DEATH IN WINTER: CHANGING SYMBOLIC PATTERNS IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO PREHISTORY

Peter G. Ramsden
McMaster University

Abstract: In considering cultural changes in southern Ontario between about 250 B.C. and A.D. 1500, spanning the Middle and Late Woodland periods, an attempt is made to integrate settlement patterns, burials and ceramic decoration. It is suggested that long-term culture change can be understood as a result of the continual interaction between material culture, ritual, ideology, economy and social structure. The constant renegotiation of the meanings of material and ritual communication, including the accidental attribution of new meanings, can be a significant force for cultural change.

Résumé: En examinant les changements culturels dans le sud de l' Ontario entre environ 250 av. J.-C. et 1500 ap. J.-C., une période qui inclue le Sylvicole Moyen et le Sylvicole Supérieur, l'auteur tente d'intégrer les schémas d'établissement, les enfouissements et les décorations en céramique. Il suggère que les changements culturels à long terme peuvent être compris de résulter de l'intéraction continuelle entre la culture matérielle, le rituel, l'idéologie, l'économie et la structure sociale. La renégotiation constante des significations de la communication matérielle et rituelle, ainsi que les attributions accidentelles de nouvelles significations, peuvent constituer une force importante du changement culturel.

By "symbolism" I mean the embodiment in an action or object of a meaning that derives from the context rather than from the object or action itself. I intend it to stand for the signalling of a mental construct — the displaying of a mental or social reality which, because it has conceptual rather than material existence, cannot itself be put on display. I do not intend any implication that this symbolling behaviour is either conscious or unconscious. I am not concerned here with the psychological processes which may produce or support symbolizing behaviour, but rather with the ways in which a

single overt action may have multiple functions, one of which is giving material expression to an unobservable, or poorly observable, social reality.

Nor am I suggesting that the symbolic content of actions will necessarily relate to definable, particular meanings, as in the familiar "red stands for danger." To say that an action is in part symbolic is simply to say that it derives from, and in turn plays a role in, a context of meaning—a network of ideas and experiences that render it plausible to both performer and observer. If a prehistoric hunter made an arrow point with notches in the side, when putting notches in the corner would have served equally well, it need not be because side notches "stood for" one thing whereas corner notches "stood for" something else. The hunter's action made sense within an interconnecting web of meanings, deriving from the social context, cultural tradition, the hunter's upbringing and training, the purpose for which the point was intended, possibly even some explicit "symbolic" meanings, and so on. The action was symbolic in that, to someone located within the appropriate context, it could be accurately read as embodying and conveying all of these meanings.

In this sense, all human behaviour has symbolic content. As Hodder (1986:354) has noted, "all 'cultural' acts or interpretations are ideological, which is not to say that they are only ideological, but that they have an ideological component." This is true in two different ways. First, I take it as a given that for almost any action there are alternative forms that the action may take and still serve its primary purpose. The particular form will be in part determined by the included symbolic messages.

Secondly, I believe that humans tend to presume a symbolic content for all actions, and therefore to respond not only to the act itself, but also to its perceived symbolic or ideological meanings (Hodder 1989b:69). The important implication of this is that the act and its symbolic content are mutually reinforcing. An action may be performed consciously for its primary material purpose, but since it will be read for its symbolic content as well, the most important result of the action may derive primarily from its perceived symbolic content.

For example, a structure may be built to provide shelter and definition for a social group. Other humans will respond to the structure on the presumption that its size, shape, location, architecture, etc. convey important social information. Some of that information will accurately reflect the symbolic content of the structure, but some of it may be unintentional. In terms of information theory, the message sent will be accompanied by a certain amount of noise and static. Since humans are instinctive interpreters of symbols and messages, a person observing the structure will react like someone listening to a garbled radio transmission—some of the static will be interpreted by the brain as making sense, and the meaning will become

transformed in the process, or a meaning may even be invented where none was intended. The point, then, is that the structure may be built for one purpose, but may come to be interpreted as having a different, or additional, purpose. Since people have no way of apprehending the "true" purpose of the structure or of automatically filtering out their erroneous perceptions, it is their perceptions that will structure their responses (Hodder 1988:68).

