

The Dakota at Mille Lacs:

A comparative analysis of the archaeology, historical sources, and oral traditions from the early contact period.

Kevin L. Callahan

"We were Caesars, being nobody to contradict us."
- Pierre Esprit Radisson

"We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth, as 'wild.' Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was the land 'infested with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it 'wild' for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the 'Wild West' began" (Lame Deer 1994:xxvii).

Introduction

In this paper I will compare the archaeology, historical sources, and oral traditions from the earliest contact period and preliminarily explore the question of what the eastern Dakota of Minnesota might have thought about their early contacts with the French. The archaeology, historical sources, and oral traditions sometimes support each other, sometimes contradict each other, and sometimes have nothing to say about particular research questions.

The early events in Minnesota reconfirm that “all politics are local” in the sense that when an expanding complex society comes in contact with an indigenous group, the paramount concern for the indigenous group may not be with a threat from the expansion of the complex society but with threats from their immediate indigenous neighbors and the creation of an imbalance in the balance of power and equality of weapons. In areas of endemic warfare, a trading “ripple effect” and a kind of economic dependency can be created by contact with a trader of superior weapons.

Jacob Brower, an archaeologist working in the early twentieth century, did several excavations in the Mille Lacs area and published two books on the archaeology of the Mille Lacs area. University of Minnesota archaeologists, such as A. E. Jenks, Lloyd Wilford, and Elden Johnson, have also published reports on excavations in the area. These archaeological resources are available to be compared with the historical versions of events that took place during the early historic period.

In addition, there is an opportunity to compare oral traditions of the Ojibwe, recorded by William Warren in 1852, with the archaeological record. Warren was part Ojibwe and part white. He had an ancestor who was a Mayflower pilgrim, and although he grew up among the Ojibwe, and spoke Ojibwe, he seems to have believed in the inevitable dominance of European civilization (Warren 1984).

On the recommendation of Professor Tim Dunnigan, I contacted Angela Cavender Wilson, a researcher on the oral traditions of the Dakota, who informed me that she could not think of any stories that addressed Dakota attitudes towards the French, but that did not mean they did not exist. She recommended contacting an elder, Curt Campbell, at Prairie Island.

The folklore of the Dakota may provide an indirect link to Dakota lifeways in the woodland areas at the time of contact since some of the beliefs surrounding their truth telling oaths may reflect their experiences with Spirit Rock Island, a boulder island that appears to move when the barometric pressure changes, from which Spirit Lake takes its name. Spirit Lake was the Dakota name for what the French later called Mille Lacs. The small Mdewakantonwon ("The dwellers at Spirit Lake") band of Dakota are today the owners of Mystic Lake and Little Six casinos in Shakopee, Minnesota.

This case study also indicates that a complex society (in this case the Kingdom of France) was not a monolithic entity but was composed of a variety of individuals with sometimes competing and conflicting agendas. Traders and missionaries sought the favor of the French king, but they occasionally disregarded the King's orders. For example, Du Luth was once accused of disregarding an order not to enter new lands and trade, requiring an amnesty. LaSalle and Margry thought Hennepin and Du Luth exaggerated their Minnesota adventures, and Hennepin protested that he was being unfairly characterized by his contemporaries. Du Luth's account generally is consistent with Hennepin's, but Du Luth portrayed himself in a very favorable light (Hennepin 1880:371,374). The following excerpt from a letter supposedly from La Salle to the Abbe Bernon gives an idea of the charges and countercharges historians must untangle regarding the truthfulness of the historical sources from this period.

I have deemed it seasonable to give you a narrative of the adventures of this canoe, because I have no doubt it will be spoken of, and if you desire to confer with Father Louis Hempin [sic.], Recollect, who has gone back to France, it is necessary to know him somewhat, for he will not fail to exaggerate everything; it is his character; and to myself, he has written me, as though he had been all ready to be burned, although he was not even in danger; but he believes that it is honorable for him to act in this way, and he speaks more in keeping with what he wishes than what he knows (LaSalle 1682; cited in Hennepin 1880:371).

A multi-vocal anthropological approach should not necessarily rely solely upon the historical accounts of French explorers to describe the interactions between an expanding, large scale society, and relatively smaller-scale, indigenous people. Less literate peoples can sometimes communicate, through oral traditions or patterning in their material culture, about the changes they were experiencing in relation to their interactions with larger and more materially complex societies.

