

Where License Reigns With All Impunity

An Anarchist Study of the Rotinonshón:ni Polity

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“Their Policy in this is very wise, and has nothing Barbarous in it. For, since their preservation depends upon their union, and since it is hardly possible that among peoples where license reigns with all impunity — and, above all, among young people — there should not happen some event capable of causing a rupture, and disuniting their minds, — for these reasons, they hold every year a general assembly in Onontaé. There all the Deputies from the different Nations are present, to make their complaints and receive the necessary satisfaction in mutual gifts, — by means of which they maintain a good understanding with one another.”

François le Mercier, 1668¹

Some historical materialists claim a densely settled, agricultural population will inevitably develop into a hierarchically stratified society, with a centralized state and an exploitative economic redistribution system, in order avoid warfare while resolving blood feuds among its members.² While this is a common occurrence, it is not the only way these issues have been resolved. Located along the southern banks of Kaniatarí:io (Lake Ontario), the traditional society of the Rotinonshón:ni (Iroquois),³ “The People of the Longhouse,” was a densely settled, matrilineal, communal, and extensively horticultural society. The Rotinonshón:ni formed a confederacy initially of five nations: Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk), Onenote’á:ka (Onedia), Ononta’kehá:ka (Onondaga), Kaion’kehá:ka (Cayuga) and Shotinontowane’á:ka (Seneca). Generations before historical contact with Europeans,⁴ these nations united through the Kaianere’kó:wa (“the Great Good Way”) into the same polity⁵ and ended blood feuding without economic exploitation, stratification, or the formation of a centralized state.

Jared Diamond hypothesizes that when stateless egalitarian hunter-gather societies develop agriculture and experience population growth, blood feuds and new resource management problems challenge their ability to maintain horizontal political relationships and economic communalism.⁶ According to Diamond, the material transition itself leads inevitably to the State, which he refers to as “the kleptocracy,” and the most the oppressed can hope for by revolting is for a change in the rate of exploitation and oppression by installing a new group of kleptocrats. In his view, “the kleptocracy” is ultimately a function of material culture.⁷

Some Marxists agree with Diamond’s perspective. They argue that in the transitions from hunter-gather communism to feudalism, and from there to capitalism, society develops the industrial production of the social wealth necessary for communism to become an option again. There is at least one strong counter example to this vulgar historical determinism and unilinear cultural evolution: the formation and continued survival of the Rotinonshón:ni in the northeast of North America.

¹ Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610–1791*, Vol. 51

² Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 268–269

³ For this article, “Iroquois” will be used to refer to those who speak a northern Iroquois language, while “Rotinonshón:ni” (Haudenosaunee) will be used for the specific polity, also known as the People of the Longhouse and the League (Confederacy) of Five (Six) Nations. Terms used throughout the article are mostly in standard Kanien’kehá:ka

⁴ Bonaparte, *Creation and Confederation*, 47

⁵ Also referred to as Gayanashagowa, “The Great Law,” “The Great Law of Peace,” “The Good Tidings of Peace and Power (and Righteousness),” “The Great Binding Law,” “The Constitution of the Five (Six) Nations”

⁶ Diamond, 286–287

⁷ *Ibid*, 276

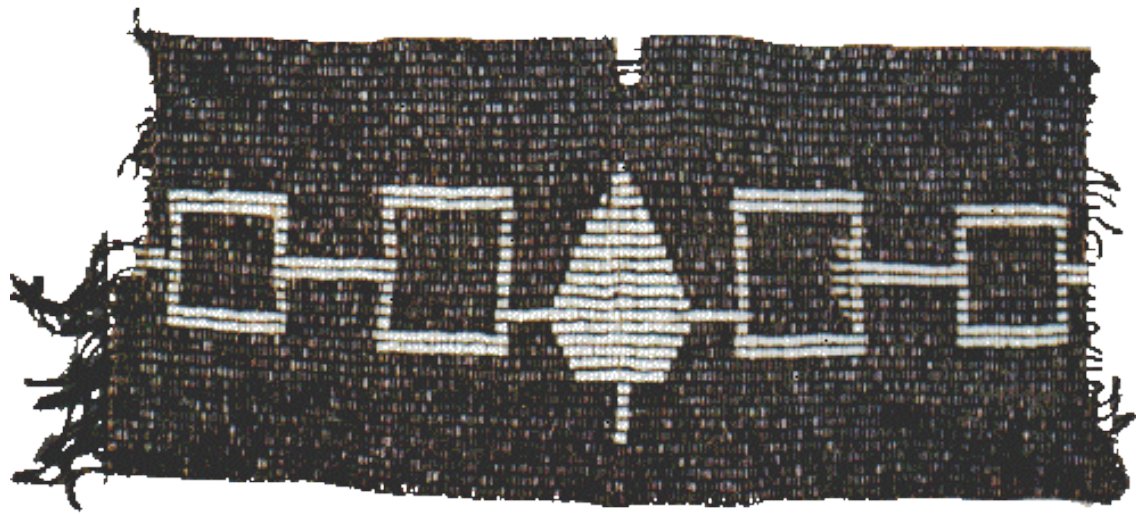
While critical of Marxism, Murray Bookchin acknowledges the cooperative and peaceful internal nature of hunter-gather societies but also brings up the problems of external warfare.

“To members of their own bands, tribes, or clans, prehistoric and later foraging peoples were normally cooperative and peaceful; but toward members of other bands, tribes, or clans, they were often warlike, even sometimes genocidal in their efforts to dispossess them and appropriate their land... As to modern foragers, the conflicts between Native American tribes are too numerous to cite at any great length... the tribes that were to finally make up the Iroquois Confederacy (the Confederacy itself was a matter of survival if they were not to all but exterminate one another), and the unrelenting conflict between Mohawks and Hurons, which led to the near extermination and flight of remnant Huron communities.”⁸

The conflicts Bookchin mentions occurred around Kaniatarí:io and Lake Erie in the 17th century and are often referred to as the “Beaver Wars,” due to the connection with the fur trade between indigenous and European people. Bookchin’s description the conflict of Kanien’kehá:ka and the Wendat (Huron) as “extermination” or “genocidal” is inaccurate. Rather than a matter of ethnic cleansing or economic competition, that conflict is better understood as a civil war of political unification among Iroquois speakers. It is ironic that in Bookchin’s tirade against modern anti-civilizationist mystification of the primitive, he acknowledges the formation as of Rotinonshón:ni polity that ended the warfare among the Five Nations, but fails to reflect upon this momentous accomplishment or see how much their achievement has parallels with his own political ideas.

⁸ Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*

How Peace Came to the Rotinonshón:ni



*Aiewáhtha Wampum Belt*¹

The story of the formation of the Rotinoshón:ni has been passed down by oral tradition, by reciting the Kaianere'kó:wa. This recitation has been done in at least five similar languages and translated and transcribed into English in multiple versions. There are many variations, and no definitive version.²

In a version of the story common at Ohswé:ken,³ Tekanawí:ta was born under mysterious circumstances to a Wendat mother, along the Bay of Quinte.⁴ After a difficult childhood, Tekanawí:ta left his community to bring the message of peace to the Iroquois. He traveled south across Kaniatarí:io, where he encountered Aiewáhtha preparing a meal. Aiewáhtha, grieving for lost loved ones, was planning to eat a man he had slain in vengeance. Tekanawí:ta conducted a condolence ceremony for Aiewáhtha, so as to end the blood feuding. He convinced Aiewáhtha to eat only of the flesh of deer, not man. Finally, he persuaded Aiewáhtha to give up war and to help him bring peace to the Iroquois.

According to a women's oral tradition,⁵ Tekanawí:ta then approached the head clan mother, Tsikónhsase.⁶ Tsikónhsase, of the Kakwa:ko (Neutral) nation, had provisioned warriors and also administered disputes.⁷ She agreed to support Tekanawí:ta's efforts for peace if he agreed to codify into the Kaianere'kó:wa several powers and responsibilities for women: matrilineality of clans, the clan as the basis of popular sovereignty, and the collective ownership of agricultural land by women. Barbara Mann, Shotinontowane'á:ka author and professor of Native American Studies, views the underlying conflict of the era in terms of the material culture of production. She describes the conflict as one between women-led agriculturists and the cannibalistic hunters, led by Thatotáhrho. Tekanawí:ta's role was to unite the warring factions, establish both farming and hunting as modes of production, and abolish cannibalism.⁸

Tekanawí:ta, Aiewáhtha and Tsikónhsase visited a series of Iroquois communities. Having gone to the Kanien'kehá:ka and gained their support, they visited the Onenote'á:ka, gaining their acceptance as well. Next they visited the Ononta'kehá:ka, but were rebuffed by Thatotáhrho. They then gained the support of the Kaion'kehá:ka, and finally visited the westernmost nation—the Shotinontowane'á:ka. All of the Shotinontowane'á:ka were convinced except their two principal war chiefs; these were brought into agreement and designated as the ratihnhohanónhna, the doorkeepers, responsible for protecting the long house of the Rotinoshón:ni from enemies to

¹ Symbolizes the confederation of the Rotinoshón:ni. Each square is a separate nation, with the white pine in the center representing Ononta'kehá:ka as the central fire keepers.

² Bonaparte, *Creation and Confederation*, 7

³ Ohswé:ken is also known as the Six Nations Reserve at Grand River, the Haldimand Tract. The version mentioned here is Seth Newhouse's. Bonaparte, *Creation and Confederation*, 85

⁴ Bay of Quinte is also home of the Tyendinaga (a reference to Thayendanega) Kanien'kehá:ka community established in 1784. There is a memorial at the Community Centre to "The Peacemaker"—an English sobriquet of Tekanawí:ta. The version mentioned here is the Ohswé:ken Rotiiá:ner version. Bonaparte, *Creation and Confederation*, 81

⁵ Barbara Mann, "The Lynx in Time: Haudenosaunee Women's Traditions and History"

⁶ Parker lists her as Djikonsa'se, "the mother of nations", "the peace queen" and states that she was of the Kakwa:ko (Neutral) nation on the east side of the Niagara. Parker, *The Constitution of the Five Nations or the Iroquois Book of the Great Law*, 71

⁷ Also transliterated as Tsokansase, Natoway Brian Rice, "The Great Epic: The Peacemaker Brings the Message of Peace to the Kenienke haka"

⁸ Mann

the west. Having convinced all of the Shotinontowane'á:ka, they returned to the Ononta'kehá:ka, and there was a mighty struggle with Thatotáhrho.⁹ Tsikónhsase devised a solution, suggesting to Tekanawí:ta that the council fire of the Rotinonshón:ni could be with the Ononta'kehá:ka, and that Thatotáhrho should become its keeper.¹⁰

Tekanawí:ta had several other innovations for the Rotinonshón:ni polity. The fifty men who would make decisions through consensus at the council fire were named roiá:ner, and they would wear deer horns to represent that they had forsaken war and ate only the flesh of deer, not of men. The roiá:ner were to have skins “seven spans thick”: they would be patient, not easily offended. Tekanawí:ta named each of the roiá:ner, and stated that their names would be requickened when they died (or were removed from office) and returned to the clan mothers, the iotiiá:ner. The iotiiá:ner had the responsibility of selecting new roiá:ner, though never the son of the previous roiá:ner. The iotiiá:ner would also have the authority to recall roiá:ner from office. A provision was made for further speakers to be added to the council at Ononta'kehá:ka, men who had merit and had sprung up like a Pine Tree—“Ohnkaneto:ten.” The Ohnkaneto:ten would have voices but not votes; their appointment would die with them and not be transferred. Further, the great good way, the Kaianere'kó:wa, could be amended by “adding to the rafters” of the longhouse.

