

ANIMAL ARRAYS AND GEOMETRIC PICTORIALS

Commercial Aspects of Plains Painting

This study examines nine unusual Plains pictorial paintings and seeks to explain their departure from the norm. Pictorial paintings had very specific functions in traditional Plains societies, and their visual vocabulary was much shaped by those functions. For example, autobiographical war paintings were shaped by their function to elicit social recognition, and supernatural imagery to summon spirit helpers. Whether historical or mythological, the essential purpose of these paintings was to record or narrate events. The subject matter of pictorials was much more comprehensively related through oral recitation, however, than through pictures. Perhaps as a consequence, pictorial narration was conveyed with great economy. Draftsmen did not portray scenes as they appeared to the eye, but invented a “visual shorthand” or pictography (Rodee 1965: 219; Dunn 1968: 30–31; Petersen 1971: 56). Types of painting tended to be compartmentalized; geometric imagery was separate from pictorial imagery, and war exploit imagery was separate from supernatural spirit helper imagery. The works in question exhibit a significant departure from these basic conventions, particularly by the presence of non-narrative animal arrays and mixed geometric/pictorial imagery. These features, along with other data, suggest that the paintings were executed for commercial reasons. The shift away from traditional functions and toward meeting expectations of European viewers would appear to provide a reasonable framework for understanding the works in question. Outside of the study of ledger drawings, the influence of the European collector on Plains painting

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Fig. 1 Piegan painting collected by James Aull, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (cat.no. 19/8139). Illustration based on tracing from the original.

has not received due consideration. This neglect is surprising in view of the large proportion of extant Plains paintings which were made for sale to non-Natives.

The Paintings

The first of the nine works is a Piegan painted hide (Fig. 1) deposited in the National Museum of the American Indian (cat.no 19/8139) by James Aull, who, according to the museum record, received the painting from I. G. Baker in 1875. Baker ran a very successful trading post in Fort Benton, Montana. The Aull painting has a number of features which typify Blackfoot war exploit robes. In the lower register the hero of the painting sits resplendent on his horse before a row of weapons which he presumably captured from the enemy. Elsewhere, there are two additional tallies of war tro-

phies. A warrior shoots two enemies with bow and arrow. War medicine in the form of decorated animal pelts trail behind three mounted men in the upper right of the painting. In the center a man performs a feat of bravery by riding a bison.¹ The rest of the painting is interspersed by an array of animals, totaling perhaps twelve species. Assortments of animals, horses excluded, which appear to have no narrative function is a significant feature of the paintings under consideration.

The second painting in the series (Fig. 2), also in the National Museum of the American Indian (cat.no. 11/3195), was presented by George Bird Grinnell. According to the museum record the painting is an autobiography of Red Crane, acquired by

¹ Catlin recorded a similar feat showing man standing simultaneously on his horse and a bison (Truettner 1979: 260, fig. 413).

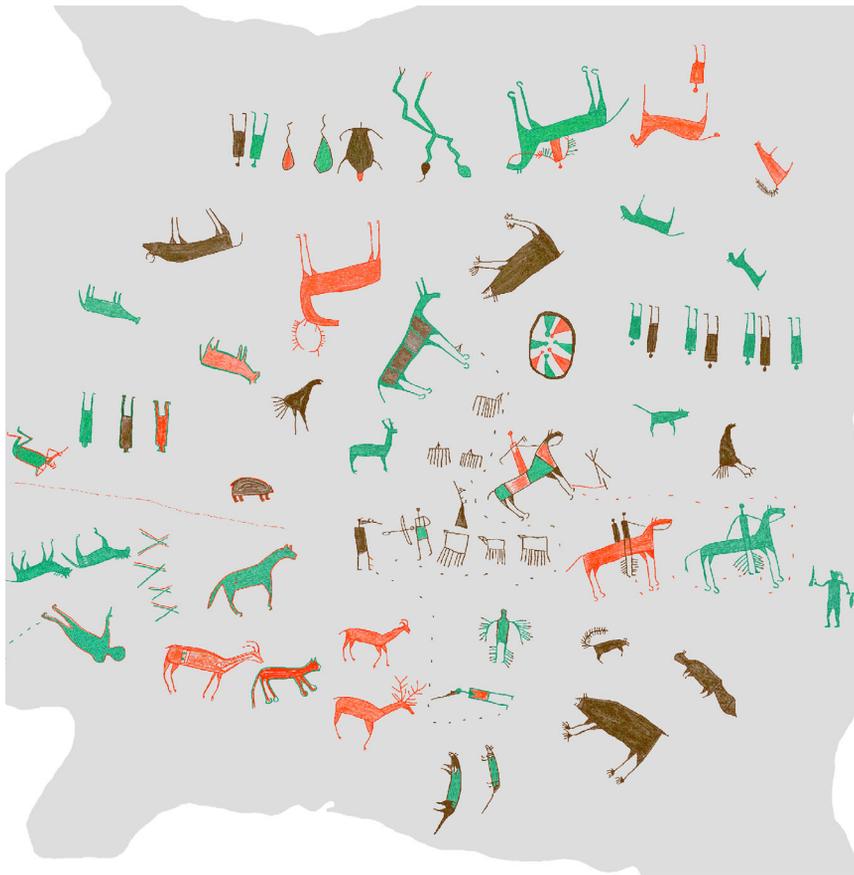


Fig. 2 Piegan painting collected by George Bird Grinnell, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (cat.no. 11/3195). Illustration based on tracing from the original. Published in Grinnell (1896: 244).

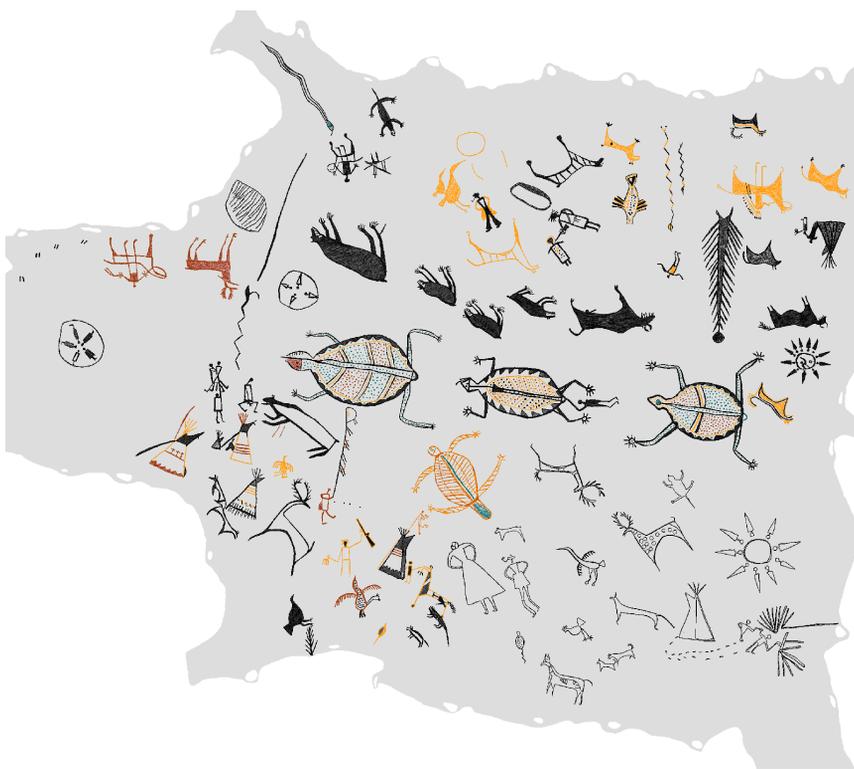


Fig. 3 Blackfoot (?) painting collected by Gen. M. F. Force, held by the Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH (cat.no. 1894.1209). Illustration based on tracing from the original. Published on the cover of Dillingham and Griffin (1976).

