THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE ACQUISITION, DIFFUSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE EUROPEAN HORSE AMONG THE BLACKFOOT TRIBES IN WESTERN CANADA

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

OCTOBER 1975

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to describe the acquisition and diffusion of the horse by the Blackfoot tribes in Western Canada and to elucidate the temporal and spatial co-ordinates of these processes. In addition, an attempt is made to ascertain the relative wealth in horses possessed by the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes, and to describe and explain the general patterns of horse distribution and circulation in this region.

The processes of horse acquisition and diffusion by the aboriginal tribes are described and traced from the equestrian culture hearth, centered on the Santa Fe area, to the northern extremities of the Great Plains. Through relations with kindred tribes or friendly inter-tribal trade, the horse frontier advanced northward by way of the Intermontane Corridor and the Great Plains route.

On the basis of information gleaned from numerous archival and published sources, it is determined that the horse frontier reached the Piegans, the southernmost Blackfoot tribe, during the years 1720 - 25. The horse was initially acquired by the Blackfoot from the Mountain tribes to the southwest, most probably the Nez Perces and Flatheads, through friendly inter-tribal trade.

The thesis concludes with an explanation of the relative numbers of horses possessed by the various tribes. In so doing, it reconstructs the distribution and circulation patterns of horses in the

Blackfoot country and the fundamental factors which influenced them. It is demonstrated that the Blackfoot equestrian culture was akin to an open system dependent upon the input of horses from the Mountain tribes to the southwest and the outflow of horses to the Crees and Assiniboines in the east and northeast.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to all the people who helped me during the preparation of this thesis. I am indebted to Dr. D. W. Moodie, who suggested the topic and acted as my supervisor. I deeply appreciate the time, effort and valuable assistance that he so generously contributed.

I wish to thank Mr. Barry Kaye and Dr. W. Koolage for their co-operation and assistance.

In addition, I would like to thank the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company for granting me permission to consult and quote from the Company's microfilm collection on deposit in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. Without their co-operation, this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally, a special thanks to Mrs. Fran Kopp for typing the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the European horse to North America by the Spaniards in the early years of the 16th century, initiated a diffusion process resulting in the dissemination of the horse throughout the aboriginal tribes in the Great Plains and Intermontane regions of western United States and Canada. The introduction of the horse to these tribes has presented a host of related problems for investigation, ranging from the means of acquisition and diffusion to studies of the aboriginal cultural changes associated with equestrianism.

Inquiries related to this epochal event have primarily been presented as historical and ethno-historical studies. However, the dynamics of the acquisition and diffusion processes, as well as the related temporal details, have been ignored or have received only cursory treatment. This particularly applies to the tribes which occupied the Canadian Plains. The available published materials provide only general and, for the most part, conflicting views regarding these events. Conclusions concerning the temporal details of these processes are equally divergent.

C. Wissler, one of the first scholars to investigate the problems of initial horse acquisition by the aboriginal tribes, suggested that the Indians may have acquired their first horses from wild herds which descended from horses lost or abandoned by the early Spanish expeditions.[1]

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[1] C. Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture", American Anthropologist, XVI, no. 1 (1914), 1-25.

Further research by Haines[2], Denhardt[3], Dobie[4], and Worcester[5] has made significant contributions to the study of this problem, providing what have generally been accepted as more plausible theories. Haines[6], Roe[7], and Ewers[8] have conducted the most recent studies on the subject of initial horse acquisition by the Indian tribes, as well as on the spatial and temporal aspects of the diffusion process. However, these works are general in nature and the widely conflicting views suggest that investigations of this nature remain inconclusive. Hitherto unused records relating to the Canadian Plains provide new perspectives on these matters among the equestrian tribes of western Canada.

It is the objective of this study to reconstruct selected aspects of the geography of the Blackfoot equestrian plains occupance from the dawn of the horse era until 1870. Specifically, the study is concerned with the acquisition, diffusion and distribution of the horse among the Blackfoot tribes, namely the Siksikas, Bloods, Piegans, Sarcees

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[2] F. G. Haines, "Where Did the Plains Indians Get Their First Horses?" American Anthropologist, XL, (1938), 112-117.

[3] R. M. Denhardt, The Horse in the Americas (Norman, 1948).

[4] J. F. Dobie, The Mustangs (Boston, 1952).

[5] D. E. Worcester, "Spanish Horses Among the Plains Indians", Pacific Historical Review, XIV, no. 4, (1945), pp. 409-17.

[6] F. G. Haines, Horses in America (New York, 1971).

[7] F. G. Roe, The Indian and the Horse (Norman, 1955).

[8] J. C. Ewers, "The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, With Comparative Materials From Other Western Tribes", Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 159 (Washington, 1955).

and Gros Ventres. It will attempt to establish, as far as the records allow, the source and method of initial horse acquisition by the Blackfoot and, in addition, an effort will be made to ascertain the approximate dates for the advance of the horse frontier to the various tribes. The study will conclude with a description of the relative tribal wealth in horses and a reconstruction of the distribution and circulation pattern of the horse among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes.

The paucity of documentary information is explained by the fact that the aboriginal tribes left no written records and the majority of them were already equestrian when contacted by the Europeans. Consequently, the nature of the data dictates a qualitative analysis of the information presented and many conclusions must be reached on the basis of inferential evidence. This evidence has been primarily gleaned from the vast reservoir of unpublished materials available in the Canadian Public Archives and from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, in particular.

From the time of Henry Kelsey's journey inland in 1691-92, followed by Anthony Henday's visit to the Blackfoot country in 1754-55, the Hudson's Bay Company began to accumulate a vast store of information in the form of journals, descriptions, impressions and experiences transcribed by the early fur traders and explorers. In addition, the Company's numerous trading posts maintained records and detailed accounts of the day-to-day events and occurrences throughout this era. Further sources of information are supplied by the records and journals of the men who served the North West Company which operated in the Canadian Plains during this time. Other surviving collections and documents, as well as numerous published materials relevant to this period of history, have likewise

been examined. Evidence from these sources has also served to shed new light on the Blackfoot equestrian era.

Due to the nature of the available evidence, it is necessary in chapter 1 to identify the patterns of initial horse acquisition and diffusion among the Plains and Intermontane tribes. In addition, this chapter examines the temporal and spatial co-ordinates of these processes. This preliminary investigation of equestrianism among the aboriginal tribes is essential to any attempt to examine the problem with respect to the Blackfoot in the Canadian Plains.

In chapter 2, evidence derived from the available archaeological information and the accounts of the early fur traders is used to trace the locations of the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes from prehistoric time to the demise of the fur trade period in 1870.

On the basis of the variant versions of the Henday Journals, chapter 3 examines the degree of equestrian acculturation achieved among the Siksikas by 1754-55, or at the time of first European contact.

In chapter 4, an effort is made to shed new light on the problem of dating the advance of the horse frontier to the Blackfoot tribes. The primary sources from which the evidence is drawn are the different Henday Journals and the variant Saukamappee accounts in the David Thompson Journals. Following this, the initial source of Blackfoot horses is investigated.

On the basis of the information gleaned from the various journals of the fur traders and explorers and the numerous post journals

contemporaneous with the equestrian period, chapter 5 describes the relative wealth in horses among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes. It concludes with a reconstruction of the general patterns of distribution and circulation that characterized the equestrian era.

Chapter 6 is the summary and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 1

THE ACQUISITION AND DIFFUSION OF THE HORSE AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIANS OF THE GREAT PLAINS AND THE INTERMONTANE REGION OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Once endemic to the Great Plains region of North America, the horse became extinct in this part of the continent about 7000 B.C.[1] It was re-introduced to mainland North America by the Spaniards in 1519.[2] Not until the early 17th century, however, does it appear that North American Indians began to acquire the European horse. The manner by which the Indians began to acquire horses is open to speculation, but the latest documentary evidence suggests that they were first obtained directly from the Spanish ranches near Santa Fe in the present State of New Mexico.

Patterns Of Horse Acquisition And Diffusion Among The Aboriginal Tribes

Previously, it had been suggested by C. Wissler that horses lost or abandoned during the De Soto and Coronado expeditions in the early 1540's formed "nucleii of several wild horse herds", from which

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[1] For more extensive discussions of the horse in prehistoric North America, see the following: F. Haines, Horses in America (New York, 1971); R. M. Denhardt, The Horse in the Americas (Norman, 1948).

[2] The first horses recorded in North America were those of the Cortez expedition, which landed at Vera Cruz in 1519. Cortez, as was the case with the later Spanish explorers, procured his mounts primarily from the Spanish ranches and estates in the West Indies, and these in turn had been carried by the Spaniards from their homeland to the Caribbean Islands.

the Indians may have acquired their first mounts.[3] Although Wissler's suggestion became for some time an accepted hypothesis, more recent research into Spanish documents has shown that few or no horses were lost by these expeditions, and that the herds of the expeditions were composed almost entirely of stallions.[4] These and other factors that militate against the credibility of the stray horse theory are dealt with at considerable length by F. G. Haines in his article, "Where Did the Plains Indians Get Their First Horses?" and F. G. Roe in his book, The Indian and The Horse.[5]

In rejecting the stray horse theory, there would appear to be only two remaining alternatives by which the Indians could reasonably have acquired their first horses. One such possibility is that they became equestrian by stealing their first mounts from the Spaniards, in which case it must be assumed that the Indian learned his equestrian habits and the art of horse management on his own accord.

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[3] C. Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture", American Anthropologist, XVI, no. 1 (1914), 1-25.

[4] A. S. Aiton, "Coronado's Muster Roll", American Historical Review, XLIV (1938-39), 556-570.

F. Haines, op. cit., p. 50.

[5] Idem., "Where Did the Plains Indians Get Their First Horses?" American Anthropologist, XL (1938), 112-117; F. G. Roe, The Indian and the Horse (Norman, 1955).

The authors point out that not only is there an absence in the Spanish records of scarcely a single horse being lost, but in order for successful reproduction to occur, a number of horses of different sexes would have had to have been lost in the same general vicinity. Single horses, moreover, would have been more apt to rejoin the herd than wander alone. Even had such odds been overcome, the chances of two horses and their offspring surviving in the hostile plains environment to which they were unaccustomed, would have been extremely small.

The only other possibility is that the Indians initially gained their equestrian knowledge and training directly from the Spanish. In consideration of the former suggestion, evidence indicates that, although the theft of Spanish stock was an art for which the Indians required little training, such raids were practiced for some time without the natives becoming equestrian. Moreover, horses taken during these early raids appear to have been utilized only as a source of food.[6]

Although there can be little doubt that the Indians, despite their general lack of familiarity with horses, took to stealing these animals from the Spanish at an early date, a sharp distinction must be made between the acquisition of these animals for food, on the one hand, and for equestrian purposes on the other hand. It should also be pointed out that the semi-domesticated Spanish range stock from which they stole was anything but docile and gentle, for the Spanish bred and trained their steeds to be spirited, intrepid animals. The development of an aboriginal equestrian culture from this stock would have at least necessitated close contact with the horse, which could

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[6] Denhardt makes reference to certain tribes in Sonora raiding and eating horses about 1567. R. M. Denhardt, op. cit., p. 91. Dobie notes that certain southwestern tribes stole horses "solely for their meat" of which the "Apaches were the chief eaters". J. F. Dobie, The Mustangs (Boston, 1952), p. 26. Roe questions the validity of the suggestion that the natives tended to kill and eat stray animals. F. G. Roe, op. cit., pp. 52, 53. However, Bolton cites an instance during the Coronado expedition in which a fatigued horse fell behind the main troop and was captured by Coronado's Indian allies. "Not being able to kill the animal because they had no knife or anything else, they tied it to a tree by all four feet, then carrying firewood to the horse, they set it on fire, burning it alive, and eating it singed and half roasted". H. E. Bolton, Coronado Knight of Pueblos and Plains (Albuquerque, 1964), p. 196.

scarcely have been accomplished without the ability to rope or lasso them. It would also have necessitated designing some sort of riding gear, however unsophisticated, and would have required learning to ride and to care for these animals.

That the American Indian, without the benefit of instruction or previous training in horse husbandry, could have mastered in the space of less than half a century a process which required several thousand years for his European counterpart to achieve, is most difficult to accept, even on an apriori basis. The very close affinity of the Indian riding gear and equestrian habits to those of the Spaniards, even to mounting their horses from the right side, casts strong doubt upon the idea of an independently developed aboriginal equestrian culture on the southwestern American Plains. Furthermore, no historical evidence has provided substantial proof that a single Indian tribe, with the exception of the Pueblos, acquired their first mounts and their equestrian knowledge and habits by any means other than through friendly contact or trade relations with equestrian tribes. This, then, provides the most acceptable explanation.

As far as records allow, it is apparent that the first Indians to acquire riding skills were the Pueblo Indians in the vicinity of Santa Fe and Taos in New Mexico. It is also apparent that they acquired these skills in their capacity as herdsmen and grooms for the Spaniards.[7] Due to the lengthy distance between Santa Fe and Mexico, the only available source of ranch hands were the Pueblo tribes, held by the Spaniards in a state of semi-slavery. According to Haines, "the mission

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[7] F. Haines, Horses in America, op. cit., p. 51.

farms and herds were all managed by Indians with some supervision from the friars, and the young men had the breaking, training, and use of horses as part of their regular duties."[8] This practice was in defiance of both the law and custom of New Spain, which forbade Indians to ride horses. However, the urgent need on the ranching frontier for more hands to tend the ever-increasing herds of livestock made such practice commonplace in New Mexico.[9]

The Spanish masters were often harsh and cruel in their treatment of their servants and many made their escape with their families to the unsubjugated Navajos to the northeast or to the Apaches on the plains to the east, where they were accepted into these tribes. Their escapes were often effected with the very horses they had broken and trained, and in this manner the Pueblos doubtlessly transmitted their talent and knowledge in horsemanship to their new kinsmen.[10] The transfer of Spanish horses and equestrian cultural traits to the Navajos and Apaches through the Pueblo Indians appears to have been the archetype of the process that subsequently led to equestrian development elsewhere among the Plains and Mountain tribes. This pattern, once established, set the stage for the dissemination of the horse from the Gulf of Mexico to the northern extremity of the Canadian Plains.

As far as can be determined, the Pueblos were the only tribe to acquire their equestrian training and knowledge, and their first

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[8] Loc. cit.

[9] Loc. cit.
J. F. Dobie, op. cit., p. 25.

[10] F. Haines, Horses in America, op. cit., p. 52.

mounts directly from the Spaniards in New Mexico. Although some pre-equestrian tribes undoubtedly raided Spanish herds at a relatively early date, such raids were solely for meat and would appear to have been completely divorced from subsequent raids for horses to serve as mounts. There is no basis for supposing that early raiding by pedestrian tribes was a factor in initiating the development of an aboriginal equestrian culture. The emergence of equestrian traits and the commencement of intense raiding on the Spanish herds by the Navajos and Apaches was not recorded until after the equestrian Pueblos had fled to the former tribes. In other words, raiding by the Navajos and Apaches for mounts did not begin until equestrian traits had been taught to them by the Pueblo refugees living in their midst. It should also be noted that it was from this point forward that the demand for horses, precipitated and perpetuated by evolving equestrian cultures, was fulfilled by intensive raiding of the Spanish herds or those of neighboring tribes.

The Equestrian Culture Hearth Of North America

The settlement of Santa Fe and the surrounding area occupied by the Pueblos and neighboring tribes of Navajos and Apaches can be viewed as the equestrian culture hearth of North America. According to D. Meinig, a culture hearth is an area of origin of some particular culture pattern.[11] The origin of culture hearth locations can be explained in part by the particular type of geographic situation common

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[11] D. Meinig, "Cultural Geography", in Introductory Geography Viewpoints and Themes, Commission On College Geography, no. 5 (Washington, 1967), 97-103.

to these areas. Hearths are locations which at the critical formative time are optimal for the stimulus of ideas evolving from recurrent contact between dissimilar cultures, the stimulus of pressures emanating from some external threat, and the stimulus of resource rewards attributable to some new method of exploitation or distribution.

The acquisition or transfer of ideas results from prolonged contact between dissimilar cultures. In the case of the growth of the equestrian culture hearth, contact was between the equestrian Pueblos and the pedestrian Navajos and Apaches. The incentive of pressures from some inveterate external threat was provided by the Spanish cavalry. A pedestrian warrior had little chance of successfully competing against an equestrian soldier in battle. It was imperative that the Navajos and Apaches develop an equestrian culture in order to maintain their freedom and to terminate the Spanish advance. The encouragement of resource rewards, arising from some new means of exploitation yielding a significant new level of economic surplus, was inherent in the increased hunting proficiency of equestrian tribes. The equestrian hunter was much more capable than his pedestrian counterpart of procuring a constant food supply as well as other products of the hunt which could be utilized as items of trade. In addition, the unequal military contests between the pedestrian and equestrian tribes yielded huge quantities of plunder which served the latter tribes as trade items in other quarters. The Navajos and Apaches acquired their booty from the pedestrian plains tribes, and offered it for barter at the trading fairs in the vicinity of the Pueblo and Spanish settlements.

Meinig further notes that major culture patterns eventually experience areal expansion beyond the region of the hearth. Such growth is a function of particular geographic conditions as well as numerous internal and external factors. As a consequence, the pattern of expansion is irregular both in its spatial as well as its temporal characteristics.

The geographic circumstances which facilitated the creation of an equestrian culture hearth in the New Mexico area were at one time or another present throughout most of the Great Plains and Intermontane region. The diffusion of an equestrian culture pattern throughout these regions would appear to have been a direct response to the presence of identical or similar conditions in various parts of the area at a particular point in time. This would lead one to surmise that the process of initial horse acquisition and diffusion by the aboriginal tribes, likewise, followed a similar pattern. As later evidence will indicate, with the exception of the Pueblos who learned their horsemanship in direct association with the Spaniards, the process of horse acquisition and diffusion among the Plains and Intermontane tribes was virtually identical. The manner in which the aboriginal tribes acquired their first mounts and the equestrian skills necessary for the development of a horse culture was through contact with friendly or kindred equestrian tribes or through inter-tribal trade. For these reasons, the relationship of tribes in juxtaposition to one another had a direct bearing on the rate and direction of equestrian culture diffusion.

Factors Influencing The Rate And Direction Of Horse Diffusion

The length of time necessary for a tribe to develop a horse culture depended on a variety of complex factors, some of which may be singled out as generally of greater importance than others. It is apparent, for example, that the different lifeways of the various tribes affected the temporal aspects of the diffusion process. The life style of the nomadic hunters, compared to that of the sedentary horticulturalists, made the former tribes much more disposed to equestrian acculturation. The desire and, indeed, the necessity for horses was far more intense among the nomadic tribes, especially in respect to warfare, hunting and transportation. In terms of Meinig's culture hearth theme, the stimuli of pressures from external threat and of apparent resource rewards were considerably greater among the nomadic hunting tribes.

The availability of a source of supply was of primary importance, for without an adequate number of horses, a tribe could scarcely develop an equestrian culture. However, the circumstance which more than any other limited or accelerated the rate of acquisition and diffusion was the availability of sources that were willing and capable of transmitting to the pedestrian tribes the knowledge and techniques necessary for the development of a horse culture. This amounted to the stimulus of ideas arising from sustained contact between unlike cultures, as suggested by Meinig. Under such favourable or optimal conditions, a tribe could achieve a reasonable degree of equestrian proficiency, at least to the extent of maintaining and

riding horses, within a decade.[12]

The absence of written records by the natives, together with the fact that the majority of the Plains and Mountain tribes were equestrian when contacted by Europeans, precludes exact dating of the advance of the horse frontier from tribe to tribe. In light of the suggestion that a tribe could achieve equestrian proficiency within a ten year period, an attempt will be made to establish in terms of decades the time during which the horse frontier reached the various tribes.

