first’. Thus, it is recited before the proceedings begin, so the people will be of one mind or in agreement with one another. Reaching agreement, or finding a consensus, is especially important if the Longhouse community has gathered to discuss important matters or make decisions.¹⁸ The echoing refrain ‘So be it in our minds’, is intended to have a residual beneficial effect for the duration of the gathering. The Address also closes a gathering at its conclusion.

The Opening is truly a living oral tradition; like any oral tradition it combines structure with flexibility, and standard phraseology with specific words of thanks. The Address weaves the different elements of the world together through kinship into what Carol Cornelius (Tuscarora) calls an “organic whole”.¹⁹ In ‘addressing’ the different elements of

¹⁷ M.K. Foster, “The Iroquoian Thanksgiving Address,” 476.

¹⁸ M.K. Foster, “The Iroquoian Thanksgiving Address,” 476.

¹⁹ C. Cornelius, “The Thanksgiving Address: An Expression of Haudenosaunee World View,” in *Iroquois Corn in a Culture-Based Curriculum*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 71.

the natural world, both the speaker and the hearers turn their attention to them. The order in which the different elements are named and thanked can vary, but in general the speaker begins at the center with assembly of people—who are reminded of their duty to one another and the world around us—and then moves outward to Mother Earth, who is closest to the people. This outward movement continues with the vegetation life, from the short plants whose leader is the strawberry, to others which provide food and medicine, and to the trees whose leader is the maple. The sap of the maple is the first ‘harvest’ of the year and the strawberry is the first fruit of the year in the Northeast. In addition, according to many versions of the story of origins, Skywoman brought the seeds of the strawberry with her from the Skyworld (see #3.2). Both the strawberry and the maple are seen as having medicinal qualities. In many, if not most versions of the Thanksgiving Address, greetings are also extended to the Three Sisters—corn, beans and squash—which are all cultivated plants.

From these stationary or rooted elements we turn to those which move; the four-legged animals running about whose leader is the deer, the birds of the air whose leader is the eagle, the waters and the fish whose leader is the trout. Then the speaker turns from the terrestrial upward to the extra-terrestrial elements, namely the lower sky world and Our Grandfathers the Thunderers, as well as the moving celestial bodies, Grandmother Moon, our Elder Brother the Sun and the stars. We then address all that which is beyond the sky, the Sky World—the land of our Grandmother and of those who have gone before us—and that which has created everything. In many versions, Handsome Lake and the Four Messengers who came to him in a series of visions are also acknowledged. Finally, we move rapidly inward back to the centre—the assembly of people once again. In effect, we have gone full circle. As Paul Zolbrod writes:

The emerging sense of design is static and, at the same time, dynamic because of the way attention is compelled to move further and further from an inner focal point fixed by a schematically appointed pattern of expression, seemingly across progressively distant zones of sensory perception, to the absolute extent of anyone's ability to conceive of them—until it is drawn back by the limits of the human imagination to the center once again.²⁰

At the closing of the Address the speaker—in an expression of humility—will almost always apologize for anything he or she has omitted and will encourage the people to give their individual greetings and thanksgiving.

The Address both mirrors and complements the annual ceremonial calendar and thanksgiving festivals. In the yearly ceremonial cycle, the Haudenosaunee hold a maple festival, a strawberry festival, a raspberry festival, a seed planting festival, a corn harvest and hunting festival. There is a Moon and Sun Ceremony, a Thunder Ceremony and the Mid Winter Festival, which begins the cycle again. The Address is recited at each of these festivals or ceremonies.²¹

The Thanksgiving Address, writes Cornelius, “defines and expresses the world view of the Haudenosaunee”; its origin “is found in the Haudenosaunee creation cosmology”.²² According to the story of origins, *Teharonhiawagon*, the Elder Twin, left this world after he

²⁰ P. Zolbrod, “The Seneca Thanksgiving Prayer,” in *Earth and Sky: Visions of the Cosmos in Native American Folklore*, Ray A. Williamson & Claire R. Farrer, eds., (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 47. —Zolbrod variously describes the Address as a ‘prayer’ and as a ‘poem’. Whether or not the Haudenosaunee think of the Thanksgiving Address as a ‘prayer’, in the sense of a petition, a supplication or plea, is open to question. As Kristin Goodleaf of Kahnawake has said to me, in Christianity we are always asking for something, whereas in the Longhouse we give thanks for everything.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of the ceremonial calendar see Annemarie Shimony, *Conservatism Among the Iroquois at the Six Nations Reserve* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994).

²² C. Cornelius, “Haudenosaunee World View,” 70

fashioned human beings out of clay, but before he departed he instructed the people to be kind to one another. At first they followed his instructions, but after a time they began to argue among themselves. From the Skyworld *Teharonhiawagon* observed this discord and he returned with further instructions for them to get along with one another. He accomplished this not by laying down rules or commandments, but by introducing a series of ceremonies and rituals. On one of his return visits *Teharonhiawagon* introduced the Four Ceremonies mentioned above. On another occasion he taught human beings the Thanksgiving Address. The Haudenosaunee refer to these ceremonies collectively as the 'original instructions.' The Address, says Cornelius, "defines the elements of the natural world [...] and establishes an attitude of thankfulness".²³ These particular "original instructions to the people direct them to be of a mind that includes thankfulness, peace of mind, an understanding of duty and responsibility, love for one another in kinship, and overall happiness". The Address also "establishes how the Haudenosaunee, as humans, are interconnected with the universe", and the world view expressed in it "specifies the duties assigned to each of the elements of the natural world and the duties of human beings regarding each of those elements. It expresses an attitude of appreciation and responsibility to an interconnected whole".²⁴

²³ C. Cornelius, "Haudenosaunee World View," 70.

²⁴ C. Cornelius, "Haudenosaunee World View," 79. —There are few analogies to the Iroquois Thanksgiving Address in the Christian tradition, though many parallels can be found in St. Francis of Assisi's (1182-1226) *Canticle of Brother Sun*. Like the Iroquois, St. Francis employs kinship terms to praise different creatures and elements of the natural world. He speaks of Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire and Mother Earth. St. Francis offers praise to these different elements for their gifts and usefulness to humankind. According to J. Donald Hughes, St. Francis' use of kinship terms to refer to created entities is original and he meant by it that they have a common birth in creation. St. Francis saw God expressed in the morphological variety of creation; he valued every species and was drawn into wonder and prayer by individual creatures. Two important differences should be noted between the *Canticle* and the Thanksgiving Address, however. The *Canticle* begins with the Lord most high and descends to Mother Earth. The Address, on the other hand, begins with the earth and ascends to that which is beyond the sky. Even more importantly, St.

In the portion of the Thanksgiving Address cited at the beginning of this chapter, the idea of a reciprocal relationship is expressed quite clearly. The plants and animals give to humankind, and in return humankind has the duty to give respectful thanks to them. Implicit in this version is the idea that humankind also has a responsibility to behave judiciously toward these same creatures. The good hunter must never over hunt.²⁵ The medicine women must never take all the plants and in addition, must express appreciation to a plant by making a reciprocal gift, most often a tobacco offering.²⁶ This particular version of the Thanksgiving Address also suggests a covenantal relationship, one which is essentially bilateral. The plants and animals give to humankind because since the *time of creation* they *agreed* to do so. In return, humankind has a duty or *obligation* to give thanks and to act with propriety towards these beings. This does not mean the Haudenosaunee have always done so and there are times when plants, and animals especially, have been exploited, during the fur trade era, for example. In an instance such as this the Haudenosaunee will tell you they

Francis praises Brother Death, from whom no living man can ever escape. The Haudenosaunee, in contrast, do not give thanks for death.

Today, Native people are often portrayed as natural ecologists and the Address has in fact been appropriated by the New Age movement. Gary Snyder's "Prayer for the Great Family," in which he expresses gratitude to Mother Earth, the Plants, the Air, the Wild Beings, the Water, the Sun and the Great Sky, is modeled "after a Mohawk prayer". Noticeably absent from his version, however, is the deep sense of kinship, the notion of a covenantal bond, the concept of social relations with the elements of the universe and the idea of reciprocity. G. Snyder, "Prayer for the Great Family," *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, Richard Botzeler & Susan Armstrong, eds. (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 1998), 593.

²⁵ This idea that a hunter must never over hunt is found in the story of the Little Water Society. For one version see Jesse J. Cornplanter "The Grateful Animals: A Legend of the Little Water Society," in *Legends of the Longhouse*, 1938, (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1992), 22-31. For a contemporary version see Rona Rustige, ed. "The Gift of the Medicine," in *Tyendinaga Tales*, (Kingston-Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 61-65.

²⁶ For one such story see Salli Benedict (Mohawk), "The Tsioneskwennie Plant People," in *New Voices of the Longhouse*, 8-10.

have forgotten their original instructions.²⁷

In his lengthy discussion of the Address, Michael Foster sees the segment on the Creator as one which establishes a compact.²⁸ He cites the tobacco burning ceremony during the Midwinter festival as an example of why such a compact is important. The Midwinter Festival is held in January or February around the time when the Pleiades, or the Seven Dancers,²⁹ is directly overhead and the ceremonies associated with it are by far the longest and most complex of all Haudenosaunee rituals.³⁰ The Midwinter Festival is a preparation for the coming year and focuses on good health and general well being. In holding the festival, says Foster, the Haudenosaunee are fulfilling their “ceremonial duty ‘at this time of the year’ so that [people] may stay well and the universe may remain contented and in an orderly fashion”.³¹ Thus, in many respects the Midwinter Festival can be seen as a

²⁷ Dan Longboat, “Haudenosaunee Meet the World Eaters in the Fur Trade: Capitalism vs. The Natural World,” in *Aboriginal People and the Fur Trade: Proceedings of the 8th North American Fur Trade Conference, Akwesasne*. Louise Johnston, ed. (Akwesasne: Mohawk Council of Akwesasne & Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, 2001), 84.

²⁸ See e.g. chapter title, “The Compact with the Creator,” in M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 108.

²⁹ A.C. Parker, “The Seven Brothers of the Star Cluster,” in *Seneca Myths and Folktales*, 83-85. —Throughout his lifetime, Arthur C. Parker collected and recorded stories and legends at the Cattaraugus Reservation in upstate New York from, as he puts it, “the non-Christian element” (xx). In about 1903 he recorded the story of the Seven Dancers as told to him by Edward Cornplanter, father of Jesse J. Cornplanter. The story recounts how seven brothers were taught to dance by an uncle. One day they decided to go on an expedition and went to their mother’s lodge to ask for food. She sent them away empty handed. They asked twice more and she refused both times. They began to dance and dance and dance and soon they were in the air over the tree tops. Their mother rushed out of the lodge and cried for them to return, but they did not. The eldest brother instructed his siblings not to look down at their mother lest they fall from the sky. As she wept, he looked down and fell to the earth and became a shooting star. The others continued to rise into the air and became the star cluster of the Pleiades. At the festival of Midwinter, when the Pleiades rises, the story of the Seven Dancers is recounted. For a contemporary version of the story see Tehanetorens, “The Seven Dancers,” in *Tales of the Iroquois*, 1976, (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1992), 69-74.

³⁰ H.L. Isaacs & B.W. Lex, “Handling Fire,” 6.

³¹ A. Shimony, *Conservatism*, 174

festival of 'preventive medicine'. For example, during the festival, the work of the False Face Medicine Society is to drive away disease for the coming year.³²

As concerns the tobacco burning ceremony, it is an invocation, says Foster, and unlike the Thanksgiving Address, which is an expression of gratitude, it expresses 'beseechment'.³³ Foster likens the act of burning tobacco to a "*summons* to the Creator",³⁴ which "is accompanied by a request that the item [or being] appear again during the new year as it always has in the past". The "message carried through the tobacco smoke binds the Creator to the exchange and places him under obligation to respond later in the year". If the beings—the hanging fruit for example³⁵—do in fact appear, this is "interpreted as a guarantee that the Midwinter requests have been heard".³⁶ Back in 1910, Arthur C. Parker wrote in this same vein that the return of the maple tree and the rising sap each spring was taken by the Haudenosaunee as a "sign of the Creator's renewed covenant".³⁷ If I am reading Foster's example correctly, it is the Haudenosaunee who initiate the covenant or compact, and the Creator who responds. In this instance the covenant is somewhere between unilateral and bilateral. In Parker's example the covenant appears to be unilateral—it is

³² H.L. Isaacs & B.W. Lex, "Handling Fire," 7.

³³ M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 135. —On page 130, Foster quotes one Longhouse speaker, Enos Williams, as saying: "'At the Midwinter Festival we beg the Creator for everything; most of the rest of the time we are thanking him for what he gave us'".

³⁴ Foster goes on to note that this summons "is structurally analogous to such mundane acts as calling a person's name, a knock at the door or the ringing of the telephone". *From the Earth*, 128.

³⁵ Hanging fruit is "a generic term for the whole class of fruits. Some speaker concentrate on the ceremonially important wild strawberry [...] The hanging fruit, and specifically the strawberries, are said to 'begin just above the earth'". M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 60-61.

³⁶ M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 128.

³⁷ A.C. Parker, *Iroquois Uses of Maize and Other Food Plants* (1910—Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1983), 102; quoted in Stephen Fadden, "Gifts of the Maple," in *New Voices from the Longhouse*, 111.

renewed by the Creator.

In more recent times, given environmental change and degradation, the renewal of the compact or covenant with the Creator sometimes takes on a sense of urgency, as Foster observes in the following passage:

In one sense the people's requests are answered by the Creator, but this may also be turned around so that what the people see is taken as binding *them* to the obligation to have the ceremonies. This has a peculiarly poignant aspect in the religion: people observe the world around them in a state of environmental decline and they interpret this unhappy situation as in some way being tied to the loss of the old ways and the death of men competent to conduct the rituals. The Creator loses touch as people lose touch.³⁸

Foster further notes that there "is a certain symmetry to the Iroquois conception of the ritual process which is an interlocking chain of obligations between [humans] and the Creator".

If I am reading Foster's observations correctly, it would seem that if in times gone by the Haudenosaunee carried out their duties to perform ceremonies of renewal and thanksgiving and the Creator reciprocated by fulfilling his duty to send the rains, make the seeds sprout, or the sap run, there may now be a sense that without these ceremonies the Creator's covenant will not, perhaps even cannot, be renewed. Once again, the Haudenosaunee will say that in failing—for whatever reason—to carry out their ceremonies, they have forgotten their original instructions. If today explicit mention of a covenant with

³⁸ M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 128-129. —Although in the years since 1974 when Foster's work was published, there has been renewal among the Haudenosaunee, environmental decline is still a concern. In his 1915 article, "Some Esoteric Aspects of the League of the Iroquois," in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Americanists*, 1915/19: 325, J.N.B. Hewitt observed, in much the same vein, that in the Mourning and Installation Council, "the lamenting cry of 'hai'i, hai'i' [...] is employed [...] in order to console the [...] spirits of the dead [...] But it was believed that should this cry be omitted in the rituals the displeasure of the departed spirits would be manifested in an epidemic of diseases [...]"

the Creator is omitted—as is the case in the version of the Thanksgiving Address included here—the idea that a covenantal relationship exists with the natural world is still very much alive—again as demonstrated in this version of the Address. Dan Longboat (Mohawk) summarizes this whole sense of reciprocal relations as follows:

Haudenosaunee culture and traditions provide understanding regarding human relations with the natural environment, the essence of which is interdependence and reciprocity. By examining foundational cultural knowledge such as the Creation Teachings, we learn how all things are alive and have specific relationships to other living things [...] This way of life involves a process of life cycles and ceremonies that bring together the physical and the metaphysical. We understand this as the ‘original instructions’, as the way of the real human beings [the Onkwehonwe, as the Haudenosaunee say³⁹] one of respect, responsibility and reciprocity.⁴⁰

An important question arises, *viz.* who or what is the Creator? In his discussion of the Creator, Michael Foster observes that it is “perhaps here more than anywhere else in the speeches that the influence of Christianity via Handsome Lake’s teachings is evident”.⁴¹ the Creator who dwells “in a world ‘on the other side of the sky’ [...] listens and watches ‘intently’ to all [hu]mankind and extends his love [...] and pity [...] to everyone. If people will only repent... there will be a place for them in the other world when they have ‘used up all their days’”. The influence of Christianity through the teachings of Handsome Lake might very well be present here, but references to the Creator can also be to

³⁹ Meaning, ‘real people’, or ‘original people’. The Ojibwa word Anishinabek also means real people as does Micmaq. For an early discussion of Onkwehonwe, see J.N.B. Hewitt, “The Meaning of En-kwe-hen-we in the Iroquoian Languages”: *American Anthropologist* 1 (1888) 323-324.

⁴⁰ D. Longboat, “Haudenosaunee Meet the World Eaters,” 84.

⁴¹ M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 83.

Teharonhiawagon, or ‘he who holds the sky’. Recall, it was *Teharonhiawagon* who ‘created’ humankind when he fashioned the first human beings out of clay.⁴² Once his work here on earth was done, *Teharonhiawagon* left to reside in the Skyworld. As mentioned previously, he observed the people and when discord set in, he returned to the earth to instruct the people on the different ceremonies and rituals they are to perform. Thus while such references to the Creator as “he made our bodies”, “he who in the sky dwells”, he who is listening “intently to the earth, when people direct their voices to me”, he who “loves us”, and “gave us the means to set right that which divides us”,⁴³ can be taken as referring to the God of Christianity, they can also be understood as references to *Teharonhiawagon*. The male gender designation is fully in keeping with *Teharonhiawagon* who is male. In addition, the means he gave the people ‘to set right that which divides us’, are the rituals and ceremonies which make up the original instructions. The idea of ‘pity’ may be the result of Christian influence, but it may as well stem from older ‘indigenous’ practices, for instance, hunting rituals. In his discussion of hunting anecdotes, Thomas McElwain (Seneca), remarks that the “hunter usually tells stories not of his own prowess, but of the amazing cunning of game animals. Boasting of hunting prowess is likely to alienate sky beings [or sky guardians], who would no longer take pity on the hungry hunter”.⁴⁴ On the question of repentance, this is likely a Christian influence.

⁴² M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 256, notes that the Cayuga word *shokwayatihsoh* is translated into English as ‘Our Creator’, but when broken down morphemically it translates to ‘he to us-bodies-create-perfective aspect marker’.

⁴³ Address by Enos Williams, in M.K. Foster, *From the Earth*, 356-357.

⁴⁴ T. McElwain, “Asking the Stars: Seneca Hunting Ceremonial,” in Williamson & Farrer, *Earth and Sky*, 269 and 266.

In his discussion of the Thanksgiving Address, McElwain reminds us of a fundamental principle, one which can easily dissipate in discussion such as this:

Some of these beings are addressed in kinship terms. It is precisely this Native American habit that suggests anthropomorphism to non-Native observers. Although it is possible to use the terms *being* or *spirit*, these are likely to give the wrong impression of the Native perception, which emphasizes *relationships* despite the tendency in translation to describe anthropomorphic beings.⁴⁵

McElwain's larger discussion focuses on "Seneca hunting and life and their evocation in narrative", wherein sky beings intervene (or not) on behalf of a hunter. The article is based on the story, "A Hunter Pursued by Genonsgwa", which accounts for the ceremonial procedures to begin hunting.⁴⁶ Both the Genonsgwa story and McElwain's explanation of it are fairly complex, but he summarizes the narrative by saying it works around different aspects of earth-sky relations, most especially the relations between sky beings and human beings. As McElwain sees it, cooperation of a pair is typical of Haudenosaunee thought, and in the case of hunting it is necessary for success.⁴⁷ McElwain concludes his study with the following observation:

The earth and the sky have cooperated in giving human beings the necessities of life. It is no doubt the Iroquois awareness of that cooperation which is their wisdom. Narrative indicators show that such awareness is

⁴⁵ T. McElwain, "Asking the Stars," 268. Second emphasis mine.

⁴⁶ In much the same way, for example as the story of the good hunter describes the origins of the Little Water Medicine Society. Among the Haudenosaunee, narrative accounts provide the underpinning of almost all ceremonial practices. Thus, for virtually every ceremony, custom or 'saying', a story exists to account for it. These have often been portrayed as children's tales, which they are not, or, as McElwain points out, by students of religion as mythological tales. T. McElwain, "Asking the Stars," 263.

⁴⁷ T. McElwain, "Asking the Stars," 274-275.

heightened not only by storytelling, but by the ceremonial practices associated with hunting”.

The following observation can be made here: the idea of a *relationship* is at the heart of Haudenosaunee narratives—be they brief or epic—and of such speech events as the Thanksgiving Address. To a great degree then, *cooperation* is at the root of all relationships. If cooperation in and of itself has no direct bearing on the present discussion of covenant, it is nevertheless of related interest since it suggests reciprocity and bilaterality. The relationship between humankind and the animals and the necessity of cooperation is at the heart of another narrative account, the story of Skywoman and the beginning of the earth as we know it.

5.3 Skywoman and the Animals

To repeat briefly, in the story of origins, as Skywoman fell from the Skyworld, the animals saw her and immediately expressed concern for her well-being. They took council and agreed on how best to help her. Each did so according to their natural gifts. The geese offered their wings, the turtle her back and muskrat (otter) his diving ability. From the beginning, then, a relationship was established between humankind and the animals. We can even go so far as to say that without the animals, Skywoman could not have come safely to the earth. In the story of origins the bond between humankind and animals is covenantal inasmuch as it began at the beginning. We also see the elements of obligation and agreement. From the outset the animals felt a sense of duty or obligation to help Skywoman. As for agreement, the animals gathered in council and agreed with one another to help the ‘other’, in this case a complete stranger. The animals are portrayed as conscious beings

possessing both reason and emotion: when they see Skywoman falling they react with emotion; when they gather in council and devise a plan to assist her, they use their reason.

The relationship between the animals and Skywoman is covenantal for another reason: it is unconditional. The animals see a stranger coming, they agree to a plan for saving her and they carry out that plan. They do not question why or even if they should help; they just help;⁴⁸ they provide for Skywoman and expect nothing in return. Something else is also present here that can be called grace. Grace is an undeserved gift that creates relationships. In Christian doctrine, grace is God's unconditional love of humankind, freely given through the gift of Christ to humankind. In the Iroquoian story of origins, it is the animals who demonstrate grace: they act with compassion and kindness toward a stranger. They do so freely and unconditionally. Just as the animals had a duty to come to Skywoman's aid, so human beings have an obligation to reciprocate. Giving thanks is one mode.

In his remarks on the way in which the Haudenosaunee viewed animals, Lafitau notes: "Far from making of them automatons, and pure machines, they [the animals] judging by their performance, possess a great deal of reason and intelligence".⁴⁹ The idea of a special bond with covenantal overtones is discussed by Lafitau in his chapter on religion. Included in his observations of various customs and practices is a description of the relationship between what he calls 'tutelary spirits' and humankind:

A calumet, knife, bearskin, plant, animal, in a word anything at all is

⁴⁸ Hazel Hertzberg, "In the Beginning: The Creation Myth," in *The Great Tree and the Longhouse: The Culture of the Iroquois*, (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 21.

⁴⁹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 230.

the *Otkon, Okki, Manitou*, that is to say the Spirit, not that they believe it really a spirit but rather its symbol, the sign of the pact, or the term of the moral union between their soul and that tutelary spirit attached to them by which they are to know all and to do all.⁵⁰

In commenting on this same passage, Mary Druke notes that the tutelary spirit has a “special relation” with a person.⁵¹ In his discussion on “The Function of Wampum in Iroquois Religion”, George Snyderman discusses this bond of moral union with the tutelary spirit in the context of covenant. In 1656 Brébeuf observed that during the celebration of Midwinter, the Haudenosaunee made gifts of several thousand wampum beads as well as a belt of wampum to the tutelary spirit for continued protection.⁵² Snyderman calls this ‘sacrificial wampum’ and he sees a relation here between the use of wampum as a sacrifice and the use of wampum in diplomacy:

In this situation the sacrificial wampum bears a marked resemblance to the strings given to renew a political pact or alliance. A pact was believed to exist between the spirit force and the people. A covenant which man believed he made with the spirit(s) force(s), was indeed similar to political covenants, and wampum served to ‘reinforce the chain’ which bound man to the spirits of the universe.⁵³

He adds:

⁵⁰ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1: 236.

⁵¹ M. Druke, “The Concept of Personhood in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Iroquois Ethnoperpersonality,” in *Studies on Iroquois Culture*, Nancy Bonvillain, ed., (George Mills, NH: Man in the Northeast, Inc., 1980), 64. —On page 67, Druke notes that while tutelary spirits were considered to be generally helpful to human beings, they might also be easily angered and cause disasters such as illness or failure in hunting.

⁵² *JRAD* 42:195. —Snyderman says Brébeuf made this report in 1636, but volume 42 of the *Jesuit Relations* is from the year 1656.

⁵³ G.S. Snyderman, “The Function of Wampum in Iroquois Religion”: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 105/6 (December 1961): 576, n. 5. —For a more detailed discussion of ‘pact’ see #5.6 below.

The Iroquois never engaged in formal efforts to prove the existence of God(s); all life and the universe itself were interpreted as stemming directly from the spirit forces which dominated. Man accepted his covenant with the spirit forces as inevitable [...] Iroquois religious ceremonials were, therefore, conceived and designed as evidence of man's acceptance of this dependent role in the universe.⁵⁴

Snyderman notes that in 1961, when the article was published, in the place of wampum, "tobacco is dropped into 'waterfalls and deep places'". He continues:

The [...] covenant with the spirits 'remains unchanged and is binding as long as man renews it.'[...] So, despite the absence of actual wampum, its function, its meaning, and its metaphor still continue in prayer and sacrifice. The symbolic covenant chain created with the spirit forces is similar to the chain created after a Condolence Council. Prayers and sacrifice keep this chain bright and strong, and bind [the Haudenosaunee] to the spirit forces which watch over and protect him.⁵⁵

Thus, in both the story of origins and in ceremonial practices, the idea of a special bond between humankind and the animals is present. This bond has overtones of a covenantal relationship. Historians will likely strongly disagree with the connection Snyderman draws between a covenant with spirit forces and the covenant chain *per se*, since for historians the latter is associated explicitly with a specific relationship, that is between the Haudenosaunee and the English (more on this #6). This question will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. For the moment we will continue to look at covenant and covenant-like ideas in the stories and relationships of the Haudenosaunee.

⁵⁴ G.S. Snyderman, "Wampum in Iroquois Religion," 579.