Joseph Kipp for Grinnell in 1889. Joseph Kipp was a trader at the I. G. Baker trading post, the same place the Aull painting originated. The central area of the hide displays a series of Red Crane's exploits connected by his footprints. In this continuous narrative sequence the hero fights the enemy and captures six scalps, a gun, and a long-eared mule. Hands in the shape of bird tracks denote the act of capture. To the left, another set of footprints delineate the events leading to the capture of a picketed horse. Above is an oval representing a patch of brush in which Red Crane and six companions protected themselves from attacking enemies. Grinnell (1896: 244) persuasively interpreted these exploits in his caption to the painting, however, his explanations for the appearance of animals are less convincing. For example, he describes the figures below the central narrative sequence as "strange adventures in which a beaver, a squirrel, a fisher and an otter had taken part." In total the painting contains twenty-eight animals, representing some fifteen species. Like the previous painting, these animals seem to float in space with no narrative connections.

General M. F. Force donated his collection of Indian artifacts, including a painted bison hide (Fig. 3), to the Cincinnati Art Museum (cat.no. 1894.1209). While this painting contains perhaps a dozen war exploits, thirty-eight animal figures representing at least eighteen species predominate. Along the central spine is a row of three turtles, where the quillwork strip is usually sewn. The relationship between the human figure and the middle turtle may refer to a mythological tale, perhaps the Blackfoot origin myth described by MacLean (1893: 165) The line of turtles symmetrically bisects the painting, while the remaining animals appear to be randomly dispersed over the picture surface.

Animals also dominate the Mandan painted bison hide collected by Prince Maximilian in 1833 (Fig. 4), currently in the Ethnological Museum Berlin (cat.no. IV B 205). Maximilian may have had his eye on this painting when he noted in his journal: "The most beautiful paintings seem to be found among the Crow, Mandan and Minitari" (Wied 1832-1834, 2: 267). It contains thirty-nine animals representing ten species, very life-like and full of personality. The two men with bison headdresses and large shields in the lower right depict bison dancers. Members of the Buffalo Bull Society

staged an impromptu dance to the delight of Maximilian and others at Fort Clark in 1833. Bodmer's sketches of the event shows dancers with similar regalia (Goetzman 1984: 298–299). On the left of the hide are two shield bearing figures which may also be of a ceremonial nature. The only readily identifiable war exploit on the hide is displayed near the tail, a figure with a horned headdress counting coup on an enemy with his ramrod.

Friedrich Köhler sold the painted hide tipi cover (Fig. 5) to the Prussian State in 1845, and it is today preserved in the Ethnological Museum Berlin (IV B 196). Köhler stated that it is a "medicine tent," but gave no tribal designation (Bolz and Sanner 1999: 83). Little is known about Köhler except that he was "valet de Chambre" for Adolphe Fourier de Bacourt, a French Ambassador to Washington from 10 June 1840 to 11 August 1842 (Sturtevant 1956: 322–223). Unlike the preceding paintings, the Köhler tipi has a strong symmetrical composition, dominated by a central pipe flanked by large radiating circles. Adding to the symmetry are horned snakes and cranes on either side of the pipe. Horses evenly spaced around the base of the tipi further balance the composition. The remaining figures appear to be randomly dispersed much like the other paintings.



Fig. 4 Mandan painting collected by Maximilian Prince of Wied, Ethnological Museum Berlin (IV B 205). Illustration based on tracing from the original. Published in Schuster (1987).

There are a total of fifty-eight animals, representing fifteen species. Twelve have markings which usually denote supernatural powers, including waist bands,² heart-lines, horns, and wavy lines. There are several war narrative scenes on the tipi as well.

Heinrich Balduin Möllhausen, a well known painter of Native American life, made three exploratory trips to the

² Schuster (1987: 38) described these and other markings denoting the supernatural.



Fig. 5 Sioux(?) tipi cover collected by Köhler in the Ethnological Museum Berlin (IV B 196). Illustration based on Weygold's drawing and slides kindly taken by Eckehard Dolinski. Published in Bolz (1999: 81).

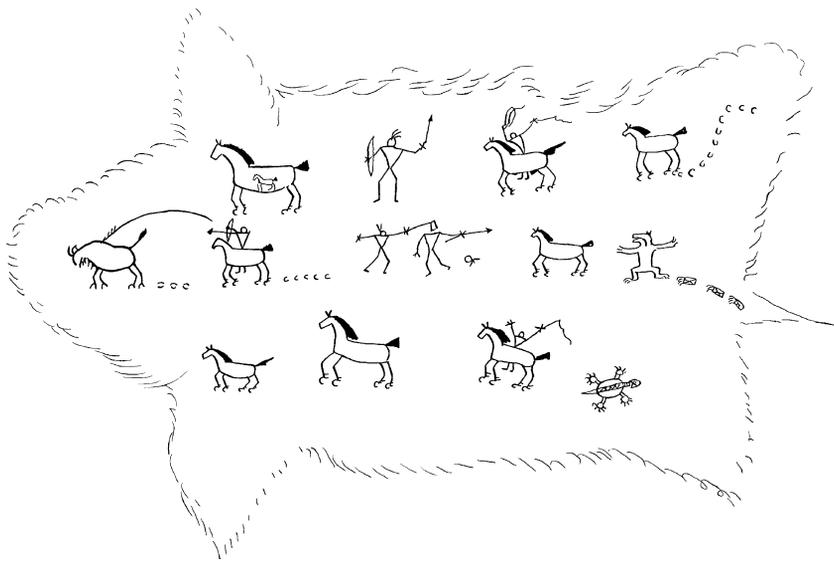


Fig. 6 Pencil sketch of pictographic robe by Balduin Möllhausen, 1851. National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (cat.no. 37,514). Illustration digitally traced from photocopy. Published on <http://www.siris.si.edu/>.

western United States. It was apparently on his first trip with Prince Paul of Württemberg in 1851 that he made the pencil sketch of a pictographic painted hide (Fig. 6), now in the National Anthropological Archives of the National Museum of Natural History (cat.no. 37,514). The drawing contains several war exploits, a bison hunting scene, a bear, and a turtle.

