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The Fox Raid of 1752

Defensive Warfare and the Decline of the Illinois Indian Tribe

RAYMOND E. HAUSER



Fort de Chartres, from a mural in the Illinois State Capitol.

On June 1, 1752, The Fox Indians led an intertribal force of between four hundred and five hundred raiders on a surprise attack against the Cahokia and Michigamea

Illinois Indian village located on the east bank of the Mississippi River, a short distance north of Fort de Chartres.¹ Specialists have long recognized that American Indian

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¹Major Macarty Mactigue, the French commandant in the Illinois country, clearly identified June 1 as the date of the attack; Macarty to Pierre Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnal, Sept. 2, 1752, in Theodore Calvin Pease and Ernestine Jenison, eds., *Illinois on the Eve of the Seven Years' War, 1747-1755*, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. 29 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1940), pp. 654, 687. Father Alexis F. X. de Guyenne confirmed the date in Guyenne to Vaudreuil, Sept. 10, 1752 (ibid., p. 720). Jean-Bernard Bossu erred when he claimed that the attack occurred on June 6, but internal evidence (a reference to "the holiday of Corpus Christi") also identifies June 1 (see Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751-1762*, trans. and ed. Seymour Feiler [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962], p. 79). Carl Ekberg confirmed that this holiday was celebrated on June 1 in 1752 (Ekberg to author, March 16, 1990).

raiding warfare expeditions grew larger after contact with Europeans, but the size and composition of that particular raiding party even caught the attention of French cartographer Jacques Nicolas Bellin in 1755.²

While scholars have often referred to the raid, their purposes have not required a thorough examination of it or its implications.³ In one of the more extensive and error-laden reviews of the attack, Lawrence Henry Gipson, an influential twentieth-century historian, employed it as an example of the difficulty encountered by the French while attempting to control their Indian allies, and he was probably incorrect here, also.⁴ The Fox raid of 1752 was a significant event for the Illinois Indian tribe because it emphasizes the inadequate implementation of defensive raiding warfare precautions, it sheds light on Indian-white relations, and it focuses attention on the role warfare played in explaining the population decline of the Illinois.

The subtribes of the Illinois and their neighbors must have maintained a fully developed raiding warfare tradition for at

least a generation prior to the arrival of the Europeans. The influence of Europeans caused Native Americans to adapt their concept of war to include communal war during the protohistoric period⁵ and to adapt raiding warfare by including firearms and much larger raiding expeditions early in the historic period. While the Illinois launched and received larger expeditions prior to 1752, the raid executed by the Fox and their allies from various northern tribes offers a clear example of how inadequate defensive raiding warfare had become, compared to the devastating dimensions of postcontact offensive operations.

The Cahokia and Michigamea constituted subtribes of the Illinois, which also included the Kaskaskia, Moingwena, Peoria, and Tamaroa.⁶ The Illinois had been subdividing into separate tribes when the arrival of Louis de Jolliet and Jacques Marquette in 1673 opened the historic period in the Illinois country, but that process was halted and then reversed by conditions that attended contact. The tribe occupied most of the present state of Illinois from at least the late 1630s until “the middle of the eighteenth

²Harold E. Driver, *Indians of North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 370; Bellin, “Partie du Cours du Fleuve St. Louis ou Mississippi,” in *Indian Villages of the Illinois Country, Part 1, Atlas*, comp. Sara Jones Tucker, Scientific Papers, Vol. 2 (Springfield: Illinois State Museum, 1942), pl. XXIV.

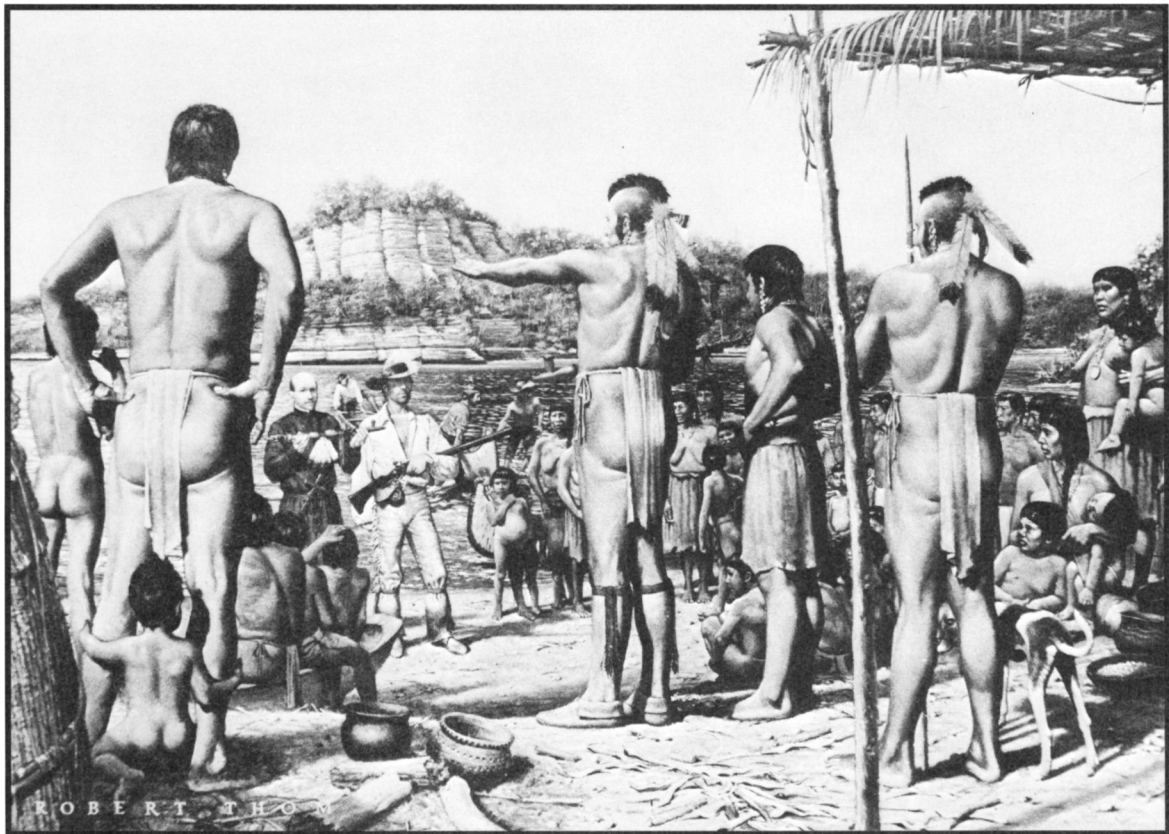
³The raid is often mentioned, but scholars have met their objectives by employing just one of the two major sources, Macarty and Bossu. For example, only two of the eighteen publications consulted that refer to the attack cite both sources; they utilize only Bossu, however; see Wayne C. Temple, *Indian Villages of the Illinois Country, Part 2, Historic Tribes*, Scientific Papers, Vol. 2, rev. ed. (Springfield: Illinois State Museum, 1966), p. 46; John A. Walthall and Elizabeth D. Benchley, *The River L'Abbe Mission: A French Colonial Church for the*