⁵⁵ G.S.Snyderman, "Wampum in Iroquois Religion," 590. —Here Snyderman seems to suggest that the covenant is unilateral, i.e., that it is up to humankind to renew it

5.4 The Three Sisters and Symbiosis

Continuing with the story of origins, once Skywoman was safely delivered, the seeds and the root of the Celestial Tree fell from her dress and began to grow. Skywoman gave birth to a daughter, who grew up very quickly, and together they began to walk or dance around and around. They danced following the movement of the sun, from east to west, and to this day the Haudenosaunee dance in the same direction, counterclockwise. As they danced the earth began to grow and soon it became Turtle Island. Skywoman's daughter became pregnant—by mysterious means like her mother—and she gave birth to twin boys, Sapling and Flint. Sapling was born in the normal way, but Flint, who was a person of contrary ways, burst through her armpit. She died as a result and the boys' grandmother instructed them on the proper procedures for burying her. Sapling followed these instructions and tended his mother's grave. From her body grew corn, beans and squash—the Three Sisters—and tobacco. For the Haudenosaunee, this sisterhood is a source of nourishment and they are often called 'our sustainers' or 'our sustenance'. In this portion of the story the idea of Mother Earth and earth as mother emerges.⁵⁶ Both Skywoman and her daughter are associated with fertility. Once Skywoman is safely on earth the seeds spill from her dress and spring to life; when the two dance, the earth grows; and when the

⁵⁶ In the late 1980s and early 1990s the question of 'Mother Earth' became the subject of considerable scholarly debate when Sam Gill published *Mother Earth: An American Story* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Gill argues that among Native North Americans "though the structure of Mother Earth may be primordial and archetypal, historically this structure was not formally identified nor did it take on importance until recently, that is, within the last hundred years." John D. Loftin offers the following critique of Gill's argumentation: "If he means that the earth as a symbolic mother (or even a metaphorical mother) is not an ancient and fundamental part of Native American religious consciousness, then I [...] disagree. But if Gill is saying only that the actual English term *Mother Earth* surfaces among Indian tribes in the last one hundred years, then I agree with Gill [...]. It strikes me that the term Mother Earth may be used by Hopis to communicate to Anglos the Hopi experience of life-giving forces. In that sense, the term is new but the meaning is old". (J. D. Loftin, *Religion and Hopi Life in the Twentieth Century*, (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 131, n. 24.)

daughter dies corn, beans and squash grow from her body. The earth itself is also seen as a source of life.

The intimate relationship established between women and the earth at the time of origins manifests itself in the customs of the Haudenosaunee. Horticulture, an activity of the clearing, became to domain of the women; men rarely participated in planting and harvesting crops. In the eighteenth century as European settlement advanced, the forest literally began to disappear and with it the activities associated with the 'forest' domain. Men were encouraged by missionaries and colonial officials to take up farming. They resisted, writes Gretchen Green, "not because they considered it degrading—as Euroamericans assumed—but because they knew that it was a violation of the natural order for men to be involved in the female domain of coaxing the 'three sisters' from Mother Earth".⁵⁷ Haudenosaunee men, she continues, "believed that the bond between women and the crops was so intimate and sacred that only women were qualified and able to bring crops to harvest". Given the account in the story of origins, the sacredness of this bond arises because the women are the very source of the Three Sisters.⁵⁸

The relationship between women and the Three Sisters, and among the sisters themselves can be described as symbiotic. Some explanation is needed here. Corn or maize,

⁵⁷ G. Green, "Gender and the Longhouse," 14. —Green goes on to note that the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake encouraged men to take up farming, especially European style farming practices such as raising domesticated animals.

⁵⁸ The first description of corn in the story of origins, is as a gift. When Skywoman fell from the Skyworld, she met the Great Fire Beast who was pure white, the colour of the wind. As she passed him he presented her with an ear of corn and with the means to prepare it, a mortar and pestle. He explained that the corn was for her to eat since there was nothing below. A.C. Parker, "How the World Began," 61.

as it is called in the Americas, is not a naturally occurring plant.⁵⁹ Maize is, writes Arturo Warman, “the collective invention of millions of people over several millennia in this continent [...] Because of the cob, maize cannot reproduce itself in natural conditions. If maize is left to reproduce alone, it will die out in a few generations”; human beings, he continues, “took the seeds and dispersed them and took care of them and produced this miraculous plant”.⁶⁰ If corn cannot exist without the care of human beings, humankind cannot exist without corn.

For Native peoples throughout the Americas, almost without exception, corn was a staple food. Corn nourishes the body, but it is also closely bound up the human life cycle, with ceremonial practices and with curing rituals.⁶¹ Maize, writes Warman, “was food, of course, and thus part of the daily life, but it was also part of the sacred life, was part of the mythologies of the New World, was part of the identity between [humans] and nature in the New World”.⁶² There exists an interdependence between corn and humankind: the relationship between corn and human beings is mutually beneficial. In other words, the relationship of corn to humans has all the hallmarks of symbiosis. Maize, Warman observes,

⁵⁹ The word ‘maize’ “is a Taino or Caribbean word for this great staple crop of the islands and mainlands of the Americas. Taino is a language spoken by an elite group of Arawaks, and the Arawaks, of course, were the people who first greeted Columbus. So the term ‘maize’ entered into European languages through Spanish early on. (Alfonso Ortiz, “Some Cultural Meanings of Corn in Aboriginal North America,” in *Indian Corn of the Americas: Gift to the World*, José Barreiro, ed. (Akwe:kon Press 56/3&4, 1989): 64.)

⁶⁰ A. Warman, “Maize as Organizing Principle: How Corn Shaped Space, Time and Relationships in the New World,” in *Indian Corn of the Americas*, 21. —J.-F. Lafitau makes the following observations: “All that they sow or plant demands cultivation, Indian corn or maize even more than the rest. It would soon disappear completely from the earth if no more care was taken of it than of wheat [...] Indeed, I do not believe that anywhere in America is seen any maize which grows wild. It does not even reappear in the places where it was formerly cultivated”. (*Manners and Customs*, 2:69.)

⁶¹ For a lengthy and interesting discussion of the cultural meanings of corn in the southwest see the article by A. Ortiz, n. 59 above.

⁶² A. Warman, “Maize as Organizing Principle,” 21

organized space and time: villages were established near corn fields and vice-versa, and in parts of the Americas, the land was even shaped by corn cultivation.⁶³ When Jacques Cartier travelled up the St. Lawrence River in 1535 he reported seeing large fields of corn under cultivation surrounding Iroquoian villages. In 1608 Samuel de Champlain and Henry Hudson made similar reports as they travelled along the St. Lawrence and Hudson Rivers.⁶⁴ The Seneca were, by any measure, highly successful corn cultivators as attested to in reports of the infamous raid by the Marquis de Denonville in 1687.⁶⁵ “Time was also organized by maize,” says Warman, “by the seasons of planting, by the seasons of cultivating, by the seasons of growth”.⁶⁶ The ceremonial calendar of the Haudenosaunee includes festivals for planting corn seeds, for observing the first corn sprouts, for testing ripeness and for the harvest.⁶⁷

The relationship among the Three Sisters is also symbiotic inasmuch as each benefits from the existence of the others. Corn, for example, grows tall and straight. It provides the stalk on which the bean vine grows. Corn, a highly productive plant, depletes the soil of nitrogen while beans, a legume, fix nitrates in the soil. Squash grows close to the ground,

⁶³ A. Warman, “Maize as Organizing Principle,” 21.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of European reports on corn cultivation among Iroquoian peoples see Jane Mt. Pleasant, “The Iroquois Sustainers: Practices of a Longterm Agriculture in the Northeast,” in *Indian Corn of the Americas*, 33-39.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the raid see John Mohawk, “Economic Motivations—An Iroquoian Perspective,” in *Indian Corn of the Americas*, 56-63. —One French army guide reported the Seneca had some three million bushels of corn in their granaries and several hundred acres of land under corn cultivation. Virtually all the stores and the crop were destroyed by French military forces.

⁶⁶ A. Warman, “Maize as Organizing Principle,” 21.

⁶⁷ For a lengthy discussion of these various ceremonies see Annemarie Shimony, *Conservatism*, 140-190; for discussions of these ceremonies by the Haudenosaunee, see *Indian Corn of the Americas*.

shades the roots of the corn and beans and controls weeds. Squash also helps in moisture retention. In addition, the Haudenosaunee will tell you that together corn, beans and squash constitute a complete food. The practice of growing corn with other crops is very ancient indeed. "Maize was always in combination with some other plants". It "almost never grew alone in the field".⁶⁸ The biologist may argue that the relationship which exists in the corn, beans and squash complex is not, strictly speaking, symbiotic. For sure each can grow on its own, but it is also true that each grows better, thrives in fact, in the presence of the others.

The Three Sisters complex and the human beings who plant, tend and give thanks to them are bound together in a symbiotic relationship. Given the way in which so much of life is structured around the Three Sisters and corn in particular, they can also be said to be bound together in social existence. The Three Sisters are kin to one another and to humankind. This is expressed in the Thanksgiving Address. Almost always, one section of the address is dedicated to giving thanks to the Three Sisters who are 'our sustenance'. Cornelius observes that "the co-existence of humans and plant life is of paramount importance in Haudenosaunee world view. Because the people did not take it for granted that crops would grow, an attitude of thankfulness and acknowledgment formed a guiding principle of the culture".⁶⁹ She continues: "The cycles of food depended on nature for the sun, wind, rain and the cycle of agriculture requires humans to plant, weed, harvest, and consume the corn, beans and squash. This creates a symbiotic relationship that the Thanksgiving Address acknowledges".

⁶⁸ A. Warman, "Maize as Organizing Principle," 21.

⁶⁹ C. Cornelius, "Haudenosaunee World View," 73.

Is this a covenant? Does mutual interdependence and a symbiotic relationship make for a covenant? The question is difficult to address since we almost always think of covenant in terms of an explicit agreement, expressed verbally or in some material way, involving certain promises and obligations. If, strictly speaking, the relationship between humankind and the Three Sisters is not a covenant, it is for sure covenant *like*. By ‘nature’ the relationship between humans and the Three Sisters is one of mutual interdependence. In his discussion of ethnophilosophical and ethnolinguistic perspectives on Huron concepts of the soul, Michael Pomedli notes that since “corn was so central to life, many religious rituals and traditions centered around it”⁷⁰; based on Brébeuf’s observations, Pomedli goes on to say that Iouskeha gathers “together the diverse and interrelated elements of earth and sky to ensure fertility, to beget life and to sustain it.” The concept of power frames part of Pomedli’s discussion on corn. Corn is nourishment, he says, and in the transfer of this nourishing power, corn is the mediating being.⁷¹ In this sense corn is medicine. Corn has life-sustaining power and when eaten, the “essence of corn empowers the consumer [...] with a like spirit, that of life, power and breath”.⁷² He adds that the “transfer of both the physical and spiritual levels was based on the principle of mutually kindred relationships”, and that “there is a foundational confluence between Hurons and missionaries surrounding the event of feasting. Both cultures display a common rootedness in the value of means and their attendant ceremonies, a universal trait. For the Europeans however, feelings of puzzlement,

⁷⁰ M. Pomedli, *Ethnophilosophical Perspectives*, 45.

⁷¹ M. Pomedli, *Ethnophilosophical Perspectives*, 138-39.

⁷² M. Pomedli, *Ethnophilosophical Perspectives*, 49.

revulsion and moral indignation prevailed concerning native celebrations”.⁷³

5.5 The Five, then Six, United Nations

Among the Haudenosaunee the events surrounding the beginnings of life on earth is sometimes referred to as the First Epoch of Time. The Second Epoch of Time revolves around events which led to the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy. This second epic narrative falls into two parts. The first part is a recounting of the travels and encounters, the work and the words—in short the deeds—of those who founded the Confederacy, namely Deganawidah or the Peacemaker, Jighonasse the Peace Queen, Hiawatha and Atotarho.⁷⁴ The second part works carefully through the central principles of the *Kaienere:kowa* (in Mohawk), or the Great Law of Peace as it is often translated into English. Here, Deganawidah instructed the Haudenosaunee on the procedures for holding a council and for naming the fifty chiefs and clan mothers of the Grand Council. He also explained in detail the meaning and purpose of the many symbols which came to be so closely associated with the Confederacy. This second part is often called the ‘Constitution’ of the Five Nations. While much can be said about the Confederacy story and the *Kaienere:kowa* the focus of the following discussion will be on the many different ways in which the *Kaienere:kowa*, brings the people of the Five Nations together. When the Tuscarora took shelter under the Tree of

⁷³ Some of Pomedli’s discussion focuses on the ‘spirit’ of corn in Huron and Seneca culture. He cites Arthur Parker’s volume on *The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet*, 1913 (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1990), as evidence of the ‘corn spirit’ among the Seneca. It should be noted that Handsome Lake lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while Brébeuf, who described the importance of corn among the Hurons, lived in the early seventeenth century.

⁷⁴ Different written versions of the story give more emphasis to one or other of the founders. For a discussion of this emphasis see B. A. Mann, “The Second Epoch of Time,” in *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, 265-284.

Peace in the early eighteenth century, the Five Nations became the Six Nations. My aim here is demonstrate the covenantal aspects or qualities of the union.

The nations which comprise the Confederacy are brought together in large part by a set of remarkable symbols, each of which is derived from the daily life of the Haudenosaunee. Among these are the longhouse, the fire, the tree, the arrow, and the clans. Each brings the Haudenosaunee together in a different way. The word 'Haudenosaunee' itself is a metaphor meaning 'people of the longhouse' or 'people of the extended house'. The longhouse is a dwelling place wherein lived several families all related through matrilineal, kinship lines. Each family has its own fire. With the *Kaienere:kowa*, the longhouse extended across the lands of the five different nations from the Mohawks in the East to the Seneca in the West. The Mohawks were named the keepers of the Eastern Door; the Seneca of the Western Door. All the nations were brought into one abode; the sky is its roof, the earth is the floor. Five fires, one for each nation, burn in this longhouse. A sixth fire was added when the Tuscarora became part of the Confederacy. In his discussion of the Confederacy, Paul A.W. Wallace observes that the symbolic longhouse with its five, then six fires, "expresses the great principle of unity in diversity [...] 'The five Council Fires,' said Deganawidah, 'shall continue to burn as before and they are not quenched.'"⁷⁵ The structure of the longhouse is such that it can accommodate development and change: "New Braces were added (by the adoption of foreign peoples) to strengthen the walls of the Longhouse, and new Beams (amendments) were added to the Rafters of the Law".⁷⁶ In many respects the longhouse as a symbol beautifully illustrates the multilateral character of the

⁷⁵ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 34.

⁷⁶ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 37-38.

Confederacy. Wallace describes the union as follows:

To the outside world the spirit of the League might seem to be expressed in the Latin motto, *E Pluribus Unum*. But to the nations within the League its spirit might have seemed better expressed in the words, *Ex Uno Plura*. The strength of the whole made safe the individual differences of the members.⁷⁷

This idea of unity under one roof was brought up in a council in July of 1654 when, as Denis Delâge points out, the Mohawks worried that the French, in making an alliance with the Onondaga, were threatening the hegemony of the Confederacy.⁷⁸ In his *Relation*, Simon Le Moyne (1604-1665) recounted the address given by the Mohawk speaker:

‘We, the five Iroquois Nations, compose but one cabin; we maintain but one fire; and we have, from time immemorial, dwelt under one and the same roof.’ In fact, from the earliest times, these five Iroquois Nations have been called in their own language, which is Huron, Hotinnonchiendi,—that is, ‘the completed Cabin,’ as if to express that they constituted but one family. ‘Well, then,’ he continued, ‘will you not enter the cabin by the door, which is at the ground floor of the house? It is with us Anniehronnons, that you should begin; whereas you, by beginning with the Onnontachronnons, try to enter by the roof and through the chimney. Have you no fear that the smoke may blind you, our fire not being extinguished, and that you may fall from the top to the bottom, having nothing solid on which to plant your feet?’ (*JRAD* 41:87089)

In this instance, the reference to ‘one fire’ is an expression of unity and agreement. As Hanni Woodbury points out, “the metaphors of the ‘single mind’ and a ‘single person’ allude

⁷⁷ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 34.

⁷⁸ D. Delâge, *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600-64*. Jane Brierley, trans. (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1993), 224.

to the Iroquois system of reaching consensus on an issue before taking action of any kind”.⁷⁹

Once the five different nations accepted Deganawidah’s message of Peace, Power and Righteousness, he gathered them together at Onondaga and ‘raised up’ the fifty chiefs or sachems of the Confederacy council and their clan mothers. Each sachem received a title and the Peacemaker instructed that each title would be passed on for all generations to come. Hence the phrase ‘hereditary titles’.⁸⁰ He instructed the chiefs as follows: “So now, you chiefs, when we prepare the place where we will lay a fire, we will light a fire whose smoke will rise, the beautiful smoke, piercing the sky”.⁸¹ He then enjoined the fifty chiefs to hold hands or link arms in a circle as a sign of their union, and according to oral tradition the Circle Wampum commemorates this momentous development. A circle is formed by two entwined strings of wampum beads. These two entwined strings mean the Great Peace and the Great Law. Fifty individual strings, one for each chief and clan mother, are attached to the circle. The chain or rope-like quality of the Circle Wampum is unmistakable. Thus, by mutual agreement, the fifty chiefs undertook the responsibility and the duty to uphold the

⁷⁹ Quoted in J.A. Gibson, *Concerning the League*, 125, n. 50.

⁸⁰ It should be noted that the titles are hereditary through the clans, not through particular individual families. In other words, the system does not result in an oligarchy. See B.A. Mann, “Governmental Functioning and powers,” in *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, 126.

Lafitau noted this custom among families:

In every family a certain number of ancestral names, both men’s and women’s are kept. These names are their own and known to be taken by such and such a family. Now it is the custom in each family to requicken and resuscitate, in some manner, those who, issues from that family, have made it illustrious. They exalt this, at the same time, the names of those whom they make live again, and impose them on those of their grand nephews destined to represent them. The latter assume more or less importance according as those who had borne their names were more or less important themselves by their qualities, virtues and deeds. (*Manners and Customs*, 1:71)

⁸¹ J.A. Gibson, *Concerning the League*, 296-97.

Great Law. In so doing, they understood their agreement would bring the promise of peace. The whole idea of linking arms is an important metaphor in Haudenosaunee council oratory. In fact, the idea of 'linking' is a principle which extends throughout the social structure of the Haudenosaunee. People link arms with one another, with family members, with the different clans, with different nations.⁸²

When the Peacemaker first came to the lands of the Haudenosaunee, bloodshed and revenge killing were commonplace. Clan was fighting clan. Once the Haudenosaunee accepted his message of peace, Deganawidah introduced a clan system, a system which would serve as a device for knitting the nations together. Wallace describes it as follows: "The relationship between members of a given clan was as binding as that between the members of a family. Yet these clans were inter-tribal. The three clans that comprised the Mohawk nation (Turtle, Bear and Wolf) were the [same] three clans (Wolf, Turtle, Bear) that made up the Oneida nations, and they were found as well in all the other nations of the Confederacy".⁸³ Rather than see the clans as a basis for division, the Peacemaker saw them as a source of unity—people of the same clan became sisters and brothers to one another, no matter their familial or national origin. Thus, writes Wallace, the Haudenosaunee could travel from the Hudson to the Genesee rivers and never lose touch with their kinfolk: "A Mohawk of the Turtle clan, making a journey to Canandaigua Lake in the Seneca country, would be entertained on the way by his Turtle kin among the Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas". The different clans were further knit together through marriage. In addition, custom often dictated that, upon marriage, the husband should move to his wife's

⁸² My thanks to Salli Benedict of Akwesasne for pointing this out to me.

⁸³ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 42.

community. In this way, blood and kinship ties extended beyond the clan, beyond each separate community and beyond each nation as well. For the Haudenosaunee, “inter-tribal clans meant international good will: the drawing together of distant peoples, not by vague phrases about human brotherhood, but by actual ties that touched the personal life”.⁸⁴

Another important symbol of unity is the Tree of Peace or the Great White Pine. Tree imagery is a recurring theme in Haudenosaunee life, culture and religious traditions (see #3.2). In his writings, Hewitt likened the Confederacy metaphorically to a human tree: “In eulogizing their completed labors the founders of the League represented and described it as a Great Human Tree of Flesh and Blood”⁸⁵; the Four White Roots are “composed of living men and women”. If an enemy drove a hatchet into one of its roots, “blood indeed would flow from the wound”.⁸⁶ Further, writes Hewitt, in “certain laws the Federal chiefs are denominated standing trees, who as essential components of the Great Tree [...] are absorbed into it, symbolically, and who are thus said to have one head, one heart, one mind, one blood, and one dish of food”.⁸⁷ In his lengthy descriptions Lafitau himself frequently employs Haudenosaunee metaphors. He does so quite naturally and with ease. For example, when writing about inherited names he commented: “it is from the women’s family that these names are taken and it is they who are charged with requickening the dead and making

⁸⁴ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 42-43.

⁸⁵ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 323. —Hewitt sees the Confederacy as an “organic unity” and as an institution “conceived at times as a bisexed being or person, i.e., as an organic unity formed by the union of two persons of opposite sexes” (Hewitt, 325). Hewitt’s use of the word ‘organic’ differs somewhat from the way in which D.J. Elazar employs the term. Elazar likens an organic polity to a living organism whereas Hewitt sees organic unity as fundamental to the makeup of the Confederacy.

⁸⁶ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 323. —This idea of a bleeding tree is also seen at the beginning of the Confederacy story when Deganawidah first set out on his journey (see #3.2)

⁸⁷ J.N.B. Hewitt, “Some Esoteric Aspects,” 323.

their ancestors live again. This is done in public ceremonies after they are resolved to ‘raise up the tree again’, as it is their custom to express it”.⁸⁸ He employs the tree metaphor again in his discussion on the selection of chiefs. The tree is the chief. “After the tree is thus reerected, if the one elected is still young and incapable of directing affairs by himself, they add roots to the tree to sustain it and keep it from falling”.⁸⁹

Returning to the Confederacy story, Deganawidah further instructed the chiefs “that their nations all exercise equal authority in the Confederacy, and that as individuals the chiefs—the tall trunks of the Confederacy—are all equal in status”.⁹⁰ He then “gave them a further symbol, the Bundle of Arrows, denoting strength through union.”⁹¹ He took one arrow from each of the Five Nations and bound them together with deer sinew. One arrow can be easily broken, but five arrows bundled together have strength, just as a united Five Nations will be strong. If one arrow is removed, the strength of the union will be compromised. The recorder of a 1690 council held at Albany noted the Five Nations “have well observed the metaphor of the arrowes, one of which being broken weakeneth, they shall nowise break them but remaine firme, with heart and hand”.⁹²

Thanks to the *Kaienere:kowa*, the Haudenosaunee were able to enter into a new, enduring relationship with one another. The powerful symbols which Deganawidah introduced to them helped make this relationship possible. In effect, he looked to the daily

⁸⁸ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1:71.

⁸⁹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners and Customs*, 1:293.

⁹⁰ J. A. Gibson, *Concerning the League*, xxviii.

⁹¹ P. A. W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 37.

⁹² “Proposals of the Commissioners at Albany to the Indians,” *NYCD* 3:713.

lives and habits of the Haudenosaunee, to their cosmology and customs and transformed the everyday into the extraordinary. Thus, at every turn, the Haudenosaunee would be reminded of the *Kaienere:kowa* and the peace it brought to them and their lands. As John Mohawk writes: “The principles of thinking the Peacemaker offered then were offered in a way that the people who lived at that time could understand. He talked of roots and trees and eagles and leaves. These were the symbols of his time”.⁹³ Each symbol brought the Haudenosaunee together in a different way: they became united under one roof; they formed a circle around the council fire; they came to the Tree of Peace and found shelter under it; they were bound together like a bundle of arrows and they shared the land and its bounty in common.

In his discussion of the *Kaienere:kowa* and the meaning of Deganawidah’s message in the post-contact period, Wallace makes special mention of the 1645 council in Trois-Rivières. The council was, says Wallace, one in a series of attempts by the Five Nations to reach a lasting peace agreement with the French and other nations. While the *Kaienere:kowa* aimed to establish peace within the Confederacy and between the Confederacy and other nations, it also gave provision for the use of force when the Five Nations was under threat. Such was the case in the early seventeenth century as the French constructed forts and established trading routes in and around the eastern regions of Iroquoia. At the same time as they were seeking alliances with the Algonquins and Hurons, says Wallace, the French were also attempting to thwart efforts by the Five Nations to establish peaceful relations with these same peoples: “The Great White Roots [...] were being

⁹³ J. Mohawk, “Origins of Iroquois Political Thought,” 227.

constantly hacked at by secret enemies”, and by “1642 the Five Nations knew they were in great danger”.⁹⁴ They called for a peace council, but by 1645 war had broken out once more, and so again the parties attempted to reach some kind of agreement. As Wallace sees it, Kiotseaeton’s address was an “appeal in the spirit of Deganawidah”. He specifically mentions the fourth belt when Kiotseaeton spoke of seeing the site of a deadly encounter between the Haudenosaunee and the Algonquins.

5.6 Factionalism and Covenanted Polities

The story of the Confederacy and its founding, of the Peacemaker and those he sought out to assist him, offers a portrait of and a plan for the Haudenosaunee to live peaceably with one another. Perhaps the greatest test to the unity of the Confederacy came when European imperial powers established a foothold in North America, set up trade routes and, eventually, began the process of colonization. The period was a time of almost unrelenting warfare during which the Dutch, the French and the English vied with one another and with different nations of Native people for control of the northeast.⁹⁵ Each of these European powers attempted to establish alliances with some or all of the Five Nations and in so doing sought to create divisions within the Confederacy. After the Treaty of Paris in 1763 and again after the American War of Independence in 1776, as the lines of demarcation between French and British held lands were transformed into international boundaries between Canada and the United States, the Confederacy was confronted yet again

⁹⁴ P.A.W. Wallace, *White Roots*, 52.

⁹⁵ M.K. Foster, *The Recovery and Translation of Native Speeches accompanying Ancient Iroquois-White Treaties* (Ottawa, ON: The National Museums of Canada, 1978) 1.

with division. The much discussed ‘covering’ of the Central Fire and the exodus of Joseph Brant and some of the Five Nations to Canada, is today taken as a pivotal event in the history of the Confederacy. The history of this period has been recounted and debated in detail by others and so no attempt will be made to discuss it here. My purpose in raising the issue of divisions within the Confederacy is intended as a preamble to a discussion of ‘factionalism’—as it is called in the academic literature—among the Five Nations.

Among Iroquoianists the question of ‘factionalism’ in the Confederacy has become a subfield of study, one which has been discussed and analyzed at some length by Regina Harrison in her M.A. thesis and again in a bibliographic essay for a Ph.D. in anthropology. Harrison’s M.A. thesis focuses on the different political factions which existed in Kahnawake in the early 1990s. Her bibliographic essay presents an historiographical survey of the Confederacy’s political history and is based on secondary source material. Harrison notes that factionalism became a subfield of Iroquois studies in about the middle of the twentieth century.⁹⁶ The pervading view is that factionalism epitomizes a society or a political system in disarray, and people with an inability to attain consensus. Harrison offers a different, more constructive approach to what she calls ‘factional politics’. Rather than take the widely accepted view of factionalism as a negative phenomenon resulting from “non-corporate groupings involved in conflicts and recruited by leaders on the basis of diverse principles”,⁹⁷ she “places emphasis on the *process* of factionalism and its inherent

⁹⁶ See Regina Harrison, “Rhetorical Use of the Great Law of Peace at Kahnawake: A Measure of Political Legitimacy in a Mohawk Community” (unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1994), 38-51.

