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# War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience

Daniel K. Richter

THE character of all these [Iroquois] Nations is warlike and cruel," wrote Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune in 1657. "The chief virtue of these poor Pagans being cruelty, just as mildness is that of Christians, they teach it to their children from their very cradles, and accustom them to the most atrocious carnage and the most barbarous spectacles."<sup>1</sup> Like most Europeans of his day, Le Jeune ignored his own countrymen's capacity for bloodlust and attributed the supposedly unique bellicosity of the Iroquois to their irreligion and uncivilized condition. Still, his observations contain a kernel of truth often overlooked by our more sympathetic eyes: in ways quite unfamiliar and largely unfathomable to Europeans, warfare was vitally important in the cultures of the seventeenth-century Iroquois and their neighbors. For generations of Euro-Americans, the significance that Indians attached to warfare seemed to substantiate images of bloodthirsty savages who waged war for mere sport. Only in recent decades have ethnohistorians discarded such shibboleths and begun to study Indian wars in the same economic and diplomatic frameworks long used by students of European conflicts. Almost necessarily, given the weight of past prejudice, their work has stressed similarities between Indian and European warfare.<sup>2</sup> Thus neither commonplace stereotypes nor scholarly efforts to combat them have left much room for serious consideration of the possibility that the non-state societies of aboriginal North America may have waged war for different—but no less

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<sup>1</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1896-1901), XLIII, 263, hereafter cited as *Jesuit Relations*.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison, Wis., 1940); W. W. Newcomb, Jr., "A Re-Examination of the Causes of Plains Warfare," *American Anthropologist*, N.S., LII (1950), 317-330; and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1975), 146-170.

rational and no more savage—purposes than did the nation-states of Europe.<sup>3</sup> This article explores that possibility through an analysis of the changing role of warfare in Iroquois culture during the first century after European contact.

The Iroquois Confederacy (composed, from west to east, of the Five Nations of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk) frequently went to war for reasons rooted as much in internal social demands as in external disputes with their neighbors. The same observation could be made about countless European states, but the particular internal motives that often propelled the Iroquois and other northeastern Indians to make war have few parallels in Euro-American experience. In many Indian cultures a pattern known as the “mourning-war” was one means of restoring lost population, ensuring social continuity, and dealing with death.<sup>4</sup> A grasp of the changing role of this pattern in Iroquois culture is essential if the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century campaigns of the Five Nations—and a vital aspect of the contact situation—are to be understood. “War is a necessary exercise for the Iroquois,” explained missionary and ethnologist Joseph François Lafitau, “for, besides the usual motives which people have in declaring it against troublesome neighbours . . . , it is indispensable to them also because of one of their fundamental laws of being.”<sup>5</sup>

## I

Euro-Americans often noted that martial skills were highly valued in Indian societies and that, for young men, exploits on the warpath were important determinants of personal prestige. This was, some hyperbo-

<sup>3</sup> While anthropologists disagree about the precise distinctions between the wars of state-organized and non-state societies, they generally agree that battles for territorial conquest, economic monopoly, and subjugation or enslavement of conquered peoples are the product of the technological and organizational capacities of the state. For overviews of the literature see C. R. Hallpike, “Functionalist Interpretations of Primitive Warfare,” *Man*, N.S., VIII (1973), 451-470, and Andrew Vayda, “Warfare in Ecological Perspective,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, V (1974), 183-193.

<sup>4</sup> My use of the term *mourning-war* differs from that of Marian W. Smith in “American Indian Warfare,” New York Academy of Sciences, *Transactions*, 2d Ser., XIII (1951), 348-365, which stresses the psychological and emotional functions of the mourning-war. As the following paragraphs seek to show, the psychology of the mourning-war was deeply rooted in Iroquois demography and social structure; my use of the term accordingly reflects a more holistic view of the cultural role of the mourning-war than does Smith’s. On the dangers of an excessively psychological explanation of Indian warfare see Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 159; but see also the convincing defense of Smith in Richard Drinnon, “Ravished Land,” *Indian Historian*, IX (Fall 1976), 24-26.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. and trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (Toronto, 1974, 1977 [orig. publ. Paris, 1724]), II, 98-99.

lized, particularly true of the Iroquois. "It is not for the Sake of Tribute . . . that they make War," Cadwallader Colden observed of the Five Nations, "but from the Notions of Glory, which they have ever most strongly imprinted on their Minds."<sup>6</sup> Participation in a war party was a benchmark episode in an Iroquois youth's development, and later success in battle increased the young man's stature in his clan and village. His prospects for an advantageous marriage, his chances for recognition as a village leader, and his hopes for eventual selection to a sachemship depended largely—though by no means entirely—on his skill on the warpath, his munificence in giving war feasts, and his ability to attract followers when organizing a raid.<sup>7</sup> Missionary-explorer Louis Hennepin exaggerated when he claimed that "those amongst the *Iroquoise* who are not given to War, are had in great Contempt, and pass for Lazy and Effeminate People," but warriors did in fact reap great social rewards.<sup>8</sup>

The plaudits offered to successful warriors suggest a deep cultural significance; societies usually reward warlike behavior not for its own sake but for the useful functions it performs.<sup>9</sup> Among the functions postulated in recent studies of non-state warfare is the maintenance of stable population levels. Usually this involves—in more or less obvious ways—a check on excessive population growth, but in some instances warfare can be, for the victors, a means to increase the group's numbers.<sup>10</sup> The traditional wars of the Five Nations served the latter purpose. The Iroquois conceptualized the process of population maintenance in terms of individual and collective spiritual power. When a person died, the power of his or her lineage, clan, and nation was diminished in proportion to his or her individual spiritual strength.<sup>11</sup> To replenish the depleted

<sup>6</sup> Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, Which Are Dependent on the Province of New-York in America, and Are the Barrier between the English and French in That Part of the World* (London, 1747), 4, hereafter cited as Colden, *History* (1747).

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. George M. Wrong and trans. H. H. Langton (Toronto, 1939 [orig. publ. Paris, 1632]), 151-152; *Jesuit Relations*, XLII, 139; William N. Fenton, ed., "The Hyde Manuscript: Captain William Hyde's Observations of the 5 Nations of Indians at New York, 1698," *American Scene Magazine*, VI (1965), [9]; Bruce G., Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal, 1976), I, 68-69, 145-147.

<sup>8</sup> Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America . . .*, 1st English ed. (London, 1698), II, 88.

<sup>9</sup> Newcomb, "Re-Examination of Plains Warfare," *Am. Anthro.*, N.S., LII (1950), 320.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew P. Vayda, "Expansion and Warfare among Swidden Agriculturalists," *Am. Anthro.*, N.S., LXIII (1961), 346-358; Anthony Leeds, "The Functions of War," in Jules Masserman, ed., *Violence and War, with Clinical Studies* (New York, 1963), 69-82; William Tulio Divale and Marvin Harris, "Population, Warfare, and the Male Supremacist Complex," *Am. Anthro.*, N.S., LXXVIII (1976), 521-538.

<sup>11</sup> J.N.B. Hewitt, "Orenda and a Definition of Religion," *Am. Anthro.*, N.S., IV (1902), 33-46; Morris Wolf, *Iroquois Religion and Its Relation to Their Morals* (New

power the Iroquois conducted “requickening” ceremonies at which the deceased’s name—and with it the social role and duties it represented—was transferred to a successor. Vacant positions in Iroquois families and villages were thus both literally and symbolically filled, and the continuity of Iroquois society was confirmed, while survivors were assured that the social role and spiritual strength embodied in the departed’s name had not been lost.<sup>12</sup> Warfare was crucial to these customs, for when the deceased was a person of ordinary status and little authority the beneficiary of the requickening was often a war captive, who would be adopted “to help strengthen the familye in lew of their deceased Freind.”<sup>13</sup> “A father who has lost his son adopts a young prisoner in his place,” explained an eighteenth-century commentator on Indian customs. “An orphan takes a father or mother; a widow a husband; one man takes a sister and another a brother.”<sup>14</sup>

On a societal level, then, warfare helped the Iroquois to deal with deaths in their ranks. On a personal, emotional level it performed similar functions. The Iroquois believed that the grief inspired by a relative’s death could, if uncontrolled, plunge survivors into depths of despair that robbed them of their reason and disposed them to fits of rage potentially harmful to themselves and the community. Accordingly, Iroquois culture directed mourners’ emotions into ritualized channels. Members of the deceased’s household, “after having the hair cut, smearing the face with earth or charcoal and gotten themselves up in the most frightful negligence,” embarked on ten days of “deep mourning,” during which “they remain at the back of their bunk, their face against the ground or turned towards the back of the platform, their head enveloped in their blanket which is the dirtiest and least clean rag that they have. They do not look at or speak to anyone except through necessity and in a low voice. They hold themselves excused from every duty of civility and courtesy.”<sup>15</sup> For the next year the survivors engaged in less intense formalized grieving, beginning to resume their daily habits but continuing to disregard their

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York, 1919), 25-26; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Indian Heritage of America* (New York, 1968), 94; Åke Hultkrantz, *The Religions of the American Indians*, trans. Monica Setterwall (Berkeley, Calif., 1979), 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XXIII, 165-169; Lafitau, *Customs of American Indians*, ed. and trans. Fenton and Moore, I, 71; B. H. Quain, “The Iroquois,” in Margaret Mead, ed., *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples* (New York, 1937), 276-277.

<sup>13</sup> Fenton, ed., “Hyde Manuscript,” *Am. Scene Mag.*, VI (1965), [16].

<sup>14</sup> Philip Mazzei, *Researches on the United States*, ed. and trans. Constance B. Sherman (Charlottesville, Va., 1976 [orig. publ. Paris, 1788]), 349. See also P[ierre] de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America . . .* (London, 1761 [orig. publ. Paris, 1744]), I, 370-373, II, 33-34, and George S. Snyderman, “Behind the Tree of Peace: A Sociological Analysis of Iroquois Warfare,” *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, XVIII, nos. 3-4 (1948), 13-15.

