

OSAGE GENDER:
CONTINUITY, CHANGE, AND COLONIZATION, 1720s-1870s

BY

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Abstract

This study demonstrates how the Osage structured their society based on gender complementarity, and although life certainly changed in the face of French, Spanish, and United States colonization, the Osage maintained this gender construction and resisted complete colonization through the nineteenth century. Osage rituals clearly demonstrate gender complementarity. Their worldview stressed duality and defined women and men as necessary pairs. Men provided and protected; women created. The Osage employed a sexual division of labor, and each gender achieved status and power in distinct ways. Gender difference did not imply hierarchical difference between the sexes. Rather men and women cooperated to ensure tribal perpetuation and success.

Gender complementarity proved one of the most stable aspects of Osage society throughout colonization. In the eighteenth century, the Osage developed one of the most expansive trading systems in North America. Scholars argue that once the Osage began trading with the French, they increased their hunting to obtain more hides and furs, expanding the male role in society at the expense of the female role. This dissertation disproves such declensionist assertions about the status of Osage women in their society. During the eighteenth century, the Osage achieved regional dominance through the work of women, in agriculture and hide processing, and men, in raiding and hunting. When the United States expanded farther west during the nineteenth century, Osage regional hegemony deteriorated. Yet, federal Indian policy's contradictions facilitated Osage

resistance to colonization. While missionaries attempted to change lifeways, federal support for the hide trade encouraged the Osage to maintain historic gendered work as both a spiritually relevant and economically successful social organization. Once removed to Kansas, a volatile environment and increasing settler depredations facilitated further resistance to missionization and the civilization program. Therefore the Osage spent their time hunting and processing hides, a far more successful survival strategy in this environment. Colonization initiated some changes to Osage life, but women were not increasingly subordinated to men. As long as Osage cosmology and subsistence followed the patterns developed before colonization, gender roles remained intact.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Instead of worshipping the Great Spirit, as we supposed, from their frequent use of the word Woh-kun-dah, which we were told meant the Great Spirit, we find that they have four principal deities, viz: the sun, the moon, the earth, and thunder. To each of these deities they apply the word Woh-kun-dah, to express the divinity and providence of each. The sun, they say, is God, because it gives light, warmth, and fertility. The moon is God, because, as they imagine, it presides over the propagation of mankind, and of animals. The earth is God, because it nourishes and supports them. And thunder, they say, is God, because it causes rain. Besides these, they have many inferior deities, the number and names of which we have not yet learned. On the whole, we conclude that they have no correct idea of the one Supreme Being; and that they are a people given to idolatry.¹

—Union Mission Journal for January-February 1822

Though the Protestant missionaries did not realize it, they recorded the integrated view of the universe embodied in Osage life and ritual. The ancient Osage *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* (priesthood), defined *Wa-kon-da* (Mysterious Power) as the source of all life. The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* concluded *Wa-kon-da's* creative power manifested in the procreative relationship between the feminine earth and the masculine sky giving birth to all terrestrial life. In order to ensure the continuity of tribal life, the Osage appealed to *Wa-kon-da* for aid by organizing the tribe as a mirror image of this union of the dual cosmic forces, most notably evidenced by gender complementarity.²

¹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 1 (July 1822): 16.

² Francis La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Two Versions of the Child-Naming Rite," *Forty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1925-1926)* (1928): 29-30; Francis La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," *Thirty-ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of*

* * *

Osage gender construction contradicts the theory of universal female subordination discussed in one of the premier introductions to feminist anthropology, *Woman, Culture, and Society*. In Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo's contribution to this text she argued there is a universal dichotomy between the domestic and public spheres and everywhere men's activities in the public sphere are given more cultural value than women's activities in the domestic sphere. In addition, Sherry B. Ortner's chapter in this text argued that everywhere culture is deemed superior to nature. Men are associated with culture, but women are universally subordinated because they are viewed as "closer to nature" due to their role as mothers.³

Scholars studying Native North American women and gender have responded to these arguments ever since. Although Indigenous groups did not construct gender identically, similarities existed. The compilation *Women and Power in Native North America* explained how Indigenous gender constructions generally stressed "complementarity rather than inequality." Complementarity referenced "balanced reciprocity" meaning the worlds of men and women, though distinct and different, were not recognized as hierarchical, and both men and women cooperated to ensure tribal success and survival. Even in cultures that

American Ethnology (1917-1918) (1925): 96; Francis La Flesche, "The Symbolic Man of the Osage Tribe," *Art and Archaeology* 9(February 1920): 69.

³ Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), 17-19; Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), 73, 83-84.

valued prestige and hierarchy, social domination and submission did not define interpersonal relationships, including those between men and women. Instead status derived from a person's excellence in their work, not from the type of work they performed. Indigenous cosmologies frequently characterized complementarity through mythological women and men or feminine and masculine forces. In Native North American societies women and men had different forms of power and therefore exercised authority and influence in different ways. At the same time, Indigenous cultures exemplified a gender continuum based on behavior not biology, yielding alternative roles. Native North America, therefore, provided evidence disproving the universality of female subordination.⁴

My dissertation demonstrates how the Osage structured their society based on gender complementarity and although life certainly changed in the face of colonization, they maintained this gender construction and resisted complete colonization. Though many historians have examined Osage economics, politics, and religion, my research fills a gap in this scholarship concerning gender. Osage historiography has primarily emphasized the lives of men. Throughout most of the colonial period, women constituted the majority of the Osage population and their activities played a central part in every aspect of tribal existence.

Cosmology defined Osage men and women as necessary pairs and understanding

⁴ A "deemphasis on hierarchy and interpersonal dominance" does not "imply either equivalence or equality." Therefore an examination of Indigenous gender roles should not be conducted in terms of Western conceptions of gender, nor viewed as an inherent opposite to dominant gender constructions. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, eds., *Women and Power in Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 14, 77-78, 96-97, 230-49.

this illuminates why all Osage people resisted outside attempts to change their lifeways.⁵

This research complements the work of historians who demonstrate how Indigenous societies resisted marginalizing women by finding alternatives or merging Euro-American expectations with more culturally relevant gender roles. Nancy Shoemaker and others in the compilation *Negotiators of Change* provided multiple examples of women and men creatively confronting changes in their societies due to European contact, increased trade, entrance into a market economy, intermarriage, and the federal civilization program. Throughout colonization, Indigenous peoples subverted patriarchy and maintained significant aspects of pre-colonial roles. In Shoemaker's article "The Rise or Fall of Iroquois Women," she examined how women's "political rights, economic roles, and individual freedoms changed in the context of colonization." All Seneca people lost power when relegated to ever-diminishing reservations, but she did not find evidence that women were increasingly subordinated to men. In fact, she found that significant aspects of Seneca women's position in society survived colonization. Shoemaker concluded that the Seneca preserved certain aspects of

⁵ Some of the predominant texts on the Osage include: Willard H. Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992); Willard H. Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Gilbert C. Din and Abraham Phineas Nasatir, *The Imperial Osages: Spanish-Indian Diplomacy in the Mississippi Valley* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Garrick Alan Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, University of Oregon Anthropological Papers No. 5 (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1973); Garrick Alan Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

women's positions in society, preventing their social relations from emulating their Euro-American neighbors.⁶

Previously scholars examined Native women in terms of high pre-contact status eventually sabotaged by colonization. Theda Perdue, in *Cherokee Women* argued this old approach led to a “declension model,” which did not account for persistence of historic gender roles or communal values in post-contact Indigenous communities. Perdue focused on “gender in the process of cultural change,” showing that eighteenth and nineteenth century Cherokee women incorporated certain aspects of Euro-American culture into their lives “without fundamentally altering values or totally restructuring gender.” Perdue’s research indicated that for most Cherokee women, European contact and the expansion of the United States did not yield total cultural transformation but rather “remarkable cultural persistence.” Colonialism impacted the Cherokee through war, disease, land cessions, trade, and the U.S. civilization program, that altered the lives of men “far more profoundly than they did those of women.”⁷

With tribes confined to reservations, missionaries and federal agents used work and education programs to teach children and adults Euro-American culture and gender roles. Betty Bell, in her historiographical article “Gender in Native America,” focused on how federal Indian policy attempted to change Native worldviews and she identified the construction of gender as the “constant and

⁶ Nancy Shoemaker, "The Rise or Fall of Iroquois Women," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 3 (Winter 1991): 39-40, 45-46, 52; Nancy Shoemaker, ed. *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁷ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 7-9, 186.

critical site in the detribalization of Native peoples.” Clearly, as Perdue has argued, these federal efforts required a cultural transformation of fundamental values and beliefs, which many Indigenous peoples resisted. Even as Indigenous groups adopted new technologies, political systems, and religious forms, they did so by incorporating them into historic belief systems. Colonizers focused on changing Native peoples, but maintenance of gender roles proved one of the primary obstacles to colonization.⁸

In the eighteenth century, the Osage developed one of the most expansive trading systems in North America. Kathleen DuVal, in *The Native Ground*, argued the Osage did this by incorporating Europeans into “local patterns of land and resource allocation, sustenance, goods exchange, gender relations, diplomacy, and warfare.” With a relatively large population (over 10,000) and French alliance, DuVal described the Osage as “far more successful than either France or Spain at building a mid-continental empire.” This differed markedly from the Great Lakes “middle ground,” where refugee or displaced Indigenous groups and the French accommodated one another, establishing trade alliances that served to unite disparate tribal identities. The Osage preferred to maintain their sovereign identity, violently subjugating their Indigenous and European neighbors, in order

⁸ Betty Bell, "Gender in Native America," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip Joseph Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002), 216. Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 185-86, 89. For more on incorporation based on Indigenous belief systems see, Richard White, "The Cultural Landscape of the Pawnees," in *Kansas and the West: New Perspectives*, ed. Rita Napier (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "King Philip's Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (October 1994); Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

to maintain their exclusive trade relations with the French. Therefore, DuVal argued Osage hegemony constituted a “native ground.” Once the Osage began working with the French on the Mississippi River, they expanded their hunting efforts to obtain more deer and bison products to trade for European goods, expanding male opportunities for prestige. Though Osage women continued agricultural and hide production, DuVal asserted “their place probably became less central than in the past.”⁹

This dissertation disproves such declensionist assertions about the status of Osage women in their society. The following chapters demonstrate how the Osage incorporated new people, technologies, and trade into their historic belief systems, preserving gender complementarity. Clearly colonization changed Osage life, but in many ways the Osage traditional leadership determined the rate and form of such changes to maintain essential cultural values. Historian Willard Rollings, in his several studies on the Osage, described how this flexible culture allowed the Osage to confront conditions of crisis and chaos created by colonization and United States expansion while sustaining “their own self-defined, cultural-spiritual framework,” which I argue included gender roles.¹⁰

In order to examine continuity and change in Osage gender roles, I must first establish a “cultural baseline.” Theda Perdue used this same methodology in

⁹ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 4-5, 12, 103-07, 27; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 7; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 7-8.

her examination of Cherokee women. There is no doubt the Osage experienced extensive cultural change prior to European contact and identifying “traditional” culture is somewhat of a misnomer. But to determine the baseline for this study I will, like Perdue, use the ethnohistorical approach of “upstreaming.”¹¹ William N. Fenton based this approach on the assumption that “major patterns of culture remain stable over long periods of time, producing repeated uniformities.” Thus historians can follow cultural constructions from the known ethnological present to the less well-known past. Of course, one must be aware that the meanings of rituals can change over time, especially as Indigenous peoples experienced colonization.¹²

I utilize early-twentieth-century anthropological records of Osage rituals to determine my cultural baseline. In 1910, an Omaha man Francis La Flesche, employed by the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), produced an exhaustive study of Osage ritual. For this work, La Flesche went beyond the descriptive nature of other BAE publications in order to emphasize the meaning of Osage religious beliefs. He contended that depictions of Indigenous myths, rituals, and legends frequently obscured true meanings. In his works on the Osage, he wanted to demonstrate their highly complex cosmology, religious organization, and ritual structure.¹³ With this goal and his Indigenous background, La Flesche’s

¹¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 8.

¹² William N. Fenton, "Indian and White Relations in Eastern North America: A Common Ground for History and Ethnology," in *American Indian and White Relations to 1830: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 21-22.

¹³ Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, 7, 11-12, 17.

publications prove a unique resource and provide a reasonable foundation for creating the cultural baseline.

Scholars often criticize BAE ethnographies as biased sources in documenting gender constructions. The Bureau usually sent one male ethnographer, with the aid of an interpreter, to interview one or a few middle-aged or elderly men on a reservation. Native men, typically excluded from women's daily or ceremonial activities, proved inadequate sources for women's roles. Although beset with some of these problems, La Flesche's unique background and inclusion of female subjects facilitated his more substantial discussion of Osage ritual and thus women's roles within them.¹⁴

Omaha and Osage were mutually intelligible languages and La Flesche interviewed Osage informants in their native tongue. The Omaha, as one of the five cognate Dhegian-Siouan tribes (in addition to the Osage, Ponca, Kansa, and Quapaw), also resembled the Osage in tribal organization and religious rites. Because of his personal knowledge of Omaha traditional life, La Flesche intrinsically understood many aspects of Osage cosmology minimizing opportunities for misinterpretation in his ritual documentation. There is some question as to whether the sacred knowledge La Flesche recorded predated 1700 and the entrance of French traders. Nevertheless, La Flesche's sources indicate

¹⁴ Alice B. Kehoe, "The Shackles of Tradition," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 53-55.

significant aspects of gender complementarity, women's power within their community, and alternative gender roles.¹⁵

The Osage traditionally believed that *Waxpegthe* (supernatural punishments), such as accidents or sudden death, resulted from the irreverent transfer of sacred knowledge. When La Flesche began the majority of his research in 1910, most of the Osage had converted to Peyotism. Therefore, many of the former priests no longer took part in Osage religious rites, removing these restrictions that previously prevented the transfer of religious knowledge. La Flesche's eleven principal male informants had privileged access to historic sacred knowledge because of their past initiations into the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* (priesthood).¹⁶

Unlike many other ethnographers of this time, La Flesche also had female informants. One of them, Mon'-ci-tse-xi, provided information on the traditional uses of corn. And another, Hon-be'-do-ka dictated chants and songs associated with her role as a ceremonial weaver.¹⁷ With his innate tribal knowledge,

¹⁵ Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, 18; Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 35; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 105-06, 27.

¹⁶ Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, 19-26; Francis La Flesche, "Tribal Rites of Osage Indians," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 68, no. 12 (1918): 87.

¹⁷ La Flesche, "Tribal Rites of Osage Indians," 86-90; Francis La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," *Forty-fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1927-1928)* (1930): 694-95; Francis La Flesche, "Ethnology of the Osage Indians," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 76, no. 10 (1924): 104-05.

language skills, diverse informants, and explicit goal to delineate the meaning of ritual in Osage society, La Flesche produced invaluable cosmological sources.¹⁸

These rituals clearly demonstrate that the Osage constructed gender based on complementarity rather than inequality. The union of masculine and feminine forces in Osage cosmology underscored the lack of hierarchical difference between the sexes. Men provided and protected; women created. This meant men hunted and engaged in warfare to protect their homes and families. Women bore children, cultivated crops, gathered wild foods, built lodges, dried meat, cured and tanned hides, prepared meals, and manufactured clothing. Women and men, therefore, cooperated to ensure tribal perpetuation and success.

In the eighteenth century, the Osage incorporated Europeans into Native systems of dominance and exchange. Once the Osage claimed exclusive French trade, they altered their social organization to facilitate commercial hunting.¹⁹ Increased raiding, warring, hunting, and hide processing did not require a reorganization of gender roles. In the expanding hide trade, both men's and women's work in procuring and processing hides gained additional economic importance. The Osage responded to increased male absence and mortality in this

¹⁸ La Flesche employed three forms in presenting his five major ritual studies: 1) "free English translation of the intoned or recited parts of the rituals;" 2) Osage language transcriptions of dictaphone recordings from his informants; 3) literal English translation, as close as possible to the original. La Flesche chose to include the Osage translations so "the educated Osage may read the rituals of his ancestors in his own language unconfused by the English translations." At the same time, La Flesche conceded the difficulty in literal English translation because, in ritual, the Osage used a different form of their language, incorporating figures of speech and metaphors to fully convey ceremonial ideas. Hence, the free English translation, which formed the bulk of each documented ritual, yielded the most comprehensive description for non-Osages. Francis La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," *Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1914-1915)* (1921): 54-55.

¹⁹ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 5, 104-05.

trade by adopting matrilocality and polygyny. Women's sexual freedom and availability for divorce precluded female subjugation in this context. As trade became increasingly competitive in the late-eighteenth century Osage women also increased their status and that of their kin through intermarriage with European traders.²⁰

In the nineteenth century, Osage regional hegemony deteriorated as United States colonization relocated eastern Indigenous groups to Louisiana territory, closely followed by Euro-American settlers. Warfare, particularly with the Cherokee, severely disrupted Osage life. Needing continued trade with the United States for self-defense and economic stability, the Osage remained at peace with the Americans. Peace eventually culminated in Protestant missionization that tried to assimilate the Osage people into Euro-American culture, requiring a fundamental abandonment of traditional cosmology including gender complementarity. Federal Indian policy's contradictions, however, undermined the civilization program. U.S. trade relations with the Osage provided economic incentive not to abandon historic lifeways. Through the 1820s Osage villages remained in tribally-selected sites that supported Osage subsistence, trade, and gender roles, leading to the failure of missionization.

