

THE VISION EXPERIENCE:  
A NEO-EVOLUTIONARY STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

### THE VISION EXPERIENCE: A NEO-EVOLUTIONARY STUDY

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The vision experience was an important cultural phenomenon among the Indians who inhabited the greater Plains region of the United States and Canada during the 17th through 19th centuries. For the most part, previous discussions of this subject either have documented variations in its form and function or have interpreted it in terms of its psychological meanings and functions.

Using the ethnographic literature on the vision experience in societies of the Plains and of peripheral areas, this thesis attempts to demonstrate that variations in the meaning and function of the vision experience are systematically related to differences in selected social structural features. In so doing, it also tries to show that the vision experience was a form of rationale which served to justify a society's manner of distributing power, prestige and privilege. More generally, it endeavors to explain how variations in the vision experience are associated with evolutionary changes between three ecological types of societies, namely, peripheral hunting and gathering societies, True Plains societies and peripheral horticultural societies.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the vision experience can be viewed as an adaptive mechanism, whose meaning and manner of functional integration change in response to overall modifications in social structure and ultimately, ecology. More specifically, it has been found that the circumstances, recipients and meaning of visions changed regularly with alterations in modes of status allocation, basic social units, degree of social differentiation and leadership patterns. It was further found that divergence in the vision experience was related to structural variations between each of the three ecological types of societies. Conversely, similarities in the vision experience were found to be the result of convergence in structural features within each ecological type and in some instances between these types.



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**By**

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In a larger sense, this study was influenced by the empirical and theoretical contributions of several social scientists, particularly, Ruth Benedict, Gerhard Lenski, Symmes Oliver and Julian Steward. In addition, the ethnographic literature on Plains societies has provided the necessary data to support the problems undertaken in this thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction . . . . .	1
II.	The Relationship of the Vision Experience to Other Sociocultural Phenomena: A Conceptual Framework . .	16
III.	The Vision Experience in Peripheral Hunting and Gathering Societies . . . . .	39
IV.	The Vision Experience in True Plains Societies . . .	71
V.	The Vision Experience in Peripheral Farming Societies .	134
VI.	Conclusion . . . . .	180
	Bibliography . . . . .	197

## INTRODUCTION

The Indians who inhabited the Plains between the 17th and 19th centuries shared with other North American Indians an esteem for vision experiences. In all of the Plains societies and in most of those adjacent to this area, the vision experience was an institutionalized cultural phenomenon. As used in this thesis and in accord with the descriptive definitions of other anthropologists (Lowie, 1954: 170; Benedict, 1934: 39), the expression "vision experience" designates a culturally prescribed dream or hallucination, which was interpreted as a revelation of supernatural entities resulting in the recipients acquisition of power, advice or ritual privileges.

Although the vision experience was a universal phenomenon in North America, it displayed considerable variation in both form and function. The parameters of this variation are amply documented in a number of Ruth Benedict's works (1922; 1923; 1934), wherein she contended that it assumed a multiplicity of forms and as such, was impossible to describe in a uniform fashion. In reference to the Plains societies, she stated:

"Each tribe has its own distinctive version, a pattern so distinct that any random reference to fasting and vision in the native texts could almost without fear of mistake be assigned to the one particular tribe from which it was collected - at most to two or three which are in some way closely associated" (1922: 3).

Since the goal of this thesis is largely to explain in a systematic fashion how variations in the vision experience, on the Plains and in adjacent areas, are regularly related to other socio-cultural phenomena, it seems appropriate at this time to briefly discuss Benedict's position on this subject and to describe some limitations of her views.

Benedict, like her peers, during the historicalist-diffusionist phase of American Anthropology conceived of culture as an aggregation of traits which could be analyzed independently or in association with others. In her early studies (1922 & 1923), Benedict treated the vision experience as a discrete entity to be seen in its association with other cultural characteristics like: guardian-spirits, shamanism, puberty rites and so on. For the most part, her major contributions to the study of this phenomenon were to establish its distributional parameters in North America and to demonstrate variations in its relationship with other cultural factors in different societal contexts. The following paragraph best summarizes her aims and theoretical position with respect to the vision experience on the Plains:

"The very great diversity of the vision pattern even in one culture area such as the Plains is therefore evident. Not only are the general traits unevenly distributed and even entirely lacking in certain tribes, but local developments of one kind and another have overlaid the common pattern till it is at times hardly recognizable. A blanket classification under some such head as 'acquiring of guardian-spirits,' leads us nowhere. Correlated with the use or disuse of torture; with the existence of a shamanistic caste, or the free exercise of supernatural powers by all men; with the conception of visions as savings-bank securities or as contact with the compassion of Wakanda, - are and must be psychological attitudes of the utmost diversity which make Plains' religion a heterogeneity which defies classification. Animism, magic, mana-ism, religion - jostle each other in this one area; and after all these headings were





tabulated, the real diversities would still remain outside. For this reason, topical studies of religion must lack the rich variety of actuality, and imply a false simplicity. Is it not our first task to inquire as carefully as may be in definite areas to what things the religious experience attaches itself, and to estimate their heterogeneity and their indefinite multiplicity" (1922: 21) ?

The context, in which the above paragraph was written, is better understood if the reader takes into consideration that Benedict's essays were a reaction to a number of poorly formulated and undocumented generalizations on the vision experience prevalent during the early 1900's. An example of one such reaction will serve to illustrate this point. Justifiably, Benedict objected to Hutton Webster's generalization that visions were synonymous with puberty rites (1923: 49). As she demonstrated, the vision experience was indeed associated with puberty rites in a number of historically divergent societies, but these two distinct traits also existed independently of each other in many areas (i.e. the Plains). Therefore, she argued that it was false to assume that vision experiences were the inevitable forerunner of puberty rites (1923: 49-51). Although each of these traits are often not concomitants, Benedict does not attempt to explain why certain societies linked the two and others did not. Instead, she merely offers examples of variation in the combination or non-combination of these two traits.

The major problem with Benedict's interpretation is that she relies on the particularistic argument - that connections between visions and other cultural traits are "essentially fortuitous" and "the result of specific factors in the tribal situation" - to explain the lack of uniformity in this phenomenon's distribution (1923: 58).

Within the context of modern anthropological theory, one can certainly question the adequacy of Benedict's explanation for the vision experience's heterogeneity in different cultural contexts. The assumption that the relationship between visions and other sociocultural phenomena is "fortuitous" denies, at least implicitly, the possibility that systematic regularities can exist between these phenomena in historically divergent societies. It is important to note in this context that although Benedict recognized the existence of cross-cultural uniformities, her attempts to explain the existence of these parallels never went beyond historical fortuitousness. At this point it might be suggested that the existence of regularities between a large or limited number of societies was contrary to her major research goal, which was to prove the "indefinite multiplicity" of the vision experience and other religious phenomena.

One of the unfortunate consequences of her research strategy was that many interesting observations concerning the functional relationships between visions and other sociocultural characteristics were never developed. For instance, she noted that the occurrence of "vested rights and privileges" among certain Northwest Coast and Prairie Plains societies was probably related to their placing restrictions on who could receive visions. She further indicates that this was in direct contrast to the situation among High Plains societies, wherein the vision experience allowed for considerable, individual freedom in decision-making and action (1934: 83-84). The differences in the form of the vision between these two groups of societies is anchored in the fact that the vision



is a part of a society's unique configuration and cannot be understood without reference to all features that make up this pattern. Thus, instead of pursuing her important observation which deals with the relationship between a society's modes of status allocation and its visions, she moves on to demonstrate how the vision varies in its relationship to other parts of the society's configuration.

A major limitation of her approach was that the cultural characteristics with which she was dealing were all treated as if they were on the same level of abstraction. In other words, shamanism, puberty rites, economic factors and so on were all conceived as having equal status in a society's configuration, and consequently, they were all viewed as being related to the vision experience in equivalent degrees. Clearly, the fact that shamans may or may not have visions is certainly not on the same level of discourse as the fact that modes of status allocation may or may not be connected with the form the vision experience assumes in different societal contexts. While this author shares Benedict's tenet that cultural phenomena of the same generic type display cross-cultural diversity and that they are related to other sociocultural factors, I do not share her position that the variation is to be explained by relegating all of one's variables to the same level of abstraction or by assuming that the features under consideration are related to each other in the same degree.

Given the excellent and lengthy discussions of the vision experience in various ethnographies, it is notable that Benedict never presented a detailed interpretation of the meaning and functional integration of this phenomenon in any one society.

Instead, her essays on the vision appear as encyclopedic inventories in which the vision is related to other sociocultural features in an indiscriminate fashion and in which the variables under study are, for the most part, treated in abeyance of their larger sociocultural contexts. Thus, in spite of the fact that Benedict gathers together voluminous amounts of information on the extent to which the vision experience varies, cross-culturally, her efforts never resulted in a systematic explanation for this diversity. In spite of these general limitations, a number of interesting insights in her essays do serve as a baseline from which further research can be conducted.

Although the anthropological literature on vision experiences, particularly those of Plains societies, is abundant, most of it is confined to descriptive accounts in various ethnographies. Given the availability of rich source materials, it is striking that the phenomenon in question has not received extensive treatment since Benedict's works in 1922 and 1923. Instead, it has been given only limited attention in textbooks on religion or in the context of other empirical and theoretical issues. A number of authors, in addition to Benedict, have provided descriptive discussions and outlined the parameters of the vision's variations in particular culture areas. For instance, Lowie (1954) briefly discussed variable features of the vision experience on the Plains; Ray (1939) described cross-cultural differences in this phenomenon on the Plateau; and Underhill (1948) compared vision experiences in the greater Southwest and demonstrated that the patterning of complex ceremonies among the Zuni, Hopi and Pueblo were an extension of the structural formula in visions. Other authors, who have dealt with

the vision experience, in contrast to Benedict, have essentially avoided the issue of its heterogeneity. At least, they do not offer empirical and theoretical explanations for cross-cultural differences in its form and function. Rather, they have provided explanations for certain of its functions in a large or limited number of North American societies. For example, Pettit (1946) dealt with it as an educative experience; Erickson (1950) considered its relation to role transitions; and Wallace (1956) viewed it as a form of personal therapy. In the following chapter, the contributions of these and other authors will be discussed in more detail in the context of specific problems and issues.

In view of the present status of the literature on the vision experience, the goal of this thesis is to try to order a portion of the widely dispersed information on this phenomenon in the general Plains area so that variations as well as regularities in certain of its aspects can be explained. Attention will largely be focused on four specific aspects of this phenomenon: its circumstances, recipients, manifest content and functions. The circumstances describe the culturally defined situations under which visions are received and publically recognized. The recipients refers to the kinds of individuals who receive the vision and how this phenomenon is distributed among individuals occupying different status positions in the society. The manifest content relates to the manner in which the recipient and his larger society define and interpret the symbolic content and behavioral directives of the vision. And finally, the functions designate the manner in which the vision articulates with the larger sociocultural system or portions of it.

A cursory review of the ethnographic source materials on the





general Plains region suggested that it might be useful to examine variations in these aspects of the vision experience in the context of ecological and neo-evolutionary theory. The overall orientation of this thesis is very similar to Julian Steward's position, as expressed in the following statement:

"Multilinear evolution is essentially a methodology based on the assumption that significant regularities in cultural change occur, and it is concerned with the determination of cultural laws. Its method is empirical rather than deductive. It is inevitably concerned also with historical reconstruction, but it does not expect that historical data can be classified in universal stages. It is interested in particular cultures, but instead of finding local variations and diversity troublesome facts which force the frame of reference from the particular to the general, it deals only with those limited parallels, of form, function and sequence which have empirical validity" (1955: 18-19).

To put it differently, this thesis is primarily concerned with adaptations in the context of what Sahlins(1960) has referred to as specific evolution.

The position of Steward (1955), Service (1962), Lenski (1967) and other neo-evolutionists that social organization is an adaptive mechanism, which facilitates a society's adjustment to existing ecological conditions and the level of technological development has some interesting implications for the study of cultural phenomena such as the vision experience. First, if cultural phenomena, particularly that which is subsumed under the category "religion," legitimizes and facilitates the operation of the social structure, it might be argued that adaptive changes in the social structure create commensurate alterations in religious phenomena. In other words, religion (or that portion of culture which rests on supernatural premises) is viewed as an adaptive mechanism, as well, which changes in response to changes in social structures. Thus, it might also be



argued that if the manifest content of religion is a reflection of its social function, adaptive social structural changes should equally influence modifications in manifest content. Generally, my position approximates Goode's (1951) structural-functional analysis of primitive religion, wherein he indicated that religious rituals create linkages between religion, as a belief system, and "other spheres of action" (i.e. economy, political structure and social arrangements). In his analysis, he demonstrated through a comparison of five differently organized societies how changes in secular "spheres of action" are related to changes in ritual linkages and finally, to alterations in the symbolic content of the belief system. Although Goode does not advocate neo-evolutionary, interpretations, his framework provides a baseline from which structural-functional analysis of religious behavior can be synthesized with neo-evolutionary orientations.

In view of the preceeding assumption that religion is an adaptive mechanism, it is the position of this thesis that evolutionary continuums formulated for technological and social structural features can be extended to cultural, specifically religious phenomena, as well. Thus, if systematic changes of an evolutionary nature occur between hunting and gathering societies and horticulturalists in basic social units (Steward, 1955; Service, 1962), modes of status allocation and leadership patterns (Lenski, 1967), as a result of alterations in food supply, increased technological developments and so on, it might be expected that aspects of religion change in accordance with evolutionary modifications in other spheres. More specifically, it might be possible to demonstrate how changes in technology and social organization viewed in a sequence of

increasing complexity affect changes in the meaning and functional integration of religious phenomena.

At this point, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss other evolutionary considerations of religion, as they contrast or compare with the approach suggested in this thesis. In the past, evolutionary studies (Tylor, 1889; Frazer, 1922) viewed religion as a self-contained mechanism which evolved by its own volition. Aside from general criticisms directed at the arguments of the classical evolutionists, it is important to note that they did not attempt to interrelate their proposed schemes of religious evolution with evolutionary changes in other sectors of the total sociocultural system.

Since the writings of the early evolutionists, little has been done to order data on religious phenomena from an evolutionary perspective. Bellah (1952), Wallace (1967) and Swanson (1960), however, have developed evolutionary schemes or typologies for broad application. Bellah's framework, on the one hand, involves distinctions of an evolutionary nature that are based on symbolic systems of qualitatively different orders. Essentially, he demonstrates that religious symbol systems have evolved from compact to complex ones. Wallace's framework, on the other hand, is concerned with the identification of particular types of religion as distinguished from each other on the priority of a particular cult institution. These types can be viewed on a continuum from those which are composed of only individualistic and shamanic cult institutions to those in which ecclesiastical institutions predominate. Using Sahlin's (1960) distinction, both of these authors can be said to have employed general rather than specific evolutionary frameworks. Although both of these authors have made some interesting

observations about the evolution of religious phenomena and have related their typologies, in a general fashion, to evolutionary changes in other spheres of action, they do not for the most part explain specific linkages in any great detail.

Unlike these writers, Swanson systematically demonstrated the association between specific kinds of theological beliefs and particular aspects of the economy and social structure. Like Durkheim, Swanson argued that the supernatural can be seen as the symbolic equivalent of society. In this context, he considers dieties and spirits as equivalents of sovereign groups and views mana as corresponding to "primordial links" between men. Although Swanson does not explicitly formulate a developmental typology, many of the factors he interrelates have evolutionary implications. For instance, he demonstrates that beliefs in high gods are significantly related to the overall social complexity of a society and that beliefs in a number of superior gods is strongly associated with the ranked stratification of sovereign groups within the society (1960: 64-67). In general, his evidence not only supports the contention that religion is an adaptive mechanism but also gives credence to the position that religious phenomena can be viewed from the perspective of an evolutionary continuum.

Given the theoretical assumptions briefly outlined in the preceeding pages, the major goal of this thesis is to show how the form of the vision experience changed systematically in response to its functional relationship to social structures viewed in a sequence of increasing complexity. More specifically, it will try to understand how specific variations in the form and function of the vision experience are associated with different ecological types



of societies. The rationale for organizing sociocultural data within the framework of ecological or technological types is nicely expressed by Goldschmidt, who states:

"If we consider that the development of technology is the prime mover in social evolution and that it operates on the social level through changing population density, settlement patterns, economic well-being and the like, then it follows that this evolution is not simply a matter of stages of a set character. Rather, there are infinite degrees of development, and these in turn are subjected to factors external to the sociocultural system which here and there alter the underlying regularity. Yet, a taxonomy of societies based upon the manner in which a people exploit their environment to obtain their basic needs is not entirely off the mark, for broadly speaking and with these reservations in mind, these productive techniques fulfill the basic needs of human sustenance and set the conditions to which a host of secondary circumstances must conform. (1959: 132-133).

In this context, the ecological and technological aspects (e.g. nature of food supply, subsistence techniques, population size) of the societies under consideration will serve as the independent variables, while the aspects (manifest content, circumstances, recipients, social functions) of the vision experience will serve as dependent variables. The structural and organizational aspects (basic social units, modes of status allocation, leadership patterns), on the other hand, will be utilized as intervening variables to explain relationships within each type of society.

As indicated previously, attention will largely be directed to empirical evidence from those societies that inhabited the American and Canadian Plains between the 17th and 19th centuries or that utilized this environment during certain portions of the year (i.e. Oto and Kutenai). However, additional evidence will be presented from a number of peripheral societies, who did not utilize the Plains to serve as reference points for contrast and comparison.

One attempt to categorize groups in the greater Plains area on an ecological-technological basis was carried out by Symmes Oliver (1962), whose classification consisted of three types: peripheral hunters and gatherers, True Plains societies and peripheral farming groups. Oliver demonstrated that the differing technological and ecological basis of these types was reflected in certain distinctive variations in their social systems. He argues that True Plains societies, originally of either hunting and gathering (i.e. Comanche and Blackfoot) or farming (i.e. Teton Dakota and Cheyenne) backgrounds adapted their social organizations in similar fashions to meet the requirements of a new ecological situation, created largely by the acquisition of the horse, by the seasonal movements of the major food resource, buffalo, and by the periodic unity and dispersal of the bands. On the other hand, peripheral societies, who entered the Plains, periodically, although affected by the new developments in the central Plains region, maintained in part their respective emphasis on either hunting and gathering or farming. Hence, they also retained organizational features characteristic of their type. For the most part, the peripheral hunters and gathers (i.e. Lemhi and Kutenai) included those societies, who inhabited the region to the west and north of the central Plains, whereas the peripheral farming groups (i.e. Oto, Omaha, Pawnee) occupied the fertile farmlands to the east.

Although societies of a given type shared many organizational features due to similar ecological conditions, Oliver indicates that existing differences within each type are explainable in terms of differing historical backgrounds and/or ecological idiosyncracies. He points out, for example, that organizational differences between

True Plains societies are related to their former modes of existence. Depending on their previous origins, they shared particular organizational features with either the hunters and gatherers or farming groups.

Further, Oliver's study lends support to the neo-evolutionary position that societies can be placed on a continuum of increasing complexity. Thus, the peripheral farming groups exhibit greater complexity in their social organization than the peripheral hunting and gathering peoples. The True Plains societies, on the other hand, are seen as being in the middle range of this continuum.

With respect to the vision experience, it is the position of this thesis that the social organizational adaptations of True Plains and peripheral societies affected the form and function of the vision experience. Thus, given the briefly outlined conclusions of Oliver's study, we should expect certain uniformities to occur within each ecological type and that patterned differences will exist between them. These are explainable in terms of convergent or divergent structural aspects and ecological conditions. It is clear, however, that small variations in the vision experience will also exist within each of these ecological types. These differences can often be explained by idiosyncratic circumstances or historical background differences. While this thesis will note some of these differences particularly, between True Plains societies, it will attempt primarily to set forth major uniformities of the vision associated with the threefold ecological classification.

It must be made clear, however, that no attempt has been made in this thesis to cover all salient sociocultural features of the societies under concern. Instead, a number of organizational and

ecological features have been chosen on the basis of their direct relevance to the problem. A more detailed discussion of the socio-cultural aspects chosen for comparison is provided in the following chapter.

It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to our understanding of the vision experience's meaning and functional integration among North American groups, in general, and among Plains societies, in particular; that it will illustrate the systematic relation between ecology, social organization and religion; and that it can provide a model for the extension of neo-evolutionary frameworks to other religious features.

## Chapter II

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE VISION EXPERIENCE TO OTHER SOCIOCULTURAL PHENOMENA: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before inquiry into any subject, it is obvious that one must define and clarify the terms to be employed and the phenomena to be explained. Since the problem of concern in this thesis is essentially comparative in its orientation, it is necessary at the outset to delineate the sociocultural features chosen for comparison. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to define the aspects of the vision experience, social organization and ecology to be investigated in each of the three types of societies. In so doing, specific references will be made to literature referring to relevant subject matter and issues.

#### I. ASPECTS OF THE VISION EXPERIENCE

A cursory review of the literature on the vision experience in North America leads one to the conclusion that first, there are subtle disagreements over the range of behavior which legitimately constitute this referent and secondly, there are variations in interpretation with respect to its pertinent structural and functional aspects. However, while there are many ways to conceive the vision experience, these viewpoints are not always mutually exclusive. Rather, differences in definition and in explanation appear to stem from the frame of reference used and the type of vision experience under investigation. Since the vision experience displays considerable variation in different cultural contexts, it can be noted that

many definitions and explanations are appropriate under certain circumstances, but less suitable under others. Therefore, it must be made clear that it is not my purpose in the following pages to minimize the contributions of other authors on this topic, but rather to elaborate on certain of their insights and to offer alternative definitions and explanations.

In the introduction (p. 1), the vision experience was briefly defined as a religious activity, which involved "a culturally prescribed dream or hallucination interpreted as a revelation of supernatural entities resulting in the recipients acquisition of power, advice or ritual privileges." Although this definition is one which is generally accepted in the literature and one which has cross-cultural applicability, it describes, only in a general fashion, certain generic features of the phenomenon under concern. It is necessary therefore, in the following pages to discuss these core variables in a more precise manner. This discussion will proceed from two points of reference: First, certain structural aspects (i.e. circumstances, recipients, manifest content) will be outlined and defined, and secondly, the functional relationship of the vision experience to other sociocultural phenomena will be considered. Since Benedict (1922 & 1923) and others (Lowie, 1954; Ray, 1939; Underhill, 1948) have already documented the variation of these aspects in different cultural contexts, I will only briefly present certain of the divergencies in this chapter.

Before describing the structural aspects of the vision experience, it is necessary to make a conceptual distinction between idiosyncratic and institutionalized visions. Visions, if we view them merely as supernatural revelations in the form of a dream or



hallucination (D'Andrade, 1961: 313), occurred in all North American societies, and contrary to Benedict's assertion (1934: 89) existed among the "Appollonian" Pueblo of the Southwest (Eggan, D., 1952). Although visions may be universal phenomena in North America, they do not in all instances follow culturally prescribed patterns nor are they institutionalized in every social setting. The visions that occur among the Pueblo, for instance, are generally idiosyncratic forms of behavior, which have no culturally standardized meaning for the society at large. Although their manifest content may be influenced by the sociocultural context in which they occur, they are not explicitly defined by the society. In contrast, the symbolism and behavioral directives of institutionalized visions follow culturally prescribed patterns and articulate in a definable manner with other sociocultural spheres of action. This thesis, therefore, will not be concerned with visions, as idiosyncratic forms of behavior; rather, it will deal only with those visions, wherein circumstances, recipients and manifest content are associated with a specified range of standardized meanings in the society.

Ruth Benedict (1923: 26-27) noted that the North American Indians recognized two means of acquiring visions. On the one hand, visions were directly sought by the individual, often through various techniques of self-mortification (i.e. fasting and self-torture). On the other, visions could appear to individuals, "involuntarily," without any conscious effort to solicit them. Although these two means of acquisition could be recognized as legitimate ways to receive visions, in many instances, only one of the forms was in fact institutionalized. Among certain True Plains societies, for instance, the prescribed pattern was for males to seek visions under conditions of

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self-deprivation. Although involuntary visions did occur and were often socially recognized, they were usually viewed as less effective than sought after visions. Lowie (1925: 338) records an example of this, where a Crow recieved a vision during sleep, believed it ineffective, and later went through the prescribed pattern, which involved self-laceration, to recieve a socially acceptable vision. In contrast, certain of the peripheral societies in the Great Basin did not seem to institutionalize sought visions. Instead, culturally prescribed visions appeared, spontaneously, during sleep or while hunting (Steward, 1934: 423-438).

The range of possible circumstances under which sought or spontaneous visions could be acquired is defined on a temporal as well as spatial basis. By spatial, I am referring to the culturally prescribed occasions on which visions are legitimately received. Cross-cultural differences in the spatial variable are to be seen in terms of the type and variety of occasions. Thus, while one society may limit socially recognized visions to the occasion of a medicine bundle transfer, others will allow visions to be sought on a number of different occasions such as: prior to a raid or hunt, during mourning, for naming a child and so on. It must be indicated, however, that while visions may be sought on the occasion of a group ritual, like the Sun Dance, the actual solicitation occurs, privately. In general, it can be stated that the vision experience is a solitary religious activity, insofar as it is most often recieved under conditions of isolation rather than in the context of a group activity.

The temporal variable, on the other hand, refers to the appropriate time or times during which visions are sought or likely to be received, spontaneously. In most of the peripheral societies,



individuals commenced the quest for visions during childhood or early in adolescence, but solicitation would cease upon the receipt of an appropriate vision or at the onset of puberty (Benedict, 1922: 1-2). As Landes (1937: 118) indicates for the Rainy River Ojibway, children were sent on preparatory trials that could extend over a period of several years, but the actual receipt of a vision usually occurred only once. Although the solicitation of visions ceased at puberty in many societies, involuntary visions might be received during adulthood. In contrast, members of True Plains societies did not begin to solicit visions until the early years of adulthood, and in addition to the receipt of a "primary vision," were allowed to legitimately seek visions on a number of different occasions throughout adulthood (Benedict, 1922: 1 & 17).

If I understand Benedict correctly, the "primary vision" is analagous to the vision received at or around puberty in the peripheral societies. For the most part, the manifest content of "primary visions" is related more to the life-time goals and activities of an individual than to his participation in immediate and particular endeavors.

It must be indicated at this point that the circumstances under which an individual receives a vision is to be differentiated from the occasion and time at which the vision is publically recognized. Even though the receipt of a vision may occur under appropriate circumstances and the manifest content may conform to culturally prescribed patterns, these factors do not necessarily imply that the vision will be recognized by the society. In most North American societies, public recognition does not occur until such a time that the recipient can, as it were, validate his rights to a vision

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through such things as the exercise of personal abilities, display of wealth or ascription. Among the Sanpoil, for instance, "primary visions" are solicited during childhood. However, these visions are not openly discussed, revealed through songs or fetishes and displayed in spirit dances, until the recipient can force their validation through personal achievements (Ray, 1940: 186). And among the Oto, while any individual might receive a vision, socially recognized visions were usually confined to individuals whose vision could be validated through inherited rights and family wealth (Whitman, 1932).

The second aspect of the vision experience to be considered is the recipients. It is apparent, when reading the ethnographic literature, that variations in the vision experience occurred not only between different societies but amongst the members of the same society. Therefore, this thesis will address itself to the following questions: which individuals in the society are eligible to receive a vision, what kinds of vision, as defined by the manifest content, do they receive, and finally, how are visions distributed among individuals occupying different status positions in the society?

Societies in North America ranged from those in which all members were expected to receive visions through those in which visions, in general, were potentially available to all but certain ones restricted to a few, and finally, to those in which visions are the prerogative of specific persons. Aside from age, there are a number of different criteria, which North American societies employed to determine the eligibility of individuals with respect to all or particular visions. It must be indicated, however, that the vision experience was most often a male rather than a female pursuit. Although females were often allowed to receive visions, it was usually

not incumbent upon their status to do so. Since most of the literature on the vision experience deals with visions received by males, sex, as a criterion, will not be discussed in any detail. Therefore, in the following portions of this thesis, references to individuals, recipients or persons designate males, unless otherwise indicated.

Ascribed and/or achieved membership in a given sodality may determine whether or not an individual has the right to a vision. In some societies, all socially recognized visions were inherited and formally restricted to individuals on the basis of their position in certain kin-based sodalities. The literature on the True Plains societies suggests, on the other hand, that while there was, ideally, a free access to visions, certain kinds of visions were frequently restricted to religious practitioners or members of certain men's societies. For instance, among the Arapaho, only certain individuals on the basis of their prior achievements in warfare were allowed to receive visions prerequisite for entrance into a leadership sodality (Elkin, 1959: 238).

Whether or not visions are formally restricted on the basis of age, sex, prior achievements or family affiliations, it is clear from numerous ethnographic accounts that success in attaining visions varied amongst members in the same society. Thus, while visions may not be the prerogative of certain persons, it often happens that specific individuals on the basis of their prior achievements are more likely to receive visions than their less successful counterparts. Lowie (1935: 232) illustrates this in a quote from a Crow informant: "All who were well-to-do had visions...I was to be poor so I had no visions." Steward (1934: 423-438) suggests for the Owens

Valley Paiute that visions, although desired by and open to all males, were not received by everyone.

Although the relationship between the status of recipients and the manifest content of visions will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section of this chapter, it is worthwhile at this point to note that the vision is often an after the fact phenomenon, which does not really dictate future experiences but is based on past ones. Ray (1940: 186) and Lowie (1935: 241) suggest that the account a recipient gave of his vision was in all likelihood reconstructed to meet his adult status. Steward (1934: 423-438) and Erickson (1950: 152) note that the type of vision, as defined by manifest content, an individual receives was often conditioned by his past experiences. In accord with these authors, it is my position that who receives a vision and what kind of vision they receive, positively corresponds to their social status, as defined by specified, secular criteria. As I will attempt to demonstrate later, a primary function of the vision is to legitimate a society's mode of status allocation and concomitantly, its distribution of social powers and privileges.

The final aspect to be considered in this thesis is the manifest content or the manner in which the individual and his larger society interpreted the symbolism and behavioral directives of the vision experience. Since the interpretation of a vision's manifest content rested largely on beliefs in supernatural beings and powers, it is necessary to briefly describe the symbolic representation and meaning of these concepts. Although the societies in the general Plains region and in peripheral areas did not interpret the manifest content of visions in a uniform fashion, it is possible to delineate certain generic features common to a large number of these groups.



Within the respective belief systems of these societies, there existed a wide variety of supernatural beings, some of which frequently manifested themselves in visions. These beings could represent vaguely defined entities, concrete conceptions of fauna, flora and physical objects, or highly personified beings in human forms. Despite variations in their physical representation, all manifested some degree of personification; they could talk, feel, think and/or act in a human-like manner. For the most part, supernatural beings represented in visions can be classified as animistic spirits in opposition to a class of powerful gods or dieties. In the sense that Tylor (1971: 9) used it, animism refers to beliefs in the existence of numerous personified spirits whose powers and abilities are specific and limited.

The nature of these spirits has often been described as "personal" in that the spirits were identified with specific individuals and granted their recipients personal favors. There are, however, spirits who may be described as "social" because they were symbolically associated with collective groups like men's societies, clans, lineages and so on, and because they were related to the social group to which the recipient will or does belong. Moreover, when "social" spirits appear in visions, they usually bestow favors phrased as ritual privileges, ceremonial instructions and so on, all of which have collective significance. Societies in North America may range from those wherein the spirits revealed in visions are predominately "personal" through those wherein "social" spirits prevail and finally, to those, wherein both forms may occur.

The spirits manifested in visions have also been described as guardian-spirits (Benedict, 1923). This expression has served

as an all-encompassing rubric under which is subsumed most of the animistic spirits in North America. Unfortunately, this term has been loosely, and in some instances, mistakenly applied to spirits present in visions. While it is certainly normative for some societies to view these spirits as guardians in its literal sense, it is not so in others. Protection is only one of the many roles that spirits could assume vis á vis their suppliants. In reaction to Benedict's use of the term "guardian-spirit," Jacobs (1964:266) argues that the animistic spirits in North America are projections of various kinds of secular relationships, and will be viewed in accordance with the nature of particular alignments that are important in the society. As he illustrates, they need not be protective or authoritative figures, but could equally be viewed and addressed as a brother, sweetheart or peer. In fact, it is even possible for such spirits to be conceived as malfarious. Among the Winnebago, for instance, prior to the appearance of a benevolent spirit, evil beings might be manifested in visions to dissuade the recipient from his quest (Radin, 1937: 162). Jacobs' idea is certainly supported by the study of Spiro and D'Andrade (1958: 456-466), wherein they demonstrated that a society's attitudes towards its gods are largely reflections of the child-parent relationship. Since North American societies differ with respect to behavior characterizing a given social relationship (i.e. parent and child), it should be expected that conceptions of these animistic beings will also vary.