<sup>15</sup> Lafitau, *Customs of American Indians*, ed. and trans. Fenton and Moore, II, 241-245, quotation on p. 242.

personal appearance and many social amenities. While mourners thus channeled their emotions, others hastened to "cover up" the grief of the bereaved with condolence rituals, feasts, and presents (including the special variety of condolence gift often somewhat misleadingly described as *wergild*). These were designed to cleanse sorrowing hearts and to ease the return to normal life. Social and personal needs converged at the culmination of these ceremonies, the "requickening" of the deceased.<sup>16</sup>

But if the mourners' grief remained unassuaged, the ultimate socially sanctioned channel for their violent impulses was a raid to seek captives who, it was hoped, would ease their pain. The target of the mourning-war was usually a people traditionally defined as enemies; neither they nor anyone else need necessarily be held directly responsible for the death that provoked the attack, though most often the foe could be made to bear the blame.<sup>17</sup> Raids for captives could be either large-scale efforts organized on village, nation, or confederacy levels or, more often, attacks by small parties raised at the behest of female kin of the deceased. Members of the dead person's household—presumably lost in grief—did not usually participate directly. Instead, young men who were related by marriage to the bereaved women but who lived in other longhouses were obliged to form a raiding party or face the matrons' accusations of cowardice.<sup>18</sup> When

<sup>16</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, X, 273-275, XIX, 91, XLIII, 267-271, LX, 35-41. On *wergild* see Lewis H. Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois* (Rochester, N.Y., 1851), 331-333, and Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 148-149. The parallel between Iroquois practice and the Germanic tradition of blood payments should not be stretched too far; Iroquois condolence presents were an integral part of the broader condolence process.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, "American Indian Warfare," N.Y. Acad. Sci., *Trans.*, 2d Ser., XIII (1951), 352-354; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York, 1970), 101. It is within the context of the mourning-war that what are usually described as Indian wars for revenge or blood feuds should be understood. The revenge motive—no doubt strong in Iroquois warfare—was only part of the larger complex of behavior and belief comprehended in the mourning-war. It should also be noted that raids might be inspired by *any* death, not just those attributable to murder or warfare and for which revenge or other atonement, such as the giving of condolence presents, was necessary. Among Euro-American observers, only the perceptive Lafitau seems to have been aware of this possibility (*Customs of American Indians*, ed. and trans. Fenton and Moore, II, 98-102, 154). I have found no other explicit contemporary discussion of this phenomenon, but several accounts indicate the formation of war parties in response to deaths from disease or other nonviolent causes. See H. P. Biggar *et al.*, eds. and trans., *The Works of Samuel de Champlain* (Toronto, 1922-1936), II, 206-208, hereafter cited as *Works of Champlain*; *Jesuit Relations*, LXIV, 91; Jasper Dankers [Danckaerts] and Peter Sluyter, *Journal of a Voyage to New York and a Tour in Several of the American Colonies in 1679-80*, trans. and ed. Henry C. Murphy (Long Island Historical Society, *Memoirs*, I [Brooklyn, N.Y., 1867]), 277; and William M. Beauchamp, ed., *Moravian Journals Relating to Central New York, 1745-66* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1916), 125-126, 183-186.

<sup>18</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, X, 225-227; E. B. O'Callaghan *et al.*, eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York . . .* (Albany, N.Y., 1856-1887), IV,

the warriors returned with captured men, women, and children, mourners could select a prisoner for adoption in the place of the deceased or they could vent their rage in rituals of torture and execution.<sup>19</sup>

The rituals began with the return of the war party, which had sent word ahead of the number of captives seized. Most of the villagers, holding clubs, sticks, and other weapons, stood in two rows outside the village entrance to meet the prisoners. Men—but usually not women or young children—received heavy blows designed to inflict pain without serious injury. Then they were stripped and led to a raised platform in an open space inside the village, where old women led the community in further physical abuse, tearing out fingernails and poking sensitive body parts with sticks and firebrands.<sup>20</sup> After several hours, prisoners were allowed to rest and eat, and later they were made to dance for their captors while their fate was decided. Headmen apportioned them to grieving families, whose matrons then chose either to adopt or to execute them.<sup>21</sup> If those who were adopted made a sincere effort to please their new relatives and to assimilate into village society, they could expect a long life; if they displeased, they were quietly and unceremoniously killed.

A captive slated for ritual execution was usually also adopted and

22, hereafter cited as *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*; Lafitau, *Customs of American Indians*, ed. and trans. Fenton and Moore, II, 99-103; Snyderman, "Behind the Tree of Peace," *Pa. Archaeol.*, XVIII, nos. 3-4 (1948), 15-20.

<sup>19</sup> The following composite account is based on numerous contemporaneous reports of Iroquois treatment of captives. Among the more complete are *Jesuit Relations*, XXII, 251-267, XXXIX, 57-77, L, 59-63, LIV, 23-35; Gideon D. Scull, ed., *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson: Being an Account of His Travels and Experiences among the North American Indians, from 1652 to 1684* (Boston, 1885), 28-60; and James H. Coyne, ed. and trans., "Exploration of the Great Lakes, 1660-1670, by Dollier de Casson and de Bréhant de Galinée," Ontario Historical Society, *Papers and Records*, IV (1903), 31-35. See also the many other portrayals in *Jesuit Relations*; the discussions in Lafitau, *Customs of American Indians*, ed. and trans. Fenton and Moore, II, 148-172; Nathaniel Knowles, "The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America," American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings*, LXXXII (1940), 181-190; and Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, 103-107.

<sup>20</sup> The gauntlet and the public humiliation and physical abuse of captives also served as initiation rites for prospective adoptees; see John Heckewelder, "An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States," *Am. Phil. Soc., Transactions of the Historical and Literary Committee*, I (1819), 211-213. For a fuller discussion of Indian methods of indoctrinating adoptees see James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXII (1975), 55-88.

<sup>21</sup> Usually only adult male captives were executed, and most women and children seem to have escaped physical abuse. Occasionally, however, the Iroquois did torture and execute women and children. See Scull, ed., *Voyages of Radisson*, 56, and *Jesuit Relations*, XXXIX, 219-221, XLII, 97-99, LI, 213, 231-233, LII, 79, 157-159, LIII, 253, LXII, 59, LXIV, 127-129, LXV, 33-39.

subsequently addressed appropriately as “uncle” or “nephew,” but his status was marked by a distinctive red and black pattern of facial paint. During the next few days the doomed man gave his death feast, where his executioners saluted him and allowed him to recite his war honors. On the appointed day he was tied with a short rope to a stake, and villagers of both sexes and all ages took turns wielding firebrands and various red-hot objects to burn him systematically from the feet up. The tormentors behaved with religious solemnity and spoke in symbolic language of “caressing” their adopted relative with their firebrands. The victim was expected to endure his sufferings stoically and even to encourage his torturers, but this seems to have been ideal rather than typical behavior. If he too quickly began to swoon, his ordeal briefly ceased and he received food and drink and time to recover somewhat before the burning resumed. At length, before he expired, someone scalped him, another threw hot sand on his exposed skull, and finally a warrior dispatched him with a knife to the chest or a hatchet to the neck. Then the victim’s flesh was stripped from his bones and thrown into cooking kettles, and the whole village feasted on his remains. This feast carried great religious significance for the Iroquois, but its full meaning is irretrievable; most European observers were too shocked to probe its implications.<sup>22</sup>

Mourners were not the only ones to benefit from the ceremonial torture and execution of captives. While grieving relatives vented their emotions, all of the villagers, by partaking in the humiliation of every prisoner and the torture of some, were able to participate directly in the defeat of their foes. Warfare thus dramatically promoted group cohesion and demonstrated to the Iroquois their superiority over their enemies. At the same time, youths learned valuable lessons in the behavior expected of warriors and in the way to die bravely should they ever be captured. Le Jeune’s “barbarous spectacles” were a vital element in the ceremonial life of Iroquois communities.<sup>23</sup>

The social demands of the mourning-war shaped strategy and tactics in at least two ways. First, the essential measure of a war party’s success was its ability to seize prisoners and bring them home alive. Capturing of

<sup>22</sup> Several authors—from James Adair and Philip Mazzei in the 18th century to W. Arens in 1979—have denied that the Iroquois engaged in cannibalism (Adair, *The History of the American Indians* . . . [London, 1775], 209; Mazzei, *Researches*, ed. and trans. Sherman, 359; Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology & Anthropophagy* [New York, 1979] 127-129). Arens is simply wrong, as Thomas S. Abler has shown in “Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact Not Fiction,” *Ethnohistory*, XXVII (1980), 309-316. Adair and Mazzei, from the perspective of the late 18th century, were on firmer ground; by then the Five Nations apparently had abandoned anthropophagy. See Adolph B. Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America* (New York, 1937), 694.

<sup>23</sup> Robert L. Rands and Carroll L. Riley, “Diffusion and Discontinuous Distribution,” *Am. Anthro.*, N.S., LX (1958), 284-289; Maurice R. Davie, *The Evolution of War: A Study of Its Role in Early Societies* (New Haven, Conn., 1929), 36-38; Hennepin, *New Discovery*, II, 92.



enemies was preferred to killing them on the spot and taking their scalps, while none of the benefits European combatants derived from war—territorial expansion, economic gain, plunder of the defeated—outranked the seizure of prisoners.<sup>24</sup> When missionary Jérôme Lalemant disparaged Iroquoian warfare as “consisting of a few broken heads along the highways, or of some captives brought into the country to be burned and eaten there,” he was more accurate than he knew.<sup>25</sup> The overriding importance of captive taking set Iroquois warfare dramatically apart from the Euro-American military experience. “We are not like you CHRISTIANS for when you have taken Prisoners of one another you send them home, by such means you can never rout one another,” explained the Onondaga orator Teganissorens to Gov. Robert Hunter of New York in 1711.<sup>26</sup>

The centrality of captives to the business of war was clear in precombat rituals: imagery centered on a boiling war kettle; the war feast presaged the future cannibalistic rite; mourning women urged warriors to bring them prisoners to assuage their grief; and, if more than one village participated in the campaign, leaders agreed in advance on the share of captives that each town would receive.<sup>27</sup> As Iroquois warriors saw it, to forget the importance of captive taking or to ignore the rituals associated with it was to invite defeat. In 1642 missionary Isaac Jogues observed a ceremony he believed to be a sacrifice to Areskouï, the deity who presided over Iroquois wars. “At a solemn feast which they had made of two Bears, which they had offered to their demon, they had used this form of words: ‘Aireskoi, thou dost right to punish us, and to give us no more captives’ (they were speaking of the Algonquins, of whom that year they had not taken one . . .) ‘because we have sinned by not eating the bodies of those whom thou last gavest us; but we promise thee to eat the first ones whom thou shalt give us, as we now do with these two Bears.’”<sup>28</sup>

A second tactical reflection of the social functions of warfare was a strong sanction against the loss of Iroquois lives in battle. A war party that, by European standards, seemed on the brink of triumph could be expected to retreat sorrowfully homeward if it suffered a few fatalities. For the Indians, such a campaign was no victory; casualties would subvert the purpose of warfare as a means of restocking the population.<sup>29</sup> In contrast to European beliefs that to perish in combat was acceptable and even honorable, Iroquois beliefs made death in battle a frightful prospect, though one that must be faced bravely if necessary. Slain warriors, like all who died violent deaths, were said to be excluded from the villages of the

<sup>24</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXII, 85-87, LXVII, 173; Knowles, “Torture of Captives,” *Am. Phil. Soc., Procs.*, LXXXII (1940), 210-211.

<sup>25</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XIX, 81.

<sup>26</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 274.

<sup>27</sup> *Works of Champlain*, IV, 330; Charlevoix, *Voyage to North-America*, I, 316-333.

<sup>28</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XXXIX, 221.

