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Tracy Neal Leavelle

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**Tracy Neal Leavelle : The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America (Early American Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America (Early American Studies):

In 1730 a delegation of Illinois Indians arrived in the French colonial capital of New Orleans. An Illinois leader presented two ceremonial pipes, or calumets, to the governor. One calumet represented the diplomatic alliance between the two men and the other symbolized their shared attachment to Catholicism. The priest who documented this exchange also reported with excitement how the Illinois recited prayers and sang hymns in their Native language, a display that astonished the residents of New Orleans. The "Catholic" calumet and the Native-language prayers and hymns were the product of long encounters between the Illinois and Jesuit missionaries, men who were themselves transformed by these sometimes intense spiritual experiences. The conversions of people, communities, and cultural practices that led to this dramatic episode all occurred in a rapidly evolving and always contested colonial context. In *The Catholic Calumet*, historian Tracy Neal Leavelle examines interactions between Jesuits and Algonquian-speaking peoples of the upper Great Lakes and Illinois country, including the Illinois and Ottawas, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Leavelle abandons singular definitions of conversion that depend on the idealized elevation of colonial subjects from "savages" to "Christians" for more dynamic concepts that explain the changes that all participants experienced. A series of thematic chapters on topics such as myth and historical memory, understandings of human nature, the creation of colonial landscapes, translation of religious texts into Native languages, and the influence of gender and generational differences demonstrates that these encounters resulted in the emergence of complicated and unstable cross-cultural religious practices that opened new spaces for cultural creativity and mutual adaptation.

"A thorough study of Jesuit influence in the Great Lakes, and the author shows how, where, and why Christianity appealed to Indian communities." *American Historical* "An extended and elegant essay on the meanings and nuances of religious conversions. . . . In addition to its sophisticated and nuanced analysis of these religious and cultural exchanges, this book contains moments of exceptional insight." *Church History* "Compelling, well written, and evocative of an important time and place in colonial North America where the sharing of spiritual concerns could result in new meanings, new understandings, and new relationships (both ambiguous and fraught) Leavelle's scholarship opens new windows of interpretation that demand scholarly attention." *Journal of American History* "With great detail and imagination, Leavelle brings a nuanced approach to conversion as cross-cultural practice, paying balanced attention to missionaries and Indians, analyzing behavior and action, song and speech, rituals and relationships, and considering plural conversions in the context of a volatile colonial world. One of the best studies I have read on the subject." Colin G. Calloway, Dartmouth College "Leavelle pays balanced attention to the French and indigenous peoples, and complicates ideas about Catholicism and expressions of Indian culture and tradition. He considers how Catholicism was, for many Indians, an authentic expression of their lives. This results in a rich and engaging story about the expanding, retracting, and ever-evolving relationships between the missionaries and various Algonquian-speaking nations of the Upper Great Lakes and Illinois country." *Catholic Historical* About the Author Tracy Neal Leavelle is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History and Director of the Digital History Initiative at Creighton University. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 *Spiritual Gifts: Conversion as Cross-Cultural Practice* A delegation of Illinois Indians on a diplomatic mission astonished the residents of New Orleans in 1730 with their ardent participation in the Catholic ritual life of the colonial capital. The Jesuit missionary Mathurin le Petit observed that during their three-week stay "[the Illinois] charmed us by their piety, and by their edifying life. Every evening they recited the rosary . . . and every morning they heard me say Mass." People crowded into the church to witness the spectacle of "savage" Indians worshipping and singing before the altar. The highlight for the audience was a responsive Gregorian chant in which Ursuline nuns "chanted the first Latin couplet . . . and the Illinois continued the other couplets in their language in the same tone." The Illinois appeared to be very well educated in Catholic practice, pausing during their daily activities to recite a variety of prayers. "To listen to them," concluded the priest, "you would easily perceive that they took more delight and pleasure in chanting these holy Canticles, than the generality of the Savages." Le Petit was correct in a sense. The inhabitants of some of the Illinois villages had developed a strong attachment to Christianity through years of interaction and exchange with the French. Illinois leaders Chicagou and Mamantouensa arrived in the city at the head of the delegation to show solidarity with their French allies who were embroiled in deadly conflicts with Native nations in the lower Mississippi valley. In an audience with the French governor, Chicagou presented two calumets, or ceremonial pipes, one symbolizing the shared French-Illinois attachment to Christianity and the other the diplomatic and military alliance between them. The Illinois had since the middle of the seventeenth century engaged the French in calumet ceremonies to sustain friendly relations. In the 1690s, the Illinois converted in large numbers to Catholicism, adding a significant new dimension to the relationship. The connection now required two calumets, and one of these thoroughly Native ritual objects represented the religious traditions introduced by the French. This "Catholic" calumet seems an apt symbol for the ways that in which the Illinois incorporated Catholicism into their lives. The calumet was an indigenous cultural vessel that now carried new meaning, just as the Catholic prayers the Illinois chanted in the New Orleans church in their own Native language contained Illinois cultural concepts. Indeed, the Illinois defined themselves as Christians through the ritual of prayer, through religious practice. Le Petit commented that "the Illinois . . . were almost all 'of the prayer'

