Jesuit Rings from Fort Michilimackinac and Other European Contact Sues

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JESUIT RINGS FROM FORT MICHILIMACKINAC
AND OTHER EUROPEAN CONTACT SITES

by

Judith Ann Hauser

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Anthropology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April, 1982
An in-depth search of historical documentation and archaeological references indicates that there exists very little information on Jesuit rings. The primary references were statements in the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents which strongly suggest that Jesuit rings were used as religious items by missionaries in the area known as New France.

Cleland (1972) hypothesizes that changes in the design, quality, and production of the rings over a 60 year period indicate that the rings were used as trade items. Very little has been published on this subject but there is some support for this hypothesis.

The largest number of rings recovered from any one site was found at Fort Michilimackinac, which was a large fur trade center and a center of missionary activity. An analysis of the distribution of the rings found at Michilimackinac supports Cleland's hypothesis, strongly suggesting that they were indeed used as trade items.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals were instrumental in the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. William Cremin (major advisor), Dr. Donald P. Heldman, Staff Archaeologist of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, and Dr. Robert Maher for their constructive criticisms.

I would especially like to thank my parents, Robert and Zelda Hauser, and my sister, Lisa Hauser, for their constant encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my family for proofreading the drafts of my thesis.

Thanks also go to Chris Hogg for all of his help in accumulating the Jesuit rings from Michilimackinac; Dr. Richard Stamps, Department of Anthropology, Oakland University, for his help and for encouraging me as an undergraduate; Christine Bartz, Librarian, Cranbrook Institute of Science and my Father, Robert Hauser, for his help on this project and for drawing Figure 9.

Although all of these individuals contributed to this thesis, the responsibility for the conclusions presented is entirely mine.

Judith Ann Hauser
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jesuit rings or brass finger rings with cast or engraved designs have been recovered from European contact sites throughout the Upper Great Lakes and the Middle Mississippi Valley, the area once known as New France. The rings are decorated with heart shapes, letters, and other cast or engraved symbols.

Originally, they were used by the Jesuit missionaries as part of the strategy to spread Christianity among the Indians, as may be inferred from this passage in the Jesuit Relation of 1660-1670:

The one who can repeat, on Sunday, all that has been taught during the week, has for reward a string of colored glass beads, or two little glass tubes, or two brass rings (Thwaites 1959:251).

Moreover, the rings were also used as currency by the missionaries, as is indicated by the Jesuit Relation of 1638-1639:

...one person will bring us three ears of corn another six, some one else a squash; one will give us fish another some bread baked under the ashes. In this manner, we live happily and contentedly. As their presents, we give them little glass beads, rings, awls, small pocket knives, and colored beads; this is all our money (Thwaites 1959:159);

and the Jesuit Relation of 1640:

...Your Reverence must know, to begin with, that although these savages practice among themselves certain rules of hospitality, with us they do not. We are, therefore, obliged to carry with us a few little knives, awls, rings, needles, earrings, and such like things, to pay our hosts (Thwaites 1959:19).

Six gross of finger rings were requested in an invoice regarding
the Illinois missions and sent to Father Jean De Lamerville in 1702. However, no mention was made as to the specific purpose the rings were intended to serve (Kenton 1954:394).

There is also a high probability that the rings were sometimes part of a "gift-exchange" system not directly associated with religious activities. It was the practice of the French to exchange gifts with their Indian allies to maintain friendship. The gifts used were usually the same as those items used for trade. This hypothesis is discussed further in the chapters on religious and secular usage and symbolism.

Although they were introduced into New France by Jesuit missionaries, there are indeed indications that Jesuit rings were also used for trade. The indications are strong enough that archaeologists commonly refer to them as European trade items. However, the relative importance of Jesuit rings as religious and trade items is not entirely clear. To date, there has been little research concerning their role in the flow of trade through New France during the period of 1715 to 1781 when fur trading was at a high level of activity.

A large part of New France had an abundance of beaver and other animals. Beaver pelts were very much in demand in Europe for the hat industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fur traders, mostly French, spread through New France concurrently with the missionaries. Fort Michilimackinac was a major fur trade center as well as the site of a church and priest's house. Because of its strategic location at the point where two of the Great Lakes meet, it was an important place of interaction between Indians, traders,
and missionaries.

In addition to being the site from which the largest number of Jesuit rings have been recovered, archaeological research at Michilimackinac has determined the location of the church, priest's house, traders' houses, and other structures. These factors combine to make a study of the location of the Jesuit rings at Fort Michilimackinac in relation to the structures important with respect to expanding our knowledge of the usage of the rings. For example, if the rings are observed to cluster near the church and priest's house, it could be an indication of their usage as religious items. To the contrary, if they cluster near the fur traders’ houses, it could be an indication of their role in the fur trade. This study attempts to make such a determination.

Further, the design, quality, and manufacturing processes used to produce the rings found at Michilimackinac and other European contact sites are examined in an attempt to determine whether style drift could shed any further light on the relative importance of the rings in religious and trade endeavors. It has been established by Cleland (1972) that the rings changed from cast to engraved designs during their usage and, moreover, changed from clearly religious motifs to motifs that were somewhat questionable from a religious standpoint. The quality of manufacture also appears to deteriorate from relatively sharp cast images to more obscure engraved designs.

This study, therefore, seeks to relate the historical and archaeological documentation, the distribution of the rings in relationship to the structures at Fort Michilimackinac, and the stylistic
changes in the rings, themselves, over a period of 60 years, to increase our knowledge of Jesuit rings relative to their religious and secular usage.
CHAPTER II

PROBLEM

Jesuit rings are unique cultural artifacts because of their ambiguous nature. It is clear, primarily from references to the rings in the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents cited in the introduction, that the rings were originally used as religious rewards to the Indians — a use supported by the obviously religious motifs of the early cast rings. These same documents also indicate that the missionaries sometimes used the rings as currency. But, beyond this the documents are silent.

An in-depth study of the historical documents and archaeological sources reveals few references to non-religious use of the rings. For example, Brown (1943) states that cheap brass finger rings crudely engraved with small figures or devices appeared to be included in the stock of every trader during the French regime in Wisconsin (1634-1763). Cleland (1972) says that very little is known about the origin and distribution of Jesuit rings. He also says that although they seem to have been used primarily in religious contexts, it is possible or even probable that they may also have been used simply as trade items. Mason (1976) says that the rings were moving out of the sphere of religion; This suggests that they moved into a secular sphere that could possibly have included trade. Vergil Noble (personal communication) refers to 16 identifiable trade rings found during the 1977 excavation of Fort Ouiatenon, a small trading post.
established by the French in 1717 on the west bank of the Wabash river. Brain (1979:291) refers to a list describing trade goods requested by the Louisiana Colony on September 16, 1701. Under the heading of "Presents to be made to the Indians," the following passage is included, "... 2 gross signet rings at 40s a gross."

