1	Sheshatshit	5	La Romaine
2	Davis Inlet	6	Natashquan
3	Schefferville	7	Mingan
4	Saint-Augustin	8	Sept-Iles

Figure 1: Montagnais-Naskapi Communities of the Eastern Québec-Labrador Peninsula.

TERRITORIAL MOBILITY

AMONG THE MONTAGNAIS-NASKAPI OF LABRADOR

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Nous savons relativement peu de choses sur le mode d'occupation des terres dans les régions qui n'ont pas vu l'émergence d'un système de territoires de chasse. Les écrits portant sur l'est de la péninsule Québec-Labrador ou bien mettent l'accent sur la mobilité territoriale et la fluidité des groupes ou bien font appel au modèle des régions fixes où les groupes retournent année après année.

A la lumière de données recueillies à Sheshatshit, l'auteure soutiendra que la mobilité fait partie intégrante des patterns d'occupation territoriale au Labrador. Elle démontrera que la répartition des individus sur le territoire est la projection dans l'espace des relations sociales changeantes qui existent dans la bande.

Relatively little is known about territorial occupation in areas where a system of hunting territories has not developed. Studies on the eastern part of the Québec-Labrador Peninsula either stress territorial mobility and group fluidity or present a pattern of fixed areas where groups return on a regular basis.

Data collected at Sheshatshit point to the fact that mobility is an integral part of land occupancy patterns in Labrador. The distribution of individuals over the territory is here seen as the spatial projection of dynamic social relations existing within the band.

Preliminary analyses of data provide insights into territorial mobility among the Montagnais-Naskapi of Sheshatshit (formerly North West River) in Labrador. This corpus of data is still being analyzed, and final results will eventually appear in a volume on social structure and organization at Sheshatshit (see Note 1).

This study of territorial occupation deals strictly with winter distribution of Sheshatshit Band members. It attempts to reconstitute occupational patterns from about 1900. The aim is to determine where, when, and with whom Sheshatshit Band members hunted during this period.

I sought from the outset to avoid the tendency of most ethnographers, beginning with F. G. Speck, to draw a static sketch of territorial occupation and instead to examine its dynamic aspects. Those who have described the system of individual hunting territories have emphasized its structural rather than dynamic elements, and those who have dealt with land occupancy in areas where such a system does not exist have either exaggerated territorial mobility or treated it as secondary.

Although there is a considerable body of literature on hunting territories among the Northern Algonquians, only three studies bear on central Labrador. Leacock's (1954) well-known study, of the emergence of hunting territories and the fur trade, is based on data collected mainly at Natashquan but also in part at Sheshatshit. The volume published by the Finnish geographer V. Tanner (1944), from data collected in Labrador during the summer of 1937, contains a section on territorial sub-groupings of the Sheshatshit band. The only detailed study, however, of territorial occupation in Labrador is that carried out by A. Tanner (1977) for the political association of the Labrador Indians.

FLEXIBLE BANDS WITH CHANGING MEMBERSHIP

V. Tanner (1944) and Leacock (1954) reported the absence of individualized hunting grounds around Sheshatshit. In light of information originating with the neighboring Moisie Band, Tanner came to believe that this was the result of the breakdown of an older system of organized hunting territories. Leacock took exactly the opposite tack by asserting that such a system had never existed in central Labrador, although changes in hunting and trapping patterns at Sheshatshit indicated that just such a system was emerging in the early 1950s. My own data, which agree with recent findings by A. Tanner (1977), indicate that individual hunting territories in central Labrador still do not exist and most probably never have.

First, there are no words in the Sheshatshit dialect to speak of such a reality. Terms such as *nitassi* (my land) or *nimeshkana:m* (my path) (referring to a trapline) are not used by Sheshatshit speakers (see Note 2). The only exceptions are individuals who have immigrated as adults from the neighboring Sept-Îles Band, where a system of individual hunting territories has developed. In the current Sept-Îles dialect, the term *nitassi* (my land) and the neologism *ninatu:un-assi* (my hunting land) are common. You will even hear *nisha:kaikanim* (my lake) (referring to the main lake on one's hunting ground) and *nishi:pi:m* (my river) (referring to the river used as a main travel route to one's hunting ground).

