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## **A Stylistic Analysis of the White Swan Robe: Crow Representational and Applied Art as Ethnic Markers**

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Douglas Allen Schmittou entitled "A Stylistic Analysis of the White Swan Robe: Crow Representational and Applied Art as Ethnic Markers." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Anthropology.

Michael H. Logan, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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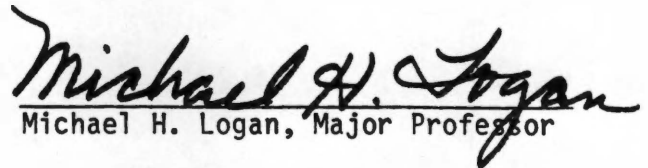
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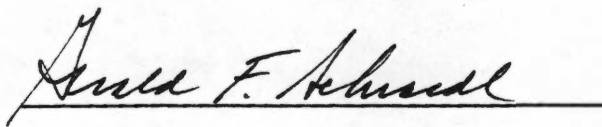
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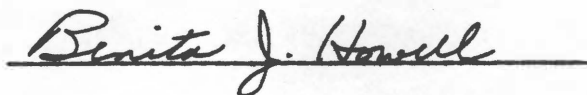
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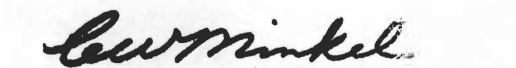
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Associate Vice Chancellor  
and Dean of the Graduate School

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE WHITE SWAN ROBE: CROW REPRESENTATIONAL  
AND APPLIED ART AS ETHNIC MARKERS

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Douglas Allen Schmittou

August, 1996

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thesis may make to the literature on Crow art and material culture is largely a tribute to the professionalism and generosity of the aforementioned persons and institutions.

Curatorial assistance, accession data, and biographical information on White Swan were abundantly provided by Kirby Lambert. Photographs of the individual vignettes, as well as the blanket strip that embellishes the White Swan robe, were taken by W. Miles Wright, staff photographer for McClung Museum. Photographs of other artifacts utilized in this thesis were taken by John Reddy, Eric Stephenson, and Warren Hanford. Aid in securing copies of specific archival photographs which were included in the exhibit, and subsequently in this thesis, was provided by Father Peter J. Powell (Saint Augustine's Center for American Indians, Inc.), Kirby Lambert and Lory Morrow (Montana Historical Society), David Burgovin and Paula Fleming (Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives), and Shilice Clinkscales and Pamela Dewey (National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution).

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## ABSTRACT

The White Swan robe constitutes an extraordinary source of data concerning the manner in which Crow men and women differentially employed elements of somatic, representational, and applied art to simultaneously communicate their tribal affiliation, and to differentiate themselves from members of neighboring Plains tribes. The unique value of this specimen arises from the fact that it is not only the "canvas" upon which White Swan and an anonymous second artist depicted their respective military exploits, but is also embellished with a classic Transmontane-style beaded strip. Analysis of the painted vignettes was conducted for the purpose of determining thematic content, with particular attention devoted to those mnemonic devices used to convey ethnicity. Interpretations were based upon data derived from comparative examination of war exploit robes and ledger drawings, archival photographs, and museum collections. While it is possible to elicit the basic pictographic message of each vignette, efforts to establish an historical context for the events represented therein are hampered by the absence of primary narratives from White Swan. Notwithstanding the significance of his participation in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, White Swan apparently chose, in this case, to emphasize war honors earned within the context of intertribal warfare. This conclusion is based upon the absence of certain stylistic conventions which White Swan typically employed in depicting events associated with the Battle of the Little Bighorn.



Analysis of the beaded strip was conducted, ultimately, for the purpose of determining whether it was of Crow or Plateau manufacture. Consideration of the latter possibility was necessary since previous researchers have documented a tendency toward subareal specialization in the application of Transmontane-style beadwork to specific artifact classes. Using criteria derived from provenienced specimens, it was concluded that the White Swan blanket strip was of Crow origin. The problem of whether blanket strips were essentially a Plateau specialization, or were produced with roughly equal frequency by the Crow and Intermontane peoples, has not been resolved, but can fruitfully be explored through a comprehensive examination of unprovenienced blanket strips using criteria of attribution derived from provenienced pieces. A number of research venues are also suggested which may contribute to greater understanding of White Swan as an artist and historical figure.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. METHODOLOGY .....	11
III. PLAINS INDIAN WARRIOR ART AND THE WHITE SWAN VIGNETTES .....	24
IV. TRANSMONTANE BEADWORK AND THE WHITE SWAN BLANKET STRIP .....	61
V. CONCLUSIONS .....	91
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	97
VITA .....	107

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. War exploit robe attributed to White Swan, Crow, ca. 1880 ..	3
2. Medicine Crow, Crow, 1880 .....	13
3. American Horse, Lakota, 1877 .....	14
4. Swift Dog (Lakota) kills a Crow warrior, ca. 1870 .....	15
5. White Swan fights two Nez Perce or Shoshoni .....	29
6. Wolf Lies Down, Crow, ca. 1908 .....	30
7. White Swan, Crow, 1899 .....	31
8. White Swan kills a Nez Perce away in the Northwest Mountains	33
9. White Swan counts coup upon a slain Lakota warrior .....	35
10. Five Crow chiefs, 1881 .....	36
11. Black Hair, Crow, ca. 1900 .....	37
12. White Swan counts coup on a man wearing a split horn bonnet.	39
13. White Swan captures a gun .....	42
14. White Swan, wearing an ermine-trimmed shirt, ca. 1900 .....	43
15. Bear Bull, Blackfeet, 1926 .....	44
16. Eagle Head (or Minimic) and Howling Wolf, Cheyenne, ca. 1877	46
17. White Swan tests his supernatural power .....	48
18. A Crow warrior captures an enemy's horse .....	50
19. Pretty Eagle, Crow, 1880 .....	51
20. Piegan Blackfeet Man, 1833 .....	52
21. A Crow warrior captures an enemy's gun .....	54
22. A Crow warrior counts coup on a very brave man .....	55

23.	A Crow warrior counts coup on a fleeing enemy who wears a split horn bonnet .....	57
24.	Two warriors, Crow, and Lakota, charge each other while firing their rifles .....	59
25.	Tobacco bag, Crow, late nineteenth century .....	66
26.	Upsichta (Great Blackness), Mandan, 1834 .....	77
27.	Curley, Crow, 1883 .....	80
28.	Rectangular panel from the White Swan blanket strip .....	81
29.	Center rosette on the White Swan blanket strip .....	84

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The University of Tennessee's Frank H. McClung Museum recently held a major exhibition on Plains Indian art. Widely acclaimed by museum professionals as well as ethnologists and art historians, With Pride They Made These: Tribal Styles in Plains Indian Art (see Logan and Schmittou 1995a) offered a truly novel perspective on one of the most intriguing questions within the field of American Indian art history, i.e. why did tribally distinct styles emerge within the medium of beadworking? The exhibit was the most extensive temporary display produced to date by McClung Museum, as well as the largest of its kind ever held in the Southeast. Due to its highly focused theme and interpretive approach, support from lending institutions greatly exceeded all curatorial expectations. Consequently, visitors of the exhibit were exposed not only to a broad representation of Plains Indian material culture, but also to several artifacts of truly spectacular artistic and historical significance, including a full-length, double-trail Lakota eagle feather bonnet (Denver Art Museum, Acc. No. 1947.181), a war shirt attributed to Stone Calf (Kansas City Museum, Acc. No. 40.623), the preeminent Southern Cheyenne chief of the early reservation period, and a pair of Pawnee leggings (Colorado Historical Society, Acc. No. H.294.1) that predate 1850. Another premier specimen

within the exhibition was a painted and beaded buffalo robe (Montana Historical Society, F.J. Haynes Collection, Acc. No. 78.38.105) attributed to White Swan, a Crow warrior who served as a scout for General Custer during the events leading up to the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Appraised at \$250,000 (Chapman, personal communication, 1995), this remarkable biographical robe had never been exhibited outside of its permanent institutional setting, the Montana Historical Society.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a stylistic analysis of the White Swan robe (Figure 1), a specimen that is uniquely representative of the breadth of ethnic expression found within Crow art and material culture. Discussion will emphasize the thematic content of the vignettes painted by White Swan and an anonymous second artist (see Cowles 1982:53-54, 60). These paintings depict the war exploits of these men (Chapter 3). The robe is also embellished with a beaded blanket strip that is a classic example of the "Transmontane" (see Conn 1986:128-129) regional style (Chapter 4). Because of White Swan's participation in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, this specimen possesses historical significance that transcends its status as art and artifact. Therefore, stylistic analysis of the White Swan robe as a venue for Crow aesthetic and ethnic expression will be supplemented by a concerted effort to better establish a historical association between White Swan and the events that transpired on that fateful day, June 25th, 1876 (Chapter 5).

White Swan was one of six Crow warriors who served as a scout for General Custer during the Little Bighorn campaign. White Swan not only



Figure 1. War exploit robe attributed to White Swan, Crow, ca. 1880. Montana Historical Society, F.J. Haynes Collection, Acc. No. 78.38.105. Photograph by John Reddy. Photograph is excerpted from Logan and Schmittou 1995a:9.

distinguished himself in combat while under the direct command of Major Marcus Reno, but was seriously wounded and had to be transported from the field by travois (Stewart 1955:409-410, 477-478). This battle became the focal point of much of the ledger art that White Swan later produced (see Cowles 1982).

Unfortunately, biographical data and primary narratives from White Swan are frustratingly sparse within the ethnohistorical literature. E.A. Burbank, an artist who visited White Swan in 1899, provides one clue as to the dearth of available information when he records,

My best Indian account of the fight was from White Swan, another Crow, who had been a scout for Reno. After I had painted his portrait, White Swan agreed to show me over the battlefield. He was deaf and dumb, the affliction having been caused by the blow of a Sioux who had struck him over the head with a war club during a battle. So White Swan had to tell me about the Custer fight in the sign language and by drawing rude pictures illustrating features of the battle (1944:161).

The timing of White Swan's death in 1904 (Hammer 1976:45; O'Connor 1985:Plates 17, 18) also impaired his literary legacy, as it preceded the flurry of historical research pertaining to the Little Bighorn campaign that ultimately led to the publication of numerous narratives from Crow and Arikara scouts who served with White Swan (e.g. Curtis 1909; Dixon 1913; Graham 1953; Hammer 1976; Libby 1973; see also Davis 1985:41, 50-52; Fleming and Luskey 1993:103-107; Harcey and Croone 1995). Consequently, our understanding of the activities of Hairy Moccasin, White Man Runs Him, Curley, and Goes Ahead -- men who participated only tangentially as combatants at the Little Bighorn -- is far more complete than the picture we have for White Swan.

Despite his status as "the most prolific Crow warrior-artist of



his time" (Maurer 1992:216), comparatively little scholarly study has been devoted to White Swan as either an artist or an historical figure (but cf. Bradley 1991; Cowles 1982). Therefore, this thesis possesses merit, first and foremost, in helping to fill a significant void in the literature pertaining to White Swan. Secondly, this thesis enhances scholarly understanding of certain facets of Crow art, material culture, and ethnohistory. Analysis of the White Swan robe is pedagogically valuable for additional reasons. On the most fundamental level, it illustrates the gender-based division of labor which characterized Plains Indian artistic production (cf. Szabo 1994:214).

As can be seen in the painted vignettes, men employed a representational style that was idiosyncratic in content, but most commonly featured personal military exploits such as the counting of coups or the stealing of enemy horses (Ewers 1939:17; Maurer 1992:41, 43). Art of this genre was applied to shirts, hide robes, tipi covers and liners, and visually reinforced the individual warrior's accomplishments and status (Conn 1986:20; Ewers 1984:75). With the extermination of the buffalo and the onset of the reservation period (ca. 1875-1880), this biographical art tradition was more frequently perpetuated in the pages of ledger books. Whether expressed in the earlier medium of war exploit robes such as White Swan's, or the later "ledger art style," male representational art has been a topic of extensive scholarly study (e.g. Blish 1967; Bradley 1991; Brownstone 1993; Cowles 1982; Ewers 1939, 1983a; Heidenreich 1980, 1985; Keyser 1996; Lessard 1992; McCoy 1994, 1995, 1996; Petersen 1971; Rodee 1965; Szabo 1994; Taylor 1994:181-191; Young 1986). Lessard points out that

pictographic art represents a source of ethnographic data that, on occasion, has not been preserved elsewhere, even in museum collections (1992:62). More importantly, these warrior-artists of the past conveyed, through their works, a keen awareness of the role of somatic art and material culture as signifiers of tribal identity. This sensitivity was cultivated out of necessity. As Petersen (1971:54-55) relates,

No doubt the warrior studied tribal costume traits just as a modern soldier learns aircraft identification. Survival might depend on the ability to recognize friend from foe at a glance, whether from a silhouette against the sky, the litter of an abandoned camp, a piece of clothing dropped along the trail, or a solitary moccasin print.

Tribally diagnostic features served as mnemonic devices to communicate the ethnicity of individuals depicted in war exploit art. Representation of these marker traits became sufficiently standardized that one can, with training and comparative study, "read" the painted vignettes of the White Swan robe as though they were a text. For example, White Swan emphasizes the importance of a particular war exploit by depicting himself with a coup feather of exaggerated size, as if to say, "This is my great achievement" (see Figure 1). The aforementioned vignette illustrates the capture of a gun from an enemy during hand-to-hand combat, one of the four war honors necessary to become a chief among the Crow (Lowie 1983:5, 216; Powell 1988:20).

In contrast to the naturalistic qualities of male representational art, Crow women of the nineteenth century, as well as their counterparts in most other Plains tribes, typically employed a repertoire of geometric design elements in hide painting, quill embroidery, and beadwork. Within the medium of beadworking, these

motifs were particularly diagnostic of tribal affiliation as can be seen in the classic Transmontane-style beaded strip on this robe (Figure 1). Ironically, determination of the proper tribal attribution for this beaded strip is one of the more controversial issues associated with stylistic analysis of the White Swan robe. Barbara Loeb (1983:166-185; 1984:16-17, 25-26) offers a compelling argument, one based upon archival photographs and specimens of known provenience, for Plateau specialization in the application of Transmontane-style beadwork to blanket strips. On the other hand, Feder (1980a:42-43) clearly demonstrates that the "Hourglass with Broken Circle" motif, which is prominently featured on the White Swan blanket strip, was a common rosette design among Upper Missouri River tribes at least as early as the 1830s. These competing perspectives will be thoroughly examined in Chapter Four.

