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### Article Title: Some Reflections on Plains Caddoan Origins

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Article Summary: This is one of a series of articles based on presentations at a mini-symposium "Toward Plains Caddoan Origins: A Symposium" held at the Smithsonian Institution in November, 1976. This article presents the traditional and the alternative views of the origins of the Plains Caddoan.

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON PLAINS CADDOAN ORIGINS

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The traditional view of Plains Caddoan origins (see for example, Dunbar 1880; Dorsey 1906; Fletcher in Hodge 1907-1910) links these groups with other Caddoan-speaking tribes that were historically located in the Red River valley, in eastern Texas and adjacent Arkansas. To all was once attributed an eastward movement from the Southwest, which was nowhere specifically delineated. The southern Caddoans, including the Caddo proper, the Kichai, and the Wichita led the way, spreading through the Red River country and southward, where they were later encountered by the early French and Spanish. Later came tribes ancestral to the Pawnee confederacy, moving north and northeast through Kansas and into Nebraska. Leading the general northeastward movement were the Skidi, with whom the Arikara were closely associated. The Skidi settled long ago on the Loup River and made this their homeland. The Arikara moved on to the Missouri River and up that into South Dakota, leaving the ruins of their old villages visible along the bluffs of the mainstem from Omaha northward.

Other versions have the Skidi moving into the Loup River country from east of the Missouri or even east of the Mississippi, to be conquered by the South Band Pawnee when they arrived later in the central Nebraska region. Still others have the Pitahawirata or Tappage Pawnee living formerly in southeastern Nebraska, on the Smoky Hill River in Kansas, and elsewhere, presumably as an entity distinct from the other tribes of the South Band group.

Like other origin myths, those pertaining to the Pawnee, Arikara, and Wichita are usually vague and unspecific in time and locality. In light of current thinking, tempered or conditioned by more than a half century of directed but often intermittent research in archeology, ethnology, linguistics,

ethnohistory, and physical anthropology, they provide little direct help on the problem of working out details of the early history of the tribes involved. In large part, they consist of the sort of raw material that long ago drew from Lowie (1915:597) the expostulation that "I cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever." A less extreme view taken here accepts the possibility that myths and traditions may point the way to still productive lines of research, provided they are used critically and circumspectly, as all research materials should be. Here our concern is the degree to which various lines of investigation converge or diverge in the search for enlightenment on a common objective—Plains Caddoan beginnings.

Since their earliest recognition by whites, the Caddoans have been known as semisedentary tribes, dividing their subsistence between hunting and gathering and the cultivation of maize and other crops. The archeological investigations into their past during the last four or five decades have consistently indicated the depth in time of this way of life. For the northern Caddoans—the Pawnee and the Arikara—an important feature of that lifeway has been community residence in fixed villages of earthlodges, whereas the central and southern groups, from the Wichita south, have been grass house dwellers. This dichotomy of basic house forms has unquestionably colored some of the research goals and methods of the archeologists.

For the Pawnee, as we have seen, archeologists have developed a frame of reference in time. The documented Pawnee of the American period, that is, post-A.D. 1800, exhibited so many basic similarities in house types and in their material culture inventory to the demonstrably earlier Lower Loup materials, that a direct relationship has long been argued (Strong 1935; Wedel 1938; Grange 1968) without serious challenge. The Lower Loup sites date variously somewhere in the A.D. 1550-1750 period, to which perhaps 50 years could be added at either end, or both. As to archeological antecedents, the prehistoric Upper Republican phase has long been regarded as a probable ancestor.

The ceramic analyses by Grange (1968) seem to confirm the view that Lower Loup and historic Pawnee materials are essentially temporal variations of the same ceramic tradition. Of greater importance is the proposed separation of Lower Loup

materials into two series, one leading to the historic Skidi and the other to the Grand-Republican-Tappage or South Band group. The Lower Loup to historic Skidi sequence is seen as developing in the Loup River country, whereas the Lower Loup to Grand sequence took place along the Platte River, centering around its junction with Shell Creek from the north and Skull Creek from the south. Which of these two proposed lines of development has priority in time, in other words might lay claim to being the ancestral line, is moot.