One can get a perfectly sensible answer from any adult of the Sept-Îles Band with a question such as *Ta:nte tekuannit*

tshu:ta:ui usha:kaikanim? (Where is your father's lake?). The majority of the Sheshatshit people consider such a question not only unintelligible but also stupid. The only possessive form of the term *assi* (land) used in the Sheshatshit dialect is *nitassi:na:n* (our land). According to the context, it refers either to the band territory or to the ill-defined territory claimed as "Indian land" (see Note 3).

An organized system of hunting grounds would, moreover, be incompatible with the general features of the bands inhabiting the eastern part of the peninsula. Leacock's (1969 and 1981) evidence indicates that until about 1950 extreme flexibility and mobility were the predominant characteristics of social organization in that area. The territorial boundaries of the band were vague, and members, both male and female, changed bands at will. This mobility was the result of band exogamy and the tendency to matrilocal residence. Leacock identified this mobility, together with many choices open to an individual, as the basic features of bands in the eastern Québec-Labrador Peninsula.

The large circulation of personnel between the bands of Mingan, Natashquan, La Romaine, and Saint-Augustin has been well documented by Leacock. That they operated as a social and marital network is reflected in the distribution of Montagnais-Naskapi dialects within the peninsula: the four bands still share a common dialect.

In central Labrador, inter-band mobility was equally great. Of the 239 married individuals (alive or deceased) whose cases were examined, only thirty percent were born within the Sheshatshit Band, of parents also born in that band. Thirty percent had immigrated, and forty percent, although born in the band, had at least one immigrant parent. Thus in central Labrador bands were open units having continuous relations with one another.

This is especially true of the Sheshatshit Band. Situated at the heart of the eastern half of the peninsula, it is in the center of a wide kinship network that can be best represented as a spiderweb. Genealogical connections extend in all directions: southwest, to the Sept-Îles and Mingan Bands; northwest, to the Davis Inlet and Fort Chimo (now the Naskapi Band of Schefferville) bands; and south, to Saint-Augustin, La Romaine, and Natashquan (see Figure 1). Given imprecise boundaries and changing band membership, how are the winter hunting parties organized within the band? What rules, if any, govern their distribution during the winter?

According to Leacock, hunting groups in the eastern Québec-Labrador Peninsula are unstable and informal units. Their personnel are constantly changing along consanguineal or affinal and patrilineal or matrilineal lines, as well as through bonds of friendship. "The composition of these parties and the grounds

they exploit shift from year to year and from winter to spring" (Leacock 1981:68). Territorial occupation in central Labrador seems to follow no pattern—extreme fluidity is its only constant.

V. Tanner's description follows more extensive fieldwork and goes somewhat further. It corresponds to Rogers's (1963:82) "hunting range system." Tanner (1944) defined six areas of the band territory to which a certain number of families returned each year (see Figure 2).

A. Tanner (1977) presented a similar model. He gathered a substantial mass of data on the activities of hunters in the Labrador interior from 1900 through 1970. The model divided the center of the peninsula into six sub-regions, each one corresponding to the range of a particular herd of caribou. Although only four of these regions agree roughly with those outlined by V. Tanner (1944), A. Tanner claims that each is exploited repeatedly by an identifiable sub-group, and he lists the male hunters who make up each group. Neither of the Tanners, however, makes any reference to social organization.

How can one reconcile the changing, elusive situation described by Leacock and the model of fixed areas described by the two Tanners? In both cases, it appears quite clearly that the description is influenced by the method of data collection. Much of Leacock's data amounts to sketchy life histories, collected from a restricted number of informants, which emphasized inter-band mobility, while the Tanners relied heavily on mapping. In view of this problem, I was aware that any attempt to describe patterns of territorial occupation in Labrador would call for extremely precise and detailed data.

