

*Coup Counts and
Corn Caches*

*Contact-Era Plains Indian
Accounts of Warfare*

LINEA SUNDSTROM

Plains Indian records such as rock art, winter counts, ledger-book drawings, and hide paintings document a wide range of motives, tactics, and outcomes for intergroup fighting. Plains Indians made such records generally for their own use to supplement oral histories. These records thus provide an emic view of armed conflict on the Great Plains from the last few centuries before European weaponry and horses reached the area up until the end of the Indian Wars. These native records chronicle different kinds of conflict: large-scale attacks on horticultural villages; small-scale raids for horses, captives, and scalps; sustained campaigns to keep enemies (including non-Indians) out of hunting territories; defensive actions; and at least one captive-rescue operation.

Sometimes these documents reinforce archaeological findings; for example, the battle locations known as the Larson and Leavenworth archaeological sites appear in the Lakota winter counts (Sundstrom 1996). Both sites were Arikara earthlodge villages: one raided by a Lakota war party and the other attacked by a US military force that included a large contingent of Lakota warriors. In other cases, the indigenous documents record or detail conflicts not visible in the archaeological record, such as skirmishes between small war parties or battles fought far from settlements. While the archaeological record highlights the larger battles and attacks on villages, the pictographic records and associated oral narratives suggest

that sites like Crow Creek are more anomalous than representative of Plains Indian lifeways in the precontact era.

EMIC VERSUS ETIC RECORDS

Euroamerican documents such as newspapers, military reports, and history books frequently misrepresent armed conflicts. Because of the high stakes involved, each side tends to demonize the enemy, minimize its own failures, and exaggerate its own successes. The saying “the first casualty of war is truth” is often repeated in journalism schools; its more general version is that the winners get to write the history books.¹ Today, many people wonder why 23 Congressional Medals of Honor were awarded to US soldiers for the Wounded Knee massacre, but at the time many people viewed the event as a hard-won victory against a fierce enemy. In an article for the *Nebraska State Journal* about the burial of US soldiers killed at Wounded Knee, reporter William Fitch Kelley (1971:206) wrote: “Gallant soldiers, you fought the foe most nobly; you wavered not in the hour of danger, when the treacherous Indian, without warning, shot you down upon Wounded Knee.” Kelley’s stories omitted the fact that these noble men had mostly died from their own side’s “circular firing squad” at a conflict in which they took the lives of an estimated 200 unarmed women, children, and infants. That might still be the story in the history books, had not photographs such as that in figure 4.1 and the accounts of Lakota survivors collected by Charles and Mary Eastman (1945) and James Mooney (1896) eventually come to light.

This is just one example of why it is important to seek out multiple accounts. The winners might write history, but they typically do not write the whole, unvarnished truth.

KINDS OF PLAINS INDIAN RECORDS

Warriors created painted hides and ledger-book drawings to publicize individual deeds or coups. These Contact-era works have been a key to interpreting late-period Indian rock art throughout the Great Plains (Keyser 1979, 1987b, 1996, 2000; McCleary 2008b; Rodee 1965; Sundstrom 1990:316–321; 2004:99–113; Sundstrom and Keyser 1998). Because ledger-book drawings, hide paintings, and Biographic rock art together form a single narrative art tradition, interpretations from art in one medium can be applied to another. In the words of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, “They have . . . still more remarkable modes of communicating thought. The large figures displayed on their buffalo robes are



FIGURE 4.1. *Wounded Knee battlefield: Big Foot's camp three weeks after the Wounded Knee Massacre. (Digital file from original item. Digital ID: ppmsca 15849 Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC 20540 USA <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/>.)*

hieroglyphics, as easily understood by an intelligent Indian as written words are by ourselves; and they often contain the narrative of some important event” (Chittendon and Richardson 1905:681). Those creating these records retained the same or similar pictographic conventions for showing the protagonist, enemy/victim, capture of weapons or horses, and the like as the media shifted from painted hides to pencil drawings on paper (Greene 1985) (figure 4.2).

Like the ledger-book drawings and hide paintings (Afton et al. 1997; Berlo 1996; Greene 1985; Keyser 2000; Mallery 1972; Maurer 1992; Szabo 1994), the vast majority of the narrative rock art in the northern Plains depicts battle scenes, horse raids, or other warrior activities. The art tradition includes few scenes of everyday activities or ceremonies, although some artists created such drawings on paper to sell to non-Indians during the early reservation period (Berlo 1996:18, 35; Ewers et al. 1985:8–10; Maurer 1992; Szabo 1994:27). Many petroglyphs can be interpreted within the larger narrative warrior-art tradition of the northern Plains, including hide paintings and ledger-book drawings, which are in turn interpreted based on the recorded

