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Refugees: a world made of fragments

Human populations construct their cultures in interaction with one another, and not in isolation.

Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*

I

The Frenchmen who traveled into the *pays d'en haut*, as they called the lands beyond Huronia, thought they were discovering new worlds. They were, however, doing something more interesting. They were becoming cocreators of a world in the making. The world that had existed before they arrived was no more. It had been shattered. Only fragments remained. Like a knife scoring a pane of glass, warfare apparently far more brutal than any known previously among these peoples had etched the first fine dangerous lines across the region in the 1640s. Broad cracks had appeared, as epidemics of diseases unknown before in these lands carried off tens of thousands of people. And then, between 1649 and the mid-1660s, Iroquois attacks had fallen like hammer blows across the length and breadth of the lands bordering the Great Lakes and descended down into the Ohio Valley.

The Iroquois desired beaver and the hunting lands that yielded them, and they wanted captives to replace their dead or to atone at the torture stake for their loss. The coupling of the demands of the fur trade with Iroquois cultural imperatives for prisoners and victims created an engine of destruction that broke up the region's peoples. Never again in North America would Indians fight each other on this scale or with this ferocity. Amid the slaughter people fled west. The largely Algonquian-speaking world west of Iroquoia broke up, and the Iroquois pushed the fragments west.¹

Shattered peoples usually vanish from history, and many of the Iroquoian peoples – the Eries, the Neutrals – who fell before the epidemics and the

¹ For recent accounts of the Iroquois wars, see Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 84–113; Daniel Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (1983): 528–59; and Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*, 2 vols. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1972), 2:767–97, 820–21.

warfare, disappeared as organized groups. But most Algonquians did not disappear. Instead, together with Frenchmen, they pieced together a new world from shattered pieces. They used what amounted to an imported imperial glue to reconstruct a village world. This village world sustained, and was in turn sustained by, the French empire.

The story of the creation of this world forms the beginning of this book, and it must begin with the often horrific fragments left by the shattering of the old. To write a coherent story of the Iroquois hammer striking Algonquian glass, historians have traced the blows of the hammer. When they have featured the victims of the Iroquois, they have written about other Iroquoians – the Hurons, Petuns, Neutrals, and Eries – because these groups either had Jesuit missionaries among them or lived beside neighbors that did. They have not concentrated on the shattering Algonquian world, because it is hard to tell a story of fragmentation. And in any case, the very events grew vague as the Iroquois blows fell farther and farther west among peoples the French barely knew. When the French did come to know these peoples, the blows were still falling and the story seemed only chaos.

The result is a historical landscape that consists largely of dim shadows. There are tribal traditions collected a century and a half or more after the fact. There are the memories of French traders – their recollections in old age of a youth among strangers. There are contemporary accounts, vivid renderings of events in which details are unfamiliar and without apparent meaning. Thus a fractured society has been preserved in fractured memory. To pretend this world exists otherwise is to deceive. And in any case, this fragmentary, distorted world is, for the historian, good enough. For the history in question during the horrible years of the mid and late seventeenth century is a history of perceptions, of attempts to make sense, of attempts to create coherence from shattered parts. For the French and the refugees alike, older patterns and older routines were in collapse. For all concerned this was a world where dreams and nightmares happened. It was a desperate world where accidental congruences and temporary interests became the stuff from which to forge meaning and structure. The fragments are the history. It is, therefore, a world best initially perceived in fragments, as both Algonquians and Frenchmen perceived it and tried to make sense of its danger, strangeness, and horror.

The horror that the Iroquois would bring to the *pays d'en haut* was first prefigured by another confederation of Iroquoian-speaking peoples. The Neutrals, soon themselves to become Iroquois victims, obtained iron weapons from Europeans when their enemies to the west still relied on stone. In the mid-1640s a large Neutral war party “to the number of 2,000” attacked a stockaded Algonquian village in Michigan. These Algonquians were a

people the Neutrals called the Nation of Fire. Most likely, they were Fox or Mascoutens. After a siege of ten days, the Neutrals captured the fort. They killed many on the spot, but they retained eight hundred captives – men, women, and children. Of these, they burned seventy warriors. The old men had a crueler fate. The Neutrals put out their eyes and girdled their mouths, leaving them to starve in a land they could no longer see.²

As Iroquois attacks depopulated the lands around Lake Ontario, refugees fled west and the Iroquois followed. Refugee Ottawas and remnants of the Hurons and Petuns fled in stages as pressure from the Iroquois increased. In 1653 eight hundred Iroquois cornered their prey at Green Bay, one of the stops on this staggered flight west. Many of the besiegers were, it turned out, “the offspring of the people whom they had come to attack.” Far from their original home, Hurons adopted by the Iroquois attacked refugee Hurons. For a long time, the Iroquois besieged the fort and villages. But in this siege it was the attackers rather than the besieged who grew hungry, and so eventually the two sides negotiated a truce. In exchange for food and a safe withdrawal, the Iroquois agreed to surrender the Hurons who were among them.

Some of these Hurons, however, had developed ties to their captors. On the eve of the departure of the Iroquois, the Ottawas at Green Bay gave each Iroquois warrior a loaf of poisoned corn bread. A Huron woman, who had married an Iroquois man but had fled west with the refugees, knew the secret. She told her son, who, apparently, had come with the Iroquois, not to eat the bread. The son informed the Iroquois of the plot, and they escaped.

The salvation of the Iroquois proved temporary. They divided into two parties. The smaller party went north, where warriors from the bands of the people who were to become the Chippewas and the Mississaugas attacked and defeated them. Few escaped. The main force pushed south into the prairie country. They reached a small Illinois village. The men fled, and the Iroquois killed the women and children. But other Illinois were nearby, and the warriors surprised and overwhelmed the Iroquois. In this warfare their deaths only became the seeds for new attacks.³

The Iroquois onslaught did not halt other wars in the *pays d'en haut*, and sometime during the Iroquois wars, four or five hundred Miami warriors marched against their southern enemies. In their absence, a band of Senecas destroyed their village. Only one old woman, left for dead, survived. She told

² JR 27:25–27.

³ Nicolas Perrot, *Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America*, in Emma Helen Blair (ed.), *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, 2 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911), 1:151–56.



Although such portraits emphasized the exoticism of Indians, the trade blanket, the trade beads, and the breech cloth all testify to the mixing of European and Indian worlds. (Mackinac State Historic Parks)

the returning Miamis that the Senecas had marched the women and children east.

Every night as the Senecas traveled home, they killed and ate a Miami child. And every morning, they took a small child, thrust a stick through its head and sat it up on the path with its face toward the Miami town they had

left. Behind the Senecas came the pursuing Miamis, and at every Seneca campsite, brokenhearted parents recognized their child.

When the Senecas were within a day's march of their own village, they sent their people a message telling them to prepare a great kettle and spoon to enjoy the good broth they were bringing them. It was at this last campsite that the pursuing Miami warriors at last caught the Senecas. But the Senecas had guns and the Miamis did not, and so the Miamis decided to set an ambush rather than attack the camp directly.

Two Miami spies watched the Seneca camp. And that night, as usual, for the evening meal one of the Senecas decapitated a child and prepared its body for the kettle. Hearing a noise outside the camp, the cook tossed the head into the bushes and told the wolf he imagined lurking there that he was giving it the head of a Miami for its supper. The Miami spies carried the head back to their companions who sorrowfully recognized it.

When the heavily laden Senecas reached the Miami ambushade, they were overwhelmed. The Miamis killed all but six. Two escaped. Four were taken prisoners. The Miamis killed two of their captives and beheaded them. They ran a string through the ears of the heads and hung the heads around the necks of the remaining two prisoners whose hands, noses, and lips they cut off. They then sent them home to tell of the vengeance of the Miamis. At the Seneca village all was horror and confusion. The Miamis returned home with those of their relatives whom the Senecas had spared.⁴

Pierre Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law Médard Chouart, better known as Des Groseilliers, were the bravest and most experienced of the French who followed the refugees west. In the late 1650s and early 1660s when Iroquois war parties haunted the rivers and portages, they made several voyages, going as far as the Mississippi in search of furs. Sometimes they traveled with Jesuits in search of souls; always they traveled with Huron-Petuns, Ottawas, and other refugees who had come to Montreal for guns and other goods. Their travels took them into a world of horrors. They recorded events that they could not fully decipher.

In 1658 Radisson and Des Groseilliers departed on the voyage which eventually took them to the Mississippi. Their own party contained twenty-nine Frenchmen, who desired "but to do well" for themselves, and six Indians, all or mostly Hurons. As was customary, they formed a convoy, with others going west. Of the French, only Radisson and Des Groseilliers had experience in the western woods. The novice voyageurs advanced carelessly

⁴ C. C. Trowbridge, *Meearmear Traditions: Occasional Contributions from the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan*, no. 7, ed. Vernon Kinietz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938): 75–76.

upriver, laughing at the caution of Radisson and Des Groseilliers and calling them women. After three days' travel, a single Iroquois appeared on shore with a hatchet in his hand, signaling the French to land. Even after the Iroquois threw his hatchet away and sat on the ground, the novices feared to approach him. The Iroquois finally rose, advanced into the water, and said (in the fractured English of the Radisson manuscript): "I might have escaped your sight, but that I would have saved you. I fear not death." When the canoes finally closed on him, and their occupants, binding him, took him on board, he began to sing his death song.

When he had finished singing, he made a speech. "Brethren," he began, "the day the sun is favorable to me [it] appointed me to tell you that you are witless, before I die." The enemy, he told them, was all around. The enemy watched the French; it listened to them. It regarded them as easy prey. "Therefore I was willing to die to give you notice. . . . I would put myself in death's hands to save your lives." He instructed them on how to proceed if they were to save themselves. The "poor wretch," wrote Radisson, "spoke the truth and gave good instructions." The next day, the party met Iroquois warriors on the river. After initial panic, the French and Hurons forced up. They then brought in the prisoner "who soon was dispatched, burned and roasted, and eaten. The Iroquois had so served them." Why the Iroquois warrior had surrendered to save the French, the French never knew. In the end, all the French but Radisson and Des Groseilliers decided to return to the French settlements. The two brothers-in-law, endangered and saved by events they did not understand, continued in company with the Indians. They could explain cruelty; they could not make sense of kindness, if that is what the Iroquois by the river had intended.⁵

The refugee villages in the West welcomed Radisson and Des Groseilliers and those who followed. Those who had no traders eagerly sought them. In the 1660s, the Miami and Mascouten refugees who had settled inland from Green Bay invited Nicolas Perrot and a companion to visit them. When the French landed at the Mascouten village, an old man carrying a red stone calumet – a long-stemmed pipe decorated with feathers – and a woman with a bag containing a pot of cornmeal met them. Behind the old man and the woman came two hundred young men with "headresses of various sort, and their bodies . . . covered with tattooing in black, representing many kinds of figures." The young men carried weapons. The old man first presented the calumet to the French on the side next to the sun. He then presented the calumet to the sun, the earth, and all the directions. He rubbed Perrot's head, back, legs, and feet.

⁵ Arthur Adams (ed.), *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1967), 80–84; also see Introduction.

The old man spread a painted buffalo skin and sat Perrot and his companion upon it, but when he tried to kindle a fire with flint, he failed. Perrot drew forth his fire steel and immediately made fire. "The old man uttered long exclamations about the iron, which seemed to him a spirit." He lighted the calumet and they smoked. They ate porridge and dried meat and sucked the juice of green corn. They refilled the calumet, and the Mascouten blew smoke into Perrot's face. Perrot felt himself being smoked like drying meat, but he uttered no complaint. When the Mascoutens tried to carry the Frenchmen into the village, however, Perrot stopped them. Men who could shape iron, Perrot said, had the strength to walk.

At the village the ceremonies were renewed. The Miami chiefs, entirely naked except for embroidered moccasins, met them at its edge. They came singing and holding their calumets. A war chief raised Perrot to his shoulders and carried him into the village where he was housed and feasted.

The next day the French gave a gun and a kettle as presents, and Perrot told the Miamis and Mascoutens that acquaintance with the French would transform their lives. "I am the dawn of that light, which is beginning to appear in your lands, as it were, that which precedes the sun, who will soon shine brightly and will cause you to be born again, as if in another land, where you will find more easily and in greater abundance, all that can be necessary to man." The gun, he said, was for the young men, the kettle was for the old; and he tossed a dozen awls and knives to the women, adding some cloth for their children. The French expected gifts of beaver in return, but it turned out that the Miamis singed their beaver in the fire, burning off their fur, before eating them. They had no beaver skins.

A week later a leading chief of the Miamis gave a feast to thank the sun for having brought Perrot to them. He made the feast in honor of a medicine bundle which contained "all that inspires their dreams." Perrot did not approve of the altar. He told the chief that he adored a God who would not let him eat food sacrificed to evil spirits or the skins of animals. The Miamis were greatly surprised. They asked Perrot if he would eat if they closed the bundles. He agreed. The chief then asked to be consecrated to Perrot's spirit "whom he would . . . prefer to his own who had not taught them to make hatchets, kettles, and all else that men needed." Perrot departed leaving the Miamis and Mascoutens to make sense of him while he tried to make sense of them. Neither Perrot nor the Indians were sure of the intentions of the other. Both sides, however, knew what they wanted from each other.⁶

Refugees were never quite sure what to make of Catholic priests. On August 8, 1665, Father Claude-Jean Allouez embarked from Three Rivers with six

⁶ Claude Charles Le Roy, Sieur de Bacqueville de La Potherie, *History of the Savage Peoples Who Are the Allies of New France*, in Blair (ed.), *Indian Tribes*, 1:322–32. Hereafter cited as La Potherie, *History*.

other Frenchmen and four hundred Indians who had come to Three Rivers to trade. The Indians objected to taking Allouez. They thought he was a witch. They thought the baptism that he administered caused children to die. A headman threatened to abandon the Jesuit on an island if he persisted in following them. When Allouez's canoe broke, the Hurons reluctantly agreed to carry him. They changed their minds the next day, however, and Allouez and his companions had to repair the broken canoe and follow as best they could.

Eventually the Indians relented again and agreed to take all the French except for Allouez. He, they said, did not have the skill to paddle nor the strength to carry loads on a portage. Only after Allouez prayed for divine assistance did the Indians consent to take him, but he became the butt of their jokes, and they stole every item of his wardrobe that they could lay hands on.

Allouez endured the usual hardships of the dangerous passage to the lakes, and he created other hardships for himself. The Indians ate lichen soup; they once ate a rancid deer that had been dead for five days. When the Indians were careless with the powder they were transporting, it blew up and badly burned four warriors. Allouez interfered with the shaman's attempt to cure a burned man. Furious, the shaman smashed the canoe that carried Allouez.