Geography

In the 17th century, the eastern Dakota had settlement sites at Mille Lacs Lake in east central Minnesota. The outlet of this large shallow lake was initially an excellent site for wild rice production, maple sugaring, fishing, and hunting wildfowl. Mille Lacs is, of course, legendary with fishermen for its “muskie” fishing. Brower reported that in April 1901 at Outlet Bay, Mille Lacs, “during the spawning season, more than 600 maskalonge were speared, some of which measured four feet in length, and they were hauled away in wagon-load quantities” (Brower 1901:48). The Mille Lacs area is forested and possesses a convenient waterway (the “roads” of North American prehistory) in the form of the Rum River which connects Mille Lacs with the Mississippi, and thus the Minnesota river valley. The shallow lakes or wide spots on the flowing Rum River (the outlet of Mille Lacs Lake) were perfect places for wild rice to grow. This put the settlements relatively near the border of the eastern woodlands and the prairie, where the eastern Dakota traveled to hunt bison. The earliest French called the Dakota the “nation of the beef” referring to their hunting buffalo. The French referred to the Indians as “wild men” and the Dakota referred to the white men as “spirits.”

Chronology

The first contacts between the French and the Dakota occurred during the last half of the 17th century. These were written up in narrative accounts about the travels of Radisson and Grosseillers, and later Father Louis Hennepin. Various historically important letters were also written by Du Luth and La Salle. Hennepin’s book was considered a “best seller” for the time in France and in several other countries. Pierre Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law Medard Chouart (later known as Sier des Groseilliers) were the first white men to reach Minnesota’s Prairie Island, in the Mississippi, around 1655 and later traveled to Mille Lacs c. 1659 (Brower 1901:83). Radisson never mentioned years in his writings and

rarely mentioned months. His second expedition to Minnesota may have been in 1660 or 1662, as reconstructed by different historians. The Jesuit Relations which kept track of yearly events has been used to estimate the years described in Radisson's narratives.

A year before Hennepin's travels, Du Luth visited the Dakota at Mille Lacs (1679) and had a council with them where he described the advantages of trade with the French (Upham 1908:216). "On the 2nd of July 1679 [Du Luth] caused his Majesty's arms to be planted in the Great Village of the Nadoussioux called Kathio" (Brower 1901:47).

La Salle sent Michael Accault, Anthony Augelle, and Father Louis Hennepin from Fort Crevecour (Illinois) on the last day of February 1680 to explore the Upper Mississippi (Upham 1908:215). Hennepin, who was literate, later wrote that they were captured by a war party of 120 Dakota, in 33 canoes, on their way to fight the Miami on April 11, 1680. Hennepin portaged around St. Anthony Falls (which he named) by traveling for about 800 paces through what is now the east bank campus of the University of Minnesota. After his release by Du Luth and some French soldiers at Mille Lacs (Du Luth claimed Hennepin was his elder brother), Hennepin published the *Description of Louisiana* in 1683 (Shea cited in Brower 1901:48). According to Edward Neill "the Dakotas began to be led away from the rice grounds of the Mille Lacs region" by the French trading posts built by Nicholas Perrot and Le Seur (Neill 1852; cited in Warren 1984:157). According to the Ojibwe oral tradition recorded by William Warren in 1852 the Dakota were driven from Mille Lacs in what is called the Battle of Kathio (Kathio is a corruption by a Dutch printer of the Dakota word "Isanti") (1984:157). "According to the Indian mode of counting time [the peace that was achieved after this battle] occurred four generations ago, or about the year 1695" (Warren 1984:163).

Le Sueur built a trading post on the Mississippi on an island between Lake Pepin and the mouth of the St. Croix (Warren 1984:163-64). According to Winchell (1911) this trading post was built in 1695 at Prairie Island in the Mississippi.

Background

The terms Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota refer to dialects of the Siouan language and are also groups of people. Lakota, for example, is generally spoken in the western part of South Dakota (The Oglala on the Pine Ridge Reservation are an example). Nakota is spoken in the eastern part of South Dakota, Montana, and Canada, and Dakota is generally spoken in Minnesota. The original homeland for the eastern Dakota people was in Minnesota and in the Mille Lacs area. As Lloyd Wilford noted: "Father Louis Hennepin visited the Sioux at Mille Lacs Lake in 1680 and reported that it was the sacred lake of these Indians and the focal point of the whole nation, from which the tribes and bands spread out over a wide area" (Wilford 1944:329). The dialects changed as the Dakota people moved west. The word "Sioux" is thought by many to be a disparaging term created by the Ojibwe meaning "snakes" and is generally not now preferred by Dakota people for that reason, although it so permeated the historical literature that it is still used in terms like the "Siouan language family." The eastern Dakota were woodland people who used canoes, and undertook wild rice harvesting, fishing, and some bison hunting. Bison could live in both the plains and forests. The only crop raised at that time at Mille Lacs was tobacco. The later, and perhaps more familiar, plains culture resulted in part from the wars with the Ojibwe and partly from the Dakota Conflict in 1862. The latter event was one of bloodiest Indian Wars in American history with about 500 white casualties. The number of Dakota casualties is not known. Subsequently most of the Dakota fled or were forcibly removed from Minnesota.

