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Recommended Citation

Norman D. Humphrey, Police and Tribal Welfare in Plains Indian Cultures, 33 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 147 (1942-1943)

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POLICE AND TRIBAL WELFARE IN PLAINS INDIAN CULTURES

Norman D. Humphrey¹

The Delimitation of Data.

The geographic area known as the Great Plains contained in the early nineteenth century some thirty-two distinct tribes speaking eighteen mutually unintelligible languages. Some of the tribes of the area were marked by the possession of societies or associations. From tribe to tribe enough similarity existed between these societies to induce early investigators to view them as being essentially alike; and they were grouped together under the terms warrior societies, or police societies.

The tribes having societies occupied a definite geographic territory, ranging from what is now Saskatchewan to what is now Texas. For the purpose of a comparative study of the police activities of these societies I chose first those tribes which Wissler designates as typical Plains tribes,² namely: the Blackfoot, the Crow, the Gros Ventre, and Oglala-Dakota, the Assiniboine, the Arapaho, the Cheyenne, and the Kiowa (the data on the Comanche was too meager for comparison)³; and second, three of the southern Siouan group,⁴ the Iowa, Ponca, and Kansa; and a village tribe of the upper Missouri, the Arikara.

That organization of Plains tribes, which for convenience I shall call political, had an "executive" aspect in the office of the chief, and a "legislative" aspect in the council, while the administration of the rules made by these bodies was in the hands of police, groups, ordinarily societies invested with this power.

The Interrelation of Chiefs, Council, and Societies

The societies were subordinate to the chiefs and the council in the exercise of authority. The chiefs co-operated with the societies, however, in the maintenance of order and unity. The Crow societies, for example, while co-operating with the chiefs on an even footing,

¹ Instructor in Sociology, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan.

² Wissler, Clark, "General Introduction to Societies of the Plains Indians, *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. 11, viii. (hereafter cited as *A.P.A.M.N.H.*)

³ Mooney says, "Among the Plains tribes generally the men and boys are organized into warrior societies varying usually from six to twelve in number, each having its special equipment, dance, songs, and ceremonial function." Mooney, J., "Military Societies," *Bulletin 30, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1, 872, (Washington, 1907).

⁴ Wissler, Clark, *North American Indians of the Plains*, (New York, 1920), 14.

were subordinate to them in that the chiefs could veto society proposals.⁵

The council sanctioned, limited, and directed the activities of societies. Their ceremonial performances had to have such sanction; their war activities were to some extent limited, and their police activities directed, by the council. In directing the operations of societies the council delegated authority to individuals and societies, who in turn had control over the behavior of the tribesmen, and so acted to maintain tribal order. The chief was the executive officer of the council.

Power to exercise direct control over individual behavior might be delegated by the council without regard to societal affiliation, as among the Kansa and the Iowa;⁶ to a particular society, as with the Arapaho and Cheyenne;⁷ to one society (or a group of men from the society) at one time, and to another society or group at another time,⁸ as among the Crow, Oglala, Kiowa, and Ponka; or to several societies for the same occasion, as with the Blackfoot.⁹

⁵ Lowie, R. H., *The Crow Indians*, (New York, 1935), 6. The All-Comrades societies of the Blackfoot were the dominant factor in tribal organization, and the power of the head chief was largely dependent on his co-operation with them. These societies, on the other hand, took orders from the head chief who was the council executive, Curtis, E. S., *The North American Indian*, (Cambridge, 1911), 16.

⁶ Each Iowa chief selected two body-guards from among the titled braves to act as camp police. The office could be sold for a horse, and the purchaser might cite the exploits of the bought-out officer as his own. On the march a leader to take charge and choose the camp-site was appointed by the chief of the leading gens, a different one each day. Skinner, A., "Societies of the Iowa, Kansa, and Ponca Indians," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, 11, (1915), 685. The Kansa hunt leader was chosen by three band chiefs, who also designated twenty men to act as police. These officials endured only as long as the hunting trip. An equal number of men had supervision over punishments inflicted by the police. *Ibid.*, 756.

⁷ The decisions of the Cheyenne tribal council were enforced by the Dog Society. Hoebel, E. A., "Associations and the State in the Plains," *American Anthropologist N. S.*, Vol. 38, No. 3, (1936), 436. The Arapaho council delegated authority to the Spear Society, but the head men of the Star Society selected the camp circle location at the time of the sun-dance. Dorsey, G. A., "The Arapaho Sun-Dance; the Ceremony of the Offerings Lodge," *Field Columbian Museum Publication*, 75, Anthropological Series, Vol. 4, (1903), 22, 32.

⁸ Each spring the Crow chief appointed one of the military societies to act as police; occasionally many years in succession, since there was no fixed rule of rotation. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, (New York, 1935), 5. The two police heads of the Oglala selected two other prominent men to serve with them as chiefs of Akicita (police). This group chose either eight or ten other men to act as police, or designated one of the Akicita societies to serve. If the latter was the case, the society leaders detailed the duties to members. The heads of the Akicita who were responsible to the council received their orders from the four executive officers in that body (the wakicu). The civil and economic affairs of a camp were enforced by the police. It was their duty to supervise the regulation of the hunt and the conservation of the food source. Wissler, C., "Societies and Ceremonial Associations of the Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, (1912), 39. The head Kiowa medicine men chose a society to act as police in the buffalo hunt. Lowie, R. H., "Plains Indian Age-Societies: Historical and Comparative Summary," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, (1916), 843. A Ponka chief would on one occasion choose as police the bravest warriors of one society, and another occasion, the warriors of another. Skinner, A., "Ponca Societies and Dances," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, (1915), 794-5.