Removal to Kansas presented significant challenges as the Osage attempted to survive in a new environment. Federal officials funded the Catholic

²⁰ For discussions on similar changes in women's roles see, Michael Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," *Western Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2000); Linea Sundstrom, "Steel Awls for Stone Age Plainswomen: Rock Art, Religion, and the Hide Trade on the Northern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist* 47, no. 181 (May 2002).

Osage Mission and these missionaries hoped to succeed where their Protestant predecessors failed. But the volatile weather frequently devastated Osage and Euro-American agricultural in the region. Thus, the Osage spent increasing amounts of time hunting, a far more successful subsistence strategy in this environment. In the 1830s-1850s the Osage supplemented their economy with federal annuity payments and trade with the Comanche on the western plains. This additional income ended at the same time Kansas territory opened for settlement. Settler depredations and the variable climate discouraged the Osage from exchanging hunting for sedentary agriculture, again undermining missionization. As long as Osage subsistence followed the patterns developed in the eighteenth century, gender roles remained intact.

Gender complementarity proved one of the most stable aspects of Osage society during colonization. In the early eighteenth century the Osage used their large population and location between French traders and the prairie plains resources to develop “one of the largest trading systems in North America.”²¹ The economic success of such exchange resulted from the complementary work of men and women. At the same time, Osage men and women both contributed to subsistence through hunting and agriculture respectively. United States expansion eventually compromised Osage regional hegemony. However, the civilization program failed primarily because subsistence remained successful enough to

²¹ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 103.

allow traditional cosmology and complementary gender roles to remain the dominant feature in Osage life.

Chapter 2

Cosmology and Complementary Gender Roles

It would appear from the story handed down by the old men, in mythical form, of the origin of the people, that the Noⁿ-hoⁿ-zhiⁿ-ga arrived at the idea that life was conceived between two great fructifying forces – namely, the sky and the earth – and continued forever to proceed therefrom. This conception the Noⁿ-hoⁿ-zhiⁿ-ga not only expressed in the mythical story mentioned above, but also in dividing the tribe in two parts – one to represent the sky and the other the earth – they further emphasized this symbolic expression by requiring the men belonging to one division to take wives from among the women belonging to the other division. This tribal arrangement did not arise from an idle thought, but from a belief, born of a long study of nature, that such was the means employed by Wa-koⁿ-da to bring forth life in bodily form.¹

—Francis La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men”

Osage cosmology reproduced in Osage society the duality found in nature.

The rituals Francis La Flesche recorded demonstrate how every aspect of tribal life, including gender construction, unified the two primary cosmic forces. Men and women functioned in complementary roles, each spiritually conditioned for different tasks, yet equally significant in tribal survival and perpetuation.

To understand how Osage gender roles changed over time, particularly in terms of European and American colonization, I will first examine Osage cosmological gender characterized in ritual. The accompanying songs, chants, and symbols requested divine aid in perpetuating tribal and individual existence and defined how the Osage related to the natural and spiritual worlds. Ritual defined and reiterated the tribe’s religious and social organization including how

¹ La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men,” 48.

men and women related to one another.² The Osage worldview stressed duality and defined women and men as necessary pairs. Each gender achieved status and power in distinct ways, again indicating gender difference did not imply hierarchical difference. The Osage employed a sexual division of labor without assigning greater importance to either gender's work.

* * *

The Osage belong to the Dhegian-Siouan language family, which also includes the Kansa, Omaha, Ponca, and Quapaw. Similar language, oral history, and religious and social organization, indicate these five nations previously lived as one group east of the Mississippi River. Scholars disagree, however, on Dhegian history prior to French colonization. Some argue Dhegian peoples lived along the lower Ohio River until sometime in the seventeenth century, when they migrated westward in search of game. Other scholars contend aggressive eastern tribes, possibly the Iroquois, forced this westward migration. Recent comparisons of Osage and Omaha rituals with Cahokia Mounds archeological data suggest the Dhegian peoples lived at Cahokia. The Osage Tribal Museum also states the Osage "are believed to be descendants" of Cahokia residents. All Dhegian oral

² La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 530, 77, 675; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 49-50. Historian Walter Williams, in a generalized discussion of ritual and religion, stated that American Indian religions emphasize "the spiritual nature of all things. To understand the physical world, one must appreciate the underlying spiritual essence." For Indians, everything had a spirit. One thing's spirit was not superior to another, including humans. "The function of religion is not to try to condemn or to change what exists, but to accept the realities of the world and appreciate their contributions to life. Everything that exists has a purpose." Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 21.

traditions describe a westward migration, across the Mississippi River, after which the five groups eventually separated from one another.³

According to Osage tradition, in the early days of their tribal life the people united for protection with little formal organization. At some point, a group of men known as the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* (Little Old Men) assembled in an attempt to formulate tribal governance. Osage rituals repeatedly reference the tribe's "move to a new country." This phrase referenced instances where the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* changed the tribe's religious, social, or political organization in order to accommodate new realities facing the nation. Various events prompted such changes, including incorporating new people, creating civil government through dual hereditary chieftains, defining war and peace ceremonies, and arranging war expeditions.⁴ The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga*'s power within Osage society stemmed in part from their willingness to accept and direct tribal cultural change by incorporating new elements into the older cosmological framework.⁵

³ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 43-45; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 5, 98-100; Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, 27-28; Marvin D. Jeter, "From Prehistory through Protohistory to Ethnohistory in and near the Northern Lower Mississippi Valley," in *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, ed. Robbie Franklyn Ethridge and Charles M. Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 216-18; Alice B. Kehoe, "Osage Texts and Cahokia Data," in *Ancient Objects and Sacred Realms: Interpretations of Mississippian Iconography*, ed. F. Kent Reilly and James Garber (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 249-50, 60; *The Osage Timeline*, (Pawhuska: Osage Tribal Museum, February 12, 2010).

⁴ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 60-62; John Joseph Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 53-56, 75-79.

⁵ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 7-8, 28; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 66-67, 70-71.

One “move to a new country” involved a great flood that forced the Osage to disperse from their central village. Subsequently the nation remained divided into five villages or bands based on where each one of these groups waited out the flood: Big Hills, Upland-Forest, Thorny-Thicket, Down-Below, and Heart-Stays. The nation retained two tribal hereditary *Ga-hi-ge* (chiefs) representing each moiety. But after the flood, villages reorganized into self-sufficient entities, each with a set of internal *Ga-hi-ge*, *Non'-hon-zhin-ga*, and full clan representation. In many ways the five villages operated as ceremonially, politically, and economically independent communities into the colonial period.⁶

The Osage eventually built these villages where the Little Osage, Marmaton, and Marais des Cygnes rivers came together forming the Osage River, in present-day western Missouri (Figure 2). They lived a semi-sedentary life in large villages, each with over one hundred lodges and more than one thousand residents. The Osage utilized the diverse prairie plains environment and subsisted on agriculture, gathering, and hunting. Women’s work involved constructing lodges, raising sizeable quantities of corn, beans, and squash, gathering roots and other edible plants, collecting and preparing salt, bearing and rearing children, manufacturing all of the clothing and utensils of their household, and processing hides.⁷ Men hunted deer, elk, bear, bison, and other small game and

⁶ Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 18-19; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 144-45; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 21.

⁷ Josiah Gregg and Max L. Moorhead, ed., *Commerce of the Prairies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 419; Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, to Headwaters of the Mississippi River, through Louisiana Territory, and in*

manufactured the tools necessary for hunting and war.⁸ The Osage annual cycle began in April when women planted their crops in the fertile flood plains along the rivers near their villages. In late May or early June the entire village traveled to the plains where men hunted and women tanned and cured the meat and hides. By late July they returned to the villages so women could harvest the crops and store the surplus for winter. In late September or early October the villagers again traveled to the plains where they hunted until cold weather set in and they followed game animals to sheltered parts of the prairies or forests. When they obtained enough meat to last through May, they returned to the home villages to begin the cycle again.⁹

The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* also pondered the source of life. Over time, they observed a connection between celestial cycles and seasonal vegetation changes on earth. They concluded the procreative relationships between the sky and earth, sun and moon, and the morning and evening stars, provided the continuity of life. The ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* believed celestial bodies moved under the guidance of a governing power, which they called *Wa-kon-da* (Mysterious Power). *Wa-kon-da's* silent, invisible, and creative power gave life to the sun, moon, stars, and earth, maintaining eternal cycles in perfect order. As the source of life, wherever

New Spain, During the Years 1805-6-7, ed. Elliott Coues, vol. 2 (New York: F. P. Harper, 1895), 532; Francis La Flesche, *A Dictionary of the Osage Language*, Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of American Ethnology. Bulletin 109; (Washington: U.S. Govt. print. off., 1932), 38; Victor Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), 251; Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory During the Year 1819. With Occasional Observations on the Manners of the Aborigines*. (Philadelphia: Thos. H. Palmer, 1821), 193.

⁸ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 21, 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-21; Andrea A. Hunter, "An Ethnoarchaeological Analysis of the Women's Role in Osage Society" (Thesis, University of Missouri, 1985), 3-4.

Wa-kon-da moved, there was life. The mysterious presence of *Wa-kon-da* made the sun, moon, stars, earth, humans, insects, animals, grasses, trees, and water indivisibly one.¹⁰ As the life source, the Osage continually requested *Wa-kon-da*'s divine aid for continued tribal existence.¹¹

From these observations the ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* gradually formulated the organization of the tribe that, in its entirety, symbolized the universe, and thus *Wa-kon-da*, in all its visible aspects (Figure 1). The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* recognized the duality of masculine and feminine forces throughout nature and characterized this duality in all Osage rituals. They concluded that all life resulted from the union of the two greatest physical forces, the masculine sky and the feminine earth, which combined to give life to all things. They divided the people into two moieties – *Txi-zhu*, representing the sky and *Hon-ga*, representing the earth – that united to ensure the continuity of tribal life.¹² *Txi-zhu* men married *Hon-ga* women and vice versa, binding together both divisions as inseparably as *Wa-kon-da* bound the sky and earth.¹³

¹⁰ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Two Versions of the Child-Naming Rite," 29-30; La Flesche, "The Symbolic Man of the Osage Tribe," 69; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 51.

¹¹ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 49.

¹² The *Hon-ga* (earth) moiety had two subdivisions representing the earth's dry land and water.

¹³ La Flesche, "The Symbolic Man of the Osage Tribe," 69-70; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 47-48, 51, 59; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 302, 60-61; Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 141; Francis La Flesche, "Right and Left in Osage Ceremonies," in *Holmes Anniversary Volume: Anthropological Essays* (Washington D.C.: J.W. Bryan Press, 1916), 278. Exogamy symbolically bound the two tribal divisions, but it also physically prevented tribal inbreeding.

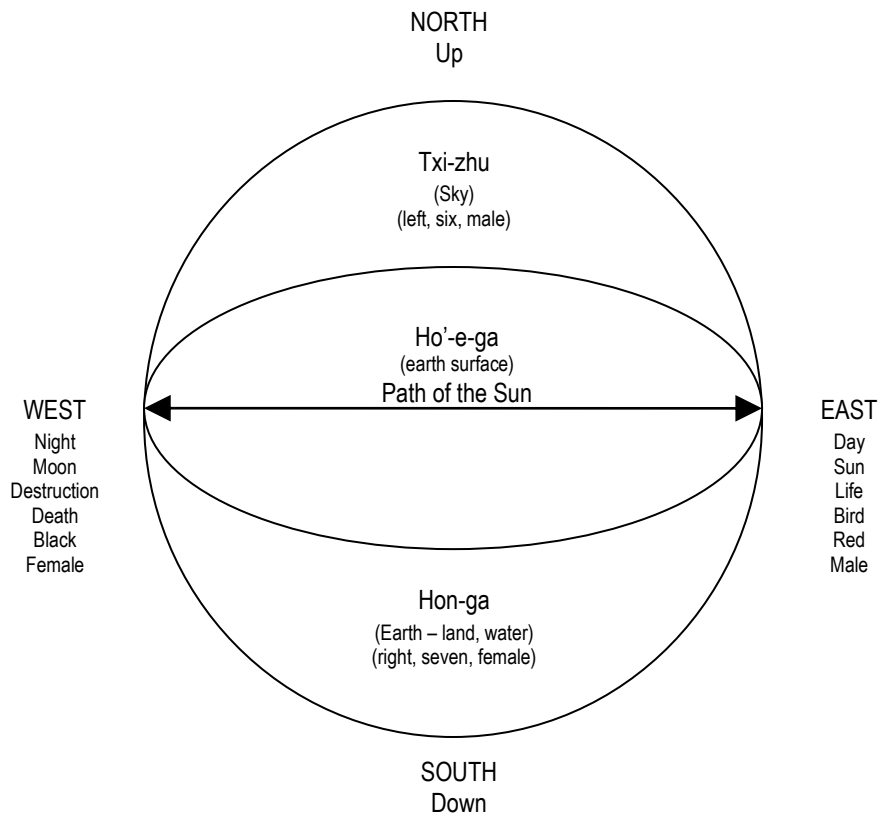


Figure 1. Structure of the Osage cosmos (adapted from Garrick Alan Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995)).

Virtually every aspect of Osage life involved ritual. Public rituals, such as daily prayer vigils, continuously conveyed and reiterated tribal values. Every Osage person, every day appealed to *Wa-kon-da* for a long and healthy life. *Wa-kon-da's* mysterious creative power embodied in the night brought forth the day – “two mystic powers that forever follow each other.” Therefore night was the “mother of day.” Sunrise symbolized the merging of masculine and feminine forces and life’s beginning and end. At dawn, men, women, and children cried, lamented, and wailed for *Wa-kon-da's* life-giving aid and to mourn the deceased.

Frequently the Osage repeated these prayers at mid-day and at dusk, following the sun's path of life across the horizon.¹⁴

Priesthood rituals contained exclusive portions of Osage sacred knowledge and history entrusted to a particular clan. When the ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* designed the tribal organization, they subdivided the *Txi-zhu* (sky) and *Hon-ga* (earth) people into 24 clans.¹⁵ Each clan had unique creation stories, life-symbols, and sacerdotal functions. Thus performing tribal ceremonies required every clan's participation and reinforced tribal solidarity. An exclusive group of initiated priests, who shared the name *Non'-hon-zhin-ga*, maintained clan-specific ritual knowledge, divided into seven degrees (Table 1).¹⁶

¹⁴ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 49-50; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 364; Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 208; Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, vol. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 493-94.

¹⁵ There is some discrepancy in the number of clans. Anthropologist Garrick Bailey identified 24 clans, while Francis La Flesche identified 21. La Flesche qualified the three remaining clans as "separate when speaking of the gentile order [social organization] for the purpose of commemorating certain portions of the story of the tribe." However, historian Willard H. Rollings argued the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* increased the number of clans over time, "perhaps to incorporate new people into the group or to expand the number to accommodate a growing population." Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, 40-41; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 52-54; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 67.

¹⁶ The priesthood was divided into seven degrees (or rituals) and initiation into any one degree constituted priestly status (see Table 1). Priesthood initiation was costly. Initiates spent seven years collecting various valuables, food supplies, and seven different animal skins. Even with familial aid, procuring the skins proved difficult, particularly prior to the introduction of horses and guns. Therefore, few men joined the priesthood and even fewer obtained more than one degree. La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 202; Francis La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, No. 101 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), 52; Bailey, ed. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, 49-50. The seven animal skins required as an initiation fee included: mottled lynx, gray wolf, male puma, male black bear, male buffalo, elk, and deer; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 46.

Table 1: Seven Ceremonial Degrees of Osage Clan Priesthood Rites ¹⁷

1. Wa-zhin'-ga-o, The Rite of the Shooting of a Bird
2. Non'-zhin-zhon Wa-thon, The Songs of the Vigil Rite
3. Wa-xo'-be A-wa-thon, The Singing of the Wa-xo'-be Songs
4. Ca Tha-dse Ga-xe, The Making of the Rush Mat Shrine
5. Mon'-sha'kon Ga-xe, The Making of the Sacred Burden-Strap
6. Wa-do'-ka We-ko, The Call to the Ceremonial Distribution of Scalps
7. Ni'-ki Non-k'-on, The Hearing of the Sayings of the Ancient Men

Francis La Flesche transcribed the second, third, and seventh rituals from this list, which contained Osage tribal history, cosmological organization, and significant discussion of gender roles.

