

THE PRE-RESERVE BLACKFOOT:
CULTURAL PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE

by

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I.

INTRODUCTION

In historic times the three Blackfoot tribes - Siksika, Blood and Piegan - inhabited and exploited for sustenance a territory bounded approximately by the Rockies to the west, the Missouri River to the south, the Saskatchewan border to the east, and the North Saskatchewan River to the north. In addition they traversed wider tracts of country in quest of trade and plunder - from the forests of central Alberta, across the mountains, and even into Mexico. In 1800 Mackenzie wrote "They are the people who deal in horses and take them upon war parties towards Mexico, from which they enter into the country to the south-east, which consists of plains." (McClintock, 1910:3).

During the years between 1787 and the latter 1870s they came to be recognized by Indians and non-Indians alike as the dominant military power on the northwestern plains, and can validly be considered one of the major deterrents to any complete demographic fulfillment of the American 'manifest destiny' rationale in that period. In 1832, George Catlin, a self-taught artist and Indian enthusiast, called the Blackfoot "...perhaps, the most powerful tribe of Indians on the Continent..." and "...estimated the Northern Blackfeet at 450 lodges, the Bloods at 450 lodges, the Piegans at 500 lodges, and the Small Robes (who were actually a large Piegan band) at 250 lodges, giving

a total of 1,650 lodges, or, (averaging 10 persons to a lodge) 16,500 persons." (Ewers, 1958:60). Of horse ownership, the ultimate proof of wealth on the Plains, Prince Maximillian du Wied noted that a particular "...Piegan chief possessed between 4000 and 5000 horses." (Goldfrank, 1966:6) and somewhat more conservatively Bradley estimated that in 1830 or thereabouts "The Piegans averaged ten horses to a lodge, the Blackfeet and Bloods, five." (Goldfrank, 1966:6).

It must be kept in mind that this pinnacle of affluence and power were facets of Blackfoot existence for a space of roughly a century only, a century of Plains history difficult to assess in static terms, a century characterized in that area by marked technological, ecological, economic and social change. Blackfoot ascension to military supremacy in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century was in part the result of an ability to adapt technological innovations to their specific socio-ecological circumstances and to employ newly acquired skills very successfully against neighbors who had been familiar with firearms and horses for many years prior to Blackfoot acquisition. It was equally the result of their protracted seclusion from direct European contact. In 1781 they escaped the full ravages of a smallpox epidemic which quickly reduced the powerful Snakes to an enemy of so little consequence that the survivors could no longer militarily maintain their Plains hunting territories and fled forever across the Rockies. The Crees, who were numerous and well armed enough to have caused the Blackfoot considerable trepidation, had gradually since 1680

adopted almost completely the role of entrepreneurs for British fur traders, and as the Hudson's Bay Company was more involved in the fur country to the north of the plains, the Crees were initially little interested in the unproductive vacuum left by the departing Snakes. This situation changed after the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1805 when Americans first realized the fur potential of the Northern Rockies, but by that time the Blackfeet were well able to control trade in the area.

There can be little doubt, from historical evidence alone, that the introduction of the horse - and to a lesser extent, the gun - to the Plains was to a large degree responsible for an accelerated displacement of populations, for major balance of power shifts and for a proliferation of adaptive social modifications. Lewis (1942:61) emphasizes for the Blackfoot another important factor for mutation:

The fur trade was the mainspring of Blackfoot culture change. The horse alone cannot explain the florescence of Blackfoot culture which took place in the nineteenth century. Rather, it was the fur trade together with the horse and gun which had a dynamic effect upon Blackfoot institutions.

Clark Wissler, an assiduous student of the Blackfoot, and whose ethnological data has been invaluable to later scholars, nevertheless saw the Plains situation in a somewhat static context and maintained that the Plains lifeway was little affected by the introduction of the horse. "In other words," he states, "from a qualitative point of view the culture of the Plains would have been much the same without the horse..." (Wissler, 1914:165). Again,

"As an intensifier of original Plains traits, the horse presents ✓ its strongest claim...To such a culture the horse would most surely be a new and superior dog; he would, like any greatly improved appliance, enrich and intensify development in certain established directions."

(Wissler, 1914:167). Many contemporary anthropologists have expressed dissatisfaction with Wissler's adherence to a rigid functionalism and his atomistic view of culture and certainly much of his museum-oriented research has tended to ignore the processes of social change so vividly chronicled in such profusion by a host of observers who depended for economic and physical survival upon dispassionate appraisal of the Plains mosaic. They were not ethnologists by profession, but to a surprising extent, their notes and journals substantiate and corroborate individual observations. Of this, Herskovits (1938:25, 26) writes:

That all actual historical documents bearing on a given situation should be exhaustively analyzed goes without saying. Especially in the case of contact between European and non-European peoples will material of this sort prove important...Information of this character has been neglected to a surprising degree - not only in studies of acculturation but also in studies of the ethnology of relatively undisturbed folk. Yet the light such materials shed on changing custom, the strictly ethnological data that they supply, and the sense of sureness in time-depth afforded, are of the greatest value in the study of any civilization, acculturated or not.

Most noticeable in recent studies of the forces at work for culture change in the dynamic Plains tableau is a real attempt at historical perspective, a testing of hypotheses with the aid of

reliable historical documents, an obvious impatience with functionalism alone as a means to interpreting the processes of social change, and in many instances a methodology closely approximating that of the contemporary archaeologist. In his excellent work on acculturation, Lewis (1942:5) describes his procedure:

It has consisted of 'digging' into historical records for information concerning culture change among the Blackfoot. For this purpose, we have examined traders' journals, travelers' reports, records of fur companies, government papers and a host of secondary sources. The ethnography contained in these sources has been arranged in a chronological framework, thus resulting in a time schedule of the culture elements in the order in which they appear in the records of observers.

What has emerged clearly from this kind of research is a composite picture of historic Plains culture somewhat more comprehensive than the earlier trait-distribution approach to the problem of cultural continuity; a view that hardly denies the abundant evidence of culture persistence but rather also emphasizes the crucial role of technology in shaping social change and that especially accents the relationship between technology and the total ecological system. According to Oliver, (1962:68) "The complex interrelationships between the technological systems and the environment of other men, other animals, and other societies were certainly key factors in the developing Plains situation."

Regardless of the usefulness of Wissler and Kroeber's employment of the culture area concept in listing the tribes of

the True Plains area, most ethnologists agree upon their requisites for inclusion in this category, and also accept the premise that the classic Plains cultures evolved in a relatively short time from ^{— long history} two distinct economic backgrounds - that of sedentary, village-centred horticulture and that of nomadic hunting and gathering. With minor reservations, it is also accepted that the typical Plains culture of the historic, pre-reserve era was partially exemplified, in Wissler's words (1914:220) by:

...the dependence upon the buffalo or bison, and the very limited use of roots and berries; absence of fishing; lack of agriculture; the tipi as a movable dwelling; transportation by land only with the dog (in historic times with the horse) and travois; want of basketry and pottery; no true weaving; clothing of buffalo and deerskins; a special bead technique; high development of work in skins; special rawhide work (parfleche, cylindrical bag, etc.); use of a circular shield; weak development of work in wood, stone, and bone. Their art is strongly geometric, but, as a whole, not symbolic; social organization tends to the simple band; a camp circle organization; a series of societies for men; sun dance ceremony; sweat house observances, scalp dances, etc.

Since Wissler's well-known essay on the influence of the horse on the Plains cultures, Strong, Mishkin and Kroeber have especially taken exception to the trait-complex approach with its concomitant oversimplification of cultural continuity and ecological causality. As Oliver (1961:8) points out, "Surely the horse as well as the buffalo was a vital ecological fact. It is one thing to hunt the buffalo on foot; it is quite another to hunt the buffalo on horseback." And Mishkin (1940:5, 24) concluded that "...the horse

was the most important single factor in the development of the Plains cultures of the nineteenth century." None of this is by way of stating an absolute case for economic or technological determinism; it does imply that certain cultures are more readily amenable to one ecological situation than to another and that ecological circumstances may be and are instrumental in disturbing the stability of a culture. Steward (1955:37) has suggested that some socio-cultural patterns are more closely related to subsistence activities than others, and that "The environment is not only permissive or prohibitive with respect to these technologies, but special local feature may require social adaptations which have far reaching consequences." Certainly the occupants of geographically similar regions often show great divergencies in cultural achievement. The Pueblo peoples of the upper Rio Grande valley live in a physical environment not too radically different to that of the Blackfoot and had almost as easy access to the vast southern buffalo herds, and yet practiced a communal, horticultural way of life. Similarly, the Mandans of the Missouri River, although buffalo hunters, lived in permanent villages and engaged in subsidiary horticulture. On the other hand, many of the historic Plains tribes came from precisely the same economic background as that of the Mandans and upon acquisition of horses abandoned horticulture for full-time hunting. As Oliver (1961:14) has succinctly stated:

What really seems to have happened on the Plains was that tribes of different cultural backgrounds moved into a similar or shared ecological situation. This seems to be a reasonable interpretation of the

historic Plains situation. The fact that there were Folsom or other Early Man horizons on the Plains, and that they had a considerable time depth, does not alter the basic facts for the historic Plains tribes who were relative newcomers to the region. It may be granted that there were resemblances between the pre-horse Plains hunters and the later Plains tribes, or between the pre-horse and post-horse cultures of the same tribe. Both, after all, were hunting the same animal. But this is certainly not to say that these cultures were the same. The introduction of the horse created a different ecological situation which required new socio cultural arrangements.

Because of their prolonged isolation from whites the Blackfoot are less extensively documented than many of the other Plains people, but of the first-hand evidence available, a good part is of excellent quality, so that together with linguistic and archaeological data, a reasonably accurate reconstruction of Blackfoot life for some time previous to reserve confinement is possible. With allusion to this material as well as to recent anthropological studies, it may be possible to illustrate in the case of the Blackfoot the *Hypothesis* contention that equestrian Plains cultures were not entirely adaptive modifications of antecedent pedestrian cultures, but true emergents. With especial emphasis on political systems and warfare it is toward that end that this paper is focused.

