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HUSHGAH ADIISH THE BADLANDS LODGE: A HIDATSA CULTURAL HUB ON THE UPPER-MISSOURI RIVER IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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**HUSHGAH ADIISH THE BADLANDS LODGE: A HIDATSA
CULTURAL HUB ON THE UPPER-MISSOURI RIVER IN THE
LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

by

MICHAEL J. BARTHELEMY JR.

B.A., HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2013

THESIS

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Requirements for the Degree of

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**Hushgah Adiish The Badlands Lodge:
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ABSTRACT

The way our people, the Hidatsa, begin a narrative about older times is “There was smoke in the village.” It draws one into this idea that the village was prosperous and that the people had wood to burn and cook fires, with plenty of food for all. This past is viewed longingly by recent generations because of the hardships the people have endured since the introduction of European disease and relocation to lands our people deem undesirable. This very same nostalgia is what fueled an exodus from Like-A-Fishhook Village, driving the Crow-Flies-High Band of Hidatsa and Mandan Indians 120 miles west to confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. They were the survivors of smallpox and the witnesses of land loss. In a single season, in the winter of 1837 and spring of 1838, their lives forever changed when smallpox claimed the lives of 60 percent of the tribe. Their neighbors, the Mandan, suffered a 90 percent loss. A five-hundred-year monopoly on trade goods in the Upper-Missouri region that was held by Mandan and Hidatsa came crashing down, and they became dependent on U.S. government rations and annuities. For many historians, the history of the Mandan and Hidatsa ends in the 1840s. With the loss of our trade capabilities, we lost our voice in the wider history of the northern plains and American West. But we didn’t stop making history. The Hidatsa

people endured through the nineteenth century and responded through resistance like many tribes to the structuring of the newly imposed reservation system and the arrival of missionaries. The Crow-Flies-High band was in many ways a direct response to these changing life ways. As a group, we have been historically marginalized by our own people the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara on the Fort Berthold reservation. However, we were the last holdouts in a changing world—The last of the buffalo hunters, eagle trappers, and earthlodge dwellers. We desired cultural revitalization in a time when Native culture was being attacked and repressed by the US government. We maintained our culture and our sense of place in a region that had always been ours.

Chapter one demonstrates the historical background of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara prior to their consolidation at Mua-Iruckphe-Hisha-Adiish, Like-A-Fishhook Village. The smallpox epidemics of 1781 and 1837 decimated the tribal populations of all three groups and created a power vacuum in the Upper-Missouri region. Forced from their villages on the Knife River complex, the Mandan and Hidatsa migrated north along the Missouri where they were later joined by the Arikara for mutual defense against the Lakota and Dakota Sioux.

Chapter two shows the founding of Mua-Iruckphe-Hisha-Adiish. The chapter stresses the importance of cultural practice and worldview of the tribes. It is a period of closer relations with the United States Federal Government through treaty making, land cessions and direct government oversight with the creation of Indian Agent posts. The increased tension with the federal government as well as intertribal disagreements on leadership/religious roles led to an eventual split among the Mandan and Hidatsa.

Chapter two closes with disagreements over bundle rights and ration distribution that led to an eventual migration of the group led by Crow-Flies-High.

Chapter three argues the migration of the Crow-Flies-High band leads to the establishment of a new village and cultural hub, Hushgah-Adiish, Badlands Lodge/Village. It explores the attempted cultural revitalization by the group and the ability of Native people to live successfully distanced from governmental oversight. This chapter illustrates the importance of the region to Hidatsa-proper people as a hunting territory and sacred region. It also showcases the various cultural practices such as eagle trapping that see a rise in popularity during this time. There is a look back at Fishhook Village during this time period and the increased efforts by missionaries and Indian Agents to push forward the agenda of civilization for the village dwellers. As a result, Hushgah Adiish becomes an outlet for traditionalism that is otherwise being repressed.

Chapter four reveals the waning years of Hushgah Adiish, and establishment of the final village away from the reservation, Hushgah eeda Aashiish: The Stream of the Badlands Band. It explains the reasons for the eventual forced removal of the band to the reservation and how they retained a distinct cultural identity and practice from their 24 years of successfully living away from the influences of missionaries and Indian Agents. It displays how these people fit into the wider context of the waning days of the buffalo hunt and the desire for Indian people to live as they once did before the restriction of their movements by the federal government. The Hushgah or Crow-Flies-High band were a reactionary group of Hidatsa and Mandan who lived for 24 years away from religious restriction and flourished as a defiant people.

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Historiography

There is no definitive academic history of the Crow-Flies-High band. The current body of work on the Upper-Plains does not specifically focus on the history of this band of Hidatsa and Mandan. There is only passing mention of the band and their departure from Like-A-Fishhook. Much of the information available appears in the format of ethnographic studies that were conducted in the early twentieth century. Most noted among these ethnographers are Gilbert Livingston Wilson and Alfred Bowers. Both men studied different aspects of Hidatsa and Mandan ceremonial practice and social relationships. Although there is mention of this group of people there is no attempt at a singular focus of the history of these people. Archeological reports help to illuminate the type of village life these people experienced when they migrated from Like-A-Fishhook. Integral to this study is the oral history that has been passed down and recorded from the descendants of this band. Historians have touched upon the topic briefly but with few details, with the exception of Roy Meyer who focuses on the Crow-Flies-High band more than any other historian since. Roy Meyer is the last historian to write a history of all three tribes, Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara. Other historians have only dealt with one or a combination of the three with focus on a particular period of the tribe's history. The Crow-Flies-High band fits into larger themes of the history of Native people in the late nineteenth century.

There are two crucial archeological reports that explored the two village sites of Crow-Flies-High's band. Gregory Fox's, *The Garden Coulee Site (32W118): A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa* and Carling Malouf's *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*. Malouf's report was conducted in the late-1950s as part of the Missouri Salvage

Program related to the creation of Garrison Dam. He documented the archeology of the site occupied by the Crow-Flies-High band from 1884-1894 but also tried to reconstruct the history and village activities of the occupants using ethnographic, ethnohistoric and archeological data.

Gregory Fox's 1988 study attempted to find the earlier village site of Crow-Flies High that was occupied from 1869-1884, near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. Fox's report was conducted through the Midwest Archeological Center. It is clear that Fox was inspired by Malouf's methodology, and he also applies ethnographic and ethnohistorical information in order *to better understand* a village site. Fox utilizes both fort correspondence and annual reports from the Indian agent at Fort Berthold *to better understand* the activities of the Crow-Flies-High band. He consults the foremost modern expert on the Mandan and Hidatsa, Gerard Baker, who is a descendant of the Crow-Flies-High band and was the Fort Union historian in the nineteen-eighties.

Despite their methodology, there are some problems with both archeological studies. It is difficult to understand the history of a people without an understanding of their cultural practice, cultural geography and worldview. Both reports are dismissive of the cultural importance of the village sites in relation to surrounding holy areas and eagle-trapping pits. The other crucial mistake in the archeological reports is that there is no regard for separation of the Hidatsa into their three subgroups: Hidatsa-proper, Awatixa, and Awaxawi. This difference, which is reflected in language, cultural practice, and history is vital in understanding the Crow-Flies-High migration.

Ethnographer Gilbert Livingston Wilson worked with collaborators on the Fort Berthold Reservation for a decade from 1908-1918. He worked largely with the Goodbird

Family, this included: Mah-hiddi-wia, Buffalo-Bird Woman, her brother Wolf Chief, her son Edward Goodbird and Nuptadi Mandan husband Son-of-A-Star. Wilson's work was published through the American Museum of Natural History: *Agriculture of the Hidatsa Indians: An Indian Interpretation* (1917) *The Horse and Dog in Hidatsa Culture* (1924) *Hidatsa Eagle Trapping* (1928), and *The Hidatsa Earthlodge* (1934). All of these studies are vital in illuminating different aspects of historical Hidatsa lifeways but they are also problematic for considering Garden Coulee. The Goodbird family was Awatixa through Mah-hiddi-wia and Nuptadi Mandan through her husband Son-of-A-Star. The Crow-Flies-High band was majority Hidatsa-proper with members of the Nuptadi Mandan. collaborator information about the band from the Goodbird family is second-hand and their Awatixa, Awaxawi Hidatsa and Nuptadi Mandan relatives could have been at times in direct conflict with leaders such as Bobtail Bull and Crow-Flies-High, both Hidatsa-proper. This family mostly remained at Fishhook Village during the absence of the Crow-Flies-High band, with the exception of Wolf Chief traveling there to trap eagles.

Wolf Chief, a Hidatsa who traveled to the Garden Coulee site in approximately 1873 to trap eagles, described the village as twenty-three earthlodges and seven log cabins. It was a thriving community and when Wolf Chief arrived they had just begun to boil the new green ears of corn from their gardens. Fox dismisses the number of lodges described by Wolf Chief and talks about the pitfalls of oral history. He only unearthed two lodges in his archeological work and does not take into account that the lodges were sold for firewood by the band before their move in 1884 and were most likely dismantled by the workers at Buford. The population at Garden Coulee was constantly fluctuating

but there remained a core group of 150 individuals. It was more likely they had the number of lodges described by Wolf Chief if this site was their village.

Wilson also relied on/found willing collaborators among the Mandan and Hidatsa who were recognized Christians. They were more open to divulging information in regards to the sacred ceremonies and rites of their people. There were no such willing collaborators among the majority members of the band of Crow-Flies-High. This thesis will illuminate some of the reasons for their unwillingness to cooperate with researchers.

Alfred Bowers was another anthropologist who collected information on the Fort Berthold Reservation from 1929-1933. He published two books: *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization* (1950) and *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization* (1963). Like Wilson, Bowers interviewed a number of collaborators for his work. Bowers had fourteen collaborators in total for his study of the Mandan. Three of these collaborators were Hidatsa of the Awaxawi band and all of the Mandan collaborators had been occupants of Fishhook in the time of Garden Coulee occupation.

For his study on the Hidatsa, Bowers relied on the same collaborators who provided information to Gilbert Wilson, with the addition of a few other collaborators. Most important for this study was the information from Four Dancers, son of Guts, brother of Bobtail Bull who was keeper of the Earthnaming bundle. Four Dancers was the only Hidatsa-proper collaborator in Bower's study and the only one from the Crow-Flies-High band. Bowers seemed to understand the need to go directly to the source and expressed his frustration in attempting to secure collaborators in the Shell Creek community, the community where the Crow-Flies-High band settled after their return to the reservation.

“I never found such hard sledding in all my work here as I have had with this Crow Flying High Band and when I say tough, I mean tough enough. They still go out to the hills crying all night, never venture into a Christian Church and carry an inherent dislike for all whites. If I had time, I know that I could get next to them but even with the best of secrets, others do know something of it so I have much second hand information on most of the things they own”¹

The translator for Alfred Bowers was my Great-grandfather James Baker, a descendant of Short Bull, a Nuitadi Mandan ceremonial leader at Garden Coulee. James was a member of the Crow-Flies-High band and was five years old at the time of the forced military escort to the reservation. It appears that Bowers may have overlooked this fact or perhaps did not understand James Baker’s association with the band, but either way, he did not appear to ask James about the band. As Bowers states, all information he has in regards to the Crow-Flies-High’s band is second hand information, with the exception of his collaborator, Four Dancers.²

Both Bowers’ and Wilson’s work serve as the cornerstone for later research on the Hidatsa and Mandan people. Publications such as Elizabeth Fenn’s *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A Mandan History of The Mandan People* and Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider’s work *The Way to Independence* rely heavily on the field research conducted by both of these anthropologists. It is nearly impossible to do a study of the Hidatsa and Mandan without the use of the ethnographic and ethnohistorical information collected by Bowers and Wilson.

Roy Meyer is a historian who wrote *Village Indians of the Upper-Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras* (1977). This is one of the last completed tribal histories

1. Ibid, xxvii.

2. Ibid, xvii, 174, 233, 236-242.

of all three tribes. It is a wonderful collection of ethnographic research, archeological reports, military correspondence and Indian office reports. Meyers discusses the problems and challenges of writing as an outsider and someone who does not share in the ethnic and cultural background as those who are being examined. This fact does not hinder the quality of Meyer's research. Meyer does an excellent job of continuing the history of the Three Tribes after the 1840s. Most historical research in regards to Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people end in the 1840s with the establishment of Like-A-Fishhook Village. Meyer brings the Three Tribes into the twentieth century and shows they have a rich and vibrant history. Meyer is also the historian who has written the most about the Crow-Flies-High band. He uses documentary evidence to illuminate the lives of these people.

Carolynn Gilman and Virginia Schneider's work *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Family 1840-1920*, achieves a similar goal to Meyer's and sheds light on a time period that has not received much attention in the historical record. Gilman and Schneider analyze the lives of the Goodbird family to take an in-depth look at Fort Berthold in this time period. They use a majority of information from Gilbert Wilson's studies, his published works and field notes. Wilson worked intimately with the whole family. Schneider uses the Goodbird family as a springboard to discuss different external forces effecting the population at Fort Berthold such as Americanization efforts, integration into a cash economy, and the changing national Indian policy. The integration of photographs, maps, sketches and oral histories make this a unique study and invaluable resource for any researcher investigating Fort Berthold at this time.

Elizabeth Fenn's *Encounter's at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* is the most recent study on any of the three tribes and has garnered much attention

from both the academic community and the tribal community at Fort Berthold. Fenn received the Pulitzer Prize for her writing on the Mandan history in the Knife River complex. It follows a trajectory that is similar to former histories of the Mandan with their “collapse” at the Knife River complex in 1837. With the staggering population loss at Knife River, the Mandan are considered by many historians to have lost their autonomy, and with it, their voice. Fenn attempts to bridge the historical Mandan at the Knife River complex with the contemporary Mandan without any regard to the intricate and complicated history at Fishhook or at Hushgah Adiish. Not only do the Mandan continue to flourish but they are also largely separated along the lines of Nupta and Nuida. I am descended from the Hidatsa-Proper and Nuitadi Mandan, both of whom were present at Hushgah Addiish.

The use of Native oral history has been a large part of anthropological work, but it still has yet to gain ground in historical research. This thesis is an attempt to give some legitimacy to Native history and Native oral tradition and to offer a richer understanding of Native perspective. In order to attain this, researchers must look at historical events through Indian eyes. Native people have a different worldview from that of Euro-Americans, and they also have a different conceptualization of the landscape around them. This study is also a cultural geography and attempts to reclaim space by returning cultural sites back to their original Hidatsa names. In doing so, this decolonizing methodology gives a greater understanding of how Hidatsa people in the late nineteenth century would have viewed the world around them and is how culture is connected to the landscape. Both Bowers and Wilson attempt to achieve this position from an anthropological standpoint, but their lack of collaborators from the Hidatsa-proper and

Nuitadi Mandan creates an incomplete picture of the history of the Crow-Flies-High band. Rarely have American Indians been afforded the opportunity to write their own histories or lend their voices to the narrative of US history. There is a great need for Native people to reclaim their place in history as the storytellers rather than the collaborators.

Meanings and Definitions

This thesis integrates the Hidatsa language in an effort to return the place names throughout Hidatsa territory to their original designations. It is an attempt to re-conceptualize this area of the northern plains in a way that the Hidatsa people would have viewed the world around them. I stress that the culture is embedded in the landscape. The Hidatsa language is not written, and I attempt to get as close to the phonetic spellings as possible. There are slight variations in Hidatsa place names among the three sub-groups of Hidatsa. Based on my own family connections, the majority of the place-names that I use can be assumed to be from the Hidatsa-proper group.

Chapter One: Historical Background to the Three Tribes; Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara

“White people do not know how to live – They leave their homes in small parties; they risk their lives on the great waters, and among strange nations, who will take them for enemies: - What is the use of the Beaver? Do they preserve them from sickness? Do they serve them beyond the grave? We are no slaves. Our fathers were not Slaves. In the young days, there were no white men and we knew no wants. We were successful in war. Our arrows were pointed with flint, our lances with stone; and their wounds were mortal. Our Villages rejoiced when the men returned from war; they brought back many scalps of our enemies. The white people came and they brought some goods with them; but they also brought smallpox and liquor. The Indians since are diminished and they are no longer happy.”

-Hidatsa Chief³

This story is not mine, alone. This is the story of families; among them; Driver, Crow-Flies-High, Dragswolf, Parshall, Birdsbill, Blackhawk, Youngbird, Baker, Dancing Bull, Fast Dog and Fox. I was raised in such a fashion that I believe when we pass on to the next place and take that final journey, we are traveling to the old village. Many who have gone before me took this journey and for some of them it was a physical as well as spiritual place. For generations, Hidatsa and Mandan have looked to early cultural sites and historic villages. There is a feeling of nostalgia associated with those places. Every generation that has gone before me dreamed of an earlier village site they will experience once more at the end or new beginning. The elders of my youth looked longingly at community life on the river bottom to communities like Independence, Shell Creek,

3. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818*, 234.

Lucky Mound, Charging Eagle and Beaver Creek. Places that were inundated with the creation of Garrison Dam in 1953 and destruction of ninety-percent of our fertile bottomland. The old village is an idea; a longing for the old days, songs in Water Chief hall, summer celebrations at Elbowoods. The old time community. Places that I would try and sit and imagine. Two generations before mine, the people looked longingly at Like-A-Fishhook village when all three tribes were consolidated in a single village. Those who were Crow-Flies-High members, Hushgahs, looked to the Garden Coulee site at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers called Hushgah Adiish, the Badlands Lodge. These were places that had seen the ending of the Okipa and Naxpike, the final summers of the traditional Sun Dance. It was the dawn of the grass dance societies; the waning of the buffalo culture and final days of the earth lodge village. The older generation, in those sites, dreamed of Awa-Di-ghick-hoo, the Five Villages. The historic villages of the Mandan and Hidatsa in the Knife River complex. A place where all sub-groups of the Hidatsa enjoyed autonomy and the Nuitadi and Nuptadi Mandan had hosted Lewis and Clark in the winter of 1804. The elders before them looked to Awa-di-buss-ee-hay, Village on Slant; and other villages throughout the Knife and Heart River regions. This pattern must have gone back to those original thirteen villages, when we as Mandan and Hidatsa became self-aware as a people, for we have been in the region since time immemorial.

This thesis is a study of the Crow-Flies-High band of Hidatsa and Mandan Indians, Hushgah, who migrated from their refuge at Like-A-Fishhook Village in 1870, moving 150 miles west, to the vicinity of Fort Buford in what is now the western border of North Dakota and Eastern border of Montana. Here, they attempted to revitalize earlier

cultural practice and lifeways as they had known them at the Knife River complex, Awa-Di-ghick-hoo, five villages along the Knife River occupied from 1781-1837.⁴ In particular, this study emphasizes the leadership roles of Crow-Flies-High's band and their part in maintaining ongoing cultural practice such as eagle trapping at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, kinship and political relationships with other tribes in the region and use of oral history narratives compiled in the notes of anthropologists and family collections from the Hidatsa and Mandan who shared this history. Crow-Flies-High's village was a thriving cultural hub away from the reservation at a time in American Indian history when native culture and religion was being actively repressed by the United States government. In addition to history, this study is a cultural geography, that re-conceptualizes this area of the Upper-Missouri in a way that would have been understood by Mandan and Hidatsa people in the late nineteenth century. This study employs a decolonizing methodology in rewriting the existing narrative with the new perspective of the native people involved, including an implementation of the Hidatsa language and with that, reclamation of space. This is a transdisciplinary study that uses ethnographies, archeological surveys, US military correspondence, and tribal oral histories. This history challenges the prevailing narrative of Hidatsa and Mandan communities in this time period, which asserts that they declined and gives voice to a people who have not been afforded the opportunity to lend their perspective to history.

The Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara are semi sedentary tribes whose early archeological history can be traced to their Paleo-Indian ancestors, who were organized into semi

⁴ Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 44-45.

migratory hunting bands. These migratory people traveled throughout the northern and middle plains regions hunting large mammals, working stone projectile points, and harvesting roots, nuts, and berries. During this period, these predecessors to the more-highly-developed Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara cultures, began to live along the Missouri River and its tributaries. Early Mandan people traveled long distances to extract Knife River flint, plentiful in the region now known as Dunn Center, North Dakota. This precious commodity later became a main article of trade with neighboring tribes in the region. The Arikara became renowned in the middle Plains region for their decorative buffalo robes, which were sought after by many tribes moving through their territory. All three groups were main economic hubs in their respective regions because all three tribes kept dried-food stores in cache pits for trade. The Arikara were known by the Lakota as Corn Eaters. One thousand years ago, these previously migratory people who lived along the Missouri River begin to construct rectangular lodges, the earliest forms of earthen structures that were the forerunner to the Mandan and Hidatsa earth lodges. During this era, the groups became semi sedentary people depending mostly on an agricultural economy. Agriculture is what made these people a strong economic and military force. The labor of women toiling in gardens along the bottomlands of the Missouri and its tributaries made these villages prosperous. The Missouri River was the lifeline of the agricultural tribes, the epicenter of their world.⁵

The Arikara split from the Pawnee in the seventeenth century and as they moved north, they adopted circular earthlodge architecture. A circular structure is easiest to keep

5. C.L Dill, *Early Peoples of North Dakota*, 5-25.

warm during the bitter winter months on the northern plains. Out of necessity, the structure of earthlodges changed with the region.⁶

According to Hidatsa and Mandan oral tradition, the people have been in the region since time immemorial. The culture is inscribed on the landscape. The area of the upper Missouri River and its tributaries is the focal point of the creation stories of both Mandan and Hidatsa people. Their creation stories have become closely related over years of cultural exchange. In this centralized location, Lone Man (Maud-zay-dah-new-wud-zish) and First Creator (Ee-zah-goo-ah-hiddish) arranged the rest of the physical world.

