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“This is that which . . . they call Wampum”

Europeans Coming to Terms with Native Shell Beads

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ABSTRACT The Native American–European encounter created a multitude of opportunities for understanding and misunderstanding. Linguistic and cultural barriers contributed to the complexity of cross-cultural understanding. In the case of tubular shell beads known today as wampum, Europeans sought a suitable term to describe the unfamiliar cultural goods that served Native people in ways unfamiliar to Europeans. The French, Dutch, and English experimented with diverse terms—both Native and European—eventually settling on *porcelaine*, *sewant*, and *wampum*, respectively. In doing so, they drew on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds while coming to terms with the Native American languages they encountered. A study of these cross-cultural interactions reveals the nuances and the limits of European understanding, and it demonstrates the cultural linguistic legacy of European colonization.

From the moment Europeans set foot on North American shores, they put into words their observations of the people they met, the apparel Native people wore, the ways they conducted themselves, and the material goods they used. The visitors employed a combination of linguistic and anthropological tools to do so. When they encountered wampum—small, tubular

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beads made of whelk shells and measuring about one-quarter inch long and one-eighth inch in diameter—Europeans drew on past experience and terminology, or innovated and adapted, to understand and explain this novel Native product. Used primarily by Iroquoian speakers and their neighbors in the lands that Europeans would claim as New France, New Netherland, New England, and New York, wampum was profoundly important to the Five Nations Iroquois and the Hurons. Grasping this importance, Europeans quickly exploited Native appreciation for wampum to facilitate the fur trade. The English and the Dutch also adopted wampum as a local currency. The significant role wampum came to play in European colonization led to a well-established nomenclature for wampum in each of the respective colonial regions.

This essay explores Europeans' efforts to name wampum. This is more than just a litany of linguistic experimentations. The words Europeans adopted for wampum help us understand the way they made sense of wampum and how they engaged Native culture. It tells us about the complexities of early America—its intercultural character, the role of inter-European competition for territory and resources, and the linguistic layering resulting from a series of explorers, traders, and colonizers from throughout diverse seafaring nations. Finally, it demonstrates how European cultural influence was reflected by the predominance of terms that each language group—French, Dutch, and English—settled on as the best term for wampum in their respective colonial zones. Eventually, however, these terms gave way to the one used among the English—*wampum*—which became common parlance throughout the English colonies and has extended into the modern age.

DEFINING TERMS

It's a tricky business discussing an evolving substance with varied and changing names. As will be elaborated on thoroughly in the coming paragraphs, the material artifacts traditionally known as wampum were known by many different names in early America. Native terms commonly included *wampumpeag*, *sewant*, *onekoera*, *kekw*, and *roanoke*, or some variant of these, depending on the respective language and dialect. Among Europeans, shell beads and their by-products were known by these Native terms or variants of them, such as *wampum* or *peak* among English speakers and *sewant* among Dutch speakers, or by European terms such as *porcelaine* among the French. And such shell products changed throughout the colonial period, evolving in size, quality, and application. There is no single

term that adequately captures the diversity of shell beads and shell bead applications or that accurately reflects the historical and cultural situation in which these beads functioned.

Recognizing the difficulty of *wampum* being applied too broadly, some archaeologists have sought to clarify what wampum was by defining what the term *wampum* refers to. Since white shell beads, both discoidal and cylindrical, existed in various forms before contact with Europeans, they have come up with terms such as *True Wampum*, *Council Wampum*, *Proto-Wampum*, and so forth.¹ While on the surface this exercise appears useful and aims at capturing the changing nature of wampum, it's not clear that a continual parsing of terms will achieve the necessary clarity, and it might also cause confusion. Two examples suffice—*True Wampum* applies to the smaller, more refined beads that emerged after contact with Europeans in the mid-seventeenth century, regardless of color. Since the Native term *wampumpeag*, from which *wampum* and *True Wampum* are drawn, referred specifically to white beads, this gloss seems to run counter to the purpose of finding precise terms. Also, since wampum continued to evolve throughout the colonial era, albeit in subtle ways, any effort to develop specific terms for each stage of development will either fail to capture all the possible variations or result in a plethora of confusing and unhandy terms.

Furthermore, such an approach seems likely to commit the fallacy of the semantical question by "confusing actual happenings with verbal descriptions of actual happenings," as the historian David Hackett Fischer has described it.² The real problem with this error, particularly in this case, is that it obscures more than it reveals. Not only was wampum a changing and evolving artifact, but the history of that change—when wampum came into being, who manufactured it and how, when those fabrication techniques changed, and a host of other questions—tends to be shut off from discussion when labels such as *True Wampum* are too rigidly applied. The definition of *True Wampum* has to do with both the size and shape of wampum beads as well as how it was manufactured. Since it is presumed that wampum meeting these size and shape criteria depended on the introduction of

1. James Bradley, "Re-Visiting Wampum," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 39 (2011): 25; 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), 63.

2. David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 21.

European tools, once the appellation True Wampum is used, all the attending historical factors are assumed to be in play. But surely this is backward. Whatever scholars decide to call the white (and dark) cylindrical shell beads used first by Native people and then by both Europeans and Indians, they need to be always on the lookout for what the sources—whether historical, archaeological, linguistic, or otherwise—tell them about these beads and how they evolved over time.

Moreover, ignoring the names given to wampum (broadly understood) by the historic Native Americans and Europeans who made, traded, and used it means overlooking much about wampum itself, about its function in past societies, and how people from different cultural backgrounds understood each other and the material artifacts they encountered and shared. Mysteries and uncertainties about wampum and the meaning of its names remain, but those who wish to understand the versatile and ubiquitous shell beads of northeastern North America must go beyond simple appellations to understand the complexity of this unique artifact.

In the meantime, however, we still need a nominal handle for discussing these unique shell beads of early northeastern America, and I am adopting what eventually became the common and generic term—*wampum*—when speaking about the product in its different stages of development and in its manifold uses by diverse peoples. But much of what this essay will do is introduce many of the various terms used by Europeans and explain why they used them and what they meant by them. Furthermore, it will give some sense of the evolution and diverse manifestations of wampum. In the meantime, and in keeping with common parlance, *wampum* will be adopted in this essay to refer to marine shell beads, both white and purple (colloquially referred to as “black” or “dark”).

FRENCH ADAPTATION

The French used several words to refer to wampum—*matachias*, *rassade*, and *porcelaine*—but they first used *esnogy*, a Native term, demonstrating an attentiveness not just to the beads’ unique form and function but to the Native term used to describe it. On his second voyage to the St. Lawrence River in 1535–36, Jacques Cartier sojourned among Iroquoian speakers and reported that “the most precious thing that they have in this world is *esnogy*,” which Marc Lescarbot later recorded in the early seventeenth century as “*esurni*.”³ The Iroquoian linguist Gunther Michelson has drawn a

3. Jacques Cartier, *A Memoir of Jacques Cartier, Sieur de Limoilou, His Voyages to the St. Lawrence*, ed. James Phinney Baxter (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1906), 165;

connection between *esnogny*, *esurgni*, and one of two terms with deep roots in the Iroquoian languages—**nqkwir*-.⁴ Appearing only a few times in the documentary record, however, *esnogny* was abandoned as the French moved on to terms they found more familiar.

Although French-Indian contact in what became New France was only intermittent between Cartier's voyages and the renewal of active exploration and trade around 1600, Basque, Breton, and Norman fishermen and traders did frequent the coast, laying the foundation for another French adaptation, *matachias*.⁵ When French descriptions of Native culture reemerged in the early seventeenth century, they usually employed this term in their efforts to best describe the novel Native cultural expressions that they saw and experienced, particularly wampum. Marc Lescarbot wrote in 1612 that the Indians of southern New England made "carcenets and bracelets (called . . . *matachias*) of the shells of those great sea-cockles, called *vignols*, like snails."⁶ Others used the term less definitively, applying it to more than just wampum, as when Samuel de Champlain recorded one Native practice in which "all the women and girls proceeded to cast off their mantles of skins, and stripped themselves stark naked, showing their privities, but retaining their ornaments of *matachias*, which are beads and braided cords made of porcupine quills, dyed of various colours."⁷ Even while Lescarbot used *matachias* to describe something that sounds like wampum, he also used it to describe beads from France: "To-day they have no more of it [*matachias*], or else they have lost the art of making it; for they greatly use the *matachias* which are brought them from France." Other decoration could also be covered by the term, as when Lescarbot observed that "in Port Royal and its confines, and towards Newfoundland, and at Tadousac, where they have neither pearls nor *vignols*, the maids and women make *matachias* with the quills or bristles of the porcupine, which they dye in black, white, and red colours, . . . but they esteem more highly the *matachias* which come from

Marc Lescarbot, *The History of New France*, trans. W. L. Grant, 3 vols. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1907-14), 2:338-39.

4. Gunther Michelson, "Iroquoian Terms for Wampum," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 57, no. 1 (1991): 108-9.

5. Laurier Turgeon, "Basque-Amerindian Trade in the Saint Lawrence during the Sixteenth Century: New Documents, New Perspectives," *Man in the Northeast* 40 (1990): 81-87.

6. Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 3:157.

7. Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. H. P. Biggar (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1922), 1:107-8.

the country of the Armouchiquois.”⁸ And yet another time Lescarbot described *matachias* as “necklaces, scarfs and bracelets.”⁹ Sometimes the intended meaning was not clear at all. Reporting on the year 1634, Paul Le Jeune used *matachias* when writing of the culture of the Montagnais. Describing their clothing, he noted that when they sewed their leggings, “they leave an edge of the skin itself, which they cut into fringe, occasionally fastening to this a few matachias.”¹⁰ So from the earliest use, *matachias* served to describe both wampum and other ornamentation, often beads, but not exclusively so.¹¹

Matachias emerged from the intercultural matrix of Canada’s Maritime region as part of a Basque-Algonquian trade pidgin. But many Francophone observers were confused about the etymological sources of *matachias*, and scholars since then have also misidentified the source of the word. Lescarbot called it a Native word, noting that, in contrast to the Indians of Brazil, who called their ornamentations “*bou-re*,” the same were “by ours [called] *matachias*.” And more than fifty years later, in 1672, Nicolas Denys concurred, writing that “the Indian women fix the price to the fishermen according to the kind of skin and its fantastic ornamentation, which they call *matachiez*.”¹² Furthermore, the original French editions sometimes place the word in italics, indicating the word’s foreign origin.¹³ In modern times,

8. Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 3:157–58. In “French Beads in France and Northeastern North America during the Sixteenth Century,” Laurier Turgeon quotes Lescarbot’s statement a few lines before this one that they “make great use of *Matachiaz*, which we bring to them from France,” and asserts that these are shell beads manufactured in Paris, but the text does not make this explicit; *Historical Archaeology* 35, no. 4 (2001): 71. My thanks to Daniel Richter for directing me to Laurier Turgeon’s work.

