“Seeing These Good Souls Adore God in the Midst of the Woods”

The Christianization of Algonquian Nomads in the Jesuit Relations of the 1640s

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Abstract

Up to 1647, Jesuit missionaries in New France attempting to evangelize nomadic Algonquians of North America’s subarctic region were unable to follow these peoples, as they wished, in their seasonal hunts. The mission sources, especially the early Jesuit Relations, indicate that it was Algonquian neophytes of the Jesuit mission villages of Sillery and La Conception who themselves attracted other natives to Christianity. A veritable Native American apostolate was thus in existence by the 1640s, based in part on the complex kinship networks of the nomads. Thus it appears that during that decade, the Jesuits of New France adopted a new strategy of evangelization, based partly on the kinship networks of the nomads, which allowed for the natives’ greater autonomy in communicating and embracing Catholicism. A difficulty faced by the Jesuit editors of the Relations was how to concede to the culture of the nomads without offending their devout, European readers of the era of the “great confinement,” upon whom the missionaries depended for financial support. One way the Jesuits favorably portrayed nomadic neophytes—who were often unaccompanied by a missionary in their travels—was by underscoring the importance during hunting season of memory-based and material aids for Catholic prayer (Christian calendars, icons, rosaries, crucifixes, oratories in the woods, etc.). Thus, in the Jesuit literature, the gradual harmonization between Native American mobility and the Catholic liturgy was the

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key feature of the missionaries’ adaptation to the aboriginal context of the 1640s—a defining period for the Jesuit apostolate in North America through the rest of the seventeenth century.

Keywords

New France – nomadic Algonquian societies – Jesuit evangelization – native apostolate – Jesuit Relations – material culture of religion – devotional objects

This article concerns religious and spiritual aspects of Jesuit missionary interactions with Algonquian peoples in North America in the early seventeenth century. An attempt is made here to reconstruct from Jesuit writings—particularly selections from early volumes of the *Jesuit Relations* (1632–1673) which were published annually in Paris—the manner in which nomadic peoples of America’s Subarctic adopted the Catholicism preached by the missionaries. Of course, evidence from the *Relations* cannot itself prove why and how Christianity was effectively received by the nomads. However, the *Relations* do enable us to place the Jesuits’ adaptations to the cultural universe of the natives within their original ideological context. What was the symbolic and spiritual context in which they described their developing work of evangelization among the nomadic Algonquians in the 1640s? How do the Jesuits’ assertions revise our understanding of other strategies adopted in the spiritual thought of the time?

Ethnohistorical approaches to the mission have, at best, been concerned only in superficial ways with the Jesuits’ spiritual and psychological motives, thus hampering more comprehensive and balanced considerations of relations between the missionaries and the natives. Yet one way to more fully restore the Native American dimension of the mission’s history is to better grasp the importance of the natives in the spiritual history of the Jesuits. This article, thus, while not offered as a definitive historical reconstruction based equally on archaeological, ethnological, and anthropological data, sets up a range of possibilities regarding the natives’ reception and transformation of Christianity, by means of empirical and circumstantial data drawn from the missionary accounts themselves.

The history of the evangelization of America’s northeastern natives, insofar as it has been written from the perspective of “conversion” and of adherence to a new religion, has failed to date to offer an operational model for Native
Americans’ evangelization under the French colonial regime. As Kenneth Morrison has argued, “conversion poorly describes the complex processes of religious change” observed in the mission setting.\(^1\) Indeed, it may have been that Christianization did not effect ruptures with the natives’ original cultural universe, or with a non-Christian past, or even that it did not cause a confrontation between two cultures after the 1630s. As it is the purpose of this article to demonstrate, the Jesuit sources suggest this was strongly the case among the nomadic Algonquians in the 1640s.

### Failure of the Jesuit Strategy of Sedentarization

After an unsuccessful journey into the wilderness to evangelize Canada’s hunter-gatherer Montagnais people in the winter of 1633, the superior of the Jesuit mission to New France, Paul Le Jeune (1591–1664), began discouraging other missionaries from accompanying these nomads in their seasonal travels.\(^2\) He began instead to call for the Montagnais’ fixed settlement and Frenchification. To this end, between 1637 and 1641, he established two mission villages, Sillery near Quebec and La Conception at Trois-Rivières.\(^3\) Conceived as a village after the European mode, Sillery was equipped with French-style houses, a chapel, and a hospital for its residents, a small population of native converts to Christianity and their families. To cover the expenses of this project, Le Jeune was able to turn to a network of pious Catholic elites in France who were already somewhat apprised of the North American situation, thanks to the annual publication in Paris since 1632 of the missionaries’ *Relations de la Nouvelle France*.

This strategy of incorporating Native Americans into French settlements in the Saint Lawrence River Valley quickly proved itself ill-adapted to the commercial needs of New France, which at the time was very dependent upon the

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1. Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 147.
2. Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).
3. Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*, 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896–1901), 20:237; 22:273; 23:303–307. Hereafter cited as JR. The population of the villages was about 150 persons in 1643, compared to about 300 French in all of New France in this period. There were four stone houses built for the leading natives of the villages in 1642; the rest of the population lived in small habitations made of bark. On the hospital, see JR 20:237, 25:395.
fur trade. Trade with the Montagnais and other populations was more profitable when those showing openness to the French and to Christianity remained in their original sociocultural contexts, better able to access to the natural resources of the continent and to continue cultivating relationships with more remote, subarctic peoples who supplied them with pelttries. For this reason, in 1641, the inhabitants of Saguenay and Sillery who came to the trading post at Tadoussac refused to take the Jesuit Jean de Quen (c.1603–1659), when he asked, to visit these northern nations. The subarctic region, abounding in game, remained inaccessible to the French, including the Jesuits, up to 1647.

