

A QUESTION OF FAITH:  
JESUIT MISSIONS TO THE SENECA IROQUOIS AS VIEWED THROUGH  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND TEXTUAL RECORDS

A Thesis

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By

Sarah Ann Eastly

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Jesuit missions to the Seneca Iroquois, which spanned from 1668-1709. Using museum collections of archaeological artifacts and historical sources, the goal of my research is threefold: to update the data on Christian-themed artifacts found at Seneca sites, to develop a more cohesive portrait of Iroquoian spirituality, and to examine whether the material and historical records present a case for religious syncretism. My updated enumeration of Jesuit-style finger rings takes into consideration current excavations, and has more than doubled since Alice Wood's 1974 study. By contrast, the religious medals, crosses and crucifixes found on Seneca territory have never been analyzed until now. Research on the religious medals was aided by the Clark Manuscript, compiled from 1894-1902 by General John S. Clark (1823-1912). Overall, my research decisively concludes that Christian-themed artifacts occur both within and outside of the Jesuit missionary period.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Eastly is a Master's candidate in the Archaeology Department at Cornell University. She received her undergraduate degrees in Anthropology and English at the University of Pittsburgh.

For Dad, Pap-Pap and Grandma & Grandpa E, and all the other faithfully departed.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the larger scheme of history, the Jesuit Missions to Seneca territory barely lasted the blink of an eye. Yet, the archaeological record is rich with Christian-themed artifacts, especially “Jesuit” style finger rings. Early historians such as William Beauchamp (1903) and Hugh Bihler (1956) ascribed these findings directly to the presence of Jesuit priests. Later archaeological work undertaken by Charles Wray and Harry Schoff unearthed even more assemblages of “Jesuit” style finger rings and other varieties of Christian-themed artifacts. Wray and Schoff’s 1954 work, as well as Alice Wood’s 1974 count of the rings echoed the idea that the artifacts were implicitly linked to the presence of Jesuit priests. As such, “Jesuit-style” finger rings were not expected to occur at sites dated to after the Treaty of Utrecht. However, after Martha Sempowski and Lorraine Saunders revised the site dating sequence in 2001, and the excavations of more eighteenth-century sites occurred (Jordan 2008), it became apparent that earlier archaeological studies of Christian-themed artifacts were in dire need of an update.

Keeping in mind the revised site sequence, the goal of this study was initially to reassess the numbers and types of “Jesuit” finger rings, and to account for any newly discovered items. As I worked in Rock Foundation Collection at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, it quickly became apparent that Christian-themed artifacts were occurring at Seneca sites occupied before *and* after the Jesuit missions. At the same time, modern-day scholars such as Carol Mason have come forward with new ideas concerning the origin and interpretation of Jesuit finger rings. With her latest work, Mason decisively breaks any theoretical ties between the presence of rings

with the presence of missions or priests. She also echoes Cleland's earlier suggestions about the rings becoming secular trade items after a certain point, and is similarly critical of inferring too much in the way of religious connotations (Mason 2010:9-10).

Until this thesis was written, the religious medals from Seneca sites had never been studied. Similarly, a "new" primary source known as the Clark Manuscript, which helped me to identify and translate the medals has never, until now, been introduced to scholarly audiences. Additional kinds of Christian-themed artifacts, such as crosses and crucifixes, are also counted and documented here for the first time. As such, this thesis aims to fully incorporate both the material and the written records in hopes of generating a clearer image of the Seneca missions, their historical context, and the context of the artifacts.

I will begin with a brief history of the Jesuit order, followed by biographies of individual Jesuit priests whose contributions and writings were crucial to the missions. The next section of the chapter provides a detailed account of the history of the Seneca Iroquois, their identity within the Five Nations, settlement patterns and customs. A separate section is devoted entirely to Iroquoian cosmogony, soul mysteries, and spiritual beliefs, with special attention paid to dreams, magic and healing. The chapter ends with a comprehensive historical account of the Jesuit missions to the Seneca, as well as the political circumstances that ultimately brought about the end of the missions.

Chapter two focuses primarily on the archaeology of the Seneca missions. Beginning with a detailed look at the major scholarly contributions of archaeologists past and present, the first part of the chapter discusses how the interpretation,

categorization and overall understanding of “Jesuit” artifacts found on native sites has evolved and changed. The next section is wholly devoted to finger ring typology, with images of each type included. Again, as the tables will show later on, Alice Wood’s 1974 data has doubled in light of more recent excavations. The next section is devoted to the Clark Manuscript, how it came to be compiled and its known contributors. A brief biography of General John S. Clark is also included. What follows next is naturally a typology of the religious medals found at Seneca sites, illustrated with images from the Clark Manuscript.

Chapter three presents the reader with a site-by-site analysis of Christian-themed artifacts located at Seneca sites. For easy reference, three artifact tables display the types and counts of rings, medals and miscellaneous items. The last section of chapter three is a discussion of the problems and questions surrounding the interpretation of Christian-themed artifacts. Special attention is paid to the issue of previous scholars ascribing the artifacts with inherent religiosity, the implications of Carol Mason’s newest study on brass rings, and the conundrum of locating “Jesuit” finger rings and religious medals on sites occupied long after the missions closed.

Chapter four turns its focus once again on the history of the missions. The first section, “Faith in Numbers” begins with a look at village population estimates. When considering the numbers, however, it is also crucial to remember that the Senecas allowed Huron people and those of other tribal affiliations to reside on their lands (JR 54:79-81). While it is not possible to speculate on these particular demographics, acknowledging that the numbers also reflect the presence of other groups helps to put into perspective the later discussion of who the “believers” mentioned in the *Jesuit*

*Relations* may have been. Next, using the *Jesuit Relations*, I supply a chronologically ordered account of every baptism occurring on Seneca territory. Since parish records or anything comparable do not exist, this is an attempt to estimate the numbers of baptisms that occurred during the missions.

Subsequently, I investigate the methods the Jesuits used to proselytize potential converts, and the intersection of Catholic and indigenous beliefs, particularly regarding martyrdom. Historical accounts of baptism and/or conversion on Seneca territory are supplied as well. Taking all of the above into consideration, the last section speculates on the identities of “the believers” on Seneca territory.

Finally, the concluding chapter takes up the question of whether or not the archaeological and historical records make a case for religious syncretism. I also address the problems with Richter’s assumptions about Christian factionalism dividing Iroquoian communities in the late seventeenth century and beyond. The chapter ends with some speculation on the fate of the “believers” after the missions close and suggestions as to where one might look next; it is ultimately my hope that this study will be a helpful springboard for further inquiry.

## **CHAPTER 1 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

### *Overview of the Jesuit Order*

The Jesuits have established missions all over the world since the Society of Jesus was founded in 1534. From the Society's own recorded history, Inigo Lopez de Loyola, who later took the name Ignatius, was the son of a Basque noble family in Spain. Growing up under the reign of King Ferdinand, Ignatius aspired to become a knight. In 1521 he attempted to fulfill his dream on a battlefield at Fort Pamplona. His right leg was shattered by French artillery fire, but the French soldiers who witnessed this were so impressed with his courage that they delivered him safely to his family home in Loyola. At home Ignatius began a long period of recovery with only religious books to occupy him. The result of his spiritual and intellectual engagement during this time compounded: realizing that the pursuit of earthly glory left him feeling empty (not to mention in excruciating pain), Ignatius began to consider the idea of heavenly glory and the prospects for one capable of understanding beyond the material world. His family urged him not to do anything rash, but by 1524, Ignatius left home again and wandered the world in search of a way to realize his new inner vision (Catholic Encyclopedia 1913). Compared to the clergy of his day, Ignatius was something of a maverick, and with the Inquisition taking place around the same time, Ignatius's antics led him in and out of hot water:

Having recovered health, and acquired sufficient experience to guide him in his new life, he commenced his long-meditated migration to the Holy Land. From the first he had looked forward to it as leading to a life of heroic penance; now he also regarded it as a school in which he might learn how to realize clearly and to conform himself perfectly to Christ's life. The voyage was fully as painful as he had conceived.

Poverty, sickness, exposure, fatigue, starvation, dangers of shipwreck and capture, prisons, blows, contradictions, these were his daily lot; and on his arrival the Franciscans, who had charge of the holy places, commanded him to return [home] under pain of sin (Catholic Encyclopedia 1913).

However, by 1524, Ignatius had found a safe haven at the University of Paris and began a Master's in Theology. With a group of likeminded classmates, he directed a series of meditations derived from his spiritual growth to date, which basically form the same "spiritual exercises" that modern Jesuits draw on (Society of Jesus 2009). After being ordained, Ignatius and his followers dedicated themselves to the service of Pope Paul III, who then approved the Society's creation in 1540. Ignatius was elected General Superior and served in that post until his death in 1556 at the age of 65 (Society of Jesus 2009).

Jesuits thus differed from the other kinds of monastic orders at the time, with their heavy emphasis on education and individual spiritual quickening — a tradition which continues to this very day (Society of Jesus 2009). Unlike the Spanish conquistadors who bombarded foreign shores for "God, gold and glory," the "black robes" for better or worse, lived among the indigenous groups they befriended and spoke their languages, as though they might have been "proto-anthropologists" (Steckley 1992:478).

When Jesuit mission efforts began, the great world powers were Spain and Portugal, and as a result mission sites were at first largely determined by the locations of Portuguese settlements in the East, and by the trade routes followed by the Portuguese merchants (Catholic Encyclopedia 1913). The first French Jesuit missions

were concerned with the French Caribbean and then later, New France (Catholic Encyclopedia 1913).

The New France missions through time sponsored numerous priests making their rounds through Huron and Iroquois lands and establishing permanent missions. What follows is a brief biographical account of the Jesuits who, at some point in their careers, ministered to the Seneca. It will hopefully become obvious in reading of each individual biography that “missionaries” should never be lumped together, or their intentions over-simplified. The missionary biographies are listed by order of appearance on Seneca territory.

### *Missionary Biographies*

#### **Fr. Pierre Joseph Marie Chaumonot**

Born: March 1611, Burgundy, France; Died Feb 21, 1693 Quebec

The boy who became Father Pierre Joseph Marie Chaumonot grew up poor in the French countryside. When he came of age, he was to become a cleric under the tutelage of his uncle. In hopes of going to Beaune with a friend, Chaumonot stole 100 sols from his uncle and fled home, going on a series of adventures. Fearing the legal and familial consequences of his thievery, he remained abroad for many years. After wandering as far as Italy he stumbled upon a Jesuit preaching in the countryside, and was so moved by the sermon that he took the St. Andrew’s novitiate in Rome on 18 May 1632 at 21 years of age.

As Chaumonot studied to become a priest, he met Father Poncet de La Rivière, who showed him Father Brébeuf’s *Relation* of 1636. Upon reading of Brébeuf’s work with the Mohawks, Chaumonot decided to apply for the missions in Canada,



thereby accelerating the time it usually took for a Jesuit's education to be completed before the final priesthood vows (Canadian Biography).

When Chaumonot arrived in New France, he first began preaching in Huron country with Father Poncet. When this venture ended in 1639, he spent time among the Neutrals and elsewhere in Canada. In 1655, the Onondaga had sent ambassadors to Quebec requesting missionaries; following Father Simon Le Moyne's peace mission in 1654, Chaumonot left Quebec with Father Claude Dablon in September 19 1655 and arrived at Onondaga in early November 1655 (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). From 1655-1658, while he was among the Onondaga, he also made several visits to the Huron refugees on Seneca lands until the Onondaga mission was abandoned. At that point Chaumonot left the area to return to the Hurons (Bihler 1956:84).

**Fr. Simon Le Moyne**

Born: October 22, 1604 Beauvais, France; Died: November 24, 1665 Cap-de-la-Madeleine

Little is known of Father Simon Le Moyne's early life, other than his birth year and place. He entered the Jesuit novitiate at Rouen, France on December 10, 1622 at only sixteen years of age. Through the Jesuits he was able to study philosophy at the Collège de Clermont in Paris during 1624–27. After completing his studies, he spent the remainder of his novitiate and probationary years in various teaching positions in France. While no mention is made of why he volunteered for the New France missions, he arrived in Quebec on June 30, 1638 (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). He was sent to do mission work in Huron territory, but this did not begin well. A letter from Father François Du Peron, tells of how Le Moyne was abandoned by his

Huron guides in the wilderness. For 15 days, he and his companion survived on hunting small game. Luckily, Father Du Peron and his party came by unexpectedly and so Father Le Moyne made it to Huron territory after all. He remained there until 1649; following the defeat of the Huron nation, he returned to Quebec. Like Father Chaumonot, Simon Le Moyne acquired fluency in Algonquian and Huron languages during his tenure in New France. The Hurons gave him the name “Ouane” (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). In 1661, the Onondaga mission was re-established; Father Simon Le Moyne, as Chaumonot had done, began journeying from there to Seneca lands. His most eminent achievement in New France was diplomatic. In 1653 a treaty had been signed between the Iroquois and the French, but the terms of the agreement were very tenuously regarded and war was a growing risk. For his part, Father Le Moyne spent the years 1654-1662 traveling back and forth between the French and various Iroquois lands in hopes of brokering peace. By the time Father Le Moyne died, “four of the five nations were seeking peace with the French” (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). An additional testament to his success in the matter comes to us from the words of a renowned Onondaga chief, Garakontié:

When he learned of the death of his old friend, he spoke these words: “Ondessonk, hearest thou me from the country of the dead, whither thou hast so quickly passed? Thou it was who didst so many times expose thy life on the scaffolds of the Agniehronnons [Mohawks]; who didst go bravely into their very fires, to snatch so many Frenchmen from the flames; who didst carry peace and tranquility whithersoever thou didst go, and who madest converts wherever thou didst dwell. We have seen thee on our council-mats deciding questions of peace and war; our cabins were found to be too small when thou didst enter them, and our villages themselves were too cramped when thou wast present, – so great was the crowd of people attracted thither by thy words. But I disturb thy rest with this importunate address. So often didst thou teach us that this life of afflictions is followed by one of eternal happiness; since, then, thou dost now possess that life, what reason have we to mourn thee? But

we weep for thee because, in losing thee, we have lost our Father and Protector. Nevertheless we will console ourselves with the thought that thou still holdest that relation to us in Heaven, and that thou hast found in that abode the infinite joy whereof thou has so Often told us.” (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009)

### **Julien Garnier**

Born: January 6, 1643 Brittany, France; Died: January 30, 1730 Quebec

Julien Garnier entered the Jesuit Order at the age of 17. Two years later, he arrived in Quebec. For the next three years, he taught at the Jesuit College and studied Huron, Algonquian, and Iroquois languages. He began his mission work with Father Jacques Bruyas among the Oneidas, shortly thereafter went to work with the Onondagas (Canadian Biography 2009). In 1668 he was summoned by Father Fremin to assist with the Seneca mission, and it is in Seneca land where he remained the longest. Notably, his overall tenure in New France was the longest of any of the Jesuits; by the time he died, he had spent over 67 years and 3 months in the northeast (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). Father Garnier was prolific at gathering converts and also was an adept linguist; he eventually wrote a dictionary of the Seneca language (Bihler 1956:86). As will be discussed later, during his time with the Seneca Garnier was careful to try and separate his mission work from politics, noting how contentiously the movements of the French military were perceived by his charges.

### **Jacques Fremin**

Born: March 12, 1628 Reims; Died: July 20, 1691 Quebec

Father Jacques Frémin became a Jesuit in Paris on November 21, 1646, and came to Canada in 1655. In 1656 his work with the Onondaga intersected with Simon Le Moyne’s embassy. The dictionary of Canadian Biography omits his time in Seneca land, but we know from Catholic Historian Hugh Bihler and the *Jesuit Relations* that

Fremin came to minister to the sick refugees in November of 1668 (Bihler 1954:86). It is not noted when he left Seneca lands, but he remained active in ministry throughout Iroquois territory as he visited with Onondagas, Cayugas, and Mohawks. He also made several trips back and forth to France in the interests of the missions. When his health deteriorated, he became the confessor to the nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu until his death (Canadian Biography 2009). As a final note on Fremin, *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* seems to both insult and condone him. The source of this information is not cited: “Father Frémin’s intelligence was not great, and his manners lacked refinement, but his courage and good sense were particularly outstanding. It is estimated that during his apostolate he baptized some 10,000 natives” (Canadian Biography 2009).

**Pierre Raffeix**

Born: January 15, 1635 Clermont-Ferrand; Died: August 29, 1724 Quebec.

Pierre Raffeix entered the novitiate March 23, 1653 at the age of eighteen. According to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, he arrived at Quebec on September 22, 1663. In 1666 he was appointed as assistant to Father Chaumonot at the Huron mission at Quebec. When the mission ended, he returned to Quebec and taught classics and rhetoric at Jesuit College. In 1671 he handed over this work to Father Frémin, and went with Father Julien Garnier to start teaching the gospel to the Senecas (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). Raffeix was also the lawyer of the group; in acting as “procurator” he helped to settle certain legal disputes concerning the Jesuits and the French government in and out of court. Like Father Fremin, in his old

age Father Raffeix also spent his time hearing confessions until he died (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009).

**Francois Vaillant De Gueslis**

Born: July 20, 1646 Orléans; Died: September 24, 1718 Moulins

François Vaillant de Gueslis entered the Jesuit novitiate on November 10, 1665 in Paris. He sailed for Quebec in 1670 without finishing his university studies. He began mission work under the guidance of Father Chaumonot at Lorette from 1675-1676. Afterwards, de Gueslis went to the Mohawk country to assist Father Jacques de Lamberville. When war closed the Mohawk missions, de Gueslis appears to have made a fateful decision. According to the Dictionary of Canadian biography: “he accompanied Brisay de Denonville on his expedition against the Senecas, and on July 19, 1687, set his hand to the act taking over their country. On 31 December 1687 he went as an ambassador to Thomas Dongan, the governor of New York, to try to persuade him to promote peace between the French and the Iroquois” (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2010). The sources do not indicate what prompted de Gueslis to take such actions, nor is it mentioned what consequences his choice of allegiances may have had, given the pains his Jesuit colleagues in New France took to avoid association with the French military. During the 1690s de Gueslis remained in Montreal, functioning as a Superior for a community of men. When the position ended in 1697, de Gueslis was then sent to a Detroit mission, which only lasted for a few months due to the hostility he was met with. In 1702, he accompanied Julian Garnier to Seneca territory. Sources do not indicate what particular Seneca mission de Gueslis worked at, nor is there any mention of his time in Seneca Territory in the *Jesuit*

*Relations*. However, given what is written of Julian Garnier's general approach towards the Seneca and his apprehension regarding the French military advances around the missions, it could be that pairing Garnier with a priest who previously worked with Denonville may have spelled disaster in an already uneasy working environment. By 1706 De Gueslis returned to Montreal, where he remained until 1716. A year later, he journeyed back to France and succumbed to illness (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2010).