In the beginning, the Earth was water and this is where Maud-zay-dah-new-wud-zish, the Lone Man, found himself and he began to wander and think, “Who am I and where do I come from?” It is then that he heard a voice on the western wind that said, “Go back and follow the ripples of the water until you find where you’ve come from.” So Lone Man turned and went back, following the ripple marks curved like a bow, until he came upon an eagle staff. He took the staff from the water and encountered Ee-zah-goo-ah-hiddish, the First Creator.

“You must be my brother,” said Lone Man, “... But I am the elder.” They began to argue and First Creator turned himself into a coyote pup and lay in the water. It’s then that Lone Man planted his staff in the water and left for a time, traveling around the world. On his return, First Creator was a coyote in his youth. Lone Man’s eagle staff began to curve ever so slightly on top. Lone Man left a second time and went around the world. When he came back, First Creator was a coyote in his prime of life with a mane of thick fur and sharp teeth. Lone Man’s staff was bent even more. So Lone Man left and went around the world for a third time. He came back and First Creator was an old coyote with patchy fur and teeth ground down from wear, and Lone Man’s eagle staff was bent to a curled end. So Lone Man, left a fourth time and went around the world. He then came back and found the bones of a coyote, and the top of his eagle staff was curled into a hoop. First Creator brought himself back to life and said, “See, I am the elder!”

“Let us make land,” said Lone Man. So he assembled Red-eyed Mud Hen, Goose, Mallard and Teal, telling them to dive below the water and gather a bundle of sacred earth. In turn they all failed, except Red-Eyed Mud Hen

6. Ibid, 20-23.

who dove below the depths and came back with a sacred bundle. Lone Man divided the bundle into two equal shares. Lone Man took his half and made the lands west of the Missouri River with rolling plains, high buttes, with the smell of sweet grass. He made animals suitable for his side of the river.

First Creator, meanwhile, was lazy and made mountain tops too high and valleys too steep. He created animals with three legs that couldn't stand on their own. So Lone Man began to criticize him, "Look what you've done! In your laziness you've created this uninhabitable land and creatures that cannot stand on their own."

First Creator was ashamed, so he lowered the mountains and made gentler the valleys but the mountains remained high and the valleys low. The high peaks left by First Creator are what are known today as the Rocky Mountains. The water, left over from the beginning, was the Missouri River. Lone Man then awakened the people who were beneath the Earth.⁷

There people below the earth were the Hidatsa. The Hidatsa were separated into three distinct cultural groups with different villages: The Awaxawi, Awatixa and the Hidatsa-proper. These groups spoke a similar language but had separate histories, ceremonial practices and governing bodies. Prior to 1838, the villages would have seen themselves as distinct but all under the name, Hidatsa. Historically, the Awatixa (People of the Springs) lived upriver in closest proximity to the Mandan, who followed a semisedentary lifestyle. Like the Mandan, the Awatixa, sustained themselves by means of an agricultural economy. Also, they profited from the greatest cultural exchange and commerce with neighboring tribes, again because they resided closest to the Mandan, the great traders of the northern plains.⁸

The Hidatsa-proper (People of the Willows) had the greatest cultural and kinship ties with the River Crow Indians, whereas the Awatixa and Awaxawi had only a limited connection with the Crow in terms of cultural exchange. The Hidatsa-proper pursued a

7. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 297-303.

8. *Ibid*, 29-32.

lifestyle similar to that of Crow Indians; they often abandoned settled villages to hunt buffalo and attack enemies with Crow relatives. The River Crow and Hidatsa-proper were once a single group living together in the Knife River region. At some point after a successful buffalo hunt, the band of River Crow felt offended when they believed that the Hidatsa had cheated them out of their fair share of buffalo tripe. In response, they moved westward to present-day Montana, taking up a fully migratory lifestyle with their relatives, the Mountain Crow. The Hidatsa-proper, after splitting from the Crow, moved up the Missouri River and settled upstream from the mouth of Metsee-Ahshee, or Knife River, resuming a semi sedentary lifestyle. As reflected in the oral history of these people, and consistent with the archeological and anthropological record, the Crow Indians are known by the Hidatsa as Gee-haut-sah (“Got Mad [pouted] over Tripe”), and the Crow call the Hidatsa Awa-shay (“Lives in the Dirt”). To the present day, however, the two groups consider themselves as closely related linguistically, historically, and by kinship.⁹

The Awaxawi (“Lives Around the Water”) claimed that they originally lived on the western tributaries of the Red River to the north, then migrated to the Devils Lake region of North Dakota, a claim supported by archeological evidence. Later, they traveled west to the Missouri River with the incursion into their original homeland by Chippewa and Dakota Indians from present-day Canada and Minnesota. By this time, they were already agricultural Indians, having adopted the lifestyle of the Mandan and Awatixa by whom they were strongly influenced through overland trade.¹⁰

9. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 13,16.

10. *Ibid*, 14-16.

The Mandan were historically divided into five fixed bands with one or more villages each. These five groups were the Ístopa (“Those Who Tattooed Themselves”), Nuptadi, Mánaná (“Those Who Quarreled”), Awigaxa, and Nuitadi. The Mandan lived in villages numbering between six and nine, in the Heart River region of North Dakota prior to the smallpox epidemics of 1782 and 1837.¹¹

The year 1738 marks the first recorded contact between the Indians of the Upper-Missouri River and Europeans. However, the Mandan as well as the Hidatsa had felt the effects of Europeans from the moment they landed. Trade routes among Indian peoples delivered European goods long before any earth lodge dwellers set eyes on a white man. The European introduction of the horse was already greatly impacting the plains people and would reorient the plains power structure. A French expeditionary force, led by Pierre Gaultier de Varennes La Vérendrye, with the help of Assiniboine guides, ventured south from Fort Maurepas near Lake Winnipeg to the villages of the people he called “Mantannes.” It is debated among historians whether these were Mandan or the Awaxawi group of Hidatsa.¹² The Assiniboine guides identified all as “Mantannes,” making no distinction among the various agricultural tribal groups to which they led La Vérendrye. The village where he camped cannot be located. Most archeologists agree that he stayed at the winter encampment of river tribes located in the bottomlands of the Missouri,

11. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization* 24-25.

12. Orin Grant Libby, and State Historical Society of North Dakota. 1908. *Typical Villages of the Mandans, Arikara and Hidatsa in the Missouri Valley, North Dakota*. Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota - Vol. 2, 1908. Orin Libby, the secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota in the early twentieth century, argued that La Vérendrye encountered Hidatsa rather than Mandan. His claim was unconvincing to other historians since nothing remains of the earthlodge village described in La Vérendrye’s journals.

which were subject to annual floods. La Vérendrye's journey to and visit with the "Mantannes" marks the beginning of a long history of interaction between Europeans and the Upper-Missouri River Tribes.¹³

The Arikara were originally part of the Skidi band of Pawnee, and from this group they received the name, Arikara. It means "antlers" or "horns" and is a reference to the old Arikara practice of forming the hair around two bones to stand erect. They are believed to have split from this band in the seventeenth century. The Arikara, like the Hidatsa and Crow, remained on friendly terms with their Pawnee relatives and moved back and forth from their territory to Pawnee territory with relative ease.¹⁴

Early contact with traders was positive but tensions between the Arikara and fur traders began to grow as the Arikara saw their roles as middle-men weakening. The Arikara villages situated on the junction of the Grand and Missouri Rivers allowed for the Arikara to control trade on the Missouri and decide who could reach the Mandan villages. The Arikara people received the horse from the Wichita and Comanche around the year 1720. At that time, they were warring with the Mandan and Hidatsa and rather than trade horses to them, they traded horses to the Lakota. This decision would create its own problems later on; the Lakota become the primary enemy of the Arikara in the nineteenth century. This is also why the Mandan and Hidatsa received horses relatively late,

13. Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de La Vérendrye, *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and his Sons*, 327-328

14. George E. Hyde, Wasyl Halich, Russell Reid, and John Webb. 1951. *North Dakota History*. Volume 18, No. 4. 192-94, 197.

estimated around 1750, and why they were still utilizing the dog travois in the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Distrust toward Euro-Americans along the river can be traced to a single incident. An Arikara leader was sent to Washington D.C., with the assistance of Lewis and Clark in 1805, but he died in 1806. The Arikara blamed Euro-American traders for the death of their leader and family members sought revenge in the historic manner of Plains tribes. Their hostility is also thought to have been fueled by the British, who were frequenting the river and telling tribes not to trust the Americans, coaxing them into open conflict with members of the Missouri Fur Company. In 1807, an expedition to the Yellowstone, led by Manuel Lisa, was stopped by Arikara, who demanded payment for traveling upriver. They were reported by the travelers to have hostile intent and finally they allowed the expedition to pass after Lisa showed the Arikara his cannon and zeroed in on the village. His refusal to pay was an affront to Arikara control of the river and threatened their positions as middlemen.¹⁶

Open hostilities continued on the Missouri between Arikara and fur traders. Later in the year 1807, the Arikara attacked an escort party that was leading the Mandan leader, Sheheke-shote (White Coyote), back to his village in the Knife River region. They eventually forced the party downriver after killing four and injuring ten. It would be two more years before Sheheke-shote could venture once more up the Missouri.¹⁷ Travelers along the Missouri were ever cautious of the unpredictable Arikara, who could attack at a

15. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 25-26.

16. *Ibid*, 54-55.

17. Tracy A. Potter, *Sheheke: Mandan Indian Diplomat: The Story of White Coyote, Thomas Jefferson, and Lewis and Clark*, 142-146.

moment's notice. The first expedition of William Ashley traveled up the Missouri in 1822 and traded with the Arikara for horses. The second expedition in 1823 camped at the main Arikara village and was attacked in the early hours of the morning. Fourteen Americans were killed and 10 wounded. Ashley fled downstream, where he pleaded for help from Colonel Henry Leavenworth at Fort Atkinson. Leavenworth moved six companies northward and was joined by 60 men of the Missouri Fur Company and 750 Lakota. The Army and the Lakota forces attacked the main Arikara village but were repelled repeatedly as the defenders fired from behind their stockade. The Arikara finally sued for peace when the army moved in its artillery.¹⁸

Peace was negotiated on August 11, 1823 but the Arikara abandoned their village the following day. At this point, the Arikara scattered into different directions, some traveling as far north as the Cannonball River and far west to the Rocky Mountains. The peace did not stop Arikara from attacking Whites whenever they encountered them. A later Ashley expedition heading overland to the Yellowstone was attacked by an Indian force that was strongly suspected of being Arikara. The Missouri was abandoned to the tribes for a time and it would be a number of years until the Americans would again control movement on the river. The Missouri River is the lifeblood of the plains. Control of the river equated to trade access, these ideas of controlling the waterways had been on the minds of Americans since the Louisiana Purchase.¹⁹

Between 1738 and 1837, a number of encounters between Europeans and Indians of the Upper Missouri River have been recorded. The most noteworthy explorers,

18. Ibid, 55-56

19. Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*. 38, 56.

trappers, and painters visiting the region were Mackintosh in 1773, David Thompson in 1797, Lewis and Clark in 1804, George Catlin in 1833, and, together in an 1833 expedition, Karl Bodmer and Maximilian Alexander Philippe, Prince of Wied. Intermittent trade occurred between these sedentary tribes and European explorers. Unbeknownst to the Native populace, a majority of these visitors wished to see the tribes in their “natural state,” believing that before long the tribes would be extinguished. It was already cemented in the minds of Americans that the West would be changing. The Mandan and Hidatsa people saw the rate at which the world around them was changing but could have never anticipated the accelerated rate they would experience in the latter end of the century.²⁰

The Arikara remained out of the picture for a while. They were scattered far and wide across the plains. There is evidence of some Arikara staying with the Mandan during the 1830s. With their former position as middlemen on the Missouri crushed following the outcome of the Arikara war of 1823, the Arikara made peace with the Mandan. Still, they were at odds with the other agricultural tribes because their conflictive relationship with Whites persisted. Still, Karl Bodmer painted an Arikara man while he stayed with the Mandan in 1834.²¹

Two major smallpox epidemics reshaped the lives of Indian people living along the Upper-Missouri River and resulted in the repeated reorganization and consolidation of their villages. It is agreed by historians, supported by fur trading journals, and Native

20. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, 215-217.

21. Russell Reid, and Clell G. Gannon. 1929. "Journal of the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition." *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, 30-45.

oral history, that the first smallpox epidemic occurred in spring of 1782. This first epidemic decimated the Mandan and Hidatsa populations, reducing a multitude of villages that had existed since pre contact to only five. The Mandan were forced to migrate north of their sacred heartland, (Nah-daash-shee) the Heart River, to the Painted Woods area on the east bank of the Missouri River, establishing two villages, Nupta and Nuita, named after the two surviving Mandan bands. The Arikara retreated north from their villages located along the Niobrara in northern Nebraska, moving away from their relatives, the Pawnee. The Arikara moved to the vicinity of the Grand and Cannonball Rivers, where they would flex their power as middlemen between the white traders and the Mandan. The year 1782 marks a turning point in regard to life on the northern plains. The agricultural societies of the Missouri no longer had the same power that they did prior to the smallpox epidemic, and Lakota/Dakota attacks continually worsened as the Lakota saw their once powerful enemies decimated by disease.²²

The Lakota were wholly dependent on the vast buffalo herds that moved throughout the plains region. The horse had made this lifestyle possible, and they moved constantly, covering a significant geographic space. As a fully migratory people, they had the advantage over their enemies by constantly moving during the summer months. The Mandan and Hidatsa had fixed positions along the river in order to maintain their gardens. The Lakota were aware of these village sites and took full advantage by raiding in the summer months when women worked in their gardens and men would be on constant lookout for the enemy.²³

22. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, 215-217.

23. Donald J. Lehmer, *Introduction to Middle Missouri Archeology*, 169-170.

The introduction of the horse and a shrinking geographic space for the river tribes intensified warfare with their enemies. The main agitators for the river tribes were the Sioux bands, both Lakota and Dakota. Lakota raiding on Mandan gardens contested the economic prowess of the Mandan. The Mandan and Hidatsa villages had been a cultural hub because of agriculture. The nature of their economy grounded them in a semi-sedentary lifestyle. This made them vulnerable to a new mobile enemy. Instead of having to come to the villages to trade for agricultural goods, the Lakota took advantage of the River tribes sedentary positions and raided rather than traded. Warfare was constant and it transformed the society. Age-grade societies formulated around warfare, and honor deeds became a main lifeway for men. It kept male populations low compared to that of women and ushered in an era of plural marriages. The entire life cycle of men revolved around their war deeds and ability to display their success in war.²⁴

Like other tribes in the region, the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara now moved seasonally. All three were agricultural, but movement to sacred sites was essential for maintaining the holy rites and practices of the people. Young men journeyed across territory to fast in sacred areas so as to gain a protector or spiritual helper. These helpers aided them throughout their entire lives and kept them safe from enemies.²⁵ Women would have historically travel distances to pick plants, but they never went very far from the villages following the acquisition of the horse by enemy tribes. The badlands, was in a sense, an ample foraging area and was the home to many of the medicines used for

24. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 42-43.

25. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 328-332.

illness but the foraging in this area was hindered by the ability of the Lakota to cover large stretches of territory in a small span of time.²⁶

Women kept the households for all three tribes and owned the property. They had the rights to earth lodges and garden areas in the bottomlands of the river. Men owned nothing but their clothes and various medicine items.²⁷ These gender roles made divorce an easy process.²⁸ A woman could divorce her husband by simply leaving his items outside the earthlodge or, vice versa, a man could simply return to a lodge of his mother's clan.²⁹ The only exception to restricted long distance movements of women was that of the Hidatsa-proper, who maintained their close kinship relationship with the Crow and often traveled to Crow lands or shared hunting territories to stay with relatives. The Crow remained a constant ally throughout the nineteenth century.³⁰

The Hidatsa, Awatixa, and Awaxawi moved next to the Mandan on the west bank of the Missouri, near the mouth of the Metsee-Ashee, Knife River, establishing three villages named after the three subgroups of Hidatsa. This group of Mandan and Hidatsa villages, located near present-day Stanton, North Dakota, came to be known by their inhabitants as Awa-Di-Ghick-Hoo, which in the Hidatsa language means the Five Villages. The three Hidatsa villages were comprised of distinct cultural groups with variations in oral tradition, ceremonial practices, and dialect. The differences in their dialects are still apparent among fluent speakers on the Fort Berthold Reservation today.

26. Gilbert Livingstone Wilson, and Michael Scullin, *Uses of Plants by the Hidatsas of the Northern Plains*, xxv, 14-16.

27. Washington Matthews, *Ethnography and Philology of the Hidatsa Indians*, 47-52.

28. Virginia Bergman Peters, *Women of the Earth Lodges : Tribal Life on the Plains*, 80-81.

29. *Ibid*, 52-57.

30. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 37, 214-216.

Both the Mandan and Hidatsa had controlled their own hunting territories for generations but as their populations decreased and Lakota encroachments on their old hunting territories shrank their recognized territory, the two tribes began to recognize a shared territory. They entered into a more intimate tribal relationship than they had ever experienced.³¹

The centralized location of the two tribes was uncharacteristic for these agricultural people in that they had never lived at such close proximity prior to the 1782 epidemic. This consolidation into five clustered villages was intended to provide a better defense against hostile migratory tribes. These are the five Mandan and Hidatsa villages where Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1804-1805, during which time they established Fort Mandan.³²

The Lewis and Clark expedition, while a momentous event in the American history of the West, was of little consequence to the Mandan and Hidatsa in recounting their oral history. To the Mandan and Hidatsa, what was most noteworthy about the visit paid by Lewis (“Long Knife”) and Clark (“Red Hair”) was the appearance of York, William Clark’s black slave. The Indian people referred to York as “Good Medicine” as they tried to rub off the black pigment from the skin of this Mash-ee-shib-ee-shah, or “Black White Man”.³³

Lewis and Clark were entering a world that was unknown and foreign to them. They knew what contacts the agricultural tribes had made with foreign nationalities but

31. Ibid, 11-25.

32. Raymond W. Wood, William J. Hunt Jr., Randy H. Williams, *Fort Clark and its Indian Neighbors: A Trading Post on the Upper Missouri*, 20-28.

33. Marc Jaffe, and Alvin M Josephy, *Lewis and Clark through Indian Eyes*, 125-129.

they failed to understand the complexity of the changing society for these people. For Mandan and Hidatsa, it was changing at a rapid pace. New trade goods had been made available to them, firearms and horses were being purchased from their Crow allies, and they were undergoing a cultural transformation that would forever alter them as a people.³⁴ Native people are not stagnant. The Mandan and Hidatsa culture was not unchanging. They were adaptable survivalists. They had integrated the horse into their lives, along with metal pots and rifles.

The second smallpox epidemic occurred in 1837 and was more devastating than the first in 1781. It is estimated that it took the lives of more than half of the remaining Mandan and Hidatsa. At least one historian estimates the population loss among the Mandan at 90 percent, leaving a mere 150 survivors. People died in their damp and enclosed lodges, the sedentary nature of Mandan and Hidatsa villages being the perfect environment for incubation of the smallpox disease. Other migratory tribes of the Northern Plains fared better, having split up and scattered in different directions, meeting in later seasons at rendezvous.³⁵ The smallpox epidemic shattered both Mandan and Hidatsa historic ceremonial life, most especially the formalized rites and secret knowledge of bundle bearers. It deteriorated the age-grade society in favor of a less structured system.³⁶

Mandan ceremonial practice that had been formalized through the generations and the survivor population witnessed a majority of its medicine leaders perish in a single

34. Roland Bohr, *Gifts from the Thunder Beings: Indigenous Archery and European Firearms in the Northern Plains and Central Subarctic, 1670-1870*, 147, 165, 270-217.

35. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana : The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, 271.

36. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 21-27, 35-37.

season. Sacred cultural knowledge that was only known among specific members of the tribe was lost. The Okipa, the Mandan Sun Dance would take a completely different form in the latter nineteenth century. Cultural knowledge is not held by one member of the community. The religion was not based on the ideas or memorized oral traditions of one member; it was a community knowledge base.³⁷ This knowledge base was severely disrupted and the same can be said of the formalized rites of the Hidatsa groups the Awatixa and Awaxawi.