DATA COLLECTING AND PROCESSING

Detailed life histories obtained through tape-recorded interviews form the core of the data that I collected in Sheshatshit. These rest on a large genealogical data bank pertaining to the whole eastern Québec-Labrador Peninsula (see Mailhot 1984). Thirty-two individuals, including ten married couples, were interviewed by the Montagnais-Naskapi-speaking author. Their ages ranged from forty-two to eighty-eight years, with the average being fifty-eight. I interviewed eighteen women but only fourteen men, thereby intentionally introducing a feminine bias in the sample. In doing so, my purpose was to counter the opposite bias one finds in the literature on hunting territories, from which women are surprisingly absent, a fact that cannot be ignored by any scholar, and one that I, as a female ethnographer, would like to correct.

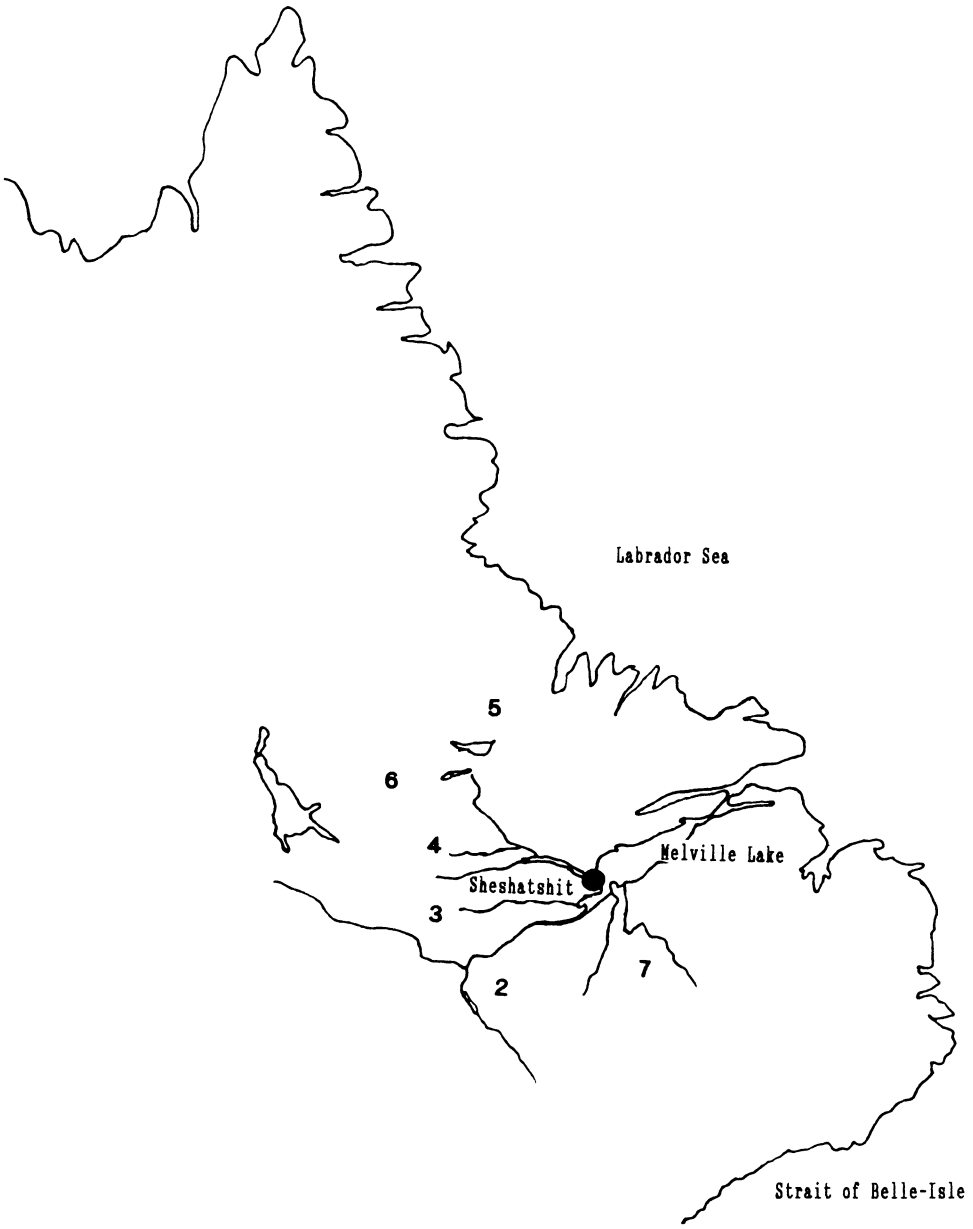

Figure 2: Hunting Areas of the Sheshastshit Band (according to V. Tanner 1944:585).

Historical Cases of Hunting Groups

The purpose of these interviews was to collect the greatest number of cases of historical hunting groups of which people would have clear recall and so could locate in space and time. Time markers used during the interviews were memorable events of the subject's personal life, such as the year his or her father, mother, or grandparent died, the year a parent remarried, the day a younger sibling was born, or the winter before his or her own wedding. This method allowed for not only the gathering of information about events on which people could report accurately but also the precise dating of each case. The dates of birth, marriage, death, and burial have been compiled for many hundred individuals of the Sheshatshit and neighboring bands from church records kept at the Québec and Labrador missions between 1920 and 1963 and from two censuses, dated 1935 and 1945. All dates compiled for each individual were filed on computer. By combining the oral history with this data base, it is possible to date each hunting group.

With reference to these time markers in their life histories, subjects were asked where exactly they were on the territories at that time—in Montagnais-Naskapi, *Ta:nte tshitishikushpi*? (Where did you go inland?). The predictable answer is a Montagnais-Naskapi place name—either a precise location (such as a lake or mountain) or a general area or the river along which the group traveled inland. No mapping was done during the interviews, but a toponymy study was carried out separately to locate all place names mentioned in the interviews.

