Samuel Kirkland's mission to the Oneidas, 1766-1808

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Samuel Kirkland's Mission to the Oneidas, 1766-1808

by

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Abstract

Samuel Kirkland, an eighteenth-century Presbyterian minister, lived among the Oneida Indians for more than forty years (1766-1808). Throughout his mission to the Oneidas, Kirkland witnessed some major cultural transformations. These changes assisted Kirkland in converting Oneidas to Christianity.

Three scholars (Campisi, Graymont, and Guzzardo) present theses that explain the constituents of Kirkland’s mission. Two of these scholars, Campisi and Graymont, believe that Kirkland drew his support from the ranks of Oneida hunter-warriors. Guzzardo believes Kirkland’s support came from civil leaders (chiefs and sachems). This master’s thesis supports Guzzardo’s position, through a detailed analysis of Oneidas affiliated with Kirkland’s mission, and reveals trends not presented in Guzzardo’s thesis.

This master’s thesis examines the nature of Kirkland’s mission in two time periods: a pre-Revolutionary War and Revolutionary War era (1766-1783) and a post-Revolutionary War era (1784-1808). Throughout the duration of the mission, Kirkland drew followers disproportionately from the ranks of the civil leaders. Although no hunter-warriors supported Kirkland before the revolution, some hunter-warriors did embrace Kirkland in the post-Revolutionary era. The author of this paper attributes Kirkland’s appeal to waning status of certain sectors of the Oneida male population. The cultural transformations Kirkland noted throughout his mission account for these changes in status.
On October 25, 1767, a twenty-five-year-old Presbyterian minister residing amongst the Oneida Indians commenced his journal of his new mission to the Oneidas with a description of a disturbing incident in his village. Informed by a young man of a group of Oneidas drinking rum outside the village, the minister embarked to investigate. Upon reaching the bacchanalian site, the minister encountered a few intoxicated Oneidas. In what would soon characterize much of his intercourse with the Oneidas, the self-righteous minister discovered the group’s keg of rum, which he “distroy’d as soon as discover’d, without any further Ceremony.” The minister thought nothing further of the incident until the next day.

The following morning, the husband of the woman who owned the spirits called upon the minister in order to learn the reason for the minister’s actions. The minister exhorted this man for two hours on the subjects of “Temperance, Righteousness, & Judgement to come.” The Oneida man quietly listened to the minister’s extemporaneous sermon, agreeing with what was preached. When the minister concluded his preaching, the Oneida man “insisted upon my paying for half the Liquor if no more.” The minister refused this reasonable bargain and sensed that this man would seek recourse in the form of personal revenge. The Oneida man soon fulfilled the minister’s expectations.

The next day, this same Oneida man returned to the minister’s dwelling. The man quickly became belligerent and ordered the minister to follow his commands. The minister “thought prudent to get clear of him as soon as possible, and the sooner the better.” In attempting to exit the domicile, the minister felt the hands of the Oneida man clutch his throat. A struggle ensued in which the minister subdued the Oneida

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attacker. Calling for assistance, the minister bound his assailant. While restrained, the Oneida man threatened to kill the minister. Realizing his threats were merely empty, for he was tightly bound, the man plunged into a state of self-pity. The Oneida begged for the minister to kill him, expressing contempt for his situation and the station of the minister:

My Life may go to the devil. I hate you and all the English Ministers. You are a good for nothing fellow, a Villain, a Mischief Maker, a servant of the devil... you... are the cause of it, by your continual talk of sin, sin, sin, as tho' there was nothing else in the World. You are a Plague to me, you give me all this trouble. 

With a similar attempt upon his life at the conclusion of his mission to the Seneca Indians, two years earlier, and this current threat at the commencement of a mission to the Oneida Indians, one would expect the young minister to soon forsake any hope of proselytizing the gospel amongst the Iroquois. Such was not the case with this minister, Samuel Kirkland. Kirkland tirelessly served the Oneidas for forty-one years (1767-1808) and lived among them until his death in 1808, never relinquishing hope that the Oneidas would embrace his Presbyterian theology and the arts and industry of the encroaching European settlers.

The aforementioned incident aptly foreshadowed the conflict between cultures that Kirkland encountered throughout his tenure amongst the Oneidas. Preaching against the evils of intemperance, polytheism, and adultery, while simultaneously exhorting the adoption of European farming techniques and material crafts, Kirkland met considerable resistance from many Oneidas who perceived his religious and material reforms as a serious threat to their existence as a distinct people. Triumphant successes and dismal failures to both him and the Oneidas punctuated his mission. In spite of a theology antithetical to traditional Oneida belief systems and a

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program of material and agricultural reform determined to fundamentally alter Oneida practices, Kirkland gained a vibrant following.

Over the duration of his tenure amongst the Oneidas, a distinct change in the composition of Kirkland's mission occurred. In the first period, 1766-1783, male civil leaders (sachems and chiefs) and matrons (whose societal status was inextricably linked to the men they elected as civil leaders), as opposed to their rival hunter-warriors, composed the bulk of Kirkland's mission. These civil leaders were attracted to Kirkland's mission because of their decreasing status in a society in which hunter-warriors gained immense prestige in the colonial fur trade and European military struggles for hegemony over North America. In the second phase, 1784-1808, the shattering effects of the American Revolution destroyed the traditional societal role of hunter-warriors. No longer needed by competing European empires for their military prowess and game scarce through white encroachment on Oneida hunting lands, hunter-warriors declined in status. In an effort to prevent a further erosion of their status and to preserve their existence as a people, hunter-warriors joined their civil-leader brethren in embracing Kirkland's mission. In order to comprehend what was successful or fruitless to each party, an examination of Samuel Kirkland's life and theology and Oneida Indian culture is in order.
Chapter 1
Samuel Kirkland: Early Life and Seneca Mission

Samuel Kirkland entered the world on December 1, 1741 in Norwich, Connecticut. According to Pilkington, "Of the founder's early boyhood little is known, save what may be deduced from his being the tenth child of twelve sired by an impecunious country parson." His father, Daniel Kirtland, a Yale graduate of the class of 1720, was ordained as a Congregational minister of a Norwich, Connecticut parish in 1723. After serving thirty years as a minister in this parish, in 1753, a council of church members declared Daniel Kirtland mentally unfit and relieved him of his ministerial duties. Reverend Kirtland never preached again.

One can only hypothesize why Reverend Kirtland's parish council deemed him mentally incompetent. Quite possibly, the parish council, ardent Congregationalists, censured Daniel Kirtland for his flirting with "New Light" principles. The Great Awakening enveloped the region in which Kirtland preached, and reform-minded individuals actually established a New Light church in Kirtland's area three years before his dismissal. Reverend Kirtland was aware of these developments and identified with the principles of the Great Awakening: "Although Daniel Kirtland had little sympathy with the more flamboyant enthusiasms of the waxing Separates, he was

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4 Pilkington, Hamilton College, 2.

5 Kirtland was the original surname before Samuel adopted the Kirkland name.
partial to New Light teaching in general and had friends among their leaders, especially Eleazar Wheelock, who was to exert great influence upon his son. Samuel Kirkland followed the example of these two role models and embraced the teachings of these New Light ministers.

Eleazar Wheelock did indeed “exert a great influence upon his son.” In October of 1760, at the age of eighteen, Samuel Kirkland left his home in order to attend the newly opened More’s Indian Charity School in Lebanon, Connecticut. The proprietor of this school was Eleazar Wheelock, a staunch New Light minister and influential leader in Connecticut’s Great Awakening who was instrumental in the founding of Princeton University and Dartmouth College. Before opening this school, Wheelock had been a minister and private tutor for nearly thirty years. His first experience with Indian education came as a tutor in 1743 to a promising young Mohegan Indian, Samson Occom. Wheelock groomed Occom for the ministry, a calling Occom undertook with relish, eventually assisting Samuel Kirkland in his future mission to the Oneidas.

So pleased was Wheelock with the progress of Samson Occom that he developed a complete education plan for Indian children. According to Axtell, “Wheelock’s goals were essentially two: to save the Indians from themselves and to save the English from the Indians. The best way to accomplish both was, as he stated so facilely, to turn the Indians into Englishmen.” In order to achieve these goals, Wheelock endeavored to remove children from their homelands and board them at a school. The curriculum would include not only English grammar and theology, but also agricultural techniques and useful arts. Once imbued with this knowledge, Wheelock envisioned his pupils returning to their respective homelands to distribute their knowledge amongst their respective peoples. The ideal result, for Wheelock, would be a complete

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8 Ibid, 208.
transformation of (what he interpreted to be) pagan, nomadic, hunter-gathering societies into God-fearing, stable, agricultural societies modeled after those of European settlers. More's Indian Charity School was to be the embodiment of this vision.

In Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution, Alan Heimert explains the differences between traditional Congregational theology and the New Light theology of the Great Awakening. For Heimert, the Great Awakening represents "the independent fulfillment of one of the strains that in Puritanism had been held in precarious balance: 'piety' and 'reason'." In this model, Congregationalism adhered to a form of Arminianism in which God reveals his saving grace to individuals through a lengthy period of preparation (i.e., through reason). Contrastingly, New Light theologians emphasized a highly emotional (what some might term fanatical) experience by the work of the Holy Spirit upon an individual. Although debates rage as to the precise effects of the Great Awakening, Hudson discerns some major trends in the movement: "The structure of public worship was modified, a more popular type of preaching dominated the pulpit, new forms of architecture were introduced, and even the churches' understanding of their mission was altered."

Under the terms of New Light theology, a broadened enfranchisement of the saved occurred. Salvation could be achieved by not only by white Congregationalists, but also African slaves and Indians. In the wake of the Great Awakening, new interest arose for the conversion of Indians to Christianity that was previously almost extinguished by the close of the seventeenth century. According to Ahlstrom, "The

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10 Ibid., 3.
missionary spirit itself was a fruit of the Awakening."13 Eleazar Wheelock served a paramount role in bringing the Gospel to Indians through his establishment of More's Indian Charity School and Dartmouth College (initially intended to educate Indian youths until its conversion to a college for white male youths). Through Wheelock's example, Samuel Kirkland strived to convert Indians to Christianity.

