THE OHIO, THE INDIAN’S LAND

BY WILLIAM A. HUNTER*

THE armed contest for the Ohio, which began at Jumonville Glen on the morning of May 28, 1754—or at the Forks of the Ohio on April 16, though no shots were fired at the earlier encounter—was the military sequel to a diplomatic contest for the region. Behind this display of British and French power politics, however, had been waged the struggle between British and French traders for control of the area, a struggle highlighted by incidents like the Indian uprising of 1747 and the French and Indian attack upon the pro-British Indians at Pickawillany on June 21, 1752, which foreshadowed the later warfare.¹

But behind these phases of the Anglo-French rivalry was an older, more somber story of Indian warfare, of the conquest of the upper Ohio by the League of the Iroquois. The destruction of the Eries as a people, in 1654, had opened the upper Ohio to Iroquois attack; and thereafter Five Nations war parties devastated and depopulated the region.² Of the victims of these attacks we know but little:

History gives us no glimpse of them, nor of their end. Pots made by their women, however, are found in the cemeteries of seventeenth-century Seneca towns. The archaeology of the Ohio ... shows a large gap at this point, for the next later objects found belong to Iroquois and their wards of a century later. Archaeology provides a corpus delicti, and history finds the property of the deceased in the possession of the Five Nations.³

Among the survivors (other than captives) of this destruction were the fugitives known to history as Shawnees, some of whose


²George T. Hunt, The Wars of the Iroquois (Madison, 1940), 100-102.

³John Witthoft, unpublished manuscript (1951).
scattered bands drifted back to the Ohio in the eighteenth century.

By 1700 the upper Ohio region, westward into present Indiana, had become by conquest the hunting lands of the People of the Long House. Families and bands from all their divisions, and especially from the adjacent and powerful Seneca, drifted into the area and began to make small and scattered settlements. Aliquippa's Town, Logstown, Kuskuskies, and various "Mingo Cabins" appear in the records and on the maps. The growth of these somewhat detached colonies created the problem of their relation to the Iroquois Council at Onondaga, with a tendency on the part of the migrants to act independently, and an insistence on the part of the League that the status of the Ohioans was that of "warriors" or "hunters," and not that of "counsellors."

As time passed, this Iroquois population was supplemented, in growing numbers, by immigrants of another origin; for the upper Ohio area became increasingly the new home of displaced groups associated with and dependent upon the League. Chief among these were Shawnee bands who, on terms of uneasy amity with their former enemies, sifted in from the Susquehanna and other remote havens; and Delawares, more important numerically and historically, who moved in from eastern Pennsylvania, accompanied and followed by the traders whose business had become an essential part of these Indians' economy.

Although the precise official relation of the Iroquois migrants to the Onondaga Council might continue uncertain, some practical arrangements had to be made for these Ohio peoples. In consequence we find in the records of the early 1700's certain of the resident Iroquois cast in more or less definable roles: Tanagharisson, a Seneca, is referred to as "the Half King," and appears to have some sort of overall responsibility and a special interest in the Delawares; Scarroyady (Côté du ciel to the French, Monacatootha to the Shawnees), an Oneida, is concerned with the Shawnee settlers; Canajarera (Broken Kettle, Big Kettle), another Seneca, is associated with the Wyandots; Kaghsedaniunt (Belt of Wampum, White Thunder) is the keeper of the wam-

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4 Provincial Record, L, 436-437 (Colonial Records, V, 357-358); PR, M, 89 (CR, V, 478).

5 See PR, L, 425 (CR, V, 351) for a census of Ohio warriors in 1748. Further removals from the east undoubtedly increased the proportion of the Delaware population.
Among the dependent peoples, the Delawares, remote from their eastern relatives, also have resident officials; after 1752 Shingas is their "king," and Custaloga keeps their wampum. 6

These identifications of role are inadequate, and unfortunately must remain so. Like Alice through the looking glass, the white man gazed into the Indian world, and fancied what he saw there to be the counterpart of what he already knew; but, entering within, he found a world unexpectedly strange and unaccountably different. "Half King" is a European term whose deceptive connotations are not removed by saying, for example, that Tanagharisson was a "viceroy" of the League.

