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Family Hunting Territories and  
Social Life of Various Al-  
gonkian Bands of the  
Ottawa Valley

BY  
F. G. Speck



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# Family Hunting Territories and Social Life of Various Algonkian Bands of the Ottawa Valley.

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## CHAPTER I.

### FAMILY HUNTING TERRITORIES OF THE TIMISKAMING INDIANS.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

Among the bands of Algonquins and Ojibwas in northern Ontario visited during the summer of 1913, chiefly in the interests of the Geological Survey of Canada, I spent some weeks with the Indians at the head of Lake Timiskaming, on the boundary between Ontario and the Province of Quebec.

These people are officially known as the Timiskaming band of Algonquins, numbering 241 in 1911, and located at their old headquarters in a village, North Timiskaming, 3 miles above where the Rivière des Quinze empties into Lake Timiskaming. The Timiskaming band has partially taken up farming through contact with French Canadians. Consequently the information obtained here is not of as high a grade as that secured from the Timagami band, which is of the same general type. The general results of my investigations up to this point warrant classifying the Timiskaming Indians as a branch of the Algonquin group, itself a subdivision of the Ojibwa. The Timiskaming people have, however, become greatly influenced by contact with the true Ojibwa only a few score miles to the west of them. This has resulted, through contact

and intermarriage, in the modification of some fundamental Algonquin characteristics, both in social and material life. The characteristic traits of the Algonquin group appear more genuinely in the Lac des Quinze band, about 25 miles east of the Timiskaming people, and also in the bands at the southern end of Lake Timiskaming, the Mattawa and Kipawa bands. In a general introductory paper which I am trying to prepare on the complicated ethnic affinities of the Algonkian bands to the north, more specific information will be presented on the inter-relations and areas of culture distribution of the different groups.

Although a collection of ethnological objects was made with accompanying data on material culture, especially decorative art, while visiting the Timiskaming people, this chapter will deal only with some phases of social organization. Timiskaming myths and folk-lore are published in another paper of this series. The chief object of my visit to this band was the investigation of the hunting territorial divisions which I have found to be so characteristic of all the northern tribes of the Algonkian stock so far visited.<sup>1</sup> I subsequently discovered that the Timiskaming Indians did not present so fruitful a field for these researches as the Timagami band of Ojibwa, where the family hunting territorial divisions and totemic clans exist side by side in the same group. For this reason I am referring the main discussion of this dual social classification to the third chapter of this paper, devoted to the Timagami band.

#### THE ALGONQUIN BANDS.

The Timiskaming Indians may, I feel safe in saying, be definitely classified as a modified branch of the Algonquin group of the Ojibwa (Algonquin being a tribal designation distinct from, but included in, the term Algonkian, which refers to the whole linguistic stock). The modification mentioned is due to a secondary influence of the Ojibwa neighbours on the west and northwest, namely the Timagami and Matachewan bands.

<sup>1</sup> This statement covers the Montagnais, Naskapi, Cree, Ojibwa, Algonquin, Têtes de Boules, Penobscot, Micmac, and Wabanaki.

The Timiskaming people call themselves *Sagi'waxn'icana'bi* "Head-of-the-lake people," from their location and ancient village at the head of Lake Timiskaming. Some forty years ago there was a Hudson's Bay post there, and archaeological finds on the point at the hamlet of North Timiskaming indicate an aboriginal headquarters at the same place. The term Timiskaming itself, according to native testimony, is a corruption of Algonquin *Temia'gamin* "deep lake". The name of the present headquarters of the band is *Oba'djonasa'gin* "narrow current at mouth of river," which describes the topography of the village at North Timiskaming. Lake Timiskaming bears the name *Oba'djiwana'η sagahi'gan* "narrowed-current lake," referring chiefly to the topography at Ville Marie farther down the lake, where there was also an ancient native headquarters and later a Hudson's Bay post.

