

COMPETITION AND WARFARE: FUNCTIONAL VERSUS HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS

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ABSTRACT/RESUME

The relationship between Sioux and Chippewa in the northern U.S.A. and southern Canada has previously been explained in functional terms as competition over game resources. The author re-examines this and suggests that the relationships among resources, competition and warfare must be seen as part of a system rooted in an historical framework including intergroup hostility.

La relation entre les Sioux et les Chippewa dans le nord des États-Unis et le sud du Canada a précédemment été expliquée dans les termes fonctionnelles comme une compétition au-dessus de jeu de ressources. L'auteur re-examine ceci et suggère que les relations touchant les ressources, la compétition et la guerre, doivent être vues comme une part du système de racine dans un cadre historique incluant l'hostilité entre les groupes.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will discuss the underlying thesis of H. Hickerson's description of Sioux-Chippewa relations in the period from 1780 to 1850. He wrote of "warfare . . . (as) a function of competition over game waged chiefly in the areas where prime game was most abundant . . ." in the forest-parkland of Minnesota and Wisconsin (Hickerson, 1965:62). This association will be examined in light of the historical relationship between the Cree and Assiniboiné Indians in the prairie-parkland ecotone of southwestern Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND

The geographic area of concern for this paper encompasses an area from the Upper Great Lakes region of northern Ontario, Minnesota and Wisconsin in the south and east, and southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the north and west. This area includes a wide range of ecological regimes such as the conifer-dominated southern Boreal Forest in the north, and the broad discontinuous zone of mixed deciduous forest to the south (Figure 1). To the south and west of these zones, the mixed grass prairie zone exists (Figure 1). These vegetation zones presented by Syms (1977:17) and largely supported by Hickerson's (1962; 1965; 1970) data are historical reconstructions that are somewhat at variance from the contemporary situation due to local conditions, the effect of large scale agricultural and logging operations and the suppression of fire and animal predation. Furthermore, it is highly probable that great fluctuations in the nature of the boundaries between vegetation zones occurred in response to climatic fluctuations through time as well as "short term" change by means of succession. It is also important to point out that these boundaries are in no way sharply delineated. Rather, they formed discontinuous ecotones that contained variable proportions of species associated with one community or another in response to local conditions. This discontinuous melding of vegetation also reflects the range of animal species that occupied the study area during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The mixture of animal and floral resources varied in response to seasonality and geography as well as the economic orientation of the native occupants of the region.

E.L. Syms (1977:29-32) summarizes and schematically presents the animal resources in southern Manitoba across these vegetative and physiographic boundaries (Figure 2). This presentation indicates that some specific resources such as bison, antelope and caribou seem to be specifically associated with particular vegetation regimes that varied on a seasonal basis. Other resources such as deer, carnivores and many rodent species appear to be ubiquitous although much more common in the Aspen Parkland ecotone. Therefore, it is evident on a seasonal basis at least, and as a function of the melding of prairie and forest species in general, that the Aspen Parkland ecotone zone contained much more highly concentrated and varied supplies of both faunal and floral resources than the adjacent vegetative communities.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF VEGETATION ZONES (Syms, 1977:17)

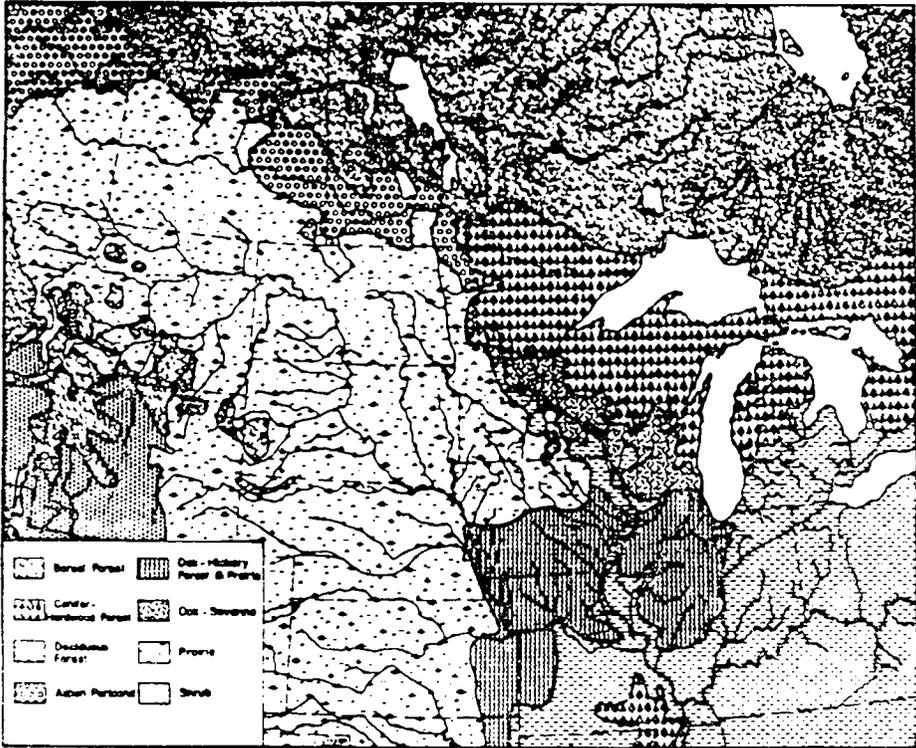


Figure 1 Map of Vegetation Zones (Syms 1977:17)

