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## THE SISSETON-WAHPETON DAKOTA INDIAN FUR TRADES, 1820-1838

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**Abstract.** A variety of strategies were used by Europeans and American Indians in the Sisseton-Wahpeton regional fur trades, 1820-1838, as a result of the changing environment and available local natural resources. A comparison of the Big Woods riverine Sisseton-Wahpeton and the Prairie Lake patterns bears this out. Patterns of periodicity and seasonality were present. There was a difference between the essential and non-essential fur goods and the percentage used in the Indian society. Changes are evident in the switch from a predominantly beaver fur trade to a muskrat fur trade and then to a robe trade in this period. After eighteen years of contact with the Euro-American colonial economic system, the Dakotas were becoming enmeshed into the Euro-American economic system.

### INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the Dakota Indian fur trade between 1820 and 1838 and its relationship with other indigenous and Euro-American fur trades mainly involving the Hudson's Bay Company, the Northwest Company, the American Fur Company and the Columbia Fur Company, in the cultural region occupied by the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota Indians. This geographic area consists mainly of central and southern Minnesota, northern Iowa and the Dakotas. The Euro-American fur trade in the cultural research area of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota Indians between 1820 and 1838 reflected in many ways their annual subsistence strategies.

The cultural adaptation which took place among the Santee Dakota before 1820 was basically an amalgamation of bands coopted into subtribes. In 1820 the Sissetons were divided into two subtribes: the Northern and the Southern. The Wahpetons were divided into two subtribes: the Eastern and the Western.

By 1820 the traditional Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakotas were living in bimodal villages and were exploiting the flora and fauna of the transitional prairie-forest ecotone along the Minnesota River Valley. During the expedition of Major Stephen H. Long, Joseph Renville, Jr., reported the total demography of the Sisseton-Wahpeton as 410 lodges, 950 warriors, and 3,400 persons (Keating 1959).

The Wahpeton and Sisseton summer villages from the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers towards Big Stone Lake in 1820 were:

1. Eastern Wahpeton village at Little Rapids or *Inyan-ce-ya-ka-ton-we* under Red Eagle or Red Quillon;
2. Eastern Wahpeton village at Belle Plaine, village of the shinney or lacrosse game, Wahpetons of the round prairie;
3. Eastern Wahpeton village at LeSueur, village of the alder thickets;
4. Eastern Wahpeton village at Jordan, village of the sand prairie

or sand creek, *Wi-ya-ka-o-ti*;

5. Southern Sisseton village at Traverse des Sioux, village under Red Iron;
6. Southern Sisseton village at Swan Lake under Sleepy Eye, (Durand 1981);
7. Southern Sisseton village at mouth of Little Rock Creek;
8. Western Wahpeton village at Lac qui Parle, moved from Little Rapids village after 1800;
9. Western Wahpeton village at Big Stone Lake under Yellow Spider and Southern Sisseton village at Big Stone Lake under Sweet Corn, (Seymour 1823);
10. Northern Sisseton village on Lake Traverse;
11. Five Lodges or *tizaptan* band of Sissetons, at Two Woods Lake in South Dakota, (Riggs 1839).

The Dakota, like the Lakota believed in the circle as their most important symbol of life (Geertz 1973). Their annual subsistence cycles were also circular (Fig. 1).

The annual seasonal cycle of the Eastern Wahpetons along the lower Minnesota River Valley in 1820 began in the large circular summer villages on grassy areas surrounded by gallery forests. Nearby women planted fields of corn, beans and squash. In the spring the women gathered maple sugar at *chanhassen* or the place of the grey bark trees. In the spring, summer and fall men fished for rock sturgeon in the Minnesota River. Men hunted elk, bear, and deer in the Big Woods, spring, summer and fall. Muskrat and beaver were trapped and speared in the rivers and lakes, spring and fall. In the fall, women gathered wild rice in the local lakes and sloughs especially *psin mde* west of Shakopee and around Lake Minnetonka. In the winter they lived in large villages in the river bottoms or in the Big Woods area west of the Minnesota River.

The Southern Sissetons in the Lower Minnesota River Valley in 1820 lived in large circular villages on the island and shores of Swan Lake. The men hunted muskrat and beaver in the prairies of southern Minnesota. The women gathered wild rice, roots, forbs, wild fowl eggs, turtle and frogs in the wet prairies of southern Minnesota. The men fished for rock sturgeon in the Minnesota River and Rock Creek. They wintered in large circular villages in the Blue Earth River Valley.

