From Path to Myth: Journeys and the Naturalization of Nation along the Missouri River

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In the year of 1907 Sitting Rabbit, a native of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation completed a map of the Missouri River, from the modern North Dakota- South Dakota border to its confluence with the Yellowstone River. The map was commissioned by then secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota Orin G. Libby, who offered to pay five dollars for the labor involved in this project. Prepared in consultation with several Mandan and Hidatsa elders, the map depicts the location of village sites and other natural and cultural features and includes 38 place names and notations in the native language. These places, in turn, correspond to narratives of migration, colonization, and settlement (Thiessen, Wood, and Jones 1979:45). Sitting Rabbit's map not only renders in canvas a view of the Missouri River environs as they were used and understood by the earth-lodge tribes at the turn of the twentieth century, but also provides insights into the process through which people appropriate the physical world and subsequently identify it as integral to their biological and social reproduction. As our country commemorates the bicentennial of the Corps of Discovery expedition to the Pacific Ocean, it is only fitting to reflect on the significance of journeys and nation-making along the Missouri River.

In this paper we combine the information contained in native maps and sketches with narratives of origin, migration, war, and ritual to examine the role of journeys in the formation of national identities among the historic Siouan-speaking Hidatsa and Mandan of North Dakota (Figure 1). The central tenet of this paper is that movement across the landscape both generates and

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constantly reinforces identities through the fulfillment of social and ceremonial obligations connected to specific physiographic features and natural resources. To pursue this line or thought, we begin by outlining the dimensions of movement across the landscape by individuals and groups. Second, we discuss different types of journeys to illustrate the varying scales of landscape movement among the Hidatsa and Mandan and the relative contribution of these journeys to identity formation. And third, we reflect on the extent to which travel, narrative, and ritual led to the rise of this modern native nation.

Dimensions of Landscape Movement

Unpacking the relationship between journey and identity formation requires the isolation of two distinct but complementary aspects of landscape movement: behavior and memory. The first aspect refers to the act of traveling and to all the interactions a traveler may engage in with people, nature, and the supernatural (Kelly and Todd 1988; Rockman 2003; Zedeno 2003). The second aspect denotes the internalization of landscape knowledge acquired during traveling (O'Hanlon and Frankland 2003; Golledge 2003; Levinson 1996) and the inscription of old and new knowledge through symbols and stories (Lowenthal 1975; Rappapport 1985). Behavior and memory ultimately contribute to the formation of identities by generating "place-worlds" that humans come to identify as their own or as their nature. As Basso (1996:6-7) explains in his preface to *Wisdom Sits in Places*, "if place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine."

To characterize the interplay of journeys and identity formation among the Hidatsa and Mandan, we apply a multi-dimensional approach to landscape movement that addresses connections between travel behavior, memory, and identity. Behavioral interactions that occur during travel

may be explained by three dimensions—formal, relational, and historical. Recollections of landscape features and events, as well as consolidation of newly acquired knowledge and past experience, may be explained by cognitive and inscriptive dimensions.

Behavioral Dimensions of Landscape Movement

Given that behavioral interactions cannot occur without reference to place, time, and participants, the formal, relational, and historical dimensions help identify and describe the properties and performance characteristics of the contexts of landscape movement (Zedeno 2000:107). Briefly, the formal dimension corresponds to the physical characteristics of these contexts; the relational dimension addresses the interactive links (economic, social, political, and ritual) that develop while traveling; and the historical dimension describes the progression of landscape learning that result from successive journeys.

The contexts of landscape movement encompass at least two key formal elements: route and path. Route refers to the direction, mode, and distance of movement whereas the path refers to the physical and cultural properties of the route. Paths, traces, roads, or trails are also used as synonyms to describe the material imprint left by frequent travel along a given route (see symposium papers). But the concept further applies to dream journeys: during a vision quest, for example, an individual may travel through unknown lands by leaping from landmark to landmark or following an actual trail (Brody 1981). As connections between travel behavior and recollections of travel experiences unfold, the distinction between route and path may be either blurred or sharpened as needed to draw attention to certain area of knowledge or to derive a fable from the experience. Routes and paths have performance characteristics or interaction-specific capabilities (*sensu* Schiffer 1999) that allow travelers to accomplish the original purpose of their journeys as well as to opportunistically benefit from these capabilities. Visibility, for example,

allows travelers both to see far and to be seen; seclusion, on the other hand, prevents travelers from having to confront physical danger; accessibility and proximity help travelers to obtain needed resources or to arrive to their destinations with relative ease. Classic examples of purposeful and opportunistic interactions among travelers and between travelers and other resources abound in the northern Plains ethnographic literature; the most common is that of chance encounters between groups of antagonistic hunters that escalate into all-out warfare.

When planning a journey, travelers may consider the relative merits of different routes and paths according to their performance characteristics. The need for safety, for example, may be more important than proximity to a destination; or, the need to find water may override safety. Golledge (2003:27) observes that, when selecting routes, travelers are less concerned with optimization than with satisfactory compromise; generally, a route that takes people where they want to go is good enough. Paths that are frequently traveled owe their popularity to especially attractive properties and performance characteristics; there, travelers may engage in repeated interactions with other travelers, with natural resources, or with spirits. Popular paths often are naturally well-marked by conspicuous physiographic features and do not lend themselves to be easily ambushed. Movement effectiveness increases when the terrain becomes familiar enough than travelers can device short-cuts or alternative routes (LaMotta 2004), or when they can use the specific properties and performance characteristics of a given path for accomplishing multiple tasks.

Purposeful and opportunistic interactions or experiences lived on the path permeate human-nature relations, from exploration to colonization, and from expansion to consolidation and even abandonment and thus form the core of land-based identities. The discovery of new resources and fallback lands optimizes the potential for survival and economic growth; friendly encounters

with other people help expand social networks through trade and marriage; or violent encounters can potentially increase one's reach into another's homeland and resources through war, raid, and slavery. Not in the least, spiritual experiences enhance personal power and wisdom (Myers 1986). A particularly blessed dream or song obtained during a vision quest or any other journey could lead the dreamer to go be initiated into an existing religious society or to develop new rites and ceremonies. Even when following a familiar route, therefore, a traveler may bring home new and valuable information and experiences that become linked to specific places and resources along the path.

The progression of landscape learning and wayfinding leads to the evolution of particular places or suites of places into landmarks. Landmarks may be liked to "pages" in the history of landscape movements because they serve as cartographic devices for wayfinding as well as mnemonic devices for narrating stories and myths (Zedeno 2000:107). The Sweet Grass Hills in southern Alberta and the mouth of the Yellowstone River in North Dakota illustrate two types of conspicuous landmarks recognized by different ethnic groups in the northern Plains as key points in north-south and east-west travel routes. Such landmarks contain untold archaeological, cartographic, and narrative evidence of their use history. Furthermore, along well-known routes one may find landmarks that are connected sequentially to form alignments, or non-sequentially, that is, forming clusters. Narratives of war expeditions illustrate how the accumulation of different types of interactions linked to such individual landmarks, to landmark alignments, and to landmark clusters form the fabric of cognition and representation of the "place-worlds" warriors create to justify their search for social identity.

