

MEMBERTOU'S RAID ON THE CHOUACOET "ALMOUCHIQUOIS"

--THE MICMAC SACK OF SAGO IN 1607

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MARC LESCARBOT

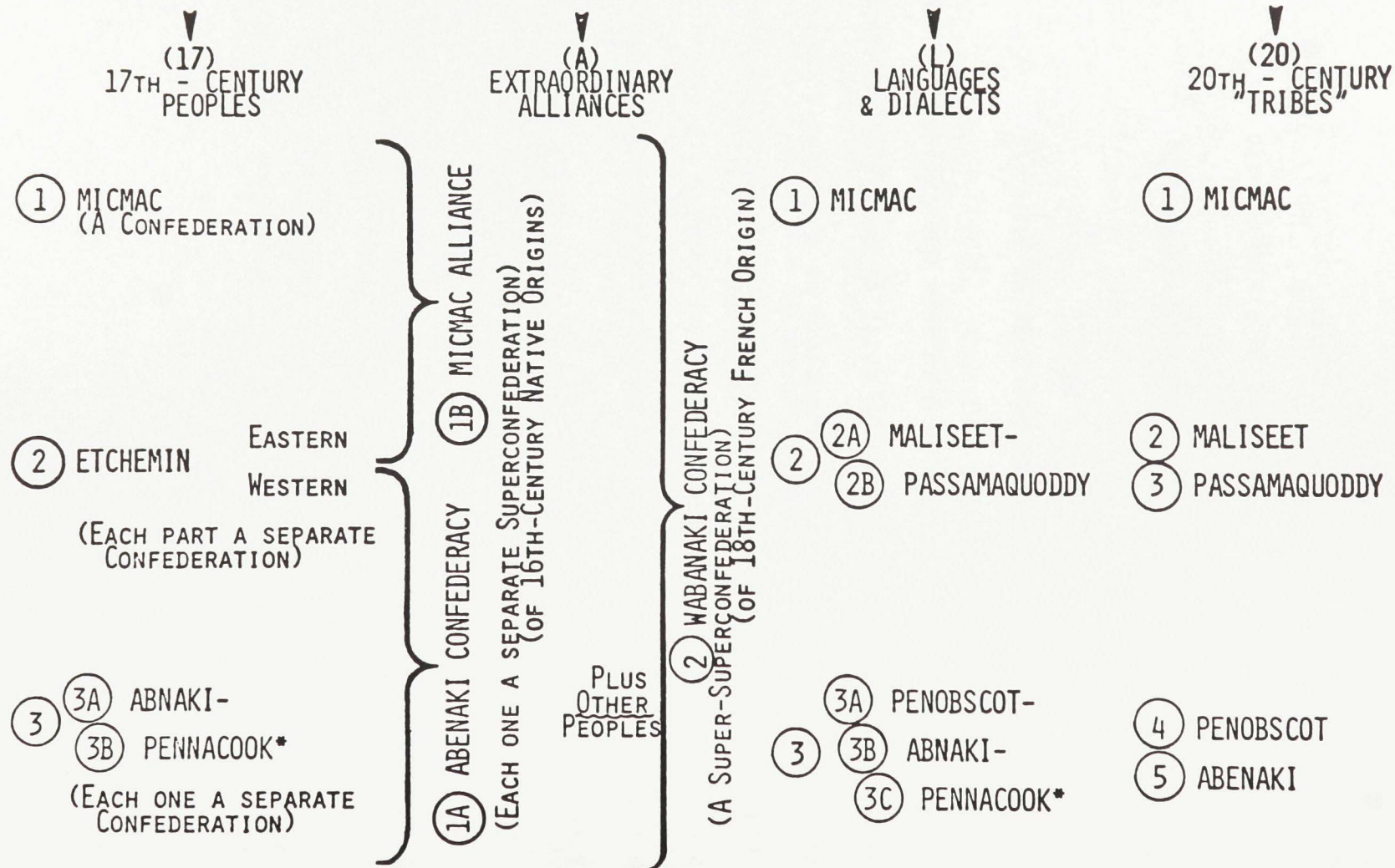
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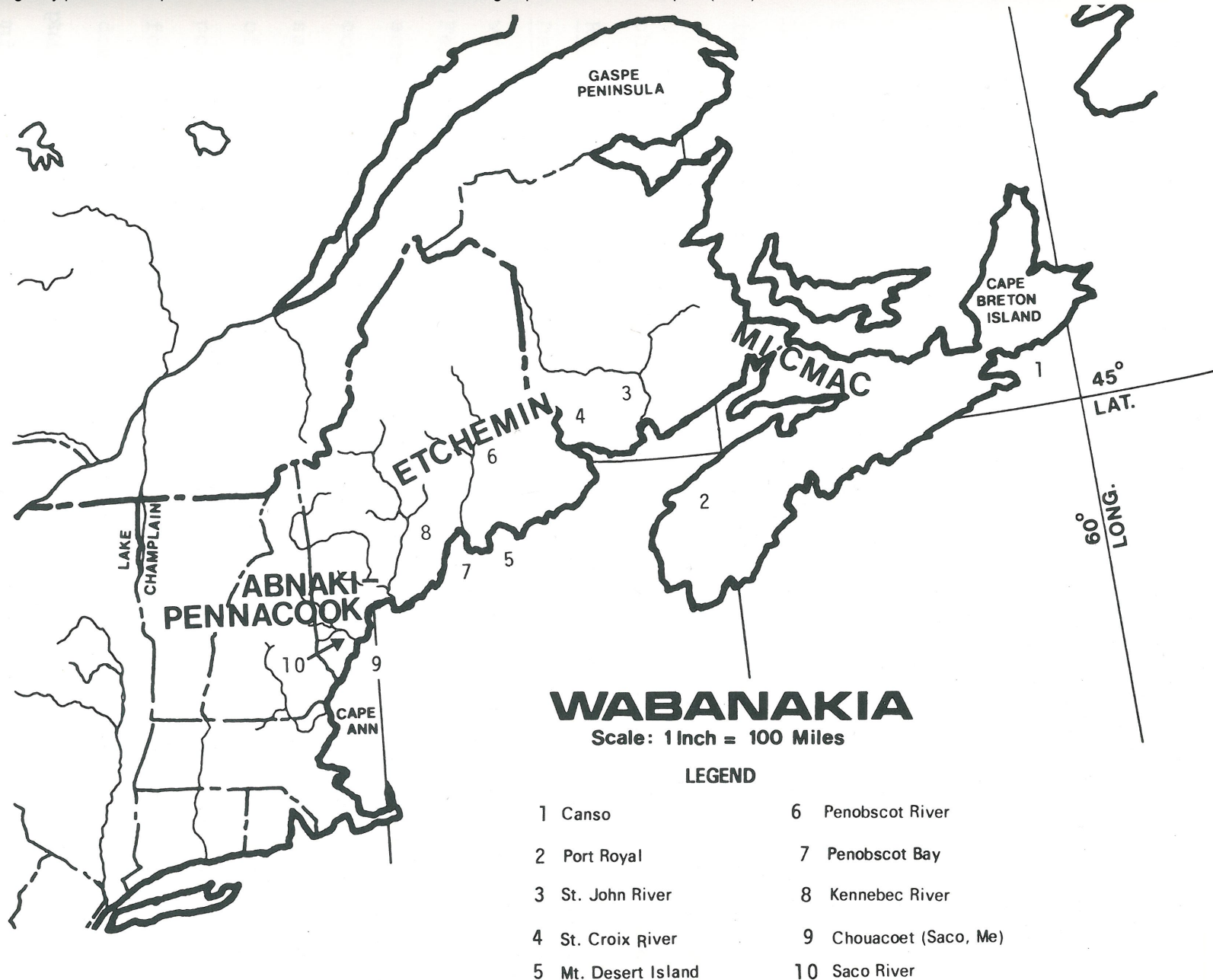
Résumé. Cette communication constitue à la fois une orientation et une introduction pour le poème épique qui la suit, et une critique ethnohistorique des relations écrites par Lescarbot, Champlain et d'autres, faisant état des rapports des Micmacs avec leurs voisins Etchemins et Abénakis-Pennacooks au début des années 1600. L'auteur entreprend une analyse des principales alliances politiques et militaires Wabanaki de façon à mieux comprendre ces écrits, y compris le poème.