**Father Joseph-Francois Lafitau**

Born: May 31, 1681 Died: July 3, 1746 Bordeaux

Both Father Joseph-Francois Lafitau and his younger brother Pierre-François (1685–1764) joined the Jesuit order in their teens. While Father Pierre-François stayed in Europe and became the bishop of Sisteron, France, Father Joseph Lafitau, arrived in New France just before the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. He spent a total of fifteen years in New France. According to the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, he took up residence at Sault-Saint-Louis (Caughnawaga), on the south shore of the St Lawrence opposite Montreal. Sault-Saint-Louis was founded by Fathers Pierre Raffeix, Jacques Frémin, and Jean de Lamberville. Under the tutelage of Father Julian Garnier, Lafitau became fluent in numerous Iroquoian languages and utilized the library resources of Quebec to further his studies. A dedicated scientist, linguist and anthropologist, Father Lafitau wrote extensively on Iroquoian language, customs, herbal medicine and religious views. Even though the Seneca missions were closed by the time Lafitau was established in New France, much of what is known about Iroquoian spirituality and ceremony was transcribed by Lafitau in the *Jesuit Relations* – hence why it seems

appropriate to mention him here. Lafitau's work was arguably ahead of his time, setting him apart from contemporaries and from the writers of the Enlightenment:

He stressed the importance of describing cultures in terms of themselves, and in his view the [savages] of the New World were men, the Iroquois were people in their own right, and their customary ways were worthy of study. This was a new kind of primitivism that would transform generic savages into specific Indians. Although many of his comparisons seem farfetched today, and his inferences from them unjustified, he was more competent than his contemporaries and more mature because of his unique way of utilizing field observations to criticize earlier sources on the Iroquoian peoples and of employing their customs as a means of understanding the nature of antique society and culture. (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2000)

Father Lafitau was able to be published through the help of his brother, but his work was arguably not given its full dues by the scholarly community until anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep praised Lafitau, applauding his systematic sense and pointing to him as an inspiration for modern French ethnology. Other early anthropologists such as Louis Henry Morgan, Sir John Myers, and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown also claimed him as a "pioneer" in the discipline (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2000).

One last Jesuit affiliated with the Seneca mission does not appear to have published biography: Father D'Heu (Bihler 1956:95-96).

### ***The Seneca Iroquois***

The Senecas, along with the Cayugas, Mohawks, Onondagas, Oneidas and Tuscaroras comprise the Iroquois Confederacy. The French traders who first encountered the Senecas translated their name as the *Tsonnontouans*. One will find both Senecas and *Tsonnontouans* mentioned in the *Jesuit Relations* and various secondary sources; hence it is important to remember that both terms refer to the same

people. In their own language, the Seneca call themselves the “*Onöndowága*,” which literally means “people of the great hill” (Richter 1992:1). The Seneca, as well as the other members of the Confederacy, refer to themselves as belonging to the *Haudenosaunee*, or “people of the longhouse” (Richter 1992:1).

Far from being merely a dwelling, the longhouse itself symbolizes a deep regard for community and family, which some scholars (Richter 1992:19) have suggested stems from the depths of Iroquoian cosmogony. In each longhouse, several families lived communally. Iroquoian clans are named after different animals, and to this day, one’s clan affiliation is handed down through the mother’s line (e.g. matrilineal kinship). Thus, although their husbands would be from different clans, all the women residing in one longhouse may actually hail from the same clan. Among the Senecas, Onondagas and Cayugas, clan groups are further divided into moieties with specific ritual obligations to one another. Overall, the notion of reciprocity was a cardinal virtue of “longhouse society” (Richter 1992:21).

One of the best examples of reciprocity and ritual comes to us from the account of the General Assembly by Fr. Francois Le Mercier:

We follow the location of the places in the order of the Chapters; for after the Nation of [the Mohawk] and that of [Oneida], proceeding in a Southwesterly direction, we reach [Onondaga], -- a large Village, and the center of all the Iroquois Nations, -- where every year the States-general, so to speak, is held, to settle the differences that may have arisen among them in the course of the year. Their Policy in this is very wise, and has nothing Barbarous in it. For, since their preservation depends upon their union, and since it is hardly possible that among peoples where license reigns with all impunity -- and, above all, among young people -- there should not happen some event capable of causing a rupture, and disuniting their minds, -- for these reasons, they hold every year a general assembly in Onnontaté [Onondaga]. There all the deputies from the different Nations are present, to make their complaints and receive the



necessary satisfaction in mutual gifts, -- by means of which they maintain a good understanding with one another. (JR 51:80-81)

The act of being “clear minded” in both diplomatic and day-to-day interactions, especially when faced with bereavement or thoughts of vengeance, was arguably a vital outcome of these ritual functions (Richter 1992:39). While the Iroquoian practice of gift-giving and their notion of communal ownership was regarded highly by the Jesuits, it was often misunderstood by the Dutch and English, who tended to view alliance and property in stricter economic terms (Richter 1992:22).

The Senecas built their longhouses and formed several villages predominantly in what is now West-Central New York, between the Genesee River and Canandaigua Lake (Houghton 1912:367). Wray and Schoff (1953) first suggested that the Senecas built two major villages, paired each with at least one smaller “satellite settlement.” Each major village site contained roughly between one and two thousand people (Vandrei 1987:10). Also, while the Seneca practiced agriculture and were fairly sedentary in that regard, they still moved their villages at least every 10-20 years (Wray and Schoff 1953:2). Even though archaeological investigations have since re-dated the site sequence (Sempowski and Saunders 2001), the basic settlement pattern proposed by Wray and Schoff has been corroborated and elaborated on in the thorough investigations of modern scholars (Jordan 2004; 2008).

From their village outposts, the Senecas were connected to a vast network of trade and exchange involving other native groups, as well as the Dutch, the French and later, the English. As will be elaborated on later, it is very likely that “Jesuit artifacts”

or Christian ideas preceded the missionaries' entrance to Seneca territory. Just as much as their territorial position was beneficial, it also wound up placing the Senecas in the middle of political turmoil. While the particulars of the missionary period will be dealt with later, it is important to realize that even after the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht ensured nominal British control of New York, diplomacy continued to hang in the balance. Senecas, whenever possible, strived to remain neutral as they were continuously visited by the English, the Dutch, as well as French-Canadian traders (Richter 1992:246).

An account from 1716 describes the hospitality extended to a group of "New Yorkers" (British) who came to Seneca land, bound for Irondequoit Bay. The travelers were greeted with a fully operational trading post and smithing services—along with the presence of some French Canadians. Before they continued on their way, the Seneca "invited them to return again" and offered to "build them a house" (Richter 1992:246). Richter attributes this gesture by the Seneca to a desire for "balance between empires" (Richter 1992:246). The balance managed to endure through the mid-eighteenth century, until the French-Indian War (Richter 1992:246).

### ***Iroquoian Spirituality***

"Spirituality" is potentially a more inclusive term than "religion" for the vast corpus of cosmogony, ceremony, and ritual expressed among members of the Five Nations, as well as the Huron. For Iroquoian people everything in daily life, from the construction of villages, to hunting, farming, warfare and ceremony, relates to their spiritual beliefs and values. To understand this, the best place to go first is the Iroquoian creation story, the Legend of Sky Woman.

The Legend of Sky Woman accounts for the making of the world and people, and also explains the existence of evil and magic inherent in the natural world (Richter 1992:9-10). While there are variations in the telling of the tale, the basic story depicts Sky Woman falling from her celestial home through a hole in the uprooted Tree of Life. As she fell to the watery void below, a great turtle rose from the water to form dry land, and other animal spirits emerged to help her as well. In Iroquoian cosmogony, “the Sky World is populated by *ongwe shona*, or first peoples; this world is inhabited by *ongwe honwe*, ‘real men,’ material re-creations of the *ongwe shona* of the Sky World. Both the *ongwe honwe* and the *ongwe shona* are considered as persons by the Iroquois; that is, as having a consciousness and an awareness of self and others” (Blanchard 1982:219).

In some versions, Sky Woman gives birth to twins first; in others, she initially has a daughter (Tekawerahkwa), who then is impregnated by the West Wind and has the twins (Iroquois Museum 2009). Either way, the twins exemplify good and evil, respectively. Through the actions of the “Good Twin” and the “Bad Twin,” the world is explained dualistic terms. For every item created by Good Twin, there was an opposition created by Bad Twin. For example, if Good Twin made a straight river, Bad Twin added rocks to bend the river; if Good Twin created a food plant, Bad Twin made a poisonous one (Richter 1992:10). Depending on the version of the story, Skywoman (or Tekawerahkwa) died in childbirth when Bad Twin tore out of her body below the arm. From her body, the three sisters were created: corn, beans and squash. Good Twin and Bad Twin continued to struggle for power following the death of their mother. Good Twin triumphed, but since both were gods, neither could die, and Good

Twin could not undo the evil already in the World (Iroquois Museum 2009). To help humans, Good Twin taught them both practical things, such as how to grow corn, as well as ceremonial means of communication with the Sky World. He also organized people into clans and named each after an animal representative (Richter 1992:11). Owing to the implicit idea of the “god” or “goddess” figure creating the world and the properties thereof through their own body, a major component of Iroquoian spirituality is thus reverence for the natural world and a seeking of balance between the constantly dueling forces of light and dark.

### *Shamans and Magic*

A major component of Iroquoian ceremony and spirituality involves communication with the spirit world and “non-human persons” (Richter 1992:24). Shamans were thought to be supernaturally gifted individuals with the ability to harness certain amounts of power. According to Richter: “ideally shamans used their skills for the benefit of individuals and the community— to heal the sick, to make crops grow, to assure a successful hunt—and thereby increased the spiritual power and physical well-being of the kin-group and village” (Richter 1992:25).

Nevertheless, as Blanchard points out, “these same persons must learn to control this power or else suffer the consequences at the hands of their communities” (Blanchard 1982:224). Users of “magic” had to walk a fine line, even though Shamans were expected to produce physical signs such as rain or crops as a sign of their powers (Richter 1992:25). However, there was also an ample amount of superstition regarding sorcerers and/or witches—the most widely used terms for anyone who would harness supernatural forces to do evil (Blanchard 1982:224).

The earliest writings on Iroquoian magic actually come from Fr. Paul Le Jeune's ministry to the Huron. Even though the Seneca are distinct from the Huron, the spiritual beliefs described are common to both the Huron and the Five Nations. In 1637 Fr. Le Jeune wrote a letter detailing the Huron beliefs in good and evil. In the letter, he borrows the Algonquian term "Manitou" likely because his guides and interpreters were Algonquian (Jordan personal communication 2009).

[They give] the name Manitou to all Nature superior to man, good or bad. This is why, when we speak of God, they sometimes call him the good Manitou; and, when we speak of the Devil, they call him the bad Manitou. Now all those who have any special acquaintance with the Manitou, be he good or bad, are called among them "*Manitouisiouekhi*." And inasmuch as these persons know only the bad Manitou, that is, the Devil, we call them Sorcerers. Not that the Devil communicates with them as obviously as he does with the Sorcerers and Magicians of Europe; but we have no other name to give them, since they even do some of the acts of genuine sorcerers,—as, to kill one another by charms, or wishes, and imprecations, by the abetment of the Manitou, by poisons which they concoct. And this is so common among them, at least in their own opinion, that I hardly ever see any of them die who does not think he has been bewitched. This is why they have no other Physicians than the Sorcerers, whom they employ to break the spells by which they think they are held. (JR 12:5-7)

Based on this text, it almost appears as though the Huron feared the use and abuse of power by others more so than an actual "devil." Similarly, the detachment from a single superior God and the deployment of "Manitou" to suffice for all things supernatural is almost analogous to the Iroquoian view of Mankind as the "sum of many parts."

### *Soul Mysteries*

The typical Western idea of the soul as an ambient spiritual component, capable of transcending bodily death barely begins to fathom the complexity through which the soul was understood by many Native American cultures. When the Catholic

Jesuits began their missions, they found themselves among a people already quite fluent in their own mysteries of the soul. Rather than viewing each person as having one indivisible spiritual essence, the Huron and Iroquois were inclined to view each person as the sum of many “soul-parts,” an understanding which prevails throughout the Five Nations and the Huron (Hultkrantz 1997:2-4).

The *life soul* was the most “earthy” aspect of a person’s spiritual substance. Above all, the life soul depended on the corporeal body—whether it was living or not. Many Iroquoian groups, including the Huron believed that this part of the “being” hovered close to the corpse for several days or longer. This explains the community emphasis on mortuary treatments in general, as well as the Huron Feast of the Dead (Hultkrantz 1997:209-210).

Attached but separate from the life soul was the idea of an *ego soul*, which is essentially what remains of the departed individual’s mind and personality after death. Sometimes the ego soul is associated with ghosts or “wandering spirits” (Hultkrantz 1997:204-207). In the event of a “haunting,” the ego soul is what enables the spirit’s manifestation.

The remaining idea of *free soul* is potentially the Native American answer to the Judeo-Christian preoccupation with bodily integrity in that it is the most otherworldly part of one’s being that could move between realms. A particular matter of concern with the free soul was the idea of *soul loss*. Besides illness or other physical causes of the death, the free soul could be endangered by unfriendly magic and enemy curses. In the case of unconscious, comatose or entranced people, it is thought that the free soul has left the body to directly commune with the spirit realm,

while the life soul helped to carry on normal body functioning. By the same token, it was presumed that if the free soul was away for too long, physical death was imminent. Besides illness or other natural causes of the death, the free soul could be endangered or compromised by things such as unfriendly magic and enemy curses, and could be enslaved during the course of torture, if the prisoner cried out to his captors (Hultkrantz 1997:188-189). The free soul also seems to be the part of the person active in dreams (Englebrecht 2003:48).

### *Dreamers and Healers*

Dreams were perhaps the most widely-regarded part of Iroquoian spirituality. Throughout the Jesuit Relations, the missionaries repeatedly lament the dream superstitions that seemed to permeate into all aspects of life.

Prior to contact with the missionaries, the people in any Iroquoian village who had authority over spiritual matters were the medicine men, also known as shamans; in the *Jesuit Relations*, the French authors refer to them pejoratively as “Jugglers.” As the terms “shaman” and “medicine man” respectively imply, the Iroquoian concept of medicine was innately spiritual. Writing from the St. Michael Seneca mission during the summer of 1669, Father Fremin criticizes the village shamans, for both the proliferation of “superstition” against Christianity, and for what he feels is economic exploitation: “They [Jugglers] are always summoned to explain the Dreams, and as they know admirably how to turn them to their own profit, they live and grow rich on the credulity of these poor people, who spare nothing – above ail, when they are sick – to carry out what the Jugglers has told them the dream orders them to do” (JR 54:99).

The extent to which dreams were so deeply regarded caused Fremin to comment: “The Iroquois have, properly speaking, only a single Divinity — the dream” (JR 54:95).” Moreover, in the preface to Volume 54 Fremin notes that: “the Senecas [in particular] are even more superstitious than other tribes regarding the importance of dreams” (JR 54:10). In the same passage, Fremin also states that he and his colleagues are “in constant danger of death at the hands of some savage who may have dreamed of killing them” (JR 54:10). Dreams, which were viewed as direct messages from the spirit world, were to be obeyed as closely as possible. While people did not worship their dreams or offer them any sacrifices, failing to appease whatever a dream suggested would guarantee any number of ill consequences (JR 54:97). Consequently, the Jesuits felt that by “inclination natural to their sex” women were most devoted to dream superstition, and that people seemed more inclined to heed their dreams in times of sickness rather than in health, since the dream could spell the means to a cure (JR 54:99).

Father Fremin provided a detailed account of the lengths people would go to appease their dreams:

He who has dreamed during the night that he was bathing, runs immediately, as soon as he rises, all naked, to several cabins, in each of which he has a kettleful of water thrown over his body, however cold the weather may be. Another who has dreamed that he was taken prisoner and burned alive, has himself bound and burned like a captive on the next day, being persuaded that by thus satisfying his dream, this fidelity will avert from him the pain and infamy of captivity and death, — which, according to what he has learned from his Divinity, he is otherwise bound to suffer among his enemies. Some have been known to go as far as Quebec, traveling a hundred and fifty leagues, for the sake of getting a dog that they had dreamed of buying there. (JR 54:97)



Arguably the last thing a prospective convert let go of – *if* they ever let go – was the belief in the power of their dreams: “The great obstacles to the missionary’s success are the dependence of these people upon dreams” (JR 57:15). The Jesuits thus took a multi-faceted approach to undermining dreams and other practices they deemed “superstitious.” Ironically, many of their approaches caused people to view the “black robes” as shamans, whereby they replaced indigenous superstitions with Catholic ones. Outside of dreams, the use of sweat lodges, chanting, dances, charms and fetishes, fasting, drugs and alcohol or even self-mutilation, were all regarded as “integral religious experiences” (Blanchard 1982:219). The intersection of Native and Catholic beliefs will be explored in more detail later.

### ***The Jesuit Missions to the Seneca***

The Jesuits often wrote letters back and forth to one another and to their Superiors, concerning their work in New France and elsewhere. These correspondences served both administrative and documentary purposes for the Jesuit order, and as a consequence give scholars details about their travels among the Five Nations Iroquois and the Huron. In all these exchanges, the *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents 1610-1791* may exhibit a Eurocentric bias to the eyes of the modern reader. Yet as primary source material they provide an invaluable amount of historical context for archaeological projects, and also may serve as a scholarly template through which to examine the harbingers of cultural change: contact and eventual colonialism. The *Jesuit Relations* were compiled and translated by Reuben Gold Thwaites between 1896 and 1901 (Library and Archives Canada 2008). The occasional journal and letter style of the writings allows today’s reader the chance to follow genuine human voices

across time—statistical data is pushed aside in favor of anecdote, in favor of the moment that shook the writer and sometimes his most cherished beliefs to the core.

The *Jesuit Relations* covers the Seneca missionary period in several volumes. The earliest documented visits to Seneca territory begin in the *Relation of 1656-1657* (JR 44). In 1657, Father Pierre Chaumonot arrived from Cayuga territory and began to preach to the Huron refugees associated with what he knew to be the “village of Saint Michael,” a satellite community of “Gandagan,” known even then to the French as the “Seneca capital.” For the sake of archaeological understanding, in 1657, Gandagan was probably the Marsh site (Jordan, personal communication 2009). After arriving in Gandagan and exchanging “ceremonial tokens of alliance” (i.e., gifts) Chaumonot began to preach,. He supplemented the Gospel with personal rhetoric as he spoke to his audience: "Will you [all] not trust those living presents, and such bravery and courage? And will you be simple enough to think that so clever a band of men would have left their native country,—the finest and most agreeable in the world,—and endured such fatigue, in order to bring a falsehood so far?" (JR 44:21) After a period of deliberation, the elders agreed with Chaumonot and entreated the Jesuit to continue his work: “After having maturely deliberated, they replied that they willingly believed and embraced the Faith which we had been kind enough to bring to them, and they earnestly begged the Father to reside with them, in order the better to instruct them in our mysteries. One was more deeply touched than the others; he would not allow the Father to depart before he had been instructed and baptized, and had obtained the same happiness for his wife” (JR 44:21). Even though duty soon called Chaumonot back to

Onondaga lands (JR 44:23), his letter anticipates the founding of permanent Seneca missions.

On November 1, 1668, Father Jacques Fremin began the first permanent mission in Seneca territory at what became the St. Michael mission. His charges there, again, were described as mostly Huron refugees (Bihler 1956:86), many of whom were already practicing Christians (JR 54:9). However, the village dynamic Fremin encountered was probably very different from when Chaumonot visited, because a terrible epidemic was making its rounds across Seneca lands and beyond. The number of sick and dying people needing ministry overwhelmed Fremin, and so Father Julien Garnier was summoned from Onondaga lands to help (JR 54:9). The epidemic ended soon after Garnier's arrival, and since he and Fremin were no longer consumed with making so many sick-visits, they used the opportunity to double their mission efforts.