As the first white student at More's Indian Charity School, Samuel Kirkland encountered Indian culture and ministerial attempts to alter Indian religion and sustenance patterns. Kirkland pursued an academic curriculum suitable for college entrance. While still enrolled at the school, Kirkland traveled with a fellow Mohawk student on a recruiting trip to Mohawk country in November, 1761. This Mohawk student, Joseph Brant, eventually became an esteemed warrior and chief of his nation and a formidable rival to Samuel Kirkland; during the American Revolution, Kirkland and Brant assiduously recruited the six "tribes" of the Iroquois Confederacy for their causes (Kirkland for the Colonies, Brant for Great Britain). The trip fascinated Kirkland, who endeavored to study, with the assistance of Joseph Brant, the Mohawk language.

After one more year of study at the school, Kirkland had exhausted the educational possibilities at the school. Encouraged by his progress, Wheelock raised funds for Kirkland to study at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) for one year in preparation for a career of preaching the gospel amongst native peoples. Entering in 1762 as a sophomore, Kirkland studied for two years. Eager to commence his own mission, and deemed prepared by Wheelock, Kirkland left the College of New Jersey in autumn of 1764 to begin a mission to the Seneca Indians, one of the six Iroquois tribes, in western New York State. At his class's commencement in 1765, the College of New Jersey conferred upon him, in his absence, his

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baccalaureate, "probably at Dr. Wheelock's solicitation, and through his influence."  

Kirkland arrived in early November of 1764 at Johnson Hall, domicile of Sir William Johnson, Commissioner of Indian Affairs of the British Colonies. Johnson, who was immensely respected by the Iroquois, established the necessary diplomatic protocol for the creation of Kirkland's mission to the Senecas. While lodging at Johnson Hall, William Johnson provided Kirkland with prudent advice, which Kirkland recorded as: "if I was cordially received by the Seneca's, I should in a week or two be adopted into some one of the principal families & that I must pay particular attention to my new relations. It would give me the liberty of applying to them for any thing I wanted. Probably I might receive adoption into the head Sachem's family."

Kirkland reached Kanadasegea (near present-day Geneva, New York), the principle Seneca village East of the Genesee River, on February 7, 1765 and immediately applied Sir William Johnson's advice. Before entering the village of Kanadasegea, Kirkland sent a messenger ahead to request that the head sachem receive him. The head sachem, Sakauengwalaghton, cordially welcomed the young minister and the two exchanged speeches. As Kirkland anticipated, he was soon adopted into Sakauengwalaghton's family as a son. Sakauengwalaghton assigned Kirkland living quarters with one of the village's families, and his troubles with the Seneca began.

Four days after moving into his new quarters, Kirkland awoke early one morning to the sounds of crying. During the night, the head of the household died from what any white would consider natural causes. Kirkland was immediately suspected of wrongdoing: "I soon found by prudent enquiry, that the circumstances of this man's death had given a general alarm; & that there was a party rather unfriendly to me who

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14 Lothrop, "Life of Samuel Kirkland," 146n.
15 Samuel Kirkland's account of his mission to the Senecas is found in Pilkington, ed., The Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 3-39. Dates Kirkland provides are not completely accurate; Kirkland wrote in 1799, "I wish to complete my Journal (including the two first years of my Mission, which I was obliged to burn, while in the Seneka's Country, to save my life)," 316.
intended to charge it upon me." In a culture in which witchcraft was a social reality, many implicated Kirkland in his host’s demise. A council soon convened in order to discuss the recent death. In this council, those present discussed the Iroquois’ lifestyle and the implications Kirkland’s theology and proposed agricultural and material reform would have upon traditional culture. Perceptive Seneca hunter-warriors, cognizant of New England settler’s subjugation of once independent coastal Indians, realized that British visions of civilization necessitated complete adoption of European traditions and would render their role obsolete: British settlers desired to eliminate Indian material and psychological dependence on hunting and warring and replace it with peaceful agricultural pursuits.

The Seneca chief Onoonghwandekha addressed all those assembled at the council. He immediately accused Kirkland for the death of his caretaker: “This white may we call our Brother has come upon a dark design, & employed or he would not have traveled so many hundred miles.” Onoonghwandekha proceeded to elucidate his perception of what Kirkland’s teachings would have upon the Iroquois:

Brethren, attendl, you may be assured that if we Seneca’s... receive this white man & attend to the Book which was made solely for White people, we shall become a miserable abject people. It has already ruined many Indian tribes by embracing what is contained in this book, altho’ they call it God’s Book. How many remnants of tribes to the East are so reduced, that they pound sticks to make brooms, to buy a loaf of Bread or it may be a shirt. The warriors, which they boasted of, before these foreigners, the white people crossed the great Lake, where are they now? why their grandsons are all becom mere women!

Brothers attend! This will be the condition of our children & grandchildren in a short time if we change or renounce our religion for that of the white people. We shall soon loose the spirit of true men. The spirit of the brave warrior & the good hunter will no more be discovered among us. We shall be sunk so low as to hoe corn & squashes in the field, chop wood, stoop

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17 Pilkington, ed., Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 11.
18 Ibid., 23.
down & milk cows like negroes among the Dutch people. Brethren hear me! I am in earnest because I love my nation & revere the customs and practices of our ancestors and they enjoyed pleasant days. I tell you that on condition, we allow this white skinned Brother to continue with us & finally to embrace what is written in what the white people call Gods Book, it will be a complete subversion of all the ancient customs, religious feasts and our offerings to Thaonghyawagon [the Great Spirit], which our forefathers so strictly observed. All all will be gone as to our national character, as true men...

Onoonghwandekha poignantly captured the essence of the repercussions Samuel Kirkland’s plan of material reform would have upon the Iroquois if they embraced his teachings. Kirkland’s plan of Indian reform entailed not only embracing Christianity, but also disrupting traditional Iroquois patterns of sustenance; a diverse mode of food procurement, consisting of both non-intensive agriculture and seasonal hunts, would have to be converted to a sedentary lifestyle of intensive agriculture. As Onoonghwandekha noted, European disease and conquest reduced the Eastern coastal tribes to such a lifestyle, teetering on the brink of extinction. One such coastal tribe, the Mohegans, allied themselves with the Puritans of Massachusetts and Connecticut in campaigns against the Narragansetts and Pequots throughout the seventeenth century. One century later, on October 4, 1774, the Oneidas granted a small parcel of their land to the remnants of the Mohegans, now joined with their former enemies (Pequots, Narragansetts, Mahicans, and Montauks), who departed from their ancestral Connecticut homeland to found Brothertown (one of the villages of Kirkland’s future mission) in 1788. Onoonghwandekha’s observations of coastal tribes made a generation earlier could now be directly witnessed by any Iroquois. The English

precedent was clear: for Indians to embrace the Christian theology and material lifestyle espoused by ministers quite possibly meant extinguishing their culture.

Such a prospect was too much for the Senecas to bear in 1765. In May of 1766, little more than a year after his arrival in Seneca country, the Senecas forced Kirkland to abandon his mission. Kirkland returned to Lebanon, Connecticut, where he was officially ordained as a Presbyterian minister on June 19, 1766. In spite of his tribulations among the Senecas (which consisted of threats on his life, periods of nearly starving, and rejection of his plan for Indian reform), Kirkland and Wheelock had not forsaken hope of establishing a flourishing mission to some Indian people. Ronda notes, “Both missionaries believed that the Oneidas had been less tainted by French Catholic beliefs and would more readily accept Kirkland’s teaching.”22

French Jesuit activity was a critical concern for both Kirkland and Wheelock. Beginning in the middle of the seventeenth century, Iroquois curiosity of Christianity resulted in French Jesuits establishing missions to the Iroquois. Unlike their New England counterparts, French Jesuits did not require the Iroquois to surrender their traditional food procurement patterns in order to adopt Christianity. Hunter-warriors quickly perceived this difference between these two rival Christian sects and were willing to listen to preachers who did not threaten their hunter-warrior existence. In order to have any hope of reforming Indians to British standards, Kirkland and Wheelock had to target a tribe who had not come under the influence of the French Jesuits. Both men believed that the Oneidas were likely candidates, for French Jesuits failed in their missionary endeavors to the Oneidas in the 1660s. Kirkland arrived in Oneida country on August 1, 1766 to begin his forty-one-year residence with this people. In order to understand the dynamics between Samuel Kirkland’s teachings and traditional Oneida practices, an examination of traditional Oneida culture is in order.

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Chapter Two
Oneida Indian Culture and Religion

The Oneidas were one of the original "tribes" of the Iroquois Confederacy. This League united five tribes (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk), of a similar linguistic and ethnic tradition, inhabiting adjacent territory in what is now Upstate New York. Because of this relationship, ethnographers tend to study the culture of these tribes as one single entity under the rubric of "Iroquois." The reader may assume, unless noted, that the Oneidas conformed to general Iroquois practices. After white settlers' encroachment on Tuscarora land in North Carolina, the Tuscaroras, another Iroquoian-speaking people, joined the league as a sixth member in 1722-24. Archaeologically, each tribe can be distinguished in the stratigraphic column as a separate cultural unit by the year 1400, the approximate date of formation of their confederacy or league. Traditionally, the formation of the League arose after a lengthy period of hostility among these five tribes "as a means to enable them more effectually to resist the pressure of contiguous nations." Although united politically, each tribe maintained a large degree of autonomy in their civil affairs.

Bounded to the west by the Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas and to the east by the Mohawks, the Oneidas inhabited a six-million-acre tract of land in Central New York State. The main Oneida villages in the eighteenth century were located within what is now Madison County, New York. In defining boundaries for the Iroquois (indeed, any indigenous North American people), European settlers were confused. Unlike European agricultural communities, Iroquois food procurement patterns necessitated large tracts of "unused" land potential (i.e., unimproved for agricultural use or habitation). Thus European settlers severely underestimated the expanse of

23 William A. Starna, "The Oneida Homeland in the Seventeenth Century," in The Oneida Indian Experience, 10.

Indian lands. For the Iroquois, no such confusion existed: territorial boundaries were marked by the regional geomorphology, often in terms of waterways. These boundaries were recognized by not only the Iroquois, but also surrounding tribes (see Map 1).