The Western Wahpetons lived at Lac qui Parle in large circular summer and winter villages. Mary Riggs' map (1837) showed the summer village of *tipitankas* in the prairie area on the second terrace was surrounded by gallery forests on the south and protected by the bluffs of the river on the northern side. The winter village of *tipis* appeared in heavy timber on the riverine bottom.

The Western Wahpetons used round hide *t tipis* migrating in their annual subsistence cycles between summer and winter villages. In the spring in the prairie-forest ecotone of the Minnesota River Valley, they exploited a large variety of food resources including the sap of the box-elder trees. Women planted corn, beans and squash near their summer villages. They moved from the wooded areas along the river, across the wet prairies to the Big Woods area around Otter Tail Lake in search of game for food and furs. On the prairies in the summer, women gathered wild forbs, grasses and berries. In the fall in the wet prairies women gathered wild rice, turtle, wild fowl eggs, fish, frogs, muskrats and birds. In the Big Woods they gathered acorns, fruit, berries, nuts, grapes and wild beans, while the men hunted deer, bear, fishers, foxes, raccoons, elk, mink and martens.

The Northern Sissetons at Lake Traverse practiced primitive horticulture - planting corn seeds in the ground and abandoning the fields - while gathering forbs, grasses, roots, berries, and hunting the buffalo. They wintered on the points and islands in Lake Traverse.

THE SISSETON-WAHPETON FUR TRADES, 1820-1838

Between the years 1820 and 1838 there were four different types of Indian fur trades that were prevalent:

1. The indigenous trading system;
2. The Euro-American trader at an annual Indian fair;
3. The Euro-American fur post close to an Indian village;
4. The Euro-American trader who traveled by horse and wagon to a village for the robe trade.

The indigenous trading system which developed in the historic period was based upon an empirical economic exchange, i.e., barter, reciprocity and redistribution. The historical Santee Dakota empirical economic exchange system had two parts to it: the internal system and the external system. The internal system was divided into four subsystems:

1. The interpersonal system based upon individual bartering within the village;
2. The intravillage system based upon the *tiospaye* or band system of exchange. In this redistributive society, the bands collected, produced and redistributed resources to their members and other members of the village, including food, shelter and clothing at certain ceremonial occasions, celebrating rites of passage;
3. The intervillage system based upon exchanges between small hunting and gathering groups from different villages;
4. The intratribal system based upon the annual trading fairs held twice annually, summer and winter for the *Oceti Sakowin*: All Dakota, Nakota and Lakota tribes (Grobsmith 1981). The *Oceti Sakowin* or Seven Council Fires met twice a year to exchange ideas, crafts, foods, pipes, women, ornaments and weapons of warfare (Fig. 2). The place of the fair in 1820 was the Oakwood Settlement on the James River. The annual fairs were a time for reorganizing the bands in each village under a headman or headwoman called an *itancan* or "wearer of the shirt." Annually at these fairs marriages took place on an exogamous village basis. Tribal hunting parties were organized in the summer and band hunting parties organized in the winter. During the annual fairs, 160 headmen sat in