⁹ Wissler, *op. cit.*, 24. Wissler, C., "Societies and Dance Associations of the Blackfoot Indians," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, 17. Grinnel, G. B., *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, (New York, 1903), 219.

The Blackfoot All-Comrades, for example, were under the authority of the chief, and duties were delegated to them by the chief. The societies were called upon by the council for the execution of specific duties, and could not act until so commissioned. No society had a monopoly on police duties, and for an occasion the chief could call one or two of the societies rather than on individuals. In the spring band-assemble, the chief at a feast appointed two or three of the younger societies to be camp police for the season. Chiefs of the policing societies selected the camping sites for the group; if this selection was disputed the matter was settled by a vote of all the chiefs of policing societies.

The powers vested in police societies, although they varied from tribe to tribe, were in general concerned with such social and economic activities as the tribal buffalo hunt, the movement of the camp, the formation of the camp circle, the settlement of personal disputes in the camp, and the regulation of war. The police activities of societies will be discussed at length later in the paper. Here it is necessary only to note the delegation of authority to societies.

Spatial Expression of Inter-Relation of Societies and Political Organization of the Tribe

The arrangement of tipis in the camp circle may be regarded as an objectification of the implicit social relations existing between chiefs, council, and societies. The social relation between the political organization delegating authority and the police groups exercising it is evident from the spatial arrangement of their respective lodges. The chief's lodge, which also served as a council house, was ordinarily located at the center of the camp circle.¹⁰ Near the center of the camp circle also, and close to the chief's tipi, were the lodges of the groups doing police duty. "Where we find a camp circle organization," Wissler says, "we note an Akicita tipi."¹¹ Other societies, which were not at the moment doing police duty, could erect lodges within the camp circle, and carry on special activities there.¹²

Private families were required to erect their lodges so as to form

¹⁰ Upon the reorganization of the tribe in the spring, the Oglala council (the seven chiefs and wakicun) had a tipi set up in the middle of the camp circle and met there, the wakicun having "seats of honor," and the seven chiefs, councillor seats. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 8. The two leaders of each Blackfoot society which had been selected as camp police pitched their lodges together in the center of the camp. These double lodges became the place of councils and feasts, and the headquarters for men on police duty. Curtis, *op. cit.*, 17. Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 224. The chief of the Assineboine erected his lodge in the center of the camp circle and from there directed the police. Lowie, R. H., "The Assineboine," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 4, (1909), 35.

¹¹ Wissler, C., "General Discussion of Shamanistic and Dancing Societies," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, (1916), 875. The Oglala Braves society, the one most frequently called upon for police duty, had a lodge at the center of the camp circle. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 27. The leader of the Horns society of the Blood tribe of the Blackfoot, who determined the time and location of camp formation, pitched his tent in the middle of the camp circle. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 418.

¹² Within the Oglala camp circle there were special society tipis, located at equal distances from each other. The Kit-Fox society had three tipi within the circle. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 18, 41. The Blackfoot societies had lodges within the camp circle. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 386. The dancing lodge used in ceremonies by Gros Ventre societies was constructed of two large tents at the center of the camp circle. Kroeber, A. L., "Ethnology of the Gros Ventre," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 1, (1908), 227.

the camp circle. Societies doing police duty, however, were privileged to place their lodges within the camp circle, near the chief's tipi. Practically, this was a convenience to the chief communicating orders, and to the police who had thus a central point from which to depart on their duties. The social significance of this arrangement lies in the fact that in a lodge so placed, a society had both a material manifestation of its existence and an evidence of its importance in the life of the tribe.

To summarize the relation of the societies to the so-called political organization of the tribe: The societies, generally were under the domination of the council and the chiefs. A society which had been chosen to act as police took orders, previously discussed and agreed upon by the council, from the executive officer or officers, the chiefs. In several tribes certain society officials were members of the council. The council sanctioned, limited, and directed the activities of societies in ceremonial life, war, and the food quest. The spatial arrangement within the camp circle of the lodges of chief and societies indicated the existence of a special relation between them, as well as signalling the importance of societies in the life of the tribe.

The Meaning of Police Activities

Complete, almost inexorable control over the population of a camp was exercised primarily during the period of the communal buffalo hunt. Such authority, vested in police societies, was the rule throughout the Plains area. Concerning this fact, Lowie says,

The basic idea is that during a hunt a group is vested with the power forcibly to prevent premature attacks on the herd and to punish offenders by corporal punishment, by confiscation of the game illegally secured, by destruction of their property generally, and in extreme cases by killing them.¹³

Police activities were not confined to the Plains area. According to Wissler, police groups had fundamentally the same name among the Plains tribes and those tribes of the Central Algonkians which had the institution.¹⁴ In the general literature the term "akicita" or its tribal variants is translated as "soldiers," but its nearest English equivalent should be "police" or "marshalls."¹⁵

It has been previously mentioned that in the Plains area the police powers were delegated by the council preponderantly to so-

¹³ Lowie, R. H., *The Origin of the State*, (New York, 1927), 103.