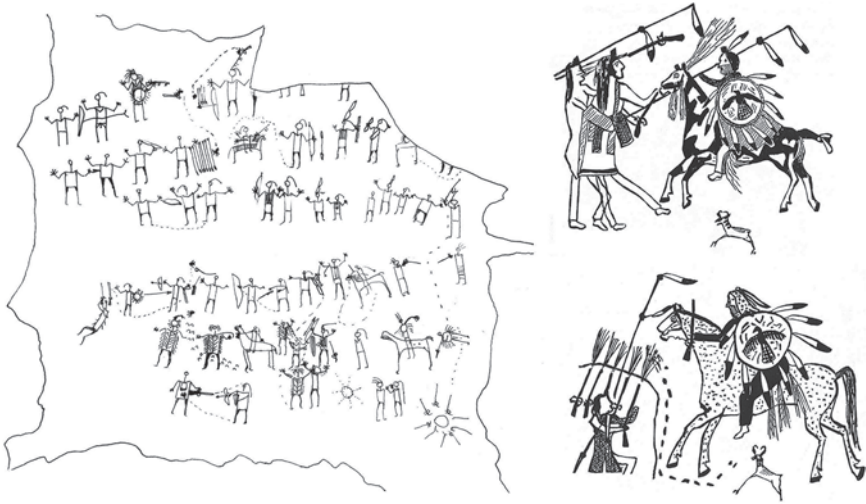


FIGURE 4.2. Pre-horse-era hide painting from Musée del Homme, Paris, (left) and two pages from *Running Antelope's* pictographic autobiography (right).

statements of the people who created them (Keyser 1996, 2000; Mallery 1886, 1972; McCleary 2008b).

Winter counts are lists of year-names representing the most significant events in the life of the individual or band for each of the years included in the count (Calloway 1996:31–33; Greene and Thornton 2007; Howard 1960, 1976; Mallery 1886, 1972; McCoy 1983; Sundstrom 1997, 2003, 2006). Originally, these lists comprised pictographs, but later many were recorded as Lakota, Dakota, or English text. The vast majority of winter counts available for study are from the Lakota, but a few Yanktonai Dakota, Mandan, Kiowa, and Blackfoot winter counts also exist. Each year's name was something like a headline for a specific event, the details of which the winter count keeper had committed to memory, and that event in turn evoked everything else important that had happened that year (figure 4.3).

Most of the scholarly literature on winter counts treats them as items of material culture, rather than sources of historical data (e.g., Maurer 1992). Few scholars have brought winter counts and other indigenous documents to bear as primary sources on historic research. One exception is George Hyde, who used Lakota winter counts in his accounts of Oglala history (Hyde 1957, 1961). James Howard's study of Yankton ethnohistory also treats winter counts as historical documents (Howard 1976). Ron McCoy analyzed winter counts as a

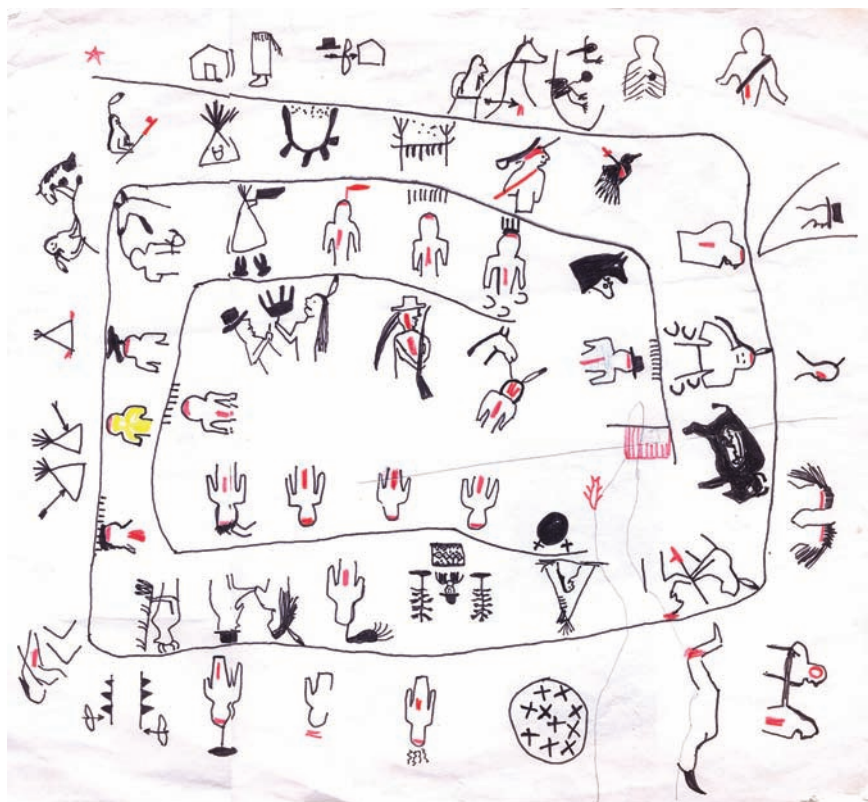


FIGURE 4.3. *The Thin Elk-Steamboat Winter Count, Buechel Lakota Museum, St. Francis Mission, St. Francis, South Dakota. Drawing by author.*

source for pre-1800 Lakota history (McCoy 1983). Other studies using winter counts have focused not on history per se, but on epidemics, migrations, and astronomy (Chamberlain 1984; Henning 1982; Sundstrom 1997).