The fact that tensions existed between religious and commercial priorities generally, and specifically between the goal of the natives’ sedentarization and the exigencies of the fur trade, cautions against our taking the Jesuits’ descriptions of Sillery and La Conception at face value. The Jesuit project of settling and civilizing the natives contradicted the missionaries’ move to adapt to local circumstances. It should be noted as well (although this alone does not explain the shift in strategy), that epidemics, as well as the Iroquois Wars that menaced the Laurentian colony beginning in 1641, also did not favor the permanent settlement of native families won over to Christianity.

At the end of the 1630s, the Jesuits abandoned their civilizing program. The mission shifted, differently, to a situation in which the neophytes of Sillery and La Conception began mediating between the Jesuits and the northern, subarctic populations—especially the Montagnais, Atikamekws, and

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4 Michel Lavoie speaks of a strategy of establishing French sovereignty in the colony by means of settling the natives. Lavoie, *Le Domaine du roi, 1652–1859* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2010), 271.
5 JR 21:99.
6 Nelson-Martin Dawson, *Fourrures et forêts métissèrent les Montagnais: Regards sur les sangs-mêlés au Royaume du Saguenay* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2011), 11; Antonio Dragon, *Trente robes noires au Saguenay* (Chicoutimi: Société historique du Saguenay, 1971), 53. See also JR 31:341 and 33:29 on Jean de Quen’s first voyage to Lac Saint-Jean (Lake Piougamik) to evangelize the natives there beginning in the summer of 1647.
7 Tensions over religious and commercial priorities existed from the beginning of North America’s evangelization, as is seen following the commencement of the Franciscan Recollet apostolate in 1615. Caroline Galland, *Pour la gloire de Dieu et du Roi: Les récollets en Nouvelle-France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Cerf, 2012), 287–293.
8 JR 21:21, 60–78; 22:93.
9 Alain Beaulieu, *Convertir les fils de Caïn: Jésuites et Amérindiens nomades en Nouvelle-France, 1632–1642* (Quebec: Nuit Blanche, 1990), 152–153.
Pessamits, the groups most often cited by the Jesuits, although the names used in the mission sources are varied and ambiguous.\(^{10}\) The part-time residents of the mission villages, known as domiciliés, began to stand in for the Jesuits in evangelizing these groups. As the missionaries reported in the Relation published in 1642, “it must be confessed, that it was not we who won them [the Saguenay natives], but our neophytes, or new Christians of the residence of Saint Joseph [Sillery].”\(^ {11}\)

In other words, the Jesuits began to recognize dispositions in the natives which expressed Christian spirituality in a way that was “natural” to them rather than of European origins. This shift in perspective corresponded with one in Europe, where the social context of Catholicism and its ecclesiastical controls were giving way to a more personalized and free sort of piety.\(^ {12}\) This is not to say, however, that the Jesuits’ increased openness to interiorized expressions of Native American Christianity, as evidenced in mission writings from

\(^{10}\) Dawson, *Fou rures et forêts métissèrent les Montagnais*. In this era, the names of Algonquian groups were unstable. Hence the generic terms used by the Jesuits in the 1640s: “some small Nations that are scattered here and there throughout the country” (JR 22:219); “nations of the north” (JR 29:65). In 1650, in an essential document to which we will return, Jean de Quen enjoined the missionaries of Tadoussac to draw up an inventory of these groups, being careful to distinguish “by nations and by families.” Jean de Quen, “Règlement de la mission de Tadoussac” [c. September 1650], in *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, vol. 7: *Le Témoignage du sang (1647–1650)*, ed. Lucien Campeau (Rome: IHSI/Montreal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1994) [MMSI, vol. 59: *Missiones Occidentales*], 677. Linguists employ the term “Nêhiraw” to signify these descendants of the Cree, Innu, Naskapi, or Atikamekw. John E. Bishop and Kevin Brousseau, “The End of the Jesuit Lexicographic Tradition in Nêhirawêwin: Jean-Baptiste de la Brosse and His Compilation of the *Radicum Montanarum Silva* (1766–1772),” *Historiographia Linguistica* 38/3 (2011): 293–324.

\(^{11}\) JR 21:81. See also JR 22:239. Additionally, Barthélemy Vimont wrote in the Relation of 1644, “To give a general idea of the Christians of Saint Joseph […]. It is they who first received the faith, who have borne it to other nations” (JR 25:335). Similarly, at the beginning of 1643, Huron neophytes even began to replace the Jesuits as instructors of Christianity among their compatriots and other nations. Like the domiciliés, they tried to make it more attractive to their fellows. As Jérôme Lalemant wrote of some Huron Christians, “they preach […] the holiness of the Christian law; they […] imperceptibly open the door for us to many great nations who could not hear our name without a shudder, and who had looked upon us in the past only as persons who brought misfortune upon them” (JR 27:67–69).

\(^{12}\) René Taven eaux, *Le catholicisme dans la France classique (1610–1715)*, 2 vols. (Paris: SEDES, 1980), 2:424–425.
1640 onward, stemmed mostly from this development in European Catholicism, rather than in equal measure from North America’s native cultures. Indeed, the missionaries’ shift toward a more personal piety occasioned new opportunities for the Jesuits—however transitive—to open up further to the spirituality of the nomads. Therefore, the changing parameters of the Jesuit apostolate invite us to give credit to their own accounts of how they evangelized the Algonquians. They ask us, as well, to consider intersubjectivity and symbolism present in their Relations.

