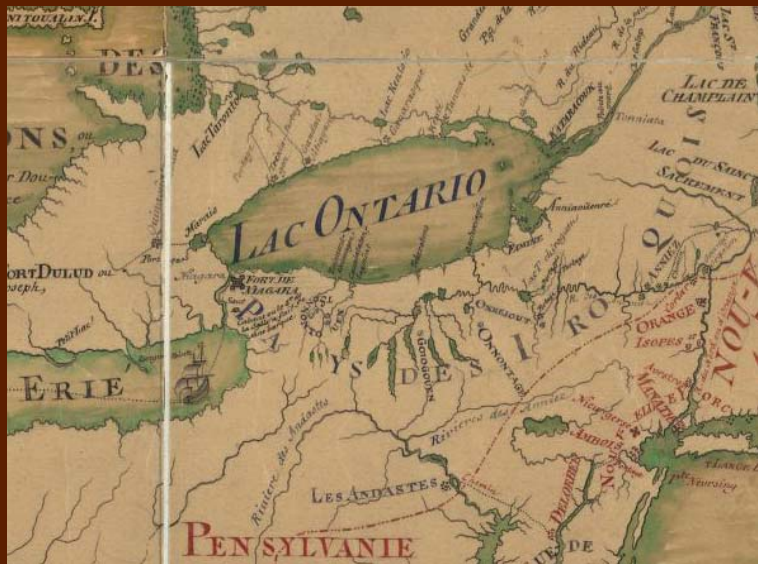


FRENCH-INDIAN NEGOTIATIONS, LATE 1600s, IN NEW FRANCE (CANADA) AND TEJAS (TEXAS): THREE ACCOUNTS



Jean Franquelin, map of North America (*Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale*), 1688, detail including "Pays des Iroquois" (land of the Iroquois)

1673. ACHIEVING A PEACE WITH THE IROQUOIS.¹

After chronic and devastating warfare with the Iroquois since the early 1600s, the French negotiated a peace treaty in 1673, summarized in a 1684 letter by Baron de Lahontan, a French official in New France. (A final peace was not achieved until 1701.)

These *Barbarians* are drawn up in five Cantons, not unlike those of the *Swiss*. Tho' these Cantons are all of one Nation, and united in one joint interest, yet they go by different names, viz. the *Tsonontouans*, the *Goyogoans*, the *Onnatagues*, the

Onouyouts, and the *Agniés*.² Their Language is almost the same; and the five Villages or Plantations in which they live, lie at the distance of thirty Leagues [ninety miles] one from another, being all seated near the South side of the Lake of *Ontario* . . .

There has been an Alliance of long standing between these Nations and the *English*, and by trading in Furs to *New-York*, they are supplied by the *English* with Arms, Ammunition, and all other Necessaries, at a cheaper rate than the *French* can afford them at. They have no other consideration for *England* or *France*, than what depends upon the occasion they have for the Commodities of these two Nations; though after all they give an over-purchase; and they pay for them four times more than they are worth. They laugh at the Menaces of our Kings and Governors, for they have no notion of dependence, nay, the very word is to them insupportable. They look upon themselves as Sovereigns, accountable to none but God alone, whom they call *The Great Spirit*.

They waged War with us almost always, from the first settlement of our Colonies in *Canada* [early 1600s] to the first years of the Count of *Frontenac's* Government [1672]. . . Count Frontenac who succeeded Mr. *Couselle*, perceiving that the *Barbarians* had the advantage of the *Europeans*, as to the waging of War in that Country; upon this apprehension, I say, he declined such fruitless Expeditions [as *Couselle* had waged against the *Mohawk*], which were very chargeable to the King, and used all his efforts to dispose the *Savages* to a sincere and lasting Peace.