In a 1669 letter, Fremin wrote:

Accordingly, having no further occupation with the sick, we began to proclaim the Gospel to these people, who had never heard of Jesus Christ; and, in order to do it with the greater success in different places, Father Garnier took charge of the Village named Gandachiragou. There, in a short time, he built a Chapel, which is very convenient, and to which people come from all directions for instruction. As for me, on the twenty-seventh of September, 1669, I entered the Village named Gandougaraé, where I was received with all the marks of public joy. For a long time I had been expected there with impatience (JR 54:79).

At Gandougaraé, Fremin found himself ministering to a diverse group of inhabitants, including Hurons, as well as people from other indigenous nations who had been "incorporated" onto Seneca lands:

The remnants of three different Nations which were formerly overthrown by the Iroquois, obliged to surrender at the discretion of the conqueror, and to come and settle in his country. The first Nation is called Onnontioga, the second the Neutrals, and the third the Hurons. The first two have seen scarcely

any Europeans, nor have they ever heard of the true God. As for the third, it is a sort of conglomerate of several Villages of the Hurons, all of whom were instructed in the Faith, and a number baptized by our Fathers, before that flourishing Nation was overthrown by the arms of the Iroquois (JR 54:79-81).

While his Chapel was being built, Fremin called on various households. The piety of the Huron villagers, many of whom had remained steadfast in faith even without priests is recounted at length (JR 54:81). Fremin noted however, “as for the Onnontioga, Tsonnontouens, and Neutrals, they have scarcely seen any Europeans, and have never heard of the Faith” (JR 54:83). Reading this, one might infer that the Seneca, or even the general Iroquoian way of life involved tolerance for different ideologies and social practices, especially when it came to incorporated conquered enemies into their villages. In contrast to seventeenth-century European engaged in a variety of bloody struggles over religion, the Christians and the non-Christians of the Five Nations appeared to be able to co-exist in relative peace. Fremin personally admired this non-militant, yet devout adherence to faith, as he wrote:

What I have most admired in those Hurons who have been Christians for several years is the public profession which they often made of their Faith, without blushing for the Gospel, or fearing the insults and mockery of the Pagans — a course which, among an entirely infidel and Barbarous people, is more difficult than can be believed. The other Nations were so well convinced of the firmness which they manifested in their Faith that they no longer called them by any other name than “the Believers” and “the Faithful;” and, among them all, two men had gained for themselves so high a reputation for virtue throughout the country, that everyone felt a veneration for them. (JR 54:83)

As mass was said from day to day in the newly built Chapel, Fremin observed that the: “fervor of the Hurons passed even to their children, and these little savages were seen persuading the children of the other Nations to accompany them into the

Chapel, in order to pray with them there, — a proceeding which obliged their fathers and mothers to come and see what they were doing, and sometimes to follow their example, in order not to be put to confusion by being outdone” (JR 54:85). This passage suggests that the Jesuits, even as much as they preached and made house visits, were also willing to let Christianity take hold gradually as people, acting on their own accord, grew more curious.

Of course, this is not to suggest that the preaching of the Jesuits was always unopposed or that the Jesuits themselves were always welcome. Toward the end of Fremin’s 1669 letter, he recounts how a drunken man tried to assassinate Father Garnier in the first of many such attempts that Garnier experienced during his career:

Departing from Onnontagué [Onondaga], we arrived on the seventh of September at Gandachiragou. While we were calling at Gandagara, a drunken man seized Father Garnier with one hand, and raised the other two different times to stab him with a knife; but, by good luck, a woman who chanced to be not very far from this Barbarian, took the knife out of his hand and prevented him from carrying his brutality farther. I admired on this occasion the firmness and resoluteness of the Father, who did not even change color. (JR 54:115)

With that episode behind them, Fremin concluded his letter by assuring his Superiors that he was now fully installed at St. Michael “at a Village called Gandagarae” (JR 54:119), while Garnier worked diligently “in the Village of Gandachiragou” (JR 54:119).

While incidental mentions of the Seneca may occur elsewhere in the *Relations*, volumes 56-59 contain the most information on the missions during peak years Jesuit of activity. Volume 56, which dates from 1671-1672, contains a July 1672 letter from

Father Garnier to his Superiors. In this letter, Garnier acknowledged the relationship between the French military's movements and the "success" of his mission work: "The spiritual interests of these Missions depend largely on temporal affairs, and above all on the state of men's minds regarding the peace with the French" (JR 56:57). To support his statement, Garnier recounted how a council of elders from a village called Gandachiorágon informed him that they wished to begin Christian prayer customs and also gave him permission by to minister to the sick and otherwise visit freely with the village inhabitants. However, the advance of the French army and the oratorical skills of an unidentified "old man" soon eroded these sentiments. Garnier wrote: "rumors of the approach of a French army soon undid these small beginnings. The people's minds being ill prepared, the demon used the opportunity to make them speak against the faith and against its preachers. An old [Cayuga] man who came some years ago from Goiogouen, — a mischief-maker, but a persuasive speaker, able to do what he Will with our Tsonnontouans, and passing among them for a prodigy of wisdom, — is wont to demonstrate to them that the faith makes people die" (JR 56:58). The heckler to Garnier's ministry accused the Jesuits of being spies for the French and evil sorcerers who no doubt bought the plague into villages as a part of their under-handed political dealings (JR 56:58). Garnier continues his letter by writing of how once genial relationships with villagers were now cold and threatening. There were on-going talk of plans to assassinate the priest and a great deal of harassment directed at Garnier, especially when people had occasion to over-indulge in alcohol (JR 56:61). Nonetheless, Garnier assured his Superiors that in spite of these setbacks, he continued his work in earnest (JR 56:61).

The rest of the letter relays some of the more noteworthy interactions with new and prospective converts to the faith. Much of what Garnier described involves the baptism of sick and dying individuals. These “deathbed” conversions will be examined in more detail later in this thesis. Of the living “believers,” it is again the Huron who strike Garnier with their zeal: “The Hurons of the Mission of Saint Michel are more desirous than ever to go to Quebec and swell the Church of Nostre-Dame de Foy; and some of those who are not yet Christians have declared that they would then embrace the Faith.” (JR 56:65)

Garnier ended his letter by saying that he still had a great deal of hope that through continuing education, Christianity would continue to spread and would ultimately prevail among the Seneca:

After all, I have observed that it is not so much depravity of morals that prevents our Savages from being Christians, as the prejudiced impressions which most of them have of the Faith and Christianity. I know nearly two hundred families among them, who maintain inviolate the marriage-bond, and rear their children in morality; who keep their daughters from undue freedom of intercourse abroad, and from plunging into riots of sensuality; and who, would be inclined to live very Christian lives if they had the Faith. (JR 56:69)

The Relation of 1672-1673 (JR 57), allows readers to pick up with Garnier and his charges a year later. Unlike mission efforts in other Iroquoian territories, Garnier’s account was optimistic. He reported high numbers of baptisms and even requests that another priest join him since the Mission of St. Jacques (Gandagaro) was growing (JR 57:13-14). While tenuous politics among the French, English, Iroquois and Algonquin fur traders remained in the background, Garnier’s ministry seemed to be thriving. He wrote:

We have never performed our duties in greater quiet and with more freedom than this year. Father Raffeix arrived at La Conception at the end of the month of July; and, a month afterward, I returned to St. Michel whence I had gone forth a year before, — Both because the village had been entirely consumed by fire, and because I alone remained at Tsonnontouan. Here, I have experienced all the satisfaction that I could hope to obtain from our Christians, — through their assiduous attendance in the chapel, night and morning, at prayers, and Their punctuality in coming every Sunday to the instruction that I give them before Mass; and through the Zeal that several of them manifest in taking the part of the faith when any irreligious men speak against it. (JR 57:190-191)

In addition to the details of his ministry, it is worth noting for the sake of archaeology that the burned village Garnier mentions could refer to the Bunce or Cherry Street sites. Both these were satellites of the Ganondagan community (Jordan 2004:12) and thus might be associated with the St. Michel mission.

Furthermore, even though reliable quantitative data is not often present in the *Relations*, Garnier does provide his Superiors with a sense of how many people had been baptized so far: “Since the month of July, 1672, I have baptized 43 children — 29 of whom already enjoy the happiness that baptism has procured for them, while several of the others still linger — and 12 adults, 9 of whom died shortly after their baptism, giving me many evidences of their predestination” (JR 57 198-199). The “happiness” Garnier speaks of in this passage would refer to eternal paradise in Heaven, which again strengthened the association that many non-coverts made between death and baptism.

Volume 58 concludes parts of the Relation of 1672-1673 before mentioning subsequent events. As far as the Iroquois missions are concerned, the prologue would lead one to believe that nothing had profoundly changed. However, Father Francis Xavier (1682-1761) while in residence at the mission of St. Marc [to the Fox tribe]



recalled how a party of Iroquois hand-delivered a letter from Garnier to him. Xavier asked the party how Garnier and his charges were doing and was given some vexing news. He wrote:

The 11th. They summoned me to the council, where the ambassadors who came From the Iroquois handed me Reverend Father Garnier’s Letters. When I had read Them, they asked me whether matters were right. I replied that they were, provided The Iroquois kept their word; that there was, however, one thing wrong, and this was that they had talked too much while with the Iroquois, — that they had said that they had driven the black gown away from their country, and would no longer have any Relations with the French. They were so surprised at such a deception that they remained for a long time without uttering a word. Finally they cried out: “It is the Iroquois who have invented that; they love not the French. But we love the black gown. We beg thee to continue to take care of us, to instruct our children, and to love us.” (JR 58:51-53)

This passage dates to sometime around June 1673 and is yet another example of how the missions were often at the mercy of politics. The identities of the Iroquoian messengers are not clear from the text, and so the correlation of this passage to a historical event remains, for now, uncertain. However, later on in the volume, Father Raffeix and Garnier write in detail of the missions at St. Michael, La Conception and St. Jacques, and no mention of expulsion is made.

Of his charges at St. Michael and St. Jacques, Father Garnier seems to have felt that indigenous “superstition” was the last remaining obstacle to Catholicism:

[if they] had detached themselves from the superstitions of the country as thoroughly as they have hitherto preserved themselves from the vice of drunkenness, we would have no trouble in making true Christians of them. Most of them ask Father Garnier for baptism, and he is obliged to refuse them, because they will not renounce some dances and other superstitious ceremonies which they use as remedies in their illnesses. Two things render follies of this kind more difficult to cast off: the first is the false hope of recovering health by this means; the second is the profit that many of them derive from it. This has not prevented two of the poorest families of the village from giving an example of generosity and fidelity to God, — all the more admirable since, in abandoning the practice of

these superstitions, they deprived themselves of the sole resource that remained to them for relieving their poverty and extreme indigence. One often sees in these poor barbarians similar effects of a powerful grace, which are an evident proof of heroic virtue. (JR 58:229)

At La Conception, Father Raffeix's account mirrored Garnier's sentiments: "The great number of superstitions that have gathered here with the tribes who have come hither for refuge, after the destruction of their own country, is a considerable impediment to the propagation of the Gospel" (JR 58:237).

Even though it has already been established among scholars that prospective converts were highly reluctant to give up their traditional dances and ceremonies, the idea of an "economy" from such things may be a fairly new concept – especially since the example Garnier mentions is not of a shaman, but of two families enduring what appears to be economic and other hardships for not participating in ritual activity. Garnier does not elaborate further, but for future reference we might ask how certain people were "paid" by others for the conducting of ceremonies or rituals. We may also ask what Garnier, as a village outsider, might have meant by "the poor" – especially since the typical portrait of seventeenth century "longhouse society" usually evokes images of economic equality. Lastly, if "the poor" of St. Michael in question were displaced Hurons, what does this say about the corpus of ceremonial traditions embraced at different times by the Iroquois?

When Volume 59 (1673-74) opens, in the preface confirms that the missionaries were still among the Seneca, but their work was being significantly challenged: "the Senecas are least inclined to embrace the faith; but the missionaries among them 'fail not to win many victories over hell'" (JR 59:13). Later on in the preface, we learn that

at this time the Seneca had just defeated the Andastes (Susquehannocks); armed with this confidence, they were now contemplating war against the French. As a result, once again politics had cast its shadow on the mission efforts, calling into concern the safety of the priests (JR 59:19). The actual body of the letter from the Seneca missionaries suggests that the Seneca meant to commence their campaign against the French with the destruction of Fort Catarokoui, which was then built at the “entrance” to present-day Lake Ontario. (JR 59:251), but this never materialized. However, an attempt on Garnier’s life was made: “Not long ago, they had resolved to break Father Garnier’s head, by making him pass for a sorcerer. He who was to strike the blow was not only designated, but was also paid for it; and we would no longer have had that missionary, had not God preserved him by a very special providence” (JR 59:251).

Garnier’s near-assassination is not the only sign of unrest in Seneca territory. The 1676 account of Iroquois missions in volume 60 seems to suggest major civil disturbances:

The upper Iroquois — That is to say, those who are most remote from us, like the Sonnotouans and the Ouoguens — are the most arrogant and most insolent. They run after the missionaries with hatchets in their hands; they pursue them with stones; they Overturn their Chapels and their little Cabins; and in a thousand other ways subject them to most infamous treatment. The fathers endure everything, and are prepared for everything; for they know well that the Apostles planted the faith in the world not otherwise than through persecutions and through sufferings. That which Consoles them in the pitiful condition in which they are placed is to see the fruits that God derives therefrom for his glory and for the salvation of these same Savages by whom they are so ill-treated. (JR 60:173)

After volume 60 the accounts of day-to-day happenings in the Seneca missions diminish; politics are the most likely culprit for this. In 1676, Father Dablon wrote to the Jesuit Mission Superior: “I can Obtain Nothing further from Fathers de Carheil,

Pierron, Raffeix, and Garnier, who are among the Upper Iroquois, because their chief occupation is to suffer and, as it were, to die at every moment through the constant threats and the insults that those barbarians heap upon them; and they, in spite of all that, fail not to snatch many souls from the Demon” (JR 60:173). Yet political tensions may not have been the only factor contributing to an apparent lapse in communication in the historical record. Influenza, which still makes its terrifying rounds across the world today, was one of many diseases affecting native populations in the Post-Contact era. The last part of the 1676 letter describes a biological battle, as well as a spiritual one:

In a village of Sonnontouans where Father Garnier is, 40 children and 14 adults who had been baptized have died within a year. As for Reverend Father Raffeix, who is in another village of Sonnontouan, he writes that he has derived great advantage from a general Influenza with which God has chastised those barbarians, and which in one month Carried off more than 60 little children, for whose baptism he Spared himself no more than he did for that of the adults whom God showed to be his in that prevalent disease. (JR 60:175)

The nearest historical source after the *Relations* for the Seneca mission period after 1676 are the *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* – also known as *New York Colonial Documents*, and cited hereafter as the NYCD. The *New York Colonial Documents* were compiled and translated by various authors, mostly in the mid-nineteenth century; as a disclaimer, scholars should hence bear in mind the substantial amount of time between the original authors’ writing and the editors’ work.

Prior to Denonville’s punitive expedition of 1687 (which is covered in volume 63 of the *Jesuit Relations*), the Seneca missions were also, albeit temporarily, interrupted

by French military conflict. The 1684 expulsion is dealt with in larger detail in the *New York Colonial Documents*, volume 9, “The Paris Documents,” which contains a wealth of information on the governor’s and internal affairs of the then-French colony. The Jesuit missions are not discussed at length, but they do show up in a few crucial places where there is also talk of war.

In 1682, Joseph-Antoine Le Febvre de La Barre was appointed Governor General of New France, succeeding General Louis de Buade de Frontenac. Upon meeting with leaders in Montreal, La Barre was charged with organizing an invasion, as it was believed “the Iroquois planned to destroy one after another western Indian nations, and with them the French fur trade and the Jesuit missions in new France” (Richter 1992:149). When it came to marching on Seneca lands, La Barre justified his plans by pointing out the recent Seneca attack on Fort Saint-Louis in Illinois country, as well as many alleged assaults on fur traders. Of course, when it came to naming their disputes with Iroquoia at large, the French simply blamed the English for enticing the Iroquois to make war; and the reasoning behind any warfare or conflict boiled down to who had control of not just the land, but the fur trade, and thus which monarch would ultimately stand to profit.

The summer of 1684, Governor Dongan found out the La Barre and his men were finally on their way (after two years of bluffing), and he immediately summoned representatives from all Five Nations – but his summons had already been preempted by the Seneca, who were waiting in Albany to purchase ammunition and weapons (Richter 1992: 151). A seasoned statesman by that point in his career, Dongan seized the opportunity – and so did the Iroquoian representatives present, who believed they

were brokering a fair deal that would allow them to continue trading and retain as much autonomy as possible. Dongan promised military allegiance to the Five Nations with the understanding that the Iroquois would stop trading with the French and no other French settlers would be allowed on the land – except the Jesuits, whom Dongan was willing to tolerate on religious grounds, since he was an Irish Catholic himself (Richter 1992: 150-151). However, with the price of “security” equaling their freedom, the Five Nations representatives were not easily swayed by Dongan. The Seneca representatives and Jesuit priest brothers Jean and Jacques de Lamberville opted to give negotiations with the French one more try (Richter 1992: 151). Dongan was not pleased with the idea of independent French peace talks; as far as he was concerned, the “submission” of the Five Nations was already in print after the council at Albany—even though he had no plans of living up to his end of the bargain, and as such did not supply the military aid that the Seneca requested (Richter 1992: 152).

Discontent and suspicion spread across the Five Nations. Onondaga orator Otreouti told Dongan's interpreter: “You say we are subjects to the King of England and Duke of York, but we say we are Brethren. We must take care of ourselves. Those arms fixed upon the post without the Gate [of Onondaga], cannot defend us against the Arms of La Barre” (Richter 1992: 152). The neutralist agenda could not have come at a better time for the Five Nations. La Barre and his men all this time were camped out in a swamp, low on supplies and battling disease. Hopeless, La Barre wound up agreeing to peace terms and returned humiliated to Montreal (Richter 1992: 153-155). Afterwards, Otreouti continued to push the neutralist agenda, in the wake of Dongan taking credit for Otreouti's accomplishments and telling the anglophile-Iroquois:

“Those who trusted him would not regret that they were so true to this government”  
(Richter 1992: 155).

Focusing on the Jesuits again, a letter from M. De Meulles to M. De Seignelay dated July 12, 1684 shows a certain amount of discord in the chain of command between the King, the Colony Governor and the “General” in question. De Meulles asserted that the profits from trade were far higher than the King had been led to believe (NYCD 9:228). Yet the intricacies of French politics are not as noteworthy here as the account of Father Garnier’s “escape” in the Governor’s expensive bark [ship] upon hearing of his countrymen’s plans for war:

This empire may be said to be divided between the King and the Governor; and were this to last long, the Governor's share would be far greater than that of his Majesty. Those who were sent this year by the General to Fort Frontenac to trade, have already divided with him ten to twelve thousand crowns. Last year he had a bark constructed, which he made his Majesty pay for and which cost considerable, in the design of going to trade in Lake Ontario with the Senecas, the Indians of Niagara, and all the other Indians around that lake; which is so true that Father Gamier, a Jesuit, who was a Missionary to the said Senecas, after being informed secretly of our intention to make war, escaped in the said bark, which was anchored in a little River seven leagues from their village, and where all the Iroquois used to come to trade (NYCD 9:229).