It is easy to say that an Indian "king" was neither a monarch nor an executive head, that he owned no land and had no subjects; this illustrates the ineptitude of the European designation, but it does not clarify it. The Indian was governed by customs rather than by persons. Furthermore, he lived in a society illiterate in the European sense, a society in which (at the time of which we are writing) a string of wampum served as token and reminder of a formal speech, and a patterned belt of wampum commemorated a diplomatic engagement. In this world the validity of a treaty was attested by the fact that it was held at one of the designated "council fires," and that of official communications by the fact that they passed between regularly authorized spokesmen—spokesmen who appear in our English records as "kings." 7

The authority of such a "king's" speeches derived from no principle of divine or constitutional right, but from the attitude of his constituents as determined in council. In this lies the explanation of some peculiarities of Indian treaties: the fact that an Indian "king" could not reply to a diplomatic proposal before first conferring with his counsellors; the repetition of a message on separate occasions to show that it expressed a firm attitude and not a passing whim; the indeterminate character of Indian diplomacy in general, with the struggle of white negotiators to obtain final, clearcut decisions from people to whom any question re-

6 It should be noted that the name forms given here are only a few of the many variants found in contemporary records.

7 This use of the word "king" provides a reasonable interpretation for Teedyuscung's otherwise fantastic assertions that the Five (Six) Nations had but one king, and that he was himself made king of ten nations (see Pennsylvania Archives, first series, II, 725; CR, VII, 199, 208, 213, 701).
mained, so long as it existed, a matter for discussion and reconsideration.

It may seem curious that we hear more of "kings" among the dependent Delawares than among the dominant Iroquois; but in fact this contrast, incongruous in European eyes, reflects the different organizations of these peoples, and the relationship between them.

The southern Delaware Indians (the name is geographical and European, these people having had no distinctive national name for themselves) seem to have been originally a number of autonomous bands, not joined like their northern Delaware relatives into loose confederacies, the Mahicans, Wappings, and Munsees. The records of William Penn's early land purchases, for example, show no knowledge of any central or overall Delaware authority; each band spoke for itself. The components of the League, on the other hand, speaking in the name of the Onondaga Council, gave an impression of unity stronger, perhaps, than the facts warranted.

The increasingly close, if not increasingly friendly, relations between these Delawares and the Five (or Six) Nations, however, called for some more general diplomatic arrangement on the part of the Delawares. The fact of Delaware dependence upon the Iroquois is a familiar one; but neither the date and manner of its origin nor its precise nature and extent is satisfactorily known to us. At a later date some Delawares charged that the Iroquois had gained their dominant position through trickery; but earlier accounts speak of conquest. Plausibly, the relationship was a consequence or concomitant of the Iroquois conquest of the Susquehannocks, which ended in 1675. So long as the Delawares lived upon their own lands their tributary status may have been felt but lightly; but when they sold these lands and moved onto those of the Five Nations, their subordinate relationship became more emphatic. The period of displacement probably saw the breakup of some Delaware bands and their absorption into larger groups, thus reducing the number of "kings"; the example of the Onondaga Council would suggest the establishment

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9 George T. Hunt, op. cit., 137-144.
of some kind of Delaware counterpart; and Provincial officials would find it convenient to deal with a "king" who spoke for a larger Delaware aggregate.

Before 1701 we hear of a "king" named Hithquoquean acting as diplomatic intermediary between the southern Delawares and the Iroquois; and in 1712, eleven years after the death of this "king," these same Delawares chose Alumapees (Sassoonan) head of the delegation which carried their tribute belts to Onondaga. As Alumapees' own "Schuylkill Indians" absorbed smaller bands, the Province found it increasingly convenient to deal with him as "king" or spokesman, though it is clear that he never acted in this role for the more northern bands, those involved in the "Walking Purchase." So, in 1718, "Sassoonan King of the Delaware Indians" headed the delegates who ratified the previous land sales made by the various southern bands. At a later date Alumapees made his home at Shamokin, so that his people are referred to as "Delawares of Shamokin"; and during his lifetime some of his followers who had extended their hunting trips to the Ohio became resident in that region, making their first settlements at Conemaugh and Kittanning. Despite this removal, the Province continued to regard Alumapees as spokesman for the Ohio settlers.

It seems to have been customary to designate a successor during a "king's" lifetime; and while there was no set order of succession, a person who stood in an appropriate degree of relationship to a "king," a nephew for example, might naturally be chosen. However, the two nephews designated by Alumapees both died in 1731, and this "king" made no further nomination before his own death in 1747. The subsequent discussions shed some light upon the nature of this "kingship." James Logan urged Conrad Weiser to prevent the selection of Alumapees' nephew Pisquitomen, whom Logan did not like, as successor; Weiser