Priesthood rituals described the duality observed in nature, represented in a sexual division of labor and gender complementarity. Rituals required male and female participation and only married men joined the priesthood. Much of the information on women's roles came from "instructions for the wife" covering topics including planting and gathering, weaving sacred shrines, singing and dancing, and sending courage to warriors.¹⁸

Osage rituals identified men as the providers and protectors of their communities. Men hunted game for food, shelter, and clothing. In addition, the continued existence of the tribal unit depended on men's courage and valor:

...the life granted by Wa-koⁿ-da must be protected. The woman, the children she bears, the home she builds for their shelter and comfort, the fields she cultivates must be guarded; the land upon which the tribe depends for plant and animal food must be held against invasion; and the life of the individual and of the tribe itself

¹⁷ This is the ceremonial order of the degrees for the *In-gthon'-ga* (Puma) clan of the *Hon-ga* (Earth/dry land) moiety. La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 152-53.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 185, 270; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 285, 301-02; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 624; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Two Versions of the Child-Naming Rite," 54; La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 59, 242.

must at all times be defended from enemies. The burden of this protection rested upon the men of the tribe...¹⁹

Osage men specifically protected women and everything they produced.²⁰ In order to do this, men sometimes engaged in warfare. The ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* regarded war as a "necessary evil," consequently heroic deeds defending the village and fields counted as more prestigious *O-don* (war honors) than aggressive acts against an enemy.²¹

Humans bore responsibility for their survival, but they could not sustain life without *Wa-kon-da's* aid.²² Two fundamental aspects ensured tribal perpetuity: courageous warriors protecting the villages and women adding to the population through bearing children.²³ The Osage sought *Wa-kon-da's* assistance in all of these endeavors. Men appealed to *Wa-kon-da* for the "gift" of courage, symbolized by carrying the sacred bird-hawk into battle (discussed below). *Wa-kon-da's* greatest demonstration of divine favor manifested in continued fertility and children, indicating *Wa-kon-da's* enduring desire for Osage existence.²⁴

Osage ritual defined women as "the channel through whom all human life must proceed and continue."²⁵ The Osage revered and adored women because *Wa-kon-da* favored them with the mystic power of creating human life and

¹⁹ La Flesche, "The Symbolic Man of the Osage Tribe," 70.

²⁰ La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 24-25; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 288.

²¹ When a warrior ceremonially recounted his war honors, he had to recount one *O-don* for protecting villages and fields for every *O-don* he earned in attacking an enemy. La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 228; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 288.

²² La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 66-67, 365.

²³ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 681-82.

²⁴ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 364-65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 238.

performing the sacred duty of motherhood.²⁶ This is exhibited in the word for woman, “*wa-k’o*”, a derivative of “*Wa-kon-da*.”²⁷ Though men engaged in warfare, the ancient *Non’-hon-zhin-ga* deemed women – as warrior mothers – equally important in war achievement. But women, as life channels and creators, could not associate with death, and did not physically participate in hunting or warfare.²⁸

Part of the female creative role included agriculture. In formulating and performing the tribal rites the ancient *Non’-hon-zhin-ga* emphasized women’s mystic power as the life channel, mirrored in plant form by corn (*ha’-ba*). The duty of planting, cultivating, and harvesting corn belonged to women.

This sacred duty of attending to the maize has a dual significance: it is the woman who conceives and brings forth the child to its place in the physical world. No one is, therefore, better fitted than she to perform the sacred symbolic act of preparing the soil, planting therein the seed of the maize, and helping it come into the light of day.²⁹

Corn needed to bear food, which the children had to eat, and women knew the plant required the same kind of motherly care to bring it to fruition.³⁰ Though

²⁶ In the tenth buffalo song in the “Songs of Wa-xo’-be,” La Flesche stated the song expressed “a feeling of reverence for woman, a feeling akin to that of adoration, for it is she upon whom nature has imposed the sacred duty of motherhood.” La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo’-Be,” 635.

²⁷ The Osage Tribal Museum has an exhibit relating to the structure of the cosmos and definitions of associated terms: “*Wa-kon*” means “mysterious,” and “*da*” means “great,” therefore “*Wa-kon-da*” means “great mysterious.” The term “*wa-ko*” meaning “woman” refers to women’s mysterious creative power. “*Ni-ka*” means “man.” *Osage Cosmos*, (Pawhuska: Osage Tribal Museum, February 12, 2010); La Flesche, *A Dictionary of the Osage Language*.

²⁸ La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil,” 238, 88, 302; La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo’-Be,” 635, 81-82; La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 24-25.

²⁹ La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo’-Be,” 624.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 635; La Flesche, “The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil,” 288.

corn held the greatest significance, Osage women cultivated numerous crops, including squash and beans.³¹

Priesthood rituals included specific instructions for women concerning corn cultivation. A man could assist in clearing fields, but “he must work under the direction of the woman who is the owner of the field.” When clearing and planting, a woman ceremonially painted the parting of her hair red to represent the path of the sun, the path of life, and the paths of all living things converging toward the woman and her children, providing them with food, shelter, and clothing. This painting appealed to *Wa-kon-da* for aid in food procurement and as a request for strength and health in maintaining the tribal population through reproduction. During planting a woman sang requests to *Wa-kon-da* for fruitful harvests. Planting ceremonially commenced when each woman created seven hills “facing” the sun, placing the first grain of corn in the first hill, two grains in the second hill, and so on through the seventh, covering each hill with a footprint. After the seven sacred mounds, the woman sowed the remainder of the corn without ceremony. The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* considered planting corn a sacred and powerful act because, when the grain awakened to active life, it forced its way through the woman’s footprint, into life-giving sunlight flourishing to abundance. In her role as planter, the woman appealed to *Wa-kon-da* for supernatural aid in

³¹ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 284, 88. La Flesche also mentioned *wa-ton'* (squash) cultivation, which also counted as a sacred food; La Flesche, "Ethnology of the Osage Indians," 107.

achieving corn's growth to maturity and for male success in hunting and warfare.³²

In addition to cultivation, Osage women gathered wild plants to feed their families. Osage women gathered large quantities of *tse'-wa-the* root (water chinquapin or *Nelumbo lutea*) and dried it for winter use.³³ The ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* deemed the water chinquapin a sacred life symbol, and like corn, women gathered it with appropriate ceremony. A woman painted the parting of her hair as a sign of gratitude to *Wa-kon-da* for the sun passing over her and the water chinquapin, shedding life-giving power. After arriving at the body of water where she gathered the root, the woman cut a willow pole to use as a staff for support and aid in digging. She used willow because the Osage believed this tree never died and also symbolized life. Before gathering, a woman touched a bit of mud to her head and body as an act of reverence to the earth, wherein lay *Wa-kon-da's* life-giving power. When she found the first root, she rubbed her arms and body with it in order to receive the blessing of life and then threw that root back as a wish for the plant's continued growth. Then she gathered the remaining roots without ceremony.³⁴

³² La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 194-96, 288; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 294-95; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 624.

³³ Also known as the American lotus, this plant grows along the muddy shores to eight-foot depth of ponds, streams, and rivers. The plant reproduces through seeds, rhizomes (rootstock), and tubers. The rhizomes are stems that creep along the muddy bottom of the body of water and the tubers can reach ten inches in length and over half a pound in weight. Susan Post, "Species Spotlight: American Lotus," *Illinois Natural History Survey Report* (July-August 1997).

³⁴ La Flesche, "Ethnology of the Osage Indians," 104, 06; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 195; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Two Versions of the Child-Naming Rite," 55. La Flesche also mentioned women gathering *cta-in'-ge* (persimmon), which along with corn, squash,

Part of the female creative role involved serving as the *wa-xo'-be* (portable shrine) weaver and caretaker. The *wa-xo'-be* consisted of three ceremonially woven envelopes protecting the sacred bird-hawk, a central figure in war rituals and priesthood ceremonies. The bird-hawk symbolized courage and aggressiveness because "he is gifted with swiftness of wing and makes his attack with unerring precision, striking his prey so that it is unable to flee."³⁵ The sacred bird-hawk, a child of the sun and the moon, also symbolized the dual masculine and feminine forces in Osage life. The ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* determined the *wa-xo'-be* woven envelopes held "equal dignity and sanctity with the object to be enclosed therein."

The part they [*Non'-hon-zhin-ga*] gave the woman to perform at this particular stage of the ceremony has reference, not only to her sacerdotal office as weaver of the shrine proper that symbolizes life in all its forms, celestial and terrestrial, but to the reverent care she bestows upon the shrine when it passes into her keeping, because of the initiation of her husband into the mysteries of the tribal war rites. The part also has reference to woman's position as representative of the potential power of the tribe through its warriors who are born of woman, therefore, in the warlike achievements of the tribe her part is regarded as no less important than that of the men who face death upon the fields of conflict.³⁶

The *wa-xo'-be* shrine in its entirety symbolized life in all its forms; the upper portion of the woven rush case represented the sky, the lower portion the earth, and the inner part (where the bird-hawk lay) represented the space between the

and water chinquapin constituted the Osage's most valued plants because of their dependable food supply. La Flesche, "Ethnology of the Osage Indians," 106-07.

³⁵ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 296.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 302.

sky and the earth (*ho'-e-ga*), where human life existed until death (Figure 1).³⁷

Men carried it into battle as a symbol of courage, but the rest of the time a priest's wife reverently cared for the *wa-xo'-be* – a significant honor and responsibility.³⁸

Specific women, ceremonially chosen and trained through initiation into the “The Making of the Rush Mat Shrine” ritual (Table 1), wove new *wa-xo'-be* envelopes when needed. Typically the weaver required four days to complete the task. She partitioned off her home to seclude herself during this ceremonial work so she could hold vigil and prevent others from seeing the sacred designs. The weaver's process constituted a materialization of spiritual powers and her seclusion prevented anyone from improperly or irreverently using her methods. On all four mornings, the weaver continually sought *Wa-kon-da's* aid in her work and displayed her vigil by smearing one piece of dirt on the left (associated with *Hon-ga*, or earth, moiety) and another on the right side (associated with *Txi-zhu*, or sky, moiety) of her forehead – representing the unification of nature's dual forces. Next she sang a song of longing and sorrow for her deceased relatives, known as the “Weaver's Lamentation.” Finally, before beginning her work, the

³⁷ La Flesche, "Right and Left in Osage Ceremonies," 281-82; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 531, 681-82; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 301. The sacred bird-hawk represented life for the Osage and death for all their enemies. “The part that represented the earth and the sky had conventional designs woven into the matting and symbolized the clouds that move between the sky and the earth. The portion of the matting that symbolized the day is left undyed and is of a very light color. Across the entire width of this portion of the mat are woven, equidistant, narrow dark lines that represent night. The pocket in which were to be placed the hawk and other sacred articles was made by doubling that part of the matting having on it the symbols representing sky and the earth...The space within the pocket symbolizes the expanse between the earth and the sky into which all life comes through birth and departs therefrom by death.” La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 683. La Flesche, "Right and Left in Osage Ceremonies," 281-82.

³⁸ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 681; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 192.

weaver recited the *wi'-gi-e* (ritual chant) of the rushes, which figuratively described the sun, moon, sky, and phases of night and day because, upon completion, the woven rush mat embodied the visible universe's power. As a weaver, this woman signified her role as life channel and creator.³⁹

Beyond their role as mothers, cultivators, gatherers, and weavers, women also sent goodwill and good wishes on behalf of male relatives at war.⁴⁰ Prior to war expeditions, women sang and danced in the "Songs of Triumph," during which a priest's wife and *wa-xo'-be* weaver hung the sacred bird-hawk from her back as commander's wore it during battle. Other women accompanied her, dancing and carrying the other *wa-xo'-be* items. This ritual singing honored the woman's specific role as sacred weaver and caretaker of the shrine. When dancing and singing, the women struck the ground with their loom poles (used as an upright of a loom frame), beating time to the music. At the end of the song, the women violently threw down their poles so they lay pointing toward the west; indicating the women's appeal to *Wa-kon-da* for the destruction of their enemies and the maintenance of the tribe.⁴¹

When a warrior needed the *wa-xo'-be* for a war expedition, he appealed to its female caretaker for her "good wishes for success" in this endeavor. After she

³⁹ The weaver learned this chant through her initiation into the "The Making of the Rush Mat Shrine" ritual, which La Flesche did not transcribe. La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the *Wa-Xo'-Be*," 687, 93-95, 97-99.

⁴⁰ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 185.

⁴¹ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 301-03; La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 59-60. The women who typically danced in this fashion served as official weavers at the performance of ceremonies of the "The Making of the Rush Mat Shrine," one of the seven degrees of priesthood initiation that La Flesche did not fully transcribe. La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 59.

provided the *wa-xo'-be* and the warrior left on his journey, this woman spent several days symbolically painting and rubbing soil on her face by which she sent sympathy, courage, and her wishes for his success. Every night when she washed off the paint and soil, she recited, "I remove from my head the soil of the earth and wipe my hands upon the body of the chief of our enemies, that he may come to his death at the hands of our warriors." In this way the ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* determined the woman sent her aid to the warrior and all his comrades carrying her *wa-xo'-be*.⁴² Women other than *wa-xo'-be* caretakers also took part in ceremonies to send their good will on behalf of warriors. Symbolically painting their faces, women invoked *Wa-kon-da's* aid in overcoming the enemy. Primarily, though, these rituals ensured that women's courage accompanied and assisted warriors in battle.⁴³

After successful warriors returned to the village, women and men often participated in the scalp dance. Women, the principal actors in this dance, "pretend[ed] to be men," stripped to the waist, and painted and decorated their bodies in the male war styles. Women carried scalps, bows, arrows, tomahawks, war pipes, and other war items and danced while men, also in male war dress, danced close to the women, reciting their victories in battle. The Osage

⁴² La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 192-94. By doing these things the woman performed her specific ceremonial duties of the "Painting for the Sending of Courage" and "The Vigil by which the Woman Sends Courage." La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 285.

⁴³ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 284-85. This ceremony was entitled, "Symbol of the Sending of the Will."

considered the scalp dance a demonstration of both women and men's courageous success in warfare.⁴⁴

Two of the seven clan priesthood rituals La Flesche did not record – “The Making of the Rush Mat Shrine” and “The Making of the Sacred Burden-Strap” – may have included even greater discussion of women's roles in Osage society (Table 1). In one source, La Flesche briefly mentioned that women participating in the “Dance with Loom Poles Song” also served as the official weavers in the Rush Mat ritual. The weaver and the woven rush mat case played a significant part in all the rituals associated with the *wa-xo'-be*. A separate ritual dedicated primarily to weaving this rush mat would provide additional information on the role of women concerning sacred objects and possibly warfare.

Osage tribal historian John Joseph Mathews contended, “[w]hat the *wah-hopeh* (sacred bird-hawk) was to the warrior, the *mo'n-sha-ko'n*, the burden strap was to the woman.” La Flesche also briefly described the sacred burden-strap as “the *wa-xo'-be* of the woman,” considered “the emblem of her duty as a homebuilder.” Women generally used burden-straps to carry firewood; however, a sacred burden-strap served a ceremonial rather than functional purpose:

Each woman who was highly respected had a ceremonial one, which her husband had made for her ceremonially, and this was never actually used, but as a symbol was hung by the side of the entrance to the lodge; on the left if her father was *Tzi-Sho*, and

⁴⁴ Only women whose husbands or male relatives brought back scalps participated in the dance. Edwin James, *Part 2 of James's Account of S.H. Long's Expedition, 1819-1820*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 15, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1905), 85; J. Owen Dorsey, “An Account of the War Customs of the Osages,” *The American Naturalist* 18, no. 2 (February 1884): 127-28.

right if *Hunkah*. The ceremony of the strap was number three in the seven holy ceremonies.⁴⁵

Some of La Flesche's informants contended the sacred burden-strap held greater sanctity than the sacred bird-hawk. When a man wanted to honor his wife and increase her social standing, he commissioned a symbolic burden-strap ceremonially made for her. It would again seem a full account of the Burden-Strap degree would provide additional insight into many aspects of Osage women's roles.⁴⁶

* * *

Osage gender construction clearly stressed complementarity rather than inequality. The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* organized tribal life based on the dual masculine and feminine forces they observed in celestial and seasonal cycles. Rituals required both male and female participation and defined a sexual division of labor without giving greater importance to either gender's work. Women and men accessed power in different ways, none of which involved dominating one another. Women's influence, also a form of power, impacted tribal survival and warfare success. Osage gender, though polarized by male and female, existed

⁴⁵ Emphasis original; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 324.

⁴⁶ A burden strap included a broad buffalo hide band worn across the chest and long thongs tying a wood bundle on a woman's back. La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 59-61; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 152-53; La Flesche, "Right and Left in Osage Ceremonies," 282; Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 339-40.

along a continuum, allowing for alternative gender roles, which still fit into the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga's* conception of the universe.⁴⁷

Tribal survival depended on a sexual division of labor, which exhibited how autonomy equated interdependence in many Indigenous societies. The male domain included hunting and warfare, while the female domain included food cultivation, gathering, and reproduction. The Hidatsa employed a sexual division of labor demonstrating how such task systems gave males and females “access to information, knowledge and materials unavailable to the opposite sex.” Hidatsa men and women independently controlled the decision-making related to their work. But it is “problematic to determine the relative status of men and women in this type of system without arbitrarily attaching more importance to the experience and activities of males...or females.” Osage rituals reaffirmed the necessity and interdependence of both genders to ensure the survival of the tribe, without giving their separate and autonomous duties comparative significance over one another.⁴⁸

In Native North America, social domination and submission did not define relationships between men and women. Within Blackfoot society, women held more innate power than men because they were “born with power to reproduce

⁴⁷ Daniel Maltz and JoAllyn Archambault, "Gender and Power in Native North America: Concluding Remarks," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 231, 33-34, 45-49.

