The Musée de l’Homme’s Foureau Robe and Its Moment in the History of Blackfoot Painting

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ABSTRACT

Of the numerous pictographic records kept by Plains Indians since the beginning of the nineteenth century, most are pictorial narrative paintings. Their primary subject is personal war exploits. Fuller understanding of these paintings and their larger social meaning depends on our ability to identify their age and cultures of origin. The search for the cultural origins of the Foureau painted bison robe in the Musée de l’Homme rests on the principle that each Plains tribe left a distinct stylistic signature on its paintings. The Foureau robe is compared with seven similar paintings. Five distinct formalistic traits uniting these works are identified and discussed. The data associated with these traits suggest that the robe and analogous paintings were executed by the Blackfoot between 1820 and 1845.

Keywords: Blackfoot; pictographic; hide painting; rock art; warfare.

Despite the great breadth of achievement in Plains Indian narrative painting, this study deliberately focuses on eight paintings. The Plains Indian artistic community is not homogeneous, but is segmented into dozens of distinct tribal groups. The paintings of a given tribe exhibit both the tribe’s own visual traditions and influences of other Plains tribes, native peoples outside the region and non-natives. This cross-fertilization contributes to the great problem of assigning specific tribal attributions to Plains Indian paintings. Aside from the melting-pot effect of artistic influences, other circumstances add to the difficulty of identifying tribal styles. Change has been a hallmark of Plains Indian paintings since they were first collected by non-natives two hundred years ago. Their transformation did not necessarily progress in a linear fashion, but sometimes jumped back and forth in time and varied from one artist to another. The large body of extant work has been dispersed from all corners of the Plains into collections throughout the western world, making first-hand study difficult. These works do not reproduce well in publications, because they have large surfaces often filled with small and faded images. The frequently inadequate and unreliable documentation further obscures the search for their origins. These circumstances suggest that the study of Plains Indian painting is best conducted through the examination of small sets of related works.

THE MUSÉE DE L’HOMME ROBE

The painted bison robe discussed here (Figure 1) has attracted considerable interest due to its “archaic style” (Brasser 1987:77) and because it is preserved in the Musée de l’Homme (cat. no. 96.73.1), the repository of the world’s oldest and most cryptic collection of North American Indian paintings. The robe, measuring approximately 1.6 x 1.5 meters, is covered by 21 discrete pictorial scenes. These narrate military exploits, probably of the original owner. The exploits likely spanned a good portion of his fighting years, yet it is difficult to perceive any chronological order in their distribution over the hide.

The Plains tribes had systems of ranking war exploits. These varied somewhat from one tribe to another in their degree of complexity, gradation and flexibility. The three most universally accredited exploits in the northern Plains account for almost

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all the events on the Musée de l’Homme robe: capture of a weapon, killing an enemy, and touching an enemy. Figure 2 illustrates the first of these war honors. The victim with blood flowing from his arm fires his rifle toward the head of the victor; the victor, armed with a bow and arrow, captures the powderhorn of the victim, as indicated by the trail of footprints leading to the detached hand. Figure 3 shows the hero stepping up to a mounted enemy, taking his gun and stabbing him with a knife. In Figure 4, the hero appears to count coup by touching the enemy on the head with his bow.
alternatively, the hero may be capturing the enemy’s bow, or he could have killed him with a bow (see Keyser and Brady 1993:9 versus Thompson 1977:158 and Vatter 1927:66). Figure 5 records a sequence of events taking place in a single battle or perhaps on a lengthier war expedition. The hero with his lance and shield appears in the midst of three enemies. On the left he takes two guns from a wounded warrior. On the right he wounds one man in the stomach with his lance and then another on the head with a sword. Over the entire robe, the hero inflicted wounds on roughly twelve enemies, counted coup about ten times and captured at least seven weapons. Of the few remaining exploits, Figure 6 is easiest to interpret. It shows the hero with his shield challenging an enemy entrenchment bristling with guns.