(that is, according to their manner of expression, that they are Christians)." The Illinois term was araminatchiki, for "those who pray." Araminatchiki spoke, sang, and chanted Illinois words in a new Christian order and context, but these words could never be emptied entirely of their indigenous meaning. Ambiguity reigned in the volatile colonial world the Indians and French made together in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Effective navigation of this swiftly changing world required the kind of cultural creativity on vivid display in the houses of worship and colonial offices of New Orleans. The appearance of a "Catholic" calumet in 1730 represented the results of many decades of encounter and cultural translation, a particularly compelling example of the exchange of spiritual gifts. A well-known early encounter between the Illinois and the French revealed the importance of these gifts in establishing and maintaining relationships. On 17 May 1673, the Jesuit Jacques Marquette embarked on his famous exploration of the Mississippi with the French trader Louis Jolliet and a small group of men. It took the travelers a month of hard work to make their way from the mission of Saint Ignace at Michilimackinac to Green Bay and, finally, into the mighty river itself. The party paddled down the Mississippi for a week without seeing any other people. Finally, on 25 June, they spotted a path leading inland from the water's edge. Alone, Marquette and Jolliet followed the trail and approached a group of villages near a river. They shouted to announce their presence and waited for the villagers to greet them. Marquette recounted that four old men walked slowly toward the two Frenchmen. Two of the men carried calumets, beautiful ceremonial pipes "finely ornamented and Adorned with various feathers." Silently, they raised the pipes to the sun. Marquette was relieved to see the calumet ceremony because he knew the Indians reserved such treatment for friends and potential allies. He also noted that the men wore cloth, which indicated that they had traded in French goods. The men stopped before the explorers, and Marquette asked who they were. They replied that they were Illinois and then offered the calumets for the Frenchmen to smoke. The four Illinois men invited Marquette and Jolliet to enter the village, where the rest of the people waited impatiently to greet their foreign guests. A long series of formal ceremonies followed. At the door of a cabin, an old man, entirely nude according to the missionary, extended his hands toward the sun and said, "How beautiful the sun is, O frenchman, when thou comest to visit us! All our village awaits thee, and thou shalt enter all our Cabins in peace." Marquette and Jolliet entered the cabin, where a crowd of people watched them carefully. The priest heard some people say quietly, "How good it is, My brothers, that you should visit us." The Frenchmen smoked the calumet again and then accepted an invitation from a "great Captain" to visit his nearby settlement for a council. Many curious Illinois who had never seen the French before lined the path to the village. The Illinois leader greeted them at his cabin flanked by two old men. All three were nude, and they held a calumet toward the sun. The two explorers smoked again and entered the cabin. Marquette reciprocated, using four gifts to speak to the assembly. By the first, he informed the Illinois that the party explored the river and contacted its peoples with peaceful intentions. "By the second, I announced to them that God, who had Created them, had pity on Them, inasmuch as, after they had so long been ignorant of him, he wished to make himself Known to all the peoples; that I was Sent by him for that purpose; and that it was for Them to acknowledge and obey him." The third present announced that the French monarch had subdued the Iroquois and would restore peace throughout the land. Finally, the fourth gift asked the Illinois to share their information about the river and the lands and peoples to the south. The Illinois leader responded with a speech that welcomed the French explorers and requested that Marquette return to teach them about the great spirit. He then gave Marquette and Jolliet three gifts: a young Indian slave, an esteemed calumet, and a third unnamed gift that was part of a plea that the explorers go no farther. After the council, the hosts fed Marquette and Jolliet a ceremonial meal of four courses. The leader placed bites of boiled corn meal (sagamit), fish, and buffalo in their mouths as if the Frenchmen were children, but the visitors refused the dog that was offered as the third course. After the feast, an orator led them around the village to all the cabins, calling the people out to greet the visitors. Marquette explained that "everywhere we were presented with Belts, garters, and other articles made of the hair of bears and cattle, dyed red, Yellow, and gray. These are all the rarities they possess. As they are of no great Value, we did not burden ourselves with Them." The tired travelers slept in the captain's cabin and the following