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WARFARE PATTERNS OF THE  
ASSINIBOINE TO 1809.

by

Gary Blake Doige

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
Department of Geography

Winnipeg, Manitoba

c Gary Blake Doige, 1989

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GARY BLAKE DOIGE

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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MASTER OF ARTS

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#### ABSTRACT

This study examines the warfare patterns of the Assiniboine from the time of their separation from the Yanktonai division of the western Sioux to 1809. Its focus is upon the changing patterns of warfare and alliance that emerged between the Assiniboine and other native peoples of the northern plains and woodlands. It thus seeks further understanding of this war complex by examining, not only the patterns of conflict and alliance, but also the changing geography of trade in which they appear to have been embedded. The study terminates in the early years of the nineteenth century with the demise of the alliances which the Assiniboine had forged with their Blackfoot neighbors to the west and the village Indians of the upper Missouri to the south. This saw the collapse of the extensive commercial sphere that they had earlier carved out, and led to new patterns of conflict from which the Assiniboine benefitted little. The study concludes that, following the introduction of European influences, warfare was largely a function of economic and political motives, although the motives of status, glory or revenge did play a part.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION.

There is a large literature on the Plains Indians. Within it, these people, more so than most Indian groups, have been depicted as warlike, both in their relations with one another and with Europeans. There is, however, much controversy in this literature as to the nature and causes of Plains Indian warfare. Moreover, there have been few studies devoted explicitly to the history of Indian warfare on the Plains. Even fewer attempts have been made to unravel the history of warfare among particular Indian groups. This chapter examines the debate surrounding the nature and causes of Plains Indian warfare. It then discusses the relevant literature on Assiniboine warfare.

With few exceptions the literature on Plains Indian warfare is confined to anthropological and ethnographic studies. Within this literature two basic interpretations of the nature and causes of warfare are apparent. The first can be detected in the publications of Lowie (1920, 1935, 1940, 1954), Wissler (1940), Linton (1936), Turney-High (1949) and Smith (1938). This school of thought portrayed intertribal warfare as being an individualistic enterprise fought for glory, revenge, and prestige. By the early 1940's a second generally, alternative, interpretation emerged in the works of Mishkin (1940), Newcomb (1950), Secoy (1953) and Calloway (1982). These scholars interpreted intertribal warfare as a collective enterprise that was

undertaken, not so much for individual prestige, but for economic and territorial gain.

In a series of monographs beginning in 1920, Robert Lowie, the most prolific Plains ethnographer, argued that the Plains Indian went to war because he was warlike. Native peoples did not fight for material gain or survival. They fought because fighting was considered to be a game worth playing. When it was played according to a set of well-defined rules, it brought social recognition to the individual warrior (Lowie, 1920:356). Although Lowie considered other factors in his later publications, he nevertheless retained the view that status was the dominant factor in Plains Indian warfare. Thus, in his 1935 book, The Crow Indians, he wrote:

...Doubtless the stimuli for military enterprises were not uniform, varying with different men and different situations. Utilitarian urges appear but certainly were not dominant. The desire for horses was the most 'economical' motive of Plains Indian warfare . . . (Lowie, 1935:227-8).

Five years later Lowie offered much the same explanation. Although the stealing of horses was a cause of warfare that had economic implications, the goal still remained for the warrior to achieve as much prestige as possible in order to raise his social standing within his tribe. It was Lowie's contention that Plains Indian warfare was nothing more than an exciting pastime that involved specific and accepted rules of behavior. The primary motive "was to score, only the loss of kindred promoting reprisals on a major scale. Whenever men fight for glory, practical ends are bound to recede" (Lowie, 1940:221-2).

Lowie's most definitive statement on the subject was published in 1954 towards the end of his career in his now classic book, Indians of the Plains. In this work he (Lowie, 1954:104) concludes that the motives for warfare involved "revenge, horse-lifting and the lust for glory". In his estimation, warfare was not waged for economic reasons or for the acquisition of new territory. Overall, Lowie's book was favorably received by his peers. Fred Eggan, (1955:310) an anthropologist at the University of Chicago, welcomed the book "as a sound basis for interpretations of specialized aspects of Plains culture".

In the same year that Lowie completed his general textbook on cultural anthropology, Clark Wissler published a comprehensive work titled Indians of the United States. Like Lowie, Wissler dismissed economic motivation in Plains warfare.

The Algonkin wanted buffalo, while the Dakota wanted to keep them for their own use. It all looks like economic war, something we can understand. Yet so far as we can see, the Assiniboin, the Ojibway, and the Cree on one hand and the Dakota on the other thought of the feud in terms of horses, captives and scalps, symbols of glory and social distinction (Wissler, 1940:157).

Since Wissler and Lowie devoted much of their lifetime to the study of the Plains Indian, many anthropologists were either influenced by or adopted some of the thought of those two scholars. A student of Wissler, Ralph Linton, acknowledged that the Indians of the Plains were nomadic, and as a result, came into frequent contact with other native groups. This in itself, however, was not seen as a potential cause of conflict. In Linton's view, the food and other resources on the Plains

were more than adequate to care for a much larger population than the area already supported. Therefore, the Plains Indian was not driven into war by economic necessity (Linton, 1936:463).

In his study, Primitive War, it is apparent that Hugh Turney-High relied on many of Lowie's depictions of the nature of Plains Indian warfare. Throughout his book, Turney-High strongly contended that there was no organized warfare on the Plains because the native peoples of that area functioned below, what he called a "military horizon". The conflicts that did occur were "a mildly dangerous game" fought for reasons already stated by scholars such as Wissler and Lowie (Turney-High, 1949:104, 134, 147, 169-70).

For the most part, anthropologists such as Lowie, Wissler, Linton, and Turney-High studied Plains Indian warfare from an ethnological rather than a purely historical perspective. They made little or no use of historical documents and detected little or no change in the nature of Indian warfare in the past. Thus of Lowie's work, Raymond DeMallie wrote:

Lowie's analysis reflects the static quality that is one of the greatest dangers of Boasian anthropology; while everything is understood to have a past, the process of retrospective description falsely stabilizes an idealized remembered culture as unchanging norm rather than as a historical moment (Lowie, 1954:xv).

By not using historical sources other than oral histories, and adopting the techniques of descriptive ethnology, Lowie had portrayed intertribal warfare in a primarily static and essentially ahistorical fashion.

Oscar Lewis had earlier criticized Marion Smith's work on Plains warfare for essentially the same reason.

In her 1938 study, Smith provided a detailed description of the varieties and distribution of war honors, methods of counting coup, and scalping. She (Smith, 1938:432) maintained that there was no reason to believe warfare was an integral part of the Plains economy, or that the prevalence of horse stealing rested upon a purely economic motive. In her analysis of the various components of the Plains war complex, Smith found "no evidence" that the horse and gun revolutionized war procedure. The problem with this analysis, in Lewis' view, was that:

The authors' [Smith] war complex which is a static picture of nineteenth century Plains warfare, assumes a degree of stability and integration of the above elements which seems unwarranted. In view of the non-historical approach, it is not surprising that 'no evidence' of the vital changes was found (Lewis, 1942:36).

The majority of those who advocated an individualistic interpretation of Plains warfare arrived at their conclusions mainly from the evidence derived from informants interviewed on reserves in the early twentieth century. In so doing, they studied mainly the motives of individual accounts of warfare instead of warfare itself. As the anthropologist, W.W. Newcomb, remarked:

The weak point of all these interpretations is the failure to distinguish between the motives of an individual for fighting and what causes his society to go to war. The motivation of the individual is not the cause of warfare, it is rather the method by which a cultural irritation or need is satisfied (Newcomb, 1950:320).

By using oral history, the general causes of war were confused with the reasons why individual men fight. Because of criticisms of this nature, it is not surprising that alternative views of Plains warfare began to emerge alongside those originally put forth by Lowie and Wissler.

Beginning with Bernard Mishkin, there emerged a second school of thought that increasingly challenged the individualistic and non-economic portrayal of intertribal warfare. This school sought more purely historical perspectives and focused upon the economic and technological changes that overtook Plains Indian societies following the advent of European influences. From these perspectives, tribes were seen as fighting for the economic and social benefits that came to be derived from "furs, slaves, better hunting grounds, and horses" (White, 1978:320). Intertribal warfare was further presented as being dynamic and changing over time.

Mishkin was the first to re-examine this problem by studying the interrelationships between horse culture, rank and warfare, and their places in Kiowa society. Within this framework, he (Mishkin, 1940:3-4) argued that warfare was economic in nature and that "the true weight and implication of the economic factor [in Plains warfare] has not been clearly analyzed". Mishkin's study began with a discussion of the characteristic patterns of Plains warfare, especially of raids and revenge parties, and the ways in which warriors achieved status in terms of their war exploits. He also examined the more general processes at work following the introduction of the horse into Kiowa society. With the coming of the horse a new cause for war arose:

which in some places functioned under the old revenge pattern (notably Osage) and in other parts of the Plains became not only a new and dominant cause but gave rise to a new pattern of warfare as well (Mishkin, 1940:61).

Although he was reluctant to dismiss the game aspect in Plains warfare, Mishkin (1940:62) maintained that within the more fundamental economic framework of war a system of honors functioned "the successful performance of which was essential to rank...the relationship of the economic factor in war to the game element contains no contradiction".

A complete rejection of the individualistic interpretation did not appear until 1950. In that year, W. Newcomb concluded that intertribal warfare was the only method by which native societies could prosper and survive. The various tribes were not constantly involved in war because individual warriors were warlike. They were,

warlike because their sociocultural systems obliged them to be. The individual attitude of war was an expression of the sociocultural process, by no means its cause or initiator (Newcomb, 1950:329).

Newcomb determined that the almost perpetual warfare of the Plains Indian was a result of a complex set of historic and economic causes that were deep-seated and long-standing. The first cause was the migration onto the Plains of different groups of native peoples. A second fundamental cause of war was competition over the horse. The introduction of the horse made desirable "a new mode of subsistence, and the ensuing competition had likewise led to war" (Newcomb, 1950:328). Related to this was the nomadic nature of some Plains Indians. Such peoples moving with the unpredictable movement of the buffalo herds were

constantly allying and amalgamating. Secondary causes such as the competition of tribes for European weapons, the playing off of one tribe against another and the differential impact of disease were also important factors to consider. Much more than in previous studies, Newcomb used historical source materials to document these effects.

In his 1953 monograph, Changing Military Patterns on the Great Plains, Frank Secoy arrived at essentially similar conclusions. The publication focused on the changes that occurred in the military techniques of the Plains Indian from 1630 to 1830. Distinguishing the Spanish tradition and the English-French tradition, Secoy outlined how each introduced a different complex of culture-traits, particularly the horse and gun, into the different regions of the Plains. His discussion begins with the Apache of the southwestern Plains, who developed a post-horse, pre-gun military pattern in the seventeenth century. He described Spanish armaments and Apache armored cavalry, and considered the effects of the Apache military complex on trade, political organization, and neighbouring groups such as the Caddoan, Utes, and Comanches. These adopted the military complex in order to survive and subsequently conquered the northern part of Apache territory in the first third of the eighteenth century. At the same time, a post-gun and pre-horse military pattern was developing in the northern Plains. This was the result of the French-English fur trade making available a regular supply of guns and ammunition to the tribes of the northwestern forest. The conclusions that Secoy reached were three-fold. First, war involved an interaction between different societies, not simply between

individuals as earlier anthropologists believed. Second, war was a struggle between two societies for victory and survival. The game aspect of intertribal warfare is thus entirely rejected. Third, Secoy (1953:94) concluded that the implementation of any of the military patterns could only have been possible through trade. To have obtained the necessary technological and cultural innovations such as guns or horses, a tribe had to establish strong trading links with one or the other of these complexes.

One of the few historians to discuss the causes of Plains warfare was Colin Calloway. Not unlike Newcomb and Secoy, he (Calloway, 1982:26) concluded that the horse and gun brought about "dramatic changes in native culture, social organization, economy, commerce, warfare, and tribal locations". According to Calloway, warfare during the historical period was endemic on the Plains, and was fought for a complex set of economic factors with the most important being who was going to control the trading centers as well as access to those locations. The most important intertribal trading network revolved around the Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara villages. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries virtually every tribe on the Plains visited one of these villages. The position most sought after in that network was that of the middleman. By gaining access to it a native group could direct or stop the movement of goods, particularly guns and horses, to other tribes. As a result, the role of the middleman was frequently fought over, and when obtained it was jealousy guarded. Within this context Calloway (1982:30) concluded that "far from fighting solely for glory or

revenge Indians...fought for economic benefits, lands, and even survival".

Unlike the studies of Plains Indian warfare per se, there have been few specific studies that discuss the implications of intertribal alliances. The emphasis upon warfare in the anthropological and ethnographic literature has resulted in the lack of appreciation of the importance of alliances and maintaining peaceful interrelationships. More recently, two anthropologists, John Ewers (1975) and Katherine Weist (1977) have examined the nature of alliances from two different perspectives.

Ewers' 1975 paper analyzed the balance of power and the formation of alliances as they relate to the history of interethnic warfare on the northern Plains from prehistoric times to 1870. It is his contention that intertribal relationships in this region can be viewed in terms of the history of four major alliances. Each alliance was named after its core tribe. The first alliance is comprised of the tribes of the Blackfoot of which the Piegan, Blood and Siksikas are considered to be the nucleus. The alliance also included the Sarsi, a small Athapascan tribe as well as the larger Algonquian speaking Gros Ventres. To the east were the tribes of the Assiniboine and Cree who, with the westernmost bands of the Ojibway, formed the second major alliance. The third alliance was between the Mandan and Hidatsa. The fourth comprised the tribes of the Dakota and Sioux who came to be regarded during the historic period as aggressive enemies to virtually every tribe in the area. The most anomalous tribe was the Crow who did not ally themselves

with any particular group. In Ewers' (1975:406) view they were able to survive in a difficult geographic position "through their courage and military prowess and their diplomacy". Ewers, however, presented an essentially static and oversimplified view of these alliances. Failure to recognize change in these relationships has been generally criticized by the historian, Richard White:

In too much Indian history, tribes fight only 'ancient' enemies as if each group were doled out an allotted number of adversaries at creation with whom they battled mindlessly through eternity (White, 1978:82).

In contrast to Ewers' view that the Crow were unaligned, Katherine Weist's more detailed historical investigations have revealed that such was not the case and, in the process, moved significantly beyond the static portrayal of alliances. Weist's paper is an ethnohistorical analysis of Crow interethnic relations from 1800 to 1850. Her (Weist, 1977:43) findings opposed the typical categorization of interethnic relations as being either "friendly" or "hostile". In the section discussing the nature of Plains alliances, Weist generally described them as being of three types. The first is a stable alliance which is characterized by peaceful relations that persist over a long period of time. The second is a relationship which involves periods of sporadic antagonisms alternating with periods of peace. Finally, there is an association which can be described as generally hostile (Weist, 1977:42). A tribe's political history may involve all three types of alliances at different periods in time or a variation of a particular type. The boundaries between the three types of alliances are not rigid, but they

are flexible enough to be adopted to any description of interethnic associations. The factors that determine how an alliance is made and maintained must consider a variety of external and internal factors (Weist, 1977:45).

It is apparent that increased historical research has revealed that Plains warfare following European contact was largely a function of economic and political motives. These were greatly influenced by the advent of the European horse, gun and European diseases. These views do not deny that individual motivation persisted in warfare and that the motives of status, glory and revenge continued to function in post-contact Plains Indian warfare. They do, however, imply that individual motivation was secondary to the broader issues of an economic and political nature that appear to have become more prominent following the intrusion of European influences. It is upon these broader patterns of Plains Indian warfare in the historical period that this study of the Assiniboine is focused. It thus seeks further understanding of this war complex by examining, not only the patterns of conflict, but also the changing geography of trade and alliances in which it appears to have been embedded.

There is no study devoted exclusively to the history of Assiniboine warfare. However, this subject of necessity has been examined in varying degrees and in different contexts within the larger literature related to the Plains Indian. Only two book length studies have been written solely on the Assiniboine. The first of these is Robert Lowie's, The Assiniboine, published in 1909. Although Lowie devoted an

entire chapter (1909:28-33) to warfare, the discussion is essentially an ethnographic one focused on the weapons used by the Assiniboine, and the various dances associated with their warfare. Lowie did make some use of historical source material, but only to show how the Assiniboine used the throwing stone as a weapon, and to visually depict the Assiniboine warrior of the nineteenth century.

The second full length publication on the Assiniboine is based upon John Larpenteur Long's interviews of Assiniboine elders on the Fort Belkamp Reservation in Montana in 1939. These recollections were originally published in 1942 under the title, Land of the Nakoda: The Story of the Assiniboine Indians. They were subsequently re-issued in 1961 under the title of The Assiniboines, with an introduction by Michael Kennedy. Like Lowie's study, the oral accounts collected by Long are almost completely ethnographic in content, and warfare is noted only in a cursory manner. To the extent that any historical information on warfare is included, it is confined to a single account of a war party (Kennedy (ed.), 1961:52-56). This account, however, cannot be precisely dated, and is of little historical value.

Although Assiniboine warfare is noted in varying degrees in the works of the major fur trade historians, it has received only marginal treatment as background to the European development of the trade (Innis, 1970, Morton, 1939; Rich, 1960(a), 1967). More recent work by the geographer, Arthur Ray, in contrast have sought to elucidate the role played by the Indian in the development of the fur trade of the western interior of Canada. The most important of Ray's works in this respect

is his book, Indians in the Fur Trade, published in 1974. This book clearly establishes the changing economic roles of the Assiniboine, Cree and Ojibway throughout the fur trade period, and is the first to make a contribution of this nature. The emphasis is upon the changing economic circumstances of the Assiniboine and Cree, and the ecological and demographic consequences that attended them. Despite this economic focus, however, it is only within the pre-1763 period that there is any discussion of the historical alliance and warfare patterns associated with the development of the fur trade.

John Milloy's book, The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790-1870, is the most significant work written about the military history of any northern Plains tribe. Milloy acknowledged the fact that the Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Mandan, Crow, Ojibway and particularly the Assiniboine, formed an integral part of this study. The military history of the Plains Cree was divided by Milloy into three distinct eras, each defined by a paramount motive of war. The first period is identified as one in which the Cree, including their Assiniboine allies, attempted to control the access of other northern Plains tribes to posts established by the Hudson's Bay Company, and second, to the Mandan villages. The face of Cree warfare changed with the appearance of the horse on the northern Plains. With the arrival of horses on the Plains, a new cause for intertribal warfare surfaced. Hence, Milloy distinguished a second period titled "The Horse Wars". The third and final period is characterized by the decline of the once abundant buffalo herds. According to Milloy, Cree warfare in the last decades

of the nineteenth century revolved around who was going to control, and have access to, that valuable resource. Intimately related to each military era is a parallel trade pattern that linked the Cree with other Plains tribes and with non-natives. In most phases of Cree warfare, the Assiniboine figure prominently and are assumed to have shared an essentially common experience. Milloy's three eras furnish a valuable service for a fuller understanding of warfare in the northern Plains and have been influential in shaping this study of the changing nature of Assiniboine warfare and its pattern of development.

## CHAPTER II

### ORIGINS OF THE ASSINIBOINE.

It has been largely accepted that, prior to their emergence as a distinct political unit, the Assiniboine belonged to the allied nations of the Dakota. The term "Dakota" can be translated as "Leagued or Allied", the suffix coming from the Siouan term "Koda", which means "friend" (Riggs, 1893:156). From the oral traditions of the Dakota it is apparent that, prior to European contact, they were divided into two "concentric camping circles", which made up the tribes of the traditional seven "council fires". The Mdewankantonwan (Santee), Wahpekute (Santee), Wahpeton (Santee), Sistonwan (Sisseton), comprised the inner ring, while the Ihanktonwan (Yankton), Inaktonwana (Yanktonai) and Titonwan (Teton) made up the outer ring (Dorsey, 1897:215). Members of the inner ring were situated to the east of the Mississippi River, and the outer ring were found to the west of the river (Wozniak, 1978:3). Linguistic studies of the Assiniboine place their language closest to the Inaktonwana (Yanktonai), rather than the Santee or Teton (Anderson, 1971:4). This evidence would imply that the Assiniboine were earlier associated with the Yanktonai, and corroborates Dakota oral traditions claiming that the Assiniboine were initially a part of the Yanktonai nation. The Yanktonai, in turn, were among the nations of the outer ring, and thus lived somewhere between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.

The date of the Assiniboine separation from the Yanktonai, and the circumstances that occasioned this split, have long been a matter of debate. David Thompson (Glover (ed.), 1962:164) reported in 1797 that the separation occurred "some forty or fifty years ago". That would place the division sometime between 1747 and 1757. Thompson obtained this information directly from an Assiniboine whom he met on December 3, 1797, on his way to the Mandan villages. A similar date was derived by Hayden in 1862 when he spoke to an elderly Assiniboine chief:

Moreover, there lived a few years since, on the Missouri, a very old chief, known to the traders as "Le Gros Francais"... , who recollected perfectly well the time of their separation from the Dakota's, which according to his date must have been about 1760 (Hayden, 1862:379).

Despite these claims, there is an abundance of documentary evidence indicating that the separation of the Assiniboine occurred at a much earlier date than suggested by Thompson and Hayden's informants. Pierre Charles Le Sueur, while on the Blue Earth River in southern Minnesota in 1700, learned through two members of the eastern Sioux who arrived at his trading post that,

The 'Christinaux' [Cree] having had the use of arms before the 'Sioux' through the English of Hudson Bay, continually came to make war with the Assinipolis [Assiniboine] who were their closest neighbors; those feeling that they were weak, asked for peace, and in order to make it more secure, they became allies with the 'Christinaux' in taking some of their women. The other 'Sioux' who were not part of this alliance, and who had, since always war with them, continued to make it hence having found one day some 'Christinaux' at the Assinipolis place, they broke their head. That is what has given the occasion to make war to

their nation in becoming allies with the Christinaux' who gave them through the Hudson [Bay] English, arms and merchandises (trans. from Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:82-83).

Le Sueur's statement led Arthur Ray (1974:14) to postulate that relations between the Assiniboine and Dakota were severed sometime after the Cree received firearms from the Hudson's Bay Company (hereafter cited HBC). This would suggest that the separation took place shortly after the founding of the HBC in 1670 and almost a century before the dates provided by the Thompson and Hayden informants.

William Warren, in his History of the Ojibway People (1984:138) noted that he had read in a book that the Assiniboine were "forced into an alliance by the ke-nis-te-no who first received firearms" from the HBC. In all likelihood Warren was referring to the information conveyed to Le Sueur by the Dakota. Through questioning a chief of the Pillager Ojibway, however, Warren recorded another account of the Assiniboine separation that points to a much earlier date. According to Esh-ke-bung-e-coshe, the chief of the Pillager Ojibway, who had lived among both the Assiniboine and Cree:

Many years before they became aware of the presence of the white man on the great island [i.e.: the earth] the Yankton division of the great Dakota tribe, resided on the borders of the great western prairies near the Red River of the North. They numbered many hundred lodges, and their warriors prevailed against the ke-nis-te-no toward the north (Warren, 1984:138-139).

The chief went on to relate how a quarrel over women erupted between two families of the Yankton, leading to the separation of the Assiniboine

and the founding of an Assiniboine-Cree alliance,

...the weaker party consisting of a thousand lodges [Assiniboine], left the main camp and retired by themselves to pursue their hunt for meat to feed their women and children. The feud did not end but continued with greater fury: the larger camp [Yanktonai] even sending war parties to attack the struggling hunters of their former brethren. Scalps were also taken, and this is equal in Indian custom to a declaration of open and exterminating war. The smaller camp, therefore, to prevent their total eventual destruction at the hands of the more numerous Yanktons, moved towards the country of Ke-nis-te-no, with whom they had always waged a never ending warfare; and preferring to trust themselves to their generosity rather than the vindictive hatred of their own kindred, they collected the women and children whom in former years they had captured from them, and adopted in their families. These they placed on horses, and loaded with presents, they were sent to the great Ke-nis-te-no town on Dead River (Ne-bo-se-be) [Netley Creek], with the peace pipe of seceding Dakota's, requesting to be received in their lodges and protected from the 'fire that raged in their rear' on the western prairies (Warren, 1984:139-140).

Much of what Warren recorded appears to be plausible except for the reference to horses. Horses were first observed among the Assiniboine by Anthony Henday in 1754-1755 (Hudson Bay Company Archives B.239/a/40 F.14d, hereafter cited HBCA), at which time the westernmost of the Assiniboine had only a few horses, and were just beginning to equestrianize. Farther east, in the Red River Valley, the Assiniboine did not begin to acquire horses until the 1760's (Ray, 1974:159). If the 'break-away' Assiniboine in fact had made their first overtures to the Cree by returning captive relatives on horseback, then the split did not occur until after the first horses arrived among them and the

Yanktonai, or sometime in the 1760's. On the other hand, Esh-ke-bung-e-coshe recounted that the split had occurred many years before the Dakota had learned of the coming of the white man. Further evidence would suggest that Esh-ke-bung-e-coshe's story is in error in its reference to horses, but basically correct in dating the split to the pre-contact period.

The earliest documentary reference to the Assiniboine as a nation distinct from the Dakota is contained in the Jesuit Relation of 1640. In that year Father Paul Le Jeune recorded that,

In the neighborhood of this nation [Winnebagoes] are the Naduesiu [Sioux], the Assinipour [Assiniboine], the Eriniouai [Illinois], the Rasaouakoueton [Masconten], and the Pouitouatami [Pottawatomies]. These are the names of a part of the nations which are beyond the shores of the great river saint Lawrence and of the great lakes of the Hurons on the North. I will now visit the Southern shores. I will say, by the way, that sieur Nicolet, interpreter of the Algonquin and Huron languages for the Gentlemen of new France, has given me the names of these nations, which he himself has visited, for the most part in their own country. All these people understand Algonquin, except the Hurons, who have a language of their own as also have the Ouinipigou [Winnebago], or peoples of the sea (Jesuit Relations, V. 18:231, 233, hereafter cited J.R.).

"Sieur Nicolet" was Jean Nicollet, who visited Green Bay in 1634-1635, where he met the Winnebago. There can be little doubt the Assiniboine were regarded as a nation distinct from the Dakota by the time of Nicollet's journey, suggesting that the split occurred sometime prior to 1635. Further evidence that the Assiniboine had split off from the Dakota prior to acquiring horses is contained in the Jesuit Relations of

1658, wherein the Dakota and the Assiniboine are described as distinct nations occupying separate territories. Father Dreuilletes wrote,

The ninth, situated beyond the Nadouechiousk [Sioux] thirty-five leagues or there about from Lake Alimibeg [Nipigon], is called the Nation of the Assinipoualak [Assiniboine], or Warriors of the Rock (J. R., V. 44:249).

More important, in events relating to the same year, Nicolas Perrot observed that the Dakota were fully engaged in war against the Assiniboine and Cree. According to Perrot,

In all that time they [Ottawa and Huron] were not molested by the Sioux, who gave all their attention to wageing war against the Kiristinons [Cree], the Assiniboïles... (Blair (ed.), 1911, V.1:170).

Perrot's account leaves no doubt that the separation had occurred prior to 1658.

From all these accounts there can be little doubt that the Assiniboine separated from the Yanktonai, and that this event occurred sometime prior to 1635. It might be observed in this regard that glottochronological studies of the Siouan languages postulate that the separation of the Assiniboine dialect from the Dakota took place around 1500 A.D. (Springer and Witkowski, 1982, Carter, 1980, in Syms, 1985:87). Working on another front, Ossenbergl (1974:38) concluded from cranial evidence that "the divergence between the Dakota and Assiniboine lineages had commenced probably by the end of Laurel times about A.D. 800,...". Although these glottochronological and physical anthropological interpretations vary greatly in their estimates, both indicate that the Assiniboine as a distinct linguistic and biological

group had begun to emerge in the late prehistoric period. This, however, is not conclusive evidence that they had broken their political association with the Sioux by 1500, but it does indicate that the Assiniboine were developing as a coherent identity or ethnic group long before white contact.

In addition to the Sioux account recorded by Le Sueur, which states that the Assiniboine separation resulted from the Cree acquiring guns from the HBC, two other versions of the circumstances that caused the Assiniboine to secede from the Sioux can be found in the oral histories. The first, recorded by Father de Smet, told of a quarrel that developed between the women of the Yanktonai, to whom the Assiniboine belonged prior to the split. The dispute was based upon the possession of a slaughtered buffalo,

The conflict soon became general and wound up in a fight to the finish, which left dead and wounded. The Assiniboin band had the worst of it, and parted forever from the others. Since that day they never meet save as mortal enemies (Chittenden and Richardson (ed.), 1905:1382).

Lowie (1910:7), however, questioned this tradition, observing that an identical story was told to him when he was among the "Crow to account for their separation from the Hidatsa." A different tradition accounting for the split was related to William Keating (1825:405-406), Newton Winchell (1911:409), and William Warren (1984:138-140). These accounts state that the split erupted over the taking of one of the principal warriors wives while the two bands were hunting buffalo. The end result of the quarrel, as told by Keating was that,

...the nation was divided; a long and bloody civil war ensued, the aggressor and his friends withdrew to the north [the Assiniboine] ceased to pay any allegiance to the confederacy and formed a new nation (Keating, 1825:406).

In contrast to the Le Sueur account, which attributes the split to European influences, neither of these traditions speak of the white man, and are consistent with the view that the separation occurred before the advent of European influences. Although neither of these accounts can be verified from independent evidence, they are in agreement with one another, and were recorded by four different observers at widely separated points in time and space. In the absence of other evidence, it is thus plausible to accept the view that the split arose over wife-stealing or the possession of a buffalo. It is also possible, however, that these were only triggering mechanisms that reflected more general circumstances that may have been building up for some time. It is extremely doubtful, however, that the split was owing to the intrusion of English guns as related by Le Sueur. It is also unlikely that it was caused by a diffusion of French trade goods at an earlier period. Indeed, the acquisition by the Sioux of European trading wares does not appear to have occurred before 1660 and, by that time, the Assiniboine had already separated from the Yanktonai. Referring to the mid-1650's, Nicolas Perrot observed,

The Sioux who had no acquaintance with the firearms and other implements which they saw among the strangers [Huron and Ottawa]--for they themselves use only knives and hatchets of stone or flint (Blair (ed.), 1911, V.1:159-160).

Prior to the arrival of European influences the most important trading network for the Sioux was centered upon the Mandan and Arikara villages. During the late prehistoric period, the region encompassing the drainage basin of the Missouri River was an area of extensive in-migrations by a number of distinct native populations. From approximately 900 A.D., the region came to be occupied by the Mandan, then the Arikara, and finally the Hidatsa (Meyer, 1977:1-17). Without question, the "pre-Assiniboine" must have had some contact with these three groups. The earliest trade contacts between the Dakota and Mandan involved the exchange of by-products of the chase for agricultural products. That trade has been defined as a "direct exchange between producer and consumer" (Ewers, 1968:21). It is not out of the realm of possibility to consider that quarrels over access to the villages of the upper Missouri may have led to the Assiniboine becoming a distinct tribal entity. Whatever the case, the evidence suggests that it was not initiated by European influences and was purely Indian in origin.

Like the causes, oral traditions also point to the place of Assiniboine separation from the Yanktonai. William Keating wrote,

It is said...a quarrel arose between two influential families of Yanktonans at the time they were hunting in the vicinity of Lake Traverse... (Keating, 1825:405).

Jacob Browner in 1862 learned from the Sioux who lived near Red Wing, Minnesota, that the seat of the quarrel "was about Osakis Lake, Todd County..." (Winchell (ed.), 1911:70). While at Fort Union during the summer of 1833 Alexander Philip Maximilian recorded that,

The Assiniboins are real Dacotas, or Sioux, and form a branch which separated from the rest a considerable time ago, in consequence of a quarrel among them. They still call themselves by that name, though they seem generally to pronounce it Nacota. They parted from the rest of the tribe, after a battle which they had with each other on Devil's Lake [North Dakota], and removed further to the north (Thwaites (ed.), 1906, V.xxii:387).