For the purposes of this study, it has been assumed that the horse frontier had reached a particular geographical limit when the tribe in question had developed a horse culture to a sufficient degree to utilize their horses as mounts. In many instances, the different levels of sophistication attained in the development of a horse culture by particular tribes at the time of European contact, afford the most important clues to establishing dates of horse acquisition. It is with these limitations in mind that the following attempt is made to examine the spatial and temporal coordinates, as well as the processes of horse

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[12] When the French explorer, La Salle, reached the mouth of the Mississippi in 1682, there was no evidence that the horse had reached the semi-horticulturalist tribes dwelling along the river banks. When Tonty encountered the same tribes in 1690, they had sufficient numbers of horses to barter some to him, and they had achieved the art of riding them. I. J. Cox, ed., The Journeys of René Robert Cavelier sieur de La Salle (New York, 1905), I, pp. 46-50. The failure of additional concrete evidence to be brought to light after a thorough search of the available sources of information and, on the basis of such circumstantial evidence that exists, a ten year span would appear to have been the probable period of time necessary for equestrian acculturation by a particular tribe.

acquisition and dissemination among the Plains and Mountain tribes of North America as far as the borders of the Blackfoot country. The progression of the horse frontier can be traced primarily along the two main diffusion routes as outlined by Haines and Ewers.[13] These routes extend northward by way of the Great Plains and the Intermontane Corridor.

Initial Diffusion Beyond The Equestrian Culture Hearth

There is little doubt that subsequent to the Pueblos, the first Indians to acquire the horse in the American southwest were the Navajos. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Spanish settlements in New Mexico were suffering from such costly raids on their herds by Navajo Indians that Governor Onate was obliged to send soldiers into the mountains with the objective of "putting down the Apaches [Navajos][14] who were killing people and stealing horses."[15] By 1607, when Onate resigned as governor, the Navajo raids were of sufficient intensity to cause the viceroy to write to the King, informing him that:

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[13] F. Haines, "The Northward Spread of Horses Among The Plains Indians", American Anthropologist, vol. 40, 1938, pp. 429 - 437; J. C. Ewers, "The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, With Comparative Material From Other Western Tribes", Bureau of American Ethnology , Bulletin 159, 1955, pp. 7 - 15.

[14] For some time the Spanish chronicles made no distinction between the Navajos and the Apaches, possibly due to the fact that the former had no desire to have any intercourse with the Spaniards. They were thus seldom seen by the Spanish during this initial stage of raiding.

[15] Hammond and Rey, cited by J. U. Terrell, The Navajos (New York, 1970), p. 26.

> "their [Navajos] depredations - burning settlements, killing people, and stealing herds - were causing havoc in New Mexico and driving the colonists to despair -. Pueblos fled to the high country whenever tribute collectors appeared. The colonists had insufficient horses, and even the military was in need of mounts because of Navajo raids."[16]

The intensity of the Navajo raids and the ever increasing exodus of the Pueblo Indians from their Spanish oppressors to the Navajo country, suggests that the Navajo to the north and northwest of the Spanish settlement had become competent equestrians at least by the decade 1605-15.[17] Between 1620 and 1642, a power struggle between civil officials and the Franciscans for control of the colony allowed the Navajos to raid almost at will, and the swiftness and effectiveness with which the raids were executed, suggests that they were conducted by mounted warriors.[18]

The post 1642 period was a significant era in the history of horse diffusion. Under Governor Pacheco Heredia, who assumed office in 1642, the Pueblos were burdened with such heavy taxes and restrictions that they were reduced to the verge of starvation. This greatly

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[16] J. U. Terrell, ibid., p. 27.

[17] The fact that no mention was made of the Navajos being mounted until several years later is probably due to the circumstance that their mountain homelands were not easily accessible, and that during their raids they relied on hit and run tactics, avoiding if possible a direct confrontation with the Spanish military. The Indians' weapons were ineffective against the heavy armor of the soldiers, and they feared the Spanish guns. As a result the Navajos were seldom sighted.

[18] While Governor Heredia was in office, the Franciscans claimed that "...they [Navajos] made so many raids, killed so many mission Indians, and stole so much stock, - that the Spanish military, even with the aid of civilians, was unable to defend the colony." J. U. Terrell, op. cit., p. 41.

intensified the exodus from the Pueblo settlements to the Navajos and Plains tribes. "Out of the one hundred fifty pueblos occupied when the Spanish colonized New Mexico and Arizona, only forty-three contained inhabitants when Pacheco left office in 1644."[19] The assimilation of substantial numbers of Pueblos into the tribes of the Navajos and Apaches was marked by the subsequent increased proficiency in the Navajos' equestrian ability and was concurrent with a sudden increased hostility in the attitude of the neighboring Apache tribes towards the Spanish. Relations between the Pueblos and Navajos improved to the point where, by 1650, they were in alliance in a conspiracy to overthrow the Spanish. The Pueblos, according to a Spanish report, "under the pretext that the Navajos were doing it, turned over to them in the pastures the droves of mares and horses belonging to the Spaniards which are the principal nerve of warfare..."[20] In 1659, a Spanish military expedition failed to make contact with a single Navajo even though they penetrated deep into their territory. By this time the Navajos were staging mounted raids as far as Santa Fe and in the next few years the "Navajos had increased their attacks in virtually every section of northern New Mexico to such an extent that travel on any road, except by a large military force, was completely unsafe."[21]

The Navajos' wealth in horses and proficiency in their usage is significant in that they initiated the diffusion of the horse northward by way of the Intermontane route. To the north of the

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[19] Ibid., p. 43.

[20] C. W. Hackett, cited by J. U. Terrell, The Navajos, op. cit., p. 43.

[21] J. U. Terrell, ibid., pp. 44, 45.

Navajos lived their friends, the Utes. There is no doubt that the Navajos were the medium through which the Utes gained their first horses, for they were reported to be raiding with the Navajo by 1659.[22] In 1692, when the Spaniards reconquered New Mexico, the Utes were riding with the Navajos as allies of the Hopis.[23] Once they possessed more horses than they required, the Navajos presumably bartered them to the southernmost Utes, who in turn passed them on to their northern kinsmen, the Shoshonis and Comanches. It is presumable on the basis of the foregoing information that the horse frontier had advanced to the Utes in the Colorado-Green River areas by the decade 1640-50 (see Figure 1-1).

Equestrian Diffusion In The Great Plains

Meanwhile, in the Great Plains the Apaches were in control north of the Canadian River, including much of what is now Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and eastern Colorado. The Apaches were more numerous than the Navajos and occupied a much greater expanse of territory. As a result, the rate of horse diffusion throughout the Apache tribes occurred more slowly during the initial stages. A lack of documentary evidence precludes an earlier dating than the decade 1640-50 for the advance of the horse frontier to the southern Apaches. The horse was obviously distributed to the Apaches during this decade when the harsh treatment by the Spanish forced the Pueblo Indians to flee to the

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[22] F. Haines, "Nez Perce and Shoshoni Influences on Northwest History", in Greater America: Essays in Honour of Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed. by Dr. Adele Ogden (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945), p. 381.

[23] C. W. Hackett, op. cit., p. 54.

neighboring tribes. By mid century, the Apaches were transformed from rather humble, wandering footmen to fierce, proud, equestrian warriors, and "... from 1655 to 1675 the Pueblos and Spaniards of New Mexico suffered greatly, both from severe drought and from savage Apache raids."[24]

The Apaches were swift to perceive the advantage they derived from the horse in warfare, an advantage they were anxious to maintain by preventing the diffusion of these animals to their adversaries to the north. This fact, coupled with the general southward migration of the Apache tribes, served to effectively retard the northward advance of the horse frontier in the Great Plains for many years.

A landmark in the saga of horse diffusion occurred in 1680 when the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico revolted against the Spanish. Those Spaniards not murdered in the uprising were forced to flee in such haste that their herds of livestock were abandoned. The Apaches and Navajos reaped a wealth of horses and Spanish goods in the subsequent plunder, as they were alternately friend or foe of the Pueblo tribes, whichever the occasion warranted. The devastating intertribal wars weakened the Pueblo tribes and, out of the resulting anarchy, the Apaches emerged as lords of the plains, unchallenged until the arrival of the Comanches. The sudden new wealth in horses on the part of the Navajos and Apaches created a surplus which they were anxious to trade. This greatly accelerated the process of diffusion.

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[24] A. B. Thomas, cited by G. E. Hyde, Indians of the High Plains (Norman, 1959), p. 18.

Emboldened by their success, the Apaches, by 1690-95 were adding to their wealth by launching raids deep into Mexico, where they plundered the provinces of Sonora and Chihuahua and stole great numbers of horses.[25]

While still forming an effective barrier to direct contact between the northern tribes and Spanish, the Apaches by this time were willing to trade their excess horses to their kinsmen or to tribes with equally valuable items to barter, such as European goods, and especially guns. The northern bands of Gataka and Kiowa Apaches seemingly had acquired sufficient numbers of horses from their southern kinsmen to be well mounted by the decade 1710-20. They were responsible for the introduction of the horse to the Black Hills region.[26] Diffusion beyond the Black Hills region was apparently stymied by the Apaches for several decades for when the La Vérendryes visited the Mandan villages on the Missouri in 1738, they did not observe a single horse[27] (see Figure 1 -1).

While the Apaches were hindering diffusion northward in the plains, the Jumanos were responsible for the flow of horses eastward from the Santa Fe area to the tribes on the lower Mississippi.

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[25] G. E. Hyde, ibid., p. 15.

[26] The Kiowa and Gataka Apaches dwelled near the Black Hills during much of the 18th century. Bourgmont noted their presence on the White River in 1717, and when the Ponca Indians moved up the Missouri about 1720, near the mouth of the Bad River, they were attacked by mounted warriors. ibid., p. 42.

[27] La Vérendrye, Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de La Vérendrye and his sons, ed. by L.J. Burpee (Toronto, 1927), XVI, p. 335-337.

The Jumanos traded horses to the semi-horticulturalist Caddoan and Tejas tribes, as well as the Pawnees. A Caddoan tribe visited by the La Salle party on the lower Mississippi in 1682, showed no evidence of possessing horses. By 1686, however, La Salle was able to obtain horses from the Cenis tribes in southeastern Texas.[28] In 1690, the Tonty party contacted the same Caddoan tribe visited by La Salle in 1682. The Caddoans by this time were equestrian and were willing to barter horses to the Frenchmen[29] (see Figure 1-1).

The horse frontier did not advance in a uniform wave-like pattern across the plains. In design, it more closely resembled spoke-like projections of unequal length radiating from the south-western core region centred on Santa Fe, which served as the hub in the diffusion process. The various alliances and kinship links served to promote or hinder the process. While the route following the Mississippi was the means by which the northern tribes could bypass the Apache lands, diffusion in that sector was hindered by the animosity that existed between the southern Caddoans and the Osages, the latter tribe in turn being on hostile terms with the Pawnees (see Figure 1-1). Despite their more northerly position, the Pawnees seem to have acquired the horse before the Osages. In all likelihood the horse was transmitted to them through the remnant of the Jumano tribe which joined the Pawnees when forced from their homeland by the Apaches. The horse had barely reached the northern Pawnees by the decade 1710-20, for they were still poorly mounted when visited

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[28] La Salle, The Journeys of Réné Cavelier sieur de La Salle, ed. by I. J. Cox, op. cit., p. 117.

[29] I. J. Cox, ed., ibid., pp. 46 - 50.

by Bourgmont on the Platte River in 1714[30] and by Du Tisné in the Arkansas River country in 1719.[31] At that time the northern Pawnees were on friendly terms with the Gataka and Kiowa Apaches, who were willing to exchange horses for firearms and other European goods obtained from the French.[32] Hostility between the Pawnees and Mandans hindered further advance along the Missouri River until after the time of La Vérendrye.[33]

On the basis of the available evidence, it would appear that the process of horse diffusion in the Great Plains was directed along two main routes. The most direct route followed a northerly course from the equestrian culture hearth area near Santa Fe to the vicinity of the Black Hills. This was the central plains route controlled by the Apaches. The second route, initially controlled by the Jumanos, moved in an easterly direction towards the Mississippi River. They introduced the horse to the semi-horticulturalist tribes along the west bank of the Mississippi. From this point, the horse spread northward to the Missouri River and hence along the course of that river to the Mandans.

The diffusion of the horse from Santa Fe to the Mandans on the Missouri River required a time span of at least one hundred and

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[30] G. E. Hyde, op. cit., p. 40.

[31] H. Joutel, ed., A Journal of La Salle's Last Voyage (New York, 1962), pp. 38 - 39.

[32] G. E. Hyde, op. cit., p. 40.

[33] La Vérendrye, op. cit., p. 336.

twenty-five years. Numerous factors hindered the diffusion process in the Great Plains. The Apaches controlled the central plains route during most of the 17th century. These tribes were reluctant to trade horses to other than kindred tribes until the early decades of the 18th century. The large population of the Apache tribes and the great expanse of territory they controlled served to retard the rapid advance of the horse frontier. In addition, northward diffusion in the Great Plains was hindered by a general southward migration of the Apache tribes.

The Mississippi-Missouri route in the Great Plains was much less direct but served the purpose of by-passing the Apache barrier. Rapid diffusion by this route during the 1600's was primarily hindered by the hostile relations that existed between the neighboring tribes. By the early 1700's, however, the French traders were providing the northern tribes with European goods for which the tribes to the south were willing to offer horses in exchange. Huge trading fairs attended by members of numerous tribes were witnessed by La Vérendrye's men about 1740 near the Mandan villages on the Missouri.[34] Horses served as a principal item of exchange at these gatherings.

Equestrian Diffusion In The Intermontane Region

The Intermontane Corridor west of the continental divide offered an alternate route by which the Apache barrier could be by-passed. The direction of diffusion was primarily northward by way of

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[34] Loc. cit.

the Colorado, Green and Snake River valleys. Once beyond the regions controlled by the Apaches, the Mountain tribes emerged through the South, Lewis and Hellgate Passes onto the plains of Montana and Wyoming (see Figure 1 - 1).

As previously stated, the Navajos are credited with introducing the horse to the Mountain tribes. The horse passed from the Navajos to their friends, the Utes, who occupied the Green River Valley in Colorado and Utah. As noted earlier, the Navajos were sufficiently well supplied with horses to stage raids as far as Santa Fe by the decade 1650-60. In all probability the Utes had received their first horses by the decade 1640-50.

To the north of the Utes along the Green and Snake River valleys were their kinsmen, the Comanches and Shoshonis. During the latter part of the seventeenth century they occupied much of what is now Idaho, Wyoming, Montana and parts of Utah and Colorado. Some time shortly before 1700, the equestrian Shoshonis emerged from their mountain home to claim the plains region of Montana and Wyoming. At this juncture, the Comanches separated from the Shoshonis and moved southward along the eastern slopes of the mountains.[34]

The migration of the Comanches was a consequence of their quest for horses for they moved directly to the New Mexico and Texas regions. It is uncertain when the first groups arrived but the Cenis tribes in southeastern Texas informed La Salle that they traded their

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[34] When first definitely identified by the whites, they still resembled the Shoshonis in their culture and language to such a degree that the two groups could not be easily distinguished. E. Wallace and A. Hoebel, The Comanches, Lords of the South Plains (Norman, 1950), p. 6.

horses from the Choumans. The Choumans were at that time carrying on an active trade with the Spaniards.[36] Although the Comanches were not positively identified in the Spanish records until 1705, the Choumans referred to by the Cenis were in all probability the vanguard of the southward migrating Comanche tribes. By 1717, the Comanche raids caused the Spanish sufficient concern to send punitive expeditions against them.[37]

The fact that the Comanches must surely have been proficient and experienced horsemen before leaving the safety of their mountain homes strongly suggests that the horse frontier had reached the Shoshoni groups on the upper headwater of the Green River by at least the decade 1675-85. By 1727, the Comanches had driven the Apaches from the Colorado and Kansas plains and were pushing still farther towards the southwest.[38] By the decade 1720-30 the Comanches were passing on to their northern Shoshoni kinsmen, droves of horses and metal weapons gained through warfare and stealing.[39]

According to legend, the Nez Perce traded their first horses from the Shoshonis.[40] Josephy, who has made extensive studies of

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[36] La Salle, The Journeys of René Robert Cavelier Sieur de La Salle, ed. by I. J. Cox, op. cit., p. 117.

[37] E. Wallace and A. E. Hoebel, op. cit., p. 8.

[38] G. E. Hyde, op. cit., pp. 95 - 96.

[39] V. Trenholm, The Shoshonis, Sentinals of the Rockies (Norman, 1964), p. 18.

[40] A. M. Josephy Jr., The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the North-West (New Haven and London, 1965), p. 28.

the Nez Perce Indians, claims that despite the fact the Intermontane tribes were not always on friendly terms, the Nez Perce and other Columbia River tribes met peacefully each year with the Shoshonis and Paiutes on the Snake River near the mouths of the Weiser, Payette and Boise Rivers in southwestern Idaho[41] (see Figure 1 - 1). At these locations, the Nez Perce attended the annual trading fairs where they participated in the intertribal barter and exchange of commodities. It was apparently by this means that the Nez Perce acquired their first horses.

Once they became equestrian, the Nez Perce began to attend a similar trading fair to the north, at a point below Spokane Falls, probably at or near the spot where the trading post, Spokane House, was later established. Here they were introduced to the Flatheads from east of the Bitterroot Mountains. The Flatheads were also equestrian by that time, having seemingly obtained their mounts from the Shoshonis east of the Bitterroots in a manner similar to that of the Nez Perce.[42] On the basis of the contention that the Shoshonis were sufficiently well mounted by the end of the 17th century to venture onto the plains, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Nez Perces and Flatheads had become equestrian by the decade 1690-1700.

It is evident that the rate of diffusion in the Intermontane region was considerably more rapid than in the Great Plains. Movement along the mountain rimmed river valleys was more direct and the

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[41] Ibid., p. 21.

[42] Ibid., p. 27.

diffusion process extended over a much smaller and confined area. In addition, the population of the Mountain tribes was relatively small compared to that of the Plains tribes and they lived on more peaceful terms. A combination of these factors resulted in the diffusion of the horse to the southwestern margin of the Blackfoot territories by about the year 1700. At the same time the horse had scarcely extended north of the Platte River in the Great Plains (see Figure 1 - 1).

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has been presented with a view to establishing the pattern of horse acquisition and diffusion among the Plains and Mountain tribes. The pattern's genesis can be traced to the transfer of horses and equestrian techniques from the Pueblos to the Navajos and Apaches. From that point forward the pedestrian Indians acquired their first horses and instructions in horsemanship from friendly or kindred equestrian tribes or through intertribal trade.

In addition, the discussion has outlined the main diffusion routes. It is evident from an examination of Figure 1 - 1 that the distribution of the horse among the Plains and Mountain tribes proceeded slowly until the decade 1640-50, which marked the mass exodus of the Pueblo Indians to the neighboring tribes. The Pueblo tribes made available supplies of horses as well as the training necessary for the development of an equestrian culture. While the Navajos and possibly small numbers of the neighboring tribes were equestrian

prior to this time, the Pueblo exodus appears to have initiated the diffusion of the horse to the Utes along the Intermontane route, northward in the Great Plains through the Apaches, and eastward to the Mississippi through the Jumanos.

As previously stated, the available documented evidence suggests that the Caddoan tribes became equestrian in a time span of about ten years. In addition, it should be noted that the neighboring tribes of the Pueblo Indians, in particular the Utes and Apaches, were recorded as being equestrian by the early 1650's, or about ten years after the beginning of the Pueblo exodus. By 1655, these tribes were staging mounted raids against the Spanish. In the absence of more concrete evidence, it would appear that equestrian acculturation could be achieved by the aboriginal tribes within a decade. At the very least, there is no historical evidence which conflicts with this assumed period for equestrianization.

In the post 1650 period, the horse was carried northward by way of the Colorado and Green River Valleys by the Utes who introduced it to the Comanches and Shoshonis (see Figure 1 - 1). Since the latter tribes ventured from the safety of their mountain homes by the turn of the century, it is evident that the horse frontier had reached these tribes several years previously. The Shoshonis are credited with transmitting the horse to the Nez Perces and Flatheads by the last decade of the 17th century.

In the Great Plains, the horse was distributed northward among the various Apache tribes and reached the Kiowas and Gatakas

in the vicinity of the Black Hills by 1710-20. The Jumanos carried the horse eastward to the semi-horticulturalist tribes along the west bank of the Mississippi. These tribes were equestrian by the decade 1675-85. The Apache barrier was by-passed by moving northward along the Mississippi to the Missouri and following the course of that river to the Mandans. The horse reached the Mandans in South Dakota by 1735-45.