¹⁴ Wissler, C., "General Discussion of Shamanistic and Dancing Societies," *op. cit.*, 874.

¹⁵ The term is defined by the Oglala in the following ways: "those who see that there is general order in camp when traveling from one place to another; those who attend to the duties of overseeing the buffalo so that no one may chase the buffalo at once, or splitting up the party so that when one chases the buffalo one way, the other band closes in; and those who supervise the chase get better results. They also see that no one kills another, but in case one does, they either kill him or destroy all his property, kill his horses, destroy his tipi, etc." Wissler, *op. cit.*, 9-10.

cieties;¹⁶ but that in several instances the powers were delegated not to societies but to groups of distinguished men,¹⁷ or to kin structures.¹⁸ As Lowie says, "The personnel of the constabulary varies from tribe to tribe; the duties may be linked with a particular society (Mandan, Hidatsa), or be assumed by various military societies (Crow),¹⁹ or fall to the lot of distinguished men without regard to associational affiliations (Kansas)."²⁰

The Origin of Police Activities

The problem of the historical origin of police duties and societies has slight relevance to the question of what constituted the functional role of societies as they last existed. Whether police activities were basic to the formation of societies, or whether they were an accidental adhesion to already extant associations, has importance only for the question of origins.²¹

¹⁶ Whether the men's societies of the Blackfoot were police by virtue of their own membership, or whether they were individually called out to form an independent body, is not certain. Yet Wissler states that any society containing able-bodied men was likely to be called upon by the men to guard the camp for a stated period. Wissler, C., "The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 7, (1911), 26. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 370. The four head akicita of the Oglala were chosen from one society and they selected their assistants from that society. The chiefs usually chose the head akicita from societies by rotation. An individual could not decline service, but he could be discharged for misconduct (murder, adultery). Appointment was regarded as an honor. The appointment of the leaders of a society as head akicita "allowed for an efficient administration, for they could call to service a highly organized corps of able-bodied men." The Akicita were civil officers who served in domestic and industrial activities in camp. The association of police with the military societies is a peculiarity of the western as distinguished from other groups of Dakota, "and need not have originated from them since it is found in a number of neighboring tribes in the same form," Wissler, *op. cit.*, 10, 13; Lowie, "Plains Indian Age-Societies," *op. cit.*, 910.

¹⁷ The Kansa police consisted of twenty men, persons of proven courage, who had taken a scalp, counted coup, or slain an enemy; for their task of controlling others was an arduous and often dangerous one. Skinner, A., "Kansa Organizations," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, (1915), 746. But while each of the Siouan tribes here dealt with, the Iowa, Ponka, and Kansa, had a constabulary, in none was the police power associated with a definite society, or with military societies as a whole. There was an approximation to this, however, among the Ponca where the chief chose the bravest warriors of one society for one occasion, another group from another society for the next. Because of the fact that police duties were in most cases activities of societies, it has been found convenient to analyze these duties as such; regarding them if they were not directly associated with societies, as serving further to outline activities that were performed by societies.

¹⁸ Among the Osage, where there was a gentile system, some of the gentes exercised police powers. Lowie, "The Assineboine," *op. cit.*, 98.

¹⁹ It is not known whether police duties among the Cheyenne devolved on the Dogs exclusively, or alternately on several societies; the former case is more probable. Lowie, "Plains Indians Age-Societies," *op. cit.*, 895.

²⁰ Lowie, *The Origin of the State*, 103.

²¹ The important consideration in depicting the functional role of an association is that of the plexus of social activities which adhere to it and give it content. To use an example from our culture, that branch of the Masonic Order known as the Shrine has come to have as one of its activities the building and maintenance of a series of hospitals for crippled children. To help finance these hospitals the Shrine holds annually on New Year's Day a football game between an all-star eastern and an all-star western team. It is a known fact that the activity was an accretion; therefore a consideration of it regardless of how

Lowie felt that the mechanism responsible for the appearance of police groups was that of "economic necessity." "Under the grim pressure of economic necessity," he says, "the Plains Indians evolved the notion of temporarily suspending that virtually complete freedom from coercion enjoyed by a tribesman."²² Once the notion of a suspension of complete freedom had been evolved, the exercise of power was attached haphazardly to societies. In the Plains area, Lowie says, "police functions developed in connection with the camp circle and the tribal hunt. Where age societies had arisen, these disciplinary duties fell to their lot. Where ungraded military societies occurred, police functions were attached to them."²³ Lowie therefore viewed police activity not as the primary factor in the formation of societies, but as an accidental adhesion to societies already existing. Wissler concurred in this view, feeling that the performance of police duties by societies was an accidental association. The performance of police duties, he says, "can scarcely be considered as contributory to the formation of a tribal system of societies."²⁴