day pushed their canoes back into the water in front of a crowd that Marquette estimated at almost 600 people. Pleased with their reception, the missionary promised to return the next year to instruct the Illinois, a people who had in his view "a gentle and tractable disposition." In this detailed journal, Marquette documented a voyage of exploration and discovery that marked the arrival of the French in the heart of the continent and the establishment of dynamic new relationships with Native peoples. The Jesuit superior in New France, Claude Dablon, applauded the success of the expedition. He noted the geographic significance of the river systems that Jolliet and Marquette traveled and declared the potential of the rich and beautiful lands that awaited colonization in the pays d'en haut, the upper country that lay above and to the west of the Saint Lawrence River valley. Dablon also viewed the waterways as key routes into a promising new field for evangelization. French officials responded quickly to the opportunity and by the early eighteenth century had created a colonial empire that stretched from the Saint Lawrence, through the Great Lakes, to the mouth of the Mississippi. This grand empire was more fragile than it appeared on maps of European territorial claims, however. The French relied on the cooperation of Native peoples in sophisticated diplomatic alliances and elaborate commercial networks to maintain the interior colonies. Without cooperation, they were virtually powerless in a vast region that remained, in many ways, Indian country. Neither the French nor the diverse Native nations that lived

in the region were able to impose their visions of stability on the region. The familiarity of Marquette's account and the larger-scale concerns of French empire building all too easily obscure the complexity of what was really happening in the kind of close encounter the missionary described. There was an intimacy, intensely spiritual in nature, in the interaction. Not unexpectedly, Marquette framed the entire enterprise in religious terms. The missionary reflected in the first lines of his journal that when he received his orders to accompany Jolliet, "I found myself in the blessed necessity of exposing my life for the salvation of all these peoples." The idea of death in service to God brought him joy. The planned journey seemed that much more auspicious in that the instructions arrived on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, with whom he always claimed a special relationship. In the final section of the account, Marquette described the baptism of a dying child in a different Illinois village and concluded, "Had this voyage resulted in the salvation of even one soul, I would consider all my troubles well rewarded, and I have reason to presume that such is the case." The baptism represented a moment of spiritual encounter that fit into the pattern already established through the ritual greetings, sharing of food, exchange of gifts, and problematic attempts at communication. For the Illinois, too, the spiritual dimension of the encounter was important, although for very different reasons. In their case, unknown beings and strange events sometimes embodied or communicated *manet8a*, or "power" in the Illinois language, and therefore they required special attention and analysis. Reimagine for a moment the encounter from the Illinois perspective. It was midsummer, and the days were long, hot, and humid. The corn was well established in the fields so carefully tended by women. Someone heard shouting from the main path to the river, and two strangers appeared. What did these men want? Clearly, they were French, for the Illinois had seen and traded with them in the Great Lakes region to the north. Four elders went to greet the visitors, two of them carrying *ap8aganaki*, or calumets, which they raised to the sun as a sign of welcome and honor. The black-robed stranger asked who they were, a question difficult to understand because he did not speak well. "Inoki," they replied, which meant "we are the people" in Illinois. The Frenchmen put the *ap8aganaki* to their lips, and the soothing smoke from the sacred herb drifted into the air, the first sign of a potential relationship. Together, the six men entered the village to continue the ceremonial greetings. "How good it is, My brothers, that you should visit us," the people said. Two more times the visitors shared the *ap8aganaki* before they sat in the cabin of a prominent man to talk. The black-robed one offered gifts as he spoke; he seemed to know how to behave as a guest. He talked about peace and friendship and of spiritual things, too. He spoke with reverence about *kichemanet8a*, a great spirit, but the listeners could not discern the true nature of this being. When the man finished speaking, the Illinois leader presented a series of valuable gifts to show his respect and to signal his positive response to the offer of friendship and alliance. An Indian slave would accompany them down the river and the the calumet would ensure a peaceful journey. Women delivered generous bowls of food to the cabin, and the host fed his visitors. They accepted most of the food in the carefully scripted ritual but refused the dog. Why? And why on the way out did they fail to take the intricately designed gifts offered by the people? Many things remained unclear, but the Illinois knew that these men, or others like them, would return. Hopefully, they would bring more gifts and items for trade. Maybe, with more men, they could help them fight their enemies in this tumultuous time. Perhaps the one who talked of *manet8akispiritshad* access to new rituals and valuable spiritual powers. Encounters like these initiated a complicated process of cultural translation and mutual conversion that lasted for a century in the *pays d'en haut*, the great expanse of land and water that encompassed the Great Lakes and Illinois country. Marquette