9. Marc Lescarbot, “Last Relation of What took place in the voyage made by Sieur de Poutrincourt to New France, twenty months ago,” in Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents; Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791* (hereafter cited as *JR*) (Cleveland: Burrows Bros., 1898), 2:134–35, 294n17.

10. “Le Jeune’s Relation, 1634,” in *JR*, 7:15, 309n1.

11. Marc Laberge’s book on Algonquian apparel and decoration reflects the broader meaning of *matachias* in its title, *Affiquets, matachias et vermillon: Ethnographie illustrée des Algonquiens du nord-est de l’Amérique aux XVIe, XVIIe, et XVIIIe siècles* (Montreal: Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec, 1998).

12. Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 3:157; Nicolas Denys, *The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia)*, trans. and ed. William F. Ganong (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1908), 447–48.

13. This observation comes mostly from the French transcriptions accompanying the English translations. The actual original publications have not been

it has generally been accepted by scholars that the term is from the Mi'kmaq language. For example, the historian William F. Ganong wrote that "*matachias* . . . [is] clearly of Micmac origin," whereas the historian H. P. Biggar designated it "an Indian term."¹⁴

Instead, *matachias* appears to have European origins. Sustained contact between Basque fishermen and Algonquian speakers in the sixteenth century led to the emergence of a trade pidgin based largely on the Basque language. From the 1540s on, Basque sailors frequently visited the shores of Canada around the mouth of the St. Lawrence River and, later, the Maritime provinces of Canada. The interchange between these peoples necessitated the creation of a lingua franca with some forty Basque-originated words that can be found in the historical records and several phrases of Basque origin. Among these is *matachias*, which is based on the Basque *patatxa*, from the Spanish *patacon*, or coin.¹⁵ In fact, Lescarbot himself recognized the context in which *matachias* emerged, even if he did not recognize that the word itself was related to Basque. He made frequent references to Basque-Native contact and Basque words used among the Native people, which led him to conclude that "the language of the coast is half Basque."¹⁶

Regardless of whether those who used the term knew its etymological origin, they used it to describe Native material culture even outside the Maritime region, and *matachias* eventually entered the language of Canada, although it was rarely applied to wampum. Champlain was the first to do so,

consulted. Also note that, in the case of the *Jesuit Relations*, these italics are inconsistently used, even within the same document. But even in the case of the French publication of Bacqueville de la Potherie's *Histoire de l'Amerique septentrionale* (1722; repr., Paris: Nyon, 1753), the apparently related word *matachel/matacher/matachient* is sometimes placed in italics but usually is not.

14. Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 3:157n1; *Works of Samuel de Champlain*, 1:108n1; see also Sylva Clapin, *Dictionnaire canadien-français ou Lexique-glossaire des mots, expressions et locutions* (Montreal: C. O. Beauchemin, 1897), s.v. "matachias," and William A. Read, *Louisiana Place Names of Indian Origin: A Collection of Words*, ed. George M. Riser (1927; repr., Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 109–10.

15. 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, no. 3–4 (1989): 117–47; *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter cited as *OED*), s.v. "matachia, n." (3rd ed., March 2001; online version March 2012, www.oed.com/view/Entry/114865, accessed April 25, 2012).

16. Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 2:24.

describing the material culture of Algonquian speakers of the St. Lawrence Valley. Father Gabriel Sagard, who used the term several times in his report on the Natives of New France, did so when describing the Iroquoian-speaking Huron-Wendat people in 1623–24.¹⁷ In fact, in his Huron-Wendat dictionary, Sagard translates Huron words into *matachiée* and *matachier*, as French terms.¹⁸ The word eventually became part of Canadian French, as found in Georg Friederici's *Hilfswörterbuch für den Amerikanisten* and the *Dictionnaire canadien-français* of 1897.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Basque

17. Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. George M. Wrong, trans. H. H. Langton (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), 122/334, 129/338, 144/344, 160/352; Gabriel Sagard, *Gabriel Sagard's Dictionary of Huron*, ed. John Steckley (Merchantville, N.J.: Evolution Publishing, 2010), 234, 269, 270.

18. Father Chrétien Le Clercq used the term several times in his midcentury writings about the Mi'kmaq people, not only as a noun, but also as a verb, conjugating it as though it were a French word, while also using it to refer not to wampum but to painting: "The women adorn this little cradle carefully with certain bits of bead-work, with wampum, porcupine quills, and certain figures which they form with their paints [*matachias*]. . . . For these they make little garments of skins, which are all painted [*matachiées*]," and "the Indian women . . . conserve [their beauty] by art through the aid of their painting [*matachias*]." He also uses the word in verb form: "When, now, we say that the Indians paint themselves [*se matachient*], that is equivalent to saying that they daub their faces" and "they paint [*se matachient*] the whole face black." [Chrétien] Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia*, trans. and ed. William F. Ganong (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1910), 89, 89n1, 95, 96–97, 339, 342; Lescarbot, *History of New France*, 3:157n1. Similarly, Nicolas Perrot, who was in New France—including the Great Lakes region—from the 1660s to 1700, used *mattachez* and *matachiez* for "painted or variegated" and "painting." Nicolas Perrot, *Moeurs, coutumes et religion des sauvages de l'Amérique septentrionale*, ed. Pierre Berthiaume (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2004), 14, 171n5. Claude-Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie, traveled in the Great Lakes region around the turn of the eighteenth century and wrote of the Native people: "They had taken pleasure in painting [*matacher*] themselves in a very peculiar manner." Other forms of the word in Potherie's usage included *matache*, *matacher*, and *matachient*, usually referring to painting oneself, especially with vermilion. Claude-Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie, "History of the Savage Peoples Who Are Allies of New France," in Emma Helen Blair, ed., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Region of the Great Lakes* (Cleveland: Arthur Clark, 1911), 315; Potherie, *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale*, 1:365, 2:97, 2:102, 2:188, 3:46–47, 3:264, 4:234; Clapin, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. "Matachias" and "Matachier." Another word clearly linked to *matachias* is *mataché-ée*, which appeared in Louisiana, far from the Native American speakers of Canada; Read, *Louisiana Place Names*, 109–10.

19. Friederici, *Hilfswörterbuch*, Georg Friederici, *Hilfswörterbuch für den Amerikanisten* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1926), s.v. "matacher, mattacher, matachier";

term may have found its way into nineteenth-century Mi'kmaq as *metasia-mogol*, which denotes "brightly or vari-coloured clothes."²⁰

In finding ways to describe Native material culture, the French also used the less ambiguous French term *rassade*, often demonstrating a discerning eye when it came to Native American material culture. Used by French speakers only in the early modern era, *rassade* referred to inexpensive glass beads. In modern editions of the seventeenth-century narratives, *rassade* is usually translated as "beadwork" and seems to be the intended meaning of most authors who used the term.²¹ For example, in the 1620s, during his time with the Hurons, Sagard mentions wampum and glass beads in the same sentence, distinguishing the latter as "rassade."²² Among the Mi'kmaq in the 1670s, Chrétien le Clercq repeatedly used the term, often distinguishing it from wampum. Two of many examples suffice to demonstrate this: "The women adorn this little cradle carefully with certain bits of beadwork [*rassade*], with wampum, porcupine quills, and certain figures which they form with their paints," and "they ornament [their hair] with little strings of beadwork [*rassade*] or of wampum."²³ Similarly, Father Sébastien Rale included the term *rassade* in his Abenaki dictionary as a separate entry from the one translated as wampum.²⁴ On the other hand, when visiting Port Royal, Acadia, in 1699–1700, the Sieur de Dièreville, apparently unfamiliar with both wampum and typical French nomenclature for it, used the traditional French term for glass beads to describe wampum: "They bind their Hair with Rassade, a variety of small Beads, which are black &

Clapin, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. "Matachis." Clapin, however, attributes an Algonquian origin to the term.

20. Quote from William F. Ganong in Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia*, 89n1; see also Sieur de Dièreville, *Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal in Acadia or New France*, trans. Alice de Kessler Lusk Webster, ed. John Clarence Webster (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1933), 168.

21. Modern dictionaries and those from before 1500 do not include this term. *Dictionnaire de française "Littré,"* s.v. "rassade," <http://littré.reverso.net/dictionnaire-francais/definition/rassade/62132>, accessed August 6, 2010; Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, s.v. "rassade," www.cnrtl.fr/definition/rassade, accessed August 6, 2010.

22. Sagard, *Long Journey*, 144, 344.

23. Le Clercq, *New Relation*, 89, 94, 95, 98–99, 126, 339, 341, 342, 343, 355. Interestingly, the editor of the volume did not make the same distinction as Le Clercq, asserting that "this bead-work (*rassade*) includes, of course, wampum," 95n1.

24. Sébastien Rale, *A Dictionary of the Abnaki Language in North America* (1691), ed. John Pickering, *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, n.s., 1 (1833): s.v. "rassade."

white.”²⁵ While the etymology of *rassade* indicates that it comes from the Italian *razzare*, to shine,²⁶ it is doubtful that Dièreville applied the term with any more thought than to apply a word he associated with beads to a comparable Native artifact for which he did not know the indigenous term.

The French employed and then discarded one term after another until they settled on the one that would sufficiently describe wampum while excluding other material goods. From the seventeenth century on, *porcelaine* (*pourceleine*, *pourcelaine*, *porcelene*, *porceline*) became the most commonly used term for the specially made and highly valued marine shell beads.²⁷ Samuel de Champlain’s use of this term is the earliest recorded instance. He wrote that the Hurons “sent for fifty beaver-skins and four wampum belts [*carquans de leurs porcelaines*].”²⁸ The French use of *porcelaine* in reference to wampum is more curious than it might at first appear and demonstrates how an indigenous American product was cast by Europeans in terms that were understandable to them from their own historical and cultural backgrounds. Further, a thorough investigation of this term reveals deeper (but unusual) connections between the French and Native Canadians than is generally appreciated. In English, and today in French, porcelain or *porcelaine* refers to chinaware. It might seem, then, that French observers, noting the similarities between the finely polished shell beads and the glazed ceramic products from China (which were beginning to be produced in Europe in the sixteenth century), naturally applied the term to Native shell beads. But no early modern scribe satisfactorily explains why the term was first chosen to so nominate wampum other than Marc Lescarbot’s statement that “they make them beads . . . like unto that which we call ‘porcelain.’”²⁹ By itself, this vague statement does little to help us understand

25. The editor of this account believes that Dièreville literally meant glass beads and that these had supplanted wampum beads by this time. The absence of the normal terms for wampum here and elsewhere in this account, when he is clearly writing about wampum, however, suggests he was drawing on what he knew to best describe an unfamiliar artifact. Dièreville, *Relation*, 168, 168n1, 171, 171n1.

