The Probability of Family Hunting Territories in Eighteenth Century James Bay: Old Evidence Newly Presented

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Introduction

The discussion of family hunting territories has been around in the anthropological literature for some sixty-odd years, ever since Speck initiated it in 1915. His claim that this northern Algonquian system of land-tenure pre-dates the arrival of the Europeans (1923.459) has ensured its place in the literature for yet some time to come. As the nature of the problem is one of time or origin, the evidence on which any such discussion is based has to be historical. The relatively recent systematic study of archival records by anthropologists has and should continue to generate new interest and new evidence. However historical data alone is insufficient to answer the question of the age of family hunting territories as it is not a subject with which early explorers or traders were familiar or interested. Even direct statements by such men concerning the practice of individually owned hunting tracts of land must be greeted skeptically as they may well have been seeing and describing social conventions of the Algonquian people in terms familiar to themselves, or measuring these practices against their own concepts. Private ownership of land was, of course, highly institutionalized in European society.

The lack of reliable and conclusive historical evidence does not make such an inquiry impossible. Previously, anthropologists who did not have access to the archival records had to argue their case on logical grounds; for instance, whether a specific practice was feasible given the wider social context. Thus, much of this literature focuses on the various features making up the configuration termed the "family hunting territory system". It is due to the extensive examination of the subject and the creative thinking of the previous writers that we today have an excellent basis for further exploring the issue. I do not intend this paper as a forum for criticizing the earlier studies just because I have had access to new historical data which they did not. Hopefully, I am using their findings in the manner in which they were offered - as a means of advancing our knowledge. Thus this paper combines anthropological reasoning and historical evidence. It does so to examine the length of time a family hunting territory system has operated in eastern James Bay (Québec). However its main concern is to demonstrate one way in which ethno-historical analyses can be flushed out from the historical data, data that by itself is not particularly informative.

As the question of family hunting territories has not only a long and relatively productive history in the anthropological literature but one that is presumably well-known, I will refrain from reviewing the issues.
Suffice it to say that the concept of "family hunting territories", as it has come to be known in the literature, refers to a flexible system of land tenure in which individuals or small family units are considered to own the rights to specific animal resources of a particular tract of land over which they annually hunt. Furthermore they have the right to transfer this ownership either temporarily or permanently as through inheritance. All the anthropologists agree that those northeastern Indians who hunted or trapped non-migratory fur bearing animals such as beaver have had such a system of land tenure at least in this century.

Speck and his supporters in the 1930's argued for a pre-Columbian origin while Jenness (1932) and Bailey (1937) rejected this notion, seeing it as a consequence of the European fur trade. They were supported by Leacock in the 1950's in the first study to challenge thoroughly Speck's arguments. In it she concluded that family hunting territories were of relatively recent origin dating from the time of the introduction of store-purchased foods. Since then Rogers (1963) and Bishop (1970, 1974) (the first one to apply archival data to this problem) found in each of their research areas evidence to push back the beginnings of a family hunting territory system to the late and middle parts, respectively, of the nineteenth century. For both, the fur trade was still viewed as the major external factor though each specified specific causes.

As early as 1915 Speck labelled the land tenure system we are discussing as a "family hunting territory" system and the name has stuck although most recognize it as less than satisfactory. As Tanner (1973.105) and others have pointed out it is actually an individual who is considered owner of a territory and not a group of kinsmen. Moreover it need not be a family in the sense of closely related individuals who hunt over this land. My own research in the James Bay area has shown this to be true in times past as well (Morantz 1977a.22). Tanner has also set the discussion in proper perspective when he emphasizes, as have others, that the land per se was not owned but the rights to the resources of that particular tract were. The hunting territory is, in Tanner's view, a "unit of management" (1973.112). Having acknowledged the modern thinking on these subjects I now return, to avoid confusion, to the old manner of expressing this social phenomenon.

