THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MONTAGNAIS-NASKAPI

by

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Introduction

The first purpose of this paper is a presentation of the traditional social organization of the Montagnais-Naskapi to show the present state of anthropological knowledge. It is also an indication of lost opportunities since it is doubtful now whether enough data will ever be gathered to notably increase this knowledge. The present rapid changes in Northern Quebec seem to have closed the last possibilities of studying their traditional culture, and no amount of field-work will now reveal what used to be. The second aim of this paper, and also the subject of the conclusion, is to assess from the available data the role the social organization and culture has played during the transition to the present stage of virtual disappearance.

I

The Montagnais-Naskapi live in Northern Quebec, in the area formed by the Atlantic Ocean, the Hudson Bay, and the Gulf of the St. Lawrence. With the exception of the widely scattered camping-grounds of the interior, the new mining locations, and the few inhabited places on the coast, Northern Quebec is largely deserted, unchartered country. The interior is formed by a succession of low folds and wide valleys covered by fir forests, or open permafrost tundra. The whole is criss-crossed by a labyrinth of lakes and a network of rivers. Administratively, the Montagnais-Naskapi live in the two Provinces of Quebec and Labrador-Newfoundland.

The Montagnais-Naskapi were in their present location when the French colonized Canada in the early 17th century. These early reports suggest that they were organized as nomadic bands living exclusively by hunting and fishing. Contacts with the French are reported to have begun a number of important changes. The use of

firearms, and the intensive slaughter of animals, led to the disappearance of certain animals upon which these bands depended. The fur-trade, and the supplies brought in by the traders, only partially compensated for the decreasing game. The situation became worse as white trappers -- mostly French Canadians -- encroached on the Indians' best hunting grounds. Leacock (1954) has suggested that it was the gradual disappearance of game as well as the encroachments of other trappers which created the concept of property rights over hunting territories. Forced out upon the less advantageous ones, the Indians had to exert greater efforts which yielded ever diminishing returns. Diseases brought in by the Europeans decimated their ranks and their number was further reduced by epidemics. They are reported to have reached their lowest number at the beginning of the 20th century, but have been increasing since. All reports agree to state that this increase is practically entirely limited to the bands in reserves, and especially those which have intermarried with the French Canadians, and who have more or less left their previous hunting life for more settled occupations in the relatively better climate of the southern part of the area.

There is no complete survey of the Montagnais-Naskapi. Most of the information about them is given in monographic studies whose data was obtained from a relatively small number of informants. This is unfortunate as some considerable differences are reported to exist between the various bands living within this extensive territory. While the language used throughout the area, and some of the customs, are basically similar, local variations exist which have led to the making of a differentiation between Montagnais (French: Men of the Mountains) and Naskapi (Algonkian: the true men). It is, however, difficult to discover who are the Montagnais, and who are the Naskapi, as these terms are used by different authors to indicate the same bands. Tanner (1947), for instance, list only three such bands as being Naskapi. Speck (1934), on the contrary, uses the name to cover all Indians living in the whole of the area. To overcome some of these difficulties they will be referred to in this paper as Montagnais-Naskapi. This usage also eliminates the misleading inference about two distinct groups. As there are no overall political organization, or other forms of centralization, the present usage merely refers to a geographical and cultural area, and the various bands within it are to be classified according to their differences from each other.

Major Characteristics and Social Units

The band is the largest unit of social organization. However, these bands do not have the same social structure. It has become generally accepted that two extreme types of traditional social organization existed among the Montagnais-Naskapi, and bands are classified according to their position between these two extreme types. The two extreme types are themselves associated with modes of life characteristic of either the forest or the tundra. The tundra type is derived from the huntung of the wandering herds of caribou. It is nomadic and communal. In its most extreme form all the elementary families remain together, and the band hunts in common under the leadership of a chief. The forest type is more limited in the wanderings of its hunting parties, and in its more extreme form approaches settled life in a permanent camp. The elementary family is the hunting unit, and the band is often without a recognized chief. Speck and Eisely (1942, 29) stress that the main factors determining these two types are simply the types of game in the two areas. However, as there are fluctuations both in the location of the game and the amount of game to be found in each area, major variations in social organization have been reported for the same band. Furthermore, as certain bands live in territories where their hunting program changes with the seasons of the year, these two extreme types of social organization will exist at different periods of the year for the same band. The whole band will break up into elementary families to hunt in a family hunting ground. Later, these families will come together under a chief to hunt together as a single group after the caribou herds.

Variations in the number of bands reported in existence range from 26 (Speck 1935) to 17 (Fried 1956). It is not possible to say whether 9 bands actually disappeared during the period. Reports show that each band varies both in numbers and in the size of the hunting ground. Another type of differentiation between them, which shows more clearly their cultural variation, is the distinction they themselves make between "big hunters" and "little hunters." The "big hunters" live in the remote interior, and most of them are reported to have retained some of the traditional culture. Their contacts with Canadians, either missionaries, Indian Agents, or the members of the Hudson Bay Company posts, are limited to the short period they spend at one of the posts to sell their furs and buy supplies for the next hunting trip. The "little hunters" are those who have become more and more sedentary, and have taken over much of the French Canadian

way of life. They are themselves considered to be like French Canadians by the "big hunters." Their occupations range from small scale trapping and hunting, to working in the various industries located near them, or acting as guides for sportsmen in hunting and fishing trips. They have given up living in tents, and have built wooden houses of the Canadian type. The traditional organization is reported to have completely broken down among them, and to all intents and purposes they are without knowledge of either their traditional language or customs. It would be wrong to suppose that the "big hunters" represent a type of social organization which is basically what existed before the contact with Europeans. The fur trade, the mass conversion of the Montagnais-Naskapi to Christianity, mean that no element of their pre-contact way of life has remained untouched. Since the 18th century, for instance, the history of most of these bands has been closely linked with that of the posts set up by the Hudson Bay Company. Originally these trading posts were established near the summer gathering places of the bands. In a number of instances these posts were later moved to places more suitable from the Company's point of view, and these in turn became the gathering places of the bands. Not all the bands had trading posts located permanently in their territory, so that they had to trade at another band's summer camping-ground. Other bands had more than one post established within their traditional territory. Changes in the location of a trading post, or its closing down, caused major changes in the lives of the Montagnais-Naskapi, and gradually their pattern of life was transformed to suit the distribution of trading posts within the whole area.

