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# Wampum, Tawagonshi, and the Two Row Belt

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## Abstract

This essay outlines the early history of wampum, explaining its origin, its value to Native Americans, and its first observations by Europeans. It then considers how wampum, as it existed in the 1610s, fits the role of wampum as described in the Tawagonshi document and fits with its manifestation in the Two Row Belt. The essay argues that key elements in the Tawagonshi document and the Two Row Belt itself are inconsistent with wampum use as recorded in archaeological, documentary, and visual sources. This finding does not discount the possibility of a Dutch-Native agreement similar to the one recorded in the Tawagonshi document that included wampum rituals and the creation of a wampum belt such as the Two Row Belt.

## Keywords

wampum; Two Row; *Guswhenta*; *kaswentha*; Tawagonshi

Wampum—strings or belts of shell beads—was in use among the Five Nations Iroquois and other native groups at the time of contact with Europeans. It also came to figure prominently in Native American-European affairs in the Northeast. It is no surprise, then, that wampum is intricately linked to the Tawagonshi/Two Row tradition. Indeed, the Tawagonshi document specifically mentions wampum: “*ende als een bewijs van Eere ende Toegeneeghenheydt verruylen wy eene silver ketting voor een vaedem Seewant*” (and as evidence of the honor and goodwill we exchange a silver chain for a fathom of beadwork [wampum]).<sup>1</sup> The other connection this agreement has to wampum is in the form of the Two Row Wampum Belt, also known as *kaswentha*, which many Iroquoian people believe commemorates the 1613 agreement. Thus discussion of wampum bears directly on the Tawagonshi-Two Row tradition. Yet, although much work has been

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 of the essay of Hermkens et al. in this issue.

done on various aspects of wampum's history, little of this has been synthesized into a narrative that captures the breadth of wampum's historical development. In the absence of such a synthesis, this essay explores in summary fashion what is known of wampum's history from its origins through the early Dutch period and considers how the Tawagonshi document and Two Row Wampum Belt fits into that history. What is currently known about wampum from documentary, pictorial, and archaeological evidence is not entirely consistent with the way wampum is discussed in the Tawagonshi document and does not support an original manufacture date of 1613 for the Two Row Belt. On the other hand, current knowledge of wampum does not rule out the possibility of an early, but undated, agreement in which wampum could well have played a role and which was memorialized by the Two Row Belt.

## What Was Wampum and Where Did It Come From?

Wampum comprised small, cylindrical-shaped beads (5.5 mm x 4 mm) made of shell.<sup>2</sup> At about 1600, the beads were made of Knobbed Whelk and Channelled Whelk (*Busycon carica* and *Busycotypus canaliculatus*) by coastal Algonquian speakers such as the Munsees, Pequots, and Native people of Long Island, who traded it inland to Iroquoian speakers and others.<sup>3</sup> The term *wampum* is an anglicized truncation of the Algonquian term *wampum-peag*.<sup>4</sup> Its origins are obscure. Clearly the adoption of shell and shell products was a tradition that stretched back thousands of years among most Native Americans.<sup>5</sup> Among the Iroquois, archaeological evidence shows the use of beads similar to wampum (although larger and cruder) dating back hundreds of years, and the Iroquois themselves manufactured these pre- or proto-wampum beads.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, terms in the Iroquoian language

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<sup>2</sup> Lynn Ceci, "Tracing Wampum's Origins: Shell Bead Evidence from Archaeological Sites in Western and Coastal New York," in Charles F. Hayes III and Lynn Ceci (eds.), *Proceedings of the 1986 Shell Bead Conference, Selected Papers* (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1989), pp. 63-80 at 63.

<sup>3</sup> George Hamell, "Wampum: Light, White, and Bright Things Are Good to Think", in Alexandra van Dongen (ed.), *One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure* (Rotterdam, Neth.: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1995), pp. 41-51 at 42.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Webb Hodge, *Handbook of Indians North of Mexico*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 30 (Washington D.C., 1910), s.v. "Wampum," by John N.B. Hewitt, p. 904.

<sup>5</sup> J.S. Slotkin and Karl Schmitt, "Studies in Wampum," *American Anthropologist* 51 (1949), pp. 223-36.

