

Turtles from Turtle Island: An Archaeological Perspective from Iroquoia

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Iroquoians believe their world, Turtle Island, was created on the back of the mythological Turtle. Archaeologically, there is abundant evidence throughout Iroquoia to indicate that the turtle was highly symbolic, not only of Turtle Island, but also of the Turtle clan, which was preeminent among all the Iroquoian clans. Complete turtles were modified into rattles, turtle shells and bones were utilized in a variety of symbolic ways, and turtle images were graphically depicted in several media. This paper explores the symbolic treatments and uses of the turtle in eastern North America, which date back to the Archaic period and evolved into the mythologies of linguistically and culturally diverse groups, including the Iroquoians, Algonquians (Anishinaabeg) and Sioux.

Introduction

A Middle Woodland burial mound at Rice Lake yielded a marine shell carved and decorated as a turtle effigy. At the nearby Serpent Mound, unmodified turtle shells were carefully placed alongside human skeletons. At the Middle Ontario Iroquoian Moatfield ossuary in North York (Toronto), the only artifact interred with the skeletal remains of 87 individuals was a magnificent turtle effigy pipe. At the roughly contemporaneous Middle Ontario Iroquoian Van Eden site near Milton, there was a piece of turtle shell onto which had been burnt the image of seven men in a canoe. At the Lawson site, a pre-contact Neutral Iroquoian village in London, a massive snapping turtle shell rattle was uncovered, as was a deer femoral head onto which a turtle effigy had been etched. And at the Draper site, a pre-contact Huron Iroquoian village near Pickering, there were two deer phalanges with images of turtles burnt and etched onto them, as well as two turtle leg bones, which had been drilled for suspension as pendants.

These items are but a few of the many objects found on archaeological sites in southern Ontario that demonstrate the many uses of turtle bones and shells and ancient beliefs about the mystic turtle.

Turtle was, of course, a pivotal player in the Iroquoian creation story. Briefly stated, the Great Mother Aataentsic fell through a hole in the Sky and

landed on "Earth" which was formed only when aquatic animals dredged up dirt and placed it upon Turtle's back (Figure 1). The fact that the falling Aataentsic was eventually saved by landing on Turtle was noted in almost all versions of the creation story; in many sources it is noted that this was not just any Turtle, but "Great Snapping Turtle" (Cornplanter 1998:12). Jesuit Father Paul le Jeune's 1636 version specifically recorded that "aquatic animals" dredged up soil to put onto Turtle's back and that the falling Aataentsic then landed on "this Island" (Thwaites 1896-1901:10:127-139). Significantly, in this version, it was Turtle who observed the falling Aataentsic and it was Turtle who instructed the aquatic animals to "dive to the bottom of the water, bring up soil to her, and put it on her back. No sooner said than done, and the woman fell very gently onto this Island" (Thwaites 1896-1901:10:129). This is perhaps the earliest written reference to "Turtle Island," so it is significant to emphasize that it was first formally documented by the Jesuits among the Ontario Iroquoians (Huron). A subsequent version of the creation story in the Jesuit Relations noted only that the Huron believed Earth was supported on the back of a "tortoise of prodigious size" (Thwaites 1896-1901:30:62-63).

In some versions of the Iroquoian creation story there is an even greater symbolic significance attached to Turtle: the twin sons (one good, one evil) to whom Aataentsic eventually



Figure 1. *The Iroquoian creation story of Sky Woman Aataentsic falling to land upon “Turtle Island”. Drawing by Jesse J. Cornplanter, 1936, reproduced from Legends of the Longhouse (Cornplanter 1998:11).*

gave birth had been conceived through her union with “Great Turtle” before she fell through the hole in the Sky (Hewitt 1928:466, 484-485; Schoolcraft 1851-1857:6:666-670).

The Iroquoian creation story involving Aataentsic and events subsequent to her falling to Earth is sometimes known as the “Skygrasper” or “Sky-Holder” saga, in reference to the good twin son (see, for example, Wonderley 2004:xxiii-xxiv). One particular component of the Skygrasper epic is especially relevant here. At one point Skygrasper was instructing the people about the Four Ceremonies they should conduct, such as the Great Feather Dance. In his instructions about the Greatly Prized Ceremony and the sacrificial White Dog ritual within it, he said it must be done to please him and that “all the peoples of the world [were] my father’s clansmen” (Hewitt 1928:561). In a footnote to that passage, Hewitt (1928:610n.59) drove home the point that “father” meant Great Turtle and all people were, therefore, Turtle’s clansmen. This association gives dual meaning to Turtle Island, as Earth was created on Turtle’s back and all people on Earth were Turtle’s clansmen. It is well-documented, historically and

ethnographically, that all Iroquoian-speaking groups had a multitude of clans, including a Turtle clan. Significantly, when the clans were enumerated, the Turtle clan was preeminent and always appeared first (Beauchamp, in Thwaites 1896-1901:51:293-295; Engelbrecht 2003:49; Morgan 1877:70; Rumrill 1988:19, 23). Thus, at least some of the turtle effigy pipes and images of turtle in other media might have been totems signifying an individual’s membership in the Turtle clan.

Consequently, images of a turtle depicted in a variety of media, such as effigy pipes and on bone artifacts, may potentially have played a dual symbolic role in the Iroquoian universe, both as clan or totem insignia and as portrayals of the Great Turtle on whose back the Earth was formed to create Turtle Island. But Turtle was also significant in the creation stories, cosmologies and clan structures of many other First Nations including the Anishinaabeg (Algonquian-speakers), various Siouan-speaking groups, and numerous others. In fact, it is possible to find images of turtles just about anywhere within the temperate regions of North America, which is, after all, Turtle Island to those First Nations inhabiting them.

Turtles in the Natural World, Mythological Realm, and Archaeological Record

Just what is it that makes turtles so special? Turtles as animals are remarkably adaptable creatures since they can live on land or in water in virtually any environment. They are one of the oldest surviving members of the animal kingdom, and fossil specimens have been found on all seven continents. These fossil specimens range in size from the minuscule 7-cm long *Eumotosaurus* of mid-Permian age (250 million years ago) in South Africa to the gargantuan 3.6-m long, 2,700 kg *Archelon* of the Cretaceous period (136 to 65 million years ago) in North America (Fenton and Fenton 1958:315-318).

Turtles are one of the few members of the animal kingdom, and the only reptile, to carry their house on their back. Turtles were and are incredibly versatile: they provide meat, eggs and oil for human consumption and the shells and bones

were and are employed in many varied ways ranging from strictly utilitarian objects to highly symbolic ceremonial paraphernalia.

Perhaps it is simply because turtles were so adaptive and versatile that they came to be respected, revered and idolized, virtually everywhere in the world at one time or another.

Turtles are ubiquitous in world mythologies and folklore. Turtles can assume almost any guise, as a he, she or it. Turtles can be slow and stupid or incredibly smart. A turtle can transform into a person, a person can transform into a turtle, or parts of a turtle can be components of a composite, gryphon-like creature. Turtles can be benevolent or malevolent. Some people keep turtles as adorable pets, while others dread them for their viciousness. Some turtles are edible, others are noxious. At different times in different places, the turtle has symbolized fertility, longevity or cunningness.

