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**No. 1. Introduction: The Concept of Locality and the
Program of Iroquois Research**

By WILLIAM N. FENTON

INTRODUCTION

THE CONCEPT OF LOCALITY AND THE PROGRAM OF IROQUOIS RESEARCH

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The modern state, at all its levels, from the nation down to the community, is organized on the principle of where one lives, and neighbors seldom are related. At earlier times and in nonliterate societies neighbors are likely to be a group of kinsmen. If the modern state seizes the principle of coresidence, or local contiguity, and thus makes all its political and legal arrangements on a local or territorial basis, preliterate societies project the kinship units, which absorb local political and legal functions, to the level of the tribe and state. Maine (1883, p. 124 ff.) discovered the two principles of kinship and territorial organization of politics, but overstated the case for an evolutionary sequence from the former to the latter. In earlier societies, he wrote, man fights for his kin, not his neighbors, but he neglected to state that they were often identical. According to Lowie (1948, pp. 10-11), Maine was wholly right in distinguishing the two principles of solidarity—kinship and coresidence—and he was also correct in stressing the predominance of kinship in simpler cultures, but he overemphasized the point. In predominately kinship states like the Iroquois, the local tie operated equally with kinship, and Iroquois society shows that a kinship group is fundamentally also a local group, and that both factors have been operative in the creation of a confederacy.

Morgan himself was aware of the localized character of much of Iroquois culture, and his description of the operation of the League indicated how certain matters were left to local autonomy. His materials were derived mainly from the Tonawanda Band of Seneca, whom he befriended in their efforts to recover a reservation sold from under their feet by the Seneca council at Buffalo Creek, and his knowledge of the Seneca Nation, by that time resident at Cattaraugus and Allegany, derived from conversations with Nicholson Parker, the United States interpreter, and from correspondence with Rev. Asher Wright. So far as I know, Morgan never visited Allegany. The Onondaga at Syracuse were better known to him, and he went to

Grand River collecting for the New York State Cabinet of Antiquities (Fenton, 1941). Perhaps, without his intention, his writings became generalized for all the Iroquois.

Morgan's intense interest and prodigious contribution to the study of kinship systems have all but obscured his own affirmation of Maine. The relation of kin to locality was sharply focused in Morgan's thinking: that clans arise from clans by a process of local segmentation, that clans were formerly associated with villages, and that clans lived together and tended to segregate their dead in burial grounds. Such were the questions which he addressed to Rev. Asher Wright and to which partial answers may be found in Morgan's writings (Stern, 1933; Morgan, 1878, 1881).

With a few notable exceptions, succeeding generations of anthropologists carried on studies of kinship and left community studies to the sociologists (Murdock, 1949, p. 79). My own interest in the organization of social groups on a local basis stems from several sources: from Sapir's sending me as a student to see Speck before going to the field, from a 2-year residence at Tonawanda while community worker for the United States Indian Service; from reading and teaching Linton's work (1936); from conversations with Steward (after joining the "Bureau") while writing for the Swanton volume (Fenton, 1940). Finally, the stimulus to attempt integration of the disciplines working on various aspects of the Iroquois problem came from a war-time experience of surveying foreign area-study programs in the universities (Fenton, 1947). There resulted four conferences on Iroquois Research,¹ held annually 1945-48 at Red House, N. Y., and by extension the present symposium, to which the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association devoted an afternoon session, New York City, November 17, 1949.

The Iroquois afford an opportunity to test the validity of the area-study approach to a culture which has local, tribal, and national levels.

¹The Proceedings of the Conference on Iroquois Research have been prepared by participants and edited by me for publication in mimeograph and distributed to members of the Conference. Proceedings of the First Conference (11 pp.) were issued at the Administration Building, Allegany State Park, Red House, N. Y., and are now out of print. Proceedings of the Second Conference (6 pp.) were issued by Smithsonian Institution, and notes appeared in the *American Anthropologist* (vol. 49, 1947, pp. 166-167) and in *American Antiquity* (vol. 12, 1947, p. 207). Proceedings of the Third Conference reached abundant proportions (24 pp.) and were issued for the Conference by the Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass., following on *Science* (December 5, 1947, pp. 539-540) and the above professional journals. By 1948 the group had shifted from informal discussion to presentation of research papers and formal reports of field and museum investigations; again *Science* (November 26, 1948, vol. 108, p. 611) carried a notice, and the Proceedings of the Fourth Conference, issued March 15, 1949, by the Smithsonian Institution, totaled 27 pages. (A limited number of copies of Proceedings 3-4 are available.) The meetings had reached such proportions and the topics so crowded the agenda of the Fourth Conference that it seemed advisable in 1949 to meet with all the anthropologists in New York and devote a full 2-hour seminar in Ethnology to formal papers written around the theme of local diversity.

