

MORTUARY PROGRAMMES OF THE EARLY ONTARIO IROQUOIANS

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Over the past few years, excavations and analyses of a number of sites and collections have increased our understanding of Early Ontario Iroquoian burial practices. Although this data base is still distressingly small and uneven, it has become apparent that neither of the generally recognized cultural constructs of the period (Glen Meyer and Pickering) can be characterized by a single, coherent mortuary programme. Rather, each small group of interacting communities apparently developed its own distinctive set of burial practices, responsive to the particular social, environmental and ideological factors affecting it. The absence of any overarching mortuary programme brings into question the integrity of the Glen Meyer and Pickering constructs, and the ability of either to mount the sort of concerted and sustained endeavour that is implied by J.V. Wright's conquest hypothesis.

INTRODUCTION

J.V. Wright (1990, 1992) has recently reaffirmed his belief in what has come to be known as the "conquest theory, which he initially proposed in 1966 to explain the extensive changes between the Early and Middle Ontario Iroquois stages (Wright 1966:40-41,53; Wright and Anderson 1969:78-79). Put briefly, at about 1300 AD the Pickering peoples of south-central and eastern Ontario are said to have conquered their Glen Meyer contemporaries in southwestern Ontario, absorbing the survivors to produce the following Uren horizon. Although Wright has presented a broad range of evidence in support of his hypothesis, I shall confine myself here to the data base with which I am most familiar, the burial practices of the Early Ontario Iroquoian peoples (for other critiques see Jamieson [1991], Pearce [1984:391-395], and Williamson [1990a:311-312]).

Wright (1992:12) has characterized Pickering burials as generally secondary, often occur-

ring in small ossuaries located within the village. He contrasts this pattern with that of the Glen Meyer people, who are said to have preferred burial practices which left no archaeological record, perhaps because they used scaffolds or had final burial well beyond the village confines. This distinction, however, is flawed in two respects. In terms of raw data, Wright has not considered a number of Early Ontario Iroquoian burials (Table 1), though to be fair, information on many of these was not readily available when he wrote his article. Even now, much of the information exists only in unpublished manuscripts and in reports locked away in the files of various government agencies.

On a more fundamental level, Wright has erred in approaching burial practices from a typological perspective. He characterizes burials in formal terms, viewing them as isolated features with a limited set of attributes (e.g., flexed versus bundle, single versus multiple), rather than as expressions of mortuary programmes which are complex and dynamic, responsive to a variety of social and economic factors (Binford 1971:6; Brown 1981: 31). These programmes, which include not only the patterned behaviour that a society displays in its treatment of the dead but also the concepts, values and social judgements conditioning that behaviour, underlie and constrain individual burials. If they are to be effective, then, intercultural comparisons should be structured in terms of these mortuary programmes, rather than the resulting burial forms. The reconstruction of mortuary programmes is not, however, a straightforward matter. It involves an additional level of inference, one beyond the relatively concrete evidence of the burials themselves. Comparisons based on these more hypothetical constructs will inevitably be more difficult.

One potential stumbling block is the difficulty in distinguishing between fundamental differences in mortuary programmes and mere

shifts in the attendant circumstances (Spence 1986:88). For example, among the Historic period Huron a person who died violently was left in the primary grave, rather than being exhumed for the final ossuary burial (Ramsden 1991:32; Trigger 1976:52). The Ball and Warminster sites, located near each other in Simcoe County and probably representing successive occupations of the same Huron community (Fitzgerald 1986), have both been extensively excavated. A total of fourteen burials, six of them adults, have been found to date in the Ball village (Knight and Melbye 1983; Dean Knight, personal communication 1993). In contrast, the only burial recorded within the confines of the later Warminster village is the joint interment of two infants in one of the longhouses (Kapches 1976:33). It is not clear whether this discrepancy is due to a reduction in the categories of people who were normally excluded from the ossuary, which would constitute an actual change in the mortuary programme, or whether it simply reflects (at least in the case of some of the adults) a decrease in the impact of warfare.

The question of ossuary burial is another example of this potential for confusion. Most archaeologists have defined ossuaries on the basis of their formal properties (number of included individuals and secondary nature of interments), rather than in terms of their role in the mortuary programme (e.g., Dodd et al. 1990:353; Johnston 1979:95; Mullen and Hoppa 1992:38 cf. Jackes 1988:140). While this is understandable, given the difficulty of interpreting mortuary programmes, it can lead to some uncertainty. For example, the appearance in a local archaeological sequence of burial pits containing a dozen or more disarticulated individuals might represent nothing more than a growth in size of the contributing community, leading to the inclusion of more individuals in an annual reburial ceremony. On the other hand, it could mark a fundamental change in the mortuary programme, perhaps a shift from a pattern of annual exhumation and joint reburial of the community's dead to a less frequent final burial ceremony, triggered by events like village relocation, the death of a leader, or a reformulation of inter-village alliances. The term "ossuary" is best reserved for the archaeological manifestation of the latter practice. The two may be difficult to distinguish, although one would expect more individuals and fewer articulations (or less evidence

of dismemberment) in true ossuaries, since much more time would have been allowed for the decomposition of soft tissue in the primary burials. Jackes (1988:140) adds the further stipulation that in ossuaries the remains of individuals are mixed, rather than deposited in discrete bundles.

