Swampy Cree/Trader Relations, 1684-1840

The problem for this paper arises out of the broader question of ethnic stratification, specifically that characterizing intergroup relations in The Pas Manitoba. Despite the contention of the Durkheim positivists that modern social settings can be analyzed only in terms of currently operative variables (Bellah 1964:89), it seems clear that the present-day interethnic relations have evolved out of prior circumstances; ultimately beginning with the "Protohistoric" period of indirect contact, followed by the "Early" and Competitive" trade eras (as per Bishop and Ray 1976:134).

As a prologue to a proposed master's thesis dealing with the question of ethnic stratification in The Pas, this paper will be concerned with the initial sequence of intergroup relations in the environs of the Pas from first contacts of the Swampy Cree with Europeans at York Factory beginning in 1684 up to the introduction of a second agent of contact upon the establishment of a mission at The Pas in 1840 which has been examined by Pettipas (1972).

The purpose of this paper is therefore twofold: first, to delineate the pattern of initial contact history in the area; secondly, to test the theories of Lieberson (1972) and Barth and Noel (1972) with historical data on intergroup relations. As scholars such as Schermerhorn (1970:195) and Hodgen (1974:15) have pointed out, it does not necessarily follow that a theory applicable to modern societies automatically explains historic situations which may lack the structural characteristics requisite for the validity of the theory in question. The predictive power of these theories in historical contexts must be tested.

Barth and Noel (1972:333-4) stress the need to distinguish among the explanations for emergence, stability, adaptation and change in ethnic differentiation. These authors identify four major frames of reference, or "perceptual contexts", used to analyze interethnic relations: the "Race-Cycle Framework", the "Consensus Framework", the "Interdependence Framework", and the "Conflict Framework".
Traditional interpretations of initial Indian-European relations have either implicitly or explicitly adopted the "Conflict" approach. In brief, Barth and Noel (1972:343-4) characterize the "Conflict Framework" as the approach that identifies the goals of the interacting social units to be incompatible or mutually exclusive.

Basing their interpretations on the work of Pitt-Rivers (1927), scholars such as Bailey (1937) and Wissler (1929) assert that cross-cultural contact ipso facto occasions conflict. In a separate conclusion to his earlier work on contact with the Eastern Algonkians, Bailey (1938:264) states:

...when a people migrate into an already inhabited area, a conflict almost inevitably arises between the culture of the immigrants and that of the indigenous population. The result of such a conflict may account both in intensity and magnitude to nothing less than an economic and social revolution.

In his analysis of contact in the Canadian West Stanley (1936) also asserts that the "clash" of "primitive" with civilized cultures is endemic to contact situations. As evidenced by his more recent work, Stanley (1978) still continues to support the interpretation that conflict is inevitable.

E. M. Larrabee has proposed a model of Indian-European cultural interaction which also places heavy emphasis on conflict. Larrabee (1976:39) argues that the reason for widespread similarity in patterns of Indian-European contact lies in the conflict between different "cultural themes". It is this conflict which, according to Larrabee, provides the major impetus for movement through his proposed sequence of relations.

However, it must be pointed out that the "cultural themes" Larrabee identified for Euro-Americans are those of "yeoman farmers", not those of fur traders. "Emphasis on economically successful farming", the importance of land ownership, and the obligations of "Christian charity" (Larrabee 1976:20-1) are not elements of the "Early" and "Competitive" era fur traders' "themal complex". Thus, the very basis of Larrabee's model is called into question once it is applied to the fur trade in Western Canada as opposed to its context on the Atlantic slope. It might well be argued (below) that major themal complexes of Indian and trader were in fact more complimentary than conflicting.
The more general, but similar, conflict models presented by Blalock (1967:76-7) and Price (Lieberson 1972:41) are both based on contact with expansionist European agriculturalists and not traders. The conflict interpretations mesh closely with Lieberson's description of the results of contact in a "migrant superordination" situation. Most of the above authors would tend to agree with Lieberson's (1972:41) description:

When the population migrating to a new contact situation is superior in technology (particularly weapons) and more tightly organized than the indigenous group, the necessary conditions for maintaining migrants' political and economic institutions are usually imposed on the indigenous population.

This situation of migrant dominance according to Lieberson is likely to result in early conflict, as migrants begin to interfere with the natives' established order. In this situation natives have no alternative but to submit to migrant dominance.

On the other hand, a contact situation characterized by "indigenous superordination" occasions less conflict in the early stages of contact and migrants demonstrate the capacity (and willingness) to become integral parts of the ongoing social order.

In his review of recent trends in ethnohistory, Spores (1980:590) has indicated a need for ethnohistorians to take greater care in the application of conflict theory. In order to develop an alternative approach to the conflict analysis of Indian-European relations it is necessary to examine these relations in light of the theoretical outlines of "Race", or interethnic, relations provided by Lieberson and Barth and Noel. Barth and Noel (1972) believe that the Race-Cycle Framework best explains the sequence of emergence and stabilization of interethnic relations. This perceptual context is basically an evolutionary, processural model; i.e. evolution in the "general" sense (Service 1962) rather than the "specific", unilinear approach as illustrated by such schemes as Park's contact-competition-accommodation-assimilation cycle (Barth and Noel 1972:335). The Race-Cycle Framework...