The weapons of war were buried beneath the tree of peace, so that there would be no further war among the nations of the Rotinonshón:ni.¹¹ (The English idiom, “burying the hatchet,” originates with the Rotinonshón:ni.) The tree's four white roots of peace stretched to the cardinal directions, spreading the good tidings. There were rules for adoption of individuals and whole nations, to follow the roots, find shelter beneath the tree of peace, and join the Rotinonshón:ni. The condolence ceremony for those who were in grief was described, as well as the use of wampum. The Rotinonshón:ni would be guided by principles of “peace, power and righteousness.” The last issue that Tekanawí:ta resolved was about hunting territory: Tekanawí:ta declared that all Rotinonshón:ni would share the hunt and “eat of one bowl.”¹²

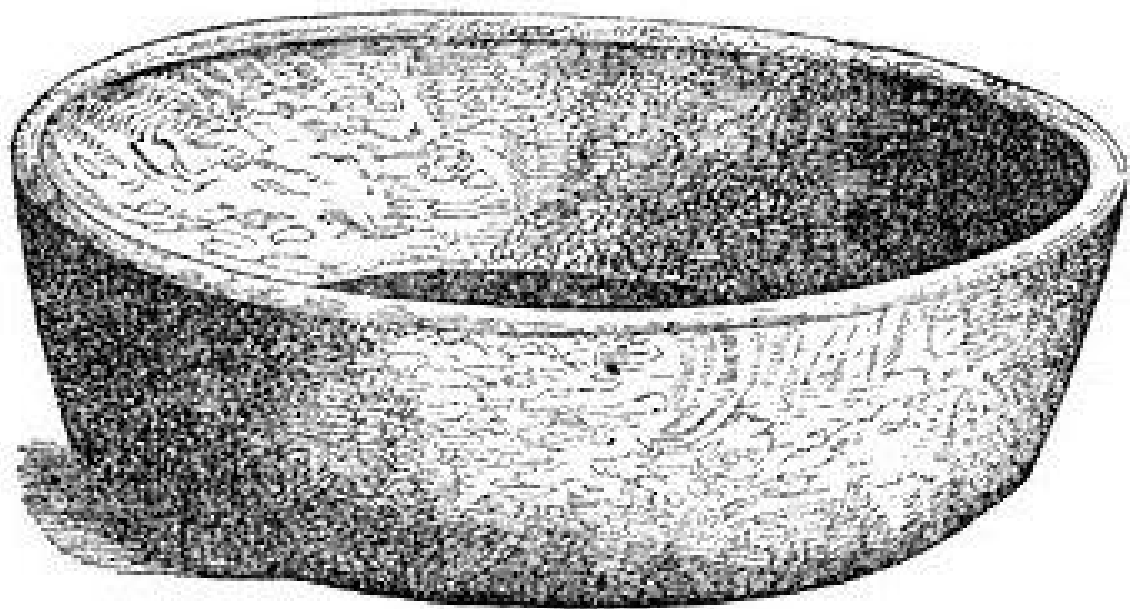
⁹ This version is from Thaientané:ken (Joseph Brant). Bonaparte, Creation and Confederation, 54–55.

¹⁰ This has been related in the oral tradition as recited by Jake Thomas and referenced by Kanatiiosh Barbara Gray, “The Importance of Narratives in Understanding: The Passions & Law”

¹¹ Kahentinetha Horn, “Traditional Culture and Community Competition”

¹² Newhouse and Ohswé:ken rotiiá:ner versions, Parker; as well as Rice's version.

“One Bowl”: The Communal Economy of the Rotinoshón:ni



*Illustration by Lewis Henry Morgan*¹

“They still possess virtues which might cause shame to most Christians. No hospitals are needed among them, because there are neither mendicants nor paupers as long as there are any rich people among them. Their kindness, humanity, and courtesy not only make them liberal with what they have, but cause them to possess hardly anything except in common. A whole village must be without corn before any individual can be obliged to endure privation. They divide the produce of their fisheries equally with all who come”

Father Simon Le Moyne, 1657²

In the 17th century, the Rotinonshón:ni lived in settled towns of as many as two thousand people, surrounded by palisades. Population density averaged two hundred people per acre. These were the densest communities in the Northeast, including those of European settlers, until the 19th century.³ The communal fields surrounding Rotinonshón:ni villages extended for up to six miles in radius. Even after the Rotinonshón:ni population had been greatly reduced by war and disease, they were still very productive farmers.

One indicator of quantity of Rotinonshón:ni production is taken from a military campaign against them under the orders of U.S. President George Washington, who the Rotinonshón:ni have named Ranatakárias—“Town Destroyer”.⁴ During the American Revolutionary War, in 1779 the Sullivan-Clark military expedition attacked the villages of all Rotinonshón:ni nations except the Onenioté’á:ka. The alliance of the Onenioté’á:ka with the United States against the rest of the Rotinonshón:ni broke the peace between the Rotinonshón:ni nations that had stretched back to Tekanawí:ta’s foundation, and resulted in profound consequences for all. According to Sullivan’s official report, the U.S. army burned forty towns and their surrounding fields, destroying 160,000 bushels of corn; Anthony F.C. Wallace estimated “500... dwellings in two dozen settlements... and nearly 1 million bushels of corn” were destroyed⁵; and Allan Eckert estimated at least fifty towns and nearly 1,200 houses were burned. The American Revolution was more an economic disaster for the Rotinonshón:ni than a military defeat.

Teiowí:sonte Thomas Deer describes the economics of the traditional Rotinonshón:ni as synonymous with contemporary concepts of communalism or socialism: “an emphasis is placed upon the survival and welfare of the collective as opposed to the success and comfort of the individual. Such societies are composed of a group who voluntarily participate in a cooperative livelihood that shares the burden of labor and as well the fruit of such labor. This concept is reinforced by the Kaianere’kó:wa in its analogy of the bowl from which all Haudenosaunee would share from.”⁶ Hunter Gray has referred to tribal communalism and the Rotinonshón:ni ethos of tribal (mutual) responsibility as “strawberry socialism.”⁷

In 1977, when Rotinonshón:ni delegates addressed the United Nations with their economic ideas, they argued against permanent private property and excluding others from the means of

¹ Lewis Henry Morgan, *The League of the Ho-de’-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois*, 308

² *Jesuit Relations*, Vol. 43

³ Richter, 17

⁴ Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, 143

⁵ *Ibid.*, 194

⁶ Teiowí:sonte Thomas Deer, “The Traditionalist Doctrine”

⁷ Hunter Gray, “Strawberries, the Iroquois, and My Strawberry Socialism”

production. They suggested that the concept of alienated property results in slavery. They stated that their rejection of a commodity economy, their rejection of conspicuous consumption, and their ideas of eminently fair distribution would result in all people sharing in material wealth. Their concepts of economy and labor would require an entire community of involvement, rather than isolated nuclear families. All people, they declared, have a right to food, clothing and shelter. No one should have a position of economic power over anyone else, and there should be no artificial scarcity created by property ownership.⁸

Did the Rotinonshón:ni have private property historically? Historian Daniel Richter has argued that the Rotinonshón:ni economics only superficially resembled communalism. Property ownership, however, derived from need and use, while abandoned property was free for the use by anyone. Further, that in times of shortage, all was shared communally.⁹ This is an example of a usufruct (use rights) system of ownership, which many anarchists would approve of, including Bookchin: “an individual appropriation of goods, a personal claim to tools, land, and other resources ... is fairly common in organic [i.e. aboriginal] societies... co-operative work and the sharing of resources on a scale that could be called communistic is also fairly common... But primary to both of these seemingly contrasting relationships is the practice of usufruct.”¹⁰

It bears mentioning that wampum, beads made of shell and strung together, was used as currency among cash-poor European settlers in the Northeast. Wampum, in addition to European-manufactured goods, was exchanged for beaver pelts with the Rotinonshón:ni. Among the Rotinonshón:ni, however, it was not used as currency. A hallmark of their diplomacy and gift exchange, wampum functioned almost exclusively as a political and social aid, used in the condolence ceremonies, in the requickening of newly selected leaders, and as a mnemonic device for agreements and treaties.¹¹

While the Rotinonshón:ni mode of production was collective, it was divided by gender. Men engaged in clearing the forest, hunting, fishing, diplomacy, trade and warfare. Women focused on extensive horticulture, childcare and village life¹². Collective effort and communal ownership of the land did not, however, preclude individuals from working separately. To this extent, the communism of the Rotinonshón:ni can be regarded as voluntary.

“Women worked in family unites in fields cleared by their clan brothers. So long as each did her share of the labor, she also shared in the communal harvest. Individual women might also keep private plots, but they shared in the communal harvest only if they also did their parts in the fields of the ohwachira. An ad hoc mutual aid society was sometimes formed by these women so that they could bring collective effort even to fields not supervised by clan matrons”¹³

⁸ Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 25

⁹ *Ibid.*, 23

¹⁰ Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*, 50

¹¹ Graeber, *Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value*

¹² Akwesasne Notes, “Basic Call to Consciousness”

¹³ Kahwá:tsire / Ohwachira means matrilineal clan. Snow, *The Iroquois*, 69

“We are left to answer for our women”

“Hear and listen to what we, women, shall speak, as well as the Sachems; for we are the owners of this land, AND IT IS OURS! It is we that plant it for our and their use. Hear us, therefore, for we speak things that concern us and our children; and you must not think hard of us while our men shall say more to you, for we have told them”

Seneca women

“We are left to answer for our women, who are to conclude what ought to be done by both Sachems and warriors. So hear what is their conclusion. The business you come on is troublesome, and we have been a long time considering it; and now the elders of our women have said that our Sachems and warriors must help you, for the good of them, and their children”

Sagoyawatha “Red Jacket”, 1791¹

Anarchist anthropologist Harold Barclay has pointed out that “Egalitarian does not... mean that there is any equality between sexes and between different age groups” and that “true sexual equality is a rarity.”² By contrast, the Rotinonshón:ni are often held up as an example of a matriarchy, though I disagree with the semantics of that term. While the Rotinonshón:ni are both matrilineal and matrilocal, and the women do have a role in consensual politics and in selecting and removing men from leadership positions; women do not wield power over men the way men wield power over women in a patriarchal society. Anthropological archaeologist Dean Snow, explains this very well: “Iroquois women were not matriarchs, or Amazons, or drudges. They were Iroquois women, who lived in a nonhierarchical society in which their role as food producers was properly appreciated and in which the elevation of some aspects of kinship to political significance gave them influence that they might not otherwise have had.”³

Another anarchist anthropologist, David Graeber, described the overlapping councils by gender:

“Longhouses were governed by councils made up entirely of women, who, since they controlled its food supplies, could evict any in-married male at will. Villages were governed by both male and female councils. Councils on the national and league level were made up of both male and female office-holders. It’s true that the higher one went in the structure, the less relative importance the female councils had—on the longhouse level, there wasn’t any male organization at all, while on the league

¹ Sally Roesch Wagner, *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminists*, 91–92

² Barclay, *People Without a Government*, 121

³ Snow, 65

level, the female council merely had veto power over male decisions—but it’s also true that decisions on the lower level were of much more immediate relevance to daily life. In terms of everyday affairs, Iroquois society often seems to have been about as close as there is to a documented case of a matriarchy.”⁴

Another indication of differences between the Rotinonshón:ni and European settler society comes from that same Sullivan expedition in 1779 that destroyed so many Rotinonshón:ni towns. While preparing to attack and destroy the towns, General James Clinton even remarked that the Rotinonshón:ni men never raped women, and that some measures needed to be taken to prevent American soldiers from raping.⁵ Among the Rotinonshón:ni, violence against women, including spousal abuse, was harshly punished by a woman’s kin.⁶ A man who abused a woman could not be selected as a roiá:ner.⁷

Divorce was easy and common, so much so that Jesuit missionary Father Jacques Bruyas, while regarding divorce as the greatest sin among the Rotinonshón:ni, explained that “There is as great ease in breaking marriages as in making them — the husband leaving his wife, and the wife her husband, at pleasure.”⁸ Since the husbands lived with their wives’ kahwá:t sire (matrilineal clan), in divorce former husbands had to leave the home. While the majority of the property as it was held in common through the matrilineal clan, personal possessions were always kept distinct between a husband and wife.⁹ Children remained with the mother after divorce,¹⁰ a contrast to the paternal ownership of children which was the standard in the continent’s European settler society until it was replaced by maternal preference in custody in the 1920s. Kanatiosh (Barbara Gray) has argued that “western law emerges with a structure based on hierarchy, which I believe is attributed, to their treatment of women as secondary citizens. Whereas, Haudenosaunee law emerges with a democratic structure based on equality and goodwill for all.”¹¹

Family planning was essential to women, who had the responsibility for farming, and often chose to limit the number of children for whom they were responsible at any one time. There were many abortifacients and fertility medicines known to Rotinonshón:ni herbalists.¹² Christian missionaries, and later in the early 19th century the Shotinontowane’á:ka prophet Ganioda’yo, who codified Karihwi:io or Gai’wiio (“the good message”), preached against divorce and abortion, while emphasizing the relationship of husband and wife over that of mother and daughter.¹³ Wallace, a psychological anthropologist and historian, regarded the reforms of the Karihwi:io as “the sentence of doom upon the traditional quasi-matriarchal system.”¹⁴ Kahentinetha Horn, the editor of Mohawk Nation News, has asserted that the polity’s “structure has been modified to accommodate the Gai’wiio. For example, instead of the Clan Mothers appointing the Chiefs according to the Old Way, in the Gai’wiio the Chiefs select the Clan Mothers.”¹⁵