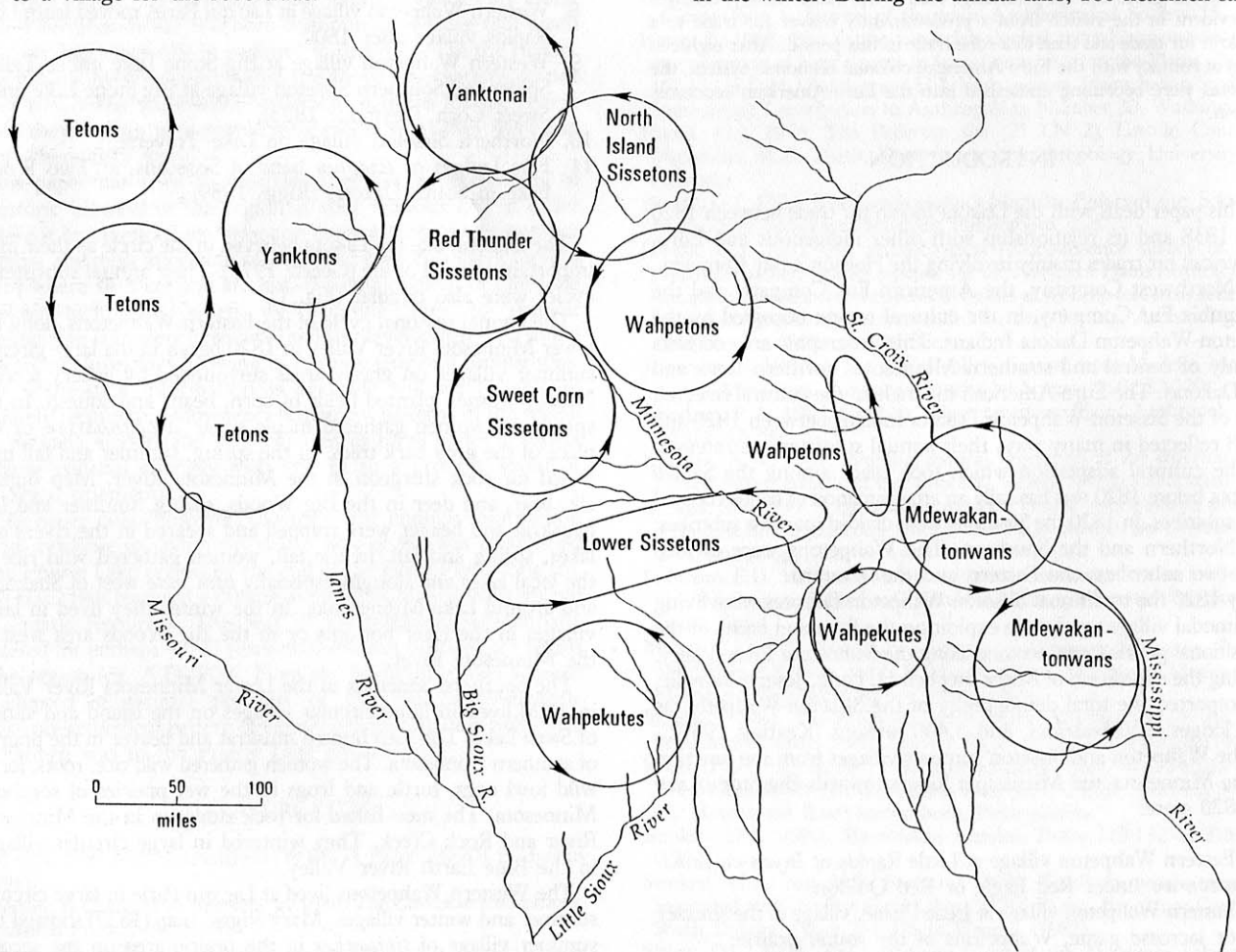


FIG. 1. Annual Sioux subsistence cycles, 1820-1834.



council and planned for the next year. Four headmen were usually chosen to lead the discussion. One headman was usually elected the spokesman for the whole council, who would make alliances and/or establish trade with outsiders.

The external empirical economic exchange system was divided into two subsystems: the intertribal trading systems and the long distance trading system. The intertribal trading system consisted of villages trading on their borders with other tribes for goods, women and warfare alliances. The long distance trade consisted of traders or fictive kin travelling long distances to primary continental trading centers such as those located at Sault Ste. Marie or the Missouri River villages of the Mandan, Hidatsa or Arikara to obtain the luxury items like corn seeds and tobacco.

The European economic colonial trading system by 1820 was based mainly upon the exploitation of the Indian as a cheap producer of raw materials for the large centralized American and European markets. Berkhofer (1965) has stated that the Indian trapper was an agent for a colonial system which stretched from the local post, to the depot, then to national markets in Philadelphia, New York and Boston to Montreal, Quebec and overseas to international markets.

The European colonial spheres of influence in 1820 were vested in wooden fur trading posts near winter villages built by American, British and Canadian companies. By this time the Santee Dakota were entering into the first phase of the American fur trade, with sites of posts at Mendota, Little Rapids, Lac qui Parle, Big Stone Lake, Lake Pepin, and Traverse des Sioux - all dependent upon Prairie du Chien as a depot (Baillly Papers, Minnesota Historical Society). The Hudson's Bay Company had a fur post at the northern side of Lake Traverse attached to Pembina, Grand Forks, Red Lake and Rupert's land at Fort Garry (Bourke's Diary, 1819-20).

By 1820 the beaver populations had been overexploited in the Red River Valley so that the Hudson's Bay Company traders under Duncan Graham of Graham's Point on the Bois des Sioux River in 1819-1820 built a post to trade with the Dakota living at Lake Traverse. But the game hunted and trapped by the Sisseton-Wahpeton Indians for furs winter, spring and fall in the ecotone between the deciduous forests of the Big Woods and the tall grass prairie in western Minnesota were mostly muskrats (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.108, d.8, fo. 4-5, Fig. 3).

