

TWO PRAYERS IN 17TH-CENTURY MONTAGNAIS

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ABSTRACT

Two prayers in Montagnais included in Père Paul Le Jeune's Jesuit Relation of 1634 have been reprinted four times in the past hundred and thirty years. An investigation of the various editions reveals differences in the rendering of the Montagnais text, some due to misreading, some due to misprints, and some due to the use of both a printed original and a contemporary manuscript version. A correct reading is presented here, along with some philological and linguistic comment.¹

In 1635 Sébastien Cramoisy, the royal printer in Paris, published the Relation de ce qui s'est passé en la nouvelle France, en l'année 1634, better known as the 'Jesuit Relation of 1634,' written by Père Paul Le Jeune, the superior of the missions at the time (Le Jeune 1635). This was one of a long-running series of reports written by the Jesuits in Canada to their superiors in France and published annually in Paris, reports which began in 1632 and continued until 1673. In it, Père Le Jeune describes at 342-page length² all his activities and those of his colleagues during the year 1634. Because he was a Jesuit and knew Montagnais, a central Algonquian language closely related to Cree, spoken then as now in Québec and Labrador in a variety of dialects, he included a respectable number of examples of words, phrases, and even whole sentences in this language in his various accounts. His most notable contribution was a chapter specifically entitled 'De la langue des sauvages montagnais,' in which he discussed a number of points of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and discourse (cf. Cowan 1984).

His second most notable contribution was the inclusion of two prayers in 17th-century Montagnais of some 16 lines each with interlinear French translation. These are among the earliest continuous texts in that language, the only known earlier texts being some prayers and other liturgical material collected by Père Enemond Massé and published in 1632 in the works of Samuel de Champlain under the title 'L'Oraison dominicale, tradvite en langage des montagnars de Canada, par le R.P. Massé de la Compagnie de Iesvs' (Champlain 1870:16-20). Le Jeune's prayers, then, constitute a valuable record of the stage that Montagnais had reached in the

early 17th century, a stage that can be compared with both the Proto-Algonquian that preceded it and the modern Montagnais that has followed it.

Although scattered comments have been made about the Montagnais material found in the Jesuit Relations, no further analysis of the material contained in these two prayers appears to have been published before now. And although the present analysis is far from complete itself, it is appropriate to make some comments of a philological nature here as a preliminary to a more extended treatment projected for a later date.

According to Le Jeune's account, the prayers were first written in French by himself, then translated into Montagnais by a native speaker dubbed 'The Apostate' by Le Jeune. The occasion was Christmas Eve, 1634. Le Jeune and a group of Montagnais Indians were on a hunting expedition. It was freezing cold and they had had very poor luck in their hunting. Le Jeune, who spent a good deal of his time complaining about how cold and hungry he was, not only on this trip, but seemingly throughout the whole year - at one point he was reduced to eating the scraps of animal skin that the Indians scorned just to keep alive - thought that the appropriate action to take at this perilous point in time was to pray for food. He fashioned one prayer for himself to deliver, and another which was intended for the Indians whom he was accompanying.

In his own prayer Le Jeune asked God to provide food, since, if he did, the Indians would believe in God and would obey him; he also offered to sacrifice his own life for those of the Indians. In the second prayer, Le Jeune had the Indians swear several times that they were not lying, that if they were provided with food they would become sincere believers, and that they would do what they were taught, presumably by Père Le Jeune. Le Jeune recited his prayer alone, then recited the Indians' prayer which they recited after him. Apparently these prayers worked, since the next day every hunter but one - ironically, this was the Apostate, the person who had translated the prayers from French into Montagnais in the first place - was successful in finding and killing at least one game animal.

There are four relatively modern editions of this account. The first was edited and printed in Québec in 1858 by Augustin Côté as part of the publication of all the Jesuit Relations with the blessings and aid of the Catholic Church in Canada (Côté, ed. 1858 [1634]:76).³ The second was included in the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, another printing of all the Jesuit Relations along with other material from the period, edited by Reuben Thwaites and printed between 1896 and 1901, with original text in French or Latin and English translation of all documents (Thwaites

1959:7:152-157). This is the edition to which most scholars have access. It is also the edition that is most in concord with the copy of the original publication consulted by the present author.⁴

The third is an edition of the only known manuscript copy of the Relation of 1634, located in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, published by Guy Laflèche in 1973 (Laflèche 1973:158-160). The fourth is a quasi-diplomatic edition of a number of the Relations plus other material, much of it previously unpublished, made by Lucien Campeau in 1979 under the auspices of the Jesuit order itself (Campeau 1979:702-75).