<sup>6</sup> Ceci, "Tracing," pp. 65-72.

that referred to wampum in the early seventeenth century—for example, the Mohawk *onekoera*—have origins dating back one thousand or more years.<sup>7</sup> What these words referred to in ancient times cannot now be known, but certainly the terms had a long history with the Iroquois and later came to refer to the highly valued wampum. Nor were marine shells the only source of beads; it is possible fresh water shell was also used.<sup>8</sup>

Many people from the eastern Great Lakes to the Atlantic Coast, particularly (but not exclusively) Iroquoian speakers, held wampum in great esteem. For example, in explaining the origins of the League of the Five Nations, or Haudenosaunee, the Iroquois tell the story of Hiawatha and Deganawida. In brief, the Iroquoian tradition holds that internecine violence was devastating native society prior to the formation of the League of the Longhouse. Deganawida, a prophet known as the Great Peacemaker, preached peace and reconciliation. He first converted Hiawatha, and together they convinced the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas to put aside their grievances and agree to a league of peace. Hiawatha is said to have discovered wampum, and he and Deganawida used it in bringing their message of peace and in rituals of social healing. In creating the League, Deganawida and Hiawatha established ongoing and annual rituals that incorporated wampum and were designed to provide a means of the airing of future grievances.<sup>9</sup>

This use of wampum grew out of more fundamental practices of social exchange. How longstanding such practices were, it is difficult to say, but they were not unique to the Iroquois nor did they exclusively depend upon the use of wampum. Social reciprocity and gift giving were commonly practiced by all Eastern Woodland Indians. The giving of gifts and the exchange of material goods resolved differences and cemented relationships between individuals and groups. While wampum often served in such exchanges, other goods were also given and received. Furthermore, wampum's use extended beyond such ceremonial exchange. The Five Nations Iroquois, other Iroquoian speakers such as the Hurons, and the Algonquian speakers

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<sup>7</sup> Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635*, Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna (ed. and trans.) (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 52; Gunther Michelson, "Iroquoian Terms for Wampum," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 57, no. 1 (1991), pp. 108-31.

<sup>8</sup> James Phinney Baxter (ed.), *A Memoir of Jacques Cartier, Sieur de Limoilou, His Voyages to the St. Lawrence*, (New York, 1906), p. 165.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 31-49.

of the lower St Lawrence Valley and lands between the river and the Atlantic regularly used wampum for decoration and ornamentation, social exchange, diplomatic interactions, healing practices, courting rituals, and burial ceremonies at the time of contact with Europeans.

## Early European Observations

Such practices were observed and recorded by Europeans as early as the first half of the sixteenth century. Jacques Cartier noted in 1535 that “the most precious thing that [the St Lawrence Iroquoians] have in this world is *esnogy*, the which is white as snow.” “Bead money,” he also called it and believed that they “use it as we do gold and silver, and hold it the most precious thing in the world.”<sup>10</sup> As Cartier prepared to return to France with Donnacona, a village leader, a delegation of villagers came to the ship and “made him a present of four-and-twenty collars [probably belts] of *esnogy*.”<sup>11</sup> Similar exchanges took place his voyage downriver. When Cartier returned in 1641, he was greeted by Donnacona’s people, including his successor, Agohanna, who “took a piece of tanned leather of a yellow skin edged about with *esnogy* ... which was upon his head instead of a crown, and he put the same on the head of our captain, and took from his wrists two bracelets of *esnogy*, and put them upon the captain’s arms.”<sup>12</sup> Certainly other Europeans—particularly Basque fishermen—observed or received wampum from native people during the rest of the sixteenth century, but no record of these observations remain.<sup>13</sup> Although the Iroquoian speakers of Cartier’s day no longer inhabited that stretch of the St Lawrence, Europeans arriving there in the early seventeenth century and armed with the knowledge of