The early French historical accounts from the last half of the 17th century suggest that the Dakota were interested in trading for French material culture in the form of guns and gunpowder and various metal objects. The French were interested in furs and intentionally or inadvertently created an interest in trade by having earlier supplied firearms to the Ojibwe. During this period, the Dakota were being affected by the movement into Minnesota of the Ojibwe who were moving westward partly in response to pressure from the powerful and dangerous Iroquois Confederacy further to the east. The Dakota were behind in the 17th century North American “arms race” which gave the Ojibwe a lethal advantage during the periodic conflicts which erupted during this period of endemic warfare.

In writing about the Battle of Kathio, William Warren’s recording of the Ojibwe oral history of the battle emphasized the Ojibwe use of European weapons and gunpowder to drive the Dakota out of the area. At one point during the battle the Ojibwe were reported to have dropped bags of gunpowder onto the fires of Dakota families who had retreated into partly underground dwellings. The bags of gunpowder exploded killing the house’s inhabitants. This battle, so vividly described by Warren, and Warren’s conclusion that the Dakota were driven from the Mille Lacs area, has since been questioned by some historians who have argued that the reason most of the Dakota left Mille Lacs was because of food resource depletion following an increase in population and a desire to be closer to the French trading post on the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota.

A brief overview of Dakota society in the late 17th century.

Radisson indicated that the great Sioux town he visited had 7000 men (Brower 1901:47). Du Luth said that he found Hennepin at Mille Lacs “with about 1000 or 1100 souls” (Du Luth 1685; cited in Hennepin 1880:376). According to Warren, “The Dakotas occupied the lake in two large villages, one being located on Cormorant [Shaub - aush -

kung] Point and the other at the outlet of the lake [in plain view of each other]. A few miles below this last village, they possessed another considerable village [at Aquipaguetin Island] on a smaller lake, connected with Mille Lac by a portion of Rum River” (Warren cited in Brower 1901:49).

According to Elden Johnson there had been a population increase due to increasing sedentism, possible through the availability of wild rice and probably development of a way to dry the rice for long term storage.

[T]he number of late prehistoric sites on or adjacent to Mille Lacs increases by several hundred percent over those of the Middle Prehistoric period. One of the major archaeological problems has been the analysis of site data to interpret this phenomenon of apparent population growth and associated cultural dynamics. . . . Research results indicate that the major causal factor was a subsistence shift from a diffuse seasonal pattern to a focal subsistence pattern centered on the utilization of wild rice and bison. While not clearly represented in the archaeological inventory, the crucial factor allowing this shift was probably the development of a system of parching wild rice to dry it and allow for long term storage. That and the development of a systematic procurement organization produced a stable vegetable food supply (Johnson 1984:12).

Guy Gibbon has indicated that there were perhaps only 10,000 people in State of Minnesota during the contact period (Gibbon 1998).

Both the archaeology and historical accounts confirm that the Dakota were a hunting, gathering, and fishing society who hunted deer and bison, fished, and gathered wild rice as staples (Johnson 1984). Their one crop was tobacco (Bailey 1997). Hennepin gave his captors French tobacco and tobacco seeds with which they were very pleased -- reportedly because of its superiority to the local tobacco (Bailey 1997). The archaeological evidence makes it fairly easy to distinguish Dakota sites from Ojibwe sites since the Dakota made pottery and the Ojibwe did not (Wilford 1944:329). According to Wilford:

[Hennepin] mentioned two other facts of importance to the archaeologist – that they cooked their food in earthen vessels, and they often carried about with them the bones of their deceased relatives. . . . The Sioux custom of placing corpses on a

scaffold behind the villages and later gathering up the bones was noted by many later observers.

On the shores of Mille Lacs Lake are numerous village sites and hundreds of mounds. The village sites are very rich in potsherds and the mounds contain secondary burials. The exact type of the vessels that Hennepin saw is unknown, and there is no historical account showing that the Sioux built mounds over the bones of the dead, but all of the evidence points to the Sioux as the makers of the pottery and the mounds at Mille Lacs (Wilford 1944:329).