The vegetative and animal communities of Minnesota and Wisconsin retain many essential similarities with those described by Syms (1977) in Manitoba. From the reconstruction of the 18th and 19th century environment of this region according to Hickerson (1962, 1965, 1970), the importance of such Plains species as bison and antelope were much reduced and were largely limited to the prairie/parkland areas along the Red River (Figure 3). This limited distribution of such animals became even more significant with time as intensive hunting pressure cleared the area of such resources. As figures 1 and 3 indicate, the deciduous ecotone zone in Minnesota and Wisconsin was dominated by hardwoods rather than aspen. As the Minnesota/Wisconsin area is the headwaters of the Mississippi River and contains many large and small lakes (including access to Lakes Superior and Michigan), this area likely contains more water bodies than western Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This hydrological and topographic situation is also expected to have dramatically increased the importance of fish, wild rice and maple sugar as seasonal food staples. The coniferous forests of Wisconsin and Minnesota contained significant, but diffuse food sources such as moose, however the deciduous ecotone forests to the south contained much higher numbers of "edge browsing" ungulates such as virginia (white-tail) deer and wapiti (Hickerson, 1965:56-57). Hickerson does not refer specifically to wapiti (red deer, elk), however Banfield (1974:397-401) indicates that this large cervid did occupy Minnesota and Wisconsin and preferred the prairie and parkland habitats. The distribution of game animals between the Boreal Forest and the Deciduous Forest was not expressed as an abrupt change, but rather, a gradual increase in concentration as one moved south into the parkland. Hickerson (1965:57-59) has effectively shown that large but somewhat variable quantities of virginia deer occupied this Parkland region in excess of the numbers in adjacent zones. He further points out that these deer populations were concentrated into small areas on a seasonal basis during the "yard" in winter. This "yarding period" occurs when the snow becomes "so deep as to inhibit movement and shelter (is) necessary" (Hickerson, 1965:58). This predictable winter behavior made the deer particularly vulnerable to over-hunting and virtual extinction in large areas as destruction of one numerically concentrated yarding herd could destroy the deer stock occupying a large area in summer. Hickerson (1965:44) also points out that the deciduous parkland also contained the highest concentrations of fur bearers such as beaver, marten and muskrat. As was the case with the ungulate species, the concentrations of these resources exhibit a grading continuum from one vegetation zone to another.

In the Prairie-Parkland transition of southwestern Manitoba and southern Saskatchewan, the numerically most concentrated food source were bison (Syms, 1977; Arthur, 1975). These animals are not only large, thereby providing a large return of meat per animal, but are also herd animals. In the Aspen Parkland the availability of these animals varied on a seasonal basis. Arthur (1975:53-54) indicates that this seasonal movement was fairly localized on a regional basis in response to such factors as weather severity, fire and range conditions. On a general basis this seasonal movement expressed itself by the

FIGURE 2: A SCHEMATIC SUMMARY OF ASPEN PARKLAND ANIMAL RESOURCE POTENTIAL (Syms, 1977)

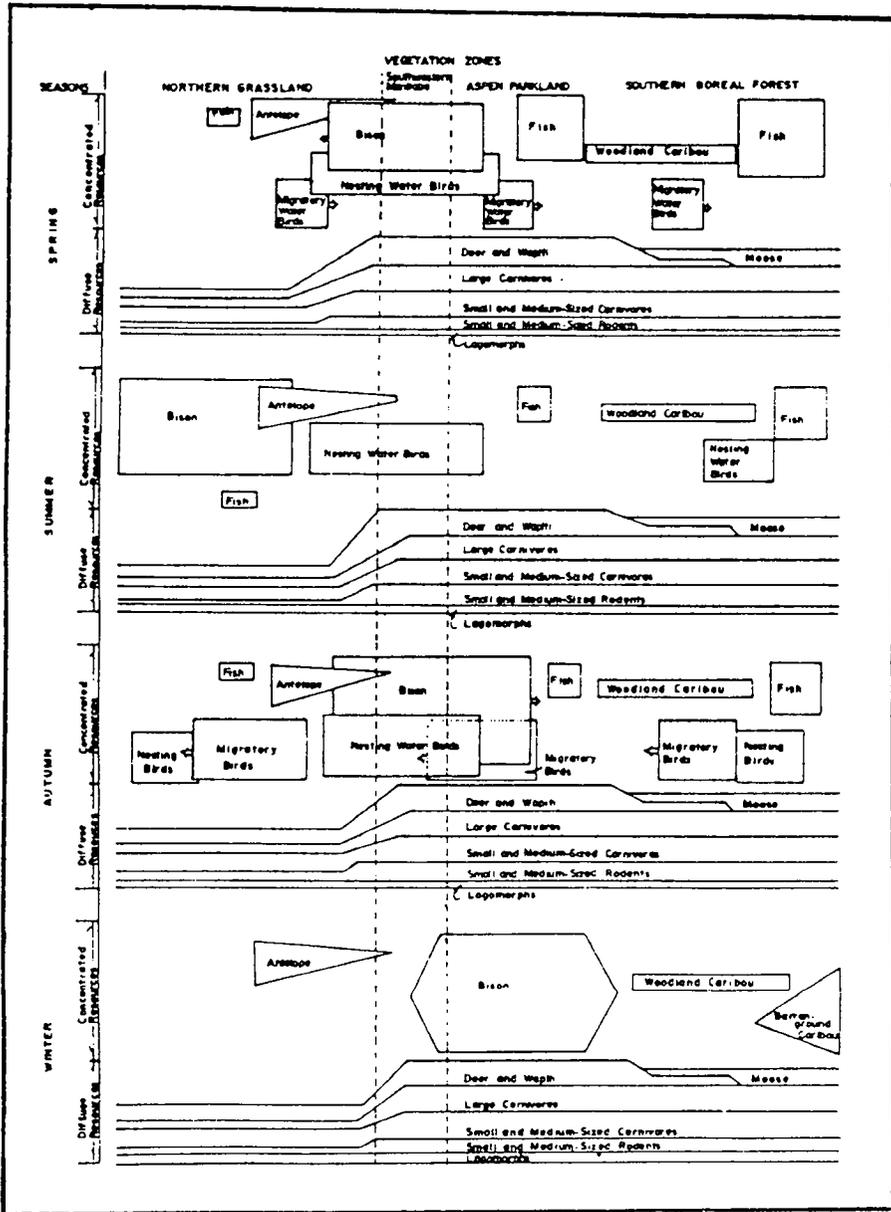


Figure 2 A Schematic Summary of Aspen Parkland Animal Resource Potential (Syms 1977)