THE WABANAKI OF THE NORTH-ATLANTIC SLOPE CULTURE AREA

(HUNTING-FISHING-GATHERING BASIC; MAIZE HORTICULTURE SUBSIDIARY WHERE PRESENT)



*NOT ALL OF THE PEOPLES OF THE PENNACOOK CONFEDERACY ARE MEANT TO BE INCLUDED IN EITHER ALLIANCES ①A & ② OR IN LANGUAGE ③



It is my hope that this paper will prompt other Algonkianists to consider some heretofore ignored questions about the early-seventeenth-century Wabanaki: the Micmac, Etchemin, and Abnaki-Pennacook, of what is now sub-St. Lawrence Canada and northern New England. I suggest only some tentative answers to these questions herein, but shortcomings of each and every known early account written by Europeans may prevent our ever obtaining indisputable and final answers.

Although Membertou's raid is my stated topic, meaningful discussion of the events surrounding it requires me to make an ethnohistorical critique of early sources and an analysis of Wabanaki political and military alliances. The Micmac sack of Saco in 1607 thus serves as the means, not the end, of this paper. Indeed, I asked my Fredonia colleague Thomas H. Goetz to translate into English Marc Lescarbot's French poem about Micmac chief Membertou's expedition into Abnaki-Pennacook country solely because of the indirect light that the data on the Chouacoet campaign shed upon Etchemin superchief Bashaba's Abenaki Confederacy. This confederacy seems to have been the major power-bloc in Wabanakia until its collapse ca. 1615 at the hands of later Micmac leadership.

Membertou's 1607 raid was made in retaliation for the 1606 murder of his son-in-law, Panounias, by "Almouchiquois" from Chouacoet, located at the Saco River-mouth in today's southern Maine. It is in the two separate French accounts of this killing and its revenge, written by Royal Geographer Samuel de Champlain (1613/1907) and lawyer-adventurer Marc Lescarbot (1618a/1907-14;

1618b/1914) that we have our only descriptions of Bashaba's Abenaki Confederacy actually at work as a political and military alliance. Yet, neither Champlain nor Lescarbot nor their later-arriving countryman, Jesuit missionary Pierre Biard, ever once directly mention (to my current knowledge, at least) anything about Bashaba's Abenaki Confederacy. And, at best, Champlain and Biard only imply the status of confederacy-superchief for Bashaba. This is the more remarkable because both Champlain and Biard had made friendly face-to-face contacts with Bashaba. Lescarbot's silence could stem merely from relative unfamiliarity with Bashaba.

It is only in early English accounts that Bashaba's superchieftaincy and/or confederacy are mentioned explicitly: Davies' Relation of a Voyage to Sagadahoc 1607-1608; the Hakluyt/Purchas Description of the Countrey of Mawooshen [in 1602-1609]; the writings of Captain John Smith (1616;1624); and those of Sir Ferdinando Gorges (e.g., 1658). However, few if any Englishmen actually met Bashaba the Great, despite repeated attempts (recorded from 1605 onward--e.g., Rosier 1605a;1605b) by his ambassadors to arrange supposed meetings with him; English distrust of Indians or contrary winds spoiled the first few tries. The possibility exists, therefore, that English preconceptions of feudalism exaggerated the realities of Bashaba's status and dominion. But even so, little if any sense can be made of the two French accounts (especially Champlain's) without having in mind what one might call an "English" interpretation of Bashaba's superchieftaincy and confederacy.