Although this thesis does not deny the existence of varying conceptualizations concerning the suppliant-spirit relationship, attention will be directed towards their function as benefactors. Throughout North America, the vision conformed to a formula wherein

a supernatural being would appear to the recipient and bestow upon him various supernatural favors (Benedict, 1922: 1). As Benedict rightly argued, attempts to enter into relationships with spirits were not the primary purposes of the vision experience. Rather, these relationships were viewed merely as means for persons to gain access to supernatural powers and other necessary favors. Therefore, these spirits, in addition to other functions, can be seen as primarily serving the individual in an intermediary capacity.

While the spirits represented in visions were often believed to have greater access than humans to certain kinds of supernatural powers, they were not necessarily viewed as their ultimate source. In many instances, visions involved direct symbolic representations of conferred favors and did not contain or embody intermediary spirits. If the primary purpose of visions was not to enter into relationships with supernatural beings, the question arises as to what was its raison d'etre. In accordance with Benedict (1922: 17; 1923: 28) and others, this author subscribes to the idea that the vision experience was primarily a means through which supernatural powers and favors were acquired. Since beliefs in supernatural powers were central features of the religious belief systems in the general Plains region, it is imperative that we understand the basic premises upon which this concept rested and its relationship to the vision experience.

Generally speaking, supernatural power was viewed as an omnipresent and impersonal force, which could be embodied in material objects, natural phenomena, human beings and supernatural entities. In the vocabularies of most North American Indian societies, there exists equivalent words or phrases to denote this power, which variously served to describe objects, qualities, states or actions.

Moreover, the expressions for power could be phrased as nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs (Lowie, 1954: 17).

Power received in a vision could be interpreted, for instance, in a personal manner. In this sense, it might be conceived as a quality specific to certain spirits and embodied in certain individuals in the society. As a quality, personal forms of power were related, on the one hand, to abilities, skills or talents of individuals and spirits in one or many endeavors like hunting, curing warfare, gambling, love-making and so on. On the other hand, power was conceived less as an ability but more as a generalized kind of luck or success in one or more of the above endeavors. Moreover, personal, supernatural powers might be considered the private possession of individuals not to be openly discussed much less transferred.

However, when personal forms of power are in addition described as a form of wealth, they often became transferable commodities that could be variously sold, given-away or bequeathed. In this instance, the power an individual possessed or could make use of was usually embodied in material objects like personally owned medicine bundles and other paraphernalia rather than embodied merely as a quality in the individual. Most, if not all, medicine bundles or tokens owned by individuals were initially inspired through a vision, and could be considered tangible symbols of the power or powers an individual controlled.

Secondly, supernatural power could be interpreted in a collective manner. In this sense, it was viewed as the quality or possession of a sodality or the entire society. When a person received a vision symbolizing collectively owned power, he was usually granted privileges or rights over its control and/or instructions

for its use. Moreover, rights to these powers are not received from personal spirits, but from spirits that are often symbolic representations of social groupings like clans, lineages, men's societies and so on. Further, collective powers may be described as a form of wealth and embodied in material objects like medicine bundles, shield emblems or crests. Here, however, while their care and management are entrusted to a particular individual, they are owned by a social group or the entire society. It is interesting to note that specific and ritualized kinds of visions are often required of individuals before they can assume control of collectively owned bundles.

It should also be noted that power received through a vision experience could be viewed as either the permanent or temporary possession, quality or privilege of an individual. If permanent, the individual retained rights to personally or collectively defined powers throughout his life time. In contrast, many visions granted their recipients powers that could be used only during the duration of a particular event. Some of these conceptual differences can be illustrated by reference to the Crow, wherein an individual may receive personal power that will enable him to be a talented and successful warrior, he may also acquire rights over collectively owned powers embodied in a medicine bundle, and finally, he may be granted power which might enable him to successfully seek revenge (Lowie, 1935). As visions and the power they bestow rest on a temporal-activity continuum, they also can be viewed on a spatial-activity continuum. Thus, just as visions may or may not be limited in time, they can be limited to certain activities or they can be more generalized encompassing a variety of actions.

In so far as the vision experience was interpreted in terms of

the revealed powers, and in some cases, the advice of a personified spirit, the usages of supernatural power can be discussed in the context of the vision's behavioral directives. In general, it can be said that the use and/or possession of power in North America implied an individual's or group's control and manipulation of phenomena in their behavioral environment for personal and/or collective ends. Essentially, cross-cultural differences are to be found with respect to who or what was being controlled and who was given the prerogative of controlling. While the vision experience was an individualistic religious activity rather than a collective ritual or ceremony and while the behavioral directives of visions indicate, for the most part, the use and control of power by the recipient, supernatural power revealed in visions might be directed towards either individual or group ends. For instance, among the Mandan, an individual might receive a vision which directed him in the use of a medicine bundle owned by his lineage. However, while he is instructed in the ceremonial use of this bundle, the power embodied in the bundle is ideally used for group interests not personal aggrandizement (Bowers, 1950: 170). Since powers acquired in visions could be applied to individual and/or group ends, I see no need to categorize the directives of the vision experience, as exclusively magical (i.e. personal). For this reason, I would disagree with Province's assumption (1955: 368) that the vision experience among Plains societies was "carried on purely individual ends."

In the foregoing discussion, I have only briefly outlined certain dimensions and variations in the circumstances, recipients and manifest content of the vision experience. In spite of certain variations in this phenomenon, it is possible to see visions as existing

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on a continuum from those wherein symbolism is individualistic and interpreted in a personal manner to those wherein symbolism is collective and understood within the context of social groups. Moreover the behavioral directives of visions may be applied to individual and/or community ends.

As indicated previously, a number of explanations have been proposed to account for the function of the vision experience in North American societies. The majority of these explanations, however, have taken the individual and psychological premises, as their primary points of reference. While this author views visions as providing a rationale for legitimizing the manner in which a society distributes its status, powers, and privileges, it is appropriate to view them within other theoretical frameworks.

Given the widespread occurrence of visions in North American societies, where hunting and/or warfare are institutionalized, a number of authors (Wallace: 1966; Petitt: 1946; D'Andrade: 1961; Underhill: 1948) have suggested that the search for power served to reduce stress and anxiety in situations of uncertainty. Generally, they argue that because anxieties over unpredictability and danger are likely to deter success in activities vital to the society, the vision experience can be seen as a mechanism which instills confidence in its members to effectuate control over their environment. Wallace (1966: 175), for instance, argues that technological rituals in general augment the mobilization of human effort in direct proportion to uncertainties and risks involved.

Wallace (1956: 272) has also related the existence of visions to anxieties over independence. Referring specifically to "visions, wherein guardian-spirits are manifested, he argues that the



protection and authority provided by parent-like, supernatural figures serve to displace unacceptable wishes for dependence and nurturance in societies, where males are forced or pressured to be self-reliant and independent. In a similar fashion, D'Andrade (1961: 320-327) concludes on the basis of comparative evidence that anxieties over independence and isolation are related to the presence of culturally patterned dreams involving the search for and control over supernatural powers. He further demonstrates that these types of dreams were more prevalent in hunting and gathering societies, where value was placed on independence, achievement and self-reliance than in horticultural societies where emphasis was placed on nurturance and obedience.

Although the existence of a number of visions can be explained by their functional relationship to anxieties over uncertainty, independence, isolation and so on, such explanations are not universally suited to all visions in North America. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, visions symbolizing power and personified spirits could occur in both hunting and gathering as well as horticultural societies, but their manifest content was phrased and interpreted in very different manners.

It has also been demonstrated in the literature (Wallace: 1956; Pettitt: 1946; Erickson: 1950) that visions facilitated role transition. Pettitt, for instance, stated in a manner analagous to D'Andrade that the vision experience was an educative mechanism, whose purpose was "a practical attempt to give greater assurance to achievements in life and to produce an independent, self-reliant personality." Although there is little doubt that anticipatory socialization is an important function of visions, particularly, those that occurred at

or during puberty, Petitt's description of the personality characteristics it supposedly reinforces is clearly limiting. Socio-psychological independence is certainly a desired male trait in many areas of North America, but it is not necessarily a valued feature in all societies that institutionalize visions. Moreover, as will be demonstrated visions in which the manifest content is highly formalized, do not appear to reinforce self-reliance. Rather, they often condition an individual for anchorage in or reliance upon certain social groupings. Therefore, while many visions prepare individuals for the assumption of new roles or statuses, they do not necessarily reinforce similar personality characteristics.

In contrast, but not in contradiction, to the previous functional explanations, this author would like to propose that the vision experience was a form of social identity, which served to legitimate an individual's actions and status in the community. Looking at the vision experience from the perspective of the society, it can be argued that visions were utilized to justify the manner in which the society distributed its status positions, secular powers and privileges. In general, it can be further said that visions and their derived power were a form of rationale, which explained to members of the society why certain individuals were more capable of assuming positions of privilege, prestige and authority.

There are several reasons, which can be briefly outlined at this point, for supporting this position. First, supernatural power can be seen as the symbolic equivalent of social power. As will be demonstrated in the forthcoming chapters, supernatural powers, like secular forms of power, were not distributed equally amongst members of the same society but differentially allocated to individuals on



on the basis of their ascribed and/or achieved position in the society. Thus, it does not appear fortuitous that persons, who occupy positions of prestige and leadership, are also the individuals, who ideally possess or have control over the most valued kinds of supernatural power. A good example of this differential distribution of supernatural power and its relation to the recipient's status is provided in Steward's autobiographies (1934) of two Owen's Valley Piante. The first Piante was very successful in life, as a hunter, gambler and lover; his reason for this success was explained by the fact that he had on various occasions received supernatural powers through spontaneous visions. In contrast, the second Piante was a failure in life, and consequently, he rationalized his lack of success, as a result of not having acquired power through a vision.

There are also a number of instances in the ethnographic literature, wherein the symbolism and behavioral directives of visions are directly related to the status position the recipient occupies. Erickson (1950), for instance, suggests that among the Dakota the visions of the Berdache and Heyoka facilitated their placement in status positions to which their previous experiences had already prepared them for. The relationship between visions and one's social status is clearly seen for the Mandan. In this instance, individuals receive inherited visions, whose manifest content is directly related to their ascribed membership in a kin-based sodality (Bowers, 1950: 156). The fact that visions are often after the fact phenomena is particularly important in this context. Although the acquisition of a vision is seen as a means to social power and privileges, it is obvious that the vision is also a sign of one's position in the society. Lowie (1935: 254), for instance,

indicates for the Crow that visions are often remolded by individuals to meet "the needs of the moment." And Ray (1940: 186) points out for the Sanpoil that visions, received at puberty are forgotten and not recalled until the recipient reaches adulthood. He further argues that "without conscious falsification" the details of the vision are reformulated to meet the circumstances under which the individual finds himself.

As indicated in a previous section of this chapter, after an individual received a vision, he often had to validate his right to it; hence, he must justify his claim to supernatural power. Thus, if visions do legitimate status, it can be argued that the credibility of one's claim to power directly corresponds to the position one occupies in the society. It would stand to reason, therefore, that an individual would not discuss the contents of his vision until he was assured of its validation.

It should also be indicated that visions were also used to validate decision-making in a number of groups. The Northern Shoshone, for instance, use visions to organize and plan for raids. However, as Lowie (1909: 226) points out, warriors were more likely to follow a leader whose visions had already been proven. The employment of visions in decision-making served to validate the rights of particular individuals make choices, particularly, in unpredictable activities like hunting and warfare.

The societies to be compared in this thesis vary in their modes of status allocation, leadership patterns, degree of social differentiation and basic social units. Thus, if the vision does in fact legitimate status, secular powers and privileges, it would be expected that systematic changes in social organization will create

modifications in the vision's form and function. In the following section of this chapter, I will briefly outline the organizational features to be compared and to set forth certain propositions concerning their functional relationship to the vision experience.

## II. ASPECTS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

A. Modes of Status Allocation - It has been demonstrated by Oliver (1962) and Lenski (1966) that very different kinds of criteria are used to allocate statuses in the three ecological types of societies to be considered in this thesis. In hunting and gathering societies, personal achievements are principal criteria; among True Plains societies, wealth and achievements in warfare are the basis for status conferral; and in the peripheral horticultural societies, statuses are largely defined by ascription and wealth. Since it can be demonstrated that visions and their derived powers also serve as a formal or ideal basis for status conferral, it should be expected that the eligibility of recipients, the symbolic representation of supernatural power and the behavioral directives of visions are functionally related to these groups modes of status allocation.

B. Leadership Patterns - Directly related to a society's mode of status allocation are its leadership patterns. Here attention will be directed to the individuals who are eligible to become leaders, to the kinds of privileges that accompany these positions, and to the degree of power or authority they exert in such statuses. Thus, it might be expected that there is a relationship between who is eligible to receive visions, hence, supernatural power, and who is eligible to assume positions of leadership. For instance, in societies where leadership positions are restricted to certain members on the basis of ascribed criteria, it would be expected that

visions are also restricted.

C. Social Differentiation - A society's degree of social differentiation is another variable to be considered in this thesis. The primary question under consideration is the relationship between inequalities in the distribution of property, wealth, secular powers and privileges and inequalities in the distribution of supernatural power. Clearly, in a society where there is little social differentiation it would be expected that supernatural powers might be more equally distributed and freely accessible than in a society with a highly formalized and stable ranking system, in which case supernatural power would likely be restricted to and exclusively controlled by certain segments of the society.

D. Basic Social Units - In this thesis, the basic social units of the societies under consideration range from simply organized societies with only nuclear families or bands to complexly organized societies where clans and other corporate, organizational devices exist. With respect to Swanson's (1964) hypothesis that the pantheon of supernatural beings reflect a society's organizational complexity, it might be expected that the personified supernatural beings manifested in visions are a reflection of basic structural units. Thus, in societies where individuals are primarily anchored in nuclear families and social independence is valued, the personified spirits might be interpreted in a personal manner and be more closely aligned to specific individuals than in societies where anchorage is in clans and dependence is stressed. Moreover, whether supernatural power is an individualistic representation or a collective one should reflect the importance of either personal or social (i.e. group) alignments. The distinction between "personal"

and "social" forms of the vision experience is clearly related to Cohen's (1964) proposition that transition rights in childhood and adolescence reflect the kinds of social units into which individuals are being anchored.

Since a number of different authors (Lenski, 1967; Steward, 1955; Service, 1962; Oliver, 1962) have demonstrated that these organizational variables systematically change in response to alterations in environmental potential and the level of technological development, it is to be expected that the vision experience will exhibit systematic variations that correspond with changes in modes of status allocation, leadership patterns, degree of social differentiation and basic social units. Since I will discuss the ecological and technological features in detail in the context of a discussion on each type of society, I will merely list these variables at this point. They are as follows: availability and predictability of food resources, basic subsistence activities, population size and concentration, level of economic surplus, and the presence or absence of warfare.

In the following three chapters, the ethnographic data relevant to the problems under consideration will be presented. A number of societies have been chosen for comparison on the basis of ready availability and completeness of data on vision experiences and other pertinent sociocultural features. An effort has been made to include in the sample a variety of societies, who differ with respect to both existing social institutions and ecological backgrounds. Each chapter, however, will deal only with the societies of a given ecological type. To recapitulate, the ecological types are: peripheral hunting and gathering societies, True Plains societies, and peripheral



farming societies. Further, these chapters are organized into three sections. The first section will include an introductory presentation of common or shared ecological and social organizational features. However, when important differences arise in these variables, as among True Plains societies, they will be indicated as well. This is followed by a section devoted to ethnographic descriptions of at least four representative societies. These separate descriptions are provided in order to give the reader an integrated picture of the relationship between the vision experience and social organization in particular societies. The final section will contain a general summary of the vision experience, wherein significant cross-cultural uniformities will be outlined and explained within the context of shared ecological and organizational features. Again, when apparent differences exist in the form and function of visions within a particular ecological type, these will be described and explained. The format of these chapters has been designed to provide a systematic framework upon which the final comparative analysis of all three types will rest.

### Chapter III

#### THE VISION EXPERIENCE IN PERIPHERAL HUNTING AND GATHERING SOCIETIES

The societies chosen for comparison in this chapter can be divided into two broad groups. The first group includes four societies that lived in areas peripheral to the Central Plains but did not participate in a Plains economy. These societies, the Western Shoshone of the Great Basin, the Sanpoil-Nespelem of the Plateau, the Slave of the Mackenzie Basin and the Rainy River Ojibway of the Woodlands area are fairly representative of hunting and gathering societies in their respective culture areas. As a group, these societies provide an interesting point of reference for contrasting certain sociocultural variables with True Plains societies. The second group of hunting and gathering societies, on the other hand, acquired horses and occupied the Central Plains region during certain seasons of the year. Thus, while the Kutenai and Northern Shoshone exhibited sociocultural characteristics more common to True Plains societies due to their periodic participation in a Plains way of life, they still displayed features that were more typical of hunting and gathering societies.

A. ECOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY - As their name implies, the subsistence techniques of these peoples primarily involves hunting, fishing, and/or gathering of wild plants. For the most part, societies in North America that employ hunting, fishing and gathering techniques live in environments of rather meager and unpredictable food resources. In addition, the existing plant and animal resources are

usually scattered over large territories necessitating a low density in human population. Moreover, besides the limited potentiality of food resources in their respective environments, it is also noted that the technology and means of preserving food resources in hunting and gathering societies is extremely limited. As such the ecological conditions under which these groups live is not conducive to the production and maintenance of a measurable surplus in either material items or food resources. There are, of course, differences between hunting and gathering groups in the nature of their technology and in the potentialities of their respective environments, but it can be said, for the most part, that the limitations of their environment and technology set very definite and similar parameters on the organization and complexity of their social units.

B. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION - Small, autonomous and self-sufficient bands, villages or families are the characteristic social units of simpler hunting and gathering groups in North America. The ecological conditions under which these groups lived precluded the development of social units larger than a family, band or village. First, the limited availability of food resources restricted the size of these social units from approximately fifty to one-hundred members (Steward, 1955: 125). However, under extremely favorable environmental conditions, larger groupings numbering up to two-hundred were known to have existed in groups like the Sanpoil-Nespelem. Secondly, since food resources are usually unpredictable, population size and membership in particular units are not constant, but fluctuate according to seasonal and overall changes in environmental conditions. Thus, an important characteristic of these social units is their organizational flexibility. Further, mobility is demanded of these groups in

situations where natural resources are scattered over large territories. Although most hunting and gathering groups are nomadic for a greater part of the year, semi-nomadic conditions may arise when favorable environmental conditions allow for partial curtailment of mobility. Consequently, in some instances, semi-permanent residence in villages or campsites develops for certain portions of the year; in other instances, conditions may allow for continued semi-permanent residence (Steward, 1936: 331-334). And finally, since subsistence activities did not require the cooperation of groups larger than the band or family, specialized and corporate organizational devices were usually not needed.

The environmental limitations imposed on hunting and gathering societies and the general composition of their basic social units permitted but little status differentiation considered in terms of both its horizontal and vertical dimensions. As Lenski (1967: 103) points out in his recent book, limited food resources and a fluid organization of subsistence units preclude the development of stratification based on either economic or political-power criteria. For the most part, societies falling into this category can be described as "egalitarian." This is true in two respects: 1) The available economic resources are usually equally distributed among the population; 2) All individuals have the potential right to assume positions of privilege and leadership.

Since the economic resources are limited, marked inequalities in their distribution would in all probability affect the overall survival of the group. In contrast, inequalities in the distribution of prestige and privilege have functional value. As Lenski states:

"Here there is no problem of short supply and inequality does not threaten the group's chances of survival...In other words, the benefits and honors enjoyed by a few represent a return for services rendered to the many under conditions free from any form of social coercion or man-made shortage" (1967: 104-105).

To put it differently, personal abilities and skills in activities crucial to the survival of a group are important assets in hunting and gathering societies. Aside from their survival value, they also serve as basis for social inequalities in prestige and influence. This as Lenski (1967: 105) indicates is a "more satisfying arrangement" than "potentially disastrous inequalities" in material items and food resources. Although some social inequalities do exist in these groups, the degree of social differentiation is much narrower than in other types of societies. All individuals, regardless of their kin-affiliations, and provided they possess requisite skills and talents, have the potential right to assume positions of prestige and privilege.

Since social inequalities are largely a function of individual differences in abilities or age and sex status within the family, social privileges and leadership positions were usually not hereditary prerogatives. Individuals had to continuously validate their claims through the exercise of their skills and talents. Although in the more affluent of these groups, there existed an incipient trend towards ascription, this pattern was weak and did not always run in particular family lines. Consequently, some of untalented fathers were not restricted from social privileges and leadership positions (Lenski, 1967: 110-111). Therefore, it can be stated that in general status positions were allocated on the basis of personal achievements rather than ascription or wealth.

Although social and political power is exercised by individuals in positions of prestige and leadership, by and large, this power is restricted to particular spheres of action. As such, the power of shamans, communal hunt leaders, and so on does not extend beyond the limits of their circumscribed activities. While generalized leadership positions do exist, they are usually accompanied by leadership positions of a more specialized nature. It must also be noted that leadership was often informal and spontaneous; it was usually not associated with a formal office. Moreover, the power these leaders exerted is better described as charismatic rather than authoritarian.

As Lenski argues:

"In hunting and gathering societies, prestige usually goes hand in hand with political influence. The reasons for this are not hard to find. Government by coercion is an impossibility in these societies. The leader of the group is not supported by a force of specialists in violence who are dependent on his favor and therefore motivated to follow his orders... Furthermore, dissatisfied followers may always desert their leader and attach themselves to another band. It follows, therefore, that government must be by persuasion" (1967: 106).

#### C. ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS

##### The Western Shoshone

This group, like other Shoshonean speaking peoples of the Great Basin, is known for the simplicity of its institutions and mode of organization. The nuclear family or at the most three families searched for food and lived by themselves for the greater part of the year (Steward, 1955: 105). During the winter, when pinon nuts were in abundance, twenty or more families camped together. However, as Steward (1955: 114) noted, "they were not tightly nucleated settlements," but encampments of widely scattered families within the pinon region. The only cooperative endeavors in subsistence were

periodic communal hunts of rabbits, antelope, mud hens, and deer. However, these took place only when there was sufficient game, when appropriate leaders were on hand, and when enough people could be gathered together to participate (1955: 109). Steward attributes this organizational simplicity to the general scarcity and unpredictability of food. He states:

"Shoshonean society was affected not only by the erratic and unpredictable occurrence of practically all principal foods and by the limited technical skills for harvesting and storing most of them, but it was also shaped by the predominant importance of wild vegetable products, which put a premium upon family separatism rather than upon co-operation" (1955: 107).

Property, like subsistence, activities, was largely restricted to individual families. Rights to natural resources "resulted from work expended by particular individuals or groups and from habitual use" (Steward, 1955: 107). Because of the unpredictability of food resources, families did not retain permanent or exclusive rights to any bounded territory. Instead, the Western Shoshone roamed large areas in an unpredictable fashion, which was determined by the availability of food resources (1955: 108).

Status among the Western Shoshone was not inherited, but was accorded to individuals on the basis of subsistence skills. Further, it was restricted and defined within the parameters of nuclear families or small encampments during the winter (Harris, 1940: 52). Leadership positions were largely limited to specialized hunting leaders known as "bosses" and to religious practitioners or shamans. These positions were acquired on the basis of skill and experience, and the power these leaders exercised was restricted to their particular spheres of action. As Harris states:

"It is apparent that the opportunities for social dominance were restricted. There were occasions





however, when certain individuals had somewhat more authority than others. These opportunities were vague and few. Only under exceptional circumstances would the leadership of one man be recognized in the cluster of camps which made up the winter community...The more common pattern, by far, was that of a winter village where each camp maintained its fundamental social, economic, and political autonomy" (1940: 52).

Religion, as Steward indicates, was primarily "a matter of individual concern" (1955: 114). Except for informal dances dedicated to fertility and general well-being, ceremonies and rituals propagated for group interests were nonexistent. The concept of buha, an omnipresent, supernatural force, was the central feature in Shoshonean religious beliefs. Harris states that "merely in order to live every person must possess the bird-like Buha, the life principle" (1940: 56). Further, all individuals had the right to acquire additional power beyond the minimum required for life. The additional power was obtained principally through two types of vision experiences. On the one hand, power was received through involuntary dreams, and on the other, it was deliberately sought in specific localities such as valleys, caves, and mountain passes. Power acquired through direct solicitation was considered more efficacious than that received in involuntary dreams (Harris, 1940: 57). Harris provides an ideal description of a sought vision experience, which is worth quoting. He states:

"The suppliant remained here overnight; if the "powers" desired that he receive Buha, he experienced the proper vision. If not, the individual was prevented from sleeping or frightened away by ogres or mountain dwarfs. If allowed to dream, he was directed by an unseen force, or as in one case, by a 'huge, handsome Indian whose face I could not see;' to follow certain instructions. The suppliant's ability in fulfilling these requirements often determined the strength, if not the type of Buha received. Each locality conferred by one kind of power so that no confusion could result. Upon awakening, the



individual would find certain paraphernalia; an eagle feather, a weasel skin, etc. which he used or displayed thereafter in curing or in the exercise of power" (1940: 58).

The "powers" or tutelaries represented in visions ranged from plants, clouds, animals to other types of natural phenomena. Each of these tutelaries, in turn, symbolized certain types of skills or abilities. Thus, bears represented strength in fighting, the wolf depicted hunting prowess, clouds indicated the ability to run fast and so on (Harris, 1940: 60).

Although all individuals hoped to contact these tutelaries and receive power from them in the form of special talents, not all individuals were fortunate enough to receive visions and hence, power. Power was distributed in varying degrees among the Shoshone with individuals possessing different amounts as well as kinds of power (Harris 1940: 57). It is interesting to note that an individual was not believed to possess power until such a time he could demonstrate its efficaciousness (Harris, 1940: 58). Further, the power an individual possessed was believed to benefit the recipient only, it could not be transferred through sale, inheritance or given-away (Steward, 1955: 114). The power a shaman received was, of course, an exception in that its use directly benefited others.

Among the Western Shoshone, visions and their derived power appear to justify the possession of personal abilities and skills. Further, as in the case of "bosses" they may serve to validate decision-making with respect to the time and place to initiate communal hunts (Steward, 1955: 114). In general, Shoshonean life afforded few opportunities to acquire permanent positions of influence and prestige. Therefore, the use of visions in the validation of leadership positions is limited to a few part-time specialists like shamans

and "bosses."

### The Northern Shoshone

This group provides an interesting contrast to the Western Shoshone because of certain notable differences in their social organization and vision experience. Around 1800 the Shoshone of Idaho and Wyoming acquired horses and proceeded to take up bison hunting and warfare. The previously dispersed families became united in "predatory bands," which functioned primarily "in raiding and defense against white reprisals" (Steward, 1955: 113). Although a large number of the families in this area amalgamated in bands, those who did not have horses continued to live according to the older pattern of dispersed family units (Lowie, 1909: 208). For the greater part of the year, the Northern Shoshone bands remained separated; however, Lowie (1909: 209) suggests that a few bands may have joined forces during the summer for communal Buffalo hunts.

In contrast to the Western Shoshone, the economic endeavors of the Northern groups were largely collective activities. During part of the year, they fished for salmon in the tributaries of the Columbia River. As many as 50 to 100 men were needed to trap fish in wiers and baskets. In addition, communal buffalo, rabbit and antelope hunts involved large cooperative endeavors (Lowie, 1909: 184-185). Furthermore, raiding parties usually contained between 10 and 15 men.

With the evident changes in the economy and organization of social units, transitions in status allocation and leadership patterns also took place. While skills in basic subsistence activities was still an important basis for status conferral, achievements in warfare became increasingly important determinants of privilege and prestige (Lowie, 1909: 208). Further, there were more opportunities for

individuals to gain permanent positions of influence. First, there existed in addition to the head chief, a group of "little" chiefs who attained their positions through successful exploits in warfare. The responsibilities of the head chief included: general director of the camp, recognition of visitors from other groups, presider at councils and organizer of hunting and fishing endeavors. The "little" chiefs, on the other hand, merely served in advisory capacities to the head chief and the group at large (Lowie, 1909: 208). Steward, (1943: 85) however, adds to the list of leaders among the Northern Shoshone with the inclusion of specialized hunt leaders, who organized and directed communal rabbit, buffalo and antelope hunts. Furthermore, shamans were accorded established positions of influence (Lowie, 1909: 218). However, as with the Western Shoshone, the power exercised by leaders was limited to their particular spheres of action, and can be described as a form of personal persuasion rather than absolute authority (Lowie, 1909: 208).

Among the Northern Shoshone ceremonial organization was extremely simple being limited to a number of informal dances. These were organized under the direction of dance leaders, whose informal authority was limited to this particular activity. The dances did not occur at definite times, but only when enough people congregated in any one place (Lowie, 1909: 206).

Although religion in general was still an individualistic matter, there are some significant differences in interpretation. Here, as among the Western Shoshone, an omnipresent supernatural power and a variety of tutelaries were central elements in religious behavior. Steward (1943: 92-95) reports that all Northern Shoshone children were expected to have special dreams of power to be interpreted by

shamans. In addition, early in adulthood males would deliberately seek visions in isolated places in the mountains under conditions of fasting without food and water. The power bestowed upon a recipient was usually revealed to the individual in the form of an animal or bird. For instance, wolves, bears, and coyotes were believed to confer war power, while beavers and eagles conferred doctoring power. Most often the power granted was for success in war, but it might also be granted for success in other endeavors like hunting and gambling. Again, shamans differed from laymen in the curative nature of their power. Lowie (1909: 225) notes that once power was acquired, it remained with an individual throughout his life time unless he disobeyed the advice of his guardian-spirits. In addition, to the power received through direct solicitation, power might come to an individual involuntarily, as in a dream; this could happen at any time during a person's life. Frequently, involuntary visions served as a basis from which men organized hunting or raiding parties (Lowie, 1909: 226). Further, supernatural power appears to more clearly validate claims to positions of social prestige and influence. Lowie (1909: 226) notes that the Northern Shoshone attributed the success of chiefs to their possession of supernatural power. In a sense, the conception of power was a convenient way to rationalize why one man was more capable than another to assume positions of leadership and to justify why certain men should organize others for a raid or hunt.

The fact that Northern Shoshone males as opposed to Western Shoshone were urged to deliberately seek power under conditions of self-mortification might imply, as Underhill (1948: 2) argues, a greater degree of unpredictability and irregularity in major

subsistence activities and warfare, but it might also imply greater group rather than individual pressures exerted upon males to succeed and to perform these activities well. Since success in secular activities is correlated with the possession of power and a band depends on the successful performance of certain of its members, it does not seem unreasonable to argue that supernatural power received by an individual also benefits all the members of the band. Thus, a warrior, who possesses strong war power, is a valuable asset to a band with predatory interests. Unlike, the Western Shoshone male, who is responsible only for his immediate family, the Northern Shoshone's activities in hunting and warfare reflect obligations to a larger collective group. Moreover, band organization demands certain formal modes of reciprocity between its members. Here services rendered to the group by a few are exchanged for positions of prestige and influence. The Western Shoshone, on the other hand, do not have formal modes of reciprocity; individuals provide for themselves and their immediate family or when need arises, to other families in the immediate vicinity (Steward, 1955: 220). Although the possession of supernatural power by an individual has important implications for both groups, it would appear that the social organization of the Northern Shoshone is more conducive to exerting group pressure on the individual to receive a vision, hence, supernatural power.

#### The Sanpoil-Nespelem

Sanpoil and Nespelem refer to a series of villages in the Plateau area of Washington, which are culturally and linguistically related. However, these designations do not refer to any sort of political unity, for each village was a politically independent unit (Ray, 1932: 15-17). The residence patterns of this area were

characterized by semi-permanent villages inhabited in the fall and winter but during the summer abandoned for temporary campsites near lucrative fishing spots. The population size of any one village was not stable, but in the course of several years could range from 25-200. As Ray points out, villages were extremely fluid organizations; he states:

"A person was bound in no way to any particular village. He was privileged to change his residence at any time, selecting as his new home any village of the group. Families often lived for a few years at one location, tired of it or became dissatisfied, and moved to another settlement. This might be continued indefinitely. On the other hand a certain proportion of the Sanpoil remained in their respective villages throughout life but this sedentary group was always in the minority" (1932: 109).

The semi-sedentary nature of Sanpoil and Nespelem social units is no doubt related to their major source of subsistence, fishing. The abundance of fish in certain areas of the Plateau and Northwest Coast is an important ecological variable, which allows for a number of organizational deviations from the ideal description of hunting and gathering societies in the introduction to this section. However, unlike the more prosperous societies on the Northwest Coast, the fish resources of the Sanpoil and Nespelem were limited and had to be supplemented during the winter months with animal foods acquired through hunting. Both subsistence activities, fishing and hunting, involved individualistic as well as communal techniques. The choice of technique appears to be related to the habits of the animals or fish (Ray, 1932: 57-71).

The distribution of economic resources was almost entirely on an egalitarian basis. Land, fishing places, and berry patches were not owned by individuals or villages, but shared by all individuals in the area. Food acquired in communal subsistence activities was





evenly distributed among all members, while food acquired by individuals did not have to be shared. Although natural resources were relatively plentiful in this area, Ray (1932: 25\_26) states that "wealth did not carry with it an advanced status." It is interesting to note, however, that shamans were considered wealthy men, who received sizable remunerations for their services (1932: 26). This is an interesting contrast to the Western Shoshone shamans, who as Harris (1940: 57) indicates, were expected to be "poor and humble" and received only trivial and worthless items for their services.

