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Author(s): Harold Hickerson

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The Feast of the Dead Among the Seventeenth Century Algonkians of the Upper Great Lakes¹

HAROLD HICKERSON

Indiana University

DURING the middle three decades of the 17th century, before French traders and missionaries had gained a permanent foothold in the Sault Ste. Marie-Mackinac Straits region in the present Upper Peninsula of Michigan, upper Great Lakes Algonkian-speaking peoples were already involved in the fur trade through Huron and Nipissing middlemen.² The influx of French trade commodities, mainly metalwares and cloth, although restricted due to harassment on the trade routes by the Iroquois, had marked repercussions on the economic and political institutions of the Algonkians of the northern Lake Huron-Lake Superior region. An enrichment in material culture and the development of external relations stemming from the trade formed the basis for political and ceremonial developments quite exceptional in terms of the later history of those Algonkians. One facet of this development was the ceremony held in several of the Algonkian villages referred to by the French as *Fête des Morts*, or Feast of the Dead. The Feast of the Dead, as it was practiced by the Algonkians of the upper Great Lakes, probably had been introduced by the Hurons or their trading partners, the Nipissing. These latter, until 1649, formed a geographic and commercial link between their Algonkian-speaking kindred of the upper Great Lakes and the Iroquoian-speaking Huron of the Ontario peninsula.

The Feast of the Dead had a brief career in the upper Great Lakes region. The ceremony was not continued for long after the establishment of French missions and trading stations at Sault Ste. Marie and in nearby locales during the seventh decade of the 17th century (JR 52:199-203), and it would be difficult to find any traces of the communal aspects of the Feast in the mortuary customs of the Chippewa descendants of those peoples today. But certain practices involved in the Feast of the Dead of the 17th century reflect the sociopolitical and economic life of the participants, and what insights are afforded are relevant to Chippewa history.

The contemporary Chippewa have been portrayed as an "atomistic," individualistic people.³ Hallowell, Barnouw and Friedl have projected this portrait to cover the Chippewa of historical and even aboriginal times. Hallowell and his followers have emphasized the persistence of the "atomistic" Chippewa personality structure through the long period of their contact with Europeans, even though their conditions of life have changed markedly.⁴ This is an interesting problem; it is also an elusive one, if only for the reason that the earliest sources on the Saulteur (forerunners of the Chippewa), while comprehensive in some other regards, do not provide explicit information on personality.

Corresponding to the picture of the individualistic Chippewa personality, students of Chippewa culture have also depicted an individualistic, "atomistic" socioeconomic life.⁵ Hallowell (1955:242) supports Speck's hypothesis (1915) that the individual family hunting territory system was a feature of aboriginal Algonkian organization, despite Jenness' rejection of Speck's findings (1935:6-7). Thus, Hallowell reinforces the notion of "atomism" in this important aspect of economic organization. Friedl explains the persistence of the "atomistic" Chippewa personality structure by saying that in all stages of their history, no matter what the external conditions of life:

... each Chippewa has always come to expect that every situation in which he finds himself is likely to be relatively unique, immediate, and short-lived in its consequences (Friedl 1956:816).

In the realm of economic, political, and religious experience, all of which come under Friedl's concern, this Chippewa outlook inhibits cohesion and reinforces particularity.

It is, however, a statement by Barnouw which is most striking in regard to the "atomism" of Chippewa organization:

... there was no economic co-operation outside of the family unit. There was no communal hunting, like that on the Plains, no camp circle, no organized council of chiefs, no policing system, no regularly constituted military societies, and no symbols of group integration. Every man was for himself or for his own family; and there were few activities which linked the isolated families together.

Even the major religious ceremonies were not conducted for the benefit of the group as a whole (Barnouw, 1950:16)...

I believe that the following material, although relevant to only a brief period in the history of the Saulteur and their congeners of the upper Great Lakes, reveals a quite different picture, at a period as close to aboriginal times as the sources permit.

THE UPPER GREAT LAKES ALGONKIANS

The upper Great Lakes Algonkians of whom I write constituted in the middle 17th century a number of autonomous groups. These groups occupied contiguous territories on the coast, in the near interior and on the islands of northern Lake Huron, and in the northern and southern interior of eastern Lake Superior. The peoples living in this region included the Saulteur, Nipissing, Mississauga, Amikwa, and the various divisions of the Ottawa, besides a number of other groups which did not survive the 17th century as distinct peoples—the Achiligouan, Nikikouet, and others now even more obscure. Collectively, all these groups formed the western wing of a great family of peoples, very similar in language and culture, which was distributed from Ottawa River to eastern Lake Superior.⁶

In this paper I am chiefly concerned with the most prominent of the peoples on the western wing of this family, the Saulteur, who are the lineal ancestors of the modern Chippewa. However, for that early time it is often difficult to isolate the activities of any specific group. The intricacies of French tribal nomenclature provide one block to identification. Furthermore, it was char-

acteristic at that period for the Algonkians of the upper Great Lakes to combine in political, trading, and military alliances, and to seek common markets for their trade peltries. Linguistic and cultural similarity and interlocking marriage and blood relationships must have reinforced political and trading alliances and have been reinforced by them.

The upper Great Lakes Algonkians were hunters in the winter and fishermen in the summer (Blair 1911 I:275-277; Kellogg 1917:207; JR 54:129-131). Few data on their hunting are available; we do know that communal

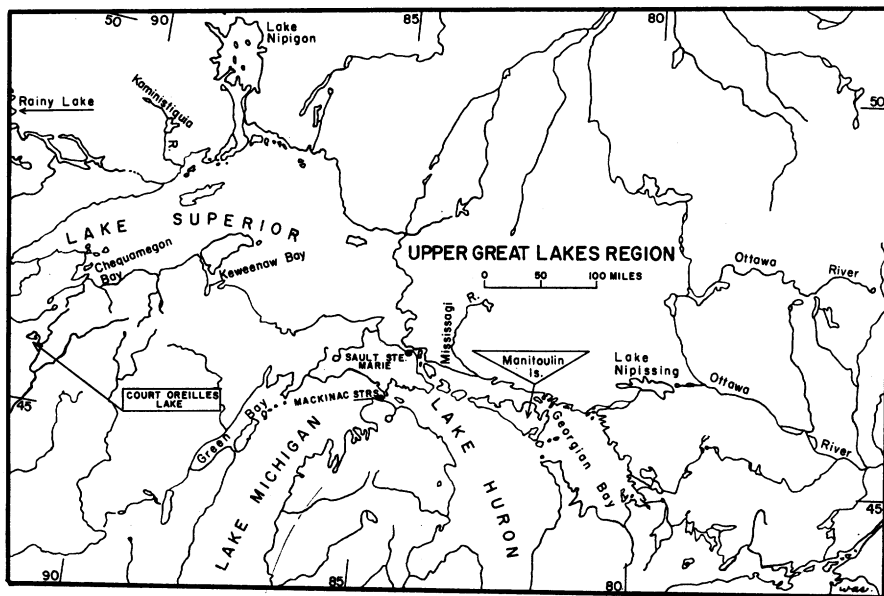


FIG. 1. Upper Great Lakes Region.

hunting of large game, especially of elk, moose, and woodland caribou was carried on, as well as hunting by individuals (Blair 1911 I:106-110). By the mid-17th century the beaver had assumed great importance because of its value in the fur trade (Blair 1911 I:173). Neither wild rice nor maple sugar production appear to have been important industries for the upper Great Lakes Algonkians, except possibly among some few groups living west of Green Bay who were neighbors of the Menominee. The gathering of berries played a part in their economy (Blair 1911 I:279-280).

The fisheries, however, were the hub of community life, and fishing was the main subsistence pursuit. A sufficient quantity was taken in nets and by the spear in the late fall so that a small surplus could be frozen for winter use (Blair 1911 I:275-276). Village sites, occupied from six to eight months of the year (JR 54:129-133), were selected on the basis of the advantages they held for fishing, although by 1670, at the end of the period of which I write, the fur trade had already become an important factor in the selection of vil-

lage residences (JR 55:97; 56:117). Trading depots, however, were often located at pre-existing Indian fisheries, where Indian and European traders were afforded a stable food supply (see Kellogg 1917:207).

