The Algonquian Plains?

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude du développement de la culture en Amérique du nord soulève trois problèmes: (1) la distinction entre les phases "pré-contact" et "post-contact" est confuse, spécialement en ce qui a trait aux habitants des plaines; (2) après examen du développement culturel des Indiens des Plaines, on discerne de grandes similitudes entre ceux-ci et les groupements algonquins du nord ou du centre; (3) ces similitudes s'expliquent par l'introduction et le développement de la traite des fourrures. On conclut que les véritables sociétés des plaines ont été formées au moins 125 ans avant la date communément acceptée.

For a considerable period of time there has been a tradition in North American ethnology of distinguishing between pre-contact and post-contact aboriginal life on this continent. Related to this dichotomy is an implicit distinction between what might be called "normal evolutionary" processes and acculturative processes. An unfortunate effect of this form of dualism is that the essential relatedness of human cultural life and its changes are obscured, and we tend to think of cultural change today as post-European and culture change prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century as something else. As a result, anthropological thinking has been denied the example of evolutionary-acculturative change occurring hand-in-glove in the creation of a peculiarly North American culture type, that of the Plains Indian.

The possibility of such an example was placed before us in 1914 by Clark Wissler:

> The distribution of the traits enumerated above indicates a fundamental similarity between the material cultures of the caribou and bison areas. The interpretation of this observation is an important theoretical problem.

However, Wissler then led us down the garden path: "... we have two major alternatives, diffusion from a single center or independent development in two or more localities" (Wissler,

1914:54). Wissler appears to imply that the similarities were locally derived and essentially independent of external forces. With modification, this view of the Plains continues with us today, despite the implications of Kroeber's (1939) inclusion of the Plains in his Eastern and Northern Culture Area and Lowie's assertion that:

> Altogether the Plains culture thus appears as a specialization of the Woodland cultures, modified by subsequent borrowings from elsewhere and by regional adaptations to a new environment. (1963:226)

Today we have the accepted explanation that the people of the Plains have cultures derived from other ethnographic areas, cultures which have become similar due to the necessity to change technology and subsistence pattern, a necessity which in turn derives from the particular ecology of the Plains (Oliver, 1962:68; Eggan, 1966:53-54). (A dissenting but similar view is that of Wilson (1963:367) that the Plains are best understood as the home of equestrian pastoralists rather than as equestrian bison hunters.)

Thus, at the recent Conference on Plains Ethnology and Archaeology, Ewers said:

> Nevertheless, the historical and traditional evidence indicates that the tribes resident in this area (the Northwestern Plains) at the beginning of the historic period had not lived within the area for an extended period prior to 1800. Rather they were immigrants and all but one (Sarsi) were Algonquian or Siouan speaking Indians who moved on the Northwestern Plains from the east. One must look to the east for the origins of the older traits in their cultures rather than to archaeological remains within the Northwestern Plains. To find meaningful answers to cultural problems involving these tribes one must look beyond the boundaries of the area. (1967: 173)

One does indeed need to look beyond the boundaries of the area, and one needs to look well beyond the Plains in historic times for meaningful answers about those cultures. It is the contention of this paper that to explain meaningfully the culture type of the Plains Indian one must look to the social organization of the Northern and Central Algonquians and to how this type of organization related to the fur trade and its expansion.

The tribes of Plains Indian type which will be the concern of this paper are those labeled nomadic "True Plains" by Oliver (p. 46):

Algonquian	*Other*
Arapaho	Assiniboine
Blackfoot	Commanche
Cheyenne	Crow
Gros Ventre	Kiowa
Plains Cree	Kiowa-Apache
	Sarsi
	Teton Dakota

As stressed by Oliver, and with Eggan concurring, these groups were strikingly similar. They "... share a basic pattern of tribes or linked bands in the summer and dispersed bands the rest of the year", "... a pattern of informal leadership", "... council patterns followed the same lines as the leadership patterns", "... the police functioned primarily in the summer months", "... had societies of some sort", "most (10 out of 12) had no clans", and "... determined status on the basis of war honors, horses, and personal influence" (Oliver, 1962:46-51). These traits will be accepted as those crucial to the similarities between Plains Indian societies. And, therefore, the arguments here will be phrased in terms of band-tribal organization, leadership and governmental patterns, societies, clan structure and the determinants of social status.