Along with a shattered ceremonial life, there was also a sharp reduction in the number of able leaders in both tribes. Traditionally, there had been a tribal council with a representative from each village who was a member of various clans.³⁸ The epidemic had killed most of the former council members. According to oral tradition, Charging Eagle the son of Mandan chief Four Bears, tried to assume a leadership role by virtue of his lineal descent, but because of his youth, he had not distinguished himself as a leader.³⁹ Survivors of the epidemic migrated north along the Missouri River, eventually establishing Like-a-Fishhook Village in 1845.

Bowers described the years leading up to Fishhook:

During the period 1837 to 1845 the Hidatsa were unable to operate as a tribal unit. The more sedentary Awatixa and Awaxawi preferred to continue the old cultural pattern based on agriculture. The Hidatsa-proper, with a short traditional history of agriculture on the Missouri after separating from the River Crow with whom they had still maintained close contacts on the Missouri above Knife River, preferred to accept an invitation to rejoin the Crow. When the final decision was made and the site of the new village had been selected, the Hidatsa-proper were ready to

37. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 12-13, 75, 100, 106.

38. Robert Harry Lowie, *Notes on the Social Organization and Customs of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Crow Indians*, 18-26.

39. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 242, 245, 247.

move upstream in the spring and separate permanently from their more agricultural relatives. Some Awatixa and Awaxawi families, however, decided to abandon agriculture and move upstream, while several Hidatsa-proper families moved downstream to continue agriculture.⁴⁰

In the aftermath of the smallpox epidemic, the three groups of Hidatsa who had occupied sedentary villages in the Knife River complex ventured in different directions. The Hidatsa-proper left for a time to traverse their shared hunting territory with their Crow relatives, living for a time in the manner of the migratory tribes of the plains. The Awatixa and Awaxawi, separated for a time, but soon came together for mutual defense and helped in the founding of Fishhook village.

The planning of Fishhook was oriented by the medicine leaders of the Awatixa, Awaxawi and Nuptadi Mandan. The circular area in the middle of the village is similar to that of villages at the Knife River complex. The only village without this type of orientation was the Hidatsa-proper village of Big Hidatsa. The Hidatsa proper and remnants of the Nuitadi Mandan would settle at Fish-hook in the following years and would be joined by the Arikara in 1869.⁴¹ The Arikara managed their own affairs among themselves, though if it was a matter regarding the whole village, the Arikara would send a representative to voice the opinion of their group. The founding of Fishhook had been planned by the religious and civil leaders of Awatixa, Awaxawi Hidatsa and Nuptadi Mandan. The Hidatsa-proper had arrived later with Nuitadi Mandan, and they struggled to remain autonomous and have their own representatives.⁴²

40. Ibid, 37.

41. Gilbert L. Wilson and Bella Weitzner, *The Hidatsa Earthlodge*, 350-353.

42. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 30, 37-40.

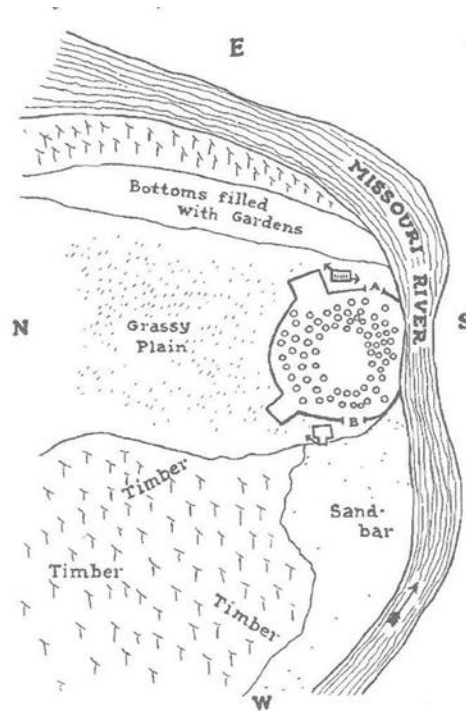


Fig. 1. Site of Like-a-Fishhook Village (Old Fort Berthold) and its Environs.

Figure 1: Site of Like-a-Fishhook Village, drawn by Wolf Chief Bowers, Wilson, Gilbert L. Hidatsa Eagle Trapping. New York: The American Museum Press, 1929, p.350.

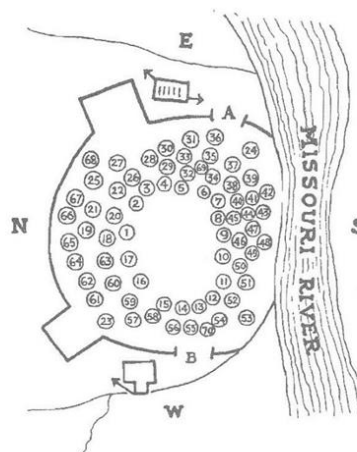


Fig. 2. Position of Lodges in Like-a-Fishhook Village. 1, Small-ankle; 2, Has-a-game-stick, one wife; 3, Has-a-game-stick, a second wife; 4, Cherry-necklace; 5, Crow-paunch; 6, Mussel-necklace; 7, Kit-fox-fat; 8, Bear-heart; 9, Feather; 10, Other-kind-of-wolf; 11, End-rock; 12, Bear-nose; 13, Missouri-river; 14, Porcupine-pemmican; 15, His-red-stone; 16, Black-panther; 17, Dried-squash; 18, Dog's-urine; 19, Red-belly; 20, Poor-wolf (or Lean-wolf); 21, Four-bears; 22, Wolf-walks-with-the-wind-at-his-back; 23, Blue-stone; 23, Reddening-a-knife; 25, Bowl; 26, White-dog; 27, Small-bull; 28, Rough-arm; 29, Hawk; 30, Wears-a-snake-coat; 31, Crow-heart; 32, Cherry-necklace, a second wife; 33, Dog-cries; 34, Full-of-honor-marks; 35, Prairie-chicken-tells-lies; 36, Big-bull; 37, Prairie-chicken-cannot-swim, one wife; 38, Prairie-chicken-cannot-swim, another wife; 39, Goose; 40, Wolf-eye; 41, Eye-has-no-water; 42, Bad-horn; 43, Frost-mouth; 44, Magic-bird; 45, Flying-eagle; 46, Bloody-mouth; 47, Wooden-lodge; 48, He-raises-all-hearts; 49, Dry-of-milk; 50, Big-black; 51, Lone-buffalo; 52, Thrust-in; 53, Skin-worn-through; 54, Old-woman-crows; 55, Butterfly; 56, Nutadokie; 57, One-horn; 58, Paints-shoulder-yellow; 59, Man-has-long-hair; 60, Blacks-his-shield; 61, Intestines (or Guts); 62, Man-smells-bad; 63, Little-bear; 64, Wolf-head; 65, Bull-has-spirit; 66, Seven-bears; 67, Black-horn; 68, Paints-tail-red; 69, Red-thigh; 70, Has-a-game-stick, a third wife.

Figure 2: Position of Lodges in Like-A-Fishhook Village, drawn by Wolf Chief Wilson, Gilbert L. Hidatsa Eagle Trapping. New York: The American Museum Press, 1929, p.352.

Gilbert Wilson's collaborator Wolf Chief described the establishment of Like-A-Fishhook village:

Missouri-river then owned the two skulls of the Big Birds ceremony. The shrine bundle of this ceremony was the most important in the tribe. Therefore, the medicine-men depended on Missouri-river to lead in the suggestions. They said to him, "Your gods are the strongest. What plan do you suggest?" Missouri-river rose with the two skulls, walked around in a wide circle, and returned to the starting place. "We will leave a circular open space as I have marked" he said "Thus shall we plan the village!" Addressing Big-cloud, Small-ankle's son-in-law, who lived in Small ankle's lodge, he said, "Your gods are strong. Where do you want your earthlodge?" Big-cloud answered, "Where the shrine now stands and facing west, for my gods are birds that come from the west, and also the thunders. Thus I am sure we will have an abundance of rain. I am sure we will live

here a long time and our children and our fields will thrive. Big-cloud had once see a vision of a thunderbird.”

Has-a-game-stick was next asked to select a site for his earthlodge. “You stand up,” they said. Has-a-game-stick did so and said, “My god is Sun-set woman. I wish my lodge to face the sunset. Then I think the Sun-set woman will remember me; I will pray to her and I hope she will hear me. Then the village will have abundance and enemies will not take it.”

Then the medicinemen addressed Bad-horn. “You stand up and choose a place for your earthlodge!” “My gods are the (grizzly) bears,” said Bad-Horn. “The mouths of bears’s dens always face the north. Therefore I want my lodge to open toward the north; my bear gods will remember me and I will remember them and I will wish this village to stand a long time.” What Bad-horn said of (grizzly) bears is true; they always have the mouths of their dens toward the north.

They told Missouri-river to stand up and select a place. Missouri-river took the two skulls and singing a mystery song walked around the circle he had marked out, pointing his right hand toward the center and moving in a sunwise direction. Three times he paced around the circle and the fourth time he stopped at the position of his lodge site and prayed: “My gods, you are my protectors. Protect this village and I am sure it will stand long. Also, send rains that the gardens may grow. The children will grow up strong and healthy because my shrine is in the village.” Then Missouri-river said to the other men, “This is all. Rise. The rest of you may choose lodge sites, but keep the circle open as I have marked it.”⁴³

43. Ibid, 351,353

Chapter Two: Mua-Iruckphe-Hisha-Adiish: Like-A-Fishhook Village

The Laramie Treaty of 1851 established clear land boundaries for all three tribes. This negotiation with the US Government resulted in the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara ceding large portions of their territory to neighboring tribes. Much of the land loss was the previously occupied Arikara territory along the Grand and Cannonball Rivers.⁴⁴ The Hidatsa band of Awaxawi ceded their birth place, Awaxawi Shib-bisha the Black Hills, to the stronger Lakota nation. The Hidatsa-proper ceded their birthplace at Spirit Lake to the Dakota as well. The Mandan maintained their heartland, Na-Dash-shee, or Heart River region but still remained with the Hidatsa and Arikara at Like-A-Fishhook. The Hidatsa lands that had been occupied since time immemorial, from the Awatixa territory along Metsee-Ashee, the Knife River, to the shared hunting territory of the Hidatsa-Proper and Crow people near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone were maintained. This treaty marked the beginning of the establishment of boundaries for the Three tribes and an attempt to restrict their movements.⁴⁵

The relationship with the US government took a different form after the Laramie Treaty of 1851. In return for peace on the Plains, the Mandan and Hidatsa were to be paid \$50,000 a year in goods and provisions for twenty-five years. The supplies came to Like-A-Fishhook soon after the treaty on steamboats sent up the Missouri. Wolf Chief noted:

A big steamboat came and brought a lot of freight from the government. Then the Mandans and Hidatsas had a big gathering together outside [the] village and the pile of freights was divided half to each tribe...Thus things

44. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1866, p. 172

45. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, xxv, 41.

continued about 15 years...The last steamboat came and brought provisions and a captain that built a house and started an agency.⁴⁶

This new agent acted as intermediary between the tribal leaders and the federal government. The agent was the tribes' first introduction to the government policy of "civilization." He embodied a new character of white men unlike the previous traders, trappers and military men who had come up the Missouri. He did not come to blend into the native culture and society but to transform it. The agent intended to impose rules and regulations on the tribes and there was little the native people could do since he controlled the flow of trade goods on which the Missouri people had found themselves dependent.⁴⁷

Government policymakers understood how the annuities would play into the historical native way of life. It was the hope of these officials that as Indian tribes became accustomed to these new clothes and foods, they would turn from their native ways and become like Euro-Americans.⁴⁸

The distribution of these goods was in direct conflict with the Mandan and Hidatsa understanding of goods in a historical context. Exchanging goods was a way of solidifying social ties, purchasing culture lore and ceremonial rites, as well as establishing a social hierarchy. Esteemed members of the tribe would gift their material wealth to clan relatives and neighbors as a way to show their honor, generosity and prestige. This flood of new goods to tribal members by the federal

46. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 132-133.

47. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 139-143.

48. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 133-135.

government threatened the age-old system of gift-giving and it threatened the position of prominent families. These goods were not the product of the skill of the women of a family, the bravery of young men or objects acquired through spiritual dreams. The leading men of the tribe even petitioned to be the channel through which these goods would be distributed, but agents refused to conform to tribal custom. All goods that were circulated through the annuity system circumvented the traditional gifting systems.⁴⁹

These new annuities came in twice-a-year shipments, which were sent to Fort Berthold by steamboat. Hidatsa collaborator Wolf Chief notes that it included, “much clothing, blankets of all kind, suits, dress goods and provisions.”⁵⁰

The weekly distribution to tribal members was a majority food ration that was stored at Fort Berthold. Gilbert Wilson’s collaborator Goodbird remarked:

A ration consisted of seven pounds of beef, seven pounds of flour, four ounces of coffee, one-half pound of sugar, one-half pound of soap, four ounces of salt and one pound of bacon. We Indians thought that these rations would go on being issued to us forever. ‘The government will take care of us and feed us for all times,’ we said, we thought that the government was very kind to us and would help us after the buffaloes were gone.⁵¹

49. Ibid, 121.

50. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 140.

51. Gilbert L. Wilson, *Wilson Field Report 1913*. Vol 13, 55-56.

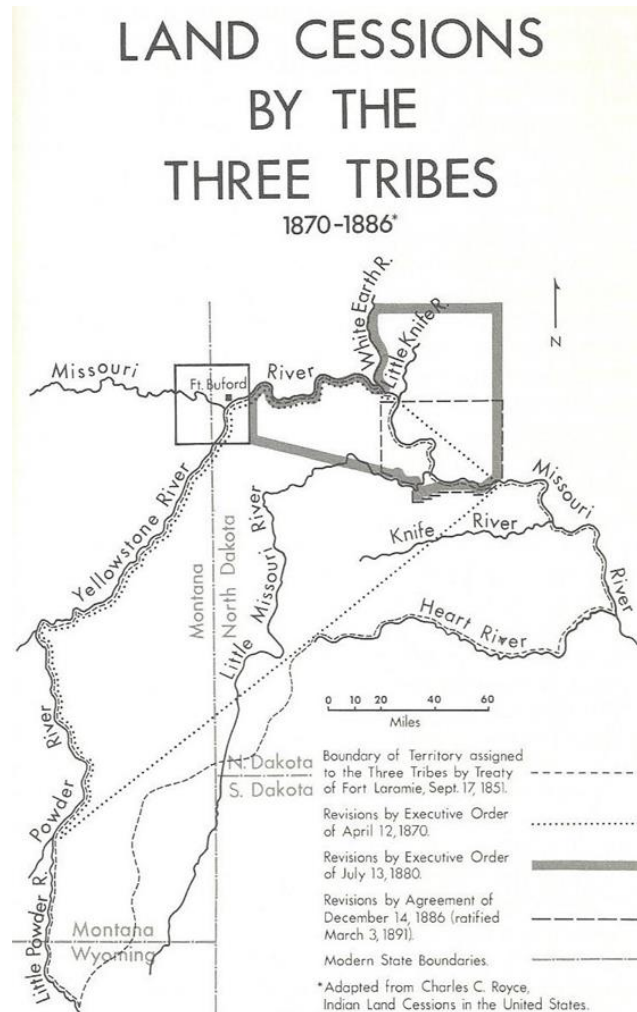


Figure 3: Map of Land Cessions by the Three Tribes Meyer, Roy M. The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1977, p113.

It became increasingly clear to the tribal populace that these rations, although owed to them through treaty and land cession, were being increasingly used by the agent to control the village dwellers. The transition to dependency eroded the earlier economic cycle of subsistence farming that had made the river tribes the epicenter of trade in the Upper-Missouri. Agent E.H. Alden issued supply checks to men at Like-A-Fishhook as

an incentive to work.⁵² It was part of the government policy that attempted to “civilize” Mandan and Hidatsa men and turn them into farmers and away from the historic war path.

A majority of the agricultural work had been conducted by the women of the tribe. Women owned both bundle rites and ceremonies that were oriented around an agricultural economy. Women sang corn songs in their gardens to help them grow. Their lives revolved around the growing of their four staple foods: Corn, Beans, Squash and Sunflowers. It was the work of women that had allowed the Mandan and Hidatsa to become successful tradesmen in the Upper-Missouri.⁵³ Women prayed to the Old-Lady-Who-Never-Dies, a cultural hero who had brought agriculture to the Hidatsa and Mandan. She was the symbol of agriculture and the harvest. Bundle owners who had rights to her bundle were believed to hold power over the gardens and were able to bring rain. The ability to bring rain was of the upmost importance to an agricultural people.⁵⁴ Migratory tribes, such as the Lakota, Crow and Chippewa would travel great distances from their hunting territories to trade for the agricultural goods stored in cache pits.⁵⁵

The cultural ways of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara were being circumvented by the introduction of these new rations and the inability of the women of the tribe to produce agricultural goods at the rate they once did. The Lakota were an ever-present danger, constantly raiding and ambushing those who strayed from the village. The

52. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 141.

53. Virginia Bergman Peters, *Women of the Earth Lodges: Tribal Life on the Plains*, 108-124, 31-48.

54. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 20, 77, 90, 344.

55. Gilbert L. Wilson, and Michael Scullin, *Uses of Plants by the Hidatsas of the Northern Plains*, 3-16.

availability of buffalo was dwindling in the region. Like migratory people of the plains, the Three Tribes considered the buffalo just as important; it was their main staple food. The buffalo was revered by the people and celebrated in a variety of ceremonial practices. With the population of the buffalo dwindling, the three tribes became dependent on government beef rations and their ceremonies ceased to have the importance that they had held at the Knife River complex.⁵⁶

The ceremonial life of the Mandan and Hidatsa revolved around the hunt, warfare and agricultural production. Sacred bundle rites were associated with bringing the buffalo close to the villages, collecting of eagle feathers for ceremonial practice, bringing rain so the gardens would grow and protecting young men when they went off to make war on their enemies. Around the region were sacred helpers who would help the people in their time of need. Every animal had a spirit and all had something different that they provided to the people. The meadowlark was the messenger who warned the Hidatsa and Mandan of a coming attack. The Eagles brought rain in the spring season and aided the women in their garden. The Eagles were also powerful wielders of thunder and lightning. They were some of the most sacred figures in Hidatsa and Mandan cosmology. The buffalo held a sacred importance economically and was a staple of the Mandan and Hidatsa. It was a creature intertwined into the oral narratives of the people.⁵⁷

The religion of the Hidatsa and Mandan revolved around the formalized bundle rites, ceremonies and personal vision quests that had been practiced for generations. The

56. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People*, 327-331.

57. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 26-40, 332, 345-346, 405.

main celebrations for the Mandan and Hidatsa were the Okipa and Naxpike, the Sundance. The Mandan Okipa was a celebration of the people's history from their formation as a tribe with various cultural narratives played out for the village dwellers. Medicine owners played the parts of various cultural heroes, acting out the people's oral tradition. It was a testament to the strength and prestige of the tribe and their continuing survival and prosperity. Young men showed their loyalty to their spiritual helpers and beings above by fasting for four days and suspending themselves from the lodge of the Okipa with the flesh from their back and chest. This four-day celebration promised the ongoing prosperity of the tribe and continued buffalo hunt.⁵⁸

Bundles were sacred items that would be wrapped in a deerskin and their origins varied, but they remained an important part of the ceremonial lives of all three groups.⁵⁹ A majority of bundles held by the Mandan were traced to the early history of the people and had been gifted to members of the tribe by cultural heroes, spiritual helpers and deities. The bundle rites were transferred from father to son among the Mandan and would require gift-giving to the elders and medicine men. Other bundles were clan and personal.⁶⁰ All the important bundles of the Mandan and Hidatsa were contained within a buffalo skull. Clan bundles could only be transferred by the clan member to another clan relative, most often a transfer from father to son within a clan. Clan bundle origins were traced to the beginnings of the clan's formation and were items associated with the function of that clan.⁶¹

58. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 111-163.

59. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 26-27.

60. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 164-166.

61. *Ibid*, 29-33.

There were seven clans total among the Hidatsa. After the smallpox epidemic in 1837, the Mandan readily adopted the Hidatsa system in place of their own. Mandan had thirteen clans but the functionality of such a clan system had ended with such a devastating population loss. Mandan clan members were transferred and adopted by the various clans of the Hidatsa, and the clan system endured. Clan relationships were important in both a social and ceremonial capacity. Clan relatives hosted one another when traveling to different villages in the Knife River complex. This practice would continue with the building of Crow-Flies-High village in 1870.⁶²

A member of the Hidatsa and Mandan was born into his/her mother's clan and could call upon these relatives when giving gifts at various ceremonies and social functions. The father's clan was most functional in death, when the father's clan would oversee the burial rights of the deceased. If individuals shared the same father's clan, they were recognized as teasing relatives. This relationship functioned both as keeping an individual humble and bringing people in the village closer together.⁶³

Personal fasting and bundle ownership was most characteristic of the Hidatsa-proper group. They even went so far as to make personal fasting and vision quests a prerequisite to formalized bundle ownership. This type of religious practice was shared with their relatives, the River Crow, and later adopted by many migratory people of the northern plains.⁶⁴

62. Robert Harry Lowie, *Notes on the Social Organization and Customs of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Crow Indians*, 18-26.