In essence, proposes that variations in the precontact characteristics of the groups coming into contact combine with variations in patterns of initial contact to produce predictable variations in the initial structure of ethnic differentiation" (Barth and Noel 1972:77).
Barth and Noel (1972:336) indicate that there are five theoretical outcomes of contact: 1) exclusion (encompassing expulsion and annihilation); 2) symbiosis (stable, beneficial exchange between members of distinct sociopolitical systems); 3) ethnic stratification (super/subordination within a single political system); 4) pluralism (equalitarian integration of distinct ethnic groups within a common political and economic system); and 5) assimilation (fusion of distinct groups into an undifferentiated society). Again, the traditional interpretations of Indian-nonIndian relations have stressed the outcomes of exclusion, stratification, or assimilation.

In terms of the Race-Cycle Framework these outcomes are determined by the action of the following variables. The pre-contact variable most often discussed is the "complementarity" of the cultures. Other important factors involved are sociocultural complexity (i.e. "scale") and pattern of migration (i.e. type, causes, characteristics, size) (Barth and Noel 1972:337). The occurrence of ethnocentrism, competition and relative power differential are also important factors in the structuring of the contact situation. Barth and Noel (1972:337) argue that if either ethnocentrism or competition is weak, or if differences in power are small, then the outcome will be equalitarian. On the other hand, if all three factors are present to a marked degree, the outcome will be inequalitarian resulting in conflict.

Therefore, in light of the above, it will be argued below that, rather than a situation of migrant superordination, what obtained west of Hudson Bay among the Swampy Cree during the emergent sequence of interethnic relations is a situation of "indigenous superordination" in a setting of "symbiosis". As Hoover (1980:53-6) indicates, it is necessary to operationalize variables involved in the hypothesis. Indigenous superordination will be indicated by evidence dealing with sociocultural, political and economic dominance. In order to operationalize the concept of symbiosis as envisioned by Barth and Noel it will be necessary to demonstrate the operation of distinct Swampy Cree-European sociopolitical systems, and the
existence of stable, mutually beneficial exchange between the
two distinct systems. This exchange will be examined on the basis
of Sahlins' (1972) scheme of reciprocity.

The above theoretical outline will be tested by using his-
torical data from the published journals and narratives of those
Europeans in contact with the Swampy Cree (Kilistinon, Maskegon,
Nahetheway, or Basquea Indians etc.) of The Pas area from 1684
when York Factory was established to 1840 when a Church Missionary
Society mission was begun at The Pas. These parameters were
selected in order to enclose this study within manageable limits.
The restriction to published works has produced a significant
bias toward Hudson's Bay Company sources. Therefore, further
archival work with French and Canadian sources will need to be
done in order to gain a more balanced picture.

A further limitation of this study arises from the circum-
scribed area chosen for most attention. This area includes the
centres of Cumberland House and The Pas (variously Faskoyac,
Pasquayah, Basquea etc.), being the two major anchor points for
historical data in Swampy Cree territory. For Europeans at least,
this seems to be a natural area and is identified in two different
contexts by Franklin (1923:59) and Ray (1974:109) as the
"Cumberland District", extending approximately one hundred and
fifty miles in each direction. The Time period specified deals
with the exclusive fur trade contact period, avoiding the com-
plicating factor of missionization after 1840.

The earliest identification of the Cree as such arises from
archaeology. Hlady (1960:25) indicates that there is a possible
connection of the Cree with the Laurel Culture of south-eastern
Manitoba dated A.D. 500 to 1000.

The first documented contact with the Cree is recorded
during Henry Hudson's ill-fated voyage to James Bay in 1611.
Andrew Graham (1969:204) identifies the single hunter who traded
with Hudson as a member of the Oueeshepow Nation (Eastern Cree)
who, during Graham's stay on the Bay (1769-91), still had an
oral tradition concerning this meeting. J. S. Dragge (1748:181-2)
reports on this first haggling session:

Then the Master shewed him, for which he [the Indian]
would have given him one of his Deer Skins; but the
Master would have both: which he had but not willingly.
prehistoric cultures of archee materials
2000 BP — on fairly sparse evidence —
Also — is this Cree “society”, a “physical type”
from post, the “” or language — or what?
You have to be very careful when you do
this & very specific what you mean
by “Cree” or whoever.

— Dale Russell has some new ideas on
who & where Cree were — if he ever
finishes his MA! — We’ll hear about it.
The Jesuit Relations first mention contact with the Western Cree between James Bay and Lake Nipigon in 1658 (Ray 1974:12). A. J. Ray (1974:12) reports that, by the last decade of the seventeenth century, the Cree had been contacted by de Noyon as far to the southwest as Rainy Lake and by Kelsey as far to the northwest as the Saskatchewan River.

During the hiatus of Hudson’s Bay Company travel into the hinterland after 1691, the French under Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendryé (a.k.a. le Cevalier) had penetrated as far as Cedar Lake by 1741 (Burpee 1927:25) and had established Fort Paskoyac at The Pas by 1748 (Hendry 1907:312). Thereafter, the Swampy Cree of The Pas area experienced regular contact up to 1760 when the Conquest crisis forced the French to withdraw.