The neglect of these sources has several explanations. The first is either a lack of awareness that they exist or a lack of understanding of how to interpret them. As mnemonics for more detailed oral narratives, the pictures themselves provide limited information. With winter counts, the picture refers to an event, which in turn refers to all the important events of that year; thus, the picture itself is only a tag for the historical events linked to it. Drawings on hide or paper provide a more complete narrative of a war event or deed, but the researcher must learn how to interpret the narrative from the pictures (e.g., Greene 1985).

A second problem is distrust of the accuracy of the indigenous accounts. This springs from Western culture's privileging of the written word and from an ethnocentric view that oral history is necessarily less accurate than written history (Lowie 1915). Because our culture does not train us to hear and memorize narratives with accuracy, we assume that this skill is either difficult to acquire or not present in other cultures. But even literate cultures use rote memorization to implant information such as the Koran, Bible verses, addition and multiplication tables, nursery rhymes, and poems. Clearly, people can learn to recite long narratives with near-perfect accuracy. A related, third problem is researchers' assumption that such records are too biased to be of value. While it is true that the system of recording and publicizing war deeds so central to Plains Indian life was likely to omit or minimize unsuccessful expeditions, it also demanded detail and accuracy in the records and their interpretation. A warrior who falsely claimed credit for a coup faced ridicule and punishment. The omission of defeats is less a problem in the winter counts, in which unsuccessful military actions are as likely to be recorded as successful ones. A fourth impediment to use of indigenous documents is simply one of cultural chauvinism, whereby researchers privilege the familiar forms of European documents over the less familiar and more esoteric non-European forms or lump together all forms of oral tradition as mythological (DeMallie and Parks 2001:1062; Goldenweiser 1915; Wolf 1997).

While indigenous records have limitations, pictographic narratives from the contact and late precontact era on the Great Plains, properly interpreted, can fill in the blanks left by archaeological data and can help to correct the biases inherent in the history that archaeological studies produce for this time and place.

WEAPONRY AND TACTICS

Scenes of conflict are rare in early Plains Indian rock art. Although rock art is notoriously difficult to date, best current data indicate that so-called warrior art is limited to the last 1,500 or so years before European contact. The earliest conflict-related Plains rock art consists of pictures of shields and shield-bearing warriors. The weapons complex here consists of large body-shields and bows, spears, antler-tine pikes, and clubs (Greer and Greer, chapter 2, this volume; Keyser, chapter 3, this volume). Most of this early warrior art focuses on showing the details of shields, weapons, and other accoutrements, including items indicating membership in warrior societies, such as the bow-spear. Early warrior art that shows action often depicts the shield-bearing warrior spearing or counting coup on a hapless individual lacking shield or weapons.

The observation that women as well as men are depicted as such unarmed victims suggests that, as in later times, warriors could gain status by slaying any enemy, not just men or other warriors (Keyser et al. 2006). Some women did go to war in later times (Ewers 1994; Greer and Greer, chapter 2, this volume; Keyser et al. 2006), but the extent to which this happened before the contact era is unknown. It is frequently impossible to tell the sex of warriors in the early warrior art, because the warrior's body is concealed behind the large shield; those that do show sex are male. An exception is a rock art panel depicting a woman—or a person in a dress, at least—engaged in combat with a warrior on horseback (McCleary 2008b:266, figure 78).

Some early warrior art includes depictions of severed heads or scalps, indicating that scalp-taking was practiced at this time; however, whether the practice had a religious function as in later times cannot be construed from either the rock art or other archaeological remains (figure 4.4). The first definite reference to scalp-taking in the winter counts is for the year 1749, although one can speculate that reports of small, wide-ranging war parties first mentioned in 1711 also refer to scalp-taking expeditions.

The early days of equestrian warfare are poorly recorded in the winter counts. This is because most winter counts available for study today do not extend back before the early 1800s: too late to record initial encounters with horses, which must have taken place before 1700. A few winter counts are older (McCoy 1983), but it appears that the extent of any given winter count was limited, as the earliest years were forgotten or generalized and dropped off the winter counts over time. For example, the winter count of Battiste Good generalizes early history into one pictograph for every 70-year period (Mallery 1972:287–328). This series of legendary events records early encounters with horses for the periods AD 1141–1210 and 1421–1490, both of which are obviously not historically accurate. The same winter count refers to using horses for bison hunting sometime between 1631 and 1700, which is reasonable for the northern Great Plains. At 1700, the Battiste Good winter count begins a year-by-year record of Lakota history, with horses referred to routinely throughout the subsequent record. We do not know when northern Plains warriors began to employ horses in battle, but the Battiste Good winter count records equestrian warfare for 1714 and 1715, and horse raids for 1708, 1709, 1717, and 1718.