II. THE PEDESTRIAN BLACKFOOT

To date any precise temporal assessment of Blackfoot prairie tenancy can only be largely speculative. Henry Kelsey of the Hudson's Bay Company was the first white man to see the Canadian plains and, according to Lewis (1942:10):

From his journal (1691-1692) we learn that at that time the Assiniboine and some Cree were on the plains between the South Saskatchewan and the Carrot and Red Deer Rivers to the east. Under the date of Sept. 6, 1691, he writes of a tribe to the west of the Assiniboine who "...knew not ye use of Canoes and were resolved to go to wars..." Mandelbaum and Bell suggest that these were the Blackfoot, while Morton identifies them as the Gros Ventre. In any case, since the traditions of the Blackfoot, Assiniboine and Cree all agree that the Blackfoot were the most westerly group, it seems certain that the Blackfoot were on the plains west of the South Saskatchewan by 1690 and probably a good deal earlier.

Wissler and Curtis have recorded Piegan tradition as indicating a migration from beyond the mountains to the southwest, while other ethnographers have been as frequently told that they came from the northeast and this latter version is more in keeping with historical evidence. David Thompson recorded that "They have no tradition that they ever made use of canoes, yet their old men always point out the North East as the place they came from, and their progress has always been to the southwest." (Lewis, 1942:12)

Some time before 1787 they are presumed to have migrated from the Eagle Hills between the two forks of the Saskatchewan River

about four hundred miles to the east of their high plains habitat. When in 1754 Anthony Hendry first encountered in the Eagle Hills what may have been this tribe, they appear from his journal entries to have been well adapted to a prairie environment and obviously not newcomers to the area. Although there is academic disagreement about the identity of the Indians - Lewis and Burpee asserting they were Blackfoot, Wissler maintaining they were Gros Ventres - when Thompson camped with the Piegans in what is now southern Alberta during the winter of 1787-88, he was informed by elderly tribesmen that, before horse ownership, their people had lived approximately four hundred miles to the northeast, and they described an area that resembled the Eagle Hills. At that time, they said, they had possessed neither horses nor canoes, and were armed only with primitive weapons of local manufacture. They led a nomadic hunting existence, travelled on foot, and relied on human and dog transport for the moving of goods and shelter. (Ewers, 1958:8). There was little to suggest, at least from these informants, that the pedestrian Blackfoot had to any extent explored the subsistence possibilities of their later historic homeland near the eastern slope of the Alberta and Montana Rockies.

Linguistically the Blackfoot are Algonkian, and it is significant in a search for origins that the majority of Algonkian-speaking populations inhabit, and have inhabited during the historic era, the forests east and northeast of the Great Plains. That Blackfoot differs most markedly of all the dialects from the presumed

parent tongue of the Western Great Lakes region denotes a prolonged, relative isolation from those parts. According to Ewers (1958:6):

Of the six Algonkian-speaking tribes who were living on the plains before 1830, the Cheyennes, Plains Crees, and Plains Ojibwas are known to have migrated westward within the historic period. The Arapahoes, Gros Ventres, and Blackfeet were older residents of the grasslands. However, persistent Arapahoe traditions point to their migration from a region further east, probably the Red River Valley of Minnesota, and to Gros Ventre separation from that tribe. This leaves the Blackfeet as probably the earliest Algonkian residents of the plains.

If linguistic distributional data tends to indicate that the Blackfoot reached south-central Saskatchewan from directly east or northeast with little or no decidedly southern deviation, then corroboration for postulating a cultural continuity for these people between forest and grassland might be inferred from archaeological evidence in southern Manitoba. In alluding to artificial burial mounds east of Winnipeg, Willey (1966:319) is of the opinion that :

Apparently they antedate European contacts in this part of the Plains (A.D. 1650-1700). It is likely that they were constructed by peoples who were primarily hunters, fishers, and collectors rather than true farmers, for the Northeastern Subarea lies largely north of the limits of aboriginal American agriculture. Their most probable cultural context is the Woodland Tradition in a marginal and essentially non-horticultural setting, and their most likely temporal position is in the later Woodland and Early Plains Village Periods of the Plains chronology.

Later, he concludes, "Some of these tribes such as the Assiniboine,

Blackfoot, and Arapaho, were the descendants of peoples who had never participated in the Plains Village Tradition to any significant extent and who had always been nomadic or semi-nomadic hunters." (Willey, 1966:329).

The reasons for the presumed westward migrations of the Blackfoot make for interesting speculation, but more germane to the focus of this paper is the question of whether or not those techniques and cultural attributes that enabled them to utilize the particular resources of the prairies and later the northern High Plains were evolved and acquired over a relatively long space of time in response to quite different physiographic surroundings - the eastern woodlands.

At first glance, the ecological transition from forests to prairie might appear to be more onerous than that from prairie to short-grass plains. In many respects the Saskatchewan habitat of the Blackfoot resembled their historic foothill territory. The Eagle Hills region was a mosaic of poplar-covered hills, small lakes, river valleys and luxurious prairies. The Saskatchewan climate is perhaps more severe in its consistent extremes, but all the basic necessities for a hunting and gathering economy - large and small game, water and shelter, wood for lodge-poles, travois, and fuel, edible wild plants - were plentiful. And there is no reason to believe that this abundant range with its wooded valley protection from the rigours of a northern winter could not have supported almost as great a density of buffalo as did the

more open expanse of the plains to the southwest. At the same time, reconstruction of prairie Blackfoot life from studies of the more thoroughly documented, neighboring Crees and Assiniboines indicate that, excepting for perhaps a trend toward specialization in the accent on buffalo hunting, these heirs to the Woodland Tradition were likely not compelled to greatly alter their previous forest culture in order to comfortably adapt to a prairie environment.

Continuity in Hunting Techniques

The prairie Blackfoot found that weapons that had sufficed in the forest could be as efficient in a grasslands setting. The standard long-range weapon was the plain wooden bow of the tribes east of the Missouri River (later replaced by the sinew-backed and horn bows of the Basin and Plateau areas when the Blackfoot moved closer to the mountains), complemented by the ubiquitous lance and stone club for close-in work. With, of course, some modification for the largest of game animals, hunting techniques were also extensions of long established woodland practice. The surround has been portrayed as a uniquely plains manoeuvre, but was in essence only a variant of the favorite winter method of impounding, a method widely employed in the forests. Wissler (1920:23) stated:

Early accounts indicate that the Plains Cree and Assiniboin were the most adept in driving into these

enclosures...The Plains Cree are but a small outlying part of a very widely distributed group of Cree, the culture of whose main body seems quite uniform. Now, even the Cree east of Hudson Bay, Canada, use a similar method for deer, and since there is every reason to believe that the Plains Cree are but a colony of the larger body to the East, it seems fair to assume that the method of impounding buffalo originated with them.

From Kelsey's journal is the following description of Cree technique (Ewers, 1958:18):

Now ye manner of their hunting these Beasts on ye barren ground is when they seek a great parcel of them together they surround them with men which done they gather themselves into a smaller Compass Keeping ye Beasts in ye middle and so shooting ym till they break out at some place or other and so get away from ym.

Wissler's speculation about the origins of buffalo impounding suggest that the prairie Blackfoot may have obtained the technique by diffusion. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that long before migration to the transitional zone between the high plains and the forests, these people were no strangers to buffalo hunting. Sixteenth century European explorers have described a woodland species that apparently ranged far into forested country to the northeast.

Since, in almost any terrain, group hunting activities are generally more rewarding than individual effort and because there is ample evidence for these activities among hunting populations, it is again unlikely that the Blackfeet and other plains tribes initiated

highly cooperative summer hunts in direct response to an availability of buffalo. Lowie (1963:18) points out the universality of disciplined communal hunting:

...we should remember that effective drives of the type occurred in North America before and far beyond the boundaries of Plains culture. Champlain describes the Iroquoian Neutrals driving deer into a pen, thus capturing 120 within 38 days; and grass firing netted 200 buffalo a day for the Miami. In California the unmounted Maidu drove deer down cliffs, the Yokuts surrounded antelope in collective drives, the Washo charmed antelope into corrals...Collective drives...are widespread among the preliterate peoples...

Persistence in Material Culture

Most of the information and description in this category is extracted from historic Plains observation, but from the fact that Blackfoot material culture displayed more of a propensity for northeastern Woodland usage, it can probably be safely assumed that (with less bulk and elaboration) interim prairie styles were little different. The Blackfoot and other northern plains people retained those forest styles and models which, with modification, could be readily adapted to prairie existence.

Admittedly the portable hide tipi was in all ways admirably suited to a nomadic plains life, but the basic design characteristics were by no means confined to the plains, nor was it the only type of shelter employed by grassland hunters. As Wissler (1920:37) noted:

The Ojibway along the Lakes used it, but covered it with birch bark as did also many of the Cree and tribes formerly established in eastern Canada and New England. Even the Eastern Dakota in early days used birchbark for tipi covers. A tipi-like skin-covered tent was in general use among the Indians of Labrador and westward throughout the entire MacKenzie area of Canada.

Lowie (1963:33) enlarges upon Wissler's statement:

All the plains tipis are far more impressive than the similarly shaped tipis found among North Canadian tribes, Siberians and Lapps. In pre-equestrian days the humbler form must have been prevalent since only shorter, lighter poles could have been readily transported. Quite probably this simpler variety, covered with bark or mats, was the original one and spread over a large area in North American and Eurasia.

Again, custom and the protracted influence of Cree and Assiniboine appear to have dictated Blackfoot sartorial fashions, rather than purely topographic or climatic considerations. In many ways their mode of dress tended to more closely approximate that of the forest tribes rather than that of their plains neighbors to the south. According once more to Wissler (1920:44), two structurally general types of moccasins prevailed in North America - the two-piece, hard-soled and the one-piece, soft-soled - and the latter, a forest representative, was preferred by the Blackfoot. The undecorated, tailored shirt was not a part of universal Plains garb until very recently, but "The Cree, Dene and other tribes of central Canada wore leather shirts...We also have positive knowledge of their early use by the Blackfoot, Assiniboin, Crow, Dakota, Plains-Cree,

Nez-Perce, Northern Shoshoni, Gros Ventre, and on the other hand of their absence among the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Pawnee, Osage, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Comanche." (Wissler 1920:47). A glance at an accurate demographic map for the above tribes in the early nineteenth century will nicely illustrate the fallacy of any too precise an environmental correlation. Assuredly those favoring the tailored shirt are generally situated in a more northerly latitude. If, however, consideration of consistent low temperature (most certainly including the wind chill factor) solely predicated clothing style, there is small reason for the Shoshoni and Nez Perce to be more adequately clad than the Cheyenne, Mandan, Pawnee or Arikara. With the one-piece dress of plains women as well, custom and diffusion rather than protection seems to have influenced form. Apparently the sleeveless version was popular with the Hidatsa, Mandan, Crow, Dakota, Arapaho, Ute, Kiowa, Comanche, Sarsi and Gros Ventre, while Nez Perce, Northern Shoshoni, Plains Cree and Blackfoot women wore dresses with fitted sleeves. Minor points, perhaps, but immediately obvious to anyone familiar with plains winters is the superiority of the tailored to the caped garment.