Late prehistoric Dakota projectile points were triangular in shape. Although Brower illustrated his book *Kathio* with an iron club from Mille Lacs, identified by an Ojibwe as being Dakota in origin, there were no archaeologically recovered guns, bullets, or gunpowder residues. For the Dakota to have traded for guns, and gunpowder in a substantial way they would have presumably have needed to have gone to a French trading post. These were initially set up along the Mississippi in southeastern Minnesota which could indeed have provided an incentive to at least travel to, if not move to a location near the post, particularly if the natural resources in the Mille Lacs area had become depleted from population growth (Neill 1852). In this view the Ojibwe moved into an area the Dakota had already been abandoning.

Dakota social organization included village sized groups which could unite and come together for military purposes but which usually lived in dispersed groups along rivers and lakes. The people of Mille Lacs regularly traveled significant distances by canoe to hunt bison west and southwest of the Twin Cities.

Dakota traditional religion is based upon what anthropologists call “animism.” Ethnohistoric sources indicate that shamanistic religious ideas permeated the society. Dream symbolism was represented on clothing, and on other objects of material culture such as pipes. Individuals had personal relationships with spirits from whom they believed they could seek assistance in hunting or in getting revenge on enemies or for other help. There were also Dakota medicine men and women (shamans), or specialists in contacting

the otherworld, who were believed to be able to cure the sick, or control the weather or animals. A war leader might have a vision which he explained before undertaking a war party.

In general terms, and like some other Native American groups, Dakota spirituality in historic times centered around certain customs and beliefs, concepts, events, and objects. These included the sweatlodge, pipe, drums, singing, the naming ceremony, prayer, vision questing and guardian spirits, the ceremonial pow wow, the medicine man or woman (shamans), medicine bags, dream articles and traditional stories regarding the Great Spirit. Ritual and spiritual objects included sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, and cedar. Dogs were often used in religious feasts and were akin to the sacrificial lambs of early Christianity.

The number four was considered sacred. There were 4 seasons and four powers of the universe were thought to sit at the four cardinal directions of North, South, East, and West. The symbolic "four colors of man" were red, yellow, black, and white. Stones were considered the oldest people. Spiritual people talked to them and referred to them for curing the sick and for finding lost objects.

Writing in the early twentieth century regarding the western Dakota, Luther Standing Bear indicated that: "Many of the lodges or societies of the Lakotas were social in character, while others arose for very serious purposes, particularly those brought into existence by dreams or visions" (Standing Bear 1978:142).

The expectation would be that 17th century Dakota material culture would include such traditional items as pipes, bows, painted and fletched arrows with triangular stone points, beaded clothing incorporating traditional items such as porcupine quills, settlement sites with wild rice processing equipment, bone or antler awls and scrapers, medicine bags, etc. European trade items would include such items as guns, bullets, gunpowder, powder

flasks, steel knives, metal cooking pots, European coins or pendants, and European cloth, and beads. These items would presumably not appear in any abundance at the Mille Lacs Dakota villages since trading posts were initially opened in southeastern Minnesota and the Dakota left the Mille Lacs area within about 100 years or so of the initial contact by Radisson. Such trade items would probably have been valued and would not have been likely to have been dropped or discarded unless unuseable or unless left as an offering. Knives were a favorite offering in western South Dakota during historic period vision quests and were found by sacred boulders in Minnesota (Walker 1991; Lame Deer 1994; Callahan 1999). According to La Salle, during Hennepin's visit the Dakota would have obtained at least twenty knives, trade tobacco, and axes (La Salle 1682; cited in Hennepin 1880:371).

According to Wilford:

In 1933 Dr. A. E. Jenks, assisted by the author, made excavations in a village site on the west side of the Rum River where it empties into Lake Onamia. The village has been identified by Brower as that of Aquipaguetin, to which Hennepin was taken as a captive. The principal material recovered was a quantity of potsherds. If Brower's identification is correct, they represent the latest style of pottery of the Sioux. . . . Only three arrowheads were found at the Aquipaguetin site, and all were triangular. Brower collected over two hundred arrowheads from the surface of the ground and from mounds at Mille Lacs Lake. A substantial minority of these points are triangular. . . . Winchell lists 9,505 mounds and other earthworks, including nearly 2,000 mounds not reported in the Lewis and Hill survey. The greatest concentrations of mounds are found at Mille Lacs Lake, Lake Minnetonka, along the Minnesota River and below the Mississippi below Fort Snelling. Within the territory ascribed to the Mille Lacs aspect are 8,521 reported mounds, a truly remarkable number (Wilford 1944:332-333,336).