The texts of the two prayers under examination differ slightly among these four editions; for example, the Thwaites text retains non-italic and small cap k's of the original in the transcriptions of the Montagnais text, features absent from the other modern editions, which do not distinguish the various types of k. The manuscript edition of Laflèche is taken from what is apparently a copy of the original manuscript, not the original manuscript itself, and is so corrupt, both in its original form and in its modern interpretation, that it is practically useless for philological purposes.⁵ Campeau presents the printed text with his own modern punctuation, but collates it with the manuscript copy and corrects it in a few places where he finds this latter a better reading than the printed version. He also changes the italics of the original Montagnais into roman type and reverses the order of the languages, putting the French above the Montagnais. Where the two versions differ, he notes the other reading at the bottom of the page. He also slightly modernizes the French spelling, and attempts to regularize word divisions in the Montagnais and make the m coincide with the French interlinear translation, but not in a wholly correct or consistent manner.

The Montagnais text with interlinear French translation is reproduced in the Appendix of this article, as it appears in the copy of the original published Relation that was examined. Line numbers have been added for ease of reference; as in Thwaites, the lines have been retained as they are in the original. However, it has not been possible to retain the grouping of French words under the corresponding Montagnais words as is done in the original and the Thwaites version. Since the space between words is problematical in the original, some being obvious and some being so close as to produce doubt concerning the intentions of both the author and the printer, a number of the groupings reproduced by Thwaites is questionable.

For typological convenience, the long s of the original has been rendered as a regular s, and the small cap K as a regular capital K. These ambiguities do not appear to be of any importance

for a linguistic analysis of the material. The present version differs from the Thwaites version in only four very minor points, none of which have any linguistic significance.⁶ Also included in the present version is the original French of the two prayers as composed by Père Le Jeune prior to the translation into Montagnais.

Some points of difference between the three modern editions of the printed version are as follows (the feature under discussion in underlined):

line 3: ouiabatamen 'qui voit' is rendered outabatemen in Coté by misreading the i as t, an understandable error since the dot above the i is missing in the original. The form is a correct changed conjunct of the root wa:p- which would be ouiab- in the transcription used in the prayers. Both Thwaites and Coté, following the original, leave a word space between the ouia and the batamen, but Campeau omits the space since the form is one word, not two.

line 3-5: chaoueriminan 'aye pitié de nous' is rendered as chaoueriminon by Campeau, probably by misprint rather than misreading, since Campeau elsewhere seems to be well aware that the first person plural inflection in verbs of this type is correctly -nan.

line 5: The circumflex in nitaouitât 'a fait' is omitted by Campeau, but retained by Coté and Thwaites. Since there is no indication of vowel length elsewhere in the two documents, Campeau apparently considered this circumflex as a random diacritic, and hence omitted it.

line 13: khisitaie 'tu disois' is rendered by Coté as khisitate, again by misreading i as t. The correct form is problematic. In the original French version of the prayer, reproduced in the Appendix, the words used at this point are vous auez promis 'you have promised,' but the interlinear French translation is tu disois 'thou wert accustomed to say.' The printed form probably needs emending to khisitaien to be in concord with other second person forms in the document, like line 1 khichitaien '[tu] as fait,' although this latter, like other forms, are in conjunct position after the conjunct particle ca, which is not the case with khisitaie. It is possible that the particle egou that immediately precedes this verb requires the conjunct, but the grammars are silent on this matter. Further analysis is called for.

line 25: pamtatim 'ie t'obéïray' is a misprint for correct pamitatin, found in the manuscript version and included by Campeau in his version. It is rendered by Coté and Thwaites, following the printed version, as pamtatim. This is one of the two instances in these two texts where Campeau follows the manuscript rather than the

printed version. The form also occurs in line 43 in the second prayer as pamitatin in all versions, so is therefore probably correct as rendered by Campeau. In a consistent orthography, the preceding khiga, consisting of the second person prefix khi- plus the future particle -ga-, would be joined to the verb to form one word, but it is printed in all versions as a separate word. The root pa:m- meaning 'obey' does not appear to occur in any modern Montagnais word list, nor in any modern Cree word list, but it is found in Bonaventure Fabvre's Racines montagnaises of 1695 (Fabvre 1970:270) as ki Pamitā8in 2 tātīn 'tu me 2 Ie t'obeis,'⁷ from which the future form khigapamitatin can be derived. The root also occurs in Ojibwa in a reduplicated form nin babamitawa 'I obey him' (Baraga 1966:183) and as bbaamta- (Rhodes 1985:34; the double bb probably indicates a syncopated initial syllable). It probably therefore represents a vocabulary item that has gone out of use in modern Montagnais.