Turning instead to rock art, the earliest pictures of equestrian warfare in the Great Plains show warriors carrying shields atop horses with leather armor (figure 4.5; also see Greer and Greer, chapter 2, this volume, and Keyser, chapter 3, this volume). These warriors carry lances and are most often shown attacking unarmed and unmounted enemies. Horse armor had a short tenure on the

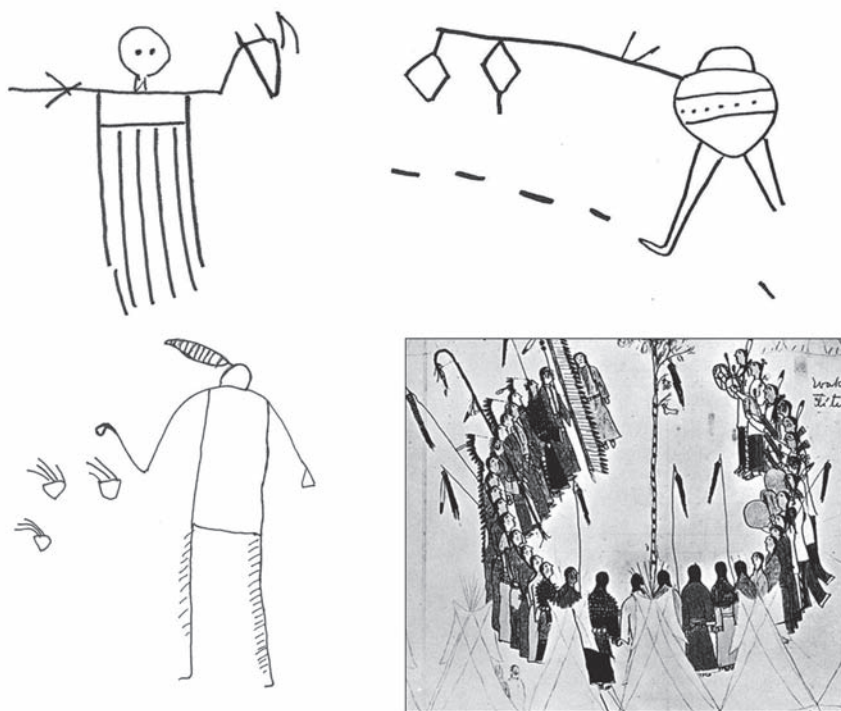


FIGURE 4.4. *Rock art and ledger drawing of severed heads or scalps. Upper left and upper right, rock art, North Cave Hills, South Dakota; lower left, rock art, southern Black Hills, South Dakota; lower right, Amos Bad Heart Bull drawing of Lakota Victory Dance, date unknown (pre-1918 book of drawings), showing women with scalps attached to coup sticks (Amos Bad Heart Bull Ledger, Plate 39b, No. 85. View the complete book at plainsledgerart.org).*

Plains, probably because it impeded the great advantage of horse warfare, the speed and agility of a well-trained mount. After the larger shield and horse armor were cast off, the weapons of choice were the bow and arrow and the lance, with a much smaller shield, if any. Rock art and ledger art of this later period of equestrian warfare typically show mounted warriors overcoming pedestrians, including women (figure 4.6). On the northern Great Plains, guns are first mentioned in the winter counts later than horses, circa 1800. According to the winter counts, the bow and arrow retained its place as the primary combat weapon until the mid-1800s and continued in use well after guns were widely available.

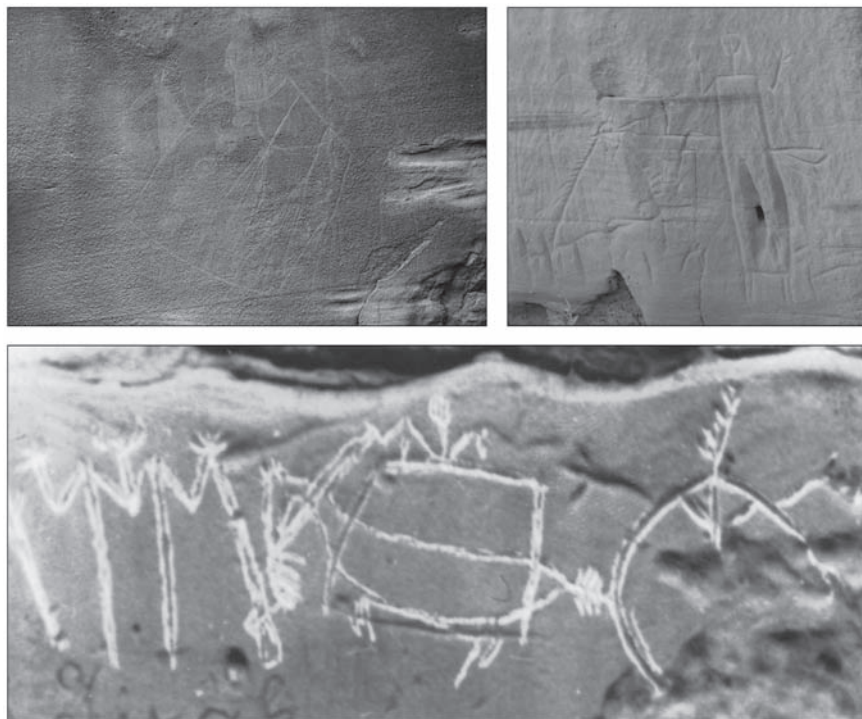


FIGURE 4.5. *Rock art depicting horse armor. Upper left, Bruner Ranch, eastern Montana; upper right, North Cave Hills, South Dakota; lower, Wilson Creek, Kansas.*

TYPE, SCALE, AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE OF ARMED CONFLICT