What is involved here is the inherent potential for ambiguity in social communication, verbal or otherwise. Communication is, of course, the means whereby social meanings are created, shared, re-created and transformed among members of a society. This is true not just of language. Embodying ideological information, material culture, like social interaction and ritual, "plays an active role in the production, reproduction and transformation of the social" (Miller and Tilley 1984b:149; Hodder 1984:66). As in any other form of communication, misunderstandings continually arise, but this is probably more true in the field of material culture than in language, where there are more opportunities for immediate corrections.

As Hodder (1989b:73) has pointed out, both the nature and context of ritual and material communications serve to make the messages more complex and more encompassing than those involved in language, and hence potentially more ambiguous. Furthermore, unlike verbal communication in which the context is usually obvious and can be used to resolve ambiguities, the messages in material culture "are often read in quite a different, 'distant,' context from that in which they were written" (Hodder 1989b:70). In part this is because material culture messages are often not shared in immediate, "face-to-face" contexts (for example, the interpretation of a structure), and, in effect, the "reader" must construct the appropriate context, and hence the correct interpretation, entirely out of past experience and ideological assumptions. Since material culture items, unlike the spoken word, tend to outlast the immediate context of their creation, the potential for misconstruing the context, and thus misinterpreting the message, is particularly high (Hodder 1988:68, 1989b:73).

Material culture expressions thus have a high potential for ambiguity, and correspondingly fewer means for ambiguity resolution. The net result is that there is a high probability of the wrong message being taken, with unintended social consequences. There will, of course, be instances in which these consequences will be trivial or short-lived, particularly if the unintended message is in conflict with a host of other messages being read simultaneously. There will also, however, be instances in which the unintended message and its social consequences can be made to make sense, either because they can be fitted into a changing pattern of social values, or because they appear to reinforce a changing role of the material object in question, or both (Weissner 1989:58). In fact, changes in either the social

system or the role of the material object are likely to exacerbate the process of misinterpretation, by making unintended, alternative interpretations appear plausible. The inferred symbolic content of material culture can thus be a powerful agent of social change (Hodder 1988).

In seeking explanations for long-term culture change, archaeologists have commonly resorted to environmental, demographic or economic changes, or to the operation of abstract processes like "adaptation." More recently, however, there has been a trend towards less deterministic explanations that explore instead the interactive relationship between ideology, power, social action and culture change (e.g., Hodder 1982a, 1982b, 1987, 1989a; Miller and Tilley 1984a). It is within this context that I would like to examine some of the cultural changes that appear to have occurred in south-central Ontario, between ca. 250 B.C. and A.D. 1500, spanning the Middle and Late Woodland periods.

Palisades

One of the ideas that led to the formulation of this paper is that of the possible symbolic significance of village palisades in the Late Woodland period of south-central Ontario. It is generally held by archaeologists that villages were palisaded for defensive and perhaps climatic reasons. Discussions of palisades usually refer to their role in and implications for warfare, and usually interpret them as physical barriers to prevent or impede access by attacking warriors (Jamieson 1990:81). Furthermore, the general increase in the strength of palisades in the late prehistoric period is usually taken as a sign that warfare increased in frequency and ferocity, the implication being that warriors began to try harder to gain access, and defenders had to build bigger and stronger walls to prevent it.

An unexamined point about palisades is that, whatever the motive in constructing a wall around a community, once built it will make a statement to others about the integrity of the community. A surrounding wall demarcates a community boundary, and divides the world into two parts: those on the inside and those on the outside. Even if the wall was built to keep out wind and snow, its construction means that any person is either inside the community or out of it; it is no longer possible to be ambiguous or peripheral. Furthermore, it is no longer possible to join the community unobtrusively, without making a political and social statement. A newcomer to a bounded community must either live outside the wall, or be brought inside the wall by occupying an empty "internal" space or by expanding the wall. Whatever the case, an obvious social statement will be made: "You are not yet inside," or "We have made a decision to admit you," or "We have expanded to encompass you."

It is just as true that palisades have implications for those living inside them, by constraining their mobility of residence, and thus their social placement. Just as it is no longer possible for an outsider to be peripheral, it is no longer possible for an insider to be truly marginal. A palisade serves as an expression of social control by containing those within, just as much as by excluding those without.

While I am not arguing that unbounded communities lack social definition or social boundaries, the existence of a wall tends to assign control over admission and exclusion to those inside, creating a power asymmetry, and thus the resulting actions must be political as well as spatial. A further implication of a physical boundary is that spatial ordering, and thus social ordering, within the community can no longer be perceived as continuous; at some spatial point, a change in category, from insider to outsider, must occur. Thus, the existence of a physical boundary creates a social structure.