Remembering Journeys: Cognition and Representation

What makes people remember journeys? Narratives of a distant past across cultures commonly recount how, at the time when people's survival depended on their ability to read the landscape for its resource potential as well as for its unseen dangers, travelers keenly studied the horizon, committing to memory shape, direction, orientation, and shadow of different features; they took note of animal traces, nests, and dens; vegetation and all potential indicators of the presence of water; minerals and rocks; and all indicators of the presence of other human and nonhuman beings. Upon return, they would describe to others what was observed and learned. Salient landforms and other features would have been described by their appearance, their proximity to other features, or by the specific experience lived or event observed at or near them.

Whether referring to physiographic characteristics or to intangible qualities, descriptions of route and path could easily be noted as the first and most significant form of internalizing or "cognizing" the context of landscape movement. Most Native American place names, in fact, are quasi-pictorial descriptions of form, content, or event. To illustrate, the Ojibway name for the present site of De Tour Village, Mackinac County, Michigan, is *Giwideonaning* or "point where we go around in a canoe." Vogel (1986:136) notes that this descriptive name is not only a navigational indicator different from portaging or crossing a specific waterway, but also a descriptor of a shoreline feature such as a point or a bend. Naming is inseparable from remembering, as descriptive names help people identify landmarks and resources they had not seen before. Naming and describing are also crucial in educating children about navigation; in modern times, Blackfeet hunters who take children with them usually teach them how to recognize a landmark by describing its appearance from different directions so that the budding hunters will not get lost if separated from the adults.[1]

[1] Information gathered by senior author in the ongoing Badger-Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District Project.

While descriptive naming is a common practice among Native Americans and other non-Western societies, the actual inscription of names and places is usually encoded in culturally specific frameworks. "Cognitive mapping," says Golledge (2003:30) "is generally understood as the deliberate and motivated encoding of environmental information so that it can be used to determine where one is at any particular moment, where other specific perceived or encoded objects are in surrounding space, how to get from one place to another, or how to communicate spatial knowledge to others." To his definition we may add the deliberate and motivated encoding of individual and group interactions with supernatural beings. The mode by which people encode new landscape information into known categories of knowledge, create new categories, and later reckon these from memory is bounded by language as well as by cultural training and experiences (Levinson 1996:353); therefore, individual narratives of journeys are generally inscribed or represented to others by appealing to elements that are shared by the society or a sector thereof. Surviving a severe storm at a particular place during a journey, for example, could be recounted by a Mandan or Hidatsa individual in reference to the power of thunder, the home of the mythic thunderbirds, the Water Buster Clan, or Thunder Nest Butte.[1] As described by Brody (1981), dreaming about old and new paths and traveling experiences is another device that allows people to integrate old and new pieces of information in reference to movement across landscapes not yet experienced by others and to justify decisions and actions regarding future travel or other activities.

As explained below, cognition and inscription of the contexts of landscape movement are not only culture-specific but they also operate at different levels of participation—individual, community of practice, institution, and nation-group—and at varying spatial and historical scales. By appealing to shared elements of inscription, the reckoning of individual journeys and

[1] Information collected by authors during ongoing ethnographic research in North Dakota.

the experiences, knowledge, and moral lessons they provide may be reclaimed by any or all participant constituencies, eventually becoming integral to their right-of-being.

Scales of Movement and Levels of Participation

Connections between journeys and identity formation among the Hidatsa and Mandan (as well as most other native groups) involved at least two scales of landscape movement, macro- and micro-geographical. Macro-geographical movements involved migration, pilgrimage, resource gathering, trade, and warfare, and potentially encompassed vast areas of land well outside what would become the Hidatsa and Mandan traditional homeland of historic times. Each of these events and activities contributed uniquely to identity formation. Memories of migration, for example, are at the core of establishing right-of-being as a people who once shared experiences and were blessed by the company and gifts of the creator and other primordial beings who interacted with humans while they were searching for their final destination. Memories of warfare, on the other hand, show the close connections that exist between individuals or communities of practice attempting to gain status and the nation-group asserting rights over contested lands and defending its territory. Like warfare, long-distance trade and adoption of individuals of a different ethnicity further affirmed a group's identity by allowing the nation-group to portray itself in a certain manner and to be seen by others accordingly (Spicer and Spicer 1992).

Traditionally, micro-geographical movements involved travel within the homeland, including seasonal village moves, summer and winter hunts and resource gathering, and ceremonial activities such as vision quests, eagle trapping, fasts, offering placement, and replenishing of ceremonial bundles (Bowers 1950, 1963; Wilson 1931). These types of movement contributed to identity formation at various levels of participation—individual, institution, community of

practice, subgroup, and nation-group--by constantly reinforcing the unique and critical role each level had in the well-being of the society and the culture as a whole. Many of the activities associated with micro-geographical movements are still practiced today. While this paper does not review the entire range of interactions and activities that stimulated or required movement within the homeland, it addresses those most consistently portrayed in narratives and maps.

Landscape Movement on the Missouri River

Throughout its history of human occupation and use, the Missouri River formed the main artery of travel for many groups inhabiting or making use of its banks and tributaries. In addition to offering travelers a clear path across the prairie, from the western fringe of the woodlands to the Rocky Mountains, and from the Hudson Bay to the Mississippi River, its timbered coulees and breaks furnished protection from natural elements and enemy groups, as well as an abundance of plant and animal resources. Likewise, the river and its tributaries cut through geological features exposing fossils, clays, pigments, gypsum crystals, and many other useful mineral resources. The seasonal regime, with its characteristic long winters, high winds, violent storms, and clear summer days set a dramatic stage for life and travel.

Both before and after the introduction of the horse in the mid-1700s, Native Americans were heavily dependent on the Missouri drainage system to navigate the northern Plains. Migration traditions of the southern Mandan, for example, describe movements and events in direct relationship to rivers leading to their final destination near the confluence of the Heart and Missouri Rivers (Beckwith 1938; Bowers 1950). While the nomadic as well as the semi-sedentary upper Missouri tribes were accustomed to traveling long distances with dog travois or dog packs, the need to maintain a balance between proximity to water sources and accessibility to buffalo herds likely determined their choice of travel routes. Whereas the horse did not alter

significantly pre-equestrian culture and society in the upper Missouri heartland, as Wissler (1914:17) once suggested, it certainly contributed to the development of a macro-geographical dimension of movement across the landscape. Less burdened by travel time and distance, equestrian hunters, traders, and warriors were able to take their journeys across the vast prairies and as far west and south as the Cimarron River and the Arkansas River (Roe 1955:91). Except for the nineteenth century military expansion of the Lakota Sioux, this macro-geographical reach was seriously curtailed with the advance of Euroamerican colonization and settlement, and formally terminated with the institution of the reservation system (Hamalainen 2003:26).

Migratory Movements

Macro-geographical movement among the aboriginal groups of the northern Plains, including ancestors of the Hidatsa and Mandan, was of continental proportions. Historical linguistics addressing the evolution Siouan dialects suggests that the mutually unintelligible Hidatsa and Mandan split from the ancestral Siouan-speaking population and from each other several millennia ago. In fact, at the time of European contact speakers of Siouan dialects could be found across the mid-continent from the Yellowstone River to the Appalachian Mountains (Grimm 1985), thus supporting the idea of very early population separation and geographical drift. Narratives of long-distance unidirectional movement toward the Missouri River also hint at macro-geographical knowledge of unknown antiquity.