Donald Brown (personal communication) points out that Jesuit rings proliferated in the Seneca area from 1657 to 1672 - a period during which the Jesuits were not active in the area.

None of the above references includes evidence persuasive enough to clearly establish that the Jesuit rings were used as trade items. They do, however, collectively establish a need and desire for more research on the matter.

The proliferation of rings found at Fort Michilimackinac, combined with our knowledge of the structures, offers a unique opportunity to increase our knowledge of ring usage. By placing the rings near the traders' houses or the church and priest's house, we should have a clearer picture of their use. This, then, is the major thrust of this study. It will be supplemented, to the degree possible, by an examination of style drift.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The direction of my research is fourfold. The study will include: Historical documents and archaeological reports; data from European contact sites other than Fort Michilimackinac; the style drift indicated by the rings themselves; and a spatial analysis of the rings found at Fort Michilimackinac.

Historical Documents and Archaeological Reports

The historical documents most frequently used in researching the Jesuit missionaries of New France are the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (Kenton 1925; Thwaites 1959). These journals were written by the Jesuit missionaries and give detailed accounts of their lives and activities in New France. There are few direct references to rings in these journals. Most have been cited in the Introduction and Problem sections of this thesis. There is, however, one reference specifically regarding religious motifs present on the rings:

One must be provided in this country with medals; small crucifixes a finger in length, or smaller still; small brass crosses and brass rings, also some in which there is the figure of some saint, or the face of Jesus Christ or the Blessed Virgin... (Thwaites 1959:139).

Certainly this single reference to iconography on brass rings does not prove that these are the rings archaeologists refer to as
"Jesuit". However, as the narrative continues, it reveals the utilization of such items:

If I had the advantage possessed by some of our Fathers, who have annuities in France, I would with only a hundred francs make many conversions (Thwaites 1959:139).

These quotations provide insight into the manner in which the rings were used by the missionaries but do not indicate whether traders also used them.

Many archaeological reports referencing studies dealing directly or indirectly with Jesuit rings, archaeological excavations in the area of New France, Jesuit missionary activities, trade practices in New France, French relationships with Indians, and Indian social structure and practices were reviewed and evaluated. Again, very few references to Jesuit rings were found, and those which were found are generally inconclusive. Some of the more helpful studies were performed by Cleland (1972), Mason (1976) and Wood (1974).

Other European Contact Sites

In addition to analyzing the Jesuit rings from Michilimackinac, other European contact sites were utilized in this research. Rings have been found at early historic sites from the Great Lakes to the Lower Mississippi Valley. Data from the following sites were particularly helpful in this study: Haynes Bluff, Mississippi (Brain n.d.); Trudeau, Louisiana (Brain 1979); Minnesota Point, Wisconsin (Brown 1943); the Lasanen site (Cleland 1971); the Marquette Mission site, Michigan (Fitting 1976); the Guebert site, Illinois
(Good 1972); the Gilbert site, Texas (Jelks 1967); a Huron ossuary in Ontario (Kidd 1952); the site of the mission of Ste. Marie, Ontario (Kidd 1949); the Fletcher site, Michigan (Mainfort 1979); Rock Island, Wisconsin (Mason 1976); the Fatherland site, Mississippi (Neitzel 1965); the Gros Cap Cemetery site, Michigan (Nern and Cleland 1974; Quimby 1963); the Kolmer site, Illinois (Orser 1975); the Frank Bay site, Ontario (Ridley 1954); the Bell site, Wisconsin (Wittry 1963); and several Seneca sites in New York state evaluated by Wray and Schoff (1953).

These rings were analyzed to determine if their displacement/distribution relative to the type of site would provide any insight into their usage, and to ascertain if there existed a pattern relating the style of the rings to the type of site involved.

Style Drift

The concept of style drift (iconography changing through time) will be addressed using the rings from Michilimackinac and the research of other archaeologists (Cleland 1972; Mason 1976). Although some archaeologists have suggested meanings for the letters and symbols represented on the rings (Cleland 1972; Noel-Hume 1972), these inferences require testing.

Cleland believes that the designs on Jesuit rings can be traced, for example, to three prototypes which occurred prior to 1700. These rings had symbols of religious significance cast on round or oval plaques. The first prototype is designated as the L-heart. This design has a large "L" on the left of the plaque and a heart.
on the right. The second prototype is the double-M which bears an inverted "M" superimposed over an upright "M". The third prototype is designated as the "IHS". These three letters, which stand for the Latin words Isus Hominis Salvator, are placed on the center of the plaque. After 1700, the rings became increasingly poorer reproductions of the prototypes. These rings have engraved letters and designs on octagonal or heart shaped plaques.

The deterioration of the L-heart series rings can serve as an example of style drift and reduced quality. The prototype design, regardless of its many variations, always showed a large "L" on the left side and a heart at the right. Above and below the "L" and the heart were groups of three radiating spikes, and a rope-like border was placed around the plaque. The entire design was done in a craftsmanlike manner and cast in high relief (Cleland 1972). As time went on, similar rings with a less well defined "L" and hearts appeared. And the shape of the rings changed from round or oval to octagonal or heart-shaped. In later rings the heart disappears altogether, and the "L" became even less recognizable. Finally, the design evolved into a "T" or an "N" or rendered heart versions.

The workmanship also deteriorates in that rather than being cast in high relief, the design is poorly engraved and in many cases almost indistinguishable.

Cleland (1972) suggests that the rate of style drift on Jesuit rings probably increased because replications were done from previous replications instead of the prototypes which were no longer available to serve as models. It is possible that the engravers who
filled the orders for Jesuit rings, realizing that they would find their way into the hands of illiterate Indians, paid little attention to detail or workmanship.

Cleland's supposition that style drift is reflected in the designs on Jesuit rings will be further discussed in the section on symbolism.

Spatial Analysis

The primary thrust of this aspect of the study will be an examination of the distribution of rings at Michilimackinac. The fort has been selected for the reasons previously enumerated. That is, that this site was the largest fur trading center in the Upper Great Lakes region; that the largest sample of Jesuit rings in New France has been recovered from this fort; and that the locations of the various structures located within the fort are known. The distribution of rings at Michilimackinac will be plotted with the expectation being that we will observe the clustering of rings around the church and priest's house and around the French fur traders' homes, which should indicate their role as both religious and/or trade items.