Another issue which can only be addressed peripherally through analysis of the White Swan robe concerns the enigmatic status of the Crow as the lone Plains representative of the Transmontane regional style. Norman Feder (1980b:31) formulated this question with great clarity when he asked:

. . .Why have the Crow, a Siouan tribe closely related to the Hidatsa, developed such a uniquely individual style that is unlike that of the Hidatsa or of any other Siouan tribe?

Subsequent studies (e.g. Lessard 1984a; Loeb 1983; Powell 1988) have focused on the emergence of the distinctive Crow style of beaded art which was, indeed, totally unlike that of any other Plains tribe, although Plateau and Great Basin groups such as the Nez Perce, Flathead, and Ute also produced a great deal of Transmontane-style

beadwork. Definitive answers to Feder's question, however, remain elusive. If anything, research pertaining to this issue has generated even more debate concerning the ultimate origins of the Transmontane style (Plateau vs. Upper Missouri River), the route of its diffusion, and the possibility of subareal specialization in its application to specific artifact classes (Dyck 1988; Feder 1980a; Galante 1980, 1984; Holm 1981; Lanford 1980, 1984, 1996 personal communication; Lessard 1980, 1984b; Loeb 1980, 1983, 1984).

The Crow aesthetic tradition emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century, as beadworking became the predominant artistic medium among the Crow as well as most other Plains tribes. Crow beaded art provided a powerful, albeit nonaggressive, means of reaffirming group solidarity during a time of tremendous cultural stress and change (Loeb 1983:14; compare with Bol 1985:49-50). As Galante astutely observes,

Development of the distinctive nature of Crow arts may be considered a statement of nationalism and an identity mechanism. While this may be the case of many, if not all, Plains groups, it was especially so (and especially important) for the Crow. . . (1984:49 [emphasis original]).

Although embroidery with glass trade beads became a prominent and highly visible ethnic marker trait, it did not totally replace preexisting venues of ethnic expression, but rather supplemented them. Elements of somatic art and material culture as diverse as hair style, tipi design, or the profile of an eagle feather bonnet served simultaneously to express within-group cohesion and to differentiate between competing groups (see Laubin and Laubin 1977:209-234; Mails 1995:357-363, 382-385). This functional role was recognized long ago

by Lowie (1983 [1935]:xvii) who stated:

If [an anthropologist] inquires whether it is customary to raise a tipi on a three or four-pole foundation, if he notes the precise arrangement of painted lozenges and triangles on a rawhide bag, it is because these apparent trivialities have proved important in defining tribal individuality.

The relative placement of any trait upon this continuum of ethnic expression may literally have been a function of its long-range visibility. Aspects of tipi construction, for example, would provide clues as to the ethnic affiliation of a camp long before details of formal dress became visible. Consequently, a preference for a four-pole foundation and exceptionally long lodge poles that were decorated with streamers of cloth or hide were marker traits for the Crow (Campbell 1927; Laubin and Laubin 1977:222, 224), and served importantly to distinguish them from their enemies, the Lakota and Cheyenne. By contrast, beaded art -- notwithstanding the distinctive color scheme favored by the Crow -- may have functioned foremost as an indicator of tribal affiliation, and secondarily as a boundary maintenance mechanism between competing ethnic groups.

If one reassesses the relationships among art, material culture, and ethnicity as a continuum in which various elements fulfill overlapping but somewhat different functions, it may be profitable to redefine tribal styles as consisting of the totality of aesthetic expression characteristic of a given people, rather than its individual manifestations within various media. This interpretation may expand the boundaries of the Crow problem beyond those originally intended by Feder. However, if one's goal is to truly understand Crow art as ethnic marker, such a stance is warranted. It is within this

broadened context of interplay between Crow artistic and ethnic expression that the White Swan robe is uniquely suited for analysis. At this point, I must state that the purpose of this thesis is not to resolve the Feder question per se. To that end, Logan and Schmittou (1995b, n.d.) offer a preliminary interpretation couched in evolutionary biological theory (see Boyd and Richerson 1989) that postulates differential population size, patterns of political alliance and military conflict, and competition for access to resources extant within Crow territory as the crucial variables that shaped the trajectory of the distinctive Crow aesthetic tradition. Readers seeking a more comprehensive understanding of Crow ethnology and ethnohistory should consult, respectively, Lowie (1983) and Hoxie (1995).

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

The forthcoming analysis of the White Swan robe will focus on applied and representational art as venues of Crow ethnic expression. This research will not attempt to chronicle stylistic change over time within either Transmontane beadwork or Crow pictorial art. Establishment of a temporal and cultural context for this specimen, however, requires a three-pronged approach utilizing data derived from the ethnographic and art historical literature, photographs and paintings of known provenience, and comparison with other specimens in well-documented museum collections (see Ewers 1983b:107).

The ethnographic literature not only describes elements of material culture that are represented on the White Swan robe, but even provides a clue as to the possible identity of the artist responsible for painting the upper half of this specimen. In commentary pertaining to two examples of a particular kind of coup stick which the Crow called the "long bow," Lowie states:

Each consists of two long slender sticks wrapped spirally with red and black cloth respectively and united at intervals with quill-covered buckskin strings. Six feather pendants are said to represent three Dakota and three Cheyenne killed by the owner.

Gray-bull said that the wood was either ash or birch (?), his model being of the former; that the feathers were formerly seven in number, all of them eagle wing feathers dyed red; and that the red flannel was substituted for deerskin. At the end of one of the sticks there was a piece of metal, so that it could be

used as a spear at close quarters. Yellow paint or white clay was smeared on the wood according to a man's visions, and the same applied to the character of the wrappings (1922a:233).

This combination lance and coup stick appears, precisely as Gray Bull described its original condition, in two of the vignettes (see Figure 1). Interestingly, these illustrations constitute the only occasions in which eagle feathers are depicted in a manner that deviates from their natural color. Clearly, selective inconsistency or artistic "license" served, in these instances, to communicate ethnographic detail.

Similarly, well-provenienced photographs document aspects of applied and somatic art that can be used, even in the absence of corroborating historical data, to identify the tribal affiliation of individuals represented in the war exploit scenes. For example, a photograph of Medicine Crow (Figure 2) illustrates the pompadour hairstyle, loop necklace, and panel leggings which White Swan and his anonymous colleague frequently used as pictographic symbols to convey their Crow ethnicity. Conversely, one of White Swan's adversaries is wearing a bone hairpipe breastplate, and leggings with beaded strips that feature straight-sided, blue triangles against a white background. These classic Lakota marker traits are clearly visible in a photograph of American Horse (Figure 3), as well as a ledger drawing by Swift Dog (Figure 4).

Museum collections, ironically, represent the most problematic source of data. In an effort to control for extraneous errors of attribution, Barbara Loeb (1983) and Marsha Bol (1989) restricted their research activities to only those collections with reliable





Figure 2. Medicine Crow, Crow, 1880. Smithsonian Institution Photo No. 52817. Photograph is excerpted from Logan and Schmittou 1995a:42.

Medicine Crow's pompadour and loop necklace provide ample testimony as to his ethnic affiliation. While his ermine-trimmed shirt and leggings faithfully adhere to the Transmontane style, they also document his prowess as a warrior, one who had successfully captured a weapon in hand-to-hand combat, and had served as a "pipe owner" or leader of war expeditions (Lowie 1983:217). The bow-shaped hair ties, as well as the "keyhole" motifs on his moccasins, were also archetypal of Crow male formal attire. However, these traits were remnants of the earlier Upper Missouri River regional style, and, consequently, were less tribally specific than the use of the striped breechcloth, for example, by the Crow (see Galante 1984:54; Lanford 1993:69; Lessard 1984b:64-65).



Figure 3. American Horse, Lakota, 1877. Smithsonian Institution Photo No. 3217. Photograph is excerpted from Logan and Schmittou 1995a:40.

Lakota formal attire differed significantly from that of their inveterate enemies, the Crow. Bone hairpipe breastplates and dentalium shell chokers were somatic markers of ethnicity. Prominent leaders, such as American Horse, often wore hair-trimmed shirts that were painted half bluish-green and half yellow. The beaded panels which embellish this man's shirt, as well as his tobacco bag, were executed in the lazy stitch technique against a white backfield, stylistic attributes that contrast dramatically with Transmontane beadwork.



Figure 4. Swift Dog (Lakota) kills a Crow warrior, ca. 1870. Private collection. Photograph by Warren Hanford. Photograph is excerpted from Logan and Schmittou 1995a:35.

Using the criteria established in respect to Figures 2 and 3, there should be little doubt as to the ethnic affiliation of combatants illustrated in this ledger art drawing. The protagonist's bone hairpipe breastplate, as well as the straight-sided triangular motifs on his beaded leggings, clearly indicate that he is Lakota. Conversely, the pompadour, loop necklace, panel leggings, and pitched hair ornament worn by Swift Dog's opponent convey, with equal clarity, that this man is a member of the Crow tribe.

accession records. This practice not only proved effective in identifying those attributes diagnostic of a given tribal style, but also provided a solid baseline for comparison with poorly provenienced pieces such as the White Swan robe. However, it may also magnify the effects of preexisting obstacles to one's understanding of stylistic patterning in Plains Indian material culture. I refer specifically to "bottlenecks" that were the products of historical forces governing intertribal and Indian-white relations. As Bol (1989:223) observes,

The Sioux artistic record is strangely silent between 1860 and the 1880's. In the search for documented Lakota collections in museums, no collection was found that had been acquired during this time period, although many objects collected later probably date from this time period.

Bol ultimately attributes this phenomenon to the deterioration of political relations along the frontier and the subsequent escalation of hostilities between the Lakota and U.S. military forces (Ibid.:223-226). Access to contemporaneous Crow material may have been hampered by a similar condition. Edwin Denig, an experienced fur trader of the mid-nineteenth century, stated that the risks associated with commerce among the Crow -- a people embroiled in conflict with the more powerful Lakota and Blackfeet -- became so great that fur traders suspended operations within Crow territory by the mid- 1850s (1961: 203-204; see also Hoxie 1995:77-78).

For the scholar interested in Plains Indian material culture, the paucity of well-documented ethnographic collections from the third quarter of the nineteenth century is particularly disconcerting, as this was the precise time period during which tribally specific styles of beaded art emerged. This shortcoming was not only an artifact of

historical circumstances, but also reflected a more endemic problem: comparatively few early collectors maintained meticulous records of acquisition. To illustrate this point, much, if not most, of the Plains material accessioned prior to 1870 by the Smithsonian Institution is identified only as "Upper Missouri" (Greene 1993, personal communication).

Thus, the issue of whether research should be limited to only well-provenienced collections is a methodological concern of great relevance to this thesis. Adherence to strict rules of documentation undoubtedly provides the most reliable conditions possible for analysis of material culture. Yet such adherence also effectively eliminates from consideration the vast majority of Plains specimens housed in any museum collection. Although this procedure may not present a problem in simply identifying the attributes characteristic of a given style, it could skew interpretation of larger issues such as the direction and chronology associated with diffusion of elements within a widespread regional style such as that shared by the Crow and many Intermontane groups. Loeb (1984:15-20) uses the paucity of well-provenienced, early Crow material -- when compared to the relatively large number of specimens and photographs that firmly document the presence of the Transmontane style among Plateau and Great Basin tribes in the 1860s and 1870s -- to seriously challenge, if not outright reject, arguments advocating an exclusively Crow origin for the style. Resolution of this problem, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Loeb also concludes on the basis of provenienced specimens and

photographs that Transmontane-style blanket strips were a Plateau specialization (1983:166-185; 1984:16-17, 25-26). The validity of this conclusion can be tested, to some degree, through analysis of the White Swan beaded strip. Admittedly, accession data for this specimen do not meet the strict rules of documentation followed by Loeb, i.e. that attribution for a specimen would be accepted "only if the original collector had documented the tribe of purchase, if the name of the Indian owner had been recorded, or if the piece had been photographed in the hands of a Native American whose tribe can be identified" (1983:66). Notwithstanding the reliability of these criteria, stylistic "signatures" such as embroidery technique, color scheme, breadth of color palette, treatment of geometric figures, and the degree of internal elaboration within motifs also provide a wealth of evidence from which tribal and chronological attributions can be derived. Conclusions drawn in this manner are, undeniably, less precise, but can be cross-referenced against well-provenienced collections and archival photographs.

Although the basic characteristics of Crow-style beadwork were recognized as early as 1959 (see Wildschut and Ewers 1985), Loeb's dissertation (1983) represents the definitive effort to operationalize those variables that would enable the scholar to differentiate between Crow and Plateau-Great Basin beaded art. In light of Loeb's argument for blanket strips being an Intermontane specialization, analysis of the White Swan strip was conducted with particular attention to the presence or absence of traits which she identified as characteristic of beadwork produced by Plateau and Great Basin peoples (1983:88-100).

My conclusions concerning the most probable attribution for this blanket strip are presented in Chapter Four.

By contrast, interpretation of the vignettes painted on the White Swan robe required, first and foremost, a broad familiarity with Plains Indian material culture. This was essential because war exploit art produced during the late pre-reservation and early reservation period (ca. 1870-1890) typically employed standardized, mnemonic devices to communicate tribal affiliation, as well as specific accomplishments such as the counting of coups. At the same time, the identity of the protagonist was often conveyed through pictographic name glyphs or the representation of highly idiosyncratic traits, such as warrior society regalia, weaponry, or shield designs (Lessard 1992: 63). Opportunities for extensive study concerning these aspects of Plains ethnology were provided by museum fieldwork and literary research conducted in association with co-curation of the exhibit, With Pride They Made These: Tribal Styles in Plains Indian Art (Logan and Schmittou 1995a).

Before proceeding to discussion of the methodology used to interpret these vignettes, it is necessary to enumerate the objectives of war exploit art as a pictographic form of communication. In depicting a specific military engagement, the artist attempted to document four facts about the event: the identity of the protagonist; the tribal affiliation of his opponent; the relative odds associated with the encounter; and, of course, the ultimate outcome of battle (Lessard 1992: 62-63). Analysis of the White Swan robe will emphasize those variables identified by Lessard, with particular attention devoted to aspects of

applied and somatic art that served as ethnic markers.

To illustrate this procedure, I refer back to the vignette in which White Swan captures a gun (Figure 1). The exaggerated coup feather simultaneously identifies White Swan as the protagonist, and symbolizes the ultimate outcome of the battle, i.e. the accomplishment of one of the four prerequisites necessary to become a Crow chief. He has indicated his tribal affiliation through representation of the pompadour and striped breechcloth. In portraying his adversary, White Swan has minimized material expressions of ethnicity, perhaps, in order to focus on the act of seizing his weapon. The danger involved in this feat is underscored by the fact that a mounted and armed enemy is rapidly approaching the site of this hand-to-hand combat. The long eagle feather drop trailer on this man's shield suggests that he may have been Cheyenne (see Petersen 1971:9, 285).