Privileges and prestige among the Sanpoil and Nespelem were assigned to individuals through achievements as well as ascription. The position of village headman was an hereditary position, which ran through certain family lines. His duties were largely advisory and consisted of settling disputes and organizing activities in the village. His power was extremely limited in view of the overall population fluctuations in village membership. Further, successful hunters or fishermen were accorded positions of leadership in communal subsistence activities. However, their authority and influence were limited to these activities (1940: 110-112). Shamans, on the other hand, assumed important social as well as political roles. Their prestigious status was achieved through the possession of both qualitatively and quantitatively greater supernatural power. In accordance with their possession of superior supernatural powers, they possessed considerable secular power and influence, which often superceded that of the village chief (Ray, 1940: 200-204).

However, to understand the distribution of secular privileges and prestige, it is necessary to discuss in detail the role of vision experiences among the Sanpoil and Nespelem. At a very early

age all boys as well as some girls were required to go on a series of vigils in isolated places without food and water. Children were continually sent on vigils until they came in contact with guardian-spirits in a vision, for failure to receive a vision denoted misfortune in adult life. As Ray states:

"At an early age every Sanpoil boy sought a guardian-spirit...No parent would jeopardize the future of his boy by permitting neglect in this matter. Only the meanest kind of existence could be anticipated by a young man who had passed puberty without having obtained a supernatural tutelary. Perhaps one man out of ten -certainly not more - failed in all attempts to gain a guardian-spirit" (1940: 182).

It is interesting to note that the guardian-spirits, themselves, were usually the symbolic representation of a specific kind of power. Thus, an eel might confer swimming power, a wood rat gave powers to get food easily, birds often bestowed overall luck and so on (1940: 182). A general description of the manifest content of visions is nicely summarized by Ray.

"The vision usually involved meeting a spirit in the guise of a human being. A conversation followed in which the spirit revealed its true identity and told the child when he reached adulthood he would be capable of doing certain things. The spirit customarily added that in times of trouble it would aid and guard him. General powers were conferred, such as gambling skill, but also specific talents were granted, for instance, skill in the stick game. Immunities were conferred; the novice was, for example, told that he not fear arrow wounds. The message of the spirit was sometimes expressed figuratively or symbolically. If a person were told that he was to be a cloud it meant he would be able to bring rain in times of drought. Or if told that he would be a stone it was interpreted to mean that he could not be injured. Before leaving, the spirit gave its charge a song, one entirely new and unique. While departing it changed to its true form" (1940: 183).

At the time of puberty vigils were discontinued; the manifest content of the vision forgotten and not recalled until the suppliant reached adulthood. Ray offers an interesting explanation for the

function of this repressional period, when he states:

"By the time the spirit returned the individual had more or less definitely found his place in the community. His talents were known to himself and to others, and his character likewise. The type of activity which was to predominate in his life was usually fixed. Now none of these factors could have been determined by the person's guardian-spirit experiences for they had not even been thought of since puberty. When recalled after this period of enforced forgetting the details of the experiences would naturally, without conscious falsification, be reconstructed to fit the situation in which the individual himself established" (1940: 185).

This statement nicely confirms an observation alluded to earlier in this thesis that visions are after the fact phenomena, which are frequently formulated and designed to meet the circumstances under which an individual finds himself. Thus, they serve to validate an individual's status in the community. Further, Ray reports that spirit power in order to be effective had to be exercised. Even in later life the power one possessed did not have to be discussed, for the community recognized an individual's power by their deeds, fetishes and behavioral characteristics (1940: 187).

At this point it should be noted that spirit power, or for that matter one's vision, were not transferrable. The power or powers one acquired were completely the result of individual endeavors. Individuals, particularly, shamans could possess various kinds of spirit power, hence a number of different spirit helpers. The number of spirit-helpers ranged from two or three to a shaman's 6 or 8 (1940: 183). The increased number of spirit-helpers for shamans is certainly in accord with their prestigious and powerful positions in the community.

The Winter dances, important communal events for members of various villages, illustrate a formally institutionalized device

in which one's powers could be displayed publically. Here individuals impersonated the behavior and actions of their spirits in dance. Thus, winter dances might be viewed as mechanisms which reinforced to the community the respective abilities, hence statuses of its members (Ray, 1940 : 190-195).

### The Kutenai

The Kutenai, also a Plateau peoples, were divided into two main groups, the "Upper River Peoples," and the "Lower River Peoples." This division was largely ecological because the Upper Kutenai were primarily bison hunters, while the Lower Kutenai were fishermen. These two divisions were in turn divided into a number of politically autonomous bands. Further, the Upper Kutenai lived in skin tipis and were nomadic, entering the True Plains area during the summer for bison hunts; whereas, the Lower Kutenai were semi-sedentary and occupied villages along major rivers in northeastern Montana (Turney-High, 1941: 15-17). It must be indicated at this point that the Upper Kutenai joined forces during the summer at the time of the annual Sun Dance; and they, along with the Flathead and the Nez Perce, were the only Plateau groups, who were organized into larger sociopolitical units (i.e. interband councils and men's sodalities) than the autonomous band or village. Ray (1939: 23) attributes the change in social organization to alterations in the mode of subsistence after the acquisition of the horse.

Subsistence activities in both divisions of the Kutenai were largely communal endeavors. The fishing of the Lower Kutenai involved large numbers of men to trap the fish during seasons of their abundance, and the hunting of deer, ducks and other animals in "drives" demanded large numbers of men. The buffalo hunts and raids of the Upper Kutenai were collective enterprises, as well. However, both



activities were organized by members of the band only; they did not involve a large amalgamated group of bands (Turney -High, 1941: 147-153).

Except for the individual ownership of horses and material possessions, territory was owned and controlled by each band. Moreover, food acquired by an individual was his own property, and food acquired in communal endeavors was evenly distributed among all members of the society. An interesting diversion from the societies thus far mentioned is the importance of wealth among the Upper Kutenai. Here we find that the ownership of horses has become an important basis for inequalities in the distribution of economic resources (1941: 196).

Leadership patterns and the allocation of statuses differed between these groups, and reflects certain differences between them in their modes of subsistence. Among the Lower Kutenai, status was largely a function of an individual's abilities in particular subsistence activities. However, there existed an incipient tendency for sons to inherit the leadership positions of their father, but if the sons were not capable other men could acquire the positions as well. Leadership was highly specialized with each leader being responsible for only certain clearly defined activities. Further, the authority of these leaders did not extend beyond the activities of which they were in charge. In this instance, the deer chief, duck chief, fish chief, band chief and shaman directed only endeavors under their control (1941: 151-154). Among the Upper Kutenai, on the other hand, two factors appear to determine an individual's status: 1) wealth individually acquired or inherited from one's family; and 2) personal achievements, particularly, in warfare. It is interesting to

note that, unlike the Sanpoil-Nespelem, families among the Upper Kutenai appear to be ranked according to their possession of horses and other valued goods (Turney-High, 1941: 151). Chiefs achieved their positions by having counted a standard number of five coups, and they had the privilege to attend informal councils, which functioned only in an advisory capacity. They were usually older men and did not exercise any power during hunts or raids. The organization of these activities was in the hands of individual hunters or warriors, who had reputations for being successful in their specific endeavors. Moreover, the warriors were organized into three men's sodalities entrance into which was based on personal achievements (1941: 146-151). The manner of status allocation and leadership patterns of the Kutenai is clearly distinct from other societies in the Plateau and for hunting and gathering societies, in general. Although, as will be seen in the discussion of True Plains societies, their organizational patterns are clearly related to the nature of the buffalo hunts, to the acquisition of horses and to participation in raids, they have been included under hunting and gathering societies because they only utilized the Plains environment during the summer months.

The Kutenai, like the Sanpoil-Nespelem, believed it was a social necessity for every individual to possess power. Turney-High (1941: 170) reports that girls as well as boys were encouraged to quest as early as six years of age. However, he indicates that it was more likely for boys to receive power and it was considered more of a necessity for them to possess it as well. Among both divisions of the Kutenai, children were taken to isolated places in the mountains by shamans or relatives, where they remained for periods of time without food or water. After several days, the instructor would return



to his charge to see if he or she had been in contact with the spirits. A child, who had not received a vision, was instructed to continue his vigil at a later time (1941: 170).

Again, like the Sanpoil-Nespelem, the spirits appear to the suppliant first in human form and reappear to reveal their true identity to the recipient. These spirits, in the form of an animal or bird, assumed a highly benevolent role vis a vis their suppliants. Moreover, they bestowed highly specialized powers for success in hunting, warfare, scouting, curing and so on (1941: 170-171). In addition, individuals may have contacts with more than one spirit in order to increase their powers. It is interesting to note that power was believed to diminish through use and had to be renewed periodically throughout one's life time (1941: 171). As Ray (1939: 79) points out, the Kutenai, unlike other Plateau groups, continuously sought power for specific endeavors such as raids, hunts and so on. However, once power was acquired, it was not discussed with other persons, but was usually guessed by the recipient's personal talents (Ray, 1939: 78).

Turney-High (1941: 170) also indicates that fathers often told their children the appropriate spirit to obtain; often the spirit revealed was in fact identical to that of the father. Given the tendency among the Lower Kutenai, in particular, to inherit the positions of their father, the acquisition of spirit and power like the father's no doubt further validated the son's claim to inherit a particular leadership position.

Another interesting characteristic of the Kutenai is that every individual owned one or more medicine bundles, which were token representations of the power the individual possessed. These bundles based on powers received in visions were never sold and could not be transferred except upon the death of the owner (1941: 173).

Unfortunately, neither Turney-High nor Ray in their discussions of the Kutenai vision experience ever indicate if there were differences in this phenomenon between the two divisions. This author, however, can infer on the basis of patterns among True Plains societies that the representation of power in a tangible object like a medicine bundle was in all probability a feature of the Upper Kutenai, where wealth becomes an important basis for status conferral. For in many True Plains societies, the medicine bundle was not only a sign of power but a sign of wealth as well. Further, the seeking of visions on recurring occasions during adulthood was possibly limited to the Upper Kutenai, who like True Plains societies were constantly faced with pressures from raids and reprisals. Unlike the Lower Kutenai, the Upper Kutenai during the summer months on the Plains undertook military precautions to protect their bands from the attacks of the Blackfoot and other groups indigenous to the True Plains (Turney-High, 1941: 142). The role of the vision experience in this group will be more clearly understood after the discussion of True Plains societies. Although many of the features of the Kutenai vision experience may be a product of diffusion, as Ray (1939) argues, the reason for their acceptance might be explained by the Kutenai's shifting emphasis in subsistence activities and changing social units and leadership patterns.

#### The Rainy River Ojibway

The Rainy River Ojibway of southern Ontario are like the Western Shoshone in their lack of social and political unity even at the band level. Landes (1937: 94-97) points out that families hunted on their own during the greater part of the year and only in the spring and summer did they congregate in larger social groupings. These

groupings, summer villages, however, were not political units but were formed purely for reasons of sociability.

The extreme autonomy of the Ojibway social units is directly related to the nature of their subsistence activities. Hunting, trapping and fishing were all conducted by individual families; communal economic activities did not exist. As Landes states, "each hunter is absolutely self-dependent never giving thought to aiding or competing with the hunters of other households" (1937: 88). It must be noted, however, that the autonomy of Ojibway families is probably not an aboriginal condition, but one which developed in response to the impact of the fur trade (Service, 1962: 84-86).

Unlike other groups thus far discussed, individual families own the territory upon which they hunt and trap, and they rarely trespass on the land of others. Landes indicates that "the absoluteness of individual ownership excludes even the closest relative" (1937: 88). Property is legitimately acquired by staking unclaimed land, by receiving it as a gift or through inheritance. However, lands used during the summer for hunting and collecting berries are allocated on a first come basis (Landes, 1937: 86-88).

Although individuals may receive prestige for their hunting abilities, leadership positions among the Ojibway are limited to warfare and religion. The leader of a raid is one who has had a series of visions, in which precise conditions for a future campaign are defined (Landes, 1932: 118). The manner in which such a position is acquired and the authority individuals exercise in such a position is best described by Landes.

"When a man has a vision depicting success in the warpath, he sends out invitations to the men in the village inviting them to attend a 'smoker' in his wigwam. When they arrive, he tells them of his

vision, and requests volunteers to follow him on the warpath. Those men volunteer who trust his reputation as a warrior and visionary, and agree to train for war through the following year. They seek visions, and then repeat their visions to the self-appointed captain to secure his approval. The next summer they meet and train again. The men rejected by the captain are supposed to be debarred from the expedition, for their presence, unempowered by the supernatural will threaten the safety of the entire party. Actually, any man who cares to flout the captain, does so" (1937: 110).

This is an excellent description of the use of visions to validate leadership in a particular, secular activity. Moreover, Landes indicates that "a man who has successfully captained a war party adds to his personal reputation and is facilitated in organizing a future party" (1937: 11).

The most influential position, however, among the Ojibway was that of the shaman, who again acquires his position by virtue of possessing supernatural power. There are various kinds of shamans each specializing in a different type of curing or divining. Many of these shamans hold positions in the MIDEwan society, wherein membership is based not only on the possession of power but on the ability of the individual to purchase a position. This society is usually graded in a hierarchical fashion on the basis of the relative powers each member possesses (1937: 99 & 111-112). As Landes (1937: 111) notes, it is only in the area of curing that Ojibway families are not self-sufficient and thus must secure the talents of a shaman. Since shamans require fees for their services and since payment is graded according to the prestige of the shaman, these individuals, as among the Sanpoil-Nespelem, are usually the wealthiest individuals in the area. Moreover, there is a tendency for this position to be inherited through specific family lines and validated by appropriate kinds of visions. Landes elaborates upon this point in the following

statement:

"Thus, compare a waif with a child born into a family of superior individuals. In such a family, though there is not investiture of the younger generation with the accomplishments of the older, there is a constant suggestion on all levels to take up the offices of the older generation" (1932: 116).

Among the Ojibway, the possession of supernatural power is the primary basis of status conferral (1937: 100). Visions, the primary means through which power is acquired, are open to all members of the society. Parents urge their children to seek visions as early as 6 or 7 years of age. The following paragraph from Landes best describes the vision experience during childhood:

"The boy's face is smeared with charcoal, and he is sent out without breakfast to play with his siblings or village mates. The very young child is made to abstain from one meal a day at intervals that are graduated to the fanaticism of the parents. The common fasting period is in the winter. Between eight and ten years, the child may fast a couple times a week for several weeks on end. It is insisted that he fast for knowledge and abilities or he will be helpless in the struggle for life. At puberty boys are sent out to seek the great vision" (1937: 117-118).

This particular description is an excellent example of how fasting and the quest for visions served as a mechanism in anticipatory socialization. In this case, the preparation of children to endure the winters and to provide for themselves under harsh conditions has an important socializing function. As for the "great vision," Landes provides another description which is worth quoting at this point.

"Alone he passes days of hunger and thirst, yearning for the realization of his hopes. If he is successful, he is vouchsafed a vision which is given him in the most personal terms: the supernatural benefactor says, 'My grandchild (or brother or sweetheart or any other relationship term which has emotional significance), I have taken pity upon you. I have seen you in your sufferings, and I have taken pity upon you. I will give you something to amuse yourself with.' And then a moving panorama unfolds in which the visionary sees what he will, henceforth, be able to practice.



He may see an act of divining, or a successful hunt or warpath. What he sees in his vision will come to pass. The gift, even a doctoring gift, need not be used for the good of people, though a few individuals say that they believe doctors receive their gifts in order to help people. It is given with the recommendation that it 'amuse' the beneficiary. The guardian spirit is not thought of as philanthropically minded. The beneficiary knows that his guardian expects a return for his gift, that is, periodical offerings of tobacco. Indeed, the relationship is one of purchaser and seller. The individual supernatural sells his powerful wares to individual supplicants in return for a periodic payment of tobacco" (1937: 97\_98).

Landes also notes that visions and their derived power were considered "exceedingly personal property." The contents of the vision are not discussed openly and as she states, "it is a compact between the beneficiary and the supernatural, and therefore, it should be confined to consultations with the supernatural" (1937: 117). The ownership of supernatural power parallels the ownership of secular forms of property in that individuals have "absolute rights over them" (1937: 99).

In addition to the primary vision received at or around the time of puberty, it appears from Landes accounts that spontaneous visions were received during adulthood. These visions variously served to validate raids, to initiate dances (which incidentally were owned and controlled by individuals), to name children and to decide on advantageous locations to hunt or trap.

In general, it can be stated that visions and their derived powers served, as a rationale among the Rainy River Ojibway, to justify awarding certain members prestige and to validate decision-making for immediate types of activities.

The Slave

The expression "Slave" refers to a linguistically and culturally defined Athapaskan group in the Mackenzie Basin of northern Canada, but it does not designate a sociopolitical entity. Like the Ojibway, the Slave were affected by the impact of the fur trade during the 17th through 19th centuries. The major social unit was the "micro-cosmic band," which included several related families. The band tended to be fluid with respect to the persistence of membership, and it was not a land owning unit (Honigmann, 1946: 64).

Again, the simplicity of the Slave's social unit can be attributed to the nature of the ecology and to the types of subsistence activities, which were the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals, particularly, moose, bear and beaver, as well as fishing (1946: 59). Honigmann (1946: 60) reports that the food resources were such as to preclude an economic surplus and extensive periods of leisure. Further, most subsistence activities were conducted by individuals, alone, rather than in the context of a group.

Property, in the form of land, was neither owned by the band or by individual families, but as among the Western Shoshone, rights were determined largely on the basis of individual use. Families, however, owned the materials used for subsistence, and individual hunters had rights over game and made decision with respect to its distribution (Honigmann, 1946: 52).

Skills and talents in subsistence activities appear to be the primary avenues to prestige among the Slave. Honigmann (1946: 63) indicates that the hunter's products were invested with considerable value. Successful hunting of game animals and the possession of supernatural powers appear to be the two primary criteria for status



conferral. Successful hunters exchanged their profits for prestige in the community. It was an "obligation," as Honigmann (1946: 65) puts it, for a successful hunter to share his gains with his less fortunate brethren. Leadership positions in the microcosmic band were invariably allocated on the basis of achievements in hunting. As Honigmann states;

"The leader was always a distinguished and successful hunter, the 'best man' of the group. As a hunter he was also apt to be the most determined man in the group, for 'only brave men would keep on after game without becoming downhearted.' The successful hunter was defined as one who 'stayed out' until he secured game. Success in hunting was not phrased as luck and, conversely, the poor hunter was not pitied for his bad luck but was apt to be condemned as lazy or 'no good.' The leader was not elected but assumed leadership by virtue of general ability and knowledge plus strength of character and supernatural power. The leader 'made' others follow him, the people often fearing a powerful man because he could use his power or medicine 'like a witch' (1946: 65).

Among the Slave all individuals except females solicited power in a formal manner. The nature of the quest is best described in the following account by Mason:

"The guardian spirit is obtained at a very early age. When a child is able to speak fairly well and to perform simple duties at about the age of five, he dreams or enters a trance unexpectedly. A spirit of an animal, of the wind, of water, or of some other phenomenon, appears and speaks to him and thereafter remains his protector, guardian, familiar spirit or medicine. It appears when called, protects him from misfortune and magic, helps him to confure, prophesy and to see and understand the invisible world" (1946: 38).

In general, the "animal people" were the major source of power, and they bestowed on their suppliants specific kinds of powers which functioned in hunting, curing and in other contexts. The nature of this power, however, was not revealed, and it was accompanied by the imposition of certain taboos upon the recipient

like not eating the meat of a certain animal (Honigmann, 1946: 76-77).

Mason reports that in later years one summons his spirit for aid and protection through particular songs and each spirit is known to have a special one. It is quite obvious that through these songs other individuals would know the power that a particular individual possessed. Riddington (1967) makes an interesting observation with respect to the use of visions and their derived power among the Beaver, a neighboring Athapaskan group. He states:

"Claims to supernatural power are based on vision quests experienced between weaning and puberty. Through these quests, the individual is supposed to acquire animal friends, songs, medicine bundles, and abilities and taboos related to the species specific behavior of the animal, but vision quest experiences are not used as political capital, are not publically announced, until the individual is in a position to force their validation... For a younger man the opportunity comes most often through his hunting ability. In a system of generalized reciprocity the hunter distributes meat to other members of his residential group, and these gifts lay an obligation on the recipients, who are forced to recognize the power of the giver" (1967: 4-5).

It is also interesting to note that in this area power could be used to control people. This was already mentioned with respect to leaders by Honigmann, but Mason (1946: 40) indicates that individuals who possessed sufficient power could use it to destroy others. This was particularly true of shamans, who had influential positions among the Slave. They, however, used their powers primarily in curing but they could be used in divining and in helping other individuals to regain their rapport with their guardians in the event they had disobeyed the taboos imposed on them. Riddington (1967: 6-7) also indicates that power among the Beaver, as among the Slave, allows individuals to kill and protects them from being killed. He argues that this conception is in opposition to the situation in

real life, wherein individuals often do not kill and may lose their life, if they are not able to kill animals. He states, "in the Beaver schedule of utilities the value placed on control is a function of its actual scarcity" (1967: 7).

#### D. THE VISION EXPERIENCE IN HUNTING AND GATHERING SOCIETIES

From the foregoing ethnographic descriptions, it is apparent that there are a number of striking uniformities in the form and function of the vision experience among hunting and gathering societies. While there are certain differences, as among the Upper Kutenai, this would appear to be related to specific changes in subsistence activities and historical influences.

With respect to the manifest content of visions, it is noted that in all of these societies the conferred powers symbolize personal skills and talents in specific activities such as hunting, warfare, curing and so on. This is directly in accord with the fact that status is allocated in these groups on the basis of personal achievements. While interpretation of power as a personal-achieved quality is functionally related to modes of status allocation, it is also, in a general way, a function of ecology and the nature of subsistence activities. Scarcity and unpredictability in food resources no doubt contributed to these societies placing a high premium on their members possessing supernatural powers related to vital activities. If these societies' male members do not possess requisite powers or skills that will enable them to kill game or ward off enemies, as the case may be, the group faces starvation or annihilation. Thus, power phrased as a talent or ability is not only important to the recipient's status mobility, but it is an asset, if not a necessity, in a community whose primary activities involve

grave subsistence stresses and uncertainties.

Moreover, since surplus in the form of wealth is negligible in these communities, it is highly unlikely that power would be defined or interpreted in such a manner. The Ojibway and Kutenai, however, are exceptions in a limited manner. Landes, as indicated previously, refers to power among the Ojibway as a form of private property, which is interesting in that they are also the only group where land is a form of private property. The Kutenai, as was noted, own horses and place value on powers embodied in medicine bundles, which is probably related to the emergence of wealth in the form of horses, a product of shifts in their modes of existence. Even though these societies appear to equate supernatural power with wealth, they still define it also in terms of skills and abilities.

It is also interesting to note that supernatural power in these societies is not transferrable; again the Ojibway and Kutenai, who may bequeath it, are exceptions. I would argue in this instance that since individual talents are not transferrable commodities in the sense that material resources are, visions as well cannot be alienated through transfer (i.e. sold or inherited).

In accordance with the fact that all members in hunting and gathering societies are potentially able to assume positions of prestige and privilege, all persons are eligible to receive visions, hence supernatural power. Therefore, visions as with secular privileges are not restricted to individuals occupying specific status positions or having certain kin affiliations. It is also important to remember that in most of these societies visions are not only desirable but a social necessity. This stands to reason in view of the fact that individual achievements are necessary to the survival



of the group.

However, while all members have access to visions, they differ in their success in attaining them and in the kinds of power they receive. Further, just as social inequalities in the distribution of power and privilege are a function of individual differences in skills and talents, so there exist inequalities in the distribution of personal, supernatural powers. In most of these societies, there is a direct correlation between the amount or kind of power one receives and one's status position in the community. Thus, among the Sanpoil and Kutenai, for instance, the most prestigious positions are occupied by persons with the greatest supernatural powers and among the Owen's Valley Piate (Steward: 1934) individuals who are not successful in life are believed to have no power.

The conception of spirits as personal tutelaries and the individualistic interpretation of power appear to be related to the fact that individuals are primarily anchored in nuclear families rather than in permanent social groups. Even though individuals associate with a particular band or village, it is not a permanent alignment. Band and village membership are flexible so that personal alignments seem to be based more on reciprocities resulting from the food quest and other vital activities than on one's membership in specified groups.

It is also important to note that in hunting and gathering societies there is a distinction between the time at which visions are sought and when they are reported by the recipient and recognized by the community. In most of the groups described, "primary visions" (those relating to the life long attributes of the individual) are solicited during childhood or adolescence. This period of initial

questing certainly functions as a mechanism in anticipatory socialization. However, these visions are not openly discussed, revealed through songs or material objects, and displayed in dances, until the recipient can legitimate his claim to supernatural power. Since powers revealed in the visions of hunting and gathering societies relate to personal abilities, the credibility of one's power or vision can only be verified through the public exercise of talents and skills. Even visions received, spontaneously, during adulthood are unlikely to be made publically known until the recipient can prove their validity.

Visions and their derived powers, in addition to validating one's status in the community, can serve as a basis for justifying the on-going decisions of members in the community. In a number of the previous descriptions, it was noted that visions were used to plan raids and to organize communal hunts. Again, the credibility of a person's vision is in direct proportion to the success or failure of the endeavor he is leading. Thus, it is more likely that individuals whose visions have proven true will be followed than those whose visions have proven false.

In summary, visions that occur among hunting and gathering societies legitimate personal abilities and achievements rarely ascription and ownership of property. Therefore, it can also be argued from the perspective of the society that they legitimate and reinforce modes of status allocation and leadership privileges, which rest on personal achievements in activities vital to the society.

## Chapter IV

### THE VISION EXPERIENCE IN TRUE PLAINS SOCIETIES

Between the 17th and 19th centuries the area of the Great Plains in the United States and Canada witnessed the arrival of populations from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, True Plains societies came from two distinctive backgrounds, one of hunting and gathering and another of incipient farming. Oliver (1962) demonstrated that the social organization of the True Plains societies represented a response, not only to their shared ecological situation, but also to their different historical backgrounds. The process of cultural continuity apparent in these societies makes for a heterogeneity of organizational structure that is difficult to summarize as simple modal patterns. Likewise, the form and function of the vision experience is not uniform but reflects to a certain extent the differing origins of these groups. The True Plains societies to be described in this chapter will be divided into two major groups (after Oliver, 1962); they include: the Comanche, Blackfoot and Assiniboiné, formally hunters and gatherers and the Crow, Teton Dakota, and Cheyenne, formally incipient horticulturalists. In addition, the Kiowa, whose origins are unknown, will be described.

A. ECOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY - With the introduction of the horse into the Plains area great changes took place in the subsistence economy of a number of societies that inhabited both the western portion and eastern periphery of the Plains. First, the rapid



mobility brought about by the horse made possible new and more efficient ways of hunting the major food resource in this area, the buffalo. The large scale, summer buffalo hunt is a good example of a more efficient technique provided by the availability of the horse. Secondly, the horse provided an impetus for the growth of the raiding complex, which developed in response to a need for more horses and to insure exclusive hunting privileges in a given territory. Moreover, the raiding complex, itself, became an important status conferring activity. The importance of the raiding complex among True Plains societies distinguishes them from Type I groups in that warfare, as an organized activity, was absent among most of the nomadic hunting and gathering societies. More importantly, however, both the horse and buffalo represented sources of riches that provided the basis for an economic surplus and a growth of inequality in wealth, factors which were negligible in Type I societies.

B. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION - The subsistence activities of True Plains societies differed according to the seasonal migrations of the buffalo. As a consequence, a dualism in modes of existence was required. In the winter and spring, when the buffalo were dispersed in small groups, subsistence activities were largely individualistic. At this time, the basic organizational units of True Plains societies were dispersed, nomadic and politically autonomous bands. Band organization, however, was not only a response to the cyclical movements of the buffalo but an adaptive consequence of the perilous conditions created by endemic raiding and warfare (Oliver, 1962: 53). The relationship between the ecological conditions of the Plains and the presence of band organization is nicely summarized by Eggan.

He states:

"The conditions of Plains life demanded a local group small enough to subsist by hunting and gathering, but large enough to furnish protection against hostile war parties and raids. The extended family was adequate for the first condition but was at the mercy of any war party; the tribe, on the other hand, was too unwieldy to act as an economic unit for very long. The band provided an adequate compromise; this is perhaps the most important reason for its almost universal presence in the Plains area" (1955: 85).

In contrast, during the summer and early fall, when the buffalo were congregated into large herds, communal subsistence techniques of a large scale were demanded. It was during this seasonal period that many of the autonomous bands gathered together into an organized camp circle, engaging in collective rituals and recreational activities and finally, participating in the communal buffalo hunt. The large population concentrations created by the coming together of various bands demanded organizational features to insure cooperation and social control. The buffalo hunt, itself, required coordinated activities and a carefully delineated division of labor; while in the camp circle, rivalries and arguments between autonomous bands had to be curtailed. Thus, while the True Plains societies shared with the groups of Type I, dispersed and nomadic, they diverged from these groups in that subsistence activities and concentrations of population during certain seasons of the year required corporate devices which transcended the capacities of the nomadic band or small kin group.

These corporate devices, importantly, were not organized on the basis of kinship. Clan organization was absent except among the Crow. As Olver (1962: 56) indicates, the flexibility and mobility demanded of True Plains societies produced a situation in which the proliferation of the kin principle, as a basis for

organization would be clearly inappropriate. He states:

"People were constantly on the move; individuals who belonged to one band might not see individuals who belonged to another band but once a year. People shifted from one band to another. Land was not owned in the same sense as land was owned among farming peoples. Corporate responsibility would have been very difficult to maintain among people as dispersed as were those on the Plains. In short, the can does not seem to be well suited to the necessities of Plains life" (1962: 56).

Instead, the True Plains societies developed a series of organizational devices on a non-kin basis. Among the devices that appear at this level are men's societies and governing councils. Organized primarily on military premises, the men's societies played an important integrating role among these groups. Specifically, they functioned in the maintenance of order in the camp circle; they policed communal hunts; and they provided a social context in which an individual's military achievements could be publically recognized. Furthermore, membership in these associations was frequently a prerequisite for the assumption of many leadership positions. It must be indicated, however, that these societies were, for the most part, only in operation during the summer months, when the bands joined together as a temporary sociopolitical unit. Likewise, the decision-making functions of the governing councils, to be discussed later, were limited to summer activities (Oliver, 1962: 56-58).

Additionally, there existed a number of societies organized on religious premises. These societies, like their military counterparts, are fraternities of persons, who share similar skills and abilities. More importantly, however, they share similar supernatural powers and often share similar visions. In some True Plains societies, shamanistic or dancing societies appear to parallel military sodalities because these societies are often divided



according to their members specialities as well as to their members relative success in particular roles. Further, like military societies, they are usually organized on a non-kin basis. Personal achievements and wealth, rather than ascription, tend to be primary determinants of membership. In some societies, like the Tobacco Society of the Crow, kinship also influences membership (Lowie, 1935: 274).

The ecological conditions and social situation of True Plains societies also created a number of changes in the allocation of statuses, privileges and prestige. As in hunting and gathering societies, the allocation of statuses on the basis of kin associations, for the most part, was absent. As will be described later, ascription was of some importance for the assumption of certain leadership positions in a number of True Plains societies of horticultural origins. Personal achievements, particularly in warfare, were a fundamental basis for status conferral. In addition, oratory skills, shamanistic talents and wisdom were considered important. Although personal achievements, as in hunting and gathering societies, are still important basis for distributing privileges and prestige, wealth acquired through individual efforts or received through extended family lines begins to influence and limit access to many status positions. It is quite apparent in a number of True Plains societies that personal achievements when not accompanied by wealth remained unrecognized. More specifically, it was the ownership of horses that provided an additional criterion for status acquisition and that created a system of rank based on inequalities in wealth and personal achievement. The importance of the horse among True Plains societies is best summarized by Oliver, when he states:

"It can be argued that both the custom of giving horses away and the custom of acquiring by raiding were

effective techniques in Plains societies. In a culture so dependent on horses for efficient hunting, it was of obvious desirability to have all hunters as well equipped with horses as possible. And the technique of stealing horses from other tribes offered a dual advantage; it increased tribal horse holdings of the successful raider at the same time it reduced the effectiveness of the competing society" (1962: 64).

It must be indicated, however, that the individual's possession of horses did not in itself confer prestige. It was required that horses be used as well as owned. Status, therefore, had to be validated by military performances as well as through generosity. Thus, it was more important in True Plains societies for a man to be generous with his horses than to merely accumulate them. Additionally, since horses could be inherited in some societies (i.e. Kiowa and Blackfoot), some families were in advantageous positions because of their control over large herds of horses. The unequal distribution of horses led to situations wherein wealthy families often had greater chances of gaining leadership than poorer ones because they could publicize their members achievements through the giving-away of horses. Although rank distinctions on the basis of wealth existed, they were not crystallized so as to preclude status mobility. Importantly, there existed, simultaneously, two channels for mobility, military achievements and the acquisition of horses. Thus, a boy from a poor family, who was a skilled warrior, could accumulate horses and have access to positions of leadership, as well.