Pedestrian Political Systems

Although an acceptable reconstruction of pedestrian Blackfoot social organization has been attempted by Ewers and others from reference to better-documented contiguous peoples and from one or two accounts of aged informants, there is still no absolute agreement on the nature of Blackfoot political grouping prior to about 1725, shortly

after which time they came into possession of guns and horses. Ewers (1958:18) considers that in Blackfoot dog (pedestrian) days "It...is unlikely that the hunting bands recognized a tribal chief. Certainly the hunting band must have been the primary political unit." The band may have been the primary political unit, but a most reliable account of a battle between the pedestrian Piegans and the Snakes specifically mentions tribal chiefs and suggests by the large number of combatants involved (far greater than normal band strength) that a larger political unit for defensive or offensive action was at least occasionally recognized. This will be more fully considered later.

In describing both pedestrian and equestrian Blackfoot political systems throughout this paper, I am alluding to those means operative within the society for the maintenance of peace within the political group, i.e. the ultimate enforcement of norms and the final arbitration of conflicting interests; for the overall organization and direction of community enterprises; and externally, for the conducting of war and diplomacy. By political group at the basic level I mean a local group explicitly organized into a functioning whole for the accomplishment of the above ends through a system of continuous and well defined leadership over and above those who head the individual families that comprise it - in other words, a band; and by the term tribe, I refer to the organization of neighboring bands into a larger unit, so extending band organization to cover a number of locally autonomous units.

As Ewers has suggested, it may be doubtful, if during their

early prairie residency, the various bands of Blackfoot operated as an integral unit other than in times of extreme peril from adjacent human groups or in summer hunts when a large enough concentration of buffalo might warrant concerted action. However, military exigencies might have been far more frequent than Ewers has implied, particularly during that era when nearby tribes were acquiring guns and horses and to the northeast were trading directly with whites. Oliver (1961:2) remarks:

It must be emphasized that the ecological equation is not a simple one; it must take into account not only culture, of which technology is one part, but also environment in its broadest sense. An important part of the environment in which any human society exists is made up of other human societies, and the interaction among these societies was of considerable importance on the Plains. The Plains Tribes had to adjust to the presence of other Plains Tribes...and they were likewise influenced by powers outside the Plains proper. This latter point is particularly clear in the case of a tribe like the Cree, whose very existence as a tribal group was due in large part to the European demand for furs.

Besides the account of a prehistoric battle between the Blackfoot and the Snakes (to which I earlier referred and which will be recounted later in this chapter), inferences drawn from archaeological evidence and study of contiguous groups, a number of treatises have amply pointed out that, among the True Plains tribes of the historic era, those groups with formal leadership patterns were originally horticultural tribes and those groups with informal leadership patterns were originally hunting and

gathering tribes. Historic Blackfoot political leadership was of an informal nature, and, if much modified to suit new ecological circumstances, it still might provide a profitable insight into the configuration of its predecessor. Once again, we are forced to rely for reconstruction partially on ethnology-based universals and historical documentation in order to prognosticate backwards in time.

In Eggan's opinion (1955:85):

The conditions of Plains life demanded a local group small enough to subsist by hunting and gathering, but large enough to furnish protection against hostile war parties and raids. The extended family was adequate for the first condition but was at the mercy of any war party; the tribe, on the other hand, was too unwieldy to act as an economic unit for very long. The band provided an adequate compromise; this is perhaps the most important reason for its almost universal presence in the Plains area.

Lowie (1963:92) defines such a band as "...a local group of people jointly wandering in search of sustenance..." and Ewers (1958:9), basing his estimate on traders' notes on Cree and Assiniboine groups, judges that "Each band probably comprised about twenty to thirty families, totalling some one hundred to two hundred men, women and children."

As the buffalo moved, so did the bands, and other than in the extreme depth of the Saskatchewan winter when the animals sought shelter and forage in the river coulees, the hunting groups knew no permanency of habitation. Lacking at that time any beast of

burden other than the dog or female human, an individual's possessions were necessarily limited in size and quantity and consisted for the most part only of those articles absolutely essential to the basics of daily living. The later characteristically large lodges with their elaborate furnishings, medicine bundles and ceremonial trappings would have been prohibitively excessive luxuries in the days of foot travel. Davis (1948:366) contends that stratification within a human society generally appears only when that society has attained a certain size and level of complexity, that is wherein exchangeable surpluses may be accumulated and specialists indulged; and Service (1962:109) declares that bands are "...largely familistic cultures; they are egalitarian;...differentiation of structure has not been carried to the point where there are separated bodies of political control, economic specialization, or even true religious professionalism." Certainly, even in equestrian times at the tribal level Blackfoot political organization was of a rather amorphous and democratic nature, and no absolute powers were vested in either the tribal chiefs or the band leaders that composed the tribal council. This ancient tradition of a loose and arbitrary allocation of authority, sufficient and efficient as it may have been for an itinerant hunting and gathering population, was to seriously inhibit a united and sustained military, political and social resistance to white encroachment in the last half of the nineteenth century.

It is hardly supportable to imagine that the prairie buffalo-oriented

economy alone provided a particularly fertile matrix for this lack of formal authority. As Wissler (1920:88) wrote, an absence of "...hard and fast distinctions between independent and dependent political units...is not by any means peculiar to the Plains." And, assuming again that the ancestors of the pedestrian Blackfoot engaged in a similar economy within an Eastern Woodlands context, it is unlikely that successive migrations westward occasioned political modifications of any magnitude. For that matter, ethnographic research has revealed few, if any, examples of rigidly ascribed and legally enforced authority anywhere north of the Mesoamerican culture area. Even the celebrated League of the Iroquois existed as a confederacy only in the interests of external military polity; it was created specifically in 1570 to preserve peace between its five member tribes in order to ensure unity of protective action against surrounding Algonkian enemies. Emphasizing the absence of any form of legal coercion of the tribes by the League, Beals and Hoijer (1959:51) submit that,

Given the subsistence economy of the Iroquois, it is not difficult to see why a statelike organization did not emerge among them. There could be no central authority or elite sufficiently strong to dominate the tribes either politically or economically. The League thus differs no whit in principle from the Plains band...for it is governed... by leaders chosen for their personal qualities and achievements, and who govern, not by force or the threat of force, but rather by persuasion and influence.

Pedestrian Warfare

There is no positive way of ascertaining if Blackfoot warfare in pre-horse days ever assumed the endemic quality of historic times, but there can be little doubt that whatever warlike proclivities characterized pedestrian Blackfoot populations, they received a tremendous impetus from the introduction of the horse. Umfreville, who was introduced to the Blackfeet in 1790, by which time they were well and thoroughly mounted, did not question this premise and unhesitatingly considered the stealing or capture of horses "...their principle inducement in going to war." (Secoy, 1953:37). Nevertheless, if the behavior of similar groups elsewhere on the continent - as viewed by European chroniclers - is any indication, the pedestrian Blackfeet were no strangers to homicide at the inter-tribal level. Both Hyde and Secoy rely heavily for reconstruction of warfare patterns on the journal of David Thompson, who in 1787 recorded the recollections of an old Cree-turned-Piegan. Saukamappee's age was estimated by Thompson at approximately eighty years and the following events took place when the Indian was about sixteen (around 1723) (Secoy, 1953:34,35):

The Peegans were always the frontier tribe, and upon whom the Snake Indians made their attacks... and the Peegans had to send messengers among us (Crees) to procure help...My father brought about twenty warriors with him. There were a few guns amongst us, but very little ammunition...Our weapons was a Lance, mostly pointed with iron, some few with stone, a Bow and a quiver of Arrows; the Bows were of Larch, the length

came to the chin; the quiver had about fifty arrows, of which ten had iron points...He carried his knife on his breast and his axe in his belt. Such was my fathers weapons, and those with him had much the same weapons...We came to the Peegans and their allies...and were a great many. We were feasted, a great War Tent was made, and a few days passed in speeches, feasting and dances. A war chief was elected by the chiefs, and we got ready to march. Our spies had been out and had seen a large camp of the Snake Indians on the Plains of the Eagle Hill...we...numbered our men, we were about 350 warriors...they had their scouts out, and came to meet us. Both parties made a great show of their numbers, and I thought that they were more numerous than ourselves. After some singing and dancing, they sat down on the ground, and placed their large shields before them, which covered them: We did the same, but our shields were not so many, and some of our shields had to shelter two men. Theirs were all placed touching each other; their Bows were not so long as ours, but of better wood, and the back covered with the sinews of the Bisons which made them very elastic, and their arrows went a long way and whizzed about us as balls do from guns. They were all headed with a sharp, smooth, black stone (flint) which broke when it struck anything. Our iron headed arrows did not go through their shields, but stuck in them; On both sides several were wounded, but none lay on the ground; and night put an end to the battle, without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other. The great mischief of war then, was as now, by attacking and destroying small camps of ten to thirty tents, which are obliged to separate for hunting...

The latter kind of military action mentioned by Saukamappe conforms nicely to general ethnological conclusions - that is, at that level of general evolutionary social organization, the preferred warfare was in the nature of surprise attacks by superior forces on small, isolated enemy camps with little risk

of heavy casualties on the part of the aggressor. Maintenance of territorial prerogatives, and the chance of chiefly acquired booty appear to have been primary objectives, although revenge and status motivation probably were not too secondary. Lowie (1963:121) states:

Certainly it is an error to assume that the desire for horses was responsible for the warlike spirit characteristic of the Plains. Apart from overwhelming evidence for the craving of glory, it is clear that precisely the same eagerness for distinction prompted the tribes of the Southeast and of the Eastern Woodlands, from which the majority of the historic Plains Indians emigrated into their subsequent habitat...In other words, the typical Plains war complex existed in a nonequestrian culture; and...the dominant motives were noneconomic.

