

ANTHROPOLOGICA

N.S. Vol. XVII, No. 1, 1975



THE CANADIAN RESEARCH
CENTRE
FOR ANTHROPOLOGY
SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY

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DE RECHERCHES
EN ANTHROPOLOGIE
UNIVERSITÉ SAINT-PAUL

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ISSN 0003-5459

ANTHROPOLOGICA is the official publication of the Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada.

Anthropologica is published twice a year and features articles in the fields of cultural and social anthropology and related disciplines.

La revue ANTHROPOLOGICA est l'organe officiel du Centre canadien de recherches en anthropologie, Université Saint-Paul, Ottawa, Canada.

Anthropologica paraît deux fois par année et publie des articles relevant de l'anthropologie culturelle et sociale et des disciplines connexes.

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THE CANADIAN RESEARCH CENTRE FOR ANTHROPOLOGY
LE CENTRE CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES EN ANTHROPOLOGIE

223 Main, Ottawa, Ont., Canada K1S 1C4

Tel.: (613) 235-1421

Subscription rate: \$14.00 per annum.

Le prix de l'abonnement est de \$14.00 par année.

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THE CANADIAN RESEARCH CENTRE FOR ANTHROPOLOGY
LE CENTRE CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES EN ANTHROPOLOGIE

Dear Reader:

Anthropologica is in its twenty first year of publication. Introducing the first issue Marcel Rioux, its first director, wrote in 1955: "Anthropologica was conceived as an outlet for studies in cultural anthropology and linguistics which otherwise might not be published, due to the lack of specialized publications in Canada". The idea was well received and the new journal met with great enthusiasm both in Canada and abroad. The success of the first series as well as the felt need for a journal of general anthropology in Canada led to the publication of the new series in 1959. Anthropologica has since become an international journal of anthropology reflecting the developments, the crises, and the re-orientations of the sciences of man here and abroad in the past quarter of a century. May we take the opportunity of the first issue of 1975 to thank both our contributors and readers who in the past have set the tone for the journal and upheld its high standard of scholarship, and invite them to keep up this high standard in the years ahead. We at Anthropologica remain committed to the same goal.

THE DIRECTOR

Cher lecteur,

Anthropologica entre dans sa vingt et unième année de publication. Elle fut fondée en 1955 pour servir de débouché aux ethnographes canadiens dont certains travaux, faute de publications spécialisées, risquaient de ne pas être publiés. La revue fut accueillie avec enthousiasme au Canada et à l'étranger; bientôt il fallut songer à modifier la formule originale pour satisfaire à la demande. Aussi en 1959 la nouvelle série fut-elle lancée. Marcel Rioux, son premier directeur, écrivait à cette occasion: "...le besoin se fait de plus en plus sentir d'une revue qui publie des études d'anthropologie générale, d'une revue qui puisse être, au Canada, une espèce de carrefour des sciences de l'homme". Anthropologica est devenue par la suite une revue internationale d'anthropologie, carrefour des sciences de l'homme et témoin de leur développement pendant un quart de siècle. Nous profitons de la première livraison de 1975 pour exprimer nos remerciements à nos nombreux collaborateurs et lecteurs qui, dans le passé, ont su faire d'Anthropologica une revue de qualité, et nous les invitons à maintenir dans le futur ce même standard d'excellence.

LE DIRECTEUR

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Sharing: The Integration of Intimate Economies

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RÉSUMÉ

Le partage est défini comme une forme de distribution économique sans calcul de ce qui est obtenu en retour; à l'intérieur d'un groupe social; et selon la structure des rôles du groupe par sexe, âge et capacité. C'est une forme de distribution prédominante au niveau de la bande et dans les ménages et autres "économies intimes" dans toutes les sociétés. Le partage est décrit comme (1) un écoulement "asymétrique", (2) ordinairement entre des gens essentiellement différents, (3) qui ont des relations internes communes, et (4) qui est fondé sur des liens émotionnels aussi bien que rationnels.

INTRODUCTION

The original Greek meaning of economy (*oikonomia*) was "household management." This concept of a dynamic material and labor system operated by the occupants of a house was usefully applied to larger scale phenomena, such as business enterprises, cities, and states. However, the economy of the household itself and the economic implications of sex and age roles are still insufficiently understood. This is an examination of the economic behavior that is most characteristic of households and other *intimate economies*, such as a group of hunters or a small commune. It is called *sharing* here and is seen as the most universal form of human economic behavior, distinct from and more fundamental than *reciprocity*.

The term "sharing" has long been used as a general term for common use or distribution. The present purpose is to sharpen the term for the analysis of the intimate economy and to place it in the context of theory in economic anthropology. Sharing is seen here as an integrative or coordinating process that makes the parts of the intimate economic system congruous and effective in concert. It is the allocation of economic goods and services without calculating returns, within an intimate social group, and patterned by the general role structure of that group. It is an economic behavior with a heavily weighted social dimension.

"Intimate" here means a social system which is small in scale and personal in quality, such that the members have extensive knowledge of each other, inter-personal sentiments have developed, and changing the identity of the persons would change their relationships. There is usually face-to-face interaction of the same people over an extended period of time. In an intimate economy the particular patterns of personal inter-dependency significantly influence the patterns of economic production and distribution.

Many social scientists have recognized the need for descriptions and analyses of intimate economies, but have found it very difficult because they are so "embedded" in other behavior. We have tended to concentrate instead on institutions that are more completely economic in character. This bias for obviously economic institutions has led us away from intimate economies and away from the simple hunting and gathering societies, where households and other intimate economies are the dominant economic institutions. Thus the foci of economic anthropology have been such spectacular phenomena as the trade rings of Papua, the Northwest Coast Indian potlatch, and peasant marketing. These orientations have distorted our theoretical assumptions toward thinking that reciprocity and redistribution are the simplest modes of economic allocation. When we review the literature on such things as the division of labor we realize that there are more fundamental bases for economic allocation.

Working from a background in small groups research in social psychology, Homans (1958:597) discussed "the view that interaction between persons is an exchange of goods, material and

non-material." At the psychological level, there is a pattern of rewards or reinforcements, an "operant conditioning", that goes on in interpersonal relations whereby certain collective values are acquired and exchanged, values that are mutually reinforcing to individuals in the social group. In process, there tends to be a proportionality in the giving and receiving of values, although these values are somewhat different for each individual. This "proportionality" itself takes many different forms through sharing systems, reciprocity systems, and redistribution systems.

Sahlins (1972) comes close to giving us a workable cultural theory for intimate economics when he writes that the concepts of "reciprocity" and "redistribution" can be applied to such things as the familial pooling of food. The weakness in his theory comes from overextending the concepts. Thus, he uses "generalized reciprocity" to describe even continuous one-way flows, which would be better considered as sharing while gift exchange should be seen as a syncretism of sharing and reciprocity. Also band organized societies can be demonstrated to be more integrated by sharing patterns than by reciprocative patterns. Reciprocity is a rationalistic, egalitarian exchange pattern that was probably born of band organized societies, but sharing is even more fundamental and was probably born of early hominid societies. The concept of redistribution was created to cover the large scale, centrally organized allocations that are an inherent part of chiefdoms and state societies.

SHARING AS AN ALLOCATION SYSTEM

Sharing is an allocation system that is closely related to man's biological nature. It is particularly dependent upon such bio-social attributes as the division of labor according to sex, age, and differing physical propensities among people who are intimately associated with each other over a long period of time. It is dependent upon such bio-social behaviors as the "mothering" of children by adults. It is dependent upon the emotional and sentimental bonds that develop between people: husband and wife, parents and children, friends, etc. Sharing is as much emotional as it is rational.

The unity of primitive production and distribution is much greater than in complex societies. There is less time and fewer steps, less space is involved, and the producers are much more often also the consumers. This tightness of the production-distribution-consumption pattern, the proximity and propinquity of events, the personal knowledge of the individuals involved of each other's participation in the process promotes sharing. Sharing is born out of social contexts with a high degree of mutual responsiveness, but it does not have to involve "conscious intent" (cf. Crook 1966).

Sharing patterns are largely unconscious to the society. Because of this the language and analysis of sharing is poorly developed. However, sharing is expressed in ethical systems, in religions, and in many social forms and rituals. Admonitions are made about such social values as generosity and charity without expectation of reward. *The economic roles of parents, husbands, wives, and children are usually framed as explicit social values in terms of sharing, rather than in terms of reciprocity or redistribution.* The ritual sharing of large game animals is usually made in sharing terms, rather than in reciprocity terms. In fact, meat tends to be shared not only among men, but among social carnivores generally, while food sharing is uncommon among herbivores and fruit-eaters, such as non-human primates. Some primitive societies inculcate a cultural compulsion to immediately give as "gifts" things which are asked for. Primitives often incorporate supernaturals into their sphere of sharing through ritual sharing. The Washo Indians, for example, often threw away a pinch of pinenut meal to feed a supernatural before dining themselves.

As a relationship between people, *sharing is usually an unequal exchange*, because some people are consistently in a better position to give. *Sharing is characterized by the attitude that each person will do what is appropriate, not by an expectation of equivalent return as in reciprocity.* The ideal of "from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs" draws from this mundane, household arrangement of sharing.

Such old ideas as primitives living in communism usually refer to the ideal of intimate sharing in bands. However, sharing

is a principle that cannot be applied very well to large integrated populations because it is socially based on intimate linkages and bio-social attributes. Thus, small enough size is an important factor in the viability of communes. They must be small enough to be sensitive to individual differences and to develop personal ties that override inequities. It can be argued that large scale yet still "personalized" sharing systems are being operated with the aid of computers, but these are new and relatively unstudied systems, mostly of universities, commercial cooperatives, and similar organizations. That is, the number of persons a human may be personal with is limited by the limited human brain. A much more intelligent computer brain can in certain ways be sensitive to the individual differences (and in this sense can be "personal") of a much larger number of people. Computer dating services, like intimate sharing systems, help us to integrate people in terms of abilities and needs, but the similarity seems only analogical.

Sharing is capable of infinite expansion as an *ideal* and it can have some integrative influence wherever it is held. However, its character changes so much as it is used in the design of well integrated society-wide systems, that it is better to say that in that "public" sector sharing is transformed into a redistributive system.

Redistribution has centricity, sharing does not. Redistribution is usually patterned by explicit rules or even laws as in taxes, corvee labor, or the military draft on the input side and the government programs for defense, public construction, and welfare on the output side. Redistribution is a public system of unequal, centralized allocation that draws some of its ideals and patterning from sharing. Redistribution is also based on the social advantages of such things as the specialization of labor, the development of storage facilities, and long range planning for large "social overhead" projects such as long distance trade, common defense, and public works.

The general flow of goods is asymmetrical and direct in sharing, symmetrical and direct in reciprocity, and asymmetrical and indirect (through a centrally organized flow) in redistribution. Reciprocity involves "sides" while sharing is a "within" relation-

ship. Reciprocity calls for the intellectual calculation of returns while sharing calls for the emotional acceptance of people in their complementary roles. Reciprocity (from the Latin *reciprocus*, "returning the same way") is exchange based on equal return or counteraction by each of two sides. Reciprocity is somewhat incompatible with intimate personal relations, although it can contribute to the integration of economic allocations in the intimate sector. It is just that sharing dominates as the transactional mode that integrates the *intimate* sector. Reciprocity dominates in the *private* sector of the wider society, while redistribution dominates in the *public* sector of the wider society. Reciprocity is (at least ideally) equal exchange based on the private advantages of the parties to a trade. Reciprocity in primitive societies provided patterns that were incorporated in the market as it evolved into a separate institution. Thus, the intellectual, calculating, explicit returns of reciprocity were preconditions of the market.

Money helps to depersonalize and concretize the ownership and movement of wealth. Money is thus highly compatible with impersonal calculation that is characteristic of reciprocity and markets. A market is a system of economic allocation in which the supplies, demands, and prices of goods and services fluctuate in a determinative relationship to each other. The market generally has little influence on the economic allocation mechanisms of the intimate sector, but does influence both the private and public sectors. Karl Polanyi was concerned that market systems would dominate society so much that they would integrate and then destroy intimate life by tying it to the market forces. The same concern can be held for too great an integration through redistributive systems, such as extreme socialism or communism, which tie intimate economies to the state-wide redistributive system.

We tend to think that the breakdown of sharing relationships in the intimate sector of life is a central sign of the dehumanization of a society. Thus, Alan Holmberg felt that the deculturated Siriono of Bolivia were so pressed by the problems of survival that they acquired an inhumane grasping selfishness in family relations. Colin Turnbull made a similar analysis of the IK of East Africa, although deteriorating ecological relationships were also seen as involved.

PRIMATE SHARING

Sharing is minimal among living primates and presumably this was also true of man's primate ancestors. The primate child is of course nursed, carried, and protected and the child's dependency on the mother is extreme and long in duration in man, compared to other primates. In several species the mother is assisted by juvenile and adult females who are without their own infants (called "aunts") (Kummer 1971:80). Mutual grooming is common, expressing both the personal affection of primates and their busy, semi-sexual, fondling habits (Jolly 1972). A primate group shares information about the presence of food, water, or the dangerous approach of predators. Then too, there is some division of labor by sex, age, and dominance. Mature males tend to lead a group in its foraging and to defend the group from predators. Dominance behavior helps to smooth the social functioning of the group, although dominant members may also "supplant" inferiors from the best feeding and sleeping places.

Antagonism toward individuals that are not members of the group is common, while individuals within the group, in a loose sense, share each other. The primate group has economic advantages for its members and some of these are comparable to human sharing. Human sharing, however, involves much more interdependence and cooperation than we find among the non-human primates. Sharing is "organic" in the sense of an integration of different parts, rather than a "mechanical" integration of like parts. Sharing is the economic reciprocal of the social "organic solidarity" within intimate economies. Cooperation and food-sharing, in fact, is more prevalent among the social carnivores than among the mainly vegetarian non-human primates. This has led some people to speculate that it was man's early adaptation to hunting that led him into more cooperation and food sharing (Pilbeam 1970:196-7).

Man diverged from the herb and fruit eating primate line as a social carnivore. Carnivorous mammals generally cooperate in food production and share in food distribution more than other mammals, largely because in the production stage animals can defend themselves and in the consumption stage are themselves

concentrated sources of food. Vegetable food is inert and scattered, requiring far less cooperation and sharing in its use. Cooperative hunting is in turn far more common than sharing the spoils of the hunt. There are important exceptions, however, of extreme sharing, particularly between adults and infants, in some species, such as the wild dog (Shaller and Lowther 1969). Human sharing behavior in intimate contexts apparently lies within the range of other social carnivores, although human sharing behaviors are far more variable through cultural patterning.

Pilbeam (1970:197) wrote that "The first result of the adoption of hunting would have been a considerable sharpening in the division of labor between males and females, with the males doing the hunting while females were responsible for gathering vegetable food and taking care of the largebrained, relatively helpless, highly malleable, hominid infant. It is possible, too, that permanent pair formation would also have evolved at about this time, each female having 'her' mate to provide for her while she could not do so herself." Sharing would then be emphasized due to this division of labor.

SHARING IN BAND SOCIETIES

Forde and Douglas (1956:333-336) summarized the primitive economy.

The economic unit is small and, save for occasional bartered specialties, does not transcend the population of a small village... The sharing of tools and of supplies to meet individual shortages are matters of moral obligation between kinsfolk and neighbors... Such skills as are practiced are known to everyone of the appropriate age and sex in the community... The household provides for its daily needs from its own production... A man does not normally earn his right to a particular share of output by contributing a particular piece of work. His claim to a share is based on his membership and on his status in the social group, household, camp, club, et cetera for which the work is being done. He works in order to fulfill his social obligations, to maintain his prestige and the status to which his sex, age, rank et cetera may entitle him.

Food processing greatly expanded the range of human foods over those of non-human primates, but this technology also brought a greater division of labor, with men usually hunting

and women doing the food processing, particularly of plants. Non-human primates gather food items which can be eaten immediately and involve relatively little variety, thus making the population more susceptible to ecological limitations. In the Upper Paleolithic and particularly the Mesolithic, humans learned to process foods by grinding, shredding, boiling, soaking, leaching, smoking, and so forth. Since these are usually women's tasks, women probably developed most of this and such accompanying technology as basketry and pottery. Men hunting large animals and women gathering and processing plants (and slow animals such as insects, turtles, and shellfish) come together to share their products at the hearth.

Within a household it is easy to share the stable home base with its firehearth, its food, its shelter, and its adaptive advantages over the continuously ranging primate life. *Familial sharing*, from a more biological base, flourishes alongside the *task group sharing* of cooperative hunting, the occasional cooperative fishing, and the rare cooperative plant gathering. Familial sharing is more related to distribution while task group sharing is more related to production.

There are adaptive parallels between the organization of social carnivores and band societies (Schaller and Lowther 1969). Men usually hunt in groups, rather than alone, usually because it is more successful. Through scouting, through driving game, through simultaneously attacking the same animal, through the use of nets and traps, and so forth the division of labor and the cooperation of labor makes the hunting of large animals more efficient. The Siriono hunt cooperatively with whistle signals, by driving game, and occasionally by shooting an arrow up to a hunter in a tall tree, who in turn shoots an even higher monkey (Holmberg 1969:53). For some large animals, such as large seals or whales, the carcass is almost impossible to handle alone. Groups are able to use their food more fully than individuals. Individuals alone must often leave much of their kill behind and thus probably lose to scavengers the parts of the animal which they cannot carry. Then too, in the competition for food between groups, especially of different species, the size and cooperation of the group is important. Within the species *there must be limits to the spheres of sharing for it to operate*. It is significant, for

example, that wild dogs are both extreme in sharing and extreme in defining the limits to the social sphere of that sharing. The adaptive limitations to sharing however, beyond the size and structure of human social groups, are usually repressed (as in infanticide or geronticide) or occur only in rare periods of starvation (when sharing spheres collapse to their most minimal size).

The actual time spent in subsistence food production by man in band societies was apparently about the same for most social carnivores. Schaller and Lowther (1969:329) wrote that "when prey is fairly plentiful, the various predators can satisfy their food requirements by being active for only 1/6 of the day. This figure is similar to the 2 to 4 hours of subsistence effort per day reported as being required by hunting peoples such as the Bushmen and Australian aborigines of Arnhem Land." The impression from my own research on aboriginal Washo society is that their daily hours of subsistence effort per se would be similar. However, these band societies were still rather obsessed with food. They were involved with such things as processing the foods for final consumption, moving the camp to areas of better hunting and gathering, carrying out the religious rituals that ensure an abundance of food, and carrying out the social rituals that will maintain a social structure that will equitably distribute food.

Apparently as a cultural means to reduce conflict, hunting societies usually have a way of designating a nominal owner of large game that are hunted cooperatively. This "ownership" is only ritualistic and nominal because in each case the animal is completely shared. This nominal owner is the first person to see the animal among the Central Eskimo, the first person to inflict a wound on the animal among the Copper Eskimo, the first person to inflict a serious wound among the Andamanese, the person who kills the animal among the White Knife Shoshoni, and the person who owns the projectile that kills the animal among the Bushmen (Dowling 1968).

Sharing has probably been the basic form of economic distribution in hominid societies for several hundred thousand years. It is based in human biological behaviors, flourishes under the adaptations to hunting, and becomes a powerful force for social

solidarity between communities. Marriage, incest prohibitions, kinship systems, etc. modulate the sharing patterns. In fact, marriage in primitive societies is a sharing contract, asymmetrical, an unequal exchange of incomparables. A "conjugal solidarity" comes through the sharing that is inherent in the sexual division of labor.

The primary means of economic distribution in band societies is sharing because their intimate economies are largely self-sufficient and without significant tribal-wide integration. Band societies are economically egalitarian. Individual households are usually free to shift their residence according to the availability of resources. Usually a few households form a loose community or "band" and several bands form a "linguistic tribe", that is, a society that speaks one language and has a collective ideology and sentiment of belonging together but lacks much in the way of political or economic integration as a tribe. Band economies generate very little trade between communities or between societies.

VARIATIONS IN BAND SHARING

I have emphasized the common features of sharing in band societies, but these societies of course differed from each other. It appears from the ethnographic literature that Kung Bushmen (Marshall 1961), Bambuti Pygmies (Turnbull 1963), and Eskimo (Spencer 1959, Damas 1968) had an extreme emphasis on sharing; Andaman Islanders (Radcliffe-Brown 1958), Australians (Meggitt 1962), Washo (Price 1968), and Kaingáng (Henry 1964) had moderate sharing; and the Siriono (Holmberg 1969) had only weak sharing. Cohen (1961) did a cross-cultural study of food sharing and found that different degrees of sharing reflected different kinds of social and economic systems. He also found a significant decrease in sharing correlated with increased spacial distance between households.

At the least there is a great range of intensities of sharing among band societies. Turnbull (1963) writes of the extreme sharing of the Bambuti Pygmies. "In essence the bonds that make two brothers hunt together and share their food are not

much greater than those that obtain between a member of a band and a visiting Pygmy, even if he is totally unrelated. Any adult male is a father to any child; any woman a mother. They expect the same help and respect from all children and they owe the same responsibilities toward them." The Eskimo have very similar practices.

Food sharing intensifies in many societies in conditions of scarcity, while in others the sharing spheres become more limited and more autonomous. The Washo reported that there were starvation (*biša-baša*) times, particularly in lean winters, when the household would hide its food even from close relatives. The Siriono had sharing rules, but it appears that these were permanently narrowed by conditions of very frequent scarcity. Societies generally find ways to cut off the lazy or the stingy man from participating in a sharing sphere, usually by ostracism. Many North American Indian band societies, such as the Eskimo and the Washo, even institutionalized the abandonment of old nonproducers.

Henry (1964:99-101) described sharing among the nomadic hunting Kaingáng of Brazil. "In times of hunger the meat is divided among the whole group... When they are hungry, close relatives simply come and sit down where there is food... to refuse food is the most frightful sin the Kaingáng can imagine... property arrangements are not a matter of checks and balances... Their understanding of reciprocity is in terms of lifelong symbiosis, not in terms of balanced exchanges. No accounts are kept, but in the back of his mind each man knows who has been systematically helpful to him and who not."

Damas (1968:115) pointed out the systematic diversity in specific sharing patterns even among adjacent central Canadian Eskimo societies. "Among the Copper Eskimo, individual nuclear family heads formed partnerships which determined the sharing of specific parts of the seal. The network of distributions was extended in the area of consumption by the practice of communal eating on a village-wide basis." The Copper Eskimo had small nuclear families so there was an economic adjustment for the broader community through highly structured sharing and communal eating.

The Netsilik Eskimo also had seal-sharing partnerships, but in their society the meat became the property of the *extended* family. In this case the men and women ate separately in adjoining domes of the family's snowhouse compound. Since the extended family acted as a pool of resources there was less need for communal eating.

Among the Iglulik Eskimo the catch was distributed among the commensal units of the entire local community by a community leader. Technically, this approaches "redistribution" in its structure, but since the scale of goods is small, the distribution is immediate, and the distributor does not control an accumulated surplus it perhaps should be thought of as just a centrally allocated form of sharing.¹ The commensal units were variable, expedient, and ranged in size from a hunter who ate alone, the nuclear family, and the extended family. In this case seal-sharing partnerships and communal eating were unnecessary because of the community-wide distribution. Each of these three quite different forms of food sharing is integrated to other specific cultural features of community life in societies with nearly identical ecological and subsistence patterns.

THE WASHO INDIANS: A CASE STUDY IN BAND SHARING

The Washo Indians lived in the central Sierra Nevada around Lake Tahoe and the valleys immediately east of the mountains. They were culturally similar to the Western Shoshoni and Northern Paiute, except that the Washo were in a slightly richer environment. This richer environment gave the Washo a higher population density than most of the Great Basin Shoshoneans (1,500 persons in 4,000 square miles for 2.7 sq. miles per person, general Great Basin ca. 15 sq. mi. per person). They had rich spear fishing grounds on the streams that led into Lake Tahoe and abundant stands of pinenut trees in the hills. Individual households owned pinenut groves, a rare phenomenon for a band society. Washo techniques for gathering and storing pinenuts, in strips and the construction of great caches, gave

¹ The Washo have a similar custom for distributing meat during their pinenut festival.

them a relatively large and stable production of food. The household of a family and relatives in a single winter house was the basic socioeconomic unit of society.

Division of labor within the household called for the women to gather plants, cook, make baskets, and tend the children. The men hunted, carried water, gathered firewood, prepared skins, and made most of the clothing, fibres, cords, rabbit skin blankets, rabbit nets, and hunting and fishing gear. Men and women both gathered pinenuts, fished, and worked in the construction of houses, although their customary tasks were different in these cooperative activities. With old age the more sedentary crafts, such as basketry for women and net making for men, were emphasized.

Sharing (*mibEšigihi*) was practiced to some degree in every level of Washo social organization, decreasing as kinship and residence distances increased. The person who would not share with others of the same household, or who was generally stingy (*hutE tiki*) would not be included in the networks of sharing and would be "talked out" of his household. *Familial sharing*, characterized by distribution resulting from the division of labor by sex and age, accounted for roughly three fourths of all Washo economic distribution. This includes the production consumed immediately by the producer.

Older people who became a burden on the household because of blindness or other disabilities were deserted and left to die. A corollary to this was the belief that persons acquired often dangerous supernatural powers with age. Thus well intentioned gifts from grandparents to grandchildren may be inadvertently harmful. Non-producing old people and children were resented for their supposedly great appetites and in practice probably ate less than the others. Old people and children were given the boiling stones and stirring sticks to lick off the cooked meal or inferior food such as rabbit brains. In times of hunger whole households without food might move in with relatives or even unrelated neighbors. The food was shared but the two groups would cook separately.

Task group sharing among the Washo occurred in connection with the breakdown of products that resulted from efforts of hunting, fishing, and gathering parties that were larger than the

household. Mere presence with the party was generally sufficient to receive an equal share. Goods were usually divided equally among all adult members of the task group. The meat of a single deer shot by a party of hunters was divided equally, regardless of whose arrow actually brought the deer down. Variations were present in some divisions, depending on such things as ownership of a rabbit net or shamanistic powers in antelope drives.

Winter communal drives for rabbits provided most of the skins used in blankets and a great deal of meat. Several individually owned nets were tied together during the drive to form a single net, about 100 yards long. The net owner would collect the rabbits that got tangled in his section of the combined nets. The drivers would receive only those rabbits they killed before they reached the nets, but the drivers usually belonged to a household that had a net. When rabbits were abundant, surpluses were rapidly circulated out to anyone who needed them, in part because catching rabbits was the easiest part of making rabbit skin robes.