line 39 (second prayer): bona [oukhiran] 'pourrais-je [mentir]' is rendered boua in the manuscript version, a reading adopted by Campeau, the second such adopted by him from the manuscript. The form is problematic. It proved impossible to find a comparable form in modern Montagnais material, but the form p8a does occur in Fabvre (1970:314), and also in Silvy (1974:137), where it is defined as 'in composition, chose trop grosse qui s'accorde à peine.' This is cleared up slightly by forms quoted by Silvy immediately after this entry like ni p8a8amau 'j'ai peine à mordre,' or ni p8a8ipiten 'j'arrache avec peine.' The form is probably a preverb which means 'hardly' or 'with difficulty' so that the whole verb form probably means something like 'I can hardly lie' or 'how could I possibly lie to you?.'

This particular Relation is unique in being preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in a manuscript copy. However, it is the opinion of Campeau that this is by no means the original manuscript, but rather a copy of the original. He is also of the opinion that the printed version was not based on this existing manuscript, but that both the printed version and the extant manuscript were based on an original which probably no longer exists. That the printed version is more correct than the manuscript copy is probably due to the instructions given to the printer by Le Jeune. These instructions are not found in the printed versions, and hence not in either Coté or Thwaites, who worked only from printed texts, but are serendipitously preserved in the manuscript copy and are included in Laflèche (1973:160) and in Campeau (1979:705). But given the multitudinous errors found in the manuscript version, these instructions were certainly not heeded by the copyist of that document. Le Jeune's comments are as follows (Campeau's rendering):

Voilà comme ilz procèdent en leurs discours. Si ces deux petites oraisons sont mises sous la presse, je supplie l'imprimeur de prendre garde aux mots sauvages. Ceux qui estoient dans la Relation de l'an passé ont esté corrompus et remplis de fautes à l'impression. Pour le françois, si l'imprimeur ou moy y manquons, on nous peut aisément redresser; mais pour le langage de sauvage, je serois bien aisé de le veoir bien correct. Retournons à nostre sujet.

Although Campeau is of the opinion that the manuscript is contemporaneous with the printed version, there are a few hints that it may have been made later, or at least in a different dialect area than the lost original manuscript of Père Le Jeune. In two places, the manuscript reading has a later palatalized affricate, spelled tch, where the printed version has the earlier velar stop, spelled kh.⁸ These are in line 11 ouascoukhi 'au ciel' where the manuscript form is ouascoutchi; and line 57 (second prayer) nikhirassin 'je (ne) mens (pas),' where the manuscript version has nitchirassin. In addition, a number of the French words in the published version have a more archaic form than those of the manuscript; for example, line 6 faict, manuscript fait, and line 62 (par)faictement, manuscript parfaitement. It is possible, therefore, that the manuscript version in the Bibliothèque Nationale was copied from the original manuscript at a date later than the printing, perhaps by someone who did not have access to the printed version, or who did not know that the printed version existed. Otherwise, of course, there would have been no point in copying out a long and difficult work that was already in print. Another possibility, since these differences are very slight, is that the extant manuscript is contemporaneous with the original, and was prepared as a backup copy to be kept in case the original was lost. The numerous mistakes in Montagnais indicate that the copyist was less than expert in that language.

In a final note on the shape of the two prayers, Campeau (1979:705) states that in spite of Le Jeune's caution to the printer, he was ill served in this since the printer went ahead and made a number of mistakes that could not have been in Le Jeune's manuscript, including the forms NouKhimame (line 1) 'Mon Capitaine,' which Campeau says should be NouKhimau, and KhicheouKhiman, (line 33) which should be KhicheouKhimau. Campeau is right that the latter form should have a u at the end instead of n, but is wrong in his statement about the first form, which is correct, and indeed exists in modern Montagnais in the shape /nuçima:m/ 'my boss/chief' (Clarke 1982:27). The final -m is a possessive suffix whose distribution in modern Montagnais is ill-understood, since it appears impossible to predict on which words it will appear. It is interesting to note that the liturgical material from Massé (Champlain 1870:17)

contains an example of this form with plural possessor N'okimaminan 'notre Seigneur' which contains both the possessive suffix >-m as well as the regular plural possessive suffix -nan. The use of this form to address God has not been found in modern texts, where the term in common use is Tshishemanitu (Cyr 1973:80), an indication that the terminology of religious discourse has undergone a certain amount of development since the days of the early Jesuits.