Numerous fishing sites in the bays, inlets, and river mouths of lakes Huron and Superior were recorded by 17th-century authors (JR 50:267; 54:151-153), but it was the fishery at Sault Ste. Marie which attracted a host of kindred and allied peoples. At various times between 1641 and 1670 Sault Ste. Marie maintained a summer population of 1,600 to 2,000 persons (JR 23:225; 52:213; 54:133). The Jesuit missionary, Dablon, in 1670 described eight separate peoples, aside from some visiting Cree, using the Sault Ste. Marie fisheries as guests of the Saulteur; these latter constituted but 150 of the total of 1,600 persons congregated there (JR 54:133-135). Three of the guest peoples—the Nouquet, Marameg, and Outchibou—appear, like the Saulteur, to have been direct ancestors of the Chippewa. The first two carried the names for the present Chippewa bear phratry and catfish gens (see Hodge 1907:279), the last bore the name that has since become generic for all the Chippewa living in the United States. Dablon states that the Nouquet, Marameg, and Outchibou, coming from adjacent territories to the north and south of Sault Ste. Marie, had been allowed by the Saulteur to settle permanently at the Sault, thus indicating a close communality of interest among all four groups (JR 54:133).⁷ Although the Nouquet were referred to as a separate people by Duluth in 1684 (Margry 1886 VI:41), by La Hontan in 1688 (Thwaites 1905:317), and Charlevoix in 1718 (WHC 16:360), this was apparently a small remnant group. To all intents and purposes the Marameg and Nouquet, along with the Outchibou, became merged with the Saulteur and within a few years after 1670 ceased to exist as autonomous peoples (see Kinietz 1940:317-320).

Village population of the upper Great Lakes Algonkians appears to have ranged from just over a hundred to nearly 500 persons (JR 54:133). Paucity of data prevents a concise picture of the sociopolitical organization of these peoples. There are hints of an early totemic⁸ organization. The absorption of the Nouquet and Marameg, who bore totem names, by the Saulteur, whose name is merely a French translation of an Algonkian name designating *Dwellers at the Falls* (JR 54:133), is, then, a recorded historical fact. Other peoples, the Amikwa (Beaver), the Nikikouet (Otter), and the Ouasouarini (Fish) (JR 18:229) also bore names which have their modern equivalents in the names of Chippewa gentes and phratries (Hodge 1907:279; Jenness 1935:8). The Missisauga, whose village was at the mouth of a river famous for its sturgeon fishery (JR 55:133-135), bore a name which merely means river mouth. The Saulteur and Missisauga, then, bore names referent to locales; the name for the Outchibou (Objibwa, or Chippewa) apparently defies etymological analysis. The Saulteur and Missisauga probably constituted members of several totemic groups using a common summer fishery and co-operating in warfare, diplomacy, and trade. It seems evident that these communities, whether organized along totemic lines or simply on the basis of the

possession of a discrete territory, did not in early times constitute mere segments of a larger tribal grouping. Their relations with each other were those of autonomous equals (see Lowie 1948:236), and the absorption of one by another group when it occurred was undoubtedly a voluntary and expedient measure (JR 54:133).

The Chippewa, Saulteur, and Missisauga continue to exist as peoples. None of those peoples who bore names of the modern gentes or phratries have continued to exist except as segments of more inclusive groupings. Possibly the process of the absorption of totemic groups once autonomous but bound to one another through interlocking relationships founded in exogamy, by larger groups living in village centers founded at locales where a great abundance of food was available, was under way before the French arrived in the upper Great Lakes region. If so, as the village locales assumed even more importance as trade centers, the process of absorption was accelerated.

There is nothing in the early literature to suggest anything but common proprietorship over territory; family or individual ownership of hunting grounds among those peoples (of the kind first described by Speck) was not reported by any early authors, and a wide survey of sources for the first half of the 18th century discloses no such system operating among the forebears of the Chippewa. This system developed later, along the lines described by Leacock for the Montagnais (1954 *passim*), only among certain of the most marginal Saulteux hunters of the Canadian trapping regions as a response to conditions imposed by almost total emphasis on the fur trade.⁹

HISTORICAL SETTING

Before turning to the Feast of the Dead, I believe it relevant to summarize briefly the period during which the ceremony was held. The second third of the 17th century was characterized by upheavals stemming from the introduction and prosecution of the fur trade.¹⁰ Incursions by the Iroquois, who were seeking trade peltries and a position in the fur trade, into the Lower Peninsula of Michigan in the 1640's and 1650's forced the Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Mascouten, and Potawatomi to abandon their villages and hunting grounds and seek refuge in the region west and north of Lake Michigan (see Wilson 1956). The Huron and Ottawa east of Lake Huron were assaulted by the Iroquois during the same period. The struggle culminated in the decimation of the Huron in 1649-1650 and the dispersal of the Ottawa during the ensuing decade (see Hunt 1940: Chapters VII-VIII). After the curtailment of the French-Huron-Nipissing trade, Cree from the Hudson's Bay region migrated to the Lake Superior region in search of trade goods, and by the late 1660's had appeared on the north shore of the Lake, at Chequamegon on the south shore, and at Sault Ste. Marie (see Mandelbaum 1940:169-172; JR 18:229). At the two latter places they came as guests of the Ottawa and Saulteur, with whom they fished and traded (JR 54:133-135, 193-195). The Nipissing, harassed by the Iroquois, and with their middleman status in the fur trade destroyed, by the 1650's had taken refuge far to the west at Lake

Nipigon, north of western Lake Superior (JR 51:63), before returning to Lake Nipissing in the 1670's (JR 56:99, 105). The refugee Algonkians west of Lake Michigan, including the Ottawa, in search of new hunting areas attempted to penetrate the rich furred game and rice lake country of western Wisconsin and Minnesota, then occupied by Woodland Dakota. These attempts were opposed by the Dakota, who sought trade outlets via Ottawa and Saulteur middlemen, but who would not tolerate competitive hunters in Dakota territory (Blair 1911 I:Chapter XV).

The Saulteur were likewise affected by the struggles of the period. The French *coureurs des bois*, Radisson and Grosseilliers, in the late 1650's found that they had quit the Sault Ste. Marie area and were located in the interior south of Lake Superior (Scull 1943:154-155, 187-194). Perrot wrote of the Saulteur relocating at Keweenaw and Chequamegon during the 1660's (Blair 1911 I:173). Nevertheless, despite temporary setbacks in trade and warfare, the Saulteur, Amikwa, and Missisauga in the long run resisted Iroquois incursions and maintained their old centers in the northern Lake Huron region and at Sault Ste. Marie (Blair 1911 I:178-181; JR 48:75-77).¹¹ In fact, by 1670 Sault Ste. Marie was the center of the western trade (Blair 1911 I:343), and at different times prior to that date had been a place of refuge for Potawatomi (JR 23:225; Scull 1943:176) and Cree (JR 54:133-135). It was not until after 1670 that Sault Ste. Marie lost its status as the leading center of trade. The Ottawa and remnant Tobacco Huron who in 1660 had established a village at Chequamegon Bay (Blair 1911 I:Chapter XV) west of the Saulteur and near the country of increasingly hostile Dakota, in 1670 moved to the Mackinac and Manitoulin Island region (JR 55:161, 169-173; 56:115-117). There they soon replaced the Saulteur as the chief carriers of French commodities to the interior peoples of the north and west.

Prior to 1670 French expeditions to the western Great Lakes were few and far between. The voyages of discovery of Brulé to the upper Great Lakes in the 1620's, of Nicolet to Green Bay in the 1630's, the journey of the Jesuits, Jogues and Raymbeault, to Sault Ste. Marie in 1641, the expeditions of Radisson and Grosseilliers to Lake Superior in 1656-1660, and that of the Jesuit, Mesnard, who died in the woods seeking the Ottawa at Chequamegon in 1660, were the only documented voyages until Perrot and the Jesuits, Dablon, Allouez and Marquette, opened the western Great Lakes for trade and missions in the mid-1660's. Perhaps *coureurs des bois* had made unauthorized and therefore unrecorded trading journeys to the upper Great Lakes between 1650 and 1665, but such desultory voyages could not have had any great effect on the cultures of the Indians they visited. However, the period between the 1630's and the 1660's, while lacking extensive French contacts, was one in which the upper Great Lakes Algonkian cultures had already been affected by the import of French commodities via the Huron.¹² The turmoil affecting the neighbors of the upper Great Lakes Algonkians on all sides, the displacement of peoples, conflicts centering in competition over hunting territories and control over trade channels, famine and impoverishment, were con-

comitants of economic and political relationships existing among Indian peoples living on the peripheries of French centers of commercial and political activity.

The culture of the upper Great Lakes Algonkians, then, by 1640-1670 was not an untouched aboriginal culture, for already European trade goods had caused alterations in the economy. The most marked change was a shift in emphasis from a subsistence economy to one in which a surplus of peltries was an economic requisite. The prosecution of the fur trade had led to serious changes in intertribal relations; new commercial relations required a broadening of political perspectives, a growing emphasis on external relations, the necessity for alliances and planned diplomacy. The Saulteur, for instance, who had once occupied a marginal game region and had relied mainly on fish for their livelihood, by 1670 under the stimulus of the fur trade had assumed a central position in regard to the trade (JR 55:97). Their external relations were motivated to a large degree by their search for trade peltries, both as hunters and as middlemen.