Bihler cites this, as well as a subsequent passage (NYCD 9:256) in his discussion of the temporary closures of all but the Onondaga missions in 1684 (Bihler 1956:94). It is especially clear from reading the later NYCD passage that the Jesuits were acting in a separate capacity from the political agency of the French crown and yet had to maintain at least a formal allegiance with said crown: “Meanwhile, the Deputies succeeded one another to sound me on the state of affairs and to learn the true cause of the withdrawal of our Missionaries. Finally, I told them that the real

cause was—that the displeasure they perceived you felt at being disparaged by the Senecas, and in which they also participated, had caused their withdrawal until the Senecas should satisfy you” (NYCD 9:256).

No mention of how the French military advances compromised the safety of Garnier and other missionaries is made in the NYCD. This begs the question of whether the politicians and generals in charge of New France ever comprehended anything of the relationships between their relentless pursuit of the fur trade, active rivalry with England, and the work of the missionaries. Even though individuals such as the de Lamberville brothers, Pierre Raffeix and Julien Garnier managed to successfully broker peace on many occasions, the Jesuits nonetheless remained caught somewhere in the middle as they lived out their daily lives in the villages, exposed to another way of life and another set of politics through their Iroquoian charges.

In volume 63 of the *Jesuit Relations* we see the culmination of five years of French war preparation. A September 19, 1687 letter from Thierry Beschefer to Cabart de Villermont describes Denonville’s march into Ganondagan, the Seneca “capital” in the East:

Arriving at the Seneca villages, the French find these abandoned, and one burned. They complete the work of destruction by cutting down the corn in the fields, and burning that left from the previous year. It is thought that this will cause great suffering, and even mortality, among the enemy. After nine days thus spent, Denonville leads back his army to Irondequoit. Before returning to Montreal, he begins the erection of a fort at Niagara, where he leaves a garrison. The expedition is regarded as successful; but it is felt that Canada is in great danger, especially as the Iroquois are incited by the English. These savages have already attacked several outlying French settlements (JR 63:22).



It is uncertain which of the Seneca towns had been burnt in advance by its inhabitants although some scholars have speculated that it was Ganondagan (Jordan 2004:25). After Denonville, approximately fifteen years passed before the Jesuits returned and resumed their efforts in 1702. The Jesuits were allowed to resume their work, largely owing to Garnier's diplomacy in Montreal where he translated Callière's peace treaty to the Huron. Upon leaving Montreal, he headed straight back to Seneca territory (Canadian Biography 2009). He remained there until presumably 1709 when "at the instigation of Peter Schuyler, four of the Five Cantons denounced the treaty of 1701, and Garnier again returned to Sault-Saint-Louis" (Canadian Biography 2009).

Unfortunately, the 1702-1709 Iroquoian missions are not adequately documented. In European eyes, the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht ceded present-day New York as a whole to the British, even though the vast majority of this territory effectively was in Indian hands. Britain, a growing Protestant empire under monarchs William and Mary, refused to allow the French Jesuits to remain. As a result Garnier, Raffeix and their contemporaries were forced to withdraw their ministry and head east towards Montreal (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009). Sources do not indicate when Garnier left the mission (Dictionary of Canadian Biography 2009), but his companion Father Vaillant was replaced in 1707 by Father d'Heu. Only two years later, however, d'Heu was escorted to Canada by forty Seneca warriors in order to ensure his safety. This spelled the end of the Jesuit missions to the Seneca and the other Iroquois of New York (Bihler 1956:96).

## CHAPTER 2

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, JESUIT-STYLE FINGER RINGS AND RELIGIOUS MEDALS

The earliest archaeological studies on Jesuit finger rings sought not to interpret the symbols or function, but to use the rings as chronological indicators. In 1966, George Quimby suggested that Jesuit finger rings might be used for dating sites, given the type of metal they were made of (copper alloy vs. “silver”) and their appearance among similar historic sites. Quimby referred to brass rings as “excellent markers of the Middle historic period” (1670-1760). Building on Quimby’s work, Charles Cleland sought to use stylistic drift among the finger rings to create a means of tracing internal change “not contingent on other associated trade goods” (Mason 2003:237).

Until very recently, Cleland's work stood alone and the concept of stylistic drift was very widely regarded. However, Cleland’s piece uses Wray and Schoff’s proposed Seneca site sequence, which has since been updated by Sempowski and Saunders (2001), and his argument for dating the sites based on stylistic drift has been proven incorrect by Mason (see below). Today one can still look to Cleland now to get a better sense of variations in ring style and design. Like his scholarly predecessors, Cleland acknowledges some rings’ connection to the Jesuits (Cleland 1972:202). He points to a letter from Jesuit Father Bruyas written in August of 1669 at the Oneida mission: “It costs me something, but that is not ill spent. The one who can repeat, on Sunday, all that has been taught during the week, has for reward a string of colored glass beads, or two little glass tubes, or two brass rings” (JR 53: 249). However, Cleland also suggests, given the prevalence of so many replicated designs, that the

rings may have also been secular trade items (Cleland 1972:202). This idea continues to inform modern scholarship.

Two years after Cleland published, Alice Wood compiled the vital “Catalogue of Jesuit and Ornamental Rings from Western New York State.” Wood was a long-time volunteer in the Rochester Museum’s Rock Foundation Collection (George Hamell, personal communication 2009). As the title suggests, her work provided a count and a working typology of all Jesuit and so-called “secular” rings among the Seneca sites. Given the more recent and continuing excavations of Seneca sites, one of the goals of this thesis is to update Wood’s data.

After Wood, the scholarly front remained relatively quiet until 1986, when Adrian Mandzy wrote a paper that suggested an implicit link between the rings and the Jesuits. Specifically, he states that the rings are representative of “the golden age of Christianization,” (Mandzy 1986:8). This is undoubtedly flawed; his language suggests that the rings are indicative of mass religious conversions occurring among the Five Nations when such a thing *never* took place. Mandzy also uses Cleland’s system of using the rings to date sites; this too is incorrect (Mandzy 1986:9), as the methodology only echoes Quimby’s errors, and thus does not reflect the currently accepted revised Seneca site sequence.

The most recent and thorough “ring scholar” is Carol Mason. She has published four papers so far on the subject and continues to conduct research. Mason’s 2003 piece, “Jesuit Rings, Jesuits and Chronology” is especially relevant to this study, as it brings to light several problems with previous scholarship. She emphasizes that we cannot rely on old historical sources such as Beauchamp who once wrote: “they

[the rings] came and went with the Jesuits” (Beauchamp 1903:37). Mason also notes that Wood’s 1974 data “at least partially contradicts” Cleland’s analysis (Mason 2003:238) and also reminds us that both Cleland and Wood also relied on the Wray and Schoff site sequence, which again has since been updated. Pertaining to the rings of Upstate New York, Mason writes:

A major area where the sequence is so violated as to diminish any confidence of accuracy is New York. Granting that the latest dates for the Seneca sites are correct (Sempowski and Saunders 2001), the distribution of engraved and stamped rings does not accord with what might be expected, given the opinion that the stamped-embossed rings are the base types from which the others evolved (Mason 2003:248-249).

Moreover, the terminology used in discussing ring style and features has varied from author to author over time, causing an unnecessary amount of confusion. In

Mason’s words:

Cleland (1971, 1972) began using the term “bezel” to describe what others have called “plaques,” and then described the designs as either “cast” or “engraved.” Mainfort, (1979:42) used the term “raised bezel” to refer to what Cleland called cast, and Wood (1974) used the term “stamp embossed” to describe the same thing. (Mason 2003:235)

Because of this, she suggests the terms supplied by Wood (1974) should become standard, as Mason herself has used them in her articles and arguing over semantics would only breed confusion. Thus for clarity’s sake, the rings mentioned in this thesis will either be referred to as “incised” or “stamp embossed.” Carol Mason’s 2005 article, “Jesuit Rings of Metals Other Than Brass,” discusses the issues with dating Jesuit rings by material as Quimby (1966) had suggested. As most of the piece concentrates on case studies in the Midwest, it does not much intersect this thesis, except for the three “pewter” rings (one blank, two “stamped”) found at Ganondagan,

which are mentioned by Wood (Mason 2005:173). However, it is important to realize that the “white” metal, (be it silver or pewter) is not the typical material for the Jesuit-style finger rings, and that dating a site based on the presence of silver or copper articles appears to be foolhardy (Mason 2005:175).

Related to the discussion of ring terminology is the area of ring craftsmanship. In short, not all Jesuit-style rings were made the same way, and how they were made and decorated was debatable – until very recently. In 2009, Carol Mason and Kathleen Ehrhardt published a study containing the results of an archaeo-metallurgical investigation conducted on a sample of twenty-five Jesuit rings from five seventeenth and eighteenth century sites in the Northeast and western Great Lakes. The results of both radiographic and optical examination demonstrated that “the rings themselves were all cast as one piece” and were done so with fairly good quality (Mason and Ehrhardt 2009:62). The method of casting is also described in detail:

Close optical examination indicates that many of the rings may have been cast in permanent, multiple piece molds. This type of mold was reusable, allowing for the creation of identical rings. Rings could also have been cast in multiples in a tree-like mold using the lost-wax method. (Mason and Ehrhardt 2009:62)

In addition, “the decorations on the ring plaque were either applied as part of the casting process or applied afterwards to a blank plaque by stamping or punching with a die, and/or by engraving” (Mason and Ehrhardt 2009:62). The metallurgical analysis shows that “no ring was made of pure, unalloyed copper” and that all pieces contained varying percentages of zinc, tin and lead – a recipe also known as “gunmetal.” This broad composition characterized the majority of rings in Mason and Ehrhardt’s sample (Mason and Ehrhardt 2009:63-64). As a result, Mason and Ehrhardt

conclude that these less-expensive, “mass-produced” rings were designed for everyday use in France—and also for export to New France. However, even more interestingly, rings of the same type and decoration exist today in British and French museums, except those specimens were made with precious metals and sometimes inlaid with stones. Asking why both cheap imitations and expensive renderings of the same rings were being produced at the same time, Mason references French jewelry expert Claudette Joannis: “for two-hundred years, these rings remained in favor with princesses as with peasants” (Mason and Ehrhardt 2009:66). Still, Mason and Ehrhardt (2009:66) remind us that the “museum specimens” are a minority, and that copper-alloy rings were readily available as tokens or keepsakes, or even as souvenirs at religious pilgrimage sites (Mason and Ehrhardt 2009:66).

Given how prolific trinket rings were throughout Europe over time, it remains uncertain when Jesuit-style rings first appeared in New France. The beginning of Mason’s “Jesuit Rings, Jesuits and Chronology” discusses the La Belle shipwreck, which contained a horde of over 1,500 rings. The wreck was recovered from Matagorda Bay, Texas, and has been dated to 1687 (Mason 2003:233). The La Belle discovery could possibly allude to trade up the Mississippi and into the interior, but the intended destination of the rings is unknown. Here Mason again cautions against using the rings in order to date sites. As far as associating the rings with the Jesuits, she recalls how previous scholars have often jumped to hasty conclusions regarding both how and why the rings came into New France and what they were used for. For example, Hauser (1982:39) stated that the rings were brought into New France by the missionaries, who “probably brought the prototypes from France themselves.” Hauser

also argues that the “rings were part of a strategy to “spread Christianity,” and this rhetoric has been taken up by others such as Mandzy (1986:49) who referred to them “Christianization rings” (Mason 2003:239). Speaking to this issue, Mason draws our attention to the particular passages in the *Jesuit Relations* that have been repeatedly cited by other scholars who have argued in favor of associating the rings with religion and the Jesuits, (e.g.) (JR 53:251, 18:19, 15:159, 66:25-31) (Mason 2003:241). In these passages, a few French terms are worth considering for future primary source work: *bague de laiton* (ring of brass); *bagues* (rings); *bagues au cachet* (rings decorated with a specific seal) (Mason 2003:241).

In her most recent follow-up article published in the spring of 2010, “Reading the Rings: Decoding Iconographic (Jesuit) Rings,” Mason breaks the chains linking missions and priests to the rings. This portion of her research departs from New France and examines the origins, meanings and purposes of both “Jesuit” and other ring designs that were popular in Europe from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century. This piece will be discussed in more detail subsequently.

Unlike “Jesuit-style” finger rings, however, the religious medals located on Seneca sites have incurred far less scholarly attention until now. In “Metallic Ornaments of New York Indians,” Beauchamp (1903) mentions the presence of medals in passing and supplies a few illustrations, but relays nothing definitive about the types of medals located, or their quantities, context or meaning. As my tables show, religious medals have been located on primarily eighteenth century sites. Unfortunately, many of the medals, which are housed at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, are badly corroded and very difficult to assess. Thus, when it came

down to typing and understanding the medals, I would have been at an impasse without the Clark Manuscript, compiled in the late twentieth century from General John S. Clark's personal correspondences. I will elaborate more on Clark and medal typology later in this chapter, but I wanted to make it clear that religious medals have a scant legacy of archaeological scholarship, especially compared to finger rings and other kinds of brass artifacts. Luckily, it appears this is starting to change, even beyond this thesis. James Bradley has begun to compile working notes on the medal typology and style (Bradley n.d.), so it is hopeful that one day the medals will catch up to the rings in terms of existing scholarly discourse and publications.

### ***Typology of Jesuit Finger Rings***

In developing a working typology of the Jesuit finger rings, Alice Wood's "Catalogue of Jesuit and Ornamental Rings from Western New York State" (1974) is the most comprehensive and the most consistent in its deployment of terms. Following Mason's suggestion to use Wood's terminology, the rings in the Rock Foundation Collection fall into two categories: incised or stamp-embossed. An incised ring is best described as one with an incised or carved design across the plaque. The term bezel as Cleland uses is potentially misleading because in gemology, this refers directly to either the metal rim around the set stone of a ring or the face of a cut gemstone (Merriam Webster 2009). The "Jesuit" finger rings do not have stones or elaborate settings. Rings that are stamp-embossed have a raised design, much in the style of a modern cameo. As a result, both Wood's "stamp embossed" and Cleland's "cast" are potentially problematic as no one appears to have yet found a stamp or mold,



respectively, in the archaeological record. Manufacturing method aside, the designs on the rings themselves provide a much more coherent way to consider types and style.

Wood places the rings found at the Seneca sites into several categories, and her ring counts do not distinguish the “Jesuit” rings from other varieties. In order to clarify Wood’s data, I have re-sorted the “Jesuit rings” into the following categories: IHS, Lheart, Ave Maria, Calvary, Pieta, Secular, King Louis, Incised Cross, Clasped hands, Man with Cross, and Jesus (bust of Christ).

When accurate classification of an artifact was not possible, I assigned those rings to a separate ‘Indeterminable’ category. Any rings not available to me for study were placed into an “Unaccounted” category. Lastly, even though there is a sizable pool of rings with so-called “secular designs,” owing to the complexity of meaning and usage that Mason (2010) brings up, as well as the questions surrounding what could be “native designs,” it is probably best to analyze these separately. What follows next is a typology with accompanying images of the “Jesuit-style” finger rings that have been found at various sites throughout Seneca territory. Most of the images are taken from Alice Wood’s 1974 survey of the Rock Foundation collection at the Rochester Museum and Science Center.

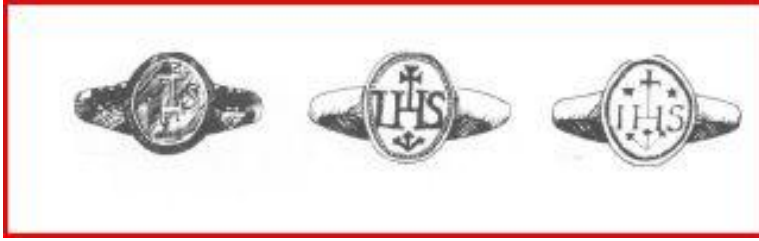


Figure 1. IHS Ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

IHS is a Christogram for *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, or Jesus Savior of men. This particular Christogram is still associated with the Jesuit order today and St. Ignatius of Loyola is frequently depicted in iconography with it.



Figure 2. L-heart Ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

In its many permutations, the L-heart type features a simple letter L and a heart shape and is probably referring to Ignatius of Loyola, but it could also be an abstract reference to the Sacred Heart.

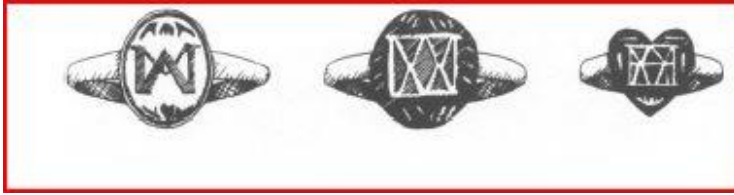


Figure 3. Ave Maria ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

The IXXI type, also referred to as Ave Maria or “VM” rings, depict an overlap of the initials V and M, which relate to the Virgin Mary. Other sources (University of Missouri 2003) have referred to this as the “Double M” type and have suggested that the 3 upper markings represent the nails used in the crucifixion.

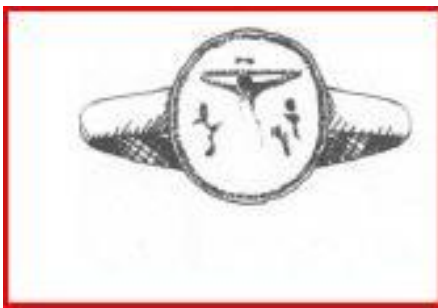


Figure 4. Calvary ring. Image taken from University of Missouri, Museum of Anthropology Online, 2009.

Crucifixion or Calvary rings, such as the one shown above depict Christ on the cross, with Mary and other women kneeling below



Figure 5. Pieta ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

Pieta rings (above) differ because they depict Mary kneeling at the foot of the cross holding her crucified son.



Figure 6. Incised cross ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

Cross rings, by contrast, do not depict the crucifixion and feature just the incised mark of the cross.

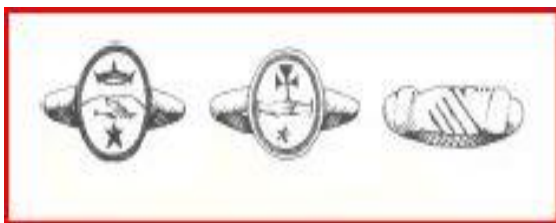


Figure 7. Clasped hands ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

The “clasped hands” design that Wood identified depicts two hands folded together. As seen in the figure above, there are variations to the design, which make it difficult to argue for a “Jesuit” association. It is possible that this design may not be religious and is related to the “bagues de foi,” or rings of truth, which signify engagement or fidelity (Mason 2010:10).



Figure 8. Man with Cross ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

The “Man with Cross” type shows a male figure holding a long cross.



Figure 9. Bust of Christ ring. Image taken from Wood 1974.

The “Bust of Christ” style depicts Jesus of Nazareth.

### *The Clark Manuscript*

The Clark manuscript is not a book manuscript in the traditional sense. Rather, it is a compilation of illustrations and the personal correspondence of General John S. Clark (1823-1912). Even though the surviving exchanges are fragmented, I was able to determine the names of at least three individuals in correspondence with Clark in the late nineteenth century, all of whom appear to have been Jesuit priests: Patrick H. Kelly and R.A. Dewey from Woodstock College, Maryland; and George E. Quinn from Fordham University, New York. While the details of each letter vary, the priests seem to have played a vital role in helping Clark translate and identify various religious artifacts, while acting as collectors and historians in their own right.

