

Tessouat (Le Borgne de L'île)
Grand Chief of the Kichesipirini
Algonquins and Their Struggle
for Control
By: A. Ernest Epp

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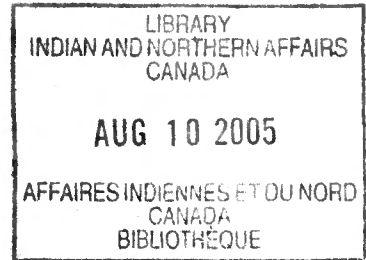
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TESSOUAT (LE BORGNE DE L'ILE)
GRAND CHIEF OF THE KICHESIPIRINI ALGONQUINS
AND THEIR STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL¹



The powerful position that the Kichesipirini Algonquins of Allumette Island occupied during the first half of the seventeenth century has been recognized by a number of historians. J. R. Miller referred in 1991 to "particularly well-situated groups" which "used their position and power to exact tolls from canoe brigades" and cited the painful lesson taught as late as 1650 to a Jesuit priest who failed to respect this reality.² James Axtell similarly spoke in 1985 of the fact that "anyone wishing to pass up or down the Ottawa [River] was obliged to pay his respects and a gratuity to the band's fearsome one-eyed sachem, Tessoüat, which required a long circuit south of the island."³ Also in 1985, Bruce G. Trigger described commercial and diplomatic contacts by the Kichesipirini Algonquin with Anadabijou, the principal Montagnais chief at Tadoussac, in 1603 and (unsuccessfully) with the Dutch at Fort Orange in 1635. Trigger also suggested that Nicholas de Vignau may not have been lying when he said that he knew the route to the Northern Sea. He suggested that it was possible that Samuel de Champlain was misled by a chief concerned to protect the sovereignty of his people and their territory.⁴

Certain high points have been noted, but the history of a First Nation as it sought to establish commercial relations and asserted its authority still remains to be written. The Kichesipirini Algonquins held a pivotal position on the Great River to the west (as it was long known), and they insisted on respect for their authority through many decades of early Canadian history. This assertion can be compared to the acts of European principalities in the mediaeval and early modern period, and it should be considered in the same way one would the efforts to control territory and people that led to the creation of the modern state

¹This paper is part of a project in the history of the Anishinabek, specifically an exploration of the frontiers of the various peoples known more commonly as the Ojibwa or Chippewa, Adowa or Ottawa, and Potawatomi. The Algonquin of the Ottawa Valley were their near neighbours on the first frontier the historian can study. This paper draws extensively on the sources in the endeavour to make them as familiar to the historian as the documents of the Canadian state are. Once these sources have become familiar, we shall be able to advance to a more general level of discussion.

²J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 37.

³James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Culture in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 45.

⁴Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 174, 227, and 179 respectively.

in Europe. The result was a nation that Father Gabriel Sagard described as "the most churlish, arrogant, and uncivil" of the peoples he had encountered—but also as the "best dressed and painted"!⁵ The efforts of the Kichesipirini Algonquins also involved an assertion of their own self-sufficiency in culture and religion against the approaches of the Jesuit missionaries. This paper explores the history of the Kichesipirini Algonquins on the basis of documents that are often more than just suggestive of the policies pursued by various chiefs. These chiefs understood the position of power they held, ensured that they were properly compensated for the permission they gave some nations (but not all) to cross their territories, and maintained the culture and religion of their people as long as they possibly could.

The development of ethnohistory as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Native history has immeasurably enriched our understanding of the history of the "New World." Insights into the life of various First Nations, which had been gained by anthropologists studying these societies over the past century, enabled historians to understand the accounts of traders and missionaries far better than they had ever done before. These same historical sources also provided anthropologists with rich information about many of the First Nations at a time when they were still far more sovereign in their actions than they could be in the era of Indian Act imperialism (and anthropological study!). The results can be seen at their best in two magnificent works by Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* and *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*.⁶ The former *magnum opus* provides a history of an important confederacy of First Nations with whom the French established intimate commercial and cultural relations during the first half of the seventeenth century. Tragically, this close contact became the basis for destructive attacks by the Iroquois of the Five Nations against the Huron confederacy, which had largely ceased to exist by 1650. The life of the Huron confederacy as a polity, if not the study of its history, was thus cut tragically short. The reason for these Iroquois attacks has been much debated, and Trigger's early proposals to place them into the context of trade rivalries amongst First Nations and European powers have not always been accepted.⁷ In the latter work of re-interpretation, he suggested that

⁵Father Gabriel Sagard, *Long Journey to the Huron Country*, ed. George M. Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 257.

⁶Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (2 vols.; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976); Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

⁷See Bruce G. Trigger, "The Mohawk-Mahican War (1624-28): The Establishment of a Pattern," *Canadian Historical Review* 52, no. 3 (September 1971): 276-86. Trigger's fascinating article, "The French Presence in Huronia: The Structure of Franco-Huron Relations in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (June 1968): 107-41, is not listed among his

“the Iroquois probably decided to obtain more furs by expanding their hunting territories northward to incorporate the southern perimeter of the Canadian Shield” and came to the conclusion, since “penetrating these regions was dangerous as long as the Hurons were settled astride the main route north,” that “the Hurons must be dispersed, an activity that would itself yield much booty in the form of furs and European trade goods.”⁸ The conduct of a war of dispersal thus became their goal, even though there had been some attempts at diplomacy between these Iroquoian confederacies preceding the destructive attacks of 1649.

The study of the First Nations as polities remains a challenge for the ethnohistorian as well as the historian. Anthropologists have tended to focus their attention on small-scale societies and judged political activity in terms of the governmental organizations that exist in modern industrial states.⁹ That is likely to remain the case even when the ethnohistorian thinks in terms of the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV. According to Trigger, Samuel de Champlain “attempted to treat [the Montagnais] as subjects of the French crown and as part of his projected colony” and “believed that Montagnais chiefs could control their followers and should be responsible to him for their actions.” Trigger went on to assert that Champlain “failed completely to understand the consensual nature of [N]ative political arrangements”; “because he viewed all power as being delegated from above, he did not comprehend that Indian leaders could not decide matters but had to secure individual consent from their followers as each new issue arose.” Trigger spoke with contempt of Champlain’s attempt in 1629 to persuade “the Montagnais and Algonkin leaders [to] form a council of band chiefs to regulate relations between themselves and the French.” Champlain’s desire to have them recognize “Chomina, a local Indian who was alcoholic and subservient to him, . . . as head of this council” may have been in the imperial tradition, but Champlain’s attempt to advance political organization was not without basis in the Aboriginal polity.¹⁰ As Trigger had already recognized, “In 1603, in order to affirm his friendship with the Kichesipirini Algonkins, who lived in the upper part of the Ottawa Valley, and to gain their support for a raid against the Mohawks, Anadabijou, the principal chief at Tadoussac, presented them with French axes, swords, kettles, ornaments, and dried food.” The Montagnais of the lower St. Lawrence River allowed these allies “the privilege of trading directly with the French at Tadoussac”; “in return, Anadabijou was recognized by his Indian allies as an intermediary between themselves and

publications in *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*; cf. 392.

⁸Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*, 261 and 262.

⁹Ruth Landes, *Ojibwa Sociology* (reprint of 1937 Columbia University Press ed.; New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1969), for example, devotes a four-page first chapter to “Political Organization” followed by twenty-six pages on “Kinship Organization” and twenty-two pages on “Gens Organization.”

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 198 and 199.

the French, a role from which he and his descendants derived considerable prestige.”¹¹

Study of the First Nations as polities requires both ethnohistorians and historians to discover another of the “worlds we have lost.”¹² Familiar with the bureaucracies of the industrial state, we assume that the absolute monarchs who supposedly prevailed in Europe three hundred years ago exercised all of the power to which authoritarian states aspired in the twentieth century. Surely the king gave his command and it was done! Surely his control of the institutions of government was total and pervasive! Surely he exercised an authority that was matched amongst the peoples of the “New World” only by such imperial states as the Aztec Empire! The liberal propaganda raised in this century against “totalitarian” states of the left and right has complicated the issue further. Very rarely do we appreciate the social dynamics that limit the dictator’s power, even in the midst of war.¹³ Aware of the means by which the governed give their consent in liberal democratic states, we are convinced that nothing of the sort existed amongst the First Nations of early Canada. Is it not possible, however, that a careful comparison of the pre-industrial state in Europe, even France, with the polity of the First Nations might point to more similarities than differences? Is it not likely that the diversity of provinces with their various notables and councils, over whom the monarchs of the Bourbon dynasty laboured to extend their rule, would resemble the First Nations of Canada more than these provinces resembled the French nation created by the revolution of 1789?

As J. F. Boshier has recently reminded us, it is useful to see the Canada of the French regime as part of the French kingdom. We need to realize that “the history of New France seen from a Canadian national standpoint is not unlike the history of Brittany or Gascony apart from the rest of France[;] . . . it has a character and charm of its own but lacks both depth and breadth, like any provincial history.”¹⁴ Boshier’s social history of the “Canada merchants” led him even further, to the “New Converts in France and New France [who] belonged to that Protestant society of merchants in Holland, Germany, England, and New England which dominated the North Atlantic [and who] were an intrusion of that

¹¹Ibid., 174.

¹²Cf. Peter Laslett, *The World we have lost* (London: Methuen and Company Limited, 1965), especially Chapter 8 “The Pattern of Authority and Our Political Heritage.”

¹³An interesting attempt to explain the fact that “Hitler left most of the old structure standing and added to it a proliferation of new state and party agencies, allowing lines of authority to become confused and areas of competency to overlap” was provided some time ago by Robert Koehl, “Feudal Aspects of National Socialism,” *American Political Science Review* 14 (1960): 921-33. The quotation is from the introduction to this article by Henry A. Turner, Jr., ed., *Nazism and the Third Reich* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 151.

¹⁴J. F. Boshier, *The Canada Merchants 1713-1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 9.

cosmopolitan republic of merchants which was a serious threat to the Roman Catholic Church and its ally, the Bourbon monarchy.” Eventually, he argued, the French government began in the 1730s to open the Canada trade to these Huguenot merchants and thus anticipated the transfer of its North American province and empire to the most powerful Protestant country of all, “the England that had recently become the greatest seapower and was soon to become the first modern industrial power.”¹⁵ Heirs as we all are of this British industrialization and the institutions (including governmental ones) that it produced, we face a great intellectual challenge in recovering the “world that we have lost” in the means of government and way of life that prevailed in both seventeenth-century France and the First Nations who lived in the watershed of the great river of Canada.¹⁶

The French merchants who dealt with representatives of these First Nations on the Ottawa river after 1610 came from a country in which the bureaucratized state had not yet been envisaged and kings were still struggling to assert their authority over provinces and peoples. The traditional historical interpretation long focused “the seventeenth century as France’s classical age” and saw this as epitomized in “the highly personal nature of French absolutism” achieved by Louis XIV. Raymond F. Keirstead points out, however, that a “dominant school of historiography in contemporary France has treated the traditional . . . interpretation with a scorn that is, indeed, monumental” and emphasized “society and economy at the expense of the state.” This school has taken us deeply into “the complex and particularistic world of French peasants, of grasping landlords, and of stubborn and independent provincial notables.” It has taught us that, “in this world of the *pays* (or region), the impersonal forces of nature were of far greater moment than the personal power of the crown.”¹⁷ The French historian who played a leading role in this re-interpretation, Roland Mousnier, “from his earliest work on the buying and selling of royal offices, to his more recent studies of peasant uprisings in the seventeenth century, . . . sought to delineate the social character of the French state and to explore the social basis of opposition to the crown.” Monarchs caught in the “conflict between the state and the dominant elites, and conflict among the elites as well[,] . . . played off one social group against the other in the old political game of divide and rule” and used “the venerable practice of selling offices in the royal service to wealthy families [as] one means of gaining support from the French bourgeoisie . . . [,] a convenient counterweight to the nobility.”¹⁸ This practice reached its most institutionalized form in “the Paulette, the name given to the

¹⁵Ibid., 10; the entry of the Huguenot merchants is discussed in Chapters 8 “The Protestant Refuge” and 9 “The Cosmopolitan Canada Trade (1743-1763).”

¹⁶The point is made for France in Raymond F. Keirstead’s “Introduction” to the collection of articles he edited as *State and Society in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: New Viewpoints, a Division of Franklin Watts, Inc., 1975), xi-xix.

¹⁷Ibid., xi.

¹⁸Ibid., xiv.

royal decree of 1604 which permitted an officer to bequeath his office to a surviving member of his family, even to his wife, provided that he paid annually to the crown a sum equal to one-sixtieth of the designated value of his office.”¹⁹

It was ironic that the Paulette should have been established during the reign of Henri IV who, with “his principal minister, the Duke of Sully, . . . consciously planned and began to implement changes that would have altered the nature of French government and society by undermining the provincial estates and through them the political position of the seigneurial nobility and urban aristocracy.” As J. Russell Major has stated:

The French Renaissance monarchy had been a decentralized state in which town councils and provincial estates had exercised numerous functions of government including, in many instances, the levying and collection of taxes. Even provincial governors and other royal officials had often been more the servants of their own interests or those of a powerful patron than of the king’s.

This particularism resulted in “provincial estates and towns [claiming] that they were unable to vote the taxes the king demanded, but then [giving] handsome presents to their governor, the secretary of state in charge of their province, and other royal officials to encourage them to persuade the king to accept their pleas of poverty.”²⁰ Major clarified the nature of the “Renaissance monarchy” by analysing the reaction to Sully’s efforts to strengthen the royal power in the province of Guyenne: “the town councils, provincial estates, and Estates General of Guyenne swung into action[,] . . . winning favorable decisions in the sovereign courts in Bordeaux and Toulouse, . . . securing the support of Marshall Ornano, the king’s lieutenant in Guyenne, and othe powerful personages, and . . . sending one deputation after another to king and council.” Marshall Ornano’s early efforts were recognized by the decision of “Bayonne, Condom, Agen, and perhaps other towns each [to give] Ornano a fine horse.”²¹ Such actions could only confirm Sully in his view “that the officials of the provincial estates and towns were using their position to exempt themselves and their friends from taxation and to vote handsome sums for those who attended the estates, served as deputies to court, or performed other duties that might seem to justify reward.”²²

The strength of the resistance in Guyenne demonstrated the limitations on French royal power at the beginning of the seventeenth century. As Major described the struggle, their

¹⁹John J. Hurt, “The Parlement of Brittany and the Crown, 1665-1675,” *French Historical Studies* 4 (1966): yyy

²⁰J. Russell Major, “Henry IV and Guyenne: A Study Concerning Origins of Royal Absolutism,” *French Historical Studies* 4 (1966): yyy; see also J. R. Major, “The Renaissance Monarchy: A Contribution to the Periodisation of History,” *Emory University Quarterly* 13 (1957): 112-24.

²¹Major, “Henry IV and Guyenne: A Study Concerning Origins of Royal Absolutism,” yyy.

²²*Ibid.*, yyy.

agent at the court, “their first *consul*, Julien de Camberforce, Sieur de Selves,” found “that Gilles de Maupeou, intendant of finances, was the only member of the council who supported Sully”; “Villeroy, the influential secretary for foreign affairs, Sillery who was soon to become keeper of the seals, Forget de Fresnes, the secretary of state in charge of Guyenne, and other councillors told Selves that they did not believe that the *élus* were necessary.”²³ Selves also “made the offer [of a substantial sum of money to persuade Henry to abandon the plan] to the king through the Countess of Moret, his current mistress[;] if she w[ere] successful, he warned the *consuls* . . ., it would be necessary to give her ‘a fine present’.” These efforts did not succeed, however, and “by 1609 [the *élus*] had begun to collect taxes in all of Guyenne.”²⁴ Major’s suggestion that, “had Henry IV lived or Sully remained the leading figure in the council, royal absolutism would have become firmly established in Guyenne,” gives even more significance to the fact that “Henry was removed from the scene by the hand of an assassin in May 1610 and Sully resigned his principal posts in January 1611.” For a few years more, during the regency of Marie de Medici, there was a “return to the consultative tradition of the Renaissance monarchy with its respect for the rights and privileges of towns, provinces, estates, and social classes.”²⁵

French royal absolutism was gradually, but only with great difficulty, imposed on the provinces of France during the reigns of the next two kings, Louis XIII and Louis XIV. As Major observed of Guyenne, “a few years after Louis XIII personally assumed the reins of government, he reverted to the policies of his father”; “in September 1621 he ordered that *élections* once more be created in Guyenne [and] as a result the Estates General soon died and the provincial estates slowly decayed and finally disappeared during the course of the century.” Similar efforts were made “between 1628 and 1630 when orders were issued creating *élections* in Dauphine, Burgundy, Languedoc, and Provence,” but the dismissal of Michel de Marillac on 10 November 1630 enabled “his victorious rival, Cardinal Richelieu, [to abandon] the effort to create an absolute monarchy and permitted Burgundy, Languedoc, and Provence to buy back their privileges just as the government of Marie de Medici had acceded to the wishes of Guyenne in 1611.” Major concluded that, “because of this act the dream of Henry IV and Sully was never fully realized [since] even Louis XIV permitted the provincial estates to function in some parts of France.”²⁶ Among the most important ministers of Louis XIV in enlarging the royal absolutism was Jean-Baptiste Colbert, whose efforts with regard to the *parlement* of Brittany have been described by John J. Hurt. Hurt observed that “Colbert also wanted a sweeping reform of

²³Ibid., yyy.

²⁴Ibid., yyy.

²⁵Ibid., yyy.

²⁶Ibid., yyy.

jurisprudence"; "one of the objectives of this legal reform would be to make justice 'free,' for Colbert could not tolerate the universal practice by magistrates of extracting payments known as *épices* from litigants in civil cases." Colbert might well wonder about a system in which what was "originally a present, such as sugared almonds, which the litigant presented as a courtesy to the judge who heard his case, . . . had been converted into money payments and made obligatory." The fact that "the magistrates derived most of their financial receipts in office from their *épices* and their valuable tax exemptions, salaries being of comparatively less value," is one more reminder of how far from the modern state France still was in the seventeenth century.²⁷ These European realities may also serve, rather ironically, to open our eyes to realities of the same time in First Nations such as the Kichesipirini Algonquins.

Our study of the Kichesipirini Algonquins starts at the beginning of the seventeenth century—and about the middle of the reign of Henry IV (1589-1610)! Tadoussac, at the mouth of the Saguenay River, was still the main centre of trade between Algonquian-speaking First Nations and various European traders. As Trigger has observed, the Montagnais of Tadoussac controlled trade there and, "as late as 1635, . . . killed a party of Montagnais from the interior who attempted to trade directly with the French."²⁸ Since "the Montagnais needed help to fight the Iroquois[,] their principal allies at the beginning of the seventeenth century were other Montagnais and Algonkin groups who lived . . . as far west as the Ottawa Valley." As noted at the beginning of this paper: "In 1603, in order to reaffirm his friendship with the Kichesipirini Algonkins, who lived in the upper part of the Ottawa Valley, and to gain their support for a raid against the Mohawks, Anadabijou, the principal chief at Tadoussac, presented them with French axes, swords, kettles, ornaments, and dried food." According to Trigger, "these allies also appear to have enjoyed the privilege of trading directly with the French at Tadoussac . . .," no small matter given the way the Montagnais treated even those of their own people who had not been given such a right.²⁹

Vivid records of the Kichesipirini Algonquins and their ruler, Tessoüat, were created at ten-year intervals (and more frequently during the second quarter century) between 1603 and 1653. The first of these records is to be found in Samuel de Champlain's *Des Sauvages*, which reported on his encounters at Tadoussac. Among the festivities he witnessed was a victory dance before "the Sagamore of the Algonquins, whose name was Besouat[sic], [and who] was seated before the said women and girls, between two poles, on which hung the scalps of their enemies:

Now after they had made good cheer, the Algonquins, one of the three nations, went

²⁷Hurt, "The Parlement of Brittany and the Crown, 1665-1675," yyy.