Warren wrote, regarding the Ojibwe oral tradition about the Battle of Kathio, that:

“The Ojibwe always assert as a proof of this tradition, that *whenever they have dug into these mounds, which they occasionally do*, they have discovered human bones in great abundance and lying scattered promiscuously in the soil, showing that they had not been regularly buried, but were cut in pieces and scattered about as Indians always treat those they slay in battle” [emphasis supplied] (Warren 1984:161-62).

This Ojibwe practice of tunneling into Dakota mounds seems confirmed by Wilford's statements about a 1932 University of Minnesota excavation about 20 miles from Mille Lacs.

Within the mound were four secondary burials of bones sewed in birchbark coverings. They were within a foot of the top of the mound and were almost certainly intrusive burials, placed within the mounds after its construction. . . The birchbark wrappings may be an indication that these burials were Chippewa, for according to Brower the Chippewa used such wrappings. Furthermore, they occasionally buried their dead in existing mounds, and there are many known instances of Chippewa having adopted the Sioux custom of exposing corpses on platforms or in trees. It may be concluded that this was an old mound in which the original ground level burials had all disappeared, and that later the four intrusive burials were made, either by Chippewa or Sioux (Wilford 1944:340).

According to Elden Johnson, the Ojibwe and the Dakota settlement patterns at Mille Lacs were distinctively different. He noted that "the majority of the late prehistoric period sites are located along the Rum River outlet lakes rather than on Mille Lacs itself. . . This location pattern is in marked contrast to the later historic Chippewa sites, nearly all of which are located on Mille Lacs itself" (Johnson 1984:14).

Elden Johnson described the contact period Dakota burial customs as follows:

The Dakota in the terminal late prehistoric and very early historic period, judging by the Cooper Mound group, constructed their mounds adjacent to their villages, and unlike the mode in the earlier Malmo middle historic phase, practiced both primary burial with associated grave goods and multiple secondary burial. They also appear to have built mounds in a cumulative (vertical) fashion unlike the earlier burial mound construction practices (Wilford 1984:25).

The character of the interactions between the Dakota and French

The official character of the interaction between the Dakota and the Radisson and Groseilliers expedition was one of the establishment of a peaceful trade relationship and alliance between France and the Dakota. According to Radisson, a formal council was held between the explorers and a large number of Dakota. The location of the council site has not been firmly identified by archaeologists although various sites have been suggested. The

character of the Dakota interaction with the exploring party of Father Louis Hennepin was apparently quite different since Hennepin and his two compatriots were allegedly taken prisoner by a Dakota war party while traveling along the Mississippi River. Hennepin was both a stranger and a missionary and he said there were some in the Dakota war party who wanted to rob and kill him. The French did not speak their language. Hennepin claimed that he was taken to Mille Lacs as a prisoner where he lived for a period with the Dakota. He was eventually released when Du Luth arrived and freed him, “sharply reprimanding” Hennepin’s Dakota captors in the process (Upham 1980:216). As a sign of his displeasure Du Luth returned two calumets that the Dakota had “danced to” the year before (Du Luth 1685; cited in Hennepin 1880:376).

The island where Hennepin was held has been excavated by archaeologists and although late prehistoric Dakota pottery and triangular projectile points were recovered no other European objects were found. With the exception of an iron club from the Mille Lacs area which was published by Brower, and Elden Johnson’s reference to finding metal trade knives and brass tinklers in Bradbury Phase sites (i.e. late prehistoric to 1700 A.D.) there was no report that I am aware of indicating the recovery of guns, bullets, or other trade items.

Comparing the oral tradition of the Ojibwe about the Battle of Kathio with the location of archaeologically identifiable Dakota village sites, Brower concluded that Warren’s description of the battle correlated well with where the sites were that he knew of.

Media through which people transmitted information.

The Dakota prayed to spirits and sometimes made offerings of items of material culture at places where they believed the spirits resided, such as the Falls of St. Anthony in present day Minneapolis, (home of “Unktehi,” the underwater spirit associated with finds of mammoth and mastodon bones) and at sacred painted granite boulders scattered across

Minnesota. The smoke from catlinite pipes was believed to be a medium of communication with the spirit world and the French attempted to take advantage of this belief as will be described below. Dreams and visions were symbolically represented on items of clothing with beadwork and paint, and also in rock art. Secular pictographic writing was ephemerally chalked on rocks. Face painting, feathers, and clothing transmitted information about social status, individual history, and warlike or peaceful intentions but many burials were secondary or bundle burials. Grave goods might, in theory, indicate the level of trade with European powers, but such items do not appear in Mille Lacs aspect burials (Wilford 1944:335).