Contacts with Canadians and others has meant that most anthropological studies, as they were made in the 20th century, report simply the end product of change. For instance early travellers reported the presence of polygamy, and the importance of the extended kinship system. These were practically unknown as customs by the 19th century.

The Bands

A description of the Montagnais-Naskapi bands must be qualified for the generality of its social organization or culture as either limited to itself or valid for a number of bands. Furthermore, the data on a number of bands is too scanty to allow for more than an acknowledgement of its existence. Taking into account all these qualifications, it seems that the minimal description is as follows. A band occupies a clearly defined area which was recognized by the members of that band, as well as of other

bands, as their "territory." Within each area the band had one or more meeting-places, usually occupied in summer, when all the members of a band came together. It was there that the Hudson Bay Company set up its posts, and the missionaries their Churches. It is also there that marriages are celebrated, trading carried out and gossip exchanged. Nowadays some of these summer camping-grounds are usually part of a reserve and wooden houses have been built by the Indian Bureau. The bands have come to be known by the name of their most important camping-ground. Should an individual Montagnais-Naskapi change his summer camping-ground to that of another band from the one he was born in, he may finally lose his membership in his original band, and acquire various rights with his new band. These rights, however, depend on the type of social organization which exists within that specific band, the presence or lack of a chief, the type of territory and of hunting rights within that territory. An idea of these differences can best be obtained by listing some of the characteristics which have been reported for each band.

1. White Whale River Band. This band was reported by Speck (1923, 454), as hunting as a single group. Its social organization was otherwise unknown, and in 1924 it was reported as composed of 57 persons. Fried (1957) reports 181 Cree speakers at Great Whale River and does not list the White Whale River band.

2. Ungava Band. They are reported to have formed a very large band previous to the 1892-3 famine. Turner (1894), who has made the only report on this band, writes that they were polygamous previous to his arrival, but when he visited them each elementary family consisted of a monogamous couple and their children living in a single tent. These elementary families came together between April and June to hunt the caribou. They then scattered until September or October to hunt for smaller animals. Fried (1956) listed 191 Naskapi speakers in the area of Chimo.

3. Barren Ground Band. Speck (1931, 561) reports that this band has been shrinking rapidly in numbers since the influenza epidemic of 1918 and the disappearance of the caribou in their territory. He also reports that they were headed by a chief and used to hunt as a group. Tanner (1947, vol. 2, 635) who visited them in 1939 reports that they have moved to the coast. Not listed by Fried (1956).

4. Big River band. Speck (1931, 566) reports that no further information exists on this band beyond the fact that it is composed of a few elementary families. Fried (1956) lists 684 Cree speakers at Fort George and no Montagnais-Naskapi.

5. Petisikapau Band. Speck and Eiseley report the disappearance of this band as a unit, and think its members may have joined the Moisie band. Not reported on by Fried (1956).

6. Davis Inlet Band. Speck (1931) reports that during 1927-28 it was composed of about five elementary families. These are said to have originated from the marriage of an Eskimo and a Scotch-Cree half-breed. Tanner (1947, Vol. 2, 671) reports the presence of 107 persons. Fried (1956) reports 117 Naskapi speakers in the area.

7. East Main Band. Speck (1931) reports that very little is known of this band beyond the fact that in 1890 it was composed of three families hunting as a group. He listed them as being 251 in 1924. Fried (1956) lists 195 Cree speakers in the area.

8. Nichikun Band. Speck and Eiseley (1924, 232-3) report that this band disappeared as a unit after the closing in 1918 of the Hudson Bay Company's post. Members of this band were met by Speck in 1915 and 1925 after they had joined other bands. Not reported on by Fried (1956).

9. Kaniapiskau Band. Speck (1931, 590-1) reports that only the name of this band was known by him. Later Speck and Eiseley (1942, 227) reported that a very close connection exists between this band and the St. Marguerite band. They added that there were few reasons for separating them were it not for the practice of using different names for the rather vague boundary which separates them. Fried (1956) has no mention of them.

10. Michikamau Band. Speck and Eiseley (1942-46) report that this group is the most integrated of the bands of the interior, and that they had been hardly influenced by intermarriage with French Canadians. They have a chief and hunt as a single group, only breaking up between October and November to hunt for certain fur animals. Tanner (1947, Vol. 2, 684) counted 18 families or a total of 150 persons when he met them in 1939. Fried (1956) does not report on them.

11. North West River Band. The members of this band are reported by Speck (1931, 592) to be nomadic caribou hunters, but he gives no further indication of their social organization beyond the fact that they numbered 304 persons in 1924. Tanner (1947, vol. 2) reports that this group numbered 35 to 40 families living in separate tents and that each had its own hunting ground. Fried (1956) reports 135 Montagnais speakers.

12. Rupert House Band. Speck (1931, 586) reports that they formed a large band of 262 persons. Fried (1956) reports 535 Cree speakers in the area.

13. Mistassini Band. Speck (1931, 587) reports that they numbered 159 persons in 1924. Lips (1947a, 398) reports that they had increased to 281 by 1929. This band has been strongly influenced by French Canadian culture through the high number of mixed marriages. The elementary families in the southern part of the area are said to have their own hunting ground. Speck (1931) reports that the families in the northern part hunt as a group. Lips (1947a, 399) states that they have elected no chief since 1928. Fried (1956) reports 654 Naskapi speakers in the area.

14. Bersimis Band. This is a very large band under the authority of a chief. Speck (1931, 598) reported that they numbered 565 persons in 1924. Fried (1956) reports that 805 Montagnais speakers are located there.

15. St. Marguerite Band. The whole of this band's territory is reported by Speck and Eiseley (1942, 227) to be divided into ten family hunting grounds. They have no chief, and some of the members have become completely assimilated by French Canadians. Not reported by Fried (1956).

16. Moisie Band. Speck (1931), 592) reports that this band comprised ten families, and had been without a chief since 1915. Both types of tundra and forest social organizations have been reported for this band. They are also said to have taken over a great many traits of French Canadian culture and most of their young men were said to prefer employment in settled occupations rather than hunting. Not reported by Fried (1956).

17. Mingan Band. This band was reported by Speck (1931, 586) to be without a chief, and to number 152 persons. Fried (1956) reports 156 Montagnais speakers living in tents and hunting.