Problems with the Archival Sources

My own interest in this issue results from my endeavours to reconstruct, or perhaps more accurately phrased, construct a reasonable facsimile of the social organization of the Cree of eastern James Bay of the eighteenth through to the middle-nineteenth centuries. The data on which my analysis is based comes almost exclusively from the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company. The difficulties faced by researchers trying to probe anthropological type questions from the daily records of an economic enterprise are well recognized. However, there is an additional
complication in working with these records in that there occurs in the early part of the nineteenth century a shift towards more detailed reporting. This was due to a combination of factors. Once the Hudson's Bay Company gained a near-monopoly situation in 1821 it was able to insist, with some success, on each hunter confining his trading to a specific post thereby enabling the trader to become more familiar with each man's hunting practices. The traders, too, were by this period much more knowledgeable of Indian lifestyles as by this time many of the company employees were "country born", that is, of Indian-British parentage. Beginning in 1814 and lasting until 1840, the head office of the company in London began requiring detailed information on all aspects of the trade, including background information on the hunters. These reports were submitted annually as district reports and are, by comparison with the other records, veritable gold-mines of anthropological information. The problem is that all of a sudden in 1814 subjects are discussed that hitherto were not, and there is a danger that certain practices might come to be recognized as dating only from that time.

The first year of the district reports, 1814, seems to have been in response to some sort of questionnaire as each new subject discussed bears the same number in each of the district reports submitted. The three James Bay reports of this year - Moose Fort (west coast of James Bay), Neoskweskau and Eastmain, all give an account of the Indians' notions of hunting territories. For example, the Neoskweskau district report, covering the inland posts of Neoskweskau, Nichikun, Rush Lake (the modern Lake Chevrillon) and Nemiscau, contains the following comments from James Clouston, the district chief. He reports:

They are no ways rigorous in claiming an exclusive right to particular grounds. An industrious habit [sic] may hunt on all his neighbours grounds. They may when intoxicated remonstrate and give him a blow or so which is the farthest I have know.

(B.143/e/1:3)

This reference to individually owned grounds, albeit ones that are not too rigorously claimed, as well as similar references from Moose and Eastmain, are the first pointed statements in the James Bay records on individual hunting grounds. Nine years later in the Rupert House district report of 1823, Joseph Beioley returns to the subject and makes these comments:

much less do I suppose that if intimated to them they would submit to any assumed authority to remove them from their own lands to others against their own wills. It appears to me that the Coast Indians and the majority of the Inland Indians who visit Ruperts House are tenacious of their property in their lands and are not pleased when other Indians encroach on them.

(B.186/e/5:9d)
Thereafter, similarly clearly stated references appear periodically up to 1870, the end of the period under study.

The question one must ask then is whether the year 1814 marks the first appearance in fact of some notion by the James Bay Cree of individually owned hunting territories or whether 1814 is merely the year of their being recorded. Since one could hardly assume the non-existence of a social feature by its non-appearance in the historical records, I decided to explore the possibility of the presence of family hunting territories in the eighteenth century in eastern James Bay using those features selected by anthropologists as comprising the family hunting territory system.

Pattern of Resource Exploitation

One of the earliest features isolated by Speck (1915.61) was the correlation between family hunting territories and the harvesting of sedentary fur bearing animals, particularly beaver, a position developed more clearly in his later writings with Eiseley (1939.273) and a position shared also by Cooper (1939.86). No one disputes this relationship though many question these men's claims that the beaver figured so predominantly in the Indians' lives in pre-contact times, to the extent that a territorial system developed around the exploitation of these animals. What was the pattern of exploitation in eastern James Bay in the eighteenth century?