For the student of Pawnee origins, we must note again the continuing presence of a serious gap in the Lower Loup-Skidi sequence between the archeologically prolific Lower Loup sites and the most important known historic Skidi village at the Palmer Site (25HW1). Only a small surface collection of pottery is available from Palmer; other later sites identified as Skidi, for example, Fullerton (25NC7), McClaine (25SD8), and Genoa (25NC6) were occupied so late in the historic period that most of the native arts, crafts, and industries from which archeologists seek to establish cultural affinities, including particularly pottery-making, had been given up. Whether detailed analyses of other cultural traits would throw further light on this relationship is uncertain so long as key sites remain closed to scientific investigation and the gathering of badly-needed new data is precluded. The hope remains, however, that properly planned excavation and analysis of house forms, for example, and of attendant details such as orientation, postmold patterns, and special features, might provide helpful leads to better understanding.

As to earlier stages in the Pawnee sequence, there are some promising clues. From the earliest known Lower Loup sites have come small but consistent samples of cord-roughened pottery (Grange 1968:72), hinting at a possible continuation of the overall cord-roughening pottery treatment well known from sites of the Upper Republican Central Plains tradition. Interestingly enough, the Great Bend aspect materials from central Kansas, which at least partially correlate in time with Lower Loup and can be identified as Wichita, also have a small percentage of cord-roughened pottery in a ceramic complex characterized otherwise almost exclusively by plain-surfaced wares with occasional simple stamping (Wedel 1959:341). Thus, both Lower Loup (Pawnee) and Great Bend (Wichita) cultures

appear to have shared in the prehistoric Central Plains tradition as one of their antecedents.

The clear unbroken line of development long ago envisioned by Strong as leading from Upper Republican to Pawnee via Lower Loup thus still eludes us. The many small hamlets and isolated house units widely scattered along the secondary streams of the Central Plains stand in sharp contrast to the large settlements recorded for the earliest known Lower Loup communities. The transitional stages, falling in the time period ca. A.D. 1300-1500  $\pm$  50 years, might logically be expected to occur somewhere in the Loup River drainage of central Nebraska. A possible candidate for these stages has been suggested by Ludwickson (1975;1978) in a still very imperfectly perceived pattern known as the Loup River phase. As provisionally outlined, this looks to me more like Upper Republican than Lower Loup; but in view of the considerable geographical blanks about whose archeology far too little is yet known on the western reaches of the several Loup River branches and eastward to the Elkhorn, it seems not unreasonable to hope for further enlightenment as field investigations go ahead in these critical districts.

An alternative view (Hoffman 1967:64, and 1968:78; cf. Wedel 1941:26) is that the Chouteau aspect of South Dakota may be ancestral Pawnee-Arikara. Between manifestations of Chouteau and Lower Loup, there are numerous resemblances, as is true also between Lower Loup and the Redbird focus (Wood 1956) on the upper Elkhorn and lower Niobrara rivers. That the resemblances and inferred relationships necessarily imply ancestral stages in Lower Loup development does not follow, even though revised radiocarbon dates place Chouteau in a somewhat earlier time level than was once thought. White trade materials have not been reported from Chouteau aspect sites, in contrast to their sparing occurrence in early Lower Loup sites. The Lower Loup sites, like those of the Great Bend (Wichita) aspect in central Kansas, are several hundred miles nearer the very early centers of white activity in the Spanish area of New Mexico, and the Pawnee and Wichita were probably in earlier contact with whites than were the Arikara on the middle Missouri. Since the evidence from the loess plains in the Elkhorn and Loup drainages is by no means all in, a proto-Lower Loup cultural horizon in the east-central Nebraska



*Pawnee chiefs at Loup Fork Village near Genoa, 1871. Photo by William H. Jackson. . . .(Below left) Sky Chief, Pawnee. Photo by William H. Jackson. . . .Society archeologist Asa T. Hill at Pike-Pawnee Village, Webster County, May, 1924. Hill viewed historic Pawnee, Lower Loup phase, and Upper Republican as probable successive stages in a developmental sequence.*



region cannot yet be ruled out in favor of the Chouteau aspect as an ancestor.

What is here considered the southwestern periphery of the Plains Caddoan area is probably of more interest in relation to Wichita origins than to the Pawnee problem. It seems increasingly likely that the Wichita via Great Bend aspect were rooted in the late prehistoric Southern Plains tradition of which Washita River, Neosho, and the Panhandle aspect were components (Wedel 1959, 1968). Here again, there is no continuous and unbroken line of development, and puzzling gaps remain to be filled between the prehistoric entities as listed and the Great Bend aspect.