In the absence of substantial documented evidence, an attempt has been made to provide some perspective on the temporal and spatial characteristics of horse acquisition and diffusion among the Plains and Mountain tribes. As will be demonstrated in the succeeding chapters, such information is most germane and, indeed, necessary in any attempt to elucidate the pattern of horse acquisition and diffusion among the Blackfoot tribes in the Canadian Plains.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLACKFOOT AND NEIGHBORING TRIBES

The Blackfoot tribes, including their allies, the Gros Ventres and the Sarcees, acquired the horse sometime prior to European contact. Since an illiterate people can leave no written records, the extent of our information regarding these tribes during the protohistoric period consists of what may be gathered from the surviving journals and records of the early white explorers and traders, the oral tradition of the natives, and the limited archeological information available for the time. Consequently, this period of the Blackfoot past is somewhat shrouded in uncertainty. As much of the evidence regarding early horse acquisition and diffusion must of necessity be inferential in nature, it is therefore essential to establish, insofar as is possible, the locational characteristics of the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes. Such information is necessary, not only to identify these tribes, but also to elucidate the temporal and spatial aspects of horse acquisition and diffusion among them. In the following discussion an attempt is made to reconstruct the geographical disposition of the various tribes in protohistoric time, as well as the changes in tribal location that occurred up to the demise of the equestrian era.

Tribal Locations In The Canadian Plains And Adjacent Lands At The Time Of Early European Contact

Such archeological evidence that exists seems to indicate that, towards the end of the prehistoric period, the three main

Blackfoot tribes, the Piegans, the Bloods and Siksikas[1], occupied the plains region of southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan.[2] Sometime prior to European contact, however, the westward moving Crees and Assiniboines forced these tribes into the plains region between the valleys of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. By the time of first European contact, all three tribes had shifted west of the present Saskatchewan-Alberta boundary. About the same time, or somewhat earlier, they were joined by a less strongly allied tribe, the Gros Ventres, who had broken away from the Northern Arapahos of the Red River Valley in North Dakota and came to comprise the southeastern frontier tribe of the Blackfoot.[3] The remaining tribe to join the Blackfoot, the Sarcees, moved from the woodland country north of Edmonton into the vicinity of the Beaver Hills, where they were living when first met by Europeans[4] (see Figure 2 - 1).

There is considerable evidence that lends credence to the theory that the westward moving Blackfoot came into conflict with the Shoshonis who, at the time, were living in the area between the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. Peter Fidler, whose accounts of early plains history have proven most reliable, noted while near the Eagle Hills:

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[1] Commonly referred to simply as the Blackfoot, this tribe is correctly known as the Siksikas, and for the remainder of this study, will be referred to by the latter name.

[2] W. M. Hlady, "Indian Migrations in Manitoba and the West", Papers of the Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society, Series III, no. 17, 1960-61, pp. 45-46.

[3] Ibid., p. 49.

[4] Alexander MacKenzie, Voyages from Montreal Through the Continent of North America, ed. by J. H. Garvin (Toronto, 1911), p. 77.

> "...formerly the Snake Indians [Shoshonis] used to inhabit about this hill but since Europeans have penetrated into these parts and supplied surrounding nations with fire arms, these Indians have gradually receded back to the southwest woods --- not one of them within 500 miles."[5]

It is also apparent that, in extending themselves into the plains, the Cree joined the Blackfoot in forcing the Shoshonis towards the southwest. In 1770, William Pink, at a point on the Saskatchewan Plains between the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, recorded the story of a battle between the Snakes [Shoshonis] and the Cree, in which the Shoshonis used guns for the first time.[6] A few years later, Matthew Cocking recorded in his journal while on the Saskatchewan Plains that his Cree companions frequently feared the presence of the Snakes.[7] There seems to be little doubt that Cocking's Snake Indians were indeed the Shoshonis, for he later tells us that:

> "...They [Crees] shew me a Coat of war which they say formerly belonged to the Snake Indians; several folds of leather stitched strongly together in the form of a European Coat, without sleeves, arrow proof."[8]

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[5] Peter Fidler, quoted in J.G. MacGregor, Peter Fidler: Canada's Forgotten Surveyor 1769-1822 (Toronto, 1966), p. 47.

[6] William Pink, A Journal of the most remarkable Transactions and Occurrences of a Journey In Land Commencing 29th June 1769 and Ending 15th June 1770, in York Factory Post Journals, 1768-69, Public Archives of Canada, Hudson's Bay Company B 239/a/63, fol. 21. (Hereafter PAC HBC)

[7] After having just crossed the South Saskatchewan River he noted: "Hunters see several horses up the branch of the other side, they are all in general afraid, supposing them to belong to the Snake Indians with whom they are always at variance." Matthew Cocking, Journal of a Journey Inland with the natives by Matthew Cocking Second at York Fort; commencing Saturday 27th June 1772 and ending Friday 18th June 1773, in York Factory Post Journals, 1772-73, PAC HBC B 239/a/69, fol. 9.

[8] Ibid., fols. 17-18.

The Shoshonis were known to have copied, in such a manner, the armor of the Spaniards. It is also relevant to note that the Cree and Blackfoot joined in battle to fight this common enemy. In the story related to David Thompson by the old Cree called Saukamappee, the Indian claimed that when he was a very young warrior he had gone as an ally of the Piegans and had fought a battle against the Snakes on the Eagle Hills.[9]

The extreme western Canadian Plains and foothills were once the homeland of the Kutenais Indians. However, with the westward advance of the Blackfoot, the Kutenais were forced to seek the protection of the mountains. As late as 1811, abandoned Kutenais lodges were still standing near Rocky Mountain House as evidence of their former residence on the plains.[10] By the time Europeans contacted them in 1792, they occupied the mountain region west of the Crow's Nest Pass.[11]

The area adjacent to the southern border of the Kutenais lands was occupied by the Flatheads and Nez Perces.[12] In contrast

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[9] David Thompson, David Thompson Papers, PAC M236, p. 265.

[10] Alexander Henry, New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, ed. by E. Coues (Minneapolis, 1965), reprinted ed., vol. II, p. 707.

[11] They were met by Peter Fidler, who had wintered with the Piegans in the Porcupine Hills, and had accompanied them on a trading expedition to the mountains. Peter Fidler, Journal of a Journey overland from Buckingham House to Rocky Mountains, 1792 & 3, PAC HBC E3/2, fol. 30.

[12] A.M. Josephy, Jr., The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest (New Haven and London, 1965), p. 31.

to the Kutenais, there is no evidence that these tribes resided on the plains, and not until they became equestrian did they venture beyond their mountain homes on hunting expeditions to the plains. The traditional home of the Flatheads was the Bitterroot Country, while the Nez Perces inhabited the plateaus and river valleys to the west and south of them.[13] As far as documentary evidence allows, these were the tribal locations in the southwestern Canadian Plains and adjacent lands when first approached by Europeans.

European Contact And Identification Of The Blackfoot Tribes

Henry Kelsey, the first European to view the Canadian Plains, may have also been the first whiteman to encounter one of the Blackfoot tribes. In the course of his journey inland from Hudson Bay in 1690-92, Kelsey travelled in the northern Canadian Plains with Assiniboine Indians and, in his wanderings, probably encountered the Gros Ventres. The paucity of geographical details provided by Kelsey's journal precludes positive identification of the route he and his Assiniboine companions followed, but it is likely that they travelled to the southwest as far as the Touchwood Hills in Saskatchewan.[14] It was in this area that he met a strange tribe referred to as the Naywattame Poets. Kelsey required the assistance of an interpreter in order to converse with them. There appeared to be considerable strife between that tribe and the Crees and Assiniboines, probably due to the westward encroachment of the latter tribes. This information supports the

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[13] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[14] Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin, The Kelsey Papers (Ottawa, 1929).

conclusion formulated by Morton, that the strange Indians encountered by Kelsey in the vicinity of the Touchwood Hills were the easternmost of the Blackfoot tribes, the Gros Ventres.[15] In addition, it lends credence to the suggestion of a general westward migration of the Blackfoot tribes.

Not for another half century following Kelsey's 1690-92 journey was there contact between the Blackfoot and Europeans. The first whiteman to definitely reach Blackfoot country was the Hudson's Bay Company employee, Anthony Henday who, in 1754-55, travelled through large areas of prairie parkland in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Whereas there was no evidence of Kelsey's having witnessed or even having heard of horses among the Indians that he encountered, Henday found the tribes to the west of the Crees and Assiniboines to be fully equestrian. It is most unfortunate that the original of Henday's journals have been lost. We have in its place four variant journals, each of which appears to have been an abbreviated and edited version of the original.[16]

In these journals Henday identified the Blackfoot tribes only as the Archithinue nation. Evidence suggests, however, that he met a large camp of Siksikas near the Red Deer River in Alberta and, on his homeward journey in the spring, encountered the same band and possibly smaller camps of Piegans and Bloods near the junction of the

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[15] A. S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (New York, 1939), p. 16.

[16] Anthony Henday Journals, PAC HBC 239/a/40, E 2/4, E 2/6, E 2/11.

North and South Saskatchewan Rivers.[17] From Henday's information the homeland of the Blackfoot, except for the Gros Ventres, seems to have been west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan boundary (see Figure 2-1). However, they also penetrated east of this line to rendezvous with Cree traders along the lower North Saskatchewan River. At these times, the Blackfoot exchanged their winter catches in furs for European goods obtained by the Cree from the Hudson's Bay Company at York Factory. It was this relationship which allowed interterritorial penetration between the Blackfoot, and the Plains Crees and Assiniboines. The relatively peaceful state that existed among these tribes when encountered by Henday was in marked contrast to that of subsquent periods of plains history, and may be attributed to the monopoly trading position of the Crees and Assiniboines at this juncture.

The difficulty in delineating the geographical boundaries of the various tribal lands is further complicated by their nomadic life styles. The problem is perhaps best summarized in the Chesterfield House Report on District in 1822 which states,

> "...As I have already observed that the Slave Indians [Blackfoot] are through necessity obliged to follow the movements of the Buffaloe, it will therefore be

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[17] In one version of his journal, Henday on two separate occasions referred to the "minthco or bloody Indians", and with regards to another small band he commented on their exceptional hospitality and superior horses. These qualities were distinguishing features of the Piegans much more so than the other Blackfoot tribes. Anthony Henday, A Journal of a journey from York Fort to the Archithinue country in the years 1755 to 1756, by Anthony Henday, being the first of the Company's Servants who went inland to endeavour to promote the fur trade, in Graham's Observations, 1767-69, PAC HBC E 2/4, fols. 77, 108.

> readily conceived that those tribes can have no fixed hunting grounds - there are however certain portions of the country considered by each tribe as their lands which they resort to when circumstances admit."[18]

As evidenced during Henday's journey, the Blackfoot tribes roamed as far as the plains east of the South Saskatchewan River but, during the winter, sought their homelands in western Alberta.

Although subsequently contacted by several other Hudson Bay Company men, it was not until the inland journey made by Matthew Cocking in 1772-73 that the first positive identification of the separate Blackfoot tribes was rendered. Upon meeting the Gros Ventres, Cocking stated that,

> "These natives are called Powestick - Athinnewoch or Waterfall Indians. 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. Mithico Athinnewoch or Blood Indians; Koskiketew Nathussituck, or Blackfoot Indians, Pigonew Athinnewoch or Muddy Water Indians and Sussewuck or Woody Country Indians..."[19]

Although he rendered the first positive identification of the tribes, Cocking offered little in the way of definition of their territory, simply stating that the Blackfoot lived to the "southwest westerly of them [Cree]."[20]

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[18] Chesterfield House Report on District, 1822, PAC HBC B 34/e/1, fol. 201.

[19] Matthew Cocking, op. cit., fol. 19.

[20] Matthew Cocking, "Journal of Matthew Cocking From York Factory to the Blackfeet Country, 1772-73", ed. by L. J. Burpee, Transactions, Royal Society of Canada, Series III, vol. 2, 1908, p. 110.

The Geographical Disposition Of The Blackfoot Tribes To 1870

With the extension of fur trade posts into the heart of the Blackfoot lands by the latter part of the 18th century, the Blackfoot tribes, other than the Gros Ventres, seldom roamed east of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. From that time until the demise of the fur trade in 1870, the general distribution pattern of the tribal territories remained relatively constant. The main exception was a southward advance, particularly on the part of the Piegans and Gros Ventres, as trade commenced with the American companies on the Upper Missouri and as pressure from the westward moving Crees and Assiniboines increased (see Figure 2-2).

In 1789, David Thompson outlined the Blackfoot territories as follows:

> "The Piegans, with the tribes of the Blood, and Blackfeet [Siksika] Indians, --- by right of conquest have their west boundary to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, southward to the north branches of the Missouri, eastward for about three hundred miles from the mountains and northward to the upper part of the (North) Saskatchewan."[21]

A few years later Peter Fidler wintered with the Piegans in the foothills near the present Canadian-U.S. border. When a group of Siksikas parted company with them, he noted that they left for "... their own country about the Red Deer River."[22] In 1808 Alexander Henry described the boundaries of the Blackfoot lands as:

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[21] David Thompson, David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812, ed. by Richard Glover (Toronto, 1962), p. 252.

[22] Peter Fidler, quoted in J.G. MacGregor, op.cit., p. 75.

> "...a line due south from Fort Vermillion to the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and up that stream to the foot of the Rocky Mountains; then goes north along the mountains until it strikes the north Branch of the Saskatchewan and down that stream to Vermillion River."[23]

Henry further observed that the Siksikas occupied the most easterly position, then the Bloods and, next to the Rockies, the Piegans.[24] In particular he noted:

> "The country which the Piegans call their own and which they have been known to inhabit since their first intercourse with the Traders upon the Saskatchewan ---- is along the foot of the Rocky Mountains, The Bow River and even as far as the Banks of the Missouri southward."[25]

About the same time Alexander MacKenzie verified Henry's description of the Blackfoot territories. In addition, he noted that the Sarcees were located at the southern headwaters of the North Saskatchewan and the Gros Ventres occupied the area near the confluence of the north and south branches of that river.[26]

The Edmonton House Report on District in 1815 indicated that, with the exception of the Gros Ventres, there were no significant changes in the Blackfoot territories. It stated that:

> "The Fall Indians [Gros Ventres] live principally on the line of the Bad [Bow] River and the Southern end of it from within one hundred miles of the Rocky Mountains to the conjunction of the Red Deer River with the Bad River."[27]

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[23] Alexander Henry, op. cit., p. 524.

[24] Loc. cit.

[25] Idem., Journey Across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, 1799-1816, vol. I, PAC, p. 1122.

[26] Alexander MacKenzie, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

[27] Edmonton House Report on District, 1815, PAC HBC B 60/e/1, fols. 3-4.

The 1822-23 Report on District from Chesterfield House corroborated earlier descriptions of the territories occupied by the Blackfoot tribes but noted a general migration to the southwest by the Gros Ventres. It stated that,

> "... the Fall Indians [Gros Ventres] in general possess all that extensive country, which lies between the Bow River and the northern Branches of the Missouri."[28]

During the years 1857-59, the Palliser expedition traversed much of the western Canadian Plains region. Palliser contacted the Sarcee at the elbow of the Battle River and two camps of Siksikas on the Red Deer River. The expedition also reported a Siksika wintering place on the Upper Bow River. The Piegans were in their favourite locations near the Porcupine Hills and in the valley of the Lower Bow River. Blood camps were situated on the South Saskatchewan River a short distance from its junction with the Red Deer, and in the vicinity of the Cypress Hills (see Figure 2-3). The expedition failed to contact the Gros Ventres, indicating that these Indians had, by this time, migrated to the northern Montana region.

Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing evidence it would appear that towards the end of the prehistoric period the Blackfoot tribes began to migrate from the plains region of southwestern Manitoba and south-eastern Saskatchewan. They were forced from their original homelands by the westward moving Crees and Assiniboines. The Blackfoot crossed the central Saskatchewan Plains between the north and south branches

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[28] Chesterfield House Report on District, 1823, PAC HBC B 34/e/1, fol. 201.

of the Saskatchewan River. When contacted by Henday in 1754, the Blackfoot tribes, with the exception of the Gros Ventres, claimed the Alberta plains and foothills as their homelands.

From the time of first contact with the Europeans to 1870, the relative geographical disposition of the Blackfoot tribes remained constant. From south to north the region was claimed respectively by the Piegans, Bloods, Siksikas and the Sarcees. The Gros Ventres occupied the lands on their southeastern flank (see Figure 2-2). With the exception of a general southward shift of these tribes by the 1850's, and the migration of the Gros Ventres to the Montana Plains, the areas claimed as their homelands remained virtually unchanged from the time of first European contact until the demise of the fur trade in 1870.

CHAPTER 3

THE BLACKFOOT EQUESTRIAN CULTURE AT FIRST EUROPEAN CONTACT

The Blackfoot, like most of the Plains tribes, were equestrian when first definitely contacted by a European in 1754. As was previously stated, the degree of sophistication attained in the development of an equestrian culture can provide important clues to the problem of dating the advance of the horse frontier. An attempt will be made in this chapter to determine the level of equestrian cultural development evident among the Blackfoot tribes at the time of first European contact. Such salient information will subsequently be brought to bear on the problem of determining the date of horse acquisition by the various Blackfoot tribes.

First Sighting Of Horses In The Canadian Plains By Europeans

The first two inland journeys from Hudson's Bay into the Canadian Plains were separated by a time span of over sixty years. As previously stated, it is believed that during Kelsey's inland journey in 1692, he and his Assiniboine companions travelled to the southwest as far as the Touchwood Hills in Saskatchewan. Evidence suggests that during the course of their travels, they encountered the Gros Ventres, the easternmost of the Blackfoot tribes. However, according to Kelsey's journal, the tribes that he contacted were pedestrian and there is no evidence to suggest that they had any knowledge of the horse or that it had reached any of the Canadian Plains tribes by 1692. When Henday journeyed inland in 1754, he found

that the Blackfoot tribes were equestrian and that the horse had reached the westernmost Crees and Assiniboines. It is evident, then, that the horse frontier had advanced into the western Canadian Plains during the interval 1692-1754.

Rumors concerning the presence of equestrian tribes in the Canadian Plains had probably reached the Hudson Bay post at York Factory through the Cree and Assiniboine traders. It is apparent from Henday's journal that he anticipated meeting equestrian Indians. While on the plains some fifty miles east of present day Saskatoon, he noted:

> "... we are now entered Muscuty plains, and shall soon see plenty of Buffalo, and the Archithinue [Blackfoot] Indians hunting them on horseback."[1] (see Figure 3-1).

Henday was not disappointed, for a few days later, on August 16, he recorded:

> "took my departure from Buffalow plain -- see 2 Buffalow, and 2 wild horses."[2]

This sighting by Henday was the first observation of horses by a European in the Canadian Plains. Although Henday took the horses

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[1] Anthony Henday, A Journal of a journey from York Factory to the Archithinue country in the year 1755 to 1756, by Anthony Henday, being the first of the Company's Servants who went inland to endeavour to promote the fur trade, in Graham's Observations, 1767-69, PAC HBC E 2/4, fol. 72.

[2] Idem., A Journal of a Journey inland from York Fort up Hay's River by Anthony Henday from June 26th 1754 to June 23rd 1755, in Graham's Observations, 1767-69, PAC HBC E 2/6, fol. 15.

to be wild, it is more probable that they were strays from a Blackfoot camp. If such were the case, it would seem to indicate the presence of large numbers of horses, or they would surely have been guarded with greater care. In historic time, the Indians rarely allowed their horses to stray far from camp unattended or without hobbles when they were in short supply. Moreover, that the horses probably belonged to a Blackfoot band is suggested by the fact that they had very recently camped in the vicinity. Near the Eagle Hills, a favorite hunting ground of the plains tribes, but generally acknowledged as the territory of the Eagle Hills Assiniboine, Henday noted that his guide had gone ahead to seek the Blackfoot, for they had passed two of their recently abandoned camps.[3]

Henday Contacts The Blackfoot

In an effort to contact the Blackfoot, Henday and his party followed the trail of the buffalo herds along the banks of the North Saskatchewan until near its junction with the Battle River and made their way along the course of the latter river (see Figure 3-2). By this time Henday had encountered two mounted Blackfoot and some Assiniboine Indians who possessed a few horses.[4] In the plains west of Wainwright, he made his first horse trade.