FIGURE 3: THE VEGETATION ZONES IN WISCONSIN AND MINNESOTA (Hickerson, 1962:28)

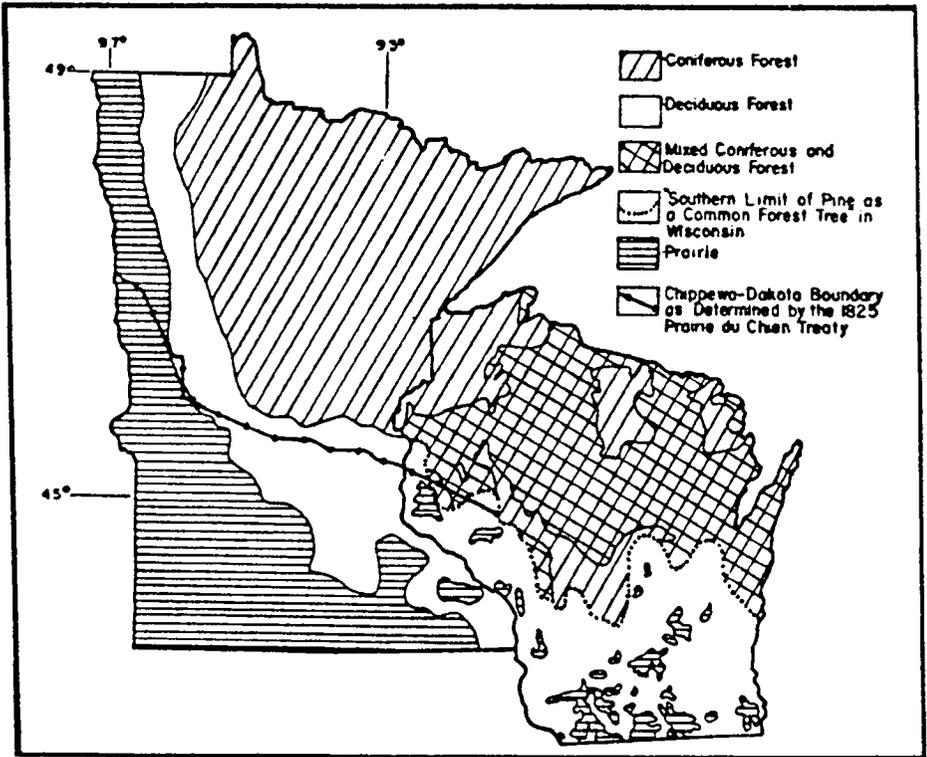


Figure 3 The Vegetation Zones in Wisconsin and Minnesota (Hickerson T962:28)

animals moving from the sheltered river valleys and parkland after the spring calving out onto the prairies for the spring rut. These herds occupied the grasslands throughout the summer, fall and early winter. With the increasing severity of the winter weather, the animals slowly moved back into the sheltered river valleys and the Aspen Parklands in midwinter. Arthur (1975:57.58 citing Cahalane, 1974:75) also indicates that "bison are (were) more sedentary in winter . . . seem more gregarious and have a tendency to form larger herds". Therefore, the winter season generally was characterized by predictably large numbers of bison being found grazing in the Aspen Parklands in a manner reminiscent of the yarding activities of the virginia deer. Also of importance in the Aspen Parklands of Manitoba and Saskatchewan were the large numbers of fur-bearing animals important to the fur trade, seasonally abundant fish resources (during the spawns), seasonally abundant migratory water birds (spring and fall) as well as variable quantities of wapiti, mule deer, antelope and sometimes moose (Figure 2).

In summary, the two regions for study were dominated by resource-rich ecotone zones between the prairie and the coniferous forest that contained a wide range of food resources that varied on a seasonal basis. The detail of the structure of these communities varied somewhat with virginia deer, wild rice and maple sugar being important resources on a seasonal basis in the southeast and large numbers of bison being seasonally concentrated in the northwest.

HISTORICAL OCCUPATION AND ABORIGINAL RELATIONS IN THE STUDY AREA

The contemporary understanding of the native people who historically occupied the study area is based upon the fur trade experience. Not only did this revolution have profound influences upon Indian society, the geopolitical relations between groups, and the nature and direction of contact with Europeans, but also, the ethnographic description of most Indian groups is actually the description of the social product of this culture contact. Reconstruction of the precontact situation and the implications of native involvement in the fur trade must necessarily be highly tentative due to the incomplete and often biased data base provided by early European observers.

Hickerson identifies two major Indian groups that, during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, occupied what was to become Minnesota and Wisconsin. In general, the relationship between these groups, the Chippewa (Saulteaux, Ojibwa) and the Santee Dakota (Sioux), can be characterized by mutual hostility (Hickerson, 1965:44). On the basis of early French colonial and religious documents, Hickerson (1970:12) identifies the land occupied by the Chippewa at the time of initial contact as being around Sault Ste. Marie, along the southerly and easterly shores of Lake Superior, the north shore of Lake Michigan and the north shore of Lake Huron (Figure 4). The Sioux occupied the interior of Minnesota and Wisconsin to the south and west of the Chippewa lands (Figure 4). The Chippewa at the time of first contact with Europeans are characterized as being organized into semi-autonomous hunting groups of 100

FIGURE 4: EARLY TRIBAL DISTRIBUTIONS (APPROXIMATE)