Cahokia Illini on Monks Mound, Studies in Illinois Archaeology, No. 2 (Springfield: Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, 1987), pp. 11–12.

⁴Gipson, *Zones of International Friction: North America, South of the Great Lakes Region, 1748–1754* (New York: Knopf, 1939), p. 146.

⁵Hauser, “Warfare and the Illinois Indian Tribe During the Seventeenth Century: An Exercise in Ethnohistory,” *Old Northwest*, 10 (1984–1985), 367–87.

⁶For a comprehensive list of Illinois subtribes, see Hauser, “The Illinois Indian Tribe: From Autonomy and Self-Sufficiency to Dependency and Depopulation,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 69 (1976), 130; Charles Callender, “Illinois,” in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians: Northeast*, Vol. 15 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), pp. 673, 680.



This painting by Robert Thom, which hangs in the Illinois State Historical Library, depicts the arrival of Father Louis de Jolliet and Jacques Marquette, the first Europeans to make contact with the Indians of the Illinois country.

century.”⁷ The Illinois suffered a disastrous population decline during the historic period,⁸ and pressures from other tribes encouraged the Peoria eventually to settle on the Illinois River at Lake Peoria. The Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Michigamea moved southwest to the American Bottom along the east bank of the Mississippi River below the mouth of the Missouri. The French built forts close to all four of those Illinois villages.

As Prairie Siouan culture peoples, the Fox and the Illinois shared the same traditional raiding warfare practices. Among the Illinois, for example, military success provided warriors with status recognized in victory ceremonies, martial tattoos, and burial rights. The Illinois regularly fought the Fox, Sioux, and five or six other tribes in a continuous state of war in which peace was only a temporary truce. The primary motive was

revenge, but prestige, adventure, and economic advantage were additional factors.

⁷Joseph Jablow, “A Study of Indian Tribes in . . . Illinois and Indiana, 1640–1832,” in *Illinois, Kickapoo and Potawatomi Indians* (New York: Garland, 1974), p. 43; see also Margaret Kimball Brown, *Cultural Transformations Among the Illinois: An Application of a Systems Model*, Publications of the Museum, Anthropological Series, Vol. 1, No. 3 (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1979), p. 252.

⁸Father Louis Vivier estimated the Illinois population in 1750 at two thousand; Vivier to [a friend], June 8, 1750, in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (1896–1901; rpt. New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), LXIX, 149 (hereafter cited as *Jesuit Relations*). This number suggests an 83 percent decline from the 1680 population of twelve thousand, which is based on Emily J. Blasingham’s total of 10,500 plus an estimated population of fifteen hundred for the Michigamea; see Blasingham, “The Depopulation of the Illinois Indians,” *Ethnohistory*, 3 (1956), 365; Hauser, “Illinois,” p. 134.

War chiefs were self-selected, and warriors volunteered to participate in their war parties in numbers that varied between six or seven and twenty. Raiders employed tactics that emphasized stealth, surprise, and ambush, and their weapons included bows, arrows, knives, clubs, and shields. War parties traveled as far as 1,250 or fifteen hundred miles, moved cautiously at night in enemy territory, and attacked at dawn. They killed enemy women and children on the

spot, but retreated quickly with warriors, who were usually tortured to death at the Illinois village.⁹

Contact with Europeans brought fundamental changes in warfare, which included communal or raid-in-force expeditions, targeting women and children as prisoners; younger warriors; metal arrow heads, knives, and clubs; and, of course, firearms. Warfare thus became much more deadly.¹⁰

The stealth, ambush, and surprise elements of raiding warfare conditioned Illinois defensive efforts. They built their semipermanent summer villages in river valley locations, with the cabins arranged along the banks of the river or on the edge of a prairie in order to avoid surprise attacks and facilitate launching retaliatory pursuit.¹¹ The Illinois despised men who were reluctant to pursue raiders, considering them cowards.¹² Defenders utilized the same weapons employed by raiders, and civil chiefs—relying on their own military experience—probably organized defensive arrangements. The presence of enemies was often discovered by women working in fields, by hunters, and by scouts returning from enemy territory. Even with numerous dogs, village defenses were usually quite lax. Enemies alerted to their peril were considered so dangerous, however, that the raiders “would need [a] ten to one [advantage]; and moreover, on those occasions each one [of the raiders] avoids being the first to advance.”¹³

Traditional Illinois defensive maneuvers also included moving villages to island locations, combining villages, removing them from the proximity of dangerous foes, and organizing defensive alliances against particularly troublesome enemies. Despite the increasing danger from raiders following contact, the Illinois did not often construct protective stockades around their villages prior to 1752.¹⁴ The French instructed the Illinois “in the art of fortification” as early as 1680,¹⁵ but the Illinois economic cycle,

⁹Hauser, “Warfare,” pp. 368–71; Callender, “Illinois,” p. 676; Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, pp. 236–37, 241, 244–45. For reviews of Fox warfare, see Wendell H. Oswalt, *This Land Was Theirs: A Study of the North American Indian* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), pp. 212–13; Charles Callender, “Fox,” in Trigger, ed., pp. 640–42.