Although all True Plains societies ranked individuals according to personal achievements and ownership of horses, they varied in the extent to which formal procedures were employed in the evaluation of individuals for the assumption of leadership positions



and for the right to gain entrance into certain men's societies. This variation among True Plains societies appears to be related to their differing historical backgrounds. As Oliver (1962: 58-61) indicates, individuals in societies of hunting and gathering backgrounds could assume positions of privilege and leadership, spontaneously, through their own efforts or with the help of extended kin. In contrast, many societies with horticultural origins had formally sanctioned offices, for which formal methods of selection were usually required. The different methods True Plains societies utilized to apportion leadership positions is best discussed in the context of patterns of leadership and authority among these groups.

Most societies of hunting and gathering backgrounds were characterized by informal leadership patterns. Their leaders arose, spontaneously, through achievements in warfare, ownership of horses, and personal charisma. Since members of bands could change residence at will, these leaders or more precisely, headmen had little power over band members. Their authority was largely contingent on the consent and will of the people under their jurisdiction. They functioned, primarily, in an advisory capacity helping to settle disputes and making decisions relating to the movements of the band and locations of campsites. During the summer months, these band leaders formed an amorphous governing council to advise and direct actions in the camp circle and on communal hunts. Although these governing councils were informally organized, they exhibited considerable power and authority in directing communal buffalo hunts and in maintaining order in the camp circle.

In contrast, among groups with horticultural backgrounds, formal patterns of leadership prevailed. In these societies, leaders



occupied positions, which approximated offices with a title and a specified set of privileges and responsibilities. The Cheyenne are an excellent example of a society, where elected leaders occupied formal offices and held these positions for prescribed periods of time (Hoebel, 1960: 37-48). Individuals were chosen or admitted to these offices on the basis of their personal achievements (i.e. military prowess, oratory skills, wisdom), generosity and in some instances, family affiliations. The summer councils were, in turn, formally organized with a definite set of offices, whose privileges and responsibilities were explicitly defined. These councils served primarily in an advisory capacity and had the power to enforce their authority through the support of police sodalities. As in the societies of hunting and gathering backgrounds, governing councils were only operative during summer months. For the rest of the year, each band had a leader who usually occupied a position on the summer council.

An important distinction, however, must be made between the so-called "peace" and "war" leaders. The peace leaders or band chiefs, on the one hand, were usually older men who had a reputation for military achievements, level-headed judgement, generosity and who controlled sufficient wealth. War leaders, on the other hand, were usually aspiring younger men who had gained a reputation for their bravery and strategy in raiding. In the former horticultural societies, it should be noted that raiding was not a spontaneously organized activity, as in former hunting and gathering societies. Rather, it was formally planned and permission of the presiding band chief was usually demanded. While in former hunting and gathering societies war leaders might exert more power and influence than peace leaders,

in societies of a horticultural origin there was usually a strict division of labor in terms of the rights, duties and parameters of authority that either type of leader could exert. It should be noted, however, that within the confines of raiding activities, war leaders had absolute authority over the members of their raiding party in all True Plains societies (Oliver, 1962: 58-62).

In addition to war and peace leaders, there existed as well other positions of privilege in Plains societies. For one, individuals could assume leadership positions in various men's societies which may or may not be coterminous with leadership positions at large. Moreover, leadership could be gained through skill in religious activities. In most True Plains societies, there were individuals or shamans reknowned for their skills in curing and/or general control over various kinds of supernatural power. Additionally, in some True Plains societies (i.e. Cheyenne and Teton Dakota) there were religious practionners who occupied formal offices. These individuals are better described as "priests" than "shamans," for they acquired their positions by gaining knowledge of ritual for communal purposes; they did not acquire their positions, as did most shamans, by virtue of their personal supernatural powers and abilities.

#### C. ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS

##### SOCIETIES OF HUNTING AND GATHERING ORIGINS

##### The Comanche

The Comanche are often considered an anomaly on the Plains because they lacked many of the institutionalized features characteristic of other societies in the area, such as: Sun Dances, men's societies, police and tribal governing councils (Oliver, 1962:71).



Moreover, the Comanche, unlike other Plains groups, remained in dispersed and politically autonomous bands, numbering between 40-100 families during the entire year. These deviations from basic Plains patterns are attributed to both historical and ecological factors. First, as indicated by Wallace and Hoebel (1954: 22), the Comanche entered the Plains from the Great Basin, where dispersed families or bands were basic social units and where corporate devices transcending the band were non-existent. Secondly, it has been suggested by Colson (1954: 13-14) that the ecological conditions of the Southern Plains were sufficiently different from the Northern Plains to have affected organizational patterns. More specifically, she states:

"The Comanche lived in the best buffalo country. The herds were widely spread, some hunting was possible right through the year. The summer hunt was not of the same crucial importance. Winter conditions were not so severe. The bands, the permanent local units, seem to have been larger than in the Northern Plains. In these circumstances, there was little need for tribal summer mobilization and there was none. Since the communal hunt was the activity of the band, and not a collection of bands, the normal organization of the band could operate to maintain order during the hunt"(1954:13).

In spite of their lack of certain characteristic organizational features, the Comanche participated fully in the horse-buffalo complex of the Plains. In fact, it is believed that at one time they were the wealthiest Plains tribe with one band reported to have had over 15,000 horses (Richardson, 1940: 23). Except for communal buffalo hunts during the summer, which involved an entire band, most Comanche activities were conducted on an individualistic basis. While men's dancing societies and medicine sodalities existed, they were not formalized, as in other Plains groups (Wallace and Hoebel, 1954: 276). Wallace and Hoebel's description of how raids were

organized is of interest; they state:

"The prosecution of warfare was a matter of individual discretion. Any Comanche was theoretically eligible to lead a war or raiding party, for there was no legal authority to restrain him. Although a vision was not deemed necessary as a sanction for starting a war party it was in many cases the effective stimulus. Should a man inexperienced in warfare and without an established reputation attempt to organize and lead, a party he would be unlikely to secure a following...On the other hand, a man whose qualities of bravery and leadership had been demonstrated in combat seldom found any difficulty in mustering a following when he announced his intention to go on the warpath. Nobody would risk leading a party without power...It was for each individual to determine for himself whether his own and the leader's power was working for success" (1954: 250).

Property, in the form of horses, was highly valued among the Comanche. With reference to the value placed on the ownership of horses, Wallace and Hoebel state:

"Horses constituted the most important type of property and the staple form of wealth. Because taking them under difficult conditions had a sociopsychological value, the acquisition of a large herd added greatly to the prestige of the owner. The owner of a large herd could make more munificent gifts to a prospective wife and members of her family and to other members of the tribe. Horses served also as an informal medium of exchange" (1954: 36).

Although Wallace and Hoebel do not explicitly indicate the extent of status inequalities according to wealth of individuals and families, there is a brief reference which indicates that the chief of one band owned half of the band's horses (1954: 39).

In addition to wealth, military achievements were a primary basis for according status, privileges and prestige. As Wallace and Hoebel state, "War honors provided the basis of the whole system of rank and social status in Comanche society" (1954: 245). In accordance with other Plains societies, the Comanche followed the institutionalized pattern of counting coup, as a basis for the public recognition of the warrior's deeds (1954: 246). Determinants

of status among the Comanche can be more fully illustrated by reference to the differential qualifications of band versus war leaders. In the following paragraph, Wallace and Hoebel nicely summarize the qualifications and duties of a band leader.

"The peace chief was known as "pa?ia:Bo" and each family encampment had its "pa?ia:Bo" whom we shall call either 'peace chief' or 'headman.' There was reluctance on the part of the Comanches to accord him formal recognition, but genuine recognition of his powers was reflected in the attention given to his advice and in the general subordination to his influence. It was one of these family headmen who was elevated to the position of head peace chief of the band; the remainder of the chiefs functioned as an advisory council for the band as a whole and at the same time maintained their positions as family headmen to their own group of followers...A peace chief rose to his position of leadership by combining generosity, kindness, evenness of temper, wisdom in council, and knowledge of his territory with good sense and the ability to speak persuasively on matters at issue. The man whose advice was most consistently followed was a peace chief for his group" (1954: 210-211).

In addition, there is some evidence to indicate that there was a tendency for sons of chiefs to take over their father's position. Moreover, the authority of the peace chief was nominal and advisory in nature, and as Wallace and Hoebel indicate, "he relied more upon personal influence than upon delegated authority" (1954: 211-212).

War leaders, as indicated previously, assumed their positions solely on the basis of their success and skill in raiding. Wallace and Hoebel indicate that there are differing opinions, as to the relative importance of civil and war leaders, they state that the "bulk of evidence indicates that the head civil chief was superior to the war chief in theory, but that if the civil chief was aged and decrepit and the war chief vigorous and popular, the authority of the civil chief would be more theoretical than real" (1954: 213). However, unlike the civil chief, the Comanche war leader exerted absolute power over individuals under his jurisdiction during a raid (1954: 275).

As among the groups in the Great Basin and in hunting and gathering societies in general, religion was primarily an individualistic undertaking. Except for the Beaver ceremony and Eagle dance, religious activities involved personal contacts with the supernatural; the vision experience being the fundamental means (1954: 175 & 155). As Wallace and Hoebel state, "psychic experiences were socially recognize and regarded as the very cornerstone of cultural life" (1954: 155).

Visions and their derived power were usually sought under conditions of self-mortification. Although the Comanches recognized unsought, involuntary visions, the power received from such a vision was not regarded as sufficient. Consequently, direct solicitation of visions was the prescribed form (1954: 155-156). Wallace and Hoebel provide an interesting description of the vision experience sought around puberty; they state:

"The initial vision quest was made about the time of puberty, before the youth had gone on the warpath for the first time. The vision-seeker was usually prepared by a local medicine man for the desired experience. As a form or symbol of purification, the candidate was required to bathe, in a preliminary step to seeking relations with the supernatural. It was necessary for the candidate to possess four things: a buffalo robe, a bone pipe, and the material for producing a light. Clad only in breechclout and moccasins, he set out to find a place far enough removed that would not disturb him, and still near enough to camp that it would not be too difficult to return when weak from hunger. He stopped four times on the way, each time smoking and praying. The spot selected was a solitary place at the top of a hill, or perhaps the site of a grave of a famous warrior or, more especially, of a medicine man who had the kind of power the candidate desired. ~~He was required to fast during the vigil, but unlike some Plains people, inflicted no self-torture.~~ The Comanche was confident of himself as a man he was reverent toward the power-giving spirits, but he felt no need to debase himself before them, to lacerate or mutilate himself in sacrificial appeasement. He was quietly humble before the sources of spiritual power, but he saw no call to demean himself in lamentation and self-pity...The regular

pattern called for the candidate to remain at his solitary watch for four days and nights, but the quest might be prolonged. He waited until he received a vision, or else abandoned the quest to try again at a later time when conditions were more propitious...The newly acquired guardian spoke and understood the language of his ward and possessed special attributes or powers which it could transfer...During the revelation, the guardian-spirit emphasized certain tabus and procedures which his ward must carefully follow; otherwise the medicine would not work or would cause evil" (1954: 154-156).

Spirits that appeared in visions could represent nearly all natural phenomena. The powers received in a vision were defined in terms of the qualities of specific spirits. For instance, eagles conferred power relating to warfare and deers as well as bears bestowed power effective in curing (1954: 203-204). Moreover, once received, power was represented in tangible objects, such as personal charms and medicine bags, which contained material representations of the various powers the owner controlled (1954: 159-160).

Importantly, the power received by the suppliant was not to be disclosed. Again, the Comanche like other societies so far discussed were pragmatists. As Wallace and Hoebel state, "The supreme test of power was whether a revelation worked...Not everyone who claimed supernatural gifts was signally successful. Either the medicine was not strong enough, or the protege did not carry out the commands accurately, or the vision-seeker had been maliciously deceived" (1954: 156).

While all Comanche males and some females possessed some sort of power, they varied in the kinds and the effectiveness of the powers they controlled. It should be noted that power could also be obtained through purchase or as a gift from a medicine man, if the individual could not acquire any for himself. This is quite unlike the situation among the Western Shoshone, where power could not be transferred.



Since the owner's power diminished with each transfer, usually only those who possessed large amounts of power could share it with others. Individuals, who were singled out for having exceptional powers in any of a variety of activities such as warfare or curing were called "medicine men" (1954: 160-161). Generally, the possession of supernatural power in Comanche society was correlated with one's prestige and as Wallace and Hoebel state, "the greater one's power, the greater prestige one achieved" (1954: 160).

Although supernatural power was transferred in Comanche society, it is not clear from Wallace and Hoebel's account, if power was ever bequeathed. In addition, there is no explicit indication whether or not the Comanche conceived of power as a form of wealth. My own impression is that they probably did. This can, however, be clarified in more detail after having discussed societies wherein supernatural power was definitely associated with individual or family wealth.

In general, supernatural power among the Comanche appears to signify an individual's success in particular activities. While this power was sought on initial quests at puberty, it is important to note that adults could seek power on recurring occasions, for mourning, for curing, for a raid, for a hunt and so on (1954: 160).

#### The Assiniboine

The Assiniboine, who resided in Northern Plains area of Canada, were organized in bands during the greater part of the year. As Rodnick states, "The band was the political unit in the Assiniboine life. It was autonomous in nature and completely sovereign. Individual affiliation with the band was loose, since it was relatively simple to form new bands, or for an individual to leave one and join another" (1938: 33). Although Oliver (1962: 27) argues on the basis

of Lowie and Jenness's accounts of the Assiniboine that the entire tribe joined forces in the summer, I am inclined to disagree on the basis of early historical accounts (see: Coues, 1897). While this is not the time to go into an elaborate defense of my position, early historical evidence indicates that a number of bands in contiguous areas not all bands linguistically or culturally identified as Assiniboine, formed a tribal unit during the summer. In view of the disparate locations of many Assiniboine bands in the Canadian Plains and their alignments with different "tribes" (i.e. Cree), I doubt that all bands were ever amalgamated into a unified tribe in the same sense as the Cheyenne. Moreover, when Assiniboine bands united during the summer they did not form a formal political organization, as each band remained relatively autonomous in the camp circle (Rodnick, 1938: 35).

Hunting activities were conducted on a communal basis, as in the great buffalo hunts during the summer, or by small parties and single hunters during the rest of the year (Lowie, 1909: 11). Raiding and warfare were spontaneous activities and formed on the basis of a dream or vision. Lowie (1909: 28) indicates that "a man would not offer to lead a war party, unless he had a dream to that effect... In each case, the dreamer would summon other young men and announce his dream. If they agreed to go, they got ready to start."

It is important to note that the Assiniboine, relatively speaking, were not a group rich in horses, and it is unlikely that individuals or families had large herds to the extent of the Comanche and Blackfoot. Prestige and privilege among the Assiniboine could be acquired through a variety of channels, which included: achievements in warfare, success in hunting, acquisition of horses and the possession of supernatural powers (Rodnick, 1938: 36). Rodnick,



however, points out that "there was no guarantee that rank once gained would continue to be held, since status was a purely relative matter in the judgment of the band, rank being defined in terms of competition for the cultural stamp of superiority" (1938: 36). In this context, it is important to note that the wealth of a boy's parents was an added asset because it helped to the child a head start in the competition for privileges and prestige (Rodnick, 1938: 36).

Band leaders among the Assiniboine achieved their authority on the basis of "personal characteristics: such as bravery, liberality, or the possession of wakan power" (Lowie, 1909: 35). Each band had a number of leaders with one being particularly outstanding. The bands held their own councils and on occasion interband councils were held. Rodnick nicely describes the organization and duties of such councils.

"The council was composed of those men within the band who had reached a high status through success in war and in the hunt. All men of family and all warriors whose prestige was considered of sufficient importance by band opinion were eligible to join in council meetings, therebeing no election to the office of councilor. The council was the legislative body of the band, no decisions being final unless by it" (1938: 35).

It is not apparent from the accounts of Lowie or Rodnick whether or not the Assiniboine had a "tribal" council nor is it apparent whether they had sodalities organized on a "tribal" basis. There was, however, a military society of noted warriors in each band, who acted as police in communal buffalo hunts, enforced decisions of the band council and supervised activities in the camp (Rodnick, 1938: 39). Lowie (1909) also indicates that there existed two major medicine societies and a number of dancing societies among the Assiniboine.

The available information on Assiniboine visions is extremely

sparse. Lowie's account (1909) indicates that all men received power via dreams or visions, and they also received instructions in the use of power from medicine men without solicitation. While solicitation of visions through means of self-mortification is a prescribed pattern among the Assiniboiné, it is important to note that among the Assiniboiné (Stoney) of Alberta individuals dream only when young receiving instructions from spirits who supposedly visit them only once (Lowie, 1928: 50). The nature of a quest involving direct solicitation is best illustrated by the following story from the Fort Belknap, Assiniboiné.

"Long ago people used to go and pray for mysterious power on the conical eminence at one extremity of Snake Butte. Frequently, the supplicants were attacked by snakes, and relatives going in search of them would only find their skeletons. Nevertheless, one young man, setting at naught the advice of his friends, decided to go there. With him he took his two-edged knife, stripped naked, and lay down. Suddenly, in the night, he heard a sound and beheld a large number of rattlesnakes approaching him. He did not know what to do. In his frenzy, he began cutting off strips of flesh from his own body, and fed them to the snakes. Then one very large snake rose from its hole, and thus addressed him. 'I am very thankful to you for feeding my children. None of the other men have done this before, that is why they were all devoured. Come, follow me, there is some one that wishes to speak to you.' The youth went down into the hole and was ushered to a large blue tent, encircled by two large snakes. He was welcomed by two curly-haired black men, who spoke Assiniboiné to him, and from them and the snakes he received religious instruction" (1909: 48).

Unfortunately, the Assiniboiné's conception of supernatural power and its relationship to particular spirits seen in visions is not made clear in Lowie's account. One can, however, infer from Dorsey's account (1894: 433-444) that the Assiniboiné conceived, on the one hand, a series of familiar spirits which bestowed on their supplicants specific kinds of power and on the other, a series of diety-like spirits which could grant highly specific types of power

as well as generalized powers of group interest.

Power among the Assiniboine could be represented in tangible objects like war-shields, war-shirts and war-charms; the former two objects contain designs which are representations of personal visions. Interestingly, these objects are buried when the owner dies. War-charms, on the other hand, are purchased from medicine men who predict the buyers future in raiding and warfare (Lowie, 1909: 30-32). Further, there are a series of bundles which are believed to embody powers of collective interest (i.e. Sun Dance bundle)(Lowie, 1909: 30-32).

In addition to visions relating to an individual's life-long activities, there also existed visions upon which dancing societies were founded (Lowie, 1909: 49). Whether or not entrance into these societies demanded specific visions is unclear from Lowie's account. It should be noted that innovative visions of the above sort are also to be found among the Comanche (Wallace and Hoebel, 1954: 216).

It is important to note that among the Assiniboine individuals who led the Sun Dance were required to have certain "prerequisite supernatural experiences" before the Sun Dance could begin. Very often, however, rights to lead a Sun Dance were transferred through paternal lines of descent and the necessary supernatural experiences were believed to more readily avail themselves to individuals in these descent lines (Lowie, 1909: 58).

While the information on Assiniboine visions is scanty, there are indications that the possession of supernatural power is associated with prestige, since as indicated previously one of the qualifications of a leader was to possess such power. Additionally, various activities could only be initiated when individuals had appropriate communications with the supernatural.

### The Blackfoot

The Blackfoot of Montana and Southern Alberta were divided into three major sections, the Blood, Piegean and the Blackfeet. These units were in turn divided into a number of politically autonomous bands, who remained dispersed for the major portion of the year. The importance of the band as a socioeconomic unit in Blackfoot society is best described by Steward, who states:

"The real economic and social unit of the Blackfoot is the band. These are groups centering around men and their male descendents and others who desire to join them. The band winters together, hunts together, and is entirely autonomous except for such special occasions as the Sun Dance or communal hunts when higher authority was instituted. To a slight degree, the band regulated marriage in that it was preferably though not necessarily exogamous and patrilocal... The idea of descent from a common ancestor, kinship and totemism are lacking among the Blackfoot, making it entirely incorrect to speak of their groups as gentes" (1934b: 7).

Hunting, as among the Comanche and Assiniboiné, was conducted on both a communal and an individualistic basis. During the summer, when the bands were united, the large scale buffalo hunt was the primary economic activity. For the rest of the year, small groups of men or individuals, alone, hunted buffalo and a number of other animals (Grinnell, 1962: 226-241). Further, raiding and warfare were conducted in small groups and were organized, informally, on the basis of a dream. As Grinnell puts it,

"Among the Blackfeet a war party usually, or often had its origin in a dream. Some man who has a dream, after he awakes tells of it. Perhaps he may say: 'I dreamed that on a certain stream is a herd of horses that have been given to me, and that I am going away to get. I am going to war. I shall go to that place and get my band of horses.' Then the men who know him, who believe that his medicine is strong and that he will have good luck, make up their minds to follow him" (1962: 250).

Among the Blackfoot, the primary means of status conferral was based on the ownership of horses. Although the counting of coup and recognition of military exploits were important, it was necessary to own horses to gain prestige and status in Blackfoot society (Ewers, 1955: 338). In fact, without horses, it would be impossible for a man to gain entrance into the higher ranked, age-graded sodalities and it would be impossible for him to assume positions of leadership. For example, Lowie (1928: 254) notes that it takes an individual much longer to gain entrance into sodalities by his own efforts than it does for an individual who comes from a family rich in horses. In addition to horses, the ownership of medicine bundles (objects which embodied supernatural power), to be discussed later, is another basis for conferring status. As Ewers (1955: 169) notes, men of distinction are usually those who own the most valued and greatest number of medicine bundles in the society. Since medicine bundles are transferred only through purchase and since horses are the medium of exchange, only those wealthy in horses can afford to accumulate large numbers of these bundles.

As a result of the emphasis placed on wealth in the form of horses and medicine bundles and as a result of the stabilization of wealth in certain families, leadership and other positions of prestige are increasingly limited to individuals from wealthy families. The assertion that personal achievements are likely to remain unrecognized when not accompanied by wealth certainly holds true for the Blackfoot.

The manner in which an individual acquires the position of band headman nicely illustrates the importance of wealth among the Blackfoot. Wissler provides a good summary statement of this process.



As he puts it,

"These head men may be considered as the social aristocracy, holding their place in society in the same indefinite and uncertain manner as social leaders in our own communities. Thus, we hear that no Blackfoot can aspire to be looked upon as headman unless he is able to entertain well, often invite others to his board, and make a practice of relieving the wants of his less fortunate band members. Such practices are sure to strain the aspirant's resources and many sink under it; but he who can meet all such demands soon acquires a place in the social life of the band that is often proof against ill fortunes of later years... Presently, he wakes up to the situation and entertains an ambition to become the leading headman of his band, or even of all bands. Then begins a campaign. He makes feasts, gives presents, buys medicines and supports ceremonies; thus making his home the center of social and ceremonial activities, the leadership of which he assumes. His rivals are stirred to activity also and the contest goes on apace. From observation, we believe that bankruptcy is the usual result; but, unless this comes at the very beginning of the effort, the aspirant acquires enough prestige to give him some claim to being headman for the rest of his days even though he becomes a hanger-on at the door of a younger aspirant" (1911: 23).

It is to be noted that the above statement nicely illustrates the fact that prestige and leadership is not accorded by the mere accumulation of wealth but by its redistribution.

It is to be noted that every band had a number of these headmen, one of which assumed the position of band chief (Wissler, 1911: 23). The principal tasks of headmen involved directing the movements of the bands and settling internal disputes. Their authority, however, was limited and rested largely on personal influence. Further, the band chief rarely made decisions without the advice and consent of other headmen in his band; to do so would endanger his already uncertain tenure (1911: 23-26).

In addition to positions of leadership in the autonomous bands, each of the three tribal units of the Blackfoot had a tribal chief, who was selected from among the band chiefs. Ewers (1955) describes

the role of this chief. He states:

"The most influential band chief became recognized as the head chief of the tribe. However, his rank was of little significance except during the period of the tribal encampment in summer. Even then his role was more that of chairman of the council of chiefs than of ruler of his people...The chiefs exercised little disciplinary power over their followers" (1955: 97).

It is also interesting to note that while the position of tribal chief was not hereditary, there was a tendency at least among the Pigeon for the chief's successors to come from his own band (Wissler, 1911: 25). Furthermore, the Blackfoot did not make a clear cut distinction between war and peace chiefs. Rather, certain headmen might have gained a reputation for achievements in warfare, but not necessarily all (1911: 26).

The tribal council of the Blackfoot was composed of band chiefs and other important leaders in the society. It was operative only during the summer and made decisions regarding matters in the camp circle and on communal buffalo hunts. This council's orders were enforced by organized men's societies, which functioned only during the summer policing the communal buffalo hunts and camp circle (1911: 26-27).

Although the Blackfoot have the most complex ritual scheme (at least as can be ascertained from the available literature) of any of the societies so far discussed, the vision experience is the basic religious element in the society and one from which more complex rituals are believed to have originated. Thus, the following discussion of Blackfoot visions will not only entail a presentation of the visions important components but will also involve a brief examination of some of the more complex rituals.

The Blackfoot conceive of three distinct but related ways to

acquire supernatural power, all of which directly or indirectly involve visions. First, visions and their derived power can be directly sought through fasting in isolated locations. As Wissler describes it,

"A youth is likely to be directed by a man of medicine experience and to be made the object of preliminary ceremonies to propitiate the dream, but he makes the journey alone. While at the chosen place the seeker of dreams or visions is expected to seek all the things of the sky, earth, and water to take pity on him. This call is a mournful wail almost like a song, the words being composed at will. The only object used is a filled pipe offered to all the beings addressed and kept readiness for the manifestations of the dream person previously discussed. It is said that the majority of young men fail in this ordeal as an unreasonable fear usually comes down upon them the first night, causing them to abandon their post" (1912: 104).

Secondly, power may be recieved through involuntary visions, while the recipient is sleeping. This, however, is believed to only happen to individuals experienced in the use of supernatural power. And finally, individuals may purchase visions and their associated powers, when represented in songs and bundles, without personally attempting to gain a vision. However, while visions may be purchased, Wissler (1912: 104) indicates that all men of distinction are expected to have some sort of direct experience on their own.

All individuals have the right to acquire power in this society, through any of the previously mentionned ways. Individuals, however, vary in the kinds and amounts of power they possess. Moreover, individuals may amass power in a cumulative sense through the purchase of medicine bundles. Wissler (1912: 278) notes, for instance, that tribal dandies, young men from wealthy families, could procrastinate in their search for power because they possessed the wealth to purchase power from others. In contrast, young men from poor families



had to quest for power in hopes that they would be granted powers to capture horses and be able to purchase medicine bundles. As noted previously, ownership of medicine bundles was a prerequisite for acquiring a leadership position in this society. The differential distribution of wealth and secular privileges is best discussed in the context of Blackfoot medicine bundles.

All bundles and other paraphernalia: symbolic of power in Blackfoot society originated in a vision. When power is transferred to the original recipient from a supernatural being, it occurs within the context of a vision. The ritual transfer, as described by Wissler, is as follows:

"The being appearing in the dream offers or consents upon request to give power for some specific purpose. This is done with more or less ceremony; usually the face and hands of the recipient are painted songs sung, directions given for invoking the power and certain obligations, or taboos laid upon the recipient. The being conferring power is not content with saying that it shall be, but formally transfers it to the recipient with appropriate ceremonies. This is regarded as a compact between the recipient and the being manifest, and each is expected fulfill faithfully his own obligations" (1912: 103)

If the original recipient decides to sell his power, he must reduplicate the contents of the original transfer for the next owner, which means that this new owner must be instructed also in the songs, techniques for using the power and obligations associated with it (1912: 104).

The beings manifested in Blackfoot visions can represent all forms of natural phenomena. Most often, they bestow upon their recipients highly specialized powers for activities such as warfare, curing, acquiring horses and so on. They may, however, bestow generalized powers, which function on a societal rather than on an individual basis. It is interesting to note that animals or other

natural phenomena are usually associated with specific powers. They can, however, bestow more than one kind of power on their suppliant. Wissler (1912: 67-90) records a number of visions where the supernatural being not only gave the recipient curing powers but also powers to acquire food or property. These two types of powers are obviously related, for if one is a successful curer, it is likely that he will have means to acquire desired forms of wealth. In addition, certain animals are believed to have greater powers over others. Thus, while the bear and wolf have very strong powers, the raven is considered less strong. Geese, interestingly, grant wisdom and foresight, powers usually received by chiefs (Grinnell, 1960: 260-261).

Among the Blackfoot, all forms of supernatural power received in visions are represented in tangible objects which range from unique charms to standardized bundles of tribal importance. Personal charms, as described by Wissler (1912: 91-107) were owned almost exclusively by men and the power represented was related to male activities such as: curing, warfare, hunting and so on. These charms were unique, in so far as they were not duplicated in form and the songs which accompanied them were specific to the person who had acquired the power. These charms were transferred through purchase to other persons. However, once the charm was transferred, the former owner no longer retained rights over the power in the charm. Although the charm could be transferred many times, the ritual and songs, as conceived in the vision originating the charm essentially remained unchanged.

Wissler (1912: 104) makes two interesting observations on the construction of bundles and the composition of songs. First, he

indicates that bundles or charms are usually constructed several years after the recipient received a vision designating the power he was to receive. Secondly, he notes that songs are often composed before the actual vision. For instance, he describes an incident where an individual had arranged words for a song and then stated that he 'expected to dream something.' Both of these observations support the contention that visions are often after the fact phenomena, which are constructed to meet the circumstances under which the individual finds himself and not necessarily unconscious psychic phenomena.

So far the discussion of Blackfoot visions and their representations in tangible objects is in accord with information on other True Plains societies - that is with respect to the nature of personal-private visions. The Blackfoot, however, also have a distinct category of highly standardized bundles. While all of these bundles are owned by individuals, many to described have uses that are not particular to the owner but open to the society at large (Wissler, 1912: 107-108).

Among the standardized bundles, there exists various kinds of paraphernalia directly related to an individual's success in warfare. These objects, war-shirts, shields, bonnets and lances are standardized in so far as their general form is duplicated, although they may have unique designs painted on their surface. All of these objects, originally conceived in visions, are believed to embody power for success in warfare. In fact, as Wissler (1912: 117-125) notes, certain of these objects are particularly noted for bringing success to their owner. The greater an object's reputation, the greater will be its purchase price when sold. Of further interest,

war bonnets appear to be restricted to members of the Bull Society, a sodality of older men, whose war exploits have been recognized (1912: 116). It is clear from Wissler's accounts that while the ownership of such objects may signify one's success in warfare, they more importantly signify the owner's wealth. It is to be noted that son's of wealthy fathers are encouraged to display their wealth, publically, in institutionalized parades around the camp (1912: 279). Clearly, for the Blackfoot it can be seen that control of supernatural power, as represented in the ownership of bundles, corresponds with secular power, as represented in the ownership of horses.

While there are a number of other kinds of bundles in Blackfoot society, in addition to those relating to warfare, the most important bundles are the "Pipe-Bundles" and the "Beaver Bundles." The functions of these two categories of bundles are of communal rather than personal interest. Pipe-Bundles, for instance, when revealed in ceremony, are believed to cure illness, alleviate misfortune and bring success in war. A war party planning a highly important raid may pay the owner of a Pipe-Bundle a sizable fee to witness a specific ritual associated with this bundle. Beaver-Bundles on the other hand, function in "calling-the-buffalo," forecasting weather and insuring a tobacco harvest. It is to be noted that both types of bundles have their origins in Blackfoot myth, which tell of the bundle's original formation, as inspired in a vision. Visions, however, by subsequent owners often initiate additional songs and functions for these bundles.

Individuals, who own these bundles, assume great prestige and have special privileges accorded to them. Since these bundles are credited with generalized powers, the owners receive sizable



payments for their services in evoking their powers in ritual. To give an indication of the value attached to these bundles, Wissler (1912: 154) records one transfer, which involved a payment of forty-seven horses in addition to a variety of other goods. It is to be noted that these bundles do not appear to be inherited. Rather, they are sold before the owner dies to another wealthy member of the society, who receives not only the bundles but elaborate instructions in their care and ritual use. Moreover, the transfer of these bundles is frequently validated through a vision, wherein a supernatural being appears to the owner and informs him to whom it should be transferred (Wissler, 1912: 136-209).