⁹⁷ R. Harrison, “Rhetorical Use,” 47.

dynamism”,⁹⁸ and states that factionalism is ‘normalized’ once we recognize that it is “1) part of a long-standing Iroquois pattern, and built into the Confederacy; 2) an important part of [the] political process, serving a useful function; and 3) likely to guide the future [...] of politics”. Harrison is here discussing Kahnawake, but her theoretical observations likely apply to other communities as well. She notes that despite the existence of factionalism, the Haudenosaunee today speak of themselves as belonging to a single Confederacy.⁹⁹

For Harrison the covering of the Central Fire after the American Revolution “marked a time for introversion and renewal rather than death or destruction”.¹⁰⁰ Today, as the Haudenosaunee deliberate over myriad issues brought about in Canada and the United States by two Indian Acts, by provincial, state and international borders and legislation, by the question of blood quantum, and by differing views on the role of band councils, factionalism appears to have reached new heights. Again, Harrison looks at this question from the inside out rather than the outside in. In her final words on the subject she draws the following conclusion:

I would like to say here that the ‘factionalized’ state of the Confederacy today may not be as sensationally anomalous as it might seem [...] [T]here has always been space within the Confederacy for a wide range of opinions, political agendas and political actions. This is not to deny that factionalism has serious, sometimes tragic, consequences, but factionalism in and of itself does not prevent the diverse group of individuals and communities who make up the Iroquois today from believing in a common

⁹⁸ R. Harrison, “Rhetorical Use,” 50, emphasis mine.

⁹⁹ R. Harrison, “Bibliographic Essay I: The Iroquois Confederacy in the Twentieth Century” (unpublished, no date), 3.

¹⁰⁰ R. Harrison, “Rhetorical Use,” 3

Confederacy and participating in the creation of Iroquois identities. In fact, the factionalism may even indicate that the Iroquois are in another period of innovation and experimentation with political forms; that may be, ultimately, the most traditional of Iroquois practices [...]¹⁰¹

Harrison raises an interesting point and even more importantly she provides us with an alternate view on the place of factionalism in Haudenosaunee political life. Is factionalism somehow intrinsic to the very structure of the Confederacy?

In his discussion of what he describes as the “three forms from which all polities are derived and through which all are organized”, Daniel Elazar also raises the question of factionalism. He discusses it within the context of covenantal polities,¹⁰² and speaking almost entirely in theoretical terms, Elazar contrasts three models: *hierarchical*, *organic* and *covenantal*: “Politics in the hierarchical model are generally founded by conquest in some form, either external or internal [...], and are organized as power pyramids more or less in the manner of military formations”; the organic model seemingly grows naturally, and “the more powerful or otherwise talented leaders form a political elite at the polity’s center that rule over the vast majority [...] who are relegated to the peripheries. Thus the model of an organic polity is that of two concentric circles, center and periphery”. Here we are reminded of Doxtator’s observation that history is an additive process which subsumes past structures into present realities (see #5.1).

The covenantal model, writes Elazar, “functions on an entirely different basis” and is “characterized schematically by a matrix, a group of equal cells framed by common

¹⁰¹ R. Harrison, “The Iroquois Confederacy,” 90.

¹⁰² D.J. Elazar, *Covenant & Constitutionalism: The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy* [The Covenant Tradition in Politics, Vol. 3] (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 2.—See #4.6.

institutions”.¹⁰³ He continues:

Its founding comes about because equal individuals or individual entities join together through a covenant or political compact... to unite and establish common governing institutions without sacrificing their respective integrities. For the matrix model, the constitution is preeminent since it embodies the agreement that joins the entities or individuals together and establishes agree-upon rules of the game which all have to observe. The politics that flows from that constitution is a politics of equals based on negotiation and bargaining and designed to be as open as possible.

Elsewhere he repeats this description with slight variations and emphasis. One section is worth quoting again here: “The matrix is founded by individuals or individual entities who join together as equals through a covenant or political compact establishing their common governing institutions without sacrificing their respective integrities and retaining a fair measure of their independence”.¹⁰⁴ In a schematic table, Elazar notes that a covenantal polity is founded on “reflection and choice”, that its model is a “matrix” of equal cells framed by common institutions, that its structure of authority is one of “frames and cells”, and its “mechanism of governance” is characterized by “a constitution (usually written), *open politics with factions* (my emphasis) and a divided administration.” By a divided administration Elazar seems to be referring to different houses or legislatures of government. Unfortunately, he does not discuss what he means by ‘open politics with factions’; he does not discuss either how such a governmental mechanism operates.

For Elazar, the first “complete modern theoretical development and successful

¹⁰³ D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 2-3.

¹⁰⁴ D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 11. —On page 3, he says that the apotheosis of the covenantal model is “a federal system in which the constituent units are represented in the framing government and also preserve their own existence, authority, and powers in those which are not delegated to the framing institutions”.

practical application [of the covenantal model] came in the United States at the end of the eighteenth century”.¹⁰⁵ Religious-based covenantal thinking existed earlier, of course, and different polities on the European continent, in the British Isles and in New England employed “covenant ideology”, as Elazar calls it; but the first real historical example of the covenant model began in North America with the creation of the United States. Elazar makes another interesting observation. He notes that covenant-like ideas may well have emerged spontaneously “in various parts of the world [...] outside of what became the covenantal mainstream”.¹⁰⁶ He cites Scandinavian oath-pacts, the Hungarian national covenant, and Bedouin and Native North American tribal confederacies as possible examples. “The Europeans who came to the New World did not see themselves as directly influenced by its indigenous inhabitants”, but these very “North Americans [...] contributed more to successful European settlement [...] than the Europeans perceived at the time”.¹⁰⁷ He continues: “Without making too much of it, in many cases they [indigenous peoples] also were organized on a federal basis with tribal confederacies and leagues from coast to coast”, and the most prominent of these was the Iroquois Confederacy.

Some comments are necessary at this point. First, Elazar draws a distinction between the ‘League of the Iroquois’ and the ‘Iroquois Confederacy’. A ‘league’ generally refers to an association of states for a common action, whereas a ‘confederacy’ refers to a union of political organizations. In our time, this distinction seems to have begun in the writings of Daniel K. Richter, primarily in his 1992 publication *Ordeal of the Longhouse*,

¹⁰⁵ D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 11

¹⁰⁶ D.J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 11-12.

and in his contribution, under the same title, to *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, in 1987.

Richter observes that the 'league' predated European contact and

existed merely (or, better, sublimely) to keep the peace and preserve a spiritual unity among the many autonomous villages of the Five Nations. Those villages, and the various headmen and would-be headmen within each of them, often failed to agree and normally acted independently. On in the late seventeenth century [post contact] did a broader agency of political, diplomatic, and military unity that I have distinguished by the name of the Iroquois *Confederacy* emerge to parallel the cultural phenomenon of the Iroquois *League*.¹⁰⁸

In *Beyond the Covenant Chain* Richter writes concerning the nature of government within the Five Nations:

Some of the darkness stems from the confounding of two related but distinct phenomena: the Iroquois Great League of Peace as a cultural and ritual institution, and the Iroquois Confederacy as a political and diplomatic entity. The first—the League—is undeniably old, relatively unchanging and very much alive to the present day. The second—the Confederacy—developed gradually in the years following European contact. It was in constant flux, and during the American War for Independence it virtually ceased to exist [...] The membership and ritual of the two entities might at times overlay, but the functions of the councils of the Great League of Peace and of the Five Nations Confederacy remained distinct.¹⁰⁹

Whether or not this is an accurate distinction to make or even an accurate portrayal of the working of the Iroquois Confederacy in the pre- and post-contact eras is very much open to question. By and large, the Haudenosaunee themselves make no such distinction. The

¹⁰⁸ D.K. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ D.K. Richter, "Ordeal of the Longhouse," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain*, 11-12.

words 'league' and 'confederacy' are sometimes used interchangeably, but the terms almost always refer to the same single entity. The basis on which Richter has developed this theoretical division is vague and may be more reflective of Western dualistic thought than of actual historical developments. For example, he observes that the late seventeenth century saw "the gradual emergence of a network of headmen whose roles were separate from, but significantly not in competition with, those of the League Sachems. No doubt some Sachems were active members of that network, despite the virtual absence of hereditary League titles from European records of Confederacy councils".¹¹⁰ It is well known, however, that hereditary sachems did not often speak in councils with the different European nations.

The fact that the Europeans did not always record the names of hereditary titles at gatherings of the Grand Council of the Confederacy does not necessarily point to a League vs. Confederacy distinction. Barbara Mann makes an important observation concerning hereditary titles:

Today, due to skewed methods of ethnographic collecting that greatly privileged male aspects of the culture, it is the names of the fifty male grand councillors that are still known. Originally, however, there were women's titles to office as well, as noted by Dayodekane (Seth Newhouse) in his 1885 manuscript of the *Gayanesshu:gowa*, the Great Law, or constitution of the league [...] Thus, while the men's titles have been preserved, the only woman's title still known today is *Jighonsaseh*.¹¹¹

In addition, Richter's comment that the 'League' is "relatively unchanging" indicates he is

¹¹⁰ D.K. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 169-79.

¹¹¹ B.A. Mann, "Governmental functioning and powers of the Haudenosaunee League," in *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, 124-25. —In the text, Mann refers to W. Fenton, "Seth Newhouse's Traditional History and Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy": *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93/2 (1949) 141-58.

taking a static view of history. The cultural and ritual institutions of the Haudenosaunee have adapted as or when the surrounding environment changed. Deborah Doxtator's study of the Iroquois clans demonstrates this most clearly. While the prevailing wisdom among historians and anthropologists suggests the Iroquois clans more or less disappeared in the nineteenth century, Doxtator has demonstrated just the opposite. Moreover, to suggest, as Richter does by inference, that the Confederacy of the post-contact era was not concerned with the question of peace is to ignore a vast portion of the primary documentation wherein peace is discussed at length.

A much more useful approach to the study of the Confederacy in the pre- and post-contact eras is Doxtator's theory of history as an additive process (see # 5.1). With this approach we see that the councils of the post-contact period subsumed existing structures—the Condolence, for example—into new realities, the presence of the Europeans (more on this #6).

Daniel Elazar's comment to the effect that he does not want "to make too much out of" the federal basis of tribal confederacies is somewhat vague. On the one hand, he may be holding back from drawing too close an analogy between Christian/European covenant theology and covenantal polities, and the confederacies of North America. As he says: "To describe certain peoples or civil societies or cultures as covenantal is only to suggest that their dominant ideologies and modal personalities are covenantal".¹¹² By this he seems to mean that certain peoples or nations can be covenantal without being Christian or practitioners of covenant theology. On the other hand, he may be steering clear of one of the

¹¹² D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 12.

most hotly debated issues now current in Iroquois studies, namely, the degree to which the Haudenosaunee influenced the 'Founding Fathers' in the making of the American Constitution. Elazar alludes to this debate in the following comment: "With the exception of the Iroquois Confederacy which had a certain influence on Benjamin Franklin and those of his compatriots who sought broader union for the British colonies in North American, these indigenous American arrangements essentially stand as testimony to the federal qualities of the country rather than as examples for the white man".¹¹³

Returning once again to the question of factionalism, given Elazar's findings this phenomenon may be characteristic of the covenantal model in general and should not be seen as particular to the Five Nations Confederacy. As Harrison says, factionalism in the Confederacy may be the most traditional practice and may indicate that the Haudenosaunee are in another period of innovation with political forms.

The important question, however, is this: can the Confederacy be taken as a covenantal model? This is a difficult question to address since we run the grave risk of forcing a Western theoretical model or structure on indigenous modes of thought and action. Many a scholar, Christopher Jocks (Mohawk) being among the most prominent warns members of the academy against doing just this.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, I am willing to take this

¹¹³ D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 12. —For a series of brief discussions of this debate and bibliographic references see Johansen and Mann, *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*.

¹¹⁴ For a recent debate on this question in religious studies circles see: Sam Gill, "The Academic Study of Religion": *JAAR*, 62/4 (1994) 965-75; C. Jocks, "American Indian Religious Traditions and the Academic Study of Religion: A Response to Sam Gill": *JAAR* 65/1 (1997) 169-81; Lee Irwin, "Response: American Indian Religious Traditions and the Academic Study of Religion": *JAAR* 66/1 (1998) 259-69. —For a discussion of the broader debate over the study of Native religious traditions see the introductory chapters to Thomas Parkhill's *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997).

risk and I do so keeping in mind Deborah Doxtator's fundamental proposition that our notions of "'difference' as separate and exclusionary, instead of as inter-connecting and inclusive, may have helped to obscure points of possible rapprochement between two different ways of ordering knowledge and conceptualizing the past". (Quoted above #5.)

Elazar's idea that a covenantal polity is founded on reflection and choice fits with the founding of the Five Nations Confederacy in the most general of ways because the oral tradition which surrounds the story of the Confederacy and its founding focuses primarily, though implicitly, on the use of persuasion. Take for example, Deganawidah's encounter with Hiawatha. On his journey to bring the Good Message to the Five Nations, Deganawidah comes to the house of a famous cannibal Hiawatha. He climbs up onto the roof, sits by the smoke hole and waits for Hiawatha. The man eventually appears and he enters the hut and places some human body parts in a kettle of water which he then hangs over some hot embers.

Thereupon he went to where the vessel sat, intending to take the meat out of the liquid, when he saw, from inside the vessel, a man looking out. Thereupon he moved away without removing the meat, and sat down again on the long bench, for it was a surprise to him, seeing the man in the vessel. Thereupon he thought, 'Let me look again.' Thereupon he, Tekanawita, looked again from above where the smoke hole was, again causing a reflection in the vessel, and then the man, standing up again, went to where the vessel sat, looked into the vessel again, saw the man looking out, and he was handsome, he having a nice face. Thereupon the man moved away again, and he sat down again on the long bench, and then he bowed his head, pondering and thinking, 'I am exceedingly handsome and I have a nice face; it is probably not right, my habit of eating humans. So I will now stop, from now on I ought not to kill humans anymore.' Thereupon he stood up again, went to where the vessel sat, picked up the vessel with the meat in it, and

then he went out, sliding straight down the slope beside the river and near an uprooted tree he poured out the vessel full of meat.¹¹⁵

In this instance, ‘reflection’, in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense, and ‘choice’ are both features of Hiawatha’s decision to leave his cannibalistic ways behind. Here, and elsewhere throughout the story, Deganawidah repeatedly uses his personal power (*orenda*) in a variety of ways to persuade the peoples of the Five Nations to give up their warring ways.

Does Elazar’s matrix—a group of equal cells framed by common institutions—hold true for the Confederacy? No and yes. In mathematics a matrix is a rectangular array of numerical or algebraic quantities treated as an algebraic entity. Conceptually, the Haudenosaunee often think of the Confederacy as related to a circle: the chiefs of the Grand Council gather in a circle around the Central Fire, the founding of the Confederacy is commemorated in the Circle Wampum, and so forth. As seen above, Elazar identifies the circle with the organic model rather than with the covenantal model. However, the idea of a matrix does apply diagrammatically and even conceptually to the longhouse. The longhouse as a building, is rectangular. In terms of the Confederacy, the longhouse metaphorically brings the Five nations under one roof. Symbolically, first five, then six fires burn in the Confederacy longhouse. As Lafitau said back in 1724: The “five peoples, in spite of different reasons for jealousy, have always kept united, and to indicate their union they say that they form a single house which we call the Iroquois Longhouse”.¹¹⁶ Elazar would not likely think of the ‘matrix’ in such concrete, spatial terms; his interpretation of

¹¹⁵ J.A. Gibson, *Concerning the League*, 81-83.

¹¹⁶ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs*, 1:87.

it would in all probability be far more abstract. However, as far as cells and frames go, the longhouse provides a useful and appropriate analogy when viewed from the perspective of the Haudenosaunee.

The very structure of the Confederacy fits well with the idea of a matrix. Thanks to the persuasive powers of the Peacemaker and the many symbols he put in place, the original five separate nations became united but each nation retained a high degree of autonomy—clans historically connected to any one nation remained with it and particular customs associated with a nation were retained. Moreover, the women and men of individual communities continued to hold village councils and held decision-making powers over their own affairs. Again, Lafitau is worth quoting here:

Whatever the origin of the Iroquois and Huron may be, they have kept this form of government in its first simplicity for, besides this gynocracy... in which the care of affairs is in the men's hands only by way of procuration, all the villages govern themselves in the same way, by themselves, and as if they were independent of each other. We see also, in each, the same distribution of families, the same civil laws, the same order so that anyone who sees one, sees them all. When, however, affairs of interest to the whole [...] are to be discussed, they unite in a general council to which the deputies of each village go. This is done with so much equality and zeal for the common welfare that there results from it a harmony and an admirable unanimity which works for the safety of the tribe [nation] and which, for that reason, nothing can break asunder.¹¹⁷

In addition to the longhouse with its individual fires, the Haudenosaunee express unity symbolically in the Five Arrows bound together with sinew. The metaphorical longhouse and the Five Arrows point to unity, but also to diversity— one longhouse, many

¹¹⁷ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs*, 1:287.

fires; one bundle, many arrows. The concept of the one and the many is also found in the metaphor, 'one heart, one mind, one body'. This metaphor is closely related to what Lafitau calls unanimity or what the Haudenosaunee call consensus. Again Lafitau: "Respect for human beings which is the mainspring of their actions, serves no little to keep up their union [...] It must be agreed that they avoid an infinite number of quarrels by this means. They have, besides that, an admirable composure and do not know what it is to burst out into insults. I do not remember ever seeing any one of them angry".¹¹⁸ Unity is also expressed in yet another metaphor, the 'common dish with one spoon'. The idea of the one and the many in unity is expressed yet again in the Confederacy Belt or the Hiawatha Belt, as it is often called. The Confederacy Belt, which is often seen today as a flag, consists of four square of white wampum beads, two on either side of a white beaded 'heart' and all joined by a line, also of white wampum. The entire motif is set in a background of purple wampum beads. The two outer squares at either end represent the Mohawks and the Seneca, Keepers of the Eastern and Western Doors.¹¹⁹ The two squares closer to the middle represent the Oneida and the Cayuga. At the centre is a heart or The Great White Pine, representing the Onondaga who are the keepers of the central fire and of the wampum. All the individual five nations are represented and all are joined together by the Path of Peace.¹²⁰

The question of the covenantal model and constitution also applies to the Confederacy if we take the instructions given by Deganawidah as the 'constitution' of the

¹¹⁸ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs*, 1:301.

¹¹⁹ In 1773 Sir William Johnson spoke of the Mohawks, Onondagas and Senecas as the elder branches of the Confederacy and the Senecas as the Western Door of the Six Nations. O'Callaghan, "At a Congress with the Six Nations Held at Johnson Hall on Friday, April 9th 1773," *NYCD* 8:365.

¹²⁰ For a detailed description see Tahenetoorens, *Wampum Belts*, 7-8.

Five Nations.¹²¹ In his 1910 interpretation of the *Kaienere:kowa*, Seth Newhouse (Mohawk) listed some 117 articles of “The Great Council of Peace” which Arthur Parker, who edited the work, grouped under a number of procedural-like clauses including ones on the names, rights and duties of both peace chiefs and war chiefs; on clans and consanguinity; on the official symbolism; on the laws of adoption and emigration; on the rights of foreign nations; on the rights and powers of war and of the people of the Five Nations. Another set addresses the religious ceremonies, the installation song, and funeral addresses.¹²²

Intimately intertwined with matters of procedure—for example how a sachem should be chosen and what his responsibilities are—is the idea of *process*. Official business was almost without exception accompanied by feasting. “When a [...] title is to be conferred, the candidate.. shall furnish the cooked venison, the corn bread and the corn soup, together with other necessary things and the labor for the Conferring of Titles Festival”, reads Article 29 of the Newhouse version.¹²³ Lafitau describes the important role of feasting among the Haudenosaunee:

Since each tribe is small in number, their union is sustained by these religious and political assembles or by eating and living together, in common so to speak, enlivening [...] the joy of those meals which are veritable feasts for them, all of them gathering [...] for the purpose proposed by the legislators, namely to bind their people’s hearts together and to draw closer the bonds attaching them to one another and making society gentler and more

¹²¹ The Seth Newhouse version of the *Kaienere:kowa* especially focuses on the idea of a constitution. Not all Haudenosaunee agree that the *Kaienere:kowa* is a constitution. Some will say it is close to a way of life.

¹²² The Newhouse version was edited and first published in 1916 by Arthur C. Parker in *The Constitution of the Five Nations or The Iroquois Book of the Great Law*, 1916 (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1984), 14-61.

¹²³ A.C. Parker, *The Constitution*, 39

amiable.¹²⁴

The articles of the *Kaienere:kowa* provide a system of checks and balances. For example, sachems were appointed by clan mothers who could and did ‘dehorn’ them if they abused their power. Thus it establishes law and order. But taken in its entirety the *Kaienere:kowa* had, and indeed still has, an overarching goal—“the full establishment of peace”. As Sotsisoweh writes: “Peace was to be defined not as the simple absence of war or strife, but as the active striving of humans for the purpose of establishing universal justice”.¹²⁵

Last, but certainly not least, Elazar notes that in a covenantal polity, the “matrix is founded by individuals or individual entities who join together as equals through a covenant or political compact establishing their common governing institutions without sacrificing their respective integrities and retaining a fair measure of independence”.¹²⁶ Only a portion of this principle applies to the Confederacy. While it is true that the individual clans and nations which comprise the Confederacy retain a large degree of independence, we cannot necessarily conclude that the common governing institutions—namely the *Kaienere:kowa*—and the Confederacy itself were established through a covenant and political pact. By this I mean the following: Oath swearing, which is so integral to the Judaeo-Christian covenantal tradition, is not necessarily part of Haudenosaunee culture, religious thinking or history. In neither the first nor the second epic narratives do we find

¹²⁴ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs*, 1:324.

¹²⁵ “Thought of Peace: The Great Law,” *Basic Call to Consciousness* (Akwesasne Notes. Summertown, TN: Book Publishing Company, 1978), 10-11.

¹²⁶ D.J. Elazar, *Matrix of Federal Democracy*, 11.

either explicit or implicit references to oath swearing. In general, the Haudenosaunee do not enter into solemn contracts or pacts *per se*, even though early missionaries and even present-day scholars (for example Snyderman and Foster) use words such as ‘pact’ and ‘contract’ to describe how relationships are established.

Among the Haudenosaunee, the process of establishing relationships was and still is closer to Althusius’ idea of symbiosis. Althusius spoke of politics as the art of linking humans together in order to establish, develop and conserve a social life among them (see #4.5). Althusius referred to politics as symbiotics (the art of living together), and to social life as symbiosis (or living together). Without repeating all the earlier discussion, many analogies can be drawn between Althusius’s thinking and the structure, even the nature, of the Confederacy. For example, Althusius saw mutual communication for the purpose of conserving harmonious relations as fundamental to politics. This is also the case for the Haudenosaunee for whom the council is the primary means by which parties attain agreement and consensus. For Althusius, association is initiated and maintained by a covenant among the symbiotes. This covenant can be explicit or implicit, the latter being assumed in the continuing consent of those who live together. If relationships among the nations of the Confederacy are not established by explicit covenant making—i.e., oath swearing—they are covenantal in essence. The *Kaienere:kowa* emphasizes shared interests and does so, in part, through the many symbols which bring the Five Nations together. Althusius speaks of kinship and consent as two dimensions of symbiotics. While he restricts the idea of kinship to familial connections, the Haudenosaunee extend it to clan relations and beyond to national and yet further again to international relations. As for consent, when the fifty sachems of the Grand Council linked arms in a circle they consented to live in peace

with one another. As the Dutch jurist Adrien van de Donck pointed out in 1653, consent and consensus making went hand in hand: If the chiefs “encounter difficulties they have various means of securing acceptance, for the community usually has to carry out what has been decided, and without its consent they cannot make much progress”.¹²⁷

Communication is a central element of Althusian politics. Communication emphasizes relationships first and foremost. Haudenosaunee councils are all about establishing and maintaining relationships and opening the lines of communication. The ceremonial clearing of the path, for example, and the First Three Strings of the Condolence, aim at opening the lines of communication among parties. For Althusius, politics serves the function of utilizing the varied gifts of humans for the benefit of all; the experience, wisdom and contributions of individuals help enhance the bonds of friendship and kinship. In Haudenosaunee life the elders often assume this role. Lafitau notes that the name *Roksten Gôa*, “meaning ‘the Old Man’ or ‘Ancient par Excellence,’” indicates maturity and wisdom and that the name is bestowed on those, whether young or old, recognized as possessing special gifts.¹²⁸ As for affairs of state, Lafitau notes that “they are always occupied, among themselves, in reflecting on all that happens, in observing and deliberating endlessly over the least events, shaping the young people for business, teaching them the style of their councils, the oral tradition which they conserve of their country’s history, of their ancestors’ virtue”.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ A. van de Donck, “Description of New Netherland,” in Dean Snow, et. al. eds. *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 125-26.

¹²⁸ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs*, 1:291.

¹²⁹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs* 1:308.

Althusius rejects the reified state and statism both of which can easily lead to tyranny. As he sees it, the less the power of those who rule, the more secure and stable the imperium remains. Similarly with the Haudenosaunee: “‘The chiefs are generally the poorest among them, marveled one Dutch traveler [in the 1630s], ‘for instead of receiving anything [...], these Indian chiefs are made to give to the populace.’”¹³⁰ Lafitau writes:

The chiefs have neither distinctive mark, nor crown, nor sceptre, nor guards, nor consular axes to differentiate them from the common people. Their power does not appear to have any trace of absolutism. It seems that they have no means of coercion to command obedience [...] They are obeyed, however, and command with authority; their commands, given as requests, and the obedience paid them, appear entirely free. This freedom serves to hold the chiefs in check [...] Good order is kept by this means; and in the execution of things, there is found a mutual adaptation of chiefs and members of society.¹³¹

In the early years of the eighteenth century the Five Nations were compared to two covenanted polities in Europe. In about 1720 Daniel Coxe (1673-1739), a British military officer and land owner, likened the Confederacy to the Swiss Cantons: “The nation of the Iroquois, as they are called by the French [...] are styled by the English as the Five Nations, being so many distinct in name and habitations from each other; but leagued by a most strict

¹³⁰ D. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 22. —In 1987 Tom Porter (Mohawk) recalled how his grandmother spoke of the chiefs:

She used to say—I like to remember the way she used to talk about it—she said if you were to recall in the old, old people’s telling of the chiefs or leaders, those leaders are the most humble ones. They are the poorest people of all the nation because they are always giving, always giving, always giving—materially, psychologically, spiritually, and politically of themselves to all the people of the nation. They are always giving (Tom Porter, “Men Who Are of the Good Mind,” in *The Indian Roots of American Democracy*, 19).

¹³¹ J.-F. Lafitau, *Manners & Customs* 1:292-293.

confederacy, like the Cantons of Switzerland”.¹³² In 1727 in the opening pages of his *History of the Five Nations* Cadwallader Colden wrote: “The Five Nations (as their Name denotes) consist of so many Tribes or Nations, joined together by a League or Confederacy, like the United Provinces [of Holland], and without any Superiority of the one over the other. This union has continued so long, that the Christians know nothing of the Original of it”.¹³³ Coxe, an Episcopalian, and Colden, a Scots Presbyterian, would both have been familiar with the covenantal nature of the Swiss Cantons and the United Provinces. Evidently, they saw similarities between two European political entities and the Five Nations Confederacy.

¹³² D. Coxe, “A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spaniards Called Florida, and by the French la Louisiane,” *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, Benjamin Franklin, ed. (Philadelphia: Daniels & Smith 1850), 2 252.

