Fatal Errors: Ruth Landes and the Creation of the "Atomistic Ojibwa"¹

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Abstract: This article examines several aspects of Ruth Landes' depiction of the Boundary Waters Ojibwa. Based on field work in the 1930s, the "Emo" Ojibwa were characterized ahistorically by Landes as atomistic individuals living in small bands having no indigenous political organization, driven by need to disperse widely in a meagre country. Research into Landes' published and unpublished materials, in conjunction with ethnohistorical research and Elder testimony, reveal major problems with Landes' field work and her analysis of the Ojibwa. Although Landes' work represents many of the biases and preconceptions of colonial anthropology, regrettably, she compromised her ethnographic portrayal by fabrications, by serious errors of fact and omission and by questionable methodology. These weaknesses limit Landes' work as a reliable source on the Ojibwa.

Résumé: Cet article examine certains aspects de la représentation des Ojibwas de Boundary Waters par Ruth Landes. Fondée sur ses recherches sur le terrain des années trente. Landes avait dépeint les Ojibwas «Emo» comme des individus atomistes vivant en petits groupes sans organisation politique indigène, obligés de se disperser sur un immense territoire pauvre. Une recherche effectuée sur les travaux publiés et inédits de Landes, ainsi qu'une recherche ethnohistorique et des témoignages des anciens ont mis en évidence de nombreux problèmes relatifs aux expériences sur le terrain de Landes et à son analyse des Ojibwas. Bien que les travaux de Landes représentent le parti-pris et les opinions préconçues de l'anthropologie coloniale, cette dernière a compromis son portrait éthnographique en forgeant des données, en faisant de sérieuses erreurs sur les faits ainsi que des omissions et en utilisant une méthodologie discutable. Tous ces éléments limitent la portée des travaux de Landes en tant que source fiable sur les Ojibwas.

uth Landes' work on the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwa) has long been considered an example of "classic ethnography." Her interpretations arose from field work among Rainy River Ojibwa on Manitou Rapids Reserve, near the town of Emo in northwestern Ontario. In several publications during the 1930s, the "Emo" Ojibwa were characterized as atomistic individuals living in small, mutually hostile bands having no indigenous political organization, driven by need to disperse in a poor country. Landes further portrayed Ojibwa women as culturally dispossessed and underprivileged. Her ethnographies from Manitou Rapids became a focus of the theory of particularity or atomism among the Ojibwa in the early 1950s and 1960s. Landes' interpretations of extreme individualism also engaged ethnohistorians, who sought to determine the origin of such "late" features of Ojibwa culture, in order to reconcile them with historical evidence for earlier collective institutions.

Historical research and Elder testimony from Rainy River First Nations² demonstrate how Landes compromised her interpretation by a number of fatal errors, including mistakes of fact, omissions and use of questionable ethnographic methods. These errors severely limit Landes' work as a reliable source on Ojibwa culture and society on Rainy River and in the Boundary Waters.

Ruth Landes and the Origin of Atomism

Ruth Landes died in 1991. She was a student of Franz Boas, a contemporary of Margaret Mead and a student and friend to Ruth Benedict. Landes' ethnographies of Ojibwa materials have been praised for systematically studying the culture from a woman's point of view (Hallowell, 1938; Cole, 1995a, 1995b). Her Ojibwa work was a principal reason for Landes' success as an anthropologist; she ended her career as Professor Emerita at McMaster University. Although it has been suggested that the body of Landes' work has been ignored and

marginalized (Cole, 1995b: 168, 177), there is little evidence that Landes' Ojibwa work was ignored.

Landes studied under Boas at Columbia University at a time when his analysis had moved inward into the relationship between the individual psyche and culture. Landes' background included a master's degree in social work and a strong interest in psychology and Afro-American Jews. The "Boasian paradigm" which examined the individual under the stress of culture (Boas, 1938: 269) was taken up by another of Landes' teachers, Ruth Benedict. Her focus on culture as "stress," or entrapment, magnified psychological components by focussing on neuroses, psychoses and general abnormality. Abnormality among the Ojibwa proved an important component to Landes' development of atomism and her understanding of gender, particularly male roles (1938: 24).³

The essentials of Landes' portrayal were published in 1937 as "The Ojibwa of Canada" (1966) in a comparative study edited by Margaret Mead, Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples. Ojibwa Sociology was released in the same year, followed thereafter in 1938 by The Ojibwa Woman (1971). Collateral articles were published in the journals Character and Personality (1937) and Abnormal and Social Psychology (1938). For Landes' work to have received such attention was unusual for this time (Frantz, 1985: 85, 86; Ebihara, 1985: 103) and reflected the powerful influence of Benedict and Mead.

Landes (1966: 102) depicted Ojibwa social life as different "orders of hostility." The Ojibwa personality structure was typified by severe anxiety neuroses caused by a shortage of food which manifested as "melancholia, violence and obsessive cannibalism," culturally represented by the Windigo (Landes, 1938: 24-26, 30). She linked the Windigo to an Ojibwa male ethos and a gamescarce environment in which the Ojibwa, extremely individualistic and protective of private property, existed in small, isolated and hostile households (Landes, 1971: 2, 9). Landes characterized the Ojibwa as hunters of big game and fur animals which were "scarce," forcing complete isolation of family households during the winter season (November-March). So isolated were the Ojibwa, they were "dizzied" by the excitement of social orientation after having been "imprisoned by the deep snows and cold" (Landes, 1937: 51-52). Landes (1966: 87) argued that such winter isolation resulted in individualistic male behaviour, while the behaviour of women was described as "spontaneous and confused" (1971:v).