The Washo had eight main forms of economic distribution that can be arranged along a primary-secondary continuum of social distance (Price 1962:37-38) "*Primary* refers to relations between people with common goals and relations that are ends in themselves, intrinsically valued, 'personal' in that the identity of the individuals cannot be changed without disturbing the relationship, 'inclusive' in that the range of involvement of the relationship is wide, and 'spontaneous' in being relatively uninhibited... Secondary relations are... extrinsic, impersonal, exclusive, and inhibited... (1) ceremonial disposal, (2) familial sharing, (3) task group sharing, (4) gift and ceremonial exchange, (5) feasts, (6) payment for services, (7) gambling, and (8) trade." It is possible to show a correlation between social distance and the replacement of sharing by reciprocity with increases in such features as expectation of returns, explicitness of returns, the negotiation of returns, and the rapidity of returns.

RECIPROCITY, REDISTRIBUTION, AND MARKETS

Fort the Trobriand Islanders, Malinowski (1961:177-191) gave a "list of Gifts, Payments, and Commercial Transactions":

(1) pure gifts, (2) customary payments, (3) payment for services rendered, (4) gifts returned in equivalent form, (5) exchange of material goods against privileges, titles, and non-material possessions, (6) ceremonial barter with deferred payment, and (7) trade, pure and simple. He then showed the particular correspondence between these forms of economic distribution and important social relations within the Trobriand society. The Trobriand Islanders are a relatively complex society which had elaborated economic systems outside of the household. Thus, Malinowski pays very little attention to the economic system *within* the household.

He (1921:8) emphasized that economic obligations, dues, and tributes formed a network that corresponded to the social network. Thus the "rules of kinship and relationship-in-law... involve a very complex redistribution of garden produce, resulting in a state of things in which everybody is working for somebody else. ...it enmeshes the whole community into a network of reciprocal obligations and dues, one constant flow of gifts and counter-gift... By various channels, by dues and tributes, and especially through the effect of polygamy, with its resulting obligations of his relative-in-law, about 30 per cent of the whole food production of his district finds its way into the large, finely-decorated yam houses of the chief."

We have come to refer to the first type of transaction, such as *between* symmetrical parts of a kinship system, as *reciprocity* and the second type of transaction such as that which is *centrally* pooled for the chief, as *redistribution*. Malinowski was describing a relatively complex society without a strong sharing ethic. If he had lived among the Bushmen instead he probably would have perceived primitive society as operating by sharing rather than reciprocity.

Polanyi (1957) took Malinowski's ideas about the structural relationships between social and economic systems in developing his theories. He then analyzed *reciprocity*, *redistribution*, and *market exchange* as distinct principles of economic integration. Dalton, in the Introduction to a collection of Polanyi's essays (1968) wrote that "Reciprocity and redistribution are best regarded as socio-economic transactional modes... Market ex-

change transactions differ because they are not expressions of social obligation, which makes them seem especially 'economic.' " Dalton said that certain kinds of underlying social relationships are "expressed" by transactional modes. Reciprocity expresses friendship, kinship, status, and hierarchy. Redistribution expresses political or religious affiliation. Market exchange, according to Dalton, does not express social relationships. Reciprocity assumes symmetrically organized groupings; redistribution is dependent upon centrality in the group; and exchange, in order to produce integration, requires a system of price-making markets.

Malinowski, Polanyi, and Dalton tended to treat these forms of economic allocation in structural-functional ways. The parts of the system were described, shown to have certain articulations with each other, and then shown to operate in particular ways. The evolutionary implications in the theory were played down. The "social" forms in the *early* periods were seen as prior to and determinative of the "economic" forms. Polanyi (1957:256) wrote that "forms of integration do not represent 'stages' of development. No sequence in time is implied." Then he turned around and gave an evolutionary statement: "Tribal societies practice reciprocity, while archaic societies are predominantly redistributive, though to some extent they may allow room for (market) exchange." This last sentence was a statement about the evolution of these forms, but it was not developed. Instead, Polanyi dwelt on the modern rise and decline of the market system, which he saw as determining social forms. "Polanyi argues that Marx was right for laissez-faire industrial capitalism... But Marx was wrong in generalizing economic determination of social organization to early and primitive societies." (Dalton 1968:xvi-xvii).

Reciprocity, redistribution, and the market were all seen as socially integrative transactional modes. However, according to Polanyi, the market dominates as the major mechanism of social integration only in certain modern market societies. Others have pointed out a corollary to this, that reciprocity may be dominant in some simple societies (such as tribes) and that redistribution may be dominant in some intermediate societies (such as chiefdoms). This, then is the beginning of an evolutionary theory. Also, it raises the question of the extent to which patterns of

economic integration have determined the social forms of simple societies.

The economic tasks of getting a living seem to have been even more central to the determination of social forms in simple subsistence societies than in complex, affluent societies. This is because intimate economies were the predominate ones in primitive societies, material exchanges at the intimate level required more diffuse and complete social interaction, and with less wealth to distribute the social concern over its distribution was more intensive. Thus, for example, an important function of primitive kinship systems was to bring inter-personal regularity into the economic tasks of getting a living. Kinship systems seem in origin to be a by-product of the economic and political organizations of people although they acquire sentimental, ideological, and game-like qualities that lead to the maintenance and elaboration of them in more of their own terms.

Band organization is related to personally knowing people within limited territorial groupings, but true tribes achieve an economic integration through reciprocative institutions that becomes removed from limited territorial groups by linking people according to principles, rather than personal knowledge and inter-dependency. This is the beginning of customary codes to regulate relations between strangers. Tribes develop associations that are not territorially based (called "sodalities") and draw their membership from several different residential groups within the tribe. These "pan-tribal sodalities", such as clans, warrior's associations, curing associations, etc., collectively provide some tribal-wide economic integration. The parts of the society become so coordinated that the society as a whole is capable of some concerted action, such as large scale hunting or a rapid response to attack from outside. Band society is aware of its parts, but tribal society goes beyond this and is so organized that it can use its parts in common causes.

Along with the impersonal principles of sodality organization, reciprocity becomes important in tribal society. Reciprocity served to integrate the economic behavior between households, between communities, and between societies in a more effective way than sharing could. Bands and tribes are egalitarian societies that

developed the reciprocal principle that things should be equal in exchanges beyond the intimate sphere. This principle of equivalence underlies the later development of the market system. Redistribution emerges in the socially ranked and politically centralized chiefdoms, emphasizes unequal exchange for the public good, and evolves into the bureaucratic administration of part of the economy. In terms of dominant modes of economic allocation, the evolution of economy has been sharing in early hominid societies and bands, reciprocity in tribes, and redistribution in chiefdom. State societies continue all three modes: sharing in intimate economies, exemplified by the modern household; reciprocity in private economies, especially in the development of a market system; and redistribution in public economies, particularly in the governmental administration of the economy through taxation and government spending.

GIFTS

Even the simplest band societies gave explicit gifts, beyond sharing and without the pressure for returns that was part of barter and trade. Gift giving is probably universal among known societies and thus very early in development. Gifts seem to be an extension of sharing patterns beyond the ordinary social contexts of sharing. Thus food, which is usually shared, is very often given as a minor gift to people who are beyond the usual sphere of sharing. In fact, a kind of ritual sharing of food, or drink, or tobacco seems to be a crucial element in social intercourse. It is a way of saying "Let us behave as if we were of the same sharing sphere or "Make yourself at home".

Firth (1970:18) said "In England some people who will accept a cigarette from a friend without a thought, insist on paying for a postage stamp, a curious kind of code. Now both are of small value. What is the criterion of difference?... A gift of a cigarette is in a way an invitation to an act of social communion, whereas a gift of a stamp can lead to only a physical and technical act, that of posting a letter".

Instead of shaking hands or bowing when they greeted the early explorers, the Washo Indians immediately offered them

pinenuts and then squatted down and began to eat pinenuts. In our more chemically sophisticated culture, we offer stimulants such as tea, coffee, and tobacco for polite conversation and depressants such as alcoholic beverages for more uninhibited occasions. Gift exchange draws both the principle of sharing and the principle of reciprocity, with quite a wide continuum of the expectations of returns. There is also a continuum involved in the kinds of things which tend to be shared to the things which tend to move as gifts or bartered objects: subsistence plant foods; then the meat of large animals; then the use of tools or equipment; and finally durable objects generally. Thus, there are often social contexts in which a person would *share* food, *loan* his tools, and *give a gift* of other durable objects. It is then incumbent on the receiver to not reciprocate the food (which would insult the sharer), to return the same tools, and to return the gift in roughly equivalent value at a somewhat later time and usually in a different form.

Mauss (1954) was impressed by the reciprocal character of gift giving, the idea that what is posed at the moment as a free gift in fact carries an obligation to return. He felt that gifts were "social prestations" between social groups, even though individuals did the exchanging. He claimed that no matter how freely a gift has been given and no matter how unsought it may be, it always carries an obligation of equivalent or greater return that can be ignored only with social disapproval and loss of prestige.

Mauss was too simplistic. Every society has many kinds of gifts, with various connotations about the expectations of return. For example, the Northwest Coast Indians were very involved in gift exchanges and thus had a rich language about them. The Puyallup-Nisqually of Puget Sound had words for the following: (1) to give a gift according to the relative prestige between donor and recipient, (2) to give a gift to assuage a strained relationship, (3) to give a gift to an affinal relative, (4) to give property at a ceremony and not expect any return, (5) to give property at a ceremony and not expect a return but receive one anyway (Smith 1940:146-150).

A rough line between sharing and giving can be drawn in terms of many features. Shares tend to be accepted without comment or expressions of gratitude while gifts involve more social

formality. While patterns of hospitality extend sharing to outsiders for a short period of time, long term visitors are expected to participate in the group's economic activities and to become part of the sharing circle. Shares should not be reciprocated while gifts should be. Gifts carry specialized social messages while sharing says simply that the sharer is playing his appropriate role as a member of a group.

MODERN STATES

The economic system of modern states are highly elaborated beyond the intimate spheres with a reciprocal market system and a governmentally administered redistribution system. However, sharing is still with us and we particularly enjoy that kind of economy: familial sharing, neighborhood sharing, or sharing within a close-knit ethnic or church group. We enjoy those situations in which we can give and receive largely without calculations. In sharing there is often an open stock or store of something that can be drawn on as needed by any member of the sharing circle. In sharing there is a low level of formality or protocol and little need to acknowledge what is being contributed or taken.

In the modern household the father may be perceived as the only economic producer, the "bread winner", and the household as a consumption unit rather than both a producing and a consuming unit. However, this is a fiction that arises when the market economy is so dominant as to be seen as the only economy. The wife and children are producers primarily within the household economy so their economic roles have been ignored and not appreciated.

A food sharing ritual was described for a Zapotec-mestizo town in Oaxaca, Mexico by Kearney (1970:32). "In Intepeji when a guest enters a home, a representative of the host family offers him something to eat or drink which he will then decline until he is eventually coaxed, or literally forced, to accept. Outside of the home similar coercions are also applied to induce reluctant individuals to accept alcohol." Since the Intepejanos have a "basic food anxiety" this generosity is not materially rational. In discuss-

ing sharing, Kearney mentions a "commensualist" theory, that communal eating has a cohesive social function, and a "genetic" theory, that eating in the presence of others has a magical benefit to oneself. He also discusses explanations from the local ethnography: all drink alcoholic beverages so that no one will be in a position to take advantage of the other drinkers, drinking as an expression of masculine honor, and the presentation of food and drink as a disguised attack on an unwilling recipient. He does not reject these as influences, but for a central explanation of the specific form of the local custom he presents a theory involving a system of self-defense from envy, hostility, and witchcraft.

This Zapotec case is one of "extended" rather than "primary" sharing (Also see Beals 1970). That is, sharing beyond the intimate economy is an *extension* of a basic model of behavior. The Zapotec food sharing ritual is applied to people outside, rather than inside, the household. Because it is an extension of sharing it is not as integrated by a continuing feed-back between such bio-social dependencies as the division of labor by sex. Even the psychological reinforcement of sharing behaviors occurs primarily in continuing intimate social contents (Cohen 1961). Extended sharing is more integrated by systems outside of the economy proper, such as ideological conceptions of "limited good" and social prestige, than the primary sharing of the intimate economy. Extended sharing is thus much more variable in form than primary sharing. Also the Zapotec are a peasantry within a state society so that the intimate economies of their households or cooperative work groups operate more than in simple societies as part of a larger economic system and are significantly influenced by reciprocal, redistributive, and market subsystems. Still, this Zapotec food ritual is more influenced by the appropriate roles of sharing between host and guest than by reciprocity calculations. We do not deny that some highly calculated reciprocity arrangements, even in primitive societies, are given a social façade of sharing-like appearances, but then people also know the differences.

Sharing now seems to be weakening in the households of modern industrial states because of this penetration of outside economic forces into the household and other forces that weaken familial interdependency and the sexual division of labor. Public

institutions such as schools and churches and private institutions such as clubs have taken many traditional functions away from families, thus displacing the reasons behind the sexual division of labor. The more that familial functions are diminished and the husband and wife become equally capable in the same roles the more the form of their economic solidarity shifts from the stronger organic integration to the weaker mechanical integration. Marriage thus tends to lose the quality of sharing and traditional conjugal solidarity, which was traditionally based on the performance of inherently different roles, becomes a weaker reciprocity contract. This does not mean that sharing will disappear. It is still possible for sharing to be based on love or friendship alone. For example, MacAndrew and Edgerton (1973:135) wrote that sharing was the most noteworthy feature in the close friendship that they document of two institutionalized mentally retarded men. This is a case of sharing based purely on friendship, without a division of labor, without sexual or material factors, and without calculating ends other than friendship. To the extent that marriages and households diminish in importance we can expect to see an elaboration of other arrangements where intimate social tolerance, emotional acceptance, interdependency, and so forth are expressed through sharing.

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Trapping and Welfare

The Economics of Trapping in a Northern Saskatchewan Chipewyan Village

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie l'économie de la trappe telle que pratiquée par une importante communauté de Chipewya au nord de la Saskatchewan. Deux modes différents de pratiquer la trappe se sont développés dans cette communauté. Aucun de ces deux modes n'apporte un profit significatif immédiat au trappeur. Beaucoup de trappeurs continuent à trapper même s'ils y perdent de l'argent continuellement. Il est clair que la trappe doit être considérée comme une expression des valeurs morales et politiques plutôt que comme une activité économique.

ECOLOGICAL ZONES

The area exploited by the Mission Chipewyan¹ includes three distinct ecological zones. The southern third of their area is boreal forest. The northern two-thirds includes the open transition zone of the boreal forest, the tundra, and its fringes. While the tundra proper is only marginally exploited now, the tundra fringes (tree line) are still moderately exploited.

The boreal forest extends south from the village of Mission. It is characterized by extensive areas of moss-covered sand and relatively few lakes. The country is rolling with few areas of

¹ Mission is a pseudonym, as are all names of persons. The fieldwork on which this article is based was conducted in 1969-70 and 1971-72 and was supported in part by NIMH fellowship and field research grant 1 FO 1 MH 43470-01A1 and the Graduate School of Duke University.

rough terrain when compared to the northern part of the range of the Mission Chipewyan.

Travel is not difficult within this zone and it is rich in fur-bearing animals and game. Although there is no significant number of woodland caribou in the region, the abundance of moose and spruce grouse assures a competent hunter an adequate food supply.

The boreal forest now has few wolves² — due to poisoning by the D.N.S. — and there is no trappable population of white fox. Other fur-bearing animals are plentiful with mink, marten and beaver being the most frequently taken. Fish are plentiful but are smaller in size than in the other zones.

The transition zone of the boreal forest begins on the north shore of the lake of Mission. The differences between the forest around Mission and the north end of the lake are quite noticeable even to a casual observer. The land is far rougher. Jagged hills and long deep valleys are prominent.

The soil is sand, but the sandy areas are much less extensive than to the south. Bare rock is everywhere. Lakes are more common, constituting up to fifty per cent of the surface area. The entire zone is contoured northeast to southwest, and in fact, the Chipewyan world axis orients northeast to southwest instead of north to south.

The further northeast one ventures into the transition zone, the more open it becomes. This reflects the increasing severity

² Wolves are scarce in Saskatchewan due to D.N.S. poisoning. They are relatively common in the Northwest Territories in spite of the extensive poisoning of a white trapper. Estimates by his employees of his kill are in the vicinity of 300 to 350 wolves killed each year. Of these, 80 to 150 are recovered. Many of the baits, especially the unmarked ones set on land, are not recovered. This poisoning is having its effect on the caribou through the removal of predation. In 1970, I examined forty-eight caribou taken by one group in the Northwest Territories. Of the forty-eight, I found fourteen injured or diseased — one broken leg, one throat cancer, four serious infections of lung flukes, one crippling hoof infection and seven seriously parasite-damaged livers. I am not trained as a pathologist and based the judgment of the livers only by comparison with the sixty or so that I saw.

On a small lake in the Northwest Territories I found the hide of a wolf, a bear, and a wolverine, as well as remnants of something my guide could not identify — a loss of about \$220.

of climate, the presence of permafrost, and the lack of soil. The animal and bird life reflects the changes in the forest.

Although all the major animals and birds of the boreal forest — except the fisher — are found within the transition zone, most of them are at or near the northeast limit of their range. They are found in lesser numbers within this zone the further to the northeast one progresses. Almost as if in compensation, within this zone individual trees are larger, forest fires less frequent, and barren ground caribou normally winter here.

Within 140 miles of the village of Mission the transition between forest and tundra begins. This narrow zone is in many ways richer than either of the other two. The number and type of fur-bearing animals is markedly reduced. Beaver, lynx, and fisher are not present; mink and marten are scarce. But wolf, wolverine, and fox are more plentiful and white fox can be taken about four years of every seven. Caribou are much more plentiful than elsewhere within the range of the Mission Chipewyan. Most years they can be found from the end of July until the middle of the following June.

With the decrease in number and type of fur-bearing animal in the progression from south to north-northeast, there is a corresponding change in the primary food source for the Chipewyan. In the southern part of their range there is almost the certainty of a continuous food supply. Moose, spruce grouse, porcupine, bear and rabbit (snowshoe hare) are always present even though their populations are subject to considerable variation in numbers.

The further north one ventures, the less reliable the food supply becomes. Fifty miles to the northeast of Mission, moose, rabbit, and porcupine are scarce. One hundred miles northeast, where most of the northern trappers have their base camps, moose, porcupine, and spruce grouse are rare and rabbits are scarce. At tree line, moose, rabbits, porcupine, and spruce grouse are either extremely rare or absent.

However, it is only in the two northern zones that there is now any chance of finding caribou in any numbers. Caribou were, and still are, the conceptual centre of the Chipewyan

universe, as well as their primary food source. But caribou are migratory and vary widely in their distribution from year to year. Utilization of caribou as a primary food source is always a feast or famine situation. If the herds come, there are far more than anyone can possibly use. If the herds do not come, there are never enough stragglers around to keep the people fed.

The different ecological zones have markedly different climates, in addition to their differences in animal life. At tree line, freeze-up frequently occurs a full month before it does at Mission. And Mission is often two weeks ahead of the extreme southern parts of the Mission trappers area. Break-up occurs in June instead of May at tree line, and the mid-winter temperatures appear to be about 10°F colder (mean January temperature) at tree line. Other variations in climate, while most probably occurring, are not recorded.

THE VILLAGE AND ITS SUBDIVISIONS

The village of Mission is a large new community. It was founded in 1953 when the priest moved his church to Mission Lake in order to escape the increasing influence of the whites and Metis of Stony Rapids. The new village was successful because of the post-war collapse of the fur market and the decline of the caribou herds.

As economic conditions worsened, more and more families constructed permanent houses in the vicinity of the church in order to draw on welfare during the winter. A Hudson's Bay Co. store was established in Mission in 1959 and a school was established about the same time. By the mid-1960's all of the Indians of the band had built a house either at Mission or at Stony Rapids.

Mission now has an Indian population of approximately 540. Of these, all but three families are treaty Indians. Stony Rapids has a population of about 170 and is almost entirely white or Metis. Only a handful of the more acculturated treaty Indians live in Stony Rapids.

Since 1965 there has been a tremendous increase in government money spent at Mission. There is a multi-million dollar

school and teachers' housing complex as well as some sixty frame houses built for the treaty Indians by the Canadian government.

The population of Mission comprises two major groups. The majority are Hearne's caribou-eater Chipewyan. They regard themselves as always having been in this country. This belief implies at least three generations in the region on the part of male ancestors. Three generations from adulthood is sufficient time for the actual birthplace of male ancestors to be forgotten.

During the 1920's and 1930's, a number of people moved to the Mission region from Chipewyan communities along the Churchill River in Saskatchewan and from Brochet in Manitoba. These immigrants spoke different dialects and had a different kinship system.

These immigrants have intermarried in the village and are mixed into all subgroups of the Mission community. They have retained their own kinship usage, but have been unable to transmit them to their children. Their dialect has blurred into the predominant speech patterns of the Mission community.

The Mission Chipewyan are divided into two named groups. The division now reflects the political division of the territory of the Mission Chipewyan between two Canadian political divisions, the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan. The *Yonthehotina* trap in the Northwest Territories, and the *Thulekayaratina* trap in Saskatchewan. Although the two groups often function as opponents on political issues, they are not political groups or bands.

The named groups of Mission Chipewyan represent two distinct solutions to the problem of survival. They are (1) social adaptations to the different ecological conditions in the boreal forest and the open transition zone of the boreal forest and tundra. And (2) they reflect differential acculturation to the welfare society of the village.

The *Yonthehotina* take their families to the trapline and operate from fixed base camps in the bush for the trapping season. The *Thulekayaratina* leave their families in Mission all year

round. Only the men and boys go into the bush for the trapping season.

Membership in either of these groups represents an economic specialization. There is very little movement of trappers from one zone to another. There are almost no successful transitions — lasting more than two years — between the groups except when a *Yonthehotina* trapper completely withdraws from trapping and remains in the village to subsist on welfare and odd jobs.

The differences in climate, animal life, and terrain between the zones are sufficiently great to call on different skills and techniques. One or two unsuccessful seasons in a different ecological zone are sufficient to cause a trapper to return to his own ecological zone. Most changes of zone are caused by service to the father-in-law after marriage. The traditional two-year service is not sufficient to learn the skills required in the new ecological zone. Upon completion of the traditional period of service, the trapper returns to his own zone where he is more successful at trapping and hunting.

The difference in technical skills required in each of the zones is becoming relatively less important in maintaining the distinction between the two groups. Instead, the degree of acculturation to certain aspects of Canadian society is becoming paramount. The *Thulekayaratina* spend more of their time in the village and more time seeking jobs. All of the full-time jobs are held by *Thulekayaratina*.

The primary influence for acculturation comes through women. As the *Thulekayaratina* women spend then entire year in the village they are more subject to acculturation pressures than any adult group. They, in turn, bring the pressure of their expectations upon their husbands.

The proximity of the *Thulekayaratina* traplines to the village allows the men to spend the bulk of their time in Mission. Traplines are set and the trapper returns to the village. Venturing out to check his traps not more than once every two weeks.

Closer association with the village is related to a greater degree of acculturation of *Thulekayaratina* males compared to *Yonthehotina* males. This differential acculturation is most clearly

shown in the utilization of welfare and cash income by the two groups.

Welfare is the primary economic fact of life for all but one of the treaty families at Mission. The greatly increased costs of store goods and the increased economic expectations of the people have come at a time when the traditional sources of income are at their lowest value.

With the extremely low prices furs bring now, it is impossible to gain a sufficient income to feed and clothe a family. Only the large scale use of poison will produce a substantial income and that practice is so destructive that it could not be used by the Indians on a large scale. Although at least half a dozen Indian trappers have access to poison, none of them use it on a systematic basis.

The *Thulekayaratina* trappers have adjusted to village life and welfare. They use welfare as their primary livelihood and relegate trapping to a secondary level of economic importance.

For these men and their families, it is the Ration payments from Indian Affairs that provides the bulk of their livelihood. Rations are given in the form of credit at the Hudson's Bay Co. store. They are paid each month and are based on family size and need. Any cash income is charged against the amount of Ration payments for which the family is eligible.

Since the families of the *Thulekayaratina* remain at Mission they receive the full benefit of the Ration system. The trappers are considered employed. But their furs are sold every time they return from the traplines. The amount they receive is never large enough to detract from their ration payments since the smaller sales are not reported to the Indian Agent.

Bone, Shannon, and Raby (1972:156) report figures for the Mission trappers that give an average income of \$206.74 for the 1969-70 trapping season. This low figure reflects three basic aspects of trapping in Saskatchewan: (1) fur prices are generally low, (2) the number of skins taken is low and (3) the furs most frequently taken in Saskatchewan are low-value furs.

However, the expenses incurred by the *Thulekayaratina* trappers are low. They do not use aircraft on their traplines.

This eliminates the cost of an aircraft charter. The cost of maintaining a dog team must be met even if a man does not trap. By using dog teams for all their trapping they incur no extra transportation expenses to trap.

The only expenses incurred are for store food (tea, sugar, flour, and lard), replacement of hardware items (traps, fishnets, etc.) and rifle shells. Most of these expenses are necessary just to hunt. The only extra cost that an active hunter incurs to trap is the cost of his traps, and traps may be used for several seasons.

The fur yield of the *Thulekayaratina* is almost entirely profit. Even the worst *Thulekayaratina* trappers who only make two, three or four skins a season, still make money if they also hunt. The *Thulekayaratina* subsist on welfare and game and use the cash proceeds of trapping for luxury items and gambling.

The extent of the dependence upon welfare is shown by the fact that a substantial number of men with families and virtually all of the unmarried men do not bother to trap at all. The cash from trapping is simply not worth the effort.

THE YONTHEHOTINA

The situation is much different for the *Yonthehotina*. Their traplines are too far from Mission for them to make frequent trips by dog team between the village and the trapline. Only three trappers leave their families in Mission and go to the traplines alone. (Two half-brothers and a widower.) All the other *Yonthehotina* take their families into the Northwest Territories with them.

This greatly increases the amount of supplies that must be purchased and taken into the bush and requires the use of a charter aircraft (Sharp:nd). The amount of store supplies taken into the bush varies greatly between families. The major factors affecting the amount of supplies taken are: (1) length of stay in the bush, and (2) the number of people in the family. The amounts presented in Figure I are based on a group of seven (two adult males, two adult females, one teenage male, and two young girls.) The length of stay in the bush was from August 11

to December 19 for five of the group, and August 1 to September 11 for the ethnographer and his wife.