In general, the text is not too different from what it would be in modern Montagnais. Apart from the general lack of affrication of velars before front vowels, and the presence of /r/ where all modern dialects of Montagnais would have either /n/, /l/, or /y/, the 17th-century phonology does not differ in any great detail from that of modern Montagnais. The grammar is still under analysis, but it follows the general lines of modern Montagnais as well, in one or another of its various dialects. It is perhaps in vocabulary where the greatest differences are found, with stems like pa:m- 'obey' and metaphors like noukhimame 'my captain' for 'my Lord' being the most obvious.

It is hoped that with the establishment of a corrected text insofar as that is possible, we will be able to make definitive statements about the language of these prayers.

APPENDIX

First prayer: French text

Mon Seigneur qui auez tout fait, qui voyez tout, & qui cognoissez tout, faites nous misericorde. O IESVS, fils du Tout-puissant, qui auez pris chair humaine pour nous, qui estes né pour nous d'une Vierge, qui estes mort pour nous, qui estes resuscité & monté au Ciel pour nous, vous auez promis qui si on demandoit quelque chose en vostre nom que vous l'accorderiez: ie vous supplie de tout mon coeur de donner la nourriture à ce pauvre peuple, qui veut croire en vous, & qui vous veut obeïr, ce peuple vous promet entierement qui si vous le secourez qu'il croira parfaitement en vous, & qu'il vous obeïra de tout son coeur, Mon Seigneur, exaucez ma priéré, ie vous present ma vie pour ce peuple tres content de mourir à ce qu'ils vivent, & qu'ils vous cognoissent. Ainsi soit-il.

- 1 NouKhimame missi ca Khichitaien missi,
- 2 Mon Capitaine tout qui as fait tout,
- 3 Khesteritamen missi, ouia batamen chaoueri-
- 4 qui sçais tout, qui vois, aye pitié

- 5 minan. Iesus oucouchichai missi ca nitaouitât
6 de nous. Iesus Fils tout qui a faict
- 7 Niran ca outchi, arichiirincasouien, niran
8 de nous qui à cause es fait hōme de nous
- 9 ca outchi, iriniouien iscouechich, niran ca
10 qui à cause es né d'vne fille de nous, qui
- 11 outchi nipien, niran ca outchi ouascoukhi
12 à cause es mort de no9, qui à cause au ciel
- 13 itoutaien; egou Khisitaie, nitichenicassouiniki,
14 es allé ansi tu disois en mon nom
- 15 Khegoueia netou tamagaouian niga chaoueri-
16 quelque chose si ie suis requis i'ẽ auraypi-
- 17 Kan, khitaia mihitin naspich ou mitchimi,
18 tié, ie te prie entierement la nourriture
- 19 arichiriniou miri, ca ouitapouetasc
20 à ce peuple dōne qui veut croire en toy,
- 21 ca ouipamitasc, arichiriniou khiticou
22 qui te veut obeyr, ce peuple te dit
- 23 naspich, ouitchihien khigatapouetatin
24 entierement, si tu m'ayde ie te croyray
- 25 naspich, khiga pamtatim naspich, Nou-
26 parfaitmēt, ie t'obiray entieremēt mon
- 27 khimame chaoueritamitaouitou oui
28 Capitaine aye pitié de ce que ie dis, si tu
- 29 michoutchi nipousin, iterimien
30 veux en contrechāge ma mort penser
- 31 ouirouau mag iriniouisonan, egou inousin.
32 quant à eux qu'ils viuent, ansi soit-il.

Second prayer: French text

Grand Seigneur qui auez fait le ciel & la terre, vous sçauvez tout, vous pouuez tout, ie vous promets de tout mon coeur (ie ne sçauois vous mentir) ie vous promets entierement, que s'il vous plaist nous donner nostre nourriture, que ie vous obeïray cordialement, que ie croiray assurement en vous, ie vous promets sans feintise, que ie feray tout ce qu'on me dira deuoir estre fait pour vostre amour, aydez nous, vous le pouuez faire, ie feray assurement ce qu'on m'enseignera deuoir estre fait pour l'amour de vous, ie le promets sans feintise, ie ne ments pas, ie ne sçauois vous mentir, aydez nous à croire en vous parfaitement, puis que vous estes mort pour nous. Ainsi soit il.