Once York Factory was established by the British Company in 1684, the Swampy Cree were also regular visitors Bayside, continuing this contact throughout the period of French control 1696-1716 (Jeremie 1926:9-10).

In an attempt to counter French competition in the hinterland of York Factory in the eighteenth century, the H. B. C. sent Anthony Hendry inland through Swampy Cree territory in 1754 (Hendry 1907:323) and thereafter Company servants were sent inland yearly to encourage the trade among the Cree and other hinterland groups. Unfortunately, the fifty-three men charged with this task between the trips of Hendry in 1774 and Matthew Cocking in 1772 were “illiterate” according to Graham, and accounts of their relations with the Swampy Cree are obscure (Tyrrell 1934:12; Graham 1969:291n.). For example, Isaac Batt and six servants spent the winter of 1765-66 inland among the Cree (Graham 1969:333) but little if any documentation is available.

After the Conquest the Hudson’s Bay Company’s new competitors from Canada were beginning to infiltrate the York Factory hinterland by 1767. James Finlay wintered in Swampy Cree territory on the Saskatchewan in 1768 and Thomas Corry followed in 1771-2 at Cedar Lake, spending 1772-3 at Pasquia itself (Isham 1949:12). Returning from his 1772-3 trip inland, Matthew Cocking reported to the Company extensive penetration by the Canadians; information which eventually led to Samuel Hearne’s mission to establish Cumberland House in 1774. This was the first permanently occupied establishment in Swampy Cree territory and it marked
an ever-increasing flow of traders and explorers such as Henry the Elder in 1775 and Franklin in 1819.

If Swampy Cree-European relations occasioned by these contacts were indeed characterized by Lieberson's "indigenous superordination" model, then the tendency of sociocultural, political and economic dominance must be determined.

In the case of Indian-European relationships on the Atlantic slope, scholars such as Jaenen (1976) have recently established that, contrary to the previously unquestioned assumption of European cultural dominance, neither Native people nor Europeans were entirely convinced of it. Jaenen argues that, although they recognized the superiority of material culture, Indians did not necessarily value other elements of European culture. On the other hand, many Europeans were acculturating to Native norms, much to the dismay of colonial governments and missionaries.

In Swampy Cree relations with Europeans, trader-moralists such as Harmon (1957:45) and Cockey (1969:29n.) were similarly distressed to find that the Europeans were imitating Indians, not the other way around. It is important to remember that the agents of contact were not all intellectual Jesuits, educated gentlemen-traders, or scientist-explorers. The many, often nameless and faceless, labourers from the poor parishes of the Orkneys, the slums of London, or the outlying cantons of Quebec had no pretensions to cultural superiority to the Indians. Indeed, they often shared a similar non-scientific or "superstitious" ethos.

French Canadian and Scot labourers were often depreciated for their credulity and willingness to accept the ritual practices of the Cree. In 1785, while travelling through Cree territory, David Thompson (1916:74) describes his men from the north of Scotland as "staunch believers in ghosts, fairies and such like folk", whereas an accompanying Indian was able to disabuse the men of a superstitious explanation of the disappearance of their axes (the act of a wolverine). On another occasion Thompson's men are convinced by a shaking tent performance à la Houdini by a Cree by the name of Isepesawan:

...my men were at a loss what to think, or say. the Natives smiled at their incredulity; at length they
consoled themselves by saying, the Devil himself had untied him (Thompson 1916:90-1).

Thompson (1916:123-5) also reports that his French Canadian voyageurs were "more strangely foolish than the Indians" in believing (as did the Cree) that his esoteric astronomical activities allowed him to predict the future or to call up a wind.

Many fur traders readily acknowledged superior Indian knowledge and skills, particularly in the realm of the environment and woodcraft (Thompson 1916:206). However, Graham (1969:163) also reports that he appreciated their skills in the medical realm upon receiving relief from headache and dizziness through an Indian-administered phlebotomy.

In addition, as Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1979) have documented, Indian patterns of marriage and affinal alliance were adopted by the European fur traders. Mariage à la façon du pays became the norm, and this Indian form of institution was maintained until missionaries began to penetrate the Northwest. Wintering at Cumberland House as late in the period under consideration as 1820, Dr. Richardson, a member of Franklin's party, observes that, rather than "uplifting" the Indians, the Europeans had found it...

...easier to descend to the Indian customs, and modes of thinking, particularly with respect to women (Franklin 1823:65).

Perhaps the most significant way in which the Indian culture dominated that of the European west of Hudson Bay was in the organization of the trade itself. The entire process was predicated on aboriginally-derived ceremony and the central importance of presents. It seems abundantly clear that adherence to Indian patterns was the sine qua non of successful exchange. Graham (1969:315ff.) and Isham (1949:49ff.) give us a detailed description of the formalized ceremonies accompanying the trade, involving calumet, ritual, oratory and gift exchange -- all important elements of Native practice. Preliminary to trade at York Factory gifts from the trader included clothing, bread, prunes, tobacco, the ubiquitous brandy, and even medicines. On their part, the Indian trade captains collected gifts of fur from each trapper and made a presentation of this "Puc'cu'tin'-ash'ia'win" to the governor. The value of the goods exchanged
was by no means equal, as Graham (1969:322) reports:

Besides all this which belongs to the capt. only, there is a return to be made for the Fuc'ca'tin'ash'a'win which though given as a present yet is only a mere form of kindness, because it is expected to be paid for; and as it belongs to the whole gang brandy and tobacco being the articles returned for it, the Governor always greatly exceeds its value as mark of his approbation of their conduct, and to encourage them to come down again in the next year.