The absence of direct French control over many aspects of the trade in faraway regions meant that Indians in such regions were free from direct French meddling in their affairs. Although becoming ever more dependent on French goods, the Algonkians of the upper Great Lakes during the period of which I am writing, arranged their own military and commercial alliances and waged war on enemies of their choosing. In a word, they maintained their hegemony.

THE HURON SOURCE OF THE FEAST OF THE DEAD

The Feast of the Dead was in all probability not a part of aboriginal Algonkian culture. Many facts support this conclusion. Extensive ossuaries do not occur in the northern Great Lakes country, whereas an abundance of ossuaries are scattered throughout the Huron country. The first mention of an Algonkian Feast of the Dead was by the Jesuit missionary, Lalemant, in 1641 (JR 23:209-223). Sagard, who was with the Huron in 1623-1624 and who described their Feast of the Dead, remarked that the Algonkians (including probably the Nipissing and Ottawa, who were known to him) at that time had no common burial of the dead (Wrong 1939:208), thus, no Feast of the Dead. The only Algonkians who, so far as we know, ever celebrated the Feast of the Dead were some of those who had direct contact with the Huron during the first half of the 17th century. No such ceremony has been recorded for the Sauk, the Fox, or the Potawatomi. The Menominee appear to have participated in the ceremony only through the agency of the Saulteur, and the Cree likewise (Scull 1943:201-202, 217). The rites were not reported for the Montagnais or for other Algonkians on the Ottawa and Saguenay rivers, or in other eastern regions. The Feast of the Dead, then, in its 17th-century western Great Lakes form, seems to have been of Huron, possibly pan-Iroquoian, provenience. The decimation and fragmentation of the Huron in 1650 involved the extinction of their tribal life as they had lived it; after that date the Huron themselves no longer held this Feast.¹³

An analysis of the Huron ceremony, taken from the writings of Champlain in 1615 (Biggar 1929 III:160-163), Sagard in 1623-1624 (Wrong 1939:211-214), and Brébeuf in 1636 (JR 10:279-311) shows that the ceremony was held every ten or twelve years at a village selected by a council of chiefs. The remains of those who had died since the last ceremony were buried in a common grave. Great wealth in trade goods, and in beaver robes and other articles of Indian production, were expended as grave goods and as presents exchanged by visitors and hosts. Members of outside groups were invited to the Feast and these honored guests were feted and given valuable presents. Games, dancing, and feasting accompanied the rites, which culminated after ten days in the sanctified atmosphere of the burial. Alliances through joint participation among the several villages of the Huron and outsiders were solemnized by the mingling of the bones of the dead from all the Huron villages and were reinforced through the exchange of articles of wealth among the living.

THE ALGONKIAN FEAST OF THE DEAD

There were four descriptions of the Algonkian Feast of the Dead. The Jesuit missionary, Jérôme Lalemant, described a ceremony he observed at Georgian Bay in eastern Lake Huron in 1641 (JR 23:209-223). The trader, Pierre Radisson, participated in a Feast of the Dead in the interior south of Lake Superior in 1660 (Scull 1943:199-201, 217-219). Another Jesuit, Louis André, observed a ceremony held at Ouiebitchiouan Island in northern Lake Huron in 1670 (JR 55:137-139). The trader and official, Nicolas Perrot, wrote a description of the Feast in his general account of the western Indians written at the turn of the 18th century (Blair 1911 I:86-88). Perrot was in the upper Great Lakes region intermittently during the period 1665-1695, and undoubtedly observed the ceremony. Besides these four accounts, another Jesuit, Thierry Beschefer, in 1683 mentioned that a Feast of the Dead had been held at Maskoungouing, a site probably on the northern shore of Lake Huron (JR 62:201), and in 1695 La Mothe Cadillac, the French commandant at Mackinac, made a brief mention of the ceremony (Margry 1886 V:104-106). However, by the 1680's the Feast was practiced by only a few of the upper Great Lakes Algonkian peoples (Blair 1911 I:88), I believe only by those who remained in the region east of Sault Ste. Marie.

According to Perrot, the Algonkian Feast of the Dead was an annual ceremony, and the peoples who participated alternated as hosts and guests (Blair 1911 I:88). Radisson mentioned that the Feast was held every seven years (Scull 1943:199), and Beschefer remarked that it was held every seven or eight years (JR 62:201). Radisson and Beschefer doubtless meant that a specific people conducted the ceremony every seven years or so, while Perrot was writing of all the upper Great Lakes peoples collectively. Apparently seven or eight distinct peoples (of which the Saulteur were one) alternated yearly in holding the ceremony.

There is no complete record of the peoples who participated in the Feast. In the 1641 ceremony described by Lalemant, the Nipissing were hosts and

Huron and Saulteur, among others not mentioned (2,000 people in all), were guests (JR 23:209, 215). In the 1660 ceremony observed by Radisson the Saulteur were hosts; it would appear that Menominee, Dakota, Cree, and possibly Ottawa, as well as others unnamed, were guests (Scull 1943:207-217). In 1670, according to André, the Amikwa were hosts at a ceremony attended by 1,500-1,600 Indians of "various Nations" (JR 55:137-139). The Saulteur were undoubtedly present, for Perrot mentioned that they and the Amikwa hunted jointly on Manitoulin Island during the winter following the ceremony (Blair 1911 I:221). In Beschefer's account of 1683, four "tribes" of Nipissing and the Achiligouan were the only participants (JR 62:201).

It is not clear from the accounts whether the visitors to the ceremony brought the remains of their dead to be buried jointly with the remains of the dead of the host village. From Lalemant's description of the 1641 Feast it would appear that the guest peoples did not participate in the actual burial, for they watched as spectators while the Nipissing conducted the preburial rites (JR 23:217-219). Radisson, however, in 1660 remarked that the peoples participating "visit . . . the boans of their deceased friends, for they keep them and bestow them upon one another" (Scull 1943:219). Perhaps peoples in very close confederacy or in the process of merging interred their dead jointly, but it would seem that among autonomous allies participation in the gift giving, dancing, and feasting which marked the ceremony was sufficient to affirm friendship and alliance.

Of the four accounts of the Feast of the Dead, the one by Lalemant in 1641 is the most detailed, and is the only one in which the rites are recorded in the order they occurred. I will present Lalemant's account in detail, and then will provide data from other authors which corroborate and add to Lalemant's account.

Lalemant participated in the rites held by the Nipissing in September, 1641, at Georgian Bay in eastern Lake Huron "for all the confederated Nations. who were invited thereto by Envoys expressly sent" (JR 23:209). Huron were present as well as the "inhabitants of the Saut, who came to this Feast from a distance of a hundred or a hundred and twenty leagues" (JR 23:215). These latter were the Saulteur. Two thousand Indians in all attended, of which the majority apparently were Algonkians. Lalemant described the arrival of the visiting groups:

Those of each Nation, before landing, in order to make their entry more imposing, form their Canoes in line, and wait until others come to meet them. When the People are assembled, the Chief stands up in the middle of his Canoe, and states the object that has brought him hither. Thereupon each one throws away some portion of his goods to be scrambled for. Some articles float on the water, while others sink to the bottom. The young men hasten to the spot. One will seize a mat, wrought as tapestries are in France; another a Beaver skin; others get a hatchet, or a dish, or some Porcelain beads, or other article,—each according to his skill and the good fortune he may have. There is nothing but joy, cries, and public acclamations, to which the Rocks surrounding the great Lake return an Echo that drowns all their voices.

When all the Nations are assembled, and divided, each in their own seats, Beaver Robes, skins of Otter, of Caribou, of wild Cats, and of Moose; Hatchets, Kettles, Porcelain Beads, and all things that are precious in this Country, are exhibited. Each Chief of a Nation presents his

own gift to those who hold the Feast, giving to each present some name that seems best suited to it (JR 23:211).¹⁴

This preliminary gift giving was followed by dancing and contests for prizes. Saulteur women performed one of the three dances Lalemant mentioned.

Two rites then took place, the "election" of Nipissing chiefs, and the "Resurrection of those Persons of importance who had died since the last Feast," through transferring their names to living relatives. During the former rite, beaver skins and moose hides were distributed by the newly elected chiefs.

Then followed the preparation of the dead for burial. This rite took place in a "Cabin with an arched roof, about a hundred paces long, the width and height of which were in proportion," a "magnificent Room" (JR 23:217). This lodge had been constructed for the purpose by the women. The remains were placed in birch bark containers, and were "covered with new robes of Beaver skins, and enriched with collars and scarfs of Porcelain Beads" (JR 23:217). The preparation of the dead for burial was also performed by the women. Afterward these women seated themselves in two opposing lines among the caskets and were served a feast by the "Captains, who acted as Stewards" (JR 23:219).