Throughout his History of New France, Lescarbot refers the reader to his poem (published in The Muses of New France) for the details, wherever mention of Membertou's raid appears. And, after reading the poem, one is struck by the intimate details Lescarbot indulges in--just as if he himself personally had witnessed the entire sack of Saco, which he did not. Indeed, quite apparently no Frenchman accompanied Membertou. Careful scrutiny of dates leads me to believe assuredly that Lescarbot was not even at Port Royal when Membertou's successful warparty returned there from the raid. Instead, Lescarbot was a member of the first French withdrawal party to leave Port Royal for Canso, the port from which the entire French colony in Acadia soon embarked on its return to France. His detailed knowledge of what transpired at Chouacoet must have come to him third-hand from Frenchmen who left Port Royal after he did, unless one or more Indian participant(s) in the raid either accompanied these French to Canso or went back to France on the ship and served as Lescarbot's informant(s), thus making his data second-hand at very best. Whichever way, "poetic license" seldom was more overworked before or since.

In attempting to evaluate the more- from the less-exaggerated aspects of the poem, the place to start (and perhaps to stop, too) is with the reported titanic actions of the hero, Membertou. It is the same Lescarbot who ridicules Champlain for his apparent credulity about the legendary Micmac Gougou monster who tells us in his History of New France that Membertou was over a hundred years of age. Yet there is, perhaps, one best way to account

for Membertou's overcoming his centennarian debilities during his Chouacoet raid: he was a ginap--a supernaturally-endowed war-leader. Outsider Lescarbot thus qualifies as being as true a believer in the powers of a ginap as any seventeenth-century Wabanaki could be.

In the light of the foregoing, I find particularly interesting the comment by editor W. L. Grant, in the Champlain Society's edition of Lescarbot's History of New France (1618a/1907-14 2:228n), that "Lescarbot is almost always more accurate than Champlain in details." If this is so, our attempt to learn more about Etchemin superchief Bashaba's Abenaki Confederacy from either source is tenuous at best. Yet, learn we can, and thus I do not wholly agree with editor Grant. Lescarbot's poem mentions Bashaba only once, in passing, as fighting against Membertou's forces--which is appropriate because of his alliance ties. Lescarbot's History..., too, mentions him only once (apparently), in a related context. While placing him on the proper side, Lescarbot obviously did not know or appreciate Bashaba. But Champlain did. Champlain's account of Panounias' murder and Membertou's retaliation thus is our only source of potentially useful data on Bashaba's status and role in the affairs surrounding these events. However, before analyzing the key Champlain statements, the stage must be set more fully.

The nature of my anthropological doctoral dissertation (Morrison 1974) forced me to commit myself to decisions about ethnic group names and distributions in Wabanakia which other students of the Wabanaki peoples seem more or less to have been

able largely to avoid. Following the lead of Bernard G. Hoffman (1955) and Fannie Hardy Eckstorm (1945:18,73-83) more than any others, I have gone further than either of them, in ways that might surprise them both, as well as others. But, I can make little sense out of the early accounts without the schema I have devised. Briefly, it is as follows.

The geographical area that I call Wabanakia stretched from the Gaspé Peninsula to Cape Ann (Gloucester, Massachusetts), and from Cape Breton Island to Lake Champlain. In the early seventeenth century, the three basic clusters of Wabanaki peoples were (from east to west) Micmac, Etchemin, and Abnaki-Pennacook. The Micmac occupied the area now called Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, eastern New Brunswick, and Gaspé Quebec. The Etchemin occupied the land between the St. John and Kennebec Rivers, but were divided approximately at Mt. Desert Island into what I call Eastern Etchemin allied with the Micmac, and Western Etchemin allied under their superchief Bashaba to portions of the Abnaki-Pennacook cluster. The Abnaki-Pennacook cluster began at the Kennebec, and where Abnaki peoples left off and Pennacook peoples began fluctuated, as exemplified by the Saco River-mouth area. It seems possible to me that explorer Martin Pring in 1603 found only Abnaki hunting-fishing territory at the Saco River-mouth (Pring 1625 in Burrage 1906:346). Champlain (1613/1907:61-63) found the probably-Pennacook palisaded town of Chouacoet with its maize gardens there in 1605. After Membertou's raid in 1607, the Saco River-mouth area may have become a no-man's land, at least temporarily.

Champlain, Lescarbot, and Biard all referred collectively to the various different Algonkian peoples west and south of the Etchemin as either "Almouchiquois" or "Armouchiquois"--a blanket term as imprecise as our own current label of "Latin Americans" for all of our neighbors to the south. Champlain later outgrew the term somewhat by distinguishing the northern Abnaki within the general Almouchiquois mass. To my current knowledge, no later Frenchmen and never any Englishmen used the name Almouchiquois at all. Our comprehension of earliest seventeenth-century ethnic groupings and settlement affiliations in southern Wabanakia never can be certain largely because of the early French use (or abuse) of this term, Almouchiquois.

Bashaba, according to both French and English accounts, was an Etchemin local sagamore (or chief) of the Penobscot River and Bay area--Western Etchemin territory in my schema. Over and above this status, however, some English accounts state, and other accounts (both English and French) imply, that Bashaba had wider influence. Overall analysis leads me to believe that he was at least first-among-equals (a true chairman) and nominal head (or superchief) of a polyglot alliance which gave him at least some structural authority to add to whatever charismatic and supernatural personal power he already possessed as a sagamore. Bashaba's alliance appears to have ranged along the Maine Coast at least from the Union River (with mouth at present Ellsworth, shoreside of Mt. Desert Island) to the Saco River (with mouth at present Saco and Biddeford), and contained bands of Western Etchemin and Abnaki, and the probably-Pennacook

Chouacoetan "Almouchiquois" of the Saco River-mouth area. This alliance I call the Abenaki Confederacy.