Of the former, the Panhandle aspect is of prime interest to us for several reasons. It is probably the most fully and accurately dated archeological horizon in the southern and central Great Plains. The principal period of occupation appears to have been between ca. A.D. 1250-1450, thus following Medicine Creek Upper Republican and preceding the Great Bend aspect of central Kansas (Baerreis and Bryson 1965:72). The stone slabs featured in the construction of some Panhandle houses recall one version of a Pawnee migration myth which has it that the people came from a country to the southeast where they once lived in stone houses. Like most myths, this can be interpreted in any of several ways. It could refer to the architecture of the Pueblo Indians. In general, the Central Plains people made little or no use of stones in house construction, neither the earthlodge nor the grass house requiring such material. At the same time, the use of quantities of stone slabs in some still unclear manner around the walls of the special semisubterranean structures composing the council circles of central Kansas is well established (Wedel 1959:220). As I have indicated elsewhere, there is a certain attractiveness to tracing one thread of development from Upper Republican through Panhandle to Great Bend, but to date little more than a measure of chronological consistency can be cited in support of the idea. That Great Bend in one or another still inadequately known northerly manifestation along the Smoky Hill River possibly contributed more or less directly to Pawnee development is another idea which merits further thought and exploration, though it seems to me to be primarily an expression of Wichita culture.

For most of the region occupied by the Plains Caddoans, we are particularly fortunate in having an unusually extensive historical record. It opens with the first penetration of Europeans into the interior of the continent, indeed into the very heart of the region with which we are here concerned, and into direct contact with representatives of the linguistic family under primary consideration. These contacts brought the Europeans into touch with a group, or groups, of native people living in a state of culture still uninfluenced by the invading alien civilization. This presents archeologists, ethnographers, ethnohistorians, and other inquirers with a rare opportunity and a great challenge.

The Spanish, first whites into the interior, have been especially good about recording for us what they saw. The native settlement patterns described by the chroniclers of the Coronado expedition in 1541 and by Onate in 1601 remind one of the Caddo settlements reported two centuries later on Red River—rambling, dispersed communities, unfortified, with gardens surrounding the lodges, the people growing maize, beans, and melons, storing crop surpluses in underground caches or silos, and so on. The native terms given all too infrequently can be helpful, when present, to the linguist in identifying tribal and/or band names, proper names and titles, and other details.

All of this is in striking contrast to the surviving French documentation for the areas to the north and east of the Spanish territories. Here for the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth centuries, we have almost nothing in the way of first hand description of community settlement patterns and native lifeways. Whereas the Wichita in Quivira entertained Coronado's conquistadores for six weeks in the summer of 1541, the larger expedition of Onate for an unknown period in 1601, and between times had destroyed and looted the 30-man party of Bonilla and Humana in 1593-1594, there is no documentary evidence that white men had been among the Arikara and their neighbors on the Middle Missouri before A.D. 1700, either as adventurers, traders, or explorers. Neither do we know the identity of the first white man to meet the Pawnee, nor the date and circumstance of his visit, unless Tatarax and his warrior band who visited Coronado among the Arkansas River Quiviras in 1541 were indeed Pawnee from Harahey.

There are interesting and stimulating maps relating to the Pawnee and Arikara in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but commonly missing are the sources of the information depicted thereon, which might provide further significant data for the knowledgeable researcher. Nevertheless, archival records undoubtedly hold further enlightenment for the prepared scholar. Such are, for example, the documents relating to the 1714 journey by Etienne Véniard de Bourgmont up the Missouri to the mouth of the Platte River. Here the distances and directions traveled each day (Bourgmont 1714; de Villiers 1925:46-59) resulted in a remarkably accurate map (69-20 Service Historique de la Marine), on which are scattered dates that can be correlated with notes taken by Claude Delisle (AM 3JJ 277:17) from a journal or other record maintained by the Bourgmont party.

For present purposes, we note that at the mouth of the Platte occurs a notation on the map to the effect that 30 leagues up this *Riviere des Panis*, one finds ten villages of the *Panis* (Pawnee). At 2.67 miles per league, or roughly 80-85 miles up the Platte, the river traveler would find himself in the locality where Shell Creek enters from the north and Skull Creek from the south. The anonymous *Description of Louisiana*, credited to Bourgmont (Giraud 1958), has the *Panimaha* or Skidi Pawnee located another twenty leagues up the Platte. Here, perhaps 55 to 60 miles above the *Panis* the eighteenth century traveler would find himself in the heart of the Loup River country, between the Burkett and Wright sites of the Lower Loup tradition and the Palmer Site of the nineteenth century Skidi Pawnee. These French observations and map representations fall chronologically into the Lower Loup time frame, and the villages they allude to are specifically *Panis* and *Panimahas*. The correlation of these two localities as reported by Bourgmont, with the postulated loci of transition from Lower Loup to Skidi (= *Panimaha*) and from Lower Loup to *Pani* (= South Band) has some intriguing implications by which further researches might profitably be guided.