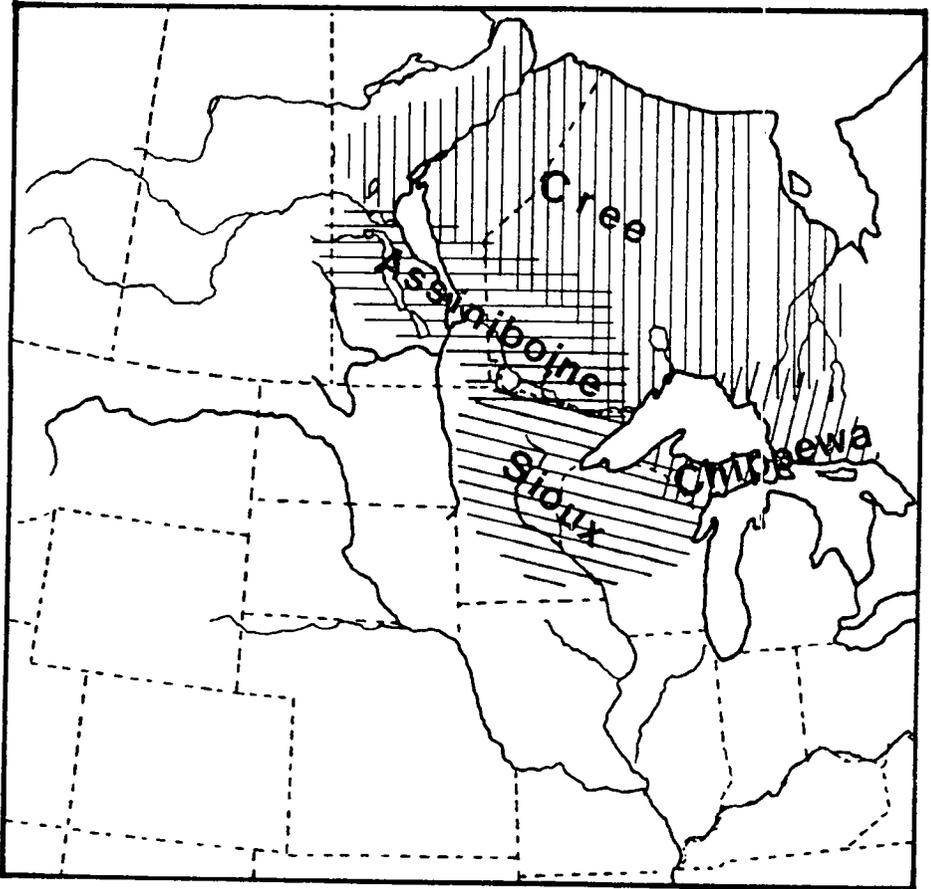


Figure 4 Early Tribal Distributions (Approximate)

to 150 individuals (Hickerson, 1970:39). These Indians occupied moderately-sized villages located at strategic positions in order to capitalize upon reliable fisheries that could support large numbers of people. These seasonal congregations of people provided the opportunities for religious rites such as the "Feast of the Dead", and the establishment and/or maintenance of alliance bonds by means of kin ties, clan membership and trade. During the winter these villages divided into smaller hunting groups and dispersed in order to exploit the more diffuse terrestrial game in the forests. The Sioux occupied the margins of the many lakes of the interior in small village camps and supplemented fish and wild rice with terrestrial game. Anderson (1980:17) makes the suggestion that the Sioux were much more mobile and grouped into smaller units than the Chippewa due to the former's reliance upon diffuse terrestrial game.

Hickerson (1970:39) asserts that during this precontact time there existed a tradition of general and periodic warfare. The Chippewa were part of an alliance with other Upper Great Lakes Algonkians such as the Cree, Ottawa and Huron and possibly with Siouan speakers such as the Winnibago and Assiniboine against the Iroquois to the east and the Dakota to the west.

As early as 1640, the Chippewa of the Sault Ste. Marie area came into indirect and then direct contact with French exploration, religious and trade parties. With this initial period of contact, the Chippewa became important trappers and middlemen as part of the French trade system. Through time and with the development of closer and more reliable contacts with French fur traders, the Chippewa villages grew more consolidated as part of a general trend involving the breakup of the local clan groups and their coming together to cluster in new large village centres (Hickerson, 1970:53). This early involvement in the fur trade provided the Chippewa with great wealth, access to firearms and a new sense of social solidarity that greatly enhanced their prestige, and military and diplomatic power.

The Dakota who occupied the interior to the south and west were literally cut off from European goods by an umbrella of enemies to the north and east. Furthermore, in the context of the rising power of the Chippewa, the Sioux were particularly vulnerable with their comparatively small-scale hunting, fishing and gathering lifestyle along the lakes and rivers (Figure 4). Given this situation, the Chippewa and the Sioux established a "peace treaty" in 1680 (Hickerson, 1970:65-66). By this means, the Sioux were finally able to gain access to European goods by bartering furs with the Chippewa for used goods which the latter had acquired from the French. In contrast to Hickerson, Anderson (1980: 24-25) makes the point that the Sioux had access to French goods through trade posts on the Mississippi River as early as 1685. He further suggests that these posts had the net effect of causing a southwestward movement of the Sioux into the prairie/parkland fringe. Anderson (1980:26) also suggests that the Sioux were at this time only peripherally involved in the trade due to the "boom-bust" cycle of the French trade system. In his words the Sioux were preoccupied with bison hunting and warfare with groups to the west rather than pursuing an unstable living by fur trapping in the eastern woodlands.

In any case, the Sioux-Chippewa treaty enabled the latter to enter the

forests of Minnesota to the south and west of Lake Superior in order to hunt and trap to supplement the supplies from their own territories (Hickerson, 1970:66). Furthermore, it can be suggested that the westward movement of the Sioux also had the effect of "vacating" land in the east which could be easily occupied by the Chippewa. This peace also encouraged the French to expand slowly westward in relative safety.