In September Allouez reached the mission of Saint Esprit at Chequamegon. He discovered that the Indians there had abandoned their belief that baptism brought death. They now thought the rite essential for a long life. Not all Indians proved to be so taken with Christian ceremonies. Allouez preached to more than ten visiting nations only to be often greeted with contempt, mockery, scorn, and importunity.⁷

Allouez only tasted the hardships the northern Great Lakes offered; Radisson and Des Groseilliers drank more deeply of them. In 1661–62 they wintered with a band of Huron-Petuns, a farming people driven to the inhospitable shores of Lake Superior. The Huron-Petun men were not as skilled hunters as the surrounding Crees, Ojibwas, or even the Ottawas. They had few food reserves. Snow usually aided hunters, but this winter the snow fell in such quantities and was of such a lightness that the hunters could not go forth. Even though they made snowshoes six feet long and a foot and a half wide, the snow would not support them. Those who did struggle out made such noise floundering in the snow that the animals heard them at a distance and fled. Famine overtook the Huron-Petuns.

Apparently (the broken English of Radisson's manuscript is unclear), the

⁷ *JR*, 1666–67, 50:249–99.

already hungry Huron-Petuns were joined by 150 Ottawa families who had even less food than the Hurons. They, too, had to have their share, although Radisson regarded them as the “cursest, unblest, the unfamous, and cowardliest people I have ever seen amongst four score nations.” The Indians ate their dogs. They retraced their steps to earlier kills to eat the bones and entrails that they had discarded. The men ate their bowstrings, lacking strength to draw the bow. Starving, the women became barren. The famished died with a noise that made the survivors’ hair stand on end. The living scraped bark from trees, dried it over fires, and made it into a meal. They ate skins; they boiled and ate skin clothing. They ate the beaver skins their children had used as diapers, although the children had “beshit them above a hundred times.” Five hundred died before the weather changed. Then the snow crusted, and the deer, breaking through the crust, became trapped. Hunters could walk up to them and cut their throats with knives.⁸

Four years after his difficult passage into the *pays d’en haut*, the Fox greeted Father Allouez as a manitou, or an other-than-human person. The previous winter, Senecas had attacked a Fox village while the warriors were away hunting. The Senecas had slaughtered seventy women and children and the few men in the village. They had led thirty more women into captivity. Allouez gave the Fox presents to dry the tears caused by the Iroquois attack. He then explained to them “the principal Articles of our Faith, and made known the Law and the Commandments of God.”

Later, in private, a Fox told Allouez that his ancestor had come from heaven, and that “he had preached the unity and Sovereignty of a God who had made all the other Gods; that he had assured them that he would go to Heaven after his death, where he should die no more; and that his body would not be found in the place where it had been buried.” And this, indeed, the Fox said, had happened. The man informed Allouez that he was dismissing all his wives but one and was resolved to pray and obey God.

As for the other Fox, Allouez wrote his superior, “Oh, my God! What ideas and ways contrary to the Gospel these poor people have, and how much need there is of very powerful grace to conquer their hearts.” They accepted the unity and sovereignty of God, but “for the rest, they have not a word to say.” Allouez credited their resistance to an earlier visit by “two traders in Beaver-skins.” If these French “had behaved as they ought, I would have had less trouble giving these poor people other ideas of the whole French nation.” The Fox asked Allouez to stay near them, to teach them to pray to “the great Manitou.” Allouez could protect them from their enemies and intercede with the Iroquois to restore their relatives. Allouez

⁸ Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 131–33.

postponed his answer, telling them in the meantime to obey the true God, “who alone could procure them what they asked for and more.” That evening four Miami warriors brought more immediate consolation. They gave three Iroquois scalps and a half-smoked arm to the relatives of the dead.⁹

A few days later, entering the village of the Mascoutens, Allouez received the same treatment earlier accorded Perrot. They summarized in their requests to him the horrors of the period:

This is well, black Gown, that thou comest to visit us. Take pity on us; thou art a Manitou; we give thee tobacco to smoke. The Nadouessious and the Iroquois are eating us; take pity on us. We are often ill, our children are dying, we are hungry. Hear me, Manitou; I give thee tobacco to smoke. Let the earth give us corn, and the rivers yield us fish; let not disease kill us any more, or famine treat us any longer so harshly!

Toward evening, Allouez gathered the Mascoutens together. He was not, he told them, the manitou who was master of their lives. He was the manitou’s creature. The Mascoutens, he reported, only “half understood” him, but they “showed themselves well satisfied to have a knowledge of the true God.”¹⁰

On his way to the Illinois country in the late winter of 1677, Father Allouez passed near the Potawatomi villages around Green Bay. He learned that a young man whom he had baptized had been killed by a bear in a particularly gruesome manner. The bear had “torn off his scalp, disembowled him, and dismembered his entire body.” The bear had, in short, treated the young man as a warrior treated the body of an enemy. Allouez, being acquainted with the hunter’s parents, detoured to console them. He prayed with the parents, comforting the distressed mother as best he could.

Afterward, “by way of avenging . . . this death,” the relatives and friends of the dead man declared war on the bears. They killed more than five hundred of them, giving the Jesuits a share of the meat and skins because, they said, “God delivered the bears into their hands as satisfaction for the death of the Young man who had been so cruelly treated by one of their nation.”¹¹

II

In these fragments of contact and change are glimpses of both a world in disorder and the attempts of people to reorder it through an amalgam of

⁹ *JR* 54:219–27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 229–31.

¹¹ *JR* 60:151–53.

old and new logics. The very nature of the Iroquois assault shaped the Algonquian response. Because distance from Iroquoia created some measure of safety, the Algonquians and the remnants of other Iroquoian peoples – for the Iroquois were just one of many Iroquoian-speaking groups – fled west. Because the Iroquois had guns and their opponents initially did not, the refugees clustered together hoping to counter Iroquois firepower with their own numbers.¹²

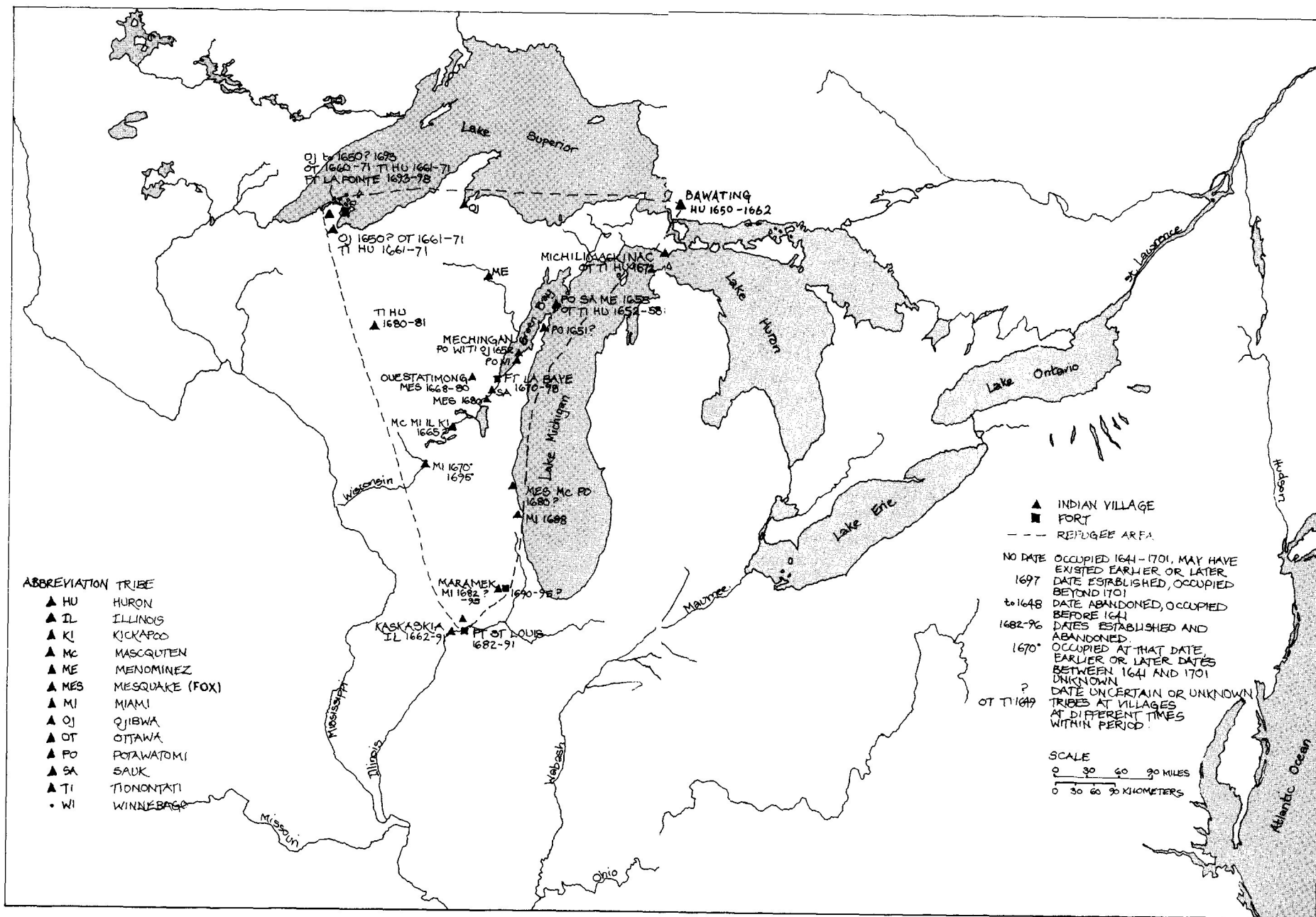
This clustering produced refugee centers that occupied a strip running north–south between the western Great Lakes and the Mississippi. As refugees moved west to avoid the Iroquois hammer, they encountered an anvil formed by the Sioux, a people whom the Jesuits called the Iroquois of the West. Antagonized by refugee aggression, the Sioux proved more than capable of holding their own against the Hurons, Petuns, and the various Algonquian groups who opposed them.¹³

The refugees recoiled and concentrated themselves within an inverted triangle whose point rested on Starved Rock in the Illinois country and whose base ran between Sault Sainte Marie and Michilimackinac in the east and Chequamegon in the west. Green Bay was approximately at its center. Inhabiting this triangle were Iroquoian-speaking groups (Huron–Petuns) and Siouan speakers (Winnebagos), but, for convenience, its peoples can be referred to as Algonquians, since Algonquian-speaking groups – Ottawas, Potawatomis, Fox, Sauks, Kickapoos, Miamis, Illinois, and many others – dominated these settlements. To the east and south of this core of village clusters was a huge area between the Ohio River and the northern shores of the Great Lakes emptied of inhabitants by the Iroquois. Geographically bifurcated into two sections – refugee and emptied lands – and peopled by inhabitants whose original coherence came largely from the homes they had lost and the enemies they shared, the *pays d'en haut* thus had meaning not because of its isolation from outside forces, but because of the very impact of those forces.

This clustering of diverse peoples had its own social and environmental consequences. It disrupted older notions of territory; geographical boundaries between refugees became difficult to maintain. Ethnic or local distinctions remained, but now villages of different groups bordered on each

¹² For these attacks, see Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 2:767–97, 820–21; *JR* 47:145–49; 62:209; 53:245–47, 255; 54:115–17; Lettre du découvreur à un de ses associés, 1679, 29 sept. 1680, in Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et établissements des Français... de l'Amérique Septentrionale, 1614–1698*, 6 vols. (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1879, repr., New York, AMS, 1974), 2:33. Hereafter cited as Margry, *Découvertes*. For the wars around Green Bay, see La Potherie, *History*, 1:293–94, 310.

¹³ For the flight of some of the Ottawas and Petuns to the Mississippi and subsequent war with the Sioux, see Perrot, *Memoir* 1:159–65; Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 95–96; *JR* 49:249; *JR* 50:279; *JR* 51:53; *JR* 54:115.



other, or previously separate groups mingled in a single village. These survivors of the Iroquois shatter zone and of the epidemics that preceded, accompanied, and immediately followed the Iroquois attacks came to be intimate neighbors and kinspeople.

During the 1650s and 1660s, for example, the Fox, the Sauks, the Mascoutens, the Potawatomis, the Kickapoos, the Noquets, the Atchatchakangouens (or Miami proper), some Weas and members of other groups of the Miami confederation, the Ottawas, and refugee Petuns and Hurons invaded lands at Green Bay previously held by the native Winnebagos and Menominees. Reduced in numbers by disease and war with other nations, the Menominees and Winnebagos had little choice but to accept the newcomers. Eventually even a few Illinois settled in the region. The precise mix of the area changed constantly as some groups moved away and others entered. The region became a hodgepodge of peoples, with several groups often occupying a single village. Other groups inhabited separate villages, but these villages were often contiguous. On Green Bay proper in the mid-1650s, for example, a mixed village of Kiskakon Ottawas, a group identified as the Negaouichiriniouek, and some Petuns lived together near a large Potawatomi village, with a third village of Menominees, Winnebagos, Noquets, and, apparently, other Ottawas close by. Conditions were similar in 1670 when the Jesuits found a mixed village of Sauks, Fox, Potawatomi, and Winnebagos living near two other, separate villages. Further inland groups of Miami and Mascoutens lived within a single palisade, and several other nations had joined with the Fox to make their village a seeming Babylon of tribes and dialects. In such conditions, there were no separate homelands at Green Bay. According to Jesuit estimates of the 1670s, 15,000–20,000 persons lived in these settlements, all of which were initially either along Green Bay or within a two- or three-day journey of it. Around Starved Rock in the Illinois country during the 1680s even greater numbers lived in a more confined area.¹⁴

Within this mixing of peoples lay the elements of the *pays d'en haut* as a distinct social formation, but a political glue was needed to hold the fragments together. A common residence and a common enemy could not alone produce social bonds among the refugees; indeed, proximity and tension more often than not produced conflict. In the seventeenth century, western Algonquians repeatedly murdered one another in the hunting grounds. On occasion, different nations thought it better to divert the Iroquois threat by betraying other peoples than to unite against the Five Nations. Mourning the loss of relatives to disease and seeking a reason for their loss, the refugees often accused each other of witchcraft. For these

¹⁴ For mixed and contiguous villages, see *JR* 44:245–49; *JR* 54:197; *JR* 55:199, 219.

Algonquians, there were few accidents; most causes were personal and they traced them either to other humans or to manitous – the other-than-human persons with whom they shared the land. Blame had to be assigned. If the perpetrators were human, then deaths and insults were remembered, awaiting either revenge or compensation.¹⁵

Nicolas Perrot, a French trader who lived much of his life among the Algonquians, knew firsthand the strength of the hatred between different groups and the bitterness of their quarrels. He came to think of the refugees as uniformly treacherous, busily plotting one another's destruction when they were not contemplating killing the French. This assessment, overstated as it might be, is based on the observations of a man who lived among the western Algonquians for more than forty years, knew them well, and was respected by them. It also reflects his understandable frustration. Perrot spent much of the period resolving countless quarrels and thwarting many plots, and he nearly ended his days in the midst of the slow torture fire of the same Mascoutens who had first welcomed him as a manitou. His outbursts are exaggerations, but they are exaggerations that underline the reality of the deep animosities smoldering among these peoples. It was precisely because the divisions, suspicions, dangers, and rivalries inherent in the refugee centers were so intense that Algonquians worked so purposefully to overcome them.¹⁶

Each group of refugees sought ties with strangers precisely because they feared outsiders. The whole logic of Algonquian actions was that dangerous strangers had to be turned into either actual or symbolic kinspeople if the refugees were to survive hunger, disease, and Iroquois attack. The creation of such ties had also been possible in the older Algonquian world, but the need for them had seemed less pressing in that roomier and more secure past. Then a people could attack strangers or withdraw from them, but in the refugee centers both violence and withdrawal were far more difficult.