Criticism of the Notions of the Origin of Police Activities

The evidence brought forth to prove these contentions is inconclusive. Lowie and Wissler have inferred that merely because there were societies which did not have police powers, or because there were police groups not drawn from societies, that they did not originate together, and that the societies existed previous to the development of police powers. The fact that police powers were found not in association with societies does not necessarily imply, however, that such powers did not originate simultaneously or co-existently with societies. Logically there are several possibilities. Where police duties are found in any particular tribe which does not possess societies, it is possible to view these duties as having come into the tribe by a process of partial diffusion from without.

thorough, would be of little value in solving the problem of the origin of the Shrine. If one was concerned, however, with the character of the Shrine today, he would necessarily consider this one aspect of its plexus of activities; and this, together with its other activities, would be the data from which could be derived its *raison d'être* today. From these functions, in other words, the basic character of the institution could be derived.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁴ Wissler, "General Discussion of Shamanistic and Dancing Societies," *op. cit.*, 875. Wissler adduced this conclusion from a consideration of several Algonkian tribes, not considered in this paper, the Plains-Cree and the Plains-Ojibway. The activities of the police groups of the Cree and Ojibway were as "police in all respects, but they had certain specialized duties as managing the buffalo hunt and leading in battle." Two forms of hunting were practiced, a mass organized tribal hunt in the summer by the surround method, and the impounding of the herd in winter. While the police had charge of the summer hunt, the winter hunt was in charge of a shaman, the pound-maker who selected his own assistants. It was from this evidence that Wissler concluded that the performance of the police duties by societies was an accidental feature, and not the basic reason for their existence.

Thus a Plateau tribe hunting buffalo in the Plain, and coming into contact with a Plains tribe possessing societies which exercised police powers, might be led to copy the manner in which the Plains tribe policed the hunt. Knowledge of the society basis of the police power would be lacking however, so that in the Plateau tribe the powers would be vested in non-society groups.²⁵ This gives an adequate theoretical explanation of how a tribe might have police powers without societies; the existence of tribes in which the exercise of police powers was dissociated from societies is similarly explained, on the basis of partial diffusion of a culture complex. Yet there is no ground in this construction of the facts for the views of Lowie and Wissler that, in terms of cultural origin and development, police powers were an accidental adhesion to already existent societies and that they had no part in the formation of a tribal system of societies. Police powers may have developed *before* societies, and, so far as can be seen from those tribes possessing police powers exercised by societies, these powers may have played a large part in the formation of societies.

It is apparent, then, that (a) police activities centered in the concept of vesting a group with coercive power over their fellow tribesmen; (b) the group vested with this authority was in most cases a society or a group of societies; (c) the police powers of societies may logically have been originally either (1) the basic factor which brought societies into existence, (2) an accretion to already extant societies, (3) a separate and contemporaneous development with societies; (d) there is little evidence affirming any one view, nor is the question of *origin* as important in an examination of the functional role of societies as in the question of the *special part* played by police activities in the total activity of a society.

The activities of police groups may be considered in three forms;

²⁵ It is interesting to note that among the Plateau tribes, where no societies of consequence had developed and where police power was exercised only when the groups went into the Plains to hunt buffalo, an early observer related social organization to economy. Wyeth writing in 1848 said regarding these tribes, "the paucity of game in this region is, I have little doubt, the cause of the almost entire absence of social organization among its inhabitants." He continues, "Some person called a chief usually opens a trade of talk, and occasionally gives directions as to times and modes of fishing, and the same is the case of the bands who go into the buffalo region. Other than this, I perceive no vestiges of government among them; I have never known other punishment than personal satisfaction by murder or theft. But after a portion of them now called Bonacks, had obtained horses they would naturally form bands and resort to the buffalo region to gain their subsistence. Having food from the proceeds of the buffalo hunt, to enable them to live together, they would annually do so, for the protection of their horses, lodges, etc. These interests have caused organization among the Bonacks, which continues the year through, because the interests which produce it continue, and it is more advanced than that of other Snakes." Wyeth, N. J., "Indian Tribes of the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains" in Schoolcraft, Henry R., *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the U. S.*, (Philadelphia, 1851-7), 207, 208.

(1) the activities functioning to prevent violations of tribal order; (2) the detection of violations of tribal order; (3) the punishment inflicted for violations of tribal order. The police, then, administered rules issued by the council, judged suspects, and inflicted punishment upon offenders.

The Prevention of Violation of Tribal Order

Police activities functioning to protect tribal order were expressed in three general situations: (a) in the movement of the camp, (b) within the settled camp, (c) and in the communal buffalo hunt.

(a) When a camp was moving its location, the police acted as guards against attacks from outside enemies.

For example, when a Blackfoot camp was moved, the van, the flanks, and the rear were each screened by a policing society acting under the orders of the leaders. In this maneuver, the Braves society was always given the most dangerous position.²⁶

In addition to guarding the camp, the policing societies decided the direction of movement and (the societies or their officers) selected the location of the campsite.

In the Gros Ventre, for example, the two bodies of young men which performed the Star Dance and the War Dance had charge, respectively, of the movement of the camp and the location of the camp circle.²⁷

When the camp had been located, the police prevented encroachments by ordinary tribesmen upon the prerogatives of status within the tribe. No individual might camp beyond the march leader's tent. Such guarding of status functioned to preserve tribal order.