¹³³ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, xx.

CHAPTER 6

“WHAT WAS AGREED UPON, IT JOINS THEIR ARMS”

[T]hey are gifted with a powerful memory [...]. And [...] after the conclusion of the matter all the children who have the ability to understand and to remember it are called together, and then they are told by their [...] sachems [...] how they entered into such a contract with these parties[...]. Then these children are commanded to remember this treaty and to plant each article in particular in their memory, and they and their children (are commanded) to preserve it faithfully so that they may not become treaty-breakers, which is an abomination to them.

Jasper Danckaerts, Labadism missionary, 1680¹

The Covenant that is now renewed shall not be only fresh in our Memories, but in the memories of our children and childrens children after us, we shall not only forbid ye Indians of our own nation but all Indians of other Nations living amongst us, to break the Covenant [...].

Adondareicha (Seneca), Albany, 1682²

When the Christians first came to this Country our Ancestors fastened the ship that brought them behind a Great Mountain with a Chain in order to secure the same which mountain lyes behind the Sinnekees Country, so that the one end of the Chain, being fastened there and the other end at ye Ship, if any body would steal away & molest this ship the chain will jingle & make a noise & so alarm all the 5 Nations who are bound to defend this ship & this is the foundation & original of the Covenant Chain among the 5 nations, which our ancestors made, which was to preserve this ship from any harm gave a Belt of Wampum.

Haudenosaunee orator, Albany, 1722³

Tracing the history of covenant and related ideas in the Judaeo-Christian theological

¹ J. Danckaerts “Journal of a Voyage to New York and a Tour of Several of the American Colonies in 1679-1680,” in *In Mohawk Country*, 210-11.

² “Treaty of Peace between Maryland and the Five Nations”: *NYCD* 3:323.

³ “The Second Answer of the five Nations of Indians”: *NYCD* 5.667.

and philosophical is not always easy but it is a fairly straightforward process. We have at our disposal a vast array of written sources and commentaries spanning several millennia (see #4). Scholars may, and in fact do, disagree on the meaning and interpretation of these works, but the sources themselves are there for the reading, so to speak. On the basis of this source material, we can make a very important observation concerning the Covenant Chain: one of the most distinctive features which set it apart from all other covenants of the Post-Reformation era is its cross-cultural dimension. Protestant covenant theologies, the European and Puritan communities founded on covenants, and the political philosophies which built on the idea of a covenant, were all internal, that is, they developed within the European, Christian theological and intellectual community.⁴ The Covenant Chain, in contrast, was the product of cross-cultural interaction. While scholars in Iroquois studies recognize this cross-cultural dimension, they have given little attention to the meaning of a covenant in either European or Iroquoian thought. Meanwhile, scholars at the other end of the scale—those studying the religious and political dimensions of covenants and covenanting—have given virtually no consideration to the Covenant Chain.⁵

6.1 The Absence of Theological Discourse

Another aspect of the Covenant Chain which distinguishes it from other covenants is the almost complete absence of theological and philosophical discourse on its existence. Given the propensity of European thinkers to express their ideas in written tracts and

⁴ While Grotius discussed the use of covenants in establishing relations with other peoples, he does so only in very general terms.

⁵ Daniel J. Elazar does discuss the Iroquois Confederacy in the context of covenanted polities, but he does not discuss the Covenant Chain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

treatises, this is somewhat surprising. Several reasons for this failure spring immediately to mind. During the era of the Covenant Chain treaties, that is from 1677 to 1776, Protestant theologians in North America and Europe may simply not have been aware of it and/or may have ignored the chain because they saw no theological structure to it. The Jesuits in North America almost certainly knew of the Covenant Chain's existence, yet they offered no commentary on it. Since covenant theology was not part of the Roman Catholic tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they may have had little interest in taking up a theological discussion of the chain. Even though they were very much interested in the use of metaphor by Native North Americans, the Jesuits did not pay any particular attention to the metaphorical use of the chain. Finally, since the Covenant Chain was widely perceived to be a political alliance between the Haudenosaunee and the English, the Jesuits may have consciously avoided discussing it. Still, other missionaries and travellers visited and resided in Iroquoia during this period; for example, the Moravians operated missions among the Haudenosaunee and were familiar with the diplomatic councils, yet none seem to have discussed the covenant chain from the theological perspective.⁶

Iroquoianists are by and large unanimous in concluding that the actual phrases 'Covenant Chain' and 'Silver Covenant Chain' entered the language of council oratory in the summer of 1677 during sessions held between the Haudenosaunee and Sir Edmund Andros, then the British governor of New York. Scholars debate whether Andros himself or the Onondaga sachem Garakontié introduced the phrase Covenant Chain and then made it silver. Richard Haan notes that Francis Jennings "implies that the Chain stemmed from

⁶ See discussion in P.A.W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser, 1696-1760, Friend of Colonist and Mohawk* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945).

an English invitation in 1677, while Stephen Saunders Webb argues that the Onondaga leader Garakontié manipulated these meetings and eventually ‘defined’ the chain as ‘silver’ for the English”.⁷ In any event, Andros, who has been credited with being the architect of the Covenant Chain, did not provide any ideological, theological or philosophical discussion of it.⁸ If Andros and other British officials ever sat down and hammered out a diplomatic protocol based on the covenant chain or even on a covenant, we do not know about it. As Haan points out, the origins of the Covenant Chain are shrouded in obscurity.⁹ Thus, the search for a specific European perspective on the meaning of covenant in the context of the Covenant Chain, is a largely fruitless endeavour.

References to various different covenants involving Native people and neighbouring European immigrants can be found in some early seventeenth century writings. For example, in a 1621 letter from the Plymouth settlement in Massachusetts to associates in England planter Edward Winslow (1595-1655), a Puritan and a man of considerable piety, spoke of a covenant with neighbouring Algonquian peoples:

Wee haue found the *Indians* very faithfull in their Covenant of Peace
with vs; very louing and readie to pleasure vs: we often goe to them, and they

⁷ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 43. —For Webb’s discussion see his *1676: The End of American Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 299 & 355-404.

Garakontié’s first reference to the covenant chain reads as follows: “Bot wee desyre now yt wch is past may be burried in oblivon and doe make now ane absolut Covenant of peace wch we shall bind wth a chayn for the Sealing of ye Same doe give ane band of Therten deep” (Quoted in Michelson, “The Covenant Chain in Colonial History,” 123 from Lawrence H. Leder, *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666-1723* (Gettysburg: Pennsylvania Historical Association 1956), 43.)

⁸ *Andros, Sir Edmund*, “Persons Participating in Iroquois Treaties,” in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 229. —For biographical information on Andros see *The Andros Papers, 1674-1676: Files of the Provincial Secretary of New York during the Administration of Governor Sir Edmund Andros*. Peter R. Christoph & Florence A. Christoph, eds. (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), vol. 1

⁹ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 42.

come to vs; some of vs haue bin fiftie myles by Land in the Country with them; the occasions and Relations whereof, you shall vnderstand by our generall and more full Declaration of such things as are worth noting [...]¹⁰

In 1654 Peter Linsdestrom (1632-1691), a Swedish traveler, made reference to covenant made between European settlers and the Lenâpé (Delaware): “Thereupon another (sachem) stood up and spoke (saying), that all who were there would keep that covenant fast and do us no injury, nor kill our hogs or other cattle, but if anyone of their people could be proved guilty of it, he should be punished as a warning for others”.¹¹ These two references suggest that both Winslow and Linsdestrom saw the agreements with their neighbours in terms of covenant; the agreements were in some way covenantal though not necessarily sacred, that is, blessed in some way.

In his 1703 memoir of his voyage to New France, Baron Louis-Armand Lahontan wrote of covenant in a somewhat different context. As is well known, Lahontan had high praise for the lifeways, culture and religion of North America’s Native peoples. He frequently juxtaposed European customs with those of Native peoples. For example, in contrast to the Jesuits and other religious orders “with their strictures and asceticisms”,

¹⁰ E. Winslow, “A Letter Sent From New-England to a friends in these parts setting forth a briefe and true Declaration of the worth of that Plantation,” in *A Relation or Journrall of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation Settled at Plimouth in New England by Certaine English Adventurers both Merchants and Others*, William Bradford, ed. (Boston, MA: J.K. Wiggin, 1865), 134-35. —Whether or not the Native people Winslow refers to entered into this covenant consciously and voluntarily is open to question since he goes on to say, “[...] yea, it hath pleased God so to possesse the *Indians* with a feare of vs, and loue vnto vu, that not only the greatest King amongst them called *Massaoyt*, but also all the Princes and peoples round about vs, haue either made sute vnto vs, or beene glad of any occasion to make peace with vs, so that seauen [seven] of them at once haue sent their messengers to vs to that end”

¹¹ P. Linsdestrom, *Geographia Americae: With an Account of the Delaware Indians: Based on Surveys and notes Made in 1654-1656* (Philadelphia, PA: Swedish Colonial Society, 1925), 130.

Lahontan described Native people as having “a natural, sweetly-reasonable religion”;¹² “no vulgar love of money pursued the peaceful native in his leafy home: without distinction of property, the rich man was he who might give most generously. Aboriginal marriage was no fettering life-covenant, but an arrangement pleasing the convenience of the contracting parties”.

Lahontan again mentioned covenant in his famous ‘dialogue curieux’ with the Huron sachem Adario. In response to Lahontan’s question on the fall of humankind, and on corruption and eternal damnation, Adario replied in part, as follows:

When you speak of *Man*, you ought to say *French-Man* [...] Do ye hear, my Brother, I have talk’d frequently to the *French* of all the Vices that reign among them; and when I have made it out that they have no regard to the *Laws* of their *Religion*, they confess’ed that ‘twas true [...] I ask’ed ‘em if they did not believe that their Souls would be doom’d to eternal Flames; and receiv’d this answer, *That the Mercy of God is so great, that whoever trusts in his Goodness shall be Sav’d; that the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace, in which God condescends to the Condition and Weakness of Man, who is tempted by so many violent and frequent Attractives, that he is forc’d to give way [...]*¹³

Lahontan’s remarks on covenant are, quite obviously, specifically Christian, the first being a reference to the sacrament of marriage, the second to the doctrine of grace.

Returning once again to the theological and philosophical foundations of the Covenant Chain, two important historical figures who wrote on the chain at length are

¹² Baron Louis-Armand de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America*, Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. (Chicago, IL: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905) vol. 1, xxxv. —The original French version was published in 1703 and the first English translation appeared that same year.

¹³ L.-A. de Lahontan, “A Conference or Dialogue between the Author and Adario,” in *New Voyages*, vol. 2: 538-39.

Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776) and Conrad Weiser (1696-1760). Both Colden and Weiser participated in, observed and recorded treaty councils. Colden, a Scots Presbyterian, was educated at the University of Edinburgh and emigrated permanently to North America in about 1715 after his marriage to Alice Chrystie. He practiced medicine in Philadelphia and then in New York where he became Surveyor General in 1721. He also served as an advisor to the Governor of New York and in 1727 published the *History of the Five Nations*.

Born in Württemberg, Germany, Conrad Weiser emigrated as a young child to New York with his family. In 1712 his father sent him to live among the Mohawks where he learned the language and served as a liaison with the German community where his family lived. He was a farmer and businessman, and in the early 1730s he became an interpreter and mediator between Pennsylvania officials and the Haudenosaunee. From 1742 to 1744 he served as governor variously of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Raised a Lutheran, he remained a religious man all his life. For a time he was a member of the monastic Seventh Day Baptist community of Conrad Beissel, but eventually returned to the Lutheran Church.¹⁴ For all his interest in and involvement with the Haudenosaunee, Weiser makes no comment on the meaning of the Covenant Chain. This is especially surprising of Weiser given his devotion to the religious life. In his journal of 1748 Weiser recounts addresses in which Haudenosaunee speakers referred to the covenant and to the Chain of Friendship

¹⁴ For a lengthy and detailed discussion of Weiser's religious life see Paul A. W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*. —According to Wallace, Weiser lived something of a tortured life when it came to matters of religion. "After baptism [by Count Beissel], Conrad Weiser found himself on the horns of a dilemma. As a follower of Beissel and Jacob Böhme, he tried to live in the realm of the spirit, and to this end grew a long beard and fasted the flesh off his bones until his friends hardly recognized him. But as a husband, father, and Indian interpreter he had duties of a worldly nature that he could not ignore" (P.A.W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, 60). This internal conflict plagued Weiser all his life.

between themselves and the English, but he does not discuss the meaning of this covenant.¹⁵

Weiser's mysticism and his strained relations with both established churches and the different Christian sects with which he came into contact, have been widely discussed, most recently by Elizabeth Lewis Pardoe in her article, "The Many Worlds of Conrad Weiser: Mystic Diplomat".¹⁶ According to Pardoe, Weiser's mysticism served him well in his role as interpreter and diplomat. Indeed, he interpreted the religious traditions of the Haudenosaunee through the eyes of mysticism. In a letter to Thomas Lee, Weiser writes the following:

If by the Word Religion, People mean an Assent to certain Creeds, or the Observance of a Sett of religious Duties, as appointed Prayers, Singing, Preaching, Baptism, etc., or even heathenish Worship, then it may be said, the Five Nations, nor their Neighbors, have no Religion. But if by Religion we mean an Attraction of the Soul to God, or an Union of the Soul with God, from which proceeds a Confidence in, and Hunger after, the Knowledge of him, then these People must be allowed to have some Religion amongst them, notwithstanding their sometime savage Deportment: For we find amongst them some Traces of a Confidence in God alone; and even sometimes (though but seldom) a vocal Calling upon him.¹⁷

According to Wallace, Weiser may have seen the councils of the Haudenosaunee as "half-religious and half-political".¹⁸ Weiser seemed to understand that councils were as much

¹⁵ C. Weiser, *Early Western Travels, vol. 1: Journals of Conrad Weiser, 1748; George Croghan, 1750-1765; Christian Frederick Post, 1758; Thomas Morris, 1764*, Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. (Cleveland, OH: A.H. Clark Co., 1904).

¹⁶ *Explorations in Early American Culture* 4 (2000) 113-17

¹⁷ Quoted in P. A. W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, 202.

¹⁸ P. A. W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser*, 249.

about establishing relations as about negotiating agreements.

Colden, the other colonial official involved in diplomatic negotiations with the Haudenosaunee, frequently mentions covenant, the covenant chain and the Silver Covenant Chain; but again, he offers no comment on the meaning and interpretation of these terms. In fact, his writings abound with references to covenant and covenants. His use of these terms falls into three general categories. 1) His letters and papers include documents wherein he and others entered into landowning and other partnerships; the partners made 'Covenant Promises' and formal, legal agreements with one another concerning financial arrangements and related obligations.¹⁹ 2) The word 'covenant', in a more strictly theological sense, also appears in various pieces of personal correspondence; family members speak of the "blessings of the New Covenant", of the "covenant of grace", and of God's everlasting covenant through Jesus Christ.²⁰ 3) By far the greatest number of references to covenants are to those with the Five Nations and to the Covenant Chain. These appear not only in his letters and papers, but also in his two volume *History of the Five Nations*, with references to 'covenant', the 'covenant chain', the 'Silver Chain', the 'chain of friendship' and the 'iron chain'. In none of these references does Colden discuss or interpret the chain or the covenant to which he refers; all are made as *verbatim* accounts or summarized versions of addresses given by the Haudenosaunee or by British colonial officials. Thus, in the writings of both Weiser and Colden references to the Covenant Chain appear only as in-text accounts of different speeches and addresses.

¹⁹ C. Colden, *Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, (New York: Williams-Barker Co, 1904), vol. 2: 9-14.

²⁰ C. Colden, *Letters and Papers*, (1937), vol. 8:59 & 67

The use of the word ‘covenant’ in Colden’s writings is especially noteworthy because it seemed to be so much a part of his daily vocabulary and thinking. Like his contemporaries, Colden regularly thought and spoke of relationships, agreements and religious convictions in terms of covenant. Covenant was the framework within which he, his confreres and his family established and maintained bonds, be they religious or what we now call ‘secular’, in nature. The use of the word ‘covenant’ was likely so commonplace it required no explanation; this may explain why Europeans offered little discussion of covenant in general, and of the Covenant Chain in particular. From the perspective of people such as Weiser and Colden, the Covenant Chain was an apt, if unusual, application of the covenant idea.

6.2 Haudenosaunee Reflections on the Covenant Chain

The single most important source for the theological and philosophical meaning and interpretation of the Covenant Chain comes from the Haudenosaunee themselves. For them the Covenant Chain is an oral history born of and structured on oral memory. The three citations at the beginning of this chapter demonstrate the central idea of memory and its historic role in the continuing preservation of the Covenant Chain as both an ongoing historical entity and as a means by which relationships are sustained over time. This oral history and oral memory are preserved for us in written records. How we approach, address and utilize these written records reflects the degree to which we are really willing to consider Haudenosaunee ways of thinking on the Covenant Chain. Some observations by Paul Ricoeur provide a starting point for this process. He encourages the reader to move from explanation to interpretation. In his essay, “What is a Text? Explanation and

Understanding”,²¹ Ricoeur observes that in *explaining* a text we bring out its structure; he refers to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss on ‘mythemes’ as an example of the important role structural explanation plays in hermeneutics. To explain a text, does not mean that the text is being interpreted, says Ricoeur. In *interpreting* a text, he continues, we follow the *sens*—the direction or the path—of thought open to us; “reading becomes like speech”, and the text “now has a meaning”—in fact it “seeks to place us in its meaning”. It is now alive. When the Europeans used the expression ‘covenant chain’ they were speaking out of a complex context. When the Haudenosaunee used the phrase ‘covenant chain’ they were also speaking out of a complex context. Thanks to the work of many historians we have a pretty fair idea of the complex context out of which the Europeans spoke. Now, with the help of Haudenosaunee speakers both past and present, we can begin to follow the *sens* of the Covenant Chain as an oral history. As Ricoeur says, reading becomes like speech. Let us begin with a discussion of the second word in the expression—‘chain’.

6.3 Arms Linked Together and the Chain

The word ‘chain’ has several meanings, and according to the OED it is first and foremost “a connected series of links (of metal or other material) passing through each other, or otherwise jointed together, so as to move on each other more or less freely, and thus form a strong but flexible ligament or string”. The English word ‘chain’ comes from the old French *chaine* or *chaeine* which in turn comes from the Latin *catena*, meaning a closely linked series. Figuratively, a chain is “a binding or restraining force”, and—although now

²¹ In John B. Thompson, ed. & trans. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 159 & 161.

obsolete—a chain at one time also meant “a bond of union or sympathy”. A chain is related to things linear—a “continuous linear series of material objects”—such as mountains or people. To chain something is “to bind, fasten, and secure”. Figuratively, to chain something or someone is, among other things, to “fetter, confine or restrain”. In the English language, when employed figuratively, the word ‘chain’ both as a noun and a verb often, though not always, has negative connotations.

Much, less work has been dedicated to studying the etymology of chain in Iroquoian languages. “Literally translated from its roots the word for chain in Iroquois languages means something like *arms linked together*. Cayuga example *teHonane:tosho:t* they have joined hands/arms”(Glossary, ‘chain’). The idea of linking runs through Haudenosaunee society, says Mary Druke, and can be found in kinship and clan ties, marriage ties, ties between leaders and their communities and ties among nations; ties were also established between human persons and persons of the other-than-human class.²² The importance of creating such ties cannot be underestimated. As Druke says: “On a most basic level, humans who did not establish and maintain relationships—persons who had no friends, kin, or alliances—faced grim prospects”.²³ The actual linking of arms is seen explicitly, in the Circle Wampum and in councils such as the one in Trois-Rivières in 1645 when Kiotseaeton linked arms with French and Algonquin delegates (see #2.7). The imagery evoked by arms linked together is, quite strikingly, that of a chain. Thus the metaphor of *arms linked together* is a kind of founding metaphor on which the metaphors of the rope, the iron chain and the covenant chain are built. In the context of Haudenosaunee thought, the figurative

²² M. Druke, “Linking Arms,” *passim*

²³ M. Druke, “Linking Arms,” 32.

use of arms linked together and the chain is almost always in a positive sense. Their use as metaphors served to affirm relationships.

Jennings has noted that first use of the expression ‘covenant chain’ came in 1677 during councils held under the auspices of Edmund Andros. In fact, this pairing of the words ‘covenant’ and ‘chain’ may have been completely new in the history of the English language. Both words appear in conjunction with other words—chain plate, chain chest, chain-hook and covenant blessings, covenant charter and covenant-breaker—but the first mention of ‘covenant chain’ seems to be in colonial documents relating the history of northeastern North America. Moreover, this may very well be the only context in which the expression has appeared; in other words, ‘covenant chain’ did not become generalized in the English language.

In the English language, one concept which both chain and covenant share in common is that of ‘bond’. English language versions of the Old Testament translate the Hebrew word *berit* into covenant, and *berit* “seems to have the root meaning of ‘bond, fetter,’ indicating a binding relationship”.²⁴ Thus bond is implicit in covenant: it is implicit also in arms linked together: when people linked arms they were creating bonds with one another. Given this particular similarity, the expression ‘covenant chain’ might appear to be redundant. In the context of the present discussion, however, the chain is best seen in terms of historical developments.

Historians seem to agree that in general the chain began as a rope, then became iron,

²⁴ *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 1993 ed. s.v. “Covenant,” 138-39. —See #4.1.

and finally silver. Jennings describes the changes as a “progression”,²⁵ while Haan sees these and other changes as a “shift in emphasis” and as an emerging pattern.²⁶ Haan discusses the various chains in relation to linked arms, but Jennings does not. Haan’s idea of the chain as an emerging pattern seems fairly close to Doxtator’s theory of history as an additive process (see #5.1). This means the following: the oral tradition surrounding the chain points to a carefully constructed continuity which incorporates or subsumes the structures of the past. According to Doxtator, in the process of incorporating past structures, no level of organization disappears. In other words, throughout the entire era of the Covenant Chain councils Haudenosaunee speakers continued to link arms with other parties, and when they polished the Silver Covenant Chain, they continued to speak of the rope and/or the iron chain. For example, in 1694 an Onondaga speaker described the chain as follows:

In the days of old when the Christians came first into this river we made a covenant with them first with the bark of a tree, afterwards it was renewed with a twisted withe, but in processe of time, least it should decay and rott the Covenant was fastened with a chain of iron which ever since has been called the Covenant Chain and the end of it was first made fast at Onnondage which is the Center of the five Nations.²⁷

We do not get the sense here that the iron chain displaced or even replaced the bark of a tree and the twisted withe. Rather, as the covenant was renewed, the bond between the Christians and the Haudenosaunee was strengthened.

²⁵ The quote reads as follows: “Iroquois traditions, repeatedly recited and recorded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, affirm a progression of alliance with the Dutch from rope to iron chain”. (F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 55.)

²⁶ R.L. Haan, “Covenant and Consensus,” 52 & 43.

²⁷ Onondaga speaker, treaty minutes, August 15, 1694, Penn Papers, Indian Affairs, mss., 1:14; in F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 55, n. 26

Canassatego's famous 1744 Lancaster address in which he recounted the chain's history has been quoted in the secondary literature many times and bears quoting here once again:

It is true that above One Hundred Years ago the Dutch came here in a Ship, and brought with them several Goods; such as Awls, Knives, Hatchets, guns, and many other Particulars, which they gave us; and when they had taught us how to use their Things, and we saw what sort of People they were, we were so well pleased with them, that we tied their Ship to the Bushes on the Shore; and afterwards, liking them still better the longer they staid with us, and thinking the Bushes too slender, we removed the Rope, and tied it to the Trees; and as the Trees were liable to be blown down by high Winds, or to decay of themselves, we, from the Affection we bore them, again removed the Rope, and tied it to a strong and big Rock (here the Interpreter said, They mean the Oneida Country) and not content with this, for its further Security we removed the Rope to the big Mountain (here the Interpreter says they mean the Onondaga Country) and there we tied it very fast, and roll'd Wampum about it, and, to make it still more secure, we stood upon the Wampum, and sat down upon it, to defend it, and to prevent any Hurt coming to it, and did our best Endeavours that it might remain uninjured forever. During all this Time, the New-comers, the Dutch, acknowledged our Right to the Lands, and sollicitated us, from Time to Time, to grant them Parts of our Country, and to enter into League and Covenant with us, and become one People with us.

After this the English came into the Country, and, as we were told, became one People with Dutch. About two Years after the Arrival of the English, an English Governor came to Albany, and finding what great Friendship subsisted between us and the Dutch, he approved it mightily, and desired to make as strong a league, and to be upon as good Terms with us as the Dutch were, with whom he was united, and to become one People with us: And by his further Care in looking into what had passed between us, he found that the Rope which tied the Ship to the great Mountain was only fastened with Wampum, which was liable to break and rot, and to perish in a course of Years; he therefore told us, he would give us a Silver chain, which would be much stronger, and would last for ever. This we accepted,

and fastened the Ship with it, and it has lasted ever since.²⁸

In this passage, the material form of the chain has a bearing on the strength of the relationship between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans. Jennings writes that “the series indicates varying degrees of relations starting with a rope, being strengthened by a chain of iron, made suddenly splendid as a chain of silver, and even occasionally transformed into a chain of gold”.²⁹ As Jennings sees it, a “rope referred to an alliance that was less strong in some manner than a chain” (Glossary, ‘chain’). In terms of the actual material, the rope evidently referred to the bow lines on European ships, while the iron and silver chains probably originated in European trade goods.³⁰ In council oratory all three were employed in the metaphorical sense; no actual ropes or chains were exchanged. Instead, chains were represented on wampum belts through the use of highly stylized designs and human figures with arms linked together. “There never was any one single Covenant Chain Wampum belt which would be displayed whenever the Chain was symbolically polished by one side or the other”, writes Michelson.³¹ “There must have been dozens in colonial times because the records contain references to Covenant belts which varied considerably as far as dimensions and patterns were concerned”. A typical belt, Michelson estimates, “was probably several

²⁸ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, Appendix, 104-5. —Canassatego was an Onondaga sachem.

²⁹ F. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 55. —For example, in 1682 an Oneida speaker said: “Wee do make the Covenant Chain fast & clear like Gold wherein Corleir & they of Maryland and Virginia & wee are linked & shall keep inviolable. Do giue one Bever”. (“The Propositions of the Hon Coll. Henry Coursey & Coll. Philemon Lloyd Agents for Maryland,” NYCD 3:327.)

³⁰ Several scholars note that Native people did not have rope, iron or silver, prior to contact with the Europeans. This may be an accurate observation from an archeological point of view, but as concerns rope, the Haudenosaunee did use sinew or gut for weaving wampum belts. As for silver, it was widely used among Native South and North Americans, though it may not have reached the Northeast by the time of contact.