The Timiskaming Indians regard as belonging to their own dialectic and cultural group: the Lake Abitibi Indians, *Abi't-ibi'anicana'bi* "Blue-water people"; the Grand Lake Victoria Indians, *Katci'sa'gin ani'cana'bi* "Big-outlet people"; the Quinze Lake Indians, *Ki'no'ηgani'cana'bi* "Long-sand-point people"; the River Desert and Maniwaki Indians, *Tegazi'bi'η ani'cana'bi* "Hungry-river people"; the Mattawa Indians, *Matawasi'bi ani'cana'bi* "Mouth-of-river people"; and the various bands along the Ottawa river, known as *Ktci'si'bi ani'cana'bi* "Big-river people." This embraces practically the whole of the division classified as Algonquin. Most of these bands, it may be added, possess the same general distinctions in material culture, except that the more northerly bands, of whom the Timiskaming constitute one, had no agriculture, mat-covered wigwams, porcupine quill work, ash-splint basketry, and rush matting, as the necessary materials are absent in their latitude.

#### HUNTING TERRITORIES.

The social units composing the band are the families, which consist of individuals related by descent and blood together with other women married to the men of the family. These

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See Phonetic Key at end of paper for meaning of characters used.

families are patronymic, the family name providing a surname for the group. Individuals, of course, may have special nicknames derived from some personal characteristic, some deed, or an animal, but the classifying name of identity seems to be the family surname, the nickname being a sort of secondary modifier.

The matter, however, which constitutes the main bond of union and interest in these groups is the family hunting territory, in which all the male members share the right of hunting and fishing. These hunting "lots" or territories (*nok'i'wak'i'* "hunting ground") are more or less fixed tracts of country whose boundaries are determined by certain rivers, ridges, lakes, or other natural landmarks, such as swamps and clumps of cedars or pines. Hunting outside of one's inherited territory was punishable occasionally by death. More often, however, trespass was punished by conjuring against the offender's life or health. Each family, as a rule, had some shaman in its ranks who could be called upon to work malefic influence upon a member of another family who was known to have intruded. In this way we can see how, in the community of old, a much involved system of cross-conjuring must have grown up, often, as the Indians themselves state, causing more or less of rivalry and feuds between certain families. Sickness in general came to be attributed to these sources, it is claimed. Permission, however, could be obtained by a man to hunt in another's territory. This happened frequently as an exchange of courtesies between families when the game supply of one or the other had become impoverished. These privileges were, nevertheless, only temporary, except in a few cases where they were obtained through marriage. It was customary, for instance, in case a family had a poor season on its own domain, for it to obtain a temporary grant of a certain lake or stream from its neighbour, so as to tide over until a better season. When it was necessary in travelling to pass through another family territory, permission was generally sought at the owner's headquarters before passing on, and if by necessity game had been killed to sustain life, the pelts were carried to the owners or delivered to them by some friend. This gave the proprietors the right in the future to do the same in the territory of their trespassers.

These arrangements were matters of tradition and were remembered in detail by the families concerned.

The rights in the hunting territories were inherited paternally. Occasionally, to adjust matters, an old man would subdivide his district among several sons, thus creating new family groups, though, of course, these would recognize mutual privileges to a certain extent. For the most part, the territories were fairly rigid and permanent. Only a few changes are remembered to have taken place within the range of tradition.

It is interesting to note that the large and attractive islands in Lake Timiskaming were common property, or more properly reserves, to be occupied and hunted on when the families came together in the spring for their social reunion. One of these, known as Chief island, is called *Ogi-ma'mini'si* "Chief island," and was the property of the *Mazi'nigi`jik* family, from which the band chief was most frequently chosen. Here the chief had a regular camp and many families would, upon occasion, camp around him, using the islands, which teemed with game, for their supplies while at the gathering. The hunts which took place at these times were communal, bands of hunters driving the game from the centre of the island to the shores, where hunters were posted waiting in canoes. Then the meat obtained would become common provender for the assembly.

The chief, *ogi-ma'*, was a man chosen for life, generally from the *Mazi'nigi`jik* family, on account of his strength and wisdom.