Information was also gathered on the composition of each hunting group thus detected. In answer to the question *Auentshe tshiui:tshima:ti:t*? (Who are those you went inland with?), informants provided a more or less complete list of the individuals belonging to their own hunting group. In cases of children born inland, the names of the midwives attending their births were collected. This is information the women retained for each one of their numerous children.

Memorable Places

Aside from hunting groups, the places of births, deaths, and burials in the interior were elicited from a great number of Sheshatshit Band members. Many of the people interviewed knew the exact place of death and burial of some of their close relatives, even though they had not witnessed the event. Widows and widowers could state the place of birth of their late spouse; mothers remembered the place of death of children who had died at an early age. I also drew up lists of individuals buried in the different graveyards of the area, some located in the interior and others on the shores of Lake Melville.

Statements and Generalizations

The corpus of data includes general statements about where a particular person usually hunted. These statements were either volunteered by interviewed subjects or prompted with the question *Ta:nte ta:pan nu:tshimi:t?* (Where was he/she in the interior?) or else *Ta:nte natu:ui:pan ma:n?* (Where did he/she hunt usually?). A distinction must be made between the "general statements" triggered by these questions and others, which I call "generalizations," that refer to a specific time period. Some examples of the latter would be: "During my childhood we always were at such a place until my mother died," or "For the three years I lived with uncle X, we always went inland in such a direction." Again, dates of such events filed on computer allowed the dating of these periods.

Knowledge of the Land

I have also investigated the knowledge the interviewed subjects had of the Sheshatshit Band territory. In Montagnais-Naskapi, the concept of knowledge, when applied to a person or to a place, is conveyed by the verb "to see," so that "knowing" necessarily implies direct experience. If one states that he or she "knows" a place, it means that he or she has been there. People also talked about places that they had never visited. This information, too, is revealing of their personal experience of the land. Therefore sentences such as "I have seen such a lake many times," or "I have seen it only three times in my lifetime," or "I have never seen it" were extracted from interviews and regarded as data on territorial occupation.