Within these boundaries, each tribe procured or produced foodstuffs in a similar manner. Iroquois cultures practiced slash-and-burn agricultural techniques, raising maize, beans, and squash in the fertile soil. The importance of these three crops can not be over-emphasized; Iroquois religion celebrates the Three Sisters, the mythological embodiment of these crops. The Iroquois also utilized a vast array of aquatic and terrestrial animals; however, none was as important as the deer. Dried venison sustained the population, and deer hides, antler, and bone provided the raw materials needed for fabrication of clothing and numerous other utilitarian objects. What European settlers mistakenly assumed was unused land was, in fact, reserved as hunting territory for the semi-annual deer hunt. Throughout food procurement, a strict division of labor existed; men hunted and cleared fields, while women planted and tended crops. This is lucidly indicated in the aforementioned speech of Onoonghwandekha, for no proud Iroquois man would reach “so low as to hoe corn & squashes in the field.”

The Iroquois possessed a well-developed religion centered upon elaborate communal celebrations. Although not truly a monotheistic religion, for minor gods

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25 William A. Starna, “Traditional Iroquois Land Use,” in Christopher Vecsey and William A. Starna, eds., Iroquois Land Claims (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 41. Starna attributes this delineation scheme to Morgan (see League of the Iroquois, 41-46); however, Morgan explicitly states, “The Iroquois rejected all natural boundaries, and substituted longitudinal lines.” (p. 41) The actual method of boundary demarcation suggests a series of reasonably straight longitudinal lines bounding well known geomorphic features. Thus straight lines marked tribal boundaries, withgeomorphs as their reference points.

26 Starna, “Traditional Iroquois Land Use,” 40.

Map 1.-- Iroquois Territory, 1600

were acknowledged, Iroquois religion celebrated the works of the Great Spirit or 
Hawenneyu. The Great Spirit created all good things in the world and received devout 
worship from the Iroquois. Similar to Christian theology, an evil persona, in this 
case Hanegoategeh, imbued the world with malicious intent. As in Christian theology, 
"Man's free agency stood between them, with which, in effect, he controlled his own 
destiny. A Life of trust and confidence in the Great Spirit, and of obedience to his 
commands, afforded a refuge and a shelter to the pious Indian against the machinations 
of the Evil-minded." Upon death, the spirit ascended to repose with the Great Spirit 
in a state of eternal happiness.

A series of public worship ceremonies were held annually (Mid Winter, Green 
Corn, Planting, Harvest, Strawberry, and Maple) in order to celebrate the goodness of 
the Great Spirit. In these celebrations, men and women elected to perform these 
rituals conducted the religious rites. For the Iroquois, no specific class of priests or 
shamans existed, and these religious custodians could relinquish their positions at any 
time. Morgan writes of them: "They were distinguished by no special privileges, 
except while in the act of discharging their prescribed duties; they wore no costume, 
of emblem of office, to separate them from the people. In fact they were common 
warriors, and common women, and, in every sense, of and among the people." These patterns of subsistence and religious worship existed from the formation 
of the league until well after European contact; however, changes in Oneida society 
were occurring. The fur trade exacerbated preexisting tribal factionalism. 
Throughout the eighteenth century, Oneida political life was rife with factionalism. 
This strife was caused by tensions between the Oneida's civil leaders (sachems and 
chiefs) and military element (hunter-warriors). Throughout the existence of the 
Iroquois Confederacy, political decisions were made by a consensus of a body of fifty-
two sachems. These were hereditary positions passed along matrilineal lines, where

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clan matrons elected an individual from the family line to fill vacant positions. This legislative body conducted all matters of diplomacy, but in times of warfare, sachems held no official military responsibility. Individual Oneidas raised war parties and were not controlled by the sachems. If the person who formed the war party did not personally lead it, the members elected individuals as leaders. Any sachem who agreed to join a war party entered as a rank-and-file member of the excursion and had no power to control it, unless elected to be a leader. Thus civil leaders exerted no direct influence over military excursions.

Iroquois warfare was not based upon an attempt to totally destroy an enemy; a tribe did not utilize all of its resources in an effort to extinguish the existence of enemy tribes. In fact, many acts of war were the result of one individual's need for vengeance over an enemy, and this man would assemble a war party in order to redress his grievances. War held a spiritual value for the Iroquois, often as a means of assuaging grief of individuals who had lost relatives in past conflicts. This was achieved through the capture of prisoners, who were either adopted into the family (and replaced his or her namesake in the tribe with complete privilege to the rank of the person the captive replaced) or symbolically tortured and killed. In either method, the death of a family member was vanquished. Scholars term this form of warfare as "mourning war", and it served a vital cultural and spiritual role by simultaneously replenishing a population reduced by warfare and psychologically filling a deceased family member's position.30

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century, various European and indigenous peoples fiercely competed for control of the lucrative fur trade. As the stakes increased, European traders equipped their allied Indians with deadlier iron weapons and firearms. These Indian allies waged war with their competing Indian neighbors, all in an effort to secure control over the fur trade. Improved weaponry

increased casualties in war. Compounding this increased combat mortality was an earlier population loss through introduction of Old World diseases, which decimated Indian populations.\textsuperscript{31} The decrease in population through both deadlier warfare and disease necessitated an increased frequency in mourning wars, causing a dangerous spiral that threatened society: a diminishing population required more captives, resulting in more mourning wars for new captives, which caused more military casualties. So disruptive was this cycle that, According to Richter, “By the mid-1660s several missionaries estimated that two-thirds or more of the people in many Iroquois villages were adoptees.”\textsuperscript{32}

The Iroquois involvement as a paramount member of the fur trade accrued great political and military strength to the confederacy. In this altered society, military segments gained unprecedented prestige in their communities. Where sachems and civil chiefs once held the greatest esteem, hunter-warriors, who could provide trade items and captives to replace deceased relatives, now commanded more respect. However, the traditions of the Iroquois allotted political power to the sachems, and the warrior faction could not exercise control in civil affairs. In this struggle for communal status, the sachems and civil chiefs were relinquishing prestige, but they still laid claim to tribal leadership.

Before the Revolution, civil leaders gravitated towards Kirkland in the wake of waning status and control over the people. Hunter-warriors, who increased their status through the fur trade and resounding military successes and were caretakers of Oneida religion, rejected Kirkland’s plan of Indian reform. After the American Revolutionary War, much of Iroquois society was in a state of crisis. The political confederacy which so coherently united the Iroquois was abolished during the war, in 1777. Each tribe pursued its own interest during the war, and the confederacy was

\textsuperscript{32} Richter, “War and Culture,” 541.
never re-established. Encroaching white settlers infringed upon Oneida agricultural lands and disrupted deer-hunting patterns. Hunter-warrior communal status, as providers of meat and psychological promoters of tribal pride through military valor, markedly declined. A post-Revolutionary period of Oneida material deprivation, alcoholism, and despair led many to question the efficacy of traditional belief systems. Once separated from their chiefs and sachems (who embraced Christianity in the hope of preserving some of their traditional authority), the status-deprived hunter-warriors joined their civil leaders in Kirkland's mission (preventing any further erosion of their status), and both attempted to revitalize Oneida culture through Christianity. These cultural changes facilitated Kirkland in gaining support for his mission.
Many scholars attribute the changing nature of Oneida culture as the vehicle through which Kirkland established his mission. In *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, Graymont writes that Kirkland appealed most strongly to the hunter-warriors of the Oneida tribe. She attributes this appeal as a means of Oneida hunter-warriors of challenging the traditional political hegemony of sachems and civil chiefs. In her position, the intense factionalism present in Oneida society between the hunter-warriors and civil leaders led hunter-warriors to use Kirkland in their quest for tribal control. As Graymont states:

Kirkland also noted as an aside that the warriors were largely ‘uncontrolled by the Sachems.’ This historic phenomenon in Iroquois culture which had resulted in a long-standing rivalry between the warrior element and the peace chiefs and a consequent decline in the influence of the latter would redound to the favor of the Puritan religion of the Oneidas.  

Graymont believes that the hunter-warriors used Kirkland’s religion for political purposes. By abandoning both their traditional religion and political structure and supporting Kirkland, hunter-warriors found an outlet for exercising their increased status and a justification for their defiance of the sachems. Kirkland served as an implement to coalesce a separation that had been fomenting for generations.

Graymont is exceedingly vague in her decision to term Kirkland’s brand of religion “Puritan”; however, she provides the reader with glimpses of Kirkland’s theology and Oneida response to it. When Kirkland celebrated communion, three or four hundred Indians could be present, but Kirkland carefully regulated who could

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receive communion: "Only regenerate persons were admitted to church membership, and only those in a state of grace were permitted to receive communion." Kirkland would exhort his views in sermons that would last for hours, preaching three times on the Sabbath. Kirkland's policy on baptism was also demanding: "He insisted that only the regenerate and the children of the regenerate were fit subjects for baptism." Kirkland's refusing to baptize dying children often angered the Oneidas, especially when Oneidas witnessed that Catholic and Anglican ministers would perform the rite to anyone. In these respects, Kirkland differed little from any Congregational minister, Old or New Light: both groups were Puritans.

Jack Campisi also attributes a schism between hunter-warriors and sachems as the means through which Kirkland proselytized. Like Graymont, he believes Kirkland appealed to the hunter-warriors, who were attempting to usurp the powers of the hereditary sachems. According to Campisi, "what he [Kirkland] did was to introduce a doctrine that gave religious validation to the political reality that was already extant." Hunter-warriors resented that they could not control tribal politics in the traditional system of hereditary rule. By embracing Kirkland's religion, the hunter-warriors were able to challenge the political power of the sachems:

He [Kirkland] had challenged the efficacy of the political structure by his insistence upon renunciation of the Iroquois religion in order to receive baptism. In doing so, he attacked the symbolic basis of the political structure thus weakening the position of the hereditary chiefs. Needless to say, they opposed Kirkland's religion and, by extrapolation, his politics. However, Kirkland's influence did not depend upon the

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35 Ibid.
37 Campisi, "Oneida," 482.
support of the sachems but the warriors who, by converting to the new religion, found a means of challenging the structures and limitations of the Iroquois political system.  