⁴⁸ Janet D. Spector, "Male/Female Task Differentiation among the Hidatsa: Toward the Development of an Archeological Approach to the Study of Gender," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 95. For further discussion of gender complementarity, particularly in myth, see, Victoria D. Patterson, "Evolving Gender Roles in Pomo Society," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 129-32.

both the human and the material components of the social world.” The inability of Blackfoot men to bear children indicated their lesser reproductive power, translating into their inability to make tipis, clothing, or meals. Blackfoot men provided the raw materials, such as semen or slaughtered bison that women processed into useful parts of society. Even though they did not have innate power, Blackfoot men could achieve power on earth, either through spiritual aid (acquired in vision quests) or in hunting and warrior success.⁴⁹

Osage women and men accessed power much like their Blackfoot counterparts. Men provided raw materials and they gained honor and power through heroic deeds defending the village and women’s fields. Osage boys spent their entire childhood and adolescence learning successful hunting techniques and war strategies in order to excel at these pursuits during adulthood. The Osage revered women as the human embodiment of *Wa-kon-da*’s life-giving power. Osage women, after puberty, could create human life. They did not need training or education to reproduce. Therefore, Osage women and men accessed power in different forms: women were born with it and men had to earn it.⁵⁰

Many Native cultures depicted complementary gender roles in ritual. The Cherokee constructed gender and created community based on principles

⁴⁹ Alice B. Kehoe, "Blackfoot Persons," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 120-21; Kehoe, "The Shackles of Tradition," 69. Kehoe stated, that although Blackfoot men and women performed complementary tasks in procuring and processing food/goods, "men must strive harder to become respected adults" because they did not have women’s innate reproductive power. Kehoe, "Blackfoot Persons," 121.

⁵⁰ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 195, 238; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 624, 35; Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 338-39; La Flesche, *War Ceremony and Peace Ceremony of the Osage Indians*, 228.

embodied in the myth of *Kana'ti* and *Selu*. *Kana'ti's* hunting and *Selu's* horticultural understanding provided the model for how Cherokee men and women “occup[ied] separate categories that opposed and balanced each other.”⁵¹ The ancient *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* organized the Osage tribe, clan structure, and gender roles based on the duality of masculine (sky) and feminine (earth) forces they observed in nature. All tribal rituals reiterated the union of these two forces. Tribal welfare depended on both men providing for and protecting the community, as well as women bearing children and producing food.⁵² Cosmological differences between Osage men and women did not imply hierarchical differences between the sexes.

Osage rituals required female and male participation. All three priesthood rituals La Flesche recorded contained roles for a priest's wife and any female relatives she chose to accompany her. For example, the “Rite of Wa-xo'-be” instructed women on the specific ceremonial aspects of corn cultivation. In the “Sayings of the Ancient Men” ritual, the wife learned ceremonial painting to ensure a long life and consistent food supply for her children. The “Rite of Vigil” priesthood degree initiated female members, specifically widows filling the position vacated after their husband's death. The widow paid the same fee as a male initiate and recited the *wi'-gi-e* (ritual chant) used by her husband's clan. The widow omitted all references to the destruction of life because, as a woman,

⁵¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 13-17.

⁵² La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 47-48, 51, 59; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 301-02; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 681-82.

her role as life channel still required an avoidance of such topics and activities. Similar evidence on Blackfoot “men’s societies” initiating wives and female relatives indicated women’s power even in typically male roles. Yet, none of La Flesche’s sources claim the *Non’-hon-zhin-ga* excluded women and since at least two unrecorded priesthood rituals primarily involved women, it is likely the priesthood at some point included female members.⁵³

Women also exercised significant influence in Osage society as warrior mothers and *wa-xo’-be* caretakers and weavers. The sacred *wa-xo’-be* symbolized courage and men carried it into battle, but a woman served as the *wa-xo’-be*’s daily caretaker. In preparation for a war expedition, women sang and danced, appealing to *Wa-kon-da* for the destruction of their enemies and continued Osage survival. To commence a war expedition, a warrior subsequently appealed to the caretaker for both the *wa-xo’-be* and for her “good wishes” during his absence. Then, the caretaker spent days holding vigil to send sympathy, courage, and wishes for the warrior’s success. After war victories, women even dressed like men to celebrate the scalp dance. Women’s

⁵³ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 238, 85; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 140, 44, 270-72; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 624; Kehoe, "The Shackles of Tradition," 68. The fee necessary for initiation into the “Rite of Vigil” included various valued articles for the officers of the initiation, food for the other priests and seven different animals skins; La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 46-47. Willard Rollings argued “both women and men could acquire a degree if they could pay for it, although it seems that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only men participated; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 31.

involvement with the *wa-xo'-be* and warfare collectively referenced their role as warrior mothers, with equal importance in war victories.⁵⁴

Though polarized by male and female, Osage gender construction involved more than two genders. Distinct alternative genders existed between male and female, characterized by a lack of boundaries typically identified with the two predominant gender roles.⁵⁵ Alternative genders mirrored the *wa-xo'-be's* woven rush cases which depicted the masculine sky, the feminine earth, and the space between, where humans lived (Figure 1).⁵⁶ Several examples exist of Osage alternative gender individuals. In the 1890s, Black Dog (Shon-ton-ca-be), a one-time Osage principal leader, described several instances of Osage “men who become as women,” known as *mixu'ga* (instructed by the moon). If an Osage man dreamt he was a woman or carried cultivating implements, he would from then on dress like a woman and engage in female occupations. These dreams provided spiritual instruction or sanction for a biological man to occupy an alternative gender role. As Black Dog indicated, such individuals moved between the male and female roles:

There was a young man who had been out to fast many times. He had dreams which he thought were the kind that would make of him a man of valor. He went on the warpath and took with him a number of followers. They found the enemy, defeated them, and returned with many trophies. On the way home he got up a dance one night in honor of his victory. As he was dancing, brandishing his weapons and praising himself, an owl hooted near-by in the woods, and after each hooting the owl would say: “The leader is a

⁵⁴ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: The Rite of Vigil," 41, 192-94, 296, 302-03.

⁵⁵ Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, 81, 84, 242.

⁵⁶ La Flesche, "Right and Left in Osage Ceremonies," 282.

mixu'ga!" The people listened in amazement, and at last the leader cried: "I have done that which a *mixu'ga* could never do!" However, on reaching his home the young leader dressed as a woman and spoke as a woman. He married and had children. He was successful as a warrior, but when about to go to war he discarded his woman's clothing and dressed himself as a man.⁵⁷

A few missionaries and travelers similarly noted Osage "men" wearing women's attire and performing women's work.⁵⁸ In these alternative gender roles, Osage individuals lived between the dual masculine and feminine forces.

Evidence of Osage biological women in alternative gender roles is scanty and inconclusive.⁵⁹ This likely resulted from colonialism and observer bias, rather than an actual absence of such individuals.⁶⁰ On the plains, nineteenth-century Euro-American observers often could not differentiate alternative gender

⁵⁷ Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 132-33.

⁵⁸ John Bradbury, *Bradbury's Travels in the Interior of America, 1809-1811*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 5, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1904), 64-65; Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Aboriginal Tribes; Their Settlement within the Indian Territory, and Their Future Prospects* (Washington: William M. Morrison, 1840), 360-61; Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 234.

⁵⁹ A combined force of Comanche and Osage warriors attacked a U.S. army battalion along the Arkansas River in 1848. The commanding officer, W.B. Royall, reported "[w]e saw about one hundred yards from us during the fight a female who seemed to be their Queen mounted on a horse decorated with silver ornaments on a scarlet dress, who rode about giving directions about the wounded." But it is unclear if he saw a Comanche or Osage woman. "W.B. Royall to R. Jones, June 21, 1848," in *Miscellaneous Collections: W.B. Royall* (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Historical Society). Victor Tixier, a French traveler among the Osage in 1839-1840, repeatedly referenced an Osage "Woman Chief," but again it is unclear if this title stemmed from anything other than this woman's marriage to a village chief. Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 141, 219, 34.

⁶⁰ Anthropologist Evelyn Blackwood discussed how there are very few examples of alternative gender females among the plains tribes. She attributed this to the influence of expanded hide trade in the nineteenth century, increasing the need for female labor in hide processing and limiting their choice of occupation. There is ample evidence that alternative gender female roles historically existed in multiple plains tribes, but Euro-American observers either could not recognize any of these women, or did not find examples of them. Blackwood concluded female alternative gendered roles existed on the plains, but changes, particularly in the nineteenth century with European trade and expansion, limited the number of women who lived as men; Evelyn Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender in Certain Native American Tribes: The Case of Cross-Gender Females," *Signs* 10, no. 1 (Autumn, 1984): 36-39.

“females.” Likewise, increased need for female labor in the hide trade and population demise due to disease and U.S. expansion may have discouraged plains women from abandoning their material and biological reproductive capabilities. Certainly many other plains examples, including Blackfoot Manly-Hearted women or Lakota Winkte, indicate plains cultures allowed for “female” alternative genders. Thus it seems likely the Osage alternative gender roles incorporated biological women.⁶¹

* * *

Osage cosmology embodied the union of masculine and feminine forces in the universe. The sexual division of labor meant women and men performed different, separate, but equally important tasks. Women and men constituted necessary pairs and these complementary roles ensured tribal success and survival. The ability to dominate others did not determine gender status or power. Instead, women had innate power as the creators of human life, while men earned power through protecting and providing for women and children.

⁶¹ Ibid. For more on Blackfoot Manly-Hearted women and Lakota Winkte see, Beatrice Medicine, "'Warrior Women' - Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983).

Chapter 3

Colonial Trade, 1720s-1810s

I suppose there were a thousand souls in the camp, in the full and free indulgence of all the luxuries of their rude condition. Their position was deemed secure. There were none sick, and their supplies were abundant. The more aged warriors were not unmindful of a proper vigilance. The elder married women were busily employed jerking and curing on scaffolds, the flesh of the fat buffalo. The young men and maidens were flaunting around in small groups, dressed, painted and adorned in the highest style of fashion (their best apparel and finery they always reserve to be worn in their summer camps). The larger boys were herding and watching the thousand horses. The younger girls nursing and helping their mothers, whilst other swarms of children were swimming in the creek or gamboling over the beautiful green prairie. They were living most luxuriously on fat buffalo, elk, deer, marrow bones, tongues, hominy, beans, dried pumpkin, plums and other dainties. Mirth and hearty merriment prevailed. Never had I witnessed such general happiness in any community as prevailed here. It was truly an interesting scene to look upon.¹

—George C. Sibley, Fort Osage factor,
August 18, 1811

By the nineteenth century, some aspects of Osage life drastically changed; however, George Sibley's description of a Little Osage hunting camp in 1811 demonstrated aspects of cultural continuity. Even before the advent of colonial trade, entire communities abandoned permanent villages to travel on hunts. Men pursued game and protected the camp site, while women tanned the hides and cured the meat. The annual subsistence cycle still revolved around agriculture, hunting, and gathering. And men and women continued cooperating to ensure tribal perpetuation.

¹ George R. Brooks, "George C. Sibley's Journal of a Trip to the Salines in 1811," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 21(April 1965): 198-99.

European colonization presented new people, goods, challenges, and opportunities. Yet, all of these changes took place in the Osage cultural context, which stressed balancing and unifying the dual forces in the universe, to ensure *Wa-kon-da's* continued divine aid. During the eighteenth century, the Osage developed one of the largest exchange systems in North America by trading and later intermarrying with French colonists. Although trade increased male opportunities to earn prestige, it did not fundamentally alter Osage gender construction, or diminish women's innate reproductive power. The Osage incorporated new technologies and economic systems into their historical cosmology, maintaining gender complementarity.

A flexible culture and judicious leadership allowed the Osage to adapt to Europeans and their goods without undermining fundamental values. In Osage culture, men gained status through successfully protecting and providing for their families. Before colonization, men gained leadership status primarily based on heredity, rather than ability. The Osage social structure divided people into leader and commoner clans, with certain prestigious clans, sub-clans, and chieftainships fixed in tribal ritual and tradition. As the Osage world changed in the eighteenth century, the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* (priesthood) found ways to reward a man's individual achievements and limit internal strife by granting more autonomy to clans and providing additional avenues to political power. Thus the Osage population and leadership increasingly decentralized during the eighteenth century. Horses and firearms allowed smaller hunting and raiding parties to travel

farther from home villages. The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* also authorized smaller clan war parties, which did not require elaborate tribal ceremonies to carry out.²

While the Osage remained in self-selected village sites and retained trade dominance, they did not abandon the cosmological organization that garnered *Wa-kon-da's* favor and facilitated their success. When European traders arrived, Osage men expanded their traditional activities in hunting and raiding to monopolize regional exchange networks. To accommodate this, the Osage adopted matrilineal residence and polygyny without subordinating women. At the same time, women continued all of their pre-colonial production, including agriculture, and equally contributed to economic wealth by producing thousands of processed hides every year. In the late eighteenth century, regional power relations changed and Osage women solidified kinship ties by intermarrying with French traders to preserve tribal wealth and hegemony. The Osage economically, politically, and socially adapted to Europeans, manufactured goods, and commercial trade without dismantling core cultural values.

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² Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 7-8, 31, 64-66.

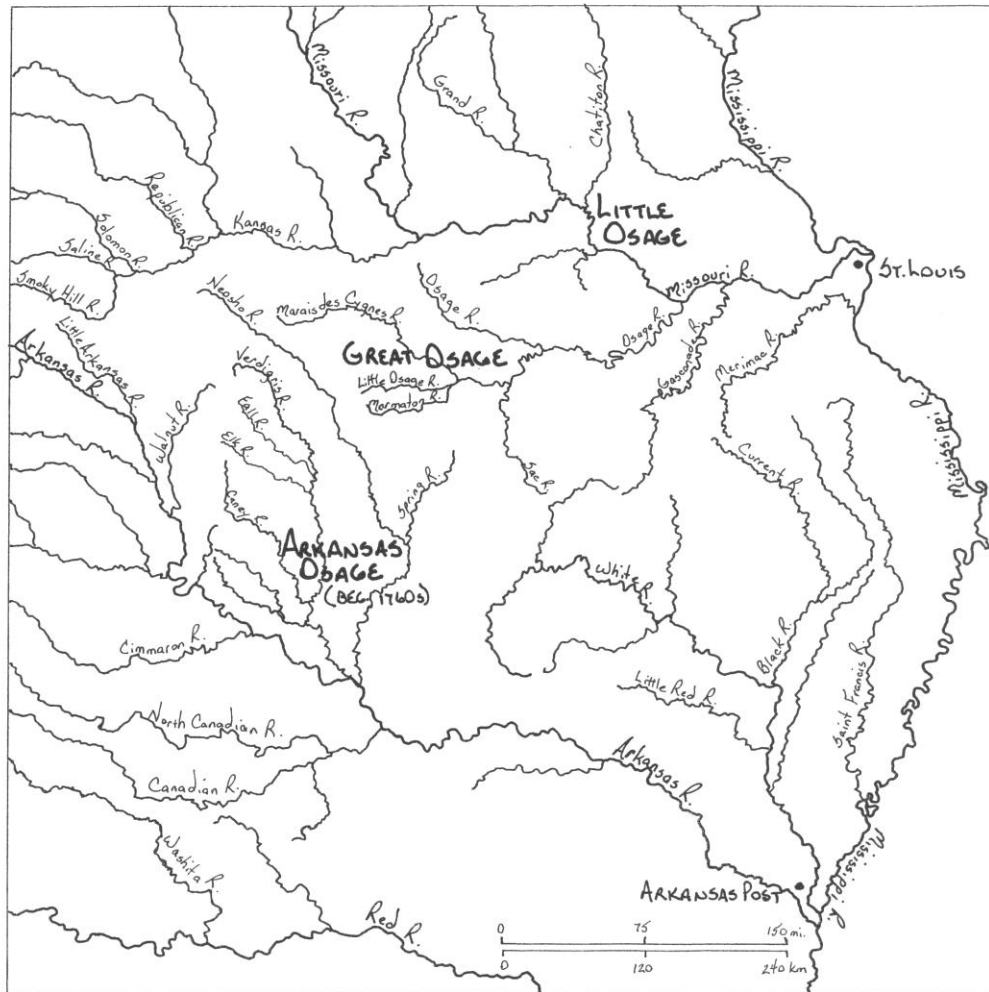


Figure 2. Osage village locations, 1720s-1810s (Artist, Denise Gerhart, 2010).

Before and after colonization, the Osage maintained an annual cycle and subsistence economy involving male hunting and female gathering and agriculture. Villages operated as ceremonially, politically, and economically self-sufficient communities. In pre-colonial inter-tribal exchange networks, the Osage traded surplus corn, squash, deerskins, and bison meat or robes for plains salt, Gulf coast seashells, and Great Lakes copper.³ European colonization significantly changed the scale of Osage trade but not the gendered procurement and production processes involved with exchange items.

