

VOLUME 15

# Northeast

BRUCE G. TRIGGER

*Volume Editor*



p. 743  
#11

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

WASHINGTON

1978

HRA012209

# Southwestern Chippewa

ROBERT E. RITZENTHALER

The Chippewa (<sup>1</sup>chīpəwô), or Ojibwa (ô<sup>1</sup>jībwa), was the largest tribe north of Mexico in 1972. Formerly they lived over an extensive area, mainly north of Lakes Superior and Huron. Since the seventeenth century they have expanded into western Saskatchewan, and south into what are now the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota, as well as into southern Ontario. An Algonquian-speaking tribe,\* their closest cultural relatives are the Cree, to the north, and the Potawatomi and Ottawa, to the south. With these last two, in the nineteenth century, some of the Chippewa formed a loose confederacy known as The Three Fires.

The first historical mention of the Chippewa-Ojibwa was in a listing of the bands in the Upper Great Lakes area in 1640 (JR 18:230). This information, which had been obtained by Jean Nicolle on his 1634 voyage to the Winnebago, included no mention of any groups farther west than the Saulteaux, then at the Sault Sainte Marie, and the Noquet and Mantouek of the nearby Upper Peninsula of Michigan, though a secondhand account of 1658 associated the Mantouek with the Eastern Dakota (JR 44:248), and there may have been Chippewa fishing camps along the southern shore of Lake Superior during this period. After 1679, however, when they entered into a truce with the Dakota, the Chippewa established villages at Chequamegon and Keweenaw bays and began their gradual expansion to the west (Hickerson 1962:65-67, 96). The following groups, and there may have been others, are recorded for the mid-seventeenth century: Ousasouarini, Outchougai, Achiligouan, Amikwa, Mississauga, Saulteaux, Noquet, Mantouek (JR 18:229-230), Nikikouek (JR 33:149), Ojibwa, and Marameg (JR 54:133). Some of the less well known of these groups, which lived along the eastern and northeastern shore of Georgian Bay prior to 1650, have also been classified as Ottawa and it is possible that some of them were Nipissing. There are simply not enough data to resolve this problem.

The bulk of the Chippewa-Ojibwa population at the time of contact was in the present province of Ontario, and the same was true in 1972. Their numbers in 1650 have been estimated as 35,000 (Mooney 1928). Kroeber (1939:6-8), reviewing Mooney's work, allowed that fig-

ure to stand, but it seems low, reconstructed on the basis of 1970 numbers. The U.S. Bureau of the Census figure of 41,946 for Chippewa living in the United States in 1970 is reasonably firm. The Canadian population poses more of a problem. Canadian Indian Affairs figures for 1970 of enrolled "Treaty Indians" total nearly 64,000 (Ontario, 43,975; Manitoba, 14,187; Saskatchewan, 5,687), but perhaps only one-half of the Canadian Chippewa-Ojibwa were enrolled in 1972 and some enrollees were actually non-Indians (Edward S. Rogers, personal communication 1972). Thus, after doubling the number of Treaty Indians and reducing the figure by an arbitrary 8,000 to account for the non-Indians, a rough estimate of 120,000 is reached. Adding the U.S. Chippewa population, the total is about 160,000. Supposing this figure to be somewhere near the truth, there would have to be either a minimum of 100,000 at contact time or else a fantastic growth rate unique to the population dynamics of tribes in the Woodland area during the historic period (cf. "Southeastern Ojibwa," this vol.).

The settlement pattern in early historic times was that of numerous, widely scattered, small, autonomous bands. Thus the term "tribe" is applicable to the Chippewa-Ojibwa in terms of a common language and culture, but it does not apply in the political sense that an overall authority or unity was present. To a considerable extent this settlement pattern was dictated by their hunting-fishing-gathering type of economy, which required a large area to support few people.

## History

### *The Fur-Trade Period, 1670-1800*

The Chippewa-Ojibwa were deeply involved in the fur trade, especially during the eighteenth century, and were deeply affected by it. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the French and British established a series of trading posts in their country to engage in the lucrative business of supplying furs, particularly beaver for making hats, to the European market. The licensed trader or his staff exchanged European goods: firearms, metal implements and utensils, cloth, beads, and liquor for furs collected by the Indians. There was a rapid shift in material culture, from a stone-bone-wood-pottery complex of their own manufacture to the metal replace-

\* For the transcriptional system used in italicized Chippewa words, see the orthographic footnote in "Southeastern Ojibwa," this vol.