26. Dico-Citations, s.v. “rassade”; www.dicocitations.com/definition_littre/24009/Rassade.php, accessed April 26, 2012; Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, s.v. “rassade,” www.cnrtl.fr/definition/rassade, accessed April 26, 2012; e-mail correspondence, Lauric Hennenon, August 22, 2010.

27. Joseph Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974, 1977), 1:lxiii.

28. Champlain, *Works*, 2:194.

29. Marc Lescarbot, *Nova Francia: A Description of Acadia, 1606*, trans. P. Eron-delle, ed. E. Denison Ross and Eileen Power (London: Routledge, 1928), 211.

French associations with the term *porcelaine* in the early seventeenth century. An exploration of the meaning of the term in medieval Europe, however, shows that the French application of *porcelaine* to wampum is far more complicated than it appears on the surface.

One of the earliest references to porcelain in European print was contained in Marco Polo's account of his late thirteenth-century journeys through Asia (published in 1298). On his travels, Marco Polo observed several societies using "porcelain" (*porcellane* or *porcellana*), that is, cowrie shells. They used these much like Indians appear to have used wampum. In Yunnan province he noted that "for money they employ the white porcelain shell, found in the sea, and these they also wear as ornaments about their necks." In the same way that the French (and other Europeans) made economic comparisons between wampum and European currency, Polo went on to note that "eighty of the shells are equal in value to a saggio of silver or two Venetian groats, and eight saggi of good silver, to one of pure gold."³⁰ Polo made many other references to porcelain shells. But he also discussed porcelain ware as china (and, indeed, his is the earliest published example in the West of the term *porcelain* as chinaware), which he observed elsewhere in his Chinese travels. But mostly his use of this term refers to cowrie shells.³¹

What are we to make of this? What etymological sources did Polo draw on when choosing the term porcelain for cowrie shells? What connections were French observers making in their minds three hundred years later when they used this term for wampum? As it turns out, Polo applied *porcellane* in ways consistent with European use in the Middle Ages. The Italians and the French (*porcelaine*) used the term in at least four different ways. First, it applied to the herb purslane; second, it denoted chinaware or porcelain ware; third, it referred to containers made from mother-of-pearl; and fourth, it applied to cowrie shells. The last of these, however, was apparently the original use of the term. Only after being used for cowries was it later applied to chinaware.³²

30. *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, ed. John Masefield (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1908), 244–45.

31. Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), 2:307.

32. Ottorino Pianigiani, *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana*, 2 vols. (Rome: Albrighi, Segati, 1907), s.v. "porcellana"; Frances Wood, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 54; Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 2:805, 807–8; *Le Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, s.v. "porcelainaine," <http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/visusel.exe?12;s=3225411870;r=1;nat=;sol=1>; Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographi-*

These applications were still functional by the time of the French–Native American encounter and suggest at least four possibilities for why French travelers chose to call wampum *porcelaine*. First, French observers may have associated wampum beads with chinaware because of their similarly smooth and shiny finishes. Second, and related, the French may have been associating wampum and cowries because of their similar finishes. Both fit Lescarbot’s rather vague description. Third, the French may have been drawing a connection between the fact that wampum was a shell by-product and that *porcelaine*—cowries—was also marine shells. Or, finally, they may have associated wampum with cowries because of their similar use—for personal adornment and, as Europeans understood it, as currency.³³

Yet another explanation presents itself, and, although not definitive, it rests with Lescarbot’s intriguing statement that the Indians made beads that were “like unto that which we call ‘porcelain.’”³⁴ Indeed, evidence from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries demonstrates that French craftsmen in Paris made beads from shell and that beads and bead-making materials were distinguished as *porcelaine*, *corail* (coral), *d’ambre et gest* (amber and jet), *coquilles* (shells), and *nacre de perles* (mother-of-pearl).³⁵ Although not prominent (10 percent or less), shell beads made up a portion of the beads made in sixteenth-century Paris.³⁶ The exact nature of the shell beads that *porcelaine* refers to is not clear, however. Since *porcelaine* denoted cowries in other contexts, the written records of bead making may simply indicate imported shells. The archaeological record does reveal some discoidal shell beads (but not cylindrical) in bead-manufacturing contexts, but more research must be done to connect *porcelaine* to such beads or to differentiate

cal and Discursive, ed. William Croke (London: John Murray, 1903), s.v. “porcelain”; *OED*, s.v. “porcelain, n. and adj.” (3rd ed., December 2006; online version June 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/147941, accessed July 29, 2011).

33. As the anthropologist Lynn Ceci has suggested, the French “may simply have been extending the commercial jargon to another potentially profitable trade bead”; “The Value of Wampum among the New York Iroquois,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38, no. 1 (1982): 101.

34. Lescarbot, *Nova Francia*, 211.

35. Laurier Turgeon, “French Beads in France and Northeastern North America during the Sixteenth Century,” *Historical Archaeology* 35, no. 4 (2001): 70–71; André Vachon, “Colliers et ceintures de porcelaine chez les Indiens de la Nouvelle-France,” *Les Cahiers des dix* 35 (1970): 260–61; Alfred Franklin, *La Vie privée d’autrefois*, vol. 16, *Les Magasins de nouveautés* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1895), 156; René de Lespinasse, *Les Métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1892), 104, 109, 112, 113.

36. Turgeon, “French Beads,” 63–64.

between beads manufactured of shell and the shells—such as cowries—themselves.

Thus, it is difficult to make a firm claim that Lescarbott used *porcelaine* in connection with shell beads then manufactured in France. No other French commentator offered a similar explanation. In fact, over one hundred years later, the Jesuit missionary Joseph-François Lafitau seemed ignorant of this possible connection between Native and French shell beads. In 1724 he wrote:

This so-called porcelain of which we speak here is very different from those works of porcelain brought from China and Japan or from what is called in France *Porcelaine de Nevers*. Those are artistic works, fashioned of clay, shaped and prepared. *Porcelaine* in America is taken from certain seashells known under that generic name [cowries] and distinguished by different individual names given them by the onlookers and determined by the diversity of their species, their shapes, and the variety of their colours. They are so pleasing to the eye that they are regarded as one of nature's greatest marvels and the ocean's most charming productions.³⁷

At least in the mind of Father Lafitau, wampum was best called *porcelaine* because it was a shell product similar to cowries, even if it was formed from an entirely different shell, the marine whelk. If *porcelaine* had once been associated with a kind of shell bead manufactured in Paris, then the term had long since been forgotten or its use was not widely known in the first place.

Regardless of when and where *porcelaine* was first applied to shell beads, the origin of the word in this context still appears to be tied to cowries, and, as such, there is another, somewhat distant but intriguing connection between cowries and wampum. The Italian term *porcellana* or *porcellane*, which Polo used, has its etymological roots in the terms related to swine—*porcus* (in English, pork, porcine), *porcella*, and *porcelletta*. *Porcelletta* is actually "little pig" or "little sow." The term applied to cowries before it applied to porcelain ware, and it possibly began to denote Asian ceramics because of the European belief that porcelain was made from crushed shells. The connections between pigs and cowries become a little murky at this point, but two explanations can be found. First, it is argued that the outer shape of the cowrie shell was reminiscent of the shape of a pig's back. The other explanation is that the underside of the cowrie shell brought to mind a sow's vulva. While this might at first seem offensive, it is important to keep in

37. Lafitau, *Customs*, 1:308–9.

mind that in many places in the world where cowrie shells are valued, the value is at least partly tied to the notion of fertility because of the obvious visual similarities between a cowrie shell's underside and human female genitalia. Certainly many, but not all, scholars have subscribed to the genitalia theory.³⁸

The vulva of a sow may, in the end, seem really to have nothing to do with wampum. But if we follow this etymological path further, we find ourselves ending up closer to the beginning of our journey than we might believe possible. The word vulva ultimately comes from the Indo-European term *wel*, meaning turning or rolling. Ancient derivatives of this word described items that were curved or had enclosing functions. Many related words in English today descended from Indo-European through the German, Anglo-Saxon, or French languages, including evolve, helix, involve, revolve, valley, vault, voluble, volume, walk, wallet, wallow, waltz, willow, well, and many more. Among these is the word *whelk*—the curved shell of the univalve sea snail, such as the *Busycotypus canaliculatus*, or channeled whelk, the shell that Native people along the coasts of America used to produce wampum in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.³⁹ It is unlikely that the French thought through all these connections when they chose the word *porcelaine* to describe the strings of shell beads that Native Americans adorned themselves with. Nor could Native people have imagined the interrelationships among foreign words, ideas, and practices that connected their valuable beads to the strange newcomers who only poorly understood their ways. But linguistic connections existed nevertheless.

DUTCH ACCOMMODATIONS

Similarly, if not as interestingly, some of the earliest Dutch observers drew on their own European and Atlantic world experience in trying to find a suitable term for wampum. Some of the earliest extant references to wampum made by the Dutch include the term *coralen*. In 1619, when Dutch

38. Pietro Raffo, "The Development of European Porcelain," in Paul Atterbury, ed., *The History of Porcelain* (New York: William Morrow, 1982), 79; Wood, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*, 54; Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 2:807–8; *Dictionnaire du Français Plus* (Quebec: Centre Éducatif et Culturel, 1988), s.v. "porcelaine"; *OED*, s.v. "porcelain, n. and adj."; *Random House Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (hereafter cited as *RHD*), s.v. "porcelain" (New York: Random House, 1987).