<sup>29</sup> *Works of Champlain*, III, 73-74; *Jesuit Relations*, XXXII, 159.

dead, doomed to spend a roving eternity seeking vengeance. As a result, their bodies were not interred in village cemeteries, lest their angry souls disturb the repose of others. Both in burial and in the afterlife, a warrior who fell in combat faced separation from his family and friends.<sup>30</sup>

Efforts to minimize fatalities accordingly underlay several tactics that contemporary Euro-Americans considered cowardly: fondness for ambushes and surprise attacks; unwillingness to fight when outnumbered; and avoidance of frontal assaults on fortified places. Defensive tactics showed a similar emphasis on precluding loss of life. Spies in enemy villages and an extensive network of scouts warned of invading war parties before they could harm Iroquois villagers. If intruders did enter Iroquoia, defenders attacked from ambush, but only if they felt confident of repulsing the enemy without too many losses of their own. The people retreated behind palisades or, if the enemy appeared too strong to resist, burned their own villages and fled—warriors included—into the woods or to neighboring villages. Houses and corn supplies thus might temporarily be lost, but unless the invaders achieved complete surprise, the lives and spiritual power of the people remained intact. In general, when the Iroquois were at a disadvantage, they preferred flight or an insincerely negotiated truce to the costly last stands that earned glory for European warriors.<sup>31</sup>

That kind of glory, and the warlike way of life it reflected, were not Iroquois ideals. Warfare was a specific response to the death of specific individuals at specific times, a sporadic affair characterized by seizing from traditional enemies a few captives who would replace the dead, literally or symbolically, and ease the pain of those who mourned. While war was not to be undertaken gladly or lightly, it was still “a necessary exercise for the Iroquois,”<sup>32</sup> for it was an integral part of individual and social mourning practices. When the Iroquois envisioned a day of no more wars, with their Great League of Peace extended to all peoples, they also envisioned an alternative to the mourning functions of warfare. That alternative was embodied in the proceedings of league councils and Iroquois peace negotiations with other peoples, which began with—and frequently consisted entirely of—condolence ceremonies and exchanges of presents designed to dry the tears, unstop the mouths, and cleanse the hearts of bereaved participants.<sup>33</sup> Only when grief was forgotten could war end and

<sup>30</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, X, 145, XXXIX, 29-31; J.N.B. Hewitt, “The Iroquoian Concept of the Soul,” *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, VIII (1895), 107-116.

<sup>31</sup> Sagard, *Long Journey*, ed. Wrong and trans. Langton, 152-156; *Jesuit Relations*, XXII, 309-311, XXXII, 173-175, XXXIV, 197, LV, 79, LXVI, 273; Hennepin, *New Discovery*, II, 86-94; Patrick Mitchell Malone, “Indian and English Military Systems in New England in the Seventeenth Century” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1971), 33-38.

<sup>32</sup> Laftau, *Customs of American Indians*, ed. and trans. Fenton and Moore, II, 98.

<sup>33</sup> Paul A. W. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace* (Philadelphia, 1946); A.F.C. Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, 39-48, 93-98; William M. Beauchamp, *Civil, Religious and Mourning Councils and Ceremonies of Adoption of the New York*

peace begin. In the century following the arrival of Europeans, grief could seldom be forgotten.

## II

After the 1620s, when the Five Nations first made sustained contact with Europeans, the role of warfare in Iroquois culture changed dramatically. By 1675, European diseases, firearms, and trade had produced dangerous new patterns of conflict that threatened to derange the traditional functions of the mourning-war.

Before most Iroquois had ever seen a Dutchman or a Frenchman, they had felt the impact of the maladies the invaders inadvertently brought with them.<sup>34</sup> By the 1640s the number of Iroquois (and of their Indian neighbors) had probably already been halved by epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other European "childhood diseases," to which Indian populations had no immunity.<sup>35</sup> The devastation continued through the century. A partial list of plagues that struck the Five Nations includes "a general malady" among the Mohawk in 1647; "a great mortality" among the Onondaga in 1656-1657; a smallpox epidemic among the Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca in 1661-1663; "a kind of contagion" among the Seneca in 1668; "a fever of . . . malignant character" among the Mohawk in 1673; and "a general Influenza" among the Seneca in 1676.<sup>36</sup> As thousands died, ever-growing numbers of captive adoptees would be necessary if the Iroquois were even to begin to replace their losses; mourning-wars of unprecedented scale loomed ahead. Warfare would cease to be a sporadic and specific response to individual deaths and would become instead a constant and increasingly undifferentiated symptom of societies in demographic crisis.

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*Indians*, New York State Museum Bulletin 113 (Albany, N.Y., 1907). For a suggestive discussion of Indian definitions of peace see John Phillip Reid, *A Better Kind of Hatchet: Law, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Cherokee Nation during the Early Years of European Contact* (University Park, Pa., 1976), 9-17.

<sup>34</sup> On the devastating impact of European diseases—some Indian populations may have declined by a factor of 20 to 1 within a century or so of contact—see the works surveyed in Russell Thornton, "American Indian Historical Demography: A Review Essay with Suggestions for Future Research," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, III, No. 1 (1979), 69-74.

<sup>35</sup> Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, II, 602; Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1976), 100. Most of the early Iroquois epidemics went unrecorded by Europeans, but major smallpox epidemics are documented for the Mohawk in 1634 and the Seneca in 1640-1641; see [Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert], "Narrative of a Journey into the Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635," in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664* (New York, 1909), 140-141, and *Jesuit Relations*, XXI, 211.

<sup>36</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XXX, 273, XLIV, 43, XLVII, 193, 205, XLVIII, 79-83, L, 63, LIV, 79-81, LVII, 81-83, LX, 175.

At the same time, European firearms would make warfare unprecedentedly dangerous for both the Iroquois and their foes, and would undermine traditional Indian sanctions against battle fatalities. The introduction of guns, together with the replacement of flint arrowheads by more efficient iron, copper, and brass ones that could pierce traditional Indian wooden armor, greatly increased the chances of death in combat and led to major changes in Iroquois tactics. In the early seventeenth century Champlain had observed mostly ceremonial and relatively bloodless confrontations between large Indian armies, but with the advent of muskets—which Europeans had designed to be fired in volleys during just such battles—massed confrontations became, from the Indian perspective, suicidal folly. They were quickly abandoned in favor of a redoubled emphasis on small-scale raids and ambushes, in which Indians learned far sooner than Euro-Americans how to aim cumbersome muskets accurately at individual targets.<sup>37</sup> By the early 1640s the Mohawk were honing such skills with approximately three hundred guns acquired from the Dutch of Albany and from English sources. Soon the rest of the Five Nations followed the Mohawk example.<sup>38</sup>

Temporarily, the Iroquois' plentiful supply and skillful use of firearms gave them a considerable advantage over their Indian enemies: during the 1640s and 1650s the less well armed Huron and the poorly armed Neutral and Khionontateronon (Petun or Tobacco Nation) succumbed to Iroquois firepower. That advantage had largely disappeared by the 1660s and 1670s, however, as the Five Nations learned in their battles with such heavily armed foes as the Susquehannock. Once muskets came into general use in Indian warfare, several drawbacks became apparent: they were more sluggish than arrows to fire and much slower to reload; their noise lessened the capacity for surprise; and reliance on them left Indians dependent on Euro-Americans for ammunition, repairs, and replacements. But there could be no return to the days of bows and arrows and wooden armor. Few Iroquois war parties could now expect to escape mortal casualties.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Works of Champlain*, II, 95-100; Malone, "Indian and English Military Systems," 179-200; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 165-166. After the introduction of firearms the Iroquois continued to raise armies of several hundred to a thousand men, but they almost never engaged them in set battles. Large armies ensured safe travel to distant battlegrounds and occasionally intimidated outnumbered opponents, but when they neared their objective they usually broke into small raiding parties. See Daniel Gookin, "Historical Collections of the Indians in New England" (1674), Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, I (1792), 162, and Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations Depending on the Province of New-York in America* (New York, 1727), 8-10, hereafter cited as Colden, *History* (1727).

<sup>38</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, I, 150; "Journal of New Netherland, 1647," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland*, 274; *Jesuit Relations*, XXIV, 295; Carl P. Russell, *Guns on the Early Frontiers: A History of Firearms from Colonial Times through the Years of the Western Fur Trade* (Berkeley, Calif., 1957), 11-15, 62-66.

<sup>39</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XXVII, 71, XLV, 205-207; Elisabeth Tooker, "The Iroquois Defeat of the Huron: A Review of Causes," *Pa. Archaeol.*, XXXIII (1963), 115-

While European diseases and firearms intensified Indian conflicts and stretched the mourning-war tradition beyond previous limits, a third major aspect of European contact pushed Iroquois warfare in novel directions. Trade with Europeans made economic motives central to American Indian conflicts for the first time. Because iron tools, firearms, and other trade goods so quickly became essential to Indian economies, struggles for those items and for furs to barter for them lay behind numerous seventeenth-century wars. Between 1624 and 1628 the Iroquois gained unimpeded access to European commodities when Mohawk warriors drove the Mahican to the east of the Hudson River and secured an open route to the Dutch traders of Albany.<sup>40</sup> But obtaining the furs to exchange for the goods of Albany was a problem not so easily solved. By about 1640 the Five Nations perhaps had exhausted the beaver stock of their home hunting territories; more important, they could not find in relatively temperate Iroquoia the thick northern pelts prized by Euro-American traders.<sup>41</sup> A long, far-flung series of "beaver wars" ensued, in which the Five Nations battled the Algonquian nations of the Saint Lawrence River region, the Huron, the Khionontateronon, the Neutral, the Erie, and other western and northern peoples in a constant struggle over fur supplies. In those wars the Iroquois more frequently sought dead beavers than live ones: most of their raids were not part of a strategic plan to seize new hunting grounds but piratical attacks on enemy canoes carrying pelts to Montreal and Trois-Rivières.<sup>42</sup>

The beaver wars inexorably embroiled the Iroquois in conflict with the

123; Keith F. Otterbein, "Why the Iroquois Won: An Analysis of Iroquois Military Tactics," *Ethnohistory*, XI (1964), 56-63; John K. Mahon, "Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-1794," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLV (1958), 255.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce G. Trigger, "The Mohawk-Mahican War (1624-28): The Establishment of a Pattern," *Canadian Historical Review*, LII (1971), 276-286.

<sup>41</sup> Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven, Conn., 1930), 1-4, 32-33; Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 33-37; John Witthoft, "Ancestry of the Susquehannocks," in John Witthoft and W. Fred Kinsey III, eds., *Susquehannock Miscellany* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1959), 34-35; Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison, Wis., 1974), 9-15.

<sup>42</sup> The classic account of the beaver wars is Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, but three decades of subsequent scholarship have overturned many of that work's interpretations. See Allen W. Trelease, "The Iroquois and the Western Fur Trade: A Problem in Interpretation," *MVHR*, XLIX (1962), 32-51; Raoul Naroll, "The Causes of the Fourth Iroquois War," *Ethnohistory*, XVI (1969), 51-81; Allan Forbes, Jr., "Two and a Half Centuries of Conflict: The Iroquois and the Laurentian Wars," *Pa. Archaeol.*, XL, nos. 3-4 (1970), 1-20; William N. Fenton, "The Iroquois in History," in Eleanor Burke Leacock and Nancy Oestreich Lurie, eds., *North American Indians in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1971), 139-145; Karl H. Schlesier, "Epidemics and Indian Middlemen: Rethinking the Wars of the Iroquois, 1609-1653," *Ethnohistory*, XXIII (1976), 129-145; and Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, esp. II, 617-664.