Moreover, the long tradition of research in the Iroquoian field gives it rich materials for testing cultural historical depth. No ethnographic province in the Americas, indeed—if not the world—has a richer lode of published ethnological and historical literature than the Northeast, and the manuscript collections of historical materials bearing on the Iroquois alone in a number of libraries are rivaled only by the Hewitt papers in the Bureau of American Ethnology archives. These materials present no challenge to the timid nor is the Iroquois problem a restricted area of inquiry. He who essays the Iroquoian problem tackles the history of northeastern North America from discovery to the present, for the Six Nations crop up near the center of every national crisis down to 1840. Since 1851, when Morgan's *League* appeared, they have become a classic people to ethnology.

The study of the local basis of Iroquois culture and the local organization of Iroquois society has particular significance because the *League* is a kinship state. As opposed to a tradition of conquest states in Asia and Africa, in America north of the Rio Grande confederacies of related village bands prevailed. Quite the most famous of these, and justly so, was the democratic *League of the Five Iroquois Nations*, the so-called *United Nations of the Iroquois*. Its political history, in preparation (Fenton, 1949 b), shows how it grew out of what Franklin called a "League of ragged villagers." Founded as a confederation of then village chiefs, its symbolisms were projected from a basic joint-household type of kinship structure to the Longhouse that was the *League*. Yet the Longhouse as a symbol for the state exhibited and tolerated a certain amount of local diversity at each of its five fires. Tribal languages have survived for study; tribal councils had locally different methods of counseling and sent different-sized delegations to confederate councils; and ceremonialism was a local concern. As may be expected, local folkways prevailed within the general framework of pan-Iroquois culture.

As if to augment local diversity, during the seventeenth century the Longhouse incorporated Iroquoian-speaking Erie, Neutral, Huron, and Conestoga captives—the Seneca alone gaining two whole villages in their role as Keepers of the Western Door; and a century later came the Tuscarora as the Sixth Nation, Siouan-speaking Catawba captives, the entire Tutelo and Saponi Tribes, and parts of the Algonquian-speaking Delaware and Nanticoke. All these tribal cultures found shelter within the Longhouse, a home in Iroquoia, and were gradually assimilated.

But Iroquois culture is not entirely a thing of the past. Much of it survives for study. Just how vigorous is the present-day culture may be judged from the symposium papers. They are based on

functional field work in the present communities, a viewpoint that we owe to the late Professor Speck, who first suggested it.

As early as 1933 Speck observed to me that each of the Rio Grande Pueblos has a distinctive local culture and that anthropology had progressed in the Southwest only after prolonged concentration by ethnologists working separately in each community. Speck's own wide field experience, ranging from Labrador to the Southeast, which he brought over via Delaware to the study of Cayuga ceremonies at Sour Springs on Grand River (Speck, 1949), argued for community studies by ethnologists working independently on local Iroquois social organization and ceremonial life at each of the focal longhouse centers. While Speck continued at Sour Springs, I commenced among the Seneca, first at Allegany (Fenton, 1936), then at Tonawanda (1941). A wider range of field work became possible after coming to the Bureau in 1939.

Work with Hewitt's materials on the League of the Iroquois took me to Grand River, where for a number of seasons down to 1945, only partly interrupted by the war, I pursued such topics as ethnobotany, the ceremonial cycle at Onondaga Longhouse, music, and social and political organization, which entailed translating the Deganawidah epic of the founding of the League (Fenton, 1944), observing and describing its major institution, the Condolence Council (1946), and analyzing various mnemonic systems (Fenton and Hewitt, 1945, and Fenton, 1950).

Speck was responsible for directing a number of students to work in the area. John A. Noon spent the summer of 1941 on Six Nations Reserve exploring the law and government of the Grand River Iroquois (Noon, 1949). Noon selected law and politics to exemplify the process of cultural change, showing how the institutions of the Confederacy were adapted to the needs of local government in Canada. Another doctoral dissertation in the Iroquoian field at Pennsylvania was that of George S. Snyderman whose analysis of Iroquois warfare (1948) goes far beyond Hunt (1940) in supplementing economic determinism with an ethnohistorical perspective derived from field work among the Seneca.² Both E. S. Dodge, now director of the Peabody Museum at Salem, and John Witthoft, State anthropologist of Pennsylvania, were guided in their first Iroquoian field work by Professor Speck. Although Dodge is associated with northeastern Algonquian and Witthoft has worked most intensively on Cherokee, both have made important contributions, often in collaboration with Speck, to the ethnobiology of the eastern woodlands.

² A third doctoral dissertation thesis on the Warfare of the Iroquois and their northern neighbors by Raymond Scheele was submitted at Columbia in 1949.