To create real or metaphorical kinspeople, the Algonquians turned to familiar cultural forms and borrowed new ones. Gift exchanges, through the conventions of reciprocity, created channels of mutual aid. Inter-marriage created bonds of kinship and obligation. The Algonquians eagerly adopted the calumet ceremony, a political ritual of reconciliation. It stayed vengeful hands, brought reflection, and established ties of symbolic kinship. A dense

¹⁵ For murders, see La Potherie, *History*, 1:310–11; *JR* 58:49, 55; James Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture* (Lawrence: Regents Press, 1977): 62–63; Perrot, *Memoir*, 163, 182. For personal causes, see Irving Hollowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and Worldview,” in A. Irving Hollowell, *Contribution to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hollowell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 381–83; *JR* 57:233; *JR* 61:149. La Potherie, *History*, 2:83. For manitous as cause, see *JR* 56:125–27.

¹⁶ Perrot, *Memoir*, 252, 258, 260; La Potherie, *History*, 2:83.

network of mutual obligation gradually developed in each refugee center. Cumulatively, each person marrying outside his or her group, each calumet smoked, each gift offered and accepted tied these disparate peoples closer together than before. War, famine, and disease, which had been the executioners of the older, familiar world of the Algonquians, were also the gruesome midwives attending the birth of the new world of the *pays d'en haut*.

In our attempts to understand these bonds, the conventional units of discourse about Indians – tribes with their distinct territories and their chiefs – are misleading. These peoples are almost classic examples of the composite groups described by Elman Service as the product of “rapid depopulation by disease which, when combined with the ending of hostilities among the aborigines themselves under the dominance of the common enemy, resulted in the merging of previously unrelated peoples.” At their most enduring, the connections between groups were not so much diplomatic ties between clear political entities as social bonds between much smaller social units.¹⁷

The ethnological details concerning these peoples have to be examined with care. The refugees ranged from hunting bands such as the various Ojibwa groups to the Miamis, who initially may have verged on being a chiefdom. Structurally, they ran the gamut from remnants of eastern confederations like the Hurons and Petuns to relatively intact western tribes like the Fox. Except for the Huron-Petuns, who were matrilineal, and the Ojibwas and Ottawas, who seem to have originally lacked clans, they were all patrilineal village peoples who were organized into exogamous clans which often had ritual functions. Such clans were sometimes grouped into paired moieties and sometimes organized into many phratries. The accounts of early ethnologists who studied these tribes and codified them are full of internal contradictions because they sought to freeze and codify what was, in fact, a world in flux.¹⁸

What is clear is that, socially and politically, this was a village world. The units called tribes, nations, and confederacies were only loose leagues of villages. The nature of authority within a Potawatomi village and that within a Miami village might, at least initially, differ significantly, but in neither case did authority extend beyond the village. Nothing resembling a state existed in the *pays d'en haut*. The entities that the French called nations, and which were later called tribes, thus had only the most circumscribed political

¹⁷ Elman Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1972), 97.

¹⁸ Charles Callender, *Social Organization of the Central Algonkian Indians*, Milwaukee Public Museum, Publications in Anthropology 7 (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1962): 19–28, 34–35, 38–41, 65, 70, 82–83.

standing. Nations shared a common language, culture, and ethnic identity, but the various villages of a nation did not necessarily share a common homeland. Whatever distinct homelands these villagers had once possessed, the diaspora provoked by the Iroquois had made irrelevant. The refugee nations now lived in contiguous villages or even in mixed villages. To decide, for example, what was Huron or Petun or Ottawa or Ojibwa territory at Chequamegon was both impossible and meaningless. Without a clear national territory and lacking even the most rudimentary national government, villages of the same nation, often located in separate refugee centers, could and did pursue independent policies. The Ottawas of Green Bay at a given moment might have closer relations to, and a greater community of interest with, their Potawatomi neighbors than they did with Ottawas at Chequamegon.¹⁹

Lacking political coherence beyond the village, groups had to forge connections at the village level. By standard ethnological reckoning, descent from male ancestors formed the key element in conceptualizing a person's place in this village world. The structural principle behind the Fox, Sauk, Potawatomi, and Kickapoo kinship systems, for example, has been described as "the unity and solidarity of the patrilineal lineage," and these same tribes had exogamous patrilineal clans "composed of either actual kin or conceptually related lineages," as did the Menominee and Shawnee. Most likely all the other people of the *pays d'en haut*, except the Iroquoian, matrilineal Huron-Petuns, shared in this system, but not enough information is available to be sure.²⁰

This strong conceptual patrilineal emphasis is not, however, much of a guide to practice. These people reckoned descent patrilineally, but they were not patrilocal; that is, when a man married, he did not necessarily live with his own lineage. He often moved in with his wife's lineage; in practice, these peoples were bilocal. This bilocality takes on great significance given the prevalence of intertribal marriages. Intertribal marriages, as Frenchmen such as Perrot correctly perceived, created a larger community of interest among the refugees. Intermarriage solidified ties with outsiders who could assist a people in times of war and hunger, but the price paid was a weakening of the patrilineages – adult men left their own patrilineages and their own villages to reside in villages where they had only affinal relatives. Such bilocality mattered less in the mixed villages of the refugee centers, where a man residing with his wife's people initially remained in close touch with his own lineage, than it did later when villages dispersed. As villages

¹⁹ Patricia Albers and Jeanne Kay, "Sharing the Land: A Reevaluation of Native American Territoriality," unpublished paper.

²⁰ Callender, *Social Organization*, 25–27, 35.

separated, the social unit with which a man lived was made up of his wife's relatives rather than his own.

There were other surprising twists in this patrilineal society. When a man married out of his own group, his children did not necessarily take his clan identity. Unless, as sometimes happened, their father began a new clan, the children of intermarried fathers belonged to the clan of their mother. Her clan adopted them. Among the Winnebagos, Sauks, Menominees, Fox, and Potawatomis, where a nephew was under strong obligations to assist his maternal uncle in war, this combination of clan adoption and obligation to maternal uncles linked the children of intermarried men to their mother's village despite patrilineal descent.²¹

Tribal identity and the technicalities of kinship reckoning thus did not dictate political behavior in this world of refugees. All kinship obligations were in a sense contingent, since they had to be activated and maintained by the person who embodied them. At birth every Algonquian, by virtue of his or her descent, clearly belonged to a patrilineage and patrilineal clan, but in daily life, that clan or lineage was not effectively composed simply of those genealogically assigned to it. A person's obligations to patrilineal relatives were necessarily inoperative on a daily basis if he or she lived far away in a different refugee concentration. But in an emergency, such ties beckoned and kinspeople might very well attempt to aid each other. Loss of population, loss of territoriality, extensive intermarriage, and the creation of multiple ties of actual and symbolic kinship between neighboring peoples heavily modified actual patrilineal organization.

In practice, kinship as an organizing principle moved far away from actual descent. The widespread custom of adoption forged social ties that had nothing to do with birth. If one person adopted an unrelated person as a relative, the adoptee acquired subsidiary kinship relations – a new mother, father, sisters, and brothers – while maintaining his or her old ones. In the case of a captive, adoption supposedly erased the social identity of the captive and replaced it with the preexisting social identity of a dead person. This process, while often effective, was apparently rarely complete. Many captives, though integrated into a new group, retained lingering ties of affection to their old ones. On a different level, sodalities or pan-tribal organizations formed other units that transcended kinship. The Catholic Church took on aspects of an intertribal sodality during this period, but the

²¹ For intermarriage, customs, and ties, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 69, 188, 270; Callender, *Social Organization*, 23, 26; La Potherie, *History*, 1:277, 301. Conference between Frontenac and the Ottawas, 15 Aug. 1682, *NYCD* 9:176. For nephew, see *HBNI* 15:612. For clans, see *ibid.*, 614, 694–95. Also see Marshall Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), 54.

most famous pan-tribal organization was the midewiwin society. Its lodges and curing rituals could be found in most of the villages of the *pays d'en haut*.²²

As the French came to realize, the boundaries between the various tribes were not always clear. Perrot, in a proposed speech to the western Algonquians of Green Bay, emphasized the consequences of the refugee experience and widespread intermarriages at that refugee center: "Thou Pouteouatimais, thy tribe is half Sakis; thou Sakis are part Renards; thy cousins and thy brother-in-law are Renards and Sakis." Similarly, the Winnebagos, according to La Potherie, were composed largely of adoptees and intermarried peoples.²³

The extreme political result of these denser connections between refugee groups was the dissolution of old groups and the creation of new ones. Various patrilineal bands – the Amikwas, Maramegs, and others – coalesced to form the two large divisions of the Ojibwas – the Chippewas, or the Southwestern Ojibwas, and the Mississaugas, or the Southeastern Ojibwas. The earlier bands apparently became clans within the new aggregate villages. This process was not complete until after the end of the refugee period, but its beginnings are apparent in the merging of several proto-Ojibwa groups with the Saulteurs at Sault Sainte Marie.²⁴

Fragments of larger groups also merged. The remnants of the Petuns or Tionontati (the Tobacco Nation) and smaller numbers of Hurons who had fled west merged to form the Huron-Petuns, whom the French called the Hurons. Iroquoian in language and matrilineal in social organization, these refugees retained a sense of their separateness from the patrilineal Algonquian speakers who surrounded them. Their union was in this sense natural. In the collapse of remnants of two large leagues into a single village much disappeared. The Huron-Petuns organized themselves into three phratries, two of which, the Deer and the Wolf, clearly came from the Petuns. The Hurons proper formed a lineage, the Hatinnionen (Those of the Bear), within the Deer phratry. The origin of the third phratry, the Turtle, remains unclear and is a matter of controversy, but it probably

²² For adoption, see Callender, *Social Organization*, 64. For connections between behavior and formal relations, see Ladslav Holy, "Kin Groups: Structural Analysis and the Study of Behavior," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1976): 107–31. For midewiwin, see Harold Hickerson, "The Sociohistorical Significance of Two Chippewa Ceremonials," *American Anthropologist* 65 (1963): 67–85.

²³ For quotation, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 270. For intermarriage as bond, see La Potherie, *History*, 1:277. For Winnebagos, see La Potherie, *History*, 1:301. French sources, using the original French sense of the word *alliance*, often identify intermarriage with political alliances.

²⁴ Harold Hickerson, "The Feast of the Dead among the Seventeenth-Century Algonkians of the Upper Great Lakes," *American Anthropologist* 62 (1960): 81–107.

comprised outsiders who affiliated with the Huron-Petuns. Sastaretsy, the ritual name for the leader of the senior lineage of the Deer phratry, was always the titular head of the Huron-Petuns.²⁵

Multiple ties, the dissolution of some social units, and the creation of others – all made the network of social and political loyalties within the refugee centers extremely complicated. In a given situation, people might very well have had to choose between several competing social groups that had claims on their loyalty. As a result, in the historical record the simple categories of tribe, village, and clan sometimes hold and sometimes break down as people consciously evaluated their conflicting loyalties.

The French chronicler La Potherie recorded a dispute among the Potawatomis at Green Bay that illustrates the complexity of these connections. A French trader assaulted a leader of the Red Carp clan of the Potawatomis, which led to a brawl in which Red Carp warriors knocked another Frenchman unconscious. The unconscious Frenchman was, however, a great friend of the “head of the Bear family” (or clan). The leader of the Bear clan seized a hatchet and declared that he would perish with the Frenchman. The daughter of the head of the Bear clan had married a Sauk headman and he, on hearing the brawl, gathered his Sauk followers and came to join his father-in-law and the Potawatomi Bear clan warriors. Only the recovery of the Frenchman prevented bloodletting between two groups for whom clan membership and relations through marriage overrode tribal affiliation. Tribal affiliation was always an unreliable predictor of social or political action in the *pays d'en haut*. There were too many other potential loyalties.²⁶

Intermarriage and adoption formed one path to peace and solidarity, but the calumet was part of a more overtly political and ceremonial way of achieving peace. The calumet was the great token of peace. The name referred to the decorated stem of a pipe such as the one offered to Perrot and to Allouez when they appeared as strangers in the villages of the

²⁵ The organization of the Huron-Petuns is a matter of some controversy. See Lucien Campeau, *La Mission des Jésuites chez les Hurons, 1639–50* (Montreal: Editions Bellarmin, 1987), 362–67. See also *HBNI* 15:404–05, and James Clifton, “The Re-emergent Wyandot: A Study in Ethnogenesis on the Detroit River Borderland, 1747,” *The Western District: Papers from the Western District Conference*, ed. K. G. Pryke and L. L. Kulisek (Essex County Historical Society and Western District Council, 1983): 7–8, 12–13. Also see Raudot lettres, AN, C11A, v. 122 (carton 64), f. 200f. Parolles, 14 juillet 1703, AN, C11A, v. 21. Part of this document appears in *NYCD* 9:752–53. Claude Charles Le Roy, Sieur de Bacqueville de la Potherie, *Histoire de l’Amérique septentrionale* . . . (Paris: J-L Nion & F. Didot, 1722, microcard, Lost Cause Press, Louisville, 1967), 3:298–99. Where the full French text is referred to instead of the abbreviated English text, the reference will hereafter be La Potherie, *Histoire*.

²⁶ La Potherie, *History*, 1:319–21.

Mascoutens and Miamis. Father Hennepin described the calumet itself in 1679 as

a large Tobacco-pipe made of red, black or white marble [catalanite]: the head is finely polished, and the quill, which is commonly two foot and a half long, is made of a pretty strong reed or cane, adorned with feathers of all colors, interlaced with locks of women's hair. They tie to it two wings of the most curious birds they find which makes their calumet not much unlike Mercury's wand or that staff ambassadors did formerly carry when they went they went to treat of peace. The sheath that reed into the neck of birds they call huars [loons] . . . or else of a sort of ducks who make their nests upon trees. . . . However, every nation adorns the calumet as they think fit according to their own genius and the birds they have in their country.²⁷

There was a pipe for peace, one for war, and others for other purposes, each distinguished by the color of its feathers. The calumet, according to Father Gravier, an early missionary, was "the God of peace and of war, the arbiter of life and of death. It suffices for one to carry and show it to walk in safety in the midst of enemies who in the hottest fight lay down their weapons when it is displayed." Similarly, Hennepin called it a "pass and safe conduct amongst the allies of the nation who has given it." Perrot, who used the calumet often, wrote that it compelled obedience from those who conducted the ceremony to the person in whose honor it was "sung." It halted the warriors of those who sang it and arrested their vengeance. When offered to another people and accepted, it stopped hostilities so that negotiations could take place.²⁸

The calumet had originated beyond the Mississippi among the Pawnees who claimed to have received it from the sun. It had spread to the Sioux and to the Illinois and was, during the mid and late seventeenth century, adopted by the nations of the Great Lakes. The French, too, would use it, and, eventually, in the form of the Eagle Dance, so would the Iroquois.²⁹

The importance of the calumet ceremony can hardly be overstated. It formed a part of a conscious framework for peace, alliance, exchange, and free movement among peoples in the region. By arresting warriors, the calumet produced a truce during which negotiations took place; when

²⁷ Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Father Louis Hennepin's A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America* (facsimile ed., Toronto: Coles, 1974 repr. of 1903 ed.), 125.