Prior the the 1940s, archaeologists paid little attention to patterned behavior in sites and between sites (Willey and Sabloff 1974:148). However, they had always recognized that the artifacts were only one factor in the understanding of hominid behavior patterns. Mapping, for example, is an indication of this recognition. A whole paradigm has emerged since the 1940s stressing the relation-
ships of artifacts and other information available to archaeologists. This is embodied in the term spatial archaeology. Spatial analysis in archaeology can include settlement archaeology, site system analyses, regional studies, distribution mapping, density studies, within-site and within-structure analyses, and stratigraphic studies. The key is to search for, recognize, and analyze relationships between things as well as things themselves.

The importance of spatial analysis in archaeology became widely recognized when G. R. Willey’s Viru Valley study was published in 1953. The central objective of Willey’s study was to relate the locations of settlements, the types and locations of structures within the settlements, and the kinds and spacing of artifacts to infer socio-political organization over time. It was the first attempt at a settlement pattern approach in archaeology on such a large scale.

Binford et al (1970) were especially influential in bringing together the advances in ecology, geography, and sociology made in the 1940s and 1950s and developing a coherent program for archaeological research which could effectively deduce much about the social structures involved. An important element in this thinking was spatial analysis. In 1948, Taylor (1967) had advocated many of the concepts and ideas put forth by Binford. However, he had not emphasized the cultural evolutionary point of view to the same degree as Binford, held to a normative rather than a processual interpretation of culture, and did not advocate some of the techniques which are today part and parcel of spatial analysis.
Binford et al. (1970) demonstrated the value of spatial analysis in the Hatchery West Study. Using traditional methods for selecting sites, Hatchery West was observed to have a very low surface density of artifacts. However, by using spatial analysis, it was possible to recognize 15 examples of eight different kinds of activity areas. Within these activity areas were recognized three broad classes representing gross differences in depositional and cultural phases.

Heldman (1980) recently completed a study of the distribution of coins from Michilimackinac. One of the more important conclusions derived from this study is that their distribution and relationship to excavated buildings clearly shows status differentiation in the fort during the period of British rule.

This study of the distribution of Jesuit rings at Michilimackinac is patterned after Heldman's study of British coins. It is anticipated that the distribution of rings relative to the location of French structures will be helpful in determining their importance as religious and trade items.
CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Jesuit missionary crusade in New France (shown on Map I) is a story of zealous motivation in the face of constant hardship and, in many cases, martyrdom. Since New France was considered an extension of France, the missionaries knew that their task was to convert the new "French" subjects to Christianity.

Although Jesuit rings were not found at all of the mission sites in New France, it is important to know something of the time period during which the rings were used. The rings were given as religious rewards, and probably even as gifts of friendship or items of trade by the missionaries.

There follows a brief overview of the establishment of missions and the ardent spirituality which brought the Jesuits from France to undertake the conversion of souls in New France.

Although there was some prior missionary activity, this story really begins with Quebec. Quebec was founded in 1608 by Samuel Champlain to serve as a center of trade, missionary work and colonization in New France. Due to political squabbles in France, lack of financial support, and very restrictive rules sent from France, Quebec did not flourish as Champlain had hoped. In 1628 and 1629, the English, who were at war with France, made threatening moves on Quebec. Champlain knew that his garrison would not be able to defend Quebec, but by pure bluff he was able to hold the English off until
July, 1629, when he finally surrendered without a fight. Champlain and others were transported to England as captives, but when they arrived in Plymouth they learned that the English and French had concluded an armistice. After three years of negotiation, a treaty was signed which returned the conquered land to French control.

With Quebec restored to the French in 1632, it became the headquarters for the Jesuit missionaries. For the next 70 years missions were built throughout New France in spite of the resistance of the Iroquois and the many hardships suffered by the missionaries.

Tooker (1964) believes that the Iroquois Confederation was formed in the latter part of the sixteenth century so that the Iroquois could trade with both the Indians of the Atlantic Coast and the Europeans. After European contact, however, confederacies were formed to combat European intrusions.

The Iroquois had always been hostile to the Algonquins who occupied the territory between the Atlantic and the Mississippi, north to James Bay and south to Cape Hatteras. In 1609 Champlain committed France's allegiance to the Algonquins and Hurons because these tribes controlled the western trade routes. As a result, the Iroquois hostility toward the Huron-Algonquin alliance was extended to include the French.

The mission at Three Rivers flanked Quebec and was built to serve the Montagnais and Algonquin tribes. The location of this mission allowed easy access to the south by way of the Richelieu River to Lake Champlain, or west on the St. Lawrence to Lake Ontario. Two years later missions were established to the east on Cape Breton
Island and at St. Charles on the Gulf of St. Lawrence to serve two Algonquin tribes, the Abenakis and Micmacs.

Jean Nicolet, a French explorer, entered the Mackinac Straits area in 1634, becoming one of the first known Frenchmen to penetrate the interior of what today is Michigan. Seven years later, two Jesuits, Isaac Jogues, and Charles Raymbault, proceeded west to Sault Ste. Marie.

In 1637 a palisaded mission, Saint Joseph, was built four miles above Quebec. The name was later changed to Sillery after the patron who funded the project (Kennedy 1950:41). Within two years, a mission, Ste. Marie, located in present-day Midland, Ontario, was established for the Hurons who occupied the area between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay of Lake Huron. Although the Hurons belonged to the Iroquois group, they were allied with the Algonquins and did not generally participate in the Iroquois "terror". Nonetheless, the mission of Ste. Marie was plagued by Iroquois raids and finally had to be abandoned in 1649.

In 1640, a Montagnais mission was located at Tadoussac on the Saguenay River northeast of Quebec. Tadoussac had been a favorite trading station of the French and a gathering place for tribes of the Lower St. Lawrence. Three years later, Montreal was founded southeast of Quebec on the St. Lawrence River as a fur trading post and remained an important terminus until British hegemony. By the close of the decade all of the Huron missions had been destroyed by the Iroquois, and the remaining Hurons were forced to flee to the islands of Lake Huron and eastward to the Island of Orleans below Quebec.
Between 1650 and 1680 several more missions were formed. The Iroquois mission for the Onondaga was established in western New York after the Iroquois signed a peace treaty with the French. In 1655, however, the Iroquois again turned on the French and the Onondaga missionaries fled. In 1660, an Ottawa mission was established at Sault Ste. Marie, and ten years later there was established an Ottawa mission at St. Ignace and a Montagnais mission at Chicoutimi northwest of Quebec. The mission of Caughnawaga was built near Montreal as a haven for Iroquois converts, and St. Francis de Sales was located near Quebec to serve the Abenaki.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century Fort St. Joseph was built on the southeast shore of Lake Michigan and the mission of St. Francis Xavier was established at Michigamea in Illinois (Good 1972: 32). Soon after 1700, however, the British expansion from the south, the struggle for Hudson's Bay, and increased tribal warfare halted the founding of new Jesuit missions. Old missions were maintained and activity was restricted to the missionary's own post. Also, at the beginning of this century, New France was put under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Marine. As such, New France became a base of operations against the British, subject to the same slow and constraining rule as in France itself. Religious devotion also waned with the libertarianism of the eighteenth century.