39. Roy Blount Jr., *Alphabet Juice: The Energies, Gists, and Spirits of Letters, Words, and Combinations Thereof; Their Roots, Bones, Innards, Piths, Pips, and Secret Parts, Tinctures, Tonics, and Essences; With Examples of Their Usage Foul and Savory* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2008), 234–35; *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed.), appendix 1, s.v. "we-."

traders found themselves besieged on their ship by a group of Munsees, they regained control of the vessel by taking hostage a few of their attackers. They later reported that "they obtained from them a few *coraelen* with which the peace was made and concluded and they parted from the others on friendly terms."⁴⁰ Though the record does not describe these *coralen*, the way they functioned in this episode and the extraordinary value the Natives attached to "a few" of them implies that wampum was intended by this term. *Coraelen*, *coralen*, and *koralen* were all various spellings used by the Dutch at the time to describe trade beads made of glass and other substances. The notarial records found in the Amsterdam city archives include many references, such as a 1608 record of Dutch traders exchanging *coralen* (glass beads) for goods in the West Indies.⁴¹ Dutchmen who regularly engaged in overseas trade would commonly have had experience with such glass beads, were familiar with the term, and would naturally have applied the term to the Native shell beads they were just then becoming exposed to. In fact, two years after the 1619 episode, one of the sailors involved in that earlier event extorted a huge sum of wampum from a different Native group, and the report of this exploit described the wampum as "small beads [*coralen*] they manufacture themselves." *Coralen* can be found throughout the Dutch sources referring either to trade beads or to the Native shell beads the Dutch discovered in North America.⁴²

While the application of this term by Dutch traders to wampum seems obvious on the surface—glass beads to shell beads—that was not the only

40. Gemeentearchief van Amsterdam, Notarial Archives (hereafter cited as GA), NA 200, August 14, 1620, Notary Jan Franssen Bruyningh, ff. 625–26v.

41. GA, NA 195, March 15, 1608, Notary Jan Franssen Bruyningh, f. 497.

42. Isaack de Rasière to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber, September 23, 1626, in *Documents Relating to New Netherland, 1624–1626*, in the Henry E. Huntington Library (hereafter cited as DRNN), ed. and trans. A. J. F. van Laer (San Marino, Calif.: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1924), 192, 232; Nicolaes van Wassenaer, "Historisch Verhael," November 1626, in *Narratives of New Netherland* (hereafter cited as NNN), ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 86 (p. 39 recto in original); Isaack de Rasière to Samuel Blommaert, 1628, in NNN, 106, and in *Indianenverhalen: De Vroegste beschrijvingen van Indianen langs de Hudsonrivier (1609–1680)*, ed. Kees-Jan Waterman, Jaap Jacobs, and Charles T. Gehring (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2009), 46; Jonas Michaëlius to Adrianus Smoutious, August 11, 1628, in NNN, 130, and in *Indianenverhalen*, 71; Nicasius de Sille to Maximiliaen van Beeckerke, May 23, 1654, in "Letters of Nicasius de Sille," trans. and ed. A. J. F. van Laer, *Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association* 1, no. 3 (1920): 102 (original in Gemeentearchief Den Haag 402, inv. nr. 1413).

possible connection being made by Dutch visitors to wampum makers and users. *Coralen* is related to several different words in the Dutch language. On the one hand is *coralen* or *koralen*, applied at the time to beads, glass or otherwise. Today the term is *kraal* (pl. *kralen*), simply meaning “beads,” although it is uncommon in modern Dutch. But both terms are rooted in *corael* or, in modern spelling, *koraal*—coral, a marine product. The connection comes from the fact that some trade beads were made from marine coral, and the Dutch application of this word to any beads appeared in the first years of the seventeenth century, just a few years before Dutch traders on North American shores applied it to wampum. Did early Dutch traders recognize the marine source of wampum beads? Did they then see some connection between wampum and coral or between wampum and glass beads? We’ll probably never know, but the maritime connection between the raw material from which wampum was manufactured and the seagoing sailors and traders who came to New Netherland and who had experience elsewhere not only with coral beads but also with cowries invites us to infer that Europeans in New Netherland drew on their maritime experience in finding a suitable word to describe a unique North American artifact. In fact, the archaeologist Elizabeth Peña asserts that the Dutch, inspired by their experience with cowries elsewhere, actively turned wampum into a commodity currency.⁴³ On the other hand, glass trade beads were ubiquitous in the fur trade, and European men marketing such goods among the Indians were just as likely to use this familiar term to describe the wampum they began to encounter in a world that was new and strange to them. Either way, they drew on their cultural and linguistic background to tag this Native good.⁴⁴

43. Elizabeth Peña, “Wampum Production in New Netherland and Colonial New York: The Historical and Archaeological Context” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1990), 56–58.

44. *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, s.v. “kraal” and “koraal,” <http://gtb.inl.nl/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&cid=M035248&lemmodern=kraal>, <http://gtb.inl.nl/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&cid=M034962&lemmodern=koraal>, and <http://gtb.inl.nl/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&cid=M034967&lemmodern=koraal>, accessed April 6, 2012; Paul R. Huey, “Glass Beads from Fort Orange (1624–1676), Albany, New York,” in *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference*, Research Records no. 16, ed. Charles F. Hayes III (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1983), 83–110; Margriet de Roever, “Merchandises for New Netherland: A Look at Dutch Articles for Barter with the Native American Population,” in Alexandra Van Dongen, ed., *One Man’s Trash Is Another Man’s Treasure: The Metamorphosis of the*

It was not long, however, before the Dutch accommodated themselves to the indigenous cultural context of Long Island Sound and the New York Bay region by adopting the term *sewant*, after the Native term *sewan* (variously spelled *zeewan*, *zeewant*, *sewan*, *seewan*, and many other ways).⁴⁵ In fact, *sewant* represents the intersection of Dutch colonial claims, Native spaces, and sources of wampum manufacture, and it became the common term for wampum in Dutch-speaking territories. *Sewant* first appeared in the colonial records in the 1620s. Isaack de Rasière, secretary of the New Netherland colony and headquartered in New Amsterdam, on Manhattan Island, used it repeatedly in a letter dated September 23, 1626.⁴⁶ *Sewant* appears throughout the Dutch records and almost always to the exclusion of other terms. David de Vries, a New Netherland resident in the 1630s and early 1640s, referred to *Zeewan*, "their money," and Adriaen van der Donck, whose tenure in the colony overlapped De Vries's, wrote of *zeewant*.⁴⁷ Visitors of the late seventeenth century, Dutch and English alike, made similar observations: Jasper Danckaerts reported that *zeewant* was "their money," and Charles Wolley noted that *sea-want* was "Indian money."⁴⁸ Although inaccurate in their observations that wampum constituted Indian money, Europeans soon adopted it themselves as one of the currencies in both New England and New Netherland in the mid-seventeenth century. As such, it appears throughout the official papers of the colonies. Every time wampum appears in the council minutes of New Netherland, the municipal records of New Amsterdam, and the official

European Utensil in the New World (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans–Van Beunigen, 1995), 71, 77, 92.

45. Additional variants include *séawan*, *seuwan*, *seuwaen*, *seuwan*, *zewant*, *zewan*, *zeerwand*, *zeewandt*.

46. Isaack de Rasière to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber, September 23, 1626, in *DRNN*; J. A. Jacobs, e-mail correspondence, August 19, 2010. See also Wassenaer, "Historisch Verhael," November 1626, in *NNN*, 86.

47. David Pietersz. de Vries, *Korte Historiael ende Journalaels Aenteyckeninge van verscheyden voyagiens in de vier deelen des wereldts-ronde, als Europa, Africa, Asia, ende Amerika gedaen*, ed. H. T. Colenbrander, vol. 3 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1911), 253, and in *NNN*, 217; Adriaen van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, ed. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, trans. Diederik Willem Goedhuys (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 95, and in *Indianenverbalen*, 130.

48. Claudio R. Salvucci, ed., *Early Fragments of Minsi Delaware* (Bristol, Pa.: Evolution Publishing, 2002), 57, 60, 61, 64; Charles T. Gehring, e-mail correspondence, August 4, 2010.

records of Fort Orange, it is referred to as *sewant*. In short, *sewant* became the Dutch word for wampum.⁴⁹

The use of *sewant*—both the term and the artifact—reflected the creation of a shared cultural space, emerging at the intersection of various groups of different languages and peoples—particularly Dutch, Munsees, and Unamis—bound together by wampum use, and it reflects the ongoing influence of that cultural region beyond the period in which the Dutch controlled it. *Sewant* was the Dutch expression of a word that had cognates in the Algonquian languages throughout the Northeast; in Massachusetts *seabwôoun*, in Narragansett *sawbôog* or *sawbôsachick*, in Lenape *sasêhemen*, in Ojibwa *saswe*, in Abenaki *sissaī8i*, and in Munsee *sé-wan*.⁵⁰ Many early observers simply equated it with wampum, attesting—as did Isaack de Rasière—that “*sewan* . . . is an oblong bead that they make from cockle-shells, which they find on the sea-shore.”⁵¹ Such observations were repeated among Europeans, and *sewant* became the common term in the Dutch colony for wampum. In the various Native tongues, however, it appears not to have denoted wampum. A few scholars have suggested that it means purple or dark wampum beads, but this is not accurate either.⁵² Others have suggested that it was a Dutch-coined word to name wampum. Although there is no documentary basis for this claim, it is possible that Dutch readers

49. Ashbel Woodward, *Wampum* (New York: J. Munsell, 1878), 8n1; James Hammond Trumbull, “Words Derived from Indian Languages of North America,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1871): 24.

50. Alexander F. Chamberlain, “Algonkian Words in American English: A Study in the Contact of the White Man and the Indian,” *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 15 (January–March 1902): 257; Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, ed. Howard M. Chapin, 5th ed. (Providence: Rhode Island and Providence Plantations Tercentenary Committee, 1936), 157; James Hammond Trumbull, *Natick-English Dictionary*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 25 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1903), 146; David Zeisberger, *Zeisberger’s Indian Dictionary*, ed. Eben Norton Horsford (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and Son, 1887), 146, 165; Ives Goddard, “Linguistic Variation in a Small Speech Community: The Personal Dialects of Moraviantown Delaware,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 52, no. 1 (2010): 43n27; Joseph Aubery, *Father Aubery’s French Abenaki Dictionary*, trans. Stephen Laurent (Portland, Maine: Chisholm Brothers, 1995), 237.