Economically these family territories were regulated in a very wise and interesting manner. The game was kept account of very closely, so that the proprietors knew about how abundant each kind of animal was, and hence could regulate the killing so as not to deplete the stock. Beaver were made the object of the most careful "farming," the numbers of occupants, old and young, to each "cabin" being kept count of. In certain districts, moose, or caribou, were protected during one year, in other districts the next year. The killing of game was regulated by each family according to its own rules.

Marriage was a matter determined entirely by the old people of the families. The wife went to her husband's family and lived there. The children then belonged definitely to the father's family, and inherited their hunting rights in the

paternal territory. In cases of poor seasons at home it was, however, frequent for the husband to visit his wife's people and hunt, perhaps for several winters, on his father-in-law's grounds.

When the male claimants to a territory became extinct, it was divided up among the relatives in other family groups.

It would have been desirable to obtain some explanations or myths concerning the origins of these bands, but it is safe to state that none now exist, as I questioned the elders of each group and family.

Furthermore, these family divisions are not primarily concerned with animal totemism, which exists here also, although, as will be seen further on, the totemic descent being paternal, there will be a more or less permanent association between the hunting territory bands and certain totems. The main point is, however, that the hunting territory groups have developed by inheritance through individuals, irrespective of totemic communalism, and that the hunting territory names or titles, as we might call them, have also grown out of what originally were personal nicknames. This will appear more clearly in my presentation of the Timagami material. No taboos of diet or killing are found concerning these family groups. They are purely social and economic. Again, as regards the names, it might be added that some can not be definitely translated because of their great antiquity. Moreover, some of them have originated in child's talk, for example *Ogu'cen*, which is thought to be a child's pronunciation for *ogwu'si's* "son." Personal nicknames are very often derived from such expressions of children learning to talk.

In the above brief résumé I have defined the most important facts that I learned regarding these hunting territories among the Timiskaming people. As the main object of this chapter is not to define or discuss the phenomenon in detail, but to present the data relating specifically to this band, I will add the actual facts secured from members of the different families themselves. It is my hope in the future to fill in the gaps as far as possible, listing geographically the hunting territories and families in the various bands through a large portion of northern Canada.



In the accompanying table, the number in the first column refers to the correspondingly numbered area in the subjoined map of hunting territories; in the second column is given the family designation or title; in the third, its explanation; the fourth gives the totem, to be discussed later; while the fifth column gives the general bounds of the territory.

In the first group, comprising seven families, are the original constituents of the Timiskaming band, so far as is now known. Some have about lost their identity through intermarriage with outsiders.

In the second group of families are given those who have become more or less affiliated with the Timiskaming band, though not originally members of it. Such attachments, due to migration and intermarriage, are always going on in these communities and must be reckoned with in any social study. Some of these families, as is noted, came originally from the Matachewan band of Ojibwas, others have come from Abitibi stock, still others from the Timagami country. The pressure on the Timiskaming territory seems to have been constantly from the west, the result of the continuous northward and eastward drift of Ojibwas from the Lake Huron and Lake Superior regions. This scheme provides us with a concrete and presumably fairly accurate illustration of how territorial encroachments occur among the natives.

#### TOTEMS.

In the third column is given the totem. This represents the clan organization, which is of secondary importance in the social organization of these Indians. The family territorial groups form a much more active bond of kinship than the clan relationship. For this reason, considering the weakness of the clan institution among the other Algonquins eastward, it would seem natural to attribute the clan system here to the influence of neighbouring Ojibwas, with whom there has been considerable intermarriage.

The clan here is a group with paternal descent and the exogamic regulation. The emblem of the clan is an animal, which is called *nto'tem* "my kin," the familiar term employed by

ethnologists. The totem is simply regarded by these Indians as an emblem of a group of people, related through their fathers, who may be encountered even in different tribes. Thus, the Timiskaming and Timagami people of the same totem consider themselves as distant relatives. There are no religious taboos entertained in connexion with the totem, nor is descent traced from it. The idea underlying the totem here seems to be, in brief, the idea of relationship between individuals who have inherited, through their fathers, a certain secondary nationality in the tribe, the emblem of which is the particular animal or totem. As may be inferred from the paternal reckoning in both the totemic and territorial groups, each hunting territory remains permanently in the same totemic group.

