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Land Tenure of  
the Rainy Lake Chippewa  
at the Beginning of the 19th Century

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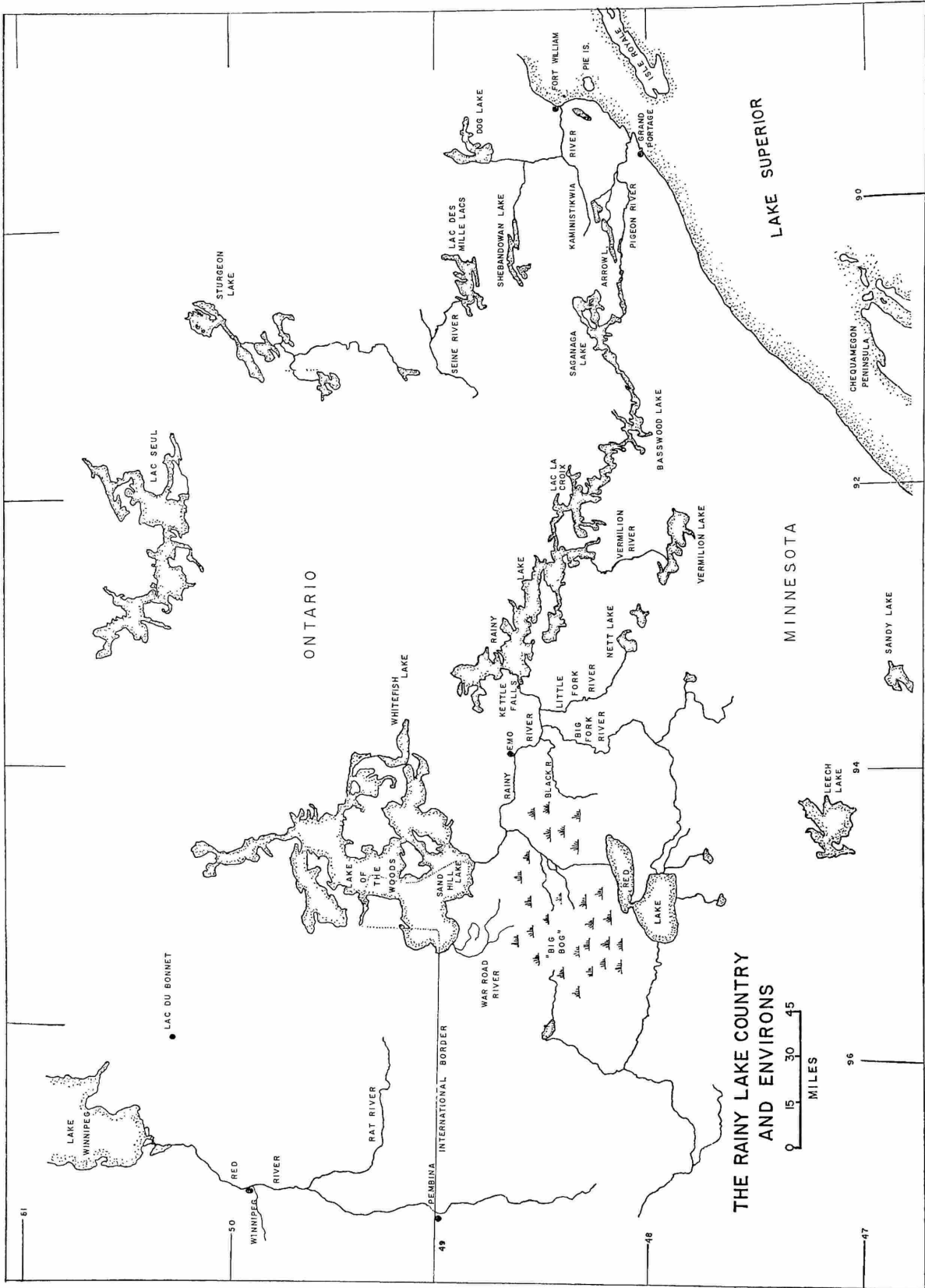
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FRONTISPIECE. Rainy Lake country and environs.



THE RAINY LAKE COUNTRY AND ENVIRONS

# Land Tenure of the Rainy Lake Chippewa at the Beginning of the 19th Century

By Harold Hickerson

## Introduction

The land tenure of northeastern Algonkians has been the subject of discussion and controversy over the past 50 years, since Speck first began describing family hunting territory systems among Algonquin and Chippewa of the Ottawa River valley (1914–15; 1915 a; 1915 b).<sup>1</sup> The issue has boiled down to whether division of land among families or heads of families maintaining them in more or less permanent usufruct, and involving sanctions against trespass, was an aboriginal or postcontact form. I believe consensus now would hold that tenure based on small patrilocal family usufruct (the classic, but by no means universal form) is postcontact (cf. Driver, 1961, pp. 249–250), but the precise form of tenure in aboriginal times would be a matter of doubt. Leacock (1954) quite conclusively demonstrated that family holdings came into existence as a result in subarctic cultures of emphasis on trapping fur for the European fur trade. Such emphasis, in

brief, led to the husbanding of beaver and other sedentary game on an individual basis, replacing old communal large-game hunting patterns.

More recently, Rogers has argued that the question of land tenure should be separated from that of the constitution of social units (1963, pp. 77 ff.). On the basis of his assessment of ecological and socioreligious factors operating among the Mistassini Montagnais and other eastern subarctic peoples he has observed, Rogers suggests that a “hunting group” unit consisting of five or so linked biological families comprised the basic social unit for the area. The fur trade had the effect of tying such units to specific territories due to such factors as the need to conserve fur and fuel, ensure a game supply in a region of limited transportation facilities, provide mutual assistance in times of need, have available the counsel of respected elders, etc. Territorial stability for such units developed from the reliance on fur game, the supply of which had to be regulated and conserved by trapper-proprietors. If I understand Rogers correctly, in pretrade times when fur was not the chief object of the chase, the hunting groups were free to utilize range over which they held no exclusive rights. Without an allotment system, the bands were nevertheless restricted to roughly defined areas without set boundaries.

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<sup>1</sup> The controversy over the aboriginality of the family tenure system relates to questions concerning the organization of primitives generally, and particularly to the question of the universality of primitive communism. This was recognized quite early in the discussion (Lowie, 1920, p. 211; Speck, 1922, pp. 83–84), and has been a tacit and at times explicit part of it ever since. I have discussed this at length in a review article (Hickerson, 1967).

In Rogers' view, then, the family hunting territory system arose in historic times as a response to the fur trade, as argued by Leacock, Jenness (1958, p. 124), and Steward (1955, pp. 144 ff.) among others, but the small family hunting band, the unit occupying such territories, has survived from precontact times.

Indeed, we will see in the Rainy Lake material that units consisting of related households of a variety of kinds, not often easily defined as to membership, formed socioeconomic groups, but it is not always clear just how they held territory. In fact, it will emerge that by 1800 (and it must be remembered that Chippewa who occupied the Rainy Lake region represented a people who had by then been in contact with Europeans and the fur trade for at least 150 years) no set tenure system had been hit upon, such were the vagaries of life in the region. We will see, in other words, a very mixed sociocultural situation out of which we must make some sense with regard to both social groups and tenure.

Without entering into controversial aspects of the discussion, then, and leaving aside the question of the constitution of aboriginal social groups, a question which must await much more basic research,<sup>2</sup> I still would like to point out that forms of land tenure among subarctic peoples, not only in North America but also in Asia (Levin and Potapov, 1964), have been extremely variable throughout the historical period. Leacock (1954) indicates a variety of forms of ownership and use of discrete units of territory among contemporary Montagnais-Naskapi, from individual to band tenure, depending on such factors as degree of participation in the fur trade, the amount of mobility required to make a living, the presence or absence of trading posts in given areas, and other factors related to ecological and historical conditions. Among contemporary Chippewa and Algonquin, tenure is by individuals (Landes, 1937 a, p. 87), by small clusters of a half dozen or so primary families of variable membership exercising joint usufruct through male members filiated through blood or affinal relationship (Dunning, 1959, pp. 57-58; Rogers, 1962, pp. B71 ff.), or by small patrilocal bands with inheritance from fathers to sons (Speck, 1915 b, pp. 3-6). Paternal inheritance seems to characterize Algonkian property

relations in most places. This, according to Driver (1961, pp. 249-250), stems from general aboriginal patricenteredness, but, I would add, certainly is related as well to male supervision of trapping, the activity most concerned with territoriality. Dunning, Rogers, and Landes all give instances or simply state that widows and others not paternal agnates may inherit, so that one may speak perhaps of a patrilocal tendency rather than rule. Dunning (1959, pp. 62-63, 77 ff.) and Landes (1937 a, pp. 95-98) both, in fact, indicate strong bilateral rather than patrilateral norms, but with a recent shift, at least in the case of the Chippewa of Lake Pekangikum, toward virilocal residence. One would presume in this area an increasing tendency for inheritance of real estate to occur within groups of male agnates.

Such variety in land tenure practice, and this does not begin to search out some of the more subtle differences, indicates shaping and reshaping to meet specific microecological and microhistorical variations. Besides the subtle differences, there are major differences amounting to forms away from small group or family ownership. We may mention temporary land allotment systems historically encountered among some of the peoples who now have family tenure systems (cf. Cooper, 1939, pp. 75-77; Hickerson, 1962, p. 41). Very early in the history of upper Great Lakes Algonkians, among whom were Chippewa, allotment was in effect. According to the French official, Antoine Denis Raudot, writing in 1710, on the north shore of Lake Superior:<sup>3</sup>

Partie des gens des terres viennent s'y habituer pour y vivre de poisson, *scavent les limites des terres qu'ils y occupent* et souvent s'y font la guerre. [Margry, 1888, vol. 6, p. 11; italics mine.]

That this may have been allotment by a band authority (the first statement of its kind with reference to the Chippewa), is indicated in a somewhat similar statement by another official, Sieur de La Noue, for 1717-21, that wandering tribes in the Kaministiquia River area on the northwest shore of Lake Superior, dependent on hunting, gathered together once a year to decide on questions of war and peace, and arrange their respective hunting areas (Margry, 1888, vol. 6, pp. 512-513).

Whether allotment was opposed to communal ownership, as Cooper argued (1946, p. 292), or whether, as I should prefer to think, in essence it was an example of a communal tenure system, we see how variable forms of tenure, temporary and permanent, were and continue to be. When we further add to

<sup>2</sup> The whole question of the role played by fisheries in determining the organization of aboriginal subarctic Algonkian social groups has received inadequate treatment. I have stressed, on the basis of ethnohistorical material, that among Algonkians of the upper Great Lakes fisheries provided the base line for clan communities much larger than the historic hunting groups of the interior lakes (cf. Hickerson, 1962, p. 81). Leacock (1954) and Rogers (1963) have tended to neglect the question of the possibility of the relationship of fisheries to social organization, stressing almost entirely hunting and trapping aspects.

<sup>3</sup> "Some of the *gens de terre* come and settle there to live on fish, set the limits of the lands they occupy and, as it frequently happens, make war on one another." [My translation.]

individual, family, and allotment systems the explicit communal band tenure of Naskapi caribou hunters of Labrador (Strong, 1929), and Chippewa trapper-hunter bands of the region south and west of Lake Superior (Hickerson, 1962, chap. 3), the problem becomes even more variable and complex.