The following night was taken up with singing in the great lodge which was kept dark except for a flickering fire at each end. The greater part of the celebrants formed a silent audience while about a dozen men, accompanied by those women who had conducted the preparations for the burial, sang in the middle of the lodge. The next morning the singing continued while the women "distributed corn, moccasins, and other small articles that are within their means, or the products of their industry" (JR 23:219). A mock battle then took place; the men rushed upon the lodge, and the women, until then in charge of the dead, yielded up the dead to them. Then, according to Lalemant:

These Warriors become Dancers after this Victory. Each Nation, in turn, occupied the Ball-room, for the purpose of displaying their agility, until the Algonquin Captains, who acted as Masters of Ceremonies, entered ten or twelve in line, bearing flour, beavers, and some dogs still alive, with which they prepared a splendid Feast for the Hurons. The Algonquin Nations were served apart, as their Language is entirely different from the Huron.

Afterward, two Meetings were held; one consisted of the Algonquins who had been invited to this Solemnity, to whom various presents were given, according to the extent of the Alliance that existed between the Nipissiriniens and them. The bones of the Dead were borne between the presents given to the most intimate Friends, and were accompanied by the most precious robes and by collars of porcelain beads, which are the gold, the pearls, and the diamonds of this Country.

The second Assembly was that of the Huron Nations, at which the Nipissiriniens gave us the highest Seat, the first titles of honor, and marks of affection above all their Confederates. Here new presents were given, and so lavishly that not a single Captain withdrew empty-handed (JR 23:221).

The ceremony was concluded with more contests for which prizes were awarded. The magnitude of the gift exchanges, with the hosts bearing the brunt of the expense, is striking. Lalemant, at one point in his description, was moved to remark:

Although the Riches of this Country are not sought for in the bowels of the Earth, and although most of them consist only in the spoils of Animals,—nevertheless, if they were transported to Europe, they would have their value. The presents that the Nipissiriens gave to the other Nations alone would have cost in France forty or even fifty thousand francs (JR 23:217).

Perrot, in his account, was more explicit. The hosts:

... lavish all that they possess in trade-goods or other articles; and they reduce themselves to such an extreme of poverty that they do not even reserve for themselves a single hatchet or knife. Very often they keep back for their own use only one old kettle . . . (Blair 1911 I:88).

The exchanges and expenditures involved a great amount of organized activity on the part of hosts and guests. (I shall reserve this for discussion at greater length in the section on communal aspects of the Feast of the Dead.) The organization of the ceremony was also reflected in other aspects. The housing of the guests was an important feature. Although Lalemant did not indicate whether the great lodge erected for the preburial rites also housed the visitors, statements by André and Perrot indicate that housing somewhat reminiscent of the Plains "camp circle" of later years was employed. André wrote that at Ouiebitchiouan Island in 1670 there were lodges accommodating two or three hundred persons (JR 55:139). Perrot again is more explicit. The hosts prepare:

... a large cabin, stoutly built and well covered, for lodging and entertaining all those whom they expect. As soon as all the people have arrived, they take their places, each nation separately from the others, at the ends and in the middle of the cabin, and, thus assembled, they offer their presents . . . (Blair 1911 I:86).

The "election" of chiefs was another aspect of community solidarity expressed in the ceremony. In Lalemant's description a number of Nipissing chiefs were raised. The elevation of a chief was also an important rite in the Feast of the Dead held at Ouiebitchiouan Island, at which the Amikwa were the hosts. André wrote that 1,500 to 1,600 Indians had gathered for the ceremony during which dances and games were held in honor of an eminent Amikwa war chief who had led a successful war party against the Iroquois. The name of this deceased chief was taken by his eldest son who, according to André, had issued the invitations to the ceremony (JR 55:137-139).

The resurrection ceremony, then, appeared to have been a stable part of the Feast of the Dead, according to André, a matter of custom ("When the Festival is held in honor of some noted Captain, the assembly is large" [JR 55:137]). Available sources give no clues as to whether this was an aboriginal upper Great Lakes Algonkian custom. Perhaps the rite of the elevation of chiefs and the assumption by them of names of deceased predecessors was of Huron provenience. But here again, community solidarity and ties among these Algonkian communities was manifested through the common recognition of chiefs. The honor paid to the deceased Amikwa chief reflects the fact that a victory over the Iroquois at that time was a matter of great importance for the upper Great Lakes Algonkian coalition.

I have tried to point out certain salient features of the Feast of the Dead as practiced by the upper Great Lakes Algonkians. The housing of guests, the feasts, the dancing, the contests, the atmosphere of festivity (so apparent in

Lalemant's account), the mourning or condolence rites, the raising of chiefs, and above all, the give-aways point to the joint participation in the preparation and execution of the ceremony by communities, or villages, in Perrot's terminology. A tacit feature of the ceremony was the maintenance of alliances among the participating peoples. Lalemant in 1641 mentioned that the Nipissing had sent envoys to the "confederated Nations." Again, he remarked that gifts had been given to the guests "according to the extent of the Alliance that existed between the Nipissiriniens and them." Perrot mentioned that those who were to hold the Feast "send deputies from their own people into all the neighboring villages that are allied with them, and even as far away as a hundred leagues or more, to invite those people to attend this feast" (Blair 1911 I:86). Radisson, in his 1660 account, remarked that at the Feast, "The renewing of their alliances . . . are made" (Scull 1943:219).

Perrot's mention of the annual alternation of hosts and guests is indicative of the reciprocal relations maintained by a number of independent peoples; the Feast of the Dead was the chief instrument through which their ties of alliance were maintained. In the Feast of the Dead, then, alliances were solemnized through the condolence rites and crystallized through the exchange of wealth.

The Feast of the Dead as an instrument to initiate alliances. Not only was the Feast of the Dead employed by the upper Great Lakes Algonkians as a means to perpetuate alliances, but also as an instrument to initiate alliances. An instance of the application of the festival to the genesis of intertribal relations was reported by Radisson in 1660.¹⁵ Radisson and his companion Grosseilliers, while on their trading expedition to the western Great Lakes, the first such recorded French expedition after the Iroquois had broken up the Huron trade in 1649-1650, journeyed to the interior south of Lake Superior in the company of Saulteur who were seeking to gain a middleman position in a revived fur trade. The Saulteur had at this time temporarily abandoned the Sault Ste. Marie region due to maurauding Iroquois and had established their summer village at an interior lake, probably Court Oreilles Lake, in northern Wisconsin (Scull 1943:175-194). The main goal of the French and Saulteur was to establish trading relations with the Dakota and Cree, the former living south, the latter north of western Lake Superior. At that time the Saulteur were in an uneasy state of truce with the Dakota, and had only recently made peace with the Cree (Scull 1943:154-155). Besides, the Dakota and Cree were at war, and neither would be inclined to permit the passage of trade goods to the other.

A series of councils and feasts were held by the Saulteur, Dakota and Cree during the spring of 1660.¹⁶ First, a number of Dakota arrived at the Saulteur village, and in a large cabin prepared for their coming held a council. After a Saulteur chief had made a speech of "thanksgiving," the Dakota presented gifts, chiefly beaver robes, to Radisson and Grosseilliers to establish an alliance with the French. The Dakota then gave a feast during which a calumet, or peace ceremony was held (Scull 1943:209-216). The next day the Dakota were given gifts, chiefly trade commodities, by the Frenchmen who urged

them to remain at peace with the Cree, and to "lead them to y^e dance of Union, w^{ch} was to be celebrated at y^e death's feast and banquet of kindred" (Scull 1943:217). Radisson remarked that the Saulteur ("Our wildmen") also made presents to the Dakota (Scull 1943:217).

Radisson accompanied fifty Indians (probably Saulteur) to a Cree encampment three days' journey away (probably in the vicinity of Chequamegon Bay) and received gifts of meat and grease from the Cree. The Cree accompanied them back to the Saulteur village at Court Oreilles Lake. A thousand more people had arrived, "That had not ben there but for those two redoubted nations [Cree and Dakota] that weare to see them doe what they never before had, a difference w^{ch} was executed wth a great deale of mirth" (Scull 1943:217-218), i.e., make peace at the Feast of the Dead.

At the Feast, then, there were Cree and Dakota, the host Saulteur, and their allies and confederates whom Radisson did not identify. The usual rites were held, feasting ("banquet of kindred"), dancing (war dances, "dance of Union") contests for prizes, the display of wealth, and the give-aways (the Frenchmen alone received 300 beaver robes, amounting to about 3,000 peltries), and the burial (Scull 1943:217-219).