According to Landes (1966: 102) "politically and economically the Ojibwa are an atomistic society . . . the individual person is the unit." The Ojibwa were described

as placing a high value on "ruthless individualism" (1969: 87). She concluded that "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.: 141). Ojibwa were relegated to the farthest outpost of the southern Sioux-Central Algonquian cultural complex: "the Canadian Ojibwa gens shows none of the religious and political developments so characteristic of the Central Algonkian and the Southern Sioux" (ibid.: 37, 52).

Landes characterized the Ojibwa as an "atomistic society" (1966: 102). No term has been more often attached to the Ojibwa. Landes published in psychiatric journals in which the Ojibwa ethos was described as "saturated with anxiety" caused by recurring starvation. The "neuroses and psychoses which flourish in such soil... manifest themselves in melancholia, violence and obsessive cannibalism," for all of which "the Ojibwa have one term: windigo." For the Ojibwa, "insanity is recognized and [a] comparatively common... characteristic and carefully described by the people." Individualism was manifested in the killing of trespassers, characterized by Landes as "ego assertion." War leaders, to Landes, were engaged in "ego-maximation," while co-operation was "personal defeat" (Landes, 1938: 24; 1937: 56-58).

None of these manifestations, such as Windigo psychosis, killing of trespassers, starvation and war parties, or indeed even life on the trapline, were observed directly by Landes. Her interpretation arose from the raw material of stories purchased from her informant, Maggie Wilson and others. The Ojibwa were portrayed as savage dissidents who could be made human and familiar through Western psychology (Landes, 1971: 178-226).4 Her letters contain degrading terminology in which the Ojibwa were "atomistic megalomaniac paranoids," the Potawatomi, "bitches and sneak thieves" and the Dakota "cretins" (RBP, September 2, 1935; January 30, 1933). Developing these impressions through Western psychology and its penchant for deviance and pathology, Landes (1971: 196, 204-206, 212) described male Ojibwa shamans as megalomaniacs, paranoids and exhibitionists who suffered from persecution reactions during their youth.

The Diffusion of Atomism

Atomism oriented research toward a particular set of phenomena, notably the idea of small dispersed family bands, and ignored evidence of collective activity. Used indiscriminately, atomism continues to be applied as both a description and explanation of Ojibwa culture and per-

sonality. The subject became a central issue in the debate on the "theory of particularity" in *Current Anthropology* (Hickerson, 1967a). Participants did not question the validity of the ethnographic data regarding "atomism." The term survives in studies of acculturation and fur trade dependency (Parades, 1980: 399-401; Bishop, 1978: 221-222).

Hickerson was not the only author to consider atomism. Atomism became the subject of a series of ethnographic papers in 1968 contained in *Human Organization*. In several case studies the phenomenon of atomism, if not the term, social atomism, was applied cross-culturally to societies then categorized as peasant, tribal and band level. The papers were assessed by John J. Honigmann (1968: 220, 227) who had applied the concept of social atomism in his published work in 1946 and 1949 among the Fort Nelson Slave Indians and Kaska. Honigmann attributed the origins of atomism not to Landes but to Ruth Benedict, and accredited A. Irving Hallowell for revealing atomism among Ojibwa. Honigmann's assessment of the case studies indicates that social atomism was generally used to explain a multiplicity of associations such as: absence of political structure; hostility in interpersonal relations; absence of large-scale organization and co-operation; fragmented communication networks; and anxiety, anomie, alienation and irrational behaviour.

As part of the focus upon individual personality and culture in North American anthropology, there was intense interest in psychological testing. Hallowell emphasized the individualistic pattern of Oiibwa society. differing from Landes on the nature of societal hostility. The Berens River Ojibwa were "chiefless, courtless, jailless" and "atomistic" (Hallowell, 1955: 345-357, 422). Using Rorschach tests, Barnouw and Ernestine Friedl concluded that the Wisconsin Ojibwa had "limited maternal care with often shifting parental surrogates [which] conditioned a dependent, emotionally repressed personality with minimal expectations from the outer world." Beliefs in the Windigo were linked to "oral frustrations" and may have been related to seasonal scarcity and inadequate parental affection. Victor Barnouw reported that Ojibwa libidinal regression was conditioned by "sexually repressed and ambivalent gender relations" which derived from "the traditionally atomistic social organization" (Manson, 1988: 89, 91, 92). Atomism was central to Barnouw's 1950 study of the "atomistic constitution" of the Wisconsin Ojibwa (Pelto, 1980: 302) and to Paula Brown's view of the Red Lake Ojibwa (1952).

Criticism of Landes' Ojibwa work has been largely indirect. Margaret Mead expressed some reservations

about the quasi-environmental rationale for extreme individualism, but did not challenge the characterization: "it still remains a problem why the habits of the winter months should so completely dominate their whole outlook, rather than the habits of summer months when they collect in villages" (Mead, 1966: 464). Soviet ethnologist J. P. Averkieva questioned whether assumptions underlying the theory of atomism did not originate outside empirical ethnography. Averkieva (1962) criticized the psychological portrait of the Ojibwa associated with the atomistic theory as "fabrications of ethnologists who are racists," for it ascribed to them negative personality traits such as sullenness, hostility and suspicion (Hickerson, 1967a: 318, 321).