The list of supplies in Figure 1 is adequate but not extravagant. The party ran out of tea, flour, lard, tobacco, .22 shells, raisins, macaroni, and candy before the December 19 return to Mission. An absolute minimum cost is in the vicinity of \$200 in supplies. A plentiful supply of tea and tobacco would require twice as much as the amount on the list.

Each trapper in the family requires ten boxes of shells for his rifle. Purchasing shells for all the rifles in a group can become very expensive if a number of teenage sons have their own rifles.

The list in Figure 1 does not include the purchase of fish-nets, floats, saws, axes, or any other hardware items. Normal replacement of hardware items requires \$50 to \$75. On occasion, a major purchase (such as dog harness or toboggan) may double the cash outlay for supplies.

FIGURE 1
OTTER FAMILY TRAPPING SUPPLIES

<i>Item</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Approximate cost (1970)</i>
1. Flour	300 lbs.	\$ 55.00
2. Sugar	150 lbs.	30.00
3. Lard	25 lbs.	25.00
4. Macaroni	10 lbs.	2.00
5. Raisins	5 lbs.	3.00
6. .303 shells	10 boxes	65.00
7. .270 shells	10 boxes	72.00
8. .22 shells	10 boxes	10.00
9. Candy	1 lb.	2.00
10. Potatoes	10 lbs.	7.00
11. Tea	24 lbs.	24.00
12. Tobacco	12 lbs. (24 cans)	48.00
	567 lbs.	\$324.00

It was not possible to obtain accurate cost figures from a larger sample of trappers. From their conversations and com-

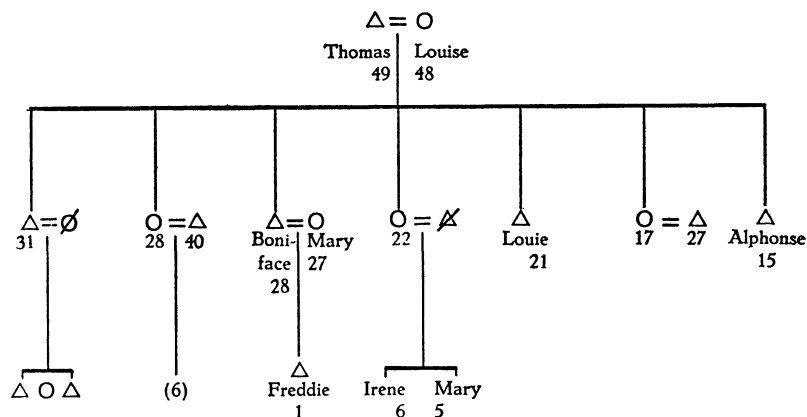
plaints about high costs at the store, I estimate the range of costs to be from a minimum of \$200 to a maximum of \$450. The mean figure should be close to \$300.

If trapping activity is resumed after Christmas, more supplies have to be purchased. Trapping is resumed only if an adequate supply of caribou have been taken by Christmas. The certainty of caribou meat makes trappers willing to return with one-quarter of the food supplies and one-half of the shells they take before Christmas.

The Otter family went 168 miles into the Northwest Territories. This was twenty-eight air miles longer than the charter to their usual camp. This location was chosen because Thomas, the father of all the males in the group excluding the ethnographer, felt that there would be large numbers of white fox in 1970. The 1970 camp was at tree line.

The entire party that went into the bush consisted of three families. All were related to Thomas (Figure 2). Boniface maintained his own tent and purchased his supplies separately from his father. He paid for the Beaver charter that brought him and all the dogs. His father paid for the Otter charter. Louie

FIGURE 2
OTTER FAMILY STRUCTURE*



* Only named persons were on the trapline

was already in the Northwest Territories with his own supplies and dogs and joined his father in late August. Thomas, Boniface, and Louie all ran independent traplines.

A more complete list of what Thomas took for the trapping season as well as what Boniface brought is presented in Figure 3. (To guard against overestimating the weights, the ethnographer's dog's weight, ninety-five lbs., is not included.)

The group loaded the entire 2,770 pounds on the Otter at Stony Rapids. The aircraft was so overweight that the floats were entirely under water and the plane could not take off. The pilot required Boniface, eleven dogs, both toboggans and dog

FIGURE 3
WEIGHTS OF TRAPPING SUPPLIES

Thomas

<i>Item</i>	<i>Approximate weight</i>	
Food, shells & tobacco	567 lbs.	
Six dogs	240 lbs.	
Seven people	810 lbs.	
Tents & bedding	50 lbs.	
Rifles, axes, etc.	50 lbs.	
Toboggan & harness	75 lbs.	
Fishnet, etc.	30 lbs.	
Other hardware	25 lbs.	
Total	1,847 lbs.	1,847 lbs.

Boniface

Food, shells & tobacco	200 lbs.	
Five dogs	200 lbs.	
Three people	323 lbs.	
Tent & bedding	25 lbs.	
Rifle, axes, etc.	25 lbs.	
Toboggan & harness	75 lbs.	
Other hardware	25 lbs.	
Outboard motor & gas	50 lbs.	
Total	923 lbs.	923 lbs.
		2,770 lbs.

harnesses to be unloaded. Boniface and the dogs followed the next day by Beaver. The toboggans and harnesses were brought later by the pilot when he was on a hunting trip.

The initial cost of the supplies and transportation for the trapping season was \$1,238.80 (Fig 4). Of this amount, Thomas paid \$742.00 and Boniface paid \$516.80. The ethnographer paid for the aircraft and was reimbursed by Thomas and Boniface. Whatever extra Thomas purchased to allow for the ethnographer during the five weeks spent in the Northwest Territories was more than balanced by the fact that Thomas' supplies were inadequate to last until Christmas and the fact that the ethnographer consumed only flour of the items on the list. Boniface's purchases were unaffected by the ethnographer's presence.

At Christmas, 1970, Louie returned to Mission by dog and sent aircraft north for his father and brother. Each chartered a Beaver to return to Black Lake. This added \$268.80 to each of their costs for the 1970 trapping season, giving a total of \$1,010.80 for Thomas and \$785.60 for Boniface.

The largest group of *Yonthehotina* (two-thirds of the northern trappers; roughly 110 of their 178 dependents) have their camps on Selwyn Lake. This lake is only a \$95.00 to \$100.00 charter by Cessna 185 or \$160.00 by Beaver. Although other expenses are the same, this allows a saving of \$217.60 on Beaver charters. Selwyn Lake is within reach of Mission by dog team and a fair number of trappers make their initial entry into the bush by Cessna 185. This aircraft, on floats and with $\frac{3}{4}$ fuel, has a payload of 960 pounds.

FIGURE 4

COST OF SUPPLIES AND TRANSPORTATION

Otter Charter, round trip (168 miles each way @ \$1.25 per mile)	\$ 418.00
Beaver Charter, round trip (168 miles each way @ \$.80 per mile)	268.00
Supplies, Thomas	324.00
Supplies, Boniface (estimate)	248.00
Total Cost	\$1,238.80

Nine hundred and sixty pounds is not an adequate amount for a full trapping season. The problem of insufficient supplies at the time of initial entry is countered by making dog team trips to Mission for supplies after freeze-up.

The total cost for a season's trapping at Selwyn Lake is considerably less than for a season further north out of reach of Mission by dog team. (See Figure 5).

If a Cessna 185 is used, the cost for a season of trapping at Selwyn Lake can be reduced to \$500.00 or about half the cost to Thomas for the 1970 trapping season and the 5/7ths of the cost to Boniface for the same period. (See Figure 6.)

To get an absolute minimum figure for the cost of a trapping season on Selwyn Lake, we may use the minimum figure of

FIGURE 5
COSTS OF TRAPPING AT SELWYN LAKE

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Beaver Charter (Initial) Selwyn Lake	\$160.00
Beaver Charter (Christmas) Selwyn Lake	160.00
Supplies	300.00
Total	\$620.00
Useful load Cessna 185	1700 lbs.
Minus Pilot's weight	— 170 lbs.
Minus $\frac{3}{4}$ Fuel (45 gals @ 6 lbs./gal.)	— 270 lbs.
Payload	960 lbs.

FIGURE 6
SELWYN LAKE WITH 185 CHARTER

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Cessna 185 charter to Selwyn Lake (Initial)	\$100.00
Supplies	300.00
Cessna 185 charter to Selwyn Lake (Christmas)	100.00
Total	\$500.00

\$200.00 for supplies instead of the more reasonable figure of \$300.00. This gives a cost of \$400.00 for a season's trapping.

Having examined the costs involved in a season's trapping in the Northwest Territories, the question naturally arises as to the yield from a season's trapping.

It was not possible to get an entirely accurate measure of the yield of Thomas and Boniface for the 1970 trapping season. Both returned to Mission December 19, 1970, and sold their furs upon their arrival. The ethnographer did not return to Mission until December 23, 1970.

From talking to them and their families, it was found that Thomas made between \$180.00 and \$200.00 and Boniface made \$240.00. This left Thomas with a net loss of \$810.00 and Boniface with a net loss of \$545.60. The yield for a season's trapping was less than the cost of their charter air fare from the bush camp to Mission.

Bone, Shannon & Raby (1972:156) gathered statistics on the fur yield from D.N.R. for Saskatchewan and the R.C.M.P. for the Northwest Territories. They found the following yield per trapper for 1969-70:

Saskatchewan	N-24	\$222.08
Saskatchewan	N-80	\$177.80
Northwest Territories		\$533.85

The figures for the Northwest Territories include the kill of a white wolf poisoner, which was approximately \$7,500.00. This figure comes from gossip at Stony Rapids, but fits the fact that Louie quit trapping and was paid \$830.00 for skinning eighty-three wolves at \$10.00 each. The year 1969/70 was bad for the poisoner. He guessed the caribou would swing east and moved his operation correspondingly. He returned to his normal area and took the wolves mentioned above by Christmas. He said that his take in 1969/70 was less than half of normal when I talked to him in 1972. Obviously, the number of wolves killed, at \$60.00 to \$110.00 each, has a great bearing on the economic success of the season. No Chipewyan hunt wolves specifically.

The average trapper who keeps his costs to the absolute minimum has to expect an average loss during the trapping season

of a minimum of \$74.50. If we consider the Indians' estimate of their yield and a more reasonable cost figure (\$500.00), the average trapper can expect an average loss of at least \$174.50.

This loss can be much greater than the minimum figure shown in Figure 7, as is the case of Thomas and Boniface. It is impossible to conclude that trapping is, or is regarded as, a profitable economic activity.

FIGURE 7
ECONOMICS OF TRAPPING

Source	Expected Yield \$	Minimum \$ Cost	Net Loss \$
Bone, Shannon & Raby	533.85	400.00	+ 133.85
Bone, Shannon & Raby, corrected for white wolf poisoner	325.50	400.00	— 74.50
Native estimate of number of pelts	250.00	400.00	— 150.00

For the *Yonthehotina* to trap, they must work at wage labour during the summer. The income saved from the summer work is the source of cash used for charter aircraft. Supplies for the bush can be obtained through an advance payment of Rations — a partial payment far less than that which would be paid if the trapper remained in Mission during the trapping season.

Not only do the *Yonthehotina* lose money by trapping, they work during the summer to save up the money they will lose trapping. Without the welfare income for supplies, trapping would be impossible for them.

CONCLUSIONS

The persistence of trapping in the economy of the Mission Chipewyan represents two distinct adaptations. For the *Thulekayaratina*, trapping is a subsidiary activity that produces a cash income only as long as it is not pursued actively. Too

much success at trapping would result in a cut in Ration payments leaving the trapper with no gain for his effort.

For the *Yonthehotina* trapping is also a subsidiary interest. It is pursued not as a means of economic livelihood but as an adjunct to the hunting of caribou. Trapping is a means of minimizing the cost of pursuing a traditional way of life in the bush, removed from the white man and the pressures of Mission.

The single activity, trapping, thus functions in a dual manner for the *Yonthehotina* and the *Thulekayaratina*. For the *Thulekayaratina* trapping is a luxury producing adaptation to the white man and his welfare. For the *Yonthehotina* it is an expression of protest against the white man and his welfare; a protest that uses the white man's welfare and jobs to continue a traditional way of life.

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Conceptual Negativism in Chipewyan Ethnology¹

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article analyse certains des facteurs qui ont contribué au fait que la culture et la société Chipewya ont été décrites ou analysées au moyen de concepts négatifs tels que déculturation, désorganisation et désintégration. L'auteur soutient que de tels concepts viennent de la définition de la culture des chercheurs, de leur méthodologie et d'autres facteurs étrangers aux Chipewya. Ces concepts peuvent tout au plus nous donner un aperçu de l'adaptation des Chipewya à la société canadienne contemporaine et ils sont ethnocentriques et injustes envers les Chipewya.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists and Canadian Government researchers who have worked with the Chipewyan since the 1920's have given remarkably similar appraisals of these Indians' culture and society in terms of the concepts of "deculturation," "disorganization," and "disintegration." This may be gratifying to those who value inter-observer reliability, but these appraisals — while perhaps logically consistent and intellectually satisfying — fail to elaborate

¹ Portions of an earlier version of this paper were presented as part of a research proposal (Koolage 1969) and subsequently as a paper to the American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, New York, 1971. I am greatly indebted to John Honigsmann for reading and criticizing the early drafts of this paper and to Louise Sweet and James VanStone for their helpful advice on this most recent draft. However, I assume full responsibility for this paper.

the many ways in which the Chipewyan are adapting to changing socio-cultural conditions in northern Canada. In another respect, these appraisals have been rather ethnocentric and contribute very little to part of our expanding audience, namely the Chipewyan themselves who increasingly resent such characterizations.

If we grant that one of the principal aims of ethnology is the description or "translation" of a way of life into terms understood by others, we may in humanistic fashion analyze those factors which influence the anthropologists' cultural description (cf. Pocock 1961:88-89, Maquet 1964:47-55). Analysis of these cultural descriptions of the Chipewyan reveals that these negative concepts or labels applied to them are congruent with and to some extent derived from the authors' definitions of culture, the methods and techniques employed, and — in some cases — very extraneous factors such as requirements for M.A. theses, romantic notions of Chipewyan life, and/or marked disdain for contemporary Indian cultures.²

In this paper, I will attempt to elucidate how the concepts and/or labels of deculturation, disorganization, and disintegration have been employed and make some inferences as to why they have been utilized. I assume that the anthropologists described what they observed, but why did they see the Chipewyan as they did? I also assume that the concepts are logically consistent with the data presented, but assert that these concepts are not logically necessary with respect to the data.

I will first briefly review some pertinent studies of the Chipewyan, the formulation and usage of the concepts under discussion, and then make some inferences as to the factors influencing their utilization.

BRIEF REVIEW OF CHIPEWYAN STUDIES

Our first account of the Chipewyan is Samuel Hearne's *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the*

² It is important to note here that I am not trying to denigrate either the anthropologists concerned or their capable works, but I am attempting to reassess our ability to communicate in positive and meaningful ways with our expanding audience.

Northern Ocean which was first published in 1795. Hearne, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, was sent inland and north from Churchill "for the discovery of copper mines, a north-west passage, etc." and to promote trade with the "northern Indians" in 1769 (Hearne 1958). After two false starts, he set out for the Arctic Ocean accompanied by Chipewyan men and their wives. His journal of that trip and the appended section, "A Short Description of the Northern Indians, also a farther Account of their Country, Manufactures, Customs, Etc." (Hearne 1958:196) constitute the primary source we have of the "aboriginal" Chipewyan. Like other early explorers, he notes primarily those aspects of Chipewyan life which struck his curiosity and interest, such as acts of shamanism, methods of hunting, foods and their preparation, menstrual taboos, interpersonal relations, and the Chipewyans' relations with the Hudson's Bay Company. In some ways, it is perhaps the most "sympathetic" account we have of the Chipewyan in that Hearne describes behaviours, even though not congenial to him, in terms of the ingenuity with which they accomplished a goal, such as obtaining extra goods from the Hudson's Bay Company. This account is also enriched by Hearne's comparative comments on the Cree ("Southern Indians") and Eskimo.

In the period between Hearne and Birket-Smith, more than 150 years, we have no full or rich accounts of the Chipewyan. Among others, there are brief references to these Indians in the journals of explorers Turnor (1934), Fidler (1934), Thompson (1916), Mackenzie (1801), Macdonnell (Jenness 1956), Simpson (1843), and Richardson (1851). Petitot (1876) and Legoff (1889), both Roman Catholic priests, have given us descriptions of the language. Lowie (1912) and Goddard (1912) collected folktales, and the latter did an analysis of the language.

In 1923, Birket-Smith, as a member of the Fifth Thule Expedition, spent a month in Churchill collecting data on the Chipewyan to contribute to the lacunae of our knowledge of Northern Athapaskans and to add a different perspective to his primary goal, a study of the material and social culture of the Caribou Eskimo (Birket-Smith 1930:5). From the Chipewyan visiting the Hudson's Bay post at Churchill he collected information on material culture (that which he regarded as

"aboriginal") and some folktales. His monograph also contains information on social culture and religious beliefs which he obtained from the Right Reverend Arsene Turquetil, O.M.I., who had lived for some years with Chipewyan at Reindeer Lake. In the spirit of ethnographic reconstruction, Birket-Smith's "Contributions" is a rather full account of the "aboriginal" Chipewyan which draws heavily from Hearne and the other early explorers.

From the period 1930 until 1960 we have several journalistic accounts (cf. Harrington 1953) of the Chipewyan and June Helm's (MacNeish 1956) excellent reconstructions of kinship and leadership.

Walter Hlady worked among the Chipewyan in Churchill in 1959-1960 as a community development officer attempting to implement programs for them. His report (1959-60) on this program provides information on the Indians, especially the problems they faced at that time, but these are incidental to his description of the programs undertaken.

James VanStone's *The Snowdrift Chipewyan* (1965) is the product of two summers and a winter month of fieldwork in a small community at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake. As part of a larger study in acculturation in the Great Slave Lake-Mackenzie River Valley area, Snowdrift was chosen by VanStone "on the basis of its homogeneity and a low level of intensity of acculturative factors" (VanStone 1965:xiv). He states that "in order to understand all the operative factors [in the area's culture change], it would be necessary that subgroups or communities displaying all the differential effects of the historic acculturative continuum be discovered and made available for study" (1965:xiii).

VanStone uses essentially a descriptive ethnographic approach with special attention to history which includes prior accounts of the Chipewyan as well as events which influenced them, such as the fur trade. He also notes comparative materials from the area, for example, June Helm's description of the Lynx Point Slave (1961), and the special "problems" in Chipewyan and Athapaskan ethnography, such as Chipewyan social organization. His comparative framework is the Chipewyan in history and the contemporary Athapaskans in the area. With its discussions of the

environment, history, economy, life cycle, social structure, and religion, this is the richest account of contemporary Chipewyan that we have.

From approximately 1965 to 1967 Ravindra Lal worked for Community Development Services in Churchill as a Research Assistant and Staff Consultant. His two brief papers (1965, 1967) on the Chipewyan deal historically with their relocation to Churchill and the negative results of this process.

In the summer of 1966, I lived with the Chipewyan in Camp 10 while a fieldwork trainee at the University of North Carolina. Since it was a training session and there was little known of the contemporary Chipewyan resident there, I concentrated on gathering and reporting of ethnographic materials. In other words, there was little or no preconceived anthropological "sense of problem" which guided the gathering of data. I state that my thesis "is an attempt to describe... broadly and in natural history fashion an Athapaskan group living in an urban neighborhood" (Koolage 1967:1). At the time I wrote the above report, I considered and naively rejected using ethnohistorical and comparative Athapaskan materials for fear of unduly influencing the selection of data presented. What few comparative materials are used deal with the other ethnic groups in the area — Eskimo, Cree-Metis, and Eurocanadians — in terms of interaction between and stereotypes of the ethnic groups. While there is a rough conceptual scheme of culture put forth in the categorization of behaviours reported, the term "culture" is not used at all.

THE CONCEPTS OF DECULTURATION, DISORGANIZATION, AND DISINTEGRATION: THEIR FORMULATION AND USAGE

"Deculturation" as a term was introduced by Birket-Smith in discussing the contemporary (1923) Chipewyan at Churchill in a section of his report titled "General Impressions." In comparing the Caribou Eskimos to the Chipewyan, he finds the former

...often fairly well off according to their small standard, still possessing that self-reliance that is a consequence of the fact that connection with

an old, deeply rooted culture has been preserved, very impressionable, helpful, and almost always smiling. In contrast to them the Indians [Chipewyan]: timid, reticent towards strangers, afraid of lowering their dignity, poor, importunate to an incredible degree, and, according to report, not entirely innocent of being unreliable and thieving... their shyness, penchant for begging, etc., must in reality be regarded in the light of their general deculturation (Birket-Smith 1930:7-8).

He does not elaborate further on the contemporary Chipewyan or his view of their "deculturation" except to note difficulties in his answering a question of ethnographic reconstruction, namely, "What do the Caribou Eskimo possess that the Chipewyan lack?" The difficulty, it seems, lies in the fact that "the Chipewyan are much more decultured than their Eskimo neighbors and therefore have undoubtedly lost relatively much more of their original culture" (Birket-Smith 1930:105). For Birket-Smith, then, the term or concept of deculturation assumes neither primary nor secondary importance in his study of aboriginal Chipewyan culture; it is merely ancillary as is his interest in the contemporary Indians.

VanStone borrows the concept of deculturation from Bernard James' study of "The Socio-Psychological Dimensions of Ojibwa Acculturation" (James 1961). As VanStone utilizes it, deculturation is a "process" which "occurs... when the abandonment of an aboriginal culture trait is not replaced with a White cultural equivalent." (VanStone 1965:110). In his concluding chapter on "Chipewyan Acculturation" the concept is employed as an explanatory device to get from his descriptive materials to his conclusion that Snowdrift is "to some extent, a 'poor-White' type of subculture" economically and that it is similar to other "bush communities" "exhibiting a sort of bush culture that is duplicated many times in many places throughout the Canadian north" (1965:110-111). From his historically oriented view of Chipewyan culture, he finds very little at Snowdrift "that is distinctively Chipewyan" (VanStone 1965:111). However, in his comparisons with other contemporary bush communities in the area, he finds many "traits" that are common or similar to Snowdrift.

Lal employs the concept of disorganization (and disorder) in analyzing the conditions of juvenile delinquency, in-group violence, heaving drinking, lack of employment, and conflicts with the law. He feels these conditions are the result of poor

planning and communication with the Chipewyan on the part of the Indian Affairs Branch, and of the Chipewyans' being "hopelessly ill-equipped to function effectively in an urbanized environment." In essence, it was a case of "the blind leading the blind" (Lal 1967:7). Especially, he claims an association between the Chipewyans' use of alcoholic beverages and their disorganization. "In 1960 treaty Indians received the legal right to drink liquor. The consumption of beer and wine in Camp 10 soared. A progressive disorganization was the inevitable result." (Lal 1967:6).

Walter Hlady used what might be termed the descriptive label of disintegration in referring to the Chipewyan institutions of marriage and the family. In one passage he notes "...the clash in cultures has resulted in a gradual disintegration of family unity" (Hlady 1960:4). While he does mention changes in economic, marriage, and leadership patterns, little material is marshalled to support the above statement. It appears to be given so that the reader will understand some of the problems he encountered in the applied anthropology project.

The concept of social disintegration as formulated by Alexander Leighton (1969) and used by John Honigsmann (1966) was applied to the Chipewyan neighbourhood of Camp 10 by myself. Social disintegration supposedly exists when a "community or neighbourhood manifests a combination of the following characteristics: high frequency of broken homes, few and weak associations, few and weak leaders, high frequency of hostility, high frequency of crime and delinquency, and a weak and fragmented network of communication" (Leighton 1959:318-319; Koolage 1967:1). It is interesting that the unit of analysis is not called a "culture" but a segment of a society — in this case a neighbourhood.

When I said that this concept was "applied" to the Chipewyan, I meant just that. The concept did not grow out of the data but was borrowed from elsewhere to aid in understanding the relationship of Chipewyan to other indigenous people in the North. It was also applied to fulfill a tacit requirement of Masters' theses in that they are expected to have theoretical significance. With this in mind, we may note that the concept is used at the beginning of the report and in a short concluding chapter. "Dis-

integration" is neither used in the body of the report nor did it guide the research of the writing.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE UTILIZATION OF THE CONCEPTS

Several elements, which might broadly be called "methodological," are common to the studies under discussion and have a bearing upon or have influenced the usage of the labels of "deculturation," "disorganization," and "disintegration." The first of these is the generally short periods of fieldwork involved. These short periods of work seem prohibitive of building culture constructs demonstrating the "integrative" nature of functional interrelationships and for observing seldom occurring events. Another aspect of this is the relatively little depth of these studies. Hlady and Lal make no attempt at depth because of the problems they consider. Birket-Smith (1930:5-6) and I (1967:2-3) mention problems with interpreters and informants and there seems to be a tone of disappointment and frustration at attempts to get below the surface. None of the above authors are fluent in Chipewyan. These studies go little beyond the descriptions of "material" and "economic" culture and such behaviours as meet the eye.³

To examine more closely why these concepts have been employed, let us consider each study and author in turn. Birket-Smith seems to hold the view that a culture is the sum of its traits. In infer this from his preoccupation with trait distributions as seen in his work in the reports of the Fifth Thule Expedition. He is interested in diffusion, origins (of the Caribou Eskimo, for example), and what might be called historical geographical determinism (Birket-Smith 1930:5, 101-110; 1957:11-14). His focus was and still is the "aboriginal" culture (cf. Nelleman 1965:63). He has little interest in the contemporary cultures of Indians and Eskimos (cf. Birket-Smith 1965:55). With a definition of "*the*"

³ In an effort to correct some of these shortcomings, I have been encouraging and supporting efforts by the Churchill Chipewyan to *present themselves* to others through their artistry, video-tapes, and hopefully their own writings. I as an individual or anthropologist cannot do it. I feel as Edmund Carpenter does when he eloquently and passionately explains his own inability to express the "intense, beautiful revelations" that are man experiencing others (Carpenter 1965:55-56).

culture as being the sum of its pre-European traits, deculturation is logically consistent with the loss of those traits. But in ignoring what has been added to the culture, Birket-Smith leaves little room for alternative interpretations of the data he presents. Hypothetically, had he spent more time in Churchill, lived with the Chipewyan, and used a different definition of culture, he might have found "culture" instead of the lack of same. Hence I view the methods, approach, and interests of Birket-Smith as being factors conditioning his use of the term "deculturation" with respect to contemporary Chipewyan.