Radisson mentioned one other feature of the ceremony not mentioned by any other author either for the Huron or Algonkians, which I have reserved for discussion in this section because of its bearing on the factor of the initiation of alliances. In his description of the ceremony, Radisson remarked that "marriages according to their countrey coustoms, are made" (Scull 1943:219). . . . Radisson's phrase, which at times in the writings of the French and British traders carried the meaning of an informal marital arrangement to suit the convenience of the moment, was perhaps meant to be taken in jest. However, there are other data which appear to lend substantiation to Radisson's statement. In 1679, the *coursur des bois*, Greysolon Duluth, while attending a peace council among the Saulteur, Dakota, Assiniboin, and Cree, among others, urged those peoples to intermarry to solidify their alliance (Margry 1886 VI:20-34). La Potherie, who used Perrot's notes to compile his history of the Great Lakes Indians, writes in reference to the 1680's that the Dakota and Saulteur had made an alliance, and that they had intermarried in the region toward the western interior of Lake Superior (Blair 1911 I:277).¹⁷ Marriage appears to have been a device to initiate alliances, in or outside of the context of the Feast of the Dead.

The Feast of the Dead, then, was the last of a series of ceremonies held in 1660 by the Dakota and Saulteur. Although the councils and feasts held by the Dakota revolved around a calumet ceremony, and did not appear to have involved condolence rites as such, those of the Saulteur were held in the setting of the Feast of the Dead. These ceremonies had as their purpose the establishment of peaceful relations among the western peoples, Dakota, Cree, and Saulteur, and the initiation of alliances, based on the fur trade and involving, as far as can be ascertained, the French and Saulteur as traders and the Dakota and Cree as hunters.

After the Feast of the Dead, the Saulteur traveled into the Dakota coun-

try, as did the Frenchmen, and returned from that expedition "loaden wth booty," trade peltries for which they had given French commodities (Scull 1943:219-220). I believe that in 1660 the Dakota were approached by the Saulteur for purposes of trade for the first time.¹⁸ The Cree had already been interacting with the Saulteur but, if Radisson is correct, had only recently established peaceful relations with them, and then only, I conjecture, when it became apparent that they could obtain trade goods from the Saulteur at Sault Ste. Marie after the destruction of the Huron-Nipissing interior trade in 1649-1650 had shut off that source of supply. The 1660 councils and ceremonies represented a major step taken by the Saulteur and French to open up to the fur trade the rich furred game regions of the west occupied by the Dakota and interloping Cree. The Feast of the Dead, then, was employed by the Saulteur in cooperation with the Frenchmen not only to bring to flower germinant relations with the Dakota and Cree, but also to establish peaceful relations between those contiguous peoples, essential for the exploitation of game, in the interests of the trade.

The Saulteur were only partly successful in a more ambitious venture than conditions at that time warranted. They succeeded in establishing an alliance with the Cree which involved trade and the use by the Cree of Saulteur fisheries during the summer when the furred game hunt was not pursued (JR 54:133-135). This interchange lasted until the 1670's when many of the Cree established direct trade with the newly formed English Hudson's Bay Company, and themselves became middlemen to peoples located in regions even further northwest (see Innis 1956:48-50; Mandelbaum 1940:172-178). The Saulteur-Dakota trading alliance, on the other hand, was forestalled by a combination of factors, chief of which was the settlement made in 1660 by the Ottawa and Huron (Petun) at Chequamegon, closer than Sault Ste. Marie to the Dakota country, and the continuing warfare between the Cree and Dakota.¹⁹ In 1679, nine years after the Ottawa and Huron had been forced to abandon Chequamegon after antagonizing the Dakota, and during the period when the Cree were being diverted by the Hudson's Bay trade, the Saulteur and Dakota succeeded in establishing a firm alliance which lasted until 1736 (Margry 1886 VI:20-34; Blair 1911 I:276-279, 358-359; II:112, 126; Burpee 1927:117-118, 134-139), when entirely new factors led to a breakdown in their relations (see Burpee 1927:257-258; WHC 17:263, 271ff). It is most probable that the Feast of the Dead of 1660 established the first basis for a rapprochement which, after many interruptions, finally materialized in the Dakota-Saulteur alliance of 1679.

Communal aspects of the ceremonies of the Feast of the Dead. The Feast of the Dead, then, was employed in establishing and maintaining alliances among the Saulteur, their congeners, and their neighbors. It is not surprising that the settled agricultural Huron, among whom the ceremony was indigenous, should have been able to amass the amounts of peltry and trade goods (after the fur trade began) they exhausted in the rites of the Feast of the Dead. Their summer trading expeditions did not divert them seriously from other produc-

tive activities, chief among which was maize cultivation. Although hunting and fishing were important in their economy, the Huron had raised enough maize to trade a surplus to neighboring Algonkians for hides (Biggar 1929 III:49-53, 131; JR 6:273). All in all, for the Huron of the first half of the 17th century the fur trade had enriched them without causing any serious breach in the pre-existing economy, and probably had been in the first place superimposed on an aboriginal system of barter through which Huron maize and tobacco had been exchanged for Algonkian hides. But what of those upper Great Lakes Algonkians whose economy had never been geared to the production of surplus foods, not to mention surplus peltries sufficient to obtain trade goods? In the era before the fur trade they had had all they could do to gain a year-around subsistence from a region whose chief available food supply was fish. However, once the fur trade had been introduced, and once metal goods—the kettle, knife, hatchet, awl, and gun—had been made available, greater mobility and an increasingly more extensive exploitation of game permitted greater accumulations of food, skins, and European commodities. The iron kettle alone, because it was far more portable than the bark trough, enabled greater freedom of movement for the winter hunting camp bands. Still, in the middle decades of the 17th century, the Algonkians of the upper Great Lakes continued to return to their fisheries at the trading centers and lead a settled village life during a large part of the year. By 1670 residence patterns had changed only to the extent that the fishing and trading centers had acquired larger populations through the coalescence of once autonomous peoples, as in the instance in which the Nouquet, Marameg, and Outchibou merged with the Saulteur.

I should like to propose at this point that the enhanced means of subsistence through the fur trade, especially as this related to an increased slaughter of game, which in turn permitted larger concentrations of peoples at centers as advantageous for fishing as for trade, led to a greater development of community enterprise. This development, I suggest, represented not a change in orientation, but a florescence. The intensified community activity of the Algonkians who celebrated the Feast of the Dead could not have developed quickly from a condition in which the nuclear family was par excellence the unit of economic activity, but from a condition in which numbers of families related actually (extended family) or fictively (totemic group), or existent simply as local groups (whether winter bands or summer villages), cooperated in vital activities. The community activity of such autonomous groups expanded during the period of florescence into the community enterprise of allied and/or confederated peoples.

In Perrot's description of the Feast of the Dead one obtains some idea of the degree of cooperation needed to hold the ceremony:

If the savages intend to celebrate the feast of their dead, they take care to make the necessary provision for it beforehand. When they return from their trade with the Europeans, they carry back with them the articles which suit them for this purpose; and in their houses they lay in a store of meat, corn, peltries, and other goods. When they return from their hunting, all those of the village come together to solemnize this feast. After resolving to do so, they send deputies from

their own people into all the neighboring villages that are allied with them, and even as far away as a hundred leagues or more, to invite those people to attend this feast. In entreating them to be present at it, they designate the time which had been fixed for its solemnization (Blair 1911 I:86).

The activities described by Perrot took about a year to execute. Trading flotillas usually left the northern Lakes region for Quebec with their cargo of peltries in June or July, and the return to the Lakes with commodities occurred in early September. Hunting was pursued during the winter, at which season meat and peltries for the feasts, give-aways, and burials were accumulated. The following spring the date and place of the ceremony was set, and the Feast itself was held during that summer, either before or after the summer's trading expedition to Quebec (Blair 1911 I:87). Thus, the members of the host village were involved in preparations during the entire year preceding the ceremony.

Although there is little explicit information, it would appear that the accumulation of goods and provisions by the host villagers was done in common. It is indicated in many sources that the Algonkian trading expeditions (after 1650) to Quebec consisted of flotillas of canoes (for instance, Scull 1943:162; Blair I:333-339; JR 41:77-79). This was as true in times of Iroquois harassment as under peaceful conditions. Large numbers of men were jointly involved in the transport of peltries and commodities, and there is no reason to believe that they did not constitute a trading community, or corporation, rather than a random assembly of so many individuals with nuclear interests, banding together for the momentary convenience of company in the interests of mutual defense. As to those invited to the Feast itself, Perrot wrote that they:

. . . set out, a number in each canoe, and *these together provide a small fund with which to offer a common present* to the village which has invited them, on their arrival there (Blair 1911 I:86. Emphasis mine).