Not all ethnographers have replicated Landes' characterization of the Ojibwa as a collection of atomistic individuals living in small, discrete, hostile households, having no communal or political organization. Dunning, for example (1959: 76, 108), attempted to explain striking differences in the rules of exogamy at Pekangekum and those described at Manitou Rapids as the result of the latter being exposed to missionaries and to a modern economy. Sister Inez Hilger (1992: ix), who studied Ojibwa child development and family structure in several neighbouring communities in Minnesota at about the same time as Landes, specifically noted considerably different findings. Similar discrepancies appear in the ethnographies of Frances Densmore (1928; 1979), who conducted field work at Manitou Rapids in 1919 and at Minnesota Ojibwa reservations. However, Landes' work on the whole remained unchallenged.

Ethnohistorians Harold Hickerson (1967a; 1967b) and Charles Bishop (1970; 1974) argued that the development of atomistic social organization could be explained by historical and ecological factors stemming from European contact, particularly the fur trade. In a 1967 publication Hickerson specifically considered Landes' work at Manitou Rapids. He did not criticize its ethnographic validity but questioned its applicability to Aboriginal conditions (Hickerson, 1962: 9-11; 1967b: 61). For others, atomism represented a culture of poverty representative of reservation situations (James, 1970; Lieberman, 1973) and became the subject of sociological investigations.

James G. E. Smith (1973: 11) attempted to reconcile the disparate interpretations of Ojibwa society by suggesting a more elastic framework. Smith argued that the complexity of historical and modern forces affecting the Ojibwa during the 19th century promoted both atomistic and collective action, and that this balance constituted the very core of the Ojibwa social dynamic. Smith cited

the extensive historical literature for northern Minnesota Ojibwa, noting that "atomistic" behaviour was present during the very era when bands formed large confederations and engaged in diverse communal activities. According to Smith, the dilemma facing Oiibwa was to balance the welfare of the individual or small co-operative kin group with the needs of the larger groups of the band, the village, the reserve or the nation. Viewed from this perspective. Landes' portrayal appeared to illuminate only one aspect of a more complex whole. Edward S. Rogers (1974: 2) questioned how the term came to be applied to all Ojibwa: "there was no reason why the nuclear families could not have grouped into larger structural units." Unfortunately, further direct critical inquiry into the bases and errors of Ojibwa "atomism" died with Rogers and Smith. Subsequently there has been little critical assessment of the basis for Landes' development of atomism.

Landes' Field-Work Methodology and the "Emo" Ojibwa

The Ojibwa were not Landes' choice for research. Manitou Rapids was selected as one possible location by Benedict and John M. Cooper. Her initial information about the Ojibwa came from Cooper (1936: 3, 4, 26) who conducted a 36-hour research visit to Rainy Lake in 1928 in which he identified a rank system within the Midewiwin or Ojibwa Grand Medicine Society. He also concluded paradoxically that the Ojibwa had no chiefs outside of those created by the Hudson's Bay Company, and no political organization. Cooper's assessment was echoed by Landes.

While Landes acknowledged earlier studies by Densmore and Ojibwa historian, William Warren, she dismissed the relevance of their findings and disparaged "a nun," Sister Hilger, for attempting to study the Ojibwa from a perspective of cultural change. Landes had little tolerance for studies of change and dismissed Hilger as "thoroughly ignorant of American or any other ethnology... material or method" (RBP, July 25, 1933; September 2, 1935). Landes' rejection of work by women scholars may be tied to self-perception: Landes insisted on portraying herself as "the first woman in the field" (Landes, 1976: 349).

Although pleased to have found a "pagan" reserve at Manitou Rapids, her principal informant, Maggie Wilson, was a recent convert to Christianity who identified herself as a Cree. Because her research informants were essentially limited to Wilson (RBP, July 10, 1932), Landes soon established an interest in women in her

field relationships. Landes chose Manitou Rapids over another reserve in Rainy Lake because she could live with a White family, that of the Farm Instructor, William Hayes (RBP, July 10 1932). Her correspondence at the time makes no mention of being prevented from "going native" by government authorities, as she later claimed (Landes, 1970: 121).

Landes conducted field work for two summers, 1932 and 1933, and the fall and early winter of 1935 (Landes, 1937: 51).4 Her correspondence provides some specific information on her schedule. During 1932, she arrived at Manitou Rapids and commenced summer field work on July 9. During 1933, she visited Red Lake, Cass Lake and Leech Lake reservations in Minnesota. Her field letters to Benedict originated from Ponemah. This was her primary base during 1933. Except for a brief visit to Manitou Rapids to arrange a trip for Mrs. Wilson to Red Lake, Landes was elsewhere (RBP, July 10 and 24, 1932, August 3 and 5, 1932, June 29, 1933, July 15 and 25, 1933, August 15, 1933). The lack of a complete genealogy for the Wilson family or of such basics as a village plan for Manitou Rapids may relate to the little time spent with the Rainy River Ojibwa.⁵

Compensation for the small amount of field time took an unusual form. Landes' primary research method was a form of "armchair anthropology." She paid Maggie Wilson \$1.00 per 15 pages of stories, translated by Wilson's daughter and forwarded by mail to Benedict. Benedict read the letters and sent payments (RBP, June 11, 1933). Wilson, an experienced informant who had worked for Cooper, Hallowell and Densmore was instructed by Landes and Benedict as to what to write about: "She gets the real point of what we want. She will henceforth send a greater variety (as well as lustier!) of material both Cree and Ojibwa" (RBP, August 15, 1933; October 12, 1933).