French of Canada. Franco-Iroquois hostilities dated from the era of Champlain, who consistently based his relations with Canada's natives upon promises to aid them in their traditional raids against the Five Nations. "I came to the conclusion," wrote Champlain in 1619, "that it was very necessary to assist them, both to engage them the more to love us, and also to provide the means of furthering my enterprises and explorations which apparently could only be carried out with their help."<sup>43</sup> The French commander and a few of his men participated in Indian campaigns against the Five Nations in 1609, 1610, and 1615, and encouraged countless other raids.<sup>44</sup> From the 1630s to the 1660s, conflict between the Five Nations and Canadian Indians intensified, and Iroquois war parties armed with guns frequently blockaded the Saint Lawrence and stopped the flow of furs to the French settlements. A state of open war, punctuated by short truces, consequently prevailed between New France and various of the Five Nations, particularly the Mohawk. The battles were almost exclusively economic and geopolitical—the Iroquois were not much interested in French captives—and in general the French suffered more than the Iroquois from the fighting.<sup>45</sup> Finally, in 1666, a French army invaded Iroquoia and burned the Mohawks' fortified villages, from which all had fled to safety except a few old men who chose to stay and die. In 1667, the Five Nations and the French made a peace that lasted for over a decade.<sup>46</sup>

While the fur trade introduced new economic goals, additional foes, and wider scope to Iroquois warfare, it did not crowd out older cultural motives. Instead, the mourning-war tradition, deaths from disease, dependence on firearms, and the trade in furs combined to produce a dangerous spiral: epidemics led to deadlier mourning-wars fought with firearms; the need for guns increased the demand for pelts to trade for them; the quest for furs provoked wars with other nations; and deaths in those conflicts began the mourning-war cycle anew. At each turn, fresh economic and demographic motives fed the spiral.

<sup>43</sup> *Works of Champlain*, III, 31-32; see also II, 118-119, 186-191, 246-285, III, 207-228.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 65-107, 120-138, III, 48-81.

<sup>45</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XXI-L, *passim*; Robert A. Goldstein, *French-Iroquois Diplomatic and Military Relations, 1609-1701* (The Hague, 1969), 62-99. The actual Canadian death toll in wars with the Iroquois before 1666 has recently been shown to have been quite low. Only 153 French were killed in raids while 143 were taken prisoner (perhaps 38 of those died in captivity); John A. Dickinson, "La guerre iroquoise et la mortalité en Nouvelle-France, 1608-1666," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, XXXVI (1982), 31-54. On 17th-century French captives of the Iroquois see Daniel K. Richter, "The Iroquois Melting Pot: Seventeenth-Century War Captives of the Five Nations" (paper presented at the Shelby Cullom Davis Center Conference on War and Society in Early America, Princeton University, March 11-12, 1983), 18-19.

<sup>46</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, L, 127-147, 239; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 121-127; A.J.F. van Laer, trans. and ed., *Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer, 1651-1674* (Albany, N.Y., 1932), 388.

Accordingly, in the mid-seventeenth-century Iroquois wars, the quest for captives was at least as important as the quest for furs. Even in the archetypal beaver war, the Five Nations–Huron conflict, only an overriding—even desperate—demand for prisoners can explain much of Iroquois behavior. For nearly a decade after the dispersal of the Huron Confederacy in 1649, Iroquois war parties killed or took captive every starving (and certainly peltry-less) group of Huron refugees they could find. Meanwhile, Iroquois ambassadors and warriors alternately negotiated with, cajoled, and threatened the Huron remnants living at Quebec to make them join their captive relatives in Iroquoia. Through all this, Mohawks, Senecas, and Onondagas occasionally shed each other's blood in arguments over the human spoils. Ultimately, in 1657, with French acquiescence, most of the Huron refugees fled away from Quebec—the Arendaronon nation to the Onondaga country and the Attignawantan nation to the Mohawk country.<sup>47</sup>

Judging by the number of prisoners taken during the Five Nations' wars from the 1640s to the 1670s with their other Iroquoian neighbors—the Neutral, Khionontateronon, Erie, and Susquehannock—these conflicts stemmed from a similar mingling of captive-taking and fur trade motives. Like the Huron, each of those peoples shared with the Iroquois mixed horticultural and hunting and fishing economies, related languages, and similar beliefs, making them ideal candidates for adoption. But they could not satisfy the spiraling Iroquois demand for furs and captives; war parties from the Five Nations had to range ever farther in their quest. In a not atypical series of raids in 1661–1662, they struck the Abenaki of the New England region, the Algonquians of the subarctic, the Siouans of the Upper Mississippi area, and various Indians near Virginia, while continuing the struggle with enemies closer to home.<sup>48</sup> The results of the mid-century campaigns are recorded in the *Jesuit Relations*, whose pages are filled with descriptions of Iroquois torture and execution of captives and note enormous numbers of adoptions. The Five Nations had absorbed so many prisoners that in 1657 Le Jeune believed that “more Foreigners than natives of the country” resided in Iroquoia.<sup>49</sup> By the mid-1660s several missionaries estimated that two-thirds or more of the people in many Iroquois villages were adoptees.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XXXV, 183–205, XXXVI, 177–191, XLI, 43–65, XLIII, 115–125, 187–207, XLIV, 69–77, 165–167, 187–191; A.J.F. van Laer, trans. and ed., *Minutes of the Court of Fort Orange and Beverwyck, 1657–1660*, II (Albany, N.Y., 1923), 45–48; Scull, ed., *Voyages of Radisson*, 93–119; Nicholas Perrot, “Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America” (c. 1680–1718), in Emma Helen Blair, ed. and trans., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes . . .* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1911), I, 148–193.

<sup>48</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, XLVII, 139–153.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIII, 265.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, XLV, 207, LI, 123, 187.

By 1675 a half-century of constantly escalating warfare had at best enabled the Iroquois to hold their own. Despite the beaver wars, the Five Nations still had few dependable sources of furs. In the early 1670s they hunted primarily on lands north of Lake Ontario, where armed clashes with Algonquian foes were likely, opportunities to steal peltries from them were abundant, and conflict with the French who claimed the territory was always possible.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, even the Franco-Iroquois peace of 1667 proved a mixed blessing for the Five Nations. Under the provisions of the treaty, Jesuit priests, who had hitherto labored in Iroquois villages only sporadically and at the risk of their lives, established missions in each of the Five Nations.<sup>52</sup> The Jesuits not only created Catholic converts but also generated strong Christian and traditionalist factions that brought unprecedented disquiet to Iroquois communities. Among the Onondaga, for example, the Christian sachem Garakontié's refusal to perform his duties in the traditional manner disrupted such important ceremonies as dream guessings, the roll call of the chiefs, and healing rituals.<sup>53</sup> And in 1671, traditionalist Mohawk women excluded at least one Catholic convert from her rightful seat on the council of matrons because of her faith.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, beginning in the late 1660s, missionaries encouraged increasing numbers of Catholic Iroquois—particularly Mohawks and Oneidas—to desert their homes for the mission villages of Canada; by the mid-1670s well over two hundred had departed.<sup>55</sup> A large proportion of those who left, however, were members of the Five Nations in name only. Many—perhaps most—were recently adopted Huron and other prisoners, an indication that the Iroquois were unable to assimilate effectively the mass of newcomers their mid-century wars had brought them.<sup>56</sup>

Problems in incorporating adoptees reflected a broader dilemma: by the late 1670s the mourning-war complex was crumbling. Warfare was failing to maintain a stable population; despite torrents of prisoners, gains from adoption were exceeded by losses from disease, combat, and migrations to Canada. Among the Mohawk—for whom more frequent contemporary population estimates exist than for the other nations of the confederacy—the number of warriors declined from 700 or 800 in the 1640s to approximately 300 in the late 1670s. Those figures imply that, even with a constant infusion of captive adoptees, Mohawk population fell by half during that period.<sup>57</sup> The Five Nations as a whole fared only slightly

<sup>51</sup> N.-Y. Col. Docs., IX, 80; Victor Konrad, "An Iroquois Frontier: The North Shore of Lake Ontario during the Late Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Historical Geography*, VII (1981), 129-144.

<sup>52</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LI, 81-85, 167-257, LII, 53-55.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, LV, 61-63, LVII, 133-141, LVIII, 211, LX, 187-195.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, LIV, 281-283.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, LVI, 29, LVIII, 247-253, LX, 145-147, LXI, 195-199, LXIII, 141-189.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, LV, 33-37, LVIII, 75-77.

<sup>57</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*, octavo ed. (Albany, N.Y., 1849-1851), I, 12-14; *Jesuit Relations*, XXIV, 295.



better. In the 1640s the confederacy, already drastically reduced in numbers, had counted over 10,000 people. By the 1670s there were perhaps only 8,600.<sup>58</sup> The mourning-war, then, was not discharging one of its primary functions.

Meanwhile, ancient customs regarding the treatment of prisoners were decaying as rituals degenerated into chaotic violence and sheer murderous rage displaced the orderly adoption of captives that the logic of the mourning-war demanded. In 1682 missionary Jean de Lamberville asserted that Iroquois warriors "killed and ate . . . on the spot" over six hundred enemies in a campaign in the Illinois country; if he was even half right, it is clear that something had gone horribly wrong in the practice of the mourning-war. The decay of important customs associated with traditional warfare is further indicated by Lamberville's account of the return of that war party with its surviving prisoners. A gauntlet ceremony at the main Onondaga village turned into a deadly attack, forcing headmen to struggle to protect the lives of the captives. A few hours later, drunken young men, "who observe[d] no usages or customs," broke into longhouses and tried to kill the prisoners whom the headmen had rescued. In vain leaders

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Reflecting the purposes of most Euro-Americans who made estimates of Indian population, figures are usually given in terms of the number of available fighting men. The limited data available for direct comparisons of estimates of Iroquois fighting strength with estimates of total population indicate that the ratio of one warrior for every four people proposed in Sherburne F. Cook, "Interracial Warfare and Population Decline among the New England Indians," *Ethnohistory*, XX (1973), 13, applies to the Five Nations. Compare the estimates of a total Mohawk population of 560-580 in William Andrews to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, Sept. 7, 1713, Oct. 17, 1715, Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Letterbooks, Ser. A, VIII, 186, XI, 268-269, S.P.G. Archives, London (microfilm ed.), with the concurrent estimates of approximately 150 Mohawk warriors in Bernardus Freeman to the Secretary of S.P.G., May 28, 1712, *ibid.*, VII, 203; Peter Wraxall, *An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs . . . Transacted in the Colony of New York, from the Year 1678 to the Year 1751*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), 69; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 272; and Lawrence H. Leder, ed., *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666-1723* (Gettysburg, Pa., 1956), 220.