51. Isaack de Rasière to Samuel Blommaert, 1628, in *NNN*, 106, and in *India-nenverhalen*, 46.

52. Edward Manning Ruttenber, “Indian Geographical Names of the Valley of Hudson’s River,” *New York Historical Association* 6 (1906): 73; William Martin Beauchamp, *Aboriginal Place Names of New York* (Albany: New York State Education Department, 1907), 100.

in the fatherland may have believed this to be the case. For example, the form given by the chronicler Danckaerts—*zeewant*—could reflect an assumption in this Dutch speaker's mind that the word was rooted in two Dutch terms. *Zee* is the Dutch word for sea, while *want* refers to a ship's rigging. Could some Dutch speakers, without experience among Native people, have believed that this was a Dutch term referring to something made by the sea?⁵³

But actually the Munsee *séwan* simply means "scattered" or "it's scattered about" or even "it's all over (the place)."⁵⁴ Similarly, the cognate *seabwhóog*, according to John Eliot, who employed this and similar forms in his 1663 Algonquian Bible, meant "they are scattered."⁵⁵ In the eighteenth century, David Zeisberger recorded *n'saséhemen* to mean "I scatter or sow."⁵⁶ But if *séwan* meant scattered, how did the Dutch *sewant* come to refer to wampum? Did the Munsees use it colloquially to mean wampum, or did Europeans apply it to wampum, never learning the actual Munsee word for shell beads? Part of the answer may lie in discovering what was intended by the term when applying it to wampum. Some scholars have suggested that *sewant* referred specifically to "loose beads," as is asserted by the folklorist Alexander Chamberlain, who stated that the term referred to "'unstrung' or 'loose' beads."⁵⁷ This claim might support the idea that Native people used *séwan* to indicate wampum, but when it was unstrung. Since wampum was traded to the Dutch both in strings and as loose beads, however, it seems unlikely that one Native term with such precise meaning, even in a trade jargon, would be introduced and not others (such as the wide variety of wampum terms Roger Williams recorded in detail).

So it seems most likely that *sewant* literally meant scattered and somehow came to be applied to wampum. The term does appear in another related context that confirms this. The Dutch recorded *Sewanhacky* as the name for Long Island. It first appeared in the historical record in a 1636 land patent

53. Chamberlain, "Algonkian Words," 257; J. A. Jacobs, personal communication, April 5, 2012; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, s.vv. "zee" and "want," <http://gtb.inl.nl/iWDB/search?wdb=WNT&actie=article&uitvoer=HTML&cid=M088055> and <http://gtb.inl.nl/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&cid=M083784&clenmoder=want>, accessed April 7, 2012.

54. Ives Goddard, e-mail correspondence, May 18, 2010.

55. John Eliot, *Mamusse Wunneetupanatamwe Up-Biblum God* (Cambridge, Mass.: Samuel Green, 1663).

56. Trumbull, *Natick-English Dictionary*, 146; Zeisberger, *Indian Dictionary*, 165.

57. Chamberlain, "Algonkian Words," 257.

to Jacobus van Corler for a tract that was “situate[d] on the island called by the Indians Sewanhackij.” In two additional deeds from that same summer, the term is also used, although rendered as *Zewanhacky* and *Surwa hacky*. Three years later another deed for land on Long Island notes that “it is called in the Indian tongue Suan Hacky.”⁵⁸ This term was clearly Native in origin—*sewan* for scattered and *hacky* for land or territory, but the latter is from the Unami-based trade jargon, not the Munsee spoken on and near Long Island.⁵⁹ But whereas the terminology doesn’t fit the linguistic geography, it does fit the cultural geography. Long Island, especially the eastern-most portion (where yet a different Algonquian language was spoken), was the center of wampum production at the time of European-Indian contact.⁶⁰

The use of *scattered* in the name could indicate either that shells were scattered all over the island (and thus it was a natural location for wampum production) or that it was called the place or land (*hacky*) of widespread or scattered (*sewan*) wampum or wampum production. Indeed, various historians and other scholars have interpreted it both ways.⁶¹ This still does not entirely help us determine the origin of *sewant* as it applied to wampum.

58. Charles T. Gehring, trans. and ed., *Land Papers: New York Historical Manuscripts*, vols. GG, HH, and II (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980), 5, 6, 9 (deeds numbered 12, 14, 15, and 28); Beauchamp, *Aboriginal Place Names*, 100; William Wallace Tooker, *The Indian Place-names on Long Island and Islands Adjacent with Their Probable Significations*, ed. Alexander F. Chamberlain (1911; repr., Port Washington, N.Y.: Ira J. Friedman, 1975), 232; J. A. Jacobs, personal communication, July 10, 13, and 14, 2011, and February 22, 2012. The transcriptions given here are provided by Jacobs.

59. Ives Goddard, “The Delaware Jargon,” in Carol E. Hoffecker, Richard Waldron, Lorraine E. Williams, and Barbara E. Benson, eds., *New Sweden in America* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 140; Goddard, “Linguistic Variation,” 43n27.

60. If Robert Grumet’s sources are to be trusted, several other Native names for Long Island also tie the island to the wampum industry. *Matowwax* meant “the land of the periwinkle, or country of the earshell,” and *Pommanoc* related to the payment of tribute. Robert S. Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981), 55.

61. E. B. O’Callaghan, *History of New Netherland; or, New York under the Dutch* (New York: D. Appleton, 1846), 1:72–73; Goddard, “Delaware Jargon,” 140; Tooker, *Indian Place-names*, 212, 232; William Wallace Tooker, *The Indian Names for Long Island: With Historical and Ethnological Notes*, Algonquian Series (New York: Harper, 1901), 18–26; J. Dyneley Prince, ed., “An Ancient New Jersey Indian Jargon,” *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 14 (1912): 512, 520.

The linguist Ives Goddard argues that *sewanbacky* is a linguistic construction of European peculiarity, unlikely among the Indians themselves, but this still leaves open several possibilities.⁶² Did the Indians of Long Island (using the trade jargon employed by the Dutch) or did the Dutch themselves call the island *Sewanbacky* because the shells from which wampum was made were scattered all over it? Or did the Dutch call the island *Sewanbacky* because they already associated *sewant* with wampum and noted that Long Island was the place where wampum was made? The emergence of coastal wampum manufacture coincided with the advent of European trade and settlement.⁶³ Thus, either way, *séwan* or *sewant* as a term specifically denoting wampum developed in the early seventeenth century.

While an exploration of the meaning of *sewanbacky* doesn't provide definitive answers to the questions of *sewant's* origins as a moniker for shell beads, it does remind us of the importance of understanding terms referring to shell beads. Despite not knowing how *sewant* came to be applied to wampum and by whom, we nonetheless know that it was the common term in Dutch-speaking territories. This was obviously the case in the region around what came to be known as Delaware Bay among the English where Unami-speaking Lenape resided long before Europeans arrived. The Dutch were the first Europeans to trade and settle there, in the 1620s, and out of this intercultural context emerged the Delaware Jargon, which came to include *sewant*. After the Swedes wrested the region from the Dutch in 1638, however, *sewant* continued to form part of the common parlance there. For example, after several years in Unami country in the 1640s, the Lutheran minister Johannes Campanius created an Indian-language version of the Lutheran catechism that included phrases in Swedish and the Delaware Jargon; he gave *zææband*, a clear variation of *sewant*.⁶⁴ Later in the century, another observer of the Indians of the Delaware Bay region, the anonymous English author of a manuscript that has come to be known as "The Indian Interpreter," noted that *sewan* meant wampum.⁶⁵

62. Goddard, "Delaware Jargon," 140.

63. Ceci, "Tracing," 73.

64. Johannes Campanius, trans., *Lutheri Catechismus: Lutheri Catechismus ofwersatt på American-Virginiske språket* (Stockholm: Burchardi, 1696), 151, 152. The Unami phrase is "Zææband ætticke," which Campanius gives as "adventure money" or "money for unexpected occurrences." In the second case, the phrase is "I shall give you money or wampum (Zææband)." Gunlög Fur graciously translated the Swedish for me.

65. Prince, "Indian Jargon," 512.

What's particularly striking about this is that there appeared to be an Unami word for wampum—*Kékw* (*kake* or *cake*, *gök*, *géquak*, *gock*, and *keekq*).⁶⁶ Campanius recorded it in his Unami catechism on the basis of his interactions with the Indians in the 1640s. It also appears in later dictionaries and sources. Curiously, few other New Sweden records make mention of the term; instead, they regularly use *sewant*.

The employment of *sewant* in New Sweden stemmed from the adoption of the Delaware Jargon, which had emerged with the Dutch-Unami trade relationship. This adoption was not coincidental, but resulted from the cultural-emissarial work of the former Dutch director Pieter Minuit. When the Swedes established their colony in 1638, they contracted with Minuit, who had led the Dutch colony in the mid-1620s and had experience with the Indian trade in both New York and Delaware bays at the time *sewant* was first recorded by Europeans. Knowledgeable about the wampum-for-furs trade and the language of exchange among the Unamis' Munsee cousins to the north, Minuit naturally introduced this term to his Swedish colleagues when he later went to work for them, helping the Swedes establish a foothold in the North American fur trade. Furthermore, Minuit was accompanied in the 1638 founding expedition to establish New Sweden by Andries Lucassen, a Dutchman with Native language experience who translated for him and who, like other Dutchmen who served in the New Netherland fur trade, would have known the importance of wampum and used the term *sewant*.⁶⁷ Eventually the Dutch reconquered the territory and doubtlessly continued use of the trade jargon from Manhattan.

Tracing *sewant* in the other direction, the Dutch influence clearly extended into Iroquoia. Emerging in the matrix of Dutch-Munsee interactions along the lower Hudson, *sewant* spread in use to Fort Orange and Beverwijck (later Albany), where the Dutch, Mahicans (Algonquian speakers), and Mohawks (Iroquoian speakers) engaged in the fur trade. In fact,

66. *Kékw* is the inanimate noun for wampum (collectively) or the animate singular for an individual wampum bead (animate plural is *kéckk*). The other forms given in parentheses in the text include both animate and inanimate forms. Ives Goddard, "Grammatical Gender in Algonquian," in H. C. Wolfart, ed., *Papers of the Thirty-third Algonquian Conference* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 213; Campanius, *Lutheri Catechismus*, 15; Prince, "Indian Jargon," 512, 513; Zeisberger, *Indian Dictionary*, 125, 220; Daniel G. Brinton and Albert Seqaqkind Anthony, eds., *Lenâpê-English Dictionary: From an Anonymous MS. in the Archives of the Moravian Church at Bethlehem, Pa.* (1888; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1979), 45 (in parentheses following this entry, Anthony gives *keekq*).