²⁸ For Gravier quote, see *JR* 63:123. See also Perrot, *Memoir*, 185; *JR* 65:123–25; Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *New Voyage to North America by the Baron de Lahontan*, 2 vols. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1905), 1:75–76.

²⁹ Perrot, *Memoir*, 186; Clifton, *Prairie People*, 124; William Fenton, *The Iroquois Eagle Dance: An Offshoot of the Calumet Dance* (Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 56, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953).

negotiations were successful, the full calumet ceremony ratified the peace and created a fictive kinship relation between the person offering the pipe and the person specifically honored by the calumet. These people became responsible for maintaining that peace.³⁰

According to Perrot, violation of the calumet was a crime that could not be pardoned. Yet, as Perrot admitted and witnessed, the calumet was violated. It appears that in practice the calumet was far more effective in settling disputes among peoples already allied – in this case allied against the Sioux and Iroquois – than between those allies and their enemies. This was not the fault of the Sioux, who apparently honored the calumet far more diligently than any other group, but who found their faith betrayed by the Algonquians. Sometime about 1669, the Sinago Ottawas killed and ate the ambassadors that the Sioux had sent them. This attack was countenanced by their headman, Sinago, to whom the Sioux had sung the calumet. He violated the calumet at the urging of the Huron-Petuns, the longtime allies of the Ottawas. Here alliance triumphed over the calumet, but to the Sioux the power of the pipe was vindicated when they defeated the Ottawas, captured Sinago, and subjected him to a grisly death.³¹

In their relations with the Iroquois, however, it was the western Algonquians who paid the greater honor to the calumet. René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, reported that the calumet was by 1680 the ordinary means of terminating wars in the Illinois country. The weaker party brought the calumet and bestowed presents on the “conquerors,” thus preventing vengeance killings from escalating into prolonged wars. Such methods, however, did not work with the Iroquois who continued their attacks even after accepting the pipe.³²

Intermarriage, gift exchanges, and ceremonies such as the calumet exerted their greatest force among peoples living in a single refugee center; their strength diminished with distance. They did, nonetheless, link one refugee center with another. The Ottawas of Chequamegon, for example, depended on kinship to obtain aid from the peoples of Green Bay against the Sioux, and the Illinois intermarried as far away as Michilimackinac. In the end, however, it would not be Algonquians who would bear primary

³⁰ Perrot, *Memoir*, 186; Donald Blakeslee, “The Calumet Ceremony and the Origin of Fur Trade Rituals,” *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1977): 81–82. Also see Alice C. Fletcher, “The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony,” *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1900–1901* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), pt. 2.

³¹ Perrot, *Memoir*, 186–90.

³² Lettre du découvreur à un de ses associés, 29 sept. 1680, and Lettre de Cavelier de La Salle, automne de 1681, in Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:33, 141–42, 145; Narrative of... Occurrences... 1695, 1696, in *NYCD* 9:644.

responsibility for creating a larger alliance of all the refugee centers. It would be the French.³³

III

The first Frenchmen who appeared in the West in the footsteps of fleeing Hurons and Ottawas did not come with any conscious desire to unite the refugees. Jesuits came in search of earlier converts dispersed by the Iroquois and for new souls to save. Traders came for furs. The traders obtained their furs and the Jesuits their converts, but they also became the mediators of a regional Algonquian alliance.

The fur trade and the missions enhanced the appeal of existing refugee centers. Frenchmen with their small but dazzling supplies of goods, their crude forts, their guns, and their powerful shamans – the Black Robes (the Jesuits) – became powerful figures within the clusters of refugee villages. But the French presence must be kept in context. Missions and forts were not magnets that pulled the Indians together. Missions did not attract Indians; Indians attracted missionaries who usually came to existing settlements. When missions did precede Indians, the missionaries were clearly anticipating movements by the Indians. A Jesuit mission, for example, preceded the Indian resettlement at Sault Sainte Marie in the late 1660s, but the Jesuits knew that this was an old village site whose primary attraction was the fisheries. Renewed war with the Sioux and temporary peace with the Iroquois made its resettlement attractive because it was farther away from the Sioux country than either Keweenaw or Chequamegon. The Jesuit mission was, at best, a secondary attraction. To argue that either this mission or the later fort and mission at Michilimackinac led the Indians to settle the area is like arguing that people go to airports to be solicited by religious zealots and only incidentally to catch airplanes.³⁴

Missions and forts could buttress but not sustain population concen-

³³ Perrot, *Memoir*, 188, 270; La Potherie, *History*, 1:277, 301; Conference between Frontenac and the Ottawas, Aug. 15, 1682, *NYCD* 9:176.

³⁴ The classic statement of European dominance is in Louise Kellogg, *The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1935), 137–38. Other, more recent scholars have taken roughly similar positions; see *HBNI* 603–04; Harold Hickerson, “Fur Trade Colonialism and the North American Indians,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 1 (1973): 21–31.

For Sault Ste. Marie as a summer fishing ground in the 1660s, see *JR* 50:266. By 1669 there were 2,000 people at the Sault and a Jesuit mission had been established there, but whether this was a permanent population or only a summer fishing population is not clear, *JR* 52:213. For overstatement of French role, see *HBNI* 603. For Jesuit recognition that the mission was not the reason for settlement, see *JR* 55:161; *JR* 56:115–17.

trations. Certainly the strenuous attempts of the Jesuits to hold the Indians at Michilimackinac later failed. Similarly, at Starved Rock, in the Illinois country, La Salle did help create the large refugee concentration that numbered 18,000–20,000 persons by the mid to late 1680s, but this represented only the resettlement of the earlier refugee center of the Great Village of the Kaskaskias which had been destroyed by the Iroquois. As Iroquois pressure lessened, La Salle was unable to hold the settlement together. Internal tensions split the community, it disbanded, and the French abandoned their fort and followed the Illinois to Lake Peoria.³⁵

Similarly, the ability to obtain valued French goods certainly increased the attraction of refugee centers for the Algonquians, but such goods did not reorient Algonquian life around the fur trade. As the French repeatedly discovered, no matter how much the refugees desired their goods, the Algonquians' most pressing needs remained food and defense. When French goods helped fill those needs, the refugees would go to great ends to obtain them; when they did not, the refugees did without them. Hunting beaver for exchange and undertaking the long and arduous journey to transport the beaver to Montreal could be justified only in years free from the threat of Iroquois attack, when ample food supplies were available. The priority Algonquians gave safety and security repeatedly overrode the French desire to increase the scale of exchange in the 1650s and 1660s. As La Potherie complained of those nations living around Green Bay in the late 1660s: "As the savages give everything to their mouths, they preferred to devote themselves to hunting such wild beasts as could furnish subsistence for their families rather than seek beavers of which there were not enough."

The French urged the Indians to come to Montreal to trade for iron weapons and guns to defeat their enemies. Indians balanced the admitted advantages of the weapons against the virtual certainty of combat with the Iroquois who awaited them along the Ottawa River. In the 1650s and 1660s, as often as not, they preferred to stay home. Even after the fur trade was firmly established during a period of peace with the Iroquois in the late 1660s and early 1670s, defense often came first. In 1675 Potawatomi elders

³⁵ For Starved Rock, see Le Clercq Memoir in Isaac J. Cox, *The Journeys of Robert Cavalier de La Salle*, 2 vols. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1905), 2:155; Recit de Nicolas de La Salle, 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 1:570; De La Salle arrive aux Illinois, c. 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:175–76; Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle, 22 aout a l'automne de 1681, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:149–58; Feuille détaché, n.d., *ibid.*, 2:201–02. La Salle à M. de la Barre, nov. 1683, *ibid.*, 2:314, 317–18. Tonty à M. Cabart de Villermont, 24 aoust 1686, *ibid.*, 3:559; "Voyage of St. Cosme" in Kellogg (ed.), *Narratives*, 350. For movements in the Illinois country in the 1680s and 1690s, see Emily J. Blasingham, "The Depopulation of the Illinois Indians," *Ethnohistory* 3 (Summer 1986): 198–201. For later French attempts at relocation, see Narrative of . . . Occurrences, 1694, 1695, *NYCD* 9:623.

blocked trading and trapping expeditions among the young men because they needed them at home for defense against the Sioux.³⁶

In countering such concerns individual French traders quickly discovered that their most effective tactic was to claim that trade alone made victory in the war against the Iroquois and Sioux possible. The failure of any nation to sustain the trade would lead the French to look for other allies and customers. Such a threat certainly gave the Algonquians greater incentive to hunt and trade beaver, but it also clearly committed the French to helping defend them. The trade voyages of the 1670s also became diplomatic missions cementing the alliance between the trading Indians and the French. For both the French and the Indians trade and alliance thus became inseparable.³⁷

Yet in the 1660s and 1670s it was still too early for a pan-Algonquian alliance under the leadership of the French. Instead, there were in practice only a series of individual alliances. The idea of a larger regional alliance was at least present by 1671, when the Intendant Talon wanted to establish the French as the mediators of all Indian quarrels, but neither agreement on such an ambition nor the means to fulfill it were yet apparent. The French were a formidable people in the West, but their early status depended as much on Algonquian misperceptions of them as on their real material advantages.³⁸

The Algonquians received the first Frenchmen who arrived in the lands between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi during the 1650s and 1660s as *manidowek*, or manitous. As a noun, *manitou* meant an other-than-human person, a spiritual being capable of taking manifold physical forms. In greeting Perrot or Allouez, however, the Algonquians seem to have used the word more tentatively, as an adjective: These were strange and powerful men whose real significance was not yet apparent. The Ottawas, Hurons, and Petuns, who knew all too well the limits of Frenchmen, were initially apt

³⁶ For quotation, see La Potherie, *History*, 336–37. For fears of trade voyage, see La Potherie, *History*, 371–72, and Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 99–100. For Potawatomi elders restraining young men, see *JR* 59:165. For Mascouten concern with subsistence hunting, see La Potherie, *History*, 372.

³⁷ For French arguments, see Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 98–100; La Potherie, *History*, 337; Lettre du decouvreur à un de ses associes, 1679–29 septembre 1680, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:39; W. J. Eccles, “The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (July 1983): 341–62. This linkage of trade and alliance has inspired some controversy. For major statements of two positions, see Abraham Rotstein, “Trade and Politics: An Institutional Approach,” *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 8 (1972): 1–28. Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman failed to find any such linkage in the Hudson’s Bay region, but this settles little since the groups in this area were hunting and gathering bands, not the settled agricultural peoples farther south. Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, *Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson’s Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 6, 232.

³⁸ Talon au roi, 2 nov. 1671. AN, C11A, v. 3, f. 159–60.

to treat the first missionaries harshly. They scorned Allouez for being unable to row or do his share on a portage. But the more westerly peoples regarded the Jesuits as men of power and treated them and the early traders with courtesy. As the Potawatomis told Perrot when he came among them: "Thou are one of the chief spirits, since thou usest iron, it is for thee to rule and protect all men. Praised be the Sun, who has instructed thee and sent thee to our country."³⁹

The Algonquians expected benefits from these men of power, but the possibilities they envisioned clearly went beyond the acquisition of trade goods. The Jesuits recognized, for instance, that they were invited to many feasts "not so much for the sake of eating as of obtaining through us, either recovery from their ailments, or good success in their hunting and war." The Algonquians expected protection, aid against their enemies, cures, and a secure subsistence. They expected, in short, far more than the French missionaries or traders could ever deliver.⁴⁰

To escape this dilemma, the priests denied that they were manitous and presented themselves only as ambassadors of Christ, the Master of Life. They sought to emphasize the transformative aspects of Christianity, but in seeking to convert Algonquians by attacking native beliefs, they, for tactical reasons, often themselves accepted native premises. The Jesuits ridiculed the manitous, but they did so in Algonquian terms. They often did not challenge the Algonquian logic of why fish or game appeared or did not appear. Instead, they denied credit to the manitous and gave it to Christ. Success in war, success in the hunt, survival after falling through the ice, all were evidence of the power of Christ. Victory in such debates over the causes of events in the Algonquian world only meant that heads of animals once offered to the manitous at feasts were now offered to Christ. Public offerings went to the cross and to the Christian God, the "Great Manitou." Indians were not so much being converted to Christianity as Christ was being converted into a manitou. As a Sauk headman told Father Allouez: "We care very little whether it be the devil or God who gives us food. We dream sometimes of one thing, sometimes of another; and whatever may appear to us in our sleep, we believe that it is the manitou in whose honor the feast must be given, for he gives us food, he makes us successful in fishing, hunting and all our undertakings."⁴¹

³⁹ La Potherie, *History* 1:309. *JR* 54:219, 229; Perrot, *Memoir*, 37, 332; Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 128, 130; *JR* 55:203–05, 217. *JR* 50:255–57, 303–05.

⁴⁰ *JR* 55:203.

⁴¹ The newer literature on missions stresses the ways in which missionaries transformed Indian cultures, but these authors emphasize that these people's lives had to be already severely disrupted by whites and that for success, domination by whites was a prerequisite, not a result. See Neil Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (1974): 27–54; Robert Conkling, "Legitimacy

The initial Indian assessment of Frenchmen and their God was quite pragmatic. And the predictable result of a French failure to deliver all that they had promised was an Algonquian reassessment of French capabilities. The Jesuits, for instance, claimed that Christ, rather than either the manitou Mitsipe (the Great Water Spirit) or the sun, brought the sturgeon in the spring. And for a season or more prayer might yield fish, but linking Christ's influence to the mating habits of a large fish did not contribute greatly to lasting Jesuit success in the region. When the fish failed, Christ failed. He was and remained a potent manitou, but Indians sought his aid so long as he delivered it reliably. Similarly, the Jesuits declined from spirits to, at best, powerful shamans. At worst, Indians regarded them as dangerous witches. In time the Jesuits would profoundly alter the way some Algonquians viewed the world, but for very many others these priests and their God could fit easily into the existing religion.⁴²

The status of other Frenchmen declined more precipitously than did that of the Jesuits, since traders failed far more rapidly and seriously to fulfill Algonquian expectations. In 1686 Nicolas Perrot gave the mission of Saint François-Xavier at Green Bay a silver soleil whose brilliant sun with a cross above it was meant to evoke the glory of the Sun King, Louis XIV. For the Algonquians, however, the ornament probably recalled Perrot's original reception, as an emissary not of the Sun King but of the sun itself. By the 1680s such a status was largely a memory. The French had not acted as manitous. They were not, after all, powerful and wealthy beings who had come to grant the Algonquians protection and aid. The French were greedy and often quite vulnerable men with an insatiable desire for old, greasy beaver robes. According to Perrot, Indians who had initially welcomed the French as powerful benefactors came to "regard those of the French nation as wretched menials and the most miserable people in the world."⁴³

and Conversion in Social Change: The Case of French Missionaries and the Northeastern Algonkian," *Ethnohistory* 21 (1974): 1–24, James P. Ronda, "We are Well as We Are: An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (1977): 66–82. For missionaries as emissaries of Master of Life, see *JR* 55:201. For denials of manitou status, see La Potherie, *History* 309–10, *JR* 54:231. For claims of efficacy of Christ's aid, see *JR* 57:209, 223, 231–33, 261, 289; *JR* 55:123–31; *JR* 60:151; *JR* 58:61; *JR* 61:149; *JR* 56:145. For feasts and offerings to Christ instead of manitous, see *JR* 57:23, 287–91; *JR* 58:63; "Jolliet and Marquette," 233–34. For the Sauk quotation, see *JR* 57:283.

