

Review Essay:

Lucien Campeau, S.I. — Monumenta Novae Franciae Volume II: Établissement à Québec (1616-1634).

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Review of: Lucien CAMPEAU, S.I. — *Monumenta Novae Franciae*. Volume II: *Établissement à Québec (1616-1634)*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979. Pp. 141, 889.

This massive erudite documentary collection relating to Jesuit missions in Canada, 1616-1634, the second volume of *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, the thirty-seventh in the *Monumenta Missionum* and 116th of the universal *Monumenta Historica*, is of interest and great value to a far wider clientele than church historians. In part, this is because the disciples of Loyola in North America were the intellectual elite among missionaries. This publication is Father Campeau's second contribution to the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* project undertaken in 1894, in the section devoted to *Missiones occidentales* in which eleven volumes dealing with Florida, Acadia, Mexico, Peru and Brazil have appeared to date.

The 141-page introduction (including a bibliography) consists of four parts — an historical overview of the period, a description of the Montagnais, their region and its mission, a review of Montagnais response to evangelization, and finally a short essay on documentary sources. This is followed by 747 pages of documents edited in the style usually reserved for medieval manuscripts, i.e., each document is introduced by a physical description including size, binding, paper, print, pagination, inscriptions, privileges, defects, etc., an historical preface, a locational bibliography of copies or editions, and a table of contents. The original pagination, where applicable, is always given, and each document is presented with numbered paragraphs and print lines for easy reference in the fashion of some Bibles. Textual variations are noted at the bottom of the page. There are also many annotations, some running to several pages of small print. These are extremely helpful in many cases, but the choice of historiographical issues and of authors debated is erratic. Most of the 150 documents presented derive from Roman archives. Le Jeune's manuscript Relation of 1632 and an account of Champlain's voyage of 1633 are of particular interest. Not surprisingly in a work of such erudition, one finds explanations for such diverse subjects as the classification of beaver and muskrat with fishes, the origin of the word *tourtière*, comparisons between an original and edited version of a Relation, explanations of Montagnais terms, and clarifications on ecclesiastical and canonical matters. There are 48 pages of appendices including two documents which properly belong to Volume I on Acadia and 39 which provide biographical information or indirectly illuminate missionary activities. Finally, there are 61 pages of unreferenced biographical notices and a 28-page analytical index. A formidable piece of scholarship even on the material level.

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Campeau warns that no historical thesis should be constructed on a single document or a temporally limited series of documents. The Jesuit experience in North America will have to be judged only on the complete extant documentation, taking into account the global context. In the meantime, his critical edition is based on the premise, which explains both its *raison d'être* and its specific orientation and exposition, that *émotion religieuse* is mankind's most powerful and elevating sentiment surpassing even the constancy, depth and breadth of love itself. Is this religious motivation then not primarily love of God and secondarily love of humanity? But Francis Jennings said recently, men in their acquisition and exercise of power "use not only the seduction of riches and the menace of force, but also the mesmerism of religion". The documents are virtually presented as official versions of historical truth to the extent that the annotations for the most part do not concern themselves with recent ethnohistorical analyses and issues. Even the introductory essay is more concerned with situating the documents in the context of two decades of colonization and evangelization than with confronting recent scholarly dialogue both in the field of Amerindian studies and Christian missions.

The ignoring of much recent scholarly work, especially in the domain of European-Amerindian relations, results in some distorted reflections on the state of the historical literature. Campeau takes Hunt's *The Wars of the Iroquois* to task, for example, calling it a classic of native history and so passes over the fact that historians and anthropologists for several decades have disputed the thesis that the Iroquois were motivated by a desire to establish themselves as the middlemen in the interior trade and to seize control of the "beaver territory" for their own hunting grounds. Most notably, the author ignores all of Bruce Trigger's scholarship, preferring to stay with the narrative history of Lanctot and Trudel, as well as the nineteenth-century works of Bancroft, Beauchamp, Faillon, Hanotaux and Rochemonteix.