VanStone's broadly descriptive ethnography is less dependent upon his theory and approach than is Birket-Smith's. VanStone is definitely concerned with history: he says so (1965:xiii), the nature of his historically relevant comparative materials imply it, and a recent work, *Eskimos of the Nushagak River: An Ethnographic History*, indicates a continued interest in it. In borrowing the concept of deculturation from Bernard James (1961), he becomes analytically involved in counting trait distributions in a manner somewhat similar to Birket-Smith. However, in using the concept of deculturation as explanation and not as a rigid criterion for the selection of materials reported in the monograph, VanStone presents us with a descriptive account that lends itself to logical inferences other than those he proposes. For example, one might infer a continued aboriginal pattern of "atomism" in his description of community organization rather than a recent process of deculturation.

One might add that had another anthropologist studied the community he might have used a definition of culture that would lead him to a different culture construct characterized by cultural integration (cf. Valentine 1969). While comparable to other bush communities in the area in respect to some aspects of culture — such as economy — the Snowdrift community would also be characterized by its own distinctiveness. Having visited Brochet, Manitoba, which appears to be developmentally about half-way between Snowdrift and Churchill (on a small to complex social scale), I feel an intuitive validity to the above conjecture.⁴

⁴ In a recent unpublished manuscript, "The Emergence of the Micro-Urban Village among the Caribou Eater Chipewyan", Jim Smith has amply documented continuing Chipewyan cultural processes at Brochet, Manitoba.

Why did VanStone choose to apply the concept of deculturation to Snowdrift? From the above discussion I point in answer to his interests in the historical approach, the short field period, the attention to material and economic culture, and the influence of Jame's article on the Ojibwa.

Lal's community development work among the Chipewyan was in part characterized by attention to ethnohistory as well as mission-oriented attempts to outline future courses of action for community development to take. That he was not happy with the Indian Affairs Branch's moving the Chipewyan from Duck Lake to Churchill is apparent in both his papers, especially in "From Duck Lake to Camp 10: Old Fashioned Relocation." In both papers he compares Chipewyan life prior to the move to life after it and finds that the quality of life was much better at Duck Lake than at Churchill. Life at Duck Lake is noted as having strong leadership under a "charismatic" Chipewyan lay preacher, a homogeneous population, cooperation and sharing in common endeavours, and a lack of "parasitism" — or one person living "constantly on the goodness of others" (Lal 1965:4-5). Now Lal finds that "life has changed from the cooperative 'communism' of the past" and suffers from age group separation, weak leadership, poor communication, and heavy drinking, leading to uncontrolled behavior (1965:5-6).

I conclude that Lal's view of life at Duck Lake, anger at the Indian Affairs Branch, use of older informants, and work done predominantly in his office in town are influences in his use of the terms "disorganization" and "disorder."

Turning to Hlady's work on the Chipewyan, my inferences as to why he employed the term "disintegration" are based, in part, upon his mission orientation and his recent thesis work. Hlady did do much more ethnological work in Churchill than is reported in the community development paper. However, he was not fond of Churchill and found the conditions of fieldwork, including the governmental bureaucracy, rather difficult. Also, living at Fort Churchill, four miles from the Chipewyan neighbourhood, he worked during the coldest part of the year which limited his mobility (Hlady 1960:9, 15). In this and the fact that he has published papers in Manitoba archaeology I infer that he has an

historical approach or orientation. Why he used the concept of disintegration will become more apparent further on.

The "tacked on" quality of my own use of the concept of social disintegration at once suggests that other alternative analytical concepts might have been used. In briefly glancing over the materials presented and the tendency to focus upon what is often termed "problem" behaviour (heavy drinking, frequent court convictions, and low levels of employment) among the Chipewyan, the "appliqué" theory appears to be consistent with the data. Why was disintegration and not another concept employed? The construct appeared to be logical and intellectually satisfying. It had been used with regard to other northern communities (Honigsmann 1966) and thus had comparative value. In another sense, my then current interest in mental health and the concept's "diagnostic" value in identifying community units or neighbourhoods as high risk areas for "mental illnesses" were influential factors.

I thus point to my own interests in mental health and factors such as M.A. requirements as partial reasons for the use of the concept of disintegration. My early data do not necessarily eliminate other alternative negative conceptualizations, including deculturation. It would be possible, with the consideration of historical and other contemporary Athapaskan materials, to conceive of the Churchill Chipewyan neighbourhood as indeed "deculturated" (although sporadic fieldwork from 1968 to 1972 brought to my attention many "traits" I had formerly presumed lost, such as the hand game). However, to do so would require me to define Chipewyan culture as being the "aboriginal" culture only I am not prepared to do that.

Two other factors which influenced my finding social disintegration in Camp 10 were a bias against the rather "organized" violence found there in 1966 and my interaction with Indian elders who expressed fear and sorrow about living in this neighbourhood.

In summary, anthropologists dealing with the Chipewyan since 1923 have characterized them as being "deculturated," "disorganized," and "disintegrated." Birket-Smith's and Van-Stone's use of the concept of deculturation is a logical derivation of their interest in ethnographic reconstruction and ethnohistory,

their definition of Chipewyan culture as the "aboriginal" culture, their short periods of fieldwork, and their sense of disappointment at not finding more that was "traditionally" Chipewyan.

Hlady, Lal, and I employ "disintegration" and "disorganization" in describing the Chipewyan living in Churchill. All of us had contacts with the larger society of Euro-Canadians and learned the stereotypes of the Chipewyan which are prevalent in the community. In essence, we sought a whole culture — integrated and organized — according to traditional anthropological models as a reaction to these stereotypes, but we observed only pieces. We either did not spend enough time in or lived away from the neighbourhood and did not interact with it intensively enough to find such integration and organization as it might possess.⁵

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, I believe that I have demonstrated that recent anthropological studies of the Chipewyan have dealt with them negatively⁶ — at least in terms of analytic concepts and/or labels such as deculturation, disorganization, and disintegration. I have also shown that these concepts are not necessarily ones which are derived from the data without alternatives and that factors such as methodology, definition of culture, and even M.A. requirements have been instrumental in their usage.

⁵ Two recent comments on the contemporary Chipewyan in Churchill which are not dealt with in the text of this paper should be mentioned. R. M. Bone, in an editorial comment in *The Musk-Ox* remarks that: Here (in Churchill), these *primitive* people of the bush would have an opportunity to taste and adapt to modern urban living and a wage economy. Unfortunately these people did not adjust. Rather, they *lost whatever pride and purpose* they had in life. Today they are a *frustrated, despairing, and broken* group of Canadians (1969:1, emphasis mine—wk).

Phil Dickman, a community development officer, notes that: ...alcohol and prostitution have played hell with these people for their culture had no worthy defence against these vices ...this *sick community* of Chipewyan Indians sadly represents a modern day tragedy (1969:22, emphasis mine—wk).

Both of these authors see elements of Chipewyan society and/or culture as being deficient or pathological. However, Dickman does note the influence of government policies and the larger Churchill society as being responsible for the Chipewyan's position today.

⁶ For a similar appraisal of the concepts of deculturation and proletarianization, see Honigsmann 1969.

Do these conceptualizations of Chipewyan culture communicate to the Chipewyan, or for that matter, to other Euro-Canadians or anthropologists? I suppose they do but in a negative and perhaps not very scientific manner. Chipewyan who utilize gossip as a major source of social control understand.

Chipewyan ethnology has not progressed very far from the 1930's. We have no psychological studies or "ethnoscience" analyses to elucidate the "cognitive maps" of the Chipewyan, nor are there any reasonably inferred world views put forth. We have no life histories of Chipewyan; Hearne's discussion of his friend and guide, Matonnabee, is the best we have in this regard. Ecological studies are just now coming into print (e.g., Jim Smith 1973) and offer promising new and less biased views of the Chipewyan. But while the ecological approach will open new analyses of the Chipewyan, will communicate more precisely with other scholars, and may even be of utility in Chipewyan land claims, they will probably be as bloodless and devoid of feeling as my own recent work on statistical analysis of multi-ethnic adaptive patterns. Who will write of the Chipewyan in humanistic or socio-political⁷ terms which communicate with the Chipewyan, the non-native layman, and the anthropologist. Anthropologists will take care of themselves, but it will probably be the Chipewyan and artistic young people who will do the most to present the Chipewyan as human beings with a living culture and society. Anthropology has not presented this facet of Chipewyan. In the light of past studies, I think it is one we need.

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Cognitive Research among the Eskimo: A Survey

GEORGE M. GUILMET

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur présente une définition de la capacité cognitive. Il fait une revue des approches anthropologiques et surtout psychologiques à l'étude de la cognition chez les Eskimo. Les problèmes méthodologiques des vérifications interculturelles chez les Eskimo sont soulignés et une autre stratégie de recherche est proposée. Finalement, la relation entre les stratégies de subsistance et la capacité cognitive est mise en lumière.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper will be to review anthropological and especially psychological approaches to the study of cognition within various Eskimo cultures, and to propose an alternative research methodology.¹ A universally acceptable definition of cognition is difficult to come by, but, for the purpose of this paper, cognitive skills are either skills of the perceptual apparatus or skills of the problem-solving, thought-processing apparatus.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

Ethnographers have generally taken informants' naturally occurring and elicited statements as representing thought processes. Birket-Smith on this basis has claimed that Eskimo logic differs from that of Westerners. To support his contention he presents

¹ I wish to thank my advisers L.L. Langness, W.H. Oswalt, D.R. Price-Williams and R.B. Edgerton for their assistance and encouragement during the preparation of this manuscript. I also wish to thank the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute, Socio-Behavioral Group, Mental Retardation and Child Psychiatry Research Program for making this research possible. Finally, a thank-you is extended to the National Institute of Child Health and Development for the Traineeship, USPHS Grant No. HD-04612, which provided the necessary financial support.

a "Polar Eskimo's" statement explaining why the bear hunt was not successful.

There are no bears, because there is no ice, and there is no ice, because there is too much wind, and there is too much wind, because we have offended the powers (1959:51).

Birket-Smith argues that "...the illogical element only turned up in his train of thought when his experience failed (1959:51)." Given, however, that the "powers" control the winds and that the "powers" are vengeful when offended, the argument is logical even though it may not be rational. Non-rational explanations are given by individuals from virtually all ethnic groups whenever the limits of personal experience are exceeded. An example of rational thinking within the limits of experience is Peter Freuchen's account of the amorous adventures of his Greenland Eskimo friend Loo-te-vek.

He saw Orfik pay the attending midwife eight kroner for her services, and his business sense once more took hold of him. His mind began to work.

"Why," he figured, "should I ever marry a woman whose every child will cost me eight kroner? It is much better — is it not? — to marry a woman who receives eight kroner any time a baby is born?"

So Loo-te-vek, without any wild talk and without any coffee party, quietly married the midwife (1961:303).

Ethnographers have frequently characterized Eskimo thought processes as concrete rather than abstract. Birket-Smith for example stated that the universal and more abstract words are lacking in Eskimo languages.

It is another primitive trait that, despite the crowd of proper names, the universal and more abstract words are lacking. For instance, there is no term for snow in general in Eskimo; but only specific terms for the various forms of snow (Birket-Smith, 1959:60).

Carpenter (1955) has similarly stated that Aivilik Eskimos do not reckon distance by abstract units of measure.

Thus Aivilik do not reckon distance between points by miles or other abstract, inflexible units of measure, but regard it as fluctuating, related always to climate, society, religion. A traveller will say a trip took so many 'sleeps', and thus describe space in terms of time. This involves more than just 'distance'; it includes such variables as weather, snow, topography and weight on the sled, as well as effort and skill (Carpenter, 1955:133).

In contrast, Briggs (1970) described Utku Eskimo concepts of emotion as highly generalized, even though they were not directly comparable with emotion concepts in English. Take for example the word *naklik*, which Briggs glossed as "to feel or to arouse concern for another's emotional welfare; to wish or to arouse the wish to be with another." When asked for a definition Briggs' informant stated that the word referred to the desire to feed someone who was hungry, to protect someone who was in danger of physical injury, and to warm someone who was cold. Nelson (1969) has stated that Alaskan Eskimos from Wainwright, Barrow, and Point Hope seem to have an unspoken concept of "percentage risk." Thus they do not risk traveling out on ice when they can foresee any chance of drifting away, breaking through the ice crust or being trapped for extensive periods of time by severe storms. Unsafe circumstances are recognized beforehand and probable consequences are foreseen. A probability model of the risks involved in alternate travel and hunting strategies requires the abstraction of general rules from the infinite combinations of concrete conditions which appear in the environment. A similar model must accompany the folk knowledge regarding the probable occurrence of game relative to season, the prey's food supply, geography, the range of weather conditions and the prey's daily habits.

Ethnographic data concerning perceptual abilities has consisted primarily of observational reports. Nelson (1969) concluded that the aforementioned Alaskan North Coast Eskimos were able to:

- 1) detect slight cracks in ice in order to keep from being stranded on an icepack which could break up and drift out upon the ocean.
- 2) observe the subtle patterns of light and dark made on clouds by light reflected from water, ice and land in order to predict weather conditions.
- 3) perceive and memorize minute geographical detail in order to navigate on seemingly featureless tundra.

Many ethnographers have reported that the Eskimos they encountered could read and/or draw maps accurately (King, 1848; Rasmussen, 1931; Carpenter 1955; Carpenter et al., 1959;

Briggs, 1970). Carpenter (1955) and Briggs (1970) reported that the groups they observed had the ability to comprehend rotated objects or rotated visual patterns.

Visual memory is another cognitive ability which has been frequently observed by ethnographers to be highly developed among various Eskimo groups. Efficient visual memory skills are suggested by the previously discussed ability to draw accurate maps, to predict ice flow movements, weather conditions and game appearance, and to navigate over seemingly featureless tundra (Marshall 1933; Carpenter, 1955; Ryan, 1965; Nelson, 1969; Briggs, 1970). About 70 per cent of responding Alaskan Eskimo teachers from village schools thought their students to possess the unusual ability to observe and remember visual detail (Kleinfeld, 1970).

Ethnographers have often reported that Eskimos create innovative solutions to complex mechanical problems (Foster, 1969; Nelson, 1969). Carpenter (1955) stated that Aivilik men were first-class mechanics and delighted in stripping down and reassembling engines, watches and all machinery. Working with the simplest tools they made replacement parts of metal and ivory to repair instruments which American mechanics had abandoned in despair (Carpenter, 1955:141). Oswalt (1963) reported the presence of mechanical aptitude and improvisation under the circumstances where an owner could not travel efficiently until a motor was repaired. However, watches, clocks and radios were not fixed and "mechanical geniuses" were not present in this community (Oswalt, 1963:105).

Ethnographers have compiled a wealth of information regarding the ecological and cultural bases of Eskimo cognitive skill, but they have not systematically dealt with cognition. Concepts such as rationale, logic, abstraction, concreteness, perception, foresight, genius and innovation have not been explicitly defined nor consistently applied. Psychologists have collected completely different kinds of data in their attempts to assess cognition. Psychological tests have been the major information gathering devices used. What follows, therefore, is a review and a critique of the results of applying among the Eskimo those psychological tests which have been constructed to analyze cognitive skills.

EARLY ATTEMPTS AT CROSS-CULTURAL TESTING

The earliest testing of isolated Eskimos reported very poor performance by Alaskan Eskimo children on both the Goodenough Draw-A-Man and the Stanford-Binet tests (Eells, 1933a & b; Anderson and Eells, 1935). Confident in their methodology the authors boldly stated that "Environment has little effect on the intelligence quotient; heredity as indicated by varying degrees of blood purity [as compared with the pure White Race] is a very significant factor (Eells, 1933a:437)." However, Marshall gave Stanford-Binet, Shimberg-Lowe, and Goodenough Draw-A-Man tests to a small group of Eskimo children living around Wiseman, Alaska, in proximity to Westerners, and found that young Eskimo children scored markedly above test norms and that older children scored at appropriate norms (1933:78-82).

DRAW-A-MAN TESTS

Levensky (1970) has confirmed Marshall's finding for the Goodenough Draw-A-Man test in that young Alaskan Eskimo children scored slightly above test norms and older children scored at appropriate norms. Vernon (1966, 1969) found that Canadian Eskimo boys, average age of 11 from Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, performed above test norms on Witkin's test with most of the boys drawing realistic seal-hunting scenes. Further, the same Eskimo boys scored close to but slightly below test norms on Goodenough's task. Harris (1963) in contrast found consistent superiority in Alaskan Eskimo children's scores on the Draw-A-Man test. However, these tests were sent to Harris by village teachers who may not have included poorer drawings. Preston, who administered Wechsler-Bellevue Performance subtests, Rorschach's, Thematic Apperception, and Eskimo figure drawing tests to Alaskan Eskimo subjects states "...the request to draw a picture of a person provoked the widest and richest variety of responses from these subjects (1964:379)." Dr. John Vogel evaluated Preston's Eskimo figure drawings by Goodenough's standards and found a very high degree of correlation between the resulting I.Q. scores and Wechsler I.Q. scores:

The correspondence between these two measures of intellectual level among Eskimo subjects seems to me extremely interesting and encour-

ages me to feel that in both their figure drawings and in their handling of three Wechsler Performance subtest [Block Design, Object Assembly and Digit-Symbol], we may have legitimate instruments for exploring further Eskimo intellectual potentialities (Preston, 1964:388).

If figure drawing tests are sensitive to skills which naturally occur in Eskimo culture, in what form do these skills appear and how are they learned? Preston's Eskimo sample lived from the Kuskokwim River to Point Barrow along the Alaskan coast. Within this region Oswalt reports the following practice:

Play activities are numerous and vary both with the setting and with the age group involved. One type, however, that of telling a story and simultaneously illustrating it in the mud, dominates the activity of girls from the time they are toddlers until they are married and sometimes continues until they are fully adult women...

The stories are told in Eskimo by one girl to one or two listeners, and the drawing is done with a stick, a table knife, or occasionally a wooden or ivory 'story-knife,' on any smooth, moist surface of the ground. The basic drawing is often an outline of a house, with lines marking off the beds and figures drawn in outline for the characters. When any change of action is related, this drawing is obliterated by rubbing and a new setting is drawn. If the only change is a speech, the storyteller makes numerous taps with her drawing implement on or near the head of the figure who is supposed to be speaking. Drawings may be made of houses, boats, sleds, hills, berry patches, or people; the storyteller may draw sketchily or methodically. A typical story is told in a few minutes, but occasionally one story may last an hour or more. Stories may be drawn outdoors in mud or snow or indoors on mud smoothed onto a board. Women begin teaching their daughters to draw when they are two or three and continue telling them stories for several years. A few boys younger than six draw, but older boys are not usually storytellers (Oswalt, 1963:34-35).

This drawing practice, more fully described in Oswalt (1964) and Ager (1971), may account for part of the measured figure-drawing ability of the Eskimos. According to Oswalt the male does not practice this skill as much as the female, thus, males should show a poorer performance at the draw-a-person task. In fact Preston reports a much lower performance on the part of the male with much less attention paid to form (1964:385). Preston also used this figure drawing task successfully as a projective test. That this task might tap for some Eskimo groups attributes of personality as well as naturally occurring cognitive skills suggests the consideration of this device.

VISUAL MEMORY TESTS

Canadian Eskimo children (9-15.5 years of age) from Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk scored almost as well as "Whites" on standardized English spelling tests despite the Eskimo children's lack of proficiency in other English skills (MacArthur, 1968). This result may be due to highly developed visual memory skills in these Eskimo children.

Kleinfeld (1971) found that Alaska village Eskimo children scored significantly higher than the urban "White" children on a visual memory test (Sullivan, undated). MacKinnon (1972), in contrast, found Caucasians superior to Hudson Bay Eskimos on a modified version of the visual memory test. MacKinnon's subject selecting techniques and sample sizes have been questioned by Kleinfeld (1973a). It is disturbing that in the same review Kleinfeld does not attend to the ecological, cultural or cognitive differences within the set of groups labelled Eskimo. She treats all such communities as if they were interchangeable. In so doing she has ignored a broad spectrum of ecological and cultural diversity which must contribute to a broad spectrum of cognitive abilities. MacKinnon recognizes the danger in premature generalizations:

He who dares to draw definitive conclusions from transcultural research is bold indeed... it is dangerous to generalize from any isolated community to the whole Eskimo culture from Alaska to Greenland... It may be extremely important to look at variables such as degree of acculturation, population homogeneity, psychosocial integration and economic viability of communities, and even nutritional intake, before we arrive at crosscultural inferences. To conclude that the Eskimo is inferior or superior per se on any given dimension, without considering the dynamic changes occurring within that culture would lead us into precisely the same trap which Jensen and his proponents have laid for themselves with regard to the intellectual status of black Americans (1972:304).

It is clear that in most cross-cultural studies of cognition the nature of one or more of the behavioral units involved is treated like a black box. Non-Western culture, Western culture, Western school and non-school are gloss terms with little more sophistication than Primitive or Civilized. Such classifications are used either because the user does not bother or does not know how to be more precise when classifying cultural phenomena. To de-

fine precisely a generalized term such as Eskimo one must systematically collect and classify a great body of detailed cultural information. Murdock (1961) has provided the cultural categories that would permit such an analysis yet we continue to seek a single educational and developmental plan that would work for all "Eskimos" from Siberia to Greenland. Cross-cultural psychologists must become more attentive to psychological effects of cultural and ecological differences.

VISUAL DISCRIMINATION AND MÜLLER-LYER SUSCEPTIBILITY

One research approach to Eskimo cognition which has treated cultural units more precisely is the ecological and developmental theory of John Berry. Berry (1966, 1969) tested Baffin Island Eskimos, the Temne of Sierra Leone and Scots on a number of different visual discrimination tasks which rate the ability of the subject to pay attention to and retain fine detail in visually presented figures. In all tasks the Eskimos tested were much more aware of slight variations in their visual environment than either the Temne or the Scots. Berry like Kleinfeld gives very little warning about possible variations within different Eskimo groups. Indeed, in some of Berry's articles the specific Eskimo group tested is rarely mentioned (1969, 1971a). However, unlike Kleinfeld, Berry tries to find the relationships between measured cognitive skills and the cultural and ecological environments in which they develop. In so doing Berry has gone beyond a black box view of culture to examine more precisely the ontogeny of cognitive processes within particular environments.

Berry (1968, 1971a) found that of 10 ethnic groups sampled only the Scots were more susceptible to the Müller-Lyer Illusion than the Baffin Island Eskimo. MacKinnon (1972) similarly found that Caucasian pupils in an urban area in Saskatchewan were more susceptible to this illusion than Eskimo pupils of Rankin Inlet on Hudson Bay. Degree of susceptibility has been hypothesized to be related both to environment and degree of pigmentation of the Fundus Oculi (Berry:1971a). The particular causes of Müller-Lyer susceptibility remain unclear, however, at least an attempt is being made to discover the contextual causes of the measured results.

EMBEDDED FIGURES TESTS

Baffin Island Eskimos scored significantly higher than the Temne and as well as the Scots on a subtest of Witkin's Embedded Figures Test with Westernized Eskimos producing higher scores (Berry, 1966). MacArthur (1968) found that Canadian Eskimo pupils at Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, about 1800 miles from Berry's sample, scored slightly lower than Western students on Vernon's Embedded Figures Test. Vernon (1969) produced the same result on another Eskimo sample from Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk. MacKinnon (1972), however, found no significant differences between Rankin Inlet Eskimo students and Caucasian pupils in Saskatchewan using the abbreviated form of the Witkin's test.

These results would be much more useful if the researchers had used the same tests and testing procedure, and if they had conducted systematic ecological and cultural surveys on each of the groups sampled. Berry and MacKinnon attempt to introduce environmental variables into hypotheses describing cognitive systems. Their observations of relevant cultural processes are promising but not nearly extensive enough.

DESIGN REPRODUCTION AND OBJECT ASSEMBLY TASKS

Berry (1966) found that a traditional group of Baffin Island Eskimos scored significantly lower than the Scottish comparison group on Kohs Blocks while a transitional group, averaging three years of education, scored equally as well. In both the traditional and transitional comparisons the Eskimo surpassed the Temne. Preston (1964) reported that Alaskan Eskimos with less education than a Caucasian comparison group scored equally as well on the Block Design subtest of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS). Foster (1969) confirmed Preston's findings for Alaskan Eskimos. Vernon (1969) reports a slightly lower median performance by Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk Eskimo boys on this test, however their schooling was often delayed or irregular. Finally, Forbes (1971) and Feldman (1971) found that Alaskan Eskimo children, who had attended village schools for the same length of time as Western agemates, scored significantly higher than test norms.

It is interesting to observe that the cognitive literature again classifies Eskimo communities into gross geographical, ecological and cultural units. Little attention has been paid to the effects of acculturative, ecological, subsistence, linguistic, social-system, and child-rearing diversity on cognitive functioning within the broad range of peoples labelled as Eskimo. In a rare exception Preston (1964) noted a systematic difference in test performance on the Block Design, Object Assembly and Digit-Symbol subtests of the WAIS between the Alaskan North Coast Eskimos and the Alaskan River Eskimos. On all three tests the River Eskimos performed significantly lower than the Coast Eskimos with by far the greatest difference occurring on the Digit-Symbol subtest.

In conversations with teachers and nurses, I encountered the opinion that the North Coast Eskimos are thought to cope with life more 'intelligently' or to be less 'primitive' than the Eskimos living along the Yukon or Kuskokwim Rivers. This opinion seems to be based on the observation that the river Eskimos are inferior in cultural accomplishment, enterprise, and adapt more slowly to white man's values... It appears to be the low scores on the Digit-Symbol subtest that account for most of the discrepancy... Actually, all the Eskimo subjects did more poorly on this test than people of our culture. This test, however, requires facile use of a pencil, and speed is the essential ingredient in the ultimate score. From my observation, I had reason to believe that the river Eskimos were less comfortable in pencil manipulation than the coast Eskimos and were even more leisurely in their approach to this particular test (Preston, 1964:352).

The Eskimos in the Kuskokwim-Yukon delta have experienced far less contact with outside influences than the North Coast Alaskan Eskimos (Federal Field Committee, 1968; Oswalt, 1965). According to a 1960 census, Eskimos in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta average over 3 years less schooling than the North Coast groups (Federal Field committee, 1968). Knowing that such variation occurs within a small part of Alaska, the current practice of directly comparing test results on all Eskimo groups is highly questionable.