Returning to the archaeological record in eastern North America, there are now abundant archaeological data to prove beyond a doubt that First Nations have held special regard for the turtle since at least the Archaic period. There are, for example, two stylized turtles depicted on ground stone plummets found on a Middle Archaic period (circa 4000 - 3000 B.C.) site in Illinois (Lutz 2000:163). At the Early, Middle and Late Archaic levels in the Modoc Rock Shelter in southern Illinois, and at Koster and other Late Archaic period sites elsewhere in Illinois, modified turtle carapaces were used not only as decorative items such as pendants but also for utilitarian purposes (cups, bowls and/or dishes) (Cook 1976:200; Fowler 1959:261). And these were not isolated occurrences. At the Fort Ancient component (circa A.D. 1400-1500) of the Mount Carbon site in West Virginia, over 2,000 faunal elements came from turtles, including at least 25 separate box turtle platters or shallow bowls, and additional bowls or platters there were made from map and slider turtle carapaces (Guilday and Tanner 1965:3, 9-10). While these turtle items might have been strictly utilitarian, there are numerous examples of the ceremonial uses of turtles as well.

Some of the most extensive evidence for ceremonial uses of turtles, anywhere and any time,

came from a series of Archaic sites in Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama and adjoining southeastern states. These include the Indian Knoll, Chiggerville, Eva, Carlson Annis Mound and Read sites assigned to the Indian Knoll horizon (i.e. Webb 1946, 1950a, 1950b), but evidence for turtle ceremonialism applies also to other horizons in those states, such as Poverty Point. Here, not only were turtle shell rattles interred with the dead, but there were also a host of symbolically placed turtle parts, such as complete carapaces positioned over the faces of interred individuals. Some of the turtle shell rattles were coated in red ochre. Rattles were associated with both sexes and all age groups, infant to adult. Gorgets were made from pieces of turtle shell; and marine shell gorgets were engraved with images of turtles. There were turtle shell cups and pendants made by perforating turtle femurs. Most remarkably, in the centre of a cemetery at the Read site in Kentucky, a stone cairn enclosed two turtle carapaces, and nothing else (Webb 1950b:362).

There are abundant data to demonstrate a reverence for turtles throughout and beyond eastern North America, from the Middle and Late Archaic periods onward. For any place, period or cultural manifestation (e.g., Indian Knoll, Glacial Kame, Adena, Hopewell, Fort Ancient, Mississippian) one can find multiple references to turtle shell rattles, other objects made from turtle shells, turtle effigy pipes or turtle effigies. One need only peruse any book that synthesizes Adena, Hopewell or Mississippian manifestations to find illustrations of turtle-shaped effigy mounds, turtle effigy pipes, or images of turtles engraved on gorgets.

The earliest documented evidence for the ceremonial use of the turtle in Ontario came from the Late Archaic Morrison's Island-6 site near Pembroke, where two separate turtle shell rattles were interred with two different individuals (Burials 6 and 11) (Clermont and Chapdelaine 1998:19, 22; Kennedy 1962:124, 1967:103). This site also included many turtle bones. Specifically, there were 151 bones from at least 11 individuals of four different species of turtles (snapping, painted, map and spotted). None of those bones were culturally modified although

some were calcined (Clermont and Chapdelaine 1998:132). Could it be that some of those turtle bones were part of the burial rituals that took place there? Another Late Archaic period site, Coteau-du-Lac, located on the St. Lawrence River, had “two fragments of worked turtle shell” that were inclusions with a human burial (Wright 1995-2004:1:248). Concurrently, there is evidence for ceremonial uses of turtles in regions adjoining southern Ontario, including New York State, Michigan and Ohio. For example, some turtle remains were interred beside the head of an adult male buried at the Old Copper Oconto site in Wisconsin (Ritzenthaler and Wittry 1952:214; Wittry and Ritzenthaler 1956:248). At the nearby Osceola site, the items interred in a mass bundle grave with upwards of 500 individuals included many “Old Copper” type artifacts as well as “a section of the carapace of a soft-shelled turtle” (Ritzenthaler 1946:64). Specific items employed during Glacial Kame times included both stone and marine shell gorgets with images of turtles carved on them (Converse 1971:35, 2001:4-5, 2003:119).

In Ontario, unmodified Blanding’s turtle carapace fragments were grave inclusions at the Glacial Kame Hind site in Middlesex County (Donaldson and Wortner 1995:10, 17, 81). Much evidence for ceremonialism exists at the Hind site, including the use of wolf skull masks, so it is not surprising to see ceremonial uses of turtles there as well.

To date, no turtle shell rattles have been found on any Ontario Early Woodland or Middle Woodland (Point Peninsula and Saugeen) site, but there is definitely evidence for the ceremonial use of turtles. At the Boyd Lakefront site near Long Point, elements of box turtle were found in association with a probable Meadowood phase Early Woodland burial (Fox 1983:20; Spence, Pihl and Murphy 1990:133). At the Middle Woodland Serpent Mounds site on Rice Lake, Burial 56 within the Serpent Mound was accompanied by an unmodified complete turtle carapace, which had been strategically placed directly beside the head of an interred individual (Johnston 1968:24, 108-109). Fragments of what was identified as a “box turtle carapace bowl” were discovered at the East Sugar Island

site, also on Rice Lake (Ritchie 1949:18). An engraved marine shell pendant in the form of a turtle was found in one of the Miller Mounds on Rice Lake (Boyle 1897:56; Wintemberg 1928b:193). That particular object was unusual enough to be selected for the cover of Killan’s (1983) book about David Boyle and Dr. Joan Vastokas (personal communication February 2005) suggested that that particular combination of a turtle image on a marine shell was a unique expression of the “betwixt and between” life on Earth and life under ground/under water. A portion of a turtle leg was included among the artifacts interred with one burial at the LesVesconte Mound near Rice Lake (Spence 1964:153), while other burials there included other turtle bones (Kenyon 1986:38-39). In addition, “unworked portions of plastron of soft shell turtle” were found in association with the burial of a child at the Point Peninsula site at Port Maitland at the mouth of the Grand River (Ritchie 1944:177). All of these discoveries suggest that Ontario’s Middle Woodland peoples regarded turtles as something other than a source of food.

The artifacts described here, mainly from the Late Woodland Iroquoian sequence in southern Ontario, demonstrate, first, that turtles were being actively sought as material from which to make both utilitarian and ceremonial items and second, that turtle effigies and images of turtles were a significant component of the Iroquoian ceremonial realm from at least the late thirteenth century onward. These artifacts fall into four specific categories: (1) items of personal adornment, such as pendants, which were made from either turtle bones or pieces of turtle shell; (2) turtle effigy pipes; (3) turtle effigies (other than pipes) and other images of turtles; and (4) turtle shell rattles.

Items of Personal Adornment Made from Turtle Bones/Turtle Shell

Examples of this class of artifact include a piece of modified Blanding’s turtle plastron from the Middle Ontario Iroquoian Uren site that Wintemberg (1928a:34; also see Fox 2002:8) interpreted as an ornament. He stated that ornaments or objects made from turtle shell were not

common on Ontario Iroquoian sites, as he knew of only two other specimens. One was “a pendant made from a section of the carapace of the painted turtle,” which was found at a village site in Waterloo County (Wintenberg 1928a:34) that we now know as the pre-contact Neutral Coleman site (Boyle 1905:44; MacDonald 1986). The other was “a fragment, possibly of a wristlet, found at a village site” in Blenheim Township, Oxford County (Wintenberg 1928a:34). The latter might refer to one of several known Middle Ontario Iroquoian (Middleport) or Late Ontario Iroquoian (pre-contact Neutral) sites in that township (Ontario Ministry of Culture Archaeological Sites Database, Borden Block AhHd).