As I have suggested above, the socio-political aspect of a community boundary may, under the right circumstances, come to be perceived as of greater importance, both by insiders and outsiders, than the need to block winter winds, or even than the need for physical protection. Moreover, if the importance of defining community boundaries or membership increases, the statement made by the wall can be underlined by making the boundary physically more imposing. Adding rows, increasing the height, reinforcing with interwoven elements and inserting military elements such as shooting galleries makes a more forceful statement: "This is a social boundary of some importance; if necessary it can be defended." Once the wall comes to be interpreted as a social boundary, it can then, in turn, be used as one.

Palisades first appear in southern Ontario at about A.D. 800 or 900 (Kenyon 1968; Noble and Kenyon 1972; Noble 1975a; Pearce 1978; Reid 1975). They are associated, and perhaps correlated, with a shift in subsistence involving the introduction of storable cultigens, and a shift in settlement from spring/summer macroband aggregations to winter villages (Noble 1975b:44). The early palisades are generally single rows of posts, and some do not appear to completely encircle the village (Reid 1975; Kenyon 1968). This has led some to suggest that they functioned as wind breaks or snow fences (eg. Reid 1975:7), an inference consistent with the identification of the villages as winter settlements. Others relate them to a rise in inter-group warfare. The military argument is weakened by the fact that the palisades do not seem to constitute a very formidable barrier, particularly if they do not go all the way around the village.

The point, however, is that the wall does not have to be impenetrable in order to signal the inadvisability of entering. Furthermore, even if they were built as windbreaks, they would inevitably convey the same message

of community boundary. The net result is the same in either case: palisades either were meant to have, or over time came to have, social importance.

I believe there is archaeological support in the subsequent history of pali-sades for the notion that their function was in part symbolic. In the late 15th century there began an obvious trend towards much heavier palisading on proto-Huron villages (Jamieson 1990; Ramsden 1990b), and this trend con-tinued through the 16th and early 17th centuries. I remain unconvinced by the common interpretation that this necessarily represents a change in the strategy or intensity of warfare. First, there seems to be little evidence that there was a major change in the type of fortification used. Secondly, if the increase in the amount of scattered human bone on sites of this period did result from an increase in the frequency of warfare, as is often alleged, then the fortifications were not in fact more effective. Moreover, other lines of evidence that can be used to support the theory of increased warfare (e.g., Jamieson 1990) are equally plausible as evidence of boundary maintaining mechanisms. Thirdly, early historic references to Huron warfare describe an ambush and raid style of warfare in which two groups of warriors stand and shoot briefly at each other and then run away; the existence of larger-scale conflicts prior to the historic period is open to debate (cf. Ramsden 1990a; Jamieson 1990).

The strengthening of Huron palisades from the late 15th century onwards may relate to a number of factors. Some recent archaeological evidence suggests that one factor may have been a period of worsening climate, and the need to construct more effective wind and snow barriers (Fitzgerald and Saunders 1988). At the same time there was an apparent breakdown or realignment of traditional tribal groupings, and the onset of a period of vil-lage fission and fusion, long-distance village relocation and re-adjustments of social and political ties (Ramsden 1977, 1990b).

I do not deny the role of warfare in these events, nor would I necessarily argue against the possibility of an intensification of hostilities. I would, however, argue that the role of palisades is that they served not as impene-trable physical barriers per se, but rather as social signals. As such, they may not accurately reflect the state of warfare; they may instead depict po-litical relations cast in a military metaphor, much as stocks of nuclear war-heads do today. They delimit and define significant social aggregates, and signal the strength of group solidarity and the ease with which an outsider may expect to enter the group. As such, it is precisely during times of social upheaval, or of environmental stress, when access to resources may be con-tested or when social boundaries may be in doubt or in flux, that we would expect symbolic statements about group boundaries to be made most strongly, and when we would most expect structures to be misinterpreted as

political barriers. We would further expect this to be most true of groups whose social identity is newly forged as a result of realignments.

It is usual in Ontario Iroquoian archaeology to interpret changes in village structure, including the evolution of palisades, as reflecting the "emergence" of certain social systems and political structures familiar from the historic records. In this view, the physical structures merely give form to, or serve to enforce, independently devised social structures that are often attributed to changes in economic strategy. There is rarely any consideration of the role that physical structures themselves may play in the formation of social structures or relations.