<sup>58</sup> The estimate of 10,000 for the 1640s is from Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, I, 98; the figure of 8,600 for the 1670s is calculated from Wentworth Greenhalgh's 1677 estimate of 2,150 Iroquois warriors, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History*, I, 12-14. Compare the late 1670s estimate in Hennepin, *New Discovery*, II, 92-93, and see the tables of 17th- and 18th-century Iroquois warrior population in Snyderman, "Behind the Tree of Peace," *Pa. Archaeol.*, XVIII, nos. 3-4 (1948), 42; Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Northeast*, in William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, XV (Washington, D.C., 1978), 421; and Gunther Michelson, "Iroquois Population Statistics," *Man in the Northeast*, No. 14 (1977), 3-17. William Starna has recently suggested that all previous estimates for 1635 and earlier of Mohawk—and by implication Five Nations—population are drastically understated ("Mohawk Iroquois Populations: A Revision," *Ethnohistory*, XXVII [1980], 371-382).

pleaded with their people to remember "that it was contrary to custom to ill-treat prisoners on their arrival, when They had not yet been given in the place of any person . . . and when their fate had been left Undecided by the victors."<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the weakening of traditional restraints, in the 1670s Iroquois warfare still performed useful functions. It maintained a tenuous supply of furs to trade for essential European goods; it provided frequent campaigns to allow young men to show their valor; and it secured numerous captives to participate in the continual mourning rituals that the many Iroquois deaths demanded (though there could never be enough to restock the population absolutely). In the quarter-century after 1675, however, the scales would tip: by 1700 the Anglo-French struggle for control of the continent would make warfare as the Five Nations were practicing it dangerously dysfunctional for their societies.

### III

During the mid-1670s the Five Nations' relations with their Indian and European neighbors were shifting. In 1675 the Mohawk and the Mahican made peace under pressure from Albany and ended—except for a few subsequent skirmishes—over a decade of conflict that had cost each side heavily.<sup>60</sup> In the same year the long and destructive war of the Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca against the Susquehannock concluded as the latter withdrew from Pennsylvania to Maryland. The end of hostilities with the Mahican and Susquehannock allowed the Iroquois to refocus westward their quest for furs and captives. In the late 1670s and early 1680s conflicts with the Illinois, Miami, and other western peoples intensified, while relations with the Wyandot (composed of remnants of the Huron and other Iroquoian groups forced to the west in earlier wars with the Five Nations) and with various elements of the Ottawa alternated between skirmishes and efforts to cement military alliances against other enemies of the Iroquois.<sup>61</sup> As the Onondaga orator Otreouti (whom the French called *La Grande Gueule*, "Big Mouth") explained in 1684, the Five Nations "fell upon the *Illinese* and the *Oumamies* [Miami], because they cut down the trees of Peace that serv'd for limits or boundaries to our Frontiers. They came to hunt Beavers upon our Lands; and contrary to the custom of all the Savages, have carried off whole Stocks, both Male and

<sup>59</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXII, 71-95, quotation on p. 83.

<sup>60</sup> Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 35-38; Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1960), 229-230; Francis Jennings, "Glory, Death, and Transfiguration: The Susquehannock Indians in the Seventeenth Century," *Am. Phil. Soc., Procs.*, CXII (1968), 15-53.

<sup>61</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LVI, 43-45, LIX, 251, LX, 211, LXII, 185; Hennepin, *New Discovery*, I, 100-295. Although the western nations had been included in the Franco-Iroquois peace of 1667, skirmishing in the west had never totally ceased; see *Jesuit Relations*, LIII, 39-51, LIV, 219-227, and *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 79-80.

Female.”<sup>62</sup> Whether those hunting grounds actually belonged to the Five Nations is questionable, but the importance of furs as an Iroquois war aim is not. And captives were also a lucrative prize, as the arrival in 1682 of several hundred Illinois prisoners demonstrated.<sup>63</sup> But this last of the beaver wars—which would melt into the American phase of the War of the League of Augsburg (King William’s War)—was to differ devastatingly from earlier Iroquois conflicts. At the same time that the Five Nations began their fresh series of western campaigns the English and French empires were also beginning to compete seriously for the furs and lands of that region. The Iroquois would inevitably be caught in the Europeans’ conflicts.<sup>64</sup>

Until the mid-1670s the Five Nations had only to deal, for all practical purposes, with the imperial policies of one European power, France. The vital Iroquois connection with the Dutch of New Netherland and, after the 1664 conquest, with the English of New York had rested almost solely on trade. But when the English took possession of the province for the second time in 1674, the new governor, Sir Edmund Andros, had more grandiose designs for the Iroquois in the British American empire. He saw the Five Nations as the linchpin in his plans to pacify the other Indian neighbors of the English colonies; he hoped to make the Five Nations a tool in his dealings with the Calverts of Maryland; and he sought an opportunity to annex land to New York from Connecticut by encouraging the Iroquois to fight alongside New England in its 1675-1676 war on the Wampanoag Metacom (“King Philip”) and his allies.<sup>65</sup> After Andros, New York-Iroquois relations would never be the same, as successors in the governor’s chair attempted to use the Five Nations for imperial purposes. Thomas Dongan, who assumed the governorship in 1683, tried to strengthen New York’s tenuous claims to suzerainty over the Five Nations—in 1684 he ceremoniously distributed the duke of York’s coat of arms to be hung in their villages—and he directly challenged French claims in the west by sending trading parties into the region.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Baron [de] Lahontan, *New Voyages to North-America* . . . (London, 1703), I, 41.

<sup>63</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXII, 71.

<sup>64</sup> For fuller accounts of the complex diplomacy, intrigue, trade wars, and military conflicts concerning the west between 1675 and 1689 touched on in the following paragraphs see, from a Canadian perspective, W. J. Eccles, *Frontenac: The Courtier Governor* (Toronto, 1959), 99-229, and, from a New York perspective, Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 204-301. A brief discussion of the Iroquois role is Richard Aquila, “The Iroquois Restoration: A Study of Iroquois Power, Politics, and Relations with Indians and Whites, 1700-1744” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1977), 16-29.

<sup>65</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 254-259; Francis Paul Jennings, “Miquon’s Passing: Indian-European Relations in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1674 to 1755” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1965), 10-50; Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip’s War* (New York, 1958), 59-60, 176-177.

<sup>66</sup> O’Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History*, I, 391-420; Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 10; Helen Broshar, “The First Push Westward of the

Meanwhile the French had begun their own new westward thrust. In 1676 Canadian governor Louis de Buade de Frontenac established a post at Niagara and a few years later René-Robert Cavalier de La Salle began to construct a series of forts in the Illinois country. The French had long trodden a fine line in western policy. On the one hand, Iroquois raids in the west could not be allowed to destroy Indian allies of New France or to disrupt the fur trade, but, on the other hand, some hostility between the Iroquois and the western Indians helped prevent the latter from taking their furs to Albany markets. In the late 1670s and the 1680s Frontenac, and especially the governors during the interval between his two tenures, Joseph-Antoine Le Febvre de La Barre and Jacques-René de Brisay de Denonville, watched that policy unravel as they noted with alarm New York trading expeditions in the west, Iroquois raids on Indian hunters and *coureurs de bois*, Iroquois negotiations with the Wyandot and Ottawa, and the continual flow of firearms from Albany to the Five Nations.<sup>67</sup> As Iroquois spokesmen concisely explained to Dongan in 1684, "The French will have all the Bevers, and are angry with us for bringing any to you."<sup>68</sup>

French officials, faced with the potential ruin of their western fur trade, determined to humble the Five Nations. For over a decade, Canadian armies repeatedly invaded Iroquoia to burn villages, fields, and corn supplies. Although the first French attempt, led by La Barre against the Seneca in 1684, ended in ignoble failure for the French and diplomatic triumph for the Iroquois, later invasions sent the Five Nations to the brink of disaster. In 1687 La Barre's successor, Denonville, marched against Iroquoia with an army of over 2,000 French regulars, Canadian militia, and Indian warriors. Near Fort Frontenac his troops kidnapped an Iroquois peace delegation and captured the residents of two small villages of Iroquois who had lived on the north shore of Lake Ontario for nearly two decades. Denonville sent over thirty of the prisoners to France as slaves for the royal galleys, and then proceeded toward the Seneca country. After a brief but costly skirmish with Seneca defenders who hid in ambush, the invaders destroyed what was left of the Seneca villages, most of which the inhabitants had burned before fleeing to safety. Six years later, after war had been declared between France and England, the Canadians struck again. In January 1693, 625 regulars, militia, and Indians surprised the four Mohawk villages, captured their residents, and burned

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Albany Traders," *MVHR*, VII (1920), 228-241; Henry Allain St. Paul, "Governor Thomas Dongan's Expansion Policy," *Mid-America*, XVII (1935), 172-184, 236-272; Gary B. Nash, "The Quest for the Susquehanna Valley: New York, Pennsylvania, and the Seventeenth-Century Fur Trade," *New York History*, XLVIII (1967), 3-27; Daniel K. Richter, "Rediscovered Links in the Covenant Chain: Previously Unpublished Transcripts of New York Indian Treaty Minutes, 1677-1691," *American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings*, XCII (1982), 63-66.

<sup>67</sup> Hennepin, *New Discovery*, I, 20-144; Lahontan, *New Voyages*, I, 269-274; *Jesuit Relations*, LXII, 151-165; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 296-303.

<sup>68</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 417.

longhouses and stores of food as they retreated. Then, in 1696, the aged Frontenac—again governor and now carried into the field on a chair by his retainers—led at least 2,000 men to Onondaga, which he found destroyed by the retreating villagers. While his troops razed the ripening Onondaga corn, he received a plea for negotiation from the nearby Oneida village. The governor despatched Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil and a detachment of 600 men, who extracted from the few Oneida who remained at home a promise that their people would soon move to a Canadian mission. Vaudreuil burned the village anyway.<sup>69</sup>

The repeated French invasions of Iroquoia took few lives directly—only in the campaign against the Mohawk in 1693 did the invaders attack fully occupied villages—but their cumulative effect was severe. One village or nation left homeless and deprived of food supplies could not depend on aid from the others, who faced similar plights. And as the Five Nations struggled to avoid starvation and to rebuild their villages, frequent raids by the Indian allies of the French levied a heavy toll in lives. In December 1691 a Mohawk–Oneida war party sustained fifteen deaths in an encounter on Lake George—losses significant beyond their numbers because they included all of the two nations’ war chiefs and contributed to a total of 90 Mohawk and Oneida warriors killed since 1689. The Mohawk, who in the late 1670s had fielded approximately 300 warriors, in 1691 could muster only 130.<sup>70</sup> Combat fatalities, the continued exodus of Catholic converts to Canada, and the invasion of 1693 had, lamented a Mohawk orator, left his nation “a mean poor people,” who had “lost all by the Enemy.”<sup>71</sup> Fighting in the early 1690s had considerably weakened the three western Iroquois nations as well. In February 1692, for example, 50 Iroquois encountered a much larger French and Indian force above Montreal, and 40 suffered death or capture; a month later, 200 met disaster farther up the Saint Lawrence, when many were “captured, killed and defeated with loss of their principal chiefs.”<sup>72</sup> Through the mid-1690s sporadic raids in and around Iroquoia by Canada’s Indian allies kept the Five Nations on the defensive.<sup>73</sup>

The Five Nations did not meekly succumb. In 1687, soon after Denonville’s capture of the Iroquois settled near Fort Frontenac and his invasion of the Seneca country, a Mohawk orator declared to Governor Dongan his people’s intention to strike back at the French in the tradition of the mourning-war. “The Governor of Canada,” he proclaimed, “has

<sup>69</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 234-248, 358-369, 550-561, 639-656; *Jesuit Relations*, LXIII, 269-281, LXIV, 239-259, LXXV, 25-29; Lahontan, *New Voyages*, I, 29-45, 68-80; Francis Parkman, *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV* (Boston, 1877), 89-115, 139-157, 309-316, 410-417.