Deeds like these brought tremendous recognition to Plains Indian warriors. Accordingly, the array of accumulated war deeds on the Musée de l’Homme robe reflects the former owner’s elevated status in his community (Denig 1928-29:605). Although the hero is inconspicuously rendered in the painting, when wearing this robe he would have been almost completely enveloped from head to foot by a graphic display of his accomplishments. The robe’s main function was to advertise the achievements of the wearer to the community at large. Many situations called for a war hero to stand up in public and recite his war deeds in great detail through voice and pantomime (Taylor 1989:275, 168-69; Wilson 1958:10, 258, 261, 275, 290, 294; Grinnell 1910:300; Curtis 1911:54; MacLean 1896:109; Ewers 1958:156, 158-59; Wissler 1912:157; De Smet 1969:1137; Smith 1938; McGinnis 1974:46; Schultz and Donaldson 1930:16). No doubt, oratory was
more important than painting as a means of publicizing and describing war deeds. Nevertheless, in itself it is significant that warfare was the predominant subject of the pictographic historical records kept by Plains Indians. Fuller understanding of these documents and their larger social meaning rests in the identification of their cultures of origin and period of execution.

The Musée de l’Homme records state that the robe was collected by Nicaise Foureau and given to the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro by F. Foureau in 1896. The robe is catalogued as Osage, a tribe living on the southeastern margins of the Plains. However, this attribution cannot be confirmed because no comparable Osage examples exist. Scholars have tended to reject the Osage attribution. Ted Brassier (1987:71, no. P2) noted that the figures on the Foureau robe were “representative of the archaic style as it survived among the Blackfoot, and is directly related to rock art in the area.” Ernst Vatter (1927:80) also thought the robe was most likely executed by the Blackfoot. John Witthoft made a study of all the Musée de l’Homme robes in 1976, and in his unpublished manuscript stated that the Foureau robe was “very likely Blackfoot.” However, these scholars offer little by way of explanation. These uncertainties, coupled with the robe’s apparent position of importance within the surviving body of Plains Indian paintings, stimulated this investigation into its cultural origins.

**COMPARABLE WORKS**

Of all the artists on the North American frontier, Rudolph Kurz was the keenest observer of Plains Indian painting. He noted in 1851 “that the human form is not represented in the same manner by all nations; on the contrary, each nation has its own conventional manner” (1937:301). Kurz’s observation holds credence, since war exploit paintings were almost exclusively made to be “read” and admired by members of the wearer’s particular ethnic community. John Ewers (1939:60) considered that formal stylization in Plains Indian painting was “intentionally motivated by aesthetic considerations” and that “satisfaction” was gained in the repetition of stylistic conventions. These comments suggest that tribal painting styles not only existed, but endured. They also suggest that the comparative method may be successfully applied in determining the tribal identity of Plains Indian paintings.

In the case of the Foureau robe, a set of distinct formalistic features was first identified. Following Kurz’s cue, the set is based on the human figure. These traits are: V-necks, upraised arms, colored outlines, missing arms and detached hands. Works which most strongly manifested the trait set were drawn from a large image bank containing 293 works falling into the general category of traditional Plains Indian narrative pictorial painting. Approximately 74% of the works have fairly solid cultural documentation, while most of the remaining were assigned tentative tribal attributions. The paintings were executed for both traditional use and for sale to non-natives on a variety of supports including hide war-shirts, robes, tipi covers and liners, canvas murals and sheets of paper. The dates of execution range from 1800 to the 1990s. From this large study group, seven paintings were chosen as the primary comparative group. Works that exhibited fewer traits in common with the Foureau robe were also flagged, loosely forming a secondary comparative group. The cultural and historical data associated with both the primary and the secondary groups were examined. This information provided the basis for assigning a cultural and date attribution to the Foureau robe.

The Malcolm robe (Figure 7) perhaps most closely resembles the Foureau robe. It came to light in September 2000 when it was placed on anonymous long-term loan at the British Museum (King 2001). Nothing is currently known about the robe’s history except that the donor acquired it from the prominent Malcolm family of Portaloosh, Scotland.

Ernst Vatter (1927:80), who was the first to pub-
Figure 7. Cropped redrawning of the British Museum painted robe. This drawing is based on David Williams’s tracing of the original.
Figure 8. Cropped redrawing of Folkens Museum painted shirt (cat.no. 1854.2.1). Front is on left, back on right. Not shown are "coup bars" and truncated torsos painted on sleeves. This drawing is based on a tracing made from the original.

Figure 9. Cropped redrawing of the Ellis Gallery painted shirt. Front is on left, back on right. Not shown are "coup bars" painted on sleeves. This drawing is based on a tracing made from the original.
lish the Foureau robe, noted that its painted figures were remarkably similar to those on a shirt held in the Fölkens Museum Etnografiska (cat.no. 1854.2.1), the National Museum of Ethnology in Stockholm (Figure 8). According to the original collection list, Count Armand Fouché d’Otrante received the shirt from a Blackfoot chief at “the Blackfoot Fort [MacKenzie or Chardon] near the Rocky Mountains in 1843 or 1844. A similar painted shirt appeared at an auction in Belgium in 1998 (Figure 9). It is said, without confirmation, that around 1820 the shirt was sent by a Jesuit missionary from North America to a Belgian monastery where it remained almost until the date of the sale (Feest 1998:65). The shirt was acquired by the Donald Ellis Gallery and soon sold to an undisclosed collector.