Bishop (1974.265-6, 269) in his study of the interior Ontario northland found that in the eighteenth century the Ojibwa population's "primary source of food was throughout most of the year big game, moose and caribou" which enabled the people to spend the winter in relatively large communal hunting groups numbering between twenty and thirty-five individuals. There is no evidence to support such a pattern of exploitation in eastern James Bay. First of all, moose were not in the area at all though woodland caribou were definitely present, much to the annoyance of the Hudson's Bay Company traders. Repeatedly in the records, the traders deplore the fact that the James Bay Indians pursue deer, i.e. caribou, and ignore beaver hunting. One such lament was written by Thomas Mitchell, the postmaster at Eastmain House in 1745:

Came in hear from ye Northward 16 Indians Small & great....& Brought a Great Quantity of Dears flesh...But very few furrs som 3 or 4 Beaver & some none at all for if ya Com Light of Dear thay will not look for any other kind of beast But when Dear Canot be Light of thay Go in Land & kill Beaver & What ya Bring of furr Kiend is commonly very Good.

(B.59/a/12:22d)

This statement, along with others, informs us caribou were hunted when available but that they were not always available. In fact, unlike northern Ontario, the eastern James Bay area throughout the eighteenth century cannot
be characterized as providing food and clothing in abundance. With regularity, beginning in 1736 when the Eastmain journals commenced, one finds reports of starvation and death in several or all the sectors of the James Bay region. Comments appear such as these ones. In 1738 two homeguard Indians reported that "one of their tent-mats had perished - three days a goo with hunger & cold" (B.59/a/2:17a). In 1778 Atkinson inscribed in his journal "such a year has our Norwd & Homeguard Indians had that I fancy never was known for Hunger & scarcity of small furs" (B.59/a/64:22d) while in July of 1783 he was sickened by the sight of twenty-nine canoes arriving filled with starving men and he remarked, "but so shocking a sight I never did see nor wish to see again...Some of them is dead since they came here" (B.59/b/2:12d). Reports such as these cannot be quantified to determine the level of resources available from 1730 to 1800 but these and many other similar entries in the journals do indicate the food supply was not stable.

With reference to Mitchell's comments, earlier quoted, regarding the availability of caribou resulting in a rejection of beaver, it might be illuminating to look at the fur returns for that year. In 1745 a total of 1,520 whole beaver pelts were traded at Eastmain and 2,350 marten skins, to give the figures for the two most important James Bay furs (B.3/d/53:15d). The fur returns for that year were higher than in the preceding few years but less than the next few. They were not extraordinary returns given that there were annual fluctuations. These furs were brought in by approximately sixty inlanders and twenty coasters. So, in spite of Mitchell's complaints, the furs produced by the Indians were considerable,\(^1\) despite the abundance of caribou north of Eastmain that year.

A recent study of the caribou population of James Bay has located three zones of concentration where the woodland caribou winter: one between Fort George and Lake Bienville, another in the lower reaches of the Nottoway, Broadback and Rupert River basins and a third north of Lake Mistassini to Lake Caniapiscau (Brassard and Audet 1976.598-99). It seems reasonable to assume these regions were also historic wintering grounds for the woodland caribou. Thus two of the caribou populations are located eastward and inland of Eastmain at not overly great distances. Therefore one should expect that if caribou were plentiful throughout most of the eighteenth century the inlanders would not have been major fur producers, given that they ceased looking for furs when caribou were available. Yet, in 1747 the Eastmain postmaster wrote to London that "the Chiepest of our trade Comes from ye Et.ward...." (B.59/a/14:15d) and later trade figures substantiate this assessment. It is also worth mentioning that the James Bay Indians had access only to woodland caribou which, unlike the barren ground variety, gather in small bands of only ten to fifteen individuals and thus are not hunted in large numbers.