In this view, Kirkland's religion appealed to hunter-warriors because it offered them a means of undermining traditional political authority of the sachems. With their increased status validated by their adherence to Kirkland's religion, hunter-warriors could justify both their attempts to control tribal affairs and rejection of traditional political relations. Campisi assumes that these hunter-warriors renounced their traditional religion as well. As noted earlier, Morgan recorded that the caretakers of religion in Oneida society were of the rank-and-file, not of the hereditary elite. In denying traditional belief systems, hunter-warriors would be forsaking their own source of tribal power, an unlikely proposition.

In explaining the appeal of Kirkland's mission to hunter-warriors, the Graymont/Campisi thesis necessitates a static Oneida political system. In reality, the Oneida political system was not as rigid as this portrayal depicts. Oneida political structure was capable of flexibility in its institutions, adapting to new situations that resulted over time. Lewis Henry Morgan documents one of these adaptations in his *League of the Iroquois* ethnography. In his treatment of Iroquois political structure, Morgan discerns a fluidity of political control in Iroquois politics. Since men of talent, by an accident of birth, would be excluded from political participation, the Iroquois created a subordinate position of chief (Hasehnowaneh). Chiefs' positions were elective offices, held for life and terminated upon death. Thus a chief's descendants enjoyed no privilege. These chiefs acted as counselors to the sachems, and no limit was placed on their numbers. Both sachems and chiefs were civil leaders.

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with no powers over military organization.\textsuperscript{39}  

As stated earlier in this paper, Iroquois conducted warfare through formation of individual war parties, not large-scale military organizations. Thus civil and military conduct inhabited separate spheres in an attempt to prevent concentration of power in any one faction. In fact, men of considerable talent were often barred from sachemship; regarding the distinguished Seneca orator, Red Jacket, “The Senecas themselves aver, that it would have been unwise to raise up a man of his intellectual power and extended influence to the office of sachem; as it would have concentrated in his hands too much authority.”\textsuperscript{40}

Both Graymont and Campisi posit similar interpretations of the appeal of Kirkland’s mission. Kirkland is believed to have taken advantage of existing rifts in Oneida society, a split which divided a traditional political system based upon hereditary office with aspirants for power who had achieved tribal prominence through warfare. These hunter-warriors, barred from political life, embraced Kirkland’s religion in an attempt to control Oneida political protocol.

Both Campisi and Graymont also use the same evidence to support their theses, an occurrence that pitted Kirkland, with hunter-warrior support, against Sir William Johnson immediately before the American Revolution. John C. Guzzardo adeptly documents this event.\textsuperscript{41} In autumn of 1770, a conflict ensued between Johnson and Kirkland. Johnson, an ardent supporter of the Anglican Church (the official religion of Great Britain), asked the Oneidas to allow an Anglican missionary to establish himself amongst the Oneidas in return for construction of a church edifice.\textsuperscript{42} The Oneidas refused this proposal but still maintained hopes of obtaining a church. Kirkland answered this call and left for Boston on October 7, 1770 in order to solicit

\textsuperscript{39} Morgan, \textit{League of the Iroquois}, 71-2.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, 103.


\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, 274.
funds for a church.\textsuperscript{43} Kirkland received £100 from the trustees of Harvard College as a salary in his establishment of his church, enough money to construct the building.\textsuperscript{44} Johnson was outraged over Kirkland’s actions, for Johnson was the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs and such matters were under his jurisdiction. Johnson assembled Oneida leaders at his home, Johnson Hall, and chastised them and Kirkland:

\begin{quote}
these Boston people are a seditious & Rebellious people, great enemies to their government... tis proper that you should in every thing ask my advise & have my approbation as the Kings servant. If you had in the first place petitioned to me for a Church, I would have wrote to the King & the great ones there, & it would have been granted you at once without any advice.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

Johnson could not expect the response of the Oneida warriors, his long-time allies. In direct opposition to Johnson, the Oneida warriors agreed to support Samuel Kirkland:

\begin{quote}
The answers which the the Warriors with the Church returned to the counsellors exceeded my most sanguine expectations, gave me recent & strong Testimonial of thier steadfastness, attachment to, & friendship for me, than I ever before received.

Numbers of them said they would go with me to prison or to death. Where I followed Christ they would follow me.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

Guzzardo acknowledges reasons for warrior support of Kirkland’s mission on this occasion but puts forward a general argument that contrasts sharply from that of Graymont and Campisi. During the winter of 1770-71, a yearning for war swept

\textsuperscript{43} Pilkington, ed., \textit{Journals of Samuel Kirkland}, 59.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, 88 n13.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, 67.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}
through Iroquois country. Kirkland notes the continuation of this bellicose movement well into 1773: “The martial spirit of the young warriors soon wake up from its long slumber & they shouted and halloo’d till their spirits were raised to a prodigious pitch. Some of the professors said it appeared to them as tho’ hell had broke loose, & their former pagan state revived full and fresh in their view.” These “martial spirits” arose because of Johnson’s inability to keep white settlers from encroaching on Oneida lands in the Susquehanna Valley, the best hunting grounds of the Oneida people. Johnson’s failure to restrain white settlement caused Oneida warriors to doubt his effectiveness, and their support of Kirkland “may have been a show of no faith in the policies of the Superintendent [Johnson].” In any event, mass warrior support of Kirkland was limited to this exceptional event, for nowhere else does Kirkland write of such appeal to hunter-warriors at any other time before the American Revolution. This incident of hunter-warrior support of Kirkland was limited to this moment in the pre-Revolutionary era and was a means of their showing dissatisfaction towards the British Indian Superintendent, not support of Kirkland’s mission as Campisi and Graymont conclude.

In his study of the struggle between Sir William Johnson and Kirkland and Wheelock to woo the Oneidas to their respective sides in the American Revolution, Guzzardo directly challenges the Graymont/Campisi thesis. According to Guzzardo, “Kirkland’s agrarianism strengthened the domestic and economic roles of the civil sachems and matriarchs while Johnson’s emphasis of the fur trade enhanced the hunter-warrior element.” It was to the civil chiefs that Kirkland owed his influence.

As James Axtell demonstrates, hunting and warring in Indian societies were

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50 Ibid., 269.
inextricably linked, and missionaries attempted to suppress these activities: "In Indian society, hunting and warfare were but two aspects of the same activity. Not only was warfare conducted by hunting parties, but hunting was a sort of ritualized warfare, carried on under strong religious sanctions. The education for one was the training for both."51 Thus these two roles in Oneida society shared a single interest.

Guzzardo distinguishes the difference of the Oneida role in the British empire envisioned by Johnson and the two preachers. In Johnson's outlook, white settlement would be excluded to the coastline, while the expanses of the frontier would remain in Indian possession. This frontier area would continue to supply Britain with valuable furs, simultaneously preserving the traditional role of Indian hunter and subordination of the colonies within a mercantilistic British empire. Contrastingly, the Kirkland-Wheelock strategy was to convert the Oneidas to Christianity, promote agrarianism, and relocate white settlers on surplus lands. In this model, Kirkland's plan of Oneida conversion to Christianity entailed a complete alteration of not only Oneida religious beliefs, but also traditional food procurement patterns and gender roles.52

Support from warrior-hunters for Kirkland's brand of spirituality, insisting upon a sedentary lifestyle of agriculture, would seem illogical; an agrarian mode of existence would eradicate the prestige of the warrior-hunters. Guzzardo notes that a split pitting sachems and matrons against warrior-hunters was traditional to Oneida society.53 This follows Morgan's ethnological evidence demonstrating a desire in Iroquois society to separate military and political spheres.54 In Guzzardo's model, matrons, sachems, and civil chiefs represented the civil faction in society, who promoted peace and social cohesion. Hunter-warriors represented the military

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52 Guzzardo, "The Superintendent and the Ministers," 259-64
53 Ibid., 279n.
54 Morgan, League of the Iroquois, 72.
faction, whose increasing tribal prestige, and subsequent desire to gain power, threatened existing tribal structure.

As caretakers of traditional religion and providers of game, hunter-warriors would eliminate their very tribal role if they adopted Kirkland's religion and his plan to convert hunter-warriors to agriculturists. One would expect little support from hunter-warriors for such a cause. In the pre-Revolutionary period, as Kirkland documents, hunter-warriors increasingly ignored the desires of their civil leaders. Without any outside interference, the hunter-warrior element might have been able to seize control of civil affairs. Kirkland entered Oneida country during a period of internal crisis, and civil leaders supported him in an effort to regain their waning status and control their challengers. Evidence for the support of Kirkland's mission from civil leaders exists in the composition of his following.
Chapter Four

Interpretations of Kirkland's Supporters

In all three scholars' studies (Graymont, Campisi, and Guzzardo), each author examines the societal role of individuals who supported Kirkland's mission. All of these authors attribute the success of the mission to traditional divisions within the Oneida tribe; however, these authors draw markedly different conclusions in their studies.

Campisi and Graymont believe that hunter-warriors, traditionally barred from political participation in Oneida society, sought Kirkland's spirituality as a means of challenging the political hegemony of civil leaders (sachems). These hunter-warriors used Kirkland's mission as a vehicle for exercising their political aspirations: with Kirkland's support, hunter-warriors could justify their usurpation of tribal power from civil leaders. Contrastingly, Guzzardo views Kirkland's mission as a way by which civil leaders (sachems and matrons) regained waning prestige eroded through increased status of warriors. All three authors concur that changes were occurring in Oneida society and that the status of hunter-warriors was increasing, but differ in their conclusions about Oneida response. In order to resolve these differences and determine actual Oneida response to the changing status hierarchy within the community, a test of the theses is necessary.

The first step in this test was to assemble as much data as possible on specific Oneidas during the period of Kirkland's mission (1766-1808). The author of this paper assembled a database of all individuals documented specifically by name throughout the duration of Kirkland's mission (as related in Kirkland's journals), recording four characteristics of each Oneida mentioned, as determined by Kirkland's
Journals and independent sources (see Appendix One). All three authors (Campisi, Graymont, and Guzzardo) suggest two major male factions (hunter-warriors and civil leaders) in competition with each other for political control of the tribe, a process controlled by tribal males. Females are ancillary to the Guzzardo's thesis: Oneida females, responsible for raising up chiefs and sachems, had their communal status directly tied to the fate of the civil leaders. As the agriculturists in Oneida society, women were also concerned with anything that would promote their traditional role.