Unlike the vignettes executed by White Swan, those on the upper half of the robe present a problem that is frequently encountered in the analysis of Plains Indian warrior art: it is sometimes more difficult to determine the tribal affiliation of the protagonist than his enemies (Lessard 1992:63). This difficulty arises if the artist chooses to identify himself, not by tribally specific elements of material culture, but rather by idiosyncratic traits that function, in essence, as personal heraldic devices. I have already suggested the possibility that Gray Bull may have been responsible for these vignettes due to the striking resemblance between his description of the "long bow" and the combination lance and coup stick represented on the White Swan robe. A superb example of the precision with which this



approach facilitates determination of the protagonist's personal identity is provided by McCoy in commentary pertaining to a ledger drawing of the renowned Kiowa warrior Satanta:

The warrior-artist who created this image . . . made identification of the central figure easy for people immersed in the Kiowa universe. The artist did this by linking the man to a weapon, shield, sash and roach that inevitably guided the viewer to the correct identity. In this instance, the hero is one of only two Kiowas who owned an arrow-lance; one of ten members of the Koitsenko warrior society (only one of whom, so far as is known, possessed an arrow-lance); and the possessor of a Crane shield. As Kiowas of that generation knew, Satanta was the only person in the entire tribe who fit that bill of particulars (1996:59).

Since the vignettes on the White Swan robe apparently represent the war exploits of two men, it was necessary to compare this specimen with other works attributed to White Swan, and to analyze the vignettes not only for the purposes of interpreting thematic content, but also to identify those traits that would distinguish White Swan's contributions from those of an anonymous second artist. Comparative analysis of works produced by White Swan was restricted to materials previously published (Bradley 1991; Conn 1982:80-81, 145; Cowles 1982; Maurer 1992:216; Utley 1988:177; Wildschut 1926) due to financial and time constraints which precluded additional fieldwork, and the fact that a significant corpus of works attributed to White Swan is literally scattered throughout museum and private collections in the western United States (e.g. Seton Memorial Museum and Library, Cimarron, New Mexico; Paul Dyck Foundation, Rimrock, Arizona; Denver Art Museum; Nebraska State Historical Society [Cowles 1982:52-59]; The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Southwest Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of the Plains Indian,

Browning, Montana; Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona; Nez Perce National Historical Park, Spalding, Idaho [Lester 1995:617]; Mark Lansburgh, Santa Fe, New Mexico [Rayson 1995, personal communication]).

Comparison with contemporaneous works produced by other Crow warrior artists provided little additional data. In contrast to the significant number of publications previously cited that pertain to Transmontane-style beadwork, scholarly analysis of Crow representational art has been somewhat lacking (but cf. Bradley 1991; Cowles 1982; Ewers 1982:45-46; Heidenreich 1980, 1985; Keyser 1996:35, 38-42; Taylor 1994:182-187; Wildschut 1926). This shortcoming stems, in part, from the fact that the Crow apparently did not produce ledger art prior to the onset of the reservation period (Szabo 1994:45; see also Heidenreich 1980:115). This deficiency, however, does not present an insurmountable obstacle to interpretation of the painted vignettes. Archival photographs, as well as war exploit robes and ledger art produced by men of other Plains tribes, provide a useful means of identifying elements of material culture and somatic art depicted on the White Swan robe.

While it may seem ironic that the works of artisans from other tribes would assist the scholar in analyzing this specimen as a venue of Crow ethnic expression, I must point out that many of the same mnemonic devices were used generically to convey ethnic affiliation within a particular tribe. For example, the loop necklace, panel leggings, striped breechcloth, pitched hair ornament, application of red paint to the forehead, and the pompadour hairstyle were group-specific, when used collectively, to Crow males (Logan and Schmittou,

n.d.). Many of these marker traits were employed on the White Swan robe, as well as works produced by Lakota, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventre (Atsina) artists, to communicate Crow ethnicity within the context of male representational art (e.g. Fawcett and Callander 1982: 7; Galante 1984:54, 57; Mallery 1893:380; Maurer 1992:221; McCoy 1994: 69; Powell 1981 vol. 1:352-357; Szabo 1994:20). Pictographic conventions, however, were not so standardized on an intertribal basis as to permit one to easily, and universally, interpret Plains Indian warrior art divorced from its cultural and historical context. Petersen (1971: 269-308), for example, provides an extensive "pictographic dictionary," but warns that it "applies strictly only to the Fort Marion artists of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa tribes for the years 1875-80" (Ibid.:270).

Interestingly, Cheyenne and Lakota warrior art from this time period provides a particularly valuable source of comparative data due to their contemporaneity with White Swan's military career, the prominent roles of these tribes in the development and production of ledger art (Szabo 1994:45), and the fact that White Swan's war record was largely established in campaigns against the Lakota and Cheyenne (Cowles 1982; see also Burbank 1944:154). Consequently, my interpretations of the painted vignettes are based on data derived from historical photographs, analysis of museum collections, extensive research of the ethnographic and art historical literature, and, most importantly, comparison with contemporaneous war exploit robes and ledger art drawings produced by the Crow, Cheyenne, and Lakota. These conclusions are presented in Chapter Three.

## CHAPTER 3

### PLAINS INDIAN WARRIOR ART AND THE WHITE SWAN VIGNETTES

Plains Indian warrior art exhibits sufficient stylistic variability that one can, at least occasionally, determine the tribal origin of a specimen without making reference to the explicit signatures used to convey the ethnic affiliation of the artist, as protagonist, and his military opponent. For example, the Blackfeet adhered, throughout much of the nineteenth century, to an earlier stylistic approach that could most accurately be described as a pictorial shorthand (see Ewers 1983a; Brownstone 1993). Thus, Blackfeet hide painting was more simplistic and symbolic in character than the increasingly naturalistic works produced by Lakota and Cheyenne men during the late pre-reservation and early reservation periods. Similarly, Young (1986:60) has identified characteristics which appear to be distinctive of the Kiowa ledger art style.

As an artistic genre, however, Plains Indian warrior art exhibits a number of traits that, for the most part, crosscut ethnic boundaries. McCoy succinctly operationalizes these variables in the following manner:

1. Heads are portrayed in profile.
2. The flow of action within the compositions typically moves from right to left.
3. There is hardly ever any background, indication of geographic locality or attempt to fix a scene's location.
4. Shading and molding (*chiaroscuro*) are virtually unknown,

- meaning no emphasis is placed on foreshortening and the creation of illusionary depth.
5. Overlapping lines may join figures, creating an x-ray effect.
  6. Proportions are not of the life or photographic variety, but abstract in the sense that abstraction denotes 'rejection of photographic imitation' (quoting Canaday 1958:8-9) (1994:74).

Vignettes painted by White Swan and his anonymous colleague conform, for the most part, with the generalized observations made by McCoy. Action is depicted as moving from right to left. Human figures appear with heads shown in profile. No effort has been made to establish a sense of depth, background, or geographic location for the exploits represented by these men. The x-ray effect, although not extensively employed, is visible on the White Swan robe, most notably in White Swan's gun capture scene, as well as the top central vignette located above the blanket strip (see Figure 1). Finally, human figures are represented in an anatomically disproportionate manner, with the torso being excessively long in comparison to the lower body. Both artists follow this stylistic convention, although the individual responsible for the upper half of the robe takes this "transgression" to greater extremes.

Precise identification of the media and techniques used in painting the White Swan robe is somewhat problematic. Given the approximate age of this specimen, it is highly probable that the colors selected for use were derived from a combination of indigenous and commercial pigments. Shades of yellow and red appear to be natural paints, while the blue pigment favored by White Swan was almost certainly acquired through trade (Lambert 1996, personal communication). By 1880, the Plains tribes had access to a spectrum of commercial colors that included "vermilion, red lead, chromate of lead (yellow), Prussian

blue, chrome green, ivory black and lamp black, Chinese white, and oxide of zinc" (Mallery 1886:52). Accession records, based upon Norman Feder's judgement, attribute the blanket strip to ca. 1880, with the hide having been painted at a later date. This context places the White Swan vignettes in a time period when Plains Indian painting was becoming increasingly characterized by the use of commercial paints (see Torrence 1994:37). Consequently, it is entirely possible that many, if not most, of the pigments seen on the White Swan robe were obtained through trade. However, efforts to distinguish between those pigments which were of natural versus commercial origin are complicated by the fact that the Crow inhabited an area rich in naturally occurring sources of paint. With respect to the Yellowstone valley, Hail states that "red was made from hematite, black from charred wood, green from lake scum, blue from blue clay mud, and yellow from buffalo gallstones" (1983:209).

Painting was usually done with "brushes" of bone, horn, or wood. While carved portions of mountain sheep horn were often used in outlining figures, the preferred utensil for covering large surface areas was crafted from the porous section of a buffalo leg bone (Brownstone 1993:7; Ewers 1939:4; Torrence 1994:48). The resulting wedge-shaped brush (ca. 2½ - 4 inches long) had a comparatively sharp edge which was employed in making fine lines, and a wide base that was used for applying paint in broad strokes (Galante 1979:10; Torrence 1994:47). A separate brush was generally used for each color (Ewers 1939:4).

Before turning to formal analysis of the painted vignettes, it is, perhaps, beneficial to enumerate those stylistic traits which

distinguish White Swan's work from that of the unknown artisan responsible for the upper half of the robe. Most superficially, a difference in preferred color scheme is readily apparent. The color palette chosen by the anonymous artist is pastel, almost muddy, and utilizes green more extensively than those vignettes attributed to White Swan. Additionally, horses depicted above the blanket strip are rendered in shades of ash, brown, and gray -- colors that are certainly more representative of the natural pigmentation of horses than the blues frequently used by White Swan. This artist also employs the x-ray effect created by overlapping figures more frequently than White Swan. By contrast, White Swan is more prone to depict the horses of peripheral participants in less than full profile length, although this may reflect the idiosyncratic experiences of each warrior, as the upper portion of the robe exclusively depicts one-on-one military encounters.

With the exception of those feathers attached to the combination lance and coup sticks, which so closely resemble the "long bow" described by Lowie (1922a:233), a subtle stylistic difference can be seen in the manner in which eagle feathers are represented. White Swan frequently depicts them in a conventionalized fashion typical of the feathered-circle motif on Central Plains robes, i.e. two long isosceles triangles joined base-to-base to form a narrow diamond. This is particularly visible on the feather trailers pendent from shields. Another contrasting feature between the two artisans, which also may reflect the idiosyncratic differences in their personal military exploits, concerns the tendency for the artist who painted the upper

half to emphasize eagle feather bonnets versus the total absence of same in White Swan's work. Finally and perhaps most importantly White Swan was far more meticulous in conveying the material and somatic expressions of Crow ethnicity than was the other anonymous artist.

Analysis of the vignettes will address, first, those painted by White Swan, and will proceed sequentially from left to right. Vignettes located above the blanket strip will be treated in similar fashion, again "reading" from left to right. Interpretation will, as previously noted, emphasize those objectives cited by Lessard (1992: 62-63), i.e. identification of tribal affiliation for the protagonist and his opponent, the relative odds associated with the encounter, and the ultimate outcome of battle. Elements of somatic and applied art that served as ethnic markers will receive particular attention in the course of this discussion.

Beginning with the left uppermost vignette attributed to White Swan (Figure 5), one can see that the the Crow protagonist is armed only with a "long bow." In accordance with Gray Bull's narrative (Lowie 1922a:233), this combination lance and coup stick is wrapped with animal fur (compare with Figure 6). It is also adorned with seven eagle feathers, which are painted red with black tips. White Swan exhibits the pompadour and red forehead paint characteristically worn by Crow men. His left arm appears to be faintly marked with horizontal stripes. According to Burbank (1944:154), these represent enemies killed by White Swan in the intertribal wars. Red stripes were used to signify Lakota, yellow for Cheyenne (Ibid.; see Figure 7). If this interpretation is correct, White Swan killed fourteen Lakota and five





Figure 5. White Swan fights two Nez Perce or Shoshoni. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.



Figure 6. Wolf Lies Down, Crow, ca. 1908. Photograph by Dr. Joseph K. Dixon. William Hammond Mathers Museum, Indiana University. Photo No. 282. Photograph is excerpted from Powell 1988:12.

The staff held by this man exhibits a number of similarities to Lowie's description of the "long bow." Although eagle feathers are neither painted red nor attached individually, there are six clusters of them which are incorporated into flat fans. The fact that the staff consists of two long slender sticks is most evident at the point of attachment for the third uppermost cluster of feathers. The securing thong can clearly be seen to encircle two sticks, one of which is wrapped spirally, perhaps with cloth of alternating colors as stated by Lowie (1922a:233).



Figure 7. White Swan, Crow, 1899. Portrait by E.A. Burbank.  
Photograph is excerpted from Burbank 1944:insert following p. 144.

Cheyenne. White Swan's upper body is painted blue which refers, perhaps, to a cloth shirt or soldier coat. This is the only vignette painted by White Swan where he is not clearly depicted as wearing the striped breechcloth, a marker trait that was group-specific to Crow males (Galante 1984:54). His breechcloth is, instead, painted simply with vermilion or red ochre which would suggest the use of red woolen stroud, or trade cloth, for that garment.

Both adversaries are wearing capotes (one red with a dark blue or black stripe, the other blue), and both are represented with pompadours, which indicates that they are either Nez Perce or Shoshoni. Data presented by Cowles (1982:53-55) would point strongly toward a Nez Perce attribution as a ledger drawing by White Swan makes reference to a battle with that tribe (Figure 8). It is interesting to speculate whether this may refer to the Nez Perce War of 1877, a campaign in which several Crow warriors served as scouts for the U.S. Army, and fought against their long-time allies, the Nez Perce. Medicine Crow, for example, left a pictorial record of his participation in the battle of Canyon Creek, a conflict in which he successfully captured a gun from a Nez Perce warrior (see Heidenreich 1980:119, 130). Crow-Shoshoni relations, on the other hand, were less consistently peaceful than the strong friendship which had existed between the Crow and Nez Perce prior to 1877. A ledger drawing by Medicine Crow documents his first war party, a battle fought between the Crow and Shoshoni in 1864 at the mouth of the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River (Ibid.:118, 130). Similarly, a war exploit robe painted by Charges-Strong (American Museum of Natural History, Acc.



Figure 8. "White Swan kills a Nez Perce away in the Northwest Mountains." Photograph by Jonathan Batkin. Courtesy of Seton Memorial Museum and Library, Cimarron, New Mexico. Photograph is excerpted from Cowles 1982:53.