The Jesuits described some neophytes as preaching the Gospel to their compatriots. One such lay preacher was Charles Meiaskouat, a Montagnais of Saguenay settled at Sillery, who accompanied Jean de Quen in his first mission to Tadoussac in 1641. During that journey, Meiaskouat convinced other peoples of the interior to ally themselves to Sillery. Likewise in subsequent years, the Jesuits relied on neophytes to carry “the name of Jesus Christ into all these little nations, with whom they have commerce.” In 1642, Paul Ragueneau wrote to Le Jeune, “Of course, by thoroughly converting one nation we greatly further the conversion of others for which we do not even labor. I am quite convinced of this.”

Innu Kinship Networks

In the Relations, the appearance of a native apostolate implies that successful Christianization no longer demanded the natives’ sedentarization. Instead, it appears to have been based on what Rémi Savard has called “the astonishing scalability of the kinship system” of the Canadian natives. What the Jesuits at times presented as new alliances between the domiciliés and the “interior” or “northern” nations seem in reality to have obeyed already established Innu kinship patterns—relationships that crisscrossed the Quebec-Labrador peninsula.
which were themselves focused on small groups that shifted seasonally. Territory and kinship being inseparable, the mission residents visited their “relatives” in the backcountry for several months. Around 1642, the Jesuits grasped the complexity of the northern Algonquian kinship networks, which centered on multi-family units subdivided into hunting groups. Thus, on October 4, 1642, Le Jeune announced a new strategy of evangelization: “[W]e have never seen more clearly how to instruct them, and the Gospel has never been expounded here more peacefully, than since about eight months.” From that point forward, the Jesuits’ strategy did not fundamentally change: the missionaries evangelized the Abenakis in the same way in the second half of the century.

Sillery and La Conception: Places of Exchange and Transformation

In lieu of French-styled villages—a project advanced by Le Jeune in the 1630s—the residences of Sillery and La Conception arose as spaces of encounter between groups of hunters who were often “related.” Above all, they were spaces of transformation of the Algonquians into partners for the work of Christianization. For example, a domicilié of Sillery went to Trois-Rivières to urge an Atikamekw to convert, reminding him, “We shall be very soon relatives indeed; my true relatives are those who believe in God […] for I shall be eternally with them […]. The kinship that we have according to the flesh, is a trifling matter: thou must be baptized, to be my true relative.” This was not an isolated case, because Jérôme Lalemant (1593–1673) declared in 1646: “The Attikameques [Atikameqws] […] have received the faith from the Christians of St. Joseph. One of the captains of this residence derived his origin from that nation […]. A good widow […] has done wonders in that country,

18 On alliances among peoples from the interior (those of Tadoussac) and the people of Sillery, see JR 33:39–41.
19 José Mailhot, *Au pays des Inns: Les Gens de Sheshatshit* (Montréal: Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1993), 9ff. On the vital and symbolic role of the interior of the land (*Nutshimit*) among contemporary coastal Inns, which retrospectively enlightens us on its importance in earlier epochs, see Naomi Fontaine, *Kaessipan* (Montréal: Mémoire d’encrier, 2011), 63–97.
20 JR 22:309.
21 Muriel Clair, “Du décor rêvé au croyant aimé: Une histoire des décors des chapelles de mission jésuite en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Québec à Montréal, 2008), ch. 3.
22 JR 20:279.
going to visit her nephew and nieces." All of this seems to indicate that a Native American apostolate was constituted through the agency of neophytes who for many years frequented the Jesuit residences of the Laurentian colony. These “ambassadors of the faith” went from cohabiting with the Black Robes to converting their “relatives” with greater ease than the missionaries could have done. They were not Frenchified but instead became indispensable cultural and spiritual mediators.

The domiciliés of Sillery enjoyed a significant degree of independence from the Jesuits. In 1640, when the Montagnais returned to the mission at the end of an epidemic, they assembled together without any priests present in order to decide upon the manner of their settlement and to elect their “civil chiefs.” The Jesuits helped organize the assembly but did not participate in it. The choice of a “prayer captain,” too, was left exclusively to the natives’ discretion. Furthermore, even Sillery’s four French-styled houses and two chapels were not places of Frenchification. Instead, social cohesion in the mission was achieved in deference to the indigenous community’s preferences and to its leaders. Indigenous social structures perdured at Sillery.