¹⁰Hauser, “Warfare,” pp. 368–71.

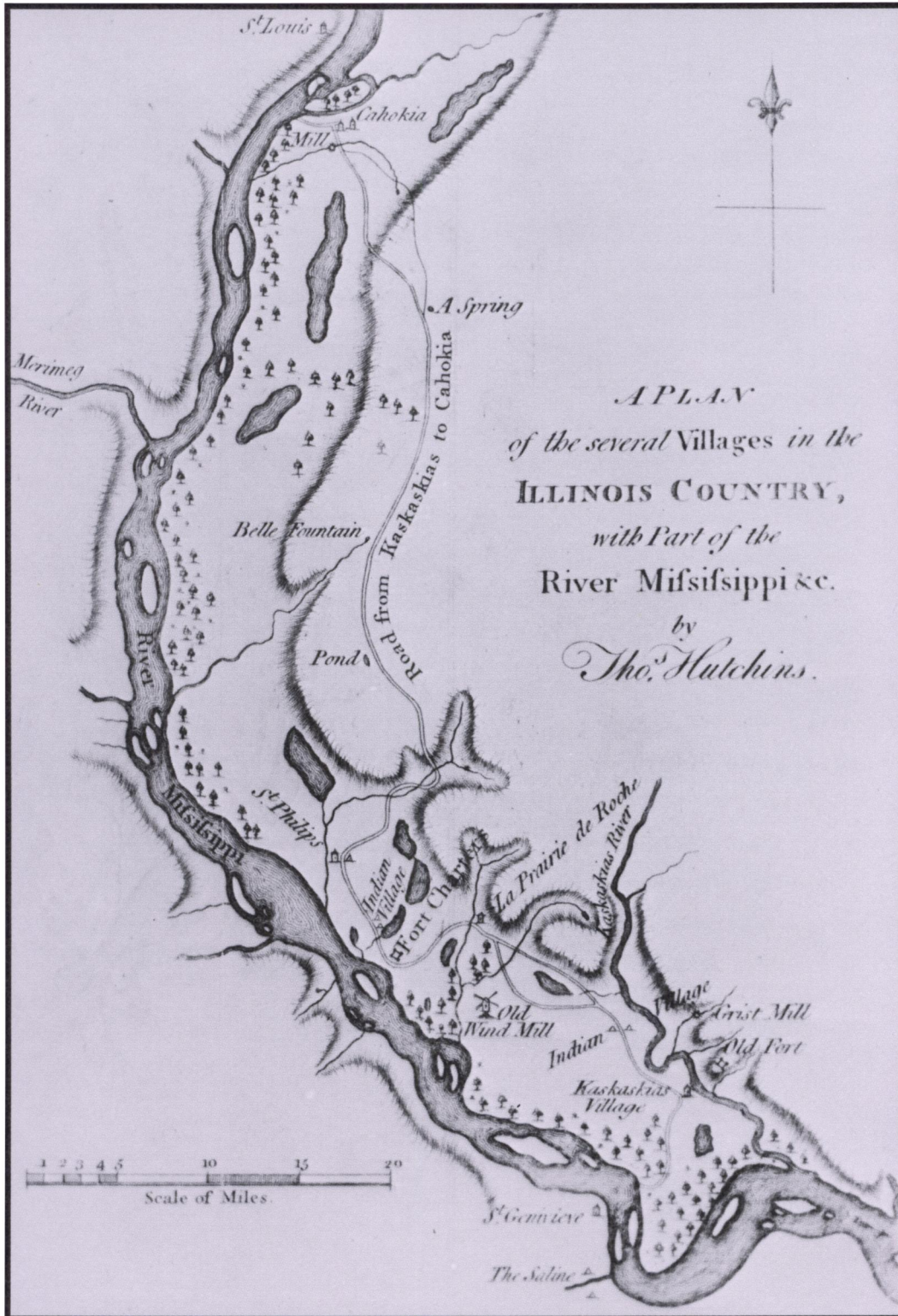
¹¹Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, pp. 238, 252; [Pierre Deliette], “Memoir of De Gannes Concerning the Illinois Country [ca. 1702],” in *The French Foundations, 1680–1693*, ed. Theodore Calvin Pease and Raymond C. Werner, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library, Vol. 23 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1934), p. 308; J. F. Buisson de St. Cosme [to Bishop Laval], Jan. 2, 1699, in *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634–1699*, ed. Louise Phelps Kellogg (1917; rpt. New York: Barnes, 1967), p. 356. See also Deliette, pp. 325, 378, 395; Napoleon A. Chagnon, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, 1983), p. 176.

¹²Bossu, p. 82; Chagnon, p. 183.

¹³Gabriel Marest to Barthelemi Germon, Nov. 9, 1712, in *Jesuit Relations*, LXVI, 273.

¹⁴Two sources challenge Blasingham’s conclusion that the Illinois did not erect stockades (p. 395): M. Bergier, April 13, 1701, in Edward Joseph Fortier, “The Establishment of the Tamarois Mission,” *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1908* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1909), p. 238; C. C. du Tisne, Jan. 14, 1725, in *The French Regime in Wisconsin—1, 1634–1727*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Vol. 16 (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1902), p. 461.

¹⁵Mary Borgias Palm, *The Jesuit Missions of the Illinois Country, 1673–1763* (Cleveland: n.p., 1933), p. 18.



This 1771 map of the Illinois country by Captain Thomas Hutchins shows the proximity of the Indian villages to the French forts and settlements.

which required frequent moves, probably discouraged them from expending the effort required to erect palisades. They continued to rely on the presence of French military power—including French forts—for protection. Dependence on French forts required timely warning in the event that several small war parties or a large raid-in-force was directed against them.¹⁶ That warning was unavailable on June 1, 1752.

