JACQUES CARTIER IN HOCELAGA IN 1535

By Bruce G. TRIGGER

To honour the approaching 450th anniversary of the first recorded visit of Europeans to Montreal Island, the McCord Museum of McGill University has organized an exhibition featuring the finds of a little-known early French explorer known as "Un Montreälais accueillant Jacques Cartier, le 3 octobre 1535". This exhibition1 considers the historical account of Cartier's visit, what is known about the Iroquoian inhabitants of Hochelaga who welcomed him to Montreal Island, and the material remains of these people as they have been recovered and studied by archaeologists over the last 130 years. The commemoration of this encounter between the native inhabitants of Montreal and early French explorers reaffirms the McCord Museum's role in preserving, studying, and displaying to the public the arts, handicrafts, and other achievements of Montrealers, Quebeckers, and Canadians from prehistoric times to the present.

Cartier's Visit

On the afternoon of October 2, 1535 (which would be mid-October in our modern Gregorian calendar), Jacques Cartier and 32 companions came abreast of Montreal Island after a two-week journey up the St. Lawrence River from Quebec. The latter part of the journey had been made in two longboats. We have no reason to doubt that they were the first Europeans to penetrate this far inland but news of their coming had clearly preceded them up the St. Lawrence. As they approached the central part of the island, over 1000 Iroquoian-speaking Indians came to the riverside to greet them. The men, women, and children danced and brought them food. They tossed so much corn-bread into the French boats that Cartier's chronicler said that it appeared to be raining bread. Cartier went ashore with some of his men and gave the Indians knives, tin beads, and other trinkets as presents. Then the French spent the night aboard their boats.

The next morning Cartier put on his best clothes and left a few men to guard his longboats. Then with the gentlemen of his crew and 20 sailors he set off for the town of Hochelaga, located near Mount-Royal. A well-trodden path led through the oak forests that covered this part of the island. Part way along this trail, Cartier was greeted by a chief who in Iroquoian fashion had lit a welcoming fire on the path. Unfortunately, the two Iroquoian boys from the Quebec City area who had spent the previous winter in France had refused to accompany the French upriver. Hence Cartier was unable to understand what the Hochelagans were saying to him. The Indians led Cartier and his men into the large, open corning fields that surrounded the town; a larger number of people than was to live in sedentary communities and large multi-family houses. They also manufactured globular ceramic vessels in which they cooked their corn soup. While the Hochelagans' manner of life and their heavily-fortified village resembled those of the Hurons, Five Nations, and other Iroquoian groups to the west, the Stadaconan groups that Cartier encountered around Montreal City seems to have continued to rely more heavily on hunting and fishing and to have remained more mobile.

Wars with neighbouring Iroquoian groups appear to have dispersed the St. Lawrence Iroquoian groups that lived west of Montreal before the time of Cartier's visit. Archaeological evidence suggests that many St. Lawrence Iroquoians joined the Hurons. Yet no group specifically claimed descent from the Hochelagans, Stadaconans, or any other St. Lawrence Iroquoian group in the seventeenth century.

The Dawson Site

The only Iroquoian settlement that has been found on Montreal Island (except for traces of a probable fishing camp recently encountered as a result of archaeological excavations in the Sherbrooke Village area) is the Dawson site discovered south of the McGill campus in 1960. At that time, the Burnside property south of Sherbrooke Street had been sold as building lots and was being covered with houses. Workmen who were employed to remove sand discovered several skeletons and numerous portions of broken pottery vessels. These finds were reported to John William Dawson, the Principal of McGill University and a leading geologist of his day. Dawson, who had already shown an interest in Indian artifacts, investigated the site and found there the remains of burials, cooking hearths, pottery vessels, clay pipes, and stone and bone tools that were clearly of Indian manufacture. The site was located along the east side of a small stream that ran southward from the McGill campus just west of Metcalfe Street. It extended as far east as Mansfield Street and from a little south of de Maisonneuve Boulevard north almost to Sherbrooke Street. Thick deposits of trash containing numerous Indian artifacts were found along the western and southern margins of the site. Dawson believed that these indicated that it had been occupied for a very long period of time. It is now known that deep middens are typical of Iroquoian sites that were occupied for only one or two decades. Among the finds of particular interest were various tobacco pipes, including one with three stylized human faces; large bone tubes which may have

been used to extract supernatural poisons from people's bodies in shamanistic curing rituals; pottery gaming discs employed in games of chance; and round "gores" cut from human skulls, which may have been joined together to form mummies. The Indian artifacts that he and others recovered from the site are now preserved in Montreal at the McCord Museum and at Le Château Ramezay.

