

THE CLANS AND PHRATRIES OF THE HURON

John Steckley

ABSTRACT

An entry from a mid-17th century French-Huron-Onondaga dictionary is used as the basis for asserting that there were eight clans of the Huron at the time of early contact. When that entry is compared with an 18th century Wyandot document, it is also suggested that the Huron had three phratries at that time.

INTRODUCTION

It has long been suspected that the Huron had eight clans at the time of first contact with the French. The main source for this belief is *the Jesuit Relations* (JR) of 1648. In his account of the condolence ceremony for the murdered Frenchman Jacques Dourart, Father Paul Ragueneau informs us that there were eight "nations" of the Huron (JR33:243, 247; also see Bressani in JR38:283, 287). Drawing upon this information, and on material published in the 19th and early 20th centuries on the Wyandot (Barbeau 1915, 1917; Clarke 1870; Connelly 1899; Finley 1840; Powell 1881), Elisabeth Tooker suggested that the eight clans were: the deer, turtle, wolf, bear, beaver, snake, porcupine and hawk (Tooker 1970:93).

I have 'new' evidence that further supports the idea of the eight-clan structure, but which changes the composition slightly, excluding the snake and the porcupine, and adding the loon or sturgeon and the fox clans.

In the same Relation of 1648, Ragueneau also refers to there being "three principal Captains" of the Huron (JR33:247). Like Trigger (1976:749), I believe that these were the heads of three phratries. A comparison of my evidence with an often neglected 18th century Wyandot source supports this belief.

THE EVIDENCE

The new source of information is a French-Huron-Onondaga dictionary (FHO) termed the "Dictionnaire huron et hiroquois onontaheronon" (Chaumonot in Victor Hanzeli's important catalogue of early Iroquoian language manuscripts (Hanzeli 1969:128). This dictionary was probably written some time in the mid-1650s (i.e., after the Jesuit Fathers Chaumonot and Dablon first embarked on missionary efforts among the Onondaga in 1655). It was composed of two columns, the leftmost giving Huron translations of French terms, the rightmost giving Onondaga equivalents. The sparsity of Onondaga forms suggests that the Huron part was written prior to entry into the country of the Onondaga, and that the dictionary was completed after a relatively short time in the field. This is probably the oldest surviving Huron dictionary (excluding Gabriel Sagard's rather poorly written phrasebook).

Possible support for this hypothesis comes from the Huron dialect recorded in this dictionary. It is different from the 'typical Huron' form (possibly a lingua franca) found in texts from the late 1640s to the 18th century. It resembles in at least one feature the 'Bear' dialect recorded by Sagard and Brebeuf (Sagard 1866; Brebeuf 1830); i.e., it has where the 'typical Huron' form has *-on,wa-*.

The entry in the FHO dictionary which provides the evidence on the clan and phratry structure of the Huron is listed under "Aumoirie" ('Armoirie' in modern French) or 'armorial sign'. There are eight of these signs, said by the author (probably Chaumonot) to represent the "nations" or "families" of the Huron. The Huron term used in this entry is 'entiok8a' (the -, - being like -y-, the -8- being a -w- before vowels and a -u- before consonants). This noun is derived from the verb "entio", which in Father Pierre Potier's 18th century Huron/Wyandot dictionary is given as referring to the "band" of an individual, or, more significantly, his or her "parenté" -specifically his or her "paren/t/s du cote de la mere" (Potier 1920:393 #13). The relevant material in the entry is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
FHO DICTIONARY ENTRIES

Sign	Gloss	"Nation" or Clan	Word Stem
"An ^o nion,en	ours	Atinnia8enten hatin ^o nion,en	Annia8enten
oskennonton	cerf	sontennonk	Skiatennon
Andia8ich		tionnenria honnontre/a/ hotienrotori	Ontrea Cenrotori
Ets8tai	castor	Satichiohare	Tsochiohare
Annaarisk8a	loup	hatinnaarisk8a	Ahonrek
h8enh8en	huart	hoti ^o ra,on	o ^o ra,on
Andesonk		hatindesonk hatiraenre	Arenre
Andatsatea	renard	Andatse ^o ronnon	Skanda,ona"