Alexander Henry the Younger provided a more generalized location of the division,

The Assiniboines, or Stone Indians originated from the Sioux or Nadouasis, probably S of St. Peters [Minnesota] River, where some misunderstanding between different bands caused the separation (Coues (ed.), 1965, V.2:516).

William Warren's (1984:138) informant likewise indicated that the Assiniboine split from the Yanktonai occurred on the "great western prairies near the Red River of the North". A slightly different oral tradition regarding Assiniboine migration following the split was relayed to Newton Winchell, Minnesota's first state geologist, by Colonel William Colvill in 1886,

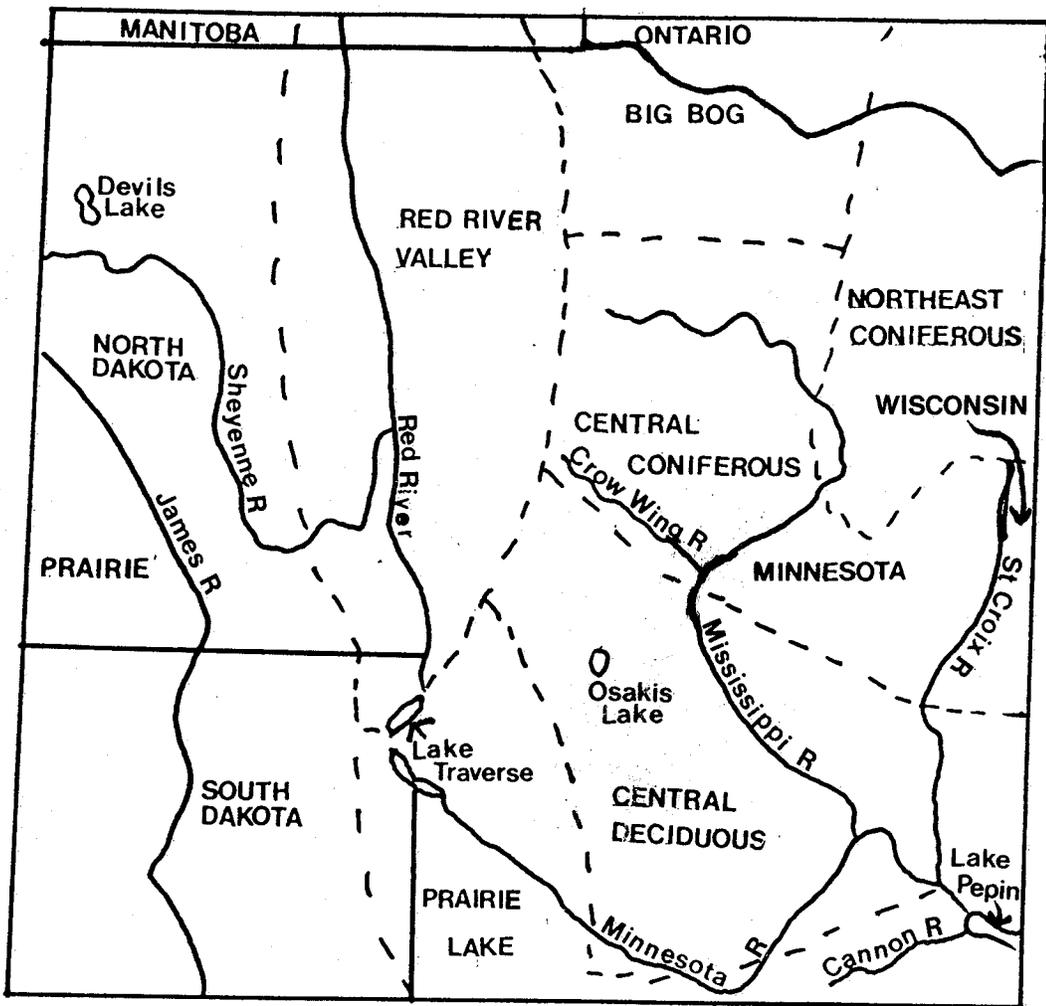
I may mention in passing that our Indians [Sioux] locate the scene of the original quarrel between their tribe and the Assiniboines on the lower bench between Spring Creek and Cannon, where were the corn fields and villages of the latter. The Sioux, a hunting party, were in a camp at the mouth of the Cannon.... The next year the Sioux attacked in great force and drove the Assiniboines up the Cannon to the falls, after a number of battles. From thence the Assiniboines escaped to the head of Prairie island and up the St. Croix, and across near the Sioux village to the Crow Wing; thence up that stream to the Red River valley, from which, after years, they were expelled by the Yhanktons (Winchell (ed.), 1888:59-60).

Although these statements cannot be regarded as conclusive, no evidence of a contradictory nature can be found. All of the locations pointed to in these traditions, moreover, lie within the aboriginal homeland of the Yanktonai (Howard, 1966:2, 1972:281) from whom the Assiniboine separated.

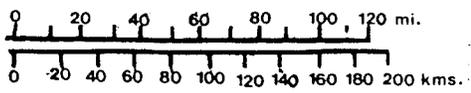
These and other oral traditions imply that the Yanktonai and pre-Assiniboine subsisted, at least seasonally, on buffalo. It was in the prairie environment or on its margins that the Assiniboine separated (Figure 1). The direction of Assiniboine migration, once they split from the Yanktonai was, according to the tradition related by William Warren, towards a large Cree encampment on Netley Creek. Similarly, Keating (1825:406) and Maximilian (Thwaites (ed), 1906, V.xxii:387) learned that the seceding Assiniboine retreated to the north. It would be logical to assume that the Assiniboine did not migrate northwards through the lake-forest region of northern Minnesota, since that area was occupied by the Sioux, from whom the Assiniboine had just violently separated. Rather, it would appear that they proceeded northward along the line of the Red River, maintaining their connections with the buffalo of this region. Not until the protohistorical period, however, is there further evidence of the Assiniboine, and of the alliance that they had fashioned with the Cree.

FIGURE 1

SITES REFERRED TO IN SIOUAN ORAL TRADITIONS AND THE  
PRE-SETTLEMENT ECOLOGICAL REGIONS OF MINNESOTA AND  
EASTERN NORTH DAKOTA



modified from Anfinson, 1984:15



### CHAPTER III

#### THE PROTOHISTORICAL ASSINIBOINE.

There has been a longstanding tradition in North American ethnology and anthropology that distinguishes between pre-contact and post-contact native life. The unfortunate effect of this division has been to assume that European induced Indian culture change occurred only following direct contact with Europeans. In recent years, however, there have been several efforts to develop a tripartite chronological scheme in which to view Indian culture change. The more recently defined period, which falls between the prehistoric and historic periods, has been referred to as the protohistorical period. It begins with the arrival of European influences among the people in question and terminates when they are first contacted directly by the Europeans themselves. The importance of the protohistorical period has been described by Bruce Trigger:

...the effects of European contact penetrated into the interior far ahead of Europeans themselves and these prior to the arrival of the whites played an important role in transforming Indian political organization and intertribal relations. Larger tribal units and confederacies developed to protect hunting territories and trade routes from encroachment as a growing demand for furs pitted tribes against one another in new forms of economic competition (Trigger (ed.), 1978:2).

Although Trigger was explaining the changes that occurred among the Iroquoian and Algonquian-speaking peoples of northeastern North America in the protohistorical period, influences of a similar nature were also

operative to the west of Lake Superior. Long before the Europeans arrived in this area, the influences of the whiteman were not without their effects upon the Assiniboine.

The protohistorical period begins when European trade wares, diseases or other influences, transmitted through Indian middlemen, first appear among a given ethnic group (Bishop and Ray, 1976:124). As it is virtually impossible to determine when the first European influences appeared among the Assiniboine, it is all the more important to specify when the protohistorical period ended, or when the first direct contacts occurred between the Assiniboine and Europeans. Even this date, however, is a difficult one to determine.

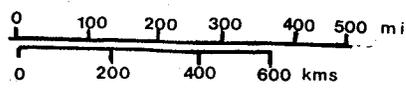
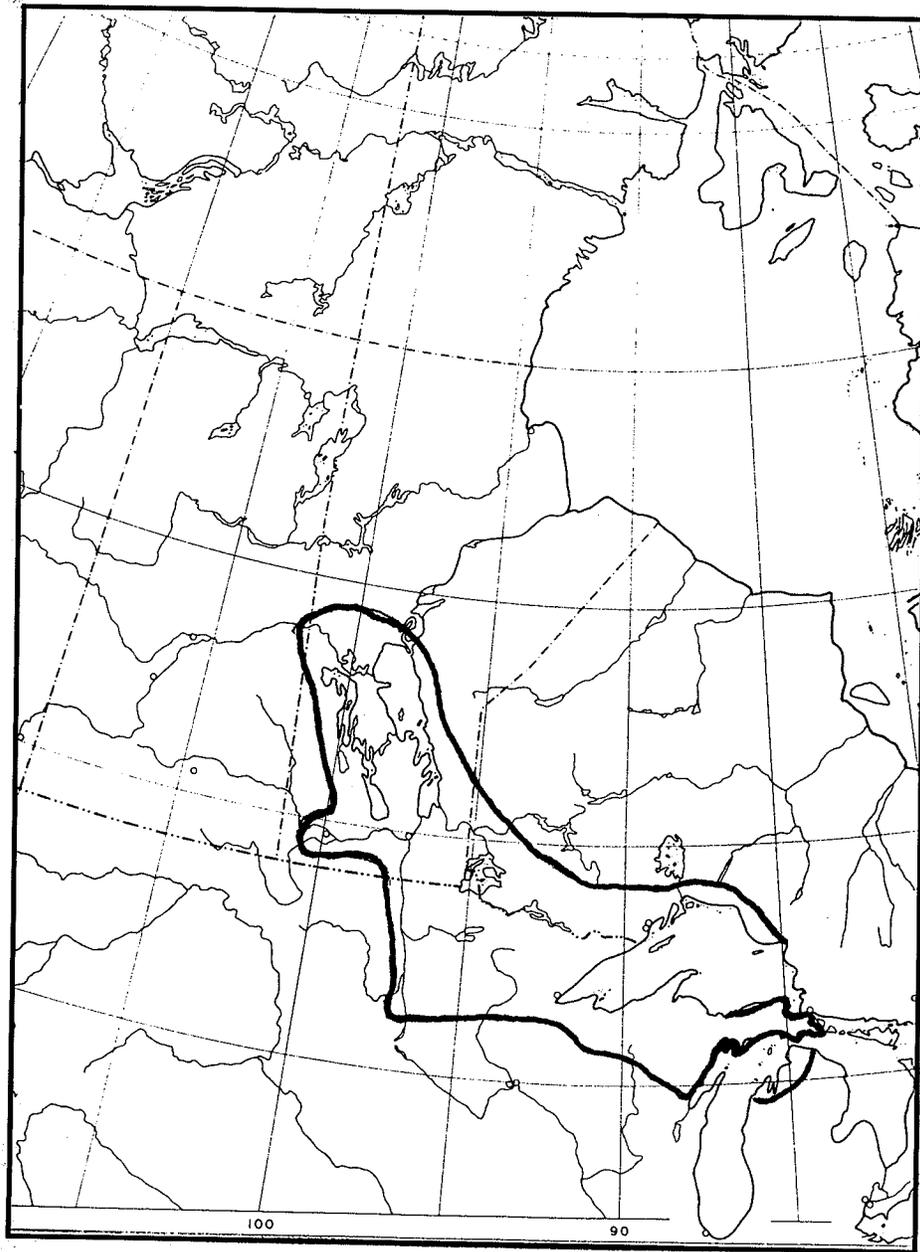
For most scholars, the protohistorical period ends with the first recorded contact between Indians and Europeans. Bishop and Ray, however, have attempted to further define this boundary in spatial and commercial terms. In their view, the end of the protohistorical period is marked, not by any form of contact between the two groups, but only by contact within the home territory of the Indian group in question (Bishop and Ray, 1976:125). Bishop and Ray further state that the end of the protohistorical period defined in this way is also characterized by a switch from middlemen trading to trapping for the furs required. However, the transition to trapping postulated by Bishop and Ray (1976:124) need in no way be synchronous with the arrival of whitemen in the territory of a particular group. There would thus be little merit in imposing a criterion of this nature to mark the end of the

protohistorical period. Moreover, as the location of the Assiniboine in the protohistorical period is much in dispute, great difficulties arise in attempting to establish when the first Europeans arrived in their home territory. For these reasons, Bishop and Ray's criteria for determining the end of the protohistorical period cannot be readily applied to the Assiniboine, and the end of this period in this study is taken as the time of the first recorded meeting between Assiniboine and Europeans. The earliest such meeting appears to have been with Daniel Greysolon Duluth who, in 1679, concluded a peace treaty between the Sioux and Assiniboine near the western shores of Lake Superior (Kellogg (ed.), 1917:330). However, whether the Assiniboine with whom Duluth met were inhabitants of that region, or traders who had travelled far, is not known.

The debate bearing upon the protohistorical Assiniboine has yet to be resolved, and has pivoted upon the findings of both archaeology and ethnohistory. For the most part, the archaeological evidence bearing upon this problem has derived from studies of a distinct pottery type known as Blackduck. The Blackduck materials have been dated between A.D. 800 and 1500 (Syms, 1977(a):106-107), and extend over three ecological zones: the boreal forest, aspen-parkland and prairie (Figure 2). Initially, archaeologists (Wilford, 1941, 1945, 1955; Vickers, 1947, 1948 (a) (b); MacNeish, 1954, 1958) concluded that the Blackduck ceramics were made by the Assiniboine and their ancestors, and that those people had occupied the entire area in which Blackduck

FIGURE 2

BLACKDUCK DISTRIBUTION



after Anfinson(ed.),1979:25.

materials were found.

Beginning in the 1960's, however, a second group of archaeologists concluded that the Blackduck wares were not associated with the Assiniboine peoples (Evans, 1961; Wright, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1968 (a) (b) (c), 1981; Dawson, 1974, 1976 (a) (b) (c), 1977, 1983; Syms, 1977 (a) (b), 1985). According to Syms there are two limitations to the Assiniboine-Blackduck association:

...(a) that the Blackduck Horizon is found only in the northern third of Minnesota, whereas the Assiniboin and their Dakota relatives were distributed throughout central Minnesota; and (b) on the basis of linguistic evidence, the Assiniboin broke away from the Yanktonai about A.D. 1600 and moved into Canada in response to an alliance with the Cree; the Blackduck Horizon spread throughout the Boreal Forest, Aspen Parkland, and nearby Plains about A.D. 800, persisted until the latter part of the 14th century, and diminished territorially to an area north of Lake Superior (Syms, 1977 (a), 106-107).

A more probable correlation, according to Syms and others, would be a Blackduck-Algonquian association.

Nevertheless, serious problems still characterize attempts to link historic populations with prehistoric artifacts. One of the foremost of Great Plains archaeologists, Waldo Wedel (1961:228), wrote that identifying artifacts and burial mounds with a "historic tribe or its forebears is perhaps expecting too much". Richard G. Forbis (1970:45), who has conducted extensive archaeological excavations throughout the province of Alberta, expressed a similar view when he wrote that "not a single site or scrap of prehistoric material culture can be positively

ascribed to any historic tribal group". Furthermore, Forbis claimed that the primary reason why northern Plains archaeologists have been unsuccessful in positively correlating artifacts with the location of the specific ethnic group in the protohistorical period has been caused by the failure of the direct historical approach. He wrote,

the direct historical approach inevitably requires certain facts of historical documentation. The location of specific sites, whose inhabitants are clearly indicated by early travelers. Archaeological investigations of these sites can then establish the cultural inventories of particular peoples. From this point of departure it is possible to establish the geographical limits of cultural complexes, and, to an extent dictated by circumstances, trace a given complex into prehistory. Up to this point this approach has been successfully applied in Canada to the Iroquois and Eskimo particularly. It has been supremely unsuccessful in the Canadian prairies (Forbis, 1963:1-2).

Given the fact that artifact complexes may have been shared by more than one social, biological or linguistic community, Bishop and Ray have arrived at essentially similar conclusions regarding the Blackduck complex and ethnic identities in the forest lands to the east:

..., it is doubtful that any attempts to equate archaeological material culture boundaries with ethnic boundaries in the protohistoric and early historic periods will be fruitful (Bishop and Ray, 1976:138).

It would thus seem that correlations of Blackduck ceramic wares with protohistorical or historic populations remain elusive. This, however, does not preclude the possibility that further archaeological investigations will shed light on the ancestral Assiniboine and other groups (Syms, 1979, 1988).

Like the controversy amongst archaeologists, the protohistorical location of the Assiniboine has also been disputed by the ethnohistorical community. Documentary interpretations made by Ray (1974), Bishop and Smith (1975), and Bishop (1982) conclude that the protohistorical Assiniboine occupied a part of the area in which Blackduck materials occur, but not the entire range. Thus, Bishop and Smith have concluded that the Assiniboine homeland at this time was in the forest country between Lake Superior and Lake of the Woods (Figure 3):

we believe that both the prehistoric remains and the early historic references support the view that at the time of contact (area A.D. 1620), the Assiniboin inhabited the boreal forests of northern Ontario from Lake of the Woods to Lac Seul to the mouth of the Kaministikwia River (present day Thunder Bay). This area is the heartland of Blackduck Focus ceramics (Bishop and Smith, 1975:61).

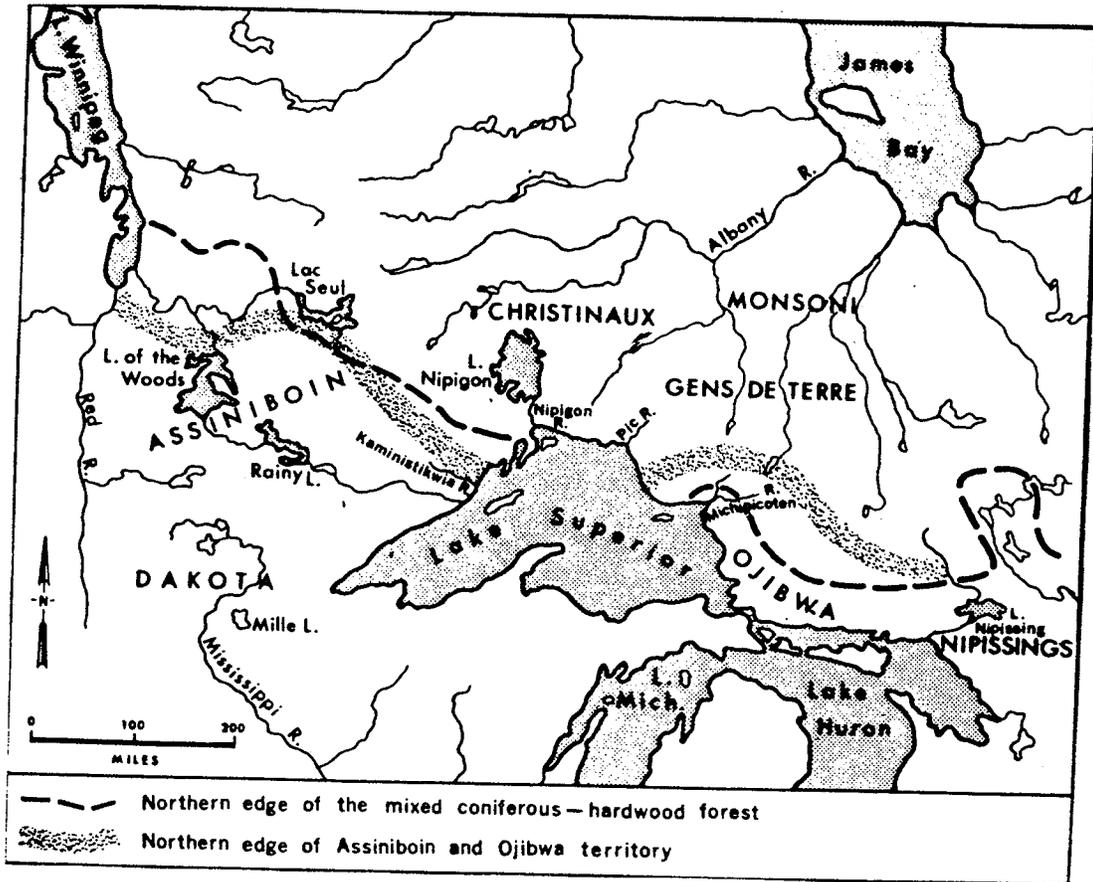
Employing much the same documentary evidence, the historical geographer, Arthur Ray, arrived at a somewhat different conclusion, placing the protohistorical Assiniboine in a more circumscribed location. He wrote,

...prior to contact, the Assiniboine occupied the boundary waters area between Minnesota and Ontario as well as a large portion of south central Manitoba (Ray, 1974:4).

More recently, Clinton Wheeler (1977:115-123) has criticized these interpretations of Ray and Bishop and Smith, primarily because of the vagueness of the historical documentation supporting their conclusions. The earliest documentary evidence bearing upon the protohistorical location of the Assiniboine is contained in the Jesuit Relations of 1658. In this relation describing the different Indian groups of the

FIGURE 3

TRIBAL LOCATIONS NORTH AND WEST OF  
LAKE SUPERIOR, c.1620.



in Bishop and Smith, 1975:55.

upper Great Lakes, Father Dreuillettes wrote,

The ninth [nation], situated beyond the Nadouechiousk [Sioux] thirty-five leagues or there about from Lake Alimibeg [Nipigon] is called the Nation of the Assinipovalak [Assiniboine] or Warriors of the Rock (J. R., V. 44:249).

Bishop and Smith (1975:57) and Ray (1974:6) have interpreted the Dreuillettes information to place the protohistorical Assiniboine one hundred miles to the west of Lake Nipigon. To further support this argument, Ray referred to Father François de Creuxs' 1660 map, on which a river is designated as "River Assinpoualacus". Ray (1974:8) identified this river as the Pigeon River, and concluded, "the river was probably given this name because it was one of the key routes which led to the Assiniboine country, and the Assiniboine were said to live along its course". To further strengthen his interpretations, Ray also cited evidence dating from the later contact period indicating the presence of Assiniboine in this general area. He thus referred to Duluth's meeting with Assiniboine at the western end of Lake Superior in 1679 (Kellogg (ed.), 1917:330-331), Duluth's observation that he built his post on Lake Nipigon in 1684 to prevent Assiniboine and other groups from trading with the English on Hudson Bay (Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 5:51), and Jacques de Noyon's 1688 encounter with Assiniboine and Cree near Rainy Lake (Margry (ed.), 1886, V.6:496-497). All of these observations led Ray (1974:12) to conclude that, at the very least, the eastern limits of the protohistorical Assiniboine territory extended into the Lake of the Woods - Rainy River region.

Clinton Wheeler, however, has since taken issue with these interpretations. Wheeler (1977:119) has pointed out that Dreuillette's account affords no information on direction, and that the Jesuit's distance estimate was too crude to accurately place the Assiniboine. More important, he has advanced an entirely different interpretation to explain the presence of Assiniboine at the locations referred to by Duluth and de Noyon. All of these references, according to Wheeler, are best interpreted as trading parties attracted to French fur trade posts. This view has subsequently been adopted by William Noble (ed., 1984:83) in his ethnohistorical investigations of the Rainy Lake region. In a similar vein, it might be noted that Assiniboine were observed by Pierre Radisson (Adams (ed.), 1961:227) near the mouth of the Hayes River in 1684. Like the evidence from Duluth and de Noyon, this observation cannot be taken as evidence for an Assiniboine homeland on the shores of Hudson Bay. Rather, the latter observation bespeaks of far ranging trading activity on the part of the Assiniboine by this time. In conclusion, the observations of Assiniboine at the Lakehead, Lake Nipigon, and Rainy Lake in the same period cannot be taken as evidence that they were living in these areas at this time. Instead, they appear to reflect Assiniboine connections in the French trade, as suggested by Wheeler and Noble, although the evidence presented for this view is not in itself conclusive.

Further information as to the pre-contact or pre-1679 location of the Assiniboine can be found in the letters of Father Jacques Marquette.

Writing from the mission of St. Esprit, located on Chequamegon Bay on the southwest shore of Lake Superior, Marquette observed in 1670 that,

The Assinipouars, who had almost the same language as the Nadouessi [Sioux], are westward from the Mission of St. Esprit, being fifteen or twenty days journey distant on a lake where they gather wild oats, and fish are plenty. I heard that there was in their country a great river leading to the Western Sea; and a savage told me that, being at the mouth he had seen the Frenchmen and four large canoes with sails (J. R., V. 54:193).

In Wheeler's (1977:116) opinion, the "lake" referred to by Marquette was either Leech, Cass, or Red Lake in northern Minnesota as those were major rice-producing bodies of water to the west of St. Esprit. As a result, he (Wheeler, 1977:117) concluded that the Assiniboine homeland in 1669-1671 was considered to be "far to the south of the Boundary Waters region by the Jesuits." This interpretation would place the Assiniboine in the northern forests of Minnesota.

As was previously noted, however, this area of northern Minnesota was occupied by the Sioux in pre-contact times. Since the Assiniboine had violently separated from the Sioux, it would be difficult to conceive of them living in this obviously hostile environment. Information provided by Nicolas Perrot (Blair (ed.), 1911, V.1:170-171) clearly indicates that in the early 1660's the Sioux were at war with the Assiniboine and Cree, a circumstance that does not accord well with Wheeler's interpretation. Wheeler, moreover, failed to account for Marquette's reference to "a great river leading to the Western sea." The historical geographers, John Warkentin and Richard Ruggles, have

offered a more plausible interpretation of Marquette's information that considers both the "lake" and the "river." They (Warkentin and Ruggles (ed.), 1970:12) have postulated that Marquette's "lake" may have been Lake Winnipeg, and that the Assiniboine may have harvested wild rice on the lake. They also considered the "Great River" to be the "Nelson River system leading to Hudson Bay". The latter interpretation is more plausible, since the reference to "large canoes with sails" implies a large ocean going vessel, and the reference is most probably to the first HBC voyages into Hudson Bay. It is unlikely, however, that the Assiniboine harvested wild rice on the shores of Lake Winnipeg.

Evidence from Perrot and Father Gabriel Marest indicated that the Assiniboine travelled a considerable distance to harvest wild rice.

Perrot wrote,

The Chiripinons [Cree] or Assiniboualas [Assiniboine] sow in their marshes some wild oats, which they harvest; but they can transport this grain to their homes only in the season of navigation. As their canoes are small, and heavily loaded with their children and the produce of their hunting, they have very often been reduced almost to starvation on account of being too far distant from their caches and their own country (Blair (ed.), 1911, V.1:103-104).

A similar interpretation was expressed by Father Gabriel Marest while at Fort Bourbon (i.e. York Factory) in 1695:

...in the summer they [Assiniboine and Cree] assemble near the lakes where they remain two or three months; and afterwards they go to gather wild oats, of which they lay in store (J. R., V.66:111).

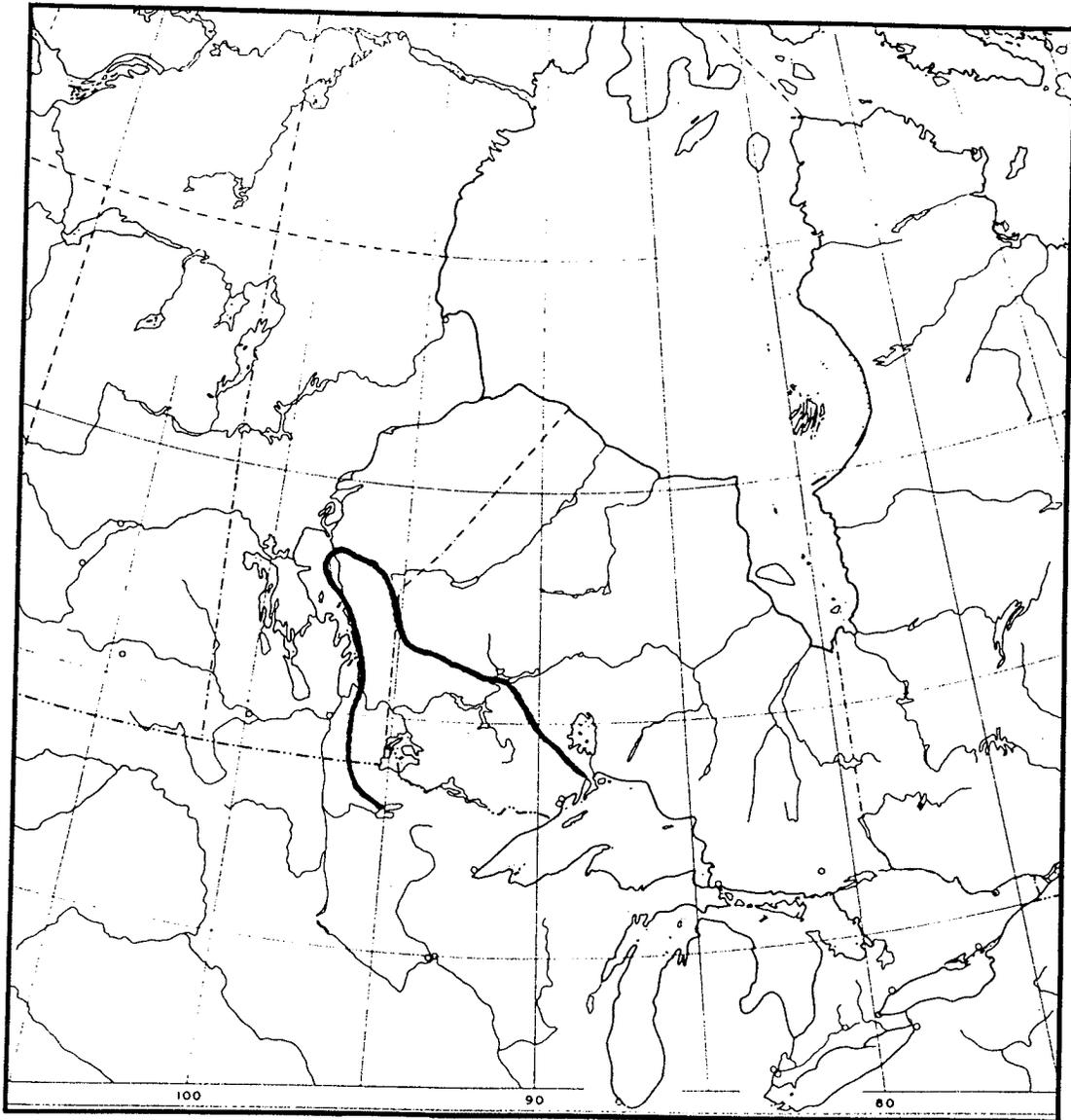
Since it would be unlikely that the Assiniboine would be harvesting wild rice in the lakes of northern Minnesota, the only possible area where

they could procure that resource would be in the lakes lying to the east of Lake Winnipeg. Wild rice is currently found in the Red River and Assiniboine valleys, as well as in the interlake region of Manitoba, but appears to have been introduced into these areas by the Ojibway around the turn of the nineteenth century from the forest country to the east (Moodie, 1988:10). Although Perrot and Marest provided no locational information, the wild rice harvested by the Assiniboine could have been tapped on seasonal forays or trading expeditions eastward from the Lake Winnipeg-Red River valley region. Indeed, it is entirely likely that some Assiniboine occupied part of this northern wild rice country (Figure 4) on a seasonable basis, and that they mingled and traded with their Cree and Ojibway allies of this region. It should be pointed out that Marquette's reference "to a great River leading to the Western Sea" may have been the Albany River system, rather than the Nelson as postulated by Warkentin and Ruggles, since the latter river was the route whereby the Assiniboine first travelled to trade with the HBC. In this connection it might be further noted that Father Claude Dablon (J. R., V.55:97) observed in 1671 that the Assiniboine were located to the "west-northwest" of St. Esprit, an observation that further suggests a homeland in the Lake Winnipeg region rather than in Minnesota to the south.

