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Joan Rupp

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CARL BODMER'S PAINTINGS AS ETHNOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTS

MRS. JOAN RUPP

The Science Museum, St. Paul

As the white man entered the Indians' homeland in greater and greater numbers, he brought with him many things to trade with the Indians. Meeting the white man, perhaps adopting a few of his hitherto unknown materials and certainly using some of his tools made many changes in the Indians' culture. Records left by these first visitors to the Indians at the beginning of the efflorescence of Plains Indian Culture give us details of the Indians' way of life and clues to some of the changes subsequent to the arrival of white men. Among these records are those of fur traders who gained their livelihood from trade with the Indians; travelers whose purpose was to see the Indians and record observations of them; and painters, some of whom went under the patronage of wealthy travelers, making a pictorial record to supplement the written records, some traveling independently across the Plains.

One of those painters who traveled with a scientific purpose under patronage was Carl Bodmer. Bodmer, when in his twenties, was a member of the party led by Maximilian, Prince of Wied Neu-Wied. Maximilian visited the Plains area in 1833 and 1834, employing Bodmer to make illustrations of what the party saw to supplement Maximilian's journal. Maximilian could not have made a more fortunate choice, for Bodmer was a superb draftsman, recording accurately and in minute detail. The accuracy and explicitness of his illustrations in some ways surpass even photographic illustration, for Bodmer's selectivity and sensitiveness present a clarity, emphasis and separateness of detail that photography could not achieve.

Bodmer's field sketches, many of them finished paintings, admirably supplement Maximilian's. Written descriptions are necessarily limited to the vocabulary of the observer, which may or may not be adequate for the study involved. Visual description can show vividly in a small area what would require paragraphs of verbal description.

Bodmer has painted villages as a whole; dwellings in use, showing many details of construction and function; the activities of a tribe as a group, notably their ceremonial dances; individual Indians in ceremonial and normal everyday clothing, indicating construction and materials used; ornamentation of the body and costumes; hairstyles; and the kinds and usage of goods brought by Europeans to the Indians.

Of the materials illustrated by Bodmer, the trade goods brought by the white man are recorded in great detail. The effect of these trade goods on the culture of the Plains Indian is vividly shown. Bright new ornament appears on costumes, on dance paraphernalia, and ceremonial objects. The Indian uses shiny metal knives and other

tools instead of laboriously fashioned tools of bone or stone. Beadwork begins to supplant the more intricate and exacting quillwork. The ready availability of new and bright yarns, cloth and trinkets triggered the elaboration of design.

Fur company records, like those of the American Fur Company of St. Louis and the Hudson's Bay Company, contain lists of goods shipped to fur posts on the Upper Missouri, the Indian's source of these items. These lists record the usual rifles, powder and ball, steel knives, axes and needles, and iron cooking utensils. The demand for these and their uses are obvious. But what about items like "strouding", "moon shells", and "tinklers"? What are these objects and materials? How were they used? Too often the fur company records omit any description of these and their use by the Indians is not generally inferred. Such is also the case with the journals of early travelers, from whom there is only an occasional clue. Of primary importance then, are the pictorial records of the painters on the scene.

Among these painters Paul Kane, Frederick Kurz, and George Catlin as well as Bodmer have left an invaluable series of documents for ethnological study. Bodmer is important in that his studies were made at the very beginning of the elaboration of Plains Culture due to the influx of European ways and materials. His datable information shows accurately what white man's materials had begun to supplant indigenous Indian goods. The illustration of function is irrefutable and distinct; designs are recorded and even color is probably relatively reliable when the original sketches are examined.¹ Bodmer took great pains to make his drawings as detailed as possible and here he surpasses all of the other known illustrators of this period. He was a master at depicting accurate proportions of both people and objects and reproducing lifelike colors. His coloring of hides and cloth, of feathers, shell, metal, stone and other properties enable definitive identifications and definition with relative ease.

Among the items traded to the Indians was cloth. Probably the most distinctive of types of cloth was the bright red wool cloth, similar to that used in some uniforms and sometimes referred to as "strouding". The use of strouding by the Indians was apparently widespread. Bodmer shows it represented in nearly every tribe he met in the Northern Plains. Since Bodmer's sketches represent but few individuals of many of the tribes, one cannot estimate the scope of the use of most objects within a specific group. But it is probably safe to assume that if one member of a tribe possessed a certain kind of trade object of utilitarian or decorative value, then others would sooner or later acquire something identical or very similar. Bodmer shows strouding being used as the body of a Blackfoot shirt and as a Mandan breechclout, as a scarf or neck decoration on Hidatsa, Mandan, and Kickapoo individuals, as decoration on assorted accessories such as pieces of the red cloth on a pipe, on a robe, attached to feathers in the hair, as

¹ Included in this survey of Bodmer's original sketches are 118 paintings, of which 56 are portraits of individuals. Data concerning these were recorded in July, 1954, while these paintings were on display at the Science Museum in St. Paul, Minnesota.

binding on braids of hair, as a kind of covering or snood for the hair, as moccasin cuffs and as binding on feather wands, decorating a headdress, and appended to a shield, a spear and a bow.