The northern Plains is one of the few culture areas in the Unites States where continuity in ethnic identity from prehistory to history was established early by scholars who sought to integrate archaeology, history, and ethnography in reconstructions of the past (e.g., Libby 1908; Bowers 1948; Lehmer 1971; Wood 1993; Ahler and Thiessen 1991). However, many issues regarding the origin and development of the earth-lodge tribes on the Missouri River remain unresolved

archaeologically (Toom 1992, 1996; Ahler 1988, 2003). Several versions of Mandan and Hidatsa migration stories were recorded by explorers and fur traders (e.g., Thompson, Tyrrell, ed. 1916), travelers (Catlin 1965; Maximilian de Wied in Thwaites, ed. 1906), government agents (Mathews 1877), and ethnographers (e.g., Beckwith 1938; Bowers 1950, 1963). In many of these accounts key tribal informants acknowledged that different versions of the story reflected separate origins of Mandan and Hidatsa ancestors and, in the case of the Hidatsa, separate origins for the historic sub-groups—an admission that has proven difficult to reconcile archaeologically.

As expansive as the archaeological record is along the Missouri River and its tributaries, all that is known with some certainty is that groups of Mandan ancestors arrived to the Heart River sometime before AD 1250 from the south and may have encountered nomadic or semi-nomadic groups already using the area on a seasonal basis. Groups of Hidatsa and River Crow ancestors likely arrived to the Knife River from the northeast after AD 1450 to join a related group already in the area since very early times, with the Crow splitting and moving west before European contact. The question of whether Mandan and Hidatsa joined or replaced existing nomadic groups who inhabited that segment of the Missouri River drainage, or developed locally, continues to be explored (Ahler 2003).

At any rate, the modern Hidatsa and Mandan acknowledge descent from a number of self-identified and named groups, many with their own version of the origin or migration story. Broadest in its geographical reach is the Mandan migration tradition told by Wolf Chief to Alfred Bowers (1950:156-163):

> A long time ago the Missouri River flowed into the Mississippi River and thence into the ocean. On the right bank there was a high point on the ocean shore that the Mandan came from. They were said to have come from under the ground at that place and brought corn up. Their chief was named Good Furred Robe…

> In this early time when they came out to the ground, Good Furred Robe was Corn Medicine, and he had the right to teach people how to raise corn. The people of Awigaxa asked him to teach them his songs so as to keep the corn and be successful in growing their corn. Good Furred Robe also had a robe which, if sprinkled with water, would cause rain to come.
> When they came out of the ground, there were many people but they had no clothing on. They said, "We have found Ma'tahara." That was what they called the river as it was like a stranger. It is also the word for "stranger."

Wolf Chief's story describes in detail the subsequent movement of the ancestral Mandan – including groups named *Nu'itadi* ("from us")*, Awi'gaxa,* and *Nu'ptadi*--along the Mississippi River, their contact with people who made and used shell bowls and spoons, their trading of red-painted rabbit hides and meadowlark breasts, and the acquisition useful knowledge and items, such as the bull boat, the bow and arrow, snares, buffalo corrals, and ceremonies and ritual objects from First Creator, Lone Man, or the animal people. Explicit references to travel and navigation abound, or example,

> Good Furred Robe also owned a boat that was holy. It could carry twelve men. Each time they wanted to trade in the other village, they would take the red rabbit hides and the yellow meadowlark breasts and float over. There was a rough place in the middle, and they would drop some of these objects into the water, and then the water would calm.

The narrative contains rich description of landscape features as well as of floral and topographic variation, with details on the appearance of the Missouri River. Of particular significance in Wolf Chief's version is the mention of three stopping places known to contain archaeological sites sometimes attributed to probable ancestral Mandan populations: Pipestone, Minnesota, the White River or White Clay River and the Cheyenne River, both in South Dakota. Other places mentioned in the migration story, including the "place where turtle went back" on the Cannonball River near Standing Rock; the White High Butte near the Turtle Mountains on the Canadian border, and Eagle Nose Butte, are associated with the acquisition of the rituals of the

Okipa, the most sacred ceremony of the earth-lodge tribes (Catlin 1965; Mathews 1877; Thwaites, ed. 1906).

From the Mandan migration story, as recalled by Wolf Chief, one learns that movement toward their final homeland near the confluence of the Heart and the Missouri Rivers followed the course of the Mississippi River upstream to the mouth of the Missouri River, and then continued along the Mississippi River cutting across the prairie toward the White River of South Dakota. Each or all of the Mandan bands named in the story built villages and grew corn at different times and locations along the route, occupying them for a few years at a time. Separation from the main body of the tribe and regrouping are acknowledged, and references to the passage of time and its effects on language variation are noteworthy (Bowers 1950:157). The knowledge that band-specific villages existed and that the identities of these bands persisted into historic times is evident from independent historical sources, including the journals kept by Richard Thompson (Tyrrell, Ed. 1916), Prince Maximilian de Wied (Thwaites, ed. 1906) and by George Catlin (1965), among others.

The Hidatsa origin and migration traditions, first recorded by Thompson in the 1780s (Tyrrell 1916:225) and later by Lewis and Clark in 1804, are thought to derive in part from those of the Mandan (Bowers 1963); however, they have an altogether different geographical context. The story begins in time immemorial somewhere in the underworld of the lacustrine woodland-prairie ecotone of the Red River to the northeast, with special emphasis on the connection to Devils Lake--the Hidatsa primordial homeland. Like the Mandan, the Hidatsa origin and migration stories have numerous places and events explicitly associated with one or more linguistically similar (but dialectically different) subgroups, namely, the *Mirokac* or Hidatsa-River Crow and the Awaxawi. Their migration took them as far north as the Turtle Mountains

during the flood and west to the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers. In contrast, the story of another subgroup known as Awatixa lacks specific references to macro-geographical movement and thus may represent a more localized population with attachments to the Missouri River that predated the arrival of the Mandan and the other Hidatsa subgroups (Bowers 1963:300) but who still spoke a Hidatsa dialect. The Mountain Crow may have resided with the Awatixa at one time but likely moved west in prehistoric times.

The role of migration myths as affirmations of group identity, social distance, and rights-of-being to land and resources is evident in the Hidatsa story, for example, which acknowledges the prior presence of the Mandan on the Heart River as well as the Awatixa on the Missouri River, but affirms that corn, buffalo, and tobacco were given to Awaxawi and the Hidatsa-Crow while they were still living at Devils Lake; therefore they owned these resources independently from the Mandan. Overall, the migration story and other origin traditions of the Hidatsa-Crow and Awaxawi portray an ancient lifeway that came to characterize the natives of the Northern Plains, with far reaching movements that took them from the eastern prairies to the foot of the Rocky Mountains and frequent contact with other groups including the Chippewa, Cree, Assiniboine and Blackfoot.

A complex of stories associated with the Awatixa, also known as the myths of the Sacred Arrow, while not including references to physical travel, reveal the powers of mystical travel and the significance of ritual in identity formation. The traditions speak of a village in the sky and name "sacred arrow" refers to the mode of travel used by the sky village people and their leader, Charred Body, and his ability to change into an arrow (Beckwith 1938). The themes center on Charred Body's selection of 13 sky village couples to settle the earth, their movement from the sky to the earth and its consequences; war and competition for the right to live on the Missouri

River; crime and punishment; and the acquisition of a liturgical order as the marker of the end of strife and the beginning of a new society. These are stories of change and becoming and thus are full of symbolism that provided a rationale for their ritual calendar and many other actions. An eloquent explanation of the historical trajectory imbedded in these myths was given to Bowers by Hidatsa informant Bears Arm. Drawing a sketch in the shape of the letter Y, Bears Arm indicated that each of the upper forks represent (1) the making of the earth and the exodus from the underworld and (2) the settlement of the lands by people from the sky; respectively. The stem symbolizes the acquisition of social and ceremonial obligations once the villages were established, the Crow had left, and people had learned how to cooperate. At different points throughout this journey, Bears Arm explained, the ancestors acquired ceremonies that follow one another like “knots on a string” (Bowers 1963:304). These ceremonial obligations, in turn, connected people to landmarks and resources within the homeland as well as with their ancestral origin places.