Two additional community studies may be directly ascribed to the influence on Speck of the Conferences on Iroquois Research. Out of the first two meetings came definite recommendations as to future needs. One was for a study of the Tuscarora problem; another was for a community study of the Onondaga at Nedrow, N. Y. Aside from their implications for archeology, the Tuscarora, who were driven out of the Southeast in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and migrated north to join the League as the Sixth Nation, left a rich historical literature; they speak a divergent Iroquoian tongue, their society and politics resemble other Iroquois, and as second-class citizens of the League they present interesting problems of personality orientation. This problem Speck dumped in the lap of Anthony F. C. Wallace, son of a distinguished historical biographer, student of both Speck and Hallowell, and himself a historical biographer in his own right (Wallace, 1949). The Onondaga problem fell to Augustus F. Brown. Pennsylvania parties have spent two seasons now at Tuscarora, N. Y., and Onondaga.

Work among the Oneida of Wisconsin was begun under the aegis of the University of Wisconsin during WPA, in acculturation by Harry W. Basehart, and in linguistics by Lounsbury. Since the war Lounsbury has extended the analysis of Oneida to a study of comparative Iroquoian, conducting field work in 1948 at Onondaga, Tuscarora, and at Six Nations Reserve on Cayuga, adding another Yale Ph. D. to the roster of Iroquoianists.

Apropos of linguistics, the Conference stimulated the work of the Voegelins and W. D. Preston on Seneca language (Preston and Voegelin, 1949). At the Summer Linguistics Institute, University of Michigan, 1947, Seneca was the *pièce de resistance*, and the students of Prof. Zellig Harris at the University of Pennsylvania are at work on Onondaga and Cherokee in particular.

While Speck had students to direct into the Iroquoian field, the University of Pennsylvania shared the program with other universities, and many of the projects funneled through the Bureau of American Ethnology. Yale, Columbia, Indiana, and Toronto Universities have a stake in Iroquois studies.

Support has come from many sources—from participating institutions, but principally from the American Council of Learned Societies, The Viking Fund, Inc., and the American Philosophical Society. The latter two, by grants to me, have contributed heavily to the Iroquois Research Fund at the Smithsonian Institution.

No over-all grants have been requested to finance a total program. Rather, the Iroquois Conference has avoided formal organization, taking the line that research foundations follow the policy of making

grants to individual working scholars, and the Conference has informally agreed to mutually endorse the applications of its participants. Each scholar is responsible to his own institution, to the source of his research grants, and to himself to guarantee productive results. In this connection, members of the Conference have worked closely with the Committee on American Indian Linguistics, Ethnology, and Archaeology of the American Philosophical Society.

While grants to predoctoral or postdoctoral fellows in universities have predominated, support has been managed for the nonprofessional scholar without institutional connection. Examples are the study of music, the dance, and ethnohistory. In 1936, while resident community worker for the Indian Service at Tonawanda, I enlisted the cooperation of Martha Champian Huot,^{2a} then a graduate student at Columbia, to record Iroquois music. I rounded up the singers and took the texts; Mrs. Huot made the records. The Columbia collection of Iroquois records went to Indiana University with Prof. George Herzog and still awaits study. Mrs. Huot, however, in 1947 received a Viking grant and renewed an interest in Iroquois culture through intensive field work on acculturation in the Mohawk language (Huot, 1948) and personality development in children at Six Nations Reserve. She has meanwhile made an analysis of Iroquois folklore, using the Waugh collection. The problem of Iroquois music has carried over to studies of the dance, to which it belongs by association.

It is fortunate, indeed, that Iroquois studies can claim two trained students of the dance. During the war Philippa Pollenz made a field study of Seneca dances, working almost exclusively with Cattaraugus informants. Her report, submitted first as an essay for the degree of master of arts in anthropology at Columbia University, is now awaiting publication as a monograph of the American Ethnological Society. Ethnologists are quite ill-equipped ordinarily to describe dances as part of ceremonialism. The need for an adequate choreographic technique is quite as apparent as the need for musical annotation. Gertrude Prokosch Kurath brings to the work an expert knowledge of music and the dance, and her symposium paper combines the techniques and methods of both fields of study. Her field study and analysis of the Fenton records in the Library of Congress collections were supported by Viking grants and represent pioneering on new ground. She has worked intensively with Seneca at Allegany, thus complementing Pollenz' work at Cattaraugus, and at Six Nations Reserve with Onondaga and Cayuga informants.

Topical studies are somewhat the antithesis of community studies, but need not be. Neither the dance, music, nor personality study has as yet brought forth an over-all picture of the Cattaraugus Seneca, but ethnohistory has done better by the Allegany and Cornplanter

^{2a} Now Mrs. E. P. Randle.