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<sup>10</sup> *Memoir of Jacques Cartier*, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>13</sup> The only evidence that wampum was observed by Basque fishermen was the appearance of the Basque-based term *matachias* among the natives. The term was later used by Champlain and other early seventeenth-century French observers of wampum users. Peter Bakker, “The Language of the Coast Tribes is Half Basque”: A Basque-Amerindian Pidgin in Use between Europeans and Native Americans in North America, ca. 1540 - ca. 1640,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 31, nos. 3-4 (1989), pp. 131, 137; H.P. Biggar (ed. and trans.), Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain* (Toronto, Ont., 1922-36), 6 vols., 1:108, 179-80; Marc Lescarbot, *History of New France*, H.P. Biggar (ed.), W.L. Grant (trans.) (Toronto, 1907, 1911, 1914), 3 vols., 2:88-9, 168-9, 309, 322, 3:101, 152, 157-60, 163, 192, 201, 285.

Cartier's voyages, expected to observe wampum among the people they met. Marc Lescarbot, for example, when commenting on shell beads among the native people made reference to "Esurni in the account of the second voyage of Jacques Cartier."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Samuel de Champlain and others noted the use of wampum among the Iroquoian and Algonquian speakers in many of the lands explored between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>15</sup>

In 1605, Champlain's explorations took him as far south as Cape Cod where he met Nausets and to the north Native people he called Armouchiquois. Of the latter he wrote, "I saw among other things a girl with her hair quite neatly done up by means of a skin, dyed red, and trimmed on the upper part with little [wampum] beads."<sup>16</sup> He observed that "Both men and women [of the Nausets] ... adorn themselves with feathers, wampum beads, and other knick-knacks, which they arrange very neatly after the manner of embroidery."<sup>17</sup> The following autumn, the French again found themselves among the Nausets, but hostilities broke out between the two groups. After a series of confrontations and attacks and counterattacks, Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt was on shore when a group of Nausets appeared. He "allowed them to approach and made as though he would accept their wares, which consisted of tobacco, some chains, necklaces and armlets made of periwinkle shells."<sup>18</sup> In 1611, in the vicinity of Quebec, as Champlain parlayed with Huron leaders, he recorded that "[t]hereupon they sent [to other Huron leaders] for fifty beaver-skins and four wampum belts" to give to the French colonizer.<sup>19</sup> And a few years later, in 1616, Champlain observed similar diplomatic activities between the native people themselves: "the Algonquins ... had to grant to ... Atignouaatitans [Hurons] fifty wampum belts with one hundred fathoms of the same, which they value highly."<sup>20</sup> In another case of inter-tribal

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<sup>14</sup> Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 2:338.

<sup>15</sup> There are several references that might refer to wampum, but the language of early observers could be interpreted in more than one way such as terms like *matachias*, shell beads, and so forth. The following summary includes only the observations that most obviously and most likely referred to wampum. There are also descriptions of encounters in which it can be inferred that wampum was observed or exchanged, but the scope of this essay is too narrow to develop a full discussion of those.

<sup>16</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 3:397.

<sup>17</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 1:411.

<sup>18</sup> Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 2:338.

<sup>19</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 2:194.

<sup>20</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 3:102-103.

diplomacy, the Algonquian leader, Yroquet, “had given wampum to” secure their postponement of a trip to the Hurons.<sup>21</sup>

If the frequency of Champlain’s observations is any indication, wampum use among the Iroquoian-speaking Hurons was particularly widespread. Women regularly adorned themselves in wampum for Champlain observed that “they are laden with quantities of wampum, both as necklaces and chains, which they put on in front of their dresses and attached to their belts, and also as bracelets and ear-rings” (marked “F” in Fig. 1). In fact, he asserted “I can assure you that at dances I have seen girls who had more than twelve pounds of wampum on them, without counting the other trinkets with which they are loaded and decked out” (marked “G” in Fig. 1).<sup>22</sup>



Fig. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 3104.

<sup>22</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 3, plate VI, 4:312, 313. In the original it reads “sont chargées de quantité de pourceline”; *Les Voyages du S<sup>r</sup> de Champlain Capitaine ordinaire pour le ROY en la nouvelle France des années, 1615-1618* (Paris, 1620), p. 86.