At this point, it is worthwhile to contrast and compare certain features of the vision experience in True Plains societies of hunting and gathering origins and to indicate as well their similarity or dissimilarity with the visions described for the peripheral hunting and gathering societies in the previous chapter. For one, the emphasis on the accumulation of both secular wealth and supernatural power in Blackfoot society and its use for personal aggrandizement does not appear to be equalled in Comanche or Assiniboiné society. The Assiniboiné, on the one hand, had few horses, so that it might be argued that serious inequalities in the distribution of wealth (horses) and supernatural power would be dysfunctional in terms of the overall survival of the society. The Blackfoot, in contrast, did not lack horses, so that serious inequalities in the distribution of both forms of wealth would not impinge upon the survival of the society. According to Ewers (1955: 140), the Blackfoot were divided into three classes, which were determined by the relative number of horses individuals or families owned.

Why the Comanche who were wealthy in horses did not explicitly equate supernatural power with the acquisition of wealth is difficult to answer or to document from Wallace and Hoebel's account (1955). It might be suggested, however, that the origin of the Comanche in the Great Basin area, where gross status inequalities were non-existent may explain why they did not emphasize wealth, as a basis for status allocation or explicitly associate wealth with supernatural power to the extent of the Blackfoot. There is some indication from early historical sources (Cous, 1898) that the Blackfoot had clearly defined inequalities in status before the arrival of the horse. Thus, the acquisition of horses may have contributed to a further elaboration of an already existent system of status inequalities in secular as well supernatural power.

It is important to emphasize at this point that although the True Plains societies from hunting and gathering backgrounds described here varied in the extent to which they stressed wealth as a primary status determinant, all of these societies appear to have conceived of supernatural power as a transferrable commodity. This is a significant divergence from the peripheral hunting and gathering societies who with the exception of the Kutenai and Rainy River Ojibway did not conceive of supernatural power and visions as extrinsic and alienable.

Except for the Comanche, who are like the peripheral hunting and gathering societies in their conspicuous absence of collective ritual, the other True Plains societies, namely, the Blackfoot and Assiniboiné have collective rituals that are accompanied by medicine bundles, supernatural powers and mythical visions of tribal significance. The elaborate proliferation of medicine bundles of communal significance among the Blackfoot may be related to the existence of "tribal" . . .

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forms of integration during the summer months. As indicated previously, the Comanche never developed formal tribal units and the Assiniboine did so only to a minimal extent.

### The Kiowa

The origins of the Kiowa are unknown. There is, however, evidence of a linguistic nature which related the Kiowa with the Tanoan speaking peoples of the Southwest. Additionally, Mishkin (1960: 17) suggests that they came from a simple nomadic, hunting and gathering background rather than a farming one.

According to Richardson (1940: 6-9), the Kiowa were organized into ten or more bands, which united during the summer on the occasion of the Sun Dance and communal buffalo hunt. The band, however, was the fundamental social grouping and consisted of an extended family group to which a number of non-relatives were attached (Mishkin, 1960: 26).

Hunting activities followed the same pattern as described for other Plains societies. Raiding was not a controlled activity but exclusively under the control of the individual leading the war party. Visions were often used to sanction raids, but they were not a necessary prerequisite (Mishkin, 1960: 30, 31).

The Kiowa, like their neighbors, the Comanche, were extremely wealthy in horses. However, the Kiowa like the Blackfoot developed a definable class system based on inequalities among families in the possession of horses. Although ownership of horses was important, it was equally imperative that the owner redistribute some of his herds to his less fortunate relatives and other band members. According to Mishkin (1960: 26), the wealthy and hence, dominant families in a band exerted considerable influence over poorer members.

The impact of the Kiowa class system on the allocation of statuses and prestige is nicely described by Mishkin, who states:

"The wealthy class could afford to set their offspring on the path to military careers while the poor, for the most part, were compelled to specialize in prosaic activities, hunting, camp duties, etc. The wealthy because they controlled the channels of publicity (could advance the interests of their descendents). Finally, the achievement of great war renown and the winning of leadership in war opened the way to further wealth accumulation. Thus the mechanism for rank perpetuation acted to create an aristocratic caste" (1960: 62-63).

The three classes in Kiowa society were differentiated, as follows: the highest class contained individuals who possessed enough property to be generous and who had distinguished themselves in war; the second division was made-up of individuals who possessed wealth but who did not have necessary war deeds; and finally, the lowest grade lacked property and military achievements (Mishkin, 1960: 35-37).

Leaders in Kiowa society were drawn completely from the highest hierarchical division. Publicity and possession of military attainments combined were determinents for the selection of incumbents to political offices. While a war record and publicity were necessary, it was even more important for a man wishing to assume a leadership position to come from a large and wealthy family who could support his economic responsibilities in give-aways and so on (Mishkin, 1960: 41).

According to Richardson (1940: 7-9), each band contained a headman, who was selected from the most dominant family in the social group. This position was often hereditary, but if the son was not competent, it could equally pass to a more capable relative. These headmen comprised an informal band council, which functioned primarily in an advisory capacity. In addition to the band headmen, there existed a number of war leaders, who were also drawn from the wealthiest class.

Although the information on Kiowa visions is extremely scanty, there is evidence which indicates that the distribution of supernatural power and the role of visions clearly reflects the operation of an emergent class system. Mishkin (1960: 50) notes that the solicitation of visions was generally a matter for individuals in the lower classes, who wished to acquire wealth and become successful warriors. In contrast, members of the upper class did not apparently need to solicit visions, as they could afford to buy their medicine from religious practitioners who were particularly adept in gaining access to specialized types of power.

As among the Blackfoot, supernatural power was represented in personal objects like shields, charms and so on. Additionally, power was embodied in the "Ten Grandmothers" the sacred bundles of the whole Kiowa tribe. These bundles were controlled by the wealthiest families in each band and appear to have been inherited from father to eldest son; the inheritor of the bundle was expected to have a standardized vision to validate its transfer (Marriot, 1945: 41-49).

#### (SOCIETIES OF HORTICULTURAL ORIGINS)

##### The Crow

The Crow before they acquired the horse were horticulturalists like their linguistically related neighbors the Mandan and Hidasta. According to Lowie (1935: 4), the Crow were divided into three politically independent bands, which united during the summer upon the occasion of the Sun Dance and communal buffalo hunt. Moreover, the Crow, unlike other True Plains societies, were grouped into thirteen exogamous, matrilineal clans. These clans were important in that as Lowie (1935: 7) puts it, "fellow clansmen recognized mutual

obligations, which characteristically overrode their sense of duty to any larger group." It is to be further noted that each of the Crow bands contained members of all the different clans.

Hunting among the Crow followed the same pattern of other societies so far discussed with communal buffalo hunts in summer and individual or small group endeavors during the rest of the year (Lowie, 1935: 72-73). Raids, however, among the Crow seem to have been organized on a more formal basis. They were usually planned by persons known as "captains" or "pipe-owners". While these ventures were individualistic undertakings in no way directed by a band chief, it could be curtailed by him, if he felt it to be "impolitic" (1935: 219). Lowie offers an interesting description of how raids were organized; he states:

"Sanction was necessary for a party, but was strictly supernatural. The organizer had dreamt about his enterprise or seen in a vision full particulars about the place to go to, the tribe to be raided even the kind of loot - to the color of a horse's skin...Failing such inspiration, a would-be leader would apply to a man of note owning a war-medicine and follow this mentor's directions, likewise based on dreams. An untried captain might not succeed in mustering a large company, for there were always skeptics doubting the potency of his revelation. Even if his medicines were strong, strict rules went with them. In some cases, for instance, no one might pass on his right side; and however, inadvertently the law was broken, dire mishap would befall the entire party" (1935: 219).

Status among the Crow was based primarily on achievements in military affairs and ownership of horses. Achievement and wealth were obviously interrelated, since the primary motive behind raiding was to acquire booty in the form of horses. In addition to achievements and wealth, status was partially influenced by family connections. As Lowie (1935: 7) puts it, "No worse insult could be hurled at a Crow than to say, 'you are without relatives' it meant that he was a Person of no account...A man of vigorous character, surrounded by the

twoscore young daredevils related to him, might easily dominate a band of a few hundred souls."

Band leadership in Crow society appears to be largely determined by achievements in warfare. Lowie provides a nice summary statement of how a band chief acquired his position. He states:

"The native term, batse'tse...denotes the standing that goes with military achievement, but need not imply governmental functions. There were four normal types of creditable exploits: leadership of a successful raid; capturing a horse picketed within a hostile camp; being first to touch an enemy; and snatching a foeman's bow or gun. A man who had scored at least once on each of these counts ranked as a batse'tse. Such men formed a body of social leaders; on the other hand, to lack all of these standardized points was to be a nobody. Possibly at one time, only men attaining or approaching a chief's record made up the band council. At all events, one member of this military aristocracy without acquiring a special title became the head of the camp"(1935: 5)

Lowie goes on to describe the power and authority exercised by these leaders over the bands, when he states that -

"He was neither a ruler nor a judge and in general had no power over life and death. He decided when and where to pitch and move their lodges. Further, every spring he appointed one of the military clubs to act as police sometimes reappointing the same society several times since there was no fixed rule of rotation" (1935: 5).

Although Lowie describes Crow bands, there is little evidence in his accounts to the effect that a tribal form of organization existed superseding the autonomy of individual bands. Although he notes that the bands gathered together during the summer for the communal buffalo hunt, his descriptions do not go beyond references to band and clan organization.

The societies of the Crow were essentially of three types. The first type, Tobacco societies, were intimately tied up with the clan system and entrance into these groups was based on kinship as well as wealth (1935: 274-276). It is to be noted that each clan had a headman, who inherited his status and controlled special bundles



important in the rituals of the Tobacco societies. The second type, Men's Clubs, were organized entirely on the basis of military achievements. They were composed of members from all clans and the leaders were usually older men, who had gained a reputation for their achievements in war. The primary function of these fraternal, men's clubs was to police the camp and buffalo hunts (1935: 172-173). And finally, there existed a number of shamanistic societies, which were composed of individuals with similar curing skills.

Among the Crow vision experiences were of great importance in their religious life. As Lowie states,

"The importance of visions in the life of the Crow can be hardly overestimated. Not only the general course of sacred ceremonies but even such details as particular songs or specific methods of painting are traced to visions. Through them it was possible to rise from abject poverty to affluence and social prestige. Even war parties were, at least in theory, wholly dependent on them, for a man organized one only when prompted by a vision or when dispatched by another man who had received such a supernatural communication. Since success in life was conceived as the result of these revelations, probably all men tried to secure a vision, though many of them failed. Conversely, lack of success was attributed to lack of visions...However, through transferability of medicine power it became possible for people not blessed with visions to participate in the benefits accruing from such experiences" (1922: 323).

Supernatural power, as among the Blackfoot, could be acquired through purchase and from sought or involuntary visions. "Men who received unsought supernatural communications of importance without being placed in conditions of stress," as Lowie notes (1922: 325), "were relatively few in number and were regarded as remarkably fortunate since they escaped the necessity of torturing themselves." On the other hand, however, many unsought visions were considered of little worth, so that the individual had to acquire power through direct solicitation (1922: 330). Moreover, Lowie (1922: 330-331) speaks of a separate category of involuntary visions, which he

categorizes as "unsought stress visions." These visions are said to occur under conditions of anxiety, misfortune and so on, wherein a supernatural being bestows power on the individual without being solicited.

Sought visions, in contrast, are the most common way for an individual to acquire supernatural power. Lowie (1922: 323) records some of the various ways in which an individual can induce a vision. First, individuals who participated in the Sun Dance ceremony by suspending themselves from poles, could expect to receive visions. Secondly, individuals could fast in the Tobacco Gardens in hopes of receiving a revelation. Thirdly, individuals could dream in their lodges. These individuals according to Lowie usually became "rich, acquiring plenty of horses." And finally, the most common way was for the individual to retire to an isolated spot and fast, as Lowie (1922: 332) puts it,

"The would-be visionary generally retired to a lonely peak, theoretically for four days, in consonance with the mystic notions clustering about that number, possibly in addition chopping off a finger-joint as an offering to conciliate the spirits invoked."

Incidentally, those individuals who fasted in the mountains were expected to "dream of guns, coups and horses." In direct contrast, it is interesting to note that poor people "would fall asleep somewhere when tired and get a vision" (1922: 323).

The nature of supernatural beings manifested in visions is highly variable, and Lowie states the following:

"From the variability of individual visionary experiences it follows that the number of supernatural beings is indefinite; and as pointed out above, the character of these beings is ill-defined. Nevertheless, certain natural phenomena and mythological personages lend at least their names to the spirits that figure in religious belief and practice" (1922: 318).

As among the other True Plains societies mentioned, spirits in visions appear to be associated with particular powers. For instance, Lowie (1935: 254) mentions that an animal spirit who is the leader of a herd (i.e. buffalo) may grant leadership powers. Personal powers that spirits can grant range from safety in battle, to the acquisition of wealth, to success in warfare and to the ability to cure (1922: 317). Additionally, spirits can grant their recipients instructions in the use of collective power, as employed in ceremonies of the Tobacco Societies and Sun Dance.

Once power is received in a vision ,it can be embodied in objects such as medicine bundles and other sacred paraphernalia. Most of these objects were related to warfare; some were unique charms and others were standarized shields, bonnets, shirts and tipis varying only in the design painted on them. These objects could be transferred through purchase and could be amassed in a cumulative sense (Lowie, 1922: 402-432). In addition, there existed bundles which had generalized rather than particular powers. These bundles, the Sun Dance Doll, Arrow Bundle and Tobacco bundles, were owned by individuals and inherited within particular family lines. When they were transferred, the next owner was expected to have a vision of a standarized nature to validate his ownership prior to the transfer (1922: 391-401). Although these bundles were owned by individuals, they were used for collective purposes.

Except for the visions validating the transfer of important bundles, all individuals regardless of age, sex and family status were eligible to seek and receive visions (1922: 332). Although all individuals might attempt to solicit visions, not all were equally successful. Some individuals were extremely adept at acquiring

power and became known as medicine men. As Lowie indicates, "their fame rested on proofs of their worth" (1935: 238). He further states, "They differed in degree not in kind, from others who had successfully sought visions and it is quite impossible to segregate them as a definite group from the rest of the community" (1922:334).

It is also interesting to note that if a boy came from a wealthy family, he did not have to seek a vision. However, if he came from a poor family, he would "go out, fast and thereby come to own property" (1922: 333). The fact that it is more necessary for the poor to acquire visions, if they wish to be successful, concurs with the information from the Blackfoot and Kiowa.

#### The Teton Dakota

The Dakota, originally a farming peoples before their assumption of a True Plains way of life were divided into seven subtribes. These politically independent subtribes did not unite to form a large tribal unit. Although bands within each of these seven major division often joined forces during the summer at the time of the communal buffalo hunt and Sun Dance, they did not necessarily follow subtribal divisions. The bands among the Teton were of a fluid nature and were composed of 10-20 families who could change their allegiance at will (MacGregor, 1946: 52-53).

Hunting activities were also seasonal among the Teton; when the bands were dispersed, individualistic techniques prevailed and when they were united, communal activities were normative (Johnson, 1965: 357-358). Raiding, however, was usually organized on a small group basis. As Johnson states,

"Each war party was headed by a single leader. These men were normally not chiefs and council members, but were younger men anxious to make a place for themselves

in the Teton world. Any man might organize a war party. He needed only to hang his decorated raw-hide shield before his lodge to publically announce his intentions. If he were a man who had been successful in the past or a man who had dreamed of a successful war venture, he would undoubtedly attract young men to his standard. Those who did accompany him did so voluntarily" (1965: 369).

Among the Teton determinants of status and rank were based on both achievements in warfare and ownership of horses. As Johnson points out in the following paragraph:

"...Bravery, oratorical ability, supernatural powers, generosity and many other factors were much more important. Teton society emphasized individual achievements above all else and ascribed status was extremely rare. Kinsmen and wealth were no hindrance to gaining status, however, for both were needed to gain admittance to important societies..." (1965: 373).

The subtribes of the Teton had chiefs who were selected on the basis of their past achievements in warfare, generosity, oratory skills and good judgement. The leaders formed a subtribal council, which according to Johnson was loose in its structure. The power of this council is described as follows:

"The council acted as a unit, their deliberations were calm and their unanimous decisions were made within the framework of the consensus of the band as a whole. Their actions were not arbitrary nor authoritarian and they lacked the force necessary to back their decisions" (1965: 366).

Johnson also makes another interesting observation regarding the status of a chief, when he states:

"Men reached the status of chief among the Teton when public opinion supported their claims. This same public opinion might dispose of a chief, for continued correct actions were required. The man who did not live up to the obligations of the rank was quickly relieved of his position and was powerless to avoid this. Strong pressures were applied to an individual chief and he had to continually validate his status by showing his generosity to the poor, by demonstrating his judgement, even temper and concern for the welfare of the band" (1965: 367-368).

While the above descriptions appear to be normative patterns

for many of the subdivisions of the Teton, it appears from Wissler's accounts that the Ogalala had a much more complex and formalized pattern of leadership. Here the subtribal council was composed of seven chiefs who were formally elected to their offices for life. Often these offices were occupied upon the death of a chief by his son or another worthy relative. In addition, there were four "shirt wearers," who occupied their office for one or two years. These were usually men with favorable military reputations, who helped the seven chiefs in issuing orders for welfare in the camp (Wissler, 1912: 8).

Among the Ogalala division of the Teton, there were three types of societies. The first type was composed of warrior societies, in which membership was contingent on military achievements and ability to pay membership fee. They functioned, as in other True Plains societies, to police the camp and communal hunts as well as to foster solidarity among the male members of the society. The second type was composed of a number of dancing societies which were organized primarily by women. Appropriate visions and membership fees were required for entrance. The final type of society demanded appropriate visions for entrance and was of a shamanistic nature. It is important to note that the vision required for entrance into these societies was of a standardized nature (Wissler, 1912: 35-96).

The information on Dakota religious beliefs is somewhat confused because of the fact that information on the Teton and Eastern branches of the Dakota are often merged under one description. Since these two branches lived under very different ecological conditions and maintained different organizational features, it is dangerous to use certain early sources, as did Benedict (1922) for descriptions

on Dakota religious beliefs. Much of the information Benedict provides in this article is based on the Eastern Dakota, who were not a Plains people but lived in a Woodlands area.

Among the Teton Dakota young boys usually solicited visions at or around the time of puberty. The nature of this quest is best described by Johnson, who states:

"A boy was usually prepared for the vision quest by a shaman who instructed him in the necessary ritual preparation and in the way he should conduct himself while seeking the vision...The vision quest itself involved fasting, isolation, and self-torture. The young boy fasted four days before leaving camp and took ritually purifying sweat baths in the small dome-shaped sweat house. On leaving camp, the boy found an isolated place where he waited four days and nights or until he received a supernatural vision" (1965: 375).

Contrary to Benedict's assertions that the Teton had no concepts of guardian-spirits (1922: 11), it is my impression that during the initial questing of the Teton contact was maintained with personal tutelaries of various kinds (Dorsey, 1894: 445). Specific powers relating to life long endeavors were believed to be acquired from these quests (Wissler, 1912: 81). It is to be noted, however, that as among the Crow individuals could receive powers from supernatural beings who ranged from ill-defined spirits, through ghosts and to spirits that assumed deific proportions (Dorsey, 1894).

The importance of visions and their renewals later in life is nicely summarized by Johnson, when he states:

"The vision quest, if successful, gave the boy a guardian spirit on whom he could call in times of need throughout his life. Men frequently fasted and sought renewals of their visions during their life. The boy would also be told in the vision what items he should collect to carry in a small pouch on his person for protective purposes. Most also received songs which were theirs and which, when sung, gave supernatural aid. The vision was a highly personal experience, and an experience vital to success in Teton society. The shaman received his calling through a

vision and the warrior received supernatural aid for life. All visions were not of equal potency, however, and the Teton looked upon variable success in warfare among several men or the differing powers of shamans as indicative of the power of their separate supernatural guardians. All boys did not receive visions either, and he who was not successful suffered in consequence. The unsuccessful candidate tried again for a vision experience and some men received their first later in life" (1965: 375).

Rapport with the supernatural could also be gained, as among the Crow and Cheyenne, by pledging oneself to the Sun Dance. Performance in this ritual, which entailed dancing anyone of three dances - some more efficacious than another - involved self-torture by tearing one's flesh as one gazed at the Sun. Although visions were not received during this ritual, all men who successfully performed one of these dances were expected to receive a vision from the Sun during the following year (Walker, 1917).

As in most other True Plains societies, once power was acquired, it could be represented in tangible objects. Although individuals owned personal charms, shields, tipis and so on, there is no direct indication if these objects were ever transferred. It is known, however, that individuals successful in acquiring powers could sell portions of their power to their less fortunate brethren. In spite of more conclusive information on this point, it is probable that these personal types of paraphernalia were transferred. It is quite clear, however, that the generalized tribal bundles were transferred. Sun Dance paraphernalia, Otter Skin bags and sacred pipes were usually bequeathed. Whether or not visions were necessary to validate such a transfer is, however, unclear. It is known that prior to transfer the recipient had to be trained in their ritual use and told the details of the mythical vision that was associated with it (Wissler, 1927:



113-119; Thompson, 1941: 604-609).

The Dakota appear to make a distinction between religious practitioners who are shamans and those who are "keepers" of the tribal bundles. It is also to be noted that unlike the Crow shamans were differentiated from laymen not merely because they possessed or controlled greater powers but because they received their calling from specific supernatural beings in visions. Thus, as an example, the Heyoka or contraries of Dakota society could always be recognized because their visions contained the symbolic element of a thunderbird (Walker, 1917: 83-84). Additionally, shamans formed distinct societies membership into which required receiving a standardized vision.

#### The Cheyenne

The Cheyenne were probably the last horticultural group to enter the Plains and assume a fully nomadic life. They were organized into ten bands, which united during the summer into a highly formalized tribal unit. The nature of Cheyenne bands is nicely summarized by Hoebel, who states:

"The core of a band consists of one or several closely related kindreds, although some families not directly related may choose to live with some particular band. The one great exception is the Dog Soldier band, the most powerful of the Cheyenne military societies. This group began living together as a unit at some time in the past and formed a band not at all based on kinship ties"(1960:37).

Hunting activities among the Cheyenne are again determined by the cyclical movements of the buffalo with communal hunts during the summer and individual or small group hunts during the rest of the year (Hoebel, 1960: 64). According to Hoebel (1960: 70-75), the Cheyenne have three types of war parties, none of which require the endorsement of a vision; these are "private, fraternal and tribal."

The private parties are formed by any "properly qualified Cheyenne," who first must make an offering to the Sacred Arrows before he can call fellow friends together to organize a raid. In contrast to small raiding parties, organized usually to acquire horses, raiding parties which engage in revenge are composed of members from a military society. These punitive expeditions must also be sanctioned by making a vow to the Sacred Arrows. In addition, it is to be noted that the tribal council has the right to prohibit a group from engaging in a war expedition (1960: 47).

Determinants of status among the Cheyenne were based on a combination of both military achievements and ownership of horses. In addition, if an individual wished to gain the position of peace chief, he must be energetic, even-tempered, wise and generous (1960: 37).

The peace chiefs of individual bands, who were also members of the council, were chosen for a term of office which usually lasted for ten years (1960: 36). The manner in which an individual acquired this status is described by Hoebel as follows:

"Each chief, if he is still alive at the end of his term chooses his own successor from within his own band. Thus every band normally has at least four representatives on the council. Although the office is not hereditary, a man frequently chooses his own son to succeed him - if the son measures up to the qualification for chieftainship. The office is always looked upon as a grave responsibility and not a political plum. It brings respect and honor, but nothing else. There are no economic advantages; quite the contrary, being a chief means having a drain on one's resources..." (1960: 46).

The tribal council composed of forty-two members, who were ritually initiated into their offices, received an approximately equal number of representatives from each band. Of these members, five were chosen to occupy the positions of sacred chiefs. The sacred chiefs

occupied their offices for the same period of time as an ordinary chief (1960: 45). The functions of this tribal council are nicely summarized by Hoebel; he states:

"In addition to treating such matters as camp moving and tribal (as against individual raiding expeditions) war policy, the council also acts as a judicial body in cases involving criminal act. In governmental affairs, it further serves as executive and legislative authority over the military societies, which act as the administrative police branch. In matters of war and peace, however, the warrior groups have an active say in the decision-making process. They can, in fact, ignore and thereby nullify the ruling of the council in matters in which they are vitally concerned. The council, although it has the constitutional authority to act on its own, takes realistic conizance of this hard fact " (1960: 47).

Cheyenne religion, unlike other religions thus far discussed at this level, is not organized around the primacy of vision experiences. Although visions have a definable role in Cheyenne society, they play a subordinate role to the more highly formalized rituals.

As among other True Plains societies, Cheyenne men may fast in isolated locations in hopes of receiving personal powers.

As Hoebel puts it,

"A man who wants personal power for healing or immunity in battle may fast in a lonely place and beg the spirits for indulgence and aid. If favored by a spirit, he receives a blessing along with instructions as to how to prepare specific amulets and how to paint himself and what to sing to evoke power" (1960: 85).

Although men might desire to seek personal powers in this manner, according to Gladwin (1957: 118), few were successful.

A more common way for a Cheyenne to gain rapport with the supernatural was through a sacrificial offering. As Gladwin notes, "These ordeals were reserved for times of greatest anxiety; for a young man before he led his first war party, or in response to a vow made in requesting supernatural aid during illness of a close

relative" (1957: 122). In Cheyenne society, an individual pledges himself to a ceremony, as "an offering in exchange for help" (Hoebel, 1960: 85). As Hoebel (1960: 85) notes, "gifts are given to the Medicine Arrows and Sun Dance Lodge. Skin is cut from the arms, and men hang from the pole or drag buffalo skulls." Most frequently, such acts took place on the occasion of the Sun Dance, but it was also possible to make these offerings on other occasions as well. When performed at the Sun Dance, Hoebel writes, "the act also brings great public approval and is a conspicuous means of gaining prestige" (1960: 16). Although a vision may be the outcome of such a performance, as Benedict (1922: 14) states, "it is hardly more than a postscript." It is important to note that these visions did not raise any question of acquiring personal, supernatural patrons; it was the ritual which invoked power not the guidance of a special tutelary.

While supernatural power or aid could come to an individual through visions or sacrificial offerings, it could also come from purchasing medicine from a religious practitioner or from careful observances of ritual. Unlike other societies so far discussed, it appears from Hoebel (1960) and Grinnell's (1923) accounts that power received from visions was not sufficient to bring success and good fortune into one's life. Rather, all important activities had to be supported through necessary ritual observances. For instance, although a man may have a dream, in which a design for a war-shield is inspired, no man can decorate his shield without the aid and ritual direction of an established shield-maker (Hoebel, 1960: 75). In general, it is to be noted that personal charms are most often purchased from competent religious practitioner rather than from

inspirations in dreams or visions.

Moreover, it is important to note that religious practitioners among the Cheyenne function as intermediaries (1960: 83). This is interesting, in so far as in many other True Plains societies, it is the supernatural being in a vision who is the intermediary. Moreover, among the Cheyenne religious practitioners need not have visions to validate their religious activities. These are validated in mythical visions, wherein the bundles they keep originated. Furthermore, these leaders do not require personal forms of supernatural power to perform their rituals, but rather require elaborate instructions in the use of collective power found in bundles (Hoebel, 1960: 83-84). Here, as among the Teton, "keepers" are a distinct group from shamans and laymen in religious matters.

The subordination of visions and the increased importance of collectively sanctioned ritual among the Cheyenne places them in a somewhat unique position among True Plains societies. Although I have not presented ethnographic evidence on the Arapaho, according to Elkin's account (1940), they are quite similar to the Cheyenne in down playing visions and in emphasizing collectively sanctioned ritual. In general, it would appear from the evidence so far presented that increased formalization in political organization and in modes of status allocation is accompanied by a tendency to deemphasize the role of personal-private religious experiences, like visions, and to stress standardization in ritual. It is interesting to note that the Cheyenne and Arapaho have the most formalized leadership patterns and governing councils (Oliver, 1964: 47). This, according to Oliver, is a function of cultural continuity specifically their horticultural origins. Since the Cheyenne and Arapaho were

probably the last groups from farming backgrounds to enter the Plains, I would argue that their emphasis on standarization in ritual at the expense of more spontaneous forms, like the vision, is also a function of cultural continuity not ecological adaptation to the Plains situation. The Crow and Gros Ventres (see Flannery and Cooper, 1952) also of horticultural backgrounds had more informal leadership patterns and also stressed visions, as a means for validating prestige and privilege. According to Lowie (1935: 258), emphasis on personal-private visions was in all likelihood a recent development among the Crow.

#### D. THE VISION EXPERIENCE IN TRUE PLAINS SOCIETIES

As evidenced in the preceeding ethnographic descriptions, vision experiences among True Plains societies do not conform to a simple modal pattern. Although the vision experience is a variable phenomenon at this level, it is possible to speak of two major tendencies in the meaning and function of visions in this area.

On the one hand, there existed in all True Plains societies sought and involuntary visions of a personal-private sort. It is probable that the proliferation and importance of these visions in most True Plains societies were a response to the anxieties and challenges created by the demands of the raiding complex and a highly competitive system of individual ranking. While it is likely, for reasons to be discussed later, that personal-private visions increased in number and importance for groups of horticultural backgrounds, like the Crow (Lowie, 1935: 228), they are probably a continuation of an already existent pattern for groups of hunting and gathering backgrounds - though interpreted in a different manner.

While personal-private visions could be sought on recurring

occasions at any time during a person's life, the initial pursuit of visions usually began in late adolescence or early adulthood. With respect to the age at which these visions are initially sought in True Plains societies, Benedict (1922: 1-2) indicates that a major difference between True Plains societies and those peripheral to the Plains was that "primary" visions were sought early in adulthood, among the former, and prior to or around puberty, among the latter. This divergence in the time at which visions were initially pursued appears to me to be a function of age differences in the assumption of adult roles. While in hunting and gathering societies young boys usually began to train for and participate in subsistence activities, in True Plains societies the conditions under which raiding and warfare took place were probably too perilous for young, inexperienced adolescents. It would appear to me, therefore, that given the conditions of raiding among True Plains societies, rigorous anticipatory socialization for the assumption of the male role would take place later in the life cycle than it does in hunting and gathering societies. Therefore, it would seem probable to me that, if in fact, the vision experience is a mechanism in anticipatory socialization, the age at which it would be initially pursued would be consistent with the person's ability to participate in adult activities.

The supernatural power acquired in personal-private visions among True Plains societies was related to the recipient's success or "luck" in any one of a variety of endeavors important in these groups. Most often, power acquired in personal-private visions was equated with skill and success in warfare and in raiding than with skills or abilities relating to subsistence activities like hunting. The association of power with success in warfare is clearly

related to the fact that status, at least partially, was accorded on the basis of personal achievements in warfare rather than in hunting. This change in emphasis can also be seen as a general function of Plains ecology. Here societies were not primarily concerned with the scarcity and unpredictability of food resources since the buffalo were, for the most part, plentiful. Rather, these groups placed a premium on their members acquiring power that would protect them from enemies and that would enable them to maintain as well as increase their most valued resource, the horse.

Since True Plains societies have a definable economic surplus, namely horses, it is not surprising to find that supernatural power is increasingly interpreted as a form of wealth. In many societies at this level, it is evident that visions and their derived powers not only reflect a person's competency in a given activity, but they also imply the recipient's success in acquiring property. Thus, while supernatural power can represent a personal quality or ability of an individual, it can also symbolize his material gains.

One of the clearest indications that supernatural power is viewed as a form of property or wealth is its embodiment in tangible objects, which can be amassed by individuals in a cumulative sense or transferred (i.e. sold, given-away or bequeathed). In most True Plains societies, once power is acquired in a vision and validated through successful use, it can be represented in any of a variety of objects. These objects, war-shields, war-bonnets, tipis, unique charms and so on can be transferred with their accompanying vision, ritual and power to persons other than the original recipient. As such, persons if they possess requisite wealth, can amass power without necessarily searching for it on



their own. In this context, it is to be noted that there are persons, especially competent in acquiring and using specialized kinds of power, who make it their business to sell their services and powers to their brethren. Love, horse, gambling and war medicines can be purchased from certain individuals for indefinite or limited kinds of use. Here it might be argued that since material gains are not embodied in the individual, supernatural power is also increasingly defined as an extrinsic property or possession rather than merely a unique and intrinsic quality of the individual.

Personal-private visions, like positions of prestige and privilege in True Plains societies, were not formally restricted to individuals on the basis of status, age or sex. In general, there was an open access to or free competition for personal-private visions and their derived powers. However, as in hunting and gathering societies, not all individuals are equally successful in acquiring visions nor are all persons alike in terms of the kind or amount of power they receive in visions.

The reasons, however, for differential access to personal forms of supernatural power among members of True Plains societies is somewhat different. Here the failure to receive visions could be interpreted as either lack of success in curing or military activities and/ or failure to acquire property; this latter reason is obviously dependent on one's success in the aforementioned activities. As in the case of Lowie's informant Littlerump, he received no visions because he was going to be poor (1935: 224). Generally, in those societies where status is defined or validated, primarily, by one's material possessions, there is a direct correlation between one's secular wealth and the amount of supernatural power one has

access to. In fact among the Blackfoot, as described previously, supernatural power embodied in medicine bundles and other sacred paraphernalia was considered a form of wealth, and individuals, who owned the largest number of and most valued, sacred objects in the society most often occupied the highest status positions.