The Gros Ventre police assigned to each individual his camping place; any person disregarding this assignment was subject to punishment.²⁸

The tenure of office for a society policing the camp was usually one season; i.e., that period when the separate bands came together for the buffalo hunt.

²⁶ Wissler, *op. cit.*, 370; Curtis, *op. cit.*, 16. On the march a detachment of the Assineboine police cleared the way for the dog-travois, while another section constitute the rear guard. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35. The Kiowa police flanked each side of the main body as it marched, with other groups placed in front and behind to prevent straggling. Battey, T. C., *The Life and Adventures of a Quaker Among the Indians*, (Boston, 1876), 185, 186.

²⁷ Kroeber, *op. cit.*, 239. The akicita societies of the Blackfoot determined the route of the summer's travel. Curtis, *op. cit.*, 17. The selection of the route was the duty of the policing society of the Crow. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 6. A Ponka march leader had similar authority as to the place of camping. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 794. The Oglala Badger and the Crow Owner Societies were most often chosen for police duty in moving camp. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 13.

²⁸ Kroeber, *Ibid.* The Iowa leader for the march selected the camp for the night, but the police of the march assigned individuals of each band their camping spots and prevented any camping beyond the tent of that day's officer. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 685, 690.

For example, the policing society of the Oglala served, from the beginning of the summer hunt, for that summer season or for year.²⁹

(b) Within the settled camp the police groups prevented the disruption of tribal order by regulating the internal life of the camp and by guarding against external aggression.³⁰ Police acting as sentries or guards was a form of the latter capacity.

In a Blackfoot camp at night one or two akicita societies were assigned to stand guard. This duty was performed in turn by the Piegan societies, appointed as the season's police. Several men, shouting warnings as they went on duty that all persons should rest in their lodges, kept watch over the camp from darkness to sunrise. Each man patrolled that portion of the camp circle wherein his own band was situated, stopping at the end of his beat and exchanging signals with the sentinel of the next band.³¹

The Blackfoot societies guarding a camp not only forestalled surprise attacks by the enemy, but prevented unsanctioned war parties of their own band from committing acts of provocation.³²

Following a quarrel between a Piegan band and a group of Kutenai visitors, the visitors left the camp. The chiefs then instructed the Catchers Society, then acting as police, under no circumstances to allow the young men of the Piegan tribe to leave the camp.³³

In preventing persons from leaving camp when buffalo were sighted, and before the organized hunt began, the guards functioned

²⁹ Wissler, *op. cit.*, 10. The Crow military societies, policing the tribe during the communal hunts, had a tenure of office for one season. Lowie, R. H., "Military Societies of the Crow Indians," *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, Vol. 11, (1913), 179. The Blackfoot societies, chosen for police duty, were camp police for the season. Curtis, *op. cit.*, 17. The tenure of the policing military society of the Northern Cheyenne was also for one season, lasting only while the tribe drifted in a certain direction. When the direction of movement changed, or the bands separated, tenure ended. Hoebel, *op. cit.*, 434. The Kansa leader of the march held tenure for the trip. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 746. The Iowa march chief held office only for one day. *Ibid.*, 686.

³⁰ A society acted as police in the prevention of disorder in the camp. It had certain disciplinary powers and duties. Several Arapaho societies had regulative functions. The chief duties of the Arapaho Spear society were concerned with policing camp. Kroeber, A. L., "The Arapaho," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. 18, Part a, (1904), 151. Dorsey, George A., and Kroeber, A. L., "Traditions of the Arapaho," *Publications, Field Columbian Museum, Anthropological Series*, Vol. 5, (1903), 32. Oglala akicita societies maintained general order in camp. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 9. Crow military organizations prevented disorder. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 192. The Kiowa warrior societies were camp police. Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," 17th Annual Report, *B. A. E.*, Part 1, 224.

³¹ Wissler, *op. cit.*, 370. Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 222; Curtis, *op. cit.*, 17-18. Iowa police guarded the camp. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 690. The Arikara Black Mouths were guards of the village. Lowie, "Societies of the Arikara Indians," Vol. 11, *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, (1915), 664. The police of the Assineboine, in case of danger, were stationed in outposts at the extremities of the camp to prevent people from passing beyond the lines and falling into the hands of the enemy. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35.

³² The camp police stopped Crow War parties from starting out on what was considered to be an inauspicious occasion. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 6. Kiowa warriors saw that no unsanctioned raiding parties escaped from camp. Battley, *op. cit.*, 185-6.

³³ Schultz, J. W., *My Life as an Indian*, (New York, 1907), 115.

in yet another way to maintain tribal order. This duty was performed by camp police in all tribes. A "no hunting" order was issued which authorized the police to stop any member of the band from leaving camp. This order was mandatory even over women who wished to go out to pick berries, and over those intending to chop wood for camp fires.³⁴ The object of this police activity was conservation of the food source, an activity which, protecting as it did the material welfare of the tribe as a whole, was a basic prerequisite to the existence of tribal order.³⁵ The maintenance of tribal order, in turn, protected the tribal material welfare, by functioning further to conserve the food source. To state the matter succinctly, we may say that the police activity of societies, by means of an enforced tribal unity functioned to conserve the tribal food source as a whole.