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[3] Idem., A Journal of a Voyage or Journey in Land from York Fort up Hay's River, By Capt'n Anthony Henday from June the 26th 1754 to June 23rd 1755, in York Factory Post Journals, 1754-55, PAC HBC B 239/a/40, fol. 18.

[4] Ibid., fol. 29.
Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fols. 74, 76, 82.

> "...this day Came 7 tents of Esinepoets, [Assiniboines] they brought another horse, and this day they Catcht another, so that we have now 3 horses..."[5]

In another version of his journal, Henday specifically stated,

> "I bought a horse from them to carry my goods and provisions..."[6]

Henday implies that the natives caught a horse that was running free, and a few days later he stated that he "Saw several Wild Horses..."[7] Whether or not they were actually wild or, as has been previously suggested, they were strays from an Indian camp, these observations strongly suggest that horses were more abundant or more available as Henday's party proceeded westward.

At this point in time, it appears that the Assiniboines had only recently begun to acquire horses, for they were used only by those nearest the Blackfoot. Even these Assiniboines had very few horses. Significantly, Henday observed that among the Assiniboines horses were used only asdraft animals and not for mounts.[8] He further noted that at night the horses were hobbled and grazed about the tents,[9] a procedure practiced by the Plains Indians only with the more valuable of mounts or when, as was undoubtedly the case with the Assiniboines, they possessed very few of them and could ill afford any losses.

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[5] Anthony Henday, op. cit., B 239/a/40, fol. 28.

[6] Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fol. 81.

[7] Loc. cit.

[8] Ibid., fol. 82. Henday again noted this basic difference in horse usage on his return journey near the forks of the Saskatchewan River. "They [Eagle Indians] are a tribe of the Asinepoet Nation [Assiniboines]; and like them use the Horse for carrying the baggage and not to ride on." Ibid., fol. 108.

[9] Ibid., fol. 81.

On October 11, Henday and his party crossed the Red Deer River about thirty miles east of present day Red Deer (see Figures 3-1 and 3-3). They proceeded in a southwesterly direction towards Ghostpine Lake and on October 14, at a point about fifteen miles east of present day Penhold, they arrived at a large Blackfoot camp of about 220 tents. Although positive identification of the tribe cannot be conclusively established, the evidence most strongly suggests that Henday had arrived at a Siksika encampment. They could scarcely have been the Sarcees, for estimates never placed their entire tribe at more than 100 tents. Had they been the Bloods, Henday would surely have identified them as such, for on two other occasions he made references to the "minthco or bloody Indians",[10] which could have been none other than the Bloods of the Blackfoot tribes. At no time does Henday make reference to, or identify, the Piegans by name, but as was established in the previous section, their homeland was much farther south in the vicinity of the Bow River. Furthermore, when the tribe departed from Henday's company just east of Red Deer, Alberta, they moved in a westerly direction toward their winter camping grounds. Later, when Henday himself was northwest of Red Deer, he noted the Blackfoot smoke a day's distance to the northwest. This would have placed them near the Upper North Saskatchewan River, a short distance southwest of Edmonton, or in an area which was later recognized as the traditional winter camping grounds of the Siksikas. On the basis of their geographical location and the size of the encampment, one can only conclude that the equestrian camp encountered by Henday was that of the Siksika Indians.

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[10] Ibid., fols. 77, 108.

Equestrianism Among The Blackfoot Tribes
At The Time Of Henday

From Henday's advance meetings with groups of Siksikas at various points from 25 to 30 miles west of Sedgewick, Alberta, to the large camp near Ghostpine Lake, and from his observations made at that camp, it is evident that the Siksikas were better supplied with horses at that time than at many subsequent times during the horse era. On at least four occasions prior to reaching their camp, Henday met small groups of Siksikas, all of whom were mounted.[11] During his visit at the camp, not only were all the warriors well mounted, but they possessed sufficient numbers to enable them to relegate the horses of lesser quality to the duties of draft animals. Chief Factor Isham wrote concerning information related to him by Henday:

> "...these horses are of great Service to them in Carrying or hawling of goods, and for although they have no Carts, yet have a contrivance which answers the same Effect, which is Sleds, having a pole fixed on Each side, the head of the Sled which hangs by a back band on Each side the horse/the same as Shafts to a cart by which they Hawl good Loads."[12]

Henday was amazed at the expertise of the Blackfoot horsemen and at the quality of their mounts. At the Siksika camp near the Red Deer, he described the horses as "...fine tractible animals, about 14 hands high; lively and clean made..."[13] Later, on the banks of the lower North Saskatchewan, he observed: "The Archithinue Natives were well mounted on good Horses."[14] A few days later, on the same

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[11] Ibid., fols. 76, 82, 83, 85.

[12] Anthony Henday, op. cit., B 239/a/40, fols. 73, 74.

[13] Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fol. 86.

[14] Ibid., fol. 107.

river he met a band of about 30 tents and stated: "They have the finest Horses I have yet seen here, and are very kind people."[15] One would suspect that this latter band might well have been the Piegans, who were subsequently noted for their kind hospitality and friendliness towards the whiteman and for their superior quality horses.

We do not know the extent of Henday's equestrian experience but certainly he seems to have admired and envied the qualities of horsemanship displayed by the Blackfoot men. While visiting the Siksikas, he had an opportunity to hunt buffalo with them. He recorded in his journal:

> "I rid a hunting with 20 of his young men, they killed 8 buffaloe, fine sport, the horses are trained to the game. They are so expert that with one or two arrows they will drop a buffaloe. As for me I had sufficient employ to manage my horse..."[16]

Only a small percentage of horses ever became good buffalo runners such as Henday was describing. As a consequence, such animals were extremely difficult to obtain and were among the Indians' most cherished possessions. They would not trade or sell one, even at an exorbitant price. In addition to hunting buffalo, Henday's Blackfoot used their horses to ride down moose and waskesews [elks].[17] In May, when the Saskatchewan River was flooded and swift, the Blackfoot did not hesitate to swim their horses across it to the side where Henday was camped, which prompted him to refer to them as "brave Natives".[18]

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[15] Ibid., fol. 108.

[16] Ibid., fol. 89.

[17] Anthony Henday, op. cit., B 239/a/40, fols. 73, 74.

[18] Ibid., fol. 66; and Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fol. 107.

Certainly such a feat could be performed by only the most accomplished of horsemen. The Blackfoot had by Henday's time learned to fashion their own horse gear: Halters made from hair and saddles and stirrups from buffalo hides.[19] It should be observed that their equipment, as described by Henday, remained essentially the same throughout the remainder of the horse era.

Conclusion

It is clear from Henday's observations that the horse had become the indispensible companion of the Siksikas and that these Indians had by this time developed an equestrian culture as sophisticated as any to emerge among the Indians of the North American Great Plains.[20] It is also apparent that with an equestrian culture flourishing among the Siksikas at this time, the horse frontier had reached the northwestern limits of the grasslands of the continental interior by at least the middle of the 18th century. By Henday's time, moreover, there is conclusive evidence to indicate that the horse frontier, having reached its northwesterly extremity in the grasslands environment, had already begun to move in an easterly direction across the Canadian Plains. Although neither the Cree nor the Assiniboine had developed an equestrian culture by this time, at least in the sense that they were adept at riding horses, Henday's information indicates that horses were for the

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[19] Ibid., E 2/4, fols. 86, 87.

[20] That the horse had become an integral element in the Blackfoot way of life is suggested by one of the reasons cited by the Siksika chief in refusing Henday's invitation to make the journey to York Factory. He stated that they could not possibly leave their horses. ibid., fol. 86.

first time coming into use among the westernmost of these two nations. Horses, however, had not by this time reached the Crees and Assiniboines of eastern Saskatchewan and Manitoba.[21]

It is on the basis of this information that new light can be shed on the process of horse acquisition and diffusion among the Blackfoot tribes in the Western Canadian Plains.

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[21] This fact is evident not only in Henday's journals, but also those of William Pink and Matthew Cocking.

CHAPTER 4

THE BLACKFOOT ACQUIRE THE HORSE

Review Of Previous Research On Initial Acquisition of Horses

Speculation by other scholars as to when the horse frontier reached the Blackfoot range from the year 1600 to about the year 1800. C. Wissler, one of the first to concern himself with the problem, speculated that the Blackfoot may have been equestrian by the beginning of the 17th century.[1] However, Wissler did not have the opportunity to study data and material that became available to later researchers. His estimate was based on the assumption that the Plains tribes may have acquired horses lost or abandoned by the early Spanish exploring expeditions in the 1540's. Although Wissler admitted that such an estimate was sheer speculation, it came to be accepted by other scholars, and especially W. P. Webb in his monumental study of the Great Plains.[2] It is now obvious that the year 1600 predates horse acquisition by the Blackfoot by a wide margin. As was previously demonstrated, the diffusion of the horse to the Navajos did not begin until the decade 1605-15.

In the opposite extreme, Grinnell suggested that the Blackfoot acquired their first horses "about the year 1800."[3] It is now

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[1] C. Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture", American Anthropologist, vol. 16, 1914, p. 10.

[2] W. P. Webb, The Great Plains (New York, 1931), pp. 56-57.

[3] G. B. Grinnell, "Horses", in Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, ed. by F. W. Hodge (Washington, 1912), I, 569-71.

evident from Henday's journal that the Blackfoot were fully equestrian by 1754-55. More recent estimates have been made by Burpee, Roe, Haines and Ewers following the publication of the Henday and Thompson Journals. On the basis of information derived from one version of the Henday Journals, Burpee suggests the "earliest years of the 18th century" as the probable date of first horse usage by the Blackfoot.[4] After an extensive review of available published material pertaining to the problem, Roe concurs closely with Burpee in stating that he believed the horse to have reached the Blackfoot "after about 1700."[5]

Considerable information on the acquisition and diffusion of the horse among the Plains Indians has been brought to light by Haines. On the basis of the Saukamappee story recorded in David Thompson's Narrative,[6] Haines favors the years 1732-1737 as the period during which the horse reached the Piegans.[7] Worcester also accepts as accurate the temporal details of the Saukamappee story, yet proceeds to suggest that the Blackfoot probably acquired their horses about the same time as the Sioux, a tribe which presumably became equestrian about the same time

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[4] L. J. Burpee, ed., "Journal of a Journey by Anthony Henday; to Explore the Country Inland, and to Endeavour to Increase the Hudson's Bay Company's Trade, A.D., 1754-1755", Transactions, Royal Society of Canada (Toronto, 1907), Series 3, vol. I, Section 2, p. 318.

[5] F. G. Roe, The Indian and the Horse (Norman, 1955), p. 101.

[6] David Thompson, David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America 1784-1812, ed. by J. B. Tyrrell (Toronto, 1916), pp. 328-332.

[7] F. G. Haines, "The Northward Spread of Horses Among the Plains Indians", American Anthropologist, vol. 40, 1938, p. 435.

as the Mandans.[8] However, it is quite apparent from the La Vérendrye Journals that the horse did not reach the Mandans until the early 1740's,[9] and from Henday's account, it is obvious that the Blackfoot were equestrian before that time.

Ewers, the most noted authority on the equestrian Blackfoot Indians, dates the acquisition of horses by these tribes "at about the same time these animals reached the Mandan villages on the Missouri or shortly thereafter."[10] Ewers offers no additional evidence to support his contention other than that derived from the Saukamappee story and the version of Henday's journal published by Burpee. In view of the highly sophisticated equestrian culture evident among the Siksikas in 1754, it is difficult to accept such a late dating for the advance of the horse frontier to the Blackfoot tribes.

The Saukamappee Account

Several scholars have cited the Saukamappee story recorded in the Thompson Narrative as evidence in suggesting the possible date of horse acquisition by the Blackfoot. In his narrative, Thompson recorded a story related to him by an old Cree Indian in 1787.[11]

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8 D. E. Worcester, "Spanish Horses Among the Plains Indians", Pacific Historical Review, vol. 14, 1945, p. 410.

9 La Vérendrye, Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de La Vérendrye and his sons, ed. by L.J. Burpee (Toronto, 1927), XVI, p. 335-7.

10 J. C. Ewers, "The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, With Comparative Material From Other Western Tribes", Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 159, 1955, p. 18.

11 David Thompson, The David Thompson Papers, PAC M236, pp. 264-271.

Although Saukamappee was a Cree, most of his life was spent with the Piegans. When he was a lad of about 16 years of age, the Piegans sent messengers to the Crees to ask for aid in their warring with the Snakes [Shoshonis]. Saukamappee and his father were among the Cree warriors who joined the Piegans in battle against the Shoshonis. This was a mass infantry battle in which the opposing lines of warriors exchanged arrows from a respectable distance. The battle ended with few casualties and Saukamappee returned to his people, grew to be a young man and married, probably at about the age of 20-25 years.

During the interval between his return from the Piegans and his marriage, Saukamappee heard of horses for the first time. The Shoshonis had used them in battle against the Piegans and had caused heavy losses among the Piegan warriors. Shortly after he was married, Saukamappee again joined the Piegans in battle against the Shoshonis. On that occasion the enemy did not use horses, and the victory by the Crees and Piegans was attributed to the use of firearms by several Crees. A short time after this battle, Saukamappee sighted a horse for the first time. It was a Shoshoni mount killed by an arrow. Saukamappee returned to his people once again, only to find that his wife had deserted him and had gone to live with another man. Shortly thereafter, Saukamappee returned to the Piegans and became a member of that tribe.

There is little reason to doubt the veracity of the historical and cultural details of Saukamappee's account. However, Thompson failed to transcribe the details of his narrative until some sixty years after his conversations with Saukamappee.[12] There are numerous inaccuracies

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[12] J. B. Tyrrell, ed., David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America 1784-1812 (Toronto, 1916), p. XV.

in the dating of historical events throughout Thompson's narrative which testify to his failing memory. If the Saukamappee story is cited as evidence in establishing the date of horse acquisition by the Blackfoot, the calculation of his age is of critical importance. It should be pointed out at this juncture that Thompson supplies variant estimates of Saukamappee's age in two different sections of his papers.[13]

Among scholars of the Blackfoot, Thompson's first estimate has either been ignored or gone undetected. What would seem to have been Thompson's original estimate appears in a portion of his manuscript notes that was unavailable to Tyrrell when he edited Thompson's Narrative in 1916.[14] However, these pages have subsequently been added to the original manuscript and are included in Glover's edition of Thompson's journals published in 1962.[15] According to this portion of Thompson's journals, he determined Saukamappee's age by comparing events of the fur trade related to him by the old man with those recorded by contemporary French writers. On that basis, he reckoned that Saukamappee was at least 90 years of age and that his memory extended back to about the year 1700.

If this estimate is accepted as correct, Saukamappee was born about 1697, and he participated in the first battle against the Shoshonis in 1713. Cree men usually married when 20-25 years of age. Since Saukamappee fought in the last great infantry battle with the Shoshonis

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[13] David Thompson, op. cit., pp. 27S, 264.

[14] J. B. Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 53.

[15] R. Glover, ed., David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812 (Toronto, 1962), p. 49.

shortly after his marriage, that event occurred between the years 1717-1722. It was about this time that Saukamappee sighted the dead Shoshoni horse.

In a later section of his narrative, or the one that has attracted scholarly attention, Thompson suggested that Saukamappee was 75 to 80 years old and that his account extended back to about 1730. In this instance, Thompson does not indicate the manner in which he ascertained the Indian's age. If this estimate were accepted, Saukamappee would have been born between the years 1707-1712, and would have fought his first battle against the Shoshonis during the period 1723-1728. The last infantry battle would have been fought sometime during the interval 1727-1737 and, in all probability, Saukamappee would not have seen a horse until the third decade of the 18th century.

It was, then, between the time the Piegans and Shoshonis fought their last great infantry battle and the time Henday visited the Blackfoot country that the horse frontier reached the Blackfoot tribes. With the details of the Saukamappee story in mind, it is pertinent at this juncture to re-examine the evidence supplied by all four versions of Henday's journals, as only the journal published by Burpee has been examined in this context by previous scholars.

The Degree Of Equestrian Acculturation Among The Blackfoot At The Time Of Henday, 1754-55

From Henday's information, as well as that supplied by previously examined evidence, it is possible to deduce that the horse had penetrated Alberta in a south to north direction, had reached the

northwestern extremity of the grasslands and had turned in an easterly direction towards the Crees and Assiniboines by the middle of the 18th century. Since the Siksikas, with the exception of the Sarcees, were the most northerly of the Blackfoot tribes, it can only be assumed that they acquired the horse after the Piegans, Bloods and Gros Ventres. By Henday's time the Siksikas owned a substantial number of horses and appear to have reached the peak of equestrian proficiency. The implications are that horses had been among the Siksikas for at least two decades prior to Henday's visit.

This implication is supported by the fact that they possessed a significant number of highly prized buffalo runners. Although Henday failed to provide an estimate of their numbers, his observations indicate that there was no scarcity of them in the Siksika camp. This is manifest in the fact that they were owned by the young men of the tribe. As was evidenced in later historic periods, it was unusual for the younger men to own superior horses such as buffalo runners since they lacked the wealth, experience and social status of the older men. In addition, the chase, as opposed to the surround, was the buffalo hunting technique practiced by the Siksika hunters. The first hunting method employed by the equestrian tribes, other than use of the jump or pound, was the surround. When using this technique, the natives encircled a herd of buffalo and, while racing their mounts around the periphery of the milling herd, shot at the animals until they broke away.[16] This technique has been interpreted as an equestrian version of the surround on foot that characterized the pedestrian plains occupance. As the hunters

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[16] J. C. Ewers, op. cit., p. 154.

became more skillful and experienced horsemen and acquired superior quality mounts, they employed the method called the chase, whereby the hunters raced their mounts among the stampeding buffalo and shot their choice of animals from close range.[17] This method was considerably more dangerous and required much greater skill and experience on the part of both the hunter and his horse. The chase was obviously the method used by Henday and his Siksika companions. At that time he marvelled at the equestrian skills displayed by the natives and noted that their horses were "...trained to the game."[18]

It is also apparent from Henday's observations that the Siksikas had possessed horses for a sufficient length of time to have significantly affected other aspects of their culture. According to Lewis, when the pedestrian Blackfoot were dependent on dogs to serve as beasts of burden, the maximum load that could be transported by dog travois was between 40 to 50 pounds. In view of the fact that a buffalo hide weighed over 50 pounds and six to eight was the average number of dogs owned per lodge, the maximum number of hides used to cover a lodge was about six to eight. This obviously represented the limit of the Indians' capacity to transport them. A lodge of this size could only accommodate about six to eight persons.[19] However, Henday noted that the lodge of the Siksika Chief was large enough to

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[17] Ibid., p. 155.

[18] Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fol. 89.

[19] O. Lewis, "The Effect of White Contact Upon Blackfoot Culture", in Monographs of the American Ethnological Society (New York, 1942), p. 35.

contain 50 persons.[20] The only means by which the natives could transport the number of hides necessary to construct a lodge of this size was by packhorse. Thus, it is apparent from the change in this aspect of the Blackfoot culture that they had utilized the horse as a draft animal for a considerable length of time.

Dating Initial Horse Acquisition By The Blackfoot Tribes

In view of the level of sophistication attained by the Siksikas in the development of their equestrian culture, one must conclude that they had possessed the horse for at least 20 to 25 years before Henday's visit.[21] This would mean that the horse frontier must have reached the Siksikas between the years 1730-35. It is also apparent that the Siksikas acquired their first horses and instructions in equestrian techniques from the Bloods and Piegans. In the case of such strongly allied tribes, the constant intercourse and close contact would greatly accelerate the rate of diffusion. It seems reasonable to conclude that the time span necessary for the horse to advance from one Blackfoot tribe to another was about 5 years.[22] On the basis of this

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[20] Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fol. 86.

