

CHRISTIAN ISLAND: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF OSTEOLOGICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

Ethnohistorically, Christian Island is described as the last outpost of the Huron Indians in Ontario. It is the site of the final retreat from the Five Nations Iroquois in 1649-1650. The events which surround that retreat are well recorded by the French Jesuit priests but little anthropological research has been directed toward verifying the described events. The current paper considers this problem using archaeological and osteological data recovered from the island in 1968. The archaeological analysis demonstrates a strong relationship to late historic sites, particularly Fort St. Marie I. Using both univariate and multivariate analysis, the osteological sample appears to represent a heterogeneous population but with definite Huron affinities. The combined analyses suggest that the data recovered are most likely part of the 1649-1650 occupation.

RÉSUMÉ

Au point de vue de son histoire ethnique, l'île Christian est décrite comme le poste le plus avancé des Hurons en Ontario. C'est le lieu de leur retraite finale en 1649-1650 devant les Cinq Nations Iroquoises. Les événements relatifs à cette retraite sont fidèlement consignés par les jésuites français, cependant, il s'est fait peu de recherches

projectile point, two end scrapers, a polished slate adze, a slate pendant fragment, two bone awls, a worked raccoon baculum, a shell bead and a bird bone bead.

Trade items were recovered from all areas of the village (Tables 5 and 6). These items included a large number of square-headed nails and spikes of various sizes. The copper triangular projectile point forms all had a single small hole drilled in the centre which would suggest that they were used as pendants rather than points. Three religious objects were recovered: two rings and a medal (Pl. 4). The small medal had the letters *BIL* (Blessed Ignatius Loyola) in one corner, indicating that the medal had been struck before Loyola was canonized in 1662 (Kidd 1949:144).

Although many writers have suggested that European trade beads can be utilized for dating sites, little work has been done to establish a working chronology (Quimby 1966; Kidd and Kidd 1970). Therefore, the trade beads recovered from Christian Island are not of much value in establishing the date of use. The beads from Christian Island are not numerous, but they are similar to the types recorded at St. Marie I (Kidd 1949:140) and may suggest a late date for the site.

The Burial Area (BeHb-3)

Testing in the fall of 1967 located a large bone concentration containing both articulated and disarticulated human bones. It was on the basis of this knowledge that this part of the island was designated the burial area (Fig. 3). Further work in 1968 uncovered another large bone pit and four small burial pits. It would appear that this section of the island was used exclusively for burying, as there was very little village debris in or around the burials. The soil was very sandy, being the remains of an old shore line.

The two large burial pits (Fig. 3) were designated the *Bone Pit* and the *Wet Pit*. The *Bone Pit* (Pls. 1 and 2) is the pit which had been tested the previous fall; it proved to be the largest and richest burial pit. The original pit was roughly oval in outline at the surface with tapered sides toward the bottom. It has a total depth of two metres. The sandy soil made it impossible to maintain any wall higher than about one meter. Although a conscious effort was made to locate the original

TABLE 6

BEADS FROM BeHb-2

<u>Bead Type</u>	<u>Colour</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ia	Brick Red	6
Ia ⁹	Dark Blue	1
Ic	Brick Red	1
Ie	Bright Green	1
Ie	Dark Blue	2
IIa ³	Brick Red	16
IIa ⁶⁻⁸	Black	1
IIa	Dark Blue	1
IIa	Ivory	1
IVa	Black, Light Red, Brick Red	12
IVa	Light Blue, Dark Blue	2
IVb	Dark Blue, White Stripes	3
Modern (?)	Light Blue	1
		48
		48 TOTAL

TABLE 7

GRAVE GOODS FROM BeHb-3

<u>Object</u>	<u>Association</u>	<u>Total</u>
Pipe (Pottery)	<i>Wet Pit</i> , Burial 17	1
Knife (Iron)	Pit with four individuals, Feature 61	1
Buckle (Brass)	Pit with one disarticulated individual, Feature 62	1
Beaver Incisor	Feature 62	1
Bear Canine	Feature 62	1
Beads	Feature 62	4
		9
		9 TOTAL