⁴² For sturgeons, see *JR* 57:287–89, 293; *JR* 58:275. For Jesuit claims of conversions, see *JR* 61:69, 71, 103, 153–54, 131; *JR* 57:233. For doubts about how Catholic such converts were, see "Journey of Dollier and Galinee," in Milo Quaife (ed.), *The Western Country in the Seventeenth Century: The Memoirs of Lanothe Cadillac and Pierre Liette* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1917), 206. *JR* 59:229.

⁴³ For the soleil, see facing page, *JR* 65. For Perrot quotation, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 63–64. See also La Potherie, *History*, 319, 333; *JR* 54:225; *JR* 55:185–87; Thwaites (ed.), *Hennepin's A New Discovery*, 82; Duchesneau to de Seignelay, 10 Nov. 1679, *NYCD* 9:133, Duchesneau's

Once they ceased to be manitous, the French were in danger of becoming merely rich, powerful, arrogant, and quarrelsome strangers to be appeased when necessary and looted when possible. They were as yet in no position to unite the Algonquians. How could they be, when they themselves often seemed more diverse and fractious than any single Algonquian group? The French, after all, had conflicting purposes for coming west. Saving souls, gathering furs, and gathering allies against the Iroquois were endeavors that could not always be easily reconciled. For example, *coureurs de bois* – the illegal traders who despite French efforts could not be removed from the West – diverted Miami war parties against the Iroquois by falsely telling them Ontario, the French governor, wished them to hunt beaver instead.⁴⁴

Even a cursory examination of the accusations of Jesuit missionaries against traders and *coureurs de bois*, of the governor against the Jesuits, of the Montreal traders against the governor, and of the various trading factions against each other reveals the depths of French suspicion. A man like La Salle, who sought to carve out his own fur trade empire in the *pays d'en haut*, might be more willing in theory than the Algonquians to admit the role of chance or accident in human affairs, but in practice he was apt to detect malevolent agents behind every misfortune. He suspected that the Jesuits had sent the Iroquois against the Illinois in order to ruin him. He thought that rival traders might have conspired to sink his ship, which had vanished without a trace in Lake Michigan, and that they worked actively to lure away his men, who seemed to desert him every time he turned his back. His supporters thought that the Iroquois had pillaged Frenchmen on the order of the governor of Canada, La Barre. The French, too, sometimes seemed far more ethnically diverse and culturally mismatched than the refugees. Father Hennepin wondered in 1678 how the mix of Italians, Normans, Flemings, and French (all of “different interests . . . and . . . humours”) going west with La Salle could ever hope to cooperate. They couldn’t. Most of them deserted and left La Salle in the lurch. Forging a coherent policy in such conditions was difficult and the inability of the French to discipline and control the *coureurs de bois* was only the most prominent sign of this.⁴⁵

Memoir on the Western Indians, Sept. 13, 1681, NYCD 9:161–62; Perrot, *Memoir*, 263–64; Denonville à M. de Seignelay, aoust 1688, AN, C11A, v. 10.

⁴⁴ For diversion of war party, see La Potherie, *History*, 2:97.

⁴⁵ For Jesuit conflicts with Frontenac, see W. J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 126. For differences between civil officials, see Duchesneau to Seignelay, Nov. 10, 1679, NYCD 9:131. For accusations revolving around the La Salle expeditions, see “Le Clercq Memoir,” Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 98, 109–110, 126–27. Lettre de La Salle au Ft. Frontenac, 22 aoust 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:214–20, Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle à un de ses amis, Oct. 1682, *ibid.*, 2:295–301 and Extrait du mémoire (1682), *ibid.*, 2:347–48; De la Barre à Colbert, 14 nov. 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:303–04. La Salle à M. de la Barre, 2 avril 1683, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:320–31, Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle (1681), *ibid.*, 2:116, 121, and Lettre de Cavalier

The political coherence of Algonquian and French societies might never have extended beyond the individual refugee concentrations if the Iroquois had not once again forced the peoples of the *pays d'en haut*, both French and Algonquian, to move toward a larger unity. The French had made their own peace with the Iroquois as early as 1667, and this peace had been extended uneasily over much of the West in the late 1660s and the 1670s. At the time the Iroquois had other wars on their hands. The end of the fighting with the Susquehannas of Pennsylvania and the decision of that people to relocate in Iroquoia, however, both reinforced the Iroquois and allowed the Five Nations to turn once more toward the West. In 1680 they launched the second phase of the Iroquois wars by attacking the Illinois, destroying the Great Village of the Kaskaskias and threatening to embroil the entire upper country in renewed warfare.⁴⁶

These attacks prompted a crisis both in the refugee centers and Quebec. During the years of dwindling Iroquois pressure, Algonquian rivalries had reemerged. The Fox had antagonized most of the nations at Green Bay. The Miamis, as it turned out, had conspired with the Iroquois to destroy the Illinois but had themselves been betrayed by the Iroquois, who, after their successful attack on the Great Village of the Kaskaskias, had fallen on the Miamis. The Ottawas and their allies at Michilimackinac, instead of aiding the victims of the Iroquois attacks, desperately sought to conciliate the Iroquois and escape renewed war following the murder of a Seneca chief, Annanhae, by an Illinois at the Kiskakon Ottawa village at Michilimackinac. Divided among themselves, the Algonquians were equally at odds with the French, whose traders had so deeply antagonized Algonquian hunters that murder had become a commonplace of the trade.⁴⁷

The Ottawas and Illinois thus desperately needed French aid, but they deeply distrusted the French. In 1681 the Ottawas piteously appealed to the

de La Salle, 22 aoust 1680 – automne 1681, *ibid.*, 2:145–47. For Hennepin quotation, see Thwaites (ed.), *Hennepin's A New Discovery*, 73. Mémoire . . . 1687, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:346–47; Relation des découvertes and des voyages, 1679–81, Margry, *ibid.*, 1:504–13.

⁴⁶ For Iroquois, see Jennings, *Ambiguous Empire*, 137–40, 155–56. Chrétien Le Clercq, *The First Establishment of the Faith in New France*, 2 vols. (New York: J. G. Shea, 1881), 139–45; Relation du voyage de Cavalier de La Salle, du 22 Aout 1680 a l'automne de 1681, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:128–35. Duchesneau's Memoir on Western Indians, Sept. 13, 1681, *NYCD* 9:163–64. De la Barre au Ministre, n.d. (1682), AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 60–61; Enjairan de de la Barre, Aug. 26, 1683, *WHC* 16:110–13. The Iroquois, in an attempt to maintain peace with the French, argued that they did not wish war in the West but would defend themselves. Conference de M. de Frontenac avec un deputation des Iroquois, 11 sept. 1682, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 14.

⁴⁷ For Miamis, see Le Clercq, *First Establishment of the Faith*, 139; La Salle, Relations des découvertes, Margry, *Découvertes*, 1:525–29. For La Salle's original wish for neutrality, see Relation des découvertes, Margry, *ibid.*, 1:502–03; for Ottawas, Duchesneau's Memoir on Western Indians, Sept. 13, 1681, *NYCD* 9:163–64; for Fox, La Durantaye, 22 avril 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 521; for murders, see next chapter.

French for protection. Without it they considered themselves, in their words, already dead, yet they were not sure that some Frenchmen were not plotting with the Iroquois to destroy them. Rumors, believed by both Frenchmen and Indians, were rampant in the upper country that various French factions had encouraged the Iroquois attacks. It was true that Henry de Tonti, La Salle's lieutenant, had been wounded by the Iroquois during the attack on the Illinois, but it was also widely believed, by La Salle among others, that the Jesuits had condoned the Iroquois assault. In Quebec Governor Frontenac equivocated; he attempted to secure peace with the Iroquois while promising the Algonquians new protection that he did nothing visible to provide.⁴⁸

At Quebec and Montreal French officials received these pleas for aid from the West and considered their options. Slowly they came to recognize the need for unity among the Algonquians and a joint French-Indian alliance to defeat the Iroquois. If the Illinois were lost, French strategists reasoned, Green Bay and the Ottawas would follow. The fur trade would vanish. Canada would be isolated and vulnerable to Iroquois attacks, and England, whom the French regarded as the sponsor of the Iroquois, would control the continent.⁴⁹

As these discussions proceeded, French divisions did not disappear, but among those active in the West, those debating policy in Quebec and Montreal, and those overseeing the policy in Paris a consensus on the need to unite the western tribes began to emerge. Such an alliance, they agreed, depended on the ability of the French to protect and supply their allies and,

⁴⁸ For Tonti's actions, see Tonty Memoir, in Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 1:8–13. For Frontenac's attempts to secure peace, see Discours de M. de Frontenac au député de Iroquois, 12 sept. 1682, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 46. *JR* 62:151–55; lettre à M. de la Barre, 14 aoust 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 293–94, Enjairan à M. La Barre, 7 mai 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6; Presents Made by the Onnontagues to Onontio . . . 5 Sept. 1684, *DHNY* 1:119. For La Salle's accusations against Allouez and other Jesuits, see Lettre de La Salle au Ft. Frontenac, 22 aoust 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:214–20, Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle à un de ses amis, oct. 1682, *ibid.*, 2:295–301, and Extrait du mémoire (1682), *ibid.*, 2:347–48.

⁴⁹ La Salle's actions encouraged an alliance of western villagers, Le Clercq, *First Establishment of Faith*, 156; Relation des découvertes, Margry, *Découvertes*, 1:525–34. Other officials and La Salle, fearing for his trade, wanted peace with the Iroquois, Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle à un de ses amis, oct. 1682, *ibid.*, 2:294–96. Duchesneau's Memoir on Western Indians, Sept. 13, 1681, *NYCD* 9:164–65; Conference on Intelligence Received from Iroquois, Mar. 23, 1682, *NYCD* 9:171, also *JR* 62:157–65. For Frontenac's decision to accord "la nouvelle protection" against the Iroquois, see Mémoire . . . à l'égard des sauvages . . . , 12 sept. 1682, *RAPQ*, 1948–49, 141–42. For king's orders to maintain peace among allies and defend them from Iroquois, see king to La Barre, May 10, 1682, in Theodore C. Pease and Raymond C. Werner (eds.), *The French Foundations, 1680–93, Collections of the Illinois Historical Library* (Springfield Ill.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1934), *IHC* 23:17. For La Barre's measures, Abstract of Letters Received from Canada, *NYCD* 9:196–97. He, like other French officials, thought the English were behind Iroquois attacks, De la Barre au ministre, n.d. (1682), AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 60–61; M. de la Barre au ministre, nov. 1683, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:331.

above all, to mediate the differences between them. In 1681 the Intendant Duchesneau advised that it was in “our interest to keep these people united and to take cognizance of all their differences, however trifling these may be, to watch carefully that not one of them terminate without our mediation and to constitute ourselves in all things their arbiters and protectors.” From the West, Father Le Clercq, who had accompanied La Salle, reached similar conclusions: “If we wish to settle in those countries and make any progress for the faith, it is absolutely necessary to keep all these tribes, as well as others more remote in peace and union against the common enemy – that is, the Iroquois.” Finally, in 1684, an anonymous memorialist restated the policy while warning against the selfish interests that might undermine it:

Take heed of their plans, of their disagreements, and do not allow any of them to terminate without the participation and without the orders of those who, representing the person of the king, ought not to be so mean as to sell them [the Indians] their mediation at so high a price that they [the Indians] are forced to disregard it and come to terms without having recourse [to us].⁵⁰

Even as the French in Quebec debated unifying the western tribes, the French in the West, who were more immediately threatened by the Iroquois than officials at Quebec, took the first hesitant steps to secure such an alliance. In order to resist the Five Nations, they moved somewhat clumsily toward healing divisions both between themselves and the Algonquians and between the various Algonquian groups. As Iroquois warriors plundered Frenchmen in the West, La Salle fortified and garrisoned Starved Rock and gathered Miamis, Illinois, and Shawnees around him. Daniel Greysolon Dulhut acted forcefully to halt the murders that plagued the trade and to try to reconcile warring Algonquian groups. Governor La Barre, who had succeeded Frontenac, garrisoned and provisioned Michilimackinac. In 1684 Frenchmen and Algonquians in concert turned back an Iroquois attack on the Illinois, and Governor La Barre summoned western warriors for an assault on Iroquoia. Working deftly out of Michilimackinac, the first French commander in the West, Oliver Morel de la Durantaye, secured the warriors. The alliance seemed a reality.⁵¹

⁵⁰ For divisions, see Lettre de La Salle au Ft. Frontenac, 22 aoust 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:214–20, Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle à un de ses amis, oct. 1682, *ibid.*, 2:295–301 and Extrait du mémoire (1682), *ibid.*, 2:347–48; Lettre M. de la Barre à M. Colbert, 14 nov. 1682, *ibid.*, 2:303–04. For Duchesneau quotation, see Duchesneau's Memoir on Western Indians, Nov. 13, 1681, *NYCD* 9:162. For Le Clercq quotation, see *First Establishment of Faith*, 156. Mémoire sur quelques... dans la ferme de Canada (1684), AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 480.