And Huron men seeking the affection of young women would make “a present of some wampum necklaces, chains and bracelets.”<sup>23</sup>

In addition to adornment and courting rituals, wampum was used in healing and burial contexts. Hurons responsible for healing the sick oversaw elaborate dance rituals in which the dancers brought gifts, including wampum, to the bed ridden. In the unusual Huron Feast of the Dead held every eight to ten years, when Huron people would lovingly gather the remains of their deceased loved ones and carry them to a common burial pit, they would inter them “with the necklaces, wampum chains, tomahawks, kettles, sword-blades, knives and other trifles which they prize greatly.”<sup>24</sup> Huron wampum supplies must have been plentiful enough to provide them with a surplus, since they were known to trade it, along with other items, to the neighboring hunter-gatherer groups for animal skins.<sup>25</sup>

The earliest Hudson Valley reference occurs in 1609, when Henry Hudson ‘discovered’ for himself and his employers the river now bearing his name. Robert Juet, his second mate, described “stropes [belts] of beads” that they received from the native people, most likely Mahicans. The next record (not including the Tawagonshi document) of wampum in connection with the Dutch comes more than ten years later. After a decade of trade between the Dutch and the Indians primarily located on the shores of Long Island Sound, the Connecticut River, and the Hudson River—a period poorly documented—two episodes involving wampum enter the records. In 1620, a significant conflict between a band of Munsees and the Dutch was resolved with the exchange of wampum. This occurred after Captain Willem Jorisz Hontom and supercargo Jacob Eelkens failed to make any successful trade with the native inhabitants of the upper Hudson—either Mahicans or Mohawks. Returning to the southern reaches of the river, they engaged in trade with a band of Munsees who became aggressive while aboard the Dutch ship. The Dutch nearly lost control, but were able to trap a few Indians in the hold who eventually gave them “a few *coraelen* with which a peace was

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<sup>23</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 4:315; Champlain further described “When she has a child, the preceding husband returns to her, to show her the friendship and affection he bore her in the past more than any other has done, and that the child to be born is his and of his begetting. Another will say the same to her, and in this way it is at the woman’s choice and option to take and accept whoever pleases her most, having in her amours gained much wampum,” pp. 316-17.

<sup>24</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 330-2. See also Erik R. Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead: Indian-European Encounters in Early North America* (Baltimore, Md: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Biggar, *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 4:309.



made and concluded,” much like the exchange between De Poutrincourt and the Nausets.<sup>26</sup> Just two years later, Jacob Eelkens was involved in another case, this time on the Connecticut River: he captured a Sequin chief and demanded a ransom of “one hundred and forty fathoms of Zeewan, which consists of small beads they manufacture themselves, and which they prize as Jewels,” as recorded about four years after the event.<sup>27</sup> By 1628, after the Dutch had traded for some fifteen or more years on the Hudson and had sponsored settlers in more recent years, the secretary of the colony, Isaac de Rasière made several notations about wampum and offered this description of the Munsee Indian involvement in wampum:

As an employment in winter they make *sewan*, which is an oblong bead that they make from cockle-shells, which they find on the sea-shore, and they consider it as valuable as we do money here, since one can buy with it everything they have; they string it, and wear it around the neck and hands; they also make bands of it, which the women wear on the forehead under the hair, and the man around the body; and they are as particular about the stringing and sorting as we can be here about pearls.<sup>28</sup>

## Tawagonshi, Two Row, and the Historical Record

How does the Tawagonshi document and the Two Row Belt fit with the history of wampum as here established? Certain aspects of wampum stand out

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<sup>26</sup> Stadsarchief Amsterdam, notarial archives, inv. nr. 200, 14 August 1620, fol. 625-6v. Note that I confused Hans Hontom for Willem Jorisz Hontom when I first published this story in Paul Otto, *The Dutch-Munsee Encounter in America: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Hudson Valley* (New York: Berghahn Press, 2006), pp. 58-9. This error was discovered by Mark Meuwese; Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 121n.