23 JR 29:67.
24 On the fundamental role of relatives (parentes) in the Jesuit apostolate in New France, see Muriel Clair, “Corps et décor: Les reliques dans les chapelles amérindiennes en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle,” in Reliques modernes: Cultes et usages chrétiens des corps saints des Réformes au révolutions, vol. 2, ed. Philippe Boutry, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, and Dominique Julia (Paris: EHESS, 2009), 812–814. In Pierre-Michel Laure’s Apparat français-montagnais of 1720, we find the expression “Jerussa ka itutamauat” or “Ambassadeur de Jésus-Christ.” Laure, Apparat français-montagnais, ed. David Eaton Cooter (Sillery: Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1988), 42.
25 JR 18:97–103.
26 JR 18:169. See also, in September 1643, during an assembly composed only of natives, the election of Pierre Tregatin as “Maistre des Prières” (JR 24:166). These prayer masters are often termed “dogiques” in the Relations.
27 It appears that providing a French-styled house to a family was a mark of favor conferred on neophytes most zealous in the Jesuits’ cause, as was the case with the aforementioned Charles Meiskouat. On the role of Western-style houses in the formation of inegalitarian societies, see the case study on the Innus, or present-day Sheshatshuts, in Mailhot, Au pays des Innus, 53–78. Regarding the chapels at Sillery, two were used by the neophytes before 1644, when the Hospitalières began their ministry, one by the Algonquians (Chapelle de l’Hôtel-Dieu), and another by the Montagnais (the chapel in the Jesuit residence). JR 24:57. On the bicephalous organization of the village (and also of the two cemeteries), see Clair, “Du décor rêvé au croyant aimé,” 207–208; JR 22:169–173; 23:305–307.
28 JR 18:105–107, 121–125.
A major result of this was that domestic spaces, as described in the Relations, were invested with a sacred significance ordinarily reserved, back in Europe, for Catholic shrines. Early in the 1640s, in their homes made of bark, neophytes who were temporarily enclosed in the “French” village employed their bodies in exterior expressions of Catholic piety: kneeling on the ground, praying aloud with their hands joined together, and holding rosaries or wearing the beads around their necks in a particular way. At the same time, the Jesuits presented the larger village structure as disposing native souls toward civil obedience, while the village hospital healed and consecrated Algonquian bodies. Commenting on such elements of life at Sillery, the Jesuits in their Relations presented edifying examples to their metropolitan readers without strict regard for accurately portraying the natives’ experiences of piety. At the same time, they provided their confrères and the colonial French, through the same pages, enough information with which they could judge for themselves the new mode of Christianizing the nomads. Consequently, from 1641 onward in the Relations, the sacred space of the interior of the neophytes’ cabins at times rubbed up against a profane French model represented by the village (houses, hospital, and also a prison after 1643). The Jesuits thus attributed rigorous discipline in Sillery not only to pastoral necessities but also to civil ones.\textsuperscript{29} Ironically, then, the importance granted in European discourses to a civilizing framework and love of social order, as these were favored by elites of the era of Louis XIII and of the Regency, authorized the Jesuits to formulate their first program of accommodating American nomadism.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29} Major themes in the study of Sillery include discipline and self-discipline as adopted by the native Christians. Cohabitation among Christians and non-Christians had its price, it seems. JR 20:43–183, 22:61–63, 67, 83–85, 117–121; 24:35, 45–49; 25:47–151; 29:79–81. In the Relations, this factionalism exacerbated tensions within the village, setting up captains as “inquisitors.” However, these extreme disciplinary attitudes may be explained by the legalistic ethic in Algonquian culture, of which Le Jeune wrote in 1642: “Add to this the erroneous idea that he had in his head, like some other savages, namely, that newly-baptized Christians are soon attacked by death, or by some serious illness, if they fail, however slightly, in keeping the promise they have made to God to follow his will” (JR 22:103). In this case, it is understandable why the Jesuits did not ascribe any role to themselves in creating the penitential climate at Sillery.

\textsuperscript{30} The brochure of the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal offers a good example of this new exigency, through the figure of a God who was managerial and rational in his mercy, and upon whom laypersons wanting to help their fellows had to model themselves—something the anonymous author called “l’ordre de la charité.” Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal, Les Véritables motifs de Messieurs et Dames de la Société de Nostre Dame de Montréal pour la conversion des Sauvages de la Nouvelle France, s.l. (Paris: s.l., 1643), 53–56.
At Sillery, there was, on the one hand, a repressive, profane space conforming the natives’ behaviors to French regulations, and, on the other, a sacred space in which the Algonquians took possession of Christianity in their own ways. In the Relations, crucifixes and rosaries were often associated with native objects, while the body language of devotion as familiar to seventeenth-century Catholics was employed to “sanctify” domestic spaces. In December 1642, an Algonquian woman who could not attend Mass at the chapel of the hospital nuns, “stayed in her cabin [...] and behaved as if she had been at Mass. She set up an image of our Lord, knelt before it [...], recited her beads, rose as is customary at the Gospel, adored our Lord as is done at the elevation, and sang as they are accustomed to do after Mass—inasmuch that, when the Father went to see her, she told him that she had been to Mass in her cabin [...].”

This attitude, which is a bit strange in view of the stress the Jesuits had put on building mission chapels in the 1630s, announced as well the adoption of new objects of piety by the Christian Algonquians. These included a series of temporary religious decorations created spontaneously by the nomads. Such a process of sacralizing domestic space by means of objects of devotion was nothing new: it characterized European Catholicism in the seventeenth century, signaling the advent of a more personalized and this-worldly oriented spirituality. In this case, however, it seems that the phenomenon encouraged the Jesuits to articulate a spiritual discourse and aesthetic that were particularly indigenous. Algonquian oratories were adorned, so to speak, by the

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31 “Their first and last action every day is to kneel before a crucifix or a picture which they fasten to a piece of bark, and there say their prayers” (JR 25:163); “On Sunday morning, they met all together in a cabin, and hung to a pole, planted in the middle of it, an embossed crucifix, which all venerated on bended knees, and with clasped hands—with as much respect as if they were before the altar on which the Blessed Sacrament is kept” (JR 26:77).

32 JR 24:29–31. See also the testimony, very similar to this, of an Atikamekw woman praying in the forest with the aid of a rosary as if she had been in one of the sanctuaries of the Laurentian colony. JR 26:78.

33 Clair, “Du décor rêvé au croyant aimé,” ch. 1. “[T]he [Montagnais of Saguenay] began to give an account of all that had happened during their great winter hunt. They are in the habit of asking for a [...] calendar to distinguish the days that are honored [...]. They [...] said that it was their custom on those days to spread out and expose to view a fine, large picture in the best cabin; to light two tapers, as we do in our chapels; to meet all together, and to sing hymns and canticles; to say their prayers aloud; to recite their rosary, and to listen to those who sometimes spoke to them of prayer—that is, of the doctrine of Jesus Christ” (JR 26:133–135). See also JR 24:29–31; 26:135.