A third analogous shirt, preserved in the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature (cat.no. H4.4.4), was collected by Paul Kane during his frontier painting expedition, probably in 1848 (Figure 10). Although museum records do not supply a tribal identification, Taylor (1986:275) argued convincingly that it is Blackfoot. A fourth comparable shirt exists only as a watercolor added to a portfolio of drawings attributed to George Catlin preserved in the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Although Catlin perhaps collected the shirt during his travels up the Missouri River in 1832, scholars believe that the drawing was executed by a contemporary of Catlin. Unlike the peculiar human forms which Catlin adapted for his Indian paintings (Ewers 1979:19, Holm 1992:49), the figures on this shirt appear to have been faithfully rendered (Figure 11).

Another comparable shirt is preserved in the Civici Musei Reggio Emilia (cat.no. 113) in Italy (Figure 12). It was collected along with five other objects by Antonio Spagni while living in the United States between 1833 and 1841. According to the collector, one item belonged to a Cheyenne chief.

Figure 10. Cropped redrawing of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature painted shirt (cat.no. H4.4.4). Front is on left, back on right. Not shown are the painted “coup bars” over the shoulders and along the sleeves. This drawing is based on a tracing of the original.

Figure 11. Cropped redrawing of the Gilcrease Museum watercolor (cat.no. 4776.6.187). This rendering is altered so that the back and front are side by side as opposed to one atop the other, as in the original watercolor. The front is on right, back on left. A color photograph of the drawing is published in Getlein (1973).
and the remaining objects, including the painted shirt, were those of a Sioux chief (Laurenrich-Minelli 1990:191; Laurenrich-Minelli 1992:67). However, because the attributions of several other items in the Spagni collection have recently been questioned and revised (Laurenrich-Minelli 1990:191; Laurenrich-Minelli 1992:67), the Sioux designation for the shirt may also be erroneous.

The final painting to be brought into juxtaposition with the Foureau robe is a detail from a panel at Writing-On-Stone petroglyph site (DgOv-57) in southern Alberta (Figure 13). The number of guns and horses suggests that this scene occurred well into the 1700s, or more likely 1800s, during the period when the Blackfoot held sway over the territory surrounding Writing-On-Stone. Selwyn Dewdney, a pioneer in the study of Canadian rock art, may have had this panel in mind when he noted:

[the Foureau robe] is unique among all hide paintings I have found in museums on either side of the Atlantic; the figures being rendered in a style unique to petroglyphs occurring only in southern Alberta and northern Montana (Dewdney 1979).
COMMON TRAITS

The trait which most strongly characterizes the Foureau robe and the seven accompanying paintings is the V-neck. This feature is distinguished by a chevron-shaped line at the top of the torso, resulting in a "V" at the base of the neck and forming pointed shoulders. V-neck figures appear on only fifteen hide paintings, but occur much more frequently in rock art. As such, V-necks are of great interest, serving as a direct link to a considerably earlier and more obscure phase in Plains Indian visual art. About 82% of the human figures on the Foureau robe have the V-neck feature, 73% on the Malcolm robe, and virtually all humans in the remaining paintings share this trait, except the Manitoba Museum shirt which has 23% (Figure 14). ²

Figures with the arms out from the sides and bent upward at the elbow have been equated with the so-called "posture of epiphany" or "adoration." At an earlier time on the northwestern Plains, this gesture may have had religious significance; however, such meaning would be incongruous with much of the narrative content in war exploit paintings. ⁵ In the paintings under consideration, the frequency of V-neck figures with upraised arms is as follows: 70% of figures on the Foureau robe, 90% on the Ellis Gallery shirt, 62% on the Civic Musei shirt, 61% on the Folkens Museum shirt and 13% on both the Manitoba Museum shirt and the Malcolm robe (Figure 15). Neither the Writing-On-Stone detail nor the Gilcrease drawing display this element.