<sup>27</sup> Nicolaes van Wassenae, *Historisch Verhael alder ghedenck-weerdichste Geschiedenissen die hier en daar in Europa ...*, November 1626, in J. Franklin Jameson (ed.), *Narratives of New Netherland*, (New York, 1909) (hereafter *NNN*), p. 86; the original Dutch reads “Om de Noort legghen de Sickenanes, tusschen de Brunisten, en Hollanderen. d’Opperste van die Natie heeft onlanx met Pieter Barentsz. een accoot ghemaect/met niemant dan met hem te handelen. Jaques Elekes [sic] hadde hem in den Jare 1622. op syn Jacht ghevanghen/ en moest groot rantsoen betalen/ of hy wilde hem koppen/ betalende hondert en veertich vademen Zeewan dat syn kleyne Coralen die sy selfs maken / by haer als Juwelen gheacht / daerom betrouet hy nu niemant als desen” (Amsterdam), p. 39 recto.

<sup>28</sup> Isaac de Rasière to Samuel Blommaert, 1628, in *NNN*, p. 106; see the Dutch transcription in Kees-Jan Waterman, Jaap Jacobs, and Charles T. Gehring (eds.), *Indianenverhalen: De vroegste beschrijvingen van Indianen langs de Hudsonrivier (1609-1680)* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2009), p. 46. The original Dutch reads: “Voor tijt verdrijf Inden winter Maeken sy seuwan, t’welck een Corael is Lanckwerpich, dat sij van kinckhoorens, die sij aende zeeCant vinden

in these European observations and serve as a benchmark in the evolution of this sacred item. It is clear, for example, that Native people deeply valued wampum. Although Europeans did not seem to understand why, and in many cases they misconstrued wampum to be a form of Indian currency, or at least they used substances valued by Europeans as comparables—silver and gold, they nevertheless saw the deep and intrinsic value wampum held for Indigenous people. Europeans also observed and clearly recognized the role of wampum in social exchange. Again, their assumption that wampum was akin to money may have led them to see such exchanges as primarily economic rather than social—Jacob Eelkens' exploitation of native appreciation of wampum in 1624 speaks much more to an economic understanding of wampum than a recognition of its powerful role in social exchange.

The form that wampum held, at least on the surface, seems to fit as well. The French records, in particular, refer to both strings and belts of wampum, apparently paralleled in the Tawagonshi document that explicitly identifies a string or "fathom" of wampum being given by the Indians and in the existence of the Two Row Belt. But probing a little deeper, the Tawagonshi details do not fit so well. The term used to describe wampum—*sewant*—does not appear again in the Dutch records until 1626, referring to the 1622 event. Earlier Dutch (and English) terms were limited to linguistic adaptations—using the very familiar term *beads* or the word used in the West Indian trade, *coraelen*, to refer to wampum. In fact, *sewant* came from Algonquian speakers—most likely those on Long Island, and certainly not from the Mohawks. While *sewant* likely came into cross-cultural currency among the Dutch, Munsees (Algonquian speakers), and Mohawks (Iroquoian speakers) by later decades, it seems unlikely that the Dutch would have employed it as early as 1613 in an agreement with the Mohawks. A more likely expression would have been one of the European terms seen in other records of the 1610s or the Mohawk term—*onekoera*.<sup>29</sup>

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maeken, en houdent voor soo werdich als men hier het gelt doet, alsoo men alles wat sy hebben daervoor Can Coopen. Sy snoerent, draghent aen den hals en handen, maeken daer banden van, die sy voort hajer opt hoeft doen aende vrouwen, ende de mans ompt Lif; sijn daer soo vies van, als men hier vande perellen Can wesen int snoueren en sorteren."

<sup>29</sup> One of the earliest extant records of the Iroquoian term is in 1635; see Van den Bogaert, *Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country*, p. 52. It is also worth noting that despite traveling among the Mohawk and the Oneida with the purpose of renegotiating fur prices, Van den Bogaert regularly used the Algonquian term *sewan* and not an Iroquoian word. *Onekoera* appears in his glossary of Mohawk terms where he defined it as "*sewant haer geldt*" ("sewan, their money"); *Indianenverhalen*, pp. 88, 93, 95.