The Busby Collection donated to the London Museum of Archaeology (now Museum of Ontario Archaeology) in 1981 included some items obtained by Dr. Busby from Mr. Ernie Sackrider and other collectors. Included in the Busby Collection was a fragment of drilled turtle carapace from the post-contact Neutral Walker site near Brantford, labelled “turtle shell gorget” (LMA Accession 981-5:178). It is definitely a gorget, or large pendant, since all of the outer edges are ground or worn smooth. It is half-moon shaped with one large central perforation.

Pendants and/or gorgets made from pieces of turtle shell or turtle bone are also apparently quite rare in New York, although Pratt (1976:272) listed one turtle bone with a single perforation, from the post-contact Oneida Cameron site.

Aside from such references to ornaments or possible ornaments made from turtle shell fragments, there are also isolated, rare occurrences of artifacts made from turtle bones. For example, in a brief description of various sites in Elgin County, Anderson (1903:86) mentioned a snapping turtle humerus “which was worn smooth around the middle, having probably been worn attached to a thong”. From other information he supplied in that report (1903:86-87), it is possible to determine that this item had been found on the Downpour site, now interpreted as a Middle Ontario Iroquoian village occupied during the Uren substage (Wright 1966:56). A “polished humerus of the snapping turtle” found on the pre-contact Neutral Lawson site (Wintenberg

1939:13) may likewise have been some form of an ornament. Two modified turtle long bones, a humerus and a femur (Figure 2), found at the pre-contact Huron Draper site were interpreted as possible pendants, as both had been culturally modified (McCullough 1978a:30).



Figure 2. Pendant fashioned from a turtle femur from the Draper site ALGt-2.

Turtle Effigy Pipes

One of the earliest positively documented turtle effigies yet found in Ontario is a ceramic pipe recovered from the early Middle Ontario Iroquoian Moatfield Ossuary in North York (Toronto), dated circa A.D. 1280-1320. This was the only artifact included among the 87 individuals of the mass secondary burial (Andreae et al. 1999:7; Williamson and Pfeiffer 2003:140-141). In keeping with the overall theme of the present article, it is appropriate to quote what was said of the symbolic significance of the Moatfield turtle effigy pipe—that it was a reflection of “the Iroquoian creation story and the origin of life on Turtle Island [Skye 1998]...[i]ts placement on the floor of the ossuary is consistent metaphorically with the community resting on the ‘back’ of the turtle” (Williamson and Pfeiffer 2003:335).

In his report on the Middleport site, Wintenberg (1948:37-38) described one ceramic effigy pipe as representing either an otter or lizard, but he added the statement that it might also have been intended to represent a turtle. This is a recurring theme in the interpretation of archaeological data. Many researchers have noted the difficulty of attempting to classify certain effigy pipes as representations of specific animals or mythologically significant

entities. For example, Mathews (1981b:38) noted that some effigy pipes that were classified as lizards or salamanders could, in fact, have been turtles.

Echoing earlier statements by Boyle (1897:50) and Wintemberg (1924:38), Noble (1979:70-71), in his overview of Ontario Iroquoian effigy pipes, noted that turtle images on pipes were rare and that “when they do occur they are invariably on lithic pipes.” He made reference to only four known stone effigy pipes from Ontario that depicted a turtle, all of which had been previously reported by Boyle, Orr, Laidlaw or Wintemberg. One, with complete turtles carved on both sides of the bowl, was discovered in Yarmouth Township, Elgin County (Boyle 1896b:60-61). That pipe could have potentially been found on one of several known Middleport or pre-contact Neutral sites in that township. The second, from Sunderland, Brock Township, Ontario County, was a complete turtle with head and four legs and a short rear projection interpreted as a tail. That pipe, made from a light-coloured limestone material, was unique among all known turtle effigies as it had the orifice for the pipe bowl drilled into the centre of the turtle’s back (Boyle 1897:51-52; also illustrated and described further by Laidlaw 1903:51-52). The third stone turtle effigy pipe was initially reported by Boyle (1897:52-53) as being found in Darlington Township, Durham County, but Laidlaw (1903:53), in reference to that same specimen, stated it was found on Ball Point Island, Lake Scugog, Durham County. Regardless, the Durham effigy was carved in soapstone and had a complete turtle (body, head, four legs and tail) clinging to the side of the bowl. The fourth turtle effigy to which Noble (1979:70-71) referred was from a Huron site in Oro Township, Simcoe County. That pipe, carved from slate, had the head of the turtle projecting above the top of the pipe bowl, facing away from the smoker, and the body extending down the side of the bowl; the bowl was therefore on the turtle’s back (Laidlaw 1913:49-50). The latter specimen could symbolize the important component of the Iroquoian creation story of Earth resting on the Great Turtle’s back.

Mathews (1981a, 1981b) also examined Ontario Iroquoian effigy pipes. She referred to at least ten known turtle effigies, four of which were

made of clay (1981b:41-42). She noted that it was virtually impossible to identify any of these effigies to a particular species of turtle, that the “carapaces are sometimes indicated as a series of squares (on one example, enclosing concentric circles) or triangular forms” and that “these stylized decorations could apply to dozens of species” (Mathews 1981b:42).

Neither Mathews (1981a, 1981b) nor Noble (1979) was apparently aware of another stone turtle effigy pipe, of which the present author learned courtesy of Dr. Jean-Luc Pilon of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. That effigy, curated at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Catalogue VIII-F-8529) was discovered somewhere in Simcoe County in 1884 by C. A. Hirschfelder. The effigy is a complete turtle with its head sticking above the pipe bowl and the legs and body hugging the side of the bowl. No other details about where this item was found were available. In general form it is quite similar to the soapstone effigy pipe noted above from Darlington Township, Durham County, in that both have the turtle “hugging” the bowl.

In his brief report on the Middle Ontario Iroquoian (Middleport) Robb site, Donaldson (1962:18) noted the recovery of two zoomorphic clay effigy pipes, one of which “represents a soft-shelled turtle.”

Three ceramic effigy pipes from the pre-contact Huron Draper site all portray kneeling, headless female torsos, each with two arms clutching the breasts (see illustrations in von Gernet 1985:Plate 9). One of those pipes also had a turtle effigy moulded onto the back of the female torso, while a second one had on the back a decorative motif of incised lines and tiny punctates which could possibly have been intended to represent a turtle’s carapace. Those pipes could perhaps have multiple symbolic connotations, representing both fertility and the Great Turtle.

Two quite remarkable ceramic turtle effigy pipes were discovered by Wilfrid Jury at the pre-contact Huron Flanagan site in Huronia, and were described as “totems” (Jury 1948:Plate 8, Figures 8 and 9). Although both objects (curated at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology, London) are clearly turtle effigies, they are strikingly different

from each other, and quite different from all other Ontario Iroquoian turtle effigies.