Changes in material culture meanings cannot occur randomly. If a social actor attributes an "incorrect" or "inaccurate" meaning to a material item, such as a palisade, she or he must both find and place that new meaning within a context that already exists, at least within the actor's mind. The evidence of early palisades is quite consistent with the view that they functioned as something analogous to wind or snow breaks. However, the fact that they could be interpreted as enclosing a community leaves them open to misinterpretation by contemporary archaeologists as much as by prehistoric Iroquoians (Hodder 1986:354), insofar as one may choose the wrong context for comparison. Longhouses, by all appearances similar in construction to early palisades, probably housed some kind of kin-based, socio-economic corporate group. If such houses were viewed as the most appropriate context for comparison and interpretation of palisades, the logical conclusion would have been (and remains) that villages also comprised stable corporate groups with social and economic functions. Such a comparison might also lead to the conclusion that social relations within the village were mediated by kinship, real or fictive.

Viewed in this light, the social and political structure of villages may have been partly a consequence of their changing physical structure and the ideological contexts in which this was evaluated by both insiders and outsiders. In turn, the physical structure could also be manipulated to influence people's perceptions of social and political reality. As they constantly reinforce and modify each other, neither the social nor the physical structure can be said to be the "cause" of the other.

Burials

Coincident with the changes in settlement and subsistence systems during the transition from Middle to Late Woodland was a change in the mortuary system. Of special interest here is the change from the use of designated cemeteries associated with the spring/summer camp in the Middle Wood-

land, to the eventual appearance of the ossuary burial system described for the 17th-century Hurons.

The Middle Woodland burial system may be characterized as one which made use of band cemeteries, sometimes, perhaps always, in association with the major summer macroband camp site (Finlayson 1977:575; Spence 1986:86). Typically, these cemeteries show signs of being used over considerable periods of time, and contain a variety of interment styles both primary and secondary, often with numerous grave offerings. Both the interment styles and grave offerings differ from one cemetery to another (Johnston 1968:71; Finlayson 1977:228-229, 511; Spence 1986; Spence, Pihl and Molto 1984). It has recently been suggested that these cemeteries served both to mark and identify band territories and to promote internal group cohesion, and that the families that made up the band made a point, where possible, of transporting deceased members to the cemetery for interment each spring (Spence 1986:92).

In the Middle Woodland period, then, band identity was marked by the presence of a permanent cemetery located strategically within the band territory, and band membership would have been marked by the right to bury deceased family members there, as well as the right to join other band members at the nearby spring/summer camp. Furthermore, participation in the rituals involved in interring family members in the band cemeteries provided feelings of group solidarity which may have been very functional in a situation of rather fluid band membership.

The burial system described for the historic Huron, and known archaeologically for the late prehistoric Huron, was structured differently, and I think was meant to signal some different things. As is well known, Huron villages maintained a village cemetery within which village residents were buried (Tooker 1967:130). The periodic relocation of the village was apparently the occasion for the disinterment of the village dead, and their reinterment in a common ossuary near the village. Two things are of note here. First, in spite of lineage and clan differences within the village dead, at the time of the ossuary burial all the bones were purposely mixed together, so that clan, lineage and even individual identities were destroyed. Secondly, the historic records suggest that people could be invited from other villages to bring their dead to the feast, and to have them too mixed in the mass of bones in the ossuary (Tooker 1967).

In part, this burial pattern is a reflection of Huron cosmology. Souls were considered to hang around the village cemetery until the Feast of the Dead, at which time they went off together to reside in a village of souls. But at the same time it participates in the ideological reality of village structure. As long as the living village exists, the dead continue to exist and function as individuals, and to carry on kin-structured relations with the living vil-

lage members. When the living village ceases to exist, the souls depart to their own village as a single entity, as symbolized by the mixing of their bones. Thus, while the village is in existence, social distinctions within it are openly recognized. But when the time comes to move, either to journey into a new area to establish a new village, or to journey out into the cosmos, the village residents are united. Just as the palisade around the village serves to signal the unity on one level of those inside as well as the degree of permeability of the group boundary, so too is the burial system a signal both of solidarity, and of the extent of membership and exclusion.