18. Nastashkwan Band. Speck (1931, 587) reports that they were without a chief and hunted in groups composed of affiliated families for part of the year, and then broke up into elementary families. Fried (1956) reports 136 Montagnais speakers hunting and fishing in the area.

19. Musquato Band. No further information is available beyond the report by Speck that it was composed of 20 families in 1924. Fried (1956) does not list it.

20. St. Augustin Band. Speck (1931) reports that it was composed of 15 families or 34 persons hunting in groups. They are reported to have intermarried with Eskimos. Fried (1956) lists 77 Montagnais speakers in the area.

21. Lake St. John Band. Lips (1947a, 398) reports it as having 670 members in 1929. They are reported to have practically all intermarried with French Canadians. While they have a chief he possesses little authority. The whole area is subdivided into family hunting-grounds and each family hunts as a unit. A large number have settled down to sedentary occupations and even to part-time farming. Fried (1956) lists 1113 Montagnais at Pointe Bleu.

22. Chicoutimi Band. Speck (1931, 588) reports them to be under the authority of the Lake St. John chief, and to have been incorporated into that band. Not listed by Fried (1956).

23. Escoumains Band. They are reported to have disintegrated as a separate unit. Speck (1931, 589) reports that they have no political unity and no chief, and that four of the families have been assimilated with the French Canadians. Fried (1956) reports 75 Montagnais in permanent buildings in a reserve.

24. Godbout Band. Speck (1931, 589) reports that this band was disappearing. Not reported by Fried (1956).

25. Shelter Bay Band. Speck and Eiseley (1942, 232) report that three families formed this band in 1925. They are said to be of recent formation as a band. Fried (1956) does not mention them.

26. Tadoussac Band. Speck (1931, 589) reports that only one family remained in 1915, and that they had joined after that another band. Not reported by Fried (1956).

As can be seen from the above summary there are extensive variations, and sometimes conflicting evidence. It is doubtful if the band names used by the various authors correspond to the reality in all instances. The latest survey, that of the Seminar on the Aboriginal population of Quebec (Fried 1956), seems to be the most accurate, but even then, it reports Cree speakers where previous authors have reported the existence of Montagnais-Naskapi groups.

II

The Kinship System

Because of the variations between bands, and the lack of detailed information about some of them, the description which follows must be taken to be limited to the southern bands which have provided most of the available data. This is unfortunate since it is the southern bands which have been longest under the influence of French Canadian culture, while the northern groups, who are said to have remained more traditional, have not been studied as thoroughly.

The traditional kinship system was patrilineal and patrilocal with certain matrilocal variations. However, no larger kinship unit than the extended family has ever been reported. The band is a political unit, not an exogamous clan. It is difficult to know whether this has always been so, or is a recent development. The terms "my people," my "relatives" and my "band" are said to be synonymous, but no example of exogamous rule has been reported for the band. Another problem of the extension of kinship is the presence of cross-cousin marriage. The same term is used for both father-in-law and mother's brother; for mother-in-law and father's sister; for both daughter-in-law and cross-niece; for both siblings-in-law of opposite sex and cross-cousin of opposite sex (Flannery, 1938; Hallowell, 1932; Speck, 1918). The same term is also used for cross-cousin of opposite sex and lover. For parallel-cousins the same term is used as for siblings. Few specific instances of cross-cousin marriages have, however, been reported (Flannery, 1938, 30). The available information stresses that cross-cousin marriage does not extend to second cousins. Furthermore, Flannery (1938, 32) reports that the custom is now dying out. Similarly, polygamy, which was reported to have been in existence as late as 1840 (Lips, 1947a, 419), has disappeared. Lips (1947a, 417) also reports that definite rules about

exogamy or engogamy were not known by his informants. Speck (1930, 421) maintains, however, that certain preference rules are to be found in the Mistassini band. Marriage is said by all informants to be done according to the rites of the Catholic Church, or, in a few instances, according to those of the Protestant church available in the area. Because of the practically complete acceptance of Christian religious marriage, reports stress that it is not possible to know the previous forms of marriage.

Joking relationships have been reported between certain categories of men and women standing in a classificatory position of cross-cousins. Strong (1929, 283) reports that among the Barren Ground band male cross-cousins are supposed to exchange obscene language, accompanied by horse-play aimed at exposing each other's genitals. They have, moreover, the privilege of sexual relations with each other's sisters and cousins. A formal request is reported to be necessary for this privilege which implies the exchange of sisters on the permission of the father of these girls. Among women this custom is said to be limited to joking, although they also go through the same form of verbally asking for each other's brothers. Such exchanges that do take place are said to be of sisters, not of wives. In other bands this practice is reported by Strong to be unknown (1929, 283). Hallowell (1932, 175) has suggested that it is probable that cousin marriage was practiced more widely than now. The kinship terminology does suggest that preferential marriage of cross-cousins was widespread, but with its decline, new terminological terms have now appeared, copied from the French Canadians.

Lips (1947a, 418) reports that nowadays, for the Lake St. John and Mistassini bands, the initiative for bringing about a marriage rests with the young people concerned. If a girl wants to marry a certain young man, she informs her mother, who will then pay a visit to the mother of the young man. Normally, however, it is the young man who takes the first step by offering a gift to the girl. If the gift is accepted it is a sign that the girl will marry him, if not, she returns it. The usual age of marriage is between 16 and 20 for a girl, and somewhat older for a boy. The parents have no right to force their children into a marriage, and sometimes an elopment is said to force the parents to accept a marriage they disapprove of.

Lips also reports that it is not customary in these two bands to give a dowry to the future bride, and the bride has no obligation to prepare anything for a

future married life. Even if her parents are comparatively wealthy, the only property she is reported to bring with her are a few personal clothes. It is the bridegroom's task to take care of the new household's needs, and he has to provide everything, with the help of his father. This usually consists of a tent, a gun and ammunition, and enough food to last through the first winter season, a canoe, traps, clothes and all the necessary household utensils. Shortly before the marriage the bridegroom puts up his own tent near that of his father, and makes ready for the spouse.

The wedding itself is attended by the whole of the band if it takes place during the summer camping period, or by those living not too far from the hunting-grounds of the families concerned. If a missionary church exists at the camping-ground and a priest is present, the couple will have a Christian religious wedding. Otherwise, the manager of the nearest Hudson Bay Company post may officiate. In a few instances it is reported that the chief of the band, where he exists, will declare the couple married. Later these two types of civil marriage will be sanctioned by the missionary priest when he visits the summer camping-ground of the band.