Both Guzzardo and Graymont examine the Oneidas in the years immediately preceding the American Revolution and during the Revolution, while Campisi's thesis encompasses the entire period of Kirkland's mission (1766-1808). This necessitates dividing the collective biography into two broad time periods, one before and during the Revolution (1766-1783) and one after the Revolution (1784-1808). Thus any changes in the composition of mission members that might have occurred through time will be discernible.

The next step consisted of a comparison of the two categories of data: pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary data and post-Revolutionary data. Since all three authors locate their theses in a model of competing status groups in Oneida society, status was compared in both data groups. Status (chief, sachem, or hunter-warrior) was then crosstabulated with religion (Christian or pagan) and compared with the general Oneida population for the two groups. Any tendency for either status group's preference of religion was then made readily apparent. This exercise revealed that chiefs and sachems supported Kirkland's mission throughout its duration. This manipulation of the data will also revealed changes in religious preference of status groups over time. Although no support for Kirkland's mission was evident before the

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Revolution, the period after the Revolution revealed a level of support from hunter-warriors equal to that of the chiefs.

The final step was to analyze the results of these crosstabulations. If either status group gravitated disproportionally towards either Christianity or traditional Iroquois religion, an explanation accounting for the preference is in order. This explanation will incorporate Iroquois ethnological data and historical records in order to validate the findings.

Over the duration of Samuel Kirkland’s mission, Kirkland recorded the names of 110 Indians identifiable as Oneidas (Appendix One). Of this number, the overwhelming majority were males (101). Kirkland’s noticeable omission of women was possibly the result of his Euro-centrism: in the British colonial society with which he was accustomed, males dominated public spheres. He projected this European practice into his journals, assuming (erroneously) that only Oneida males must have controlled civil and religious matters. This source makes it impossible to examine gender, although Kirkland’s qualitative description of his mission indicates a large following of women. Any analyses of these data necessitate examining only the male population, since copious data exist only for the male members of Oneida society. Table 1 presents all males by status and religion.

Table 1.--Status and Religion of Oneida Males in Kirkland’s Mission, 1766-1808

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
<th>Unknown Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachem</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=101
The distribution of individuals in Table 1 reveals that members of certain status groups dominated Kirkland's mission. For those individuals whose status and religion is known, Table 2 lists, by status, the percentages in both religions.

Table 2.-- Percentage of Individuals by Status Group When Religion is Known, 1766-1808

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachems</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If one assumes that the men of unknown status were warriors and combines the civil leader status groups (sachems and warriors), Table 3 is the result.

Table 3.-- Percentage of Individuals by Combined Status Groups When Religion is Known, 1766-1808

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs &amp; Sachems</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors &amp; Others</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By examining the percentages in these Tables 2 and 3, the composition of male members in Samuel Kirkland's mission is readily apparent. Chiefs and sachems, when religion is known, gravitated towards Christianity in greater percentages than their male brethren. Even if all others are assumed to be warriors, the level of support from this group does not match that of the
chiefs and sachems. In light of demographic data from the period, chiefs and sachems were over-represented in the mission.

When the status of an individual is known, 73 percent of the noted Christians were chiefs or sachems. These figures hardly lend credence to the Campisi/Graymont thesis suggesting that Kirkland drew his supporters from the warrior ranks as a means of defying their civil leaders. In relation to known population figures for the Oneidas during this period, the figures represent a much greater percentage of chiefs and sachems among the Christian ranks than their expected composition of the total male Oneida population.

Precise Oneida demographic data are not available for the eighteenth century; however, data for the other Iroquois tribes exists. In October of 1789, Samuel Kirkland conducted a census of all of the remaining Iroquois (except the Oneidas and Mohawks) in the United States. The figures in Table 2 are taken from this census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senecas</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onondagas</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayugas</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscaroras</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this census, 74.2% of all individuals tabulated are adults (Table 4). The gender composition of adults is 48.5% male and 51.5% female (Table 4). Based upon

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the geographic proximity and cultural similarities of the other Iroquois tribes, one may assume, with a degree of certainty, that such demographic factors are similar for the Oneidas during this time period.

No Oneida demographic figures are available in this census. Kirkland may have tabulated them, but no record is included in his papers in the Hamilton College Burke Library. Any existing Kirkland document is housed in this collection, either in original or photocopy. Many of these documents are drafts, for the originals were forwarded to his mission sponsors in Scotland and discarded in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, other Oneida population estimates for the time period must be utilized. DeWitt Clinton, governor of New York State, conducted a census of the Oneidas in the United States and Canada in 1794. Clinton calculated the Oneida population to be 1,088, with 628 (57.72%) in the United States and 460 (42.28%) in Canada. These United States figures are in accord with a 1791 tabulation conducted by Samuel Kirkland, yielding a figure of 588 Oneidas in the United States. Applying the demographic percentages from other Iroquois tribes in 1789 to the Oneidas in the United States in 1794, the estimated adult population is 466, composed of 226 men and 240 women.

A number of contemporary observers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries recorded their estimates of the Oneida population. Throughout these records, these individuals noted the number of warriors ranging anywhere from a low of 70 to a high of 250. For nine population estimates during the years 1659-1763, the average number of warriors was 156, with a median of 180, of a total population of 1500. If the adult population and gender percentages of Kirkland’s 1789 census are

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57 Starna, “The Oneida Homeland in the Seventeenth Century,” 17.
59 Jack Campisi, “Ethnic Identity and Boundary Maintenance in Three Oneida Communities,” 35.
applied (74.2 percent adult, of which 48.5 percent are male), an estimated 29.3 percent of the adult male population were warriors.

These demographic figures may also be used to calculate the percentage of males who were chiefs. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Lewis Henry Morgan estimated the Seneca population to be 2,500, with a total of 70 chiefs. If this population exhibits similar demographic trends as the Iroquois at the end of the eighteenth century (72.4 percent adults, of which 48.5 percent were males), then 900 of these were adult males. Since 70 chiefs were known to exist, then 7.8 percent of the adult male population would be expected to be chiefs. This percentage provides an estimate of chiefs for the Oneida population, but it should be used with caution: the number of elected chiefs for the Senecas increased through time. Thus this 7.8 percent figure represents the maximum percentage of chiefs for the population.

Determining the percentage of sachems for the Oneidas is a more straightforward task. The Oneidas, as well as all other Iroquois tribes, had a permanently established number of sachems. For the Oneidas, this figure was 9. If 226 adult Oneida males resided in the United States after the Revolution, then 4 percent of the adult male population were sachems. This represents the maximum percentage of adult males who were sachems, for it assumes that none of the sachems moved with the Oneida population to Canada after the Revolution. The pre-Revolutionary figure may also be estimated. Using the demographic figures from the end of the eighteenth century (74.2 percent adults, of which 48.5 percent were males), then 533 were adult males. Therefore, 9 sachems represents 1.7 percent of the adult male population.

As is evident in Table 1, these figures do not correspond with the distribution of adult males recorded in Kirkland’s mission. In Kirkland’s mission, the percentage of Christians who were chiefs (31.2 percent) is four times higher than the estimated

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percentage of chiefs for the adult male population (7.8 percent). The number of sachems who were Christian is two and one-half times higher than the estimated percentage of sachems for the adult male population in the post-Revolution estimate. If the pre-Revolution estimate is invoked, the number of Christians who were sachems is five and three-quarters times higher than the estimated percentage of sachems for the adult male population. Finally, the number of warriors who were Christian is more than 50 percent lower than for the estimated percentage of warriors for the adult male population. For the duration of Kirkland’s mission (1766-1808), then, a disproportionate number of chiefs and sachems gravitated towards the Christian faith, while a considerably smaller number than expected of warriors embraced Christianity. These figures provide credence to Guzzardo’s thesis that Kirkland drew his support disproportionately from the civil leaders of society (sachems and chiefs) and simultaneously weaken the Campisi/Graymont thesis that Kirkland garnered support from the military element of society (warriors).

In order to test the validity of Graymont’s thesis, the sample population must be limited to those years before and during the American Revolution (since Graymont’s thesis encompasses the years immediately preceding and during the Revolution, while Campisi does not restrict his thesis to any particular time period). When the population is divided into a pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary-era sample, the sample in Table 5 is derived.
Table 5.-- Status and Religion of Oneida Males in Kirkland's Mission, 1766-1783

N=29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of individuals in Table 5 reveals that members of certain status groups dominated Kirkland's mission in this era. For those individuals whose status and religion is known, Table 6 lists, by status, the percentages in both religions.

Table 6.-- Percentage of Individuals by Status Group When Religion is Known, 1766-1783

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachems</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even when those of other status are combined with warriors (Table 7), chiefs and sachems still represent a higher percentage of Christians.
Table 7.-- Percentage of Individuals by Status Group When Religion is Known, 1766-1783

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs and Sachems</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors and Others</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is evident in Tables 5-7, chiefs and sachems were attracted to Kirkland's mission before the Revolutionary War. In fact, no identifiable warrior could be discovered throughout Kirkland's journals for the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary eras. When compared to the data of estimated percentages of warriors, sachems, and chiefs for the Oneidas, the preference of chiefs and sachems for the Christian religion is even more apparent. Table 8 lists these figures.

Table 8.-- Demographic Figure of Mission Indians and General Oneida Population, 1766-1783

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In Mission</th>
<th>In Tribe</th>
<th>Of Status Group Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachems</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is evident in Table 8, Kirkland drew support disproportionately from certain status groups. Considering the total population of chiefs and sachems for the tribe, Kirkland considered almost one-fourth to be Christians. A much lower percentage (2 percent) of the potential males of the general population were
Christians. No warriors were Christians.