The sequence of changes from the Middle Woodland pattern to the Late Huron pattern may be summarized as follows. With the change from spring/ summer macroband camps to winter villages, the major burial areas changed from discrete cemeteries to scattered burial areas within the villages, such as occur on early Late Woodland Glen Meyer and Pickering villages (ca A.D. 800-1200) (Kenyon 1968; Pearce 1978:20; Wright and Anderson 1969:11-13; M.J. Wright 1978:28). One obvious aspect of this change is that the burial areas are no longer separate from the habitations. The living and the dead share their bounded community. This is consistent with the suggestion that community boundaries soon took on social significance; on the other hand, the maintenance of the village dead within the palisade would strongly reinforce the social message.

Beginning about the time of the Middleport substage (ca A.D. 1300), the ossuary system began to crystallize, and this seems to have accelerated in the late 15th to early 16th centuries (Wright 1966; Noble 1975a). Is it a coincidence that as palisades were elaborated to emphasize village boundaries and group membership, the burial system was modified to reflect intra-village solidarity?

The later history of the ossuary burial system involves the elaboration of grave offerings in the historic period, at least at the ossuary stage, for which some unique socio-economic explanations can be suggested (Ramsden 1981), and the extension of ossuary membership to include people from selected other villages. In other words, in the late Huron period, the burial system marked a socially defined, significant group which coincided with the residential village in some cases, but transcended it in others. Neither the burial system nor the village's physical structure is a "reflection" of the other, nor can they both be accurate reflections of the same social reality. Instead, each is involved in its own way with the continual active negotiation of the social and ideological system.

Trends and Interpretation

Both settlement and burial systems in the Middle to Late Woodland periods can be interpreted as having symbolic content. Both systems also display changes through that time span that reflect a changing society. Those changes affect subsistence, settlement and social structure.

In the Middle Woodland period we can surmise that hunting-gathering-fishing bands inhabited a territory arranged around a spring/summer fishing camp where the largest group aggregation took place. At this camp was a cemetery where the past band members remained for eternity, marking the territory as belonging to that group. By contrast, present evidence suggests that there was little in the way of substantial residences, and nothing to denote community boundaries.

From a "symbolic" point of view we might suggest that what is being signalled by this combination of burial and settlement systems is the rights of a group, however defined, over the broad territory whose focus is the band cemetery. I would relate this to the fact that group membership in hunter-gatherer societies tends to be somewhat fluid, whereas long-term control over a particular territory is more crucial due to the harvesting requirements of hunter-gatherer subsistence items. In other words, such a band is defined by where it resides, rather than by who is in it.

On the other hand, when dealing with the more densely populated shifting agricultural Late Woodland society, territoriality over the long term may be less important, since the group has to move periodically in any case, and is at the same time less dependent upon wild resources. In a situation of resource stability and population density, and the consequent need to evolve mechanisms for stabilizing local populations and distancing them from other such local populations, a community may come to place more emphasis on who the group is rather than where it is. With the changing nature of land use and the changing nature of social identity, it may become more important to place boundaries around groups of people rather than around territories, and to maintain space between groups.

Looking at a smaller scale of material culture, it may also be possible to see expressions of these changes in ceramic decoration. It is possible to characterize Middle Woodland ceramic decoration as a series of immediately contiguous decorative zones cascading down the vessel, and filling all available space as they go (Finlayson 1977). By contrast, late Huron vessels are shaped so that there are clearly distinct vessel sections: collar, neck and body, and these are often further demarcated by horizontal design elements. Empty zones are common (Ramsden 1977). Middle Woodland potters, then, seem concerned with filling up contiguous spaces while distinguishing them stylistically. Huron potters on the other hand were more concerned with de-

fining and bounding discrete zones of decoration, and separating them with empty areas. Again, I would suggest that it is more than coincidence that this change in the structure of ceramic vessel decoration accompanied major shifts in subsistence, settlement and burial systems between the Middle and Late Woodland periods in southern Ontario. On the contrary, it seems more likely that many different aspects of behaviour and material culture were involved in these changing notions of space and boundaries.

Whereas explanations of culture change through the Middle and Late Woodland periods usually refer to such issues as changing subsistence base, increasing population and changing political structures, I believe an argument can be made that the ideological interpretation of ritual and material culture played a significant role. What I have suggested here is that the constant interplay between social actions and material objects on the one hand, and the ideological interpretation or misinterpretation of those actions and objects on the other, is responsible for observable patterns of cultural change. It is important to note that it is misguided to try to assign primacy to one sphere of activity as a cause of change; a shift in subsistence cannot lead to a change in settlement without a concomitant change in social and political ideology. At the same time, it is instructive to be aware of the potential role of material culture and ritual in both reinforcing and modifying social structure and ideology. It may well be that changing economic circumstances make new interpretations of objects and rituals entirely plausible, and, in turn, make the manipulation of those new interpretations for economic or political ends feasible.