Even in his criticism of Hunt, Campeau fails to take into account what is now known about the struggle for control of the beaver trade in the early seventeenth century. He describes the Iroquois Five Nations as roving over territories claimed by the French, as diplomats, hunters and warriors, but "never as traders" (p. 83). Yet in 1641 the Mohawks, reacting to the harsh treatment they received at the hands of the Dutch, sent a delegation to New France's Governor, Montmagny, asking that a trading post be established in their territory. Would it have been more accurate to have said that the Iroquois at the time could not assume the role of primary producers and collectors of furs assigned to native peoples by the French merchants and also by the missionaries who at the time were somewhat dependent upon the favour of the commercial monopolists? It was Father Le Jeune, perhaps fearing what peace with the Iroquois might mean for the already precarious mission which was beginning to divide the Hurons into factions, who imputed treacherous and warlike motives, rather than peaceful and commercial ones, to the Mohawks. The studies of Hart, Bachman, Kupp, Richter, as well as the documentary collections of Van Laer and Van der Donck, incline us to doubt Le Jeune's malevolent interpretation. Campeau, by adopting the early Jesuit view of the Iroquois as insatiable aggressors and barbarous invaders, reinforces Francis Parkman's racist view of Iroquois ferocity and terrorism. He sees only the desire to destroy and ravage as the driving force behind Iroquois relations with neighbouring tribes and the French. Perhaps it is worth noting that the Iroquois were not successful against the Mahicans, Sokokis and Susquehannocks. These eastern tribes had something in common — they lacked missionaries and they possessed firearms!

The traumatic effects of the epidemics of the 1630s which carried off an estimated half of the population, and the threat which the founding of Montreal (1642) seemed to

pose, should not be passed over in silence either. The French were never as peace-loving and accommodating as the author would have us assume — e.g., offering the Iroquois vast hunting territories (which “belonged” to them in any case) and proposing peace with themselves and their native allies. Even Father Jogues’ mission in 1646 was seen by the Mohawks with apprehension as a means of introducing spells and charms which brought drought, famine and epidemics. Furthermore, Catholicism disturbed the cohesion of native confederacies such as the League of the Iroquois and the Huron Confederacy by introducing ideological factionalism. These are consequences and accompaniments of evangelization which no social historian can fail to note. But then one must concede that *Établissement à Québec* was not written primarily in the conceptual framework of social history.

The main focus is on the Montagnais, not the Iroquois, and therefore it is of the portrayal of their culture and contact experiences that we can expect better things. Campeau declares that here was a living native culture, capable of perpetuating itself after contact with the French, yet also capable of adopting and retaining a form of Catholicism without at the same time having all the institutional trappings, regular services and a constant presence of European clergy. Conversion and cultural assimilation were dissociated, contrary to early missionary policy and official state ideology. The author believes that this was the reason for the attacks of “le pontife Frontenac et son acolyte Chrétien Le Clerq”, as well as of the Sulpicians, on the number and sincerity of Jesuit conversions. In fact, the charge was also that the Jesuits were more interested in the “conversion of beaver pelts” than of native souls. The cultural relativist approach was not approved of by the Propaganda Fide and Holy See, as the famous “Chinese rites” controversy revealed.

Disclaiming any competence in Montagnais linguistics, Campeau nevertheless provides his readers with useful insights, including an appreciation of the linguistic hurdles early missionaries had to overcome. In the matter of Montagnais religion, or mythology as Campeau prefers to call it, the primary sources are rather confusing because traditional native religion was not dogmatically codified. Furthermore, it was subject to personal and local diversity in both belief and practice. Following his seventeenth-century sources, the author identifies as foremost in the native belief system a culture hero, Messoré, who appears in the form of a muskrat. Although the Montagnais, like other Algonkian peoples, conceived of no single ultimate source of existence, the missionaries persisted in trying to identify one in order to establish some bridgehead, so it would appear, with Christianity. The culture hero appears to have been a variant of the Great Hare, Nanabozho, the Creator of the native world, the “master of life”, the originator of culture, the ruler of the afterworld, and at the same time the trickster who was the originator of death. The Algonkian belief system, as described by such scholars as Hultkrantz (whom Campeau does list in his bibliography), Conrad, Cooper, Tanner, Fisher and Flannery, incorporates a deluge account along with the story of the recreation of the earth by muskrat. It may be that Le Jeune in 1633 and 1634 understood and recorded only a segment of the Montagnais creation story.