This is not the place to argue the origins or reasons for war among humankind or for specifically an economic causality, but there is an abundance of proof to support the opinion that, even among the relatively classless pedestrian Blackfoot, the rationale for fighting was not wholly economically-based and was likely much older than their tenure on this continent.

A propos of the battle described by Saukamappee, as Service (1962:115) sees it, the inability of a tribal organization to economically sustain a protracted and total campaign, or to support subject populations in a case of true conquest, renders tribal warfare quite inconclusive, so that "...the bellicose state of intertribal relations tends to be unremitting and is thus

a strong environmental inducement for a consistent unity of the various independent tribal segments or local kin groups."

Given the particular subsistence economy of the pedestrian Blackfoot, wherein seasonal dispersal in the interests of survival was mandatory and wherein tribal physical unity was hampered by lack of fast communication and transportation, inter-tribal confrontations as outlined by Thompson's informant were relatively infrequent. Petty raiding for small economic gain or for purposes of vengeance and prestige was most likely the representative pattern, and it is doubtful if the casualty rate ever approximated that of the historic era when mobility, striking power and especially magnitude of reward were emphatically enhanced by adoption of the horse and gun.

III. THE EQUESTRIAN, PRE-RESERVE PERIOD

Less than ten years after the typical infantry action as narrated by Saukamaptee in the foregoing chapter, the frontier Piegans were introduced in a rather terrifying manner to horses, and a very short while later both they and the Snakes for the first time became aware of the military potential of the gun. Saukamaptee was then a Cree and his tribe was allied temporarily with the Blackfoot against the extremely powerful and wide-ranging Snakes. Secoy notes that the Snakes were required to travel to New Mexico for horses and had yet too few to risk in any but hit-and-run raids, which explains their absence in the second of the following confrontations. The account, as recorded by Thompson (Secoy, 1953:36-37), of primitive peoples suddenly faced with the immediate effects of advanced technological aids is worth reproducing in part.

...Messengers came from our allies to claim assistance. By this time (1736-40) the affairs of both parties had much changed; we had more guns and iron-headed arrows than before; but our enemies the Snake Indians and their allies had Misstutim (Big Dogs, that is Horses) on which they rode, swift as the Deer, on which they dashed at the Peegans, and with their stone Pukamoggan knocked them on the head, and they had thus lost several of their best men. This news we did not well comprehend and it alarmed us, for we had no idea of Horses and could not make out what they were. Only three of us went...we came to our allies... it was found between us and the Stone Indians we had ten guns and each of us about thirty balls and powder for the war, and we were

considered the strength of the battle. After a few days march...the enemy was near in a large war party, but had no Horses with them, for at that time they had very few of them...We prepared for the battle as best we could. When we came to meet each other...lying flat on the ground behind the shields, we watched our opportunity when they drew their bows to shoot at us, their bodies were then exposed and each of us, as opportunity offered, fired with deadly aim, and either killed, or severely wounded, every one we aimed at...the greater part of the enemy took to flight...

When Anthony Hendry journeyed onto the prairies in 1754-55 he found what were probably the Blackfoot thoroughly committed to a mounted, nomadic, buffalo-oriented life, and in 1790, little more than half a century after the tribe had first seen the horse, Unfreville remarked that they "...are the most numerous and powerful nation we are acquainted with,...War is more familiar to them than the other nations, and they are by far the most formidable...In their inroads into the enemies country, they frequently bring off a number of horses, which is their principle inducement in going to war." (Secoy, 1953:38).

During these years, Hudson's Bay Company men and independent French traders from Montreal had made available to the Blackfoot (through Cree and Assiniboine middlemen) a whole range of sometimes technologically superior articles and utensils ideally suited to a mobile, hunting existence - tools and appliances lighter, more durable, more efficient and ready-made - so that far more time could be utilized for hunting and raiding. In addition to guns, iron cooking vessels, axeheads, awls, metal knives and arrowheads,

blankets, etc. quickly replaced the laboriously worked local manufactures. Lewis notes that "With the infiltration of the labor saving devices of white material culture and the consequent rise in the standard of living...Blackfoot dependence upon the whites, though on a different level than that of the Cree, was no less real." (1942:34).

Besides, of course, being invaluable in locating, following and hunting the buffalo, the horse became a means for transporting more meat, hides and household gear than was ever possible in the days of human and dog transport, so that Blackfoot material culture burgeoned quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Lewis (1942:35) writes:

While we have no description of Blackfoot tipis in pre-horse days we can infer the limits of their size from the fact that the maximum load that could be carried by the dog travois was between 40 to 50 pounds. Since the weight of a buffalo hide was well over 50 pounds, a six to eight skin tipi would probably tax their transportation facilities to the limit. Such a tipi could accomodate six to eight persons. However, in the earliest reference to Blackfoot tipis found in Hendry (1754) or about twenty years after their acquisition of horses, Hendry writes that the "leader's" tent in a camp of two hundred was "large enough to contain 50 persons."

Lewis also notes (1942:35-36) a further increase in dwelling size in the 1830's when American fur trade expansion brought even more wealth to the Blackfoot and allowed the most successful of them to afford polygyny.

As direct contact between the Blackfoot and the fur trader became the norm in the first decades of the nineteenth century, daily living for the tribesmen was immeasurably richer and easier, and they could now "...devote more time to warfare, to accumulating wealth in horses through raids on enemy camps, to prolonged religious ceremonies, to social gatherings, and to feasting." (Ewers, 1958:44). Unlike the Cree and Assiniboine, the Blackfoot would either not or only half-heartedly trap for trade, but with their expertise as mounted buffalo hunters they could kill many more animals than were needed for subsistence and they assumed the role of meat supplier to the traders. They also did a thriving and prosperous business selling remounts to the whites. Ewers (1958:37), extracting from Alexander Henry's ledgers, notes that at Fort Vermillion in 1809, the price of a horse from the Blackfoot was "...a gallon keg of Blackfoot rum, 2 fathoms of new twist tobacco, 20 balls and powder enough to fire them, 1 awl, 1 scalper, 1 fleshing knife, 1 gun worm, 1 P.C. glass, 1 fire steel and one flint. In addition to utilitarian time-savers, the traders offered a wide variety of luxury items - coloured strouding, beads, finger rings, commercial paints, point blankets, cloth coats, etc. - all of which could be had for effort which must have seemed infinitely preferable to the drudgery of producing equivalent articles from local resources with an inferior technology.

By acquiring horses and adapting them to their buffalo

economy the Blackfoot were able to provide sustenance, shelter, clothing and exchangeable surpluses with a fraction of the effort and time formerly necessary; with guns they were able to enlarge their hunting territories by ousting those tribes to the south and west who had only limited access to firearms; in adopting European trade goods they gained leisure which could profitably be turned to raiding for more horses for exchange and prestige. They were no longer tied to a simple subsistence pattern.

Political Organization

It is Service's contention (1962:112) that external offence-defence requirements may often be the selective factors responsible for the evolution from a band to a tribal society, and, if we can assume that early European accounts of the social and political organization of pre-equestrian Cree and Assiniboine validly represent then-contemporary reality for the Blackfoot as well, Ewers may be correct in his assumption that the pedestrian Blackfoot normally recognized only band leadership. The suggestion of a system somewhat more sophisticated implicit in Saukamappee's account of the first Snake-Blackfoot battle could represent a transitional phase. With the incursion of mounted raiders from the south and west and the presence of fusil-armed peoples to the north-east, the formation of larger political groupings for defence requirements probably became very desirable, if not

mandatory for survival. It is widely acknowledged that gun and horse introduction fostered a tremendous surge of raiding and warfare among Plains populations, and that pre-equestrian raiding largely for purposes of vengeance and prestige was superceded by continuous raiding for economic gain and prestige. Long before the Blackfoot had access to firearms and horses they had felt the effects of European technology and the opportunity for comparative wealth it engendered among native populations closer to the source of supply. Certainly there is considerable evidence to suggest that, along and beyond the expanding horse and gun frontiers, there occurred a tendency toward larger and more inter-dependent political formations - that is, from a predominantly band organization to that at the tribal level. In any case, within and possibly for some decades before the period between Thompson's meeting with the Blackfeet and 1878 - the hunting band was no longer the ultimate political unit.

No matter what form it takes, political organization implies by definition that one person has authority (whether legal or not) over another, and it is to be hoped that the following analysis will illustrate that delicate balance between the role of a Blackfoot leader and his status, a relationship that was very much of a paradox to distant Canadian and American legislators at the time of treaty-making.

The Blackfoot Band

The very specialized economy of these buffalo hunting nomads precluded year-round concentration of tribal members, so that for three quarters of each year the hunting band represented for a Blackfoot his immediate social, economic, and political reality. It is important to keep in mind that, having chosen to perpetuate on the high plains a centuries-old predisposition for a hunting and gathering existence and having successfully (if sometimes involuntarily) effected the transition from a woodland to a prairie to a plains environment, the Blackfoot were, in their peregrinations and demography, directly influenced by the habits of the animal that provided them with highly nutritious food, substantial shelter, fuel, and a satisfying way of life.

As Forde has noted (1949:50):

During the late spring and early summer (the buffalo) congregated in enormous herds, migrated along established routes to the richest pastures and fattened on the fresh grass, coming into prime condition from June to August. But in the autumn and winter, when feed was scarcer and less nutritious, they scattered more widely, forming smaller herds, and were compelled to shift more frequently from place to place. These considerations effected not only the methods of hunting but the distribution of population. While there was every advantage in the formation of large groups in summer for organized attack on the great herds, in the winter season there was need for the separation of the people into smaller groups scattered widely over the country.

Very simply, then - as in pedestrian days - a Blackfoot band was required to be small enough to ensure adequate subsistence

during the lean months, yet large enough to properly engage in the most effective hunting techniques and to ensure at least a modicum of military protection.