Lescarbot's poem presents none of the background data needed to better understand the events described therein. Even Lescarbot's History of New France tells less than it should. Champlain's Voyages [of 1604-1607] states (largely unsystematically) most of what we know, but far less than we would like to know. A summary follows, utilizing both authors' inputs.

Champlain first met Bashaba on the Penobscot River, near present Bangor, in September 1604, and learned that the "Souriquois" (Micmac) and "Canadians" (Montagnais) were then defined as enemies by Bashaba's people, the (Western) Etchemin. Bashaba expressed desire to trade regularly with the French. But the French established their base in Acadia first on the St. Croix River in Eastern Etchemin territory, then moved it to Port Royal in Micmac territory. Both the Eastern Etchemin and especially the Micmac developed early, strong, and lasting attachments to the French and to French tradegoods. Membertou, the local sagamore of the Port Royal area, quickly used his French connections to enhance his native political standing, and soon overshadowed his neighboring fellow-chiefs, both Micmac and Eastern Etchemin.

Two other Micmac local sagamores, Messamouet and Panounias, at separate times in 1606, took French tradegoods to go to the "Almouchiquois" town of Chouacoet, supposedly to attempt friendship alliances, but also to show off. Messamouet (who had visited France earlier) was insulted by his reception at

Chouacoet and went home angry, vowing retaliation. By the time that Panounias set out, the probably-Pennacook Chouacoetans apparently had seen enough boastful Micmac swaggering French tradegoods. Furthermore, they desired revenge on the Micmac and their allies for a recent mass killing of some of Bashaba's allies. The result was that Panounias was murdered.

Eastern Etchemin sagamore Ouagimou then asked Bashaba for Panounias' body. Bashaba

granted it to him, begging him to tell his friends that he was very sorry for his death, and assuring him that it was without his knowledge that he had been killed, and that, inasmuch as it was not his fault, he begged him to tell them that he desired they might continue to live as friends. [Champlain 1613/1907:108]

But, when Panounias' body arrived at Port Royal,

Mabretou made an address to his companions on the death of the deceased, urging all to take vengeance for the wickedness and treachery committed by the subjects of Bessabez, and to make war upon them as speedily as possible. All agreed to do so in the spring. [Champlain 1613/1907:109]

Having presented the necessary background for better understanding Lescarbot's poem, I now refer the reader to the accompanying English translation thereof, by Goetz.

It remains thereafter for me to follow up on the poem--to continue my commentary where it leaves off. Here again, Champlain provides the details. He apparently was still at Port Royal (as Lescarbot was not) and presents an account based upon his more direct access to participants in the Chouacoet raid.

On the 10th of August, Mabretou arrived from the war, who told us that he had been at Chouacoet, and had killed twenty savages and wounded ten or

twelve; also that Onemechin, chief of that place, Marchin, and one other, had been killed by Sasinou, chief of the river of Quinibeguy, who was afterwards killed by the companions of Onemechin and Marchin. All this war was simply on account of the savage Panounias, one of our friends who, as I have said above, had been killed at Norumbegue by the followers of Onemechin and Marchin. At present, the chiefs in place of Onemechin, Marchin, and Sasinou are their sons: namely, for Sasinou, Pememen; Abriou for his father, Marchin; and for Onemechin, Queconsicq. The two latter were wounded by the followers of Mabretou, who seized them under pretence of friendship, as is their fashion, something which both sides have to guard against. [Champlain 1613/1907:113-114]

Champlain's account confronts us with no small problem, however: Why does Champlain state that (Almouchiquois) chiefs Onemechin and Marchin were killed by Kennebec River chief Sasinou, who logically should have been their ally because of his spatial location within Bashaba's domain, even if he might not have been of identical ethnicity with them? Writing of events in 1605, Champlain (1613/1907:58-59) earlier had implied friendship between Marchin and Sasinou, as one might naturally expect. While it is possible that Champlain simply is mistaken in his indictment of Sasinou, another early account of 1607 events implies rather strongly that Champlain is not wrong. Davies' Relation of a Voyage to Sagadahoc 1607-1608 (in Burrage 1906: 403,411) clearly states that Sasinou not only had enemies who were his neighbors, but that he was an enemy of the Micmac and their allies, too. I thus am forced to assume that Sasinou (who is totally unmentioned by Lescarbot) either already was, or quickly became, a third side in Membertou's 1607 Chouacoet campaign, and also must have been a maverick within Bashaba's

Abenaki Confederacy as well.

Lescarbot, too, poses a potential problem. In his History of New France, Lescarbot adds the following details to his poetic account:

These two chiefs, Olmechin and Marchin, have... been killed in battle. In their place was chosen by the Indians a certain Bessabes, who since our return [in 1607] has been killed by the English. In his place they have brought down from the back-country a chief named Asticou, a man grave, valorous, and feared, who in the twinkling of an eye will gather together a thousand Indians, as would Olmechin and Marchin. [Lescarbot 1618a/1907-14 2:325]

Here I see no necessary contradiction between Champlain's statement that the successors of Olmechin and Marchin were their sons (especially if the sons then were seized by the Micmac) and Lescarbot's remarks (just quoted) that Bashaba replaced Olmechin and Marchin--because of Bashaba's superchieftaincy status over and above local sagamores. However, I strongly disagree with Lescarbot on both the implied immediate death of Bashaba and the English being its perpetrators. Bashaba and Asticou both were alive and well and competing to host the new French mission station in early summer of 1613, according to Father Biard (1616), who personally knew them both. I do not believe that the English killed Bashaba, and I feel that Lescarbot is just plain wrong in saying that they did. However, the English indirectly and unintentionally may have contributed to Bashaba's demise, as will be touched upon below. Lescarbot elsewhere (see footnote in 1618a/1907-14 2:367-369) states that in 1609 Asticou was acting as Olmechin's successor at Chouacoet, in a French-sponsored

peace-seeking ceremony. I see no necessary contradiction of sources here, either, because Bashaba's confederacy well might have delegated Asticou that ceremonial duty.