understood that diplomatic protocol demanded that he present gifts to Indian leaders, but he probably did not fully appreciate the immense power in some of the gifts. If he had, the missionary likely would have gratefully accepted the finely crafted and vibrantly colored objects the Illinois pressed into his hands. It was precisely items like these that men carried into battle for protection and strength. A gift was not just a thing, a mute object. Gifts could speak, and some contained great power. Even the exchange of seemingly mundane items established potentially lasting relationships with mutual obligations. Although the value of these smaller gifts failed to translate clearly, Marquette easily recognized the calumet, *ap8agana* in Illinois, as a very special gift. As Marquette expressed it, the calumet "seems to be the God of peace and of war, the Arbiter of life and of death." Marquette described the calumet: "It is fashioned from a red stone, polished like marble, and bored in such a manner that one end serves as a receptacle for the tobacco, while the other fits into the stem; this is a stick two feet long, as thick as an ordinary cane, and bored through the middle." He continued, "It is ornamented with the heads and necks of various birds, whose plumage is very beautiful. To these they also add large feathers, red, green, and other colors, wherewith the whole is adorned." Birds were powerful other-than-human beings, and their feathers possessed useful power. Dablon commented in his report on the expedition that "this gift has almost a religious meaning among these peoples." The spiritually potent pipes commanded great respect throughout the region and beyond, among many Native peoples. The Illinois used the calumet and its related ceremonies "to put an end to Their disputes, to strengthen their alliances, and to speak to Strangers," as well as to demonstrate respect toward the *manet8aki*, the spirits who populated their world. The calumet communicated the sincerity and identity of its carrier. It served as a translator of peaceful intent. Marquette gladly accepted the priceless gift, and he later used it to avoid dangerous confrontations with wary Indians to the south. The exchange of gifts in the Illinois village represented the establishment of a respectful, reciprocal relationship with the two Frenchmen. They were no longer strangers. Participation in these rituals reflected

a major adaptation to Native customs for Marquette and Jolliet, a kind of conversion. The Illinois had started to incorporate these men into an Indian world, even as the two visitors looked forward to a time when the French would rule a commercial empire populated by Christian Indians. Religious encounters in the pays d'en haut brought people together in ways that promoted exchange across cultural borders, but not in a simple or straightforward fashion. Colonialism and its effects—the appearance of colonial officials, traders, and missionaries; the movements of Native peoples responding to pressures and to opportunities; the establishment and desertion of villages, forts, trading posts, and missions; the impact of warfare, disease, and alcohol—created unsteady formations on which to build new relationships. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a confluence of diverse peoples in a complex colonial environment contributed to the social and cultural transformation of the upper Great Lakes and Mississippi valley. It seems somehow appropriate that this transformation occurred in a place defined by its rivers and lakes, by swift currents and quiet coves, by rhythmic waves and sudden tempests. French missionaries paddled into this changing world to lead its transformation. On lakeshores and riverbanks, on long portage trails, and on high bluffs with golden prairie views, they tried to persuade Native people to accept them as teachers, ceremonial specialists, and political allies. In Indian lodges and wooden chapels, the missionaries urged their listeners to recognize the new manitous, the spirits that offered the only true path to paradise. The shared space of Native villages and Indian missions left ample room for a variety of responses. The priests delivered their message and conducted their rituals using Native languages. Cultural influences flowed in many directions, influencing the expression of missionary spirituality and the emergence (and the rejection) of Native Christianities. Ultimately, generations of encounter produced a series of colonial conversions, the creation of hybrid cultural forms and religious practices that reflected simultaneously the movement and the persistence of boundaries. These interactions gave birth to the "Catholic" calumet the Illinois presented to their French friends. Singular definitions of conversion that depend on the idealized renovation of imperial subjects from "savages" to "Christians" are insufficient to explain the complicated processes that unfolded in this colonial world. The experiences of Native peoples and missionaries argue instead for the adoption of a plural, dynamic, and flexible concept of conversion that accounts for the changes in all participants. Such a perspective requires an analysis of religious action—orientation and movement, song and speech, ritual and relationships—more than it does a simple delineation of faith and doctrine. Ritual activity and social relations remained the basis for Native religious life even for those who adopted Christianity, the *araminatchiki*. The classic definition of conversion emphasizes the abandonment of indigenous religious practices for faith in a Christian God and "orthodox" Christian ritual, but such a view is too limited for the diverse religious changes that occurred in the pays d'en haut. Missionaries participated actively in these movements, seeking as they did their own spiritual transformation as they labored to bring others to Christ. Rarely was conversion a simple