⁴ Graeber, 122

⁵ Wagner, 68

⁶ Ibid, 66

⁷ Ibid, 47

⁸ Jesuit Relations, Vol LI, CXXII

⁹ Wagner, 73

¹⁰ Ibid., 69

¹¹ Kanatiosh

¹² Snow, 71–72

¹³ Wallace, 283–28

¹⁴ Ibid, 28

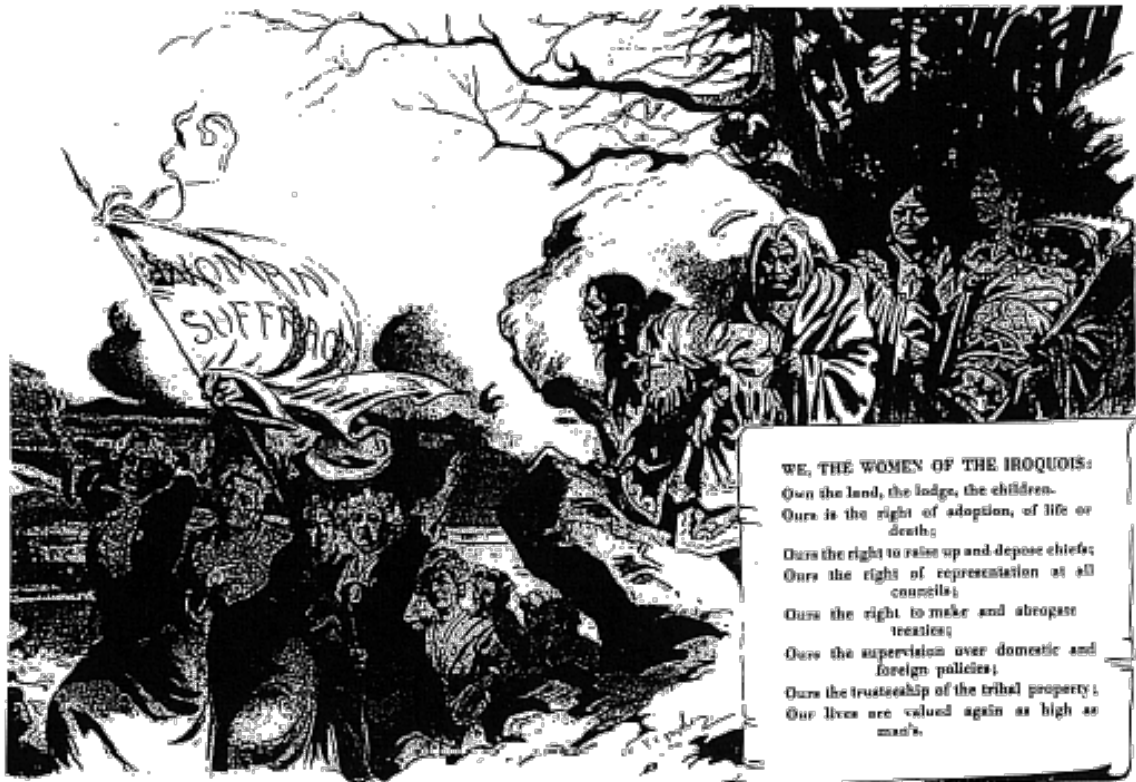
¹⁵ Kahentinetha

Over time, individual households of nuclear families replaced the traditional longhouses as residences. The situation had so changed by 1850, when Lewis Henry Morgan published his classical ethnographical study *The League of the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois*, he observed that women, and only women, were punished for adultery by public whipping.¹⁶ In 1924, an elected band council, rather than the traditional polity, governed Ohswé:ken; women were initially deprived of suffrage.¹⁷ At Onondaga, Tonawanda and Tuscarora, the iakoiá:ner never lost their rights to select roiá:ner.¹⁸

¹⁶ Morgan, 331

¹⁷ Snow, 217

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 198



WE, THE WOMEN OF THE IROQUOIS:
Own the land, the lodge, the children.
Ours is the right of adoption, of life or death;
Ours the right to raise up and depose chiefs;
Ours the right of representation at all councils;
Ours the right to make and abrogate treaties;
Ours the supervision over domestic and foreign policies;
Ours the trusteeship of the tribal property;
Our lives are valued again as high as man's.

*Drawn by Joseph Keppler, "Puck", 1914*¹⁹

At the same time Rotinonshón:ni rights and responsibilities were under attack, female European settlers were gaining some of those very rights. The contradiction is made even more glaring in the examination of American feminism by Women's Studies professor Sally Roesch Wanger, who found that the gender relations among the Rotinonshón:ni were an inspiration to suffragists in the United States like Matilda Joslyn Gage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott.²⁰ While Gage had been to court for attempting to vote in U.S. elections, she pointed out that her adoption as Karonhienhá:wi into the Wolf kahwá:tsire granted her a voice in selecting roíá:ner—giving her more political representation by adoption into the Kanien'kehá:ka nation than she had in the U.S.²¹

This difference in regards to suffrage was something well known to Rotinonshón:ni. Gawasco Waneh (Arthur Parker) wrote in 1909: "Does the modern American woman [who] is a petitioner before man, pleading for her political rights, ever stop to consider that the red woman that lived in New York state five hundred years ago, had far more political rights and enjoyed a much wider liberty than the twentieth century woman of civilization?"²²

Modern feminists might regard the traditional division of roles according to gender as less than egalitarian. Some contemporary Rotinonshón:ni would agree, and argue that traditional gender role division is obsolete, while also pointing out that some of that division had its origin in colonial gender roles imposed by European cultural imperialism. One example is the concern raised by Taiaiake Alfred:

"We cannot hold on to a concept of the warrior that is gendered in the way it once was and that is located in an obsolete view of men's and women's roles. The battles we are fighting are no longer primarily physical; thus, any idea of the indigenous warrior framed solely in masculine terms is outdated and must be rethought and recast from the solely masculine view of the old traditional ways to a new concept of the warrior that is freed from colonial gender constructions and articulated instead with reference to what really counts in our struggles: the qualities and actions of a person, man or woman, in battle."²³

¹⁹ "On May 16, 1914, only six years before the first national election in which women had the vote, Puck printed a line drawing of a group of Indian women observing Susan B. Anthony, Anne Howard Shaw and Elizabeth Cady Stanton leading a parade of women. A verse under the print read:

"Savagery to Civilization"

"We, the women of the Iroquois

Own the Land, the Lodge, the Children

Ours is the right to adoption, life or death;

Ours is the right to raise up and depose chiefs;

Ours is the right to representation in all councils;

Ours is the right to make and abrogate treaties;

Ours is the supervision over domestic and foreign policies;

Ours is the trusteeship of tribal property;

Our lives are valued again as high as man's. "

Donald A. Grinde, Jr and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of*

Democracy

²⁰ Wagner, 28

²¹ *Ibid*, 32

²² *Ibid*, 93

²³ Taiaiake, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, 84

The Beaver Wars, which were Not Only about the Fur Trade

“I take thee by the arm to lead thee away. Thou knowest, thou huron, that formerly we comprised but one Cabin and one country. I know not by what accident we became separated. It is time to unite again. I have twice before come to seek thee,— Once at Montreal, speaking to the French In thy absence; the 2nd time, at Quebec. It is for the third time that I now come.”

1656¹

Bookchin rarely examines the Rotinonshón:ni polity, and the few times he addresses it in print, he is dismissive. In the course of his dismissals he often repeats the common academic myth that the conflicts of the 17th century, misnamed “the Beaver Wars,” were fought over economic control of the fur trade. While it is true that the primary European interest in the conflict was to secure access to large quantities of low-cost beaver fur (in exchange for goods produced solely for indigenous consumption), there were other, potentially more important, reasons for the Rotinonshón:ni involvement in those conflicts.

“Warfare was endemic among our prehistoric ancestors and in later native communities, notwithstanding the high, almost cultic status enjoyed by ostensibly peaceful “ecological aborigines” among white middle-class Euro-Americans today. When foraging groups overhunted the game in their accustomed territory, as often happened, they were usually more than willing to invade the area of a neighboring group and claim its resources for their own. Commonly, after the rise of warrior sodalities, warfare acquired cultural as well as economic attributes, so victors no longer merely defeated their real or chosen “enemies” but virtually exterminated them, as witness the near-genocidal destruction of the Huron Indians by their linguistically and culturally related Iroquois cousins.”

Bookchin²

As pointed out earlier, the Rotinonshón:ni were not primarily a foraging society. The majority of their food came from horticulture, so they faced no need to relocate into territory held by others due to overhunting. In the early years of European colonization, disease greatly reduced indigenous populations before the settlers arrived in large numbers. During the Beaver Wars, there was actually much more available land per capita, due to this population reduction, than there had been before the arrival of the Europeans. While warfare did take on cultural and economic attributes, understanding the Beaver Wars only in terms of the fur trade and the role of

¹ Jesuit Relations: 42:253

² Bookchin, Nationalism and the “National Question”

warfare in culture is far too simplistic. Bookchin is right about the linguistic and cultural similarities between the Wendat and Rotinonshón:ni, and that itself is the key to understanding the determination with which the Rotinonshón:ni prosecuted their wars with the Wendat, Kakwa:ko, Erielhonan (Erie), Tionontati (Petun), Wenrohronon (Wenro), and Susquehannock nations.

Bookchin mentions the rise of “cultural attributes” of warfare. One such attribute practiced by the northern Iroquois-speaking peoples, not only the Rotinonshón:ni, was the mourning war. When people died in the Iroquois communities, the grieving relatives expected the dead to be symbolically replaced as soon as possible. Quite unlike the European settlers’ notion total war, a mourning war was ultimately ritualistic, and was not aimed at the eradication of an enemy or seizure of their territory. Rather, the goal was to take captives, who would replace the dead. Losses among warriors involved in the mourning wars could also be called on to be replaced. Large-scale casualties were rare, and when they did occur, they were considered great tragedies. Since disease was regarded as a hostile attack by unknown agents, those who died from sickness had to be replaced by mourning war. This process of replacing the dead by assigning their names and responsibilities to others is referred to as requickening.

Mourning war had at one time often involved cannibalism and torture, but these practices had completely died out of Rotinonshón:ni society by the 18th century. Central to the Rotinonshón:ni polity was the ceremony of condolence. Tekanawí:ta gave this ceremony to Aiewáhtha, to help with his grief so that peace would be possible between them and Thatotáhrho. Condolence would allow for blood feuds to end, and for people within a nation to be requickened, with the use of wampum, into new titles to replace the dead. Condolence has been seen as a replacement for the mourning wars. Some critics argue the Rotinonshón:ni polity simply caused the nations of the confederation to redirect their blood feuds outward.



The warfare among Iroquois-speaking nations had begun long before European contact added fuel to the fire, with its contributions of epidemic disease, firearms, and other metal weapons. The Rotinonshón:ni emerged out of a period of war, but it is noteworthy that not all Iroquois-speaking nations of the Great Lakes joined the great peace. Despite being close relatives to the Five Nations, the Susquehannocks did not join the Rotinonshón:ni. In the late 1500s, they moved their villages south to the river that still bears their name.³ Linguistic similarities between Susquehannocks and Cayuga suggest that some Susquehannock were adopted into the Cayuga nation, while most of them headed south.⁴

Darren Bonaparte cites an old oral tradition about the Kaniatarowanéhne (later known as the St. Lawrence river): “[T]here was once a great confederacy that had villages on the St. Lawrence River. After a shooting star destroyed one of their villages on the St. Lawrence, the confederacy broke down, leaving two or three smaller confederacies in their wake who eventually became hostile to each other. The Huron Confederacy, north of Lake Ontario, and the Iroquois Confederacy were two of those; a third would be the people archaeologists refer to as the “St. Lawrence Iroquoians.”⁵

When Jacques Cartier first explored the Kaniatarowanéhne in 1535, he encountered Iroquois-speaking communities all along the river between major settlements of Stadacona (near Quebec City) and Hochelaga (Montreal). When Samuel de Champlain came to the river in 1603, those Iroquois-speaking communities were gone. By the early 17th century, “[t]he Jefferson County Iroquoians had disappeared, probably absorbed by the Iroquois. The St. Lawrence Iroquoians had been incorporated into the Huron confederacy, as had people from other clusters around modern Toronto, the Trent River valley, and elsewhere just north of Lake Ontario,”⁶ although some may have also joined the Kanien’kehá:ka.⁷

The first published account of contact between Europeans and the Rotinonshón:ni is Champlain’s. In 1609, he and his Algonquian allies encountered a group of Kanien’kehá:ka near Crown Point. Champlain introduced the Rotinonshón:ni to the use of firearms by killing fifty of them including three Kanien’kehá:ka roiá:ner, one of whom carried the name Aiewáhtha.⁸ This was a huge defeat by the standards of the mourning wars. The French continued to ally themselves with the Algonquian and the Wendat, and the Rotinonshón:ni began trading with the Dutch by 1614. In 1615, Champlain led Wendat and Andastes in an attack on the Rotinonshón:ni at an Ononta’kehá:ka village, killing many, including another roiá:ner. In the central nation of the Great Longhouse, the Ononta’kehá:ka village was the council fire and symbolic heart of the Rotinonshón:ni.⁹ Firearms and forged blades were now part of warfare between Iroquois-speaking peoples.¹⁰ From the perspective of the Rotinonshón:ni, access to guns and metal became a priority, driving their trade with the Dutch, who were willing to trade these for beaver pelts. It became necessary to secure a stable supply of pelts, and to deprive their enemies of the same.