Fort Michilimackinac was established by the French on the south shore of the Straits around 1715 to hinder competition from the Hudson's Bay Company and to function as a focal point for French fur
traders and their Indian allies. Residents of the fort included licensed traders, craftsmen, missionaries, and coureurs-de-bois or unlicensed traders. Local Ottawa and Ojibwa Indians also frequented the fort (Stone 1974:8). French occupation of Michilimackinac lasted from circa 1715 to 1761, and during this time the garrison was involved in little military activity. The fort served primarily as a fur trade center.

Archaeological evidence and historical documentation demonstrate that the fort went through several expansions and two rebuildings after the original settlement was established. The earliest settlement, known as DeLigneny's fort, was a small trading compound which dates from about 1715 to sometime in the 1730s (Heldman and Grange 1981:16-19). The second settlement resulted in a total rebuilding of the fort, and was the largest expansion in its history. This rebuilding occurred sometime in the 1730s, with another slight expansion taking place in 1744 (Ibid:19-27). The third and final rebuilding of Michilimackinac may be attributed to the British. Evidence suggests that the 1730s and 1744 French expansions may represent the condition of the fort when the French surrendered it to the British in 1761. The hexagonal pattern of the final fort can probably be attributed to the British after 1761 in order to accommodate additional military buildings (Ibid:29-36).

The earliest known map of Michilimackinac is that by Lotbiniere in 1749 (Gerin-Lajoie 1976), which illustrates the fort after the second rebuilding and expansion. The structures included within the fort at this time were a powder magazine, 45 houses, a church, the
house of the Jesuits, with an adjoining court and garden, and a forge. A parade ground was located in the center of the fort, and inside an enclosure (outwork) to the west of the fort stood an ice-house, bake oven and a "post of the meridian". Additionally, outside of the fort and to the south were located a stable and two bake ovens.

Several Jesuit missionaries presided at the fort throughout French occupation. Next to the Jesuit Church of Ste. Anne, built in approximately 1742-1743, stood the house, court and garden of the Jesuits. Stone (1974) lists the following as the known Jesuit missionaries who served at Michilimackinac:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Marest</td>
<td>1715-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Michel Massaiger</td>
<td>1723-1731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Baptiste Saint-Fe</td>
<td>1730s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Luc du Jaunay</td>
<td>1730-1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel Guignas</td>
<td>1737-1738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Baptiste de la Morinie</td>
<td>1741-1752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claude Godefroy Coquart</td>
<td>1741-1744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marin-Louis le Franc</td>
<td>1753-1761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 relinquished Newfoundland, Acadia and Hudson's Bay to British control. The establishment of British rule put a stop to the immigration of priests from France, and by 1763 only 21 Jesuit missionaries remained in Canada (Kennedy 1950:53).

In 1760, Montreal was surrendered to the British as a result of the French and Indian War. Michilimackinac was turned over to British forces in September of 1761. The Articles of Capitulation allowed the French inhabitants of Michilimackinac religious freedom and permission to retain property and goods (Stone 1974:9).

During the British period the fort became more of a military post because of an increase in troops. Previous French trade mono-
polies and restrictions were removed and the British licensing system permitted anyone to carry on trade from the following five posts in the Great Lakes area: Michilimackinac, Kaministiquia; La-Baye; Detroit; and Ouiatenon (Ibid:10).

On June 2, 1763, Fort Michilimackinac was attacked by a group of local Ojibwa as part of Pontiac's uprising. Twenty-two of the British were murdered. The fort was reoccupied by British forces in 1764, and for the next several years new buildings were constructed and old ones rebuilt (Heldman and Grange 1981:29-51).

In 1779, as a response to the American Revolution, it was decided that the fort would be rebuilt on Mackinac Island, providing a more defensible position. Fort Michilimackinac was dismantled and moved to the island during the winter of 1780-81.
CHAPTER V

MICHILIMACKINAC

Description

Fort Michilimackinac is located in Mackinaw City in the SE\(^\text{c}\), NE\(^\text{s}\), Section 12, Emmet County, Michigan, at the northernmost point of the lower peninsula. The fort is on the south shore of the Straits of Mackinac which connects Lake Huron and Lake Michigan (as shown on map 2 below).

MAP 2. The Straits of Mackinac
Being in close proximity to a number of islands, lakes and streams which were important in both military and fur trading activities, the site of the fort was quite strategic in terms of the expansion of New France. In Michigan's upper peninsula, north of the Straits, lies St. Ignace, where a French garrison called Fort de Buade was established in the late seventeenth century. Approximately eight miles northeast of Michilimackinac lies Mackinac Island, where the fort was relocated in 1781.

Excavation

The archaeological program at Michilimackinac began in 1959. For the first 10 years the program was conducted by the Curator of Anthropology at the Michigan State University Museum (Moreau S. Maxwell from 1959 through 1964; and Charles E. Cleland from 1965 to 1969).

Field directors during this period included Maxwell, Lewis R. Binford, Carl Jantzen, Ronald Vanderwal, Lyle M. Stone and James A. Brown. Site reports from these field seasons are included in the bibliography.

During that 10 year period archaeological and historical data were sufficient to allow for the reconstruction of several structures. The present stockade was reconstructed in 1960, and the following buildings were reconstructed in ensuing years: The Commanding Officer's house, the provisions storehouse, a British trader's house, a soldiers' barracks, the church, the priest's house and two French row houses.
From 1970 to 1973, excavations were directed by Stone outside of the stockade. The area excavated was in the proposed parking lot area east of the fort. Structures located in three areas clearly indicate that a major occupation, with both French and British components, existed outside of the fort. In 1974, under Stone's direction, excavation was begun on the powder magazine in the southeast corner of the fort. Excavation continued in 1975 under the direction of Donald P. Heldman (Heldman and Minnerly 1977). In the following year, two houses within the Southeast row house and one within the South-Southeast row house were excavated under Heldman's direction (Heldman 1977). During the 1977 season House 1 of the South-Southeast row house was excavated (Heldman 1978). During the 1978 and 1979 seasons, areas of the Rue de la Babillarde were excavated under the direction of Heldman and Roger T. Grange, Jr. (1981). The data analyzed in this paper were gathered from the 1959 through 1979 seasons. The author participated in the 1978 field season. The 1979 termination point was chosen because analyses and site reports are available only for this 20 year period of research at the fort.
CHAPTER VI

JESUIT RINGS

Distribution in New France and to the South

It is clear from the documents that missionaries originally used brass finger rings and other trinkets in New France as inducements in converting the Indians to Christianity. It has also been established that the Jesuits used such items as a form of currency in procuring food from the Indians. Both uses are mentioned in the Jesuit Relations (Thwaites 1959: Vol. XV, 159; Vol. XVIII, 19; Vol. LII, 251; Vol. LX, 139). The Jesuits probably brought the prototypes from France; however, it has not been precisely determined whether any of the rings were manufactured in New France during the period under consideration. No manufacturing centers have been found and no reference to the manufacture of rings in New France was uncovered in the historical research undertaken for this study.