Internal order in the settled camp was the concern of police groups when they acted to stop quarrels,³⁶ and when they supervised the behavior of tribesmen in the Sun-dance and other ceremonies.³⁷

(c) About the concept of the communal buffalo hunt centered a number of police activities tending to maintain tribal order. Police prevented premature attacks on a sighted herd. When a herd was sighted, the police enforced the "no hunting" order issued by the chief³⁸ until the organized hunting could begin.

The Kiowa soldiers on the hunt, for instance, surrounded a tract of country which contained a large herd of buffalo. No one was allowed to chase buffalo past this ring guard. When the police acted in this capacity they were known by a term which, in English translation, means, "They can stop anyone."³⁹

³⁴ A Blackfoot woman who disobeyed a no-camp-leaving mandate in order to pick berries had her basket spilled by the guards when she returned to camp. McClintock, W., *The Old North Trail*, (London, 1910), 464. Arikara police forbade tree chopping in winter since the noise scared away the buffalo. Those who disobeyed had their axes broken, Lowie, *Societies of the Arikara Indians*, p. 664, (1915).

³⁵ This function will be discussed at length at the end of the paper.

³⁶ The Crow policing society tried to settle disputes within the band and in general maintained order, Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, 5. The Iowa Soldiers (Skinner, *op cit.*, 690), and the Ponca akicita, (*Ibid.*, 794), also acted to settle quarrels. The Kansa akicita were summoned when marital disputes occurred. Skinner, *Ibid.*, 752. When a quarrel arose in camp, it was the duty of the Oglala Chiefs Society to intercede with a pipe and make peace. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 40. The tomahawk carried by two officers of the Piegan Catchers Society had supernatural power to stop fights and boisterous conduct in camp. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 403.

³⁷ During the summer, when the tribal camp was formed preparatory to the Sun-Dance, the Blackfoot akicita were almost constantly on duty. Wissler, *Ibid.*, 370. No special akicita were appointed for the Oglala Sun-Dance, or for other ceremonies. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 10. The Iowa Soldiers kept order during ceremonies. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 690. The akicita of the Kansa, appointed to take charge of certain dances, saw to it that everyone participated. *Ibid.*, 752.

³⁸ Both the Ponka (Skinner, *op. cit.*, 794, 796), and the Assineboine sent out as buffalo scouts men who were doing police duty. These announced the sighting of buffalo to the camp through a herald. Thereupon silence was proclaimed by the police, and no one might pursue the buffalo without the permission of the akicita. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 55.

³⁹ Battey, *op. cit.*, 185-6; Lowie, "Societies of the Kiowa," Vol. 11, *A.P.A.M.N.H.*, 843.

As they surrounded the herd, the hunters were kept in line by the police; then, at a command from the hunt leader, the attack and slaughter occurred.⁴⁰ In one tribe, the Assineboine, the product of the hunt was turned over to the police, who apparently later distributed it.⁴¹

The police by preventing premature attacks on the herd, prohibited any one individual from exploiting the food supply to his own advantage at the expense of the group. In so doing, the police acted to give each hunter, and so all male tribesmen, a relatively equal opportunity to exploit the food source. The food supply was at the same time conserved and the welfare of the tribe protected.

The Detection of Violations of Tribal Order

In addition to administering the rules promulgated by the council in the interests of tribal order, the police acted in the capacity of judges. To the apprehended suspect whose guilt was apparent, punishment was quickly meted.⁴² In at least one case where the innocence or guilt of the suspect was not immediately apparent, the police had the power to gather evidence.

On this point Hoebel gives an instance for the Cheyenne, in which the aborted embryo of a Cheyenne child was discovered in a camp. Since the death of a Cheyenne at the hands of a tribesman "bloodied" the arrows of the Medicine Arrows and the Medicine Hat (upon whom tribal welfare rested), resulting in game shunning the country and the failure of war parties, it was necessary to discover the culprit. The police accomplished this by having all the suspects line up and bare their breasts, an examination of which revealed the most recently pregnant woman, and therefore the criminal. While a ritual sufficed to purify the Arrows, the murderer was still rotten inside, her breath stank and she drove off game.

⁴⁰ The Assineboine police also acted to prevent premature charges on the herd (Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35), as did the Oglala policing society. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 9. The soldiers of the Iowa, when surrounding and charging the buffalo herd, kept men in line until the chief ordered the attack, (Skinner, *op. cit.*, 690), as did the akicita of the Ponka. *Ibid.*, 794. The Crow policing society in the hunt stopped premature attacks on the sighted herd. Anyone scaring the herd away was punished. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, *op. cit.*, 5; Lowie, "Military Societies of the Crow Indians," *op. cit.*, 179.

⁴¹ The Assineboine Soldiers, of whom there would be about fifty in a camp of two hundred lodges, received all meat obtained in the buffalo hunt, after which they feasted and danced. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 55.