³ Snow, 67

⁴ Ibid, 87

⁵ Bonaparte, “Kaniatarowanenneh: River of the Iroquois”

⁶ Snow, 88

⁷ Bonaparte, “Kaniatarowanenneh: River of the Iroquois”

⁸ Natoway Brian Rice, “The Great Epic, Coming of the Light Skinned Beings.”

⁹ Natoway, “The Great Epic, Coming of the Light Skinned Beings.”

¹⁰ Snow, 79–80

In 1634, a plague of smallpox hit the Rotinonshón:ni, halving their population¹¹ and forcing relocations for the entire five nations as they fled diseased villages. While already engaged in wars with multiple indigenous nations and the French, and with changes to their economy and material technology, it must have seemed an apocalyptic scenario. The Wendat and other nations were similarly affected by epidemic diseases. There were unprecedented calamities for Rotinonshón:ni and Wendat societies, and the cultural tradition of mourning war called for replacement of all the dead through warfare.

Natoway combines a number of oral traditions, historical, and archeological research with his narrative of “The Great Epic.” In it, he relates that differences in wealth developed among the Wendat, based on the Jesuit policy of only trading with those Wendat who converted to Christianity. Jesuits and Christianity were also blamed for the disease within the community, and some traditional Wendat voluntarily joined with the Kanien’kehá:ka and Shotinontowane’á:ka to attack Wendat converts to Christianity, even going so far as to lead them in battle.¹² Graeber notes the changes in economic structure of the Wendat, but not the Rotinonshón:ni: “Delage argues that among the Huron, new regimes of property and the possibility of personal accumulation, really emerged only among converts to Christianity; among the Five Nations, they do not seem to have emerged at all.”¹³

Snow has claimed that during the final Rotinonshón:ni campaign against the Wendat in 1648, more than a thousand Wendat fled their villages, and seven hundred were taken prisoner or killed. In the following fall, the Kanien’kehá:ka-Shotinontowane’á:ka army numbered over a thousand men, including adopted Wendat who had been “fully integrated” into Rotinonshón:ni society. By 1651, another group of five hundred Wendat were brought into the Shotinontowane’á:ka nation, but were given autonomous control of their village.¹⁴

The Beaver Wars continued. The Erielhonan, with Kakwa:ko and Wendat refugees among them, were dispersed westward or absorbed into the Shotinontowane’á:ka, Ononta’kehá:ka, and other Rotinonshón:ni nations.¹⁵ By 1657, the Rotinonshón:ni had defeated their Iroquois-speaking enemies to the north and west. Kanien’kehá:ka and Shotinontowane’á:ka went to Quebec to convince Wendat refugees to return with them. According to Snow: “A village of perhaps 570 Hurons was built near the three Mohawk villages that existed there at the time... [A] decade later Jesuit missionaries would note that two-thirds of the Mohawk village of Caughnawaga was made up of Huron and Algonquian captives and adoptees.”¹⁶ Tionontati and Wenrohonon were also attacked, dispersed, and absorbed by the Rotinonshón:ni.

The post-dispersal history of the five nations of the Wendat, as described by John Steckley, holds that the Ataronchronnon (Bog) disappeared, the Atahontaenrat (Deer) joined the Shotinontowane’á:ka in an independent community, Arendaeronnon (Rock) joined the Ononta’kehá:ka, and the Atinniawenten (Bear) joined the Kanien’kehá:ka. The Atingeennonniyahak (Cord) remained as the sole Wendat nation.¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid, 100

¹² Natoway, “The Great Epic, The Revival of the War Chiefs”

¹³ Graeber, 146

¹⁴ Snow, 115

¹⁵ Ibid, 117

¹⁶ Ibid, 118

¹⁷ John Steckley, “Wendat Dialects and the Development of the Huron Alliance,” Humber College

In his military history of the Rotinonshón:ni, Daniel P. Barr compares accounts of the conflict and determines that:

“Between 1631–1663, the Iroquois attacked the Hurons at least 73 times. More than 500 Huron people are recorded as having been killed during these raids, with an astonishing 2,000—one-fifth of their post epidemic population—captured and deported to Iroquoia. These numbers are likely low-end estimates.... [T]he number of captives taken by the Iroquois during the Beaver Wars was on average two to three times greater than the number of enemies they killed. Both scenarios illustrate that the acquisition of enemy captives to replace Iroquois population losses was the primary factor in the Beaver Wars, which were not a series of conflicts designed to impose Iroquois control over the fur trade, but rather an Iroquois fight for survival, one vast, prolonged mourning war.”¹⁸

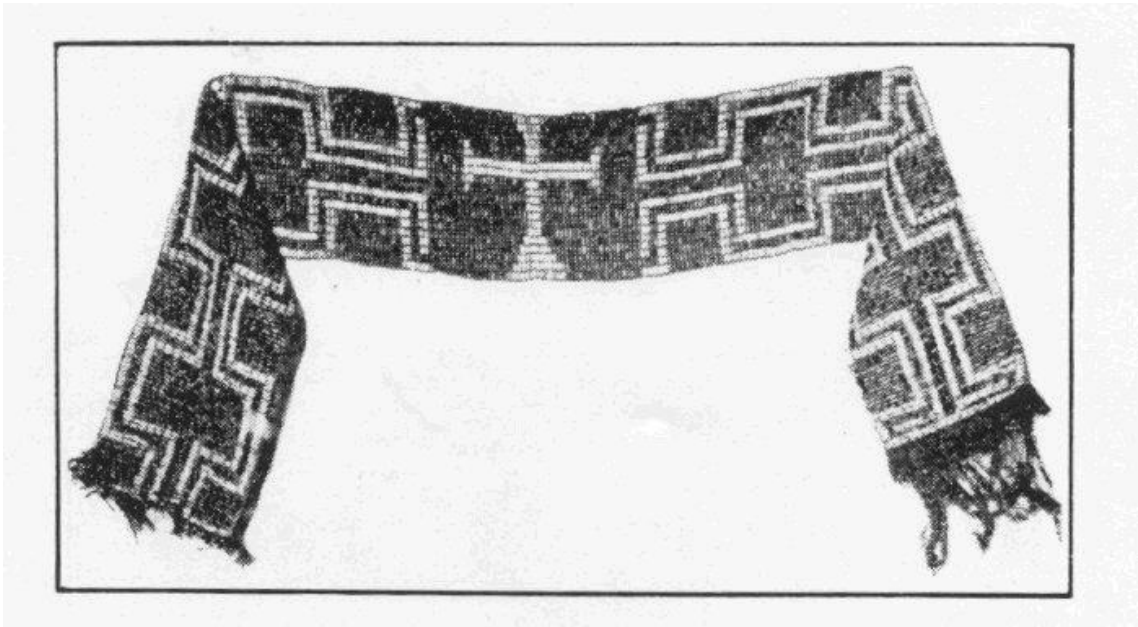
The descendants of captured Wendat adoptees were fully integrated into Rotinonshón:ni society and treated as equals. One notable example is Joseph Brant, Thaientané:ken, who was descended from Wendat captives adopted by the Kanien’kehá:ka both on his father and mother’s side.¹⁹ Thaientané:ken went on to become a Ohnkaneto:ten, and led war parties against the United States during the Revolutionary War. His efforts helped establish the community at Ohswé:ken, the Six Nations reserve along the Grand River. The town of Brantford is named for him, as is the Tyendinaga Mohawk Community at the Bay of Quinte. It should be noted again that various versions of the Kaianere’kó:wa hold that Tekanawí:ta originated from the Wendat nation, that the iakoiá:ner Tsikónhsase came from the Kakwa:ko nation, and even that Aiewáhtha was from the Ononta’kehaka nation, was adopted by the Kanien’kehá:ka, and became a roiá:ner there. From the perspective of many Iroquois speakers, they were the same people; membership among the warring nations could be quite fluid.

Warfare with the Susquehannock continued. Over time, more of them were adopted into the Rotinonshón:ni, often into the Oneniote’á:ka nation. The last Susquehannocks were not adopted, but were massacred by English settlers from Maryland. “By spring of 1669, a permanent village of Indian Christians had grown up around Raffeix’s Saint Francois Xavier des Pres mission. The first settlers were a diverse group of ‘free Iroquois’ and Erie, Huron and Susquehannock adoptees of the Oneidas.”²⁰ They were later joined by many Kanien’kehá:ka, and eventually this community moved to Kahnawà:ke.

¹⁸ Daniel P. Barr, *Unconquered: The Iroquois League at War in Colonial America*, 47, 40–41

¹⁹ Bonaparte, *Creation and Confederation*, 96

²⁰ Richter, 119–120



*The Wendat-Kanien'kehá:ka Peace Belt*²¹

In 1713, most of the Iroquois-speaking *Tehatiskaró:ros* (Tuscarora) nation, which had been warring with North Carolina settlers, relocated to live among the *Rotinonshón:ni*. By 1722–1723, they were incorporated as the Sixth Nation of the *Rotinonshón:ni*, living autonomously from the others. They were not invited to have *roiá:ner* in the council, but would be represented by the *Oneniote'á:ka* and *Kaion'kehá:ka*.²²

While there may have been economical and cultural motivations for *Rotinonshón:ni* participation and prosecution of the Beaver Wars, the result was far from genocide of their opponents—rather, it was the political unification of most northern Iroquois-speaking peoples under the *Kaianere'kó:wa*. It bears emphasizing that, according to Wallace, “[a]doption was so frequent during the bloody centuries of the beaver wars and the colonial wars that some Iroquois villages were preponderantly composed of formally adopted war captives.”²³ Adoption was as much a form of political unification of other Iroquois-speaking peoples, who already shared cultural traits, as it was cultural assimilation. Autonomous villages were common. The Beaver Wars might best be seen as bloody civil war among Iroquois-speaking people in the context of a larger series of devastating tragedies, not a genocidal conflict based on resource acquisition. Increasingly, the Beaver Wars are being referred to as the Iroquois Wars—which seems far more appropriate since the majority of the participants were Iroquois-speakers. Further context is provided by considering that the Beaver Wars were contemporary with the Thirty Years’ War on the European continent, and with the English Civil War. All three were fought with similar weapons. In his “Great Epic,” *Natoway* depicts the Beaver Wars as a usurpation of authority by the *ohnkanetoten* and war captains, leading the longhouse of the *Rotinonshón:ni* to fracture, and finally to crumble during the American Revolution.²⁴

On August 27, 1999, the four surviving nations of *Wendat* came together in a “tree of brotherhood” under the unity proposed by the *Peacemaker* of “peace, power, and righteousness” with leaders who have skins “seven span thick”. It seems that the message of the *Kaianere'kó:wa* was finally received by all of the *Wendat*.

²¹ This wampum belt was given to the *Kanien'kehá:ka* of *Kahnawà:ke* by the *Wendat* of *Lorette* (*Wendake*), circa 1677.

²² *Kahentinetha*

²³ Wallace, 29

²⁴ *Natoway*, “The Great Epic: *Sawiskera* Gains Control”

Kaianere'kó:wa as Constitution of a Stateless Polity?