Many of the ancestral landmarks mentioned in the origin and migration myths are noted in Sitting Rabbit’s map of the Missouri River, including villages or “towns” otherwise known for their archaeological remains that predate confirmed Mandan sites (Thiessen, Wood, and Jones 1979:154-156). Among Sitting Rabbit’s landmarks located below the known Mandan towns on the Heart River are ten villages (Figure 2), at least six of which correspond to prehistoric sites and others have no known material correlate. Most villages are named individually. Also depicted is a “mysterious corral,” near Holy Corral Creek, which apparently represents the buffalo corral built by Lone Man during the migration to save the Mandan from the flood (Bowers 1950:162). Other landmarks that likely allude to events told in the migration story include the Turtle Fall Creek and Village, and the Eagle Nose Village. The mythical Awatixa village of the Arrow People, known archaeologically as Flaming Arrow (Will and Hecker 1944)

as well as numerous historically known landmarks associated with the other Hidatsa subgroups and with Euroamericans are also depicted on the map.

Although Sitting Rabbit used river charts provided to him by Owen Libby, to the Western eye his sequential arrangement of the charts and the placement of landmark depictions on either bank the river seem backwards and upside-down. Yet, such cartography shows the way in which the Mandan map maker and his consultants culturally understood the river: historically, beginning in the south and ending in the north and geographically, as it appeared to them from their turn-of-the-century homes. The sequences and clusters of landmarks that Sitting Rabbit chose to depict in the map and their corresponding icons follow the historical trajectory of the Mandan from the migration to the establishment of the reservation. The map further encodes culturally ordained information about the relationship among different groups of Indian and non-Indians, the landscape, and the spirit world, thus showing a clear sense of differentiation between "us" and "the other."

Landscapes of Warfare and Trade

Despite Lewis and Clark's assertions that the village tribes, particularly the Mandan, fought defensively, until the devastating smallpox epidemic of 1837 the Hidatsa along with Mandan and Arikara warriors were in the habit of taking long-distance trips to fulfill visions and attain prestige (Meyer 1977:69). In fact, during his 1832 visit to the villages Prince Maximilian de Wied (Thwaites, ed. 1906:353) noted that,

> The Mandans and Minataries [Hidatsa] make excursions as far as the Rocky Mountains, against their enemies, the Blackfeet, and against the Chippeways, to the country of Pembina. Their other enemies are the Sioux, the Arikara, the Assiniboins, and the Chayennes. They are at peace with the Crows.

The main westward route was drawn on a sketch of the upper Missouri country made by the Mandan chief Sheheke or Big White for William Clark in 1805 (Reid, comp. 1974-48:122). Clark later recorded this path in the general expedition map drafted by Nicolas King. It is shown with the characteristic dotted line of a footpath paralleling the south bank of the Missouri River, crossing the Yellowstone River just above its mouth, crossing the Missouri River below the Three Forks, and penetrating the Rocky Mountains (Tucker 1942: Plate XXXIA; Figure 3). An important characteristic of this and other long-distance warpaths is that they may have been proprietary; this is indicated by a “road to war” drawn by the Assiniboine in the mid-1800s (Figure 4). The Assiniboine route traverses the same region as the Hidatsa route, and also penetrates the Rockies, but it parallels the Missouri River on its north bank. The path begins at Fort Union on the mouth of the Yellowstone River and follows the river course closely; it then turns northwest along the Milk River where it forks, one path going to the Fort Benton Trading Post on the Marias River and the other, labeled “warpath,” deviating toward the north side of the Sweet Grass Hills, and then turning south to the heart of Blackfeet territory in East Glacier, Montana (Warhus 1997: Plate 64).

Both routes thus reflect similar landscape movement behaviors but different territorial identities and perhaps different tribal allegiances: whereas Hidatsa warriors traversed Crow territory relatively safely, the Assiniboine warriors could do the same across Gros Ventre lands. That these paths are of great antiquity is confirmed by a map of the world made by Ac ki mok ki, a Blackfoot chief, in 1801 at the request of Hudson’s Bay Company trader Peter Fidler (Warhus 1997: Figure 56). This map, which encompasses areas then unknown to White explorers, also depicts the a north-south route along the Rockies and the Missouri drainage system from the Rocky Mountains to the mouth of the Yellowstone River, noting the existence of the river

villages just to the east of this landmark (Figure 5). Ac ki mok ki's map became the key to the Western territories as it depicted the route Lewis and Clark would soon follow.

The early existence of these continental routes, coupled with their consistency in the area they traversed and their beginning and end points, may be explained by trade. The development of a trade network that crisscrossed the plains and linked groups ranging from the Pacific Ocean to the Mississippi headwaters dates to the thirteenth century; thus, it may have been a response to the demise of Cahokia. It also coincides with the arrival of Mandan ancestors to the Heart River, which became the main center of trade activity. At its height, or before the smallpox epidemic of 1781, the network articulated with several strategically located rendezvous trading centers that connected distant and often enemy tribes to the Mandan depot (Wood and Thiessen, Eds. 1985; Ewers 1968). Its focus evolved historically from subsistence/ceremonial gifting to firearms, horses and other European imports, and to the fur trade (Thiessen 1993), but its role in mediating interethnic political relationships and social and geographic boundaries among traditional enemies remained central.

Control of the trade network did wonders to shape the identity of the Mandan as rich, fabled people with fortified towns of almost surreal quality—much like the seven cities of Cibola in the Southwest. During his Missouri River voyage of 1719, French explorer Bernard La Harpe heard of these "famous towns" from the Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita (Wedel 1971). A similar fame among the northern tribes attracted Pierre Gautier Varennes sieur de La Verendrye and his sons to journey from the Lake of the Woods to the Missouri River; he met the Mandan in 1738 (Wood 1980). Trade continued even after the smallpox reduced the Mandan to a few thousand and forced them to abandon some of their villages. Explorers such as Antoine Tabeau, a chronicler for Spanish envoy Jacques d'Englise, described in 1791 that "all the rivers, which empty into the

Missouri above the Yellowstone , are frequented by a swarm of nations with whom, at the post of the Mandanes, a trade, as extensive as it is lucrative, can be carried on" (Abel 1939:161). Even after the Corps of Discovery had returned from their expedition in 1806 and the fur trade was taken over by American Fur Company's upper Missouri outfit, travelers and traders pondered of the magnificent villages and their picturesque visitors (Catlin 1965; Abel, Ed. 1997). The trails to the Rocky Mountains continued to be used by the nomadic tribes for warfare and trade throughout the life of Fort Union Trading Post at the mouth of the Yellowstone River (1829-1866) and until the creation of reservations.