To further confuse matters, there might also have been a transitional stage between annual reburial and ossuaries. Individual primary burials may have been exhumed for annual joint reburial, and later (perhaps with village relocation) these annual reburial features may have been exhumed for a joint final "ossuary" burial. This pattern would be very difficult to identify without extensive excavation of the community.

Deciphering these complex mortuary programmes and identifying the factors underlying them will require a comprehensive data base. To this end, brief outlines of the extant Early Ontario Iroquoian and early Middle Ontario Iroquoian burials are presented below (see also Table 1). Unfortunately, practical constraints preclude discussion of the numerous sites that have not produced burials (e.g., Fox 1976; Timmins 1992), although these must eventually be considered if mortuary programmes are to be properly situated in the economic and social cycles of their communities. The fact that burials are found in a variety of sites (e.g., villages, fishing camps, and specialized burial sites) gives some hint of the complexity of the task.

Reconstruction of these mortuary programmes requires a wide variety of observations. Some of these are gleaned from the literature on the seventeenth-century Huron and Neutral peoples, whose burial practices represent the culmination of long mortuary traditions that began at least as early as the Early Ontario Iroquoian expressions described below. Under normal circumstances both Huron and Neutral practices involved some form of primary disposal of the corpse near the time of death, followed at some later point by the exhumation of part or all of the primary burial and its transfer to a final secondary burial, which it generally shared with the selected remains of other exhumed primary burials (Ramsden 1990, 1991; Trigger 1976:51-54). The exhumation and reburial were tied to the settlement cycle and social life of the community, as well as to a specific ideology. Within this very general pattern there was, of course, a great deal

of localized variation. For example, secondary reburial features range from the large ossuaries of the Huron (some of which included several hundred individuals from a number of contributing villages and which were deliberately designed to obliterate any individual, lineage or clan distinctions [Kidd 1953; Ramsden 1990:174]), to considerably smaller features at some Neutral sites which may have been restricted to families (Kenyon 1982; Jackes 1988:139-141).

In any case, we cannot simply project our understanding of Historic period practises back into the past. Although some elements of Native ritual and ideology may indeed have considerable temporal depth (von Gernet 1992:137-138), change over time is inevitable. Thus, the presence of a similar practice or burial form in two different places or times need not mean that it arose from the same needs or performed the same function in both settings (Binford 1971:16). Each early Iroquoian community likely tailored its mortuary programme to suit its own particular mix of social, environmental, and ideological imperatives.

To unravel these complex programmes will require extensive excavation of communities and detailed analyses of the burials. A wide range of observations should be made with each burial (e.g., Saunders 1978). In the case of secondary burials, these should include:

(1) the number of individuals represented (in a secondary burial feature this would be, in part, a function of the size of the contributing community and the time elapsed since the previous reburial event);

(2) the age and sex structure (under-represented categories may indicate age- or gender-specific practices in the mortuary programme [e.g., Saunders and Spence 1986]);

(3) a comprehensive inventory of the skeletal elements of each individual present in the feature (the exhumation of primary burials sometimes involved fairly rigid guidelines on what should, or should not, be included in the secondary burial [Spence 1988]);

(4) detailed data on the degree of articulation among elements (this information can help in distinguishing exhumed primary from secondary burials, and in determining the time that had elapsed between the primary burial and the exhumation and reburial);

(5) cutmarks and other postmortem alterations (incompletely decomposed bodies were

often disarticulated and defleshed, when exhumed from the primary grave, to reduce them to bones and allow selection of elements for the reburial [Ramsden 1991; Spence 1988]. In southern Ontario an exposed corpse can decompose in a matter of months, while a subsurface burial may retain a considerable amount of soft tissue for several years);

(6) data on pathology and perimortem trauma (the health or particular physical qualities of individuals or their cause of death may affect their postmortem treatment [Ramsden 1991:32-33; von Gernet 1994:44-46]);

(7) season of interment (pollen or flotation analysis may allow determination of the season of burial. Reburial might have been timed to coincide with seasonally recurring events in the community cycle [e.g., Fox 1988]);

(8) metric and epigenetic characteristics of the individuals (it may be possible to identify and characterize the contributing population through the frequency and distribution of particular traits [Saunders 1978:49; Spence and Fox 1992:40]);

(9) the contexts of the burial features (the location of a burial with respect to the village palisade and house structures is particularly important. A reburial feature in a longhouse, for example, may have been reserved for extended family or lineage members, rather than open to people from the community as a whole).

Unfortunately, much of this information is not available for many of the burials outlined below. Political constraints, post-interment disturbances, and incomplete analysis and reporting have all contributed to gaps in the data. Readers wishing further details may consult the references listed for each site. For convenience the sites are organized under the traditional culture-chronological labels (Glen Meyer, Pickering and Uren), though these distinctions are now becoming more of a hindrance than a help to interpretation (Pearce 1984; Williamson 1990a, 1992). Glen Meyer and Pickering may represent artificially segregated points in a spatial continuum, and there appears to be some disagreement about the temporal border between the Early Ontario Iroquoian stage and Uren. Sites presently identified as late Glen Meyer or Pickering, such as Reid, Tara, Force and Bennett, would be considered Uren by some investigators (Wright 1992:12; Burse 1994).