Forges were used to manufacture iron implements at Tadoussac and at the Huron village in Detroit, but no mention is made of the manufacture of brass items in the Jesuit Relations (Kenton 1954:438-439, 464). Interestingly, a stone mold for casting lead crosses was found at St. Joseph (Quimby 1939:28) but, again, no sign of a means of manufacturing rings was uncovered.

The lack of archaeological and documentary evidence concerning the place of manufacture of these rings leads to some speculation.

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They might have been imported from France or, perhaps, manufactured in New France. Because of the number of Jesuit rings at Michilimackinac it might even be possible that this fort was a manufacturing center. However, this has not been established archaeologically. In fact, the area of the fort which has been excavated includes the blacksmith's shop and some of the French houses. No evidence of the manufacture of Jesuit rings as a cottage industry is indicated for the French dwellings or the forge.

Besides the forge and brick kiln activities at the fort several cottage industries have been suggested on the basis of archaeological excavation. A large quantity of sheet brass scraps which have been found in the fort are evidence that the metal was used extensively. Because sheet brass is easy to fashion, it was possible for inhabitants to make many items in their own houses. Patches were cut out to repair kettles and attached by punching holes and hammering in cone-shaped brass rivets. Other items fashioned from sheet brass are lugs for kettles, tinkling cones, projectile points, funnels, hinges, colanders, sieves, utensils for cleaning muskets, heel plates and buckles. Lead was also used in cottage industries. Musket balls were cast in lead, whizzers were made for children, religious crosses were fashioned and leaded windows were used by the wealthier inhabitants. Bone was used to make buttons, dice, awls, and harpoon points, and antler was used to fashion handles and combs. Micmac pipes were also a popular cottage industry with local inhabitants (Armour 1966).

Even though the sources(s) of rings has not been precisely de-
terminated, the eventual resting places of many of the rings are known. Table 1 shows the location for 302 Jesuit rings found in New France and the southern trade area. The table is arranged by site and in descending order of the number of rings found. Where the same number of rings were found at more than one site, they are arranged in alphabetical order.

It is immediately apparent that the two sites where the most rings were found were primarily trading posts, 47% of the rings coming from Michilimackinac and Fort St. Joseph. Ouiatenon, a French trading post on a major trade route between Canada and the Illinois settlement, yielded 17 Jesuit rings, and Minnesota Point, another trading post on Lake Superior in Wisconsin, was the source of seven rings. Altogether, these four sites, recognized as being primarily trading posts, account for 166 rings or 55% of the total indicated.

Rock Island, with 34 rings (Mason 1976), was an Indian village and cemetery in Wisconsin. Because of its location, a great number of missionaries, explorers, and traders passed through Rock Island on their various journeys westward of the Great Lakes country.

Not unexpectedly, a large number of rings were found in Indian burial grounds. Seven were found in two graves at Rock Island (Ibid); 30 in four of 19 burial pits at Lasanen (Cleland 1971); nine at Gros Cap (Nern and Cleland 1974); 15 at Fletcher (Mainfort 1979); and two at Ossossane (Kidd 1953), for a total of 55. The 15 rings found at Fletcher were found in three of the 108 graves. The nine rings found at Gros Cap by Quimby (1963) were from a single grave and were all associated with one hand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>CAST PRIMARY</th>
<th>ROUND/OVAL</th>
<th>ROUND/OVAL</th>
<th>OCTAGONAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michilimackinac, MI</td>
<td>1715-1781</td>
<td>Trading post</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Joseph, MI</td>
<td>1700-1780</td>
<td>Trading post</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Island, WI</td>
<td>1650-1770</td>
<td>Indian village</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasanen, MI</td>
<td>1670-1700</td>
<td>Algonquin</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell, WI</td>
<td>1680-1730</td>
<td>Fox village</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gros Cap, MI</td>
<td>Post-1670</td>
<td>Indian cemetery</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota Point, WI</td>
<td>1634-1763</td>
<td>Indian camp &amp;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trading post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, MI</td>
<td>1740-1770</td>
<td>Indian cemetery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatherland, MS</td>
<td>1682-1730</td>
<td>Natchez village</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Bay, ONT</td>
<td>1650-1670</td>
<td>Indian site</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolmer, IL</td>
<td>1720-1753</td>
<td>Michigamea village</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossossane, ONT</td>
<td>1624-1636</td>
<td>Huron ossuary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Banks, WI</td>
<td>1634-1763</td>
<td>Indian village</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert, TX</td>
<td>1760-1800</td>
<td>Indian village</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guebert, IL</td>
<td>1720-1736</td>
<td>Kaskaskia Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haynes Bluff, MS</td>
<td>1699-1735</td>
<td>Tunica-Yazoo site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquette Mission, MI</td>
<td>1671-1705</td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheboygan, WI</td>
<td>1634-1763</td>
<td>Indian site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trudeau, LA</td>
<td>1731-1764</td>
<td>Tunica site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The remainder of the rings were found at various Indian camps and villages, except one ring found at the Marquette Mission (Fitting 1976). Two of these sites, Guebert and Kolmer, were in Illinois. They were located on major trade routes between the Upper Great Lakes and the Lower Mississippi Valley.

Only a small number of Jesuit rings reached the South, even though the French trade extended into the lower valley as far as Louisiana and Texas after LaSalle opened the trade routes in the years 1682-1684. The principal fur traders of Upper Louisiana all lived in St. Louis (Phillips 1961) and, of course, the Mississippi River was the main trade route south. The French established trading posts at Natchitoches in 1714. Two rings were found at Fatherland, a Natchez village in Mississippi (Neitzel 1965), one at Gilbert in Texas (Jelks 1967), one at Haynes Bluff in Mississippi (Brain n.d.), and one at Trudeau in Louisiana (Brain 1979).