<sup>70</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 814-816.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 38-39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 531-535, quotation on p. 531.

<sup>73</sup> Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 172-174; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 599-632; Colden, *History* (1747), 180-181.

started an unjust war against all the [Five] nations. The Maquase [Mohawk] do not yet have any prisoners, but that Governor has taken a hundred prisoners from all the nations to the West. . . . Therefore the nations have desired to revenge the unjust attacks."<sup>74</sup> Iroquois raids for captives kept New France in an uproar through the early 1690s.<sup>75</sup> The warriors' greatest successes occurred during the summer of 1689. That June a Mohawk orator, speaking for all Five Nations, vowed "that the Place where the French Stole their Indians two years ago should soon be cut off (meaning Fort Frontenac) for to steal people in a time of Peace is an Inconsiderate work."<sup>76</sup> Within two months the Iroquois had forced the temporary abandonment of Frontenac and other French western posts, and, in an assault at Lachine on Montreal Island, had killed twenty-four French and taken seventy to ninety prisoners.<sup>77</sup>

Later in the 1690s, however, as the Five Nations' losses mounted, their capacity to resist steadily diminished. They repeatedly sought military support from governors of New York, but little was forthcoming. "Since you are a Great People & we but a small, *you will protect us from the French*," an Iroquois orator told Dongan in 1684. "We have put *all our Lands & ourselves*, under the Protection of the Great Duke of york."<sup>78</sup> Yet as long as the crowns of England and France remained at peace, the duke's governors largely ignored their end of the bargain. England's subsequent declaration of war against France coincided with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which unleashed in New York the period of political chaos known as Leisler's Rebellion. In 1689 Mohawks visiting Albany witnessed firsthand the turmoil between Leislerians and anti-Leislerians, and soon the Iroquois observed the resulting English military impotence. In February 1690, a few miles from the easternmost Mohawk village, a party of French and their Indian allies destroyed the sleeping town of Schenectady, whose Leislerian inhabitants had ignored warnings from anti-Leislerian authorities at Albany to be on guard.<sup>79</sup> Soon after the attack, the Mohawk headmen visited Albany to perform a condolence ceremony for their neighbors' losses at Schenectady. When they finished, they urged prompt

<sup>74</sup> Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 136-137.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-140; *Jesuit Relations*, LXIII, 279, 287-289, LXIV, 249-259, LXV, 29; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 503-504, 538, 554-555.

<sup>76</sup> Treaty Minutes, June 17, 1689, untitled notebook, Indians of North America, Miscellaneous Papers, 1620-1895, Manuscript Collections, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>77</sup> Richard A. Preston, trans., and Leopold Lamontagne, ed., *Royal Fort Frontenac* (Toronto, 1958), 175-180; Lahontan, *New Voyages*, I, 98-102, 147-151; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 434-438; Eccles, *Frontenac*, 186-197. English sources claimed 200 French deaths and 120 captures at Lachine (Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 297-298).

<sup>78</sup> Treaty Minutes, Aug. 2, 1684, untitled notebook, Indians of North America, Miscellaneous Papers, 1620-1895, Manuscript Collections, AAS.

<sup>79</sup> O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History*, I, 284-319, II, 130-132; Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 158-160.

New York action against the French. But neither then nor during the rest of the war did the Iroquois receive a satisfactory response. New York's offensive war consisted of two ill-fated and poorly supported invasions of Canada: the first, in 1690, was a dismal failure, and the second, in 1691, cost nearly as many English casualties as it inflicted on the enemy.<sup>80</sup> After 1691 New York factional strife, lack of aid from England, and the preoccupation of other colonies with their own defense prevented further commitments of English manpower to support the Iroquois struggle with the French. The Five Nations received arms and ammunition from Albany—never as much or as cheap as they desired—and little else.<sup>81</sup>

What to the Five Nations must have seemed the most typical of English responses to their plight followed the French invasion of the Mohawk country in 1693. Though local officials at Albany and Schenectady learned in advance of the Canadian army's approach and provided for their own defense, they neglected to inform the Mohawk. In the wake of the attack, as approximately 300 Mohawk prisoners trooped toward Canada, Peter Schuyler assembled at Schenectady a force of 250 New Yorkers and some Mohawks who had escaped capture, but he was restrained from immediate pursuit by his vacillating commander, Richard Ingoldsby. At length Schuyler moved on his own initiative and, reinforced by war parties from the western Iroquois nations, overtook the French army and inflicted enough damage to force the release of most of the captive Mohawk. Meanwhile, when word of the invasion reached Manhattan, Gov. Benjamin Fletcher mustered 150 militia and sailed to Albany in the unprecedented time of less than three days; nevertheless, the fighting was already over. At a conference with Iroquois headmen a few days later, Fletcher's rush upriver earned him the title by which he would henceforth be known to the Five Nations: Cayenquiragoe, or "Great Swift Arrow." Fletcher took the name—chosen when the Iroquois learned that the word *fletcher* meant arrow-maker—as a supreme compliment. But, in view of the Mohawk's recent experience with the English—receiving no warning of the impending invasion, having to cool their heels at Schenectady while the enemy got away and Schuyler waited for marching orders, and listening to Fletcher rebuke them for their lax scouting and defense—the governor's political opponent Peter De La Noy may have been right to claim that Cayenquiragoe was a "sarcasticall pun" on Fletcher's name, bestowed for a showy effort that yielded no practical results.<sup>82</sup>

Yet if the English had been unable—or, as the Iroquois undoubtedly saw it, unwilling—to give meaningful military aid to the Five Nations, they were able to keep the Indians from negotiating a separate peace with the

<sup>80</sup> O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History*, II, 164-290; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 800-805, IV, 193-196, IX, 513-515, 520-524.

<sup>81</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 836-844; Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 165-166; O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History*, I, 323-325, 341-345; Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century*, I (New York, 1924), 228-265.

<sup>82</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IV, 6-7, 14-24, 222; Colden, *History* (1747), 142-150.

French that might leave New York exposed alone to attack. Although after 1688 ambassadors from several Iroquois nations periodically treated with the Canadians, New Yorkers maintained enough influence with factions among the Five Nations to sabotage all negotiations.<sup>83</sup> New York authorities repeatedly reminded their friends among the Iroquois of past French treacheries. At Albany in 1692, for example, Commander-in-Chief Ingoldsby warned the ambassadors of the Five Nations “that the Enemy has not forgot their old tricks.” The French hoped “to lull the Brethren asleep and to ruine and distroy them at once, when they have peace in their mouths they have warr in their hearts.”<sup>84</sup> Many Iroquois heeded the message. Lamberville complained in 1694 that “the english of those quarters have so intrigued that they have ruined all the hopes for peace that we had entertained.”<sup>85</sup> The repeated failure of negotiations reinforced Canadian mistrust of the Iroquois and led French authorities to prosecute the war with more vigor. By the mid-1690s, with talks stymied, all the Five Nations could do was to accept English arms and ammunition and continue minor raids on their enemies while awaiting a general peace.<sup>86</sup>

For the Iroquois that peace did not come with the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. At Ryswick, the European powers settled none of the issues that had provoked the conflict, yet they gained a respite that allowed each side to regroup. Paradoxically, however, a truce between the empires precluded an end to conflict between the French and the Five Nations; jurisdiction over the Iroquois and their territory was one of the sticking points left unsettled. Accordingly, Frontenac and his successor, Louis-Hector de Callière, refused to consider the Iroquois—whom they called unruly French subjects—to be included in the treaty with England and insisted that they make a separate peace with New France. Fletcher and his successor, Richard Coote, earl of Bellomont, argued equally strenuously that the Iroquois were comprehended in the treaty as English subjects. Thus they tried to forbid direct Franco-Iroquois negotiations and continued to pressure their friends among the Five Nations to prevent serious talks from occurring.<sup>87</sup> While Iroquois leaders struggled to escape the diplomatic bind, the Indian allies of New France continued their war against their ancient Iroquois enemies. In the late 1690s the Ojibwa led a major western Indian offensive that, according to Ojibwa tradition, killed enormous numbers of Seneca and other Iroquois. Euro-American sources document more moderate, yet still devastating, fatalities: the Onondaga lost over ninety men within a year of the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick,

<sup>83</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 384-393, 515-517, 565-572, 596-599; *Jesuit Relations*, LXIV, 143-145.

<sup>84</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, III, 841-844; see also *ibid.*, IV, 77-98, 279-282.

<sup>85</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXIV, 259.

<sup>86</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 601-671.

<sup>87</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 323-342; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IV, 367-374, 402-409.



and the Seneca perhaps as many. Such defeats continued into 1700, when the Seneca suffered over fifty deaths in battles with the Ottawa and Illinois. All along at Albany, authorities counseled the Five Nations not to strike back, but to allow Bellomont time to negotiate with Callière on their behalf.<sup>88</sup>

#### IV

By 1700 Iroquois warfare and culture had reached a turning point. Up to about 1675, despite the impact of disease, firearms, and the fur trade, warfare still performed functions that outweighed its costs. But thereafter the Anglo-French struggle for control of North America made war disastrous for the Five Nations. Conflict in the west, instead of securing fur supplies, was cutting them off, while lack of pelts to trade and wartime shortages of goods at Albany created serious economic hardship in Iroquoia.<sup>89</sup> Those problems paled, however, in comparison with the physical toll. All of the Iroquois nations except the Cayuga had seen their villages and crops destroyed by invading armies, and all five nations were greatly weakened by loss of members to captivity, to death in combat, or to famine and disease. By some estimates, between 1689 and 1698 the Iroquois lost half of their fighting strength. That figure is probably an exaggeration, but by 1700 perhaps 500 of the 2,000 warriors the Five Nations fielded in 1689 had been killed or captured or had deserted to the French missions and had not been replaced by younger warriors. A loss of well over 1,600 from a total population of approximately 8,600 seems a conservative estimate.<sup>90</sup>

At the turn of the century, therefore, the mourning-war was no longer even symbolically restocking the population. And, far from being socially integrative, the Five Nations' current war was splitting their communities asunder. The heavy death toll of previous decades had robbed them of many respected headmen and clan matrons to whom the people had looked for guidance and arbitration of disputes. As a group of young Mohawk warriors lamented in 1691 when they came to parley with the Catholic Iroquois settled near Montreal, "all those . . . who had sense are

<sup>88</sup> Leroy V. Eid, "The Ojibwa-Iroquois War: The War the Five Nations Did Not Win," *Ethnohistory*, XXVI (1979), 297-324; Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 29-30; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 681-688, 708-709.