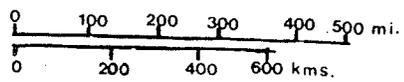
Accompanying Dablon's description was a map of the Lake Superior-Upper Lake Michigan area. It should be noted that there are at least five slightly different versions of the map. Pencilled notations show later attempts to correct the map (Heidenreich, 1978:88). The

FIGURE 4

OCCURRENCE OF NORTHERN WILD RICE



after Dore, 1969:27.



original was probably drafted by Dablon, but was no doubt based on the combined experiences of Dablon, Father Claude Allouez, and Marquette (Heidenreich, 1980:93). Written on the map on the north shore of Lake Superior, opposite Isle Royale, is the inscription: "R. par ou lon va aux Assinipoüalac a 120 lieues vers le nor ouest." A similar notation appeared on Claude Bernou's 1682 map: "Par cette rivière aux Assinipoülacs a 150 lieues vers le Nord-Ouest ou il y a beaucoup de Castors". In both cases, the river whereby the territory of the protohistorical Assiniboine could be reached has been identified by Noble ((ed.), 1984:75) as the Pigeon River. However, on at least one variant of the 1670 original there is, on the north shore of Lake Superior, a river extending from Kaministikwia to a body of water identified as "Lac des Assenipoils." Given the direction of the river, it is likely that the territory of the protohistorical Assiniboine could be reached by the Kaministikwia River rather than the Pigeon River which runs in a westerly direction. Such an interpretation accords well with the notations by Marquette and Bernou that the territory of the Assiniboine could be reached by a river which ran to the "Nord Ouest."

According to Heidenreich (1975:130) there were many different measures of distance in use during this period, but the most common was the lieue d'une heure, which was the distance a man could travel in one hour. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, that unit of measure was the equivalent of 3.45 statute miles (Heidenreich, 1975:126). Using this information, it can be postulated that the

homeland of the protohistorical Assiniboine was some 400 to 500 miles "to the northwest of a point on the north shore of Lake Superior about the Kaministikwia River" (Dawson, 1976(d):162). Such a placement would put the Assiniboine beyond Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods, and into the Lake Winnipeg region. Related to this point is Father Louis Hennepin's 1680 description of the Assiniboine. While in captivity among the eastern Dakota in northern Minnesota, Hennepin wrote that Indian visitors who had arrived from the west informed him that,

The nation of the Assinipoulacs whose lake is down on the map and who lie to the North East of the Issati [Eastern Dakota], was not above six or seven days journey from us (Thwaites (ed.), 1974:267).

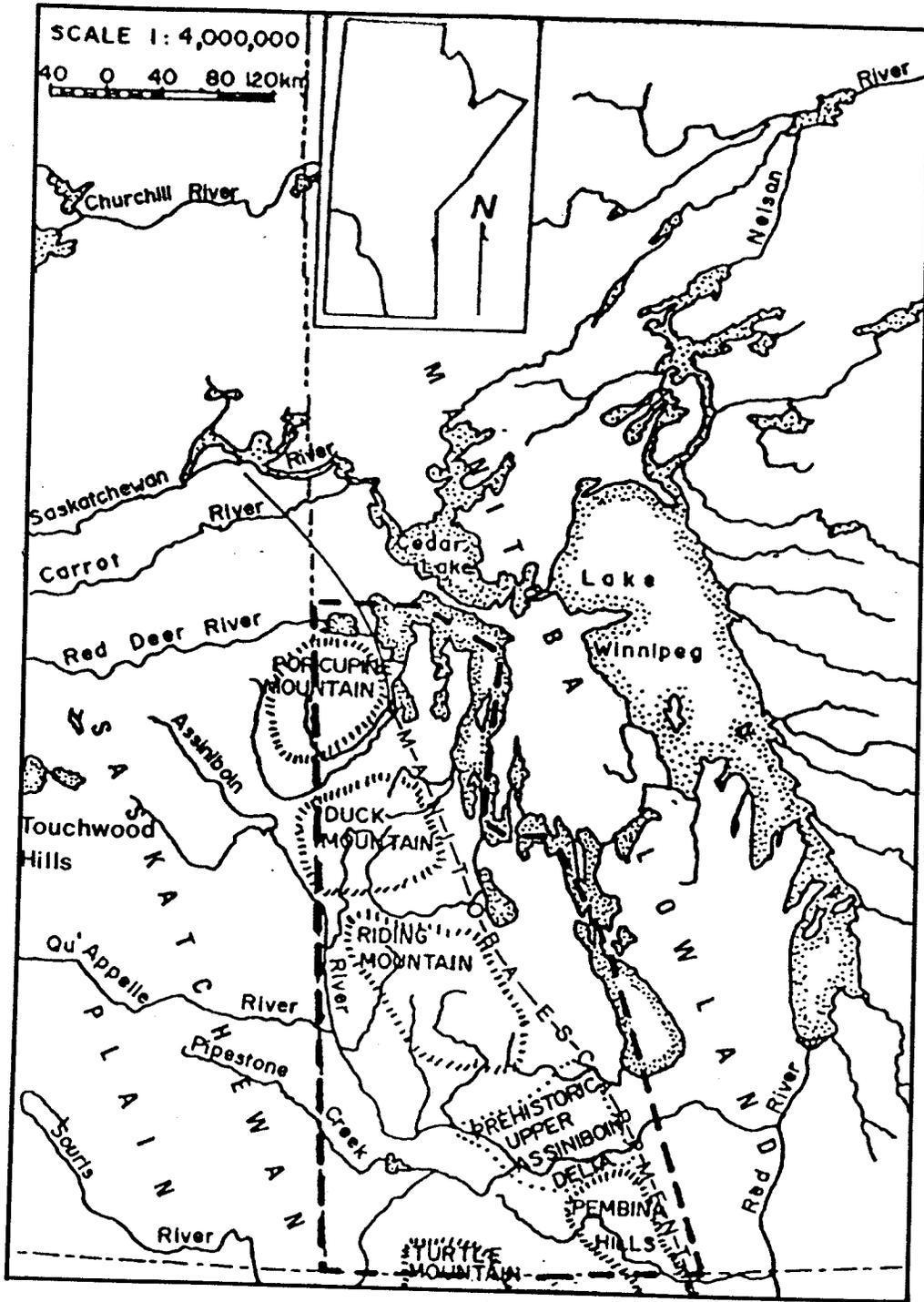
From his examination of Hennepin's map, Reuben Thwaites (ed., 1974:267), the editor of Hennepin's journal, concluded that the Assiniboine were to be found around Lake Winnipeg.

Additional support for this view can be found in the accounts of Henry Kelsey and David Thompson. According to Ray (1974:12) Kelsey's 1690-1691 journal "makes it clear that the Assiniboine occupied the land along the Carrot River and southward as far as the Touchwood Hills" (Figure 5). It would also seem likely that, in their trading and warfare excursions, the protohistorical Assiniboine may have ranged farther west still. While on his way to the Mandan villages in 1794, David Thompson recorded that,

From their own accounts some forty or fifty years ago a feud broke out [with the Yanktonai], and several were killed and wounded on both sides; about five hundred tents separated from the main body and took

FIGURE 5

PHYSIOGRAPHY OF EASTERN SASK. AND WESTERN MANITOBA.



in Nicholson, 1988:352.

up their hunting grounds on the Red River and the Plains stretching north-westward along the right bank of the Saskatchewan River to within 300 miles of the Mountains, and being in alliance and strict confederacy with the Nathathaways [Cree]... (Glover (ed.), 1962:163).

Although Thompson was describing the extent of Assiniboine territory during the mid-eighteenth century, evidence that he obtained from the aged Cree chief, Saukamappee (Glover (ed.), 1962:246-248), indicates that the Assiniboine, Cree, and Blackfoot were actively involved in military engagements with the Snake, or Shoshoni of the Eagle Hills region of west-central Saskatchewan, during the early decades of the eighteenth century. Despite this high degree of mobility, La Vérendrye (Burpee (ed.), 1972:250) was informed by an Assiniboine chief in 1737 that "the fork of the Red River, ...was their own proper territory...".

From the documentary evidence presented, it is apparent that the territorial heartland of the protohistorical Assiniboine lay in the Lake Winnipeg - lower Red River valley region. This view is consistent with the Indian oral traditions previously presented which assert that, following their separation from the Yanktonai, the Assiniboine moved northward to Netley Creek in the lower Red River valley, where they allied themselves with the Cree. It is also apparent that by the protohistorical period the Assiniboine ranged well beyond this homeland on trading and military expeditions that carried them north to Hudson Bay, west into Saskatchewan, and as far east as Lake Nipigon. It is the different interpretations of these far-flung activities that have led

the ethnohistorical community to hotly contest the location of the protohistorical Assiniboine.

## CHAPTER IV

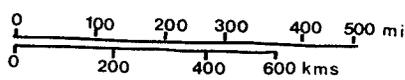
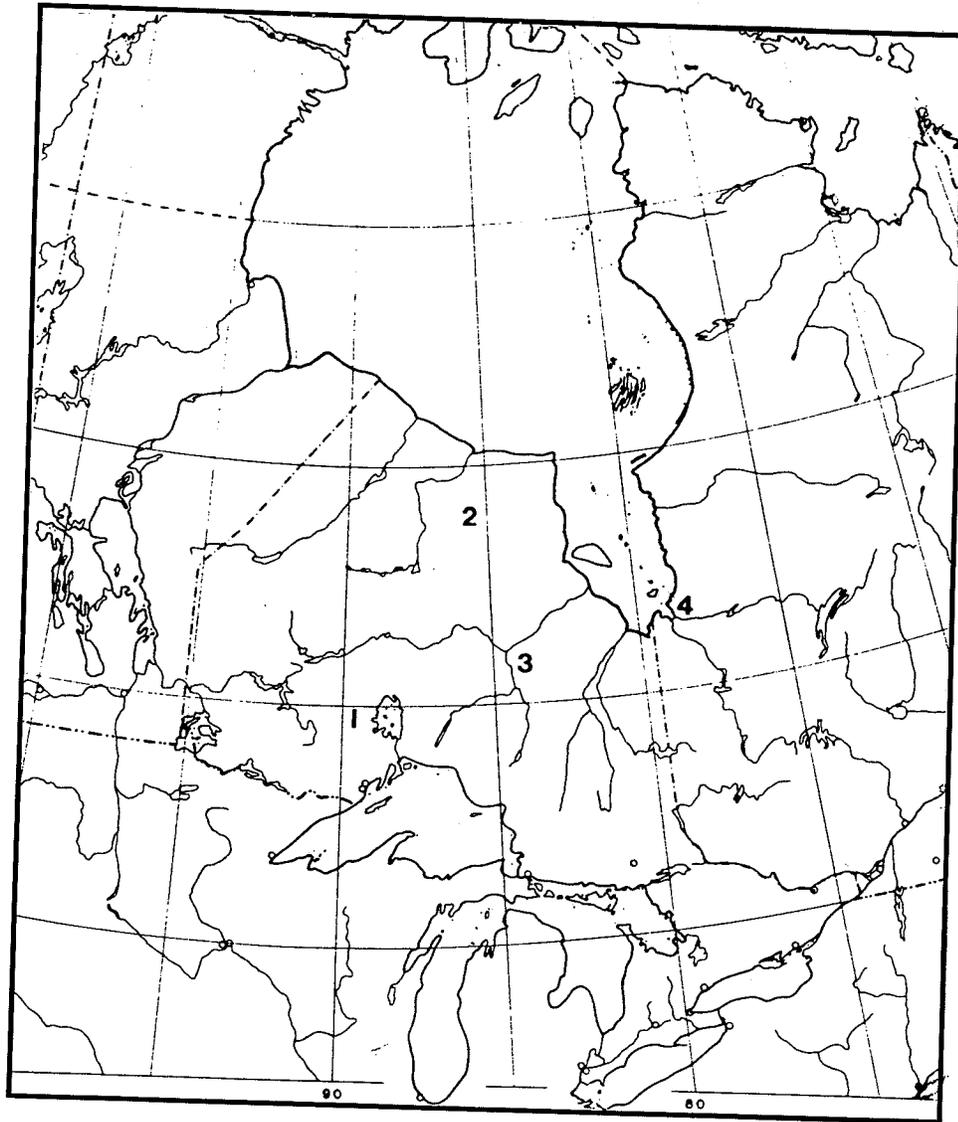
### TRADE, ALLIANCES AND WARFARE IN THE PROTOHISTORICAL PERIOD.

When the Assiniboine separated from the Yanktonai sometime before 1640, they migrated northward, and aligned themselves with the Cree. Although locating the Cree in the protohistorical period involves many of the same problems as trying to define the territory of the protohistorical Assiniboine, information supplied by Father Gabriel Dreuillettes in 1658 would suggest that the Cree were divided into at least four "nations or tribes" (Figure 6):

Those of the first are called the Alimibegouek Kilistinons; of the second, the Kilistinons of Ataouabouscatouek Bay; of the third, the Kilistinons of the Nipisiriniens, because the Nipisiriniens discovered their country, whether they resort to trade or barter goods. They comprise only about six hundred men, that is, two thousand five hundred souls, and are not very stationary. They are of a very approachable disposition. The people of the fourth tribe are called Nisibourounik Kilistinons (J.R., V. 44:279).

It would appear that the "Kilistinons of the Nipisiriniens" were receiving trade goods through an Algonquian trading network that was connected with both the French settlements on the St. Lawrence, and the Iroquoian villages of peninsular Ontario (Heidenreich, 1971:230). However, it is apparent that the Cree of the James Bay region had received their first French goods much earlier and from an entirely different source. In 1603 Samuel de Champlain learned that the Montagnais travelled to James Bay by way of the Rupert River to "barter

**FIGURE 6**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF CREE ACCORDING TO**  
**FATHER GABRIEL DREUILLETES, 1658.**



- 1 Alimibegouek Kilistinons
- 2 Kilistinons of Ataouabouscatouek Bay
- 3 Kilistinons of the Nipisiriniens
- 4 Nisibourounik Kilistinons

beaver and marten skins" for French merchandise from "said nations of the north," of whom the Cree were certainly a part (Bigger (ed.), 1922-1936, V. 1:124-125). This trade appears to have been well developed by this time, and probably began with the emergence of Tadoussac as a major trading center in the lower St. Lawrence during the latter decades of the sixteenth century (Trigger, 1976:213). Thus, the first Cree to acquire European goods were probably the "Nisibourounik Kilistinons" living near the mouth of the Rupert River. The James Bay Cree were also receiving trade goods from the Nipissing in Champlain's time. In 1615 Champlain wrote that the Nipissing,

go to trade the goods which we give them in barter and exchange for their furs, with those who dwell there [on James Bay] who live by the chase and fishing (Bigger (ed.), 1922-1936, V. 3:41).

Of the two trading networks, there can be little doubt that the Montagnais trading system to James Bay was the earliest. It would also appear that trade goods from this system would have filtered through to the other Cree groups identified by Druillettes, and that this movement of French goods to the Cree would have intensified when European wares later became a part of the Nipissing commerce to the north. It is thus entirely possible that some French trade goods had diffused throughout Cree territory by the turn of the seventeenth century, and that the Assiniboine shortly thereafter received their first European wares. These goods would have been acquired from the "Alimibegouek Kilistinons," or some unidentified group living to their west.

Whenever this event occurred, it can be assumed that the relationship between the Assiniboine and Cree went beyond a simple exchange of furs for used French trade goods, for trade was an essential element in initiating and maintaining alliances (Trigger, 1985:185). Tribes that were trading partners were expected to support one another in war. It is possible that the Cree identified by Druillettes as the "Alimibegouek Kilistinons," or the Lake Nipigon Cree, may have initially allied themselves with the Assiniboine, given their close geographic proximity. Although Mandelbaum (1979:20) wrote that "there is not the slightest evidence that the Cree had a westward extension," into the Lake Winnipeg region, evidence related to Warren (1984:139-140) by the chief of the Pillager Ojibway that the Assiniboine first contacted the Cree at Netley Creek, would suggest that some Cree ranged as far west as Lake Winnipeg. Furthermore, although no accounts have survived from the protohistorical period (i.e. c.1640-1679), intimate connections between the Cree and Assiniboine must have been formulated by the early decades of the seventeenth century. In 1695 Father Gabriel Marest wrote,

The Kriqs [Cree] and the Assiniböels [Assiniboine] are allied together; they have the same enemies, and undertake the same wars. Many Assiniböels speak Kriq, and many Kriqs, Assiniböel (J.R., V. 66:108).

For a Siouan-speaking people to acquire the ability to converse in an Algonquian language, and vice versa, certainly indicates that the two tribes had a long association.

While it is most likely that the Assiniboine acquired French trade goods from their Cree neighbors prior to 1640, it is certain that they

had direct and sustained contact with the Cree and other Algonquians following the destruction of Huronia by the Iroquois in 1649-1650. By the early 1650's the Iroquois had dispersed many of their neighbors. As a direct result of this turmoil, the lands surrounding both shores of Lake Superior became locations where bands of Ottawa, Ojibway, Huron and other peoples congregated. Even though the middlemen trade was for some time in a state of disarray following the destruction of Huronia, those displaced by the Iroquois attempted to re-establish and expand it. Indeed, these dislocations eventually saw the trading Indians forge new contacts with peoples with whom they had little or no previous contact. Among the latter peoples were the Assiniboine.

Arthur Ray (1974:12), while aware that the "Assiniboine and Western Cree had been linked to the Ottawa-Indian-French trading network" prior to the establishment of the HBC, was not specific as to who these trading Indians were. However, Charles Aubert de la Chesneau's "Memoir on the Western Indians" described the trading network that had emerged thirty years after the fall of Huronia, and identified the Indians who participated in it,

The Outawas Indians, who are divided into several tribes, and are nearest to us, are those of the greatest use to us, because through them we obtain beaver; and although they, for the most part, do not hunt, ...they go in search of it to the most distant places, and exchange for it our merchandise which they procure at Montreal. They are the Themistamens [Temiscaming], Nepisseriens [Nipissing], Missisakis [Mississauga], Amicoues [Amikwa Ojibway], Sauteurs [Saulteur Ojibway], Kiscakons [a tribe of Ottawa] and Thionontatorons [Tobacco Huron]. They get their peltries, in the North, from the people of the

interior, from the Kilistinons [Cree], Assinibouets [Assiniboine] and Nadouessioux [Sioux], and in the south, from the Sakis [Sauk], Poutouatamis [Potawatomies], Puants [Winnebagoes], Oumaomineas of La Folle Avoine [Menomonies] Outagamis or Foxes, Maskoutins [Mascouten], Miamis and Illinois (O'Callaghan (ed.), 1855, V. 9:160-161).

From Chesneau's point of view, the term "Outawas," was a broad designation referring to the Algonquians who were the main suppliers of furs in the Upper Great Lakes region. Innis (1970:45), and others have confused the "Outawas," as they are referred to in the Chesneau "Memoir," with the Ottawa proper. As a result, the latter have been given a much more prominent role than they actually played in the new commercial network that developed in the Lake Superior-Lake Michigan region following the destruction of Huronia. Although the Ottawa proper, by 1654, largely controlled the major trade routes leading to Quebec (Waisberg, 1978:68), they relied on other Indian traders, or "Outawas" to collect furs. It may have been that by the mid 1650's, the Kiskakon, who were a tribe of the Ottawa proper, as well as the Temiscaming, Nipissing, Mississauga, Amikwa and Saulteur, and the Tobacco Huron were in direct contact, and trading with the Assiniboine and Cree.

By 1660 the focal point for the majority of the displaced Algonquians was Chequamegon, located on the southwestern shore of Lake Superior. Gradually, it became the nexus of Indian trade in the Lake Superior-Lake Michigan region. As an example of this, Father Claude Allouez noted ten Indian nations in conference at Chequamegon during

1665 (J.R., V. 50:279). It is also during this time that the various tribes began to define their own individual interests. Although the Sioux were initially a significant part of this Algonquian trading network, this relationship soon deteriorated to a point whereby open warfare resulted. Perrot wrote that sometime between 1657 and 1660, a combined force attacked the Sioux,

...the Hurons...conspired with the Outaoues to undertake a war against them [Sioux] purposing to drive the Sioux from their own country in order that they themselves might thus secure a greater territory in which to seek their living (Blair (ed.), V. 1, 1911:164).

Despite the joint assault, the Ottawa and Huron were unable to expel the Sioux from the upper Mississippi region. The Ottawa were forced to abandon Sioux country, and settled at Chequamegon around 1658-1660 (Waisberg, 1978:64-65), and the Tionnontate Huron later were forced to join the Ottawa at this location. The Sioux had other enemies to contend with at this time. During his Mississippi expedition of 1658-1660 Radisson discovered that the Mascouten and Cree, "often have joined together and have companies of soldiers to war against the great nation [Sioux]" (Adams (ed.), 1961:89).

Although the Assiniboine were not mentioned by Radisson, given their close association with the Cree, they must have had some role in fighting the Sioux. This suggestion is confirmed by an examination of the journal written by the French explorer, Nicolas Perrot. Referring to the period 1658 to 1660 he wrote,

In all that time they [Ottawa and Huron] were not molested by the Sioux, who gave all their attention to waging war against the Kiristinons, the Assiniboules, and all the nations of the north; they ruined those tribes, and have been in turn ruined by them. For all those tribes are, at present time, reduced to very small numbers: the Sioux, who formerly had more than seven or eight thousand men, seem to be those who travel by canoe, instead of which the other tribes of the prairies cannot all together form, to-day, a body of more than a hundred men or so, at most. It is true that the Renards, the Maskoutechs, and the Kickapous have greatly contributed to defend them, and not the other tribes (Blair (ed.), 1911, V. 1:170-171).

Here, a distinction is being drawn between the eastern Sioux, and the Sioux who occupied the plains to the west of the Mississippi River. It would seem from this observation that both divisions of the Sioux were at war with their northern neighbors (Blair (ed.), 1911, V. 1:171). It would thus appear that, not only were the Assiniboine-Cree and "the nations of the north" militarily engaged in the forests of northern Minnesota with the eastern Sioux, but that warfare also raged between the two rival groups in the prairie region of southern Manitoba and northern North Dakota. Both divisions of Sioux were being "defended" or assisted, by the Fox, Mascouten and Kickapoo. Although Radisson (Adams (ed.), 1961:81) recorded in 1659 that the Mascouten and Cree had long been at war with the Sioux, it is apparent that the Mascouten by this time were in alliance with the Sioux, and assisting them in their wars with the Assiniboine-Cree and the "nations of the north." Another group apparently allied with the Sioux at this time were the Saulteur, who had taken up residence on the south shore of Lake Superior. In citing

Perrot (Blair (ed.), 1911, V. 1:173, 181), Holtzkamm (1981:19) wrote that the Saulteur living at Chequamegon and Keweenaw maintained peaceful relations with the Sioux from 1661 to 1665.

While it is true that Chequamegon flourished as a centre of Indian life between 1661 and 1671, evidence from Perrot indicates that, at the same time, the Sioux and their allies were carrying on a fierce war with the Assiniboine-Cree, and the "nations of the north." The comment by Perrot that "they ruined those tribes and have been in turn ruined by them" suggests that both sides suffered heavy casualties. Since intertribal trade was an important element in initiating and maintaining alliances, Perrot's broad designation of the "nations of the north" can be equated with at least some of the Indians reported by Chesneau to have traded with the Assiniboine and Cree. It is likely that the Nipissing may have assisted the Assiniboine and Cree in their early warfare activities because they had previously conducted a productive trade with the eastern Cree, and later with the Cree surrounding Lake Nipigon. The Assiniboine-Cree were also allied with members of the northern division of the Ojibway. William Warren in his book, the History of the Ojibway People wrote,

Long before this [i.e. the establishment of Grand Portage], the Ojibways of the northern division had already reached in their northward progress, the country of the Ke-nis-te-no and Assineboins, the former of whom belonged to the same stock as themselves, and though the latter were of Dakota extraction, yet finding the two tribes in close alliance and carrying on a war against the Dakotas, they entered their wigwams in peace, and joined in alliance with them (Warren, 1984:138).

Since the nature and timing of the northern Ojibway's migration is in some dispute, all that can be written is that their union with the Assiniboine-Cree took place after the destruction of Huronia, but before La Vérendrye's arrival in the Lake of the Woods-Rainy River region.

It is somewhat more difficult to determine the position of the Ottawa proper and Huron within the Assiniboine, Cree, Ojibway, and Nipissing alliance. It is unlikely that members of the Ottawa and Huron who had been defeated by the Sioux, and then forced to retreat to Chequamegon between 1658 and 1660, would be in any condition to offer assistance to the Assiniboine-Cree and their allies. However, there were some Ottawa and Huron who regularly congregated at the "Sault" to fish during the autumn season. There were also those who utilized the Lake Nipigon region along with the Amikwa and Nipissing (Blair (ed.), 1911, V. 1:173). Although the evidence is lacking, it is likely that those Ottawa who did not originally migrate into Sioux territory with their brethren maintained close connections with the Assiniboine and Cree, and, therefore, should be included in Perrot's "nations of the north" designation. Furthermore, given their recent successes in repulsing three separate Iroquoian attempts to destroy them and their allies between 1653 and 1663 (Blair, (ed.), 1911, V. 1:151, 179; Adams (ed.), 1961:88), some Ottawa and Huron would be fully prepared to assist the Assiniboine-Cree and the other "nations of the north," against the Sioux and their allies.

After the retreat of the Huron and Ottawa from Chequamegon in 1670-1671, intertribal warfare raged throughout the Lake Superior region, effectively closing it to French traders (Kellogg, 1925:209). The French were very concerned about the long term effects of intertribal hostilities upon their fur trade based economy. In 1681 Chesneau wrote, "when differences and wars break out between those nations, that the Governor-General endeavor to appease them and procure them peace" (O'Callaghan (ed.), 1855:161). To bring some measure of stability to the area, Daniel Greysolon Duluth arranged two truces between the warring nations of the Lake Superior region. Negotiations were first conducted between the Saulteur and Sioux, and during the spring of 1679 a truce was arranged (Blair (ed.), 1911, V. 1:277). From Fond du Lac Duluth travelled to Mille Lac, where on July 2, 1679, he met the Issati, a division of the eastern Sioux. In the same year, he also "set up arms of his majesty" in two other villages of the eastern Sioux. It was hoped that with the absence of any conflict with their neighbors, the Sioux, as well as the Saulteur, could effectively harvest the abundant fur resources of northern Minnesota. The only obstacle to this plan were the Assiniboine and the "nations of the north." On the 15th of September, 1679 Duluth,

made with the Assenipoulaks [Assiniboine] and all the other nations of the North a rendezvous at the extremity of Lake Superior to cause them to make peace with the Nadouecioux [Sioux] their common enemy, they all appeared there, where I had the good fortune to gain their esteem and their friendship, to bring them together, and in order that peace might last longer among them, I believed that I could not

better cement it than by causing marriages to be made mutually between the different nations. This I could not carry out without much expenditure. During the following winter I caused them to hold meetings in the forest, at which I was present, in order to hunt together, feast, and thus draw closer the bonds of friendship (Kellogg (ed.), 1917:330-331).

As with Perrot in 1660, Duluth also writes about the Assiniboine being associated with the "nations of the north." There can be little doubt that the Cree and northern Ojibway can be included in Duluth's "nations of the north." Others earlier included under Perrot's rubric of the "nations of the north," and thereby associated in trade and war with the Assiniboine and Cree during the mid-seventeenth century, likely had little sustained contact with them during the last three decades of the seventeenth century. Many of the Nipissing, for example, migrated back to the lake that bears their name after the Iroquois wars. Also, the Ottawa and Huron began to concentrate their activities around the French depot and fort at Michilmackinac (Waisberg, 1978:90). At the same time, the Assiniboine, Cree, and Ojibway began to orientate themselves towards the posts recently established on Hudson Bay by the HBC.

In previous studies of the early warfare patterns of the Assiniboine and Cree (Ray, 1974:3-26) and Cree (Milloy, 1988:6), little attention has been given to the connections that these two tribes developed with the peoples who had been dispersed by the Iroquois during the mid-seventeenth century. However, once the Assiniboine and Cree are placed within the economic and political environment that emerged in the Lake Superior region following the destruction of Huronia, it can be

seen that a new set of alliances had emerged. From the evidence provided by Chesneau, Perrot, and then by Duluth it would appear that during the 1650's and 1660's the tribes that made up the northern trading network were at war with those who made up a southern trading partnership. The first group included the Assiniboine, Cree, northern Ojibway, Nipissing, Ottawa, and Tobacco Huron. The tribes who made up the southern trading network were dominated by both divisions of the Sioux. Perrot wrote that the Fox, Mascouten, and Kickapoo were assisting the Sioux against the Assiniboine-Cree and the "nations of the north." The Saulteur of Chequamegon also formed a significant part of this southern network, serving as middlemen between the French and woodland Sioux.

## CHAPTER V

### ASSINIBOINE TRADE AND WARFARE TO 1700.

Following the establishment of the HBC in 1670 there was "a reorientation of trading networks in the forests to the southwest of Hudson and James Bay" (Ray and Freeman, 1978:42). While Assiniboine ties with the Algonquian-French trading network largely remained intact following the founding of the HBC, the new English posts on James Bay offered an alternate source of European wares to the Assiniboine as well as the Cree. Ray and Freeman (1978:43) wrote that "shortly after the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company,...Assiniboine and Cree trading parties began visiting Albany regularly."

Although there is some evidence for Assiniboine trading at Fort Albany shortly after its founding, this trade does not appear to have developed into the regular commerce that Ray and Freeman describe. Unfortunately no post records are available for Fort Albany during this early period. Although the English began trading at the Albany estuary as early as 1674, and a post was built there in 1679, the post account books do not begin until 1692, and the first surviving post journal dates from 1705. There is no evidence in any of these documents of Assiniboine trading at Fort Albany.

Ray and Freeman's assertion that the Assiniboine began trading regularly at Albany shortly after the establishment of the HBC in 1670 appears to be based upon Duluth's account of the building of a post on

the northeast side of Lake Nipigon in 1684. According to Duluth this post was built to prevent the Assiniboine and other Indians from trading on Hudson Bay (Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:50-51). There can be little doubt that Duluth's post was constructed to prevent the Indians from descending the Albany River to the English factory at its mouth. It would appear, however, that an Assiniboine trade at Albany had begun just prior to the building of the French post in Lake Nipigon. It would also appear that this trading connection was a short lived one.

In his 1682 report to the Governor and Committee of the HBC, Governor John Nixon, writing from Charlton Island in James Bay, noted that "we have trade with...the sinnypoets [Assiniboine] lately" (Rich (ed.), 1945:254). This would appear to be the only direct account of Assiniboine trading at Albany on James Bay. Shortly thereafter, HBC traders, the French, as well as traders from New England were operative at the mouths of the Nelson and Hayes Rivers, and these new developments appear to have opened new opportunities for the Assiniboine which saw them terminate their earlier connection with Fort Albany. Thus, in 1684, Pierre Radisson met 400 "Asenipoetes" at the mouth of the Hayes River (Adams (ed.), 1961:227). These new developments prompted the French to build a second post in an effort to draw the Indians away from the new HBC post of Fort Nelson. In 1685, a small outpost (Fort des Francais or Fort Frougris) was built by Duluth's brother, La Tourette, at the junction of the Albany and Kenogami Rivers (Lytwyn, 1981:33). The success of his efforts were made clear in a letter he sent to the

Governor-General of New France, Jacques-Rene Brisay de Denonville in 1687. Describing the contents of the letter, Denonville wrote,

Du Lut's brother, who has recently arrived from the rivers above Lake of the Allenemigigons [Nipigon] assures me that he saw more than 1,500 persons came to trade with him. They were very sorry to find he had not the goods to satisfy them. They are the tribes accustomed to resort to the English of Port Nelson or River Bourbon where they say they did not go this year, through Sieur du Lhu's influence...The overland route to them is frightful on account of its length and of the difficulty of finding food. He says there is a multitude of people beyond these, and that no trade is to be expected with them except by sea, for by the rivers the expense is too great (Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:52, translated in O'Callaghan (ed.), 1855, V. 9:343).