63. Alfred W Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 124-126.

64. *Ibid*, 136.

Adoption among the Hidatsa and Mandan was an important practice in solidifying friendly relationships among other tribes as well as extending the wealth and prestige of a household. This custom complicated the relationships between tribes but also served to continue trade relationships. This tradition played heavily into the oral history and cultural stories of the Mandan and Hidatsa. Cultural heroes often adopted one another to establish roles and proper protocol in interacting with one another. Adoption soon became a formalized rite and was necessary for trade among foreign tribes. Adopted relatives were not considered any less than biological or clan relatives.⁶⁵

The most important and sacred of the Hidatsa rites was the Earthnaming ceremony and corresponding bundle. This bundle dictated the territory of the Hidatsa. Its owner knew of the location of sacred buttes where the buffalo and other various spirits resided and helped the people when called upon. Before the Hidatsa delegation was sent to Fort Laramie, the representatives consulted with the Earthnaming bundle owners, Guts and Poor Wolf, who divulged where the homeland of the Hidatsa stood in relation to these sacred buttes. The epicenter of the Hidatsa spiritual life and cosmos was a place called Bah-heesh or Singing Hills.⁶⁶

An Assiniboine boy taken prisoner by the Hidatsa wore a raven skin as a necklace when captured and was named Raven Necklace. A few years later the Hidatsa went into winter camp on the Missouri above the mouth of the Little Missouri River. During the winter, the Assiniboine attacked the village and Raven Necklace undertook to protect three women of his adopted tribe. Two of the Assiniboines who attacked the women were recognized as his Assiniboine brothers. He wounded both brothers but did not kill them. After the battle it was learned that 30 young Hidatsa women were missing, among them Raven Necklace's adopted sister.

65. Ibid, 7, 48-49, 95,167.

66. Ibid, 29, 434-435.

Raven Necklace traveled northward to the Assiniboine camp, looking for the Hidatsa women, and visited with his Assiniboine family. They discussed the battle and then he inquired about his adopted sister. During the night he freed the 30 women but his sister was not among them. He killed one enemy who was out as a scout and then they traveled toward the Missouri, reaching a timbered coulee north of the spot where Fishhook village later stood. Raven Necklace was about to push over a dead tree when a voice said, "Raven Necklace, leave that tree alone, for it is my home. I have young ones here and I do not want my home destroyed."

Looking up he saw that Owl was speaking. Owl said, "This valley is known Owl valley. You can make a buffalo corral here. I will give you a ceremony called Earthnaming. When you perform the rites the other spirits will teach you the songs and what things to use with the Earth medicines. When you call them together, they will tell you the names of these high hills. There will be a great deal of memorizing."

The 30 women helped him build the buffalo corral and they took many buffaloes, tanning the hides and curing the meat. Then they went upstream and joined the others at the winter camp, waving the scalp to show that they had overcome one enemy. All this time the spirits living in the various buttes came to him in his dreams and taught him the songs and rites.

The people went back to Knife River in the spring where many people helped him put up the goods to buy the ceremony. Among the buttes represented were: Killdeer Mountains (Bah-heesh), Ghost singing butte (Noogaraaxi Ita AriiSh) the burial place of Hawk and Swallow, Crow Butte (Aarihsha eeda Pahish), Singing Butte, Heart Singing Butte, Little Heart Singing Butte, Fox Singing Butte, Rosebud Butte, White Butte, Opposite Butte and Buffalo Home Buttes. The Spirits came and established this ceremony.⁶⁷

67. Ibid, 434-435.

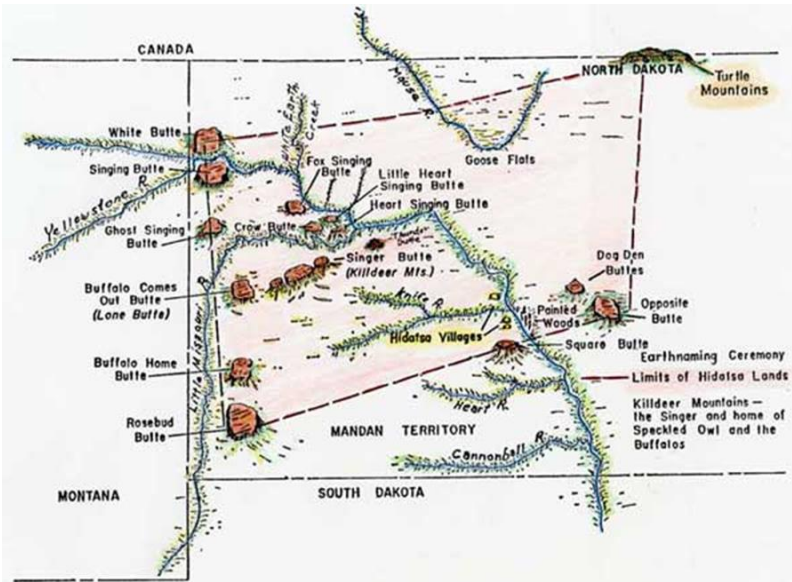


Figure 4: Map of Hidatsa Territory, drawn by Bears Arm. Bowers, Alfred W. *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, p.12

The Earthnaming bundle was received through hereditary rites from father to son. The bundle keeper acted as the peace leader of the Hidatsa and overlooked civil affairs. Bundle Keepers were held in high esteem because of their ability to bring buffalo to the village. The Earthnaming bundle owner could also pray to all the spirits who resided in the sacred buttes surrounding the Hidatsa homeland, a rite that was not afforded to all.⁶⁸

Sitting on top of Bah-heesh and looking out in all directions, one can imagine that all of the various topographic features carried with them a cultural narrative. Ghost-singing butte was the home of the hawk and swallow spirits, both important figures in the origin narrative of the Earthnaming ceremony. Embedded in the landscape around them were the stories of clan origins, bundle rights, sacred fasting journeys and skirmishes with enemies. This was Hidatsa and Mandan territory since time immemorial.⁶⁹

68. Ibid, 12. Map drawn of Hidatsa territory for Alfred Bower's study by his collaborator, Bears Arm.

69. Ibid, 434-466.

In 1861, the United States entered into the American Civil War and troops stationed on the Northern Plains were moved east, leaving many former army post abandoned. Troops were replaced by volunteers who had neither the equipment nor the will power to defend the three tribes from the Lakota. At Fort Berthold the Union had posted “Galvanized Yankees,” Confederate prisoners who preferred the high plains to a prisoner of war camp. Annuities that were to be paid to the three tribes were instead given to the Hunkpapa in an attempt to appease them.⁷⁰ The people inside Fort Berthold were starving at the time and could not tend their fields for fear of Lakota attacks. Other government supplies were rushed to gold prospectors in western Montana who were helping to finance the war in the east. The Three Tribes were starving and with their only ally, the Crow, occupied in their own territory, the situation became dire.⁷¹

The Dakota War of 1862 ignited a fire storm on the Northern Plains when earlier peace agreements were abandoned in favor of warfare throughout the region. Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people soon became prime targets for the Lakota and Dakota. For generations, the Lakota had encroached on Hidatsa and Mandan territory and had successfully broken the Arikara in the war of 1823. With the power of the river tribes dwindling after two great smallpox epidemics, the Lakota stepped in to fill the power vacuum. The Hunkpapa and Oglala were especially intent on destroying the village of Fishhook.⁷²

70. Philippe Régis de Trobriand, *Military Life in Dakota: The Journal of Philippe Régis De Trobriand*, 226-227, 299, 308-310.

71. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 106-111.

72. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 40-41

The Arikara were forced from Star Village by increased Hunkpapa and Oglala Lakota raiding, and they moved their encampment across the river, closer to Fort Berthold. Our elders retain the oral history of the events that transpired. Four Bears, the Hidatsa war chief, sent a delegation to the Arikara across the Missouri asking them to join with the Mandan and Hidatsa at Like-a-Fishhook. He offered to meet in council with the Arikara leaders to smoke the pipe and discuss plans to move all people into one village for the common defense of all three tribes. The Arikara refused the delegation, saying that they could not abandon their tobacco bundles buried in their new village. The Lakota attacked the Arikara encampment again and the Arikara repelled them with heavy losses. Again, Fours Bears sent a delegation across the river and again he was refused by the Arikara who worried for their medicine.⁷³ The Lakota attacked the Arikara at daybreak and they broke through the palisade, scattering the Arikara and routing them. The Arikara came fleeing across the river and the Hidatsa rode out to defend them. This is why the Hidatsa people call the Arikara, Uh-doo-Gud-ahg-hoo, "They Came Running." The Hunkpapa set fire to the new Arikara village but instead of forsaking the villages they sent of force of six-hundred against Like-a-Fishhook. This raid was not to steal crops, horses, or take women captives but to eradicate the three tribes.

A Lakota elder warned the young men who went out that day that he had a vision of a buffalo bull. Every time he tried to go in a direction, the buffalo bull was in his path, preventing him from going forward. He told them, "These people have strong medicine and it would be unwise to attack them." But they ignored him and in their foolishness and

73. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider. *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 326-327

overconfidence, the Lakota attacked the village with full force. The three tribes were outnumbered ten to one but fought to defend their village. Whenever the Lakota would gain ground and have the upper hand, then a buffalo bull would appear and unseat the Lakota and send their ponies into a frenzy. The three tribes finally sent the Lakota running and chased them to the Cannonball River, eighty miles south of Like-a-Fishhook. According to tribal oral history, the medicine was strong and the people believed it was the Great Spirit who saved them from annihilation that day. They suffered many losses though; my great-great-grandmother, Mada-gah-Besh (She Kills) rowed her eldest son Bah-Hee (Drum) across the Missouri to engage the Lakota and he came back slung across his horse's back.

The Three Tribes avoided disaster in that case, but the Lakota were unrelenting in their attacks. The year 1862 was a crucial for the three tribes. A region that was once unimportant to legislators in Washington suddenly took on great significance. The United States military soon reinforced the region and began building and reinforcing forts to counter Lakota aggression.⁷⁴ Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people joined the scouts at Fort Lincoln in Dakota Territory and soon were helping the United States subdue defiant Lakota tribes. They would take an active role as scouts at Fort Buford and Fort Stevenson.⁷⁵

In this period warfare intensified on the Northern Plains and created a state of panic for the River Tribes. Rarely had tribes engaged in a total war against one another. With the shrinking territory and the dwindling availability of resources, the tribes were

74. Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier: 1846-1890*, 92-98.

75. Orin Grant Libby, *The Arikara Narrative of Custer's Campaign and the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, 9-35.

pitted against one another in a contest of survival. Near termination of the Hidatsa is rarely addressed in history books, and the only evidence found of such an event occurring is from interviews with tribal members during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We also have our oral history intact and remember our times of hardship. As a people, we have endured, and the three tribes were brought closer together by these events.

At Fishhook the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara were starving. Unable to retreat to their hunting territory because of pressure from the Lakota, the Three Tribes depleted all the game in their near vicinity and became wholly dependent on government rations.⁷⁶ Wilkinson described the Indians at Fishhook as being in “a truly pitiable condition”.⁷⁷ Hungry Indians turned up at Fort Stevenson, where they were given moldy crackers and salt that had been condemned by the Commission on Sustenance. Colonel Trobriand remarked, “What is no longer fit for horses and mules is still good for the Indians, who cook it into oaten cakes which they regard as a fine windfall, so commonly does want habitually reign among them”.⁷⁸

Trobriand marveled that despite the poverty and hunger of the Three Tribes, none of the men set out to kill the post’s cattle herd. He explained, “And these poor Indians die of hunger near these cattle rather than touch them, when the flesh of a single beast would make a royal meal for a very large number of them...And these are the Indians who are

76. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 124-125.

77. *Ibid*, 118-119.

78. Philippe Régis de Trobriand, *Military Life in Dakota: The Journal of Philippe Régis De Trobriand*, 226-227, 308-310.

pillaged, plundered and oppressed without the mercy of government agents.”⁷⁹ Trobriand constantly reported on the corruption of the Indian Agents but does little to alleviate the dire situation for the tribes.

Lakota parties were constantly harassing the occupants of Fishhook. The danger for women gardening in the bottomlands soon became clear. Drought in the region crippled an already threatened corn crop and the situation became dire. Tribal traditions and practice came to a standstill as the buffalo retreated, and the populace was unable to travel to their sacred sites, seeking visions. The acquisition of eagle feathers halted, and the eagle trapping pits once accessible throughout their region became too far from the safe but confining walls of Fishhook. As desperation set in, so too did the continuing power struggle among the tribal elite and medicine leaders.

The Indian Agent at Fort Berthold, Capt. W. Clifford, wrote to the governor of the Dakota Territory on the welfare of the residents at Fishhook: “Most outrageously abused, cheated and swindled in every conceivable manner, starved, their women prostituted, insults heaped upon them until they have sunk very low indeed.”⁸⁰ The tribes were desperate to leave Fishhook but constant Lakota raiding had prevented them from separating and venturing into the hunting territory.

In the year 1869, the entire village populace of Fishhook left in a mass migration to the hunting territory of the Hidatsa-Proper near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers. There was rumor of buffalo roaming on the ranges, and leaving for

79. Ibid, 299.

80. Roy M Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 118-119

the plains would have been a welcome change from the confinement of Fishhook. Gilbert Wilson's collaborator, Buffalo-Bird-Woman, described the journey:

The people at Fishhook had seen no buffalo herds for seven years, when word was brought to them that there were buffalo far up the Missouri. "We will go and seek them," the hunters said. All the village, Hidatsa and Mandan, prepared for the hunt... Our next camp after this was near the mouth of the Yellowstone outside of Fort Buford, toward the river, where there were a great many soldiers. The soldiers came down to look at our camp and seemed to be very good people. Many of them gave coins to the children, five and ten cent pieces. We bought some flour here; before this at other camps, we had eaten deer and antelope meat and corn. We camped here three nights.⁸¹

This oral history coincides with the report of the Commanding officer at Fort Buford in the same year:

The Indians in the vicinity of this post are the Assiniboine, The Yanktonies, the Gros Ventres, The Mandan... The Gros Ventres, and Mandan are nominally on a reservation at Fort Berthold but they subsist still principally by the chase. They pay several visits every year to this post [Fort Buford] going and returning from their hunts.⁸²

In Like-A-Fishhook Village, there was a continuing power struggle between religious and civil leaders. Consolidated into one village were the remnants of the three distinct cultural groups of the Hidatsa, and two groups of the Mandan Nupta and Nuita.

The age-grade societies that had existed at the Knife River complex were still functional in the early years of Fishhook but divisions between the bands of Hidatsa had led to further fractioning in the groups. The Hidatsa-proper did not have all the formalized bundle ownership rites like the other two groups of Hidatsa, and this was seen as a break from tradition of the Awatixa and Awaxawi. These men of the Hidatsa-proper

81. Gilbert L. Wilson, *The Horse and the Dog in Hidatsa Culture*, 263, 266.

82. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 21.

were simply continuing the traditions of their forefathers. They had made personal bundle ownership and vision quests a prerequisite to the ownership of clan, tribal and society bundles. They circumvented the practice of paying for bundle rites by hosting the elders of the tribe to ask for sacred knowledge and the blessings of the bundle owners. This was in direct conflict with Awatixa and Awaxawi practice along with the formalized rites of the Mandan. One vocal representative of the opposition was a young war leader named Crow-Flies-High.⁸³

The parents of Crow-Flies-High (also known as Raven that Flies Highest or Heart) died in the smallpox epidemic of 1837. He was raised by women from his own clan, Eats-From-The-Line. His father had been the bearer of the Old-Woman-That-Never-Dies bundle but died before passing it on to his son. In Hidatsa tradition, medicine bundles were passed from father to son through ceremony. Fathers taught the bundle rights to their sons and would host feasts for the tribal elite at the completion of the apprenticeship. Since Crow-Flies-High had been too young to receive the bundle, it had been “put away” by holy men of the Hidatsa. Since he had not been raised in his own biological family’s household but had been raised by clan relatives, he was materially poor and could not afford to pay for rights to his father’s bundle, according to Hidatsa tradition. Crow-Flies-High was one of the many individuals who had suffered the loss of family members through the smallpox epidemic—in his case, his entire immediate family.⁸⁴

83. Ibid, 44, 236, 247, 251.

84. Ibid, 43.

When he came of age, Crow-Flies-High fasted. He went out like many of the young men of the Hidatsa-proper and had a vision of his father's bundle. He was criticized for fasting privately by leaders of the Awatixa and Awaxawi, who did not recognize this practice and saw it in direct conflict with their own medicine beliefs, but it was in accordance with the traditions of the Hidatsa-proper which they shared with the River Crow having lived in close proximity to them. Anthropologist Alfred Bowers related the custom communicated to him by his collaborators: "They shared the belief that personal and individual fasting was as effective in bringing good luck as fasting during the formalized rites or the purchase of tribal bundles."⁸⁵

Interpreting his vision, medicine leaders insisted that Crow-Flies-High purchase the rights to what should have been his bundle by inheritance, the Old-Woman-That-Never-Dies bundle. Flouting the authority of Awatixa and Awaxawi medicine leaders, he gathered articles that appeared to him in his vision and created a personal bundle, resulting in heightened tension among the groups of Hidatsa who had the tradition of hereditary bundle ownership. The medicine men of the opposing bands regarded this practice as taboo and a major break from traditions they were struggling to preserve.⁸⁶

In another break with traditional practice, Crow-Flies-High engaged neighboring tribes in battle without the aid of medicine men, but by his success, he distinguished himself among other warriors. Due to his success in battle and the recognition he gained as a holy man, he was able to become a major war leader. He was criticized for not holding feasts and paying medicine men richly for performing ceremonies in preparation

85. Ibid, 225.

86. Ibid, 45, 238, 240, 243.

for his war exploits. Both civil and spiritual leaders resisted Crow-Flies-High's ascendancy as a leader because he was so young and refused to pay proper dues. Crow Paunch and Poor Wolf, leaders of the Awatixa and Awaxawi, grew jealous of Crow-Flies-High and his increasing prestige and popular acceptance. Crow-Flies-High, they felt, had not properly acquired the credentials to lead war parties. The chief elders cautioned young men of the Village not to follow Crow-Flies-High to war because he had not been blessed by them and warned that going with him would bring misfortune. Despite this, young men would sneak out with Crow-Flies-High, repeatedly returning with war honors. Because of his distinguished war record, Crow-Flies-High was named a member of the Black Mouth Society, which acted as a police force maintaining order in the Village. In a time when the village of Fishhook was under virtual siege, Crow-Flies-High and his followers were able to break from the confines of the village and attack the Hunkpapa and Oglala who so plagued their relatives.⁸⁷

Crow-Flies-High became good friends with Bobtail Bull, a fellow member of the Black Mouth society and an Earthnaming bundle bearer. He was the son of Guts, the previous owner of the bundle, who had lost prestige because of his unlucky war record.⁸⁸ Guts passed the bundle to his son and put him in direct competition with the Awaxawi Earthnaming bundle bearer, Poor Wolf. Traditionally, the Earthnaming bundle bearers were hereditary leaders of the tribe, whether in civil affairs or warfare. Bobtail Bull, with popular support from within the Village, declared himself the civil leader, naming Crow-Flies-High his second in command, who was responsible for directing warfare. There was

87. Ibid, 42-45.

88. Ibid, 238-240

little the other tribal leaders could do to resist the growing authority of Bobtail Bull and Crow-Flies-High.⁸⁹

Lakota attacks on the Village of Fishhook had prevented any schism of the tribe but the pressure was mounting among the opposition leaders. The situation had continually deteriorated since 1851, and the differing beliefs in bundle ownership, relations with the federal government and a desire to be free of the constraints of Fishhook weighed heavily on the bands of Hidatsa.⁹⁰

Poor Wolf, who was of the Awaxawi group and owner of an Earthnaming Bundle, had exceeded Bobtail Bull, also an Earthnaming Bundle owner from Hidatsa, in tribal achievements and this development was resented among the Hidatsa-proper who viewed Bobtail Bull as the rightful leader. The Nuitadi Mandan preferred Poor Wolf, who owned one of the Mandan Corn Ceremony bundles. The younger men whose parents had come from Hidatsa-proper village felt their vision experiences were as important as tribal bundles, since they had more scalps and stolen horses to their record than those who stayed around the village all of the time performing ceremonies. The Hidatsa-proper complained that the young men of the Awatixa and Awaxawi just hung around the village and waited to buy rights from the elder men of the tribe without gaining honor for themselves on the warpath.