For the more numerous Glen Meyer finds,

sites are organized by areas that may represent clusters of related communities, or the successive occupations of a single community (Williamson 1990a, 1992). Site locations are shown in Figure 1.

GLEN MEYER BURIALS

Dutton Area

Downham Nurseries (AeHi-29). Two concentrations of human bone were exposed by agricultural activities on a village site by the Thames River near Dutton (Mayer and Antone 1988). Linda Gibbs and the author examined the surface-collected bone. One feature included bones from at least one adult while the other had material from five distinct individuals: three adults, a child of 8-11 years, and a child of 3-6 years.

Caradoc Area

Roeland (AfHj-33). A primary adult burial was found in one of the houses of a late Glen Meyer palisaded year-round village (Williamson 1985:180).

Byron Area

London Ski Club (AfHi-78). The primary burial of an elderly female was exposed during land alteration at one of several Glen Meyer sites in the Byron area, near London (Pearce 1984:351).

Warbler Woods (AfHi-57). The primary burial of an adolescent of about 12-13 years was found at this site (Spence 1982). Although no settlement could be identified, Glen Meyer ceramics were found in the immediate vicinity. The Glen Meyer Dunn site is some 300 m to the west (Pearce 1984:139).

Praying Mantis (AfHi-178). This small palisaded village was fully excavated by Robert Pearce for the London Museum of Archaeology. Only two burials were found. One, near the palisade and beyond the house structures, was the primary burial of an adult female from which the long bones, cranium, mandible, and a few other elements had been exhumed. The other feature, which may have been inside a house (analysis has not yet been completed), contained the disarticulated elements of eight adults and subadults. They are represented for

the most part by long bones, crania and mandibles. One mandible has a number of drilled holes in the corpus. Only this mandible, one cranium, and one long bone bear cut marks (Spence 1994).

Boisclair (AfHh-28). Although a burial pit was completely destroyed in construction work at this spring-summer occupation site, a salvage effort directed by William Fox resulted in the recovery of most of the human bone. A preliminary analysis indicates the presence of at least six individuals: three adults, one young adult or adolescent, and two children. At least some of these were incomplete secondary burials. Several bones bear cut marks. Material from nearby pits produced radiocarbon dates of 950 B.P. \pm 80 and 645 B.P. \pm 75¹, the latter considered unacceptable (Fox 1983:3).

Norfolk Area

Elliott (AfHc-2). This is a palisaded inland village in the Norfolk sand plain (Fox 1988; Spence 1988). A large pit just inside the palisade produced a date of 760 B.P. \pm 80 and a deposit of human bone made sometime during the late winter or early spring. The deposit included the very incomplete and almost entirely disarticulated remains of one adult and three children. No crania and very few of the major long bones were present. Analysis of the elements and their distribution, and of the other pit contents, suggests that this was a discard location where primary burials exhumed from throughout the community were reduced and sorted, the major elements being withheld for final burial elsewhere while those considered to be of lesser importance were discarded in the pit.

Bruce Boyd (AdHc-4). Although primarily an Early Woodland site, the Bruce Boyd site near Long Point also has a minor but significant Glen Meyer occupation, probably related to the warm-season Glen Meyer fishing station on the knoll immediately to the north (Fox 1976: 169; Spence 1988). A few disturbed burials were found on the latter site, but little is known about them. Three Glen Meyer burials were excavated on the Bruce Boyd site, none of them within house structures. One held the incomplete remains of a single adult, another

¹All radiocarbon dates are presented in their uncalibrated form using the 1950 AD baseline.

Table 1. Early Ontario Iroquoian Burials

Site	No. of Burials	Location of Burials	No. of Individuals	Condition
Downham Nurseries	2	in village area	>1,5	unknown
Roeland	1	in house	1	primary
London Ski Club	1	in village area	1	primary
Warbler Woods	1	no settlement nearby	1	primary
Praying Mantis	2	1 at village edge 1 in house	1 8	exhumed primary secondary
Boisclair	1	in village area	6	secondary
Elliott	1	at village edge	4	discarded elements of exhumed burials
Bruce Boyd	3	in village area	1-5 in each	secondary
Stafford	1	in village area	2	secondary
(?) Reid	2	in house	5,7	secondary
Force	2	1 in house 1 in village area	1 8	unknown secondary
Rogers	1	unknown	>28	secondary (ossuary)
Zamboni	several	no settlement nearby	1-5 in each	secondary
Macallan	1	in village area	2	secondary (?)
Winona Rock-shelter	1	no settlement nearby	4	secondary
Chedoke Falls	1	near settlement	unknown	unknown
Tara	4	1 in house 2 in village, outside houses 1 in village, outside houses	1 2,4 7	primary discarded elements of exhumed burials secondary
Bennett	13	most in houses	1-2 in each	10 primary, 3 secondary or exhumed
Miller	7	1 in house 5 outside houses 1 beyond village	1 3-4 in each 13	exhumed primary secondary or exhumed 1 primary, 12 secondary
Serpent Pits	3	no settlement nearby	15-29 in each	secondary
Richardson	2	in house	1,5	secondary
(?) Reid-Cummins	1	no settlement nearby	>10	secondary