Warpaths of the Homeland

With the advance of Euroamerican colonization and concomitant expansion of the Sioux into the northern Plains after the epidemic of 1837, long-distance movements of the Hidatsa and Mandan were reduced, both due to the danger of traveling outside their territory and of leaving the villages at the mercy of marauders. Yet, short-distance trade trips to the main posts, raids and revenge attacks continued throughout the nineteenth century. Raid episodes against the Sioux and the on-and-off enemies the Arikara that occurred in the vicinity of American trade and military posts appear in sketches and narratives as micro-geographic in scale, rarely venturing far outside the homeland. A sketch made by Lean Wolf in 1881 shows a horse raid against a Sioux encampment near Fort Buford at the mouth of the Yellowstone River (Figure 6). This sketch stands in sharp contrast to that made by Big White in that it depicts a country bounded by the White man, from Fort Buford to Fort Berthold. Yet, the sketch uses traditional Plains Indian icons to indicate Indian and White settlements, footpaths, and horsepaths (Walhus 1997: Figure 66). This instance, and the narratives discussed below illustrate the enduring role of warfare as a tool for individuals who, in their search for a rightful place in society, also contributed materially and symbolically to the identity of their clan, village, and the nation-group.

The homeland and its boundary markers were sketched by Bears Arm in the early twentieth century (Figure 7). Although his sketch may not have exactly matched the boundaries of the homeland of all Hidatsa and Mandan subgroups, it nevertheless provides a fair backdrop for understanding landscape movements at a micro-geographical scale and the purposeful and opportunistic interactions they stimulate. Two narratives of warfare recorded by Beckwith and by Bowers in the 1930s show the ways in which journeys linked individuals and groups in decision-making processes, the imbeddedness of ritual practice in landscape movement, and the role of geographical and cultural knowledge in the validation of warriors' status and identity.

In the first narrative, told to Alfred Bowers around 1930, a Mandan warrior known as Crow's Heart explains how individual revelation leading to warfare was a significant factor in identity formation across all levels of participation. Given that spirit-guided experience in battle was requisite in attaining leadership positions, it required formal ritual preparation and cooperation among institutions and communities of practice to ensure success:

> If a man goes out on the hills to fast and suffer and some holy person or animal comes to him and tells him that he will be lucky and kill an enemy, but when he goes out as leader, the enemy kills one of his party instead, he will come home crying because the people will think that he didn't fast right or that his dream wasn't real. Brave men will start fasting again and seek an even stronger god by fasting longer and offering their flesh to the Sun… It is often hard to get men to follow an unlucky leader. If he goes out a second time and kills or strikes an enemy, the people will say, "You have a real protector now, one that is going to be a great help to you" (Bowers 1950:170).

Crow's Heart illustrates this statement with an account of how in 1876 a warrior went about recruiting the party leaders and scouts from different Hidatsa and Mandan clans after receiving a vision that promises him an enemy capture and ritually preparing for the journey:

> I joined the party [because] he had no horses. If we got horses, we would be pretty well fixed… When a party of this kind is made up, they do not announce it but act quietly in preparation for the trip. A night was set to leave…We met at Two

> Chief's lodge, since he was brother-in-law of Crow's Breast, one of the Old Wolves. We had enough bullboats in readiness to carry the party down the river. It was planned that the party should sing the songs belonging to the whole group [society songs] before leaving. All of us wore a white piece of cloth for a headgear and a white cloak reaching to the knees …

When this expedition fell through due to the arrival of a rainstorm, Crow's Heart readily joined another vision-guided war party. On the route to the place where the enemy was to be found, the warriors engaged in certain ritually prescribed activities, such as a visit to the Home-of-the-Buffalo Hill on the southwest boundary of their homeland (see Figure 7) where the spirits of the buffalo live, and the gathering of blue and red war paint in the vicinity of this landmark. But when the party came upon the place foretold, the enemy had just left.

That the man who had the vision did not get the credit for this journey even though he found sign of the enemy where he was told he would find it highlights the importance of success in identity formation and the individual's responsibility for affecting positively the identity of his peers, his clan, and the whole group. This is indicated in Bowers' (1963:193) observation that often the elders would forbid raids and war expeditions if they thought they posed a high risk of death or seemed destined to fail. Expeditions which met with the approval of the elders generally included seasoned and respected war leaders whereas unauthorized ones did not, hence, meeting with almost certain disaster. The existence of a regulatory arm known as the prestigious Black Mouth society, which patrolled all travel and punished the disobedient, further suggests that landscape movement at different scales was integral to the social order. Thus for journeys to be successful they had to crosscut all levels of participation and to be under regulation by the mediating institution. Transgressions, of course, abounded as Bowers notes; but in the end great success would erase all signs of disobedience because it reflected the strength of the group.

"Geography of a War Party," a second narrative recorded in 1931 by Beckwith from Crow's Heart, not only provides an insight into the mode of traveling and route navigation, but also explains the trajectory from traveling experience and cognition to identity formation:

> On all these expeditions I was scout of the war parties. I was a good runner, hardy and enduring, and that is how I came to know the names of those hills and other landmarks in the country. I know that I am right because I have seen these places. A person who tells the stories without seeing the places, should anyone see the account will be laughed at. Some have been farther than I and know more. I can also tell the names of the chiefs of the parties and the ponies stampeded (Beckwith 1938: 303).

Crow's Heart scouting activities apparently took him from the Mouse River and Devil's Lake area northeast of his village to the Black Hills in South Dakota. His narrative provides names, description, and short stories associated with the landmarks along the warpaths he took and also those that either could be seen from a particular place along the route or were in some other way connected with a navigational landmark but not within sight of it. From his description it is also evident that he could not judge distances of places he had not seen:

> Along the northern Pacific is the divide where the rivers flow north and south. Just this side of the divide, north of Dickinson, is a butte called Bull-snake-den because there are many bull snakes there. On top of the divide is butte-on-top-of-the-divide. Southwest of Dickinson is a nice-looking butte called Children's home where spirit children live; from thence come the children born into the tribe. From there on is another butte called Where they-find-blue-clay because here one finds blue clay with pockets of red and yellow ochre. The next hill is buffalo Den. People say that when a heavy fog lies on this hill, when it lifts there are always buffalo to be seen. The next butte is called Home-of-the-rain. When the Indians go on hunting parties it seems as if it was always raining there…[he continues naming hills] …Next come the Black Hills, called Bad-looking-mountain because not considered desirable. The tops are not open but rough and wooded. From this range westward lie the Two-cedar-buttes-facing-each-other. These hills face each other and look as if water washed out between them.

Since Crow's Heart scouting did not take him much farther west or south than the Black Hills of South Dakota, it is unlikely that his geographical knowledge acquired first-hand actually included the Pacific Ocean. His narrative, instead, alludes to the Northern Pacific Railroad, to

furnish the listener with a general idea of the direction of the divide in relation to the landmarks mentioned. After the farthest point of the warpath has been reached, the narrative backtracks to fill in with details of the country along the Little Missouri River route, to the vicinity of the villages, and then to the northeast end of the route and thereabouts. As Crow's Heart describes the landmarks and the significance of their names, he also recalls the activities associated with them, including fasting, self-torture, offerings made for good luck in war, interactions with spirits, and picture-writing made by the warriors to record horses raided and enemies killed.