In 1905 E. M. Chadwick donated a painted bison hide to the now defunct Provincial Museum of Ontario. He acquired the robe "some years ago" from the family of John S. Baxter, a former employee of George Catlin (Boyle 1905: 27–31). David Boyle, the Director of the museum, published a black and white illustration of the painting (1905: 27–31), which is the basis for

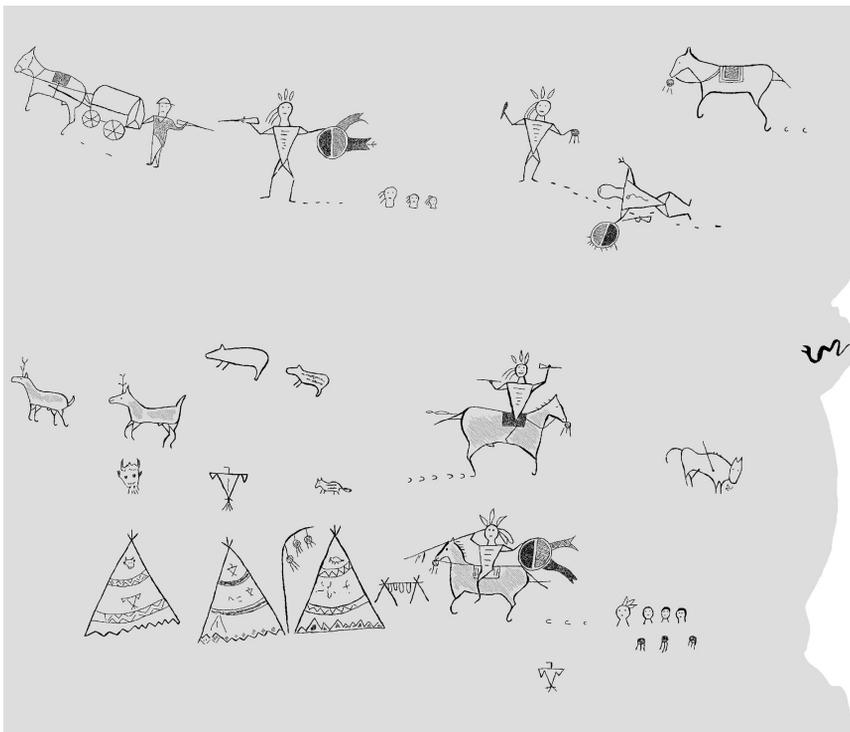


Fig. 7 Catlin (?) painting formerly in the Provincial Museum of Ontario. Illustration digitally traced from plate in Annual Archeological Report of Ontario (1905: 27–31).

the drawing reproduced here (Fig. 7). It was mounted in a frame, giving rise to the squared-off shape of the hide. The article notes that the shield appearing three times in the painting is half red, half green. The painting disappeared some time before the collections of the Provincial Museum were transferred to the Royal Ontario Museum in 1933. Some three war narratives are represented in the painting, as well as tallies of scalps and decapitated heads. Three painted tipis are displayed in the lower left. Curiously, the animals decorating the apex of the tipis are echoed by the figures directly above. There is a bison hunting scene, as well as various interspersed animals.

The next painting (Fig. 8) bears a note on the underside: "Gabriel André, St Louis, 12. 9. 1843." According to Sturtevant in Feest (2001: 178) André (or rather Andreae) lived in St. Louis from 1827 to 1843. The painting was part of the Speyer collection until acquired by the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC V-E-281). According to Speyer, as told to Brassier, Gabriel Andreae collected the hide on the upper Missouri River (cp. Vatter 1925). The painting is comparable to the Köhler tipi cover in its symmetry, large pipes, and elaborate radiating circle designs. The upper register depicts a bison hunt. In the upper right corner is a peculiar, partially skinned bison. The image brings to mind a Cheyenne ritual in which a bison was ceremonially killed and butchered in a special way. All the meat was taken, but the head was left intact and still attached to the backbone and tail (Harrod 2000: 86). The lower register presents a complex war scene, presumably the defense of a village against enemy attackers.

The final painting under consideration (Fig. 9) is plate 22 of George Catlin's monograph on North American Indian tobacco pipes, held by the British Museum. In his caption Catlin identified it as a "Facsimile of a painted Buffalo Robe (N^o 32) in Catlin's Indian Collection." His comments on the original robe owner are interesting, "Such a *cool gentleman* as this, deliberately smoking his pipe in the midst of his desperate battles, must carry terror and dismay wherever he fights, and I think, pretty clearly shows the tempering character of tobacco fumes in a new light, though I am not a smoker." This warrior is shown in four encounters with the enemy. There are two bisons in the lower right corner of the hide whose appearance in relation to the other figures in the lower register

ter seems gratuitous. On the bowl of the immense pipe above the quillwork strip are two copulating bisons, seemingly under the influence of the tobacco smoke. Indeed, wafting smoke seems to spread its intoxicating effects over the entire painting. Despite his claim to be a non-smoker, Catlin the showman was in the practice of stopping suddenly in the middle of a portrait sitting as if something were wrong, take one or two tremendous puffs from the pipe, "streaming the smoke through my nostrils, exhibiting in my looks and actions an evident relief" (1841, 1: 109).

Having introduced the works under consideration, we turn now to an examination of the paintings in light of the following criteria: textual records, picture supports, formalistic considerations, geometric imagery, animal arrays, genre scenes, and indelicate imagery.

Textual Records

The painted hides deposited in the National Museum of the American Indian by Grinnell and Aull share a number of historical connections. The museum catalogue record states that the Aull painting is on an albino calf skin. It is indeed a small hide, measuring 185 by 170 cm at the extremities, and is brownish white in color. When the Blackfoot killed an albino bison they would normally hang the hide as an offering to the sun (Clark 1982: 88–89; Wilson 1958: 56; Schultz 1907: 85; Curtis 1911: 14–15). Bradley noted that in 1832 the Blackfoot hung an albino skin for several hours at a Sun Dance, and later took it to the Mandan village where they traded it for eight horses and other valuable goods (1923: 268–269). Clark noted that the albino fur is brownish white (1982: 88–89), however Wilson (1958: 87–88) described yellow furred calves which appeared at certain times of the year, then turned dark. Given this information it is not clear whether or not the Aull painting is on an albino skin. However, in 1881 James Willard Schultz did witness the killing of a large five-year-old cow, not a pure albino bison, but a "spotted robe." The Blackfoot hunter's father, Spotted Eagle, recognized that the hide was worth a lot of money and he decided to further increase its value by painting on it "the record of his life; the enemies he had killed, the horses he had taken, the combats he had waged against the grizzly tribe, and the ani-