34 Emmanuelle Friant, “Le Catholicisme matériel: Les objets de la piété privée dans la France des XVIe et XVIIe siècles” (Ph.D. Thesis, Université de Nancy 2, 2009), 454–491.
missionaries’ pens in the *Relations* in a diffuse, impressionistic way that suggests an interaction between the colonial and indigenous worlds by which native Christians were immanently and subjectively taking hold of the divine.\(^{35}\)

As a result of their new openness to native expressions of spirituality, the Jesuits abandoned the mission’s civilizing component.\(^{36}\) However, references to it still appeared in the *Relation* of 1643, due to the uncertain outcome of a trial involving the heirs of Noël Brûlart de Sillery, the benefactor of the village that bore his name, who were contesting his bequest of 32,000 *livres* to the Jesuits of New France.\(^{37}\) Construction of a planned chapel was delayed as a result of this suit. The chapel would only be completed in 1647, thanks to the charity of another benefactor, Michel de Marillac.\(^{38}\) It is therefore inapt speak of a failure of Frenchification in this era, even though Le Jeune had pleaded in its name, several years earlier, when soliciting funds from European *dévôts*. In the *Relations*, the evolution of the Jesuit apostolate unfolds gradually, based on the funds that were available for it. The Jesuits’ financial dependency is seen in their having maintaining both the project of “reduction” or sedentarization at Sillery over several years, as supported by Brûlart de Sillery, and that of a seminary for young natives, which was sponsored by an aristocratic couple in France, the Rouault de Gamaches.\(^{39}\) It seems therefore that in the 1640s, the

\(^{35}\) On forms of spirituality foreign to all divine transcendence, see Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: Une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985). On the immanentist conceptions of the Algonquians, see Irving Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View,” in *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 19–52. On contemporary Montagnais Christianity that derives from this encounter between Catholic transcendence and Native American spirituality, see Anne Doran, *Spiritualité traditionnelle et christianisme chez les Montagnais* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005). On the implications for Sillery in the seventeenth century of this maintenance of traditional mental schema among the natives after their conversion to Christianity as professed by the Jesuits, see Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin*, 115–129.

\(^{36}\) Beaulieu, *Convertir les fils de Cain*.

\(^{37}\) JR 23:307; 24:101. As for the Duchesse d’Aiguillon, benefactress of the *Hôtel-Dieu* and, consequently, of Sillery until 1644, her liberality toward New France decreased after the death of Cardinal Richelieu in 1643, jeopardizing the future of the Jesuit missions, despite a gift she made to the mission of Tadoussac in 1642. JR 23:185; 24:123–125; Bruce Trigger, *Les Enfants d’Aataemtsic: L’histoire du peuple huron* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1991), 743.

\(^{38}\) Barthélemy Vimont, *De la chapelle de Sillery* [1647]. Archives des Jésuites au Canada, 184.

\(^{39}\) On the donation of the Rouault de Gamaches family, one of whom, René, entered the Society of Jesus in 1626, see the sources relative to the Collège de Québec, Fonds Campeau, Bo-0219, boîte 6, n. 68, document dactylographié, n.p. Most of these documents have been reproduced or consulted by Lucien Campeau in his diverse studies. See especially
challenge for the missionaries was how to make their concessions to native cultures without offending their devout audience in Europe, upon whom they relied to finance their enterprise. How, for example, could they portray Christianized Algonquians as fully Christian, when the natives of the mission rarely received the sacraments of communion and confession, and did not live amidst the structures of French civil society? How could they present nomadism in a new light to an audience that, in France, favored the “great confinement” of socially deviant and marginal populations? Was not the primary objective of the Society of Jesus, in the wake of the Council of Trent, to bring the faithful closer to the sacraments, and to make the laity more obedient to the institutional, visible church?

Around 1640, the Jesuits were still unprepared to reveal to their French public their concessions to native sensibilities. At this point, they simply acknowledged the special spirituality of the Algonquian neophytes by appealing to the hackneyed theme of the primitive church. The Relations insisted that the neophytes frequented the sacraments and desired to go as often as possible to the chapels of Sillery or, if not there, to the other shrines in the Laurentian colony on high holy days, especially Christmas and Easter. This last point in itself is interesting, as it suggests that the missionaries did not deem it so important for the neophytes to remain in the village to assist at feast day offices. “To announce the day of a solemn festival,” wrote Le Jeune in 1642, “is

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MNF vols. 2 and 3, and “La condition économique des jésuites dans une Nouvelle-France pionnière (1625–1670), Les Cahiers des dix 50 (1995): 23–53.

Jean-Pierre Gutton, La Société et les pauvres en Europe (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles) (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1974), 122–135.

On the importance of administering the sacraments in the Jesuits’ pastoral work, in particular confession and Communion, see Henri Pinard de la Boullaye, La spiritualité ignatienne: Textes choisis et présentés (Paris: Plon, 1949), 95–112, and John W. O’Malley, The First Jesuits (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch. 4.

On Sillery’s comparison to the primitive church, see JR 24:49–51. Sillery would also serve as a model to the Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal, when the time came to defend the project of the creation of Ville-Marie. Catherine Marin, “Jean-Jacques Olier et les missions de France et au Canada,” in Jean-Jacques Olier, homme de talent, serviteur de l’Evangile (1608–1657), ed. Maurice Vidal (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2009), 149–150.

On the importance accorded to the frequenting of the sacraments at Sillery and at La Conception in justifying the acceptance of Algonquian nomadism, see JR 20:267–269; 22:43–49, 81; 24:21, 45, 59; 31:129. The domiciliés of Sillery went for convenience, in Quebec, either to the newly constructed chapel of the Ursulines or to the church in Quebec, that of the Hundred Associates after the fire of 1640. JR 22:47, 79; 24:21, 105; 43:315.

