

## Comment on Williamson and Robertson's "Peer Politics Beyond the Periphery: Early and Middle Iroquoian Regional Interaction"

Susan M. Jamieson

This paper is a thoughtful elaboration on, if misinterpretation of Jamieson (1992). Contrary to Williamson and Robertson, I focus upon "prosaic" artifacts as evidence for interaction between overlapping "ethnic or kin group linkages" throughout the eastern North American continent, following the premise that the greater the degree of peaceable interaction, the more similar the material culture owing to shared information and ideology. These linkages, largely based on exogamous marriage, pluralized Ontario Iroquoian societies (Jamieson 1992:71-73). This is a peer polity approach when polities at the same "level of development" interact but, as significant Middle and Late Iroquoian interactions were with more complex Middle Atlantic, Fort Ancient, and Piedmont polities, that terminology is inappropriate and misleading. I argue that long distance relationships developed during the Middle Ontario Iroquois stage (including those with populations strongly influenced by the Dallas phase [Jamieson 1992:73,75]), but did not play a major role until later *as an addition to, and not a replacement of, earlier interaction patterns*. I do not argue that there were "large-scale or highly developed relations between Ontario populations and people in the southeast or midwest", nor do I imply any loss of autonomy to polities external to Ontario.

Migration and diffusion are valid contextual explanatory mechanisms (e.g., Anthony 1990; Cohen 1972:9) summarily dismissed by Williamson and Robertson, although employed conceptually throughout their paper. Exogamous marriage, captive adoption, and refugee population incorporation *are* long-term migration. Visits to trading partners and exogamously married kin *are* short-term migration. Diffusion can, and does occur when gifts are given (the basis for trade) and information and ideologies are exchanged. It is these latter which promote social evolution, given systematic interaction of polities operating within a

common prestige goods system.

That a number of northern Iroquoian cultural traits originated in the Middle or even Early Woodland is not at issue, as similar local patterns are apparent throughout the middle and eastern half of the North American continent. What is at issue is that Mississippian *informational and ideological* concepts were manifested in certain traits or trait combinations. In other words, material culture *is a* signifier (Deely 1990; Hodder 1991a, 1991b; Vastokas 1986-1987, 1992). After these concepts began to develop in Mississippian societies, relevant trait frequencies rapidly increased in local assemblages to the north and east in a contiguous distribution. This implies associated informational and ideological diffusion via intergroup contact. Acceptance of Mississippified (i.e., filtered and modified through intervening cultures and locally reinterpreted [Jamieson 1991:6, 1992:70-71]) informational and ideological concepts would have been facilitated due to the similarity and contiguity of manifesting traits to those having local precedence.

The Caradoc data does not negate the fact of a contiguous, uniform distribution of black pebble pendants from the Allegheny drainage through western New York into peninsular Ontario. As I note (Jamieson 1991:4, 1992), there are clinal patterns of trait distributions within Early and later Ontario Iroquoian assemblages which reflect the nature of local or regional interaction even while the larger proposed patterns of change are maintained. And, ceramics from the later Caradoc sites are consistent with terminal Early Ontario Iroquoian patterns (Jamieson 1991:5, 1992:72). Finally, Williamson and Robertson's argument with respect to the geographical proximity of the Caradoc sand plain to the Upper Ohio drainage obviates the all-important role of social distances (Jamieson 1991:5, 1992:72,74). This stance has implications for Williamson

and Robertson's model of Early and Middle Ontario Iroquois development, which fails to explain adequately substantial relations with populations on the Mississippian periphery.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Anthony, D. W.  
 1990 Migration in Archaeology: The Baby and the Bathwater. *American Anthropologist* 92:895-914.
- Cohen, Y. S.  
 1972 *Diffusion of an Innovation in an Urban System*. University of Chicago Department of Geography Research Paper 140. Chicago.
- Deely, J.  
 1990 *Basics of Semiotics*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Hodder, I.  
 1991a *Reading the Past*. 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.  
 1991b Interpretive Archaeology and Its Role. *American Antiquity* 56:7-18.
- Jamieson, S. M.  
 1991 A Pickering Conquest? *Kewa* 91(5):2-18.  
 1992 Regional Interaction and Ontario Iroquois Evolution. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 16:70-88.
- Vastokas, J. M.  
 1986-1987 Native Art as Art History: Meaning and Time from Unwritten Sources. *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21(4):7-37.  
 1992 *Beyond the Artifact: Native Art as Performance*. Roberts Centre for Canada Studies, York University, North York, Ontario.

## Reply to Jamieson's Comment

Ronald F. Williamson and David A. Robertson

Susan Jamieson should be commended for recognizing that past societies were often subject to external, sometimes far-reaching influences which occasionally had profound effects. She is mistaken, however, in her assertion that our paper represents an elaboration of her hypothesis that Late Woodland societies in southern Ontario had been subject to a process of "Mississippification" (Jamieson 1992). Not only do we argue that this process is unlikely to have taken place, but we are equally concerned with addressing the difficulties inherent in applying a generalized core-periphery model to the explanation of Ontario Iroquoian cultural evolution (e.g., Dincauze and Hasenstab 1989). It could, nevertheless, be said that the peer polity interaction approach and Jamieson's regional interaction approach are not all that different. Perhaps the most fundamental differences between our paper and her published views relate to the emphasis placed on local versus long-distance interaction. In that regard, it should be noted that the recognition of attenuated contacts with more complex societies, within the context of more highly developed and intensive local interaction with neighbouring, similarly scaled communities, in no way invalidates the use of the phrase "peer polity interaction".