The overall method described here has its limitations. It does not take into account either the nature of economic activities in the interior or the exact route followed by a hunting group during one hunting season. It also does not pretend to reconstruct each single hunting group to which an individual has belonged or the distribution of all Sheshatshit Band members over the territory for a given period. In both cases this would be an impossible task. The method used permitted only the collection of spatio-temporal markers for as many individuals as possible and for the longest possible historical period.

Data Processing

These data are computer processed using a simple data base management system. Once extracted from the original interview, each piece of evidence is entered into a separate computer record which includes the following fields: place, region, access route, relative date, absolute date, trading post (at departure and re-

turn), members of hunting group, and kinship relation to ego. The type of data is specified on each record: case, general statement, generalization, place of birth/death/burial, place seen, and place never seen. Data entry is currently in process; the projected size of the file is six to seven hundred records.

The computer will then be able to sort individuals who have been associated with a given place or the different places a given individual has used. It will compile the composition of all hunting groups for a given place or for a given person. It will also draw up lists of general statements about a specific individual that had been gathered from different informants or compare facts and general statements about the same person.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Preliminary examination of the data has provided me with some interesting insights. A comparison of the general statements that informants made with their territorial history, as reconstructed from the facts, shows the interviews to contain two types of contradictory statements. On the one hand, people often said things like: "A person went here and there—he didn't always go to the same spot" or "We went from place to place—people can go inland with whomever they wish." Leacock noted that for Natashquan people, it was desirable to have visited the largest possible expanse of territory. At Sheshatshit it was clear that, given this ideology of mobility, subjects tended to exaggerate their real knowledge of the territory.

On the other hand, informants often spoke of particular areas they or others frequented. The area attributed to a given individual, however, often changed with the person interviewed. Depending on the context, the informant often referred to different regions as the ones to which he or she usually went. In reality, these different statements are all true when the time factor is taken into consideration. Generally, when an individual says "I have always been at such-and-such a place in the interior," he or she is, in fact, speaking of one place among many frequented at one particular time of his or her life.

Structured Mobility

I cannot agree with Leacock's (1981) claim that in Labrador the membership and territory of hunting parties change from year to year and even from season to season. I also do not agree with V. Tanner (1944) who suggests that the same families return every year to the same regions. Territorial occupation in that area seems characterized by what I would call "structured mobility." A. Tanner (1977) encountered the factor of mobility in his at-

tempt to construct a model where each sub-region was exploited by a given group. In his list of hunters for each of the six sub-regions, nearly half the names appear in more than one group. In identifying a certain list of men with one region, he is forced to add that members of hunting parties also trapped in numerous other regions as guests of other groups. Such a model implies that every individual identifies with a certain area and that numerous incursions into other regions can be explained by something like an "exchange of hunting privileges" between groups, an expression used already by Speck (1917:91).

My own data indicate that mobility, rather than being an exception to the rule, is an integral part of land occupancy patterns in Labrador. This mobility, however, can be described only in reference to social relations, which determine the distribution of individuals over the territory. This is clear from an examination of the life histories (see Note 4). For example, one informant, who joined the Sheshatshit Band around 1926, continued to hunt in region 6, where he had hunted previously with one or the other of several half-brothers and while trading at the Sept-Îles Post. After his marriage to a widow born in the Saint-Augustin Band, he alternated between region 1, where he now hunted with his new in-laws, and 4 and 6, where he associated with a wide assortment of his own blood relatives. When part of area 6 was flooded following the construction of a dam, he confined himself to 1 and 2.

When this man was interviewed by A. Tanner in the mid-1970s, he stated that his usual area had been region 2. When I interviewed him in 1982, he stated it was 6, and most people in the community thought he had always hunted in 1 . . .