²⁸Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*, 173-74.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 174.

out of their lodges, and withdrew by themselves into an open place. Here they arranged all their women and girls side by side, and themselves stood behind, singing all in unison in the manner I have already described. Suddenly all the women and girls proceeded to cast off their mantles of skins, and stripped themselves stark naked, showing their privities, but retaining their ornaments of *matachias*, which are beads and braided cords made of porcupine quills, dyed of various colours. After they had made an end of their songs, they cried all with one voice, *Ho, ho, ho*; at the same instant all the women and girls covered themselves with their mantles, which were at their feet, and they had a short rest; then all at once beginning again to sing, they let fall their mantles as before. They do not stir from one spot when they dance, but make certain gestures and motions of the body, first lifting up one foot and then the other, and stamping upon the ground.

The Algonquin chief "sometimes . . . arose and moved away to address the Montagnais and Etchemins, saying to them: 'See how we rejoice for the victory which we have obtained over our enemies; ye must do the like, that we may be satisfied'." The next part of the ceremony involved "the grand Sagamore and all his companions cast[ing] off their mantles, being stark naked save their privities, which were covered with a small piece of skin, and each of them [taking] what seemed proper to him, such as *matachias*, tomahawks, swords, kettles, pieces of fat, moose flesh, seal; in a word, every one had a present, which they proceeded to give to the Algonquins." Champlain concluded, "After all these ceremonies the dance came to an end, and the Algonquins, both men and women, carried away their presents to their lodges."³⁰

The first recorded visit to the home of the Kichesipirini Algonquins, who lived on Morrison Island in the Ottawa River south of Allumette Island, was made by Samuel de Champlain in 1613. Determined to find the peoples and places that Nicholas de Vignau had described to him, Champlain was guided by "Quenongebin" or Kinouncheperini Algonquins who lived south of Allumette Island.³¹ Morrison Island proved difficult to reach, situated as it was beyond a long series of rapids on the Ottawa River and only a little less isolated on the route that Champlain and his party actually took for some distance through the forest: "We had much trouble in taking this route overland, being laden for my part alone with three arquebuses, an equal number of paddles, my cloak, and some small articles" but without any provisions.³² His guides knew the country, however, and travel became easier when they reached "a settlement of Indians who till the land and reap the

³⁰*The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. H. P. Biggar (6 vols.; Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922-36), 1:107-09 (emphasis added for the Algonquian term that became part of the French of Quebec). The gifts taken up by the Algonquins in this ceremony are the ones Trigger has described as coming from Anadabijou; it is clearly Trigger's inference that these items were given to the Algonquins by the Montagnais chief. I follow others in agreeing that the spelling, "Besouat," resulted from Champlain's misunderstanding of "Tessouiat." (Cf. *ibid.*, 108 n. 2).

³¹*The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. Biggar, 2:264.

³²*Ibid.*, 272-74.

maize” and whose chief was named Nibachis. This chief expressed his astonishment “that we had been able to pass the rapids and bad trails on the way to their country.” Clearly, Champlain “was everything the other Indians had told him.” After they had dined on fish, Champlain “told them [he] was in this country to assist them in their wars, and . . . wished to push on still farther to see other chiefs for the same purpose, at which they were glad, and promised to help [him].”³³ This reaction and the actions of the chief suggested that there were good relations between the people at the south end of Muskrat Lake and the Algonquins of Morrison Island: “Nibachis had two canoes fitted out to take [them] to see another chief named Tessoüat, who lived eight leagues from him on the shore of a large lake, through which passes the river we had left.” After they reached the end of Muskrat Lake, they “went a league to the north-east, through a very beautiful region along narrow beaten trails where the going is easy, and . . . arrived at the shore of this lake where stood Tessoüat’s encampment.” This chief “was with another neighbouring chief, and was much astonished at seeing me, telling us he thought I was a ghost, and that he could not believe his eyes” at seeing Champlain in his encampment.³⁴

They then went to the “island where stood their badly-made bark wigwams.”³⁵ The island was “strongly situated; for at its two ends and where the river enters the lake are troublesome rapids, whose rugged character makes it strong,” but it was “not liable to be flooded as are the other islands in the lake.” Champlain noted that the lake “abounds in fish, but the hunting is not very good.” If Champlain were not impressed by the shelters that the Algonquins had built “as [he] looked about the island, [he] noticed their cemeteries, and was filled with wonder at the sight of the tombs, in the form of shrines, made of pieces of wood, crossed at the top, and fixed upright in the ground three feet apart or thereabouts:

Above the cross-pieces they place a large piece of wood, and in front another standing upright, on which is carved rudely (as one might expect) the face of him or her who is there buried. If it is a man they put up a shield, a sword with a handle such as they use, a club, a bow and arrows; if it is a chief, he will have a bunch of feathers on his head and some other ornament or embellishment; if a child, they give him a bow and arrow; if a woman or girl, a kettle, an earthen pot, a wooden spoon, and a paddle. The largest tomb is six or seven feet long and four wide; the others smaller. They are painted yellow and red, with various decorations as fine as the carving. The dead man is buried in his beaver or other skin, whereof he made use in his life; and they place beside him all his valuables such as axes, knives, kettles and awls, so that these things may be of use to him in the land whither he goes; for they believe in the immortality of the souls . . . These carved tombs are only made for warriors; for other men they put

³³Ibid., 275-76.

³⁴Ibid., 277-78.

³⁵The French original, *où leurs Cabanes assez couvertes[sic] d[']escorces d'arbres*, describes the Algonquin structures in the summer time when the bark pieces need not cover the shelter frame tightly. The translation conveys a judgement not found in the original.

no more on the tombs than for women, as being useless people. Hence but few of these tombs are found amongst them.³⁶

The tombs would appear to have included at least one chief's burial site and a considerable number for leaders in war and (perhaps) their families. The carvings, added to the other furnishings, also indicated a certain quality of cultural development among the Kichesipirini Algonquin.

Champlain's initial discussions with the Algonquins focused on the establishment of a French settlement near the later site of Montreal. He recognized that his hosts had "made their encampment here in order to escape the incursions of their enemies." "Having noted the poorness of the soil" that they were cultivating, he "asked them how they could waste their time in cultivating such a poor region, seeing there was much better land which they left untilled and abandoned, as at the St. Louis rapids." "They replied that they were forced to do so, in order to be safe, and that the roughness of the region served as a bulwark against their enemies; but that if [he] would make a settlement of Frenchmen at the St. Louis rapids as [he] had promised, they would leave their abode to come and live near [the French], feeling assured that their enemies would do them no harm whilst [the French] were with them." Champlain then "told them that this year we should prepare wood and stone in order next year to build a fort and plough the land." Their response was "a great shout in sign of approval." Champlain concluded "this conference [by] invit[ing] all the chiefs and head-men among them to meet me on the following day on the mainland at the wigwam of Tessoüat, who was going to give a feast in my honour, and said that there I should announce to them my intentions." "They promised they would come, and immediately sent an invitation to their neighbours to be present."³⁷

The council began the next day with a banquet at Tessoüat's residence. Champlain described how "all the guests came, each with his wooden bowl and spoon, and sat down on the ground in Tessoüat's wigwam without observing any rank or ceremony." The chief then "served out to them a sort of hasty pudding, made of maize crushed between two stones, mixed with meat and fish, cut into little pieces, and all cooked together without salt[;] there was also meat roasted on coals and boiled fish separately, which he also distributed[, and] for drink we had fine clear water." Their host, "who gave the banquet, conversed with [them] without eating himself, as is their custom." Other customs governed the beginnings of the council. "When the banquet was over, the young men, who are not present at the speeches and council-meetings, and who during banquets remain at the doors of the wigwams, left." Following their departure, "each of those who had stayed began to fill his pipe, and several offered me theirs, and we spent a full half-hour at this ceremony, without uttering a word, as is their custom." Champlain, "after having

³⁶Ibid., 278-80.

³⁷Ibid., 278-79 and 280-81.

smoked plentifully during such a long silence, . . . explained to them through [his] interpreter, that the object of [his] journey was none other than to assure them of [his] affection, and of [his] desire to aid them in their wars, as [he] had done previously:

that what had hindered me from coming last year as I had promised, was that the king had employed me in other wars, but that he had now commanded me to visit them, and to reassure them regarding these things, and that for this purpose I had a number of men at the St. Louis rapids. I told them that I had come on a visit to their country to note the fertility of the soil, the lakes, rivers and sea, which they had told me were in their country, and that I desired to visit a nation, distant six days' march from them, called the Nebicerini, in order to invite them also to go on the war-path, and that for this purpose I asked them to give me four canoes, with eight [Algonquins] to take me to that region.

Champlain observed that, "since the Algonquins [were] not great friends of the Nebicerini, they seemed to listen to [him] with the greater attention." Following his speech, "they began again to smoke and to converse together quietly about [his] proposals."³⁸

Champlain's host had the honour of replying to his requests, as "Tessoüiat, on behalf of all, began to speak, saying that they had always realized that [Champlain] was more kindly disposed towards them than any other Frenchman they had seen, and that the proofs of it which they had experienced in the past, made it the more easy for them to believe in it for the future;

that [Champlain] had shown that [he] was indeed their friend by running so many risks to come and visit them, and to invite them to go on the war-path; and that all this forced them to bear as much good will towards me as to their own children. Nevertheless that last year [he] had failed to keep [his] promise and that two thousand [people] had come to the Rapids in the hope of finding [him], in order to go on the war-path and to make [him] gifts; that on not finding [him] they were much disappointed, thinking [he] was dead, as some had told them; moreover, that the French who were at the Rapids were unwilling to assist them in their wars, and some had even treated them badly, so that they had resolved among themselves not to come to the Rapids any more. This had forced them, since they did not expect to see [Champlain] again, to go on the war-path alone, and in fact twelve hundred of their men had done so. And since the greater part of their warriors were absent, they requested [him] to postpone the project until the following year, when they would make it known to all the tribes of that region. As for the four canoes for which [he] asked, they granted them . . . , but with much hesitation, [since] they viewed such an enterprise with considerable disfavour, on account of the toils [he w]ould undergo; that these tribes were sorcerers and had killed many of [his] people by magic and poisoning, and consequently were not considered friendly; moreover as regards war, [Champlain] had no need of them, for they had [little] courage.

This speech was only part of their effort to persuade Champlain to abandon his project, "whose one desire was to see these tribes, and to make friends with them, in order to view the northern sea [and who] made light of their difficulties, saying that it was not far to that

³⁸Ibid., 282-84.

country [of the Nebicerini]; that as for the bad portages, these could not be worse than those we had already passed, and that with respect to their spells, these would have no power to hurt me; for my God would preserve me from them; that I was also acquainted with their herbs, and should therefore take good care not to eat them; that I wished to make them all good friends and would make presents to the other tribes for that purpose, feeling sure that they would do something for me.”³⁹

Although these arguments appeared to have succeeded, so that “they granted [Champlain] the four canoes . . . and [he] forgot all [his] past troubles in the hope of seeing that much-desired sea,” he was distressed to have “Thomas my interpreter, who understands their language very well, [come] to tell me that the [Algonquins], after I had left them, had imagined that if I should undertake this journey, I should die, and they as well, and that they could not give me the canoes as they had promised, inasmuch as no one among them was willing to be my guide.” When Champlain realized that “they thought I should postpone the journey till the following year, when they would take me along with them, with a good escort to protect ourselves against these tribes, who are wicked people, in case they wished to do us harm,” he immediately “went off to find them, and told them that till then I had held them to be men and true to their word; but that now they were showing themselves children and liars, and that if they did not wish to keep their promises, they should not pretend to be my friends; however, if they felt inconvenienced by giving me four canoes, they could give me but two, and only four [companions].” The Algonquins’ reiteration of concern about “the difficulties of the portages, the number of rapids, the wickedness of those tribes, and . . . the fear they entertained of [his] destruction” provoked Champlain to declare “that I was sorry they showed themselves so little my friends, and that I should never have believed it [since] I had a youth . . . who had been in that country and had not noticed all the difficulties they represented, nor found those tribes as bad as they were saying.” Attention shifted abruptly to Nicholas de Vignau as “they . . . began to eye him, . . . particularly Tessoüat, the old chief, with whom he had wintered.”⁴⁰

The confrontation between Tessoüat and Nicholas focused on the veracity of Champlain’s companion. “The old chief, . . . calling him by name, said to him in his language, ‘Nicholas, is it true that you have said you had been in the Nebicerini country?’ “ “For a long time he remained silent; then he said to them in their language which he speaks a little, ‘Yes, I have been there.’ “ “Immediately they regarded him with anger, and rushed upon him, as if they would have eaten him or torn him asunder, shouting very loudly.” And Tessouat said to him,

You are a brazen liar; you know well that every night you slept alongside of me and

³⁹Ibid., 284-87.

⁴⁰Ibid., 287-89.

my children, and rose every morning at that place. If you visited those tribes, it was in your sleep. Why have you been so shamefaced as to tell lies to your chief, and so wicked as to wish to jeopardize his life amid so many dangers? You are a miserable wretch whom he ought to put to death more cruelly than we do our enemies. I am not surprised that he importuned us so much, having confidence in what you told him.

Champlain "at once said to [Nicholas] that he would have to make a reply to these people, and that since he had been in those parts, he must give evidence of this to convince me, and to get me out of the difficulty in which he had placed me; but he remained silent and quite abashed." Champlain "drew him aside from the [Algonquins], and begged him earnestly to tell me the truth; and said that if he had seen this sea, I would have the promised reward given to him, and that if he had not seen it, he must tell me so, without giving me any more worry." "Once more with oaths [Nicholas] affirmed all that he had before asserted, and said he would show [Champlain] this if these [Algonquins] would give [them] the canoes." When Thomas informed Champlain "that the [Algonquins] of the island were secretly sending a canoe to the Nebicerini to warn them of [his] arrival," Champlain "went to these [Algonquins] to tell them that that night I had dreamed that they were going to send a canoe to the Nebicerini without letting me know, at which I was astonished, seeing that they knew that I had wished to go there." The Algonquins responded "that [Champlain] did them great wrong, in that [he] had more confidence in a liar, who wanted to kill [him], than in so many honest chiefs, who were [his] friends, and held [his] life dear." Champlain "answered them that my man . . . had been in that region with one of Tessoüat's relations and had seen the sea, and the broken fragments of an English ship, together with eighty scalps in the possession of the Indians, and an English youth whom they kept prisoner and these they wished to present to me." The Algonquins, "on hearing this mention of the sea, the ships, the English scalps and the prisoner, . . . exclaimed more loudly than before that he was a liar[:] With one voice they declared that he should be put to death, or that he should name the person with whom he had gone there, and should state the lakes, rivers and trails by which he had passed." Nicholas responded "without flinching that he had forgotten the name of this Indian, although he had mentioned his name to [Champlain] more than twenty times, . . . even on the previous day." He had also described "the particulars of the country . . . in a paper which he had given to [Champlain]." When Champlain "had it interpreted to the Indians who questioned [Nicholas] regarding it[,] he made no reply, but his sullen silence manifested his wickedness." The final test of Nicholas de Vignau's veracity occurred after Champlain "sent for him to come before his companions; . . . informing him of all that had taken place, I told him that the time for dissimulation was past, and that he must tell me whether or not he had seen the things he had related; I said . . . that I had forgotten all that had happened, but that if I had to proceed farther, I should have him hanged and strangled without any mercy." "After some meditation [Nicholas] fell upon his knees and asked [Champlain] for pardon, declaring that all he had stated regarding this sea both in France and in this country was false; that he had

never seen it, and had never been farther than Tessoüat's village; and that he had related these things in order to return to Canada."⁴¹

This confession of Nicholas de Vignau's duplicity—which was confirmed by his telling the interpreter Thomas “that he had had no idea [Champlain] would undertake this expedition, on account of its dangers, . . . [and] hoped the journey would be put off for another year, while he on reaching France would secure a reward for his discovery”—left Champlain with no choice but to go “very sorrowfully . . . and inform . . . the [Algonquins] of the deceit of this liar, telling them that he had confessed the truth to me.” His hosts “were much pleased [at this] but reproached [Champlain] with having had so little confidence in them, who were chiefs, [his] friends, and men who always spoke the truth[:] ‘This very wicked liar must die, . . . do you not see that he wanted to kill you? Give him to us, and we promise you he will tell no more lies’.” Champlain was compelled, “because they were all howling to get at him, and their children still more loudly, [to forbid] them to do [Nicholas] any harm, and made them also keep their children from doing so, inasmuch as I wished to bring him back to the Rapids to show those gentlemen to whom he was to bring salt water.” He was left with “the regret of not having made better use of my time [for] had I proceeded in a different direction, relying upon the reports of the [Natives], I should then have made a beginning of an affair which must now be postponed until another time.”

Champlain now “invited the [Algonquins] to come to the St. Louis rapids where lay four ships loaded with all sorts of merchandise, and where they would receive good treatment[:] this invitation they made known to all their neighbours.” Before leaving the Algonquins of the Island, he “built a cross of white cedar, bearing the arms of France, which I set up in a prominent place on the shore of [Allumette L]ake, and begged the [Algonquins] to be kind enough to preserve it, as well as those they would find along the trails by which we had come[:] . . . if they broke these down, harm would befall them, but . . . if they preserved them, they would not be attacked by their enemies.” The Algonquins “promised . . . to do this, and [said] that [he] should find these again when he came back to their country.” Champlain “took leave of Tessoüat, the kind old chief, [on June 10] and made him some presents, promising him, if God kept me in good health, to come again in the following year, prepared to go on the war-path.” Tessoüat, for his part, “promised . . . to collect great numbers for that occasion, declaring that [Champlain] should see nothing but [Natives] and arms which would satisfy [their guest].” He also “let [Champlain] have his son to accompany” them as they “set off in forty canoes and passed by way of the river

⁴¹Ibid., 287-94; the account that Champlain provides of Nicholas de Vignau's several interrogations, including his eventual confession to his fellow Frenchmen as a group as well as to the interpreter Thomas in private makes it very doubtful that Trigger is right in the suggestion (noted earlier) that Vignau had travelled to James Bay and that Tessoüat misled Champlain.