Since seven of the nine available portraits of Mandans show the use of red strouding, one might speculate that the red cloth was particularly popular among these Indians. That red strouding was depicted on only one of twelve paintings of Piegan Indians illustrated might also be noted. However, drawing conclusions from these two notations can be very misleading. Several authors indicate that the Mandan and Hidatsa were the center of trading among the Indians over a long period of time, probably extending from the early 18th century (Ewers, 1956). They were the middlemen facilitating the passage of goods from tribe to tribe. Though the records of trading in this fashion seem to be concerned mostly with such things as knives, rifles and kettles with considerable utilitarian value, decorative materials could be transferred in this same manner. Perhaps this could explain the prevalence of the bright red cloth among the Mandan, or perhaps the Piegan simply did not share a Mandan preference for it, if such existed. Whatever their preferences, however, it is certain that strouding was available to all when Bodmer visited the Northern Plains, and uses found for it were extremely varied.

A curious little ornament reminding one of the shape of an hour-glass was found as a part of the costume of an Assiniboin, a Cree, a Dakota, a Piegan and three Mandan individuals. This "hour-glass ornament" appears to have been made of strands of stiff hair, probably horsehair, cut in about 4" lengths, and tightly bound in the center one and a half or two inches so that the ends have a tufted appearance. The Assiniboin Indian used two as decoration on the barrel of his rifle. All of the others used them as decorations in their hair, usually at the temples. The construction of the one the Piegan wore was the same except that the tufts appear to be made of strands of beads and the center binding possibly of quill. Some of the bindings in the center portion of the little ornament may have been of metal wire, although if these objects were indigenous products rather than a trade item from the white man, the center bindings might all be quill, or thick twine wrapped very carefully and regularly.

Whether these small objects were made by the Indian, which is somewhat doubtful because of the regularity and exact similarity of most of them as illustrated, or whether they were manufactured by a European trade source; and what the manufacturer's "trade name" was for this small ornament pose interesting questions. Certainly the ornaments themselves had some importance to the Indian as a decorative element in this Northern Plains area.

Only one mirror, rectangular in a wooden frame, was shown in Bodmer's illustrations. This was in the hands of a Mandan. This same Mandan Indian also has hanging around his neck a cord or thong with a small conical object, probably a weight of some sort. This also is unique among the paintings.

Difficult to obtain and probably dearly bought were shells traded among the Northern Plains Indians, some probably from as far away as the islands of the South Pacific, including those known as "cowries". These probably were supplanted to some extent by "moonshells" brought in by white traders. One known later source of these was the S. A. Frost and Sons Company of New York. The moonshells varied in size from 3/4" to about 2 1/2" in diameter, and were apparently made of white shells, possibly stamped out as buttons were, and with one or two small holes through which a thong or cord was passed for attachment. Since their size did not fit them for embroidery, they were used as pendants. Bodmer shows them worn by Kickapoo, Ponca, Dakota, Mandan and Yanktonai individuals. Also used in this same fashion were metal medals with images imprinted on them. Bodmer very carefully makes a distinction in both color and delineation between these and the moonshells. The medals were found on Oto, Blood, Ponca and Cree individuals. Shells are also given careful treatment. The necklace of cowry shells worn by one Assiniboin individual is easily recognizable as are the larger shells worn by an Hidatsa Indian. One Blackfoot chief has bits and fragments of many things hung on his shirt, among them pieces of shell. Dentalium shells from the Pacific coast are to be found on one Cree example as well as one Yanktonai.

Small metal cone-shaped "tinklers" Bodmer shows as worn by a Teton Dakota woman and a Mandan warrior. These tiny noisemakers were variable in length from about one-half to one and a half inches, and were possibly crudely fashioned from tin containers by the Indians themselves. Most of them show only approximate regularity in size and shape. They were used as a fringe on the bottom edge of the Teton woman's dress and as appendages to the ends of the woven or braided quill strings hanging from the Mandan's robe.

Other metal goods found among the Indians were bands used around the neck, armbands, bracelets, and finger rings. One Piegan Indian used finger rings on three fingers of each hand. The Hidatsa Indian Dog Dancer also used finger rings. A metal ring the approximate size of a thin finger ring was used by an Oto in his ear. An Hidatsa and a Yanktonai each used metal armbands, about 1 1/2" in width while another Hidatsa used a narrow, thinner bracelet on each arm. An Oto, a Piegan and a Kutenai each used a metal band around the neck. All three have designs imprinted, the Piegan and Kutenai examples having a braided design effect.