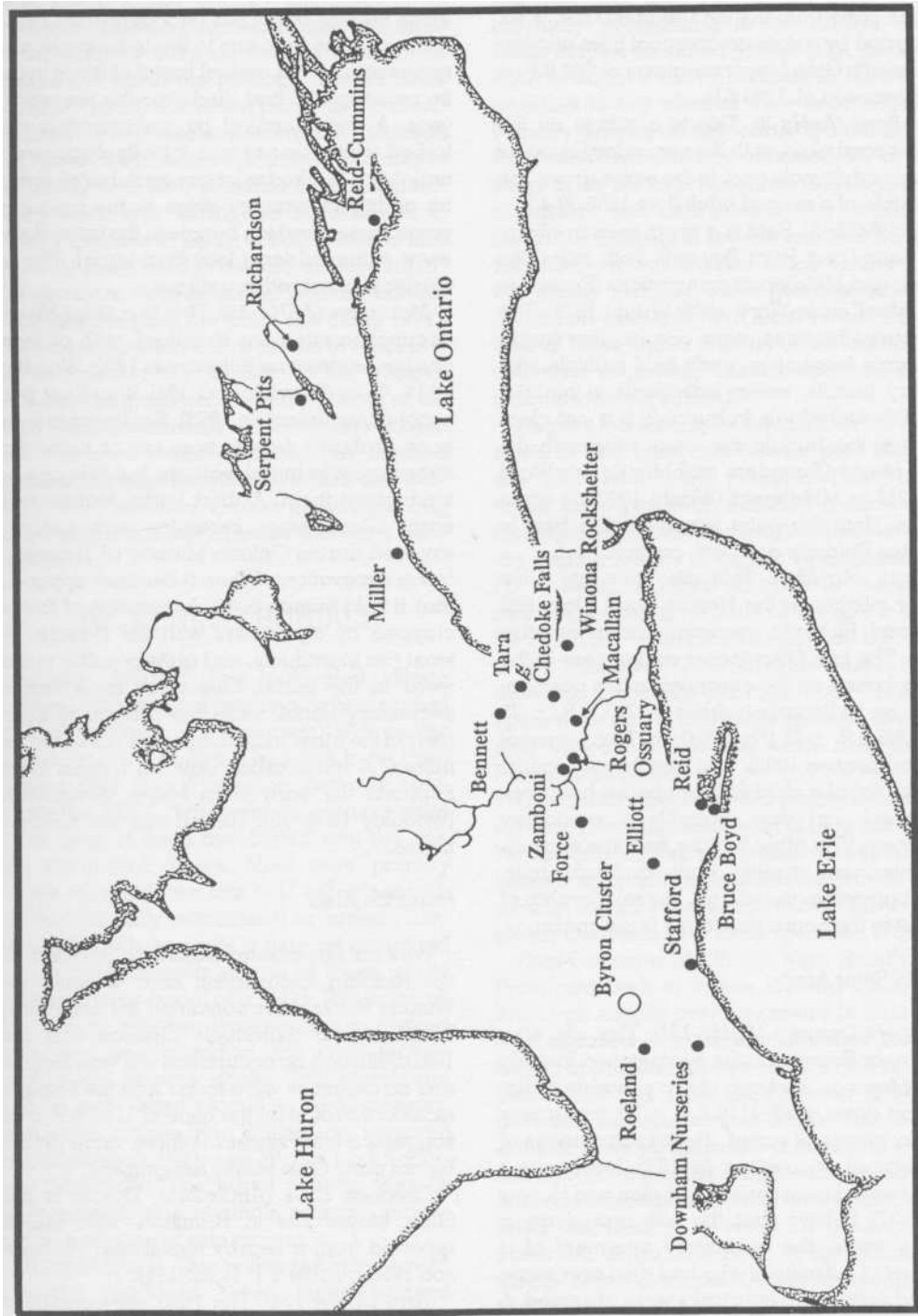


Figure 1. Early Ontario Iroquoian Components with Burials

the secondary burial of two adults. The third feature was a multiple secondary burial of five individuals: two adults, a youth, a child and an infant. All but the infant showed some degree of articulation, but none were complete or fully articulated. There is a radiocarbon date on human bone from the feature of 900 B.P. \pm 60, supported by a date on charcoal from another feature with Glen Meyer ceramics of 860 B.P. 65 (Spence et al. 1981:61).

Stafford (AeHg-3). This is a village on the Norfolk sand plain, with the secondary burial of a single adult male and, in the same grave, the mandible of a second adult (Lee 1958:39-40).