Some have been tempted to submit a particular translation and transcription of the Kaianere'kó:wa to a political-science constitutional analysis. Depending on the version of the Kaianere'kó:wa, an analyst might come to the conclusions that Donald S. Lutz has: that the Rotinonshón:ni was not a participatory democratic confederacy of equal nations, but rather a hereditary oligarchy in which the Kanien'kehá:ka enjoyed a privileged position in making proposals to the council.¹ Lutz only consults the versions of the Kaianere'kó:wa published by Gawasco Waneh (Arthur Parker). In fact, his analysis focuses only on a single version written by Dayodekane (Seth Newhouse), and ignores a different version approved by the roíá:ner at Ohswé:ken, which was included in Gawasco Waneh's volume. According to Snow, "The Newhouse version tells us as much, if not more about political conditions on the Grand River at the end of the nineteenth century than it does about the origins of the League"². The Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee believe that no one version is preferred and that "many traditional leaders feel that none of the written versions have all of the known oral history included."³

Atsenhainton (Kenneth Deer) objects to the Kaianere'kó:wa even being called "the Great Law" and those that would treat it as such: "it's not a law: it's guidelines to help people get to harmony and coexistence... They look at the Great Law and interpret it the way a constitutional lawyer would. That's not the way it was intended to be treated."⁴ Even if the Kaianere'kó:wa should not be given a strict legalist reading, among its principles is a metaphor for amendment: "adding to the rafters" of the long house. This includes meetings among the traditional Rotinonshón:ni involving not only the roíá:ner but all the people, as a check on their power.⁵

The influence of Lewis Henry Morgan's study of the Rotinonshón:ni on Marx and Engels' concept of a stateless communist society is well known. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels summarized Morgan's description of the Rotinonshón:ni society:

"No soldiers, no gendarmes or police, no nobles, kings, regents, prefects, or judges, no prisons, no lawsuits – and everything takes its orderly course. All quarrels and disputes are settled by the whole of the community affected, by the gens or the tribe, or by the gentes among themselves; only as an extreme and exceptional measure is blood revenge threatened-and our capital punishment is nothing but blood revenge in a civilized form, with all the advantages and drawbacks of civilization. Although

¹ Donald S. Lutz, "The Iroquois Confederation Constitution: an analysis."

² Snow, 183

³ Haudenosaunee: Great Law of Peace

⁴ Taiaiake, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, 102

⁵ *Ibid*, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, 103

there were many more matters to be settled in common than today — the household is maintained by a number of families in common, and is communistic, the land belongs to the tribe, only the small gardens are allotted provisionally to the households — yet there is no need for even a trace of our complicated administrative apparatus with all its ramifications. The decisions are taken by those concerned, and in most cases everything has been already settled by the custom of centuries. There cannot be any poor or needy — the communal household and the gens know their responsibilities towards the old, the sick, and those disabled in war. All are equal and free — the women included. There is no place yet for slaves, nor, as a rule, for the subjugation of other tribes.”⁶

While Engels is right to commend the communal economy, sexual equality, and horizontal political structure of the Rotinonshón:ni, he erred in claiming that there were no ranks of social prestige with political responsibilities. The anthropological definition of “egalitarian” is narrow. There are some “rank societies in which positions of valued status are somehow limited so that not all those of sufficient talent to occupy such statuses actually achieve them. Such a society may or may not be stratified. That is, a society may sharply limit its positions of prestige without affecting the access of its entire membership to the basic resources upon which life depends”⁷ While the numbers of roíá:ner and iakoiá:ner were limited by the Kaianere’kó:wa to certain kahwá:tsire, positions of ohnkanetoten were open to all men on the basis of merit and selection by the roíá:ner council. As has already been explained, Rotinonshón:ni society had a communal work and consumption ethic (the communal economy of the “one bowl”), so although ranks of prestige did exist, they did not serve in a position of accumulating or redistributing wealth.

Graeber, who as an anarchist is quite suspicious of all hierarchy, says of the traditional Rotinonshón:ni, “for all the complex federative structure, society was in most respects highly egalitarian. Office-holders, male and female, were elected from among a pool of possible heirs; the offices themselves, at least the male political ones, were considered as much a responsibility as a reward as they involved no real material rewards and certainly granted the holder no coercive power.”⁸

While it is often argued that the roíá:ner were traditionally selected from certain matrilineal lines, and that not all kahwá:tsire were able to select candidates, this varied over time and location. Teiowí:sonte describes modern debates around heredity: “To some, heredity is the very essence of Haudenosaunee governance and an integral factor in leadership selection... To others, this concept represents the infiltration of European corruption into Haundenosaunee leadership selection and the fortification of a class system invading our traditional concept of democracy with notions of royalty. Likewise, advocates against the heredity concept believe it to be a non-traditional convention that is a fairly recent development resulting from colonization.”⁹ Snow claims that “Each nation devised its own internal mechanism for selecting and organizing its League Chiefs”¹⁰; and that ohnkanetoten were created to specifically deal with the issue of empowering men who did not come from the distinct matrilineal lines eligible for becoming roíá:ner.¹¹ He argues further

⁶ Frederick Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*

⁷ Fried quoted by Barclay, 41.

⁸ Graeber, 122

⁹ Teiowí:sonte “The Heredity Question”

¹⁰ Snow, 62

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65

that at times, the ranks may have represented a political class distinct from the common Rotinonshón:ni, and a class of slaves made up of captives who had not been adopted¹²—a situation which would have been most pronounced during the Beaver Wars.

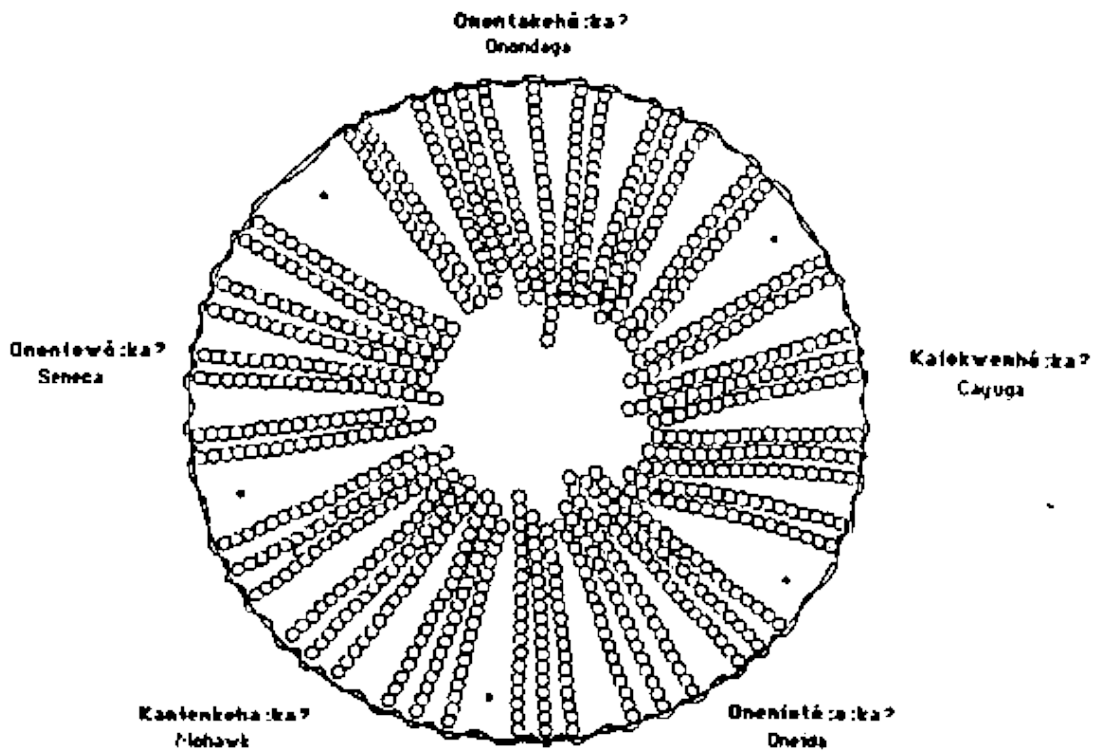
Graeber notes this as well. “It was around this period one reads accounts of a society effectively divided into classes, with adopted prisoners doing the bulk of the menial labor and with members of their adopted families having the right to kill them for the slightest infractions or impertinence... [T]his exceptionally brutal period did not last long: the children of these captives were considered full members of their adoptive clans.”¹³ As we have seen from the life of Thaientané:ken, the descendents of adoptees had the same political rights of common Rotinonshón:ni and could be selected as ohnkanetoten. It is seemingly without contradiction that Snow also describes how little authority came with rank: “Although men appointed by each ohwachira probably met as a village council, they had little authority beyond the force of their personalities. This in turn meant that face-to-face persuasion was the rule.”¹⁴ Kanatiiosh emphasizes that “being a chief or a clan mother is just as important as being a person without a title, for all people are held responsible for preserving and protecting the Great Law of Peace.”¹⁵

¹² Ibid, 130

¹³ Graeber, 124

¹⁴ Snow, 89

¹⁵ Kanatiiosh



*Circle Wampum*¹⁶

Bonaparte, who himself served as a former elected chief of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne,¹⁷ does not even think that roia:ner should be called “chiefs”: “a lot of our people don’t like using the term “chief” instead of “royaner,” because chief is such a generic term. You’ve got fire chiefs, police chiefs, chief of staff, etc. Those are positions where the people who have them are empowered to make decisions for a group, whereas our “royaners” are facilitators for having the group itself come to the decision, and who then act upon that decision.”¹⁸ Indeed, the focus on decision-making among the Rotinonshón:ni was always to reach consensus. Snow has argued that the Rotinonshón:ni “emphasized consensus rather than executive authority, unanimity rather than majority rule, and equality rather than hierarchy”¹⁹ Taiaiake goes so far as to write that “holding non-consensual power over others is contrary to tradition. Whatever the purpose behind the use of arbitrary authority, the power relationship is wrong”.²⁰ Richter describes a state of universal suffrage, claiming that voting in the council was open to all who had reached the age of maturity.²¹

Those familiar with the institution of consensus-based spokescouncils, used recently in the protests against corporate neoliberalism (“anti-globalization”), will notice many similarities with Kahentinetha Horn’s description of consensual decision-making among the Kanien’kehá:ka:

“[N]o one can impose their will nor make decisions for another, all must understand the viewpoint and agree of their own free will. The goal is not total agreement, but total understanding. If there is no agreement, then the consensus is to retain the status quo. If there is understanding by all then they go ahead with the decision... In entering the consensual decision-making process, whatever ideas are put into the process, the needs and attitudes of each is considered and complements the decision. Also, the individual has a duty to be directly involved, and to bring their ideas into the discussion within their clan. The final decision will be fully satisfactory to some, satisfactory to others and relatively satisfactory to the remainder, and will reflect elements from every group. This is a slow careful process requiring the reaching of a full understanding by each individual and not a decision made by a ‘leader.’ The person who explains the decision is a spokesman.”²²

The Kaianere’kó:wa lacks the monopoly of force and the authority of coercive control that define statist polities. It is a mutual agreement of non-aggression among its participants, aimed primarily on maintaining peaceful relations among them, rather than a guiding document for the rule of elites over the rest of society. Richter has stated that “the coercive exercise of authority

¹⁶ Symbolizes the unity and equality of the fifty roia:ner. The one longer strand represents the people or keeper of all records of the league. Image from Wampum Chronicles. [<http://www.onondaganation.org/wampum.circle.html>] [<http://www.tyendinaga.net/amsp/youth99/wampums/pg2.htm>]

¹⁷ The MCA is a band council, not an organization of the traditional polity of the Rotinonshón:ni; thus it has chiefs not roia:ner.

¹⁸ Bonaparte, personal correspondence; a sentiment also confirmed by Kahentinetha Horn in her interview with Kakwirakeron.