It is quite apparent in many True Plains societies that success in acquiring supernatural power either through purchase or direct solicitation is limited by wealth acquired through one's own efforts or through extended family lines. Thus, if one comes from a wealthy family, one can purchase necessary supernatural powers without direct solicitation or procrastinate in one's personal search. Conversely, it is often stated that only individuals of poor families desiring fame and fortune need to search for visions. Therefore, in many groups it is not considered a social necessity for certain individuals to acquire personal-private powers through direct solicitation.

The limitations on visions in True Plains societies is no doubt related to the fact that secular wealth (horses) to a large extent restricts access to status positions. Despite slight differences of emphasis with respect to wealth over personal abilities, as primary determinants of status, it can be argued that since wealth is an important basis for validating status mobility, supernatural power would also be extended to a material realm. Furthermore, since supernatural powers can be embodied in material objects, they can be alienated from the original recipient like any other tangible resource including horses. Therefore, personal-private visions appear no longer to validate merely private attributes but now represent a means for justifying the differential accumulation of wealth.

While most males attempt to acquire personal-private visions, whose powers are usable throughout the recipient's life time until transferred or misused, many individuals seek or receive, involuntarily, visions whose powers are limited spatially and temporally. Visions designating the details of a raid or a revenge party are a case in point. These visions, as in hunting and gathering societies, serve primarily to direct decision-making. Interestingly, the relative importance of these sorts of visions seems to vary in True Plains societies - so that we find in groups where leadership is spontaneous and informal visions have a more important role in decision-making than in societies where leadership is more formalized. A brief contrast between the Comanche and Cheyenne will serve to illustrate this particular point. Among the Comanche, as indicated previously, raids were sanctioned and planned on the basis of a vision. Here any person who could acquire followers was free to engage in warfare and raiding activities. The peace chiefs had no authority to curtail their actions. In contrast, the Cheyenne who had a highly formalized political system demanded that individuals planning a raid undergo necessary ritual precautions as performed by religious practitioner. Although visions may inspire a raid among the Cheyenne, the raiding party is ultimately under the sovereignty of a higher authority, a religious practitioner or a peace chief. Additionally, there are a number of other occasions for which an individual might wish to solicit a vision whose powers are limited in duration such as: during mourning, before naming a child, prior to a gambling event, during courtship and so on.

It is worthwhile at this point to bring to the reader's attention the existence of what can be best described as "prophetic"

visions. These visions are to be distinguished from the personal-private visions described, in so far as they generally do not raise any question of acquiring supernatural powers. These visions are believed to indicate a future event (i.e. a forthcoming death) and have a clairvoyant or precognitive aura about them. In most True Plains societies, as well as in many hunting and gathering societies, prophetic visions were quite common. In fact, certain individuals were renowned for their talents in this area and their aide was often solicited for finding lost objects, indicating the auspiciousness of a raid and so on.

The visions of True Plains societies, so far discussed, concur in many respects with the visions found in hunting and gathering societies. They are similar because they are of a personal-private nature and because they are not restricted, ideally, on the basis of status. Moreover, individuals in societies at both levels vary in terms of their relative success in acquiring these visions.

However, as I have tried to indicate in the preceeding paragraphs, personal-private visions differ between the two types of societies primarily on the basis of their increasing association with wealth in True Plains groups. The most important implication of this is that visions and their derived powers become extrinsic and transferrable rather than intrinsic and unalienable. Furthermore, by way of transfer and direct solicitation, personal-private powers like wealth can be amassed in a cumulative sense.

In most True Plains societies, the most common way in which personal-private powers were transferred was through direct sale or purchase. Although personal-private powers could be inherited, this was, for the most part, an uncommon method of transfer. Inheritance

was probably uncommon because in most True Plains societies secular forms of wealth were not bequeathed upon the owner's death to near kinsmen but given to persons outside the extended family. Moreover, most positions of prestige and privilege were not directly inherited even though one's family affiliations might be considered. Thus, just as access to most status positions and to wealth was not an hereditary prerogative, so access to supernatural powers was not restricted by inheritance. Although individuals born of families with both secular and religious forms of wealth might be more likely to succeed in True Plains societies, this did not preclude an individual from a poor family from acquiring these forms of wealth by his own efforts. Importantly, vertical mobility in either direction was possible for individuals in True Plains societies.

At this point it is important that I briefly describe what was involved in the transfer of personal-private powers and visions. Theoretically, when an individual desired to purchase power, he had to participate in a ritual, which was supposed to be an exact replication of the original owner's encounter with a supernatural being. The contents of the original vision, its songs, instructions and special powers were transferred without the next recipient having to recontact the sponsoring supernatural being. Thus, the major difference between a ritual of transfer and direct solicitation is that a human being assumes the role of benefactor and no direct, supernormal experience is involved. As Wissler (1934) has indicated for the Plains area, the basic pattern of visions was not only extended to rituals involving transfer of powers; and sacred objects but to the format of collective ritual as well. The relationship between the patterning of vision experiences and other rituals will be discussed

in greater detail in the concluding chapter to this thesis.

While personal-private visions were very important in True Plains societies, there also existed another type of vision in which the symbols contained in the manifest content are clearly associated with social groups and in which the instructions were directed, for the most part, towards group rather than personal ends. In True Plains societies, men's sodalities, religious societies, group rituals and so on were all believed to have been formed on the basis of contact with a supernatural being through a vision. Moreover, additions to as well as alterations in existing secular and religious institutions of a group nature were based on visions. It becomes quite apparent after reading the ethnographic literature on the True Plains that there was a general proliferation of visions with innovative goals. The presence of and increase in these types of visions in True Plains societies is no doubt related to the drastic alterations taking place for groups in the midst of rapid changes. More specifically, they can be viewed as a rationale for justifying changes or additions in organizational devices as a response to new ecological circumstances.

Once a group activity has become institutionalized the vision validating its creation is often relegated to myth. Many myths (not all) in True Plains societies are legendary or actual accounts of visions which justified the formation and continued existence of certain collective institutions. More specifically, they are publicly standardized and sanctioned descriptions of the circumstances under which the vision was received, characteristics of the vision's recipient as well as the contents and behavioral directives of the vision, itself. The myth explaining the origins of the Cheyenne, Sacred Arrows, for instance, can be viewed as a standardized account

of a vision which justified their formation and continued use (Grinnell, 1926: 3-9). In essence, these myths can be viewed as collective visions, which are known to the society at large or to particular sectors, therein. Importantly, they are no longer private - that is only known to the original recipient and to the select few to whom the vision might later be transferred. This is to be expected, in so far as their content is of direct interest to the public rather than a select few individuals. Moreover, unlike personal-private visions, visions that justify the creation of collective institutions and which later assume mythical proportions do not validate an individual's idiosyncratic activities, abilities and achievements, but rather they validate activities of individuals as members of a group or participants in a collective activity.

In this context, it is important to bring to the reader's attention the existence of visions that involve a supernormal experience but are highly standardized in their content. Unlike personal-private visions, the symbols and behavioral directives are not unique to the recipient. Rather, these visions have a highly regularized content even though received by different persons. In other words, identical visions, ideally, are received by different individuals. These visions also differ from personal-private visions in a number of other ways. Like the visions that originate a group activity, the content of standardized visions contains symbols and behavioral directives that are clearly associated with a group or group activity. The power represented in these visions is to be applied, ideally, for communal ends rather than purely personal ones. Most often, standardized visions grant the recipient the right to use and/or control power for collective purposes. It is of interest to note that they are often related to a myth, which accounts for the formation and existence of the group

or group activity to which these specific visions are associated. Moreover, these visions, unlike their personal-private counterparts, are restricted to persons, who meet necessary requirements prior to their assumption of communally sanctioned positions. The most frequently used criteria for restricting these visions is ascription. Thus, they often become an hereditary prerogative.

At this point, it is worthwhile to list some examples of these standardized visions. In several True Plains societies, receipt of an appropriate, standardized vision was required before certain medicine bundles could be transferred. The Crow, for instance, appear to have required standardized visions to validate the inherited transfer of tobacco bundles, whose ownership was necessary in order to assume certain privileged positions in the Tobacco Society. The Kiowa also appear to have validated the inherited transfer of their sacred bundles, the "Ten Grandmothers," via standardized visions (Mariott, 1945). The Blackfoot, on the other hand, do not bequeath bundles used for collective purposes. Rather, these bundles are limited to persons of wealth who can afford to purchase them. Here the owner of the bundle receives a vision which designates to whom it should be transferred. It is important to note that in the above three cases, these medicine bundles were owned by families or individuals, even though the powers embodied therein were used for band or tribal purposes. It would appear that these standardized visions legitimated the inherited transfer of religious privileges and/or support the rights of wealthy families in acquiring these privileges and in monopolizing secular power.

It appears, however, from the literature that standardized visions are not always necessary to validate the inherited transfer of



collective medicine bundles. Among the Cheyenne and Ogalala division of the Teton Dakota certain medicine bundles were owned by the entire society but entrusted to specific persons for their care and use. Succession of the office of bundle keeper or priest was based on ascription and an appropriate vision was usually not required to validate transfer from father to son or to other related kinsmen. Why the transfer of bundles required validation via a standardized vision and other bundles did not might be related to who in fact owns the bundle. The evidence from True Plains societies does not allow for a definite answer at this point; the evidence, however, from the peripheral horticultural societies will allow for a more careful consideration of this question.

Receipt of a standardized vision is also necessary in some societies before one can gain entrance into certain secular or religious sodalities. Among the Arapaho, for instance, entrance into a high ranking leadership sodality required a standardized vision (Elkin, 1944: 168). Membership in a number of Dakota religious societies also required the receipt of an appropriate vision, as mentioned earlier. Again, a more complete understanding of these visions will emerge after a discussion of visions in peripheral horticultural societies.

It can be briefly suggested here that the development and/or continuance of standardized visions and their mythical counterparts are to be explained by reference to both ecological and historical factors. Like governing councils and non-kin sodalities, collective visions (myths), bundles and rituals were important devices in maintaining and reinforcing tribal and/or band unity for communally organized activities. The Sun Dance, for instance, was an annual

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ritual which involved the cooperation and participation of members from different bands. It occurred prior to the communal buffalo hunt and can be viewed as a device which motivationally prepared members of autonomous groups for a collective and highly organized economic activity. It is interesting to note that male participation in the Sun Dance was believed by many True Plains societies to insure success in acquiring a vision, hence supernatural power. Although the visions received by persons who participated in the Sun Dance were of a personal-private sort, their relation to this group activity is important, in so far as this suggests that personal powers are not to be acquired by one's own efforts alone but can also be received in the context of services to the society at large.

The acquisition of supernatural power through one's services to a group is most clearly developed among True Plains societies of horticultural backgrounds and only slightly developed, if at all, among the former hunters and gatherers. This is no doubt related to the fact that corporate organizational devices were more formally organized among the societies of farming backgrounds than those of hunting and gathering ones.

Along these lines, it is also to be noted that standardized visions and ritual, in general, are most highly developed in the former horticultural societies, many of which had formalized modes of status allocation and a formal political organization. Conversely, they are either completely absent or nominally present among the former hunters and gatherers.

This situation is also directly related to the relative importance of personal-private visions amongst the different True Plains societies. Here formal versus informal patterns of leadership and

modes of status allocation is also relevant. Among the Comanche, the most informally organized of the True Plains societies, informal patterns of organization existed and personal-private visions predominated. In contrast, among the Cheyenne, the most formally organized of the True Plains societies, formal patterns existed and standardized ritual was stressed at the expense of the more personal-private forms. The Crow, although of horticultural origins, were in a midway position. For the most part, leadership patterns were informal, but there were a few instances of more formal patterns of leadership within the clan and certain religious spheres. Here personal-private visions assumed considerable importance, but there also existed scattered instances where standardized visions were appropriate.

The implications of this dualism both in terms of the formality or informality of leadership patterns as well as the personal-private versus the standardized nature of visions will become more apparent after a discussion of horticultural societies, where formal leadership patterns and standardized visions predominated.

Before concluding this summary of the vision experience in True Plains societies, it is necessary to briefly describe the nature of the supernatural beings manifested in visions. In personal-private visions, the supernatural beings may appear as ghosts, animals, dwarfs, inanimate objects as well as mythical personages. These supernatural beings appear in most instances to bestow powers that are specific to their kind or species. It also appears that spirits may have at their disposal a variety of powers, which they can bestow on their suppliant. It is interesting to note that spirits are often ranked relative to one another. Lowie (1954: 174),

notes that among the Crow and Comanche open debates often took place between individuals over the relative strength of their guardian's powers. This also appears to be the case for the Dakota (Dorsey, 1894: 441). This situation is clearly in accord with the rigorous and competitive system of ranking of individuals in secular activities like warfare. Importantly, spirits revealed in personal-private visions were not placed in absolute positions of rank, just as mobility between ranks was normative in True Plains societies.

The supernatural beings revealed in standardized visions were in all cases associated with a social group or ritual activity. Importantly, they were conceived of as supervisors or sponsors of collective endeavors not personal-private ones. Whether these beings were a distinct class from those seen in personal-private visions is difficult to determine from the available literature. It appears to me, however, that in a number of societies the same category, class or species of beings could manifest themselves to individuals for personal or communal purposes. In other words, it does not appear that certain spirits have exclusive control over either individual or collective activities. Supernatural beings, however, may be more commonly associated with one activity over another.

## Chapter V

### THE VISION EXPERIENCE IN PERIPHERAL FARMING SOCIETIES

The last group of societies to be discussed in this thesis are the village-dwelling, horticultural societies, who lived in the Prarie Plains area directly east of the High Plains region or who occupied locations along the tributaries of large rivers in the High Plains. The societies from this area chosen for comparison are the Oto, Mandan and Omaha. In addition, an ethnographic description will be included on the Winnebago, who resided in the Central Woodlands area. Moreover, the summary statement on the vision experience will also include evidence from other societies outside the general Plains region like the Delaware, Creek, Papago, Zuni and so on. Finally, evidence from societies on the Northwest Coast is relevant here not because these groups were horticulturalists, but like the groups described in this chapter, they had a relatively stable food supply and were settled in villages organized along lines of kinship and rank. Since horticultural societies in North America vary in terms of both their ecological circumstances and social organizational devices and since the Prarie Plains farming groups are not entirely representative of all societies in North America engaging in plant cultivation, this additional information will provide the reader with reference points for broader contrasts and comparisons.

A. ECOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY - The fact that all horticultural societies depend more or less on food cultivation, as a primary source of sustenance, is an important ecological consideration. Farming,

as a type of subsistence, appears to be directly related to the presence of a predictable and regular food supply. This is, for the most part, in direct contrast to the situation among the hunting and gathering societies described, where the food supply was irregular and unpredictable. This regularity in food supply, in turn, appears to be related to the existence of stable and relatively large concentrations of populations in sedentary villages. Although the location of villages was periodically changed, this seems to be a product of territorial pressures from outside sources or the result of infertility in land created by continuous use.

Farming, as a major means of subsistence, also contributed to an economic surplus in food products. The Mandan, for instance, built large enclosures to store their surplus corn (Bowers, 1932).

Importantly, much of this surplus food was used, as a medium of exchange, in trading for horses, furs and other commodities that could be provided either by the True Plains societies to the west or by the fur traders. It is necessary to note that many of these groups assumed a very important place in the trading complex on the Northern Plains. Trading was particularly significant, since it provided these groups with additional and varied sources of wealth.

Although the term horticulture implies cultivation of plants, these societies did not completely rely on the cultivation of plants for their sustenance. Although horticultural societies in North America varied in the extent to which they relied on farming, all engaged in hunting and/or fishing to some extent. In all of the societies to be described in this chapter, hunting was carried on singly or by small groups throughout the year. With the development of the horse-buffalo complex in the Central Plains, many of

the farming societies directly adjacent to this region staged seasonal buffalo hunts and assumed a nomadic way of life for brief periods of time. However, unlike the Crow and Cheyenne, these groups did not completely give up their farming and pursue a completely nomadic way of life. Thus, except for brief periods of time, when the total social unit or a large portion, thereof, commenced the hunting of buffalo, these societies occupied villages in relatively stable locations. Generally, farming and village life dominated the life ways of these groups.

It should also be mentionned that horticultural groups in North America engaged in warfare. Again, the extent to which they stressed this activity varied. Although the groups directly adjacent to the Central Plains engaged in warfare, they seem to have done so primarily on a defensive rather than an offensive basis (Eggan, 1966: 63). Unlike True Plains societies, they were organized primarily for peace rather than war.

B. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION - The social organization of these societies is characterized by highly specialized groups that are intricately interlocked to form a more complex and tightly organized structure than is found among True Plains societies. Eggan (1966: 64 & 1955: 42) indicates that the social organization of these societies was "well adapted to agricultural life." He argues it is probable that a more sedentary and dense population, having access to a relatively large and stable economic surplus, was associated with the existence of clan organization in these societies. He states:

"The increased density of population requisite for village life was made possible by the increased food supply resulting from combining maize agriculture with hunting and gathering. The utilization of fertile bottomlands along the Missouri and its tributaries

made it possible for these villages to be both large and relatively permanent; the problems of integrating the population around common activities in connection with agriculture and hunting, with regard to both subsistence and rituals, made the development of segmentary clan organization highly probable. Wherever it is essential to hold property in trust or to maintain rituals from generation to generation, unilateral organizations or 'corporations' are far more efficient than bilateral ones. The clan gives a greater degree of stability and permanence but has in turn a limited flexibility and adaptability to new situations" (1952: 42).

Thus, the very advantages, maximization of continuity and increased stability, clan organization has in the horticultural societies would create difficulties in the nomadic groups at the previous levels having more unpredictable lifeways. Here a more flexible organizational device (e.g. band) is required that can readily adapt its numbers and geographical location to fluid situations.

Clan organization provided a basic integrating framework in these societies. In addition to regulating marriage, clans often regulated the control of land and other property, maintained control over both secular and religious positions of leadership and had specific responsibilities and duties in both secular and religious spheres of activity.

In addition to clans, there existed a number of other organizational devices, which cross-cut kin-based groups. Among these groups were the warrior societies, governing councils and religious sodalities, all of which were organized primarily on a non-kin basis. These groups, however, were dependent indirectly on clan organization, in so far as membership was usually an hereditary prerogative. Although these organizations were composed of members from different clans, individual families controlled certain positions by hereditary right. Since villages were not clan specific, organizational



devices transcending the clans were important basis for maintaining village solidarity. It can be further argued that they provided a basis for village cooperation and thus, helped to minimize rivalries and disputes that might be created by placing primacy on individual or family affiliation with a clan.

Moreover, with the emergence of a sizable and stable economic surplus, striking inequalities in the distribution of both tangible and intangible forms of wealth develop. Unlike True Plains societies, many of the horticultural societies have stabilized their wealth by allowing certain families to maintain absolute control over specific types of property. This situation created in a number of these societies definable and permanent social strata. Further, not only might families occupy different ranked positions within a clan, but clans might occupy different ranked positions within the society at large.

Status inequalities based on differential access to both material wealth and secular power increases sharply in these horticultural societies. The acquisition of leadership positions and social privileges is determined primarily by ascribed status positions that tend to be hereditary and are validated by family wealth. Use of certain tracts of land, religious and secular privileges as well as rights to leadership positions are now, for the most part, bequeathed within the confines of particular extended family lines. Personal achievements, therefore, play a less important role in status allocation. Status mobility and competition, when it does exist, is usually limited to achievements within one's own kin group or to certain limited activities like warfare, where achievements play a more important role in defining positions of leadership and

prestige. Generally, it might be stated that since most positions of privilege are the prerogative of certain families and since these positions are ultimately arranged along clan lines, free access and unrestricted competition for assuming them would in all probability make for social instability.

Leadership positions in horticultural societies are formalized offices with clearly delimited and in most instances, specialized functions. In most of the peripheral horticultural societies, there are clear cut distinctions between the rights and duties of persons, who hold offices of civil chief, war leader or keepers of sacred bundles. As indicated previously, most of these positions are usually the prerogative of certain families, whose rights are determined by ascription and validated by wealth. Moreover, individuals, who occupy these offices, exercise considerable authority and have at their year around disposal a specially selected group of "soldiers" to enforce their demands.

The emergence of a political structure based on ascription and wealth with formal offices, which are accompanied by explicitly defined responsibilities and authority, leads to a situation in which, as Lenski (1966: 133) puts it, "rights to offices are regarded as 'property,' which can be retained indefinitely or transmitted within families without regard to the qualifications of the possessor." The latter part of this quote is not completely applicable to the societies under consideration here because although families can be viewed as owning offices, the qualifications of the incumbent to the office are certainly considered. While hereditary succession often moves from father to son or from mother's brother to mother's son, it is not absolute. If a direct descendent is not capable, it may



pass on to another near relative but always within the appropriate lines of descent. Thus, competition for leadership positions is not eliminated in horticultural societies but restricted.

### C. ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS

#### The Oto

The Oto were a semi-sedentary village tribe, who lived in the southeastern corner of the present state of Nebraska during the 19th century. There were five villages among the Oto comprised of "voluntary groupings of families" (Whitman, 1937: 2). It appears from Whitman's account (1937: 16) that these villages were organized along clan lines at one time but in later years were comprised of families from a variety of clans.

Agriculture was the primary means of subsistence for this group. Corn, squash, melons and beans were among the plants grown. Importantly, both men and women participated in farming activities. In addition, hunting was an important male activity, which could be carried on singly or in groups. It was believed that an individual's success in hunting was due to the possession of supernatural power acquired in visions (1937: 6).

During the early summer and late fall, the Oto participated in the buffalo hunt. This biannual affair involved men and women from several villages and rigid cooperation was demanded amongst those participating. This communal affair, additionally, demanded that members of the villages assume a nomadic mode of existence for brief periods of time. Although buffalo hunts were an important source of food, they were not like agricultural products, the major source of food. Because of the Oto's heavy reliance on farming, Whitman states that "village life outranked the life of the buffalo hunt in

importance" (1937: 5).

Land used for agriculture was not owned by clans or individual families. Instead, the village was the land holding unit. Families controlled rights to particular plots of land through habitual use, and they owned the produce from the plots that they worked on (Whitman, 1937: 5).

Warfare seems to have been of little importance among the Oto. Although warfare did take place, it seems to have been waged on a defensive rather than an offensive basis. The Oto, according to Whitman (1937: 10), were organized for peace rather than war.

Oto villages were divided primarily along two lines, kinship and rank. In reference to the former, each village was divided into a number of gens and subgentes, each of which had its own privileges, institutions, peculiar idiosyncracies and supernatural origins (1937: 18). Within each gens, certain families largely because they controlled both intangible and tangible forms of wealth, occupied the highest status positions in the village and in the tribe as a whole. Importantly, it is the family among the Oto, which is the principal social unit and around which politics and other activities center. As Whitman states:

"But more important than the gens, more important than the individual is the family. Conceptually the family like the gens, has individuality; the family is responsible for its members; family prestige and prerogatives extend into all forms of Oto activity" (1937: 42)

With respect to rank, Oto families were members of three distinct classes. According to Whitman,

"Oto recognize status, and even today they distinguish between those families from whom chiefs spring, noble families from whom are drawn those with priestly powers, warriors and the rich; and the common families which do not amount to much" (1937: 42).

From Whitman's account, it appears that the Oto system of rank was stabilized and access to positions of privilege and prestige was based primarily on ascription. "Families," according to Whitman, "control and jealously maintain their intangible privileges" (1932: 36).

Whitman's discussion of modes of status allocation among the Oto is extremely meagre. However, it appears that most positions of leadership were hereditary. Each gens, theoretically, had an hereditary chief and each village had a chief. According to Whitman, chiefs who resided over villages and the tribe as a whole came from the leading subgens among the Bear gens. The biannual buffalo hunt, on the other hand, was led by individuals who came from the leading family among the Buffalo gens. The manner in which leaders assumed their positions is best described by Whitman, who states:

"A chief it was said had to be a good man, a man of peace. He was considered to be the father of an extended family, whose first duty was to care for his people, to help them in trouble, to lift the aged and the fallen and to aid the orphan. Although the office was hereditary it did not follow that the oldest son was always selected to the chieftainship in the place of his father. A second son, who showed himself more fitted to chieftainship than his older brothers might become chief in his place" (1932: 36).

In addition, to the peace chiefs were the warriors or soldiers. These were men of rank who succeeded to their positions through their kin affiliations and generosity. They functioned in carrying out and executing the orders of the peace chiefs. While Oto villages were organized along secular lines, they were also organized along ceremonial lines. Leadership positions in the religious sphere were also acquired through ascription. There were leaders who kept and knew how to use the society's sacred bundles and there were leaders of religious societies, which functioned primarily in curing. These leadership positions are best described as "offices" because

they were accompanied by definite rights and privileges.

Among the Oto, supernatural power could either be acquired by an individual through his own efforts or through inheritance. Powers of a personal-private nature could be granted in a vision for use in hunting, curing and so on. Early in adolescence individuals would initiate their search for power. According to Whitman,

"The fast and vision quest was the Oto boy's first appeal as an independent individual to the supernatural forces which pervaded the world in which he lived. But because power was conceived as being handed down from father to son through family inheritance, it was the appeal for blessings which was important rather than the vision. Strictly speaking, vision might or might not be a blessing; evil supernaturals or omens might appear to the visionary. Proof of blessing was later success in life. 'If a man says he heard (God), and has neither a good house nor is well-to-do, they (the people) don't believe him' (1932: 82).

As indicated in the previous paragraph, power was believed to be handed down within family lines. Power that is owned and in the possession of the family is socially important; individually owned power is of little significance (1932: 40). With respect to the role of visions in Oto society, Whitman states the following:

"Fasting is not nearly so important among the Oto as it is among the Central Algonkians and even other members of the Southern Sioux. Whether this is a breakdown in form or whether the vision quest never assumed a place of great importance in Oto life, I do not know. I could find no one living who had had a vision during puberty fast. Today the Oto have no concept of a guardian spirit. Vision is an omen of future success or the revelation of a rite for achieving success" (1932: 81).

He goes on to state later that

"Among the Oto, vision, when accepted by the community, primarily served as the validation of personality. It justified individuality. It gave prestige and power. Though any man or woman might have a vision, there were definite checks on vision experience. True vision proved itself. If a man had a vision of curing and could not cure, his vision was suspect; if a man had a vision of wealth and were not wealthy, his vision was a deceit, either practiced on him or by him. Moreover,

visions, unproved in time did not confer either honor or privilege. And there was still another check. The power that was associated with vision might be double edged. The possession of power implied corresponding payment to the supernatural"(1932: 86).

Additionally, Whitman points out that

"Vision might come at any time, in youth or in old age. If it came in youth it was discounted until proved; if it came in later life it was also discounted unless the man or woman was already powerful. Although each boy went out on a vision quest, there are few accounts of any who had visions, and fewer still of those who became powerful on account of them"(1932: 87).

The preceeding statements of Whitman bring to the reader's attention two important points; first, abilities or powers granted in visions had to be validated, and secondly, few people gained success through individual efforts, hence, personal-private visions. This would certainly stand to reason, if one remembers that most positions of privilege and prestige in Oto society were based on ascription. Whitman, in describing visions that grant powers for curing, makes an interesting observation about the disruptive nature of visions in Oto society. He states:

"Power to cure and to diagnose could be gained through vision or could be inherited. Unquestionably in the old days men with strong visions undertook to practice medicine, but vision was not said to be a fundamental prerequisite as it was among neighboring tribes. Too many visions with their resultant powers would have upset family status too easily. Unlike the Ponca to whom power was more important than family, the Oto relied on the family for their sense of security. They accepted vision with reserve; power they made the servant of the family not its master" (1932: 101).

Importantly, among the Oto it is the family which gives an individual power for personal use, as well as grants him rights over power for collective purposes. As Whitman indicates in this regard:

"In ritual ceremonies as well as in the exercise of power it is the family and not the gens which maintains control through right of transmission. Gentile ceremonies and gentile power are limited; there is a spring ceremonial when the sacred gens bundles are ceremonially aired; there



are naming ceremonies and such privileges; and there is gens leadership during the year. But it is in family lines that these prerogatives are transmitted even in gens rituals, and in prerogatives that have no gens relevance the family controls all transmission of power" (1932: 85).

Membership in important curing societies was, therefore, a family prerogative. For instance, the Medicine Lodge among the Oto was a prestigious group which was limited to members of chiefly and noble families. Entrance, while based on ascription, was also determined by wealth. Individuals not only had to pay exorbitant prices to join this society, but they had to continue to validate their right to membership by gift giving. Importantly, visions were not necessary for membership. However, it is important to note that initiation ceremonies were based on patterns analogous to those in vision quests. As a part of the initiation, members who had power by virtue of their belonging to the lodge imitated various animals with whom the initiate spoke and through whom he received power and learned special songs (1932: 111-116). The fact that visions do not guarantee membership in a society is also illustrated by reference to the Buffalo Doctor's Lodge. Whitman describes a case, where a man received power from a buffalo for curing, but because his family did not have rights to membership in this lodge he could never join (1932: 105-107). Thus, it would appear that even if an individual receives a vision of a buffalo but is not a member of a family with rights to the position of buffalo doctor, the vision is essentially worthless in terms of validating status.

It is important to note that among the Oto medicine bundles and religious sodalities with their associated ritual have their origin in visions, which have now been relegated to the status of a myth.

The Omaha

The Omaha, like their linguistically related relatives the Oto, were a semi-sedentary peoples. However, unlike the Oto, they resided in only one village, which was located along the Missouri River in eastern Nebraska.

The Omaha were, according to Mead (1936: 1), also a peaceful people, who relied heavily on the cultivation of plants for their sustenance. Land was owned by the entire village but distributed to individual families for cultivation. Probably, one of the primary reasons that land was not owned by individual families among these groups was because of their constant changes of location due to infertility of soil, on the one hand, and from pressures of impinging True Plains societies, on the other. In addition to horticulture, hunting was a major occupation, which could take place by individuals, alone, or in small groups. Furthermore, the Omaha engaged in buffalo hunting biannually. This was a communal affair and a large proportion of the village left to pursue a temporary existence of nomadism.

Warfare was of limited importance and was not emphasized to the extent that it was among True Plains societies. Raiding for horses did take place and success in this activity was somewhat important for assuming secular leadership positions (Fletcher and LaFlesche, 1911: 204-205). It is important to note that warriors were required to fast and receive visions prior to a raid (Dorsey, 1889: 390). Here warriors and their leaders addressed their "prayers" to the Thunder-being. In addition, prior to large war parties, keepers of certain sacred bundles are expected to conduct rituals to bring success on the warpath (Dorsey, 1889: 382). Incidentally, these customs also

appear to take place among the closely related Ponca and Kansa (Dorsey, 1889: 382 & 390).

The Omaha village, like Oto villages, was divided along the principles of kinship and rank. This village, on the one hand, was divided into two moieties and ten exogamous, patrilineal clans, which were in turn subdivided into lineages (Fletcher and LaFlesche, 1911: 746). These clans had hereditary leaders, special privileges and in some instances, special functions. On the other hand, Omaha society was divided according to rank. There were three distinct classes which included chiefly families, priests and doctors, and the under-privileged; admission to the privileged classes was based on transmission usually through paternal lines (Dorsey, 1882: 216).

Although status in Omaha society was primarily determined by ascription, wealth and limited achievements were also of importance. Extended families, as among the Oto, controlled rights to both secular and religious positions of prestige and privilege. However, among the Omaha a family had to validate their right to all status positions through purchase. Secular leadership positions appear to have been completely based on ascription and wealth but in more recent times personal achievements were also involved. In order to assume the office of village chief, it was expected that a man perform a series of graded acts, which involved limited war achievements and extensive gift giving. According to Fletcher and LaFlesche (1911: 213), it required considerable wealth to become a chief.

Among the Omaha there existed a governing council which was composed of seven chiefs and five keepers of sacred bundles. Fletcher and LaFlesche best describe this council, when they state:

"Among the duties of the council of seven besides that of maintaining peace and order within the tribe were making peace with other tribes, securing allies, determining the time of the annual buffalo hunt, and confirming the man who was to act as leader, on whom rested the responsibility of this important movement..." (1911: 209-210).

It appears that among the Omaha clans were not as important in directly providing leadership for specific functions like the buffalo hunt.

The Omaha council can be viewed as an important interlocking device transcending the autonomy of individual clans. In a similar manner, the various medicine societies, which cross-cut clan divisions, also served to create solidarity amongst members of different clans. The role of these societies will be elaborated upon in more detail in the following paragraphs.

According to Fortune, Omaha visions can be divided into two categories: "solitary visions" acquired through the individual's own efforts and "acquired visions" received as an hereditary prerogative. As among the Oto, solitary visions were of little importance in gaining prestige and privileges in the society at large. Fortune makes the following observation:

"It is interesting to note how the unconventional valued the solitary vision. It was socially stressed but yet rejected in terms of institutions; so that the social stress led to nothing concrete...the initiate into a society laid aside his solitary vision and depreciated its power in comparison with his acquired vision. His acquired vision was associated with public respect, public power and a traditional doctoring good will" (1932:55).