**A comparison of the Ojibwe oral tradition, the French historical accounts,
and the archaeology at Mille Lacs**

A comparison of the Ojibwe oral tradition as described by Warren with the French historical accounts and the archaeological finds raises some interesting conflicts and problems. As previously mentioned, William Warren spoke Ojibwe and collected Ojibwe oral history from “their story tellers and tradition keepers” during the middle of the nineteenth century. He checked and evaluated his informants stories by using a “composite view” or multiple informants (Warren 1885, reprinted in 1984:xi). Warren Warren described the Battle of Kathio as follows:

The vanguard of the Ojibways fell on the Dakotas at Cormorant point early in the morning, and such was the extent of the war party, that before the rear had arrived, the battle at this point had already ended by the almost total extermination of its inhabitants; a small remnant only, retired in their canoes to the greater village located at the entry. This, the Ojibways attacked with all their forces; after a brave defence with their bows and barbed arrows, the Dakotas took refuge in their earthen lodges from the more deadly weapons of their enemy.

The only manner by which the Ojibways could harass and dislodge them from their otherwise secure retreats, was to throw small bundles or bags of powder into the aperture made in the top of each, both for the purpose of giving light within, and emitting the smoke of the wigwam fire. The bundles ignited by the fire, spread death and dismay amongst the miserable beings who crowded within. Not having as yet, like the more fortunate Ojibways, been blessed with the presence of white traders, the Dakotas were still ignorant of the nature of gunpowder, and the idea possessing

their minds that their enemies were aided by spirits, they gave up the fight in despair and were easily dispatched. But a remnant retired during the darkness of night to their last remaining village on the smaller lake. Here they made their last stand, and the Ojibways following them up, the havoc among their ranks was continued during the whole course of another day.

The next morning the Ojibways wishing to renew the conflict, found the village evacuated by the few who had survived their victorious arms. They had fled during the night down the river in their canoes, and it became a common saying that the former dwellers of Mille Lacs became by this three days' struggle, swept away for ever from their favorite village sites. The remains of their earthen wigwams are still plainly visible in great numbers on the spots where these events are said to have occurred; they are now mostly covered by forests of maple trees. The Ojibways assert as a proof of this tradition, that whenever they have dug into these mounds, which they occasionally do, they have discovered human bones in great abundance and lying scattered promiscuously in the soil, showing that they had not been regularly buried, but were cut in pieces and scattered about, as Indians always treat those they slay in battle.

It is well to state here, that some of the old men who relate this tradition, give the name of O-Maum-ee to the former dwellers of Mille Lacs, and they further assert that those people were totally exterminated on this occasion. The more intelligent affirm that they were the Ab-oin or Dakotas, who having their principal village on a peninsula, or Min-a-waum, were known in those days by the name of O-maum-ee. This, connected with the fact afforded us by the early French explorers, Hennepin, Du Luth and Le Seur, that the Mde wakantons were former dwellers of Mille Lacs, is sufficient to prove the identity of the people whom the Ojibways drove from its possession (Warren 1984:160-62).

Brower concluded, from his archaeological surveys, that Warren's account was congruent with the location of Dakota settlements at Mille Lacs. However, Brower and others have described on many occasions how the many Dakota burial mounds at Mille Lacs were between their houses and contained secondary burials (disparate bones collected after excarnation or exposure to the elements). It is an interesting practice, that archaeologists should take note of, that the Ojibway were digging into Dakota sites and looking at the bones they found. Warren's informants might have viewed scattered bones from disturbed burial mounds.

A second problem with Warren's account has to do with the statement that the Dakota were unfamiliar with gunpowder. In the very next chapter of his book Warren described intermarriage between the Dakota and the Ojibwe in a period of peace after the

battle. The Ojibwe Catfish and Merman clans intermarried with the Dakota, and Warren claimed the Ojibwe and Dakota Wolf and Merman clans recognized each other as blood relations at peace meetings (Warren 1989:163-165). The Dakota presumably would have known about gunpowder through intermarriage. The Mille Lacs battle was precipitated in part, according to Warren, when a quarrel began between two Ojibway and Dakota men courting the same woman. This suggests, along with the statements that the war was triggered when 4 sons were killed when visiting a Dakota village, that there was communication and contact between the two groups. Warren's account sounds suspiciously similar to an account in Radisson where the Dakota were supposed to have been frightened by gunpowder. Warren was familiar with the Radisson account so it is odd that there would have been an assertion that the Dakota were unfamiliar with the effects of gunpowder.