In summarizing this discussion on the distribution of rings, several points warrant comment. First, the rings were found in great abundance at sites that were primarily trade sites. This, in itself, is not conclusive, but coupled with the negligible number of rings found at mission sites, this observation does suggest a pattern. Second, the rings were found in large enough numbers at Indian sites, including cemeteries, to establish that they had importance to the Indians and were indicative of some sort of relationship between the French and the Indians. Third, the large number of rings found in New France compared to the few found in the southern trade area sup-
ports the view that they were a New France item. None of the above points represents new information. They are presented here because they clearly reflect the results of the research undertaken in this study and may be helpful in drawing conclusions.

A discussion of the methods of manufacture and various styles follows.

Manufacture, Design, and Symbolism

As shown in Table 1, the Jesuit rings were made with either cast or engraved designs. Further, the designs were round or oval, octagonal, or some form of heart-shape. The designs on the plaque vary from the likeness of a person holding a crucifix to clasped hands, stylized hearts, letters, and other more obscure designs.

Cleland (1972) and Mason (1976) have scrutinized these differences in style and manufacture and found that they represent style drift over a period of about 60 years beginning in approximately 1700. Cleland traces approximately 95% of the 241 rings from 14 sites in the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley areas to three prototypes, the L-heart series, the double-M series and the IHS series. The L-heart rings feature a capital L on the left of the plaque with a heart on the right. These rings are ambiguous in that the specific intent of the design is unknown. It has been suggested that the "L" may represent Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (Anonymous 1936). Alternatively, the letter may stand for Louis, the French king, with the plaque design suggesting allegiance to the king (Wood 1974). Two rings found in the state of New York with crowns above
the L-heart design tend to support the latter interpretation.

The sacred heart in Catholic doctrine may have occurred through stimulus diffusion from Mexico to France at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Kehoe 1979). The sacred heart represents Jesus' heart. The double-M motif stands for the Latin words Mater Misericordia or "Mother of Mercy". Some rings feature the superimposed letters "A" and "M" which may well stand for Ave Maria. The IHS on rings, as previously noted, may stand for Jesus Hominis Salvator or "Jesus Savior of Mankind". The letters are actually the first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus which is IHSOUS. This monogram represents the Society of Jesus, the official name of the Jesuit Order founded by Ignatius Loyola.

Cleland (1972) has concluded that the cast rings with round or oval plaques date between 1624 and 1700, and those rings with engraved designs or octagonal or heart-shaped plaques date between approximately 1700 and 1780. Mason (1976) dates octagonal and heart-shaped rings found at Rock Island to the period of 1670-1730, supporting an earlier date for heart-shaped rings than Cleland. Neither Cleland nor Mason make any inferences concerning the usage of the rings.

The following attempt to analyze the rings listed in Table 1, and relate them to the findings of Cleland and Mason is undertaken in hopes that it will shed light on their actual usage. It has already been established through historical documentation that the original intent of the rings was to help convert the Indians to Christianity. Cleland (1972) has also shown that the early rings
were well made items with high quality cast designs. As shown in Table 1 only three of 90 rings found at Michilimackinac were cast rings. One ring (Figure 1, Number 3) has a cast-raised relief of clasped hands surrounded by a rope-like border. Wood (1974) states that such rings were known as "Fede" rings and may have symbolized either a religious or secular pledge. The second cast ring (Figure 1, Number 2) depicts the figure of a man holding a cross. This does not fit into any of Cleland's series, but clearly suggests religious symbolism. The third specimen (Figure 1, Number 1) has a double-M in raised relief. Cleland terms the double-M ring a prototype and considers it very early and at least originally religious in nature. This ring was found in a context associated with the first stockade expansion of the 1730s, suggesting more overlap in time between the cast and engraved rings than proposed by Cleland.

All other rings from Michilimackinac have engraved designs. The matrix analysis summarized in Table 2 relates the shape of the plaques of these rings to the design. From this analysis it is immediately apparent that letter designs are predominant and that the octagonal shape is preferred. Nineteen of the 39 octagonal lettered rings (Figure 3, Numbers 1-18, 21) appear to fall into the L-heart progression and 20 (Figure 3, Numbers 19, 20, 22-39) fit into the IHS series as proposed by Cleland. None relate to the double-M progression. However, six of the 12 heart-shaped rings with letters were apparently of the double-M series (Figure 4, Numbers 1-5, 10), with only four being L-heart (Numbers 6-9) and two being IHS (Numbers 11-12).
Noel-Hume (1972) suggests that the letters on the rings could have been premarked with likely sets of customers' initials. Inasmuch as the letters on rings are often quite redundant or occur singularly, this hypothesis seems unlikely. Alternatively, Brown (personal communication) has suggested that the initials could represent trading partners; that is, traders may have given the rings to Indian allies as part of a "gift-exchange". This interpretation is thought to be more likely because the same rings given to allies could have been traded to others.

### TABLE 2. Engraved Rings at Michilimackinac

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAQUE SHAPE</th>
<th>Round/Oval</th>
<th>Octagonal</th>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamped Heart</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engraved Heart</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Images</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obliterated Design</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All 10 of the rings with stamped heart designs (Figure 5) are octagonal in shape and could possibly fit into the L-heart series of Cleland (1972) although the designs do not precisely match those presented in his paper. It is also possible that some of them could fit into the "Duel Heart" series suggested by Mason (1976). She suggests that the prototype for this series may have been a medal like that found at Michilimackinac which shows a pair of flaming hearts surmounted by a dove(?) with the words "Jesu(?)" and "Maria" on either side and drops of blood(?) below the hearts.

Next in order of frequency are rings with images other than letters or hearts. These include examples of all three plaque shapes. All of the heart-shaped rings with these images (Figure 8, Numbers 6-11) could fit into the L-heart series. The single round ring with a snowflake design (Figure 8, Number 2) and the three octagonal rings (Figure 8, Numbers 3-5) with less definite designs do not appear to be part of any of Cleland's progressions. However, the round ring (Figure 8, Number 1) with the crosshatching appears to be of the double-M series.

The remaining rings with recognizable designs have engraved hearts, three on round plaques (Figure 6) and one on a heart-shaped plaque (Figure 7). These examples fit nicely into the L-heart series.

One important observation stands out when examining the rings themselves. The designs on the cast rings are of very high quality. The detail is very fine and the likenesses are very clear. The
FIGURE 1. Cast Rings from Michilimackinac

FIGURE 2. Round and Oval Rings with Engraved Letters

FIGURE 3. Octagonal Rings with Engraved Letters

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FIGURE 3. Continued

FIGURE 4. Heart Shaped Rings with Engraved Letters

FIGURE 5. Octagonal Rings with Stamped Hearts

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FIGURE 6. Round and Oval Rings with Engraved Hearts

FIGURE 7. Heart Shaped Ring with Engraved Heart

FIGURE 8. Rings with Other Images
double-M, for example, is straight and well proportioned, and it can be inferred that these rings were relatively expensive compared to most of the inscribed rings. The inscribed rings, on the other hand, vary considerably in quality. None comes close to the quality of the cast rings, and some are very crude. Interestingly, the inscribed rings are almost without exception a little larger than the cast rings.