- 33 KhicheouKhiman ca khichitaien ouascou,
 34 Grand Capitaine qui as faict le Ciel
- 35 mag asti, missi khikhisteriten, missi Khi-
 36 & la Terre tout tu sçais toute chose, tu
- 37 picoutan, khititin naspich, tanté
 38 fais bien ie te dis entierement comment
- 39 bona oukhiran? khititin naspich, oui mi-
 40 pourrois-je mētir? ie te dis sās feintise si
- 41 riatchi nimitchiminan, ochitau
 42 tu no9 veux dōner nostre nourriture tout
- 43 tapoué khiga pamitatin ochitau,
 44 expres assurement ie t'obeïray tout ex-
- 45 tapoué Khiga tapouetatin, Khititin
 46 pres, en verité ie te croiray, ie te le dis
- 47 naspich, niga tin missi Khè eitigaouané;
 48 entieremēt, ie feray tout ce qu'ō me dira
- 49 khir khe, outchi Khian, outchihinan,
 50 de toy à cause ie le feray ayde nous
- 51 khiga khi outchi hinan, naspich niga
 52 tu nous peux ayder absolument ie feray
- 53 tin missi, khé eitigaouané khir Khe, outchi
 54 tout ce qu'on me dira de toy à cause

- 55 khian, Khititin naspich; nama
 56 ie le feray ie te le dis sans feintise, ie ne
- 57 nikhirassin, nama khinita khirassicatin,
 58 mens pas, ie ne te sçauois mentir,
- 59 ouitchihinan khigai tapouetatinan nas-
 60 ayde nouss affin que nous te croyons par-
- 61 pich; ouichihinan mag missi irinioua-
 62 faictemēt, ayde nous puis de tous les hō-
- 63 khi ouetchi nipouané. Egou inousin.
 64 mes à cause tu es mort, ainsi soit-il.

FOOTNOTES

¹This article is a revised and enlarged version of a paper read at the Conference on American Indian Languages held at the 86th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago, November 1987.

²The copy of this work referred to is that to be found in the Library of Parliament in Ottawa, call number F5602.5 J58 R5 143 1635. It is a small volume approximately 4 by 6 inches in size.

³Coté's edition is in two volumes. Volume 1 contains the Relations for 1611, 1626 and 1632 to 1641; Volume 2 contains the rest. However, each volume has separate pagination for each Relation, so reference has to be to the year, and within each year to the page as numbered in Coté.

⁴Le Jeune's Relation of 1634 is rare among the Jesuit Relations in having been reprinted twice. One reprint was by Cramoisy himself later in 1635; the other was a version published the following year along with the Relation of 1635 in Avignon, a city which, being at that time under Papal control, was not subject to French copyright law. Although this reprint could not be legally sold outside of Avignon, it was authorized by the Jesuit superiors and it is highly probably that it was distributed widely in France. These two reprints are a testimony to the popularity of these Relations, which regularly sold out shortly after publication. For further information cf. Pilling (1891:308) and McCoy (1972:32-37).

⁵Laflèche's statement is as follows (Laflèche 1972:226): 'Sans savoir comment il a pu y parvenir, on peut être assuré qu'il s'agit

bien du manuscrit qu'a eu entre les mains Sébastien Cramoisy qui le reproduit mot pour mot dans tous ses détails, conservant même l'inversion du paragraphe (p. 181, note a) qu'il rétablira par la suite; il ignore seulement quelques pages (voir p. 83, note a et p. 101, note a) qui sont pour nous inédites.' In fairness to Laflèche, it must be pointed out that his primary purpose is to analyze the Relation as a literary text, with structural and cultural considerations at the forefront, not textual and linguistic ones, and was consequently less concerned about the Montagnais vocabulary items than if linguistic analysis had been his goal.

⁶The differences are as follows: line 16, auraypi- lacks a word space and is obviously a misprint in my copy; Thwaites has correct auray pi-; line 39, the question mark after oukhiran is italic in Thwaites, probably by misprint, since one would assume that only text in Montagnais would be italicized; line 47, Khè has an acute accent in Thwaites, Khé, which is probably correct, since there are no other cases of a grave accent in the text or in other cases of this same word; line 61, Thwaites has the page break after pich, instead of after the end of the preceding line, probably by misprint.

⁷The symbol 8 represents the sound u or w, while 2 represents the second person.

⁸Both the spelling -tch- and the spelling kh occur in these prayers, in addition to c or k. The question of the palatalization of Proto-Algonquian velars in Montagnais, and what these graphic sequences indicate, is a subject treated by Hewson (1973). An extended consideration of these matters in relation to these two prayers is planned at a later date.

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