

BOOK REVIEWS AND REVIEW ESSAYS

Charles A. Bishop and Toby Morantz, eds., *Who Owns the Beaver?: Northern Algonquian Land Tenure Reconsidered*, Special Issue, *Anthropologica* 28, (1-2), 1986.

As Adrian Tanner observes in his contribution to this collection, the controversy over northern Algonquian systems of land tenure has always involved more than the study of a relatively small number of Amerindians living in remote parts of northern Canada. Since 1913, when the American anthropologist Frank Speck first trumpeted to a Philadelphia newspaper his discovery of what he called "family hunting territories" among various Algonquian bands in the upper Ottawa Valley, the debate has generally taken on an ideological cast, pitting advocates of "private property" against proponents of "primitive communism" with both groups attempting to draw conclusions as to the origins of modern societies. The various contributors to this volume try to avoid this particular type of ideological trap. Almost uniformly, they suggest that the terms of the debate have been misconstrued due largely to sloppy thinking about the meaning of concepts, such as "property," "territory," and "land ownership" and that greater attention should be paid to the historical diversity of land tenure forms even among such relatively homogeneous populations.

Krystyna Siechiechowicz, for example, is able to show that two contemporary Ojibwa communities in northwestern Ontario, though only fifty miles apart, have developed radically different patterns of land tenure--the one based largely on a classic system of patronymic territories, the other, by contrast, on communal occupation of land. She therefore downplays the importance usually ascribed to ecology and suggests that these differences in land-use patterns result from the historic interrelationship between

kinship and economics. Her views on the significance of kinship are shared by Jose Mailhot, who argues that access to territory among the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador is based directly on social relations. While she agrees with earlier scholars such as Eleanor Leacock that mobility has been an integral part of land occupancy patterns in Labrador, Mailhot insists that such mobility is a direct function of social relations, which actually determine the distribution of individuals over the territory.

Despite their subtle disagreements, it is this stress on *mentalite* which allows Tanner, Siechiechowicz and Mailhot, as well as Fikret Berkes, Colin Scott and Brian Craik--all of them members of an impressive new generation of Algonquianists--to provide so many fine, if limited, insights. All have a great deal of experience in the Subarctic, and Mailhot and Craik are fluent in Montagnais and East Cree. Their conclusions are based on extensive observation and the careful accumulation of detail. In this sense, they are true successors to Richard Preston and the late E.S. Rogers, the two senior Subarctic anthropologists who furnish prologue and epilogue to this collection. Both have always insisted that careful study should precede theorizing; so much so that Rogers, in particular, was frequently criticized by others of a more intellectual bent for his unregenerate empiricism.

As Preston points out, the size of the claims made by these younger scholars is in inverse proportion to their very precise and extensive data collection--in contrast to earlier anthropologists, who often made very large claims on little more than a youthful summer's work. This was certainly true of Frank Speck, who basically "discovered" family hunting territories during two weeks he spent at Bear Island in Lake Temagami during the early summer of 1913 and then buttressed his theory after equally brief stints among other Algonquians in northern Ontario and Quebec. And this seems to have been true of Rolf Knight and Eleanor Leacock as well.

This does not necessarily mean that all of this earlier work is as flawed as Knight's, who claimed, among other things, that hunting territories at Rupert's House in eastern James Bay had

been imposed by the Hudson's Bay Company--and that, in reality, individuals could hunt wherever they wanted. According to Brain Craik, Knight's study in the late 1950s was based on data from only three individuals, none of whom was a traditional trapline head. By contrast, the article in this volume by Regina Flannery and Elizabeth Chambers reworks John M. Cooper's 1932 map of band and hunting territories on James Bay from Cooper's own files as well as from notes kept by Flannery herself, who had assisted Cooper in his original fieldwork. They insist that Cooper's map is an accurate reflection of a system of land tenure which dates back to at least the 1870s; and that the term "family hunting ground," as used by Cooper and Speck, still appropriately describes this system.

On several occasions, Flannery and Chambers thank Toby Morantz, one of this volume's co-editors, for providing them with historical references which corroborate or supplement Cooper's fieldwork. Morantz's own contribution, in fact, dovetails perfectly with the Cooper material--at least for eastern James Bay--because it carries the analysis beyond that usually available from memory ethnography. Drawing particularly on the fur trade records, she attempts to find evidence for any or all of the four components of the family hunting ground system described in the anthropological literature--namely, trapping for exchange, individualization, notions of trespass, and conservation practices. Although she is careful not to force too many inferences from her data, she concludes that all of these features were present, at least in incipient form, as far back as the early 18th-century.

Given so much of the debate about the "aboriginality" of family hunting territories, it is surprising that only editors Morantz and Charles Bishop devote any attention to historical documentation. Though far from perfect, and subject to their own unique biases, the records kept by traders, missionaries, surveyors, government officials and the like provide almost three hundred years of data against which to test--as Morantz has shown--many of the hypotheses advanced in this volume. Thus, if the distinction in land tenure systems Krystyna Siechiechowicz posits

for northwestern Ontario is historically valid, it should be possible to verify that fact by conducting the type of detailed analysis of Hudson's Bay Company records that Ed and Mary Black Rogers have already carried out for nearby Weagamow Lake.