The hosts, in turn, provided new clothes to replace the old ones worn by their guests. Then:

When all are assembled, they are expected to dance all at the same time during three consecutive days; and during this period one of the hosts invites to a feast at his own house about twenty persons, who are chosen and sent out by their own people. But instead of serving food at this feast, it is presents which are offered to the guests, such as kettles, hatchets, and other articles from the trade; there is, however, nothing to eat. *The presents which they have received belong in common to the tribesmen.* . . . Another of the hosts will do the same for other dancers, who will be invited to come to his house, and see how his people treat [their guests]—until all those of the [entertaining] village have in turn given feasts of this sort (Blair 1911 I:87-88. Emphasis mine; brackets Blair's).

Of course, in this description Perrot noted competition in regard to the distribution of presents;²⁰ although the guests received their presents "in common," they were donated by individuals on behalf of their households. Still, the very mechanism of the ceremony demanded the concerted action of several households (lodges), who had accumulated the provisions and commodities beforehand, had determined together the time and place of the ceremony, had cooperated in erecting the cabins to accommodate the visitors, and had provided the new garments to clothe their guests. I believe it may be

assumed that the members of the host village pooled their resources to make provision for the ceremony, the chief function of which, after all, was the perpetuation of alliances, a matter of community interest and an expression of community solidarity.

If it were assumed that the upper Great Lakes Algonkians, including the Saulteur, had no communal hunting and employed the individual family hunting territory system, then it would be hard to imagine how through their individual efforts they could provide the food and goods necessary for the Feast of the Dead, not to mention provisioning their people on long trading expeditions. Perrot indicated that communal hunting was an important, if not critical, feature of the economy of the upper Great Lakes Algonkians of the 17th century. He described in considerable detail the methods used in hunting the caribou in the savanna region north of the upper Lakes. Rawhide snares were stretched between trees and poles. The animals within this fence were driven through a passage into nooses where they were slaughtered by the waiting hunters. Moose, where they were abundant, were taken in the same way. Cree on the shores of Lake Superior used dogs to drive moose into the lake where they were killed by the men in canoes. Even beaver were hunted by groups of men rather than by individuals. Perrot did not single out for special mention the hunting methods of the Saulteur, but he did mention that they hunted the beaver and moose. After 1679, when they had established their alliance with the Dakota, the Saulteur, according to Perrot, hunted buffalo, elk, and deer on Dakota lands. Even though the buffalo and deer could be hunted by individuals employing camouflage and disguise (what Perrot called the "surprise"), the elk, in days before the extensive use of the gun, could be taken only by the employment of the fence surround, by a company of hunters (Blair 1911 I:104-110).

Perrot mentioned one instance in which the Saulteur in company with the Amikwa, with whom Perrot passed the winter of 1670-1671 on Manitoulin Island, killed 2,400 moose with snares (Blair 1911 I:221). This hunt occurred after the Feast of the Dead of 1670 at which the Amikwa were hosts. Apparently, the Saulteur crossed over from Ouiebitchiouan Island with the Amikwa, at that time impoverished through the ceremony, and helped supply them with game.

Communal hunting in which the whole village was employed was undoubtedly used only sporadically by the upper Great Lakes Algonkians. Hunting was also carried on by small groups or by individuals who contributed to the support of the hunting camp band of several families.²¹ The fact remains that these Algonkians could and did organize community game drives (probably annually) to provide for contingencies,—the Feast of the Dead being one—and this in a relatively poor game region.

THE DECLINE OF THE FEAST OF THE DEAD

Lalemant's description of the Algonkian ceremony of 1641, Radisson's account of 1660, that of André in 1670, and Perrot's general description show

that the Feast of the Dead retained its main features throughout that period. These were extensive gift-giving, especially on the part of the host village, dancing, feasting, and contests of skill, the elevation of chiefs, and the burial of the dead in a common grave. Another constant feature was the housing of visitors in a great lodge, or in several large lodges. The chief function of the ceremony also remained constant—the creation and maintenance of alliances.

Perrot, who wrote his memoir on the western Indians no earlier than 1695, remarked that a few of the Algonkian villages still continued to celebrate the Feast of the Dead (Blair 1911 I:88; also Margry 1886 V:104–106). If so, the ceremony, probably by then limited to the easternmost of the upper Great Lakes Algonkians who remained in or near their original locations—the Nipissing, their close allies, the Achiligouan, the Amikwa, and perhaps the Missisauga—was certainly in decline. In the 18th century there were no longer any references to the practice among Algonkians.

Many factors inhibited the continued practice of the Feast. I cannot deal with any of them in detail here, but I will summarize what I believe to be the chief factors contributing to its decline. The coalition of peoples who celebrated the rites even as late as 1670 were confined to the region between the Lake Nipissing-Georgian Bay area and Sault Ste. Marie (except, of course, for the temporary flights due to Iroquois raids). By the first decade of the 18th century those peoples maintained villages and occupied hunting grounds stretching from north of Lake Erie and the Detroit area nearly to the western end of Lake Superior on the northern and southern sides (Margry 1886 VI:5–8; JR 60:215–229; MPHC 33:162–163; NYCD 9:819–820, 848). By the end of the 1680's the Saulteur had established permanent villages at Chequamegon and Keweenaw, toward the western end of Lake Superior. Those at Chequamegon, the largest settlement, carried on trade with the Dakota and hunted on Dakota lands in Minnesota and western Wisconsin (Blair 1911 I:276–278). Only a small group remained at Sault Ste. Marie; by that time the furred game supply had become depleted in the vicinity of the old centers of trade (NYCD 9:160–161). The scattering of the upper Great Lakes Algonkians served to interrupt the communications they had maintained with one another over the past half-century and more.

The loss of Indian hegemony was a factor in the termination of the ceremony. Perrot wrote that the French had made the Indians realize “that these useless extravagances of theirs were ruining their families, and reducing them to a lack of even the necessities of life” (Blair 1911 I:88). Although this was too simple an explanation for the termination of the Feast, the advent of the French certainly had its effect on the autonomy of those Indian societies. Once the French, through their traders, missionaries, and officers, gained a foothold in the upper Great Lakes region, a process well under way even by the late 1660's, Indian hegemony disappeared. The French formally took possession of the upper Lakes in 1671, and by the 1680's they were carrying trade goods to all corners of Lake Superior, a movement which sprang in great part from their need directly to oppose inroads on the northwest trade

by the Hudson's Bay Company (see Innis 1956:Chapter IV). The old trading center at Sault Ste. Marie fell into decline. The Indians, especially the Saulteur, who had come annually to a very few loci to fish and trade, remained in their new far-flung villages where they obtained commodities to carry inland to hunter peoples such as the Dakota. The French entrepôts became the centers of political and economic activities and French coureurs des bois like Perrot and Duluth were everywhere creating nests of intrigue (see Margry 1886 VI:38-50). Through their direct control over the source of supply of trade goods and their increasing ascendancy in the transport of peltries and goods, the French could urge their policies on the Indians for whom resistance could mean a cessation of the trade and consequent famine.²²

The ceremony employed by the Indians to establish political and commercial relations had developed at a time when they and not the French determined the course of trade and their political life. The French could enter their country only by their leave. When the French, through the stimulus of the Iroquois wars and competition with the British, gained control of the upper Great Lakes posts and each French post took on the attribute of being a little political center, the *raison d'être* for the ceremony among many of the upper Great Lakes Algonkian peoples disappeared. The essential political relationships came to be maintained between the French and separate Indian peoples, rather than among the Indians themselves with the French looking on as interested outsiders (Blair 1911 *passim*).

This fragmentation of political activity was made possible by conditions arising from an ever-increasing emphasis placed by the Indians on the fur trade. Among Woodland peoples, wherever the fur trade was instituted it became entrenched; so vital did this trade become that the well-being or wealth of any community came to be measured in terms of the amount of iron and cloth it possessed in the form of commodities.²³ So also did the wealth of a region come to be regarded chiefly in terms of the amounts of furred game it produced, and no longer solely in terms of the supply of fish or the abundance of large game.²⁴ However, in almost every region a scarcity of furred game occurred after the first impact of the trade had resulted in exhaustive exploitation (WHC 16:107; NYCD 9:160-161; Margry V:83).