With the continued expansion of the French around Lake Superior, throughout the Rainy River area and into southern Manitoba as well as up the Mississippi River during the 1730's, the Sioux gained direct access to European goods. This development effectively neutralized the middleman position of the Chippewa and left them in a weakened economic position in a resource-depleted home territory. Not surprisingly, they redoubled their expansionist efforts into the territories of the Sioux along the south shore of Lake Superior (Figure 4) (Hickerson, 1970:66). Since the Sioux now had an independent source of European goods, the treaty between the groups broke down with a renewal of hostilities by 1736. Anderson (1980:30-34) suggests that this renewal of hostilities can also be related to a revitalization of the fur trade in the mid 1700's which encouraged some of the Sioux groups to re-occupy the woodlands as part of a fur exploitation pattern.

The Chippewa, as part of their westward expansion in the context of hostility, quickly re-established and maintained alliances with the Cree and Assiniboine Indians to the north and west against the Sioux. This escalation of competition over land and resources resulted in widespread warfare throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin between 1736 and ca. 1751 (Hickerson, 1970:71). This warfare also regularly spilled over into southern Manitoba (James, 1956).

During the period between ca. 1751 and ca. 1780 this warfare slowly turned in the favor of the Chippewa as the eastern Chippewa extended their territories westward along the south shore of Lake Superior into northeastern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin (Figure 5). At the same time the "Pillager Chippewa" of the Rainy River Region expanded southward. This resulted in the establishment of Chippewa control and occupancy of the land in a band extending from the major wild rice lakes in the northwest such as Red Lake, Leech Lake and Sandy Lake, along the St. Croix River and as far east as Lac du Flambeau (Figure 5) (Hickerson, 1962:12). The victorious Chippewa quickly established permanent villages along these lakes and continued to push further south and west in order to provide themselves with a sufficient hunting territory to feed their large semi-sedentary populations and to acquire furs for the fur trade.

This struggle for control of the land in the south and western portions of Minnesota and Wisconsin achieved a "debatable zone" or "hostile frontier" along the deciduous parkland zone between the coniferous forest and the prairie that was described earlier (Figure 5).

In summary, by the middle of the 18th century the two groups had reverted to their original military hostility in addition to competition for food and fur (Hickerson, 1965:48). This competition was even more enhanced as these needs required that both groups have access to the resource-rich deciduous parkland that coincided with the buffer zone between them (Figures 3 and 5). Hickerson

(1965:48) characterizes this mutual need as the hunting "preoccupation of (the) Sioux and Chippewa with the virginia or white-tailed deer". The Chippewa increasingly needed this seasonally concentrated food source to supplement the food supply for their large sedentary villages in the winter when fish and wild rice supplies grew short (and the deer were yarding to combat the deep snow). This need grew more intense through time as hunting and trapping pressure in the coniferous forest reduced the supplies in the lands that they controlled. The Sioux also depended heavily upon the white-tailed deer for food in order to supplement the dwindling bison herds along the Red River and to supply these prairie-fringe Indians with fur-bearing animals used as a trade commodity (Hickerson, 1965:44). Hickerson (1965:51) also maintains that the small virginia deer rather than the wapiti were the primary prey in the war zone because they were easily hunted in winter and were small enough to be transported quickly and easily back to the safe territories.

This historic situation of economic necessity, competition for scarce resources and warfare provide the basis for the three major points of Hickerson's (1965; 1962:12-29; 1970:91-119) argument.

- 1) Competition for scarce or valuable resources located in concentrated forms in the deciduous parkland initiated and/or escalated the hostility between the Sioux and Chippewa throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries.
- 2) As the rich parkland area was a war zone, neither group could safely penetrate the area in order to exploit the resources on an intensive basis.
- 5) This limited exploitation due to warfare had the effect of maintaining and managing the resources on a "sustained yield" basis. This was evidenced when a truce was declared in 1825 (Prairie du Chien treaty) that divided the parkland between the two groups and permitted safe hunting (Figure 5). Within three years, the hunting pressure had depleted the deer supplies, resulting in starvation (Hickerson, 1965:52-53). In response to these shortages, individuals began hunting out of their territory and hostilities broke out again in 1839. This renewed hostility again created a war zone that functioned as a game preserve whereupon the deer again became plentiful.

These assertions led Hickerson (1965:62) to conclude that ". . . warfare was a function of competition over game and was waged chiefly in the areas where prime game was most abundant. . ."

This interpretation of the nature of Chippewa/Sioux relations contrasts sharply with the nature of the relationship between the Assiniboine and the Cree Indians. The Assiniboine are part of the Siouan linguistic group that, despite their links with the Dakota, broke away from the latter and formed a

military alliance with the Cree Indians. Ray (1974:12), Hlady (1960:2-35) and several other authors have cited early French records to suggest that the Assiniboine occupied an expansive area with an easterly margin approximately 100 miles west of Lake Nipigon, throughout the Rainy River-Lake of the Woods area and as far west as the Carrot River/Touchwood Hills area of eastern Saskatchewan in the late 17th century (Figure 4). This range is rather sketchy and tentative due to the paucity of documentation. They are considered to have been a distinct group at least as early as 1640, and occupied the most northerly of the Siouan territories adjacent to the Cree (Ray 1974:4). The Cree at this early date appear to have occupied a vast expanse of land from Lake Nipigon to the James Bay region in the east and as far west as the land between the lower Nelson and Saskatchewan Rivers (Figure 4). Ray (1974:4-5) presents one version of the situation that led the Assiniboine to divide from their southern kinsmen and establish peace with the Cree. The catalyst for this split is suggested to be rooted in the fact that after 1670 the Cree gained direct access to European arms and goods via the newly established Hudson's Bay Company to the north. This increased military strength on the part of the Cree forced the Assiniboine who occupied the frontiers to seek peace by forming new alliances with the Cree against the Sioux in order to avoid annihilation.