TRANSLATIONS

"An^onion,en" and "hatin^onion, en" are both derived from a verb meaning roughly 'to be a bear' (Potier 1920:451; FHO "animaux"). The first term means 'a bear', the second 'they are bears'. "Atinnia8enten" and "Annia8enten" both stem from a verb meaning something like 'to be in or of the country of the bear' (Potier 1920:450). The former, meaning 'they are of the country of the bear', was also the name of the so-called Bear 'tribe' of the Huron (Heidenreich 1971:301).

'Oskennonton' and cognate terms are used to refer to deer in Several Iroquoian languages (Barbeau 1961:168). It has the literal meaning of 'one who goes to or is in the land of the dead' (Potier 1920:352 #60). "Sontennonk" and "skiatennon" seem to be derived from a verb meaning 'to keep, take care of something or someone' (Potier 1920:378). The fact that in later years this was the clan of 'Sastaretsi', the hereditary chief of the Wyandot (Potier 1920:151) suggests that they might have been the 'keepers' of political authority or of the office of hereditary chief.

"Andia8ich" was the Huron word for 'turtle' (Potier 1920:449; FHO "animaux"). The word "tionnenria" means 'where or when there is a small group' (constructed with the noun "annenra" meaning "armee ... troupe . . . bande d'animaux, d'oiseaux" (Potier 1920:450) and the verb "a" meaning 'to be such a size' (Potier 1920:160 #1). This makes sense when the translations for the rest of the words in the phrase are given. "Honnontre/a/" is derived from a verb "atrea", meaning 'to be a grandchild (maternal)' (Potier 1920:203 #43, and can be

translated as 'they are their grandchildren'. The final word in the phrase is difficult to translate accurately, but at least part of it is cognate with the name 'Wenro', an Iroquoian people that joined with the Huron in the late 1630s (JR8:116, 16:252, 17:212, 18:234, 21:230 and 39:138). The whole phrase probably means something like: 'When they were small they adopted the Wenro as their grandchildren.'

"Ets8tai" is the term for 'beaver', meaning literally 'It is very shiny or brightly coloured' (Potier 1920:180 #19; FHO "animaux"; the St. Lawrence Iroquois used a cognate term: Barbeau 1961:168). "Satichiohare" and "Tsochiohare" appear to be derived from a noun plus verb combination signifying 'to wash one's mouth' ("achia", mouth) (Potier 1920:446) and "ohare", 'to wash' (Potier 1920:405 #12).

"Annaarisk8a" and "hatinnaarisk8a" mean 'wolf' and 'they are wolves' respectively. In his dictionary Potier claimed that this term was derived from a noun plus verb combination meaning roughly 'to chew bones' (Potier 1920:450). The term "Ahonrek" may be derived from the verb ",ari,i" meaning 'to chew or suck' (Potier 1920:346 #43), thus having a meaning something like 'they chew.'

The term "h8enh8en" means 'loon' (FHO "animaux"). The name of the clan, however, is 'sturgeon'; with "hotir^a, on" and "or^aaon" meaning 'they are sturgeon' and 'it is a sturgeon' respectively (FHO "animaux").

The names "Andesonk" and "hatindesonk" mean 'hawk' and 'they are hawk' (FHO "animaux"). The names "hatiraenre" and "araenre" are variations of the term used by the Huron to signify the Neutral or one part of the Neutral (White 1978:411). It may be derived from a verb ",a,enie" meaning 'to roll or turn over', possibly relating to the fact that the Neutral (or one particular subgroup of the Neutral) had been turned over or rolled over in defeat (Potier 1920:245). They may have been adopted into the hawk clan as the Wenro were adopted into the turtle clan.