Most of the Christian males in Kirkland's mission for the years 1766-1783 were either chiefs (52.9 percent) or sachems (11.8 percent). When compared to the data of estimated percentages of warriors, sachems, and chiefs for the Oneidas, the preference of chiefs and sachems for the Christian religion is even more apparent. Although the chief population is estimated to be, at a maximum, only 7.8 percent of the male Oneida population, 52.9 percent of the Christian males mentioned in Kirkland's journals for this time period are chiefs, a figure more than six times the expected value. The sachem class is also disproportionately in favor of Christianity. While the estimated percentage of sachems for the adult male population in the pre-Revolutionary era is 1.7 percent, 11.8 percent of the Christian males in the journal were sachems, a figure nearly seven times higher than expected. Thus in the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary subset of the population sample, an overwhelmingly high percentage (64.7 percent) of identified Christians were either chiefs or sachems, while no Christians recorded were warriors. These findings deny the validity of Graymont's thesis of warrior support for Kirkland's mission in the immediate pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary eras.

When the data are examined for the post-Revolutionary period, new trends are evident. Table 9 presents the sample population for the years 1784-1808.

**Table 9.-- Status and Religion of Oneida Males in Kirkland's Mission, 1784-1808**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachem</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=72
The distribution of individuals in Table 9 reveals that members of certain status groups dominated Kirkland’s mission in this period. For those individuals whose status and religion is known, Table 10 lists, by status, the percentages in both religions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Group</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachems</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is evident in Table 10, chiefs and sachems were attracted to Kirkland’s mission after the Revolutionary War. This period also witnessed an increase in following from warriors and other males of the tribe. Even if those of unknown status are combined with warriors, their level of support does not equal that of chiefs and sachems (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Group</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs and Sachems</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors and Others</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared to the data of estimated percentages of warriors, sachems, and chiefs for the Oneidas, the preference of chiefs and sachems for the Christian religion
is more apparent. Increased support from warriors and other males is also evident.

Table 12 lists these figures.

Table 12: Demographic Figure of Mission Indians and General Oneida

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population, 1784-1808</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachems</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warriors</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the post-Revolutionary era, Kirkland considered over half of Oneida sachems Christian and almost half of all chiefs likewise. Although raw numbers of warrior and other male support increased, they represented only a small percentage of potential converts.

These tables indicate some significant changes in the composition of Samuel Kirkland’s mission through time. During the years 1766-1783, the chief status group represents 52.9 percent of Christian Oneida males; however, for the years 1784-1808, the chief status group comprises 22.7 percent of the same subset, a considerable decrease. Contrastingly, for the years 1766-1783, no identifiable warriors who were Christian are present in Kirkland’s journals. For the years 1784-1808, the warrior status group is 22.7 percent of the Christian male sample, a raw percentage level of support equal to that of the Christian chief subset. Thus warrior support for Samuel Kirkland’s mission went from nothing before and during the American Revolution to nearly 25 percent of the mission.

For both the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary eras, a very high
percentage of males with an unknown status are present (27.6 percent for the pre-Revolutionary group, and 56.9 percent for the post-Revolutionary group). Kirkland did not comment on these individuals' societal role, and the author of this paper could locate no biographical evidence in any sources. Their presence in the sample is problematic, for their numbers placed in any other status group would markedly increase the percentage of Christians in that status group in the mission; however, the proportion of warriors who were Christian would not significantly increase their percentage of the total population of warriors. In both periods, Christianity was the religious preference for the greatest number of men with other status (75 percent in the pre-Revolutionary era and 48.8 percent in the post-Revolutionary era). Perhaps these were individuals who did not distinguish themselves in the hunter-warrior role and viewed an alliance with their traditional civil leaders in the Christian religion as the most prudent course of action.

Throughout the duration of the mission, Kirkland recorded a startlingly similar number of Christian males in relation to all Oneida males mentioned. Throughout the entire mission, Christians comprised 60.4 percent of all males denoted. For both time periods, a nearly identical percentage of Christian males were recorded: from 1766-1783, 58.6 percent of the Oneida males, while from 1784-1808, 61.1 percent of the males. Thus he was consistent with his documentation throughout the duration of his mission.

From this series of tables, one discerns that any characterization of Samuel Kirkland's mission must be restricted to precise temporal limits. When constrained to the years 1766-1783 and the status groups in which individuals are ascribed in the above tables, Graymont's thesis of warrior support immediately preceding and during the American Revolution fails to accurately explain the data. Over the same period, Guzzardo's thesis of support for the mission from civil leaders accounts for the data quite well. In testing Campisi's thesis, his assertion of warrior support is
erroneous for the years prior to and during the American Revolution; however, the composition of the mission changed through time and, in the post-Revolutionary period, Kirkland garnered warrior support. In order to account for this change over time, an explanation is in order.
Chapter Five
The Changing Nature of Samuel Kirkland's Mission

David Donald posits a theory of status anxiety to account for the appeal of radical abolitionist movements in nineteenth-century America.\(^{61}\) For Donald, "membership in a movement like abolitionism offered these young people a chance for a reassertion of their traditional values, an opportunity for association with others of their kind, and a possibility of achieving that self-fulfillment which should traditionally have been theirs as social leaders."\(^{62}\) This model can be extrapolated to the Oneidas in the period before and during the American Revolution. Enmeshed within a Euro-American economy based upon the fur trade, the hunter-warrior faction of the Oneidas reached unprecedented heights of status. As the procurers of the raw materials so coveted to European traders, hunting represented an occupation capable of producing not merely levels of subsistence but also with the economic power to obtain luxury goods. Warriors also benefited in this new Euro-American economy with an increase in communal status. Subjugation of neighboring peoples through warfare brought increased economic importance for hunter-warriors. Through their conquest of adjacent peoples, the Iroquois ensured that any furs reaching the New York-based fur trade, the colonies' center of the endeavor, would necessitate the Iroquois acting as middle men, thus reaping a profit on any native transaction with Europeans. Accordingly, "The Iroquois furnished practically all the pelts that were handled by traders of New York."\(^{63}\) Conquering of neighboring peoples also entitled the Iroquois to tributary payment, often provided in the forms of furs. Both activities increased


Iroquois profits, which resulted in an increased communal status of hunter-warriors.

This increased communal status could not be translated into political aspirations in which to further their cause. As noted earlier, even though individuals could be elevated to the chief level (and never to the hereditary sachem level unless born into a clan who retained this right), governmental action entailed a civil function designed to promote peace. Aggrandizement for the hunter-warrior element could not be accomplished in the civil governmental forum. This recent improvement in status created a situation in which hunter-warriors increasingly challenged the status of the Iroquois civil leaders and often ignored their statutes.

As Kirkland noted during the period before the Revolution, "the Warriours for the most part are uncontrouled by the Sachems." Increased communal status of warriors was eroding the traditional power base of the sachems and chiefs. The crisis became so monumental that "The Sachems... were afraid a separation would ensue between them & the warriours, & were ready to comply with their Terms, be what they would." The civil leaders of the Oneidas were attracted to Kirkland's mission, as is evidenced by the collective biography, as a desperate means of regaining waning status in the face of a radical alteration of the traditional Oneida social order.

Tied to the fate of the civil leaders was the role of the matrons. As mentioned earlier, clan matrons were responsible for appointing the clan's hereditary sachem, if the clan lineage contained one. In order to preserve their status in Oneida society, clan matrons had to ensure that the sachems retained their social status. This entailed casting their lot with the sachems, who supported Kirkland's mission. Throughout the entirety of Kirkland's journals, only about a dozen women are specifically mentioned by name. These individuals were either wives of important men of the community or held the position of matron (called "she-sachems" or "governesses" by Kirkland). While away from his mission on a diplomatic proceeding, Kirkland received a letter

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from the chiefs of the Oneida tribe which demonstrates support of Kirkland's mission from a union of chiefs and matrons: "...the female Governesses, or chief women, join their [the chiefs'] earnest request, that their Father will immediately visit them & let them hear his voice once more."\textsuperscript{66}

A denial of Kirkland's mission in the pre-Revolutionary era would be expected by the hunter-warrior element of Oneida society. For Kirkland, acceptance of Christianity entailed not only adoption of a new belief system but a new mode of material sustenance as well. In the earlier experiences of other New England Protestant missionaries, mere adoption of Christianity was not nearly enough:

> When the Indians had changed their homes, their community, their livelihood, their government, and their allegiance, they still had not done enough to satisfy the English reformers. Nothing less than total assimilation to white ways would fulfill the uncompromising criteria of "civilization," nothing less than renunciation of the last vestige of their former life.\textsuperscript{67}

With such a precedent set, Kirkland could expect no less than his forbearers. Kirkland emphasized agriculture over a hunting-warring existence, a position stressed in his plan for education of Oneida youth: "the scholars, & more particularly the Indian youth, may if possible early imbibe a habit of Industry & Love of Agriculture."\textsuperscript{68} With agriculture as the means of material sustenance for the Oneidas, the large tracts of land reserved for hunting would become superfluous and could be sold for white settlement. After the Revolution, Kirkland championed the cause of tribal allotment amongst the Oneida, replacing communal ownership of land with individual private ownership: "The last proposed plan (in substance) was this, viz. to divide their property, or set apart a certain portion of land to each family."\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{66} Pilkington, ed., \textit{Journals of Samuel Kirkland}, 143.
\textsuperscript{67} James Axtell, \textit{The Invasion Within}, 167.
\textsuperscript{68} Pilkington, ed., \textit{Journals of Samuel Kirkland}, 249.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid.}, 265.
reader should doubt Kirkland’s feelings on allotment, five years later Kirkland noted, “It is my opinion that there is more prospect of effecting a division of property among the Oneida’s than there has been for many years past.” 70

These prospects a hunter-warrior could most likely not bear. In Iroquois society, strict divisions of labor were drawn based on gender. Although men traditionally did perform the labor-intensive agricultural activities (felling trees, clearing fields, etc.), no Oneida hunter-warriors could be expected to participate in agricultural endeavors if familiar patterns of sustenance could be followed. Gender division of labor and customs in Iroquois society was so pervasive that when the Iroquois made the Delawares a tributary tribe, the Iroquois:

forbade them from ever after going out to war, divested them of all civil powers, and declared that they should henceforth be as women. This degradation they signified in the figurative way of putting upon them the Gakaah, or skirt of the female, and placing in their hands a corn-pounder, thus showing that their business ever after should be that of women. 71

As the Seneca, Onongua deahla, aptly remarked, conforming to white standards of material sustenance would cause Iroquois males to relinquish their proud hunter-warrior tradition and essentially become females under their cultural terms. Dr. Jeremy Belknap, a Congregationalist minister, noted the division of labor in ethnocentric terms: “observed several of the Oneida ladies preparing to go out into the fields with their hoes to work in the cool of the morning whilst their husbands smoke their pipes at home.” 72 While European observers viewed this division of labor as being slothful, the Oneidas were merely practicing ancient cultural traditions: women

70 Pilkington, ed., Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 314.
71 Morgan, League of the Iroquois, 338.
72 Jeremy Belknap and Jedidiah Morse, “Dr. Belknap’s Tour to Oneida, 1796,” in Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings (vol. 19, 1881-1882): 413.
controlled agricultural production and distribution of food. Hunter-warrior males could not be expected to practice agriculture if traditional venues were open.