⁴² A violator of the rules of the chase among the Assineboine received the following treatment if discovered: All the akicita started for his lodge. The overseer of the hunt entered, took the owner by the hand and led him out; then re-entered and led out the wife and children of the culprit. His lodge was destroyed, his travois chopped up, and his dogs and horses shot. *Ibid.*, 35. An offending Blackfoot hunter was brought back, whipped, had his lodge destroyed, and his supply of pemmican, etc., taken away. Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 220. The punishment for illegal hunting among the Gros Ventre was to have both the meat and skin of the illegally obtained game cut into small pieces. Kroeber, *op. cit.*, 239. The Crow beat the culprit, broke his weapons, and confiscated the game. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, *op. cit.*, 5.

Therefore a sentence of banishment was imposed by the tribal council and enforced by the soldiers.⁴³

The Punishment for Violations of Tribal Order

The police inflicted punishment upon individuals guilty of infraction of tribal rules promulgated by the Council. Among the Assineboine punishment for the crime of one individual against another was an individual affair. The police took a hand only in the case of violation of rules which they were administering.

Among the Assineboine, the punishment of practically every crime except disobedience to the tribal police was an individual, not a tribal affair.⁴⁴

If police power was exercised in a punishment-inflicting form, only in the case of violation of orders which the police were administering, and never in the case of mere personal offenses, it would indicate that the police punished only offenses against the tribe as a whole. The literature of police-inflicted punishments is concerned almost wholly with such violations as hunting despite a "no hunting" order, or prematurely attacking the herd. Offenses of this type, it is apparent, threatened the means of subsistence of the whole tribe. Since the police punished only offenses against the tribe as a whole, and these were primarily offenses which threatened the means of subsistence of the group, it may legitimately be induced that the prime function of the police was the maintenance of material tribal welfare.

Offenses which did not directly threaten the material well-being of the tribe, yet whose retribution was administered by the police, may be regarded as jeopardizing the unity of the tribe and lessening its solidarity; they were therefore tribal offenses and within the sphere of police action.⁴⁵

The crimes punished by the police then were of two sorts: offenses against the tribal source of goods, and offenses against the

⁴³ If a Northern Cheyenne was suspected of hunting when a "no-hunting" rule was in force, the Soldiers could enter his lodge to search for evidence. If innocent, the individual rushed out holding up his hands in protest. A search of the tipi followed. If guilty, the individual made no move, and the penalty followed. Hoebel, *op. cit.*, 434-5.

⁴⁴ Lowie, *op. cit.*, 36.

⁴⁵ Did the police in any tribe punish offenders for crimes against fellow tribesmen, which were not offenses against the tribe as a whole? A Blackfoot woman, found to have committed adultery a second time, was killed by the police. Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 216. The Blackfoot warrior who killed a fellow tribesman might be killed by the police. Wissler, "The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians," *op. cit.*, 10. The banishment of a Cheyenne murderer has been previously noted. In the case of the Cheyenne it is obvious that the supernaturally caused consequences of the crime (scarcity of game, failure in war) made it, in the eyes of the Cheyenne, an offense against the material welfare of the tribe. In the citation from the Blackfoot it is possible that the individual crime was construed as an offense against the tribal material welfare. In any event, it is apparent that if the crimes did not affect the material welfare, they did affect the solidarity of the tribe, and were therefore tribal offenses punishable by the police.

unity of the group. Police-inflicted punishment upon individuals guilty of disrupting tribal order was also of two sorts: (a) punishment upon the physical persons of the offenders; and (b) punishment through attachment of the offenders' material possessions.

In several tribes individuals found guilty by the police of violating rules of the hunt were whipped.⁴⁶ The police had the right, if they deemed it necessary to uphold the rules, to kill an offender.⁴⁷ The Crow⁴⁸ and the Cheyenne⁴⁹ police could banish an offender from the band. The powers of the police over the physical person of an offender were, in a general view of the Plains, of three sorts: physical beatings, capital punishment, and exile.

Punishment of an individual through the instrument of his property took the forms of confiscation⁵⁰ and destruction.⁵¹ However, in two tribes, the Iowa and the Kansa, the police did not have the right to destroy property.⁵²

The punishment inflicted by the police upon offenders against tribal order was ordinarily not personally resented; if it was, still the offender had no further recourse.⁵³ An individual who accepted

⁴⁶ The right to whip offenders for the violation of hunting rules was held by the Crow police. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, *op. cit.*, 193; Lowie, *op. cit.*, 179. This was also the right of the Assineboine police. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35. The Kiowa police went through a ceremonial "soldier killing." Lowie, *op. cit.*, 843. This was also the case of the Iowa Soldiers. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 685. The Kansa akicita each gave a culprit one stroke. Skinner, *Ibid.*, 746. The Black-Mouths of the Arikara could beat both men and women, although women received less severe punishments. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 664. The All-Comrades police of the Blackfoot whipped culprits. Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 220; Curtis, *op. cit.*, 17.

⁴⁷ The Northern Cheyenne Soldiers even had the right to wipe out a whole family to enforce the law. Hoebel, *op. cit.*, 435. The Arikara police could kill an offender, (Lowie, *op. cit.*, 664), as could the Assineboine, (Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35); the Iowa, (Skinner, *op. cit.*, 698); and the Ponka, (*Ibid.*, 795).

⁴⁸ The Crow put the offender out of camp only for a short period. Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, *op. cit.*, 115.