The first pipe (F.158; Figure 3, Table 1) resembles a rather crude child's model of a turtle with body and stubby legs; both the head and the tail are broken off. A hole runs through the body from the neck, where the head has broken away, to where the tail would have been. The specimen is decorated with incised lines on the top to represent the carapace. The break line, where the tail had broken off, had been ground smooth after breaking and the under-surface (plastron) is smoothed, as if the object had been worn suspended around a person's neck after the effigy's life as a pipe had ended by breakage.

The second effigy pipe (F.172; Figure 4, Table 1), in marked contrast to the first, looks like a carefully modelled turtle with head, tail and legs concealed under a massive carapace. The maker of this specimen went to considerable effort to portray realistically the turtle in life-like form. The carapace, does not, however, look natural or realistic at all since it was elaborately decorated with incised lines in various patterns—obliques, opposing obliques, chevrons and circles. The carapace is markedly asymmetrical with different combinations of motifs on the right and left halves.

A single turtle effigy pipe was found in a large and diverse assemblage of 29 ceramic effigy pipes at the St. Lawrence Iroquoian Mandeville site (circa A.D. 1500; Chapdelaine 1989:99, 1992:33).

Wintemberg (1936:110, 112) believed a fragment of a ceramic effigy pipe found at the St. Lawrence Iroquoian Roebuck village portrayed a turtle. It retained what he thought were part of the front foot, "with the digits indicated by three short grooves," part of the carapace "covered with closely parallel, impressed diagonal lines," and a groove separating the carapace from the foot. He also found at Roebuck two other fragmentary effigy pipe bowls, interpreted in the text as "probably" bird heads but described in the plate captions as "bird, snake or turtle head" (Wintemberg 1936:110 and Plate 16, Figures 9 and 10).

Table 1. *Dimensions of the ceramic turtle effigy pipes from the Flanagan site.*

Cat. No.	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Thickness (mm)
F. 158	54	44	23
F. 172	62	50	30

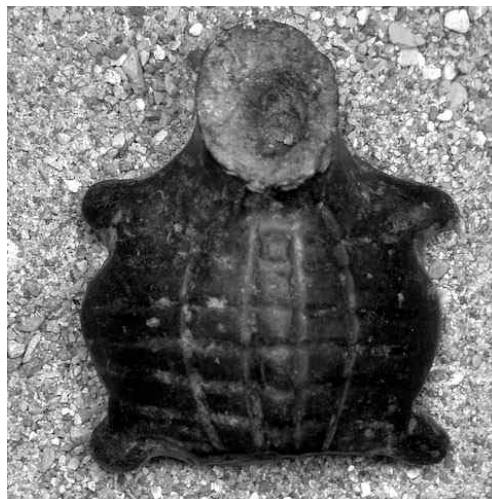


Figure 3. *Ceramic turtle effigy from the Flanagan site (F.158).*



Figure 4. *Ceramic turtle effigy from the Flanagan site (F.172).*

Non-Pipe Turtle Effigies and Other Images of Turtles

In 2003, William D. Finlayson recovered a remarkable artifact from the Metate site, a post-contact Neutral village near Milton. The artifact (curated at Museum of Ontario Archaeology) is a complete deer phalange onto which had been burnt the image of a dancing man wearing a

headdress and holding a rattle (for illustration, see Wright [1995-2004:3:1385, Figure 127f]). Even if the rattle is not a turtle shell, this single image verifies the direct association between dancing and rattles in the late pre-contact to early post-contact period.

There are at least three known occurrences, from Ontario Iroquoian sites, of deer phalanges with images of turtles that are burnt or carved onto them. Two of these objects were discovered at the pre-contact Huron Draper site (circa A.D. 1500) near Pickering, Durham region. One of these specimens (Figure 5) was described and illustrated by McCullough (1978b:25, 27h; also illustrated in Wright [1995-2004:3:1385, Figure 127g]) and the second was identical to it (personal observation; collection curated at Museum of Ontario Archaeology). The third turtle image was reported by David Boyle (1900:22) as having been found by him in about 1870 at Braeside Farm, Richmond Hill. Presumably it was from another pre-contact Huron village site.

In 1921, W. J. Wintemberg uncovered a unique item at the pre-contact Neutral Lawson site. It was a fragment from the head (ball joint) of the femur of a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), which had been perforated to permit suspension as a pendant. Wintemberg's illustration (1939:Plate 12, Figure 16) clearly shows that it had further modification, but the illustration does not reveal the true nature of that modification. I examined and photographed it while it was on loan to the Museum of Ontario Archaeology in 2006 (Figure 6). Six indentations are carved into it immediately below the suspension hole, some of which are visible in Wintemberg's illustration. The relative size and placement of these indentations leave no doubt in my mind that they depict a turtle. There

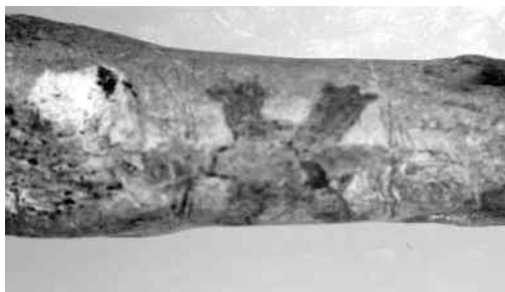


Figure 5. Turtle image etched onto a deer phalange from the Draper site (AlGt-2).

is one larger, central indentation to represent the body and it is surrounded by five smaller indentations strategically placed to represent the head, tail and three legs; the fourth leg (rear left) is missing. The indentations for the three legs and the tail are of equal size whereas the indentation for the head is slightly larger (although considerably smaller than the body). If this object was worn as a pendant, the turtle's head was facing up.

In the *Fourth Annual Report of the Canadian Institute*, Boyle (1891:49-50) illustrated and briefly described a turtle effigy carved from "fine-grained sandstone." (measuring about 67 mm long and 37 mm wide, based on the illustration). A complete turtle in plan view is shown, with protruding head and four legs with toes. It was found in South Yarmouth Township, Elgin County, perhaps from or near the same Yarmouth Township site where a stone turtle effigy pipe was reported by Boyle (above). This sandstone effigy was one of the items personally selected by Boyle for the Provincial Museum's display at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 (Boyle 1893:10).

Ridley (1961:28-31) described and illustrated a small turtle effigy "pendant" made from catlinite, found in the post-contact Neutral Dwyer Ossuary near Brantford. Another three-dimensional turtle effigy carved from catlinite was illustrated in the field notes of noted relic-hunter Ernie Sackrider, with the notation that he had discovered it on the post-contact Neutral Walker site. That effigy was a pendant, as evidenced by a drilled suspension hole in the hump of the turtle's back.

The notes of Sackrider (1970) also contained an illustration of yet another turtle effigy—a pendant, as it has a hole through the turtle's head. His illustration is on the same page as a ground slate birdstone and two ground slate bannerstones.



Figure 6. Turtle image etched onto a deer femoral head from the Lawson site (AgHh-1).

One might conclude, therefore, that the turtle effigy was also made of similar stone. The location of the pendant is given as “Banks of Fairchild Creek at Grand River, right side, downstream.” It probably came from one of several known pre-contact or post-contact Neutral sites along the Grand River south of Brantford.

The Calvert Collection, donated to the London Museum of Archaeology, contained at least three ground stone turtle effigies, which presumably came from the Walker site or a nearby post-contact Neutral site.