After the Revolution, Samuel Kirkland gained some hunter-warrior support for his mission. Wallace describes post-Revolutionary hunter warriors as “deprived of their military ardor, reduced to political impotence, corrupted in their customs, disillusioned with their religion, stripped of their hunting land, and made to look depraved and contemptible in the eyes of their white and Indian neighbors.” With the defeat of the British in the Revolution, the military importance of the Iroquois rapidly waned. Once the most respected indigenous people in European North America’s military and economic endeavors, the conclusion of the Revolution made their position superfluous: British and French military threats to New York had greatly diminished, and eastern sources of furs were exhausted. White settler encroachment on Oneida lands ensued in a torrent after the Revolution, a situation frequently documented in Kirkland’s journals. The young Oneida chief, Captain John, noted this rapid white settlement in a speech to the students, trustees, and president of Dartmouth College, not far removed from the Iroquois homeland: “I have often heard of this great School, being set up in this place which but a little while ago was a wilderness, shaded with the tall pines, & now it has become like a field of light.” For Kirkland, such developments meant an improvement over native settlement. As he stated of the Oneida homeland in 1793, "That this place, which six years ago was in a state of nature, a mere wilderness should so suddenly appear like the garden of Eden, the fields around us whitening for harvest or clad with verdure."

The shattering effects of the American Revolution on Oneida society can not be

75 Pilkington, ed., Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 226.
76 Ibid., 258.
understated. With the covering of the Iroquois council fire in 1777, the Iroquois never rekindled the confederation that so firmly bound the Iroquois tribes. The Revolution impoverished the Oneidas who chose to side with the colonies and remain in their homeland during the Revolution.\textsuperscript{77} As a retaliation for Oneida participation in General Sullivan’s retaliatory march into the heart of Iroquoia, the Iroquois laid waste to the Oneida homeland in 1780.\textsuperscript{78} The Oneida’s Iroquois brethren burned Oneida houses and their church and destroyed standing crops and orchards. The result was that the Oneidas lived as refugees in Schenectady, New York for the duration of the Revolution and subsisted on government handouts.

After the Revolution, prosperity did not return to the Oneidas. As Kirkland relates of the time period, “The burden of their song is their poverty, and the present extreme scarcity of provisions.”\textsuperscript{79} One must not assume that this poverty was the result of women and children losing husbands and fathers in the Revolution; as Table 2 indicates, a rather well balanced sex ratio existed in the post-Revolutionary period. The ensuing poverty must be attributed to the disruption of traditional Iroquois patterns of food procurement.

Upon the conclusion of hostilities, on October 22, 1784, the newly formed United States signed the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Article II of the treaty states, “The Oneida and Tuscarora nations shall be secured in the possession of the lands on which they are settled.”\textsuperscript{80} Such was not to be the case for the Oneidas. By the beginning of

\textsuperscript{77} Guzzardo believes that Graymont overestimates the level of Oneida and Tuscarora support for the Colonial cause in the American Revolution. According to his examination of population figures for both tribes in Canada in 1778, almost one-half of the population sided with the Iroquois’ decision to ally with the British. Guzzardo, 283n.

\textsuperscript{78} Graymont acknowledges that the Oneidas were reluctant to fight their Iroquois brethren: “Only a few Indian warriors volunteered to accompany the Sullivan-Clinton expedition... Perhaps most of the Oneidas hesitated to attack the villages of their fellow Iroquois.” Graymont, “The Oneidas and the American Revolution,” in The Oneida Indian Experience, 39.

\textsuperscript{79} Pilkington, ed., Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 164.

\textsuperscript{80} Graymont, Iroquois in the American Revolution, Appendix A, 297.
the 1790s, the Oneidas, under intense pressure from the State of New York, relinquished all but a few parcels of their ancestral homeland. In protesting these land sales, Good Peter, an avowed Oneida Christian and convert of Kirkland, stated that the cessions “are very dear to Us; as from thence We derive the Rags which cover our Bodies.” Recent scholarship supports Good Peter’s exhortations. Taking into consideration deer populations, cull rates, and minimum numbers of hides necessary to clothe a person over the course of one year, Starna estimates the amount of hunting lands needed to supply clothing for an Iroquois population of 1,000 to be 1360 square miles. If these figures are adjusted to Samuel Kirkland’s Oneida population figure of 588 in 1791, then 800 square miles of hunting lands would be necessary to clothe the post-Revolution Oneida population.

In August of 1788, the New York Genesee Company, a group of land speculators, and the State of New York deceived the Oneidas into relinquishing five million acres of their land (most of their holdings) in exchange for “$2,000 cash, $2,000 in clothing, $1,000 in provisions, and $600 in annual rents.” Reduced to a few small reservations, the Oneidas could not possibly sustain themselves in traditional manners on their remaining lands. With no lands on which to hunt and no enemies to conduct warfare, the warrior element of the Oneidas lost its traditional societal role. One can see why Iroquois warriors in the Revolution “Knowing that fur traders were preferable to land-hungry colonists... abandoned their traditional neutrality policy and went to war against New York.”

83 Starna, “Aboriginal Title and Traditional Iroquois Land Use: An Anthropological Perspective,” in *Iroquois Land Claims*, 43-44.
84 Kirkland, “A Statement of the Number...”
85 Campisi, “From Stanwix to Canandaigua,” 59.
The effect of this alteration of traditional food procurement patterns and resulting loss in status was a general state of despair for the warriors (indeed, the Oneidas as a people). Many turned to alcohol. Samuel Kirkland often documented the powerful allure alcohol held over the Oneidas. In one poignant sermon, Kirkland preached to the Oneidas as follows:

Now, my dear Children continue to listen. I must tell you that so far as I have searched for the Cause, & examined into your lives & conduct, I believe the sin of Drunkeness, your excessive use & insatiable appetite for strong liquor, has been the out-let to most of your vices, & source of all your misery, together with a spirit of Jealousy, which seems to be interwoven with your very constitutions.

How often have I told you that the sin of Drunkeness, seldom if ever comes alone, but always followed by a dreary & dismal train; destructive to the peace of families, wounding to the Soul, and reproachful to God. 87

Kirkland’s exhortations did not fall upon deaf ears, for many of the Oneidas realized the negative effects alcohol rendered on their community. One such Oneida addressed Kirkland on the evils of intemperance and the reasons for his personal and people’s reliance upon it: “I believe I have injured myself by Rum. It is a murderer. I know not how I came to love drink for from my youth I was always averse to it as you well know. I believe the divisions, disturbances & unusual thirst for drink which has almost destroyed our town, first set me into it.”88 With their traditional role in society eradicated through land sales and subsequent white settlement and their society rife with division, alcohol temporarily assuaged warriors’ pain. For a more permanent uplift of their spirits and replenishment of their communal status, these warriors turned towards Christianity for renewal.

87 Pilkington, ed., Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 293.
88 Ibid., 344.
In assessing the appeal of Kirkland's mission to the Oneidas, all interpretations, including that which is presented in the preceding pages, attribute the allure of the mission as a means of exercising political aspirations or reviving waning political prestige. None of these theses treat the theological appeal of Kirkland's mission. An assessment of Kirkland's theology is necessary in order to demonstrate that Oneida status groups used Christianity as a vehicle for preserving waning prestige.

Kirkland was an adherent of an emotional brand of New Light theology in which an individual stood alone in judgment before his God. Thus the path to salvation was of an individual, not communal, nature. As an inheritor of Calvinistic tenets, Kirkland believed that salvation was given through the grace of God, not something earned through one's actions; however, each individual possessed the free will to act in accord with God's laws or in conjunction with Satan. Kirkland preached on this as follows: "God has put into your hands a happy opportunity to determine for yourselves... There are but two things, two portions set before us Life or death, the love & fear of God or the service of Satan & the wages of sin, which is death."

Services often lasted for hours, in which Kirkland would admonish his parishioners for their failures. As one Oneida man characterized Kirkland, "You are a good for nothing fellow, a Villain, a Mischief Maker, a servant of the devil... you... are the cause of it, by your continual talk of sin, sin, sin, as tho' there was nothing else in the World." The Oneidas were accustomed to religious ceremonies of great length and did not protest against the amount of time Kirkland devoted to services. As Kirkland noted of an Oneida chief's speech, "in former times, when their Fathers celebrated what they called a religious feast and dance in the pagan stile, they frequently followed it without intermission, for three day and night successively. And it would be a reproach to Jesus Christ, if they could not attend one whole day in seven to his

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Especially in winter, attending religious services could be physically agonizing. Space was always limited, and many had to endure haranguing while standing for hours: "there were more than fifty persons who could not get into the house & were obliged to stand without by the door & windows; although the day was severely cold with a high wind & frequent squalls of snow." With such severity of dogma and service conditions, one is amazed that Kirkland had any followers.