Regarding types of conflict, the indigenous sources considered here are consistent in indicating that the vast majority of armed conflict during the contact era was limited in scale. Because winter counts list only one event per year, battles that involved large numbers of combatants, prolonged engagements, or mass casualties should be well represented. Nevertheless, a sample of Yanktonai Dakota, Sicanju Lakota, Oglala Lakota, northern Lakota, and Peigan Blackfoot winter counts² mentions small war parties and opportunistic attacks twice as often as large battles (Appendix 4.A). This sample included 26 mentions of large-scale battles, meaning battles involving more than 30 warriors per side. By comparison, the sample included 29 mentions each of small war parties (a few to as many as 30 warriors) and opportunistic attacks on hunters, wood gatherers, eagle trappers, women gathering prairie turnips, families camping away from the main group, and the like. Another 43



FIGURE 4.6. *Warrior on branded (US Cavalry?) horse counting coup on pedestrian warrior, North Cave Hills, South Dakota. Drawing by James D. Keyser.*

events recorded in the winter counts are individual battle casualties, of which most if not all took place in skirmishes between enemy war parties. Only 22 multiple-casualty events appear in the winter counts. Of these, 12 report between two and 12 deaths, and presumably refer to battles between war parties, as opposed to attacks on villages. Events involving more than 30 deaths or simply recorded as “many killed” include three attacks on Middle Missouri earthlodge villages and one on a Skiri Pawnee village. Two others refer to the annihilation of entire bands, but it is not clear whether this took place at a village or encampment or in some other circumstance. Four of the 10 high-casualty (more than 30 killed) events were losses suffered by forces attacking encampments or settlements. In these cases, an enemy attack on a camp or village was suppressed at high cost to the attacking force. Three others refer to fights against non-Indian forces: the Villasur fight, the Grattan fight, and the Fetterman fight.

	Arikara	Assin	Blackft	Cree	Crow	Hoch	Kiowa	Mand	Metis	Ojibwa	Omaha	Pawnee	Shosh	Ute
1682														
1685														
1694														
1702														
1715														
1755														
1764														
1771														
1774														
1776														
1778														
1780														
1787														
1789														
1790														
1793														
1796														
1797														
1798														
1799														
1801														
1802														
1803														
1806														
1808														
1810														
1812														
1813														
1814														
1818														
1820														
1823														
1824														
1828														
1831														
1835														
1836														
1837														
1838														
1840														
1842														
1845														
1848														
1849														
1851														
1853														
1855														
1857														
1859														
1861														
1864														
1869														
1873														
1874														
1875														

FIGURE 4.7. Enemies mentioned in Dakota/Lakota winter counts, 1685–1875; specific incidents (black) and timespan (gray). Ho-Chunk, ??; Mand, Mandan; Shosh, Shoshone.

While the scope of warfare was limited and many conflicts unplanned, the Lakota winter counts also show that the geographic range of war parties was wide and gradually shifted toward the west over the period covered by these records. Conflicts sometimes broke out between widely separated groups, such as the Ho-Chunk and Lakota, or the Lakota and Utes (figure 4.7). Because these groups were not fighting for commonly claimed territory, it would appear that such conflicts were the result of chance encounters between

	Northern Prairies	Northern Plains	Middle Missouri	Platte River	Black Hills/ Powder R.	Columbia Plateau
1680-1690						
1691-1700						
1701-1710						
1711-1720						
1721-1730						
1731-1740						
1741-1750						
1751-1760						
1761-1770						
1771-1780						
1781-1790						
1791-1800						
1801-1810						
1811-1820						
1821-1830						
1831-1840						
1841-1850						
1851-1860						
1861-1870						
1871-1880						

FIGURE 4.8. *Geographic locations of battle mentioned in Dakota/Lakota winter counts.*

war parties. At the same time, the locations of battles recorded in the Lakota winter counts indicate a shift toward the west (figure 4.8). This presumably reflects the increased power and territory of the Lakota alliance as it expanded westward across the Missouri and into the Black Hills, Powder River, and Little Missouri country.

MOTIVES FOR WARFARE

As noted, scalp-taking was an important motive for small-scale armed conflict in the contact era and the late precontact Great Plains. Acquiring a scalp to assist the soul of a deceased comrade or relative along the way to the afterlife was a regular part of mourning and is best understood in this religious context, rather than as trophy-taking (Sundstrom 2015). Such events most often occur in the winter counts not as records of the scalp raid itself, but as records of the ceremony in which the deceased person’s loved ones impelled his comrades to pledge themselves to getting a scalp when the season for battle next came around. In the 200 conflict-related events in the winter counts, scalping is explicitly mentioned only four times, although the



FIGURE 4.9. *Three horse-raid scenes in rock art from the North Cave Hills, South Dakota: (left) remnant of horse with tether rope; (center) horse raider with quirt in back hand; (right) capture of a horse carrying a travois.*

pictographic winter counts frequently depict a forehead wound on warriors killed in battle.

Horse raids are mentioned only four times in the sample of winter counts used in this study. This apparently is a result of underreporting, because horse raids are shown frequently in ledger-book drawings and in rock art. Unless a new breed of horse, an especially fine warhorse or racehorse, or a very large herd was taken, horse-raiding events were likely overshadowed in the winter counts by more significant or unusual events. By contrast, records of horse raids are common in northern Plains rock art (figure 4.9).