The French depictions of the *Panis* and *Panimahas* in the early eighteenth century, as for example by the Delisles, raise other interesting problems. The 1718 Delisle map indicates 10 or 12 villages for each of these two groups. In the American period, after ca. 1800, there were seldom more than one or two

villages per band or tribe; and on occasions when the Republicans and Tappages moved in with the Grands, only two principal villages were customary. Do the more numerous towns shown for the early eighteenth century reflect a pattern of band- or clan- or bundle-specific villages which, a few years later, perhaps following catastrophic smallpox visitations or other calamities, coalesced into three or four large towns aimed at providing greater security against increasingly turbulent relations with other tribes? No Frenchman, unfortunately, described the pattern of these villages or towns, to tell us whether they were dispersed or close-knit fortified, defensively oriented, settlements. What does seem clear is that the *Panimaha* and *Panis* communities being mapped and tersely reported in the Platte-Loup region of central and east-central Nebraska during the first half of the eighteenth century are almost certainly to be identified with archeological sites of the Lower Loup phase. La Renaudiere's report of eight Pawnee villages 30 leagues up the Elkhorn at a half league from one another, stands by itself, still unconfirmed and unexplained in terms of archeology. Could he have been reporting on settlements of the Redbird focus (Wood 1956), or other still unreported or unidentified sites on the Elkhorn?

Recent investigations into Plains Caddoan linguistics promise to shed further new light on archeological thinking. Recognizing that the linguistic picture for the northern groups was undoubtedly once much more complex than it appears today, we are reminded that in historic times there were only two distinguishable Pawnee dialects—Skidi and South Band. Arikara now appears to be not a branch or offshoot of Skidi, as was formerly generally thought, but is closer to South Band which better preserves the archaic forms in Pawnee. Of particular interest is the suggestion that separation of Arikara from Pawnee could have occurred as recently as A.D. 1450-1500, which would be following the drastic reduction of territory occupied by the Upper Republican manifestations of the Central Plains tradition, inferred withdrawal of the people to the eastern plains, and appearance of the Coalescent cultures on the Middle Missouri.

The dialectal variations suggested in the former multiple Skidi settlement patterns, in which there were traditionally 13, 15, 18 or more villages, each possessing its own ancestral bundle,

recalls to mind the speech differences reported among the early nineteenth century Arikara—32 populous villages according to Trudeau, ten per Lewis and Clark, and so on. This is also remindful of the already noted representations on early eighteenth century maps showing ten, twelve, or more villages of the *Panimaha* or Skidi. The French maps also suggest multiple villages for the *Panis*, that is, the proto-South Band people, but for such a pattern there appears to be no linguistic or other separate supporting evidence. Are we to infer from this that the split from the Chawi (Grand Pawnee) parent stock by which the Republican and Tappage bands arose was a relatively late development, perhaps indeed not antedating the beginning of the eighteenth century?

It appears to be true, unfortunately, that there exists only the scantiest hope for ever ascertaining the degree of dialectal differences between the various band-villages of the seventeenth century Arikara, *Panimahas*, and *Panis*—information that might be helpful to archeologists and prehistorians in unraveling the very tangled threads with which they are dealing. There are no band or village or chief's names in the known documents—unless they remain undiscovered or unrecognized in manuscripts still awaiting scholarly examination in archival repositories.

For the traditional or legendary Pitahawirata (Tappage) villages in the southeastern Nebraska region, in the Nemaha locality, and their moves to the Republican River and to the Smoky Hill valley in Kansas, I am aware of no supporting archeological evidence. That is to say, none of the archeological materials so far reported from southeastern Nebraska or from the Smoky Hill locality conform to what has come to be regarded as Pawnee in origin. If these localities were indeed occupied by that tribe except transiently for hunting or other short-term activities, it must have been when they possessed an inventory of archeological traits wholly alien to what archeologists today recognize as Pawnee at any time level—or the sites have yet to be found or recognized!