67. Goddard, "Delaware Jargon," 138.

wampum was central to trade relations between the Dutch and the upper Hudson Valley Indians. Europeans bought the shell beads from Munsee manufacturers on the coast and traded them to the inland peoples for a steady supply of furs throughout the seventeenth century. Iroquoian speakers, however, had their own terms for wampum, including words designating individual beads, strings of beads, belts, specifically white wampum, invitation wampum, condolence wampum, and so forth. One of the key words for wampum was recorded by Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert during his journey among the Mohawks and Oneidas; he made a word list, noting that "onekoera" (Mohawk) was "sewant haer geldt," that is, "wampum their money."⁶⁸

But despite the Iroquoians' history with wampum and their long and rich linguistic tradition regarding the sacred beads, they adopted *sewant* in their communications with the Dutch. In records produced in the Iroquoian country and in descriptions of the Native people written by people who had met or interacted with the Mohawks and other members of the Five Nations, *sewant* is the preferred term.⁶⁹

Though this demonstrates the expansion of the shared cultural space originating at the intersection of the Dutch-Munsee peoples into the territory of the Mohawks and their Iroquoian brethren, the ongoing use of the term *sewant* in the Albany area and on the lower Hudson long after the English takeover of the colony demonstrates the persistence of this cultural pattern. The Englishman Charles Wolley, who wrote about New York in the late seventeenth century, cited both *wampam* and *Sea-want* as "Indian money," reflecting the Dutch-Anglo ethnic mix of this polyglot colony.⁷⁰ Similarly, in a land transfer in 1670 New York, reference was made to "certain sums of seewant" and "a certain sum of wampum and divers other goods."⁷¹ In the *Records of New Amsterdam*, begun when the city was incorporated in 1653 and continuing into the English period, we again see the

68. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, trans. and eds., *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 52; Michelson, "Iroquoian Terms," 109-13.

69. See, for example, Charles T. Gehring, ed. and trans., *Fort Orange Court Minutes, 1652-1660* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 69, 81, 102, 132, among scores of others; William Starna, e-mail correspondence, April 4, 2012.

70. Salvucci, *Minsi Delaware*, 62.

71. Quoted in Thomas M. Strong, *The History of the Town of Flatbush* (New York: Thomas R. Mercein, 1842), 30.

pattern of *sewant* being used in Dutch language and cultural contexts and *wampum* being used in English contexts.⁷²

Another example from the period of transition from the Dutch-based culture of New Netherland to the English-based culture of New York appears in the *Livingston Indian Records*. Beginning in 1666, just after the establishment of English rule, these documents reveal the use of both *wampum* and *sewant*. Though there is no sudden shift in the use of terms, *sewant* does not appear in the records after 1685; the records cover a period that extends to 1723. Though Robert Livingston was a Scot, he had been raised in the Netherlands and married into a Dutch family, which connected him to the Dutch community in language and culture. So it is no surprise that as secretary for Indian affairs on behalf of the New York colony, and in his extensive interaction with the Mohawks, he would use *sewant*. At the same time, he undertook these duties during the long-term linguistic and cultural transition from Dutch to English in New York, and *wampum* also appears in the records during this period. But it is also significant that when *sewant* tends to appear, it is in the context of Dutch translators or Mohawk envoys, or in the calculation of the value of gifts exchanged between Native people and colonial officials. In all cases, this use of *sewant* points to the ongoing influence of the social, linguistic, and diplomatic structures that emerged during Dutch colonization.⁷³

But as widespread as *sewant* had become among Dutch and Swedish speakers, other words also emerged demonstrating Dutch efforts to accurately capture the panoply of shell products, including wampum, especially in the context of intercultural commerce.⁷⁴ In particular, the Dutch merchant Evert Wendell at the turn of the eighteenth century employed wide-ranging nomenclature to describe the diverse manifestations of wampum

72. Berthold Fernow, ed. and trans., *The Records of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674* (hereafter cited as *RNA*) (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1897), 6:10, 14, 25, 42, among other references, demonstrates the expanded use of *wampum* in English contexts.

73. Robert Livingston, *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666–1723*, ed. Lawrence Leder, *Quarterly Journal of the Pennsylvania Historical Association* 23, no. 1 (1956): 33, 38–40, 44, 48–52, 54, 57, 60–61, 67, 76–77.

74. Research for this paragraph is based on Kees-Jan Waterman's transcription and translation of the account book: *"To Do Justice to Him & Myself": Evert Wendell's Account Book of the Fur Trade with Indians in Albany, New York, 1695–1726* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2008); page references will be given to the manuscript page as identified in the transcript and the translation page. George Hamell offered invaluable assistance in helping me understand these terms in light of turn-of-the-eighteenth-century Iroquoian material culture.

and other shell products. While Wendell commonly used the term *sewant*, he also used *schijven* (*sijven*, *schiffve*, *schifve*), *swarties*, *wittiens*, *hant* and *banden*, *pijpen* (or *pijpe*), *schulpen* (*schulppen*), *hand banden* (*hant bande*, *hand band*, *hant hant*), and *arm band*.

Wendell had several Native customers, mostly among the Mohawks and Mahicans, but also other Iroquoians and Indians to the north and west. These Native customers traded furs to Wendell for a variety of goods, including various shell products. In some cases, Native people laid down wampum as security for their debts. For example, one customer, Nietewapewa, "sold [or gave as security] his belt [which] was 145 black [wampum beads] long and wide 10 long with [16] white places on it, each place 36 small white [wampum beads]."⁷⁵ Belt, here, is translated from the Dutch word *band*, which literally means something that binds but is not the same thing as *belt*. Neither *band* nor *belt* adequately describes the woven beads that may have been draped, held, or displayed, but rarely, if ever, actually worn as belts by Native people. This compares with the French use of *colliers* and *branches* for belts and strings, respectively.

Related to *band* are *hand band* and *arm band*. In both cases, these words are equivalent to the English words of the same spelling, so we have something like "hand belt" or "arm belt," in other words, bracelet or cuff. Less well known than wampum belts, wampum cuffs were not uncommon. Designed to wrap around the lower forearm, these short woven belts were narrower at one end than the other to accommodate the natural tapering of the human arm from the elbow to the wrist. In the slanted edges, laces or ties extended in order to fasten the cuff to the arm. Like the belt mentioned above, these wampum cuffs were usually given as security for goods Wendell had sold to his Native customers on credit.⁷⁶

In Wendell's description of white and dark beads, he broke from the standard European practice and also employed a particularly Dutch grammatical expression. Using the diminutive form, he refers to the dark beads as *swarties* (blackies) and the white ones as *wittiens* (whites or white ones). Wendell was not the first to make this linguistic adaptation. In the *Records of New Amsterdam*, a scribe refers to individual wampum beads using the diminutive *seewantjes*. Literally meaning "little sewant," *seewantjes* didn't

75. *Ibid.*, 10/108.

76. *Ibid.*, 24/146, 57/159, 99/198, 100/199; Marshall Joseph Becker, "Unique Huron Ornamental Bands: Wampum Cuffs," *Material Culture Review* 66 (Fall 2007): 61–69.

imply smaller-than-normal wampum beads; like the employment of *swartjes*, it only reflected the common use of diminutives in Dutch.⁷⁷ A later Dutch-speaking merchant further innovated the use of the diminutive so characteristic of the Dutch by referring to individual wampum beads as *tantjes* (that is, “little teeth”).⁷⁸ Needing to refer to individual beads, the French, too, tried to find a suitable term, settling on *grains*, which also found its way into English nomenclature.

Schijven, *pijpen*, and *schulpen*, the other Dutch terms to be found in the account book, directly translate as *disks*, *pipes*, and *shells*. How do these relate to wampum? All of them are related to shell products, just as wampum was, but while wampum consisted exclusively of short, tubular beads, these three items reflected a wider array of shell ornaments. Comparison with an English-language document from the same era puts Wendell's terms in context. On the occasion of the Iroquois council with Governor Cornbury in Albany in 1702, the list of gifts given to the Native people include “110 wampum Pipes 9 Shells 117 Round small Shells.”⁷⁹ These items all formed part of the Standardized Marine Shell identified by the archaeologist Duane Esarey. Along with effigies, crescents, pyramids, and other ornaments and decorations made of marine shell, these forms were produced like wampum in small-scale, cottagelike industries by either colonists or Indians using local raw materials and European tools. They were then marketed to Native Americans.⁸⁰

“Wampum pipes,” probably the *pijpen* in Wendell's book, were much longer than traditional wampum beads, of larger diameter, and not typically used in belts. Perhaps more familiar to readers as “hair pipes,” made familiar by Plains Indians in the nineteenth century, these longer beads, five to six inches long, began to appear in Seneca sites at least by the 1640s.⁸¹ They

77. *RNA*, 3:273 (152 in the original manuscripts); *RNA*, 3:332. Thanks to J. A. Jacobs for consulting the original on my behalf.

78. Robert Sanders Daybook, New-York Historical Society, Sanders Papers, March 11, June 3, June 4, 1736, and March 7, 1738/39.

79. E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, 1854) (hereafter cited as *DRCHNY*), 4:981.

80. Duane Esarey, “Another Kind of Beads: A Forgotten Industry of the North American Colonial Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2013).

81. Martha L. Sempowski, “Fluctuations through Time in the Use of Marine Shell at Seneca Sites,” in Charles F. Hayes III, ed., *Proceedings of the 1986 Shell Bead Conference: Selected Papers*, Research Records no. 20 (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1989), 88, 92.

often adorned the hair—thus "hair pipes." Plains people would use shorter ones in choker necklaces and longer ones in breastplates.

Schulpen—literally, shells—were actually gorgets fashioned from West Indian conch; *schulpen* served as a convenient term to describe a round breastplate. Those familiar with images of eighteenth-century Indian warriors have probably seen such men sporting silver gorgets bestowed on them by English and French allies. Native people valued white shell and silver products for the same reasons—their association of light and bright things with positive social states, friendship, and peace. *Schulpen*, too, were later adopted by Plains people, who combined them with hair pipes in chokers and breastplates. The last gift noted in the Cornbury account—round small shells—may have been small gorgets, or they may have been *schijven*, another shell product also known as runtees. These were circular shell disks engraved with a cross pattern or some other geometric design. All these shell goods, along with wampum, were valued by Indians and could be found in their communities. Native people regarded wampum as especially potent artifacts, but they also valued many other shell products, often for some of the same reasons—the light color of the items and their marine origin. The various Dutch terms found in Wendell's accounts reveal the diverse applications of wampum and the wide-ranging manifestation of other shell products that existed in early America.⁸²

ENGLISH APPROPRIATIONS

While *porcelaine* reigned in New France and *sewant* predominated in New Netherland, *wampum* became the common term in English-speaking colonies that were located near the heart of wampum country.⁸³ Other terms also emerged in the English-speaking colonies. *Peak* and *roanoke*, for example, were used regularly, but *wampum* eventually won the day. The term was recorded as early as 1636 in Winthrop's *History of New England* and

82. DRCHNY, 4:981; Wendell, "To Do Justice," 1/91, 9/106, 17/114, 17/115, 72/172, 83/183; George Hamell, e-mail correspondence, August 2–4, 2010; Kees-Jan Waterman, personal communication, July 15, 2010; Charles F. Hayes III, "An Introduction to the Shell and Shell Artifact Collection at the Rochester Museum and Science Center," in Hayes, *Proceedings of the 1986 Shell Bead Conference*, 37, 39–43; Sempowski, "Fluctuations," 88; Charlotte Wilcoxon, "Indian-Trade Silver of the New York Colonial Frontier," *Antiques* (December 1979): 1360n5. Examples of all these forms can be found among the photographs accompanying the Sempowski essay.