movement away from one settled identity or set of practices toward another equally stable identity or ritual regime. Rather, the movement itself represented a significant element of conversion, a substantive engagement with difference that left none of the participants unchanged. A broader analysis of multiple conversions—French and Indian—more clearly articulates varied responses to cultural and religious differences and avoids the many problems that arise when trying to measure the supposed sincerity of Native neophytes. Conversions of all kinds in French and Indian North America took place in a colonial context notable for its shifting and often highly localized and deeply personal power relations. These plural transformations reflected the emergence of complicated and unstable cross-cultural religious practices. A primary definition of conversion is "turning in position, direction, destination." In this sense, cultural encounters that involved any authentic exchange across lines of difference required a reorientation, a turn toward or away from the other, the identification of a new direction of travel. This metaphorical movement is apparent in the meeting of Marquette and Jolliet with the Illinois. The French explorers left the flow of the Mississippi to follow a path into an uncertain new world. The Illinois in turn shifted their gaze from the interior life of the village to the visitors from the outside. Marquette and Jolliet later returned to the river with a tangible expression of the relationship they had formed there. Religious studies scholar Thomas Tweed emphasizes "movement, relation, and position" in his theoretical reflections on religion. Tweed argues that two "orienting metaphors are most useful for analyzing what religion is and what it does: spatial metaphors (dwelling and crossing) signal that religion is about finding a place and moving across space, and aquatic metaphors (confluences and flows) signal that religions are not reified substances but complex processes." He explains that dwelling "allows devotees to map, build, and inhabit worlds. It is homemaking. In other words, as clusters of dwelling practices, religions orient individuals and groups in time and space, transform the natural environment, and allow devotees to inhabit the worlds they construct." Homemaking involves the construction of physical and cultural boundaries and is, therefore, an expression of power. The emphasis on crossing is recognition of the inherent instability of boundaries over time. "Religions," Tweed contends, "are not only about being in place but also about moving across. They employ tropes, artifacts, rituals, codes, and institutions to mark boundaries, and they prescribe and proscribe different kinds of movements across those boundaries." Tweed's use of the terms confluences and flows acknowledges the mixing of cultural and social streams within and between communities, a metaphor that works well for a region traveled most efficiently by water. The colonial setting of the pays d'en haut encouraged both crossing and dwelling. Missionaries arrived to redraw boundaries and reform communities, but like Marquette in the Illinois village,

they often found themselves drawn into complex spiritual worlds that they did not entirely understand. Crossing and dwelling constituted a form of remapping the world, a way of enlarging the Christian homeland to incorporate others. The experience also offered opportunities for personal spiritual development. This exterior process of itinerant movement through space was closely connected to the interior movement from sin to sanctification, the translation of cross-cultural encounters into a sometimes radical spiritual transformation. Missionaries often waited impatiently to participate in this communal and individual endeavor. Marquette was writing to the general of the Society of Jesus requesting a post in the foreign missions as early as the 1650s, before he had even finished his theological studies. In 1665, he wrote again and indicated that he had been set on service in the foreign missions since childhood. In that same year, his colleague, Claude Allouez, prepared to leave the French settlement of Trois-Rivieres to reestablish the Jesuit mission in the upper Great Lakes, recently vacant because of the death of the previous missionary. Allouez had spent seven years working and studying to get ready for the challenge and to fulfill his dreams of Christian devotion. On 20 July 1665, he said a votive mass in honor of Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Xavier to promote his plan for the mission to the primarily Algonquian-speaking peoples of the region, but Catholic saints alone could not grant the missionary's wish. Allouez needed the cooperation and assistance of Native peoples. A little over two weeks after the mass, Allouez finally convinced a party of reluctant Native traders to carry him in their bark canoes on their return trip into the lakes. Allouez turned again to Xavier for inspiration and guidance a few years later, when Allouez started a journey to open another Jesuit mission farther into the country. He and his two companions invoked the missionary saint in prayer twice each day during the difficult winter journey in 1669. The month-long trip ended in early December at a Native village on Green Bay that was home to people from several Native nations. Allouez celebrated a mass to mark the occasion on Xavier's feast day, 3 December, and asked the Jesuit saint to be the patron of the new mission that Allouez named after him. "The thought of saint Francois-Xavier moves my spirit," Allouez recorded in some personal writings about the missionary vocation. "If men of the world expose themselves to as many perils and undertake such great works to win goods that will only perish, how difficult could it be for the servants of God to accept suffering and danger in order to win souls purchased in the precious blood of Jesus