

JAMES F. PENDERGAST
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Other Ideas on

"The Ontario Iroquois Controversy"

F. Ridley (1963) in his paper "*The Ontario Iroquois Controversy*" refuted an hypothesis advanced by Trigger (1962) and sought "to acquaint the reader with a sound approach to Iroquoian development and progression in Ontario . . ." He left no doubt that in his opinion similar efforts by others are unsound ; even diabolically unsound by intent.

Readers were asked to support the author's views on the inferred or stated assurance that his interpretation of the evidence is *the* correct interpretation practically to the exclusion of all others. This appears to be the real core of what Ridley has dubbed "*The Ontario Iroquoian Controversy*". In effect he is no longer prepared to let competent scholars weigh the evidence for themselves, draw their own conclusions, and deliver their hypothesis for acceptance or rejection by "la grande famille" of Iroquois archaeologists on its merits. They are now expected to accept the author's views. Those who perversely persist to draw their own conclusions are alleged to be the cause of the dispute which he claims to be "embarrassing to the profession and the viewing public" alike.

It is difficult to comprehend how an honest difference of opinion held without rancour can be denigrated to the level of an dispute. Surely as long as Ontario Iroquois archaeologists are forced to draw conclusions, from what is largely circumstantial evidence using deductive reasoning, there are bound to be divergent opinions. Because there will seldom be absolute proof in favour of one side or the other it is likely that opinions will continue to be graded in degrees of credibility. This need not be an unacceptable situation so long as a reasonably amicable, unemotional, objective atmosphere prevails to foster dialogue between groups with divergent opinions; for it is likely that as new evidence appears these differences will undergo a synthesis resulting in conclusions probably more valid than the original. Actions, intentional or otherwise, which weaken or destroy such an atmosphere are a retrograde step. It is then that differences of opinion may sink to the level of a dispute and become embarrassing. It is then that emotion is likely to replace objective reasoning and become the principal ingredient of monologues seeking to rationalize a point of view but seldom presenting conclusions which represent the best possible use of the evidence available or the brain power which can be brought to bear on the problem. This point is approached when an individual claims to possess the whole truth and suggests that the "vast resources" of learned institutions have diabolically distorted matters to thwart him.

In the belief that we still enjoy a climate conducive of the constructive exchange of differing opinions without being accused, or even suspected, of any ulterior motive, I take this opportunity to differ with Ridley on three points:

1. His suggestion that he considers the "Onondaga culture to be an offshoot from the Lalonde culture" (Ridley, 1963, p. 51).
2. That the Crystal Rock site is late in the prehistoric Iroquois sequence (*Ibid.*, p. 59).
3. That the Waupoos site is later than Roebuck (*Ibid.*, p. 59).

In support of his contention that Lalonds is the antecedent of the Onondaga Ridley (1952a, p. 205) states he is inclined "to consider this pot style (Lalonde High Collar) to be the ancestor of the later Mohawk, Onondaga, and Susquehannock collared vessel." He has held this opinion for the past thirteen or more years (Witthoft, 1951, p. 317; Ridley, 1952a, p. 203, 205; 1952b, p. 13; 1958, p. 143; 1963, p. 51, 58). Witthoft (1951, p. 317) records his opinion of Ridley's proposal stating that "it is impossible to equate Lalonde with our concepts of Onondaga history . . ." Emerson and Popham (1952, p. 162) have said they "do not find themselves in agreement with Ridley's inclination to consider the Lalonde diagnostic high-collar ware to be the ancestor of the late Mohawk, Onondaga and Susquehannock collared vessel. Subsequent to these objections additional data (Emerson, 1960, 1961; Pendergast, 1962, 1963, *in press* 1, 2) have become available which makes it possible to examine Ridley's proposal in greater detail.

Published data (*op. cit.*) indicates that the greatest known concentration of sites which produce Lalonde High Collar pottery lie in the general area between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. On some of these sites the incidence of Lalonde High collar sherds is high; on the Lalonde site it represents 47% of the pottery sample (Emerson and Popham, 1952, p. 162) while on another site on Lot 20, Concession 12, Innisfil Township, Simcoe County, it represents 68% of the pottery (*Ibid.*, p. 163). It follows that should Ridley's suggestion be correct there is likely to be a geographical distribution of Lalonde High Collar sherds from this center southeastwards through the intervening area to the Onondaga areas in eastern Ontario, southern Quebec, Vermont, and northern New York State.