The declared origins of the 1752 raid-in-force may be found in the culture-driven competition of raiding warfare. The Fox rationalized that the immediate reason for the attack was the Cahokia aggression of 1751, which violated a peace with the northern tribes arranged by the French. While the Cahokia were “out on a hunting trip,”

they captured seven Fox and tortured them. Jean-Bernard Bossu, a French officer and the only eyewitness to write an account of the raid, does not explain where the Cahokia executed the captives, but he does relate the experiences of the Fox prisoner who escaped and endured tremendous hardships during the journey to rejoin his tribe.¹⁷

The Fox were, of course, distressed at the news that the survivor brought, and they determined to carry out a remarkable revenge. Even if the provocation had not been so compelling, the Fox would have retaliated because of raiding warfare traditions, the economic and military alliance between the Illinois and the French, and the desirable geographic position occupied by the Illinois. According to Bossu, the Fox chief “assembled his men [after the return of the survivor], for nothing is done without a council, and they decided to send bundles of twigs to the chiefs of allied tribes . . . who [eventually] marched as auxiliary troops under the standard of the Foxes.”¹⁸ Although it is not possible to estimate the number of warriors contributed to the venture by the various tribes, the number of Illinois prisoners awarded the Sauk after the attack suggests that they made up a considerable part of the expedition.

The Cahokia expected a Fox retaliatory raid. Deciding that their village position and numbers placed them in some jeopardy, they abandoned the village located since 1735 about nine miles north of the French village also named Cahokia.¹⁹ The Seminary of Foreign Missions had maintained a missionary program in the Cahokia-Illinois village.²⁰ The Cahokia took a traditional defensive step when they moved about forty-five miles south and relocated with their Michigamea relatives in the village positioned just one and a quarter miles north of Fort de Chartres, a distance probably required in order to promote harmony between the two communities.²¹ Nevertheless,

¹⁶Temple, pp. 39, 20, 32, 40, 86; Blasingham, p. 395; Callender, “Illinois,” p. 678; Palm, p. 18. See also Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 677.

¹⁷Jablow, p. 217; Bossu, pp. 77–78; Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 654–55. Bossu’s account, written from memory, contains numerous errors: the date of the attack, the year the Cahokia tortured several Fox, the number of Fox tortured, the distance between the Michigamea village and Fort de Chartres, and estimates of the size of the Fox force and the number of Illinois casualties. He may also have exaggerated his role during the attack. As a source, therefore, Bossu’s details become suspect, but internal evidence concerning the date, the number of raider casualties, the death of a Sioux chief, and the references to Chicagou suggest that his broad account remains dependable.

¹⁸Bossu, p. 78.

¹⁹Walthall and Benchley, pp. 9–10. See also J. Joseph Bauxar, “History of the Illinois Area,” in Trigger, ed., p. 596. The village “was built . . . near the confluence of Cahokia and Canteen creeks on the first terrace of Monks Mound” in what today is the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site (see Walthall and Benchley, p. 10).

²⁰Vivier to [a friend], p. 149; Pease and Jenison, eds., p. xiii; Walthall and Benchley, p. 10.

²¹Bossu, p. 81; n.a., ca. 1720, in Fortier, p. 238. See also J. P. Mercier to Vaudreuil, April 20, 1743, in *Old Cahokia: A Narrative and Documents Illustrating the First Century of Its History*, ed. John F. McDermott (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1949), p. 79; Walthall and Benchley, p. 8; Clarence Walworth Alvord, *The Illinois Country, 1673–1818* (1922; rpt. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1965), pp. 222–23.

in 1721, Father Pierre de Charlevoix noted that “the French are now beginning to settle the country between this fort [de Chartres] and the first mission.”²² The Michigamea, who had occupied that summer village for more than thirty years, extended refuge to the Cahokia because they shared a “fear of being attacked by the Foxes in reprisal,” and they also hoped to share the security offered by the larger population of a combined village.²³

The Cahokia and Michigamea village had a population that might be estimated at fewer than four hundred “of all ages.”²⁴ A village of four hundred would have had an adult male population of about ninety-six who were “capable of bearing arms,” and would have contained approximately twenty-four or twenty-five large cabins.²⁵ The Michigamea had entertained Jesuit missionaries in their village, but because the Illinois had not accepted Catholicism in sufficient

numbers and because of the unavailability of a missionary, the village was without one by 1750.²⁶

The village probably had its dwellings arranged in “the lineal pattern of the Illinois” that was “spread out, scattered along the bank” of the Mississippi.²⁷ The Michigamea did not protect the village with a palisade. It was placed so that it “was surrounded by woods and a ravine.”²⁸ Agapit Chicagou served the Michigamea as village or peace chief. He was an experienced political leader who had been chief for more than twenty-five years, and he was also well acquainted with the French, having visited King Louis XV at the royal apartments at Fontainebleau in 1725.²⁹

The Fox assembled a huge raiding party of “four hundred or five hundred” warriors that included representatives from such northern tribes as the Sioux, Sauk, Potawatomi, Winnebago, Menominee,³⁰ and

²²Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America* (1761; rpt. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1966), II, 221. See also Palm, p. 50.

²³Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 654; Charles Edward Orser, Jr., “The Kolmer Site: An Eighteenth Century Michigamea Village,” p. 70, *Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, Illinois State University, Normal*; Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, p. 225. Some of the Cahokia may have joined Wabash Valley tribes who were associated with the English (see Pierre de la Rue, Abbé de L’Isle Dieu to Antoine-Louis Rouillé, Comte de Jouy, March 28, 1752, in Pease and Jenison, eds., p. 567); see also Walthall and Benchley, p. 10.

²⁴Vivier provided enough information in 1750 to allow for an estimation of the combined village’s 1750 population (see Vivier to [a friend], pp. 145, 149).

²⁵Blasingham, p. 364; see also Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, p. 228n; Letter by Vivier, Nov. 17, 1750, in *Jesuit Relations*, LXIX, 221; Blasingham, p. 364; Vivier to [a friend], p. 147.

²⁶Vivier to [a friend], p. 149; see also Palm, p. 94.

²⁷Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, pp. 257–58, 242. Traditionally they may have arranged their cabins “in rows on ‘streets’” (ibid., p. 241).

²⁸Brown to author, Aug. 9, 1991; Bossu, pp. 78–79.

²⁹Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 665, 672; Bossu, p. 81; Richard N. Ellis and Charlie R. Steen, eds., “An Indian Delegation in France, 1725,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 67 (1974), 385–405; see also Virgil Vogel, “Chicagou,” in *Indians of the Chicago Area*, ed. Terry Straus (Chicago: NAES College, 1989), pp. 33–36.