Consider also the baptismal ceremonies of the Atikamekw in 1643 which took place at the Jesuit residence in Quebec and at the Ursuline chapel, and also those of the Hurons.
to give them joy; they strive to observe the feasts according to the seasons—they ask for a list of the days, or for a small calendar, especially when they go to hunt or to trade for any length of time."  

From December to February, the neophytes hunted in the forests in the vicinity of Quebec. They attended Mass several times a week at Sillery or at Quebec. However, from February to April they hunted for moose and beaver hundreds of kilometers away from the colony. They did not return until the month of April. A significant part of their lives thus was spent with no priests present among them, and without the benefits of the Catholic sacraments. Nevertheless, religious practice was possible for the natives by means of memory-based and material aids for Catholic prayer, which they highly favored. References to liturgical calendars, rosaries, and pictograms used for prayer are numerous in the *Relations*. Furthermore, the adaptation to the Algonquian context seen in the early 1640s—a defining period for the North American Jesuit apostolate of the second half of the century—rested on harmonizing the mobility of the nomadic peoples with the Catholic liturgy. Calendars and devotional practices were critically important in these circumstances. Jean de Quen's *Règlement de la mission de Tadoussac* (c.1650), an exceptional document that offers insight into the mission apart from the *Relations*, attests to the primacy accorded to such mnemonic devices in the evangelization of the nomads. The distribution of calendars, which were written alphabetically or with pictograms, assured the missionaries of the sustainability of Catholic practices among the nomads during hunting season: “We must adjust the calendars [...] which we give to the savages for their winter travels; that is to say, marking which feast days are days of abstinence, days of fasting, and the like, who went to Sillery for instruction in the years 1642–1643, which were carried out with magnificence in the church at Quebec. JR 24:77, 83, 117.

45 JR 22:45.

46 JR 22:93, 23:317, 24:28; Dragon, *Trente robes noires*, 44.

47 On the calendars, writings, and objects of piety, in particular the Rosaries in the homes of the *domiciliés* and related peoples (the Atikamekw in particular), see JR 18:171; 20:81, 189, 199–201; 275, 293; 22:45–47, 57–59; 113, 221–223; 23:315–317; 24:25–27, 59, 63, 81, 83, 91–93 (“It is incredible how much these good people are inclined to this devotion of saying the Rosary [...] and how eager they are to have them—especially those which are rather large and handsome, to wear them suspended about their necks”), 95–99, 143; 25:161, 189, 211; 26:77 (“his paper that served him as a calendar, and enabled him to distinguish the festival days, affected him more than that of the other things”); 114, 131; 27:143; 29:111; 31:173; 33:31.

48 On the permissive attitude adopted by the Jesuits toward the *domiciliés* only discussed here in relation to the theme of the "liberty" of movement allowed to the natives in the 1640s, see Allan Greer, *La Nouvelle-France et le Monde* (Montreal: Boréal, 2009), 85.
so that when they meet in the woods and show one another their calendars, they see that we are uniform in our rules."49 In the Relations from 1644 onward, the calendars and the rosaries were designated by the term "meubles de dévotion" [furnishings for devotion] as necessary for all nomadic Christians.50 The document of 1650 attests, consequently, to a method of apostolate put into practice the preceding decade.

How was Christianity able to move to the center of life among the Algonquians when they did not always live close to a mission village or a chapel? It appears that, in their mode of Christian practice as the Jesuits cultivated it and permitted it to flourish, a spatial paradigm came to be outweighed by a more inclusive, temporal paradigm. In a certain sense, a new respect for the temporality of Christianity offered the missionaries, in the Relations, a way to silently pass over the natives’ non-compliance with the norms of seventeenth-century sacramental Catholicism.

An Algonquian Christianity without sacraments, without priests, and without chapels for a good part of the year is represented in the Relations. In 1648, according to Jean de Quen, Jérôme Lalemant went so far as to note, ‘Although these persons are very far from our churches, they are very near to their God, who amply supplies the deficiencies of his ministers, when such remoteness is in the order of his providence.’51 In other words, a territory unknown to the French and the Jesuits—the boreal forests—provided the framework for the neophytes’ spiritual practice. At the same time, this context is missing in the Relations: the Jesuits commented rather on the nomads’ postures and gestures of prayer, their hymns, particular prayers that they mumbled or declaimed, and their handling of objects of devotion. Descriptions in this vein were based on second-hand accounts—that is, the words of a Native American Other, presented in the form of direct discourses. Thus, differently than in the Relations of the 1630s, the missionaries in the 1640s did not describe what they themselves saw, but reported on what they heard from native Christians.

The Relations of the 1640s thus became locations of native expression, just as the Algonquians emerged as actors in their own Christianization. The role of the missionaries consisted therefore in translating words spoken to them in Native American tongues, reformulating a native discourse on native activities

49 De Quen, Règlement de la mission, 677: ‘[…] régler les kalendriers, que l’on fait et que l’on donne aux sauvages pour leur hyvernement, c’est-à-dire quelles fêtes faire maigre, quels jours de jeusnes et choses semblambles, afin que, se rencontrans dans les bois et se montrans les uns aux autres leurs kalendriers, ils voyent que nous sommes uniformes en un règlement.”