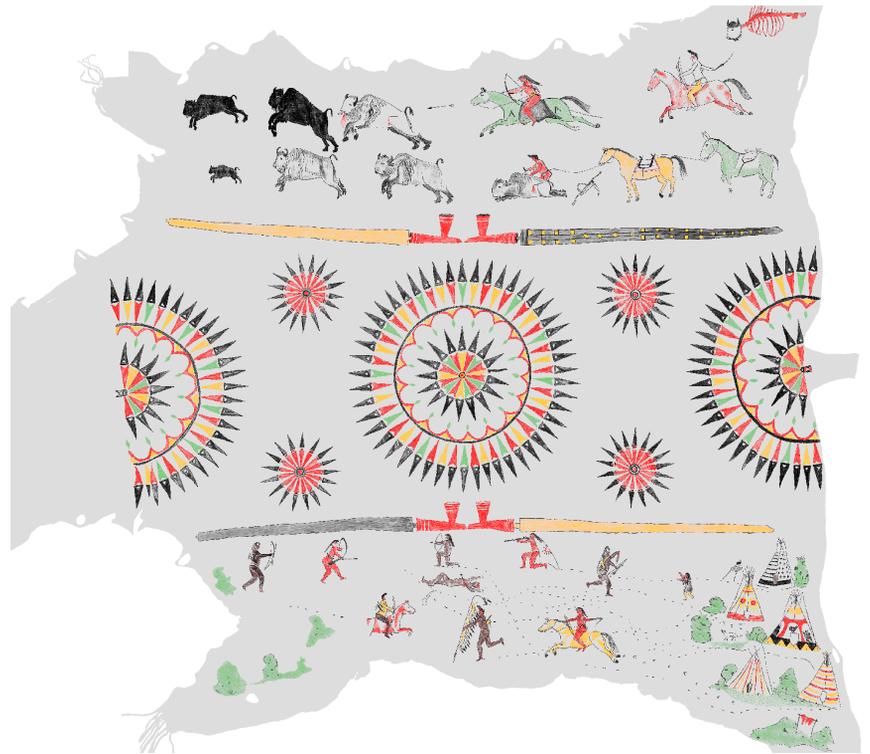


Fig. 8 European (?) painting collected by Gabriel Andreae, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, QC (cat.no. V-E-281). Illustration digitally traced from 4" by 5" transparency. Published in Vatter (1925: 87–88), Baillargeon (1998), and Brassier (1976: 36).

mals and stars of his medicine." The I. G. Baker post sold this curio for one hundred dollars to a man from Montreal (Schultz 1906: 86–87; Hanna 1986: 103). Given these circumstan-

ces, it seems likely that the Aull painting was also made for sale.

James Willard Schultz (1859–1947) was born into a prosperous, cultured family in Boonville, New York. In 1877

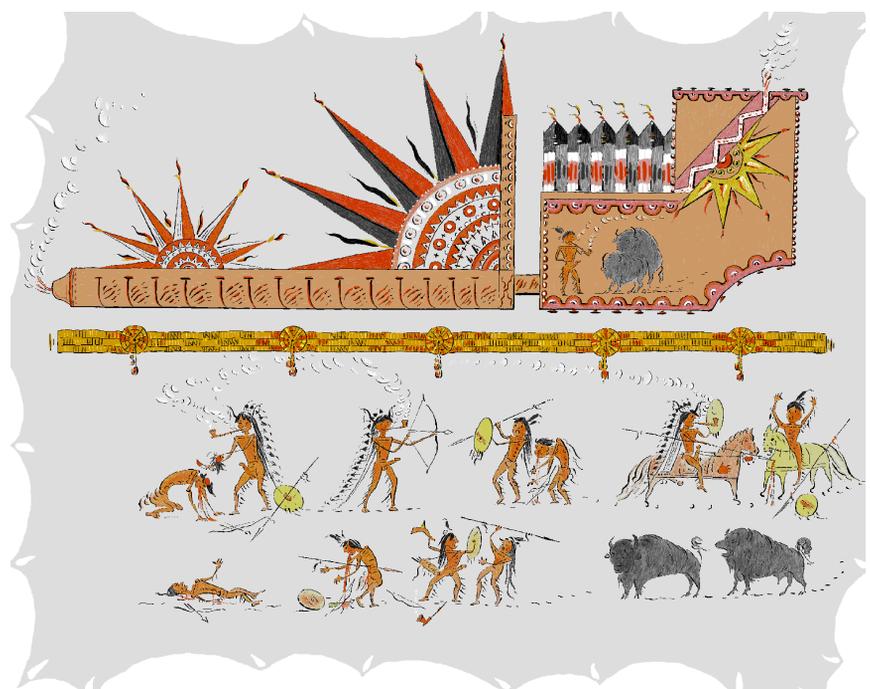


Fig. 9 Plate 22 of George Catlin's monograph on North American Indian tobacco pipes, Ethnography Department of the British Museum, London. Illustration digitally traced from 4" by 5" transparency. Published in Ewers (1979: 65).

he traveled to Montana, where he established a lifelong relationship with the Blackfoot, and with Joseph Kipp, the well known I. G. Baker trader. The documentation on the Aull and Grinnell paintings both point to that trading post as their source. The latter work, specifically attributed to Red Crane, was acquired by Joseph Kipp in 1889. The Canadian Museum of Civilization has a painted elk skin which, on the basis of stylistic considerations, could only have been painted by the same Red Crane (V-B-536, illustrated in Keyser and Klassen 2001: 272). It was acquired from George Terasaki in 1975 with documentation stating that it was "collected by Dr. Hart Merriam in the 1880s near Glacier National Park." Schultz developed his great love for the outdoors as a boy in the Adirondacks under the guidance of his neighbor, C. Hart Merriam (1855–1944). The two frequently corresponded by letter during the 1880s (Hanna 1986: 96). Merriam became one of the America's greatest naturalist and a respected ethnologist. He was also a friend of George Bird Grinnell (1848–1938), publisher of *Forest and Stream Magazine*, a leading pioneer in the conservation movement and also a well known ethnologist (Sterling 1977: 244). In 1885, inspired by Schultz's articles in *Forest and Stream*, Grinnell visited the Blackfoot Reserve and the adjacent mountains to the west which would become Glacier National Park. According to Shultz, Grinnell conceived the idea of Glacier National Park on that visit (Sheire 1970: 183), and launched the campaign that would see it become a reality in 1910 (Hagan 1997: 38). The lure of the Plains Indians contributed much to the great popularity of the park: "It was no accident that for the first forty years of the Park's existence, Blackfeet from the nearby reservation greeted visitors at the Park's hotels, danced in the evening around an open fire, and stood patiently in full war bonnets while being photographed" (Shiere 1970: 141). Plains pictographs decorated the park hotels in abundance. The most ambitious effort was a 180 foot canvas mural covered with war narratives painted by Medicine Owl and eleven Blackfoot chiefs (Shiere 1970: 199). Natives, most notably George Bull Child, would earn their living painting hides for the Glacier tourists.³ In this context, the Aull and Grinnell paintings could be considered precursors to Glacier tourist art.