The giving of small gifts (often liquor or tobacco) became an institution pre-facing nearly every contact with Indians inland as well, and few if any favours were asked, or transactions carried out, without the trader first supplying gratuities. On his way through Basquea July 31, 1772 Cocking met a man and his wife and records the following common scene:

I present my pipe to him & make him a small present, & by strength of a little liquor prevail on him to accompany us & hope to take him with me to the Fort next summer (Cocking 1908:99-100).

Hearné smoothed the way for his projected inland post among the Swampy Cree and Assiniboine in 1774 with gifts of tobacco and "other Trifling articles which I took with me for that purpose" (Tyrrell 1968:99, 111). This practice continued late into the one hundred and fifty year period under consideration (Franklin 1823:48).

Presents also played a significant role in the competition for Cree business. Cocking (1908:118) attributes the propensity of the Cree and Assiniboine to trade their most valuable furs at the Canadian François' post at Basquea to his liberal distribution of gifts of liquor and clothing. Indeed, the Swampy Cree used this perception among Company men to their own advantage. After distributing presents of his own and informing them of his intent, Hearne (Tyrrell 1968:104-5) reports:

Part of which seem'd to approve thereof, and others seem'd to doubt of our Success, saying that the Pedlors by this time has to much influence, and that I ware to late in coming. The Pedlors generosity is much talk'd of, and are say'd to give away great quanies of goods for nothing, and as for Knives, Steels, Worms, Flints, awls, Needles & Paint, these Indians would Persuade me that they Never Trade but are given gra-tice to those who ask for them. Guns, Kettles, Powder,
Shott, Cloth, Gartering &c they also tell me are much cheaper than at the Company's Standard. -- I cannot pretend to say anything to the Contrary at Present, but shall hereafter Endeavour to make myself better acquainted with the troth of this very extraordinary account.

In a letter of August 23, 1774 H. B. C. employee Joseph Hansons, writing about the difficult passage to Churchill, indicates the strength of the gift principle per se:

...it is surprising to think that any of the upland Indians comes down through such troubles when they are supplied in their own hunting Grounds by the Canada Traders: It being usual at your Honours Factorys to make the Leaders &c some trifling presents is the only Motive which invites them down with what few furrs they keep after trading with the Canada Traders... (Tyrrell 1934:240n.).

Presents of tobacco and brandy were distributed even to those who came to Cumberland House with nothing to trade (Tyrrell 1934:130, 173). Food was often given to the indigent (Graham 1969:318). The Indians consistently expected these gifts and were not equanimous about not receiving them as Harmon (1957:55) discovered after withholding gifts because of shortages.

It therefore seems clear that European traders had been maneuvered into the "primitive" system of Indian gift exchange. As Sahlins (1972:169) indicates, the gift was the "primitive way" of securing peaceful relations. Politically, traders had no choice but to be lavish with their presents if they were to solidify trade relations with the Indians. Europeans were bound by this Native cultural system regardless of how distasteful or "uneconomic" it might seem to seventeenth and eighteenth century mercantilists.

It might also be argued that the Swampy Cree, besides dominating the European in the sociocultural realm, were politically superordinate beyond demanding presents. Hendry and the Company servants travelling inland through Cree territory depended almost entirely on the Cree for guidance, diplomacy and indeed their very lives (Hendry 1907:330-1, 337).

In terms of their own political clout, Europeans such as Kelsey (1929:15-16) were not able to disuade the Cree from pursuing their war plans instead of hunting beaver, just as
Hearne was unsuccessful in preventing the Chipewyans from attacking the Eskimo. In fact, the latter was himself drawn in to the conflict against his wishes (Graham 1969:198). Neither did the French under la Vérendryé have much success in this diplomatic area. The Cree and Assiniboine continued to go to war and, as a result, they seemed to la Vérendryé to be carrying "more slaves than packages" (of furs) (Burpee 1927:381).

Ultimately, European traders had very little political influence with the Swampy Cree because they lacked the power to directly advance their interests on their own. Samuel Hearne was careful to vet his plans with the Swampy Cree and Assiniboine he met on his way inland in 1774 (Tyrrell 1968:99, 104-5, 111). Hearne reconsidered the prospects for a site for his post around Basquea, "...but did not Determine to build there till I had Consulted the Indian Chiefs..."

Europeans were in a rather weak political position, wintering inland, and depended on Indian leaders to protect their interests. Orkneyman Mitchell Oman reports to David Thompson (1916:320) his concern over his position at Hudson House among the Nahetheways in 1776:

...our situation was by no means pleasant, the Indians were very numerous, and although by far the greater part behaved well, and were kindly to us, yet amongst such a number there will always be bad men, and to protect ourselves from them we had to get a respectable chief to stay with, and assist us in trading, and prevent as much as possible the demands of these Men.