Prior to the appearance of European settlers and traders, the Osage initially obtained manufactured goods through inter-tribal exchange systems. The horse, one of the earliest and arguably most important new trade items, reached the Osage at least by the 1680s. The Osage word for the horse, *ka-wa*, has questionable origin. Some scholars argue *ka-wa* roughly translated as “mystery dog,” while others contend the term referenced *Kaw-Thu-Wah*, or the Kiowa, believed to have first traded horses to the Osage.⁴ For other European goods, such as firearms, the Osage primarily depended on their Illinois and Missouri neighbors.⁵ Diplomatic relations with these groups provided European trade goods and protection from expanding and powerful eastern tribes.⁶ As early as

³ Ibid., 81-82.

⁴ Ibid., 82-83; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 126-28.

⁵ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 82, 88.

⁶ Willard Hughes Rollings, "Prairie Hegemony: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Osage, from Early Times to 1840" (Dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1983), 255.

1680, Osage envoys traveled up the Illinois River to trade with the French.⁷ By 1694 unlicensed French traders (*coureurs de bois*) exchanged goods in Osage villages, yet the Osage remained at an arms disadvantage without sustained and direct contact with French trading posts.⁸

To increase access to game and enhance trade, the Osage separated into three tribal divisions in the eighteenth century (Figure 2). The “Great Osage” remained in the pre-colonial village location, where the Little Osage, Marmaton, and Marais des Cygnes rivers merged to form the Osage River. The “Little Osage” moved north to the Missouri River sometime before 1719 to take advantage of rich hunting grounds and trade traffic on this river. In the 1760s, the “Arkansas Osage” moved south to the Three Forks region, where the Verdigris and Neosho Rivers joined the Arkansas River, to exploit Caddoan horses, furs, and slaves.⁹

Initial dependence on Illinois and Missouri middlemen for European goods made women’s agricultural products some of the Osage’s most accessible and desirable early trade items. Though hide and pelt production grew during the eighteenth century, agriculture remained central to Osage village subsistence and European trade. Many early Louisiana settlers relied on Native agriculture for

⁷ Louis Hennepin and Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America, Volume 1* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 177.

⁸ Jesuits and Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, vol. 64 (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), 170-71; Gilbert J. Garraghan, *Chapters in Frontier History: Research Studies in the Making of the West* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1934), 57-58; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 88-89; Rollings, "Prairie Hegemony: An Ethnohistorical Study of the Osage, from Early Times to 1840", 258.

⁹ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 21, 113, 35, 43, 95.

subsistence.¹⁰ Native villagers supplied the corn, meat, and other foodstuffs consumed at isolated colonial settlements, like the Arkansas Post (near the mouth of the Arkansas river), frequented by Osage traders.¹¹ In 1751 French officials lamented their colonists' disinterest in cultivation and without enough African slaves in the Illinois and Great Lakes settlements, food production remained in Native hands.¹² Those hands made the Illinois country into one of the most reliable food sources for French colonists through the Seven Years War. Osage women contributed to this agricultural trade by growing corn, beans, and squash in their home villages, traded to posts throughout the region.¹³ From there, food flowed south along the Mississippi River to New Orleans and north to outposts including Fort Ouiatenon, Fort Duquesne, and Fort Detroit, providing thousands of pounds of food annually.¹⁴

In the 1720s, the French built trading posts along the periphery of Osage territory, ending Osage dependence on other Native middlemen.¹⁵ Archaeological excavation of Osage villages indicated European traders supplied guns, beads,

¹⁰ Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 196.

¹¹ Nancy Maria Miller Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime, 1699-1763* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 269-70; Usner, *Indians, Settlers & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783*, 198; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 128.

¹² Theodore Calvin Pease and Ernestine Jenison, *Illinois on the Eve of the Seven Years' War, 1747-1755, Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*, vol. 29 (Springfield: Trustees of the State Historical Library, 1940), 377-79.

¹³ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 94.

¹⁴ Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime, 1699-1763*, 293, 97-98. Usner, *Indians, Settlers & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783*, 198.

¹⁵ Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime, 1699-1763*, 344-45. Some of these trading posts included Fort de Chartres, Fort Orleans, Fort Cavagnolle; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 89-91.

kettles, knives, square nails, awls, hoes, and axes.¹⁶ Nearby trading posts enabled the Osage to establish themselves as middlemen in the exchange between the French and Indigenous nations to the west and south. Everything the French wanted, the Osage could acquire in the west and south: horses, slaves, furs, skins, meat, and tallow. The Osage became major commercial hunters. French traders attempted to initiate trade relations with western and southern tribes; however, Osage warriors prevented, violently if necessary, any threats to their position as middlemen. Taking advantage of their large population (at least 10,000) and strategic location between the Mississippi River and the prairie plains, the Osage established their regional hegemony as the primary economic and military power in western Louisiana. By the 1750s, Osage-French trade expanded at the expense of their former Illinois trading partners, who complained that French traders saved all of their best goods for exchange with the Osage.¹⁷

A significant part of Osage trade dominance involved the fur and hide trade. To supply French traders, the Osage expanded their hunting territory over three ecological zones: plains, prairies, and the Ozark Mountains. This territory produced a wide variety of peltry and hides from elk, bison, bears, wolves, raccoons, foxes, wildcats, weasels, and muskrats. Osage hunting lands covered an estimated one hundred thousand square miles, encompassing all of present-day

¹⁶ Carl Chapman, "The Little Osage and Missouri Indian Village Sites, Ca. 1727-1777 A.D.," *The Missouri Archaeologist* 21(December 1959): 21.

¹⁷ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 106, 11, 16; Kathleen DuVal, "'a Good Relationship, & Commerce': The Native Political Economy of the Arkansas River Valley," *Early American Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 80-81; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 106-07, 09.

Missouri, half of Arkansas, and portions of Oklahoma and Kansas.¹⁸ Though the Osage hunted beaver, the mild winters in this region prevented local beavers from producing the thick pelts of their Canadian counterparts, lowering the exchange rate.¹⁹ The most lucrative hide trade derived from deerskins, which required more extensive female labor in tanning and trimming than beaver peltry.²⁰ In the 1740s the French shipped over 100,000 deerskins back to France, and in 1757 alone, the Osage traded over eighty packs of deer and bearskins.²¹

Without a doubt, the laborious and time consuming hide processing added to an Osage woman's workload. With a "chisel-like scraper" a woman removed any remaining flesh or fat from a hide and "planed the surface to an even thickness."²² Next she oiled it with a mixture of fat, brains, and liver and then rapidly pulled the hide through a small loop of sinew or rubbed it with a piece of bone or pumice stone to ensure uniform smoothness and softness.²³ Excavations of an eighteenth-century Little Osage village identified large flint scrapers used in hide processing as the most abundant Native-made artifacts in the entire site and

¹⁸ J. Frederick Fausz, "Becoming 'a Nation of Quakers': The Removal of the Osage Indians from Missouri," *Gateway Heritage: Quarterly Journal of the Missouri Historical Society* 21 (Summer 2000): 30; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 94.

¹⁹ Surrey, *The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Régime, 1699-1763*, 345, 47; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 93.

²⁰ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 93-94; Sundstrom, "Steel Awls for Stone Age Plainswomen: Rock Art, Religion, and the Hide Trade on the Northern Plains," 114.

²¹ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 94.

²² Tom McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 95.

²³ Carl Haley Chapman and Eleanor F. Chapman, *Indians and Archaeology of Missouri*, Missouri Handbook, No 6 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 1964), 101-03; Gregg and Moorhead, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 422-23; McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo*, 96.

iron awls as one of the most prolific European-made objects.²⁴ In addition to the commercially traded hides, Osage women continued their domestic production.²⁵

As one Euro-American observer noted after visiting an Osage village, “it is to their [women’s] industry and ingenuity, that the men owe every manufactured article of their dress, as well as every utensil in their huts.”²⁶ The majority of artifacts from an excavated Great Osage village site, inhabited before and after European colonization, pertained to women’s agriculture, food preparation, skin work, and weaving. This led one anthropologist to conclude, “the women’s role can be considered the dominating influence on the techno-economic system at Osage village sites.”²⁷

The expansion of commercial trade did not signify a decline in female status and women’s roles in processing hides gained additional economic importance. By the late 1700s, Osage hunters likely doubled or tripled the

²⁴ Chapman, "The Little Osage and Missouri Indian Village Sites, Ca. 1727-1777 A.D.," 14, 30; Chapman and Chapman, *Indians and Archaeology of Missouri*, 96-97; Carl Haley Chapman, *The Origin of the Osage Indian Tribe: An Ethnohistorical, Historical, and Archaeological Study*, ed. David A. Horr, vol. 3, Osage Indians (New York: Garland Pub. Inc., 1974), 114.

²⁵ “There were piles of buffalo hides all over the villages, and the women were continually in the process of making the things from the hides which were needed both for war and for everyday practical use;” Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 271.

²⁶ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory During the Year 1819. With Occasional Observations on the Manners of the Aborigines.*, 192-93.

²⁷ Andrea Hunter is an Osage tribe member and anthropologist. She also stated, “[F]rom a cultural materialist viewpoint, the behaviors that harness more energy are more important to a culture and can be expected to have the most profound affect on the overall state of the system. It is these behaviors that produce the material items that should be recovered in larger percentages at an archaeological site. The distribution of the tools and material items from the Scotten Site show a definite tendency toward the women being the dominant utilizer.” The Scotten site is the southeastern portion of an excavated Great Osage village known as the Brown site (23VE3), located approximately ten miles northeast of present-day Nevada, Missouri. Dr. Carl Chapman directed excavations of this site in 1941, 1947, 1964, and 1983. The Brown site is the earliest known Osage village site. Hunter, "An Ethnoarchaeological Analysis of the Women's Role in Osage Society", 2, 38-49.

amount of time they spent hunting.²⁸ Hunters procured enough hides to occupy multiple women for days or weeks at a time. An Osage man's hunting prowess mattered little without female labor because traders demanded expertly tanned hides that would survive the trip back to Europe. Women in the hide trade generally monopolized the skills needed to produce finished hides placing a high value on their labor. In societies where valued items depended on women's production, access to female labor sometimes proved the most crucial means of differentiation between men. The social status of an Osage woman's entire kin group came to depend on the trade goods exchanged for her processed hides. The complementary work of women and men facilitated Osage prominence as hide traders in colonial Louisiana.²⁹

But the Osage traded more than hides. When Charles Claude du Tisé made the first official French visit to Osage villages in 1719, he traded for their horses.³⁰ In 1785 the Spanish Governor-General Esteban Rodriguez Miró wrote that Osage wealth "consists in having many horses which they get from the Laytanes or Apaches and from the frequent raids that one nation makes on

²⁸ Fausz, "Becoming 'a Nation of Quakers': The Removal of the Osage Indians from Missouri," 31.

²⁹ Sundstrom, "Steel Awls for Stone Age Plainswomen: Rock Art, Religion, and the Hide Trade on the Northern Plains," 114-15; Henry S. Sharp, "Asymmetric Equals: Women and Men among the Chipewyan," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 58; David Wishart, "The Roles and Status of Men and Women in Nineteenth Century Omaha and Pawnee Societies: Postmodernist Uncertainties and Empirical Evidence," *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 514.

³⁰ Abraham Phineas Nasatir, ed. *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 18. Du Tisé visited a Little Osage village near the Missouri River; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 113.

another.”³¹ Even with sizeable herds, they did not breed these horses. Miró criticized that the Osage “entirely prevent the raising of colts by loading the [mares] more than usual and making them run too much.”³² For Indigenous peoples, incorporating livestock required an adaptation to spiritual and cosmological gender construction to determine if men or women should take on animal husbandry. By not breeding horses, the Osage prevented a reorganization of gender roles. Men obtained horses in traditional male occupations. They hunted the wild horses, especially between the Red and Canadian rivers.³³ Men also raided the neighboring Pawnee and other Caddoan nations, sometimes collecting hundreds of horses at a time.³⁴ And they served as middlemen, trading European goods with western Native peoples for horses.³⁵

In addition to horses, the Osage also traded slaves. They historically took primarily women and children as captives in inter-tribal warfare and either killed or adopted them.³⁶ The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* (priesthood) determined the fate of captives, often allowing warriors to ceremonially adopt these individuals as full

³¹ Nasatir, ed. *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 124-25.

³² *Ibid.*, 125.

³³ Edwin James, *Part 3 of James's Account of S.H. Long's Expedition, 1819-1820*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 16, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1905), 272-73.

³⁴ Caddoan-speaking nations included Paninoir, Panimaha, Wichita, Tawakanis, Iscanis, Tonkawas, Kichais. Nasatir, ed. *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 19; Thomas Nuttall, *Nuttall's Travels into the Arkansas Territory, 1819*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 13, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1905), 247; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 138, 242, 52.

³⁵ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 106.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

members of their Osage clan and family.³⁷ Captive exchange played a significant part in Native diplomacy because captives, more so than wampum or calumet, symbolized life-giving rather than life-taking, and solidified peace between enemies. French participation in ritualized kinship captive exchanges with Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley tribes led many traders to turn Native slaves into profitable commodities. The slave trade seriously destabilized inter-tribal relations as French allies, like the Osage, increasingly raided their neighbors for slaves.³⁸

Osage raids on the Caddoan tribes along the Arkansas and Red rivers provided significant numbers of slaves to French colonies. Limited contact with French traders isolated the Caddoan peoples in this region, keeping them relatively unarmed and vulnerable to Osage attacks. So many slaves came from Caddoan communities, that the French generically termed Native slaves “pani” in reference to the Caddoan-speaking Pawnees, Panimahas (Skidi Pawnees), Panis Noirs, and Panis Piques. Osage raiders primarily procured slaves from enemy nations and viewed slave trading as simply another way of defeating their

³⁷ La Flesche, "Right and Left in Osage Ceremonies," 287. Although the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* and warriors dominated captive adoption, women often exercised influence in such matters, evidenced by John D. Hunter, a white captive boy adopted by the Osage: "I had not been long with the Osages, before I was received into the family of Shen-thweeh, a warrior distinguished among his people for his wisdom and bravery, at the instance of Hunk-hah, his wife, who had recently lost a son, in an engagement with some of the neighbouring tribes." John D. Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them* (Philadelphia: J. Maxwell, 1823), 43.

³⁸ Brett H. Rushforth, "Savage Bonds: Indian Slavery and Alliance in New France" (Dissertation, University of California, Davis, 2003), 3-4, 21-22.

enemies.³⁹ Even though the volume and destiny of Osage slaves changed in the eighteenth century, the traditional existence of slave taking and captive exchange in Osage society meant this aspect of European trade also did not require a reorganization of historic gender roles.

Though many aspects of gender roles remained intact, other aspects of Osage social organization changed during European colonization. Osage oral tradition repeatedly referenced the nation's "move to a new country" which metaphorically described changes to the social, political, and religious organization in response to new challenges or circumstances.⁴⁰ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Osage combined patrilineal descent with matrilineal residence, producing an unusual cultural construction in Native North America.⁴¹ Other Dhegihan-Siouan-speaking nations used patrilineal descent and patrilineal residence, leading scholars to conclude the Osage once organized in the same way before this "move to a new country."⁴² Several scholars argued that increased European trade demands for hides, horses, and slaves prompted the Osage to

³⁹ Caddoan slaves also came from the Wichita, Kichai, Taovaya, Iscani, Guichita, Tawakoni. Nasatir, ed. *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 19; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 109-10; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 35; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 157.

⁴⁰ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Chiefs; Sayings of the Ancient Men," 62-63.

⁴¹ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 42; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 16.

⁴² Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 42; Betty R. Nett, "Historical Changes in the Osage Kinship System," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 8, no. 2 (1952): 168; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 13.

adopt matrilocality.⁴³ Members of one clan formed an Osage hunting or raiding party. In the eighteenth century these men traveled up to 500 miles from their villages, amounting to months away from home.⁴⁴ Under a patrilocal system, an entire household would not have its male protection and production during every hunt or raid, and if disaster struck, the household could lose nearly all these men.⁴⁵ Matrilocal residence reorganized the household to include men from various clans, preventing the total male absence at any one time.⁴⁶ In addition, matrilocal residence allowed successful hunters and warriors to marry women from the established hereditary leadership clans, thus providing kinship relations that melded the pre-colonial Osage leadership structure with the eighteenth century system that accommodated individual male achievements while maintaining tribal solidarity.⁴⁷

The hide trade, matrilocality, frequent male absence and sometimes death, fostered, or at least encouraged, polygyny. Sororal polygyny (one man marrying women of the same family) likely developed among the Osage as an adaptive strategy just like matrilocality. Increased raiding likely decreased the number of available marriageable males, reinforcing polygyny to bolster the Osage population.⁴⁸ Some scholars view polygyny as evidence of female subordination,

⁴³ Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 58; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 42; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 43.

