

## THE PETUN AS THIEVES

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### Abstract

The supposed reputation of the Petun as thieves is examined and rejected

La réputation supposée du peuple Petun d'être voleur est examinée et rejetée.

### Maps

Figure 1 - Anonymous ca. 1641 Map "Nowelle France", showing the legend "KHIONONTATERONON ou petite nation des Algomquins" on the north side of the Ottawa River. Page 3a

Figure 2 - Map "Le Canada ou Nouvelle France" 1656 by N. Sanson d'Abbeville 1656, showing "Quionontateron or Petite Nat" on the north-east side of the lower Ottawa River. Page 3b

### Introduction

The Petun enjoy a multitude of names. For example, the prestigious Dictionary of Canadian Biography provides:

"**Tobacco Nation** (Petuns, Tobacco Hurons, Quieuenontatironons or "Mountaineers," (Tionon); in French Gens du Pétun, Pétuneux, Tabacs.. "

The purpose of this Bulletin is to examine who were the 'Quieuenontatironons', because it is through this identification that the Petuns are regarded as thieves (e.g. Trigger 1987:387, 390, 909). It will be shown that the name Quieuenontatironons (Quieunontateronons), along with a host of variations, Khionontatehronon, Tionnontatehronnon, Etionnontatehronnon, etc. was not exclusive to the Petun but a descriptive term ("people of the hills") applied to any group living in or near hills or mountains.

### Gabriel Sagard

The first association of the Quieunontateronons with thievery appears in the writings of the Recollect Brother Gabriel Sagard. On arriving in Huronia in 1623, he was adopted by a Huron family who "took care that nothing of my little stock of clothing should be lost, and warned me to be on my guard against thieves and cheats, especially the Quieunontateronons, who often came to see me in order to get something from me; for of all the tribes of savages this one is

among the smartest in the matter of deceit and theft" (Sagard 1939:71).

Sagard knew the Quieunontateronons fairly well. He referred to them several times under an alternative name - "la petite Nation" (Little Tribe), e.g. "la petite Nation, que nos Hurons appellent Quieunontatetonons" (Sagard 1939:9, 198, 234, 263, 371, 388, 401). He visited the Quieunontatetonons-Petite Nation, walked in their woods, bought a muskrat from them, and spoke to a Quieunontateronon man who replied half in Huron, half in Algonquin. The Quieunontatetonons-Petite Nation were also known as the Weskarini, an Algonquin tribe living on the north side of the Ottawa below Allumette Island" (Sagard 1939:263n1).

Sagard listed "the Little tribe" (la petite Nation) as among those Algonquins "who know the (Huron) language in some measure on account of the necessity of using it when they travel" (Sagard 1939:9, 280). It was not surprising therefore than the Quieunontateronon man he spoke to replied half in Huron, half in Algonquin.

Confusingly, Sagard seems to have twice used the same name 'Quieunontateronon' for an entirely different people, the Petun. In his dictionary he defined Quieunontateronon as Petun. He wrote that the country of the Neutral nation lay "to the south four or five days' journey from the Hurons, beyond the nation of the Quieunontateronons" (Garrad and Heidenreich 1978:396; Hodge 1913:457; Sagard 1939:158). As the Neutrals were certainly beyond the Petun and one of the routes to them lay via the Petun, this would appear to conclusively identify the Petun as the Quieunontateronons.

That the Quieunontateronons were the Petun is accepted by James Mooney, who included 'Quieunontateronons', and three related versions of the name, on his list of fifty-seven related versions of 'Tionontati'. Nevertheless, Sagard used the same name for the Weskarini.

#### How many nations were called Quieunontateronons ?

It is not possible that the "Petite Nation", or Weskarini, an Algonquin tribe living on the north side of the Ottawa River, were the same people, or even distantly related to, the Petun, an Iroquoian people living west of the Huron in the Blue Mountain area. Yet they shared the same name, variously Quieunontateronons, Khionontateronon, etc.

That both these versions of the name by which the Petun were known were also used for the Algonquin Petite Nation (Weskarini) is confirmed by map legends. The area marked "Natio Algonquorum" on the François du Creux 1660 map Tabvla Novae Franciae is marked "Khionontateronon ou petite nation des Algonquins" on the anonymous ca. 1641 map Novvelle France (Figure 1), and "Quionontateronon ou Petite Nation" on the Sanson d'Abbeville 1656 map Le Canada ou Nouvelle France (Figure 2).