¹⁹ Snow, 142

²⁰ Taiaiake, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, 28

²¹ Richter, 43

²² Kahentinetha

was virtually unknown” among the Rotinonshón:ni,²³ and that their “political values were essentially noncompetitive.”²⁴ Graeber believes that “the entire political apparatus was seen by its creators primarily as a way of resolving murderous disputes. The League was less a government, or even alliance, than a series of treaties establishing amity and providing the institutional means for preventing feuds and maintaining harmony among the five nations that made it up. For all their reputation as predatory warriors, the Iroquois themselves saw the essence of political action to lie in making peace.”²⁵

Justice among the traditional Rotinonshón:ni was the responsibility of everyone, particularly one’s matrilineal kin. The focus was on condoling kahwá:tsire for their loss and on regulating social behavior through popular opinion, rather than through justice administered by a specialized class. While some see the offering of wampum to the family of a murder victim to as a reparational payment, comparable to the Northern European wergild, Morgan claimed that “the present of white wampum was not in the nature of a compensation of the life of the deceased, but of a regretful confession of the crime, with a petition for forgiveness. It was a peace-offering, the acceptance of which was pressed by mutual friends, and under such influences that the reconciliation was usually effect, except, perhaps, in aggravated cases of premeditated murder.”²⁶

Wallace’s interpretation echoes Engel’s analysis of Rotinonshón:ni justice: “Behavior was governed not by published laws enforced by police, courts, and jails, but by oral tradition supported by a sense of duty, a fear of gossip, and a dread of retaliatory witchcraft. Theft, vandalism, armed robbery, were almost unknown. Public opinion, gently exercised, was sufficient to deter most persons from property crimes, for public opinion went straight to the heart of the matter: the weakness of the criminal.”²⁷ And Kanatiosh argues that European settler “hierarchy breeds competition, and competition breeds anger, resentment, hatred, and can lead to revenge, which only continues the vicious cycle of violence. Western society is dependent on imprisonment, fines and other punishments, which are supposed to keep social order.” She contrasts that system of coercive punishment with the legal principles of the Kaianere’kó:wa, which created a “shared community where people have mutual respect for the entire group rather than interested only in one’s self. Perhaps a little spirituality, shame, guilt, and respect of self and community would be the best elements to include in a recipe for a true system of justice.”²⁸

Richter repeatedly describes the traditional polity of the Rotinonshón:ni as a “nonstate society”²⁹ and “a system dependent upon voluntary compliance”.³⁰ His insistence on the difference between the Rotinonshón:ni and the colonial states it was contemporary with is worth emphasizing:

“Making and preserving peace, then was the purpose of the League, and accordingly the Grand Council apparently did not undertake the kinds of political functions of decision making and diplomacy characteristic of state-organized governments. In the early seventeenth century, the League possessed few state like characteristics: the

²³ Richter, 45

²⁴ Ibid, 45

²⁵ Graeber, 125

²⁶ Morgan, 333

²⁷ Wallace, 25

²⁸ Kanatiosh

²⁹ Richter, 44

³⁰ Ibid, 46

Five nations had little in the way of common foreign policy, no effective means of devising unified strategies, and no central government in the sense that term is usually understood by Americans. Indeed, on various issues the ten or so autonomous towns of Iroquoia were often at odds with one another as they were in consensus. The League was not designed to remedy the deficit—nor, apparently, did the Iroquois people even perceive that there was any kind of deficit...”

Daniel Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*³¹

While the exact definition of a “state” is elusive, none can deny that states wield a legal monopoly of violence, and that the state therefore takes a coercive role in regards to its citizens. In respect to the degree of a given polity’s coercive control over its constituent members, we can imagine a spectrum with the totalitarian state on one end and a stateless society, an anarchy, on the other. Societies that are more ranked and stratified are more statist. Along this spectrum, the Rotinonshón:ni polity falls toward the pole of statelessness, having extremely limited ranking, and lacking in both coercive authority and economic stratification.

The anarchist historian George Woodcock believed that the Rotinonshón:ni’s polity amounted to a stateless confederation: “a common council of sachems, in whose selection the women, whose influence derived from their control of agriculture, played a great role; but this council did not interfere in the internal affairs of the tribes, so that it remained the coordinating body of a true confederation rather than the government of the state.”³² Colonial historian Francis Jennings recognizes that it was “a league of friendship and mutual assistance, but ... a league of consultation and contract rather than a government of legislative command”.³³ Member nations “never gave up their power of individual decision. Often they struggled for dominance within the league, and sometimes (though rarely) they came to blows with each other. These phenomena were also to be observed among colonial towns and villages, but whereas the Iroquois tribes maintained local independence throughout their existence, the colonies gradually came under more and more effective central controls.”³⁴ All Rotinonshón:ni nations are equal, regardless of their number of clans, size of territory or numbers of population.³⁵ Bookchin, who so often suggested New England town-meeting democracy as a basic building block of libertarian municipalist confederation, would have done well to have taken the advice of Mitchel Cohen, and examine the Rotinonshón:ni polity as an example of the very sort of ideal of that he was advocating:

“Town meetings, according to Bookchin, are the American equivalent of the Greek polis — and why does he not seek to emulate the Iroquois tribal council instead or any of a hundred non-European forms? Linked together, local communities form the potential, according to Bookchin, for a “federated municipalism.” All other forms, particularly those created by native peoples, are seen as inferior. American Indian communities are diminished, in Bookchin’s framework, because of their lack of rational municipal debate. The framework of the colonizer informs Bookchin’s ideas

³¹ *Ibid*, 40

³² George Woodcock, “Anarchy, Freedom, Native People & The Environment”

³³ Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 7

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ Kahentinetha

despite himself, disempowering radical ecology movements and undermining their potential.”³⁶

³⁶ Mitchel Cohen, “Listen, Bookchin!”

Anarcho-Indigenism

While Bookchin might have not recognized similarities between his own anti-authoritarian politics and the traditional Rotinonshón:ni polity, some Rotinonshón:ni have also brushed off such comparisons. In an essay attempting to dissuade Rotinonshón:ni from participating as allies in the protests against the Free Trade Area of Americas (FTAA) meetings held in April 2001 in Québec City, Teiwí:sonte argued that the “platform and aspirations among some of these groups, particularly the Anarchists, are to eliminate any structured authority. Anarchism is a Greek word meaning without government. Their beliefs are contradictory to that of the Kaianere’kó:wa and actually threaten the existence of Haudenosaunee governments if these groups ever attain their ultimate goal.”¹

At least one of Teiwí:sonte’s comrades in the Wasáse Movement, Taiaiake, might disagree with Teiwí:sonte’s interpretation of anarchism. Others, like Ward Churchill, have seen commonalities between Indigenism and Anarchism.² Taiaiake, coming from a traditionalist Kanien’kehá:ka perspective but also an academic career in political science, history and indigenous governance, argues explicitly for an “anarcho-indigenism.”³ Far from seeing anarchism as a hindrance to the reestablishment of the Kaianere’kó:wa as the polity of modern Rotinonshón:ni, Taiaiake sees anarchism as the kind of political philosophy, “fundamentally anti-institutional, radically democratic, and committed to taking action for change,”⁴ that is needed to combine with the indigenous vision of a good society. Not only do the commonalities exist in terms of philosophy, but they are increasingly being seen on the levels of strategy and praxis:

“There are philosophical connections between indigenous and some strains of anarchist thought on the spirit of freedom and the ideals of a good society. Parallel critical ideas and visions of post-imperial futures have been noted by a few thinkers, but something that may be called anarcho-indigenism has yet to develop into a coherent philosophy. There are also important strategic commonalities between indigenous and anarchist ways of seeing and being in the world... a rejection of alliances with legalized systems of oppression, non-participation in the institutions that structure the colonial relationship, and a belief in bringing about change through direct action, physical resistance, and confrontations with state power. It is on this last point that connections have already been made between Onkwehonwe groups and non-indigenous activist groups in the anti-globalization movement.”⁵

In defining universal indigenous principles, Taiaiake’s position is not only anti-statist but also explicitly anti-hierarchical: “Traditional indigenous nationhood stands in sharp contrast to the

¹ Teiwí:sonte, “The new Revolutionary War”

² Churchill, “Indigenism, Anarchism, and the State: An Interview with Ward Churchill”, “Uping the Anti”, #1

³ Taiaiake, Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom, 45

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

dominant understanding of ‘the state’: there is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity.”⁶ He goes so far as to call continued cooperation with the state as “morally unacceptable.”⁷

Perhaps anarchism and the struggle of other social movements have had effects upon indigenism as well. While Taiaiake is a passionate proponent of a return to traditional polity, he acknowledges that “it’s not going to look the same as before. Our ideas about injustice might even possess and lead us to fight our own people and the injustice they are bringing on through the instrument of their form of government.”⁸

The similarities between anarchism and indigenism are being increasingly noticed, as anarchists find themselves in solidarity with indigenous struggles from Oaxaca to Ohswé:ken. Some have gone so far as to argue that indigenism is the ancestor of anarchism⁹—a claim that seems all that more plausible when anarchists study the traditional polity of the Rotinonshón:ni. Teiwí:sonte has called the traditional polity of the Rotinonshón:ni the “original socialist paradise,” partly because of its influence on Marx’s socialism.¹⁰ Feminists in the U.S. have acknowledged the influence of Rotinonshón:ni on their vision of equality. The traditional polity of the Rotinonshón:ni has demonstrated that cultural evolution is not unilinear. There is an alternative to a stratified, hierarchical, patriarchal society and an exploitive economy—but we must build it now, and not wait idly for some far-off future when material culture has completed its development. There is an alternative to kleptocracy. It is possible today!

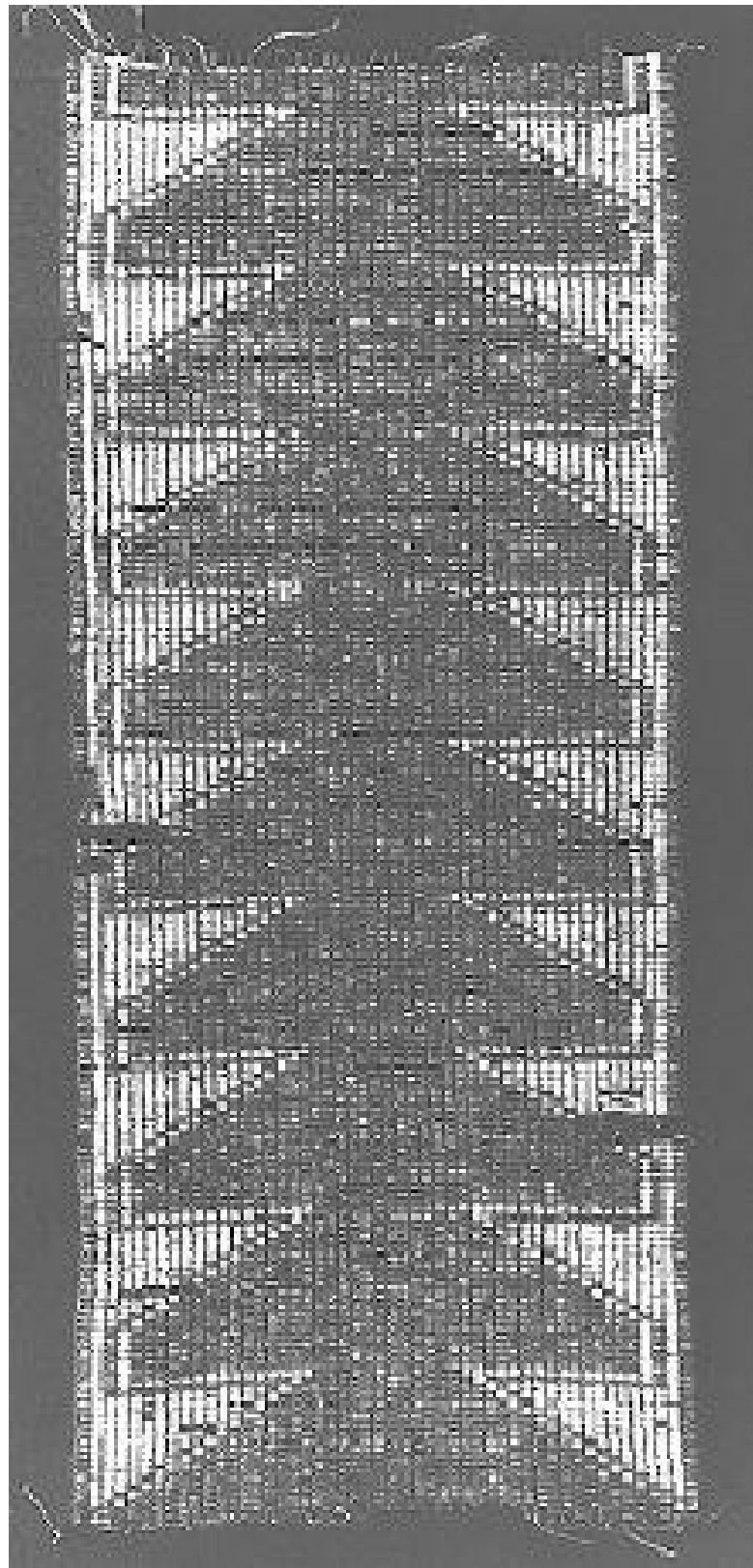
⁶ Taiaiake, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*, 56

⁷ Taiaiake, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, 36

⁸ *Ibid.*, 92

⁹ Churchill

¹⁰ Teiwí:sonte, “Barred from the ‘socialist’ paradise”