⁴⁴ Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 43-44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 66.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

but polygyny did not automatically imply male dominance in this context.⁴⁹ A polygynous Osage man married sisters or cousins who, in a matrilineal society, would have lived and worked together regardless of marital status.⁵⁰ Similar examinations of the Omaha and Pawnee indicated that in the hide trade, women welcomed and desired the communal assistance sororal polygyny provided in maintaining the household and processing hides.⁵¹

Sexual freedom and the availability of divorce also precluded female subordination. U.S. geologist George William Featherstonhaugh on a surveying expedition through Osage territories in the 1830s noted that some Osage co-wives “cohabit” with other men.⁵² Louisiana resident Louis Bringier in 1812 noted that an Osage man “may have as many wives as he can obtain; these may leave their husband when they please, and the man, on his part, can repudiate his wife,” indicating the availability of divorce for both men and women.⁵³

The changing imperial and economic situation of the 1750s-1760s threatened Osage regional hegemony. In the 1750s the Pawnee and Wichita, two nations the Osage had long raided for slaves and horses, allied and traded with the

⁴⁹ Lillian A. Ackerman, "Complementary but Equal: Gender Status in the Plateau," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 86.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wishart, "The Roles and Status of Men and Women in Nineteenth Century Omaha and Pawnee Societies: Postmodernist Uncertainties and Empirical Evidence," 513.

⁵² George William Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac, to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 71.

⁵³ L. Bringier, "L. Bringier, Esq. On the Region of the Mississippi, Etc.," *American Journal of Science and Arts* 3(1821): 34. Osage tribal historian Louis F. Burns also states that in order to divorce, a husband simply removed his things and moved out of his wife's lodge or a wife threw her husband's things out of her lodge. A wife retained her lodge and the children often remained with her. Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 210.

expanding Comanche empire to the west. These three nations attacked hunting parties and challenged Osage trade dominance by exchanging horses, hides, and slaves directly with the French. The Seven Years War, however, triggered a shortage in French trade goods, which the Osage monopolized to cement their regional control and exclude the rival Comanche network. When the war ended though, French trade officially ceased and the Spanish acquired colonial Louisiana.⁵⁴

These political and economic changes encouraged the Osage to create kinship ties that solidified trade relationships. Early to mid-eighteenth-century trade relied on numerous French-Native villages along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.⁵⁵ The population in these communities derived from intermarriage between French traders and Native female slaves, who did not serve as cultural mediators between the French and Native nations. The Osage, like the majority of Indigenous people in colonial Louisiana, established French trade without intermarriage.⁵⁶ The rise of the Comanche empire and Spanish colonial authority in the late eighteenth century prompted the Osage to develop kinship connections with traders. St. Louis, founded in 1764, developed into the most significant fur trading community in this region, serving as home to many French

⁵⁴ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 126-29; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 117.

⁵⁵ Tanis C. Thorne, "The Chouteau Family and the Osage Trade: A Generational Study," *Rendezvous: Selected Papers of the Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1981* edited by Thomas C. Buckley (1984): 109; Tanis C. Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 66-67.

⁵⁶ Kathleen DuVal, "Indian Intermarriage and Metissage in Colonial Louisiana," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (April 2008): 267-71, 302-03.

colonists who remained in North America after the Seven Years War.⁵⁷ Chouteau family members (St. Louis co-founders) became the city's leading merchant-traders because of their intermarriage and trade ties with the Osage.⁵⁸

Osage marriages conveyed respect for tribal values and consequently influenced an entire lineage's status. Families that obeyed social norms ensured respectable status by arranging their children's first marriage, called *mi-zhin*. Young people did not publicly prefer a particular partner, even though attachments sometimes developed in childhood. Before a woman's family would accept a man's marriage offer, he had to demonstrate his value as a husband and potential father through proficiency in hunting and warfare. Women reached an eligible age for *mi-zhin* marriages right after puberty, typically at thirteen or fourteen years old. Men, because of the achievement requirements, typically did not enter a first marriage until their twenties. Once a man had proven himself, his relatives would contact a woman's family with a marriage proposal. If the woman and her family approved the match, the two families negotiated a sizeable gift exchange, typically involving horses, food, and clothing. The exchange coincided with feasting, after which the man joined his wife's household. Divorced or widowed individuals, previously *mi-zhin* married, could subsequently partner in an *omiha* marriage. Individual men and women initiated *omiha* marriages, but often they attempted to mirror the *mi-zhin* process and involved

⁵⁷ William E. Foley and C. David Rice, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 7; Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*, 69, 88.

⁵⁸ Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*, 71; Thorne, "The Chouteau Family and the Osage Trade: A Generational Study," 109-10.

extended family members to demonstrate a reputable social position. Those who did not follow these customs and cohabited with a partner entered into an illegitimate marriage, called *gashon 'th mighthonge*, which translated as “a union in the natural state or in disregard of tribal custom.” Because these individuals deliberately disregarded tribal custom, they could not obtain formal positions of authority and their children were not regarded as full members of the tribe.⁵⁹

In terms of intermarriage, the status of a Native woman mirrored the status of the European man she married.⁶⁰ Osage tribal historian John Joseph Mathews explained how illegal traders (*coureurs de bois*), trappers, and men who simply abandoned European settlements to “go native” entered into *gashon 'th mighthonge* marriages, and tended to attract “widows whose chances of remarriage were not too bright, or girls of the second class whose immediate ancestors had mated...without benefit of formality.”⁶¹ Conversely, prominent late-eighteenth-century French merchants from the Mongraine and Lambert families developed kinship ties through *mi-zhin* or *omiha* marriages to women from the hereditary chieftain clans. For example, Noel Mongraine married “Marie” Pawhushan, the

⁵⁹ Francis La Flesche, "Osage Marriage Customs," *American Anthropologist* 14, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1912): 128-30; Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 243-44, 47-48; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 312-23. In Nivale and Tawagla's marriage in 1854, Nivale and his family supplied all the provisions for the ceremony and he provided 50 horses to her family. John Joseph Mathews argued that Osage individuals could marry without horses, but so doing indicated that either party “had no pride.” Paul Mary Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," ed. J. Daly Lowrie and Garrick Alan Bailey (St. Louis, Missouri: Midwest Jesuit Archives, Unpublished Manuscript), 145-46; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 319.

⁶⁰ Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," 423.

⁶¹ Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 164, 308.

daughter of one of the Osage's most powerful turn-of-the-century chiefs, Pawhuska (White Hair). Osage clans also adopted these prominent traders to ensure their children's patrilineal clan affiliation.⁶²

Though the Chouteaus made very little official reference to their Native families and children, ample evidence indicates these relations existed for generations between St. Louis and Osage villages. The first generation of Chouteau traders (beginning 1760s-1770s) predominantly resided and identified with St. Louis society. Nevertheless they developed and maintained strong economic and social ties with the Osage through marital and sexual relations with Osage and métis women (including some of the Mongraine daughters). Though never publicly acknowledging these children, some evidence suggests these Chouteau fathers facilitated their métis sons' employment as traders and interpreters. The second Chouteau trading generation (beginning 1810-1820) departed sharply from their father's practices by abandoning their legitimate families in St. Louis to create families and live permanently in Osage villages. The second Chouteau generation publicly acknowledged their métis offspring, sometimes through inclusion in their wills.⁶³

⁶² Thorne, "The Chouteau Family and the Osage Trade: A Generational Study," 111; Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*, 94-95.

⁶³ First generation included Rene Auguste Chouteau and Pierre Chouteau, Sr. Second generation included Pierre's sons, August Pierre (A.P.) Chouteau and Paul Ligest Chouteau. Thorne, "The Chouteau Family and the Osage Trade: A Generational Study," 110-12, 14; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*, 285; Foley and Rice, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis*, 45; Stan Hoig, *The Chouteaus: First Family of the Fur Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 249-54; Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*, 92-96.

In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Native women all along the Missouri River Valley gained status through marriages and liaisons that united Native nations and traders.⁶⁴ John Bradbury, traveling up the Missouri river in 1811, stopped at a trading post near a Little Osage village where a local physician, educated him on the customs and manners of the Osage people by “walk[ing] with me down to the boats, where we found several squaws assembled, as Dr. Murray assured me, for the same purpose as females of a certain class in the maritime towns of Europe crowd round vessels lately arrived from a long voyage, and it must be admitted with the same success.”⁶⁵ Osage and other Indigenous women along the Missouri refined and institutionalized sexual interaction to create kinship ties that facilitated positive trade relations and created roles for Native women as cultural mediators.⁶⁶ Numerous European and American travelers noted sexual contact and offers from Osage women, which they incorrectly associated with licentiousness and infidelity.⁶⁷ Osage women had sexual freedom in their society and there is little evidence of Osage husbands’ jealousy of even their wives sexual relations with European and American visitors.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," 414-15.

⁶⁵ Bradbury, *Bradbury's Travels in the Interior of America, 1809-1811*, 60-61.

⁶⁶ Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," 415.

⁶⁷ Jules Louis Renê de Mun et al., *Journals of Jules De Mun* (St. Louis 1928), 30; Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 184, 258.

⁶⁸ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 184.

French-Osage métis trading communities developed throughout the region. Generally, Osage women reared their métis children during early childhood at trading posts or in home villages. Fluid residency in these communities corresponded with fluid marital ties, exemplified by “Marie” Pawhushan who married and lived with Noel Mongraine in St. Louis for years before moving back to her village and marrying an Osage man. Most métis children received some kind of Euro-American education, usually from missionaries. Sons often joined their father’s profession, marrying Osage or métis women. Daughters often married white or métis men.⁶⁹

Spanish officials hoped to use traders, métis communities, and Native peoples to transform Louisiana into a strong barrier between the British colonies and New Spain. Attempts by the Spanish colonial state to organize and manage trade undermined this goal. They angered Native traders by implementing price controls on imports and exports, altering the French system which often paid higher than market value for hides and furs simply to maintain Native alliances. The Spanish also attempted to regulate exchange by licensing traders and directing Osage trade specifically through St. Louis, benefitting the Chouteau family.⁷⁰ In an attempt to stabilize inter-tribal relations and end raiding, Spanish officials outlawed trade in Native slaves.⁷¹ The Spanish also discontinued the

⁶⁹ Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri*, 148, 72-73.

⁷⁰ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 118-22; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 108-09, 30.

⁷¹ Governor Alexandre O’Reilly outlawed the Native slave trade in Louisiana via proclamation on December 7, 1769; Lawrence Kinnaird, ed. *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794: Part 1, the*

livestock trade, hoping to prevent Native raids on western and southern Spanish communities where most of the livestock originated.

These sanctions seemed to outlaw a significant portion of Osage exports.⁷² Osage raiding continued, though, eventually prompting Spanish Louisiana Governor General Francisco Louis Hector, Baron de Carondelet in 1792 to prohibit all Osage trade and he instructed “any subject of His Majesty, or individual of the other nations, white or red, may overrun the Great and Little Osages, kill them and destroy their families, as they are disturbers of the prosperity of all the nations.”⁷³ Regardless of Spanish restriction, the lucrative Osage trade continued to attract French and British traders and illicit exchange plagued the region. A new tribal division, the Arkansas Osage, emerged in the 1760s when bands began moving south to procure skins, furs, slaves, and livestock, which they illegally traded at the isolated and poorly manned Arkansas Post (Figure 2).⁷⁴ As Zenon Trudeau, Lieutenant-Governor of Spanish Illinois and the Commandant at St. Louis noted in 1798, “on many occasions they [the Osage] compel the traders to an unequal and unjust exchange, maltreating them if

Revolutionary Period, 1765-1781, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945 (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1949), 125-26.

⁷² Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 130-31.

⁷³ Lawrence Kinnaird, ed. *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794: Part 3, Problems of Frontier Defense, 1792-1794*, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945 (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1946), 107.

⁷⁴ Din and Nasatir, *The Imperial Osages: Spanish-Indian Diplomacy in the Mississippi Valley*, 72; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 131, 34-35.

they resist. But these vexations do not prevent the traders from returning next year to seek others like them.”⁷⁵

Osage hide trade increased tremendously into the nineteenth century. By 1777, just in documented St. Louis trade, the Osage produced 729 packs of otter, deer, beaver, buck, and wildcat skins, over sixty percent of the skins traded by Missouri River tribes that year.⁷⁶ And through the 1790s, the Osage dominated over half of the legal Spanish Missouri river trade, amounting to roughly six hundred packs of skins per year.⁷⁷ United States officials, after the Louisiana Purchase, calculated the illegal Osage trade at the Arkansas Post for the final four years of Spanish rule involved tens of thousands of skins valued at \$20,000.⁷⁸ At the same time the Little and Great Osage produced \$43,000 worth of furs, showing the enormous volume of their hunting.⁷⁹ Fort Osage, a U.S. trading factory on the Missouri River (1808-1822), and the sub-factory Marais de Cygnes (1820-1822) at the river of the same name’s junction with the Osage River, consumed 20,000-30,000 Osage-produced skins a year.⁸⁰ After the end of the factory system in 1822, numerous traders, including Chouteau family members, opened private trading houses near Arkansas Osage villages and the old Marais de

⁷⁵ Abraham Phineas Nasatir, ed. *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 539.

⁷⁶ Louis Houck, ed. *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, vol. 1 (Chicago, Ill.: R. R. Donnelley & sons company, 1909), 139.

⁷⁷ Nasatir, ed. *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 209-11, 321, 539.

⁷⁸ Treat to Davy, April 15, 1806. Letter Book of the Arkansas Trading House, 1805-1810.

⁷⁹ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 220.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 230-34.

Cygnés factory site. Just A.P. Chouteau's trading amongst the Osage through the 1820s constituted tens of thousands of skins annually.⁸¹

While Osage men conducted extensive hunting, women continued their participation in the hunt and in processing hides.⁸² Some scholars interpreted the presence of women and children on Osage hunts in the 1820s as compromising both agricultural and hunting production, by leaving cornfields unattended and hindering the pursuit of game.⁸³ For at least a century though, entire villages always accompanied men on their hunts. French emissary, Claude Charles du Tisné noted the Osage semi-sedentary life when he visited the Little and Great Osage in 1719, commenting "[t]hey remain at their villages only as do the Missouri, with the winter spent hunting buffalo which are very abundant in this area."⁸⁴ In 1811, U.S. trading factor George Sibley witnessed the same thing when he visited a Little Osage hunting village (discussed above).⁸⁵

A missionary described how the Osage mobilized for a hunt in 1821, "[t]hey move from home in a body, men, women, and children, leaving none

⁸¹ Ibid., 234.

⁸² For examples see, "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 13; Sarah Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 2d ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1833), 128-29; "Osage Indians: Account of Their Conditions, Manners, Etc," *Missionary Herald* 23, no. 5 (May 1827): 146-47; "Osages: Their Character, Manners, and Condition," *Missionary Herald* 24, no. 3 (March 1828): 80.

⁸³ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 224.

⁸⁴ Mildred Mott Wedel, "Claude-Charles Dutisne: A Review of His 1719 Journeys (Parts 1 and 2)," *Great Plains Journal* 12, no. 1-2 (Fall 1972-Spring 1973): 151; Anna Lewis, "Du Tisne's Expedition into Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 3, no. 4 (December 1925): 320.

⁸⁵ Brooks, "George C. Sibley's Journal of a Trip to the Salines in 1811," 198; Thomas D. Isern, "Exploration and Diplomacy: George Champlin Sibley's Report to William Clark, 1811," *Missouri Historical Review* 73(October 1978): 96-99.

behind.”⁸⁶ Embarking on a bear hunt in March 1823, another missionary characterized the Osage procession, “[t]hey passed the station single file; first the hunter, then the women and children and pack-horses. The procession was two miles in length.”⁸⁷ On buffalo hunts, Osage villagers proceeded in a similar manner of two single file lines, sometimes up to ten miles long.⁸⁸ Women led horses carrying all the necessary provisions, including skins for bedding and shelter, surplus meat, and corn.⁸⁹ Once near the hunting territory, women gathered wood for fuel and used branches as provisional lodge-poles.⁹⁰ These temporary hunting villages had “all the coverings to their houses, their cooking utensils, and provisions; and continue the same community of social interest, as in their villages.”⁹¹ Women processed meat by,

[cutting it] into long strips, and plait them together with bark about twelve inches wide and four or five feet long...[then]...they place the meat on poles over the fire, till it becomes well heated through; throw it upon the ground, and tread it back and forth, probably with the view of making it more tender; and then keep it near the fire until it is thoroughly cooked and dried.⁹²

Even though male hunting and female hide processing dominated the Osage economy and workload, women’s agricultural production remained sizeable, successful, and spiritually important throughout this period. During

⁸⁶ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 2, no. 6 (December 1821): 223.

⁸⁷ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 8 (August 1823): 235.

⁸⁸ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 92-93.

⁸⁹ Washington Irving et al., *The Journals of Washington Irving (Hitherto Unpublished)*, vol. 3 (Boston: The Bibliophile Society, 1919), 124.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ "Osage Indians," *Missionary Herald* 22, no. 9 (September 1826): 268.

⁹² "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 4 (April 1824): 112.