These bands, as with all or most other local groups practising a hunting-gathering economy, formed around an agnatic nucleus and their families, with coresidence within a more or less well-defined territory and a cooperative participation in group affairs as the only essential requisite for inclusion. However, they were not overly exclusive units nor were they of a size constancy. According to Forde (1949:51) "The situation can probably best be summarized by saying that the winter camp groups of related families tended continually to express their economic and social individuality as named bands, but the situation was modified by processes of accretion and division more rapidly than was reflected in the nominal constitution and membership of the groups at any one time." There appear to have been many families who changed band affiliation from time to time, and unless they were undesirable for some special reason, they were accorded complete recognition. Ewers notes (1958:96,97) that, with the advent of wealth in the form of horses and trade goods, a Blackfoot band became a much more fluid unit than in prehistoric times.

Band leadership, generally consisting of one man and in large bands occasionally of two or more, was never, before final

Blackfoot subjugation, based on ascription. Certainly the sons of chiefs sometimes succeeded to the position, but in theory chieftancy was awarded only for those particular character traits and marks of prowess that had apparently traditionally obtained during pedestrian times. That this pattern was in fact eroded by economic and technological concomitants of increasing white contact will be observed later. However, besides a basic kinship identity, a man was ostensibly chosen as the chief of his band because of his outstanding skill as a hunter and warrior, his competence in economic planning and his ability to maintain reasonable order and harmony within the group. He did not have access to any legally coercive machinery by which his will or decisions might be enforced - he was chief only by the sufferance of the males of his band, by the tacit consent of his peers. The historian, Francis Parkman (1964:104) wrote of the Oglala Dakota in 1846:

Courage, address and enterprise may raise any warrior to the highest honor...but when he has reached the dignity of chief, and the old men and warriors have formally installed him, let it not be imagined that he assumes any of the outward signs of rank and honor. He knows too well on how frail a tenure he holds his station. Like the Teutonic chiefs of old, he ingratiates himself with his young men by making them presents...If he fails to gain their favour, they will set his authority at naught, and may desert him at any moment; for the usages of his people have provided no means of enforcing his authority.

Parkman's description in part mirrors the Blackfoot situation, although he errs in supposing that those very qualities - sagacity and physical prowess - that favored the elevation of a man to leadership would not themselves evoke respect and perhaps fear and thus assist in enforcing his positional power, excepting against collective opposition. Parkman's employment of the word "ingratiated" is also ill-chosen and youthfully ethnocentric. In addition to hospitality, ostentatious liberality facilitated circulation of goods within the band, and most certainly was not indulged in without the expectation of sometime reciprocation, either in kind or at least in loyalty. Nevertheless, there was nothing formally obligatory in the principle of reciprocity, although "...a continual borrower lost status and a limit was thus put upon indiscriminate begging." (Flannery, 1953:85). As L.M. Hanks (1950:27) explains it:

Blackfoot theory stated that any person might camp with any chief. In practise, each camp comprised a stable core of close relatives of the chief, his brother, sister's husband, son-in-law, and often his son. In addition there was a circle of less immediate relatives by blood or marriage, such as the son's father-in-law, brother's wife's husband, and any member's cherished age-mate of no traceable relationship. On this level, a man or his wife was almost always related somehow to several chiefs. A person exploited his kin relationships to his own advantage, and if ever the authority of his chief became obnoxious or he saw better advantage elsewhere, he moved away to assume membership among another chief's following. Thus chiefly

jurisdiction was over voluntary followers who had the right to move away from burdensome authority whenever they wished.

Whether or not military prowess of an outstanding order was considered necessary in a pedestrian band leader, it had most certainly become a prime requisite in the later Plains situation. As Oliver (1961:63) emphasizes, "It is necessary to stress the point that the True Plains tribes were quite literally fighting for their lives. They were engaged in a fierce competition with other tribes and with outside powers for territory and for horses; both land to hunt in and horses to hunt with were crucial to survival." Certainly ownership of horses was a basic determinant of status and everywhere on the Plains raiding constituted the main method of enlarging herds. A warrior who displayed a flair for successful horse raiding and who was able to steal enough of a herd to bestow horses as gifts to the less skillful and fortunate was well on the way to band leadership.

For all the apparent individualism of expression, and for all the lack of a formal legal frame within which intrasocietal strife might be sanctioned, the band level of sociocultural integration (Service, 1962:107) as exemplified by many of the nomadic Plains peoples, did not to any degree represent chaotic disorder. At the most primary level - that of the nuclear family - there was little question of the authority of the husband, and the

way of the Blackfoot female transgressor was indeed hard. Again in common with many other Plains tribes, wherein sexual repression and inhibition (other than in rigidly prescribed circumstances) obtained, Blackfoot norms in this matter were especially prohibitive and many are the accounts by white travellers of Blackfoot women who had been facially mutilated for adultery. Good manners, mutual restraint and suppression of potentially disruptive emotions acted to promote in-group harmony generally. The alternatives to adherence to prescribed modes of behavior were deterrent enough, the most drastic of which were ostracism and banishment. In Ewer's words (1958:97):

The individual who was wronged was expected to exact such punishment of the wrongdoer as he or his family was able to inflict. Not uncommonly, the criminal fled to another Blackfoot band or to a neighboring tribe. Theft customarily was followed by reclaiming of the stolen property. Murder was punished by the dead man's relatives, who usually took the life of the murderer. But if the murdered man was poor and the killer rich and powerful, the matter might be ended by a payment of horses to the family of the deceased. Thus it was possible for a wealthy man to get away with murder, although he would not enhance his popularity by doing so.

Ewers has in the latter part of that statement nicely outlined the gap between theory and practice, or for that matter between persistence and change. The amassing of wealth and consequently power, made possible by the introduction of a technology that reduced actual subsistence time and effort requirements to a

minimum, created something radically new in Blackfoot life - a class society. Ewers has always taken the position that Blackfoot culture after the introduction of the horse was qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from Blackfoot culture in pedestrian times and contends that the change was largely social rather than material. (Ewers, 1955:338):

The adaptation of the horse to the Plains Indian economy brought about a change from a relatively classless society to a society composed of three classes, which graded almost imperceptibly into one another, and in which membership was determined largely upon the basis of horse ownership - a privileged but responsible upper class, a relatively independent middle class, and an underprivileged and dependent lower class.

Mishkin also stresses the advent of the horse as instrumental in the reorganization of cultural values inasmuch as it brought a new standard of wealth based upon the number of horses an individual might possess. (Mishkin 1940:22):

Among Plains tribes there is a correlation between horse surplus, trading and raiding. These three factors describe a circular course each maintaining and accelerating the other. Thus those tribes that owned surpluses were naturally the most active traders and in turn were compelled to be the most active raiders in order to replenish their surpluses for future trading.

Obviously, a warrior who had attained wealth by raiding likely also possessed those qualities prized by the Blackfoot in leaders, but equally expected of a leader in a now stratified

society was the quality of generosity, a sense of responsibility toward his less gifted or fortunate fellows. Ewers (1958:97) has suggested this as a primary reason for the marked formation of new bands and the dissolution of old bands that so confused mid-eighteenth century census attempts. And because any able man, although his position might be more advantageous as the son or relative of a leader, could by industrious application acquire horse wealth, a fixed status system based on inheritance would have initially been difficult to maintain. Elkin (1940:224) states that:

The possession of wealth, other than it permitted one to gain a reputation for liberality, was thus not in itself a criterion for the ascription of prestige. The horse, however, under proper circumstances, might have allowed for social stratification on a property basis. Unlike other forms of property, it was the essential means of procuring a livelihood, was differentiated into relative values, and deteriorated slowly. Nevertheless, any development along this line was almost precluded by constant warfare. The frequency with which whole herds were won or lost served to prevent property ownership from becoming personally concentrated.

In remarking upon the instability of the pedestrian Blackfoot bands both Collier and Lewis (1942:43) have included British-American trade rivalry as a contributory factor. The Hudson's Bay Company policy of dealing only through chiefs had, of course, generally enhanced chiefly authority. In order to ingratiate themselves with the Blackfoot hunters in a concerted effort to wrest the trade monopoly from the Hudson's Bay Company,

American traders by-passed the headmen and with the assistance of trade whisky appealed directly to the younger men. Lewis (1942:43) remarks:

...the authority of the elders had diminished to the point where fathers could no longer control the produce of their own sons...Once the young men did not have to depend upon their chiefs and elders for their liquor, one of the economic bases of the chiefs authority disappeared. The prestige and authority of a chief was therefore dependent upon his generosity, and Collier considers the lack of generosity on the part of a chief as one of the most important causes for a man changing his band membership.

Normally, the band chief was in no way a supreme executive, and only by force of his personality as a peacemaker would he intervene to alleviate internal discord that might become dangerously disruptive to band harmony. As will be seen, public law of a sort did exist at a tribal level for control of the communal hunt during the summer months, but for the remainder of each year when the bands had dispersed to their respective hunting and wintering territories, private law - "... (that) body of rules governing conduct deemed to be of immediate concern to the injured party but indirectly recognized as of concern to the society at large..." (Hoebel, 1960:49) predominated. The Blackfoot, unlike their fellow Algonkians, the Cheyenne, seem to have relied for retribution mainly on the *lex talionis* premise, and on public disapproval and ridicule. In a discussion of Cheyenne public law, Hoebel (1960:49) outlines the problem of intra-group violence which, although specifically refractory,

illustrates the entire Plains dilemma.

Violence of Cheyenne against Cheyenne is the great challenge to the Cheyenne system of social control, and the existence of this danger stems from the fact that Cheyenne basic values are contradictory at certain points. On the one hand, the individual is trained and encouraged to be militarily aggressive. He is publicly rewarded with many ego-satisfying reinforcements for sterling performance on the battlefield. But...his training leads to strong repression in the development of many phases of his personality. He is taught to be competitive in the achievement of war status and horse-stealing reputation. At the same time he must repressively control his sex drives, and he is trained in social altruism and mild demeanor within the camp. It is therefore not surprising that violent emotions often break through the bonds of self-restraint in homicidal assaults on fellow tribesmen.