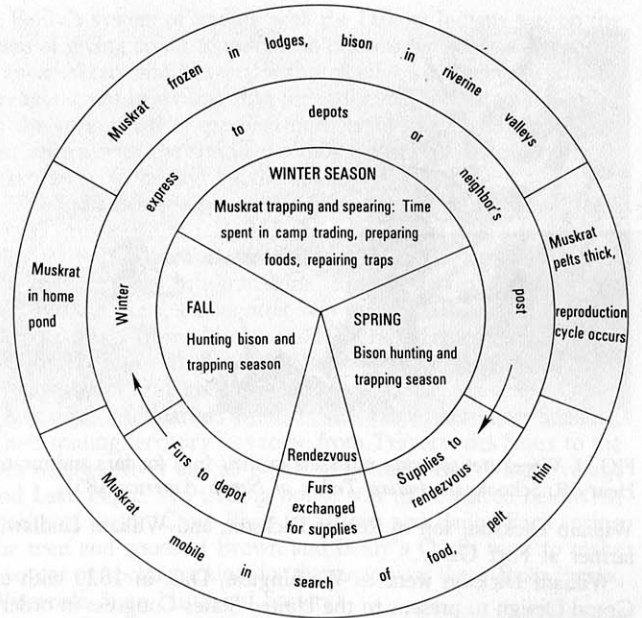


FIG. 3. Annual cycle of operations of American Fur Company, 1820-1834.

Occasionally a Santee Dakota band wandered into the Hudson's Bay Company post, the chief was given some rum and he turned over all of his band's furs to the clerk in return for trade goods, which would resupply their hunting and trapping needs (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.108, d.8, fo.3). Almost all the supplies or trade goods given to this band were hunting equipment, including powder, shot, knives, balls, guns, steels, leggings and a capot. Only a few items were non-essential for hunting, like tobacco and looking glasses (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.108, d.8, fo.3). The three looking glasses however, were only partially non-essential items, because the hunters would fix their hair and paint their faces before going hunting.

Most of the large quantity of fur trading goods at Graham's Point, 1819-1820, went to voyageurs and their Indian families, and to local Indian chiefs for gifts. Large quantities of goods were given to the Mdewakantonwan relatives of Duncan Graham and Joseph Renville, Jr. (Sibley Papers 1850).

Hazen Mooers and Dennis Robinson in 1819 built two American Fur Company posts in western Minnesota. Sent out in 1818 by James H. Lockwood, Mooers and Robinson moved in the spring of 1819 into posts at Lac qui Parle and Big Stone Lake. Lockwood also sent Duncan Campbell to a trading post at the mouth of the Minnesota River; Scott Campbell to a trading post at Traverse des Sioux; and Augustin Rocque to a wintering post at Lake Pepin (Sibley Papers, roll No. 1).

The American Fur Company was organized in 1820 at Prairie du Chien to collect furs and distribute goods to their winterers. The main depot was on Pike's Island under the *bourgeoise* Jean Baptiste Faribault. The furs were gathered by Indian hunters and trappers in the winter and spring at the muskrat lodges with spears and axes (Fig. 4). The pelts were traded at the wintering posts in the spring for European manufactured goods.

Muskrat furs were selling very cheaply on the market in the 1820's. The skins at Lac qui Parle, Big Stone Lake, Traverse des Sioux and Little Rapids were selling 20 cents a piece. The skins from Little Rock Creek, Patterson Rapids, Upper Des Moines River and Talbot Lake were selling for 17 cents a piece (Sibley Papers, roll No. 1).

The Hudson's Bay Company pulled out of Lake Traverse in 1822. In 1821, with the union of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, many of the North West Company employees found themselves unemployed. Among those released were Kenneth McKenzie, former head of the Fort William depot;

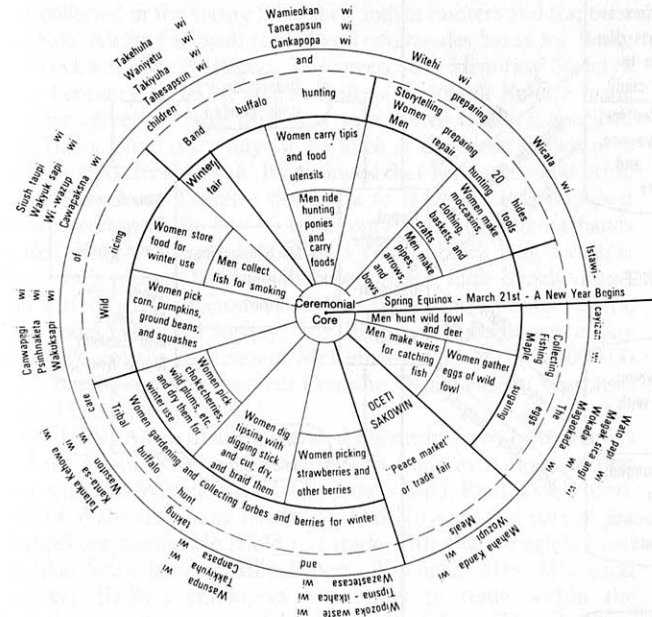


FIG. 2. Ergograph of Wahpeton annual cycle before 1834.