The absence of upper body limbs in pictorial narratives can be attributed to a combination of factors: the unwieldiness of the medium, the shorthand nature of the genre, and the exigencies of the narrative. While the lower limbs, notably the feet, serve to indicate a figure's direction of movement or orientation, the upper limbs were often not essential to the narrative, and were omitted with no loss of information. In other instances the absence of limbs contributes to the narrative, for example, by conveying helplessness or death. Groups of fully truncated figures, usually registering enemies killed, are not uncommon in older hide paintings. ⁶
However, only figures with lower limbs intact and arms missing are considered here. Figures of this category occur in all eight paintings. Their frequency of occurrence relative to other figures on each of the paintings is as follows: 18% on the Fourreau robe, 100% on the Catlin shirt, approximately 80% on the Writing-On-Stone detail, 77% in the Manitoba Museum shirt, 73% on the Malcolm robe, 16% on the Folkens Museum shirt, 10% on the Ellis Gallery shirt, 7% on the Civi Musei shirt (Figure 16). These numbers do not include the distinctive rows or tallies of fully truncated V-neck torsos painted along quilt work strips on the Folkens Museum, Ellis Gallery and Gilcrease drawing. The porcupine quillwork strips decorating the shoulders and sleeves of these three shirts are almost identical and their rosettes have similar hourglass motifs. These commonalities further suggest a single tribal origin for the shirts.

Colored outlines refers to figures outlined in colors other than black or dark brown (Ewers 1939:18). Sometimes they were filled in with the same hue, resulting in brightly colored monochromatic forms. On the Fourreau robe, 36% of the figures have red or green outlines; 100% on the Ellis Gallery shirt are outlined in red; and 13% on the Folkens Museum shirt have green or red outlines. Rock art was often executed in iron oxide pigments, usually producing colors in the red range, as in the Writing-On-Stone example. The Manitoba Museum shirt has a single red-outlined figure, carrying a sacred pipe stem. The Malcolm robe apparently also has a single colored outline figure. The manner in which the figures on the Gilcrease drawing were replicated suggest that the originals had colored outlines. All figures on the Civici Musei shirt are outlined in black.

Plains Indian war exploit paintings are abbreviated narrative accounts, delineating the minimum salient features necessary to publicize an event or series of events. In this regard, the detached hand motif is an effective narrative device. The hand usually represents the hero and is typically adjacent to a weapon or object indicating the infliction of a wound, or more commonly, the capture of a trophy. The detached hand motif occurs 19 times on the Fourreau robe, 52 times on the Malcolm robe, 11 times on the Folkens Museum shirt, 9 times on the Manitoba Museum shirt, twice on the Gilcrease drawing, and probably once on the Ellis Gallery shirt (Figure 17). It does not appear on the Civici Musei shirt nor, apparently, on the detail from Writing-On-Stone. Another type of hand motif gives the appearance of hand imprints placed on warriors’ chests, horse rumps, war shirts, or leggings. These imprint-like hands have a wide east-west distribution in the Plains (see Truetner 1979:173,167,142,148-9; Bowers 1950:72; Bowers 1965:279; De Smet 1969:247; Hungry Wolf 1977:268, Wilson 1918:295; Wilson 1916:37; Nabokov 1967:34). However, they are not found in narrative paintings and so are not further considered here.

**Trait Distribution**

Of the 293 works in the image bank, approximately 104 paintings are documented as Blackfoot and 21 tentatively attributed to the Blackfoot. The Blackfoot examples, along with those of the Crow (41), Cree (11) and Sarcee (9) figured most prominently in this study. The remaining 107 works are
attributed to a variety of other tribes, almost all from the northern Plains and Plateau regions. Connections, based on the five formal traits, were made between the eight paintings under study and those in the image bank. The resulting distribution patterns facilitated the search for the tribal origins of the works under consideration. The distribution of figures with missing arms is largely limited to Blackfoot paintings and appears to be one of their strongest pictorial traits. This convention is also evident on the few surviving hide paintings executed by the Cree and Sarcee tribes, neighbors of the Blackfoot to the north and west, and to a lesser degree by the Crow to the south. About 70% of the Blackfoot paintings contained figures with colored outlines. This would appear to be a strong Blackfoot feature, occurring less frequently in paintings of the three adjacent tribes.