Campeau also follows Le Jeune’s description of Montagnais polytheism, relating the belief in powerful spirits, commonly called *manitos* in the historical literature, and conjuring in the shaking tent ceremony. The missionaries had great difficulty in understanding that in Montagnais beliefs animals, plants and natural objects were also “animate” and essentially spiritual beings who shared the same afterworld with mankind. The author does touch on the common Algonkian belief in dual souls, which Hultkrantz called the ego-soul and the free soul, and the lack of any concept of reward or punishment in the afterlife. On the matter of dreams he reported what other missionaries found among Iroquoian people: the dreams were either symptomatic expressing inner wishes or visitations of a manito.

He did not elaborate on the puberty fast and the quest to establish a relationship with a manito, nor the visions which were essential to success in hunting and war, good health, and honour. Campeau does make the point that religion was centered on present existence, not the hereafter, and that hunting and health were its essential concerns.

The author also follows the figurist thesis, expressed most clearly for the Canadian context by Father Lafitau in the eighteenth century, that Amerindians “n’avaient plus qu’une idée déformée” (p. 113) of God’s original revelation to primitive man. The seventeenth-century missionaries’ view of women as dangerous is also reported without critical comment. Yet the view that they were the cause of illness and death in some cases scarcely accords with their role as expert curers, diviners and skillful artisans which we find in the anthropological literature. In reporting on native social organization and the division of labour, the sources fail to observe that the fur trade increased significantly the workload of women, and indirectly therefore stimulated polygamy and the adoption of some French clothing and foodstuffs. There is little comment by the author on women as chief resisters to conversion. Nor is there much said about their great love for their children and the permissive upbringing of these children. Nevertheless, these seem to have been important elements in native resistance to French schooling and assimilation policies.

The depiction of the native peoples is considerably less ethnocentric than that found in Campeau’s first volume dealing with Acadia and the Micmacs. There are still two aspects of bias which require comment. First of all, positive traits are rarely highlighted, such as Micmac hospitality or their exemplary honesty in keeping Noyrot’s supplies intact while he was detained in Europe. It is the missionaries who come across as invariably enlightened, altruistic and self-sacrificing, never as intolerant, self-serving or burdened with the prejudices of their own Christian/pagan heritage.

Secondly, the negative aspects of European contact, and of missionary intrusion in particular, are too often played down, although it is admitted at one point that Le Jeune’s instruction had remained too European and “insuffisamment ouvert aux profondeurs de l’ame humaine universelle” (p. 113). When a Frenchman is murdered by an Algonkian in 1633, for example, the comment is that brute force was the virtue most respected by natives and therefore it was important to inculcate “les principes de la justice des Français, qui mesuraient le chatiment à l’offense” (p. 65), an affirmation which misrepresents both Amerindian values and French legalism. Similarly, the disastrous depopulation of Montagnais country, and the missionaries’ role therein, is not deemed worthy of elaboration by the author.

In the introductory section dealing with Montagnais’ responses to evangelization, Campeau reveals a number of assumptions. The French are presented as sympathetic from the outset and motivated by humanitarian considerations, although it is conceded the St. Lawrence valley was no longer inhabited when Champlain founded his *habitation* and that this had some bearing on race relations. The hostility and conquest mentality of the sixteenth-century ventures are ignored. Champlain emerges as a benevolent father figure, who established the pattern of Amerindian diplomacy for his successors; on the other hand, he is quick to recognize what is called the capricious, impulsive, undisciplined, vindictive, often crafty and dangerous character of the Native peoples (p. 98), a description which some historians might attribute to the French intruders. Too much is made of article 17 in the charter of the Company of One Hundred Associates which grants baptized natives full French citizenship with all its rights and privileges in France itself. In practice in the colony it was a meaningless clause. Campeau concedes that no similar rights were granted non-

baptized Amerindians but this, he argues, implied no devaluation whatever of those natives because the same rule applied to Frenchmen. It is surely little consolation that Europeans as well as Amerindians could be "non-persons".