In 1871 the Governor of Montana Territory, Benjamin Potts, acquired a

painted bison hide attributed to the Santee Sioux chief, Standing Buffalo. He sent the painting and "such specimens as will make you a cabinet that will entertain the curious" to General W. Ferguson Force, a Cincinnati judge (Potts to Force, 3 November 1871, CAM accession file). Potts explained that Standing Buffalo "sent me [his] robe through the Indian Agent a few days before his death." According to *Harpers Weekly* of 9 September 1871 (15[767]: 837) Standing Buffalo had gone to fight the Gros Ventre with the expectation of dying, and so distributed all his horses and property among relatives and friends. The chief was killed in that fight on 5 June 1871. Judge Force had recently been elected to the bench when he asked his friend Potts to make him a collection of Indian artifacts. Force must have wanted to impress the elite of Cincinnati, by filling his Victorian parlor with objects complimentary to his military achievements—so much so that he may have been more than willing to accept the improbable story that his most prized object belonged to a famous Dakota chief recently memorialized on the pages of *Harper's*.

On his first western expedition Balduin Möllhausen noted in his diary on 2 April 1852: "Möllhausen makes friends with the Indians and makes drawings in their manner on Bison robes for which the fur trade companies pay him well" (Graf 1991: 88, kindly translated by K. Klann). Trade in Native painted bison robes was not new. With reference to war exploit robes Maximilian noted in 1833: "Such robes are sometimes expensive; in the Company's stores they can be had at a price of six to ten dollars" (Wied 1832–1834, 2: 267). The painter Alfred Jacob Miller noted on his 1837 expedition to the Rockies that "[t]he Indians sometimes select a few of the robes, and paint on them reminiscences of battle scenes, in the most brilliant of colors, thereby enhancing their value, and causing them to command a premium at the agency of the fur company" (Miller 1973: 132). On 11 May 1852 Rudolph Friedrich Kurz learned of Möllhausen's impoverished situation on the frontier: "Not long since, I am told, some Oto found, on

the Platte, a Prussian named Mullhausen [sic] in a hopeless situation, having with him a wagon but no team." Given Möllhausen's financial state, it is likely that his pencil sketch was in preparation for a commercial version on hide.

The little we know about Köhler suggest that he did not acquire his collection first hand, yet no one has questioned his statement that the tipi cover is from a "medicine tipi." Frederick Weygold published a lengthy article, which appears to be a series of speculative connections between images depicted on the tipi and mythological descriptions in the literature (1903). Dr. Charles Ronald Corum, who wrote an article on the tipi in 1975, claims that Weygold received information from Buffalo Hump, a Sioux elder who is said to have had first hand knowledge of the tipi. Corum also claims that Buffalo Hump gave Weygold considerably more information after publication. Thus Corum's article was "an attempt to preserve additional information Weygold gathered" from Buffalo Hump (personal communication, Corum to Brownstone, 6 December 2003). Dr. David Maurer, an eminent professor of linguistics at the University of Louisville, who had studied the Sioux language both in the field and with Weygold around 1937–1939 apparently passed on this information to Corum (confirmed by Prof. A. Futrell, University of Louisville, personal communication, 3 December 2003). As it stands, Corum's article is an oral history based on an "unusual coincidence of events in which [Corum] is able to go back through Maurer to Weygold to Buffalo Hump takes us back some one hundred and fifty years in the memory of man" (Corum 1975: 232). Unfortunately, Corum neglected to cite his information in a way which would allow for corroboration, and as of 15 December 2003 has been unable to locate information on the tipi in his personal Maurer papers (personal communication, Corum to Brownstone, 14 December 2003). These circumstances underscore the limited scientific value of the mythological interpretations of the images on the tipi.

The New York Public Library preserves Catlin's "Souvenir Unique," a portfolio of lithographs containing some eleven "facsimiles" of painted robes allegedly in his collection. Catlin noted in the caption to the Mandan robe (#157) in the portfolio that his illustrations were "reduced from originals, with the greatest care, with the

³ Comparable examples of large scale local production include:

—The numerous Shoshone paintings of Chief Washakie and his protégés.

—At least twenty-five Ojibwa painted bison hides of the type noted in Brownstone (1991), see also Feest (1979)

best camera" (See also Catlin 1841, 2: 247). Catlin probably makes reference to the *camera lucida*, an optical device which produces an exact reflected, traceable image. The lithographs were very faintly printed, allowing Catlin to strengthen and embellish them with pencil, giving them the look of drawings. Catlin's British Museum drawing and the "Shienne [Cheyenne] robe" in the "Souvenir Unique" were almost certainly struck from the same lithographic stone. Catlin further strengthened the lines, and added color, giving the British Museum version the appearance of watercolor painting. He also added a smoking pipe to the victorious "hero" of the robe in each of his four exploits. Catlin had created and described nearly half the plates in his smoking monograph by 1852. This was a period during which his financial woes were particularly acute (Ewers 1979: 14, 16). He completed the monograph between 1864 and 1866 and sold it to William Bragge, a scholar on the history and use of tobacco. These embellishments and circumstances cast certain doubt on the accuracy of Catlin's "fac-similes."

Support Issues

There are a number of anomalies concerning the supports upon which the works in question were painted. The Köhler tipi is extraordinarily small, less than half the size of a regular tipi. The orientation of the smoke flap pockets indicates that if the poles controlling the flaps were on the outside, their usual position, the paintings would have to be on the inside of the tipi. Bolz, however, considered the possibility that the smoke flaps might in some unorthodox way be controlled from inside (Bolz and Sanner 1999: 83–84). In doing so he lent credence to Mooney's theory that the tipi might have been used as a sweat lodge (EMB Acquisition Files America vol. 26, 1536/04). Sweat lodges from the Canadian subarctic to central Mexico are universally in the form of low domes.⁴ In the Plains these were insulated with layers of bison hides and blankets. The Köhler tipi would be totally impractical for the concentration of hot vapor, and its painted decoration would likely suffer damage by the

⁴ In this regard, Catlin's description and illustration of a tipi shaped sweat lodge is highly improbable (Catlin 1841, 1: 186, pl. 71).