The Clark Manuscript is currently housed in the Rochester Museum and Science Center. The sketches and watercolor reliefs in the manuscript depict in great detail the common types of religious medals and crucifixes that were recovered from various native sites in upstate New York. Unfortunately, the details are too vague to enable the modern reader to know exactly where the artifacts were being taken or traded from. However, Clark hailed from Auburn and was mostly collecting artifacts that would have come from Cayuga territory (Hamell 2010, personal communication). Thus, the descriptions of the types are still applicable to the findings in Seneca territory. In addition to some very helpful illustrations, the collaborators behind the Clark manuscript also managed to translate the Latin inscriptions and Christograms found on the medals. This not only helps to identify the medals, but also may yield insight pertaining to the religious devotions of the time, as well as potentially what aspects of Catholicism were being “exchanged” with native people.

### ***Biography of General John S. Clark***

No details of Clark's life are mentioned in the pages of the manuscript I used to identify the medals. However, a fleeting salutation in one letter that addressed Mr. Clark as "General" caught my attention. A search for one 'General John S. Clark of Auburn' turned up his 1912 obituary in the New York Times archives. From the information gleaned from Clark's obituary, I was able to locate the writings and website of Deb Twigg, Executive Director of the Susquehanna River Archaeological Center of Native Indian Studies (SRAC). Twigg has compiled a biography of Clark, along with many other nineteenth century historians. Twigg was also gracious enough to introduce me to history enthusiast and medical doctor, Charles A. Ellis. Ellis has several of Clark's original maps, letters and Civil War-related sources in his possession. In collaborating with Deb Twigg, Dr. Ellis has enabled me to give details about Clark's life and illuminate his contributions to Native American studies.

General John S. Clark was born on November 2, 1823 in the town of Mentz, New York, to Israel S. DaVall and Sallie L. Clark. His original name was John Swarhout Smith Duvall and it was changed to John Clark "by an act of the legislature (Laws 1834 Chapter 65, page 70) according to the wish of his grandfather Bennoni Clark, who made him his heir" (Twigg 2010). He spent most of his boyhood on a farm northwest of the village of Throop. He attended Bethany College in West Virginia and later became a civil engineer and surveyor in Cayuga County (Twigg, personal communication 2010).

In May of 1861, he was "by acclamation" selected as Colonel in command of the newly forming Nineteenth Regiment of New York Volunteers (Ellis, personal

communication 2010). On June 6th, 1861, the Cayuga Volunteers left for Washington and the Union Army. In July, while outside Martinsburg, West Virginia, dissension in the ranks prompted complaint to Commanding General Patterson, who relieved Clark of his command and recommended court martial. Nothing came of the charges (no court martial occurred), and Col. Clark became Aide-de-Camp to General Nathaniel Banks. As A.D.C., Clark's main task was as military topographer. Clark served on General Banks' staff for the remainder of the War, at the end of which he, like many other colonels with excellent war records, was brevetted to Brigadier General, a title he kept for the rest of his life even though he never actually served in the war as a General (Ellis, personal communication 2010).

When Clark returned to civilian life, he became the City Engineer of Auburn, New York. However he also allowed his interests in history and archaeological topography to flourish, and as such was in communication with many of the eminent nineteenth-century archeologists and historians of the Northeastern United States. Clark devoted a considerable amount of time trying to locate formerly occupied native villages in upstate New York. He collaborated with Rev. James Hawley in the study of the Jesuit Relations, and later the Moravian journals, in order to try to locate the mission sites referenced therein (Ellis, personal communication 2010). In 1885 he cooperated with the Catholic historian John Gilmary Shea and Rev. C. A. Walworth to specify the location of the site where Isaac Jogues and other Jesuits were tortured and killed by the Mohawks, and also attempted to identify the location of the village where Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha was born and lived. The information Clark provided proved essential to the founding of the Shrine of the North American Martyrs in



Auriesville, New York and Kateri Tekakwitha's Shrine in Fonda (Ellis, personal communication 2010). It should be noted that Dean Snow has since written that Clark's placement of Kateri Tekakwitha's birthplace is incorrect (Snow 1995: 41-42).

Clark later wrote about the Native American archeology along the Susquehanna River, and also wrote of and mapped Sullivan's Campaign against the Western Indians, as well as the so-called "Groveland Massacre" (Ellis 2010, personal communication). Ultimately his avocational pursuits earned him the "first strike of the Cornplanter Medal," given for excellence in Iroquois Research (Ellis 2010, personal communication). He was also adopted into the Iroquois Confederacy, receiving the name *Hehaw-wesuck*, meaning "Pathfinder" (Ellis 2010:personal communication). General Clark died in Auburn on Easter Sunday, April 7, 1912 (New York Times Obituary 1912).

### ***Medal Typology Adapted from the Clark Manuscript***

Using the Clark manuscript, I have compiled a working typology of the religious medals recovered from Seneca sites to date. As the data table in chapter three will corroborate, some medals were too badly corroded to identify, but all medals have been noted. Note that this list does not include other varieties of medals housed in the Rock Foundation collection, such as those depicting British or French monarchs. Unless otherwise specified, the medal types below come in circular or ovular shapes. Types are listed in alphabetical order and all the images are taken directly from the Clark Manuscript. Lastly, it is difficult to evaluate religious medals for stylistic drift, simply because the imagery and symbolism of Catholicism have not changed greatly in the last several hundred years. Most of the medals described below are still in

circulation in the homes of, or around the necks of, Catholics across the world today, easily obtainable in parish gift shops or pilgrimage sites.

*Images of Medals from the Clark Manuscript*



**Figure 10. Benedictine medal**

Benedictine medals depict the HIS insignia on the front and the cross of St. Benedict on the back. This image is a relief of a medal taken from the Clark Manuscript.

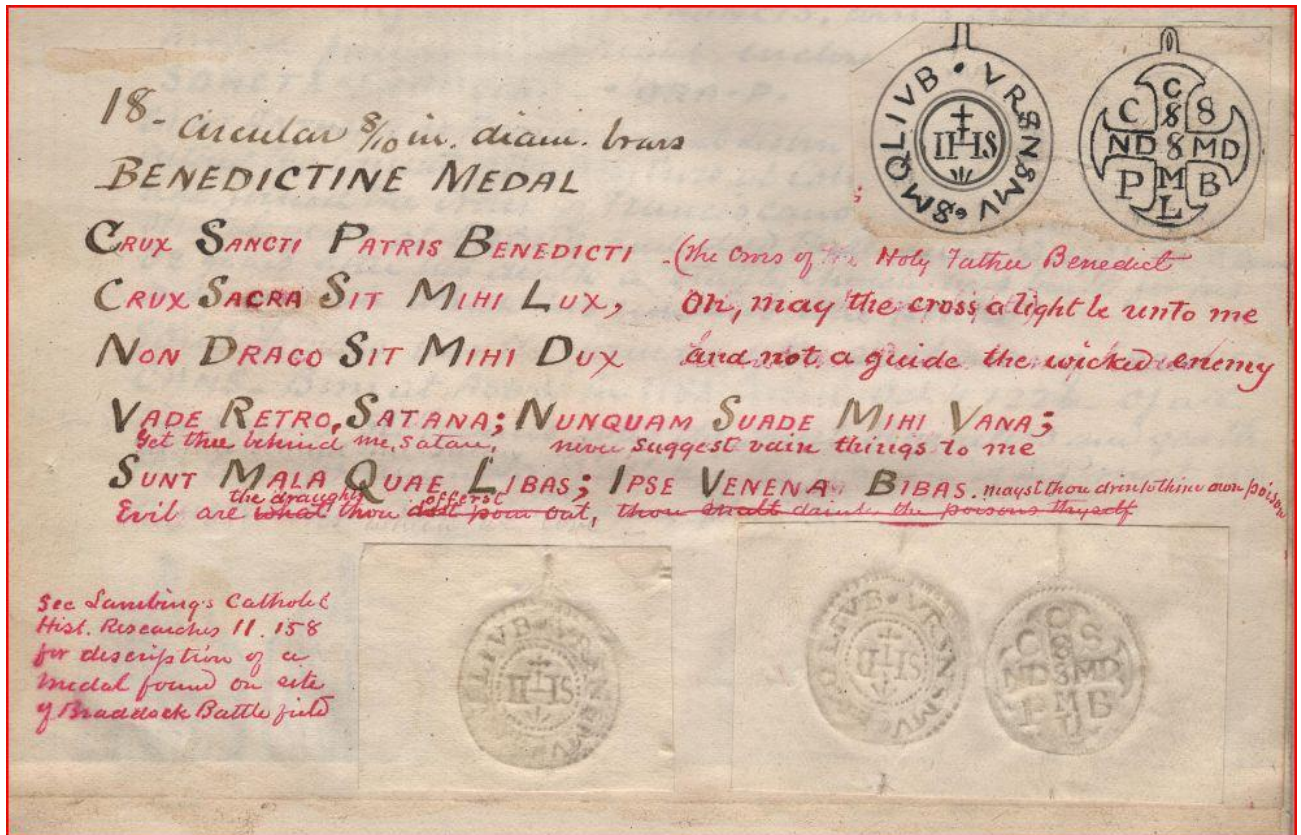


Figure 11. Image of Benedictine Medal inscriptions taken from the Clark Manuscript.

The inscriptions translate to:

PAX: Peace

CSPB: Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti (Cross of Father Saint Benedict)

CSSML: Crux Sancta Sit Mihi Lux (May the Cross be a holy light for me)

NDSMD: Noli Draco Sit Mihi Dux (Let not the dragon be my guide)

VRNSMV: Vade Retro Satana Nunquam Suade Mihi Vana (Go away Satan, never sway me with vanities)

SMQLIVB: Sunt Mala Quae Libas Ipse Venena Bibas (The offerings you pour are evil, drink the poison yourself)



**Figure 12. Communion medal**

Communion or Eucharistic medals depict two angelic figures kneeling in prayer, one on each side of an altar. This quite literally symbolizes the idea of the “heavenly host.” The sun shines brightly in the center above and sometimes a small cross can be seen just below the sun. Given its significance in Catholicism, one might also find communion imagery such as on the back of another type of medal.



**Figure 13. Conception medal**

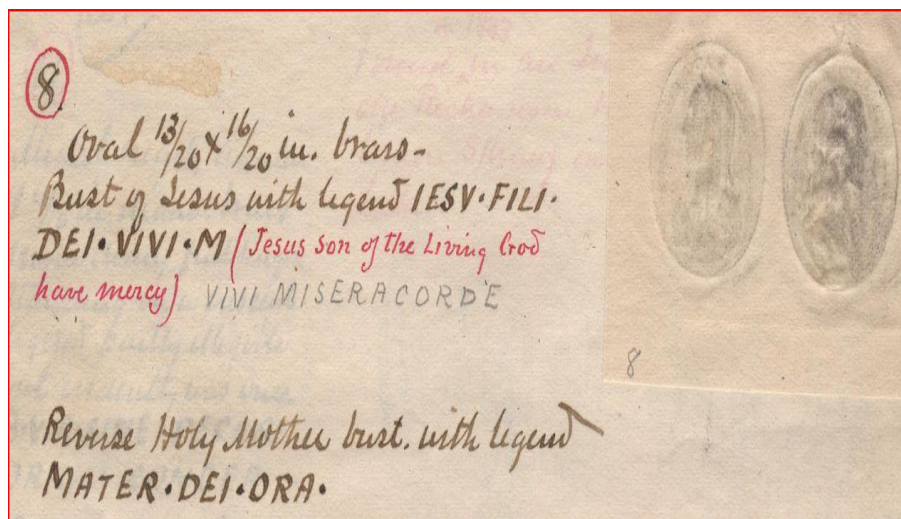
Conception medals feature an image of the Virgin Mary, either by herself or holding the infant Jesus. There is a Latin inscription: *A priori con sin*, which translates to “conceived without sin”





**Figure 14. Mary and Jesus Medal**

This is a broad category pertaining to medal that prominently features cameos of Mary and Christ together on one side of a medal or separately on either side. The backs of the one-sided medals vary; some are smooth and some feature an unknown male priestly figure. A variation of this type shows Jesus in shepherd robes with a staff, instead of his profile.



**Figure 15: Relief of Mary and Jesus medal excerpted from the Clark Manuscript.**



**Figure 16. Pieta medal**

Much like the pieta ring, this style depicts Mary holding the body of Christ below the cross following the crucifixion. This style medal will often have the communion scene on the back.



**Figure 17. Sacred Heart Medal.**

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the oldest Catholic devotions, still in use today and widely popular in France during the 17-eighteenth century.



**Figure 18. St. Augustine the Bishop medal**

St. Augustine medals feature a bust of Saint Augustine on the front, wearing a bishop hat and carrying his staff.



**Figure 19. St. Ignatius medal**

St. Ignatius medals feature a bust of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order.



**Figure 20. St. Michael Medal**

This medal depicts the figure of the Archangel Michael holding a shield and a large sword. The point of the sword stabs the head of the serpent (Satan) coiled at his feet. On the back of the medal, there is a cross bordered by a Latin inscription that reads: Sign (or seal) of the confraternity of St. Michael the Archangel." A confraternity is an association of either laymen (or laywomen) who join together to do charitable work accompanied by prescribed prayers. The scapular of St. Michael originated under Pope Pius IX, who gave it his blessing, and was formally approved under Pope Leo XIII around 1878. (Fr. Daniel McMullin personal communication 2010). Image taken from the Clark Manuscript.

**Miscellaneous Medal Category:**

Owing to corrosion or other damage, it was impossible to fully identify two of the medal types in the Rock Foundation collection. However, I have done my best to describe the findings in hopes that this lack of information will eventually be resolved.

The "Church" medal is octagonal (a rare shape) and depicts a building with peaked roof and fleur de lis; the bust of a bald man with a pronounced nose is on the other side.

The "Book lady" medal features a woman (Mary?) sitting with an open book on the front and a regal looking male on back.



### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **AN UPDATED ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIAN-THEMED MATERIALS IN SENECA TERRITORY**

Since Alice Wood's seminal 1974 study, several additional excavations on sites in Seneca territory have taken place. As the corresponding table demonstrates, my newer findings, incorporating ring finds from post-1974 digs, have drastically increased total site ring counts, almost tripling Wood's original figures. In order to conduct my research, I consulted the collections housed at the Rochester Museum and Science Center by hand in order to both confirm and recalibrate Wood's data with the newer findings. To ensure the data is as complete as possible, I have also included artifacts accounted for by the Geneva Historical Society, as well as newer findings from excavations undertaken by Dr. Kurt Jordan at Cornell University. Additionally, the numbers of other Christian-themed artifacts, such as religious medals, crucifixes, and crosses have been documented. These objects have never been seriously studied before, and so the significance of their occurrence on Seneca land has largely been overlooked. The new data thus reflects all known findings of Christian-themed artifacts from 1974-2010 (see Tables 1-3).

Wood's total ring count for all Seneca sites was 137; the updated total works out to approximately 442. While some of the biggest ring increases do occur in the earlier, pre-1687 sites, the later seventeenth and eighteenth century sites such as Snyder McClure and Huntoon had high ring counts in the sample to begin with and thus do not show as much change between the two sets of data.

However, the sites with the most rings now also display the most increase from Wood's original totals. The Dann site was recorded to have 19 rings initially and now the total comes to 79. Ganondagan was initially thought to have 15 rings; with the updated count, the figure increases to 91. These increases are not coincidental; other scholars have long associated both Ganondagan and Dann with the location of Jesuit missions. The Dann site, also known as "Gandachioragou," is thought to be associated with the mission of La Conception (Hamell 1980:96; JR 55:75). Ganondagan, also translated as Gandagaro ("big town") was an eastern principal village and home to the St. Jacques mission (Hamell 1980:3). Nonetheless, because no structural remains of Jesuit missions that have been located at present, it is still difficult to correlate sites with specific missions. The ring data and primary sources, while intriguing, should rightfully incur our scrutiny.

The religious medals, crucifixes and other devotional objects at Seneca sites occur less frequently in the archaeological record than the finger rings — the reason for this is presently unknown. Since no one has previously published on the medals, I consulted the Clark manuscript (housed at the Rochester Museum and Science Center) to come up with the working typology presented in chapter two, but owing to the complexity and stylistic variation of religious medals, I acknowledge that this may need to be amended in the future. The religious medals recovered so far are exclusive to Dann, Ganondagan, White Springs, Snyder-McClure, Huntoon and Townley-Read, with a particularly rich assemblage of medals occurring at Snyder-McClure. Crucifixes, crosses and other devotional materials are even more scantily distributed

among the Seneca sites. The earliest crucifix was found at the Steele site; the most crucifixes have been recovered from Snyder-McClure.

While stylistic variations may occur, the typology of crosses and crucifixes is far less complicated. Crucifixes in this sample are either wooden or metal and specifically depict the figure of Christ on the cross; crosses, by contrast, do not depict the actual crucifixion. The crucifixes in this sample are all fairly similar in appearance. At Christ's feet, there is usually a skull and crossbones, symbolizing physical death. Above the body, there is usually a dove, symbolizing the resurrection, and an "INRI" engraving. INRI is an acronym for the Latin inscription *Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum* – Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.

In order to more accurately and clearly portray the Seneca site sequence, I list the western principal villages and satellites first, followed by the eastern principal villages and their corresponding satellites. I have relied primarily on Jordan (2010) for site dates, since his work is the most current. As for population data, for consistency and simplicity's sake, I have relied on Vandrei (1987) for the estimates of individual village populations. More currently Jordan (2008), Jones (2008), and Parmenter (2010) each have supplied figures for Seneca population. Vandrei's numbers do not contradict Jordan or Parmenter, even if the exact numbers vary slightly, whereas some of Jones' figures are thought to be too high for certain sites (Jordan, personal communication 2011). Since an exact measurement of village population is not the goal of this thesis, I would rather error on the side of conservatism than unintentionally misrepresent data. Estimating native population is extremely difficult, owing to warfare, disease epidemics and other variables (Jordan 2008: 54). At the end

of the seventeenth century, Jordan estimates the overall Seneca population to have averaged around four thousand people, with a temporary decline in number at the turn of the eighteenth century, most likely due to smallpox or other disease. (Jordan 2008: 55).

Again, even though demography continues to garner scholarly debate, for the purposes of this research, having a rough understanding of the numbers will hopefully help the reader to understand that the French Jesuit influence was diluted amongst numerous villages, and practicing Catholics were a definite minority in Seneca territory throughout time. This is important to bear in mind when considering the quantities of Christian-themed artifacts that have been recovered. What follows next is a site-by-site presentation of the ring, medal and crucifix data, as well some historical background pertaining to each location.

### **Powerhouse**

Powerhouse was a western principality occupied from 1640-1655 (Jordan 2010:90). The site was built on low ground near a stream on approximately 10 acres (Wray and Schoff 1953; Vandrei 1987). Some older secondary sources point to a mission at this site (Wray 1973; Bihler 1956), but this seems unlikely given that the dates of occupation predate the start of permanent missions. In Wood's catalog, approximately 18 rings are recorded, the numbers divided evenly between IHS and L-Heart designs. This count has *not* changed over time, and is only slightly higher than the contemporaneous Steele site. Vandrei estimates the population at Powerhouse fell between 1300-2200 people during its occupation (Vandrei 1987:11)

## **Menzis**

The Menzis site is western satellite village, occupied from approximately 1640-1660 (Jordan 2010:90). Vandrei gives a site area of 1.5 acres and a population estimate between 200-330 people (Vandrei 1987:11). Wood counted no rings, and only one ring, potentially secular in design, has been located subsequently.

## **Steele**

The Steele site was a principal eastern village occupied between 1645-1660 (Jordan 2010:90). Over the course of its use, the site is thought to have had a population ranging between 1300-2200 people (Vandrei 1987:11). Wray (1973:7) states that the time of occupation was a period of “heavy Dutch trade.” The site was built on low ground near a stream (Wray and Schoff 1953). At the Steele site, Wood records only one IHS Jesuit ring and one undifferentiated ring-band (1974:100-101). The ring count is now at 16, with a variety of Jesuit-style designs, as well as some potentially secular designs present. One copper alloy crucifix was found at Steele.