Although all important secular and religious positions in Omaha society were based primarily on ascription and although all socially acceptable forms of supernatural power were inherited, it is quite obvious from Fortune's account that individuals were directly encouraged to seek visions and supernatural power on their

own initiative.

Fasting for "solitary" visions began in the middle years of childhood. The following excerpts from Fortune best describe the nature of this initial, questing period:

"Small boys of seven or eight years of age upwards were sent out together in the early morning with faces covered with clay by their parents to one of a few selected spots. This happened every fine spring morning...They (the small boys) were technically fasting as they went out before breakfast. They cried out at the sacred spot as they had been instructed to do in singing refrain, 'Waka<sup>n</sup>da! here needy he stands and I am he.'

One man told me that as a child he cried out incorrectly under these circumstances, when his father appeared from nearby and corrected him. It appears, as might be expected, that the small boys needed close supervision, at least at their first appearance before the supernatural.

The small boys cried out and waited for some time as they had been told to wait. A supernatural being might appear to them and give them something very good, they had been told. They went home, at breakfast and forgot the supernatural entirely in playing all day, as one man put it to me. Next morning they went again unless it was stormy weather.

Small boys never 'got anything good' as they had been told they might. They went out Spring mornings because they were told to go, it appears. Naturally, I do not know how well they were kept up to the mark. But I am sure their elders' seriousness must have impressed them considerably. And they must soon have discovered that 'something good' meant curing powers, or hunting powers, or fast running powers that the supernatural beings might give them at any moment" (1932: 37-38).

"In such a manner in formal and in informal training a small boy was directed towards hope of great gifts from a Patron. And even if small boys received no very striking supernatural appearances on their formal early spring morning excursions, the foundations of belief in the supernatural was firmly laid in them" (1932: 39).

After puberty boys were expected to go through a more rigorous period of vision questing known as no<sup>n</sup>zhi<sup>n</sup>zho<sup>n</sup>. As in the early childhood quest, the youth searching for a vision hoped to

encounter a supernatural being, who would grant him hunting powers or the more valued doctor's powers. According to Fortune,

"The youth before going out to request a revelation (usually termed vision or dream in the literature) the gift of power, had not heard any detailed account of any previous vision told. The telling of visions merely to satisfy curiosity was not done in Omaha. Such action would have led to no<sup>n</sup>ka. If a father possessed a power from revelation, he would only tell a son the details in return for a heavy payment from the son, and only in giving over the power to his son and so denuding himself of it. A son offering such payment and begging the deed-ing over of the power from his father to himself was requesting transfer of his father's immunity from sickness. An adult realised that fully and believed that such action might precipitate his father's death" (1932: 39-40).

He further states:

"There was an avoidance of public mention of the facts of transfer of supernatural power. It was publically given out that power was a direct endowment of a solitary by a Supernatural Patron. That was natural enough. It was what every father hoped for his son. The factual alternative, although true, was not platable for public mention. It was actually not realised that transfer was the only way in which 'tricks' could be handed on even by initiates into the 'trick' practising societies. They, believing in an ultimate origin from a Supernatural Patron giving the power and 'trick' (miracle rather) to a man, hoped that their sons might tap the original font: again, even if they had not" (1932: 40-41).

As can be seen from the above statements, adolescents were encouraged to quest in good faith for benefits that were difficult to acquire from such a venture. This may appear a contradiction, but as inferred in the above statement, transfer of power was a complete secret, the disclosing of which was believed to bring on death. This contradiction, however, has important and positive functions. First, it might be suggested that individual achievements in Omaha society were not impossible, even if rare. Secondly, encouraging everyone to search for power has value, in so far as it instills in the youth a belief that supernatural power is to be gained by visions and

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It also outlines the methodology used in the study and the results obtained.

The second part of the paper discusses the results of the study and the conclusions drawn from the data. It also discusses the implications of the findings and the limitations of the study.

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as such, it indirectly serves to validate the rights of those who have received visions to positions of prestige and privilege.

In spite of the secretiveness. which surrounded the transfer of power, youths did know the names of the supernatural beings, the powers they bestowed and the places these beings inhabited or frequented. As Fortune states,

"He was told that near by the sacred fireplaces in the sacred places of revelation quest the Grizzly Bear Spirits lived underground. He knew that they could give powers of bleeding and had powers of bleeding (without skin cutting). Above in the distant sky was the Thunder Bird Spirit, who could give powers of weather control...In a popular legend he had probably heard that Buffalo Spirits wen through the air with a rushing sound. They could give powers treating wounds. Ghosts commonly manifested themselves as whirlwinds or in human forms except that they walked on air, a foot or two above the ground. They could give powers of treating paralysis or delirium or unconsciousness. If they chose so to do they might paralyse him instead of giving him immunity and power to cure others; just as the Thunderbird might strike him down by lightning" (1932: 41).

The individual also understood that all members of the sacred societies had received their powers from supernatural beings in visions. As Fortune indicates,

"The members of every sacred society (the Midewiwin or Shell Society excluded) were all understood to have obtained their powers directly from the respective Supernatural Patrons of their societies. Thus a Grizzly Bear Society doctor avowed absolutely that his power came from an encounter between him and the Grizzly Bear Supernatural Beings...The youth going out on his important no zhi zho experience hoped for such an encounter with a Supernatural Being who might become his Supernatural Patron and give him such supernatural powers as the doctors had for instance: or else supernatural help in hunting or in foot racing. Doctors' powers were most highly valued however, as the power that could cure others also gave its possessor immunity from sickness and hence long life, it was believed. Moreover, fees secured in curing others kept the doctor protected from want. Again all the important associations were doctor's associations, the Thunder Bird Society, the Horse Society, and one or two others excepted; the Midewiwin or Shell society was another exception but it was not taught that it could be entered by individual





solitary success in securing a Supernatural Patron. Hence public prestige and society admittance was to be gained from doctor's powers most prominently, with few other avenues" (1932: 39).

Fortune also points out that youths, who could expect to gain admittance to a particular secret society might in fact know certain of the details of the appropriate vision needed to be admitted. In reference to the Buffalo Society doctors, he noted that fathers often tell their sons a traditional vision account, as if recounting a myth. The son in all probability recasts the mythical version into a more personal form - so that while the son may in fact have a personal encounter with a supernatural being, it is in all likelihood that his account is based in prior tutoring (1932: 72-75).

The socially stressed quest that took place after puberty lasted four days. It appears that as in other societies described not all individuals were equally successful. If the youth were successful in his quest, he told no one about it for four days, after which he went to the member of the appropriate society, where his experience and kin qualifications were judged by members of that society (1932: 43-45). It must be pointed out that even if the youth had an appropriate vision, it would be impossible for him to gain entrance if he did not have the appropriate family connections. On the other hand, a young man unsuccessful in his quests, but who did have ascribed rights in the society could still gain entrance. He would, however, have to go through a specific ritual of transfer in order to gain access to the power of the society he wished to enter. Fortune describes this transfer as follows:

"Transfer was called 'to cause to see the supernatural.' The initiator and the novice went away privately together. The initiator taught the novice, the traditional vision of the society, or the traditional form of it that descended

in his family line to be more exact; the sacred song or songs of the vision; and the secret herbs, or the correct performance of the 'trick' or both. He then handed over the medicine bundle that went with the vision, the songs, herbs or herbs and trick" (1932: 46).

He goes on to say in this context that

"It was understood by the outside public that a man had such control of his Supernatural Patron that he could induce vision of it in the novice whom he 'caused to see the supernatural.' So vision by transfer was real vision. The conventional phrasing of transfer was linguistically an objection to mere transfer without some show of supernormal experience" (1932: 47).

As indicated previously, entrance into all societies was by transfer and it was believed that individuals gained their rights to enter vis a vis a vision without human intervention. Fortune makes some other important observations, which should be quoted at this point. He states:

"Son succeeded father, or sister's son, mother's brother, or son-in-law, father-in-law. The elders kept complete freedom of choice. Some men had membership in several societies, and they might distribute their membership in succession or not, at will. No one got any direct social power from the individual quest; but an air of illusion in regard to the possibilities was general" (1932: 46).

It is important to note that certain of the contents of an individual's vision could be depicted on buffalo robes and tipis. Additionally, the right to picture certain symbols on one's own property could be bequeathed. It appears, however, from Dorsey's account (1894: 394-405) that individual's had to also belong to the society of the supernatural being represented on their property.

Interestingly, priests who controlled the tribal bundles (an hereditary prerogative) did not, for the most part, belong to any of the secret societies. They could, however, belong to the Midewiwin society, wherein entrance was through "apostolic succession" to use Fortune's phrase (1932: 90). Furthermore, peace chiefs were

usually members of this society. Thus, it appears that the members of this society were primarily those who occupied the highest status positions in the society at large (1932: 169-174).

In concluding this section on the Omaha, the reader's attention should be directed to the following summary statement by Fortune:

"This custom of claiming a derived vision as personal is widespread amongst North American tribes. In Omaha it fits so agreeably with the horror of the associations of transfer, that it looks as if it were made amongst the Omaha to avoid unpleasant reference. In Omaha it looks like an attempt repeated in each generation to encourage the next generation to get away from the necessity of transfer, an attempt perpetually doomed in each generation because mere vision is not enough..." (1932: 45).

It might also be suggested that "claiming a derived vision" also fits in with the use of ascribed criteria as primary modes of status allocation. If the cultivation of plants requires certain stability in organization, as has been suggested by Eggan and if clan organization and ascription provide such stability, it would, therefore, seem reasonable to argue that "acquired" visions have an important function in validating the maintenance and continuance of prestige and privilege based on ascription.

#### The Mandan

The Mandan, a semi-sedentary peoples, resided in several villages along the upper waters of the Missouri in what is now the state of North Dakota. This group relied on a combination of gardening, hunting, fishing and trading for their livelihood. Communal subsistence activities were farming and buffalo hunting; the later activity being carried on primarily during the summer. In addition, individuals, alone or in small groups, hunted and fished.

The villages were economic, social and political units. With respect to their economic functions, Bowers relates the following:

"Each village was an economic unit. It acted as a unit when leaving on the summer buffalo hunt, although there was a certain amount of cooperation among villages in the matter of protecting the old people left behind and in keeping enemy raiding parties from burning the lodges during their absence. Each village had its garden section which was separate from other village garden areas, although my informants claimed that at one time...all the available corn grounds were planted and that it was necessary for the villages to meet in council to define the garden limits of each village" (1950: 23).

As among the Oto and Omaha, villages were divided along lines of kinship and rank. Although the matrilineal clans had members dispersed in all villages, it appears that lineages were localized in each village. Clans in Mandan society had their own leaders, ceremonies and special functions. It is interesting to note that clans controlled the right to raise certain stocks of corn. Lineages within each village controlled rights over land on principles of usufruct; they did not, however, own the land, which was under village ownership. The extended family household appears to have been the functioning economic unit and members of it worked together in gardening and in hunting (1950: 25-35).

With respect to rank, it appears that within Mandan villages certain clans and their lineages had higher positions than others. In addition, households had differential status positions within the lineage. According to Bowers (1950: 42-48), status within the village depended largely on a family's ownership and control of important medicine bundles and their associated ceremonies. Bruner (1961: 223) notes that in all Mandan villages the Waxikena clan occupied the highest status positions because they controlled the most valued bundles in the society, those connected with the Okipa ceremony. Bruner makes some interesting observations about differential ranking in villages. He states the following:



"Mandan society was stratified into classes based upon the inheritance of tribal bundles. Those who owned important bundles were usually wealthy, as they received goods and property for performing sacred rites and could marry two or more wives, who in turn produced corn, dressed skins and brought other economically valuable assets. The lineages in possession of tribal bundles tended to preserve their wealth by arranging selective marriages with other important families" (1961: 227).

Modes of status allocation were based primarily on ascription and validated by wealth. Additionally, personal achievements were of some importance. Bowers states the following:

"A man's social status at any one period varied greatly between individuals. It was in part determined by birth, those being born in households having important bundles and a well-balanced household economy and particularly if there were many brothers and sisters, had a great advantage over those whose households had been broken up by death or divorce" (1950: 80).

Achievements in warfare were also of importance, and Bruner observes the following:

"Those who were not eligible to inherit a tribal bundle could achieve recognition through personal achievements and military glory; the path was open, but it was difficult and uncertain. A young man who had no medicine could fast, engage in self-torture, perform acts for village welfare, and if he were a member of a large kin group that could provide necessary goods, he could give feasts to bundle owners. If he performed these acts, he would receive some sacred object or medicine associated with a ceremony which enabled him to become a war leader. Without proper medicine and sacred knowledge a man could not lead a war expedition, as others would not follow" (1961: 227)

In this context, Bowers (1950: 63) points out that fasting was required before one could participate in war expeditions. He also indicates, which is inferred in the preceeding paragraph, that young men desiring to become war leaders had to undergo a period of apprenticeship. Selection of war leaders appears to have occurred annually and they were chosen on the basis of their personal skills as well as upon their ownership of a buffalo skull received through inheritance

and purchase or through receipt of an appropriate vision and purchase. It was the war leaders prerogative to decide whom he would like to follow him on an expedition.

In addition to war leaders (they were also in control of communal buffalo hunts), were village and clan leaders. These latter positions were based primarily on ascription and wealth. With respect to village leaders, Bowers makes the following statement:

"Mandan village and tribal leadership was vested in a hierarchy of bundle-owners or priests who constituted a group of headmen whose number varied from time to time depending on the status of various bundles. From this group two leaders were selected whose war or peace-making record exceeded that of all others or who, because of other practices, had acquired considerable popularity with the people" (1950: 34).

Clan leaders also appear to have been elected along similar lines as the village headmen. The authority of both types of leaders was minimal. According to Bowers, "his principal authority was derived from his ability as an orator to persuade the council of older men to sanction his opinions" (1950: 34).

There also existed in Mandan society a series of age-grade societies. Entrance into these societies was based on a combination of criteria, which included family affiliations, limited achievements and wealth. It is interesting to note that entrance into the higher age-graded societies was more expensive than the other ones, thus limiting the number of persons who could reach positions in the highest sodality (Bowers, 1950: 62-63).

In Mandan society, supernatural power could be acquired for personal use in a variety of ways including: fasting, receiving visions, purchasing medicine bundles, offering feasts to bundles and so on (Bowers, 1950: 211). It appears from both the accounts of



Bowers and Bruner that individuals not only varied from others in the amount of power they possessed, but they also varied in the amount of power they possessed at different times during their own life cycle. Power could be amassed through the ways indicated above, but it also could be expended through use. In this context, Bruner states the following:

"The quantity of power possessed by an individual varied throughout his life career. Children had no power; they were not born with any. As a young man began to fast, engage in self-torture and participate in the ceremonies, he gradually acquired power. His quantity of power was built up to its peak as he approached middle age, at about the time he became involved in village administration; thereafter there was a slow decline, until, in old age, his power was gone. An old man who had completed the cycle was regarded with great respect; his material needs were provided by gifts from the young men just starting their power quest" (1961: 228).

Individuals began their search for power during their middle childhood years and could continue the search until the age of fifty (Bowers, 1950: 107). Young boys usually began their search for power by fasting during the Okipa ceremony. The length of time devoted to fasting increased until the age of seventeen. It was believed that fasting in this ceremony would help the individual later to acquire a vision (Bowers, 1950: 111).

Bowers (1950: 109) notes that visions did not always accompany fasting during childhood. Serious solicitation of visions and a guardian-spirit seems to have occurred around the "property owning age." Three methods seem to have been employed to induce a vision at this time: inflicting self-torture, offering goods to a bundle, and fasting. Interestingly, the search for visions took place outside the village, where the youth paid his mother's brother to help him induce a vision and interpret it. If a boy did not receive a vision through this method of questing, a ceremonial clan father often

would give the youth a sacred object from a clan bundle to induce a vision(Bowers, 1950: 63).

In Mandan society, there was a distinction between personal and tribal bundles. This incidentally was also the case for the Omaha. Both of these types of bundles could be transferred through inheritance and purchase. Visions were the basis upon which a bundle was formed and according to Bowers (1950: 182) , the visions were short-lived, if not incorporated into a bundle rite. Elaborate rites accompanied the transfer of bundles, which involved instructions in its use and mythical background, as well as instructions in inducing appropriate visions connected with the bundle (Bowers, 1950: 211). Thus, bundles as well as their associated visions became hereditary prerogatives. It is interesting to note in this context that if an individual was not in a direct line of descent for a bundle but had received an appropriate vision, he could claim the bundle by virtue of his special vision providing he could afford the purchase price (Bowers, 1950: 107).

At this point it might be worthwhile to bring to the reader's attention an excerpt from Benedict which describes the practices of the neighboring village tribe, the Hidatsa; it is as follows:

"The Hidatsa are matrilineal; but medicine bundles are inherited in the father's line. It was an uncoordinated process by which rights to visions were perpetuated, for though it was obligatory that it descend in the male line, one must also have the same vision before one inherited and one must likewise pay a purchase price. Since an inheritor must have a vision from the family bundle, the function of the father in preparing the mind of the suppliant for this particular spirit-visitant became important. Not only was supervision exercised by the father over fasting; but ceremonies had to be performed under the superintendence of duly qualified bundle owners" (1922: 18).

As has been inferred in the preceeding paragraphs, a rather similar

practice occurs among the Mandan, wherein relatives supervise the questing for visions. This direct supervision certainly is not incongruent with the factors of inheritance in bundle transfers. Receipt of an appropriate vision, therefore, would seem to serve as an ideal way to validate the individual's hereditary prerogative to a certain bundle, its powers and associated ceremony.

### The Winnebago

The Winnebago, who lived in the present state of Wisconsin, are the final semi-sedentary village peoples to be discussed in this section. As in the other groups so far described, villages consisted of groupings of families belonging to different clans. Members of the same clan, however, lived in separate sections within each village (Radin, 1916: 115).

The Winnebago also relied on both horticulture and hunting for their sustenance. Extended family groups cooperated amongst themselves in the cultivation of corn, beans and squash. The hunting of deer, bear, buffalo and other animals was carried on by individuals or by groups. Communal hunts were conducted under strict rules and as Radin notes, "individuals were strictly prohibited from taking initiative except by permission" (1916: 114).

Unlike in some of the other horticultural societies described, warfare took on considerable importance among the Winnebago. Certain of Radin's observations on this matter are worth quoting here. He states:

"War was one of the most important elements in the life of the Winnebago. The life of the warrior was the ideal toward which all men strove. It not only satisfied certain emotional needs but it was so inextricably interwoven with social standing in the community and with individual prestige that Winnebago life is unthinkable without it. An element of culture fraught with so much significance to the

individual and the social group was bound to be surrounded by innumerable customs, regulations and restrictions. It was a life that was at stake every time an individual went on the warpath, and remembering the value of each life to a small community, it is not to be wondered at if there is a definite attempt on the part of the social group to restrict individual activity in this particular regard. An individual might go on the warpath either alone or in company with few people, but the community in the person of the chief, insisted that he show some warrant for his action...It is hardly likely that many men would willingly run the risks of unnecessarily antagonizing their fellow tribesmen when the proper means of preparing for the warpath was open to all... Certain requirements were, however, necessary. It was not left to each individual to decide for himself whether he possessed these, but the final decision always lay in the hand of the chief" (1916: 156).

Receiving a vision seems to have been one of the most important ways to validate engaging in warfare, as Radin indicates:

"Any man who has been specially blessed with war powers may go on the warpath. Such a man must not merely be blessed with these general war powers that individuals obtain during their puberty fast, but must likewise be blessed with a definite enemy to kill or capture, as the case may be, immediately before he starts out. In practice this meant that whenever a person wished to go on the warpath he fasted in order to obtain the necessary guarantees of success. An account of the powers granted by the spirit or spirits was then placed before the chief and if, in his opinion, they justified the undertaking, the man was permitted to go. If they were insufficient the chief expressed his disapproval and the contemplated undertaking had either to be given up or the man would be compelled to fast again for increased powers. There were a number of men who were unable to obtain the requisite powers. To them one of two alternatives was left open: they might either purchase sufficient powers to go on a warpath or they might volunteer to join a large warpath" (1916: 157).

As mentioned previously, Winnebago villages were organized along clan lines. These clans seem to have had definite ceremonial and secular functions. Leadership for specialized activities was drawn from clans, which were believed to control supernatural powers over these activities. For instance, leaders in the Bear clan were responsible for organizing and ordering all communal hunts. In



addition, this clan was responsible for providing men to police the village. The Thunderbird clan, on the other hand, had the prerogative to provide the village with its peace chiefs, while the warrior clans prerogative was to provide war leaders. It also appears that these clans were ranked in Winnebago villages with the above mentioned clans assuming the most important duties and responsibilities in the village. Other clans were apparently ranked below these and assumed minor sociopolitical functions (Radin, 1916: 199-200).

In Radin's major work, The Winnebago Tribe (1916), he, unfortunately, does not provide the reader with a concrete or explicit statement on modes of status allocation. It can, however, be inferred from this account that achievements, ascription and wealth were in varying degrees determinants of status. It appears that all males had a chance to achieve success in military activities and to gain positions of prestige and privilege in this sector, irrespective of their clan association. Other leadership positions, however, appear to have been restricted to members of certain clans, as described in the previous paragraph. It seems that there was a certain amount of status mobility within the clans and that certain families did not have exclusive control over or rights to specific offices. For instance, the peace chief of a village is said to be "chosen" from the better families in the Thunderbird clan on the basis of his temperment and good habits (1916: 209). Additionally, keepers of sacred clan bundles also assumed positions of prestige and privilege. It appears that as among the Mandan, clan bundle owners also assumed positions of leadership; these bundles were transferred through inheritance.

In addition, shamanistic talents and membership in certain religious societies also conferred prestige and privilege.

The responsibilities and authority of the village peace chief was clearly limited, in so far as all serious decisions had to have the consensus of the entire village council, which was composed of leaders from all clans (1916: 163-165). This council functioned primarily in the settling of disputes and conflicts within the village; it also had the power to curtail raids that it felt were impolitic.

The Winnebago encouraged all males to begin their quest for visions in early childhood, usually around five or six years of age. Boys were sent out early in the morning to isolated spots without food and water from autumn until spring. This was continued with increasing rigor until the boy reached puberty or had received an appropriate vision (Radin, 1916: 135). The Winnebago attempted to insure that their youth receive appropriate visions by having male relatives actively supervise them during the questing period. According to Radin, "it was customary for parents, generally grandparents to tell youths who were fasting what kind of experience they were to expect, and particularly how they were to recognize a true spirit when it should appear and thus guard against being deceived by an evil spirit" (1920: 7). Additionally, families who owned bundles often placed them in front of the child's fasting hut to insure an approved vision or else the child's hut was placed near a place where specific spirits were thought to reside. In reference to one specific family, Radin states the following:

"Every Winnebago clan has at least one war-bundle; most of them have more. The father of S.B. possessed one, and most of the 'power' resident in this particular bundle was supposed to have been bestowed by the thunder-

birds and night-spirits. Perhaps that is why a black-hawk's nest was selected for the fasting-lodge, the black-hawk being regarded as a thunder-bird, although my interpreter was uncertain about this matter" (1920: 6).

The above practices and further evidence provided by Radin indicates that there was a strong tendency among the Winnebago for visions and their accompanying powers and spirits to remain in certain family lines. At one point, he infers that certain spirits are more difficult to get at than others, even though some families are known to see them in visions quite frequently. In this regard, he states:

"Some spirits are more difficult to approach than others. The black-hawk, regarded as the chief of the thunder-birds is one of the most difficult spirits to obtain blessings from. However, blessings from him were quite customary in S.B.'s family" (1920: 8).

It is important to note in this context that S.R.'s family were members of the Thunder-bird clan and also had control of one of the clan bundles. This is brought out in the following statement:

"To an old pious Winnebago such as S.B.'s father at this time was, it was clear that the thunder-birds would listen to his son's prayer for, first the family belonged to the thunder-bird clan, and secondly, various members had received blessings from them and thirdly, the clan war-bundle which they possessed had been bestowed upon an ancestor, not so many generations back, by the thunder-birds" (1920: 37).

The tendency towards inheritance of spirits in visions is explicitly indicated by Radin, when he states:

"In the concept of guardian spirits we have a mixture of both the 'mechanical' and the 'contract' theories. The guardian spirits themselves are, to our mind, but the transformed localized spirits, in other words, the genii loci. They are supposed to protect the individual to whom they appear in the same way as the genii loci protected their precinct. While theoretically every Winnebago could have his own guardian spirit, there seems to have been a marked tendency for certain guardian spirits to be inherited. This was so, not because there was any distinct development of the idea of inheritance,



but because certain definite powers were associated with the spirits, like success in hunting, fishing, etc. In terms of everyday life this simply meant that a good hunter would try to make his sons and near relatives good hunters; in religious terminology it meant that a son was blessed by the same guardian spirit as the father" (1916: 290).

The Winnebago believed that visions, wherein "True Spirits" appeared, granted special powers to their recipients. Powers relating to success in warfare, in doctoring and in acquiring wealth were believed to be granted by particular spirits revealed in visions. The importance of power or "blessings" is aptly described by Radin, as follows:

"...man, unaided, cannot overcome life's crises. The proper and ideal help is to obtain powers (blessings) from the spirits, but failing that, to purchase protecting medicines from those who happen to possess them. Blessings from the spirits cannot be transferred or purchased because the recipient must even then, theoretically, fast for them" (1920: 75).

The above paragraph implies that not all individuals are equally successful in their search for power and must solicit aide from their more fortunate brethren. Radin describes this in more detail, when he observes that-

"His repeated insistence on this point shows how common is lack of success in fasting. While this may represent the modern demoralized condition of Winnebago culture, it may also reflect a true old cultural fact, namely, that not everyone was able to enter into communication with the spirits. It may also represent, in a way, a kind of competition between the priests, on the one hand, and the doctors, shamans, and herbalists, on the other. The greatest rivalry existed between them and they doubtless made all the claims imaginable for their respective powers" (1920: 79).

In this context, Radin also makes the following comment:

"Not everyone who fasts is blessed with power. For those who are thus unable to obtain blessings directly from the spirits there is only one method of protection against evils left - the purchase of plants with magical properties from those who have been blessed with them.

These can be obtained by an individual no matter how unsuccessful he has been in obtaining blessings through personal fasting. All that is needed is sufficient riches for purchasing them. Of course it goes without saying that those who have been blessed with power may and do also provide themselves with these medicines"(1916: 170).

Since Radin spends a great deal of time discussing the nature of spirits among the Winnebago, it is worthwhile presenting some of his comments on this subject. Spirits among the Winnebago vary from very vague kinds like fire, to specialized animal spirits, to spirits associated with corporate groups and finally to spirits that assume deity-like proportions. Importantly, all of these types of spirits can manifest themselves in visions. As Radin states,

"To the average Winnebago the world is peopled by an indefinite number of spirits who manifest their existence in many ways, being either visible, audible, felt emotionally, or manifesting themselves by some sign or result. From a certain point of view, all spirits demonstrate their existence by the result, by the fact that the blessings they bestow upon man enable him to be successful and this holds as just as much for the spirits who manifest themselves in the most intangible emotional manner as for that one who is visible in a vision" (1916: 284).

He also states:

"According to the Winnebago, spirits possess the power of bestowing upon man all those things of socioeconomic value to him. These may vary from such very important economic things as rain or success on the warpath to the most insignificant trifles. Practically, any spirit no matter how indefinitely conceived, can bestow generalized blessings. On the whole, however, these powers are conceived of as being in the hands of a comparatively small number and the same powers are frequently possessed by different spirits" (1916: 289).

It is interesting to note that one of the most common types of spirits to be revealed in a vision are those associated with clans.

Radin makes the following observation on this point:

"When animal names became associated with the social groups they are accompanied by specific associations clustering around these animals. These associations were probably of the same type if not indeed identical

with those grouped around the animals as guardian spirits. The clan animals are among the principal guardian spirits to-day and we must expect to find an explanation of the attitude toward them as clan animals in the attitude exhibited toward the guardian spirit. To a certain extent it would be quite correct to say that the guardian became the clan animal. This does not, however, mean in the slightest degree, that the guardian spirit of the individual became the clan animal, but merely that the concept of the guardian spirit became associated with a local group" (1916: 195).

He goes on to say later that-

"The attitude toward the clan animal differs from that toward the guardian spirit in this characteristic respect, that more emphasis is laid upon identification with the animal itself than with the 'spirit.' As far as could be determined, the clan animal is the thunderbird with his characteristics of lightning and thunder, of the bear who likes honey and raisins, etc. The animal is engraved as clan symbol and used as a property mark, and he is brought into intimate contact with the group by the postulation of descent. Naturally, descent is not from the 'spirit' animal but from the living animal species. Nevertheless the clan animal has, at the same time, retained its place as a guardian spirit, and in a most suggestive way, for the blessing of a clan animal is more easily obtained by a member of the clan than by an outsider. The clan animal is, in short, a clan protector" (1916: 196).

The association between clan animals and spirits seen in visions is most adequately described for the Winnebago. Whether this existed for other societies discussed, who also had clans is unclear. Benedict (1923: 56-59) and Fortune (1932: 23) point out that Fletcher and La Flesche in various of their works indicate an intimate relationship between clan animals and spirits revealed in visions; Fortune, however, strenuously denies this by stating that clan animals are of an entirely different category than spirits seen in visions. Dorsey's account (1894) of Siouan cults indicates that there might have been some such association among the Osage. It is apparent that this type of association took place to a certain extent among the Menom<sup>ini</sup> (Skinner: 1915) and among certain of the advanced hunting and gathering societies along the Northwest coast like the Kwakiutl (Boas, 1895).

This association will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion to this chapter, which will immediately follow.

Among the Winnebago, there also existed several secret societies, which functioned primarily in curing. Entrance into these societies required an appropriate vision, usually one in which the animals associated with that group appeared. Unlike the societies, among the Omaha, families did not control the positions, therein. All individuals could gain entrance provided they had the requisite vision and provided they possess sufficient wealth to pay the purchase price (Radin, 1916: 329-349). The one society that was an exception to this was the Medicine Lodge, in which ascription was a criteria for entrance. Like the Medicine Lodge of the Omaha, no vision was necessary for entrance (1916: 357).

#### D. THE VISION EXPERIENCE IN PERIPHERAL FARMING SOCIETIES -

Generally, semi-sedentary horticultural societies diverge quite significantly from hunting and gathering and True Plains societies not only with respect to particular features of visions but to factors relating to religious beliefs and actions in general. Although certain True Plains societies shared a number of features with horticultural societies, as indicated in the last chapter, this seems not to be so much a product of ecological circumstances but a result of the fact that these groups practiced farming before they assumed a True Plains way of life.

The peripheral horticultural societies discussed in this chapter diverge from hunting and gathering as well as True Plains societies in at least three important ways. First, most socially approved forms of supernatural power are owned and/ or controlled by families as members of larger corporate groups and are transferred through

inheritance within specified lines of succession. Secondly, although personal-private visions continue to exist, they are superseded in number and importance by standardized visions, whose symbols are linked to social groups and activities. And finally, institutionalized restrictions on the right to receive publically recognized visions and their derived powers fully emerges at this level.

In most horticultural societies, socially valued forms of supernatural power were under the ownership and control of families rather than individuals. Supernatural power, as in True Plains societies, was considered a form of wealth or property, which could be embodied in tangible objects like medicine bundles or other types of paraphernalia. However, most types of supernatural power were not freely accessible to all members of the society; the most valued forms were maintained as well as transferred through inheritance within specific family lines. Further, families not only controlled rights over the use of certain or all kinds of power, but they also controlled rights over the visions, which originated this power and/ or which validated its transfer. In order to understand this situation, it is necessary to discuss the role of personal and social forms of supernatural as well as personal-private and standardized visions in these societies.

Visions which grant individuals personal powers related to skills and achievements in activities like hunting, warfare and curing are, relatively speaking, of lesser importance in gaining public prestige and privileges than in the societies described at the previous two levels. If personal-private visions do assume importance, there are usually limitations on the range of activities to which they can be legitimately applied. Moreover, even if an individual receives a vision granting him personal powers in these activities, there is no

guarantee that the visions will receive public recognition. In most of these societies few individuals receive visions which grant personal powers that can be used in gaining public prestige and privileges. Generally, it would seem that personal powers representing individual achievements would be of little value in situations where most positions of leadership and privilege are determined by ascription and/or inherited family wealth.