10 PR, C, 30; D, 280-282 (CR, I, 410-411; II, 571-574).
12 PR, K, 258 (CR, IV, 585).
13 Papers of the Provincial Council, 1730, Aug. 8, 20 (PA 1, I, 265-266); PR, H, 189, 235; I, 12 (CR, III, 432, 472, 626). Hanna's identification of Alumapees with Alymacapy (Allemokypp), an Ohio Delaware, rests upon Hazard's misreading of a manuscript (Hanna, op. cit., I, 279; PA 1, I, 301).
14 For early instances of such designated successors, see Journal of the Friends Historical Society, IX (1912), 164-166; PA 1, 1, 124.
recommended Lapaghpeton, who declined; and Thomas Penn advised the Provincial officials not to interfere: "the Delawares are tributary to the Six Nations, and tho these call themselves Schuylkill Indians, they are a branch of those Delawares, and as such the six Nations may take Umbrage with our meddling in this matter." The Six Nations, it was reported, would confer about a successor at Shamokin in the spring of 1748; but they apparently failed to select one.16

Many of Alumapees' people had gone to the Ohio, and upon his death still more of them probably moved there, including the nephew Pisquitomen and his younger brothers, the Beaver and Shingas. In 1751 Governor Hamilton appealed to the Delawares on Ohio to choose a spokesman to be approved by the Province and the Six Nations.16 Finally, at Logstown in June, 1752, the Six Nations Half King appointed Shingas to be Delaware "king"; and Pennsylvania and Virginia soon recognized the new spokesman.17

In a few years these Indians would become known as Unami ("downriver") Delawares, probably in reference to their traditional home on the lower Delaware; but this name does not appear in the records until 1757.18 Their tradition was one of generally peaceful relations with William Penn and his successors. Many of these Delawares spoke English. Their mode of life had been affected profoundly by contact with European culture; and the ties between them and the Pennsylvanian traders who accompanied them to the Ohio were very strong. It involves little exaggeration to describe these Indians as the first Pennsylvanian settlers on the Ohio.19

When we are told of these Delawares "that their late King Skalitchi Desired of them that they wou'd take Care to keep a Perfect peace with ye English & that . . . the Indians should be

16 Richard Peters Papers, II, 81; PR, L, 104 (CR, V, 138-139); Penn Manuscripts, Penn letter books, II, 212; PR, L, 211, 229 (CR, V, 212, 222).
19 PR, Q, 14, 89-90 (CR, VII, 665, 726).
half English & the English make themselves as half Indians that
they might the better be as ye same”; when Alumapees assures
Governor Gordon “That he looks upon all the English & the
Indians to be as one People closely united & joyned together”; when the Beaver assures the Governor that “We always looked
upon You to be one Flesh and Blood with Us”; or when Shingas,
more surprisingly, says that his uncle and James Logan were
brought up together, we are of course dealing with figures of
speech; but we must not forget that the figures conveyed a fa-
miliar idea. To the Provincial government, these Delawares were
in a very real sense “our Indians.”

Nevertheless, these Ohio Indians, Six Nations conquerors and
Delaware tenants alike, looked upon the Ohio lands with a jealous
eye which did not fail to see in the arrival of white traders the
threat of white settlement. To the Six Nations the region was a
private preserve; on March 23, 1731, the Seneca chief men wrote
from “Kanaossedago” to Governor Gordon “that it is their Land
but that your people may trade there but not build Stone or
Timber houses, but of Bark.” To the Delawares the land was
a sanctuary; they had brought the traders with them, and might
regard the Philadelphians as brothers, but the news of English
and French claims to own the Ohio troubled and alarmed them.
In 1748 the Indians assembled at Logstown listened to Conrad
Weiser and George Croghan, and in 1749 they listened to Céloron
de Blainville. Having listened, the Beaver and Oppamylucah, two
Delaware leaders, asked Christopher Gist, in March, 1752, “where
the Indian’s Land lay, for that the French claimed all the Land
on one side of the River Ohio & the English on the other Side.”

Thus, the British and French governments might disagree
whether or not Boishébert’s landing at Presque Isle in June,
1753, constituted an invasion, and the Governor and the Assembly
of Pennsylvania might dispute whether or not their Province had
been intruded upon; but to the Indians on Ohio the matter was
beyond question. Taking with him representatives of the Shaw-

*8 PR, D, 317; H, 188; M, 407 (CR, II, 629; III, 431; VI, 156); Moravian Archives, Indian Missions, C. F. Post.
*9 PPC, 1731, Mar. 23; Abr. Wendell to Governor Gordon (in Dutch; quoted from accompanying translation).
*10 William R. Darlington, Christopher Gist’s Journals (Pittsburgh, 1893), 78.
TRANSLATION OF SENECA MESSAGE TO GOVERNOR GORDON,
March 23, 1731, regarding trade at Adiego or Kittanning. The translator
misunderstood the Dutch original: "We have seen a Letter from you to the
Five Nations wherein you write..."