For the unsetting of our stage, another summary is in order. After 1607, Membertou apparently abandoned his active status as ginap (war-leader). He then deliberately forsook his highly successful role as shaman to espouse French Catholicism--a singularly adaptive response to increasing European contacts--and in 1610 "Henri" Membertou became the first native chief to be baptized in New France. He gloried in this distinction until his death in 1611. In 1613, the French attempt to establish the mission station of St. Sauveur on Mt. Desert Island was cut short by a sudden devastating raid by English Captain Argall of Virginia. Argall then sacked the French trading station at Port Royal. This brought an abrupt if only temporary end to French influence in Wabanakia. The French thus could not then control their Micmac friends, who pushed their so-called Tarentine (Micmac) War to a new height of fury against Bashaba and his Abenaki Confederacy, eventually destroying both, ca. 1615. In this indirect manner, then, the English eclipsing of French influence does seem to have sealed Bashaba's fate. The words of Sir Ferdinando Gorges succinctly relate what happened to super-chief Bashaba and his confederacy:

...the Warre growing more and more violent between the Bashaba and the Tarentines, who (as it seemed) presumed upon the hopes they had to be favoured of the French that were seated in Canada their next neighbors, the Tarentines surprised the Bashaba, and slew him and all his

People near about him, carrying away his Women,
and such other matters as they thought of value;
after his death the publique businesse running to
confusion for want of an head, the rest of his
great Sagamores fell at variance among themselves,
spoiled and destroyed each others people and
provision, and famine took hould of many, which
was seconded by a great and generall plague,
which so violently rained for three yeares
together, that in a manner the greater part of
that Land was left desert without any to disturb
or appease our [English] free and peacable
possession thereof..... [Gorges 1658 in Baxter
1890 2:76-77]

This paper has presented my initial interpretations of
some of the unclear issues tangential to its title theme--
issues which seem to have been ignored almost too rigorously
in the past. Hopefully it may stimulate further considerations
of these issues and lead to future clarifications of some if not
all of them.

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THE DEFEAT OF THE ARMOUCHIQUOIS SAVAGES¹
BY CHIEF MEMBERTOU AND HIS SAVAGE ALLIES, IN NEW FRANCE,
IN THE MONTH OF JULY, 1607

By Marc Lescarbot

In which one can recognize the ruses of war of said Savages,
their funeral rites, and the names of several among them.
I do not sing the pride of the giant Briareus
Nor of the furious passion of the proud Rodomonte
Who has almost covered the universe with blood
Nor how he forced the gates of the underworld.
I sing of Membertou and the happy victory²
Which acquired for him a short time ago an immortal glory.
When he littered with dead the fields of the Armouchiquois
To avenge the Souriquois people.

Because of an ancient discord between these peoples
Rarely could they agree to get on well with one another,
And if occasionally they treat for peace,
This peace can be called a fool's trap.
"Because the Renard [fox] never changed his nature,
And the double-faced man took no heed to keep his word."
In fact, this lesson was taught these savages only recently
At the expense of the one who gives me subject
To say what moved Membertou and his followers
To undertake such a bloody pursuit for his death.
He was Panoniac (for such was his name)
Once a savage of great renown among his people.

Believing he had made a good alliance
With these wicked persons, he went unsuspectingly
To talk among them; he even aided them
Very frequently with the best of his possessions.
But for all that this people given to doing evil
Did not abandon their evil fashion of life.
Because this Panoniac ten months ago
Having gone to see them (for the last time)
Carrying in his boats some merchandise
To suit these perverse nations,
Who have always been greedy for spoils,
Without mercy they slaughter their neighbor,
Pillage what he had and divide it.
The companions of the dead man escape by swimming away and
Hide themselves for a time in the shadow of a rock
Not daring to approach on these warm mornings.
Because to tell the truth, the murderous band
Was much too large and too strong for them.
But as the over-ridden horses of Phoebus Apollo
Were drawn exhausted under the waters
These mad dogs finally abandoned the spot
Leaving there the cut up dead body
Which under cover of the dark night
Was suddenly carried away without noise by his friends,
And not put, as we are, in an earthly grave
Nor in a wooden coffin, nor in a stone hollow.

He was embalmed in the form of Kings
Whom the pious Egyptians embalmed in times past.

The Etechemin people are the first
To receive the bad news of this cruel murder,
Whence followed a mourning so full of loud woes
That the high Heaven heard its clamor
(Because when these people lament the death
Of one of their own the people of these parts make
Strange clamors many days together.)
But this was not the principal mourning,
Because when this poor body was shown to his people
At Port-Royal, God knows how many cries,
Howlings, and funereal complaints there were.³
The air was filled with wails, and the nearby hills
Seemed by their echoes to endure all these ills:
The thick forests, and even the river
Gave evidence of being in extreme sadness.
Only eight days were spent in this fashion
Out of respect for the French who made light of this.

Service paid to the wandering spirit
(Who has already passed the Styx)
And to the body present there, Prince Souriquois
Starts to cry out in a frightful voice:
What then, Membertou (he said in his language)
Will he leave unpunished such a vicious outrage?
What then, Membertou will not have satisfaction
For the excesses against his own and even his house?

Shall I never see extinguished this race
Who of mine and myself pursue the ruin?
No, no, one must not put up with this insult.⁴
Children, it is proper for us to die for such a blow,
Or else by our arm to send ten thousand souls
Of this accursed people to the fires of hell.
We have close to us the support of the French
To whom these dogs have done a similar wrong.
It is resolved, it is necessary that the countryside
Soon be bathed in the blood of these murderers.
Actaudin my dear son, and your youngest brother
Who have never once abandoned your father,
It is now necessary to arm yourselves with force and courage,
Now then, go quickly one following the shore,
From here to Cap Breton, the other through the woods
Towards the Canadians and the Gaspeiquois,
And the Etechemins to announce this insult,
And say to our friends that I beseech them all
To carry in their souls a spirited resentment,
With the result that they arm themselves promptly
And come to find me near this river,
Where they know I have planted my banner.
Membertou had no sooner commanded his people⁵
Than each took the route he was instructed to follow,
And made in a short time such good dispatch,
That they seemed to outdistance a French postilion
So well that in Spring from all directions

Young and old soldiers come to Membertou.