83. George Hamell, "The Iroquois and the World's Rim: Speculations on Color, Culture, and Contact," *American Indian Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1992): 464n5.

other records throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries in its traditional form as well as *wampom*, *wompam*, *wampam*, and *wompom*.⁸⁴ *Wampum* was clearly a convenient term for the English, but it was an abbreviation of the Native word *wampumpeag*, literally meaning “strings of white [shell beads].”⁸⁵ The earliest record of the complete Algonquian word, in this case as *wampampeack*, is in William Bradford’s journal in 1627.⁸⁶ This form was similarly set down by writers in Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Europeans employed a diverse orthography in rendering it: *wampampeege*, *wampumpeage*, *wampeage*, *wampum peak*, *wampompeag*. It was common among Algonquian speakers through New England and north to the St. Lawrence River.⁸⁷

Tracing the origins of this term’s use among the English reveals important details about the English colonists’ discovery of wampum itself. It is commonly understood that first the French and then the Dutch learned of wampum and its uses by Native people, and that the (Dutch) West India Company official Isaack de Rasière introduced wampum to William Bradford and the English in 1627, but linguistic clues in the records indicate otherwise.⁸⁸ Bradford reported in his history of Plymouth Plantation that,

84. *OED*, s.v. “wampum, n.” (2nd ed., 1989; online version June 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/225411, accessed July 6, 2011).

85. 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, 904. The purple beads that were woven together with white beads to form treaty belts appeared only after European colonization; see Paul Otto, “Wampum, Tawagonshi, and the Two Row Belt,” *Journal of Early American History* 3, no. 1 (2013): 110–25.

86. William Bradford, October 1, 1627, in *Correspondence between the Colonies of New Netherlands and New-Plymouth, A.D. 1627. From the letterbook of William Bradford, governor of New-Plymouth, etc.*, 364, http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=nys;cc=nys;q1=364;rgn=full%20text;idno=nys168;didno=nys168;node=ny_s168%3A4;view=image;seq=12, accessed January 7, 2014.

87. William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *The Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), s.v. “Indians of South New England and Land Island: Early Period,” by Bert Salwen, 160; Claudio R. Salvucci, ed., *Wood’s Vocabulary of Massachusetts* (Bristol, Pa.: Evolution Publishing, 2002), 39; Chamberlain, “Algonkian Words,” 264; Trumbull, *Natick-English Dictionary*, 194–95, 340–41; Salvucci, *Wood’s Vocabulary of Massachusetts*, 28; Frank G. Speck, “Functions of Wampum among the Eastern Algonkian,” *American Anthropological Association* 6, no 1 (January–March 1919): 5; *Rale, Dictionary*, 510.

88. See, for example, William T. Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 95–96;

of the goods they traded with the Dutch beginning in 1627, "that which turned most to their profit, in time, was an entrance into the trade of wampumpeag." Bradford implies that their purchase of the first fifty pounds' worth of beads was their introduction to wampum, since De Rasière "told them how vendible it was at their fort Orania, and did persuade them they would find it so at Kennebec. And so it came to pass in time, though at first it stuck, and it was two years before they could put off this small quantity."⁸⁹ What's striking, however, is that, with rare exception, the English almost never called these marine shell beads *sewant*, the term commonly used by the Dutch and adopted from a Native tongue, which one would think would have been adopted at the same time the Dutch introduced them to the shell beads.⁹⁰ But one of those terminological exceptions is at the hand of Bradford himself, as he reports in his correspondence on this same meeting with Isaack de Rasière: "We at this time bought sundry of their commodities, especially their *seawan* or *wampampeack*, which was the beginning of a profitable trade with us and the Indians."⁹¹

Not only does he employ *wampumpeak*, a term not used by the Dutch, along with *sewant*, but actually this was *not* the first time he used *wampumpeak*. Four months earlier, Bradford and others formed a company of traders and established a commercial contract with the Plymouth colony, which granted them, among other things, the right to the goods stored at Manomet, including "wampumpeag."⁹² Indeed, it was the earlier entrance of the English into this trade that led De Rasière to sell a supply of beads, not the other way around. The Dutch official knew well that the English had built a factory at the head of Buzzard's Bay and had since entered eastern Narragansett Bay, where they discovered the production of wampum. As he reported to an official in the Netherlands, "Here also they have built a shallop, in order to go and look after the trade in sewan, in Sloup's Bay and

Cynthia J. Van Zandt, *Brothers among Nations: The Pursuit of Intercultural Alliance in Early America, 1580–1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99–100.

89. Bradford records this for the year 1628, but all other evidence, including other documents produced by Bradford, indicate that the meeting took place in October 1627. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Modern Library, 1952), 203.

90. Alexander Chamberlain claims that *sewant* was "current in parts of New York and New England for two centuries" but later fell into disuse. This was certainly true for New York, among Dutch speakers, but does not seem to be the case for New England. "Algonkian Words," 257.

91. William Bradford, October 1, 1627, in *Correspondence*, 364.

92. Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 195.

thereabouts.”⁹³ Furthermore, as early as 1626, De Rasière had reported that the Pilgrims were getting wampum, writing that “the Brownists of Plymouth come near our places to get wampum [*sewan*] in exchange.”⁹⁴ The English, then, having discovered at least by 1626 wampum’s production by southern New England Indians—the Narragansetts—adopted the term they used for it—*wampumpeag*, which they later truncated into *wampum* and *peag*. Significantly, Bradford’s narrative about the introduction of the English to wampum by the Dutch found in his *History of Plimoth Plantation*, written several years after the event, seems to be a ruse to cover his financial dealings with the Indians.⁹⁵

Shortening *wampumpeag* to *wampum*, as the English did, kept the prefix signifying white (*wamp*), but divided in half the stem referring to strings (*umpeag*). This pruning of the Algonquian word effectively cut it off from its original, literal Native meaning and allowed *wampum* to become a generic term, first in New England, then in the colonies more broadly, and finally in the later American experience. In colonial New England, *wampum* came to refer to all cylindrical shell beads—white or black and loose, strung, or woven. *Wampum* is found throughout the English colonial primary sources in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is regularly used by scholars of those periods.

The other truncation of *wampumpeag* came out as *peag* (*pege*, *peacke*, *peake*, *peack*, *peauge*, *peague*, *peage*, *peag*, or *peäg*), making its first appearance at least by 1632, and earlier than the first recorded instance of *wampum*.⁹⁶ Although as an abbreviation *peag* also does an injustice to the original term *wampumpeag*, it at least makes linguistic logic for *peag* to apply to white as well as dark shell beads (or any strings of beads, for that matter), since it is the designator for “white” that is omitted. (Roger Williams recorded an Algonquian term with an entirely different stem—*suckáuhock*—for dark wampum.) There is no difference in their application—both *peag* and *wampum* applied to wampum—and both were widely used. In the battle for

93. Isaack de Rasière to Samuel Blommaert, 1628, in *NNN*, 110.

94. Isaack de Rasière to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber, September 23, 1626, in *DRNN*, 224.

95. Scholars familiar with these sources have not failed to note Bradford’s earlier knowledge of wampum; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 150–51; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 191n24.

96. *OED*, s.v. “peag, n.” (3rd ed., September 2005; online version June 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/139276, accessed July 6, 2011); “Claiborne vs. Clobery et als. In the High Court of Admiralty,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 28, no. 2 (1933): 178–79.

which term would become the commonly accepted one over time, however, *peag* lost out in favor of *wampum*. The reason for this is difficult to fathom today. A reading of the colonial records would seem to indicate that *peag* was just as common as *wampum* was. In his correspondence Roger Williams customarily, but not exclusively, referred to both white and black shell beads as *peag*,⁹⁷ and references to one form or another of *peag* can be found throughout the colonial records. But by the late eighteenth century, *peag* had become far less common in the records.

More curious is the adoption of *peag* by English colonists south of the wampum-making regions, but a close examination of its use reveals important intercolonial and intertribal networks. *Wampumpeag* was unique to the Algonquian speakers of New England, and wampum as it existed at the time of European–Native American contact was largely a product of Long Island Sound and nearby coasts. But *pege* appears in the Maryland records as early as 1632—the same year as it appears in the New England records, primarily in the accounting records of William Claiborne, where it is used six times, all to the exclusion of *wampum* and *wampumpeag*.⁹⁸ Claiborne was a Virginian with entrepreneurial interests in the upper Chesapeake, so his use of *pege* appears unusual, but Claiborne was also a Puritan who had settled in Virginia around the time that Plymouth was founded. In the late 1620s he began trading with the Susquehannocks through the upper Chesapeake Bay. The Iroquoian-speaking Susquehannocks used wampum and wampumlike shell beads just as their linguistic cousins and neighbors did.⁹⁹ It is no surprise, then, that Claiborne's records of 1632 enumerate the purchase of several fathoms of wampum. Though more research is necessary, it seems likely that his suppliers of *pege*—Patrickson, Ludlowe, and Bolter—were New England traders. In fact, if the "Mr. Ludlowe" in Claiborne's accounts refers to Roger Ludlowe, a clear connection is made not only to New England, but also to the wampum producers of Long Island,

97. Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie, Robert S. Cocroft, Bradford F. Swan (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1988), 1:251, 252, 259, 273, 294, 299.

98. "Claiborne vs. Clobery," 178–79. Much later, in 1709, John Lawson wrote of his travels in the Carolinas using *peag* in addition to and sometimes in place of *wampum*; John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, ed. Hugh Talmage Lefler (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 164, 184, 201, 203, 214, 224.