Other things being equal, the most effective way to address the problem would be to get into the social organizational similarities immediately. Unfortunately other things are not equal. Try as we might ethnologists have been unsuccessful in establishing a consistent pre-historic ethnographic baseline for either the Eastern and Northern Algonquians or for the Plains. For this reason we must first discuss the early fur trade relations and then the phenomena of Algonquian social organization.

Considerably prior to European contact and settlement of the Central Atlantic coast, contact was established with the Algonquians of the type now known as the Maritime Cluster (Abnaki, Malecite, Micmac, and Penobscot) and the Cree Cluster (Cree, Montagnais, and Naskapi) (Murdock, 1965:27, 26). However, we may never ascertain the effects of initial contact. Cartier discover the Indians of Chaleur Bay (probably Micmac) ready

and anxious to trade fur for European goods on his arrival in 1534 (Innis, 1956:10). Thus trading was probably established in North America prior to formal European colonization and exploration. We do know, however, that from 1534 to approximately 1620 the French and the Eastern Algonquians were working out trade relations, to the advantage of each side.

It is felt that in establishing mutually satisfactory trade relations each side attempted to use what existed to some degree and tried to enforce changes to some degree. Thus, by 1626 the established pattern of summer communal villages along the rivers and near the French and dispersed winter bands or extended families was a composite of Algonquian-French origin (Innis, *ibid.*). Following Hickerson (1967) and Leacock (1954) it is surmised:

> Presumably, with the transformation of the old summer fishing season into the all-important trading season, the introduction of individualized trapping methods, and the dropping off altogether of communal caribou-hunting as the animal became virtually extinct... the loose aggregate of small bands which traditionally gathered for the summer was strengthened at the expense of the winter hunting units, which in turn were shrinking in size. (Leacock, 1954:22)

As Hickerson (1967:324) asserts, this cyclical kind or organization probably has a great time depth and is widespread. Further evidence for Eastern Algonquian communal action is the disappearance of the Laurentian Iroquois from the St. Lawrence by 1581. Fenton opines that the migration from Hochelaga and Stadcona was, in part, caused by the breakdown of the "antagonistic cooperation" between the Laurentians and the Eastern Algonquians, brought about by the introduction of trade goods from Tadoussac and, possibly, Port Royal (1940:174). Thus, prior to Champlain's seventeenth century expeditions against the Iroquois, the Algonquians had successfully "liberated" the valuable St. Lawrence Valley from them.

By 1600, then, we have the beginning of the cycle of trade, displacement, reorganization, competition relating to the fur trade. It is this initial defeat by the Iroquois which was to lead to the patterning of the French fur trade. The collapse of Hochelaga and Stadcona allowed the French to proceed down the St. Lawrence to Huronia and, eventually, up the Saguenay to the

heartland of the Cree Cluster near James Bay. But this possibility was not the one and only cause of continuing Algonquian-French relations. The Algonquians were of particular cultural value to the French. Not only did they have the cyclical patterns of settlement and the geographical location, they had the custom of producing the best beaver pelts. They wore beaver robes, and, in the wearing process, inadvertently produced "castor gras d'hiver", the most desireable form of beaver pelt (Innis, 1956: 14).

Thus, by early seventeenth century the symbiosis between the Algonquian speakers and the French had developed. By mid-seventeenth century these relations were further solidified and extended by the expulsion of the Huron, Tobacco, and Neutral Nations from present-day Ontario by the Iroquois. As Innis notes:

> The penetration of European goods among the western Indians, the emergence of the Ottawa as middlemen (replacing the Huron), and the long period of diplomacy and warfare had important effects on Indian life, and in turn on the fur trade. An immediate result was the settlement of Indians who were unable to go to Montreal, ... at points, especially Green Bay, which gave them direct access to trade in European commodities brought by middlemen. (p. 55)

This statement points to the role of the Northern and Central Algonquians in this phase of fur trade expansion. It was at this time, for example, that the Ottawa "traders" journeyed to the Mississippi, contacting the Sioux, and travelled north toward Hudson's Bay, contacting the Cree. It was also at this time that the Menomini, Fox, and others gathered at points along Lake Michigan to gain access to European trade goods. Some, like the Menomini, became fur producers (Callender, 1962:33); others produced a surplus of "Indian corn" for the use of the voyageurs returning to the fur trade fairs at Montreal (Innis, 1956:61). That all were concerned with the fur trade and the competition it engendered is evidenced by the efforts made by the western Indians to interdict trade between the Ottawa and the even more westerly Indians, especially the Prairie-Parkland Sioux (Innis, 1956:54).