Such a degree of variability must necessarily indicate wide departures from aboriginal norms. It is difficult to envision great sociocultural heterogeneity in the relatively homogeneous area of the northern St. Lawrence drainage, excepting possible, but by no means proven, dichotomies between forest and tundra peoples. We do know, however, that much of the region occupied by Chippewa and related Algonkians in historical times was not occupied by them in aboriginal times. For example, the greater part of the region between Lake Superior and Hudson's Bay was occupied by Chippewa and Cree only after 1700, and if there had been scattered Algonkians in that region before that date, they were in all likelihood refugees from the Iroquois wars of the half-century preceding (Hickerson, 1960, pp. 99-100). There have also been the

strongest suggestions that Montagnais-Naskapi entered the tundra area of Labrador only after the coming of the Whites (Speck, 1931), although one scholar holds an opposing view (Rogers, 1964, pp. 214-219).

Mass relocations of peoples in interior trapping regions who once were confined to lake and sea coastal areas where there was plenty of fishing to provide the basis of a collective collecting life, a great variety of experience with the fur trade and the traders as well as with other Whites in various capacities, and relationships with the several European polities, were only some of the factors underlying increasing sociocultural differentiation. These factors, and others—game failures in this or that region, the fortunes of war and diplomacy, etc.—in almost infinite multiplicity, were postcontact, hence historical. No such variation could have existed in aboriginal times, if only because ecologic conditions in the nonagricultural eastern subarctic would not have permitted a high rate of selection and adaptation in economic and social organizations.

## The Chippewa of Rainy Lake

This paper is concerned with land tenure among Chippewa who had their home base at Rainy Lake. This group is geographically close to the Chippewa at Emo, Ontario, studied by Landes in the 1930's. In her publications (1937 a; 1937 b), Landes has stressed the extreme individualism of the Chippewa of that region; indeed, they appear in many respects to be the most individualistic of all Algonkians. Here are some of the statements made by Landes on their individualism:

The Ojibwa . . . village . . . was held together by little more than the consciousness of neighborhood, for no official activities characterized its existence. [Landes, 1937 a, p. 1.]

All property, with one slight exception, is held by individuals, not by groups. Society can only ascertain the legality of the acquisition. Beyond that, society has no voice. Indeed, the individual is urged to the farthest to do what he likes; legally he cannot be criticized when for example he bombards his neighbors with sorcery, or refuses to tolerate needy families on his rich trapping grounds. Individuals may grumble, especially close relatives, and there

is a weak notion of fair play; but these are as nothing compared with the valuation placed on ruthless individualism. [Ibid., p. 87.]

Through all the different forms of property, it is seen that the individual is the property-holding unit.

The scale of property rights is graduated thus: the absolute owner of property is the individual, regardless of sex or age. He lives most intimately with his domestic family but does not yield his ownership rights. He shares goods with his spouse and immature children. He has sentimental ties with his bilateral family, to whom he extends courtesies respecting his property. Beyond this he personally extends his ties in any direction he will. Throughout, the rights of the individual are stressed. [Ibid., pp. 143-144.]

Unlike their neighbors to the south and west, the Canadian Ojibwa have only a feeble development of the characteristic American forms of hospitality and gift exchanges. There are no such obligations even between parents and children. [Ibid., p. 141.]

Hunting grounds, as well as agricultural and maple sugar grounds, and fall fishing places, were owned individually, and acquired by inheritance in either

line, or by preemption (*ibid.*, pp. 95–98). Although permission could be extended to others to use the grounds:

A force that often compelled a man to grant hospitality was the fear of bad medicine which the disappointed person would otherwise send to him . . . . [Landes, 1937 a, p. 90.]

And there are many similar statements throughout the work. This, of course, is representative of the classic appraisal of the “atomistic” Chippewa social and psychological organization. Landes does not assess possible changes in Chippewa life and exhibits only a weakly developed notion of the usefulness of employing older sources for comparative purposes. She does cite the mid-19th-century Chippewa writer, William Whipple Warren, at various places to indicate, for example, that the clan was more important to the American Chippewa than to the Canadian Chippewa (1937 a, p. 37), but even here her work is ahistorical: she should have said, the clan *was* more important to the Minnesota Chippewa of the 1850’s than it is to the Emo Chippewa of the 1930’s. But then again, war parties are referred to in the present tense.

Landes, then, was not concerned with change, and assumed quite naturally, in the spirit of the time at which she was writing, that the Chippewa she saw were bona fide representatives of an ethnic entity, then, forever, and always, *Chippewa*—individualistic, mutually hostile, and essentially unorganized.

This paper, which concerns itself with land tenure and related topics, will not offer a historical continuum for changes in property relations, nor will it even present a definitive statement on property forms among the Chippewa who frequented the trading posts at Rainy Lake during the period it surveys. Indeed, it confines itself to the very few years between 1793 and 1826, and uses selected rather than random sources for that period. What it will attempt to show is that at that time, a period of great activity in the fur trade, and for the Chippewa generally in that region, forms of tenure were as indefinable as they were definable at Emo a generation ago. In fact, it is the hope of this paper that clues relating to the development of an individual or family tenure system might be found in the historical data it presents.

A sense of duty compels me first, however, to provide background material on the history of Indian occupations of the Rainy Lake region and adjacent sectors. The way in which the Chippewa came to occupy the border region west of Lake Superior illuminates processes of expansion during the postcontact era. Even if we cannot trace every step in this expansion, we have enough data to get some insights and to set the stage for our discussion of property relations.

The distribution of the eastern branches of the Siouan Dakota west and southwest of Lake Superior in the mid-17th century (Thwaites, 1959, vols. 23, p. 225; 51, p. 53; 55, p. 169) might indicate that the Rainy River region was not outside their range of residence or movement. By 1660, however, Cree were already north of Lake Superior (Scull, 1943, pp. 149 ff., 193, 219), and between that time and 1680 there was intertribal conflict among Dakota, Chippewa (or Saulteur, as they were known at the time), Cree and others west of Lake Superior. Although the Chippewa and eastern Dakota were able to make a peace in 1679 which lasted until 1736, Cree and Dakota who occupied contiguous regions, perhaps separated by an extensive unoccupied tract intervening between them as a neutral zone, continued to conflict in that region (Margry, 1888, vol. 6, pp. 20–34, 508–510, 514; WSHS, vol. 16, pp. 189–190; Hickerson, 1962, pp. 65–66).

For a while after 1716, Cree groups and their Assiniboin allies were the chief occupants of a vast country, northwest and west of Lake Superior, which included the Rainy River valley. French officials and traders who wished to explore in the region west of Lake Superior which now forms the international border had to deal with Cree and allies of the Cree who controlled such vital locations as Rainy Lake, called Lake of the Christinaux (Cree), and Lake of the Woods (WSHS, vol. 17, pp. 139–140; Margry, 1888, vol. 6, pp. 495–498).

In 1717–21, the French under La Noue were attempting to establish relations of trade and diplomacy with Cree at Rainy Lake (Tekamamiouen) as part of a general plan to advance exploration westward, with the ultimate goal of reaching the Western Sea. In a letter of 1720 to the *Ministère de la Marine* concerning La Noue’s plans in the Rainy Lake area, the Governor General, Marquis de Vaudreuil, wrote:<sup>4</sup>

Le Sieur de La Noue me marque qu’il comptoit de partir, cet automne, de son poste pour aller hiverner à Tekamamiouen, les Christinaux le demandant avec instance. Si on peut établir un poste, il sera très avantageux pour le commerce de cette Colonie

<sup>4</sup> “The Sieur de la Noue advises me that he intends to set out from his post this fall to winter at Tekamamiouen, at the strong urgings of the Cree. If a post can be established there, it will be greatly advantageous for the trade of this colony, because of the prime winter beaver which can be gotten from them, which is there in abundance, this quality of beaver being altogether necessary to the final process in hat-making. Other peltries will be obtained, principally marten and lynx, of the finest quality. They will be thus encouraged gradually to prosecute their trade at Kamanistigouya [Fort William, Ontario], hence diverted from journeying for that purpose to Hudson’s Bay. The English who have establishments there will be deprived of this trade to the profit of the colony.” [My translation.]



par le castor gras qu'on on tirera et qui y est en abondance. Cette qualité de castor estant tout à fait nécessaire pour la consommation dans la chapellerie, on aura leurs pelletries, qui consist principalement en martes des plus belles et les loups cerviers, et on les engagera insensiblement à venir faire leur traite à Kamanistigouya [present Fort William, Ontario], en les détournant d'aller la faire à la baye d'Hudson. Les Anglois, qui y ont des établissements, seront par là privés de ce commerce, et la colonie en profitera. [Margry, 1888, vol. 6, p. 510; brackets mine.]

Trade and diplomacy, then, were drawing the French to the Cree west of Lake Superior. However, except for the sporadic trade of *coureurs des bois* which must have been taking place in the Rainy Lake region (Margry, 1888, vol. 6, pp. 508 ff.; Burpee, 1927, p. 93) and perhaps some distance to the west over the next few years, and despite many official projects for expansion of exploration and trade, no concerted movement occurred until the 1729 explorations of Sieur de La Vérendrye and his followers.

In La Vérendrye's reports covering the early years of his explorations, 1729-36, Cree and their close relatives, the Monsoni, were firmly entrenched in the entire international border region. Their allies, the Assiniboin, were to the west in the Red River-Lake Winnipeg region, and hostile Dakota were to the south, in the upper Mississippi and Minnesota River regions (Burpee, 1927, pp. 43 ff., map facing p. 53). La Vérendrye, to finance his explorations, traded extensively for fur and other articles with the Cree and their friends, supplying them with manufactured goods in return. The process of trade and exploration involved extensive and intricate arrangements with large bodies of Cree and Assiniboin upon whose good offices the success of French ventures depended.

The Cree and their allies were engaged in continual warfare against the Dakota who occasionally were helped by *their* trading allies, the Chippewa of Chequamegon Peninsula of the south shore of Lake Superior. Indian-French relations were complicated by this warfare, and La Vérendrye frequently found himself involved in the pacification (and occasionally mobilization, except that this was not normally admitted in official correspondence) of large Indian forces (cf. Burpee, 1927, pp. 133-192).

Relations among Indians in the border region were on a tribal level; warfare involved hundreds of warriors, French-Indian negotiations took place in great councils convened at French forts and prominent Indian settlements, and trade involved the French conveying tons of commodities along the international border route to masses of Indians assembled at the French forts.

The journals and letters of La Vérendrye permit no real insights into forms of property ownership among the Indians. The trade, however, was by no means restricted to fur which is best taken by small teams of hunters, but included all manner of provisions which could have been and undoubtedly were taken as much through collective efforts as through individual methods of hunting. In August, 1733, for example, at Lake of the Woods,

. . . 150 canoes, with two or three men in each, Cree and Monsoni, arrived laden with meats, moose and beef [bison] fat, bear oil and wild oats [rice], the men begging me to have pity on them and give them goods on credit, which was granted them after consultation among those interested. [Burpee, 1927, p. 140; brackets mine.]