[they] had left”; “on the way down [they] met with nine large canoes of Ouescharini, having in them forty strong and powerful men who were coming in response to the news they had received [and] also met with others, which altogether made sixty canoes, and twenty more which had set out in advance of [them], each canoe with a good deal of merchandise in it.”⁴² At the conclusion of the trading at the St. Louis Rapids, Champlain persuaded the Algonquins “to take with them two young men, in order to [maintain the friendship], learn something of their country, and place them under the obligation of coming back to us.” He had to assure them, however, that “these were honest, truthful youths, and that if they would not take these young men with them, they were not my friends.”⁴³

The next recorded visit to the Kichesipirini Algonquins occurred about a decade after Champlain was there, although Jean Nicolet apparently spent two years with them in the interim. As the *Jesuit Relation* of 1642-43 stated in an obituary following Nicolet’s death by drowning:

He came to New France in the year sixteen hundred and eighteen; and forasmuch as his nature and excellent memory inspired good hopes of him, he was sent to winter with the Island Algonquins, in order to learn their language. He tarried with them two years, alone of the French, and always joined the Barbarians in their excursions and journeys He accompanied four hundred Algonquins, who went during that time to make peace with the Hyroquois, which he successfully accomplished; and would to God that it had never been broken, for then we would not now be suffering the calamities which move us to groans After this treaty of peace, he went to live eight or nine years with the Algonquin Nipissiriniens, where he passed for one of that nation, taking part in the very frequent councils of those tribes, having his own separate cabin and household, and fishing and trading for himself.⁴⁴

It was significant that this very able young Frenchmen should have been sent initially to live with the Island Algonquins and should have joined in peacemaking efforts with them. It was interesting that he should then have gone to live with their neighbours to the west, the Nipissiriniens (also known as the “Bissiriens” and “Nebicerini”), and played such an active part in their affairs.

⁴²Ibid., 294-97. The fact that the party included women as well as men can be inferred from the fact that Champlain referred to “the women who decided to pass the night in their canoes, not feeling safe on land” after it was reported that “four enemy canoes” had been spotted (ibid., 300). “The women” seems, incidentally, a far better translation of “les femmes” than “the squaws” offered by the translator of Champlain’s “Fourth Voyage” in the Champlain Society series!

⁴³Ibid., 307. “Maintain the friendship” seems preferable to the phrase, “to keep the Indians friendly,” as a translation of “pour les entretenir en amitié.”

⁴⁴The *Jesuit Relations and Related Documents*, ed. Rueben G. Thwaites (71 vols.; Cincinnati : Burroughs, 1896-99), 23:275 and 277. [Cited hereafter as *Jesuit Relations*.]

Father Gabriel Sagard travelled to the Huron country without undue difficulty in 1623, but he was stopped for a time by the Island Algonquins on his return the next spring.⁴⁵ Approaching their country from the west, Sagard and his companions “were much hindered by great quagmires and deep mud and marsh, adjoining a small lake[;] we had to take exceptional pains in walking over them and step cunningly and lightly, because we expected at any moment to sink over our heads in the depths of the lake, which partly underlay this great stretch of black miry earth, for indeed it was shaking under our feet.” They made their “camp on a tongue of land where had been already lodged for four days a fine old Huron with two young boys [who] were awaiting company in order to pass through the country of the Honqueronons as far as to the place of barter.” Sagard explained the situation: “this tribe of Honqueronons is sly enough not to allow passage through their territory at the trading season to one canoe alone or two together, but likes to make them wait for one another and all pass like a fleet, in order to get the corn and flour cheaper, which they make the others barter for furs.”⁴⁶ Champlain had observed the “poorness of the soil” during his visit in 1613 and the fact that “their gardens . . . had in them only some pumpkins, beans, and peas like ours, which they are beginning to grow.”⁴⁷ Although Champlain had observed “maize . . . only four finger-breadths high” in early June at the neighbouring settlement of Nibachis, Tessoüat and his people had clearly found a means of drawing on the agricultural success of the Hurons in order to obtain a valuable food product for themselves.⁴⁸ The Kichesipirini Algonquins also forced the Huron fleets to transport these provisions to their territory.

In spite of the arrival “next morning [of] two more Huron canoes . . . [.] no one yet dared to risk a passage for fear of insult.” Sagard’s men “at last . . . advised [him] to declare [him]self master and captain of both canoes and of the goods in them, so that [they] might be able to pass freely and without fear, and escape the insults of this tribe without getting any harm done to [them].” Having travelled only a little distance, they spotted “two lodges of that tribe set up in a cove on a height, whence they could discover

⁴⁵Cf. Father Gabriel Sagard, *Long Journey to the Huron Country*, ed. George M. Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 63: “We passed through several tribes of savages but we only stayed a night with each, so as to proceed on our way without pause, except among the Epicerinys or Sorcerers, where we halted for two days, both to rest from the fatigue of the journey and to do some trading with that tribe.” Was he able to speak with Nicolet while they were there?

⁴⁶ Sagard, *Long Journey to the Huron Country*, ed. Wrong, 255.

⁴⁷*The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. Biggar, 2:280 and 287. Cf. *Woman’s Day Encyclopedia of Cookery*, ed. Eileen Tighe (12 vols.; New York: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1966), 8:1314: “Peas are an old vegetable [that] originated in western Asia . . . but they were not grown in Europe very widely before the middle of the 17th century, when they became most fashionable in gourmet circles.” It would appear that Tessoüat and his people were ahead, or at least abreast, of the gourmets of France!

⁴⁸*The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. Biggar, 2:276.

and observe far off those who were passing into their territory.” Sagard’s companions “thought they were sentinels posted to hinder them from passage [and] begged [him] earnestly to lie at full length in the canoe so as not to be seen by the sentinels [but able to] be a witness both with eyes and ears of the ill-treatment which they might receive.” As it happened, “the poor wretches said nothing . . . that could give offence [and] were thinking simply of their fishing and hunting.” Sagard’s party consequently journeyed on “and passed through a lake and after that along a river, which brought us to the village, leaving on our left the direct route to Quebec.” Their voyage had been such, however, that they “certainly were all but lost that day twice before reaching the village, in two very dangerous places, quite near the fall, which descends from the lake into the river, and then [they] landed at a place covered with strawberries on which [they] made [their] best meal, and gained new strength to complete [their] day’s journey [over] a distance of twenty leagues and more.” If Sagard’s measure of the distance they travelled that day is accurate (and a league were equivalent to about three miles), the territory of the Kichesipirini Algonquins would have extended on the west almost halfway to Lake Nipissing.⁴⁹

The arrival of Sagard’s party among the “gentry of the Island” involved all of the ironies his emotional description recognized:

O poor people, how deserving of pity you are! I confess that you are the most arrogant and churlish of all whom I have seen. Come now to meet us, and arrange your bands so as to await us quietly at the harbour where we must disembark, since we are unable to avoid the sight of you and your insolent behaviour, which, however, was restrained and checked at the mere voice of a poor Recollect friar of St. Francis. You took him for a captain, and he is nothing but a poor simple soldier and unworthy servant of Jesus Christ the Crucified, who died for us on the Cross. After having spoken with some [Algonquins] whom we found encamped in a place apart, we reached the landing-place, to which almost all the [Algonquins] of the town had already betaken themselves with great noise and shouting and were awaiting us with the intention of profiting by our provisions, our corn and flour. But when they were about to take possession of them and had already got into our canoes[,] I put a stop to it and made them step out of them (for my people did not dare to say a word), and ordered everything to be carried to the place where we intended to encamp, a little way off from them in order to avoid their too frequent visits. It cannot be doubted that these Honqueronons were not so simple as not to see clearly (as indeed they strongly objected to us) that for me to call myself the master of the corn and meal was a pretext devised and invented by my people to be free from their violence and importunity. But they had to be patient and curb their opposition, for they did not dare attack me or cause me annoyance for fear of reprisals in the Quebec trading, to which they go every year.

Sagard’s description of the Kichesipirini Algonquins is particularly significant when one remembers that he had just spent a winter among the Hurons and also met Nipissiriniens, “High Hairs” (later known as Ottawas), and Neutrals: “I say truly, and I again repeat, that this tribe is the most churlish, arrogant, and uncivil of all whom I have seen; but they are

⁴⁹Sagard, *Long Journey to the Huron Country*, ed. Wrong, 255-56.

also the best clothed and painted and the most prettily bedecked of any, as if finery were inseparably combined and bound up with arrogance, vanity, and pride, as the nursing mother of all the rest of the vices and sins." Sagard was particularly impressed by "the young women and girls [who] seem to be nymphs, so well dressed are they, and hinds, so fleet of foot are they."⁵⁰

The description of the two days that Sagard and his party spent among the Kichesipirini Algonquins tells us a good deal about that community. They "spent the rest of the day in setting up [their] camp, and again all the next day [they] waited for the arrival of the interpreter Brulé, who [had] asked [them] to stay until he could accompany them." They "found so little politeness and acceptance in that village that no one would trade [them] a single piece of fish except at an exorbitant price," although Sagard realized that this might be "out of resentment at our not having allowed our corn and meal to be freely at [the Algonquins'] disposal, as they had promised themselves." Sagard and his party had fortunately "encamped in a place very suitable for fishing, where [they] caught a quantity of fish of various kinds, which [they] ate, boiled and roasted." While they were enjoying this supper, the villagers "did not omit to come and look at [them] in front of [their] camp, yet rather to be a check on [them] and to make fun of [them] than to learn about their salvation; for at the meal-time, seeing [Sagard] blow at [his] *sagamité*, because it was too hot, they laughed at it, not bearing in mind that neither [his] tongue nor [his] palate was iron-clad and hardened like theirs." The diet of Sagard and his Huron companions also included "a strayed dog, which [his people] caught and killed with blows of their tomahawks," and "an eagle that [his] people had taken from its nest" before they headed away down the Ottawa River.⁵¹

The following ten years were difficult ones for the Kichesipirini Algonquins and the French. Before the decade of the 1620s ended, Canada had fallen into the hands of the English and Champlain had been taken captive. The capitulation of 19 July 1629 to the Kirke brothers had been preceded by more than a year of threats, and Champlain's desire to strengthen his alliances with the First Nations has to be put into that context. Champlain asserted that Chomina was "a true and faithful friend of the French" and that, "among all the [Natives], we had not known one who was a more faithful and serviceable friend than Chomina, who kept us informed of all the plots that were being hatched amongst the [Native people]; consequently I treated him very well, knowing him to be truly loyal."⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid., 256-58; cf. the description of the Petite Nation or Ouescarini Algonquins: "I call them good, because I did indeed find them good and of a disposition so obliging, kind, and civil that I was highly edified and pleased with them" (ibid., 263).

⁵¹Ibid., 258-59.

⁵²*The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, ed. Biggar, 6:5 and 7-8.

This was the reason Champlain “sent for Chomina to come and see [him] at the Fort, and after having talked to him a long time on the subject of the good will he had always shown towards the French, . . . promis[ed] him that on the arrival of the ships [Champlain w]ould have him elected Captain; all the chiefs would then make much of him; he would be considered as a Frenchman among [them]; he would receive rewards and handsome presents in the future, which would give him credit and honour amongst all those of his own nation . . . and to increase his credit no council or business would take place among them to which he would not be called as holding the first rank in his nation” Chomina’s responded to these promises and the suggestion that “what he had to do was to follow [Champlain’s] advice and, if he had done well in the past, to do still better,” according to Champlain, with a “promise to do [so] with great demonstrations of joy [and the assurance] that nothing would take place among the [Native people] to the disadvantage of the French without his informing [the French] of it.”⁵³ One of the terms of the understanding between them was that Chomina “should be recognized as captain among the [First Nations] pending the arrival of [the French] vessels, when the proper ceremonies of reception would be performed, and that he should have as adjuncts, to act as his council in lesser rank, Erouachy[, from the Quebec area], Batiscan, chief of the [Trois-Rivières] country, and Le Borgne, who was a good [Native] and a man of intelligence, with one other man known to us, in order to decide upon matters after mutual consultation.”⁵⁴ The council that followed this agreement did not fully support Chomina’s initial assertion “that he had repeated to his companions in council what [Champlain] had proposed to him [and] that all had been greatly pleased,” but Erouachy did say at the end: “Be assured, while awaiting the fulfilment of our promises, that we shall carry them out, and that, on the arrival of the vessels, Chomina will be received as Chief.”⁵⁵ Although the English capture prevented the fulfilment of that promise, Champlain’s war-born effort to organize the First Nations in the French interest appeared to have succeeded.⁵⁶

Father le Jeune’s *Relation* of 1633 described the resumption of French and Jesuit activities after Canada was returned to France in 1632. He mentioned, for example, that, “on the first day of April, the Captain of the Algonquains[sic] came to see [them] and brought [them] some Elk meat, his people having killed ten of these animals.” While in conversation with him, Father le Jeune “asked him if he had a son, and if he would not give him to us to be educated.” When the chief inquired “how many children I wanted” and the priest “told him that in time [he] should perhaps feed twenty[,] he was astonished.” He then “replied that he would be very glad to give us his son, but that his wife did not

⁵³Ibid., 8-9.

⁵⁴Ibid., 13.

⁵⁵Ibid., 16 and 23.

⁵⁶This interpretation calls into question Trigger’s strictures on Champlain’s action cited at the beginning of this paper.

wish to do so." Father le Jeune observed that "the women have great power here[;] a man may promise you something, and if he does not keep his promise, he thinks he is sufficiently excused when he tells you that his wife did not wish it." The chief's response included the statement, "I know enough to instruct my son; I shall teach him to make speeches," hinting clearly at the father's ambitions for his son. The chief also accepted some religious instruction.⁵⁷ One evening, the Jesuits "received news that a little [Native] was sick unto death" and went to the cabin "to inform the [Algonquins] why they had come so late; that it was because they loved that little child, and that if it died without baptism it would not go to Heaven [but,] on the contrary, if it were baptized it would be forever happy." The priests "asked also if its parents would not be very glad to have it baptized [and] the mother answered that for her part she would be very well pleased, but that her husband was drunk, and asleep in another Cabin." Pursuing the issue, they "asked, if the child should die, if they would not bring it to [their] house and bury it in [their] Cemetery; and, if it were restored to health, if they would not give it to us to be educated." The mother's response was "that her son was dead; but that if he revived, as soon as he should be able to walk (for he was only about six months old) she would bring him to us." An Algonquin having run "to the father of the child and roused him," the latter also said, "Though I am drunk, I understand very well all that thou sayest; go and bid those Fathers baptize my son; I know very well that they will do him no harm; if he dies, it is because he is mortal; if he recovers, I shall give him to them to be educated." Only after the baptism had occurred did Father Le Jeune learn that "the Father of the child was called 'la Grenouille' [the Frog]" whom he knew well "as a Captain of the Algonquains"—and the person who had "asked [him] how many children [he] wanted, and who was astonished when [he] replied that [they] wanted twenty, and many more when [they] should be able to feed them".⁵⁸

The re-establishment of commercial and diplomatic relations between the French and the various First Nations proved to be quite a complex matter. Champlain hoped to have the Hurons as his main trade partners, but he was forced to send a Huron named "Louys de Sainte Foy, surnamed by the Savages Amantacha" to persuade them to travel to Quebec. According to Father le Jeune: "The Island Savages and the Algonquains, two tribes on the route from the Hurons to [Quebec], had tried to dissuade them from visiting the French, saying we would do them a bad turn on account of the death of one Bruslé, whom they had killed; and that an Algonquain of the [P]etite [N]ation, having killed a Frenchman, had been taken prisoner, and had been condemned to death; also that the same would be done to some Huron." It was the Jesuit Superior's opinion that "their design was to get all the merchandise from these Hurons at a very low price, in order afterwards to come

⁵⁷*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 5:179 and 181.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 227, 229, and 231.

themselves and trade it, with either the French or the English.” The bitterness of his last words could be inferred from his stating that “Louys Amantacha” had assured the Hurons of “the good feeling of the French toward them”; “as [for] Brusle, who had been murdered, he was not looked upon as a Frenchman, because he had left his nation and gone over to the service of the English.” The diplomacy of Louys Amantacha succeeded in bringing “six or seven hundred Hurons” to Quebec for a profitable season of trading and negotiating.⁵⁹

A key point in the negotiations between the French and the Hurons involved the Jesuit desire to establish a mission in the Huron country. In the presence of Fathers le Jeune and Brebeuf at the 1633 council, “Sieur de Champlain made his presents, which corresponded in value to those that the Hurons had made him.” As Father le Jeune well knew, “To accept presents from the [First Nations was] to bind oneself to return an equivalent.” The conclusion of these discussions left “the Hurons . . . the happiest people in the world[;] those who were to embark and to carry the Fathers in their canoes had already received pay for their future troubles [and the French] had placed in their hands the parcels or little baggage of the Fathers.” They had “gone to the Storehouse to sleep, Father de Nouë and [Father le Jeune], with [the] three Fathers, that [they] might see them off early in the morning in their little canoes, and might say to them [their] last farewell, when all at once [their] joy was changed into sadness.” It was “at about ten or eleven o’clock that night [that] a one-eyed [Native], belonging to the Island tribe, closely allied to the tribe of the prisoner, went among the cabins of all the [Native peoples] crying out that they should be careful not to take any Frenchmen in their canoes, and that the relatives of the prisoner were on the watch along the river to kill the Frenchmen, if they could catch them during the passage.” The fate of the man accused of murder had, “on the previous Sunday[, led] some [people] of the same tribe as the prisoner [to hold] a council with the captains of the Montagnais[sic], of the [I]sland [Algonquins], and of the Hurons, to determine how they might secure the pardon of this prisoner.” The closest associates of the French, “the Hurons[,] were besought to ask it [but] they refused, and this Island [Algonquin], whose tribe was allied to the tribe of the murderer, raised this general cry among the cabins, warning every one not to give passage to a Frenchman, unless they wished to place him in evident danger of his life.” Soon afterwards, the Jesuits “found the Captains of the [First Nations] in council, to whom the Interpreter, according to the order of Sieur de Champlain, declared that he desired to talk to them once more before their departure.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹:Ibid., 239, 241, 265, and 265; cf. *ibid.*, 8:99, for testimony by the Hurons themselves of the way “the Algonquains and even the Hurons of the other villages, threatened us with death if we went [to trade with the French] on account of the murder of Brulé.”

⁶⁰*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 6:7 and 9.

The discussions that ensued forced the Jesuits to postpone the establishment of their mission in the Huron country for a full year. In the morning, "at daybreak, a [Native] passed through the camp proclaiming that they were not to depart that day; and that the young men should keep the peace, and that those who had not sold all their merchandise should sell it." At "about eight or nine in the morning, [S]ieur de Champlain again assembled the Captains of the Hurons, the Island [Algonquins] who made this outcry, and the Captain of the Montagnais." The Algonquin chief being asked "why he had aroused that opposition[,] he answered that

the whole country was in a state of alarm, and that it would be lost if the French were embarked to be taken to the Hurons, for the relatives of the prisoner would not fail to kill some of the party and thereupon war would be declared; that the Hurons even would be dragged into it; for, if they defended the French, they would be attacked, and that thus the whole country would be lost; that he had not aroused any opposition, but had merely made known the evil designs of the murderer's relatives; that, if the prisoner were released, these troubles would be immediately ended, and that the river and the whole country would be free.

When "the Hurons were asked if they still adhered to their wish to take [the Jesuits] to their country[,] they answered that the river was not theirs, and that great caution must be observed in regard to those other tribes, if they were to pass by in security." Father le Jeune was sure that the Hurons "asked nothing better than to furnish passage to the French" but he also "observed the discretion of these [Native people], for they gave evidence of their affection for [the French], in such manner as not to offend the tribes through which they must pass in coming to [Quebec]." He quoted "one of them [who,] addressing the Island [chief], said:

Now listen; when we shall be up there in thy country, do not say that we have not spoken in behalf of the prisoner; we have done all that we could, but what answer wouldst thou have us make to the reasons given by [S]ieur de Champlain? The French are the friends of all of us; if it depended only upon us, we should embark them.