³⁰Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 654, 655. Macarty repeated the list, except for the Potawatomi (ibid., p. 665). Vaudreuil accepted Macarty’s list of tribes (see Vaudreuil to Rouillé, Sept. 28, 1752, in Pease and Jenison, eds., p. 726). L’Isle Dieu, apparently relying on Macarty, did not mention either the Potawatomi or the Winnebago (see L’Isle Dieu to Rouillé, Sept. 5, 1753, in ibid., p. 832).

Kickapoo.³¹ The main body of raiders traveled south down the Mississippi River in a convoy of sixty canoes; a vanguard of the finest Fox runners functioned as scouts. The stealthy raiders passed Fort Cahokia without alerting the French, and they concealed themselves from Adamville, the French commander in the Peoria area,³² when they discovered him along their route. They said later that they neglected to present themselves to Macarty Mactigue, the French commander in the Illinois country, because they feared that the Illinois would then discover their purpose or that Macarty would prevent them from attacking.³³ The raiders “landed” about six-tenths of a mile from the

target village, a location permitting “the invaders to come within musket shot of the unsuspecting Michigameas.”³⁴

Although the combined warrior population of the Cahokia-Michigamea village could not have been more than 20 to 25 percent of the strength of the attacking party, the Fox developed a plan that would reduce the target population to an even more desirable advantage. They scheduled their attack for a day when many Illinois were absent from the village because of a Roman Catholic religious observance, “the holiday of Corpus Christi,” at Fort de Chartres.³⁵

The Fox began the attack on Sunday night³⁶ with a ruse that sent a dozen warriors, who were among their “fastest runners,” rushing into the village. “[S]hout[ing] a death cry” and killing everyone they encountered, the decoy party quickly withdrew as soon as each of the attackers had discharged his firearm. The enraged Illinois immediately raced after the retreating Fox and into an ambush laid by the main raiding force. Concealed by tall grass, the Fox and their allies fired their guns at the advancing Illinois, killing twenty-eight of them. The raiders then charged the village in order to burn it and kill or capture as many men, women, and children as possible.³⁷

The raiders “burned ten or twelve cabins [about half of the village], and scattered about the limbs of the dead,” a possible reference to the ultimate act of disdain or contempt: desecrating the graves of those Illinois buried in an adjacent graveyard.³⁸ While the hasty withdrawal of the raiders was part of the raiding tradition, it might also have been encouraged by the proximity of the French at Fort de Chartres, the Europeans located between the village and the fort,³⁹ and the anticipated return of the visiting villagers.

Removing thirty scalps, the raiders quickly withdrew, taking about forty prisoners

³¹Bossu added the Kickapoo to the Fox, Sauk, and Sioux (p. 78). Father Michel Baudouin included the Kickapoo, too, along with the Fox and Sauk, but he also added the Mascouten (see Baudouin to L'Isle Dieu, June 28, 1754, in Pease and Jenison, eds., p. 874). Because those on the scene did not include either the Mascouten or the Chippewa, who were included on a 1755 map, those tribes have not been included in the list of Fox allies (see Bellin, pl. XXIV).

³²Bossu, p. 82. For identification of Adamville, see Alvord, pp. 235–36; Pease and Jenison, eds., p. 655n.

³³Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 655. Macarty's reports frustrate scholars because his comments are so opaque. Unfortunately, his detailed account of the Fox raid, written to Vaudreuil on June 2, 1752, is not extant, and specialists must, therefore, rely on his summary account of Sept. 2, 1752.

³⁴Bossu, p. 79.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 654, 655.

³⁷Bossu, p. 79. The number killed in the ambush may have been an exaggeration; Bossu also counted “about eighty Michigamea . . . killed or taken prisoner” (p. 80).

³⁸Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 654; Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, p. 243; Blasingham, p. 379.

³⁹The raiders took precautions to avoid injuring the only Frenchman they encountered during the raid because it would have compromised their relations with the Europeans. Bossu made this point, but it might also serve as an example of the complaint that he exaggerated his role in the events he described (see Bossu, p. 79; Palm, p. 116n).

with them as insurance against Illinois retaliation. Within a day the raiders tortured three or four captives to death (presumably included in the total of thirty dead).⁴⁰ The Fox and their allies suffered only four losses, including “a bemedaled chief of the Sioux.”⁴¹

The exultant raiders proceeded back up the Mississippi River without any of the caution that had marked their descent or lament over their losses. They placed their captives in the leading canoes. “As they came up to the French fort of the Cahokias, they fired a salvo with their muskets,” Bossu reported. “The Fox chief flew the French colors from his canoe and could not have been prouder of his victory if he had conquered an entire empire.”⁴² The raiders again encountered Adamville on the river, about seven and a half miles from French Cahokia, but that time they had no qualms about discussing their attack.⁴³

The surviving Illinois sought refuge at Fort de Chartres.⁴⁴ When the raiders destroyed about half of the village, they displaced between 163 and 196 Illinois. The panic caused by the attack, “the lack of a fort to which they could retire in case of alarm,” and the loss of household goods quickly induced a number of families to move in with Peoria relatives some two hundred miles away on Lake Peoria.⁴⁵

Six days after the attack, the Illinois who had retreated to Fort de Chartres were again thrown into a panic when a Frenchman named Roulier arrived from French Cahokia with news that the reinforced Fox raiding party was returning and would attack the “next morning.” At the direction of French authorities, the Illinois men, women, and children marched all that cold and rainy night the fifteen miles required to join their Kaskaskia relatives and to reach French Kaskaskia. The French authorities there, however, refused to offer the Illinois sustenance, yet prevented them from leaving, fearing an alliance with the

Miami. A French priest eventually supplied the destitute with shelter and food, and Macarty discovered that Roulier had lied about the impending attack. The frightened Illinois finally left Kaskaskia on June 11, only to receive another “sharp alarm” the next day, “while going [back] to the village of the Michigamea.”⁴⁶

The French authorities did make an effort to obtain the release of the forty Illinois captives. One band of Sauk held thirteen prisoners, and another—led by Le Chat Blanc—retained six women even after releasing “a [Michigamea] man, three women, and a child” to the Peoria. The remaining survivors were distributed among the other members of the alliance, except for the Sioux, who were only interested in scalps and held no prisoners. The French effort on behalf of the Illinois apparently included dissuading the Peoria from launching a retaliatory attack against the Sauk.⁴⁷ By 1754, the commandant at Green Bay, Joseph de la Marque, Sieur de Marin, secured the release of four Illinois women from the Fox, bringing the known total of repatriated captives to nine.⁴⁸

The impact of the raid on the Illinois was, of course, quite devastating. Seventy inhabitants of the combined village had been

⁴⁰Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 655, 672.