⁴⁹ The Cheyenne banished a murdered for life. Hoebel, *op. cit.*, 436.

⁵⁰ Those who prematurely attacked the herd would have the meat obtained confiscated among the Blackfoot, (Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 220); Gros Ventre, (Kroeber, *op. cit.*, 229); Crow, (Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, *op. cit.*, 5); and Kiowa, (Lowie, *op. cit.*, 843).

⁵¹ The Blackfoot police had the right to tear a man's lodge to shreds, and destroy his travois. Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 220, 222. A Ponka culprit's tent might be destroyed and his horses and dog shot. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 795. The Kiowa who resented physical punishment might have his horse shot. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 843; Battey, *op. cit.*, 186. Gros Ventre police could destroy property and kill the horses of an offender. Kroeber, *op. cit.*, 234. Similar punishment was inflicted upon an Assineboine, (Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35), and upon an Oglala, (Wissler, *op. cit.*, 10) by their respective police.

⁵² Neither the Kansa akicita, (Skinner, *op. cit.*, 746), nor the Iowa soldiers, (Skinner, *op. cit.*, 690), could destroy property as punishment.

⁵³ The punishment inflicted by members of Blackfoot societies was not personally resented by offenders since the police were acting within their rights. Wissler, *op. cit.*, 26. The Iowa police were exempt from vengeance for punishment given in performance of duties. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 690. Over-harsh action on the part of the soldiers of the Northern Cheyenne was not well taken, but there was no recourse for injured bodies. Hoebel, *op. cit.*, 435. An Arikara who became angry at Black-Mouth punishment had no recourse. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 664. Both Kiowa, (Lowie, *op. cit.*, 843), and Ponka, (Skinner, *op. cit.*, 795) individuals who resented punishment would receive further punishment for their trouble.

punishment gracefully might be restored to his former status.

Assineboine police waited four days after the chastisement of an offender. If he made no show of resistance, the police would donate property to restore his loss. They would gather the gifts together in one place, re-erect the pardoned offender's lodge, picket the horse, tie up the dogs, and put pemmican inside the tent. Then all marched toward the man's resting place, led him to the new lodge, bade him enter, and announced all inside belonged to him.⁵⁴

The police might thus restitute confiscated property or replace property that had been destroyed; or they might give presents to compensate for a beating.⁵⁵

To summarize the discussion of the police activities of societies: the police prevented violations of tribal order by acting as guards on the march and in camp; by setting camp disputes, and by patrolling organized hunts; they detected and judged the innocence or guilt of suspects; they punished guilty individuals, physically or through their property; and they might compensate individuals who gracefully accepted punishment.

The functional role of police groups in Plains culture may be considered to have three aspects, namely: (a) the function relative to the maintenance of the status of the tribe; (b) the function relative to the maintenance of a relationship with the supernatural beneficial to the tribe as a whole; (c) the function relative to the maintenance of the tribe's material welfare. Together with these three aspects of the police activities of societies functioned to maintain the tribal order.

The function of policing societies in maintaining the status of the tribe had both intra-tribal and extra-tribal, aspects. Within the tribe, the police activities served as a means by which an individual might achieve prestige. Since only competent (brave, judicious) men were selected for police duty, the chosen society endowed its members with status in the eyes of fellow tribesmen. In turn, the police, by guarding the prerogatives of officials (exemplified in the cases of individuals punished for camping in other than assigned spots, or for camping beyond the leader's tent), tended to preserve the existing status-hierarchy. Maintenance of the tribal status as a whole, in the eyes of other tribes, was accomplished when police groups functioned to protect the camp from external aggression. As did the obligated acts of bravery performed

⁵⁴ Lowie, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁵⁵ If a Ponka took his punishment well, sometime within the next four days he would be sent for and led to the soldiers' tent. There each one who had struck him in punishment and counted coup on him would ask, "Where did I hit you?" Upon being shown, the soldier would then make him a present. Skinner, *op. cit.*, 795. If an Arikara took his punishment well, the two pipebearers of the Black-Mouths would give presents when he smoked the pipe, so that he would hold no ill feeling against them. Lowie, *op. cit.*, 664.

by members of societies on the warpath, this war-like preparedness of a camp made for tribal solidarity and impressed enemies.

The police functioned to maintain a beneficial relation with the supernatural. Individuals who violated tabus affecting the whole tribe disrupted this relation; and it became the duty of the police to apprehend and punish such individuals; e.g., the exile imposed by police upon a Cheyenne murderer. It is noteworthy, in this example, that the supernatural wrath visited upon the tribe took the form of failing war-parties, and the disappearance of game from Cheyenne territory.⁵⁶

The police societies functioned to maintain the tribal source of food. They patrolled the hunt to prevent any individual from scaring away the game, and to insure each individual an equal chance to secure sustenance. This sort of activity served the end of general tribal order and therefore served the most important end of tribal material welfare.

The functional role of societies, so far as it was expressed through police activities, was that of maintaining tribal order by means of protecting tribal status, preserving a beneficial relation with the supernatural, and guarding the tribe's material welfare.

⁵⁶ It is probable that this function of policing societies was widespread in the Plains, though as a feature of society activities it seems to have escaped the notice of ethnologists who did the field work on Plains societies.

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