Indeed, fur traders inland occupied a very tenuous strategic position as the experience of Alexander Henry the Elder illustrates. On October 8, 1775 after joining with a large group of other traders (including such experienced traders as Pond, Cadotte and the Froebishers -- one hundred and thirty men all together), Henry's party was waylaid at Pasquayah village by Chatique (the Pelican), a headman of about thirty families of Swampy Cree (Henry 1969:254-61). Chatique invited the traders to his tent and demanded stiff tribute for allowing the party to pass, saying:

...that we must be well aware of his power to prevent our going further; that if we passed now, he could put us all to death on our return; and that under these circumstances, he expected us to be exceedingly liberal
in our presents; adding, that to avoid misunderstanding, he would inform us of what it was that he must have... He went on to say that he had before now been acquainted with white men, and knew that they promised more than they performed; that with the number of men which he had [about thirty], he could take the whole of our property, without our consent; and that therefore his demands ought to be regarded as very reasonable: that he was a peaceable man, and one that contented himself with moderate views, in order to avoid quarrels, -- finally, that he desired us to signify our assent to his proposition, before we quit our places (Henry 1969:260).

Henry's party decided that discretion was the better part of valour and acceded to the demands. As a final indignity, Chatique followed the departing traders in one canoe, and upon catching up to them, imperiously demanded another keg of rum. This too was granted and Catique left the Europeans to contemplate this object lesson in dominance.

Despite the fact that the French were generally well-regarded by the Indians, they too had to submit to the political dominance of the Swampy Cree. For example, when abandoning their establishment at the Conquest in 1760, the Basquea Indians refused to allow the French to burn their post, hoping that the British could thereby be attracted to replace them by ready-made buildings. (Graham 1969:261). In 1754, on being detained by la Corne's men from the French establishment at Basquea, Hendry reported to his Cree guide that the French wished to detain them. Attickashish (Little Deer) merely "...smiled and said they dared not" Hendry 1907:326). Despite Hendry's concern over the possibilities, Attickashish was quite aware that the French had no means to assert their authority in opposition to Indian wishes.

There are many references to the situation of physical danger at the hands of the Indians which faced the Europeans. As late in the period as 1804, Harmon (1957:xix) remarked that the Indians were a "constant source of anxiety and danger" to him. In fact, on a single journey in the Swan River Department three attempts were made to murder him.

The Cree found it politically possible to manipulate, plunder and even murder Europeans in their territory with seeming impunity. Graham (1969:263) explains that the Indians regarded
H. B. C. servants as slaves and that, therefore, when they had Company men at their mercy inland, they exploited them to the great detriment of the Company. Hearne's journal of 1774 records a prime example of this when on the 9th of October, seven canoes of Canadian traders arrived at the newly established Cumberland House. They had with them Company servant Robert Platt whom they had rescued. He had been hijacked by his Cree voyageurs, "crewilly" stripped of the goods he was conveying, and left on the shores of Lake Winnipeg with a "Tent of Strange Indians" from whom he also received "very unkind usage" (Tyrrell 1968:120).

In many cases the Canadians fared even worse (especially in the later stages of the period). Proebisher recounted that in the winter of 1774-5 the Canadian traders at Frog Portage (north of Cumberland House) had encountered severe starvation conditions. One of his men, who had been driven to the extremity of eating one of his dead comrades, was himself killed by the Cree. This action was in accord with their belief that cannibals became possessed by the dreaded Weetigo spirit. Here again, Europeans were obliged to submit to Indian cultural beliefs. The point is however that for the Europeans no recourse was possible, nor indeed contemplated (Tyrrell 1934:190).

In April 1779 Philip Turnor (Tyrrell 1934:225-9) reports that twenty-five tents of Indians attacked the Canidian establishment at Hudson House on the Saskatchewan, killing two traders. This was in retaliation for the poisoning of one Ke-pouche (a "troublesome" Indian). After supplying the Indians with forty-eight gallons of rum and offering all their remaining goods, the Canadians fled to the H. B. C. post nearby and all the Europeans withdrew downriver.

Even the French who were warmly regarded by the Indians (Cocking 1908:119-20) and to whom Indians were "strongly attached" (Hendry 1907:327), encountered serious problems. Jeremie (1926:39) recounts that in 1712 Crees killed five members of his small contingent who were on a hunting trip from Fort Bourbon (York Factory). The issue was the reluctance of the French to trade for powder and to share the proceeds of the hunt with the Indians. Unfortunately they camped near a party of natives who were starving and who had no powder, as I did not want to trade it, but wished to keep it as a safeguard for
my own life and the lives of my men. These natives, considering themselves dared by the recklessness way my men were shooting every kind of game, and feasting before their eyes without sharing anything, made a plot to kill them, and seize what they had (Jeremie 1926:39).

It is clear from the above therefore that the Cree were politically dominant over the Europeans during the first one hundred and fifty years of contact, particularly once the trader had left the relatively secure confines of Bayside forts. The Cree demanded tribute and plundered high- as well as low-ranking traders at will. They were able to impose their cultural standards on trade, sanctions for deviance such as cannibalism and hoarding, and revenge with seeming impunity. Europeans simply did not have sufficient power to oppose Cree political super-ordination.