Radisson's trip predated the Mille Lacs battle by many decades. Radisson wrote about two incidents involving a display of guns and gunpowder. During the first peacemaking ceremony with the Dakota, the Frenchmen smoked a peace pipe and promised an alliance. Then Radisson states:

That done, we throw powder in ye fire, that had more strength then we thought; it made the brands fly from one side to the other. We intended to make them believe that it was some of our tobacco, and make them smoke as they made us smoke. But hearing such noise, and they seeing that fire fled of every side, without any further delay or look for so much time as look for the door of the cottage, one run one way, another an other way, for they never saw a sacrifice of tobacco so violent. They went all away, and we only stayed in the place. We followed them to reassure them of their faintings. We visited them in their apartments, where they received [us] all trembling for fear, believing really by that fame meanes that we were the Devils of the earth. There was nothing but feasting for 8 days (Radisson 1967:209).

He then built a fort and waited for a delegation of Dakota to rendezvous. After their arrival he made peace and alliance promises, feasted and made speeches, and after smoking the calumet put on something of a show to impress the Dakota.

So done, we rose, and one of us begins to sing. We bade the interpreter to tell them we should save and keep their lives, taking them for our brethren, and to testify that we shot off all our artillery, which was of twelve guns. We draw our swords and long knives to our defense, if need should require, which put the men in such a terror that they knowed not what was best to run or stay. We throw a handful of powder in the fire to make a greater noise and smoke.

It seems unlikely then that after two such demonstrations the Dakota would be unfamiliar with guns and gunpowder.

Conclusions

The archaeology, historical sources, and oral traditions sometimes agree, sometimes contradict each other, and sometimes are not applicable to particular research questions. The chart that follows outlines and summarizes the conclusions.

A Comparison of Archaeology, Historical Sources, and Ojibwe Oral Tradition (as described by Warren) with regard to various related research questions.

| Research Question | Archaeology | Historical sources | Ojibwe Oral Tradition (Warren) |
|---|---|---|--|
| Did the Dakota live at Mille Lacs during the contact period? | Yes. Pottery, triangular points, and burials indicate their presence at Mille Lacs (Johnson 1984; Wilford 1944). | Yes. Radisson, Hennepin, Du Luth, and others indicate the Dakota were at Mille Lacs at the time of contact. | Yes. Ojibwe oral tradition indicates the Dakota were at Mille Lacs until the battle of Kathio (Warren 1984). |
| Was Mille Lacs undergoing resource depletion at the time of late prehistory and during the time of contact? | Elden Johnson (1984) suggested that the archaeology supports a shift from a diffuse seasonal pattern to a settled focal subsistence pattern centered on wild rice and bison with substantial population growth. | Hennepin's account of his visit in 1680 suggests the Dakota (and he) went hungry for substantial periods of time. At one rough period in Wisconsin Radisson ate his dogs. | n.a. |
| Did the Ojibwe drive the Dakota from Mille Lacs as a result of the Battle of Kathio? | Brower (1901) thought the archaeology supported Warren's account because settlements were found where Warren described them (but the scattered bones might have been disturbed Dakota burials). | Edward Neill (1852) indicated that the Dakota moved out because of resource depletion and to be nearer the French trading post in southeastern Minnesota (They would also have been closer to the bison and further from the Ojibwe). | The Ojibwe oral tradition "5 generations" later recorded by Warren (1885) indicated the Battle of Kathio drove the Dakota out and the Ojibwe used guns and gunpowder to kill the Dakota. |
| Did the Dakota hunt bison and raise tobacco at Mille Lacs? | Yes. Bison bones and tobacco seeds have been recovered archaeologically (Johnson 1984; Bailey 1997). | Hennepin went on a bison hunting expedition and Radisson called the Dakota "the nation of beef" because the hunted bison. The | n.a. |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| | | Dakota were happy with Hennepin's French tobacco gift and tobacco seeds. | |
| Was Hennepin held captive on an island near Mille Lacs? | The excavation at the island found Dakota pottery and points but no evidence of Hennepin's stay. Some metal trade good knives have been found at Mille Lacs. | Hennepin claims he was a captive and Du Luth saved freed him. The Margry papers and La Salle indicate this was an exaggeration and he was not in danger and he also misunderstood Dakota customs. | n.a. |
| Were the Dakota "still ignorant of the nature of gunpowder" at the Battle of Kathio as suggested by Warren? | Although no guns have been found at Mille Lacs, the Dakota may have moved before major trade occurred. | Radisson's account indicates displaying guns and gunpowder was part of the initial council meeting. | Warren suggests the Dakota were unfamiliar with gunpowder and guns but in discusses intermarriage at length with the Ojibwe who had both. |
| How did the Dakota view the French at the time of contact? | Trade knives have been found at Mille Lacs (from some time period). | The French indicate the Dakota called them "spirits" (perhaps because of their appearance. The Dakota were interested in trading at least according to the French). | The Ojibwe took advantage of the Dakota's lack of guns and gunpowder and fear of the spirits associated with gunpowder. |
| Did the Dakota associate gunpowder with "spirits" such that they were dismayed during the Battle of Kathio that "their enemies were aided by spirits" as claimed by Warren? | No gunpowder residue has been noted at excavation sites (would it survive?). | Radisson suggests the French were trying to get the Dakota to associate gunpowder "smoke" with tobacco smoke and spirits (The Dakota may have been justifiably afraid | Warren's account of the Battle of Kathio suggests that to the Dakota the explosions from gunpowder suggested to the Dakota that they were aided by spirits. |