Although Duluth's brother was not specific as to the identity of the Indians he traded with, some of them may have been Assiniboine. Like the earlier trade at Fort Albany, however, any Assiniboine trade that may have occurred at Fort des Francais was short-lived. The Assiniboine continued to trade at Fort Nelson, and in 1688, Jacques de Noyon wintered at Rainy Lake where he traded with both Assiniboine and Cree (Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:496-497).

Ray and Freeman (1978:43) argue that once Fort Nelson was established, the Assiniboine and Cree had "the opportunity to play the role of middlemen" in the English fur trade. Because the Cree occupied the entire boreal forest region extending from northern Ontario to the lower Saskatchewan River, and because the Assiniboine inhabited the territory from Rainy Lake to central Saskatchewan, both were in a position to control the major canoe routes that reached Hudson Bay.

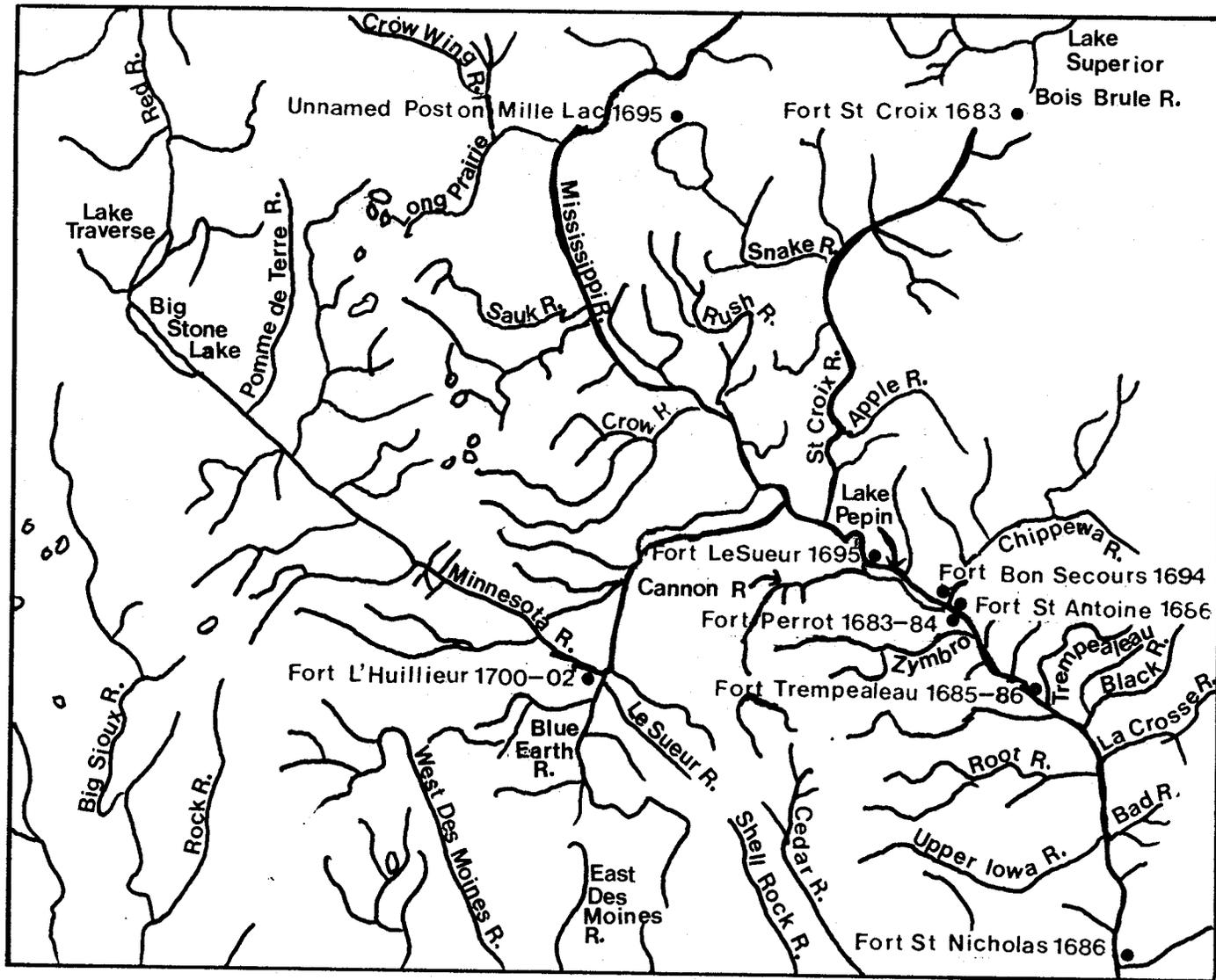
This locational advantage was made even greater by the availability of firearms in the English trade.

These views are based upon Nixon's report of 1682,

...I am informed, there is a nation of Indians called the poyets [Sioux] who have had no trade with any cristian nation as yet, one whome (most people of those Indians who trade with us) doeth make warr, and steall their beaver. It would be greatly to the advance of our trade if we could gaine a correspondance with them, but the means to bring it to pass will be chargeable, and troublesome: but I conceive that it may be brought about thus. We must see to contact with those Indians that goe to warr on them, not to kill them, but to take them alive and sell them to us, and by that means wee will treat them kyndly and send them home to their country againe, with some young men of our factorie, and some trusty Indians with them, or by some other means whatsoever, for they would faine have a trade with us but are affrayed to break through our neighbouring Indians [Cree] for want of armes, we have trade with their nixt nighbours the sinnypoets [Assiniboine] lately which if this comes to pass...yow [you] will have a great trade, our Indians [Cree and Assiniboine] are affrayed that they will breake doune to trade with us, for by their goodwill, they would be the only brokers between all strange Indians and us, and by all means keep both them and us in ignorance, the one of the other deallings, which must be looked at in due tyme (Rich (ed.), 1945:254-255, quoted in Ray and Freeman, 1978:44).

While it is clear from Nixon's report that the Assiniboine and Cree were using English guns to establish themselves as middlemen, it is unlikely that the Sioux would have any motive to attempt to force their way through Assiniboine and Cree territory at this time. From 1683 to 1702, Duluth, Perrot and Pierre Charles LeSueur established nine trading posts near Sioux territory (Figure 7). As a result, the Sioux began to take full advantage of these posts. The movement by the Sioux to the French

FIGURE 7 FRENCH POSTS ON THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI



in Holtzkamm, 1981:45

trading posts was in direct contrast to the movement of the Assiniboine to James and then Hudson Bay. Such contrasting trading patterns pulled the Assiniboine-Cree and Sioux away from each other, thereby limiting the possibility of any hostile engagements. In fact, from 1683 to 1700 there is no evidence of any active military engagements between the Sioux and Assiniboine-Cree.

It would appear that once the Sioux were no longer considered a threat, the Cree attempted to assert their locational advantage over the Assiniboine. This turn of events coincided with the establishment of trading posts on the mouths of the Hayes and Nelson Rivers in 1682, which the Cree were more advantageously situated to exploit than were the Assiniboine. The earliest evidence to suggest some change in the relationship between these two allied peoples is found in the journals of Pierre Radisson. In the spring of 1682, Radisson met a number of Cree canoes at the mouth of the Hayes River. Following a conversation with the headman, Radisson learned that, "he [Cree] would kill the Assemptoits if they came down unto us" (Adams (ed.), 1961:198). Although this does not indicate that a state of conflict had developed between the Assiniboine and Cree, it does show that at least some Cree were intent upon monopolizing the trade to Hudson Bay.

Almost ten years later Henry Kelsey also observed strained relations between some of the Assiniboine and Cree. Thus, in his second inland journey with the Assiniboine in 1691 he wrote that,

our [Assiniboine] Indians making a great feast telling [me] they were very glad [that] I was returned according to my promise for if I should be wanting they should be greatly afraid [that the] Nayhaythaways Indians [Cree] would murder [them and] so made me master of [the] feast (Doughty and Martin (ed.), 1929:9).

These Indians with whom Kelsey was feasting were the "Eagles brich" who have been identified by Rich (1967:73) as Wood Assiniboine. It would appear that the "Eagles brich" were so terrified of the Cree that they asked Kelsey to be "master of [the] feast." It was hoped that his presence would discourage the Cree from attacking.

In his analysis of the reported animosity between the Assiniboine and Cree Milloy wrote,

...the Cree-Assiniboine alliance was an alliance between the Cree and some bands of Assiniboine and that the Cree were actively opposed to other bands among who could be numbered the Mountain Poets and the Eagle Birch [sic] Indians...During Kelsey's time on the plains only some bands of the Assiniboine were allowed to travel north. These favoured Assiniboine probably concerned with maintaining their privilege of passage on the Hayes, were forced to stand aside and ignore the deperadations of the Cree on the Mountain Poets and Eagle Birch [sic] Indians and they actively joined the Cree against the Naywattame Poets (Milloy, 1972:45-46).

While Kelsey's second journal does confirm Milloy's suggestion that the Cree were "actively oppossed" to some bands of Assiniboine, there is no evidence from Kelsey's journal which would indicate that some Assiniboine were forced to stand passively by "and ignore the deperadations of the Cree on the Mountain Poets [Assiniboine] and Eagle Birch [sic]." It is also unlikely that hostility between the

Assiniboine and Cree revolved around the desire of some Assiniboine to maintain access to York Factory. The reason why such animosity was prevalent between the Assiniboine and Cree is found elsewhere in Kelsey's journal.

The purpose of Kelsey's second journey inland was "to discover [and] bring to a commerce the Nayatame Poets" (Doughty and Martin (ed.), 1929:4). It has been generally accepted that the latter Indians were the Gros Ventres. Throughout his second journal there are references to the Cree and Gros Ventres being at war with each other. Although the Assiniboine also told Kelsey that they were going to attack the Gros Ventres, Kelsey arranged a truce between them on September 9, 1691 (Doughty and Martin (ed.), 1929:17). It is entirely possible that the Cree were so incensed by the Assiniboine accompanying Kelsey to trade with the Gros Ventres that the Cree threatened to kill Assiniboine. Only the presence of Kelsey prevented a major hostile engagement taking place between the Assiniboine and Cree.

If some of the Assiniboine and Cree were at odds in 1691, evidence from the journal of Father Gabriel Marest kept at Fort Bourbon (York Factory) in 1694-1695 would suggest that the two tribes were on peaceful terms by 1695:

There are seven or eight different tribes who come to the Fort; and in the year 1695 possibly three hundred or more canoe-loads of them came to trade. The most distant, the most numerous, and the most important of these tribes are the Assiniboels [Assiniboine] and the Kriqs [Cree]....The Kriqs and the Assiniboels are allied together; they have the same enemies, and undertake the same wars. Many Assiniboels speak Kriq, and many Kriqs, Assiniboel (J.R., V. 66:107).

Furthermore, since both tribes were reported by Pierre Charles Le Sueur (Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:82) to be making preparations to attack the Sioux in 1700, there can be little doubt that the Assiniboine and Cree were on peaceful terms to the close of the seventeenth century.

## CHAPTER VI

### WARFARE IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PLAINS AND WOODLANDS, 1700-1782.

Throughout most of the eighteenth century the Assiniboine were militarily active on two fronts. To the west, the Assiniboine and their allies became embroiled with the Snake, Kutenai and Flathead. The westward thrust of trade and influence, however, did not free them from conflict along their southern and eastern flanks so that, in addition to sending war parties into the grassland region of southern Saskatchewan and Alberta, they remained in conflict with the prairie and woodland Sioux. Although there is little evidence of encounters on this front during the last two decades of the seventeenth century, the beginning of the eighteenth century saw conflict renewed. The revival of warfare in this region revolved around the French trade and the western thrust of French trading influences at this time.

By 1702 France was again involved in war with England, and up until its conclusion in 1713, affairs between the two powers remained hostile. By the former date, intra-Indian relations in the upper Mississippi had become difficult for the French. Since the 1690's the Sioux, Saulteur, and the Iowa had been waging war against the Mascouten, Fox, and Miami (Anderson, 1984:33). These intertribal wars, along with the continual assaults by the Iroquois, devastated the western commerce of the French. Finally, in 1696, Louis XIV of France ordered the complete withdrawal of

all formal French influences from the area. The subsequent conditions in the west were outlined in a French report for 1696-1697 which stated:

Affairs were in great confusion throughout all those countries, and different Nations allied to us seemed disposed to wage war among themselves (O'Callaghan (ed.), 1855, V. 9:672).

Holtzkamm (1983:227) has argued that, in the vacuum created by the French withdrawal, relations were strained between the Sioux and Ojibway and, by 1700, the Assiniboine and Cree were again at war with the Sioux. At Fort L'Huillieur in southern Minnesota, Le Sueur was given the following information in November of 1700:

two Mantanons Sioux [the Mdewankantonwan] arrived; these savages have been sent especially to inform that all the Eastern Sioux and some of the Western ones had got together to go to the French, because they had learnt that the 'Cristinaux' and the 'Assinipoils' were coming to make war with them (Translated from Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:82).

In her analysis of this evidence, Mildred Mott Wedel (1974:164) wrote that, while the Assiniboine and Cree were not as active as the Fox and Mascouten when it came to waging war against the Sioux, they nevertheless did restrict the Sioux from expanding northward. It is apparent that the Assiniboine and Cree were the aggressors at this juncture and it is likely that they sought to take advantage of the Sioux while the latter had been cut from the eastern trade by the Fox and their allies. So effective was this warfare that the Fox and Mascouten in 1702 destroyed Fort L'Huillieur, the only source of French trade goods in Sioux territory.

By the second decade of the eighteenth century, however, the Fox and Sioux had arrived at a new understanding.

The Foxes, Sauks and Sioux were able to bury their differences and to join together in an alliance against the "French Indians", that is, the Ojibways of the Superior area and the other Crees and the Assiniboines of the Border and Manitoba Lakes areas (Ruggles, 1958:305-306).

This new alliance between the Fox and Sioux was effected in either 1717 or 1718. In 1717 Father Charlevoix learned of an alliance between the two former enemies (in Holtzkamm, 1981:26). In 1718, when two French officers from La Pointe attempted to censure the Sioux for an attack upon the Ojibway at Kaministiquia, they discovered that the Sioux were in league with the Fox (Margry, (ed.), 1886, V. 6:508-509, in Holtzkamm, 1983:227). Following the Sioux attack on the northern Ojibway, the Chequamegon Ojibway, who hitherto had been on peaceful terms with the Sioux, began to prepare for war against their former trading partners. While a new alliance is not clearly noted here, given that "enemies held in common tend to make cohorts in arms" (Sharrock, 1974:104), it would appear that the southern and northern Ojibway were expecting conflict with the Sioux in 1718. Because the Assiniboine and Cree had long been associated with the northern Ojibway in trade and war, it is possible that the alliance was extended to the southern Ojibway at this time.

No sooner had the Sioux ceased warring with the Fox and their allies than they struck a major blow at the Assiniboine. When thirteen canoes of "Sinnepoets" arrived at York Factory during the late spring of 1717 they made,

a miserable complaint of a mortality amongst them by staying here so long here . . . their enemy's the Poets [Sioux] whilst they was here fell upon their familys . . . here came 110 canoes of those

men last year [1716] [and] they can scarce make up  
50 now for their enemy's has gotten their wives  
[and] children into ye [their] possession  
(HBCA. B.239/a/3 F.52).

Since the location of the Assiniboine at this time was in the southern Manitoba grasslands, there can be little doubt that the Sioux attack occurred somewhere in that region. Describing the disposition of the Cree and Assiniboine, Nicolas Lamontagne Jérémie wrote near the conclusion of the French occupation at Fort Bourbon (i.e. York Factory) that:

The country on the east side of this lake [Winnipeg] which runs nearly north south, is a land of dense forests, with many beaver and moose. Here the country of the Cree commences, . . . The west side of this lake is full of very fine prairies in which are many of these oxen [bison] which I have mentioned. All these regions are occupied by Assinibouels . . . (Douglas and Wallace (ed.), 1926:32).

It would also appear that the Assiniboine sought to avenge their loss of women and children in a campaign in 1717, as only 50 canoes of Assiniboine men went down to York Factory that year.

Not only were the Sioux trying to push into the upper Red River valley but they were also attempting to gain control of the territory farther east. In 1717, Zacharie Robute de la Noue constructed a small outpost on Rainy Lake and reported that through conflict, the Sioux had taken over most of the Rainy Lake - Lake of the Woods region (Ray, 1974:14). While this was not the homeland of the Assiniboine, the Sioux takeover of the region nevertheless was of vital concern to them. The region was not only important to the Assiniboine as an area where they

procured wild rice, but also an area through which they traded with the French. In 1718 the "Mountain Indians", whom Pentland (1985:154) identified as either Assiniboine or Cree from the Manitoba Escarpment region, told Henry Kelsey that:

the French wood runners [coureurs de bois] are very busy up the lakes [Rainy River, Lake of the Woods] and that they invited some of the Mountain Indians to come and trade with them so they sent some of their young to try but the Poetueks [Sioux] destroyed most of them [and] but a few returned alive . . . they all agree that the French decoyed them into the snare and seem mightily incensed (HBCA. B.239/a/5 F.50).

Shortly after this event, Kelsey was informed by the Assiniboine who had come to trade at York Factory, that "they would go to wars because their enemy's [Sioux] had killed several of their friends while they were trading last year . . ." (HBCA. B.239/a/5 F.73). Warfare between the Sioux and Assiniboine was motivated by a complex web of economic, political, and territorial concerns, but the information relayed to Kelsey suggests that the element of revenge was also embedded in the overall pattern of conflict. It needs to be emphasized, however, that revenge was not the cause of warfare, "it is rather the method by which a cultural irritation or need is satisfied" (Newcomb, 1950:320).

Even though a formal alliance was never concluded, coureurs de bois operating to the east of Lake Winnipeg and in the upper Mississippi both indirectly and directly assisted the Sioux in their wars with the Assiniboine. The coureurs de bois who were operating out of Louisiana obtained licenses to trade with the Sioux, and supplied them with guns, powder, and lead (Margry (ed.), 1886, V. 6:510, In Holtzkamm, 1981:68)

and such firearms were undoubtedly used against the Assiniboine and their allies. There is, moreover, evidence that the coureurs de bois led Sioux parties against the Assiniboine, and that the raiding was trade motivated. In the York Factory post journal of 1729 it was reported:

Been In formed by most of the upland Indians this summer that 8 French wood Runners [coureurs de bois] went to warrs Last Summer [1728] with the poetts [Sioux] against our Sinapoets with a design to Destroy them or force them to trade with them (HBCA. B.239/a/11 F.18 quoted in Ray, 1974:14).

When they were not directly participating in Siouan assaults, the coureurs de bois were encouraging the Sioux to attack the Assiniboine and their allies to prevent them from trading with the English. For example, on May 19, 1722, Kelsey was told by a leader of thirty canoes of Assiniboine that,

the Poets [Sioux] . . . are encouraged by the French to warr against all cuntry [sic] Indians that came here to trade. (HBCA. B.239/a/7 F.22).

Some five years later, Thomas Maclish, chief trader at York Factory, was informed by a number of Assiniboine that, "the said Poits [Sioux] are encouraged by the French" (HBCA. B.239/a/10 F.3d). At Albany, Joseph Myatt wrote on September 1, 1723 that the presence of the coureurs de bois had an even more damaging effect upon relations between traditional allies:

. . . one Canowe came down the River . . . to tell us that the sinapoets hath killed upwards of a hundred of the Inds yt [that] were here to trade this spring and not to Expect an Ind[ians] down

this River the next spring but I hope it will not be as he reportes, not but it is certaine the Kannady wood runners [coureurs de bois] doe all they can to intercept our trade and set the Inds at variance one with another that comes to trade with us (HBCA. B/3/a/12 F.3).

Although Bishop (1974:312) suggested that it was the Cree who were attacked by the Assiniboine, it was most likely the Ojibway, who not only traded at Albany but also with the French on Lake Superior. The effect that these French inspired assaults had upon the Assiniboine was drastic, driving them far to the north beyond the range of the Sioux war parties. On June 12, 1729 it was reported that:

I understand by severall of our home Indians [Cree] that last summer [1728] the poetts [Sioux] went to warrs with our Senipoets and drove our Senipoets As farr as the Head of the Churchill River (HBCA. B.239/a/11 F.18, quoted in Ray, 1974:15-16).

It was also reported that some of the Assiniboine began to trade at Fort Churchill.

The said Senipoetts [Assiniboine] are gone to Churchill this Summer to trade which we are glad to hear of the Same we being informed the 1st this Summer that the . . . Poetts [Sioux] had Destroyed most of our Senipoetts by the Instigation of the french (HBCA. B.239/a/11 F.19, quoted in Ray, 1974:14).

Despite these successes of the Sioux in the west, it is apparent that combined forces of the Assiniboine, Cree, and Ojibway had driven them from the Rainy Lake - Lake of the Woods area sometime prior to La Vérendrye's penetration to the region in the 1730's (Ray, 1974:14). These circumstances, together with La Vérendrye's explorations, brought about a change in the French approach to intertribal relations in the

Northwest. During the early eighteenth century, coureurs de bois first tried to discourage the Assiniboine and Cree from trading with the English, and later, they led Siouan war parties into the territory of the Assiniboine, Cree, and northern Ojibway. Because the Rainy River - Lake of the Woods area would have to be used as a major thoroughfare for French canoes in La Vérendrye's western thrust, he sought to establish friendly relations and trade with the Assiniboine, Cree, and Ojibway who now occupied this region. It would appear that the Indian allies responded favorably to this proposal for, in the spring of 1729, the Assiniboine and Cree assured La Vérendrye that they would trade with the French at Kaministiquia. However, La Vérendrye subsequently learned that the,

death of one of their principal chiefs, a man of high consideration, has caused them to change their plan and decided them to go to war in the direction of the Spaniards to avenge his death according to their custom (Burpee (ed.), 1927:61-62).

Following this, La Vérendrye prepared to develop a direct trade by building French posts in the Lake of the Woods - Rainy Lake area. Accompanied by his sons, Jean-Baptiste, Pierre, François, his nephew, La Jéremaye, and fifty engagés, he set off from Montreal on June 8, 1731. They arrived at Grand Portage, at the western extremity of Lake Superior on August 26, 1731. From that location an advance party under the leadership of Jean-Baptiste and La Jéremaye journeyed to Rainy Lake where they built Fort St. Pierre in the autumn of 1731. After reading La Jéremaye's reports the new governor of New France, Charles

Beauharnois de la Boische, wrote:

. . . on his [La Jéremaye] arrival at Lake Tecamamiouen [Rainy Lake], he sent some savages of the locality, laden with presents to invite the Cree and Assiniboin to come and see him, but that the winter was so severe that he did not see one of them; that these nations are nearly all at war with one another, . . . nevertheless he stopped several war parties, and prevented the Monsoni from going to attack the Sioux living at a distance on the prairies, and that when the Sieur de la Vérendrye arrives an effort will be made to bring about a general reconciliation (Burpee (ed.), 1927:93-94).

La Vérendrye, who had returned to Kaministiquia, rejoined the expedition in the spring of 1732 at Fort St. Pierre. The party then moved on to the Lake of the Woods where they established Fort St. Charles on the southwest corner of the lake in the late spring of 1732. La Vérendrye, like his nephew, had difficulty in persuading the Assiniboine and Cree to trade with the French. On May 21, 1733 he wrote:

We are with the Cree and near the Assiniboin. None of them have yet to come to the fort as they have in some way been made afraid of us . . . (Burpee, (ed.), 1927:96).

While the Cree and Assiniboine were hesitant in responding to La Vérendrye's overtures, he also had to face the problem of continued warfare between them and the Sioux.

All the savages around here [Fort St. Charles] are very fond of war. I stopped them all last year [1732], but this year [1733] I had to let them go on with it, forbidding them, however, to go to the river Sioux, which they promised not to do; they are all going in the direction of the prairies (Burpee (ed.), 1927:96).

La Vérendrye was urging the tribes of the Northwest not to wage war with

the "river Sioux" or those of the Mississippi because the French had just constructed a post (Fort Beauharnois) in their territory in 1731. He feared that such an attack would make it difficult for the French to conduct a profitable trade with the eastern Sioux. La Vérendrye went on to write that, "No Sioux has come here [in the vicinity of Fort St. Charles] for any warlike purpose within the last two years [1731 and 1732]" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:99). This would seem to suggest that the eastern Sioux were content to trade in their own territory without trying to push into the Northwest in order to gain access to the French trade in this region.

During the spring of 1733, La Vérendrye wrote from Fort St. Charles that:

. . . the Sioux and Saulteurs, . . . have been carrying on a war from time immemorial against the Monsoni and Christinaux or Cree and even against the Assiniboine (two tribes against three). On both sides they are continually forming war parties to invade one another's territory, as will be seen further in this Journal, a state of things which is gradually destroying them, hinders their hunting and does considerable harm to the Commerce of Canada (Burpee (ed.), 1927:134-135).

While Bishop (1974:312) has argued that the Monsoni were a Cree group, a document attributed to La Vérendrye identifies the latter as Ojibway, for the Monsoni are described by him as speaking "Sauteaux" (PAC. MGIB B12 F.17, quoted in Greenberg and Morrison, 1982:93). The Monsoni inhabited the Rainy Lake area and were the people among whom La Vérendrye established Fort St. Pierre, his first post west of Lake

Superior. They were also the people whom La Jéremaye had sent with presents to induce the Assiniboine and Cree to trade at this establishment.

La Vérendrye's account of 1735 suggests that a shift in alliances had taken place since 1718. In it he notes that the Saulteurs and Sioux had been at war with the Monsoni, Cree, and Assiniboine from "time immemorial", and it would appear that any differences that earlier had arisen between the Saulteurs of Chequamegon and the Sioux had long since been resolved. Although there is no direct reference to Sioux-Saulteur warfare in the period from 1718-1733, attempts by the French to conclude a peace between the two peoples during that time suggests some hostility (Holtzkamm, 1981:27). An extract from a letter written by Charles Le Moyne de Longueuil at Quebec in 1726 indicates that a peace was made between the Saulteurs and Sioux in that year.

I received a letter from Sieur de Linctot, commanding at La Pointe, wherein he gives me advice from the Sauteurs (Chippeways) who are come down expressly on account of arrangements he has made to establish a peace between the Sioux and Sauteurs. He has caused the Sioux prisoners to be returned, which has put them on good terms with the Chippeways, and the Sioux have asked for a missionary. He has sent two Frenchmen to them (Thwaites (ed.), 1902-1915, V.3:158).

This peace appears to have still been in effect in 1733 for, in that year, La Vérendrye noted (Burpee (ed.), 1927:139) that a joint Sioux-Saulteur war party was lurking near Fort St. Charles. There was, in consequence, a continuation of the split between the northern Ojibway, including the Monsoni of the Rainy Lake region, and the

southern Ojibway living on the south shorelands of Lake Superior. The latter had long served as middlemen to the eastern Sioux, while the northern Ojibway peoples had similarly operated as middlemen between the French and the Assiniboine and Cree. This alliance persisted following the founding of the HBC in 1670, which gave the Cree, Assiniboine, and northern Ojibway direct access to European goods on James, and Hudson Bay. The Sioux, and in a lesser degree, the southern Ojibway remained enemies of these northern allies.

While relations between the southern Ojibway and Sioux in the upper Mississippi waxed and waned, the alliance of the Assiniboine, Cree and northern Ojibway did not suffer these perturbations. During the summer of 1733 a combined Monsoni-Cree war party set off from Fort St. Charles to attack "the Saulteur of the Point [Chequamegon] and the Sioux" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:135). The plan was for the Monsoni to strike a blow at the Saulteur while the Cree were to launch an assault against the Sioux. The Cree foray must have been against the western Sioux because it took them, "a twenty days march in the prairies" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:137) from Fort St. Charles. Upon moving against a Sioux village, a small party of the latter ambushed the Cree, killing four. Since the Sioux, according to La Vérendrye (Burpee (ed.), 1927:137), thought they were attacking the Assiniboine, it is possible that Assiniboine were with the Cree on this hostile incursion into the territory of the western Sioux. Following this initial encounter:

The Sioux, surprised by the number of the enemy,  
took flight, abandoning a portion of their arms in

order to reach an isolated wood in the midst of the prairie, where the fight went on until nightfall . . . They [Sioux] lost twelve men without counting the wounded (Burpee (ed.), 1927:138).

Unlike their Cree allies, the Monsoni did not carry through in striking a blow against the Saulteurs, and were dissuaded from doing so by the French. La Vérendrye wrote (Burpee (ed.), 1927:136) that he, "forbade them [Cree and Monsoni] to make war on his children the Saulteurs; and I said to them that if they were obedient to his [Governor of New France] word, I would give them everything they asked". La Vérendrye went on to write that:

The 300 Monsoni having gone up the river St. Pierre [Warroad River] again as far as a fork where they were to leave their canoes to go into the prairies, met three men, Saulteur and Sioux, scouts of a party of one hundred. The Monsoni fired on them and killed one whose scalp they took (Burpee (ed.), 1927:136-137).

When the Monsoni returned with this news, La Vérendrye gave them tobacco as a reward for not attacking the party of one hundred and the Monsoni, "returned highly pleased to their families" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:137).

During the spring of 1734 an intertribal council was held at Fort St. Charles. The purpose of this conference was to receive La Vérendrye's answer to a request made earlier by the Monsoni and Cree, that his eldest son be allowed to go on the warpath with them against the Sioux. This request, which threatened French relations with the Sioux, was eventually honored and Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye became a councillor to the chief of the Monsoni and Cree. Shortly after the conference ended, the senior La Vérendrye wrote:

On the 11th [May, 1734] all the warriors came to take leave of me. They told me that they wanted to go up the river St. Pierre [Warroad River] to place their canoes above the fork in the river by which the enemy was accustomed to pass in order to come to them, and so as to put their lands and families in safety, and then go to the prairies where the Assiniboin had given them rendezvous. I consented to everything. They told me that their campaign would last two months and that the number of warriors might amount to eleven or twelve hundred men when the Assiniboin had joined them (Burpee (ed.), 1927: 185-186).

The combined force of Monsoni, Cree, and Assiniboine fell upon the "Mascoutens Poïanes", or the "Sioux of the Prairies" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:210). As a consequence of this attack, the Sioux "resolved on vengeance and put into practice all possible means for accomplishing it" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:211). Learning of La Vérendrye's support for the Monsoni, Cree, and Assiniboine, the Sioux carried out their threat by killing his eldest son, Jean-Baptiste, Father Aulneau, as well as nineteen voyagers on an island in the Lake of the Woods on June 8, 1736.

There is some doubt as to which division of Sioux was responsible for this massacre. Beauharnois wrote (Burpee (ed.), 1927:211) that it was "a party of Prairie Sioux to the number of one hundred and thirty" who were to blame. However, a letter written by an independent voyageur, René Bourassa, who had met the Sioux on the day of the attack, claimed that:

the attacking party was composed of Prairie Sioux, of some of the Sioux of the Lakes [eastern Sioux] and of [some from] Monsieur de la Ronde's post. The latter appeared well disposed to the French (Burpee, 1903:16).

Although the last mentioned Indians were not identified they appear to have been eastern Sioux trading at Chequamegon, because "Monsieur de la Ronde" was Louis Denys, Sieur de la Ronde, commandant of the French post at Chequamegon. This would indicate that the western and eastern Sioux were both responsible for the assault. In addition, La Vérendrye was informed through the letters of Bourassa, which were delivered to him at Fort St. Charles on December 23, 1736 that, "there was one Saulteur who had been present at that tragedy" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:238). This would suggest that the Sioux were still allied with the Saulteur at this time. More generally, the massacre of the French occurred because, "they [Sioux] had a grievance against the French for distributing arms to their enemies wherewith to kill them" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:218). More immediately, however, it was precipitated because:

The Savages [Sioux] had a particular enmity against the son of Sieur de la Vérendrye [Jean-Baptiste], who had two years before [1734] had joined the Cree in a campaign against the Sioux: he had been proclaimed chief according to what is stated in the council but, however that may be, the young man had turned back and had not taken any part in the war (Burpee (ed.), 1927:264).