Reid (AdHc-5). Reid is a warm season village site near Long Point Bay with both late Glen Meyer and Middleport occupations (Saunders and MacKenzie-Ward 1988; Wright 1978). The two burial features, near one another inside the same longhouse, each held multiple secondary burials, seven individuals in burial 1 and five individuals in burial 2. It is not clear whether the burials are associated with the Glen Meyer (Saunders and MacKenzie-Ward 1988:21) or Middleport (Wright 1992:12) occupation. Until this point is settled, it is best to treat the Reid site data with caution.

Force (AgHd-1). This site is a late Glen Meyer village on the Norfolk sand plain (Bill Fox and El Molto, personal communication 1993). The late Glen Meyer assignment of the site is based on the ceramics and is corroborated by radiocarbon dates of 715 B.P. \pm 75 and 705 B.P. \pm 75 (Fox 1980; Bill Fox, personal communication 1993). Two burials were found. The burial of a child in a longhouse had been disturbed, but was probably a secondary interment. The other feature held the secondary interment of eight adults and subadults. Although within the village, the relationship of this pit to the house structures is not known.

Grand River Area

Rogers Ossuary (AgHb-131). This site, situated near Brantford, can be assigned to early Glen Meyer on the basis of two separate radiocarbon dates, both 1110 B.P. \pm 60, and a very low incidence of caries. The circumstances of its original excavation in 1935 leave many unanswered questions, but Mullen and Hoppa (1992:37) believe that the site represents a single event, the secondary interment of a number of individuals who had died over some period of time. No cut marks were observed. A

count of the extant femora gives a minimum population of 28 individuals, although Wilfrid Jury is reported to have removed another 19 femora from the pit.

Zamboni (AgHb-144). This early Glen Meyer cemetery in Brantford includes a number of warm season burial pits (Woodley et al. 1992). Each contains from one to five individuals, and may represent the annual burial of those in the community who had died over the preceding year. A larger central pit, unfortunately disturbed when the site was initially discovered, may have marked a longer-term burial event, an additional ossuary stage in the mortuary programme, in which burials in the annual pits were exhumed for a joint final burial. The pit cluster was not within a village.

Macallan (AgHa-59). This is a Glen Meyer occupation site near Brantford, with at least one house structure (Glencross 1992; Woodley 1994; Gary Warrick and Phil Woodley, personal communication 1993). Scattered human bone probably derives from two or more disturbed multiple burial features, but little can be said about them. A third burial feature with early Glen Meyer ceramics was partially exposed during Ontario Ministry of Transportation excavations. When it became apparent that it held human bone, excavation of the pit stopped by agreement with Six Nations. At least two individuals, and quite possibly more, were in the burial. One adult male was a secondary burial, while the method of interment of the other individual could not be determined. A radiocarbon date on human bone supports the early Glen Meyer assignment (Woodley 1994:15). The pit was not inside a house.

Hamilton Area

Winona Rockshelter (AhGv-3). Situated on the Niagara Escarpment near Winona, the Winona Rockshelter contained the secondary burial of four individuals (Spence and Fox 1992). Although no occupation site was located and no ceramics were found with the burial, a radiocarbon date on the bone of 1190 B.P. \pm 60 suggests a late Princess Point or, more probably, an early Glen Meyer assignment.

Chedoke Falls (AhGx-265). This is a late Glen Meyer site in Hamilton, with burials reported from a nearby rockshelter (Williamson 1990a: Table 9-1; 1990b:116).

Tara (AiGw-124). The Tara site consists of

two overlapping thirteenth century villages in Burlington (Burse 1994; Gibbs 1990; Lang 1991; Warrick 1992; Gary Warrick, personal communication 1993). The burials are apparently associated with the earlier eastern village. Burial 2, the primary interment of an adult, was inside a longhouse. The other three burial features were all located outside the houses but within the palisade. Two of these (burials 1 and 3) contained primarily the disarticulated lesser skeletal elements (unfused epiphyses, teeth, ribs, vertebrae, and bones of the hands and feet) of adults and subadults. There were four individuals represented in burial 1 and two in burial 3. Both features had probably been used to discard the less important elements from exhumed primary burials, much like the pit at the Elliott site (Lang 1991). Burial 4, on the other hand, seems to represent the complementary aspect of the village's mortuary programme, the joint reburial of the larger skeletal elements selected and retained from exhumed primary burials. The bundled remains of seven individuals, adults and sub-adults, were included. Crania, mandibles, long bones, and a number of lesser elements were present.

PICKERING BURIALS

Bennett (AiGx-1). This palisaded village northeast of Hamilton was originally identified by Wright (Wright and Anderson 1969) as late Pickering, but is believed by some to be Uren (Burse 1994; Ron Williamson, personal communication 1993). Thirteen burial features were found, nine of them associated with the one fully excavated house. Most were primary burials, although two pits held either secondary (but partially articulated) or primary dismembered adults, while a third pit contained the missing elements of one of these adults and the bundle burial of a child. This latter pit was one of only two features that contained more than one individual, the other feature holding two primary adults. Two burials appear to have been placed in semi-subterranean sweat lodges (Ron Williamson, personal communication 1994; see Wright and Anderson 1969:22-23). The burial pattern, then, is predominantly one of single primary burials, with no evidence of exhumation.