By 1736, Cree appear to have been inclining ever more westward congruent with La Vérendrye's movements. In that year a break occurred in the Chippewa-Dakota alliance (cf. Hickerson, 1962, p. 69), and the Chippewa of western Lake Superior soon joined forces with the Cree and Assiniboin in making attacks on the Dakota in northern Minnesota and in the prairies to the west.

The first effect of this breach, however, was the settlement by a group of Chippewa in 1736 of the Vermilion River district west of Lake Superior not far east of Rainy Lake (Burpee, 1927, pp. 233-234, 238). This was the first reference to Chippewa occupying any area west of Lake Superior, a movement which incidentally represented the first step of a series of moves which resulted, by the late 18th century, in Chippewa occupying such major regions as northern Minnesota and western Wisconsin and, by the 19th century, prairie and plains areas even farther west. Rainy Lake itself for a while had been occupied by the Monsoni branch of the Cree, so that now Chippewa and Cree were close neighbors (Burpee, 1927, pp. 224, 292-293). Over the following period the Chippewa and Cree of western Lake Superior and the international border region waged relentless war against the Dakota to the south over the protestations of the French who feared that Indian wars would have a deleterious effect on their trade and exploration (Burpee, 1927, pp. 258 ff.).

This warfare was on a large scale. For example, as the result of an outbreak in 1842 a Cree-Assiniboin war party of over 200 killed 70 Dakotas and took numerous prisoners (Burpee, 1927, pp. 380-381). At the same time, the Governor General, the Marquis de Beauharnois, reported to the Foreign Minister what a missionary returning from the French post at the mouth of the Kaministiquia on the northwest shore of Lake Superior, the gateway to the Northwest, had reported to him. While La Vérendrye's men were at

the Grand Portage, a short distance to the south, . . . the Saulteur of that post came to hold council with an Indian chief of that place who possesses much influence; that this chief told him last spring that it was intended to make a descent on the Sioux, and that he . . . had represented to them several times that this was going directly contrary to my orders; that the result, nevertheless, of the different councils held was that the Saulteur of point Chagouamigon (who went down this summer to Montreal to confirm the peace which they had made with the Sioux) were to amuse them during part of the winter by living on good terms with them, so that the Sioux, considering themselves to be at peace and having no suspicion, shall all of a sudden find their enemies on their hands.

The chief in question, with the tribes from Nipigon, Kaminstikwia, Tecamamiouen, the Monsoni, Cree, and Assiniboin, are to fall on them and create all the carnage they can; they are absolutely resolved to destroy them in spite of all that can be done to prevent them. This chief, he states, is a man of resolution whose intrepidity makes an impression on others; he had told him last spring that the Sioux were only good to eat, and that he wanted, for his part, to kill enough of them to feed his village. [Burpee, 1927, pp. 383-384.]

There is no record of an ensuing struggle, except for a hint in a La Vérendrye report of 1744 that the attack may have failed (Burpee, 1927, pp. 454-455), but we see readily that warfare was organized and intertribal in character, and in some cases, as we see from the euphemistic allusion to feeding the village, for purposes of territorial expansion.<sup>5</sup> In short, this was no affair for small skulking parties whose members were interested merely in the glory of a quick coup.

In fact, by 1767, when there is available information of a concrete nature on tribal distributions west of Lake Superior, we see that warfare had had a profound effect on tribal alignments. The Anglo-American explorer, Jonathan Carver, visited Grand Portage near the mouth of Pigeon River, the present international border and the terminus of an alternate route to Rainy Lake, the Kaminstiquia being the other (Carver, 1779, pp. 106-107), where he consulted traders and Indians to get an impression of the interior country. At Rainy Lake (Lac La Pluye) there was in residence "a considerable band of Chipeways" (ibid., pp. 114-115). Farther west, at Lake of the Woods, Red River, and Lake Winnipeg were Cree and Assiniboin (ibid., pp. 108-113). There is no mention of Monsoni who may well have been merged in the traders' minds

<sup>5</sup> Note by contrast Landes' allusions to warfare among the Emo Chippewa as being motivated solely by individual concerns (1937 a, p. 118).

with Cree. Chippewa, then, by the mid-1760's, had replaced Cree as far west as Rainy Lake, and the history of Chippewa residence in the Rainy Lake region must be considered as dating from Carver's visit.

Significant is the fact that a substantial portion of northern Minnesota, including the Mississippi headwaters, erstwhile within Dakota range, was described by Carver as a region of war roads "not possessed by any one Nation," an area where "Indians seldom travel . . . except War Parties" (ibid., map facing p. xvi). The allies from the international border region, including Chippewa newly settled at their frontier village at Rainy Lake, had succeeded in reducing an extensive country to the south to a war arena, in effect an unoccupied neutral zone or no man's land, lying between them and the Dakota.

By 1775, Chippewa had again spread westward, and it was soon after that, by the early 1780's, that substantial Chippewa populations had spilled over from western Lake Superior and the border region to occupy lake sites in the headwaters regions of the Mississippi and Red Rivers (cf. Hickerson, 1962, p. 12). The reports for 1775 of the fur trader, Alexander Henry, who traveled west from Grand Portage along the usual trading route, give an indication of the hazardous and rough life being led by the Chippewa of the border region over the past years. Henry found three settlements of Chippewa west of Lake Superior. The first he encountered was at Lac La Croix, just east of Rainy Lake. Here, in Henry's words,

. . . there was formerly a large village of Chipeways here, now destroyed by the Nadowessies [Dakota]. I found only three lodges, filled with poor, dirty and almost naked inhabitants, of whom I bought fish and wildrice, which latter they had in great abundance. When populous, this village used to be troublesome to the traders, obstructing their voyages, and extorting liquor and other articles. [Henry, 1901, pp. 238-239; brackets mine.]

West of Rainy Lake, at the junction of the Rainy and Big Fork Rivers, there was a village of 50 lodges of Chippewa from whom Henry bought new canoes: They insisted further on having goods given to them on credit, as well as on receiving some presents. The latter they regarded as an established tribute, paid them on account of the ability which they possessed, to put a stop to all trade with the interior. I gave them rum, with which they became drunk and troublesome; and in the night I left them. [Ibid., p. 240.]

At the entrance to Lake of the Woods, farther west, Henry found a village of 100 people where he obtained fish and also "ceremonious presents," consisting of provisions including wildrice. Here Henry was ad-

dressed formally in council and asked to establish trade relations with the people of the village. Henry in return provided ammunition and other articles, and also rum. The Indians became drunk and traded 100 bushels of wildrice for more rum and other goods. After a night of debauchery Henry departed with great speed to avoid the difficulties which he feared would accrue from the behavior of his men with the women of the village (*ibid.*, pp. 241-242).

Besides those at the three settlements, there were other Chippewa whom Henry met near Rat Portage of Lake of the Woods. They comprised,

. . . several canoes of Indians, who all begged for rum; but, they were known to belong to the band of *Pilleurs*, also called the *rogues*, and were on that account refused. [Henry, 1901, p. 244.]

These last were also Chippewa, the group which constituted the core of the Pillager Chippewa population which a decade later was established at Leech Lake to the south in Minnesota.

The border region until 1780 was a tribal frontier area. Before Chippewa occupation which began on a small scale in 1736 with the refugee settlement at the Vermilion, and during the ensuing period, perhaps until the 1760's, Dakota war parties marauded through the area interrupting trading convoys and not stopping at killing Frenchmen as well as Indian enemies (Burpee, 1927, pp. 185-186, 217-219). After 1780, when Chippewa occupied northern Minnesota, for some years past a neutral zone between the Dakota and them, the border region became, due to relative deficiencies in the game supply and in other resources, a kind of backwater lying well in the lea of the new Chippewa frontier which comprised the more favorable forest-prairie area of central Minnesota (*cf.* Hickerson, 1962, pp. 12 ff., 28-29).

But during the period when the Grand Portage-Rainy Lake-Lake of the Woods traverse was the frontier, the village community was the significant unit of organization. Warfare, trade, and councils, whether involving the early Cree residents or later Chippewa settlers, were undertaken on village and intervillage levels by tribesmen and allies.

We have seen that fur trapping, to which the family hunting territory system is best adapted, was by no means the exclusive, or even the most important, pursuit of the border village peoples during the proto-historical and early historical periods. Large game hunting, fishing, wildrice harvesting, canoe building, and even toll collecting (called *extortion* or *pillage* by the Europeans) were all pursuits productive of the raw materials and commodities of subsistence and trade.

The history of the peoples of the border region was indissolubly linked with the history of European exploration and trade. This involved, in the long

run, an irreversible series of contradictions of aboriginal modes of life, first affecting the Cree and later the Chippewa who, by the time they supplanted the Cree in that region, had already experienced contact with the French of Canada in their earlier loci to the east. European trading rivalries in early days between the French of Canada and the British at Hudson's Bay, and after 1760 between the British who replaced the French in Canada (those Scots who later formed the Northwest Company) and the Hudson's Bay traders, were a factor stimulating European expansion into the Indian country. These rivalries over trading advantage led to changes in the geographical and trading relations among tribes. In another paper (1962, pp. 69-70), I went to some length to show how Chippewa expansion in the 18th century westward from their centers in the eastern Lake Superior region was a function of the necessity of securing large game and fur at a time when normal supplies of game were shut off to them. This occurred when their trade relations with the Dakota were interrupted as a consequence of their being bypassed by the French who were expanding so as to successfully compete with the British, an expansion which involved establishing direct trade with the Dakota instead of dealing with them through Chippewa middlemen as had been the case for almost 60 years past.

The increasing dependency of the Indians on European trade goods, and the growing emphasis on the fur trade at the expense of time-honored subsistence pursuits; the inevitable relinquishment of political autonomy following the loss of economic self-sufficiency; increasing warfare among Indian polities resulting in the decimation of entire villages or, in better times, territorial relocations through expansion at the expense of enemies; all were factors contradicting and undermining traditional ways of life.

Thus far, until the 1770's, however, we have found no material suggestive of individualization of productive activities or land ownership among the Algonkian peoples of the international border region. On the contrary, we have found extensive indications of collective behavior in hunting, trading, negotiating, and fighting. Indeed, before the Indians became utterly dependent on regular trade with Europeans, the Cree were propitiated by the explorers and, later, the Chippewa who replaced them were in the habit of exacting toll from the traders. Only peoples acting together in large village groups could establish interaction with Europeans involving dictating to some extent the course of their movements. The collapse of such collective patterns, then, did not occur all at once. It was only after the Europeans had gained a strong foothold that we begin to find extensive signs of the disintegration of collective life.

## Tenure and Subsistence

Except for the 20 years of the La Vérendrye period (1729–49), when the Indians and the French west of Lake Superior had reasonably stable relations, there are no data indicating regular trade at established posts. We have seen that when Alexander Henry arrived in the border region in 1775, he found the Indians in great need of trade goods. But even he, avid trader that he was, continued on to the west, only stopping long enough to carry on the most perfunctory trade for provisions and other necessities for his voyage and, incidentally, to debauch the Indians and corrupt their women.