Landes ignored the effects and significance of the 1915 forced relocation of seven neighbouring communities, including Little Forks, onto Manitou Rapids (RBP, August 3, 1932). Landes had been repeatedly told by Wilson of the relocation. Landes much preferred working on the American side of the border where government offices were "almost country clubs" and the "sociological set up lovely." Here she found reservations composed of one people, much intermarried, who were neatly divided into pagan and Christian settlements (RBP, June 14, 1933).

Landes freely admitted that she was not taught specific field-work techniques, but had been instructed instead to "conjecture, to experiment, to use every tool we commanded, to venture." Landes frequently referred

to herself as a New Yorker compared to the poor Ojibwa and admitted that objectivity was impossible between persons "as disparate as they and I." She also stated that she was perceived by the Ojibwa as "vicious, exploiting informants to sell a million-dollar book" and that she conducted her research in a "chronically shocked state" with "the chronic hysteria of Indian villagers" (Landes, 1970: 120, 121, 127; Landes, 1982: 401).

Landes did not maintain the confidentiality of those denigrated in Maggie Wilson's stories, despite being cautioned by Benedict to change the names (RBP, February 4, 1935). In her published work, Landes (1971: passim) identified by name Ojibwa who, she alleged, had committed incest, child abuse and infanticide, were illegitimate, deserted by spouses or adulterous. She seemingly did not appreciate that unverified allegations, in addition to being defamatory, might have had severe consequences under the criminal law or the *Indian Act* (see Fluehr-Lobban, 1994).⁷

After determining the Red Lake Ojibwa were not in pristine Aboriginal condition, Landes used the term "cultural leprosy" (RBP, June 29, 1933) to describe their loss of traditional culture. She characterized her field work as "aboriginal ethnology" and described useful informants as "freaks of nature." Finding what she viewed as an impoverished Aboriginal culture, she chose to concentrate on what she considered was still Aboriginal—personality (RBP, June 29, 1933, July 25, 1933, September 2, 1935).

Landes developed her interpretations of Ojibwa personality by dabbling in dream analysis and word association tests, based on her reading of Carl Jung. Through a single recorded episode reported by Wilson, Landes was able to deduce that sexual desire among Ojibwa women revealed "distorted homosexuality" (RBP, March 20, 1935; August 16, 1935).

Landes' field methodology also raises an important question of how representative Maggie Wilson was of the Ojibwa. Maggie Wilson's father was said to have been a Cree who spoke Ojibwa, while Maggie was married to an Ojibwa chief's son (Landes, 1971:v). For many years after her work at Manitou Rapids, Landes was still troubled that Wilson identified herself as a Cree. In 1984 she attempted to resolve this issue by seeking historical information from Grand Council Treaty #3 and archival sources (RLP, November 4, 1984, Box 2).

According to annuity pay lists which provide genealogical data based on male descendants of band members, Wilson's maiden name was Spence. The Spence family first appeared on Rainy River at Little Forks reserve in 1875. Peter Spence, an Anglican Native catechist from Fort Alexander on Lake Winnipeg, was

appointed to manage the mission church at Little Forks. His instruction of the younger members in the gospel aroused antagonism from their parents who were, according to Spence's superior, Rev. Robert Phair, "strongly opposed to the truth," and under the influence of the "medicine men" (National Archives of Canada [NAC], 1875, 1879). In 1878, Spence and his son, Benjamin, who was Maggie Wilson's father, were placed on the band annuity list for Little Forks (NAC, 1875-1915). Landes chose to ignore possible implications of Wilson's self-identification as Cree. In doing so she portrayed Wilson as representative of the Manitou Rapids Ojibwa, a society into which her father's family had emigrated as Anglican catechists.

Landes' approach to Wilson's stories and to anthropology is perhaps best expressed in her own words: "I prefer the great imaginative literature to anthropological interpretations of field studies, where the writing is leaden.... I find statistics and projective tests elusive . . . and often misleading, but amusing, like astrology" (RLP, September 4, 1984, Box 2). Landes planned to develop Maggie Wilson dramatically as a fictional personality, retreating from the field into textual analysis. In 1976, aided by a text entitled "How to Write a Story and Sell It," she subjected Maggie Wilson's stories to various literary themes, including Joan of Arc ("Shaw's Joan"). Her cryptic notes are revealing: "never allow oneself 2 tell a story exactly as happened. It won't come off... move from facts 2 fiction" (RLP, n.d., Box 36). The fatal errors in Landes' work can be traced directly to inadequacies in her fieldwork and the failure to consult the ethnohistorical evidence, much of it readily available at that time in printed government reports. 10

Criticism of field methodology, or of conclusions arising from deficient field research, has been levelled at both Benedict (see Geertz, 1988: 20, 110) and Mead. In Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth, Derek Freeman claimed in 1983 that Mead seriously misrepresented the character and culture of Samoa as depicted in her 1928 Coming of Age in Samoa. The Samoan controversy ignited unprecedented debate concerning key aspects of field work, methodology and the history of anthropology.¹¹

Ethnohistorical Evidence

Landes' portrayal of the Ojibwa ethic of atomism, its associated attributes of hostility, intense interpersonal anxiety, and lack of village or political organization, are not reflected in the historical evidence for the Boundary Waters and Rainy River area of northwestern Ontario. Political developments in the 18th and 19th century were related to sustained warfare with the Dakota Sioux, increasing populations and clustered village sites, increased fur trading in a competitive environment, missionary encounters and interventions by the Canadian government. These developments required a greater integration of leadership among the different bands. The Midewiwin also achieved a prominent role integrating the larger assemblages to repudiate Christianity and provide a vehicle for charismatic leadership through the ritual consumption and redistribution of trade goods (Lovisek, 1993).