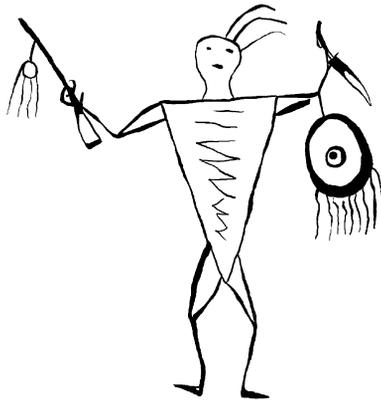


Fig. 10 Detail of a shirt which Catlin painted in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (cat.no. 386,505).

action of steam. Diminutive sacred painted tipis, generally smaller than Köhler's, were sometimes ritually transferred to favored Blackfoot children. However, the Köhler tipi is not Blackfoot, and I know of no other people who practiced that tradition. The Blackfoot Big Eyes and his wife did make a small "travelling tipi" for Walter McClintock around 1900. "The wife was skilled in the making of tipis and was known also as a good decorator. She painted pictures of both war and hunting on [McClintock's] tipi-cover illustrating adventures in the life of her husband" (McClintock 1936: 21). The unusual circumstance of a woman painting war exploits is perhaps explained by that fact that the tipi was intended for someone outside the indigenous community. Perhaps the Köhler tipi was also made for an outsider.

Governor Potts described the Cincinnati painting as a robe, but it is too large to be worn, measuring 308 x 222 cm including the tail. Furthermore, it is too heavy for wear because the hide was not planed down to the customary thickness of wearable robes. According to the conventional manner of wearing robes, the head always appears on the left in relation to the painted side. The position of the head on the British Museum painting is reversed. When worn, all the figures on a robe should appear right side up. The multiple orientation of figures on the Aull, Grinnell, Cincinnati, and the Mandan paintings suggest that they were not meant to be worn as robes. Maximilian noted that "Such [war exploit] robes often have a transverse band beautifully embroidered with porcupine quills ..." (Wied 1832–1834, 2: 266), yet the quillwork strip is absent from all the paintings under con-

sideration, except that from British Museum. The Andreae painting is on horsehide, a material not used in Plains robes. Grinnell claimed that his painting was once part of an old elk hide tipi liner, yet its animal pelt-like shape is unlike the more rectangular shape of a tipi liner section.

Formal Aspects

Catlin developed a pictographic human figure unlike any found in genuine Plains paintings (Holm 1992: 48). These are typified by figures on two shirts from Catlin's own collection, now held in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution (cat.nos. 386,505, 386,506). His male figures are characterized by a broad shouldered triangular torso which ends in a point and dovetails with the upper legs, knees and feet pointing outward. On comparison with a typical figure from one of the shirts (Fig. 10) it is obvious that the figures on the Baxter painting were executed by Catlin himself. The figures on the Möllhausen drawing are more akin to Catlin's than those typically painted by Native artists.

Catlin's human forms on the British Museum painting are executed in a different style. They are closer to European figures in their anatomical accuracy (except for oversized penises), variety of body positions, three dimensionality, and expressiveness of facial features. His sinuous outlines display European graphic virtuosity. Unlike figures painted by Plains artists, these are filled in with their natural (local) colors. The humans and carousel style horses in the Andreae painting are equally European in their treatment, although toward the late nineteenth century Plains artists would adopt a similar figurative style. Details like the three dimensional treatment of pipe bowl openings and warriors' legs realistically astride their horses are further indications of the European origins of the Andreae painting.

As noted by Bolz (Bolz and Sanner 1999: 81), Corum (1975: 230), and Weygold (according to Corum 1975: 230), the images on the Köhler tipi appear to have been executed by two hands, the key elements including the pipe and radiating circles being rendered by a more accomplished draftsman than the casually depicted surrounding animals. It is possible that the animal figures were added in context with the sale of the tipi to the collector.

Despite Governor Potts's Dakota attribution, the Cincinnati painting exhibits a number Blackfoot features: the formal qualities of humans and horses, the war bridle charm attached to a horse, the four entrenched battle scenes, and the decorative designs on tipis. Potts also notes that "the hieroglyphics is said to be the history of the tribe in Indian characters," yet the painting displays none of the features of a winter count.

Geometric Imagery

Geometric and pictorial imagery are rarely mixed in Plains painting. Perhaps this tendency is connected to the generally held belief that men were painters of pictorial images and women of geometric designs. The literature, however, contains several notable exceptions to this gender equation. Catlin's lithograph No. 133 in the "Souvenir Unique" shows a woman painting a mixed geometric/figurative robe, and its caption clearly states that she was painting her husband's military history. Referring to the Blackfoot war exploit painting illustrated in his North American journal (Thomas and Ronnefeldt 1976: 17), Maximilian noted, "the painter (undoubtedly a woman) did not, however, have a good red dye but used a yellowish-red earth for this purpose on the buffalo hide instead" (Wied 1832–1834, 2: 156). Finally, Rev. John MacLean (1896: 193) observed around 1880 that a Blood woman had painted a bison hide tipi with her husband's war exploits.

One of the most popular types of geometric robes featured a large central radiating circle. Presumably painted by women, these were generally worn by men. The design is said to be synonymous with both the sun and the feather bonnet, each associated with men and war (Maurer 1992: 288; Horse Capture in Maurer 1992: 62–67; Brasser 1976: 20). A very limited number of paintings characterized by large radiating circles contain pictorial imagery. The most notable is the Mato Tope robe in the Bern Historical Museum (cat.no. N.A. 8), presumably painted before the chief's death in 1837. It features a large central radiating circle surrounded by pictures of Mato Tope's war exploits. The composition of Catlin's illustration of a "Mandan robe" (1841, 1: 248–49, fig. 312; and Souvenir Unique #157) is remarkably similar to the Mato Tope robe, except that the hide is vertically oriented, making it unsuitable for wear.

Catlin painted numerous robes worn by subjects of his portraits with mixed geometric and pictorial imagery, however given his strong tendency toward artistic license their accuracy is questionable. A more recent Dakota example featuring a large central radiating circle, surrounding by a variety of animal figures, is in the American Museum of Natural History (cat.no. 50.1/7348). Another, said to have been painted by Sitting Bull himself in the late 1870s, was apparently given to a Canadian trader in exchange for writing lessons (illustrated in Hollow and Hoover 1984: 8). It is decorated with a large radiating circle in the center, flanked by two elaborate pipes. A large head surmounted by an elaborate headdress, a crow and a bison complete the imagery. The painting appears to have been made as a memento.⁵ The Andreae, Köhler, and British Museum paintings are related to these paintings in so much as they display a mixture of geometric radiating circles and pictorial imagery.