It is even more curious when one considers the involvement of Jacob Eelkens in both the 1613 event and the 1620 and 1622 events. The later events, without any other context, seem to indicate that Eelkens learned the importance of wampum in the 1620 episode and then exploited that knowledge in the 1622 episode among the Sequin Indians. Even more significantly, if Eelkens had been party to a written treaty with the Mohawks in 1613 and used the term *sewant* in a document commemorating that, why would he later use the much more generic and obviously adapted term of *coraelen* in 1620? And while there is evidence of Europeans observing diplomatic wampum exchanges and being involved in some rituals of social reciprocity involving wampum, the very specific action of exchanging a string of wampum for a silver chain in order to seal a diplomatic agreement is not consistent with the level of cultural understanding the Dutch appeared to have at that time nor with the stage in cross-cultural interactions that the Dutch and the Native Americans had reached by then. Finally, the earliest extant Dutch observations of wampum do not involve any Iroquoian people. In short, these little details related to wampum use found in the Tawagonshi document appear anachronistic in the context established by the rest of the historical record.

But the most significant anachronism relates not to the details described in the Tawagonshi document, but in the origin of the Two Row Belt in connection with an event dated to 1613. The Two Row Belt—a wampum belt with two rows of purple beads set against a background of white beads—is inconsistent with the observations outlined here. Until the 1630s, virtually all observations about wampum—if they made reference to color—described it as white or described it as being manufactured from shells that were white (when dark shell beads did begin to be manufactured, they were constructed nearly exclusively from the dark purple section of the Quahog clam—*Mercenaria mercenaria*).<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the term *wampum* comes from *wampum-peague*, which is Algonquian for “strings of white shell beads.” While it later

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<sup>30</sup> There is one counter example that needs to be addressed. Marc Lescarbot, who lived in Acadia for about a year, wrote in 1606-1607, probably referring to the Micmacs, noted that they “content themselves with *matachias*, which they hang at their ears, and about their necks, bodies, arms, and legs.” And then he makes an interesting, but confusing comparison: “The Brazilians, Floridians, and Armouchiquois [inhabitants of the area between the Saco and Connecticut Rivers] make *carcenents* and bracelets (called *boure* in Brazil, and by ours *matachias*) of the shells of those great sea-cockles, called *vignols*, like snails, which they break into a thousand pieces and collect, and then polish them upon a sandstone till they make them very small; then they pierce them and make them into rosaries.” At this point Lescarbot included an intriguing color distinction: the beads are black and white, and very pretty they are.” Furthermore, earlier editions of the work not only make the color distinction,

came to be applied to white and purple beads, its earliest uses were limited to references to white beads.<sup>31</sup> In addition to the observations cited above, Gabriel Sagard, who lived among the Huron from the summer of 1624 until the summer of 1625 and wrote extensively of wampum, never once described dark beads. Introducing his readers to wampum he noted their manufacture from what sounds like whelk: “their wampum ... consists of the ribs of those large sea-shells called vignols, like periwinkles, which they cut into a thousand pieces, then polish them on sand-stone, pierce a hole in them, and make necklaces and bracelets of them.” Whatever the source shell, it was clear that they were white, for the native people made the beads “with great trouble and labour on account of the hardness of these ribs, which are quite a different substance from our ivory; that indeed they do not value nearly as much as their wampum, which is prettier and whiter.” Furthermore, he offered detailed observations about wampum “strung in different ways,” but never mentioned the use of dark and white beads or belts with patterns and pictographs although he did note that “some of them have also belts and other finery made of porcupine quills dyed crimson red and very neatly interwoven. Then there is no lack of feathers and paints, which are at everybody’s service.” Finally, the frontispiece to his book pictured Huron women bedecked in wampum, much like the engravings accompanying Champlain’s writings, but these gave no indication that the wampum included dark beads (note the second, fourth, and sixth figures in Fig. 2).<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the few graphic representations of wampum dating from about 1630 or earlier depicted only white wampum. Note the images published in Champlain’s and Sagard’s volumes. Two other striking examples come from New Netherland. First is a proposed coat of arms for the colony (see Fig. 3). The proposed image pictured below was accompanied by the note that described the shield being comprised of “een swarten bever op een

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but also describe what sound like wampum belts with designs or pictographs: “Between each of these beads they set other beads, as black as those of which I have spoken are white.” However, it is not clear whether he is speaking about native people in the Northeast, of Florida, or of Brazil. And despite the reference to dark beads, these are not beads made of Quahog clam (which would be dark purple and not black), but were “made of jet, or of a certain hard black wood resembling jet, which they polish and make as small as they list”, Champlain, *History of New France*, 3:157 and note 1.