| | | | |
|--|------|---|---|
| | | of someone throwing an explosive into a fire). | (The Dakota were being killed at the time so they may have been dismayed about dying). |
| Was there a belief by the Dakota that some European objects had spiritual power? | n.a. | The Account from Margry indicates: 'The Dakota did not touch his chalice "because seeing it shine, they said it was a spirit that would kill them" (Hennepin 1880:360). | Warren's account of the Battle suggests the Dakota saw the guns and gunpowder in spiritual terms. |

References

Bailey, T. W.

1997 *Evidence for Tobacco Use at the Wilford Site (21ML12), Mille Lacs County, Minnesota*. Master of Science, University of Minnesota.

Brower, J. V.

1900 *Mille Lac*. Memoirs of Explorations in the Basin of the Mississippi 3. 7 vols. H. L. Collins, Saint Paul.

Brower, J. V.

1901 *Kathio*. Memoirs of Explorations in the Basin of the Mississippi. H. L. Collins, St. Paul.

Brower, J. V.

1902 *Kakabikansing*. Memoirs of Explorations in the Basin of the Mississippi 5. 7 vols. H.L. Collins Company, St. Paul.

Brower, J. V.

1903 *Minnesota. Discovery of its area. 1540-1665*. Memoirs of Explorations in the Basin of the Mississippi 7. 7 vols. H. L. Collins, Saint Paul.

Callahan, K. L.

1996 The Fort Ransom Writing Rock. Upper Midwest Rock Art Research Association, <http://www.tcinternet.net/users/cbailey/index.html>.

Callahan, K. L.

1998 *Shamanism, Dream Symbolism, and Altered States of Consciousness in Minnesota Rock Art: Ethnohistorical Accounts Regarding Pipestone, Jeffers, and Nett Lake.*

Callahan, K. L.

1999 Minnesota's Red Rock and other sacred boulders of the Upper Midwest.
Paper presented at the International Rock Art Congress, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Folwell, W. W.

1921 *A History of Minnesota I.* Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

Gibbon, G.

1998 Lecture Notes. In *The Archaeology of North America*, University of Minnesota course.

Hennepin, L.

1880 *Description of Louisiana.* John G. Shea, New York.

Hennepin, L.

1938 *Description of Louisiana.* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Johnson, E.

- 1984 Cultural resource survey of the Mille Lacs area, Typescript submitted to the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.
- LameDeer, J.
- 1994 *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions*. Washington Square Press, New York.
- Nute, G. L.
- 1943 *Caesars of the Wilderness: Medars Chouart, Sieur Des Groseilliers, and Pierre Esprit Radisson, 1618-1710*. D. Appleton-Century Company, New York.
- Radisson, P. E.
- 1967 *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson*. Burt Franklin, New York.
- Standing Bear, L.
- 1978 *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London.
- Upham, W.
- 1908 *Minnesota in Three Centuries*. The Publishing Society of Minnesota, Mankato.
- Walker, J. R.
- 1991 *Lakota Belief and Ritual*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London.
- Warren, W. W.
- 1984 *History of the Ojibway People*. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul.

Wilford, L. A.

1944 The Prehistoric Indians of Minnesota, The Mille Lacs Aspect. *Minnesota History* 25(4):329-341.

Winchell, N. H.

1911 *The Aborigines of Minnesota*. Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Saint Paul.