The mean combined scores of Alaskan North Coast and River Eskimos on the Object Assembly subtest of the WAIS were above test norms with the very best scores being produced by the young (Preston, 1964). Likewise, Lantis (1968) reports that adolescent and young adult Eskimo males performed on a

similar Block Assembly test at the same level as Harvard undergraduates, whose nonverbal intelligence is presumably higher than that of the general population.

MAZE TESTS AND MORRISBY SHAPES TEST

Kunce, Rankin and Clement (1966) report that Alaskan Eskimo Adults performed slightly below test norms on Peter's Circular Mazes. However, the subgroup from this same sample having a high school education performed substantially higher. Vernon (1969) found that the median performance of Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk Eskimo boys on Porteus Mazes was lower than an English comparison group, but, the Eskimo students frequently had delayed or irregular schooling. Finally Caucasian pupils in Saskatchewan were found to outperform Hudson Bay Eskimo students on the Porteus Mazes (MacKinnon, 1972). MacKinnon questions the significance of these results and suggests caution in drawing generalizations from cross-cultural research.

Berry (1966) found that both traditional and transitional Baffin Island Eskimo groups surpassed Scots and especially Temne performances on Morrisby Shapes. This result conforms with observations that some Eskimos have the ability to comprehend rotated visual configurations (Carpenter, 1955; Briggs, 1970).

CLASSIFICATION AND PIAGETIAN TASKS

Reich (1966) tested 20 Eskimo and 20 "White" pupils in Anchorage Alaska on a modification of Piaget's Equivalence task. In terms of structure, the developmental trends of Eskimo and "White" children were alike. That is, the proportion of "superordinate groupings" increases and that of "complexes" decreases with age. However, Reich found that Eskimo children formed fewer "superordinate groupings" than "White" children of corresponding age. This finding was attributed to the Eskimos' traditional emphasis on "the concrete individuality" of physical objects. Berry (1966) reinforced this conclusion by finding that, despite equivalent visual acuity, Baffin Island Eskimos were

significantly more aware of slight variations in the visual environment than the Temne or Scots.

Vernon (1969) tested 50 Eskimo boys living or boarding at Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk on a related sorting task (Goldstein and Scheerer, 1941). These Eskimo boys of average age 11 attained a median score slightly above test norms. Vernon discounts these results by stating that "...This task depends little on linguistic capacity or on level of conceptual development (1969:205)."

On a battery of tasks derived from Piaget's writings, Vernon's Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk sample was found to score well below test norms based on "White" norms (1969). True to form Vernon attributes this finding to the "...severe constriction of intellectual development by the unstimulating atmosphere..." of Eskimo homes and reservations (1969:205). Vernon's negative view of cultural environments other than those of "Whites" severely handicaps the usefulness of his research. Berry's research, which searches for cognitive, cultural and ecological differences, is less culturally biased in this regard.

MacArthur (1968) presents some of Vernon's data on the Piagetian tasks:

TABLE 3

MEAN *T*-SCORES ON PIAGET TASK, BASED ON WHITES AGE 9¹

Tasks	EskY Subsample	Edmonton ² Whites
Time Concepts	62	50
Number Concepts	62	50
Logical Inclusion	54	50
Equidistant Counters	55	50
Conserv. Length Rods	58	50
Conserv. Amt. Plasticine	57	50
Conserv. Area	59	50
Conserv. Vol. Liquid	51	50
Embedded Figures (Vernon)	53	50
Position & Size Shadow	45	50
Visualizing Insect	48	50
Water in Titled Bottle	45	50

¹ Edmonton White means are 50, *SD* 10, for each test.

² Within groups, a difference of 3 may be considered significant at the .05 level, very approximately.

The EskY subsample is Vernon's (1969) Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk sample of 50 Eskimo boys of average age of 11. The Edmonton Whites are mixed male and female of average age 9, therefore, comparisons across rows are not very meaningful. However, variation down columns shows that the Eskimo boys did best on the Time Concepts and Number Concepts tasks. These results along with high scores on perceptual tasks leads MacArthur to state:

Characteristics of tests least badly meeting the criteria set up for measures of Intelligence A' appear to be: — (a) the items form something of an age-scale sampling stages in the development of cognition, starting with perception-dominated items, and proceeding through reversible concrete operations to propositional or formal operations; — (b) they use as stimuli symbols which, though dependent on learning are likely to be learned in a variety of cultures; — (c) arrangement of items in the test itself forms a crudely-programmed sample of learning-on-the-spot. These suggest three directions in which continued basic research may aid considerably with the practical problems of assessing the general intellectual potential of individual candidates from other cultures to adapt to more technological ways of living (1968:49).

Feldman et al. (1974) have tested 67 North Slope Alaskan Eskimos on a series of tasks, derived from Piaget, which seem to meet MacArthur's three attributes. Two very different sets of stimulus materials, colored blocks and pictures of wild animals, were used to create structurally identical versions of this new test.

The Colored Blocks Test was administered to 67 North Slope Eskimos during the summer of 1971. This test was designed in order to investigate the congruence of the performance of Eskimo children and adolescents with some of Piaget's basic hypotheses: that cognitive development is hierarchical; that is, that it follows a logically invariant sequence of staged abilities. For this purpose five cognitive operations were defined: (a) completing a matrix by attending to one set of relations between attributes (Section 1 of the test); (b) completing a matrix by coordinating two sets of relations between attributes (Section 2); (c) identifying the operation performed on a set of relations between attributes (Section 3); (d) operating on a set of relations between attributes (Section 4); and (e) operating on operations (Section 5) (Feldman et al., 1974:73, manuscript copy).

In addition to the Colored Blocks Test, there is a test which is a cultural analogue to Sections 1, 2, and 4 of the blocks test. The stimulus materials are drawing of arctic animals, approximately 2" x 2". The

entire stimulus set consists of two values for each of two dimensions. The two dimensions are the true size of the animals and their natural habitats. The two values of size are large and small, and the two values of natural habitat are land and sea. The large sea animals were whales or walruses; the small sea animals were seals or fish; the large land animals were bears; and the small land animals were foxes (Feldman et al., 1974:69, manuscript copy).

The first hypothesis tested is that the appearance of cognitive abilities follows a logically invariant sequence. Out of 32 possible patterns of response, 63% of the subjects fell into one of the six predicted patterns. The second hypothesis predicts that cognitive abilities will appear in stages. Some evidence to support this hypothesis appeared, however, "...none of the age groups performed correctly on Section 5 above the average predicted by chance... (Feldman et al., 1974:82, manuscript copy)." The authors conclude:

The universality of the staging and sequencing hypotheses is not established in the present study. Nonetheless, the sequence is shown to emerge... The predicted sequence does not describe all subjects; however, it is obtained far more often than any random model might predict. And it is obtained more often in an analogue form... [that is with the pictures of animals] (Feldman et al., 1974:115, manuscript copy).

Feldman et al. are caught in between two theoretical points of view. Initially, they tried to prove the occurrence of universal developmental stages and sequences. Where Eskimos failed to conform to predicted patterns the authors attribute the variance to cultural factors. For example, Feldman et al. suggest that the inability of Eskimos to perform section 5 of the test is due to their inability to linguistically represent complex and specific abstract ideas.

Eskimo children in the generation tested here are described by their parents as unskillful speakers of Inupiat. They are described by their teachers, as well as by standard measures, as unskillful speakers of English as well. Their English is fluent in the sense that they readily express ordinary events and desires; however, it is simple and undifferentiated and it is difficult for Eskimo children to express complex ideas, or new ideas, or abstract ideas, with any degree of exactness. Structurally their language is a reduced version of standard English. In this respect it is not very different from the usual characterization of Pidgin languages, although Eskimo English is not usually considered to be a pidgin (Feldman et al., 1974:109, manuscript copy).

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS WITH CROSS-CULTURAL TESTING

Throughout this paper numerous criticisms of cross-cultural testing among the Eskimo have been put forth. Those criticisms will now be reviewed and others which are relevant will be discussed.

1) Except for rare instances, all Eskimo groups have been assumed to be identical in terms of ecological context, acculturative status, subsistence base, social organization, psychological orientation and especially cognitive style. The attribute variations within "Caucasian", "White" or "Western" comparison groups have likewise been ignored.

2) Some researchers explained poor performances by Eskimos in terms of the "culturally deprived" or "culturally disadvantaged" nature of their cultural environment rather than in terms of the limitations of culturally biased tests. Researchers are bold indeed, who condemn all "Non-Western" cultures on the basis of the extremely minute cultural knowledge gained from cross-cultural test results. As Berry has said, concepts such as "...culturally deprived" or 'culturally disadvantaged'... have no valid place in a society guided by an ideology of cultural pluralism (1971c:145)."

3) Psychologists have assumed the cognitive abilities of all Eskimo peoples to be perceptual, figural, spatial, and visual because of good performances on non-verbal tests and because of poor performances on verbal tests conducted in English. However, not one psychologist has published the results of culturally sensitive verbal tests based on and conducted in native languages to see whether or not verbal abstraction occurs among skillful native speakers. The non-verbal, concrete style that psychologists have attributed to life in the north may be an artifact of tests conducted and dependent on competence in a recently introduced language.

For children in a community where the parent generation, the expressers of complex ideas, usually speak a different language to them than the children speak among themselves... [the development of] a grammar and vocabulary sufficiently differentiated to permit encoding of complex and specific, abstract ideas... may fail to evolve (Feldman et al., 1974:108, manuscript copy).

4) Eskimos, especially young males, have become increasingly antagonistic to any sort of testing and research, which they view as another form of White exploitation (Kleinfeld, 1973a). Co-operation, if at all, may be perfunctory, resulting in extremely low test scores (Feldman and Bock, 1970). Kleinfeld (1973b) has found that nonverbally communicated personal warmth on the part of the ethnographer improves test performances. Finally, Eskimos may find it difficult to view a trivial, pointless task, whether verbal or non-verbal, as worthy of serious concentration and maximum effort (Kleinfeld, 1973a).

5) Performances by Eskimos on standardized tests may be lowered because of their unfamiliarity with test form, test conventions and stimulus materials. Eskimos, especially males, have been socialized into extreme caution before making a judgement (Kleinfeld, 1973a). The hunter is taught never to take risks, never to call out a hasty evaluation because the penalty can be swift death not only for himself but also for others who rely on his decision (Nelson, 1969). Error may result in social ridicule (Kleinfeld, 1973a). Especially more traditional Eskimos tend to have a slow, cautious response style which may depress their scores on speeded figural tests (Preston, 1964). Power rather than speed tests may be better indicators of Eskimos' figural abilities (Kleinfeld, 1973a).

6) Psychologists have ignored the effects of poor dietary conditions on measured cognitive skills. Miss Commons, the teacher in Newtok Alaska, explains a situation which may be typical.

Some children come to school hungry; they hop out of bed and come right to school. And the juice and graham crackers, although served regularly, are not an adequate replacement for breakfast. The school lunch is not always sufficient to make up for the lack of breakfast either (Alaska, 1970:47).

7) Psychologists have ignored the effects of other negative health conditions on measured cognitive skills. Again, the Newtok teacher explains.

Hunger also was combined with fatigue in this village. The children decided their own bedtime and often stayed up until 10:00 p.m., playing or attending movies (Alaska, 1970:48). Hearing problems were a primary cause of low educational achievement... ten to forty percent of

the school population has draining ears or other hearing problems. Often ear damage occurs before the child reaches school, and consistent medical care for ear infections is difficult. With hearing problems, it is doubly hard for a child to learn a second language (Alaska, 1970:52).

FUTURE RESEARCH STRATEGY

Thus far, information describing Eskimo cognitive abilities has been of two general types. Ethnographers have gathered elaborate cultural information but have not attempted to systematically deal with cognition. Psychologists have both defined cognition and developed devices for its measure, but, have displayed a superficial understanding of the cultural context in which cognition develops.

Fieldwork techniques which have the ability to assess the nature and context of cognitive development have been created, but have not been applied in any Eskimo community. Michael Cole and his colleagues, anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists, have pioneered a theoretical and methodological approach to understanding cognitive development (Gay and Cole, 1967; Cole, Gay and Glick, 1968; Cole, Gay, Glick and Sharp, 1971; Cole and Gay, 1972; Cole and Scribner, 1974). Price-Williams, Edgerton and Gallimore have applied a closely related approach which they have labelled "ecology of competence (1972-74)." This program combines naturalistic observation and *ad hoc* experiments in the field with classroom intervention.

More specifically, our program of research calls for (1) prolonged and detailed natural observation of children who are learning to cope with their cultural environments (this is necessary in order for us to infer how these children develop the cognitive and affective abilities to become competent members of their society), (2) field experimentation to clarify and confirm the nature and distribution of these abilities (such experimentation does *not* employ standardized western tests, but develops *ad hoc* experiments based upon relevant and meaningful behaviors in the natural environment), (3) intervention in the schools in order to discover ways in which the cognitive and affective skills of poor and ethnic children can be brought into closer fit with the skills required for success on a school setting (Price-Williams, Edgerton and Gallimore, 1972-74:1).

Eskimo children are learning to cope with a range of cultural environments which aboriginally and currently have adapted themselves to survival in harsh, arctic niches through the exploitation of fishing, hunting, trapping and gathering techniques and devices. It is logical therefore, to hypothesize that most naturally occurring cognitive abilities will be directly or indirectly correlated with these subsistence skills. Oswalt, for example, has reported the following condition among one group of Eskimos in the Yukon-Kuskokwim River Delta, Alaska:

It is apparent that subsistence is a major interest for each adult in the community. Each man must support his family, and the sheer amount of time considered in subsistence activities makes these a focus of daily life. The stringencies of the environment and the virtual impossibility of storing significant quantities of food for more than a year force adults to think constantly about making a living. The education of children at home is largely in terms of developing the proficiency in livelihood techniques. Ceremonial recognition of subsistence achievements is conferred upon a girl when she picks her first berries and upon a boy when he kills his first animal of each species [excluding fish]. When adult status is attained, the greatest measure of prestige and success by village standards is in terms of subsistence proficiency (Oswalt, 1963:120).

The hypothesis that cognitive abilities are related to occupation tasks is relatively unresearched but not totally without precedent. Price-Williams (1969) found that Mexican children who were from pottery-making families performed better on tests for conservation of substance using clay than did children from families of similar socioeconomic status who engaged in other trades. Gladwin (1970) has documented the complex set of knowledge and logic that is concomitant with the elaborate navigation and boat building skills of a nonliterate sailing people on a South Pacific atoll. Dasen (1973) found that Aborigines of central Australia sometimes draw maps on the ground to indicate where water holes are located. Being hunters and gatherers in a dry land these people often travel great distances in their search for water.

The later three examples, along with the previously given ethnographic and psychological data, suggest a close relationship between subsistence and/or occupation tasks and cognition. Using the "ecology of competence" methodology the extent of this relationship within any given Eskimo group can be discovered.

CONCLUSIONS

Neither traditional ethnographic nor traditional psychological approaches to understanding cognitive development have satisfactorily described the ecological and cultural origins of cognitive abilities within the various Eskimo cultures. The "ecology of competence" methodology (Price-Williams, Edgerton, and Gallimore, 1972-74), pioneered by Cole and his colleagues, offers a refined alternative to prior strategies. Among Eskimo groups the relationship between subsistence tasks and cognitive competence is of particular practical and theoretical interest. Both Eskimo educational curriculums and our general understanding of human behavior promise to profit from this systematic, multi-disciplinary, research approach.

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Histoire des Apindji d'après la tradition

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SUMMARY

Presenting the oral-tradition history of the Apindji, this article describes the development of the political, social, and cultural life of this people, isolated from other Gabonese ethnic groups since the eighteenth century.

This oral-tradition history, recently collected from among recollections of elderly Apindji, recalls the names of the first socio-political leaders of the tribe, the names of their families, as well as historical and mythical events.

INTRODUCTION

La reconstruction de l'histoire des peuples du Gabon peut se faire à partir de deux sources: la tradition orale, que certains peuples ont pu sauvegarder et transmettre jusqu'à nos jours à de nouvelles générations et la tradition écrite, que nous retrouvons ici et là dans les descriptions et remarques des observateurs, missionnaires, explorateurs ou colons français.

La tradition orale, comme les descriptions des observateurs européens rapporte non seulement les événements socio-historiques, les migrations ou les noms des personnages importants mais s'intéresse aussi et surtout à la culture spirituelle de ces peuples. Ainsi apprenons-nous les différentes sortes de croyances, de coutumes, de pratiques et l'évolution des idées morales. Ce que les descriptions modernes ne peuvent pas nous donner, nous pouvons, dans une certaine mesure, le retrouver, encore aujourd'hui, bien que sous une forme réduite, dans les récits oraux, les contes ou les souvenirs personnels des vieux, qui se rappellent encore leurs premiers contacts avec les missionnaires et les colons français.

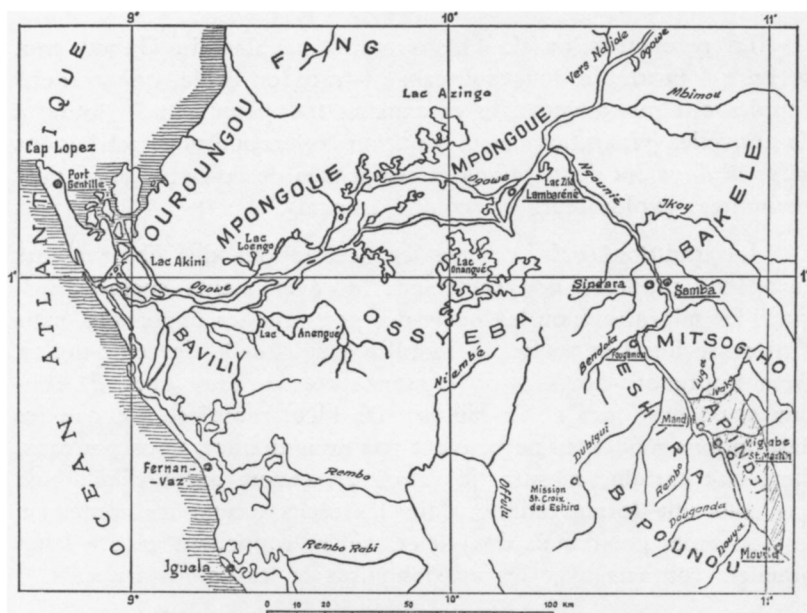
L'histoire des Apindji est plus ou moins liée à celle des autres peuples du Gabon. Leur migration surtout est le résultat du grand

mouvement effectué au XVII^e siècle par la famille ethnique Okandé, et aux XVII^e et XIX^e siècles par celle des Fang sur le territoire de l'Afrique Équatoriale.

"L'histoire des Apindji" que ce peuple nous transmet par sa tradition orale, n'est plus connue par les jeunes Apindji et encore moins par les autres Gabonais. Peut-être, ces quelques données concernant le passé de ce peuple paisible, intelligent, orgueilleux et fier en même temps, contribueront-elles à sauvegarder son patrimoine qui disparaît peu à peu dans l'oubli du fait de la détribalisation.

Pour un peuple dont la conscience tribale est un caractère dominant, ces souvenirs du passé constituent un élément non négligeable pour comprendre le mécanisme de formation de cette conscience collective.

En outre, l'importance de ce peuple du point de vue religieux et culturel dépasse de loin son rôle historique. En effet, le peuple



Région de la Ngounié et du Bas-Ogowe

apindji appartient par son passé culturel à l'histoire de la pensée philosophico-religieuse du Gabon. Il en est digne par sa persévérance et sa fidélité à son patrimoine culturel et surtout par son culte ancestral, le Bouiti, dont il se sait le fondateur. Même si, graduellement sous la pression des événements historiques, économiques et politiques et en particulier, à cause de nouveaux besoins spirituels, l'organisation de cette société masculine, le Bouiti a changé, l'essentiel de sa philosophie religieuse demeure intact. Comme jadis, dans un contexte socio-économique lié au milieu naturel, aujourd'hui, dans une nouvelle situation favorable au développement de la conscience nationale, le Bouiti proclame l'affirmation de la vie. Exprimant la pensée profonde des Apindji, le Bouiti actuel propose constamment l'idée de la perfectibilité de l'homme dont la réalisation a lieu par la communion avec la communauté des morts et des vivants. Les visions que provoque la plante sacrée iboga socialisent l'initié bouiti, en le plaçant au milieu de la société tribale et le spiritualisant en lui révélant des valeurs qui dépassent l'utilité quotidienne.

En étudiant les sectes synchrétiques que les Fangs ont créées, on ne peut pas oublier que la source de leur pensée philosophico-religieuse et le contenu de leur liturgie proviennent du Bouiti des Apindji. C'est même la langue de ces peuples, Apindji et Mitsogho, en tant que langues apparentées, qui est devenue langue rituelle des sectes bouitistes synchrétiques.

Le fait que la forme religieuse retenue par le peuple gabonais d'aujourd'hui à la recherche d'une identité nouvelle mais fidèle en même temps à son caractère profond soit le Bouiti montre que les Apindji avaient su trouver un culte correspondant intimement à la nature et aux aspirations de l'homme dans ce milieu.

C'est dans cette optique que s'explique l'importance que nous attachons aux données de la tradition pour reconstituer le passé tribal apindji.

Ces quelques informations concernant le passé des Apindji d'après leur tradition orale constituent une partie des résultats des recherches sur ce peuple, effectuées en 1963 sous le patronage du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique à Paris et de l'Institut International Africain de Londres. La monographie

complète des Apindji concernant la structure socio-économique, les croyances, les coutumes et la créativité culturelle est en préparation.

BREF APERÇU ETHNO-HISTORIQUE

L'histoire et la culture des Apindji sont le résultat de nombreux facteurs, qui se sont influencés mutuellement. Elles s'expliquent tout d'abord par les grandes migrations des peuples, les changements endogènes au sein de l'éthnie Okandé, l'époque cruelle de la traite, la colonisation française détruisant les coutumes et humiliant la personnalité africaine et enfin par influence socio-politique et culturelle actuelle des nouveaux états africains. À ces facteurs, il faut ajouter les aspirations propres de la tribu apindjie, orientées vers la lutte pour l'indépendance culturelle et religieuse (dont témoignent les événements des années 1950-56 à Saint Martin par exemple) ou à la recherche d'une possibilité d'adaptation à la nouvelle situation socio-politique et économique que la jeune République du Gabon a créée.

La première phase intéressante de cette "histoire" se situe dès les environs de 1600, d'après les estimations des historiens de la culture africaine.¹ Les grandes migrations des peuples forts tendant vers le Sud ont provoqué des contacts entre diverses traditions, coutumes et cultures qui ne sont pas restés sans écho dans l'histoire culturelle du Gabon. Ces influences ont eu un caractère différent au Nord du Pays (invasion des Fang) ou au Sud (contact avec le Congo christianisé). Dans le premier cas l'effet est apparu plutôt dans la structure sociale; l'influence du Congo, par contre se manifeste surtout dans la pensée religieuse: le nom Nzambé, pour l'Être Suprême provient du royaume du Congo.

À cette époque la population du Gabon était constituée de deux groupes à savoir: les Pygmées et les peuplades immigrées. Au premier groupe appartiennent les Akowa, Beku, Akkas, Tiki-tikis, Basua, Efe, Obongo, Bakola et Batwa. Ces tribus, qui passent pour les plus vieux habitants des forêts équatoriales vivaient principalement sur le territoire du Cameroun, du Gabon et du Congo actuel. Au moment de la prise politique du Gabon par

¹ BRUEL, G. *L'Afrique Equatoriale Française*. Paris, 1930.

les Français, les Pygmées vivaient dans les régions de Santa Clara et de Libreville, ainsi que sur la rive gauche du Golf, sous la domination du Roi Denis Okowe (Rapontchombo, 1800), fin du XVIII^e et au début du XIX^e siècle.

Le deuxième groupe des peuples, qui est venu au Gabon en plusieurs étapes à partir du Nord, englobait les ethnies suivantes: Miéné (Pongwé, Galoa, Orungu, Enenga), Eshira et Okandé (Apindji, Mitsogho, Okandé). D'après Soret² et Gautier³ ces migrations se sont déroulées de la façon suivante: les Pongwé sont arrivés sur le territoire du Gabon en plusieurs étapes. Le premier groupe a dû arriver déjà vers 1300. Ils passent donc pour les premiers occupants du Gabon contemporain. Après eux, à trois siècles d'intervalle, vers 1550 nous rencontrons au Gabon les Orungu, qui dans ce temps-là se sont installés sur les lacs, situés au Nord du Pays. Peut-être un demi siècle après, les Enenga commencent leur vie sédentaire sur le lac Zilé, où ils ont dû arriver de l'amont de l'Ogoué, des environs d'Alembé, Molongi et Junkville,⁴ où ils habitent encore aujourd'hui. C'est à la même époque à peu près que les Apindji et les Mitsogho commencent aussi la migration, dont nous parle la tradition orale, bien que de façon très générale. Ces maigres informations sont pourtant complétées et confirmées par la tradition des autres peuples avec lesquels les Apindji étaient liés par mariage, sans parler de parenté linguistique, comme dans le cas par exemple des Mitsogho. Malgré tout, pour reconstruire l'histoire des Apindji il faut s'appuyer sur des hypothèses, en particulier quand il s'agit de la direction de leur migration, de l'époque et de la durée du séjour des Apindji sur l'Océan.

Selon Socet⁵ et Baumann⁶ (les langues des Enenga, Okandé, Simba, Bavové, Galoa, Mitsogho et Apindji sont très proches⁷)

² SORET, M. Carte ethno-démographique de A.E.F.B.I.E.C. N° 11, pp. 27-29, 1955.

³ GAUTIER. *Etudes historiques sur les Mpongoués et tribus avoisinantes*. Mémoires de l'Institut d'Etudes Centrafricaines. N° 3; Brazzaville, 1950.

⁴ WALKER-RAPONDA, A. *Notes d'Histoire du Gabon*. Mémoire N° 9. Institut d'Etudes Centrafricaines. Brazzaville, 1960.

⁵ SORET, M. Carte ethno-démographique., *op. cit.*, 1955.

⁶ BAUMANN, H. et WESTERMANN, D. *Les peuples et les civilisations de l'Afrique*. Paris, 1962.