Zebulon Pike's journeys through Osage villages in 1806-1807 he noted the "Osage raise large quantities of corn, beans, and pumpkins, which they manage with the greatest economy, in order to make them last from year to year. All the agricultural labor is done by women."⁹³ Louis Bringier, who spent time amongst all three major tribal divisions in 1812 noted, "[t]hey all cultivate Indian corn and pumpkins, in one field common to all and not fenced in; none but the women work in these fields, which are about half an acre for each woman. All their tools consist in one hoe, and a large tomahawk."⁹⁴ While Pierre Chouteau served as the U.S. Osage Indian Agent, he reported continued corn planting and harvesting during his residence in White Hair's village along the Osage River in 1816.⁹⁵ John Hunter, a Euro-American adopted into an Osage family in the late 1700s, later wrote "[t]he squaws raise for the consumption of their families, corn tobacco, pumpkins, squashes, melons, gourds, beans, peas, and within a few years past, potatoes in small quantities."⁹⁶

Women's agriculture continued to produce a surplus through the 1820s, resulting in caching, to provide foodstuffs through the winter. The Osage built caches in well-drained areas, dug in the "shape of a jug," meaning a narrow neck

⁹³ Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, to Headwaters of the Mississippi River, through Louisiana Territory, and in New Spain, During the Years 1805-6-7*, 532.

⁹⁴ Bringier, "L. Bringier, Esq. On the Region of the Mississippi, Etc.," 34. For more on Bringier's travels see, W. D. Williams and Louis Bringier, "Louis Bringier and His Description of Arkansas in 1812," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1989).

⁹⁵ "Pierre Chouteau to Unknown Regarding Policy of Living with Osage Tribes When Acting as Agent," in *Native American Collection* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1811-1817).

⁹⁶ Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 265.

led to a widened hole, lined with sticks, then filled with foodstuffs. After filling the hole with dirt, they drove horses over the cache or used a fire to disguise the soil disruption.⁹⁷ Various travelers and U.S. officials made note of caches even though villagers and families attempted to keep the locations secret. In 1815, Jules de Mun, on a trip through the Great Osage villages along the Osage River, described that “[w]henver the inhabitants of the village go off on a hunt they put their corn in some place removed from the woods where they think there is less risk of its being discovered by their enemies.” De Mun noted elderly Osage men and women unable to travel on hunts guarded these caches.⁹⁸ In 1820, Factor George Sibley, reported that each Osage family, “can save from ten to twenty bags of corn and beans, of a bushel and a half each; besides a quantity of dried pumpkins. On this they feast, with the dried meat saved in the summer, till September, when what remains is cashed, and they set out on the fall hunt.”⁹⁹

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⁹⁷ Louis F. Burns, *Osage Indian Customs and Myths* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1984), 110-11.

⁹⁸ Mun et al., *Journals of Jules De Mun*, 26-27.

⁹⁹ “G.C. Sibley, Factor, Fort Osage, to Thomas McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Trade, October 1, 1820,” in Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs, Comprising a Narrative of a Tour Performed in the Summer of 1820* (New Haven: Converse, 1822), 205. Women also continued gathering foodstuffs, making for an incredibly varied and well-balanced diet. Sibley described Little and Great Osage subsistence including “[w]alnuts, hazlenuts, pacons, acorns, grapes, plums, papaws, parsimmons, hog potatoes, and several other very nutritious roots.” John Hunter said Osage women collected hickory nuts, chestnuts, wild liquorice, sweet myrrh, anise and Pash-e-quah roots, sweet potatoes, crab and may apples, Osage oranges, strawberries, goosberries, whortleberries, blackberries, and dew-berries. Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs, Comprising a Narrative of a Tour Performed in the Summer of 1820*, 206; Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 265.

European colonization changed the volume of Osage trade and facilitated their eighteenth-century regional hegemony, but all of this took place in the Osage cultural context and historic gender construction remained intact in many ways. Women's agricultural production provided many of the initial goods used in early French trade. Even after the expansion of the hide trade, women continued subsistence agricultural production. In the hide trade, a man's hunting prowess only translated into wealth and status if the women in his family expertly processed the hides. Sexual freedom and availability of divorce meant the polygynous relationships developed in this period did not decrease women's status. Horse and slave trading evolved from traditional raiding and captive exchange, preventing a reorganization of historic gender roles for men or women. And as colonial empires changed and rival Native nations gained power, Osage women used marriage and sexual relations to incorporate traders into kinship networks ensuring sustained trade.

Chapter 4

Confronting the Expanding United States, 1820s-1830s

Probably few portions of the heathen world are in circumstances more unfavorable to being affected by missionary labors, than the Osages. Their wandering and predatory habits render it exceedingly difficult for missionaries to have much intercourse with them; and what little instruction is communicated at any time is very soon forgotten, while on their periodical hunting or war expeditions. The people, also, when addressed, manifest an unusual indifference to all religious considerations.¹

—“Miscellaneous Communications
Respecting the Mission,” April 1829

The Osage faced significant external pressure in the early nineteenth century, but villages remained in historic locations that for the most part supported the Osage culture, economy, and gender roles. The Osage did not abandon their cosmology and the civilization program generally failed. Just the same, increased competition in hunting, declining values for hides and furs, and rising American settler populations forced some Osage families to diversify production in ways that undermined traditional subsistence and gender roles. Internal tribal political structure continued to decentralize into autonomous bands and villages with single leaders that confronted colonization in varying ways. The Osage needed to maintain peace with the Americans, so they found ways to resist “civilization” while remaining hospitable to missionaries.²

* * *

¹ "Osages: Miscellaneous Communications Respecting the Mission," *Missionary Herald* 25, no. 4 (April 1829): 123.

² Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 154-55; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 72-73.

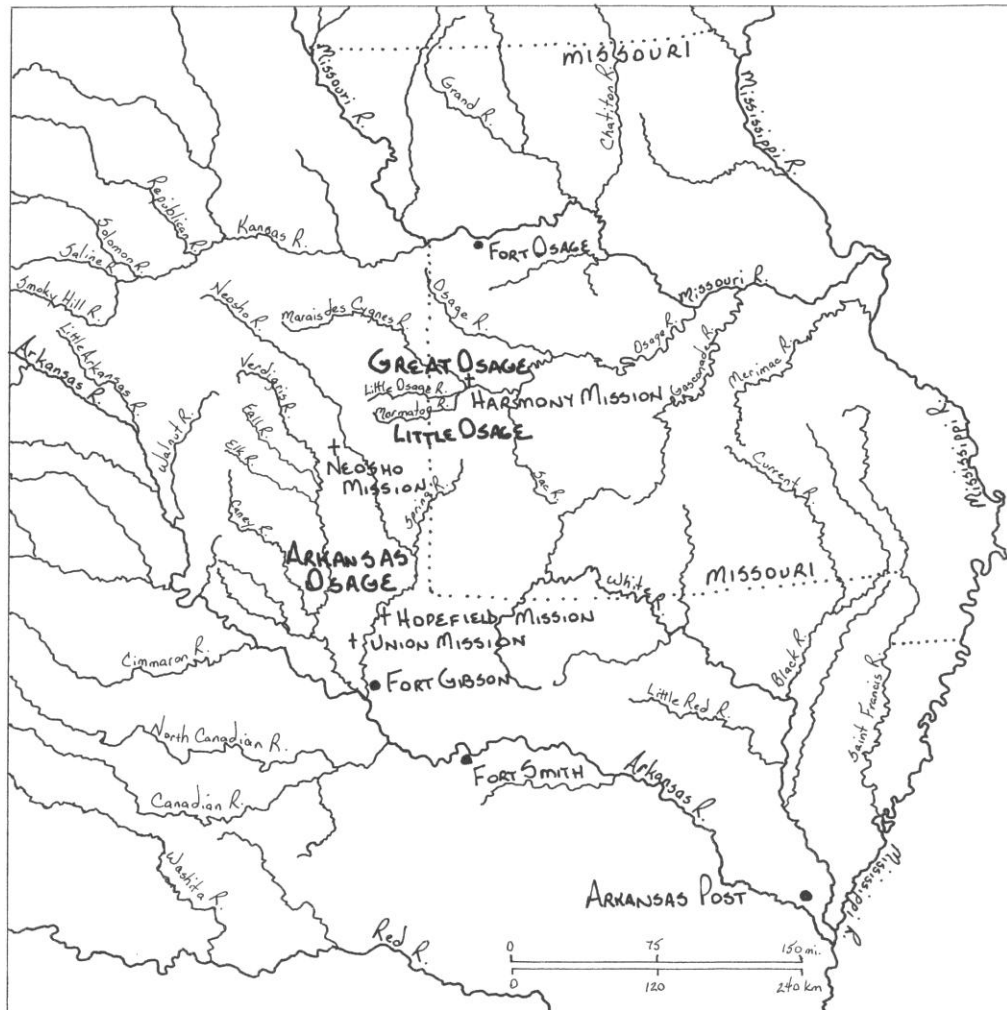


Figure 3. Osage village locations, 1810s-1830s (Artist, Denise Gerhart, 2010).

After the United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the Osage had to contend with federal Indian policy. Thomas Jefferson believed the survival of the democratic nation depended on expanding the U.S. population into new territory. Large and powerful Indigenous nations, however, controlled most of this territory. Jefferson, like many Americans, believed in a hierarchy of cultures, placing Indigenous peoples in a lower, “savage,” stage of civilization, doomed to extinction in the modern world.³ Jefferson hoped to use the Louisiana Purchase as a new home for eastern Indigenous peoples and as the place to “civilize” both emigrant and local tribes.⁴ “Civilizing” would end hunting, convert Natives to Christianity, and institute Euro-American gender construction of male farming and female domestic housework.⁵ In the civilization program, missionaries, teachers, and farmers served a dual purpose, they philanthropically assisted Native peoples in adopting Christianity and Euro-American culture, all of which allowed the United States to acquire Native land.⁶

The sizeable Indigenous groups of the Louisiana Purchase would have to make room for this. The Lewis and Clark expedition provided Jefferson with information on western Native cultures, populations, and power.⁷ He also wanted

³ Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 206-07, 26; Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 3-6.

⁴ Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*, 274.

⁵ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 179, 208; David La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 45.

⁶ Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*, 226; Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian*, 7, 125-29.

⁷ Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*, 243.

to prevent Native alliances with U.S. rivals like Spain and Britain. Through establishing trade relations with Native peoples, Jefferson hoped to counter foreign influence in Indian affairs, secure loyalty, and eventually gain land.⁸ To this end, the president instructed Lewis and Clark to send Native leaders to Washington, D.C. to impress them with U.S. technology, population, and power. An Osage contingent arrived in Washington in July 1804 – the first Native representatives Lewis and Clark sent to visit the president.⁹

Jefferson wanted to consolidate the three major Osage divisions in one place to enable eastern Indigenous removal and diminish Osage power (Figure 3). The Chouteau family preferred Osage unification in the north where established trade relations would likely enhance their family's wealth. Jefferson favored this plan as well; and appointed Pierre Chouteau Osage Indian Agent for 1804-1818, and his sons A.P. and Paul Ligest Chouteau would later serve as agents and subagents. Little Osage villagers historically lived along the Missouri River and remained there until attacks from northern Native groups pushed them to join the Great Osage villages. Travelers continued to observe Little Osage villages and fields along the Missouri River at least until 1818. At the time Protestant missionaries arrived in the 1820s, the Great and Little Osage lived together just south of where the Marais des Cygnes and Marmaton (Little Osage) Rivers joined to form the Osage River. The Arkansas Osage remained along the Verdigris

⁸ Ibid., 241, 44, 48.

⁹ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 36.

where they had established villages in the 1760s.¹⁰ The Great and Little Osage, closer to St. Louis and connected to the Chouteau family's lucrative trade, received the majority of federal attention, politically isolating the Arkansas Osage.¹¹

In the early nineteenth century, other Native nations increasingly encroached on Osage territory. From the north, Osage villages repeatedly faced attacks and competition from the Potawatomi, Iowa, Sac, Mesquakie, and Kickapoo searching for game and attempting to escape the expanding Euro-American population. The same thing happened in the south with the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Shawnee, and Delaware. Cherokee hunting parties in particular encroached on Osage territory as early as the 1780s. As U.S. colonialism increasingly disrupted Cherokee life and the civilization program demanded monumental cultural changes, more than 5,000 Cherokee permanently relocated west of the Mississippi River between the 1790s and 1820. The Osage viewed emigrating people as "squatters and poachers" threatening Osage dominance.¹²

¹⁰ When Fort Osage opened along the Missouri River, all the Little and Great Osage villages spent the first winter there in 1808-1809. By the next spring, most of the Great Osage returned to their Osage River village sites. H. M. Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana: Together with a Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri River, in 1811*, *Nineteenth Century American Literature, Series A: The Ohio Valley*; (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear, and Eichbaum, 1814), 70; Bringier, "L. Bringier, Esq. On the Region of the Mississippi, Etc.," 33; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 46.

¹¹ Chouteau family members wielded significant influence, participating in all major Osage treaties through the 1820s. Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 216-17; Hoig, *The Chouteaus: First Family of the Fur Trade*, 28, 45.

¹² DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 196, 98, 200; La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory*, 7, 44-45, 48, 50-51; Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian*,

In 1808 federal officials tried to implement the removal and civilization program in Louisiana Territory. In the Treaty of 1808, the Osage ceded half of present-day Arkansas and nearly all of present-day Missouri to the United States in return for annuity payments, goods, a trading factory, and federal military protection. Initially, policy makers viewed this treaty as a victory in their endeavor to peacefully acquire land for eastern Indian removal.

To the Osage, the Treaty of 1808 had an entirely different meaning. Pawhuska (White Hair), Great Osage principal leader, and Nichu Malli, Little Osage principal leader, ceded land primarily settled and dominated by other Indigenous groups.¹³ The Osage controlled only the western edge of the cession. In addition, the Osage viewed land rights for settlement and land rights for hunting as two separate issues. Pawhuska and Nichu Malli thought they sold the right to share hunting lands, not to settle Natives or Euro-Americans on the land and Osage hunters continued to use this land for years to come. From the Osage perspective, the trading factory, Fort Osage, demonstrated the U.S. need for Osage alliance and supplied direct access to goods near their northern villages. With increased Native competition from emigrating eastern groups, guaranteed access to U.S. trade held paramount importance for Osage economic security. The Arkansas Osage did not participate in the Treaty of 1808 negotiations, but consented to it in 1809 in return for legal trade at the Arkansas Post. In the Osage

246-47; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 220-31.

¹³ Pawhuska was also called Cheveaux Blanc or White Hair. Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 173.

view, this treaty constituted a fair exchange, sharing hunting land in return for peaceful relations with the U.S. and guaranteed trade.¹⁴

After the treaty, federal officials encouraged Cherokee settlement on the Osage ceded lands. According to civilization policy, the Osage should have adopted farming as a more efficient use of the land they now shared with the Cherokees. Regardless of American perceptions that “Indians” constituted one racial category, the Cherokee and Osage had completely separate cultures, whose differences only became more exaggerated as they competed over land, game, and regional dominance. The Cherokee believed they had earned the Osage land through treaty, war, and settlement. Not surprisingly, the Osage attempted to remove the Cherokee intruders through warfare. The large, well-armed Cherokee population posed the most formidable threat to date to Osage access to game. In an effort to control the region, the Cherokee befriended Osage rivals, creating strong alliances, and disrupting Osage hunting, agriculture, and village life with their attacks. In this situation, the Osage needed to preserve good relations with Americans, the only source for goods and guns. They hoped peace would

¹⁴ Meriwether Lewis, Upper Louisiana Territorial Governor, to President Thomas Jefferson, December 15, 1808,” in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, vol. 1 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 766-67; Charles J. Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. 2 (Treaties)* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 95-99; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 202-04; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 224-29.

encourage the U.S. to stop Cherokee violence, but federal officials demanded Osage land cessions instead.¹⁵

The Treaty of 1818 between the U.S. government and the Arkansas Osage, attempted to end the Cherokee-Osage violence in the south. The Osage ceded land for the Cherokee to hunt on in peace. Misinterpretation plagued this treaty too. Arkansas Osage leaders thought they ceded land to Euro-American settlers who would not compete with the Osage in commercial hunting and whose farms would provide a barrier between Cherokee and Osage lands. As Cherokee, not white settlers, continued to move into the area, violence escalated.¹⁶

Osage life was under siege. Cherokee and other Native hunters competed with the Osage in the hide trade and depleted game animals in the region. Native rivals stole Osage horses, attacked hunting parties, and destroyed villages. The Cherokee raided Osage storage caches and burned agricultural fields. The prevalence of violence forced some Osage men to remain behind in the summer hunting camps to protect the women, elderly, and children who frequently fell victim to Cherokee attacks. Violence ruined summer hunts, which primarily provided the meat supply to sustain a village through the winter. Osage warriors

¹⁵ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 208-09; La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory*, 7; Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. 2 (Treaties)*, 95-99.