Peoples living in poor or hunted-out fur regions were obliged to move into rich or unexploited regions, as hunters or as middlemen trading with hunters in those favorable areas. The Saulteur, who by 1680 represented an amalgam of several once autonomous peoples for whom Sault Ste. Marie had become a village center, moved westward toward the Dakota country west and southwest of Lake Superior, and into the less favorable subsistence region of western Ontario north of the Lake. The British northwest trader, Cameron, writing at the turn of the 19th century, attributed the movement of Saulteur into the region north of Lake Superior to an increase of population in combination with scarcity of furs. The picture he gives is relevant to the dispersal of peoples once clustering at the great lacustrine centers and at Hudson's Bay (Cree):

This part of the country has been peopled about one hundred and fifty years ago, partly from

Lake Superior and partly from Hudson's Bay. . . . Every old man with whom I conversed, and from whom I made some enquiry on this subject, told me that his father or grand father was from either of these two places, and that the reason they came so far back could be accounted for in no other way than in the following: Population was then on the increase both in Hudson's Bay and on the shores of Lake Superior, and as Indians, who are obliged to rove from place to place for a good hunting ground, are equally at home in any place where they can find their living, they took to the interior of the country where they found innumerable rivers and lakes, swarming with a vast quantity of fish, beaver and otters. When one place was exhausted, they would retire farther and farther back . . . (Masson 1890 II:241-242).

As the search for trade furs became of absorbing interest to the Indian hunters and traders, political fragmentation occurred. Whereas in the 1660's the Indian trading center at Sault Ste. Marie had attracted Algonkians from the circumjacent region, by the 1680's the area of occupancy of those peoples broadened; the same force which had once brought discrete peoples together was now operating to drive them apart. Political fragmentation followed economic fragmentation and dispersal as a natural consequence, for at no time, even in the most active period of the Sault Ste. Marie trading center and fishery, would the upper Lakes region support large village aggregates on a permanent year-round basis. But the post-trade fragmentation resulted in a different kind of organization than that which had characterized the pretrade communities. All indications are that the pretrade local group affiliation had been based on kinship, actual or fictive, and on the common use of a traditional territory, the employment of fisheries and hunting grounds circumscribed and limited by custom and guaranteed by the tacit recognition of neighbors. Post-trade fragmentation occurred on the basis of exigency, often of momentary expediency; communities, no longer based on kinship or the possession of a discrete territory, came to be located in the furred game nurseries or at the French trading centers scattered along the transport routes. These locations shifted as the nurseries became depleted or as the trading centers were relocated to meet the specifications of competition and war among Europeans. Fragmentation, well under way during the last two decades of the 17th century, resulted in the 18th century in the permanent occupation by the Saulteur of dozens of lake and river sites north, west, and south of Lake Superior. Many of these sites were quickly infested by European traders, so that the communities took on the appearance of being merely trading post bands (see Hickerson 1956).

Migrations resulting from the scarcity of furred game through over-exploitation, the loss of political hegemony, and an ever-increasing preoccupation on the part of the Indians with the fur trade at the expense of traditional productive activities, were the principal factors involved in the fragmentation of those communities who celebrated the Feast of the Dead, and in the termination of the Feast.

CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to point out certain features of upper Great Lakes Algonkian organization, with special reference to the Saulteur of the 17th century, taking as a point of departure the Feast of the Dead. Although a Huron import,

the complex of practices of the Feast did not, when adopted, involve any profound reorientation of upper Great Lakes Algonkian culture. The give-aways were by no means alien to Algonkian custom; at least, sharing was a rooted principal of interaction (Blair 1911 I:132-135). The Feast of the Dead was employed as an instrument to perpetuate alliances among themselves and to initiate alliances with outsiders. Again, the upper Great Lakes Algonkians were kindred peoples, closely related linguistically and culturally, and allied through interlocking relationships. The Feast of the Dead was incorporated as a binding instrument to enforce alliances already based in part on kinship, and to transform these kinship-based alliances into confederacies to encompass new problems—the complex relations stemming from the fur trade.

The sociopolitical and economic activity displayed by those precursors of the Chippewa is in stark contrast to the political chaos and economic particularity which characterize their descendants. The picture of the Chippewa as endemic individualists ("Every man . . . for himself or for his own family") is not historically accurate. Nor is it historically relevant to contrast the Chippewa and Plains Dakota, as Mead and Barnouw have done, to show the former to be individualistic and "atomistic," the latter to be cooperative and cohesive.²⁶ It is true that the Saulteur of the mid-17th century did not develop communities of the scope of the summer camp circle of the 19th-century Plains Dakota,²⁶ but neither did the pre-horse Woodland Dakota of the 17th century (see Blair 1911 I:166). Several small Algonkian communities, organized on the basis of kinship and/or the common use of fisheries and hunting territories, maintained ties involving cooperation in warfare and possibly even hunting. Under the stimulus of the fur trade during the period when the upper Great Lakes trade was in the hands of Indians, these discrete communities, related but autonomous, took over the Huron apparatus for establishing firmer and more durable ties with one another and with outsiders like the Cree and Dakota with whom they wished to establish trade. By 1670 many of the once discrete communities were no longer autonomous, but had joined congeners more favorably located for trade and subsistence pursuits. In instances in which those peoples had formed totemic units, they retained their gens or phratry affiliation while losing, perhaps gradually at first, their control over specific territories. By 1670 the organization of villages or bands on the basis of kinship was obsolete, and by 1680 territorial occupancy was fluid and based on the contingencies of the moment rather than on tradition.

The political and economic florescence of the period during which the Feast of the Dead was celebrated was comparable to some extent with the florescence of political and economic life on the Plains following the introduction of the horse. The Plains horse culture, due to its remoteness from European centers and its relative aloofness from the necessity of direct trade with Europeans, was given time to develop and flourish until very recent times, so much so that it came to an extraordinary degree to typify the culture of the Plains Indians for 20th-century anthropologists. The Algonkian florescence, on the other hand, did not survive the 17th century. The main factor

involved in its disruption was the loss of hegemony stemming from the reliance on commodities controlled at their source by Europeans who used this dependence as a political lever. The upper Great Lakes Algonkians, then, had forced upon them a subject status nearly two centuries before the Indians of the central Plains.²⁷

I do not mean to imply that the Saulteur and their kinsmen did not resist European inroads on their social and political life, nor continue from time to time to assume the initiative in dealings with Europeans. But the frontier struggles of the late 17th and 18th centuries were determined far more by competition among Europeans over rights to exploit Indian industry than among Indians over rights to exploit European enterprise. This represented to a great degree a reversal of the conditions that had obtained in the upper Great Lakes region in the 16th and early 17th centuries.

In conclusion, the Saulteur and their upper Lakes kinsmen demonstrated political unity and economic cohesion during the period of their ascendancy in the early years of the fur trade. Although their organization was egalitarian, men whose activities in war (and undoubtedly in diplomacy) served to foster and preserve the interests of the community, were recognized as chiefs, in some instances at least through the rite of "election" at the Feast of the Dead. The political and economic "atomism" that appears to characterize most of their modern descendants may reflect only the fact that hierarchical systems did not replace their old communal organization, that they have remained egalitarians, despite the corrosion of the old "associative mechanisms."

NOTES

¹ This paper was written in part from source materials gathered by the Great Lakes-Ohio Valley Research Project of Indiana University, of which the author is an associate. Thanks are due Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, David Baerreis, John A. Jones, Dorothy Libby, and Nancy P. Hickerson for criticism and suggestions. The formulations and conclusions are the author's.

² The position of the Huron and Nipissing in the fur trade during the first half of the 17th century is described at length by Innis (1956:Chapter III) and Hunt (1940 *passim*).

³ Landes' descriptions of the Rainy River Chippewa (1937a *passim*; 1937b) epitomize this portrayal.

⁴ See Hallowell (1955 *passim*, but especially Chapters V and VI), Barnouw (1950), and Friedl (1956). Also Boggs (1958).

⁵ Not all students of Chippewa culture do so, however. Jenness views the individualism displayed by the Chippewa of Parry Island as a recent development, a departure from aboriginal communalism (1935 *passim*). Bernard James takes issue with the notion of "atomism" on the grounds that the whole concept is ill-defined and does not apply to the large militant Chippewa communities of Minnesota in the 19th century (1954). Jenness and James, then, do not accept the notion of "atomism" when applied to the historic Chippewa.

⁶ See, for instance, JR (18:229-231) and Blair (1911 I:153-154, 279). There is no satisfactory historical treatment of the aboriginal relationships of those peoples. The two volumes of the *Handbook of American Indians* (Hodge 1907-1910) provide under separate tribal headings very brief but fairly satisfactory historical data on their locations and ethnic identities. Also see Kinietz (1940 *passim*).

⁷ The English translation of Dablon's text in the passage in which he enumerates the peoples living at Sault Ste. Marie is misleading, for it would appear that three peoples besides the Nouquet, Maramég, and Outchibou had cast in with the Saulteur. The French text leaves no doubt

that it was the three peoples whom Dablon named who joined the Saulteur (JR 54:132). The reason the Saulteur came to be known by the name of one of those peoples is a mystery. Those peoples collectively were first called by their modern generic name in 1667 by Allouez (JR 51:61), then in 1684 by Lahontan (Thwaites 1905:340), and not again until the period of British rule.