[21] It has been previously suggested that a tribe could, within a decade, achieve a reasonable degree of equestrian proficiency, at least to the extent of maintaining and riding horses. However, it is obvious that a much longer span of time was required to attain the degree of sophistication evident among the Siksikas. It is also noteworthy that at the time of Henday's visit in 1754, the horse had only recently advanced to the westernmost Assiniboines. Although the Cree and Assiniboines lacked the favorable environment of the Blackfoot, the degree of equestrian proficiency attained by those tribes over the next twenty years was incomparable to that exhibited by the Blackfoot in 1754.

[22] It is apparent that similar conditions account for the accelerated rate of horse diffusion among the Apache tribes in the Great Plains, compared to the rate of diffusion among the unrelated tribes along the Mississippi-Missouri route (see Figure 1-1).

hypothesis, it is suggested that the horse frontier reached the Bloods during the interval 1725-30 and the Piegans between the years 1720-25.

If one assumes Thompson's estimate of 75 to 80 years to have been Saukamappee's correct age, then according to Saukamappee's account the horse could not have reached the Piegans until the late 1730's and probably not until the early 1740's. On the basis of the evidence presented, it is difficult to accept the possibility that between that time and 1754, the horse could have been distributed to the tribes of the Bloods, Gros Ventres and Siksikas and, in addition, allowed sufficient time for the latter tribe to have developed such a highly sophisticated equestrian culture.

Thompson's first estimate, then, which placed Saukamappee's age at about 90 years, appears to be a more accurate calculation. Thompson arrived at this estimate by comparing details of the fur trade obtained from Saukamappee with those recorded by contemporary French writers. However, the fact that Thompson estimated the Indian to be "near ninety years of age, or more",[23] indicates that he was unable to precisely establish Saukamappee's date of birth and there is further evidence in Saukamappee's testimony which implies that the suggestion of 90 years was a conservative estimate.

On the basis of the assumption that Saukamappee was in the vicinity of 90 years of age, it is apparent that the Shoshonis were not equestrian during the last great infantry battle fought sometime between 1717-22. As has been previously discussed, however, the Shoshonis and

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[23] David Thompson, op. cit., p. 275.

Comanches were well mounted when they emerged onto the Wyoming and Montana Plains about 1700. It is most surprising, then, that 20 years or so later, they failed to use horses in the battle against the Piegans. It is evident from Saukamappee's account that the Shoshonis had been mounted in previous battles in which instances the Piegans had lost some of their best warriors. Such information tends to favor an earlier dating for these events than is indicated by Thompson's estimate. In any event, the fact that this was the last infantry battle between the two tribes strongly suggests that horses came into general use shortly thereafter. Although the circumstantial evidence favors a slightly earlier dating, we can conclude on the basis of the above premise that the horse reached the Piegans sometime during or shortly after the period 1717-22. In that event, the foregoing evidence corroborates the contention that the Piegans were equestrian by the period 1720-25.

This dating allows a time span of 30 to 35 years for the horse frontier to have advanced from the plains adjacent to the foothills in Montana to the northern limits of the Alberta Plains. In addition, by the time of Henday's visit in 1754-55, it had progressed in an easterly direction in the Canadian Plains to the westernmost Assiniboines and Crees. During that time the horse culture had permeated the tribes of the Piegans, Bloods, Siksikas, Gros Ventres and, in all probability, the Sarcees as well. The time span was of sufficient duration to allow the Siksikas to develop an equestrian culture as sophisticated as any to emerge on the plains. In view of this evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that the horse frontier

reached the Piegans, the southernmost of the Blackfoot tribes, during the interval 1720-25. The Bloods and possibly the Gros Ventres were equestrian by 1725-30, the Siksikas by 1730-35, and the Sarcees by 1735-40.

Review of Theories On The Source And Method Of Horse Acquisition

The source of Blackfoot horses and the method by which they acquired their first mounts have presented as great a problem to scholars as has the matter of establishing the date for the advance of the horse frontier to those tribes. Most, however, maintain that the Blackfoot obtained their first horses by stealing them from the Shoshonis.

Haines cites the Saukamappee account in Thompson's Narrative to substantiate his view that the Piegans acquired their first horses from the Shoshonis.[24] However, careful examination of Thompson's journals reveals that the instance referred to by Saukamappee occurred in 1781, when the Piegans stole the unattended horses from a Shoshoni camp which had been stricken by smallpox. The Saukamappee account, therefore, does not support the contention that the Blackfoot obtained their first horses from the Shoshonis or that horses were first obtained by the Blackfoot through theft.

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[24] F. Haines, Horses in America (New York, 1971), p. 54 and idem., "The Northward Spread of Horses Among the Plains Indians", American Anthropologist, 40, (1938), p. 435.

Worcester,[25] Denhardt,[26] Lewis,[27] and Tyrrell[28] have arrived at conclusions similar to those expressed by Haines, citing as evidence the Saukamappee account and the relative geographical position of the two tribes. Ewers[29] and Roe,[30] however, have rejected this contention and have expressed the view that Indians without some transmitted acquaintance with the elements of equestrian management could scarcely have acquired their first mounts through theft. Ewers, in particular, discounts the Shoshonis as the initial source of Blackfoot horses in view of the longstanding conflict between the two tribes and the unlikely transmittal of equestrian traits.

The remaining thesis is that the Blackfoot acquired their initial horses and equestrian instructions through contact with friendly tribes or through trade relations. Ewers suggests possible diffusion of horses and equestrian traits to the Piegans from the Kutenais, Flatheads or perhaps the Nez Perces or even the Gros Ventres.[31]

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[25] D. E. Worcester, op. cit., p. 410.

[26] R. M. Denhardt, The Horse in the Americas (Norman, 1948), p. 86.

[27] O. Lewis, op. cit., p. 39.

[28] J. B. Tyrrell, ed., op. cit., p. 334.

[29] J. C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwestern Plains (Norman, 1958), p. 23.

[30] F. G. Roe, op. cit., p. 134.

[31] J. C. Ewers, "The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture", op. cit., p. 19, and The Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwestern Plains, op. cit., p. 23.

He writes, however, that "It is much more likely that their Blackfoot first mounts were obtained in peaceful trade with one of the other tribes to the west who possessed horses before the Blackfeet had any - the Flatheads, the Kutenais, or even the Nez Perces."[32] Roe fails to suggest the possible sources of initial Blackfoot mounts.

Source And Method Of Initial Horse Acquisition By The Blackfoot

Since the horse reached the Blackfoot from the south, and since the Blackfoot were equestrian before the horse frontier had progressed along the plains route as far as the Mandan villages, it must obviously have reached them by way of the Intermontane route. The medium through which the horse frontier reached the Blackfoot, in consequence, could only have been one of the Mountain tribes to the south and southwest of them.

The fact that the Piegans sighted their first horses among the Shoshonis, and that the hunting grounds of the Shoshonis and Blackfoot shared a common frontier, does not bear sufficient weight to conclude that the Shoshonis supplied the first mounts to the Piegans. Their geographical proximity was not necessarily an important factor in the initial stages of horse diffusion, especially in view of the inveterate enmity that existed between the Shoshonis and the Blackfoot. Proponents of the Shoshoni source have failed to recognize that

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[32] Idem., The Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwestern Plains, op. cit., p. 23.

initiation to instructions in horsemanship and horse management was a necessary prerequisite to the development of an equestrian culture among the aboriginal tribes. Moreover, the very close affinity of major features of the Blackfoot equestrian culture to those of the neighboring Plains and Mountain tribes, as well as the speed with which it evolved, convincingly suggests that the Blackfoot, like their American counterparts, cannot be credited with an independently developed equestrian culture.

In their conflict with the pedestrian Blackfoot, the equestrian Shoshonis held a decided military advantage. It is extremely doubtful that they would have relinquished that advantage without receiving some equally valuable item in return. The only item which might conceivably have induced the Shoshonis to offer the Blackfoot horses and the necessary instructions for the development of an equestrain culture, was the European gun. In regions where the horse and gun frontiers were approaching the same area, a good horse and a gun were considered of equal value.[33] However, the exchange of guns for horses could scarcely have occurred between the Shoshonis and Blackfoot at the early juncture. On the basis of information supplied by Henday in 1755, the York Factory Journal recorded that the equestrian enemies of the Blackfoot had no guns, while the Blackfoot had very few.[34] The scarcity of firearms among the Blackfoot tribes even

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[33] Alexander Henry, New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, ed. by E. Coues (Minneapolis, 1965), reprinted ed., vol. II, p. 513 and Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fols. 80, 81.

[34] York Factory Journals, 1755, PAC HBC B 239/a/40, fol. 76. See also William Pink. A Journal of the most remarkable Transactions and Occurrences of a Journey In Land Commencing 29th June 1769 and Ending 15th June 1770, in York Factory Post Journals, 1769-70, PAC HBC B 239/a/63, fol. 21.

at this late date, precludes the possibility that they acquired their first mounts from the Shoshonis through a trade in guns.

As was previously suggested, the horse frontier had probably reached the Flatheads and Nez Perces by at least the decade 1690-1700. It is also apparent that in the exceptionally favorable environment of the mountain valleys, the herds of the mountain tribes, particularly those of the Nez Perces, multiplied prolifically. The strong friendship which developed was manifest in the subsequent intermingling of these two tribes, resulting in the Nez Perces joining the Flatheads in excursions beyond the mountain barrier onto the Montana Plains. The Nez Perces reached the Flathead country by one of four routes,[35] and at any given time about a tenth of the Nez Perce tribe was among the Flatheads.[36] The products from the plains, particularly those acquired from the buffalo, were novel to the Nez Perces and were in great demand. The Nez Perces offered for barter, food staples common to their country, highly prized bows of horn and wood, and most important of all, their excess horses.

Their excursions took them onto the Montana Plains beyond the mountains where they encountered not only the Flatheads, but also the Shoshonis and roving bands of Blackfoot. The Nez Perces were eager to obtain dressed buffalo robes, rawhide skins, lodge coverings, beads, feathered bonnets and stone pipes offered to them by these tribes.

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[35] A. M. Josephy, Jr., The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest (New Haven, 1965), pp. 29-30.

[36] F. Haines, Horses in America (New York, 1971), pp. 77-78.

This trade was noted by two Canadians sent from Acton House to persuade the Kutenais to make trading journeys to that post.[37] They related to Peter Fidler that a well established trade had existed for some time between the Blackfoot and the Kutenais, Flatheads and Nez Perces, by which means the Blackfoot acquired horses. They also occasionally raided those tribes for the same purpose. During that period of friendly trading, the Kutenais lived, or at least hunted considerably, in the area east of the Rockies.[38] The existence of a trade relationship between the Blackfoot and the friendly Mountain tribes is corroborated by Fidler.[39] In 1792, he observed what appeared to have been a trade of long standing duration between the Piegans and the Kutenais. The Kutenais supplied the Piegans with excellent horses in exchange for European goods.

The Blackfoot seem to have traded peacefully with the Mountain tribes until theft replaced trade as the principal means by which the Blackfoot tribes fulfilled their demands for horses. About the same time the Blackfoot began acquiring firearms from the Cree and Assiniboine traders. Once the Blackfoot obtained both the gun and the horse, they held a decided military advantage over the Shoshonis and the other Mountain tribes. Although the latter retreated to their mountain homes, from that point forward they suffered from incessant Blackfoot raids for horses. Although one cannot always

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[37] Peter Fidler, Journal of a Journey overland from Buckingham House to Rocky Mountains, 1792 & 3, PAC HBC E 3/2, fol. 36.

[38] A. M. Josephy, Jr., op. cit., p. 31.

[39] Peter Fidler, op. cit., fol. 30.

accept the historical authenticity of Indian legends, one Blackfoot tradition contends that they acquired their first horses from the Indians west of the Rockies in what is now Montana.[40]

Conclusion

In summary, the information gleaned from the various journals and records, as well as the circumstantial evidence presented here, strongly supports the thesis that the horse reached the southernmost Piegans during the period 1720-25. Throughout the following 15 to 20 years the horse frontier advanced to the Bloods, Gros Ventres, Siksikas and Sarcees, extending itself in the process to the northern limits of the Alberta Plains. By the time of Henday's visit in 1754-55, the horse was moving in an easterly direction in the Canadian Plains and had reached the westernmost Crees and Assiniboines.

There is also ample evidence to conclude that the Piegans acquired their first horses and instructions in horsemanship through intertribal trade with the Nez Perces and possibly the Flatheads. This trade was later expanded to include the Kutenais and other Mountain tribes. Although the Blackfoot eventually drove the Mountain tribes from the plains, this intertribal trade was maintained at least until the beginning of the 19th century. By this time, however, theft had replaced trade as the primary means of horse acquisition by the Blackfoot tribes.

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[40] J. C. Ewers, Indian Life on the Upper Missouri (Norman, 1968), pp. 12-13.

CHAPTER 5

NUMBERS, DISTRIBUTION AND CIRCULATION PATTERNS OF HORSES IN THE BLACKFOOT COUNTRY

The foregoing discussion has been presented with a view to establishing the date, source and method of horse acquisition by the Blackfoot tribes. These factors, in combination with other circumstances, were operative in determining the relative tribal wealth in horses. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to ascertain the relative numbers of horses possessed by the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes and to elucidate the patterns of horse distribution and circulation among them. It will, in addition, endeavor to identify the principal factors influencing the numbers and distribution of horses in the areas occupied by these tribes.

Relative Numbers And Distribution Of Horses Among The Blackfoot And Neighboring Tribes

The available estimates regarding the numbers of horses possessed by the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes are crude calculations at best. Although the few existing estimates supplied by contemporaneous European and American traders and explorers are generally reliable, the nomadic nature of the natives and the periodic fluctuations in horse numbers precluded the possibility of any observer arriving at more precise figures. However, on the basis of the available data and relevant circumstantial evidence, an effort can be made to establish a meaningful horse distribution pattern among these tribes.

The Mountain tribes to the south and southwest of the Blackfoot lands, including the Shoshonis, Kutenais, Crows, Nez Perces and Flatheads, possessed by far the largest numbers of horses of any of the tribes in question. The historical records indicate that, as a consequence of the exceptionally favorable environmental conditions in their homelands, the herds of these Mountain tribes, in particular those of the Flatheads and Nez Perces, multiplied prolifically. Although numerical estimates are generally unavailable, the contemporary traders and explorers left little doubt that these tribes were richly endowed with horses. When Alexander Henry commented on the numbers of horses possessed by the various tribes, he stated that the Flatheads and other Mountain tribes owned "vast herds."[1] The wealth of horses among these tribes was generally acknowledged by the Blackfoot and throughout the equestrian era they served as the principal source of supply for Blackfoot mounts.[2] The fact that the Mountain tribes, especially the Nez Perces and Flatheads, were able to maintain their wealth in horses, despite the heavy losses they suffered to Blackfoot horse thieves, testifies to the immense numbers they owned.

Among the Blackfoot tribes, the Piegans were recognized as possessing the greatest numbers of horses. In 1792, during his visit to the Piegans, Fidler recorded:

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[1] Alexander Henry, New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson, ed. by E. Coues (Minneapolis, 1965), reprinted ed., vol.II, p. 526.

[2] The equestrian era extends from the time of initial horse acquisition to the demise of the fur trade and buffalo herds about 1870.

> "...These Indians [Piegans] we are with have a great number of horses with which they haul their tent poles, Provisions and all their necessities - the children usually ride on sledges (travois)... The men in general ride as it would be debasing themselves to walk."[3]

Despite the fact that Fidler neglected to supply an estimate of the number of horses in the camp, it is evident that the Piegans were well endowed with them.

In 1808, while stationed at Fort Vermillion on the Saskatchewan River, Alexander Henry made the following observation:

> "...several of the Blackfeet [Siksikas] own 40 or 50 Horses. But the Piegans have by far the greatest numbers; I heard of one man only having 300 horses."[4]

In addition, the various post journals rarely noted shortages of horses among the Piegans and they were obviously the most reliable in supplying the trading posts with horses.

The remaining Blackfoot tribes often suffered from extreme shortages of horses, particularly in the post 1800 period. On numerous occasions the post journals recorded that, with the exception of the Piegans, the Blackfoot refused to offer a single horse in trade or that they had lost almost their entire herds. In 1820, the journalist at Chesterfield House noted:

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[3] Peter Fidler, Journal of a Journey overland from Buckingham House to Rocky Mountains, 1792 & 3, PAC HBC E 3/2, fol. 7.

[4] Alexander Henry, Journey Across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, 1799-1816, vol. I, PAC, p. 788.

> "... all the Blackfoot [Siksikas] and Fall Tribes [Gros Ventres] are so miserably off for Horses ... that they are litteraly starving as they have none fit to run Buffalos."[5]

According to the same journal two years later, a large band of Indians comprised principally of Siksikas, Bloods and Gros Ventres, estimated at about 1,200 tents and 6,000 persons, was encamped about the post near the junction of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers. The entire group owned in the neighborhood of 1,000 to 1,200 horses, or scarcely a sufficient number to provide mounts for all the warriors.[6]

In 1827, the Edmonton Post Journal recorded that the Bloods were so devoid of horses that they were obliged to carry their provisions to camp on their shoulders.[7]

The situation among the Gros Ventres was similar to that of the Siksikas until the former tribe migrated to the Montana region.[8] A Gros Ventre informant indicated to Flannery that:

> "When she was a child, that in her grandmother's young days, [which was estimated to have been the early years of the 19th century] the Gros Ventres were so badly off and had so few horses that they used dog transportation almost exclusively, but that

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[5] Chesterfield House Journal, 1820, PAC HBC B 34/a/4, fol. 49.

[6] Chesterfield House Journal, 1822, PAC HBC B 34/a/1, fols. 20,23,34,38.

[7] Edmonton Post Journal, 1827, PAC HBC B 60/a/24, fol. 38.

[8] A large faction of the Gros Ventres fled to American territory after attacking and plundering trading posts on the Saskatchewan River in 1826. They joined their Arapaho kinsmen for several years before eventually returning to the region adjacent to the east flank of the Piegan lands. See R. Flannery, The Gros Ventres of Montana (Washington, 1953), Pt. I, p. 13.

> the situation gradually improved, and by the time our informant was born (ca. 1855) they had many horses, a sign of prosperity."[9]

The migration of the Gros Ventres to the Montana region provided them with easier access to the Mountain tribes as well as to the Crows who were reputed to have owned more horses than any tribe on the Upper Missouri.[10]

Estimates of horse numbers among the Sarcees, the northernmost of the Blackfoot tribes, are not available. However, according to the post journals, they rarely had sufficient numbers of horses to offer in trade and they frequently appeared at the trading post with few or no horses in their possession. Their condition was noted in the Edmonton Post Journal in 1828:

> "This morning the Indians (Circees) [Sarcees] arrived and have not a single horse amongst them."[11]

The Crees and Assiniboines, who occupied the area to the east and northeast of the Blackfoot, experienced continual horse shortages. Fidler noted in 1793 that, "... frequently They [Crees] have none [horses]",[12] and Thompson recorded in his journal about 1800 that, "... the Stone [Assiniboine] Indians are always in want of horses..."[13] Such conditions were characteristic if not ubiquitous among these tribes throughout the equestrian era.

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[9] R. Flannery, op. cit., p. 17.

[10] R. M. Lowie, The Crow Indians (New York, 1956), p. XIV.

[11] Edmonton Post Journal, 1828, op. cit., fol. 46.

[12] Peter Fidler, op. cit., fol. 41.

[13] David Thompson, David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812, ed. by R. Glover (Toronto, 1962), p. 267.

Estimates of relative numbers of horses among the Blackfoot tribes were also supplied by the Americans from the perspective of the Upper Missouri. These estimates largely corroborate those of the British traders located to the north and east of the Blackfoot lands.

In 1830, while in the Montana territory, Lt. James Bradley estimated that the Piegans owned an average of 10 horses per lodge while the Bloods, Siksikas and Gros Ventres averaged only 5 horses per lodge.[14] Bradley based his estimate on information obtained from Alexander Culbertson and other traders who spent many years among the Blackfoot. Culbertson was married to a Blackfoot woman and possessed a thorough knowledge of her people.