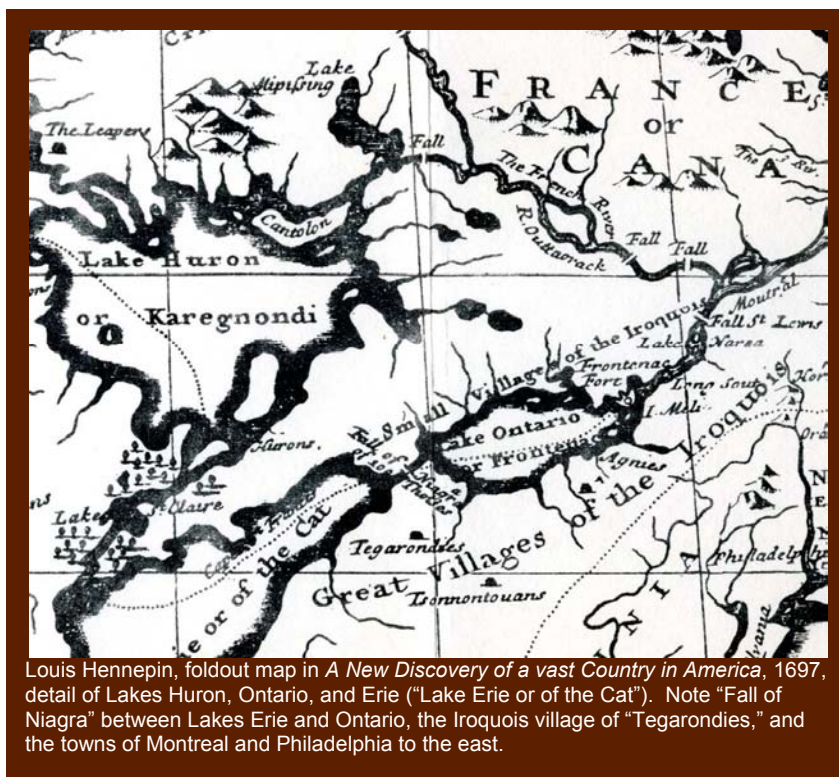
Excerpted, images added, and some spelling and punctuation modernized by the National Humanities Center, 2006: www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm. Complete image credits at www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm

¹ In Baron de Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages dans l'Amerique septentrionale* (*New Voyages to North-America*), 1703, reprint of the English edition of 1703, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1905), Vol. I, pp. 58-61. Full text online in French and English as digital images from Early Canadiana Online at (English) www.canadiana.org/ECO/ItemRecord/35675?id=9f18f6ba5c545e63 and www.canadiana.org/ECO/ItemRecord/37430?id=c59db14fdc283c66.

² "Iroquois" was a title bestowed by the French; the tribesmen called themselves "People of the Long House"; to the English, they were known as the "Five Nations." Lahontan gives the five confederates of the league in the French form their names; the English called them—proceeding in the same order, from west to east—Seneca, Cayuga, Onandaga, Oneida, and Mohawk. [Thwaites, ed., Lahontan, *New Voyages*, Vol. I, footnote, p. 58]

This judicious Governor had three things in view; The first was to encourage the greatest part of the *French* Inhabitants, who would have abdicated the Colony and returned to *France*, if the [Indian] War had continued. His second Topic was that the conclusion of a Peace would dispose an infinity of People to marry and to grub up the Trees, upon which the Colony would be better Peopled and enlarged. The third Argument that dissuaded him from carrying on the War was a design of pursuing the discovery of the [Great] *Lakes*, and of the *Savages* that live upon their banks, in order to settle a Commerce with them, and at the same time to engage them in our interests, by good Alliances, in case of a Rupture with the *Iroquois*.

Upon the consideration of these Reasons, he sent some *Canadans* by way of a formal embassy to the *Iroquois* Villages, in order to acquaint them that the King, being informed that a groundless War was carried on against them, had sent him from *France* to make peace with them. . . The *Iroquois* heard this Proposal with a great deal of Satisfaction; for Charles II, King of *England*, had ordered his Governor in New-York [Thomas Dongan] to represent to them that if they continued to wage War with the *French*, they were ruined, and that they would find themselves crushed by the numerous Forces that were ready to sail from *France*. In effect, the promised to the Ambassadors that four hundred of their number should meet Count Frontenac, attended by an equal number of his Men, at the place where Fort Frontenac now stands. Accordingly, some Months after, both the one and the other met at the place appointed, and so a Peace was concluded.