*“The Evergrowing Tree” belt*¹¹

¹¹ This belt symbolizes adoption: any one or any nation outside of the Rotinoshón:ni wishes to abide by the Kaianere’kó:wa may follow one of the great roots to the tree. If their minds are clean and they promise to obey the wishes of the roiá:ner council, they are welcome to take shelter beneath the tree of peace. [http://www.tuscaroras.com/jtlc/Wampum/evergrowing_tree_belt.html]

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Glossary

Terms are mostly in standard Kanien'kehá:ka

- **Erielhonan** / Rhierrhonon (Erie) : Iroquois-speaking nation, People of the Long Tail, People of the Cat, south of Lake Erie
- **Iakoiá:ner** / Oianer / Oyaner / Oyander / Yakoyaner : Clan Mothers, Title Holder, “they know the path”, “good path maker”, “good”, “noble” **Iotiiá:ner** / Otiyaner is the plural form.
- **Kahwá:tsire** / Ohwachira : Matrilineal Clan
- **Kaianere'kó:wa** / Gayanashagowa / Gai Eneshah Go' Nah : “The Great Good Way”, “The Great Law”, “The Great Law of Peace”, “The Good Tidings of Peace and Power (and Righteousness)”, “The Great Binding Law”, “The Constitution of the Five (Six) Nations”
- **Kaion'kehá:ka** / Kaiokwenhá:ka' / Kaionkwe'haka / Kaokwa haka / Kayonkwe'haka (Cayuga) : “People of the great swamp”. Iroquois-speaking nation, the third nation to join the Rotinonshón:ni. West of the Ononta'kehá:ka nation, and east of the Shotinontowane'á:ka nation. A younger brother nation.
- **Kanien'kehá:ka** / Kenienke haka / Kanyen'kehaka (Mohawk) : “People of the flint”. Iroquois-speaking nation, first nation to join the Rotinonshón:ni. The keepers of the Eastern Door. An older brother nation.
- **Kakwa:ko** (Neutral) : Iroquois-speaking nation near the Niagara
- **Karihwí:io** / Gaiwiio : “the good message”, The Code of Handsome Lake
- **Ohnkaneto:ten** / Ohnkanetoten / Ehkanehdodeh / Enkanedoden : “Pine Tree” chief/sachem, selected by council of roiá:ner, serve for life, have voice but not vote in council of roiá:ner consensus decision-making, may be stripped of their title by council of roiá:ner (the council will no longer hear them).
- **Oneniote'á:ka** / Onenyote'haka (Oneida, Onneiouts) : “People of the standing stone”. Iroquois-speaking nation, second nation to join the Rotinonshón:ni. West of Kanien'kehá:ka nation, east of Ononta'kehá:ka nation. Allied to the United States during the U.S. Revolutionary War. A younger brother nation.
- **Onkwehón:we** / Onkwehonwe : the original people, indigenous
- **Ononta'kehá:ka** / Oneota haka(Onondaga): “People of the hills”. Iroquois-speaking nation, the fifth nation to join the Rotinonshón:ni. Keepers of the central council fire. West of the Oneniote'á:ka nation, east of the Kaion'kehá:ka nation. An older brother nation.

- **Roiá:ner** / Royaner / Roianer / Hoyane : “He makes a good path for people to follow”, “good”, “noble”, clan chiefs/sachem, selected by the iakoiá:ner, usually from men within the kahwá:tsire, subject to removal from office by decision of iakoiá:ner. Rotiá:ner / Rotiyaner / Rotiianer is the plural form. Their badge of office is a deer antler headress, symbolizing that they will only eat the flesh of deer and make war no more. To participate in warfare, a roiá:ner would have to give up their position as roiá:ner.
- **Ratihnhohanónhna** / Roninhohhot : the door keepers, the Shotinotowane’haka charged with guarding the western door of the Rotinonshón:ni longhouse.
- **Rotinonshón:ni** / Rotinoshoni / Rotinonsonni / Rotinonsionni / Haudenosaunee / Hotinnochiendi / Ganonsyoni (Iroquois) : “People of the long house”, “the people of the completed longhouse”, “the lodge extended lengthwise”, the Five / Six Nations of the Iroquois, the league of the Iroquois, the Iroquois confederacy.
- **Shotinotowane’á:ka** / Shotinotowane’haka / Sonontowa haka (Seneca) : “People of the great mountain”. Iroquois-speaking nation. Fourth nation to join the Rotinonshón:ni. The door keepers, the western most nation of the Rotinonshón:ni. An older brother nation.
- **Susquehannock** / Conestoga : Iroquois-speaking nation, south of the Rotinonshón:ni
- **Tehatiskaró:ros** / **Taskaroraha:ka** / Taskarorahaka (Tuscarora) : “People of the shirt”. Iroquois-speaking nation who migrated north after pressure from North Carolina settlers. The sixth nation to join the Rotinonshón:ni as a distinct, autonomous nation—but did not have roiá:ner in Rotinonshón:ni council. Oneniote’á:ka roiá:ner would speak for them in council, and Taskarorahaka were regarded as the younger brothers to the Oneniote’á:ka.
- **Tionontati** (Petun) : Iroquois-speaking nation, “Tobacco”, Khionontateronon, Conkhandeerrhonon, Quieunontati
- **Wendat** / Wyndat / Wyandot / Wyandatt (Huron) : Iroquois-speaking nation “Huron” was the French name for the Wendat because of their farming. Literally, “Huron” means “peasant”; Guyandot, Guyandotte, Ouendat, and Wyandotte. Included : Arendahronon (rock people); Attignawantan (Attignaouentan, Attignousntan) (bear people); Attigeenongnahac (Attiguenongha) (cord people); and Tahontaenrat (Scanonaerat, Scahentoarrhonon) (deer people).
- **Wenrohonon** / Ahouenrochrhonon (Wenro): Iroquois-speaking nation, “the people of the place of floating scum”, Ahouenrochrhonon and Ouenrionon.

People

- **Aiewáhtha** / Ayenwatha / Ayonwentah / Ayawatha / Ayonwatha / Hiawatha / Hayanwatah : Kanien’kehá:ka roiá:ner, possibly Ononta’kehá:ka adopted as Kanien’kehá:ka. Title is quickened.

- **Atsenhainton Kenneth Deer** : “The fire still burns”. Kanien’kehá:ka of the Bear kahwá:tsire, residing in Kahnawà:ke, publisher and editor of “The Eastern Door”, Chairman/Rapporteur of the UN Workshop on Indigenous Media in New York in December of 2000, member of the Board of Directors for the Quebec Community Newspapers Association from 1999–2001, and co-chairman of the National Indian Education Council in Canada.
- **Barbara Alice Mann, Ph.D** : Shotinontowane’á:ka author, professor of Native American Studies at the University of Toledo
- **Dayodekane / Seth Newhouse** : Kanien’kehá:ka and Ononta’kehá:ka author of Ohswé:ken. He transcribed the Kaianere’kó:wa in 1885, but was not credited when Gawasco Waneh published it.
- **Ganioda’yo / Ganeodiyo / Gunyundiyo** : “**Handsome Lake**”, Shotinontowane’á:ka roiá:ner who brought the Karihwí:io. Title is requickened.
- **Gawasco Waneh / Gawaso Waneh / Arthur Caswell Parker** : “Talking Leaves”, Shotinontowane’á:ka archeologist, historian, published Kaianere’kó:wa in English.
- **Hunter Gray (Hunterbear) John R Salter, Jr.** : Ahkwesáhsne Kanien’kehá:ka, Mi’kmaq, St. Francis Abenaki, labor organizer and civil rights activist, former departmental chair of Indian Studies at University of North Dakota, member of Solidarity, Socialist Party USA, Democratic Socialists of America, Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism and the United Auto Workers Local 1981 (National Writers Union).
- **Kahentinetha Horn** : Kanien’kehá:ka journalist and activist from Kahnawà:ke, editor of Mohawk Nation News (MNN). She is also a professor of Indigenous Women’s History at Concordia University.
- **Kanatiiosh Barbara Gray, JD**: Kanien’kehá:ka/Ononta’kehá:ka and Deer kahwá:tsire from Ahkwesáhsne, author and Ph.D. candidate for Native American Justice Studies, Arizona State University Law School, Editor of the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) Newsletter
- **Karonhienhá:wi / Karonienhawi / Matilda Joslyn Gage** : “Sky Carrier”, a suffragist of European ancestry adopted into the Wolf kahwá:tsire of the Kanien’kehá:ka.
- **Natoway Brian Rice, Ph.D** : Kanien’kehá:ka author, assistant professor of aboriginal Education at the University of Winnipeg
- **Ranatakárias / Ranatakias / Hanadagywu / Caunotaucarius / Conotocarius / Hanadahguyus** : “Town Destroyer”, title given to George Washington when President of the United States because of his ordering the Sullivan-Clark military expedition against the Rotinonshón:ni. The title has been passed on to subsequent U.S. presidents since.
- **Sakoiatentha Darren Bonaparte** : Kanien’kehá:ka author from Ahkwesáhsne, wampunchronicles.com, member of Wasáse Movement

- **Segoyewatha** / Sagoyawatha : Shotinontowane’á:ka and Ohnkaneto:ten, famous orator, “He Keeps Them Awake”, “**Red Jacket**”, Otetiani, “always ready”
- **Taiaiake Gerald Alfred, Ph.D** : Kanien’kehá:ka author from Kahnawà:ke, adjunct professor of Political Science, Director of Indigenous Governance Programs and the Indigenous Peoples Research Chair at the University of Victoria, member of Wasáse Movement
- **Teiowí:sonte Thomas Deer** : Kanien’kehá:ka journalist and illustrator from Kahnawà:ke, member of Wasáse Movement
- **Tekanawí:ta** / Dekanahwideh / Deginawada / Deganawida : “Two Currents Coming Down”, possibly Kanien’kehá:ka, possibly Wendat adopted by Kanien’kehá:ka. The title is not requickened. “**The Peacemaker**” is an English sobriquet.
- **Thaiantané:ken** / Tyiantané:ken / Thayendanega / Tyendinaga / **Joseph Brant** : Kanien’kehá:ka and Ohnkaneto:ten, lead many Rotinonshón:ni against the United States. His efforts would help establish the community at Ohswé:ken, the Six Nation’s reserve along the Grand River, and the town of Brantford is named for him, as is the Tyendinaga Mohawk Community at the Bay of Quinte.
- **Thatotáhrho** / Tatotaho / Atotárho / Atotarho / Tododaho / Tadadaho / Adodarho / Adoda:r’ho : Ononta’kehá:ka roiá:ner, keeper of the council fire. Title is requickened. The current Thatotáhrho is Sid Hill.
- **Tsikónhsase** / Tsokansase / Jigonsaseh / Jikohnsaseh / Djikonsa’sse : “the mother of nations”, “the peace queen”, “round face” possibly of the Kakwa:ko on east side of the Niagara, provisioned warriors and also administered disputes. Title is requickened.

Places

- **Ahkwesáhsne** : “Where the partridge drums”, St. Regis
- **Hochelaga** (Montreal): also called Tiohtiá:ke / Tsotiahke in Kanien’kehá:ka “where the people split apart.”
- **Kahnawà:ke** / Kahnawake / Caughnawaga : “On the rapids”, a Kanien’kehá:ka community near Montreal.
- **Kanehsatà:ke** : “On the crusty sands”, a Kanienkeha community near Oka and Montreal.
- **Kaniatarí:io** : “Beautiful lake”, Lake Ontario
- **Kaniatarowanénhne** / Kaniatarowanenneh : “Big waterway” in Kanien’kehá:ka. Also called the St. Lawrence River.
- **Kenhtè:ke** (Tyendinaga) : “Place of the bay”, a Kanien’kehá:ka Community at the Bay of Quinte, birthplace of Tekanawí:ta.

- **Ohswé:ken** / Ohsweken : the Six Nations reserve along the Grand River, the Haldimand Tract
- **Onnontaé / Ononta:ke** (Onondaga) : “On the Hill”, Ononta’kehá:ka town, near Syracuse, where the central council fire of the Rotinonshón:ni is kept.
- **Stadacona** : also called Tetiatenontari:kon in Kanien’kehá:ka, near Quebec City
- **Tonawanda** : West of Alabama, New York
- **Tuscorara** : Near Niagara Falls

Niá:wen : Thanks. Niá:wen to Kaiò for helping with this



Tekeni Teiohate, The Two Row Wampum

“You say that you are our Father and I am your son. We say, We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. This wampum belt confirms our words. These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, traveling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the onkwehón:we, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other’s vessel.”