Christ!" Allouez saw in his hard labor for the missions, his encounters pleasant and otherwise with Native peoples, and the baptisms and conversions that he gained an incomparable path to the saintliness modeled by his missionary hero Saint Francis Xavier. In April of the following year, Allouez visited a village of Mascouten, Miami, and Illinois Indians west of Lake Michigan. At a feast, a Native elder stood with a bowl of tobacco and addressed his visitor: "This is well, black Gown, that thou comest to visit us. Take pity on us; thou art a Manitou; we give thee tobacco to smoke. . . . We are often ill, our children are dying, we are hungry. Hear me, Manitou; I give thee tobacco to smoke. Let the earth give us corn, and the rivers yield us fish; let not disease kill us any more, or famine treat us any longer so harshly!" Allouez responded that "it was not I to whom their vows must be addressed; that in our necessities I had recourse to Prayer to him who is the only and the true God; that it was in him that they ought to place their trust; I told them that he was the sole Master of all things, as well as of their lives, I being only his servant and envoy." Allouez's encounter reveals some of the challenges of navigating a world in motion. He believed that the Indians greeted him as a god, but he misunderstood his welcome. The translation was poor in this early encounter. The term manitou in Algonquian languages referred to spirits, the other-than-human persons that populated the landscape, as well as to the power that could influence the world and its inhabitants. In this case, the people in the village showed respect for Allouez, not yet knowing the extent of his power or how he might use it. Jacques Marquette acknowledged this understanding when he referred to manitou at one point as "persons of consequence." The elder, sprinkling sacred tobacco, requested that the Jesuit priest, a person of consequence, share his power for their benefit. The Algonquian-speaking peoples of the region constantly cultivated ritual bonds with the manitous around them, for manitous offered essential access to the power that made life possible. Allouez recognized the strength of these traditions and hoped to turn the people away from their honored spirits and toward his own. French missionaries adapted Native religious terminology and ideas so that they could explain Christianity in comprehensible terms. In the Illinois language, God became kichemanet8a, or the great spirit, the ultimate source of power in the world. The priests tried to introduce a vertical orientation in communities defined largely by horizontal relationships. The challenge of translation and the confluence of cultures limited the priests' ability to produce such a dramatic reorientation. Some Native peoples rejected the proposed transformation, while others translated concepts and practices into creative new expressions of indigenized Christianities. In the years after Marquette's encounter with the Illinois, Jesuit missionaries often encountered resistance to their teachings, especially among the Peoria band of the Illinois. Some Peoria leaders explicitly made the connection between rejection of the missionaries and maintenance of Peoria identity. One, for example, argued that Jesuit teachings were simply useless in the Illinois country. Religious traditions could not, in this view, be conveniently transported from one territory to another. Peoria identity required Peoria religion. A Peoria leader suggested to a man flirting dangerously with Christianity that the community stage a public presentation by the nation's elders and chiefs about the continuing relevance and power of Peoria religious traditions compared to the unwelcome ideas from afar. The established map of the Peoria homeland made little space available for the missionaries and their religious practices. By the eighteenth century, however, many Illinois communities had adapted

to the presence of Christianity, some enthusiastically. The Illinois described conversion as a change of heart or a rebirth. This internal reorientation also involved the remapping of boundaries and the translation of cultures, but it did not mean giving up a Native identity. In 1725, five years before he appeared to acclaim in New Orleans, Chicagou traveled to Paris to defend Illinois autonomy and claims to land. "We have ceded to [the French] the land we formerly occupied at Kaskaskia [a village near the Mississippi]," he said; "that is fine, but it is not good that they come mingle with us and put themselves in the middle of our village and our surrounding lands. I believe you who are the great chiefs, you must leave us masters of the land where we have placed our fire." Chicagou refused to accept further displacement, especially given the attachment of his people to the French and to Christian practice. The delivery of the calumets to the French governor in New Orleans strengthened the connection. The two episodes together, separated by five years and two long journeys by water, demonstrated the effects of crossing and dwelling and the confluence of cultures. These colonial conversions represented a range of emergent cross-cultural religious practices explored here through attention to a series of critical interpretive issues. Our voyage into this world starts well before Marquette's arrival on the Mississippi or the dramatic Illinois appearance in New Orleans. It begins instead with an examination of Jesuit and Ottawa origins, both mythic and historical. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Ottawa confederacy responded to vicious colonial and intertribal conflicts by reorganizing around key sites in their ancient homeland at the center of the Great Lakes region. The resettlement of some Ottawa communities in locations that were both new and old at the same time allowed the Ottawa confederacy to maintain control of strategically important sites and thus retain its place in the evolving systems of alliance and exchange. The eruption of violence and the spread of disease also destroyed many of the Jesuit missions in New France, the most famous of them being the missions to the Hurons. Like the Ottawas, the Jesuits sought a new beginning in the upper Great Lakes. The stories of Ottawa and Jesuit origins as well as strong memories of the recent past created a dynamic cultural and experiential background for the relationships that developed in the new missions in the Great Lakes area. The stories provided essential statements on moral behavior and interpersonal relations in a changing world. They also contributed to the formation of divergent concepts of human nature, and they influenced attempts to mediate otherness through rituals of exchange. Native peoples like the Ottawas and Illinois viewed the missionaries as potentially powerful outsiders who had not yet formed the social bonds necessary for acceptance in their communities. For their part, the Jesuits certainly perceived Indians as savages in need of salvation, but they also recognized innate spiritual qualities that indicated a connection to the original revelation of God. The missionaries' desire to restore this lost affiliation attracted them to a much larger project to transform land and people according to an ideal Christian landscape centered spiritually and metaphorically at Jerusalem. The attempted destruction of a savage Babylon and the erection of a new holy kingdom in the North American interior took place in a land already rich in meaning, filled with stories, and alive with power. Indians and missionaries introduced to their encounters competing visions for the creation and maintenance of ordered cultural landscapes that reflected and reinforced notions of the sacred, interpretations of the past, and visions for the future. The geographies of these encounters reveal space as a significant arena for colonial contests over people, place, and meaning. Despite these differences, Jesuit and Native models of spiritual transformation remained flexible enough to accommodate multiple perspectives at the same time. Priests and Indians identified convergences in their respective traditions that became the basis for the creative reexpression of spiritual experiences and for the redefinition of self, personhood, and community. And Indians were not the only ones transformed by these spiritual encounters. Guided by the example of the Spiritual Exercises, the founding document for Jesuit spiritual practice, Catholic priests articulated new identities of their own in what was to them a savage wilderness of frequent affliction, suffering, and martyrdom. Access to this world of stories and spirits can be difficult. The linguistic material prepared by Jesuit missionaries in the Illinois language therefore provides an important supplement to the standard French sources. These Native-language materials, which scholars are only now beginning to use, show how the intersection of language, culture, and history affected the contours of spiritual life and the course of religious change. Examination of missionary translations of Christian concepts offers significant opportunities to consider how Native peoples might have received and reshaped difficult ideas like grace and sin. The very prayer manuals and dictionaries intended to increase the effectiveness of the missionary enterprise also supply evidence of the limits of translation and the effects of intercultural mediation on the creation of indigenous forms of Christianity. One of the results of this interpretive journey through the Native villages and missions of the pays d'en haut is a more textured description of religious life in these multicultural communities, one that recognizes the humanity of all participants. It has been all too easy for scholars to deny the sincerity of missionaries and to dismiss the genuine engagement of Native peoples with Christianity. Most accounts of French-Indian encounters in the region have not treated religion in detail or have considered religion to be simply another weapon in the arsenal of colonial domination. In their otherwise admirable attempts to counter the hagiographic style and heroic tone of some earlier historical accounts, scholars often dismiss the overt religious elements in missionary literature as formulaic and essentially meaningless constructions or as merely another expression of colonial propaganda. While the connection between missionization and larger colonial systems is undeniable, it is equally important to recognize that missionary literature recounts real efforts to achieve the eternal salvation of Native peoples and of the missionaries who carried the gospel to them. Social, political, and

economic issues were important but still secondary to this original purpose. Moreover, the relationship between these additional concerns and the enduring goal of conversion changed through time and from situation to situation. Unfortunately, the corrective trend toward critical accounts of missionization has generated a strong bias against Christianity as an authentic expression of Indian religiosity. In an analysis of Native Christianity, scholar James Treat observes that "Native Christians have been called heretical, inauthentic, assimilated, and uncommitted; they have long endured intrusive definitions of personal identity and have quietly pursued their own religious visions, often under the very noses of unsuspecting missionaries, anthropologists, agents, and activists." Surveys of Native American religious traditions rarely devote much space to discussions of Christianity despite its importance in Native communities past and present. Christian missionization unquestionably supported colonization, dispossession, and the destruction of Native cultures. Yet the adoption and indigenization as well as the rejection of Christianity represented thoughtful and varied responses to colonization. The