Dawson believed this site to be the remains of Hochelaga. If so, it would have been occupied only for several decades around 1535, since the Iroquoians relocated their settlements every few decades as the fertility of surrounding fields declined and nearby sources of firewood became exhausted. Yet the area over which Dawson found artifacts covered less than 0.8 hectare and more recent work has failed to produce evidence that the Dawson site was any larger than this. The site is therefore too small to be the remains of a large Iroquoian community such as Hochelaga, which would have been several times bigger. By studying broken pieces of pottery, such as those that Dawson collected from the site, archaeologists can determine the age of Iroquoian communities in relationship to one another. Recent studies suggest that the pottery from the Dawson site dates to somewhere between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is no longer certain that any of these pieces are contemporary with the Iroquoian material from the site. Yet, while it cannot be proved that the Dawson site is the remains of Hochelaga, it is clear that this site was inhabited by the same tribal group that occupied that famous community. Hence the material collected and preserved by J.W. Dawson and others that is now on display at the McCord Museum constitutes a precious link with the inhabitants of Montreal who welcomed Jacques Cartier to what already in the sixteenth century was the metropolis of the St. Lawrence.

AN OLDER ENTENTE

By Bernard DENVIR

On Saturday October 14th, 1066, Duke William of Normandy and his army advanced up the small hill on which Battle Abbey now stands, and charged the troops of English King Harold. William the Bastard to the French, William the Conqueror to his new Anglo-Saxon subjects, had consummated a marriage between two cultures, two traditions. Within a few years this would produce a flowering of a hybrid growth that was to boast some of the finest Romanesque monuments in Europe and a Franco-British culture of remarkable brilliance. William of Malmesbury, that entertaining historian and avid raconteur who was born twenty-five years after the arrival of Duke William wrote, "With their arrival, the Normans breathed new life into religious standards, which everywhere had been tending to decline, so that now you can see in every village, town and city, churches rising in a new and magnificent style of architecture"; and he claimed that it was through the very church in which he had arisen in Canterbury Cathedral, "Nothing like it had been seen, or could be seen in England, either for the brilliant light of its windows, the gleam of its marble paving, and the many coloured paintings which lead the wondering eye to their centre."

Yet till now there has been little effort made to encapsulate for the twentieth century these splendours of the twelfth. Many have been utterly destroyed, by Tudor avarice or Puritan iconoclasm; shrines have been ravished, monasteries despoiled, statues mutilated. But now Britain is making amends in one of the most magnificent exhibitions of Norman, or Romanesque, art ever to have been mounted. housed within the sombre, grey cement walls of the massive Hayward Gallery on London’s South Bank, a building which in its late 1960s architectural bravura, echoes the rugged strength of a Norman keep, are some six hundred objects, astutely selected, brilliantly displayed, meticulously catalogued, all from the period between 1066 and 1200, relics of one of the most successful ententes cordiales in the history of European culture. (The exhibition closes on July 8th.) Drawn from some fifteen countries and from scores of small village churches, Swiss abbey, provincial museums and little-visited chapels, many of the exhibits have never been on view to a general public, nor have they, often enough, ever left their original location. Now seen within the glowing context of that creative explosion brought about by the meld of Anglo-Saxon, Viking and French traditions, they take on a new significance and exude a more vibrant beauty.

An entente Anglo-Norman culture certainly was, though, of course, one may doubt its contemporaneity in some respects. Remi, Bishop of Lincoln, who had fought amongst the Norman knights at Hastings, decided, according to Henry of Huntingdon, a contemporary of William of Malmesbury, to build in his cathedral city a strong church, in a strong position, invincible to enemy attack. "The materials of its construction," he says, "are a symbol of the grandeur of the times, the massive cathedral at Durham, looms over that city like a great fortress, anticipating in its impregnability the later Palace of the Popes at Avignon. But, cordiality apart, there had been close links between England and Normandy long before the fatal arrow entered Harold's eye, and the Anglo-Saxons went down in the bloody and mire of a Sussex field. Edward the Conqueror was himself half-Norman; and the artists of the Winchester School had always been admired, and their works acquired by French abbeys and cathedrals. The most famous memorial of the contest between Harold and William, the Bayeux tapestry, was made at Canterbury for Odo, the Conqueror's brother, and English needlework had always been in great demand across the Channel. The actual tapestry is too fragile to allow it to be brought from Bayeux, but Stuttard's famous copy made in the early nine­teenth century before the original was altered by well-meaning restorers, is valuable not only in its own right, but also as part of that revival of interest in early medieval culture which is documented in one of the more fascinating sections of the exhibition.