To archeologists concerned with the Plains Village Indian cultures, the kinds of houses in which their people lived are of considerable importance because of their variations from time to time and from place to place in floor plan and other construction details. The Pawnee and Arikara have long been

regarded as earthlodge-using people; the Wichita and other southern Caddoans were more typically grass house dwellers. Broadly speaking, this dichotomy seems to be borne out by the accumulating archeological evidence. Yet there are reasons for maintaining a flexible viewpoint on these matters. In 1772, De Mezières reported that the *Ouedsitas* (Wichitas) on the Brazos River in Texas were then living in houses which "through lack of wood, are made of earth, and are wretched and uncomfortable" (Bolton 1914:I,294). No further details are given, and we do not know how similar or dissimilar these structures were to the familiar earthlodges of the Pawnee and their neighbors.

If the Pawnee or a significant portion of them lived on the Nemaha or elsewhere in grass houses, their remains might conceivably have been overlooked in the archeologists' obsession with earthlodges, which all orthodox Pawnee are supposed to have used; but their material culture inventory must surely have included a great deal more and their pottery and other village debris should have been recognizable if it occurs in localities concerned. One wonders whether some of these reputed erstwhile homelands, instead of stopping points or stages in a prehistoric band migration, may reflect the remembrance of seasonal hunting camps visited and re-visited over a period of years, eventually becoming identified with, or as, former band locations. If, as the historical documents suggest, the Pitahawirata did not appear as a separate entity among the Pawnee until ca. A.D. 1800 or even later, the search for their earlier traces may be a futile one unless it be carried on as a part of the larger problem of general South Band culture history.

If there is substance for the suggested former use of the grass house by members of all the Pawnee bands, and as other than a feature of the culture of less affluent individuals or families, one other implication is perhaps worthy of note. Is it possible that some of the intractable lodge floors that sooner or later bedevil every field archeologist, with well-marked hearths but poorly defined postmold patterns and other features, were actually grass house instead of earthlodge ruins? Were the apparently open spaces between recognized earthlodge floors in some of the large dispersed settlements formerly occupied by grass houses of which few or no traces remain, especially to the



*Wichita grass lodge (center), open-sided arbor, and tipi frame, Oklahoma. Photographer, date, and exact locality unknown. Neg. 55928, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. . . (Below) Scene in a Pawnee village on Loup River near Genoa, Nebraska. All eyes are focused on the earthlodge in the middle distance, awaiting the results of an ongoing conference between their chiefs and an official United States government delegation. Photo by William H. Jackson, 1871. Neg. 1245B, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.*



observer conditioned to recognize the remains of a mud lodge? The likelihood seems remote, but the possibility should perhaps not be dismissed out of hand.

The biological affinities of the various widely scattered human groups involved in the Plains Caddoan populations have gone almost unstudied until very recent years. A major reason for this neglect is the very limited size of the samples with which physical anthropologists have had to deal in their observations, except in the case of the Arikara (Bass 1964). The living populations through which the Wichita, Pawnee, and Arikara were known to the Americans included less than a dozen measured individuals from each tribe, usually from deculturated communities whose members were probably of tribally mixed descent. For the eighteenth century and earlier levels, when these tribes were presumably at or near their peak of culture and extensive dislocations and re-arrangements of population had not progressed so far, there were almost no adequately documented samples available.

Utilizing new techniques physical anthropologists are now investigating more closely the interrelationships of the historically related groups and also their relationships to earlier populations for which a measure of cultural distinctiveness has been argued by the archeologist. Despite skeletal samples so limited that convincing conclusions are still impossible, certain trends are of much interest. That these inquiries show Lower Loup skeletal materials to be closer to historic Pawnee than to Arikara is neither surprising nor unexpected but is still gratifying, since it reinforces the position developing from the archeological evidence that Lower Loup is indeed a sixteenth to eighteenth century manifestation of Pawnee culture.

As to relationships between the named historical groups and their suspected antecedents in the Central Plains tradition as dimly seen by the archeologists, Bass (1964) long ago noted a "great morphological difference" between his avowedly heterogeneous Central Plains tradition sample and his Pawnee and Arikara series. More recently, craniometric relationships have been seen as "not inconsistent with the hypothesis that the Central Plains tradition, and the St. Helena in particular, led to the Coalescent tradition and the historic Arikara" (Jantz et al. 1978:150).