That both or more versions of the name were applied both to the Petun and the Weskarini has been noted by John Steckley. He has explained that Quieunontateronons, Khionontateronon,

etc. is not so much a name as a descriptive term applicable to people living "where there is a hill". It was "a descriptive name that could apply both to the Petun country below the Niagara escarpment near Collingwood, Ontario, and to the country of the Petite Nation (Weskarini) below the Laurentian escarpment (Steckley 1990:18, 22 -26-27).

As a descriptive name it could apply to any peoples living anywhere near hills or mountains. The anonymous map Novvelle France also has the possibly related legend "Chioaentonati" on the Mattawa River east of Lake Nipissing.

The name 'Tutonaguy' was given to a village near Hochelaga at Montreal on the St. Lawrence River, evidently near Mont Royal. H. P. Biggar, the editor of Jacques Cartier's works, has suggested that this name "resembles the Huron word Tionontaté", which he took to mean "people beyond the mountains" (Cartier 1993:103).

It is possible that a number of other unrecorded nations or villages were named, or referred to as, Khionontateronon, Quieunontateronons, etc. if they lived near hills. However, the usage today generally reserves "Quieunontateronons" for the "Petite Nation" (Weskarini), and "Khionontateronon" for the Petun.

### Sagard Again

When Sagard's textual references to the Petun are examined in the original French, it is found he most usually refers to them, on all but two occasions, by versions of the French-derived name Petun, such as 'des Petuneux', 'Petuneuses' (Petun women), 'Nation du Petun' (Sagard 1939:280, 344, 345, 363, 369, 380). In his dictionary he placed the Tobacco tribe (Petuneux) as among those speaking the same language as the Hurons. But, confusingly, he twice seems to have used the word "Quieunontateron" for the Petun.

Not impossibly, his reference to the Neutrals being beyond the Quieunontateron, may have arisen from the winter camp of the Weskarini people being south of where he himself was living with the Hurons. Or it may simply be a mistake by the printer or subsequent editor. But the dictionary reference remains unexplained. It can be stated that Sagard's usual practice was to mention the Petun by the name Petun, and very rarely as the Quieunontateron. On the other hand he always mentioned the Weskarini as the Petite Nation or Quieunontateron.

Given that the name Quieunontateronons applied variously to the Weskarini, the Petun, and possibly a number of other unknown groups, the identity of the thieves, "among the smartest in the matter of deceit and theft" (Sagard 1939:71), is not clear. The Tionontati (Petun) have been proposed, possibly because they were accused in another instance (Trigger 1987:387, 390), but Sagard was far more familiar with the Weskarini than he was with the Petun.