Counting coup was undoubtedly a strong motivator for offensive warfare. This is less evident in the winter counts than in the innumerable ledger-book drawings and rock art panels depicting individual coups. But even in the winter counts, which were not created explicitly to record or publicize coups, 12 of 200 conflict events recount unusual or especially impressive coups. Only a small percentage of coups would have been recorded as year names in winter counts, because they record only the most memorable or important event of each year.

Winter counts indicate that several attacks on hunting parties, as well as many of the large battles, were attempts to take over or defend good buffalo-hunting grounds. A Blackfoot winter count mentions a large battle with the Salish over a bison hunting territory, while another mentions Blackfoot fighting Kutenai who came to hunt bison in the Alberta foothills. The latter may have been during a time when the herds were decreasing, but the former event in 1811 is not likely to reflect reduction of the herds. The numerous clashes between Lakota and Pawnee, and Lakota and Crow, were motivated in large part by Lakota attempts to take over bison grounds on the North Platte and in the Powder River Basin (McGinnis 1990:109–128). An event recorded in Lakota winter counts not included in the sample used here records a fierce

battle with a group of Métis who had come south to hunt bison in territory claimed by the northern Lakota tribes.

Luc Bouchet-Bert (1999) proposed that some warrior art was made to warn away enemy intruders. This idea is given credence by ethnographic accounts of war parties leaving behind pictographic notices when they killed enemies (Grinnell 1926:31–34; Hans 1981:50; Hyde 1968:54; King 1880:84), and by the observation that warrior art appears to be relatively uncommon in areas held as neutral zones, such as the Black Hills, Pipestone (Minnesota), and the Sweetgrass Hills. By depicting well-armed, powerful warriors and scenes of victory, warrior art that was placed permanently within the landscape in the form of rock art served notice to any trespassers. If correct, this use of rock art supports the concept of warriors defending hunting territories. The winter counts, as well as other oral histories, clearly demonstrate that warriors moved within vast territories, occasionally encountering and often confronting their counterparts from tribes living hundreds of miles away. This degree of mobility very likely created opportunities to exploit new territories and increased the conflict between groups as core territories shifted and expanded or contracted. The warrior set could keep their own villages and camps safe and scout out promising hunting grounds by engaging in such long-distance expeditions. In this way, warriors could effectively defend and expand their territories while protecting their villages from direct attack.

Finally, the Lakota and US Cavalry attack on the Arikara village known archaeologically as the Leavenworth site (Krause 1972) is recorded in the winter counts primarily as a plunder event. The invading Lakota force raided the Arikara corn fields and corn caches, but not much fighting ensued because the Arikara abandoned the village when they saw the combined force approaching. The year name is “much spoiled corn” or “much dried corn,” in reference to the raid on the Arikara fields and cache pits. It seems unlikely that the Lakota were induced to join the US force by the possibility of plundering the corn stores, but this is mentioned here as a possible secondary motive for attacking the horticultural village.

While precontact and early Contact-era rock art depicts both men and women as victims of enemy attack, a trend emerges in the later records of taking women and children captive rather than killing them (Keyser et al. 2006). The Yanktonai winter count records that in an attack on the Nuptadi Mandan village in 1780 many women and children were taken captive to boost the population of the Yanktonai. This presents a striking contrast to the Crow Creek and Larson archaeological sites, at which large numbers of women and children were among those killed in attacks on earthlodge



FIGURE 4.10. *This rock art panel from the North Cave Hills, South Dakota, shows a warrior touching a woman's genitals, indicating that he is claiming her as a wife.*

villages. By the late 1700s, epidemic disease introduced from Europe had taken a heavy toll on native populations; thus, enemy women were increasingly seen as more valuable as potential wives and mothers than as sources of scalps. Although the attacks on the Larson site and Nuptadi were only nine years apart, the attack on Nuptadi corresponded with, or closely followed, a very widespread smallpox epidemic that may have both weakened the village's defenses and made its potential captives an attractive target for attackers. In 1838, a Skiri Pawnee war party attacked a Lakota family and carried off a young girl to be sacrificed in the Morning Star Ceremony, which they were

performing in hopes of abating an especially deadly smallpox epidemic. A Lakota war party avenged her death soon thereafter, but brought the deadly virus back with them to their own camps.

It is not clear whether warfare on the northern Great Plains was motivated by a slave trade. The winter counts mention captive women and children, but not slaves for trade. Pictographic records such as rock art and ledger-book drawings clearly show capture of enemy women (Keyser, chapter 3, this volume), but these lack clear evidence of taking captives as chattel, as opposed to adopting women and children into the captors' group (figure 4.10). This contrasts with some ethnographic accounts of Plains Indians trading captive women to other groups (Greer and Greer, chapter 2, this volume).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, records made by Plains Indians reveal several things about warfare. First, they show that motives behind warfare were many and overlapping, but that principal among them were scalp-taking, acquiring war honors, and defending or expanding hunting territories. Horse raiding was an activity that might be accomplished without fighting; however, many such raids precipitated defensive or retaliatory action from the enemy. Both acquiring the horses themselves and gaining the honor of bravely capturing them belong in the list of motivations for warfare. Most hostile encounters were either between wandering groups of warriors or between war parties and civilians caught off guard while away from their camps or villages. Large-scale attacks on villages that led to mass casualties, such as those recorded archaeologically at the Crow Creek and Larson village sites, were relatively rare and not always successful. Finally, tactics and motives changed over time as horses and European-manufactured weapons became available and as population declines due to waves of imported epidemic disease promoted taking women and children as captives to be adopted into the captor society.