The detached hand is almost exclusively found in Blackfoot and Crow hide paintings. This motif is prevalent in their paintings likely because of its effectiveness in conveying the capture of trophies from the enemy. This deed figured prominently in the respective war honor systems of both tribes, ranking highest in the Blackfoot system (Vatter 1927:52; Ewers 1958:139; Bradley 1923:267; Grinnell 1910:302; Curtis 1911:10; Wissler 1911:36-7; Wilson 1958:2) and around second in the Crow system (Bonner 1965:197; Lowie 1912:230; Medicine Crow 1992:45; Marquis 1928:174-5; Nabokov 1967:34; Morgan 1959:191). The two groups depicted the hand motif differently. Unlike the Blackfoot hand, the Crow hand is highly stylized with comb-like fingers and dramatically curved-back thumb (Figure 18).

The distribution of V-neck figures is largely concentrated in rock art sites in the plains of southern Montana, northern Wyoming and at Writing-On-Stone, Alberta (Schuster 1987:35; Magne and Klassen 1991:415; Conner and Conner 1971:17), with a significantly lower concentration in western South Dakota (Keyser 1984; Sundstrom 1984:108).
and western Kansas (Schuster 1987:33). Hide paintings containing V-necks have been almost exclusively attributed to the Blackfoot and Crow. These groups occupied the territory having the greatest number of petroglyph sites containing V-neck figures. Crow V-necks, however, differ considerably from those of the Blackfoot. The former display extreme elongation, a strong sense of line alternating between curves and angles, broad shoulders with tapering torso, angular hip formations and arms usually bent and raised like boxers (Figure 19). Blackfoot V-necks basically exhibit straight-line construction, almost always with parallel-sided torsos. Their general symmetry and frontal upper bodies tend to give them a somewhat wooden or frozen appearance. Crow figures, on the other hand, often convey a sense of fluidity and grace (Brownstone 2001).

Figures with upraised arms have an extremely wide distribution in North America. Concentrations of these figures may be found in rock art in Texas (Kirkland and Newcomb 1967:87, 151), in Washington near the Pacific coast (Schuster 1987:38), above the Saskatchewan Plains (Jones 1981), across the Canadian Shield (Dewdney and Kidd 1962), and in the sacred images of the Menominee (Kasprycki 1994) and Ojibwa tribes of the eastern woodlands (Dewdney 1975). Large numbers of upraised-arm figures are found in hide paintings, often in groups, attributed to the Sioux and Mandan dating to the first half of the nineteenth century (Figure 20). However, aside from the paintings under consideration, figures having V-necks combined with upraised arms are largely limited to rock art of the northwest.
ern Plains (Magne and Klassen 1991:Table 3; Conner and Conner 1971:17), principally in Blackfoot and Crow territory (Figure 21).11

RELATIONS TO BLACKFOOT PAINTING

Of the 125 Blackfoot paintings considered, 24 pre-date 1875, 40 were executed between 1875 and 1909, and 61 between 1910 and the 1990s.12 Relative to other plains tribes, this body of work exhibits a remarkably conservative process of development (see Brownstone 1993). The Hudson’s Bay Company introduced the Blackfoot to European painted tableaux around 1820 (Garry 1900:201), and a number of European artists including George Catlin, Carl Bodmer, Alfred Miller, Paul Kane and Father Nicholas Point visited the Blackfoot between 1832 and 1848. However, the introduction of European pictorial traditions seems to have had little effect on Blackfoot painting at the time. The earliest documented example of a Blackfoot painting commercially made for the European market appears to be an “albino robe” dating to about 1870.13 Several hides painted by Red Crane in the early 1880s were almost certainly made for sale.14 John Ewers (1958:301) noted that in the 1890s there was “a slight revival of the decadent old art of robe painting” when “collectors of ethnological specimens began to encourage veterans of intertribal wars to record their war deeds on skins.” James Wilson, a Blackfoot (Blood) Indian agent, wrote on September 25, 1893, “During the last year or so quite a trade has been done in painted [war exploit] robes...” (United Church Archives, Rev. J. MacLean Papers, Box 1, File 18). There are at least seven extant hide paint-

The period after 1910 marks an explosion in the number of paintings executed by the Blackfoot for commercial purposes. The commercial potential was largely realized in the context of the growth of tourism in the recreational parks in the Rocky Mountains of Montana and southern Alberta. Two ambitious projects were the suite of 42 canvas murals with translations of the pictographs by 19 aging warriors around 1913 in Glacier Park Hotels and three 52-foot murals commissioned by the Great Northern Railways. The Glacier Park murals appear to have been destroyed, although ten survive as illustrations in booklets (McAdams 1919; anonymous ca.1915). The Calgary Stampede and Banff Indian Days must surely have encouraged the continued tradition of painting war exploit on tipis and tipi liners, kept up at least until the 1970s (Hungry Wolf 1977:71; Blood Tipi donated by H. A. Dempsey, Glenbow Museum).