FIG. 4. Wapekutes spearing muskrats in their huts for furs and meat. Henry R. Schoolcraft. *Indian Tribes of North America* 1853.

William Dickson, son of Robert Dickson; and William Laidlaw, farmer at Fort Garry.

William Dickson went to Washington, D.C. in 1820 with a Grand Design to present to the United States Congress in order to receive monetary support from the government to develop a new American fur company in the west. The company was to be called the Columbia Fur Company. Dickson presented his design locating the mainpost at Lake Traverse in Robert Dickson's old post. The company's territory was to stretch east down the Minnesota River to the Mississippi River and up the St. Croix River to the Falls. It would extend west among Tetons and into the main villages of the Mandans at the juncture of the Knife and Missouri Rivers. Eventually the plan was to expand the company's posts to the sources of the Missouri River and then west to the Columbia River (Lavendar 1969).

McKenzie, Laidlaw and Lamont declared their intentions of becoming United States citizens. They organized the new company

with two other United States citizens - namely William P. Tilton and S.S. Dudley. They contracted with Stone, Bostwick and Company in St. Louis to supply them with Euro-American manufactured goods (Lavendar, 1969). They built a new post in 1822 at Lake Traverse and one in 1823 at Pierre, South Dakota called Fort Tecumseh. By 1826 there was a Fort Adams at Lac qui Parle under Joseph Renville, Jr.; Fort Columbia on the Sheyenne fork of the Red River under William Dickson; Fort Washington at Lake Traverse under William Dickson; Fort Union at Traverse des Sioux under Duncan Campbell; Columbia Fur Company Factory at Land's End near Fort Snelling under Daniel Lamont; a post at St. Croix Falls and Prescott, Wisconsin under Philander Prescott; and a post at Leaf Lake (Parker 1950).

The American Fur Company established Joseph Rolette, Jr., as *bourgeoise* at Prairie du Chien in charge of the Upper Mississippi Outfit and intended to use Dennis Robinson and Hazen Mooers to undercut Dickson and McKenzie's prices in obtaining furs from the Indians. Mooers was sent to winter at the Sheyenne fork of the Red River; a voyageur was sent to Devil's Lake to winter; Louis Provencalle was still trading at Little Rapids; Ezekial Lockwood was trading at Lac qui Parle; Jean Baptiste Faribault was at Mendota; and Dennis Robinson was wintering at Lake Traverse (U.S. Serial No. 93, 1853). Ramsey Crooks placed Renville's post in the northern department and sent Renville's relatives to a post built by Rolette at Whitewood Lake and the James River (Lavendar 1969).

In 1822, Tilton and Dudley received a license to trade with the Sioux at Fort Snelling along the Minnesota River and with the Mandans, Hidatsa and Crow Indians on the Upper Missouri, from William Clark at St. Louis. In the fall of 1822, Tilton left Lake Traverse with horses and wagons for the Missouri River villages of the Mandans under Joseph Jeffries, James Kipp and three other men. Their intention was to establish a fort among the Mandans and to gather up all the buffalo robes, plus the produce of the country and to carry them back in wagons to Lake Traverse