The cultural dynamics expressed in these two narratives of war, particularly the opportunistic relationship between landmark proximity and ritual practice, are representative of a wide range of socially sanctioned activities that required landscape movements at various scales and levels of participation, including trade, adoption, buffalo hunts, and the seasonal village moves. But since warfare pitched one group against another, it exacerbated the need to demonstrate rights-of- being through individual skill and collective power, as the sketch made by Lean Wolf suggests (see Figure 6). In a parallel fashion, trade also stimulated competition for the quality and quantity of goods exchanged and the individual skill at bartering, all of which in turn reflected on the relative wealth of groups participating in the network. This parallel further argues for the complementary nature of warfare and trade in the history and identity of northern Plains tribes.

Recalling Journeys and Behaving Accordingly

The notion that the memory of a distant journey, as recalled in oral tradition, is not simply alternative history but a dynamic tool for transferring the rudiments of behavior and preserving the social order, is explicitly or implicitly understood by the members of non-Western nations such as the Hidatsa and Mandan (Grinnell 2004). This is most evident in the malleable

configuration of origin and migration myths, war epics, and liturgy; as Beckwith (1938) notes, versions of a story vary according to the narrator's whim for organizing all the critical pieces; such freedom is acceptable as long as the moral of the story is driven home or the ritual associated with the story is effective. Stories evolve through time because they are dependent upon experience and training of the narrator as well as collective change; yet, without permanent anchors stories would drift and lose their reason for being remembered. Place and landmark, especially when named descriptively, have the power of anchoring memories so that people can appeal to a familiar referent when making decisions as to how to approach the unknown (Basso 1996). For this very reason, journeys and memories of journeys occupy a central place in the social order: the route and the path physically and symbolically link the foreign to the familiar, thus providing the listener or the novice with both a lesson by which to navigate the landscape and to behave under certain circumstances, and a tool to predict the outcome of potential interactions and experiences.

As a group evolves, origin and migration myths, too, mature to incorporate landmarks and experiences that reflect the distance between the ancestors and the generation recalling the myth, the knowledge accrued in the intervening time and space, and the currency of the fable for claiming god-given rights—such distance, knowledge, and currency are the essential ingredients for naturalizing national identity. In a fashion similar to narratives of origin and migration, where a story describes the ways in which the ancestors, whether alone or alongside primordial creatures, transformed the unknown into the familiar, the tales of war expeditions and victories serve a crucial role in generating and perpetuating identities. By recalling the wisdom and status acquired from experiencing the landscape and appropriating it from others, people construct a coveted "place-world" where competition and affirmation of rights *is* the natural order.

Movement, Memory and Identity Today

The Missouri River has changed drastically since William Clark sketched it from Big White's memory in 1805 and since Sitting Rabbit completed his map in 1907. The modern river landscape is, by and large, a product of the construction of six dams in the 1930s and 1940s. The remains of its use history and the imprints of the foot and horse paths that closely followed its course are now under water. Many of the landmarks mentioned by Crow's Heart no longer bear their original names. Yet, the upper Missouri tribes and particularly the Three Affiliated Tribes (Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara) maintain their intimate connection to the river. They continue to travel incessantly along the highway paralleling the old route to find work and to attend myriad social, political and religious functions. Gossip, news, and gifts spread quickly and widely through the age-old social networks, and arguments ranging from the ethnic identity of Sakakawea to tribal water rights are as aggressive now as trade and warfare were in the past.

Today, a recreation complex complete with a bridge, hotel, casino, museum, and marina in the busy "New Town" at the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation have replaced the bustling earth-lodge villages that sheltered the Corps of Discovery in the winter of 1805. Yet, as coauthor and Hidatsa historian Calvin Grinnell (2004:24) observes, change and modernity are inseparable from Hidatsa and Mandan identity, because they were anticipated by First Creator and Lone Man when the world was new and the Missouri River and surrounding plains had just begun their existence:

> According to the Mandan creation myth, as told to Arthur Mandan by his mother Calf Woman, when First Creator and Lone Man decide to make the world from mud brought by a bird to the surface of the water, Lone Man chooses to create the east whereas First Creator chooses create the west, leaving a space between, in the water, which becomes the Missouri River…First Creator makes the west side: broad valleys, hills, coulees with timber, mountain streams, and springs with

> buffalo, elk, mule deer and white tails, mountain sheep and all other creatures useful to mankind for food and clothing… Lone man makes the east side: mostly level country, lakes and small streams with rivers far apart and his animals were beaver, otter, muskrat, moose and other animals with cattle of many colors with long horns and long tails.
> First Creator and lone Man meet and compare their creations: They first inspect what Lone Man has created…First Creator disapproves: "the land is too level and affords no protection to man. Look at the land I have created: it contains all kinds of game. It has buttes and mountains by which man can mark his direction. Your land is so level that a man will easily lose its way for there are no high hills as signs to direct him…The lakes you have made have most of them no outlet and hence become impure. Look at the cattle you have created with long horns and tail, of all colors, with hair so short and smooth that they cannot stand the cold! …
> Lone Man realizes his dilemma: "The things I have created I thought were the very things most useful to man. I cannot very well change them now that they are once created. So let us make man use first the things that you have made until the supply is exhausted and then the generations to come shall utilize those things which I have created."

Calf Woman's prophetic story shows how, to the modern tribes, the Missouri River serves as a dividing line and as a measure of distance between two worlds—First Creator's representing precolonial identity and traditional lifeways, and Lone Man's the reservation life. Rather ironically, by taking a strong initiative in the celebration of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, the upper Missouri tribes are reclaiming the river and its history to assert their own identity. For the Mandan and Hidatsa, the Missouri River remains a "time-line" in the construction of individual and group identities, because it encompasses both a literal and a symbolic journey through land and time, and a place-world where these nations have found themselves anew.

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List of Figures

Figure 1. The Missouri River drainage and vicinity

Figure 2. Detail of Sitting Rabbit's map showing features mentioned in the Mandan migration story

Figure 3. Detail of William Clark's 1810 map showing the Hidatsa "Big Bellies" war path (Tucker 1942: Plate XXXIA)

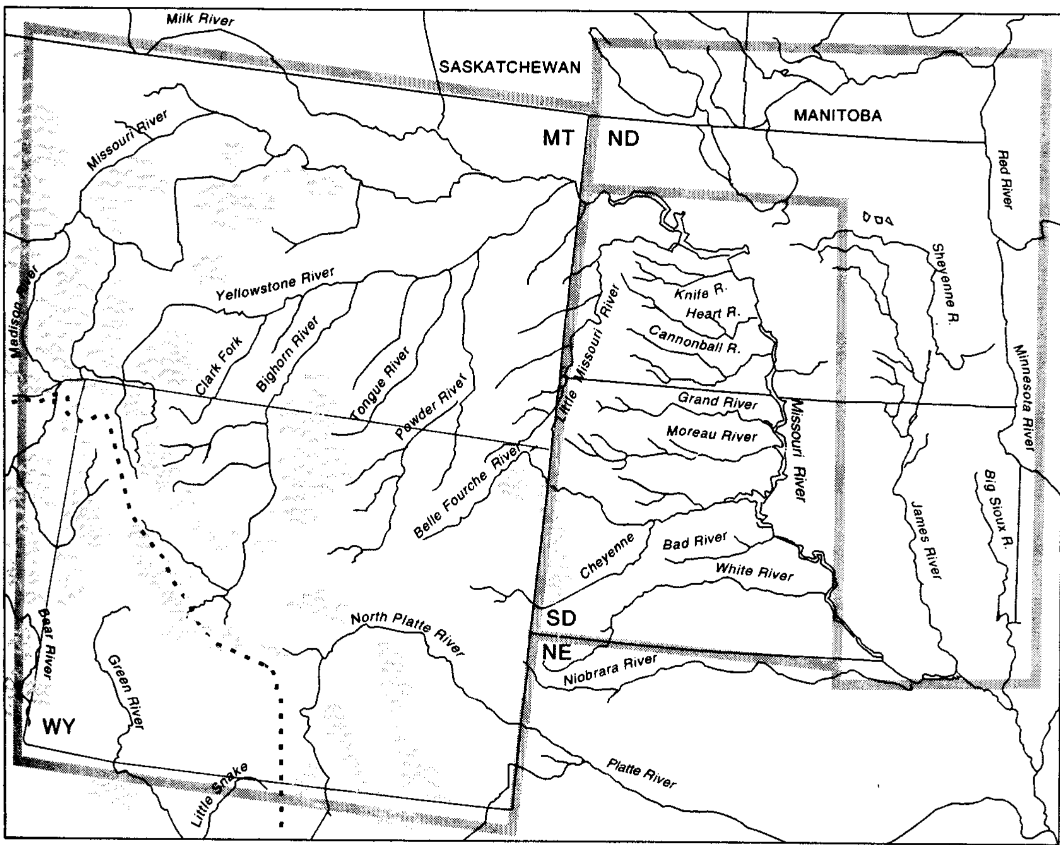
Figure 4. Assiniboine map of a war path (from Warhus 1997)