A month after the Lake of the Woods massacre, Cree and Monsoni arrived at Fort St. Charles and informed La Vérendrye that, "they were all ready to move against the enemy, and asked me for vengeance" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:221). Shortly thereafter, four canoes of Cree and Assiniboine arrived "from the vicinity of Lake Winnipeg", and inquired, "If I [La Vérendrye] intend to go and avenge the blood of the French,

and particularly that my son" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:222). This party also told La Vérendrye that:

A strong party of their people they said was going to start for the prairies and go to the Point du Bois fort which was the usual rendezvous for Assiniboin, Cree and Monsoni, distant about fifty leagues from Fort St. Charles in order to reach the Sioux . . . (Burpee (ed.), 1927:222-223).

"Point du Bois fort" is located on La Vérendrye's map of 1737 on the Red River, some distance above its junction with the Assiniboine. Since the 1734-1735 and 1735-1736 journals of La Vérendrye are missing, it is not clear whether it was a post built by some member of La Vérendrye's party, or if it was an Indian rendezvous point, perhaps fortified, to which the name had been given (Burpee (ed.), 1927:222).

After two months of negotiations with the chiefs of the three tribes, La Vérendrye managed to convince them, "that we must defer this war to a more favourable time" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:230), and La Colle, chief of the Monsoni told La Vérendrye that, "next spring we shall go on a campaign against the Sioux to avenge the shedding of French blood" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:232). To prevent the large number of Assiniboine and Cree that were gathering at "Point du Bois fort" from attacking the Sioux, La Colle "was on his own behalf carrying to Pointe du Bois fort a roll of tobacco for the warriors to keep them from going to war" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:237). Despite La Colle's assertion that he was going to the rendezvous point, he sent another member of his tribe. On the 2nd of January, 1737 a number of Indians arrived at Fort St. Charles, and,

reported having received the man sent by La Colle and having obeyed his instructions and mine; [La Vérendrye] and thus in accordance with your [Beauharnois] intentions this famous war party was broken up (Burpee (ed.), 1927:239).

After the war party broke up, the Assiniboine returned to (Burpee (ed.), 1927:240) "hunting buffalo to get meat and fats", while the Cree began to prepare for La Vérendrye's visit to Fort Maurepas. It was not until the spring of 1737 that La Vérendrye gave his consent for the Assiniboine, Cree, and Monsoni to attack the Sioux.

Before the combined force of Assiniboine, Cree, and Monsoni set off into Sioux territory, La Vérendrye on May 26, 1737 wrote:

sixty Barrier Cree arrived [at Fort St. Charles] and told me that the Winnipeg Cree whom I left at Fort Maurepas all had died of small-pox, which had been brought to them by those who had gone to trade with the English (Burpee (ed.), 1927:256-257).

The "small-pox" eventually prevented the Assiniboine, Cree, and Monsoni from attacking the Sioux. After receiving a letter from La Vérendrye's youngest son, Beauharnois wrote:

. . . that the Assiniboine to the number of eight hundred had left at the end of April [1737] to go and take vengeance on the Sioux for the Frenchmen [they had killed] and that the Cree and Monsoni had also raised war parties, though he does not give their numbers, but that smallpox having broken out among them they were obliged to stop with the loss of a considerable number of their people carried off by that disease (Burpee (ed.), 1927:282).

La Vérendrye's support of the Assiniboine, Cree, and Monsoni allies, together with the massacre of the French when the Sioux retaliated for

this behavior, appears to have caused a rift between the southern Ojibway and their Sioux allies. Indeed, it would appear that, following the Sioux attack upon the French, the Saulteurs were prepared to re-align themselves with the Cree, Assiniboine, and Monsoni, and to take up the hatchet against the Sioux.

Although the Saulteurs cannot be positively identified as members of the Assiniboine, Cree, and Monsoni war party that gathered in 1737, La Colle informed, "the Cree that certain Saulteur had joined him and that he will await them at the rendezvous" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:258). La Vérendrye learned shortly after the massacre that, "a great number of Saulteur have sought refuge with them [the French] through fear of the Sioux" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:238), implying a significant breach between the former allies. 'The French' refers to Bourassa, who along with twelve voyageurs, was on the Vermilion River in northeast Minnesota, with the "intention being to winter there . . . and to trade with the Saulteur" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:234). Because La Vérendrye's journal is missing for the period from August, 1737 to July, 1738 it is not known if Bourassa remained on the Vermilion River, or if he complied with La Vérendrye's order that he, and his party, should return to Fort St. Pierre (Burpee (ed.), 1927:234), because an outpost on the Vermilion River would reduce the trade at Fort St. Pierre.

Subsequently, La Vérendrye expanded his network of posts directly into Assiniboine territory. On the 3rd of October, 1738, he built Fort La Reine (Burpee (ed.), 1927:305) on the Assiniboine River near the

present site of Portage la Prairie, thereby fulfilling a promise he had earlier made to the Assiniboine that a post would be built on their "own proper territory" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:250). The La Vérendrye party built another post among the Assiniboine on October 15, 1738 (Burpee (ed.), 1927:308) at the junctions of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, naming it Fort Rouge. It was following the construction of these posts that La Vérendrye set out in the company of some Assiniboine to establish contact with the Mandan and Hidatsa, the agricultural villagers of the upper Missouri.

Ray (1974:88) has written that "the Assiniboine did not carry on a regular trade with the Mandan in pre-European times". However, Wood and Thiessen ((ed.), 1985:20) have suggested that this trade was a longstanding one, and "was an old pattern most likely predating Euro-American contacts". In prehistoric time, according to Ewers (1968:21), the earliest trade contacts between the Sioux (and by association, the Assiniboine) and Mandan involved the exchange of by-products of the chase for agricultural products. Ewers (1968:22-23) went on to explain that once the Assiniboine acquired access to European wares, the trade in those goods took precedence over the exchange of buffalo by-products to the Mandan. This second trading pattern was described by La Vérendrye on June 2, 1736:

I enquired of the Assiniboine where they meant to spend the summer; they said on returning from the war they would go to the country of the Kouathéattes [Mandan] to buy Indian corn and beans for which they

gave in exchange axes, knives, firesteels, and other iron tools which these people do not possess (Burpee (ed.), 1927:253-254).

Despite what might have been a longstanding trading relationship, it is apparent that the Mandan and Assiniboine had not always been on peaceful terms with one another. While at Kaministiquia in the spring of 1729 La Vérendrye had a conversation with "A Slave" who had "been made prisoner by the Assiniboin on the stretch of country to the left of the river of the West", and that person:

reports that the villages there are very numerous, many of them beign two leagues in extent, and that the back country is inhabited like that fronting on the river. All the savages there, according to his report, raise quantities of grain, fruits abound, game is in great plenty and is only hunted with bows and arrows; the people there do not know what a canoe is; as there is no wood in all that vast extent of country, for fuel they dry the dung of animals (Burpee (ed.), 1927:50).

There can be little doubt that the "Slave" represented one of the agricultural tribes of the upper Missouri region. Shortly after La Vérendrye established Fort St. Charles in 1732, he reported through Beauharnois that the, "Cree and Assiniboin have constantly made war upon them [Mandan] and have captured several children from them" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:107). By 1733, however, it is apparent that a peace had been concluded, for Beauharnois noted that the, "Cree and Assiniboin have made peace with that tribe" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:108). This led Milloy to conclude:

. . . the value of corn, the common enemy [Sioux] and, in addition, the value of the Cree-Assiniboine

as owners and eventually merchants of European weapons - would have been the three legs upon which the peace of 1733 and, perhaps, subsequent military cooperation rested (Milloy, 1988:44).

While Milloy is implying that this trade between the Mandan and Assiniboine took place only following the conclusion of a peace between them in 1732 or 1733, evidence from Father Jean Pierre Aulneau suggests otherwise. On April 30, 1736 wrote from Fort St. Charles that:

. . . I intend, with as many of the french as are willing to encounter the same dangers to join the Assiniboels, who start each year, just as soon as the streams are frozen over, for the country of the Kaotiouek or Autelsipounes [Mandan] to procure their supply of indian corn (J.R., V. 68:293).

In their estimation of this evidence, Will and Hyde (1917:176) have concluded that the "journeys of the Assiniboins to the Mandan for corn were a regular part of their yearly round". Moreover, Aulneau's description implies an established trade that had been taking place for a considerable period of time. If this was the case, then the statement by Beauharnois that both the Cree and Assiniboine "have constantly made war" on the Mandan seems questionable. Just as relations between the eastern Sioux and Saulteurs fluctuated between periods of peace and war, so did relations between the Assiniboine and Mandan. Although there is no conclusive evidence before 1732-1733, relations between the Mandan and Assiniboine probably moved from hostility to friendship, and vice versa, as each perceived alterations in their political and economic situations.

The fluctuating nature of Assiniboine-Mandan relations was evident during La Vérendrye's stay in the Northwest. Before he reached the Mandan, La Vérendrye wrote:

The Mandan are much more crafty than the Assiniboin in their commerce and in everything, and always dupe them (Burpee (ed.), 1927:324).

Although the Mandan often duped the Assiniboine in trade an alliance with the Assiniboine offered protection against Sioux assaults. The threat of attack by the Sioux was present when La Vérendrye arrived near the Mandan villages in November, 1738.

So he [Mandan chief] now gave great thanks to the Assiniboin for having brought the French to see them; they could not, he said, have arrived more apropos, because the Sioux would soon be there having been notified of our movements; and he begged me as well as the Assiniboin to be so good as to assist them, as they hoped much from our valor and courage (Burpee (ed.), 1927:321).

When the Mandan later told the Assiniboine that the Sioux were nearby, the Assiniboine reacted differently:

Seeing the great quantity of provisions the Assiniboin were consuming every day, and being afraid they would stay a long time, they spread the report that the Sioux were not far away; that several of their hunters had caught sight of them. The Assiniboin fell into the trap and quickly decided to decamp, not wanting to have a fight. A Mandan chief made a sign to me [La Vérendrye] to wait and that the report about the Sioux was only to get the Assiniboin to go. On the morning of the 6th [Dec., 1738] they all left in great haste, believing the Sioux to be at hand and fearing that they would intercept them (Burpee (ed.), 1927:332-333).

In his analysis of these events, Meyer (1977:19) wrote, "It is evident that the Mandans did not wish to alienate the tribe that served as their source of European-made goods, and they had to resort to a ruse to rid themselves of their now un-welcome guests". It is also apparent that the Assiniboine, travelling with their women and children, did not see this as a fit occasion to do battle with the Sioux. Moreover, the Assiniboine at this juncture had already "completed their purchases of all the things they were to buy" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:332). Whether the Mandan were also trading with the Sioux at this time is not known. Although in later periods the Mandan and Sioux were generally on hostile terms, it is apparent that there were also occasional periods in which trade transpired between these two peoples. Thus, writing of the upper Missouri villagers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Will and Hyde observed:

The Sioux, though among the best customers of the agricultural tribes, were never really their friends and could never be trusted. They were the Picts of the Upper Missouri, continually harassing the village dwellers. It is probable that they procured as much corn by plundering and extortion as in honest trade (Will and Hyde, 1917:185-186).

Had the Sioux been trading with the Mandan-Hidatsa when La Vérendrye visited their villages, the Mandan would not have wanted to be seen trading with their enemies, the Assiniboine, at this time.

After a month's stay with the Mandan-Hidatsa, La Vérendrye returned to Fort La Reine in January, 1739, and by June, 1740, he was back in Montreal soliciting funds to further explore the upper Missouri country.

When Beauharnois granted him the fur-trading monopoly of the posts he had founded, La Vérendrye and Father Claude Godefoy Coquart set out for the west in June, 1741. While Coquart remained at Kaministiquia, La Vérendrye pushed on to Fort La Reine, and subsequently "established a new fort at the request of the mountain Cree on the Lakes of the Prairies [Lake Winnipegosis], . . . and named fort Dauphin" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:378-379). La Vérendrye, however, was dismayed that he could not personally journey to the Mandan-Hidatsa as he had previously done, "on account of the war which is being carried on very vigorously between our tribes and the Sioux" (Burpee (ed.), 1927:377). Instead he sent his two sons, Pierre and Louis-Joseph to reconnoiter the upper Missouri region. The warfare referred to by La Vérendrye was a combined Assiniboine, Cree, and Monsoni attack upon the Sioux. In a dispatch dated May 26, 1742 to Beauharnois, Father Coquart, while stationed at Kaministiquia, wrote:

. . . La Colle, a Monsoni war-chief of Rainy Lake, had formed in September [1741] a party of more than two hundred men, the majority of whom were Cree and Assiniboin; that they had attacked the Sioux of the Prairies, that seventy warriors of that tribe were killed, without counting women and children; and that the number of slaves was so great that according to the report and the expression of the savages, they occupied in their march more than four arpents [about 700 feet]; that the band of La Colle had lost only six men; and that there were many wounded, as they had fought during four days (Burpee (ed.), 1927:380-381).

The eastern Sioux were so alarmed by this victory, and by the slaughter of their western brethren, that they urged the French to convene a peace

conference at Montreal. Anderson (1984:50) wrote that the eastern Sioux hoped to avert a similar disaster which could become, "a real possibility should the Cree and Assiniboins join the Chippewas [Saulteurs at Chequamegon] and Ottawas in an all-out war on the eastern Sioux". To counter the pressure of the tribes of the Northwest, the eastern Sioux made peace with the Saulteurs at the general council in Montreal in July, 1742 (Burpee (ed.), 1927:384). Even though the Sioux and Saulteurs at Chequamegon had patched up their differences, the Sioux still had to contend with the Assiniboine and their allies. In 1743 Beauharnois complained that:

The chief in question [La Colle, a Monsoni war chief from Rainy Lake] with tribes from Nipigon, Kaministikwia, Tecamamiouen [Rainy Lake], the Monsoni, Cree and Assiniboin are all to fall on them [Sioux] and create all the carnage they can; they are absolutely resolved to destroy them in spite of all that can be done to prevent them. This chief . . . told him [La Vérendrye] last spring that the Sioux were only good to eat, and that he wanted for his part, to kill enough of them to feed his village (Burpee (ed.), 1927:384).

When returning from their explorations of the region to the southwest of the Mandan villages in 1743, a French party under the leadership of Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye encountered one hundred Assiniboine to the northeast of a location referred to by Louis-Joseph (Burpee (ed.), 1927:430) as "fort La Butte". Burpee noted that it was a point of high elevation on the edge of the Missouri Coteau that was used by the Assiniboine to navigate between the Souris and upper Missouri Rivers. Shortly after they met, Louis-Joseph wrote:

On the 31st [May, 1743) our scouts perceived thirty Sioux in ambush on our road. We all went at them together. They were greatly surprised to see so many people, and retired in good order, turning round and facing from time to time those who came too near [to] them. They knew what kind of men they had to do [deal] with, for they knew the Assiniboin to be cowards. As soon as they perceived us, however, all mounted on our horses, and recognized us as Frenchmen, they ran off in great haste, never looking back. We had none killed, but several were wounded. We do not know what their losses were except that one of their men got amongst ours [and was captured] (Burpee (ed.), 1927:430-431).

It would appear that the French and the Assiniboine had a skirmish with the Sioux in which "several" Assiniboine were wounded and an unknown number of Sioux were killed. Although Wood and Thiessen ((ed.), 1985:63) wrote that the French "travelled back to Fort La Reine . . . with a large party of mounted Assiniboin Indians" it would appear that it was the French who were mounted, not the Assiniboine. Since Louis-Joseph's father resigned as commandant of the Poste du Nord, in 1743, the course of Assiniboine relations with the Sioux, fall into obscurity for the next several years.

It is apparent, however, that hostilities prevailed in 1753, because the French trader, Joseph Marin, unsuccessfully tried to initiate a peace between the prairie Sioux and the Cree at his father's post on Lake Pepin on the upper Mississippi during September of that year (Anderson, 1984:54). Paul Marin had built that post during the summer of 1750. It is apparent that Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye, commandant of the French post at La Pointe, wrecked Marin's plan for a peace between the Cree and prairie Sioux as he "convinced the Cree

representatives to return to Lake of the Woods and evicted Marin's two traders from the upper Mississippi, intending to procure furs from the region for himself" (Anderson, 1984:54). Although the Assiniboine were not specifically mentioned in this account, information from a 1749 memoir written by La Vérendrye indicates that some Cree were allied with the Assiniboine at this time.

From the forks, leaving the Red River to enter the Assiniboine (Assiniboels), it is 60 leagues to Fort La Reine. The country to the north of this river belongs to the Cristinaux of the strong woods (du bois fort), of the fisher (du Pecan) and to those of the rough water (de l'eau Trouble). They could number all together three hundred men and a large part of them are allied to the Assiniboine (PAC. M618 B.12 F.38, quoted in Greenberg and Morrison, 1982:94).

Evidence from the journal of the French explorer, Jacques Repentigny Legardeur de Saint Pierre (Brymner (ed.), 1887:clix) indicates that in August, 1750, the Indians who inhabited the region around Fort St. Pierre were "going in bands against the Sioux, Sakis [Sauk], Puants [Winnebagoes], Renards [Fox]". However, in Margry's ((ed.), 1886:639) edition of Saint Pierre's journal no reference is made to the Sauk, Winnebagoes or Fox. Although Saint Pierre did not identify who the Indians of Fort St. Pierre were, in all probability they were Monsoni as La Vérendrye near his death in 1749, wrote:

From Saguinga to Fort St. Pierre, Rainy Lake [is] 70 to 80 leagues. This whole area is inhabited by the Monsonis, who number close to 140 or 140 men in three bands. They speak Sauteux (PAC. M618. B.12 F.38, quoted in Greenberg and Morrison, 1982:93).

As La Vérendrye also observed (PAC. M618. B.12 F.30, quoted in Greenberg and Morrison, 1983:93) that to "The North and North-west of this lake [of the Woods] belong to the Cristinaux, allies of the Monsonis", the Cree along with the Monsoni, were sending war parties into the territory of the Sioux.

The peace which had been formulated between the Saulteurs and Sioux in 1742 had broken down for, in 1750, Joseph Marin made his way to La Pointe in order to arrange a peace between the two tribes. To bring about an effective understanding, Marin negotiated a division of hunting territory in order to allow the Sioux and Saulteurs to "effectively exploit game preserves" without having "to be on guard against intrusions by outsiders" (Anderson, 1984:53). The Saulteurs agreed to hunt only from the headwaters of the St. Croix River to its junction with the Snake River, and if they wanted to hunt beyond that line, they would have to gain permission of the Sioux. This in fact transpired that year, for the Saulteurs "purchased the use of the Crow Wing River valley for the 1750-51 hunting season" (Anderson, 1984:53). Despite the efforts of Joseph Marin, the Saulteurs and Sioux were at war by the summer of 1754, and again, Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye was responsible for this outbreak of hostilities. According to Anderson (1984:55), Louis-Joseph sent Saulteur hunters into the Crow Wing valley, and "soon a Dakota hunter was killed, and Marin was faced with an intertribal war". In the spring of 1755 an eastern Sioux spokesman told Marin:

No one could be ignorant of the fact that from the mouth of the Wisconsin to Senue Lake [Leech Lake], these lands belong to all of us. At all points and on all the little rivers we have had villages . . . And today the Sauteux [Saulteurs] want to take our lands and chase us away (In Anderson, 1984:55).

The Marins were forced to abandon the upper Mississippi region two years after the French-Indian War broke out in 1754.

The fur trade of the St. Lawrence was reopened to western commerce following the English defeat of the French in 1763. One of the first English traders to re-open this commerce was Alexander Henry the Elder who was granted permission to trade with the Sioux and Saulteurs. Upon arriving at Chequamegon in the fall of 1765, a number of Saulteur chiefs:

informed me, that they had frequently attacked the Nadowessies, (by the French called Sioux or Nadouessioux), with whom they are always at war . . . The cause of the perpetual war, carried on by these two nations, is this, that both claim, as their exclusive hunting-ground, the tract of country which lies between them, and uniformly attack each other when they meet upon it (Bain (ed.), 1901:189).

In the spring of 1766 the Saulteur told Henry of an engagement in which four hundred of their men had challenged six hundred Sioux.

The battle, as they related, raged the greater part of the day; and in the evening the Nadowessies, to the number of six hundred, fell back, across a river [St. Croix River] which lay behind them, encamping in this position for the night. The Chippeways [Saulteurs] had thirty-five killed; . . . and then retired to a small distance from the place expecting the Nadowessies to recross the stream in the morning . . . In this, however, they were disappointed; for the Nadowessis continued their retreat (Bain (ed.), 1901:194-195).

In 1767 a peace council was held at Mackinac in which both the Saulteurs and Sioux agreed to adopt the English as "their father", but during the next year, war broke out once again (Anderson, 1984:61).

At the same time as the Sioux and Saulteurs were at war, the western Sioux were raiding into Assiniboine territory. Writing from some thirty miles up the Minnesota River, at a location referred to by the Sioux as the Grand Encampment, Jonathan Carver in 1766 noted:

These bands of the Nadowessee are some of them 300 strong. They hold continual wars with the Chippeways and the Illinois Indians and the Pawnees on the Missure [Arikara on the Missouri River] and the Assiniboils [Assiniboine]. From the last two they bring a great many slaves every year which they exchange with the traders for such things as they want . . . This is done by the remote bands who have no knowledge of Europeans and only trade with their brethren [of] the river bands [eastern Sioux] who of late years have opened a trade with the French and English (Parker (ed.), 1976:100).

Although Carver identified eight bands of Sioux, the majority of whom were eastern Sioux, it would appear that the "remote bands" of Sioux were the western Sioux who, as yet, had little direct European contact. If this was the case, then Carver's information indicates that it was the western Sioux who were, "every year" waging war on the Assiniboine, and taking "many slaves". Furthermore, since Carver (Parker (ed.), 1976:100) also noted the "Assiniboils live near Lake Winipeek [Winnipeg]", there can be little doubt that the western Sioux were still regularly raiding into the southern Manitoba grasslands. Upon returning to Grand Portage after a six month stay with the Sioux, Carver, on July 14, 1767 wrote:

Here we found the King of the Christenoës [Cree] and several of his people encamped who was glad to see us, and several tents of the Assinipoils [Assiniboine] . . . These two nations seemed much connected by frequent intermarrying and inhabit the country between the Chipeways teretories on Lake La Pluie [Rainy Lake] and Lake Winipeek [Winnipeg] and trade chiefly to Hudson's Bay, but come here in search of traders from Michilimackinac with a design if possible to git some of them to go into their country and winter with them. The reason they give for their coming here after traders is that they say that at Hudson's Bay they were forced to give much more for their goods then for those they purchase of traders from Michilimackinac or Montreal (Parker (ed.), 1976:130).

It is possible that the Assiniboine whom Carver reported travelling to Grand Portage to encourage traders from Michilimackinac to come and trade "in their country", were the same Assiniboine who, according to Ferdinand Jacobs, had been "cut off" from trading at York Factory by members of their own tribe. On July 5, 1767 Jacobs wrote:

I am informed by the Indians that there has been a Civill war among the Sin nee poets [Assiniboine] that most of one tribe is kild, and from above 50 canoes we shall not have 20, and it is not certain we shall have them, it being thought they will be cut off coming down which unluky affair will lessen your Honors Trade very much at this place (HBCA. B.239/a/55 F.40).

No further information is available on this apparent split among the Assiniboine or its cause. From Carver's account, however, it would seem that some Assiniboine and Cree were endeavoring to revive the eastern trading connection which they had long maintained with the French. Whether this was to obtain cheaper wares, as Carver was informed, or because this group had fallen afoul with their kinsmen in the Hudson Bay trade, cannot be established. It is clear, however, that the Ojibway

had no objections to these Assiniboine and Cree passing through their territory to open a trade with Michilimackinac traders, a trade which would also benefit the Ojibway living in the country west of Lake Superior.

Like the Assiniboine to the west, the Sioux also subjected the Ojibway situated in the Lake of the Woods - Rainy River region to their wrath. When Alexander Henry the Elder arrived at Lac la Croix some 150 miles west of Grand Portage, in July, 1775, he wrote:

. . . there was formerly a large village of Chipeways here, now destroyed by the Nadowessies [Sioux]. I found only three lodges, filled with poor, dirty and almost naked inhabitants of whom I bought fish and wild rice, which the latter they had in great abundance (Bain (ed.), 1901:239).

Upon entering the Rainy River, Henry noted that the Ojibway of this region were better off, and more numerous, than those of Lac la Croix. The Rainy River Ojibway forced Henry to pay an "established tribute paid to them on account of the ability they possessed to put a stop to all trade with the interior. I gave them rum which they became drunk and troublesome; and in the night I left them" (Bain (ed.), 1901:240).

However, when describing the Lake of the Woods region, and the Ojibway who had traded there during the French regime, Henry noted that their numbers had diminished.

The Lake of the Woods is thirty-six leagues long. On the west side is an Old French fort or trading post [Fort St. Charles, built by La Vérendrye in 1732], formerly frequented by numerous bands of Chipeways, but these have since been almost entirely destroyed by the Nadowessies [Sioux]. When strong, they were troublesome. On account of a particular instance of pillage, they have been called Pilleurs (Bain (ed.), 1901:243).

It would appear that, in the interlude between the retreat of the French and the arrival of the English traders from the St. Lawrence, in 1765 the Sioux had made major inroads among the Ojibway to the west of Lake Superior, and had thinned their ranks as far west as Lake of the Woods. It would also appear that, by this time, both southern and northern Ojibway were joined in warring against the Sioux, and that the Assiniboine-Cree alliance extended to both branches of Ojibway. According to Hickerson (1970:71) this warfare with the Sioux involved two distinct phases. From 1736 to 1751 a "Chippewa-Cree-Assiniboin coalition . . . rendered Dakota occupancy of the Minnesota woodland rice lakes and fur grounds precarious". During the second phase, from "ca. 1751 to ca. 1780", the Saulteur from Chequamegon began "extending their hunting range into the eastern part of northern Minnesota at the same time that the Pillager Chippewa from Rainy River were extending their hunting range south". As a result, by 1783 the Pillager Ojibway had gained control of Sandy and Leech Lake in northern Minnesota, a region that was the traditional hunting ground of the eastern Sioux (Hickerson, 1970:71).

At the same time as the Pillager Ojibway were pushing into northern Minnesota, at the expense of the Sioux, other Ojibway were expanding west into the Manitoba lowlands among the Assiniboine and Cree, where they were subjected to a particularly severe assault by the Sioux.

Three leagues from the lake [Winnipeg], the River aux morts [Netley Creek] enters the R[ed] River on the north side, here a large camp of Assiniboils,

Krees and Saulteux were massacred by the Sioux or Nadawesse, the most powerful nation in all the interior country. Ever since this slaughter the River has been called with Propriety Rivière aux Morts (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:79-80).

The journal of Alexander Henry the Younger had a similar account (Coues (ed.), 1965, V.1:41), but Henry wrote that the Sioux attacked a Cree encampment. Despite this discrepancy, it would appear that, by 1780, the Sioux were still raiding into southern Manitoba, and had achieved a major victory at Netley Creek.

This Sioux victory and the advance of the Ojibway into northern Minnesota were followed by an outbreak of smallpox in 1780. Concerning the outbreak of the epidemic David Thompson wrote:

From the best information this disease was caught by the Chipaways (the Forest Indians) and the Sieux (of the Plains) about the same time, in the year 1780 . . . From the Chipaways it extended over all the Indians of the forest to its northward extremity, and by the Sieux over the Indians of the Plains and crossed the Rocky Mountains (Glover (ed.), 1962:236).

According to Alexander Mackenzie (Lamb (ed.), 1970:106-107) the smallpox epidemic, along with the previous assaults did much to diminish the Indian populations of the Lake of the Woods - Rainy River region. The Assiniboine also contracted the disease, and their population was reduced considerably (Ray, 1974:106). It was estimated that "young and old not one in fifty of those tribes [Assiniboine, Cree, Blackfoot] are now living" (HBCA. B.239/a/79 F.73d). There is no evidence of Assiniboine warfare in the immediate aftermath of the epidemic, but it is apparent that they had begun to abandon the Manitoba lowlands. In

1819 Peter Fidler wrote from Brandon House that:

. . . the old Indians [Assiniboine] say at the former place [junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers] in their boyish day great numbers visited but have since been gradually advancing more Westward (HBCA. B.22/e/1 F.11d).

This was part of a general westward migration involving, not only the Assiniboine, but the Ojibway and Cree as well. According to Ray:

In summarizing the population relocations which had taken place between 1763 and 1821, one of the more striking changes was the nearly complete abandonment of the Red River valley, the lower Assiniboine River, and the Manitoba interlake regions by the Assiniboine and Western Cree. As they withdrew, the Ojibwa moved in behind them. The Ojibwa also moved into the Swan River and Cumberland districts and penetrated as far up the Assiniboine River as its confluence with the Souris River. To the west and southwest, the Assiniboine and Cree held most of the parkland and grassland regions of the present province of Saskatchewan (Ray, 1974:104).

These movements reflected earlier patterns in the development of the York Factory trade, which saw the Assiniboine forge new alliances in the west. This brought them into conflict with the Snake, Kutenai, and Flathead so that, throughout most of the eighteenth century they were militarily active on a western front as well as a southeastern one with the Sioux.

## CHAPTER VII

### WARFARE IN THE WEST, c. 1709-1782.

At the same time as they waged war against the Sioux, the Assiniboine came into conflict with the tribes who inhabited the region adjacent to the eastern flanks of the Rocky Mountains - the Snake, Flathead, Kutenai. This warfare followed upon the development of a middlemen trade in European goods with the Blackfoot tribes, which saw the Assiniboine as well as the Cree ally themselves with the latter in their wars against their enemies to the west. This trade and concomitant warfare reflected the growing influence of the Cree and Assiniboine in the Hudson Bay trade, and especially that which developed out of York Factory into the Saskatchewan River basin in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

Writing from Fort Bourbon (i.e. York Factory) sometime between 1709-1713, the French officer in charge of that post, Nicolas Lamontagne Jérémié, tried to encourage the Assiniboine and Cree to follow the course of the "Deer River" to discover "if there were not some sea into which this river discharged" (Douglas and Wallace (ed.), 1926:32). The "Deer River" was the Saskatchewan River (Ray, 1972:94). The Assiniboine and Cree told Jérémié that they could not comply with this request because "they are at war with a nation which bars them from this road"

(Douglas and Wallace (ed.), 1926:33). In this war they took prisoners, and brought some of them to Fort Bourbon to be interviewed by Jérémie.

I have questioned prisoners of this nation whom are [our] natives [Assiniboine-Cree] had brought expressly to show me. They told me they were at war with another nation in the west, much further away than their own country. Those other men say that they [have] for neighbours men who are bearded and who build stone forts and live in stone houses, a custom which [our] native tribes do not follow. They say these bearded men are not dressed like them and that they use white kettles. I showed them a silver cup, and they told me it was the same kind of thing as the others had spoken about, and they also told me that these others cultivate the land with tools of white metal. From the way they describe the grain raised by these people, it must be maize (Douglas and Wallace (ed.), 1926:33).

Although this description contains elements of exaggeration and pure fabrication, it is significant that reference was made to the cultivation of "maize". The only region in the Northwest where Indian agriculture was practiced at this time was the upper Missouri, and that area was occupied by the Mandan and Hidatsa. It would thus appear that the Indians with whom the Assiniboine and Cree were at war were also in conflict with the upper Missouri villagers. Although the region to the west of the Assiniboine was occupied by the Blackfoot tribes in the early decades of the eighteenth century (Milloy, 1988:6), these were not the people with whom the Assiniboine and Cree were at war at this time. Rather, all the evidence points to the Snakes and their allies, as well as to the Gros Ventres.

According to Blackfoot oral traditions (Ewers, 1968:12) they had been driven out of southern Alberta by the Snake and into the region to the east of the Eagle Hills well before the Assiniboine and Cree penetrated into the Saskatchewan River area. The Snake and their allies then took control of southern Alberta. In 1787 David Thompson wrote:

All these Plains, which are now the hunting grounds of the above Indians [Piegan, Siksika, Blood], were formerly in full possession of the Kootanaes [Kutenai] northward; the next the Saleesh [Flathead] and their allies, and the most southern, the Snake Indians [or Shoshoni] (Glover (ed.), 1962:240).