essentialist critique of Native Christianities fails to sufficiently recognize human agency and discounts the creative dimensions of encounter. An episode from a Mascouten and Miami village west of Lake Michigan presents a clear demonstration of substantive engagement across cultures, as well as the uncertainty that always seemed to go along with it. In 1676, the Jesuit Antoine Silvy praised a man he called Joseph for his piety and his dedication to prayer. When Silvy arrived at his mission, few of the several thousand inhabitants of the village claimed to be Christian. By Silvy's count, only 36 adults and 126 children had received baptism. He added only five more children and four adults to this modest number. The chapel was often full, but most people appeared only out of curiosity, not to pray with the missionary. Joseph was an exception. Silvy thought him the most remarkable of all the older Christians. The priest provided his superiors an example in his report. "An accident that greatly surprised me, happened recently to this poor man, while I was saying mass, at which he was very devoutly assisting. For, when I was at the consecration and was elevating the sacred host, he suddenly fell into such convulsions that he seemed like one possessed." "He was," Silvy continued, "Brought to himself; and after mass, when I wished to know the Cause of that accident, I was greatly consoled on learning that it was none other than the respectful Awe that the good christian felt at that august mystery." According to Silvy, Joseph always requested new prayers to incorporate into his ritual routines. He asked for a brief rosary of seven or eight words and "he said it with such special attention and affection that he inspired me with devotion, and Gave me unequalled pleasure. It would be an exceeding consolation to have many neophytes like him." Joseph seemed particularly concerned with calling down divine protection for his son, who had gone off to war in the conflict-ridden region. Joseph's assistance alongside the missionary as well as the trance he endured during the mass point toward the very real possibility that Joseph had identified important intersections or convergences between Christianity and indigenous religious practices. Joseph may, in fact, have apprenticed himself to the missionary to become a kind of Christian healer who could operate in both worlds. Silvy perceived him as the ideal neophyte helpful, enthusiastic, and pious in practice but Joseph's performance at the mass would have been even more familiar in the large public ceremonies that were common in these Native villages. The French trader and colonial official Pierre Deliette described these ceremonies among the Miamis and Illinois in a memoir he left after many years of service in the Illinois country. Deliette wrote, "Two or three times in the summer, in the most attractive spot in their village, they plant some poles in the ground, forming a sort of enclosure . . . which they furnish with mats." As people prepared the ceremonial ground, the medicine men and women convened in a cabin to discuss their plans and get themselves ready for the coming rites. At the appointed time, the men and women entered the enclosure and sat down. A leader rose to address the healers and the assembled crowd. "My friends," he instructed, "today you must manifest to men the power of our medicine so as to make them understand that they live only as long as we wish." Shaking their gourd rattles and chanting, the healers called on their manitous in turn. "Immediately," according to Deliette, "three or four men get up as if possessed, among them some who resemble men who are on the point of dying. Their eyes are convulsed and they let themselves fall prostrate and grow rigid as if they were expiring." In the climax of the ceremony, the healers expelled the offending manitous from the ailing men using their own spirits and powers. The power to do so constituted its own kind of spiritual gift, one that had to be handled with care and respect lest the reciprocal relationship between healer and manitou be damaged or severed. Deliette argued dismissively that these medicine men and women conducted the ceremonies to instill fear and uphold their power and influence in the community. On the other hand, the pattern seems remarkably similar to the mass Silvy described. Such masses typically took place inside a small wooden chapel or in a specially prepared ground with a large wooden cross towering over the scene. Silvy would have arrived to say mass with all his priestly accoutrement and called the assembly to worship. Joseph stood by as his assistant. At a critical moment in the mass, Silvy elevated the sacred host for the consecration, the very moment of transubstantiation, and Joseph fell into a trance, as if possessed. In this case, the body and blood of Jesus Christ induced the trance, and the power of God pulled Joseph out of it so that he could continue his worship. Joseph worked closely with Silvy before and after the spectacular event to add to his repertoire of prayers and then used these acquired rituals to seek protection for his family. Silvy viewed him as the model convert. Joseph and others around him may have been just as impressed with his special access to new manitous and spiritual power. Such events, with all their ambiguity, became a common feature of the colonial conversions that transformed the religious landscape of the pays d'en haut in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The distance

traveled from this moment, from this early encounter, to the presentation of a "Catholic" calumet in New Orleans some decades later was indeed a long and difficult journey marked by uncertainty. It was precisely this pervasive element of ambiguity, however, that supported the formation of new relationships and the creative exchange of spiritual gifts powerful and attractive to some, threatening and still dangerous to others.