A second subject, a woman born within a sub-group of the Davis Inlet Band, migrated to the Sheshatshit Band and took a husband. For the following seven years of her marriage she alternated between 3, where she coresided with some of her in-laws, and 5, where she associated either with other categories of in-laws or with some of her blood relatives, who had previously emigrated from the Davis Inlet Band. In 5 she also occasionally joined relatives who still traded at the Davis Inlet Post.

A third subject, a man born in the Sheshatshit Band, spent his childhood in 6 with brief incursions into 5 and 1. After his marriage, he stopped going to 6 and spent most of his winters in 2, where his father-in-law mostly hunted at the time. He then also occasionally hunted in 1, 3, and 4.

The Access Key to Territory

We see, then, that although an individual does not return each year to the same region, there is a definite factor that

determines where he or she does go. Someone hunts in a particular area because of connections with others who hunt there at that time. In other words, an individual's presence in one particular region is not explained when they identify it as their habitual grounds, but purely in terms of social relations. These social ties provide the "access key" to different regions, whether within or outside the band territory.

Naturally, these relations are constantly changing. In Labrador, until the late 1950s, the demographics of Indian groups were characterized by especially high mortality and birth rates. Kinship networks of each band member were thus affected in an ongoing way by births, marriages, and deaths, and these rapidly modified the structure of groups.

Mobility in Labrador was generally extensive, but certain people were more mobile than others. Those who are part of extended, dynamic kinship networks will obviously benefit from a larger set of choices than those with less extended networks. Logically, individuals whose personal and family history is like a thickly woven fabric of adult deaths, remarriages, numerous births in the nuclear family, and successive adoptions will tend to acquire a more diversified territorial experience than those whose family history is of relatively thinner cloth. Exogamy, too, is a factor, either at the level of the band or within its subdivisions. A detailed examination of marriage cases might reveal that less mobile individuals belong to kinship groups with a tendency to endogamy.

Complex and Extended Kinship Networks

Overall results of the analysis of the composition of hunting groups cannot be presented here, since compilation of the data is not yet complete. Preliminary examination of approximately one hundred cases, however, indicates that individuals tend to associate equally along matrilineal or patrilineal lines as well as with affinal or consanguineal relatives. This agrees with Leacock's findings.

Surprising is the breadth of kinship ties involved in the formation of hunting groups. Not only all categories of close relatives but also complex and remote family ties play a role. This can be seen more clearly in the composition of a few hunting parties briefly outlined below (see Note 5; see also Figure 3).

In case one, ego chooses to hunt with a couple to whom he is doubly related, although these connections are quite remote. The next three cases illustrate the effect of numerous remarriages and the resultant extension of the kinship network. In case two, the two men at the bottom have no common biological parent, yet they consider themselves close relatives and hunt together. In

case three, a man hunts with his own parents as well as with a man born from his second spouse's previous marriage. In case four, a man and his son belong to the same hunting group as the man's new in-laws from a second marriage. In case five, we see an example of extended kinship ties, linking woman A and man B.