Based on his own fieldwork with the Piegan, conducted during the early 1900's, Wissler wrote:

The Piegan claim that before the white man dominated their country (an uncertain date probably 1750-1810) the Blackfoot, Blood and Piegan lived north of MacLeod; the Kootenai in the vicinity of the present Blood Reserve; the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine to the east of the Kootenai; the Snake on the Teton River and as far north as Two Medicine River; and the Flatheads on the Sun River. These traditions were so definite and consistent that consideration must be given to them (Wissler, 1910:17).

There is also evidence from Snake oral traditions that they occupied the prairie region of southern Alberta. After interviewing many elderly Snake Indians, James Teit (1930:24) discovered that the Snake were at one time divided into a plains and mountain group, and that the latter inhabited the region of the Sweet Grass Hills on the Montana-Alberta border. During their stay at the Mandan villages in the winter of 1805, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (Thwaites (ed.), 1969, V.2:116) learned that "within their [Snake] own recollection they formerly lived

in the plains, but they have withdrawn into the mountains". The Snake may have roamed even further east than the Sweet Grass Hills, for as Peter Fidler noted:

Formerly the Snake Indians used to inhabit about this Hill [Eagle Hill], but since the Europeans have penetrated into these parts [and] supplied the surrounding nations with firearms those Indians have gradually receded back to the S. Wards (HBCA. E.3/1 F.183 quoted in MacGregor, 1966:47).

In 1787 an old Piegan chief named Saukamappee, but Cree by birth, related to David Thompson a detailed account of two battles that had occurred between the Piegan and their allies, and the Snake. In the first of these battles, which was indecisive, the Piegan were assisted by the Cree. In the second, both Assiniboine and Cree fought with the Piegans against the Snakes and achieved a major victory. While there is little reason to doubt the historical veracity of Saukamappee's account, there is some uncertainty as to when these two hostile encounters took place. Using Tyrrell's 1916 edition of the Thompson journals, A. S. Morton (1939:16-19) wrote that the first engagement took place in 1728, and the second in 1734. Milloy (1988:7) arrived at essentially the same dates - the first in 1723 and the second in 1732. Since Saukamappee was reported by Thompson to be "75 to 80 years of age" (Tyrrell (ed.), 1916:328) in 1787 Morton and Milloy concluded that he was born between 1707 and 1712. As Saukamappee was "about sixteen years old" (Tyrrell (ed.), 1916:328) when the Cree assisted the Piegan in the first battle against the Snake, that hostile action took place between 1723 and 1728. Following this engagement, Saukamappee married, and it has been assumed

(Morton, 1939:17) that Cree men usually marry when they are twenty-two years of age. Shortly after he married, the Cree-Assiniboine again engaged the Snake. Given Saukamappee's assumed age at this time, it would appear that this battle occurred between 1729 and 1734. However, what Morton was unaware of, and what Milloy failed to consider, was another estimate of Saukamappee's age in Thompson's notes (PAC. A.82 F.27s, in Rinn, 1975:55). This estimate exists in a section of Thompson's notes that was discovered by Hopwood in 1956 (Hopwood, 1957) and hence, unavailable to Tyrrell when he edited the Thompson papers in 1916. When Glover edited his papers in 1962 he included Hopwood's discovery. Referring to Saukamappee, Thompson wrote:

Although erect and somewhat active, and in full possession of his faculties, and yet from the events he related and upon comparing them with the accounts of the french writers on the fur trade of Canada he must have been near ninety years of age, or more, for his relation of affairs went back to near the year one thousand seven hundred and this was now the year 1789 [Editors note: Thompson errs here. His stay is dealing with the winter of 1787-88.] (Glover (ed.), 1962:49).

Rinn (1975:56) was the first to connect this new chronological information with the events recalled by Saukamappee. If Saukamappee was "ninety years of age or more", Rinn (1975:56) concluded that he was "born about 1697, and he participated in his first battle against the Shoshonis [Snake] in 1713". Assuming the primacy of the information in the unpublished notes discovered by Hopwood, Rinn went on to conclude that, since Cree men married when they reached the age of between 20 and 25 and:

Since Saukamappee fought the last great infantry battle with the Shoshonis [Snake] shortly after his marriage, that event occurred sometime between the years 1717-1722 (Rinn, 1975:56-57).

It may well be, then, that the first battle took place in 1713 and the second between 1717 and 1722, instead of 1723 and 1732 as Milloy had assumed.

In order to gain help in their wars with the Snake, the Piegan requested the assistance of the Cree. Two messengers from the Piegan came to the camp of Saukamappee's father, and twenty Cree volunteered to aid the Piegan.

We [the Cree] came to the Peeganes [Piegan] and their allies [Siksika and Blood]. They were camped in the Plains on the left bank of the River (the north side) [of the North Saskatchewan River] and were a great many. When 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, and we had to cross the River in canoes, and on rafts, which we carefully secured for our retreat. When we had crossed and numbered our men, we had 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 (Glover (ed.), 1962:241).

The battle which followed may well have been characteristic of pre-gun and pre-horse warfare in that both sides were content to stand behind large shields and shoot arrows at each other from a distance. There were few casualties, and the engagement ended in a draw. Although no firearms were involved in this fight, the Cree did possess them, but they "were left at home for those who stayed behind to hunt" (Glover (ed.),

1962:241). Although Saukamappee made no direct reference to the Assiniboine participating in this engagement, there is every reason to believe that they were involved in the overall pattern of conflict at this time.

While this battle did not produce any significant casualties, there is evidence from York Factory that the Assiniboine had their population considerably reduced through intertribal conflict about this time. This evidence suggests that the warfare was in the west, and lends further weight to the idea that the first battle described by Saukamappee occurred in 1713, and not in 1723 or 1728 as depicted in the published literature. On April 22, 1716 Knight wrote:

the wars has almost ruin'd this Country, it being so thin Peopled at the best. there has been all those Indians as they call em Sinnepoets [Assiniboine] Destroyed so that of about 60 canos as us'd to come Yearly there is not Above 6 families left wch [which] they told me this Reason for it that they had lost the Use of there Bows and Arrows by having Guns so long Amongst them and when they were disappointed of Powder Shott wch [which] was Often by the Ships not coming. there Enemies found They had no guns to Defend them [and] Destry'd above 100 Tents Men, Women and children (HBCA. B.239/a/2 F.22d, quoted in Ray, 1974:19, 21).

The only clue as to the identity of the Indians who attacked the Assiniboine was that they used only "flints, beaver teeth and bones with bows and arrows" as weapons (HBCA. B.239/a/2 F.39). This account rules out the Sioux, as they were undoubtedly in possession of iron goods, and probably guns by this time. It also suggests that this conflict occurred in the west.

In addition to the Snake, it is also possible that the Assiniboine were at war with the Crow at this time. In the spring of 1716, Knight reported the Crow were at odds with the "Mountain Indians". While Ray (1974:57) assumed that the "Mountain Indians" were either Mandan or Hidatsa, Pentland (1985:154) has shown that they were "Assiniboine and Algonquians who lived in the Riding Mountains, Duck Mountains, and Porcupine Mountains west of Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis". On May 23, 1716 the "Mountain Indians" returned home with a:

leading Indian, his Brother [and] Wife wch [which] I had Employ'd to go Amongst ye [the] Cocauchee or Crow Indians wch [which] was a Slave Woman of yt [that] Country yt [that] had Undertaken to go into her Country again with her husband and a great many more Indians and make a peace and bring me down a great deal of the Yellow Mettle wch [which] she told me, it was so plenty (HBCA. B.239/a/2 F.58, quoted in Ray, 1974:57).

Upon returning to York Factory in the spring of 1717 the "Mountain Indians":

told me at the Concluding of the Peace they presented those Indians with their Guns, Powder [and] Shott [and] whatever else they had and when they came here wee had nothing for them but was forced to go unarmed [and] was afraid they should be killed with their own weapons that they had supplied them with for there is 20 of them to one of ours. Then again the Miscarriage to the west so considering everything it will be found the loss twice as much as I inserted before (HBCA B.239/a/3 F.34).

The last sentence in this document led Ray (1974:21) to assume that Knight was updating his earlier statement regarding the loss of "100 Tents Men, Women and children" (HBCA B.239/a/2 F.22d). Instead of the "100 Tents" Ray (1974:21) concluded that the Assiniboine "had numbered

200 tents of whom only five or six were left". As to who was responsible for this attack Ray wrote:

Most of the losses the Assiniboine suffered appear to have been inflicted by the Muscotay Indians, or Indians from the Buffalo Plains between the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan River. These Indians would probably have been the Blood and Blackfoot. Other groups living farther to the west, perhaps Sarcee and Beaver Indians, were also at war with the Assiniboine since the York Factory journals state that hostilities existed with four or five groups to the west and southwest (Ray, 1974:21).

This interpretation is unlikely since the Saukamappee account clearly indicates that the Cree in 1713, and the Assiniboine between the years 1717 and 1722 were allied the the Blackfoot tribes in their wars with the Snake. The Assiniboine were thus at war with a number of different tribes, among whom were the Crow, as well as the Snake and their allies at this time.

In the York Factory account book for the years 1717 and 1718, Knight wrote that in their wars with their enemies "the leading upland Indians of the Southern Sinne Poet hath been the greatest suffers", but also that "the Northern Sinne Poets hath been the greatest suffers of all" (HBCA. B.239/d/9 F.8). It would appear that both divisions of the Assiniboine had suffered as a result of hostile clashes with their enemies. Moreover, an important distinction was made between the Assiniboine. There were Assiniboine and Cree who, according to Jérémie (Douglas and Wallace (ed.), 1926:32) occupied the "territory between the lower Saskatchewan and upper Nelson rivers and the middle Churchill River between Southern Indian Lake and Reindeer Lake" (Ray, 1974:19).

Those were the woodland or northern Assiniboine and Cree. Ray (1974:19) also noted that the earliest York Factory journals (HBCA. B.239/a/1-5) indicated that the territory of the woodland Assiniboine and Cree reached as far as the head of the Churchill River. Jérémie also outlined the territory of the southern Assiniboine and Cree.

The country on the east side of this lake [Winnipeg] which runs nearly north and south, is a land of dense forests, with many beaver and moose. Here the country of the Cree commences. The west side of this lake is full of very fine prairie in which are many of those oxen [buffalo] which I have mentioned. All these regions are occupied by the Assinibouels (Douglas and Wallace (ed.), 1926:32).

Not only were both these divisions of Assiniboine and Cree at war with the Sioux (HBCA. B.239/a/3 F.52), but they were also engaged at the same time against the Snake and their allies.

About this time, the Piegans were still being attacked by the Snake. Saukamaptee related to Thompson that:

By this time 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 [Flathead and Kutenai] had Misstutim (Big Dogs, that is Horses) on which they rode, swift as the Deer, on which they dashed at the Peeagans [Piegan], and with stone Pakamoggan [tomahawks] 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 (Glover (ed.), 1962:241-242).

As this equestrian attack on the Piegan occurred shortly before the second battle (i.e. 1717-1722), and after the first engagement in 1713, it would appear that in the interval between the two battles the Snake had acquired their first horses. To combat the Snake attacks the

Piegan, once again, asked for the assistance of the Cree. When a Piegan war chief met his warriors shortly before they attacked the Snake he:

found between us [Piegan and Cree] and the stone Indians [Assiniboine] 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 (Glover (ed.), 1962:242).

Shortly after this initial rendezvous, the combined force of Assiniboine, Cree, and Piegan began to move toward the Snake. After a few days the scouts of this party returned with the information that "the enemy [Snake] was near in a large war party, but had no horses with them, for at this time they had very few of them" (Glover (ed.), 1962:242).

Unfortunately, there was no indication as to what direction the war party was travelling, or where the ensuing battle took place. As with the first engagement in 1713 both sides knelt behind their shields, but the end result was very different. Saukamappee informed Thompson that with their guns they "fired with deadly aim, and either killed or severely wounded, every one we aimed at" (Glover (ed.), 1962:242).

Following this initial assault the entire force of Assiniboine, Cree, and Piegan charged the Snake line and:

the greater part of the enemy took to flight, but some fought bravely and we lost more than ten killed and many wounded; Part of us pursued and killed a few, but the chase had soon to be given over, for at the body of every Snake Indian killed, there were five or six of us trying to get his scalp, or part of his clothing, his weapons, or something as a trophy of the battle (Glover (ed.), 1962:243).

While Milloy's (1988:8) statement that "the Snake had been routed" seems correct, it is apparent that the Assiniboine, Cree, and Piegan also suffered some casualties. When the looting and scalping of the Snake had concluded, a celebration followed, and after much wrangling, scalps were given to the Cree and Assiniboine marksmen whose "guns had gained the victory" (Glover (ed.), 1962:243).

In his assessment of this hostile action Ewers wrote:

Fearful of their enemies' new weapons the Shoshonis [Snake] retreated southwestward and the Piegans took over the Red Deer Valley (Ewers, 1958:22).

This southwestward displacement of the Snake likely took some time to complete. Saukamaptee's assertion (Glover (ed.), 1962:241) that the second engagement (i.e. 1717-1722) was "always the subject of the conversation and driving the Snake Indians to a great distance" suggests that the Snake were probably driven from the Eagle Hills region into southwestern Alberta. The second step in this forced migration of the Snake occurred after the Blackfoot tribes acquired horses. Wissler wrote:

that the traditional expansion of the Blackfeet which drove all those tribes [Kutenai, Snake, Flathead] beyond the mountains or elsewhere came after the introduction of the horse (Wissler, 1910:17).

As the Blackfoot tribes obtained their first horses sometime between 1720 and 1730 (Rinn, 1975:65) the Snake were probably ousted from southwestern Alberta after 1730. Furthermore, as Anthony Henday found the Blackfoot tribes, firmly entrenched in southern Alberta, they and

their Assiniboine and Cree allies, must have expelled the Snake by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Despite Schaeffer's (1982:4) claim that the Kutenai occupation of the plains was "terminated by a devastating epidemic, undoubtedly a little known smallpox epidemic of the 1730's", evidence from Teit and Henry strongly indicates that they were driven into the Rocky Mountains by the Blackfoot tribes and their allies. The Kutenai ethnographer, James Teit wrote:

About the same time when the Shoshoni [Snake] were just attacked, the Blackfoot may also have driven out the more northern bands of Kutenai (the Kutenai Tuna'xe) that lived east of the mountains (Teit, 1930:317).

According to Teit's (1930:307) and Turney-High's (1941:13) elderly informants, these "northern bands of Kutenai" were Kutenai who lived in the plains of eastern Alberta. In fact, in 1811, Alexander Henry the Younger discovered the remnants of several "Kootenay" encampments,

Along the Clearwater [a tributary of the North Saskatchewan] and near the foot of the mountains, are still to be seen the remains of some of the dwellings of the Kootenay's built of wood, straw and pine branches. The same are observed along Rivière de la Joile Prairie [a tributary of the Clearwater River] and Ram River [a tributary of the North Saskatchewan]. This gives us every reason to suppose that nation formerly dwelt along the foot of these mountains, and even as far down as our present establishment [Rocky Mountain House] near which the remains of some of their lodges are still to be seen (Coues (ed.), 1965, V.2:703-704).

Henry then concluded that the Kutenai had been "driven into the mountains by the different tribes who lived E.[ast] of them". Without question, the "different tribes" were the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, and

Cree. Further evidence that the Assiniboine had earlier been at war with the Kutenai was provided by Henry, writing from Fort Vermillion in 1809:

. . . a large party of the Gens du Bois Assiniboine arrived with their chief old Star, formerly of great consequence, but of late years not listened to. He is Kootonis [Kutenai] by birth who was taken in infancy at war, and by his great bravery acquired influence (Coues (ed.), 1965, V.2:549-550).

While Milloy (1988:8) noted that "It cannot be known for certain whether joint campaigns continued against the Snake in the Saskatchewan River area" from 1732 to 1751 evidence from the journals of La Vérendrye suggests otherwise. In 1737 La Vérendrye observed that the Cree were taking slaves from the upper reaches of the Saskatchewan River.

The upper part of the River of the West [Saskatchewan] is inhabited by wandering savages like the Assiniboine called Pikaraminiotiach, very numerous, without fire-arms, but possessing axes, knives and cloth like ourselves, which they get from down the river where white men dwell who have walled towns and forts. These whites have no knowledge of fire-arms or of prayer. The distance from the height of land to the sea may be three hundred leagues. The Cree have no knowledge of these men except through the slaves they have made after having crossed the height of land; the tribe in question carry their tents or dwellings with them like the Assiniboine (Burpee (ed.), 1927: 248-249).

Although Burpee (ed), 1927:248) wrote that it is impossible to identify who the "Pikaraminiotiach" were, they were obviously Indians who have had some European contact given that they possessed "axes, knives and cloth like ourselves [the French]". Smith (1980:38) wrote that they were "one of the numerous nomadic groups on the northern plains". These Indians may well have been the Snake who, by this time, were trading with the

Spanish. It was recorded by Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye (Burpee (ed.), 1927:412) that in 1741 the "Gens du Serpent [Snake] destroyed seventeen tents of the "Gens des Cheveaux [Cheyenne]" and "made slaves of the young women and sold them on the coast for horses and merchandise". The Cree and Assiniboine may have also been at war with the Snake in 1738 as Richard Norton wrote:

. . . at least sixty canoes of western Indians that was with me the last summer was engaged all the winter in a fierce war against the Atchue-thinnies, a people bordering near the Western Ocean who are great enemies to our inland trading Indians, and by what I can learn their reason for going against them was that the said Atchue-thinnies did take the opportunity to attack and kill many of the families of the said trading Indians, while they were coming with their goods to the factory last summer (HBCA. E.6/6 F.50d, quoted in Davis (ed.), 1965:249).

The Assiniboine and Cree probably made up a significant portion of the "western Indians" as well as the "inland trading Indians". It is somewhat more difficult to identify who the "Atchue-thinnies" were, as that term was Norton's rendition of the generic Cree word "ayatchiyinaw" which literally translates as stranger or enemy (Flannery, 1953:2). Ewers (1958:25) argued that the term referred to a wide variety of people, including the Blackfoot tribes and their Sarsi and Gros Ventres allies, as well as the Snake and their allies. The difficulty in identifying exactly who the Assiniboine and Cree were fighting on their western frontier during the first half of the eighteenth century is that both English and French observers used this general term, rather than specific tribal designations, to identify the enemies of the Assiniboine and Cree.

In 1743 James Isham wrote that the Cree were taking slaves from the "Earchithinues". Isham had never seen any of the "Earchithinues" except for:

a Slave, which was Brought Down by the Southwd Indians [Cree], - their Country Lyes on the back of this Land, and to the westward of Churchill River, where the Spaniards frequents those seas, at the same time does not traffick with that nation, - I have heard from the mouth of the said Slave Concerning that Country, by which I understood itt was situated much as York Fort Hays's River, with a fine Navagable River that op'ns into the sea, and great plenty of the best and finest of furs, which is their chiefest Commodity's; the Sinnepoets [Assiniboine] and other Indians Going to warr with them, is a hinderance to their Coming to the English Settlements to trade (Rich (ed.), 1949:113).

Although Isham did not attempt to further identify these "Earchithinues", evidence from one of his accounts titled "Different Ways to Count To Ten In The Indian Language" implies that two different groups of "Earchethinues" were discerned. According to Flannery (1953:2) the first list Isham designated (Rich (ed.), 1949:35) as the "Earchithinu Language" was that of the Blackfoot, while the second list (Rich (ed.), 1949:36) titled "Earchethinue Language in another part of the Country" was, according to Flannery (1953:2), "apparently neither Blackfoot nor Gros Ventre". In all probability the Assiniboine and Cree were at war with the second group of "Earchethinue", as the latter were allied, with the Blackfoot tribes at this time. However, it is apparent that the Assiniboine and Cree were also at odds with the Gros Ventres about this time.

At Fort La Reine during the winter of 1750-1751, Jacques Repentigny Legardeur de Saint Pierre wrote (Brymner (ed.), 1887:clxi) that the Assiniboine and Cree were at war "against Hyactchéjlini, the Brochets and the Gros Ventre". The "Hyactchéjlini" were probably the same Indians whom La Vérendrye referred to on his map as "Pays de la Nation des Hiattchiritiny", and whom he placed to the west of "Lac des Glaciers [Cumberland Lake]" in the region of "R[iver] Blache [North Saskatchewan River]". Flannery (1953:2) has concluded that the term "Hyactchéjlini" was a French rendition of the generic Cree term, "ayatchiyinaw", which again, means stranger or enemy. The same can be said about La Vérendrye's "Hiattchiritiny".

As the Gros Ventres occupied the same general region in the 1750's (Brink, 1986:37) as the "Hiattchiritiny" referred to by La Vérendrye on his 1737 map, there is every probability that the "Hyactchéjlini" were a band of Gros Ventre. The identification of the "Brochet" Indians remains problematic. Milloy (1988:10) has suggested that they were also a band of Gros Ventre. However, this seems unlikely as Burpee ((ed.), 1927:247) postulated that the "Brochet" were the "Wood Crees" who lived along the "R[iver] du Brochet". More recently, Warkentin and Ruggles ((ed.), 1970:80) have identified the "R[iver] du Brochet" as a portion of the upper Churchill River system. This lends further credence to Burpee's interpretation and suggests that there was some internecine warfare among the Cree at this time.

As Kelsey had tried to do in 1691-1692, Saint Pierre attempted to arrange a peace between the Assiniboine and Cree and their neighbors. He gathered the warring parties together at Fort La Reine in the winter of 1750-1751 and:

had the happiness to turn them [to peace] so well that they swore to one another that they would live like true brothers, and that their hearts would be so closely united that they would form but one heart (Brymner (ed.), 1887:clxi).

Shortly after formulating this peace, he set out from Fort La Reine intending to rendezvous with his second in command, Joseph-Claude Boucher Chevalier-de Niverville, who reportedly had established Fort La Jonquière some "three hundred leagues above that of Paskoya . . . on 29 May, 1751" (Brymner (ed.), 1887:clxiii). However, while on his way to meet Niverville in November, 1751, Saint Pierre:

met two Frenchmen, with four Indians, who were coming to inform me of the continued illness of M. de Niverville, and, as an addition to the misfortune, of the treason of the Assinipoëls towards the Yhatchélini [Hiattchiritiny], who were to be my guides as far as to the Kinongeouilini [Brochet?]. This is the result of the treason. The Assinipoels going to where the French were newly established at the Rocky Mountains, found the Yhatchélini there to the number of forty to forty-five cabins. They renewed the peace to which they had sworn during the preceding winter (which was the fruit of my labours), by giving reciprocally to each other the Calumet, of which it is the symbol. For five days they were feasting together, at the end of which time, the Assinipoëls, seeing that they were much more numerous than the others, slaughtered them, and no mention is made of a single person saved, except a few women and children whom they carried off as prisoners. This unfortunate event totally deranged my plans, and compelled me, most unwillingly, to

abandon them. This is what must be expected (not a very consoling reflection) when that kind of nation is to be made use of. I have been thirty-six years among the Indians, but I have never seen any who equal in perfidy those in question. The other nations have the same dread of them (Brymner (ed.), 1887:clxiii).

As Morton (1939:237-238) argued that Fort La Jonquière was constructed "at farthest near the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan", and not near the Rocky Mountains as Saint Pierre claimed, the slaughter of the "Yhatchélini", who were most likely a band of Gros Ventres, by the "Assinipoëls", probably took place somewhere between the North and South branches of the Saskatchewan River.

It would seem to be about this time that the Gros Ventres requested the protection of the Blackfoot. In 1937, James Willard Schultz was told by Big Brave, a member of the Blackfoot who was living on a reservation in Montana that:

. . . we [Blackfoot] became the Entrails Peoples' [Gros Ventres] friends, protectors, long before the white men came into our country to trade with us (Schultz, 1988:271).

Big Brave also dated this occurrence:

It was 183 winters back, and the Entrails People [Gros Ventres] had come to us [Blackfoot] for protection before that time. Well, I am eighty-four winters [old]. I was in my tenth winter when our long friendship with the Entrails People ended (In that I knew he was right, for I had learned from the late Joseph Kipp, George Steel, and others that the break between the Blackfoot tribes and the Gros Ventres had occurred in the summer of 1863) (Schultz, 1988:273-274).

It would appear that "183 winters back" refers to about 1754, and as Big Brave indicated that the Blackfoot offered the Gros Ventres "protection before that time" the Gros Ventres and Blackfoot would seem to have been allies before Henday made his journey. The reason why the Gros Ventres requested sanctuary in the Blackfoot country was also noted by Big Brave.

The Entrails People came to our very-long-ago fathers, came crying, and our fathers said to them, in the sign language, of course: 'Who are you? Whence came you? What troubles you?'

'We are the Entrails People', they replied. 'We come from far-down river country. There the Cutthroats (Assiniboines) became too many for us to fight; we have to flee from them because they were killing us off. We ask you to pity us; let us live in your great plains - and mountain country.'

Replied our long-ago fathers: 'Entrails People, we welcome you into our country. Wander in it as you will. Live upon our buffalo. Your enemies are our enemies, and will join you in fighting them.'

So it was that we [Blackfoot] and the Entrails People became close friends in the long ago. Oh, how very saddening it is that we did not always remain so; then how many lives of the four tribes [Piegan, Blood, Blackfoot, Gros Ventres] of us would have been saved (Schultz, 1988:271).

With the Gros Ventres in the camp of the Blackfoot by 1754, the Assiniboine could no longer afford to attack the Gros Ventres for fear of disrupting the peaceful relationship that had developed between the Assiniboine and the Blackfoot tribes. In fact, for the next ten years, there is no evidence to suggest open hostilities between the Assiniboine and Gros Ventres.

The accounts of Anthony Henday do not reveal hostilities with the Gros Ventres in 1754-1755. However, he observed that the Snake were waging war upon the Assiniboine and Cree, as well as the Blackfoot tribes. On February 10, 1755 Henday wrote:

met 4 Indian men who told us that the far distant Archithinue had killed 30 nigh [near] Archithinue and 7 of our Indians, and that they were going to war again and so left (HBCA. E.2/6 F.30).

The reference to "our Indians" identifies the Cree and Assiniboine as these were the peoples with whom Henday was travelling. The comments made by James Isham (HBCA. B.239/a/40 F.39-39d) indicate that he distinguished the "English Earchithinues" from the "foreign Earchithinues". Henday's "nigh Archithinues" can be equated with Isham's "English Earchithinues", who included the Blackfoot tribes. His "far distant Archithinue" were Isham's "foreign Earchithinues", who were the Snake, Kutenai, and Flathead. It would appear that the Snake and their allies had killed thirty members of one of the Blackfoot tribes, as well as seven Cree and/or Assiniboine. When Henday met the "Archithinue" he observed:

They have other Indians beyond them who are their enemies who are also called Archithinues and by what I can learn talks the same language and hath the same customs, seed [saw] many fine girls and a few boys whom they had taken in war and a great many dried scalps they had taken in war with long black hairs which they and all the other Indians [Assiniboine and Cree] displays on long poles whenever they feast and sing (HBCA. E.2/4 F.47).

In the fourth version of the Henday journals, the enemies of the Blackfoot and their allies are described somewhat differently.

They have other Natives Horsemen as well as [those on] Foot who are their Enemies; they are also called the Archithinue Indians . . . (HBCA. E.2/11 F.27).

The "Horsemen" were possibly the Snake, or Kutenai, while the Indians who travelled on "Foot" may have been allies of the Snake who had yet to equestrianize.

In order to understand the Cree and Assiniboine support of the Blackfoot territorial drive in the eighteenth century, Milloy (1988:16) wrote that it is important "to look at Blackfoot-Cree relations from a non-military perspective". Anthony Henday was the first European to witness this trade between the Assiniboine and Cree and the Blackfoot. On May 27, 1755 Henday wrote:

We are above 60 canoes and there are scarce a Gun, Kettle, Hatchet, or Knife amongst us [Assiniboine-Cree], having traded them with the Archithinue Natives (HBCA. E.2/11 F.38, also in Burpee (ed.), 1973:45).

Despite his efforts to get the Archithinue to trade at York Factory, Henday on October 16, 1754 came to the conclusion:

They will never be got down to trade, they boil in stone kettles and some brass ones which they purchase as also other kinds of goods from the few Assenipoet and other tribes [Cree] that deals with the English and French, giving them in return beaver and wolves skins (HBCA. E.2/4 F.48).

Not only were the Assiniboine and Cree trading with the Blackfoot, but they were also trading with other Assiniboine who chose not to make the long journey down to trade with either the French or English.

I have done my endeavour to get the Assenepoets down with their goods. I am only able to get 12

canoes of them more than which yearly visit York  
Factory and Churchill (HBCA. E.2/4 F.55d).

It would also appear that there were some Assiniboine trapping furs  
along with the Blackfoot in the prairie region of southern Alberta.

Indians killing moose and waskesews [red deer] but  
very few beaver altho' they are numerous, as are the  
wolves and foxes, but not one trap have they put up  
yet, my bedfellow informs me that they were angry  
with me for speaking so much about trapping and  
advised me to say no more to them about it, for  
they would get more wolves and beavers from the  
Archithinues and Assinipoets than they could carry  
(HBCA. E.2/4 F.52).

This pattern of trade whereby the Blackfoot and Assiniboine who chose to  
remain in the interior traded furs with the Cree and Assiniboine was  
eventually witnessed by Henday.

. . . 127 tents of Archithinue came to us. I bought  
20 wolves skins from them, and the trading Indians  
[Cree and Assiniboine] bought a great many skins of  
sorts, which proves what my bedfellow told me  
concerning the traders getting the most part of their  
furs from the Archithinue and Asseenipoet Indians  
(HBCA. E.2/4 F.57).

It is also apparent that the Assiniboine who were taking the furs of  
their kinsmen and the Blackfoot were middlemen to the French as well as  
to the English. When Henday arrived at the French post, Fort Paskoya on  
the 29th of May, 1755 he wrote:

several Asenipoets distributed their long heavy furs  
and felts that the French would not take among our  
Indians [Cree and Assiniboine] with directions of  
what to trade for them (HBCA. E.2/4 F.59d).

By the time of Henday's journey it would appear that at least some  
Assiniboine were residing in the prairies of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

In Milloy's (1988:25) view, "some of the Assiniboine, if for no reason other than the necessity of tending horses, would remain in the Saskatchewan River area, while others returned to York Factory for supplies" when travelling through the Sounding Creek region of southwestern Alberta, Heday on September 20, 1754 wrote:

. . . came to 7 tents of Assinipoets. I smoked with them and have done all in my powers to get them to visit our forts but I am afraid to little purpose they living in this plentiful country and can do without any European support but their chief objection is the long distance. I bought a horse from them to carrie my goods and provisions, they are very fractable [fractious] and at nights they graze about the tents with their feets fettered (HBCA. E.2/4 F.44).

The account of this meeting in the first version of the Heday journals stated that, "this day came 7 tents of Esinepoets they brought another horse and this day catcht another so that we have now 8 horses (HBCA. B.239/a/40 F.14d). The third version indicates:

. . . came to 7 tents of Asinipoet Indians I smoked with them and bought a Horse from them to carry my goods and provisions; at night they let the Horses graze about the tends fettering their legs (HBCA. E.2/6 F.19-19d).

The fourth variant states:

. . . came 7 tents of Asinepoet Natives I smoked with them and bought a horse from them for a gun to carry my provisions etc. At night they let the Horses graze with their feet fettered (HBCA. E.2/11 F.17, also in Burpee (ed.), 1973:28).

Despite some discrepancies in these accounts, it is apparent that the Assiniboine possessed very few horses at this time and were just

beginning to equestrianize. On his return trip to York Factory, Heday encountered ten tents of "Eagle Indians" on the North Saskatchewan River some 122 miles upstream from Fort à la Corne and wrote:

They are a tribe of the Asinepoet Nation; and like them use the Horses for carrying the baggage and not to ride on (HBCA. E.2/11 F.38, also in Burpee (ed.), 1973:45).

