

bands in the past often set themselves up as "chiefs," but to what extent they functioned as such is hard to assess. In any case, generally the position did not pass on to their children.

In sum, "ascribed" status, a status one is born into other than age or sex, is virtually non-existent among the Naskapi, and there is no way of holding even "achieved" status beyond the period of demonstrated ability through actual performance. Substantially the same appears to be true of other hunters. It applies even to the Australians in spite of their elaborate formal social structure, except that they presumably achieve a more automatic additional measure of respect with advancing age. Apparently the relations of production which characterize these societies means status is non-functional in the most immediate day-to-day sense of helping them wrest a living from nature. As to how this actually operates, one gets the impression that it arises from the fact that individuals retain a basic independence, a control over the entire source of their subsistence, which they lose with specialization and the division of labor. True, a person cannot exist alone and is utterly dependent on the group, but it is a direct dependence upon the entire group, not an indirect and somewhat obscure dependence upon one or another section or class within the group which can exert special control over him or her. It is this which makes it possible for the individual not to "endure in the least those who seem desirous of assuming superiority over the others."

What has not been so widely noted as the egalitarianism among hunters is the fact that it is combined with a marked acceptance of, and latitude for, individuality. As mentioned above, this struck me forcibly when working with the Naskapi. True, it has often been commented upon for the Eskimo, and one also finds inferences of it in monographic material on other such cultures. In contradiction to a commonly encountered inference that egalitarianism among "primitive" peoples involves being pressed into a set mold by stern necessity, so that egalitarianism is achieved at the expense of individuality, one meets not merely a "broad-minded" "tolerance" for idiosyncracies among the Naskapi, but a truly positive acceptance of them, as long as they do not threaten the existence of the group.

4. Montagnais Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization

During the sixteenth century, the St. Lawrence valley was the scene of French and English competition for furs, especially for beaver which was used in the manufacture of hats. Sporadic trade of furs between native peoples and European fishermen was old, possibly preceding Columbus's first voyage; for when Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence in 1534, the people he met were familiar with European vessels, products, and interest in furs. By midcentury, ships were coming to the area for the sole purpose of trading, and during the latter part of the century several companies competed unsuccessfully for a monopoly of the trade.

In 1559, a permanent French trading post was established at Tadoussac, downriver from Quebec, chosen by Champlain to be the headquarters of New France and founded in 1608. Three Rivers, further up the St. Lawrence, was established in 1617. Champlain was welcomed by the Algonkians and Montagnais.* They saw in him an ally in their warfare with the Iroquois, who, armed with weapons obtained from the Dutch, were raiding north and west for furs. Champlain's main interest was in gaining

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*The anthropological term for the native population of the Labrador Peninsula, exclusive of the Eskimo, is "Montagnais-Naskapi." At times I shall use the simpler "Montagnais," a name applied by the French to the various groups that summered on the north shore of the St. Lawrence river. Like the Algonkians, the Montagnais are an Algonkian-speaking people.