Miller (AIGs-1). This palisaded village near Pickering produced seven burial features

(Kenyon 1968; Ossenberg 1969). One, the exhumed grave of a primary interment, was in a house. Five other graves were outside the houses and near (either just within or just outside) the palisade. These are complex features, and their role in the community's mortuary programme is not always clear. Some may be exhumed graves (e.g., the lower layer of burial 3 and all of burial 6), but it is not possible to say whether they were originally primary graves, or secondary annual burials that were then partially exhumed for a third stage in the burial procedures. Others may be secondary and final burials (e.g., burial 2). Burial 1 is different in several respects from all the others. It was located much further from the village, included some grave goods, and contained elements of at least 13 individuals. One of these was a primary infant burial. The rest were secondary burials, although some articulations were noted.

Serpent Pits (BbGm-2). Situated on the north shore of Rice Lake, near the Serpent Mounds site (Anderson 1968; Johnston 1968, 1979), these three pits each included a number of incomplete and totally disarticulated secondary burials, largely of adults: 15 individuals in Pit 1, 29 in Pit 2 and 25 in Pit 3. There are radiocarbon dates on bone of 905 B.P. \pm 60 for Pit 1, 510 B.P. \pm 60 for Pit 2, and 660 B.P. \pm 60 for Pit 3. Johnston (1979:93) rejects the 510 B.P. date and places the pits in the 1000 - 1300 AD span, while noting that some ceramic features may indicate a relatively early date in the Pickering sequence.

Richardson (BbG1-3). At a palisaded village in Percy Township, southeast of Rice Lake, two burials were located in a house: the secondary burial of a partially articulated adult male and, nearby, the joint secondary burial of five completely disarticulated adults (Pearce 1978).

Reid-Cummins (AJGh-62). Near Sandbanks Provincial Park in Prince Edward County, a burial pit slightly over one metre in diameter was exposed in quarrying activities that affected approximately two-thirds of the feature (Molto and Fox 1988; Bill Fox and El Molto, personal communication 1993). The extant skeletal material indicates a minimum of ten individuals, including adults and subadults and representatives of both sexes. An articulated segment of a vertebral column was observed *in situ*, and none of the extant elements bear cut marks. Given the number of individuals and the small size of the feature, it

seems most likely that the feature held a multiple secondary burial (Bill Fox, personal communication 1993). No cultural material was directly associated, but an early Pickering fishing camp lies 50 m to the south. However, the patterns of dental pathology and cranial morphology suggest a somewhat later date, perhaps in the 1250-1500 AD span (Molto and Fox 1988).

UREN BURIALS

Klassen (AdHd-6). Located on the Norfolk sand plain, near the Lake Erie shore, this site produced surface evidence of the presence of burials (Dodd et al. 1990:354).

Port Royal (AdHd-4). Situated near Klassen, this site had two multiple secondary burials (Dodd et al. 1990:353-354; Fox 1976:170). One was at the site, with two individuals, while the other, with four individuals, was located on the other side of the creek.

Uren (AfHd-3). Situated further inland on the Norfolk sand plain, Uren was a major village (Jamieson 1978; Wright 1986:16-21). Three pits inside houses each contained a few lesser elements (phalanges, patellae, teeth, etc.), and are probably primary burial pits from which bones had been exhumed for secondary reburial. Three others contained only a single tooth each, perhaps also representing exhumed primary burials or merely teeth lost through age or disease. Several other pits, both in and outside longhouses, each held one or a few major bones. Their role in the burial programme is not clear, although Jamieson (1978) raises the possibility of prisoner sacrifice. One pit in a longhouse held the incomplete and largely disarticulated remains of an adult female, a teen-age male, and a child of about 12 years. The major elements were well represented, the minor ones less so. Jamieson (1978) and M. Wright (1986:18-19) suggest that this feature may represent the secondary burial of three individuals who, for reasons of age or cause of death, may have been excluded from final ossuary burial with the other members of the community. However, no evidence of an ossuary has been found.

Bonisteel (AfGu-2). This site is located on the north shore of Lake Erie, near Port Colborne (Cybulski 1976; Spence 1989). One burial pit held the remains of a child of 9-11 years, but the circumstances of its discovery make it

impossible to determine whether the burial was primary or secondary. A second feature contained the incomplete remains of three individuals: an adult male, a child of about 7 years, and an infant of 6-9 months. Each was represented by a mixture of major and lesser elements. Although three of the adult thoracic vertebrae were still articulated, the sacrum had been pierced for suspension.

Myers Road (AiHb-13). Located at Cambridge, this village was fully excavated by Archaeological Services Inc. (Ramsden et al. 1992). There appears to have been a discontinuous occupation throughout the Uren and into the Middleport period. Five burials were found, all inside longhouses. Three of these were from separate features in the east end of House 1, and probably date to the Uren period: a secondary adult, a primary adult, and a primary child burial. In House 7, a Uren structure, the articulated lower right leg of an adult was found in a feature, probably representing an exhumed primary burial. The primary burial of an infant was recovered from a Middleport longhouse.