While Ray (1974:157) wrote that this information indicates that the Assiniboine "had possessed horses for only a relatively short period, considering that they were still using them essentially as they employed their dogs" he does not attempt to elucidate the source of the Assiniboine horses. As the Blackfoot tribes, according to Rinn (1975:63) acquired their horses sometime between 1720 and 1730, there is every reason to believe that the Assiniboine obtained their first horses in trade from their Blackfoot allies some time after 1720-1730, and before Heday's journey of 1754-1755 (Ray, Moodie, Heidenreich, 1987:Plate 57). This trade in horses would have further cemented the alliance between these two groups of peoples and the Assiniboine and Cree support of the Blackfoot in their warring to the south and west. It is significant that Heday acquired an Indian horse for a European gun, a pattern that would subsequently be repeated over and over again in the new commerce of the northern plains (Ewers, 1958).

Farther eastward, the horse appeared among the Assiniboine somewhat later (Ray, 1974:157; Ray, Moodie, Heidenreich, 1987:Plate 57). When Joseph Smith and Joseph Waggoner traversed the territory of southwestern Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan in 1756 and 1757 (HBCA. B.239/a/43),

and again in 1757 and 1758 (HBCA. B.239/a/45) they encountered many bands of Assiniboine, but none as yet had adopted the horse. However, during a journey Smith undertook over essentially the same territory in 1763 and 1764 he learned that an Assiniboine had lost two women and two horses as a result of a clash which he had with the "Archeadrenes" (HBCA. B.239/a/52 F.18), whom Ray (1974:158-159) identified as the Gros Ventres. In the region to the south of the present city of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (Ray, 1974:43), the HBC explorer, William Pink, on January 23, 1767, encountered:

a large body of Indians consisting of Sixteen tents and a great many Horses and pitched thare Tenting a Little to the S.E. of me about a quarter of a mile. Those Indians that I am with [Cree] call them prw a sym a wock. But I find they are of the same that we can Syn na Poits that come down to your fortes . . . they say the chief of their a bode is farther inland to the 50 wards than those are that come down to your settlements that we call Syn na Poits, so they say they never saw any English settlements, nor can paddle in canue . . . (HBCA. B.239/a/50 F.13d).

When Pink and his Cree companions moved southwestward into the parkland belt to gather birchbark with the "Syn na Poits" they had just met, more Assiniboine were encountered in the Birch Hills (Ray, 1974:44), Pink's Cree companions informed him that they:

has been at War with other Indians called by them Ye arch a thin a wooke in the fall of the year [September or October, 1766] [and] a Battle in the winter and a great many Ware [were] kiled on the other side (HBCA. B.239/a/56 F.21d).

It may have been that the "Ye arch a thin a wooke" were the Gros Ventre, because the territory that the Assiniboine-Cree and Pink were crossing

was that of the Gros Ventres in the middle of the eighteenth century (Brink, 1986:37). This would mark the first time in twelve years that the Assiniboine and Gros Ventres were openly hostile towards each other. Just as relations between the Mandan and Assiniboine fluctuated between periods of peace and war, and as the Blackfoot and Gros Ventres" did not always remain" (Schultz, 1988:271) at peace, it would appear that Assiniboine-Gros Ventres relations also changed in this way. When Pink returned to the same region a year later he noted on the 26th of September 1767 that:

. . . yesterday night Dyed on Indian men kil'd in War, all theare Tolck [talk] is now about war, they say that this is the reason for it, that is a very [important] Dyes [dies] with sickness or is killed amongst them they must go to war with the other natives called Ye artch a thynea Wock and kill as many as they can of them and then they say they are Eavin [Even] with them for the death of theare [their] friend or friends (HBCA. B.239/a/58 F.12d).

This attack, however, never materialized as a peace between the two rival groups was made on April 4, 1768.

those people called ye artch a tyne ne wock and those that I am with [Cree and Assiniboine] some years a gow [ago] ware [were] most times at warr with one a[nd] Nother [Another] [.]. But now they has made an a greement one with a Nother that they will live both as one and not gow [go] to [war] with a nother [each other] againe (HBCA. B.239/a/58 F.31).

It would also appear that the Gros Ventres were at peace with the Blackfoot tribes. On December 1, 1772 Matthew Cocking wrote:

. . . our Yeachithinee Friends came to us and pitched on one side of the Buffalo Pound; twenty-one Tents of them, the other seven are gone another way. One of the Leaders is thoroughly acquainted with the Assinnee

Poet Indian tongue so that we shall be able to understand each other, my Leader [a Cree] being also acquainted with that tongue. These nations are called Powestick Athinnewock or Water-fall Indians [Gros Ventres]. The people I am with inform me there are four nations more which go under the name of Yachithinnee Indians with whom they are in friendship viz Mitcho Athinnewock or Blood Indians: Kaskiketew Wathussituck or black foot Indians and Sussewuck [Sarsi] or muddy water Indians [Piegan]. Their enemies also go under the general name of Yachithinnee Indians, four nations, Kanapick Athinneewock or Snake Indians; Wah-tee or Vault Indians [ ? ]; Kuttunnayewuck [Kutenai]; and Nah-puck Etshigvanuck or flat Head Indians (HBCA. B.239/a/69 F.22d).

It would appear that Cocking confused the "Sussewuck" [Sarsi] with the "muddy water Indians", who were identified as "Pegonow or Muddy-water Indians [Piegan]" in Andrew Graham's 1791 version of Cocking's journal.

Our Archithinue friends came to us and pitched a small distance from us; on one side the pound 21 tents of them, the other seven are pitched another way. One of the Leaders talks the Asinepoet language well, so that we shall understand each other, as my Leader [a Cree] understands it also. This tribe is named Powestic-Athineuwuck (i.e.) Waterfall Indians [Gros Ventres]. There are 4 Tribes, or Nations, more, which are all Equestrian Indians, viz, Mitheo-Athinuwuck or Bloody Indians, Koskitow-Wathesitock or Blackfooted Indians, - Pegonow or Muddy-Water Indians [Piegan] + Sassewuck or Woody Country Indians [Sarsi] (HBCA. E.2/11 F.32, published by Burpee (ed.), 1908:110-111).

While this version lists all four tribes of the "Archithinue" - Blood, Blackfoot, Piegan and Sarsi, it makes no reference to the other "Yeachithinnee" - Snake, Kutenai, and Flathead. Whatever the reason for this omission, the Assiniboine and Cree were allied with the Blood, Piegan, Sarsi, Blackfoot, and Gros Ventres, against the Snake, Kutenai, and Flathead at this time.

In Graham's "account of the Archithinue Indians [Blackfoot tribes]" written in 1771 he noted:

They [Archithinue] and the Asinepoets are continually at war with the other Indians beyond them. Several slave children they sell to our Traders, who brings them down to the home natives [Homeguard Cree] (HBCA. E.2/7 F.17d).

There can be little doubt that the "other Indians beyond them" is a reference to the Snake because on November 4, 1772 Cocking was informed by a group of Assiniboine and Cree that:

some of their Yachithinue Friends have large quantities of ammunition laying by them traded from time to time from them [Assiniboine and Cree], preserving all to use against their enemies the Snake Indians, killing Beasts with the Bow (HBCA. B.239/a/69 F.20).

Not only were the Blackfoot, Assiniboine and Cree raiding the Snake for slaves, but they were also stealing horses from these Indians. Referring to the Assiniboine in 1775 Graham wrote:

War is their [Assiniboine] delight and the Archithinues [Snake] the objects of their inveterate enmity, from these poor creatures they take the fine horses so frequent amongst them and which to convey, their baggage about the country (HBCA. E.2/9 F.82).

The stealing of horses from the Snake and the previous trade of horses from the Blackfoot allowed the Assiniboine to acquire many horses such that most appear to have become equestrian in the two decades following Henday's journey. In 1776 Alexander Henry the Elder noted (Bain (ed.), 1901:295) that the Assiniboine situated in the parkland-grassland region of south-central Saskatchewan had large herds of horses grazing near their

villages. Henry also wrote (Bain (ed.), 1901:303-304) that the Assiniboine "often go to the mountains on war parties, and always on horseback". While the Assiniboine and Cree worked in concert both as suppliers of firearms to the Blackfoot and as active participants in their wars with the Snake, Alexander Henry the Elder observed in 1776 that some tension did exist.

They [Assiniboine] lived in fear of the Christinaux [Cree], by whom they were not only frequently imposed upon, but pillaged, when the latter met their bands, in smaller numbers than their own (Bain (ed.), 1901:318).

By this time, the H.B.C. had begun to build trading posts in the interior to challenge those being built by traders from the St. Lawrence. The first was Cumberland House on the North Saskatchewan River in 1774, which was followed shortly thereafter by posts on other plains rivers. Instead of going to York Factory, the Assiniboine and their Cree allies, began to trade at the eastern Saskatchewan River posts and, as the posts multiplied, new markets opened up for the buffalo hunting peoples of the grasslands and parklands. On January 24, 1774 the chief trader at Cumberland House wrote that the "Assinee Poet" were the:

Best for bringing in food, and indeed it may be said they are the only ones who ever have any large stocks of Preserved Provisions (HBCA. B.49/a/4 F.15, quoted in Rich (ed.), 1951:111-112).

During the fall of 1779 "three families of Assin'nee Poets Indians arrived from across the River. They had brought some dried Provisions

but no Furs" (HBCA. B.B.49/a/4 F.14, quoted in Rich (ed.), 1952:71). It would appear that the Assiniboine were quick to take advantage of this new economic opportunity. This role of provisioner by the Assiniboine and Cree was further enhanced by their greatly increased transport capabilities following equestrianization. Moreover, by the fall of 1780 the Assiniboine were burning the prairies surrounding Hudson House on the North Saskatchewan River to prevent the buffalo herds from approaching the post where the HBC traders could easily kill them and acquire provisions for themselves without having to trade with the Indians of the area (Ray, 1974:133; Ray, 1984:264-265). While the Assiniboine supplied the traders of Cumberland and Hudson House with dried buffalo meat, pounded meat, grease, and pemmican (Ray, 1984:265) they continued to wage war on their enemies. In the spring of 1777 the "Basquo Indians [Woods Cree] informed Cocking that "both Pigogomew [Cree] and Assinnee Poetuk are again gone to War" (HBCA. B.49/a/4 F.26, quoted in Rich (ed.), 1951:146). The chief trader at Hudson House, William Walker wrote:

I can remember the time altho' it is but a few years that they [Assiniboine and Cree] did not go to War above once in three, but now they have got such great supplies of Ammunition that they don't know what to do with it, they go every year . . . (HBCA. B.87/a/4 F.4).

Although neither Cocking or Walker identified the Indians with whom the Assiniboine and Cree were at war, in all probability they were the Snake and their allies to the west or the Sioux to the south. The continual

harassment of the Snake by the Assiniboine-Cree and the Blackfoot tribes eventually came to work against them. On July 2, 1782 Matthew Cocking wrote from York Factory that:

some of the Indians went to war last year [1781] having met with a Tent of Snake Indians who were ill of the Small Pox, they killed [and] scalped them, by this means they received the disorder themselves, and most of them died on their return, the few that reached their own Parts communicated the Disorder to their Countrymen and since then it has run with great rapidity through the whole Country above here . . . (HBCA. B.239/b/42 F.15d, also in Rich (ed.), 1952:298).

In the York Factory 1781-1782 post journal Cocking noted that the "Southern [Cree], Assinnee Poet, and the Yachithinue [Blackfoot, Piegan, Sarsi, Blood, Gros Ventres]:

met with a Tent of Kanasick Athinewock (i.e.) Snake Indians who were all ill of the Small Pox (and where supposed to have received it from the Spaniards whom tis said those people trade with) Killed them all and scalped them to carry away with them, by this means they received the infection and almost all of them died on their return, what few reached their own country communicated the disorder to their Friends and it spread through the whole country above here in some parts of which it still rages (HBCA. B.239/a/79 F.73d).

Saukamaptee related a similar account to Thompson (Glover (ed.), 1962:246) but instead of scalping the Snake as the York Factory account indicates, the Piegan "agreed to take some of the best of the tents, and any other plunder that was clean and good, which we did, and also took away the few Horses they had and returned to our camp". This disease came to infect all the tribes of the northwestern plains, and every tribe suffered huge losses and "young and old not one in fifty of those

tribes are now living" (HBCA. B.239/a/79 F.73d). In fact Saukamappee told Thompson that following the epidemic:

War was no longer thought of, and we had enough to do to hunt and make provision for our families, for in our sickness we consumed all our dried provisions . . . Our hearts were low and dejected, and we shall never be the same people. To hunt for our families was our sole occupation and kill Beavers, Wolves and Foxes to trade our necessities; and we thought of War no more, and perhaps would have made peace with them [the Snake] for they had suffered dreadfully as well as us and left all this fine country of the Bow River to us (Glover (ed.), 1962:246-247).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BREAKDOWN OF ALLIANCES, 1785-1809.

Following the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1782, the frequency of intertribal conflict on the northern plains temporarily declined. Although there was no tribe that did not feel the terrible effects of the disease, by the close of the eighteenth century intertribal warfare resurged with an apparent new fury. According to Milloy (1988:31) this period "was a time of political instability on the western plains - the adjustment period between an old era and a new one". With arms and ammunition gradually becoming available to all tribes, rather than a select few, a new phase in plains trade and warfare began. This was further complicated by the advent of the horse and the emergence by this time of a fully fledged equestrianism among all the northern plains people. These circumstances led to the disintegration of the Assiniboine and Cree alliance with the Blackfoot, as well as to the more frequent hostility with the tribes of the upper Missouri region. Despite these new patterns, warfare with the Sioux continued to pre-occupy the Assiniboine and their Cree and Ojibway allies. Conflict also continued between the Assiniboine and Cree and their Snake enemies to the south and west.

The first recorded hostile action by the Assiniboine following the smallpox epidemic was against an old enemy - the Snake. William

Tomison, on December 24, 1785 wrote (HBCA. B.87/a/6 F.16d) that "ten tents of Assinnee poet Indians" arrived at Hudson House and:

they inform me they was at war last summer against the Snake Indians but gained little by it, as they have now got Guns as well as they are clothed with European Goods (HBCA. B.87/a/8 F.17).

As the Snake at this time had no direct contact with European traders, their "Guns" and "European goods" must have been acquired from other sources. It is most probable that they were acquired in trade from the upper Missouri villagers, either directly from the Mandan and Hidatsa, or through intermediaries such as the Crow, who traded westward towards the Rocky Mountains. It is also likely that they stole some of these wares from the Piegan, as Saukamappee observed (Glover (ed.), 1962:247) that "two or three winters" after the smallpox raged through the camp of the Piegan the Snake ambushed and killed five tents of Piegan who were camped on the Bow River. As the Piegan contracted the smallpox about 1781, this Snake assault probably took place in either 1783 or 1784. The Piegan, under the leadership of "Kootana Appe" set off to find the Snake shortly thereafter. While this party, at first, "returned without seeing the camp of the enemy" (Glover (ed.), 1962:248) they set out again and "returned with about thirty five horses in tolerable condition and fifteen fine mules which they had brought away from a large camp of Snake Indians" (Glover (ed.), 1962:249-250).

In June of 1787 "the first notable rupture occurred . . . for reasons unknown between the Cree-Blackfoot alliance" (Milloy, 1988:31). On June 9, 1787, it was reported by William Tomison at Manchester House

(HBCA. B.121/a/2 F.5) that the Cree "have been at war with the Blood Indians and killed some women and children and taken some of their children for slaves". It would appear that the Assiniboine were not involved, as on July 18 of the same year, Tomison wrote (HBCA. B.121/a/2 F.5d) that "24 tents of Stone Indians arrived on the South Side [of Manchester House] and put up on a Hill a little distance from the river". While the Assiniboine were setting up camp around Manchester House, Tomison observed (HBCA. B.121/a/2 F.6) that "all the Cree Indians fled for the woods for fear of the Blood Indians and Sussew Indians [Sarsi]". William Walker at South Branch House wrote on August 19, 1787 that:

at noon arrived on the other side of the River 9 tents of Southerd Indians [Cree] belonging to the upper settlement [Manchester House] but having kild some of the Blood Indians made them fly down this way (HBCA. B.205/a/2 F.9d).

However on August 24, 1787 "a tent of Muddy River Indians [Piegan]" arrived at Manchester House with:

their chief business is to make it up between the blood Indians and Crees and Sussew Indians [Sarsi] to be at peace and all to come to the House as before (HBCA. B.121/a/2 F.7).

Concerning this evidence Milloy wrote:

This was an astute diplomatic move. Manchester House was at that time the post farthest west on the North Branch. If the war continued, the Piegan realized as did the traders that 'it [the war] will do great harm to this House [Manchester] as the Blood Indians and the Muddy River Indians [Piegan] will be afraid to come in (HBCA. B.121/a/2 F.5).' The Cree in 1787 evidently still had the power to close off the supply of European goods to the Blackfoot (Milloy, 1988:31-32).

Although the Piegan left Manchester House on August 24, 1787 (HBCA.

B.121/a/2 F.7) to make peace between the warring parties, there are no reports for that year which would indicate either the success or failure of the Piegan mission. However, at Manchester House in 1792:

one tent of blood Indians has staid [stayed] to await the arrival of some Nehethewea Indians [Cree] to know whether they intend to keep peace with them or not (HBCA. B.121/a/7 F.19).

This would suggest that the differences which had earlier arisen between the Cree and the Blood and Sarsi had not resulted in further conflict.

During April, 1788, the "Fall Indians [Gros Ventres]" had a skirmish with" 18 tents of Southward Indians [Cree]", in which the Cree,

killed the leading man, after which they cut off his arms, head and Private Parts and took out his bowels and then took what furs they had untraded, This has been done by those of the South Branch and always traded with the Canadians (HBCA. B.121/a/2 F.35).

In both the Manchester and South Branch House journals for this period, there is no evidence to suggest that the Assiniboine were involved in these skirmishes. Instead, it was reported on July 23, 1789, that the Assiniboine stole a number of horses from Manchester House.

1 man came from the Horse tent with information that 14 Horses is stolen away by the Stone Indians besides several of 1 year old and foals (HBCA. B.121/a/3 F.6).

At the same time as the Assiniboine were stealing horses "The Southard [Cree] and Fall Indians [Gros Ventres] have been killing each other and since the whole country is in a stur [stir]" (HBCA. B.205/a/3 F.6).

Once again, for reasons unknown, the Assiniboine remained absent from these hostilities, and arrived at both Manchester House on July 25, 1789

(HBCA. B.121/a/4 F.7d) and the Canadian establishment on July 31, 1789 (HBCA. B.121/a/4 F.8) with provisions which they traded for "ammunition and tobacco". During December, 1790 the Assiniboine arrived at Manchester (HBCA. B.121/a/6 F.14) but instead of trading provisions Tomison wrote "they are all starving for want of Provisions owing to the ground being all burnt last summer [1790]".

The first evidence of renewed conflict with the Gros Ventres by both the Assiniboine and Cree following the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1782 dates from 1793. In the summer of that year, "a band of Gros Ventres consisting of 16 lodges" (Morton (ed.), 1929:62) were camping near South Branch House where they were discovered by the "Branch and Swan River Indians [Cree]", along with a "Band of Stone Indians" (HBCA. B.24/a/2 F.20d) who:

immediately resolved to revenge all their former injuries, by exterminating entirely these unfortunate wretches - For this purpose they watched their opportunity and when the others were retired to rest unsuspecting of danger, they fell upon them like hungry Wolves and with remorseless fury butchered them all in cold blood except for a few children whom they preserved as slaves (Morton (ed.), 1929:62).

At Buckingham House, it was subsequently reported (HBCA. B.24/a/2 F.21) that the Assiniboine and Cree "killed 2 of their [Gros Ventres] old men [and] 150 women and children". Instead of attacking those who had inflicted such heavy losses on them, the Gros Ventres subjected the posts of the HBC and the North West Company (hereafter cited NWC) to their wrath. In October 1795 the Gros Ventres wreaked havoc upon Pine

Island Fort, a Canadian trading post, as well as the HBC post, Manchester House (HBCA. B.24/a/2 F.21). Duncan M'Gillivray at Fort George reasoned (Morton (ed.), 1929:63) that the Gros Ventres were "intimidated from attempting any speedy revenge upon the Crees, formed the design of attacking us, whom they considered the allies of our enemies". Milloy (1988:33) postulated that "an attack on Company posts would be a short cut to acquiring firearms and with firearms they could be on equal footing with the Cree". On June 24, 1794 the Gros Ventres destroyed the HBC establishment, South Branch House, and killed "three of Your Honors Servents" (HBCA. B.60/a/2 F.10). Following these unprecedented assaults, the Gros Ventres fled. According to Duncan M'Gillivray:

The Gros Ventres hitherto stationed at the Rocky Mountains have separated in two Bands; one of them supposed to be that which attacked S.B. [South Branch House] [and] had formed an alliance with the Snake Indians, formerly their mortal enemies, with intention to abandon this other quarter forever, and the other band Steer their course in this direction [towards] Fort George to obtain peace of us and the nations that surround us (Morton (ed.), 1929:39).

As the Blackfoot tribes were in league with the Gros Ventres, the Assiniboine and Cree assaults on the Gros Ventres probably further strained relations with the Blackfoot. The Blackfoot, moreover, were no longer dependent upon Cree and Assiniboine traders for European products as, by this time, they could trade directly at the Saskatchewan River posts. This turn of events rendered the economic basis for the Blackfoot alliance with the Assiniboine and Cree irrelevant. Thus on

December 12, 1796 George Sutherland wrote that the Blackfoot who were trading at Edmonton House, which had been constructed during the previous year, were preparing to go to war against the Assiniboine.

. . . Mr. Shaw [second in command at Edmonton] and myself have told the Blackfeet tribe not to bring their Wolves [and] provisions here, but carry them down to Buckingham where goods are left for them . . ., their answer was that they were afraid of the Stone Indians who are pounding buffalo in the road, they add that they intend going to war against the above Indians next spring, it needless to say I endeavoured to disengage them from this barbarous expedition, I have therefore very little hopes of your [Peter Fidler] having a good trade at Buckingham (HBCA. B.24/a/4 F.6d).

Despite Sutherland's efforts, it would appear that war broke out after 1796 between the Assiniboine and Cree, and the Blackfoot, and persisted until 1803. On August 18, 1803 Daniel Harmon, who was at the NWC post, Fort Alexandria, on the upper Assiniboine River, wrote that the Assiniboine and Cree made peace with the Blackfoot:

for both parties began to weary of such a bloody War as has for such length of time been kept up between them, and are therefore much inclined to patch up a Peace on almost any terms whatever (Lamb (ed.), 1957:69).

About the same time as the alliance between the Blackfoot tribes, and the Assiniboine and Cree, began to break down, the Assiniboine were subjected to a series of Sioux assaults. Shortly after the opening of Brandon House in 1793, Donald Mackay, chief trader at the post wrote:

. . . at 2 p.m. [March 20, 1794] a Band of Stone Indians arrived, five tents and twenty men besides

women, but not a single fox slain. They say that they are pursued by their Enemies and cannot settle to kill any Furs, they say that their enemies last spring [1793] killed about twenty tents of their tribe, fifty-nine men and ninety women besides children. They say that not as much as one man Escape[d] the slaughter (HBCA. B.22/a/1 F.20).

Although Mackay did not identify who had slaughtered the Assiniboine, their enemies would appear to have been the same Indians who attacked the Assiniboine during the summer of 1793. John Sutherland, who was stationed at Fort Ellice at the junction of the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle Rivers, wrote:

I learn from some of the old hands that had been residing many years at Red River that the Assinebons never hunted so little as they have done this year; the reason that they give is their enemy's the Skues [Sioux] and Mandan killed 60 or 70 of them last summer [1793] and killed one and wounded another this spring [1794] which makes them afraid to go out of their tents (HBCA. B.63/a/1 F.4).

It is evident that, in 1793, the Mandan and Sioux were allies and, according to Sutherland, their attacks may have been prompted by Assiniboine raids. According to Sutherland:

. . . these Indians [Assiniboine] are noted for stealing and therefore I am not surprised at the Soos [Sioux] and Mandan Indians destroying so many of them as [they are] a set of inferior beings (HBCA. B.63/a/1 F.5).

Three years following the losses reported at Brandon House and Fort Ellice, the Assiniboine were again attacked by the Sioux. David Thompson, while on his way to the Mandan villages during the winter of 1797 wrote (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:105) that the Assiniboine had fifteen tents killed "last year [1796]" by a large party of Sioux near

the Turtle Hills in the southwestern corner of Manitoba. Thompson made no reference to the position of the Mandan. However, it would appear that by the summer of 1797 the Mandan and Assiniboine were again on peaceful terms. At Brandon House, Thomas Miller wrote on August 4, 1797 that:

. . . on the evening two Indians arrived, and informed us that the Mandles [Mandan] Cristinaux and Assiniboils have combined together and engaged with the Panies [Arikara] who is neighbors to the former and fought a battle this summer [1797] . . . when in 30 of the Panies were killed (HBCA. B.22/a/5 F.9d).

When Thompson's reference to the loss of fifteen Assiniboine tents in 1796 is added to those of the spring of 1793 when "twenty tents" (HBCA. B/22/a/1 F.20) of Assiniboine were killed and, those of the summer of 1793, which saw "60 or 70" (HBCA. B.63/a/1 F.4) killed, or about six tents, the total Assiniboine loss would be forty-one tents. Peter Fidler in 1815 wrote (PAM. V.69(18). F.52 In Ray, 1974:108) that there were eleven Assiniboine in each tent. This would suggest that the number of Assiniboine lost between 1793 and 1796 through Sioux assaults would be somewhere between 445 and 455 people.

Thus, following the smallpox epidemic, or in the period 1785-1796, the Assiniboine renewed their conflict with the Snake and Gros Ventres on their western front. During the same period, their alliance with the Blackfoot tribes broke down. Trade with the latter collapsed, and their old allies became formidable enemies, blocking further Assiniboine expansion to the west. The Assiniboine also suffered heavy losses in their longstanding conflict with the Sioux and, except for the renewed

alliance with the Mandan in 1797, the Assiniboine could look only to the Cree and Ojibway for support in the broadening conflict that accompanied the establishment of trading posts on the northern plains.

At Brandon House on October 18, 1800, it was reported that the Assiniboine and Cree had "fought a great battle with some Sioux's [and] got the advantage of them, they sang and danced ye [the] whole night" (HBCA. B.22/a/8 F.4d). During the spring of 1801 (Milloy, 1988:45) John Tanner noted (James (ed.), 1956:70) that the "Assiniboins, Cree and Ojibways were again assembling to go join the Mandan's in making war on the A-gutch-o-ninne-wug". An earlier reference in Tanner's journal (James (ed.), 1956:38) indicates that the "A-gutch-o-ninne-wug" "live two days distant from the Mandan" and, according to the editor, Edwin James, the "A-gutch-o-ninne-wug" was a Ojibway term meaning "settled people". The combined Assiniboine, Cree, Ojibway, and Mandan returned from the "settled people" "having accomplished little or nothing" (James (ed.), 1956:70). It appears that these "settled people" were the "Panies [Arikara]" whom the Mandan, Assiniboine, and Cree had previously attacked during the summer of 1797. Although the Mandan and Assiniboine were operating in unison in the spring of 1801, by the middle of December of the same year they were again in conflict with each other. This hostility appears to have been occasioned by an Assiniboine attack on the Snake who, at that time, were on a trading expedition to the Mandan villages. On December 21, 1801 it was reported by Thomas Bunn at Brandon House that the Assiniboine:

bought 150 horses [and] 8 slaves from the Snake Ind[ians] they destroyed 18 Tents of them, in a battle close to the Mandan Village, 38 losses fell by the arms of the former. L. Slater went to the spot where the battle was fought [and] counted 19 heads, the rest were taken away by the wolves, the day before our men stated the Mandans killd 11 Assineboils within a half mile of their Village, the heads were brought in [and] eat[en] by the Dogs with several other parts of their bodies (HBCA. B.22.a.9 F.13).

By the spring of 1802 "the Assineboils came in [to Brandon House], are all running away from above for fear of the Mandans" (HBCA. B.22/a/9 F.19d). According to Milloy this movement between periods of peace and war was:

based on the attempts by the Cree and Assiniboine to rebuild a profitable position for themselves in the trade system, and on the shocks of horse thefts by the Cree and Assiniboine warriors (Milloy, 1988:58).

More generally, it reflected the breakdown of the Assiniboine alliance with the Blackfoot tribes. This saw the Assiniboine turn increasingly to the upper Missouri to forge alternate trading connections and especially to acquire horses. Horses, however, could be acquired by theft as well as trade, and horse raiding strongly coloured their relationship with the Missouri villagers. The breach between the Assiniboine and Mandan that developed in 1801 developed because the Assiniboine raided the Snake while the latter were trading at the Mandan villages. The Mandan horses themselves, moreover, were always tempting targets for the Assiniboine and Cree who visited their settlements. Both Alexander Henry the Younger (Coues (ed.), 1965:V.1:325) and Lewis and Clark (Thwaites (ed.), 1969:V.2:221) noted that the Mandan were

forced to keep their horses in their lodges at night to prevent them from being stolen by the Assiniboine, and this stealing of horses from the Mandan camp by the Assiniboine continued well into the nineteenth century (Milloy, 1988:60-66). In summing up Cree, Assiniboine, and Mandan-Hidatsa relations between 1794 and 1805 Milloy (1988:58) concluded, "This trend toward stealing Mandan-Hidatsa horses was the beginning of the end for the trade and military alliance between the Cree-Assiniboine and Mandan-Hidatsa".

Sometime between the spring of 1801, when Assiniboine, Cree, Ojibway, and Mandan attacked the "settled people" and, the breakdown of relations between the Mandan and Assiniboine in December, 1801, the Assiniboine struck a particularly severe blow at the Gros Ventres.

What raised the resentment of the Fall Ind[ians] [Gros Ventre] so very much was that the Summer 1801, The Southern [Cree] [and] Stone Indians had made war upon them, killing 76 men, women [and] children, in two different places up towards the Stony Mountain in the Moocoowans river [Oldman River] [and] at the Ie kim me coo hill [Cyprus Hills] they also scalped who they took for dead . . . The Small pox the same spring [1801] also came amongst them [the Gros Ventres] from the Southwards towards the Mississouri River [and] cut off 100 principally of Children [and] fortunately it did not spread amongst other Indians. Also that winter [1801-1802] being uncommonly severe with deep snow, that a few of them lost their lives by the severity of the weather when out in the Planes trapping small foxes, also a heavy [and] sudden snow in May 12 and 13, 1801 which killed above 100 of their horses [and] the Enemy [Assiniboine and Cree] besides went away with 174 . . . (HBCA. F.3/2 F.230, quoted in Johnson (ed.) 1967:317n).

The "small pox" was contracted by the Gros Ventres through a "few Tattood Indians [Arapaho]" who arrived at Chesterfield House in 1801

(Johnson (ed.), 1967:294). Despite the setbacks suffered by the Gros Ventres, they were able to launch a successful counter blow at the Assiniboine in 1803. At Brandon House, John Mackay wrote (HBCA. B.22/a/11 F.6) that the "Fall Indians [Gros Ventres] . . . have taken or killed 60 Assiniboils" during the fall of 1803.

Milloy has argued that the Assiniboine and Cree campaigns against the Gros Ventres were:

undoubtedly designed in part, to supplement their poor stock of horses. As early as 1801 some Arapaho, conducted by the Gros Ventres, visited the South Branch area [Johnson (ed.), 1967:297]. By 1807 a connection had been made between the Arapaho, Cheyenne and Blackfoot through which the latter began to receive horses (Milloy, 1988:32).

While there is little reason to doubt that the Assiniboine and Cree augmented "their poor stock of horses" by waging war on the Gros Ventres, it is unlikely that the Arapaho played a significant role in supplying horses to the Blackfoot in 1807. When the Arapaho arrived at Chesterfield House in 1801, the Blackfoot killed "one man, one woman and two children of the Tattood [Arapaho]" (Johnson (ed.), 1967:299).