All drawn to him not by unreal hopes

Under the assured guidons of the brave Captains

Chkoudan, Oagimont, Mememboure, Kich'kou,

Messamoet, Ouzagat, and Anadabijou,

Medagoet, Oagimech and among them

The one who more than all others the Armouchiquois abhor.

He is Panoniaques, who has the chance

To bring misfortune to this nation

For the bitter memory of his brother's death.

When all had arrived, of this cruel death

It was necessary to start the mourning over again

And to put the body of the deceased in a coffin.

The bearded Membertou then started to speak:⁶

You know, he said, O benevolent people

The reason which has brought you here,

It is this body massacred without mercy which you have seen

Whose spilled blood asks for revenge,

Without my making long representations to you for it.

And as in centuries past when to the Roman people

Was shown the inhumanly massacred Caesar

(Membertou was able to have heard this from us.)⁷

All were moved immediately with an ardent anger.

They wished to redress this cruel vituperation

Against the assassins (as I have learned it is

mentioned in ancient writings).

Thus you must all by this strange sight

Be moved with the desire to keep the praise
That our ancestors have put in our trust,
And as a result of which they are now in peace,
Not having esteemed themselves worthy of living
Without having pursued their enemies for their insults.

At these words each felt moved to combat;
Each felt the fire of revenge ignited in his heart,
And would have willingly against the scoundrels
(If possible) thus joined battle,
But it was first necessary to bury his body,
And to accomplish the required last rites.
This great band thus maddened with sadness
Lead the dead body to its mausoleum,
And making sacrifice to Vulcan of his goods,
Bows, arrows, quivers, knives, and dogs
Matachias⁸ also and his skins
All that he had saved when he lost his life.
But as for the mourners, each within his power
Paid him, devotedly, the accustomed duty.
Some cover him with beaver skins, some with knives, roses,
Weapons, trinkets, and many other things.
Then close the coffin, and allow to rest
The one whose quarrel they have just espoused.
The sky which very often warns us of misfortune,
Beforehand had by an ill omen,
Testified to the effects of this war here,
Because having frowned a long time,

It revealed many a time lighted torches,
Spears, dragons, flaming armies.

Thus went the fleet with the intention
Of vanquishing, or of dying on this occasion
Leaving the guardianship of their children and wives
To us, who took faithful care of them.
When they saw the shores of the Armouchiquois,
This wary people recognized them at once.
Suddenly messengers travel fast throughout the country,
And sound horns on each mountain
To warn everyone to be on the watch and to stand by
Before the enemy comes to awaken them.

Peoples from every direction gather in large bands
So numerous that they surpass the waves of the sea.
But still Membertou does not take fright,
Because he knows well how to take at the right moment
The enemy, who so proud, seeing his small band,
Promises themselves to do away with it as soon as the dark,
Shall have spread its curtain over the earth.

Membertou however draws his boat near
To the port of Chouacoet, where the adversary band
Was waiting for him with curiosity, to know what business
Brought him to them: but he had left
His people behind a rock, and had advanced
To reconnoiter the port and the terrain
That he wished to ruin by war.

He, he, this was the cry with which he called

All the alert people who were firmly waiting there,
Yo, yo was the answer. Then, after he asks
If he and his small band could safely
Treat with them and amicably
Settle the difference which for so long
Held each of them in endless war,
And ruined each others land.
They wildly believe to catch by surprise⁹
The one who shrewder than those he came to entrap,
Tell him he may freely approach the shore,
And his people that he had left near the rock,
That they have no greater desire than to see a peace
Solidly established between them forever,
So that they who know the French so well
May share the goods which they have in abundance,
And thus be able to succor one another
Without henceforth pursuing each other.
Membertou receives the offer and as a hostage
Sends one of his own in exchange to the shore.
Then he draws back and goes to see his people,
Whom he finds greatly desirous of knowing
What the will of these peoples was
And if they seemed inclined to some sort of peace.
Prince Souriquois approaching his followers
With a joyous face comes to them saying,
They are ours: the farce will take place,
Tomorrow we must see this band defeated:

And he gives them a full account of what happened,
And how they had greeted one another.
After all (he says) let us think of surprising them
And in this respect let us not make a mistake.
When we left the plan was
To make them a present of the goods we brought,
And to exchange our goods with them.
So that the deceitful man may be caught in his deceit,
Only half of us will go by sea:
The rest in two groups will go secretly
Spreading throughout the woods on sentry duty
Until the moment when my horn calls them:
Then they shall attack and come to our support,
And as long as the day shall last they will strike,
Without pity, without kindness, and without mercy,
So that here we shall be spoken of for a long time to come.
In addition to our quarrel there are some spoils,
They have wheat, nuts, vines, linseed,
All these goods will be ours if we are courageous,
And if we wish to sack their women
They will also be ours. It was still night
And the clear sky was brilliant with golden studs,
When Membertou (whose mind never rested)
Goes to his quarters and gives his people their assignments,
Those whom he knows to be quick runners
He tests with terrestrial dangers.
Thus Memembourre suited for pursuit