Sculptures, mosaics, carvings and paintings of men and women of the Middle Ages as cooched within their own little worlds, it came as something of a shock to realize through this exhibition how cosmopolitan they were. Take one of the finest manuscripts in the exhibition, for instance, the Leofric Gospels. They had been made at Lan­dénvenc in Brittany, whence the monk had fled because of Viking raids in 924. In the next century the book was acquired by Leofric, who was bishop of Exeter between 1065 and 1072, and who himself had been educated in Thurin­gia. The Normans, in fact, were part of an interna­tional mafia, which spread from Scandinavia to Sicily. Henry II's daughter married William II of that kingdom, and the porch of the church at Lil­ley, on the towing path outside Oxford, is adorned with ornamental work more common in that Italian island than in the green country-­side of Berkshire. The greatest of Norman church­men, Lanfranc, William's nominee to the see of Canterbury, came from Pavia. When he built the great cathedral there and extended the abbey of St. Augustine, he used stone from Caen, and an architect from Sens. Some of the sculpture on view in the Hayward was executed for a church in Herefordshire by an artist who had been taken on the pilgrimage route to Santiago by Oliver de Merlimond, and who had studied and sketched what he had seen in the churches of Poitou and Saintonge, while other examples from Reading show strong Lombardic influence.

Of course, the church in general and the reli­gious orders in particular played a great cosmopolitanising rôle. The obituary-list (a document lauding a dead abbot, which was cir­culated to other monasteries so that they might add their own praise) of Vitalis, abbot of Savigny, was taken to 200 religious houses in France and England before returning to France, and the most impressive murals in this exhibi­tion come from the chapter house of Sigonsa in Aragon, where they had been painted by an En­GLISH monk who had studied in Sicily. The Tree of Jesse window from York was echoed later at St. Denis and Chartres, and St. Stephen Harding, one of the first abbots of Clessa the fountain­head of the great reforming order, came from Sherbourne in England. The configuration of the subject of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, which occurs in the stained glass of Canterbury, was repeated in the following cen­tury in the Basilica of St. Francis at Assisi.

There were echoes of a more ancient past inter­mingled with the bright new world of the An­glo-Normans. Phallic boars, stretching through Viking mythology back to the Stone Age in their inspiration, appear on the tympanum from the church of St. Nicholas in Norwich, and a ge­
neology in the exhibition shows the kings of Britain being descended from Adam through the Norse god Woden. At the same time, too, there are constant reminders at the Hayward Gallery of the extent to which the legacy of Greece and Rome was still a living thing, indeed the very word Romanesque (despite the fact that the English prefer to describe it as “Norman”) suggests this. Stories from Aesop’s Fables appear in the Bayeux tapestry; the dump fold type of sculpture, with drapery moulded in pleats so close to the body that it looks as though it were wet, represented at its finest by some of the figures from St. Mary's Abbey in York, is derived from ancient Greece via Byzantium. Manuscripts of the worker of Prudentius and Boethius abound; there is a book by Terence from St. Albans, acquired by Lanfranc’s nephew, and the works of Pliny were duplicated in distant Yorkshire scriptoria. Henry of Blois, brother of King Stephen, educated at Cluny, was one of the first great collectors, buying classical sculpture in Rome to adorn his English palace, and a ciborium from the abbey of St. Maurice d’Agaune in Switzerland, made in England, but supposed to have been donated to that institution by Charlemagne, shows in its interior the centaur Chiron, educating Achilles.

Men’s minds ranged widely too. The exquisitely painted flowers in a herbal from St. Augustine’s Canterbury are close to a natural science textbook compiled by Byrhtferth, a monk of Ramsey Abbey, based on the writing of Isidore of Seville. From the old monastic library at Canterbury, one book which survived the insensate phials of his blood scooped up from the pavement of his great church, and on a more personal level, his letters compiled into a book by Prior Alan of St. Augustine’s and edited by John of Salisbury, the foremost scholar and political thinker of Anglo-Norman England.

It is amazing how frequently, in what is often thought of as an anonymous age, we catch the echoes of individual people whose personalities have survived for close on a thousand years. There is Master Hugo, the craftsman employed at Bury St. Edmunds who not only produced a magnificently illuminated bible, but cast the bronze doors of the abbey and carved the fine wooden figure for a crucifix which is in the exhibition. Artists were indeed recognised as creative personalities, and on one of the plaques commissioned by that intriguing character Henry of Blois, there is the inscription, “Art comes before gold and gems; the artist before everything.” That is not a sentiment one would think of as being expressed at this time, and that by a man who was not only an astute and successful politician who aroused the ire of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, but one who founded one of Britain’s most famous alms-houses, the hospital of St. Cross at Winchester.