Louis Hennepin, foldout map in *A New Discovery of a vast Country in America*, 1697, detail of Lakes Huron, Ontario, and Erie ("Lake Erie or of the Cat"). Note "Fall of Niagra" between Lakes Erie and Ontario, the Iroquois village of "Tegaronadies," and the towns of Montreal and Philadelphia to the east.

1679. ALERTING THE IROQUOIS TO A FRENCH FORT AT NIAGARA.³

In preparation for his first expedition to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, explorer Sieur de La Salle planned to build a fort on the Niagara River. This account of the "embassy" to the Iroquois to explain the planned fort is from Louis Hennepin, a Recollect (Franciscan) missionary who accompanied the expedition.

Whosoever considers our Map will easily see that this New Enterprise of building a Fort and some Houses on the River *Niagara*, besides the Fort of *Frontenac*, was like to give Jealousy to the *Iroquois* and even to the *English*, who live in this Neighborhood and have a great Commerce with them.

Therefore to prevent the ill Consequences of it, it was thought fit to send an Embassy to the *Iroquois* . . .

. . . [A]fter five Days Journey, we came to *Tagaronadies*, a great Village of the *Iroquois Tsonnontouans* [Seneca], and were immediately carried to the Cabin of their Principal Chief, where Women and Children flocked to see us, our Men being very well dressed and armed. An old Man, having according to Custom made public Cries to give Notice of our arrival to their Village; the younger Savages washed our Feet,

³ In Louis Hennepin, *Nouvelle découverte d'un très grand pays situé dans l'Amérique* (*A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*), 1697, reprint of the second English edition of 1698, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), Vol. 1, pp. 79, 81-88. Full text online (in French) as digital images from Early Canadiana Online at <http://www.canadiana.org/ECO/ItemRecord/35675?id=9f18f6ba5c545e63>.

which afterwards they rubbed over with the Grease of Deers, wild Goats, and other Beasts, and the Oil of Bears.

The next Day, which was the First of the Year 1679, after the ordinary Service, I preached in a little Chapel made of Barks of Trees, in presence of two Jesuits, viz. Father *Garnier* and *Rafeix*; and afterwards we had a Conference with forty-two old Men, who make up their Council. These Savages are for the most part tall and very well shaped, covered with a sort of Robe made of Beavers and Wolves-Skins, or of black Squirrels, holding a Pipe or *Calumet* [decorated ceremonial pipe] in their Hands. The Senators of *Venice* do not appear with a graver Countenance and perhaps don't speak with more Majesty and Solidity than those ancient *Iroquois*.

This Nation is the most cruel and barbarous of all *America*, especially to their Slaves, whom they take above two or three hundred Leagues (600-900 miles) from their Country, as I shall show in my Second Volume; however, I must do them the Justice to observe that they have many good Qualities; and that they love the *Europeans* to whom they sell their Commodities at very reasonable Rates. They have a mortal Hatred for those who, being too self-interested and covetous, are always endeavoring to enrich themselves to the Prejudice of others. Their chief Commodities are Beavers-Skins, which they bring from above a hundred and fifty Leagues [450 miles] off their Habitations, to exchange them with the *English* and *Dutch*, whom they affect [like] more than the Inhabitants of *Canada* because they are more affable and sell them their Commodities cheaper.

One of our own Men named *Anthony Brossard*, who understood very well the Language of the *Iroquois* and therefore was Interpreter to M. *de la Motte*,⁴ told their Assembly,

First, That we were come to pay them a Visit, and smoke with them in their Pipes, a Ceremony which I shall describe anon: And then we delivered our Presents, consisting of Axes, Knives, a great Collar of white and blue Porcelain,⁵ with some Gowns. We made Presents upon every Point we proposed to them, of the same nature as the former.

Secondly, We desired them, in the next place to give Notice to the five Cantons of their Nation that we were about to build a Ship, or great wooden Canoe, above the great Fall of the River *Niagara*, to go and fetch *European* Commodities by a

more convenient passage than the ordinary one, by the *River St. Lawrence*, whose rapid Currents make it dangerous and long; and that by these means we should afford them our Commodities cheaper than the *English* and *Dutch* of *Boston* and *New-York*. This Pretense was specious enough and very well contrived



⁴ de la Motte: a French military officer with the expedition.