Is made the general of an elite band,
Medagoet on the other hand brave in great feats of arms
Chose the strongest and the most skillful from the entire camp.
But the great Chief before raising his banner
Waited until Dawn had scattered its light
On all the horizon: and when the Sun
Had been escorted to the place of its waking
He sets sail, heading straight to the place
Where a great gathering of people was already waiting for him,
When having arrived, some of his people
Are anxious to follow him.
He greets the chiefs of this party,
Among them Olmechin, Marchin, and their households.
Then he offers the presents which I mentioned,
Which he offers as a mark of his esteem.¹⁰
There were dresses, hats, shoes, and shirts,
But when it was time to see the other goods,
Among the spears, daggers, and cutlasses,
There were some horns, of which they did not know
The use, nor the evil end they concealed.
The others, however, were in the woods
Carefully waiting for the planned signal,
When Membertou wishing to show his prestige
Calls his people by blowing a horn,
And in trumpeting, triumphantly deceives the deceivers.
Because in an instant he who had no arms
Hearing his people come he pretends to be alarmed

Finding himself provided with axes, knives,
Bows, arrows, swords, picks, and darts,
He attacks these people, and each of them begin
At once to defend themselves without great success.
They massacre many of them, meanwhile from the woods
The reinforcements arrive screaming:

He, he oukcheqouia,¹¹ and in the conflict
Soon find themselves mingled.

The Armouchiquois seeing that it was all over for them
If they did not promptly put their trouble right
Think of the need to defend themselves
Rather than of placing themselves at their mercy here.
They were for the most part armed with knives
Which they were accustomed to wear around their necks,
But these weapons were of little use at this time.

Because Membertou equipped with good armor
With a shield of hardwood and a good cutlass
Just as the swing of a scythe lays low
Honor in fine epics: his sword likewise
Reaped the enemy with extreme rapacity.

The others carried away with a like ardor
Following the chief's pace, do not lack courage
But with cries¹² and frightful voices
Kill these poor wretches like ants.

So that it was all over for them
If they did not find some way to reverse the situation.
These people who always loved pillage

Believed their advantage over Membertou so great
That there was no need of arms for this meeting,
Nevertheless had taken care just in case
To store an armory at the bottom of a valley,
Where the fleeing band finally went.
There each one armed himself with bows, arrows, and quivers,
With picks, shields, and wooden maces.
There they turn around and with angry faces
Charge Membertou and his people inebriated
With the blood of the Armouchiquois. In this counterattack
Panoniagues was in danger of dying
Wounded in the chest by a javelin.
Chkoudun the courageous, received on the spine
A blow which almost crushed him and saw himself in danger
Of never moving (the enemy was gaining ground).
But the strong Chkoudumech' his brother, with his body
Forcing his way through the crowd, soon made room
To take him out of there: but he was beaten
By a blow struck by the cruel Olmechin
Which taxed all his valor. Mnesinou (whose glory
Throughout these parts is well known)
As the boldest, strives with his spear
To pierce Membertou through:
But the blow dodged with subtle adroitness
By Prince Souriquois, to his son it directs itself,
His son Actaudinech' whom he loves more
Than all the beauty of the earth and sky.

This blow having pierced his sleeve
As quickly as a flash of lightning struck him in the hip:
Completely startled by this Prince Membertou
Recalled the eyes of the monstrous Gougou¹³
And the ancient duel that in his tender youth
His father once dared to undertake,
And redoubling his force he stretched out his arm,
And cleaved him in two with his proud cutlass.
And like a tall oak blown down by a storm
Drags down with it all the best in its neighborhood
So the dead Mnesinou fell, surrounded by many of his followers,
Went to see the sombre region of Pluto.
But the Armouchiquois do not allow themselves to be chased,
Preferring to die there than to live shamefully
If it ever happened that Membertou, victor,
Eternally dishonored them in this combat.
Thus reassembling themselves they make some attacks
And give their enemies many a set-back.
Because until then they had still not organized
For this reason they had badly revenged themselves.
Bessabes and Marchin, who have the first blows,
Come to attack with their proud bands
The Souriquois chief, a hail of arrows
Falls on both sides from every direction.
The sun's brightness remains obscured,
The number of arrows continually increasing.
In this attack some of the Souriquois

Are wounded: but there are more
Laid low on the other side: because their arrows
With heads of bone, do not make as mortal a wound
As those used by the neighbors of the French
Which have steel tips at the end of their wooden shafts.
Yet once more here is a new force
Which tries the arms, not the hearts, of the Membertouquois.
Go, go, go, is their cry, Abejou, Olmechin,
The strong Argostembroet, and the proud Bertachin
Are the leaders of it, who in their first encounter
Met the forces of the valiant Messamoet.
Messamoet (who once breathed the air of France
Had learned the knowledge of warfare
Among the domestics of the Lord de Grandmont)
After many a skirmish had gained the hill
From which he thought he had an easy advantage
To injure his adversary without danger to himself.
But this crafty foe stayed far from there,
And lead the main squadron of Souriquois
Who followed briskly to just above the shore
Where twice a day the tide rises.
There Neguioadetch' mother of the deceased,
After having watched the combat for a long time,
Seeing Membertou's followers in disarray
Comes to land and leaves her long-boat,
To give heart to the astonished warriors
Who had abandoned their first stable position.

And like those Persian mothers and wives
Of old seeing their infamous sons and husbands
Fleeing from the Medes who were following them,
Courageously went to the front suddenly,
Without shame to show them the part of the body
From which man receives his entry to life,
Some crying "What then, do you want
To save yourself in here to avoid the blows
Of those who chase you? Others in another way
Crying to their children: Return to the door
Of the dwelling place in which you were born,
Or return quickly against the enemy.
Finding themselves full of shame before such a spectacle,
The blood of shame now mounts to their faces
So well that in turning around
They put an end to the Empire of the Medes.
Thus did this mother in seeing the danger into which
Membertou and his followers were going to plunge themselves.
Neguiroet her husband now paralytic,
But who understood the practice of how to fight well
Had himself carried there: and well recognizing
The impending disaster which was going to beset them
If some new force did not arrive,
Had himself lowered to the ground, and himself tries
To march to combat, in order to die there
If he could not at least aid his friends.
Being in the middle of them, he gives them courage