⁸ The Chippewa placed no special restriction on exploitation of the totem animal (Jenness 1935:9; Kintetz 1947:76). By a totemic group I mean an autonomous patrilineal kinship group (see Lowie 1948:250). When I write of gens in this paper I refer to a nonautonomous patrilineal group, such as exists today among the Chippewa (however, see Bushnell 1905; Jenness 1935:8). I distinguish between totem and gens because apparently some of the early kinship groups correspond to modern gentes, while others correspond to modern phratries.

⁹ The British trader, Alexander Henry, in 1764 described a form of "family" ownership of territory for the Chippewa who had their summer village at Mackinac, and their winter hunting grounds on Big Sable River, a small stream on the western side of Michigan's Lower Peninsula (Henry 1901:111, 122-123). A family with which Henry wintered consisted of a man, his wife, their two sons, the wife of one of the sons and their child. This extended family was joined at the end of the winter hunting season by "several lodges of Indians, most of whom were of the family to which I belonged, and had wintered near us. The lands belonged to this family, and it had therefore the exclusive right to hunt on them. This is according to the custom of the people; for each family has its own lands" (Henry 1901:142). So wrote Henry. This "family," or band, possibly constituting gens-mates from the Mackinac village, was much too large to conform to the type of family owning unit described by Speck. Schoolcraft in 1841 mentioned that a Chippewa hunter of Grand Traverse Bay, Lower Peninsula Michigan, whose hunting grounds had been stealthily entered, threatened retaliation for the trespass. In this instance, Schoolcraft stated that the trespasser was of a "separate *band*" (1851:695. Emphasis mine). I believe that Barnouw's statement (1954:16) that there were no permanent family hunting grounds among the Chippewa south of Lake Superior can be extended to include the Chippewa of Michigan as well (also see Jenness 1935:5-6).

¹⁰ Hunt's work (1940 *passim*) is authoritative in relating the Iroquois wars to the fur trade. Rejection of Hunt's conclusions on grounds that he was an economic determinist (Barnouw 1950:6-7) is irrelevant.

¹¹ The final return of the Saulteur to the Sault Ste. Marie vicinity probably occurred in 1662 when they vanquished an Iroquois war party (JR 48:75-77). The Sault was barely within range of Iroquois war parties, and the Saulteur were never forced to abandon the Sault for very long.

¹² The first reference to Huron trade with the Saulteur was in 1638-1639 (JR 15:155).

¹³ Fenton and Kurath observed an attenuated Feast of the Dead among the Grand River Iroquois only a few years ago, long after the ceremonies had terminated among those Algonkian peoples who had taken them over from the Huron (1951).

¹⁴ The caribou and moose skins, the former at least brought by Algonkians living to the north of lakes Huron and Superior, were not exchanged in the fur trade with the French at that time. All other items mentioned were. Champlain in 1615 and the Jesuit missionary, Le Jeune, in 1636 remarked that animal skins were traded by the Montagnais to the Huron for maize (Biggar 1929 III:49-53, 131; JR 6:273). These skins, then, had an exchange value apart from the European instituted fur trade.

¹⁵ Radisson wrote the narrative of his expeditions from memory many years after, and gave no dates for the events he described. Although some events he mentioned were documented in other sources, his chronology of events was not always correct. 1660 seems the best estimate for the year of the events I am reporting from Radisson's account, for it was at that time that the Ottawa whom Radisson found near Chequamegon (Scull 1943:221) established their village there (Blair 1911 I:165).

¹⁶ According to Radisson's text the Feast of the Dead was held in northern Wisconsin twice, in succeeding years. I am concerned with the second Feast, held in 1660. Radisson's text gives the impression that he and Grosselliers ran the show during the ceremonies described below. Undoubtedly they were active participants, but modesty was not their chief virtue.

¹⁷ As late as 1852, Warren, who possessed an intimate knowledge of the Chippewa, wrote

that the members of the Chippewa Wolf gens who lived chiefly on the St. Croix River and at Mille Lacs Lake, 17th-century centers of Dakota occupancy in western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota, "derive their origin on the paternal side from the Dakotas" (MHC 5:49). If the fore-runners of those Algonkians had indeed been organized in exogamous patrilineal local groups, then affinal relationships would have been of critical importance in defining intergroup relations. The Dakota and Cree, of course, are excepted from totemic organization, but it was the Saulteur and their congeners who tended to establish the principles of interaction through their initiation of political and trading alliances.

¹⁸ Perrot narrated that the Ottawa and Huron in the late 1650's, while located in the vicinity of Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River, carried on some trade with the Dakota occupants of that region. This trade was of a desultory nature and was interrupted by warfare (Blair 1911 I:159-166).

¹⁹ In 1673, for instance, Cree visiting at Sault Ste. Marie interrupted a Dakota-Saulteur peace council by killing the Dakota spokesmen in such a way as to implicate the Saulteur (JR 58:255-263). Perrot wrote in reference to the 1660's that the Dakota and Cree had "ruined" each other through their warfare (Blair 1911 I:170).

²⁰ Mead, in contrasting the cooperative Dakota with the "grossly individualistic" Chippewa, found that competition among the Dakota took the form of an "associative mechanism." Her example is interesting: "The Dakota vied with one another for prestige, but the very terms in which they vied were a general give away to all and sundry" (1937:459-460).

²¹ Even at the height of the fur trade at the turn of the 19th century, the Chippewa maintained hunting camps of several families, to which hunters contributed game (Tanner 1830 *passim*).

²² By 1684 Duluth had established posts on the northwest side of Lake Superior. He also had traders swarming among the Saulteur at Chequamegon and Keweenaw (Margry 1886 VI:38-52), and in the 1690's Chequamegon had a French commandant (Margry 1886 VI:53-58). Attrition through cessation of trade was not an avowed policy of the French, nor was it an especially useful policy during the period of competition over the northwest trade with the British from the 1670's on. La Potherie, however, indicated the subversion of Indian autonomy through the fur trade: "The savages . . . admired all the wares brought to them by the French. . . . The knives, the hatchets, the iron weapons above all, could not be sufficiently praised. . . . The savages often took them [the Frenchmen] for spirits and gods; if any tribe had some Frenchmen among them, that was sufficient to make them feel safe from any injuries by their neighbors; and the French became mediators in all their quarrels" (Blair 1911 I:307-308. Brackets Blair's). When the officer, St. Lussou, took possession of the upper Great Lakes in 1671, the separate Indian peoples avowed their "alliance" with France. According to La Potherie, they implored the support of the king, "without which they could no longer maintain life" (Blair 1911 I:346-347). On a practical level, the French used the trade as a lever to detach the Dakota from their alliance with the Fox in the 1720's (WHC 17:77-80), and a decade later Vérendrye secured passage through the Cree country by bringing trade goods to them (Burpee 1927 *passim*). When the Dakota annihilated a French trading convoy to their Cree foes in 1736 they were punished by a withdrawal of the trade (Burpee 1927:213-219; WHC 17:267-269, 315-318).

²³ This is obvious in the accounts of Perrot and La Potherie (Blair 1911 *passim*; also Margry 1886 VI: 55-58).

²⁴ The migrations of the Saulteur from Sault Ste. Marie to the west were motivated in large part by their search for peltries (Blair 1911 I:278; Margry 1886 VI:26-34).

²⁵ It might be relevant to compare the Woodland Mdewakanton Dakota of the first third of the 19th century with their contemporary Plains congeners. The Woodland Dakota showed the same tendencies toward community fragmentation, disunity among the separate villages, weakness of the institution of chieftainship, economic apathy and distress, as the Chippewa of the late historic era. Unlike the Plains Dakota, but like the Chippewa, they were dependent to a great extent on the fur trade (Taliaferro 1821-1839 *passim*; see also note 27).

²⁶ If the Plains summer camp circle was larger than the Algonkian summer village (Sault Ste. Marie possibly excepted), this was a function of greater mobility, a more extensive game

supply, and a less diversified economy. The same can be said of the winter hunting bands.

²⁷ The Plains Indians, of course, had contacts with European traders. Because of their geographic position and mobility they could obtain trade goods without subordinating themselves to European political authority. When a Mdewakanton (Woodland Dakota) chief was asked by his agent, Taliaferro, to clarify his position during the Winnebago uprising of 1827, he protested his innocence by saying: "My Father You know that the Medawarkantongs cannot be without the Traders if they are stopped we must Starve to death—the Sioux of the plains say they can jump on their horses & with their bows and arrows can kill what they want and do not want your assistance. We my Father cannot do this" (Taliaferro 1821-1839 IV: August 29, 1827).

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