<sup>89</sup> Aquila, "Iroquois Restoration," 71-79.

<sup>90</sup> A 1698 report on New York's suffering during the War of the League of Augsburg states that there were 2,550 Iroquois warriors in 1689 and only 1,230 in 1698. The report probably contains some polemical overstatement: the first figure seems too high and the second too low. By comparison, 2,050 Iroquois warriors were estimated by Denonville in 1685, 1,400 by Bellomont in 1691, 1,750 by Bernardus Freeman in 1700, and 1,200 by a French cabinet paper in 1701 (*N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IV, 337, 768, IX, 281, 725; Freeman to the Secretary, May 28, 1712, *Records of S.P.G.*, Letterbooks, Ser. A, VII, 203). If the figure of 1,750 warriors cited by Freeman—a minister who worked with the Mohawk—is correct, the total

dead.”<sup>91</sup> The power vacuum, war weariness, and the pressures of the imperial struggle combined to place at each other’s throats those who believed that the Iroquois’ best chance lay in a separate peace with the French and those who continued to rely on the English alliance. “The [Five] Nations are full of faction, the French having got a great interest among them,” reported the Albany Commissioners for Indian Affairs in July 1700. At Onondaga, where, according to Governor Bellomont, the French had “full as many friends” as the English, the situation was particularly severe. Some sachems found themselves excluded from councils, and factions charged one another with using poison to remove adversaries from the scene. One pro-English Onondaga headman, Aquendero, had to take refuge near Albany, leaving his son near death and supposedly bewitched by opponents.<sup>92</sup> Their politics being ordered by an interlocking structure of lineages, clans, and moieties, the Iroquois found such factions, which cut across kinship lines, difficult if not impossible to handle. In the 1630s the Huron, whose political structure was similar, never could manage the novel factional alignments that resulted from the introduction of Christianity. That failure perhaps contributed to their demise at the hands of the Five Nations.<sup>93</sup> Now the Iroquois found themselves at a similar pass.

As the new century opened, however, Iroquois headmen were beginning to construct solutions to some of the problems facing their people. From 1699 to 1701 Iroquois ambassadors—in particular the influential Onondaga Teganissorens—threaded the thickets of domestic factionalism and shuttled between their country and the Euro-American colonies to negotiate what one scholar has termed “The Grand Settlement of 1701.”<sup>94</sup> On August 4, 1701, at an immense gathering at Montreal, representatives of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oneida, also speaking for the Mohawk, met Governor Callière and headmen of the Wyandot, Algonquin, Abenaki, Nipissing, Ottawa, Ojibwa, Sauk, Fox, Miami, Potawatomi, and other French allies. The participants ratified arrangements made during the previous year that provided for a general peace, established vague boundaries for western hunting territories (the Iroquois basically consented to remain east of Detroit), and eschewed armed conflict in

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Iroquois population in 1700 was approximately 7,000, calculated by the ratio in note 57.

<sup>91</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXIV, 59-61.

<sup>92</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IV, 648-661, 689-690.

<sup>93</sup> Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, II, 709-724. See also the discussions of Indian factionalism in Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., “The Political Context of a New Indian History,” *Pacific Historical Review*, XL (1971), 373-380; and Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson, Ariz., 1962), 491-501.

<sup>94</sup> Anthony F. C. Wallace, “Origins of Iroquois Neutrality: The Grand Settlement of 1701,” *Pennsylvania History*, XXIV (1957), 223-235. The best reconstruction of the Iroquois diplomacy that led to the Grand Settlement is Richard L. Haan, “The Covenant Chain: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Niagara Frontier, 1697-1730” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1976), 64-147.

favor of arbitration by the governor of New France. A few days later, the Iroquois and Callière reached more specific understandings concerning Iroquois access to Detroit and other French western trading posts. Most important from the French standpoint, the Iroquois promised neutrality in future Anglo-French wars.<sup>95</sup>

A delegation of Mohawks arrived late at the Montreal conference; they, along with ambassadors from the western Iroquois, had been at Albany negotiating with Lt. Gov. John Nanfan, who had replaced the deceased Bellomont. The Five Nations' spokesmen had first assured Nanfan of their fidelity and told him that the simultaneous negotiations at Montreal were of no significance. Then they had agreed equivocally to perpetuate their military alliance with the English, reiterated that trade lay at the heart of Iroquois-New York relations, consented to the passage through Iroquoia of western Indians going to trade at Albany, and granted the English crown a "deed" to the same western hunting territories assured to the Five Nations in the Montreal treaty. In return, Nanfan promised English defense of Iroquois hunting rights in those lands. Meanwhile, at Philadelphia, yet a third series of negotiations had begun, which, while not usually considered part of the Grand Settlement, reflected the same Iroquois diplomatic thrust; by 1704 those talks would produce an informal trade agreement between the Five Nations and Pennsylvania.<sup>96</sup>

On one level, this series of treaties represented an Iroquois defeat. The Five Nations had lost the war and, in agreeing to peace on terms largely dictated by Callière, had acknowledged their inability to prevail militarily over their French, and especially their Indian, enemies.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the Grand Settlement did secure for the Iroquois five important ends: escape from the devastating warfare of the 1690s; rights to hunting in the west; potentially profitable trade with western Indians passing through Iroquoia to sell furs at Albany; access to markets in New France and Pennsylvania as well as in New York; and the promise of noninvolvement in future imperial wars. The Grand Settlement thus brought to the Five Nations not only peace on their northern and western flanks but also a more stable economy based on guaranteed western hunting territories and access to multiple Euro-American markets. Henceforth, self-destructive warfare need no longer be the only means of ensuring Iroquois economic survival, and neither need inter-Indian beaver wars necessarily entrap the Five Nations in struggles between Euro-Americans.<sup>98</sup> In 1724, nearly a

<sup>95</sup> Bacqueville de La Potherie, *Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, IV (Paris, 1722), *passim*; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 715-725.

<sup>96</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IV, 889-911; *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, II (Harrisburg, Pa., 1838), 142-143; William M. Beauchamp, *A History of the New York Iroquois, Now Commonly Called the Six Nations*, New York State Museum Bulletin 78 (Albany, N.Y., 1905), 256; Jennings, "Miquon's Passing," 118-121.

<sup>97</sup> Eid, "Ojibwa-Iroquois War," *Ethnohistory*, XXVI (1979), 297-324.

<sup>98</sup> Aquila, "Iroquois Restoration," 109-171; Richard Haan, "The Problem of Iroquois Neutrality: Suggestions for Revision," *Ethnohistory*, XXVII (1980), 317-330.

generation after the negotiation of the Grand Settlement, an Iroquois spokesman explained to a delegation from Massachusetts how the treaties, while limiting Iroquois diplomatic and military options, nevertheless proved beneficial. "Tho' the Hatchett lays by our side yet the way is open between this Place and Canada, and trade is free both going and coming," he answered when the New Englanders urged the Iroquois to attack New France. "If a War should break out and we should use the Hatchett that layes by our Side, those Paths which are now open wo[u]ld be stopped, and if we should make war it would not end in a few days as yours doth but it must last till one nation or the other is destroyed as it has been heretofore with us[.] . . . [W]e know what whipping and scourging is from the Governor of Canada."<sup>99</sup>

After the Grand Settlement, then, Iroquois leaders tried to abandon warfare as a means of dealing with the diplomatic problems generated by the Anglo-French imperial rivalry and the economic dilemmas of the fur trade. Through most of the first half of the eighteenth century the headmen pursued a policy of neutrality between the empires with a dexterity that the English almost never, and the French only seldom, comprehended. At the same time the Iroquois began to cement peaceful trading relationships with the western nations. Sporadic fighting continued in the western hunting grounds through the first decade and a half of the eighteenth century, as the parties to the 1701 Montreal treaty sorted out the boundaries of their territories and engaged in reciprocal raids for captives that were provoked by contact between Iroquois and western Indian hunters near French posts. Iroquois headmen quickly took advantage of Canadian arbitration when such quarrels arose, however, and they struggled to restrain young warriors from campaigning in the west.<sup>100</sup> As peace took hold, Alexander Montour, the son of a French man and an Iroquois woman, worked to build for the Iroquois a thriving trade between the western nations and Albany.<sup>101</sup>

The new diplomatic direction was tested between 1702 and 1713, when the imperial conflict resumed in the War of the Spanish Succession (Queen Anne's War). Through crafty Iroquois diplomacy, and thanks to the only halfhearted effort each European side devoted to the western theater, the Five Nations were able to maintain their neutrality and avoid heavy combat losses. Only between 1709 and 1711 did the imperial struggle again threaten to engulf the Five Nations. In 1709 Vaudreuil, now governor of New France, ordered the murder of Montour to prevent further diversion of French western trade to the Iroquois and the English.

<sup>99</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 724-725.

<sup>100</sup> Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 192-200; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 759-765, 848-849, 876-878; Yves F. Zoltvany, "New France and the West, 1701-1713," *Can. Hist. Rev.*, XLVI (1965), 315-321.

<sup>101</sup> Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 44-67; "Continuation of Colden's History of the Five Indian Nations, for the Years 1707 through 1720," *New-York Historical Society, Collections*, LXVIII (1935), 360-367, hereafter cited as Colden, "Continuation"; Haan, "Covenant Chain," 152-153.

As a result, many formerly pro-French Iroquois turned against the Canadians, and most Mohawk and Oneida warriors, with many Onondagas and Cayugas, joined in the plans of Samuel Vetch and Francis Nicholson for an intercolonial invasion of Canada. Only the Senecas, who were most exposed to attack by Indian allies of the French, refused to participate.<sup>102</sup> The army of colonists and Iroquois, however, never set foot in Canada because Whitehall reneged on its promise of a fleet that would simultaneously attack Canada from the east. After the 1709 fiasco, Iroquois-French relations continued to deteriorate. The Seneca determined on war with the French in 1710, when they were attacked by western Indians apparently instigated by the Canadians. Then, in the spring of 1711, a party of French came to Onondaga and, spouting threats about the consequences of further Iroquois hostility, attempted to build a blockhouse in the village. When Vetch and Nicholson planned a second assault on Canada in the summer of 1711, large war parties from all Five Nations eagerly enlisted. Once more, however, the seaborne wing of the expedition failed, and the land army returned home without seeing the enemy.<sup>103</sup> The debacles of 1709 and 1711 confirmed the Iroquois in their opinion of English military impotence and contributed to a chill in Anglo-Iroquois relations that lasted for the rest of the decade.<sup>104</sup> Iroquois leaders once again steered a course of neutrality between the empires, and after the peace of Utrecht trade once again flourished with the western Indians.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to its diplomatic benefits, the Grand Settlement of 1701 provided a partial solution to Iroquois factionalism. Iroquoian non-state political structures could not suppress factional cleavages entirely, and in the years after 1701 differences over relations with the French and the English still divided Iroquois communities, as each European power continued to encourage its friends. Interpreters such as the Canadian Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire and the New Yorker Lawrence Claeson (or Claes) struggled to win the hearts of Iroquois villagers; each side gave presents to its supporters; and on several occasions English officials interfered with the selection of sachems in order to strengthen pro-English factions. As a result, fratricidal disputes still occasionally threatened to tear villages apart.<sup>106</sup> Still, in general, avoidance of exclusive

<sup>102</sup> Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 64-69; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 902; Leder, ed., *Livingston Indian Records*, 207-210; Colden, "Continuation," 370-380.