An unfinished stone turtle effigy, found in Hastings County was illustrated and described by Orr (1924:115): “it is very well chipped or flaked into almost perfect shape. The head, neck, mouth and eyes are reduced to a nearly finished state by the picking process, and are slightly polished”. It does not appear to have legs. There are several known pre-contact Huron sites in Hastings County.

Wilfrid Jury and his crew found a turtle effigy at the Newton site in Huronia, identified by him as the Huron village and Jesuit Mission of St. Louis (circa 1649). It was a pendant fashioned from a thin sheet of lead that had probably been pounded and rolled from a lead musket ball. The turtle is represented with round body, round head and two protruding front legs. A circular perforation was drilled through the centre of the shoulder. It measures 5 cm from tail to head (Jury and Jury 1955:37).

The Train Farm site (also known as the Fitzgerald and Burnfield site) in Medonte Township, Simcoe County, was briefly investigated by Wilfrid Jury in the summer and fall of 1947 and identified by him as the probable Huron village and Jesuit Mission of St. Joseph II, where Jesuit Father Antoine Daniel was murdered on July 4, 1648 (Jury 1949). A turtle effigy recovered from this site is carved from soft, brownish-black stone. It depicts head, tail and four legs extending out from the body; lines incised across the top of the body resemble the suture lines of a carapace.

Kidd (1952:73) noted that red slate or catlinite effigies, including turtles, had been found on post-contact Huron sites in Ontario. The illustrations to

his article included a drawing (Figure 27k) of one such turtle effigy (from an unspecified location).

One of the most remarkable objects in the collections of the Museum of Ontario Archaeology is a small slate pendant (measuring 45, 23 and 5 mm long, wide and thick, respectively; LMA #978-4-31) with images carved into both surfaces. One side has the image of a turtle in the centre with a snake encircling it. The other surface has the image of a fish in the centre with a snake encircling it. On the turtle side, the head of the turtle faces “up” (towards the drilled suspension hole in the pendant) and the head of the snake has an open mouth with a protruding tongue, almost touching its own tail directly above the turtle’s front right foot. On the fish side, the head of the fish faces “down” (away from the pendant’s suspension hole). The head of the snake has an open mouth with its protruding tongue almost touching its own tail above the fish’s tail. The image of the turtle, with head, four legs and tail sticking out, is 21 mm long and 11 mm wide. The pendant was supposedly found very close to the Lawson village, perhaps at an associated agricultural cabin site.

There were at least two illustrations of other turtle effigies in the *Annual Archaeological Report, Ontario* series. One was of a “brown slate” effigy pendant from Nottawasaga Township, Simcoe County (Boyle 1905:44, Figure 68). The other, made from an unknown type of stone (slate?), was from an unspecified Ontario location (Boyle 1895:81).

At the St. Lawrence Iroquoian Mandeville site, a single stone turtle effigy was found. It is a naturally shaped pebble that had been deliberately pecked and incised to create the image of a turtle (Chapdelaine 1989:103, Figure 7.22).

What is perhaps the earliest turtle effigy found in New York State was a “blue-gray native slate” specimen found at the Davis site in Margaretville, dated to the Laurentian (Late) Archaic period, circa 1000 B.C. (Ives 1955:12). Turtle effigies and turtle effigy pipes occur on New York Iroquois sites, but not as frequently as in Ontario. Wray (1956:16) noted only one Seneca example, a stone vasiform pipe with a turtle effigy on it from a site broadly dated A.D. 1550-1625. One pipe featuring the likeness of a turtle on top of the

bowl was discovered on the late seventeenth century Onondaga Indian Hill site (Engelbrecht 2003:59); while Beauchamp (1898:Figure 149) illustrated another pipe with the bowl formed into the middle of the turtle's back. Rutsch (1973:218-220) noted and illustrated only two turtle effigy pipes from New York, both of which had the turtle clinging to the side of the bowl with the head up, the tail down and the legs grasping the bowl. One (from Jefferson County) had the turtle facing the smoker whereas the other (without provenience, in the collection of the Cayuga Museum in Auburn) had the turtle on the front of the bowl looking away from the smoker. Beauchamp (1897:31) mentioned, but did not illustrate, a turtle "totem of grey stone" with a "projecting head, feet and tail" that was "perforated for suspension." It had been found in "an early cache in Cayuga."

Some turtle effigies were made by the New York Iroquois from pieces of marine shell, but apparently not until the seventeenth century (see, for example, Bradley 1987:129, 225). Earlier, however, they manufactured pendants or amulets from pieces of turtle shell (see, for example, one object from the Garoga site, circa A.D. 1525-1580, illustrated by Snow [1995b:160, Figure 4.27c]). After the introduction of European guns and lead shot, some of the New York State Iroquois (especially the Mohawk) moulded lead effigies of turtles and other animals or mythological creatures (Engelbrecht 2003:152, Figure 60; Snow 1995a:14, 1995b:252, 351, 353, 380-381, 399). In fact, Rumrill (1988:19, 23) stated that "the most common and simplest forms" of lead effigies created by the Mohawk were likenesses of turtles and that those effigies were "definitive artifacts" with deep symbolic significance well beyond their obvious use as clan totems. Some of the Mohawk specimens were perforated, suggesting they had been suspended on a necklace. The fact that the numerous Mohawk turtle effigies show considerable variation in form, size and detail (see Rumrill 1988:Figures 2, 3 and 5) suggests that they were individually made rather than mass-produced. The popularity of lead turtle effigies is known for at least some archaeological sites, such as the

Mohawk Mitchell and Janie villages (1640-1660), where eight and three examples were found, respectively, within otherwise sparse artifact assemblages (Rumrill 1985:22, 24). The practice of moulding effigies continued through the seventeenth century, as known from the recovery of a lead turtle effigy at the Mohawk Nellis village (circa 1680-1693; Rumrill 1985:34) to the late eighteenth century, as known from the recovery of a lead turtle effigy at the Lord site (circa 1753-1778) at Sidney, New York (Hesse 1975:28-29). European pewter was likewise used to make turtle effigies (Bradley 1987:155; Rumrill 1988:19). Some turtle effigies made from European metals (iron, pewter) were noted by Beauchamp (1903:Figures 272-273) and Pratt (1976:233). From the seventeenth century onward, both European and Native craftsmen fashioned extraordinarily large numbers of silver bangles, baubles and pieces of jewellery, and those items included turtle effigies (Carter 1971:89, 115).

The Iroquoian-speaking Susquehannock in southern Pennsylvania also made turtle effigies. At the Susquehannock component (circa 1550-1600) of the Funk site, artifacts buried alongside human interments included two turtle effigies, one made of catlinite and the other of steatite (Smith and Graybill 1977:54). Another stone turtle effigy occurred at the Washington Borough cemetery (Cadzow 1936:107; Griffin 1952:Figure 25p). In an overview of Susquehannock art and iconography, Kinsey (1989:312, 315) noted that although turtle images were rare, they nevertheless did occur. He specifically mentioned a total of 17 turtle images, which occurred as effigy pipes, carved stone pendants and two turtle effigies made from recycled lead musket balls.

It is a matter of some interest that turtle images appear with some regularity in other media, such as wood (ladles), but rarely on bone or antler (combs) or clay (as castellations on ceramic vessels).