It would also be foolhardy for us to "summarily dismiss" migration/diffusion as a valid explanatory mechanism, or to deny it at least some role in Iroquoian development, given that external contacts are patently obvious with the arrival and gradual adoption of southern domesticates. What we suggest, however, is that endogamous processes must not be overlooked in the search for the genesis of various aspects of Iroquoian culture. There is no reason to assign primary importance to diffusion, or to assume, as does Jamieson (1991:3, 8, 1992:71, 72, 74, 76, 77), that culture contact necessarily results in acculturation, unless the data clearly suggest that this is so.

While we acknowledge that some continental interaction no doubt occurred, the data indicate that it was no more "significant" than local interaction. Thus, the suggestion that the

northern Iroquoian traits or trait combinations (which Jamieson defines as manifesting Mississippian "informational and ideological concepts") were used by Ontario Early or Middle Woodland populations, is very much at issue. When Jamieson argues that it was precisely because these traits were present earlier that their more recent Mississippian ideological value was readily accepted, it is, in essence, to deny the same traits, during centuries of previous local interaction, any symbolic and informational meaning. Was there not a local pre-Mississippian ideological tradition or did material culture only begin to "signify" in Mississippian times?

Moreover, recent attempts to associate local Late Woodland peoples on the Cahokian periphery with centralized elites point to Ramey Incised pottery and Short-nosed god masquettes (Hall 1991; Pauketat and Emerson 1991) as artifacts that should be identifiable in the archaeological record of societies which underwent a Mississippian-related cultural transformation (Green and Rodell 1994). There are simply no artifacts of this nature on Ontario Early and Middle Iroquoian sites.

As for black pebble pendants, they are restricted in distribution in peninsular Ontario to Middle Iroquoian sites along the north Lake Erie shore, where black shale pebbles naturally occur. Furthermore, the use of black stone and coal beads and pendants across the North American continent (Miles 1963:136; Simonsen 1973:42-44) makes it difficult to differentiate symbols representing Cahokian ideology from those which are more widespread or pan-Indian (von Gernet 1992). Indeed, the colour black-like the colours red and white-is understood by some anthropologists to be a powerful universal symbol (Firth 1973: 68; Turner 1968:88-91). On the other hand, the fact that black shale, slate and coal are among the most accessible and malleable substances for stone bead industries, may go a long way in explaining their presence in the archaeological record.

In summary, we would reiterate that, in the absence of any convincing evidence for sub-

stantial relations between Early and Middle Iroquoians in Ontario with more complex Mississippian populations, the examination of prolonged and consistent exchange and communication between groups at a similar level of complexity, within the Great Lakes Region, will provide our best clues for understanding Iroquoian cultural evolution.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Dincauze, D. F., and R. J. Hasenstab  
 1989 Explaining the Iroquois: Tribalization on a Prehistoric Periphery. In *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology*, edited by T. C. Champion, pp. 67-87. Unwin Hyman, London.
- Firth, R.  
 1973 *Symbols, Public and Private*. Cornell University Press, New York.
- Green, W., and R. L. Rodell  
 1994 The Mississippian Presence and Cahokia Interaction at Trempealeau, Wisconsin. *American Antiquity* 59 (2): 334-358.
- Hall, R.  
 1991 Cahokian Identity and Interaction Models of Cahokia Mississippian. In *Cahokia and the Hinterlands: Middle Mississippian Cultures of the Midwest*, edited by T. E. Emerson and R. B. Lewis, pp. 3-34. University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Jamieson, S. M.  
 1991 A Pickering Conquest? *Kowa* 91(5):2-18.  
 1992 Regional Interaction and Ontario Iroquois Evolution. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 16:70-88.
- Miles, C.  
 1963 *Indian and Eskimo Artifacts of North America*. Bonanza Books, New York.
- Pauketat, T. R., and T. E. Emerson  
 1991 The Ideology of Authority and the Power of the Pot. *American Anthropologist* 93(4):919-941.
- Simonsen, B.  
 1973 *Archaeological Investigations in the Hecate Strait-Milbanke Sound Area of British Columbia*. National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Paper 13. Archaeological Survey of Canada, Ottawa.
- Turner, V.  
 1968 *Forest of Symbols: A Study in Ndem-bu Ritual*. Cornell University Press, New York.
- von Gernet, A.  
 1992 New Directions in the Construction of Prehistoric Amerindian Belief Systems. In *Ancient Images, Ancient Thought: The Archaeology of Ideology*, edited by A. S. Goldsmith, S. Garvie, D. Selin, and J. Smith, pp. 133-140. Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Chacmool Conference, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.