Apart from Mato Tope's painting in Berne, there are other paintings by this famous chief. He painted a copy of his robe to present or sell to Catlin (Catlin 1841, 1: 148, Souvenir Unique, caption to Mato Tope plate). Mato Tope's painting collected by Prince Maximilian in the Linden Museum (cat.no. 36125) is probably also a copy of the original. The chief made a drawing on paper of a single event on his robe, also collected by Maximilian (Joslyn Art Museum, R17). It seems that Mato Tope preferred to create new versions of his robe for commercial purposes, rather than parting with the original. As Kurz suggested, both the radiating circles and pictorials appealed to Europeans: "From a trader I bought a painted buffalo robe. I had one already in my possession that was adorned with a sun, but the figures in the other were still more interesting"

⁵ Sitting Bull sent a war exploit robe to the pope in 1886 (Smith 1943: 192, 197), and gave another to his friend Mrs. Weldon (Smith 1943: 175). Sitting Bull's "great sun robe used in the Ghost Dance" was apparently once in stock at Campbell's Curio Store (Cronau 1946: 423). Sitting Bull wanted to ensure that his war record, particularly expeditions against Fort Buford, would be recognized by the commander of that post, General Morrow. For this reason he sent the general a ledger book of his exploits and those of the war parties which he led (Smith 1943: 174). It seems as though Sitting Bull supplied different types of paintings depending on the nature of the recipient.

(Kurz 1937:49). Possibly Native artists responded to this interest by combining the two types of imagery in a single painting.

Another geometric type robe, less popular than the radiating circle, is dominated by large intricate pipes. The pipes feature fan-like feather pendants which have the appearance of partial radiating circles. Among the few extant examples are the "Sacred Child's robe" collected from the Hidatsa (AMNH cat.no. 50.1/6021, see Galante 1993: 536), and a Pawnee robe probably made before 1850 in the Field Museum (cat.no. 15803). Pipes on conventional war exploit paintings are more modest in appearance and they record achievements such as war party leadership. The Andreae, Köhler, and British Museum paintings contain geometric type pipes combined with large radiating circles and pictorial imagery.

Animal Arrays

Animal arrays are the most distinguishing feature of the works under discussion. Animals sometimes appear in war exploit paintings in narrative contexts, usually in hunting scenes or in the performance of brave deeds. The European preoccupation with supernatural animal narratives in Plains painting is surely reflected in the totemic-like arrangement of the animals above and in the apex of the tipis in the Baxter painting. At other times arrays of various animal species are distributed over the picture surface, apparently in random order, with no narrative connection. Keyser and Klassen (2001: 217) suggested that the array of animals on Red Crane's painting at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the twin to the Grinnell painting, represents "iconic vision quest imagery" of the same sort as is found in local rock art. In a similar vein, Berlo (2000: 37–38) offered a religious interpretation for the presence of animals on the Köhler tipi. However, Plains peoples viewed animals on many levels, from profound to mundane, so there is no reason to assume that these animals are imbued with special religious significance. The term "natural history drawings" applied to ledger drawings of animals lacking narrative context also finds application in the paintings under consideration (Berlo 1996: 188, 216; 2000: 117). If ledger artists of the late nineteenth century were residually influenced by European naturalists visiting the West

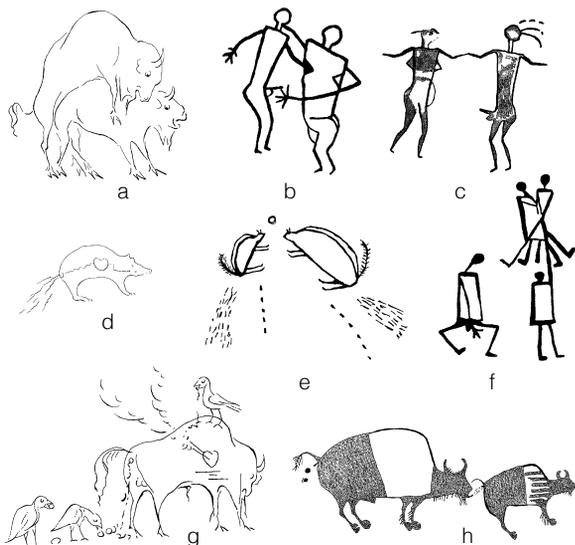


Fig. 11 Indelicate imagery: (a) "Shienne," NYPL Souvenir Unique; (b) Sioux? EMB IV B 196; (c) Sioux? EMB IV B 196; (d) "Pawnee," NYPL Souvenir Unique, (e) Mandan, EMB IV B 205; (f) Blackfoot? CAM 1894.1209; (g) "Pawnee," NYPL Souvenir Unique; (h) Mandan, EMB IV B 205.

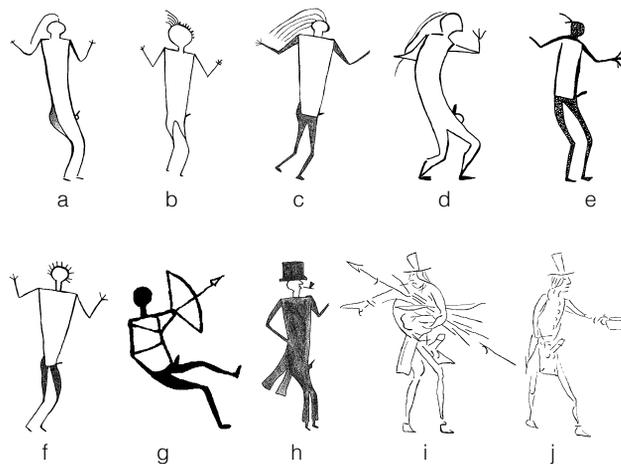


Fig.12 Priapic figures: (a) Sioux? Mandan? HMV B.155; (b) Mandan CMC V-H-2; (c) Mandan? MH 86.71.1; (d) Sioux? NMNH 2130; (e) Pawnee, BM 5202; (f) Mandan? Hidatsa? PMH 99-12-10/53121; (g) Sioux? EMB IV B 196; (h) Sioux, SHSW 1962.285.4; (i) "Ottoe" NYPL Souvenir Unique; (j) "Ottoe" NYPL Souvenir Unique.

in the first half of the nineteenth century, then we can expect that hide painters of the early period were also influenced. The European natural history drawings were made not only for scientific reasons, but also to satisfy public curiosity about wildlife beyond the U.S. frontier. Since there was a market for Plains paintings at the time, that interest may have stimulated Indians to include assortments of natural, or supernatural animals in their commercial efforts.

Genre Scenes

Genre-type scenes are seldom found in the early Plains pictorials. The Buffalo society dancers in the Mandan painting and the little tipi village near the head of the Cincinnati painted hide approach that category. On the other hand, detailed genre scenes are prominent among the four paintings thought to have been executed by Europeans. Perhaps the most exciting activity for Europeans visiting the West was hunting bison on horseback, so it is not surprising to find that activity prominently featured in the Baxter, Möllhausen, and Andreae paintings. The latter provides a didactic view of the process of killing, skinning and transporting bison meat. The Andreae painting gives an unusually detailed battle scene. It even shows a warrior and a woman rushing toward each other with outstretched arms, he about to present her with a bloodied scalp. Her village is represented by

an unlikely concentration of ceremonial painted tipis, a meat drying rack, a dog, a travois and shrubbery. The Baxter painting contains a comparably detailed village setting. The act of scalping is delineated in the upper right corner of that painting. Scalping is given full graphic treatment in the British Museum painting. The Möllhausen drawing features a beheading scene. The Native war exploit painting was an ideal vehicle for these European pastiches. At once, they mimic Plains depiction, while satisfying the European appetite for images not normally found on Indian paintings.