⁵¹ Recit de Nicolas De La Salle, 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 1:570, Tonti Memoir in Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 1:31; M. de la Barre to M. de Seignelay, 4 Nov. 1683, *NYCD* 9:202; De Baugy, 24 mars 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6; Memoir of M. de la Barre, Oct. 1, 1684, *DHNY*

Unfortunately La Barre's attack failed miserably. The French militia fell sick, Governor La Barre panicked and signed an embarrassing treaty abandoning the Illinois to the Iroquois, and the worst Algonquian fears of French cravenness and untrustworthiness seemed true. To recoup, the French court removed Governor La Barre and renounced his treaty. His successor, Jacques-René de Brisay Denonville, attached great importance both to protecting the western allies and mobilizing them against the Iroquois. He gave gifts of guns to the Illinois and other allies, maintained fortified posts not only at Michilimackinac and Starved Rock, but also at Saint Joseph, Maramek (near present-day Kalamazoo) and eventually many other places, and summoned the Algonquians for a second joint attack on Iroquoia in 1687.⁵²

All of this only partially reassured the allies. The Ottawas, in particular, never lost their fear that the French would abandon them. The Iroquois preyed on this fear and, with English encouragement, sought to transform it into temptation. The Iroquois assured the Ottawas and also the Huron-Petuns that if they deserted the French, the Five Nations would secure them a trade with the English that would provide better European goods at cheaper prices. Even as the French-Iroquois war resumed with Denonville's attack, even as it became subsumed in a larger imperial war between France and England in 1689, the mutual distrust of the French and the western Indians, particularly the Ottawas and Huron-Petuns, persisted. Both nations repeatedly seemed on the verge of deserting the French. The Indians were motivated sometimes by the lure of English goods, at other times by the reasonable fear that the French would betray them. Separate French peace negotiations with the Iroquois disposed the allies to make a separate peace of their own.⁵³

The French-Algonquian alliance rested on a delicate balance of fear and temptation. Renewed Iroquois attacks created the impetus for the alliance,

1:109–16. For Dulhut, see Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:73; Enjairan to M. de la Barre, 26 aug. 1683, Margry, *Découvertes*, 5:3–7. For Durantaye, see M. de la Barre to M. de Seignelay, 4 Nov. 1683, *NYCD* 9:202.

⁵² For La Barre's failure, see Presents Made by the Ononotagues to Onontio, 5 Sept. 1684, *DHNY* 1:117–19; De Meulles to Minister, Oct. 10, 1684, *DHNY* 1:120–271. For crown's disavowal, see Instructions to M. de Denonville, Mar. 10, 1685, *IHC* 23:68–78; Mémoire: De Denonville, Sept. 8, 1686, AN, F3, Moreau-St. Mery, v. 6, f. 270–71; Mémoire instructif, AN, F3, Moreau-St. Mery, v. 2, f. 218.

⁵³ For discontent of allies, see Denonville Memoir Concerning Present State of Canada, Nov. 12, 1685, *DHNY* 1:199–200. Instruction to M. Denonville, Mar. 10, 1686, *IHC* 23:68–78. See also Denonville's letter to Seignelay and reply, Aug. 20, Sept. 3, Nov. 12, 1685, *NYCD* 9:274; For initial English threat and French response, see Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:98–101; Denonville au Ministre, 13 nov. 1685, AN, C11A, v. 7, f. 105; Denonville to Seignelay, May 8, 1686, *NYCD* 9:287–92, and Oct. 9, 1686, *NYCD* 9:286–303; Denonville to Seignelay, June 8, 1687, *NYCD* 9:324–25; *ibid.*, Aug. 25, 1687, *NYCD* 9:336–37; Denonville au Ministre, 15 juillet 1687, AN, C11A, v. 9, f. 36. For Huron-Petun

but trade with the English allies of the Iroquois perpetually threatened its dissolution. French denunciations of their allies as unfaithful and treacherous were as self-serving as they were common, but they also contained significant elements of truth. Particularly for the Huron-Petuns and the Ottawas at Michilimackinac, alliance with the French always had to be weighed against its alternative: rapprochement with the Iroquois and trade with the English. The French could not assume loyalty or dictate to the Algonquians as long as that risky alternative remained.⁵⁴

From its inception, then, the alliance was not simply the natural result of poor and shattered peoples' seeking to share French wealth and power but, rather, an initially precarious construction whose maintenance seemed as essential to Canadian as to Algonquian survival. The alliance endured not because of some mystical affinity between Frenchmen and Indians, nor because Algonquians had been reduced to dependency on the French, but rather because two peoples created an elaborate network of economic, political, cultural, and social ties to meet the demands of a particular historical situation. These ties knit the refugee centers to each other and each center to the French. Central to this whole process was the mediation of conflicts both between the French and their various allies and among the allies themselves. In the end the alliance that the French and Algonquians created in the last two decades of the seventeenth century rested on the willingness of the French to undertake such mediation and their ability to perform it effectively. As in an Indian confederacy, the mobilization of force against outsiders was only a secondary achievement of the alliance. Primarily, the alliance sought to insure peace among its members. Ideally, of course, all the allies would agree to fight a common enemy, but before that could happen, all had to agree not to fight each other. As Governor Denonville realized, it was "absolutely necessary to reconcile them before thinking of deriving any advantage from them." Because mediation secured peace, mediation was at the heart of the alliance.⁵⁵

IV

It is hard, accustomed as we are to think of European dominance in terms of conquest and commercial advantage, to accept mediation as a source of

measures to disrupt French-Iroquois negotiations, see Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:220–25; also Mémoire: Chevalier de Callières, 1689, AN, C11A, v. 10. For separate peace, see Relation de cequi s'est passé d l'année 1694 jusqu'au mois de nov. 1695, AN, F3, Moreau-St. Mery, v. 7, f. 341.

⁵⁴ For both recognition of and frustration at this situation, see Mémoire instructif de l'estat des affaires de la Nouvelle France . . . Denonville à M. de Seignelay, aoust 1688, AN, C11A, v. 10, f. 64–70.

⁵⁵ Memoir of Denonville, Nov. 12, 1685, *DHNY* 1:198–99.

power, but power it was. Admittedly, without goods to give as presents or French troops to aid the Algonquians against the Iroquois, mediation would have been impossible. But it is equally true that neither trade nor military force alone could have held the alliance together. It was the ability of the French to mediate peace between contentious and vengeful allies that did that. Anyone who has attempted to follow in La Potherie's *History* the tangled and dangerous negotiations conducted by men such as Perrot or has looked at the career of Henry de Tonti or of Daniel Greysolon Dulhut has some sense of both the immensity of the task and the difficulty of the achievement. Even with new Iroquois attacks imminent, Tonti in 1685 had to make a present of a thousand ecus worth of merchandise to reconcile the Miami and Illinois. In effecting such reconciliations the French found a niche in Algonquian political systems, whose organization, as the Intendant Raudot later noted, made it easier to declare war than to secure peace.⁵⁶

The alliance that took shape following the Iroquois attacks of 1680 survived the seemingly endless string of internal crises that afflicted it during the 1680s and 1690s to become the vehicle for the defeat of the Iroquois. It transformed the Algonquians from a terrified people confined to a few crowded and impoverished settlements to a confident and expanding people reoccupying country long denied them by the Iroquois. Once armed and organized, the Algonquians themselves became the protectors of Canada. They carried the war home to the Five Nations. It was they, as Governor Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil would stress in the early eighteenth century, who had defeated the Iroquois. It was they whom the Iroquois most feared. It was on them that French security came in large measure to depend. The refugees recognized full well the implications of their military victories and came to possess, as Perrot said, the "arrogant notion that the French cannot get along without them and that we could not maintain ourselves in the colony without the assistance that they give us."⁵⁷

The alliance was based on mediation, but mediation was only possible because of what might be called the infrastructure that supported the alliance itself. In the late seventeenth century this infrastructure consisted of the refugee centers themselves, which concentrated Indians in large, easily accessible numbers; French missions and forts located in these refugee centers; and the *congé*, or permit, system of trading, which not only supplied

⁵⁶ For Perrot, see La Potherie, *History*, 1:309, 311, 2:61–78, 84–85, 111–13. For others, see Boisguillot à M. de la Barre, 7 mai 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 528; Tonti à M. de Villermont Margry, *Découvertes*, 3:559; Raudot lettres, AN, C11A, v. 122 (carton 64) f. 200ff.

⁵⁷ For examples of attacks, see Narrative . . . of Occurrences, 1697–98, NYCD 9:680–81; Narrative . . . of Occurrences, 1696–97, *ibid.*, 672; Vaudreuil & Raudot to Minister, Nov. 14, 1708, MPHC 33:402; Yves Zoltvany, "New France and the West, 1701–13," *Canadian Historical Review* 46 (1965): 304. See also Tonti à M. de Villermont, 28 mars 1689, Margry, *Découvertes*, 3:564; JR 64:37. For quotation, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 262.

goods to the West but, by giving officials some control over traders, made them potential French emissaries and diplomats. French wealth and Algonquian and French military strength sustained this infrastructure. And the combination of French literacy – at least among Jesuits, officers, and a few traders – and the presence of Frenchmen in all the major refugee centers bound it together. The French established a command of distant events that allowed them to intervene propitiously in Indian politics at critical moments and coordinate their own actions with a precision and secrecy Indians could not match. The many occasions on which Frenchmen disrupted Indian “plots” that threatened to destroy the alliance or gathered widely separated nations for common endeavors testify to the importance of this communication network.⁵⁸

Looked at from this perspective, the alliance was a French construction, but other angles of examination yield other perspectives. The underlying premise of the alliance – mediation as a source of influence – was essentially Algonquian. The precursors of the alliance were the Potawatomis who, in effect, showed the French the possibilities of mediation. According to La Potherie, the Potawatomis’ role as mediators had made them the most influential group at Green Bay.

The old men are prudent, sensible, and deliberate; it is seldom that they undertake any unseasonable enterprise. As they receive strangers very kindly, they are delighted when reciprocal attentions are paid to them. They have so good an opinion of themselves that they regard other nations as inferior to them. They have made themselves arbiters for the tribes about the bay, and for all their neighbors; and they strive to preserve for themselves that reputation in every direction.⁵⁹

In the early 1680s, the Potawatomis responded to Iroquois attacks and to their own conflicts with the French by attempting to expand their role as mediators to include both the Illinois and the Miamis, who had by then once more moved south of Lake Michigan. These attempts, however, exacerbated conflicts with the French – with both the Jesuits at Green Bay and La Salle, who was establishing the French as the dominant people at Starved Rock – and overtaxed Potawatomi resources. And when, in retaliation for epidemics they believed to have been caused by Jesuit witchcraft, the Potawatomis

⁵⁸ For examples, see Boisguillot à M. de la Barre, 7 mai 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 528; M. De la Barre au Ministre, 9 juillet 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 284; Denonville à M. de la Durantaye, 6 juin 1686, AN, C11A, v. 8, f. 51–56; Tonty Memoir in Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 1:37–38; Mémoire instructif des mesures que M. Denonville a prises pour la guerre . . . 26 aoust 1686, AN, C11A, v. 8, f. 98. Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:149–63. Denonville to Seignelay, Jan. 1690, NYCD 9:440.

⁵⁹ La Potherie, *History*, 1:302.

murdered Jesuit donnés, a display of French force at Green Bay led them to concede leadership to the French.⁶⁰

The French, not the Potawatomis, would lead the alliance. The Algonquians acknowledged the French governor of Canada, who bore the title of Onontio, as the head of the alliance. *Onontio* was an Iroquois word meaning great mountain. It was the Mohawk rendering of the name of Charles Jacques de Huault de Montmagny, an early French governor. Both the Iroquois and the Algonquians applied the name to all later French governors. Onontio was a person of real power, but none of the French governors who led the alliance was regarded as a conquerer. Instead, western Indians regarded Onontio and the Frenchmen who followed him as their allies, protectors, suppliers, and as the mediators of their disputes. Or, in Algonquian terms, Onontio was their father and thus they addressed him in council. Becoming fathers was, in a sense, a demotion for the French. They originally had been manitous – that is, in metaphorical kinship reckoning, grandfathers. They had taken a step down the generational ladder.⁶¹

Onontio deployed his power by directing French resources along Algonquian channels. Or, rather, goods that originated in French society were distributed according to customs that originated in Algonquian society for, as we shall see, it increasingly became meaningless to speak of the alliance as French or Algonquian. It was both. As Perrot noted, liberality was highly regarded among the Algonquians; it was both a mark of and a route to status and power. No request had significance and no agreement was binding without an exchange of presents. In the words of Intendant Duchesneau, “These tribes never transact any business without making presents to illustrate and confirm their words.” The importance of any agreement was measured in terms of the gifts which accompanied it. Goods, bestowed wisely, were the mark of leadership and the route to influence; it was the route the French took.⁶²

French agents of the alliance – the priests, officers, and traders – could,

⁶⁰ Lettre du Pere Enjairan à M. de la Barre, 26 aoust 1683, Margry *Découvertes*, 5:3–7; Perrot, *Memoir*, 188.

⁶¹ For origin of *Onontio*, see Eccles, *Canadian Frontier*, p. 201, n. 15. I’d like to thank Ray Fogelson for pointing out the generational progression here. There remains much interesting work to be done in sorting out the complex metaphorical network the Algonquians used to govern political and social relations. For an attempt to do this for the Iroquois, see Mary A. Druke, “Linking Arms: The Structure of Iroquois Intertribal Diplomacy,” in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800*, ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

⁶² Perrot, *Memoir*, 291; for quotation, see Duchesneau’s Memoir on the Western Indians, Nov. 13, 1681, *NYCD* 9:161. Frontenac to Duchesneau, July 28, 1682, *NYCD* 9:175, Lettre de Cavalier de La Salle, 22 aout à l’automne de 1681, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:150. Callières au Ministre, 20 oct. 1699, AN, C11A, v. 17, f. 7.

however, only act with the cooperation of Algonquian leaders. The alliance essentially merged the French politics of empire with the kinship politics of the village. The men – French and Algonquian – who translated one politics into the other were the people the documents refer to as chiefs. Frenchmen so often used the term *chief* as a generic tag for any Indian who showed signs of having influence within his own society that trying to give the word an operational meaning is hopeless. There was no more an office of chief in Algonquian societies than there was in French society. The men, and sometimes women, of influence whom the French most often took for chiefs were *okamas*, or village civil leaders. In most of these groups, leadership was clan- and lineage-based, with separate leaders for war and for peace.⁶³

Leaders in the alliance were thus often leaders in their own society as well. Just as Onontio was the governor of New France, with duties, obligations, and interests totally distinct from those of the alliance, so chiefs could hold positions both within their own society and within the alliance. But Algonquian village leaders, unlike Onontio and his French officials, were not rulers. The French equated leadership with political power, and power with coercion. Leaders commanded; followers obeyed. But what distinguished most Algonquian politics from European politics was the absence of coercion.

Only among the Miamis did the French recognize leaders who seemed to possess power in the French sense. The first Jesuit accounts thought the leading man of the Miamis was “the King of the nation.” And Chichikatolo of the Miamis later seemed to the French a formidable leader of a hierarchial society. On seeing Chichikatolo at Montreal in 1701, La Potherie reported that he carried himself with the bearing of a Roman emperor. When Chichikatolo gave orders, his people obeyed them, or so, at least, the French thought. But Chichikatolo was an exceptional figure; no later Miami chief equaled him.⁶⁴

The normal influence of an Algonquian *okama* was far different. As Chigabe, a Saulteur chief, and probably a lineage head of one of the proto-Ojibwa bands of Lake Superior told Governor Frontenac: “Father: It is not the same with us as with you. When you command, all the French obey and go to war. But I shall not be heeded and obeyed by my nation in a like manner. Therefore, I cannot answer except for myself and for those immediately allied or related to me.”⁶⁵

Except for war leaders during a war expedition, chiefs could command no other men. There were people of power and influence among the Algonquians, but their power was, as Pierre Clastres has argued, non-

⁶³ *HBNI* 15:649, 693, 712–13, 732.