The competitive trends initiated by elevation from a subsistence-level pedestrian, classless existence to equestrian and trade-oriented affluence became a dominant feature of later nineteenth century Blackfoot life, and in conjunction with access to alcohol, led to a rivalry for power and recognition that distinguished this tribe as especially violent. As early as 1810, a trader at Rocky Mountain House said of the Piegans, "That power for all evil, spirituous liquor, seems now to dominate them, and has taken such hold on them that they are no longer the quiet people they were." (Ewers, 1958:35). And, in alluding to violence and aggressiveness within bands of the Blood tribe, Goldfrank (1966:11) cites the following representative cases taken from winter counts of the 1850's

and anthropological field notes:

Big Snake was the Chief of Many-Children band. He had many wives and children and the strong men in his band were envious of him. Mad Wolf tried to kill him.

A chief of the Followers-of-the-Buffalo band gave Big Snake a fast buffalo horse and in return Big Snake presented him with a fine weasel tail suit. The Buffalo chief soon regretted his generosity and wished to recover his gift. Accompanied by his father, he entered Big Snake's tipi and demanded his horse. Big Snake shot and killed him. The father ran from the tipi. No one tried to avenge his death because Big Snake was much stronger.

Some members in the Many-Children Band were envious of Packs His Tail because he was rich. One day, he visited their camp, and after considerable drinking on both sides, they took away his gun and killed him. When his brother, Many Pinto Horses, came to avenge his death, the Many-Children shot him, too.

The Blackfoot Tribe

In the late spring and early summer when the buffalo began to migrate in huge herds to the summer pastures, the Blackfoot bands came together for the great hunt, and it was with the annual advent of this extremely productive project that a definite, public system of control and authority, cross-cutting band and kin affiliations, emerged. Band-like expedients for integration - exogamy and marital residence - were insufficient to ensure tribal solidarity. The exigencies of military polity may well have provided the basic impetus to

the transition from band to tribal organization, but the potential for increased economic activity inherent in concerted equestrian effort must also have been almost immediately obvious to the pedestrian bands upon their initial introduction to the horse. And later, buffalo hides and horses became valuable items of trade with fur companies. These constants of equestrian Plains existence - hunting requirements, offence-defence considerations, and the gaining of status by competitive exchange - made political consolidation most desirable, and to a large extent account for the formation of military or police societies among the Blackfoot and other Plains tribes; these groups, recruited from all bands and almost all age levels within a tribe, may be considered to have met the need for a seasonal unifying agent, to have been evolved for expressly political purposes. Lowie, Wissler and others have referred to the Blackfoot as problematical with regard to clan organization or other kin-based tribal subdivision, and Service (1962:138) states that:

All of the Plains tribes lacked true lineal residential groups, although some had them, as well as clans, before they became equestrian in the Plains. It would seem also that the tribes were often formed by amalgamation rather than internal growth. Appropriately, the Plains tribes had a marked efflorescence of clubs, societies, and age-graded associations. This judgement does not mean that the presence of clubs, segmentary lineages, or kindreds precludes the rise of non-kin sodalities, for they should be expected to come about in proportion to the need for them; it is merely a way of saying that the need for non-kin sodalities is

greater if there are no kin sodalities, or if the kin sodalities are too weak.

If, in pedestrian times, there had among the Blackfoot been "...a tendency toward a gentile exogamous (clan) system..." (Wissler, 1920:90), it seems, as Service suggests, to have become blurred and politically ineffectual by the beginning of the last century. Some of the reasons for this change in band and tribal composition are not too difficult to discover. The same epidemic of smallpox that decimated the Snakes in 1781 also to a lesser extent reduced the Blackfoot who contacted it from the lodges of their dead and dying enemies; and the epidemic of 1837 took nearly two-thirds of the Blackfoot population. Alexander Culbertson, an American trader at Fort McKenzie that year claimed that, "...following this epidemic and dispersal of the Indians into different bands, knowledge of kin relationships was lost to the young, so that marriages took place between first cousins and even brothers and sisters." horsehit (Ewers, 1958:66). In any case, the basic ecological factors of Plains life - an extreme dependence on the buffalo cycle and the military necessity for mobility and flexibility - naturally inhibited the formation of groupings more suitable to an established, sedentary society. Goldschmidt (1959:154) finds clans most common in the "middle range of social systems; that is between the hunters and gatherers and the state-organized societies, and Eggan (1955:42) states:

Whenever it is essential to hold property in trust or to maintain rituals from generation to generation, unilateral organizations or "corporations" are far more efficient than bilateral ones. The clan gives a greater degree of stability and permanence but has in turn a limited flexibility and adaptability to new situations.

It may well be that the men's clubs and societies were in essence a continuation of principles formerly implicit in the kin-oriented band, and that that characteristic age-grading of Blackfeet societies represented a transference of that status differential based on age that generally applies to kinship dominated systems. This inference is supported by Lowie (1963:106) who reports that among two other Plains tribes with age-societies the younger group referred to the next older as their "fathers", and Oliver (1962:57) notes that:

Societies, like clans, are characteristic of the "middle ranges" of cultural systems. They are one technique of organizing such societies for action. We have seen how the Plains situation tended to inhibit the development of large kinship units such as clans. In view of this, societies would seem to be an ideal alternative device for structuring the Plains tribes on a nonkinship basis.

It would not be amiss to re-emphasize that, even if a clan system had operated within pedestrian Blackfoot bands, the altered economic situation occasioned by the horse, the gun and the fur trade might have made its retention difficult. This factor, noted earlier, is enlarged upon by Ewers (1958:96):

The hunting band was probably a much more fluid unit than it had been in prehistoric times. In early times when everyone stood literally on an even footing, the chiefs had no property to dispense. But in the middle of the nineteenth century poor families looked to their chief for charity. They changed their band allegiance if they believed they might better their economic condition as followers of a more liberal chief. Some of the larger bands had more than one chief. New bands were created when a rising leader and his followers broke away from an existing band. An older band might dissolve after the death of a prominent chief if there was no one who could take his place in the hearts of his followers.

It will be obvious from the above, with its attendant grudges and ill-feelings, that in order for the bands to effectively and in concert engage in the summer buffalo hunt some form of or agency for discipline had to evolve. With regard to age-grading, which may have reached the Blackfoot by diffusion, Lewis (1966:41) points out that "The borrowing of age grades...is intelligible in that they were an ideal mechanism for expressing and channelizing the vertical mobility which came with the increase in wealth."

In each of the three Blackfoot tribes there were from nine to twelve age-graded men's societies, into one of which every male was admitted, and wherein all but the senior society he remained four years as a rule, before moving on to the next. Each society owned its own songs, dances and ceremonies, and its members were mostly of similar age and experience, although Forde (1949:56) suggests:

...as at school, individuals did not always start at the bottom, and one or two might skip a grade later on or stay behind beyond the normal period. Moreover, a few old men became honorary members of the more junior societies and acted as instructors, while one or two young men were admitted to the senior societies.

Transfer of membership was individually arranged and involved purchase of tenure from one who himself proposed to transfer to his next senior grade. Rank, insignia, accoutrements, and privileges appropriate to membership were paid for with horses and weapons.

The functions of these societies were manifold, of course, and certainly non-secular and entertainment considerations are not to be denied, especially as each society met as an entity only for the brief summer hunt. Eggan (1955:88) has noted:

The larger tribal organization is reflected in the camp circle but finds its integration primarily in ceremonial and symbolic terms. The band system, which was primarily an economic organization, dominated most of the year, but when the tribes came together, the society organization, composed of males, was pre-eminent and overshadowed the band organization. The importance of tribal ceremonies in social integration can hardly be overestimated.

There were also serious public obligations extracted from each society or the societies collectively, and foremost among these was the maintenance of order and cooperation during the communal hunting period. When each band as a discrete unit

had finally pitched its tipis in its assigned place within the tribal circle in early summer, the hunting regulations were declared operative by the head chief, and from that time until mass hunting was suspended immediately prior to dispersal to respective wintering grounds, anyone who attempted to kill buffalo on his own or in any way disturb the herds before each major hunt was organized was punished severely by whatever societies had been given the responsibility for policing the camp. As Forde (1949:56) describes the arrangement, "When the bands assembled in the spring, the leaders of the societies conferred with the band chiefs, who outlined their proposals for camping sites and routes of travel, and selected two or three of the societies to undertake the various duties for that season." Offenders who by their actions might endanger the success of a venture upon which the entire tribe depended for subsistence and exchangeable surpluses were beaten and their property destroyed. This authority was delegated only very temporarily, and other than within the family, was the only provision in the Blackfoot political system for the public application of sanctions of force, and even then it could be exercised only at the behest of the council of chiefs. As Forde sees it, "The changing membership, coupled with the rivalry of one with another and the short season of their activity, averted any tendency to the permanent seizure of power by one or all of these societies." (1949:57).

Ethnologists characteristically refer to Plains Indians' mens' societies as military societies, and Hoebel (1960:33) states that these societies are "...social and civic organizations mainly centered on the common experience of the members as warriors, with rituals glorifying and enhancing that experience, and with duties and services performed on behalf of the community at large." Inasmuch as all physically able Blackfoot men were potential warriors, the appellation "military society" sustains, although raiding, with booty and prestige as incentives, was largely a personal rather than a tribal matter and the participants, voluntarily recruited, might be from a number of societies. On the other hand, in tribal expeditions there is a possibility that the Blackfoot societies might have acted as military police to preserve battle discipline and so diminish the chance of heavy casualties or defeat, although I can find no historical or ethnographical statement to this effect. In contradistinction to the Cheyenne, whose warrior societies are known to have beaten overanxious and careless scouts "...just as though they had broken the rules of the communal hunt" (Hoebel, 1960:74), it is doubtful that Blackfoot mens' societies were employed as control enforcement agencies in warfare. Ewers has recorded that "In large-scale battles, when the size of the opposing forces was nearly equal, Blackfoot tactics suffered from weakness of organization and command and the relative independence of the individual warriors. Blackfoot fighting men were not soldiers but gladiators." (1958:140).

I wonder if he read any memoirs of Indians? I doubt it.

The origin of age-graded societies among the Blackfoot is problematical. An excellent case for diffusion to the Arapaho, Gros Ventres and finally to the Blackfoot from the horticultural village Mandan and Hidatsa has been put forward. (Oliver, 1962:57). Borrowed or no, there is no recorded evidence for societies as such within the Blackfoot political configuration until they were described by Maxmilian in 1833, that is, fully forty-six years after the Blackfoot were positively identified by Europeans; it is highly probable that it was an adaptive measure in direct response to a new ecology. In support, Service (1962:114) is of the opinion that:

The competition of societies in the neolithic phase of cultural development seems to have been the general factor which led to the development of integrating pan-tribal sodalities. The kind of natural habitat is important, of course, in a consideration of the size, stability, and number of residential groups and the general density of population in an area, but problems arising from this kind of adaptation are technological as well. It seems likely that without foreign political problems over-all tribal integration would not take place; it is always such problems that stimulate the formation of larger political bodies.