The Boundary Waters Ojibwa figure prominently in 19th-century historical documents. Before the treaty with Canada in 1873, the Ojibwa economy was diversified through the use of a wide variety of resources: fish, wild rice, berries, garden produce, maple sugar and large and small game. Products such as canoes, pitch, bark and native twines were used in the household and sold to traders. Foods, such as corn, rice, sugar, dried and fresh fish and meats, were also important items of trade. The trade in natural foods, furs and fish products provided the basis for fur company operations (Densmore, 1928; Holzkamm, 1986; Holzkamm, Lytwyn and Waisberg, 1988; Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993). The fur trade in the district remained profitable throughout the 19th century, despite intense competition from other traders (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1994; Holzkamm, Waisberg and Lovisek, 1995).

Strategies of seasonal resource use varied each year in response to environmental changes. Although a wide variety of resources was available, their relative abundance in any given year was subject to fluctuation. A balanced seasonal round involved "switching" among a wide range of resources (Vennum, 1988: 4). Economic diversity was a major aspect of the Ojibwa subsistence dynamic throughout the 19th century, during which the regional population expanded greatly (Bishop, 1978: 225). From 455 in 1822, by 1875 the total Ojibwa population of the Hudson's Bay Company's Lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake) District rose to 1 790, a 393 percent increase over 53 years. To offset this increase, the Ojibwa intensified the agricultural sector and developed the considerable potential of garden islands by increased planting of potatoes and corn (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993: 178). They also sowed wild rice in new locations (Moodie, 1991: 71-79).

Economic activities promoted seasonal gatherings of Ojibwa families into large groups at maple groves, fishing stations, berry patches, garden sites and rice fields (Archives of Ontario, 1868; Densmore, 1928; Hind, 1972;

Holzkamm, 1986; Holzkamm, Lytwyn and Waisberg, 1988; NAC, 1870; Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993). Large seasonal groups based upon abundant resources were the foundation for tribal government and Ojibwa military power. A Canadian official advised in 1868 that "they have a sort of government... [and] are sufficiently organized, numerous and warlike, to be dangerous if disposed to hostility," a condition resulting from an "abundance of food" afforded by rice, corn and sturgeon (CSP [Canada Sessional Papers], 1869: 20, 27).

Specific work was typically associated with one sex, but both women and men were providers and producers. Gender domains frequently overlapped within the same activity; men and women had complementary roles in canoe building, gardening, wild rice harvesting and hunting and fishing. Management and direction of tasks devolved to experts in their field, women as well as men, and women had an important voice in the distribution or sale of the various harvests. Women exercised leadership roles in economic and medicine areas, and "held positions as medicine women, seers, chiefs, warriors and mediators." Their function as herbalists was particularly significant within the ranked Midewiwin (Buffalohead, 1983, 1989; Densmore, 1928: 119-123).

On Rainy River, as recorded by male colonial officials, Ojibwa government was predominantly of a "patriarchal" cast (NAC, 1870). During the 18th and 19th centuries, Ojibwa bands organized through a tribal Grand Council asserted sovereignty over their territory. A wide range of ranked male leaders are noted in the historical documents, including Grand Chief, first- and second-rank civil chiefs, first- and second-rank soldiers, war chiefs, pipe bearers and messengers (CSP, 1873: 133-135; Lovisek, 1993; Smith, 1973). An abundance of sturgeon and wild rice made the Ojibwa "saucy and independent of the Hudson's Bay Company" (Dawson, 1859). Despite the efforts of the company to support missionaries, the Grand Council, under the influence of Midewiwin practitioners, proscribed Christianity in 1849, and continued to assert its dominance in the region (Lovisek, 1993). Colonial officials were obliged to respect rules for travel imposed by the Grand Council, which forbade, among other things, the taking of scientific samples or the making of celestial observations (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1994). After 1867, agreements were made for passage of federal officials for the First Riel expedition, while the Grand Council considered more permanent arrangements with the newly founded Dominion of Canada. Treaty negotiations which would involve some cession of land commenced in 1869, but were not concluded until 1873 (Morris, 1971; NAC, 1873).

Government Control and Displacement of the Ojibwa

The Ojibwa on Rainy River in 1873 were part of an organized tribal society in control of their resources and government. Within three decades after the treaty much changed. Government administration of the region favoured resource extraction and Eurocanadian settlement over Native development. Legislatively, women were excluded from any formal role in band government under Canada's *Indian Act*, and were ignored in federal policy initiatives. Significant changes occurred to the Ojibwa economy, population, land base and political structure.

Development of the existing village sites on the Rainy River had been an important inducement to signing the treaty. By 1875, 49 712 acres of arable lands had been chosen as reserves by the seven bands of Ojibwa on Rainy River only to find that the Ontario provincial government, representing settlers, refused to recognize their reserves. In a series of court challenges during the 1880s Ontario secured constitutional title over Crown lands along Rainy River by 1888, and refused to confirm Ojibwa reserves surveyed under federal authority. Because of provincial ownership, Canada denied the Ojibwa permission to clear timber on the reserves, and then used this to support policy that uncleared reserve lands were an impediment to Eurocanadian farming settlement. As a condition for transferring Crown title to Canada in 1913, Ontario insisted that Canada secure surrenders of all reserves along Rainy River except for Manitou Rapids. By coercion and a threat of removal without compensation, Canada secured such surrenders by 1915. The Ojibwa were obliged to abandon their other villages to relocate to Manitou Rapids. By this process, 89 percent of the Ojibwa land base along Rainy River was taken for Eurocanadian settlement, leaving just 5 736 acres at Manitou Rapids for seven bands (NAC, 1913a, 1913b, 1914a, 1914b; Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993: 195, 210 [n.106-107]). Pressure was also placed on the resources of the Manitou Rapids reserve as its local population increased through the relocation process. As noted earlier, Landes was told about the relocation, but she chose to ignore it.