From the evidence it seems reasonable to conclude that the eighteenth century James Bay Cree were not large game hunters to the exclusion of fur bearing animals and that
the latter in fact formed a significant part of their economy. They might have preferred caribou but the environment did not permit them to be such exclusive hunters. Amongst the Wabanaki, Snow determined from archaeological evidence that the "beaver and other sedentary fauna were of considerable importance aboriginally" and that the fur trade intensified this hunting pattern (1968.1145). To date the archaeologists working in James Bay are not yet able to make such conclusive statements. However they are finding a higher ratio of beaver bone to caribou, though one must keep in mind the possibility that caribou and other bone were disposed of in another manner (James Chism, pers. comm.). It is possible then that Snow's conclusions might someday be shown to be applicable to eastern James Bay as well.

The scarcity of all food resources which resulted in the people's increasing dependency on small sedentary animals and a decline in their mobility are occurrences which took place in much of the Hudson's Bay Company's domain in the early part of the nineteenth century. It happened in James Bay, too, though the degree of starvation does not seem as desperate as Bishop (1974.212-13) found in northern Ontario, nor was the decline in furs produced as great. Although this scarcity and decreased mobility is suggested by some as initiating the development of the individually owned hunting territories, this need not be the case if the people were already involved in the harvesting of sedentary game. The changed economic conditions may have solidified this social phenomenon; it need not have launched the development of such a system.

Size of Co-residential Groups

Bishop (1974.269) also found that because large game and not beaver was the mainstay of the northern Ontario economy, the Ojibwa were able to winter in relatively large groups of twenty to thirty-five individuals. Again in this regard the eighteenth century records are not too informative. Although this was the period of trading captains arriving at the post with trading gangs of sometimes up to twenty-two men, I have argued elsewhere (Morantz 1977b.87) these were probably task-oriented groups which came together for the purpose of trading and once done these gangs disbanded until the following spring. For example, one year (1781) Captain Suckepe, twan,ish complained that he could not find some of his gang (B.59/a/56:24) and a similar complaint was made by a Mistassini leader in 1790 (B.59/a/66:31d). Many years captains who had previously come to Eastmain with large gangs arrived with only a few men and accordingly a diminished supply of furs, a not too likely occurrence if the gangs had been wintering together.

In conducting ethnohistorical analyses one has to be extremely cautious about employing a single quote to support a point. However I believe this one is instructive particularly since the Englishman is, in part, quoting an Indian informant. It dates back to 1755 and is a report of a conversation the Eastmain postmaster, John Longland, had with the homeguard captain, Jack Copodgeye:
Did I not Come for Skins Yes I Told him then I must Go where I can Gott them for if we stay a Good many to gather you will Gott no skins and I find that to be True for where there is 3 or 4 famelys in one Tent they Do nothing but Contrive for there Belley & not Look out for furrs.

(B.59/a/23:3d)

Is it not possible that in this conversation Longland is using "3 or 4 famelys in one Tent" as reflecting a kind of upper limit to express the other extreme? This would represent, at an average of five persons per family, about fifteen to twenty individuals so that in fact a smaller number were preferable for hunting fur bearers. That "fur hunting" by 1755 occupied a relatively important place in the James Bay economy has already been demonstrated by the fur return figures given for 1745. It is conceivable that even then the winter hunting group, that is the co-residential group, functioned in small groups involving two adult men when they were hunting and trapping fur bearing animals. They would have joined forces with another such group or groups in late winter in order to hunt caribou. Co-residential groups of a single household or two households (usually father and son combinations) were in another analysis found to be the usual composition in the 1830's when the historical evidence is more definite (Morantz 1977a.20). One cannot definitely claim this as the nature of the social organization in the 1700's but it seems to be the type that best accords with the scant data there are on the subject.

Degree of Involvement in Fur Trade

Both Rogers and Leacock in their separate analyses view involvement in the fur trade, that crucial factor creating the development of individualized hunting tracts, as a relatively late occurrence. Rogers (1963.84), in his study of the Mistassini of the James Bay region explains it this way:

At the time of contact all natural resources were considered free goods, but in the nineteenth century, furs came to be considered the property of the individual hunter and furbearers the property of the hunting group. That rights to certain resources came into existence is correlated with the highly evolved fur trade of the late nineteenth century, when increasing numbers of furs were exchanged for trade goods. The hunter considered trade goods individual property and extended the concept to include furs by means of which trade goods were secured.