Brass bells or "hawk bells" were also present in this area, as shown by their appearance as part of the costumes of a Mandan, an Hidatsa and a Piegan. Generally these were used at the ends of strings so that they would ring freely as the wearer moved.

Several varieties of beads were shown by Bodmer. In the case of the larger beads there is generally very little difficulty in determining them. However, there is the possibility of some confusion when the beads are very small or seed beads. Although Bodmer worked in very

minute detail, the differences between quillwork and beadwork may not be clearly defined. In some cases, as in a portrait of only the head and shoulders, the difference is exquisitely shown, but when the figure must necessarily be reduced in size to be shown at full length, then it is not easy to determine whether a particular specimen shows beadwork or quillwork. Of those that were adequately definable, however, it is interesting to note the prevalence of seed beads colored blue and colored white. Red occurs less often and yellow and black only rarely, with one case of pink on a Mandan. Of the larger beads the bright blue glass ones show up on a Kickapoo, a Teton-Dakota, a Dakota, a Cree, a Blackfoot, a Blood, and four Mandan individuals. These all seem to be about $\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter. Blue about $\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter is shown on an Hidatsa, and white about $\frac{1}{4}$ " also on an Hidatsa, a Cree woman, and a Cree man. A pair of red beads with a white lining inside are worn by a Yanktonai Indian.

Tubular beads variously called Browning beads, Basket beads or large Bugle beads occurred on portraits of a Fox, a Sauk, a Missouri, and an Hidatsa Indian.

The use of beads probably supplanted some of the quillwork at the time of Bodmer's trip to the Northern Plains. As the availability of beads increased quillwork became increasingly more rare. Since bone beads were difficult to make and polish and quillwork is very intricate and exacting as well as time-consuming, the Indian seems to have readily accepted the beads as a substitute.

The beads were used in many ways, as earring appendages both singly and in strings; hung alternately with long slender bone "hair-pipes" from hour-glass ornaments attached to the hair at the temples. Many strings together were used as a loosely hanging necklace or braided or twisted into a less pliable neckpiece. They were hung singly on a thong or cord at the neck; embroidered on strips of hide used on clothing; as embroidery on hide bags; or merely as small appendages of bead-embroidered hide on a rattle or a costume.

Bodmer does not often picture weapons in his portraits. Three rifles are shown; in one illustration, that of a Piegan, just the barrel shows; another is held by an Assiniboin and the third by a Mandan. One pipe tomahawk is pictured in the hands of a Dakota, one whip in the hand of an Assiniboin, a Club with small triangular projectiles held by a Mandan, a knife and sheath, in the hair of a Mandan. The knife and sheath are either painted red or possibly made of Catlinite, a red stone. Bodmer shows, held by the same Mandan with the knife and sheath, an axe, also red. Two Piegan Indians are pictured holding arrows with barbed tips, and the Hidatsa Indian Dog Dancer is shown with several arrows tipped with long slender metal points (Johnson, 1955). The Hidatsa Dancer also holds a short bow. Several long triangular-shaped spearheads are shown, one of them painted red and possibly made of wood rather than metal. The spearhead held by an Arikara is attached to a kind of club or ornamental piece rather than a spearshaft. One held by an Assiniboin is attached to a very long

bow. Three held by Mandans in a group illustration have various appendages and are apparently an integral part of the ceremonial. Two others, one with the wooden one painted red, or perhaps made of red wood, are illustrated within the interior of a Mandan earth lodge.

Through these field sketches of Carl Bodmer, then, we gain a sort of preview of the elaboration that was to come using many of these materials and a profusion of similar ones. Many of these materials which might have had some utilitarian value became mere decoration with an extreme degree of elaborateness. In an ethnological frame of reference, Bodmer's paintings surely contribute important documentary evidence of Plains Indian Culture in the early 19th century.

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CHANGING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN AN EASTERN DAKOTA COMMUNITY

MRS. CYNTHIA KELSEY

621 4th St., S. E., Minneapolis

The Prairie Island Community of the Eastern Dakota Indian includes some 534 acres in Goodhue County on the west bank of the Mississippi River fourteen miles northwest of Red Wing, Minnesota. At present there are just under 100 people living in the community, 60 of whom are under 21 years of age. One's first impression of the community is that the Indians of Prairie Island have reconciled themselves to the ways of the white man. The clothes they wear are similar to those of the farmers surrounding them, the children are avid readers of comic books, the young girls wear lipstick and nail polish. Even the white man's attitude toward cars has penetrated to the Indian—the newer the model the more valuable the possession. One

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