There is also a need for broader comparative work. Although this volume purports to cover northern Algonquian land tenure in general, virtually all of the papers deal solely with the inhabitants of the boreal forest regions of Quebec, Labrador and Ontario. There is no discussion of the boreal forest Cree of the northern prairie provinces. And only Bishop treats the Algonquians of the Upper Great Lakes-Ottawa Valley region--who, after all, were the source of Frank Speck's original data on family hunting territories. Alexander Henry's famous observation of 1761, which Bishop cites, shows that these people then had the notions of individualization, trespass and hunting for exchange which Morantz finds on eastern James Bay. They also continued to have the notions of "boundary defence" which Bishop finds in the 17th century records. When John Thomas of the Hudson's Bay Company travelled inland up the Missinaibi River towards Lake Superior in the summer of 1777, he paid one individual a "Toll for coming through his Country in our Journal hither" and made extensive presents to another, "this being his ground we are settled on" (HBC Archives A11/44, fos. 75-76).

Charles Bishop is surely right to stress that territoriality can include more than subsistence resources--control of trade routes being a concrete example. And he is probably correct in his assumption that, at least along the Great Lakes--Ottawa/St. Lawrence River route, the fur trade intensified existing forms of territoriality, rather than creating new ones. But in a volume full of careful conclusions, he tends to overstate his case; as he himself observes in his paper, some may find his arguments "too speculative and the supporting data too sketchy."

For example, Bishop finds that boundary defence in the early historic period applied only to prestige/luxury materials; there is "no evidence," he says, that groups prevented others having access to subsistence resources. This is arguing negative evidence,

always a dangerous practice--and particularly dangerous given the paucity of written materials from the 17th century. Simply because the Jesuits or Nicolas Perrot write that a number of groups shared the rich whitefish resource at Sault Ste Marie, are we entitled to conclude that the fishery did not belong to the Sauteurs, or that there were no rules governing its exploitation? At this stage, we simply do not know the answer. However, it is interesting to note that when Ojibwa from Agawa Bay, up the coast from Sault Ste. Marie, came down to take whitefish in the 19th-century, they were not allowed to camp on Whitefish Island, in the middle of the rapids, because the island belonged to the Ojibwa of Sault Ste. Marie (Conway, n.d.).

There should be a moratorium on references to the sacred 17th century texts--Jesuit Relations, Le Clercq, Nicolas Perrot et al.--until more is known about the Algonquians of the Great Lakes-Ottawa/St. Lawrence route over the following two centuries. Very little study, for example, has ever been devoted to the Ojibwa who continued to inhabit the north shores of Lakes Huron and Superior, or to their kinsmen who moved into what is now Michigan and southern Ontario. Did individualism and individual rights, as Bishop argues, in fact replace collective rights to resources and/or collective territoriality? Writing in the mid-19th-century, the Mississauga/Ojibwa historian Peter Jones stated that

the Ojibway Nation is found scattered in small bodies in the country extending from the River St. Lawrence thence along the northern shores of Lakes Ontario, Erie, St. Clair, Huron, both sides of Lake Superior and of Hudson's Bay territory...Each band or community has its own chiefs and manages its own affairs, within the limits of its territory, quite independently of other tribes of the same nation" (Jones 1861: 39).

And in 1849, Thomas G. Anderson and Alexander Vidal, commissioners appointed by the government of Canada to investigate Ojibwa claims to the north shores of Lakes Huron and Superior reported that "long established custom...has divided this territory among several bands each independent of the other;

having its own chief or chiefs and possessing an exclusive right to and control over its own hunting grounds" (Vidal and Anderson 1849).

In contradistinction to Bishop, these observers seem to be speaking of collective territorial rights of some sort. When Frank Speck visited the Temagami Ojibwa in 1913, he concentrated on individual rights, stating that each constituent family of the band had "its special hunting territory (nda'ki.m 'my land')" (Speck 1915: 12). But, though Speck may not have been interested, the Temagami Ojibwa have another word as well--nda'ki.men.an, meaning "our land." These two terms correspond to the Montagnais-Naskapi words nitassi (my land) and nitassi:na:n (our land), discussed in Mailhot's article. Not only did the Temagamis provide Speck with the boundaries of each family hunting territory, they also told him where their land ended and that of various neighboring bands began (Speck 1915: 15-16).

So it seems possible for collective territorial rights to co-exist with individual rights. This still begs the larger question of what these collective rights involved. As Rogers points out in his epilogue, we still do not know enough about sociopolitical organization and its relationship to territory--though, as he suggests, fear of witchcraft must have played an important role in boundary maintenance. Another profitable avenue for further study is that being pursued by the ethnoarchaeologist Thor Conway, who is concentrating on mythic landscapes, sacred sites, burial sites and other magico-religious practices which create a sense of collective identity. The issue of Northern Algonquian land tenure, in short, is a long way from being resolved.

James Morrison

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It is time to stop blaming the victim. That is the message of University of Manitoba historian Doug Sprague in Canada and the Metis, 1869-1885. For too long, Canadian historians have laid the blame for the dislocation of the Metis from Manitoba in the 1870s and the subsequent 1885 rebellion on the Metis themselves, and not on the federal government. Sprague now challenges the idea of Ottawa's benevolence--what he terms the good faith interpretation of such historians as Bill Morton, Donald Creighton, and George Stanley--and argues instead that federal attitudes towards the Metis were anything but accommodating. Indeed, he suggests that "a genuine reconsideration of the evidence"(17) indicates that Ottawa acted in a duplicitous manner and that the provisions of the Manitoba Act that dealt specifically with Metis interests were maliciously undone by federal authorities. The migration of the Metis from Manitoba after the Red River Resistance was consequently a forced dispersal, and not the actions of a so-called nomadic, primitive race. The 1885 Rebellion, moreover, was deliberately provoked by the federal government; it was a desperate gamble by Prime Minister John A.