Olmstead (AhGx-32). This village was occupied from terminal Glen Myer through Uren (Welsh and Williamson 1994; Ron Williamson, personal communication 1993). A burial feature just outside the palisade, disturbed prior to archaeological excavation, produced elements of at least two individuals, an adult and an infant. Post-interment disturbance makes it impossible to say whether the burial was originally primary or secondary.

Tabor Hill (AkGt-5). At this site in Toronto, two associated ossuaries produced a minimum of 213 individuals (Churcher and Kenyon 1960). The assignment of the ossuaries to Uren is based on the fact that Thompson, a Uren site two kilometres away, is the nearest known village. This dating is dubious in the absence of any supporting evidence (Dodd et al. 1990: 353).

DISCUSSION

The data outlined above are unfortunately very uneven in quality, ranging from a vague reference to the presence of burials at or near a site (e.g., Chedoke Falls) to detailed published descriptions with osteological analysis (e.g., Bennett). In many cases there is too little information to even attempt reconstruction of

the underlying mortuary programme. Despite their limitations, however, these data do demonstrate that there was considerable variation in Early Ontario Iroquoian mortuary programmes (Mullen and Hoppa 1992:38; Spence and Fox 1992:40; Woodley et al. 1992).

One Glen Meyer pattern, suggested for the Norfolk sand plain area, is tied to the rhythm of the annual settlement-subsistence cycle of the community (Fox 1976, 1988; Spence 1988). The evidence for this mortuary programme derives largely from the Elliott and Bruce Boyd sites. At the time of death each individual was given a separate primary interment. The absence of primary burial pits at some of the major inland Glen Meyer sites (i.e., Porteous, DeWaele, and Elliott) suggests that scaffold burial or some other form may have been used (Wright 1992: 12). Then, in the warm season, when the community moved to settlements along the north shore of Lake Erie, these burials were exhumed and a selection of the remains, emphasizing crania and the larger elements of the postcranial skeleton, were put aside for joint reburial. Those elements considered inconsequential (or perhaps simply overlooked) were left in the primary burial feature, discarded in refuse pits, or scattered on the surface or in middens (Spence 1988).

The final burial pit for the retained elements would thus include the incomplete remains of most or all of those in the community who had died over the preceding year. Given that some northern horticulturalists have a crude annual death rate of about forty per thousand (Pfeiffer 1983:10; Spence 1988:15; Ubelaker 1978:96), some two to ten individuals might be expected in such a feature. A number of elements would still be in articulation since there would have been only a year, at most, of decomposition. If there were few or no articulated elements, some evidence of forceful disarticulation in the form of cut marks on the bones might be expected. As noted above, crania and the major postcranial bones would be common while lesser elements like the bones of the hands and feet, ribs and vertebrae would be under-represented. These annual reburial pits would not have been located inside the house structures, since they would normally have drawn on the residents of more than one house. Although some reburial features were apparently located in the main village, as at the Force site, others are associated with the warm season lakeshore settlements (Fox 1976;

Spence 1988). The Reid site burials may seem to contradict this pattern (Saunders and MacKenzie-Ward 1988:23), but their temporal assignment is uncertain.

A similar mortuary programme can be traced back into the Middle Woodland period in some areas (Spence 1986). It may also have characterized the earlier Princess Point occupation along the north Lake Erie shore, if the two multiple burial pits at the Varden site on Long Point were indeed associated with the Princess Point component there (Molto 1983). The persistence of this pattern into the Middle Ontario Iroquoian stage in the area may be indicated by the Uren, Port Royal and Bonisteel burials.

The burials at the Elliott, Bruce Boyd, Tara, and perhaps Force and Boisclair sites seem to fit this pattern of annual exhumation and joint reburial of the community dead. However, it was not characteristic of all of the Early Ontario Iroquoian occupations of southwestern Ontario. Preliminary analysis of the Praying Mantis data suggests a pattern of longhouse, rather than community, secondary burial, and perhaps a longer spacing between reburial episodes than merely a year. The enigmatic Reid site burials may also indicate that the longhouse group took precedence over the community in some cases, if they are indeed Glen Meyer features.

In the Grand River area the Rogers Ossuary, and perhaps the Zamboni and Macellan sites (Woodley 1994:22), would seem to represent still another tradition. This area may have witnessed a relatively early development of ossuary burial, with the final collective interment locked into a longer cycle than the annual one which dominated the Norfolk sand plain settlements (Mullen and Hoppa 1992:37). It may also have included most or all of those in the community who had died since the previous episode, instead of focusing on one particular social unit. None of these features was inside a longhouse, and at least Zamboni was apparently well removed from any settlement.

Pickering mortuary patterns are even more difficult to assess. The initial burial is often in the house, as at Miller and Bennett (and some Glen Meyer sites). However Bennett, with its pattern of predominantly single in-house primary burials, is anomalous among Early Ontario Iroquoian sites. Bursey (1994) believes that Bennett is actually a Uren site. The associ-

ation of two Bennett burials with sweat lodges is a Middle Ontario Iroquoian trait (Ron Williamson, personal communication 1994). It is possible that the Bennett people had adopted the practice of final ossuary burial at the time of village relocation, but had been forced by some unexpected occurrence to forgo their usual exhumation and reburial ceremony.