The establishment of regular trade among Chippewa groups in the border region, after halting beginnings as early as the 1770's, began to take place on a large scale after the troubled era of the American Revolution and the treaty period following. Except for interruptions such as the War of 1812, when trade everywhere in the Northwest was curtailed, the Rainy Lake region from the 1790's on was seldom without traders, and subposts were established at other locations along and adjacent to the border.<sup>6</sup>

The center for trade for the Chippewa in the border region inland from Lake Superior was Rainy Lake. All trading companies active in the region had their main depots there. Aside from Chippewas resident at Rainy Lake, others who lived as far away as Vermilion Lake in northern Minnesota (Gates, 1933, pp. 211–212 *et passim*; HBC, B:105/a/8; 105/a/9)<sup>7</sup> and Lake of the Woods (HBC, B:105/a/5/; 105/a/9), as well as smaller lakes on or near the border like Whitefish and Sturgeon Lakes, either came to Rainy Lake to trade or were contacted by traders from Rainy Lake who traveled to them *en derouine*. Lake of the Woods

<sup>6</sup> I do not enter into detail on trading company activities in the border regions, except where such material bears directly on Indian land tenure and related problems. Data on the fur trade, trading company rivalries and agreements, etc., relating to the border area west of Lake Superior may be found in Nute (1944; 1950), the American Fur Company Papers (AFC, 1831–49), and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (cited as HBC). In general, the period under discussion here, covering the end of the 18th century and the first three decades of the 19th, was one of bitter rivalry; first between the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, then, upon the absorption of the former by the latter in 1821, between the British firm and the American Fur Company. This later rivalry was reconciled to some extent in 1833 when the two companies made an agreement involving rights to trade at specific locales in the border country, an agreement which lasted until 1847 (Nute, 1944, pp. 47–48; AFC, vol. 2, letters 1979, 13820, 13888, 16357; Rich, 1961, vol. 3, chap. 20).

<sup>7</sup> This and other citations and quotations from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Ottawa are published by permission of the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company.

was a great source of provisions for the traders, especially wildrice and corn grown by the Chippewa on Plantation, or Corn Island in the Lake, and Vermilion Lake also was a source of supply of wildrice and fish (HBC, B:105/a/1; 105/a/9; 105/a/10; 105/e/6).

There were Chippewa scattered in small bands and in family groups throughout the area of which Rainy Lake was the hub. The closest major posts to Rainy Lake were Fort William and Grand Portage to the east, Lac Seul to the north, various posts along Red River to the west, and Leech and Red Lakes in Minnesota to the south (cf. HBC, B:231/e/5; 105/a/9; Nute, 1930; Hickerson, 1956; 1959). The Indians living in intermediate areas went to this or that post or subpost depending upon the number of cooperating and/or competing traders in the general area, or on the supply of fur and provisions—fish, game, wildrice, etc.—in any given year. Trading company agreements, of course, tended to regularize the trade, but the period covered here was characterized by competition, not cooperation between companies.

In addition to Rainy Lake and the larger subsidiary lakes, there appear to have been Chippewa at various times at such places as Saganaga, Sandhill, Basswood, and other lakes in the border country to the east, and along Rainy River at such places as its junctions with the Big Fork and the Black coming in on the Minnesota side to the west. These locations were probably for the most part seasonal encampments rather than villages, and are reported only sporadically by traders and others. At some of these locations Chippewa as early at least as the late 1780's were making bark canoes for the trading brigades going farther west. This, at least in some instances, was in lieu of trapping fur; indeed, one Hudson's Bay Company trader, John McKay, in 1796 stated that the Chippewa found making canoes more profitable than going on the spring beaver hunt (Mackenzie, 1901, p. 59; Gates, 1933, pp. 102, 104, 198; Coues, 1897, vol. 1, pp. 13–17, 22, 240; HBC, B:105/a/2; 105/a/3; 105/a/5). At other encampments, traders were able to purchase fish, wildrice and other provisions (HBC, B:105/a/1; 105/a/8; 105/e/6).

Unsettled conditions in the trade, often haphazard procedures for obtaining provisions, and wide fluctuations from year to year and over broader periods of time in opportunities for traders and Indians alike to get subsistence, led to a good deal of moving about on the part of the Chippewa in that area, as well as the smaller trading stations which served them and were served by them. A reading of traders' journals and

reports for the period 1793–1826 shows great mobility of families and bands, and a feast-or-famine way of life. During the company rivalry days liquor was dispensed freely in exchange for provisions, and although many of the traders objected to this on practical as well as moral grounds, the practice continued (cf. HBC, B:105/a/9). This, of course, resulted in great hardship for the Indians whose own provisions ran out early nearly each winter.

With respect to mobility, we see in the journal of the Northwest Company trader, Jean Charles Baptiste Chaboillez, for 1797–98, that a band of about 15 men from Rainy Lake were trapping all winter for his post near the present Pembina on Red River in the north-east corner of North Dakota, on lands west of Red River, far from their home residence (Hickerson, 1959, pp. 277–278, 295, 300 *et passim*). That this movement was for the purpose of finding large game as well as fur is indicated in the post journal of the Hudson's Bay Company trader at Rainy Lake in 1793–94. According to John McKay:

Part of the Indians that formerly belonged to this place has since gone to the red river a place more suitable for the support of their families. [HBC, B:105/a/1.]

In 1822–23 another trader, Dr. John McLoughlin, reported that there had been extensive emigrations of Chippewa from the Rainy Lake region to other areas to trap, but fur having become depleted they had returned, only to find a shortage of land (HBC, B:105/e/2). This same trader next winter reported that he could not decide whether to establish a subpost at the entrance of Rainy River at Lake of the Woods, not knowing whether the Chippewa were to winter there or in the plains toward Red River (HBC, B:105/a/9). There are other scattered references in the Hudson's Bay Company post journals for Rainy Lake for the 1820's on movements by small and large bands from one place to another along and near the border. There was extensive movement at all times. Much of this was, of course, seasonal: variable subsistence patterns caused shifting around within limited areas to take advantage of various hunting, fishing, berrying, wildrice, and maple sugar grounds.

Subsistence, as may be guessed, was extremely difficult in the Rainy Lake region. Almost every winter Chippewa scattered through the region were reported by the traders to be starving, and frequently traders subsisted the Indians with wildrice, potatoes, fish, and even sturgeon oil (HBC, B:105/a/1; 105/a/4; 105/a/5; 105/a/8; 105/a/9; 105/e/6). On one occasion, in 1819–20, the winter was so difficult that the Hudson's Bay Company trader reported that the Chippewa were resorting to cannibalism (HBC, B:105/a/7).

There is excellent material in the post journals and other reports of the Bay Company traders for general subsistence and trading practices of the Chippewa in the Rainy Lake district. There is also information on aspects of social organization and land tenure which we will get around to in the perspective of socio-economic practices.<sup>8</sup> In the autumn the Indians took "debts" as individuals or on behalf of small extended family groups at the trading post which they were to pay back in fur during the course of the fall-to-spring "hunts," i.e., trapping season (cf. HBC, B:105/e/6). Beaver, otter, lynx, marten, and other peltry were taken. If the hunts for this larger fur were not successful, some or all of the Chippewa, no matter where their winter trapping grounds had been, would journey in the spring to the vicinity of Lake of the Woods, chiefly to the marsh or meadow country west of that lake, to hunt muskrats (HBC, B:105/a/8; 105/e/2). When the "rats" failed, as happened on occasion due to an extreme fall of water upon the "taking" of the ice, the Chippewa were badly off, because they could not obtain needed supplies for the summer season during which they otherwise had no trade (HBC, B:105/e/6; 105/a/10).

Before the winter season, when fur trapping was the main pursuit, the Chippewa attempted to lay in a supply of provisions, chiefly wildrice, but also corn, fish, and occasionally the meat of the larger animals. Their greatest reliance was on wildrice, and they tried to keep a supply—the residue of what they sold to the fur traders. So great was this reliance that when the rice failed, so did the "hunts," because the Indians then would have to concentrate their whole attention on gaining subsistence during the harsh winter season (HBC, B:105/a/8; 105/a/9; 105/a/10; 105/e/2).

One explanation given by the traders for their reliance on wildrice was a general decrease in the supply of large game—especially the moose and woodland caribou—which at one time had been fairly abundant in the region. The Virginia deer was not a common animal in those northern woods, so did not play an important role in their subsistence (HBC, B:105/e/4; 105/e/6.) The rice crop failed on several occasions mentioned by the traders, resulting in drastic curtailment of trapping as the people tried desperately to obtain food (HBC, B:105/a/8; 105/a/10). Causes listed by the trader, J. D. Cameron, for failure of the wildrice crop in 1825–26

<sup>8</sup> Conditions at and around the Hudson's Bay Company posts must have been duplicated at the Northwest Company and, later, the American Fur Company posts, so that the material I present, although relying heavily on the Bay Company reports, should be taken as applying generally to conditions in the whole of the Rainy Lake region.

could be floods, low water, wind, and hail (HBC, B:105/e/6).

Aside from wildrice, the Chippewa living at Lake of the Woods also raised a certain amount of corn, beans, pumpkins, and potatoes, some of which they traded, but some of which they kept for winter use (HBC, B:105/a/9; 105/e/6). This was the only farming locale in the border region. One trader mentioned, however, that the Chippewa had all but stopped farming even there, because after the merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company in 1821, absence of competition over provisions had resulted in a drop of the price of corn from a three-point blanket for 2 bushels to a pint of powder for 1 bushel (HBC, B:105/e/2).

Other plants used were berries, but only apparently when they were plentiful, and Jerusalem-artichokes (in some places called marsh potatoes) which, however, were eaten only in conjunction with other foods except in times of starvation (HBC, B:105/e/6).

There were fluctuations in the game supply. The trader Cameron, for example, mentioned that in the spring of 1824 the Chippewa killed a great number of moose, but a year later Indians in the same place were starving (HBC, B:105/e/6). Although in general the large game had been depleted or driven away, traders on some occasions, especially in the fall and spring, before and after the winter trapping, mentioned Chippewas coming in with venison (HBC, B:105/a/1; 105/a/6; 105/a/7; 105/e/4). Still, in so short a supply were the cervine animals that Cameron noted that there were not sufficient hides to afford leather for the Indians' needs (HBC, B:105/e/6).

Apparently as important as large game at certain times, especially in the dead of winter, was the snaring of snowshoe hares which afforded subsistence not only to the Indians but to the traders as well. Although women were reported on at least one occasion to be bringing "rabbits" into the trading post, indicating they may have set the snares themselves, in most references the men were the hunters (HBC, B:105/a/3; 105/a/6; 105/a/9; 105/a/10). These hares were not as important in the subsistence of the Rainy Lake Chippewa as they were to the Chippewa farther east and to the north. For example, in the Fort William district, according to the trader, John Haldane, "in winter their sole dependence for subsistence is on Rabbit . . . & Partridges of various kinds" (HBC, B:231/e/1), and at Flying Post to the north hares supplied not only the major food but also clothing for the "poor Indians" (HBC, B:70/e/4; 70/e/5). The hare must take its place beside the Virginia deer, the caribou and the bison as a supporter of life and therefore as a shaper of the destinies of tribes; the beaver cannot so be considered. Without the hare, the deer,

the caribou and the bison, the beaver remains in the fastness of its sylvan habitat, too remote to excite anything more than the most desultory interest for the stray hunter, an object of curiosity and perhaps even of disdain.