Seneca. Ethnohistory is, in last analysis, a kind of ethnography plus documentary research. History, moreover, has a tradition of glorious amateurism. It is natural, I suppose, that the local scholar, who first comes to notice as a correspondent of the Bureau of American Ethnology, as a critical reader of Smithsonian publications, may be induced to take up ethnology seriously. He has usually been attracted by his reading to cultivate Indian neighbors who are living descendants of deceased heroes of history. It is a natural transition from the border warfare of the Pennsylvania frontier and from such heroes as Cornplanter and Blacksnake to collecting Seneca folklore and cultivating such characters as the late Windsor Pierce and Chauncey Johnny John. The banker or lawyer in the small city near an Indian reservation has unusual opportunities for following ethnology as a hobby and combining with reading and writing systematic interviews of Indians who call on him daily. Such has been the growth of interest in the case of Merle H. Deardorff, who contributes the paper on the historical beginnings of the Handsome Lake Religion at Cornplanter, which is situated close to Warren, Pa., where Mr. Deardorff has been sometime superintendent of schools and banker for many years.

Ethnological studies at Allegany have received further stimulus from Hon. Charles E. Congdon of Salamanca who, like L. H. Morgan of Rochester, came out of the law. For many years Indians have been among his clients; they are daily callers at his law offices; and, as part of the local scene, they fall within a range of interests which embraces the history, fauna, and flora of southwestern New York. It is to Mr. Congdon, chairman of the Allegany State Park Commission, that the Iroquois Conference owes its place of meeting annually at the Administration Building on Red House Lake. Every scholar who has worked at Allegany owes the Congdon family a debt of hospitality.

Viewed topically, the present symposium covers the land, language, society, personality, religion, and music. Every contribution starts from field work in a certain community; from there it moves out to comparative treatment of data from a second and third community; thence to generalized observations. We have avoided the temptation of overgeneralizing on single instances and insufficient data. To the extent that acute observations of local patterns of behavior may be observed to hold for several communities they may be considered pan-Iroquois culture norms. Thus the observation of Lawson for the eighteenth-century and Wallace for mid-twentieth-century Tuscarora that they evidently have no fear of high places is supported by the predilection of the Mohawk for work in "high steel," and structural steel working is virtually an Iroquois national monopoly. Yet the

method of science requires that until parallel studies are made of other Iroquois communities the study of personality in the Tuscarora community be not generalized for all the Iroquois. To the extent that this study is sound, of which it gives every evidence, Wallace can generalize from later field work and the results of parallel studies by Doris West at Cattaraugus, A. F. Brown at Onondaga, and M. C. Randle at Six Nations.

Similarly, Kurath's dance materials present every indication of being generalized behavior. In the case of songs and dances which are widely diffused and participated in by several Iroquois communities, the general culture patterns stand out in sharp relief while local differences are niceties of which the Iroquois are acutely aware and the observer comes only gradually to distinguish.

Concepts of land ownership seem to be widely diffused among the Iroquois and their neighbors. One is struck by an over-all familiarity with a common philosophy toward the land by all Eastern Indians, and the historical sources often fail to yield local distinctions no longer obtainable through field work. The changes in this philosophy owing to White contact have peculiar timeliness just now for assessing claims arising out of treaties. In fact, ethnohistory has already joined hands with the law and become a branch of applied anthropology, claiming the research time of several anthropologists.

Historical sources frequently deal with the Indians of a particular place at a given point of time. The village with its chief and council of old men is a recurring theme in Iroquois political mythology; and the chiefs of particular places who were the leaders of local village bands appear as signers of treaties. By constantly keeping locality in perspective and being on the alert for cultural differences that arise locally we can assess the documents and understand what happened in history. We shall see that people who lived together in a certain place, and were thereby related according to structural principles outlined below, retained an overriding sense of loyalty not shared for kinsmen who had moved away. And those who had left the long-house fireside to dwell outside its walls soon became kindred aliens. The time perspective for cultural history moves from the ethnological present to the historic past. Spatially, the method proceeds from the local community to tribe, nation, and confederacy. Recognizing that feuds and factions develop locally and are the frequent cause of band fission today, the same process can be seen at work in history to produce splinter movements and the dismemberment of kinship states.

Focal factors, on the other hand, are language, village agriculture, the mutual-aid work party, the projection of kinship patterns of solidarity to persons in other towns, tribes, and nations, implemented perhaps by ceremonial friendships, lacrosse leagues, intertribal political and religious councils, and the Condolence Council by which the

chiefs of one set of towns installed candidates in another set of towns, and the current exchange of Handsome Lake preachers.

We have included in this symposium two other papers: a joint account of the Feast of the Dead among two Grand River groups by Mrs. Kurath and myself, because it illustrates what kind of data the ethnologist can still collect among the Iroquois, and the paper illustrates a combination of ethnological reporting supplemented by transcription and analysis of recorded music and choreography; and a discussion of the status of Iroquois women in the past and present by Martha Champion Randle.

There's life in the Longhouse yet.

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