Oliver has differentiated between "formal leadership" and "informal leadership" in terms of polar examples of each among the tribes of the Plains (1962:58) and as his model for "informal leadership" patterns he has chosen the Blackfoot. Once again, a certain cultural persistence or continuity of

practice over a long period of time is manifested. In comparing the Blackfoot with the other polar example, the Cheyenne, he concludes:

There are real differences here; the problem is to account for them. They cannot be attributed to ecology, since both of these True Plains tribes shared essentially the same ecological situation. The break in the data among the True Plains tribes of different backgrounds provides the clue: the tribes with formal leadership patterns were originally horticultural tribes, and the tribes with informal leadership patterns were originally hunting and gathering tribes. This correlates closely with the information from peripheral tribes. Most of the peripheral hunting and gathering tribes had a system of informal leadership, whereas all of the peripheral farming tribes had a system of formal leadership. The generalization may be broadened; it seems to be generally true that leadership patterns become more formalized as one moves from nomadic hunting and gathering peoples to sedentary horticultural societies. The conclusion seems inescapable that the differences in leadership patterns among the True Plains tribes reflect differences in the types of leadership that they had when they first moved into the Plains. They certainly had to adapt to the new Plains situation, but they did this by modifying existing institutions.

Unlike the Dakota, Omaha and Cheyenne, whose systems featured elected councils and appointed chiefs, the Blackfoot had a relatively unsystematic arrangement for tribal leadership. The leader or leaders of each component band composed a tribal council which recognized one of their number as tribal chief, who retained his office only by popular assent and who was vested with no absolute or immutable authority. Chiefly rank

at the tribal level was of little importance excepting during the period of the summer tribal gathering, and even then a chief was in essence more of a chairman of the council of band chiefs than a ruler of his people. At other times, for all intents and purposes, tribal discipline was non-existent. Denig, whose experience with the northern Plains tribes extended from 1832 to 1854, outlines the Indian concept as follows (Flannery, 1953:32):

In fact the rank or standing of each Indian be he chief or warrior is so well known and his character so well judged by the vox populi that he takes his place spontaneously. A higher step than his acts and past conduct confer, imprudently taken, would have the effect of injuring him in their eyes as a leader. Every chief, warrior or brave carves his own way to fame, and if recognized as one by the general voice becomes popular and is supported; if not he mixes with hundreds of others in similar situation and waiting opportunity to rise.

According to Ewers (1952:39) the Piegans and perhaps the other Blackfoot tribes had a civil chief and a war chief - "...the former renowned for his eloquence, the latter for his success in leading large war parties. Both held limited authority. They, as well as the chiefs of bands, were leaders only by the will and consent of their people."

It has been variously emphasized by traders, frontiersmen, historians and ethnographers that, as well as military, hunting and organizational skills, Plains chieftancy

was most decidedly contingent upon a propensity for liberality; whether or not this quality was expected or even possible to indulge in pedestrian days, it had definitely become a requisite for status aspiration by the early nineteenth century, by which time Blackfoot subsistence techniques had undergone radical change and luxuries had become necessities.

With new found wealth, made possible by equestrian hunting potential and white labour-saving devices, came economic inequality, and inevitably, more of an inequality of opportunity for political advancement. Ewers (1952:95) estimates that an average family of eight persons required ten horses to move camp satisfactorily and also at least one good buffalo horse for each adult male, but that there were many families who owned only one or two horses and were of a consequence dependent upon charity. At the other end of the economic and social scale were those relatively few Blackfoot as observed by a French-Canadian trader in 1860 (Ewers, 1958:95):

It is a fine sight to see one of these big men among the Blackfeet, who has two or three lodges, five or six wives, twenty or thirty children, and fifty to a hundred horses; for his trade amounts to upward of \$2000 a year.

In a political system whereby rank was considerably dependent on public goodwill, surpluses were accumulated only to be expended as munificently as possible to secure prestige.

James Doty recorded in 1854 (Ewers, 1958:96):

Every man who can acquire a large herd of horses, keep a good lodge and make a large trade in Buffalo Robes is a chief, and he will maintain a persuasive influence over his people just so long as he continues wealthy, and ministers to the popular voice in directing the movements of the camp, leading war parties, etc. Whenever he opposes his wishes to those of his people, they will desert him and turn to some chief more pliable.

Even if, immediately prior to capitulation and reservation confinement, the old pre-horse values regarding rank still ostensibly obtained, obviously the sons and male relatives of wealthy men were in a much better position to aspire to high rank than were those of poor Blackfoot, so that one might wonder how soon or if status traditionally gained by achievement might have become status attained largely by ascription. As Goldfrank (1945:7) points out:

Inevitably, the activities of the man without horses or with only a few were limited. While his personal bravery might be unquestioned, the poor man could not hope to organize or direct a war party - the chief road to social recognition - for no man of greater wealth would submit to his leadership. Eager to participate in a hunt or raid but lacking a fast horse, he was forced to borrow from a wealthy patron, sometimes handing over as much as one-half the game killed or one half the loot captured.

Because, as noted above, a man would never consider raiding with a leader who was not as affluent, and because raiding parties tended normally to consist of male relatives, booty and honors became more and more the perogatives of certain

families. As well, the not-inconsiderable equipment needed for protracted forays precluded the poor from participation, especially as guns and ammunition were to be had from traders only in return for horses and hides.

Admitting that there was still much opportunity within equestrian Blackfoot society for vertical mobility, Goldfrank nevertheless adds this qualification (1945:8):

...the mere fact that great numbers of horses could be accumulated and held for a considerable period led to certain advantage. Manipulation through purchase, give-aways, and other forms of ostentatious display in no way destroyed this advantage. Shrewdly exercised, they built up great prestige and reliable support.

Much of the warfare so typical of equestrian Blackfoot life was, of course, partly the result of an accent on the amassing of wealth, an emphasis the adherence to which and excelling at which had precipitated the chiefs to eminence. It was a system eventually whose effects they were powerless to deal with effectively, had they wanted to. Their efforts were often completely nullified by their own ambitious younger warriors who desired stolen horses and battle honors to acquire economic and social status. Old Chief Low Horn, ostensibly tired of bloodshed, bargained for peace with the American government in 1853 and apologized to the Governor of Washington Territory for the refractory behavior of the Piegans, explaining

that the chiefs "...could not restrain their young men, but their young men were wild, and ambitious, in their turn to be braves and chiefs. They wanted some brave act to win the favor of their young women, and bring scalps and horses to show their prowess." (Ewers, 1958:210). Not the least of the major obstacles to Indian acceptance of reservation existence was the failure of white administrators to comprehend the basic nature of the relationship of a chief to his people and the limits to his authority. As a consequence of this dangerous ignorance, tractable minor chiefs (taking full advantage of the confused transitional period) were frequently granted plenipotentiary powers wholly anathematical to their wards.

The Blackfoot Confederacy

The three Blackfoot tribes "...although believing in a common origin and maintaining friendly relations, had each its own territory, tribal organization and ceremonial." (Ford, 1949:49), and each was entirely autonomous. There was never in the equestrian period a Blackfoot confederacy in the political sense, only in the social sense; that is, a feeling of being Blackfoot. To the best of my knowledge the three tribes in their entirety had at no time acted collectively, although passage of individuals through political boundaries, or cooperative military action involving bands from a combination of any two of the

tribes were not wholly uncommon. Furthermore, the Gros Ventres and Sarsis, thought by many non-Indians to be member tribes of the "confederacy", formed nothing more than the occasional military alliance with the Blackfoot. As a matter of fact, both of these tribes during the mid-nineteenth century also fought at various times against the Blackfoot.

Equestrian Warfare

As with other facts of True Plains cultures, there are those who contend that equestrian warfare was a modification of pedestrian patterns, and those who see it as a qualitative departure from the pre-horse and pre-gun past. Smith, for instance, accepts the case for acceleration because of improved technology but rejects any marked revolutionizing of military procedures. Lewis, on the other hand, takes exception to Smith's non-historical research and argues that the whole character of Blackfoot warfare underwent considerable change when the tribe became mounted and armed with guns. (Lewis, 1942:46).

Before examining Plains equestrian warfare it might be well to consider that the type of infantry warfare as related by Thompson's informant was likely typical of major battles in that period subsequent to indirect fur-trade influence and prior to horse acquisition; and in order to have so efficiently fielded

a disciplined force the Blackfoot must, for that transitional period at least, have evolved a relatively sophisticated political organization. This is not to imply that in pedestrian days small-scale raids were not as prevalent as pitched battles or that in equestrian times large-scale actions were entirely lacking. However, one of the most distinguishing features of Blackfoot mounted warfare is the importance of equipment over masses of men, the extreme mobility of combat, and the florescence of individualism.

As much a determinant as Blackfoot acquisition of horses was the increasing availability of guns and ammunition as the European traders moved further west and initiated direct trade with the tribe in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The Snakes, Flathead and Kutenais, who were south and west of the frontier Piegans and thus even more removed from the source of firearms, were by 1800 totally evicted by the Blackfoot from their lands along the eastern slope of the Rockies. They had painfully learned during this protracted flight to avoid large-scale pitched battles with their fusil-equipped enemies, so that by the time they had fully occupied the disputed territory, northwest Plains warfare consisted for the most part of mounted guerilla actions. As Saukamappee related of an even earlier stage (Secoy, 1966:52):

The terror...of our guns has prevented
any more general battles and our wars have

since been carried by ambuscade and surprize of small camps....While we have these weapons (i.e. guns, iron arrowheads, knives and axes), the Snake Indians have none, but what few they sometimes take from one of our small camps which they have destroyed, and they have no traders among them. We thus continued to advance through the fine plains to the Stag River (Red Deer River)...