³¹ G. Michelson, “Covenant Chain in Colonial History,” 124.

feet long, between six and twenty rows wide, and had a number of human figures or squares and/or diamonds which were connected by a center line or multiple links”.³²

If the material from which the chain was made reflected the strength of relations between the Haudenosaunee and different European nations, so too did that to which it was fastened. Once again, the idea of durability comes to the fore. In looking once again at Canassatego’s speech we move from bushes, to trees, to a big Rock, to a big Mountain. All are features of the landscape, each is more solid than the previous. The reference to bushes and trees seems logical enough given the passage as a whole. In order to demonstrate how relations with the Dutch commenced, Canasseatego began with the least sturdy mooring. As relations strengthened, so did that to which the ship was moored. The reference to bushes can be interpreted in other ways as well. For example, ‘chain’ refers in diplomatic terms to “negotiations carried out informally away from the council fire were said to be done *in the bushes*. The phrase might be used for commonly accepted private consultations for expediting the flow of formal business”(Glossary, ‘bushes’). Perhaps, then, relations with the Dutch began in an informal, private way; both oral tradition and the documentary evidence indicates this may indeed have been the case.³³ The reference to bushes may also have had cosmological significance. In the Thanksgiving Address, bushes, along with trees, are thanked for their gifts to humankind.

³² G. Michelson, “Covenant Chain in Colonial History,” 125.

³³ For a discussion on informal, formal and linguistic communication between Native people and the Dutch see Lois M. Feister, “Linguistic Communication Between the Dutch and Indians in New Netherlands, 1609-1664”: *Ethnohistory* 20/1 (1973) 25-38. For a discussion of informal relations between the Mohawk and the Dutch trader Jacques or Jacob Eelckens, see D. Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 87-89 & 93. Jacques came to be thought of somewhat affectionately by the Mohawks as ‘Governor’, though he never served officially in that post.

In Haudenosaunee council oratory, references to trees abound. In this instance, the tree, though stronger and more firmly rooted than bushes, is nonetheless still subject to the forces of nature and to decay, and so a rope was tied to a big Rock and then to a big Mountain. As the text indicates, these are references to specific places. Oneida, the settlement, is the place of the standing stone. The Oneida call themselves Oneyote?aka or people of the Standing Stone. Onondaga, the settlement, is the place of the mountain or the hill. The Onondaga, Onota?keka, are the people of the mountain. Onondaga is also the centre of the Confederacy. Thus, the rope was not only tied to the places, but to the people as well, suggesting a further strengthening of the relationship between the Haudenosaunee and, in this instance, the Dutch. Finally, said Canassatego, with the English the ship was fastened with wampum—which still could break—and then with a silver chain.

While ‘linked arms’ could and evidently was used interchangeably with ‘chain’, its meaning was neither synonymous with, nor restricted to the chain, be it of rope, iron or silver. In other words, the basic aspects of ‘linked arms’ range over a broader semantic field than the chain. Arms linked together comes from deep within Haudenosaunee culture, history and thinking, and ‘chain’ only partially expresses the multiple meanings of linked arms. For example, the idea of linking arms is organic in the sense that two living things are joined together and like all living things, they can break apart. Both Canassatego and the speaker in 1694 seemed to recognize the organic nature of the rope and the bushes and trees to which it was tied: they could easily decay. Canassatego also felt the wampum belt was subject to rot. Perhaps he was referring to the gut or sinew with which wampum beads are strung together. Other orators, including the speaker of 1694, spoke of an iron chain: it could rust and thus also decay. A chain made of silver on the other hand, was sure to be long

lasting, especially if it was kept in a high state of polish. This transition from organic materials (a rope tied to bushes and trees) to inorganic substances (iron and silver chains tied to rocks and mountains) reflects a strengthening of relations.

If over time 'linked arms' and 'chain' were used interchangeably, this is no surprise. In terms of cross-cultural communication, the chain was sufficient to convey a concept fundamental to Haudenosaunee thinking, that of renewal. As historians have noted, to metaphorically 'polish the chain' was to renew relations. For anthropologist Michael Foster, the "theme of renewal runs deep in the Iroquoian world view".³⁴ He continues:

We see this in the emphasis in council protocol upon clearing obstructions from the path, polishing the covenant chain, building up the council fire, and the procedures at the Wood's Edge. The metaphors of the fire, the path and the chain reveal a set towards the alliance which recognizes a degree of entropy in the system. In the Iroquoian view the alliance was naturally in a state of constant deterioration and in need of attention.

The whole idea of renewal reached its zenith when the Silver Covenant Chain was polished; but it can also be seen in repeated references to the rope and the iron chain. The very process of recounting the history of relations between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans was itself a form of renewal. "Abstractly", wrote Jennings in 1971, "the Chain was a unique institution created by contract for eliminating violence and reducing conflict between Indians and Englishmen within specified and bounded territories".³⁵ Jennings is right in thinking that the chain helped eliminate violence and reduce conflict; but neither the chain nor arms linked together can or should be thought of solely in terms of a contract. In other words, the

³⁴ M.K. Foster, "The Function of Wampum," 110.

³⁵ F. Jennings, "Constitutional Evolution," 89.

specificity of an agreement did not necessarily imply only or just a contractual obligation.

The whole idea of arms linked together takes on added meaning when seen in the context of the Condolence. The full Condolence for raising up a new chief is one of the most magnificent ceremonial occasions celebrated by the Haudenosaunee. Just a few years ago, in May of 2000, the Mohawks condoled a chief who would bear one of the original Confederacy titles, Sharenhowaneh. This was the first full Condolence for the Mohawk Nation in over thirty-five years; as many as a thousand people attended. According to press accounts, the ceremony was both impressive and moving. Kenneth Deer, editor of Kahnawake's weekly newspaper *The Eastern Door* reflected on the meaning of The Condolence for the Haudenosaunee today and wrote: the "gathering of so many people from all the Nations has led to renewed friendships and new relations [...] There were good feelings all around"; he urged his readers to "capitalize on the momentum this event has created".³⁶

Ross Montour, who attended the ceremony and wrote a report on it, wondered if he would ever see such an event again in his lifetime. He recounted how men and women, adults and children, Chiefs and Clan mothers, Elder Brothers and Younger Brothers—all dressed in full regalia—came through the forest, and at the edge of the wood they greeted one another around the fire. "In the chant the singer speaks in terms of dusting off of the soil and troubles of the journey, saying, 'And we shall rub each other down'". Montour considered the moment carefully: "Watching this, one thinks of the troubles of this journey, in this time". He asked himself: "What are those threats facing us now? Is it the divisions

³⁶ K. Deer, "Condolence still leaves time for change," editorial. *The Eastern Door* 9 (May 12, 2000) 16

attacking from within? Is it the loss of so much knowledge?" The clear-minded then spoke the first three words of the condolence to the bereaved. Montour listened as the Elder Brothers repeated the words their ancestors had recited for generations and generations before them, and as the travellers prepared to enter the longhouse, he again considered the moment carefully: "Whatever it means to each one present, whatever each carried in his or her mind, of this much I am certain; we were all meant to be here on this ancient ground". As some five hundred people processed into the longhouse, a singer chanted the Roll Call of the Chiefs. The Hai Hai's began and continued for a full hour. "Delivered in one long, continuous note, the sounds seemed to enter into me, resonating deeply", recalled Montour. "It strikes at the core of the spirit". The Younger Brothers sang the Six Songs, and then a speaker delivered the remaining twelve strings of wampum along with the words which accompany them. The Clan mothers brought forth the candidate, Brian Skidders, and he was condoled. "All of this was stirring to behold", wrote Montour. It was "a moment which could have been snatched from the pages of history and historic in its relevance".³⁷

Over three hundred and fifty five years ago when Mohawk, Wendat, Algonquin and French delegates gathered in council, were thoughts of this kind going through everyone's mind as Kiotseacton took their arms and spoke the words of Condolence? No chief was raised up at that council, but the text indicates that the delegates considered at length the difficulties they faced and the hope they carried away with them when the council finally concluded. In September, during the second meeting of that 1645 council, a Mohawk speaker again linked arms with the delegates. Vimont wrote the following:

³⁷ R. Montour, "The Gathering of the Five: Condolence at Akwesasne": *The Eastern Door* 9 (May 12, 2000) 16.

When this discourse was ended, the Hiroquois began to sing and to dance. He took a Frenchman on one side, an Algonquin and a Huron on the other; and, holding one another by the arms, they danced in time, and sang in a loud voice a song of peace which they uttered from the depths of their chests. (*JRAD* 27:289)

Did the sounds of the peace song resonate deeply within them? Did the song strike at the core of the spirit? Did the words spoken address the troubles of their journey, in their time? The threats they all faced? Is this what linking arms really means? Is this the kind of emotional and intellectual energy that, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, went into renewing the Covenant Chain?

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING REMARKS

7.1 Two Sides and the Centre

In her study of the Iroquois clans in the nineteenth century, Deborah Doxtator dedicates a considerable amount of time to a discussion of ‘sides’ and ‘centres’. She sees all nineteenth century Haudenosaunee social institutions as having within them two balanced elements or sides (see #1.7). What has not been discussed thus far is her idea of the centre. To review briefly, Doxtator notes that the “spatial concept of dividing things into two parts is related to the idea of ‘the middle of things’ or the center”.¹ She continues: “Just as the point between the two sides or parts of the day has significance, so Rotinonhsyonni thought marks the point where two different types of ‘places’ meet”; and she gives the example of condolence rituals wherein “certain songs and speeches must be performed at ‘the wood’s edge’ signifying the transition from forest to settlement clearing”. In this instance ‘the wood’s edge’ is the middle or the center. Quoting Mircea Eliade, Doxtator describes this centre as ‘the zone of absolute reality’. “All North American indigenous oral traditions are concerned”, she writes, “with the place of creation from which all subsequent actions ‘reverberate’. This place forms the ‘center’ and what Mircea Eliade terms ‘the zone of absolute reality’ to which all things are connected”.² As concerns time, place and the center she adds that time “is focused and grounded in this spatial ‘center’ or ‘clearing’ so that what occurs in continual cycles emanates from that center like ripples from a stone thrown in the

¹ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 52

² D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 53

middle of a pond". She also speaks of moving centres, for example, when the Six Nations and Tyendinaga reserves were created in the early nineteenth century, the clearing or the centre shifted: "The Rotinohsyonni transplant themselves to another place or center after the American Revolution, from New York state to the north shore of Lake Ontario".

In order to place both the clans and the idea of the centre within the context of Haudenosaunee intellectual traditions, Doxtator recounts the story describing how the clans first began. According to Haudenosaunee cosmology, when the mysterious young man Ho'nigo'heowa'nen or 'His Mind is Great' introduced the idea of the clans, he divided them into two groups and in so doing created a 'middle' line around which the people could "focus their minds".³ In the story itself, that middle line is a river: half the people are on one side of the river; half are on the other side. Conceptually, the middle line is "the moieties of clans". Why does this middle line or centre exist? Why is it important? What purpose does it serve? As we know, reciprocal relationships are fundamental to Haudenosaunee philosophy and, says Doxtator, when Ho'nigo'heowa'nen divided "the clans into two groups he created another means by which they can create reciprocal relationships".⁴ This 'middle line', Doxtator continues, "both join[s] people together into a whole and yet keep[s] them spatially distinct and separate from each other".

³ D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 60.

⁴ D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 60. —Her discussion here is akin to the idea of boundaries. A boundary or a border separates two things, but it also joins them together: "Rotinohsyonni intellectual traditions are rooted in place, cycles of movement in two 'directions' about a center, and the flexible, incorporating nature of social institutions". This means relationships are perceived not on the "hierarchical ranking of parts", but "on successfully integrating the parts into the complete whole using spatial considerations such as the center as dividing points between two 'sides'". (D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 63-64.)

The idea that the ‘middle line’ is a means by which reciprocal relationships can be created is key to understanding the meaning of the Covenant Chain from the perspective of the Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee and the Europeans—be they Dutch, French, or English—together form the two sides. The Covenant Chain or the metaphor of linked arms is the middle line or the centre which both joins them together and yet keeps them spatially distinct and separate. The Chain of Friendship wampum belt is a very fine visual expression of this idea. Thus the Covenant Chain became the means by which reciprocal relationships between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans were created. In polishing the Chain, this reciprocal relationship was renewed. Thus the Covenant Chain is very much in keeping with the “idea of balance between two spatially differentiated groups”.⁵ For the Haudenosaunee, maintaining this balance with Europeans was difficult—the playing ground was not at all level. This in part helps to explain why the Covenant Chain needed to be polished, repolished, and polished yet again.

Doxtator’s discussion of what the clans are and what they mean is also helpful in understanding the meaning of the Covenant Chain. Rather than think of the clans in terms of structure, she suggests they are “more easily understood as a pattern of activity”⁶: reciprocal relationships are part of this pattern of activity, and the clans themselves are part of the broader additive cycle. When the Four Ceremonies were added, nothing was taken away or displaced (see #5.1). Similarly with the clans; when they were created they displaced nothing. “In Rotinohsyonni thought, place and relationship to space are of fundamental importance”, she writes. “They underlie identity and concepts of additive

⁵ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 70.

⁶ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 62.

social change. These changes are expressed with the basic metaphor of the family made up of two sides extended outward to include larger and larger groups of people". These larger and larger groups include the clans, the community and the many different communities. "From this perspective the expression of the idea of reciprocal two-sided relationship among human beings acquired larger and larger spatial structures of social meaning the more it continues, since carried to its logical conclusion it inevitably involves increasing numbers of people living in further and further places."⁷

After the arrival of the Europeans, the Haudenosaunee sought the means to establish reciprocal relationships with people beyond the family, the clan, the community and even the Onkwehonwe themselves. The Covenant Chain facilitated this process. The Covenant Chain is also in keeping with Haudenosaunee intellectual traditions for another reason. It did not repudiate previous ideas, it did not replace or displace any other social institution. It was added on and, as Doxtator says of all such institutions, it subsumed all within the next development.⁸ I have already noted that the rope, the iron chain and the Silver Covenant Chain themselves were part of an additive process. But in a much more fundamental way the Covenant Chain and its antecedents incorporated and retained previous patterns, one of the most important being the idea of reciprocal relationships. Also, when colonial officials referred to or addressed an ambassador of the Confederacy by clan names such as 'Wolf' or 'Bear', the reference had far reaching implications. Treaties, which were external matters usually negotiated in the forest, affected internal matters and the clearing as well.⁹ Thus

⁷ D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 58.

⁸ D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 61.

⁹ D. Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 76.

councils were both outward looking and inward looking.¹⁰

Doxtator also addresses the question of metaphor. That the Haudenosaunee used metaphors is well known, she says; but the “process of how metaphors actually function to convey meaning”, is much less understood.¹¹ “Clans are based on the metaphor of the family but this metaphor has many other related expressions” or parallel meanings. Familial metaphors “incorporate and repeat themselves in the organization of clans and larger and larger groups of people such as moieties, nations and the Confederacy of Nations.”¹² The multiple meanings of familial metaphors also extended to councils and to the two sides of the fire. Thus the metaphor itself becomes a ‘middle line’ or a centre which helps to establish a balance between two sides.

In his seminal study on the Great Lakes region during the era of colonial expansion, historian Richard White speaks of the ‘middle ground’—the point at which different European powers and various nations of Native people arrived “at some common conception of suitable ways of acting”.¹³ This middle ground “involved a process of mutual invention” which “passed through various stages”.¹⁴ The middle ground is in effect a common ground and in their attempts to establish it, each side applied “its own cultural expectations to a new context”. Cultures often changed in the process.¹⁵ In the *pays d’en haut*, says White, the

¹⁰ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 77.

¹¹ D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 62.

¹² D. Doxtator, “What Happened to the Clans,” 63.

¹³ R. White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50

¹⁴ R. White, *The Middle Ground*, 51.

¹⁵ R. White, *The Middle Ground*, 52.

middle ground “existed on two distinct levels. It was both a product of everyday life and a product of formal diplomatic relations between distinct peoples”.¹⁶ In diplomatic councils particularly “the middle ground was a realm of constant invention, which was just as constantly presented as convention. Under the new conventions, new purposes arose, and so the cycle continued”.¹⁷ In order to succeed, White adds, “those who operated on the middle ground had, of necessity, to attempt to understand the world and the reasoning of others and to assimilate enough of that reasoning to put it to their own purposes”.

White’s evolutionary view is both perceptive and interesting, and at first glance it looks as if the Covenant Chain is a middle ground. The two-word expression itself appears to be the product of two religious/cultural traditions. In addition, White’s ‘middle ground’ seems to be analogous to Doxtator’s ‘middle line’. A basic difference exists between the two, however: whereas, Doxtator’s middle line is understood to be foundational to all Haudenosaunee institutions, White’s middle ground is a somewhat vague place involving struggle and possibly even contrivance rather than reciprocal relationships. The Haudenosaunee, as a matter of course if not routine, consciously looked to create a middle line so that reciprocal relationships could be established. Doxtator’s ‘middle line’ also fits well with *kaionni*. Cuoq described *kaionni*, when used metaphorically, to mean a diplomatic wampum belt (see #2.1). The wampum belt, which is long and straight like *kaionni*, a canal, is a straight, wide line. When two parties exchange wampum belts, the belts themselves become a middle line and, to repeat yet again, help create reciprocal relationships.

¹⁶ R. White, *The Middle Ground*, 53.

¹⁷ R. White, *The Middle Ground*, 52.

7.2 Key Concepts and the Covenant Chain

What, then, are some of the key concepts associated with the Covenant Chain? The idea of reciprocal relationships and of renewal come immediately to mind. The ideas of complementarity and of balance between two sides are also present, as are those of two spatially differentiated groups and the middle line or centre. We also see the idea of kinship and linked arms and the ideal of agreement. With the Silver Covenant Chain we see the ideas of lightness, whiteness and brightness—“We are now come to make the Chain clear and bright”.¹⁸ The Silver Covenant Chain is also associated with strength—it is much stronger than the rope,¹⁹ with durability—“it can neither rust nor be broken”,²⁰ with endurance—“which is of so long standing may be preserv’d bright and unhurt”,²¹ and with longevity—“[we] wish it may continue as long as the Sun and Moon give light”.²² It has to do with friendship—“with which our Friendship is locked fast”.²³ The idea of polishing the chain is associated with renewal and reciprocity. It is associated with steadfastness and inviolability—“It was what we believed before hand, and therefore we never let slip the chain of friendship, but held it fast, on our side, and it has never dropt out of our hands”.²⁴ It is associated with agreement, trust and truth—“we are desirous to live with you, our

¹⁸ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 118.

¹⁹ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 140.

²⁰ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 144.

²¹ C. Weiser, *Early Western Travels*, 34.

²² C. Weiser, *Early Western Travels*, 116.

²³ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 118.

²⁴ C. Weiser, *Early Western Travels*, 262.

Brethren, according to the old Chain of Friendship, to settle all these Matters fairly and honestly”.²⁵

All the chains—the rope, the iron chain and the Covenant Chain—are associated with history and with oral memory. When speakers discussed the chain and presented wampum belts, they recounted its history. They did so in the same manner as their ancestors had done before them and in so doing they kept this history fresh in their memories for the ‘rising faces’ of those yet to come.

7.3 A Point of Clarification

In his discussion on “The Constitutional Evolution of the Covenant Chain”, Francis Jennings points out that the words ‘covenant’ and ‘chain’ appear separately in the mid-seventeenth century documents, but that “the first reference [...] to the two words together, with their implication of an interrelated system of alliances, occurs in 1677 at the end of two treaties negotiated under the auspices and control of Governor Andros”.²⁶ Jennings goes on to say that mid-seventeenth century references to a chain and to covenant refer to “an *ad hoc* arrangement of convenience between two parties”, and he cites as an example, an address by a Mohawk speaker to Dutch delegates on September 6, 1659:

The Dutch [...] say we are brothers and are joined together with chains, but that lasts only as long as we have beavers. After that we are no longer thought of, but much will depend upon it when we shall need each other (NYCD 13:109).

²⁵ C. Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, 164.

²⁶ F. Jennings, “Constitutional Evolution,” 90.

Jennings may in fact have overstated the case. An alternate interpretation of this passage suggests that while the Dutch saw the chain as an arrangement of convenience, the Mohawks thought of it in terms of a long lasting relationship. The next portion of the speaker's address reads as follows: "The alliance made in the country, who can break it? Let us at all times keep together what has been made one" (NYCD 13:109). The speaker, for his part, seems to take a somewhat fatalistic view of Dutch attitudes. Is he employing irony to make his point? Jennings also fails to mention the larger context in which this critique was made. The Dutch, as it turns out, responded with dispatch to the speaker's comments. Within days, seventeen Dutch delegates travelled to Kahnawake to make amends. Their address of September 24, 1659 reads in part as follows:

Brothers it is now sixteen years ago that we made our first treaty of friendship and brotherhood with an Iron chain and which until now has not been broken either by us or our brothers and we have no fear that it will be broken by either side, so that we shall not speak of that any more, but shall be and remain as if we had lain under one heart".²⁷

This particular passage is almost always cited by historians as noteworthy for two reasons: It is the first mention in the literature of the 'iron chain', and it is also a reference to the very first formal treaty of friendship between the Haudenosaunee and Europeans, that is, the Dutch, in either 1642 or 1643.²⁸ In the context of the above discussion, however, these two passages also demonstrate that the chain was something more than an *ad hoc* arrangement of convenience.

²⁷ G. Michelson, "Covenant Chain in Colonial History," 120.

²⁸ F. Jennings says 1643, but Michelson cites sources which indicate the council took place in 1642. The council went unrecorded, but Arent Van Corlaer, a Dutch colonist, trader, and director of Rensselaerswyck, referred to it in a letter of June, 1643. (G. Michelson, "Covenant Chain in Colonial History," 119.)

In any event, contrary to accepted wisdom, the council of September 24, 1659 was *not* the first mention of the iron chain.²⁹ In 1656 and again in 1658 the Mohawks spoke of the iron chain in councils with the French. In his *Relation* of 1656-1657 Paul Le Jeune, then Superior of the mission in New France, included Father Simon Le Moyne's account of an address given by three Mohawk 'captains' to the 'governor' of Trois-Rivières on or around April 25, 1656. At the time, the Mohawks were threatening to attack the Hurons. "Their Chief showed a great collar of Porcelain beads", writes Le Moyne, "and said: 'Here is an iron chain, longer around than the trees that grow in our forests, which shall bind the Dutch, the French and the Agnieronnons [Mohawks] together. The thunder and lightning of heaven shall never break that chain'" (*JRAD* 43:107-109). This reference to an iron chain points to a relationship which is much more than temporary. The word 'covenant' does not appear in the text, but the orator's language most certainly points to the idea of covenant in the sense that the relationship has the qualities of reliability and durability.

This particular reference has all but escaped the notice of scholars. In "The Functions of Wampum," George Snyderman refers to it briefly saying it is an example of the "indestructibility of the metaphoric chain".³⁰ but it is not mentioned by Jennings, Richter or any of the scholars who contributed to *Iroquois Diplomacy* and *Beyond the Covenant Chain*. Exactly why this iron chain alliance has escaped the notice of Iroquoianists is not at all clear. Most scholars of the Covenant Chain have relied heavily on English-language sources produced 'south of the border'. In addition, it is a generally accepted principle that the Covenant Chain alliances were between the Iroquois Confederacy and the English. In his

²⁹ G. Michelson, "Covenant Chain in Colonial History," 120.

³⁰ *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 98/6 (December 1954) 476.

work on *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701*, published in 2001, Gilles Havard points out that while the Iroquois and the French established alliances around the Tree of Peace, the Confederacy and the English created alliances with the Covenant Chain and the Silver Covenant Chain. Also, it is a generally accepted principle that antecedents to the Covenant Chain, namely the 'rope' and 'iron chain', pointed to alliances between the Iroquois and the Dutch.³¹ These tendencies to look only at English-language sources and to presuppose that the Covenant Chain and its antecedents did not involve the French probably accounts for the lapse. Scholars have noted that in 1684 "Garangula [or Garakontié the Onondaga chief] co-opted New France into the Covenant Chain, but the French crown rejected the membership".³² Other references to the Covenant Chain in French sources can also be found. For example, in 1741 the Marquis de Beauharnois planted a Tree of Peace at Kanehsatake, *and* he also polished the Covenant Chain.³³

On February 4, 1658 the Mohawks once again made reference to the iron chain. In an address to Louis d'Ailleboust, then governor of New France, three Mohawk emissaries presented nine wampum belts of "considerable beauty". The first was to assure the French that Simon Le Moyne, called Ondesonk, who was wintering with the Mohawks, was alive and well. He "lodges in our cabins", said the speaker. With the second belt, the speaker said: "The Iroquois and the Dutch are united by a chain of iron, and their friendship cannot

³¹ See F. Jennings, D. Richter and the writings of contributors to *Iroquois Diplomacy* and *Beyond the Covenant Chain*.

³² "Descriptive Treaty Calendar," in *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 161.

³³ See L. Johnston, "Onontio, le grand arbre et la chaîne d'alliance": *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 29/2 (1999) 11-22.

be broken; this is to make Onontio enter that union".³⁴

The implications of these two references for an iron chain alliance involving the Mohawks, the Dutch and the French have yet to be analyzed by historians; they may or may not be significant for the history of the Covenant Chain. At the very least we can say that in light of these two citations, not all pre-1677 references to the chain point merely to *ad hoc* arrangements, as Jennings suggests. In addition, we can also say that relations between the French and the Haudenosaunee (or the Mohawks more specifically) were not always or only centered on the Tree of Peace, as Gilles Havard and others have suggested. If the French tended to see their alliances with the Haudenosaunee in terms of the tree metaphor, the Mohawks at one time saw their relationship with the Dutch *and* the French in terms of the iron chain metaphor. Whether or not the French understood the metaphor of the iron chain is open to question, since they made no comment on it.

³⁴ *JRAD*, 44: 207. —This journal entry was written by Simon le Moyne and is dated New Holland, March 25, 1658.

GLOSSARY

From the 'Glossary', in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, F. Jennings, W. N. Fenton, M.A. Druke, D.R. Miller, eds. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 115-124. The page number is included in the definition/description of each term.

'Bushes', 116.

Negotiations carried on informally away from the council fire were said to be done *in the bushes*. The phrase might be used for commonly accepted private consultations for expediting the flow of formal business. It could also be used to condemn illegal transactions made without the knowledge or consent of the proper authorities.

'Chain', 116.

Literally translated from its roots the word for *chain* in Iroquoian languages means something like *arms linked together*. Cayuga example: *teHonane:toshon:t* they have joined hands/arms.

A chain of friendship was any bilateral or multilateral alliance.

The *Covenant Chain* was the name of the particular confederacy founded in 1677 at Albany. According to the English, it embraced the Iroquois and their tributaries on the one side, and New York and the other English colonies on the other side. Both tributary and colonial memberships varied from time to time.

Records prior to 1677 do not record the term "Covenant Chain," but later Iroquois tradition extrapolated it into the past as a rubric over a long series of treaty relationships that had begun with a *rope* between Mohawks and the Dutch of Fort Orange. The rope apparently signified a nonaggression pact for the purposes of trade. It was converted into an *iron chain* connecting the Mohawks with all the Dutch of New Netherland in a bilateral mutual assistance alliance at about 1643. The iron chain was renewed by the English of New York in 1664, at which time it included also the "Senecas," i.e., the non-Mohawk nations of the League. In 1677 the chain became *silver* as a multilateral, bicultural confederation of the Iroquois League and certain English colonies and thus began the Covenant Chain proper. At one point Massachusetts Bay tried to gain primacy in the chain by calling its connection golden, but the effort did not succeed.