"We have seen a Letter from you wherein you write of holding a friendship
with the Indians, & their Chiefs asking us what were the contents of your
Letter. We told them, upon which they were glad of the Brother hood, & they will not fail on their part in return
to hold a friendship with your people, they desire that their People may be well used at the place called Adiego
that is they may have good payn Yosemite in their dealing
that it is their Land but that your people may trade there
but not build Stone or Timber Houses, but of Bark, and
if any of their People come to Adiego without Cloaths
or provision or want Powder & Lead that they may
be supplied according to their necessities. and if any
of their Young warriors doe anything amis, that the
best may be made of it if it may be passed over, and
we Shall do the same if we hear nothing that ill
and we Double or strengthen the Channel of Brother hood
with you, hapy we it will continue forever we wish the
beard here it may be well used. This is from the mouth
of the Chiefs here who send two Skins to bind it.
written by me

abt. Wendel
at the Desire of the Chiefs here, I was sentither by
the Commissioners of Albany for good of the Gover

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nees and the Delawares, the Half King set off for the French camp, and on September 3 ordered Marin to withdraw, reminding him that this was the third time the French had been refused passage through this country. As the Half King made clear, he spoke on this occasion for the Ohio "hunters" and not for the Onondaga Council: "I am speaking in the name of all the warriors who inhabit the Belle Riviere . . . I do not come from my chief."

The Half King's stand was a bold one. The British colonies would be slow to act; we know this today, and the Half King may have suspected it then. For his stand to succeed, however, the dependent Shawnees and Delawares must join with their Six Nations superiors not merely in distaste for an armed invasion but in equally resolute opposition to it; and Marin acted shrewdly to forestall such unity of action. He struck at Six Nations prestige: "I despise all the stupid things you said. I know that they come only from you, and that all the warriors and chiefs of the Belle Riviere think better than you." And he recalled the old enmity between the Shawnees and the Iroquois; La Salle, he said, had taken possession of the Ohio "when it was inhabited by the Shawnees, with whom the Iroquois waged incessant war, and who have always been our friends."

From this point we can trace a weakening of the Indian position. Rebuffed by the French, Tanagharisson, relying upon English support, pursued until his death (at John Harris's, on October 4, 1754) a steadfast policy of opposition to the French; but the Ohio Indians were not of one mind, and he could not speak for all. When Washington went to Fort Le Boeuf in November, 1753, the Half King accompanied him and tried to persuade the Delawares to break with the French and return the wampum belts received from them. The Half King's people helped lay the foundation logs of the Virginian fort at the Forks of Ohio; and, when Contrecoeur seized that place, on April 16, 1754, they joined Washington in the May 28 attack upon Jumonville's party. A month later they burned their village of Logstown and joined Washington at Fort Necessity; and after the surrender on July

4 they retired to Virginia and to the back settlements of Pennsylvania. Even after this, Tanagharisson persuaded Delaware and Shawnee delegates to join him at Aughwick (Shirleysburg), in September, 1754, to ask help of Pennsylvania. Scarroyady, who succeeded Tanagharisson as "half king," joined Braddock, after whose defeat he and his followers retired to their ancestral home in New York. The scattered Ohio Iroquois who had not joined Tanagharisson were called home by the Onondaga Council in 1756; and those who still remained (like the deaf "Onondaga," Tiskegiee, whom Post met near Fort Duquesne in August, 1758) did so as French collaborators.

Of the dependent Ohio peoples, the story of the Shawnees is soon told. Nursing old grudges against the Iroquois, unfixed in residence and in allegiance, they responded readily to French proposals. The very delegates who accompanied the Half King in September, 1753, apologized to the French next day for his defiant attitude, and dissociated themselves from it. Some of their chief men who had lived in Pennsylvania attended the Aughwick council in September, 1754; but these evidently were overruled by their pro-French fellows. Like the Delawares, the Shawnees attacked English settlers in 1755; unlike them, they took no initiative in 1758 to leave the French and seek reconciliation with the English.