Reference to the "Northwest Mountains" suggests, perhaps, a location along the Montana-Idaho border, an area traversed by Chief Joseph and his band during the Nez Perce War of 1877.

No. 50-6826) illustrates a horse raid against the Shoshoni in which members of that tribe are represented with "upturned lock" (Lowie 1922b:316).

Whether these capote-clad adversaries are Nez Perce or Shoshoni, they possess rifles which they are firing at White Swan. The process of determining the final outcome of this encounter should be approached with a degree of caution. The most plausible explanation is that the vignette represents the counting of coup, an act of bravery which is accentuated by the numerical odds and weaponry possessed, respectively, by combatants. If this interpretation is correct, however, the act is less explicitly depicted than one finds in the following two vignettes.

In the lower left vignette (Figure 9), White Swan reaches down from his horse to count coup upon a presumably slain enemy. The bone hairpipe breastplate and beaded legging strip with straight-sided blue triangles against an open white background strongly suggest that this adversary is Lakota. He is also wearing brass arm bands, a breechcloth of red woolen stroud, and a single eagle feather in his hair; his braids appear to be wrapped with red trade cloth.

White Swan counts coup on this man with an elk antler quirt that has two lash straps (compare with Figure 10). The protagonist conveys his own ethnicity through representation of the pompadour and striped breechcloth, a marker trait which, as previously noted, was truly specific to the Crow (see Figure 11). Something is obviously suspended from his neck, although it is impossible to categorically identify it as a loop necklace. Ornamentation of White Swan's horse also



Figure 9. White Swan counts coup upon a slain Lakota warrior.  
Photograph by W. Miles Wright.



Figure 10. Five Crow chiefs, 1881. Standing: Stands on the Cloud, Sits Before the Cloud. Seated (left to right): Medicine Crow, White Hair on Temple, Bird on the Ground. Photograph by F. Jay Haynes. Photograph is excerpted from Tilden 1964:193.

Note the brass tack-studded elk antler quirt held by Bird on the Ground. For a thorough discussion of this style of quirt and its role in Plains Indian material culture, consult Pohrt (1978).





Figure 11. Black Hair, Crow, ca. 1900. Photograph by Fred Miller. Photograph is excerpted from O'Connor 1985:plate 36.

Black Hair's pompadour, loop necklace, ermine-trimmed shirt, and block-style beaded legging strips are thoroughly representative of Crow male formal attire. This photograph is one of the comparatively few, however, to depict the striped breechcloth, which White Swan often uses to symbolize his ethnic affiliation.

communicates much about this warrior's intentions and accomplishments. A scalp appears to dangle from its bridle. Similarly, an eagle feather is attached to the horse's tail, which is bobbed -- a clear indication that White Swan is on the war trail. The diagonal markings on the horse's neck, however, are more problematic; they do not manifest the zigzag configuration that was characteristically applied to impart the speed of lightning to a favored war horse. These lines may represent a distinctive coloration pattern which would remind White Swan of the specific horse that he rode into battle on this day. There is also a remote possibility that this is a mnemonic for a horse hood. A 1906 photograph documents the use of this artifact by the Nez Perce (see Fleming and Luskey 1992:212), although I have been unable to locate evidence that would clearly support its use by the Crow.

With respect to markers of achieved status, the protagonist wears three feathers in his hair, a convention which, according to Burbank (1944:154), may represent the three wounds that White Swan received at the Little Bighorn (see also Figure 7). A modicum of corroborating evidence for this interpretation can be seen in the fact that White Swan has painted a red spot on his upper body, a common pictographic symbol for wounds received in battle. However, I have insufficient data, at this time, to conclude that this or any other vignette on the White Swan robe actually depicts his personal exploits at the Little Bighorn.

Another coup exploit is represented in the vignette located directly below the central and right rosettes of the blanket strip (Figure 12). Once again, White Swan hangs on to his horse's neck with



Figure 12. White Swan counts coup on a man wearing a split horn bonnet. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

one hand, while reaching down to count coup on a fallen enemy. In addition to his striped breechcloth and pompadour, White Swan's loop necklace is visible in this vignette. His opponent is wearing a red stroud breechcloth, as well as a split horn bonnet that is trimmed with ermine pelts and a trailer of red trade cloth.

Split horn bonnets were less tribally specific than elements of material culture that White Swan has used to convey the ethnicity of opponents in other vignettes. Evidence that the Lakota used this style of headdress can be seen in a ledger drawing by Swift Dog (McCoy 1994: 68) in which he depicts himself wearing a bonnet virtually identical to the specimen visible here. However, use of ermine-trimmed, horned bonnets was recorded among many Northern Plains tribes during the first half of the nineteenth century (Walton 1985:100). In this case, White Swan apparently chose to emphasize the individuality, rather than the tribal affiliation, of his opponent. This mnemonic would be meaningful to White Swan, as well as comrades who may have accompanied him on this war party, in recalling the event and specific adversary represented here.

The danger associated with this coup is conveyed by the fact that White Swan is simultaneously being attacked by two other enemies; these warriors are portrayed more generically with little intent to communicate ethnic affiliation. Further evidence of their status as background figures can be seen in the fact that they are depicted without legs. The uppermost mounted enemy carries a shield, the border of which is trimmed with eagle feathers. He fires an arrow from his bow, just as White Swan counts coup on his slain comrade. A second

adversary is armed with a rifle. These men are most likely Lakota, but can not be conclusively identified as such on the basis of hair style, regalia, or face paint.

The lower central vignette represents the aforementioned gun capture exploit (Figure 13). Within the Crow system of grading war honors, the significance of this event is clearly illustrated by the exaggerated size of White Swan's coup feather. This accomplishment gave White Swan the right to trim his shirt with ermine pelts (see Figure 14). According to Lowie (1983:216), capture of a bow also entitled a Crow warrior to decorate his shirt in this manner.

In portraying his adversary, White Swan has minimized material expressions of ethnicity in order, perhaps, to focus on the act of seizing his weapon. Although this man's braids appear to be wrapped with red trade cloth, he has also pulled part of his hair forward in the old top knot fashion (see Figure 15). The latter style is frequently represented in ledger drawings that depict Lakota warriors of White Swan's generation (Figure 4; see also Cowles 1982:56 [Figure 6]; Maurer 1992:221). Its use, however, was, by no means, limited to members of that tribe. Bodmer portraits document its prevalence among the Gros Ventre (Atsina) and Blackfeet as early as the 1830s (see Hunt and Gallagher 1984:237, 239, 248-249, 320). The greenish triangle directly above this man's top knot is perplexing. It resembles the "cone-headdress" which Taylor (1994:185) and Galante (1984:55) describe as an early pictographic symbol for the Crow. If this interpretation is correct, it would seem illogical to refer to a Crow enemy in this manner, unless this archaic and poorly understood marker trait



Figure 13. White Swan captures a gun. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

As previously noted, the size of White Swan's coup feather may constitute a pictographic means of stating, "This is my greatest achievement."

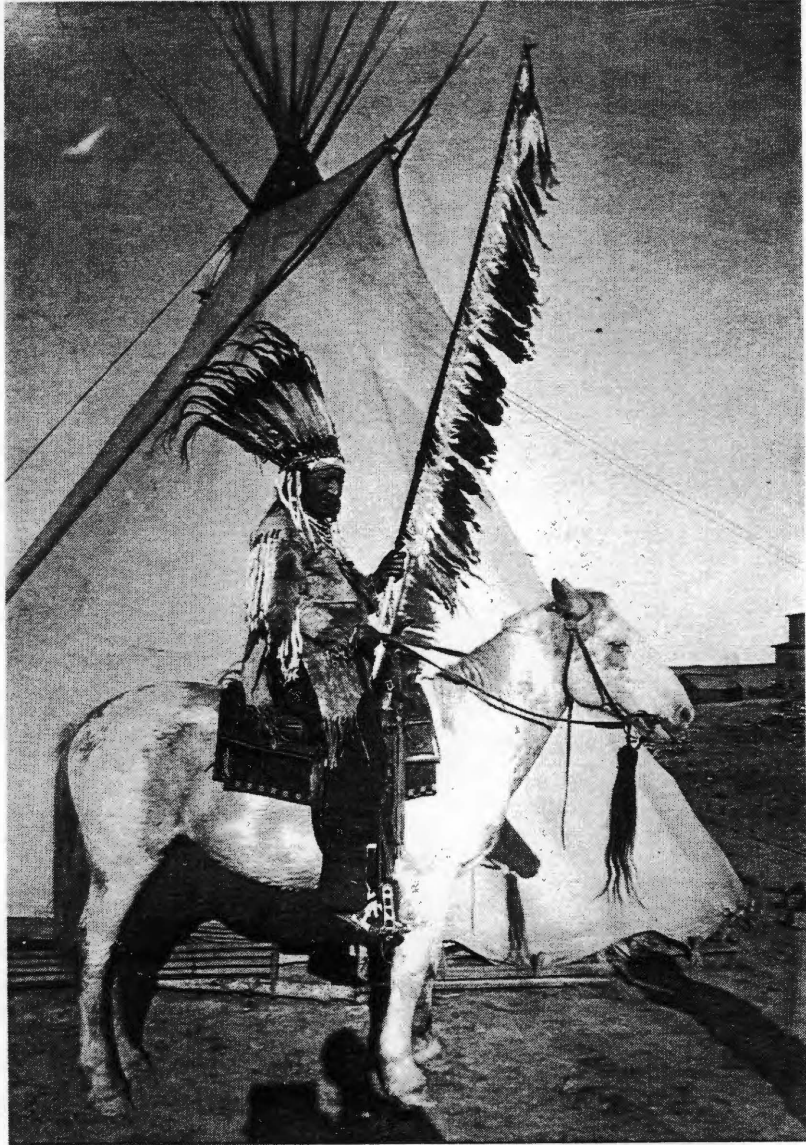


Figure 14. White Swan, wearing an ermine-trimmed shirt, ca. 1900. Photograph by Fred Miller. Photograph is excerpted from O'Connor 1985: plate 17.

Given the frequency with which some frontier photographers used props to embellish their subjects, it can not be stated with absolute certainty that this shirt actually belonged to White Swan. Nevertheless, Figure 13 clearly illustrates that he earned the right to wear a shirt decorated in this manner.



Figure 15. Bear Bull, Blackfeet, 1926. Photograph by Edward S. Curtis. Photograph is excerpted from Davis 1985:225.

Although I am unaware of data that would indicate whether the top knot hairstyle conferred any special status among Lakota men, its use among the Atsina, and possibly the Blackfeet as well, was originally limited to chiefs and holy men (see Ewers 1971:234; Hunt and Gallagher 1984:237, 239, 248-249).



was more widespread than previously thought.

White Swan conveys his own ethnicity by reference to the pompadour and striped breechcloth. Each of his upper arms faintly exhibits five parallel stripes (red, blue, yellow, blue, red -- moving from the shoulder to the elbow). As previously noted, these may represent enemies slain in intertribal warfare. The danger associated with this particular exploit is underscored by the fact that White Swan, while in the act of capturing his opponent's weapon, is being charged by another adversary wielding a rifle. The long trailer on this man's shield suggests that he may have been Cheyenne (compare with Figure 16).

Data derived from analysis of another Crow pictographic robe provide a possible means of establishing a historical context for this war honor. William Wildschut acquired the latter specimen for the Heye Foundation in 1925, and obtained an interpretation of the painted vignettes, five of which Crow informants identified as representing events from White Swan's military career. Two of these exploits were specifically associated with the battle of Big-Shoulder-Blade which, according to Wildschut, was fought in the area between the Bighorn and Little Bighorn Rivers, a few miles south of present-day Hardin, Montana (1926:30). Wildschut's description of one such vignette closely parallels my interpretation of White Swan's gun capture exploit:

In 6 is illustrated one of White Swan's most famous deeds. He is shown whipping a Sioux until the enemy dropped all of his weapons, which were taken by this famous Crow warrior. The Sioux was not killed, but was allowed to go, thereby becoming forever disgraced (Ibid.:31).



Figure 16. Eagle Head (or Minimic) and Howling Wolf, Cheyenne, ca. 1877. Photograph courtesy of the Saint Augustine Historical Society. Photograph is excerpted from Szabo 1994:89.

Note the similarity between the feather trailer attached to Howling Wolf's shield, and the one depicted in Figure 13.

Interpretation of the vignette located in the lower right corner of the White Swan robe (Figure 17) requires a greater degree of speculation than any other war exploit scene portrayed by White Swan. Once again, the protagonist communicates his tribal affiliation through representation of the pompadour and striped breechcloth. Stripped for battle, he appears to be wearing a "no retreat" or warrior society sash, and is armed only with a coup stick. A wavy zigzag line separates White Swan from two armed adversaries. This pictographic symbol is often used to connote something sacred or mysterious (see Petersen 1971:274). Perhaps White Swan depicted himself being staked to the earth with a wooden pin through his sash, thus testing the strength of his supernatural power. While this interpretation seems plausible, it must be qualified by the fact that I have been unable, thus far, to determine White Swan's warrior society affiliation. This point is critically important, as the military obligations of sash-wearers differed significantly among the various Crow warrior societies (see Lowie 1913; Taylor 1994:157). It should also be noted that the show of bravery represented by this vignette would not be considered a war honor in the technical sense. However, survival of such an encounter would prove, beyond all doubt, White Swan's courage as well as the efficacy of his war "medicine," qualities that would have been highly respected by other Crow warriors.

This concludes analysis of those vignettes attributed to White Swan. Commentary pertaining to war exploit scenes painted above the blanket strip will proceed, sequentially, from the lower left to upper



Figure 17. White Swan tests his supernatural power. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

right. The lower left vignette almost certainly depicts the successful capture of an enemy's horse (Figure 18). While the theft of any horse was a valued accomplishment, only the capture of those mounts that were picketed directly outside their owners' lodges warranted merit as one of the four war honors necessary to become a Crow chief (Lowie 1983:216). Horses picketed in this manner were, invariably, the fleetest in an enemy encampment, and typically were used only for hunting buffalo, or in war (Ewers 1985:39-40). Consequently, the capture of such a horse represented an extraordinary economic resource to the invading tribe.