In 1856, Blackfoot Agent Hatch suggested that the Piegans and Bloods averaged 10 horses per lodge while the Siksikas had fewer.[15] Figures supplied by Agent Vaughan in 1860 estimated that the Piegans possessed about 8.6 horses per lodge while the Bloods and Siksikas possessed about 8 per lodge.[16] The estimates for the latter tribes, however, may well have been high due to the fact that their principal items of trade were heavy pelts and buffalo hides. In view of the great distances between the Blood and Siksika homelands and the Upper

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[14] J. H. Bradley, in J. C. Ewers, "Were the Blackfoot Rich in Horses?" American Anthropologist, 45, 602-610.

[15] Agent Hatch, U.S. Commission of Indian Affairs, 1856, in J. C. Ewers, "The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, With Comparative Materials From Other Tribes", Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 159 (Washington, 1955), p. 20.

[16] Agent Vaughan, loc. cit.

Missouri posts, large numbers of horses would have been required to transport their bulky trade goods. Since the trading expeditions did not involve the entire tribes, the number of horses observed among those who journeyed to the trading posts was, in all probability, not indicative of the overall tribal wealth in horses.

Ewers found that information obtained from his eldest Blackfoot informant corroborated the figure supplied by Bradley. According to his informant, the relative numbers of horses among the various tribes in the 1860's was about the same as those suggested by Bradley in 1830. He emphatically stated:

> "Flatheads had more horses than the Crows, Crows more than the Piegans, Piegans more than the Bloods, and Northern Blackfeet [Siksikas]. The Gros Ventres, Crees and Assiniboines had still smaller numbers. ...The Piegans have been known for a long time back as having larger numbers of horses than the Bloods or Blackfeet [Siksikas]."[17]

These, then, were the conditions that generally existed among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes throughout the period under study.

In view of the fact that the relative tribal wealth in horses remained virtually constant throughout the horse era, it is possible to discern a general horse distribution pattern in the area occupied by these tribes. It is evident, on the basis of the preceding discussion, that the Mountain tribes to the south and southwest of the Blackfoot lands possessed the largest numbers of horses of any of the tribes in question. Their lands, consequently, represented the area of highest horse densities in the entire region outlined.

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[17] J. C. Ewers, "Were the Blackfoot Rich in Horses?" op.cit., p. 603.

Despite the fact that the Piegans possessed fewer horses than the Mountain tribes, they owned almost twice as many as any of the remaining Blackfoot tribes. Thus the region controlled by the Piegans marked the area of highest horse densities within the Blackfoot lands. Although the Bloods appear to have been somewhat richer in horses than the Siksikas to the north, the average concentration of horses among these tribes showed a significant decrease compared to that among the Piegans. The Gros Ventres possessed fewer horses than the Siksikas until the former tribe migrated to the Montana region. After that time the relative wealth in horses of these two tribes was about the same. The Sarcees, the northernmost of the Blackfoot tribes, were less well endowed with horses than the Siksikas.

The tribes considered to have been the most deficient in horses were the Crees and Assiniboines who occupied the region to the east and northeast of the Blackfoot. The lands of these tribes, therefore, represented the area which featured the lowest horse densities in the region under study.

In conclusion, the general horse distribution pattern evident among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes was characterized by a decreasing horse density gradient extending from the Mountain tribes in the southwest to the Crees and Assiniboines in the east and northeast. Within the Blackfoot lands, the pattern featured a general decrease in the respective numbers of horses distributed among the Piegans, the Bloods, Siksikas, Gros Ventres and the Sarcees. This distribution pattern, with the exception of the temporal and seasonal variations to be subsequently discussed, persisted among the tribes in this region throughout the course of the equestrian period.

Factors Influencing The Numbers And Distribution Of Horses In The Blackfoot Country

The numbers and distribution of horses in the Blackfoot country were subject to the influence of a host of physical and cultural ecological factors, some of which were responsible for dramatic temporal fluctuations in horse numbers and seasonal variations in the distribution pattern. However, it is within the scope of this study to consider only those factors of fundamental importance in this regard.

With the exception of the Mountain tribes, the natives experienced minimal success in the practice of horse breeding as a means of maintaining their herds. Consequently, the principal means of horse acquisition by the Blackfoot, Crees and Assiniboines was through theft. For this reason the relative geographical location of the respective tribes to the source of supply, as well as their situation relative to other horse deficient tribes, were factors of vital concern.

Throughout the equestrian period the Mountain tribes served as the source region for horses acquired by the Blackfoot. Alexander Henry indicated the source of the Blackfoot horses in 1808. He recorded:

> "Those animals are got from their enemies southward, where they [Blackfoot] are perpetually at war with the Snakes [Shoshonis], Flatheads, and other nations..."[18]

Similar observations were recorded earlier by Thompson and Fidler[19] and the various post journals provide ample evidence to indicate that this

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[18] Alexander Henry, New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, op. cit., p. 526.

[19] See David Thompson, David Thompson Papers, PAC M 236, pp. 168, 174; and Peter Fidler, op. cit., fols. 27-30.

pattern was sustained to the end of the 1870 period.

The Blackfoot horse raiding parties were usually comprised of a small number of warriors. These parties journeyed to the enemy lands on foot, expecting to return mounted on stolen horses. The objective of these raiding parties was to steal a small number of horses that could be transported swiftly in the event of pursuit by the horses' owners. Thus, the greater the travelling distance involved to reach the source of supply, the less frequently the raids could be executed and the more hazardous the conditions experienced. Those tribes capable of participating the most frequently in successful horse raiding expeditions acquired the greatest number of horses.

The Piegans, who occupied the southernmost area of the Blackfoot lands, had to travel a distance of 50 to 200 miles to reach the source region. In contrast, the Siksikas and Sarcees in the northern regions were obliged to cover 400 to 600 miles. The Bloods occupied an intermediate position between the Piegans and Siksikas. The geographical location of the Gros Ventres changed from time to time but, for the most part, their position was comparable to that of the Bloods.

It is apparent, then, that the location of a tribe relative to a source of supply was of paramount importance in the acquisition of horses. The close proximity of the Piegans to the source region allowed them to maintain their herds with comparative ease. The increased distance of the Bloods, Gros Ventres and Siksikas from the Mountain tribes made the acquisition of horses progressively more difficult for these tribes and the perpetual horse shortages suffered by the Sarcees is

explained, in part, by the great distance they were obliged to travel to reach the source of supply.

The poor practices in horse husbandry and the more severe environmental conditions caused the Crees and Assiniboines to be in constant need of horses. However, the dependence of these natives on the Mountain tribes as an equestrian source region was negated by the prohibitive distances between their homelands. Consequently, the Crees and Assiniboines turned their attentions to the Blackfoot herds and, throughout the 19th century to the end of the 1870 period, the western Crees and Assiniboines acquired their horses principally from this source. Other Assiniboines, who occupied the easternmost plains region of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, also obtained horses from the Mandan and Hidatsa villages in South Dakota.

Thompson regarded the Assiniboines as notorious horse thieves as early as 1800[20] and, in 1807, the Edmonton Post Journal recorded:

> "These Stone [Assiniboine] Indians are the most useless and the most troublesome tribe that inhabit these parts, they kill no furs and Horse stealing is their trade."[21]

In 1826, the same journal recorded:

> "...they [Siksikas and Sarcees] reported that the Crees from below had been in their camps to war and killed 18 Blackfoot and all their Horses taken."[22]

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[20] David Thompson, David Thompson's Narrative, ed. by R. Glover, op. cit., p. 267.

[21] Edmonton Post Journal, 1807, op. cit., B 60/a/7, fol. 11.

[22] Ibid., 1826, B 60/a/32, fol. 26.

Thus, as a consequence of their relative geographical situation, the Sarcees, Gros Ventres, and especially the Bloods and Siksikas, bore the brunt of the Cree and Assiniboine horse stealing expeditions which, on occasions, completely depleted their herds.

While the Piegans suffered only minor losses to the Crees and Assiniboines, they occupied a frontier position between the Mountain tribes and the Blackfoot. They were forced, therefore, to contend with the majority of raids originating from those tribes. However, these raids were primarily in retaliation for thefts committed on the herds of the Mountain tribes by the Blackfoot and the losses suffered by the Piegans were usually comparatively moderate.

Although theft remained the most common means of horse acquisition among the Plains tribes, the Piegans and southern Bloods, as a result of their favorable geographical position, obtained numerous horses cheaply through trade. The Piegans controlled the lands to the east of the mountain passes through which the Kutenais might reach the plains. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Piegans prevented contact between the Kutenais and the European traders as well as the Crees. By maintaining a monopoly on this middleman position the Piegans and Bloods were able to offer European goods to the Kutenais at ten times the original value. In return, the Kutenais offered large numbers of excellent horses.[23]

In brief, among the Blackfoot tribes, the Piegans and, to a lesser extent, the Bloods occupied the regions which offered the greatest

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[23] See Peter Fidler, op. cit., fol. 30.

advantages for acquiring horses both through theft and trade. The location of the Gros Ventres and Siksikas offered less opportunity in this respect, while the great distance between the Sarcees and the Mountain tribes seriously hindered their attempts to obtain horses. In addition, due to their relative location, Piegan losses to horse thieves from other tribes was considerably less than those of the remaining Blackfoot tribes. In particular, the Bloods and Siksikas, who shared a common border with the Crees and Assiniboines, suffered devastating losses to these horse deficient tribes during the post 1800 period.

In addition to the relative geographical position, climate was also of fundamental importance in controlling the numbers and distribution of horses in this region. During the summer season, climatic conditions were generally favorable for the Blackfoot tribes, as well as for the Crees and Assiniboines and had little or no impact upon the relative numbers of horses owned by any of these groups. During this period, the Canadian Plains tribes roamed the open plains and parklands where forage was more than ample for their herds as well as for the buffalo herds from which they derived their sustenance. The movements of the buffalo herds were controlled by a host of ecological conditions which precluded an established regularity in their summer movements and for this reason, the Indians were, perforce, as erratic in their distribution as the buffalo they followed.

As late fall approached, however, the tribes moved towards favorite winter campsites. The Crees and Assiniboines sought the wooded hills and river valleys in the plains and parklands while the Blackfoot tribes retreated to the shelter of the foothills, nearby river valleys

and wooded topographic highs. The onset of winter likewise drove the buffalo from the open plains to wooded or sheltered locations. In contrast to the summer climate, that in winter had a severe impact upon horse numbers in the Canadian Plains. Moreover, the effect of the winter climate upon horse numbers was not the same throughout the Blackfoot country and neighboring lands.

In the prairie provinces, the mean daily January temperature gradients are generally oriented in a northwest-southeast direction (see Figure 5-1). The 0°F. mean daily January isotherm, which bends sharply south from northern Alberta and extends across south-central Saskatchewan and the southern extremity of Manitoba, marks the northern extent of the aboriginal equestrian culture. Beyond this limit, horses were incapable of surviving conditions of extreme cold without the benefit of supplementary fodder and shelter. The mean daily January temperatures tend to rise as one moves in a southwesterly direction towards the foothills, reaching a maximum of 18°F. in the extreme southwestern region of Alberta.

The injurious effects of the climate on horses wintering in the prairie region are well documented throughout the equestrian period. During Henday's visit to this area in 1754-55, the winter was exceptionally mild. However, by January he noted that his horse was losing flesh and the women were gathering grass for them.[24]

The severe effects of the winter season in the Saskatchewan Plains were witnessed by Matthew Cocking when he wintered with a party

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[24] Anthony Henday, op. cit., E 2/4, fol. 99.

of Crees between the forks of the Saskatchewan River in 1772-73. He noted the death of their first horse from cold and hunger near the end of January. By the middle of February he recorded:

> "... several Horses died for want of food, which they say is the case at this season of the year."[25]

Cocking does not indicate the number of horses that survived the winter but it appears from his journal that the frequent loss of horses to cold and hunger was a regular and expected occurrence among the Crees in the Canadian Plains.

Although the herds of the Blackfoot also suffered periodically from adverse weather conditions, they generally wintered in more favorable locations. Only the Gros Ventres and the Sarcees wintered beyond the 8°F. mean daily January isotherm. The most amenable areas, the Porcupine Hills and the Bow River Valley, were the favorite winter campsites of the Piegans. In the area claimed as their homelands, the mean daily January temperature ranged from 14°F. to 18°F. In addition, the winter season usually descended later and spring arrived earlier here than in the other regions of the Blackfoot country. Fidler was amazed at the variations in weather conditions that he experienced during his journey from Buckingham House on the North Saskatchewan to the winter campsite of the Piegans in the Porcupine Hills. In contrast to six inches of snow at Buckingham House in early November, it scarcely measured three-tenths

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[25] Matthew Cocking, A Journal of a Journey performed by Mr. Matthew Cocking, Second Factor at York Fort, in order to take a view of the Inland Country, and to promote the Hudson's Bay Company's Interest, whose Trade is diminished by the Canadians Yearly intercepting the Natives on their way to the Settlements, in Graham's Observations, 1792, PAC HBC E 2/11, fol. 131.

inch in the Piegan country by the end of that month. He noted the presence of geese and swans in the vicinity and the weather remained generally mild throughout the winter. At the late date of January 13, Fidler observed a prairie fire near their camp.[26]

The Blackfoot lands also received the benefits of frequent chinooks which brought sunny, mild relief to the usual winter weather. Longley defines a chinook as a day during December, January or February when the maximum temperature reaches 40°F.[27] As the air from the Pacific rises over the mountain ranges it loses much of its moisture. When this air descends to the Alberta Plains it is warmer than it was on the Pacific coast due to the fact that it has absorbed heat as the vapour changed to rain or snow. Not only does this condition bring welcome relief to the winter temperatures, but it often results in the disappearance of the accumulations of snow, allowing the grazing animals to obtain food supplies with little difficulty.

The frequency of the chinooks varies throughout the province of Alberta (see Figure 5-2). It is apparent that the greatest frequency occurs in the extreme southwestern portion of the province or that area favored by the Piegans for their winter campsites. The effects on an area which experiences a greater number of chinooks during the winter season was observed by Roe, who was familiar with the Alberta region. He noted that the Bow River at Calgary frequently remained open throughout

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[26] Peter Fidler, op. cit., fols. 8, 43.

[27] R. W. Longley, "The Frequency of Chinooks in Alberta", in The Alberta Geographer, no. 3, 1966-67, p. 20.

the winter, whereas he had not known the Red Deer River about 80 miles distant to do so in the course of more than 50 years.[28] As a result of these conditions, the Blackfoot tribes, in particular the Piegans, lost considerably fewer horses to the combination of cold weather and starvation than did the Crees and Assiniboines who wintered in less favorable areas.

The mild weather associated with the chinooks was, for the most part, beneficial in nature. However, if this unseasonal weather was accompanied by rainfall, it could result in a potentially disastrous situation. If the rainfall turned to sleet or ice, it could seriously impede attempts by foraging animals to acquire food. On March 2, 1830, the Jasper House Journal recorded the death of nine horses due to starvation as a consequence of the ice covered plains.[29] On February 6, 1855, the Edmonton Post Journal testified to the unpredictable nature of the weather near the mountains. On that occasion it recorded:

> "Rained very hard during the night and continued so till about noon when it turned to sleet this weather which is very uncommon at this season will be a source of great trouble to the Hunters, our Horses will also run a great risk of dying for want of fodder..."[30]

During conditions such as this, the horses were prevented from reaching the dried grasses beneath the snow by the crusts of ice which cut into their legs and feet.

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28 F. G. Roe, The North American Buffalo, A Critical Study of the Species in its Wild State (Toronto, 1972), p. 75.

29 Jasper House Journal, 1830, PAC HBC B 94/a/2, fol. 13.

30 Edmonton Post Journal, 1855, op. cit., B 60/a/29[a], fol. 12.

The condition which created the greatest havoc among the Blackfoot herds was excessive depths of snow. It was during these winters that they suffered their greatest losses. In January, 1789, William Walker of Manchester House supplied William Tomison at South Branch House with the following information by letter:

> "Several Indians have been in from different quarters but could not bring any furs the snow being so very deep, which has starved the greatest part of their horses to death and what is alive cannot travel."[31]

During this particular winter the great depths of snow prevented travel by horses from the end of November until spring. The losses incurred by the Blackfoot tribes, in particular the Siksikas, Bloods and Sarcees, were so severe that there was a complete absence of trade in horses at Manchester House that year.

The severe winter of 1810-11 which featured what Europeans referred to as unexampled depths of snow, decimated the horse herds throughout the Blackfoot lands. By January, the depths of snow prevented travel by horses and, at the late date of April 17, the Edmonton Post Journal recorded:

> "... tho the Buffalo are near their tents in great numbers, the snow is so very Deepe that they [Blackfoot] cannot drive them into the pounds and the few horses the severity of the winter has left them alive are so wretched that they have difficulty in gaining their own subsistence."[32]

Evidence gleaned from the various historical sources contemporaneous with the equestrian era suggests that the Blackfoot tribes suffered acute depletions of their herds due to adverse climatic conditions

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[31] Manchester House Journal, 1789, PAC HBC B 121/a/3, fol. 60.

[32] Edmonton Post Journals, 1811, op. cit., B 60/a/9, fol. 11.

at least once each decade. The greatest losses in horses were incurred by conditions such as unseasonal rainfall or excessive depths of snow combined with extremely cold temperatures. Although these conditions prevailed periodically throughout the lands of the Blackfoot, Crees and Assiniboines, they occurred with much less frequency and with less severity in the southwestern region, or that area occupied by the Piegans. Consequently, losses among the Piegan herds due to adverse weather conditions were appreciably less than those experienced by the remainder of the Blackfoot tribes and especially by the Crees and Assiniboines in the eastern plains. In contrast, the amenities of the climatic conditions in the sheltered regions occupied by the Mountain tribes to the southwest of the Blackfoot are readily evident in the huge numbers of horses they possessed and the success they experienced in horse breeding practices. It is, thus, apparent that climate and relative location of the various tribes account in large degree for the patterns of acquisition and maintenance of horses among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes.

The General Circulation Pattern

The equestrian component of Blackfoot culture can be viewed as an open system characterized by a constant input of horses from the south and southwest and a constant drain towards the east. Thus, while the Blackfoot principally acquired their herds of horses from the Mountain tribes, they in turn served as the principal source of supply for the Crees and Assiniboines who occupied the lands on their eastern and northeastern flanks.

As previously indicated, the flow of horses to the Blackfoot lands from the tribes west of the Rockies, the Shoshonis, Nez Perces, Flatheads, Kutenais and Crows, is well documented in historical records. The intensity of the Blackfoot raids among the Mountain tribes appears to have reached its peak during the period 1820-40. Throughout this period the Snake Country Journals record the continuous incursions of Blackfoot raiding parties in the lands of the Shoshonis, Flatheads and Nez Perces. The effects of these raids on the Mountain Shoshonis was noted by Ogden in 1826:

> "... they [Shoshonis] are far from being too well provided in horses, but it cannot be otherwise as the Blackfoot steal great numbers of them."[33]

Although such records testify to the influx of large numbers of horses to the Blackfoot lands from the south and southwest, this was accompanied by a significant movement of horses from the Blackfoot lands to the plains and parklands to the east and northeast. In the post 1820 period, the Blackfoot tribes suffered incessant losses to the neighboring Crees and Assiniboines. The general circulation pattern was summarized by the Edmonton Post journalist in 1833:

> "They [Assiniboines] of course will meet with some of the Plains Tribes [Blackfoot] and war will be the consequence, as the former are too fond of horse stealing which the latter are as fond of keeping, though they got theirs from their enemies west of the Rocky Mountains in the same way as the Assiniboines would take them, by thieving."[34]

The general circulation pattern also featured the flow of smaller numbers of horses in a reverse direction. The Crows, Flatheads

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[33] Peter Ogden, in Snake Country Journals, 1826, PAC HBC B 202/a/5, fol. 27.

[34] Edmonton Post Journal, 1826, op. cit., B 60/a/32, fol. 47.

and Shoshonis occasionally raided the Blackfoot herds, usually in retailiation for raids committed against their herds. Of the Mountain tribes, the Yellowstone Crows appear to have stolen the greatest number of Blackfoot horses. In all probability, this was due to the fact that they were better supplied with firearms than were the other Mountain tribes. The Crows penetrated the extremities of the Blackfoot territories and at various times their horse raiding excursions were noted in the Chesterfield House, Rocky Mountain House and Edmonton Post Journals.[35]

The Blackfoot, likewise on occasions, raided far into Cree and Assiniboine territories. In some instances, the Blackfoot pursued Cree and Assiniboine raiding parties in an effort to recover their stolen horses.[36] However, it appears that the Blackfoot experienced limited success in these endeavors and the flow of horses from the Crees and Assiniboines to the Blackfoot was relatively small. Thus, the general circulation pattern was characterized by a constant input of horses to the Blackfoot lands from the Mountain tribes to the southwest and a constant outflow from the Blackfoot lands to the Crees and Assiniboines in the east and northeastern plains and parklands.