⁴¹Bossu, p. 79; see also Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 655.

⁴²Bossu, p. 79.

⁴³Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 655.

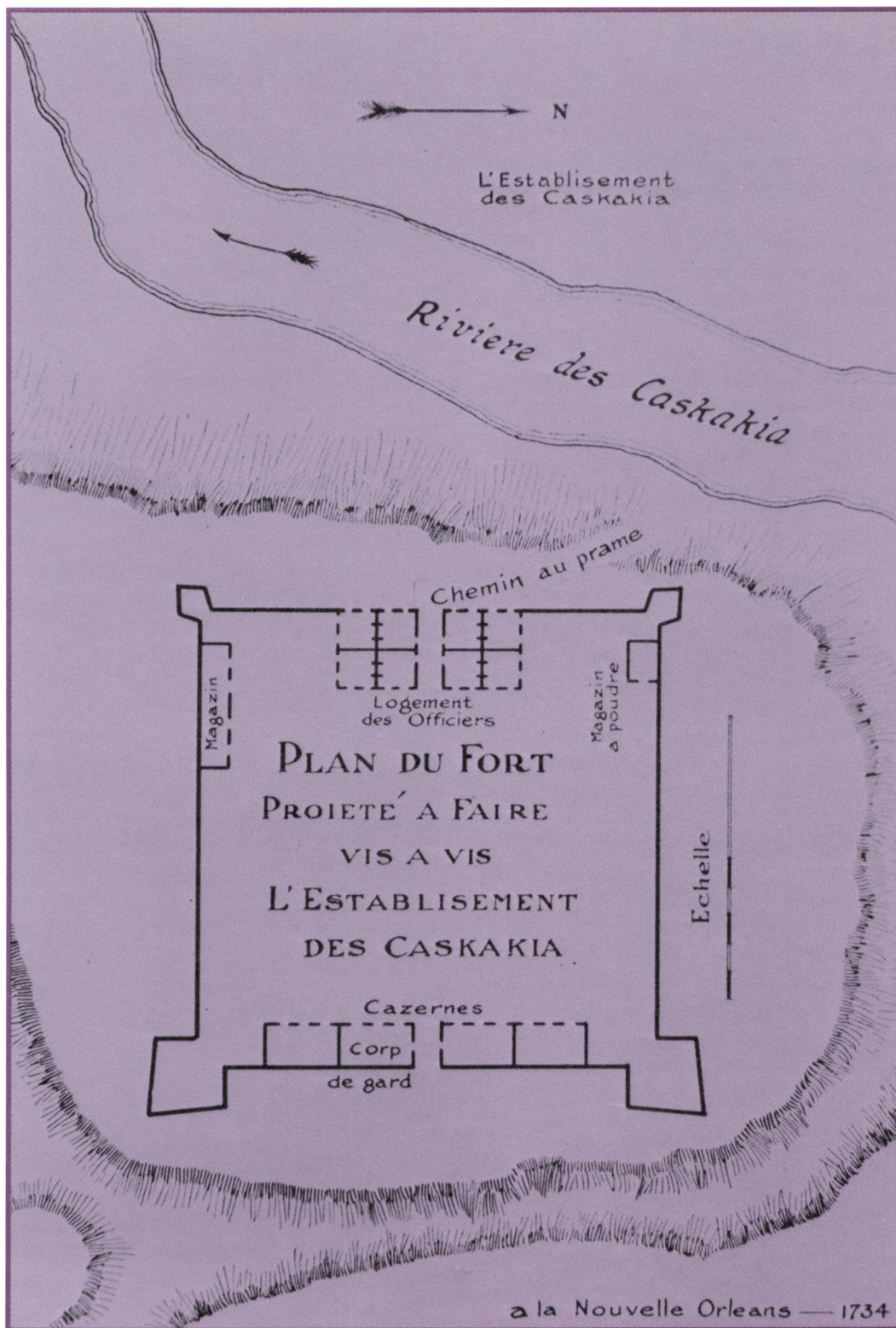
⁴⁴Guyenne to Vaudreuil, p. 720. See also L'Isle Dieu to Rouillé, Sept. 5, 1753, p. 832.

⁴⁵Guyenne to Vaudreuil, p. 718.

⁴⁶Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 657–58; Guyenne to Vaudreuil, pp. 720–22.

⁴⁷Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 664.

⁴⁸Michel-Ange, Marquis Duquesne de Menneville to Rouillé, Oct. 31, 1753, in Pease and Jenison, eds., p. 850; Blasingham, p. 380.



Fort Kaskaskia was built not only to protect French economic interests in the area but also to provide some security to the Indian villages nearby.

killed or captured, the raiders continued to hold thirty-one prisoners two years after the attack, and the loss of those captives plus the thirty killed during and after the raid meant that of a total population of nearly four hundred, about 340 villagers survived the attack.