99. Barry C. Kent, *Susquehanna's Indians* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1989), 171–74.

since Ludlowe, a founder of Connecticut, was responsible for a treaty with the wampum-producing Pequot Indians in the 1630s. Whatever the case, from this point on, *peag* was a familiar term describing shell beads in the southern colonies.

But *peag* was not the only term found south of the future Mason-Dixon Line; other terms, revealing some of the ongoing confusion among Europeans about Native culture, were also employed. Claiborne referred, for example, to *roanoach*, more commonly known as *roanoke*. Spelled variously as *roánòke*, *roenoke*, *ronoak*, *roenoke*, *rawranoke*, *roanoac*, this is one of the earliest Native terms for shell beads recorded by English speakers. First taken down as *rawrenock* by John Smith in 1612, this term was frequently used by the English to describe shell beads.¹⁰⁰ But was *roanoke* wampum? In other words, did *roanoke* apply to small, cylindrical white beads made of marine whelk? And if not, to what did it refer? It seems clear from the records that it was not the same as wampum. Some European observers present both terms, explaining that wampum was more valuable than roanoke.¹⁰¹ What it actually was, however, is less clear. Some sources suggest that these were white marine shell beads, but discoidal rather than cylindrical. Other sources imply that the roanoke were unpolished or unfinished white marine cylindrical beads.¹⁰² Either way, the appellation of *roanoke* seems odd since in the Virginian Algonquian tongue it means “ones rubbed smooth by hand.”¹⁰³ Certainly there is much evidence of the use of shell beads, often discoidal, among the Indians of the Chesapeake.¹⁰⁴

But though there appears to be no exact correlation between wampum and roanoke beads, it is not clear that English speakers always recognized

100. *OED*, s.v. “roanoke, n.” (3rd ed., June 2010; online version June 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/166553, accessed July 6, 2011). John Smith, “A Map of Virginia. With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion,” in *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, President of Virginia, and Admiral of New England, 1580–1631*, pt. 1, ed. Edward Arber (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), 418.

101. “A Relation of Maryland,” in Clayton Colman Hall, ed., *Narratives of Maryland, 1633–1684* (New York: C. Scribner, 1910), 90.

102. William R. Gerard, “Virginia’s Indian Contributions to English,” *American Anthropologist* 9, no. 1 (1907): 106.

103. *OED*, s.v. “roanoke, n.”

104. William Strachey, *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (1612; repr., London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), 65, 71, 74–75, 114, 132, 142, 171; *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631)*, ed. Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 1:53, 139, 190, 216, 232.

the nuances between these beads. Many chroniclers simply treated terms like *wampum*, *roanoke*, and *peag* as synonymous. John Lawson, writing about North Carolina at the turn of the eighteenth century, said that the shell beads are "that which we call Peak, and Ronoak; but Peak more especially. This is that which at New-York, they call Wampum. . . . This is what many Writers call Porcelan."¹⁰⁵ Still, while *wampum* and *peag* were apparently applied by Englishmen to many different shell beads and other decorative shell products in the southern colonies, it was rare that terms from outside wampum country were imported and used alongside *wampum*, *sewant*, and *porcelaine*. One possible exception to this, however, occurs in Riverhead, New York, the heart of traditional wampum-manufacturing country on eastern Long Island, where the name *Roanoke* was mysteriously applied to a point of land and since that time adorns roads and businesses there.¹⁰⁶

Although the term *wampum* appears to be ubiquitous in retrospect, it clearly wasn't exclusively so in the English-speaking colonies where the term was initially adopted. Furthermore, depending on where and when one stood in early America, different terms were commonly used. These names for wampum often emerged from the intercultural context of each place. Rooted in Native terms, European terms, or trade jargons, these words may have been used in passing, or they may have evolved into the common parlance of the region. Whatever the case, an exploration of several of these tells us much about wampum's intercultural and evolutionary nature.

THE WAMPUM MONOPOLY

The use of white and dark shell beads that we now commonly know as wampum flourished among Native people and Europeans in a region that transcended the boundaries of Native tribes and European colonies. Used by eastern Algonquians, the Five Nations Iroquois, and other Iroquoian speakers, wampum could be found in English, French, and Dutch colonies. Though Algonquians no doubt continued to use terms like *wampumpeag* and *suckâuhock* among themselves, and Iroquoian speakers used variations of

105. Lawson, *New Voyage*, 203.

106. Tooker, *Indian Place-names*, 212. For example, Roanoke Avenue, Roanoke Plaza Liquors, and Roanoke Vineyards in Riverhead, Long Island; see http://maps.google.com/maps?q=riverhead+long+island&rlz=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-Address&coe=UTF-8&rlz=117ADFA_enUS452&cum=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=GUWTT46kAYqsiAKhktEm&sa=X&oi=mode_link&ct=mode&cd=3&ved=0CB4Q_AUoAg, accessed April 21, 2012.

onekoera along with a wide range of other terms for wampum in its various manifestations and applications, the terms *wampum*, *porcelaine*, and *sewant* became common currency in the lingua franca of New England, New France, and New Netherland. But these regional variations and diverse nomenclatural practices were eventually lost.

The first step came when Europeans and Indians in these different intercultural zones accepted common terms in their communication with each other. This is hardly a surprise; by the seventeenth century, wampum had emerged as a product of intercultural forces and had come to be used primarily, but not exclusively, in intercultural interactions. New Netherland, for instance, was not so much a colony of the Dutch superimposed on Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking Native groups. Instead, it formed an intercultural zone where all residents of that zone used and exchanged wampum. Their regular interactions and shared practices were reflected in the common adoption of the term *sewant*. This is not to say that there was not some degree of cultural imperialism. It is unlikely that Native people stopped using their own terms for wampum when speaking among themselves, whereas Europeans used the same terms among themselves as they did between themselves and Indians.

As English colonial hegemony expanded, so did the use of *wampum*. New Netherland became New York, and New France was eventually absorbed into British North America, and with these political changes the spaces of intercultural contact created in those colonies further evolved. By the end of the eighteenth century, the wampum lands were all part of the Anglo-American world and *wampum* had pretty much come to be used as the common term for shell beads. As the cultural and intellectual influence of New England continued to shape American thinking in the nineteenth century, *wampum* would be associated with the strings and belts of shell beads so well known in northeastern North America. But as the nineteenth century wore on, and New England's cultural influence diminished as Americans expanded westward, romantic notions of vanishing Indians and their culture spread in American culture. Added to this were nationalizing cultural trends. *Wampum* became equally romanticized and more genericized, and many who used the term did not understand *wampum's* linguistic origins or its unique role among Native people of the northeastern United States.

By the twentieth century, *wampum* had become common parlance in American English to refer to beads, Native American decoration or money, or just general slang for money. Just past the turn of the twentieth century, the Native linguist and ethnologist J. N. B. Hewitt described wampum

broadly as “the shell beads in use among the North American Indian wrought out of several kinds of shells found along both the western and the eastern littorals of the continent.”¹⁰⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* declares that wampum “serv[ed] as currency for the N. American Indians” without actually specifying which tribes or when or where, and the *Random House Dictionary* also identifies *wampum* as an informal term for money.¹⁰⁸

As such, wampum’s forms as known in the early era of European–Native American contact were confused or only vaguely known and understood, especially in popular culture. To some, belts of white and black beads had always existed among Native people. To others, wampum could be anything from brightly and multicolored glass beads to shell beads of various shapes and sizes, to shells themselves, such as dentalium. The unique and specific uses of wampum by Iroquoian speakers and their neighbors were often forgotten; popular images of wampum portrayed Plains Indian people (to whom wampum was not indigenous) exchanging belts of beads in red, blue, yellow, and white.¹⁰⁹ Wampum can also be counted among those Native words that not only have found their way into common parlance in English, but have been loaned to other languages. For example, in Serbo-Croatian, the once dominant language of Yugoslavia, one can find *wampum* along with *moccasin*, *tomahawk*, and *wigwam*.¹¹⁰

Wampum presented Europeans with a unique cultural artifact that Native people used in unfamiliar and beguiling ways. They made sense of this

107. Hodge, *Handbook of Indians North of Mexico*, s.v. “Wampum,” by John N. B. Hewitt.

108. OED, s.v. “wampum” (2nd ed., 1989; online version June 2011, www.oed.com/view/Entry/225411, accessed July 6, 2011; *RHD*, s.v. “wampum.”

109. A search through eBay regularly turns up Indian trading cards from 1959 and from 1979 to 1981 that display such wampum, one belt clearly portrayed in a plains cultural context. In the 1960s the Marx corporation came out with a Western series of twelve-inch action figures, including a Native character named Geronimo (ostensibly the famous Apache) whose molded clothing represented plains cultural buckskin with fringe and whose changeable plastic accoutrements included an eagle-feather headdress, a buffalo headdress, an Iroquois false face mask, and a belt of wampum patterned after traditional Iroquoian wampum belts. I remember as a child being a member of the YMCA “scouting” group called the “Father and Son Indian Guides” in the 1970s and being told something to the effect that “wampum is Indian money and could consist of shells, beads, or dried frog skins [!].”

110. Morton Benson, “English Loanwords in Serbo-Croatian,” *American Speech* 42 (October 1967): 179, 182, 184.

material good, applying to it a variety of terms that seemed reasonable to them. In each of the broad cultural regions—New France, New Netherland, and New England—terms for wampum emerged from the intersection of language, culture, and geography. *Porcelaine*, *sewant*, and *wampum* became intercultural words—terms needed to function in social, economic, and political contexts that were shaped by intercultural realities. And they were words that emerged from the cross-cultural contact itself. As *porcelaine* and *sewant* faded from the documentary record and *wampum* took their places, the intercultural context that led to their creation also disappeared, and memories of that past faded. *Wampum*, shorn of the complex history in which it first appeared, has become little more than a hackneyed term that can mean just about anything related to Native Americans or money. In early America, however, *wampum*, *sewant*, and *porcelaine* represented earnest efforts by real people to make sense of each other, the material goods they used, and the cultural values and practices in which they used them. Exploring these terms, how they came to be used, and why brings contours back to the flattened landscape of early America. They remind us that the story of encounter was more than just separate but occasionally intersecting worlds of Europeans and Indians and that the early American experience was other than a Whiggish story of Pilgrim landings and struggles for liberty. Recovering the lost uses of *wampum*, *sewant*, and *porcelaine*, as well as the other terms Europeans experimented with and then cast aside, helps us recover a history rich in texture and complexity, where outcomes were not predetermined, and where the encounter of diverse peoples continually meant coming to terms with one another.