

Red River country to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, they did not find their new abode uninhabited. It is probable enough that the people whom they found in possession had come through the passes from the country west of those mountains. If these people were overcome by the Blackfeet, and their women taken as wives by the conquerors, two results would be likely to follow. In the first place, the language would become a mixed speech, in grammar purely Algonkin, but in the vocabulary largely recruited from the speech of the conquered tribe. A change in the character of the amalgamated people would also take place. The result of this change might be better inferred if we knew the characteristics of both the constituent races. But it may be said that a frequent, if not a general, result of such a mixture of races is the production of a people of superior intelligence and force of character.

The circumstances thus suggested may account, not only for the peculiarities of the language and character of the Blackfeet tribes, but also for the different traditions which are found among them in regard to their origin and former abode. It would be very desirable to trace that portion of the Blackfoot vocabulary which is not of Algonkin origin to its source in the language of some other linguistic stock. To do this would require a careful comparison of this foreign element with the various languages spoken in their vicinity, and particularly with those of the tribes west of the Rocky Mountains. For such a comparison there has been neither time nor adequate material, and this interesting subject of inquiry must be left for another occasion.

The religion of these tribes (applying this term to their combined mythology and worship) resembles their language. It is in the main Algonkin, but includes some beliefs and ceremonies derived from some other source. Father Lacombe's account of their cosmogony and their deities cannot be better given than in his own clear and pithy style. In their view, as in that of the Lenape and other Algonkin nations, there were two creations: the primary, which called the world into existence, and of which they have but a vague idea; and the secondary, which found the world an expanse of sea and sky (with, it would seem, a few animals disporting themselves therein), and left it in its present state. 'The primitive creation,' writes M. Lacombe, 'is attributed to a superior divinity, whom they call the Creator (*Apistotokiw*). This divinity, however, is in some manner identified with the sun (*Natōs*). The earth itself is believed to be a divinity of some kind, for, in their invocations, if they call the sun "our father" (*Kinnon*), they call the earth "our mother" (*Kikristonnon*). It seems also that the moon is considered to be one and the same divinity with the sun. At any rate, in the invocations it is designated by the same name, *Natōs*. Yet it is often said to be the "old woman," the consort of the sun. The whole of this is confused enough in the minds of the Indians to render them unable to give, when questioned, exact explanations.

'As to the secondary creation, if it may be so styled, the Indian account runs as follows: At a certain time it happened that all the earth was covered with water. The "Old Man" (*Napiw*) was in a canoe, and he thought of causing the earth to come up from the abyss. To put his project into execution he used the aid of four animals—the duck, the otter, the badger, and the musk-rat. The musk-rat proved to be the best diver. He remained so long under water that when he came to the surface he was fainting, but he had succeeded in getting a little particle of earth, which he brought between the toes of his paw. This particle of earth