The first decade after 1873 saw substantial growth of agricultural infrastructure on the reserves. Customers for produce included the numerous lumbering and construction crews in the region. Development ceased after 1882, however. The federal government, by an amendment to the 1881 *Indian Act*, asserted control over Indian commercial agriculture by prohibiting sales to non-Indian consumers without a license. Cultivated lands temporar-

ily declined in extent, and small subsistence and medicine gardens replaced earlier efforts. Increased reliance was placed upon hunting, trapping and wage labour (Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993). After 1915 farming on Manitou Rapids Reserve was managed by a government farming instructor (NAC, 1916-1936).

Decline of agriculture in the 1880s was followed by devastation of a major fishery. The immense sturgeon resource of Rainy River and Lake of the Woods, a mainstay of the pre-treaty economy, was quickly depleted following the abandonment of federal efforts in 1892 to reserve the fishery to the Ojibwa. During the 1880s harvest levels on the American side of the boundary waters began to rise. As Canadian fishermen began operations, harvests increased dramatically through pound nets placed at the mouth of Rainy River. Annual harvest of dressed sturgeon between 1895 and 1899 averaged over one million pounds, with significant amounts of caviar. Thereafter yields dropped precipitously as sturgeon were overfished. By 1920, a decade before Landes' arrival at Manitou Rapids, the harvest was at its lowest point in a century. While Ojibwa switched to other fish resources the virtual destruction of sturgeon constituted a severe subsistence and commercial loss for the Ojibwa (Holzkamm, Lytwyn and Waisberg, 1988; Van West, 1990).

Difficulties faced in fishing and farming were aggravated by navigation and power dams built by Eurocanadian settlers, and by industrial plants using the power. A dam built in 1887 at the outlet of Lake of the Woods backed up the waters of Rainy River and flooded gardens, hay and wild rice fields in 1888; many of the gardens were "submerged . . . several feet under water so that boats could sail over them." Despite protests and petitions nothing was done to relieve the situation. In 1905, a power dam and paper mill was built at Fort Frances, at the head of Rainy River, upstream from Manitou Rapids Reserve. The dam damaged gardens, hay and rice fields, cemeteries and houses on Ojibwa villages on Rainy Lake. Downstream, effluent from the mill degraded Rainv River (NAC, 1909; NAC, 1913a, 1913b; Waisberg and Holzkamm, 1993: 191-193, 208-209 [n.90-94]).

After 1900, provincial wardens began to enforce offreserve game and fish laws, despite clear assurances given in Treaty #3. Market hunting for White settlers, an important source of revenue after the decline of reserve agriculture in the 1880s, was terminated, despite the Indian agent's finding that this constituted a "great hardship, and detriment to their means of living." Trapping grounds were appropriated, and Indians driven off. Many commercial fishing grounds were allocated to Eurocanadians, despite their proximity to reserves and demonstrated Indian need (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1909; NAC, 1937, 1939; Tough, 1991).

Records maintained by the Department of Indian Affairs document many instances of protests and petitions by Ojibwa chiefs after 1880. The unwillingness of Canada to adhere to the terms of the treaty or provide protection for important Ojibwa economic resources led to bitter disputes between bureaucrats and band officials who "indulge in denunciations of the Government's treatment of them in order to influence the prejudices of the Indians against the Department and thus secure the necessary number of votes for their election" (NAC, 1895). 12 As in many other regions in Canada, officers of the Department of Indian Affairs relied increasingly upon the *Indian Act* to achieve federal goals of "civilization" and Christianization.

Canada targeted tribal cohesion. Treaty annuities were paid on reserve rather than at tribal conventions. The Indian Act imposed political restrictions upon the traditional male ranks, and disenfranchised all women; typically the names of women do not appear on tribal lists. Soldiers and messengers, traditional ranks, were done away with (NAC, 1895), while councillors and chiefs were threatened with deposition under the Indian Act for "incompetency" in not heeding "advice" from their agents. Vacancies in band political offices were not filled (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1909), while the deaths of notable medicine chiefs were celebrated in the annual reports (CSP, 1891: 200). Indian Act legislation after 1895 made any traditional religious celebration involving the exchange of "money, goods or articles of any sort" an indictable offence punishable by two to six months in prison (SC, 1895, 1906).¹³ Chiefs who participated openly in the Midewiwin in 1911 on Lake of the Woods were arrested by the agent and lodged in jail, and the Inspector of Indian Agencies, Rev. John Semmens, was advised to enforce the Act and its later amendment forbidding dance participation by Indians in Aboriginal costume outside of their own reserves. At Manitou Rapids during the 1920s, the farming instructor operated as an informant in alerting the police to forbid Indian dances, requesting that the Fort Frances Detachment "send [a] mounty" (CSP, 1914; NAC, 1905; 1911; 1914b). While most such convictions resulted in suspended sentences, the direction of federal law was clear and constituted a direct assault on traditional Ojibwa religion. The annual Midewiwin festivals, celebrated openly before 1900 as an occasion for a tribal gathering, declined in significance. Replaced by secret observances in violation of federal law, the open connection of the Midewiwin to a political structure of civil chiefs in a Grand Council was ended.