89. Ibid, 145, 77, 233, 236.

90. Ibid, 21.

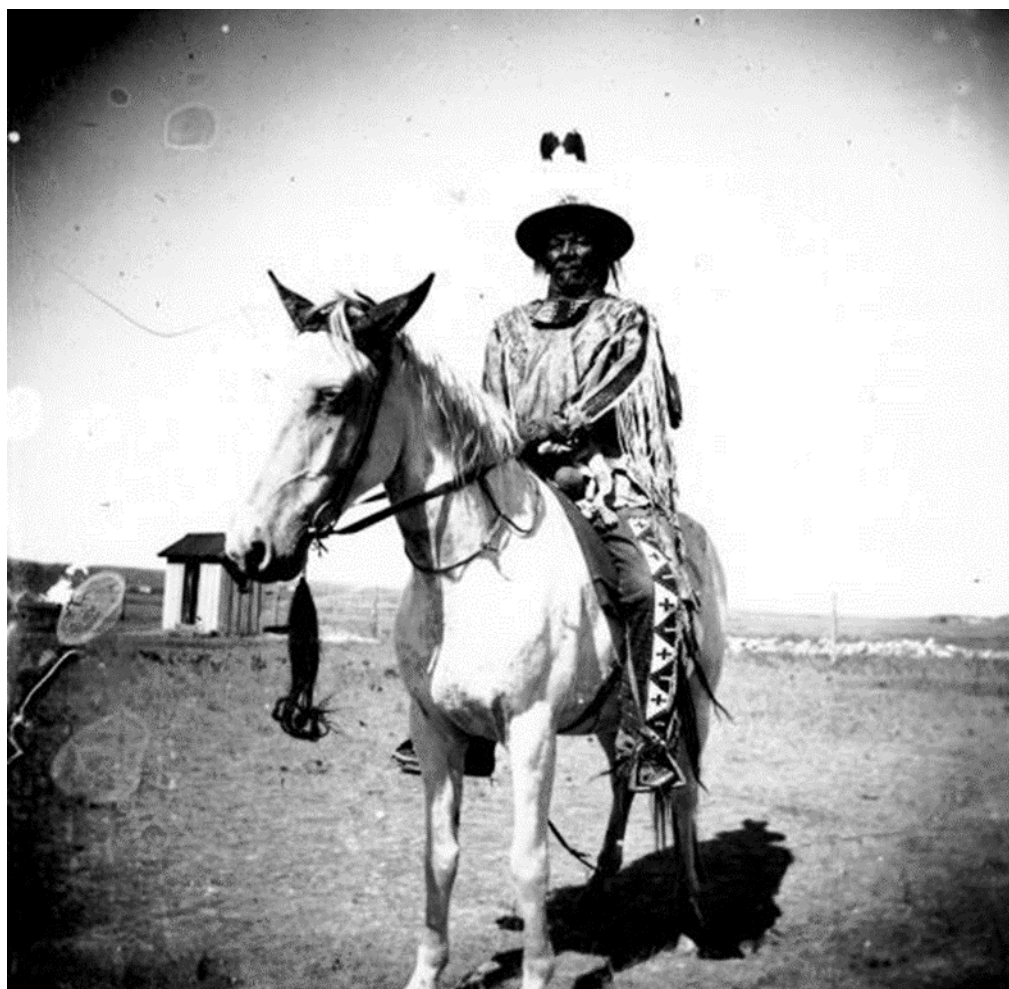


Figure 5: Photograph of Crow-Flies-High. Crow Flies High on horseback, Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. Photographer Unknown. 1910-1915 N.D. State Historical Society of North Dakota. Fort Berthold Photograph Collection 00270 (Accessed, January, 2016.) <http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/uw-ndshs/id/5740/rec/6>

Crow-Flies-High was regarded as a leader early on, and Buffalo-Bird-Woman mentions him as the leader of a hunting expedition when she was a young woman. He is also noted [to hold council meetings as hunting expeditions, uncharacteristic of a man his age but he circumvented the age-grade society with his war record.⁹¹

The consolidation at Fishhook village had caused years of intertribal bickering over leadership. The increased Lakota attacks on the populace led to the military leaders

91. Gilbert L. Wilson, *Waheenee: An Indian Girl's Story*, 128-132.

taking charge of village affairs but calling on the Earthnaming bundle owner as a spokesman. The problem was that two leaders were in possession of the Earthnaming bundle, as situation that had effectively split the military force in half, with one group declaring loyalty to Bobtail Bull and the other, to Poor Wolf.⁹²

Anthropologist Alfred Bowers stated in a communication with Archeologist Carling Malouf:

There is no reason to believe that the formation of Crow-Flies-High's band was no fortuitous circumstance in which conservatives from all segments of the Hidatsa tribe joined in a protest to an acute political situation at Fort Berthold. It is more probable that it was made up primarily of Hidatsa who had always represented an advance element in the movement up the Missouri River over the centuries. Crow-Flies-High's band may have always been a separate unit within the Hidatsa structure. The Crow Indians may have had a similar association with the Hidatsa.⁹³

In Bowers' study of the Hidatsa, he separates all subgroups of the Hidatsa and displays how all three were distinct at the Knife River complex. It is not so much that the group that followed Bobtail Bull was an "advance element," but it had been made up primarily of the descendants of those people who had occupied Big Hidatsa Village and were Hidatsa-Proper. Bowers seems to overlook this fact and views incorrectly, the band of Crow-Flies-High as a separate unit of the Hidatsa from an earlier period.

Another cause of the friction at Fishhook was the Indian agent's continual attempts at "civilizing" the population at Fishhook. This pressure would only increase as the power of the agent grew with ration distribution. The agent became one of the most

92. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 233.

93. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 18.

powerful forces at Fishhook because of his ability to distribute or withhold rations from a starving population.⁹⁴

In fact, the event that caused an already highly tense situation to boil over was Crow-Flies-High's public complaint concerning the unequal distribution of government rations from the Poor Wolf faction. Poor Wolf and Paunch were both accused of an unequal distribution of the government meat ration, favoring those members of their faction over the rest of the tribal populace. Poor Wolf as well as Paunch were viewed as leaders of the Hidatsa among their own Awatixa and Awaxawi element but also the federal government because they were willing to work with the agent. This relationship with the Indian agent was what allowed them to distribute the rations and afforded them a new status in the tribe.⁹⁵

The accusation was a very serious charge, considering the village populace at Fishhook was in a near constant state of starvation. Crow-Flies-High went to the agent, but when his formal complaint failed to see immediate results, he accused both leaders publicly of their actions. This was a very serious thing: A tribal member publicly accused the leadership and to voice his accusation to the whole village. It was also what the Awatixa and Awaxawi considered a further breakdown of the age-grade system: A younger member of the tribe was denouncing his elders. This outlandish display of unrest resulted in the planned assassination of Crow-Flies-High among the opposition element. Crow-Flies-High reportedly rode through the village declaring his displeasure with the

94. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 139-141.

95. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 40-45.

greed of the tribal leaders until he was ordered to return to his earthlodge by friend and Earthnaming bundle owner Bobtail Bull. Alfred Bowers explains:

Poor Wolf, who was the Awaxawi group and owner of an Earthnaming Bundle, had exceeded Bobtail Bull, also an Earthnaming Bundle owner from Hidatsa, in tribal achievements and this was resented, particularly since the Mandan preferred Poor Wolf because he owned one of the Mandan Corn Ceremony bundles. The younger men whose parents had come from Hidatsa village felt their vision experiences were as important as tribal bundles since they had more scalps and stolen horses to their record than those who stayed around the village all the time performing ceremonies. The disgruntled element accused the constituted leaders of unfair division of government rations. Seeing that trouble was likely to break out, Bobtail Bull organized the opposition to establish a separate village at Fort Buford where the young men served as scouts for the United States Army.⁹⁶

The official government explanation of the disagreement was not voiced until fifteen years later when Gifford wrote:

This band of Indians under the leadership of Crow-Flies-High ... separated from the band of Arickarees, Gros Ventres and Mandan of this place several years ago owing to a disagreement on the part of the Crow-Flies-High and the present Gros Ventres Chief in regard to the elevation of the former to the distinguished honor of Chieftainship. Being depleted in his ends, Crow-Flies High and his followers migrated to Fort Buford...⁹⁷

96. Gregory L Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 19.

97. *Ibid*, 20.

Chapter Three: Hushgah Adiish: Badlands Village

The Hidatsa-Proper were venturing into the heart of their hunting territory. They had for generations kept this land with their relatives, the River Crow.⁹⁸ They were frequent visitors to the old Fort Union where they traded for European goods and it was here on these plains that the Hidatsa-proper had transformed themselves into a horse culture.⁹⁹ The Hunkpapa and the Assiniboine both had claimed this territory for their own and it was in constant conflict. The land was invaluable for a people who had been present since time immemorial but also because more recently it became the last refuge of the buffalo on the Northern Plains. This was the land of the Hidatsa, and they had every intention of defending it.

Bobtail Bull agreed to lead the group of Hidatsa-proper west from Fishhook Village, to the vicinity of Fort Buford. They were joined by the Nuitadi Mandan, whose leadership and ceremonial rites had been disregarded by the Nuptadi Mandan in a way similar to the Hidatsa-Proper by the Awatixa and Awaxawi. There were also Awatixa and Awaxawi who joined the exodus. Those who grew restless at Fishhook were unhappy with their tribal leaders and longed to be free of government oversight and pressures.

Although it is characteristic of this band to maintain aversion to the federal government, documentary evidence suggests that this group may have been in part supported by the agency.

On account of the small supply of subsistence stores furnished for the use of the Indians at this point last fall, and the small number of horses or other means of transportation at their disposal, it was found necessary to devise some means of getting those that could obtain their living by hunting away from the fort to the hunting ground, as if they were left here

98. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 21.

99. Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 129, 220.

the supply of food would be exhausted long before the expiration of winter, and as a consequence, starvation must ensue. Accordingly quite a number of Indians and several tons of corn were shipped by steamer to Fort Buford, Dakota Territory, which is the nearest point to the Yellowstone River hunting ground.¹⁰⁰

In hopes of a better life and in an attempt to regain earlier cultural practice, Bobtail Bull led 120 Hidatsa-Proper and Mandan to the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. Little is known about the early years at the village Hushgah Adiish, but according to those who experienced that period, it was a thriving community. We can assume that life there must have been a welcome change to the continuous siege of Fishhook and the people's dependency on the agency. The tribe moved to the vicinity of Fort Buford at a time when the fort was under a virtual siege. Fort Buford was the military successor to the fur trading post at Fort Union, which closed in 1876.¹⁰¹ Fort operators admitted that it was the band of Crow-Flies-High that alleviated the situation there.¹⁰² The Hunkpapa had been determined to destroy the fort since its establishment in 1866. It was a direct affront to the Dakota control of the territory since it had wrestled control from the Hidatsa and Crow.¹⁰³

Although there is no surviving oral tradition about the founding and formalized orientation of Crow-Flies-High village as there was with Fishhook, it is safe to assume that the orientation would have followed similar patterns of bundle ownership. A map drawn by Adlai Stevenson or Bear-in-the-Water of Crow-Flies-High village during his

100. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.II8)*, 21.

101. Ibid, 23.

102. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 139-140.

103. Carla Kelly and State Historical Society of North Dakota. *Fort Buford: Sentinel at the Confluence*, 13-18.

visit on an eagle trapping expedition exhibits that the same care was given in the village orientation as there had been with Fishhook.¹⁰⁴ Hidatsa-proper leaders and those of the Nuitadi Mandan would have followed similar protocol in the founding of the village similar to that of their Awatixa, Awaxawi and Nuptadi counterparts.

Although the Fort did provide a trading ally as well as a military alliance with those who moved there, the region was also very significant to the Hidatsa-proper. It held a sacred and cultural significance later detailed by Rufus Stevenson, an occupant of the village:

The story which I am about to tell is not being told because I don't know any better, I know the regulations of telling these stories, such as time and season. I am telling it because it is part of the history of my forefathers.

We, Indian people, as you know, are losing our old people who know the customs of our people. I am telling this story because we are still Indian. There are some of us who are half white, however, the Indian half carries more weight than the white.

In the old days, our forefathers went out to supply themselves for the winter to come in the fall season, and one of the prize possessions were eagle feathers. Our forefathers would go to the trapping grounds in the fall to obtain them. Some people were lucky and some were not in trapping eagles. In order to change their luck or to keep it strong, the men would fast and pray all night long, praying to find some power to help them. The Indian ways were hard, especially for those who were unlucky, and they would fast and pray every night until their luck changed. They prayed and fasted so that they would be helped by some power.

Whatever I am telling is sacred and Holy, but I am telling these things because I want to explain the way of life of our forefathers to the younger generation of our people, so that they will know the stories of their forefathers.

When the men went trapping, they looked for hills that were suitable for the pits and built a camping site to stay in. When they found these location, they would get their bait and other equipment ready for the catch. After the catch is over, they would return to these sites and compare catches, some catch more, and some less. These catches were the talk of the villages when they first get back. This trip is not an ordinary one to the

104. Carling I. Malouf, *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*, 149.

people, it is sacred. In the olden days everyone had been on one of these trips or was related to someone who had gone.

Even today, I believe in these things. I want to keep my Missouri people prosperous, and these things which were involved in the eagle trappings trip were taught to the people by a Holy Spirit, through visions, through prayers, and fasting. The Spiritual Beings respected the people, because of the power and fastings, they believed that the village were kept together by the power of the Spirits who united them.

By telling these stories, I am not trying to be a big man, a chief, I am only trying to explain some of the customs of our race. If I were going to tell all of it, it would take a whole day. It would be pretty hard for me to explain everything. When they went on these camping trips, there were certain regulations which each person had to abide by. They would have to follow, step-by-step, each rule, from the picking of the campsite to the manner in which they returned to the village. Each evening, when the people returned to the campsite, the head of the hunt would tell special eagle trapping stories. In the middle of these stories the young men would go out and fast to find power. That is the reason why I want the younger people to learn to respect the ways and beliefs of the older people. When you see any of the holy grasses or other things that grow, you should show respect for them, for they were used as medicine, and made it possible for you to grow. I have been asked to tell stories and that is why I'm trying to explain to you how the trapping works.

I want all the holy things who are listening to hear while I pray to them to let me tell these things, so that the younger generation will understand. I want to be with these river people for more years yet and I hope the powers will allow me.

I want to tell the story of where my people came from and how they built a village together. Take the Mandans, they are called 'people from the mouth of the river', for that is where they came from. They started from the mouth of the river and built villages as they came up. They ended up at the south of the Heart River and they said: We will make a village here; this is good country. When the Mandans stayed there, they lived on a hill that slanted, and from that it got its name, Slant Village. While they were there the Hidatsa used to come from the Devil's Lake, out of which they were believed to have come. They only knew the area around Devil's Lake, until once the young men went out hunting, further west than they were accustomed to and found the Heart Village. They saw people on the other side of the river. When they saw these people, they hollered to each other. The Hidatsas said, "We want to cross the water" and one of the Mandan said, "I think these people want to cross the river." Before they heard this statement, they didn't know what to call these people, but after, they called them the Water-Crossing-People (Miniteree). When they made connections with the Mandan, sign language or however, they told these Mandan that they would be back in four nights. When they

said four nights, it really meant four years. The Mandans misunderstood them and they made a big feast and got ready to welcome them.

After four years, the whole Hidatsa tribe came to the river. They helped each other across and settled with the Mandans. The village was much bigger after that and covered the whole hill, that was why it was called Slant Village. After a few years, the Hidatsa moved west to the Knife River. And when they settled and made their village, the Mandans came over to visit them in their new home. After they had gone back to their own village, they decided to move in with the Hidatsa. They set up their village at the end of the Hidatsa village and theirs was called the End of the Village Dwelling. After they had lived together for a few years, the whole village was called the Five Villages.

After living there together for many years, some white settlers came to the village and started a trading post. The Indians, not knowing quite what the White men were doing, accused them of being thieves, and these white people put poison in the river to get even. But, there was one white man who thought a lot of the Indians and warned them to move from the village, back to the hills until everything was purified of the poison, then they could return. But after the white man warned them of the disease that may be caused by the poisoning, they still did not believe him. They said that they had lived there by the water for a long time and it was theirs. Instead of moving back from the river, they moved west along it. And as they settled in new places, they had sickness in their villages, known as smallpox to the white men. Each time they camped, people would die, until they hit the Little Missouri and went along it, as far west as it goes. It turns south and where it turns south, they left it and continued on west to the Yellowstone River. Finally they came to a place called Cherry Necklace fasting grounds. When they moved onto this place, after Necklace fasting, they decided to make their village there. Cherry Necklace built a sweat house there and when he had finished, he let every member of the tribe go clear through, in one door and out the other and he tapped them on the back as they went through. When they went through, each one was washed clean of smallpox. When this was done they counted the male warriors from little boys on up, that could carry weapons. The total was only fifty. After this was all over, they stayed there for a while, but then returned to the Missouri River. They settled in a spot which they called Like-A-Fishhook Village. They said, "This place will protect us from enemies." They needed this protection because there were so few of them left. They were on a peninsula which was high above the water and so they were only defenseless on one side.

After they were living there for a few years, the Arikaree came from across the river and the people invited them to join them for the Hidatsa needed to increase themselves for protection. They finally came across and joined forces with the Hidatsa and Mandan, and that was the start of the Three tribes, known as the Mandan, Ree, and Hidatsa. After living together they intermarried quite a bit because there were so few of

each of them. We were intermarried so much that the three tribes became one.

I am telling you this because if you know how small a population we were at one time, you should respect the courage which it took for us to go on. We have worked together and stayed together and now the population is up to 4000. I feel that we are only one tribe.¹⁰⁵

Rufus Stevenson indigenizes the historical narrative by sharing the place of Hidatsa people in this time period. The Hidatsa are aware of their intimate relationship with the geography and the confluence was a place that held a position of reverence. Stevenson acknowledges this new phenomenon in the passing and sharing of knowledge in indigenous contexts. This revolutionary idea related the stories for future generations and broke from the constraints of a sacred knowledge base. It was necessary for knowledge to pass in new ways in order to preserve it. He is offering an indigenous method of telling history.

Cherry Necklace, a Hidatsa-proper, had created a sweat lodge in this area of the confluence during the smallpox epidemic, and for this reason tribal members claimed to have survived. Cherry Necklace had been a recognized leader of the Hidatsa-proper and close relative of the Crow. The confluence was situated on the shared hunting territory of the Hidatsa-Proper and their relatives, the River-Crow. This is an important region in this time because it is one of the final buffalo corridors in a period when they were being hunted to extinction. Cherry Necklace's son, Long Bear, was one of Hidatsa who traveled to the new village.¹⁰⁶

105. Interpreted by Paige Baker. Gerard Baker's personal archive collection. Text digitized by JC Whitman from an original typewritten document found in Carl Whitman's personal papers, 2009.

106. Carling I. Malouf, *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*, 161.

Buffalo were essential to the historical lifeways and cultural practice of the Hidatsa as well as the Mandan. For these people to have access to buffalo would have enabled them to revitalize the buffalo-calling rites and maintain an economic self-sufficiency. Another important aspect of cultural revitalization at Fort Buford was the availability of eagle traps. Eagle Trapping was a practice shared by both the Mandan and Hidatsa. Those who were in possession of eagle trapping rites and bundles had the rights to trap eagles and acquire their precious tail feathers.¹⁰⁷ The feathers of eagles were used not only in ceremonial practice but also in the regalia of warriors and leaders to exhibit their successful war records. Eagle feathers were a highly treasured commodity and carried with them a large barter price. The cost of a good horse was three war bonnets containing a total of one hundred and eight black-tipped feathers.¹⁰⁸

107. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 206-214.

108. Gilbert L. Wilson, *Hidatsa Eagle Trapping*, 108.



Figure 6: Hidatsa Eagle Trapper. Curtis, Edward S, The Eagle Catcher. C, 1908. Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, (Accessed January 23, 2016.) <https://www.loc.gov/item/89707034>

The location of Hushgah Adiish was directly adjacent to One Cottonwood Camp, one of the original traps of the Black Bear. Eagle Trapping linked the region intricately with the history of the Hidatsa as well as the Mandan. Both tribes are believed to have purchased the rite from black and brown bears in their oral traditions. It was a cultural hero, Black Wolf, who had secured this rite and learned the appropriate songs and methods associated with trapping eagles. It was the gifts of these black bears that were held in the eagle-trapping bundles. Eagle-Trapping rites, like other bundle rights, were transferred from father to son or could be purchased from relatives. The pits of these eagle trappers were in seven principle areas, believed to be the original seven eagle-trapping pits.¹⁰⁹ Hidatsa and Mandan people held the belief that they would be more

109. See Appendix A for full Mandan and Hidatsa eagle trapping narratives.

successful on an expedition if their pits were built close to these original seven pit areas.¹¹⁰

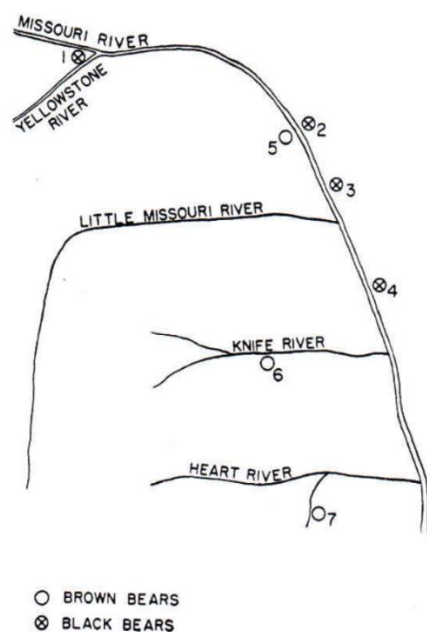


FIG. 29.—Mythological trapping camps of the Bears. 1, One Cottonwood Camp; 2, First Trapping Camp; 3, Buckbrush Trapping Camp; 4, High Butte Trapping Camp; 5, Thunder Butte Trapping Camp; 6, Sand Lodge Camp; 7, Heart River Ravine Camp.