<sup>103</sup> Colden, "Continuation," 398-409; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 242-249, 267-277; G. M. Waller, "New York's Role in Queen Anne's War, 1702-1713," *New York History*, XXXIII (1952), 40-53; Bruce T. McCully, "Catastrophe in the Wilderness: New Light on the Canada Expedition of 1709," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XI (1954), 441-456; Haan, "Covenant Chain," 148-198.

<sup>104</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 372-376, 382-388, 437, 484-487; Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 98-105.

<sup>105</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 445-446, 584; Colden, "Continuation," 414-432; Haan, "Problem of Iroquois Neutrality," *Ethnohistory*, XXVII (1980), 324.

<sup>106</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 545, 569, 632, IX, 816; Thomas Barclay to Robert Hunter, Jan. 26, 1713 (extract), Records of S.P.G., Letterbooks, Ser. A, VIII,

alliances or major military conflict with either European power allowed Iroquois councils to keep factional strife within bounds. A new generation of headmen learned to maintain a rough equilibrium between pro-French and pro-English factions at home, as well as peaceful relations with French and English abroad. Central to that strategy was an intricate policy that tried to balance French against English fortified trading posts, Canadian against New York blacksmiths, and Jesuit against Anglican missionaries. Each supplied the Iroquois with coveted aspects of Euro-American culture—trade goods, technology, and spiritual power, respectively—but each also could be a focus of factional leadership and a tool of Euro-American domination. The Grand Settlement provided a way to lessen, though hardly eliminate, those dangers.<sup>107</sup>

The Iroquois balancing act was severely tested beginning in 1719, when Joncaire persuaded pro-French elements of the Seneca to let him build a French trading house at Niagara. Neither confederacy leaders nor Senecas opposed to the French encroachment attempted to dislodge the intruders forcibly, as they had done in the previous century at Fort Frontenac. Instead, Iroquois headmen unsuccessfully urged New York authorities to send troops to destroy the post, thus hoping to place the onus on the British while avoiding an open breach between pro-French and pro-English Iroquois. But New York Gov. William Burnet had other plans. In 1724 he announced his intention to build an English counterpart to Niagara at Oswego. With the French beginning to fortify Niagara, league headmen reluctantly agreed to the English proposals. In acquiescing to both forts, the Iroquois yielded a measure of sovereignty as Europeans defined the term; yet they dampened internal strife, avoided exclusive dependence on either European power, and maintained both factional and diplomatic balance.<sup>108</sup>

The years following the Grand Settlement also witnessed the stabilization of Iroquois population. Though the numbers of the Iroquois continued to decline gradually, the forces that had so dramatically reduced them in the seventeenth century abated markedly after 1701. The first two decades of the seventeenth century brought only one major epidemic—smallpox in 1716—<sup>109</sup> while the flow of Catholic converts to Canadian missions also slowed. The missions near Montreal had lost much of the utopian character that had previously attracted so many Iroquois converts.

251-252. For examples of Claeson's and Joncaire's activities see Colden, "Continuation," 360-363, 432-434, and *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 538, 562-569, IX, 759-765, 814, 876-903.

<sup>107</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 217-227; Colden, "Continuation," 408-409; Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 79n-80n.

<sup>108</sup> The evolution of Iroquois, French, and English policies concerning Niagara and Oswego may be followed in *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, *passim*, IX, 897-1016; Jennings, "Miquon's Passing," 256-274; and Haan, "Covenant Chain," 199-237.

<sup>109</sup> Andrews to the Secretary, Oct. 11, 1716, Records of S.P.G., Letterbooks, Ser. A, XII, 241; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 484-487, IX, 878.

By the early eighteenth century, drunkenness, crushing debts to traders, and insults from Euro-American neighbors were no less characteristic of Iroquois life in Canada than in Iroquoia, and the Jesuit priests serving the Canadian missions had become old, worn-out men who had long since abandoned dreams of turning Indians into Frenchmen.<sup>110</sup>

As the population drain from warfare, disease, and migration to mission villages moderated, peaceful assimilation of refugees from neighboring nations helped to replace those Iroquois who were lost. One French source even claimed, in 1716, that "the five Iroquois nations . . . are becoming more and more formidable through their great numbers."<sup>111</sup> Most notable among the newcomers were some 1,500 Tuscaroras who, after their defeat by the English and allied Indians of the Carolinas in 1713, migrated north to settle on lands located between the Onondaga and Oneida villages. They were adopted as the sixth nation of the Iroquois Confederacy about 1722. There are indications that the Tuscarora—who, according to William Andrews, Anglican missionary to the Mohawk, possessed "an implacable hatred against Christians at Carolina"—contributed greatly to the spirit of independence and distrust of Europeans that guided the Six Nations on their middle course between the imperial powers. The Tuscarora, concluded Andrews, were "a great Occasion of Our Indians becoming so bad as they are, they now take all Occasions to find fault and quarrel, wanting to revolt."<sup>112</sup>

## V

The first two decades of the eighteenth century brought a shift away from those aspects of Iroquois warfare that had been most socially disruptive. As the Iroquois freed themselves of many, though by no means all, of the demographic, economic, and diplomatic pressures that had made seventeenth-century warfare so devastating, the mourning-war began to resume some of its traditional functions in Iroquois culture.

As the Five Nations made peace with their old western and northern foes, Iroquois mourning-war raids came to focus on enemies the Iroquois called "Flatheads"—a vague epithet for the Catawba and other tribes on the frontiers of Virginia and the Carolinas.<sup>113</sup> Iroquois and Flathead war

<sup>110</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXVI, 203-207, LXVII, 39-41; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 882-884; George F. G. Stanley, "The Policy of 'Francisation' as Applied to the Indians during the Ancien Regime," *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française*, III (1949-1950), 333-348; Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Frenchification and Evangelization of the Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century New France" (*sic*), Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Study Sessions*, XXXV (1969), 57-71.

<sup>111</sup> *Jesuit Relations*, LXVII, 27.

<sup>112</sup> Andrews to the Secretary, Apr. 20, 1716, Apr. 23, 1717, Records of S.P.G., Letterbooks, Ser. A, XI, 319-320, XII, 310-312.

<sup>113</sup> Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Notes on the Iroquois: Or, Contributions to the Statistics, Aboriginal History, Antiquities and General Ethnology of Western New York* (New York, 1846), 148-149; Fenton, "Iroquois in History," in Leacock and Lurie, eds., *North American Indians*, 147-148; Beauchamp, *History of New York Iroquois*, 139.

parties had traded blows during the 1670s and 1680s, conflict had resumed about 1707, and after the arrival of the Tuscarora in the 1710s Iroquois raiding parties attacked the Flatheads regularly and almost exclusively.<sup>114</sup> The Catawba and other southeastern Indians sided with the Carolinians in the Tuscarora War of 1711-1713, bringing them into further conflict with warriors from the Five Nations, who fought alongside the Tuscarora.<sup>115</sup> After the Tuscarora moved north, Iroquois-Flathead warfare increased in intensity and lasted—despite several peace treaties—until the era of the American Revolution. This series of mourning-wars exasperated English officials from New York to the Carolinas, who could conceive no rational explanation for the conflicts except the intrigues of French envoys who delighted in stirring up trouble on English frontiers.<sup>116</sup>

Canadian authorities did indeed encourage Iroquois warriors with arms and presents. The French were happy for the chance to harass British settlements and to strike blows against Indians who troubled French inhabitants of New Orleans and the Mississippi Valley.<sup>117</sup> Yet the impetus for raiding the Flatheads lay with the Iroquois, not the French. At Onondaga in 1710, when emissaries from New York blamed French influence for the campaigns and presented a wampum belt calling for a halt to hostilities, a Seneca orator dismissed their arguments: “When I think of the Brave Warriours that hav[e] been slain by the Flatheads I can Govern my self no longer. . . . I reject your Belt for the Hatred I bear to the Flatheads can never be forgotten.”<sup>118</sup> The Flatheads were an ideal target for the mourning-wars demanded by Iroquois women and warriors, for with conflict channeled southward, warfare with northern and western nations that, in the past, had brought disaster could be avoided. In addition, war with the Flatheads placated both Canadian authorities and pro-French Iroquois factions, since the raids countered a pro-English trade policy with a military policy useful to the French. And, from the perspective of Iroquois-English relations, the southern campaigns posed few risks. New York officials alternately forbade and countenanced raids against southern Indians as the fortunes of frontier war in the Carolinas and the intrigues of intercolonial politics shifted. But even when the governors of the Carolinas, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York did agree on schemes to impose peace, experience with English military

<sup>114</sup> On Iroquois-Flathead conflicts before 1710 see Colden, *History* (1727), 30-71, and “Continuation,” 361-363, and Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 50-61. References to raids after 1710 in Colden, *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, and other sources are too numerous to cite here; a useful discussion is Aquila, “Iroquois Restoration,” 294-346.

<sup>115</sup> Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 94-96; *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 372-376, 382-388, 484-493; Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham, N.C., 1928), 158-161.

<sup>116</sup> *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 542-545, 562-569, 635-640.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 876-878, 884-885, 1085, 1097-1098.

<sup>118</sup> Colden, “Continuation,” 382-383, brackets in original.



impotence had taught the Iroquois that the governors could do little to stop the conflict.<sup>119</sup>

While the diplomatic advantages were many, perhaps the most important aspect of the Iroquois–Flathead conflicts was the partial return they allowed to the traditional ways of the mourning-war. By the 1720s the Five Nations had not undone the ravages of the preceding century, yet they had largely extricated themselves from the socially disastrous wars of the fur trade and of the European empires. And though prisoners no longer flowed into Iroquois villages in the floods of the seventeenth century, the southern raids provided enough captives for occasional mourning and condolence rituals that dried Iroquois tears and reminded the Five Nations of their superiority over their enemies. In the same letter of 1716 in which missionary Andrews noted the growing independence of the Iroquois since the Tuscarora had settled among them and the southern wars had intensified, he also vividly described the reception recently given to captives of the Onondaga and Oneida.<sup>120</sup> Iroquois warfare was again binding Iroquois families and villages together.

<sup>119</sup> For examples of shifting New York policies regarding the Iroquois southern campaigns see *N.-Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 446-464, 542-545, and Wraxall, *Abridgement of Indian Affairs*, ed. McIlwain, 123.

<sup>120</sup> Andrews to the Secretary, Apr. 20, 1716, Records of S.P.G., Letterbooks, Ser. A., XI, 320.