APPENDIX 4.A

200 Armed Conflict Events, 1682–1876, from Yanktonai Dakota, Sicangu Lakota, Oglala Lakota, Northern Lakota, and Blackfoot Winter Counts

LARGE BATTLES

- | | |
|------|----------------|
| 1682 | Dakota v Cree |
| 1685 | Santee v Omaha |

- 1704 Entire Yankton tribe went on the warpath
- 1783 Battle at Big Woods
- 1787 Battle between Dakota and Arikara
- 1790 Took 8 Cree tipis in battle
- 1798 They fought six days in the foothills
- 1803 Battle at Heart River (Yankton)
- 1810 All the Yanktonai went on a war expedition to Stone Hill
- 1811 Large battle between Salish and Peigan over bison grounds; killed
7 Peigan and 5 Salish
- 1811 Blackfoot fought the Cree
- 1814 Peigan were in a great battle
- 1816 Peigan attacked Pend d'Oreilles who were moving camp
- 1818 Yanktonai battle with the Winnebago
- 1823 They attacked with the whites (Leavenworth–Arikara village)
- 1824 Yanktonai report a big battle
- 1828 Peigan lost the battle
- 1831 What started as a skirmish turned into a large battle (Yankton)
- 1835 Lakota and Pawnee fought across the ice
- 1836 Wood Striker Yanktonai fought with Arikara
- 1845 Sioux attacked Peigan who were moving camp
- 1859 Peigan fought the Kutenai in the Alberta foothills when they
came to hunt bison
- 1863 Sioux Uprising
- 1870 Blackfoot beat the Crees at Lethbridge
- 1875 They fought Bear Coat Miles
- 1876 Little Big Horn

EXPEDITIONS OF SMALL WAR PARTIES

- 1711 A few Dakota went on a war party
- 1726 Dakota war party went to the Big Horns
- 1743 White Warbonnet went to war
- 1749 They returned from a raid with many scalps
- 1755 They fought the Winnebago
- 1758 A few Dakota went on the warpath
- 1764 War party of nine Arikara or Pawnee came (Yanktonai)
- 1768 Feather Shirt passed the pipe
- 1771 Two war leaders were killed
- 1775 A woman killed an enemy and came back
- 1776 A fight with the Assiniboin
- 1781 Holy Elk won a battle
- 1796 Bear Paw wore an eagle bonnet and was wounded
- 1797 Arikara killed a Lakota water boy

- 1808 A small war party killed an enemy
- 1815 They fought in the thin brush
- 1825 Brave Man went to war
- 1827 Blue Feather was wounded
- 1828 Peigans fought with Elk in states
- 1834 Blackfoot fought Crow at Yellowstone River
- 1835 Peigan beat the Sioux in battle
- 1840 They starve to death war party
- 1841 Bloody Hand killed enemies and returned
- 1843 Shaves Forehead was wounded
- 1844 Blackfeet fought Assinboin at Belly River
- 1846 They came back without Two Herds
- 1847 They abandoned Good Heron's younger brother
- 1859 Yellow Robe was killed
- 1860 Big Crow was killed by a bullet

HORSE RAIDS

- 1805 They killed a horse thief
- 1813 A Crow was cut up coming into camp
- 1848 A great horse raid
- 1873 Bear Paw killed a Crow horse raider

OPPORTUNISTIC ATTACK

- 1688 They attacked hunters
- 1693 Man attacked but made it back safely
- 1698 Enemy attacked and killed Good Hunter
- 1719 Buffalo hunter killed by enemies
- 1761 Eagle hunters were killed
- 1772 Enemies killed three wood gatherers
- 1775 Killed two scouts
- 1779 A hunter and his family were killed while hunting
- 1788 Cheyenne killed Shade's father
- 1789 They killed two Mandan
- 1791 Man watching a steamboat was killed
- 1793 Killed a Crow in his lodge
- 1795 A woman fetching water was killed
- 1796 Arikara attacked Yankton when they were out hunting buffalo
- 1797 Woman digging tipsin was killed
- 1806 An eagle catcher was killed
- 1808 Eagle hunters were killed together
- 1810 Pawnee killed Blue Blanket's father
- 1814 Big Road's father was killed by Pawnee

- 1814 They killed a Kiowa envoy
- 1829 They killed a Crow in winter
- 1835 Lodge was killed while skinning a buffalo
- 1838 Pawnee attacked family in their lodge, killed men, and took the daughter as a Morning Star sacrifice
- 1839 They killed a man in his lodge at night
- 1838 They killed three Assiniboin boys
- 1840 Calf Falling was killed in his lodge
- 1859 They surrounded the red tipi
- 1863 They scalped a boy
- 1874 They killed someone while moving camp