Aside from hares, ducks and geese were objects of hunting during the spring (HBC, B:105/a/5), and perhaps during the fall as well when they certainly would have been glutted on wildrice and easy prey for hunters with sticks and snares.

Some of the fur animals, namely beaver and bear, must have been used as food, although the former is not mentioned in the traders' reports as a culinary item. On one occasion it was reported that a Chippewa had starved to the point that he had had to consume two beaver skins, a matter as sad for the trader whose credits were ingested as for the Indian who had to ingest them (HBC, B:105/a/10). But the "hunts" for fur were always mentioned in a different category than hunting for subsistence: to a great degree they were mutually exclusive pursuits. This has general significance for the question of land tenure, as one of the contentions of Cooper (1939, pp. 81-82; 1946, pp. 291-292), and also Speck and Eiseley (1939, pp. 272-273; cf. Eiseley, 1947), in defending the notion of the aboriginality of the family hunting territory system, was that the early Algonkians had placed great reliance on the beaver for subsistence. The beaver, unlike the bison, for instance, being sedentary game, the tenure system of its hunters acting on them in severalty rather than in community would necessarily have been individual rather than collective. Leacock rightly pointed out (1954, pp. 2-3) that all evidence from early sources indicates that Algonkians with the family hunting territory system in historical times, in aboriginal times could not have relied on such game as beaver, but rather depended on larger game for subsistence; to which I add that fishing and sea mammal hunting were equally if not more important than chasing caribou and moose, and these also were collective activities demanding or permitting the seasonal association on a permanent basis of large band groups. Aside from beaver being extremely difficult to hunt in winter time with primitive implements, nowhere did they exist in large enough numbers (not breeding like rabbits) to afford subsistence for even small groups of hunters and their immediate families.

In spring, after the winter "hunts," and during the final muskrat drive, the women repaired to the maple groves to make sugar, some of which they traded to the fur traders. There was one prominent grove at the junction of the Rainy and Big Fork rivers west of Rainy Lake, and there may have been other groves (HBC, B:105/a/6; 105/a/7; 105/a/10). This may not have been as important an activity to the Chippewa at

Rainy Lake as it was farther south in Minnesota where at such places as Red, Cass and Leech Lakes there was a regular apportionment of maple groves to the several families of those villages (Hickerson, 1965, p. 17). Indeed, a trader at Rainy Lake, Simon McGillivray, mentioned that in the summer of 1824, 60 Chippewas of Sandy and Leech Lakes in Minnesota had come to Rainy Lake with sugar to trade at the post, the going price being a plain two-and-one-half point blanket for 48-50 lbs. of sugar. These Chippewas, according to the trader, would invariably arrive at Rainy Lake during a "sugar year," and if they could not get the prices they wanted from the traders, would barter their sugar with local Chippewas, with the result that the locals would be "despoiled" of half their guns, kettles and blankets (HBC, B:105/e/4).

Although wildrice was basic to the winter subsistence of the Chippewa of the Rainy Lake district, fishing was extremely important and, in the long run, was essential to the subsistence of Indians and traders alike. There are more references in the traders' journals to fishing than any other subsistence activity, and these journals generally did not cover the summer season when hunting and trapping were not carried on on a systematic basis. During the summer the Chippewa apparently for the most part occupied fishing encampments along Rainy River, especially at Kettle Falls near the junction of the Rainy and the Big Fork, and on many of the lakes and connecting streams in the border region. Lake of the Woods, Whitefish Lake, and Basswood Lake were said to have been excellent fishing lakes, while Rainy Lake itself had but an indifferent fishery (cf. HBC, B:105/e/6).<sup>9</sup>

The main fish caught by Indians and traders in the border lakes country were whitefish, lake trout, sturgeon, and perhaps ling or burbot. Fish were caught in large numbers in the spawning grounds which were well known to the Indians and the traders in spring, late summer (trout) and early fall (whitefish). Dragnets, probably obtained from the fur traders, were used for these and for sturgeon as well, as were spears (HBC, B:105/e/6). There is a possibility that weirs were constructed in certain river mouths to catch sturgeon, as indeed was the case among Chippewa on the south shore of Lake Superior to the east who lived in communities of comparable size (Hickerson, 1962, pp. 81-82), but the traders' reports are silent on this. Kettle Falls was a great sturgeon fishery, as was Sturgeon Lake north of the border east of Rainy Lake (HBC, B:105/a/8; 105/a/9).

The traders obtained many fish in the appropriate seasons from the Indians and, in addition, had their

own employees regularly attend winter fisheries established near the trading posts. The Chippewa did not themselves fish extensively during the winter unless they were very short of provisions. I believe that ice fishing was not a traditional occupation for the Chippewa, and the traders were actually much more inclined to set nets under the ice than were the Indians. One reason for this was that fishing provided very meager returns during the 4 or 5 mid-winter months. It was much easier in the old economy to fish extensively in the fall and preserve a supply for winter use, rather than depend on the precarious day-to-day fishery of mid-winter. Besides that, the fisheries, to be prosecuted with any efficiency at all, would have taken the Chippewa out of their trapping grounds at a time when they could least afford to abandon them.

Indeed, during the warmer months when fishing was carried on intensively, it was done on the main streams and lakes away from the trapping grounds. The trader, John McLoughlin, for 1823-24, gave general data on the seasonal movements of one small band, that of the sons of the deceased Chasseur. They were said to trap between Rainy Lake and Mille Lac nearby to the northeast, but in (late) winter they were reported to trap nearer Sturgeon Lake, then in spring come toward Rainy Lake, e.g., occupy the area between Sturgeon and Rainy lakes, to live on sturgeon and to dry some for the summer (HBC, B:105/a/9). Although their itinerary is not in this account strictly given, it is clear that the late winter movements of this agnate band were dictated by the spring sturgeon fishery, and that the fishery was located away from their usual early winter trapping territory.

There is more data on fisheries: The trader, J. D. Cameron, mentioned an interesting means of fish storage (HBC, B:105/e/6). The Chippewa at the rapids below Rainy Lake (Kettle Falls) killed large numbers of sturgeon with dragnets and spears. These they would cut up in flakes and dry over a slow fire. Then they would pound the flakes between stones until they attained a spongelike consistency. Mixed with the oil which was collected, it provided them with a rich subsistence food.

Cameron revealed that a few of the Chippewa stored this fishmeal for winter use. However, the traders obtained some of the surplus and found it very handy, not only for their own men to carry when *en derouine* or on other missions, but to subsist Indians who would come into the trading post, whether due to etiquette or want, without food during the winter. Indeed, in general the traders' stock of provisions (wildrice, corn, fish, fishmeal, and dried meat which they obtained chiefly from the Indians; wheat and potatoes which they grew or brought in with them;

<sup>9</sup> In this excellent report by J. D. Cameron there is detailed information on fisheries and other features relating to subsistence and trade.

pemmican and grease which were brought from their western posts, namely Cumberland House and various posts in the Red River country (HBC, B:105/a/5; 105/a/6), were made available to large numbers of Indians during the November to March period when subsistence was remarkably difficult to obtain.

The major part of these provisions was gotten in the first place from the very Chippewa whom they later subsisted, often in exchange for rum, but also for useful commodities—blankets, kettles, sewing equipment, etc. This amounted to a kind of insurance system for the Indians, a system which also assured their continuing adherence to the trader with whom they first had dealings. One aspect of this use of “surplus” provisions to subsist the needy Chippewa, and one would presume that not all Chippewa each year required assistance at the post, was a radical change in old production and distribution patterns. The trading post now behaved as an intermediary (and the trader a middleman) in the distribution of “surplus,” the pretrade system having been much different, to this effect: that “surplus” production by one segment of a socioeconomic organism, perhaps a family within a band, would have been immediately and directly distributed throughout the entire band.

Aside from implications for growing individuality of economic activity, an important factor in this change perhaps was the increased leeway permitted for trapping at the expense of subsistence pursuits through the provision of a storage mechanism. Although the Indians were often on the verge of starvation and, in some instances, actually starved to death (HBC, B: 105/a/9), by and large they could make shift in the hardest times by coming to the trading post for food, or by sending one of their number, a woman or “young man,” to carry back food to the trapping area. It is, by the way, but one step from this kind of system to the actual establishment of a store.

This, then, in general was the subsistence picture. A delicate equilibrium was maintained between subsistence and trade, but there is no question of the

hardship undergone by the Indians in a very inhospitable region. The large game had been hunted out—on occasion some of the larger denizens would put in a ghostly appearance, but only to meet the fate of their predecessors—and even fur, as we will see, tended to become exhausted under the pressure of intensive trapping. The wildrice crop was erratic and afforded adequate subsistence perhaps one year in two. Fishing was a sturdy standby in summer, but was employed in winter only when there was a desperate need for subsistence. Otherwise, the Chippewa snared hares for food in the winter encampments. This and all else failing, they would make their trek to the trading post to consume ceremoniously the rice, corn, and fish which they had been largely responsible for producing in the first place.

The kind of life described by the traders involved a great deal of mobility, not only Indians shifting their territory from year to year, as was indicated in the citations from Chaboillez and McKay, but, as seen from the account of the movement of the sons of Chasseur and other material, from season to season. In the former instance, moves took the form of migrations of entire social units, bands, to take advantage of promising, perhaps untapped (or untrapped), subsistence areas, like the one adjoining the Red River valley (cf. Hickerson, 1956). In the latter case, movement was undertaken by somewhat smaller groups in accord with seasonal shifts in subsistence and other economic activities. These were limited movements and could have occurred within established orbits. However, there could arise speculations on the part of the traders concerning the specific trapping region of this or that band for an entire season.

All these factors have bearing on the problem of land tenure. Before getting right down to that question, however, it serves us to look into the social organization of these Chippewa, particularly the type of groups in which they were organized. This, too, insofar as (with the limited data available) we can explore it, inveighs heavily on the question of tenure.

## Tenure and Social Organization

In general, the clan organization of the proto-historic Chippewa had disappeared by 1800; that is, the discrete social units were no longer clan units, as they had been at the time of first contact with Europeans (Hickerson, 1966). Relocations of populations and changes in ways of making a living, especially changes wrought by the adoption of the fur trade, had rendered obsolete the clan organization

with its foundations in an ancient territorial system. The clan units were too weak in numbers and too wanting in polity to cope with new territorial needs and the multifarious new relationships with other Indian and European groups engendered by introduced trade systems. Before the end of the 17th century Chippewa living at various places along Lake Superior, and particularly those who after 1680



dwelled at Chequamegon Peninsula to the west on the south shore, had regrouped into large multiclan villages, bilateral in overall organization and also in the organization of constituent band units. However, by the turn of the 19th century this village and others had repeatedly fragmented until there were dozens of large and small communities scattered throughout the lake country of the northern portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota, and the Canadian woods (Hickerson, 1962: 1966). We have seen that the Chippewa in the Rainy Lake region arrived there only in the wake of westward moving Cree, and that the first Chippewa settlement in that general region, the one at Vermilion River, had splintered away from Chequamegon in 1736.