In a thorough study of Seneca Iroquois ladles dated from A.D. 1600 to 1900, Prisch (1982) provided an historical overview of the use of carved ladles (made from wood, antler and shell) as highly personal objects that were used as

spoons to eat hominy and soup. She also documented six definite turtle effigies: five of them made from wood; one made from shell. Two of the wooden specimens were discovered at the Steele village (circa 1635-1650), one was found at the Marsh site (circa 1650-1675), and two were found at the Boughton Hill village, which was established in 1675 and destroyed by the French in 1687. The single known shell turtle effigy ladle also came from Boughton Hill. Prisch (1982) also discussed two additional Seneca turtle effigies, one from the Dann site (circa 1660-1675) and another from the Snyder-McClure site (1687-1710), both of which were fragmentary, made from wood, and had brass inlay. She concluded that both were probably pieces of broken effigy pipes, not ladles. Prisch (1982:61-68, 122-125) surveyed available records to compare the seventeenth and eighteenth century Seneca ladles (recovered archaeologically) to nineteenth century ethnographic specimens and to ladles from other areas. She found examples of turtle effigy ladles among the nineteenth century Cayuga and Onondaga in New York and the nineteenth century Six Nations Iroquois in southern Ontario. She observed a unique specimen attributed to the Seneca residing in Oklahoma in the nineteenth century—a dual effigy with a turtle on the back of a human head.

Antler combs from seventeenth century New York Iroquois sites were sometimes quite elaborate, with exquisitely carved images of people, animals and/or mythological beings (see, for example, Beauchamp 1902:284-288; Wray et al. 1991:45; Williamson and Veilleux this volume). In his overview of Seneca combs, Wray (1963:45, 47) specifically made note of the fact that the only turtle effigy comb known to him was a Susquehannock specimen from Pennsylvania—from the Washington Borough cemetery at Safe Harbor in Lancaster County (Cadzow 1936:119, 123; Macaulay 1936:44; also see Kinsey 1989:307, 312). Antler combs with effigies on them have also been recovered from seventeenth century Ontario Iroquoian sites such as the post-contact Grimsby cemetery (Kenyon 1982:20, 54, 96, 214-215, showing otter, human[?], bear, paired bears, and a pair of unidentified animal effigies) and the Dwyer Ossuary (Bonham

1978:23, showing paired animals, identified by him as foxes). Ridley (1961:Plate 12, Figure e) illustrated a different antler comb with a pair of animals (foxes?) from the Dwyer Ossuary, as well as an otter effigy comb from the Burke Ossuary (Ridley 1961:Plate 9, Figure c) and an effigy comb from the Walker site featuring a pair of unidentified creatures (Ridley 1961:Plate 5, Figure bb). However, to my knowledge, there are no known examples of a turtle on such combs from Ontario.

Effigies of animals (or mythological entities?) were sometimes moulded onto the castellations of Iroquoian ceramic vessels. They include a salamander on a pot from the Grimsby cemetery (Kenyon 1982:19) and two possible mammalian figures on two different vessels from the sixteenth-century, St. Lawrence Iroquoian Roebuck village (Wintemberg 1936:110 and Plate 8, Figure 30). A moulded animal effigy, appliquéd to the castellation of a ceramic vessel, from the Oneida Goff site in Madison County, New York (Pratt 1976:Plate 17, Figure 14), has been interpreted by one researcher as a “possible frog” (Wonderley this volume, Figure 4a). Also, Wray et al. (1987:76) made reference to examples of “representational effigies” of “animal faces and figures” on ceramic vessels from New York Seneca sites. To my knowledge, there are no known examples of turtles on such vessels. A salamander on the castellation of the Grimsby pot is somewhat akin to a salamander clinging to the front of a ceramic pipe bowl from Grimsby (Kenyon 1982:223, Plate 214). Since the image of a turtle is sometimes found clinging to or hugging ceramic or stone pipe bowls, one can legitimately ask why no images of turtles have been found (to date) on ceramic pots from any Iroquoian sites? The possibility that a turtle effigy might some day be found on the castellation of an Iroquoian ceramic vessel is perhaps heightened by a discovery of one such turtle effigy on a ceramic sherd from a Lenape (Delaware) site along the Delaware River in New Jersey (Staats 1983:9).

Also found in the Grimsby cemetery was a wooden bowl with an effigy handle carved to represent a seagull (Kenyon 1982:62, Figure 42 and Plate 67). One carved wooden spoon from the Grimsby site had on its handle a human face effigy (Kenyon 1982:117), while another was an animal

effigy interpreted as a weasel (Kenyon 1982:157, Figure 104 and Plate 138). Another, apparently unique, artifact from the Grimsby site was a piece of antler shaped like a “letter opener”, topped by a human face effigy (Kenyon 1982:206). It is quite different from the human figure effigies carved from antler found at sites such as the New York Seneca Cameron cemetery (Wray et al. 1991:218-223).

Animal effigies occur on many artifact classes. For example, a bird occurs on an antler pipe from the New York Seneca Tram site (Wray et al. 1991:48) and a wolf, possibly, is represented on a stone axe from an unknown location somewhere in the New York Mohawk Valley (Snow 1995a: Figure 19.9), although that object is stated to be “a partial or complete fake” (Snow 1995a:125). From the pre-contact Neutral Clearville site in Kent County, Ontario, there was a human skull disc (parietal), that was interpreted as a gorget (Jury 1941:Plate 9) but perhaps comprises one-half of a disc rattle with crudely incised images engraved on it—possibly representing a sunburst or starburst and a headless human stick figure (Pearce 2003:16 and Williamson and Veilleux this volume). A few decorated items from Ontario Iroquoian sites were interpreted by Fox (2004:292-297) as probably representing snake/serpent and/or thunderbird, including an incised and drilled slate pendant from a pre-contact Neutral site in Elgin County (see Anderson 1903:83, Figure 55) and a possible bird (thunderbird?) effigy made from a piece of recycled brass from the post-contact Neutral Walker site (see Wright 1981:105-106, Figure 61.18). Large numbers of bone tubes, frequently decorated, have been recovered from Neutral Iroquoian sites. Although most of the decorated tubes bear incised geometric patterns (see, for example, Wright 1981:95-97 with reference to the Walker site) rather than deliberate animal effigy figures, some zigzag motifs on bone tubes from the post-contact Neutral Hamilton (town), Hood (village) and Bogle I and II (hamlet) sites (see Lennox 1981:305-310, Figure 45.3, 1984:99-100, Figure 11, Figure 25.6, Figure 34) were interpreted by Fox (2004:294-295) as possible representations of a serpent and thunderbird. A double-holed ground slate pendant with a zigzag motif between the two holes, found on

the pre-contact Neutral Alward village in Elgin County, may also relate to ethnographically documented Iroquoian mythologies of the Horned Serpent and/or Thunderer (Fox 2004:297-298). A ground slate gorget fragment found by Mr. James Edwards on his farm in Lobo Township, Middlesex County, on which is located the Middle Ontario Iroquoian (Middleport) Edwards site (AfHi-23) (Pearce 1996:94-97), had incised figures, including two mammals interpreted as dog or wolf (illustrated by Wintemberg [1924:Plate 3, Figure 2] and Ellis [2002:Figure 5]). The latter object may not be Iroquoian at all; incised figures on slate gorgets are known from much earlier time periods, such as seven dog or wolf images on a presumed Early or Middle Woodland (circa 2800 to 1500 B.P.) gorget found by Mr. Croft Garnham in Oxford County (Ellis 2002). Nevertheless, these objects raise the possibility that someone, sometime, might discover an image of a turtle on such artifacts. Or, perhaps not, if the Iroquoians had prescribed rules that restricted turtle images to specific items to be used in specific instances.