Population of the seven Rainy River Ojibwa bands declined by over 50 percent from 504 to 244 between 1875 and 1915 (NAC, 1875-1915). Outbreaks of smallpox, syphilis, measles, whooping cough, tuberculosis, influenza and other infectious diseases played a role in the decline. Increased rates of disease occurred simultaneously with dietary changes resulting from the damage to resources such as sturgeon and rice (CSP, 1883: 41, 125: 1884: xli, 66-67, 129: 1886: 128: 1888: 67-68, 165; 1891: 36: 1895: 190: 1909: xxiv. 83: 1910: 87, 270: 1912: 85; 1913; 88). These historical data add a different interpretation to that proposed by Landes who viewed the Ojibwa preoccupation with sickness as a curious phenomenon and termed it "obsessive," with everyone "ridden with anxiety about his[/her] health . . . a rather hypochondriacal self-preoccupation" (1971: 178). According to T. Kue Young (1988: 40, 142 [n. 12, 13]) crude death rates at Fort Frances and Kenora agencies in some years reached 50 per 1 000, "exceedingly high . . . compared to Canadian national rates." Canada assisted the process of depopulation by removing many Ojibwa from band lists on the basis of "foreign residence" (CSP, 1884: 131). By 1915, the seven Rainy River Ojibwa bands had lost 52 percent of their 1875 population as well as 89 percent of their land base. The remainder were crowded into Manitou Rapids, surrounded by Eurocanadian settlers (Waisberg, Lovisek and Holzkamm, 1996). Access to off-reserve resources became increasingly circumscribed after 1915. Traditional trapping and hunting areas in Rainy River valley were either occupied by settlers or appropriated by non-Indian trappers.

Thus, by the time Ruth Landes appeared at Manitou Rapids Reserve, the economic situation was much changed from 1873. Attempts had been made to suppress Ojibwa tribal organization and religion, Ojibwa were prohibited from areas formerly affording them subsistence, and were reduced to 11 percent of their former reserve land base. Ojibwa representing 15 totems, formerly inhabiting seven reserves, had been removed to the one remaining reserve, Manitou Rapids.

Landes' portrayal of pretreaty Ojibwa life and personality, based on material culled from Wilson's stories, does not reflect the totality of Aboriginal society and culture before the colonial period. The abundant evidence for communal co-operation, tribal integration and the importance of women prior to the post-1873 period brings into question the success of Landes' venture into Aboriginal ethnology. Additionally, her omission of political developments occurring during the colonial period of the

1930s is further cause for criticism. Resistance to the suppression of tribal organization among the Treaty #3 Oiibwa is abundantly documented during the period after 1918. While annual tribal Grand Councils had been suppressed, band chiefs and councils from throughout the Treaty #3 region continued to meet, sometimes in secret, to form multiband political organizations, despite the efforts of Indian Agents. Manitou Rapids Ojibwa men took a leading role in organizing collective tribal political resistance during the 1930s under the stewardship of Chiefs John McGinnis and Jim Horton of the "Union Council," the "Organization of Amalgamated Indians" and the "League of Indians, Treaty No. 3." Their petitions dealt overwhelmingly with the violation of Treaty #3 promises or Canada's breach of its treaty commitments (NAC, 1939). Failure by Landes to note a regional protest movement based at Manitou Rapids in the 1930s calls into question her portrayal of Ojibwa society as lacking integrative institutions. It may also provide a cautionary example about reliance on one informant, very inadequate ethnographic techniques and limited field exposure.

Conclusion

Ojibwa society at Manitou Rapids, both before and after 1873, did not lack communal ideals or organization. From a cultural perspective Landes' invention of atomism has distorted the record of Ojibwa lives. Numerous aspects of Landes's portrayal of the Ojibwa are not supported by historical evidence. Landes presented her interpretation without specific consideration of such historical data. Her view suffered from the inadequacies of an ahistorical type of anthropology and the methodology she employed. Landes' legacy should be assessed on this basis.

The most revealing criticisms of Landes' work are yet to emerge—those from the Ojibwa. The writings of Ruth Landes became known to Manitou Rapids Ojibwa in the early 1970s after Landes provided her work to P.C. Clarkin, Indian Affairs School Superintendent, for use in Native curricula in exchange for information about Ojibwa mental health (RLP, April 10, 1969, Box 4). Not unexpectedly, members were distressed at how their parents, grandparents and relatives had been portrayed. Although comprehensive investigations of the response to Landes' depiction have not been attempted, Elders have rejected Landes' work. One Elder states that Landes based her findings on "kitchen gossip" while another reported that those who had read The Ojibwa Woman did not like the book. This included Maggie Wilson's daughter and Landes' interpreter (personal communication, 1994,

1995). A female descendant of Maggie Wilson offers a slightly different interpretation. She suggests that Wilson was confused when she related her stories to Landes as she was in the process of conversion to Christianity and was rejecting Native values (personal communication, Elder Y, 1993). Landes typed such situations involving the renouncing of Native ways as "unsystematized prosecutory ideas, and delusions of grandeur" (Landes, 1971: 213), but found in the narratives the sorts of raw material she was after.¹⁴

Further clarification of the many issues raised by Landes may eventually be drawn from history and ethnography, from the Indian Affairs files buried in archives and from the living memory of Ojibwa. Our concern, as anthropologists, has been to demonstrate the manner in which the atomistic "Emo Ojibwa" were a construct compounded almost equally of fatal ethnographic and historical errors.