⁷ BRUEL, G. *La France Equatoriale Africaine*. 1935, p. 309. Cf. aussi: Bodinga-Bwa Bodingas. Tradition orale de la race Iviya. T.M.T. Paris, 1969.

tant le groupe Okandé (des Apindji, Mitsogho et Okandé) que le groupe Mièné (tribus Pongwé, Galoa, N'Komi, Orungu et Enenga) sont venus de l'Est, en suivant le fleuve Ivindo. Ce fait n'est pas mentionné directement par la tradition des Apindji, qui parle seulement du voisinage et de la parenté des Apindji avec ces tribus. Mais cette remarque de la tradition peut se rapporter aussi bien à l'époque de leur séjour sur l'Océan qui est donnée par la tradition de tous ces peuples. De même qu'elle peut concerner aussi bien l'époque où ils étaient ensemble dans le delta de l'Ogoué et de la Ngounié. On voit par cet exemple l'incertitude des informations fournies par la tradition.

Les Orungu, les Eshira et les Apindji affirment qu'ils sont venus du pays Tomba, mais personne ne sait dire où se trouvait ce pays.⁸

Le temps pour commencer une migration, son parcours, sa durée et ensuite le choix et le nombre des arrêts étaient réglés tant par la grandeur de la tribu que par le degré d'évolution de la conscience sociale et par les contacts plus ou moins actifs et passifs avec les peuples voisins. Les Apindji, comme d'ailleurs aussi les Mitsogho, ont dû être précédés par les Enenga et les N'Komi; ces derniers sont apparentés avec les Apindji et les Mitsogho, bien qu'ils aient adopté plus tard un des dialectes Pongwé. Ces premières migrations ont eu lieu sans doute vers la fin du XVI^e siècle, temps du début de la traite des Noirs.

La durée du séjour des Apindji dans le bassin Ivindo-Ogoué, à mi-chemin de leur migration vers l'Océan, sans doute dans les environs de Boué, est difficile à déterminer. Une des raisons, pour lesquelles ils quittèrent ces parages était la peur des Ossyeba cruels et de la supériorité des Bakélé, repoussés de leur côté par les Fang. Les Apindji passèrent alors successivement par les endroits où se trouve aujourd'hui le village du nom Apindji et l'île Alembé, dans le bassin de l'Ogoué et l'Okano. Les attaques des Ossyeba les repoussèrent ensuite vers N'Djolé et Samkita. On peut supposer que les Apindji quittèrent cette région vers 1600 ou 1650 pour continuer ensuite leur migration vers l'Océan.⁹

⁸ LEJEUNE, R.P. *Echo des Missions*, 1886.

⁹ AVELOT, R. *Recherches sur l'histoire des migrations dans le bassin de l'Ogoué et la région littorale adjacente*. Bull. de Géographie hist. et descriptive, Vol. XX, n° 3, pp. 357-412, 1905; le même: *Notice historique sur les Bakalé*. L'Anthropologie, T. XXIV, pp. 197-240, 1913.

Le fait que Brazza¹⁰ et Compiegne¹¹ aient rencontré les Apindji sur l'Ogoué, peut nous supposer, qu'une partie des Apindji est demeurée là, tandis qu'une autre est partie vers l'Océan. Par quelle voie sont-ils arrivés jusqu'aux bords de l'Océan, nous ne le savons pas. Ont-ils utilisé même voie de terre que celle qu'on suppose aux Bakelé ou se sont-ils dirigés continuellement le long de l'Ogoué et ensuite le long du lac Como jusqu'à Kango, ce qui se justifierait par leur prédilection pour le canotage? Il est difficile d'affirmer quoi que ce soit en la matière. Mais, comme les Bakelé, les Apindji ont dû arriver jusqu'à l'Océan, dans les environs de Libreville.

Chaillu, en 1858 les trouve bien installés sur la Ngounié.¹² Leurs nombreux villages étaient situés vers le sud de Fougamou.



Fig. 1. La Ngounie près de la mission St-Martin

¹⁰ BRAZZA (Pierre Savorgnan, de). *Voyage dans l'Ouest Africain. Le Tour du Monde, 1887-1888*, pp. 289-336. Paris.

¹¹ COMPIEGNE (Marquis de) et MARCHE, Alfred. *L'Afrique Equatoriale, 1876*, Vol. 2. Paris.

¹² CHAILLU (Paul Belloni, du). *Voyages et aventures dans l'Afrique Equatoriale, 1863*, Paris. Le même: *L'Afrique Sauvage, nouvelles excursions au pays des Ashango, 1868*, Paris.

En tenant compte de ce fait on peut supposer que leur installation remonte déjà à une époque largement antérieure, peut-être même au siècle précédent.

À l'époque où les Blancs ont commencé leur pénétration, les peuples du Gabon habitaient depuis plusieurs générations leur territoire ou bien ils terminaient leurs migrations, comme on peut le constater avec les Bakélé. De même se renforçaient et cristallisaient les positions des tribus les unes envers les autres, qu'elles essayent de vivre en paix entre elles ou d'exercer leur domination sur les plus faibles. Le XIX^e siècle fut dans l'histoire des contacts de l'Europe avec l'Afrique un siècle décisif. Son début est marqué par les décrets interdisant la traite¹³ et par la création de ligues antiesclavagistes mais sa fin inaugure une nouvelle époque d'exploitation moderne, époque de colonisation et d'humiliation raciale, exercée par les peuples "civilisés" et chrétiens. Comme à l'époque de la traite, les sociologues, les anthropologues et certains missionnaires, sans parler des autorités ecclésiastiques, ont essayé de justifier la domination des Blancs sur l'Africain, en créant pour "prouver" l'inégalité des races des hypothèses biologiques ou sociologiques plus ou moins ridicules. Elles étaient censées déterminer et expliquer l'infériorité supposée de la race noire.¹⁴ Ce siècle fut aussi une époque de grandes recherches scientifiques, de colonisation militaire et administrative et de commerce intensif ou plutôt d'exploitation économique. Les explorateurs, mais aussi souvent les missionnaires et les commerçants préparaient indirectement le terrain pour les futures conquêtes de colonisation, œuvre d'hommes comme Savorgnan de Brazza et Chanoine.¹⁵

Si on laisse de côté les tendances politiques de certains explorateurs, leurs informations représentent une des plus importantes sources de renseignements sur la vie, l'organisation sociale, les croyances et les coutumes des Apindji. Ce peuple avait avec les Européens des contacts indirects, fournissant aux factoreries des marchandises de sa production et des contacts directs, lorsque les explorateurs passaient par leurs villages. Ces possibilités

¹³ RINCHON, Dieudonné, P. Capucin. *La traite et l'Esclavage des Congolais par les Européens*. S.L., 1929.

¹⁴ LE MÊME. Cf. aussi Ch.-A. JULIEN. *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord jusqu'en 1830*, 2 Vol., 1956. Cf. de même: *Le dossier Afrique*, Marabout 21, pp. 59-63.

¹⁵ SURET CANALE, J. *Histoire de l'Afrique Occidentale*. Vol. 2, 1961.

pourtant n'étaient pas nombreuses et cela à cause de l'accès difficile des villages bien cachés dans la brousse et très écartés les uns des autres.

LE MYTHE DE L'ORIGINE

L'ethnocentrisme, si typique des peuples traditionnels se trouve aussi chez les Apindji. Ce peuple du Gabon croit qu'il existe depuis le début du monde et de l'histoire de l'humanité. Sa fierté et son orgueil tribal peuvent même s'expliquer en partie par cette conception de l'homme et de l'histoire.

Le mythe de l'origine de l'humanité chez les Apindji raconte que Nzambé (Dieu), pour créer le genre humain (*kinda moma*) a fait tomber sur la terre deux morceaux organiques (*migéné mibalé*) dont l'un était masculin, appelé Nzambé et l'autre femelle du nom Mokodwé. Mokodwé est connue aussi sous le nom Gémwadye-Mwadye, ce qui veut dire: mère de toute humanité. La chute de Nzambé et de Mokodwé sur la terre provoqua un grand fracas semblable au tonnerre et causa un énorme tremblement dans les environs. Tout de suite après, tandis que partout



Fig. 2. Village apindji. Au fond la case rituelle du Bouiti

dominaient encore les ténèbres cosmiques, Nzambé et Mokodwé se sont unis dans l'acte conjugal et ont marqué ainsi le commencement de la vie pour toute l'humanité. Le premier peuple était les Apindji (mopinzi-pinzi), ensuite les tribus voisines: Akèle (Mokèlè) tribu des chasseurs et Galoa, Eshira, Simba, Enenga des environs de Lambaréné et les autres. Dans la dernière étape de la création est parvenu l'homme blanc (motangayi), mais celui-ci ne voulant pas rester parmi les peuples noirs est parti au pays où se réunissent tous les fleuves (Té angò mopéndaga na go Koyi), alors vers l'Océan, là où la terre abonde de tout, le faisant riche et fort.

Telle est la manière dont les vieux Apindji se sont imaginé et racontent leur origine et leur place dans l'ontologie et la cosmologie. À ce mythe se joignent des récits concernant leur migration du pays de leurs ancêtres vers l'Océan et ensuite leur retour vers le fleuve Ngounié.

LES MIGRATIONS DES APINDJI D'APRÈS LA TRADITION

La tradition des Apindji, on a pu le remarquer déjà, ne nous transmet pas de détails concernant le début de leurs migrations. Elle mentionne seulement les noms de quelques villages et les noms des peuples avec lesquels ils migrèrent du Nord-est, de ce pays mystérieux Tomba, vers l'Ouest, pour s'arrêter finalement aux bords du "Grand fleuve", l'Océan. Malheureusement elle ne nous parle pas des autres endroits, où les Apindji habitaient, avant leur arrivée ici. Elle ne mentionne pas les migrations précédentes. Manquent aussi des informations plus développées sur les relations de voisinage et les contacts intertribaux. Par contre cette tradition nous offre beaucoup plus d'information concernant le retour du peuple vers l'intérieur du pays. Pour cette période nous connaissons par exemple le nom des principaux dirigeants socio-politiques, les événements extraordinaires tels que la famine, qui provoqua la séparation des tribus et des clans, la découverte et le passage du fleuve de la Ngounié, le moment de la grande séparation tribale et enfin les événements plus récents que les Vieux peuvent rapporter selon une tradition directe les tenant de la génération précédente. Tous ces éléments entrent dans la compo-

tion de la tradition, comprise au sens large comme le souvenir et constituent "la tradition orale sur le passé des Apindji". Elle nous informe sur le mode de vie, l'outillage, les croyances et les coutumes du peuple aux diverses étapes de son histoire.

Le séjour au bord de l'Océan

Le récit concernant la migration des Apindji de l'Océan vers l'intérieur du pays, y compris l'histoire des personnages importants et l'installation sur la Ngounié nous le devons à un groupe de vingt Notables apindji du village Migabé (Môndô), sous la direction de Mr Makanaga, chef de village, âgé de 79 ans. Ce récit nous a été fait en août 1963.

D'après cette tradition orale, les Apindji ont dû habiter sur l'Océan dans le voisinage des Mpongwé, Galoa, Okandé, Enenga et Simba. Les Apindji mentionnent que pendant leur séjour sur l'Estuaire le roi des Simba s'appelait Motamba et le roi des Okandé, Bika. La tradition évoque ensuite l'eau salée et les grosses vagues dont les Apindji avaient peur. Des souvenirs analogues se trouvent aussi dans la tradition des tribus Ivéa, Bakélé

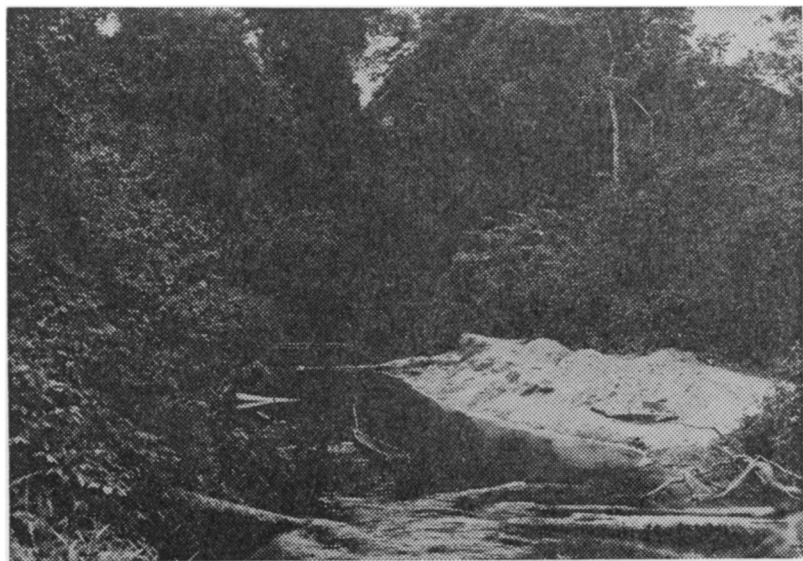


Fig. 3. Dans la forêt au pays des Apindji près de Mouila

et Mitsogho, dans laquelle l'Océan est appelé "le fleuve de grands vagues" (Go mbei ya mindyokidyoki).¹⁶ D'après la tradition ces peuples ont quitté l'Estuaire non seulement à cause de la peur devant le grand bruit des vagues mais aussi à cause de la peur des "grands oiseaux de mer", mbéa, qui attaquaient les villages et emportaient leurs habitants. Il s'agit ici des vaisseaux à voile de la traite et des razzias.

Combien de temps les Apindji sont-ils restés au bord de l'Océan? Il est difficile de le dire. En s'appuyant sur la comparaison avec différents peuples voisins et apparentés aux Apindji, on pourrait conclure que leur séjour sur l'Océan n'a pas dépassé la durée d'une génération. C'est pourtant pendant cette période que s'est réveillée et a pris forme chez les Apindji la conscience sociale, conscience d'une unité, les distinguant des autres, quoique apparentés avec eux. Toutes ces tribus de la grande famille ethnique Okandé étaient jadis liés par la même langue et la même structure sociale, basée sur la parenté et la descendance matrilineaire.

D'après ce que la tradition nous dit, la vie socio-politique indépendante a dû commencer à se constituer déjà dans la période de leur séjour aux bords de l'Océan. La conscience politique s'est créée et développée à cause du danger commun, représenté par la traite, qui a poussé finalement les tribus à quitter cet endroit côtier et à retourner vers l'intérieur du pays. On suppose que la décision a été prise par des personnalités disposant du pouvoir mais surtout dotées d'intelligence. D'après cette tradition, à la tête des Apindji se trouvait dans ce temps-là le roi M'Bômbô, de la famille Bômbôdi. La tradition souligne précisément que c'était leur premier roi. Sa famille est devenue une famille dynastique, de laquelle sont sortis ensuite d'autres personnalités socio-politiques et certains guides spirituels du peuple Apindji. Lui ont succédé d'abord son fils Mokwango et ensuite son petit-fils, N'Dala, dont la mère, N'Donda, était de la maison Dibongo.

À cause de la séparation et des nouvelles conditions de vie, ces peuples commencèrent à créer leur tradition propre, à développer leur langue et à s'enrichir par de nouvelles expériences.

¹⁶ BODINGA-BWA BODINGAS. *Tradition orale de la race Iviya. Op. cit.*

Ainsi commença un nouveau groupe ethnique, une tribu, manifestant des tendances à la séparation et à l'indépendance. On connaît d'ailleurs d'autres exemples de situations où les peuples se séparent et se différencient des autres; d'autres fois, par contre, à cause du voisinage et d'une symbiose économique et culturelle avec un peuple plus fort, ils perdent leur caractère propre, leur langue et leur authenticité en tant que groupe et adoptent les coutumes, la langue et la tradition religieuse d'un peuple plus fort. Ainsi les Ngowé, à partir de 1900 ont cessé d'utiliser la langue eshira pour adopter la langue mièné ou enenga. Le même cas s'est présenté aussi pour un groupe d'Apindji qui habitaient sur l'Ogoué en voisinage des Okandé. Par le mariage réciproque et la cohabitation, ces Apindji, en tant que peuple faible, ont subi l'influence de cet autre peuple.¹⁷

Malgré la différenciation tribale, les deux grands groupes ethniques, Mièné et Okandé, en retournant vers l'intérieur du pays, ont gardé encore des liens sociaux et de parenté ainsi que des sentiments d'appartenance mutuelle. Nous retrouvons ces deux groupes de nouveau sur l'Ogoué moyen, avant que la séparation définitive dont nous parle la tradition n'ait lieu à Lambaréné. Les récits traditionnels nous expliquent en effet les causes qui ont provoqué des changements dans les grandes ethnies Okandé et Mièné vers la moitié ou vers la fin du XVIII^e siècle, poussant la majorité des tribus à un nouveau déplacement. Elles y furent contraintes tout d'abord par la famine, par le désaccord, la jalousie et surtout par les tendances dominatrices des tribus les plus fortes. Ce moment est d'une importance historique extraordinaire parce qu'il représente aussi le début de la séparation de la grande famille Okandé et le début de la formation de la tribu Apindji en tant qu'entité socio-politique. Un tel séparatisme socio-politique trouve son expression tant dans le nom "apindji" que dans la constitution d'une structure sociale propre et dans la formation de nouvelles lois coutumières.

Voici comment selon la tradition ces peuples se sont séparés et comment sont nés les noms de quelques tribus et en particulier celui des Apindji. La famine qui est arrivée parmi les Okandé a forcé certains clans à se mettre à la recherche de nou-

¹⁷ HAUSER, A. *Notes sur les Omyéné du Bas Gabon*. Bull. IFAN, XVI, juil.-oct. 1954, N° 3-4, Série B: Sciences Hum. p. 407.

veaux moyens de vivre. Ces peuples ont dû de ce fait acquérir une meilleure connaissance de la forêt. Comme nouvelle nourriture, ils ont découvert des lianes sauvages, appelées "mikangé" (sing. Mokangé), qu'on consommait comme les asperges, c'est-à-dire en les débarrassant de leur peau épineuse et en les broyant.

Toujours selon la même tradition orale le groupe qui a trouvé cette nouvelle nourriture a refusé de la partager par ceux qui sont restés au village. Ces derniers donc, choqués par ce manque de solidarité, ont décidé de les quitter. Ils ont dû les quitter en disant avec résignation: "Tsanayi na Mikangé myagno! Ase to gëndi to madibute mipinzi: ndé no mata "Asi Mikangé"! Restez donc avec vos asperges, nous, au contraire, nous nous rendrons pour chercher les fruits sauvages mais on vous appellera désormais "le peuple des asperges"! Sans doute les autres ont-ils répondu: "Et vous, on vous appellera "le peuple des fruits sauvages" (Asi mipinzi)!

Si l'on en croit cette légende, les Apindji (mopinzi pinzi) ont préféré rester fidèles à la cueillette et à la chasse que de se fatiguer à préparer un plat jusqu'alors inconnu ou de cultiver les plantations. Les explorateurs et les missionnaires qui les ont observés de près ont témoigné que les Apindji n'aimaient pas s'adonner à la culture systématique de la terre.¹⁸ C'est de ce temps-là en apparence que sont restées ces deux expressions pour distinguer les deux groupes consanguins, désunis par la famine, à savoir: "Asi Mikangé" c'est-à-dire "ceux des asperges sauvages" et "Asi Mipinzi", c'est-à-dire "ceux des fruits sauvages". Le premier terme désigne les Okandé et le deuxième les Apindji.

Le retour vers l'Ogoué

Comme les tribus Miéné et Okandé, les Apindji aussi commencèrent alors une nouvelle migration, mais cette fois ils retournèrent vers les bords du fleuve Ogoué. Un récit nous les montre remontant ce fleuve non sur des pirogues, mais sur des morceaux de bois flottants, espèce de radeau. Des femmes et les enfants, étaient assis, et les hommes faisaient avancer leurs "bar-

¹⁸ ADAM, J. Martin. *Annales Apostoliques*, 1901, avril, p. 36. Cf. aussi: NEU, P.R.P. *Ibidem*. p. 43-45.

ques", en s'appuyant avec leur rame sur les bords du fleuve. Sous la direction du chef Dibônda, de la famille Getôbo, ils avancèrent vers Ndjolé. En se dirigeant toujours vers le haut de l'Ogoué, les Apindji arrivèrent sans doute jusqu'à la 58^{ème} chute, appelée N'Diku (Manguier), très connue dans ce temps-là comme le lieu de la mangue sauvage. Ceci se passait avant que les premiers explorateurs, Chaillu, Brazza et Compiègne arrivent. Le dernier village que les Apindji ont fondé après être revenus de l'Océan et avant de se rendre vers Lambaréné ou de migrer vers les territoires situés sur les bords de la Ngounié, était Lélédi ("ville des Apindji"). Bien qu'abandonné et isolé ce village existait encore en 1911, lorsque M^{re} Raponda-Walker faisait ses tournées pastorales.¹⁹

Le séparatisme tribal à Lambaréné

Tandis que les Okandé et les Simba se dirigeaient en amont de l'Ogoué, vers Boué, les Apindji envisageaient de se rendre vers le sud. La séparation des Ndjolé n'était que partielle. Elle n'englobait que quelques clans. Elle a pourtant frappé les esprits comme la légende le montre, créée autour de ce moment de la séparation. Elle raconte que le jour de la séparation à Ndjolé, les Apindji ont préparé de la nourriture dans une grande marmite au pied d'un énorme baobab (oguma). En se séparant ils ont laissé cette marmite toute bouillante et, dit-on, la marmite bout encore et est devenue imperceptible. D'autres séparations encore ont eu lieu beaucoup plus tard, au moment par exemple où les Apindji sont parvenus au lieu où la Ngounié se jette dans l'Ogoué, là où aujourd'hui se trouve Lambaréné. En tant que lieu de séparation, les gens indiquent le vieux baobab à l'entrée de Lambaréné. C'est ici, selon la tradition, qu'a commencé la vie indépendante des tribus Galoa, Makota, Simba, Okandé, Mpongwé et Apindji. Pour rappeler aux peuples ce moment important, un artiste a sculpté un masque sur son énorme tronc. Malheureusement la municipalité a coupé cet arbre en 1972 pour élargir la route.

Selon la tradition, l'arrivée des Apindji sur la Ngounié a dû être la conséquence des migrations des Eshira, précédés par les

¹⁹ WALKER-RAPONDA, A. Notes, *op. cit.*

Mitsogho, arrivés par voie terrestre. Le temps de l'arrivée des Apindji sur les bords de la Ngounié peut être fixé vers la fin du XVIII^e siècle ou au début du XIX^e si on admet comme vraies les affirmations des vieux Apindji, selon lesquelles ils habitaient ce territoire depuis plus de cent ans.²⁰ Nous possédons d'ailleurs des informations assez concrètes à ce sujet, celles des premiers missionnaires de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, qui ont fondé leur mission Saint-Martin sur la Ngounié en 1899.

Après avoir quitté les environs de Lambaréné, les Apindji ont continué à avancer toujours vers le sud-est le long du fleuve Ngounié²¹ s'arrêtant successivement près de la chute d'eau de Samba²² et ensuite dans les parages de Sindara. Comme on peut normalement s'y attendre, les lieux les plus accidentés de ce parcours ont inspiré l'imagination populaire. Ainsi à propos du barrage de Fougamou. Un jour, raconte la tradition, Dibônda, armé d'une machette et de quelques lances (sagaies) étant à la tête de son groupe, a pris la forêt de Sindara. Il a escaladé les montagnes et descendu les pentes les plus rocailleuses, s'enfonçant ainsi dans la forêt (pinzi) il est arrivé de la sorte avec son groupe jusqu'à Fougamou. À cet endroit, ayant vu que la Ngounié n'offrait aucun obstacle à la navigation et pouvait donc être une voie de pénétration facile pour ennemi, il s'est décidé à barrer la Ngounié. Il a pris une liane (mokwangèse), liane épineuse, qu'il a dépliée et il a ainsi relié la Ngounié d'une rive à l'autre au niveau du barrage de Fougamou, barrage qui prit dès lors une force et une difficulté d'accès extraordinaire. Il marcha lui-même sur cette corde disant: "O té mokela Nzambé, na motangai, na monombé, gwango gé pendo; wa diei diei, wa diei diei ngôngô, giolé, na vitsè te tsè tè, na vikongo kongo" — Voici le barrage de Nzambé, que ni blanc, ni noir ne le franchiront; qu'ils viennent en amont ou qu'ils viennent en aval, ni la petite brindille ni la petite feuille ne passera. Ainsi fait, Dibônda fit traverser sa troupe. Il jeta des pierres au milieu de la Ngounié, puis une pluie torrentielle se mit à tomber, entraînant des montagnes dans le fleuve de

²⁰ ADAM, J. Martin, *op. cit.* p. 36.

²¹ L'explication concernant l'étymologie du nom Ngounié se trouve dans: WALKER-RAPONDA, A. Notes, *op. cit.*

²² D'après Walker-Raponda, A., le nom de Samba provient de Samba et Ngosi, esclaves, homme et femme, offerts par les Eshira pour obtenir les faveurs des esprits habitant les lieux dangereux de la chute d'eau.

gros blocs de rochers jusqu'au barrage fait par Dibônda. Alors celui-ci dit à son peuple: "O kai Nzambé ébi Mokéla" — "Par-tons, Nzambé a fait le barrage". Dibônda continua son chemin, cette fois sur la rive gauche du fleuve. Ainsi on le voit, la légende tente d'expliquer les barrages naturels qui se trouvent à cet endroit et d'autre part elle glorifie le chef apindji de cette époque, Dibônda. Bien que la tradition n'ait pas laissé beaucoup de données sur ce chef du groupe, il est resté dans la mémoire du peuple entouré de légendes. On ne connaît pas le nom de son père ni de sa mère. On sait seulement qu'il provenait de la famille Getôbo Samikoso et que son interdit familial était de ne jamais manger de perroquet ni de singe nombo. Les Apindji ont ainsi conservé dans leurs contes et légendes le souvenir des hommes qui ont procédé aux destinées du peuple dans les moments importants de son histoire. Ainsi, outre Dibônda, se rappelle-t-on de Mokwango, le héros qui était à la tête de tous les Apindji au retour de l'Océan vers le fleuve Ogoué.