⁵ Porcelain: term commonly used by the French for the beads which served the Indians as both money and adornment; the same as the "wampum" of English writers. [Hennepin, *New Discovery*, 1697, ed. Thwaites, 1903, footnote, p. 83]

to engage that barbarous Nation to extirpate the *English* and *Dutch* out of America: For they suffer [allow] the *Europeans* among them only for the Fear they have of them or else for the Profit they make in Bartering their Commodities with them.

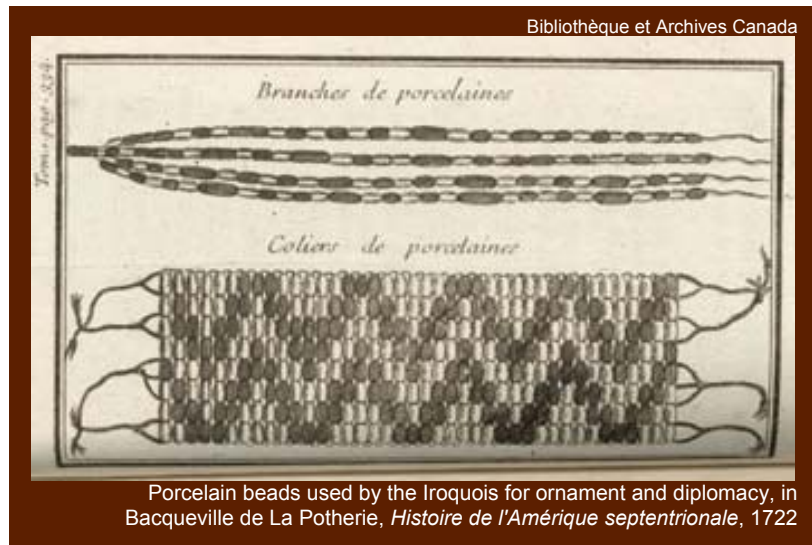
Thirdly, We told them farther that we should provide them at the River *Niagara* with a Black-Smith and a Gun-Smith to mend their Guns, Axes, etc., having nobody among them that understood that Trade, and that for the convenience of their whole Nation, we would settle those Workmen on the Lake of *Ontario* at the Mouth of the River *Niagara*. We threw again among them seven or eight Gowns and some Pieces of fine Cloth which they cover themselves with from the Waist to the Knees. This was in order to engage them on our side and prevent their giving ear to any who might suggest ill things of us, entreating them first to acquaint us with the Reports that should be made unto them to our Prejudice before they yielded their Belief to the same.

We added many other Reasons which we thought proper to persuade them to favor our Design [plan]. The Presents we made unto them, either in Cloth or Iron, were worth above 400 Livres,⁶ besides some other European Commodities very scarce in that Country: For the best Reasons in the World are not listened to among them, unless they are enforced with Presents.

I forgot to observe [mention] that before our Interpreter began to talk of the matters with the Council, M. *de la Motte* ordered him to tell the *Iroquois* That he would enter into no Particulars in presence of Father *Garnier*, a Jesuit, whom he much suspected: Whereupon the old Senators ordered the said Father to withdraw. As I had a great Respect for him, I went out likewise to bear part of the Affront put upon him, and to let M. *la Motte* see that he had no reason to desire me to go to the Council with him, since he had resolved to affront in my presence a Jesuit Missionary, who was amongst that barbarous Nation without any other Design but to instruct them in the Truth of the Gospel. This was the reason why I was not present in the Council the first Day that we acquainted the *Iroquois* with the subject of our Embassy. . .

The next Day the *Iroquois* answered our Discourse and Presents Article by Article, having laid upon the Ground several little pieces of Wood to put them in mind of what had been said the Day before in the Council; their Speaker, or President, held in his Hand one of these Pieces of Wood, and when he had answered on Article of our Proposal, he laid it down with some Presents of black and white Porcelain which they use to string upon the smallest Sinews of Beasts; and then took up another Piece of Wood, and so of all the rest till he had fully answered our Speech, of which those Pieces of Wood and our Presents put them in mind. When his Discourse was ended, the oldest Man of their Assembly cried aloud for three times, *Niaoua*; that is to say, *It is well, I thank thee*; which was repeated with a full Voice and in a tuneful manner by all the other Senators.