"Andatsatea" means 'fox', and "Andatse^aronnon", 'the people of the fox' (FHO "animaux"). The term "Skanda,ona", I have so far been unable to translate.

This clan structure differs only slightly from the Seneca, Cayuga and Onondaga (Tooker 1970:94).

TABLE 2
CLAN MEMBERSHIP OF
THE HURON, SENECA, CAYUGA AND ONONDAGA

Huron	Seneca	Cayuga	Onondaga
Bear	Bear	Bear	Bear
Deer (Keepers)	Deer	Deer	Deer
Turtle	Turtle	Turtle	Turtle
Beaver	Beaver	Beaver	Beaver
Wolf	Wolf	Wolf	Wolf
Sturgeon	Heron	Eel	Eel
Hawk	Hawk	Hawk	Ball
Fox	Snipe	Snipe	Snipe

PHRATRIES

It is instructive to compare the terms in Table 2 with a list of the clans and phratries of the Wyandot recorded by Potier in the mid-1740's (Potier 1920:151) as given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
POTIER'S WYANDOT PHRATRIES AND CLANS (ADAPTED)

- 1) "Cskennonton" (Deer) Phratry:
 - a) "esontennonk" (keepers) clan;
 - b) "e,angontr8nnon" (snake) clan;
 - c) "hatinnion,en" (bear) clan.
- 2) ",andia8ich" (Turtle) Phratry:
 - a) "ennienstenronnon" (?)* clan;
 - b) "eronisseeronnon" (?)* clan;
 - c) "a^ctieronnon" (?)* clan;
 - d) "entioronnon" (prairie turtle; Barbeau 1915:86 fn2) clan.
- 3) ",annaariska8a" (Wolf) Phratry:
 - a) "hatinnaariska8a" (wolf) clan;
 - b) "hatindesonk" (hawk) clan;
 - c) "hotira,on" (sturgeon) clan;
 - d) "ti,ata,entsi" (they are old) clan.

c These are probably all the names of various kinds of turtles; see Barbeau 1915:85-6.

TABLE 4
A COMPARISON OF THE WYANDOT AND HURON
CLAN LISTS

<u>Wyandot</u>	<u>Huron</u>
1) Deer phratry	
a) Keepers (Deer)	Bear
b) Bear	Keepers (Deer)
2) Turtle phratry	
	Turtle
	Beaver
3) Wolf phratry	
a) Wolf	Wolf
b) Hawk	Sturgeon
c) Sturgeon	Hawk
	Fox

The similarity between the lists of tables 2 and 3 is quite striking, particularly in the order in which the clans are presented. removing from the Wyandot list (Table 3) the clans that do not appear on the previous list (Table 2), we have the comparison shown in Table 4.

The marked similarity between the two lists suggests to me that the early Huron list was not written in random order, but according to phratry. Further, I would contend that Huron society had three phratries at the time that the French-Huron Onondaga dictionary was

written: the *bear*; the *turtle*; and the *wolf*. The bear phratry would then contain the bear and deer clans; the turtle phratry, the turtle and beaver clans; and the wolf phratry, the wolf, hawk, loon or sturgeon and fox clans. That this would place an animal associated with water in the turtle phratry, and a Canidae predator in the wolf phratry, seems to make this contention more credible.

This three-part Huron phratry structure would then mirror exactly the three 'clan' system of the Mohawk and Oneida (Tooker 1970:92). Perhaps, like the Mohawk and Oneida, the three phratries could reform into two moieties for ceremonial purposes (Tooker 1970:93): i.e., with the bear and turtle phratries combining into one four-clan unit, the wolf phratry providing the other.

If such was the case, it would be tempting to identify the first unit as the Bear 'tribe', the second as the Cord 'tribe'. The 'newcomers' into the area, the Deer 'tribe' and the Rock 'tribe' might have aligned themselves with one of the two moieties; the Deer with their neighbours the Bear/Turtle moiety (which contained the deer clan), the Rock with their Wolf moiety neighbours.