The European explorers and missionaries who interacted with the Iroquoians certainly made frequent reference to their body painting and tattoos. For example, the general index to Thwaites’ *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* provides references to “tattooing” and “body and face painting” in at least 38 of the 73 volumes. A single volume often contains multiple references (i.e., Thwaites 1896-1901:73:335). In one volume, Jesuit Fathers Brebeuf and Chaumonot described some Neutral men being covered from head to toe in tattoos of “a thousand different figures” (Thwaites 1896-1901:21:197). Earlier, Bressani had written that the Huron frequently formed “on the face, the neck, the breast or some other part of the body, some animal or monster - for instance an Eagle, a Serpent, a Dragon, or any other figure which they prefer” (Thwaites 1896-1901:38:251). No doubt the turtle was the subject matter of some of these tattoos, as indicated by the example below.

The *Codex Canadensis (Les Raretés des Indes)* contained a collection of watercolours attributed to Jesuit Father Louis Nicolas. One of those watercolours (circa 1701) was a somewhat fanciful illustration with the caption “cet icy depute du bourg

de gannachiouavé” (here is a representative of the town of Gannachiouavé). The man illustrated was holding a two-metre long serpent and smoking a one-metre long pipe, but what is relevant here is the fact that his entire body was covered in tattoos, which included a large image of a turtle on his upper left leg. The watercolour was included in a major exhibition mounted by Dennis Reid and Joan Vastokas (1984:22) on Native and European Art, displayed for Ontario’s Bicentennial at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto in 1984. The original *Codex Canadensis* resides at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art (Gilcrease Museum) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the Collections Manager (Ms. Sarah Erwin) there confirmed to me in February 2005 that the tattoo on the man’s left leg was indeed that of a turtle.

Pictographs and petroglyphs that can be definitively ascribed to the Iroquoians are few and far between but they do exist. The Painted Rocks site near Amsterdam, New York, contained various red ochre human figures and one animal figure—a bird (Lenik 2002:195-198; Snow 1995a: Figure 9.3). Another example is an owl petroglyph discovered along the Susquehannock River near Colliersville, Otsego County, New York (Lenik 2002:200-201). These specific images raise the possibility that, somewhere, an Iroquoian might have drawn an image of a turtle on a rock (or tree, or portable object). This is all the more likely when one considers that the Iroquoians drew images of people and symbolically significant animals on animal skins (Thwaites 1896-1901:8:261), on pieces of bark (Thwaites 1896-1901:24:83, 95), and on posts or poles (Beauchamp 1905:132; Parker 1991:39). There is also at least one documented instance of a turtle being drawn on the end of a longhouse, recorded in 1785 by English fur trader John Long at “Jenesee Lake,” New York (Long 1971:173). These images may have been clan symbols rather than symbolic portrayals of the Great Turtle of Turtle Island.

There are also examples of pieces of turtle shell used as the medium on which to create works of art. One example came from the Middleport Van Eden site near Milton, Ontario, which had an image burnt into it of seven “men-in-canoe” (Finlayson 1998:228, 1262; also see Wright

1995-2004:3:1384, Figure 127c). Although there are no known images of a turtle on such pieces, the idea that there might be, somewhere, a turtle image on a piece of turtle shell is intriguing.

Turtle Shell Rattles

There are no lack of references to the many uses of turtle shell rattles by Iroquoian-speaking peoples throughout the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, and to the rituals and ceremonies which were conducted to the accompaniment of turtle shell rattles (see, for example, Fenton 1987:27, 78-79; Thwaites 1896-1901:15:179). Archaeological data now confirm that such rattles have been part of the Iroquoian repertoire since at least A.D.1000.

Detailed data are available for a large number of Ontario Iroquoian turtle shell rattles, including the species of turtles from which the rattles were made and the number of holes, which are highly variable, drilled in each rattle. Some of these data have been summarized by Fox (2002). I have compiled an as yet unpublished database of this information. As of April 2006, data had been compiled for 65 rattles from 33 Ontario Iroquoian sites. Specimens made from box turtle (*Terrapene carolina*) predominate but rattles made from painted (*Chrysemys picta marginata* or *Chrysemys* sp.), Blanding’s (*Emydoidea blandingi*) and snapping (*Chelydra serpentina*) turtle are also known. There appears to be no uniformity in the numbers of holes drilled in the two components of the rattles: at the post-contact Neutral Grimsby cemetery, alone, there were specimens with two, four, five, six and seven holes in the carapaces and between one and eight holes drilled in the plastrons (Kenyon 1982:49, 52, 53, 143, 211). Specimens illustrated by Ridley (1961:Plate 5, Figure r and Plate 12, Figure f) from other post-contact Neutral sites had five and nine holes drilled in the carapace. A large (27.5-cm long) snapping turtle shell rattle from the pre-contact Neutral Lawson site had four holes drilled in it.

My database contains examples of turtle shell rattles from all stages and branches of the Ontario Iroquoian Tradition. For the Early Ontario

Iroquoian Stage, specimens have been found at both Pickering Branch sites, such as Miller, and Glen Meyer Branch sites, such as Woodsman. For the initial Uren substage of the Middle Ontario Iroquoian Stage, specimens are known from the Uren and Willcock sites. For the subsequent Middleport substage, specimens are tabulated from the Robb, Rife, Van Eden and Winking Bull sites. From the pre-contact Neutral period, there are specimens from the Lawson and Clearville villages. The current evidence suggests that the use of turtle shell rattles in southern Ontario reached a zenith among the protohistoric and historic Neutral: the number of specimens recovered on a large number of sites ranges from one to over a dozen. The sites include Irving-Johnson, Christianson, Dwyer, Walker, Grimsby, Milton Heights, Lake Medad, Orchid, St. David's, Cleveland, Thorold, Hamilton and Freelon. Not to be outdone by their neighbours, the pre-contact, protohistoric and historic Huron and historic Petun also used turtle shell rattles, as known, for example, by specimens from the Draper, Sidey-Mackay, Kirche, Parsons and Lite sites. Farther east-southeast, rattles have been found at St. Lawrence Iroquoian sites such as Roebuck and Beckstead.

The Ontario examples mentioned have a chronological span of at least 650 years, from circa A.D. 1000 to 1650, and are spread over an enormous geographical area, extending 547 km west-to-east by 386 km south-to-north. Examples of turtle shell rattles are also known from Iroquoian sites throughout New York State, especially from post-contact cemetery sites such as Tram, Cameron (Wray et al. 1991:63-64, 238) and Adams (Wray et al. 1987:45).