⁶⁴ For Miami chiefs, see La Potherie, *History* 2:330–31. For talk at Detroit, July 30, 1704, see *MPHC* 33:192, *JR* 55:215. For Chichikatolo, see La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4:202, 207–8.

⁶⁵ For Chigabe quotation, see Narrative of . . . Occurrences, 1694–95, *NYCD* 9:612.

coercive; it was a type of power that Europeans failed to recognize. In Algonquian village societies, people conceived of power as arising from outside. Power came from manitous, who gave it to individuals or to ancestors of the group. The power of clans usually derived from an ancestral vision, and that power was actualized in a ritual bundle consisting of objects that symbolized the original vision. Each bundle had its attendant ceremonies. A clan chief was the person responsible for these ceremonies. A village chief often was the head of the senior lineage of the chiefly clan, but this was not always so. Often leadership was not hereditary, and, even when it was, the leading candidate might be unsuitable. In such cases a village council composed of the elders and leading men met to select and to ratify the occupant of the office.⁶⁶

To be a chief within a village seemed to many French observers a thankless task. The chief was under an obligation to give to all who asked. Villages were not homogeneous; they contained members of different lineages, clans, and families. The chief intervened to mediate quarrels between them, but they were under no obligation to listen to him. Chiefs and elders deliberated on what course a village should pursue, but no one was obliged to obey them. Chiefs were men with large responsibilities and few resources. But chiefs were also widely acknowledged as men of influence; they were not the same as other men.⁶⁷

The French desired to transform this noncoercive leadership into a coercive leadership. Like the manitous the Algonquians originally equated them with, the French brought power in from outside. To chiefs in need of goods to redistribute to followers and in need of help in protecting the village, an alliance with the French was natural. And as the French singled out certain leaders to be the channels by which French power entered the villages, they created a new kind of chief which can best be distinguished as an alliance chief.

As used within the French alliance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the word *chief* came to refer to both Algonquians and Frenchmen. Alliance chiefs were people who represented their society to outsiders. They mediated disputes among allies and acted to focus the military power of the alliance against outside enemies. Any man who performed such tasks, no

⁶⁶ The most intriguing and suggestive discussion of chieftanship and politics in North and South America is Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 1987); see particularly 7–47.

Clastres's argument that the chief was the speaker for the group does not always literally apply to Algonquians. Chiefs usually employed special speakers to speak for them in council. Similarly, polygamy, while important among Algonquians, did not seem to have the same political significance as it did for Clastres's South American villagers, but this is a matter for additional research. For Algonquians, see *HBNI* 15:617–18, 649–50, 661, 732.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of chiefs as mediators, see Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 59–60.

matter what political or social position he held within his own society, was an alliance chief. Both the Sieur de Louvigny, a military officer who commanded the French expedition sent against the Fox, and Nicolas Perrot, a trader, were French chiefs despite the sizeable differences of their status within French society. As alliance chiefs, however, they, in effect, lost their French attributes of power: the ability to command. They acquired the Algonquian obligations of power: the obligation to mediate and to give goods to those in need. Alliance chiefs among the Algonquians did not claim the power to command. They always needed the consent of their councils.⁶⁸

The prototype of Algonquian alliance chiefs was Onanghisse of the Potawatomis. His exact social position among the Potawatomis is difficult to determine. Like his French equivalent, Perrot, Onanghisse, however, increased his influence among his people because of his success as an intermediary with foreigners. Onanghisse had led Potawatomi attempts to negotiate an anti-French axis with the Miamis and Illinois in the early 1680s, but with the birth of the French alliance, he had become one of its leading figures. His standing increased as he mediated among neighboring peoples and the French as well as among his own people. His activities at the great peace conference of 1701 which ended the Iroquois wars are typical. He spoke to the French for the Sauks in order to arrange compensation for a Frenchman the Sauks had killed among the Sioux. He spoke for the Mascoutens who wished to make retribution for pillaging Perrot's goods and attempting to burn him at the torture stake. On different occasions at the same conference, he spoke for the Potawatomis, Fox, and Winnebagos. He was, in short, a mediator for the alliance among all the peoples gathered about Green Bay, and his activities extended beyond it into the Illinois

⁶⁸ For Indian reference to French chiefs, see Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 14, 1706, *MPHC* 33:268; Marest to Vaudreuil, July 2, 1712, *MPHC* 33:557; Speech of Illinois, 1725, *WHC* 16:456–57; Narrative of de Boucherville, 1728–29, *WHC* 17:40. For the king as a great chief, see La Potherie, *History*, 1:347. For French use of the term, see Pontchartrain to Vaudreuil, June 9, 1706, *NYCD* 9:777; Parolles des Outtauois de Michilmakina . . . 23 juillet 1708; Reponse, AN, C11A, v. 28, f. 215; Beauharnois & D'Aigremont au Ministre, 1 oct. 1728, AN, C11A, v. 50, f. 32.

For examples of chiefs saying their authority was delegated by the council or by the elders, see Narrative of . . . Occurrences, 1694–95, *NYCD* 9:610; Conseil, 27 sept. 1703, AN, C11A, v. 21 (Niquimar); Words of Ottawas, Sept. 24, 1707, *MPHC* 33:346–47; Words of Ottawas, 23 June 1707, *MPHC* 33:327.

The Algonquian system of alliance chiefs and native *okamas* did not parallel the Pueblo system of an internal religious leadership and a separate set of leaders to deal with the Spanish. Algonquian alliance chiefs might or might not be *okamas*, shamans, or clan leaders. Nor does this Algonquian system parallel the absorption of native leaders as vassals by the Spanish in Florida; see Amy Turner Bushnell, "Ruling 'the Republic of Indians' in Seventeenth-Century Florida," in Peter Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 134–50.

country. It was no wonder that he identified so strongly with French chiefs, telling Governor de Callières that Perrot was his “body,” aiding him in all the lands of Algonquians to *autoriser* the *parole* of Onontio.⁶⁹

The alliance grafted together imperial politics and the village politics of kinship; the two became branches of a single tree. The politics of kinship remained strongest within the villages and among contiguous peoples. This was not a harmonious politics. Factionalism divided the village councils; and because village boundaries themselves were permeable, factions formed links with outsiders. The chiefs struggled to mediate these quarrels, but the politics of kinship grew weaker with distance. Imperial politics thus grew more significant as geographical scale increased. Distant groups were united within the French alliance not so much by their real or metaphorical kinship relations with one another as by their common standing as children of Onontio, who was the representative of the French king. The alliance had a center, an imperial center, and from this center the French focused their efforts to influence peoples who were allies rather than subjects of the empire. Where the bonds of kinship failed, French and Algonquian alliance chiefs interceded. They came with their calumets, their presents to cover (that is, to offer compensation for) the dead, and their captives to replace or raise up the dead. Those who refused to accept the mediation of the alliance chiefs risked the threat of having the united force of the alliance brought against them.⁷⁰

V

The social and political bonds forged by the refugees and the French, for all their strength, could not hold the refugee centers together. The centers were the creations of desperate people who in seeking to create political and military security created ecological and economic instability. The centers concentrated large numbers of people who were often hungry and often sick. They became easy targets for the virgin soil epidemics ravaging the Western Hemisphere.

Among American Indian peoples there had been no prior exposure to

⁶⁹ James Clifton, “Potawatomi Leadership Roles: On Okama and other Influential Personages,” in William Cowan (ed.), *Papers of the Sixth Algonquian Conference, 1974*, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper no. 23 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1975), 43–99, Onanghisse, 58, 63, 65–69. See also Lettre du Pere Enjalran à M. de la Barre, 26 aoust 1683, Margry, *Découvertes*, 5:3–7; La Potherie, *Histoire*, 4:208–11, 212–13, 224, 234; Le Clerq, Memoir from Membre Papers, in Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 125.

⁷⁰ As Marshall Sahlins observes, tribes overcome local cleavages only insofar as necessary to prevail militarily, Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 45.

diseases long endemic to Europe. Indian populations had not been selected over time for resistance to such diseases, nor had individuals developed antibodies to these diseases from previous exposure during childhood. Smallpox and measles struck virgin populations in the Western Hemisphere, and these so-called virgin soil epidemics carried off huge numbers of people. No matter how well fed or secure the Indians might have been, a significant proportion of them were doomed to die in such epidemics, but when virgin soil epidemics hit hungry people forced into crowded and contiguous settlements by warfare, the toll became enormous. The Iroquois, in effect, pushed the Algonquians onto a killing ground where smallpox and measles took a far greater toll than Iroquois muskets or scalping knives during the late seventeenth century. There are no reliable estimates of how many died, but calculations on selected tribes indicate a decline of anywhere from 25 percent to over 90 percent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁷¹

Hunger exacerbated disease, and the refugees were often hungry because, in seeking to create a safe and familiar world, they taxed the natural world to its limits. The predictability of the natural world became uncertain. The Algonquians had recognized and depended on seasons of plenty and seasons of scarcity that were determined by the great natural rhythms of the planet. There were seasons when fish spawned and deer rutted, and both could be taken more easily. There were seasons when game animals were fat, their coats sleek, their fur heavy, and seasons when they were weak and emaciated and provided little food. There was spring when women could plant and fall when they could harvest. The subsistence cycles of the refugees, with variations according to skills, technologies, and cultural tastes, moved to these rhythms. These larger patterns were recurrent and predictable. Indians noted them and provided against expected times of dearth.

In the Great Lakes settlements scarcity came in the late winter and early

⁷¹ Disease was depopulating the Ottawas in the mid 1660s, (*JR* 50:287). A little later the Mascoutens prayed for relief from the diseases killing their children (*JR* 53:229); in 1670–71 “bloody flux” was among the Ottawas (*JR* 55:117–31). In 1672 the people at the Sault Sainte Marie had been reduced to extremity by disease (*JR* 57:223). In 1676 disease followed a poor harvest among the Fox (*JR* 60:199, 151). In 1677 many died of an unnamed sickness around Lake Huron (*JR* 61:69–70). In 1679–81 there was smallpox among the Iroquois and at Montreal (*NYCD* 9:129, 154). This probably spread west. There was an epidemic that killed many at Green Bay in 1683 (La Potherie, *History*, 1:354), and there was sickness among the Menominees in the early 1680s, but it is unclear if this was smallpox (*JR* 62:205).

For Winnebagos, see La Potherie, *History*, 293–300. For Sauks, Fox, Winnebagos, and Menominees, see Jeanne Kay, “The Fur Trade and Native American Population Growth,” *Ethnohistory* 31 (1984): 265–87. For a discussion of Iroquois demography, see Ann F. Ramenofsky, *Vectors of Death: The Archaeology of European Contact* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 71–102.

spring when game animals were emaciated and yielded little meat. Horticulturalists in this area depended on their cached corn to pull them through until the sturgeon ran and plenty returned. In the Illinois country the season of scarcity extended from late winter into early summer. This was the period between buffalo hunts and before new crops could be harvested. Then the Illinois depended on dried buffalo meat and stored corn. Indians could and did meet predictable seasons of scarcity by storing a surplus from the seasons of plenty.⁷²

In the refugee centers this environmental stability failed. Well before the Iroquois wars there had inevitably been bad game years due to drought or bitter winters. Fish populations fluctuated naturally. Poor weather disrupted spawning runs and Great Lakes storms prevented fishing in late fall. And drought, pests, or early frosts could kill or limit corn crops. Any such failure of one component of the system obviously increased reliance on the others. In this sense, there had never been a single, "normal" subsistence cycle. There were only series of contingencies as annual variations shaped food procurement. The refugee centers suffered these normal fluctuations, but in the centers, precisely because they were in marginal agricultural and overcrowded hunting areas, resource depletion compounded the usual seasons of scarcity. From necessity, the Algonquians came to rely on a narrower range of resources.

By virtually all French accounts, it was corn and fish that made the refugee concentrations possible outside of the Illinois country. Along the Great Lakes there was no concentration of refugees where the fisheries and the potential for corn agriculture did not coincide. According to the Jesuits, the people of Chequamegon lived only on corn and fish. At Green Bay corn was the Potawatomi protection against the famine "that is only too common in these regions." The land cleared for cornfields stretched for three leagues around the French post at Michilimackinac, and at both Green Bay and Michilimackinac the French relied on Indian surpluses for their own corn supply.⁷³

⁷² For storage of food, see *Lettre du découvreur à un de ses associés*... 29 sept. 1680, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:36–37. De Gannes (Deliette) *Memoir*, *IHC*, 23:310–14; Thwaites (ed.), *Hennepin's A New Discovery*, 154; *JR* 54:223, *JR* 51:27; *JR* 57:265; *JR* 55:111; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:143–48, 168. Sufficient corn was available at Michilimackinac and Green Bay for sale to the French; see Le Clercq *Memoir* and Joutel's *Journal*, both in Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 1:128, 2:228–29.

⁷³ Perrot, *Memoir*, 120; La Potherie, *History*, 305; *JR* 54:151, 166; Thwaites (ed.), *Hennepin's A New Discovery*, 116; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:146–48. For Michilimackinac, see "Journey of Dollier and Galinee," 207; and "The Memoir of Lamothe Cadillac" in Quaife (ed.), *The Western Country*, 12–15; and Letter of Cadillac, Aug. 3, 1695, in E. M. Sheldon, *The Early History of Michigan from the First Settlement to 1815* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1956), 74; Narrative of... Occurrences in 1694, *NYCD* 9:587. For Green Bay, see *JR*

Culturally, the consumption of corn and the idea of security were closely intertwined. As Perrot noted:

The kinds of food which the savages like best and which they make the most effort to obtain are the Indian corn, the kidney bean, and the squash. If they are without these, they think they are fasting, no matter what abundance of meat and fish they have in their stores, the Indian corn being to them what bread is to the French.⁷⁴

This need for corn prompted these fleeing and desperate peoples to seek arable lands in unpromising regions where agriculture yielded only a tenuous subsistence. The skilled Huron and Petun horticulturalists who fled into the Lake Superior region went well beyond the climatic edge of the reliable 160-day growing season needed for corn agriculture. There were, however, pockets of land where microclimates suitable for agriculture existed. These areas offered 140-day growing seasons that made agriculture risky but possible. At each of these pockets along southern Lake Superior and northern Lake Michigan – Chequamegon, Keweenaw, Michilimackinac, and Sault Sainte Marie – refugees eventually settled. Farther south, at Green Bay, the line of refugee villages hugged almost exactly the edges of the 160-day growing season. Because the refugees lived along the margins of the lands where corn could be grown, however, crop failures were a constant possibility. Agriculture, particularly at Chequamegon and Michilimackinac, ran great risks of late-spring and early-fall frosts. Repeated losses of corn crops at Michilimackinac in the 1690s helped to prompt the eventual abandonment of that place by the Ottawas and the Huron-Petuns. At Green Bay harvests were more certain, but the harvest failed there in 1675. It appears, too, that the crop failures like those at Michilimackinac later in the century may also have occurred at Green Bay, where the French Intendant Raudot claimed that corn no longer provided much security to the Fox, Mascoutens, and Kickapoos.⁷⁵

With the precariousness of corn growing and the large populations the

56:121; *JR* 57:265–67. For evidence that Indians regarded fish and corn as necessary staples, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 237, and Narrative of . . . Occurrences, 1695, *NYCD* 9:606.