Indelicate Imagery

For lack of a better term, "indelicate" images are found in both European and Native paintings in the study set. On the right side of Fig. 11 are examples of sexual activity, flatulence, and defecation from Plains paintings.⁶ Similar imagery from Catlin's "Souvenir Unique" are on the left. Of interest is the contrast between the European and Native perspectives on these images. The Mandan who painted the bison and skunks (Fig. 11e, h) was simply following his pictorial narrative tradition by having his subjects involved in an activity. The bison bull smelling the urine of the cow is a typical act which enabled bulls to establish and keep track of the territory occupied by their concubine of seven or so cows (M. Engstrom, Curator of Mammalogy, ROM, personal commu-

nication, September 2003). On the other hand, Catlin seems to portray comparable scenes (Fig.11d, g) as comical events. This comparison perhaps supports Lancaster's observation that Native American humor tends not to be scatological, whereas the European "frequently finds humor in physical or mental deformity or in the various biological processes of both men and animals (1966: 150)." Similarly, Catlin's images of the warrior hero with erect phallus in the British Museum painting, find parallel in Plains paintings from the upper Missouri in the first half of the nineteenth century (Fig. 12a-h). However, the significance of the phallus appears to be different. In the British Museum painting it is always the victor who has an erect penis, whereas in Plains painting it is usually the vanquished who is portrayed in this way, although in several paintings both hero and victim

⁶ The following abbreviations are used for museum collections referred to in the captions and text:

| | |
|------|--|
| BM | British Museum |
| CAM | Cincinnati Art Museum |
| EMB | Ethnological Museum Berlin |
| HMV | Hamburg Museum für Volk- erkunde |
| MH | Musée de l'Homme |
| NMNH | National Museum of Natural History |
| NYPL | New York Public Library |
| PMH | Peabody Museum, Harvard University |
| ROM | Royal Ontario Museum |
| SHSW | State Historical Society of Wisconsin |

have the priapic feature. Catlin went one step further in the "Otoe robe" in his "Souvenir Unique," where he "forcibly and truly illustrates the system of rum selling and the march of civilization" and its debilitating effects on a Native village. The painting shows all the Indian men passed out, while one priapic trader offers rum to a fleeing woman, and another is laden with Native artifacts which he has presumably traded for liquor or stolen (Fig. 12i, j). Thus in the guise of a Plains painting Catlin pursued his mission to educate his audience to "fairly and truly contemplate the system of universal abuse, that is hurrying [Indian] people to utter destruction ..." (Catlin 1841, 2: 249, see also 1841, 1: 260).

Euroamericans entered an era of prudishness around 1810 when substitute words like gosh, darn, and gad-zooks were invented; and chicken breast and thigh were replaced by white meat, dark meat and drumstick (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas series, "Tolerance and Prudence," 21 June 2003). Similarly, taboo subjects could be conveniently expressed by substituting Native culture for European culture. Sir William Stewart, who lived among the north-western Plains peoples immediately before Catlin, wrote several fictional works set among the Indians. DeVoto (1947: 426) noted about his book, *Altowan*, "I know of no English or American novel of that time [1846] or for many years later which is half so frank about homosexuality." Carving erotic scenes on pipes did not have a strong traditional background among Native peoples, yet it is said that the Cherokee carved them for Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and less famous collectors (personal communication, Ted Carpenter, 10 December 2002; see also Ewers 1979: 62). Tous-saint Charbonneau, interpreter for Lewis and Clark, and others also collected such pipes, presumably on commission, from Native peoples of the upper Missouri (Ewers 1979: 18, 62). Batkin (1987: 28, 29) noted that Pueblo potters in the 1880s were encouraged by traders to produce work of an obscene nature. These were concealed from ladies at the back of the shop. So too, the "obscene carvings" on plate 21 of Catlin's *The British Museum Monograph* was concealed in a locked compartment at the back of the volume (Ewers 1979: 62). Forbidden images, hidden under the mantle of Plains art, were thus smuggled into European society.

Conclusion

This study has examined nine paintings, selected because they share certain unconventional characteristics. Five of the paintings were by Plains Native artists, and four were by Europeans.⁷ After analyzing the textual and artifactual data it appears that all the paintings were commercially influenced by European viewers. The European renditions are indicative of the types of images anticipated by the European audience. By extension, these help to determine how Plains Native painters were commercially influenced. The appearance of unconventional elements in Plains painting may thus be considered as an indication of commercialization and the expectations of the European market.

Beyond the study group, it should be noted that European collectors have left their stamp on the earliest extant Plains pictorials. For example, on 3 April 1805, Lewis and Clark sent to President Jefferson a painted robe depicting a major inter-tribal battle.⁸ Seymour illustrated robe of a battle between the Pawnee and Kansas (Beinecke Library, cat.no. 3728460), the original apparently presented to Major O'Fallon at the Pawnee council of 1819–1820.⁹ Single panoramic battles

⁷ Additional hide paintings similarly featuring an abundance of animals include the following:

—National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, cat.no. 13/5988 (Barbeau 1960: 77).

—cat.no. AF3636 Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB, Cheyenne?

—Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA, cat.no. E24,991, Blackfoot?

—Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, CT, cat.no. 10674, shows cavalry man running bison.

—Deutsches Ledermuseum, Offenbach, cat.no. 8660 (Patty Frank coll.), appears to have been painted by a non-Native (Völger 1976: 4.42.10).

—Photothèque, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, photograph of hide painting in a private collection.

⁸ "Robe representing a battle between the Sioux & Ricaras against the Minetares and Mandans" and "buffalo robe painted by a Mandan man representing a battle fought 8 years Since by the Sioux & Riecaras against the mandans, me ni tarraas & Ah wah har ways. (Mandans &c. on horseback" (DeVoto 1962: 493–494).

⁹ A painted bison hide said to have been collected by O'Fallon at the Pawnee council is held by the National Museum of the American Indian (1/6745), however it departs significantly from the Seymour watercolor. The imagery in the latter ap-

pear to fall under the conventional war exploit painting canon, and so may have been inspired by Euro-American military men interested in knowing how Plains Indians fought. A significant number, if not the majority, of extant hide paintings were likely made for sale to a non-Native market. Many of these were executed after the days of inter-tribal fighting, when the traditional context for war exploit paintings had significantly fragmented. Commercialism and the European audience are factors routinely considered in the study of ledger art. However, the data discussed here indicate that such considerations have a strong and continuous presence throughout the corpus of historical Plains pictorials.

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