One of the major assumptions underlying many traditional interpretations of Indian-European contact is that Native people quickly lost their economic self-sufficiency upon contact and became critically dependent upon trade goods for their survival (eg. Bailey 1938). This perception is beginning to be qualified through research by those such as Sloan (1979) who has demonstrated that the Chipewyan and lower Mackenzie groups were quite able to withdraw from the trade when it turned out to be not to their liking. They returned without significant disruption to a primary adaptation to caribou hunting.

In reality, it was the European trader who "depended" upon the Cree for guiding and diplomatic skills, production of provisions, as well as physical labour. In many cases it is abundantly clear that the Cree were economically dominant, by demanding presents, improved quality goods and by tough bargaining.

As tripmen, the Cree held the upper hand in the hinterland. They demanded and received high premiums for their efforts and felt no compunction about taking Company servants and goods well out of the way to suit their own purposes (see Tyrrell 1934:113). They often deserted their employer whenever they wished, however, the really telling point is that the Company had no alternative but to rehire the prodigal workers soon after, and without penalty (Tyrrell 1934:170, 173).

The journals are replete with references to Cree dominance
in the economic realm. Hendry's upland Cree guide Attickashish and Hearne's Ne-sin-e-kish were admitedly critical to the success of their enterprises, as was the Cree leader Wappenessew for the French (Hendry 1907:326, 346; Tyrrell 1934:97).

Hearne (Tyrrell 1934:118) points out that Company servants were by no means qualified to construct the necessary canoes, nor to handle them competently, while Dragge (1748:168) confirmed that there would be no winter movement without the Indian-made snowshoes. Hearne concludes after his stay at Cumberland House:

The very great dependance we have on the Natives at Present for canoes as well as their assistance in getting the Men and goods up, is not only attended with a very extraordinary expence but yearly exposes a large quantity of goods to the greatest danger of being totally lost, witness las Year.../200 gallons of brandy from one shipment/...these losses together with their payment not only runs away with all the Profit, but renders the Companys Servants the make game and laughingstock of every trader from Canady (Tyrrell 1934:193).

Traders wintering inland as well as those at York Factory itself depended on Indians for procuring the critical country provisions. In particular, the isolated sedentary inland settlements which were not adapted to following the game were often in conditions of severe want and had to call on "Providence" (read Indians) to bring them food. The dependence on the Cree for provisions obtained for travellers as late in the period as Franklin's (1823:57, 56) party. Graham (1969:294) admits that Company men were much inferior to the Cree in hunting skills and even in the use of firearms. It is clear from Hearne's journal of 1774-5 that his men would never have survived without the skills of two Home Indians, Nee-shue-wap-pay-a-thin and Patte-cow-wow, or the provisioning efforts of the local Cree (see Tyrrell 1934:126-7, 137, 147).

Many journal references point out that one of the major difficulties encountered by the H. B. C. (perhaps in contrast to the use of French voyageurs by the Canadians) was the seller's market for labour. As mentioned above, the Company often was forced to rehire the same untrustworthy workers who had just left them in the lurch. Hendry (1907:351-2), Cocking (1908:96), Hearne (Tyrrell 1934:99, 106, 169-70) and Turnor (Tyrrell 1934:202-8)
The trade balance cannot stand.

In the analysis, you see the different kinds of transactions. You see a number of them, and how they fit into general theory.
all report no end of problems with their Cree tripmen. It becomes obvious that the Europeans had no real power to control their employees.

The Cree seemed relatively secure in the control over their own working conditions. When a load seemed unnecessarily heavy to Indians carrying goods to Cumberland House in 1774, Hearne reported that they arbitrarily decided to send fifty-six pounds of duck shot back to York Factory (Tyrrell 1934:112). While agreeing to build extra canoes (although not as many as originally promised) at Cumberland House in the spring of 1775, Cree craftsmen refused to build them to specifications, much to Hearne's displeasure (Tyrrell 1934:150, 152, 157). Hearne evidences much frustration at the unprofitability occasioned by the dominant position the Indians enjoyed as a result of their monopoly on the skilled labour necessary for the prosecution of the trade.

The journals indicate that the Cree tripmen often demanded to be given extra treats of alcohol, and it seems as if their importunacy could not be refused even though Company servants recognised that drinking caused great delay and inefficiency. Indians arriving at the posts often demanded the same consideration (Thompson 1916:125). Turnor confirms Cocking's (1908:118) earlier observation by stating:

The Honourable Hudsons Bay Company may think it imprudent to give the Indians liquor but without it, it is impossible to get them to do anything...

The Cree seemed to be in complete control of the labour and trade processes. On his first attempt to bring the Cree and Assiniboine downriver to York Factory in 1775, Hendry (1907:352) ran into difficulties in attempting to get his party past the Canadian post at Basqueau:

The Indians drank so much I could not get them away; nor was I capable to prevent them from trading their furs.