Champlain "did all in his power, and gave [the Jesuits] liberty to advance all the reasons they could, to the end that [the] fathers might be set on their way[;] he urged very strong and very pertinent reasons; he used threats; he proposed peace and war; in short nothing more could be desired." The Algonquin chief responded to all these arguments "that they could not restrain their young men; that he had given warning of their wicked intentions, and that the French ought to postpone their departure for this year; that they would vent their anger upon the Hiroquois, their enemies, and then the river would be free." When the Jesuits realized that their insistence "would involve the French in war against these people, in case they were killed, [they] agreed with [S]ieur de Champlain, that the preservation of peace among these tribes was preferable to the consolation they would experience in dying on such an occasion."⁶¹

Father le Jeune drew the moral of the experience and recognized the realities of power

⁶¹Ibid., 9, 11, 13, and 17.

vis-a-vis the First Nations. He suggested that "the Captain of the tribe of the murderer [could not] have seized all those who had wicked designs against the French," because these [First Nations] have no system of government, and . . . their Captain has no such authority." All he could do was "to ask these wicked people to give up their designs." He was aware that, "when the [Native people] feared the Europeans more than they [did] now, if one of their men wanted to kill a Frenchman, either having dreamed that he was to do it, or from other causes, the others flattered him and made him presents, fearing that he would carry out his wicked intentions, and in this way they might lose the whole country." By this time, "it [was] a great deal if they warn[ed] the French to be on their guard, as they did not long ago, saying that there were some young men who were prowling about in the woods to kill any Frenchman that they might find by himself, and thus (he concluded) we are not safe among these people."⁶² There were additional realities to be "found in the interests of the Island [Algonquins], the Algonquains[sic], and the other tribes [located] between [Quebec] and the Hurons:

These people, in order to monopolize the profit of the trade, prefer[red] that the Hurons should not go down the river to trade their peltries with the French, desiring themselves to collect the merchandise of the neighboring tribes and carry it to the French; that [was] why they [did] not like to see [the Jesuits] go to the Hurons, thinking that [the priests] would urge them to descend the river, and that, the French being with them, it would not be easy to bar their passage.

The Hurons, for their part, were concerned about the French system of justice:

The second reason [for their failure to reach the Huron country might] be found in the fear of the Hurons, who [saw] that the French [would] not accept presents as a compensation for the murder of one of their countrymen [and] fear[ed] that their young men [might] do some reckless deed [;] they would have to give up, alive or dead, any one who might have committed murder, or else break with the French[, and] this ma[de] them uneasy.

The Jesuits could only accept that "God has set limits to time, which man cannot pass."⁶³

The desire of the [Island] Algonquins to maintain their own political position was well expressed in 1634, when the Jesuits renewed their efforts to travel to the Huron country. The fact that an Iroquois attack had "killed about two hundred of [the Hurons], and [taken] more than one hundred prisoners, Louys Amantacha being one of the number," left the Hurons feeling weak and more than a little uneasy. Father Jean de Brebeuf's request to the Hurons led "an Algonquain Captain, called the Partridge, who lives in the town, [to make] a speech recommending them not to take any Frenchmen on board[;] now these Hurons, who had to pass through the country of this Captain on their return, became very cold." Monsieur de Plessis having come to Trois-Rivières, he was forced to have "the Algonquains assembled in Council, especially this Captain, to have him explain the reason of his opposition[;] he brought forth several reasons [and] dwelt, as I judge from Father

⁶²Ibid., 15 and 17.

⁶³Ibid., 19 and 21.

Brebeuf's letters, upon the trouble that would occur in case some Frenchman should die among the Hurons." The Governor's response was significant: "He was told that, as the Fathers would not be in his country, the peace between the French and his Compatriots would not be disturbed, whether their death were a natural or a violent one." Although "the Algonquains were satisfied" with this assurance, the Hurons now made their own excuses "on account of the small numbers of their men, who could not carry so many Frenchmen; also on account of their small Canoes and the presence of sickness among them." In spite of all the Jesuit efforts, including the buying of one Huron's tobacco with porcelain to make "a place for six persons," the Hurons took only "two young Frenchmen, and one Father."⁶⁴

In fact, a number of other Frenchmen did make the journey to the Huron country, despite the desire of the Kichesipirini Algonquins to control contacts between the French and the Hurons. Father Brebeuf faced their threats when "the Algonquains, through whose territory we were passing, tried to intimidate us, saying that the Hurons would kill us as they had Brulé, and desiring to keep us among them, with abundant demonstrations of good will."⁶⁵ The failure of these efforts led the Algonquins to acquiesce in the establishment of the Jesuit mission in the Huron country. As Father le Jeune reported later, "those who had embarked Father Daniel and Baron wished to leave them at the Island; but the Master of the canoe in which Father Daniel was, seeing him dissatisfied at that, caused him to embark at once and carried him until they met the Captain of La Rochelle [in the Huron country]," who had been eager to take Father Daniel to the Huron country the previous year. As for "Baron, had it not been for the Captain of the Island, who caused his baggage to be put back into the canoes, he would have remained there."⁶⁶ The Jesuits' decision to winter in Ihonatiria, near "the spot where poor Estienne[sic] Brulé was barbarously and traitorously murdered," resulted ironically from the actions of the Algonquin chief: "Besides, if we had gone elsewhere the people of this village would have thought themselves still in disgrace with the French, and perhaps would have abandoned trade with them,—especially as during this last Winter Le Borgne, of the Island, spread the report that Monsieur de Champlain did not wish us to remain there, on account of the death of Brulé, and that he was demanding four heads; and it is probable that, if we had not been here, and if we had not remained as pledges, several, fearing to be arrested for their own faults or for those of others, would not have returned again to the trade."⁶⁷

The ongoing threat of war among the First Nations became a terrible reality during

⁶⁴*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 7:215 and 217.

⁶⁵*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 8:83.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 93, 99, and 103.

1635. The Jesuits in the Huron country wrote during the summer "that it was reported there that the Hiroquois had destroyed seven canoes of the [P]etite Nation of the Algonquains," and Father le Jeune observed that, "if this be true, the peace . . . [would be] broken, for [the] Montagnais allies of the Algonquains w[ould] take sides with them." The Jesuit Superior also mentioned "a report . . . that a certain [Native] named 'the Frog' [la Grenouille], who act[ed] as Captain [at Quebec], ha[d] said that the Hiroquois, with whom he had made a treaty of peace, ha[d] incited them to kill some of the Hurons, and to make war against them." He quoted "those best informed [as believing] that this [was] a ruse of those who trade[d] with these Tribes, and who [were] striving to divert, through their agency, the Hurons from their commerce with [the] French; which would happen if [the] Montagnais made war against them; and then [the Dutch traders] would attract them to their Settlements, and there would result a very considerable injury to the Associated Gentlemen of the Company of New France."⁶⁸ The following year, Father le Jeune reported the death of this same Algonquin chief:

I cannot sufficiently admire [God's] mode of humbling the pride of the haughtiest among them, especially of a certain man named *Oumastikoueiau*, surnamed by the French la Grenouille ['the frog']. This wicked man had more authority than all the Captains, and his influence extended even among all these Tribes. His plans were laid to divert them entirely from commerce and friendship with the French. To this end he had negotiated peace with his enemies; but God, who knew the malice of his heart, crushed him, and permitted the most wicked of the [Native peoples] to be involved in his crimes. For in trying to open a way to the Foreigners through the lands of their enemies, whom he thought he had won over, they imbrued their hands in his blood, slaughtering him miserably, as well as all those whose pride had caused us the most trouble.⁶⁹

Later that summer, a council took place on the "river of the Hiroquois," where "one of the Montagnais Captains had come to throw himself under [the] protection of the French commandant at [Trois-Rivières]"; "he was suspected, but wrongly, of having received presents from the Hiroquois, and of having betrayed la Grenouille ['the Frog'] and the others who had been massacred." Fortunately, "Monsieur de Plessis settled all that."⁷⁰

The Jesuits in the Huron country found the chief of the Kichesipirini Algonquins seeking their support for an alliance in the winter of 1636. As Father Brebeuf reported later: "On the twenty-eighth of March, Francois Marguerie, who had gone to winter with the [Algonquins] of the Island, brought four of them to us." The Jesuit fathers "were . . . deeply astonished to see that a young man like him, only twenty to twenty-two years old, had the courage to follow the [Algonquins] over ice and snow, and through forests, forty

⁶⁸Ibid., 59 and 61.

⁶⁹*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 9:95 and 97; cf. *ibid.*, 12:247, for a discussion with "one named Oumastikoueian, who is allied to these [I]slanders" whom the French confronted in 1637 regarding his sowing discord between them and the Hurons.

⁷⁰Ibid., 245.

successive days, and for the space of some three hundred leagues,—carrying, dragging, and working as much as, and more than any of his band, for these Barbarians, having arrived at their halting place, made him get ready their meal, while they warmed themselves and rested.”⁷¹ The Jesuits learned that “the occasion of the coming of these Island [Algonquins] to the country of the Hurons was the death of twenty-three persons whom the Iroquois had massacred, notwithstanding the peace.” Such an act of “perfidy had excited a strong desire for vengeance,” and the Island Algonquins “had collected some twenty-three collars of Porcelain, to rouse the Hurons and the Algonquins to take up arms and lend them assistance, promising that our French would be of the party, as against the common enemy . . .”⁷² The Algonquin delegation, it became clear, included the chief himself: “Le Borgne of the Isle said to the Hurons, in our presence, in order to recommend the subject of his Embassy, that his body was hatchets; he meant that the preservation of his person and of his Nation was the preservation of the hatchets, the kettles, and all the trade of the French, for the Hurons.” He was not successful: “neither the Hurons nor the Algonquins have been willing to listen to them, and have refused their presents.” The Bissiriniens of Lake Nipissing also “refused to listen to them, on account of the extortion practiced on them by the Island [Algonquins] in going down for trade.” The Hurons “covered their refusal with the apprehension they have of an army with which they were lately threatened,” but the Jesuit Superior asserted that the “real cause was in fact that the Nation of the Bear, which constitutes the half of the Hurons, was piqued because the Island [Algonquins] did not invite them as well as the others,—offering them no presents, and on the contrary forbidding that they should be told of the matter.” The pique that these Hurons felt was matched by that of the Kichesipirini Algonquins who, “seeing themselves refused, have returned very much discontented at the Hurons as well as at the Bissiriniens, and have threatened that they would let neither of them pass down to the French.”⁷³ As a consequence, when disease afflicted the Bissiriniens in 1637, they believed that “it was brought upon them . . . as well as upon the Hurons, by *Andesson*, Captain of the Island, in revenge, because they had not consented to join their forces with the latter to make war upon the Hiroquois.”⁷⁴

The attitude of the Kichesipirini Algonquins towards the French thus became a matter of real concern. The Jesuits had been told “that [Le Borgne of the Island] has boasted that he is master of the French, and that he would lead us back to [Quebec] and make us all recross the sea.” These words had come to them by report: “I am telling what is said, and the boasts attributed to him, for we did not hear them; on the contrary, they went away, so

⁷¹*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 10:73 and 75.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 75 and 77.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁴*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 13:211.

far as we are concerned, with every appearance of satisfaction and contentment." The delegates "had, in fact, a long and friendly talk with us, with the object of making us entirely leave the Country of the Hurons or at least the Nation of the Bear, as the most wicked of all the tribes, since it had murdered Estienne Bruslé[sic] and good Father Nicolas, the Recolet[sic], with his companion; and had some time before, for a blow, slain eight of their men:

To me in particular, in the way of flattery and praise, they said that, rather than risk my life among a Nation so perfidious, they would advise me to go down to [Quebec], at least after having passed another year here to learn the language perfectly; and that I would be a great Captain, and the only one who could speak in their councils.

As Father Brebeuf observed, "Thus these brave counsellors gave us advice, with many and long speeches, to show the friendship they had always had for the French above all Nations." The Jesuits "replied that we had not come into this Country to act as interpreters, nor in the hope of getting riches, nor yet in the hope of becoming one day great Captains;

but that we had left behind our parents, our means, and all our possessions, and had crossed the sea in order to come to teach them the way of salvation, at the peril of our lives; that, for the rest, we were trying and would try so to comport ourselves that other Nations would have more reason to love us than to do us harm. In short, we told them that one day some of our Fathers might stay in their Country, to instruct them; and that they would have had them before this, had it not been for their wandering life.

The Kichesipirini Algonquin delegation "declared that they were well content, and acquiesced in [the Jesuits'] reasons; to confirm which, [the Jesuits] gave them a Canoe with some other little presents, with which they were very well satisfied,—saying that they were already on their return to their own Country, and uttering a thousand thanks and many promises to treat our Fathers well when they should pass through their territory."⁷⁵

The presence of Jesuits in the country of the Hurons did not weaken the position of the Kichesipirini Algonquins, as Father Daniel discovered during the summer of 1636 when he tried to return to Quebec. Father le Jeune quoted the letter he sent by "a Canoe of Hurons":

I am staying at the Island, waiting for the main part of the band, composed equally of Hurons and Nipisiriniens. The Savages of this place have already sent back thirteen Canoes of Hurons, forbidding them to go to the French; but their Captain, called *Taratouan*, having learned that I was coming down, held firm until my arrival; for as he had departed before we did from the Huron country, so we reached the Island after he did. Then he told me that the inhabitants of this Island forbade them to pass; when I asked him the reason for this, he answered that he had heard nothing except that the body of a recently-deceased Captain . . . had not yet been "cached;"[sic] you know what that means, and therefore that to go on ahead would be merely scattering fire to augment their grief and to irritate anew the young men, who are very angry and mutinous. I told him that he must pluck up courage, that I would speak to the Captain here. I fact I did see him and he received me well, thank God. Their proposition was that they should take us Frenchmen on to you, but that the Hurons should turn back. Now I had resolved not to proceed, unless the Hurons did; I had already promised them this, and they were greatly pleased over it. These difficulties show them that it is important for us to remain in their Country, which they

⁷⁵Ibid., 77, 79, and 81.

know very well. I begged the Captain to consent to my sending a Canoe on ahead, to give notice of our coming; it is the one which brings you these letters.⁷⁶ Father le Jeune explained that “these Islanders would prefer that the Hurons should not come to the French nor the French go to the Hurons, so that they themselves may carry away all the trade; for this reason, they have done all they could to block the way; but, as they fear the French, those who accompany the Hurons make the journey easier for them.” He also expressed an understandable amazement “that[,] although the Hurons may be ten against one Islander, yet they will not pass by if a single inhabitant of the Island objects to it, so strictly do they guard the laws of the Country.” Since “this portal is usually opened by means of presents, sometimes greater and sometimes smaller, according to the emergency[,] they ought to be very rich this year; for, a Captain of the Island having died this Spring, and their tears being not yet dried, no strange Nation can pass by there without making them some gift, to make them more easily swallow, as they say, the grief occasioned by the death of their Chief.”⁷⁷ The hereditary custom was well-known: “When he who has passed away has been raised from the dead,—that is, when his name has been given to another, and presents have been offered to his relatives,—then it is said that the body is ‘cached,’ or rather, that the dead is resuscitated; and then only the usual tribute is paid when one passes over the highways and boundaries of these Islanders.”⁷⁸ The Hurons appeared to be caught up in a period of official mourning that would end with the Algonquin variant of “The King is dead; long live the King.”

While the secular affairs of the Kichesipirini Algonquins were undergoing a traditional change, one of their young men was completing his spiritual journey in a new direction. Father le Jeune stated, in the *Relation* of 1638, that he was “not pleased with those who . . . believed that in the mind of the [Native peoples] one did not observe any little ray of light or knowledge touching the Divinity.” He pointed to one young man who “belong[ed] to the Island [Algonquins], a nation far distant from the French” and who, “having been delivered from a sickness that had taken off many others, philosophized this way: “There must certainly be in the Universe some powerful spirit which has preserved me; for I have done nothing for my recovery more than the others, and yet my body is not made of a different material[;] I would gladly know this benefactor.” He had also, “being alone and contemplating his hand, . . . said:

It is not I who have formed this hand, or who stretched out these fingers; nor can this be also attributed to my father or mother,—for, besides that they did not know when my hand was formed, they cannot give any motion to their work; they cannot make a paddle, or a canoe, or any other piece of work which opens and closes itself by a secret

⁷⁶*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 9:271 and 273.

⁷⁷It seems most unlikely that the chief who was being “cached” was actually, as the author of the *Relation* suggested, more or less parenthetically, Le Borgne of the Island. It was surely La Grenouille whose death has already been noted!

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 275 and 277.

impulse as my fingers do. Without doubt there is some great workman who performs these wonders; if it be so, would that some one would give me a knowledge of him!⁷⁹

“This good young man,” as Father le Jeune put it, “came down, by mere chance, to [the Jesuits’] dwellings [and,] having heard [them] speak of the great Architect of the Universe, his heart [took] fire [and] he [went] to see [them] immediately in private.” Taking instruction twice a day, “the more [they] talked to him of God, the more he wishe[d] to hear about him.” He would, “after a long hour of instruction . . . go to the Chapel, to ask God for the grace to retain what had been taught him[, and then he] usually retired to a lonely place in the woods to meditate by himself upon what he had learned [and] return[ed] to his cabin [and] communicated it to his people with glowing enthusiasm, accompanied by a quaint modesty.” Having become “fortified in the Faith, he made a feast to all the [Native people] who were in the neighboring cabins [so] that he might unburden his heart to them:

My dear countrymen, I have summoned you to declare to you publicly that from this moment I give up all the foolish customs of our nation; and, as a proof of what I say, I will sing no more, I will engage no more in those cries and noises that we make at our banquets, but I will pray to God and will bless him because he has given us what I freely present to you to eat; see if you wish to pray to him with me.

Their astonishment may well be imagined as “they lower[ed] their eyes, and follow[ed] him word for word in the prayers he offered to God.” The Jesuits’ astonishment may similarly be imagined when, after they “gave him a present to more completely gain his friendship, he refused it, saying that he did not believe in order to derive some benefit from the French.:

All your possessions will not save my soul; it is the Faith alone that I expect from you; if I took anything else, the people of my nation would imagine that I did not believe in God, but in you people. I could desire only one favor; and that is that I might be aided to become sedentary, that I might dwell near you to hear the word of God. They are saying here that a house has already been built near [Quebec] for this purpose. Send word, if you please, to the Father who has charge of it, to do me the favor to grant me the same courtesy that he intends to show the others; but make him understand clearly that, although he refuse me, I will not cease to believe in God. It is not [the Father] who created my soul, and who must pardon my sins; if there were no longer any of you people in the country, I could not abandon God.⁸⁰

Such a faith was truly a remarkable phenomenon!

The balance of power between the Kichesipirini Algonquins and the Hurons had not changed in these years nor was the peril the Jesuits faced any less. Father le Jeune’s *Relation* of 1638 reported that Father Jerome Lalemant had, on his way to the Huron

⁷⁹The author observes re this Native proof from design for the existence of God: “I beg Your Reverence to believe that I add nothing to the ideas of this [Algonquin]. We deserve to be reproached for having lost many others like these, because we did not note them down on paper.” Cf. *Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 14:193. Is this the first record of a Native philosopher?