But what of the rings at the other sites listed in Table 1? Very little detailed description as to the quality or fineness of these rings was included in the reports. The available information is summarized in Table 1, this being the method of manufacture and the shape of the plaque. Probably the most interesting fact relative to the rings themselves is that their style appears to be consistent with Cleland's date of approximately 1700 as the transition point from cast to engraved after which time the style further progressed from round or oval to octagonal to heart-shaped. For example, 20 of the 52 rings found at St. Joseph were cast, and six were engraved with round or oval plaques. The remainder were octagonal or heart-shaped. Inasmuch as there was considerable activity at this site between LaSalle's arrival in 1682 and the end of the French period in 1780, the ring styles do seem to progress over time as Cleland hypothesized.

Lasanen, too, appears to fit the hypothesis, since the activity of missionaries and traders at this site falls into the 30 year period prior to 1700. Twenty-nine of the 30 rings found here were cast, and the other one was round with an inscribed plaque. Incidentally,
according to Cleland (1971), the Indians inhabiting the area served as middlemen in trade with other Indians, both to the north and south, during this period.

The rings found at Rock Island do not afford as clear a picture from the data presented in Table 1. However, Mason (1976) points out that 17 of the rings are associated with a 1670-1732 Potawatomi village, while at least 21 reflect a 1750-1770 Ottawa occupation. Mason also points out that round/oval shape was predominant in the 1670-1730 village components, but that three octagonal and four heart-shaped rings were also found. The later Ottawa occupation, on the other hand, had only one round/oval ring, one oblong example, two heart-shaped specimens, and 13 octagonal rings. These two levels at the same site represent an excellent case for style drift even though not in complete agreement with Cleland's hypothesis relative to the time period for each style of ring.

In spite of these data and the interesting inferences drawn from them, very little light is shed on the use of the rings. At best, they seem to lead to a certain amount of speculation, which is not altogether unhealthy. It is not unreasonable to assume, for example, that the reduction in quality and workmanship was coincident with an increase in production, and that this increase in production represented a change in the direction of their usage. The engraving on Jesuit rings may have changed through time because iconography, over a relatively short period of time, became meaningless to those who created the rings (Heldman n.d.). It is also possible that the initials on some rings represent trade partners and that the rings
with non-religious designs (Figure 8, Numbers 1-5) were used for secular reasons, either gift exchange or trade. This latter alternative explanation is the one favored by the author.

The Distribution of Rings at Michilimackinac

As previously mentioned, the primary thrust of this study is the analysis of the distribution of Jesuit rings at Michilimackinac. It is designed to compare the distribution of rings in the "religious" area of the fort with the distribution in the "secular" area. It was also decided, a priori, that the following limitations would apply:

1. That only excavated area within the boundaries of the second expansion of the fort in 1744 would be considered since this is the area primarily associated with the French occupation; and

2. that the excavated area would be divided into sections surrounding the structures based on the author's judgement of a reasonable division of space. Since the church and priest's house were close to row houses on two sides, this proved simply to be a matter of establishing the dividing lines equidistant between the religious structures and the row houses in both directions.

The excavated area and the location and size of each structure were determined from maps included in the 1978-1979 site report (Heldman and Grange 1981). These were plotted on a large map of the fort.

Seventy-four of the 90 rings found at the fort were also
plotted on the map, based on provenience information obtained from the site reports (Ibid; Stone 1974). The remaining rings were not plotted because their proveniences were not precise and, therefore, they were of no value in this distribution study.

Figure 9 shows the completed map. The sections to be compared are identified by the letters A, B, C, D, and E. The sizes of these sections and the structures associated with each, are provided in the Appendix. The three rings in section F and the one ring found in the square at the lower center of the fort are not considered because they could not be associated with any of the structures.

A cursory examination of Figure 9 suggests that the rings are randomly distributed across the fort. This is confirmed by the analysis presented in Table 3 below. As this comparison shows, 18% of the rings were found in the 20% of excavated area surrounding the church and priest's house, and the remaining 82% were found in the 80% of excavated area surrounding the French row houses.

**TABLE 3. Analysis of Jesuit Ring Distribution at Fort Michilimackinac**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Rings</th>
<th>Area Sq. M.</th>
<th>% Rings</th>
<th>% Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>*13</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B, C, D, E</td>
<td>*59</td>
<td>3073</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>*72</td>
<td>3839</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One ring on dividing line between sections A and B is counted for both sections.
FIGURE 9 DISTRIBUTION OF RINGS

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Examination of the rings/area excavated ratio for the five sections reveals that the greatest difference is between section B with a ratio of 0.58 and section D with 2.00. A chi-square test to determine the probability of this observation being due to chance results in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Observed Rings</th>
<th>Expected Rings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi^2 = \frac{(16-27.4)^2}{27.4} + \frac{(4-2.16)^2}{2.16} = 6.30
\]

This \( \chi^2 \) indicates that the difference in ratios could be expected to occur by chance less than 2.5% of the time. Examination of the area comprising the two sections suggests an explanation. The number of rings found varies inversely with the distance from a structure. Fully 66% of section D is occupied by row house, while the row houses present in section B occupy only 33% of the area excavated. The apparent significance of this observation is therefore nullified by the difference in the nature of the areas of the site being compared.

A discussion of each of the sections is in order to better understand the data. One of the earliest documents showing the locations of various structures is the Lotbiniere Map of 1749. This map must be considered quite accurate because Lotbiniere was equipped with a special sextant for survey work upon his arrival at
the fort. He had purchased the sextant from an artisan in Quebec when he was assigned by Governor de La Galissoniere to survey the route to Michilimackinac from Quebec. Further, his written report of the trip contained a number of references to the dimensions and layout of the fort. The excavations at Fort Michilimackinac place the structures of the French period very close to the locations shown on the map. And, importantly, from the standpoint of the distribution of the rings, the map shows that most of the area between the church and the priest's house, and a garden area behind the two structures, were enclosed by fences. In summary, most of the area covered by section A (Figure 9) was enclosed and clearly defined as being associated with religious activities. Since the area was enclosed it can be inferred that the rings found near the church and priest's house arrived there via the priests or someone admitted to that area by the priests.