What fingers have caressed these objects in the exhibition, what eyes have followed the lines in the manuscripts, we shall never know. But one book is better documented than the rest, the St. Louis Psalter, lent by the University of Leiden. It was written by an Augustinian monk in the North of France, for Geoffroy Plantagenêt, illegitimate son of Henry II and Archbishop of York who died in exile and is buried at Grandmont near Rouen. On his death it passed to Blanche of Castille, Queen of France, whose father Alfonso made some additions to it. Her son was the canonized Louis IX, and there is an inscription in a fourteenth century French hand which reads, “This Psalter belonged to my Lord St. Louis, who was king of France, from which he learnt to read in his childhood.” Louis gave it to his daughter Agnes, wife of Robert of Burgundy, from whom it passed to her granddaughter, who married Philippe de Valois, who gave it to his second wife Blanche de Navarre, from whom it passed to Philip of Burgundy and became part of the rich artistic heritage of that house, remaining for some time at Dijon, the capital city of that rich kingdom. When the Hapsburgs absorbed Burgundy, it was moved to Bruges, and then in 1741 bequeathed to the University of Leiden. This is the first time it has been back in England since c. 1190.

Marrying the English feeling for nature and its concern for decoration with the French respect for classical form and monumental dignity, exploring the potentialities of the ribbed vault, balancing in script, in needlework, in coinage, in pottery and other arts and crafts the romanticism of the Anglo-Saxon tradition with the classicism of the Franco-Norman, the first two centuries of this millennium produced in the British Isles a cultural pattern, the ground-plan of which was never to be totally eradicated, and which has been so finely presented to twentieth century eyes in this exhibition at the Hayward Gallery.
transposait, avec une expression particulièrement vivante, l'accent radieux qui marquait toute cette manifestation. «Dans les montagnes, j'ai trouvé l'éternel et l'immortel qui, telle l'image que renvoie un miroir, m'ont fait découvrir et comprendre tant soit peu tout ce qui me touche profondément», de dire Williamson. «La, j'ai puisé l'énergie qui m'a aidé à poursuivre ma route...» Parallèlement, c'est aux montagnes que Harris, lui aussi, devait la révélation d'une puissance primordiale, d'une force grandiose, lumineuse, unissant l'homme, la nature et l'esprit. L'exposition de Nasgaard apparaît comme un témoignage de toutes ces coïncidences, qui n'ont, en fait, rien de si exceptionnel et qui sont ici audacieusement mises en présence.

Malheureusement, comme toute exposition à thèse, celle-ci comporte un point faible, qui est, une fois encore, le catalogue. Si Nasgaard a su traiter de la peinture scandinave avec une juste efficacité, devant l'art canadien il a quelque peu échoué. La sélection des œuvres du Groupe des Sept semble avoir été faite à la hâte (en effet, pour la plupart, elles provenaient de la propre collection du Musée, en elle-même excellente). Il en va de même pour le texte – et notamment en ce qui a trait au Groupe des Sept –, qui présente un manque évident de rigueur dans la recherche. Nasgaard se proposait de faire connaître les liens entre l'art canadien et l'art scandinave ; il lui aurait suffi, pour ce faire, de se reporter à la période victorienne, à l'époque où William Blair Bruce, peintre de Salons né à Hamilton, Ontario, et dont les motifs d'inspiration étaient typiquement canadiens, partit vivre en Suède. Il faut préciser que la femme de Bruce, Carolina Benedicks, était issue d'une importante famille de commerçants suédois, qu'elle avait ses entrées à la Cour et, tout comme Bruce du reste, dans les cercles artistiques. Elle plaide même la cause de son mari auprès du prince Eugène. Les artistes canadiens contemporains n'étaient pas sans savoir que William Bruce vivait à l'étranger et qu'il s'était installé en Suède. Maurice Cullen, qui viendra par la suite l'un des inspirateurs du Groupe des Sept, fréquenta Bruce à Grez, de 1892 à 1894, et d'autres encore, lui rendirent visite lorsqu'il vivait en Suède.

Et quelle place, précisément, Cullen ou Suzor-Côté tenaient-ils dans cette exposition? Tout comme Bruce et nombre d'autres Canadiens, ils ont étudié à Paris. Les ateliers français offraient le privilège commun de réunir tout naturellement des étudiants venus du monde entier, les Scandinaves compris. Rien non plus sur le Groupe du Beaver Hall, qui fut fondé à Montréal à la même époque que le Groupe des Sept et qui comptait des peintres comme Albert Robinson? Et sur Clarence Gagnon? Les illustrations que ce dernier réalisa pour Maria Chapdelaine, et dont le thème n'était autre que l'âme du Nord, ne sont pas, elles non plus, mentionnées. En outre, l'absence de bibliographie dans le catalogue de Nasgaard constitue une omission tout aussi surprenante et, qui plus est, elle jette un doute sur la nature didactique de l'entreprise. Il faut avouer, néanmoins, que les origines d'un mouvement sont souvent obscures et que l'analyse de Nasgaard, somme toute, apporte une contribution aux écrits nébuleux traitant de ce sujet.


(Traduction de Laure Muszynski)