The Delaware course was less clearcut than either of these, and much more difficult. Their ties of friendship with Pennsylvania were strong, and their dependence upon English trade stronger still. Their attitude toward the Six Nations (unlike that of their brethren from the upper Susquehanna) was not hostile; and, however distasteful their subordinate position, it had afforded them the advantages of a home and protection. On the other hand, these Delawares could not oppose the French without substantial support from the Six Nations and from the British; unlike the Half King's band they could not take refuge in their ancestral home in case of failure; and without trade they could not live in the

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55 P.A 1, III, 527-528. The name, which appears in Post's rough notes, may be the same as Jeskake or Déjiquéqué (Papiers Contrecoeur, 104, 105, 189).
56 Papiers Contrecoeur, 61-62.
manner to which they had become accustomed. So the Delawares would remain on the Ohio, preferably (if the League and the British opposed the French effectively) in their old alliances; but if those alliances failed they must accept the French, hoping so to secure the carrot of French trade and to escape the cudgel of the invader's Indian allies.

Following the Half King's unsuccessful defiance of the French, "King" Shingas temporized. At Logstown, in November, 1753, Shingas said he could not accompany the Half King and Washington, but that Custaloga had the wampum belts at Venango; at Venango, Custaloga said he could not return the belts without a speech from the "king." At the end of January, 1754, Shingas joined the Half King in appealing to Pennsylvania and Virginia to build a fort at the Forks of Ohio; and he assured Croghan, at Logstown, that although "I live here on the River Side, which is the French Road, . . . I will neither go down nor up, but I will move nearer to my Brethren the English, where I can keep our Women and Children safe from the Enemy." A few weeks later Joncaire heard at Venango that these Delawares were on their way from the Forks of Ohio to join him; but French scouts who on March 7 found Shingas' town deserted reported that its population had "gone the way of the English." In June Shingas communicated with Washington's party, but would not join it openly. Nevertheless, after the surrender of Fort Necessity he visited Captain Stobo, one of the Virginian hostages held at Fort Duquesne; and in September his brother, the Beaver, and other leading Delawares met with the Half King and Weiser at Aughwick.

Indecision can be in its effect decisive. At this conference the Beaver appealed to the Six Nations and to Pennsylvania for help. He reminded the Half King of the protection the Delawares had received as wards: "We have . . . lived very easy under your Protection, and no high Wind did blow to make Us uneasy, but now Things seem to take another turn, and a high Wind is rising." He appealed to the Pennsylvanians as brothers, "one Flesh and Blood with Us." But the Half King replied that he could not

27 PR, M, 407 (CR, VI, 166).
28 Papiers Contrecoeur, 108.
It was all very well for Delawares to tell James Kenny, in 1763, "that at Braddock's Defeat there was not One of ye Delawares & only four Mingoes & three Shawanas, all ye Rest Northrn Indians," and their story may be true; but the Indians had read the direction of the wind. Indian delegates, we are told, "had applied to Gen'l Braddock and Enquired what he intended to do with the Land if he Cou'd drive the French and their Indians away To wch Gen'l Braddock replied that the English Shoud Inhabit & Inherit the Land." On June 22-24, more than two weeks before the defeat at the Monongahela, two parties of French and Indians, identified as Delawares and Shawnees, attacked the borders of Maryland and Virginia. Braddock had locked the door which had been closed at Aughwick, and the day of the diplomatic intermediary had passed. Abandoning the "kingship" which Virginia and Pennsylvania had recognized, Shingas himself about October 1 attacked settlers near Fort Cumberland, and a month later fell upon Pennsylvania settlers in Cumberland County. In response to this "betrayal," Pennsylvania and Virginia, which had failed to give Shingas the help he needed, now offered rewards of three hundred dollars and fifty pistoles for his head.

It is needless, however, to dwell upon the shortcomings of British negotiations with the Ohio Indians; and to do so would perhaps obscure the point. A shrewder and more aggressive British policy might have spared the white settlers some of the hardships of border warfare; but it is hard to see how it would have spared the Indian on the Ohio. The prime object of the British was not Indian friendship but the lands of the Ohio—not as a matter of suzerainty only, or of trade advantages, but of occupation, first and necessarily by armed garrisons, later but foreseeably by settlers—and it is not easy to see how the British could have

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PR, M, 408-409 (CR, VI, 157-158).
PR, N, 239, 263-264 (CR, VI, 643, 675).
Pennsylvania Gazette, Jan. 1 and Apr. 30, 1756.
obtained or kept both the Indians' friendship and the land. The real plight of the Ohio Indians is not pictured for us by Shingas, in guise of a refugee king at enmity with his former allies, but by the Beaver, with his troubled inquiry about the Indian's land.

"The river where we are," the Half King had told Marin, "belongs to us warriors."

"It belongs incontestably to the King," Marin had contradicted him.

But General Braddock's prophecy (though he did not live to fulfill it) was to be the blunt and final answer.

CAPTAIN SNOW'S SKETCH OF THE OHIO COUNTRY, 1754

*Library of Congress*