Ensuite les Apindji continuèrent leur route, arrivant un jour à un petit affluent de la Ngounié, le Ngondo. Ils remontèrent

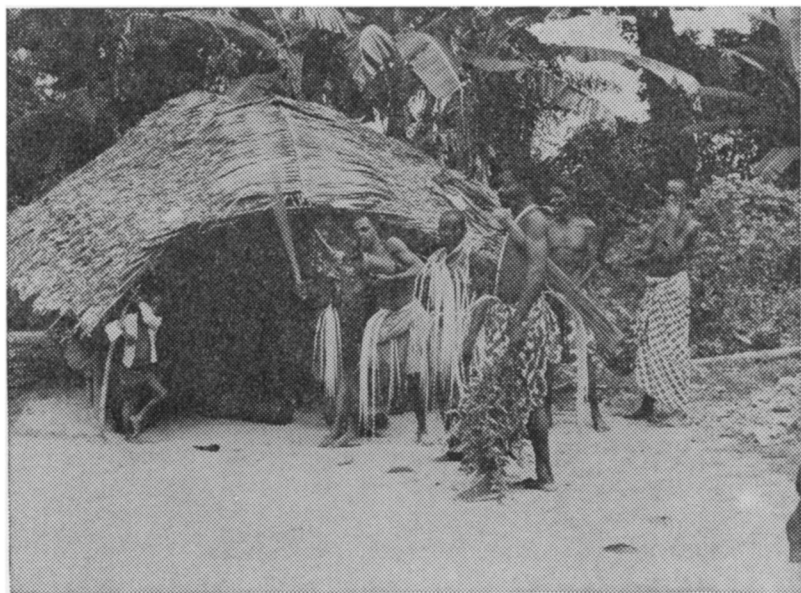


Fig. 4. Initiés au Bouiti devant leur case rituelle près de Lambaréné

cette rivière, mais cette fois par les rives, laissant leurs chalands à l'embouchure. Ici ont été construits les premiers villages temporaires aux maisons en feuilles (kongo) et en écorce d'arbre (migana). Ici aussi a eu lieu encore une autre séparation de clans. C'est ainsi qu'un groupe continua à remonter la Ngounié par la rive droite, laissant des groupes en route. Ainsi différents groupes claniques ont constitué les villages de Ngondo, Migabé, Miantsi, Diaka, Mandzibué et d'autres encore.

Un groupe des Apindji, qui est resté sur l'Ogoué, a gardé son nom G'Apindji sa Makota, et continue à habiter la région de Ndjolé en constituant un groupe à l'écart des Fang, Boduma et Mitsogho. Leur langue reste pourtant proche parente de celle des Apindji de la Ngounié (Migabé, Mouila). Les Okandé, au contraire, appelés par les Apindji Mokandé (Mokandé Apindji) ou G'Apindji sa go Mokandé, se trouvent encore sur les bords de l'Ogoué dans les environs de Boué. Plus vers le Sud-est vivent les Simba, qui dans un temps relativement court ont tellement déformé la langue apindjie, que ces derniers les comprennent difficilement. Le peuple Enenga, avec lequel les Apindji étaient en relations vivantes de voisinage, est aussi entré en consanguinité avec lui par le mariage. Ils vivent dans les endroits de Lambaréné et en particulier sur le lac Zilet. D'après les vieux Apindji ils constituent un groupe mélangé ayant pour ancêtres des Pygmées, qui vivaient parmi les Apindji pendant leur migration dans les environs de Libreville. La langue Enenga est la langue la plus éloignée de celles qui ont pour base ethnique le groupe apindji.²³

Aujourd'hui ces tribus se distinguent non seulement par un nouveau dialecte mais aussi par une nouvelle tradition, bien qu'elles aient assez de traits qui révèlent leur origine commune.

L'INSTALLATION SUR LA NGOUNIÉ

Les premiers villages

Lorsque les Apindji se sont installés sur la Ngounié et ses six affluents leur vie s'est stabilisée. L'eau représentait pour eux à la fois un moyen de communication et une source de nourriture

²³ HAUSER, A. Notes sur les Omyéné..., *op. cit.*

à cause de la pêche. Le premier village, fondé au bord de la Ngounié était Mokandé. Il n'existe plus, mais selon la tradition, il devait se trouver sur la rive Ngondo à l'endroit où est aujourd'hui le village Genionga et le chantier forestier Madré. Aux environs de ce village d'autres sont nés à savoir:

Sanzé, chef Dikègèdia Sanga, de la famille Moi
Mèngwè, chef Mòkòkò, de la famille Gévango
Bènzè, chef Ekondò a Kéba, de la famille Dibôngô
Mokenga, chef Ndjikwé a Talé, de la famille Bidi
Gényonga, chef Ngoi a Diangé, de la famille Géboi
Magonga, chef Molei, de la famille Nzibo
Gyamba, chef Gémomba sa N'Doki, de la famille Gévango

Avant l'arrivée des Blancs, le village Apindji était toujours grand, s'étendant sur plusieurs dizaines de mètres. Il pouvait avoir trois ou quatre nganza. Les cases faites en écorce d'arbre s'allongeaient sur deux rangs. D'autres villages ont été créés ensuite surtout dans la brousse, pour vivre tranquillement loin des attaques des peuples belliqueux et pillards qui rôdaient souvent sur la Ngounié en quête de rapines. Dans ce temps-là, écrit M^{gr} A. Raponda-Walker,²⁴ c'est-à-dire vers 1900, les Eshira et les Bapounou n'osaient pas se mettre en route sur la Ngounié. Les Bakélé attaquaient les barques chargées de marchandises, brûlaient les villages et les maisons de commerce. Les missionnaires de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, qui à cette époque-là arrivèrent sur le territoire apindji, affirment, que les villages de ce peuple étaient situés profondément dans la brousse pour échapper à ce pillage. D'après la tradition, la population apindjie semble avoir vécu à cette époque-là dans la paix et la prospérité. Le peuple devait cette quiétude en grande partie à son guide politique et organisateur, Mokwango et à son fils N'Dala.

Les récits traditionnels évoquent souvent la belle vie de ce temps. Pendant la "belle saison" (monda na gesevo), l'époque où le gibier abonde et pendant la saison sèche, les Apindji se rendaient en groupe à la chasse ou à la pêche. La chasse était réservée aux hommes, la pêche aux femmes. Au village on laissait seulement les enfants, les vieillards et les invalides pour garder les cases. On voit la nécessité d'autant plus grande de les mettre

²⁴ WALKER-RAPONDA, A. Notes., *op. cit.*

à l'abri des tueurs et des pillards en situant les villages dans la brousse. Durant la période de chasse et de pêche, hommes et femmes vivaient séparément. Toute rencontre sexuelle était interdite. La nuit on chantait "Dikanokano", sorte de devinettes chantées, on acclamait Nzambé pour lui demander des "bienfaits", on invoquait aussi les ancêtres. Le premier gibier de la chasse était mangé entièrement et à la fin du repas on se réunissait pour donner la bénédiction: "mwilsago mamalè". Ainsi la chasse serait bonne et propice. À la fin de la chasse, tout le groupe devait quitter le camp. On préparait les paniers de viande et de poisson séchés. Avant de quitter le camp on sacrifiait de nouveau à Nzambé pour le remercier de ses dons. On quittait le camp ordinairement le matin après les sacrifices au cours desquels on laissait quelques morceaux de viande ou de poisson sur les fumoirs pour plaire aux ancêtres.

En dehors de la chasse et de la pêche les activités au village avant la colonisation française englobaient le tissage et la ferronnerie.

Les rois des Apindji

À une vie plus stable devait correspondre un nouveau type d'organisation. Aussi est-ce à cette époque semble-t-il que peut se situer l'établissement de la royauté chez les Apindji. Comme souvent quand on touche aux origines d'une nouvelle vie pour un peuple, la personnalité du premier roi apindji apparaît dans la tradition, avec des dimensions mythiques. Ainsi Mokwango est devenu dans l'histoire des Apindji un être presque surnaturel. On dit de lui, qu'il fut partout aimé, éveillant chez les gens le sens de l'obéissance et du pouvoir de suggestion extraordinaire. Avec le temps, le peuple lui a même attribué le don d'ubiquité. On le voyait en même temps au village et sur la route. Il devait cette force aux "matengé", les fétiches, qu'il portait toujours avec lui.

Mokwango est mort avant l'arrivée des premiers explorateurs, appelés par les gens "ngesi" (le terme "ngesi" devait signifier Anglais) (inglesi). Si c'étaient les commerçants de la première compagnie de commerce Hatton et Cookson, qui implanta des factoreries le long de l'Ogoué et de la Ngounié, ce dut être vers

1850 ou un peu plus tôt, peut-être, parce que l'anglais Bruce Walker, fondateur et premier directeur de cette maison de commerce, raconte qu'il arriva le 30 novembre 1874 avec ses marchandises déjà, jusqu'à la chute d'eau de Samba, au village Boualé, habité par le peuple Ivéa.

Il est difficile de dire qui gouverna après Mokwango; peut-être son fils N'Dala ou son frère Mazenda. De Chaillu, l'explorateur, à qui nous devons les premières informations sur les Apindji, parle du roi Rémandji, dont il fut l'hôte, quand il se rendait en 1858 chez des Enenga, aux environs du Lambaréné d'aujourd'hui. Était-ce un chef ou un roi, on ne peut l'affirmer, si l'on s'en tient au terme utilisé par de Chaillu ou aux informations des Apindji. La tradition des Apindji ne parle pas du tout de lui. En effet après Mokwango elle mentionne seulement le nom de Kinga et ensuite le nom de Dibiti.

Le premier de ces deux rois, Kinga, était polygame; il avait quatre femmes; le deuxième, Dibiti, était son co-régent. Tous deux partagèrent le pouvoir du fait de la situation démographique. La population vivant dans la prospérité était tellement étendue, qu'une seule personne n'était pas capable de régenter tous les villages de la brousse. Ces raisons économiques et démographiques ont causé la division du pays en deux "royaumes" avec à leur tête Kinga, de la famille Dibongo et Dibiti, de la famille Makongolo. Le premier gouvernait le territoire entre les villages Mobuka et Mwalo avec les villages Migabé (Môndô), Enzamba, Bènzè, Genionga, Ngombé, Diombo et Môbuka. Au deuxième royaume appartenaient les villages suivants: Tubagengé, Mogesangano, Bandi, Manzi, Tamba, Mönigô, Yondo et Mwalo près de Mouila. À ces villages, qui se trouvaient le long de la Ngounié, il faut ajouter ceux qui étaient situés profondément dans la brousse, loin du fleuve.

La tradition raconte que ces deux personnalités royales, Dibiti et Kinga, étaient pleines d'orgueil et de présomption. Jamais, ils ne se rencontraient pour discuter ensemble de leurs soucis ou des besoins de leurs sujets. Ils utilisaient toujours pour leurs échanges un intermédiaire, un vassal de la famille Gambé qu'on appelait N'Zondo (le juge) Mômba. Il avait pour siège le village Diômbô. Ainsi n'était-il qu'à quelques heures de marche de Mi-

gabé, résidence de Kinga; pour rejoindre Dibiti, par contre, à Mengué, il lui fallait marcher toute une journée.

La fonction sociale élevée de ce personnage transparaît dans son surnom même: Mômbo — le juge. Il était intermédiaire entre les deux rois en temps de paix comme dans les moments de crise. Il représentait dans ces moments le peuple qui voyait en lui son protecteur et son défenseur contre l'absolutisme et le caprice des deux rois. On mentionne en effet de nombreuses occasions de litige entre Dibiti et Kinga, divisés par la jalousie. Ces conflits fréquents étaient source de misère pour le peuple déjà tyrannisé. À cela s'ajoutaient les maladies et la famine. Seules la prudence et l'habileté de Nzondo Mômbo réussissaient bien souvent à épargner au peuple tous ces malheurs.

Quand et comment s'est terminé la domination de cette étrange triumvirat, la tradition ne nous le dit pas. Il est aussi étonnant qu'aucun des explorateurs ni missionnaires ne mentionne ces rois fédéraux. Lorsque de Chaillu parle du roi des Apindji, Remandji, qu'il a rencontré pendant la pêche entre Fougamou et Waka, en se rendant du pays Eshira chez les Enenga dans les environs de Lambaréné, on peut supposer qu'il s'agissait là vraisemblablement du successeur du roi Kinga, comme l'indiquait le fait que son village se trouvait sur la route de Fougamou. On peut supposer aussi qu'il était le roi du fait que pour saluer de Chaillu, il est venu entouré d'un grand cortège, composé de notables, de chefs et d'anciens.

Les affinités socio-culturelles intertribales

La tradition figée dans sa forme par les générations concerne plutôt les événements de l'origine des Apindji. Elle se caractérise par un manque de dates précises mais elle est homogène. La tradition récente par contre, celle que les vieillards gardent comme souvenir personnel, concerne les événements récents et offre des possibilités de datation et de vérification éventuelle. Cette tradition récente nous informe sur les relations que les Apindji ont entretenues avec les peuples voisins. Il en est question surtout par rapport aux Mitsogho, Eshira et Bapounou, en ce qui concerne la vie culturelle, commerciale et militaire. Le caractère de ces re-

lations s'explique par des influences mutuelles et par une dépendance plus ou moins grande.

Apindji et Mitsogho. Étant donné la parenté ethnique et linguistique entre les Apindji et les Mitsogho, les échanges socio-culturels entre ces deux peuples ont été plus développés qu'avec d'autres "races". D'ailleurs ces deux peuples, les Mitsogho, appelés aussi Kangé et les Apindji, connus souvent sous le nom Gapinzi, habitaient sur la même rive ou face à face. Leurs relations ont donc oscillé entre la cohabitation pacifique et la guerre.

L'influence culturelle réciproque entre les Apindji et les Mitsogho se remarque surtout dans leurs sociétés d'initiation ainsi que dans le domaine de la création artistique qu'il s'agisse de chants et de danses ou même dans les coutumes. L'aquit le plus important de cette étroite interrelation culturelle a été la diffusion du Bouiti à travers le Gabon. D'après la tradition apindjie, le Bouiti, société masculine d'initiation, si connue aujourd'hui dans tout le Gabon a été créée par deux vieillards apindji, Sanza et Modumé. Les Mitsogho se l'ont appropriée et l'ont enrichie de forme artistique et surtout d'une mythologie. La même tradition nous dit encore que le Mwiri (Mweli)²⁵ a été inventé aussi par les Apindji et c'est seulement par la suite que ces deux sociétés d'initiation se sont répandues chez les autres peuples. On sait par exemple que les Fang, les derniers arrivés au Gabon, ont aussi accepté le Bouiti dans les années 1910-1930, pour le développer et en faire ensuite une religion synchrétique.²⁶ Les Mitsogho étant plus nombreux et surtout plus mobiles d'un point de vue sociologique que les Apindji, les autres peuples, et récemment les Fang, ont pu être en contact avec eux et avec leur connaissance de la mystique bouitiste. Ainsi les Mitsogho, même si l'on accepte l'idée de l'origine apindjie de ce mouvement, ont joué un rôle capital dans sa propagation. Cette influence déterminante des Mitsogho sur le développement de cette société masculine d'initiation appa-

²⁵ Sur Mwiri (Mweli) voir: WALKER-RAPONDA, A. et SILLANS, R. *Rites et Croyances des peuples du Gabon*, 1962, Paris., pp. 225-237. Cf. aussi: SWIDERSKI, S. *Les agents éducatifs traditionnels chez les Apindji*. Revue de Psychologie des peuples, N° 2, 1966, pp. 194-220.

²⁶ Sur le syncrétisme religieux au Gabon, voir: Notes biographiques sur les fondateurs et les guides spirituels des sectes synchrétiques au Gabon. *Anthropologica*, N.S. Vol. XV, N° 1, 1973.

raît dans la terminologie liturgique, faite dans cette langue, quoique langue sœur de celle des Apindji. Par contre il est difficile de dire si la société féminine, Nyembé,²⁷ si répandue dans la région de la Ngounié, provient aussi des Apindji ou des Mitsogho. L'opinion populaire attribue l'origine de cette association plutôt aux Mitsogho, bien que la langue secrète du Nyembé soit la langue mièné. Le caractère mitsogho de cette société est pourtant assez fort. Il réside par exemple dans l'utilisation de "tours de passe-passe" lors des danses, pour faire ainsi sortir des fantômes, appelés Migonzi. La plus grande influence des Mitsogho sur les Apindji s'exprime dans le Nyembé et le Bouiti-du Nganga, qui comportent souvent des chants "getsogho". Les femmes exécutent même des rythmes mitsogho.

Étant donné le caractère plus paisible et plus sédentaire des Apindji, ce peuple n'a pas développé un art spécifique de la guerre. Les Mitsogho par contre étaient "spécialisés" dans ce domaine comme le montre la crainte que les autres peuples éprouvent encore à leur égard. Ils étaient redoutables à cause de leurs "Hommes-tigres"²⁸ utilisés pour la guerre ou pour les assassinats concertés, qui avaient lieu surtout en saison sèche contre les femmes qui se rendaient aux plantations. Il y avait autrefois une route qui permettait aux Mitsogho de surprendre les Apindji dans leur sommeil. Elle venait du côté de Mimongo, contournait le pays des Apindji, en passant par la forêt noire, pour aboutir vers Migabé. Cette route, les Apindji l'appelaient: "Epongo ya go Konga" — la route de la grande forêt" ou "Epongo ya Kala" — la route d'autrefois", l'ancienne route. C'est par cette route que les guerriers mitsogho poussant des hurlements de "panthère" (Nzego), s'approchaient des villages plus près les uns des autres. Dans ce temps-là les Apindji habitaient plutôt à l'écart au fond de la forêt, liés seulement par les pistes. C'est donc au contact des Mitsogho, comme racontent les vieux, que les Apindji ont appris toute la tactique "militaire" aussi bien que la fabrication des armes indigènes.

²⁷ Sur le Nyembé, voir: SWIDERSKI, S. Les agents éducatifs, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Sur la société secrète des "hommes-léopards", hommes-tigres ou hommes-panthères, voir WALKER-RAPONDA, A. et SILLANS, R. *Rites et croyances*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-182. Cf. aussi: FAURE, F. *Le diable de la Brousse*. Coll. "Jesers". Société des Miss. Evang., 1953.

La troisième cause de relation entre les Mitsogho et les Apindji était le commerce englobant aussi bien les produits d'importation que la vente et l'achat des esclaves.

Le commerce avec les Mitsogho concernait principalement l'achat du sel. En effet ils étaient connus au temps de l'installation des Blancs comme fournisseurs de sel. D'après les informations de M^{me} Digombé Christine, apindjie, mère de l'abbé Lazare Digombé, notre informateur et traducteur principal, le sel venait du côté de Fougamou. Le chemin de cette ville n'était connu que des Mitsogho. De même les Mitsogho se sont groupés près de Mayumba, dans un village connu sous le nom "Dikoka Dia Mbatsi" ou Dikoka tout court, dont le chef s'appelait Mbatsi. Ils transportaient le sel, tant de Fougamou que de Mayumba dans des sacs, appelés "saki" ou "pukas" (sakidya vianga — sacs de sel). Les Apindji, par contre, les conservaient dans des "tuyaux" faits avec de la paille (konza) de raphia, tout comme les tuyaux de torche de résine d'okoumé.²⁹ On appelait ces tuyaux de sel: yongèla ya vianga. Ces tuyaux de sel représentaient une grande valeur commerciale. Il n'est pas étonnant qu'on les ait utilisés comme constituants de la dot pour le mariage. Dans le langage commercial on disait: "Na bomi t'anga to bale" — J'ai reçu deux sels" ou "Na bomi yongèla to bale" — J'ai gagné deux tuyaux de sel". Le sel avait donc une fonction commerciale tenant la place que prendra l'argent après.

Les vieux Apindji racontent que leur peuple servait plutôt d'intermédiaire entre les Mitsogho et les autres peuples. Avec les Eshira par exemple pour la direction de la Côte, Lambaréné, Libreville ou Sainte-Croix-Fernan-Vaz; avec les Bapounou, par contre pour la direction de Mayumba — la mer. Avec les Mas-sango et les Bandjabis pour la direction d'extrême sud du Pays.

Une autre forme de commerce entre ces deux peuples avait pour objet les esclaves. Au début, avant l'arrivée des Blancs, l'esclavage avait une forme plutôt d'entre-aide que d'agressivité ou de commerce. Les esclaves se recrutaient tout d'abord parmi les

²⁹ La paille était cousue en longueur. Après les avoir remplis du sel on pliait le fond du tuyau. Ensuite on les mettait au fumoir pour les conserver. Pour en faire usage on râpait le sel ainsi durci, comme on fait pour le chocolat indigène (modika), fait avec des mangues sauvages grillées.

enfants têtus, désobéissants ou paresseux. Leurs pères ou oncles maternels décidaient de les vendre à un chef mitsogho, ami. La procédure était assez simple. Le jour convenu, ou bien l'ami mitsogho venait rendre visite et on s'arrangeait pour lui livrer l'enfant, ou bien on allait en voyage chez l'acheteur et on y abandonnait l'enfant. En retour le chef apindji recevait des marchandises, du sel ou de l'argent, lorsque le cas se produisait encore après l'installation des Blancs.³⁰

Une toute autre sorte d'esclaves apindji provenait des guerres, que les Mitsogho faisaient assez souvent contre les Apindji. La différence entre les esclaves vendus dans leur enfance et les esclaves de guerre était énorme. L'enfant (ou l'homme) vendu par représailles aux Mitsogho entrait dans la famille de son maître comme serviteur et devenait la "souche" d'une nouvelle "maison" à l'intérieur de la famille clanique de son maître. Les prisonniers de guerre esclaves par contre, étaient tués et mangés ou vendus et dirigés vers la Côte. Parfois aussi ils étaient par la suite "naturalisés" mitsogho. On dit pourtant, que rarement les enfants apindji, amenés comme esclaves, survivaient. Devenus adultes, ils découvraient qu'ils n'étaient pas de vrais mitsoghos mais des esclaves apindji, alors ils mouraient de honte (*movém-gaba*).

Apindji et Eshira. Les relations avec les Eshira se sont développées de façon à peu près semblable. Tout d'abord les Apindji servaient comme intermédiaires entre les Eshira et les autres peuples, entre les pays côtiers (Lambaréné-Port Gentil-Libreville) et les pays de l'intérieur du sud-Gabon. Aller chez les Eshira pour faire du commerce s'appelait dans ce temps-là: faire fortune — *mobongaga okila*. Ces "voyages dans le pays Ngosse"³¹ entrepris le plus souvent par de grands chefs, accompagnés d'une nombreuse escorte en prévision d'attaques éventuelles sont même devenus le

³⁰ Le prix d'un esclave variait selon le sexe, l'âge et le pays. D'après RINCHON, D., *op. cit.*, p. 178, au royaume de Congo, la valeur d'un esclave était de 10 écus à la fin du XVI^e siècle. Edward Lopez, ambassadeur du roi congolais, assure qu'il a vu en Angola, un chien, de taille moyenne, troqué contre 22 esclaves, dont chacun coûtait 10 ducats. (Selon: PIGAFETTA, Ph. Le Congo, trad. Nahum, p. 71) dans: RINCHON, D., *op. cit.*, p. 178.

³¹ Ngosse désignait le pays des Eshira. Il concernait une grande famille eshira du Bas (Gisira gi Banda ou Gisira gi Ngosiles Eshira du Bas ou encore Eshira de Ngosi, habitant vers Fougamou et Fernan-Vaz par opposition aux Gisira gi Tandu-Gisira du Haut, de la région de Foygamou et Mouila).

sujet de beaucoup de contes apindjis. Bien entendu l'échange des esclaves entraînait aussi dans ce commerce entre chefs apindji et gisira. Les esclaves vendus aux Gisira étaient revendus aux peuples de la Côte (Mièné) puis aux Blancs. Les esclaves apindji des Eshira provenaient des deux mêmes sources que ceux des Mitsogho. Ce pouvait être des prisonniers de guerre ou des Apindji vendus par représailles. Étant donné l'amitié et la compréhension mutuelle entre les deux peuples séparés seulement par le fleuve Ngounié, les apindji esclaves appartenaient pour la plupart à cette dernière catégorie. Si un enfant était désobéissant, son père décidait facilement de le vendre à un ami gisira. La procédure était semblable à celle que les Mitsogho appliquaient. Les Apindji achetaient aussi les enfants eshiras. Aujourd'hui il y a des Apindji qui sont des descendants des esclaves eshira ou mitsogho. On les distingue par leur langue "tordue".

Apindji et Bapounou. Les contacts que les Apindji avaient avec les Bapounou concernaient le commerce du sel mais leurs causes les plus importantes étaient dans le domaine culturel et la santé. Tandis que les Mitsogho se sont faits connaître comme grands initiés du Bouiti, les Bapounou, par contre, sont devenus célèbres à cause de leurs guérisseurs, les nganga danseurs au miroir (gyeno), capables de lire les secrets, de prévoir le danger, de punir les malfaiteurs et de guérir. Ce sont eux, en effet, qui savaient dresser au milieu du village un fétiche capable de faire mourir les gens vampireux qui avaient l'habitude de venir dans la nuit nuire aux familles, en leur enlevant des enfants. Le nganga bapounou creusait un trou au milieu du village avec dedans une lance ou bien de l'huile empoisonnée dans un vase. Le malfaiteur, une fois tombé dans le trou, était attrapé. L'huile, qu'on lui donnait à boire provoquait sa mort. Les Apindji appelaient ce fétiche "mukaki".

Pour en finir avec les caractéristiques des relations entre les Apindji et les peuples voisins, il faut ajouter encore les remarques suivantes: en dehors du commerce du sel et de l'échange des esclaves, qui était plus ou moins commun aussi à plusieurs autres peuples, chacun d'eux développait et sauvegardait les particularités de sa pensée, ses activités culturelles et ses coutumes. Les Apindji par exemple, et surtout les femmes apindjies étaient connues pour leur habileté à la pêche dans les marigots. Leur art

dans la préparation des nasses fut imité ensuite par les femmes eshira. Ces dernières invitaient souvent les femmes apindjies à la saison sèche. Tous les peuples voisins connaissaient les célèbres "nasses des eshira" (matogu en eshira, étava en apindji), fabriquées avec les "pandanus" (magubu en ap., mafubu en gisira), qui abondent sur la rive gauche de la Ngounié dans les viviers vaseux.

L'AUTORITÉ ET LE POUVOIR

Le père et l'oncle maternel

La notion, le genre et les dimensions du pouvoir chez les Apindji ont subi des modifications au fur et à mesure qu'a changé et que s'est développée la conscience tribale de l'indépendance et de l'autonomie. Cette évolution dépendait surtout de celle de la cellule sociale de base, la famille.