In any case, the alliance developed at some time prior to the late 17th century as both French and British traders record the violent nature of the hostility among the Indian groups, and the Hudson's Bay Company began receiving joint Cree and Assiniboine trading parties at their bayside posts. The involvement of the Cree and Assiniboine in the Hudson's Bay Company middle-man trade tended to influence a general northwesterly movement of these groups rather than to the east to the French posts (Ray, 1974:13). This movement gave better access to and tighter control over the major north-south transportation routes through the Nelson River system that drained Lake Winnipeg, the Saskatchewan River and the Red River systems. Access to European goods as well as the formation of this strong military, trade and social alliance allowed the Cree and Assiniboine to expand their territories at the expense of their Gros Ventre and Blackfoot enemies to the southwest, the Sioux to the south and the Chippewyan to the north.

By the 1760's the Cree and Assiniboine alliance controlled a territory that straddled the parkland, with control of a substantial portion of the southern Boreal Forest and the northeastern portion of the Plains (Figure 6) (Ray, 1974: 22). During this period of expansion and realignment in the Aspen Parkland, Ray identifies two cycles of resource exploitation involving these two groups which he illustrated in Figure 7.

The accounts of both the French and English . . . suggest that there were two cycles of exploitation . . . One of these was based in the forests and parklands and was most common among the Cree and certain bands of the Assiniboine who maintained direct contacts with the Hudson's Bay Company posts. This cycle was one in which the tribal bands spent the warmer months of the

FIGURE 6: CREE AND ASSINIBOINE CONTROL OF THE ASPEN PARKLAND (Ray, 1974:22)

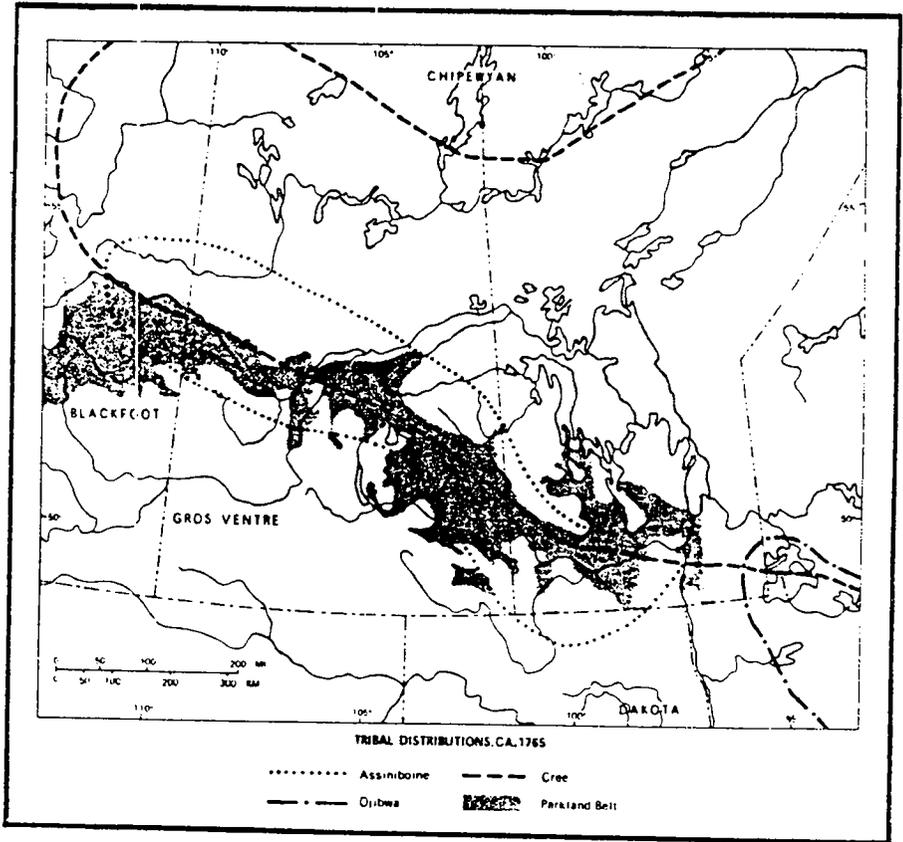


Figure 6 Cree and Assiniboine control of the Aspen Parkland (Ray 1974:22)

year in the forests. At that time the men made their trading expeditions to the bay while their families fished and hunted along the shores of lakes and rivers in the forest land . . . In late August, September, and October they hunted in the wooded areas adjacent to the prairies, taking moose and trapping beaver. From November to March they moved into the parkland belt proper where they often lived with the Assiniboine, hunting bison and trapping wolves and fox. In March, April and May they reassembled along the lakes and rivers to build their canoes, trap furs, fish and hunt waterfowl.

In contrast to this scheduling of activities by the Woodland-Parkland Indians, there was another cycle having a Grassland-Parkland orientation which was typical of the Assiniboine groups who had only indirect contact with the Hudson's Bay Company through the Cree and Assiniboine middlemen, or, in other cases, who traded principally with the French. These bands commonly resorted to the parklands in the winter season to seek shelter, hunt bison, and trap wolves. In the spring they often set up fishing weirs along the principal rivers of the parklands, such as the Assiniboine to take Sturgeon. At this time, and often extending into early summer, raiding parties were sent into Siouan and Gros Ventre territory. In middle and late summer the tribal populations shifted to the open grasslands to prey on the large bison herds. Toward the end of the summer and into autumn, even into early winter in some instances, a trading trip was made to the Mandan villages to obtain Indian corn. Upon completion of these expeditions, the two groups returned to the parklands, except those who wintered in the scattered outliers of the forest zone, such as in Turtle Mountain. It was through these overlapping economic systems., that the tribes of the grasslands, forests and parklands came into contact with each other... (Ray, 1974:46).