⁷⁴ Perrot, *Memoir*, 102.

⁷⁵ A vivid graphic representation of how village sites related to climatic zones is available in Helen Hornbeck Tanner (ed.), *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 20–21. The climate appears to have grown colder and moister beginning about 1400 A.D.—David Baerreis, Reid Bryson, and John Kutzbach, “Climate and Culture in the Western Great Lakes Region,” *Mid-Continental Journal of Archaeology* 1 (1976): 52. For crop losses, see Narrative of . . . Occurrences . . . 1695, *NYCD* 9:607; *JR* 60:199; Antoine Raudot, “Memoir Concerning the Different Indian Nations of North America,” in W. Vernon Kinietz, *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965); Cadillac’s Account of Detroit, Sept. 25, 1702, *MPHC*, 33:138.

fisheries became a critical resource. François Dollier de Casson and René de Bréhaut de Galinée claimed that the fisheries alone could support 10,000 persons at Michilimackinac. And Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac, was only slightly more conservative when he claimed that fish alone could support most of the 6,000–7,000 Indians there. At Green Bay, the French were more restrained in their claims. They thought the net fisheries, snagging as they did fish, diving birds, and waterfowl on their flyways, sufficed for three months' subsistence, and this apparently did not include the sturgeon taken in the spring at fishing weirs or the fall catch of herring, which, smoked and stored, fed people over the winter. Father André in November 1672 found the Potawatomi cabins at Chouskouabika so full of nets and herring that he could hardly enter them.⁷⁶

The fisheries tended to be more reliable than agriculture because the Algonquians were not at the margins of the fisheries but at their centers. All the great concentrations of refugee population on the Great Lakes were located at the best fishing sites on Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. Michilimackinac, the longest lived of these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlements, was, in Algonquian terms, the "native country" of the fish themselves. Yet fishing also remained a precarious endeavor that demanded precise skills and a suitable technology that not all refugees possessed. Those tribes who did fish extensively were at the mercy of the weather. Storms during spawning season, or a warm winter and weak ice, could doom a fishery. Fisheries at their most successful could provide only seasonal abundance. Algonquian techniques of drying could preserve the fall catch of herring and whitefish through the winter, but the yields of the spring runs of sturgeon could not be preserved long during the warm and humid summers.⁷⁷

The hunt, the last major element in the food cycle of the refugee centers, was the least important in terms of yield, but still a critical seasonal resource and the last defense against famine. In most years the largely hunting peoples regularly resorted to fishermen and horticulturalists for food, but in

⁷⁶ La Potherie, *History*, 305. *JR* 54:151, 167; Thwaites (ed.), *Hennepin's A New Discovery*, 116; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:146–48. For Michilimackinac, see "Journey of Dollier and Galinée," 207; and "The Memoir of Lamothe Cadillac" in Quaipe (ed.), *The Western Country*, 12–15; and Letter of Cadillac, Aug. 3, 1695, in Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 74; Narrative of . . . Occurrences in 1694, *NYCD* 9:587. For Green Bay, see *JR* 56:121; *JR* 57:265–67.

⁷⁷ Charles Cleland, "The Inland Shore Fishery of the Northern Great Lakes: Its Development and Importance in Prehistory," *American Antiquity* 47 (1982): 761–84, particularly map on 765; For quotation, see *JR* 55:159–61. The Bell site, an early historic Fox village, shows numerous fish remains, but most of those came from rivers and from smaller lakes near the Fox village. Paul W. Parmalee "Vertebrate Remains from the Bell Site, Winnebago County, Wisconsin," *The Wisconsin Archeologist*, NS 44 (March 1963): 62. For lack of ability to use canoes, see *JR* 58:63. La Potherie, *History*, 2:20.



This sketch by Decard de Granville shows Indian fishing techniques and equipment on the Great Lakes about 1700. (New York Public Library)

years when crops or fisheries failed only hunting and gathering stood between the Algonquians and starvation. The anomaly of hunters clustering on overcrowded lands, whose major attraction is fisheries that the hunters themselves do not efficiently exploit is explained as soon as the context is broadened. Corn and fish sustained large settlements, and around these settlements hunters came for trade and protection. Around the horticultural villagers who relied heavily on the fisheries, therefore, were other villagers, some horticultural, some not, who relied more heavily on the hunt. This pattern predated the fur trade, but the fur trade reinforced it.⁷⁸

This combination of marginal agriculture, sometimes precarious fishing, and the clustering of hunters for defense and trade set the stage for environmental disaster. As hunters depleted game around the refugee centers, hunger and famine ensued when the fisheries or the corn harvest failed. Pierre Esprit Radisson and the Huron-Petuns endured such a famine. Five hundred died, and hunger continued into the summer of 1661, when Father Menard died trying to reach the Huron-Petuns. In 1670 the Jesuits found the Potawatomis and other tribes of Green Bay proper pinched with hunger. The Mascoutens, Fox, and other outlying villagers complained of hunger during the 1670s. Even in the best years, the surplus stored from horticulture was relatively small. In 1671, Father Allouez claimed that a family with ten or twelve bags of corn considered itself wealthy. The Potawatomis might strive to fill their cabins with herring, but by late winter the fish were gone and they anxiously awaited the coming of the sturgeon.⁷⁹

Winter became a time of particular horror. Those groups that did not fish extensively regularly departed on winter hunts, but when corn and fish were abundant, the fishing peoples preferred to remain in their villages taking what game they could obtain nearby. By staying home they avoided the prolonged winter hunts that had become the most dangerous point in the refugee subsistence cycle. To embark on a winter hunt was to leave stored

⁷⁸ The tribes who did not fish have been cited previously. The Ojibwa groups around Chequamegon, Keweenaw, Green Bay, and Sault Sainte Marie usually did not plant crops. The Fox, who did plant crops, also relied heavily on hunting, Parmelee, "Vertebrate Remains," *Wisconsin Archeologist*, 65. For game animals at each location, see *ibid.*, 65, and James E. Fitting, "Patterns of Acculturation at the Straits of Mackinac," in Charles Cleland (ed.), *Cultural Change and Continuity: Essays in Honor of James B. Griffin* (New York: Academic Press, 1976).

⁷⁹ For the Radisson account, see Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 131–34; and for death of Father Menard, *JR* 48:127–37. Exact dates are hard to determine from the Radisson manuscript; Adams dates the starving winter of 1661–62, but the *Jesuit Relations* clearly date it as 1660–61. That this was the same winter seems certain because both accounts have it followed by a Feast of the Dead with the Sioux. *JR* 46:143. For other accounts of famine diets, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 102–03; *JR* 48:119; *JR* 50:177; Adams (ed.), *Radisson*, 130–33; *JR* 46:139–43; *JR* 48:119, 261–65; *JR* 51:171. For Green Bay in 1670, see *JR* 54:203, 207, 213. For Mascoutens, Fox, etc., see *JR* 59:229. For Allouez's claim, see *JR* 55:111.

supplies behind; without pack animals and with canoes useless on frozen streams or lakes, only small amounts of corn and fish could be carried on the journey. Echoes of disasters on the winter hunt reverberate through *The Jesuit Relations* and other early French sources. Jacques Marquette, at the beginning of his Mississippi voyage of 1673, reported that late fall and winter, when they moved into their hunting camps, was when the Mascoutens, Miamis, and Kickapoos most feared famine, and he later described the fatigues of such hunts as being “almost impossible to Frenchmen.” Father Allouez, however, did endure them. He accompanied eighty cabins of Miamis and some Shawnees who were reduced to a famine diet of such roots as the women could grub as they staggered through half-frozen marshlands. He claimed later that such experiences were the common expectation of hunters. The Miamis survived their ordeal. But other hunters starved when game failed them and they could not get back to the food caches they had made. Starvation and hunger on the hunt were never predictable. In the winter of 1675–76, during a lull in the Iroquois wars, sixty-five Mississaugas starved to death north of Lake Erie, while several days away the Ottawas enjoyed abundant game.⁸⁰

Such disasters were not the simple exigencies of the hunting life; they were the special problems of refugees crowded into lands which could not sustain the hunting pressure put upon them. Hunters eventually eliminated large game from the vicinity of the refugee centers. According to the Baron de Lahontan, no large game existed within twenty leagues of Michilimackinac by 1688, and this is supported by archaeological excavations which show few remains of large mammals in village middens. By 1675 the French noted

⁸⁰ For hunting patterns, see Fox: *JR* 54:223; *JR* 58:47–49; Miamis: *JR* 54:23; *JR* 68:63; *JR* 59:225, 171; Perrot, *Memoir*, 109, 118–19. Le Clercq says the Illinois hunted in large village groups. LeClercq Memoir in Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 1:102. According to Margry (*Découvertes*, 1:460), La Salle said the Illinois hunted by families “ou par tribus” meaning, apparently, clans. Each party consisted of 200 to 300 persons. By 1699 hunting parties composed only of active men and women departed from the winter camps, *JR* 65:73, 83. For variable hunting patterns of fishing peoples, see *JR* 51:29; *JR* 54:203–05, 211, 213; *JR* 55:191; *JR* 57:265–67, 291–93; *JR* 58:39, 63, 289; *JR* 55:43; *JR* 59:165–67. *JR* 57:249–55, 261; *JR* 61:103–05. The demographic composition of these parties changed over time. The large hunting party reported by the Baron de Lahontan in 1688 probably included women and children, Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:143. In the same area during 1685–86, the Iroquois had captured children as well as adults when they raided winter hunting camps. Denonville to Seignelay, June 12, 1686, *NYCD* 9:293–94. La Potherie, who wrote in the early eighteenth century, indicated largely all-male hunts occurred out of Michilimackinac in the 1690s, La Potherie, *History*, 1:281–82.

For Marquette's statements, see “Jolliet and Marquette” in Kellogg, (ed.), *Narratives*, 233–34, and *JR* 59:171. For Allouez, see *JR* 62:207, 208. For starvation of smaller hunting bands, see Perrot, *Memoir*, 103, and La Potherie, *History*, 1:280. For praise of Fox hunting grounds, see *JR* 54:219. For starvation and hunger among the Fox, see *JR* 59:229. For death of Mississaugas, see *JR* 60:215, 229. The Mississaugas died on lands apparently often hunted by the Iroquois.

that deer grew noticeably more abundant as one traveled away from the Potawatomi villages on Green Bay. Buffalo had markedly diminished on the lands near the Great Village of the Kaskaskias by 1680.⁸¹

Game remained most abundant in the lands the Iroquois had emptied. These, as French accounts make clear, were war grounds where all who entered were in danger. Hunting nations confined to relatively small areas thus depleted game locally, even though abundance might exist just beyond them. Normal cultural controls for conserving game seem to have failed when several nations competed for, or were compressed into, the same hunting area. Baron de Lahontan and French traders mention hunting practices which took care to spare breeding stock during hunts, but such methods proved inadequate in the 1670s and 1680s. One of the Iroquois complaints against the Illinois was that they slaughtered all the beaver and failed to leave any breeding stock.⁸²

The refugee centers became barometers of Algonquian fortunes: They swelled with defeat and shrank with victory. The requirements of defense acted as a centripetal force, holding the refugees around the centers, while hunger and disease, acting as centrifugal forces, pushed them out. The price of such defensive concentrations was very often misery. Their residents endured the centers only because the alternatives were worse. Those who escaped them did not seek to return. Three Shawnees, probably from the Great Village of the Kaskaskias, summarized the everyday horrors faced by the refugees. Captured and adopted by the peoples of Saint Louis Bay on the Gulf of Mexico during La Salle's 1682 foray down the Mississippi, they showed no desire to return to the *pays d'en haut*. When the French offered them a chance to return to their villages, the Shawnees replied:

They were not unnatural enough to abandon their wives and children; . . . moreover, being in the most fertile, healthy, and peaceful

⁸¹ For initial hunting on Green Bay and for Summer Island as a summer hunting station, see David S. Brose, "Summer Island III: An Early Historic Site in the Upper Great Lakes," *Historical Archaeology* 4 (1970): 24. Michilimackinac, Sault Sainte Marie and surrounding regions were praised as good hunting areas in the late 1660s and early 1670s, Perrot, *Memoir*, 221; *JR* 50:263. Compare this to Lahontan's statements in Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:148; Perrot, *Memoir*, 120, and Cadillac Memoir in Quaife, *The Western Country*, 15, and Fitting, "Patterns of Acculturation," 325. For deer diminishing near Potawatomis, see *JR* 59:173. By 1699 St. Cosme reported a dearth of meat in the area almost all the time, "Voyage of St. Cosme" in Kellogg (ed.), *Narratives*, 343. For buffalo, see Voyage de M. de La Salle à la riviere Mississippi, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:95.

⁸² For neutral grounds, see Lettre de Cavalier de la Salle, 11 aoust 1682, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:236–37, and Lettre du Découvreur à un de ses associes, 1679 – 29 sept. 1680, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:59–60, and Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:318–20. The area around the Detroit River and Lake Erie that Father Henri Nouvel described in 1676 was an old neutral ground that was now being hunted, *JR* 60:219–21, 227. For attempts to conserve game, see Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:82, 114; Mémoire que la direction . . . 16 avril 1703, AN, C11A, v. 24. For Iroquois complaints of Illinois, see Du Chesneau's Memoir

country in the world, they would be devoid of sense to leave it and expose themselves to be tomahawked by the Illinois or burnt by the Iroquois on their way to another where the winter was insufferably cold, the summer without game, and ever in war.⁸³

In the 1690s, the horrors of the *pays d'en haut* eased as the French and Algonquians put the Iroquois on the defensive. French and Algonquian invasions of Iroquoia burned villages, killed warriors, and disrupted subsistence cycles, leaving the Iroquois hungry and poor. As the losses of the Five Nations mounted, the Iroquois ineffectually sought English aid. The Iroquois wars, sometimes as part of larger imperial wars, sometimes as a separate struggle, continued until 1701, when the exhausted Iroquois sought peace with Canada and its allies. The result was the so-called Grand Settlement of 1701 which established a general peace. The Iroquois essentially abandoned hunting territories west of Detroit and agreed to allow Ontario to arbitrate their conflicts with his allies. The Iroquois promised to remain neutral in all future Anglo-French wars.⁸⁴

The triumph of the alliance over the Iroquois during the 1690s meant the decline of the very communities that had produced the alliance. The refugee centers, protected from Iroquois attacks, disbanded; their inhabitants moved into the more fertile and temperate lands opened up by Iroquois decline. Neither the alliance nor the common European-Algonquian world forged in these centers died, however. They continued to grow.

on Western Indians, Nov. 13, 1681, *NYCD* 9:162–63; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 1:82.

⁸³ Cavalier's Account of La Salle's Voyage to the Mouth of the Mississippi . . . , Cox, *Journeys of La Salle*, 277, 283.

⁸⁴ For the end to these wars and the Grand Settlement, see Richter, "War and Culture," 546–53.