## **Wheeler Station**

Previously referred to as the Fox Farm Site, Wheeler Station is thought to be an eastern satellite village of Steele occupied by Huron “refugees” from approximately 1655-1675 (Jordan 2010:90). If this is the case, it would correspond to the time after the Huron defeat noted in historical sources. Wheeler Station is also thought to be associated with the 1656 St. Michael Mission (Bihler 1956:10). Wood does not identify any rings associated with Wheeler Station; the presence of other Christian artifacts is uncertain. Schoff states that the burials associated with Wheeler Station and/or the St. Michael Mission “contained many objects of the historic period, but did

not contain any Jesuit artifacts” (Schoff 1949:25). In a major change, since Schoff and Wood’s studies were published, 14 Jesuit rings have been recovered.

### **Dann**

The Dann site was a principal western village occupied from 1655-1670 (Jordan 2010:90). Houghton describes “an abundance” of Jesuit rings. The site was built on “low land” (Wray and Schoff 1953), possibly suggesting peace time. This site contained a sizable burial ground with approximately four hundred burials exhumed, and “Jesuit brass rings are abundant” among the recovered grave goods (Houghton 1912:414-416). Again, the Dann site may be associated with the town of Gandachioragon and the “first” La Conception mission, which lasted until 1670. Wood’s data showed the Dann site to contain approximately 19 Jesuit rings, with most falling into the IHS or L-Heart categories (Wood 1974:100-101). The count is now at 79 rings, 50 of which are Jesuit-style, 25 potentially secular designs and 6 indeterminate. Two medals have been recovered from Dann. One is “communion” in style and another has a simple cross design.

### **Marsh**

The Marsh Site is situated on 15 acres of land in East Bloomfield Township, approximately a quarter of a mile from Mud Creek (Houghton 1902:420). In terms of the Seneca settlement sequence, the Marsh site is an eastern principality thought to be occupied from 1655-1675 (Jordan 2010:90). Vandreii estimates the population at Marsh to have fallen somewhere in the range of 2000-3300 people (1987:11). Wood gives a tally of 6 L-heart rings, 9 HIS rings, 2 Ave Marias and 2 Calvary images

(1974:100-101). Since additional excavations have taken place, 18 more rings have been recovered for a new total of 37.

### **Ganondagan**

Also known as Boughton Hill, this was an eastern principal village occupied from 1670-1687 (Jordan 2010:91). It is generally believed that this is the village the Seneca burned and abandoned in response to Denonville's invasion. A sizable amount of Christian-themed artifacts have been found at this site. Some secondary sources (Bihler 1954; Schoff 1949) have placed Ganondagan as the home of the St. Jacques mission. Vandrei (1987:11) suggests Ganondagan ranged from 1200-2000 people. Wood's ring tally shows approximately 32 rings found at the site, with the majority falling under the LHS and the L-heart variety (Wood 1974:100-101). In the site report, Houghton speaks of one burial as "containing a Christian" but does not elaborate. One may wonder if he was referring to burial 11, which contained an individual with "five brass rings on his fingers," and "crucifix and rosary in hands" (Houghton 1912:437).

Later excavations at the site revealed even more quantities and varieties of rings. Totaling both his and Wood's numbers, Robert Dean counted approximately 47 rings. Again, the IHS and L-Heart motifs are most prevalent but his site report shows a range of Pieta, friendship and Calvary rings, along with various "abstract" designs (Dean 1984:44). Even though Wood touches on the abstract designs in her catalog, no effort has ever been made to understand or classify the abstract ring designs by themselves. The total amount of rings found at Ganondagan now comes to 91.

Other devotional objects have also been found: a single wooden crucifix, one badly corroded medal, and a silver apostle spoon with corroded figure. Apostle spoons

were a popular baptismal gift in the sixteenth century. They are usually made of silver, with their handles adorned with bodily representations of Christ and the twelve Apostles. Apostle spoons were alluded to by Shakespeare. In Henry VIII, Act 5, Scene 3, the King asks Cranmer to be sponsor for the infant Elizabeth; he demurs because he is a poor man, upon which Henry banters him in these words: "Come, come, my lord, you'd spare your spoons." As such, wealthy child may be given a whole set of 13; a person of less affluent birth may possess fewer numbers or only one (Catholic Encyclopedia 1913).

### **Bunce, Beal and Cherry Street**

The Bunce and Beal sites are eastern satellite villages were thought to be associated with the Boughton Hill community. Houghton's writing makes it difficult to tell if he is referring to what Alice Wood recognized as the Cherry Street site or the actual Beal site. Sempowski has pointed out that Cherry Street was likely the Huron Village that burnt in 1670 and Beal was the replacement built. The Bunce site is a cemetery-only site and is thought to contain individuals who resided at both Beal and Cherry Street (Jordan, personal communication 2008). From these two associated communities, Wood counted a total of three rings: one Calvary ring at Cherry Street, and one St. Francis of Assisi and one Calvary ring at Beal (Wood 1974:100-101). Since Wood, the data for Cherry Street and the Bunce site has not changed; however the total count for Beal is now at 5 rings.

### **Rochester Junction**

Rochester Junction was a principal western village, occupied circa 1670-1687 (Jordan 2010:90). There is a possible name confusion: Houghton refers to a



“Kirkpatrick site at Rochester Junction” that allegedly contained the La Conception mission; Bihler later says the same thing but just calls the site Rochester Junction. This site contained a cemetery with just under 50 graves, many of which were already disturbed prior to excavation. In terms of Christian artifacts, Houghton reports that a “silver vessel” (possibly for communion) and Jesuit rings were found. Like Ganondagan and Beal, this site was also built on high ground (Wray and Schoff 1953:59). While most ring types fall into the L-Heart category, Wood records more diversity in terms of the other types found, unlike the sites previously mentioned. These include: IHS (2); Calvary (2); Pieta (3); St. Roch (3); Woman (Mary?) with Crucifix (1); King-Louis (1); Bezel (1); incised cross (1); and blank (1) (Wood 1974:100-101). Since Wood, the ring count has more than doubled, placing the total now at 34 rings, including 11 potentially secular designs. I was also able to confirm the existence of the silver communion host box.

### **Kirkwood**

The Kirkwood site was a principal western satellite village of the Rochester Junction community thought to have been occupied circa 1670-1687 (Jordan 2010:91). The site is situated on only 2.5 acres, thus its population is thought to have been small even compared to other satellite villages, with a range of 330-550 people (Vandrei 1987:11). Wood (1974:100-101) lists five rings found at this site (Ave Maria, Pieta, Handclasp, Incised cross and King Louis motifs). The total is now at 11 rings.

### **White Springs**

White Springs was a principal eastern village occupied 1688 to 1715 (Jordan 2010:91). Its exact size remains unknown, pending further excavations. Up until

recently only the cemeteries had been excavated. However, on-going new Cornell University domestic excavations at White Springs have shown evidence that the site was a nucleated community. In terms of terrain, White Springs does not seem as “defensible” as Snyder-McClure. No materials from White Springs were present at the Rochester Museum and Science Center when Wood published; hence the most current data comes from recent excavations undertaken by Dr. Kurt Jordan at Cornell University. The count shows 2 VM rings, 1 octagonal, 2 Jesus-busts and 1 plain brass band.

A variety of other devotional materials are associated with White Springs as well. There is a single St. Ignatius medal, one St. Placidus of Rome medal, and one brass cross, which I have tentatively labeled a “communion cross.” The cross, located in the summer of 2010, is particularly interesting because the imagery on its respective sides tells the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The pictograms are so exact in their relation to Catholic catechism that it is possible this kind of object would have either been given to someone to mark their communion and confirmation, or was perhaps kept around as a teaching tool since the pictures provide an easy reference. A 1929 photograph by Hammond Tuttle in the collections of the Geneva Historical Society increases the count to 6 more (indeterminable) medals, 3 rings, 1 crucifix and 1 partial rosary.

### **Snyder-McClure**

This was a principal western village occupied from 1688-1715 (Jordan 2010:91). Wray (1973) suggests that no Jesuit material was found in the region after the Snyder-McClure site, but this information is clearly incorrect based on the

Huntoon findings. Jordan (2004) describes the village as “situated on a hilltop” and containing at least five to ten longhouses and at least three separate cemetery areas. The concentration of Jesuit rings is high, with a total of 35 documented by Wood. The most prominent design motifs in the collection include the L-heart, IHS, Ave Maria and Heart-plaque (Wood 1974:100-101). Additional findings place the total count at 55 rings.

The assemblage of medals and crucifixes found at Snyder McClure is quite distinctive compared to the other sites. 24 copper alloy medals have been recovered from the site, with a wide distribution of designs. The majority seem to feature a Mary and Jesus motif. With some variation, this entails either an image of the Blessed Virgin on one side and a bust of Christ on the other, or it might show Mary holding the infant Jesus on one side with the crucifixion on the other. Eight copper crucifixes and one partial rosary have also been recovered.

### **Huntoon Site**

The Huntoon site was a principal western village occupied from approximately 1710-1745 (Jordan 2010:91). Notably, all of the site’s occupation takes place after the Jesuits were expelled from the region. Wood (1974:100-101) records 3 Ave Maria, 1 Pieta and 2 of what she calls “octagonal impressed” rings. Current archaeological data shows 2 Sun-heart rings, 2 heart-cross rings, 7 plain heart Jesuit rings, 11 wedding bands, 3 Virgin Mary (VM) motif rings, and 1 handclasp (Pieta). There are also 26 of what might be ornamental/secular rings that have a wide variety of designs among them, or whose designs are too worn to determine. The total ring count now comes to exactly 43.

As for other devotional items, the Huntoon site has yielded two copper crucifixes and five medals. Of these, there are 3 Benedictine-style medals, 1 Mary and Jesus medal, and 1 communion-style medal.

### **Townley-Read Site**

The Townley-Read site was a principal eastern village, occupied from 1715-1754 (Jordan 2008:19). “Short longhouses” consisting of 2 families were the preferred domestic arrangement (Jordan 2008:14). The site had not been excavated when Wood published, so all data is current. In a recent study on copper alloy materials at the Townley Read site, Jessica Herlich records 28 “Jesuit style” rings in the Rochester Museum collections, as well as one additional ring which is currently housed at Cornell University (Herlich 2009:22). Of the twenty nine rings, nine rings are of the double-M motif, eight are L-Heart motif; 3 IHS; and 3 “N progression” rings. The remaining Jesuit rings, as Herlich suggests, show variations to the commonly acknowledged heart or star designs (2009:25).

Eight medals have been found; 1 Mary and Jesus, 3 indecipherable and 4 possibly not religious in nature. There is also a single copper alloy crucifix affiliated with the site. As of this writing, Townley-Read is the latest site discovered that contains specifically Jesuit-related materials.

### **Late eighteenth century Sites**

The Canawaugus, Big Tree and Creek sites were occupied during the last half of the eighteenth century through the very early nineteenth century. According to George Hamell:

Canawaugus was the location of the village in which Cornplanter was born around the middle of the eighteenth century; there was also a village in that same area at the time of the Sullivan expedition, as well as at the end of the eighteenth century; the area was then set aside as the Canawaugus Reservation, which was occupied through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Big Tree has a similar history of occupation. The Creek site is located on lands that were formerly part of the original Tonawanda Reservation. The occupation of that area spans the 1770s through the early nineteenth century, and of course continues on the reservation proper as repurchased by the Senecas and confirmed in the mid-nineteenth century. (Hamell personal communication, 2010)

No “Jesuit-style” rings or medals have yet been found at any of these later sites. A single wooden crucifix and a beaded plain cross necklace were recovered from Canawaugus. Big Tree has a single pewter cross with a faded inscription. At the Creek site, there is a small plain silver cross charm that was likely part of a necklace.

*ARTIFACT TABLES*

**Table 1. Finger Rings from Seneca Sites**

Site	Occupation Date	IHS	IXXI	Lheart	Calvary	Pieta	Secular	Man w/Cross	King Louis	Clasped hands	Incised Cross	Jesus	Indeterminable	Unaccounted	TOTALS	Wood 1974 Ring Counts
Powerhouse	w.p. 1640-1655	7	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	18
Menzis	w.s. 1640-1660	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Steele	e.p. 1645-1660	5	1	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16	2
Wheeler Station	e.s. 1655-1675	5	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	14	0
Dann	w.p. 1655-1670	24	3	18	0	0	25	1	1	1	0	0	6	0	79	19
Marsh	w.p. 1668-1675	13	4	9	1	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	37	19
Ganondagan	e.p. 1670-1687	20	4	11	5	7	4	8	0	2	0	0	24	6	91	15
Beal	es. 1670-1687	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	2
Cherry St	e.s. ?-1670	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Rochester Junction	w.p. 1670-1687	6	0	1	2	4	11	1	1	0	1	0	4	3	34	15
Kirkwood	w.s. 1670-1687	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	11	5
White Springs	e.p. 1688-1715	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	3	11	0
Snyder-McClure	w.p. 1688-1715	12	9	3	3	2	20	0	0	0	5	0	4	0	55	35
Huntoon	w.p. 1710-1745	2	6	1	0	1	26	0	2	0	0	0	5	0	43	6
Townley-Read	e.p. 1715-1754	3	18	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	29	0
<b>Type Totals</b>		<b>97</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>137</b>

Site date sources: Jordan 2008: 28; Sempowski and Saunders 2001: 6

Table Key  
 e.p. = eastern principal village  
 w.p. = western principal village

**Table 2. Religious Medals from Seneca Sites**

Site	Occupation Date	Communion	Mary&Jesus	Pieta	Benedictine	St. Michael	St. Augustine	St. Ignatius	Conception	Misc.	Indecipherable	Site Totals
Dann	w.p. 1655-1670	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Ganondagan	e.p. 1670-1687	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
White Springs	e.p. 1688-1715	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	6 *tuttle picture	8
Snyder McClure	w.p. 1688-1715	1	8	3	2	0	2	1	2	3	2	24
Huntoon	w.p. 1710-1745	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Townley-Read	e.p. 1715-1754	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	8
Type Totals		3	10	3	5	1	2	2	2	7	6	41

Site date sources: Jordan 2008: 28; Sempowski and Saunders 2001: 6

<p>Table Key  e.p. = eastern principal village  w.p. = western principal village</p>
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**Table 3. Crosses, Crucifixes and Other Devotional Materials from Seneca Sites**

Site	Occupation Date	Crucifixes and Crosses:	Other Devotional Materials:	Total Crucifixes/Crosses	Total Other:
Steele	e.p. 1645-1660	1 copper crucifix	None	1	0
Rochester Junction	w.p. 1670-1687	None	1 silver communion host box	0	1
Ganondagan	e.p. 1670-1687	1 wooden crucifix	1 apostle spoon	1	1
White Springs	e.p. 1688-1715	1 "communion" cross* + 1 copper crucifix	1 partial rosary	2	1
Snyder McClure	w.p. 1688-1715	8 copper crucifixes	1 partial rosary	8	1
Huntoon	w.p. 1710-1745	2 copper crucifix	None	2	0
Townley-Read	e.p. 1715-1754	1 copper crucifix	None	1	0
Canawaugus	1750-1768?	1 wooden crucifix	1 beaded cross necklace	1	1
Big Tree	?	1 pewter cross w/faded inscription	None	0	1
Creek	1775-1826	1 silver cross charm	None	0	1

Site date sources: Jordan 2008: 28; Sempowski and Saunders 2001: 6

<p>Table Key  e.p. = eastern principal village  w.p. = western principal village  e.s. = eastern satellite village  w.s. = western satellite village</p>
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### *Problems and Questions In the Interpretation of Christian-Themed Artifacts*

In the study of Jesuit finger rings it seems one is left at a scholarly impasse when venturing beyond mere typology and into the realm of meaning. Carol Mason notes: “some writers distinguish between the rings with obvious religious decoration and those that are the same except that the religious tie is not recognizable (e.g., Mandzy 1986; Wood 1974), but most archaeologists do not (e.g. Hauser 1982)” (Mason 2003:235). Because so little has been discovered as to why, how and when the rings began venturing into North America, speculation as to what the rings were intended for is also rife with division.

One of the more problematic but compelling points of view is held by Adrian Mandzy. Even though he acknowledges that “secular” designs do occur, Mandzy again repeatedly refers to the rings as “Christianization rings.” He suggests that the rings “were probably brought over by the earliest explorers as their own personal items” and that “with the advance of Christianity came the use of rings for religious order” (Mandzy 1986:51). To make his case, he recalls a Huron ossuary excavated by the University of Toronto that contained six rings.

Jean de Brebeuf, described a Huron ossuary which he had visited in 1636. Excavations made by Kenneth K. Kidd and the Royal Ontario Museum of Archeology, Toronto, produced six copper finger rings, two of which were still in situ on the third phalanges (finger bone), and all but one were imported, the exception being a crude open band, probably of native manufacture. Of the remaining five rings all had bezels and well fashioned circles. The simple bezel bore a design of a star bordered by two vertical impressed lines. Two of the five bezels retained glass faces and behind one of them a reddish substance was visible (Kidd, 1953:370) The number of rings correlates with Brebeuf’s account of the number of Christian burials and the probable number of married Christian women who may have used these rings as wedding bands. Provided this is true, would it not be most probable that the Jesuits who were performing

these marriages would want to continue to instill their strong religious beliefs? (Mandzy 1986:51)

Even though none of the rings described in the ossuary appears to be a Jesuit-style design, and the obvious problem of trying to correlate the number of rings with Brebeuf's number of burials, Mandzy continues to press his case. He jumps from historical accounts of marriages to typology, and as Cleland did, Mandzy attempts to erroneously correlate ring style and time period—and in that, he ignores any real question of meaning.

However, we cannot solely criticize Mandzy for simply ascribing the rings to “Christianization.” Although he does not cite her work, his ideas echo Hauser's who basically stated in her piece on Ft. Michilimackinac that the rings were brought to New France by the Jesuits to spread Christianity (Hauser 1982:1). Still, the literal grandfather of the idea that the rings were used somehow as a conversion tool may very well be Beauchamp, who claimed that the rings “came and went with the Jesuits” (Beauchamp 1903:37). Nonetheless, even if one is not looking to use the rings for chronological purposes, it is still hard to separate their existence from their longstanding association with the Jesuit missions, their conversion activities and the dates of each mission's establishment (Mason 2003:239).

Conversely, it has also been suggested that the rings in themselves, regardless of their decoration, were secular trade items or became such after a certain point in time. Cleland states: “Jesuit rings seem to have been used primarily in religious contexts, but it is, of course, possible or even probable that they may have also been used simply as trade items. That very few Jesuit rings have been recovered

archaeologically from the church or priests' house at Fort Michilimackinac would support the theory that these rings had become secular trade items by the second quarter of the eighteenth century” (Cleland 1972:202). While one cannot and should not apply Cleland’s idea to the findings in and history of Seneca territory, what is even more problematic is that he fails to suggest exactly how the rings could have gone from potentially sacred, or at least important enough to be buried with people, to secular. Of course, metal trinkets had their everyday practical uses, whether they were somehow sewn onto clothing for decoration or were melted down and made into projectile points or other desired objects. However, based the numbers of rings with their original designs (religious or not) left intact that I examined, it seems logical that the rings, even if they were cheap trinkets, likely held some kind of significance to their wearer.