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 191, 193, and 195.

country, “encountered on the way four cabins of the Algonquins of the Island.” He found himself suddenly called by the Hurons, who “motioned him to take his place near a certain evil-looking [Algonquin;] this man, perceiving the Father, fell into a rage, and complained that a Frenchman who had passed that way a few days before had bled one of his sick people, and death had followed.” Father Lalemant described what ensued:

Thereupon, becoming angry and enraged, he showed me a halter and a hatchet, . . . making me a sign that I must die! Finally, he arranged this cord with a running knot; and with a furious and violent gesture he seized my head with both his hands to compel me to pass it into this noose. I stopped him with my hand, explaining to him my innocence as best I could. He ridiculed all this, became still more enraged, and raising his hatchet, gave me to understand that if I did not perish by the one I would by the other. Seeing that the collar of my gown prevented him from strangling me, he tried to unhook it. During this struggle, our Hurons smoked without uttering a word; two of our Frenchmen who were outside the cabin hastened to arm themselves, but I stopped them for fear of a greater misfortune,—advising them rather to negotiate with the Hurons, who had taken us under their protection and safe guidance. . . . From time to time, the Hurons came and looked into the cabin to see what was going on, saying that they would remain there all night to consider what was to be done, holding themselves responsible for my person, in case he consented to release me; this caused the barbarian to let me go. . . . our Hurons went into council, where they decided to make presents to this madman,—sending for him to come into their cabin, to give him hatchets and a javelin-knife. . . . This barbarian, having looked at all these hatchets, said, ‘The idea of killing the Frenchmen is beginning to get out of my mind; but that I may be satisfied, and that it may go out altogether, I must have a kettle besides.’ There being none forthcoming, he asked for a shirt instead; one was given to him, and he declared that he was perfectly satisfied. . . .

By this means, Father Lalemant’s safety was achieved but the incident was eloquent of Native customs and the relative strength of the Island Algonquins.⁸¹

There was a curious sequel to the assault on Father Lalemant. Father le Jeune’s *Relation* of 1639 introduced the account with the words, “although the remarks I am about to make have almost no connection with one another, they will give, nevertheless, some light and some information for the better understanding of the minds of the [Native peoples].” The first incident related to “a Captain of the Algonquins of the Island,—a man of intelligence, and very eloquent for a [Native],—[who] had some quarrel with another Algonquin [and] received a hatchet blow upon his head that almost cost him his life[;] in fact, he would have lost it, had not a[n Algonquin], by turning away the arm of the aggressor, lessened the violence of the blow.” The chief, “seeing himself all covered with his own blood, did not trouble himself about it, but coolly sat down in the cabin of him who had struck him,—showing no emotion either of fear or of revenge.” Similarly, “the man who had given the blow sat down not far away, appearing in no wise concerned.” Having been “informed of this dispute,” a Jesuit “ran straightway to the cabin, entered, and found all its people in silence, as calm and as cold as marble[;] he would not have believed that there was any quarrel between people apparently so calm and peaceful, if he had not seen

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 267 and 269.

the blood trickling from the head of this poor wretch.” Having asked the chief “who had given him this wound,” the priest received “no answer [but] the aggressor began to speak, and said, ‘It was I who did it, because he made me angry’.” The confession made, “he relapsed into silence” and the attempt of “the Father . . . to reconcile them” had little impact. When the chief eventually “went out, he made the following speech to his people: “My nephews, do not take any revenge for the injury that has been done me; it is enough that the earth trembled at the blow that was given me,—do not overturn it by your wrath.” When he had “recovered and seeing that the French were trying to get some satisfaction from the [Algonquin] who last year had put the rope around the neck of Father [Jerome] Lalemant,—this man, raising his voice, harangued thus:

I am astonished that those who boast of praying to God, and who say that it is necessary to pardon offenses, since God pardons them, wish to obtain revenge for an injury that was done them a long time ago. It is well enough known who I am,—it is well known that it is I who hold the earth firmly in my arms; and yet not long ago, when I received a blow that almost cleft my head in twain, I was not agitated, I conceived no desire for revenge; why will you not imitate this example? But if the wolf had caused my soul to issue from its body, my mouth would have pronounced these last words: ‘My nephews, do not trouble the earth on account of your uncle, who has always held it up.’ I say more, if I had felt the earth tremble, I would have tried to stop it, to restore it to its usual peacefulness with the two arms of my soul; and if I could not have succeeded in this, I would have cried out, ‘All is lost, the world is turned upside down[;] I have nothing more to do with it,—I have discharged my duty, I have pardoned the injury that was done me; I have given counsel, they would not be wise,—the fault is not mine.’ Behold, . . . how men of intelligence behave.⁸²

These were surely the words of Tessoïat, the grand chief of the Kichesipirini Algonquins, and they indicated that his traditional position had metaphysical dimensions!

The *Jesuit Relations* of 1640 and 1640-41 continued to report interaction between the French and the Kichesipirini Algonquins. The Jesuit Superior reported meeting Native people on his way to Trois-Rivières and, having told them of the possibility of settling at Sillery in the community of Saint Joseph, learned that “they were relatives of the Captain of the Island; but that . . . they did not like him, because they knew very well that he showed himself interested in the cultivation of the land and in the instruction, only in appearance.”⁸³ Soon these Island Algonquins were working the land at Sillery, and other “Algonquins of the Island were doing the same thing at [Trois-Rivières;] the clearing they ha[d] made [was] one of the strongest chains that c[ould] hold them there.”⁸⁴ “Some [Algonquins] of the Island, and of other places, having come down to [S]aint Joseph [at Sillery], the Christians, seeing that the new guests had nothing for dinner, made a collection among themselves, and furnished as many as twelve hundred smoked eels,

⁸²*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 16:209, 211, and 213.

⁸³*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 18:93.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 109.

divided into twelve large packages; having gathered together this alms, they sent for us to know if it would be acceptable to God.” The missionaries were understandably proud of this practice of Christian virtues: “The poor people had not too many provisions for themselves; but, as acts of charity are recommended to them, every one contributed joyfully [and,] having . . . sent for four of the chief of the recently-arrived [Algonquins], they put this gift into their hands, to be distributed to all those who were in need.” They were also aware that, although “we greatly approved this kindness,” the act of “charity did not prevent these new guests, naturally haughty and proud, from having several quarrels with the Christians of [S]aint Joseph, and almost always on account of Religion.”⁸⁵ As the same *Relation* reported, the Algonquins “taunted them, saying that faith and prayer made men die; that since some had been baptized, maladies had prevailed among them, and that, when they were taught another belief than that of their fathers, at that very time death exterminated them; that a part of those who ha[d] become Christians [were] concerting with the French to ruin the whole country of the [Algonquins].”⁸⁶

The French and Jesuit challenge did not appear solely religious to the “Captain of these Islanders.” The *Jesuit Relation* reported “the great vanity and insupportable pride” of this ruler, who visited the Jesuits “during the stay that he made at S[aint] Joseph [and] held this discourse with [them]:

I had some intention of spending the winter here, but I am told that neither your Captain loves me nor do you. Perhaps you do not know that I have ruled from my youth, that I was born to rule. As soon as I open my mouth, every one listens to me; it is also true that I bear up and maintain the whole country during the life of my grandchildren and my nephews Even the Hurons give ear to me, and I command among them; I rule them, as if I were Captain. I say not a word over there,—the rest speak; but there is nothing done except that which I have in my mind. I am like a tree,—men are the branches thereof, to which I give vigor.

The Jesuits marvelled over the contrast between what they had heard and what they saw: “To see a man wholly nude, who has neither covering for the feet, nor other raiment than a wretched bit of pelt, which screens only the half of his body; ill-favored by nature, having only half his eyes, for he is blind in one, and dried-up like an old tree without leaves,—to see, I say, a skeleton, or rather a ragamuffin, bear himself like a President, and speak like a King, is to see haughtiness and pride under rags.”⁸⁷

A dramatic confrontation between Tessoïat and the Jesuits occurred during the winter of 1640-41, when “all the [Algonquins] who [were there] having met together, and being shut up as in a fort, the poor Christians suffered the insolence and the evil example of the Pagans” (as the Jesuit Superior put it). Father Buteux heard that they were resorting to a ritual “brought from the upper countries, which was to last three nights, during which the

⁸⁵*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 20:155.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 155 and 157.

[people] run through the cabins with the shrieks and yells of Demons [and] the finest act of this tragi-comedy consists in this point,—the girls and women begin to dance, and some men take the Juggler . . . under the arms, and make him walk over the glowing coals without being burned.” Since Father Buteux had “secretly had notice, from a Christian, of the time when this diabolical farce was to be played for the healing of a sick woman [and] prompted by zeal for the glory of our Lord,” he and Father Poncet “went to the cabins about ten o’clock at night . . . and, inveighing as strongly as he could against these insolencies, accosted the Captain of the [Algonquins] from the Island, who alone could check these disorders, as being the chief author and promoter of them.” The provocation was extreme: “this man, naturally colder than ice, became excited, and reproached the Father, saying to him that Baptism and prayers made the [people] die; the Father replied to him that their sins and sorceries were the cause of their death.” Not surprisingly, “at this clamor, the [people] ran in haste from all sides, and alarm was manifest in their camp; the Christians said nothing, being few in number, but the Pagans yelled at the top of their voices [and] the Captain, carried away with anger, threw burning cinders at the eyes of the Father, and took a rope as if he intended to strangle him, threatening to kill him.” Although “the Father very coolly presented his neck, . . . this Barbarian proceeded no further [and] some [Algonquins] begged the Fathers to withdraw, which they did [but knowing that] this diabolical superstition was stopped for that time.”⁸⁸

This dangerous confrontation between Tessoüat and the Jesuits naturally aroused concern. “The French, having learned of the affront that had been made to the priest at their very door, were much troubled [and] Monsieur de Chanflour, the commandant at [Trois-Rivières,] sent for th[e Algonquin] Captain in order to obtain satisfaction, notwithstanding the entreaty the Father made him to cast . . . into oblivion” the events that had followed their interruption of a traditional ceremony. As the Jesuits saw it, “this Barbarian was subtle and crafty [and] perceived his defeat; he admitted, indeed, that he had thrown cinders at the Father, and that he was ready to receive the same, in reparation for his fault:

But as for the rope which I took in my hand, . . . it was never in my mind to bind the Father, much less to strangle him. But when he reproached me with making the [people] die by my charms, and I, in my anger, reproached him with making them die by prayers, I took a noose, to show him that, if we both spoke truly, we both merited death; to have made an attempt upon his life . . . never entered my head.

That was apparently the end of the matter, for the *Relation* added only that “the catastrophe of this tragedy [presumably meaning the attempt to cure the sick woman] was that these fine Physicians were not at all able to cure their patient.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸Ibid., 263 and 265.

⁸⁹Ibid., 265.

Tessoüat's desire to maintain control over the Algonquins of the St. Lawrence Valley found expression in various stratagems that summer. The Jesuit Superior wrote the moral at the outset: "The Devil, who sees well that the settling down of the roving [Natives] is the shortest and surest way of their salvation, bends all his energies to destroy that which God has so happily begun." The Algonquins "of the Island, . . . being upon the point of withdrawing from Saint Joseph, whither they had come for a little time, did not wish to depart on bad terms with our Christians and our Catechumens," and so, according to the missionary, "they put in operation a scheme which would have done much harm, if God had not given constancy to these Neophytes." The Algonquins "invited them to a feast, and said to them, that prayer was good, that our doctrine was indeed rather harsh, particularly touching Marriages,—but, as it had been received by some of them, the others might also embrace it in time:

They said that, in order to facilitate the matter, and to bring about a closer union with each other, it would be fitting that they should all live together, and that they must choose some place more distant from [Quebec] than Saint Joseph was, for a thousand reasons which they pleaded; that the Fathers should be with them, to instruct them; and that, by degrees, each one would yield himself to the customs of the French. In short, they expressed a great friendship and a great desire that the Christians should abandon their abode and go to dwell with them in some other place.

As far as the Jesuits were concerned, this "was an underhand thrust of the Enemy of God and man, who used the eloquent speech of a wretched one-eyed man, who [saw] only half of the earth, and nothing at all of the beauty of heaven." After "our Neophytes, having heard this discourse, came to give us an account of it[,] it was not difficult to make them see the malice of Satan, and the instability of those who invited them." Given this guidance, the Christian Algonquins were prepared to respond to the invitation and "that is why one of them, in a council they held concerning this matter, said these words to them: 'If I did not believe in God, I might follow you, but the step is taken,—I have responded to God, and told him that I would obey him; and thus I cannot leave the place where we are taught his will' [and] another added: 'You say that you will remain firm in the place that you shall choose; but I warn you that faith alone will give you steadfastness. I know you well; neither your head nor your feet will have any check until you believe in God'."⁹⁰

The next stage of Tessoüat's plan involved an invitation to go to war together. The Kichesipirini "Algonquins, having returned to [Trois-Rivières], sent to invite the [Algonquins] of Saint Joseph to go with them to war[;] he who brought the word, used these terms:

Here is a Masterly stroke for the prayers and the faith that you have chosen; the Algonquins of the Island and of the Petite Nation say that, if you will accompany them to the war, they will all be baptized on their return, and they will adopt the prayers.

One of the Christians, "Jean Baptiste Etinechkawat[,] responded in the name of all: 'Your

⁹⁰Ibid., 165 and 167.

argument is not properly stated,—you have inverted your words: you say, “Let us go to the war, and then we will be baptized;” reverse your language, and say: “Let us be baptized, and then let us all go together to the war”[;] if you speak thus, your speech will be straightforward [and] you will not put yourselves in danger of being lost, and God our father, seeing his children together, will have favorable opinions of us.’ ” Others of the Algonquin converts “accompanied them,—although with sorrow, on account of their superstitions.” As “one of them related . . . on his return:

Setting out from Saint Joseph, we went to the Chapel to pray to God; passing through [Trois-Rivières], we who were baptized confessed; and a little further on the unbelievers made a feast of two dogs; they chanted and howled according to our old customs, and all that for the sake of killing the enemy. I said plainly to them that that would avail nothing, but they mocked at it; five times they consulted the Devils in their tabernacles. During all that time we withdrew apart, kneeling in prayer; a[n] Algonquin] not yet baptized sided with us, renouncing the Sabbath of the infidels. At the last consultation, the enemies surrounded us; as soon as we had wind of it, my Jugglers quitted their tents, and took to their heels. I cried aloud to them and asked them of what use their demons had been to them; my speech was not long, for I had to escape, as well as the others. Some made for the woods, others for the water; we embarked upon the great lake, on which the Enemy was paddling; we passed and repassed each other in these dangers, without being discovered.

The battle ended soon thereafter, but the “good Neophyte” testified that he had “prayed to God in silence with all [his] heart [and] it seemed to [him] that [he] felt within [him] an unknown power which sustained [him].”⁹¹

The fears engendered by Iroquois attacks and European illnesses created division in the ranks of the Kichesipirini Algonquins. As the Jesuit Superior saw it, “Those who have come from places nearer to the Hurons have brought I know not what dance or diabolical superstition, which has given us much trouble[;] pride is reigning here, and the famine which is pinching these poor wretches will not succeed in bringing it down.” In fact, “the fear that they ha[d] of their enemies, prevent[ed] their going to the hunt so that their lives [might] be sustained.” The Algonquins appeared very near panic: “Every day and every night they have visions; they see, so they say, the Hiroquois behind their corn, they see them lying still; they see those that pursue them; they observe attentively the tracks of their enemies on the sand; they identify the place where they have slept, the trees from which they have gathered fruit, they even hear them yelling in the depth of the forest,—they give a thousand false alarms to our Frenchmen.” In these circumstances, “the reproaches that were formerly made to [the Jesuits were] recommenced here: these new visitors t[old them] that prayers cause[d] them to die, that to be baptized and to see very soon the end of life [were] the same thing . . .; it [was] in vain to tell them that many more Unbelievers die[d] than Believers.”⁹² One of the Algonquins, who had actually survived baptism in the midst of illness, the Jesuits regarded as an “Apostate.” The man was “called by his

⁹¹Ibid., 167 and 169.

⁹²Ibid., 261.

own people Oumasatikweie, that is to say, 'the toad', "and he had been "baptized during a severe sickness [but,] having recovered, . . . did not imitate those who openly confessed in health the faith which they had received in their sickness." The Jesuits perceived "this wicked man [to have] more venom in his heart and in his tongue than that unsightly creature [the toad] has in its whole body" because Oumasatikweie had "publicly declared himself the enemy of God and of Christianity [and was] using his utmost efforts to dissuade those who would be inclined to embrace it."⁹³

All of Oumasatikweie's energies were aroused to prevent "a certain man named Piescars, . . . a man somewhat noted among his people, from receiving holy Baptism; but the Devil [was] overcome in one of his most powerful instruments, and God . . . triumphed in a soul which [bore] faithful witness." When "this good Neophyte, [who] was named Simon by Monsieur de Chanflour, the commandant of the fort at [Trois-Rivières], . . . saw that the Unbelievers, and especially this wretched Apostate, tormented him about the plan he had for being baptized, he desired to make his baptism as solemn as was possible,—protesting by this very public act that he did not wish to believe in secret . . . but . . . wished fearlessly to raise the standard of the Cross wherever he might happen to be." Consequently, "some time before his baptism, he called together the chief [Algonquins] and said to them:

I have resolved to be a Christian; I am no child,—I know well what I am doing. I do not doubt that many will disapprove of my intention; but the doctrine which has been taught me seems to me so beautiful and so true, that, although the whole world should spurn it, I would embrace it with all my heart, even should I be alone in my resolve.

After he saw "that some of them bent down their heads, as a sign that these words had shocked their ears, the next day he made a second charge upon them [and] went out in open view, and began shouting aloud among the cabins, according to the custom of the country . . . : 'Men, listen to my words!' " His shouts were effective as "immediately every one was silent in the cabins, and, as a sign that they were listening, some responded 'Ho, Ho!' " He then told everyone:

I have already told some of you that I believed in God, and that I wished to be baptized: I now say it publicly. I am doing nothing secretly,—the matter being of itself good and holy, it is not necessary to conceal it. Let whoever will disapprove, my decision is made, I shall be baptized to-morrow.⁹⁴

Piescars' public declaration provoked Oumasatikweie to action in a heated debate over the choices before the Kichesipirini Algonquins. Piescars having "reëntered his cabin," as

⁹³Ibid., 281.

⁹⁴Ibid., 281 and 283. The author of the Relation described the announcing "custom of the country" thus: "When the Captains and chief (men) wish to announce anything publicly, they have no other trumpets than their voices, which they make resound through their Villages, or in the places where they have gathered their cabins" (ibid.).

the *Relation* put it, “the Apostate came out from his, vomiting from his mouth poison, with which he endeavored to infect all his Cuntrymen:

I see indeed . . . that he who has just spoken is willing to let himself be deceived by the French. Well and good; let him be deceived, since he wishes to be, but he will be the only one of his company, for no one desires to follow him; some vain hope urges him, for which we care nothing. They baptized me when I was sick unto death; as soon as my mind returned to me, I disavowed all that I had then said.

“Having offered his prayer” in the chapel prior to “mak[ing] another public denunciation of this Apostate’s insolence,” Piescars “went toward the cabins, raised his voice, and cried with fiery zeal:

I have already told you many times that I intended to be baptized[;] I persevere in my resolution. Whoever has anything to say against me, let him hasten, for it is to-morrow that I shall be baptized; It was to be to-day, but, as the young men are absent, I am awaiting their return, so that they may learn by my example not to fear slanderous tongues, when so holy an act is in question.