A primary concern here is the sampling involved in certain

cases—which has nothing to do, of course, with the authors' competence or procedures, since they have to work with whatever material has been provided by the archeologists and collectors. For the record, though, let it be noted that the nine Pawnee crania considered in an earlier paper in this volume are from two South Band village sites, three from Linwood (25BU1) and six from Hill (25WT1). Linwood is considered Grand Pawnee, the Hill Site is Republican Pawnee, and neither is likely to date much before A.D. 1800. The Lower Loup sample consists of one specimen from Barcal (25BU4), probably eighteenth century Grand Pawnee, and one from Wright (25NC3), probably late sixteenth or early seventeenth century Skidi. We can only lament the fact that the Lower Loup complex, which pretty certainly represents Pawnee culture at its apogee, is so inadequately portrayed; and further, that the Skidi with their especially rich ceremonialism and religion and their supposedly closer relationship with the Arikara, must have their biological affinities judged from a single cranium. Strange as it seems, from what is undoubtedly the most important remaining historic Skidi village—the Palmer Site—and from its likeliest lineal precursor—Burkett (25NC1)—there are apparently no measurable skeletal materials from which the biological relationships of their erstwhile populations can be judged today. Lacking solid data on these points, then, we must continue to speculate on the degree to which skeletal materials, especially measurable crania, from a wider range of sites in time and space would further illuminate the two lines of development which have been proposed for the evolution of historic Pawnee culture from Lower Loup in the specified Platte and Loup River localities.

With respect to changing mortuary practices among the Plains Caddoans, these involve basically primary interment versus secondary (or scaffold?) burial. Historically, the Wichita, Pawnee, and Arikara all buried in the ground, usually soon after death. So far as evidence is available, this was the prevailing practice in protohistoric times as well, for example, in Lower Loup. The Arikara, from the recent observations by Ubelaker and Willey (1978), may have had scaffold burial in earlier times or as one step in the mortuary process.

Upper Republican and St. Helena materials are all from ossuaries—the remains, that is, from disarticulated skeletons

exposed after death with the bones eventually deposited in a communal or mass pit. Just how, or by what stages, and when, the Central Plains tradition peoples made the change from secondary to primary inhumation in protohistoric or late prehistoric times is one of the continuing problems with which archeologists are confronted.

The Arikara sample included by Ubelaker and Jantz in an earlier paper in this volume lists 17 crania from Mobridge (39WW1), a post-contact Coalescent (seventeenth century) community. For reasons that are entirely valid, their analysis included only crania collected in the recent comprehensive excavations of 1968-1970. These were all from primary interments of the usual historic Arikara type. It happens that from another burying ground at this site, its exact location undetermined, M. W. Stirling in 1923 collected a number of skeletons which occurred in presumably secondary situations. Stirling noted the disarticulated and incomplete skeletons here—forty individuals in eleven graves—as contrasted to the usually single interments in each of three other Arikara cemeteries in the same general neighborhood (Wedel 1955:86, 178). These Mobridge burials, moreover, were without European artifact associations, yielded very few artifacts of any kind, and therefore suggested an earlier time level. Crania recovered from this operation are still in the national collections, and one wonders whether they could be identified—either as aliens of different stock than the Ubelaker-Jantz sample, or as an Arikara-related population still practicing an older form of secondary burial.

During our 1976 discussions at the Smithsonian Institution, Dr. Lesser spoke with particular perceptiveness and clarity on Pawnee theology and philosophy. These were closely involved with the bundle system and ultimately with the stars, from which the people themselves were believed to have derived. In the growth and elaboration of this system of thought, the leaders may well have been the Skidi. During the old pre-horse and pre-epidemic days, when Pawnee culture came to flower and its population peaked, a rich and involved ceremonial life culminated. Actively supported and carried forward by an elaborate and well-organized priesthood, this began to fall apart when large scale raiding, warfare, and the general turmoil of the horse period swept over the Plains. Among the casualties of

these turbulent times and the resultant cultural breakdown were the priests and medicine men who were lost before they had time and opportunity to transmit to younger men the mysteries of the system (see also Lesser 1979:49). What information we have today comes largely from or through people who were outsiders or commoners rather than from the true and informed keepers of the secrets. By the 1800s, the old religious system, the rituals, and the priesthood were crumbling. Lesser noted that a key point in this system was the desire of the priests to bring order into human society, to tie up loose ends in thinking.