It was often said that the chain had to be *greased* or *polished* at certain regular intervals because rust or dirt had accumulated on it. The point was that alliance had to be

perpetually renewed and its terms renegotiated. Sometimes the *smell of the bear's grease would last a year*, meaning that renegotiation would be due in one year's time.

'Clouds', 117.

Trouble or threats that overshadowed interrelationships. To *dispel the clouds* was to remove the cause of trouble.

'Eating', 117-118.

All sorts of consumption.

1. Used figuratively in sentences such as "Give us muskets to eat."
2. As a symbol of unity: *to eat out of the same dish; to eat with one spoon; to each across the fire from each other*. Iroquois alliance with the French was often described as a bowl out of which beaver was eaten with one spoon.
3. *To eat someone* was to kill him in war.
4. As a threat: *we shall eat you, or we shall put you in the kettle*. In earlier years, when ritual cannibalism was practiced, the threat might be meant literally. Its later significance was more often killing or conquering.

'Kinship', 119-120.

The Iroquois used kinship terms in diplomacy. Nations were referred to and addressed by terms translated as *father, brother, cousin, nephew*, etc. Female terms such as *mother, sister*, and *niece* were not used. Precise meanings in any given situation are often difficult to pin down because the terms in most, if not all, documents of council transactions are translation of Iroquoian terms that meant different things to Europeans than to the Iroquois. Thus Count Frontenac addressed the Iroquois as *children* and required them to call him *father*, intending thereby to establish them as subjects owing him obedience. Since he was rigid on the point, they went along with the terms in order to be able to negotiate with him. But the Iroquois did not have Frontenac's conception of patriarchal authority. In their society, fathers did not have power to command their children; nobody did, although uncles on the mother's side held a great degree of authority than the father because of lineage relationship reckoned through the mother. New York Governor Sir Edmund Andros tried to emulate Frontenac's example for the same reason, but failed to make the terms stick. His successors addressed Iroquois chiefs as *brethren* and they reciprocated with the same term.

Among the Iroquois themselves, brethren were distinguished as *elder brothers* and

younger brothers. Mohawks, Onondagas, and Senecas were the elders. Oneidas, Cayugas, and (later) Tuscaroras were the younger. They were all peers, but the elders might be said to be a little more equal, at least as regarded deference behavior.

Cousin is problematic in translation because the same word in English denotes cousins on both the mother's and the father's side, whereas the Iroquois distinguish. For them, mother's brother's children and father's sister's children are cousins to ego, but mother's sister's children are father's brother's children are brothers and sisters to ego. The meaning of cousin in diplomatic discourse, like the meaning of other kinship terms, must be inferred from context. It did not mean a relationship of authority, but it was not identical in equality to *brethren*.

Uncle signified respect and implied an expectation of responsibility for nephew on the part of the uncle when they were of the same lineage.

Grandfather was a polite and proper term of ceremonial respect, but it carried no implication of required obedience. It was given especially to the Delawares who had the reputation of being the oldest tribe in the northeast. The grandfather Delawares did not reciprocate by calling the Iroquois grandchildren. Historic treaties show them using the term *uncles*. In response, the Iroquois sometimes called the Delawares *cousins*, sometimes *nephews*, as well as *grandfathers*.

It seems likely that, when kinship terminology is better understood, a student may be able to trace changing statuses by noting changing terms, but caution must be observed. Long after Shawnees and Delawares began acting independently of Iroquois policies and "advice," the *uncle/nephew* terms continued to be used in council. To determine relative statuses, therefore, kinship terms should be regarded as one factor in the whole historical context.

'Mat', 120-121.

Symbol of domesticity and hospitality.

1. Siblings *shared one mat*.
2. *To arrive at one's mat* was to arrive at one's home.
3. *A mat stained with blood* denoted a household in which a member had been killed in war. *To wipe clean* a bloodstained mat was to appease the family's grief for their loss.
4. *To prepare a mat* was to make ready to receive a person in the home.
5. *To smoke on one's mat* was to be profoundly at peace.

‘Tree’, 122.

An important symbol of peace and protection. The celestial tree stood at the center of the earth and extended its branches and roots everywhere.

1. The *everywhere tree of peace*, symbolically shown on a very old wampum belt[...], represented the Iroquois League’s extension of authority and internal peace to tributary nations. The *white roots of peace* reached out in every direction from it. Sometimes the roots were made to bleed by attacks.

2. *To plant a tree of peace* was to extend protection over some location or people, as New York’s Governor Edmund Andros planted a tree of peace at Schaghticoke for refugee Indians from New England. To plant the tree of peace *on the highest mountain* was to make a general peace. To *uproot the tree* was to start war.

3. As applied to individuals the tree metaphor was a symbol of peace chiefs. The chief, who was a protector of his people, was *raised up*. He might *fall*, for one reason or another, and possibly be replanted.

APPENDIX I

KAHIONNI or KAIONNI

From: Jean André Cuoq. *Lexique de la langue iroquoise: avec notes et appendices* (Montréal: J. Chapleau, 1882), 160-161. English translation.

This word—only secondary—is composed of KONNIS and of OHIA, an early form of KAHIONHA *de quo supra*, and signifies a *fabricated [man made or manufactured] river*, in the same way as KAIATONNI signifies a *fabricated person*. (See this word on p.129) [Here Cuoq is referring to statues and dolls.]

Kehionhonnis, *to make a river, i.e., a canal*;

Kehionhonnianions, *to make rivers, i.e., canals*;

Kahionhonni, *or kahionni, a canal*.

Kahionnhonni is employed literally and *kahionni* is employed figuratively.

To better understand the relationship between a water course and a belt or collar of wampum, it is necessary to have in mind what Canada was like at the age of discovery and long after, since the first settlers arrived.

Everywhere were thick and immense forests, with no road and no path, and no means to communicate except by the rivers, waterways and lakes, in great number, throughout the country.

At that time, it was impossible to make a journey of any distance unless by water, or in winter, by ice. Military expeditions and peace embassies could not traverse the impenetrable forests, but a quicker and more convenient way open to Native people for communication: the lakes and the rivers. Their bark canoes served as the vehicle of transport in the summer, and during the winter months, they could, with the help of snowshoes, make long runs on the snow of the frozen rivers. One can understand, then, how much the Native people of North America appreciated the waterways and their various tributaries, the ponds and large water sheets; what displeased and constrained them greatly was to be obliged to portage around the rapids. Therefore, according to their mythology, Tharonhiawakon endeavoured to make all the water courses navigable whereas his mischievous brother took pleasure in drying up the rivers and in multiplying the number of rapids. But that belongs

to the domain of legend and I will talk elsewhere about that. Coming back to *kahionni*: this object in the form of a strip or ribbon simulates a river in the Native understanding; and this they say, because of its elongated shape, as well as because of the beads of porcelain of which it is made and which the waters represent and the waves. And as a navigable water course facilitates mutual relations among nations, the *kahionni*, the river made by man, likewise is the sign of an alliance, of harmony and friendship; it serves to bring together divided minds, it is the binding feature of the hearts.

Hence the nice names given to our great diplomats of the *onkwe onwe*. [*Onkwe onwe* is an Iroquois word meaning, 'original people' or 'real people']:

Ahionwatha,	Ahionwaues,
Shakionwiio,	Thothionwashre.

Ohio or *kahionha* is in each of these names, but one should not forget to take *Ohia* always in the figurative sense.

I will explain the first name [Ahionwatha] as: "*he makes a river, he constructs a river with that,*" from the verb now rarely used *katha*, *wakaton*, *enkate*, *to make with*, v.g. *asare wakaton*, *I made it with a knife*. [Here Cuoq includes the following footnote: "Those who would not agree with my explanation may find another one in a small book published in 1881 in Salem (Mass.) under the title of: *HIAWATHA and the Iroquois Confederation* by Horatio Hale."]

The second [Skahionwiio] means: "*he strikes the river, makes it echo,*" from the verb *kwaheks*, *wakwahe*, *enkwaheke*.

The significance of the third [Ahionwaues] is "the very-beautiful river." An S at the beginning of a word augments the relevance of the qualifying adjective. One can also say that when joined to a personal name, it is equivalent to the particles of nobility such as VON in German, VAN in Dutch, DE in French. Thus, the famous name NIKORA SKAHIONWIIO can be translated as: *Monsieur Nicholas de la Bellerivière*.

Finally, the last name [Thothionwasere] can be explicated as: "he doubled the river," from the verb *TEKIASERHA*, see this word, p. 46. [The word *tekiasere* means doubled; to place one on another, crossed, participle of *tekiaserha*.]

A photographic reproduction of J-A. Cuoq's original text on KAHIONNI or KAIONNI from the web site Canadiana Online, <http://www.canadiana.org>.

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Partout ailleurs, on se sert du dérivé *kahionha*. Ainsi on dira :

Kahionhate, *il y a une rivière ;*
 Kahionhiio, *une belle rivière ;*
 Kahionhowanen, *grande rivière ;*
 Kennihahionhaa, *petite rivière, ruisseau ;*
 Kahionhakon, *au fond de la rivière ;*
 Kahionhakta, *le long de la rivière ;*
 Tsi teiotehionhaterahon, *confluent de deux rivières,*
là où deux rivières se rencontrent.

KAHIONNI vel KAIONNI

Ce mot n'est qu'une racine secondaire, il est composé de KONNIS et de OHIA, forme primitive de KAHIONHA *de quo supra*, et signifie *rivière fabriquée*, de la même manière que KAIAIONNI signifie *personne fabriquée*. (Voy. ce mot, p. 129.)

Kehionhonnis, *faire une rivière, c.-à-d. un canal ;*
 Kehionhonnianions, *faire des rivières, c.-à-d. des canaux ;*
 Kahionhonni, *vel kahionni, un canal.*
Kahionhonni s'emploie au propre et kahionni au figuré.

Pour bien saisir le rapport qui existe entre un cours d'eau et une ceinture ou collier de wampum, il faut se représenter à l'esprit ce qu'était le Canada à l'époque de sa découverte et ce qu'il a été longtemps encore depuis l'arrivée des premiers colons.

Partout d'épaisses et immenses forêts, nulle route, nul sentier, nul moyen de communication, si ce n'est celui qu'offraient les rivières, les fleuves et les lacs en si grand nombre qui partagent le pays.

Il était impossible alors de faire un voyage tant soit peu long autrement que par eau, ou sur l'eau glacée, en hiver. Les expéditions militaires pas plus que les ambassades pour la paix, ne pouvaient traverser des forêts impénétrables ; mais une voie de communication plus prompte et plus commode, restait toujours ouverte aux Indiens, celle des lacs et des fleuves. Leurs canots d'écorce leur servaient de véhicule en été, et pendant les mois de l'hiver, ils pouvaient, à l'aide de leurs raquettes, faire de longues courses sur la neige de leurs rivières glacées. On comprend dès-lors combien les Peaux-Rouges du nord de l'Amérique Septentrionale devaient apprécier les fleuves et leurs divers

affluents, les étangs et les grandes nappes d'eau ; ce qui leur déplaisait et les contrariait vivement, c'était de se voir dans les rapides, obligés de faire portage. Aussi d'après leur mythologie, Tharonhiawakon s'efforçait-il de rendre partout les cours d'eau navigables ; tandis que son méchant frère prenait plaisir à dessécher les rivières et à multiplier les cascades. Mais ceci est du domaine de la Fable, et j'en parlerai ailleurs. Revenons à *kahionni* : cet objet en forme de bande ou ruban, simule une rivière, dans l'esprit des Sauvages ; et cela, disent-ils, tant à cause de sa configuration allongée qu'à cause des grains de porcelaine dont il se compose et qui représentent les flots et les vagues. Et de même qu'un cours d'eau navigable facilite les rapports mutuels des nations, ainsi le *kahionni*, la rivière fabriquée de main d'homme, est un signe d'alliance, de concorde et d'amitié ; il sert à rallier entr'eux les esprits divisés, il est le trait-d'union des cœurs.

De là les noms si sympathiques donnés à nos grands diplomates de la race *onkwe omwe* :

* ABIONWATHA,	ABIONWAHES,
SKAHIONWIIIO,	THOTHIONWASERE.

Ohia ou kahionha, se trouve renfermé dans chacun de ces noms, mais il ne faut pas oublier de prendre toujours OHIA dans le sens figuré.

J'expliquerai le premier nom par : " *il en fait une rivière, il fabrique une rivière avec cela,*" du verbe maintenant peu usité *katha, wakaton, enkate, faire avec*, v. g. *asare wakaton, je l'ai fait avec un couteau.* *

Le second signifie " *il frappe la rivière, la fait résonner,*" du verbe *kwaheks, wakwahe, enkwaheke*.

La signification du troisième est " *la très-belle rivière.*" S'initial augmente la force des qualificatifs. On peut dire aussi qu'étant joint à un nom de personne, il équivaut aux particules de noblesse VON des Allemands, VAN des Hollandais, DE des Français. Ainsi le nom du fameux NIKORA SKAHIONWIIIO pourra se traduire par : *Monsieur Nicolas de la Bellerivière.*

Enfin le dernier nom s'explique par : " *il a doublé la rivière,*" du verbe *TEKIASERHA*, voy. ce mot, p. 46.

* Ceux à qui ne plairait pas mon explication, en trouveront une autre dans un petit écrit imprimé en 1881 à Salem (Mass.), et qui a pour titre : *HIAWATHA AND THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERATION* by HORATIO HALE.

Note:

Cuoq's discussion of *kahionni* bears a striking resemblance to Haudenosaunee readings of the *Guswentha* belt. One should be reminded here that the Haudenosaunee describe the white beads of *Guswentha* or the Two Row Wampum belt as the River of Life. The two parallel rows of black beads—one representing the canoe of the Onkwehonwe, the other the ship of the Europeans—travel along this River of Life. The two rows of black beads extend to each end of the belt indicating the river, the vessels and the agreement will flow 'as long as the grass grows'. (See illustration, Appendix 2.)

Guswentha has been the subject of considerable debate, particularly as concerns its origins. According to the oral memory of the Haudenosaunee, the belt represents a treaty agreement made between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch early in the seventeenth century, about 1613. A number of scholars and academics, William Fenton, Charles Gehring, William Starna and Daniel Richter among them, find little or no documentary evidence of such a treaty. They assert that one document, which came to light in the 1960s, is a forgery. (See Van Loon L.G. "Tawagonshi, the Beginning of the Treaty Era": *The Indian Historian*, 1:3 (1968) 22-26.) For a critique of this document see, Charles T. Gehring, William A. Starna and William Fenton, "The Tawagonshi Treaty of 1613: The Final Chapter": *New York History*, 68/4(1987): 373-393. For a response see Vernon Benjamin, "The Tawagonshi Agreement of 1613: A Chain of Friendship in the Dutch Hudson Valley": *Hudson Valley Historical Review* 16/2 (1999): 1-20. For a discussion on the meaning of *Guswentha* and a reading of the belt see Richard Hill, "Oral Memory of the Haudenosaunee: Views of Two Row Wampum," *Indian Roots of American Democracy*, José Barreiro, ed. Ithaca, New York: Akwe:kon Press, 1992, 149-159. In this article Hill questions the manner in which academics discuss the origins of *Guswentha*.

APPENDIX 2

THE CIRCLE WAMPUM AND WAMPUM BELTS

The wampum belts of the Haudenosaunee are made of white and purple quahog and whelk shells, carved into cylindrical beads. They are strung together with sinew or gut. Designs on the belts exchanged during diplomatic councils include highly stylized human figures often with joined hands or arms linked together, as well as circles, ovals, diamonds, and lines. For Deborah Doxtator the patterns and pictographs employed by the Haudenosaunee constitute intellectual imagery: "Knowledge was stored in symbolic form using images on wampum belts, birchbark and fur pelt drawings, utilizing images that evoked concepts rather than reproducing spoken language".¹

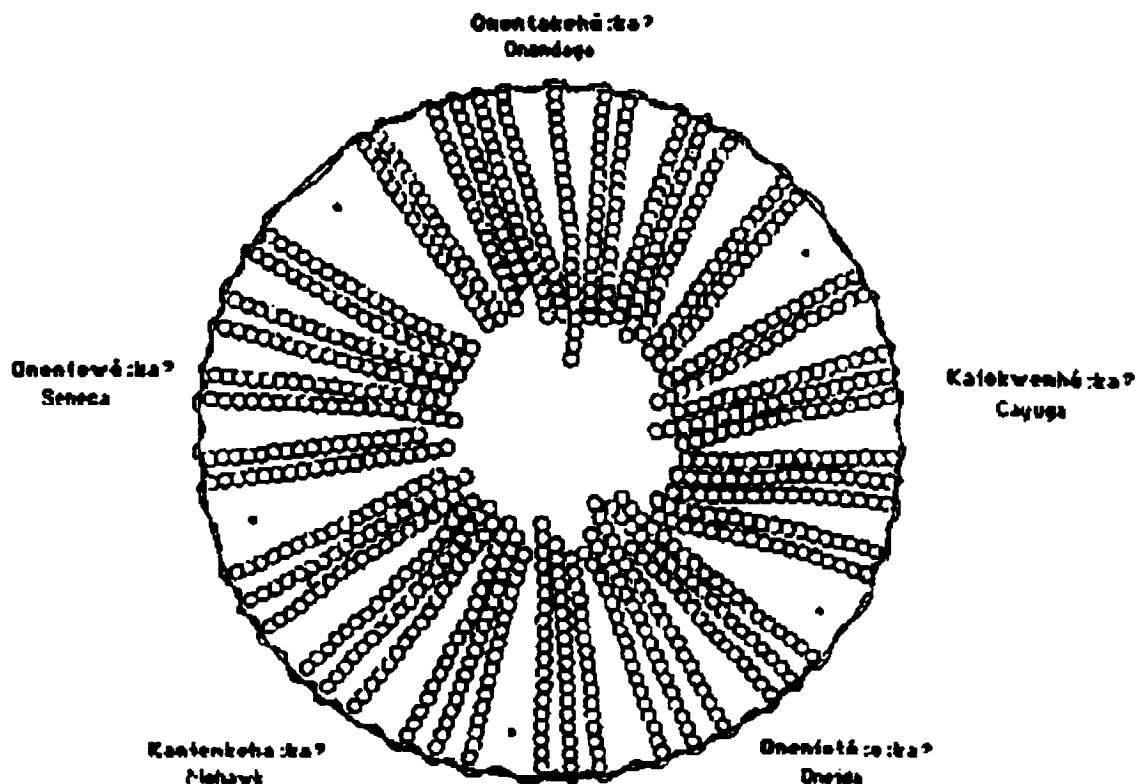
The reproductions of the Circle Wampum, the Hiawatha Belt, the Evergrowing Tree Belt and the *Guswentha* (Two Row Wampum) come from the Tuscarora web site, <http://www.tuscaroras.com>; the Tyendinaga web site, <http://www.tyendinaga.net> and the Oneida web site, <http://oneida-nation.net>. All other reproductions and text come from W.M. Beauchamp's *Wampum and Shell Articles Used by the New York Indians*, Albany, NY: University of the State of New York, 1901, 381-476. Additional text is indicated with square [] brackets.

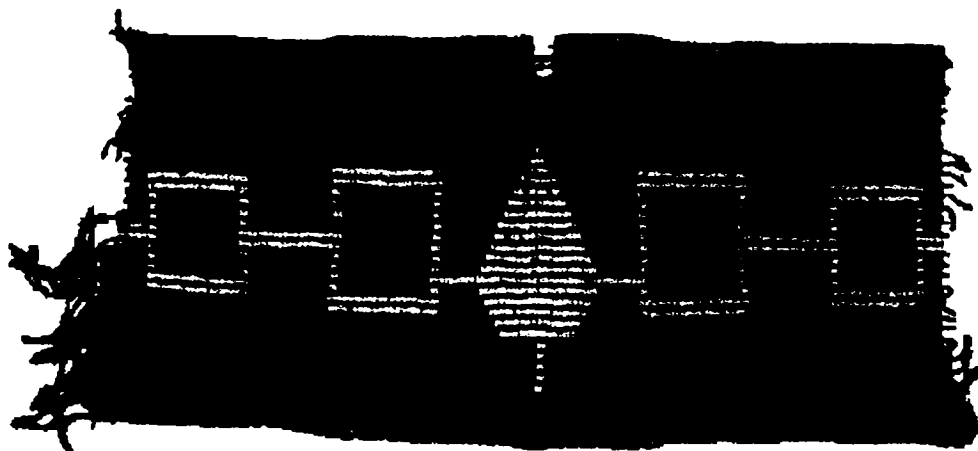
¹ D. Doxtator "Inclusive and Exclusive " 40

The Circle of the Fifty Sachems of the Covenant of the League of the Five Nations

**Rotinonhshón:ni? Teiotiokwaonháston, Mo.
Hodínghshó:ni Deyodyogwapháhs:dgh, Ca.**

The original of this wampum record was made at the time of the Founding of the League and has been handed down through a line of Wampum Keepers until the present time. This circle of white wampum represents the seating plan of the fifty sachems of the Iroquois Confederate Council. Each strand stands for a Confederate Lord's name. They are bound together by intertwined strands representing the Unity of the Laws of Peace, *Kaianerenkó:wa*, Mo., *Gayaneshra?gó:wa*, Ca. The circle of white wampum is very sacred.





Five Nations Territorial Belt

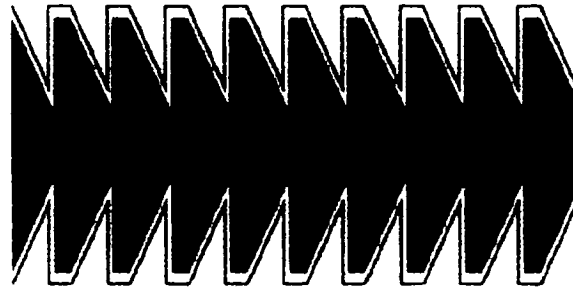
Haienhwá:tha' Belt, Mo.

Hayehwátha' Belt, Ca.

A broad dark belt of wampum of thirty-eight rows, having a white heart in the centre, on either side of which are two white squares all connected with the heart by white rows of beads shall be the emblem of the Unity of the Five Nations.

The first of the squares on the left represents the Mohawk Nation and its territory, the second square on the left and the one near the heart, represents the Oneida Nation and its territory, the white heart in the middle represents the Onondaga Nation and its territory, and it also means that the heart of the Five Nations is single in its loyalty to the Great Peace. That the Great Peace is lodged in the heart, meaning with the Onondaga Confederate Lords, and that the Council Fire is there for the Five Nations and further, it means that the authority is given to advance the cause of peace, whereby hostile nations out of the Confederacy shall cease warfare. The white square to the right of the heart represents the Cayuga Nation and its territory, and the fourth and last white square, represents the Seneca Nation and its territory.

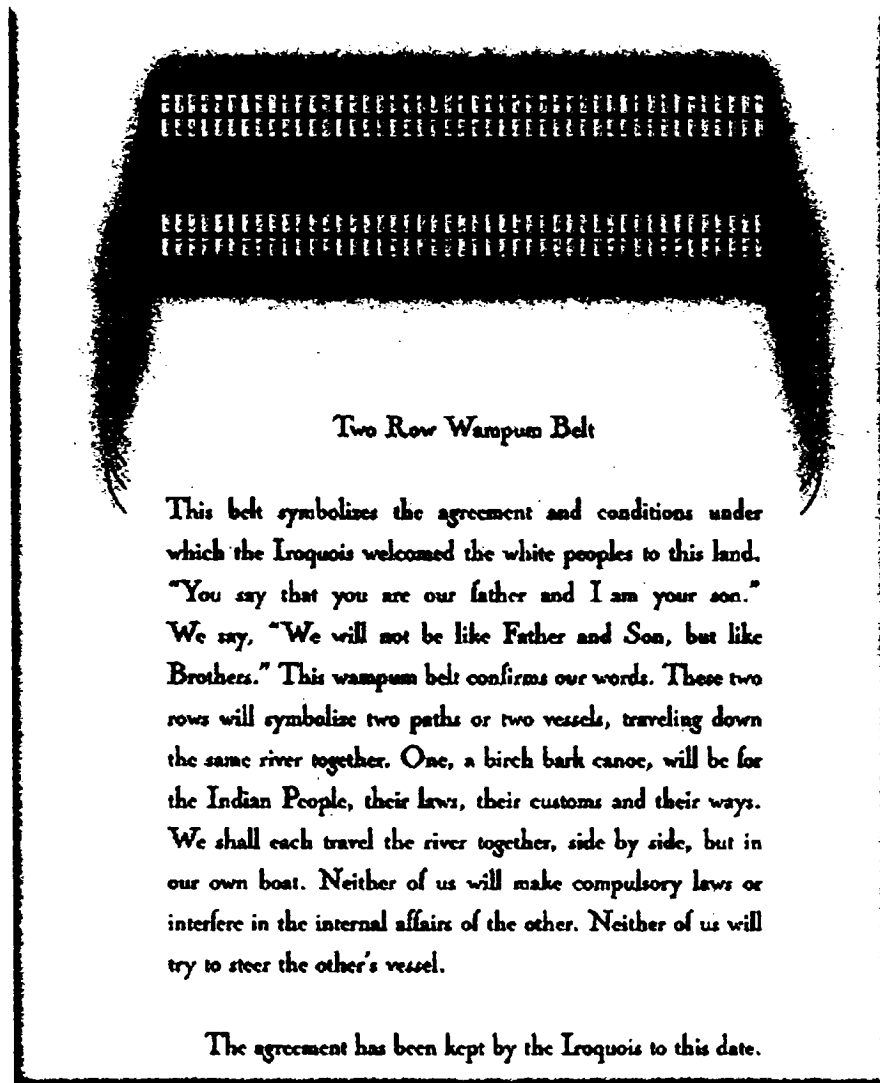
White shall here symbolize that no evil or jealous thoughts shall creep into the minds of the Lords while in Council under the Great Peace, White, the emblem of peace, love, charity and equity surrounds and guards the Five Nations.



Skaronhesekò:wa Tsiokterakentkò:wa

This belt represents the Evergrowing tree, with its white roots spreading out to the north, south, east, and west from Iroquois Territory. The Peacemaker says that any man from any nation outside the five nations confedracy, who wishes to follow and obey the Great law of peace, can follow the Great roots of the tree and if they have clean minds and promise to obey the wishes of the confederate council, they will be welcome to take shelter beneath the "Tree of the long leaves' needles"





Two Row Wampum Belt

This belt symbolizes the agreement and conditions under which the Iroquois welcomed the white peoples to this land. "You say that you are our father and I am your son." We say, "We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers." This wampum belt confirms our words. These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, traveling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel.

The agreement has been kept by the Iroquois to this date.

Plate 13

- 171 Belt given by the Esopus chiefs at a treaty in 1664, now in the county clerk's office, Kingston, NY.
- 172 Mohawk belt 26 inches long with an extreme width of 11 rows.
- 173 "Penn" belt.

Plate 16

- 186 Belt signifying two nations, and a strong and enduring alliance. [Tehanetorens calls this belt the 'Council Fire of Six Nations Belt', which means that the Haudenosaunee are "a united people, that the Path of Peace connects their territories, their Council Fires (Governments)".²]
- 187 Belt having five double diamonds standing for the Five Nations.
- 188 Belt called by owner "Six Nations' peace belt".
- 189 Belt having partly open diamonds on a white ground, 10 rows deep called by owner "Six Nations' peace belt."
- 190 Probably a covenant belt.
- 191 Defective belt having two white squares and two white hexagons inclosing similar figures, probably recent.
- 192 Council belt.