Miller, further to the east and somewhat earlier, is complex. There is some evidence to suggest annual reburial but it is possible that an ossuary stage, perhaps tied to village movement, had been added to the mortuary programme. Burial 1, with at least 13 individuals, might represent this third stage, although it could also be the annual burial for a year of unusually high mortality. In this one respect, Miller seems to resemble Zamboni more closely than it does other Pickering sites, although neither Miller nor Zamboni are particularly well understood.

The Serpent Pits are probably ossuaries, village relocation reburial features, to judge by the number of individuals in each and the absence of any articulated elements. Jamieson (1991:5,7) suggests that they represent influences from the Middle Atlantic coast. However, the Pickering people of the area may have simply continued a local tradition of periodic mass reburial that extended back into the Middle Woodland period (Spence et al. 1984:137). Serpent Mounds Mound E, Cameron's Point Mound C and the Le Vesconte mound were probably mass reburial events. The Preston Mound and mounds G and I of the Serpent Mounds site, each containing a mixture of numerous and largely disarticulated individuals, may represent a late Middle Woodland continuation of this pattern (Spence et al. 1990:165).

At first glance, the larger Richardson site burial pit appears to be similar to the annual community reburial pits discussed above. It is, however, located inside a house structure, suggesting that the five individuals buried in it (and the one secondary burial from a nearby pit) may have been residents of the house, rather than of the village as a whole. Richardson seems to be similar in this respect to the distant Reid, Praying Mantis, and Uren sites, which also had multiple secondary in-house burial pits.

CONCLUSIONS

Death in Early Iroquoian communities, as in all societies, must have been an erratic event, occurring unpredictably and usually striking only one person at a time. It would not have offered an opportune venue for wider social statements. Thus the primary burial, which took place at or near the time of death, probably involved only a limited participation by the broader social network of the deceased. Wider participation, and the expression of social and political concerns that underlay it, was deferred to a more appropriate occasion, at which time some or all of the primary burials were exhumed and redeposited together in a secondary burial. Apparently the timing of that occasion and the breadth of participation varied considerably (Mullen and Hoppa 1992:38; Spence and Fox 1992:40), echoing the variability noted in Early Ontario Iroquoian material culture and settlement patterns (Williamson 1990a; Wright 1986:66-67). In some cases it may have taken place once a year, responsive to the annual disruption in community life that occurred with the warm-season dispersal from the main village. In others, perhaps with more sedentary communities, it coincided with the shift in village location, an event that occurred only once every decade or so but which must have become the major point of dislocation in the community cycle. In some cases the reburial event was restricted to members of a single longhouse group, while in others the effective social context of the deceased may have been the village as a whole. It is even possible that more than one community, or a particular social group represented in more than one community, may have been involved.

Mortuary programmes also changed over time, adding a further level of complexity to their analysis. As villages became more sedentary and more committed to an agricultural subsistence base, the mortuary cycle may have lengthened because the major disruption in the social life of the community shifted from an annual event to a more widely spaced one, the periodic relocation of the village. Also, the primary social context of the individual may have changed from the longhouse to the village as a whole, although the longhouse or some larger segment of the village may later have regained priority with the development of

cross-cutting, pan-residential institutions (Williamson 1992:28). As Chapdelaine (1993) has demonstrated, these changes did not occur regularly nor at a uniform pace through-out the Iroquoian area.

Wright (1992:12) attempted to enlist mortuary practices in support of his contrast between Glen Meyer and Pickering. However, the data reveal that no uniform set of practices characterized either "culture". Rather, each local group of interacting communities tailored its burial practices to fit its own particular circumstances. The absence of a single, coherent mortuary programme in either Glen Meyer or Pickering raises doubts about their social integrity. If we accept the principle that burial practices reflect the operation of social factors, and indeed play a major role in defining and mobilizing social networks, we must then question the plausibility of these larger cultural constructs and the potential for their collective action that is implicit in the conquest hypothesis (see Wright 1990:498). It is recognized that Wright's characterization of these constructs and their interactions embraces a much broader range of evidence than just mortuary behaviour, which in fact plays rather a minor part in his theory. Nevertheless, Ontario Iroquoians seem generally to have assigned burial practices a key role in sociopolitical integration. The absence of any overarching mortuary programme, then, brings into question the cohesiveness and effectiveness, if not the reality, of these constructs. If Early Ontario Iroquoians were organized into sociopolitical units that extended beyond the village, these would more likely have been at a smaller scale; the Grand River and Norfolk sand plain clusters may be cases in point.

The data described above offer some tantalizing hints on these topics, but to date many of the distinctions stressed here have not been readily apparent in the archaeological record. More burials, described in more detail (and the full analysis and publication of extant burials), are required. Given the current political constraints on the excavation and analysis of burials (e.g., Woodley 1994:9,14), it is not clear that we will ever achieve the data base necessary to resolve these questions. Compounding this uncertainty is the fact that a well-described corpus of data in any one area or time period will not necessarily inform us even about contemporaneous sites in adjacent areas, given the highly localized orientation of most

Early Ontario Iroquoian mortuary programmes.

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