The members of these scattered communities were never for long without access to European goods through the fur trade, and although they were still bound to getting their own subsistence in time-honored ways and/or with firearms and steel traps, the fur trade in the last analysis was the critical factor in determining their movements between and within territories.

The size and cohesion of communities of the late 18th and early 19th centuries (the period, by the way, during which the Chippewa through their migrations had achieved their maximum expansion), was determined in great part by the availability of fur and food on one hand, and the proximity of enemies on the other. Thus, in Minnesota south of the border region an abundance of fur and other game, along with fish and wildrice, supported large village communities. The one at Leech Lake amounted to over 800 souls (Hickerson, 1962, chap. 3). Bolstering the cohesion of these large village groups was the constant warfare which they carried on with the Dakota over the rich hunting areas of central Minnesota and the prairies adjoining the Red River of the North to the west (Hickerson, 1962, chap. 2).

If warfare had the effect of consolidating the organization of large numbers of Chippewa hunters formed in bands, subsistence pursuits, with the exception of communal hunting in the frontier region, and also trapping, required the cooperation of only small numbers of people who quite logically were organized in extended family household groups. Opposite pulls, one toward cohesion, the other toward separation and particularization of social units, resulted perhaps in fluid membership of the bands, emphasis on the autonomy of the limited extended family, but at the same time, the emergence of a sodality crosscutting the entire village to glue together its wavering segments. The sodality among the southern Chippewa was the *warrior society*, an association of household leaders and of "young men" who had distinguished themselves in

combat. These together, in the absence of established hierarchies, maintained the village polity. I have described the sodalities elsewhere (1962, pp. 52-61), and although Barnouw expressed doubt concerning their actual existence (1963, p. 142), I would say that such societies cannot be conjured up by questing ethnohistorians as, say, personality portraits can be conjured up by questing ethnopsychologists.

This was in the south. In the north the general organization broke down as the result of a very restricted ecology and unsettled trade conditions. Small bilateral or patrilineally filiated groups, in many places mere family bands, each with a distinct micro-territory, characterized the social organization. Such groups, even where they clustered in lakeside fishing and/or trading settlements, did not form cohesive communities, nor do they today (Dunning, 1959, *passim*). They are "atomistic" in every sense and feel cohesion only in their shared sentiment of hostility to the entrance into their settlements of outsiders, Europeans and congeners, whom they mistrust.

The settlements of the Rainy Lake area at the time of which I am writing were intermediate between the cohesive village communities to the south and the isolated family band settlements to the north. Without often actively participating in warfare, the Chippewa of the Rainy Lake district nevertheless were not entirely outside the area of struggle with Dakota, and at times even received tobacco from southern congeners to join them on war expeditions (HBC, B:105/e/4).

On at least two occasions in the 1790's Chippewa from Rainy Lake were reported to be taking part in war councils. The trader, McKay, in 1794 reported that 19 Chippewas were preparing to set off on a war party, but they were apparently dissuaded by the trader (HBC, B:105/a/2). Chippewa from Rainy Lake hunting in the Red River region in 1798 conducted war councils with Chippewa from Red Lake and other places, but again were dissuaded from attacking the Dakota, this time by the Northwest Company trader who had much to lose if the Indians abandoned the "hunts" for the fray (Hickerson, 1959, pp. 368, 397). Otherwise, some of the older Rainy Lake Chippewa, even as late as 1825, had still older relatives who had been involved in the struggles with the Dakota in the border region itself before 1775, and so were not far removed from a period when village cohesion was required for survival.

On the other hand, the population at Rainy Lake and nearby locales was small compared to that at the more southerly locales in Minnesota. For 1822-23 John McLoughlin reported the population of the Rainy Lake district as constituting 107 men, 118 women, and 230 children, a total of 455 (HBC, B:105/e/2). This represented the number of people

for the entire district which included, as well as Rainy Lake itself, Vermilion Lake and Lake of the Woods, and also possibly some of the smaller places—Whitefish, Sturgeon and Basswood Lakes among others. This would seem to be substantiated by the census reports of Henry R. Schoolcraft, the Chippewa agent at Sault Ste. Marie, who reported the Chippewa of the border region as if they all were properly attached to the United States. In 1824 Schoolcraft (MS.) listed 210 souls for Rainy Lake and 90 for Vermilion Lake. The total of 300 falls short of the total of 455 given by McLoughlin, but this may be explained by Schoolcraft's omission of figures for the Chippewa at Lake of the Woods.

In his census report for 1831–32, however, Schoolcraft listed 159 for Rainy Lake, 132 for Vermilion Lake, and 135 for Lake of the Woods, a grand total of 426 (1834, p. 220), much more in accord with McLoughlin's figure for the entire district. McLoughlin's figures, then, should not be considered as applying to Rainy Lake alone, but to the sister villages at Lake of the Woods and Vermilion Lake, and possibly to a few much smaller population clusters at the minor locations as well. For an area approximately 150 miles by 100 miles this represented an overall population density of one person per 32 square miles. This figure is very low in comparison with that for the Chippewa to the south in Minnesota which, despite the internecine warfare with the Dakota waged by those Chippewa, I have estimated amounted to about one person per 12 square miles (1962, p. 32). In fact, population in the border region seems to compare with that given by Hallowell (1955, pp. 121–122) for the Lake Winnipeg region: one person per 35 square miles. Dunning's estimate (1959, pp. 48–49) for 1875 for the northern area of one soul per 87 square miles, however, is probably quite realistic, and before that the population density in the north must have been even less.

Thus, the Rainy Lake people, with respect to village population and population density, seem to have stood between their northern and southern relatives. This, of course, was congruent with their geographical position; midway, so to speak, between the southern villages and the northern family bands.

In other particulars the Rainy Lake people seem to have held an intermediate position. We have seen that, although exposed to the pleas of their fellows to the south to join them in warfare against the Dakota, by the 19th century they were reluctant to engage in war. Of course, by that time they were not a frontier people, so had nothing to gain from war except some lumps on the head. Although there is no evidence for a warrior group, as indeed existed in the villages to the south, still the traders referred to "young men"

who were the followers of certain chiefs (cf. Gates, 1933, p. 103), and these, as we know from other material (cf. Hickerson, 1959, pp. 302–304), formed a distinctive subgroup in the bands, with every connotation that they could exercise, when needed, military solidarity.

The drift of social organization, however, seemed over the 30 years or so encompassed by this report, to be away from large band formations toward smaller social groupings which, in almost every case, were family groupings. There still persisted, however, small bands with perhaps a more inclusive membership.

In another paper (1959) I described, on the basis of the journal of the trader, Chaboillez, and other material, the social groupings of the Chippewa hunting in the Red River region. Essentially, the people who had come to Red River from other places, Rainy, Red and Leech Lakes, were organized in winter hunting bands of from about 10 to 20 named hunters who with younger relatives—usually sons or brothers but occasionally sons-in-law or other more distant blood or affinal relatives—constituted so many separate trapping units. These units remained in constant touch and could combine quickly to visit the trading post or to take up arms (1959, pp. 410 ff.).

The organization at Rainy Lake during the 1790's, from the meager material available, would seem to parallel this. The Northwest Company trader, John MacDonell, in 1793 described encountering a man, Premier, with 20 "young men" (Gates, 1933, p. 103). This may have comprised the entire complement of men who had their permanent residence at Rainy Lake at that time.

In 1804–05, it was recorded by another Rainy Lake trader of the Northwest Company, Hugh Faries, that this same Premier was at the Lake with five or six other men; later he recorded that, "the Premier and his band set off." Still later that season the whole band was encamped at the entrance of Black River (Gates, 1933, pp. 212–213). In 1804 Premier was not the only band leader. There was also the band of Picotte, number not given, whose trail was separate from that of Premier (*ibid.*, p. 240).

In 1822–23, however, McLoughlin recorded a council he held with the Indians from Rainy Lake near the trading post whose leader was the same Premier. McLoughlin distrusted this band because they hunted south of the borderline (HBC, B:105/a/8).

There were other bands mentioned from time to time by the fur traders. Aside from the Premier's band, in 1793 McKay mentioned that the "chief" of Lake of the Woods was dead, as was the "Grand Chief," and others. He gave "debts" to 12 men, the entire group at Lake of the Woods (HBC, B:105/a/3). The Lake of the Woods contingent as a band does not

play a very prominent role in the journals of later traders except for references from 1818–19 and 1819–20. In the former, the chief of Lake of the Woods visited the post with a few of his “young men” (HBC, B:105/a/6). The next year McKenzie reported meeting at least two different bands at or near Lake of the Woods. At nearby Lac du Bonnet, McKenzie met the “Duck Indian” and “some of his Band” with whom he had traded in the vicinity in years past. The Chippewa wanted a trading post on Lac du Bonnet or on some river in the neighborhood where Duck and his band were to winter, hunt, and make wildrice (HBC, B:105/a/7).

These references indicate a degree of cohesion among the Lake of the Woods Chippewa who acknowledged the leadership of certain prominent men and demanded as a group that the traders locate posts at certain vantage points in their area (cf. HBC, B:105/a/3).

There were “bands” at other lakes. At Rainy Lake, in addition to the references to bands whose leaders were Premier and Picotte, it was mentioned by Donald MacPherson in 1817 that a Rainy Lake chief had arrived with “a few of his Band” (HBC, B:105/a/5). On one occasion, in 1823, a Chippewa named Bougon visiting at the Rainy Lake post asked for “debts” on behalf of 15 men, but was refused on the grounds that they hunted south of the borderline in the vicinity of Nett and Pelican Lakes, and would therefore be apt to take their fur to the Americans (HBC, B:105/a/9). There were also other scattered references indicating social groups of more individuals than could reasonably be expected to comprise mere household units (HBC, B:105/a/6; 105/a/9; 105/a/10).

In addition to these mentions of bands and their “chiefs,” there were also mentioned in the Hudson’s Bay Company reports units called “tribes.” In one of these references, from 1795–96, McKay noted the death of two Chippewas belonging to the “Tribe of Musquash” (HBC, B:105/a/3). There is evidence that Musquash was a person and not a totem. Years later, in 1823–24, McLoughlin mentioned Rat’s band hunting in the neighborhood of Lake of the Woods (HBC, B:105/a/9). However, in a still later entry McLoughlin referred to a family group of 10–12 men and women of Sturgeon Lake hunting on lands where five families of “the Rats of Mille Lac” had hunted before they died of starvation 10 years earlier (HBC, B:105/a/3). Perhaps there were two different groups of Rats; the Rats of McLoughlin’s first reference were of the “Tribe of Musquash” mentioned by McKay, while the Mille Lac Rats were an entirely different family.

The possibility that “tribe” might refer to “clan,”

with respect to the Musquash group is unlikely on two grounds: first, as far as can be ascertained there was no Chippewa Muskrat clan; second, the term “tribe” was applied in at least two other instances to groups under chiefs whose names had no reference to possible totem creatures. One of these was a reference to a chief named Spaniard who was said to have considerable influence among his “tribe” (HBC, B:231/e/6). Spaniard cannot be considered as a candidate for totemic status. The term *tribe* in the other instance was applied to a group under a chief named Hunter. Several Indians of “the hunters tribe” were reported by Logan in 1817–18 to be at the Rainy Lake post, and the “chief” was pleased to dine at Logan’s table (HBC, B:105/e/6). That this group was not a clan group is indicated in the report by McLoughlin for 1823–24 concerning activities in the Sturgeon Lake area. The 10–12 men and women who had replaced the Rats were the families of the sons of the deceased Chasseur, or Hunter. Thus, the Hunter’s “tribe” was a family band patrilineally filiated, but cannot in any way be considered as constituting a clan, even though the male members and their female siblings, if any, were incidentally members of the same patrilineal clan.