Figure 7: Mythological trapping camps of the Bears[map]. Bowers, Alfred W. Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, p.215.

110. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 206-214.

Both origin stories of the eagle-trapping ceremony discuss the acquisition of the rite from black bears. Among the Mandan, it is a cultural hero, Black Wolf, a lazy man who stumbled upon the first lodges and traps of the black bear. He was on a hunting expedition for which he was ill suited but still learned the ceremony from the Black Bears, who adopted him as one of their own. Among the Hidatsa, the transference of the eagle-trapping rite is among the Hidatsa and Black Bear but it is the Black Bear in the narrative who learns how to trap and then sells the rite to the Hidatsa. Both of these stories have a similar theme, the sacred world that brought to the secular world with the transference through an intermediary, a cultural hero.

The original seven pit locations of the Black and Brown bears are believed to have been the holiest areas to trap eagles because the sacredness of those places lingered on into the secular time. This relates to Stevenson's distinction between telling stories in the proper season and telling history. Eagle traps were transferred through families to future generations. There is some debate as to which tribe received the rite first, but it is clear that through such close cultural exchange, all three subgroups of the Hidatsa had eagle-trapping rites as did the two of the Mandan.¹¹¹

111. Ibid, 206-214.

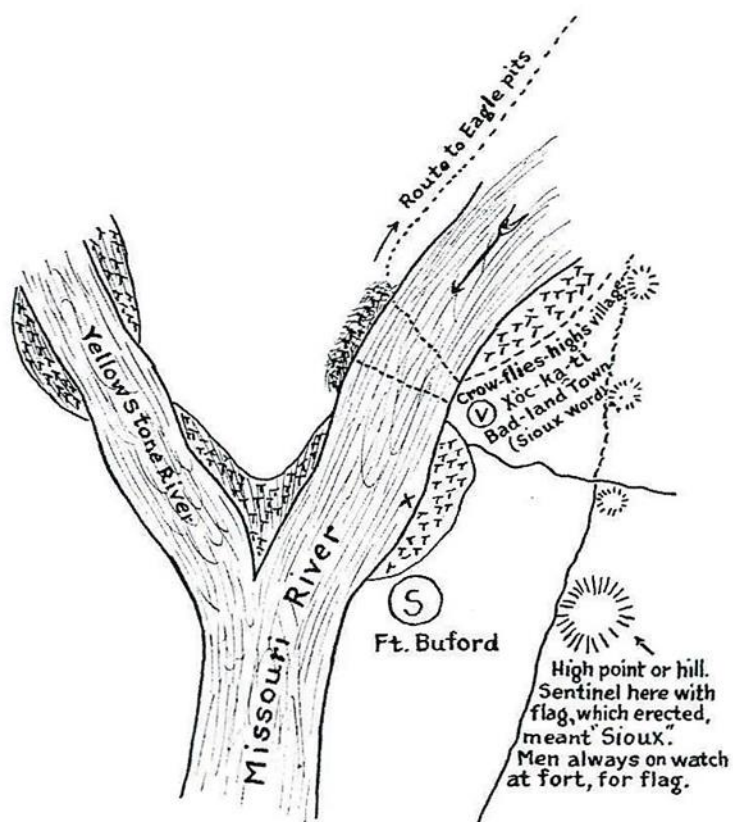


Figure 10: Map of Hushgah Adiish, drawn by Wolf Chief. *Hidatsa Eagle Trapping*. Wilson, Gilbert L. New York: The American Museum Press, 1929, p.115.

When the band settled at Hushgah Adiish, they hunted, farmed and traded with the post store at Fort Buford. Much of this early history of the band is unknown and it is fair to assume that the construction of their village, which would later be known as Hushgah Addiish or Badlands Village was arranged in a formation similar to that of Fishhook in 1845. Collaborators of Bowers and Wilson who were not Hidatsa proper denied that this band had any medicine rights. The Awatixa and Awaxawi had not recognized the medicine rights of the Hidatsa-proper, and as a result the descendants would have carried a similar view. Another possible explanation is that it was an attempt to safeguard the bundles of those people who had left to go to Buford. Hushgah Adiish and Fishhook shared kinship ties and it would be important for relatives to safeguard one

another. Through support for various missionary efforts, the government had done all they could to repress native religious practice and even went about burning the sacred bundles of the Three Tribes.¹¹² The establishment of villages were connected with the medicine rights of leaders, much like in the founding of Fishhook. Denial of medicine is linked with ideas about proper protocol for bundle creation and ownership. By the time of collaboration with anthropologists in the early twentieth century, there was complete denial from collaborators of any significant bundles rights of the Crow-Flies-High band.

This newly established village turned out to be a springboard of sorts to those who remained at Fort Berthold. It was an outlet and an opportunity to escape temporarily the government oversight on the reservation. Wilson's collaborator, Wolf Chief, used the village as a stopover to an eagle trapping expedition. All clans were represented at Crow-Flies-High village, and this allowed for clan relatives to stay with one another, as was the custom among them.

Years after the occupation of Hushgah Adiish my great-great grandfather, Black Hawk, a war leader among the Hushgah, described the importance of eagle feathers to the young men:

“I wear these feathers to show that I have struck two enemies. Once I should have struck a third enemy, but did not. I was out on a war party against the Standing Rock Sioux. It was early morning. A man came out of his cabin and we surrounded him. He looked like a half-breed and we did not know whether to take him for an Indian or a white man. ‘He wears white man’s clothes and lives in a cabin’ said some. We had no wish to kill a white man and have trouble with the Government. Others said, ‘No, he is an Indian. He lives in our enemies’ tribe and speaks to us in their language.’ It is true,’ I said, ‘He is a Lakota. Let me strike him;

112. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 332.

and I want to see if my new repeating rifle will shoot a bullet through him.”¹¹³

Anthropologist Gilbert Wilson attempted to record Blackhawk in the translation of his Hidatsa to English. The translation follows in a much different format than that of the previous statement.

We Indians not savage. We not like to kill anybody. You not think we like to go in war party, may be two months, may be year; often not have anything to eat, sleep in rain, no cover over you, may be frost, snow, cold wind on your body! We not like that; we not foolish. But what for you white man work in field? I see white men work hard with plow; sweat run down his face; he get very tired. I think he not like that. But white man turn over ground with plow, sow wheat, get much money, get rich, then he be boss. Then everybody think him big man and he marry anybody he want. We Indians not get rich because we not have money, but we like to be boss. If young man not go in war party, everybody say, ‘You bad young man. Why you not defend your tribe?’ Girls not look at him. Nobody invite him to feast. But if he go out to war party, strike many enemies, win honor marks, wear war eagle feathers in hair, then everybody say, ‘That a good young man.’ When he got to feast, everyone make him welcome; if he speak in council, everybody listen; when he go through village, all girls smile on him and he marry anyone he want!”¹¹⁴

113. Ibid, 108

114. Ibid, 108-109



Figure 11: Photograph of Black Hawk. Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. Photographer Unknown. 1910-1919 N.D. State Historical Society of North Dakota. Fort Berthold Photograph Collection 00270 (Accessed, January, 2016.)
<http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/uw-ndshs/id/5766/rec/5>

Black hawk stresses the importance of war deeds in the earthlodge society of the nineteenth century. It was important not only to obtain these honors but to display them for all to see. The male population at Hushgah Adiish were no strangers to violence. Those born at Fishhook in the 1860s had known no other life than intense violence in their homelands. The only way for men to obtain a proper status in the tribe was to go out and perform war deeds and observe the proper rites of their elders.

The village population was constantly fluctuating, but it retained a core population of about 150¹¹⁵. Wolf Chief described the village as having twenty-three earthlodges and seven log cabins.¹¹⁶ If this is the case, then it is Husgah Adiish and not Fishhook that is the last earthlodge village of the Mandan and Hidatsa. There are discrepancies among the lodge numbers and types of dwellings because the archeological data relied on what remained at the site. But we know from oral history as well as fort records that before their forced removal, the band sold their lodges to the fort for fire wood.¹¹⁷

Just as the residents of Fishhook came to stay with relatives at Hushgah Adiish so did people return to Fishhook. For example, Crow-Flies-High had reportedly visited Fort Berthold twice, in 1872 and 1875. Travel between the two villages was commonplace and demonstrated a failure on the efforts of the Indian Agent to restrict the movement of tribal people.

Small delegations from their camp the Fort Buford village visit us occasionally and receive regular rations as long as they remain.¹¹⁸

This account is at odds with the oral history of the band, who claimed that they did not accept government rations in order to retain their autonomy as a separate group and remain self-sufficient. There is the possibility that the Crow-Flies-High band accepted rations as a way to supplement their economic needs. Also, since rations were payment

115. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.I18)*, 24.

116. Gilbert L. Wilson, *Hidatsa Eagle Trapping*, 109.

117. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.I18)*, 26.

118. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.I18)*, 24.

for lands ceded, it would be prudent for the band to receive the annuities that were owed to them. It is important to note that even with the acceptance of occasional rations, the group was not wholly dependent on these goods.

Religious and social rites of the Mandan and Hidatsa were also evolving. The grass dance was purchased from the Santee Sioux in the 1870s by residents in Fishhook. It replaced an earlier practice, described by Wolf Chief's father as the Hot Kettle dance. It is unclear whether this dance was lost as a result of the 1837 smallpox epidemic or if it was simply replaced by the purchase of this grass dance. The Father of Goodbird, Son of a Star, was one of thirty people at Fishhook who negotiated the purchase. As a result, they set up the Big Grass Dance Society. For the Hidatsa and Mandan, the dance symbolized the life of the warrior. The name of the dance comes from the practice of young warriors who kept dried grass in their belts for tinder.¹¹⁹

The version of the grass dance carried out at Fishhook resembled that of the dwindling age societies. Different members carried separate duties. The most important of these members was the drum keeper, the most honored member of the group, Goodbird described him:

His lodge was open day and night to the members of the society. He had always used a pile of tobacco and two pipes ready for use; and he bought coal oil for a lamp to burn at night. And there was food in his house always for any who wanted to eat. The drum hung on the wall of the keeper's lodge. And it was a rule of the society, that if at a dance any one struck it except for the keeper, he must give the society a feast as a forfeit.¹²⁰

119. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 159-161.

120. *Ibid*, 159-160.

During this same period, the grass dance was purchased by the residents at Hushgah Adiish. It either came from residents of Fishhook or directly from the Santee. The drum keeper at Hushgah Adiish was a man by the name of Driver.¹²¹ It is unclear if he was the drum keeper in the early years at Buford, but he was in that position in the latter years. The Grass Dance ritual was a way for warriors to pantomime their war achievements and symbolized how they had received their wounds. After they gave a speech of their exploits, they hosted a feast for the community. Gift-giving was an essential part of both Buford and Berthold despite the external missionary pressures at Berthold to hoard one's wealth.¹²²

The Grass Dance society rite could have been purchased at Berthold from relatives at Hushgah Adiish, where it was then also purchased by the Crow tribe. Purchase of a ritual or ceremony from an enemy tribe was not uncommon and is a recurring theme of curiosity to onlookers from the outside. About the same time that the Hidatsa purchased the Grass Dance from the Santee, so, too, did they go to war against the Hunkpapa Lakota. Wolf Chief noted, "The government had given a big reservation to the Sioux at Standing Rock, but the land was not theirs but ours, and for that reason we went down and fought the Sioux".¹²³

This Grass Dance society illustrates some of the cross-cultural exchanges among tribes that complicated relationships but also maintained some of the historical trade routes. Along with the purchase of this practice were adoptions of foreign tribal members

121. Frances Densmore, *Mandan and Hidatsa Music*, 2, 132.

122. Carling I. Malouf, *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*, 150-151.

123. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 264.

to solidify ties. With a connection through kinship, the two groups would be more likely to trade in the future and less likely to make war on one another.

The Crow-Flies-High band had no shortage of enemies while at Hushgah Adiish. The Lakota were constantly campaigning against them in the early years. Wolf Chief described one such episode:

After Hard Horn had left for Fort Buford to get the hides and food for the ceremony, I heard how he was getting along. He hunted and got many buffaloes that winter. Because he had promised to put up a sweat lodge ceremony, the enemies came to his camp and stole horses. The young men went out to get the horses back. Hard Horn went along. He thought he might kill some of the enemies since he had promised his gods that he would give the ceremony. They found the enemies hidden in the brush where they were eating, and surrounded them. One of the enemies ran toward Two Bulls and shot Two Bulls through the chest, killing him. Bird Bear was shot through the skin but did not fall; he shot the enemy and Hard Horn's brother struck coup on him. Even though one of our men was killed, the three enemies were killed. Hard Horn and his brothers succeeded in striking coups; it showed that his luck was good because he had made this promise even though one man was killed.¹²⁴

Although this warfare caused many hardships on the occupants at the confluence, it also allowed for men to gain war honors and distinguish themselves among their people. The social roles for men were village protectors and warriors. They proved their medicine power by campaigning against enemies. The Hunkpapa Lakota referred to the Crow-Flies-High Band as Hushgah, meaning “badlands people” or “people around the hills”.¹²⁵ The Crow-Flies-High band readily adopted and appropriated this name for themselves. Soon, the villagers at Fishhook were referring to their kin in the west as Hushgahs. The village they built was referred to as Hushgah Adiish or Badlands Lodge.

124. Ibid, 366.

125. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*,

Back at Fishhook Village, it had become increasingly clear to the tribal populace that rations, although owed to them through treaty and land cession, were being increasingly used by the agent to control the village dwellers. The transition to dependency eroded the earlier economic cycle of subsistence farming which had made the river tribes the epicenter of trade in the Upper-Missouri. Agent E. H. Alden issued supply checks to men at Like-A-Fishhook as an incentive to work.



Figure 12: Photograph of annuity distribution, 1870. Gilman, Carolyn., Schneider, Mary Jane. The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987, p.140.

The most important of the women's societies was the Goose Society. It is believed to have originated from the Mandan and later adopted by the Hidatsa. Although anthropologists categorized the Mandan and Hidatsa as a matrilineal society, in reality

both men and women had a complementary role. To offer assistance with the Goose Society rites, men who were bundle owners of the Old-Lady-Who-Never-Dies and Good-Furred-Robe bundle attended these ceremonies.

Despite any good intentions in the Indian office, fraud among Indian agents was rampant not only at Fort Berthold but throughout the plains region. The job as Indian agent was a political appointment, and those living at isolated forts or agencies could rule over their Indian charges with near impunity and little governmental oversight. By 1880, there were so many cases of fraud and mismanagement in the Office of Indian Affairs that new agents were required to take a loyalty oath, stating that they would carry out orders received from the president, secretary of the interior and commissioner of Indian Affairs.¹²⁶ They also were required to post a \$20,000 bond that would be refunded at retirement if there was no evidence of mismanagement during the agent's term of service.¹²⁷



Figure 13: Photograph of Like-A-Fishhook Village, 1870. Gilman, Carolyn., Schneider, Mary Jane. The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987, p.9.

126. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 141.

127. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 117.

During this time at Like-A-Fishhook, external forces were threatening to change further the lifeways of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara. Charles C. Hall was the first permanent missionary to arrive at the Fort Berthold Reservation. He came from mission to the Santee Sioux in 1876, and greeted the people with the Dakota greeting, “Ho-washte.” He was a Congregational minister, and like that of many missionaries his goal was to civilize the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara people and Christianize them. He would go around the village shaking the hands of the occupants with greetings of “Ho-washte” and inviting them to Sunday services. Those who joined the congregation were jokingly called Ho-washtes by the villagers.¹²⁸

These Christian missionaries were seeking converts not only to Christianity but to the Euro-American way of life, which they viewed as superior to that of the tribes. They promoted Christian charity and generosity but also stressed the Protestant work ethic and ideas about thrift and self-reliance. This was in direct contradiction to Native ideas of community and gift-giving. Charles Hall reported the efforts of his charges:

to change from the old way of dependence on the common food supply to the individual family taking care of their own needs. They still have generosity, which comes from the old [customs]. And this fact hinders the progress of many...They are generous people and they feel their responsibility toward their brother. But the mission work is gradually overcoming this.¹²⁹

The Halls had no Christian converts in the first eleven years they were on the reservation. Many tribal members felt the price of Christianity was too high and did not wish to abandon their ceremonial practice and Indian ways: “The Indian men must cut off

128. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 144.

129. *Ibid*, 144.

their long braids. The religious dances must cease. The beautiful ceremonial robes must be burned. This confused and saddened many of the people”¹³⁰

The pressure to convert increased on the reservation and coincided with the government’s effort to “civilize” the American Indian. One of Reverend Hall’s first converts was Poor Wolf, one of the chiefs at Fishhook who expressed his own anguish at joining the new religion. He explained:

“What will I have to do to belong to God’s people? Many years ago I gave up fighting, stealing horses and other bad deeds. I have obeyed the white man’s laws as far as I have known them...Must I give up the old Indian songs, which are a part of the life of our people? Must I give up the charms that I have carried on my body for years and which I believe have defended me from demons? My body is tattooed to show my allegiance to various spirits. How can I cut these out of my flesh?”¹³¹

Poor Wolf was heavily criticized by both Crow-Flies-High and Crows Breast for abandoning his father’s helpers and burning his medicine in exchange for Christianity. Poor Wolf did suffer a series of misfortunes after his conversion: His team of horses was struck and killed by lightning while in a field, and his wife became ill and soon passed away. This was a sign among those who kept to the old ways, not to abandon their medicine.¹³²

130. Ibid, 145.

131. Ibid, 145.

132. Ibid, 328-332



Figure 14: Photograph of Crow's Breast and Lean Wolf, 1870. Morrow, Stanley J. Crow's Breast (first chief) and Lean Wolf (second chief), Gros Ventres. Accessed through Beinecke Digital Collections.

<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3435843> (Accessed January 23, 2016.)

In the same year as the migration of the Crow-Flies-High band of Hushgah, so, too, came the first attempt at formal education on Fort Berthold. H. L. Clifford opened the first day school on the reservation with twenty-two girls and sixteen boys. He used food as an incentive to get students to attend classes. During the late nineteenth century,

schools became the main tools of acculturation not only at Fort Berthold but throughout Indian country. The school closed when children were needed back at home and another school would not open until Agent Tappen was replaced by Sperry.¹³³

Sperry became the agent at Fort Berthold in 1873, and established a school. The missionary effort was strengthened as well when Reverend Hall, the Ho-washte, opened a “mission house” in 1876. In October 1878, Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the architect of the Carlisle Industrial School and Indian boarding school system, visited the Fort Berthold reservation and convinced nine boys and three girls to attend Carlisle. Many of the tribal leaders at Fishhook favored sending their children to schools, a stark contrast to the villagers at Hushgah Adiish. While the children of Fishhook were beginning to attend school, the children of the Hushgah were being reinforced with ideas about their ceremonial practice, hunting rights, and importance of the Native cultural values.¹³⁴

The Indian Bureau was determined to break up the communal lifestyle and village structure that existed at Like-A-Fishhook village. It was the policy of the Indian office to make Indians into individual land owners. Soon, the villagers were forced from their homes at Fishhook and moved to communities according to kinship ties and tribal affiliation. The Arikara established “camps” or small communities in the eastern part of the reservation, near the agency and mission. The Mandan moved south and west of the Missouri. The Hidatsa moved to several different camps but mostly at the later agency town of Elbowoods. To discourage anyone from returning to Fishhook, Indian Agent Gifford had the lodges and log cabins destroyed as people vacated the village. To those

133. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 116.

134. *Ibid*, 123-125.

who had been raised at Fishhook, this was a difficult move. Years later, women would venture off on their own and weep at the recollection of their home there.¹³⁵

135. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 181-183, 222-223.