Every married couple, and elementary family, is reported to live within its own tent, although it is also reported that it happens that a tent will be shared. As a rule a son will remain with his father after the marriage, and his wife joins him. If there is a family hunting-ground the son will continue to hunt either with his father, or on a particular area of the family hunting-ground assigned to him by his father. Sometimes his father-in-law will assist him with his hunting, and may even ask him to come and hunt on his own hunting-ground. This is not, however, said to be a rule, but depends on personal circumstances. If a man marries a widow who has inherited a family hunting-ground, he will leave his father and hunt on his wife's hunting-ground.

Lips also reports (1947a, 422) that within each elementary family the father is the head of the household, and his authority is recognized by all its members. He is served first at meals, and he receives the best pieces of meat. He ranks first above his wife in all social relations with other members of the band. Among the children authority is by seniority. The oldest son or the oldest daughter assigns tasks to the other children. However, another writer (Burgesse, 1944, 9) has pointed out that among the Lake St. John band there is no indication that

the subordination of women is anything more than theoretical. In practice women are men's equal in every way, especially in those activities which have developed under the influence of contact with French Canadians.

Lips (1947a, 423) reports that a married woman may own property of her own. During the absence of her husband she may lend his property to others, but she may not sell it. She inherits her husband's possessions if their oldest son is not yet of age. Should she die the oldest son inherits, provided that he is able to take care of the rest of the family, since it is his duty to take care of his younger siblings. If the eldest son is too young, the eldest daughter administers the family's property until he comes of age.

Divorce can be obtained by either side, by a simple separation. Lips (1947a, 434) says, however, that divorce or separation is very rare, as relations will always try to keep the couple together. Reasons for separation are adultery, infidelity, and disobedience. If a husband leaves his wife he ceases to support her and she is forced to return to her parents, or to go to friends who are willing to help her. In case of divorce, children may go with either parent. If a husband neglects his wife, and does not provide her with the necessities of life, or ill-treats her, her relatives may take it upon themselves to intervene. A wife may also ask the chief of the band to intervene. This seldom happens since it is held that the affairs of an elementary family are no concern of the chief. A chief may, however, punish a man for ill-treating his wife.

After the birth of a child the afterbirth is buried in the hunting-ground, and the relatives and friends are invited to a celebration. If it can possibly be managed the guestsare feasted on beaver meat, the most highly prized meat. Good luck charms are also suspended from the cradle.

The mother nurses the child for about a year. The child itself will be named according to certain events connected with the child's first days of life. It is reported by Burgesse (1934, 44) that names are no indication of a family surname, or that these names were given at birth. Naming not only changes at every generation, but takes no cognizance of consanguinity in the second degree. Nicknames may also be adopted and used later on as family names. Burgesse (1943, 48) also reports that the surname is considered merely a 'trading' name, and nothing more.

Already at a very tender age the young boys are instructed by their fathers, or the old men of the band, to become good hunters. They learn the various hunting practices, and in addition they are taught the various customs of the band. For the girls the emphasis is upon feminine skills. They are taught the art of snow-shoe lacing, the manufacture of mocassins, birch-bark baskets and rabbit-skin blankets, and the techniques of needle-work and other handicrafts reserved for the feminine sex.

Adulthood is determined by the first menstruation for the girls, and the killing of the first bear for the boys. In those areas where bear-killings are rare, matrimonial state and adulthood are equivalent. Full adulthood is only recognized on the birth of the first child. Lips (1957, 413) reports that while there is no ceremonial celebration of the killing of a first bear, the boy is thenceforth treated as a man. Outward evidence of this is the fact that he may now open a separate account with the Hudson Bay Company, and hands in his furs separately from those of his father. Under the Indian Act, the completion of the twenty-first year is the obtaining of legal capacity.

Previously, at death, men and women were placed upon a platform high up in the trees, and their graves adorned with the heads and bones of the animals they either hunted or were skillful at preparing as food or as skin to sell. Nowadays, the body is buried following the rites of the Christian Church, and the practice has developed of wearing black as a sign of mourning. At the death of a father all his possessions passed to his eldest son. If there is no son, the widow inherits. If she dies her married daughters will inherit. If there are no children, her brothers will inherit, or her nearest male relatives. If she has no brother the property will return to her husband's family. If the family dies out, the hunting-ground, as the major item of property, will revert to the band, and the chief will distribute it among the other members of the band. Very distant relatives of the extinct family have no claims upon the hunting-ground.

Political Organization

As already mentioned, there is no overall political organization of either the Montagnais or the Naskapi as separate units. The band is the largest social group within which a form of political organization can be said to exist. Even then the political organization of each band is at its best extremely loose. In some bands, while a consciousness of the existence of the band as a social unit can be said

to exist, there is no political organization as such. There is no chief or no council of heads of families. While a large number of bands do have chiefs, only a small number have a council of elders.

Another characteristic of the political organization of the Montagnais-Naskapi is that it is based on a territorial location, not on kinship grouping. Each territory of a band is defined well enough for its boundaries to be known by its members and the members of neighboring bands. While it is considered permissable to cross the territory of a foreign band without being attacked, settling within the territory, or using the camping grounds of the band implies coming under the form of political organization which exists within that territory. However, even this must not be pressed too far. Montagnais-Naskapi bands have always maintained the friendliest of relationships with each other, and have never fought each other in any wars. Considerable infringements of territorial boundaries are thus allowed without any action being taken. Furthermore, these infringements are considered an individual act, not that of the band of which the individual is a member. Only continued residence, or continuous infringement of a band's territory will be judged as warranting the application of the rules of a band on a member of another band. Similarly, infringement of a family's hunting-ground by members of the same band must be extensive and repeated before the members of that family will take retaliatory action, which, even then, will not lead to any physical attack on the culprit.

The apex of the political organization in each band, in the instances where this organization exists, is the chief. Since the passing of the Indian Act of 1927, chiefs are elected for a term of three years in any band consisting of at least 30 members. Similarly, the councillors of a band are elected and may be in the proportion of two for every two hundred Indians.