The role of “chiefs” and their influence in the band, whether the family type of band under Chasseur, or a larger type of band under Premier, cannot be known in any detail. It would appear that the “chief” was a kind of spokesman for the rest, but without any coercive power at all. This is indicated, for example, by McLoughlin, who reported about the activities of the Chippewa, Spaniard, mentioned above. Spaniard, who was hunting with his band on American soil in the vicinity of the American Fur Company post at Grand Portage, was said by McLoughlin to be “honest,” but it was feared by the trader that his “young men” would give their fur to the American post (HBC, B:105/a/9). This same man had been characterized by R. Mackenzie, a trader at Fort William in 1828–29, as having been the “principal Indian leader of this fort [with] a good deal of influence among his tribe” (HBC, B:231/e/6; brackets mine). The influence of Spaniard, then, was not great enough to prevent the men of his band from trading where they would.

There is another example of the lack of authority of the “chief.” McLoughlin, my favorite informant for the time, admonished Premier about his son trading with the American Fur Company, but Premier said he didn’t know his son had done so (HBC, B:105/a/8).

Aside from the question of influence and cohesion within the band, there is also the issue of the constitution of the band, a difficult one indeed because of the paucity of data. In general, we do have

numerous references to the relationship of pairs, trios, quartets, and even greater numbers of men who formed the core of trapping partnership units, and with their women, domestic or residential units of some kind. In the majority of cases those who trapped together and formed coresidential if not actually commensal units, were agnates: Father and son(s) and/or two or more brothers. In the Hudson's Bay Company reports and journals covering the years 1793-97, 1818-20 and 1822-26 (HBC, B:105/a/1; 105/a/10; 105/e/2; 105/e/4; 105/e/6) I have found that about 75 percent of the references to specific partnerships named a man and his son or sons. In one case a woman and her three sons formed a unit. In a few cases there were references to brothers forming a unit without the father being mentioned. In one case a man, his son, and his grandson (linked relative not mentioned, but presumably the son) formed a team.

There is one reference to a unit comprising a man and his "nephew" and another to a unit comprising a man and "two nephews," but we cannot tell in either case whether the linked relative was a brother or a sister. The traders, although sophisticated in some respects with regard to the culture of the Indians with whom they dealt, would not necessarily have differentiated between brothers' and sisters' children in a bifurcating kinship system if they took the siblings themselves as their point of departure. Whether actually nephews (sisters' children) or brothers' children (therefore "children") we cannot say; we can only say that trapping partnerships could be made up of two or more nonlineal (colineal) relatives. In one other instance the oldest son of the "chief," Premier, took "debts" for his uncle, the Borgne, and himself. Again, we cannot tell whether the Borgne was the husband of Premier's sister, the brother of Premier's wife, or Premier's brother.

There were more complicated units. In several instances, about 15 percent, affinal relatives of the unit leader were present. In two cases a man, his son, and his daughter's husband made up the domestic unit,<sup>10</sup> and in another case a man and the "nephew" of his daughter's husband arrived at the trading post, the son-in-law apparently remaining in the hunting ground.

<sup>10</sup> There is always the possibility that there are multiple references to the same unit, especially where the name of the unit leader is not mentioned. This is a hazard of research: I take comfort in the notion that this could as well apply to the more ordinary instances as the less usual ones and therefore not effect overall frequency ratios drastically.

In other cases the units were somewhat larger. One of these comprised as its core male membership the following: A Chippewa named Devil, the husband of his daughter, his three sons and two "nephews," and two sons and a nephew of his son-in-law. This unit brought fur all together to pay what appears to have been a common "debt," indicating, of course, permanency of association. Such a unit as this was bilaterally filiated, but patrilineal filiation with virilocal residence seems to have been the more frequent pattern. This general material is congruent with that given by Chaboillez for the Chippewa hunting and trapping in the Red River region in 1797-98, some of whom were from Rainy Lake. There, too, patrilineal virilocal trapping partnerships were considerably the most frequent, but there were a sufficient number of uxorilocal instances to indicate that they were no mere anomalies (Hickerson, 1959).

A question concerning uxorilocal instances arises: were these temporary arrangements with a man in impermanent bride service? The answer must at least in some cases be *no*, because we have the examples in which a man with his grown sons was living in the same residential unit with his father-in-law, and in another case grown junior agnates of a man lived in the same unit with their senior and the senior's father-in-law.

The relationships within these domestic units do not give us very extensive insights into the constitution of the bands which numbered between 10 and 20 adult men and their followers. I would assume from the fact that the domestic units could build in a variety of ways and were not, obviously, restricted to a single lineal principle of growth and affiliation, that the larger bands were bilateral and could well include persons not closely related at all. This general picture fits in with economic and territorial relations in which there was a great degree of mobility and fluidity, and the constantly changing petty alliances that such conditions would foster.

As to other social forms, there is one rather solid statement from a report by McLoughlin on the extent of polygyny. In his census figures for 1822-23, he enumerated monogamous vs. polygamous marriages as follows: Of the 107 men in the district, 8 were without wives; 82 had one wife; 15 had two wives; and 2 men had three and four wives respectively (HBC, B:105/e/2). It is possible that some of the polygamous instances represented in total or in part leviratical unions. The domestic establishments were on the whole monogamous and patrilineal, but with numerous exceptions. Whether they were also territorial we shall examine in the following.

## Tenure and Family Structure

There was, as we have seen, a fairly broad range in the size of what appear to have been domestic groupings. One would guess that the minimal household consisted of a nuclear family, but that would probably have been an exceptionally small grouping. Far more frequent were household units of two or three men and their women and children. A number of such units, perhaps between 5 and 10 but never more, associated on a voluntary basis to form bands whose members acknowledged the leadership of the head of one of the units. Those units who made up the band often traveled together, took their "debts" at the trading post at the same time, and even, as we have seen, occupied the same region, or contiguous sectors within a region, to hunt, trap, fish, and so forth.

Although certain men like Premier and Spaniard appear to have maintained a position of leadership over a period of years, it is highly unlikely that they would have commanded the same following over a long period of time. The absence of lineage affiliation determining residence and the great degree of mobility would have worked against the formation of band units with a stable membership (cf. Murdock, 1949, p. 204). There are indications in the Hudson's Bay Company reports, however, that there were coresidential units larger than the two-family or three-family household, but smaller than the band units grouped around a charismatic "chief." These were the large extended family residential groups under such heads as Chasseur, Devil, and perhaps the man called Musquash (of Lake of the Woods) and Rat (of Mille Lac). These groups, consisting of between five and eight men with agnatic, cognatic, and/or affinal ties, and their women, appear to have occupied definite territories without having subdivided them, and comprised tightly integrated socioeconomic units. Such units seem to have had more cohesion than the loose band units of Premier and other "chiefs," even to the point of all starving together, as was the case of the Rats of Mille Lac.

Two groups of fairly large size which I did not mention previously might have represented partial memberships of extended family units or less cohesive band units. In one instance, the trader, John McKay, for 1795-96, reported that 2 Indians with their families including 3 men, 6 women and 10 children had arrived at the trading post in eight canoes. Soon after another contingent arrived, consisting of three men and eight women—children, if any, were not mentioned (HBC, B:105/a/3). In each case the number of men was less than would usually be expected to have rounded out the group, indicating that

some of the men had remained behind, perhaps to overlook affairs in the hunting or ricing grounds. By indicating these groups, we see how difficult it is, even given certain assumptions on band or extended family membership, to designate and define social units. However, despite all tendencies for small household groups to go their own way (trapping, rice-making, and fishing being as well done by small units as large), the people were still moving in formations larger than could constitute the single household.

Now we may look at land occupancy at least partially in terms of what comprised social units. At Emo, Ontario, near Rainy Lake, in recent times individual ownership of trapping grounds has been the universal tenure system, and even wildrice, maple sugar, and some fishing grounds have been occupied by individuals on behalf of their elementary households. Indeed, Landes has characterized Emo (Chippewa) society as highly individualistic, with the largest effective unit for almost all activities being the nuclear family.

As to land tenure among the ancestors of the Emo people who lived in the Rainy Lake district, there are five references in the Bay Company reports and journals to individual or family land. McKay in 1793 wrote,

There was two families of Indians here Last year that has since deserted the Place on account of not finding sufficient quantity of Provisions on Their land to support their families. [HBC, B:105/a/1.]

This was at a time when many of the Chippewa from Rainy Lake were going to the Red River valley region to hunt.

In 1796-97 McKay noted in his post journal that a Chippewa had come into the post starving, and had left his wife and children behind because they could not in their weakness follow him. According to the trader, this was the second time he had left *his lands* at Rainy Lake—because he had nearly starved to death both times, he had determined not to leave again (HBC, B:105/a/4). The impression is that this elementary family unit was discrete and independent, and constituted a territorial unit.

For 1823-24 McLoughlin referred to a Chippewa, Little Rat, at the Rainy Lake post who said that he would go to Mille Lac where he had been the past year to get his "advances" from the trader. McLoughlin regretted this and wrote that he would have been able to make a better hunt on *his lands*, indicating that Little Rat had trapping grounds elsewhere (HBC, B:105/a/9).

In yet another reference from the same year

McLoughlin commented that a man and his son had come to the post with fur, and that beaver was plentiful on *their lands* (HBC, B:105/a/9).

These references might indicate a kind of proprietorship over "lands," e.g., designated territories, by small groups of trappers. We reason so because it is small household units or "families" which are mentioned, and not bands or extended family units of great size. It would appear, then, that family hunting territories were in existence in the Rainy Lake district as early as 1793, and after that.

There are other indications of a concept of possessory rights to tracts in the Rainy Lake country exercised by domestic units. In one instance, the family of a Chippewa trapper named Duck's Rump had returned to the Rainy Lake post, having discovered that another man, Saulteux, "had gone to the place they intended to go" for the winter trapping (HBC, B:105/a/9). Here, it would appear that rights to a territory had been preempted by Saulteux and asserted through occupancy, and that these rights were exclusive.

There is one other reference indicating usufruct by family groups over trapping territory. For 1825-26 J. D. Cameron wrote that many Chippewa did *not* have hunting grounds, and therefore "poached" on others' grounds (HBC, B:105/e/6). Here again, it is unlikely that Cameron was referring to larger groups than would have constituted two-family or three-family households.

Aside from the fact that Chippewas repeatedly came into the trading post as individuals or in very small groups with fur and provisions, these are, over the period of time covered in this paper, the only references indicating directly possessory rights by such groups over real estate. There are, however, even fewer references to occupation of lands by larger groups. I have already mentioned the band under Duck encountered by Roderic McKenzie in the fall of 1819. Duck and his men wanted to have a trading substation set up at or near Lac du Bonnet in the Lake of the Woods country where they would pass the coming winter season first making rice, and then trapping (HBC, B:105/a/7). The indication is that that band, whether all close relatives of Duck or simply a group of household heads temporarily affiliated with him, occupied in common the Lac du Bonnet country: for purposes of trapping, sections of the country might well have been allotted among the separate domestic units in Duck's band for winter use.