At this time, 125 years before the rise of Plains Indian society, we find the Central Algonquians in regular contact with, and, if we are to accept Innis' evaluation, to some extent reorganized by the fur trade. By the 1670-80's we also find that

for the most part the potential disseminators of eastern fur trade ideas have already been contacted by Indian fur traders — the Sioux, probably Santee Dakota, the Cree, the Assiniboine, the Cheyenne, the Ojibwa (Innis, 43-45; Howard, 1960:267; Jablow, 1950:2). Indeed, some members of these tribes joined the Ottawa in their summer journeys to Montreal. From what we know of the historic or proto-historic migrations of these groups we may conclude that from the fur trade relations established at this time the potential for further diffusion toward the west was here. In the absence of concrete knowledge to the contrary we may also surmise that between 1650 and 1800 the strengthening of communal institutions at the expense of band-extended family institutions among the Northern and Central Algonquians occurred in a fashion similar to that alluded to by Leacock for the Eastern Algonquians.

As it has been maintained that considerable cultural change had gone on during the sixteenth century, it is probably unlikely that the organization of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Algonquians was wholly "aboriginal", whatever that might have been. It can be maintained, on the other hand, that whatever else it might have been, it was Algonquian. It was the response of Algonquian groups to increasing cultural pressure, primarily from other Indians, toward changing relations in trade and war derived from European desires to exploit local resources.

Thus we concur with Murdock's assertion that the primary or elementary form of Algonquian social organization was that of the Cree Cluster, Callender's Northern Algonquian group, especially Cree and Saulteaux (Murdock, 25; Callender, 44). This type of social organization is characterized by a flexible autonomous band system which is ambilocal with a tendency toward virilocal extended families. What makes it distinctive, however, is the strength of the pattern of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage (Murdock, 26; Hockett, 1962:256). It is from this form that Hockett linguistically derives the other forms of Algonquian social organization, and from this, or a like type, that Murdock derives Ojibwa organization. Murdock protests that the Dakota type of the Ojibwa and the Omaha type of the Central Algonquians are "...alternative forms of patrilineal organization..." which rarely

develop out of each other. Thus he maintains differences between the Central groups and more northerly groups are such that they cannot be derived from the same source (p. 29).

Considering the similarity of acculturative forces and the nineteenth century similarities between Central and North Central groups it seems Hockett's reconstruction is the more plausible. It is probable, as Murdock suggests, that parallel developments have occurred in societies sharing the basic bilateral, band organized, virilocal-ambilocal system, and that cross-cousin marriage provides the mechanism by which the changes may be developed.

During the seventeenth century increased demands for trade surplus in the economies of both Central and North Central groups increased intertribal conflict and dislocation, and, for the Northern Algonquians, the exigencies of their western migration caused an increased emphasis upon communal activities and upon group solidarity, much like nineteenth century competition on the Plains influenced the level of tribal integration during summer months, and as indicated for the Eastern Algonquians. Beginning with the latter group, the Northern Algonquians, the effect was to keep band structure flexible, but stratified. As Dunning points out, modern Ojibwa local groups tend to be composed of both "member" males as well as "alien" or affinal males (1959:813). This is a condition which engenders considerable friction and conflict which is partially ameliorated by joking and gift-giving relations. Murdock indicates that the groups of the Ojibwa Cluster practiced bride service, a likely situation as intratribal gift-giving would detract from one's fur trade surplus.

From this the following hypothesis is proposed. The emphasis on cross-cousin marriage created essentially three groups of males in each summer band encampment — younger unmarried "member" males, older married post-bride-service "member" males, and intermediate married bride-service "alien" males — statuses which were recognized and validated by joking-gift-giving rituals. Thus, if bands tended to localize around permanent fur trading centers in summer, as did the Central Algonquians, these ritual relations could evolve into a moiety-like lineal system of reciprocal ritual rights and privileges based upon virilocal assemblages of males. On the other hand, among the more mobile Cree and other

northerners it could evolve into social groups of "brothers" in an age-grade-like system.

These conditions would allow for the Omaha, Dakota and what Murdock (p. 31) terms "Salishan" forms of social organization to develop within the 125 years between contact with fur trade middlemen and the emergence of nineteenth century forms of Plains, Central Algonquian, and North Central Algonquian social organization. With this process in mind, and with the economic pressure of the fur trade to ensure some solidarity, the Central Algonquian type of social organization becomes clear and its affinities to Plains organization more marked.