'Tis to be observed here that the Savages, though some are more cunning than others, are generally all addicted to their own Interests; and therefore though the *Iroquois* seemed to be pleased with our Proposals, they were not really so; for the *English* and *Dutch* affording them the *European* Commodities



⁶ approximately eight dollars.

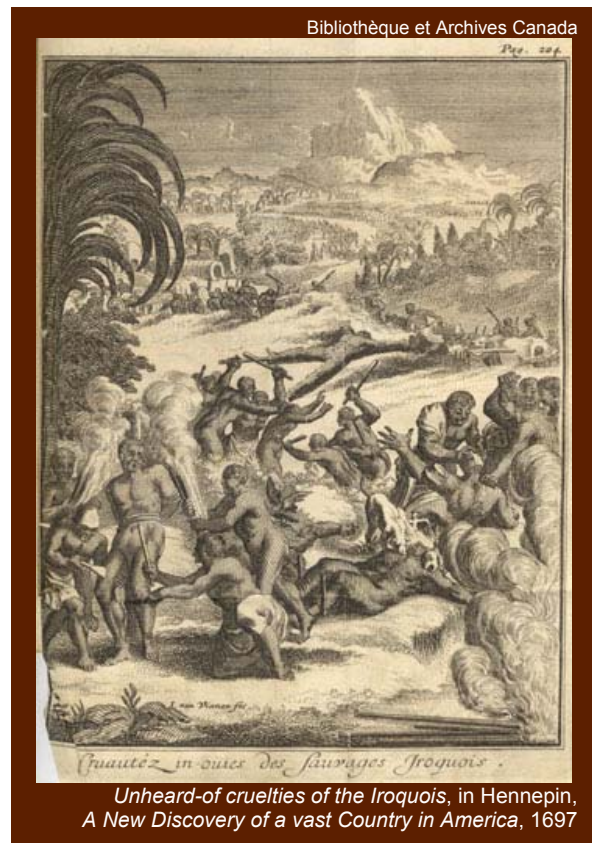
at cheaper Rates than the *French of Canada*, they had a greater Inclination for them than for us. That People, tho' so barbarous and rude in their Manners, have however a Piece of Civility peculiar to themselves; for a Man would be accounted very impertinent if he contradicted anything that is said in their Council, and if he does not approve even the greatest Absurdities therein proposed; and therefore they always answer, *Niaoua*; that is to say, *Thou art in the right, Brother; that is well*.

Notwithstanding that seeming Approbation, they believe what they please and no more; and therefore 'tis impossible to know when they are really persuaded of those things you have mentioned unto them, which I take to be one of the greatest Obstructions to their Conversion; For their Civility hindering them from making any Objection or contradicting what is said unto them, they seem to approve of it, though perhaps they laugh at it in private, or else never bestow a Moment to reflect upon it, such being their Indifference for a future Life. From these Observations I conclude that the Conversion of that People is to be despaired of 'till they are subdued by the *Europeans* and that their Children have another sort of education, unless God be pleased to work a Miracle in their Favor.

While we were still with the *Iroquois*, their Parties made an Excursion toward *Virginia* and brought two Prisoners with them, one whereof was *Houtouagaha*,⁷ which in the Language of the *Iroquois* signifies a talkative or babbling Fellow, and the other of the Nation of *Ganniessinga*,⁸ whither some *English Franciscans* were sent Missionaries. The *Iroquois* spared the Life of this last but put to death the former with such exquisite Torments that *Nero, Domitian, and Maximilian* never invented the like to exercise the Patience of the Martyrs of the Primitive Church withal.