A number of those survivors joined relatives in other villages. Other survivors eventually reestablished a smaller Michigamea village about a quarter of a mile from Fort de Chartres, "on a ridge in the midst of an open meadow," and they protected it with a palisade.⁴⁹ "The structures within the village may have been in rows with 'streets' between them," but they were "not oriented in any particular direction." Archaeologist Margaret Kimball Brown estimated a "village of only 20–25 structures" with only a "possible four to eight persons per cabin, . . . [which] would indicate a maximum of 80 to 200 persons." The size of the village suggests that it did not contain all of the surviving Michigamea and that others may have found refuge with relatives in other villages.⁵⁰

The Illinois must have concluded that their situation had become even more desperate when they learned that their allies and defenders, the French, had betrayed them by exposing them to the Fox and their other enemies among the northern tribes. The first reports of the involvement of French Commander Macarty were treated as unfounded rumor by the French. Macarty might be best described as an alcoholic with a bad temper; he was also irascible, arrogant, tactless, and inconsiderate. He was quite incapable of addressing the problems faced by France, and the governors of New France and Louisiana complained about his failures with the Indians. Bossu, it should be noted, denied the accusation against Macarty.⁵¹

Evidence implicating Macarty more directly, however, is rather convincing, if not conclusive. On July 26, Le Chat Blanc, the

Sauk chief, "secretly told the [Illinois] prisoners [he released to the Peoria] that it was the French who were the cause of the attack." The Wabash tribes also reported, "It was the French who caused them [the Illinois] to be eaten by the tribes."⁵²

Macarty certainly had enough motives to implicate him in a scheme to betray the Illinois. He understood that "the country of the Illinois, in a sense was the keystone of the arch of French imperialism" and that the Illinois Indians remained "a key factor in any anti-French enterprise in the Illinois country." The French position was precarious, and Macarty hoped to prevent further deterioration when he sought to keep the Illinois from joining an English conspiracy involving the tribes of the Wabash Valley. English rum and trade goods were more available, often of better quality, and even cheaper than French brandy and trade goods. Therefore, the Illinois were considering abandoning their longtime French allies.⁵³

As might have been expected, no documentary evidence has been found that explains how Macarty encouraged the Fox to attack. He understood the enmity that the

⁴⁹Bossu, p. 81; Brown, "The Search for the Michigamea Indian Village," *Outdoor Illinois*, March, 1972, pp. 19, 26; Orser, p. 66.

⁵⁰Brown, "Waterman Site Report," MS, rev. ed., pp. 94–96, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, Ill.

⁵¹Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 663–64; William P. McCarthy, "The Chevalier Macarty Mactigue," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 61 (1968), 53; Bossu, p. 80. See also Pease and Jenison, eds., p. xiiiii.

⁵²Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 672, 669.

⁵³Pease and Jenison, eds., p. xv; Jablow, pp. 208–16; Alvord, pp. 188, 234–35. See also R. David Edmunds, "Old Briton," in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, ed. Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 1–20.



Saukie and Fox Indians on the Beach near St. Louis by Karl Bodmer. *The Sauk joined the Fox on the 1752 raid against the Illinois Indians.*

Fox, the other northern tribes, and the Illinois shared for one another as a consequence of raiding warfare practices, and it seems reasonable to assume that he played on that animosity. He might easily have had an agent explain that French forces would not protect the Illinois if the Fox launched a covert strike of massive proportions. Of course, the assault had to be conducted with the secrecy that accompanied traditional

raiding expeditions. The French plan to retain Illinois support would have been frustrated if the Fox attack had become exposed prematurely because the French would have been required to oppose it.⁵⁴

In a September 2, 1752, letter to Pierre Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnal, the governor of Louisiana, Macarty reported news from Father Alexis F. X. de Guyenne, a Jesuit missionary who worked among the Kaskaskia. The priest indicated "that the chiefs of all the tribes were invited to meet together in the spring [of 1753] to deliberate on the means of defending themselves, and avenging themselves for the tyranny of the French who stirred them up against each other to their destruction."⁵⁵ For two reasons, Macarty probably felt constrained

⁵⁴Bossu, p. 80.

⁵⁵Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 685.

to include information in his dispatches that indicted him. First, the charges were known by and reported on by other Frenchmen, like Guyenne; second, the information could have served as a means of informing his superiors of activities he considered shrewd without directly acknowledging culpability.

On June 28, 1754, two years after the attack, Father Michel Baudouin praised a young officer named Pierre Joseph de Neyon de Villiers as a possible successor to Macarty. The Jesuit saw Neyon as "the only one proper in present circumstances when it is a question of regaining the confidence of our domiciled [Illinois] Indians which has been much abated, not to say entirely lost, by the attack. . . . We tried to persuade them that this blow was made without our knowledge," claimed Baudouin, "but they learned from the very people who attacked them that it had been brought about by [Macarty,] the commandant of the Illinois [country]." The priest hoped that "replacing the man who caused this disgrace, will be very proper to make them forget it."⁵⁶

The argument that focuses on Macarty's role in the attack is based on circumstantial evidence involving motive, means, opportunity, and Jesuit testimony, but it is quite plausible, and it is reinforced by the commander's own statements. The charges leveled against Macarty by the northern and Wabash tribes might be discounted because of the conflicting interests that would have seen them quite satisfied with any Illinois alienation from the French. The accusations of the Jesuits, especially Baudouin, require the most serious consideration, however. Illinois suspicions concerning the French role in the attack of 1752 and other raids appear to have been based on "some truth."⁵⁷

By encouraging the Fox attack, Macarty made the Illinois even more dependent and retained their services for France. Demoralized, the Illinois saw no alternative

to the French. Continued enmity separated them from the northern tribes, and French policy would not permit them to join the Wabash tribes. Furthermore, the Illinois had been allied with, related to, and living among the French for too long to sever ties because of the betrayal by one official. The Illinois, however, did become much more suspicious. While explaining the reasoning behind an Illinois effort to enlist the Osage as an ally after the 1752 raid, Macarty noted that "the Illinois are . . . always in fear of some surprise from us."⁵⁸

Illinois suspicions were based on the losses sustained in the attack. The sixty-one Illinois killed or captured in the 1752 raid represented a 15 percent loss for the combined village population of four hundred and a 3 percent loss for the total Illinois population of two thousand. To place the loss in perspective, anthropologist John C. Ewers concluded that "during many years" small raiding parties, rather than larger forces, caused "some [Plains] tribes . . . [to lose] more than one percent of their total population from war casualties."⁵⁹ The 1752 raid-in-force was so devastating because it had such a heavy impact on the Illinois population at the same time that frequent raids against them took their customary toll. The Illinois had launched large-scale or communal war operations during the seventeenth century, when their village populations had been so much larger, but the tribe was

⁵⁶Baudouin to L'Isle Dieu, p. 874.