It would be further tempting to suggest that the split noted by Trigger between the northern and southern Bear (Trigger 1976: 57, 290-2, 475-6, 518-20, 539) was not just the result of recent grievances, but was based on a division of the Bear into bear and turtle moieties. Such an assertion is supported rather tenuously by two facts. The name of the leader of the northern Bear faction, -Aen(n)ons-, was borne in the 18th century by the leader of the bear clan of the Wyandot (Potier 1920:15). As names were probably considered to be clan property (Trigger 1976:47) it is likely that the person who bore the name in the 1630's was also prominent in that clan. The leader of the southern Bear faction was based in Ossossane, the village into which the bulk of the Wenro were adopted (Trigger 1976:562). As we have seen, the Wenro were adopted into the turtle clan. Ossossane was thus probably a turtle stronghold.

This, however, is stretching beyond the credible limits of the data now at hand. Further linguistic investigation is necessary (i.e., the analysis of personal and place names) before such statements can be made with any authority.

REFERENCES CITED

Barbeau, Charles Marius

- 1915 *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*. Canada, Department of Mines, Geological Survey, Memoir 80.
- 1917 Iroquoian Clans and Phratries. *American Anthropologist* 19:392-402.
- 1961 The Language of Canada in the Voyages of Jacques Cartier (1534-1538). In *Contributions to Anthropology, 1959, National Museum of Canada, Bulletin* 173: 108-229.

Brebeuf, Jean de

- 1830 *Doctrine Chrestienne*, dv R. P. Ledesme de la Compagnie de Iesys. In Samuel de Champlain's *Voyages; ou journal des decouvertes de la Nouvelle France* (3 volumes). Paris.

- Chaumonot, Pierre Joseph-Marie
ca 1656 Dictionnaire huron et hiroquois onontaheronon. Manuscript. (FHO)
- Clarke, Peter D.
1870 *Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandotts*. Hunter, Rose & Co. Toronto.
- Connelly, William
1900 The Wyandots. In *Annual Archaeological Report, Appendix to the Report of the Minister of Education of Ontario for 1899*, pp. 92-123.
- FHO
See Chaumonot ca 1656
- Finley, James
1840 *History of the Wyandot Mission at Upper Sandusky, Ohio*. Cincinnati.
- Hanzeli, Victor
1969 *Missionary Linguistics in New France*. Mouton. The Hague.
- Heidenreich, Conrad
1971 *Huronian: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650*. McClelland and Stewart. Toronto.
- JR
1896- *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (73 volumes). Edited by Reuben Gold
1901 Thwaites. The Burrows Brothers Company. Cleveland.
- Potier, Pierre
1920 *Elementa grammaticae huronicae, 1745* (facsimilie of manuscript in St. Mary's College, Montreal). *Fifteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1918-1919*, pp. 1-157. Toronto.
- Powell, J. W.
1881 Wyandot Government. *Bureau of American Ethnology, 1st Annual Report*, pp. 57-69. Washington, D.C.
- Sagard, Gabriel
1866 *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les Freres mineurs recollects y ont faits pour la conversion des infideles depuis l'an 1615... avec un dictionnaire de la langue huronne* (4 volumes). Originally published 1636. Paris.
- Tooker, Elisabeth
1970 Northern Iroquoian Sociopolitical Organization. *American Anthropologist* 72: 90-97.
- Trigger, Bruce G.
1976 *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (2 volumes). McGill-Queen's University Press. Montreal.
- White, Marian
1978 Neutral and Wenro. In *Handbook of North American Indians* (William C. Sturtevant, ed.), Vol. 15, *Northeast* (Bruce G. Trigger, ed.), pp. 407-411. Washington, D.C.

Apt. #105
20 Forest Manor Road
Willowdale, Ontario M2J 1M2