Although it is impossible to discern from this illustration whether the animal depicted here was a horse of this caliber, a discrepancy in the protagonist's regalia suggests that this may have been the case. His pompadour, panel leggings, and pitched hair ornament (compare with Figure 19) clearly convey to the viewer that he is Crow. However, he is also wearing a pictographic war exploit robe that is quite reminiscent of the Blackfeet pictorial style (see Figure 20). This robe may represent, in essence, an "ethnic disguise" which allowed its wearer to sneak into a Blackfeet camp undetected, and nonchalantly walk away with an enemy's horse. Documentation that the clothing of other tribes was occasionally worn for precisely this purpose is provided by the narrative of the Lakota warrior Ghost Head who states:

Our plan was to reach the Crow village at night and spend the next day surveying the camp from a hill . . . . When evening came, I put on the Crow clothing which I had got from earlier battles, and started alone for the village. Had it been a Shoshoni camp I would have worn Shoshoni clothing so that I would have smelled like a Shoshoni and painted my face and fixed my

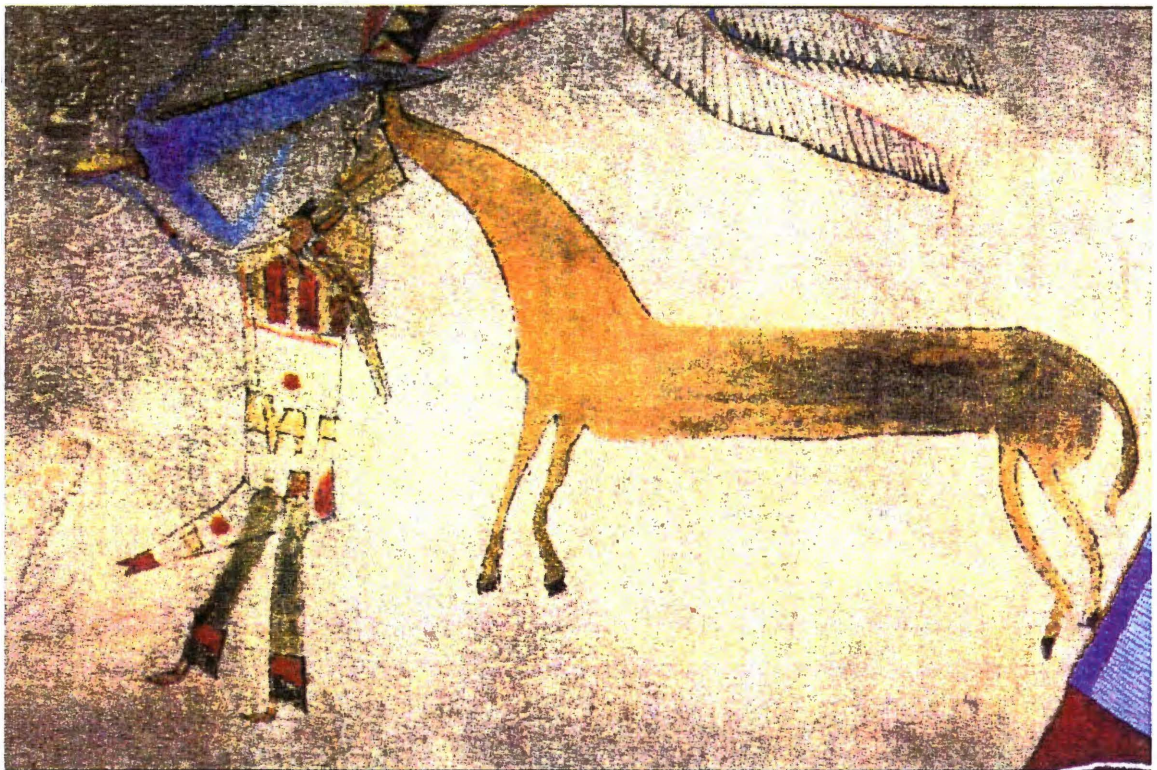


Figure 18. A Crow warrior captures an enemy's horse. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.



Figure 19. Pretty Eagle, Crow, 1880. Photograph is excerpted from Hoxie 1995:23.

The style of hair ornament visible at the back of Pretty Eagle's head was sufficiently common among the Crow that it became a pictographic symbol for that tribe (Petersen 1971:18, 289). Mallery describes the construction of this marker trait:

These wigs [of horse hair] are made in strands having the thickness of a finger, varying from eight to fifteen in number, and held apart and in place by means of thin cross strands, thus resembling coarse network. At every intersection of strands of hair and crossties, lumps of pine gum are attached to prevent disarrangement and as in itself ornamental, and to these lumps dry vermilion clay is applied by the richer classes and red ocher or powdered clay by the poorer people (1893:380).

Notwithstanding the popularity of this ornament among the Crow, similar hair extensions were worn by other Plains tribes. For specimens attributed, respectively, to the Arapaho and Blackfeet, consult Conn (1986:32, 111; see also Scriver 1990:101; Walton 1985:112).



Figure 20. "Piegan Blackfoot Man," 1833. Portrait by Karl Bodmer. Photograph is excerpted from Hunt and Gallagher 1984:252.

Although forty years of stylistic change may separate the events depicted on this man's robe from those illustrated in Figure 18, note the basic similarity in the two artists' approach to their subject material. The war exploit robe worn by the Crow horse raider closely resembles the simplistic and highly conventionalized pictographic style which the Blackfeet employed throughout much of the nineteenth century (see Ewers 1983a). When compared with the naturalistic representation of human and equine figures elsewhere by White Swan and his colleague, this stylistic disparity offers reason to conclude that the latter employed a Blackfeet pictorial robe as a means of disguising his ethnic affiliation while entering an enemy village.



hair so that I would not be noticed (Hassrick 1964:93). Evidence that this strategy worked for the anonymous Crow artisan can be seen in the fact that the horse's reins appear to be inconspicuously tucked into the folds of his robe.

A gun capture exploit is represented in the upper left vignette (Figure 21). Only the pompadour and a touch of red forehead paint clearly identify the protagonist as Crow. His adversary wears braid wraps and breechcloth of red stroud, and, most importantly, beaded leggings that are decorated with a row of straight-sided blue triangles, a marker trait which, as previously noted, was characteristic of Lakota male formal attire. With respect to my earlier statement that Gray Bull may have painted the upper half of this robe, there can be little doubt that he earned, on more than one occasion, the war honor depicted in this vignette. Gray Bull was officially recognized as having "cut three horses, taken three guns, struck three coups, and led three parties" (Lowie 1922a:253).

In the vignette located directly above the central rosette, the mounted protagonist counts coup on an opponent of elite status, someone wearing a full-length, double-trail eagle feather bonnet (Figure 22). It can be presumed that this adversary has already been slain, or at least seriously wounded, due to the fact that the Crow warrior is hanging on to his horse with his right hand, and is reaching down with a long coup stick to touch the enemy. Stripped for battle, this anonymous Crow warrior exhibits only the pompadour and striped breechcloth as markers of his tribal affiliation. His adversary is wearing a bone hairpipe breastplate and long breechcloth



Figure 21. A Crow warrior captures an enemy's gun. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.



Figure 22. A Crow warrior counts coup on a very brave man. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

Prior to the onset of the reservation period, only the most elite warriors of any tribe possessed the right to wear an eagle feather bonnet comparable to the specimen illustrated in this vignette.

of red stroud, in addition to the aforementioned bonnet. Collectively, these elements of formal attire suggest that the Crow's victim was most probably Lakota, although a Cheyenne identity can not be categorically rejected.

Another coup exploit is portrayed in the top central vignette (Figure 23). On this occasion, the mounted Crow protagonist wields a coup stick/lance virtually identical to that used by White Swan in his fight against the Nez Perce or Shoshoni (Figure 5). The only clear indication of tribal affiliation for this warrior is his pompadour. He wears a full-trail eagle feather bonnet that slopes back from the browband at a much flatter angle than the double-trail bonnet illustrated in Figure 22. This profile provides an additional clue as to his Crow ethnicity (see Mails 1995:383, 385), although representation of the pompadour makes it somewhat difficult to depict the feather bonnet in any other fashion. The tail of the protagonist's horse is tied up for war, although not wrapped with red trade cloth as would typically be seen in Lakota ledger art.

The Crow protagonist counts coup upon a fleeing enemy, who holds a shield in one hand, and a lance in the other. This adversary wears a split horn bonnet with a trailer of red stroud (compare with the bonnet worn by White Swan's opponent in Figure 12), and a bone hair-pipe breastplate that is depicted as a series of chevrons, alternating in color between red and yellow. This man's breastplate, as well as the straight-sided blue triangles on his leggings, indicate that the protagonist has counted coup on a Lakota.

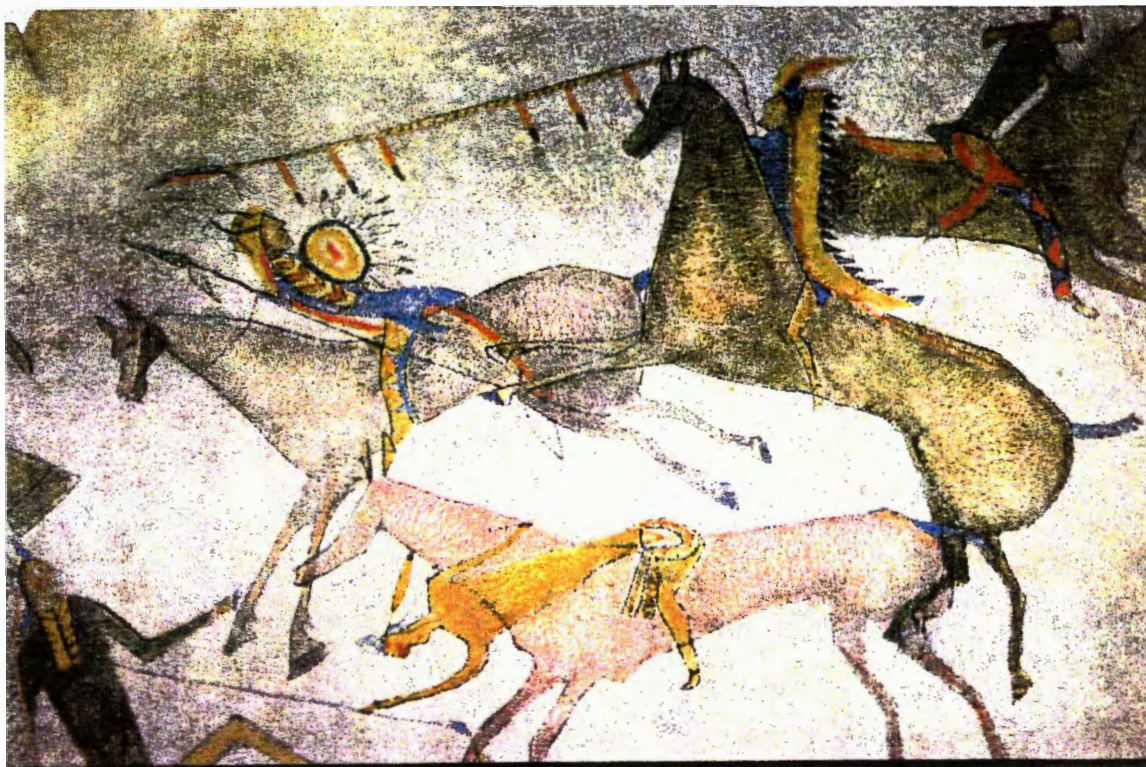


Figure 23. A Crow warrior counts coup on a fleeing enemy who wears a split horn bonnet. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

The vignette which borders the right edge of the robe portrays two mounted warriors charging toward each other while firing their rifles (Figure 24). The Crow protagonist (right) is clearly identified through his pompadour and striped breechcloth. As was the case with White Swan in Figures 7 and 9, this man wears three feathers in his hair. He also holds what appears to be a sabre in his left hand which he may have just unsheathed from its scabbard. His adversary is clad in a bone hairpipe breastplate that is barely visible from the side, a red stroud breechcloth, and leggings which bear the ubiquitous straight-sided blue triangles, suggestive of Lakota ethnicity. The outcome of this encounter, however, can not be precisely inferred. Clearly, the Crow protagonist survived this close quarters exchange of fire, but did he kill his opponent, count coup upon him, or both? These questions simply can not be answered with certainty.

In concluding this analysis of the war exploit scenes, the following points should be considered in assessing the interpretations I have set forth. While the methodology employed in "reading" the White Swan robe is useful for explicating the thematic content of the vignettes, it is currently impossible, in the absence of additional historical and biographical data, to establish a precise geographical or temporal context for any of the battles represented therein. Given the problems previously cited as contributing to the dearth of available data on White Swan, this may ultimately prove to be an insurmountable obstacle. However, a more thorough examination of the large corpus of works attributed to White Swan may provide a means of



Figure 24. Two warriors, Crow and Lakota, charge each other while firing their rifles. Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

cross-referencing events depicted on this robe. I hope to eventually conduct fieldwork on the Crow reservation to determine whether oral tradition contains data, as yet unrecorded, pertaining to White Swan's military career, both as a veteran of the intertribal wars and as a scout for the U.S. Army. Cowles (1982:53) states, without providing documentation, that White Swan served four additional tours of duty subsequent to the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The possibility that White Swan participated in the Nez Perce War of 1877 warrants an examination of the extensive literature published on that campaign. This task represents another phase of research which I have yet to begin.

Identification of the person responsible for painting the upper half of the robe presents an equally daunting task. I have already suggested the possibility that Gray Bull was the anonymous artist. Ironically, it may be easier to test this hypothesis than to acquire significant new data on White Swan, simply because Gray Bull was one of Lowie's primary informants. A thorough examination of the many narratives which Lowie recorded from Gray Bull could conceivably establish a stronger historical link between this warrior and the events depicted on the upper half of the White Swan robe. While I am currently unaware of ledger art attributed to Gray Bull, comparative analysis of such works, if extant, might also provide a key to the identity of this artist. For all of these reasons, some of the interpretations I have advanced here should be regarded as preliminary in nature. Only additional research can provide greater interpretive certainty.



## CHAPTER 4

### TRANSMONTANE BEADWORK AND THE WHITE SWAN BLANKET STRIP

Once thought to have been exclusively associated with the Crow, Transmontane beaded art was produced, to a greater or lesser degree, by as many as twelve different tribes indigenous to the Plains, Plateau, and Great Basin culture areas (see Loeb 1984:15). This aesthetic tradition emerged and floresced during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, achieving its apex of specificity as an ethnic marker during the 1880s and 1890s. Tribes adhering to the Transmontane style included the Crow, Nez Perce, Flathead, Ute, Shoshoni, Bannock, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Yakima, Spokane, and Colville (Ibid.). Analysis of the White Swan blanket strip, as an exemplary representative of Transmontane beadwork, will address, sequentially, the essential characteristics of that style; those attributes which can be used to distinguish Crow from Plateau beaded art; the typical configuration of Transmontane blanket strips; and finally, the specific characteristics of the specimen on the White Swan robe, with particular attention devoted to the presence or absence of features that would support a Plateau, as opposed to Crow, attribution.