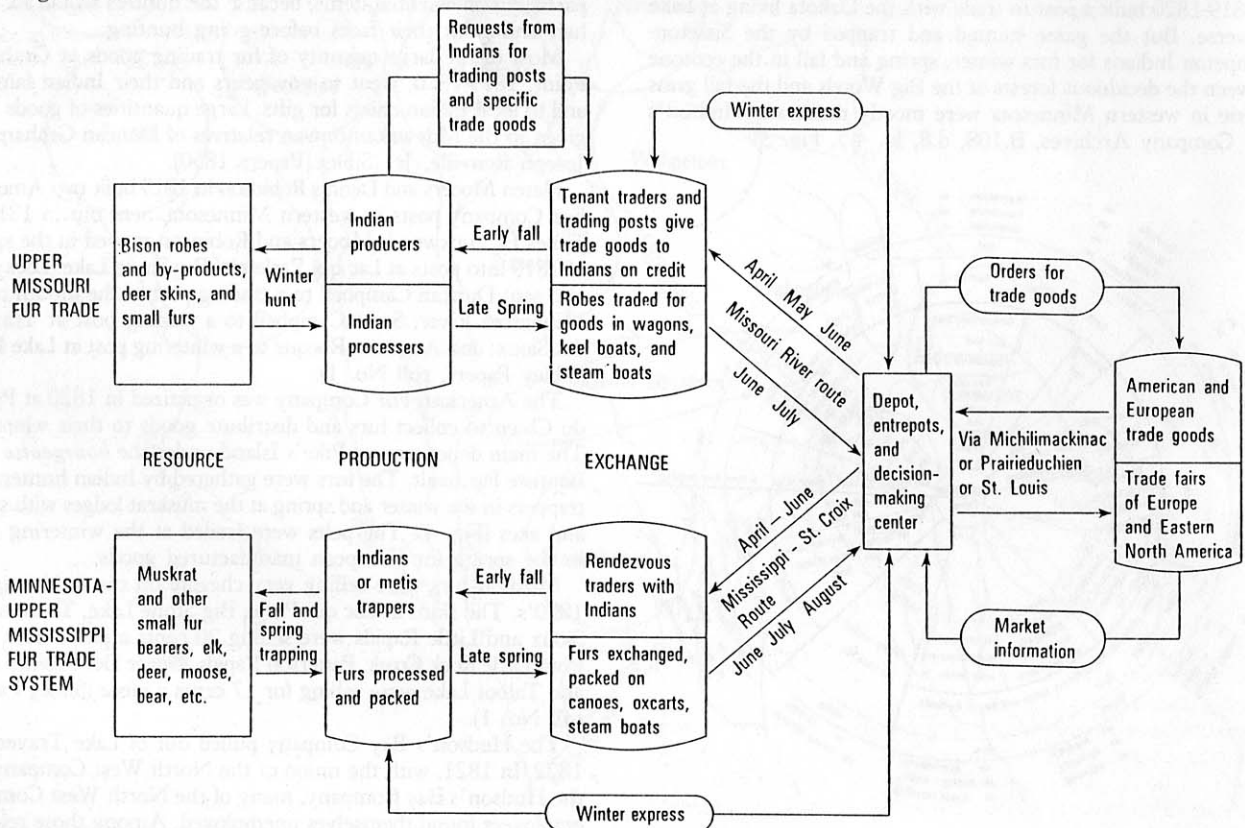


FIG. 5. American fur trade of the Upper Midwest, before 1834: organizational flows.



and then to transport them down to St. Louis (Fig. 5).

Beginning in 1823, steamboats carrying trade goods upstream and furs downstream annually arrived at Land's End for the American fur companies. From Fort Snelling they were carried by water in canoes and keelboats to the eastern edge of the Coteau des Prairies. There they were transported to horses and wagons or oxcars across the grassy prairies to Indian villages.

Every year the Columbia Fur Company took wagon loads of trade goods to the Oakwood Settlement and exchanged them for robes, pemmican and other furs from the *Oceti Sakowin*. Most of the furs collected consisted of muskrat skins, beaver skins and buffalo robes.

The American Fur Company held onto the muskrat trade and the collections of small animal skins. In the fall of 1826, the price of muskrat furs rose. That fall the American Fur Company sent out a large number of Dakota hunters and trappers armed with iron spears and iron axes into the wet prairies of southern and central Minnesota and along the banks of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers for quantities of muskrat hides. But by the fall of 1827, the price of muskrat skins had slumped and John Jacob Astor sold 550,000 muskrat skins for 36 cents a piece and still was left with 200,000 furs he could not sell (Lavendar 1969).

In the fall of 1827, McKenzie, Laidlaw and Lamont were ready to move further west to trade with the three tribes on the Missouri River. The American Fur Company agreed to buy out the posts in Minnesota and as far west as Fort Tecumseh for whatever they were worth. Kenneth McKenzie's inventory of the Traverse des Sioux, Lac qui Parle, Lake Traverse and the fur factory at Land's End amounted to \$12,409.75. McKenzie recorded the inventory at Fort Tecumseh to be 4,266 muskrat skins, 1,500 buffalo robes, 850 pounds of beaver pelts, and buildings worth \$400.00 to the total of \$14,543.00 (Lavendar 1969).

Several years before the inventory was taken by McKenzie at the juncture of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, some of the more enterprising Columbia Fur Company clerks, namely, James H. Lockwood and Alexis Bailly, formed a partnership and bought goods from Joseph Rolette at Prairie du Chien to distribute to their winterers in 1825. They distributed Euro-American manufactured goods to Louis Provencalle at Traverse des Sioux and to Jean Baptiste Faribault at the forks of the Des Moines River (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society). Rolette would supply Bailly and Lockwood with the trade goods on credit in the fall and Bailly and Lockwood would supply Rolette with furs collected in the spring from their Indian hunters and trappers. In 1826, Alexis Faribault traded at Traverse des Sioux for Bailly and Lockwood (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society).