Not all the bands have followed these instructions. Lips (1947a, 399) reports that the Mistassini band has elected no new chief since 1928, despite repeated demands by the Indian Agent that they do so. The election of a chief usually takes place while the band is assembled at its summer camping-ground. All male members of the band who are at least twenty-one years of age can take part in the election. Traditionally, however, chieftainship is hereditary, passing from father to eldest son, or if the father was without a son, to his next brother. Only when the incumbent was without a legal heir was a chief then

selected by election. Even now there is a tendency towards electing chiefs who have the traditional claim for such a position. However, if public opinion does not credit the son, or the brother, of the deceased chief with the necessary qualities, the norm of hereditary succession will be broken, and a new chief appointed who has no kinship ties to the previous chief.

Lips (1947a, 401) stresses that his various informants insisted that a person had to be of high ethical standard and conscious of his responsibilities towards his fellow-tribesmen, before he would be elected. Above all else he would be expected to be a good hunter. If a chief failed in this respect (perhaps on account of his advancing years), he would no longer be looked upon as a chief, and would consequently lose his influence over the band.

The importance of the chief within the band varied according to the social structure of the band. In those bands which hunt as a single hunting-band, the chief is reported to possess great influence in the decision of where and how to hunt, and in the settlement of disputes between members of the bands. In those bands where family hunting units are found, the chief only becomes important during the periods when the band comes together. As a mark of his rank the chief wears a certain headdress trimmed with feathers, and a specially decorated coat, which is now often the gift of the Hudson Bay Company when a new chief is elected. He wears these insignia of his office only on public occasions, and his donning of the feather crown is usually the signal for the band members to assemble for some sort of official action.

The main duties of a chief seem to consist in maintaining the peace between the members of the band, and between them and members of other bands. He also represents the interests of the band members when dealing with the Hudson Bay Company, or with the Indian Agent. As the peace-maker in the incidents between members of the band, the chief tries to prevent crimes being committed, and he acts as a conciliator in disputes. However, he cannot act in the affairs of each family without being requested to do so by a member of that family. Tanner (1947, vol. 2, 688) reports that his main duties consist in settling disputes over hunting rights between band members. In those bands which act as a single hunting group, it is he who makes the final decision of where the band shall hunt.

This type of political leadership has been said by Lips (1947a, 403-404) to result from the individualistic-

critical attitude of men who for long periods of the year are left to their own devices in their hunts or their travelling. Lips stresses that his informant told him that they were only willing to acknowledge the chief as their representative as long as he serves, or is able to serve, them. Although they do not actually remove a chief from his position to elect a successor, the office holder loses his influence. It has also been said by Lips (1947a, 404) that it is public opinion which not only controls the powers of the chief, but also all communal acts in those bands that are without chiefs. Should public opinion cease to support a chief his orders are no longer carried out, and he finds himself boycotted. Similarly, any communal act against an individual takes place if that action is supported by the majority of the members of the band. It is this possibility of being able to influence public opinion which is the source of political power. For instance, if a chief, or any other person of political status, has the additional advantage of being a shaman, his influence is considerably increased. It may also happen that an outstanding shaman may also become a political leader. Lips (1947a, 486) reports such an instance for the chief of the Lake St. John band, who was the son of an influential shaman. He stressed that this chief was himself a shaman before he was elected as a chief.

Economic Organization

The economic organization of the Montagnais-Naskapi was that of subarctic hunters. Agriculture was unknown. They hunted the moose or the caribou herds, or trapped smaller animals for their furs, like the beaver, otter, mink, or marten, whose skins were sold to the Hudson Bay Company or other merchants. This hunting was normally done within the territorial boundary of the band, and most of these territories were large enough to more than accommodate the members of each band when the game was plentiful. Each territory may have been further subdivided into family hunting-grounds in those areas where the caribou or moose herds did not roam. However, in all instances, the family was the hunting unit. Families may join together either in the common hunt of the whole band, or as groups of families who are joined by definite kinship ties. Families have thus become linked with specific areas, even when the whole band may hunt as a single group. This is due to the fact that in times of shortage, especially when the herds of caribou are small, the band will have to separate into smaller groups so as to hunt the smaller animals scattered in the whole of the territory of the band. Growing out of this peculiar relationship between

hunter and certain areas, and certain totemistic conceptions held by the Montagnais-Naskapi about their relationships with the animals they hunt, a complex system of controlling factors was created. Lips (1947b, 3) reports that his informants told him that they believed that the animals they hunted were the real owners of the hunting-grounds, and that the hunters were the servants of the spirit chiefs of the game animals. They thus had to follow certain rituals before, during, and after the hunts in order to safeguard their own livelihood. A person who hunted over some other person's territory, and thus did not observe the special relationship which had been created in that area between the spirit of the animals and the 'rightful' hunter in the area, would suffer some sort of punishment.

Beside hunting and trapping, fishing and the gathering of plants and wild berries also played some role in the economy of the Montagnais-Naskapi. However, traditionally hunting remained their chief occupation, and meat the main source of diet. With the advent of the Hudson Bay Company their hunting economy had been further specialized. Their trading of furs in exchange for other goods had resulted in their total dependence upon European goods for their necessities. This specialization could have been expected to have led to an increase in their standard of living. However, the use of firearms, of steel traps and other more efficient devices to catch animals, has contributed to a decrease in the game. Lips (1947b, 9) reports that it still happens that entire families are wiped out by starvation, and reports of Indian hunters dying of hunger run through the annual reports of the Hudson Bay Company posts like a black thread. The Hudson Bay Company has, however, helped the Indians by opening new sources of revenue to them. With the exception of one interior post which has a railway connection, and those posts of the Company situated on the coast, all posts situated in the interior are supplied with the help of Indian labour who carry the goods needed for the fur trade.

Since the coming of the Hudson Bay Company the Indians have gradually ceased to make most of their household utensils. Even their birch-bark canoe, or their skin or birch-bark tents, have been replaced by wooden canoes or canvas tents. These are, in most instances, sold already made, and only a few families buy either the wood or the canvas to make a canoe or a tent. Some families have also taken to the building of wooden houses during their summer camping period, or as permanent homes for those who have settled in one place. Similarly, the traditional clothing

which consisted of rabbit-skin coats and caribou-hide leggings, both for males and females, and the skin mocassins, have been replaced by European clothes. The traditional Indian clothes are reported by Lips (1947b, 39) to be now rarely worn.

