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The Children Of Aataentsic: A History Of The Huron People To 1660.
By Bruce Trigger. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976.
2 vols. \$45.00

While a book must be judged by more than its cover, one of the first things that strikes the reader about Trigger's book is the care with which it was produced. It is a pleasure to examine maps and diagrams which are clear and well-placed near the text to which they refer; the reproductions from earlier sources are likewise nicely reprinted with captions that unambiguously indicate their significance for understanding events in Huronia. The McGill-Queen's University Press may take pride in having produced an aesthetically pleasing as well as a scholarly book.

The Children Of Aataentsic is a very readable, at times exciting, book to experience. I say "experience" because one reacts to the book with a kind of intellectual passion that compels one to participate in the arguments being put forward by bringing one's own experiences to support or refute Trigger's position. It is a tribute to Bruce Trigger's skill as a writer as well as to his scholarship that he can generate that degree of involvement in his readers.

In the author's "preface" he provides the reader with a history of his own involvement with the history of the Huron people and the development of his ethnohistorical methods. He also informs the reader that the present work supercedes much of what he has previously published concerning the Huron. Such an autobiographical preface allows the reader to assess the biases which may influence an author and Trigger is to be praised for providing this intellectual context to help us understand his reasoning.

The first chapter is an introduction to the study of native people in Canada generally and of Iroquoians specifically. He indicates that his work focuses upon the history of the Huron rather than upon how the Huron affected the Europeans with whom they came into contact. But he cautions the reader that a Huron history should not necessarily employ "pro-Indian" rhetoric—the best way to promote the interests of native people is to seek understanding, not sympathy; the first implies knowledge, the second paternalistic prejustice. Much of the rest of the chapter discusses the necessity for the development of ethnohistorians who are armed with the insights provided by an anthropological approach and with the rigour of historiographical techniques.

The second chapter, "The Huron and Their Neighbours", is an attempt to describe the Huron in a geographic and social setting just prior to European contact. While I am in basic agreement with Trigger's interpretation, I think he could have suggested that the Huron were in the process

of shifting from a rank-level society to one that was stratified. Clearly the exclusive control of aboriginal trade routes by a few men would give them advantages which were not enjoyed by others. It would not be long before the ability to provide positive sanctions in the form of differential access to meat, fish, copper, and the like would be used in a coercive manner.

The third chapter is the one with which I believe Trigger to be on the shakiest footing. It is here that he attempts to trace the development of the Huron people as a distinct societal entity. Much of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of the shift from a hunting and gathering base to an horticultural one and of the development of matrilineal descent rules. It is most unfortunate that these concerns were not kept more distinct in their presentation; for while I find his treatment of the development of horticulture quite plausible, I have serious reservations about his treatment of the development of matrilineal corporate groups. It is to his credit that he, too, recognizes problems with his interpretation and offers alternatives in his footnotes. However, in later chapters he is much more willing to subject his historical sources to detailed scrutiny and approaches them with professional skepticism. In this chapter, he is unwilling to treat his anthropological and archaeological sources in an equally critical fashion. Although this is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the aboriginal social organization of prehistoric hunting and gathering peoples, I am of the opinion that the data support an argument for bilateral, rather than patrilineal, descent.

Beginning with chapter four, Trigger chronicles the history of the Huron from the time they begin to be affected—however slightly—by people from Europe. Here he is more sure of his footing and when dealing with archaeological evidence he is more willing to delve into controversy by carefully examining the interpretation of particular scholars and comparing them to alternative interpretations. For this and the next eight chapters one sees the richness of an ethnohistorical approach. Historical, cartographical, linguistic, graphic, archaeological, ecological, ethnographic, and biological evidence is examined, evaluated and integrated to produce a vivid and fascinating account of events in upper and lower Canada from the perspective of the Huron (to the degree that this is possible) prior to 1660.

The main thrust of the argument put forward by Trigger is that as important as the European fur trade was in altering the life-ways of the indigenous people, it was not as disruptive—in itself—as was once supposed. The Huron, especially, were neither as dependant upon European manufactured items nor as unfamiliar with commercial transactions as earlier historians and ethnographers had surmised. This is an important

point for it contributes evidence to support the notion that when people of vastly different cultures meet for the first time, each group continues to evaluate interaction in familiar terms. The consequence of this is not that there is no diffusion of ideas or material. Nor does it mean that when there is cross-cultural borrowing that the receiving culture has adopted the set of values associated with the behaviour or item in the parent culture. What it does mean is that people incorporate things from other societies in accordance with the world view of their own culture. Trigger has been most perceptive in interpreting the diffusion of European artifacts and behaviours to the Huron from the Huron perspective. This alone makes the book worthwhile.

The factors that Trigger puts forward as being the most reasonable explanations for the destruction of the Huron as a viable ethnic and social entity are: (1) the unwillingness of the French to provide military support against the traditional enemies of the Huron and their trading allies, (2) the factionalism which developed by the conversion of a substantial portion of Huron society to an exclusive and Euro-centric Christianity, and (3) the collapse of the Huron maize production as a result of changing styles of warfare. The first and second of these factors are adequately demonstrated to have occurred and produced the consequences suggested by Trigger. He is persuasive in arguing the veracity of the third factor but because he must rely upon conjecture about unrecorded strategies, and motivations of individuals from a number of societies, one feels less comfortable in accepting it with the same degree of confidence as the first two.

Before concluding, I should like to mention a few minor difficulties which might be corrected in a second edition. When discussing the Miller site (p. 128) the text indicates there were five houses discovered while the illustration (p. 129) shows six. Footnote three in the first chapter suggests that the French offered bounties for Beothuk heads during the eighteenth century; there has never been any documentary proof that such a bounty ever existed. And, measurements in future editions should be metric.

This book will have an appeal to a wide range of readers because it is a model of how to structure ethnohistorical monographs. When Trigger is at his best, the value of the ethnohistorical approach is well demonstrated because one's understanding of Huron society is so much greater than from an ethnographic or an historic perspective alone. When Trigger is at his worst, he is still very good and one may learn by being as constructively critical of his work as he is of others.

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