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[35] See the following: Chesterfield House Journal, 1823, op. cit., B 34/a/4, fol. 60, Edmonton Post Journal, 1824, op. cit., B 60/a/22, fol. 57, Rocky Mountain House Journal, 1829, PAC HBC B 184/a/1, fol. 57.

[36] See Chesterfield House Journal, 1823, op. cit., fol. 60.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The diffusion of the European Horse among the Plains and Intermontane tribes of North America began in the early years of the 17th century with the acquisition of Spanish horses by the Pueblo tribe in the vicinity of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The subsequent transfer of horses and the necessary equestrian skills and training from the Pueblos to the neighboring Navajo and Apache tribes established the archetype for the diffusion process throughout the tribes of the Plains and Intermontane regions. From the equestrian culture hearth, centered on the Santa Fe and surrounding region, the horse spread northward along two main diffusion routes, the Intermontane Corridor and the Great Plains.

The most direct route northward across the Great Plains was controlled by the Apache tribes. The determination of these tribes to prevent their enemies from acquiring the horse, the huge expanse of territory they occupied and a general southward migration combined to effectively retard the rapid advance of the horse frontier by this route. Attempts to by-pass the Apache barrier resulted in the diffusion of the horse eastward to the semi-horticulturalist tribes on the Mississippi and hence northward to the Missouri. By this circuitous route the horse reached the Mandans in South Dakota by the decade 1735-45.

The narrow confines of the Intermontane Corridor, the smaller tribal numbers and the less hostile tribal relationships contributed to the relatively rapid advance of the horse via this route. By the early years of the 18th century the equestrian Mountain tribes, the Shoshonis, Comanches, Flatheads and Nez Perces, had emerged through the mountain passes to the Montana Plains to the south of the Blackfoot lands.

In the protohistoric and early historic periods, the Blackfoot tribes migrated from the plains region of southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan to the plains and foothill region of Alberta. When contacted by the first European explorers and traders, they claimed as their homelands the area from the foothills to the present day Saskatchewan-Alberta border and from about the present day international boundary to the North Saskatchewan River. From south to north these lands were occupied respectively by the Piegans, Bloods, Siksikas and Sarcees, while the Gros Ventres occupied the southeastern flank.

The first European to positively contact the Blackfoot and to sight horses in the Canadian Plains was Anthony Henday in 1754-55. At that time the Blackfoot were fully equestrian and had attained a highly sophisticated equestrian culture. The Henday Journals and the Saukamappee account in the Thompson Journals presents a compelling argument that the southernmost Blackfoot, the Piegans, acquired their first horses and equestrial techniques from the Mountain tribes, in all probability the Flatheads and Nez Perces, by the years 1720-25.

Between that time and Henday's visit in 1754-55, the horse had reached the Sarcees, who represented the northern limit of equestrian diffusion, and had commenced to spread eastward in the plains to the westernmost Crees and Assiniboines.

Throughout the equestrian era, the relative numbers of horses possessed by the Blackfoot and their neighboring tribes remained constant and the distribution pattern was a function of a combination of physical and cultural ecological factors. Of fundamental importance in explaining this pattern were the relative geographical dispositions of the various tribes and the differences in winter environmental conditions in the lands they occupied.

In view of the fact that theft was the principal means by which these tribes maintained their herds, the distance from the source of supply was of critical importance. Horse stealing raids were usually small scale ventures. Consequently, the tribes capable of participating the most frequently in these endeavors acquired the greatest number of horses. The geographical disposition relative to other tribes dependent on theft as a means of maintaining their herds was also important, since they could cause serious depletions of horse numbers during the course of the year. In respect to the Blackfoot tribes, the most favorable geographical location was occupied by the Piegans, followed by the Bloods, Siksikas and Gros Ventres, and the Sarcees.

Harsh environmental conditions, particularly severe winter climate, frequently caused devastating losses to the herds of these

tribes. Periods of extreme cold, excessive depths of snow and ice storms presented the greatest climatic hazards. Although these conditions were experienced throughout the foothills, plains and parkland regions, they occurred with much less frequency in the southwestern Alberta area occupied by the Piegans. The Bloods, Siksikas, Gros Ventres and Sarcees wintered in less favorable locations and suffered severe losses at least once a decade. Among the Crees and Assiniboines, who occupied the east and northeastern plains and parkland regions, the heavy loss of horses to severe climatic conditions was an expected and characteristic occurrence.

Thus, the general distribution pattern, although characterized by temporal fluctuations in horse numbers and seasonal variations in the distribution pattern, featured a decreasing horse density gradient from the Mountain tribes in the southwest of the Blackfoot lands to the Crees and Assiniboines in the east and northeast. Among the Blackfoot tribes, the highest concentration of horses was found among the Piegans, followed by the Bloods, Siksikas, Gros Ventres and Sarcees.

As a consequence of the forementioned factors, the Blackfoot, and especially the Crees and Assiniboines, rarely reached the upper level of horse requirements. The heavy reliance on horses dictated by their evolving equestrian cultures created a generally constant demand for increasing numbers of them. Thus, the Blackfoot, who relied on the Mountain tribes as their principal source region, were responsible for the flow of huge numbers of horses from the southwest

to the Blackfoot lands. The Crees and Assiniboines, in turn, acquired the greatest numbers of their horses from the Blackfoot tribes. With the exception of minor reverse flows, this was the general circulation pattern evident in the Blackfoot country throughout the equestrian era.

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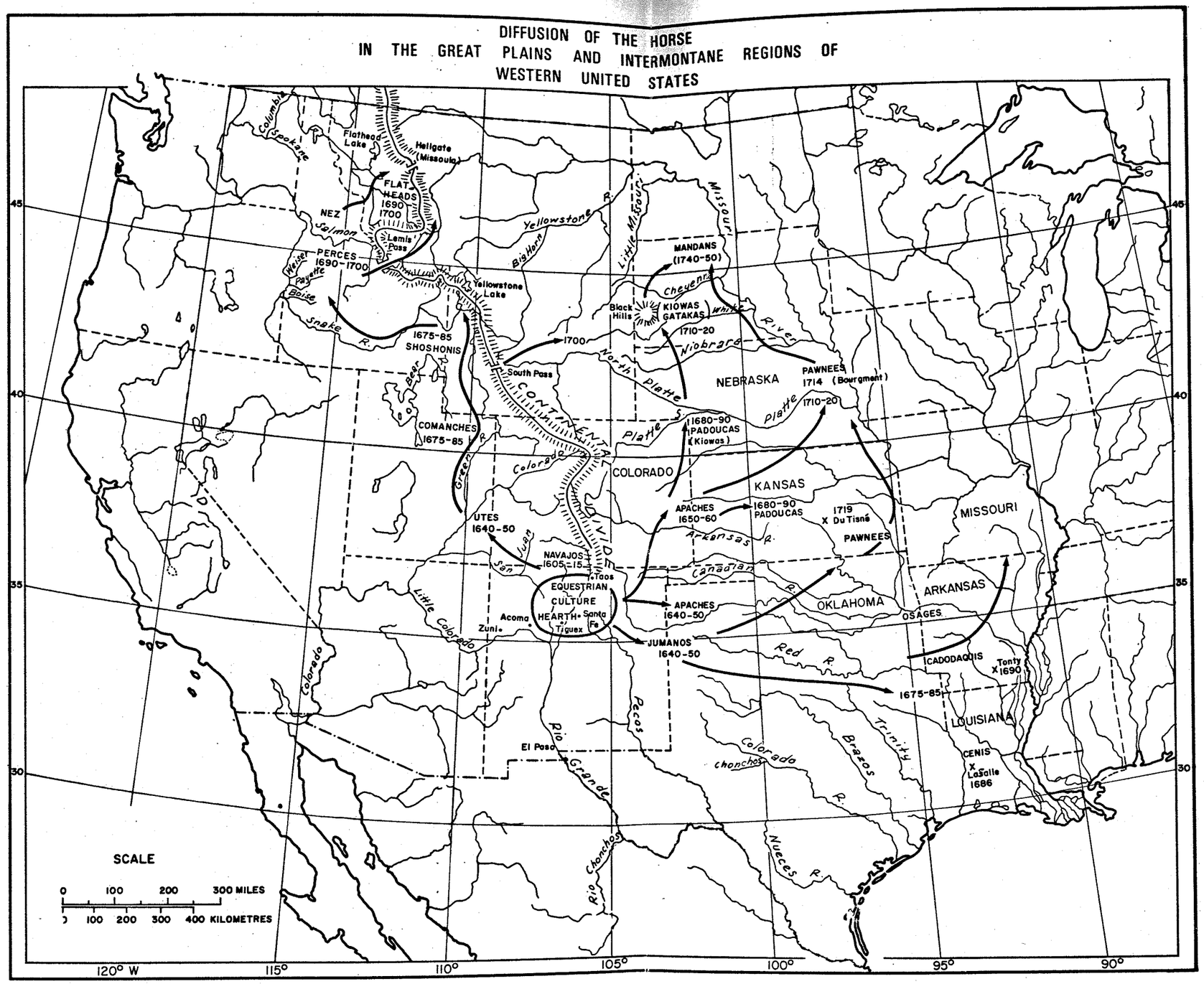

DIFFUSION OF THE HORSE
IN THE GREAT PLAINS AND INTERMONTANE REGIONS OF
WESTERN UNITED STATES
Columbia
Spokane
Flathead Lake
Hellgate (Missoula)
FLATHEADS
1690
1700
NEZ
Salmon
Lemis' Pass
PERCES
1690-1700
Weiser
Payette
Boise
Snake R.
Yellowstone R.
Bighorn
Yellowstone Lake
Little Missouri
Missouri
MANDANS
(1740-50)
Cheyenne
Black Hills
KIOWAS
GATAKAS
White
River
1710-20
Niobrara
1700
1675-85
SHOSHONIS
South Pass
North Platte
NEBRASKA
PAWNEES
1714 (Bourgmont)
Platte
1710-20
Bear
COMANCHES
1675-85
Green R.
Colorado
Platte
1680-90
PADOUCAS
(Kiowas)
COLORADO
KANSAS
APACHES
1650-60
1680-90
PADOUCAS
1719
X Du Tisné
PAWNEES
MISSOURI
Arkansas R.
UTES
1640-50
San Juan
NAVAJOS
1605-15
Taos
EQUESTRIAN
CULTURE
HEARTH
Santa Fe
Tiguex
Acoma
Zuni
Little Colorado
Canadian R.
APACHES
1640-50
OKLAHOMA
ARKANSAS
OSAGES
JUMANOS
1640-50
Red R.
CADODAQUIS
Tonty
X 1690
1675-85
LOUISIANA
Colorado
Pecos
Rio Grande
El Paso
Colorado
Brazos
Trinity
Chonchos R.
CENIS
X
LaSalle
1686
Rio Chonchos
Nueces R.
SCALE
0 100 200 300 MILES
100 200 300 400 KILOMETRES
120° W
115°
110°
105°
100°
95°
90°
45
40
35
30

Fig. 1-1

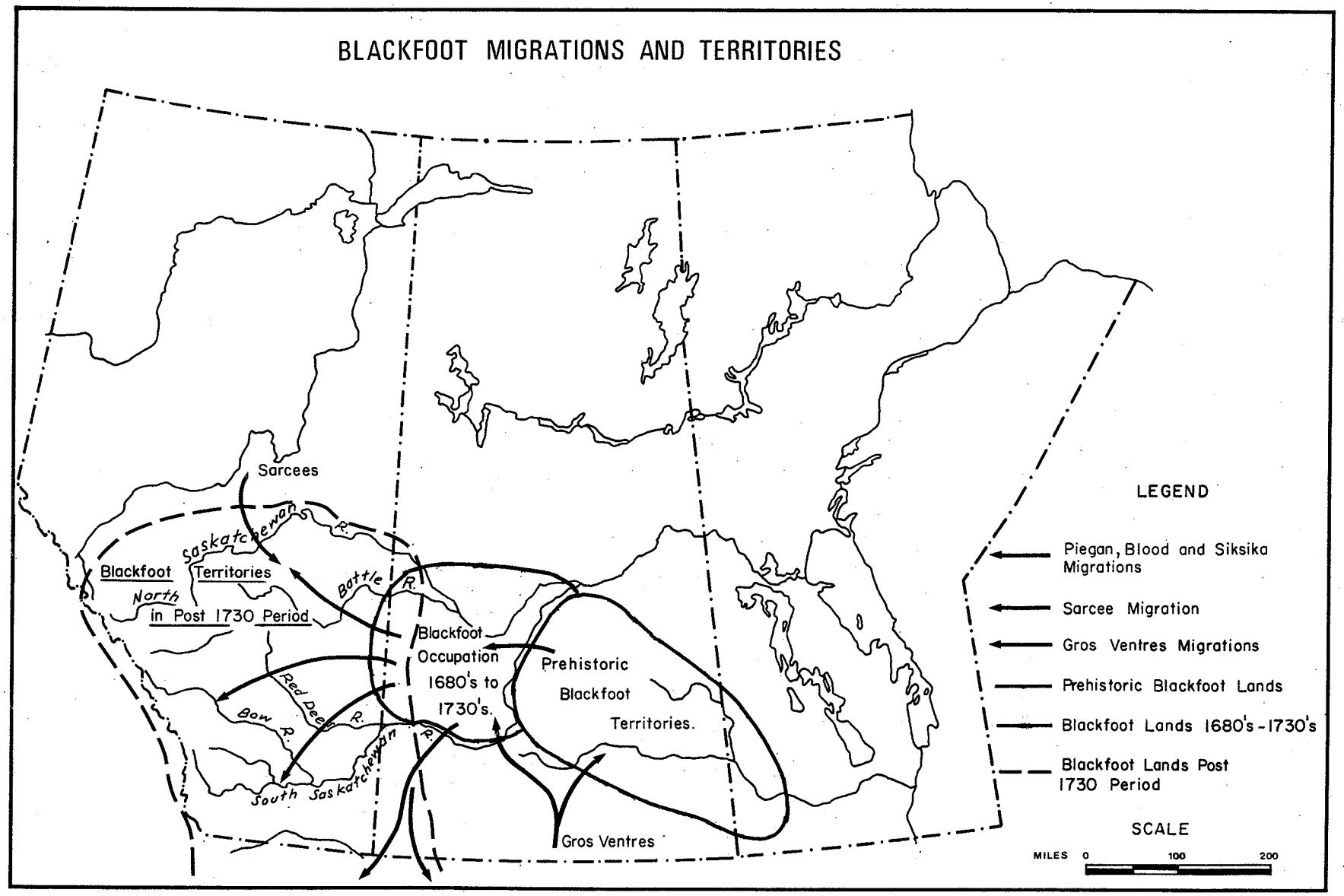

BLACKFOOT MIGRATIONS AND TERRITORIES
Sarcees
Blackfoot Territories in Post 1730 Period
North Saskatchewan R.
Battle R.
Red Deer R.
Bow R.
South Saskatchewan R.
Blackfoot Occupation 1680's to 1730's.
Prehistoric Blackfoot Territories.
Gros Ventres
LEGEND
Piegan, Blood and Siksika Migrations
Sarcee Migration
Gros Ventres Migrations
Prehistoric Blackfoot Lands
Blackfoot Lands 1680's-1730's
Blackfoot Lands Post 1730 Period
SCALE
MILES 0 100 200