However, this specialization of the Montagnais-Naskapi as hunters obtaining their necessities from the exchange of furs for European goods, has not changed the fact that the individual family has remained the main production unit. No larger production unit has been created, and guilds, associations, and so on, are still nonexistent. However, it is reported that a number of individuals have become specialists in certain activities beside that of being hunters. One is sought after because he is an expert canoe builder, another because his birch-bark articles are better and stronger, one woman because her needle and beadwork are preferred. The Mistassini band is well-known among other Montagnais-Naskapi for their outstanding leather work, which is exchanged with other bands. The surplus of these home made articles is also sold to the Hudson Bay Company who sell them to tourists as Indian arts and crafts.

There are thus only two main divisions of labour, that between the sexes, and that between old and young. Generally each family performs the same type of economic activity, and the family of the chief is not set apart from the others. It is the task of the father and of his sons to keep the family supplied with meat. When the hunter has killed an animal it is his responsibility to bring it home. This is done either bringing the animal home on his shoulders, or, if too big, by cutting up the animal into pieces, some of which are then buried in the snow and brought home at a later date. Fishing, on the contrary, is carried out mainly by women and children. Meat and fish are preserved for later consumption by drying and smoking. Since the bringing of flour into the area by the Hudson Bay Company, the Montagnais-Naskapi make a kind of bread. Previous to this it is reported that they had no bread, since no bulb, tuber, or suitable root exists in the whole region.

Between members of a band, and between bands, barter and exchange take place, but these are usually for minor goods and are only subsidiary to the main economic activity. The making of gifts is also reported. Lips (1947a, 439) reports that a gift does not have to be reciprocated with a specific counter gift, and does not create a claim. With the act of donation the gift becomes the property of the donee. Should the donor, however,

be in need later on, Lips reports that it is usual for half of its value to be returned. The gift itself is not returned. Some form of working for another hunter has been reported by Burgesse (1945, 18). A prosperous hunter among the Lake St. John band may take under his protection one or more, less skillful, or less fortunate, fellow hunters. These he outfits at his expense for the hunting season. An Indian who is thus 'protected' becomes subject to his benefactor. All the furs caught belong to his benefactor, who then pays him fixed sums of money as wages. The present units of money among them are now dollars and cents. Both Lips (1947b) and Burgesse (1945) report that formerly accounting was done in units of furs.

Social Control and Law Enforcement

The loosely knit political organization of the Montagnais-Naskapi, and their economic organization based on the family unit as the production unit in an exchange economy of furs against European goods, have not favoured the development of a strong system of social control. Furthermore, in those areas in which the Montagnais-Naskapi have come under the influence of Canadian culture, the importance of the traditional system of social control has been further weakened. The influence of the missionaries, and the presence of the Hudson Bay Company post managers, have created new foci of authority within each band. Finally the Indian Agents, as the representatives of the Canadian Government, possess extensive powers of an executive, legislative and judicial capacity in each of the areas to which they are appointed. Individual Indians often prefer to summon the person with whom they are in a dispute in front of the Indian Agent, rather than use the traditional method of enforcing the customary law of the band through an appeal to the chief or to the public opinion of the band. Where there is no Indian Agent, the managers of the various Hudson Bay Company posts become often arbritrators in disputes involving the Montagnais-Naskapi who trade at the post. Individual managers may acquire more influence over an area than any traditional chief. Finally, the missionaries, in their role as judges of ethical behaviour and of religious leaders often also acquire influence equivalent to that of law enforcement.

Lips (1947a, 475) reports a reluctance on the part of the members of the Lake St. John band to go to their chief for help. He also states that they more frequently prefer to deal with the person with whom they are in conflict on a self-help basis, or turn to the shaman for help. Burgesse (1945, 18), however, reports that members of this band

summoned each other before the Indian Agent for theft. There are, however, instances of disputes which are still dealt with by the chief, or by the chief and council. These are mostly crimes involving the majority of the band members. In such instances a court is called together. It is composed of the chief and the oldest and most respected heads of families. It assembles in exceptional cases and only during the summer camping period. It usually sits in the chief's tent, and the chief heads the court wearing his feather crown. The chief opens the court by giving a detailed summary of the case. It is then followed by the questioning of witnesses. No oath is used, although under the influence of Christianity some form of swearing has appeared in some bands. If guilt is acknowledged, and in most instances it is reported that the accused does so, the chief pronounces the sentence on a simple majority vote of the elders. The execution of the sentence is carried out by the elders themselves.

The legal concepts upon which the findings are based are simple in their formulation. Lips (1947a, 427) reports that such abstract terms as 'property', 'possession,' 'ownership', and so on, are not known in Montagnais-Naskapi. To circumscribe these nouns, the verb ' to own ' is used in various forms. The strict legal sense of ownership is thus reported to be very limited. Ownership of a hunting-ground, for instance, is manifested by the privilege to hunt or trap in that tract of land. Such hunting-grounds cannot be sold outright, nor may any hunting privileges thereon be sold. It would seem, however, that whenever such privileges to hunt are given to persons not members of the 'owning' family, they then cannot be revoked. Burgesse (1945, 10) mentions that the receiver of the privilege may then claim the area as his own hunting-ground, and hand it on to his heir. The original 'owner' cannot claim its return. Neither can the 'owner' of a hunting ground cut down the trees in order to sell the timber. He can use the wood of cut trees for his own use, but not deal in it commercially.

Hunting rights over land can be acquired either through being born in a family which already possesses a hunting-ground, or through the recognition by the members of the band that someone has acquired special hunting rights over a given area. Exclusiveness of hunting rights tends to lapse on continued non-use, but some form of rights is said to be existent even after long periods of non-usage. After his acceptance into the membership of a band a stranger may acquire hunting-rights over some

non-occupied area within the territory of the band by frecuently hunting in it, or a family may be asked to share its own hunting-ground with the stranger. The lack of precise legal concepts is directly reflected by the lack of interest in enforcing rights. Resentment against trespass is reported by Speck (1927, 389) not to be especially strong. The attitude of the 'owner' is generally mild in such matters. However, he reports that before hunting on the territory belonging to another, permission to do so is generally asked. Should this courtesy be overlooked, no punishment is inflicted. The attitude of a trespasser when taken in the act by an 'owner' is said by Speck to be expressed by the declaration, "I suppose I have no right to be here." With this confession and its implied apology, the trespasser is reported to be allowed to take away the animal he has caught, and to be allowed to hunt for food in a given part of the hunting-ground designated by the 'owner'. If quarrels should arise over the actual 'ownership' of land rights, public opinion is often the deciding factor in the attribution of land, rather than priority of right. It is reported by Lips (1947a, 431), however, that legal concepts derived from European law are beginning to appear among the Montagnais-Naskapi. Strict claims of ownership are now advanced, based upon non-traditional practices. These European-derived concepts are, however, still in the minority. The traditional attitude towards law enforcement is reported by Speck (1947a, 432) to be the prevailing one.