Chapter Four: Hushgah eeda Aashiish: The Stream of the Badlands Band

Although the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 had not formally created a land boundary for the Three Tribes, it proved an early attempt to establish tribal territorial claim. The treaty was the first effort by the federal government to establish land boundaries for respective Indian tribes. Like many Indian people during this period, the Three Tribes began to feel encroachment on their territory when whites cut lumber in the river bottoms and sell it to passing steamboats. The chiefs reported this to the Major General Winfield Hancock, who then relayed it to Captain S. A. Wainright at Fort Stevenson, providing the federal government with an incentive to establish a formal reservation¹³⁶. This new reservation included most of the land from the Fort Laramie treaty, with the exception of the Heart River region, contested by the Indians at Fort Peck. In one swift motion of a pen, the Mandan lost their Heartland, the epicenter of their cultural life. There was little the Mandan could do because they were heavily dependent on the federal government and constantly under attack by the Dakota Hunkpapa by this period. The reservation land base was approved by Executive Order on April 12, 1870.¹³⁷

The Northern Pacific Railroad moved to dispossess further the three tribes of territory with land speculation on the southern reaches of the reservation. The president of the railroad, Frederick Billings, wrote to Brigadier General Alfred Terry, inquiring about the land use with regards to the Three Tribes' use of the land, to which Terry replied, that it was for the purpose of hunting. Unsatisfied with this, Billings wrote to

136. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 112.

137. Carolyn Gilman and Mary Jane Schneider, *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family 1840-1920*, 181,182.

Colonel Nelson Miles, who replied that in reality the territory was held by the Lakota and the Three Tribes did not “occupy it or require it and never have.”¹³⁸ On July 13, 1880, the Three Tribes were dispossessed of over half the territory outlined in 1870. With another stroke of the pen, The Hidatsa lost Ba-heesh, the Singing Hills and the epicenter of their cultural geography. Land was also taken from the tribe to establish a Northern Pacific right-of-way that included lands around the confluence. This land sale was never discussed with any tribal members and completely ignored the Crow-Flies-High band, who were then occupying this territory.

Fort Berthold was plagued by the incompetence of its Indian agents. These posts were filled only for an average of two years and the agents became an impersonal force who held the power of annuity distribution for a starving people. A single agent was responsible for the entire upper section of the Missouri. This changed in 1867, with the appointment of Mahlon Wilkinson to Fort Berthold. Wilkinson was incompetent and negligent. He offered frequent excuses to the Indian Office as to why he was absent from his post and practiced ration distribution to appease hostile Sioux, using annuities that were meant for the people at Fishhook. He allowed the Northwest Fur Company to sell annuity goods to the Devils Lake Lakota and had made a healthy profit from it. As a result, the Arikara leader, White Shield, refused to sign the annuity receipt. Wilkinson told White Shield, “My friend, you are getting too old; age troubles your brain and you talk and act like an old fool.” To which White Shield replied: “I am old it is true; but not so old as not to see things as they are. And even if, as you say, I were only an old fool, I

138. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 112-113.

would prefer a hundred times to be an honest red fool than a stealing white rascal like you.”¹³⁹

Government authority transitioned from the military to full management by the Indian office. The year 1867 also marked the end of military occupancy at Fort Berthold, and regular troops transferred to the nearby Fort Stevenson. Residents of Like-A-Fishhook complained about both the soldiers and the agents to Catholic Jesuit father De Smet. They told of how the government agents had deceived them and robbed them while the soldiers mistreated them in terrible ways. Starving women from the village went to the Fort in the hope of finding any scrap food and they would be driven off with scalding water.¹⁴⁰

Agent Wilkinson was a casualty of the new policy designed to replace former agents by army officers. Captain Walter Clifford replaced Wilkinson in 1869, and he is the only agent in the historical record that the Three Tribes view favorably. Unfortunately, he was replaced by Captain Walter Clifford, and the trajectory of mismanagement continued into the mid-1880s. During these years agents sold annuities to traders for profit and made promises to the village populace they could not keep. Religious leaders who became agents further cemented the desire to “civilize” the Three Tribes, adding stress to their deteriorating conditions.¹⁴¹

The Crow-Flies-High band was a thorn in the side of government officials who had been pushing for assimilation since the first agency was established at Fishhook. The people were a living demonstration that a body of Indians could reside outside of the

139. Ibid, 122.

140. Ibid, 122-125.

141. Ibid, 123-126.

agency system and thrive. They practiced the rites of their forefathers. They attempted to revitalize the earlier lifeways that had been experienced in the Knife River complex at Big Hidatsa. They were also intricately tied into the army's operations at the Fort.

Fort Buford became the supply post for troops campaigning into the Yellowstone country. In the year 1876, the role of the Fort dramatically changed when it became the staging point for the army's summer campaign against the Lakota and Cheyenne camped in the Bighorn valley. This was the beginning of the Great Sioux War, which would dramatically change the lifeways of the migratory people of the Plains and the Hushgahs. With the defeat of the Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of the Greasy Grass, fort activity increased remarkably. Hushgahs were actively involved at the fort and hired as couriers. Fort Buford was the jumping-off point for bringing in defiant migratory people such as Sitting Bull's band. Much as the Hushgah had done in 1870, Sitting Bull entered the region, desperate to find Buffalo to feed his people. He managed to escape capture for several years but in 1881, he finally surrendered at Fort Buford. The once-proud enemies of the Crow-Flies-High band came in starving and freezing. One can only imagine that the Hushgahs must have felt they would be next.¹⁴²

Sitting Bull's surrender brought a final end to the Dakota Conflict. By 1881, there were no buffalo to be found in either Canada or the United States. The Hushgah transitioned their subsistence economy by boosting agricultural production. Since they no longer had to contend with any threat of Lakota/Dakota incursions, Hidatsa and Mandan women could increase the size of their gardens without fear of raiding. They also began

142. Carla Kelly and State Historical Society of North Dakota. *Fort Buford: Sentinel at the Confluence*, 63-67.

hunting deer rather than Buffalo, and they traded hides with a trader named Ed Hall. All the so-called “Free Roaming” tribes were on reservations except for the Band of Crow-Flies-High. They were the remaining holdouts, clinging to their old ways of life and resisting the reservation life.¹⁴³

The height of Hushgah Adiish was in the early years of the 1880s, the village population peak. Hushgah Adiish was an outlet for people living at Fishhook. Because of missionary and federal pressures, ceremonial leaders made the migration to the last holdout of ceremonial life. Prior to the migration, ceremonies were held largely at Fishhook village. Medicines leaders from Buford would return to aid in the ceremonies of the people in Fishhook and vice versa. Wolf Chief remembered: “When the green grass began to turn green in the spring, Hard Horn and all the brothers and sisters came back from Fort Buford in bullboats, bring the things he was to use. He selected the large lodge occupied by Never-Eats-Marrow, where the Mandan Okipa was held, for his ceremony and paid the family for its use.” My great-great-grandfather, Does-Not-Eat-Marrow, is one of the later occupants listed at Fort Buford.¹⁴⁴ Medicine leaders moved their families to Hushgah Adiish in order to practice earlier rites a distance from the agents and missionaries influence. Although no oral history among the occupants details the rites they performed while at the confluence, it is safe to assume that they must have engaged an active ceremonial life. The people had a ready buffalo supply in the early years, and the ability to count coup and make war on traditional enemies. With the arrival of

143. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 140; Fox, Gregory L. *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 27.

144. Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 366.

medicine leaders such as Short Bull, Knife, and Does-Not-Eat-Marrow, they would have continued on these practices. There was a full assault on Native religion in this period. Missionaries went into homes, seize medicine bundles and burn them outside the lodges. Villagers described this practice as a blow on equal footing with the death of a loved one. Many medicine leaders at Fishhook sold their bundles in hopes of preserving them. Often they went to large museums. In the 1880s, the government banned self-marring, an integral part of fasting, eagle trapping, and the Sun Dance. With the profound changes at Fishhook, Hushgah Adiish became the new cultural epicenter of the Mandan and Hidatsa.

In the late summer of 1884, the Hushgah were pressured by the military into leaving Hushgah Adiish, their home of fourteen years, not a long occupation but an important one. They traveled to a new village site far away from the agency and mission at Elbowoods, slightly off the northwestern edge of the reservation. It was located on the western bank of the Missouri, near the mouth of the Little Knife River.¹⁴⁵ The band had avoided missionization and ration distribution, and it returned to a site that had been earlier utilized by the band's women for gardens for a number of years while they still lived in Hushgah Adiish. Hushgah Adiish had been a winter encampment and a staging point for western buffalo expeditions and an eagle trapping area.

White ranchers had begun to run cattle in the Little Missouri badlands south of the reservation and a prominent member of the Montana Stockgrowers Association, Marquis de Mores, accused the Crow-Flies-High band of killing cattle owned by him and other ranchers. The accusation was brought to the attention of Agent Gifford but it was found

145. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site* (32W.118), 26-27;

that the accusations were unfounded and Crow-Flies-High eloquently defended his people.¹⁴⁶

The Crow-Flies High band wished to remain in their village away from the reservation, where they could raise cattle and horses. They resisted any relocation up to the year 1893 but, they had exhausted the region of game and with the incoming settlers and cattlemen, they saw their former hunting territory shrinking rapidly. Having refused rations and any government intervention for twenty years, the band did not want to return to the lifestyle of dependency that they had witnessed at Like-A-Fishhook in the 1860s. Crow-Flies-High compared the reservation life to living “like hogs in a pen, waiting for what you may throw at us.”¹⁴⁷

The descendant of Short Bull, John Yellowwolf, described the people’s reluctance to return to the reservation and abandon the life they had built at Hushgah Adiish. He states:

To back up a little bit before we came to Elbowoods, we were down in a place called Fort Stevenson. That was east of Elbowoods, southeast of Garrison, no, that would be east of where Garrison Dam is now. That’s where, around in that area, is where Fort Stevenson used to be. From there a group left the government quarters or reservation at that time and went up north around the Williston area and there was a group of Indians up there, part of our people that’s how far we got where this story stops. At that time, this group up at Williston area had several invitations from this Fort Stevenson army camp to back to their agency which it was called at the time. This group up at Williston their leader was Crow Flies High. One of the things that this group up northwest told them that the people in Fort Stevenson were getting commodities or government issue of clothing, food, and that’s what they were told, this Crow Flies High group. So Crow Flies High gathered his group and told them what was waiting for them when they got back, that they would get government

146. Ibid, 173-175.

147. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 141

issue of clothing, commodities and what not, but the people didn't go for it.¹⁴⁸



Figure 15: Photograph of Short Bull. Photographer unknown. Photo retrieved from Gerard Baker's personal collection.

My great-great-grandfather Blackhawk (1848-1910), the son of Short Bull, became the war chief for Crow-Flies-High when Bobtail Bull relinquished his position. No clear historical record of Bobtail Bull's involvement in the Hushgah Band survives; after Blackhawk became war chief, Bobtail Bull passed into obscurity.¹⁴⁹

148. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 34.

149. Carling I. Malouf, *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*, 152-153. Photograph is from Gerard Baker's personal archive collection.

By the year 1884, they were asked to leave Fort Buford by the commander at the post. The village had reached its maximum population of 240 members in the year 1883 and it was becoming increasingly difficult to feed such a large population with the scarcity of game. Crow-Flies-High began negotiations with Agent Gifford with the goal of moving from Buford to the mouth of the Little Knife River. Whistler noted that the band sold their houses for firewood prior to their departure from the area. The village was dismantled and used for firewood by those operating the fort, leaving behind an archeological picture of the site much different than what it had been.¹⁵⁰

The Hushgahs moved to what archeologists named “The Crow-Flies-High Village.”¹⁵¹ It was located on the south bank of the Missouri River one mile northwest of the reservation boundary on unsurveyed government land. The temporary village consisted of twenty-five cabins and one earthlodge. The earthlodge was built in a centralized location by the members of the Grass Dance Society. This is the archeological site unearthed by Carling Malouf. Much like Hushgah Adiish, the village was still engaged in hunting but deer had replaced the buffalo. Mandan occupants placed fish traps in the river and women made large gardens on the river bottom.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 140. Whistler was the Colonel posted at Fort Buford.

¹⁵¹. Carling I. Malouf, *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*, 137-140; Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 27.

¹⁵². *Ibid*, 148-151.

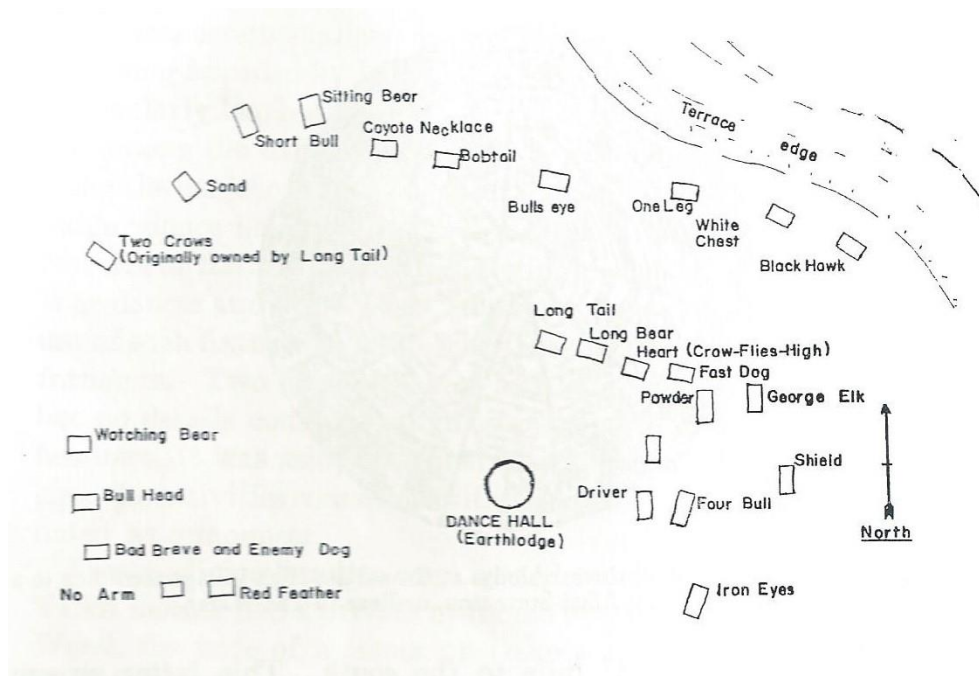


Figure 16: Map of village on Little Knife River. Malouf, Carling I. *Crow-Flies-High (32MZ1), a Historic Hidatsa Village in the Garrison Reservoir Area, North Dakota*, p.149.

The band traded deer skins with a man named Ed Hall, whose trading post was located on the bank of White Earth Creek, upstream from the village.¹⁵³

Despite living in close proximity to the reservation, the Hushgah continued to resist assimilation efforts. For example, In the year 1890, The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions erected a school to serve the Crow-Flies-High band and others, but the band refused to send their children there.¹⁵⁴

The Indian agents as well as the military had for years discussed what to do with the Crow-Flies-High band. The military desired to remove the band to the Crow Agency, where they would be settled on allotments. The military viewed this band related more

153. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.118)*, 27.

154. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 27.

closely to the Crow than the Mandan and Hidatsa at Fort Berthold. The agency made numerous proposals to send all Three Tribes to Indian Territory.¹⁵⁵

After 1884, there were attempts made by the Indian agents to return the band to the reservation. Negotiations were carried on intermittently with Crow-Flies-High appearing to concede but always managing to sidestep the return. In the *Annual Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*. Agent C. W. Darling reported

There is a party of about 100 Gros Ventres (seceders) who have spent all of their time for several years at and around Fort Buford, Dakota one hundred and thirty-five miles above this agency on the Missouri River. They are considered as belonging here, though they receive no supplies of goods from the agency except as small parties visit it.¹⁵⁶

The agent at Buford in later years reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

The number of Indians now on the roll is 1,292...If you include the Gros Ventres living in the vicinity of Fort Buford who properly belong here, the number would be increased by 1400.¹⁵⁷

In 1891 Captain Rodman reported that the band wished to remain at the Little Knife River location. Late in the year of 1891, 164 members refused to move. As a result, Captain Clapp refused to issue rations to any associated with the band. He further attempted to coerce them by refusing to issue rations to family members at Fort Berthold. The band stalled until 1894, when they were returned under military escort. Clapp reported that this band was going to be a hindrance to civilization on the reservation.¹⁵⁸

155. Ibid,27, 165-170; Gregory L Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.I18)*, 156-157; Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 140-141.

156. Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W.I18)*, 35.

157. Ibid,36.

158. Roy M. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas and Arikaras*, 141.

In April 1894, with snow on the ground, the Hushgah Band were force-marched by a United States Army detachment, under the command of Captain H. S. Foster, to the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. According to Foster, “I only heard good concerning them from the people along the route. Crow-Flies-High in particular manifested the most friendly and kindly spirit, and I believe him worthy of every consistent consideration.”¹⁵⁹

Captain Foster’s account is in stark contrast to those who remembered the march fifty years later.

“Those soldiers were cruel, they did not remember all our men who had gone out and been scouts for them. My mother said I should never forget the way those cruel soldiers drove us in the village through the snow.”¹⁶⁰

The account of this forced march has been communicated to me through my mother Mary Baker (“Ee-bith-de-gah-wee-ah,” Eagle Woman) and my grandmother, Cora Youngbird (“Mazuetza,” Sweet Grass). My mother’s grandfathers, Joseph Youngbird and James Baker, were both on this forced march to the Reservation when they were ages twenty and five, respectively. They recalled soldiers coming to escort the Hushgah Band back to the Reservation, even though these people had made the mouth of the Little Missouri River their home.

Upon their arrival at Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, the Hushgah Band refused to take up any allotments. They had no desire to break up the communalism that had kept them alive through their years at the confluence. They were finally assigned allotments, scattered throughout the already established districts of the reservation. However, the old group managed to unite once more and most took up residence in the Shell Creek area of

159. Ibid,141-142.

160. Ibid, 141.

the reservation. Here they were criticized as backwards and a hindrance to the progress of the tribe by both government officials and their village supporters. Their relatives who had taken up schooling and Christianity saw them as primitive, undoubtedly adopting ideas about Indian inferiority.

The land base that the Hushgah returned to was a complete transformation from the one they had left. They lived on a fraction of the lands the tribe had held after the Laramie Treaty of 1851. They lost much of their former cultural lands and could no longer travel to many of their medicine places. Their neighbors and relatives had adopted many foreign ways because of the ongoing pressure they had experienced while on the reservation. The world had transformed, and they had to adapt quickly to survive.

Both Crow-Flies-High and Blackhawk had two wives, Blackhawk's wives were Mink and Different Cherries. U.S. government officials informed Blackhawk that he would be allowed to keep only one of his two wives. This demand contradicted a longstanding custom among the Hidatsa and Mandan, where prominent men who could offer abundant resources would take as wives, sisters from the same family. Blackhawk opposed the order. In order to appease government officials, he ostensibly kept Different Cherries as his only wife but actually continued to support his wife Mink. His son, my great-grandfather Joseph Youngbird, assumed his position as one of the leaders after the Hushgah Band returned to the reservation.

In his account of life among the Hidatsa, Bowers recounts the state of poverty of the descendants of the Hushgah Band living in the Shell Creek District. Like most bands of resistance Indians, the Hushgah Band were the most impoverished people on the Reservation. They were poor materially, having marched to the reservation with all they

could carry. But in a way, they were some of the richest Native people remaining in Native North America because they were able to hold onto their cultural practice. Due to their long isolation, members of the Hushgah Band came to be known as keepers of culture and tradition among the Hidatsa people. They remained the conservative element in acculturation and maintained their ideas about Native traditions and practices into the twentieth century. They kept the Grass Dance Society alive in a time when Native dance was being constantly repressed. Their society became known as the Antelope Society. They were named this because the Hushgah did what they wanted and went where they pleased, much like the antelope on the prairie.

Conclusion:

The Mandan and Hidatsa were the epicenter of trade in the Upper-Missouri. They held a firm grasp on the rivers and surrounding prairies. They had a ceremonial life that was immersed in their history and geography. Their religion grounded them to the place they lived and their culture was an expression of their values. They were once a great and numerous people. When smallpox came, it shattered an earlier lifeway but did not extinguish it. Our history does not end in the 1840s. We do not cease to be relevant to the overall narrative because we lose our trade capabilities or a large portion of our territory. The Mandan and Hidatsa endured and flourished. They experienced a revitalization of culture and ceremonial lifeways.

For twenty-four years the Hushgah band of Hidatsa and Mandan lived outside the confines of the reservation. They rejected the reservation lifestyle and took to the plains in hope of a new beginning. They witnessed the waning years of the buffalo hunt, practiced their rites to eagle trapping, won war honors against their enemies and remained self-sufficient. Their village became a cultural hub in an era when Native religion and ceremonial practice was in a constant state of attack by missionaries and Indian agents. They were the keepers of culture and the singers of traditional songs. They held with them a belief in the revitalization of their old Indian ways. The village they established was an escape for the residents at Fishhook Village, an attempt to live in the manner of their ancestors. Through the early years of missionization, acculturation and assimilation, they were the keepers of culture. They became a waystation between a new era of reservation life and the old times of freedom on the plains.