Callender states for the Fox, Sauk, Kickapoo, and Potawatomi that in 1800 there was a cyclical, seasonal economic pattern of summer farming, winter and spring hunting. Under this subsistence pattern, the groups congregated into ill-defined "village-bands", which, in the case of the Sauk, came together in large tribal groups for the summer. Within this framework of organization the authority of village chief (Okimawa) was limited and councils were "loose". Also, a camp police organization existed which was active during the spring buffalo hunt and during the march back to the summer villages; however, during the rest of the year the various "village-bands" were autonomous and social control consisted of "diffuse sanctions" p. 12-17).

Distinctively the Central Algonquians (Prairie groups) were organized into patrilineages of four generations in depth (p. 19). Relative age distinctions within and between lineages were important (p. 22). Joking relations were maintained between in-laws and between cross-aunts and uncles and their nieces and nephews, likely a remnant from the basic cross-cousin marriage system. Apparently the lineage organization did not influence marriage greatly; althought "clans" were exogamous, there was a bilateral extension of the incest taboo (p. 24). Thus, lineages were essentially corporate groups for ritual activity and for the inheritance of political office. (Here it might be commented that Prairie Algonquian lineages appear to function as do Northwestern Plains Algonquian age-grade and other societies.) Ownership of non-ritual property such as land, houses, and personal property was independent of the lineage system (p. 26). Residence

was apparently ambilocal (virilocality preferred) with young husbands required to do bride service.

Local groups were organized into two opposed "clans" or sets of clans; clans were eponymous, with few corporate functions (p. 29). Names had supernatural power and placed individuals in the organization of the supernatural world. This conception of the world tied individuals to the "power" of eponymous ancestors as well as the power of vision induced rituals. Vision experiences were given corporeal reality in what Callender has called "packs". These "packs" were assembled to represent the power of the vision. Clans and lineages were "pack organizations" with each level, clan, lineage, individual, being independent in terms of the "pack" system. Voluntary associations also held "packs" which were directed toward specific activities (pp. 30-31). (Here, too, lineages and clans appear analogous to Plains age-grade societies, while individual and voluntary association "packs" resemble the medicine bundle complex of the Northwestern Algonquian Plains groups.)

Callender finds similarities in the organization of the Woodlands type, Menomini, with the Central and Prairie types. They too had summer villages, fall communal activities, and winter dispersion; communities were organized in the same pattern as the Prairie Algonquians. However, the Menomini organization broke down shortly after they settled near Green Bay in 1740 (p. 33). Although the breakdown of Menomini organization is probably attributable to the proximity of the other Indian fur trade refugees in Green Bay, it might also be theorized that they were more vulnerable to the blandishments of the fur trader, having minimal communal agricultural or hunting organization. The Menomini also had religious "packs" and semi-annual ceremonies which approximated Prairie clan rituals (p. 35).

Callender also indicates that Illinois and Miami of the Ohio Valley were like the Central Algonquians, but that the degree of approximation is impossible to ascertain because of their pre-nineteenth century disruption (p. 36).

Before turning north again to return to the Cree, Northern Ojibwa, and Saulteaux we should summarize our view of Central Algonquian-Plains similarities. Both "True Plains" peoples and

the Central Algonquians "... share a basic pattern of tribes or linked bands (village-bands) in the summer months and dispersed bands the rest of the year", and shared informal or loose leadership and councils. The Prairie Algonquians had summer police groups and all Central Algonquians had "pack" societies with clans and lineages functioning *only* as ceremonial societies, naming groups, and political inheritance bodies.

These descriptions, phrased in terms appropriate to the "True Plains" societies (Oliver, *ibid.*), indicate the similarities between Prairie and Central Algonquians of the beginning of the nineteenth century and the Plainsmen of fifty years, or less, later. Although it would be incorrect to ignore differences between the Plains and Woodlands, it is equally incorrect to dismiss summarily the similarities as coincidence. It is felt that common experience in dealing with the outflow from the fur trade, intertribal competition which was always an adjunct to the fur trade, and international competition between various ethnic groups of fur traders provided the catalyst and the potential for the development of Central Algonquian and True Plains types of pre-colonial aboriginal society.