Thus, according to Rogers, as involvement in the fur trade increased then did the concept of private ownership evolve, a late nineteenth century development. However the evidence for the James Bay region indicates that the Cree
involvement in the fur trade was significant already in the mid-eighteenth century. Earlier, trade figures for 1745 were given indicating that fur trading does not seem to have been viewed by many of the Indians as entirely incidental to their way of life. A comparison was also drawn between the years 1753 and 1828. In terms of returns, the figures for each year are in keeping with preceding and succeeding years. In 1753 those men trading at Eastmain produced a total of 2,255 beaver pelts and 1,800 martens besides other lesser furs. There were approximately fifty-nine inland hunters and twenty coasters (B.3/d/6:14; B.59/a/21). In 1828 a total of eighty-nine hunters brought to the post 912 beaver pelts, 1,885 martens and 3,400 muskrats. It seems evident to me to conclude that even prior to the intense competition between the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, the James Bay people were already highly involved in the fur trade and that this involvement did not increase as time passed. During the period of competition the trade produced by the James Bay people was equally substantial. For example, in 1788 Captain Nebbittiaibinow, who had been trading the previous five years at the North West Company post of Mistassini, arrived at Eastmain with twenty men and furs equivalent in value to 1,110 made beaver (the standard of trade equivalent to one prime beaver skin). Such a trade was not uncommon particularly during the years the trading captain system was at its height. In addition to the furs traded at the Hudson's Bay Company posts, the James Bay people were also supplying first French posts and later North West Company posts. This evidence does not negate Rogers' correlation but it does show that on Rogers' terms a much earlier date for the establishment of hunting territories was possible.

Subsistence vs. Exchange Activities

Leacock's similar argument is that fur trapping was a luxury that could not be indulged in until there was a reliable food supply, such as store-bought foods. Subsistence activities were dependent on co-operative patterns which militated against a movement towards individualism. Leacock's analysis was based on the Montagnais of the lower north shore of the St. Lawrence River. They were, until recent times, primarily caribou hunters and this must be kept in mind. However her distinction between subsistence activities and production for trade can still stand as a possible criterion of family hunting territories. Leacock (1954.7) argues, following Herskovits' differentiation between production for use and for exchange, that once furs were secured for trade, the individual's economic ties were transferred from within the band to without it and co-operation changed to competition. The availability of store-bought foods enabled this shift to individualism to occur. As Bishop (1970.13) has shown, family hunting territories developed in northern Ontario much before the introduction of store foods.

The data from the James Bay records offer another line
of challenge to Leacock's premise. It questions the assumption that subsistence activities and production for trade are mutually exclusive activities. Her formulation ignores the fact that in acquiring furs subsistence needs can be, to a considerable extent, also met. Using the total fur returns from 1753 at Eastmain as the basic data and Rogers' (1973.78) figures for the average weight of each of the species eaten by the Mistassini Cree, then beaver alone yielded some 96,900 lbs. while the total weight of the animals hunted for trade was 104,406 lbs. This total poundage represents an average of 1,770 lbs. per hunter or approximately 354 lbs. per person on the basis of five individuals per nuclear family. (See Morantz 1977c.9.) These findings argue strongly against the position that goals of furs and food were conflicting ones. Thus an individualized ownership of fur resources need not have awaited and did not await the availability of store-purchased foodstuffs, a twentieth century development in James Bay.