The authors espouse an ethnohistorical approach to Ojibwa studies. This approach redresses the absence of historical perspective in studies which have relied upon the ethnographic present. The methodology involves research of published and archival records, including the field notes and unpublished writings of anthropologists. Ethnohistory provides a powerful means of assessing the validity and origins of ethnographic models.

Ruth Landes, as this article demonstrates, erred through her failure to use historical evidence and by failing to apply rigorous research and field-work standards. For these reasons, Landes' interpretations of Ojibwa culture are not classic ethnography but are instead the product of fatal errors, a relic of an earlier ahistorical paradigm in anthropology.

Notes

- 1 Earlier versions of this article were presented in 1994 at the Canadian Anthropological Society Conference in "Fact and Fancy in the Ojibwa Ethnographic Voice of Ruth Landes: A Critique of Landes' Contribution to Canadian Anthropology" and in 1995 at the 27th Algonquian Conference as "'Cultural Leprosy:' The 'Aboriginal Ethnology' of Ruth Landes."
- 2 We wish to thank James G. E. Smith, Edward Rogers and the many Elders of Manitou Rapids as well as many others who shared their views on Landes with us. We also wish to thank Ms. Nancy McKechnie, special manuscript collections of Vassar College for her generous assistance with Landes' unpublished papers and Dr. James Harwood for providing access to the Landes papers at the Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian Institution. We also wish to thank Dr. Mary Catherine Bateson for providing permission to publish from the Ruth Benedict papers at Vassar College

- which contains Landes' correspondence. Opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors, and are without prejudice to Rainy River First Nations.
- 3 Landes recorded primarily "stories" which read more like "true confessions" describing incidents of desertion, incest and abuse. These were the major themes which Landes wanted from Wilson's stories: "woman deserted, mistreated, rewarded, shamed, combatted over, etc. The theme is damned familiar to us now" (RBP [Ruth Benedict Papers], March 20, 1935). Subjects were identified by name and there is no evidence that Landes verified the stories or acquired consent from the persons named in text.
- 4 Landes' actual field notes have not been found despite contacting all sources mentioned in her extant papers. Special thanks to Drs. N. Lurie and Keewaydinoquay Peschel for responding to our inquiries.
- 5 Correspondence in possession of authors, Landes/Waisberg, February 27, 1984: "I want to locate the records of birth for Ben Spence, the father of my great Maggie Wilson.... I want to reconstruct the genealogy. All I know of Ben Spence is what Maggie told me in the 1930s—that he was a Cree interpreter for the English."
- 6 In her letter to Leo Waisberg on November 19, 1984, Landes noted that: "Maggie mentioned the amalgamated 7 [communities] several times but we did not discuss it."
- 7 The question of Landes' use of potentially libellous data was also raised by Dr. Park regarding her material on Negro Jews. The publisher stated that Landes' work was hearsay, not science and that her use of actual names would expose the publisher to libel (RBP, January 18, 1938).
- 8 See note 5.
- 9 According to one of her descendants, for a long time following relocation of several communities to Manitou Rapids, Maggie resided alone in a cabin outside the reserve boundaries until she married Namaypock, who changed his name to Wilson (personal communication, 1996).
- 10 Correspondence in possession of authors, Landes/Waisberg, November 19, 1984. Landes also claimed in this letter that "the Manitou and Red Lake of Minnesota Ojibwa accepted all her versions... of Ojibwa life as authentic." If Landes' field notes are ever recovered, one might well assess the extent to which Landes employed verification procedures in interviews with other informants. Her field correspondence does not support these assertions, nor do Elders at Manitou Rapids.
- 11 For a summary of the Samoa controversy from various perspectives see *The Samoa Reader: Anthropologists Take Stock* (Caton [ed.]: 1990).
- 12 At this time Canada's field officers made a recommendation "to do away with the Chiefs and Headmen altogether... as the Department is quite convinced from past experience that the Indians will get along much better without them" (NAC, 1895).
- 13 Section 149 of the 1906 *Indian Act* states: "Every Indian or other person who engages in, or assists in celebrating or encourages either directly of indirectly another to celebrate any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort forms a part, or is a feature, whether such gift of money, goods or articles takes place before, at, or after the celebration of the same, or who engages or assists in any celebration or dance of which the wounding or

- mutilation of the dead or living body of any human being or animal forms a part or is a feature, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and not less than two months: Provided that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the holding of any agricultural show or exhibition or the giving of prizes for exhibits thereof." Government policy restricting the Midewiwin had also banned the Potlatch and the Sundance (Pettipas, 1994: 93, 97).
- 14 Responses to Landes' interpretations have not been limited to Rainy River. The humiliation experienced by Native artist, Leland Bell from Manitoulin Island because of Landes' portrayal of the Midewiwin has been recorded by Theresa Smith (1995: 38). Bell, however, suggests that Landes' descriptions were wrong, "either that or Ruth Landes was lying."
- 15 The late Edward S. Rogers (1986: 210) observed that ethnohistorians needed to not only look at the roles of fur traders, missionaries and government agents but also to include that of anthropologists who imparted and promoted a particular view of the Ojibwa.

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