<sup>31</sup> Hewitt, “Wampum”.

<sup>32</sup> Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, George M. Wrong (ed.), H.H. Langton (trans.) (Toronto, 1939), pp. 144-6. Note that Sagard’s general description followed that of Marc Lescarbot’s minus the comparative and other details. See note above.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

Gout velt, met een bordeur van wit Zee want, op een blaauwe grondt” (“a black beaver upon a gold field with a border of white wampum on a blue background”).<sup>33</sup> The official seal of the colony, probably adopted in 1630, similarly featured a beaver in the central position and, in this case, surrounded by a string of white wampum beads (see Fig. 4).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Bontemantel Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>34</sup> Some secondary sources have pointed to 1623 as the date of the seal's adoption, but this claim is not supported in the primary sources. I.N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island* (New York: Robert Dodd, 1922), vol. 4, pp. 51, 77; Original deed of the patroonship of Rensselaerswijck, 13 August, 1630, Varia, New York Public Library; E.B.

New Netherland comprised lands that included the heart of wampum production. By 1630, those familiar with New Netherland were well familiar with wampum. If dark beads existed in any significant numbers or were of common use in strings or belts, it seems highly unlikely that representative emblems of the colony, which recognized the importance of both the beaver and wampum to the colonial enterprise, would gloss what should have been a recognizable detail.

This is not to say that no dark beads existed before 1630, but they were rare. In the first place, tubular dark shell beads primarily came from quahog clam shells, difficult to drill without the use of European-supplied metal drills.<sup>35</sup> The earliest known purple tubular beads—two of them—have been discovered on an Onondaga site from the very early seventeenth century while another purple bead has been found in a Seneca site dating from 1605-25.<sup>36</sup> The most prominent early appearance of this type of quahog bead was on another Seneca site from the same time period. These purple beads—ten of them—appear in a small band or bracelet, demonstrating the practice of weaving beads into a “belt.” In another site on Seneca lands of the early seventeenth century, no purple tubular beads are found—defining tubular as having a great length than diameter—but there are a large number of purple discoidal beads that have a diameter equal to the length of the beads, making them a nearly tubular bead (compared to the typical discoidal beads made of quahog, which considerably shorter than their diameter). However, these shell beads appeared at a time when shell beads generally were diminishing in frequency on Seneca sites and the availability of purple shell beads appears too limited to make possible the widespread adoption and production of large wampum belts with designs or pictographs of light and contrasting purple beads.<sup>37</sup>

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O’Callaghan (ed.), *Documentary History of New York*, 4 vols. (Albany, 1849-51), 4:1; image is from O’Callaghan who states that it was “Copied from an impression in the Office of the Secretary of State.”

<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that there were no dark beads whatsoever nor any antecedents to cylindrical dark beads. As James W. Bradley points out, non-white cylindrical beads could be created from whelk shells that may have taken on a dark grey to black hue depending upon the conditions in which the sea snails lived; “Re-Visiting Wampum and Other Seventeenth-Century Shell Games,” *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 39 (2011), pp. 25-51 at 25-6. There also existed discoidal beads made from quahog shells before 1630. In addition to these two shell options, native people may have used dyed quills, stone, or dyed wood beads as dark or black beads.

<sup>36</sup> Bradley, “Re-Visiting Wampum,” pp. 42n9 and 43n17.