Implications of a Credit System

Another element of the trade that has been largely ignored and which contradicts the view that individualization did not develop until late in the fur trade is the fur trade companies' practice of giving "debt" or "credit" or "trust". Rogers (1963.84) acknowledges the impact this would have had on the concept of private ownership but he relegates this practice to the late nineteenth century. The fact is that the systematic practice of extending credit goes back in James Bay to as early as September 12, 1739 when the captain of the coastal Indians approached the master at Eastmain, Joseph Isbister, and successfully argued for its practice. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Allso ye Capt of ye home Indians and wanted to be trusted so I taulk'd with him and told him that it was a bad custom & that it ye reazon of all ye Southern Indians gooing to ye French. Allso made them carless in catching goods they being Soplied with neceserys upon trust that it mad them delletory in loking out for furs. He answard & sead iff they could not be soplied by trust that it might be a means of destroying them all for he sed formerly we traded sumer furs so that there but letle ocasion to tak goods on trust. But we traded nothing but winter goods & sead they must be soplied with neceserys to catch them withall or else there wold be but letle trade. So I trusted ye Capt....

(B.59/a/4:7)

Not only were the English giving credit but there is the reference in the above passage that the French were doing so as well. Documentary evidence for this does appear in
the French records of 1732 regarding the Indians trading at Chamouchouane and Chicoutimi (Normandin 1732:117). In fact the author, an early surveyor for New France, describes how the Indians manipulated the credit system by switching posts. It was obviously a well-rooted system by the middle of the 1700's.

That credit was granted on an individual basis is certain for in 1738 in correspondence from Moose Fort to London the practice is deplored because if an Indian chooses to go to the French or becomes sick or dies, the debt is lost as, laments the trader in reference to the Indians, "here is no executors" (A.11/43:15d). Furthermore in the correspondence of 1784 the chief trader at Eastmain instructs the master at Rupert House to forward an account of his debts "with the name of each Indian that takes it & the quantity thereof" (B.59/b/4:2). What this data regarding credit show is that the James Bay Indians, as well as those of other areas, were involved in the fur trade as individuals and not as members of families or co-residential groups. They received credit from the companies and in turn were responsible as individuals for repaying it. Certainly this is an indication that some sense of property rights was in force more than two hundred years ago.

Trespass

A very necessary adjunct to the existence of family hunting territories is the notion of trespass. This was recognized by Speck (1915:59) back in 1915 and it has been considered by all the writers since. That hunting territories and the notion of trespass are inextricably linked is best expressed by Bishop (1970:6) in his statement, "There can be no trespass without boundaries and no resentment if ideas concerning rights are not present". In other words if access to goods is freely available then the notion of trespass would not exist. That it did so in James Bay back in 1745 seems probable from this entry by Mitchell in his Eastmain journal which reads as follows:

Ever [sic] Indian hath a River or Part whear ya Resorts to ye winter season & in som are More fish yn others. But ya count it a Trespass to kill anything in one anthers Leiberty for Last winter one of our Indians did not kill one Martain & I asked him ye rason. He sade another Indian tould him all ye martains Be Longd to him so he sade he lived on Dear & som Rabbits.

(B.59/a/12:17d)

Note that the notion of trespass is extended only to those animals involved in trade but not to animals of interest primarily for subsistence. Here is evidence of Leacock's dualism between food and furs but demonstrating in fact their co-existence. As well, this passage contains the observation that it is the furs which are deemed private property and not the land. Other references to trespass
occur in the journals of the 1700's though none are so cogently formulated. Mostly they are reports of the hunters complaining of encroachment by others. Although trespass did occur this does not refute the existence of the land tenure system. In fact it proves the awareness of private property rights.

Conservation

Conservation practices is another issue in the discussion of family hunting territories first raised by Speck (1915.60) and which has enjoyed prominence in the literature ever since. Within the context of the fur trade, in which furs take on an increased value, practical implementation of conservation measures is, of course, dependent on the acceptance of private property rights and the notion of trespass. Rogers (1963.84) is very likely right when he claims conservation measures both developed as a result of private property rights and served to strengthen these rights. However conservation measures need not develop in a family hunting territory system unless there is pressure on the land. As for eastern James Bay there are very clear references to conservation practices in the 1840's (B.186/b/43:14). The question is whether the idea of conservation was introduced by the Hudson's Bay Company or was an Indian development during fur trade times. (This is omitting the whole other problem of whether conservation was practised in aboriginal times.)