And beseeches them all to avenge his outrage.
My friends (he said) you do not fight
Only for the fact, alas! which wounds me too much.
It is a question of honor; it is a question of life:
These two things lost, the loss is followed
By the regret and sorrow of the women and children
Of whom our enemies are going to be triumphant
As well as of us. Thus have courage,
I see them wavering there: it is a good sign.
At these words Membertou had the muskets fired
That at their departure the French had lent him.
Chkoudun does the same because he also had
Two muskets (for which he likes the French very much)
Which were prepared in case of necessity
As a last remedy for a debilitated body.
With their blows ten of them fell dead
And the noise of this thunder frightened the rest.
Abejou, Chitagat, Olmechin, and Marchin,
Four of the worst of this mutinous people,
Fell at this burst. Chkoudun who remembers
The blow he received does not wish the glory for it
To remain with the giver, but in a death dealing movement
Valourous he attacks the strong Argostembroet,
And sets on his followers with so great a severity
That at the sound of his name alone the enemy disbands.
Membertouchis as the oldest son of Membertou
Under the wing of his father assisted by Kichkou,

Gives three blows for everyone he receives.
And now here and there, everywhere the tide is turning.
Five hundred feet further away are Ouzagat,
And Anadabijou in the thick of combat.
They were aided by the brave band
Of Panoniagues, who was soon followed
By Oagimech' and his followers; so well that in a short time
The enemy was cut down like a field of grass:
Because all those who remained, although strong in numbers,
Hardly carried any further the ill-starred encounter
Which had followed on its heels: more especially as Oagimont
With Mememboure staying at the foot of the hill
Where a short time ago I said, the panic-stricken waited,
And valorously pursuing fought them.
But Oagimont having assumed a distant position
Too promptly, was gravely wounded by an arrow.
Mememboure (in hot pursuit) almost in the same way
Was wounded in the leg pursuing the enemy
As were several others attempting to escape from their hands
But who could not however fool their enemy.
Because Etmeminaoet the man who of six women
Can as a gallant lover appease the amorous flames,
And Metembroebit, Medagoet, Chich'cobeche'
Bituani, Penin, Actembroe, Semcoudech',
All valiant champions, warriors, and captains
Completed the ruin of this inhuman race.
But what is here worthy of astonishment,

Is that not a single Souriquois died.

The Armouchiquois extinguished, their army defeated,
Membertou glorious has sounded retreat,
They find still more wounded: Pech'kmeg,
Oupakour, Ababich, Pitagan, Chich'kmeg,
Vmanuet, and Kobech', whose wounds they dress,
While they think of the spoils of the other side.¹⁴
The cure is improvised. Among them is a soothsayer
(Ignorant nevertheless) whose name is Aoutmoin.

A prognosticator of the state of sickness
He feigns towards some demon to be his ambassador
And according to his answer, in this as in everything else,
He judges that he will soon be dead or cured.
Thereupon from the wound he sucks blood,
He spits it out, and while spitting it out shakes his sides:
This done, he applies over the wound
The kidney of a beaver (the perfect bandage)
And thus tries to cure his patient.

The spoils gathered, before leaving
They sever the heads of the Armouchiquois chiefs
So as to make of their return a time of joyous feasting.
Now they are sailing and approach the port
Where they must give comfort to their wives,
Who as soon as they have news
Of their arrival, shout from
Afar, desirous of knowing
What had been the task of each one.

And marching in order, some with spiked staffs
Others with sharp knives (all having
Their faces mottled) they were all waiting
Their turn to have their own Armouchiquois,
To butcher him cruelly.
But without that agreed to feast
And after the banquet followed the dance,
Which lasted all the day and the night,
And which goes on with unending cries
Singing the valor and prowess of Membertou
As long as their stomachs support their voices,
Or until some illness makes them rest.

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NOTES

¹Translated by Thomas H. Goetz from the French text of Marc Lescarbot's "La Deffaite des Savvages Armovchiquois," Les Mvses de la Novvelle-France (Paris: Chez Adrian Perier, 1618), contained in The History of New France by Marc Lescarbot, with an English translation, notes, and appendices by W. L. Grant and an Introduction by H. P. Biggar (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1914), III, 497-508. Originally published as Champlain Society Publication XI. Those notes marked [L.] are translated from the French text.

²Translator's note. Briareus is a mythological giant with a hundred arms and fifty heads. Rodomonte is a character in Ariosto's Orlando furioso (1516). [L.]. The point the author wishes to make is that this story is not fictitious. These verses had been started at Port Royal in the New World and continued during the ocean voyage to France.

³[L.]. See the last chapter of Book IV of The History of New France.

⁴[L.]. See The History of New France, Book IV, chapter 15.

⁵[L.]. The author expresses his astonishment at such long trips through the forests.

⁶[L.]. Only Sagamos, chiefs, wear beards.

⁷[L.]. Membertou could have heard that from us (i.e., the French).

⁸[L.]. Matachiaz, i.e., bracelets, quivers, and jewels.

⁹[L.]. The editions of 1609 and 1611-12 have here:
"Fought and reduced one another to ruin
While their appetite for revenge consumes
and eats up their hearts. Believing to trap them."

¹⁰[L.]. The edition of 1609 has, "which were received in jubilation." This line is omitted in the edition of 1611-12.

¹¹[L.]. As if to say: Where is it?

¹²[L.]. The editions of 1609 and 1611-12 have, "But making great cries."

¹³[L.]. This is a poetic pretense. See the story of Gougou in The History of New France, Book III, chapter 28.

¹⁴[L.]. From here to the end of the poem is omitted in the edition of 1617-18, and the following substituted:

"Spoils, not of treasures, not of rich jewels,
Not firearms, or numerous horses,
But only the scalps of the enemy,
To celebrate over during many a feast,
And to give comfort to their wives
When they joyously return to their home port."

Seeking over Neptune a rest without rest

I fashioned these verses in the wake of his waves.