At this point it is worthwhile to discuss a few activities to which personal-private powers acquired in visions can be applied and the extent of their importance. As mentioned previously, all horticultural societies engage in some form of hunting to supplement their diet. This activity, however, is secondary to the major subsistence activity, cultivation. Among most of the societies described in this chapter and among the Papago (Underhill, 1946: 174) of the Southwest, Menominee (Skinner, 1913: 42) of the Central Woodlands and the Delaware (Heckwelder, 1819: 238) of the Eastern Woodlands, individuals who are good hunters were believed to be so by virtue of the fact that they received hunting powers in a vision and/or purchased such powers from a specialized practitioner. However, in most of these groups success in hunting does not usually lead to positions of prestige and privilege in the society at large. Since leaders, who govern communal hunts, acquire their positions via ascription or achievements in warfare, it would seem that self-acquired personal powers relating to hunting would be of little importance as a means for validating rights to leadership.

The one activity in which achievements and personal, supernatural powers seem to be universally important, as a basis for status conferral, is warfare. However, horticultural societies vary in the

extent to which they engage in this activity and stress it as an important male endeavor. Where warfare is unimportant, as among the Oto, or where it is essentially absent, as among the Zuni (Stevenson, 1904: 325) of the Southwest, it appears that the acquisition of personal-private powers relating to warfare is of little significance. In contrast, among horticultural societies, where warfare is stressed as an important male activity and where leadership in this sphere is based primarily on individual achievements, personal-private powers relating to warfare become important bases for validating status mobility in this activity. As described previously, the Winnebago place great emphasis on the use of visions not only to validate the right of an individual to lead a raid, but to sanction decision-making in warfare, generally. The Delaware (Heckwelder, 1816), Creek (Swanton, 1929) and the Papago (Underhill, 1946) also employed visions to sanction warfare activities and leadership.

A third possible area where personal-private powers and visions come into play is curing; this, however, is not universal among horticultural societies. On the one hand, among some societies like the Winnebago, Delaware, Papago and Iroquois (Noon, 1949), shamans exercise the right to practice by virtue of the fact that they acquired personal powers in a private vision or that they received a standardized vision whose symbolism is related to any one of several curing societies. On the other hand, among the Prairie Plains societies like the Oto, Mandan, Hidasta, Omaha, Kansa, Iowa (Dorsey, 1894), and Pawnee (Murie, 1914), the right to become a shaman is an hereditary privilege. Although visions may be used to validate this right, they are inherited and standardized visions. In the latter group of societies, families control rights over most positions of prestige

and privilege in both secular and religious spheres. In contrast, among the former group of societies, there appears to be a division in the society with certain status positions being determined largely by individual achievements and others, particularly those relating to village maintenance and ceremonial being based on ascription.

The evidence on the vision experience in Prarie Plains, horticultural societies and in North America generally, suggest that while personal-private visions may be positively adaptive in situations where achievements and competition is allowed, they are not in situations where families or larger corporate groups (i.e. clans) have exclusive control over leadership positions and transmit rights of control as an hereditary prerogative. As I have previously suggested, free access and competition for positions of prestige and privilege would in all likelihood be dysfunctional in situations where ascription and inherited family wealth are the primary determinents of status. Likewise, the use of personal-private visions, as a rationale for validating personal achievements, would be at best inappropriate, if not socially disruptive. More specifically, in situations where families and larger corporate groups rigidly control and jealously exercise rights over power, privileges and prestige, self-acquired personal powers would be in direct competition with family rights.

It is interesting at this point to note that conflicts did arise over the legitimacy of personally acquired, supernatural power and power inherited through family lines. Among the Pawnee (Murie, 1914) a Prarie Plains society, ambitious young men without hereditary privileges were organizing new religious societies that became rivals and imitators of the socially recognized and authorized societies, where membership was based on ascription. Murie



indicates that these new societies had no public functions and were not officially recognized by members of the status quo. Importantly, entrance into these new societies required the receipt of an appropriate personal-private vision relating to achievements in warfare. Conflicts emanating from rivalries between hereditary prerogatives and individual achievements were probably common among societies under increasing pressures of warfare.

The evidence so far provided in this and in the previous two chapters suggests the following generalization: the extent to which achievement dominates over ascription as a primary basis for status conferral will be positively correlated with the importance and use of personal-private powers and visions, as rationale for validating positions of leadership, prestige and privilege.

It is quite apparent, however, that visions do not necessarily disappear when ascription dominates over achievement. In this instance, it seems that publically recognized visions were redefined in accordance with the facts of ascription and/or inherited wealth. In many of the peripheral horticultural societies, special visions were redefined in accordance with the facts of ascription and/or inherited wealth. In many of the peripheral societies, special visions were required before an individual could gain entrance into certain religious societies, assume particular leadership positions and/or transfer ritual privileges and paraphernalia. In accordance with the fact that rights to the above mentioned positions and privileges were often inherited within specific family lines, these special visions usually followed lines of inheritance as well. Thus, just as families might control rights to positions of privilege and prestige, they also, as might be expected, controlled the

visions, which sanctioned their hereditary prerogatives. Further details about the inheritance of visions will be provided in subsequent paragraphs.

Unlike personal-private visions, the manifest content of these special visions was highly standardized or stereotyped, in terms of both the symbols and behavioral directives contained, therein. In the previous chapter I referred to these special visions, as "standardized visions" because their contents exhibited conformity between different kinsmen within a particular descent line or between different members within a particular society. The Omaha, previously described in this chapter, provide a good example of standardization in visions. Here in order to become a member of the Buffalo Doctor's Society, as one example, individuals must receive a special vision in order to gain entrance. This vision represents an encounter with a buffalo, who is seen blowing water from his mouth, and whose powers are directed towards specific types of curing techniques. However, since membership in this society is based on ascription and wealth, only those families have the right to enter can legitimately receive the above visions. If it happens that an individual receives this vision, but does not have sufficient wealth to join or does not have appropriate family connections, the vision and the power it represents are essentially worthless. The fact that members of several different families receive the same vision is not fortuitous, for as will be shown later, the Omaha and other farming societies employ supervisory techniques to insure that the appropriate persons will gain these visions.

The supernatural powers represented in standardized visions that are needed to gain access to certain status positions is not specific

to the individual recipient. It is rather specific to the social groups, families, clans or non-kin based sodalities to which the individual will or does belong. Importantly, individuals do not possess these powers in an intrinsic fashion. Rather, like secular forms of wealth, they are extrinsic and the individual merely gains rights to their use and control. Although these powers, ideally, are used for collective ends, they can be used for personal ends but only within the context of the social group, which ultimately has complete rights over their use.

Of further importance is the fact that the spirits represented in these visions are associated also with the social group to which the individual does or will belong. Among the Omaha, Winnebago, Oto, Kansa, Iowa (Dorsey, 1894), Pawnee (Murie, 1914) and Iroquois (Noon, 1949) and among certain of the advanced hunters and gatherers on the Northwest Coast like the Kwakiutl (Boas, 1895) and the Nootka (Drucker, 1951), the visions required for entrance into certain religious societies contained spirits associated with these groups. The discussion of the Buffalo Doctor's Society, on the previous page, exemplifies this. Furthermore, standardized visions may manifest spirits which are associated with the clan to which the individual belongs. This appears to occur among the Kwakiutl (Boas, 1895), Menominee (Skinner, 1914), the Osage (Benedict, 1923: 62) and the Winnebago, as examples. Whether or not this type of association existed among the Omaha and Oto is difficult to determine from the available literature. There is, as previously mentioned, some dispute over the existence of such an association for the Omaha, where Fletcher and La Flesche argue, on the one hand that it did occur, and where Fortune asserts, on the other, that it did not exist. It is quite

likely that this type of association might have existed at one time but due to either recent historical factors and/or to the time at which the data was collected by the ethnographers, such a relationship was no longer apparent. And finally, standardized visions, which were received prior to collectively owned, bundle transfers often manifested spirits that were associated with the kin group controlling the bundle and its associated ritual. In this context, it appears that transfer of bundles owned by families within a specific clan are often accompanied by a vision in which the spirit revealed is related to the same category of beings which either founded the clan and/or awarded it ritual and secular privileges.

Since positions of privilege were largely defined in terms of responsibilities to a collective group and since property was controlled in a corporate manner, it is not surprising to find that visions are also increasingly expressed in this manner. In horticultural societies and in some True Plains societies, an individual's prestige and behavior are affected and to a certain extent limited by virtue of his membership in certain kin or non-kin based sodalities. Importantly, while individual initiative may be important within certain contexts, it is still fashioned by obligations and responsibilities to formalized groups.

Standardization in visions can also be seen as a function of the increased formalization in modes of status allocation and in patterns of leadership. Importantly, individuals do not arise to positions of leadership and prestige, spontaneously, on the basis of their own achievements and initiatives. Rather, they assume these positions because they have met a predetermined set of qualifications which may include control over wealth, membership in a given

kin-group and in some circumstances, limited achievements. In the same way, if a vision is to validate an individual's right to a particular position, its content should approximate or conform with the specifications of the status position under question.

At this point, it would be instructive to discuss the ways in which horticultural societies restrict access of their members to standardized visions, in particular, and visions, in general. Although all individuals in societies at this level are free to search for visions from which they can hope to acquire powers and benefits from the supernatural, as I have inferred in previous paragraphs, few appear to be successful. In the societies described in this chapter and among other horticultural groups like the Menominee, Delaware and Pawnee, all prepubescent youths were encouraged to quest for visions on their own initiative. This fasting continued until puberty or until the boy had reached to use Bower's phrase, "the property owning age," the rigor and time expended in questing increased. One of the interesting ways in which horticultural societies depart from the societies at the previous two levels is in the increased supervision and direction provided youngsters during their quests. In many instances, parents or near relatives actively watched over and guided their younger kinsmen. In the process of supervising these youths, it is quite apparent that certain kinds of a priori suggestions were provided the youth. For one, although an elder could rarely divulge the contents of his own vision, as Fortune (1932) points out, the elder could recast the contents of his own vision, as if he was telling the boy a myth. A more direct type of suggestion occurred when the young man is given a bundle owned by his family to help him induce an appropriate vision. Here even if the youth does not know the visions of male members in his family, he probably knows

the myth associated with the bundle. More specifically, he may know the powers it is believed to contain and the spirit from whom it originated. Another device was to take an individual to a spot believed to be the common place of residence for the spirit that the older generation desired its youth to contact. It would seem quite reasonable to argue that these devices not only increased the possibility that the youth would receive the same visions of their forefathers, but also helped to limit certain visions to lines of descent in particular families.

As I have indicated previously, even if an individual receives a vision that is standardized and related to a particular group, there is no guarantee that his vision will receive public attention. Individuals who receive standardized visions that are socially accepted appear to be few in number. In horticultural societies, standardized visions could be restricted in any one of three ways. First, if an individual received a vision of a spirit and powers associated with a particular clan, it would stand to reason that he would have to be a member of that clan to legitimately exercise his rights to these powers. In a more direct fashion, certain families retained rights to specific visions and it was their prerogative to decide to whom they should be transferred. And finally, in many societies, individuals had to possess sufficient wealth to pay for rights into certain positions of privilege. As a consequence, only those individuals<sup>s</sup> of wealthy families could legitimately claim a standardized vision to defend their rights to a particular status position. Since social status in these societies is defined largely by ascription and in many instances, family wealth, restrictions based on kinship affiliations and ownership of wealth do not

appear fortuitous.

Standardized visions in horticultural societies can be seen to validate formal leadership patterns based on ascription and wealth. In so doing, they also legitimate the inherited transfer of property and/or other ascriptive rights. Furthermore, by virtue of the fact that standardized visions are limited, they can serve to stabilize and reinforce the specialized functions of corporate groups as well as to support the differential distribution of property, privileges and prestige in a system with formalized status inequalities and limited vertical mobility. Furthermore, standardized visions direct individuals to anchorage in a formal social group and therefore, serve to reinforce their obligations and responsibilities to a collective entity.

1. Einleitung

2. Methodik

3. Ergebnisse

4. Diskussion

5. Fazit

6. Literaturverzeichnis

7. Anhang

8. Abbildung

9. Tabelle

10. Formel

11. Diagramm

12. Skizze

13. Zeichnung

14. Plan

15. Skizze

16. Zeichnung

17. Plan

18. Skizze

19. Zeichnung

20. Plan

21. Skizze

22. Zeichnung

23. Plan

24. Skizze

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191. Plan

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193. Zeichnung

194. Plan

195. Skizze

196. Zeichnung

197. Plan

198. Skizze

199. Zeichnung

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## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has had three basic but interrelated aims. First, it has attempted to demonstrate that the form and function of the vision experience changes systematically with concomittant changes in selected social structural features. In so doing, it has also tried to show that socially recognized visions were a form of rationale, which served to legitimate the distribution of power, prestige and privilege in a society. And finally, it has endeavored to explain how variations in the vision experience are associated with evolutionary changes between three different ecological types of societies in the general Plains region of North America. With these aims in mind, I would like to summarize the major findings of this thesis and to suggest applications, along similar lines, to other areas of North America.

In this thesis, the vision experience has been viewed as an adaptive mechanism, whose meaning and manner of functional integration change in response to overall modifications in a society's social structure and ultimately, ecology. More specifically, it has been found that the symbolism and behavioral directives of visions, the circumstances of receipt and the characteristics of recipients changed systematically with alterations in four selected organizational features, namely, modes of status allocation, degree of social differentiation, leadership patterns and basic social units. Moreover, it was indicated that differences in the vision experience were related

to structural variations between each of the three ecological types of societies: hunting and gathering, True Plains and peripheral farming. Conversely, convergencies in the vision experience appeared to be a function of structural uniformities within and in some instances, between these three types. At this point, a brief review of the major findings of this thesis with respect to interrelationships between the vision experience and social structure is in order.

The evidence in this thesis suggests that the symbolism and behavioral directives manifested in visions exhibited significant differences in each of the three ecological types of societies. First, as a consequence of the development and formalization of organizational devices transcending the family, band or village, the supernatural powers and beings represented in visions appear to have become increasingly associated with the ascribed attributes of individuals, as members of social groups, rather than with the achieved and personalized characteristics of individuals. Secondly, with the development of surplus resources and the use of wealth as a basis for status conferral, visions and their derived powers seemed to be less an intrinsic and unalienable quality of an individual but more an extrinsic and transferrable form of property or wealth. And finally, increased formalization in positions of leadership and privilege seems to have wrought greater standardization in the overall content of visions. To understand these changes more clearly, it would be appropriate at this point to summarize the interrelationships between the vision experience and social structure in each type.

In societies at the hunting and gathering level, for instance, it was noted that positions of prestige and leadership were determined almost exclusively on the basis of personal talents and

achievements in activities vital to the society. Here all socially significant visions were interpreted in terms of the receipt of powers, which represented personal skills, ability and success. Moreover, since these societies lacked organizational devices beyond the band or semi-sedentary village, the powers and beings manifested in visions were specific to the individual and were usually not associated with social groups or the society, as a whole. And finally, supernatural power was an attribute of the individual which could not be transferred much less openly discussed; this it was argued was probably related to the relative lack of surplus resources and the general absence of concepts of wealth.

In direct contrast, the peripheral farming societies allocated most of their positions of prestige and privilege on the basis of ascription and wealth. Except in certain spheres of action like warfare, personal achievements were of little importance in gaining prestigious positions in the community. Likewise, visions symbolizing supernatural powers related to personal talents and achievements had only a minimal role, if at all, in most of these societies. Furthermore, farming societies were characterized by the presence of clans and non-kin societies which transcended the family and village. Since secular activities and leadership were defined in terms of duties and responsibilities to more formally organized groups, religious observances were increasingly directed towards group benefits rather than purely personal ones. It is, therefore, no surprise to find that the supernatural powers and beings manifested in visions are increasingly associated with the attributes of social groups and activities. In fact, most socially recognized visions and their derived powers had to be related, in some form or fashion, to these

collective entities, if they were to be of any value. Additionally, horticultural societies had highly formalized social positions within these groups, the assumption of which were not spontaneous but based on definite rules and qualifications. Within this context, it was found that visions became more standardized reflecting the characteristics of the social position not the incumbent. For instance, entrance into most doctoring societies required the receipt of an appropriate vision, the symbolism of which was associated with features of the society not the personal attributes of the perspective initiate. Unlike most socially recognized visions in hunting and gathering societies, the content of the visions did not vary with the personal features of the individual receiving them. Rather, all individuals by virtue of the fact that they were assuming similar or identical social positions received visions whose symbolism converged.

I have chosen to discuss the symbolism of visions found in True Plains societies last because they exhibit characteristics described for both types of societies just discussed. In True Plains societies, leadership and prestige were a function of personal achievements, particularly in warfare, and ownership of horses. Ascription, as a basis for status conferral was rare. When it did exist, it was limited, for the most part, to ritual leadership positions. As in hunting and gathering societies, visions representing supernatural powers and beings specific to individuals generally assumed great importance.

I state that personal-private visions were generally important because in some True Plains societies like the Cheyenne and Arapaho, visions granting personal powers were down played in favor of collectively orientated ritual. In general, personal-private visions appear to be of greatest importance in the religious sphere among

societies of hunting and gathering backgrounds or among those of horticultural backgrounds but with informal leadership patterns. Conversely, the relative importance of personal-private visions decreased in the highly formalized societies like the Cheyenne and Arapaho.

Personal-private visions were probably important in most True Plains societies, as in hunting and gathering societies, because flexibility was demanded in organization and informality was required in leadership positions to cope with the ever present military pressures. Furthermore, unlike in the peripheral farming societies, an individual's prestige and privileges were not contingent on his responsibilities to formalized and permanent social units except during the summer. Although it was usually necessary to curb individual initiative and competition during times when cooperation was demanded (i.e. communal buffalo hunt), it was not always necessary or for that matter feasible to do so, when these societies were organized into autonomous bands. I would also argue that personal-private visions defined in terms of individual initiative and achievements were no doubt more positively adaptive than standardized visions; this would seem reasonable in so far that warfare, as a primary male activity, precludes the strict use of ascription as a basis for status conferral.

It is interesting to note, however, that a number of the societies from horticultural backgrounds recognized standardized visions, whose symbols were linked to formal social groups, leadership positions and communal activities. They were often required, as in the peripheral farming societies, before entrance into certain religious sodalities or before the transfer of ritual privileges. Since these visions did not exist or at least do not appear to have

been reported for societies of hunting and gathering backgrounds, I would argue that they were probably a continuation of already existant patterns before these societies entered the Plains and were not a recent development. Interestingly, they seem to have continued in situations where formal requirements were necessary in order to enter certain societies or to assume particular leadership positions.

It is also important to note in this context the existence of innovative visions, which justified the creation of a social group or activity. It is significant that there is little evidence from hunting and gathering societies and farming societies to suggest that such visions assumed any great importance. Except for Murie's (1914) explicit notation of the existence of innovative visions among the Pawnee, a horticultural society under the increasing pressures from the nomadic, True Plains societies, these kinds of visions appear to have been uncommon or at least did not gain social recognition. The proliferation of these visions, as I argued previously, among True Plains societies was probably a response to the increasing demands placed on societies from divergent historical backgrounds to reorganize and redefine their social groups and activities in accordance with the ecological situation of the Central Plains.

Another factor which influenced the interpretation of symbols in True Plains visions was the increasing importance placed on wealth, as a determinant of status. Since I have discussed this relationship at some length in chapter four, it is sufficient to point out here that supernatural power was no longer merely a personal-intrinsic quality of the individual, as in hunting and gathering societies, but it became an extrinsic form of property, which could be transferred to persons other than the original recipient. Importantly, socially

recognized types of power were most often conceived as individually owned rather than, as in peripheral farming societies, owned by families or corporate groups.

Along these lines, it is important to bring to the reader's attention the fact that these three ecological types of societies used and/or emphasized different means by which supernatural power could be acquired. Just as in most hunting and gathering societies the primary channel of status mobility was through individual achievement, the primary means by which an individual could acquire supernatural power was through his own initiative - that is direct solicitation and contact with the supernatural. In contrast, among True Plains societies there existed a variety of ways in which an individual could assume positions of privilege and prestige; hence, there existed a number of channels through which an individual could gain access to supernatural power. In many True Plains societies, direct solicitation was not a social necessity even though it was the most desirable means for getting supernatural power. This seems to follow the fact that in a large number of these societies although personal achievements in warfare were considered the most desirable routes to success, the ownership and redistribution of horses was of equal, if not of greater, importance in vertical mobility. Since horses and supernatural power were extrinsic and transferrable commodities, individuals could purchase power *en toto*, as in the buying of a medicine bundle and its associated vision or could purchase power, in part, from a person who was particularly adept in gaining access to the supernatural. Incidentally, supernatural power that was used for collective ends, rather than purely personal ones, could also be purchased outright or in some instances, it could be inherited.

And finally, individuals could gain access to personal, supernatural powers through participation in collective rituals like the Sun Dance. In accordance with the importance placed on ascription as a basis for status conferral, the peripheral farming societies stressed the inheritance of socially recognized, supernatural powers and visions. Generally, visions and their derived powers acquired on one's own initiative did not receive public recognition except in areas like warfare. Moreover, as in some True Plains societies, supernatural power and visions could be received through participation in communal rituals, as in the Okipa ceremony of the Mandan or the Hako ceremony of the Pawnee. Searching for personal power in the context of a group activity would appear very appropriate in societies where an individual's responsibilities to a larger collective entity become more important than his own isolated achievements; this would appear most likely in the context of communal activities (i.e. buffalo hunt) where individual initiative would have to be restricted.

With respect to the circumstances under which visions and their derived powers are received, there are two other important areas wherein variation takes place. Very briefly, it was noted that in farming societies careful supervision and guidance was provided youth during their initial search for power. Although guidance was provided among societies at the other two levels, it was not, relatively speaking, as deliberate and suggestive. As I have previously argued, this rigorous supervision is no doubt related to the fact that socially recognized visions are standardized. More specifically, it would appear that increased supervision would augment the possibility that visions and their derived powers would be kept in certain lines of succession. Thus, it also served to insure that particular visions



would be received by socially defined and appropriate persons.

The other circumstantial area which deserves brief attention is concerned with the age at which individuals are likely to receive visions and supernatural power. Again, as I have already argued, it is probable that visions were initially sought later in the life cycle among True Plains societies because of the fact that males could not fully participate in the activities of an adult until a later age. Additionally, when bands are under constant military pressures, it would be dangerous to have children in isolated spots, if a band had to quickly move its camp site. In this context, it is important to note that although in the peripheral farming societies individuals began their initial questing in childhood, serious searching for visions did not take place until after or just prior to the "property owning age." This would further substantiate my previous observation that if in fact the vision is a mechanism in anticipatory socialization, questing would be more seriously undertaken at the time when males are ready to fully participate in adult activities.

Another major focus of this thesis concerns itself with the eligibility of recipients with respect to visions and their derived powers. Related to this is the question of how visions were distributed amongst individuals occupying different status positions in the society. To begin, it is important to note that even though in all of the societies under consideration every individual had the right to search for visions and supernatural powers, not every individual's vision came to be publically recognized. Importantly, the mere receipt of a vision did not in itself confer rights over supernatural power; individuals had to prove they were worthy or eligible by various mechanisms (i.e. achievements, wealth and/or ascription)

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3. The third part of the document addresses the issue of financial risk management and the role of the risk management department in identifying and mitigating potential risks. It also discusses the importance of having a clear risk management strategy in place.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of financial planning and the role of the planning department in ensuring the long-term financial health of the organization. It also highlights the need for regular financial forecasts and the importance of having a clear financial strategy.

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depending on how statuses were allocated in the society.

In hunting and gathering societies, just as all individuals were potentially eligible to assume positions of leadership and privilege, so all persons could receive socially recognized visions and powers. In accordance with the fact that not all individuals were equally endowed with respect to skills and talents, not all individuals were successful in acquiring visions nor did everyone receive the same kind or amounts of power. Therefore, the differential distribution of supernatural powers followed variations in individual talents, success and achievements. Moreover, since there were not appreciable differences between individuals with respect to rank, it is likely that power was more evenly distributed amongst members of societies at this level than at the other two levels.

In True Plains societies, while individual achievements were important in gaining public recognition, they were likely to remain unrecognized if not accompanied by wealth. Likewise, individuals who were poor were less likely to gain access to power and visions than their wealthier counterparts, who could afford to purchase additional powers. As such, individuals from families rich in horses because they were able to purchase valued forms of supernatural power could procrastinate in their own search for power. Since supernatural power was considered, in a number of societies, a form of wealth, its distribution usually followed lines of secular forms of property. Therefore, in contrast to hunting and gathering societies, the differential distribution of supernatural powers and visions was not merely a matter of individual variations in talents and achievements but also a product of individual and family control over horses. It is important to point out that while mechanisms

existed in True Plains societies to limit access to supernatural power, there rarely existed overt restrictions, as in horticultural societies. The exceptions to this rule are standardized visions and certain kinds of power, both of which are usually directed towards communal instead of purely personal ends. Here only individuals who meet necessary requirements prior to the assumption of a particular social position are allowed to receive the vision and control the power associated with that position.

In line with the fact that most positions of leadership and privilege in the peripheral horticultural societies are restricted to individuals who meet the prescribed qualifications of a particular office, most socially recognized visions and powers are equally restricted. More specifically, important status positions are hereditary privileges of certain families; therefore, rights to valued powers and their associated visions are also conceived of as family rights. As I have pointed out previously, even if an individual receives a socially recognized vision, it is essentially useless to him unless he has the appropriate family connections and sufficient wealth to prove his right to such power. In most farming societies, families occupy stable positions of rank with little or no vertical mobility in many spheres of activity. Consequently, it does not appear fortuitous that publically approved visions would be restricted to member of those families who occupy the highest status positions and who control the greatest amount of wealth. Therefore, it would appear reasonable to argue that free access and competition for positions of prestige as well as for control over visions and supernatural power would be at best inappropriate, if not disruptive in a situation based on ascription and organized along clan lines.

Given the findings of this thesis with respect to the relationship between social structural variables and the vision experience, it would seem reasonable to assume that socially recognized visions functioned as a form of rationale to explain why certain individuals had rights to positions of prestige and privilege and others did not. Visions, however, varied in terms of the kinds of rationale that were incorporated into the manifest content to explain the existing system of distribution. In hunting and gathering societies, they served to explain inequalities in personal talents and achievements. While in True Plains societies, they no longer appear to merely validate differences in personal attributes and achievements, but they now represent a means for justifying the differential accumulation of wealth. And finally, in farming societies they serve to validate the inherited transfer of property and to legitimize ascribed status positions. Moreover, the increasing standardization in visions among societies at this level supports and reinforces the formalization of status inequalities.

The evidence from this thesis also suggests that the specific functions of visions in anticipatory socialization also changed. While it would seem quite clear that in all of the societies under consideration visions have an important role in motivating people to conform with existing institutions, they again vary in terms of what kinds of conformity are expected. In the peripheral hunting and gathering societies as well as in the True Plains societies, most socially recognized visions can be seen to function in encouraging and in reinforcing personal achievements, initiative and independence. However, when the symbolism in visions becomes standardized and is associated with social groups, it appears to me more likely, as in

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the case of horticultural societies, that visions are reinforcing anchorage and dependency upon a group rather than independence of it. Therefore, depending on the symbolism manifested in visions, they can be seen as reinforcing either psychological independence or dependence.

It can be suggested at this point that the evolutionary continuum outlined for the general Plains region with respect to changes in the meaning and functional integration of the vision experience can also be extended to other areas of North America. There is good evidence (Ray, 1939; Boas, 1895; Drucker, 1951) from the Northwest Coast and Plateau areas to suggest that a transition took place in the vision experience from the more simply organized and egalitarian Plateau hunting and gathering societies to the complexly organized and ranked hunting and gathering societies on the Northwest Coast, who lived in an area with particularly abundant and stable food resources. Ray's survey article (1939) on the Plateau region suggests that in the wealthier societies there was a greater tendency for positions of leadership and privilege to be based on ascription. Interestingly, greater emphasis on ascription appears to be accompanied by increased restrictions and standardizations in the vision. On the Northwest Coast, it is quite apparent from Boas' account (1895) that the Kwakiutl placed restrictions on who had the right to receive visions, and they associated the symbols manifested in visions with social groups. Moreover, a large portion of the publically recognized visions were highly standardized in their content.

Eggan (1966) has suggested with respect to the Central Woodlands area that as one moves towards areas more productive for agriculture, one finds greater complexity and rigidity in the social organizations of the societies in this region. It is quite likely that

that a continuum also exists with respect to the meaning and functional integration of vision experiences in the area, if we use the Rainy River Ojibway and the Winnebago discussed in this thesis as two extreme points on the continuum.

Finally, it is quite apparent that a similar continuum exists in the Greater Southwest region, and this can be verified by reference to the data in Underhill's interesting monograph (1946) on ceremonialism in this area. Certain of her observations in this work should be briefly considered with respect not only to the evolutionary approach suggested in this thesis but also with respect to the empirical evidence on societies in the general Plains region. Very briefly, she argues that the vision experience slowly developed into and was finally surpassed in importance by collectively standardized ritual. More specifically, she notes that the individual visionary, the simple vision ritual and the vision, itself, became, in turn, ritualists, complex ceremonies and myths. Her argument for this rests on the fact that the basic patterning of vision experiences is found in the complex ceremonies of the Pueblos even though the latter are much more elaborate. Moreover, although Underhill argues that this development is probably the result of changes in type of subsistence—that is from hunting and gathering to plant cultivation, she does not deal with the intervening social structural variables in her analysis of this transition.

If one looks at Underhill's evidence, it becomes immediately apparent that purely personal religious observances, like certain vision experiences, predominate in the simply and informally organized hunting and gathering societies of this region. These observances, however, become less important as one moves to more complex





and formalized societies practicing horticulture; until, finally, they disappear almost entirely to be replaced and/or superceded by elaborate rituals and myths geared towards collective rather than purely personal ends. As in the general Plains region, it appears that greater reliance on cultivation is accompanied by increased complexity and differentiation of social groups, greater formalization in leadership patterns as well as greater emphasis on ascription over achievement as basis for status conferral. In both the Southwest and in the peripheral horticultural regions of the Plains, ritual is defined more in terms of the perpetuation of cooperation and solidarity amongst members of the whole society or specific sectors, therein. Conversely, less attention, if at all, is directed towards the highly individualistic, ritual observances. If vision experiences exist at all, they are usually redefined in accordance with the facts of ascription as well as with the importance of collective activities and differentiated social groups. Increasingly, visions become less appropriate mechanisms for the validation of collective ritual and secular activities. Instead, myths or legendary accounts of visions appear to serve as more appropriate mechanisms to validate social structural features and the social relationships, therein.

In many ways the differences between visions and certain kinds of myth are not one of kind but degree. While visions seem to adequately justify the personal attributes of individuals or the characteristics they hold as members of a social group, myths have a much broader point of reference; namely, they justify the characteristics and functions of clans, non-kin sodalities and/or the society as a whole. It is interesting to note that in the peripheral horticultural societies many standardized visions embody similar

symbols, as those contained in the myth which justified the group to which the standardized vision is associated.

An important question to be raised at this point is why do some positions of privilege and leadership in the peripheral farming societies have to be validated by standardized visions and others not. In both the True Plains societies and the peripheral horticultural ones, it appears that ritual and secular leaders who control bundles and supervise rituals of "tribal" interest often do not need to receive a standardized vision to validate their hereditary or other manner of succession to the position. Since they are governing activities of "tribal" significance, the rationale which justifies their position should also be collective in its scope - that is mythical. It is also important to note that these ritual leaders do not own the bundles or rituals they are directing. In contrast, it appears that whenever bundles and rituals used for collective purposes are conceived as being the property of a family rather than a larger social group, standardized visions are usually more necessary to validate hereditary prerogatives.

Although this author does not deny the importance of certain psychological-adjustive functions of the vision experience, attention has been focused here on the function of the vision experience or for that matter religious phenomena, in general, as serving to give meaning and to provide explanations for the social relations and behavior of individuals. The evidence provided in this thesis would seem to support the Marxian position that religion and/or ideology provides a rationale for the existence of the social structure. Further, it would support Durkheim's position that religion is a metaphoric statement on a society's social relations.



To put it in another way, the position of this thesis is that religious belief and ritual can be viewed in terms of how they are adaptive consequences of social structure, in general, and social relationships, in particular. If changes take place in either of these areas, as a response to broader technological and ecological shifts, then the belief system and ritual actions would be expected to also readapt themselves to different structural circumstances.

As I have tried to demonstrate in this thesis, the vision experience was redefined in societies of the general Plains region to meet changes in social organization and ultimately, ecology. In some areas of North America (e.g. Southwest), "the vision experience," as Ruth Benedict puts it, "was redefined out of existence" (1935: 81). What appears to have happened in this region is that in certain societies there no longer existed social relationships that could justifiably use a mechanism like the vision experience to explain the attributes of their participants. Since social relationships based on religious as well as secular premises were almost exclusively directed towards social groups, myths were more adequate "charters," to use an Malinowskian expression, than were visions.

If one constantly keeps in mind the structural-functional relationships of religious phenomena to social organization, it is quite feasible, as I hope this thesis has demonstrated, to explain variations as well as uniformities within an evolutionary framework. Importantly, this thesis did not attempt to explain the origins of and/or reasons for the vision experience in North America. Rather, I have attempted to show that when the vision experience did exist, its meaning and manner of functional integration changed with alterations in the social structure and ecology.

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