Prior to his baptism the next day, he “made this address to those who were present:

Listen, young men! Perhaps, while you see me at the door of this Church, you are saying in your hearts, ‘Here is one who is doing well; Pieskars[sic] is going to be a friend of the Frenchmen. He will be favorable to us, he will not lack beautiful robes, he will have provisions in abundance.’ These perhaps are your thoughts; but you are mistaken. Know that Pieskars does not become a Christian for any human consideration,—it is to avoid the flames of the other life; it is to be the child of God, and to go some day to heaven: this is the purpose of Pieskars.

The missionaries had good reason to give “this man . . . from the Island” the “holy Baptism, which was granted him, to the joy of all those who delight in the salvation of these people.”⁹⁵

Such acts of Christian devotion led Tessouat to lash out at those who were abandoning the traditional ways. “The Captain of the Island, who strikes only unfairly, and with underhand thrusts [as the *Jesuit Relation* put it], wishing to disparage this holy action [the conversion of a Juggler of the Petite Nation], and to show that it belonged only to old women and children to be baptized, cried out among the cabins: ‘Go, good old women, go; and you, little children, who have no way of finding food, go to the [B]lack Robes and be baptized, so that you may not die from hunger; let those who resemble you, imitate you’.” Still another of the Jesuits, “Father de Quen, seeing that this outcry was made in contempt of the faith, and to alienate the [Algonquins] from Baptism, paid off this wretched one-eyed man in his own coin; for, on going the next day to summon the Christians to Mass, he added these words in a loud voice: ‘Men and women who are not baptized, go to Teswehat[sic]—he will give you all food; it is he who kills beavers, and knows well how to catch the moose’.” The chief, “proud to the last degree [and] believing himself insulted, went raging with anger to [S]ieur Nicolet and to Father Buteux, and complained of the affront that he had received; but he was asked if, when he had sent away the old women and children to the Fathers to be baptized in order that they might have food, he intended to

⁹⁵Ibid., 283 and 285.

set at naught prayers and Baptism; he said, 'No, indeed'." The Frenchmen "replied to him that neither did Father de Quen purpose to offend him in sending the men and women to him to be helped, inasmuch as he was their Captain." Tessoüat, "this clever man, seeing well that he should lose his case if he went on, preferred silence to further argument."⁹⁶

The following year produced astounding changes in the leadership of the Kichesipirini Algonquins. An entire chapter of the *Jesuit Relation* of 1642-43 was devoted to "Events at [Trois-Rivières] and at the Fort of Richelieu," the author "bring[ing] these two places into one Chapter, because they ha[d] incurred like peril from the Hiroquois, and . . . received the same [Native people], who . . . spent the year partly in one of these places [and] partly in the other." The people "who . . . lived at these two settlements [were] the upper Algonquins,—just as proud, and difficult to govern . . . as those from about Quebec [were] humble and docile." Father Barthelemy Vimont reported that, "last year, immediately after the departure of the Ships,—which was the seventh of October,—[he had] sent Father le Jeune to live at [Trois-Rivières], in order to see if he could subdue the Pride of those people, and bring them to Jesus Christ." Father le Jeune's "well-known zeal and virtue readily inspired . . . this idea," but "he had no sooner arrived there than those wretches gave him plenty of exercise." His prime concern were "the two principal chiefs . . .: one, Teswesatch[sic],—a crafty, proud man, and an enemy to the French usages and to Christianity; [and] the other . . . an apostate named Abdon, full of intelligence, but wicked and bold[, who] governed the upper Algonquins; and striving to infuse into them the same mind which possessed themselves, they feigned, at intervals, to love the Faith and the French, and then they did the very contrary in private, and often in public." Father le Jeune was aware that "there were, nevertheless, among that band some souls chosen of God."⁹⁷

The wickedness that the Jesuits saw in Abdon was revealed "on the 19th of October, [when he] with his troop, returning from the war, brought to [Trois-Rivières] a prisoner who was not Hiroquois, but their neighbor and friend." When Father le Jeune saw them "suddenly resolving to burn him," he "admonished [them] that they must not multiply their enemies, and that they ought now to give up all those cruelties." The Algonquin answer was to "mock at the Father, and at all those who mention[ed] it to them." The torture took a familiar course:

They pierce[d] one foot of this poor man with a stick, and atrociously t[ore] out his finger-nails,—he held out his hand and gave his fingers, as if he had felt nothing; they tie[d] both his wrists with cords with running knots, and four young men pull[ed] and fasten[ed] the cords with all their might, tearing and removing the flesh of his arms even to the bones. The pain cause[d] him to fall in a swoon; they cease[d] to torture him, thr[e]w water upon him, and g[a]ve him food, in order to revive him for the

⁹⁶Ibid., 291.

⁹⁷*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 24:191 and 193.

torments; the wood was already prepared for burning him, and the night of this tragedy was about to begin.

“But at evening, by good fortune, there arrived a canoe from Quebec, with letters from Monsieur the Governor to [S]ieur des Rochers, who command[ed] at [Trois-Rivières],—to the end that he should ransom and release the prisoner,—which he did with much difficulty, for rage and vengeance possessed the hearts of those Barbarians.”⁹⁸

Saving this prisoner only briefly delayed the main work of the missionary. With “this business despatched, the Father applie[d] himself to the instruction of the [Algonquins], oppose[d] the mutinous, and encourage[d] to perseverance those who had begun well.” His work was not made easier by the fact that “the miserable Teswesatch publicly forbade his people to go to mass.” Father le Jeune ‘being one day ready to say it, and seeing that no one came, l[eft] the Church; and having perceived from a distance some young girls who were approaching with fear, he ask[ed] them why they did not come in.” Their reply indicated the size of his challenge: “The Captain has publicly announced . . . that he would kill those who should go thither.” The priest’s response indicated the limitations on Tessoüat’s own power: “Fear nothing; the French will defend you.” This gradually reassured them: “One having entered, the others followed; and finally all came to Mass.” A nomadic people must, however, remain on the move: The Algonquins “tarried not long at [Trois-Rivières],—so they [were] not yet resident there, and ha[d] no fixed abode there.” The choice of winter camp took a little time for, “toward the end of November, they took a sort of resolution to go to Mont-Real[sic], in order to make their hunt there during all the winter; but, having heard that some of their companions, who had gone thither shortly before, were coming down again in order to stay at Fort Riche-lieu[sic], they went to find them, so as to winter there all together, and keep one another company, either in the chase or in war.” This gave the Jesuit Superior one more opportunity to observe that “it would be a great blessing if those people could once become fixed and settled in some suitable residence, as the others ha[d] done at Sillery.” Father le Jeune, however, “performing the office of a good pastor, [went] after his flock and follow[ed] it, leaving [Trois-Rivières] in order to move with them toward Riche-lieu.”⁹⁹

These periods of residence in the St. Lawrence Valley provided opportunities for the Kichesipirini Algonquins to learn more of the French and of Christianity. The *Jesuit Relation* of 1642-43 reported that “one of the Algonquins of the Island, having met one of the Christians from near Quebec, was so much edified that he spent nearly all the night in hearing him speak of God.” On his arrival at Richelieu, he found Father le Jeune “and relate[d] this conversation:

He said to me, ‘Courage; let us give up our old customs. We see well that we were

⁹⁸Ibid., 193.

⁹⁹Ibid., 193 and 195.

blind; our eyes are beginning to open, let us not close them again. This life is not long; practice no more any evil superstition. Beware of thy fellow countrymen, the upper Algonquins: they are not inclined to the faith, and not all those among them who seem to approve the prayers, love them. Take care not to imitate them, and if thou wilt believe, do so heartily. Such . . . were the words addressed to me by that man; we spent a good part of the night thus; that possesses my heart.'

The struggle became intense as, in the words of the *Relation*, "all these good deeds were greatly thwarted by the wicked conduct of those wretched upper Algonquins,—there was nothing but superstitions among them; there was naught but outrages and calumnies against our Christians." Father le Jeune was in the thick of the fray, "with his little band of faithful ones, vigorously oppos[ing] them,—now by dint of arguments, again by ridiculing their foolish notions [which] made them die with spite." The crisis of traditional ways was recognized by more than one of the Algonquins, as they said: "It is a strange thing . . . that since prayer has come into our cabins, our former customs are no longer of any service; and yet we shall all die because we give them up." One of them said:

I have seen the time when my dreams were true; when I had seen Moose or Beavers in sleep, I would take some. When our Soothsayers felt the enemy coming, that came true; there was preparation to receive him. Now, our dreams and our prophecies are no longer true,—prayer has spoiled verything for us.

Others blamed the Jesuits "for the punishments which God was sending them:

We see well that God is angry at us, and that he is right.—for we do not do what he says; inasmuch as it seems hard to us, we disobey him, and so he becomes angry with us and kills us. But you, you are the cause of it: for if you had lived in your own country without speaking to us of God, he would not say a word to us, since we would not know him or his will. You would then do much better to return to your own country and live at rest; for it is you who kill us. Before you came here, the French did not say so many prayers; they only made the sign of the Cross, and even then, all did not know how to make it. They did not have all those prayers which you are introducing; it is you who have brought in all these novelties, and who teach them to the [Native people], and overturn their brains and make them die. Besides, if you called to prayers only once in ten days, we would have some respite; but you have no regard to either rain, or snow, or cold; every day you are heard shouting for the prayers. It is a strange thing that you cannot remain quiet.

Father le Jeune "remonstrated with them, that if one left them in the quiet that they mentioned, they would burn eternally in Hell, and that the danger [to] their Salvation obliged [the missionaries] to urge them[;] but the majority became still more obstinate, and were furious with spite against the Father, and said that he was a greater sorcerer than their own people; that the country must be cleared of such; that they had clubbed three sorcerers at the Island, who had not done so much harm as he."¹⁰⁰

In the midst of this psychological and spiritual warfare, when "there was some fear lest [the Algonquins] should carry out their evil thought," Abdon, "that apostate . . .—seeing this coldness of the French, and especially of Monsieur de Chamflour, toward him and toward all those who were persecuting the Faith—feigned to show himself favorable

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 209, 211, and 213.

toward it, and gave some indication of wishing to become converted.” The commandant, “in order to oblige him further, gave him wherewith to make a feast for his people,—it is there, as a rule, that they manifest their intentions; but this wretch, instead of declaring himself on the side of Jesus Christ, showed himself more than ever on the side of the Devil, and, at the feast, denounced prayer, and those who were going to be baptized.” Such “treachery not only very greatly displeased the Christian [Algonquins], several of whom were at the feast, but even the Pagans themselves,—of whom one of the principal men, who had been among the most obstinate, came to [Father le Jeune] to declare himself openly, and to request baptism:

My father, . . . I am of the number of the believers: it is all settled, now. I have listened to you for a long time,—I have never said to you, ‘Baptize me;’ I say so now. I cannot suffer that man’s treachery; I wish to be baptized, and to thwart him unless he gives in.

Having been encouraged to declare himself at a feast, “the guests assembled [and] he exclaim[ed]:

For more than five years I have resisted God; I found the doctrine good, which the Fathers were teaching, but it seemed hard to me, and I could not resolve to follow it. The die is cast, it is all in earnest; I wish to be baptized and obey God,—it is to declare to you my purpose, that I have invited you.

Such protestations, which inevitably led to this Algonquin’s being baptized, left “the wretched apostate . . . dying with chagrin to see these good results which God was deriving from his bad designs.” Suddenly, “at the climax of his impiety, behold him instantly seized throughout his body with a pain so piercing and so violent that it bordered on rage and fury; he [was] utterly prostrated, but not, as yet, thereby gained to God.” Abdon’s continuing attack on the Faith and Father le Jeune provoked the latter to suggest that “it might well be that this sickness was not natural,—that God saw everything, and was casting his eyes upon him when he denounced the prayers; that God listened to all his words; that he penetrated within his heart; that he gave him this blow, in order to make him recognize his fault: that the pains which he suffered, and accounted intolerable, were nothing in comparison with the horrible tortures that he would suffer in Hell, if he continued in his treacheries; that, if he would come to his senses, God was altogether mildness, and would show him mercy.” After “the pain remained with him several days, during which [the missionaries] assisted him in all possible ways, . . . he recovered suddenly . . .; from that time he did nothing more against the Faith, but, on the contrary, he began to protect it.” His fellow “chief, . . . Tessweatch[sic], was awed, and dared not stir further [until] they both started from Fort Richelieu, with a small band of their people, in order to go to the Island of Montreal.”¹⁰¹

The establishment of the French settlement at Montreal, fulfilling hopes that Champlain had aroused thirty years earlier, had a remarkable effect on the Kichesipirini Algonquins.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 213, 215, 217, and 219.

Father du Peron, who “spent the whole Winter there[, stated]: ‘I can say with truth, that they no sooner began to recognize the integrity of the purpose of Messieurs of Montreal[*sic*], than they were keenly touched by it[;] the belief which they ha[d] nearly everywhere, that Mont-Real [had been] established only for the sole benefit of the [Native people], [was] the strongest attraction that [the missionaries had] to incline them to God; these [were] chains of love, which b[ound] them to [the missionaries] potently, and cause[d] resistance to be no longer found in their hearts, as in the past’.” The readiness to settle at Montreal that the Island Algonquins had once indicated to Champlain was now echoed in the Algonquins’ saying “that here [was] where they w[ould] believe and be baptized,—and not only those who . . . already had the advantage of living or passing there, but even those of the more distant nations . . ., solely through the account that they ha[d] heard of it.” The movement began “toward the end of February [1643], [when] there arrived at Mont-Real a band of twenty-five men, going to the war against the Iroquois; and the women and children stopped [there].” Almost immediately, “two or three days thereafter, lo, still another band c[ame], for the chase, which [was] so excellent there that the [Algonquins] all [said] that they would have lived there long ago, in great numbers, if they had had there, as at present, a place of refuge against the Iroquois, [their] near neighbors.” The leader of “this band was the first man to be baptized and married there conformably to the Church; he [was] named Oumasasikweie . . .”! This former opponent of the Jesuits “had not yet appeared at Mont-Real; he was coming to get acquainted with it, and had done so in less than one day,—for, having heard the purpose of this settlement, he was suddenly interested in it; indicated the desire that he had of at last settling down, after so many years of roving life: accepted the terms which they made him, of a field and of two men who should labor in it a full year, in order to put it in working condition; and urgently requested to be instructed.” Seizing the opportunity, since “it was seen that this man was in good earnest, without delay they led him to the locality, where he himself cho[se] the place, and immediately [set] his two men at work upon it.”¹⁰²

Oumasasikweie’s wish “that his uncle, Captain of the nation of the Island, celebrated among these nations, and especially the upper ones,—named Tesswehas[*sic*], and by the French, ‘le Borgne of the Isle,’—should be apprised of the favor that [had been] done to him” was quickly fulfilled. Having “begged [the missionaries] to write of it by [their] first letters down [to Trois-Rivières], where he was to go[,] the good man was much astonished to see his desire fulfilled almost as soon as he had conceived it: for shortly after, Tesswehas arrive[d] over the ice, [came] straight to the Fort, and surprise[d them].” His arrival was even more astonishing for, “at the outset, he said that he came to be instructed and baptized; and hearing what they had just done for his nephew, [he] promise[d] to settle [there], both himself and his family.” About a week later, “his nephew Oumasasikweie,

¹⁰²Ibid., 231 and 233.

seeing himself urged by his people to start the next day in order to go to the hunt, would not go without God." Acting not just for himself, "he spoke of it, therefore, to his wife, and they came together to beg us that they be baptized and married that same day." Such a request called for earnest consideration but was "accorded, with the circumspection and instructions requisite and necessary thereto." The governor played his part as "Monsieur de Maison-neufve[sic], with the heritage of the first family, gave him the name of Joseph [in order to have him bear the name of the first establishment which these Gentlemen of Mont-Royal(sic) have given for the (Native people)] and Madame de la Peltrie, his Godmother, an arquebus." As for "his wife, surnamed in her language Mitigoukwe, [she] was named Jeanne by Monsieur de Piseaux." After they had been taken "aside, in order to speak to them privately of God [and returned to] the room of Monsieur de Maison neufve[sic], where the most considerable persons were, these two good people began, in their presence, to testify to [the missionaries of] the joy of their hearts at seeing themselves Christians,—and French, they said, even to desiring the dress and dwelling of these."¹⁰³ The establishment of a French outpost in the no-man's land between the Algonquins and the Iroquois had clearly had a profound effect on the Kichesipirini Algonquins.

The change in the chiefs of the Kichesipirini Algonquins was quite astounding. The missionaries were pleased to find Oumasasikweie and his wife, "in token of the grace which they had received, . . . exchang[ing] words together [and] opposing the resolution of all their people, who were to start the next day: 'Let us tarry here two days, in order to be able to Feast for the [first] time with the French, on the Lord's Day,' which was the day following." Almost immediately thereafter, on "the 9th day of March, le Borgne of the Isle, first Captain of all these countries, and his wife, after the preparations requisite for Baptism, finally received it, to the admiration of all our French, and of all those people who had formerly seen that man so removed from what he was now doing,—esteeming himself happy . . . in the name of Christian, which they were about to give him." He and his wife also received official recognition as "Monsieur de Maison-neufve, with Mademoiselle Manse[sic], named him Paul; and his wife was named Magdelaine by Madame de la Peltrie and Monsieur de Puiseaux[sic]." The importance of these acts was well understood as "all the ceremonies thereof were performed with great solemnity, on account of the great progress which [was] to be hoped from them for the glory of God." The missionary "Father Poncet spoke to all the people of the great goodness of God toward this man; the tears of joy which appeared on several faces showed plainly that their hearts were filled with contentment [and] the father could scarcely speak, so much was he touched." The governor played his part as, "after they had received the blessing of Marriage, Monsieur de Maison-Neufve gave a fine arquebus to Paul, with the articles necessary for its use, and had them dine with [them]; and after dinner, he made a great feast to all the [Algonquins], where all the French were present,—who were so rejoiced that it is not

¹⁰³Ibid., 233 and 235.

possible to be more so, to see so great a mercy of God.”¹⁰⁴

The conversion of Tessoüat had long been hoped for by the Jesuits. The Jesuit Superior wrote that it had “ever been thought that the conquest of that man was more to be prized than that of a great number of others; it was never doubted that, if he were once converted, he would do thoroughly well, in view of the great natural talents which God had given him.” He was not the first convert in his family for, “before he was a Christian, God had done him a great favor,—to wit, in permitting that his children should be baptized; and besides that, he ha[d] been the occasion for many others to be, who [were] nearly all dead; but, as for him[self], he [had] not wish[ed] to be, at all.” He had, “on the other hand, . . . much retarded the glory of God, the [Algonquins] taking pattern after him; but there [was now] a probability that he w[ould] make amends for that.” They continued to marvel over the fact:

Behold the way which God has used for drawing him to himself, which is far above all human prudence; for—when we were thinking of anything else than of seeing him [at Montreal], considering the aversion which he had shown for it toward the end of the summer—there he was, nevertheless, having arrived [there] the first day of March. He knock[ed] at the door of the room of Monsieur de Maison-Neufve. Joseph, his nephew, whom I was teaching in my room,—and who had told us, two hours before, that he had much desired that le Borgne, his uncle, might have known what good treatment he had received from us; and that he wished we would write to him of it,—could not believe that he had come, before having seen him: so averse did he suppose him to be to coming here. Le Borgne told us, that having left Richelieu to go to [Trois-Rivières], he had all at once resolved to come here with his wife and his daughter, notwithstanding the dangers. ‘The single purpose which brings me,’ said he, ‘is prayer. It is here that I desire to pray, to be instructed and baptized; but, if you do not agree to it, I will go away to the Hurons, where the black robes who are there with the Algonquins will teach me, as I hope.’ Monsieur de Maison-neufve, touched to see this man, and resolved to spare nothing which was in his power, for the conversion of this poor [Algonquin], entreats us to tell him, on his part, that if he desired to become instructed and settled he had no occasion to go further than this place, where he would assist him to the best of his ability, and would love him as his brother. This man showed him much gratitude for these offers; meanwhile, we strove to lose not a moment of time, to work for his conversion, of which, thenceforth, he gave us good hope,—always attending the prayers and instructions, and all the baptisms among his people. He acted both toward Monsieur de Maison-neufve and toward us, with so great prudence that it is not possible to express it; he has been known to listen two hours to those lessons in the catechism that we were repeating to him, without saying a single word,—in order the better to think upon what he had to do. He betokened so much desire to be instructed that he had himself taught by all, impartially, saying his *Pater* with the old women and children. ‘My daughter,’ said he, ‘has no sense, not to be willing to teach me what she knows.’ That was his exclusive and important business, though formerly unworthy, in his opinion, of his thoughts.¹⁰⁵

The transformation had truly been astounding!