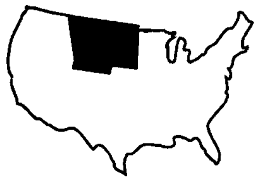
Figure 5. Blackfoot map of the world depicting the Missouri River drainage and trails (from Warhus 1997)

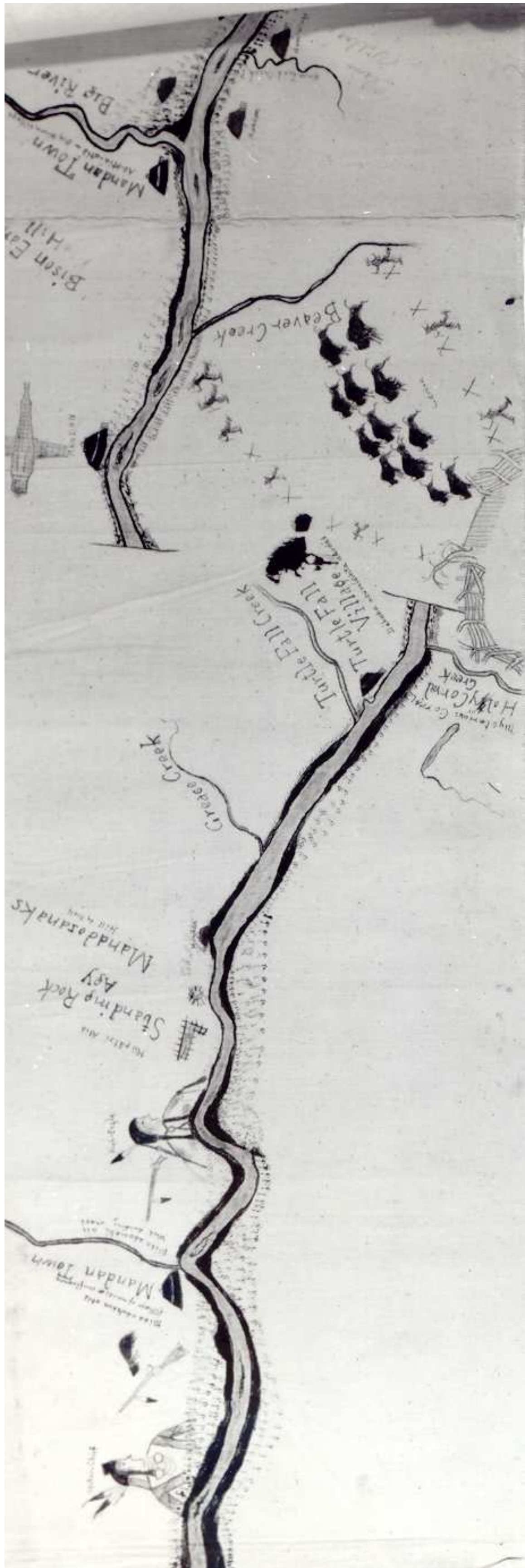
Figure 6. Detail of a horse raid y Lean Wolf (from Warhus 1997)

Figure 7. Bear's Arm map of the Mandan and Hidatsa homeland with landmarks mentioned in Crow's Heart narrative (from Bowers 1963)

Figure 1







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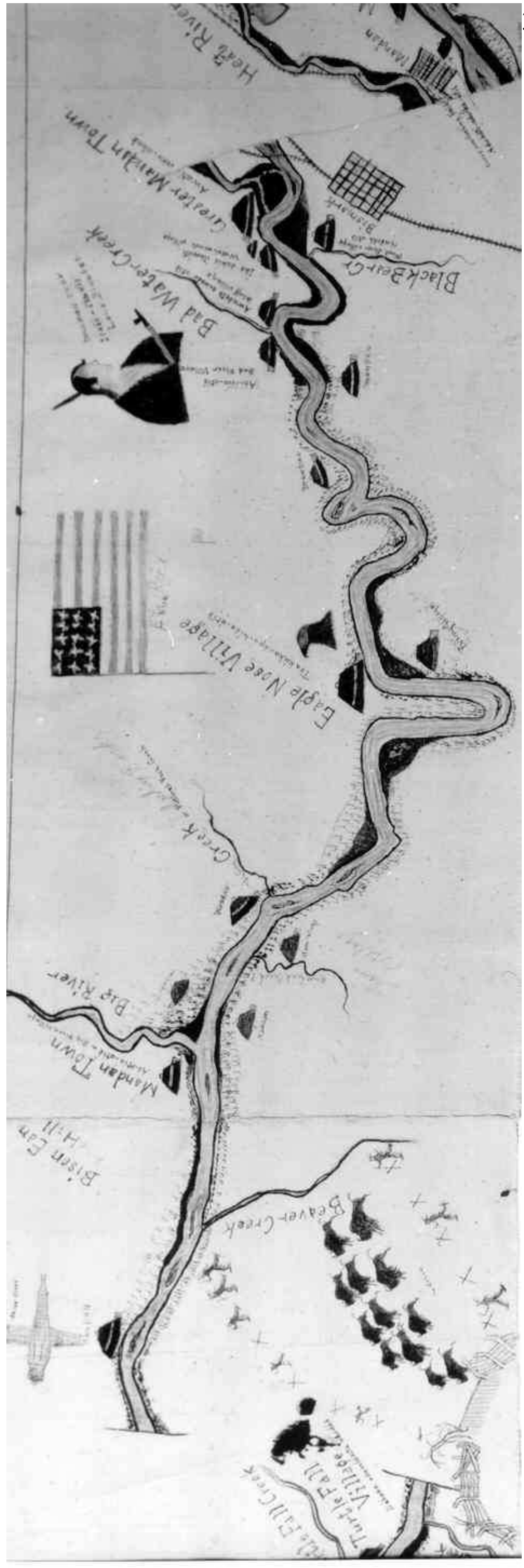