Looking north to the Cree, Ojibwa and Saulteaux, two phenomena appear most important. First, these northern groups shared the basic Algonquian bilateral, virilocal, matrilateral cross-cousin marriage structure and cyclical organization. Second, these groups were vigorous participants in the diffusion centers of the northern Plains. Secoy indicates that during the eighteenth century two of the major influences upon future Plains life were located in centers in the northeastern corner of the Plains — the horticultural villagers and the western-most Woodlands peoples. And he notes that the characteristic elements and complexes which characterize the Plains developed close by this northeastern region (Secoy, 1953:89-90). From the northern Plains the influences spread rapidly to other groups. He notes that the post-gun-pre-horse pattern of warfare emerged in this northern region, and he indicates that it was basically a "modification of the Eastern Woodlands pattern" (*ibid.*). To this he adds that the northwestern Plains post-gun-pre-horse pattern differed somewhat from the northeastern pattern and that the final form of Plains warfare pattern was diffused "... with the advancing Gun Frontier

to cover the whole Plains" (p. 91). We must surmise, therefore, that the ultimate form of competition between Plains societies, which was one of the constituents of Plains ecology, diffused across the Plains within a pattern derived directly from the Eastern Woodlands, i.e. Central Algonquian-Santee Dakota, and modified slightly by the northwestern Plains groups, i.e. Cree, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre. Thus the differences between the Cree adaptation to the fur trade and the Central Algonquian adaptation to the fur trade should account in large measure for the variation within what we would call "Algonquian Plains" social organization.

As Mandelbaum and others have pointed out, the western Cree or Plains Cree share with their eastern cousins the basic Algonquian social organization, the major difference being in the degree of cross-cousin marriage (of the western Cree only the "Calling River People" were known to practice cross-cousin marriage) (Mandelbaum, 1940:233). Thus, as he indicates, the Cree brought this basic Algonquian social organization to and on to the Plains, indeed, with some groups effecting a compromise between Plains and Parkland life (p. 166-167). Further, some Cree groups carried this organization into direct symbiosis with the Hudson's Bay Compagny as in the case of the "House People". The importance of this aspect of Cree life is emphasized by this statement by Mandelbaum:

> ...the Cree became an amalgam of many different tribal stocks. Not only do we find the Assiniboin, Monsoni, Ojibway and the Algonkin to the east and south lived among the Cree, but even their enemies, the Dakota, the Athapascans, and the Blackfoot occasionally camped with and married into bands of the Cree. (p. 180)

The Cree, then, are playing the role of the Ottawa, with some modification, as the middlemen in the fur trade (p. 178) and as carriers of elements of the fur trade — scattered peoples and fur trade culture — to the west beyond Lake Winnipeg. As such it is difficult to envision "the Cree" as a homogeneous cultural group. They appear to be displaced persons moving westward carrying the effects of fur trade exploitation yet keeping in touch with their exploiters. As Mandelbaum emphasizes, they were:

> ...greatly dependent upon the aliens not only for arms, clothing and utensils, but even for provisions. From the self-sufficiency plane of

> aboriginal existence, by 1740 they have passed into a state of economic subservience. They were specialists in fur trapping. (p. 176)

The Cree, this amalgam of numerous groups, dependent upon the fur trade, were the people(s) who introduced the gun to the Blackfoot in the 1730's and were likewise engaged with the Mandan in 1736 (Ewers, 1955:16; Ewers, 1954:431). Indeed, as Ewers indicates these Northern Groups dominated the trade activities in the major trading center of the Missouri drainage, Mandan-Hidatsa, until 1805. He further notes:

> The nomadic tribes who traded at the two primary centers on the Missouri appear to be particularly eager to obtain quantities of corn to supplement their primary meat diet. In January, 1734 Assiniboin chiefs of the lower part of Lake Winnipeg told La Verandrye that they were leaving as soon as spring opened to go to the (Mandan) to buy corn. (p. 433)

By this time the Cree and Assiniboin were embroiled in conflict with the Sioux (Secoy, p. 69), yet the trade in Indian corn, the staple of the fur trade, goes on. By this time those Algonquians dispersed by the fur trade are on the move heading west into the Plains, armed with the few guns procured from Indian middlemen and incautious French fur traders (Secoy, p. 70). Simultaneously, the Missouri trade centers became foci for diffusion of fur trade wealth, after the fashion of Green Bay a century earlier (Jablow 1950:22). As Jablow notes the early explorers and traders of the American west were dependent upon this ready maize supply and slipped into the trade pattern existing along the Missouri. The inclusion of White traders in this pattern caused considerable friction and, as before, the nomads with access to trade goods and the settled farmers tried to forestall the trade between Whites and more westerly Indians (Ewers, 1954:443).