This traditional method is itself a measure of the reluctance of the Montagnais-Naskapi to take steps against each other. For instance, against the repeated trespassing of another Montagnais-Naskapi, redress is obtained by either directly reminding him of the fact that he is trespassing, or by finally asking the chief to intervene. This is done either by the chief contacting directly the offender and reminding him that he is committing a wrong, or by the chief referring the matter to the chief of the band of which the offender is a member. If the public opinion of this latter band is against the offender, it will act against him by expelling him from their hunting-ground. The expelled person rarely finds shelter with other bands, and is finally driven to leave the area altogether.

Similarly, redress against a murder or manslaughter or even an accidental killing, is first of all thought to be in the hands of the aggrieved family, especially of his sons, brothers, or grandsons. Revenge for a killing is thought to be essential, but the murderer himself, not one of his kin, must be the victim of the

retaliation. Sometimes if kinsmen are unable to avenge themselves, the other members of the band will take some action against the murderer. Lips (1947a, 470) reports that in one instance, fellow band-members shot a murderer in the leg, but when the murderer rejoined the band the following summer at the camping-ground, they left him in peace.

Theft, robbery, or arson, were traditionally said not to be punished by any physical action. The thief or robber was simply obliged to return the goods. In the case of arson, restitution was to be made by the person who had caused the damage. Settlement was between the parties concerned. If the offender persisted in his actions, or compensation was not given, the offended person tried to mobilize the public opinion of the band in his favour. The band may then expell the offender. Similarly, rape was not held to be an offense to be punished by any action on the part of the chief, and adultery was not held to be subject to a claim of damages. A husband may leave his wife on the birth of an illegitimate child, but this is considered a personal matter, not the concern of the other members of the band. Incest will give rise to disapproval which results in the expulsion of the offenders from the band, but no other direct action will be taken against offenders.

The following kinds of punishment are reported by Lips (1947a, 471) to have been carried out in the old days: execution by shooting or drowning for murders. Fines and mutilations are said by him not to have been practices. Even today a chief may order an offender to be tied to a tree, but this is considered more in the light of a moral sanction than as a punishment as such.

The spirit of respect for life and property which various authors have reported for the Montagnais-Naskapi is, however, changing. Burgesse (1945, 10) remarks that a spirit of lawlessness is beginning to prevail in some sections, especially among the half-breeds, who do not pretend to have any respect for either Montagnais-Naskapi or Canadian laws.

Religious Organization

Speck in his book on Naskapi religion (1935) describes the various beliefs and rituals of the traditional religion from evidence based partly on historical records, and partly on information he collected himself up to his 1932 field-trip. His informants were mostly from the

Lake St. John and Michikamau bands. Burgesse who was with the Lake St. John band in 1940 reports that in matters of religious education the Christian religion is formally taught by parents to their children. He also reports that he saw such articles of the traditional religious ceremonials as rattles, drums, divination games, etc., used by the younger children as toys (1944, 15). It seems that the influence of Christianity in matters of religious beliefs has been so widespread as to question how far are traditional beliefs held or ceremonials practiced. Moreover, it has been reported that it is difficult to present these traditional beliefs as many of the Montagnais-Naskapi do not admit to any knowledge of them.

What has been reported about the traditional beliefs presents them as without any formal religious organization, and without the customary medicine societies common to North American Indians. They seem to have been without a priesthood and without any clearly formulated creed. They possessed, however, semi-religious dances and games which were acted during the summer camping period when all the members of the band were gathered together.

The traditional religious beliefs are said by Speck to have been centered around three categories of religious concepts. First, that of 'Manitou', the unknown spirit-force which can also be called the supreme power of the universe, or the natural law by which all things are ruled. Second, the concept of 'Mantoci', or the practices or rites which permit a man to come into contact with the world of the spirit. These practices resolve themselves into shamanism, the use of 'spirit control', or divination. Lastly, there is 'Minototah', the concept of proper behaviour, which guide social usages and customs in general.

These three different concepts are not clearly separated. The concept of 'Manitou', for instance, has become identified with a High God Spirit, and also with the Christian God. There has also been some discussion as to whether any concept of a High God existed before the coming of the missionaries. Speck (1935, 36) thinks there is a missionary origin for it, and for the concept of an evil spirit now found among the Montagnais-Naskapi.

It is when the second category of traditional beliefs are examined, that of 'Mantoci', that the practices and beliefs which still influence the behaviour of the Montagnais-Naskapi are to be located. This because the concept of 'Mantoci' is still closely allied to the hunting life of many of them. The concept of 'Mantoci' is closely

allied to that of 'Mistapeo', or the 'great soul' of a man. This soul is the force that provides guidance through life, and is also the means of overcoming the spirit of others and especially of game animals which are to be hunted. This 'great man' or soul, reveals itself in dreams. Those who respond to their dreams by giving them serious attention, by thinking about them, by trying to interpret their meanings, can obtain closer contact with their soul. The next obligation is for the individual to follow the instructions given to him in these dreams, or to carve them in artistic representations. The inner-life of the Montagnais-Naskapi is thus dominated by the process of self-study of dream cultivation, as it has been called by Speck (1935, 44). The cessation of dream revelation as to where to hunt for game, how to proceed in the hunt, would result in the loss of a farseeing guide, equivalent to the individual's providence, and would mean failure in hunting and being doomed to starvation. This also acts as a reinforcement to the observance of the customs of the band, since it is believed that as the 'great man' becomes more and more willing, and more active in the interest of his material body, he requires that the individual tells no lies or practices no deception upon others. In particular he is pleased with generosity, kindness, and help to others.

This belief in the 'great man' is also reported to have given rise to widespread reports of cannibalism among the Montagnais-Naskapi. Speck (1935, 45) states that there is no more recent evidence for this than reports of events during the famine years between 1899 and 1913. The first instance of cannibalism on report is given by Champlain when on the 25 May 1615 he watched six Iroquois captives being tortured, and parts of their bodies being eaten. Speck links these reports of cannibalism with the fact that the Montagnais-Naskapi believe that a spirit can acquire human form, and in that form kill and eat other human beings. Death through starvation, to which whole families occasionally succumb in their winter haunts, is often still attributed to this spirit.