Section B is an entirely different area. Both of the row houses in this area were built by the French in the 1730s and probably rebuilt in the 1760s. The majority of artifacts found in the Southwest Row House were associated with the French occupation, with secondary British deposits. Enclosed garden plots or courtyards were located along the south of all these houses except the most westerly one, where the house and courtyard were reversed. Porches were located on the side opposite the courtyards. The Jesuit rings were found mostly within the houses on the porch side. The South Southwest Row House consisted of seven adjoining houses with enclosed courtyards on the south side. Most of the artifacts found here were
British, indicating that at least some of these houses were occupied by the British after 1761 (Stone 1974). Five of the six Jesuit rings found here were within or on the courtyard side of the middle two houses.

Sections C and D both represent the easternmost ends of row houses that were in line with the Southwest and South Southwest Row Houses in B. All of these houses were located along a common street. All of the rings found in these two sections were either within the houses or courtyard areas except one which was found on the street side of House 1 of the South-Southeast Row House. No rings were found in the powder magazine. The magazine was built by the French in the 1730s and rebuilt by the British after 1761.

Section E differs from all of the others in that the Northwest Row House is not shown on Lotbiniere's map. It was apparently part of the early trading post known as Delignery's Fort which dates from about 1715 to the 1730s (Heldman and Grange 1981). The North Northwest Row House and the house identified as the Commanding Officer's Row House are shown on Lotbiniere's map. The westernmost house in the Commanding Officer's Row House is so called because the British commander apparently occupied it after 1761. Lotbiniere refers to this as the guard house so it probably housed soldiers during part or all of the French period. As shown in Figure 9, the rings found in section E were about equally divided between the vicinities of each of the three structures, with the greatest concentration near the southwest corner of the Commanding Officer's Row House.
probably the most significant point to be made with respect to
the distribution of rings at michilimackinac is that they were found
within or near every building excavated and in proportions within
the realm of chance.

considering that, except for those occupied by the military,
all of the row houses were occupied by traders, this would certainly
suggest that the rings recovered from these contexts were related to
trade. the proximity of a goodly number of the rings to the reli-
gious structures also suggests a religious role. however, one
could reason that if the rings were primarily religious in nature,
a proportionally much greater number would have been found near the
church and priest's house. the French traders operated from their
homes. it is very probable, that they stored their trade items in
their homes. heldman (1977) confirms this by listing a number of
other trade goods found in the southeast and south-southeast row
houses along with rings. since no central storage point for trade
is located in lotbiniere's map or mentioned in the documents, it can
be reasoned that most of the rings would be found near individual
storage areas and/or their use points. the structures mentioned
above, both religious and secular, would satisfy both these con-
ditions.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Brass finger rings with various plaque designs have been found at European contact sites throughout the Upper Great Lakes area and the Mississippi Valley. These rings are commonly referred to by archaeologists as Jesuit rings.

Historical documentation, primarily the Jesuit Relations, indicates that the rings originally had religious significance and, to some degree, were used as a form of currency by the Jesuit missionaries. There is also some evidence to the effect that they became trade items during the period under consideration. Brown (1943) states that the rings were in the stock of every fur trader in Wisconsin. Brain (1979) states that they were included in a list of trade goods destined for French traders in Louisiana, and D. Brown (personal communication) points out that the rings proliferated in the Seneca area of New York during the period of 1657-1672 when there was no missionary activity in the area.

It has been established that the rings were important to the Indians. They have been found in a number of Indian sites throughout the area and, more importantly, they were found in Indian cemeteries, but not in all graves or pits. Certainly they would not have been buried with the Indians if they didn't have significance.

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Further, it would be expected that if they were primarily of religious importance they would have been buried in all, or nearly all, of the graves in a given burial ground.

It is also important to note that most of the rings were found at trading posts in the areas of intensive beaver pelt trade, pointing to the possible trade importance of the rings.

There was a change in manufacture and a drift in the style of rings beginning about 1700. The later rings were inferior in quality and workmanship and indicate a change to mass production. This change in production suggests a change or at least an expansion of the use of the rings. Using Cleland's (1972) approximate dating, this change was coincident with a great expansion of the fur trade as witnessed by the building of major trading posts in the early 1700s. Also, the symbols and designs on the rings became less obviously religious in nature after 1700 (Cleland 1972; Mason 1976).

The distribution of rings at Michilimackinac strongly suggests that the rings were both secular and religious in nature. Noteworthy is the fact that four times as many rings were found within or near the traders' homes as were found in the area of the church and priest's house. The traders operated from their houses and almost certainly stored their trade items in their houses.

Conclusions

None of these pieces of information, taken separately, constitutes proof of the large-scale use of the rings in trade. However, taken together, they present a formidable body of evidence
strongly supporting such a usage. Individually, they are not con-
clusive, but collectively they are quite persuasive. The most com-
pelling single line of evidence is the distribution of rings at
Michilimackinac. Based on this body of evidence, the following
conclusions are warranted:
1. Jesuit rings had religious significance in New France. They
were one of the items used by the missionaries to convert
Indians, as described by the Jesuits themselves. The distribu-
tion of rings at Michilimackinac supports this conclusion be-
cause the rings were found near the church and priest's house
in about the same proportion as the area of space associated
with these structures.
2. Jesuit rings were used as trade items in New France especially
after about A.D. 1700. Available historical documentation,
together with the distribution of rings at Indian sites, in-
cluding burial grounds, the deterioration in quality associated
with an increase in production for secular use, and the concen-
tration of rings in and around the traders' row houses at
Michilimackinac all support this conclusion.
## APPENDIX

### TABLE 4. Jesuit Ring Distribution

**Fort Michilimackinac**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Rings</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>% Rings</th>
<th>% Area</th>
<th>% Rings</th>
<th>% Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>*13</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>*16</td>
<td>1468</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1347</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>*72</td>
<td>3840</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One ring counted for both sections A and B. Actual number of rings used was 28.
### TABLE 5. Area of Structures and Surrounding Environ in $m^2$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within Structure</th>
<th>0-3 M</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priest's house</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW row house</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW row house</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE row house</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSE row house</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW row house</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNW row house</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO row house</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The area of the land surrounding individual structures was determined by measuring 3.05 meters out from the perimeter of the buildings. The plots were truncated by the perimeter of the fort, the end of the excavated area, or by reaching half the distance between adjacent structures.
Anonymous

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Cleland, Charles


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South, Stanley

Stone, Lyle M.

Taylor, W. W.

Thomas, David Hurst

Thwaites, Reuben G. (Editor)

Tooker, Elisabeth
Willey, G. R.

Willey, G. R. and J. A. Sabloff

Wittry, Warren

Wood, Alice

Wray, C. F. and H. L. Schoff