The new pattern of small cavalry groups did not wholly replace large formations and when early in the nineteenth century the Snakes became armed with guns and tried to permanently re-occupy some of their old territories, even the pre-equestrian line of infantry was occasionally reverted to by both sides. Nevertheless, raiding had become so representative that by the middle of the century, the old rank of war chief had been abandoned entirely by the Blackfoot and was replaced by a temporary leadership of small war parties. In Secoy's opinion (1966:62):

The introduction of the gun vastly increased the warrior's power to kill as well as the distance at which it could be done. The gun thereby apparently fostered a tendency for individualism in war as opposed to cooperative group action. However, since other factors prevented this tendency from developing to the extreme of the "one man army", it usually resulted in a decrease in the size of the fighting unit, in the degree of specialization of roles, and in the subordination to centralized control. At the same time, the extremely deadly effect of massed gunfire on concentrated, slow-moving military units completely eliminated the large scale infantry form of battle.

Apart from tactical modifications and improved weapons,

the most significant change in Plains warfare was the motivation. In pre-horse times when personal property was of necessity small and limited and there was little wealth differentiation, looting can hardly have been very often a primary reason for raiding, and other than for the acquiring of new or defending of old hunting territory, warfare was conducted mainly for the purpose of revenge. Now with a new dependence on horses in order to survive and to maintain a vastly improved standard of living the dominant, if not the entire motive became economic; and as horses became the medium of exchange and proof of wealth, warfare in the form of horse-raiding became an integral part of Blackfoot life. As Lewis (1942:54) notes:

The accumulation of wealth, the manipulation of property, spending, buying and selling, dominated Blackfoot life. Social position depended upon the liberal use of wealth, ostentatious display, and other forms of social investment. Every step in religious and secular ritual involved property payments, and the number of horses that changed hands in the transfers, and the buying into societies was truly remarkable. The ownership of horses therefore became a major index of social status.

Horse-raiding parties were normally small, hastily organized groups of volunteers acting under no central military authority, and they were disbanded almost immediately the participants had returned home. The members of a party might never again raid as a group, nor were the parties of a numerical constancy.

Two men might, and frequently did, constitute a horse-stealing unit.

If the leader of a raiding party wished for eager and desperate followers, he was sure to find them in the ranks of the younger, poorer warriors who were extremely anxious and ambitious for wealth and prestige. Doty observed (Ewers, 1958:126-127):

In one of these parties are generally found 3 or 4 young men, or mere boys, who are apprentices. They go without the expectation of receiving a horse, carry extra moccasins and tobacco for the party, do all the camp drudgery, and consider themselves amply repaid in being permitted to learn the science of horse stealing from such experienced hands.

Members of a raiding party were usually of the same band and often related, so that although the band headman might be opposed to a particular raiding venture, he could do little more than register displeasure, so great was the incentive to raid. From all accounts, Plains Indians were indisposed to extensive horse breeding and could not or did not raise enough to satisfy their needs, both utilitarian and as a medium of exchange. Raiding, wherein casualties were generally light because of the element of surprise involved, was the obvious and pleasureable answer. Mishkin (1966:6) has stated:

...the supposition that wild horses ever constituted a primary source of the Indians'

herds is unfounded. According to all the evidence, raiding was everywhere the principle method of acquiring horses. There is no reason to suspect that Indian horses bred poorly; nevertheless natural increase of the herds apparently did not satisfy the Indian's needs and he was every impatient to replenish stock.

In addition to being indispensable for the efficient hunting of surplus buffalo for trading purposes, for the transporting of goods and shelter, and for effective raiding, horses came to represent a warrior's capital, the lending of which netted a handsome interest rate of up to fifty percent. Those men with surplus capital loaned horses for hunting and war parties, in return exacting "one half of the game killed, and one half of the loot captured" (Lewis, 1942:55). It is readily apparent that those Blackfoot who had accumulated surpluses by raiding needed to raid no longer, but could simply replenish and enlarge their herds by frequent loans to poor tribesmen.

Inevitably, wealth and power came to reside in certain families, and toward the end of the buffalo period, this concentration of affluence had very definitely eroded the age-old requisites for leadership. Goldfrank (1966:7-8) notes:

There is no doubt that...poor young men had to overcome many obstacles that the sons of rich men never had to face. These favoured youths, who expected their fathers' poor followers to supply the household with the necessary food and skins, could participate more frequently in the rewarding war parties and win prestige while still

comparatively young. The sons of the rich might even spurn this activity. Beautifully clothed, continually honored by their parents with expensive purchases of privilege, and assured of their bride price (they) were urged to shun the warpath altogether...Obviously these "drones" trusted to their fathers' wealth to bring them positions of respect - and this trust was not misplaced. Bravery and war deeds remained an asset to leadership, but among the Blackfoot great deeds in social and ceremonial life would alone elevate one to the status of headman.

Secoy (1966:63) remarks that, once the Snakes were able to purchase firearms in quantity from American traders early in the nineteenth century, the war potential of the contending groups was equalized and that the resultant "balance of power" precluded territorial expansion but instead allowed all the tribes involved sufficient buffalo range for their needs. Thus another of the pedestrian Blackfoot motives for war - territorial expansion - was removed, and aside from the gaming aspect of Plains warfare, only the basically economic impetus remained, with the exception, of course, of the revenging of raiding deaths.

The Blackfoot appear to have evolved a fine commercial sense to a greater degree than most of the other Plains tribes to the point where in later warfare individual aggrandizement superceded tribal interests, and where in a once classless society the gap between rich and poor became increasingly obvious. When the buffalo disappeared from the northern ranges

in 1878, Blackfoot society was in essence no longer egalitarian in the pre-horse sense, and political rank was on the verge of being total ascribed.

IV

CONCLUSION

As will have been evident in the foregoing, there are numerous minor and some not so insignificant contradictions in the material that has been cited to depict particular facets of Blackfoot life. The anthropologists involved tend generally to fall into two distinct groups - those who accept the adaptive modification premise to describe True Plains cultures, and those who see the configuration as qualitatively different from pre-horse patterns. Certain well-defined characteristics distinguish each group as distinct from the other. The former, by and large, consists of scholars who were primarily museum-oriented, who were concerned with the classification and description of culture traits, whose references are mostly taken from the publications of other anthropologists, and who were eminent during the first third of this century. The latter group is younger, is historically and holistically inclined, shows an abiding preoccupation with the dynamics of culture change, and has extensively researched the diaries, journals and documents of non-anthropologists who were intimately associated with the Plains tribes. This is not meant as an invidious comparison but, confronted with frequently dissimilar

interpretations of specific social phenomena, one is constrained to wonder if the one group portrayed the normative situation and the other the factual situation, and if the informants interviewed by the early students some time after treaty-making had not imparted recollections somewhat distorted by wishful retrospection and nostalgia. For an accurate and comprehensive description of material culture and certainly for models of the objective set of social and political relationships between the members of a society, the mass of data garnered by the early ethnographers is invaluable. As Davis (1961:53) states, "Unless we know both the objective order and the subjective set of norms we cannot understand the society." The more recent anthropologists have provided the complementary factual and historical leavening.

The focus of this paper has been on political systems and warfare and the brief foray into material culture and hunting techniques in pedestrian times was merely by way of additional corroboration for a hunting and gathering ancestry for the Plains Blackfoot. We have already noted that by the time the Blackfoot were first historically documented they had for some years been influenced by European economic and technological pressures, so that we can only assume and infer what political groupings obtained before the fur trade. It is nevertheless difficult to believe that the advent of whites disturbed a hitherto demographically static situation or that major tribal military confrontations

were wholly recent innovations.

What did take place during that time prior to reserve confinement about which we have positive, concrete, written evidence is that large-scale warfare at least changed in the main from a protracted, well organized and tribally controlled infantry pattern to ultimately little more than brief cavalry skirmishes, and that raiding (which had always existed) became by far the dominant form. More important, in terms of political organization and cultural values, the reasons for military activity were altered which, of course, along with technological improvements, dictated the tactical contrast. As Lewis (1942:59) sees it:

...the effect of the horse was to bring about a decentralization in political organization and a **florescence** of individualism. The Blackfoot had already achieved a remarkable degree of political organization in pre-horse times, when the activities of the bands, at least for war purposes, were unified under a central leader. The concerted action of early tribal warfare was a cohesive force in Blackfoot culture. Far from acting as a unifying factor, the introduction of the horse and gun represented a disruptive one.

The acquisition of the horse, the gun and European trade goods made it possible for a formerly subsistence level society to amass exchangeable surpluses; and because of an initial arms advantage, to enlarge their hunting territories,

to maintain them militarily and to control trade within them. The attendant enormously increased productivity allowed for a burgeoning and enrichment of social, religious and economic activity, and ultimately to a social stratification which by the end of the buffalo period was close to destroying traditional cultural values pertaining to political ascendancy. Mishkin (1966:63) notes that:

...the pouring into Plains society of tangible wealth in the form of horses furnished the ground on which property distinctions could arise. Next, the conjunction of property acquisition with military activity laid the basis for the ultimate creation of a wealthy hereditary elite...In Plains society, the horse, rank and warfare are inextricably woven and the analysis of their relations throws new light on the cultural process.

Although the age-graded men's societies ensured a reasonable camp harmony during the collective summer hunts, at less busy and demanding times of the year and especially when trading at the various white outlets near or within their territories Blackfoot warriors of the late buffalo period seem almost from the accounts of the traders to have been bent on genocide. Ewers (1958:258) has written that "Eighty-eight Northern Blackfoot were said to have been killed in drunken brawls in 1871" and "In a brief period two years later, thirty two of the Piegans, including two prominent chiefs, were killed." Whether or not inter-personal violence was more effectively

proscribed by material equality and less leisure in pedestrian days is difficult to assess, but it is highly probable that the competitive spirit fostered by status and wealth differentiation was partly to blame for the notorious propensity for violence among the band members of this period.

It would have been remarkable if in a short hundred years the Blackfoot had lost all vestiges of their pedestrian culture in favor of an alternative perhaps more viable in the high Plains situation, and certainly evidences of cultural persistence are abundant. Nonetheless, the evolution from a classless to a class society, from a subsistence economy to one of surpluses and external trade, from collectivity to individualism in the perpetuation of this economy, and the formation of agencies to control individual effort during the crucial summer hunt all argue persuasively for a quantitative and qualitative transformation.

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