Kirkland's brand of spirituality was almost antithetical to traditional Oneida belief systems. While Oneida religion had no conception of hell or sin, Kirkland's preaching brought such ideas to the forefront. At the center of all Oneida religious rites was a need for communal renewal. In contrast, Kirkland's spirituality stressed the need for individuals to repent. Tied to the individuality of Kirkland's theology was the performance of sacraments. Kirkland refused to baptize children unless he believed the parents to be saved and distributed communion to only those who appeared to be in a state of God's grace. This refusal of baptism often angered the Oneidas, who often voiced their opinions on the subject. Tagawaron, an Oneida chief, spoke of Kirkland's policy on baptism:

you, Fa[ther], are not fond [of] baptiz[ing] our childn. We hv many Childn among us yet unbaptized, & some hv gone out [of] [life], unbaptized. This we view as confin[ing] the word [of] God, & shuttg up the way to Heavn, or makg it very narrow. Some amoung us hv been to appearance resolved [for] Baptism, but reflectg upon the long & severe examin[ation] you oblige them to pass thro', & that they were mr likely to be denied than accepted, hv been frightened back...  

Kirkland's refusal to baptize children of unregenerate parents often resulting in an Oneida desire to seek Anglican or Catholic missionaries as an alternative. As with

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most indigenous North American peoples, the Oneidas possessed an incorporative religion, capable of changing to meet current needs. Regardless of their level of faith in Christianity, Indians viewed baptism as a beneficial rite: “the natives came to believe that baptism, which was instituted to confer holiness upon the soul, often gave health to the body, as well as providing the best insurance against hellfire.”

With such differing ideas of religion, one must question the level of Oneida belief in his spirituality.

Such questions of Kirkland’s spirituality occurred throughout his tenure as minister to the Oneidas. Kirkland’s journals are replete with Oneida complaints about his theology. Confused by the disparate teachings of Kirkland’s Presbyterianism and Catholicism of missionaries in Canada, Tagawaron noted, “you white ppl. tell us two different Commands [of] God, as tho’ God has two minds,” and implored Kirkland to “tell us just what God has commanded & published as his very mind... tell us the very pure word [of] God without any mixture of human invent[ion].” This confusion over competing Christian theologies was never resolved in Kirkland’s lifetime.

Kirkland wrote of the Oneidas’ attraction to Catholicism on numerous occasions. Often, his comments reflect the sentiments presented in an early entry in his journals: “The contentions and disputes that perplexed us last year have subsided but it evidently appears that the five nations are tinged more or less with papistical notions, and have a peculiar relish for the Roman Catholic Religion.” As Axtell demonstrates, Catholic theology and practice were inherently more attractive to indigenous American peoples; Catholic theology allowed for personal determination of salvation (in a communal setting) and did not require major alterations of traditional lifestyles, while the highly liturgical Catholic ceremony mirrored the extravagant

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“Axtell, The Invasion Within, 123.
Ibid., 84.
Much to Kirkland's consternation, the Oneidas flirted with Catholicism (from contact with French Canadian clergy at the northern border of Oneida territory) throughout the duration of his mission, eventually causing a major schism in the tribe in the late 1780s. This resulted in three competing factions: a pagan party, Kirkland's Presbyterian party, and a Catholic party.

By 1799, even though Kirkland had devoted thirty-two years of service to the Oneidas, traditional Iroquois belief systems still held power over the Oneidas. In autumn of 1789, a young Mohawk from the Grand River Settlement of Iroquois in Ontario, Canada received a series of revelations from the Great Spirit. In these revelations, the Mohawk prophet received communications from the Great Spirit indicating that the problems that befell the Iroquois were due to their lack of worship in the preceding years: "Many were the evils which had come upon them in consequence of this neglect. Sickness, epidemic disorders, losses in war, unfruitful seasons, scanty crops, unpleasant days." To regain the favor of the Great Spirit, traditional religious celebrations were to be renewed "after a total neglect of them for more than thirty years." The belief system of the white missionaries was to be ignored, and the Oneidas were to embrace traditional beliefs and communal practices.

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97 Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 277-86.
98 Jesuit contacts with the Indians are recorded in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland: The Barrows Brothers Company, 1896-1901), 73 vols. Especially useful for Oneida research are vols. L1-LIII.
99 For a contemporary account of the emergence of Catholicism on the Oneida reservation during this period, see Franklin B. Hough, *Notices of Peter Penet, and of his Operations among the Oneida Indians, Including a Plan Prepared by him for the Government of that Tribe, Read Before the Albany Institute, January 23d, 1866,* (Lowville, New York: 1866). Although concerned with the time period of 1900-1960, Alex Ricciardelli's "Factionalism at Oneida, an Iroquois Community," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1961, creates a model of factionalism which "would apply to the Oneida of the historical past and the Northeast culture area in general," 287. A taxonomy of factionalism and model of its dynamics are presented, 252-87. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.'s *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1965) presents a model of competing Christian and Pagan factions within Indian tribal societies and applies this to Kirkland's mission, 130-132.
Thus some Oneidas conducted the White Dog ceremony, in which "the use of ardent spirits was forbidden for the term of ten days." Through the course of this revitalization movement, a syncretic religion emerged, blending elements of Christianity with traditional Oneida religion. Kirkland noted that the revival of traditional spirituality "was at length agreed upon by about one sixth part of the Nation, in addition to those who had professed no other religion than paganism." Contemporaneously, a similar movement, relayed by Handsome Lake, swept through Seneca country. Throughout these Iroquois revival movements of the turn of the century, even acknowledged Christians could be captivated by the heightened awareness of traditional cultural practices. Wallace notes this for the Oneidas when Handsome Lake's message was related. Thus one must doubt how firmly any Oneida adhered to Christianity.

In accord with Kirkland's Calvinistic spirituality, only the regenerate were allowed to receive sacraments. Although Kirkland often noted that upwards of three hundred or more Oneidas would attend religious services, only a handful Kirkland ever deemed to be in a state of grace and worthy of communion. Kirkland twice records the number and gender of those who received communion. In both instances, the number was minute and the majority were women: "Administered the Supper to 19. only 2 [men] & 17. females. Two had previously obtained leave to withdraw & one under censure." Such figures indicate that even though general interest in Christianity was reasonably high, Kirkland's true believers were always a small proportion of the population. This strengthens the position that Oneida males used Kirkland's Christianity as a means of preserving their status in the community.

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helped to bind a people who could have dispersed amongst white settlers, thus preserving male societal roles. Using Christianity as a vehicle to unite the community and preserve status groups, most males were not nearly as concerned with theological distinctions as with their roles in the community. The era immediately following Kirkland's death in 1808 provides further evidence for such a conclusion. Although Kirkland's Presbyterianism was available almost continuously for four decades, within a few years after his death, the Episcopal faith became the brand of Christianity embraced by the Oneidas. The Presbyterian religion amongst the Oneidas did not survive beyond the life of its minister.

What the Oneidas found in Samuel Kirkland, other than a means of preserving interest groups' status in their community, was an attentive friend who devoted a major portion of his life and material possessions in his service to the Oneidas: "I have had a long acquaintance with Indians, & they consider me as their friend."103 While neighboring white settlers coveted their lands, sold them spirituous liquors against tribal and state strictures, and generally disdained them as a people, Kirkland embraced the Oneidas with affection. Kirkland noted the Oneidas' awareness of the white man's contempt for his Indian brethren, writing of one stating that "he understood it had become a proverb among the white people, to say, 'as dirty as an Indian,' 'As lazy as an Indian,' 'As drunk as an Indian,' 'lie like Indians.' And we Indians can only say 'Cheat like white man.' And Poor Indians must bear it."104 In the first few years after the Revolution, when provisions were scarce for both the Oneidas and white settlers, Kirkland provided food (at his own expense) to those who pleaded for his assistance: "In less than four months I have nearly expended my whole years store of provisions, and in consequence of which I have been obliged to purchase more at an extravagant price."105 Such true friendship the Oneidas lacked in their times of

104 Ibid., 171.
105 Ibid., 167.
hardship after the Revolution.

Although Kirkland's brand of spirituality was nearly antithetical to the traditions of the Oneidas and its complementary plan of educational and agricultural reform threatened to extinguish the traditional societal role of the hunter-warrior, Kirkland often showed true compassion to the Oneidas and sometimes even a smattering of respect for their culture. In spite of his plea for Indian temperance, Kirkland relented and provided alcohol to Iroquois who were preparing to conduct a mourning ceremony for a deceased relative: "as it was but a gallon which was requested & the request accompanied with a promise that there should be no intoxication, that a select number only were invited to the feast solely for the purpose [of] administering comfort & peace to the departed spirit, I should see him supplied."106 Axtell documents repeated efforts of British civil authorities and missionaries to force Indians to adopt British styles of clothing.107 Although Kirkland was heir to the British colonial experience in New England and desired Indian adoption of British clothing, he demonstrated an understanding for the necessity of traditional clothing and even utilized it himself: "In the present mode of living and employments, a full English dress would be inconvenient & indeed unfavorable to modesty... I myself found it necessary and convenient for the first two years of my mission... to put on the Indian dress."108

Kirkland provided true friendship and compassion in an era in which the Oneidas most needed assistance. Although his brand of spirituality was contrary to traditional belief systems and eventually rejected, it filled a void created by nearly two centuries of warfare, depopulating disease, and increasing factionalism and blazed a trail for subsequent Christian proselytizing. Such friendship was necessary for the Oneidas to preserve themselves as a people in a rising tide of white settlement that

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106 Pilkington, ed., Journals of Samuel Kirkland, 221.
107 Axtell, The Invasion Within, 170-74.
threatened to eradicate the Oneida culture.
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Unpublished Sources


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_____. *Notices of Peter Penet, and of his Operations among the Oneida Indians, Including a Plan Prepared by him for the Government of that Tribe, Read Before the Albany Institute, January 23d, 1866.* Lowville, New York, 1866.


Bibliography


### Appendix One

**Pre-Revolutionary Male Sample (1766-1783)**

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## Appendix One

### Post Revolutionary Male Sample (1784-1808)

#### Christians

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## Appendix One

### Post Revolutionary Male Sample (1784-1808)

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Appendix One

Post Revolutionary Female Sample (1784-1808)

Christian
Ehsah
Elizabeth
Handsome Sally
Hannah
Loonwaugauletke
Margaret
Mrs. Poghkwaunauput
Niege
Waulee
Vita


After three years of employment in array of fields, he decided to pursue graduate work in history. Mr. Mitrano matriculated at Lehigh University in August, 1992 and fulfilled the requirements for the Master's of Arts in history in December, 1993.