The foregoing example is just one of many cited in the journals where the Cree exhibit their independence in trading. During the period of H. B. C. competition with the French and
later the Canadians, the Cree were able to trade wherever and whenever their best interests or whims directed, and Europeans could exert little or no influence upon their choices other than by engaging in the dispensation of presents. It was common for the Cree to play the French or the Candians against the Company. (See Cocking 1908:100; Isham 1949:52, 86; Tyrrell 1934:104-5). Hearne (Tyrrell 1934:160) states:

I have endeavoured as much as possible to learn the Standard the Canadians trade at, but to no Purpose, those Indians who are attach’d to them inform me they trade their goods at less than half the Compy’s Standard...

The Cree held their own in the stiff bargaining and cutthroat competition of the trade. In his "Discourse" on Indian trading behaviour, Isham (1949:49ff.) paints a picture of the insistently demanding Indian trader, confirming Ray’s (1978:15) conclusion that Indians were in fact strongly consumer oriented. Using nearly identical language to Graham (1969:153), Isham (1949:81) concludes:

...they are cunning and sly to the Last Degree, the more you give, the more they crave, -- the generality of them are Loth to part with any thing they have, if at any time they give they except Double Satisfaction.

Dr. Richardson (Franklin 1923:83) confirms that as late in the period as 1823, the Cree of the Cumberland House area were still resistant to the alteration of the standard of trade. Graham (1969:275) recognized that Company attempts to manipulate the standard of trade would not have the desired effect on Indians. Indeed, they had only limited desires and any increase in the price of fur resulted in fewer furs being traded (see also Ray 1974).

In addition to the dominance demonstrated above, the Cree showed themselves not beyond skipping out from under accrued debts by simply moving to another post. Other than sending men to visit their camps to collect, the Company was powerless to do anything about it (Graham 1969:266; Franklin 1923:83-4).

The Cree were also firmly ensconced in their middleman position and were able to ignore Hendry's exhortations to "Hap wolves" (Hendry 1907:344). Neither could they be persuaded to take up the Company's part against their own interests as mid-
dlemen. On the 15th of May 1775 while staying with one hundred and twenty-seven tents of Blackfoot, Hendry (1907:351) complains about his Cree guides:

I did my Endeavour to get some of them [Blackfoot] down to the Fort; but all in vain; and altho' the [Cree] Indians promised the Chief Factor at York Fort to talk to them strongly on that Subject, they never opened their mouths; and I have great reason to believe that they are a stoppage: for if they could be brought down to trade, the others would be obliged to trap their own Furs: which at present two thirds of them do not.

It seems to be quite clear from the above, therefore, that the Cree held significant economic dominance over the Europeans during the one hundred and fifty year period under consideration.

First, there was the incidence of gift exchanges which were forced on the Europeans. In Sahlins (1972:174) terms these were not free, or "pure", gifts, but what are referred to as "prestations", i.e. "those exchanges, undertaken in seemingly voluntary guise,... but in essence strictly obligatory, on pain of private or open warfare". Since "primitive" trade is fraught with risk, uneasiness and suspicion, reciprocal prestations are introduced to maintain peace in potentially hostile relations (Sahlins 1972:302). European traders simply could not expect to avoid these obligations if trade with the Cree was to be maintained. Despite Company protestations that the value of gifts and other gratuities was very much out of line, it must be recognised, as does Sahlins (1972:302), that "The economic ratio is a diplomatic manoeuvre". Traders were simply responding to their subordinate position (economically and politically) vis-a-vis the Cree.

Although there were some examples of Sahlins' "general" reciprocity in Cree-European relations, especially in the exchange of food during times of scarcity (see Tyrrell 1934:127, 130)--it is unknown whether some type of affinal relationship played a role here or not----much of the Cree-European exchange could be classified as "balanced" or "negative" in Sahlins' terms. Actual balanced exchange through the trading window was characterized by more or less precise equivalency. In this inherently unstable process, unstable since no lasting obligations to recip-
rocate are established (Salisbury 1968:118) if social relations depend on the continual flow of goods. As noted above, Jeremie (1926:39) soon discovered that a cessation of this flow led to the disastrous breakdown of relations.

The Cree also exploited their dominant position to engage in "negative" reciprocity /i.e. haggling, attempts to get something for nothing, theft etc. (Sahlins 1972:195) with the traders. As Pith has indicated, "economic relations rest on moral foundations", yet morality is situational and sectorally organized in "primitive" societies (Sahlins 1972:199-200). There existed no real obligation for the Cree to act "morally" toward European traders who remained outside the boundaries of kinship. Therefore, they felt no compunction in surreptitiously sponging liquor from Hearne, nor in completely plundering Platt (see Tyrrell 1934:120, 171, 174). Thus, in consideration of Sahlins' model we have an ingroup--outgroup relation more than an internal kinship based system of reciprocity (Sahlins 1972:199).

Despite the incidence of "negative" reciprocity, however, it must be acknowledged that exchange was indeed beneficial to both sides. On their part, the Cree's relations with the Europeans and acquisition of new material goods combined with the benefits of a middleman position allowed them to expand their territory to the detriment of their old enemies, the Chipewyan and the Blackfoot (Hlady 1960:26).