Transmontane beadwork can be identified easily by reference to three variables: embroidery technique, color preference, and treatment of geometric motifs. Artisans who adhered to this style employed three

methods of applying beads to the supporting material. The lazy stitch, which was the preferred technique of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho women, was used by the Crow primarily to create narrow borders around large beaded fields, and to produce intermittently spaced stripes which were used to embellish possible bags, women's robes, and the neck flaps of men's shirts (Merritt 1988:41; Wildschut and Ewers 1985: 40; see also Conn 1986:142; Logan and Schmittou 1995a:3, 7 [Plate 3]; Penney 1992:197; Powell 1988:27). This technique required one thread which served both to carry the beads and secure them to the backing. Beads were applied in a series of short, parallel rows, with a stitch taken at either end of each row. This created a distinctive, ridged appearance as the beads in the center of each row tended to arc slightly above the material.

Large surface areas were covered with either the Crow stitch or overlay stitch. Both methods involved the use of one thread to carry the beads, while a second thread periodically couched the first thread to the material. These techniques differed, however, in the frequency with which the carrying thread was tacked down. The overlay stitch, also known as applique or spot stitch, produces an extremely smooth, flat surface due to the fact that the carrying thread is secured after every two or three beads. This method is equally useful for creating rectilinear or curvilinear designs, and is the preferred embroidery technique of contemporary Crow beadworkers (Loeb 1983:98). During much of the nineteenth century, however, it was used only for curved lines, such as rosettes and floral motifs, and in anchoring the single rows of white beads that were typically used to outline large design

elements (Wildschut and Ewers 1985:39).

On the other hand, the Crow stitch could, and has been, accurately described as a modified form of lazy stitch (Ibid.:40). Long strands of beads were first secured at either end, as in the lazy stitch technique. These rows were then couched transversely at much wider intervals than one finds in applique beadwork. The Crow stitch was commonly employed in beading large areas that served as solid-colored backgrounds. Consequently, it was the predominant embroidery technique of Transmontane beadworkers prior to the 1890s (Loeb 1983: 98; see also Lessard 1984b:63). While it produced a relatively smooth field, the visual effect of Crow stitch embroidery varied significantly. Careful execution of this technique resulted in a beaded surface that was almost as flat as that created by the overlay stitch. A comparatively sloppy appearance, however, resulted if the transverse lines of backstitching were too widely spaced (Wildschut and Ewers 1985:40).

The most distinctive feature of Transmontane beadwork was, unquestionably, its color scheme. No other Plains tribe employed as broad a color palette as the Crow. Sample cards collected from traders during the reservation period indicate that Plains Indian women had more than eighty colors of "seed" beads from which to choose (Ibid.: 45). Crow women, however, consistently emphasized seven colors in their beaded art. If ranked in descending order, according to the frequency with which they were used, these colors included light blue, lavender, white, dark blue, red, yellow, and green (Ibid.). One might also argue that lavender and pink were virtually interchangeable.

While these colors could be regarded as the "core" palette of Transmontane beadworkers, Crow women, in particular, did not limit themselves exclusively to their use. Some Crow specimens exhibit as many as twenty different colors or shades of color (Conn 1986:129; Feder 1995:66).

Solid-colored beaded panels, as well as the backgrounds of large designs, were usually rendered in light blue and pink, or, less frequently, lavender. In stark contrast to the white backfield typically seen in Central and Northern Plains beadwork, Crow women used white beads primarily to outline prominent motifs, and in the lazy stitch borders which often surround large beaded fields (Wildschut and Ewers 1985:46). White outlines were often bordered internally by finger-width lanes of darker colored beads, most commonly navy blue (see Penney 1992:195-196). Similar borders were applied to the edges of beaded strips that embellished men's shirts and leggings (Dyck 1988:9). Red, green, and yellow beads served primarily to accentuate the internal division of complex designs, although yellow backgrounds were occasionally used in the rectangular panels of Transmontane blanket strips, as can be seen in Figure 1. Another characteristic which contributes to the spectacular visual appeal of Crow and Plateau beaded art is the incorporation of red trade cloth as a decorative element. Perhaps most visible in the straps of martingales or horse collars (see Logan and Schmittou 1995a:35 [Plate 27]; Penney 1992:200), pieces of trade cloth were often cut to the desired size and shape, and used as inlay, thus creating a dramatic contrast between background and motif.

The color scheme favored by Crow and Plateau women also contributed to the two-dimensional appearance of Transmontane beadwork (see Conn 1986:128-129). Unlike Lakota, Cheyenne, and Blackfeet beaded art where designs appear superimposed against a monochromatic background, thus creating a three-dimensional effect, Transmontane beadwork was characterized by a dynamic interplay between background and motif. This quality was intentional as artisans who adhered to this aesthetic tradition interjected an element of optical illusion into their work. This principle can easily be demonstrated by reference to the beaded panel on a Crow tobacco bag (Figure 25). At first glance, the viewer notices two pairs of triangles that are joined apex-to-apex so as to form hourglasses. If one focuses, instead, on the predominantly pink central cross, a light blue diamond, which is outlined in white, emerges as a dominant motif, and the hourglasses recede into the background. Transmontane design composition also contributed to the efficacy of these visual puns. The aforementioned hourglasses extend the full length of the beaded field, and encompass virtually its full width as well. The resulting "horizontal-vertical grid" (Loeb 1983: 85) diffuses the natural tendency to focus on centrally located figures, an effect that is enhanced by the comparatively open foreground of the light blue diamond.

Crow and Plateau women employed a fairly standardized repertoire of geometric motifs, with specific compositions developed for each artifact class (Ibid.:81-82). In most cases, isosceles triangles, hourglasses, and diamonds dominate the visual field. In contrast to the stepped borders of Cheyenne and Blackfeet designs, Transmontane



Figure 25. Tobacco bag, Crow, late nineteenth century. Denver Art Museum, Acc. No. 1941.33. Photograph by Eric Stephenson. Photograph is excerpted from Logan and Schmittou 1995a:27.

In addition to the aforementioned visual pun, this specimen exhibits a number of traits typical of Crow and Intermontane beadwork: preference for a light blue background, broad color palette, incorporation of red trade cloth as trim, and the application of dark-colored figure borders and white outlines to elongated, straight-sided geometric motifs.

motifs were straight-sided and, as previously noted, usually outlined in white. Design composition closely mirrors the arrangement of motifs in Transmontane parfleche painting (Lanford 1980, 1984), although numerous antecedents, including rosette construction, can be seen in quill- and pony bead embroidery from the Upper Missouri River regional style extant prior to 1850 (see Feder 1980a; Lessard 1984b).

While most of the aforementioned traits were shared equally by the Crow and Plateau tribes (see Loeb 1983:90), a number of characteristics can be used to differentiate between Crow and Intermontane beaded art. Many of these attributes were specific to individual artifact classes, and thus can not be regarded as universally applicable. For example, Nez Perce and Crow cradles were often beaded in classic Transmontane fashion, but problems of attribution rarely arise due to fundamental differences in shape, as well as the closure system used to secure the infant (see Lessard 1980). Similarly, the Crow were the only tribe that produced striped-style women's leggings in the Transmontane color scheme (Loeb 1984:15). On the other hand, Plateau beaded art was characterized by the continued use of pony beads, in a supplementary role, to decorate certain objects, most notably equestrian gear and the yokes of women's dresses (Conn 1972: 11). Plateau peoples also employed red wool as an integral part of design composition, unlike the Crow who used it as trim (Loeb 1983:92; see also Conn 1986:161).

Treatment of geometric motifs, unfortunately, is of limited value in distinguishing between Crow and Plateau specimens due to the fact that Transmontane beadworkers essentially shared a common repertoire

of designs. Nevertheless, certain combinations of these motifs occurred with a statistical frequency that is worth noting. The arrangement of three diamonds in two rows is strongly associated with the Crow, and is most evident within the large beaded fields of lance cases (Loeb 1983:91; see also Galante 1980:66). Conversely, the use of wide, double-ended hourglasses is highly correlated with pieces carrying Plateau attributions (Loeb 1983:92). With respect to bandolier bags and mirror bags, a dominant, centrally located design element constitutes a signature of Plateau-Great Basin origin, whereas Crow women preferred to diffuse visual focus by framing comparatively open central designs with borders that exhibit a high degree of internal elaboration (Loeb 1980:53).

Differences in color preference offer, perhaps, the only widely useful criteria for distinguishing between Crow and Intermontane beadwork. The Plateau color palette exhibits greater variability than that employed by Crow women, both in terms of the specific colors selected for use, as well as the number of colors represented on a given specimen (Lanford 1996, personal communication; see also Loeb 1983:94). White played a more prominent role in Plateau design composition, especially in the end panels of blanket strip rectangles (Loeb 1983:94, 178). This observation is extremely important, given arguments previously cited for blanket strips being a Plateau specialization. William Wildschut expressed the opinion that certain hues which were used as accent colors by the Crow, notably red and yellow, assumed a more integral function within Plateau beaded art (Lessard 1980:61-62). Similarly, black beads, which were rarely used by the



Crow, are not infrequently seen on specimens attributed to Plateau tribes (Loeb 1983:94; Wildschut and Ewers 1985:45).

As previously noted, light blue and pink were characteristically used as background colors. However, Loeb concludes from an analysis of mirror bags and bandolier bags that Crow women commonly beaded dark-colored foreground figures against a light background, thus creating the kind of dramatic visual contrast for which Crow beadwork is so well known (1980:51). On the other hand, Plateau artisans typically juxtaposed light-colored foreground figures against light-colored backgrounds (Ibid.:52). The most common arrangement involves light blue and pink, although other combinations observed include yellow on pink and red on pink (Ibid.). Selection of bead colors of comparable value creates the impression of foreground and background blending into each other, were it not for the dark blue figure borders that separate them (Ibid.). These findings apply, strictly, only to the two aforementioned artifact classes, and may reflect the tendency for Transmontane beadworkers to develop design compositions specific to each object type.

A feature which may signify a more generalized difference in Crow and Plateau aesthetics pertains to the practice of outlining motifs. As previously noted, Transmontane designs are usually outlined in white, and are often bordered internally by finger-width lanes of dark blue beads. Apparently, this convention was followed far more faithfully by Crow beadworkers than their Plateau counterparts whom Loeb describes as having a "marked predilection for borders without outlines" (1983:94; see also Loeb 1980:50-51). Plateau artisans not only

applied outlines inconsistently, but also occasionally employed figure borders of different colors, especially red (Loeb 1983:94-95). Outlines, when used, exhibit greater variability in color, and were rendered in red and green, as well as white (Ibid.:95). These considerations will prove instrumental in establishing an attribution for the White Swan blanket strip.

The frequency with which border puns occur on specimens documented with Plateau provenience constitutes the final stylistic convention to be considered in this brief analysis of traits that appear to be specifically characteristic of either Crow or Intermontane beadwork. Border puns are a phenomenon of particular relevance since they are most prevalent on blanket strips (see Loeb 1983:85, 176). These puns are visually effective because blanket strip rosettes and rectangular panels are both constructed in such a fashion that borders often change colors when they intersect major design elements. Consequently, certain border details appear to function simultaneously as part of two separate motifs. This creates the illusion of extending one design through its border and into the next beaded field (see Powell 1988:26 [Plate 8]). According to Loeb, border puns occur almost five times more frequently on Plateau specimens than on objects attributed as Crow (1983:94).

As an element of material culture, "blanket" strips originally served to cover the seam on a buffalo robe (Wildschut and Ewers 1985: 19). Because of their size, buffalo hides were often cut in half to facilitate processing. After the two halves had been tanned, they were sewn back together with sinew thread, and the resulting seam was

covered with a decorative strip. Early nineteenth century specimens were typically embellished with quillwork or pony beads (Feder 1980a). By the mid 1850s, Edwin Denig records that young Crow men were also wearing "bright-colored blankets, loaded with beads worked curiously and elegantly across them" (1961:158). With the transition to seed bead embroidery, blanket strips, like other beaded objects, became more distinctly recognizable as ethnic markers.

Classic Transmontane blanket strips were constructed as a series of alternating rosettes and rectangular panels. In accordance with the canons of this style, beadworkers developed a rather limited number of design elements and color schemes specifically for blanket strips. Rectangular panels are bordered horizontally, and subdivided vertically, by lazy stitch lanes which, as previously noted, typically change colors at their junctures with each beaded field or major motif (see Figure 1). The resulting three-panel configuration consists of a wide center panel flanked on either side by narrow end panels. Center panels usually feature a prominent motif, most commonly a diamond or hourglass (Loeb 1983:176-177). By contrast, end panels were often beaded as a solid-colored field. An alternative arrangement involves the placement of a small triangle, sometimes two, against the otherwise open backfield of an end panel. Such figures are invariably attached by their apices to the vertical bands that border the center panel (Ibid.:167). While end panels are unquestionably a structural component of rectangles, their narrow widths and open backfields create a degree of optical flux in which they seem to simultaneously frame both center panels and rosettes (Ibid.:176).

Rectangle compositions typically involve six to eight colors, with some specimens carrying as many as ten (Ibid.:177). End panels, as previously noted, were often done in white, although light blue and pink were common alternatives (Ibid.). While the same three colors appear to have been equally prevalent as backgrounds for center panels, these components demonstrate greater variability in color than end panels (Ibid.). Approximately twenty five percent of provenienced pieces examined by Loeb exhibit backgrounds of yellow, green, red, or dark blue (Ibid.:177-178). The motifs which dominate center panels show a similar range in color, with yellow and light blue occurring most frequently (Ibid.:178). Although his comments strictly apply to rosettes, Feder suggests that the Transmontane penchant for these colors in blanket strip construction may be derived from the earlier Upper Missouri River tradition of using yellow and blue bird quills as backgrounds in quill embroidery (1980a:45). With respect to the presence or absence of outlines for the large motifs in center panels, Loeb's conclusions are particularly useful to researchers seeking to establish attributions for unprovenienced blanket strips:

Blue figure borders also dominate. Over fifty percent use these blue borders alone. Only twenty-five percent use white outlines alone. Several more use outlines or motif borders in red, green or another color. Surprisingly, very few combine an outline and a border (1983:177).

It should be evident that the variability in color selection, greater use of white beads, and inconsistent application of outlines conform to Plateau aesthetics, and add credence to Loeb's argument for Plateau specialization in the manufacture of Transmontane-style blanket strips.