50 JR 26:112.

51 JR 33:31.
for a French metropolitan public.\textsuperscript{52} Relays of information between the indigenous and metropolitan discourses were numerous and complex. In them, there were appropriations of the Christianity of others—an idiosyncratic and new Christianity, presented as such by the Jesuits at the end of the 1640s. This shift toward a Native American form of Christianity raises, of course, the problem of its character and authenticity apart from how it was recreated in the narrative and historical context of the \textit{Relations}. Allocentrism—namely the transformations of speakers’ own words into the words of persons being spoken about—are so common in the texts that the Jesuits themselves seem to disappear behind the Christian natives, giving voice to a new kind of sacrality, exploring a new symbolic continent that is more temporal than spatial, more devotional than ecclesial. Everything transpires in the texts as if the figure of the Native American accompanied, even nourished, a form of spirituality back in Europe which was more interior and less attached to institutions.\textsuperscript{53}

Before 1650, groups of Algonquian neophytes, often without priests among them, were presented in the \textit{Relations} as devout assemblies. In addition to the instructions given by the neophytes during feast days, Christian practice took place in huts that were often transformed into small bark oratories adorned with pious images, crucifixes or rosaries, animal skins, and wampum necklaces.\textsuperscript{54} The cabin thus became a kind of natural extension of the interior piety of the worshipper.\textsuperscript{55} Just one example, but a significant one because it concluded a long symbolic process of sacralization of Algonquian domestic space, was the construction of what was almost a Catholic shrine, completed by the Atikamekws without French assistance, and without the Jesuits’ even knowing its location:

\begin{quote}
[A] captain commands his people to make a fine and large cabin, which should be used only for prayer; the young men go after bark, and the women [...] branches of spruce [...] . The old men, having built the church, order all their people to clothe themselves as richly as possible, in order to honor prayer [...] . [T]hey figure and paint their faces, after their
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{52} On this point, see the reflections of ethnologist John Bishop who recalls the importance of Native American languages in Jesuit evangelization. John E. Bishop, “Qu'y a-t-il de si drôle dans la chasse au canard? Ce que les ouvrages linguistiques nous disent de la rencontre entre les Jésuites et les Nehiraw-Iriniwé,” \textit{Tangence} 92 (2010): 39–66.
\bibitem{53} See Leszek Kołakowski, \textit{Chrétiens sans Église: La conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVIIe siècle} [1965] (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).
\bibitem{54} \textit{JR} 18:171: 2451, 171–173: 25337.
\bibitem{55} Paul Le Jeune in the \textit{Relation} of 1642 and 1643 spoke of “cabanes des priants” (\textit{JR} 24:21).
\end{thebibliography}
fashion [...] they take their great robes of beavers, of otters [...] and of other animals, and their embellishments of porcupine quills, dyed in scarlet, are not wanting. The women put on their great bracelets, and the men their collars and crowns, of porcelain. The Hurons and the other tribes, seeing this display, were much astonished, not knowing the object of this pomp [...]. Some Christian Hurons, chancing to be in that great company, and seeing that it was a question of prayer, produce their crosses and their rosaries, protesting aloud that they were Christians.56

This Algonquian oratory, built independently of the Jesuits, differed in many ways from French oratories. First and foremost, it was the result, and not the cause, of native piety, departing therefore from the original intentions of the missionaries in the 1630s, who saw the decoration of mission chapels as necessary for maintaining piety among both the neophytes and the French colonists, and also for generating new faith among unbelievers.57 Also characteristic of many native Christian habitations was the thin boundary with the outside world established by the oratory: natural light as well as branches and other elements of the natural world belonged to the interior, whose boundary with the outside world, consequently, dissolved. Together with it dissolved a distinction between sacred and profane space—a distinction that, differently, was so constitutive of sacred space in Western Christianity. The Algonquian interior created an indistinct and shifting zone between itself and exterior space, the world and the body, objects and subjects, Native Americans and Christians. On this subject, Philippe Descola has proposed that the cognitive and perceptive system of the North American natives seems to have corresponded with these “nameless” decorations, borne of “ornamental” intentions: “the identity of beings and the texture of the world were fluid and contingent, resisting all classifications that seek to establish what is real solely on the basis of appearances.”58 Fluidity, moreover, was conducive to decompartmentalizing artifacts: in the passage quoted above, no distinction is made between artifacts of native and European origin which were at the disposal of the Hurons. Also characteristic of the oratories were their sensory and kinesthetic qualities: permeating the interior space were the scent of spruce branches, small objects of Catholic piety, crucifixes and rosaries often worn around the neck, necklaces made from shells, and furs that were seen by the Jesuits as part of the cabins’ religious

56 JR 31:219–221.
57 Clair, “Du décor rêvé au croyant aimé,” ch. 1.
58 Philippe Descola, Par-delà la nature et la culture (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 46.
Eventually, after 1650, textiles, furs, and porcelain necklaces or wampum even ornamented colonial and Jesuit mission churches in Canada.

In sum, during the 1640s, the Christian interior was “corporealized.” It was, consequently, upholstered—less in the interior of the oratory, as was the case at this time in public and private chapels in France, than on the bodies of the Christian natives, who were themselves the depositaries of a new sacralité. The Jesuits employed a precious and baroque vocabulary in their descriptions, similar to what was used in the same era by poets and spiritual directors to describe interior mental, private, or ecclesial experience of devotion; nevertheless, through it, the Jesuits conveyed the particular flavor of Algonquian spirituality. Thus it is likely that for the neophytes, their cabins became a space of sacralité continuous with their own, personal sacrality spheres.

For the Jesuits, nomadism was no longer an obstacle to the Catholic religion, insofar as it was transmuted—thanks in part to the success of Devout Humanism in France in the era—into an emanation of interiority, a “sanctuarization” of the individual body and soul, liberated from an ancient model of sacralité which was consubstantial with the architecture and ecclesial structures of the Middle Ages. In this case, the primacy accorded to

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59 See the remark by Claude Lévi-Strauss regarding the Relation of 1634 by Paul Leune on the subject of the possible olfactory role of coniferous wood fires in Native American homes, a reflection that led him to evoke the fragrant wood of Aztec sanctuaries and those of ancient Greece. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Histoire de Lynx (Paris: Plon 1994), 156–157. It is possible that the cabins of fir branches among the Montagnais and the Algonquians emitted odors that were crucial from a spiritual and symbolic point of view, as is suggested by a remark of 1651 concerning a chapel made of branches constructed by the Atikamekws instructed by Jacques Buteux: “we were taken to a chapel made of the bark of certain very odoriferous pine-trees, and built by the hands of these good Christians, wherein no European had ever set foot” (JR 37:55).