They use commonly that Inhumanity towards all the Prisoners they take in their Warlike Expeditions; but the worst of it is that their Torments last sometimes a Month. When they have brought them into their *Canton*, they lay them upon some pieces of Wood, made like a *St. Andrew's Cross*, to which they tie the Legs and Arms of those miserable Wretches and expose them to Gnats and Flies, and string them to death. The Children of those barbarous Parents cut pieces of Flesh out of their Flanks, Thighs, or some other part of their Bodies; and when they have boiled it, force those poor Wretches to eat thereof. The *Iroquois* eat some pieces of it themselves, as well as their Children; and the better to inspire those little Cannibals with Hatred for their Enemies and the desire to extirpate them, they give them their Blood to drink in some little Porrengers made of Barks of Trees. Thus do these poor Creatures end their Life after a long and unspeakable Torment.

That horrid Cruelty obliged us to leave the Cabin or Cottage of the chief Captain of that barbarous People to show them the Horror we had of their Inhumanity, and never eat with them since, but returned the same way we went through the Woods to the River *Niagara*. And this was all the success of our Embassy.



⁷ Probably a misprint for Ontouaganna, the name given by the Iroquois to the Algonquian tribe generally known as Shawnee. [Thwaites, 1903, p. 87]

⁸ Perhaps a reference to the Gannaouens, or the Kanawhas, the same as the Piscatoways; a tribe in Maryland, friendly to the English; they lived on the upper Potomac River. [Thwaites, 1903, p. 87]

1687. RELATING WITH THE KARANKAWA IN TEJAS (TEXAS).⁹

In 1685 La Salle attempted to establish a French settlement on the lower Mississippi River. Travelling from France with nearly three hundred settlers and soldiers, La Salle failed to find the river and finally built a small fort on the gulf coast of Tejas (Texas). When he was murdered by some of his men in 1687 while exploring distant territory, the expedition fell apart. In 1688 the fort was attacked by the Karankawa who killed the few remaining adults and took the children captive.

Among the captives were four siblings, children of Lucien and Isabelle Talon, aged from several months to sixteen years. Living with the Ceni (Caddo) Indians in east Texas was their brother Pierre, who had been sent earlier to learn the Ceni language. All five were ransomed in 1690 and 1691 by Spaniards in Tejas investigating the French incursion, and after several years in New Spain (Mexico) the brothers Pierre and Jean-Baptiste were able to return to France. In 1698 they were interviewed as part of French preparations for a second attempt at a Mississippi River settlement.

Question 16. *What sort of Indians did they meet along the way, and did it seem to them that they could trade with them? . . .*

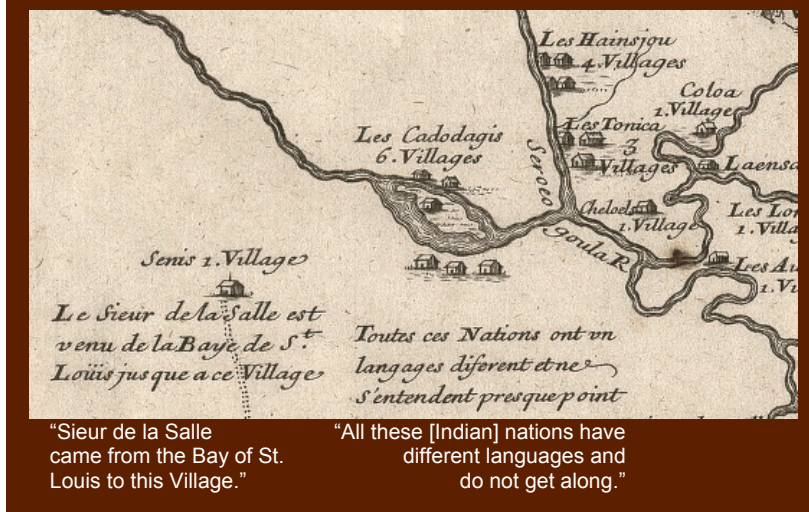
As for trade among them, nothing appeared easier, for they communicate voluntarily with the

Europeans, whom they call the Sons of the Sun. They consider this celestial body, as well as the moon, to be some sort of divinity, without, however, their rendering them any worship; they [Talon brothers] do not think that they ever showed veneration for them. M. de la Salle would never have had war with the Clamcoehs [Karankawa] if on arriving he had not high-handedly taken their canoes and refused them some little article of use that they asked him in return for them and for other services that they were ready to render to him.