Who are we and where do we come from? Like Maud-zay-dah-new-wud-zish, the Lone Man, we contemplate our existence and place in this world. For the Hidatsa-Proper and Mandan, this world is the northern plains along the Missouri River and its tributaries. It was the epicenter to everything they knew and held sacred. They were a part of the region and the region a part of them. In every direction, the hills had a narrative, the buttes held a story, the rivers kept a memory. On the windswept plains they retained their way of life by upholding their culture as their most-sacred possession. Like many stories of Native America, the story of the Crow-Flies-High band is the story of survival and adaptation.

Buffalo-Bird-Woman reflected:

I am an old woman now. The buffaloes and black-tail deer are gone, and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I ever lived them.

My son grew up in the white man's school. He can read books, and he owns cattle and has a farm. He is a leader among our Hidatsa people, helping teach them to follow the white man's road.

He is kind to me. We no longer live in an earth lodge, but in a house with chimneys; and my son's wife cooks by a stove.

But for me, I cannot forget the old ways.

Often in the summers I rise at daybreak and steal out to the cornfields; and as I hoe the corn I sing to it, as we did when I was young. No one cares for corn songs now.

Sometimes at evening I sit, looking out at the big Missouri. The sun sets, and dusk steals over the water. In the shadows I seem again to see our Indian village, with smoke curling upward from the earth lodges; and in the river's roar I hear the yells of the warriors, the laughter of little children as of old. It is but an old woman's dream. Again I see but shadows and hear only the roar of the river; and tears come into my eyes. Our Indian life, I know, is gone forever.¹⁶¹

Her reflection on these earlier times exhibit the nostalgia of older generations. My grandmother, Mazuetza, would comment on this nostalgia and say how our lives have

161. Gilbert L. Wilson, *Waheenee: An Indian Girl's Story*, 175-176.

changed but we have still retain our culture and traditions. It survived because the people chose to keep it. To view culture and tradition not as a commodity but as a necessity to who we are. The Hushgah are not just historical and fit into this time period, but many descendants identify with this group. Our strength has been in our adaptability to our circumstances but also retaining an idea of our history and culture. We are proud to be Hushgah and the ancestors who retained our culture.

When we pass on, we travel to the old village. This nostalgic idea of village life among our relatives. I was raised to believe that we should live our lives in such a manner that when we reach the old village, we would have lived in such a way that our ancestors would be honored to count us among them. When we pass on, we take four days to travel to this place. On the fourth day, our father's clan buries us and sends on our spirit. And when they ready our spirit to take our final journey into the village, our relatives sing an honor song for us. It is a song that has been sung for generations that says in our lives here, we were proud to be Nook-bah-gah, proud to be one of the people and proud of our traditional ways. The Hushgahs were part of this idea. They were a people proud of their culture and traditions.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Eagle Trapping narrative related by Ben Benson¹⁶²

In the beginning all the Black Bears were said to be living on the north side of the earth, while on the south side were the small Brown Bears. All the bears on the left side of the river, from the Yellowstone and beyond, even down to Knife River, belonged to the Black Bears. The Brown Bears on the right side of the river would know ahead of time the main trails of the eagles and get there ahead of the others from the left bank. There was a place called One Cottonwood Camp, where the Yellowstone runs into the Missouri River. When the birds traveled they always came through that country. At that time the Black Bears were catching young eagles there and would eat them, for they were tender. They caught only that kind, for they liked to eat them.

A long time ago the Mandan did not know how to catch eagles or how to do many of the things they learned to do in the later years. In one of the villages there was a young man by the name of Black Wolf who never went far from home. He preferred to stay around camp where he could dress up in fine clothes and call on all the girls. The active young men who were always out away from the village hunting and fighting the tribe's enemies did not like the way he spent his time with the girls of the village. One night he was sitting under the corn scaffold in front of a young woman's lodge when an old man, one of the announcers of the village, went from house to house calling the names of the best runners of the tribe. He asked that these young men go out in search of buffalo herds.

The chief said, "Sit down there beside your wives. Now get out one of those robes for him to wear." The girls brought out a beautiful white buffalo robe decorated on the skin side with porcupine quills. Black Wolf thanked them and said, "I am going to take this robe to my other father," and they knew then that he had some other spirits, holy people, somewhere.

Black Wolf walked out on top of the lodge and called, "My fathers, the Northern Black Bears, I have a beautiful white robe here for your bedding." His own father heard all about it and went to his own lodge where he inquired of his wife the number of tanned buffalo robes on hand. The wife thought there were thirty-five or forty. The husband said that he wished to use them. He also asked his parents to furnish robes until, in all, he had a pile of nearly one hundred robes. He invited his son to eat with him and invited all the important men of the village to be there. Then he

162. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 216-223.

presented all the robes to the young son, who went onto the roof and offered them to his “spirit” father.

Before leaving Black Bear’s lodge, the little boy had said, “When you come back, bring a large corn ball and a wooden medicine pipe filled with tobacco. When you get to the door keep crying, “I want a stuffed animal.” Keep crying until he lets you in. Let your wife go in first and stand before him. If he says you get a stuffed animal, that is all there is to it.”

Black Wolf said to the oldest wife, “We go to the north in four days.” When the four days were up, they started. The wife had a corn ball made of four-in-one [corn, beans, sunflowers, and squash]. He carried the corn ball, and he had a pipe. When he reached the highest hill, he gathered four bunches of sage, giving two to his wife and keeping two for himself. He told her the way she should step from one to the other four time. Soon they were before the grass lodge, but the sun was setting so they had traveled all day.

He began to cry, “I want a stuffed animal,” repeating it over and over until the old man inside said, “You shall have it.” Black Wolf sent his wife on ahead, telling her to stand before the old man. He carried in the corn ball and pipe and put them before the old man.

The old man said, “Sit down. We will fix this up some time later.” Black Wolf sat beside the one he called younger brother. The old man took the corn ball and pipe. The pipe was passed around three times before it was lit. Then the little boy said he would light it and eat the corn ball. He broke the corn ball in two, kept half and gave the other half to the others.

They smoked and food was cooked for them to eat. At last the old man said, “You will go home in the morning. After four days at home you must make a sweat lodge of sticks with a pit in the center. Have rocks and water at hand and find an old teepee cover to go over the framework of sticks. All those you see in this lodge will be there. I will tell you what you have to do in the future. Have plenty of food ready. The robes were prepared must be hung beside the sweat lodge. Before you go home, take your little brother over to the hills and tickle him; he will go to sleep at once. You want a stuffed animal. After the boy has gone to sleep, skin out his hind legs and pull the skin over his head but do not cut any of the bones. Stuff the skin and bring it here and put it before me where I am sitting.”

He did as he was told. Then he returned to his own village with his wife and the little boy.

Black Wolf began to prepare for Old Black Bear’s visit. Everything was in readiness just as directed by the Bears. Just before the Bears started, Coyote, First Creator, came to the Bears and said, “My friends, you aren’t going to leave me, are you? You can’t leave without me. I will be the one to teach the people how to kill the enemy and strike the coups.”

“All right, we’ll take you and you can walk with our son’s [Black Wolf’s] wives.

A large grizzly bear came and said, “Why can’t I go along? I can do a lot of work in those ceremonies. I will be the waiter.”

Then the buffalo bull came and said, “I will let buffaloes out around the village. I must go because I will be useful to the people over there.”

The snakes, the eagles, and the coyote wanted to go, and old Black Bear agreed to take them all.

Just before starting, Old Black Bear said, “We will fix up something for our son, Black Wolf.” All were ready to go and just outside the grass lodge Old Black Bear sang a song, and all the others knew it and sang it with him. While they were singing the song, Black Wolf far away heard it and knew that the Old Black Bears were coming.

It didn’t take them long to get there. They stopped once and sang the song, went a ways farther and sang again, then still further and sang. The fourth time they were at the village. Black Wolf saw them and came out with his wife, carrying a large corn ball and the wooden pipe filled with tobacco. He put the corn ball and pipe before the Old Black Bear. Old Black Bear picked up the corn ball and pipe, and returned it to Black Wolf. The party presented Black Wolf with a buffalo skull, and his wife walked with it toward their lodge, the others walking behind. She also had a stuffed animal which represented the little brother, and Old Black Bear gave them two green poles representing the Snakes which always went with the birds.

Meanwhile the sweat lodge was ready and the rocks heated. Old Black Bear said, “My son, watch something we do. We are tired so we must go in the sweat.” The animals put the rocks in and went inside. Black Wolf, from the outside, listened to the song the animals sang in the sweat, which was the sweat-lodge song.

Those Are Medicine Take of Them A Part
Take of Them They are Holy

All this meant that Black Wolf and Little Boy had trapped for eagles, and the little boy had hurt his hand. Black Wolf had taken the medicine of the Black Medicine to cure the wounds. It was of this root that the animals were singing.

When they finished the song, they prayed to the animals, and, after pouring water on themselves, came out and said to Black Wolf, “You see how we fixed the sweat lodge; when we come out, we are not tired. You can doctor and cure people with the sweat-lodge baths.” This was the first sweat lodge and this story tells how the first sweat lodge came to the Mandan.

After the animals came out of the sweat lodge, they sat down in a circle while Old Black Bear instructed Black Wolf in the technique of catching eagles. Old Black Bear said, “My son can catch eagles from the top of the lodge or he can go out on the prairies. It is better to go out on

the prairies there dig a hole on the side or top of the hill. The hole should be so deep that when you sit up your head will just reach the top of the pit. The pit must be long enough to allow you to stretch out in, and you must face to the west where the eagles come from in the fall of the year.” Then Old Black Bear gave Black Wolf the ritual to follow and the restrictions necessary to catch the birds. First Creator was there and taught Black Wolf how to use the Little Black Bear when on the hunt or warpath.

Old Black Bear gave Black Wolf instructions in the use of fish traps, how the corral of willows should be tied, which baits to use, and the depth in the water to set the trap. When making the trap, Little Black [stuffed animal] should be kept at home in a bed of robes and calicoes with his face to the fireplace. He taught the use of the snare for corralling buffaloes.

When Old Black Bear was giving the instructions to Black Wolf, he had said, “Take good care of your little brother; give him corn balls and corn mush every day.”

One day Black Wolf’s mother-in-law, while making mush for Little Black Bear, burned her hands and was very angry. She said, “Every day I cook for that sharp-nosed bear, and what good does it do?” Little Black Bear heard and cried because the remarks hurt his feelings. She brought the mush to Little Black Bear and set it before him. In the evening Black Wolf came in and walked right up to his little brother. He saw the tears in his younger brother’s eyes and noticed that the little fellow had not eaten the food, and Little Black Bear replied, “I am angry. Mother-in-law is cross with me and she called me ‘sharp nose.’ I am going back to my people, the Black Bear people.”

Black Wolf sat down beside him and begged him to stay. “I don’t say bad things about you, neither do my wives, so why be angry.” Little Black Bear said, “I will stay if you stay all night with me without sleeping.” Black Wolf agreed to the proposition and asked his wives to make up a big feast, for he was inviting all the old men to spend the night with him and Little Black Bear. The old people were glad to sit up all night with him. They sat up all night until nearly morning, when Little Black Bear extended the night another night’s length. Still they stayed until it was nearly morning when Little Black Bear extended the night another night’s length. He did this three times. The fourth time the old people all lay sleeping except Black Wolf who was sitting up sleeping by that time. Seeing that his brother was sleeping, Little Black Bear got up, and quietly returned home to the Black Bears in the north. Black Wolf woke up and saw his brother in his usual place and spoke to him. Little Black Bear did not answer, for his soul or spirit had gone back even though the body remained there.

When Little Black Bear reached home, his father asked why he had returned, and Little Black Bear replied, “She called me names. I left my body and the power is still there with it. They can still use me in catching he eagles, but will not have to live where I am insulted.”

Hidatsa Eagle-Trapping narrative related by Wolf Chief¹⁶³

In the beginning all the Black Bears were said to be living on the north side of the earth, while on the south side were the small Brown Bear. All the bears on the left side of the river, from the Yellowstone and beyond, even down to Knife River, belonged to the Black Bears. The Brown Bears on the right side of the river would know ahead of time the main trails of the eagles and get there ahead of the others from the left bank. There was a place called One Cottonwood Camp, where the Yellowstone runs into the Missouri River. When the birds traveled, they always came through that country. At that time the Black Bears were catching young eagles and would eat them, for they were tender. They caught only that kind, for they liked to eat them.

Brown Bear called himself the real spirit. He had so much power that he did not have to use bait but could use his own hands to catch them. He selected his place called Thunder Butte where he went to catch the birds by hand. One of the Brown Bears had selected his place, at the Knife River south of the town of Golden Valley where the brush runs to the east, to catch only black tips. He called it Sand Lodge from the sand stones around there. There was another place at Heart River called Heart River Ravine.

On the north side the Black Bears had a trapping place called First Trapping Camp, the highest butte below Sanish. (The Hidatsa Four Bears used to trap there.) Another place was at Buckbrush Trapping Camp, the flat west of the Mormon church just below Shell Creek. They put up a trap there, for they saw many eagles. The pits were in the hills at The Slides and to the north; another trapping place was below Fishhook to the east on the high banks, and they called it High Butte Trapping Camp. We do not know if it was Sandy Lodge, Thunder Butte, or One Cottonwood that he had his lodge close to.

Brown Bear had a lodge in one of these places. He lost his little boy from one of these lodges. When he disappeared, they looked all over. It was foggy, and they could not see a long distance or find his tracks. After a while they learned that the eagles had hidden the boy. They went far away looking, but it was foggy all the time until they came to the Heart River east of Dickinson. There they thought they had discovered his tracks along the edge of the creek. They thought according to the tracks that he was going to Rainy Buttes; sometimes the tracks were plain, other times dim. The father thought when he came near the butte that they were hiding his son inside the butte. Before reaching the Rainy Buttes, the tracks disappeared. They looked all the way around the butte, and his father said, "I am sure that they must have taken him inside of the butte; I am going to cut this butte down and destroy it. I am going to use my snare to put

163. Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, 223-227.

around it and pull the butte to pieces to see if we can find him inside.”
 Before putting the snare around the butte, he sang a holy song:
 Acira Acira goes toward the butte.
 Then he put the snare (calls it medicine robe) around the butte and pulled.
 He caved off about half of the butte, but he did not have the power to tear
 it down. Still he did not find him in there. He went all over the earth
 looking for a year, and the parents were very sad. They came back to their
 camp, and the fog still covered the sky, sometimes clearing slightly and
 then darkening. All this time Brown Bear’s boy was trying to clear the
 fog, but he was not powerful enough. At this time the young one was
 alone. The fog was beginning to break, and he could see far. The leaves
 were taking on color; he remembered his father and mother and knew that
 it was at this time of the year that his father and mother had a good time.
 He remembered himself and could tell where he came from, and he knew
 the location of the camp. As soon as he recognized the place, he sang his
 holy song while walking toward his home.

I will come to that hill.
 Then he came to the hill. He saw timber ahead. He sang:
 I will reach that big timber.
 He was there at once. He saw the Missouri River.
 I will reach the river.
 He was there. Then he saw a road and he sang:
 I will reach that road
 He was there. Then he saw the door and he sang:
 I will reach that door.
 He was there at once.

The father was feeling sad about it and was going to do something
 to the birds for punishment. He went to Eagle Butte and went into a pit.
 He would spit on his hand and hold it out. The eagles would come down,
 and he would seize them. Sometimes the eagles would fly up nearly to the
 sky, and then he would hold up his holy snare. Then the eagles would
 come right down. After that all these places were good ones to catch
 eagles. The Brown Bears would have a lodge. One with a son had more
 power than the others. He would take out his snare, and that would draw
 the birds down. They would say that he was the most powerful one in the
 lodge.

They were supposed to leave for the traps when the leaves began to
 change color. The Brown Bears had one lodge. The youngest one wanted
 to go tapping, but the father said that he was too young. Still he insisted
 that he knew the holy songs and their order, so he went out without the
 father’s permission. He was in a hole watching the eagles, and while there
 he went to sleep. The eagles picked him up and took him away. All that
 time on the eagles’ side there was a leader who said when he picked up the
 little bear, “He is sleeping down there; this is a good chance to take him

away.” This bird was a large one, the largest of the birds. The little brown bear’s father wondered what had become of him and went out the second day to see. When he came to the pit, he saw from the signs that the birds had picked him up and carried him into the sky. When he learned this, he came back and was very sad. He thought that he would catch the leader among the birds, the one who caused his son to be caught. He made plans at once to catch the bird. At his lodge there were five of these small brown bears, but one was the leader.

The old one said, “I will try to catch that big bird, for that is the one who took the boy above. I think that bird will come along about tomorrow or the next day.” The leader of the Brown Bears stood up and said, “That big bird had started already,” and when he went outside he sang:

Where I have my trap it is already; catch the one I want to

He said to the older bears, “I will go out, repeating that song on the way to the pit. When I bring that bird in, you repeat that song, take the bird, and throw it to the head of the lodge as hard as you can.” He went into the hole, and soon the big bird was in the air above him. He pretended to be asleep, and the bird came down. He picked up his snare and sang the holy songs. When the bird was near, he threw his snare up, caught the bird by the legs, and pulled him down. When he caught the bird, it began to beg saying, “Save my life.”

Brown Bear said, “No, I am going to sit on you,” meaning that he was going to eat the bird. He tired the bird up and carried him home. When he was near the lodge he cried:

I am trapping. I am holy. I know I am.
I am trapping. I have caught him.
I am trapping. Now I know I am going to eat.

He came back to the lodge and gave the bird to the others to seize and throw as hard as they could to the head of the lodge. All that time the bird was begging them not to kill him, but the bear who caught the bird said, “Do not listen to him but get that clay pot ready to put in the fire for we will eat him.”

The bears were singing while they were getting ready. They sang:
Put that pot in the fire. We will eat.

Take your knife out and get ready. We will eat.

The bird said, “I will be with you and be a great help in the future. I know that you have much power, for I can see that. If you have my help, you will have still more power.”

They sang:

Acira [Small Brown Bear] your pot moves toward the fire.
Your pot is already in the fire.

Acira your pot is boiling.
 Acira your pot is nearly red hot.
 Acira your pot is boiling.

At this time, they decided to sing their holy song which was the Knife Song to be used when butchering the bird. The bird jumped up again and promised that he would be among them forever and that he would help them along, too, and give them success in the future in whatever they should do. They asked of the bird, "How would you help us?"

The bird said, "You will call me Acira's sister; you will pick up any kind of stick and tie a small offering of leather to it, and that will be myself. When you want to get more eagles, you can say a prayer to me, and you will succeed, for I am the leader of the birds. This will go on forever, but, if you kill me, you will eat me up and then you will have nothing to show. It may be in the future that some woman will have monthlies. The eagles are afraid of them then. There is a holy song that I will teach you, and if there is such a woman you will have it to protect you. Then you will not have back lick but get good luck from the eagles." They said to the bird, "We will take your word for it, but we will give you orders that in the future you must not claw the humans, for if you do, we will get rid of you and kill all of you.

They said among themselves, "We will let the bird go, but we will put the snare around its neck with black medicine. If he disobeys what we say, having the snare around his neck, we have a chance to sit on him [eat him] again."

The leader said to the bird, "Remember what we said and do not scratch any of the people, for we are going to trap for a long time in the future. We do not want any trouble from you."

This was kept up for a long time until a few years ago. Even in my time if some woman with monthlies did not report it, the tail feathers were poor.

On the east side at The Slides, in the brush, there were about thirty black bears who had trapping places on the high hill from Lucky Mound to Joe Black Bear's home today. They had another pit in the buckbrush west of where the church is, for they saw many eagle feathers around there and thought it would be a good thing to have a trap. This pit near the buckbrush was the best of all, and they decided that, instead of using them all, they would take turns at the pit; the first man caught five eagles and the others stayed on the butte to watch. Eagles would fly over there and then disappear into the ground. Five birds would be caught there nearly every day. They used the pit for two years and hardly used the others at all, for so few birds were caught in them. They came back to try the trap again and did not succeed so they thought that someone had spoiled it. All the time they were cleansing themselves, and then they went to the pit to see what was the matter. They cleaned out the pit and found a flint knife in it and knew at once that the bad luck was caused by the knife. The leader

cleaned the pit, but still they did not succeed. They watched the sky and saw that the birds would go into the air and fly around, then go away. Even the others were having bad luck. After catching only two eagles, they decided to give up. They do not know who spoiled the pit. After all the acira had gone away the people had pits there, and they never learned why the pit was not as good as formerly.

I never heard what became of the little boy.

Big Cloud's bundle was not complete; Iron Eyes had a main one. Small Ankles would put up the lodge and put the snake pole in with the buffalo skull. He tied it into place with dark sage. I heard that one Old-Lady-Who-Never-Dies' Grandson came in so they had the two poles brought in at that time to represent the snake.

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