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 235 and 237.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 237, 239, and 241.

The grand chief of the Island Algonquins now became as determined an exponent of Christianity as he had previously been an opponent of the faith. Father du Peron testified that Tessoüat now "inclined his people to do like him"; "he told his people the resolution [to be baptized] which he had taken, and the word that he had given; he spent the rest of the night in haranguing all the [Algonquins], wherein he told wonders of the faith, to encourage them all; [he] deprecated his past behaviour; and [he] said that he hoped God would aid him, being a Christian, to do better in future." He then asked Fathers du Peron and Poncet to prepare him for baptism:

Come, . . . lead us to thy room,—my wife and me,—while the others go to the Father's Mass. Thou shalt instruct us there, in what we are to answer at the ceremony of Baptism. Come, make haste; for there will be some, even till night,—so many persons thou wilt have to baptize. Thou wilt have plenty to do, as well as the Father; because the entire day cannot satisfy my people who all wish to be baptized.

The governor, recognizing the importance of what had transpired, "to settle him [at Montreal], assigned him the same estate that he had granted to Joseph, and appointed two men to work for him,—who, with the two others, made four; and, if he had been able, he would have done still more for a matter of such importance." The Jesuit fathers, "as soon as he was baptized, . . . recognized, quite visibly, very great effects of the grace of God upon him." He showed "a countenance all the more resolved to hold fast for the faith, that he had been for a long time very averse to it." They observed also that, "whereas Paul Tesswehat was the most haughty man in the world, before his Baptism, God gave him, as soon as he became a Christian, the gentleness and the humility of a little child,—having himself instructed even by his little daughter, with a gentleness unequalled, and a Christian simplicity which render[ed] him pliable to all [their] wishes." He insisted on instruction day and night—"he found the days too short, and often stopped over night with [the priests], so as to be instructed during the night"—and "he often spoke to all his people about embracing the faith; refuted the excuse which they offered, of ignorance of our mysteries, by his own example, which he cited to them,—telling them that when they should be baptized, they would learn more easily."¹⁰⁶ At the same time, as the grand chief of the Kichesipirini Algonquins and conscious of their secular concerns, he told the missionaries "that, as many times as he awoke at night, he prayed for his young men who were in the war:

The prayer which I offer . . . I repeat as though after another, who teaches me within; for I know nothing, as yet, to say to God. See how I speak: 'Thou who hast made everything, help our young men, and defend them against our enemies. Thou canst do everything; give them courage to overcome them. Lo, that would be good if our enemies believed in thee, so as to help them, as well as us who hope in thee; but they do not honor thee; forsake them, and defend us who wish now to believe in thee.

Tessoüat found that his new faith even provided him with assistance when hunting:

two or three days after his Baptism, [he went] to the hunt with a young Huron,—whom he ha[d] kept with him through charity, since [the previous] Summer,—finding himself quite late in the day without having taken aught, he kneel[ed] and pray[ed] as

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 241 and 243.

follows: 'Thou great spirit, who knowest everything, seest thou not well, that I shall never succeed unless thou helpst me? Thou canst do everything; help me then;' and, at that instant, lo, he hear[d] a noise, follow[ed] it, and with his companion, kill[ed] two cows and a moose.¹⁰⁷

The result was the ultimate "good trait of Paul Tessouehat[*sic*],—the gratitude that he had for the obligations of his baptism" which led him to tell Monsieur de Maisonneuve "that . . . he wished to finish the remainder of his days near him,—desiring, by a steadfast abode, to make amends for the little time he had to live; and that, when he might wish to go for trade to [Trois-Rivières], he would ask leave of him, and would learn from him whether he would consent thereto." The governor's reply "that he did not desire to restrain him, and that he could go boldly where he pleased, and for as long as he would, and that he would never love him less for it" could only have "delighted him, and attached him to [the French and the Jesuits] more strongly than ever."¹⁰⁸

The conversion of Tessoüat in March 1643 did not mean that all of the Island Algonquins had given up their traditions. The *Jesuit Relation* of 1643-44 reported that some Island Algonquins wintered . . . this year with the Hurons; and one of their Captains, called Agwachhimagan, and by the Frenchmen le Charbon ['the Coal'], did not fail to play one of the tricks of his trade [for] when this wretched man . . . arrived at the village of [S]aint Michel, he secretly gathered the Captains together, and said to them:

My brothers, I have always had as much love for you as I have had hate for the Iroquois, our common enemies,—whose cruelty I experienced, as you know, last year, when I was their prisoner on two occasions, and escaped each time from their hands, when they were about to burn me alive. I learn that your village is moved by the discourses of the black gowns; . . . But you are doubtless ignorant, my brothers, to what these promises of eternal life tend. I have been among the French at Quebec and at [Trois-Rivières]. They have taught me the very substance of their doctrine. I know everything about matters of Faith. But, the more I fathomed their mysteries, the less clearly did I see. They are fables, invented to inspire us with real fear of an imaginary fire; and, in the false hope of good that can never come to us, we involve ourselves in inevitable dangers. I do not speak without having had experience of it. Some years ago, you saw the Algonquins in such numbers that we were the terror of our enemies. Now we are reduced to nothing; disease has exterminated us; war has decimated us; famine pursues us, wherever we go. It is the Faith that brings these misfortunes upon us. That you may not doubt that what I say is true, when I went down to Quebec two years ago, to see what had been the result of the Faith of the Montagnais and Algonquins who had received Baptism, I was shown a house full of one-eyed, lame, crippled, and blind persons; of fleshless skeletons; and of people who all carried death on their countenances. Such are the [domains] of the Faith. That is the House that they esteem (he spoke of the hospital built near Quebec for the sick); those are the people upon whom they fawn, because to resolve to be a Christian is to resign oneself to all those miseries. Besides that, one must expect to be no longer lucky either in fishing or in hunting. Finally, my brothers, . . . if to-day I saw the whole of your village become Christian I would be satisfied to be considered

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 245.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 257 and 259.

the greatest imposter in the world if one of you remained alive [by] the end of the third year. . . . But since those who refuse to worship [their God] are happier than those who are his subjects, if you, my brothers, like me have any feeling and love for yourselves, for your children, and for your country, choose with me to consider him rather as an enemy than as a friend.

The author of the *Relation* commented that “this wretched being, ill favored by nature, was more than half deaf, and bore in his own person the answer to his greatest calumny[;] but . . . there was no one to take part for God, and to ask this man whether it was his faith or his impiety that had caused such infirmity, and had deprived him of his children, his brothers, and his nephews,—whom death had found in the woods, when they fled with him from those appeals for their salvation”¹⁰⁹

The *Jesuit Relation* of 1645-46 provided a valuable commentary on Agwachimagan’s terrible description of the Kichesipirini Algonquins. While speaking “of the settlement of Ville-Marie, in the Island of Montreal,” the Jesuit Superior remarked “that, just as under the name of Iroquois we include various peoples, . . . likewise, also, under the name and language of the Algonquins we include many nations [and] some of these are very small, and others very populous: the Wawiechkariniwek, the Kichesipiriniwek or the [Algonquins] of the Island—because they inhabit an Island which is encountered on the way to the Hurons,—the Onontchataronons or the Iroquet nation, the Nipisiriniens, the Mataouchkairiniwek, the Sagachiganiriniwek, the Kinouchebiiriniwek, and several others.”¹¹⁰ These Algonquin peoples had presumably been represented in various ways in the great councils of 1645 and 1646 with the French, Hurons, and Iroquois that for a time appeared to establish peace. The author of the *Relation* of 1644-45 “observe[d], in passing, that it was necessary to speak in four different languages,—in French, in Huron, in Algonquin, and in Hiroquois [and that they had] interpreters of all those languages.”¹¹¹ The negotiations began after Kiotseaeton, the chief Iroquois diplomat, arrived at Trois-Rivières on 5 July 1645 “almost completely covered with Porcelain beads” and declared that he had “willingly exposed [him]self for the good of peace [and] come therefore to enter into the designs of the French, of the Hurons, and of the Alguonquins[sic].”¹¹² The same order also prevailed in the negotiations, although the Algonquins and Montagnais were the first to invite their Iroquois visitors and captives to a feast as “they gradually accustomed themselves to converse together.”¹¹³

When the negotiations began in earnest, the principle that governed was “that words of

¹⁰⁹*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 26:303, 305, and 307 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁰*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 29:145.

¹¹¹*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 27:293.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 247.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 249.

importance in this country are presents.” The presents accumulated through the summer of negotiation until the last session on 20 September: “When Monsieur the Chevalier de Montmagny had received all the presents . . . , he had them divided into three portions, in accordance with the usages of these peoples; and, after having made his Interpreter speak, he offered one portion to the Hurons [and] another portion to the Algonquins, while the third was for the French.” All disputes having been resolved between the French and the Iroquois, he then “gave two [presents] to the Hurons and the Algonquins, to invite them to express their thoughts freely with reference to the peace; for it was he, properly speaking, who was the author of it and who procured it for these peoples.”¹¹⁴ After “the Hurons had replied to the demand of Monsieur the Governor, and had manifested by . . . presents that they desired peace, an Algonquin arose and gave some presents, of which the following [was] the meaning:

At the first, he threw down a bundle of Beaver skins. ‘This is to show who I am, and to what nation I belong,—I who live in travelling houses built of small pieces of bark.’ Thus they distinguish[ed] the Wandering Algonquins from the Hurons, who [were] sedentary.

At the second, ‘This present will stop your complaints; it will subdue your anger, and will cause our rivers and yours to wash away the blood that has been shed by Algonquins and by Hiroquois.’

‘This third present will give us free entrance to your houses, after breaking down the gates of your villages.’

At the fourth, ‘Here is something wherewith to smoke with one another, both Hiroquois and Algonquins, in the same pipe, as friends do who use tobacco together.

‘The fifth will make us sail in the same ship or in the same canoe; so that, as we shall be but one people, but one village, one house, one Calumet, and one canoe will be needed. The remainder of our words, or of our presents, will be carried to your country.’ Thus he ended his speech.¹¹⁵

The deliberations ended “on the 23rd of September [as] these Hiroquois Ambassadors, accompanied by two Frenchmen, two Algonquins, and two Hurons, returned to their own country, leaving among our [Native peoples], who were now their allies, three men of their nation as hostages, or rather as pledges, of their friendship.”¹¹⁶

The peace that Kiotseaeton made had not been accepted by all of the Five Nations Iroquois, and there were attacks on Algonquins and Montagnais later that fall. The result was a new negotiation as “seven Annierronnon Iroquois and two Hurons, accompanied by [a] Frenchman, . . . appeared at Montreal” on 22 February 1646 and, “after having rejoiced that settlement, [came] down to [Trois-Rivières].” Their making “this journey . . . over the snow was appreciated,” but negotiations awaited the disappearance of ice from the river in May. On May 7th, with the French Governor in attendance, “the most considerable person [among the Iroquois] chanted a song of thanksgiving:

¹¹⁴Ibid., 293 and 295.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 301.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 303.

We were dead, . . . and behold us alive; we were bringing our own heads to be sacrificed to the shades of the Algonquins or of the [M]ontagnais who were massacred last Autumn,—surely anticipating that we should be held guilty of that murder; but Onontio, staying the wrath of the Algonquins, has made our innocence manifest.

Following these words, “they dr[e]w forth a gift, and cast it at the feet of the relatives and allies of the departed.—saying that it was to cleanse the place, all bloody, from a murder committed by treachery; and protesting that they had had no knowledge of it until after the act was done, and that all the Captains of the country had condemned this outrage.” They also “offered the presents which had been confided to them in their own country . . . betokening their joy to see themselves united and allied to the French, the Hurons, and the Algonquins, who [were] the three most considerable Nations with which they ha[d] negotiated peace,—all the others being comprised under these three most important.” The Iroquois presents included “a brasse of Porcelain to kindle a council fire at [Trois-Rivières], and a great necklace of three thousand beads to serve as wood, or fuel for this fire.” As the Jesuit Superior observed, “the [Native people] hold scarcely any assembly without the calumet filled with tobacco in their mouths; and, as fire is necessary to the use of tobacco, they nearly always kindle fires at all their assemblies,—insomuch that it is the same thing with them to light a council fire, or to keep a place suitable for assembling, or a house for visiting one another, as do realtives and friends.” Two days later, “Monsieur our Governor, very prudently adapting himself to the usages among these peoples, sent for those deputies; he dealt with them according to their customs; the Hurons who were there, and the Algonquins, did not fail to be present.” The second present offered by “the Frenchman who underst[ood] the Iroquois language” was made “to signify the satisfaction that he received on seeing the earth leveled, and the hatchet lifted and removed from th eheads of the Hurons and the Algonquins; for, as regards the French, their peace was made from the time of the first interview.” The third present was “a necklace of a thousand Porcelain beads, for assurance that he would keep lighted that council fire which they had requested at [Trois-Rivières], and that the fuel should not fail for it,—that is to say, that they would always be welcome, and that hearing would be given to the Captains who should come to treat of affairs.”¹¹⁷

Although this council was the result of continued Iroquois attacks on the Algonquins, the French Governor seemed far more concerned about relations between the French and Iroquois than about the Algonquins. That may help to explain why “Tesouëhat[sic],—called by the Hurons and the Iroquois, Ondesson; and by the French, le Borgne of the Isle,—seeing that [the French] Interpreter spoke no more, chanted a rather lugubrious song; then, lifting his eyes to Heaven, prayed the Sun to be a spectator and to serve as witness of all that occurred in this action, and with his light to make evident the sincerity of his heart and of his intentions[;] again he chanted another song; and then, raising his

¹¹⁷*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 28: 291, 293, and 295.

voice, he harangued in the name of all the Algonquins, whose words he conveyed:

The first was a protestation that a breach of the peace would not proceed from his side; and, in token of this truth, he presented two robes of Elk skins,—adding, that he had some distrust of the Annierronnons, which he wished to banish by this gift.

The second gift was also of two robes, on which those Ambassadors were to repose themselves, in order to be refreshed from the toil of their journey.

The third conveyed a humble prayer to Onontio [The French governor], that he should not walk all alone in safety within the roads which he had leveled and broken; but that this happiness should also be common to the Algonquins and to the Hurons. In a word, [the Jesuit Superior observed] this man, utterly distrustful and suspicious, was afraid that the French might make their peace in private, without troubling themselves about the [Algonquins], their allies.

The fourth gift gave assurance that the Algonquins had also laid down their arms, and thrown their hatchets into a land unknown to all men.

The fifth requested that no false alarms be given; that the [hunt] be everywhere free; that the landmarks and the boundaries of all those great countries be [lifted]; and that each one should find himself everywhere in his own country.

The sixth assured the Annierronnons that they could freely come to warm themselves at the fire which Onontio had kindled for them at [Trois-Rivières]; that the Algonquins and the Iroquois would smoke there with pleasure, and that their pipes or their calumets would not burn,—that is to say, that fear would cause no one to tremble there. All these gifts were each composed of two Elk robes, handsomely painted and well trimmed in their fashion.

The last included twelve of these beautiful robes, four for each of the three villages of the Annierronnons, entreating those tribes to give liberty to the children of the Algonquins, or even to the adult persons who should still be in their country; with assurances that the fat would not be spared for the stomachs of those who should lead them back, and that they would find ointments with which to anoint their heads,—in a word, he meant that they would be given good cheer, and that their trouble would be amply rewarded.

Was there significance in the fact that, “these gifts accepted, Kioutsæton[sic], principal Ambassador of the Annierronnons, address[ed] the Hurons” and made them two more presents but said nothing to the Algonquins? Several days later, “Monsieur our Governor entertained [the Iroquois] Deputies in the cabin of an Algonquin Captain [and] indicated to them that he had resolved to send two Frenchmen into their country, and that they would probably start in three days[;] this made the Algonquins resolve to give them two of their nation, to be of the party.”¹¹⁸

Tessoiat’s anxiety regarding the pacific intentions of the Iroquois, which he expressed at the Trois-Rivières council on 9 May 1646, proved to be all too well justified. Within four months, the Jesuit journal recorded in August 1646 that:

About this time came the news of the defeat of le [B]orgne by the [O]neiochronons; they captured a woman and killed a man, then came to excuse themselves, saying they thought that those were Hurons. It is said that there were two or [three] Annierronnons in their Company. That took place above the [L]ong Sault; the victors, returning, were defeated by the [Y]roquet people; one prisoner was brought in, and the captive woman

¹¹⁸Ibid., 297, 299, 301, and 303 (the words, “hunt” and “lifted,” represent better translations of “la chasse” and “fussent levées” than do “chase” and “raised” respectively.

was set free.¹¹⁹

As the *Jesuit Relation* of 1645-46 stated that fall, “Teswëhat[*sic*],—otherwise le Borgne of the Island,—Tawichkaron, Captain of the Onontchataronons, and Makatewanakisitch, Captain of the Mataouchkairiniwek, had resolved to dwell [on the Island of Montreal], to spend the winter there, and there to plant Indian corn in the Spring [but] the false reports which were current, that the Annierronons had made only a feigned peace, gave the alarm to the camp, and caused Teswëhat and his troop to dislodge in order to withdraw to [Trois-Rivières].” If that were not sufficiently alarming, “the Annierronnon Iroquois told [the First Nations at Montreal] that the Oneiochronons and the Onontagueronons had not entered into the treaty of peace which the former had made with the Algonquins and the Hurons; and that, consequently, they should hold themselves on their guard, because those tribes had set out to surprise the Hurons, and thence come to attack Montreal.” As “terror seized some of them, who fled like the others[,] Teswëhat, who had withdrawn among the first, sen[t] messengers, one after another, in order to urge those who remained to come down as soon as possible,—that otherwise they [were] all dead.” Since the hunt was “excellent in these quarters, because the game, during the war, was as in a neutral region, where the enemy scoured neither the open country nor the woods[,] those two squads, having taken resolution to remain, . . . passed the winter without any harm.” The Iroquois were active, however, in other areas: “they . . . nearly destroyed a village of Hurons; and . . . Teswëhat, going back to his own country, lost one of those who accompanied him, in an ambush that they set for him,—this was a young man who, being hit by an arquebus shot, was carried back to Montreal” and died there. The Jesuit Superior expressed his own fear of the Iroquois: “Those barbarians have shown that they were friends to the French; but if they came to seek Algonquins or Hurons, and found none of them, I would not like them to encounter Europeans when they had the advantage,—for, when they come to war, they take no pleasure in returning empty-handed to their own country; they very often make enemies for themselves, when they have none.”¹²⁰

Although Tessoüat survived these Iroquois attacks during 1646, other chiefs of the Kichesipirini Algonquins were less fortunate. The Jesuit Journal recorded in December 1646 that “this month we received news of the death of a wretched Apostate at [Trois-Rivières], named Abdon, or [L]a [G]renouille[‘the frog’].”¹²¹ The *Relation* of 1647 stated that a spiritual warning in the form of a “blow happened to the person of an Apostate named Joseph Ourmosotiscouchie,—in vulgar parlance, la Grenouille[‘the Frog’]” who was living at Trois-Rivières.” The apparent confusion might well reflect the fact that “that name

¹¹⁹Ibid., 225.