While Ray's model suffers somewhat from over-simplicity with regard to the seasonal movement of bison and the social organization of hunting bands, it does have great utility in illustrating that:

- 1) the Aspen Parkland formed something of a common boundary between the Cree and Assiniboine that was essential for the seasonal round of both groups;
- 2) the Cree and Assiniboine bands were in competition for resources during the winter when both groups as well as their prey congregated in the Aspen Parkland and;
- 3) despite the competition and joint exploitation of the bison and fur resources of the area, the contact did not cause warfare

FIGURE 7: TWO CYCLES OF RESOURCE EXPLOITATION (Ray, 1974)

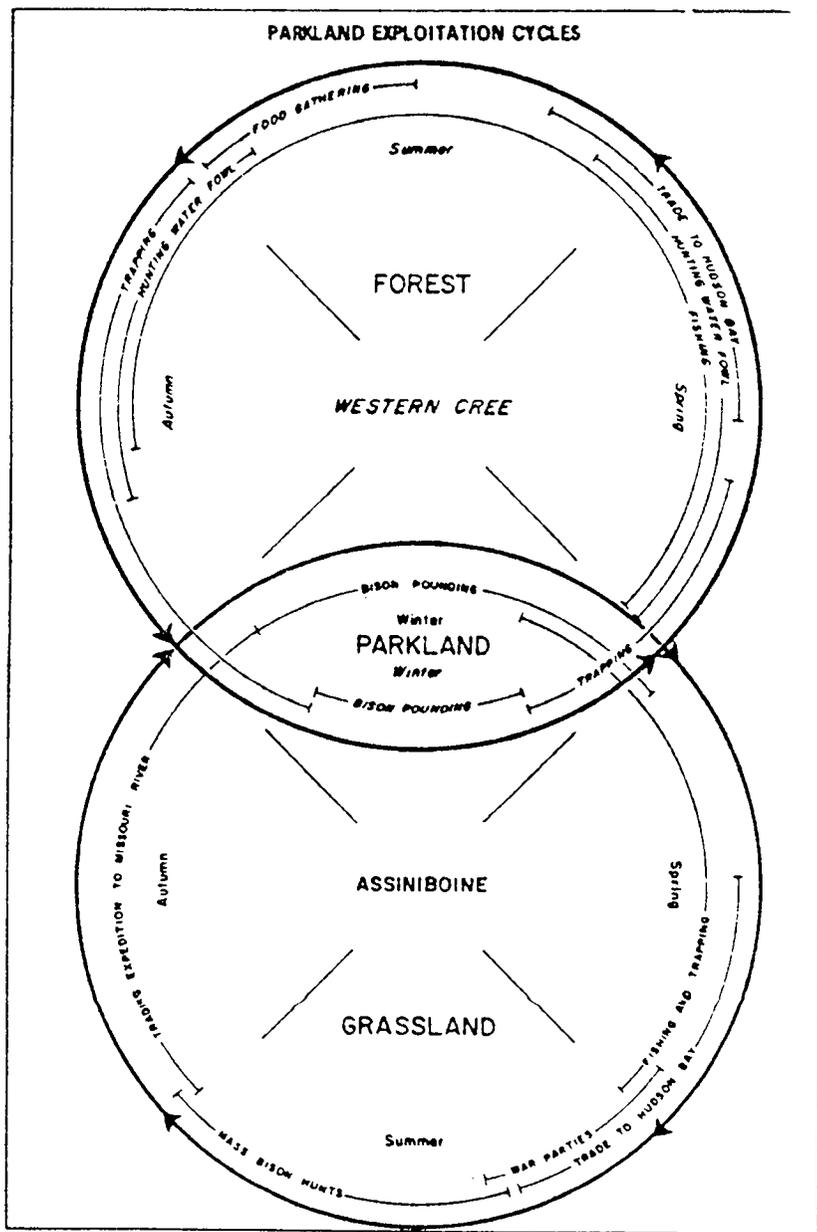


Figure 7 Two Cycles of Resource Exploitation (Ray 1974)

as Hickerson suggests was the case to the southwest, but rather provided the basis of social interchange, trade, and intermarriage.

Ray (1974:104) also points out that after 1763 and with the development of an inland European post system, the Cree and Assiniboine lost their economic position as middlemen. With this development, most Assiniboine and many Cree (Mandelbaum, 1940) became involved in new activities including the supply of provisions to the trading companies. This resulted in a general movement of the Assiniboine to the south and west and the Cree to the north and west onto the prairie. The lands that were vacated in the Red River Valley, the lower Assiniboine River and the Manitoba Interlake (Ray, 1974:104) were quickly occupied by the western Ojibwa (Chippewa) who by this time were allied with the Assiniboine and Cree against the Sioux. Ray (1974:104) further points out that the treaty for trade purposes between the Mandan, and occasionally the Blackfoot, with the Assiniboine and Cree ended at this time simply because the former two groups no longer needed the latter two as suppliers of goods and as they grew to be increasingly in competition with them for control of the bison lands. The close alliance between the Assiniboine and the Cree does not appear to have ever been threatened by this competition.

The non-appearance of hostility along ethnic lines is possibly related to the three levels of interrelationship that Sharrock (1974:95-122) identifies as characterizing Assiniboine/Cree relations. She describes the initial patterns of politico-economic alliance that existed from the 1640's to the early 1700's as being primarily war and trade alliances between semi-autonomous, adjacent bands. The primary features of this level of alliance do not seem dissimilar to that which characterized the early Chippewa/Sioux alliance as part of the fur trade. These alliance structures probably experienced periodic tensions related to distrust of the other parties.

Sharrock (1974:105-106) points out that by the 1680's the Cree and Assiniboine had become something more than allied in trade. In fact, they seem to have become partners in trade with increasingly more cooperation in joint trade ventures, higher incidences of bilingualism and the initial establishment of marriage bonds between members of the two groups. By the mid and late 18th century these closely allied bands appear to have occasionally formed "poly-ethnic co-residence units" (Sharrock, 1974:109) which evidenced no distinct political or social factionalization along ethnic lines.

By the early 1800's some "polyethnic co-residence units", became so integrated that the members of these bands "spoke both languages, but neither correctly" (Sharrock, 1974:112). Contemporary descriptions also suggest that such bands exhibiting "fused ethnicity" also evidenced a mixed identity where-by outsiders referred to them as "half Cree-half Assiniboine" and described them as possessing mixed Cree and Assiniboine cultural traits (Sharrock, 1974: 111-112).