In the Timiskaming band are three totems distributed through the families: the Kingfisher, *ogi'cki'ma'nisi*; the Caribou, *at-i'k'*; the Rattlesnake, *cici'kwe*. The totems of some of the other families now extinct in the male line are not known.

The same totems are found among the Timagami Indians. The fact that the families in both bands are related by marriage and descent, leads one to feel that the Timiskaming totems may have been derived directly from encroaching Ojibwa families in comparatively recent times.

Group I. Families and Hunting Territories of the Timiskaming Indians.

No.	Family Name.	Translation.	Totem.	Hunting District.	Remarks.
1	Masi'ni'gi'jik	"Striped coloured sky"	Kingfisher.	West of Lake Timiskaming between Matabitohuan river, Rabbit lake, and Ottetail river.	The leading family of this band usually furnishes the chief.
2	Wa'bi'gi'jik.	"White sky."	Caribou.	Northwest of Lake Timiskaming, basin of Wabi creek.	
3	Wadewe'sis.	"Game animals hunt." (?)	Kingfisher.	East of Dawson point north of Quinse river to outlet of Quinse lake.	Also known as <i>Ma'kade'nis-i</i> "Black Man," on account of his dark colour.
4	Ogu'cen.	"Son" (derivation).	(?)	East of Lake Timiskaming, south of Quinse river to line of Ville Marie.	Family extinct in male line.
5	Ka'tci'dji.	Derivation of "small."	(?)	South of <i>Ogu'cen</i> almost to Kipawa river.	He had a brother of same name belonging to Matachewan band (family also extinct).
6	Wa'beni'o'a'bi	"White Indian."	Kingfisher.	South of Wa'bi'gi'jik to Bay lake.	
7	Kitai'bi'en.	(?) "Big Pierre," or possibly derived from baby talk.	Kingfisher.	West of Lake Timiskaming to Montreal river and Bay lake.	These two were brothers who had received share of father's territory.

*Group II. Encroaching Families from Neighbouring Bands Who Came to be More or Less Identified by Intermarriage or Associated with Timiskaming Band.<sup>1</sup>*

8	Kane'oj'o.	"Tomtit."	Loon.	West of Montreal river and Bay lake.	Timagami band, brother of Wa'bi-mo'k'wa.
9	Ka'bimi'gwun'e.	"Row of feathers."	Loon.	Montreal river west to Rib lake, White Bear lake, and Rabbit lake. Line not definite.	Son-in-law of Wa'bi-mo'k'wa, to whom this territory first belonged, of Timagami band.
10	Wa'bi-mo'k'wa.	"White bear."	Loon.	From Ka'bimi'gwun'e west to Lake Timagami, though properly including Kabimi'gwun'e.	One of the leading families of the Timagami band.
11	Cs'bedi'a.	Probably corruption of Jean Baptiste; possibly derived from baby talk.	(?)	West of Wa'bi'gi'jik almost to Montreal river.	Belonged properly to Matachewan band.
12	Noca'nto.	Derivation of "nursing" in child's talk.	(?)	East of Quinze lake.	This man was of Abitibi origin, known also as Joseph Rogers.
37	Ka'tei-dji.	Derivation of "small."		West of Blanche river and Pound lake.	Belong to Matachewan band with headquarters at Elk lake. This band is a kind of mixed Algonquin-Ojibwa band whose affinities are not well understood. No. 37 not to be confused with No. 5 of same name; it is not certain just how they were related.
38	Twen.	Possibly corruption of Antoine.		East of Elk lake and Montreal river.	
39	Wa'wi'e'ski-zik.	"Round eye."		West of Elk lake and Montreal river.	Belongs to Matachewan band. This man was a sort of trespasser; his territory was not well defined and he often gave the other bands trouble.

<sup>1</sup> The Timagami band has its headquarters at Bear island, Lake Timagami, about 80 miles southwest. The Matachewan band has its headquarters at Lake Abitibi, about 160 miles north. At each of these is a post of the Hudson's Bay Company.