Rosettes employ motifs and color schemes that are totally different from those used for rectangular panels. The two most common designs have been designated, respectively, as the "Hourglass with Broken Circle" and "Bent Horseshoe" motifs (Feder 1980a:42 [Figures 3, 4]). The first of these involves an hourglass that is oriented vertically against a series of concentric circles (see Conn 1986:129 [Figure 26]; Wildschut and Ewers 1985:Figure 18). An inner circle, which is frequently made of red wool, forms a visual "bullseye," while another circle outlines the entire design field. A third circle is located equidistant between these two elements. This circle is occasionally bordered on either side by a single row of beads, and is usually subdivided into blocks of alternating colors. The "break" in this circle occurs either as a color change when transecting the hourglass, or, less frequently, with its interruption by the background color (Feder 1980a:43). The latter composition creates, essentially, two incomplete semicircles rather than a true circle. A variation of the "Bent Horseshoe" is formed if the broken ends of the circle are bent backwards (Ibid.; see also Powell 1988:26 [Plate 7]). This motif, however, may occur more frequently against a solid-colored backfield, independent of the hourglass element (see Penney 1992:159 [Plate 88]).

Backgrounds for rosettes were typically executed in yellow or pink, with green occurring occasionally (Loeb 1983:170). The same colors also appear as foregrounds, although that role is more commonly fulfilled by light or turquoise blue (Ibid.). Hourglass or triangular elements may exhibit outlines, figure borders, and foregrounds of three separate colors (see Feder 1980a:45 [Figure 14]; Penney 1992:196

[Plate 123]). As with rectangles, rosette compositions generally involve five to eight colors (Loeb 1983:170). White, however, is used infrequently in the construction of rosettes, and serves primarily to compartmentalize various components of the design field. For example, white beads may be employed in outlining, as an accent color within the broken circle, or in lieu of red wool for the central bullseye (see Figure 1). White may also be used independently or, concentrically, with a row of dark blue beads to create the outer circle that serves as a border for the rosette (Loeb 1983:170). With respect to color schemes, a final characteristic pertains to the use of red stroud as a "framing" agent. Although rosettes are obviously circular in form, they were generally beaded against squares of leather, with sections of wool cut to fit the corners (Ibid.). The resulting contrast is particularly dramatic when juxtaposed against the white end panels commonly seen on Plateau blanket strips.

Prior to analysis of the various interpretations advanced concerning Plateau versus Upper Missouri River origins and/or specialization in the production of Transmontane-style blanket strips, it should be noted that competing perspectives are not based on historically contemporaneous data. As previously mentioned, Feder (1980a) advocates Upper Missouri River origins for Transmontane rosette designs because of their similarity to quillwork and pony bead motifs recorded by the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer in 1833-34. In reaching this conclusion, Feder concedes that

We have almost no evidence for documented early examples of blanket strip rosettes from the Crow or Plateau peoples. To my knowledge there are no documented quillwork or pony bead blanket strips from the Crow, but only comparatively modern seed bead

strips all of which date from after 1850 and most much later than this. Nor do we have documented early examples from the Plateau, but we do have quite a few blanket strip and shirt rosettes done in the quill wrapped horsehair technique and in pony beads which may date from as early as the 1830s (1980a:44).

It has also been observed that Loeb (1983, 1984) regards blanket strips as a Plateau specialization due to the large number of provenienced specimens and photographs that clearly document possession of these objects by Plateau peoples. At the same time, Loeb states that "The Village tribes are not directly important to the beadwork story because surprisingly few aesthetic conventions indicate a direct link between Crow and Village art" (1983:20). One can only conclude that Loeb had not examined the Bodmer portraits which clearly illustrate Upper Missouri River antecedents for Transmontane-style blanket strips. I raise these issues not as a critique of research methodology, but rather to underscore the fact that a significant gap still exists within both the ethnographic record and museum collections for the precise time period most relevant to this problem. I refer, of course, to that critical transition from earlier pony bead traditions to the production of classic Transmontane-style blanket strips.

Having made that point, I will now address the evidence supporting each of these positions. The Bodmer pictorial legacy, upon which Feder relies so heavily, provides a rather limited database for the specific purposes of this study, but is, nevertheless, an exceptionally detailed and well documented record of early nineteenth century Plains Indian material culture. The "Bent Horseshoe" motif, executed in blue and white pony beads, appears in the portraits of two Mandan men, Sih-Chida (Yellow Feather) and Mahchsi-Karehde (Flying Eagle)

(Maximilian 1976:225, 237). Bodmer depicts the "Hourglass with Broken Circle" design on a quilled blanket strip that embellishes the robe of Upsichta (Great Blackness), another Mandan (Figure 26). Variant forms of this design are also represented on Assiniboine and Crow shirt rosettes, as well as on the vamps of a Mandan man's moccasins (Ibid.: 50, 39, 217; see also Hunt and Gallagher 1984:320).

Although Bodmer portrayed comparatively few Hidatsa or Arikara rosettes (Feder 1980a:43), an equally important stylistic component of Transmontane blanket strips appears in the regalia of the Hidatsa chief Addih-Hiddish (He Who Makes The Path) (Maximilian 1976:209). Beaded strips on this man's leggings exhibit the three-panel configuration which would later typify the subdivision of rectangular panels. The forerunner of lazy stitch borders that change color upon contact with each new design field or motif is also clearly illustrated in this portrait. Bodmer consistently represents the Crow stitch as the predominant beadworking technique, a feature that can be discerned from the flat but comparatively loose stitching visible in large beaded fields (Hunt and Gallagher 1984:200; Maximilian 1976:234-235; compare with Lessard 1984b:64-65). A final element of corroborating evidence for Feder's position pertains to his suggestion that the prevalence of yellow and blue backgrounds in Transmontane rosettes may be rooted in earlier Upper Missouri River quillworking traditions. Numerous Bodmer portraits document the use of bluish green and yellow backfields on quilled moccasins, as well as the strips applied to men's shirts and leggings (e.g. Hunt and Gallagher 1984:302; Maximilian 1976:45, 219, 222). These data support Feder's contention





Figure 26. Upsichta (Great Blackness), Mandan, 1834. Portrait by Karl Bodmer. Photograph is excerpted from Hunt and Gallagher 1984: 302.

Note the "Hourglass with Broken Circle Motif," subdivision of rectangles into three panels, and yellow background of this quilled strip. The early presence of these antecedents supports Feder's conclusion that stylistic conventions of Transmontane blanket strips were largely derived from the Upper Missouri River aesthetic tradition.

that significant elements of Transmontane blanket strip construction were derived from the earlier, pan-tribal Upper Missouri River aesthetic tradition (see also Lessard 1984b). However, this interpretation does not address the issue of whether classic seed bead Transmontane blanket strips were produced primarily by the Crow or Plateau tribes.

By contrast, Loeb's argument for Plateau specialization is predicated upon patterns of distribution for provenienced specimens and photographs. Seventeen blanket strips were located with accession data clearly documenting their ownership by Plateau peoples (Loeb 1984:17). The majority of these were of Nez Perce origin, although specimens were also collected from the Yakima, Walla Walla, and Dalles area (Ibid.:25-26). Photographic evidence is even more substantial, as blanket strips appear in twenty-nine photographs of persons affiliated with Plateau tribes, as well as nine "unidentified photographs with other Plateau traits" (Loeb 1983:183). Corroborating testimony is also provided by contemporary Nez Perce informants who expressed familiarity with blanket strips as a common element of Plateau material culture, whereas Crow women generally attributed this object type to tribes other than their own (Ibid.:184).

Provenienced Crow specimens, according to Loeb, are exceedingly rare. Only two such strips were discovered, and even these attributions are questioned (Ibid.:183-184). Photographic documentation is equally sparse, with blanket strips appearing in only two Crow photographs, one of Plenty Coups (National Museum of the American Indian, Negative No. 16713; see Loeb 1984:24 [Figure 13]) and one of

Spotted Rabbit, also known as Spotted Jack Rabbit (National Museum of the American Indian, Negative No. 13765; see Logan and Schmittou 1995a:46; Powell 1988:32) (Loeb 1984:17, 26). In summarizing the dearth of information linking the Crow to blanket strips versus the wealth of data documenting Plateau usage, Loeb remarks:

Efforts to trace blanket strips through time yield one more important clue. The Nez Perce already were being photographed with these strips by the 1870s. In contrast, blanket strips worn by the Crow and by other Plateau tribes do not start appearing until around 1900 (1983:185).

Notwithstanding the weight of evidence presented thus far, I submit that at least one more photograph clearly documents Crow possession of blanket strips, and at a much earlier date than those cited above. Kirby Lambert, Curator of Collections for the Montana Historical Society, informed me of the existence of a photograph, taken in 1883 by F. Jay Haynes, which depicts Curley wearing a war exploit robe that is embellished with a classic Transmontane strip (Figure 27). It is not known whether this robe actually belonged to Curley, or was used as a studio prop by Haynes (Lambert 1996, personal communication). However, it is apparent that the strip illustrated in this photograph is, stylistically, a virtual replica of the blanket strip applied to the White Swan robe. Having made that association, I will turn now to formal analysis of the White Swan blanket strip, with the objective of determining the most probable attribution based upon criteria previously established.

On the most fundamental level, this specimen exhibits the three-panel configuration typical of Transmontane blanket strips (Figure 28). Backgrounds are done in Crow stitch, with details executed in



Figure 27. Curley, Crow, 1883. Photograph by F. Jay Haynes. Haynes Foundation Collection, Montana Historical Society, negative no. H-936.



Figure 28. Rectangular panel from the White Swan blanket strip.  
Photograph by W. Miles Wright.

lazy stitch and applique. Lazy stitch lanes border rectangular panels, and change colors upon contact with each new design field. Backgrounds and foregrounds were sewn separately. The resulting surface dips are most visible where yellow backgrounds of center panels articulate with the dark blue borders of hourglasses. End panels are embellished only with small triangles which are attached by their apices to the vertical bands that subdivide rectangles. These bands, which are divided into blocks of alternating colors, are outlined in red where they border end panels, and in white where they frame center panels. Wide hourglasses are the dominant motifs in center panels. These design elements are bisected horizontally by stripes which, in turn, are divided diagonally into segments of alternating colors.

Design compositions for rectangles involve, collectively, nine different colors. Two shades of light blue are used as backgrounds for end panels. Turquoise and navy blue are incorporated within the vertical bands that border center panels. Royal blue appears as the primary color of isolated triangular elements, and is also employed in figure borders, as well as the lazy stitch lanes located at the top and bottom of rectangular panels. Yellow and pink serve as backgrounds, respectively, for center panels, and the hourglass designs contained therein. Red and white are used in outlining, and as accent colors within the bars that transect hourglasses.

In accordance with Transmontane canons, minor changes in design composition or color scheme occur from rectangle to rectangle (see Loeb 1983:168). Perhaps the most obvious of these involves the use of a darker shade of blue as background for end panels of the rectangle

located on the far left. More subtle variations include, moving from left to right, the selection of navy blue, rather than royal blue, beads for isolated triangular elements that occur in end panels of the second rectangle; use of royal blue, rather than white, for outlining the transverse bar in the center panel of the third rectangle; and fluctuations in the number and width of diagonal segments extant within the stripes that horizontally bisect center panels.

A variant form of the "Hourglass with Broken Circle" motif is featured in rosettes (Figure 29). Small triangles which are located parallel to, and on either side of the inner bullseye of red trade cloth, extend inward from the outer border to the second circle. This variation has also been observed on a blanket strip with Nez Perce collection history (see Feder 1980a:45 [Figure 15]). The broken circle is outlined on either side in navy blue, and is subdivided into blocks of white, red, and green. The break in this circle occurs where it transects the hourglass. It changes color in doing so, and is dramatically reduced in width, thus appearing to function as a horizontal stripe subdividing each triangle, rather than as a continuation of the circle.

Rosette compositions consistently employ seven colors. Pink serves as the background for the entire design field, while light blue fulfills that role in hourglass motifs. Green is incorporated only as an accent color in broken circles. White, red, and navy blue are all used in outlining various design elements, and are often arranged so as to form multiple color borders. For example, outer circles consist

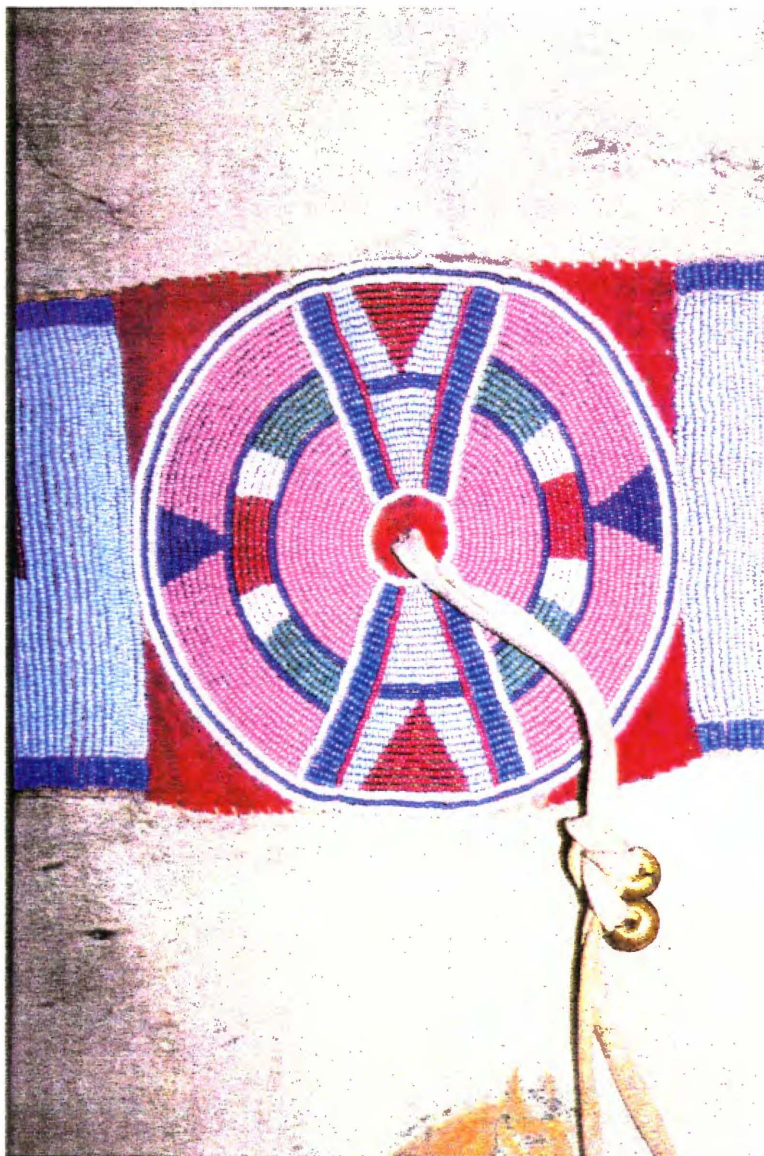


Figure 29. Center rosette on the White Swan blanket strip.  
Photograph by W. Miles Wright.



of a navy blue border outlined on either side by a row of white beads. Similarly, the royal blue borders of hourglasses are outlined externally in white, and internally in red. The latter color, however, is most apparent in triangles located at the tops and bottoms of hourglasses. These design elements are not as visually prominent as the triangles that appear on either side of the bullseye. However, the placement of motifs of comparable size and shape against the rosette's perimeter, and at each of four cardinal directions, extends the viewer's focus, horizontally and vertically, to encompass the entire design field.