During the Middle and Late Woodland periods, southern Ontario populations experienced profound cultural changes, including a shift in subsistence base from foraging to farming. Both ethnographic and archaeological evidence are consistent with the suggestion that this may have involved a change from an individualistic, egalitarian society in which social relations were negotiated through kinship, to a more communal, hierarchically ranked system in which both social and economic relations were negotiated by corporate groups.

Beyond a unilinear, evolutionist view, there is nothing "natural" or "predictable" about the ways in which culture changes, and it is most consistent with our everyday experience to suggest that sequences of events can be profoundly affected by "accidental" occurrences. What I have suggested here is that the continual reinterpretation of ritual and material culture, both accidental and purposeful, can be seen as playing a role in the particular ways in which native societies in southern Ontario evolved over several centuries after about A.D. 500. This is not just to suggest that such reinterpretation determined the particular forms of adaptation to changing subsistence or economy. On the contrary, it was precisely the continual

renegotiation of social, economic and political structures, through the rein-
terpretation and manipulation of material and ritual, that made it possible
for the economy to change in the particular way that it did.

It will inevitably be argued that these interpretations are entirely specula-
tive and largely untestable, and reduce culture change to chance events and
opportunism. I cannot disagree. The spurious (and opportunistic?) cham-
pioning of testability as a criterion of scientific and historical validity should
be sufficiently discredited. As Miller and Tilley (1984b:151) have pointed
out, raising prediction to the status of explanation does not work in the so-
cial sciences. With regard particularly to historical studies, they assert that
interpretations cannot "be judged by whether or not they can be tested, or
on the outcomes of such tests," and that "it is the establishment of detailed
links between the disparate aspects of material culture patterning that lends
strength and plausibility to the particular explanations."

I cannot in any way "prove," or for that matter even test, the proposition
that some sort of renegotiation of the meaning of palisades played a role in
changing the social, political and economic structure. My explanation is
based on two simple notions: first, that people perceive actions and objects
as having ideological or symbolic content, and secondly, that they some-
times misinterpret them. Several sequences of events can follow from this,
depending upon the circumstances, one of which is that their wrong percep-
tion will make sense or serve some purpose within a changing social, eco-
nomic or political context, and may in its turn come to be the object of ma-
nipulation, reinforcement, or further misunderstanding.

It cannot be denied that such things do happen, and that they undoubtedly
also happened in the past. To rule them, a priori, out of consideration as ex-
planations for past developments on the grounds that they are untestable is
simply to admit what has been pretty evident all along: that the scientific
method, in the sense of hypothesis formulation and testing, is an altogether
inappropriate vehicle for investigating any but the simplest of past phenom-
ena.

In fact, "testable" hypotheses are no less speculative than the interpreta-
tions I have presented here. They are simply designed to be amenable to a
particular test for falsehood. If they pass the test, they are not therefore non-
speculative, they just have not been exposed to the data that will eventually
debunk them. It is almost inevitable that all of our current interpretations of
the past will one day be considered wrong; to disqualify an interpretation
because it cannot be shown to be wrong *now* seems a bit arbitrary.

There is a tendency on the part of some critics of this sort of approach to
isolate the "search for meaning" as a discrete enterprise in archaeology,
separate from some other kinds of archaeology. If this is valid, then I cannot
imagine what those other kinds of archaeology could be. If it were not for

the meanings inherent in past actions, it is unlikely that any of us would be bothering to do archaeology; in fact it seems unlikely that any of us would be here to do archaeology.

The notion that explanations ought to be in some way "testable" or "provable" is simply a red herring. If it were an attribute of historical "truth" that it could be conclusively proved, then I would think differently, but our everyday experience tells us that it isn't.

In the final analysis, the value of our interpretations of the past is not so much in their historical "truth" as in their plausibility. They will ultimately be judged by the interest they generate, and the insight they provide into the human condition, past and present. In exploring, misunderstanding and transforming the meanings of past behaviour, we are acting in the best traditions of those whose past we study.

