

This paper analyzes the *Jesuit Relations*' two descriptions of torture inflicted by the natives in Quebec. The first instance described is the torture of an Iroquois prisoner named Sauandanoucoua by the Huron. The second instance concerns the suffering of a Jesuit priest, father Isaac Jogues, at the hands of the Iroquois. The analysis covers several aspects of these two incidents, including a description of the different ways each was tortured, the motives for torture, how each captive responded in their suffering, and how their captors viewed the victims. This paper attempts to generalize from these two accounts the behavior and views of entire cultures. The reader should keep in mind that these are only two accounts of torture by Native Americans, and may not be representative. Likewise, the actions and behavior of the victims described may not be representative of their respective cultures either.

The torture of both the Iroquois prisoner and the Jesuit priest were incredible. The intensity of pain endured by each seemed similar as much as one can gauge unimaginable pain. Forms of torture experienced by both subjects included injury to the hands with subsequent infection, maiming, loss of fingers, and infliction of pain levels which resulted in a loss of consciousness. Sauandanoucoua's suffering was accomplished mostly by burning small regions of his body a piece at a time. Father Jorge's torture was more varied and included many beatings, amputation, and tearing out of finger nails. Jorge's suffering also took place over a much longer period than the Iroquois prisoner.

Reading these accounts makes one wonder why the Indians were so cruel to their enemies. Two reasons are suggested from statements in the *Relations*. One Huron remarked while torturing Sauandanoucoua: "But let us see, wert thou not very cruel to

prisoners; no just tell us, didst though not enjoy burning them?" From this it appears that revenge was a primary motive in their torture. The practice of torture was also rooted in their superstition. During the narrative of Father Jogues' he remarks that the Indians believed that their success in war was proportional to their cruelty to prisoners. A more practical interpretation of this belief was alluded to in the final scene of "Black Robe." The movie ends stating that shortly after the Huron as a nation converted, they were defeated by their neighbors. It would seem that after rejecting the traditions of torture, their neighbors no longer feared them, and thus set out to conquer them. These reasons don't completely account for their treatment of prisoners. The Huron treatment of the Iroquois prisoner was quite contradictory. When first brought into Arontaen, he was greeted with the warmest hospitality. A feast was prepared for him, and in the words of the Jesuits, the treated him "only as a brother and a friend." The Indians conversing with him would always refer to him as "nephew" or "uncle". His fair treatment continued as he was taken to the village of Tondakhra. The reasons he was sent to that village was to replace the nephew of the chief who was lost in war. Upon seeing his injuries the Captain condemns him to death, something he refers to as a "greater kindness." It would seem at this point that his death, if truly an act of mercy would be made as quick and painless as possible. This is not the case. His friendly treatment only continues until that evening, when his final torment with fire begins back in the village of Arontaen.

The attitude toward and outward reaction displayed by both the Jesuit and native in response to their torture were similar. Father Jouges viewed his torture by the Iroquois as a representation of the suffering of Christ, and felt that it was part of God's design for him. He drew much strength from this ideal and accepted his treatment dutifully and

from the description in the *Relations*, stoically. This fact is evident from many passages, for example Jogues writes “On that day of gladness and joy, he [Jesus] was making us share his sufferings, and admitting us to participation in his crosses.” His idea of torture being an offering to God is also supported by the fact that it was somewhat voluntary that he accepted this fate: Upon the capture of his comrades he was hidden, and gave himself up so in order to provide spiritual guidance. He writes “Flight seemed horrible to me; ‘It must be,’ I said in my heart, ‘that my body suffer the fire of earth, in order to deliver these poor souls from the flames of Hell.’” However one must keep in mind at this point that he was unaware the severity of the torture he would undergo as a result of this decision. Sauandanocoua remained outwardly strong during his suffering as well. It seemed that the Indians took pride in remaining composed and fearless during their suffering. During his farewell feast he announced to the Huron, “My brothers, I am going to die; amuse yourselves boldly around me, -I fear neither tortures or death.” His reaction is slightly difficult to justify as purely Indian as he had been recently baptized, which may have affected his response. However, seeing that he had very limited exposure to the doctrine of the Jesuits, it is safe to assume that much of his attitude towards the torture was representative of the native culture.

The most distinct difference displayed in the *Relations* between the Indian’s torture of their own kind and their torture of the Jesuits, was their attitude toward the captive. The attitudes portrayed by the Huron captors of the Iroquois prisoner were much kinder than that shown to the Father Jogues. While the Sauandanocoua was tortured just as horribly as the priest, the tone that it was administered with was very different. Much of this was probably rooted in the tradition of adoption that was not uncommon

among their culture. After the Indian's initial suffering upon capture, it was decided by the war chiefs of the village of Onnentisati that he would be given to Saouandaouascouay, who would have the option of adopting him. From that moment until his final torture he was treated only with kindness and compassion. This can be seen as he is led to the next village, Arontaen. He was escorted by 30-40 Hurons, and dressed in a beaver robe, with beads, and a crown. Upon entering the village a Captain proclaims, "My nephew, thou hast good reason to sing, for no one is doing thee any harm; behold thyself now among thy kindred and friends." While in Arontaen he complained about the pain of his hands. The Huron gave him compassion and made many efforts to dress them and ease his suffering. After arriving in the village of Tondakhra, he was greeted by Saouandaouascouay with "incredible gentleness." The Captain's words illustrate this; he states, "My nephew, thou must know that when I first received news that thou wert at my disposal, I was wonderfully pleased, fancying that he whom I lost in the war had been, as it were, brought back to life, and was returning to his country." Even after the prisoner had been condemned to die, and was being tortured, the kind manner towards him continued. The *Relations* say that those who tortured him did not appear to do so in anger or rage, but with gentleness and humanity (though I personally can't visualize this). He refrained from insults and instead offered friendly words, still referring to him as "uncle", and "nephew." In the narrative of Father Jogues' torture, his captor's demeanor matched their cruel actions completely. One possible reason for this was that there was no possibility for adoption in his case. A free Huron among the Iroquois (possibly adopted), remarked to Jogue's company upon arriving, "You are dead, Frenchmen, you are dead; there is no liberty for you. Think no more of

life; you will be burned; prepare yourselves for death.” Another time the Iroquois Captain directed his men to “caress” i.e. beat the French, while the Huron were left untouched. Even when organizing the “gauntlet” the Iroquois arranged for the French to suffer most. They spaced the Europeans equally with Huron between them to offer those beating them time to prepare the most severe blows for the French. The Jesuit priest was even singled out amongst the French. Jogues’ narrative states that they viewed him as a Captain due to the deference his fellow prisoners showed him, and for this reason directed more fury at him. It seemed that the Iroquois also based their actions in their hatred towards the French. On several occasions the *Relations* state that they were subjected to verbal persecution and insults. This is stark contrast to the gentle words offered to the Iroquois prisoner by the Huron, even throughout his torture.

The acts committed by the Huron and Iroquois towards their prisoners are atrocious when examined today. However, it was an integral part of their culture, and for that reason worth examining. This paper has attempted to characterize some of aspects and subtleties in the captor’s motivations behind, and execution of their torture of their Indians and Jesuit prisoners. It has also examined the reaction of both types of captive, for clues to their motives and beliefs about their suffering. Due to the limited sources used in the analysis, one cannot completely characterize the entire cultures involved. However, by using firsthand accounts one is provided with a very clear image of these two cases, and the motives, feelings, and experiences discussed.