“As long as the Sun shines upon this Earth, that is how long OUR Agreement will stand; Second, as long as the Water still flows; and Third, as long as the Grass Grows Green at a certain time of the year. Now we have Symbolized this Agreement and it shall be binding forever as long as Mother Earth is still in motion.”

Rotinonshón:ni-Dutch treaty, 1613

Harold Barclay

I am very pleased to have received some substantial comments from Harold Barclay: professor emeritus in anthropology at the University of Alberta and author of *The State, Buurri al Lamaab: A Suburban Village in the Sudan*, *Culture: The Human Way*, *The Role of the Horse in Man's Culture*, *People without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy, Culture and Anarchism*, and *Longing for Arcadia: Memoirs of an Anarcho-Cynicalist Anthropologist*.

Thanks for sending me your essay on the Iroquois, It appears to be a very good piece of research, although I am not an Iroquois specialist. I have the following comments:

First, one has to be extremely careful in using myths and oral traditions as data. Too often they are polished up to fit a contemporary view of propriety or someones idea of correctness.

Second, and more important I suspect that you have greatly overestimated the density of population. The density you report as 200 per acre refers only to the inhabitants of the towns and does not encompass the surrounding garden area or hunting grounds. Iroquois depended entirely on wild game for meat and this would require a large area around any town. for hunting (Hunter gatherers — non gardeners- usually require 5–10 square miles per person. It would be more dense for horticulturalists but not enormously more). Then if they had, as reported, a million bushels of corn in reserves this would require 5000 acres in addition to all the other corn grown as well as squash and beans. I suspect that this ultimately means clearly less than 50 per square mile- a figure which could still make Iroquois a more densely populated area than others although one should not forget fishing specialists such as the New England Coast or the West Coast of Canada and the Alaskan Panhandle, nor the horticultural and cattle herding stateless societies in Africa.

Third, I have found little mention of the role of Mothers brother in the Iroquois literature. In Matrilineal societies with which I am most familiar the Mother's Brother has a considerable amount of authority and power. Indeed in several African Matrilineal (and avunculocal) societies he is the boss. Malinowski, of course, used the MB in matrilineal Trobriand society as an argument against Freud and his claims for an Oedipus Complex.

Fourth, on Indians and anarchism: Clearly a sort of state structure with elected chiefs and councils has been imposed upon most Indian groups and they appear to now accept this as only proper. I suppose they may be embarrassed if you point out that they once had an anarchistic arrangement. Dene of the Canadian NWT have as I understand it at least achieved in some ways a consensual arrangement in their political system.

Fifth, Iroquois may be viewed as stateless by some and as a proto-state by others (perhaps the latter are thinking in terms of unilineal evolution from savagery to state). In any case it is difficult to find a more densely populated(urbanized) group who are not state ridden. In my book, *The State*, I suggested that state development would be more unlikely in a complex society in which property, hierarchy, and an ideology supportive of these were not stressed.(p.92). A recent book, *Ancient Middle Niger: Urbanism and the Self-Organizing Landscape* by Roderick J. McIntosh, suggests statelessness in an urban setting. I however have found the book difficult to read.

My response to Harold Barclay

The oral traditions on the foundation of the league are inconsistent in a number of ways and vary from nation to nation, speaker to speaker—as might be expected. I think this is a point that Bonaparte makes very well with his “Living History”. Bonaparte even acknowledges that the study of Iroquois culture by anthropologists/ethnographers has likely had an effect on the oral tradition. He has a very funny quip about every modern traditionalist having a dog-eared copy of Arthur Parker’s work.

To me, what was not so fascinating was not so much whether Tekanawí:ta was of a virgin birth, came across the lake on a stone canoe, or that he combed the serpents from the sorcerer Thatotáhrho’s hair. Rather it was the political metaphors that are shared across the confederation. This seems to be consistent and also corresponds with the historical record. While it would be nice to have several historical records about the formation of the Rotinonshón:ni, we can only go on oral tradition, historical transcription of earlier oral tradition, archeology and some linguistics to get an idea. Among the many controversies about the formation of the Rotinonshón:ni is when it happened. That’s a debate I didn’t address in my article, for this article it was more important that it did happen and before large degree (if any) of European contact.

Also, I think it is also interesting in terms of the modern Rotinonshón:ni, to look at what narrative they use today, and what meaning that has; regardless of the actual events some 400–1000 years ago.

I agree with your comments on population density. The population density estimate I used was Daniel Richter’s from *Ordeal of the Longhouse*. If I had space in the article, I would have liked to have gone into more detail about their economy, and how extensive their use of the land was. I would have preferred to have listed population estimates from pre-contact; but that is quite difficult do the their periodic village relocations, their reliance on wooden architecture, and that population estimates during the colonial period are based on the estimated number of warriors and that is after those communities were devastated by diseases of European origin and warfare. There are high counters and low counters in terms of population. The number of people living in a particular Iroquois town, however, was a more solid estimate. I also would have preferred to have had estimates on the quantity of agricultural production before the small pox and the Beaver Wars, but I haven’t seen anything as solid as the historical estimates made during the Sullivan campaign almost two hundreds years after contact.

You make an excellent point about mother’s brothers and something I would like to explore further. The roiá:ner (sachem) were selected by the iakoiá:ner (clan mothers) from their matrilineal line (their brothers, uncles and sons). The exact role of husbands seems very murky to me

except that society was matrilineal. Among the other requirements for Roiá:ner was that they were to have been fathers. So how would this work? A wolf clan brother who would then marry into the bear clan, have children with his bear clan wife, but then could later be chosen as a wolf clan roiá:ner while still living in the bear clan long house?

Given the different modes of food production and the segregation of duties by gender, it seems that men would often spend many months away from the towns in villages—engaged in fishing, hunting, trapping, trade, diplomacy and warfare. Among the customs of cohabitation were husbands and wives sleeping on opposite sides of the fire from each other, and sleeping feet to feet rather than side by side. If you are interested in some of the psychology around the Iroquois traditional culture... I found Anthony F.C. Wallace's *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* to be very informative.

The matrilineal residency was probably disrupted by disease, war and mass adoptions. With as many as 2/3rds of the community being adoptees in many cases. This would have been an aberration in the traditional culture. The European born diseases and changes in warfare would have been an unprecedented calamity to Iroquois society. I think it is very notable about how well that culture was able to survive with even a remnant of their traditional polity, to have blocked French expansion and held their own in the face of English colonization for so long.

Also, the matrilineal situation was disrupted first by conversion to Christianity, and later Handsome Lake's religious teachings that emphasized patrilineal living and the husband-wife bond over the matrilineal clan. There was also a change in living arrangements from the colonial period from long houses to single family cabins.

On your point concerning anarchism and contemporary state structures of elected chiefs and councils among indigenous communities; I'm sure it might cause some embarrassment to some statist. While I cautiously avoided addressing the contemporary political situation among the Iroquois, this tension between statist and anti-statist (and positions in between) is very much part of the political discourse, though the terms they use are sometimes different. Something for them to figure out. As someone with anarchist (or at least libertarian socialist) sensibilities... I find the traditional polity of the Iroquois fascinating and... close enough—it's as good an example of a way of living as any others that anarchists point to. Though one could argue that the break down in their consensual politics lead to a lack of unity and their division and fragmentation due to the U.S., British and Canadian governments.

I was actually fairly careful in having contemporary Iroquois like Taiiaki Alfred make that connection between the traditional polity and anarchism; as well as having folks like Teiowí:sonte Thomas Deer explicitly reject it. However, I suspect that Teiowí:sonte is far more sympathetic to an anti-authoritarian socialism than that quotation reveals. I imagine someone like Ray Halbritter, the National Representative of the Onondia Nation and Chief Executive Officer of Oneida Nation Enterprises, will just flat out reject such an idea. If my article generates any discussion among Iroquois about such things, I'll regard that as a welcome but unintended consequence. I saw my article as an anarchist's examination of the traditional Iroquois polity, not a polemic for neo-traditionalist Iroquois to adopt anarchism as an ideology.

I actually haven't read your book *The State* yet. Only *People without Government and Culture and Anarchism*. I see it was just published in 2003, so that's definitely going on my list. Right now, I'm wading through Pierre Clastres' *Society Against the State*, but I find the language a bit difficult and I also lack the academic background in anthropology and philosophy. I think I'll try your book before I tackle McIntosh.

Reviews

“I think your paper is an excellent intro and overview on these issues. Very well researched and presented in an accessible and very smart way. I hope you pursue this line.”

Taiiaike Gerald Alfred, Ph.D : Kanien’kehá:ka author from Kahnawà:ke, adjunct professor of Political Science, Director of Indigenous Governance Programs and the Indigenous Peoples Research Chair at the University of Victoria, member of Wasáse Movement, author of *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom, Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, and *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*.

“I found your article to be interesting, partly because it adopts a thesis as a political position and then assembles evidence to support that thesis. This is not the way in which a scholar with my kind of training usually work. Because we don’t share a common mode of argumentation I don’t think that I can offer much in the way of constructive criticism. I was interested to see that you cited Harold Barclay. I think that this was the same Harold Barclay who joined the anthropology faculty at the University of Oregon the last year I was a grad student there back in the 1960s. I recommend that you also look at Joseph Brandao’s book *Your Fyre Shall Burn No More*. Joe does a good job of shooting down Hunt’s ideas that the wars of the 17th century were all about the economics of the beaver fur trade. You might find some use for that source.”

Dean R. Snow, Ph.D : Professor of Archaeological Anthropology, President-Elect of the Society for American Archaeology, Secretary of the Society for American Archaeology 2003–05 and Secretary of Section H (Anthropology) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science 2000–06, author of *The Iroquois, Mohawk Valley Archaeology: The Collections, Mohawk Valley Archaeology: The Sites* and *In the County of the Mohawks: Early Narratives about a Native People*.

“That’s really interesting. Lot of stuff in there I didn’t even know. Very nicely put together.”

David Graeber, Ph.D : Associate Professor of Anthropology at Yale University, author of *Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* and *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*.

“This is a pretty good paper. I enjoyed reading it. Just one thing. Where did you want to go with it? Part of it is a rebuttal to another authors point of view. I think you need to sum up your point a little better near the end. It is like you got diverted a bit from your argument with all the information you presented. It is well written but needs to be pulled together; nonetheless, an informative article.”

Natoway Brian Rice, Ph.D : Kanien’kehá:ka author, assistant professor of aboriginal Education at the University of Winnipeg, author of *The Great Epic* and *Seeing the World with Aboriginal Eyes*.

“Your piece was a joy to read — full of good information, and thank you for using the Native languages for names. You write very nicely!”

Bruce E. Johansen, Ph.D : Frederick W. Kayser Professor, Communication and Native American Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha, author of *Forgotten Founders, Benjamin Franklin, the Iroquois and the Rationale for the American Revolution, Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy*, and *Debating Democracy: the Iroquois Legacy of Freedom*.

“Good work! I’m impressed!”

Sakoiatentha Darren Bonaparte : Kanien’kehá:ka author from Ahkwesáhsne, Editor of *Wampumchronicles.com*, author of *Creation and Confederation: The Living History of the Iroquois*, former elected chief of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, member of Wasáse Movement.

“I have read your piece and it looks quite good. You have certainly done a great deal of solid “homework”! Your interest and commitment are commendable and you write well. Your work here could be a pamphlet!

Hunter Gray (Hunterbear) John R Salter, Jr. : Ahkwesáhsne Kanien'kehá:ka, Mi'kmaq, St. Francis Abenaki, labor organizer and civil rights activist, former departmental chair of Indian Studies at University of North Dakota, member of Solidarity, Socialist Party USA, Democratic Socialists of America, Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism and the United Auto Workers Local 1981 (National Writers Union).

“I finally got to go through the article. Very good and thorough. I loved your article. It's well articulated and an accurate overview of the sociopolitical structure of the Haudenosaunee. It did our people justice.”

Teiowí:sonte Thomas Deer : Kanien'kehá:ka journalist and illustrator from Kahnawà:ke, editor of *Revolutionarycreations.com*, member of Wasáse Movement.

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An Anarchist Study of the Rotinonshón:ni Polity
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The traditional society of the Rotinonshón:ni (Iroquois), "The People of the Longhouse," was a densely settled, matrilineal, communal, and extensively horticultural society. The Rotinonshón:ni formed a confederacy of five nations. Generations before historical contact with Europeans, these nations united through the Kaianere'kó:wa into the same polity and ended blood feuding without economic exploitation, stratification, or the formation of a centralized state.

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