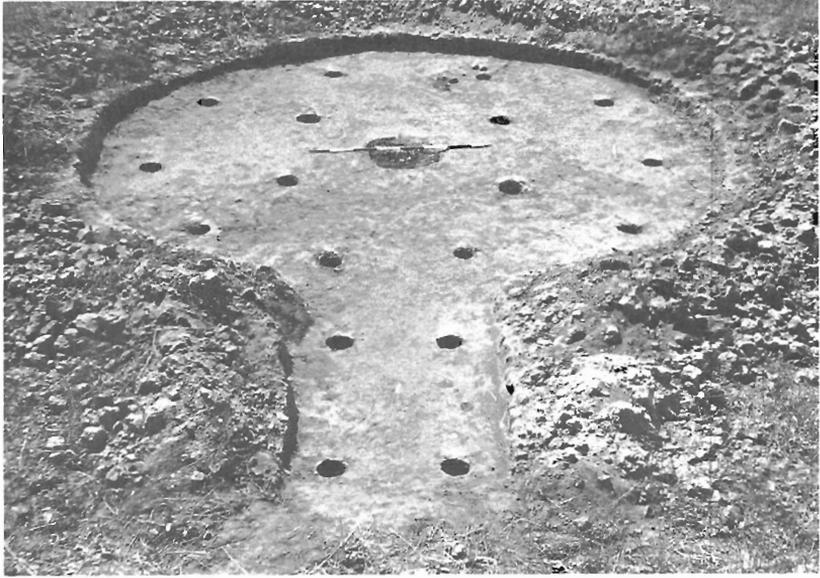
In the perspectives of archeology, these observations seem to me exciting and provocative. The intricate ceremonialism that went on during Lower Loup times and persisted into the final decades of the Pawnee stay in Nebraska is, of course, lost to us and in any case could not be reconstructed from archeology. But what has long been clear to the archeologist is the sort of thing Strong pointed out when he recognized the marked cultural differences between Lower Loup and historic Pawnee material culture and realized the significance of those differences. Specifically, they involved a marked technological and artistic superiority of Burkett and Wright site pottery and other artifacts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over the decadent nineteenth century crafts and industries as represented at post-1800 Pawnee sites. These superiorities will doubtless be greatly sharpened when non-ceramic materials are subjected to the sort of in-depth analysis that has been applied by Grange to the potterywares.

Plains archeologists were once accused of devoting a disproportionate share of their then limited time and resources to determining the shapes of the holes in the ground in which their subjects lived, specifically as to whether these were round or square. It has been demonstrated long since, of course, that these details do have historical significance. In the nature of things, we will always have more potsherds than house sites with which to experiment. I am certain, however, that more penetrating scrutiny than has yet been attempted will show that the variations in house construction may be a helpful guide to defining other patterns of behavior among the people involved. For example, there is extant information, much of it still unpublished, on 76 house floors, including 33 assigned to Lower Loup and 43 to historic Pawnee (Wedel 1979). In the Lower

Loup series, 80 percent have the traditional four-center post foundation and an equal or slightly higher proportion have the entrance opening due east. Among the post-1800 Pawnee houses, on the other hand, 86 percent have six, eight, or ten center posts, and 75 percent open toward the east, southeast, or south, that is, in the southeast quadrant. The four-post foundation is, of course, an old one in Plains house architecture, running back into Central Plains tradition times, but with predominantly "square" or subrectangular floors instead of circular and without the prevalently east-opening doorways.

The distinction between the strongly formalized Lower Loup house architecture and the less rigid patterns of the prehistoric Central Plains tradition involved a good deal more than merely altering the shape of the floor. Adjustments had to be made in the entire interior arrangement of support posts, in roof and wall construction, and probably in the furniture layout. For example, from Lower Loup times on, the patterns of posts around the floor to support the rafters and upper walls, were such as to accommodate a series of sleeping berths of the sort clearly described by nineteenth century observers among the Pawnee. There is no firm archeological evidence, so far as I am aware, of the manner in which bunks or berths or other sleeping facilities, if they were built in, were arranged in the prehistoric lodges. Nor is there any recurrent indication of possible household shrines or altars or sacred bundles or bison skulls placed at the rear of the lodge, that is, opposite the doorway.