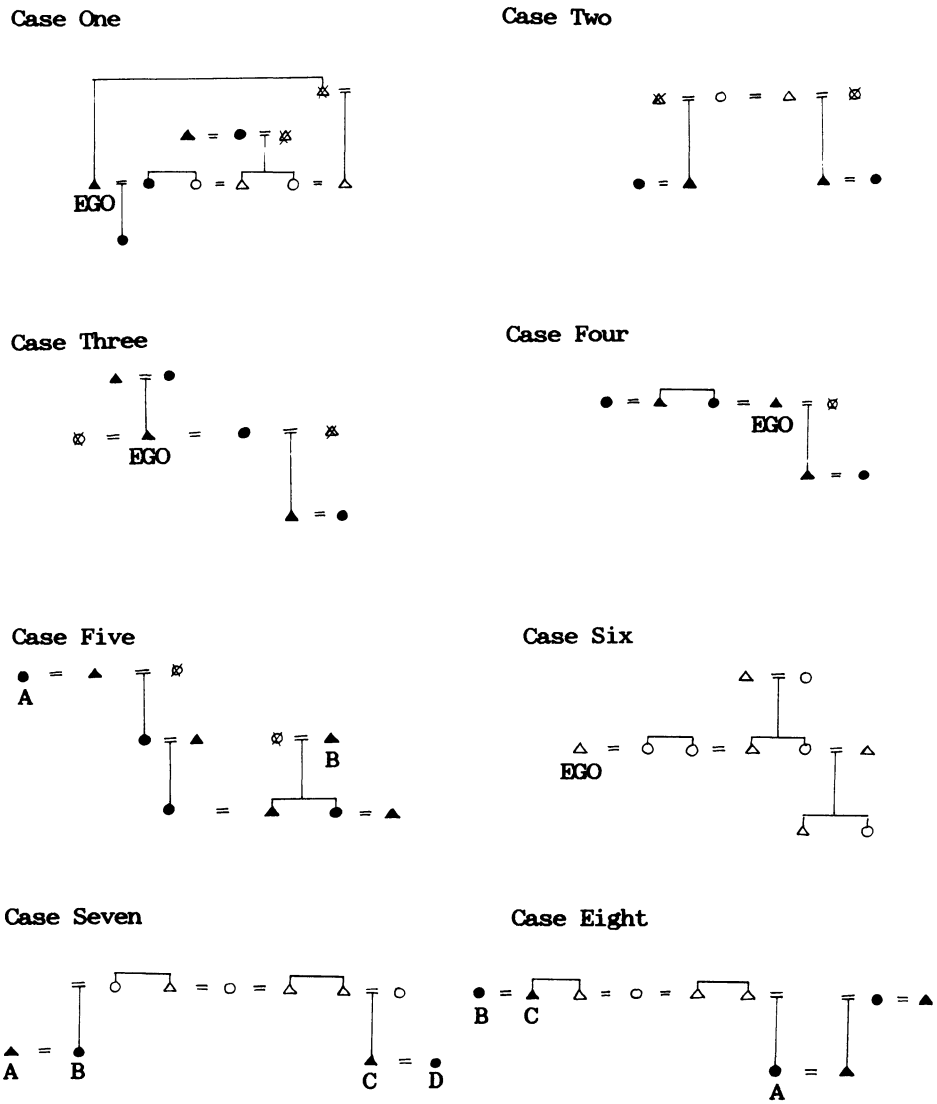

Figure 3: Diagrams of Hunting Groups (Symbols in black represent members of the hunting group).

Even where an individual's genealogy contains no multiple remarriages, he still may choose to associate with people to whom he is related through a long and complex chain of connections. Case six illustrates such an extended chain of affinal kinsmen. Each of these individuals could theoretically belong to ego's hunting group.

The kinship system increases the number of relatives among whom one can choose hunting partners. Sheshatshit kinship terminology includes several categories of classificatory relatives. In case seven, four people have hunted together because B and C refer to each other as "brother" and "sister," even though they are apparently distantly related. Affinal relations between the other individuals are classified as close, since A and C as well as B and D call each other "sibling-in-law of the same sex." Finally, in case eight, a woman and her husband belong to the same hunting group as the woman's classificatory uncle and aunt. In the local kinship terminology, A calls B and C "aunt" and "uncle"—the same terms she would apply to the actual sisters and brothers of either of her parents.

We see clearly how the Montagnais-Naskapi kinship system works to maximize one's network of relatives, be it consanguineal or affinal. Almost any kinship connection may provide potential hunting partners. Fictional kinship ties through adoption and godfatherhood increase even more an individual's circle of relatives. Friendship, I find, is much less common as a basis for hunting partnership than Leacock assumed.

What we are dealing with, then, is a system where access to territory is based directly on social relations. Relations are extremely complex and extended, and the choices open to an individual are many and varied. This is the key to the territorial mobility we find in Labrador and also to the repeated declaration by Sheshatshit people that "you can hunt wherever you want." However, this statement should be completed with an additional clause: ". . . if you have kinship ties everywhere."