Nothing is easier than winning their friendship: a hatchet, a knife, a pair of scissors, a pin, a needle, a necklace or a bracelet or glass, wampum, or some other such trinkets being ordinarily the price, because they love passionately all sorts of knickknacks and baubles that are useful or ornamental. But also, as they give voluntarily or what they have, they do not like to be refused. And, while they are never aggressors, neither do they ever forget the pride of honor in their vengeance. But one need not fear their numbers, no



Nicolas de Fer, 1701 map of La Salle's 1685 expedition to the Gulf of Mexico, details; Mississippi delta at right. Arrow indicates fort built by La Salle. The Karankawa lived along the gulf coast of Tejas.



⁹ In *Report of Two Canadian Soldiers who made La Salle's Voyage to the Mississippi and have returned thence in 1698* (Archives Nationales, Outre-Mer [DFC, Louisiane 3], in Robert S. La Salle Weddle, ed., and Ann Linda Bell, tr., *The Mississippi and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), pp. 251-252, 256-257. Paragraphing added. Permission pending. Full text available online at American Journeys (Wisconsin Historical Society) at www.americanjourneys.org/aj-114.

matter how great. They never dare attack from the front Europeans armed with muskets and other firearms. There is nothing to fear from them but surprise attacks. It is for that reason that the Spaniards all have coats of [chain]mail when they travel among them.

An unfailing means, other than small gifts, that the Europeans still have of winning the friendship of the nations whose alliance could help them the most in their settlements is to take part in the wars that they often wage against others. They believe themselves unconquerable when they unite with Europeans and spread terror and fright everywhere among their enemies by the noise and the effects of firearms, which they have never used and which they always have looked upon as inconceivable marvels. If the French had made more of a mystery to them about firearms, they would have regarded the French themselves as prodigies and invincible men; if they had squandered their lives less, and if they had taken great precautions to preserve themselves as the Spaniards shrewdly do. For it is established that they never, as a people, had seen Europeans before the arrival in their country of the said S^f. de la Lalle.¹⁰

All the savages are of such a great simplicity, so credulous and so sensitive to the friendship that is offered them, that nothing is easier then to impose on them; . . .

They listened with docility to the Spanish Religious who stayed among them — and who, having learned their language, began to preach to them — and willingly allowed them to baptize their children. This Jean-Baptiste Talon avows, having stayed in the country a long time after his brother Pierre and having gone to the Cenis village with the Spaniards, who brought him [away] on their third expedition, as has been said. . . .

Nations with which the said Talons were acquainted in the country of La Louisiane:¹¹

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| The Clamcoehs . . . who are on the seashore and almost never leave it. | } | These two nations are cruel and made war on M. de La Salle because he had taken their canoes to use them. |
| The Temerlouans . . . who are a little farther up. | | |
| The Toho . . . Still a little farther up, inland. | } | The first is a wandering nation like the Clamcoehs and Temerlouans and the other two have villages and cultivate the land. |
| The Cenis . . . A little farther up. | | |
| The Ayenny . . . Still a little farther up. | | |
| The Amalcham . . . another roving nation. | | |
| The Canotino . . . another roving nation that is always at war against all the others, being the most wicked. | | |
| The Caoiules . . . another wandering nation but not so wicked. | | |
| Choman . . . another nation. These Choman visit the Cenis and other nations quite often, not having war against anyone. They are neighbors of the Spaniards, but on a different side from the one by which the Talons passed. There are many among them who speak Spanish. | | |

¹⁰ A questionable statement. See Enríquez Barroto diary entry for April 7, 1687, concerning a prior visit to Matagorda Bay by Juan Poule and his pirate ship. Extent of the Karankawas' contact with Europeans before La Salle is not known, but the natives seem to have demonstrated, in pillaging the wrecked *Aimable's* [largest ship of the 1684 La Salle expedition] stores, that they were accustomed to plundering lost ships. [Wheeler, ed., footnote, p. 252]

¹¹ Ellipses in list in Wheeler edition.