COMPETITION AND WARFARE: FUNCTIONAL AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

In conclusion, the author finds the functional relationship between competition and warfare to be an oversimplification of Sioux/Chippewa relations. There is no question that Hickerson has effectively illustrated that during the early 1800's the hostility between these groups was characterized by competition over the resources of the parkland that formed the hostile frontier between them. Unfortunately, Hickerson fails to fully grasp the significance of the wealth of ethno-historic data that he has gathered that illustrate the dynamics of change in intergroup relations that were the product of the fur trade. As Hickerson points out, during the proto-historic period the Chippewa and Sioux were enemies; the former being part of a larger Algonkian alliance against the Sioux to the south and west and the Iroquois to the east. At the same time the Assiniboine and Cree were likely also on opposite sides of the alliance system; the Assiniboine being still allied with the other divisions of the Sioux while the Cree were probably part of the Algonkian alliance.

With the development of French contact with the Chippewa and British contact with the Cree, the power, wealth and prestige of both Indian groups were greatly enhanced. Both of these groups were able to use this access to European goods to develop an economic role as middlemen. The eastern Sioux and Assiniboine both found themselves in a position where they were cut off from European goods and facing a militarily superior hostile force. In both cases, alliances were established that provided the weaker parties with access to European goods. It should be pointed out, however, that the actual time and reason for the Assiniboine break with the Sioux is not known. In the case of the Sioux and Chippewa this involved a peace, the establishment of trade and the latter group gaining hunting access to lands controlled by the Sioux. In the case of the Assiniboine and Cree, the alliance involved a trade and military alliance against the Siouan people to the south. Clearly, the Assiniboine went further than the other Siouan people as they not only established trade alliances, but also made war on their former allies and kinsmen, and after a period of interaction slowly grew more and more integrated with their new allies through intermarriage and to-residence.

The peace between the Dakota and the Chippewa was quite short-lived due in part to the expansion of the French trade system so that the Sioux had direct access to European goods and in part to the fact that the Chippewa were making increasingly serious incursions into the lands of the Sioux. Within fifty years of the establishment of peace, the alliance broke down resulting in a renewal of violent hostility. The Chippewa continued to advance southwestward, pushing the Sioux out until by the late 18th century they controlled most of the northern and eastern parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Chippewa faced the Sioux across a narrow war zone that corresponded to the deciduous parkland. Furthermore, the Chippewa by this time had joined the Assiniboine/Cree alliance against their common enemy.

The benefits of the Assiniboine/Cree alliance were of a much longer dura-

tion than that of the Sioux/Chippewa alliance. With the exception of the sparse network of French posts throughout Manitoba and northwestern Ontario, they were the sole suppliers of European goods in the interior until the 1770's with the penetration of the area by Anglo-Scottish Montreal traders and later by the Hudson's Bay Company. Presumably, the development of kin ties, co-residence, economic co-operation and the hostility of the Sioux aided in the maintenance of the Assiniboine/Cree alliance.

The hostility between the Sioux and Chippewa in the war zone of Minnesota and Wisconsin in the late 18th and early 19th centuries may indeed have been escalated by competition for food and fur resources, but care must be taken to view this competition and warfare in light of the long tradition of warfare, the social meaning of war as a vehicle to prestige and wealth, and the social and economic implications of Native involvement in the fur trade. Other historical variables affecting this continued hostility may also be implied by a passage from a Hudson's Bay Company post journal for Brandon House in 1806.

March 22, 1806: Two of the N.W. Co. men arrived from Summerberry River [Red River] with a letter for Mr. Rocheblave from Mr. Henry who informs him that the Americans amounting to 150 men coming up the Mississippi last fall stopped at River St. Peter the residence of Sioux nation of which they hung 2 and flogged 3 for killing their traders last spring and obliged them to make peace with the Saulteux nation¹

No doubt such actions likely served to enflame the hostility between Native groups and such an enforced treaty would not be seriously observed by either party.

The temptation to consider the environmental context of scarce resources as the "trigger" to competition between groups must be resisted. In the case of the Sioux and the Chippewa this competition expressed itself in the renewal of hostility in the context of a long tradition of warfare; the expansion of the Chippewa into a territory that the Sioux considered their own; and the coincidence of a war zone between these groups within a rich ecotone zone that provided both parties with badly needed resources. Hickerson's analysis articulates the relationship between these variables, and points out that these resources were sustained despite the hunting pressure from both parties only because of warfare. That is, warfare had the "effect" of limiting access to and destruction of the resources. Hickerson's statement that warfare was a function of the competition for these resources ignores consideration of warfare between these people in the context of a tradition of hostility. This emphasis on the "effect" (or "function") leads the reader to draw the conclusion that what Hickerson is implying is that an environmental factor (i.e., the concentration of scarce resources) caused competition, which led to warfare, which in turn "functioned" to protect and maintain the scarce resource. Any disruption of this cycle, such as the establishment of peace, resulted in the decimation of the

resource and starvation for the people until the resumption of hostilities (due to competition for game) re-created the "preserve" wherein the resource could regenerate itself.

This functionalist interpretation creates a serious theoretical problem as it implies an explanation of the "origin" of the phenomenon divorced of its historical and social context and centering upon an environmental context.

This environmental context is seen as the "origin" of the competition that manifests itself in warfare, which in turn, maintains the resource. Rather, the relationship among resources, competition and warfare must be considered as an "operation in a system" (Diener, 1980:424) whose "origins" must be considered in the context of the larger historical social framework of intergroup relations characterized by hostility in the Upper Great Lakes region in the protohistoric period.

NOTES

1. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Public Archives of Manitoba: HBCA, PAM, B.22/a/13 Brandon House Journal 1805-06.

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