Although kinship networks are generally very extended, this does not mean that everybody is related to everybody. Some people have a much wider network than others. Recent immigrants, for instance, have more relatives in their band of origin than in their band of adoption. Those who joined the band as married adults do not have the set of affinal relatives they would have if they had married into the Sheshatshit band. In spite of these differences, each adult in the community can name individuals to whom he or she is not related in any way. These are the ones who are excluded as potential hunting partners.

The distribution, therefore, of band members across the territory during a given hunting season is a direct function of extant social relations—a spatial projection of operative kin-

ship ties at that precise moment. Labrador could be viewed as a kind of large chessboard where the pieces are in constant motion, but, as in chess, these pieces do not move in just any direction.

TERRITORIAL MOBILITY AND HUNTING TERRITORIES

In concluding, let me stress that the type of territorial occupation outlined here does not seem incompatible with the existence of individual hunting grounds. Several interview subjects who had migrated from the neighboring Sept-Îles Band still considered a certain area in the latter band territory "their land," even though an examination of their life histories revealed that they had spent very little time there. They moved around within the Sept-Îles Band territory in the same way as Sheshatshit Band members did in theirs, hunting in various regions and accumulating a wide knowledge of the land over the years.

This type of mobility was reported by A. Tanner (1971:78-79) for a group where a system of individual hunting grounds had developed. He examined, over a ten-year period, the distribution of seven territory owners of the Nichikun Band and calculated the number of years that each of them spent on his own territory. The astonishing average is 4.7 years! Mobility for the overall band is even greater, since those who own no territory circulate from one area to another. By interpreting these facts as an exchange of hunting privileges, Tanner, it seems to me, has not drawn the appropriate conclusions.

So far, descriptions of territorial occupation have not integrated the factor of mobility. In areas where there is a marked circulation of individuals (Leacock 1954; Knight 1965), it is concluded that there is no system of hunting territories, and in areas without such a system, mobility is treated as a minor phenomenon. The core of the hunting territory model is an individual's rights to the resources of a particular territory. This model is difficult to reconcile with the ideology of territorial mobility, which appears to be very widespread. The firm belief held by Algonquian hunters that they could hunt where they wished was reported by Leacock (1954) for Natashquan, by Knight (1965) for Rupert House, and by A. Tanner (1973) for Mistassini. I have noted its existence at Sheshatshit, but I have encountered it also in all the Montagnais-Naskapi bands where I did fieldwork—even where a system of hunting territories has long existed.

I would suggest that the kind of territorial occupation described for central Labrador can incorporate all these variations: the model of hunting territories described in the literature, the effective mobility of individuals over the territory, and the widespread ideology of territorial mobility. In fact, whether or not a system of individualized hunting territories has

developed in a given area, we would still be dealing with the same model of territorial occupation—one that reflects a dynamic social organization.

NOTES

1. Data for this study were collected during the winter of 1982 within the Sheshatshit Sociolinguistic Variability Study, a multidisciplinary project financed by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. The analysis of the data on social structure and organization of the Sheshatshit Band was carried out with a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

2. The presence of a concept within the semantic system of a given group points to the existence of the corresponding reality in the real (or imaginary) world of that group. However, the absence of a given concept does not by itself constitute proof of the non-existence of the corresponding reality.

3. In the English discourse of the Naskapi-Montagnais Innu Association, the term *nitassi:na:n* is systematically used in replacement of "Indian land," "Indian territory," and even "Labrador."

4. For the purpose of these examples, I have used V. Tanner's subdivisions of the Sheshatshit Band territory. Numbers correspond to hunting areas as outlined in Figure Two. My own analysis is not yet complete but I suspect that the results will be close to his.

5. Although these cases show that distant kinship connections can be the basis for hunting partnerships, I do not want to imply that this corresponds to a statistical norm. The final analysis of hunting groups will likely emphasize that people associate more often with closer relatives.

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