¹²⁰*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 29:145, 147, and 149; cf. *ibid.*, 229, for a further description of the ambush of Tessoüat.

¹²¹*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 28:249.

... had been borne by several Captains of his country[; it] had been given to him in order to make them live again [and it] rendered him proud and insolent." The Jesuits saw "his vehement nature [as causing] him to break forth into excesses which carried him far into contempt; and, as the Faith does not well agree with pride, he conceived such a horror for it that he could not, at times, contain his blasphemies." The Algonquins had been stricken during the fall of 1646 by "a disease which was leading them even to the gates of death"; the fact that, "having recourse to God, they recovered from it almost by a miracle[,] greatly consoled the good, and devoutly touched the wicked and the infidels." When "this miserable Apostate[, who] could not endure either that disease or its cure [for] he attributed the sickness to our belief, and health to the Demon . . . was finally attacked, . . . he believed that the Faith was causing him this misfortune." He assailed "one of our Fathers . . . going, toward evening, to offer prayer to God in the cabins . . . : 'What art thou doing here? Is it not well known throughout the earth that you cause men to die by your prayers? Do we not see that all those who listen to you soon lose life?'"¹²²

Calling upon his own traditions, Oumosotiscouchie "made a great feast [that night and] invited to it many people, and especially those whom he thought he had [persuaded] by his speeches." He told "this assembly that he d[id] not expect his cures through the prayers, but only through his dreams and visions, and through the other [customs] which his nation ha[d] always employed:

Know then . . . that I shall get well if three things are granted me. The first is, that I be given a dog which shall be made to bear the name of some person of consideration.

The second, that I be given an adopted son, who shall be called Wisanté (he meant to say '*vostre santé*'—having learned this word from the French, which he could not pronounce because they have no 'v' consonant). The third, that an eat-all feast be made. If these three things be granted me, I am cured . . .

There were "Christians . . . present at that banquet [who] lowered their heads . . . indicating that those dreams were no longer in season." But "the Pagans dared not resist that man's desires [and] they fulfilled them in every point, that very night,—and with such favorable success, as he said, that he at Sunrise proclaimed himself wholly cured." He presented himself to the people and said "evrywhere that the fulfilment of his dreams ha[d] been the end of his malady, and the restoration of his health." Suddenly, however, "a violent fever seize[d] him in the midst of his triumph, prostrate[d] him to the earth, thr[ew] him into a wreck and into torments so unusual that he foamed like one possessed." "Those of his cabin—frightened, and fearing lest he might beat some one to death— . . . tied him [and] threw over him a blanket, so as to conceal his fury and his rage." Although "a good Christian widow" ran to warn the priests and "notice [was] given to a Surgeon [who ran] thither, . . . the Surgeon, lifting the blanket, found him stone-dead,—the drivel and foam issuing from both sides of his mouth, as with a man who had been . . . strangled."¹²³

¹²²*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 31:261 and 263.

Also lost for a time was “the lawful wife of that miserable Apostate, whose death was abominable before God and before men.” She had seen “herself ill-treated by her husband [and] left him in order to go up with her Father-in-law to her own country [but] on the way, the Hiroquois [fell] upon their squad [and] took away that poor wretched woman with another who was of her company.” When “this news [was] brought to [Trois-Rivières, it] afflicted her whole kindred, but especially a Christian woman who declared: ‘I do not mourn her captivity, . . . I do not regret her absence; but I cannot console myself about the loss of her soul’.” When “the Father to whom she was relating her troubles told her that it was a just punishment, that [the widow] had neglected the opportunity of her salvation, she answered:

It is true, . . . but alas! her relatives, and especially her husband, drove her into that misfortune. However, . . . I have a firm belief that God will show her mercy. I am going to ask his pardon for her sins; and that my prayer may be more acceptable to him, I desire to confess and receive communion. Hast thou not taught me that God [is] all-powerful? What harm would there be in asking him to deliver her from the hands of her enemies?

And “her prayers were not offered in vain [for] some time after, those two poor captives were seen to appear at [Trois-Rivières after a war-party of Hurons freed them], and God knows with what joy that good Christian received them.”¹²⁴

These events indicated how intense the relationship between the French and the First Nations had become by the fourth decade of the seventeenth century. The *Jesuit Relation* of 1647-48 illustrated the subtleties of the situation in regard to the well-being of the community of Saint Joseph at Sillery. Father Jerome Lalemant reported on “an incident that [was] all the more remarkable that it [was] quite new in these countries.” The problem related to the fact that “the ships brought out so much and such strong liquor, to sell secretly to the [Native peoples], that the disorder to which it gave rise was exceedingly deplorable.” Consultations with the First Nations appeared necessary and “Monsieur d’Ailleboust, [the] new Governor, wishing to remedy the evil, sent for the Captains of the [First Nations], and asked them what they thought on the subject.” As the Jesuit Superior observed, “it [was] a prudent act to govern these peoples by the very persons who belong to their nation.” The Christians “replied that they had long desired that the drunkenness that crosse[d] the sea on board [the French] ships should not land in their cabins [but] they could not induce their people to point out those who sold them these liquors in secret.” The Governor responded: “They must, then, submit to the laws that will be enacted against their excesses.” The Captains of the First Nations “agreed to this, and the drum was beaten, at the close of high Mass, at the Residence of Saint Joseph[;] all the [Native peoples] listened; the French residents met with them. First, “an Interpreter, who held the ordinance in his hand, read it to the French; he then handed it to a [Native] Captain,

¹²³Ibid., 263 and 265.

¹²⁴Ibid., 269 and 271.

interpreting its meaning to him, so that he might publish it among his people." The ordinance "contained a prohibition on the part of Monsieur the Governor, and of the Captains of the [First Nations], to sell or purchase those liquors, and especially to drink of them to excess, on penalty of the punishments set forth in the ordinance; also an order to all who had abandoned or who would not profess the Faith to leave that Residence, where neither Monsieur [the] Governor nor the Captains of the [First Nations] would allow any Apostate to remain." The Jesuit Superior recognized that, "from the beginning of the world to the coming of the French, the [First Nations had] never known what it was so solemnly to forbid anything to their people, under any penalty, however slight[, for] they [were] free people, each of whom consider[ed] himself of as much consequence as the others [and] they submit[ted] to their chiefs only in so far as it please[d] them." Despite these facts, "the Captain delivered a powerful harangue; and, inasmuch as he well knew that the [Native people] would not recognize the prohibition enacted by a Frenchman, he repeated these words several times:

It is not only the Captain of the French who speaks to you but also such and such Captains (whose names he mentioned). I also assure you with them that, if any one should be guilty of the prohibited offenses, we will give him up to the laws and the usages of the French.

It was no exaggeration for Father Lalemant to say that "this [was] the most important public act of jurisdiction that [had] been performed among the [Native peoples] since [he had come to] this [N]ew World." It was also quite honest of him to add: "It is good to bring them gradually under the control of those whom God has chosen to command them; for, although freedom is the greatest pleasure of human life, nevertheless, as it might degenerate into license, or rather into the liberty of Wild Asses, it must be regulated and subjected to the rules emanating from eternal law."¹²⁵

This ordinance clearly required an acceptance of the authority of the Captains of First Nations as well as of the Governor of the French. That was presumably the reason it included "the order commanding Apostates to leave the Residence of [Saint Joseph]." The *Relation* noted that "Paul Tesouehat[sic], commonly called le Borgne of the Island, was somewhat astonished [since,] as he did not profess Christianity, he saw very well that it applied to him." It was "Noel Negabamat, one of [their] worthy Christian Captains, who found him quite pensive [and] said to him:

I have urged thee for so many years to yield to God and to embrace prayer firmly, and thou hast never given a positive answer. Speak, now; for I tell thee, in good fellowship, that I will have no one near me who does not firmly believe in God. I treat thee as I formerly desired to be myself treated. When Father le Jeune instructed me, he tried me for a considerable time. I was thankful to him for this; but finally, when I took the resolution truly to embrace the Faith, I said to him: 'My Father, I have not two tongues; my heart and my lips speak the same language. I assure thee that I really believe in him who has made all. I know not the future; but, if ever I

¹²⁵*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 33:49, 51, and 53.

break my word, drive me far away from here.' That is what I asked the Father, and that is what we wish to give thee. Open thy mouth, and give free vent to what is hidden in thy heart.

Tessouïat, the author of the *Relation* concluded, who had "so often thundered forth in the gatherings of his People, replied that he could not speak until his warriors had returned from the war; but he was given to understand that, if he lost his speech, he would have to find his legs."¹²⁶

It would appear that Tessouïat did not make any profession of Christian faith at Saint Joseph for the *Jesuit Relation* of 1653-54 reported from Trois-Rivières "that at last Paul Tessouehat[sic],—the famous one-eyed man, formerly Captain of the Algonquins of the Island, who was the orator of his age in these parts, as well as the most forcible speaker of his time,—at last, I say, this man all swelled up with pride, has died in Christian humility, giving, toward the end of his life, convincing proofs of his salvation." "God's Judgments are wonderful!" the Jesuit Superior asserted, "The infinite goodness—wishing to save this man, who was formerly so opposed, through his pride, to the Christian Faith and to grace—inclined him to humility, by an illness which lasted two years." In the midst of "his sickness, being humbled before God, he often said to the Father who had charge of his soul, upon his coming to visit him: 'Thou givest me pleasure; draw near, and tell me what I must do to die well; I shall be glad to listen to thee.'" And "when the Father spoke to him about God's greatness, and the rashness of those who resisted him by their wrongdoing, that poor man, touched to the bottom of his heart, cried out: 'Approach, approach, my Father, and let me disclose to thee all the wounds of my souls, and all the wickedness of my heart[;] pray him who made all things to remove all my sins from my path, in order that, when I die, I may not encounter a single one of them.'" He would also, "from time to time[,] take his Crucifix and tenderly kiss it:

It is in thee alone, . . . that I have put my trust. Since thou didst die, therefore I should die; and since thou didst die for my sins, have mercy on me and open the door of thy house to me. I hate this sinful carcass, and I will leave it when thou shalt ordain.

In expression of this attitude, "he ceased to pay any attention whatever to his body, to which he had been so attached, not heeding any longer the little comforts that are furnished to the sick,—this [was] especially the case after some vision or other that he had in his sleep [when] he found himself at the edge of a high mountain whose summit was lost to sight, and heard a voice saying to him repeatedly: 'Climb this mountain; it is the road that thou must take'." As he described the vision:

At the sound of that voice, . . . I was seized with a great fright, and my strength was insufficient to climb a mountain which appeared to me beset with precipices. Thus depressed, I perceived a high ladder, and at my side a Father, who, taking me by the hand, made me ascend without much difficulty.

As the Jesuit Superior concluded, "That vision gave him great comfort and a strong hope of attaining Heaven through Jesus Christ, who is that Mountain."¹²⁷

¹²⁶Ibid., 53 and 55.

The fame of the Island Algonquin and of their grand chief lived on through the second half of the century. The French trader and agent Nicholas Perrot, in his "Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America" written late in the seventeenth century, provided eloquent testimony to that effect:

Between Creuse River and the Calumets there is a large island, commonly called Isle du Borgne, otherwise called Isle des Allumettes. It is named Isle du Borgne because the chief of the Algonkin[sic] village which was established there was a one-eyed man. He had under his command there four hundred warriors, and was regarded as the terror of all the peoples, even the Irroquois[sic]. This chief gathered a certain toll from all travellers who went down to the French colony, for permission to pass by that place, and without it he would not allow them to go any farther. It was therefore necessary to submit to his demands, whether ascending or descending [the river]; and in order to find him one was obliged to go by the main channel, which is toward the south of the island; the lesser channel, which is much shorter, is at the north. When the Hurons [who were travelling to Quebec in 1650 with a detachment of French soldiers and a priest] reached the upper end of the island, they intended to pass by the village, according to custom, to wait upon the chief and ask his permission to pass by [his village]; but Father l'Allemand told them that the French, being masters of the country, were not obliged to do that, and persuaded them to follow the small channel. Le Borgne was soon informed of this, and sent all his warriors to bring all the Hurons to the village; and after they were asked the reason why they had planned to pass without his permission they excused themselves by saying that it was Father l'Allemand who had prevented them from asking it, and that he had made them believe that the French were the masters of the nations. Le Borgne seized Father l'Allemand and had him suspended from a tree by the arm-pits, telling him that the French were not the masters of his country; and that in it he alone was acknowledged as chief, and they [all] were under his authority.¹²⁸

This report of the particular event may well be doubted, because it was Father Paul Ragueneau who brought the shattered remnants of the Huron confederacy to Quebec in 1650, and it is doubtful that the elderly Tessoüat was at the Island in 1650. The story recounted by Perrot remains eloquent testimony of the power that the grand chief of the Kichesipirini Algonquins had once exercised over the nations. Father Ragueneau, writing the *Jesuit Relation* of 1649-50, spoke to the domination and the decline:

When I ascended the great River, only thirteen years ago, I had seen it bordered with large numbers of people of the Algonquin tongue, who knew no God. These, in the midst of their unbelief, looked upon themselves as the Gods of the earth, for the reason that nothing was lacking to them in the richness of their fisheries, their hunting-grounds, and the traffic which they carried on with allied nations; add to which, they were the terror of their enemies. Since they have embraced the faith, and adored the Cross of Jesus Christ, ha has given them, as their lot, a portion of that Cross,—verily a heavy one, having made them a prey to miseries, torments, and cruel deaths; in a word, they are a people wiped off the face of the earth.¹²⁹

¹²⁷*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 41:179 and 181.

¹²⁸*The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, trans. and ed. Emma Helen Blair (2 vols.; Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1911), 1:177.

¹²⁹*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 35:205. He concluded this epitaph for a great people: "Our sole consolation is that, having died Christians, they have entered on the heritage of true children of God."

Tessouïat, the “orator of the age in these parts,” was clearly one of the great leaders among the many who have led the First Nations through the triumphs and tragedies of interaction with the European newcomers and invaders. Historical understanding of his career has been impeded by one of the small misfortunes of a difficult life, the almost parenthetical observation—probably inserted by the Jesuit Superior at Quebec when he included Father Daniel’s letter from the Island of the Algonquins in his *Relation* of 1636—that “the body of a recently-deceased Captain . . . [that] had not yet been ‘cached’ “ happened to be this chief: “it was le Borgne of the Island.”¹³⁰ The powerful descriptions of this “one-eyed Captain” provided in the *Jesuit Relations* both before and after the summer of 1636 lead one to doubt this ascription. It is possible that the Bessouat of 1603 was not the Tessouïat who died in 1653, although Tessouïat did assert about 1640 that he had “ruled from his youth.” The fact that the name of a chief would “be given to another, and presents . . . offered to his relatives” precludes any conclusion that the Tessouïat who appears so frequently in the records is always the same person, but it seems far more certain that the “one-eyed Captain” who was mentioned by Champlain as chief of the Island Algonquins was the same person who struggled over the next two decades to maintain his position and people.¹³¹ A resolution for this historical problem is based on the fact that Le Grenouille (“the Frog”) died in a clash with the Iroquois in 1636. The *Relation* of 1636 speaks more than once of his death but says nothing about the ceremonies that followed his death.¹³² It is clear, however, that this name was borne several years later by one of “the two principal chiefs” known as Abdon.¹³³ If Le Grenouille was the chief “cached” in 1636, then Le Borgne is the person who bore the name Tessouïat through most (if not all) of the period discussed in this paper.¹³⁴

The history of the Kichesipirini Algonquins, the people known to the French newcomers as the Algonquins of the Island, is the story of a proud and determined people who had established a dominant position on the Ottawa River by the time of the first recorded visit by Champlain in 1613. They took advantage of their position on an

¹³⁰*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 9:271.

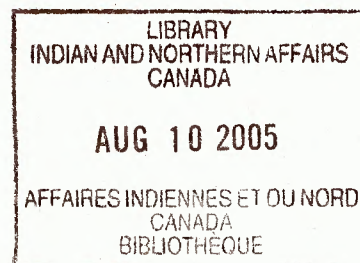
¹³¹The explanation of the “caching” ceremony is to be found in *ibid.*, 277.

¹³²*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 9:95 and 245.

¹³³*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 24:191.

¹³⁴This conclusion requires revision of both the notes provided in *Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 8:296 and 297 (where as many as four “Le Borgnes” are suggested), and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 1: 1000 to 1700 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 638-41 (where as many as three “Tessouïats” are described). The note that follows these entries in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, suggesting that “the biography of TESSOUAT (d. 1654) may possibly combine the careers of two chiefs but it appears more likely that the events recorded concern one man, who, like many other Indians of his time, wavered in his allegiance to the Christian faith” (641), is not signed but points in the right direction!

important trade route to demand payment from those passing through their country. Father Sagard's experience in 1624 suggests that the Algonquins of the Island demanded corn and flour from those passing through in order to supplement their fishing and hunting. The dominance they maintained over the Hurons speaks volumes for their skill in diplomacy and war. Tessoüat was surely a vital factor in this assertion of power, and we may be grateful to the challenge from the French that led him to assert his social significance about 1640. The situation of the Kichesipirini Algonquins clearly weakened during the following decade. Tessoüat appears to have been resident in the St. Lawrence Valley more of the time than at the Island, and his conversion to Christianity in 1643 was one of the notable events of the era (even if he became apostate later in the decade and only returned to the faith during the last two years of illness). The struggle between the traditional ways of the Algonquins and the new way of prayer taught by the Jesuits was intense and involved psychological warfare on both sides. The physical situation was surely as Agwachimagan sketched it to the Hurons about the time of Tessoüat's conversion. Where they had once appeared "in such numbers that we were the terror of our enemies," they had been "reduced to nothing; disease has exterminated us; war has decimated us; famine pursues us."¹³⁵ The Huron tragedy occurred more abruptly, but the experience of the Algonquins of the Island was an equally tragic denial of the future of a First Nation. Where the French developed in Canada (although themselves subjected to alien conquest a century later) and France remained a great power for two centuries more, the Kichesipirini Algonquins were denied the development of the polity that they surely deserved.



¹³⁵*Jesuit Relations*, ed. Thwaites, 26:303.