The stability of this exchange was quite remarkable given all the militating factors involved: for example fierce European competition, epidemic diseases, vast distances and cultural differences. Indeed, on the last point, cultural "complimentarity" might be a more accurate perception than one of cultural conflict. Aboriginal Cree technology, knowledge, labour and skills meshed quite satisfactorily with those of the European in order to produce a functional economic system lasting throughout the period.

Besides forcing the structuring of the trade to be on their terms, the Cree also dominated the employer-employee relationship by accepting wage labour only on their own terms and by demonstrating their power to engage in activities of "negative" reciprocity.
In conclusion, it seems as if the Race-Cycle Framework as presented by Barth and Noel has value over and above that of the Conflict Framework for explaining the emergence of relations between the Swampy Cree and European traders. In terms of the factors involved in the patterns of initial contact identified earlier, the following can be stated. The European migration pattern of a limited number of males did not threaten Cree dominance, and the institution of mariage à la façon du pays allowed the strengthening of the integrating relations not present to a similar degree on the Atlantic slope where large numbers and the migration of more sexually balanced population precluded a significant number of affinal relationships. The motivation of European migration to Western Canada during this period was not the inherently contentious desire for lebensraum, but the culturally complimentary quest for furs. Both groups benefitted from the economic exchange (although not from the disease exchange for example). In terms of Berreman's (1978:75) conception of social scale, the fur trade, despite common interpretations to the contrary, would seem to have an impact quantitatively and qualitatively less significant than agricultural society on Cree "roles", "situations", "belief systems", and "social interactions". In addition, many of the trader-migrants into Western Canada were very young and, as a consequence, relatively adaptable to the prevailing socio-cultural conditions (Nicks 1980:112). They were more easily able to adapt themselves (some believed much too far) to the "customs of the country".

In Barth and Noel's scheme, the presence of ethnocentrism, competition and relative power are seen as critical factors in the development of interethnic relations. First, although ethnocentrism was inherent to the situation and has been well documented on both sides (Jaenen 1976) many traders such as Harmon (1947:43), Thompson (1916:109), Jeremie (1926:32) and Graham (1969:144, 320) did admire the Cree and argued for their humanity in opposition to the evaluation of them as "savages". Indians were positively evaluated in many spheres.

(Secondly, as Loxley (n.d.) has asserted, the competition in the Indian-trader relationship was not over fur per se, but
for control of Indian labour. Given Sahlins’ (1972) analysis of the "original affluent society", Indian labour was not all that scarce to result in significant competition. Since hunters and gatherers have been shown to have relatively more leisure time as compared to people with other types of social organization, competition for labour with the Cree was not a significant consideration during the period in question.

Thirdly, it is clear from the above discussion that the balance of power rested with the Cree and not with the European.

Barth and Noel argue that such a situation (low ethnocentrism, competition and power differential) results in an equalitarian relationship characterized by limited conflict. Even though some traders were plagued by insistent haggling, or demands for presents, or were even murdered by the Cree, Europeans did not have the power to retaliate. Therefore, conflict escalating into reciprocal violence was largely prevented.

In summary, the "Race-Cycle Framework" identifies the following significant variables in the emergence of interethnic relations. First is the precontact characteristics of the groups in contact. Second is the variation in the patterns of initial contact including dominance patterns, cultural complimentarity, scale, patterns of migration, ethnocentrism, competition and relative power. A state of "symbiosis" occurs if separate socio-political systems mutually benefit each other.

In the case of Swampy Cree-European contact we have an equalitarian band level hunting and gathering society (Smith forthcoming) meeting with a hierarchically organized mercantilist society (Nicks 1980). However, despite the competitive advantage which many have assumed to be held by the more complex society, the traders were not (in Lieberson’s terms) able to impose on the Swampy Cree the conditions for maintaining the European social order. During the time period from first contact up until contact with missionaries began, the traders were forced to adapt (because of their small numbers, lack of relative power and indeed because of their goals) to the existing socio-cultural, political and economic systems of the Cree. Therefore, the conditions for Lieberson’s model of "indigenous superordination" characterized Swampy Cree-European relations. As a result, con-
flict (at least as compared with that evidenced by "migrant dominance" on the Atlantic slope) was limited because the various cultural themes were not in conflict. In fact Indian and European cultures ended up being complimentary in a number of ways.

This has been a preliminary examination of the emergence of interethnic relations in The Pas. Conditions of indigenous superordination are indicated. However, it is not altogether clear that the emergent outcome of relations was indeed one of symbiosis (at least exclusively). Some attention should be paid to the characteristics of the "pluralism" outcome. Judd (1980) has posited that the fur trade should be considered as a single social field (as is by definition requisite for "pluralism" vis-a-vis "symbiosis" defined by distinct sociopolitical systems). Since "pluralism" does not preclude conflict, this outcome (or some synthesis) might better be able to explain the occurrence of such conflict as did occur between Cree and European.

In addition, more data is needed from archival sources in order to produce a more finely tuned analysis in consideration of the "Protohistoric", "Early" and Competitive" trade eras. It might now be posited that the late Competitive era (post 1780?) saw a shift from indigenous superordination to migrant super-ordination as evidenced by the increase in conflict at this time.

At any rate, it seems necessary to reconsider the assumption of early migrant superordination during the emergent stages of contact west of Hudson Bay among the Swampy Cree.
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