As Secoy notes the intrusion of the White trader into the Plains"... provided a powerful incentive for Plains people to include a Woodlands phase in their annual economic cycle, while the traders' presence made it unnecessary for the Plainsmen to leave their ecological zone and risk disaster by entering the Woodlands" (p. 70). As Ewers indicates the old middlemen recognized their impending doom and fought. Thus, on the Plains we have a recreation of the drama played successively to Indian audiences of the Upper St. Lawrence, Stadcona and Hochelaga, Huronia, the

Saguenay, Manitoulin Island, Green Bay, the Upper Mississippi and now the Missouri, a drama reflected in the ethnography of the typical or "True Plains" Indians.

The similarities among the various Plains tribes, especially the Algonquian and Siouan speakers, is derived *not* from the ecology of the Great Plains, but the ecology of fur trade exploitation.

We may see the cyclical pattern of tribes or linked bands as a necessity under fur trade conditions, whether on the Plains or in the Woodlands. On the one hand, seasonal climatic changes dictate the pattern of trade, the pattern of trapping, the pattern of subsistence. On the other hand, intertribal competition for maize, access to trade goods and freedom of passage was inherent in the trade pattern, if not fomented by fur traders and their Indian middlemen. And, as Ewers and Jablow indicate, providing for a trade surplus means economic specialization.

Patterns of leadership, councils and police functions are also related to trade exigencies. The dependence of Indian peoples upon trade goods and the necessity for flexibility in subsistence foreordains such mechanisms of social control. Although as good a case cannot be made for the similarities here, it is important to realize the role of individuation or fragmentation of traditional Indian groups in the fur trade. It was important to both White trader and Indian middleman to promote divisiveness among their clients to forestall effective resistance to their efforts to expand their markets. As Hickerson (1967:326) notes:

> The movement of the Algonkians into the Lake Winnipeg region was dictated not by the requirements of the aboriginal way of life, but by relationships with Euro-Americans. In fact, these migrations, which began in the late seventeenth century as a consequence of the expansion of French trade into the Lake Superior region, represented a profound contradiction of existing sociopolitical forms. The old patrilineal clans occupied particular territories on the Great Lakes and in the adjacent interior. Movement in search of fur to meet increasing demand meant the disruption of established territorial patterns and the breakdown of clans into nuclear or limited extended families. Once the habit of wandering had become firmly established, the family was based not on patrilineal descent, but on simply the affiliation of one or two junior adult members... to the senior man: hence it was patrilateral and usually virilocal, but with many uxorlocal instances. Attitudes could not help

> but reflect this change from corporate descent groups toward smaller groups — families — in actual or potential competition with each other.

Such atomization would necessitate the looseness of remaining communal structures exemplified by nineteenth century Central Algonquians and nineteenth century typical Plains peoples. As noted, the patri-clans of the Central Algonquians were primarily ceremonial organizations, not corporate groups with joint land tenure. Although this aspect may be post-contact, it indicates the adaptability of those societies. The complementarity of special interest societies and individual religious "packs" among the Central Algonquians is a further feature illustrating this phenomenon — religious life could be conducted either separately or in common; so too for the True Plains. The age-graded societies are remarkably close analogies to the landless clans of the Fox and Potawatomi, and the existence of societies *per se* among all the Plains people indicates the viability of such ritual organization, and the cause of the absence of clans among ten of the twelve True Plains societies.

The competition between families mentioned by Hickerson is reflected in the emphasis on achieved status among the Plainsmen, determined by success in the fur trade and aboriginal trade patterns; war honors, horses, and personal influence. The main difference between the Plains societies and the Northern and Central Algonquians is in the ultimate intensity of trade relations, allowing the accumulation of trade surplus and in the possibility of exchanging immobile capital, tools, utensils, maize, etc. for mobile capital, horses.

The main point to be raised, however, is that these changes, inspired by the fur trade, were conducted and framed in normal evolutionary terms, terms appropriate for these societies, societies with the common Woodlands Algonquian bases. For this reason it is essential to see the divergent paths of social change of the Cree Cluster, the Central Cluster, and the Cheyenne and Blackfoot Clusters as being essentially the same process: the response of kin based societies to their changing total ecology and the "profound contradictions" implied by these changes.

We may therefore conclude that in large measure the distinction between pre-contact and post-contact Plains Indian societies is

spurious and misleading. The peculiarity of Plains Indian societies is not primarily a result of "White-contact" nor is it primarily a matter of "independent invention" or "parallel development". It is the result of the efforts of European groups to exploit this continent and the potential of those exploited, the Woodland Algonquians, to adapt or respond to exploitation.

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