⁵⁷Pease and Jennison, eds., p. xiv.

⁵⁸Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 680.

⁵⁹Ewers, "When Red and White Men Met," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 2 (1971), 142.

always unable to organize tribal—as opposed to village—expeditions.⁶⁰

Scholars have not agreed about the consequences of warfare on the depopulation of the Illinois. Influenced by eighteenth-century sources that emphasize the impact of war with the Iroquois or the northern tribes,⁶¹ both anthropologists⁶² and historians⁶³ have singled out warfare as among the most important factors that explain the Illinois decline. For example, Emily J. Blasingham pointed out that “it was the almost annual raids both by and on the Illinois which had a more lasting effect in persons killed and wounded, in destruction of food and property, and on the morale of the group as a whole.”⁶⁴

A useful approach to examining the reason behind the impact of warfare on depopulation is to focus on the French unofficial, but effective, campaign to make the Illinois *dependent* on them because dependency made the Illinois more vulnerable to depopulation factors—such as warfare, disease, and alcoholism—than tribes that maintained a more independent status.⁶⁵ Macarty

set the Fox and their allies loose upon the Illinois in order to demonstrate to the latter that they relied on French protection in order to survive. Before the assault, the commander had emphasized their vulnerability to attack when he addressed the Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Michigamea in March of 1752. “You are small, and your tribe few in number,” he declared. “Up to now the Frenchman has sustained you. The Foxes, Sauk, Potawatomi, Sioux, and many others ask to eat you up.” Macarty tied Illinois problems with him to their “trade with the English.” He asked them to “remember that the Frenchman [Macarty] has preserved you as long as you can remember, that he has saved your lives, that he has redeemed you from the house of your enemies, that he has held them back from you.”⁶⁶ Macarty clearly understood the Illinois dilemma. The Peoria, the most independent of the Illinois subtribes, survived more successfully than the others because they—like the Fox—maintained a geographical, religious, and political distance between themselves and the French.⁶⁷

⁶⁰Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, p. 233; Temple, pp. 39, 40, 45.

⁶¹“Journal of Diron d’Artaguiette, Inspector General of Louisiana, 1722–1723,” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 71; Bossu, p. 77.

⁶²Blasingham, extending anthropologist Alfred Louis Kroeber’s hypothesis, pp. 394–95; Callender, “Illinois,” p. 678; Walthall and Benchley, p. 80.

⁶³Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (rpt.; New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 56, 441; Alvord, p. 235; J. H. Schlarman, *From Quebec to New Orleans: Fort de Chartres* (Belleville, Ill.: Buechler Pub. Co., 1929), p. 296; Vogel, p. 35; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 42; Indian Claims Commission, “Commission Findings Continued,” in *American Indian Ethnohistory* (New York: Garland, 1974), III, 103.

⁶⁴Blasingham, p. 394.

⁶⁵Hauser, “Illinois,” p. 135; see also Callender, “Illinois,” p. 678; Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, pp. 223–67 passim.

⁶⁶Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 541–42.

⁶⁷Physical separation was probably the most important factor. Although the Peoria were numbered by the French as among their “domiciled” allies and lived close to a few Frenchmen at Lake Peoria, the French presence was not substantial (see Macarty to Vaudreuil, p. 677). In 1752 the vicar-general of Canada and the Mississippi noted, “Religion is among the strongest motives that tie the Indian to us” (see L’Isle Dieu to Rouillé, March 28, 1752, p. 568). Despite French reliance on the impact of Christianity, the religious independence of the Peoria was quite significant (see Hauser, “Illinois,” p. 135; Palm, p. 94). See also John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529–1854* (1855; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973), pp. 424, 426, 428; Temple, p. 36.

The 1752 raid displayed changes in Prairie Siouan warfare practices. The raid was traditional because of its declared revenge motive; the implementation of stealth, surprise, and ambush tactics; a goal that emphasized enemy prisoners and deaths; a rapid withdrawal; and the torture of captives. The changes brought by contact included firearms, larger expeditions, a night attack, women and children included among prisoners, taking captives in sufficient numbers to discourage pursuit, and a cheering rather than mourning leader, despite the loss of four members of the expedition.

The defensive ramifications of the Fox attack became painfully clear to the Illinois. Because of their dependence, the Michigamea had made themselves more vulnerable to attack by neglecting their customary defensive precautions. They failed to locate their village in the open, or close enough to the French fort, or to fortify it with palisades, and the security sought by combining village populations had not proven adequate. After the attack, many families left for refuge with relatives among the Peoria and other tribes, some on the Great Miami River.⁶⁸ The Peoria, who earlier had expected to take refuge in the French fort at Lake Peoria, now built a stockade around their village.⁶⁹ The Michigamea moved their village even closer to Fort de Chartres, built it

out in the open, and erected a palisade around it.⁷⁰ Finally, the Illinois sought a defensive alliance with the Osage.⁷¹

Macarty's probable role in promoting the Fox attack illustrates how effective the French could be in manipulating their Indian allies, both the northern tribes and the Illinois. The dependent Illinois remained cautiously loyal to the French because their options were so limited, but the ultimate impact of the raid was quite devastating. Between 1750 and 1765, when the British assumed control over the Illinois country, "the Cahokia and Tamaroa villages totally lost any distinct village identity." Eventually, "the Cahokia merged into the Peoria," and the Michigamea were absorbed by the Kaskaskia.⁷² Most of the Peoria began moving west of the Mississippi in 1765, and today the lineal descendants of the Illinois identify themselves as Peoria and make their homes in Oklahoma.⁷³

⁶⁸Vaudreuil to Rouillé, p. 727.

⁶⁹Bossu, p. 108.

⁷⁰Brown to author, Aug. 9, 1991.

⁷¹Macarty to Vaudreuil, pp. 817, 790, 824; Bossu, p. 82; Vaudreuil to Rouillé, p. 727.

⁷²Brown, *Cultural Transformations*, pp. 259, 258; Callender, "Illinois," p. 673.

⁷³*Ibid.* See also Blasingham, pp. 212, 391.