Plate 18

- 222 Used for first speech [of the Condolence].
- 223 Contains some white beads and used for second speech.
- 224 Purple wampum for third speech.
- 225 Have a few white beads, for fourth speech.
- 226 Have scattered white beads, for fifth speech.
- 227 Have purple beads, relating to the dead chief, for sixth speech.
- 228 Have some white beads at the end of the strings as for the seventh and last speech concludes with a call for the new chief.

² Tehanetorens, *Wampum Belts*, 1972, (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts Reprints, 1993) 26

Plate 19

- 229 Emblematic belt. [More widely known as the Akwesasne 'Wolf Belt'.]
- 230 Condolence belt belonging to Cornplanter
- 231 Belt procured for state museum by Mrs. H.M. Converse, formerly held by Gen. E.S. Parker.
- 232 Modern belt; this and fig. 244 are the widest belts known. [Called by Tehanetorens the 'Adodarhoh Belt'. Adodarhoh was given the responsibility to sweep away all dust and dirt from around the council fire so as to remove all impediments to mutual agreement.³]
- 233 Strong of small and irregular Canadian disk beads.

Plate 21

- 240 Belt of doubtful meaning; sloping lines are temporary alliances.
- 241 Belt prepared for Mr. [Lewis Henry] Morgan at Tonawanda in 1850.
- 242 Labeled "Hospitality or welcome belt—Canadian Mohawk". White belt of six rows with three diagonal bars of black.
- 243 Mutilated Five Nations belt.
- 244 Widest belt known [See Evergrowing Tree Belt above].
- 245 Fragment of purple Cornplanter belt without figures.
- 246 Belt nine rows deep with six human figures in black, joined by a dark line, called women's nominating belt.
- 247 "Ransom belt", purple belt of six rows with white diagonal lines and open hexagons.

Plate 22

- 248 Covenant belt with the 13 original United States. [Also known as the George Washington Belt.]
- 249 Once a belt of 13 row, now quite defective
- 250 Probably once a belt of eight rows, missing beads consumed in messages, offerings

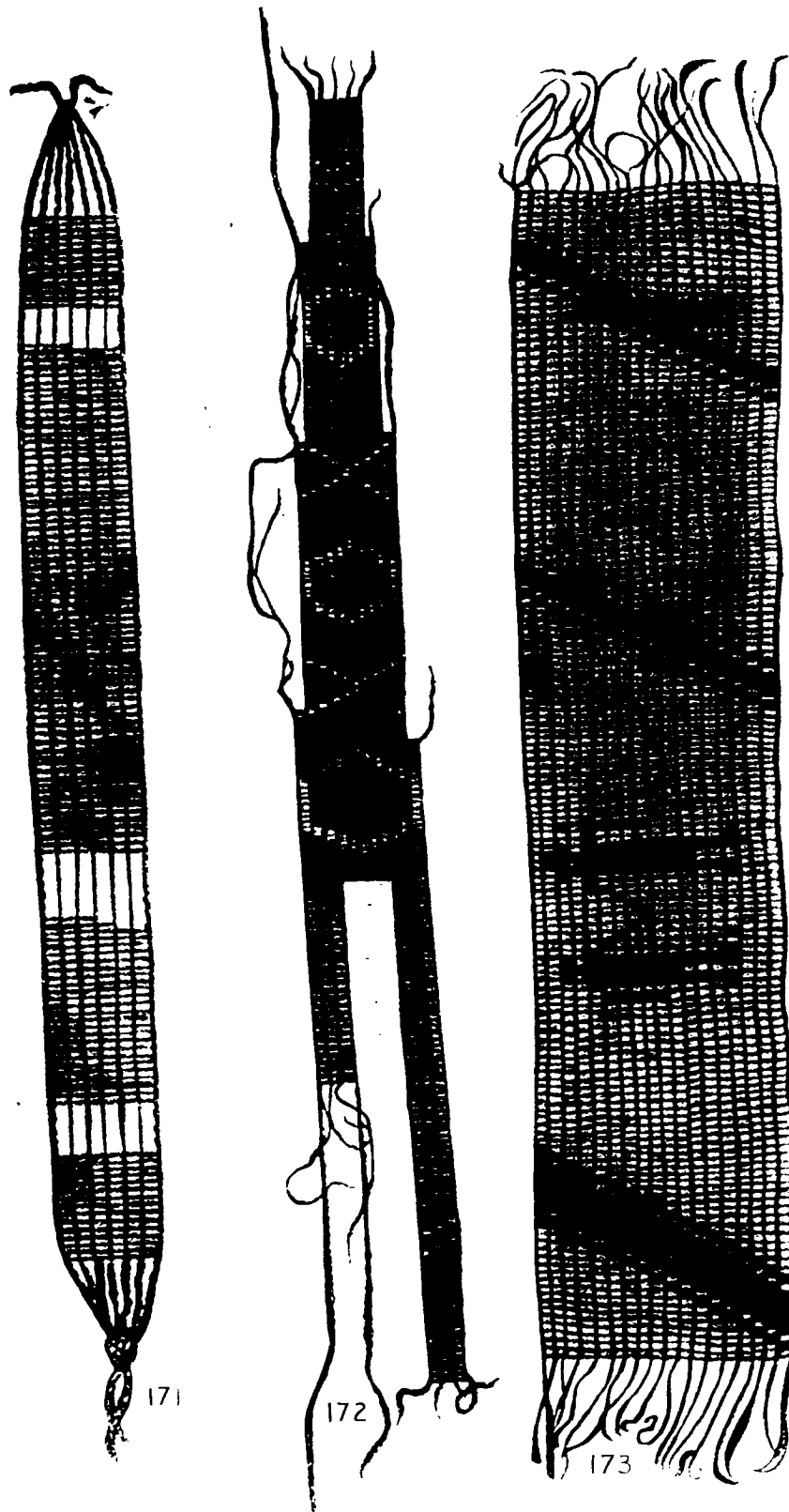
³ Tehanetorens, *Wampum Belts*, 55

and ceremonies.

- 251 Belt of seven rows with open white hexagons on a purple ground.
- 252 Reputed original record of the formation of the league [See Hiawatha Belt above].
- 253 Runtée from a recent grave.
- 253a Runtée from the Onondaga site of 1696.

Plate 26

- 274a "Sir William Johnson dish belt", nine rows wide, having four hexagons.
- 275 Defective white belt of 15 rows with one small open diamond and four large.
- 276 "Black Hawk belt" having the frequent double diamonds on a dark ground, and is 10 rows deep.
- 277 Oneida belt of unique character, and 21 rows wide.
- 278 Penobscot marriage belt of unusual character, of dark beads edged with white and has velvet strings.
- 279 Penobscot belt said to have belonged to "Molly Molassas".
- 280 Penobscot marriage belt of dark beads edged with white and has elliptic beads on one border.



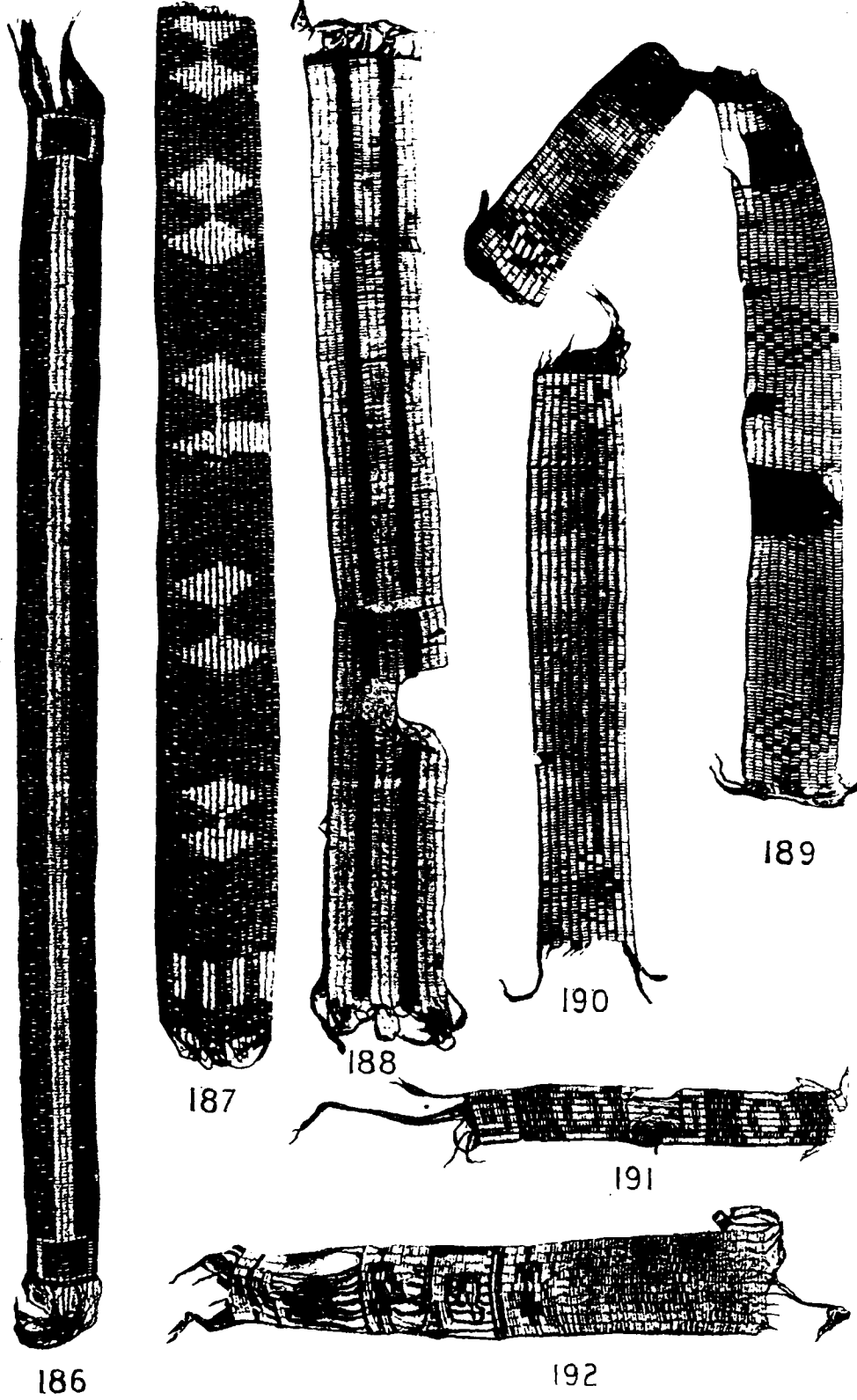


Plate 18

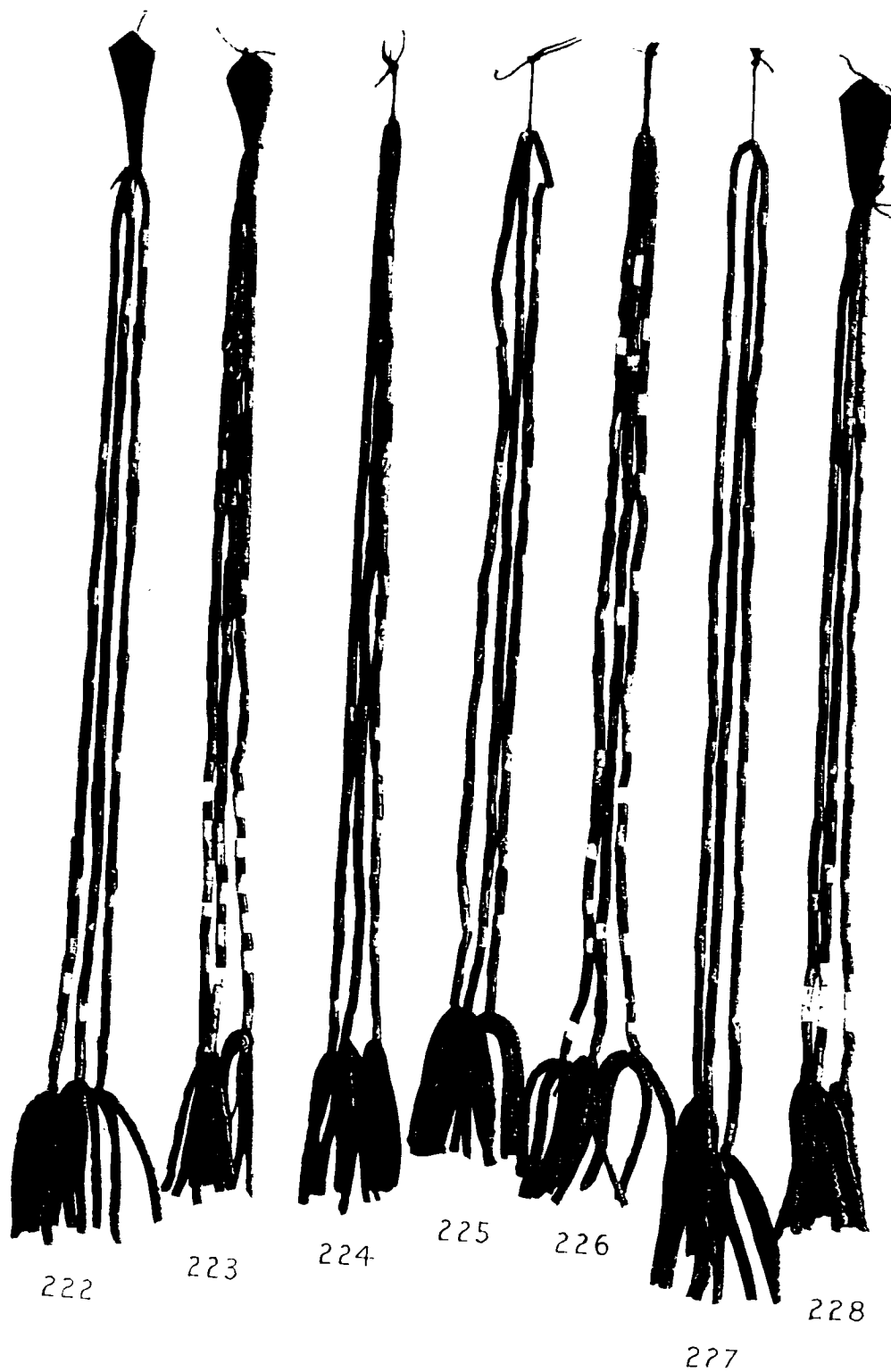


Plate 19

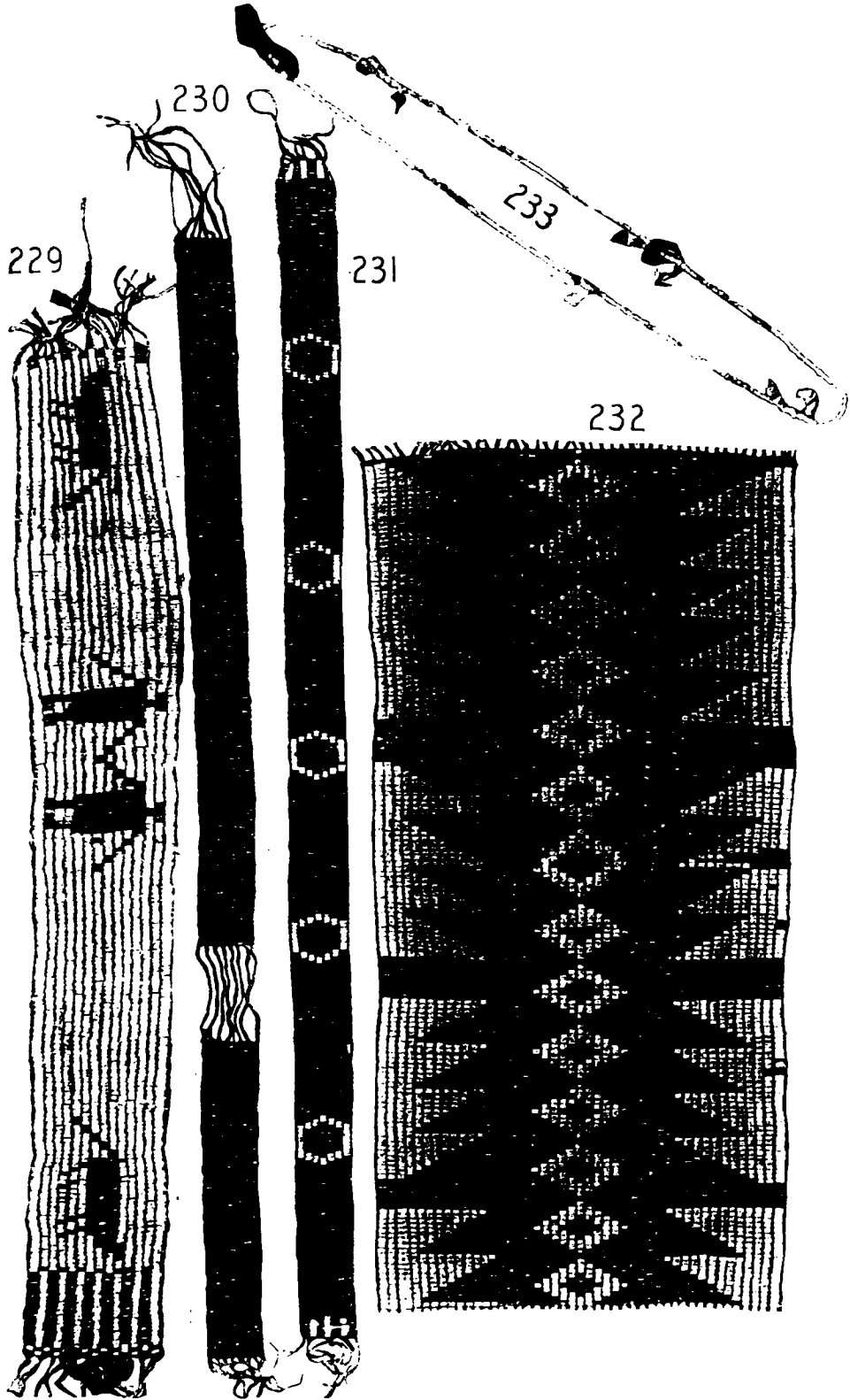


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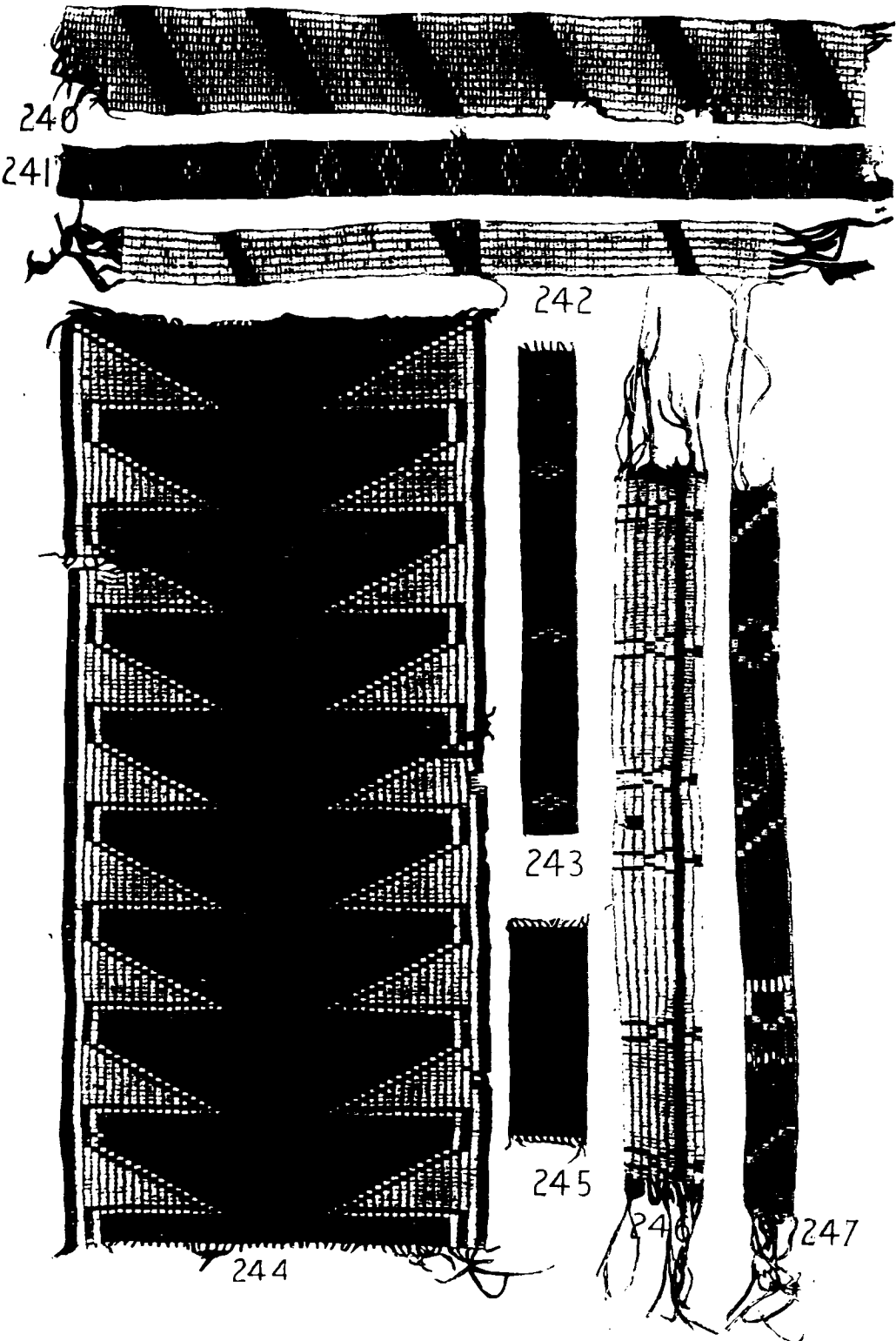


Plate 22

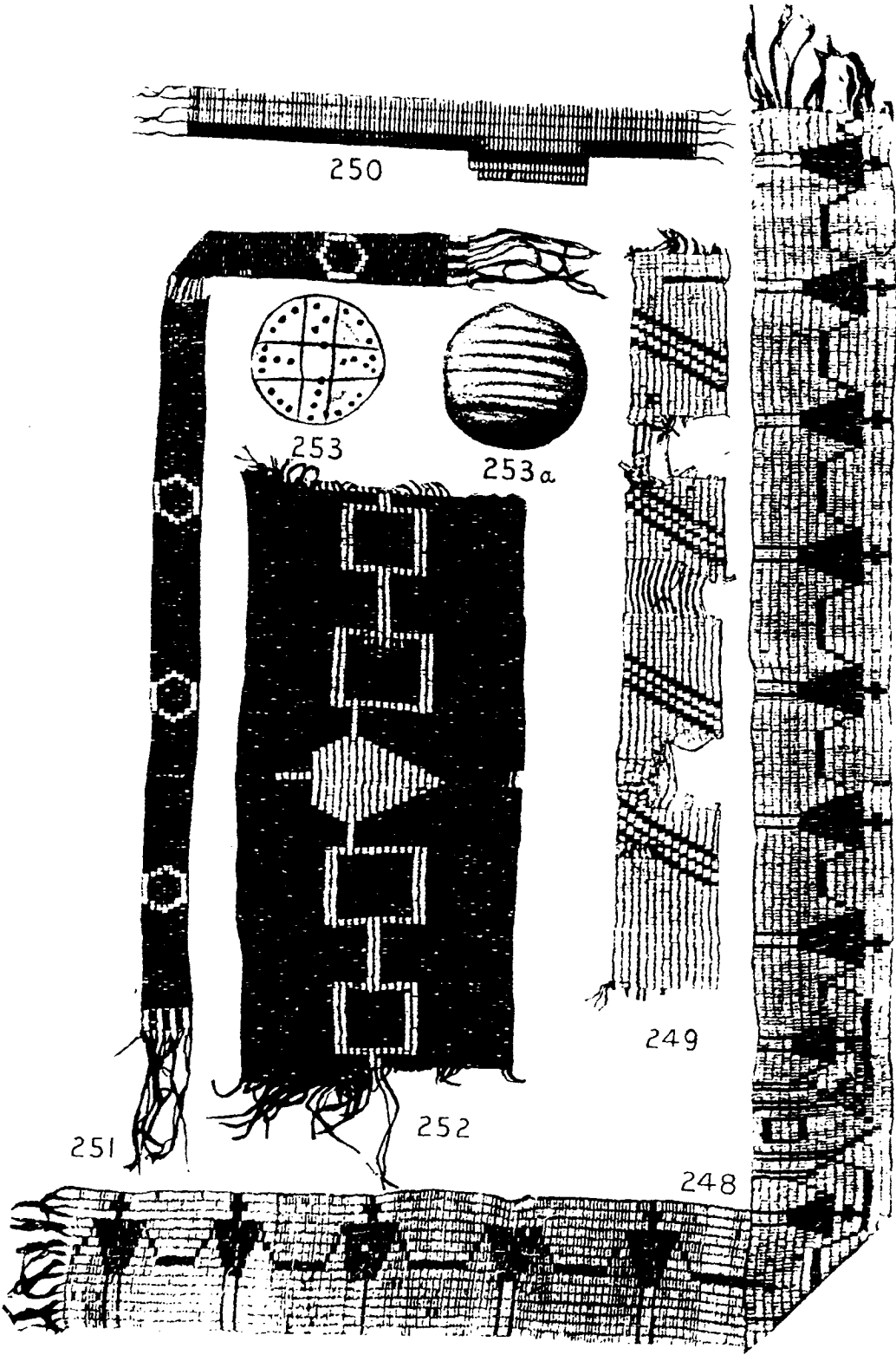
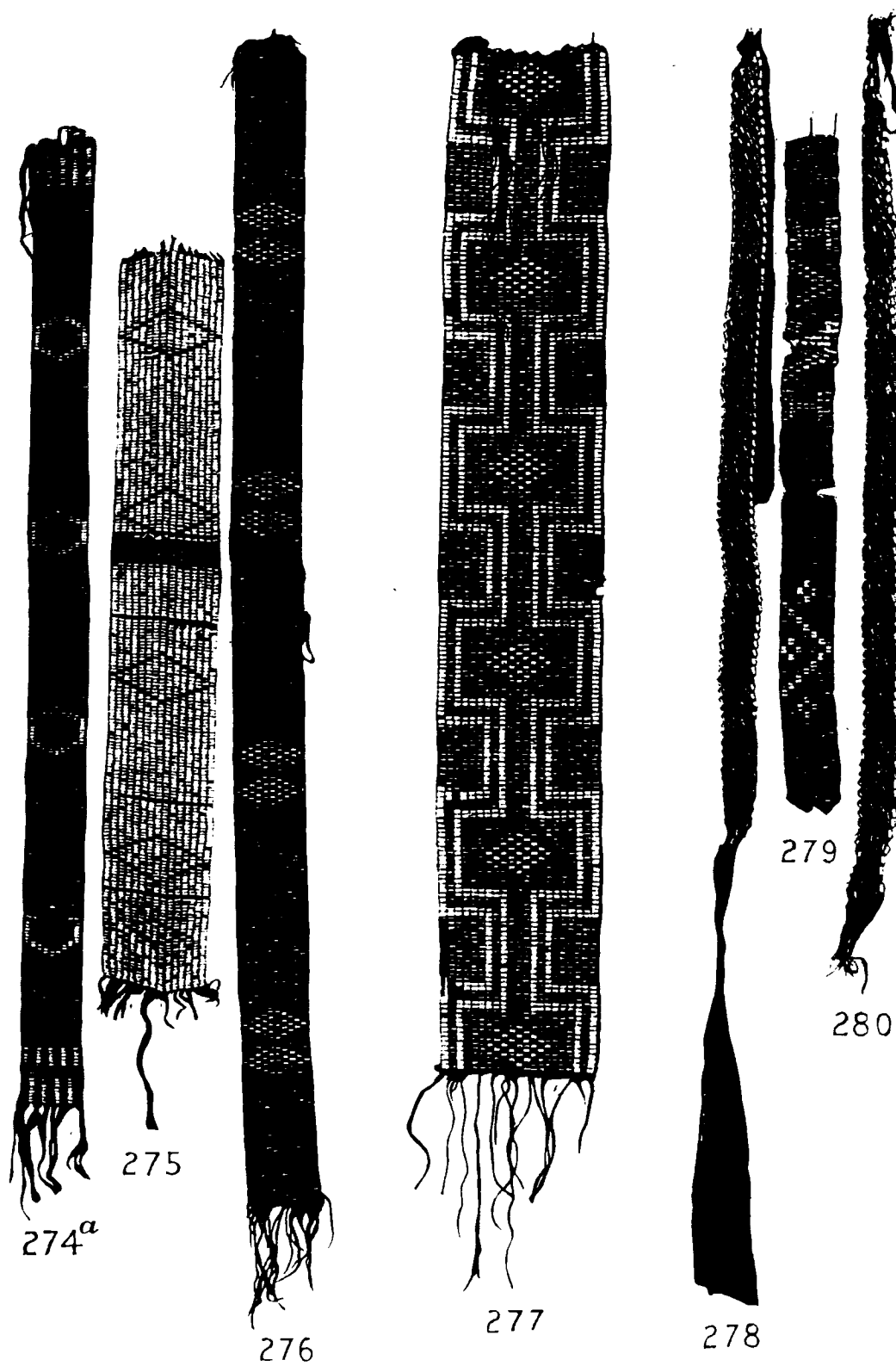


Plate 26



APPENDIX 3

THE HAUDENOSAUNEE CREATOR TWINS: SAPLING AND FLINT

More than forty versions of the Haudenosaunee story of origins have been published in the English language. These range from very short fragments to extremely long texts. One of the earliest versions, first recorded in French in 1636 by Jean de Brébeuf, S.J. when he was among the Huron, is just a few hundred words in length.⁴ The longest versions by far were recorded by J.N.B. Hewitt (Tuscarora) and were published in the early twentieth century in *Iroquoian Cosmology*.⁵ A number of other versions can be found in collections of Haudenosaunee stories published in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. In recent years, several children's versions have been published and a number have been posted on different web sites. Alongside these printed texts, the story of origins continues to thrive in Haudenosaunee communities as a living oral tradition. No single version of the story, written or oral, is considered authoritative or definitive. Moreover, no two versions are exactly alike.