60 Clair, “Corps et décor,” 310, n. 2.

61 On Parisian religious décor in the period, see Guillaume Kazerouni, Les couleurs du ciel: Peintures des églises de Paris au XVIIe siècle (Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 2012).

62 Frédéric Cousinié, Images et méditations au XVIIe siècle (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007).

63 On the theme of “cordial” interiority (devotion to the Sacred Heart) as a place of union for God’s faithful in French Jesuit spirituality, a theme that was also Salesian in inspiration, see Aloÿs Pottier, Le P. Louis Lallemant et les grands spirituels de son temps, vol. 3, La spiritualité béarnienne et les grands spirituels de la Compagnie de Jésus à l’âge d’or de l’ascétisme français, 1600–1650 (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 1929), 167–213; Éric Palazzo, L’espace rituel et le sacré dans le christianisme: La liturgie de l’autel portatif dans l’Antiquité et au Moyen Age (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); Dominique Iogna-Prat, La Maison Dieu: Une histoire
Christian temporality in the Jesuits’ evangelization of the nomads favored the description of temporary decorations conceived and created by the natives. In doing so, the spatial paradigm—the principle value assigned to “place” in Catholicism—shifted toward the village, a profane and socioeconomic space, producing a symbolic vacancy in the religious sphere: rare are any mentions of chapels, strictly speaking, or places designated for catechesis or veneration, in the Relations’ accounts of spiritual practice among the natives at Sillery or Trois-Rivières. The place of worship receded as an essential framework for the body in prayer; calendric and festive time was introduced, allowing expressions of the novelty of certain ritual and spiritual practices.

In this turn observed in the mission sources of the 1640s, the idea of an emancipation of the Algonquians vis-à-vis Western civilization was apparent. A definition of a “liberty” that was intrinsic to the natives was established: a liberty of action, a freedom to leave and to return. In the Relations, the dependency of the body on a particular place was dissolved.64 The Jesuit writers offered a counterweight, or a retraction, of the confining rules governing life in the mission villages, signified by the expression “at our very doors” [dedans nos portes] at the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Relation of 1643:

Continuation of the good sentiments and actions of the Christians of Saint Joseph [the title given to the chapter]. As soon as the ships weighed anchor before Quebec, to return to France, the majority of the savages of this residence launched their bark canoes to go and hunt moose—anticipating their usual time of departure by three months, through fear of the Iroquois. These had threatened to come and attack them at our very doors, and would have deprived them of the liberty of hunting far back in the forest.65

64 Descartes discussed the body’s dependence on a particular place in his Règles pour la direction de l’Esprit (1628–30), which challenged the Aristotelian definition of place as a location of the body. See Frédéric de Buzon, “L’espace et le lieu chez Descartes,” Espace et lieu dans le pensée occidentale, ed. Thierry Paquot and Chris Younes (Paris: La Découverte, 2012), 86: “[D]ans cette conception, le lieu et une position dans l'espace indépendante des corps qui l'occupent.”
65 JR 25:16i.
For “liberty” [liberté] to exist in the sense employed in this passage, a spatial-temporal “continuity” that permitted the natives to “leave” a place must have been perceived. Many chapters for the same year which concerned Sillery were entitled “continuation of good sentiments.” The “sentiment” appears to have been the solution for reconciling the spatial to the temporal. Sentiments approved by the missionaries were crucial during the period of natives’ temporary removal from the space of the mission village. The Jesuit narrator tried to express the religiosity of the neophytes, seen both in their ability to leave the village and in their scrupulous obedience of its rules when living there. To do this, he accumulated anecdotes pertaining to particular individuals.

It still seems that it was difficult in that era to give a clear idea of the “liberty” of the nomads while also respecting the religious, civil, and political ethic of the metropolis. The risk was great of effectively rendering the missionary useless, since the law then moved to the side of the governor and the merchants, while the religious moved to the side of the native Americans. How to describe the Jesuits’ participation in the natives’ spirituality, if not by describing the figure of the missionary as in the background, waiting for the return of the neophytes? All the inhabitants quitted Sillery at the moment of the departure of the French ships, with some returning to the boreal forest, and others traveling across the ocean to France. Each person returned to his place of origin from the place where he “was”; each “anticipated” for some months the return to a “place.” The “space” of a voyage was not a “place” but rather the “self.” Everything there was in continuity: the ships, the forest, the voyage. Sentiment proceeded from movement, from displacement. The natives’ liberty of action was a liberty of thought. As beings with imagination, they carried
departed places within themselves during their travels. Temporary religious decorations and objects of piety worn next to the skin by the nomads constituted many metaphors of an ecclesial Christianity transforming into a nomadic Christianity—a visible, monumental church into an invisible, corporeal, and spiritual church. The editors of the Relations “liberated” (so to speak) the inhabitants of the village through written description, by accepting their departure from the village and even seeing a miracle in it:

It is a marvelous effect of grace that men born in the most cruel barbarism [...] who have been but recently baptized, should nevertheless retain the innocence and grace of their baptism for six months, without instruction or any sacrament, with greater facility and perfection than many Christians do in France [...]. I think that Heaven takes pleasure in seeing these good souls adore God in the midst of the woods.69

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was granted to the consciences of the neophytes (“a moment to say a short prayer”) unless a liberty of action is recognized for them.

69 Ibid., 161–163.