Tandis que la base du pouvoir organisé et autoritaire est habituellement le père de famille chez les Apindji, dont le système socio-économique est matrilineaire, ce pouvoir se trouvait dans les mains de l'oncle maternel. Le père de famille participait à ce pouvoir délégué, il avait le droit par exemple d'organiser les cérémonies culturelles concernant les ancêtres. De même c'est de lui que dépendaient le destin et la vie de ses enfants et de ses femmes. Il pouvait sans limite décider de la vente de ses enfants désobéissants ou de ses femmes qui aimaient la querelle ou étaient paresseuses. Comme l'oncle maternel, il pouvait décider secrètement l'empoisonnement ou le meurtre de son propre enfant, si d'après lui, et d'après le ngangas, le guérisseur-visionnaire, les ancêtres exigeaient cela pour la prospérité de la famille et de lui-même. Dans ces cas, le père de famille était donc juge de la vie et de la mort; il n'avait rien à dire par contre dans l'éducation. Ce domaine appartenait à l'oncle maternel, s'il s'agissait d'un garçon ou à la mère et à sa sœur pour une fille. De l'oncle dépendaient la correction du garçon, la récompense pour sa bonne conduite, le règlement des palabres à son sujet, les cadeaux et la dot, que le garçon devait verser à la famille de sa future femme.

Si l'on veut comparer le pouvoir du père avec celui de l'oncle maternel, on peut dire que les parents (père et mère) consti-

tuaient dans la famille l'autorité de première instance. Leur pouvoir avait un caractère plutôt sacré, si l'on en juge par la devise des Apindji qui souligne leur dignité exceptionnelle: "Ici, sur terre, ton dieu est ton père et ta mère" (Go tsina go, Enzambio t'éy'oo n'étét'oo"). Le chant de Nyembé, intitulé "Komai Ngongé, mogugé" souligne ce caractère sacré des parents: "Je n'insulterai pas mon père, parce qu'il est comme une fée (tété Mogesi), je n'insulterai pas non plus ma mère, parce qu'elle est comme une fée (Iyé Mogési). Le pouvoir des parents passait ensuite dans les mains de l'oncle maternel et sur chaque enfant de sa fille. Le pouvoir de l'oncle maternel, par rapport au pouvoir du père est aussi un pouvoir délégué. Parfois le pouvoir du père de famille s'identifiait à celui du chef de village.

Le chef de village

Dans les premiers temps, juste après avoir quitté les bords de l'Océan, les Apindji n'étaient pas nombreux. La tribu des Apindji englobait un certain nombre de familles claniques, liées unique-



Fig. 5. Initiés au Bouiti à Migabé

ment par la langue et par la tradition familiale. Les questions de discipline intérieure et d'organisation étaient tranchées par le conseil des anciens, en tant que représentants des clans. Le chef de la famille clanique comme plus tard le chef du village, exerçait son pouvoir jusqu'à la mort.

Les Apindji accordaient une grande importance à la dignité de chef. Ils disaient qu'il ne peut pas être privé de son pouvoir parce que son élection a été inspirée par la volonté des ancêtres. La succession, presque sacrale, du pouvoir avait lieu au moment de la nouvelle nomination effectuée par le chef mourant. Le successeur devait être d'âge mûr, 35 ans environ et devait jouir d'une bonne réputation auprès du groupe et en particulier auprès du chef sortant. C'était aussi d'habitude un homme respecté dans le village. Bien que la succession soit héréditaire, la nomination se passait toujours d'après la volonté du conseil des Vieux. Souvent le successeur était le fils aîné du chef ou dans d'autres cas, son neveu direct (*mwakadi*, *mwana*+*kadi*=fils de sœur), fils de sa propre sœur ou bien aussi indirect, fils de quelqu'une de ses "sœurs" claniques (*kodi*).

L'ensemble des chefs de village, constituait le "Grand Conseil" du roi. Il avait pour prérogatives d'assurer le règlement des problèmes, la coordination entre les clans et surtout la défense contre les attaques des peuples belliqueux tels que les Ossyeba, Bakelé ou même Mitsogho. Les Apindji nommaient leurs chefs de village ou les chefs de famille clanique du terme *mombé-ekala*, ce qui signifie textuellement "Supérieur de village", par rapport au roi, qu'ils appelaient "*momba Gapindji*", "roi des Apindji". Ce dernier terme avait une signification à la fois sociologique et politique désignant le pouvoir supérieur sur un groupe familial ou clanique et sur un territoire limité.

Pour distinguer le pouvoir de propriété, d'après la double dignité du supérieur, celle de chef de village et celle de roi, les Apindji distinguaient deux autorités, à savoir celle au niveau inférieur: *aniva ekala* — celui à qui appartient le village, et *aniva epinzi* — celui à qui appartient la forêt autour du village, et au niveau supérieur: *aniva gekulu*, c'est-à-dire celui à qui appartient le pays et *aniva epinzi* — celui à qui appartient toutes les forêts.³²

³² Cf. le conte apindji "Kengé".

Le pouvoir lié à la possession des forêts se remarquait souvent aussi sous la forme d'interdits, que leurs propriétaires proclamaient comme nous indiquent les contes. Ils pouvaient interdire par exemple de siffler ou de souiller les forêts avec des excréments.

Les dimensions du pouvoir du chef de village subirent un changement lorsqu'à cause du développement de la tribu, le village cessa d'être équivalent d'une famille clanique. Dès que la famille clanique engloba plus d'un village, le pouvoir se concentra dans les mains du chef de la maison principale (ndako) du clan qui pouvait légitimer sa continuité linéaire d'un seul aïeul. À la différence du chef de famille ou chef de "maison" principale (ndako) il y eut aussi des "chefs" de maisons secondaires, qui avaient le pouvoir de déplacer les villages, lorsqu'existaient des querelles ou des palabres entre gens de deux familles.

Comme les chefs de village dans les premiers temps de l'histoire des Apindji, les chefs des "maisons" aussi étaient élus d'après la succession, c'est-à-dire par choix entre le fils du chef ou le fils de sa propre sœur, en respectant bien entendu la volonté des anciens du village. De façon analogue aux anciens chefs de villages claniques, ces chefs formaient le "Grand Conseil" du roi.

Les chefs de village se distinguaient des autres habitants par leur parure et leur coiffure. Outre la coiffure "à trois dents", composée de trois tresses ils portaient, plantées dans les cheveux deux plumes de coq noir; disposées au choix de deux façons différentes, en avant ou en arrière:



Les coiffures traditionnelles des chefs apindji

Le roi

La tradition orale ne nous fournit pas suffisamment d'informations exactes justifiant la décision des Apindji de se séparer de la grande famille Okandé et d'organiser un nouveau groupe sous le pouvoir d'un "roi".

En ce qui concerne le début de l'histoire des Apindji, la tradition se limite à une description topographique très générale. De même nous ne savons pas grand chose du mode de vie apindji à cette époque. D'après la tradition orale, la "monarchie" a dû débiter au moment où les Apindji ont quitté le pays des Mpongwé, la région de Libreville. Elle durait encore quand ils s'installèrent sur l'Ogoué aux environs de Ndjolé et Lambaréné et exista jusqu'au moment de la fixation de la tribu Apindji le long de la Ngounié et des rivières affluentes, aux environs de leur grand village Migabé. Dans ce temps-là les Apindji n'étaient pas encore bien nombreux, ce qui leur laissait peu de capacité de défense face aux nombreux obstacles qu'ils rencontraient sur leur chemin le long de la Ngounié, avant qu'ils ne s'arrêtent à l'embouchure du fleuve Ngounié. En raison même de leur faiblesse démographique, leur

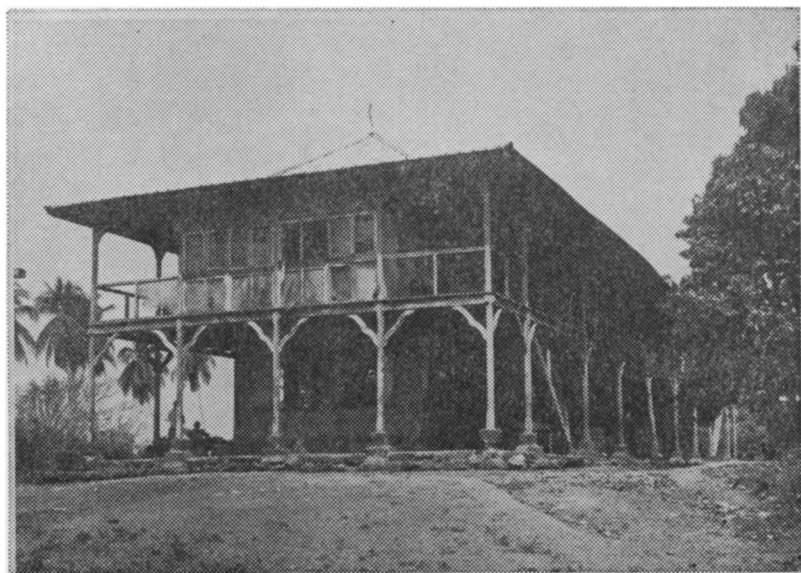


Fig. 6. Mission Saint-Martin en 1963

position géographique difficile et l'insécurité politique provenant des attaques des peuples plus forts exigeaient une main forte pour les guider et coordonner la résistance contre l'ennemi comme la construction d'une organisation forte.

La tradition orale attribue le fait de l'union et de l'organisation politique du peuple Apindji à la famille royale Bômbôdi. Avant le temps de migration on ne connaît qu'un seul nom de monarque apindji. C'est aussi le dernier roi de ce temps-là. La tradition l'appelle Mbômbô. C'est à lui qu'on attribue l'idée de quitter le pays hostile des Mpongwé et d'aller chercher de nouvelles conditions de vie au fond du pays, pour assurer la pérennité de la "race" et sa croissance. C'est peut-être de ce moment-là que provient l'expression répétée souvent par les vieux "qu'il ne faut pas que la race disparaisse, s'éteigne" (Longo gna Gapingji).

Mbômbô était à la tête du groupe Apindji en tant que chef suprême, appelé vulgairement "Momba", mot de la même racine que "mombé" — le Vieux, le Vieillard, l'Aïeul.

Les raisons qui ont poussé les Apindji à constituer une famille royale sont difficiles à établir. On peut néanmoins admettre qu'au premier rang se trouvait la nécessité de s'unir face à des voisins plus forts, à l'époque de la désagrégation sociale de la grande famille ethnique Okandé. Il se peut aussi qu'une telle réorganisation des groupes ethniques ait marqué un progrès dans l'évolution de la conscience "raciale", tribale et politique. En outre la sédentarisation d'un peuple autrefois ramasseur et chasseur exigeait une telle centralisation du pouvoir. Il fallait donc créer et fixer l'ordre intérieur. Le roi représentait par conséquent le pouvoir constitutif et exécutif. En une même personne le roi apindji réunissait les attributs de chef suprême et de juge, tant dans les affaires personnelles, familiales que claniques. Sa compétence englobait la convocation du conseil et l'organisation de la défense extérieure du pays. C'est à lui aussi qu'appartenait la faculté religieuse de bénir les gens pour le voyage et les travaux et d'organiser les cérémonies cultuelles, comme le faisaient encore les chefs de village avant l'indépendance.

Le roi, une fois élu, pouvait exercer ses pouvoirs jusqu'à sa mort, à l'exception pourtant d'un cas d'averé infidélité aux lois ou

à la confiance que le peuple lui avait accordé. On ne peut pourtant pas parler de sacralité proprement dite de la personne du roi, comme dans les anciens royaumes du Ghana ou du Congo. La tradition ne mentionne pas de rituel concernant l'investiture, la mort ou l'enterrement d'un roi.

Le pouvoir du roi était héréditaire, se transmettant du père au fils ou au neveu; on le voit au fait qu'après Mbômbô, ce fut son fils, Mokwango, qui reprit le pouvoir. Néanmoins la nomination d'un nouveau souverain ne dépendait pas de la naissance mais de la valeur personnelle du candidat. On exigeait de lui surtout une moralité exemplaire, des preuves de courage et de vaillance données pendant les combats entre les tribus ou à la chasse, une volonté forte et le sens de l'autorité, obtenant aisément des sujets l'obéissance et le respect. Évidemment le facteur de filiation jouait un grand rôle dans la succession du pouvoir, bien que le roi entreprit, lui-même, un certain temps avant sa mort, de régler le problème de sa succession en prenant la décision de nommer quelqu'un de sa famille.

La tradition orale des Apindji nous parle aussi d'un système fédéral de gouvernement. À la suite de l'expansion de leur peuple, les Apindji ont divisé le pouvoir central entre trois rois, inaugurant ainsi une nouvelle étape de fédération, qui d'ailleurs ne dura pas longtemps. Chacun de ces royaumes, de Kinga, Nzondo et Dibiti, constituait une entité territoriale et juridique indépendante s'exprimant par un pouvoir absolu du roi et par une organisation socio-économique propre. Malgré cette division, le peuple Apindji a pu conserver son unité ethnique et familiale peut-être du fait que le roi Nzondo-Momba exerçait, comme on l'a vu plus haut, une fonction d'intermédiaire entre les deux autres rois. Ce rôle de lien était encore accru par le fait que Nzondo était le fils du roi Kinga et apparenté au roi Dibiti.

Le juge

Une des plus vieilles fonctions sociales, à côté de celle de chef de famille et de village est celle du juge. Cette fonction était attribuée exceptionnellement car on la réservait à des personnes d'une valeur personnelle remarquable, tant morale qu'intellectuelle encore accrue par la sagesse de l'âge. Cette dignité, en même

temps que le devoir social, les Apindji les confiaient seulement à celui qui n'ignorait rien, non seulement de la loi coutumière mais aussi des gens de son entourage et qui jouissait d'un prestige exceptionnel et de la confiance de tous en tant qu'homme honnête et sage. C'était le plus souvent un sage du village ou du clan qui avait donné des preuves d'une connaissance parfaite de la façon de mener un procès (palabre). Son savoir-faire s'ancrait solidement dans la sagesse ancestrale comme le montrait sa connaissance de multiples proverbes et de leur bonne application. On pourrait comparer leur utilisation à celle qu'en faisait le roi Salomon, qui s'est acquis ainsi en Israël et pour les siècles la réputation de sage entre les sages par ses jugements "d'expert" en proverbes. Ce modèle du juge chez les Apindji est le roi Nzondo, connu par son honnêteté et sa justice. C'est la raison pour laquelle on lui avait donné le surnom "Momba", Nzondo-le Juge. Nous avons vu l'importance de son arbitrage entre les deux rois despotiques, Kinga et Dibiti. Le pouvoir judiciaire était symbolisé par un insigne, le chasse-mouche (gèsèse) et une plume rouge de perroquet. Parfois lorsqu'une occasion l'exigeait le juge se décorait des plumes blanches d'un coq, qu'il gardait plantées dans ses cheveux et il peignait aussi son visage en blanc. Tant les plumes blanches que la couleur blanche de son visage étaient le symbole de la justice et de la pureté.

Outre les qualités morales du candidat comptaient beaucoup aussi dans le choix d'un juge sa position dans la société et le sacrifice de quelqu'un de sa famille. L'exigence d'un certain statut social se justifiait par la nécessité d'avoir une nombreuse famille et par l'aisance requise. À cause de l'exigence de sacrifier quelqu'un de sa famille, tout le monde n'était pas prêt à briguer une telle position.³³

L'élection d'un nouveau juge avait lieu dans le nzimbé, symbole de la tombe des ancêtres, constituant avec le nganza une partie du complexe des lieux sacrés. C'était un acte de décision collective. La fonction de juge sous son ancienne forme traditionnelle a disparu vers les années 1930 et est remplacée aujourd'hui par les institutions judiciaires de base, dont les juges cou-

³³ Un sacrifice semblable était exigé aussi de celui qui voulait construire une case rituelle, nganza.

tumiers exercent les fonctions. La fonction actuelle de juge coutumier est dans une certaine mesure le prolongement de la fonction judiciaire traditionnelle. Elle se limite en réalité aux palabres, dans lesquels il s'agit toujours d'affaires familiales et de voisinage de moindre importance. La forme de ce genre de procès est restée la même et s'appuie largement, comme jadis, sur les proverbes.

Le guérisseur

La fonction de guérisseur représente une sorte de pouvoir social. Les Apindji, comme d'ailleurs aussi la majorité des peuples bantou, désignent le détenteur de cette fonction du nom nganga. La position de guérisseur était et est encore une haute fonction sociale, moitié sacrée, moitié profane. Le caractère sacré de cette fonction provient du rôle et du pouvoir que le nganga possède à l'égard de Dieu et des esprits. L'importance sociologique du nganga par contre réside dans le fait qu'il est au service du peuple tant dans son village que des alentours. C'est à lui qu'est confiée la santé physique et psychique de tous les villageois. Il veille sur le village et sur les familles individuelles. On peut dire que l'équilibre psychosocial, la santé physique et morale de la vie au village dépendent de l'intelligence et de l'habileté du nganga. La personne du nganga jouit dans le peuple d'une confiance complète et d'un grand respect. Il est le guérisseur et aussi le visionnaire capable de se mettre en contact avec les esprits, les ancêtres et même Dieu, pour prévoir les événements futurs, cachés aux yeux profanes. Il doit donc informer les villageois des malheurs éventuels, des machinations des sorciers ou de la vengeance des ancêtres. Au total c'est à lui d'interpréter les événements actuels et passés. Il le fait le plus souvent au moyen d'une danse rituelle, qui se termine par une vision. De la même manière il peut découvrir ainsi un malfaiteur. Une autre méthode de découverte des "véritables" causes de la mort de quelqu'un est la pratique de l'autopsie, exécutée sur un cadavre. Ce rite permet au nganga de juger si la mort a été causée par un empoisonnement ou par un acte de vampirisme. Le même rite prouve aussi si ce mort n'était pas, lui-même, à son tour "le mangeur des âmes". Ce jugement se basait sur la présence ou l'absence d'un crabe dans le ventre du cadavre. L'homme, chez qui on a trouvé cette carac-

téristique étrangère, était considéré comme celui qui possède evur (evus)³⁴, c'est-à-dire celui qui possédait l'esprit vampirique.

Les insignes du pouvoir de nganga est le sac noir (gébembé) qu'il garde toujours avec lui.³⁵ Tant lui que son sac sont considérés comme sacrés et intouchables. Le sac contient d'habitude des plantes médicinales et des remèdes magiques: kaolin blanc (mpemba) et rouge (nzingo) ainsi que des objets secrets, que son maître lui a confiés, lorsqu'il a terminé auprès de lui son stage de guérisseur.

Le nganga se distingue des autres aussi par sa parure qui est constituée d'une peau de civette (mossingi), accrochée à ses reins, d'un chasse-mouche (gesese), d'une clochette (pambo), d'un rameau de palme (malumbi), d'une ceinture de raphia palme (nyamba), portée de la même façon que la stola par un diacre catholique, d'une plume de perroquet et d'une plume blanche provenant de la queue d'un coq ou d'un vautour et portée au dessus du front, plantée dans les cheveux.

Pour devenir nganga, il faut d'abord avoir été initié au Mweli et ensuite au Bouiti. Enfin, un vieux nganga, un maître doit juger les qualités du candidat pour ce métier. Sa renommée future dépendra de ses qualités personnelles mais surtout de ses réussites même dues au hasard. On interprétera son pouvoir spirituel, sa connaissance des maladies, des plantes médicinales et des relations humaines. D'un côté donc le nganga doit sa réputation à son niveau de compétence professionnelle et d'autre part à ses qualités psycho-morales. Un nganga doit être diplomate et psychologue. C'est à la fois un personnage sacré et un homme de confiance. D'habitude il se distingue par un don réel d'observation, une mémoire remarquable, un mélange délicat de discrétion et de curiosité. Sa volonté forte, son pouvoir de suggestion sur autrui lui permet de susciter l'obéissance et la crainte parmi sa clientèle; sa souplesse d'esprit par contre lui facilite les relations humaines avec le groupe selon les besoins de celui-ci. Pour ce faire il doit apprendre beaucoup des Vieux du village, connaître

³⁴ Sur l'Evus (evur) voir: WALKER-RAPONDA, A. et SILLANS, R. *Rites et croyances*, op. cit., p. 82. Cf. aussi: LAVIGNOTTE, H. *L'evur, croyance des Fang du Gabon*. Soc. Miss. Evang., p. 118, 1952, Paris.

³⁵ Cf. MAMBEKE-BOUCHER, B. *Les nganga, ce qu'il faut en savoir*. Liaison, 53, p. 36-39, 1956.

l'histoire des familles pour résoudre leurs problèmes. Il doit vivre en bonne relation avec les peuples voisins, pour obtenir d'eux des informations supplémentaires. Il est généralement en collaboration avec les autres nganga, ce qui lui permet d'étudier et d'arranger les situations plus difficiles. Il est rare que les nganga s'opposent ou se contredisent entre eux. Même avec les sorciers le nganga doit vivre en bonne relation parce que ceux-ci le consultent souvent pour se tirer d'un soupçon ou de l'accusation d'un acte malfaisant.

D'habitude un nganga commence son métier vers l'âge de 35-40 ans. C'est l'âge et son expérience qui vont décider de sa réussite dans la carrière.

Le Bouiti, religion tribale

La dernière forme du pouvoir chez les Apindji et la plus forte parce que collective était la société d'initiation des hommes, le Bouiti,³⁶ qui en principe représentait pour les Apindji une religion tribale, centrée autour du culte des ancêtres.

La tradition ne nous raconte pas quand cette société secrète a été fondée. Elle nous parle seulement des deux apindji qui l'ont créée, à savoir Sanza et Modume. Tandis qu'au début le Bouiti avait un caractère principalement culturel et éducatif, il a pris par la suite une fonction politique et typiquement sociale en tant que facteur de cohésion tribale et clanique et aussi comme instance disciplinaire. La nécessité d'une telle coordination extérieure et intérieure entre les Apindji s'est faite sentir en particulier au moment de la colonisation et de la christianisation. La fondation de la mission catholique Saint-Martin en 1899 a augmenté encore cette désagrégation du peuple Apindji en le divisant en deux parties, ceux d'amont ("asi ngongo") de la Ngounié et ceux d'aval du fleuve ("asi koi"). Au moment donc où le royaume fédéral subissait une désagrégation sous l'influence de la violence des militaires français, le pouvoir politique des Apindji a été transféré aux mains des guides boutistes. La séparation des clans a été la

³⁶ Cf. SWIDERSKI, S. *Le Bwiti, société d'initiation chez les Apindji*. *Anthropos*, 60, 1965. Cf. aussi le même: *L'Ombwiri, société d'initiation et de guérison au Gabon*. Religioni e Civiltà. Roma, 1971.

cause de la division de la société du Bouiti en deux groupes, l'un englobant les villages autour de Migabé jusqu'à Saint-Martin et l'autre ceux entre Saint-Martin et Mouila. Chacun de ces deux groupes s'est divisé ensuite en corporations appelées "nzimbé"³⁷. Le premier "bouitiste" qui a pris le pouvoir politique sur tout le territoire des Apindji sur la Ngounié était Gekokamongo. Il a dû exercer ce pouvoir entre 1899-1910.

Le Bouiti en tant qu'organisme détenant le pouvoir a eu une quadruple fonction de coordination: disciplinaire, religieuse, éducative et culturelle. Il a remplacé le pouvoir central du roi. Et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, en particulier dans les villages éloignés, aux environs de Migabé, Toubagengé et Mwalo, le Bouiti continue d'exercer son pouvoir, ayant dans son "comité" les chefs de village, le conseil des Vieux et le ngang, le guérisseur.

Par son pouvoir disciplinaire le Bouiti veillait à maintenir le niveau éthique et moral des habitants, en faisant respecter les normes puisées dans sa propre tradition tribale et dans celle des peuples voisins. Le Bouiti prétendait aussi monopoliser le pouvoir d'éduquer et de former la nouvelle génération. Le Bouiti voulait la marquer par des principes et des valeurs tribales propres: sens social et communautaire, fierté et dignité personnelles. D'ailleurs, le Nyembé, la société secrète d'initiation pour les femmes partageait avec le Bouiti cette tâche de responsabilité face à l'histoire.

Le pouvoir religieux de l'organisation Bouiti se résumait principalement dans la sauvegarde du culte des ancêtres, en tant que lien entre le passé et l'avenir et en tant que source de force vitale. C'est par le Bouiti qu'avait lieu et qu'est possible encore aujourd'hui la renaissance spirituelle de chaque clan, chaque village et chaque famille. Le Bouiti passe encore aujourd'hui pour un puissant facteur d'intégration socio-religieuse, utilisant des moyens tels que la drogue sacrée, l'iboga, la "communion" par excellence, les cérémonies nocturnes (ngozé) et la hiérarchie.³⁸

De la même façon dans le domaine culturel le Bouiti exerçait un pouvoir sans limites. C'est en effet lui qui a préservé l'art

³⁷ Cf. SWIDERSKI, S. *Notes sur le Ndeya Kanga, secte syncrétique du Bouiti au Gabon*. *Anthropos*. Vol. 66, 1971.

³⁸ Cf. SWIDERSKI, S. *Remarques sur la philosophie religieuse des sectes syncrétiques au Gabon*. *Revue canadienne des études africaines*. Vol. VIII, N° 1, 1974, 43-53.

de la danse, de la musique sacrée et des chants, en organisant les ngozé, cérémonies nocturnes de caractère socio-religieux. C'est le Bouiti aussi, qui était considéré comme l'unique garant de la continuité éthique, religieuse et culturelle du peuple. Dans l'éducation tribale, offerte au jeune dans la période propice à la socialisation de l'individu, le Bouiti développait chez les jeunes gens l'amour pour l'histoire de leur peuple et le désir d'imiter ses héros dont la tradition a transmis les noms à la mémoire des générations pour qu'ils servent comme modèle culturel et éthique et possibilité toujours actuelle d'identification tribale.

CONCLUSION

Ce rapide survol des informations fournies par la tradition orale sur l'"histoire" des Apindji nous a permis malgré le caractère succinct des données de voir se dégager les traits qui au cours du déroulement historique ont permis à ce petit peuple de se constituer en entité culturelle et d'influencer par un culte particulier l'évolution actuelle du Gabon. La lutte contre le milieu, commune à tous les Africains, encore accentuée pour les Apindji par leur infériorité numérique les a obligés à chercher des moyens de survivre et de préserver leur identité. Ainsi s'expliquent leur caractère bien particulier, ombrageux et fier, mais aussi l'importance de leur culte ancestral, le Bouiti, dans la constitution de la personnalité individuelle et collective.

La connaissance des conditions qui ont présidé à la naissance de cette idéologie rend moins surprenant son extraordinaire développement récent auprès des autres tribus gabonaises, confrontées, elles aussi, par la décolonisation et le choc des civilisations, à la recherche fébrile d'une sauvegarde de leur identité propre.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

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C.P.S. (1955)