The absence of slavery in the early period of colonization is attributed to the influence of the missionaries and the Christian education of Louis XIV. Campeau would have us believe that it was Colbert and later Maurepas who undermined the humanitarian quality in French political life. The argument seems rather hollow when one considers Louis XIV's uncharitable acts towards oppressed minorities. Nor should it be forgotten that in the sixteenth century Amerindians had been kidnapped and enslaved by French sea captains, that once colonial plantation agriculture developed a demand for slave labour the King gave it legal recognition, and that no effort was made to root out slavery among the Amerindian allies. Nor can the church easily shake off what the author calls a shameful practice because two of the colonial bishops had household slaves, and the Jesuits and other male and female religious orders kept both Black and Amerindian slaves.

The thesis of humanitarianism, as if the French possessed a *génie colonial* which distinguished them from other European colonizers, reappears in the explanation of the policy of sedentarization of nomadic bands. Was it largely out of concern for the hardships which the nomadic subsistence cycle imposed on the Montagnais that the Jesuits planned their relocation on agricultural lands? Or was it their own frustrations with forest preaching and the requirements of an institutionalized religion (with its parish organization, church, presbytery, school, etc.) which motivated the experimentation with the reserve? One wonders if the author is serious in his comment that the Montagnais learned to respect the property rights of the French and they agreed to live in proximity to them and abandon their promiscuous ways (p. 103ff). The observation is followed, nevertheless, by a clause that each group kept its own ways. Indeed, did the Montagnais need to learn honesty from the French? Did the French display those traits? And as for promiscuity, it was defined differently in each culture, and French colonists seem to have been attracted all too frequently by Amerindian pre-marital freedom, if we are to believe the same Jesuit reporters.

In his effort to clarify certain obscurities in early colonial history, Campeau's explanations of two issues leave this reader somewhat puzzled. He undermines the thesis that the Recollets invited the Jesuits to come to their aid in the Canadian missions in 1625, showing instead that they were forced to put a good face on matters. But, he then proceeds to leave in obscurity their absence from the restored colony from 1633 to 1670 with a rather off-hand comment that they were caught off guard and unprepared to return in 1633. Nor did the Capuchins who were assigned the Canadian mission take it up, preferring Acadia it appears. The Jesuits were not only well prepared to substitute themselves but they seem to have returned before receiving official approbation to do so — a fact which is not elaborated upon in the explanatory notes. The destruction of the Franciscan archives has not helped in clarifying these events.

The lengthy annotation regarding toleration of Huguenots in the colony and the interpretation of the Edict of Nantes evokes a narrow legalism. Campeau argues that Huguenots were free to live in Canada as elsewhere after 1627 because there was no explicit exclusion in the charter of the Hundred Associates. However, clause 2 of the charter forbade the immigration of foreigners and warned the Associates to colonize only with "naturels Francois catholiques". It is correct that the Edict of Nantes (1598) included no North American places as enjoying the privilege of public Protestant worship. Campeau attacks those historians who oppose his interpretation as showing "peu de sens professionnel".

Yet his own argument appears specious insofar as the Hundred Associates exercised their jurisdiction in the colony. Protestants could and did slip in by other means, but that in no way alters the intent of the charter. Furthermore, to say that they enjoyed freedom of conscience while being forbidden public exercise of their religion, and to add that Catholics in England were scarcely better treated, may on the face of things be technically correct. But these are scarcely worthy defences, being only slightly less repugnant than Louis XIV's rationalization in 1685 that since there remained virtually no Protestants in France the solemn edict of toleration could be revoked. At least we see in which direction events were moving with the passage of time.

All of which brings us to the conclusion that in addition to an invaluable collection of missionary documents, Campeau has given us insightful information which can stimulate scholarly debate. May he continue his labours with his usual intellectual vigour and zeal, adequately supported by Canadian funding agencies, so that the ensuing volumes in *Monumenta Novae Franciae* may be of the same quality and acquaint us with new treasures hidden in the archives and libraries of the Old and New World.