These commercial ventures strongly encouraged the perpetuation of Blackfoot visual conventions. Moreover, the overarching traditional framework for pictorial narrative exploit painting, public coup recounting and tremendous social esteem for individual achievement, remained significantly intact, and continue to play a strong role in Blackfoot society today (Taylor 1989:168-69, 275; MacLean 1896:372; Kidd 1986:162; Dempsey 1997).

As a result, the number of surviving Blackfoot works is large, and the threads of visual tradition may still be traced from the more recent paintings to the Foureau robe.
These formalistic threads contribute to the understanding of Blackfoot pictorial style. Static-appearing humans with rectangular torsos, colored outlines, missing limbs and detached hands have a strong presence across the spectrum of Blackfoot painting. Additional formal features characterize Blackfoot painting, some of which are found in the paintings under study. The scout motif, identified as an arc penetrated by a zigzag line, is typical of later Blackfoot works. The arcs of repeated dashes found on the Ellis Gallery, Manitoba Museum and Folkens Museum shirts are probably forerunners of the scout symbol. The early Blackfoot robes at the National Museum of Denmark (He 478) and Public Archives of Canada (C18696) also contain this motif. Dashed arcs have a limited presence in paintings outside those of the Blackfoot. Entrenched battles, distinguished by circular breastworks as in the Fourreau, Malcolm and Manitoba Museum paintings, are one of the more persistent elements in Blackfoot painting. Continuous pictorial narrative, the display of multiple events linked in sequence, seems strongly associated with Blackfoot paintings. Such displays, with footprints tracing the order of events are found on the Manitoba, Folkens and Gilcrease Museum shirts and on the Malcolm and Fourreau robes. The combination of these diagnostic traits argues strongly that the Fourreau robe and the six comparable works are Blackfoot. The least secure painting in the group is the Civici Museum shirt, since it has the fewest Blackfoot features. Further, the manner of depicting breechcloths at the sides of figures on the shirt—a convention associated with Sioux works—is foreign to Blackfoot painting.

Several factors suggest the date of execution of the Fourreau robe. The most recent Blackfoot painting with V-neck figures is the Manitoba Museum shirt collected in 1848. Since there are many more V-necks, including those with upraised arms, on the Fourreau robe than the Manitoba Museum shirt, 1848 may be considered as an upper date. The history of collecting from the Blackfoot perhaps serves as a guideline for a lower date. There are only two documented collections of Blackfoot material made before 1830: the two non-extant painted robes collected by Nicholas Garry around 1820 (Garry 1900:203) and the war shirt and accompanying leggings collected by Duke Paul between 1822 and 1824 (Bolz and Sanner 1999:90).

Based on these factors, the Fourreau robe probably dates between 1820 and 1848.

**DISCUSSION**

From a broader perspective, applying the comparative method to formal traits somewhat underplays the complex nature of both the Plains Indian artistic community and the surviving body of works. It is important to keep in mind that there are numerous tribes for which we have no documented extant examples. Furthermore, the tribal representation of extant works is very uneven. These complexities hinder, for example, attempts to trace the origin of V-neck figures. It is fairly well accepted that the post-contact rock art at Writing-On-Stone, including V-neck figures, most closely resembles hide paintings attributed to the Blackfoot (Klassen 1994:15; see also Keyser 1991:265-266, Klassen 1995:145 and Bouchert-Bert 1999:41). However, Keyser (1977) and others suggest that the earliest of the Writing-On-Stone V-necks, which probably predate the Fourreau robe by hundreds of years, were made by another tribe, most likely the Shoshoni. It is not unlikely that the Blackfoot borrowed from these figures. Reverend John MacLean, who closely studied traditional Blackfoot culture first-hand between 1880 and 1889, noted, “When the South Peigan Indians visited these rocks [a set of petroglyphs in Montana], they used them as models when they returned home, drawing figures on their robes similar to those they had seen.” Some visual traits associated with Blackfoot painting are absent from the Fourreau paintings. For example, characteristic scalp images and discrete weapon tallies appear only on the Malcolm robe. Triangular-torso and X-shaped human figures, which occur quite frequently in Blackfoot paintings from at least 1833 until well into the 20th century, are all but absent from the study group. The exception is again the Malcolm robe. It contains eleven X-figures which are most unusual in their extreme elongation and are strikingly similar to the figures on the Peigan tally robe collected by Maximilian in 1833 (Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin [IV B199]). The shield-bearers on the Malcolm robe, those figures whose torsos are entirely hidden by large shields, are generally associated with rock art. Large body shields are a vestige of pedes-
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Triantian warfare, yet warrior-artists continued to paint shield-bearers for a considerable time after they acquired horses and adopted smaller shields for equestrian warfare (Conner and Conner 1971:20). Shield-bearers are found on perhaps only four additional hide Paintings, but those on the Malcolm robe find closest parallel in an 1833 rendering of a Blackfoot robe in the journal of Prince Maximilian. Further questions arise when traits associated with the Blackfeet appear in the works of other tribes. For example, the shirt dating to the early 1800s in the Peabody Museum (90-17-10/49309), which scholars believe came from the Crow or Mandan, contains hourglass figures, continuous narrative, detached hands and figures with missing arms. The shirt also has well-defined legs slightly fattened at the thigh and calf, and with a distinctive knot at the knee. Although the occurrence of such legs is rare in early works, they appear on the Foureau and Malcolm robes, the Civici Museum and Folkens Museum shirts, as well as on some shield-bearing rock art figures in Montana (Conner 1984:136). These anomalies, while not sufficient to re-attribute the Foureau group of paintings, suggest that there is much more to learn.