In February of 1828, Alexis Bailly and Joseph Rolette made another agreement, this time only with Alexis Bailly. It specified that Bailly could place anyone he liked at the Little Rapids post including Alexis Faribault. It continued that Faribault could bring the Indians from Traverse des Sioux to trade at Little Rapids if he wanted to. Bailly was to trade only with the Dakota bands at Red Wing's village, Little Crow's village, Black Dog's village, Penishaw's village, Old Sixes (Shakopee) village, Little Rapids village, and with other Wahpetons bands that traded there (Bailly Papers, Minnesota Historical Society). For this privilege Bailly was to pay \$666.67 annually to Kenneth McKenzie or 1/3 of the \$2,000.00 owed him by the American Fur Company (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society).

By 1829, Alexis Bailly expanded his outfit from Little Rapids to Lake Pepin. Rolette allowed him to trade in August of that year with Red Wing's band, Little Crow's band, Black Dog's band, part of Wabasha's band headed by Old Noyeau, and part of the Wahpekute bands. He could not trade with Black Eagle's band or Blue Spirit bands (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society). Bailly's employees were only to trade within the boundaries of these posts and not outside of them. Their Indians, however, could trap in trapping territories outside of these boundaries.

Bailly's system of trading with the Dakota Indians was on the basis of giving credit to individual persons for goods to hunt and trap muskrats and beavers within their own trapping territory on agreement in writing that the individual Indian would return in the spring with a specified number of furs. If the Indian did not return with the specified number of furs his traps would be taken away from him by the trader.

The Indians never brought in enough pelts to square off their debts. Muskrat furs were the only method of exchange. All of the furs were valued in muskrat skins. At this time, deer skins are valued at two muskrat skins, a raccoon skin was valued at two muskrat skins, and an otter skin was valued at fifteen muskrat skins (Bailly Papers, Minnesota Historical Society).

In 1832, Alexis Bailly and William Brown formed a new outfit to subcontract with Joseph Rolette of the Upper Mississippi Outfit. Their new headquarters were at New Hope, near Fort Snelling. Their trading territory was to be from Traverse des Sioux to the Des Moines River and all points in between Red Wing's village and Lake Pepin. No trading house was to be placed below the mouth of the St. Croix River by Brown and Bailly. Each spring the men and goods of Brown and Bailly's Outfit were to make a voyage to Michilimackinac for the rendezvous there (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society).

Pierre Parrant was hired by Brown and Bailly in 1832 to set up his trading post near Little Crow's village on Frenchmen's Bar near Pig's Eye Lake (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society). Steamboats brought Brown and Bailly's goods to St. Paul from Joseph Rolette at Prairie du Chien (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society).

Brown and Bailly's Outfit in 1833-34 on the Minnesota-Mississippi Rivers were not making much profit. In the winter of 1833-34 Joseph La Framboise, trading on the Cottonwood River with the Southern Sissetons, only produced 300 to 400 muskrat pelts (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society). The Sissetons were only spearing the muskrats in the wet prairies, north and south of the Minnesota River. Joseph R. Brown's trading for Bailly in the winter of 1833-34 at Oliver's Grove, near Hastings, with the Pine Bend band under Medicine Bottle, could only produce packs of smoked or dried rock sturgeon in the spring (Bailly Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Collection). In 1834 Brown and Bailly ended their partnership.

Henry Hastings Sibley arrived in Mendota in the fall of 1834 and bought five wintering posts from Alexis Bailly (Ackermann 1931). These included Mendota, Litter Rapids, Two Woods Lake, the Cannon River and Traverse des Sioux. Bailly's father-in-law, Jean Baptiste Faribault, was wintering at the Little Rapids post; Louis Provencalle was wintering at Two Woods Lake; and Alexander Faribault was wintering at the mouth of the Cannon River (Sibley 1870-80).

Sibley in the winter of 1834, reorganized his posts into the Sioux Outfit of the American Fur Company. In the spring of 1835, he entered into agreements with Joseph Renville, Jr., and Joseph Rolette. The agreement stated that Renville would trade at Lake Traverse and Lac qui Parle for Sibley in return for half of the profits or losses of the posts. The agreement was for five years, but Sibley and Rolette reserved the right to end the arrangements after one year (Ackermann 1931).

Renville's Outfit was to receive trade goods from Sibley to trade with the Indians besides articles for use for himself and his family. He promised only to trade with the Indians who lived within the Lac qui Parle district and not to encroach upon any other outfits of the American Fur Company.