Following this discussion of the White Swan blanket strip, the all important question still remains: should it be attributed as Crow or Plateau, perhaps Nez Perce? This problem, although not insurmountable, is complicated by the fact that this specimen appears to be older than the painted hide, and thus may constitute a recycled piece. Therefore, the person who applied this strip to the White Swan robe may not be the same beadworker who actually crafted it. The possibility even exists that this strip was obtained through trade or as a gift, common phenomena in intertribal relations which befuddled early attempts to define tribal styles (see Lowie 1922b). Without documentation, one is left with the task of inferring ethnic affiliation for the original artisan. Fortunately, this specimen exhibits a number of identifying "signatures" which, I believe, makes the process of attribution relatively straight-forward.

Evidence that would explicitly support a Plateau designation is

less than convincing. Nevertheless, Wildschut's observation that red and yellow may play a more integral role in Plateau design composition (see Lessard 1980:61-62) is supported to some extent. With respect to the White Swan blanket strip, red functions primarily as an accent, although some outlines are also rendered in this color. Their visual effect tends to be rather inconspicuous, since they invariably occur against either a background or foreground of light blue. Yellow, on the other hand, appears prominently as the background of center panels, but is not found elsewhere, except as a minor component of the vertical bands that subdivide rectangles. The compositional role of yellow should not be unduly emphasized here, as this color, in association with light blue, often appears in center panel motifs and rosette designs (see Feder 1980a:45; Loeb 1983:178). It should also be remembered that Feder suggests that the prevalence of yellow in Transmontane blanket strips may be derived from the use of yellow bird quills as a background in early Upper Missouri River quill embroidery (1980a:45). The placement of pink hourglass figures, bordered in royal blue, against a yellow backfield also corroborates Loeb's (1980:52) assertion that Plateau beadworkers were fond of using colors of comparable value for backgrounds and foregrounds.

On the other hand, several characteristics argue against a Plateau origin, and point strongly toward a Crow attribution. Most notably, backgrounds feature those colors traditionally associated with the Crow, light blue and pink. Unlike provenienced Plateau specimens which commonly employ white as a backfield for end panels,

the artisan who crafted this blanket strip adhered to the Crow practice of using white only to outline prominent motifs, and as an accent color. The consistent combination of white outlines and dark blue figure borders represents, perhaps, the definitive signature of Crow manufacture. It should be recalled that Loeb observed a distinct tendency for Plateau beadworkers to use wide borders without outlines (1983:94). More specifically, motifs within the center panels of blanket strips carrying Plateau documentation rarely combine an outline with a border (Ibid.:177). The presence of these traits, as well as the use of an absolutely classic Crow color scheme, lead me to conclude that the White Swan blanket strip is, almost certainly, of Crow origin.

In reaching this conclusion, it should be understood that I offer no pretense of having resolved the broader issue of whether Transmontane blanket strips were produced primarily by either the Crow or Plateau peoples. I have already suggested the possibility that the virtual absence of documented early Crow material may be an artifact of historical forces which exacerbated intertribal hostilities, and disrupted commerce between the Crow and Euroamerican traders. It is also worth considering that the data supporting Plateau specialization may be slightly skewed, since one blanket strip, and possibly two, were acquired as spoils of war during the Nez Perce campaign of 1877 (see Loeb 1983:183). Conversely, the fact that Feder (1980a) and Lessard (1984b) have clearly documented numerous Upper Missouri River antecedents for Transmontane blanket strips does not enable one to

establish an unbroken record of stylistic change for this artifact class, from its inception to its emergence as a prominent element of Plateau material culture.

Gary Galante (1984) offers an alternative perspective that may be of relevance to this issue, although his data pertain, more directly, to bandolier bags and otterskin bowcase-quivers, objects typically associated with Plateau and Great Basin peoples (see Holm 1981; Loeb 1980; 1983:132-149, 186-200). Documentation, in the form of provenienced specimens and pictographic representations, is more compelling for bandolier bags, which Galante regards as "well established on the Upper Missouri River at a very early date, at least as early as the 1850's" (1984:54; see also Lessard 1984b:64; 1992:69). Similarly, Captain W.P. Clark, in 1884, described otterskin quivers as being "as much a specialty of the Crows as the blanket is of the Navahos" (1885: 313; quoted by Galante 1984:53-54). In advancing his argument for westward diffusion of these object types, Galante views the Crow as continually motivated by the need for artistic innovation. With respect to the aforementioned paucity of early Crow material, Galante states:

The absence of these object types in Crow collections or the absence of a Crow attribution for them when they are found, can be attributed to the constant development of new innovations in response to the rigorous demands of inter-tribal trade and the abandonment of certain objects or art styles once they had been incorporated into the art styles of others. In this way the Crow constantly strengthened their concept of themselves as innovative and unique and reinforced the idea of national identity (1984: 53).

If this process was operational in the diffusion of bandolier bags and otterskin quivers, could it not also explain the apparent

trajectory of blanket strips, i.e. Upper Missouri River origins followed by predominantly Plateau ownership? Barbara Loeb provides the following rebuttal to that interpretation:

Unfortunately, it would have been necessary for all the gun cases to be made by the Crow and then dispersed to the Plateau and Great Basin, all of the otter skin quivers to be made by the Crow and dispersed to the Plateau and Great Basin, most of the blanket strips, etc. Furthermore, all this would have to have been achieved before photographers and collectors arrived to make records. In other words, the Crow would have had to create as many as six impressive types of objects and divest themselves of almost every example before the 1860's.

This argument seems especially dubious if we ask ourselves why the Crow, famous for looking grand, would discard six grand creations (1984:18).

While I do not wholeheartedly endorse the "divestiture" hypothesis, there can be no doubt that the Crow expended a great deal of energy in defining and redefining the ethnic boundaries which set them apart from neighboring Plains tribes. As for the apparent dichotomy in the production of Transmontane-style beadwork, I do not foresee an immediate resolution to this debate. However, I am inclined, at this preliminary stage of research, to attribute at least part of the problem to an unavoidable sampling error of the once extant data. Perhaps the most fruitful line of future inquiry would entail a more comprehensive study of unprovenienced Transmontane blanket strips. Using provenienced specimens as a control group for determining attributions, such analyses could further test the validity of previous conclusions regarding patterns of distribution for this artifact class. On the other hand, it is entirely possible that the proposed research would yield statistical frequencies concerning Crow versus Plateau ownership that differ significantly from those encountered

thus far. In either event, the artisan who crafted the White Swan blanket strip adhered faithfully to the Transmontane aesthetic tradition. More importantly, she provided ample evidence, in the form of stylistic signatures, to conclude that she was a member of the Crow tribe.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

The White Swan robe constitutes an extraordinary source of data pertaining to the manner in which Crow men and women differentially employed elements of somatic, representational, and applied art to simultaneously convey their tribal affiliation and to distinguish themselves from members of other Plains tribes. Consequently, this specimen reflects, in microcosm, a process that Boyd and Richerson (1989) regard as the cultural analog of speciation, i.e. the subdivision of human populations into distinct ethnic groups based upon adherence to seemingly arbitrary variants of specific marker traits. Although the use of art as a mediator of ethnicity was, by no means, restricted to the Crow, it was particularly characteristic of that tribe. The distinctive Crow aesthetic tradition emerged in response to historical forces and ecological conditions which, admittedly, have been addressed only briefly here. This deficiency arises from the artifact-specific focus of this thesis.

The uniqueness of Crow art and material culture is thoroughly exemplified by the White Swan robe, and conforms to observations made by archaeologists (e.g. Hodder 1979; Larick 1991; Wiessner 1983; Wobst 1977) who have documented cross-culturally a strong correlation between resource competition and the intensification of group-specific

patterns of stylistic expression. Analysis of the painted vignettes reveals significant differences in the artistic treatment of war exploit scenes depicted, respectively, above and below the blanket strip, thus supporting Cowles' (1982) assertion that this robe was illustrated by two men. As a result of data presented in the ethnographic literature, I have suggested the possibility that Gray Bull may have been the artisan responsible for the upper half of this robe. While I am unaware of the existence of ledger drawings or other forms of biographical art attributed to Gray Bull, this renowned warrior was one of Lowie's principal informants. Consequently, a thorough examination of the many published and unpublished narratives which Lowie recorded from Gray Bull may prove to be a fruitful line of inquiry that could potentially establish a stronger historical association between Gray Bull and the events depicted on this portion of the White Swan robe.

While it is possible to elicit the essential pictographic information contained in each vignette, the relative absence of historical context also handicaps interpretations of those illustrations that bear White Swan's stylistic signature. However, the paucity of biographical data for White Swan is, to some degree, offset by his productivity as an artist. A comprehensive and comparative analysis of the large corpus of works produced by White Swan would undoubtedly facilitate greater understanding of the war exploits depicted on this specimen. For example, it should be recalled that one vignette portrays a battle with two warriors, most likely from the Nez Perce tribe. Similar representations of conflict with members of that tribe



appear on at least four other works attributed to White Swan (see Bradley 1991:21). Additional evidence which could corroborate this interpretation will be sought through an examination of the literature pertaining to the Nez Perce War of 1877, as well as published collections of Nez Perce ledger art (e.g. Stern, Schmitt and Halfmoon 1980). Similarly, I have suggested that White Swan's gun capture scene may depict his participation in the Battle of Big Shoulder Blade, based upon information provided by Crow informants to William Wildschut (1926). I hope to conduct fieldwork on the Crow reservation to determine whether oral tradition still contains data, as yet unpublished, pertaining to this and other aspects of White Swan's military career.

Other issues which warrant further examination concern the selectivity with which White Swan represented his war record. It is most puzzling that he apparently chose, in this case, not to depict his participation in the Battle of the Little Bighorn. I base this conclusion upon two conventions which White Swan followed in relating the events of that day, June 25, 1876. As Bradley observes, "it is only in Little Big Horn battle events that White Swan carries a cavalry guidon, or pennant, and pictures his own wounds and those of his horse" (1991:11 [emphasis original]). These features are notably absent on the White Swan robe. The decision, instead, to emphasize honors earned within the context of intertribal warfare can not be definitively explained by reference to data currently available. It is clear, however, that these vignettes commemorate exploits important to White Swan, ones that document his status as a respected Crow warrior.

A final question comes to mind in assessing the spatial

arrangement of vignettes painted by White Swan. I have already noted the generalized tendency of Plains Indian men to depict movement as occurring from right to left. Are these vignettes oriented in such a fashion as to convey a sense of chronology, also moving from right to left? This is an issue that is rarely discussed in the literature pertaining to biographical art. Should it become possible to historically document when these events transpired, and should a trend toward chronological representation emerge, it could have important implications for interpreting the interrelationship of battle scenes on war exploit robes.

With respect to the White Swan blanket strip, more definitive conclusions can be advanced. Notwithstanding the absence of documentation for this specimen, a number of features clearly indicate that a Crow attribution is warranted. Characteristics derived from the earlier Upper Missouri River aesthetic tradition include the predominant use of the Crow stitch, subdivision of rectangles into three panels, presence of lazy stitch borders that change color upon contact with each new design field, and the prominence of "hourglass with broken circle" designs in rosettes. Attributes which point more specifically toward Crow manufacture involve the use of a truly classic color scheme, with an emphasis on those colors traditionally associated with Crow beaded art, most notably, light blue and pink. In contrast to the common use of white as a background for the end panels of Plateau specimens, this blanket strip exhibits the typically sparse use of that color by the Crow who employed white as an accent, and to outline large designs. Finally, the combination of dark blue figure

borders and white outlines is a feature rarely seen on blanket strips carrying Plateau provenience. In short, one would be hard pressed to find a specimen within any artifact class that conforms more faithfully to the canons of the Crow style than the strip that embellishes the White Swan robe.

The question of whether Plateau tribes specialized in the manufacture of blanket strips has not been resolved. Extensive analysis of unprovenienced Transmontane blanket strips, utilizing criteria derived from provenienced specimens, may ultimately prove whether blanket strips were, indeed, a Plateau specialization, or were produced with roughly equal frequency by the Crow and Intermontane groups.

Analysis of the White Swan robe remains, of course, an ongoing process. Nevertheless, this thesis has clearly illustrated the inter-relatedness of aesthetic and ethnic expression for a given people, the Crow or Apsaroke. Furthermore, the nineteenth century Plains culture area remains a fertile research venue for scholars seeking to better understand the role of art as a medium for ethnic expression. For example, Central and Northern Plains beaded art offers an interesting case study concerning the effects of resource competition on stylistic diversification, due to the complex arena of intertribal warfare that existed in the Upper Missouri region. Several other phenomena, seen in the material culture of Plains tribes, are the byproducts of evolutionary processes. These include differences in the relative complexity of ornamentation between Southern and Northern Plains tribes, the role of material culture in the enculturation of Plains

Indian children, the emergence of cradles as the quintessential tribal ethnic marker of the reservation period, and "runaway selection" in Lakota applied art, i.e. totally beading or quilling even non-utilitarian objects, such as gramophone covers and horse moccasins. Additionally, the virtual monopoly which the Lakota had, among the indigenous nations of the Plains, in using the American flag motif in their beadwork remains an enigma. This is especially problematic given the fact that no tribe resisted Euroamerican expansion more effectively than the Lakota. On the other hand, tribes who allied themselves with the U.S. Army, such as the Crow and Pawnee, rarely, if ever, incorporated the American flag into their beaded art. Why an oppressed people should freely adopt, albeit often in a distorted fashion, the preeminent symbol of their oppressors is a problem which should be of especial interest to symbolic anthropologists. Finally, I intend to conduct a more definitive study of Feder's original Crow problem (Logan and Schmittou 1995b), as well as the transition to floral beadwork which occurred abruptly within that tribe.

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## VITA

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