In many ways, understanding the early paintings and rock art from the Plains is like putting together a puzzle. As sound methodology is applied to assembling pieces into sections, and sections are correctly juxtaposed, ethnic art boundaries will become more distinct. In this context, the search for the origins of the Foureau robe has tentatively solved one section of the puzzle. As the paintings of other tribes are studied and identified, the Foureau robe will assume not only its moment in the history of Blackfoot painting but in the history of Plains Indian visual art as a whole.

NOTES

1. Collected works of a single artist. For example, Dr. O.C. Edwards's collection of 44 drawings by the Assiniboine artist He Who Tells are counted as a single work.
3. William Truettner noted over the telephone that this drawing was made by an artist whose work is "looser and more assured" than Catlin's. Bill Holm and Bill Sturtevant, in conversation, also expressed the opinion that it was executed by a contemporary of Catlin. Nancy Anderson of the U.S. National Gallery is currently investigating the portfolio in consultation with historians, material culture specialists, conservators and FBI handwriting experts.

Peter Faris kindly referred me to this drawing.

4. The following abbreviations will be used for locations of images illustrated in the text:
- BHM Bernische Historische Museum (Berne, Switzerland)
- BM British Museum (London, England)
- CMC Canadian Museum of Civilization (Hull, PQ)
- CMRE Civici Musei Reggio Emilia (Italy)
- DEG The Donald Ellis Gallery (Dundas, ON)
- FME Folkens Museum Etnografiska (Stockholm, Sweden)
- GM Gilcrease Museum (Tulsa, OK)
- JAM Joslyn Art Museum (Omaha, NE)
- LFC Laura Fisher Collection (New York)
- MH Musée de l'Homme (Paris, France)
- MMMH Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature (Winnipeg, MA)
- MVH Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg (Germany)
- NMD National Museum of Denmark (Copenhagen)
- NMAI National Museum of the American Indian (Washington, DC)
- OCM Opocno Castle Museum (Opocno, Czech Republic)
- PAC Public Archives of Canada (Ottawa, ON)
- SHSW The State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Madison, WI)
- SMA Stark Museum of Art (Orange, TX)
- WOS Writing-On-Stone (Milk River, AB)

5. Barry (1991:51) in describing petroglyph figures with uplifted arms at Writing-On-Stone uses the term, "posture of Epiphany," apparently to designate the moment when the godhead appears. Vatter (1927:79) used the German term "adorantenhaften" in describing figures with uplifted arms on the Foureau robe and the Folkens Museum shirt. A figure with uplifted arms juxtaposed with two blankets is depicted on the robe painted by the Blackfoot Running Rabbit (ROM HD 6541). The artist stated that this signifies the Cree's "saying for peace." Clark (1982:412) described a sign language gesture combining blankets and open hands used to call a halt to a fight.

6. For example, Sioux tipi liner, c.1840, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (1665:285.4). Upper Missouri [Sioux?] robe, c. 1830, U.S. National Museum of Natural History (2130); Sioux robe, c. 1830, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (IV B 208); Upper Missouri robe, c.1840, Soutie Museum (63.9.4); Blackfoot? robe, c. 1850, National Museum of Denmark (H 478), Blackfoot robe, c.1855, Public Archives of Canada (C18696); Blackfoot? robe, c.1830, National Museum of Ireland (1882.3381); Bodmer's drawing of a Peigan robe, 1833, Joslyn Art Museum (NA 148).