<sup>37</sup> Martha L. Sempowski and Lorraine P. Saunders, *Dutch Hollow and Factory Hollow: The Advent of Dutch Trade Among the Seneca*, Charles F. Wray Series in Seneca Archaeology,

After about 1630, however, there was an explosion of beads—particularly white and dark tubular shell beads—in archaeological settings and with that sudden increase of beads came the widespread appearance of wampum belts. This is amply illustrated by the detailed material history of the Seneca people at the Rochester Museum and Science Center. Their standing exhibit, “At The Western Door,” demonstrates material change among the Seneca from generation to generation, and the rapid expansion of wampum, including purple beads, after 1630.<sup>38</sup> What accounts for this change? Apparently it was a change in wampum production methods combined with stimulus for new forms of wampum. Whereas wampum had been traditionally made from whelk using lithic tools, after contact with Europeans native people applied the newly acquired iron tools from Dutch traders to manufacture beads from the much harder quahog clam shell that included the coveted purple tones. And why were the dark so desired? At this point, researchers can only speculate, but in addition to some of the stone, quill, and wooden antecedents to quahog beads, it is possible native people also sought to emulate in shell the colored glass beads of European manufacture, to which they were recently introduced.<sup>39</sup>

Whatever the case, the shift to including dark beads is clearly demonstrated in archaeological, pictographic, and narrative sources after about 1630. The first European observation still in existence comes from 1633 when John Winthrop noted the return of a Massachusetts Bay vessel from

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vol. 3, Research Records, no. 24 (Rochester: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 2001), pp. 262, 539, 583, 584, 654, 656, 657, 685. It should also be noted that there are questions of provenience with many of the artifacts from one of these sites since there are few extant field notes. In fact, the belt or band containing the purple quahog beads was reconstructed by its discoverer and the original brass beads were replaced by modern ones; it is presumed that all the shell beads are original, but this cannot be known for certain.

The other dark bead options mentioned in the note above could conceivably fulfill the place of dark beads in a wampum belt, but these seem to be exceptions rather than the rule and there appear to have been too few dark beads of any sort in circulation to make belts of significant size or substantial patterns. The archaeological and documentary record together appear not to support the widespread use of dark beads or the existence of belts with designs created by the alternating white and purple wampum beads.

<sup>38</sup> At the Western Door, standing exhibit, Rochester Museum and Science Center, Rochester, New York; Ceci, “Tracing,” p. 72; Martha L. Sempowski, “Fluctuations through Time in the Use of Marine Shell at Seneca Iroquois Sites,” in Charles F. Hayes III and Lynn Ceci (eds.), *Proceedings of the 1986 Shell Bead Conference, Selected Papers* (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1989), pp. 81-96 at 87-8.

<sup>39</sup> Clyde L. MacKenzie, et. al., “Quahogs in Eastern North America: Part I, Biology, Ecology, and Historical Uses,” *Marine Fisheries Review* 64, no. 2 (2002), pp. 1-55 at 13. The quahog clam is also known as the hard clam or hard-shell clam, among many other names.



Fig. 5.

Long Island where “they had store of the best wamponp[ea]k bothe white & blewe.”<sup>40</sup> Thereafter most European descriptions of wampum note both white and dark beads. The creation and adoption of dark wampum beads

<sup>40</sup> Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (eds.), *Journal of John Winthrop* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 98.



was first depicted in an image recorded by Peter Lindström with reference to the Unami people of the Delaware Bay (see Fig. 5).<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

It is difficult to fully reconcile with the historical record the description of the wampum in the Tawagonshi document or the Two Row Wampum Belt as a belt dated to 1613. As it now stands, the evidence of wampum's development reinforces the assessment of the Tawagonshi document as a forgery. Lacking an understanding that wampum evolved over time and not appreciating the nuances of that evolution, L.G. van Loon appears to have crafted a compelling document that touches on elements of wampum's history from a period later than 1613. Likewise, the original Two Row Wampum Belt could not have originated in 1613, but must have appeared after 1630. These findings, however, must be understood to be limited to a conclusion that the belt and the treaty document details are anachronistic for 1613; they do not, nor are they meant to, discredit the Two Row tradition. There may well be good evidence to support a Dutch-Iroquoian agreement much like the one outlined in the Tawagonshi document and that at the time of that agreement, the first Two Row Wampum Belt was created. With more research and greater cooperation among scholars and researchers, perhaps the date of that event can be ascertained and references to it in the documentary record can be identified.

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<sup>41</sup> Per Lindeström, *Geographia Americae*, De la Gardie-skolan, Lidköping, Sweden.