Unfortunately, a more thorough meditation of what kind of significance appears to get lost in the drive to link Jesuit rings with dates, missions and converts. Mason perhaps summarizes the scholarly conundrum best: “in spite of this repeated litany linking Jesuit priests to the rings and inferring the presence of priests from the presence of rings and the presence of rings from the presence of priests, almost all students of Jesuit rings show a powerful ambivalence about this association and manage to question it even as they ultimately accept it” (Mason 2003:240).

Mason’s 2010 article, however, challenges scholars to move beyond this mere acceptance. She consulted several French jewelry experts who relay the multi-faceted meanings of the rings and what the wearers may have intended to convey. Recalling the religious wars that took place in France during the sixteenth-seventeenth century,

Mason cites Deloche (1929), who calls the rings “energetic affirmations” of belief (Mason 2010:8). Louis XIV resumed persecution of French Protestants when he took power in the seventeenth century. At a time when religion equaled politics, wearing religious imagery could publically proclaim one’s loyalty to the crown, thus preventing their own brutal end (Mason 2010:8). On the more benign side, rings were often purchased by pilgrims visiting religious sites as souvenirs (Mason 2010:9). Yet the rest of the article calls our attention to the more secular, yet personal aspects of the rings: tokens of affection or engagement (*bagues de foi* and *bagues de roulier*), membership in a professional guild, or family initials (signet rings, or *bagues de chevaliers*) (Mason 2010:10-11). The last compelling category of ring meaning that may have resonance with this study involves the use of rings as “vernacular medicine.” Mason cites Jonas (2000), who comments on the power ascribed to Sacred Heart imagery in eighteenth century France. Notably, Mason ascribes the LHeart ring type in the “*bagues de foi*” category, even though previous scholars (Wood 1974) have linked it to Ignatius of Loyola and Sacred Heart devotion. Still, even if scholars differ on the details, Mason reminds us: “Rings had multiple functions, sometimes several at a time, and only the wearers could be sure of the intended meanings, a cautionary tale of emics in action” (Mason 2010:13). Likewise, a “simple tie to priests and missions is no longer possible. Because of their many possible roots, and many possible meanings, understanding the plaque designs has become more complicated, and the chronological ties more elusive” (Mason 2010:13).

Curiously enough, no one as of yet seems to have asked or speculated on what the Native view of the rings may have been. The Iroquoian affinity for certain shapes,

colors, materials, as well as sensitivity to physical imagery seems to be a better starting place for understanding the rings versus debating over the presence of missionaries and converts. Moreover, no one has yet taken into consideration the numbers of rings with so-called “native” or “secular” designs and what the implications of these might be. The polar separation of “the sacred and the profane” that occurs in manifestations of Western European Christianity also manifests itself in the discussion of artifacts, which may or may not be religious in nature. This rhetoric of separation ultimately fails when applied to the Iroquois, who saw the natural world and everything therein as being part of an interconnected cosmogony.

To bring the missions back into focus, in my site data I noticed that the sites with the most rings do appear to correspond with historical accounts of missions. In short order the sites with the most rings — Dann, Marsh, Rochester Junction and Ganondagan — appear to have been the locations of missions, as mentioned by Bihler (1954) and others. On the other hand, Snyder-McClure and Huntoon, which both have sizable amounts of rings recovered, were not necessarily affiliated with any particular mission. Snyder-McClure (1688-1715) dates towards the end of the Jesuit’s stay in Seneca Territory, and Huntoon (1710-1745) was primarily occupied after the Jesuits were expelled. Notably, at least half of rings found at Snyder McClure (twenty out of fifty-five) and Huntoon (twenty-six out of forty-three), seem to fall in the “secular or native designs” category.

The presence of religious medals is another matter. The medals found so far are exclusive to the later sites in the sample and occur in their greatest numbers at White Springs, Snyder-McClure, Huntoon, and Townley-Read. If the rings included

secular or native designs, but the medals of Mary and Jesus did not, the water becomes even murkier. What can such data tell us about the Seneca-variety Christianity—or the lack thereof? Due to grave disturbances and inadequate site reports, it is almost impossible to ascribe provenience to most of the Christian-themed artifacts. Yet if the people being buried at some of the early/mid eighteenth century sites grew up knowing Jesuit priests, and thus were probably been exposed to some measure Christianity, are we looking at a material example of people trying to “keep the faith?” Or, could the same “secular trade” argument be applied to the medals as well, even though the religious implications in the medals would appear more apparent than in the rings?

As the inherent religiosity of Christian-themed artifacts located on native sites continues to be debated, we might consider the parallel example of what occurred during the Jesuit Missions to the Powhatan Confederacy during the 1570s. After the Jesuits in residence were martyred, their attackers gave them a Christian burial, and then distributed the relics, clothing and religious items that were in the priests’ possession (Gleach 1997:92-93). When the Spanish returned to resupply the mission, they found them [chiefs] walking along the beach wearing the priests’ robes, along with a paten and a communion chalice (Gleach 1997:96). Rather than construing this as a random act, Frederic Gleach makes a compelling argument that the Indians recognized the “power of these items and wore them with respect, as a way of maintaining that power” (Gleach 1997:96). Gleach is also careful to note: “this is not to say that they had converted to the Jesuit faith, but rather, that they had absorbed that

religion into their own. The Indians accepted the teachings of the Jesuits – received salvation — but did so on their own terms” (Gleach 1997: 96).

Moreover: “the peaceful resignation with which they [the priests] seem to have met their fates would also meet the native ideal and confirm their inner strength and power; wearing of the material signs of their powers – their vestments, the paten, the chalice – would reflect the conveyance of this power. Indeed, it is suggested that these items were later stored away in the chiefs’ ‘treasure houses’ for years to come, the same treatment given to more traditional powerful goods such as crystals, copper, and beads” (Gleach 1997:96). While no priests were martyred in Seneca territory, it is still arguable that like the Powhatan, the Senecas too may have appropriated their own meanings to any Christian-themed items they came in contact with, and dealt with belief – or not – on their own terms.

## CHAPTER 4

### FAITH IN NUMBERS

In order to make sense of the “mixed messages” generated by information gaps and our own historical distance, I return to the *Jesuit Relations*. The collections of Christian-themed artifacts prompt several questions: How were the Jesuits communicating Catholicism? What approaches did priests take to undermine indigenous beliefs and gain converts? How many “believers” lived in a given village and who were they? Lacking a written first-person indigenous perspective, we have only the limited and biased accounts written by various Jesuit priests, who surely had their own concerns in the wake of warfare and as “strangers in a strange land.” Nonetheless, the Jesuits were some of seventeenth-century Europe’s most educated and articulate men; if their writings are read mindfully and scholarly research is undertaken with as much respect possible to cultural sensitivity, there is no reason to undermine the *Jesuit Relations* here as a source.

In order to try and unpack these questions of religiosity, I have compiled data on the recorded baptisms mentioned in the Seneca volumes, and gathered some examples of the “spiritual pedagogy” employed by the missionaries. The situational patterns evident in the accounts of Seneca conversion are examined last in hopes that the previous sections will have provided a broad enough context to understand the limitations of Jesuit influence, as well as how and why certain individuals came to be counted among “the faithful.”

For the research purposes, it is perhaps best if one considers the accounts of adult catechumens in Seneca territory separately from the number of recorded



“baptisms.” This is simply to try and distinguish the accounts of those who lived out their lives as Catholic converts from the people who experienced “deathbed baptism.” Moreover, as I will discuss later, deathbed baptisms varied from sick infants to adults who were still cognizant enough to interact with the priest.

The missions to the Seneca may be the most historically complex of the Five Nations, given that their territory was, during the time of the Jesuits, the most geographically removed from European settlements (JR 55:73). Also, many of Seneca villages consisted of “adopted” Huron and persons formerly of other groups (JR 54:79-81), and again when Chaumonot arrived, many Huron had already been exposed or converted to Catholicism (JR 44:23-25). Beyond the previously discussed tactics the missionaries employed to compel converts, the role that Huron Christians may have played in spreading the faith (as the passage in JR 54:85 suggests) is certainly an area where further research is needed.

The data on baptized and practicing Christian individuals is both incomplete and unclear. The Jesuit Relations do not separate the numbers of existing Huron Christians in certain villages from the numbers of new Seneca converts. Similarly, a “parish register” that would give a count of practicing Christian families does not appear to exist. Sometimes the *Jesuit Relations* distinguish those who died after baptism from those who survived—but not always. Thus, without exact knowledge of a given village’s population, it is hard to have a clear picture as to how many Christians there were compared to the “non-converted.”

However, archaeology has yielded considerable insight regarding Seneca settlement patterns. If we re-visit Vandrei, he suggests that each major village site

contained roughly between one and two thousand people (Vandrei 1987:10). Given the numbers Vandrei (1987) proposes, it seems logical that no matter how fervent the missionaries and neophyte converts were, Seneca Christians likely were, and remained, in the minority. The chronologically ordered data on Seneca baptisms taken directly from the *Jesuit Relations* appears to support this as well. Starting with Chaumonot's arrival in 1657, I have noted every account of baptism, and where applicable, death afterwards, mentioned throughout the course of the Seneca missions.

***Seneca Baptismal Data from the Jesuit Relations***

**1657:** Chaumonot baptizes Chief Annonkenritaoui, along with a married couple (and potentially others?) at Gandagan (JR 44:21)

**1668** (October): Fremin baptized 60 people, 33 of whom die (52:195)

**1668** (Winter): Fremin began the first permanent mission in the midst of an epidemic. He baptized "6 score people," which equals 120. However, 90 of these people die, leaving 30 "Christians." (54:79)

**1669** (September): 40 existing adult Christians (probably Huron) are noted. (54:81)

**1669** (Spring – Fall): Fremin baptized 20-25 people and prepared 10-12 more adults for sacraments (54:95)

**1669** (November): Garnier worked at Gandachiragou, baptizes 20 people, all die (54:121) Fremin baptized three captives from Gandastogué before they are tortured and burned. (54:23-33).

**1670:** Garnier counted "100 or more" baptisms at St. Michael (JR 57:190)

**1671:** Garnier has baptized "110 or more" (55:71)

**1672** (July): Garnier baptized 40 people, including 33 children who all die (56:61).

**1673 (July):** Garnier baptized 43 children -- 29 of them die, leaving 14 survivors. He also baptized 12 adults – 9 dead, leaving 3 survivors. (57:195). By the end of the year, it is recorded that Garnier baptized 55 people at the St. Jacques mission. Raffeix baptized 38 at La Conception for a total of 93 people between the two priests (57:14).

**1674 (Summer):** Raffeix wrote a letter describing an older man who desires to move with his wife and two children to Quebec or la Prairie de la Magdeleine so they may live in the community of other Christians (58: 239). Raffeix also reported that he baptized 14 children, all of whom died shortly thereafter. (58: 241)

**1675-1676:** No direct communications from the Seneca missions. (60:173) In a letter relayed by Father Dablon to Reverend Father Pierre de Verthamont states that in the wake of an influenza epidemic, Garnier baptized 40 children and 14 adults, all of whom die, and Raffeix baptizing 60 children, who also all die (JR 60:175).

**1677-1678:** No direct communications from Seneca missions. In a letter relayed by Father Dablon to Reverend Father Pierre de Verthamont, he relays via Jean de Lamberville that Raffeix and Garnier baptized 212 people, including 70 children who die (61:19).

**1680s:** No direct communications from the Seneca missions. However, Volume 62 contains a letter dated October 21, 1683, written by Thierry Beschefer, the Jesuit Mission Superior in Quebec to the Reverend Father Provincial. Beschefer states: “Father Jean de Lamberville, the superior of those missions, wrote me some time ago that hardly any one died at Sonnantouan, where Father Julien Garnier is, without having previously received baptism, — although they, with those of Goiogouen, are

the most averse to Christianity. He has baptized as many as one hundred and thirty-eight in one year, among whom are many adults” (62:225).

**1700s:** No data.

If one were to exclude those who died immediately after baptism and total only the mentioned survivors, along with the mentioned Christians (including the 40 Huron Christians), then the Relations appear to suggest a rough estimate of between 700-800 people being baptized during the peak of missionary activity. Daniel Richter, while also acknowledging the vagueness of the data in the *Relations*, suggests that the Christian population averaged around twenty percent of the total Seneca population (Richter 1985:9). However, twenty percent seems improbably high, given the numbers mentioned in the Jesuit Relations and the archaeologically-derived data (Vandrei 1987) on village populations.

### ***The Pedagogy of Conversion***

Back in Europe, each Jesuit had been given a first-rate university education in the classical humanities, in addition to theology and philosophy. Many were already experienced professors before ever stepping foot abroad; thirty-four was the average age of a traveling priest (Axtell 1985:75). Beyond an intellectual education, Jesuit novices were also expected to quicken themselves spiritually. It took candidates two years to complete Ignatius of Loyola’s rigorous spiritual exercises, and “in the un-genteel school of the heart,” the Jesuits learned to how to communicate their religious messages across the vernacular to people of various ages and educational backgrounds (Axtell 1985:77).

Of course, the missions of New France were unlike any classroom, hospital or almshouse in Europe (Axtell 1985:77). The general uncertainty of living conditions included disease, hunger, French-Indian diplomacy and inter-tribal warfare. This called on the Jesuits to take real steps to understand their audience, both for the sake of gaining converts, as well as for sake of self-preservation—even if martyrdom was looked upon as a glorious ending.

Given that the Iroquois already had a well-developed set of spiritual beliefs and values, for the Jesuits it was perhaps not so much a matter of making their charges “find God,” as it was a matter of re-conceptualizing native beliefs in a Christian light, and debunking the various indigenous traditions that the Jesuits regarded as superstition or devil-worship. As one might expect, this was not a simple undertaking. Spreading the faith first demanded that the Jesuit missionaries have a working knowledge of existing Iroquoian beliefs, followed by the ability to deploy tactics that would supplant indigenous beliefs with Catholicism—all the while without generating any hostility from their hosts.

Unfortunately, the *Jesuit Relations* do not depict the actual process of conversion in great detail, instead opting to focus on the great deeds and charity of those already converted (Richter 1985:7-8). What follows thus, are some historical accounts of “Jesuit pedagogy” in action, which is perhaps a step in the right direction if we are to learn anything about how and why people converted. While most of the accounts are from Seneca lands, in the interest of being as thorough as possible, I have also provided pertinent examples other from proximal and contemporary Iroquoian missions.

As previously discussed, the Jesuits constantly sought to undermine the Iroquoian dream beliefs and were often unsuccessful, given the ways in which the Iroquois intertwined dreams with medicine and soul mysteries. However, when it came to physical medicine, the Jesuits also tried to employ their knowledge to supplant the medicine men and gain converts. Even though sixteenth century medicine rightfully incurs our skepticism today, the tonics and remedies that were available for the Jesuits to obtain from Europe and carry with them on their journey were looked upon with high regard by the Iroquois. Writing from Cayuga Territory in 1674, Father Jean de Lamberville found himself performing the duties of both priest and physician:

The Father has acquired great influence by his skill in using various remedies. This gives him entrance to all the cabins and access to all the sick, so that few escape who are not baptized before they die. In addition to his occupation in Onnontagué, he is compelled from time to time to make excursions in the vicinity. On the last one that he made, ten leagues from the village, he fortunately arrived in time to baptize a dying man, who expired shortly afterward. Then, after crossing a river, he found several sick Christians, whom he confessed; he then bled them, and it came to pass that, by means of the spiritual and temporal remedies, God restored them to health. (JR 59:243)

In the same passage, de Lamberville also describes “bleeding” another sick man and then hurrying to administer medicines to a sick woman and her child. As a result of his work, de Lamberville stated that all his patients survived (JR 59:243). Again, this did not go unnoticed by the Cayuga, who began to take him more seriously. Around the same year, a more private medical ministry occurred in Seneca territory, when Father Raffeix at La Conception visited the cabin of a young woman who had tried to commit suicide by poisoning herself: “I went several times to see her in her cabin, to speak to her of her salvation; but human respect prevented her from answering. From time to time I took medicines and some comforts to her, in order to

induce her to consent more readily that I might speak to her of God, and of the eternal unhappiness or blessedness of her soul” (JR 58:237).

Baptism, the first of all Catholic sacraments received by a neophyte, was initially feared when the Jesuits first arrived in Iroquoia (Richter 1985:2). However, in the Seneca missions, it seems baptism quickly became a “medicine” that many desired (JR 55:9). This may be credited to Chaumonot’s positive first visit in 1656 with the Seneca. He adhered to the Seneca social conventions by bestowing gifts on his hosts and then spoke, afterwards allowing the elders to deliberate (JR 44:21). Many in the audience were moved by Chaumonot’s words and asked for immediate baptism: “One was more deeply touched than the others; he would not allow the Father to depart before he had been instructed and baptized, and had obtained the same happiness for his wife” (JR 44:21). However, the most notable neophyte included a Seneca chief, who found himself miraculously cured after his alleged conversion:

Annonkenritaoui, who is the Chief of these peoples, was inclined to surpass all in fervor, and was one of the first Christians. A canker that was eating away his thigh compelled him to take to his bed. The Father, although ill himself, went to see him, and converted him to the Faith. He will, doubtless, be a great prop to it in his own country, for God seems to have cured him, solely with that design, of a disease which everyone considered incurable (JR 44:21).

As skeptical as one may be of Annonkenritaoui’s miracle cure, and whether or not he actually remained a practicing Christian, it appears that this incident provided some much needed “good publicity” for baptism; the association people made between baptism and the dying is repeatedly noted throughout the Relations, as the Jesuits rushed to administer it to sick children and adults alike (Richter 1985:2). In 1674 at La Conception, Father Raffeix gives us a touching account of mothers desperately

seeking a means to heal their sick children: “On several occasions, mothers who had no inclination for the Faith came to get me to restore their sick children to health. I took advantage of the opportunity to baptize them, and several soared away to heaven after having received, through baptism, health of the soul instead of that of the body” (JR 58:241)

Apart from “medicine” of various kinds, the Jesuits also used their scientific knowledge to predict eclipses and other celestial events to impress prospective converts. Writing to his French provincial in 1683, Jesuit Mission Superior Thierry Beschefer stated, “This prediction of eclipses has always been one of the things that have most astonished our savages; and it has given them a higher opinion of Their missionaries” (JR 62:197). When a lunar eclipse came to pass on January 21, 1674, Father Millet at the Onneiout (Oneida) mission wrote to Father Dablon of how he used the situation to undermine the influence of village “Jugglers.”