7. Some examples of truncated non V-neck humans aligned to quill strips are: "Digger" war shirt, Provincial Museum of Alberta (H88.56.4); "Mandan" war shirt, Canadian Museum of Civilization (7366187); Arikara war shirt, Royal Scottish Museum (389); Mandan? war shirt, Detroit Institute of Arts, (1988.44); Crow? war shirt, Opocno Castle Museum (6915). These perhaps find parallel in the truncated torsos aligned at 90° to rows of black or red painted bars found on the following examples: Crow? robe, c. 1830, Bern Historical Museum (N A. 4); Crow? leggings.
c. 1855?, Opopono Castle Museum (6916); Bodmer’s drawing showing Mato Tope’s shirt, Mandan, c.1833, Joslyn Art Museum (R16); Kurz’s detail of a Hidatsa robe, Bern Historical Museum; Nez Perce robe, c.1890, Field Museum of Natural History (69143); Hidatsa robe, c.1830, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (IV B 202); Mandan dress, c.1884, American Museum of Natural History (501/5352); Catlin’s “re-creation” of a Mandan shirt, c.1830, U.S. National Museum of Natural History (386.506).
8. Taylor (1994:184) coined the term “capture hand” to describe this motif. His term is somewhat misleading since this narrative device is not exclusively used to convey the act of capture. Six of the eight works under study clearly show detached hands involved in the infliction of wounds and the counting of coup by touching the enemy.
9. This motif is found on the following paintings thought to be Crow: Bernisches Historisches Museum (N.A. 4), National Museum of the American Indian (17/6345), Opopono Castle Museum (6916), Laura Fisher Collection (88.351), Danish National Museum of Ethnology (Hd 60). It appears once on a Hidatsa robe collected by Maximilian (Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin IV B 203), and perhaps once on the Mato Tope robe in the Linden Museum (36125). This device is found twice on an early nineteenth century war shirt in the Peabody Museum, Harvard (90-17/10/49309) which has variously been attributed to the Crow (Walker Art Center 1972) and Mandan (Maurer 1993:184). The detached hand motif is found on at least twenty Blackfoot war exploit paintings.
10. Nine Blackfoot paintings contain V-neck figures: the eight paintings in the study group and the Peigan tally robe collected by Maximilian in the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin (IV B 1999). Five works thought to be Crow exhibit the V-neck feature: Bernisches Historisches Museum (N.A. 4), National Museum of the American Indian (17/6345), Laura Fisher Collection (88.351), Danish National Museum of Ethnology (Hd 60), National Museum of the American Indian (1/2558). In addition, the early robe at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University (99-12-10/53121) has seven V-neck figures. As Maurer (1993:188) observed, this robe was likely painted by several men. The peculiar hip formations and tapering torsos on the V-neck figures also occur on the Crow paintings noted above and on Kurz’s drawings of Hidatsa robes. It is said that some Hidatsa participated in the battle displayed on the robe, and if true the V-neck figures may somehow be connected to that ethnic component of the painting. Sundstrom (2000) and Nagy (2000) have suggested a possible connection between V-neck figures and the Cheyenne Hatahao symbol, which often takes the form of a rectangle notched at the top.
11. The exception is again the Peabody robe which has five V-neck figures with upraised arms.
12. The most recent example is Pete Standing Alone’s painted buffalo robe, now on display in the Irrigation Building on the Blood Reserve.
13. National Museum of the American Indian (19/8139), deposited by James Aull, who received the painting from I. G. Baker in 1875. This small cream-colored robe is probably from an immature bison, not an albino. Schulz (1907:86) describes an albino skin which was painted with similar images by a Blackfoot at around the same time to increase its value as a curio.
16. On May 23, 1889, Maclean received the following information on petroglyphs from Henry Shoecat, the Northwest Mounted Police interpreter. The “painted rocks” displaying “figures of lodges, men fighting” seen by Shoecat were “very high on the face of cliffs on the [Missouri] river…near Cow Island some 30 or 40 miles south of Benton.” Shoecat also mentioned that the police sometimes “wrote” upon the stones at Writing-On-Stone when they camped nearby. He also noted that “as the Indians passed to and fro they stopped there to cut figures upon the stones” (United Church Archives, University of Toronto, MacLean papers, Box 25, File 143).

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