English language versions published over the last one hundred or so years invariably employ the Good Twin/Bad Twin nomenclature. For example, in 1851 Lewis Henry Morgan called the twins Great Spirit and Evil-minded Sprit.⁶ In the Harriet Converse (1836-

⁴ Jean de Brébeuf, "On the Belief, Manners, and Customs of the Hurons," *JRAD* 10:124-133.

⁵ J.N.B. Hewitt, *Iroquoian Cosmology: First Part (1903) & Second Part (1928)*, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1974).

⁶ L.H. Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (1851), (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1993)

1903) version published posthumously in 1908, the twins are Spirit of Good and of Evil.⁷ In “How the World Began”, Arthur Parker calls the twins ‘Elder One’ and ‘Warty One’. Elder One is then called ‘Good Mind’ and Warty One, ‘Evil Mind’.⁸ In Joseph Bruchac’s version (1985) the twins are Good Mind and Evil Mind.⁹ In *Tyendinaga Tales* Rona Rustige (1988) takes a middle road, using the Mohawk words for Sapling and Flint, but in a footnote writes Sapling is “a very good man”, and Flint as a “man of contrary and evil ways”.¹⁰ In her 1999 version, Carol Cornelius (Tuscarora) calls them Good Twin and Evil Twin.¹¹

Scholars who recount the story of origins in secondary sources also represents the twins as good and evil. Anthony F. C. Wallace’s *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* is one such example. Here the twins are Good Spirit and Bad Spirit.¹² In his “This Island, the World on the Turtle’s Back”, William Fenton says the elder twin “becomes Sky-holder, alias Good-minded [...] The younger twin is Flint, the Evil-minded”.¹³ In *The Ordeal of the*

⁷ H. Converse, *Myths and Legends of the New York State Iroquois* (Albany, NY: New York State Museum, Bulletin 125, 1908) 31. —*Hahgwehdiyu*—Spirit of Good and *Hahgwehdaetgah*—Spirit of Evil

⁸ A.C. Parker, *Seneca Myths and Folktales*. —The principal storyteller on whom Parker relied for *Seneca Myths and Folktales* was Edward Cornplanter.

⁹ J. Bruchac, *Iroquois Stories*, (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1995) 19-22.

¹⁰ R. Rustige, *Tyendinaga Tales*, (Montreal-Kingston McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988) 10. *Taronhiawakon* and *Tawiskeron*.

¹¹ C. Cornelius, “Creation Cosmology,” in *Iroquois Corn in a Culture-Based Curriculum*, 79-82.

¹² A.F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969) 345-346, n.6.

¹³ W. Fenton, “This Island, The World on the Turtle’s Back”. *Journal of American Folklore* 75/298 (1962) 283-300.

Longhouse, Daniel Richter uses the English names Good Twin and Evil Twin.¹⁴ In *The Iroquois*, Dean R. Snow calls the twins Sapling and Flint, describing Flint as the Evil Twin.¹⁵

Discussions of the twins have reached well beyond the borders of Iroquois Studies and of Iroquoia itself. Sam Gill, in *Native American Religions*, sees both twins as creators and uses the terms Good Spirit and Bad Spirit.¹⁶ The whole idea of twinness fascinates contemporary anthropologists, Claude Lévi-Strauss most notably among them. In one of his recent books *The Story of Lynx*, he points out that twinning and twinness is widespread in the Americas. Lévi-Strauss is interested in duality and how Native peoples of the Americas address the question of duality. For Lévi-Strauss, twins of the same sex represent a formula in which one twin is the inverse of the other. Duality of this sort, he says, takes the form of antithesis including, he notes, “a good twin and a bad twin such as the beneficent and maleficent twins of the Iroquois”.¹⁷

The above is just a sampling of some versions—a quick look at others yields much the same results. Thus, the symbolic representation of the twins as good and evil can be found throughout the literature. In terms of both semantics and semiotics, this good/evil interpretation operates at many levels. The twins can be referred to descriptively as ‘good’ and ‘evil’, but more often than not they are nouns with proper names such as Good Twin and

¹⁴ D. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 10. —Richter describes his rendering as a “selective composite” of several other versions.

¹⁵ D. Snow, *The Iroquois*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 222. —He notes his story as “an abbreviated and paraphrased composite of several versions”.

¹⁶ S. Gill, *Native American Religions*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1995) 20-22 —His rendition of the story is based on the Wallace version.

¹⁷ C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Story of Lynx*, Catherine Tihanyi, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 226.

Evil Twin; Good Minded and Evil Minded; Good Spirited and Evil Spirited. Interpretations range from a somewhat benign good/evil dichotomy to a more extreme (doctrinal) Good/Evil dualism. The latter is far more prevalent than the former.

How and when the symbolic representation of the twins as good and evil first entered the literature is not an easy question to address, as a thorough historiographical analysis has yet to be carried out. However, Thomas Parkhill of St. Thomas University, has done just such a study of the Algonquian stories of origins in which the twins are also interpreted as good and evil. According to Parkhill, the symbolic representation of Kluskap and Malsum as twins representing good and evil, comes not from the Micmaq, Abenaki, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy themselves, but from one Charles Godfrey Leland, lawyer, sometime theologian, amateur folklorist and Indian hobbyist who collected Abenaki and Micmaq stories around the New England states and the Maritime provinces in the late nineteenth century. According to Parkhill, the portrayal of Kluskap and Malsum as Good Twin and Evil Twin entered popular culture due to Leland's interpretation of them.

With Leland, says Parkhill, Malsum becomes a wolf who is wicked by nature. As he studied the stories Leland became fascinated with the twins and saw in them a parallel to twins in Norse mythology. He came to believe that the Algonquin tradition was "steeped and penetrated with the old Norse spirit".¹⁸ He saw many points of contact between the Edda and the Algonquian stories of origins, and in typical Eurocentric fashion concluded that Algonquian peoples had adopted the mythology of the Norse. Thanks to Leland, Kluskap became Odin and Malsum, Fenris who, in Norse mythology is a wolf. Kluskap is the good

¹⁸ T. H. Parkhill, *Weaving Ourselves into the Land: Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1997) 61

principle and Malsum the evil principle and their struggle with one another is the battle of cosmic good and evil. Parkhill notes that virtually all published versions of the story follow in Leland's footsteps. Significantly, however, Micmaq elders who have made the story their own, recount versions which "show little evidence of Leland's inference".¹⁹ The good/evil dualism is simply not there.

Can Parkhill's type of analysis be successfully applied to Sapling and Flint? As already mentioned, a thorough historiographical study of the Haudenosaunee twins has yet to be carried out. However, Barbara Mann has developed her own view of this very question. In her paper "The Lynx in Time: Haudenosaunee Women's Traditions and History",²⁰ Mann states, without hesitation, that missionaries interpreted the twins as good and evil in order to bring them in line with Christian doctrine. "To the missionaries", she writes, "God alone created. Thus, they recrafted Sapling into a lone Creator, a mirror image of the Christian God".²¹ As Mann sees it, this kind of creative exclusivity is foreign to the Haudenosaunee way of thinking: "To the Haudenosaunee, creativity abounded; it was never the hoarded province of just one entity". She points out that the twins are not the only creators. The animals who see Skywoman descending to earth, create a place for her to land and then to live—Turtle Island. Skywoman's daughter, the mother of the twins, is also a creator—from her grave grows corn, beans and squash (The Three Sisters) and tobacco. In Mann's view, missionaries "transformed the cycle of the twins into a hellfire and damnation

¹⁹ T.H. Parkhill, *Weaving*, 133-136.

²⁰ T.H. Parkhill, *Weaving*, 3.

²¹ B. A. Mann, "The Lynx in Time: Haudenosaunee Women's Traditions and History" *American Indian Quarterly* 21/3 (1999) 423-49 ProQuest Reprint.

tale of good God versus evil Satan”.

To Mann, this kind of dualism flies in the face of Haudenosaunee logic and discourse. She notes that Daniel Brinton in his 1868 *Myths of the New World*,

deftly traced the missionary origin of [the good-evil dichotomy] from the 1636 version of Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf, which lacked any such dualism, to the versions current in 1868, which were awash with it. He accurately ‘perceive[d] at once that Christian influence in the course of two centuries had given the tale a meaning foreign to its original intent,’ concluding his excellent analysis with the observation: ‘A little reflection will convince the most incredulous that any such dualism as has been fancied to exist in the native religions, could not have been of indigenous growth.’²²

Let it be said at this point that the task here is not so much to assign blame as to unpack the Western philosophical and Christian influences which have found their way into the story. Anthony Wonderley, historian, of the Oneida Nation, who has done research of his own, suggests good/evil dualism crept slowly into the story from various sources and gradually came to be associated directly with the twins. Paralleling this development is a transformation in the relationship between the twins. He notes that while “a struggle between brothers apparently always played an important role in the creation story”, the “theme of sibling rivalry dominates the creation story familiar in modern times”.²³ It may very well be that as the theme of sibling rivalry came to dominate the story, so also did the

²² D. Brinton, *Myths of the New World* (1868), (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Company, 1992) 15. —Unfortunately, neither Barbara Mann nor Daniel Brinton says *which* missionaries recrafted Sapling and Flint. Contrary to Mann’s claim that Brinton deftly traced the origin of the good-evil dichotomy to missionaries, evidence showing he actually did so is sparse. Mann, for her part, is simply repeating Brinton’s observations without carrying out the necessary historiographical leg work. Nevertheless both Brinton and Mann are on the trail of something interesting.

²³ D. Brinton, *Myths*, 19.

idea of good/evil dualism.

As Sapling and Flint became Good Twin/Evil Twin, they began to take on Zoroastrian/Manichean overtones whereby world conflict and redemption turn on the opposition of good and evil forces. Indeed, Harriet Converse who talked of Spirit of Good/Spirit of Evil, seemed convinced of this. Writing in the late nineteenth century, she said: “The idea of moral dualism is found more or less developed in the beliefs of most primitive [her word] races. Probably in its most primitive [her word] form the idea is not of moral dualism, but [...] of the conflict of constructive and destructive forces”.²⁴ This dualism of warring powers then “took upon itself the dualism of moral forces”. She goes on to cite Egyptian and Zoroastrian texts as comparisons. “The idea is fundamentally that of light and day, and darkness and night; day with its sun light and activity and night with its blackness and unseen terrors. This underlying idea has influenced the dualistic theology of all nations”.

Typical of her time, Harriet Converse was concerned with the origin of religion and with the search for ideas that could be considered the foundation of all religions and of humankind’s earliest religious beliefs.²⁵ Further, Converse’s observations suggest the Haudenosaunee story of origins is an allegorical tale in which the twins symbolize the cosmic forces of good and evil in conflict with one another. Whether or not we can and indeed should presuppose the story is an allegorical tale is highly questionable.

The whole question is made even more complex since the good/evil terminology is

²⁴ H. Converse, *Myths and Legends*, 34, n2&3.

²⁵ For a discussion of this trend among scholars see Elisabeth Tooker, ed., *Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press) 19.

also employed by the Haudenosaunee themselves; Arthur Parker among them. Why? A possible explanation may lie not so much with the Native author as with the non-Native reader. The English-language versions of the story were written for an English-speaking audience. That audience was familiar with and had an understanding of good/evil dualism. That same audience did not, however, have the knowledge or the background to think of the twins as 'Sapling' and 'Flint'. In order to make them intelligible to the English-speaking reader, Haudenosaunee authors either consciously or unconsciously opted for Good Twin and Evil Twin.

An additional factor which is at play adds yet another dimension to this study. Here I am referring to the oral tradition. The Brébeuf version of 1636 does not mention good and evil. This version was recounted to the Jesuit father by a Huron speaker in his native tongue. Similarly with the J.N.B. Hewitt versions. The four versions of the story collected by Hewitt over a ten-year period beginning in 1889, came from Mohawk, Onondaga and Seneca language speakers. Each of the speakers recounted the story in his mother tongue and because time and length were not pressing factors, each was able to develop the story as he knew and understood it. Hewitt, who was a fastidious recorder and translator, duly transcribed the texts to accord with the versions as told to him. Rather than translate into colloquial English, he employed a kind of biblical language à la King James. His primary aim in recording and translating the texts was not to produce popularized versions of the story; quite the contrary, he wanted to preserve and communicate in writing all the complexities, intricacies and nuances of the story. As it turns out, Hewitt recorded his versions at about the same time as Harriet Converse was developing her theory of good/evil dualism.

In the Hewitt versions a highly complex vision of the twins emerges. Hewitt translated the different Haudenosaunee words for the twins into the English words, Sapling and Flint; elder one and The Warty; He Who Grasps the Sky or Skyholder and Flint.²⁶ Flint is also called Ice. In nearly one-thousand pages of text, the word 'evil' hardly appears.²⁷ In the most detailed version, "The Myth of the Earth Grasper", recounted to Hewitt by John A. Gibson, the twins name themselves. When asked by his grandmother what name he would like to have, the elder twin said he was thinking from whence he has come and where he will go after he leaves this earth and that he wishes to be named 'Holder of the Sky'. In effect, he has the past and the future in mind. The younger twin, for his part, says he is thinking of this place, of this earth, of where he is now and so he takes the name of Flint.

²⁶ J.N.B. Hewitt, *Iroquoian Cosmology*. —In the Onondaga version (John Buck, Grand River, 1889) the twins are *Odendonnia*—It Sapling and *Ohaa*—It Flint (both proper names), p. 188. They are referred to as Sapling and Flint throughout the text. In the Seneca version (John Armstrong, Cattaragus, 1896) they are *hagowane*—he elder one or he larger one (a descriptive term) and *Honohidae*—He Warty (a proper name), p. 230. The Warty is also referred to as *Othagweda*—It Flint (also a proper name) (243). In the Mohawk version (Seth Newhouse, Grand River, 1896-97) they are *Oterontonnia*—It Sapling (a proper name), p. 302 and *Tawiskaro*—Flint (Ice, Crystal) (first as a descriptive term (294) and then as a proper name), p. 307. In the Mohawk version they name themselves and do so according to either their characteristics or abilities. When he was born Flint was "wholly flint" and Sapling customarily produced new earth and maple sapling sprouts wherever he went, p. 302. In all of these versions only one name, *Tawiskaro* is used in the English transcription. In the *Myth of the Earth Grasper* (John Arthur Gibson, Grand River, 1900) they are *Dehaehiyawakhon* (he grasps the sky with both hands) and *Ohaa* (Flint or crystal ice). Their grandmother gave them these names and the Onondaga words are used throughout the text.

In his two articles "Tawiskaron," and "Teharonhiawagon," in *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, Part 2*, F.W. Hodge, ed. Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30 (1912) 707-11 & 718-23, J.N.B. Hewitt provides a syllable by syllable breakdown of each word. *Tawiskaron* and its cognates variously mean ice, hail, sleet, crystal, smooth and slippery. Hewitt notes that "the original meaning of the nominal stem -wiskar-of the vocable owiskara... came to designate ice on the one hand and chert or flint on the other". *Teharonhiawagon* and its cognates variously mean two, double and cover, overcast, spread over, which signifies sky, firmament, the visible heavens. *Teharonhiawagon* signifies literally 'He is holding the sky in two places', hence 'He, the Sky-holder'. Other cognates, when analyzed, mean, anew, and sprout, shoot and came to mean small tree or sapling.

²⁷ Hewitt wrote the following: "Some modern Iroquois who are the adherents of the [...] Handsome Lake reformed Iroquois religion, and others who have become converted to Christianity claim to identify Tawiskaro [Flint] with the devil of Caucasians, and so reasoning from this incident [...] [say] the devil created the white race", (J.N.B. Hewitt, "Tawiskaron," 708).

In effect, he has the present in mind.

In the Gibson version, we get the sense that Sapling or Skyholder and Flint represent different ways of being, different ways of thinking, and different ways of doing things. In this version Flint time and time again tries to emulate his brother's creations, with less than successful results. For example, Sapling creates pigeons, but Flint's bird-like creature has fur and teeth—a bat. Flint's intentions are good—he wants to make beautiful, useful things, but something always seems to go awry. Sapling assigns Flint's creations to the realm of the night. Eventually, Flint becomes jealous, a condition which drives him to near distraction. The two challenge each other to a lacrosse game and then to the Peach Stone game. Neither wins and in the end reach some kind of reconciliation. As my colleague Brian Deer says, ultimately, they agree to disagree.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Gibson version is the intricate detail he provides. Almost every creature, part and aspect of the Haudenosaunee world and Haudenosaunee life is in one way or another accounted for. We learn *how* the twins created, *what* they created and *who* they encountered as they walked about the earth. Put in slightly different terms, we come see that creation is a highly complex process. Indeed, the idea of process is prevalent in many versions. One might even go so far as to say that in the Haudenosaunee story of origins, the process of creation is as important as the product.

Where does all this leave us, or take us? First, Good Twin and Evil Twin are not translations of Haudenosaunee words. They are interpretative terms and as interpretative terms they do not necessarily reflect a quality or an attribute implied directly or indirectly by the actual Haudenosaunee words. Sapling or a sapling does not *de facto* connote good

any more than flint or ice intimates evil. Both are natural phenomena and in this sense they carry no moral connotations. Since time immemorial, both have been valued by the Haudenosaunee for the benefits each brings to humankind. Trees for food, shelter and transportation; flint for tools. Sapling and flint were essential to Haudenosaunee daily life—together they make an arrow. Together they also make fire. Both sapling and flint are of this earth, yet they differ. Sapling is organic, flint is inorganic. One grows, the other does not. One corresponds to the life cycle, to flexibility and warmth; the other to hardness, coldness and permanence.

What we have here is the concept of complementarity. Sapling the tree and flint the rock complement one another. Similarly, Sapling and Flint the twins likewise complement one another. Barbara Mann also raises the idea of complementarity. In metaphorical terms the twins do not operate in isolation from one another, but in complex association with one another. “Any attempt to ‘straighten them out’ by transposing them into... linear terms... destroys their content”.²⁸ Mann endeavours “to restore authentic meaning to the Twins... by thinking about them in a Haudenosaunee way. Originally the Twins concretized the East/West axis [...] the East was Sapling and the West, Flint. Sapling is associated with the colour red (through strawberries which he created) also the colour of dawn in the East and with white, another colour of the morning. Flint is associated with the colour black (flint is black) also the colour of night in the West”.

Clearly the twins are different, but taken together we get the sense of completion and wholeness. In Mann’s example we see that together they make the cycle of day and night.

²⁸ B.A. Mann, “The Lynx in Time,” 5.

According to Haudenosaunee tradition, ceremonies of the day are associated with Sapling, while ceremonies of the night are associated with Flint. Georges Sioui, (Wendat), sees the struggle between the twins in terms of proportion. He observes that in the Huron story, "The works of each [twin] were to be subject to the modification of the other, but neither was to absolutely change the character of any work of the other, nor was he to totally destroy it". The twin brothers, he says, "were equally necessary to world order and equilibrium".²⁹

More than anyone else Deborah Doxtator (Mohawk), has attempted to interpret the twins within the context of Haudenosaunee concepts of time and history. "In the creation story", she writes, "all the activity revolves around the island created on a turtle's back. The activity has two forces or 'sides': one expansive, the other contracting. These two forces or sides are represented by twins [...] Each day the elder brother twin [...] walks around the island to increase its size. The younger brother is raised inside the longhouse by his grandmother [...] and is associated with [...] contraction inward towards the center."³⁰ On the subject of time she writes:

Although Rotinohsyonni concepts of time present no gulf between time periods, they do not imply a static lack of change any more than Euro-based concepts do. In fact in Rotinohsyonni thought there is continual movement, not stasis. The creation story itself emphasizes this continual movement. For a while there is movement towards enlarging life (Spring) by Sapling, the elder brother of twins. This is followed by movement for a time back towards contraction (Winter), brought about by Flint, the younger of the twins. Although this cyclical movement is balanced, it is not productive of stasis. Each seasonal cycle is never exactly the same, and the overall result

²⁹ G Sioui, *Huron Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*, (Vancouver BC: UBC Press, 1999) 17-18.

³⁰ D Doxtator, "What Happened to the Clans," 53

of varied repetition of cycles is the gradual growth, layering and development of the earth—a continual state of change and transformation brought about by balanced forces interacting with one another.³¹

Underlying all these interpretations are two important concepts—one is that of a reciprocal relationship, the other is that of power. More than anything else, Sapling and Flint live in a relationship with one another. Each twin has power—*orenda*—though in many versions Flint's power is not as well developed as that of Sapling.

Katsi Cook (Mohawk of Akwesasne) speaks eloquently its many versions and its meaning for individuals. To imagine what she is saying is to be on the road to re-imagining the meaning of Sapling and Flint.

In the way these things are told to us, these intricate stories which take many days to relate, there is room which motivates the individual to seek their own perception of life. This is why there are so many different versions of the Creation story. Different versions follow different threads of perception. And they all teach something about life, and the world. We learn about [...] a world that is neither all good nor all bad. We learn that the entire universe is a family, and we learn that the greatest good is harmony. We learn the responsibilities and original instructions that all Creation has in maintaining this harmony.³²

The relationship between Sapling and Flint is not a metaphor for the conflict of the cosmic forces of good and evil. Theirs is a complementary relationship. From their dealings with one another, much of the world as we know it was created. More often than not, the twins themselves do not actually realize this, so involved are they in their individual and mutual tasks. The realization comes in the story itself and the story itself is in many respects a commentary on the complexity of human existence and of human relations.

³¹ D. Doxtator, "Inclusive and Exclusive," 38.

³² K. Cook, "The Women's Dance," in *New Voices From the Longhouse*, 81.

APPENDIX 4

**‘COVENANT’ AND RELATED WORDS IN
THE ANGLICAN *BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER***

From: Anglican Church of Canada. *The Book of Common Prayer, According to the use of the Church of England, Translated into the Mohawk Language*. Rev. Abraham Nelles, ed., John Hill Jr., trans. Hamilton: Ruthven’s Books, 1842.*

From the service of Morning Prayer (pages 20-21)

Then shall be read in like manner the Second Lesson, taken from the New *Testament*.

Ethone nea ne eakowaweanaghtnotouh ne Tekenihadont Teyoedaderaghteanitha ne Ase Tekaweanadaouh

From Luke 1:68. (pages 20-21)

To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers; and to remember his holy *covenant*.

Ne aoederighwahdeaty ne eanideareghtshera tsinighshakorharatsteany ne yethinihokouhkeaha: neoni reyaghre ne raorighwisaaghtsheradokeaghty;

Also from Luke 1:68 (pages 20-21)

To perform the *oath* which he swore to our forefather Abraham; that he would give us....

Ne aoderighwahdeaty tsinihorihwahniradouh raouhhake eghsthidewahnikeaha Agwereant: nene eashoekyouh;

From the service of marriage (pages 348-349)

[...] Giver of all spiritual grace, the Author of everlasting life; Send thy blessing upon these

* In the “Preface”. John Hill. Junr is mentioned as a “Mohawk Catechist” (page viii)

thy servants, this man and this woman, who we bless in thy Name; that, as Isaac and Rebecca lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and *covenant* betwixt them made, (whereof this Ring given and received is a token and pledge) and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[...] Kasheyadeanyeghtea ne sadaskatshera nenekea ne shenhase, keaiekea roegwe neoni keaiekea tyothoewisea, ne yakhiyadaderistha ne Saghseanakouh; nene tsiniyouht ne Isaac neoni Rebecca tsiteghnoenhegwe thoneghtahkoene uskahne, shadayawea ne keakayea teghnoegwe anirighwayerite neoni anirighweahawake tsinaghniweaneadane neoni wanirighwissa ne t'ninihokea (nenahotea keaiekea Eanishnouhsawy yaoedatouh neoni tayeyena ne wakatokeastaghgwe neoni ontkaranoena,) neoni yadahonatkoethase ne tsiniyaawe tayadadenorouhgwhake neoni skeanea thanigwekouh, neoni tsitanoenheke ne aoetayoyaneaha ne tsinisarihotea; ne raorihoenyet Jesus Christ Shoewayaner. Amen.

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