At present four sites have been excavated in the intervening area on the axis of the Trent River. Named in sequence from northwest to southeast, that is proceeding from Huronia towards the Onondaga areas, they are: Benson (Emerson, 1954, p. 203), Hardrock (Emerson, 1954, p. 185), Payne (Emerson, 1960; Pendergast, 1963) and Waupoos (Pendergast, *in press* 2).

Benson is a contact site which, by an interpretation of Emerson's data (1954, p. 203), has no Lalonde High Collar sherds. Hardrock is a prehistoric site where, again by an interpretation of Emerson's data (*Ibid.*, p. 185), 6% of the rim sherds are Lalonde High Collar and 7% of the castellations are the nubbin type frequently found on Lalonde High Collar sherds. Payne, a prehistoric site, produced three Lalonde High Collar sherds; two in a sample of 259 rim sherds representing 0.8% of the rims (Emerson, 1960) and one in a sample of 350 rim sherds representing 0.3% of the rims (Pendergast, 1963, p. 11). There are no Lalonde High Collar sherds in the pottery sample from the Waupoos site (Pendergast, *in press* 2).

The Iroquois sites in eastern Ontario (for this purpose defined as the area east of the Pre-Cambrian Frontenac Axis), southern Quebec,

and Vermont can be characterized by the abundance of high collared pottery typed by MacNeish (1952) as Durfee Underlined, Chance Incised, Onondaga Triangular, Cayadutta Incised, Swarthout Dentate, Lanoraie Mixed and Otstungo Incised. Documented sites possessing this characteristic are Roebuck (Wintemberg, 1936); Crystal Rock (Pendergast, 1962); Salem, Grays Creek, and Beckstead (Pendergast, *in press 1*). An additional ten large and four small sites are known in eastern Ontario and southern Quebec (Pendergast, 1964) which give every indication of being closely related to the documented sites mentioned. They include the early Iroquois site at Lanoraie and the historic Hochelaga site in Montreal. As such they probably span a large portion of Onondaga history. It is reasonable to expect that if the Lalonde High Collar pottery type is as significant to the development of the Onondaga as Ridley claims, it should appear on at least one of these sites particularly in view of the time span involved. However none produced Lalonde or Susquehannock High Collar sherds. Parenthetically, it should be explained that the sites in eastern Ontario and southern Quebec mentioned, with reservations exemplified by the Roebuck site, can be considered local variants of Onondaga because their pottery types are identical to those which predominate on known or accepted Onondaga sites in northern New York State. Skinner (1921, p. 141), Witthoft (1951, p. 316), and MacNeish (1952, p. 58) support this proposal.

Thus on this reasoning it appears that, contrary to Ridley's suggestion, there is no *evidence* to suggest the Lalonde High Collar pottery type had any influence on the development of Onondaga pottery types. In fact the frequency of the Lalonde High Collar appears to decrease as one moves southeastward away from Huronia where it is a major pottery type.

On the other hand the presence of Onondaga-Oneida pottery on Iroquois sites along the Trent River axis, the Humber River axis, and in Huronia is of interest. Tracing its prevalence on sites in a reciprocal direction to that involved in Ridley's thesis, i.e., from southeast to northwest as opposed to northwest to southeast, may serve to indicate the influence of the Onondaga-Oneida and other Confederacy Iroquois on the Ontario Iroquois on the Trent and Humber river axis and in Huronia.

The Waupoos site near Picton, Prince Edward County, on the Trent River axis is geographically closest to the Onondaga-Oneida area. There the Onondaga-Oneida pottery types, as defined by MacNeish (1952), amount to 23% of the rim sherd sample (Pendergast, *in press 2*). In addition 24% of the pottery is Mohawk and 0.5% is Seneca. At Payne, not far distant from Waupoos, Onondaga-Oneida pottery types amount to 7% of the combined 1950-52 and 1958 samples (Pendergast, 1963; Emerson, 1960). In addition 4% is Seneca, 1% Mohawk, and 0.2% Cayuga. At Hardrock no Onondaga-Oneida sherds appear but "Check-stamp body decoration, cornice-like rims on many pots, and handles on a few appear to reflect Roebuck tendencies" (Emerson, 1954, p. 186). An interpretation of Emerson's report on the contact Benson site (Emerson, 1954, p. 203) indicates that 7% of the rim sherds and 33% of the castellations are closely related to Roebuck, and hence to other Onondaga sites in eastern Ontario and northern New York State (Witt-

hoft, 1951, p. 316). The double-orifice pot from Benson is reminiscent of a similar trait accredited to the Seneca by Skinner (1921, pl. III).