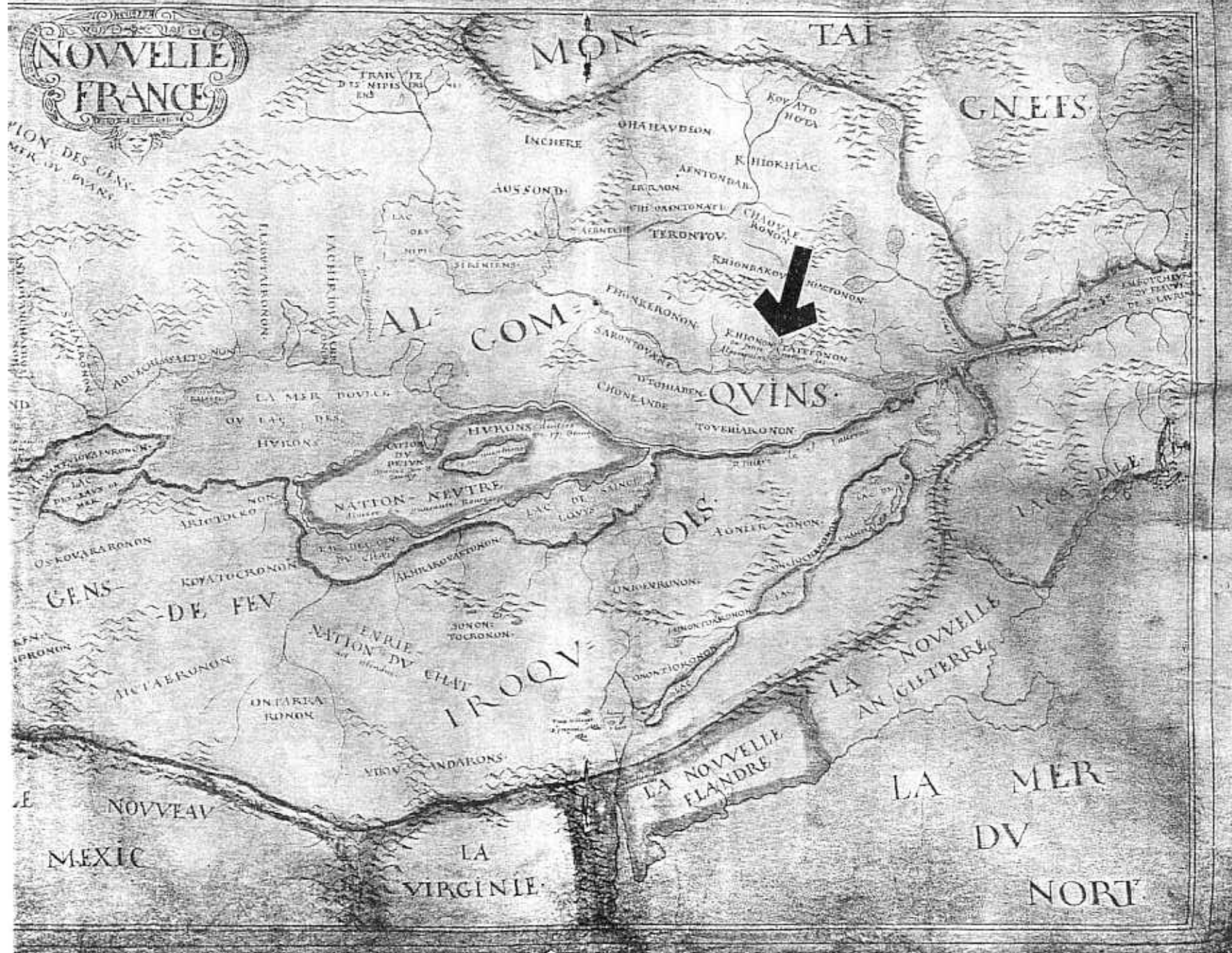


Figure 1 - Anonymous ca. 1641 Map “Novvelle France”, showing the legend “KHIONONTATERONON ou petite nation des Algomquins” on the north side of the Ottawa River (at arrow).



## Petun Thieves

Although the Quieunontateron who were thieves were more probably the Weskarini than the Petun, the possibility remains that the Petun were thieves nevertheless.

In his first book, "Le Grand Voyage ..." 1632, Sagard reported an incident where a girl in his host's cabin stole an icon from him "and threw it aside into the ashes of the fire, thinking to get it out later for herself". Sagard bullied the girl and threatened her with death. The next day he found her ill and convinced she was about to die, and was "on the point of having herself conveyed to the Tobacco nation whence she came, in order not to die away from her own country" (Sagard 1939:182). Why the Petun girl was living among the Hurons is not known. How many other Petuns were living among the Hurons, not so identified by such a whimsical circumstance, also is not known. This is the only known instance of attempted thievery by a Petun recorded by Sagard, and it was not successful.

Strangely omitted from his first book, and appearing for the first time in his second, "Histoire du Canada ..." 1636 is another incident in which the "Nation du Petun" is specifically named. The wife of Father le Caron's host stole a garment from le Caron and hid it. Thinking better of it, she returned it, claiming to have recovered it "from the hands of some thief of the Tobacco Nation" ("retirée des mains de quelque voleur de la Nation du Petun")(Sagard 1866:476). Why she chose the Petun to blame for her own action is not known. The answer may be that this was an editorial interpretation of Sagard's original text. In this instance there was thievery, but the thief was a Huron, and the Petun reference was false.

While individual Petuns may have been as open as anyone to the possibility of opportunistic thievery, no certain successful examples of it are on record, and it would not seem correct to regard thievery as a particularly Petun trait.

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