In the summer of 1835, Sibley placed Joseph R. Brown in charge of the stockaded fort at Lake Traverse. Sibley then went to visit Lac qui Parle where the Wahpetons were trading with Renville. Within the stockaded Fort Renville was a dwelling house or store and a magazine. Renville's furs were mostly muskrats, mink, fishers, otters, beavers, raccoons, foxes, badgers, and wolves as well as deerskins, buffalo skins, elkskins, mooseskins and bearskins. A

muskrat skin was worth 16 cents. A gun could be purchased from Renville for 120 muskrat skins or \$19.20 for which he paid \$6.00 at Mendota. A knife Renville sold to the Dakotas for five muskrat skins or sixty cents. He probably purchased it at Mendota for 20 cents (Willand 1968). By January of 1836, Renville had collected thirty-five packs of muskrat skins to ship down the river to Patterson's Rapids where a barge carried them to Mendota (Sibley Papers 1836).

In May of 1836, the Sheyenne River Outfit of Joseph R. Brown had operated at a loss of \$1,000.00. In the spring of 1836, Brown turned over to Sibley, 130 to 135 packs of furs - 80 of which were buffalo robes; 40 of which were muskrat skins; one of which was otter skins; one of which was fisher skins; and the rest of the packs were mixed skins. The Sheyenne River Outfit had only eight packs of spring muskrats and a few packs of otter and beaver skins. The reasons for the poor returns on the Sheyenne River were a lack of ammunition at Fort Renville for the Indians and because of the spreading prairie fires which had been set by Indians (Sibley Papers 1836).

Joseph Renville, Jr., lost \$3,000.00 to \$4,000.00 worth of muskrat skins that skidded downward in 1837 to five cents a piece. Because of the cheap prices in furs, Renville received an extension of credit to \$8,000.00 in 1838. By 1843, when he died, he still owed the company \$4,200.00 (Ackermann 1931).

In 1838, William Dickson took the last wagon load of goods to the Oakwood Settlement trading fair which included the Dakotas, Nakotas and Lakotas. In 1839, the Tetons and Nakotas developed their own trading fair in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Mdewakantonwan, after the treaty of 1837, visited the Indian agent annually at Fort Snelling to receive their goods and annuities. They traded these goods and annuities for liquors which they traded as middlemen to their Wahpetons, Wahpekutes and Sissetons relatives for furs.

### CONCLUSIONS

The success or failure of an Euro-American, British or Canadian fur trading company between 1820 and 1838 among the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakotas were dependent upon the meshing of the strategies of the Euro-American colonial fur trading companies and the local subsistence economies of the local Indian villages. The Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota Indian fur trade in 1820 was dependent upon the exploitation of the fauna in the natural environment in which they lived and subsisted, whether in the tall grass prairie, the wet prairies, the parkland, or the mixed pine and deciduous forests (Benson 1979). The early fur trading returns from the different companies reflected clearly the ecotones in which they hunted, trapped and collected their food.

Overexploitation of the natural fauna of the region by Dakota hunters and trappers armed with Euro-American manufactured guns, traps, spears and axes, combined with the fall of prices in centralized North American and European markets, greatly restricted the Sisseton-Wahpeton procurement strategies for food, shelter and clothing. By 1835, the Western Wahpetons were down to their last pair of leggings, moccasins and breech clothes, subsisting on wild berries, wild roots, fish and wild fowl (Riggs 1875). Northern Sissetons were hunting the buffalo and digging up *tipsinna* for food on the Coteau des Prairies between the James and Missouri Rivers and trading packs of buffalo meat for corn, beans and squash at the Mandan-Hidatsa and Arikara villages (Will 1950). Eastern Wahpetons were trading small furs for food and goods with the fur traders, missionaries, steamboat passengers and soldiers at Fort Snelling (Pond 1905-08). Southern Sissetons were hunting and trapping for muskrat furs farther and farther into northern Iowa on the Upper Des Moines River and coming into conflict with the Sauks and Foxes over the food resources (Hughes 1905-08).

The Sisseton-Wahpeton procurement strategies were very diverse in 1820, but by 1838 they had become more and more incorporated into the Euro-American colonial economic system. By 1838 the

Sisseton-Wahpeton subsistence strategies were restricted, weakening the indigenous trading systems. Once the specialized resources became exhausted, the Dakotas would have few choices for survival in the future:

1. They could live temporarily with their other Siouan relatives;
2. They could live on resources distributed by missionaries, fur traders and governmental agents;
3. They could become impoverished and starve; or
4. They could strengthen the indigenous trading system by partially returning to their annual seasonal subsistence strategies.

After eighteen years of Euro-American economic exploitation, the Sisseton-Wahpetons simply could not go back to all of their 1820 subsistence cycles. By 1838 they were becoming enmeshed for the most part into the Euro-American economic system.

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