Conclusions

In eastern North America, the use of turtle shell rattles and the creation of turtle effigies began as early as the Archaic period. There was a steady progression in the uses of turtle shell and in the creation of turtle effigies and images of turtle on a variety of media by a number of First Nations, including Iroquoian-speakers and Algonquian-speakers, during all periods from the Archaic into

the historic and modern era. During the critical stage when Iroquoian-speaking groups emerged as specific tribal entities, forming tribal alliances in both New York State and Ontario and Quebec (circa 1300-1400), the turtle's significance was elevated by the perpetuation of the creation story, in which the Great Turtle's role was pivotal. Concurrently, clans became more important in Iroquoian matrilineal society, with the Turtle clan being preeminent over all others. There was a marked increase in the frequency of items that demonstrated the symbolic significance of the turtle as both a clan symbol and symbol of the creation of Turtle Island, including items made from turtle bones and shells, turtle effigy pipes, other types of turtle effigies and images, and especially turtle shell rattles.

Despite all these data, there are still many unanswered questions and topics that require further exploration. Why do images of turtles appear in only certain media to the apparent exclusion of others? Why, for example, have no turtle effigies on bone or antler combs, or on the castellation of a ceramic vessel, been found on an Ontario Iroquoian site when such effigies appear elsewhere in eastern North America? Are there any indications that turtle images were associated with a particular gender—male or female? Were turtle effigy pipes, and turtle effigies in other media, personal items? Or, were they meant to be viewed by a wide audience?

A turtle-shaped stone amulet found in the Ottawa Valley was one of the featured items in James V. Wright's *Ontario Prehistory* (Wright 1972: Plate 21, Figure g) and in his "Cosmology" page in the *Historical Atlas of Canada* (Wright 1987: Plate 15); he also included an image of the amulet to portray Algonquian cosmology in *A History of the Native People of Canada* (Wright 1995-2004:3:1542). That same image of the turtle was selected by the Canadian Archaeological Association as the official logo for one of their recent annual meetings:

...a drawing of a carved soapstone turtle found near Arnprior in the Ottawa Valley... (the image) captured the essential lines of this intriguing representation of an

image widely interpreted as symbolic of the North American continent in many native cultures. The turtle and the earth it symbolizes are transitional between the skyworld and the underworld. Humans live between these spheres of competing and complimentary forces... [Canadian Archaeological Association 33rd Annual Meeting, Ottawa 2000, Preliminary Programme and Information Package].

There are at least two naturally shaped Turtle rocks in Ontario, both of which are regarded as highly significant sacred sites that are revered even today by Anishinaabeg (Algonquian) elders. One (BiHc-1) is the Great Sacred Turtle (*K'nauk-shebe-kwa-shing*) at Turtle Point on the shore of Georgian Bay (Allen, 2003:25, 2004a:39, 2004b:83-88, 2006:64-65; Jameson 1990:530; Jones 1861:255; personal observation, August 2005 and August 2006). The other is a perched glacial erratic known as Great Turtle Stone (*Kitchi Mikinak Assin*) (BIGp-41) on the shore of a remote lake in Algonquin Park (Allen 2004b:91-110; Garland 1997:56; Laidlaw 1922:83-84; personal observation September 2006). The highly respected Anishinaabeg Elder Dr. William Commanda, Kitigan Zibi First Nation, Quebec, founded "The Circle of All Nations" and assisted First Nations artist Claude Latour in the design of a logo for that organization, which incorporated the four colours of the sacred circle and "the Turtle, representing Turtle Island." A report on Elder Commanda's activities in 2005 (www.angelfire.com/ns/circleofallnations) made special reference to his trip (a few days before his 92nd birthday) into Algonquin Park to give a teaching in front of the Great Turtle Stone; his report included a photograph of the Great Turtle Stone, which he named *Kitchi Mikinak Assin*.

There are 13 turtle images pecked into the flat rock face at the Peterborough Petroglyphs site in central Ontario (Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:103-107). That number is significant: in many world cultures, there is a symbolic association between the turtle and the number 13 because many species of turtles have carapaces composed of 13 scutes. In Chinese mythology, for example, the number 13 is specifically associated with the "Turtle Chart"

(Cammann 1985:227-228). The 13 turtle glyphs at the Peterborough Petroglyphs site are also significant because petroglyphic images of turtles are recorded at only two other sites in Ontario—both in the Lake of the Woods area, Kenora District (Reid 1976:18, 42). In contrast, red ochre pictographs of turtles occur at widely scattered rock art sites across the entire Canadian Shield, from just northwest of Trois Rivières at Lac Wapizagonke in Quebec, to several sites in Ontario and westward into Manitoba. I have compiled data (albeit very limited in some instances) for at least 32 turtle pictograph images at 30 sites in Ontario alone, from Bon Echo/Lake Mazinaw (BfGh-5) in Frontenac County (Boyle 1896a:Plate 4, Figure 39) to South Bay (FdKo-1) in northwestern Kenora District (Rajnovich 1981:283, 287).

Moving slightly beyond the boundaries of Ontario, one can find turtle pictographs or petroglyphs in virtually every state, including but not limited to Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Extending the circle out a bit further, we can observe on the fringes of the Canadian Shield and throughout the American Midwest, Great Plains and Canadian Prairies, earthen mounds and stone petroforms shaped like turtles and turtle images at a very large number of rock art sites (both petroglyphs and pictographs).

The point here is simple—the turtle has been and continues to be significant to many people. Archaeological data support the concept of Turtle Island among and the special regard for the turtle by, First Nations—Iroquoian, Anishinaabeg (Algonquian), Siouan, Caddoan and many others. These images are often portrayals not simply of any old turtle but rather of the Great Turtle belonging to the respective creation legends of the various First Nations who occupy Turtle Island.

In 1639 Jesuit Father Paul le Jeune described an Ontario Huron Iroquoian ceremony he had observed at the village of Ossossane as follows:

There followed a little distance behind the company of dancers, men and women, at whose head marched two masters of ceremonies, singing and holding the Tortoise on which they did not cease to play. This

Tortoise is not a real Tortoise, but only the shell and skin so arranged as to make a sort of drum; having thrown certain pebbles into this, they make from it an instrument like that which children in France use to play with. *There is a mysterious something, I know not what, in this semblance of a Tortoise, to which these peoples attribute their origin. We shall know in time what there is to it* [Thwaites 1896-1901:17:157; emphasis added].

Today, some 368 years later, we are beginning to understand why this Turtle was so significant, not only to the Huron of seventeenth-century Ontario, but also to their ancestors and descendants and to almost all of their contemporaries across Turtle Island. But North American First Nations did not have exclusive rights to this Turtle, and if one looks hard enough one can find a revered turtle [or tortoise, or terrapin] in mythologies, legends and everyday life just about anywhere, from Abakan to Zimbabwe.

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Tortues de « Turtle Island » : une perspective archéologique de l'Iroquoisie

Les Iroquoiens croient que leur monde, « Turtle Island », fut créé sur le dos de l'être mythologique, Tortue. D'après les preuves abondantes dans le record archéologique de l'Iroquoisie, la tortue était fort symbolique, non seulement de « Turtle Island » mais aussi du clan de la Tortue, clan prééminent chez les Iroquoiens. Des tortues complètes étaient modifiées en hochets, les carapaces et les os étaient symboliquement utilisées de différentes façons, et des images de tortue étaient graphiquement représentées dans plusieurs médias. Cet article explore le traitement symbolique et l'utilisation de la tortue dans l'est nord-américain, qui tire son origine de la période archaïque et qui s'est développé dans la mythologie de groupes linguistiquement et culturellement variés, notamment les Iroquoiens, les Algonquins (Anishnaabeg) et les Sioux.

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