The band of the sons of the deceased Chasseur consisting of 10-12 men and women, a sizable group which must necessarily have been divided into several component domestic units for the purpose of trapping,

apparently occupied a territory as a unit. McLoughlin noted that they hunted between Rainy Lake and Mille Lac, but nearer Sturgeon Lake in late winter, etc., as I have described above. That this was a recognized territory, and not simply a general vague area in the neighborhood of the lakes mentioned is indicated by the statement of McLoughlin that the sons of Chasseur were occupying land where the five families of Rats had died of starvation (HBC, B:105/a/9). This was, then, a territory occupied by a family band of perhaps 20-30 members, including children, which had replaced a family band of commensurate size. These are reminiscent of the types of socioterritorial units described by Speck (cf. 1915 b) and to some extent the coresidential units described by Dunning (1959, pp. 55 ff.) for more recent times.

There are other indications that the small domestic family territories and the somewhat larger family band territories (these not necessarily being mutually exclusive) did not represent the only kind of land occupancy in the Rainy Lake district. We have seen in earlier sections of this paper that there was a great amount of mobility among the Chippewa of Rainy Lake and contiguous areas. Such mobility, involving at times migrations from one river system to another, as from the Rainy to the Red, as well as extensive seasonal movement of households and bands, would necessarily prove a deterrent to a system of permanent usufruct of trapping territories and foster an allotment system under some kind of band authority, especially in cases in which the band did not comprise merely a cohesive unilateral or bilateral extended family group (or kindred). It would appear that in some instances the Chippewa themselves did not know where specifically they would hunt and trap until the season was well upon them.

In 1822-23, for example, McLoughlin noted in his district report that he could not determine where to trade with the Chippewa of Vermilion Lake until their wintering (trapping) grounds would become known to him. The same was true of the Chippewa who frequented the vicinity of War Road River, an affluent of the Rainy near Lake of the Woods (HBC, B:105/e/2). This can only indicate that the Chippewa, who were as anxious for a trading station as the traders were to accommodate them, had not yet decided where to trap at the time McLoughlin contacted them.

The next year as well McLoughlin had not yet determined by fall whether to have a substation at the place where the Rainy River enters Lake of the Woods—because he did not know whether certain Chippewa were to winter there or to the west on the prairies adjacent to Red River (HBC, B:105/a/9). These references, then, give no indication of permanent

family trapping territories among Chippewa from such widely separated places as Vermilion Lake and Lake of the Woods.

There are other indications of flexibility in hunting and trapping grounds. We had, for example, the case of the Chippewa family under Duck's Rump who had found that the territory they had wished to occupy had been preempted. We also noted that Chippewa who had not been successful in the winter trapping, in the spring moved in large numbers to the country in the vicinity of Lake of the Woods to trap muskrat. This involved, of course, using tracts much more extensive than mere family hunting grounds. We have yet another reference indicating the flexibility of hunting grounds. In April, 1825, J. D. Cameron mentioned that five Chippewas had arrived at the Rainy Lake post with a few skins, representing the "hunt" of nearly 2 months. Three of them had come down the Big Fork River and the other two had come in from another direction across the Lake (HBC, B:105/a/10). The instance of the men coming down the Big Fork in early spring is reminiscent of teams of two to seven Chippewa hunters coming down various tributaries of the Red River in the same season in a kind of cleanup hunt, mentioned by Chaboillez for 1798 (Hickerson, 1959, pp. 413-414). The Chippewas of Cameron's report had less success than the Red River hunters who traded with Chaboillez, due to the general depletion of fur in the Rainy Lake region. Such hunts were extemporaneous and were conducted over tracts much more extensive than the usual family trapping territories.

Territory once abandoned could not be kept from preemption by others. This, of course, has been typical of the family hunting territory system generally, i.e., usufruct can be maintained only through continuous use. But certain statements devolving upon the fluidity of territory made by fur traders indicate something of the nature of the family hunting territory system. For 1822-23 McLoughlin listed the "troubles" with the Rainy Lake country. Among other things, the population was too great for the resources:

. . . this is a disadvantage that is increasing yearly from several of the natives of this District formerly having emigrated to other places which then abounded in furs but those places being now exhausted they return to their own part of the Country, and *as the hunting grounds are in common*, theirs have been as much hunted in their absence as if they had remained. [HBC, B:105/e/2; italics mine.] McLoughlin here was referring perhaps to the

trapping grounds of entire bands, but I should rather take it to refer to the territories of small domestic or extended family units of the kind I have described above. Communality of territory in this instance seems to have worked against the interests of mobile groups hunting according to where the game was and suffering in the long run because of depletion of resources in heavily trapped areas.

I presented a citation from J. D. Cameron about trapping territories being poached on by those who had no rights over any designated tracts. Cameron was discussing the unfeasibility of preventing Chippewa from trapping beaver in summer when the pelt was virtually without value:

We have however a few Indians who would willingly refrain from killing their Beaver in Summer; *were not their lands open, not only to Indians of this Department, but to Indians of neighbouring departments of the Southern District*; and who grievously laments the impossibility of making a fair division of their Lands. Many Indians have no hunting grounds which they can call their own, they therefore go about poaching on the Grounds of others, hence those who have Beavers kills them at all seasons, rather than they should fall into the hands of those roaming Poachers. [HBC, B:105/e/6; italics mine.]

Here, then, not only do McLoughlin and Cameron indicate the existence of family hunting territories, but as well they describe a situation in which rights to land are common to all the Indians, not only those of the Rainy Lake district, but of neighboring areas as well. It is quite clear that the traders, in the interests of conservation and the regularity of trade, wished that the lands were equitably divided among the several domestic and family band units whose representatives traded at their posts. It is interesting that such questions became important in the period immediately following the absorption by the Hudson's Bay Company of the Northwest Company. Once competition between these two concerns had been ended, and some control over the Chippewa in the trade could conceivably have been exercised, the attention of the traders turned to longrun rather than shortrun advantages. It is true that competition still existed with the American Fur Company, and it was not until 1833 that this was resolved by the agreement whereby the American Fur Company surrendered its privilege of trading in the border region. It is not difficult to see how the territorial policies of the traders, which under certain circumstances were also advantageous to the Indians, could have been put into effect.

## Summary

Jenness' statement (1935, p. 5) that the Chippewa of Parry Island had moved halfway to individual ownership of trapping territories from communal occupancy of lands by bands makes sense with respect to the Rainy Lake material. The advantage of such a system to an economy based primarily on trapping for the specific needs of the fur trade has been extensively pointed out by Jenness, Steward (1955), and more especially Leacock (1954) whose treatise on the family hunting territory system among the Montagnais-Naskapi resolved the question of the origin of the system in favor of a historical provenience. At Rainy Lake in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Chippewa had advanced halfway to individual or small-family usufruct in the trapping grounds. If they, unlike their Parry Island congeners in the 1930's, had moved entirely to individual ownership, this was a function of general relationships, occurring after the events described in this paper and perhaps even as late as the 20th century.

One or two matters might be pointed out relating to the widespread acceptance of the family hunting territory system by the Chippewa and other subboreal collecting peoples. There has been considerable doubt expressed concerning the influence of missionaries and traders in establishing the system, as much by the proponents of the aboriginality of small family territories (Speck and Eiseley, 1939, p. 270; Cooper, 1939, p. 82) as by opponents of that notion (Leacock, 1954, pp. 16-17). Leacock's argument (*ibid.*) that the system arose as a result of fur trade relations rather than simply on the basis of instruction and example on the part of Europeans is well taken. There were no missionaries in the Rainy Lake country during the period discussed here. As to traders, however, with respect to the data I have presented on Rainy Lake and, one would suspect, throughout the Hudson's Bay Company trading area, though thinly scattered in those vast northern regions they still were in direct contact with most if not *all* of the Indians in their trading districts. After all, no Chippewa family could escape participation in the fur trade, or in activities relating to the presence of the traders in their country—canoe building, hunting and fishing for the trading posts, etc. We saw how the traders were discussing the possibility of resolving territorial relations in favor of individual family ownership, how they questioned the efficacy of even a usufructory system, referring as they did to pre-emptors as "poachers"; it would be unreasonable to think that such policies as the traders were formu-

lating in their reports were not urged upon the Indians who, after all, were dependent upon them for basic commodities obtained at that time only through a continuing and vigorous trade.

At the root of the traders' desire for individual (or family) ownership on an equitable basis was the necessity of a continuous supply of fur, especially beaver. Conservation was perhaps the most important and most aggravated problem the traders had to face. I quoted Cameron, one of the most intelligent of the factors at Rainy Lake, to the effect that beaver could be conserved by getting the Indians to stop trapping in the summer, a matter which he thought could not be prosecuted without a division of land among them. We find McLoughlin also urging a policy of conservation. In a letter of March 1824, to the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Sir George Simpson, he stated that the number of trading posts should be reduced to promote the multiplication of beaver, pointing out that after many of the Indians had been away from their trapping grounds during the War of 1812, they had returned to find beaver in great abundance. McLoughlin later expressed a more optimistic view than did Cameron: in broaching a conservation program, the former declared that even though he was trading in an area in which there was opposition (American Fur Company), he was confident that he could get the Chippewa to stop killing beaver by increasing the prices for other fur, such as marten. In a later journal entry, McLoughlin urged that a system be introduced by which beaver trapping would be controlled, and suggested that as a farmer rests his soil, so must beaver be allowed to increase in grounds left fallow (HBC, B:105/a/9).

That conservation practices involving the use of only parts of trapping territories in any given year is a usual feature of the family hunting territory system is well known. Here, then, we have the germinal notion for this expressed, perhaps on the basis of the experience of traders in areas where there was no opposition and therefore no stimulus to overexploitation. Although I lack good historical data for the period after 1826,<sup>11</sup> I can surmise how, with the introduction of a guaranteed food supply for traders and Indians—pemmican from the western posts prepared by the

<sup>11</sup> There is ample material in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives and in other repositories; it is simply a question of getting around to it.



Métis of the Red River at first, then later, as transportation and other factors generally improved, regular store supplies like potatoes, flour, salt meat and tea—conservation practices would have been put into effect as territorial relations stabilized. With decreased mobility on the part of Indian families due to encroaching White settlement in the late 19th century, and later with registration of traplines, the family hunting territory system became a permanent fixture in Indian life in that region.

Individualization of territory, well under way even as early as the period under discussion here, affected all holdings including rice ponds, sugar groves and

fishing grounds. Landes' portrait of the Emo Chippewa must be viewed in terms of historical developments and the individualization of territorial relations due to the fur trade. The implications her work and later work influenced by hers has for general assessments of Chippewa culture and personality, and for the culture of subarctic peoples generally, must be reconsidered in terms of contact. The atomistic organization of the Chippewa in the border region is very recent. Theories held on their individualism, like all theories on individualism among primitives, in territorial and other relationships, must be modified or changed to fit historical facts.

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