OTHER RECORDS OF INDIVIDUAL CASUALTIES

- 1727 Yankton Good Cedar Woman shot and killed
- 1737 They returned and killed Running Bull
- 1751 Enemy came and killed Red Bull
- 1752 Bird was killed in battle
- 1753 Grouse was killed in battle
- 1754 Charging Bull was killed in battle
- 1756 Warbonnet was killed in battle
- 1757 White Weasel was killed in battle
- 1758 White Cow was killed in battle
- 1760 White Bird was killed in battle
- 1761 Head was killed in battle
- 1763 Camps in Center was killed in battle
- 1764 Red Camp was killed in battle
- 1767 They killed a buffalo dreamer or Wears-a-Mask
- 1769 Charging Eagle was killed in battle
- 1769 Mask Wearer was killed
- 1780 Sacking of Nuptadi Mandan village—took many women and children captive
- 1784 Red Robe was killed
- 1785 Charging Eagle was killed
- 1786 Coyote was killed
- 1787 A heyoka was killed in battle
- 1785 They came and killed Brown Bear
- 1796 They killed a Crow with very long hair
- 1802 Big Rattlesnake was killed in battle with Cree
- 1808 They came and killed Bull Elk
- 1809 Again they killed one wearing a red coat
- 1816 Lumpy Heel was killed
- 1820 Killed two Utes

- 1821 They killed a white soldier
- 1835 Running Bull killed an enemy and returned
- 1839 Eagle was killed in battle
- 1845 He Crow was killed
- 1846 White Bull was killed
- 1849 They killed a Crow, Buffalo Track
- 1854 They killed Deer Dung
- 1858 Big Crow was killed
- 1861 Red Feather was killed
- 1863 The killed a Crow
- 1869 Big Fish was killed
- 1869 High Forelock was killed
- 1871 Hump was killed in battle
- 1871 They killed the one on the white horse
- 1872 Strikes Two was killed

RECORDS OF UNUSUAL COUPS

- 1694 Yankton chased the Arikara into the water
- 1701 Killed one wearing a warbonnet
- 1762 Yellow Hide counted coup on a Crow
- 1765 A wounded woman counted coup on an enemy with her stick
- 1766 Black Lodge counted coup on an enemy
- 1774 Red Bug counted coup on a Crow with his bow
- 1774 A heyoka was killed
- 1784 A man wounded with an arrow counted coup on the enemy with his coup stick
- 1799 Black Face counted coup on two Crows
- 1801 Blackfoot took an American flag from the Pend d'Orielles
- 1807 Man in a red shirt was killed with a bullet (first report of gun—Brule)
- 1834 Lame Deer pulled out his own arrow and shot the enemy with it again

MASS CASUALTY EVENTS

- 1702 Pawnee attacked Dakota camp, but were annihilated
- 1710 Yanktonai surrounded and annihilated the Wicosawan [Tsistsistas?]
- 1723 The enemy charged and none survived
- 1723 Oto, Pawnee, and French traders killed 42 Spanish soldiers and 60 Pueblo warriors
- 1771 They burned the Mandan out (Larson Village)
- 1771 They killed many Crows

- 1793 Many killed in battle
- 1798 Three Mandan were killed together
- 1801 Killed seven Pawnee
- 1804 Four Sioux killed
- 1805 Eight were killed
- 1806 Killed three Pawnee
- 1807 Eight were killed in battle
- 1811 Six were killed in a surround
- 1813 Killed six Mandan together
- 1827 They killed many Mandan
- 1828 They killed many Mandan
- 1841 Crow killed Blackfoot Walking Crow band
- 1849 Peigan killed 50 Cree or Assiniboin
- 1853 They killed 30 white soldiers
- 1856 They killed 10 Crow
- 1857 They killed 12 together
- 1862 Eight were killed in battle
- 1866 A great massacre of Gros Ventre and Crow who attacked a Blackfoot Sun Dance encampment
- 1867 They killed 100 white men
- 1874 They killed eight Pawnee

CAPTURE EVENTS

- 1766 Pine Shooter was captured
- 1769 They took the Snake women and children captive
- 1780 Big battle with Mandan (Nuptadi Village) took many women and children captive
- 1808 Getting paint, they were captured by the Crow
- 1838 Pawnee took a Lakota girl for Morning Star sacrifice
- 1843 A boy was captured
- 1849 They captured and then killed a winkte

OTHER

- 1767 Those speaking the same language fought
- 1768 They divided themselves into two sides
- 1835 A Cheyenne was killed by accident by his Lakota band
- 1842 Pointer gave a Shoshone scout refuge
- 1856 White Beard (Harney) took hostages
- 1860 They scalped Four Horns by mistake in battle
- 1863 They killed four Crow

NOTES

1. The origins of these quotations are disputed. The first appears to go back to the Greek dramatist Aeschylus (525–456 BCE).

2. For this analysis, I looked at the Yanktonai Dakota winter count of John Bear (Howard 1976), the Oglala Lakota winter count retained by the Amiotte family (unpublished), the Sicangu Lakota winter count given to John Anderson (2002, my interpretation), the northern Lakota winter count of Charles Holy Bull (unpublished), and the Peigan Blackfoot winter count of Bull Plume (version at the Glenbow Museum).