The poor people admitted to me that it was beyond their knowledge, and begged me to go and notify them at the time of the eclipse. After this avowal of their ignorance had been several times reiterated, I publicly announced on Sunday, after mass, that the eclipse would take place on the following night; and that, if they awoke, they must remember to look. Fortunately, the sky was very clear; and, as soon as I noticed that the eclipse was beginning, I went to the orator of the country, and to some others among the most notable men; they arose and, coming quickly out of their cabins, saw that the eclipse was already very perceptible. Immediately, they announced the event, within and without the fort. I warned them that it would not remain as it was; that it would increase a great deal more, and that barely one-twelfth of the moon would remain visible. They asked me whether it would not reappear again, for these simple people thought that it was almost lost. “It will reappear entirely,” I said, “and then it will be at such a spot in the sky for it continues to advance; and, just as you now see it gradually growing smaller, so will you see it *grow larger* in the same proportion.” Everything happened as I had announced, and they were compelled to admit that we knew things better than they. For my part, I derived great benefit from this, in instructing them and undeceiving them about their myths and superstitions. (JR 58:181-183)



Related to medicine and “magic,” the Iroquois and Huron both expressed particular sensitivities to certain objects and colors. When the first Jesuits arrived in New France in 1611, they quickly began using images as teaching tools, much in the way that Ignatius of Loyola incorporated the notion of “conversion by image” into the Jesuit spiritual exercises (Axtell 1985:115). From his earlier work with the Huron, Charles Garnier (1606-1649) realized that gaining the attention of his audience required that Christian religious imagery should adhere to certain aesthetics, as well as color symbolism. Around 1645, Garnier wrote to his brother and requested pictures that included “an eighteen year-old beardless Jesus, Jesus on the cross” and images that distinguished “damned souls from happy souls” (Axtell 1985:115-116). Additionally, because it was a favorite of the natives, Garnier requested several copies of a published picture of the child Jesus hugging the knees of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary was depicted with crown on her head, a scepter in her right hand and the Earth in her left (Axtell 1985:115). Given their matrilineal kinship practices and the widely regarded roles of women in both domesticity and tribal diplomacy, the preference expressed for Marian imagery by the Iroquois and Huron is hardly surprising.

As for color, Garnier noted that “Jesus, Mary and happy souls should all be in white; others should be dressed in red or blue – never yellow or green” (Axtell 1985:115). Any such human figures should be “semi-covered, hair straight and combed and no beards” (Axtell 1985:115). Damned souls, by contrast, should appear “blackened” and engulfed in flames, with the facial expression as agonized as

possible. For additional effect, the damned soul may be held captive by “a scaly dragon below,” while “two demons jab at him with blackened pokers” and “a third removes his scalp” (Axtell 1985:116).

In the Iroquoian worldview, the sacred and the profane regularly intertwined. Rather than viewing each person as having one indivisible spiritual essence, again, the Huron and Iroquois believed that individuals were the sum of many “soul-parts” (Hultkrantz 1997:2-4). One such aspect, known as *orenda* was regarded as the spiritual power inherent in all of existence, capable of residing within objects as well as nature (Engelbrecht 2003:5-6). In the context of European contact, the Iroquois saw the guns carried by Europeans as holding volatile *orenda*, capable of both good and evil. *Orenda* could especially be expressed by shiny objects, i.e. glass beads and certain metals, which were highly sought after trade items. Similarly, *orenda* was the medium through which said objects might become magically charged in ritual (Engelbrecht 2003:145-146).

The Jesuits did not want to encourage indigenous “idolatry,” nor did they want to bestow the sacraments to adult catechumens whom they felt were not yet ready or adequately sincere. In fact, Julien Garnier was firm about refusing baptism to those who would not renounce “superstitious” native practices and fully embrace Catholic doctrine (JR 58:227). Though overall more tolerant than other varieties of religious orders in the seventeenth century, the Jesuits still demanded neophytes to undergo a “massive reorientation of behavior and belief” (Richter 1985:7). Nevertheless, in realizing the significance of objects in ritual and in daily life, the Jesuits strove to replace the “pagan” charms and medicine pouches with rosaries, crucifixes, saint

medals, finger rings and other sacramental items (Axtell 1985:112). As different as each may be, one thing all sacramentals have in common is the visual call to prayer through symbolic imagery. In the case of religious medals, the inscriptions around the imagery can spell out specific prayers and devotions.

On a related note, keen on combining Catholicism with the Mohawks' love of gambling and charms, in the spring of 1670, Father Pierron invented a game with decorated “emblems representing the sacraments, virtues, commandments, sins, etc. The game was called ‘from Point to Point’ — *i.e.*, from the point of birth to the point of Eternity... The Iroquois learn it easily, and like it so well that the Father and his catechumens pass the Easter Feast-days agreeably with this game, which is equally holy and profitable” (JR 53:13).

So far we have seen the ways that the Jesuits drew neophytes in with the lure of healing, imagery, objects and with their patented variety of “magical [scientific] knowledge.” The other notable “selling points” of the faith, which cannot be overlooked in Iroquoian context, include the complicated roles of warfare and physical suffering.

One of the more infamous occurrences of martyrdom involved Fathers Brebeuf and Gabriel Lalemant in March of 1649. It was transcribed in the Jesuit Relations through the accounts of the Christian Hurons taken captive by Iroquois forces (JR 34:9). Later, the bones of both priests were taken to Quebec for veneration (JR 34:9). It is unlikely that these events went unnoticed among the already-faithful Chaumonot encountered in Seneca Territory seven years later; the courage both priests displayed

in the face of their extreme torture would have played on both Catholic and indigenous sensibilities.

Jean de Brebeuf's death was a gruesome spectacle. As he continued to preach at his tormentors and fellow captives: "Those butchers, indignant at his zeal, in order to hinder him from further speaking of God, girdled his mouth, cut off his nose, and tore off his lips; but his blood spoke much more loudly than his lips had done; and, his heart not being yet torn out, his tongue did not fail to render him service until the last sigh, for blessing God for these torments, and for animating the Christians more vigorously than he had ever done" (JR 34:141-143). At the height of his torture, Brebeuf's heart was torn out and eaten:

Those butchers, seeing that the good Father began to grow weak, made him sit down on the ground; and, one of them, taking a knife, cut off the skin covering his skull. Another one of those barbarians, seeing that the good Father would soon die, made an opening in the upper part of his chest, and tore out his heart, which he roasted and ate. Others came to drink his blood, still warm, which they drank with both hands,—saying that Father de Brebeuf had been very courageous to endure so much pain as they had given him, and that, by drinking his blood, they would become courageous like him. (JR 34:29)

The intersection of Catholic martyrdom with Iroquoian torture ultimately yields the sufferer a macabre, yet eminent posthumous distinction. Male warriors especially may have found a certain kinship in the face of the crucified Christ, as opposed to the gentle image of the Madonna and Child. The Biblical accounts of how Christ bore the suffering leading up to his own gruesome death was quite similar to what was expected of a captured Iroquoian warrior, bound to stake in a strange village.

No Jesuit martyrs were made at Seneca missions, but the realities of warfare, as mentioned repeatedly in the *Jesuit Relations*, undoubtedly impacted the missions.

At various times, Garnier, Raffeix and Fremin, while fearing for their own lives, found themselves ministering to captives and torture victims. These are a truly distinctive variety of “deathbed conversion.” In the year 1669 at St. Michael, Fremin gave a harrowing account of two Susquehannock captives from Gandastogue, whom he converted prior to their fifteen-hour torture and eventual execution by burning (JR 54:101). In his letter, he noted the last words of one of the men: “Straightway he was led to the place of torture, and from that happy moment of his conversion until the last breath of his life, he sang continually, with an invincible courage: ‘Burn my body as much as you will; tear it in pieces; this torment will soon pass, after which I shall go to Heaven. I shall go to Heaven and be forever happy there’” (JR 54:101).

### *The Faithful and the Departed*

Unfortunately, the Jesuit Relations do not offer detailed insights as to what a native neophyte may have underwent during the process of conversion. Given the often tumultuous living situation in New France, even if the Jesuits spared no theological rigor on the (living) catechumens, it may still be the case that the initiation process was somewhat expedited. With many non-religious variables such as French politics and village diplomacy in play, it is understandable why some scholars remain skeptical about the spiritual authenticity of many conversions (Richter 1985:5).

The mingling of religion and politics is especially evident in the account of Onondaga chief, Garakontie. In 1669, after Senecas attacked an Upper Algonquian village and took many prisoners, Garakontie insisted that all parties, including the French Governor, meet in Montreal in order to broker peace (JR 53:37-51). The meeting was successful; the Senecas agreed to restore the Algonquian prisoners and

the Algonquians promised to cease hostilities (JR 53:51). With the diplomatic matters settled, Garakontie then cemented his sixteen-year alliance with the French by seeking baptism, having previously studied the faith for many years with Chaumonot at Onondaga (JR 53:51). The Bishop of Montreal personally conferred the sacrament, while the Governor of Quebec acted as Garakontie's godfather. Representatives from all of the Five Nations, the Huron, Algonquians, Ottawas, and Mohicans witnessed Garakontie's public conversion (JR 53:53). Although it is recorded that Garakontie lived out his life as a practicing Christian, it is arguably his benevolence towards the French and the Jesuits that generated a symbiotic kind of relationship, which he used to further his own political influence (Richter 1985:5).

As much as the Jesuits may have tried, a "diplomatic conversion," such as Garakontie's, never took hold on Seneca land. The converted chief, Annonkenritaoui, who was allegedly cured of the thigh canker (JR 44:21) is never mentioned again after volume 44. We may also recall that in volume 60, Julien Garnier's 1672 letter reveals that inclination the village leaders previously expressed towards embracing the faith was ultimately nullified by the rumored movements of the French army (JR 56:57).

Thus, the pattern, if there is one, of Seneca conversion seems to point to the potentially displaced and disenfranchised members of any given village, the refugees or "captives." The *Jesuit Relations* are ambivalent regarding the socio-economic status of the Hurons, Neutrals and others living on Seneca land, which leaves a great deal open to speculation. Building on Fremin's earlier account of "the Believers" and "the Faithful" (JR 54:85), following the burning of St. Michael, when the villagers lost all homes, stored food and possessions, Fremin reported to Garnier that he had never

experienced such a receptive audience (JR 55:77). In 1672 Julien Garnier affirmed the particular allure Christianity had to the downtrodden:

But of all the means that God most employs in these three villages of Saint Michel, Saint Jacques, and La Conception...that which most effectively converts the Savages is the misery and abandonment of creatures. None are better disposed to listen to the instructions, and readier to obey the movements of grace than poor slaves, or other persons deprived of all succor and abandoned by everyone. It is they who give most consolation to the Father, and who, amid their temporal miseries, most willingly receive the good news of their eternal happiness. This year the Father baptized some of this class, and they all live as true Christians. (JR 58:231-235)

While Garnier does not specify any tribal affiliations of the “slaves” and “abandoned people” in the above passage, the account from Father Raffeix at La Conception in the same volume may provide some clues:

That which gives prayer additional influence is the example of the [Huron] elders, who are the first to come and pray to God. The Chief of the Hurons never allows an opportunity to pass without exhorting [all the people, but] especially the old men, to embrace the faith in earnest; and were it not for their persistence in having recourse to superstitious remedies in their sicknesses, This Church would receive a notable increase in a short time. The Neutrals and the Onnontioga, two nations who form part of this village [St. Michel], have at last followed the example of the Hurons, and now generally come to prayers, as do the latter, to the Chapel, to pray, and to receive the instructions that we give them. (JR 57:191)

Raffeix wrote again the next summer from La Conception, but oddly enough, this time he insisted that “the great number of superstitions that have gathered here with the tribes, who have come hither for refuge, after the destruction of their own country, is a considerable impediment to the propagation of the Gospel [in the Seneca mission]” (JR 58:235). He also cites the lack of contact with the French as being a reason why the Senecas found Catholic teachings so bizarre: “they have hardly ever seen anyone who believed and practices these teachings” (JR 58:235).

Indeed, the majority of Christians mentioned at any of the Seneca missions appear to be individuals from other Nations (JR 58:239), including the two devout man Fremin mentions by name: Jacques Atondo and Francois Tehoronohiongo (JR 54:85). Both men were Christian Hurons. Jacques Atondo was said to have lived his life in “continual prayer” (JR 54:85). Francois Tehoronohiongo, formerly the host of the late Father Le Moyne in Huron Territory, raised his entire family in the faith, and overwhelmed Fremin when he said he been praying for over twenty years to see a priest again (JR 54:87-89). As such, Francois personally ensured Father Fremin’s accommodation and protection (JR 54:119).

By contrast, only a handful of Seneca converts are noted in such narrative detail, and many of these instances are deathbed conversions. At St. Jacques, Garnier recounts the conversion of an unnamed Seneca man of “great age and station” who, after rejecting the Jesuit’s proselytizing numerous times, came to embrace the faith, oddly enough, by dreaming that baptism would cure his ailment. Garnier arrived at the man’s cabin and passed the night and the next day and night with the man in prayer. On the second morning, Garnier baptized him, and the day after, he died (JR 55:81-93). More optimistically, in the Relation from 1669-1670, Fremin recorded baptizing a mother and daughter (who died) from a “more influential class of Tsonnontouen” (JR 54:91). The surviving mother, once instructed in the faith, became extremely devout in hopes of joining her daughter in heaven. She also made it a point to “have her slaves instructed, and to make them pray to God; and through her alone, it can be said more than twenty persons have been brought to God” (JR 54:93). Likewise, around 1673, Garnier ministered to a young woman, who chose to convert at the end of her life,



despite her family's disapproval. Another even less fortunate woman was evicted from her cabin owing to the noxious odor produced by the respiratory infection she was dying from. Garnier rushed to comfort and baptize her before she died (JR 58:229). One could go on at length with similar examples.

In the end however, the historical literature on the subject does not seem to suggest that the Catholicism ever came to be a major influence on the Seneca. Whether the cause was politics, or a lack of time and contact with French missionaries, it appears Catholicism remained on the "fringe" of Seneca society.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: WHAT MAY (OR MAY NOT) BE BELIEVED

While certainly biased in favor of “believers,” the *Jesuit Relations* by themselves indicate neither Seneca conversions en masse, nor an outright rejection of the missionaries. In the earliest Seneca volumes, the spread of Christianity and the Jesuits’ successes on Seneca land began in earnest through ministry to existing Christians, many of whom came from Huronia (JR 54:9). The missions to the Seneca ultimately tapered off, first due to French politics and then due to the Treaty of Utrecht with the English (NYCD 9:256). Still, even if the politics had played out differently, it is unclear whether or not Catholicism would have eventually taken hold among the Seneca.

Richter has suggested that when Christianity did attract a notable amount of followers, it created “opposing factions” between the new Christians and the Iroquoian traditionalists (Richter 1985:10-11). He also suggests that while emigrations and war may have driven out the Jesuits and given the traditionalists the upper hand in the 1680s, ultimately Christian factions would resurface in Iroquoian politics and remain influential for a long time (Richter 1985:12). Richter’s ideas on the eventual divisions in Iroquoian communities through the eighteenth century caused by religious and political affiliation are certainly compelling, but scholars should beware this declensionist narrative and not jump to conclusions. Where the Seneca are concerned, in light of Vandrei’s population data and historical sources, Christians were most certainly a minority in the late seventeenth century, hardly capable of acting as the factitious political force that Richter’s article portrays. Similarly, Richter’s claim that

Christians comprised “perhaps twenty percent of the Iroquois population of approximately 8,600” (Richter 1985:8), and that “among individual nations of the confederacy, about the same percentage applies to Oneidas, Onondagas, and Senecas, with something less than twenty percent of Cayugas and well over twenty percent of Mohawks” (Richter 1985:8) cannot be supported.

However, Christians or no Christians, the influence of the Huron and other groups who lived on Seneca territory also seems to be an area in need of further research. Besides improving our understanding of how Christianity may have been spread by these “third parties,” learning more about the lives and status of such villagers may additionally help us grasp the mechanisms behind the often misunderstood Iroquoian notions of “adoption,” “slavery,” and the “mourning-war complex” (Richter 1992:32-38; Lynch 1985). The word “slavery” as it has been used by other scholars (Starna and Watkins 1991) is particularly problematic in the study of Iroquoia owing to the word’s overt economic connotations and the variability of prisoner treatment that the historical sources express.

Politics aside, when focusing on strictly religious matters we are left at something of an impasse. History has shown varying degrees of religious syncretism, as well as compartmentalization. On the more extreme side, Romans adopted the Greek gods entirely and just changed the names; conversely, many “Creole” traditions that arose in the Americas appropriate various elements of West African, Caribbean and Catholic spirituality. Nevertheless, even with an archaeological record of Christian-themed items and a historical record that relays several decades of missionary activity, syncretism is a problematic idea to employ in the Seneca case. For

one, no records exist from this time containing a first-person indigenous perspective on religion, and secondly, the accounts of any Seneca faithful are very limited. Again, it is important to note that many of the Christians residing on Seneca lands who are mentioned in *Jesuit Relations* appear to be from Huron or other origins. Another problem is that the window of time for the missions is so small; had the Jesuit missions to the Seneca lasted a century or more, there would likely be some additional testimonies concerning subsequent generations.

However, I remain hopeful that ongoing research into the archaeological findings at Seneca sites may illuminate more about the religiosity in play during the last half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The assemblage of religious medals located at White Springs, Snyder-McClure, Huntoon, and Townley-Read is particularly fascinating. As the data shows, the religious medals, which are arguably more elaborate and perhaps are symbolically significant than the “Jesuit finger rings,” have only been found so far on eighteenth century sites, which were not documented in the *Jesuit Relations*. Do these findings reflect the presence of the older generation trying to “keep the faith”? Or were the religious medals mere trade objects with a kind of “magical” prowess ascribed to their engraved images and foreign prayers?

Where archaeology is concerned, it may be useful to conduct metallurgical tests on the medals, similar to what Carol Mason has already conducted on a sampling of Jesuit-style finger rings. Learning more about how the medals were manufactured and how they came to be on Seneca land would be especially useful in putting to rest questions about the medals’ religiosity, and why they have been located consistently at sites dated to after the missions closed.

For future study, it is also imperative to focus on the Seneca settlements that existed while the British and Americans were in control of New York State. Within this, the documentation of subsequent Protestant mission attempts and the Handsome Lake movement is crucial to tracing the relationship between colonialism and religion into present-day. Lastly, it would also be helpful to learn more about the Seneca (and other Iroquoian people) who may have migrated from New York to Quebec to live in Catholic communities. The following account was relayed by Father Raffeix at La Conception, circa 1674:

I cannot express the pleasure that I felt in hearing an old man who has been a Christian for some time, and who is not of this country. ‘ Ah,’ he said, ‘ when shall I have the happiness of withdrawing to the land of the Faith, among the French, and to live no longer here, where God is yet unknown and where he is so often offended? How contentedly I would live and die among my brothers, the Christians of Quebec or of la Prairie de la Magdeleine! If I and my family do not soon leave this country, my son, my little daughter, and my wife will be in danger of losing our Faith in the midst of infidelity and profligacy; while, if they lived with the faithful, they would be saved by following their good examples. He therefore intends, at any cost, to set out within a month to go and dwell at Quebec; but he cannot do so without much difficulty and labor. (JR 58:239-241)

If devout Catholics were willing to migrate to live in religious communities in Canada, then this may point towards another explanation for the scant material evidence of Catholicism beyond a certain point. At present, Townley-Read is the latest Seneca site that contains religious medals. The other late eighteenth centuries sites (Canawaugas, Big Tree and Creek) contain crosses and crucifixes, but no medals. This is an important distinction for archaeologists to make, because while crosses and crucifixes are fairly universal throughout Christianity, religious medals are rather exclusive to Catholic devotion. Any Protestants, especially at this point in time, would

have been particularly austere in their worship practices and would not have toted around religious materials depicting iconography, since Protestants regarded “making any graven image” as idolatry.

Did the Seneca Catholic minority quietly slip across the Canadian border and possibly out of the historical record? And regarding the majority who remained in New York state, did the remnants of Catholicism erode, only to be replaced by a mingling of Anglo-Protestant and indigenous beliefs heralded by the Handsome Lake movement of the next generation? Only time and additional archaeological and archival research will tell the tale either way. For now, the occurrence of Christian-themed items at sites dating to after the Jesuit’s departure certainly complicates what may be—or may not be—believed from the archaeological and historical records.

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