There has not been found in the historical records a direct statement, or otherwise, that can be construed as indicating the observance of conservation measures by the James Bay Indians in the eighteenth century. This does not, of course, prove anything. However in the 1820's when the records are more informative, several Hudson's Bay Company factors write of the Indians' agreement with company policies in this regard and say these ideas are not foreign to them (B.186/e/6:8;B.1/e/2:4). Perhaps this suggests it was a practice going back in time. On the other hand, a passage from the journal of Joseph Isbister, quoted earlier, indicates that the hunters were taking summer beaver as long as the company was accepting these skins in trade. How extensive this was or whether other conservation measures were employed to counterbalance the hunting of beaver in the summer is not known. The evidence, or rather lack of it, is, on the whole, inconclusive. Clear statements in this regard would have provided convincing arguments for a well-defined family hunting territory system in the eighteenth century.

Summary and Conclusion

In another paper (Morantz 1977c) I have explored the development and nature of the family hunting territory system in more depth and over a greater time span. My objectives in this paper were to determine if this territorial system was in existence in the James Bay region in the 1700's. To accomplish this task I investigated if the conditions, established by anthropologists as being favourable to the development of family hunting territories,
existed amongst the James Bay Cree of that period.

It was shown that, unlike other regions, the Cree were not exclusively big game hunters and in fact they were by the mid-eighteenth century considerably involved in the production of furs for exchange. Thus they were not highly mobile as were the Northern Ojibwa and the Montagnais and it is conceivable that co-residential groups could have returned to the same tract of land each year. Their winter hunting groups seemed, from the evidence, to be smaller than the larger communal hunting groups described by Bishop. Furthermore it was shown that their subsistence and trading activities complemented each other rather than competed so another obstacle to the early development of family hunting territories was potentially removed. Their involvement in the fur trade provided individuals with trade goods for their own consumption so that individualization processes were in force. These would have been reinforced considerably by the practice of credit being extended to individual hunters as far back as the early 1700's. The notion of trespass was considered by the anthropologists as a key factor in the development of the land-tenure system and yet its awareness and avoidance were documented in the records of 1745. Conservation was one feature which could not be confirmed as having been observed by the James Bay Cree in the 1700's, a matter of not significant concern since all the anthropologists agree it was a result of family hunting territories rather than a requirement. Still, its practice would have definitely confirmed the functioning of such a land tenure system.

I can only conclude, given that all the necessary conditions were present amongst the eastern James Bay Cree of the eighteenth century, that some form of family hunting territory system was in existence then. While the evidence is not clear enough to argue for a relatively well-defined system, it is sufficient to support the view that this system had already taken shape in the 1700's and was evolving towards a system with more definite notions of property concepts and principles of trespass.

NOTES

1 I wish to thank the Hudson's Bay Company for their kind permission to consult and quote from their records on deposit on microfilm at the Public Archives of Canada (PAC). I have consulted the following Hudson's Bay Company records:

A.11................London Inward Correspondence from Hudson's Bay Company Posts
B.1/e..............Abitibi Post Reports on District
B.3/d.............Albany Post Account Books
B.59/a..........Eastmain Post Journals
B.59/b..........Eastmain Post Correspondence Books
B.135/k..........Moose Post Minutes of Council
B.186/b..........Rupert House Correspondence Books
B.186/e..........Rupert House Reports on District
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2 The average hunt of each man works out to 19 whole beaver pelts and 29 marten skins. This correlates well with the amounts brought in by each hunter, when such information is given. The twenty coasters (coastal Indians) would have produced less than the inlanders as the former were on poorer grounds for fur bearing animals. As well they had other means of making up their credit allotment, such as provisioning the company.