One of the most important influence of the concept of 'Mantoci' on the life of the Montagnais-Naskapi, is related to their belief that animals have a spiritual existence similar to that of men. This belief has given rise to a number of magico-religious practices which are linked with every phase of hunting. For instance, the killing of animals entails a responsibility on the part of the hunter. Since the spirit of the animals may revenge itself, and later, harm the hunter, these spirits must be propitiated. Failure to do so may mean the disappearance of game, or

constant ill-luck for the hunter, resulting in famine, starvation, illness, sickness and death. All these are attributed to either the hunter's ignorance of the proper magico-rituals needed to appease these animal spirits, or the willful disregard of them. The former is regarded as simple ignorance which can be corrected through the help of the shaman, the latter isregarded as a sin. This belief has thus given rise to a complex relationship which must be observed between the hunter's 'great soul' and the spirit of the animals he hunts. The relationship is adjusted through the medium of dreams, which are accepted as the dictates of the hunter's 'great man', and which makes the hunter feel that he is fulfilling the destiny of the animals. The hunter, therefore, feels that he is in constant debt to the animals for the sacrifice of their lives on his behalf. This sacrifice must therefore be acknowledged by observing the proper behaviour both towards the spirit of the animals through the observance of the dictates of the 'great soul', and towards the body of the animal itself.

The caribou and the bear, for instance, are the animals highest in this scale of relationship between animals and men. The bear is subject to important and complicated ceremonials which are directed at appeasing their spirits. Both the disposal of bear and caribou remains after the kill is the subject of a complicated procedure. Beside various instructions as to the disposal of the flesh, the skin, the fur, and the bones, special dances are held in their honor. With the beaver, for instance, the bones must be thrown back into the river so that the spirit of the beaver can be reincarnated into another beaver. There are also numerous food taboos, which may be distinguished as food taboos for the whole band, sex groups, and individuals, and even food taboos for the dogs of the band. The members of the St. John band, for instance, are reported not to eat any kind of salt water fish (Lips, 1947a, 421). They touch deer meat only in an emergency, and their feeling against the meat of domesticated animals is very strong. An example of food taboos for sex groups is the prohibition to women to eat certain parts of animals, especially the meat next to the leg-bone. The reason for this taboo is the belief that after the eating of this meat the women will not be able to walk normally. Children also observe certain food taboos. Only the hunter himself, and nobody else, is entitled to eat the heart of a bear.

The knowledge of the proper magico-ritual practices to be observed is often acquired through the dictates of the 'great man'. Otherwise the individual will use the

services of a shaman, or will try some divination to discover what actions he should take. The shaman is the person who through his own mastery over his 'great soul' has reached a high degree of communication with the spirit world. This is usually done by the shaman obtaining communication with the spirit by going through the shaking-tent ritual. The shaking-tent is a narrow tent of small diameter. When within it the shaman goes through a series of physical and vocal rituals until he feels he has obtained communication. The procedure of submitting a request to the shaman is regulated by certain traditional procedures. The shaking-tent seems to be a key point in the shamnistic practices, and is often linked with scalpumancy, or bone reading, by which the hunting of animals is controlled.

Finally, it has been observed by Burgesse that among the Lake St. John band, traditional religious beliefs have absolutely no effect on the moral behaviour. He stresses that what remains of the pre-Christian code is strictly reserved to the field of hunting (1944, 16). However, he also points out that there is a feeling among them that in order to obtain success as a hunter, a high moral code should also be followed. It seems that in this field at least the Christian and the traditional religions have merged. Rousseau (1947, 1952, 1953) has recently stated that a religious dichotomy exists as hunters leave their summer camping grounds where they practice christianity, and return to their hunting-grounds where the traditional practices are most important.

Conclusion

This study, notwithstanding the lack of data, has shown the segmented character of the traditional Montagnais-Naskapi social organization. Furthermore, it has also shown that it had no strong cultural foci by which they could have identified themselves as a distinct culture. They lacked cultural heroes, or the tradition of great leaders. Their lives as hunters, either in small bands or as scattered family groups, in the vast spaces of Northern Quebec, prevented the existence of any cohesiveness arising out of propinquity. The distances were too great for any formal recognition of bands as far apart as those on the Hudson Bay or on the Atlantic shores.

The initial contacts with European caused little disturbances. There were no wars and only a partial friction over hunting territories. On the contrary their traditional hunting economy was exceptionally suited to the needs of

the fur-trade. The Montagnais-Naskapi became the field-operators of the fur-traders and later of the Hudson Bay Company. As such they developed an economic dependency which could only be ended by the disappearance of the game, a drop in the demand for furs, the development of new occupations, or migration to other areas. While some of these factors did become operative during the 300 years of European contact, these operated as very gradual influences rather than as critical crisis. The very gradualness of the changes reinforced the thoroughness of the transformation. The strongest cultural break was the mass conversion to Christianity and the high number of inter-marriages with French Canadians. Contrary to the situation of other North American Indian groups, the Montagnais-Naskapi did not experience any deep crisis situation due to war, or large scale discrimination. On the contrary, many of them were treated as equal, or near-equals by the French Canadians. They thus did not go through any period by which the European culture could be identified as an enemy culture. They had no messianic cult or revivalist movement, or any other forms of protest organization against the dominant culture. Only part of their traditional way of life was retained in a syncretism which was continued as long as hunting was their dominant activity. As hunting decreased in importance in certain bands, even the influence of these traditions disappeared. It seems that in many instances their very identity as Indian groups has been retained because of the formation of reserve areas, or because hunting and fishing remained the dominant mode of economic subsistence.

The present situation in Northern Quebec is one in which the slow gradual assimilation of the Montagnais-Naskapi by the gradual disappearance of their activity as hunters is now being challenged. The growth of important mining and industrial centres, with its new type of cultural emphasis, is creating problems previously unknown. It may accelerate assimilation, or it may create a re-identification of themselves as Indians. What is now needed is research, not of the traditional culture and social organization, but of the impact of the new developments in Northern Quebec on people who while they can be treated like other Canadians, may feel it is better for them to remain Indians.

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