The observed shift or relaxing of standards of house-building from Lower Loup to nineteenth century Pawnee can undoubtedly be fairly attributed to the general cultural collapse in Plains Village Indian society during the turbulent 1750-1850 period; but what of the equally striking change between Central Plains tradition times and Lower Loup? Further, what and where are the prehistoric antecedents for the cultural exuberance seen in Lower Loup—probably the star cult, the bundle concept, the priesthood, the elaborate ritual, and observably the care and evident pride reflected in quality of workmanship by the craftsmen, the potters, and so on? These things did not develop overnight. Much must have happened to bring about this florescence of culture, of thinking and doing, between ca. A.D. 1350 and 1550, but we still have no clear leads



*Small earthlodge floor at the Wright Site (25NC3), Nance County, with the earlier four center post pattern. This site may date 1625-1725 A.D. . . . (Below) Earthlodge floor at the Pike-Pawnee Village (25WT1), Webster County, with the central fireplace and eight main center posts of the historic period.*



to the details or to the stimuli responsible, or even to where it all happened.

In casting about for clues, it seems to me that we come around again to the question of the Skidi and their relationships to the South Band Pawnee and the Arikara. As has been pointed out in another paper in this volume, the Skidi appear to be no more closely related linguistically to the Arikara than to the South Band—indeed, the reverse may be true. With regard to physical type and morphology, we have essentially no definitive data on the possible relationships. In both cases, there is the caveat that we cannot be sure how far our interpretations are warped by the fact that the Skidi, the Arikara, and the South Band Pawnee of today are not the same entities as the vanished eighteenth or sixteenth century, or earlier, groups to whom we more or less freely apply those labels today.

In historic times, contemporary observers reacted variously to the Skidi as compared to the South Band groups when they visited their villages or came otherwise into contact with the Pawnee. For example, Captain John Bell (1957:118) of the Long expedition thought in 1820 that the Skidi village was “much cleaner,” beside having “a better system and regularity in the government—the inhabitants have a better appearance, are more industrious and active.” Twenty years later, Lt. J.H. Carleton (1943:100) of the dragoons, wrote that the lodges in the newly built Skidi village were “much more commodious” than those in the Grand Pawnee village from which he had just come, and he followed this with the interesting observation that “the women in this town appeared to be prettier than those of the other village.” Still later, Mrs. E.F. Platt, school teacher for the reservation Pawnee, regarded the Skidi (Platt 1892:141) as “superior to the other three bands. . .its members had a higher grade of intellect, [and] were more cleanly in their habits.” These were assuredly subjective impressions, not objectively measured assessments; but they suggest contemporary perceptions of the villagers which perhaps reflected actual differences of some sort between Skidi and non-Skidi. There is no indication that in these evaluations one observer was simply parroting an earlier one. It is only fair to note that by others the Skidi were regarded as the trouble-makers of the tribe, or as ranking somehow below other bands in the social order.

So, who were the Skidi and their immediate ancestors, and

why did contemporary observers rate them as distinct from the other Pawnee bands? Were they indeed the first division of Pawnee-speaking people to arrive in the Nebraska region? Did they have roots in the Chouteau phase peoples of the Middle Missouri, and so represent a backwash from the north in late prehistoric times? Did they really have the most elaborate and sophisticated star cult and ceremonial system, and the more orderly and stable social and political organization? Or was it only a better press among professional observers in the last hundred years or so?

In retrospect, it is clear that we have answered few of the questions with which this symposium opened. We have glimpsed some of the new data available in our field and have taken new looks at some of the older data, with, we trust, different biases and more favorable vantage points than those which colored previous views and interpretations. Overall, it seems to me that the Arikara and their background are in a generally healthy condition from the standpoint of systematic investigation, albeit with a great deal of still unworked basic data on hand for study and analysis. For the Pawnee and Wichita, whose homelands were largely bypassed in the early post-war federal water control program and whose archeological antecedents consequently did not share in the substantial funding of field work in the Missouri River Basin, there are still major lacks in basic data, including well controlled collections in archeology and physical anthropology on a scale commensurate with that available for the Arikara. For all three groups, opportunities for the collecting of additional linguistic and folklore materials, native texts, and the like, are sadly limited and fading fast. Archival research in both foreign and domestic repositories remains to be done for all, and this should be vigorously undertaken by competently trained and thoroughly qualified scholars. Finally, it can be suggested that, with recovery of such additional field data as can still be gotten in this day of rapid and widespread destruction of our cultural resources in the name of progress, and with wise application of tested and more penetrating analytical techniques to the yet unworked materials in storage here and there, it is perhaps possible for us even now to develop clearer and deeper insights into the past of the Plains Caddoan peoples than we now have.

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