At the southern end of the Humber River axis on the Black Creek (York) site, 4% of the pottery is Onondaga and 2% Cayuga (Emerson, 1956, p. 25). On the Parsons site in the same area 10% of the pottery is Onondaga-Oneida and 1% is Seneca (*Ibid*, p. 30-31). Further north on the McKenzie (Woodbridge) site 8% of the pottery is Onondaga-Oneida-Mohawk and 6% is Cayuga (*Ibid*, p. 28). In the same general area on the Seed site 3% of the pottery is Onondaga-Oneida-Mohawk, 2% Cayuga, and 2% Seneca (*Ibid*, p. 25). Still farther north on the Graham-Rogers site 4% of the pottery is Seneca and 1% is Cayuga (Emerson, 1961, p. 194). West of Huronia on the MacMurchy site 2% of the pottery is Seneca (*Ibid*).

In Huronia three contact sites show signs of being influenced by the eastern Ontario-New York State Iroquois. At Warminster less than 1% of the sherds are Onondaga, 2% Cayuga, and 1% Seneca (Emerson, 1956, p. 25). At Orr Lake 20% of the sherds are Cayuga, 2% Onondaga, and 1% Seneca (*Ibid*). At Sidey-Mackay 9 (4 of the sherds are Onondaga-Oneida-Mohawk and 3 7 Cayuga (*Ibid*).

Farther west in the Neutral area at the Lawson site 2% of the sherds are Onondaga (*Ibid*).

It appears that, quite the contrary to Ridley's thesis, it was the Onondaga-Oneida and other Confederacy Iroquois who influenced the Ontario Iroquois on the Humber and Trent river axes and in Huronia, rather than vice versa. In this regard the evidence appears to support MacNeish (1952, p. 86), Emerson (1954, p. 260; 1959, p. 8), and Pendergast (1963, p. 16). Such influence would, among other things, account for the emergence of sophisticated pipe types in that group of Ontario Iroquois which lacks a pipe sequence from which such a trait could emerge so quickly and in such a well developed form.

Further, the co-existence of Onondaga-Oneida and Lalonde High Collar pottery on the Payne site (Pendergast, 1963, p. 11; Emerson, 1960, p. 61), Parsons site (Emerson, 1956, p. 26), and Black Creek (York) site (Ridley, 1952a, Fig. 69; Emerson, 1954, pp. 133-134; 1956, p. 25) suggests there was liaison between the potters producing these types. The absence of Lalonde High Collar sherds on eastern Ontario Iroquois sites appears therefore to suggest its rejection by the Onondaga-Oneida potters rather than an ignorance of its existence.

The second point of difference, that involving the place held by the Crystal Rock site in the Ontario Iroquois sequence, arises from the table on page 69 of Ridley's (1963) paper "The Ontario Iroquois Controversy". Published data does not support his suggestion that the Crystal Rock site is late in the sequence. MacNeish (1952, p. 87), Ridley (1963, p. 59), and Pendergast (1963, p. 16) consider Roebuck a late prehistoric site. MacNeish (1952, p. 56, 87) believes Lanoraie precedes Roebuck by some considerable time and a detailed study of three Roebuck-like sites in eastern Ontario (Pendergast *in press* 1), together with a knowledge of ten similar sites in that general area, provides no reason to doubt his hypothesis. The only data published on the Crystal Rock site (Pendergast, 1962, p. 33) states that the site is more akin to

Lanoraie than Roebuck. As a result it is not understood on what basis Ridley places the Crystal Rock site late in his sequence.

The third point of difference, that arising from Ridley's suggestion that Waupoos is a later site than Roebuck (Ridley, 1963, p. 59), stems from the lack of evidence to support this proposal. At present the relationship between the sites on the Trent River axis which produce Roebuck-like pottery and Roebuck-type sites in Ontario east of the Rideau Canal is not clear. There can be little doubt that a relationship exists but the evidence available at present is insufficient to determine the basis, the spatial and temporal extent, or the degree. This being so it is difficult to agree with any place to which Waupoos may be allotted in the Ontario Iroquois sequence. We just don't know. Should Ridley have evidence to support his suggestion in regards to the Waupoos site, or the other two areas in which we differ, it should be brought to light.

There are other aspects of Ridley's Lalonde-Huron hypothesis with which I do not agree, as is apparent in my earlier paper "*The Payne Site*" (Pendergast, 1963). However the rapidity with which new data is introduced into the discussion and the lack of publications setting out the new information, together with conclusions, makes it wiser to leave these for comment by students more conversant with the current situation.

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