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Figure 2

Warpath

Figure 3

Figure 4

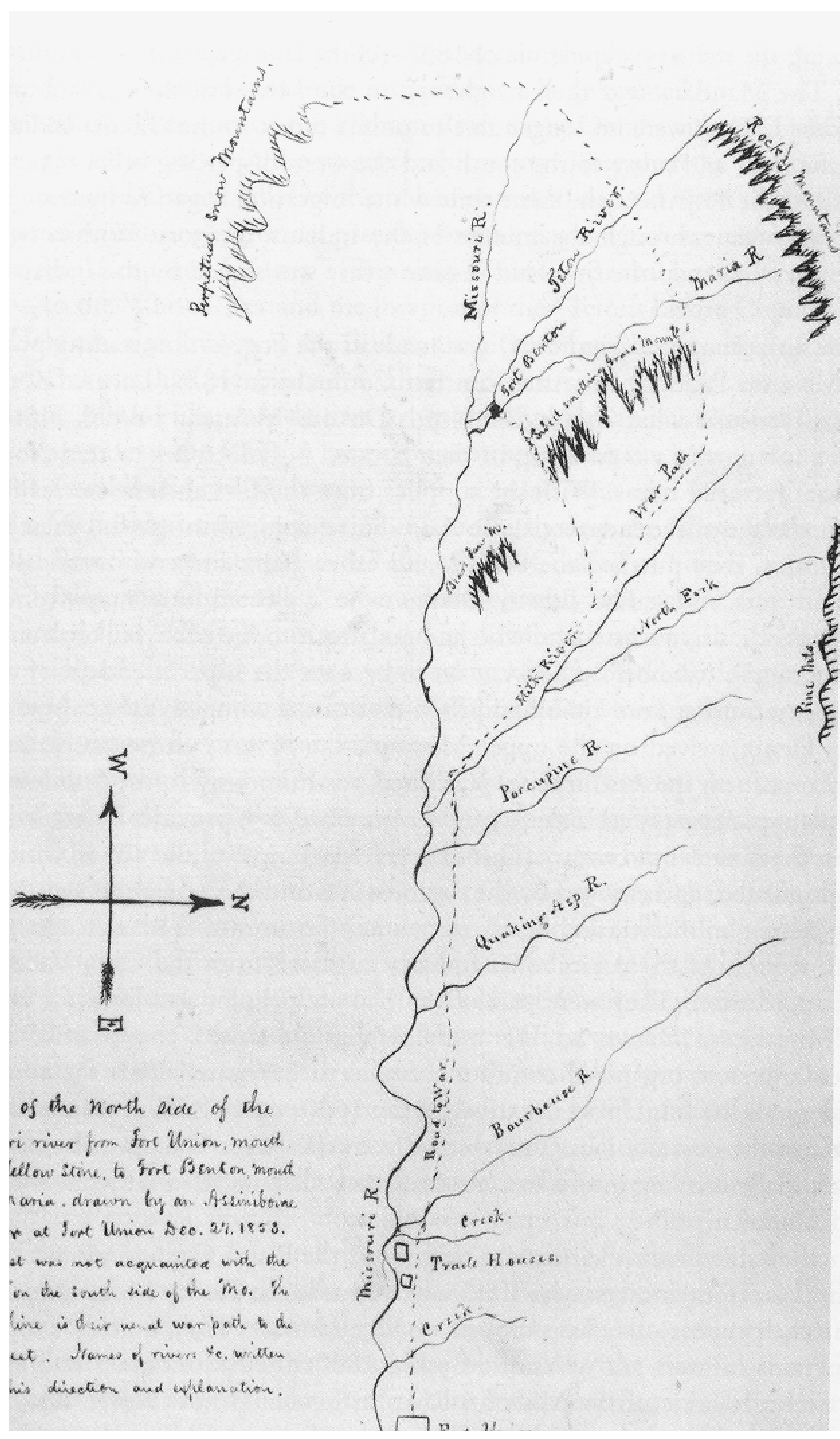

Figure 5

Figure 6

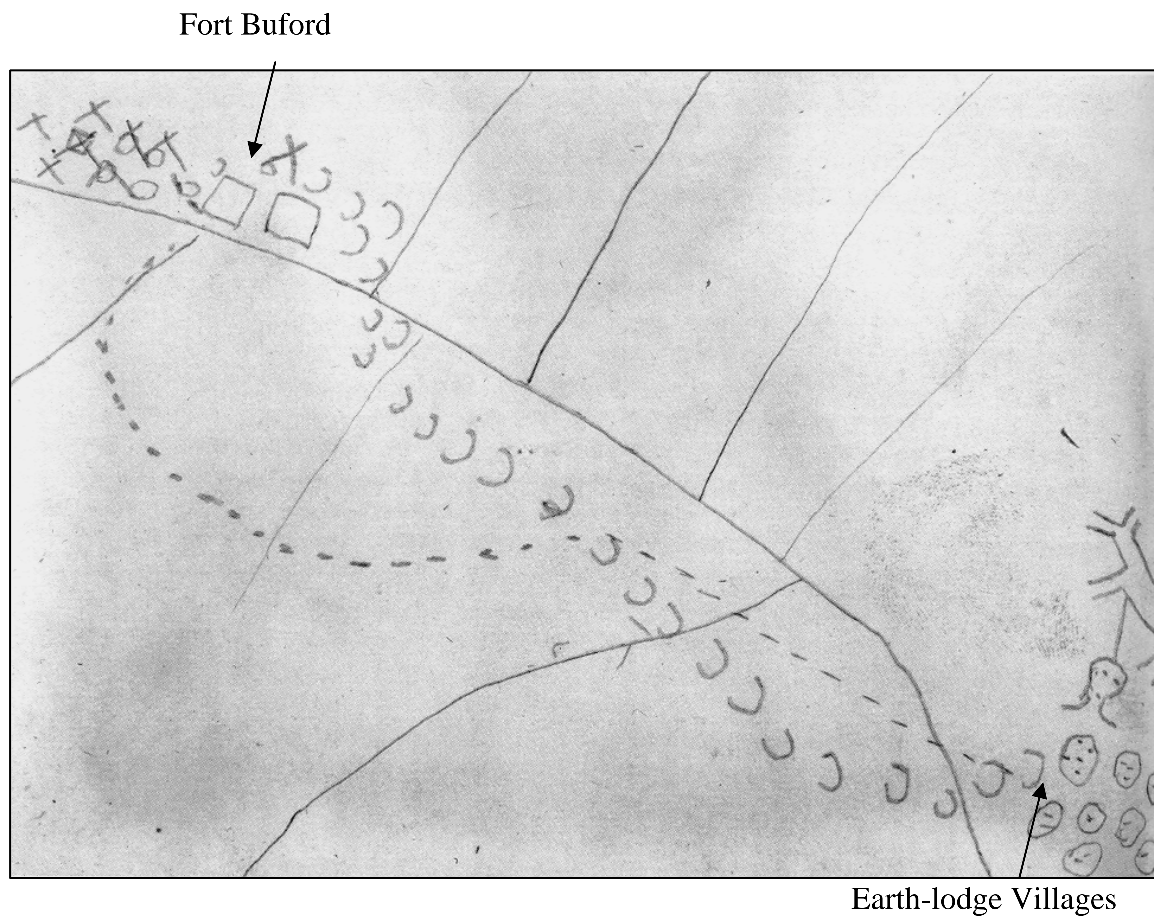

Figure 7