Fig. 2-1

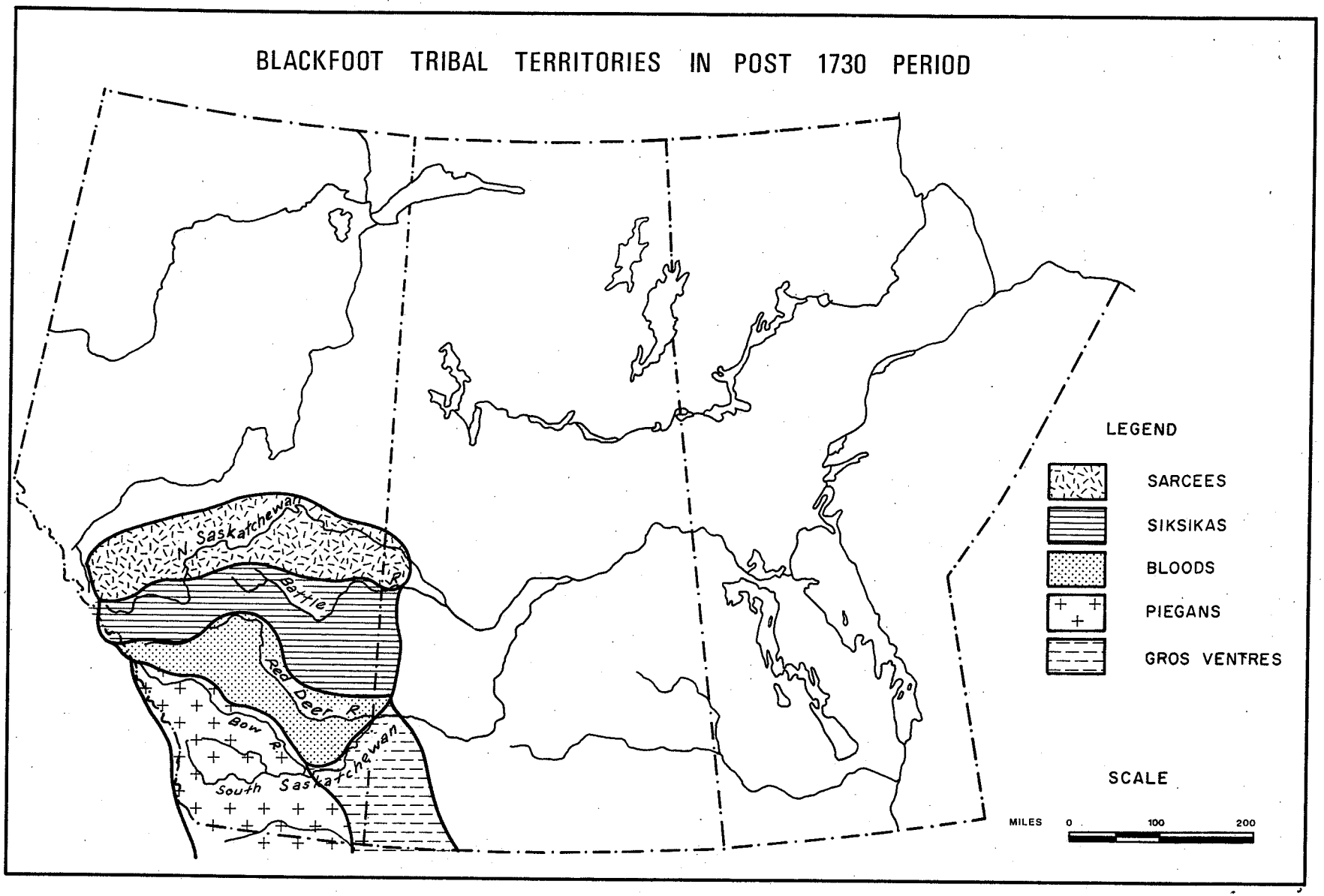
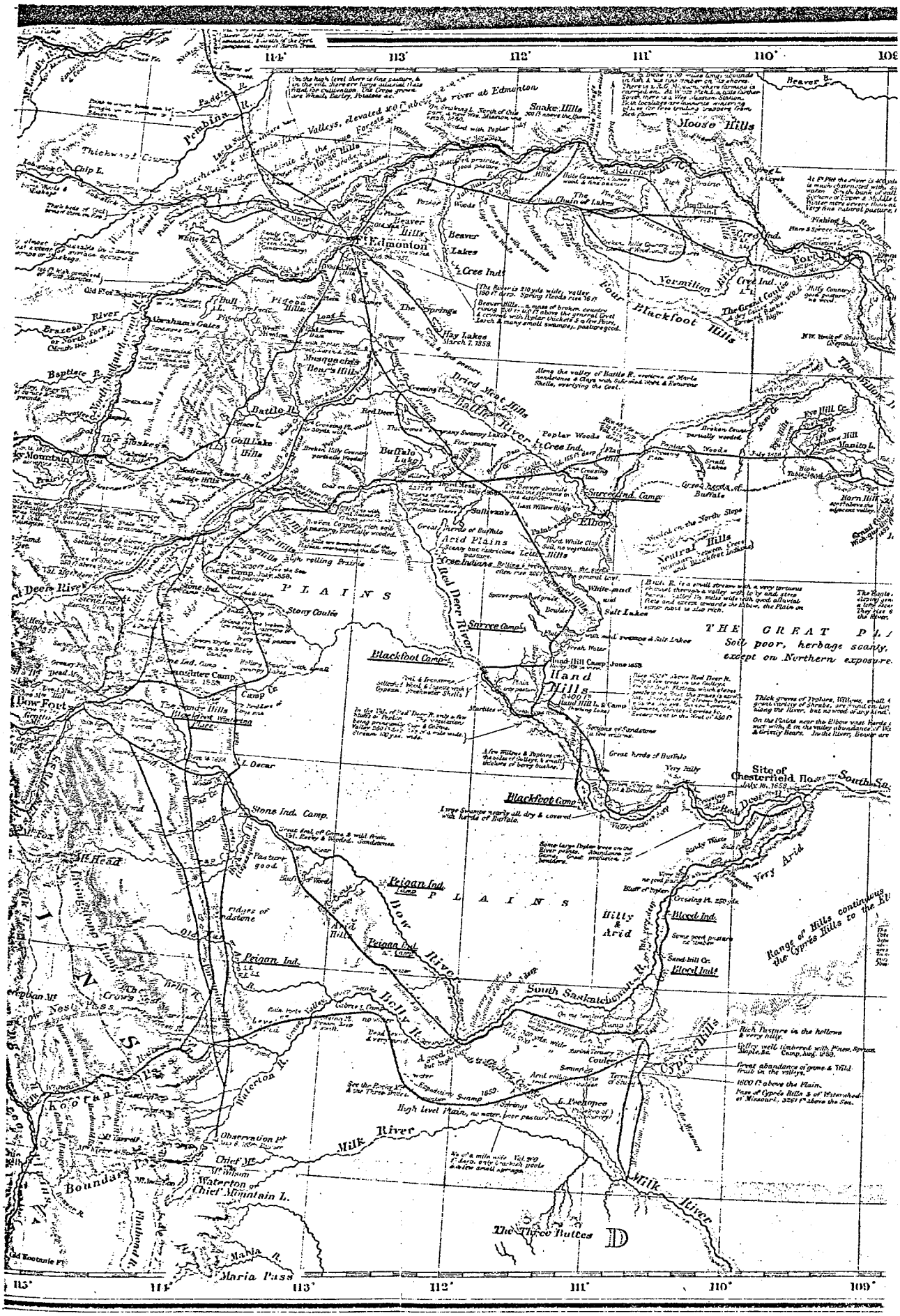
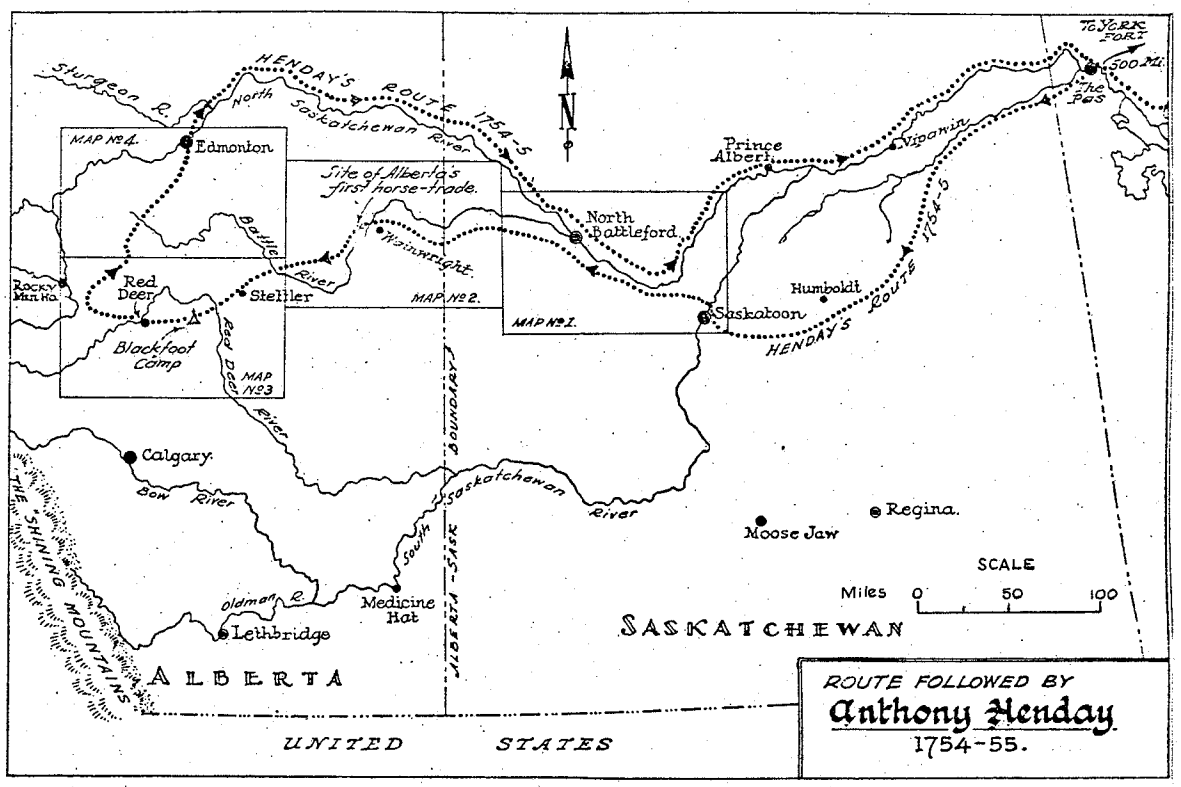

BLACKFOOT TRIBAL TERRITORIES IN POST 1730 PERIOD
N. Saskatchewan R.
Battle R.
Red Deer R.
Bow R.
South Saskatchewan
LEGEND
SARCEES
SIKSIKAS
BLOODS
PIEGANS
GROS VENTRES
SCALE
MILES
0
100
200

Fig. 2 - 2

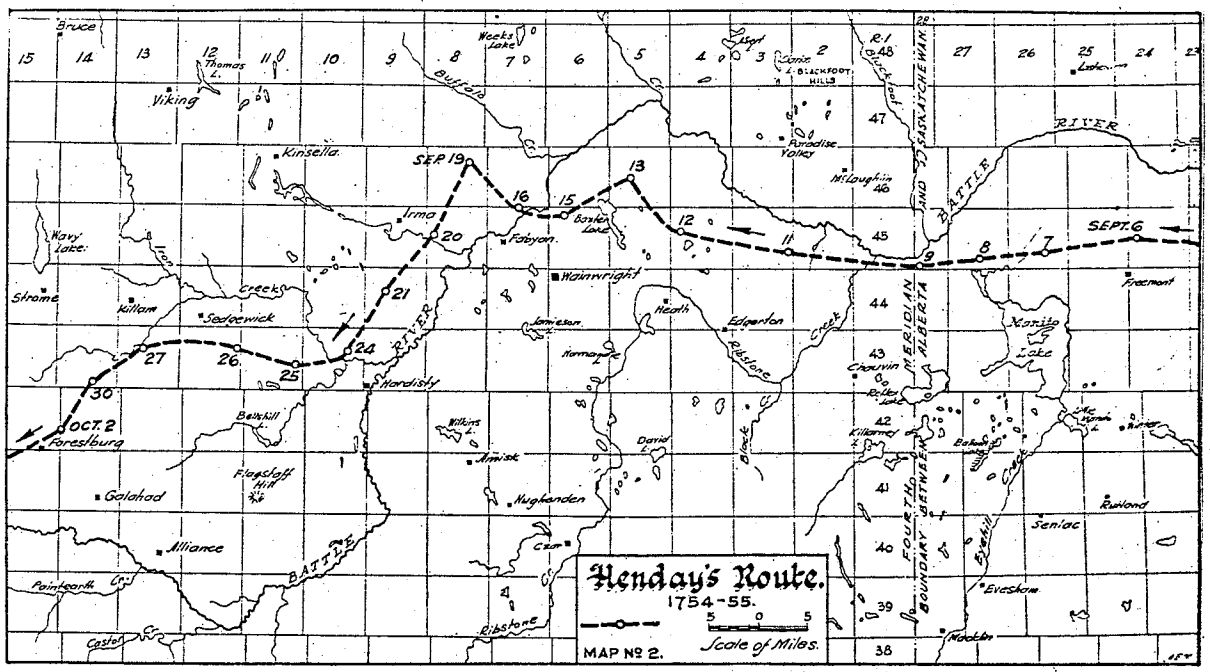
ROUTE FOLLOWED BY THE PALLISER EXPEDITION 1857-59.



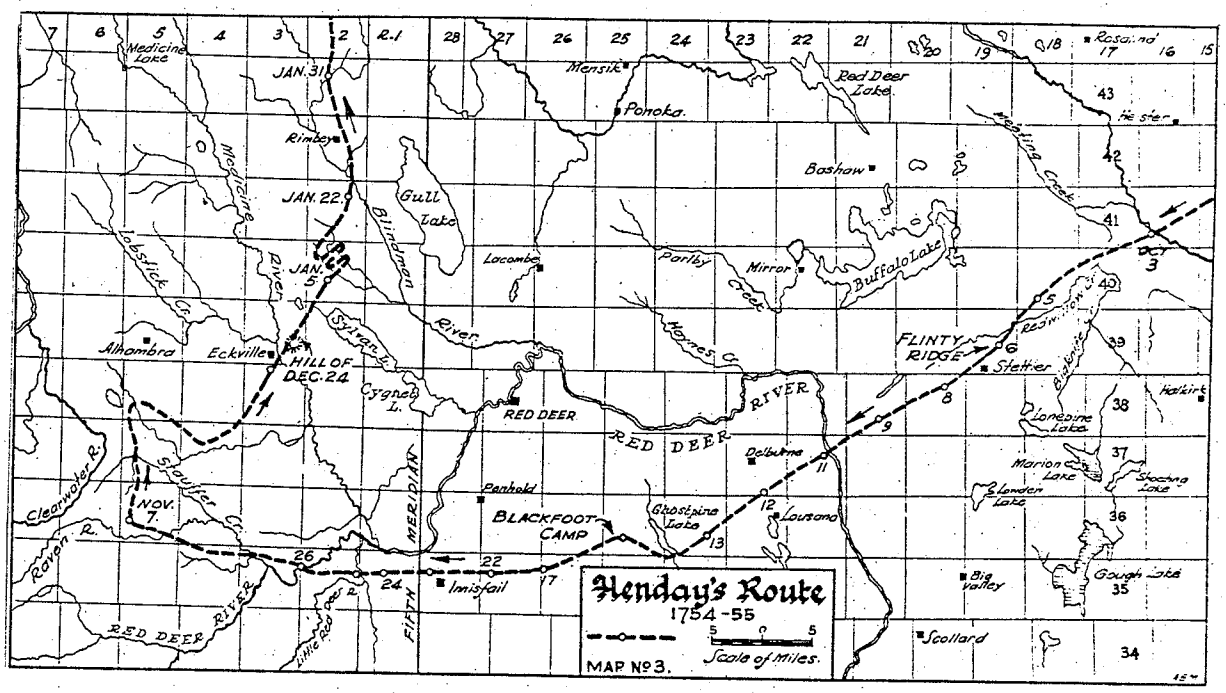
Source: Papers Of The Palliser Expedition. Figure 2-3



Source: J. M. MacGregor, Behold the Shining Mountain. Figure 3-1



Source: J. M. MacGregor, Behold the Shining Mountain. Figure 3-2



Source: J. M. MacGregor, Behold the Shining Mountain.

Figure 3-3

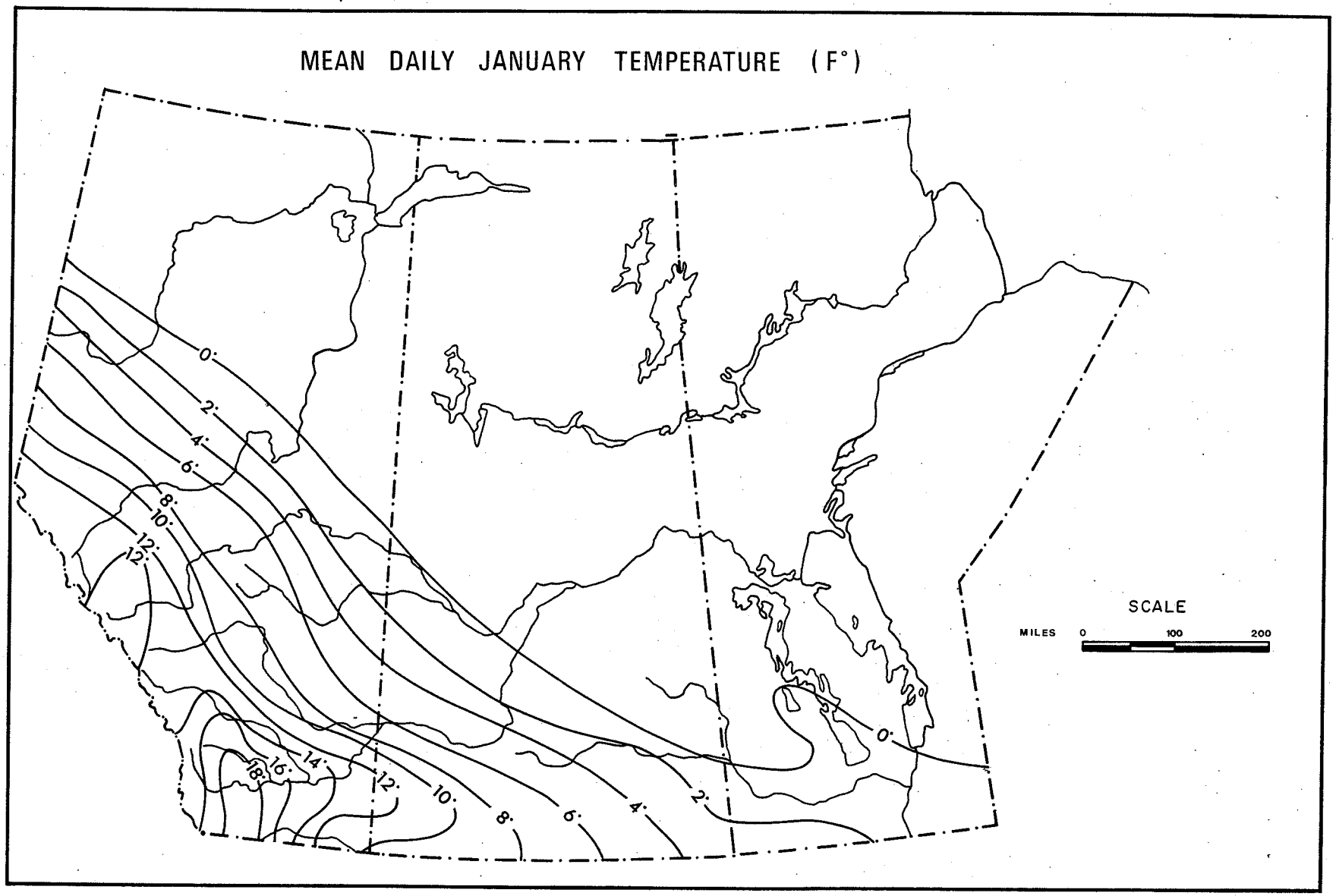
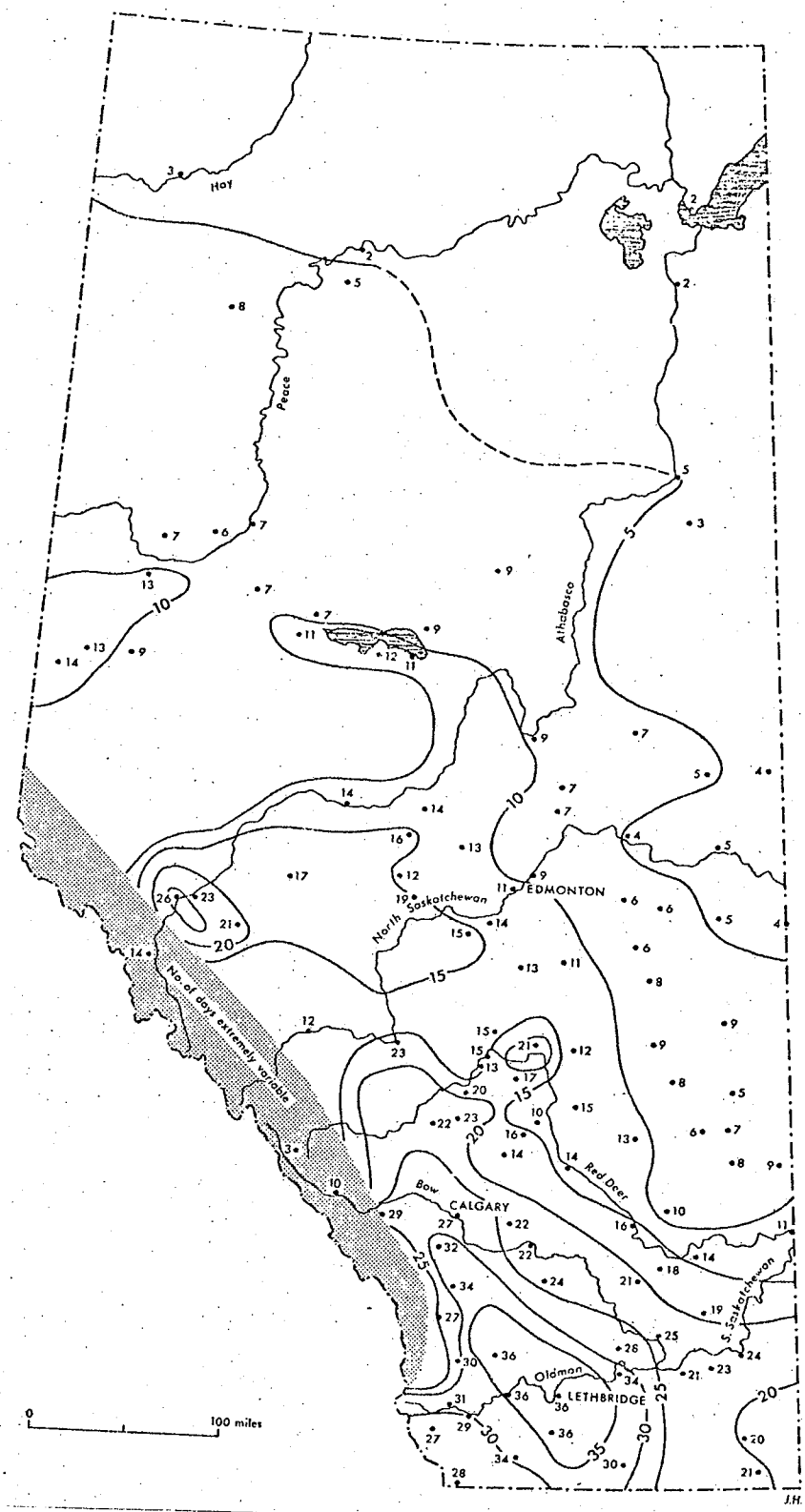

MEAN DAILY JANUARY TEMPERATURE (F°)
0°
2°
4°
6°
8°
10°
12°
14°
16°
18°
SCALE
MILES
0
100
200

Fig.5-1

CHINOOK FREQUENCY IN ALBERTA



Source: R. W. Longley, "The Frequency of Chinooks in Alberta"

Figure 5-2