Acknowledgments

References Cited

Finlayson, William D.
  1977   The Saugeen Culture: A Middle Woodland Manifestation in Southwestern Ontario. Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper No. 61. Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, National Museum of Canada.
Fitzgerald, William, and Shelley R. Saunders
  1988   Natural Population Growth or What? The Archaeology and Osteology of the 16th Century Neutral Iroquoian MacPherson (AhHa-21) Village. Paper delivered to the McMaster University Anthropology Society Symposium, Hamilton.
Hodder, Ian
  1982a   Symbols in Action. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
  1982b   Symbolic and Structural Archaeology. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
  1984   Burials, Houses, Women and Men in the European Neolithic. *In* Ideology, Power and Prehistory, edited by Daniel Miller and Christopher

Tilley, pp. 51-67. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

1986   Digging for Symbols in Science and History: A Reply. Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 52:352-356.

1987   The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

1988   Material Culture Texts and Social Change: A Theoretical Discussion and Some Archaeological Examples. Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 54:67-75.

1989a   The Meanings of Things. London: Unwin Hyman.

1989b   Post-modernism, Post-structuralism and Post-processual Archaeology. *In* The Meanings of Things, edited by I. Hodder, pp. 64-78. London: Unwin Hyman.

Jamieson, J.B.
1990   Trade and Warfare: The Disappearance of the Saint Lawrence Iroquoians. Man in the Northeast 39:79-86.

Johnston, Richard B.
1968   The Archaeology of The Serpent Mounds Site. Art and Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 10. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum.

Kenyon, W.A.
1968   The Miller Site. Art and Archaeology Occasional Paper No. 14. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum.

Miller, Daniel, and Christopher Tilley
1984a   Ideology, Power and Prehistory. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

1984b   Ideology, Power, Material Culture and Long-Term Change. *In* Ideology, Power and Prehistory, edited by D. Miller and C. Tilley, pp. 147-152. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Noble, William C.
1975a   Van Besien (AfHd-2): A Study in Glen Meyer Development. Ontario Archaeology 24:3-95.

1975b   Corn and the Development of Village Life in Southern Ontario. Ontario Archaeology 25:37-46.

Noble, W.C., and I.T. Kenyon
1972   Porteous (AgHb-1): A Probably Early Glen Meyer Village in Brant County, Ontario. Ontario Archaeology 19:11-38.

Pearce, Robert J.
1978   Archaeological Investigations of the Pickering Phase in the Rice Lake Area. Ontario Archaeology 29:17-24.

Ramsden, Peter G.
1977   A Refinement of Some Aspects of Huron Ceramic Analysis. Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper No. 63. Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, National Museum of Canada.

1981   Rich Man, Poor Man, Dead Man, Thief: The Dispersal of Wealth in 17th Century Huronia. Ontario Archaeology 35:35-40.

1990a   St. Lawrence Iroquoians in the Upper Trent River Valley. Man in the
         Northeast 39:87-95.
1990b   The Hurons: Archaeology and Culture History. *In* The Archaeology
         of Southern Ontario to A.D. 1650, edited by Chris J. Ellis and Neal
         Ferris, pp. 361-384. Ontario Archeological Society Occasional Publi-
         cation. London: London Chapter, OAS.

Reid, C.S. Paddy
1975   New Trends in the Early Ontario Iroquois Tradition. Ontario Archae-
         ology 25:7-20.

Spence, Michael W.
1986   Band Structure and Interaction in Early Southern Ontario. Canadian
         Journal of Anthropology 5(2):83-95.

Spence, Michael W., Robert H. Pihl and J.E. Molto
1984   Hunter-Gatherer Social Group Identification: A Case Study from
         Middle Woodland Southern Ontario. *In* Exploring the Limits, edited
         by S.P. de Atley and F.J. Findlow, pp. 117-142. BAR International
         Series No. 223.

Tooker, Elisabeth
1967   An Ethnography of the Huron Indians 1615-1649. Midland: Huronia
         Historical Development Council.

Weissner, Polly
1989   Style and Changing Relations between the Individual and Society. *In*
         The Meanings of Things, edited by Ian Hodder, pp. 57-63. London:
         Unwin Hyman.

Wright, J.V.
1966   The Ontario Iroquois Tradition. National Museum of Canada Bulletin
         No. 210. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada.

Wright, J.V., and James E. Anderson
1969   The Bennett Site. National Museum of Canada Bulletin No. 229. Ot-
         tawa: National Museum of Canada.

Wright, M.J.
1978   Excavation at the Glen Meyer Reid Site, Long Point, Lake Erie. On-
         tario Archaeology 29:25-32.