Although Fidler (Johnson (ed.), 1967:299) later wrote that, through his intervention, "the Blackfeet had given many valuable presents to the Tattood Indians [Arapaho]", tensions probably remained high between the two peoples. Moreover, Fidler observed (Johnson (ed.), 1967:299-300) that shortly after the Blackfoot had killed the four Arapaho, "I learn that many Blackfeet that are just left here will trade at the other river [North Saskatchewan] in the winter, as the Fall Indians [Gros

Ventres] are very near falling on them". All of this suggests hostility between the Gros Ventres and their Arapaho allies, and the Blackfoot, rather than the beginning of a horse trade from the south. This would appear to have been the case as Daniel Harmon (1820:152) observed that the Blackfoot and Assiniboine "were on their way to wage war with the Rapid Indians [Gros Ventres]" in the summer of 1806. Instead of acquiring their horses through the Gros Ventres, who in turn received their horses from the Arapaho, the Blackfoot either traded or stole their horses from the Snake or Kutenai. On April 13, 1786, it was noted by William Tomison at Hudson House that the "Pee ken now [Piegan] "Blood" and "Blackfoot tribes":

go constantly at War against the Snake Indians tribes and many is killed on both sides, at times the former take numbers of Horses [and] mules from the Latter which is the reason of their going to war (HBCA. B.87/a/8 F.35d).

When the Blackfoot tribes were not at war with the mountain tribes, they traded horses from these Indians. Peter Fidler in 1792 observed (HBCA. E.3/2 F.36) what appeared to have been a trade of long standing duration between the Piegan and Kutenai. Furthermore, when two Canadians were sent from Acton House in 1793 to persuade the Kutenais to trade at that post, they informed Fidler (HBCA. E.3/2 F.36) that the Blackfoot had acquired their horses, for a considerable time, from the Kutenai, Nez Perces, and Flathead. About the same time that Milloy (1988:32) postulated that a trade in horses had developed between the Gros Ventres-Arapaho and Blackfoot, Alexander Henry the Younger, in 1808

wrote that the Blackfoot acquired their horses from:

their enemies southward, where they are perpetually at war with the Snakes, Flat Heads and other nations, who have vast herds, and who appear to be a defenseless race; having no firearms they easily fall prey to the Slaves [Blackfoot, Piegan, Blood, Sarsi], who are tolerably well supplied with arms and ammunition (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.2:526).

Although the evidence is not as strong, it would appear that the Gros Ventres also acquired horses from the mountain tribes. On September 17, 1782 Tomison recorded (HBCA. B.87/a/5 F.12) that a party of Gros Ventre had just arrived at his post after waging war on the Snake. Two days later Tomison wrote:

The Two Fall Indians went back for their own Tents. They inform me that they killed 15 Tents of Snake Indians this Summer [1782] when they was at war (HBCA. B.87/a/5 F.12).

The Gros Ventres also set out to attack the Snake in 1801 as Fidler wrote (Johnson (ed.), 1967:285) that "the Fall Indians [Gros Ventres] set off to war against the Snake Indians about five nights ago". If there was no trading connection between the Gros Ventres-Arapaho and the Blackfoot tribes, then it is improbable that Blackfoot relations with the Gros Ventres were instrumental in breaking up the alliance between the Assiniboine and Cree and the Blackfoot tribes as Milloy has asserted. According to Milloy (1988:36) "they [the Blackfoot] had acquired a secure supply of horses through the Gros Ventres, the Cree [and Assiniboine] were therefore expendable". Elsewhere, however, Milloy (1988:36) wrote that the Blackfoot, Cree, and Assiniboine alliance disintegrated because the Blackfoot tribes now had a "direct

and secure access to European goods within their own territory" and, as a result, "they no longer needed the Cree [and Assiniboine] to get firearms". This, rather than horse trading connections, would appear to have been the main reason why the longstanding alliance between the Blackfoot tribes and the Assiniboine and Cree ceased to be meaningful and eventually fell apart.

According to Milloy (1988:35) "the diplomatic link which had been worn thin by the turmoil of the 1790's finally snapped in 1806". On August 25 of that year, the chief trader at Edmonton House, James Bird, wrote:

This morning had the pleasure to meet Mr. House with two men according to appointment (a little above Old Hudson's House) and to hear he left all well at the upper settlements but sorry to add he informs us that a fatal Quarrel has taken place between the blackfeet [and] Southern Indians, that a battle had been fought between them in which 28 of the former [and] three of the latter had fallen, that the South Indians are flying in all quarters to conceal themselves in the woods, and that the Blackfeet threaten indiscriminate vengeance. How far the effects of this Quarrel may extend its impossible to foresee but the Trade is certain to suffer by it, at all wants, as each party will be too much in dread of the other to separate in small parties for killing skins (HBCA. B.60/a/6 F.1-1d).

While the Assiniboine are not mentioned in this account, a letter written by James Bird on December 23, 1806, indicates that the Assiniboine "assisted" the Cree and that the Blood were supporting the Blackfoot:

. . . a quarrel took place in the latter end of July last [1806] between the Blackfoot supported by the Blood Indians [and] the Southward Indians [Cree]

assisted by the Stone Indians each party consisting about 400 Men a Battle was fought in which twenty-eight of the former and three of the latter are said to have fallen. The Southward Indians were ultimately forced to precipitate retreat . . . and dispersing in all quarters to conceal themselves in the Woods leaving their Enemies masters of the plains from South Branch to Hinton House (HBCA. B.60/a/6 F.5).

It would appear that the Blackfoot and Blood were in control of the territory from South Branch House north to the Saskatchewan River.

Shortly after this battle between the Blackfoot-Blood and the Cree-Assiniboine, Bird had:

the mortification to learn that his [Stone Indians], with three other Families amounting in all to twenty-five souls were a few Days since suprised by the Blackfeet and totally destroyed about an Hundred Miles from this [Edmonton House] as they were returning from the plains ignorant of the late quarrel (HBCA. B.60/a/6 F.5d).

While the Blackfoot access to firearms lay behind the breakdown in relations between the Blackfoot tribes and the Assiniboine and Cree, the 1806 battle was probably initiated by a dispute between the Blackfoot and the Assiniboine and Cree over a horse. On August 8, 1806, Harmon wrote:

Six Assiniboins have arrived [at South Branch House] and informs us that about eighty tents of Crees and Assiniboins with about as many of the Blackfeet Indians, were on their way to wage war with the Rapid Indians [Gros Ventres], their common enemy. But the two former tribes quarrelled in their march respecting a horse, which they both claimed, and which neither would relinquish. This circumstance occasioned a battle between them, which lasted during a day in which twenty-five of the Blackfeet Indians, and three of the Assiniboins were killed (Harmon, 1820:152).

With the Assiniboine cut off from the horse herds of the Blackfoot tribes and Gros Ventres, they turned increasingly to their southern trading partners the Mandan for horses. On November 18, 1804 Lewis and Clark advised the Mandan:

to put up with the recent insults of the Ossiniboins [and] Christinoes . . . we advised them to remain at peace [until] they might depend upon getting Supplies through the Channel of the Missouri, but it required time to put the trade in operation. The Assiniboine have the trade of those nations in their power and treat them badly as does the Sioux the Ricarees [Arikara], and they cannot resent, for fear of losing their trade (Thwaites (ed.), 1969.V.1:223).

The Mandan were advised to retain their connections with the Assiniboine and Cree until such time as the Americans were able to establish a supply route to the upper Missouri region, thereby making the Assiniboine and Cree expendable as suppliers of European goods. On November 30, 1804 Lewis and Clark further advised the Mandan that:

you are compelled to put up with the little insults from the Christinoes [and] Ossinaboins (or Stone Inds) because if you go to war with those people they will prevent [sic] the traders in the North from bringing you Guns, Powder [and] Ball and by that means distress you very much (Thwaites (ed.), 1969.V.1:231).

The "little insults" or the "recent insults" referred to the Assiniboine and Cree stealing horses from the Mandan. On December 25, 1804, the Canadian trader, François-Antoine Laroque observed that:

This village [Mandan] being situated on the most northern Bend in the Missouri, Consequently, nearest to the Assiniboines, who steal horses everyday (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:144).

While they indeed stole horses, the Assiniboine and Cree also traded

with the Mandan. Laroque (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:135) noted that "a band of Knistenaux . . . had also been there [to the Mandan] trading Corn [and] horses" in November, 1804. At the same time, Charles Mackenzie commented that:

Two bands of Assiniboines of a hundred Lodges each, who passed the winter [1804] at the Forks of the little Missouri, sent daily to the Villages to barter for corn, Beans, etc. (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:236).

Furthermore, on January 24, 1805 Laroque wrote:

The Assiniboins all went down to the Mandans to purchase Corn for dried meat, which they brought for that purpose, as there is no Buffalo here [near the Mandan-Hidatsa villages] (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:150).

It is apparent the Assiniboine so valued this exchange with the Mandan that they risked conflict with the European traders who, from their posts along the Assiniboine and Souris Rivers, had been sending trading parties to the upper Missouri villages since the days of La Vérendrye. Following the retreat of the French this trade was re-opened by Peter Pond in 1753 (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:24). According to Laroque, the Assiniboine:

would Endeavor to pillage us [Canadian traders] of our Goods, it being their fixed determination to prevent us . . . any Communication, between their traders [and] the Missouri Indians; as they wish to Engross that trade for themselves (Wood and Thiessen (ed.), 1985:135).

At this time the Assiniboine and Cree were also at war with the Sioux. On March 15, 1805, Meriwether Lewis was:

informed of a party of Christinoes [and] Assiniboins being killed by the Sioux, 50 in number, near the Establishment on the Assiniboin R[iver], a few [few] days ago (Thwaites (ed.), 1969.V.1:275).

Some five months later the allies of the Mandan-Hidatsa, the "Shoe Indians", killed fourteen Assiniboine. At Brandon House on July 15, 1805 John Mackay wrote:

the Shoe Indians killed fourteen Red River Indians at the Summer Berry River [Pembina River] Eight days past. (viz) four men, three women, and seven children, one man, two woman [and] one Child made their escape a party of Assiniboils fell on the track of the Shoes, they immediately returned by a nigh [near] road by which means they saved their families from distinction [extinction] (HBCA. B.22/a/13 F.5d).

Lewis and Clark (Thwaites (ed.), 1969.V.6:90) identified the "Shoe Indians" as being associated with the Hidatsa and, according to Alexander Henry the Younger, they were situated between the Mandan and Hidatsa and were:

an entirely different tribe from the Big Bellies [Hidatsa] and Mandanes; their language resembles that of the latter more than that of the former, but it is not the same. Their long intercourse with those people has tended to this similarity of language, and from proximity they have acquired the manners and customs of the other nations, though they continue to live by themselves . . . They formerly sustained a three years war with the Big Bellies, notwithstanding the latter were ten times their number. They held out with the greatest resolution and disdained to submit till the others, finding it impossible to reduce them, unless by extermination, proposed to make peace. Since then they have lived in amity. They are stationary, like their neighbors, the Mandanes, with whom they have always been at peace, and have acquired more of

their customs and manners than those of the Big Bellies, who continue to view them with an envious eye (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:343-344).

When Alexander Henry the Younger arrived at the Canadian post on the Pembina river on August 1, 1805 he:

received the unwelcome news that the Sioux had fallen upon a small camp of my Indians [Saulteur] on Tongue River [the principal branch of the Pembina river] not many miles from the fort, on the 3rd of July, and killed and taken prisoners 14 persons - men, women, and children (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:200).

On the same day that Henry learned of the assault, a combined party of Saulteurs, Assiniboine, and Cree set out to attack the Sioux but on September 27, 1805 Henry (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:265) observed that the war party returned "with empty hands" because "while preparing to attack them, the enemy escaped". John Tanner, who had accompanied this combined force into Sioux territory, wrote (James (ed.), 1956:127) that when they reached Lake Traverse the war party had diminished from 400 to 120 Assiniboine, Cree, Ottawa, and Ojibway. When they finally reached the Sioux village which, according to Tanner (James (ed.), 1956:127-128) was located "at a distance of two days travel" in a westerly direction from Lake Traverse "they found the camp had been deserted many hours before". They then returned, and were back on the Pembina River by September, 1805.

Three months later, Tanner (James (ed.), 1956:141) wrote that ". . . the Crees sent tobacco to the Ojibbeways, to accompany them to the Mandans, and join to attack on some of the Bwoi-wug [Sioux] in the country of the Missouri". While the Ojibway were waiting at Turtle

Mountain for the Assiniboine and Cree, the Assiniboine and Cree returned with the news that:

they had arrived at the Mandan village just as a war-party of the Sioux had reached the same place with a design to attack the town. The Mandan chief said to them as soon as they came, "My friends, these Sioux have come hither to put out my fire. They know not that you are here. As they have not come against you, why should your blood flow in our quarrel? Remain, therefore, in my village, and you shall see that we are men, and need no help when they come to fight us at our own doors." The Mandan village was surrounded by a wall of pickets, and close to these the Sioux fought all day. At length, an intermission took place, and the Mandan chief, calling to the Sioux from the inside, said to them, "Depart from about our village, or we will let out upon you our friends, the Ojibbeways, who have been sitting here all day, and are now fresh and unwearied." The Sioux answered, "This is a vain boast, made with a design to conceal your weakness. You have no Ojibbeways in your house, and if you had hundreds, we neither fear nor regard them. The Ojibbeways are women, and if your village were full of them, we would, for that reason, the sooner come among you." The Crees and Assiniboins, hearing these taunts, became irritated and ran out to attack the Sioux, which the latter perceiving, fled in all directions. The Ojibbeways, though they had little share in the fight, were allowed to have some of the scalps taken during the day, and one of these fell into the hands of our chief, Wa-ge-tote, though he had not been within several days' march of the scene of action, and with this trophy he returned towards his own country (James (ed.), 1956:142).

In 1806 (Milloy, 1988:61), about fourteen hundred "Assiniboins, Crees, and Ojibbeways" gathered at Turtle Mountain "to go against the Sioux" (Tanner in James (ed.), 1956:195-196). From the moment of its inception, however, this combined force was plagued with dissension. According to Tanner:

When such numbers of men assemble from different and remote parts of the country, some must be brought into contact between whom old grudges and enmities exist, and it is not surprising that the unstable power and influence of the chiefs should be insufficient to prevent disturbances and bloodshed (James (ed.), 1956:197).

Murder and horse stealing caused desertions among the warriors, and the number of Assiniboine, Cree, and Ojibway declined from the original fourteen hundred to four hundred. Even though these four hundred came to within a two days march of the Sioux, Tanner (James (ed.), 1956:200) wrote, "we now all turned back", and he then noted that the "Sioux pursued on our trail, and came in sight of us, but offered no molestation, and in due time, we all arrived at home in safety".

Although the Assiniboine were assisting the Mandan in their wars with the Sioux in December, 1805, the Assiniboine were in conflict with the Mandan by the spring of 1806. William Clark on April 11, 1806 wrote:

the Mandans and Menitarris [Hidatsa] wer [were] at war, the Ricaras [Arikara] and killed two of the latter. The Assiniboins were also at war with the Mandans, and had prohibited the N.W. traders from coming to the Missouri to trade. They have lately killed one Trader near Mouse River [Souris River] (Thwaites (ed.), 1969.V.5:329).

As in times of peace, the Assiniboine were loathe to see the Mandan supplied by the European traders from the southern Manitoba posts.

According to Henry:

we had been informed that a number of the Crees and Assiniboines were tended there [Turtle Mountain], who could certainly steal our horses, if they could - even pillage, and perhaps, murder us, as they

disapprove of our taking arms to the Missouri to supply the natives there, with whom they are often at war (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:309).

Concerning the actions by the Assiniboine towards the European traders, Alwin wrote:

When peace prevailed between the Assiniboine and their sometime enemies, the Mandans, the Assiniboine served as middlemen, supplying the Mandans with goods obtained at the British posts. This was a lucrative business for them and they obviously did not wish to see the HBC or any other traders interfere by carrying goods directly to the Missouri villages. When at war with the Mandans, the Assiniboine understandably tried to stop the British Missouri trade which provided their enemies with guns, powder and shot (Alwin, 1979:25).

While the Mandan were at war with the Assiniboine in April, 1806 evidence from the journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, suggests that the Assiniboine were again on peaceful terms with the Mandan-Hidatsa by late July, 1806. On July 23, 1806 Henry, along with a large party of Mandan and Hidatsa, set off in a southward direction to finalize "the preliminaries of peace" (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:359) that had earlier been communicated to the Cheyenne. When they reached the Cheyenne camp on July 24, negotiations began between the Mandan-Hidatsa and a party of hundred "Schians [Cheyenne] and Sioux - for the camp was composed of both these nations, and a few Buffalo Indians". The editor of Henry's journal, Elliot Coues ((ed.), 1965.V.1:384), identified the "Buffalo Indians" as Arapaho. When it appeared that a peace would finally be agreed upon by all the participants, a party of twelve Assiniboine arrived at the Cheyenne camp and Henry wrote:

After remaining thus in suspense for some time, we were informed that the uproar proceeded from the presence of 12 Assiniboines, who, having arrived at the village just after we left, and learned that the Big Bellies [Hidatsa] and Mandanes were more numerous than the Schians [Cheyenne] and Sioux, had followed our tracks to this camp. The Schians were fully determined to kill them [Assiniboine], as these people are inveterate enemies. But as they came upon our road, and in a manner unclear the protection of our party, the latter [Hidatsa] were resolved to defend them, . . . La Borgne [chief of the Hidatsa] was one of the first to be informed of their approach; and suspecting what might happen, he instantly ran out to meet them with his battle-ax in his hand. He took the chief, old Crane, by the hand telling him that he might advance into the camp without fear or danger. The Schians soon surrounded them and wished to strike some of the Assiniboines, but La Borgne, who by this time joined by many of his own people, kept them at bay by flourishing his battle-axe (Coues (ed.), 1965. V.1:385-386).

It would appear that this small party of Assiniboine had arrived at the villages of the Mandan-Hidatsa villages "just after we left" and then followed the Mandan-Hidatsa to the camp of the Cheyenne. Milloy (1988:62) reasoned that the upper Missouri villagers were forced to protect the Assiniboine from the Cheyenne as the Mandan-Hidatsa still needed to maintain the trading connection with the Assiniboine. It would also appear that the Cheyenne and Assiniboine were long-standing enemies. Contrary to what Milloy (1988:61) has written, peace was never made (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:394). The presence of the Assiniboine along with the inability of the upper Missouri villagers to come to any sort of trading agreement with the Cheyenne, Sioux, Arapaho, prevented a peace from being formulated. The Mandan, along with the twelve

Assiniboine returned to their village, and Henry (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:402) wrote that the Assiniboine "left on their return home to their camp at Moose Mountain, all provided with horses, loaded with corn". Despite this trade, Henry (Coues (ed.), 1965.V.1:402) also observed that the Mandan were "in great anxiety, fearing the Assiniboines might return and steal the horses before they could be collected in the morning" from the pastures.

The Assiniboine's attempt to monopolize the trade in European goods with the Mandan received a severe blow in 1809, with the establishment by St. Louis traders of Lisa's Fort at the junction of the Missouri and Big Knife Rivers. Milloy (1988:60) reasoned that the Mandan could now "afford to end their association with the Cree and Assiniboine" as they now had acquired "a reliable alternate source of European goods". With the advent of the Canadian, HBC, and finally American traders among the upper Missouri villagers during this period, the role of the Assiniboine and Cree as suppliers of European goods to the Mandan and Hidatsa fell into demise, just as the breakdown of the Assiniboine alliance with the Blackfoot tribes had resulted from the building of trading posts in Blackfoot territory. This turn of affairs also shut off or severely reduced the supply of horses that the Assiniboine could obtain in trade from these people. These commercial shifts saw the Assiniboine increasingly resort to stealing horses from both the Blackfoot tribes and the Missouri villagers, as well as from the Gros Ventres and the Snake. Throughout this period, the Assiniboine, in contrast to the Blackfoot tribes and the Mandan-Hidatsa, were generally horse poor.

In losing their monopoly on European goods, they were no longer able to secure a regular supply of horses in trade as could the Blackfoot tribes or Mandan. In addition:

The poor practices of horse husbandry and the more severe environmental conditions caused the Crees and Assiniboines to be in constant need of horses. However, the dependence of those natives on the Mountain tribes [Snake, Kutenai, Flathead] as an equestrian source region was negated by the prohibitive distances between their homelands (Rinn, 1975:80).

With the Assiniboine at war with the tribes of the Blackfoot, they were effectively cut off from the main source of horses for the Indians of the northern plains - the Rocky Mountains, which was inhabited by the Snake, Kutenai and Flathead (Rinn, 1975:Figure 1-1). Similarly, as the Assiniboine were moving towards more hostile relations with the Mandan-Hidatsa, who were in possession of large numbers of horses acquired from the Rocky Mountains via the Crow Indians and, from the Indians of the southern plains, the Assiniboine had no choice but to steal horses from the upper Missouri villagers and from the Blackfoot tribes and other enemies to the west. This new pattern of conflict, initially induced by the spread of European posts and the breakdown of the middleman trading role that the Assiniboine and Cree had previously enjoyed, was further heightened by warfare revolving around the horse.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

From the evidence presented here, and especially that derived from Indian oral history, it is apparent that the Assiniboine were originally part of the Yanktonai division of the western Sioux. It is also apparent that the Assiniboine separated from the Yanktonai under hostile conditions, and in this way emerged as a tribal and political entity distinct from their Siouan kinsmen. This separation occurred sometime before 1635 and took place in the prairie region of present day western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. The circumstances that caused this split are not known but appear to have been purely Indian in origin. There is no evidence of any attempts on the part of either the Sioux or the Assiniboine to reconcile their differences. Although both groups entered into alliances with other people during the historical period, they remained separate from one another and in a more or less constant state of warfare throughout the study period.

Following their separation from the Yanktonai, the Assiniboine migrated northward into the region of the upper Red River valley. Evidence from the protohistorical period suggests that the homeland of the Assiniboine at this time was in the neighborhood of Lake Winnipeg, and especially its prairie and parkland environs. All references to the Assiniboine being in the Lake of the Woods-Rainy River region are best

interpreted as either trading parties attracted to French fur trade posts or parties of Assiniboine seasonally tapping the wild rice lakes to the east of the Lake Winnipeg/Red River valley region. It was in this region that the Assiniboine came into contact with the "Alimibegouek Kilistinons", who were the Cree situated around Lake Nipigon.

These Cree were receiving French trade goods from both their northern and eastern kinsmen and it was probably from the Lake Nipigon Cree, or kinsmen living farther to the west, that the Assiniboine acquired their first European trade goods. It is most likely that the Assiniboine began to acquire French trade goods prior to 1640. As trade was not conducted with enemies, moreover, there can be little doubt that the Assiniboine/Cree alliance was either formulated or further cemented about this time. While many tribal relationships on the northern plains and woodlands fluctuated between periods of peace and war, the alliance between the Assiniboine and Cree remained constant throughout the protohistorical and historical periods, despite occasional tensions and stresses.

Trade with the Cree brought the Assiniboine into an extensive, intertribal commercial network and especially that which developed following the destruction of Huronia by the Iroquois in 1649-1650. This in turn enmeshed the Assiniboine in the broader pattern of alliances and warfare that were emerging in the upper Great Lakes at this time. By the middle of the seventeenth century there had emerged a northern trading block comprising the Assiniboine, Cree, northern Ojibway,

Temiscaming, Nipissing, Mississauga, the Ottawa proper, and the Tobacco Huron. Throughout the 1650's and 1660's these people were at odds militarily with the tribes who made up a southern trading block - the eastern and western Sioux, southern Ojibway, Fox, Mascouten, Kickapoo, Miami, Illinois, and the Winnebago. Although the composition of both of these commercial and political networks fluctuated, the core tribes, the Cree, Assiniboine, and northern Ojibway remained at war with both divisions of the Sioux as well as the southern Ojibway until Duluth made peace between them in 1679. This warfare was not fought for prestige or revenge, nor should it be considered a game fought between individual warriors. Rather, it reflected competition between two far flung groups of people whose common concern and objective was access to and control over the St. Lawrence based fur trade.

With the establishment of the HBC in 1670, alternate economic opportunities arose and, for the Assiniboine, these led to new geographical patterns of trade. This in turn led to a new set of alliances and warfare that extended west to the Rocky Mountains. While Assiniboine ties with the Algonquian-French trading network in the east largely remained intact following the founding of the HBC in 1670, the English posts on James Bay offered a new source of European wares to both the Assiniboine and Cree. This James Bay trade, however, was shortlived for the Assiniboine and terminated following the establishment of an English post near the mouths of the Hayes and Nelson Rivers in 1682. This allowed the Assiniboine and their Cree allies to develop a new middleman trade throughout the vast Nelson drainage basin,

and saw both groups expand to the west, mainly along the line of the Saskatchewan River. In addition to the strategic advantage which they held by virtue of their geographical position in this expanding trade, the Cree and Assiniboine were able to acquire firearms from the English traders, which greatly enhanced their influence, both as traders and warriors. At the same time, the Sioux began to trade at posts established by the French in their territory. This appears to have led to a hiatus in their conflict with Assiniboine and Cree and, from 1683 to 1700, there is no evidence of warfare between the two groups.

Throughout most of the eighteenth century, the Assiniboine were militarily active on two fronts. With the removal of all French trading posts on the upper Mississippi by 1702, the Fox, Sauk and eastern Sioux were able to resolve their differences and, by 1716, the Sioux were again at war with the three core components of the northern trading network - the Assiniboine, Cree and northern Ojibway. In the course of this renewed conflict, the Sioux not only made severe inroads into Assiniboine territory, but they also gained control of the Lake of the Woods-Rainy River region. This region was of considerable importance to the Assiniboine, not only as an area where they procured wild rice, but also as a corridor through which they maintained contact with the St. Lawrence based trade.

At the same time that the Sioux were raiding to the north, the Assiniboine became embroiled in warfare to the west with the Snake, Kutenai and Flathead. These tribes were also in conflict with the Blackfoot and their assaults upon the latter were so severe that,

sometime during the early decades of the eighteenth century, the Blackfoot requested the assistance of the Assiniboine and Cree in their warfare in this region. This saw the Cree and Assiniboine assist the Blackfoot in a series of successful engagements with the Snake, which led to the Blackfoot occupation of the plains of southwestern Alberta. This alliance in the west, like the warfare that it generated, was based on the exchange of Blackfoot furs for Assiniboine/Cree firearms acquired from the English posts on Hudson Bay. By the second decade of the eighteenth century, the Assiniboine had thus carved out a network of alliances and trading relationships that extended from the Lake of the Woods-Rainy River region in the east to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the west, and from Hudson Bay in the north to the plains of the Missouri in the south.

The successes that the Assiniboine enjoyed in the west were replicated farther east by the time La Vérendrye penetrated the Lake of the Woods-Rainy River region in the late 1720's. By this time, the Assiniboine, Cree and the Monsoni and other northern Ojibway had driven the Sioux out of this strategic region. They did not, however, succeed in establishing territorial control over the upper Red River valley, which remained a buffer zone between them and the Sioux. Despite this state of affairs, it is apparent that both the Assiniboine and Cree were in frequent contact with the village agriculturalists of the upper Missouri, and that a longstanding trade had transpired between them.

The relationship between the Assiniboine/Cree and the Mandan-Hidatsa of the upper Missouri was different from that which

developed between the former and the Blackfoot tribes. The alliance with the Missouri villagers appears to have been initially based on an aboriginal exchange of Assiniboine products of the hunt for the surplus agricultural produce of the Missouri villagers. Trade with the Mandan-Hidatsa probably also involved exotic natural products carried to these villages from the mountains and from the southern plains. This complementarity in trade was further enhanced when the Assiniboine began to acquire European trade goods, and later still, when the European horse spread up the central plains to the Missouri villages. Trade with the Blackfoot, in contrast, emerged only after the advent of European goods, and revolved around the exchange of Blackfoot furs for the European wares that the Assiniboine acquired first from the French and then from the English. By the time Heday arrived among the Blackfoot tribes, the Assiniboine and Cree were still at war with the Snake and their allies in the west and the trade between the Blackfoot and the Assinibione/Cree that had originated in the early decades of the eighteenth century had expanded to include an active trade in horses. While the trade in furs for guns continued, that for horses added a new bond between the two groups of people. The Assiniboine not only received horses in trade from the Blackfoot, but like the latter, they also stole them from the Snake, Kutenai and Flathead. It is significant that, in forging these alliances, the Assiniboine tapped the two major routeways by which the horse arrived on the northern plains - the intermontane route, which they accessed through their accord with the Blackfoot, and the central plains route, that somewhat later carried

horses to the upper Missouri villages, and which they were able to tap through their trading connections with these village centres. It is also pertinent to point out that it was among the Blackfoot and the Mandan/Hidatsa that the horse and gun first met on the northern plains. Horses obtained by the Blackfoot and Mandan/Hidatsa from the west and south were traded for guns and European wares carried to their camps and villages from the north and east by the Assiniboine and Cree traders. It was their access to and, indeed, monopoly over, this trade in guns and European goods that enabled the Assiniboine to exploit these connections. It also led to their rapid equestrianization which, by this time, had become a military necessity in the changing world of the northern plains.

These patterns of trade broke down with the establishment of European posts in the territory of the Blackfoot and the Mandan/Hidatsa. For the Blackfoot, the advent of trading posts meant that firearms could be acquired directly from the HBC and NWC posts, and as a result, the Assiniboine and Cree became expendable as suppliers of these commodities to the Blackfoot tribes. Such events isolated both the Assiniboine and Cree not only from the large horse herds of the Blackfoot but, also from the horse rich Snake, Kutenai and Flathead. They also led to the breakdown of their alliance with the Blackfoot and to conflict with their former allies. Similarly, relations between the Mandan-Hidatsa began to move towards longer and longer periods of hostility as European traders from their posts along the Assiniboine and Souris Rivers increasingly journeyed to the upper Missouri villages to trade. This

broke the monopoly that the Assiniboine and Cree had previously enjoyed in this trade and led to deteriorating relationships with the Mandan/Hidatsa. The advent of American traders and the establishment of Lisa's Fort among the Mandan/Hidatsa in 1809 further eroded the basis of this trading relationship. Eventually, the Assiniboine were reduced to stealing horses, not only from the Blackfoot, but also from their old trading partners on the Missouri. This led to frequent confrontations between the Assiniboine and the Blackfoot, as well as the Mandan/Hidatsa, and established a pattern of conflict that persisted well into the nineteenth century.

By the early nineteenth century the extensive trading sphere that had dominated Assiniboine external relations and intertribal warfare for almost two centuries had all but collapsed. The consequences, according to Edwin Denig, were that the Assiniboine were almost entirely surrounded by hostile tribes.

The Crow Indians were on the south, the Blackfoot on the west, the Gros Ventres of the Prairie on the northwest, the Minnetarres [Hidatsa] on the east, and the Sioux on the southeast. The Crees were their only allies and the country inhabited by the latter was the only road open to them for hunting when game failed on their own (Denig, 1961:89).

Although Denig wrote that "the Crees were their only allies", the Assiniboine could still include the Ojibway among their friends.

Although the alliance among the Assiniboine, Cree and Ojibway survived the many political and economic changes that had taken place on the northern plains, its members no longer commanded a dominant position in intertribal relations or in the European fur trade. As a result, the

Assiniboine became increasingly impoverished. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Denig (1961:70) described them as being "wretchedly supplied either with arms, clothing or other necessary articles" and, despite their skills at horse stealing he (Denig, 1961:91) noted they "have but few animals of this kind".

### MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Most of the Hudson Bay Company Archival material used in this study is classified in Section B. This section contains the records of individual Company posts, each of which has been assigned a number that generally follows an alphabetical listing of all Company posts. Section B is further subdivided into types of records, indicated by a lower case letter(s), including the following:

- a. Post Journals.
- b. Correspondence Books.
- c. Correspondence Inward.
- d. Account Books.
- e. Reports on Districts.
- f. Lists of Servents.
- z. Miscellaneous Items.

Archival material pertinent to this study was also found in Section A and E. The former contains material relating to the London headquarters and the latter is a miscellaneous category including Peter Fidler's Notebooks.

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