¹⁶ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 208-10, 15-16; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 241-50.

struggled to retaliate against the Cherokee who lived close to Fort Smith and federal troops.¹⁷

By 1825, increased warfare combined with expanding Native and Euro-American settlement compromised Osage regional hegemony. Missouri, earning statehood in 1820, boasted a rapidly increasing population that quickly approached the Great and Little Osage villages. Fort Gibson, opened in 1824 within a few miles of Arkansas Osage villages, served as a clear expression of mounting U.S. military authority in the area. Thus, when federal officials demanded land cessions to remove the Osage to Kansas in 1825, all Osage leaders, north and south, consented. Though Arkansas Osage leader Claremore signed the treaty, they remained in their lower Verdigris villages until 1839, when removal treaties with eastern nations forced federal officials to provide twenty years of annuities and thousands of head of livestock to motivate the Arkansas Osage to finally move. Loss of people, food, and trade goods undercut Osage efforts to outright resist United States colonization.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 220, 37, 39, 48-49; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 223-24.

¹⁸ Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 253-56; DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 224-26; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 118. Claremore is spelled “Clamore” in all of the Protestant Missionary records. Willard Rollings uses the spellings “Clermont,” “Claremore,” and *Gra-to-moh-se*. The Claremore described above was the long-time nineteenth century leader of the Arkansas Osage. He should not be confused with the eighteenth century leader of the same name, who Rollings argued died sometime around 1800 and was likely the nineteenth-century Claremore’s father. John Joseph Mathews uses both “Claremore” and “Claremont.” According to Mathews, Claremore’s Osage name was *Gra-Mo’n*, translated as “Arrow-Going-Home.” Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 199; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 9.

* * *

While the Osage struggled to confront competing Indigenous groups and expanding Euro-American settlement, they also had to contend with missionization. Various Osage villages, families, and individuals had sporadic contact with Catholic missionaries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Protestant missionization provided the first sustained “civilizing” effort among the Osage. In 1821 the United Foreign Missionary Society (UFMS) established two missions: Union, built along the Neosho River, near the Arkansas Osage villages; and Harmony, built along the Marais des Cygnes River just above its junction with the Osage River, near the Great and Little Osage villages (Figure 3). The UFMS accumulated sizeable debt in maintaining these missions, and after the Treaty of 1825, the Osage eventually moved over 100 miles from the mission sites, increasing costs and limiting their impact. Therefore, in May 1826 management of these missions transferred to the larger and more financially stable American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

The Protestants hoped to model, promote, and teach the Osage how to live a Christian, “civilized” life based on industry, individualism, and agricultural capitalism.¹⁹ Although Osage lifeways changed over the course of the nineteenth century, their cosmological understanding of the universe and corresponding spiritual and ritual lives remained largely traditional. The majority of the Osage

¹⁹ La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory*, 16-18; Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian*, 125-31.

population ignored or avoided Protestant missionaries completely. In 1833 the ABCFM closed the Union mission and Harmony followed suit in 1835.²⁰

U.S. trade relations with the Osage effectively supported the hunting lifestyle federal agents claimed they wanted to change and likewise undermined missionary efforts and the civilization program.²¹ Beyond all of the obvious cultural reasons, the Osage had little economic incentive to abandon commercial hunting for family farming when federal officials promoted and ensured trading in the early nineteenth century. At the same time, many Euro-American farmers west of the Mississippi River struggled to transport farm surpluses to market, leading to cash poor frontier communities, further discouraging the Osage from abandoning hide trading.²²

Missionaries repeatedly commented on and, due to their ethnocentric bias, lamented the perpetuation of Osage gendered work. Reverend Benton Pixley, missionary at both the Harmony and Neosho Missions, wrote in 1827,

The women plant the corn, fetch the wood, cook the food, dress the deer-skins, dry their meat, make their moccasins, do all the business of moving, pack and unpack their horses, and even saddle and unsaddle the beast on which their husbands and other male kindred ride; while the men only hunt and war, and when in their towns, go from lodge to lodge to eat, and drink, and smoke, and talk, and play at cards, and sleep.²³

²⁰ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 7, 46, 82, 85, 105-06, 12.

²¹ Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans*, 247.

²² *Ibid.*, 226.

²³ "Osages: Their Character, Manners, and Condition," 80. Neosho Mission was a branch of the Harmony Mission, commenced in September 1824 as an agricultural settlement for 'civilizing' Osage families. It was modeled after Hopefield, a similar agricultural venture and branch of the Union mission. Neosho mission was 70-80 miles southwest of Harmony along the Neosho River. Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 107-08; "Home Proceedings: Missionary Establishments," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 1 (January 1825): 19.

Misunderstanding the spiritual significance and complementarity of Osage gender roles, missionaries continually characterized female labor as “drudgery.” The Union Mission journal for March 1821 stated, “[i]n their hunting parties, the women take care of the horses, and prepare their encampments, and do all the drudgery.”²⁴ William C. Requa, an assistant missionary, farmer, and teacher at Union Mission, wrote to a friend in New York in 1822, “[i]ndeed, all drudgery is imposed upon the female sex.” Cornelia Pelham, who taught at the Harmony, Union, and Neosho missions, repeatedly discussed Osage women’s degradation, “they are trained up to drudgery from infancy; indeed, their whole lives are one course of servitude and debasement.”²⁵ Reverend William F. Vaill, superintendent of the Union Mission, in 1827 described the life of an Osage woman as “one unceasing round of servitude and drudgery.”²⁶

“Civilizing” the Osage required men to stop hunting and start farming. Hunting, primarily a leisure pursuit for Euro-Americans, did not constitute legitimate work, leading the missionaries to mistakenly believe Osage men despised manual labor and equated it with slavery.²⁷ The Harmony Mission journal for May 1822 said, “[p]erhaps there are no slave-holders who are more

²⁴ “Home Proceedings: Union Mission,” *American Missionary Register* 2, no. 3 (September 1821): 115.

²⁵ T.F. Morrison, “Mission Neosho: The First Kansas Mission,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (August 1935): 229; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 90-91. See also: Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 128-29.

²⁶ “Osage Indians: Account of Their Conditions, Manners, Etc,” 146-47.

²⁷ Hunting, contrary to the missionaries’ assertions, certainly qualified as manual labor. On hunting or war expeditions, Osage men often walked sixty miles on foot in a day, went days without food or sleep, and overexerted themselves to the point of coughing up blood. Fausz, “Becoming ‘a Nation of Quakers’: The Removal of the Osage Indians from Missouri,” 30; Burns, *Osage Indian Customs and Myths*, 74.

particular to have all their hard service done by their negroes, than these men are to have their drudgery performed by their women.”²⁸ In their attempts to educate the children, Union missionaries described their difficulty in “reforming” the boys because the “Osage Indians appear not to be so much afraid of enslaving their women as their sons.”²⁹ The men and boys were characterized as “emphatically *indolent*” and the missionaries needed to rid Osage males of “the deep rooted prejudice that *labour is slavery*” in order to fully “civilize” them.³⁰

Women throughout this period continued all of their spiritually significant work. Missionaries specifically mention Osage women planting their crops in virtually every year well into the 1830s.³¹ While Osage women successfully cultivated corn, the missionaries struggled with subsistence. Facing starvation in 1823 they bought nineteen bags of corn from Claremore’s village. The wife of a village chief (Tally), delivered the foodstuffs.³² The corn was “packed in on four horses, under the charge of Tally’s wife, who arrived much fatigued, having travelled most of the way on foot, with a child upon her back.”³³ In 1824 Reverend Vaill visited Claremore’s village during the corn harvest, “[t]he

²⁸ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 4 (October 1822): 147.

²⁹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 9 (September 1823): 274.

³⁰ Emphasis original; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 237.

³¹ For some examples see, "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 115; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 9 (September 1824): 275; "Osages: Journal of Mr. Vaill, During a Preaching Tour," *Missionary Herald* 29, no. 10 (October 1833): 371.

³² Tally’s Osage name is somewhat debated. Rollings uses *Ta-hah-ka-he*, which he translates as “Deer with Branching Horns.” Mathews uses the English name “Tallai,” with an Osage spelling of *Ta-Eh-Ga-Xe*, meaning “Buck-making Horns.” Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 9; Mathews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*.

³³ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 274.

industrious women are shelling and spreading it out on skins to be cured in the sun, when it is put into bags and piled in one end of the lodge.”³⁴

Much like during the earlier period, polygynous marriage constructions and matrilocality remained the norm. Travelers and missionaries frequently noted men with a “plurality of wives.”³⁵ Warfare with emigrating Native nations and the demand for female labor, particularly in hide processing, continued to make this family organization widespread amongst the Osage. One missionary noted in 1821, “[a]s polygamy is common among them, it is not uncommon to see with one man in his lodge, three or four women, who are his wives, with fifteen or twenty children.” Prior to any marriage, a man had to distinguish himself in hunting and warfare and he had to maintain or exceed this high level of achievement in order to subsequently marry his wife’s sisters or cousins.³⁶ For those with wealth, such as Claremore one of the principal leaders of the Arkansas Osage, marriages involved public feasting, which redistributed of wealth within a village.³⁷ Divorce remained available to men and women, as the missionaries

³⁴ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 12 (December 1824): 363.

³⁵ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory During the Year 1819. With Occasional Observations on the Manners of the Aborigines.*, 185; "Reports of Societies: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 2, no. 12 (June 1822): 466; "Osage Indians: Account of Their Conditions, Manners, Etc," 146.

³⁶ Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 243-44; Josiah Gregg, *Part 2 of Gregg's Commerce of the Prairies, 1831-1839*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 20, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1904), 338-39; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 108.

³⁷ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 1 (January 1823): 8.

witnessed when they convinced a man to come live with them, but his wife did not join him, and their marriage ended once they no longer lived together.³⁸

Female sexual freedom continued in the early nineteenth century. Protestant missionaries struggled to discuss sexuality in depth, generally referring to “lewd and immodest conduct” or a lack of “chastity and modesty.”³⁹ The missionaries eventually asked some Osage women living near a mission school to move because of the “pernicious influence” they exerted over the older male students.⁴⁰ Much to the missionaries’ dismay, Osage women continued to control their sexuality during the early nineteenth century.

Missionaries also noted repeated incidences of child abandonment and infanticide. During a disease outbreak in 1823 that killed numerous women, one mission doctor recorded, “[i]n one instance, a child of two weeks old was buried alive with its mother.”⁴¹ Missionary families adopted several children in 1823-1824 they found abandoned and “cast into the open prairie to perish.”⁴² Another Osage mother, when her daughter was sick, did not allow missionaries to provide medical care, “[s]he said she wished the girl to die, and even attempted to stop her

³⁸ Bringier, "L. Bringier, Esq. On the Region of the Mississippi, Etc.," 34; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 3 (September 1822): 93-94.

³⁹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 13.

⁴⁰ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 7 (July 1823): 205.

⁴¹ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 3 (March 1824): 81.

⁴² Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 91; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 7 (July 1823): 203-04; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 2 (February 1824): 39; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 12 (December 1823): 371; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 3 (March 1824): 230-31.

breath when in the agonies of death.”⁴³ In Osage cosmology, “[u]ntil the ceremonial naming the child has no place in the gentile organization, and it is not even regarded as a person.”⁴⁴ Therefore if a parent abandoned a child prior to naming, it is likely the Osage did not view this as murder. It appears Osage mothers and families could abandon children if they would not be able to care for them.

As part of the civilization program, missionaries established two agricultural settlements where Osage families could learn about Christianity and Euro-American-style agriculture. The missionaries frequently lauded their success. French-Osage métis families comprised the majority of residents in these two settlements, but nevertheless historic gender roles remained evident. The Hopefield settlement in particular retained Osage social organization in many ways. When new residents joined Hopefield, women continued building their homes in the traditional fashion.⁴⁵ Subsistence for the settlement residents primarily derived from male hunting. After the Hopefield settlement commenced in late 1823, Osage men still went on summer hunts, sometimes delaying their return to the settlement well into December.⁴⁶ To the missionaries’ dismay, the

⁴³ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 12 (December 1824): 365.

⁴⁴ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Two Versions of the Child-Naming Rite," 31. Perdue argued, that Cherokee mothers may have abandoned weak infants and “infanticide may have been practiced by the Cherokees as the only acceptable means by which people could control population growth.” Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 33.

⁴⁵ "Home Proceedings: Journal of the Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 7 (July 1825): 216.

⁴⁶ "Osages: Report of the Station at Union, June 1, 1830," *Missionary Herald* 26, no. 9 (September 1830): 287; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 7 (July 1824): 206; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 137.

Hopefield resident's corn fed "the crowd of wild Indians, that have thronged about them, to live on the fruit of their industry."⁴⁷ These Osage settlers continued to redistribute wealth and possibly joined the settlements as another subsistence strategy.

Missionaries centered their "civilizing" efforts on ending female agricultural production. In the early years of these agricultural settlements, though, they justified allowing women and children to continue removing trees and clearing fields because "there will not be sufficient domestic business to employ them."⁴⁸ Settlement women did not completely relinquish agricultural production and instead transitioned to cotton farming, which the missionaries supported because it contributed to domestic garment production.⁴⁹ In 1826, these women grew enough cotton to make cloth and western-style clothing.⁵⁰ To supplement their subsistence base, women in these settlements also gathered wild foods.⁵¹ After a flood demolished the Hopefield settlement in 1825, Osage women gathered roots and acorns providing the primary subsistence throughout the winter.⁵²

The Protestant missions constituted the closest Euro-American populations to Osage villages. And with the missionaries frequently short on food

⁴⁷ "Home Proceedings: Journal of the Union Mission," 216.

⁴⁸ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 207; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 98.

⁴⁹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 8 (August 1825): 244.

⁵⁰ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 142.

⁵¹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 244.

⁵² Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 138-39.

and supplies, Osage labor became part of Osage-Euro-American exchange. Though traditional gender construction continued to define subsistence practices, pressure from surrounding Native and Euro-American populations and declining hide trade prompted Osage individuals to seek out other income. Some Osage men and women frequently worked at the missions for wages, paid in cash or goods. From the Osage perspective, an individual could contribute to their family's subsistence with wage work. In other words, much like hides or surplus agricultural products, Osage labor constituted another "item" traded with Euro-Americans. For the missionaries, wage labor taught Osage individuals the habits of "civilization." Thus missionary employers' assigned work based on Euro-American gender constructions. For women, this included domestic work, such as food preparation and sewing, already defined as part of the female role in Osage society. For men, this predominantly included agricultural labor, significantly outside the Osage male gender role. Osage laborers viewed this work as supplemental to the subsistence base and typically redistributed the payments (in goods or cash) within a family or community like other trade goods. Even so, wage labor – particularly for men – introduced alien conceptions of gendered work.⁵³

⁵³ For a similar discussion of wage labor and gender see, Martha C. Knack, "The Dynamics of Southern Paiute Women's Roles," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 154-58.

Missionaries hoped to encourage Osage men to take up farming by paying wages for agricultural labor.⁵⁴ In the summer of 1822 (during some of the most intense competition and violence with the Cherokee), Osage men started coming to the missions seeking work. Harmony missionaries sent the men to hoe corn, fed them an evening meal, and paid them in wages exchanged for bread and cornmeal.⁵⁵ Employment numbers ranged from three to fifteen at any one time at each mission.⁵⁶ Paid somewhere around fifty cents per day, Osage laborers also used their wages to buy tobacco and clothing.⁵⁷ In 1823 one Osage man, Moineh-Perhsa, performed wage labor in exchange for the Union missionaries providing room, board, and clothing for his wife and child.⁵⁸ In this context, male agricultural labor constituted a trade item more than an adoption of Euro-American gender roles. Nevertheless, in the 1820s some Osage men began supporting themselves and their families with agricultural work.

Missionaries also used wages when they could not find any other way to convince Osage men in the agricultural settlements to farm. Reverend Epaphras Chapman, one of the missionaries at Hopefield, wrote that the Osage men,

had been unaccustomed to labour, and as it was regarded as disgraceful for warriors, it was thought expedient to try their constancy by inviting them to labour with us previously for wages.

⁵⁴ Names of Osage men who did wage work: Wah-kos-i-toh; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 274. Moi-neh Persha (also spelled Moi-reh Per-sha), one of the original Osage male Hopefield settlers; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 92.

⁵⁵ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 5 (December 1822): 212-13.

⁵⁶ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 369.

⁵⁷ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 274; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 235; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 92; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 7 (July 1824): 213.

⁵⁸ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 371.

By this means we became convinced, that it would be necessary to *lead* them on, in the accomplishment of their important undertaking.⁵⁹

While praising the “civilizing” Hopefield settlers, the missionaries also remarked that the commitment to agricultural labor directly related to how punctually Osage men received payment.⁶⁰

Osage women also performed wage labor for the missionaries. As Reverend Vaill wrote in his annual report to the Secretary of War John Calhoun in 1823, “a number of males as well as females have commenced manual labour. The women have taken hold of domestic business with admirable skillfulness, and have laboured for the Mission till they have purchased, in some instances, cloth for garments and made them with their own hands.”⁶¹ Pau-hunk-sha and his wife both worked for wages at Union mission, he in the fields and she in the missionaries’ homes, prior to their settlement at Hopefield.⁶² In the face of expanding white and Native settlements, Cherokee violence, and declining hide trade, both Osage men and women used wages to supplement their family income.

When looking for signs of successful “civilizing” among the Osage, the missionaries pointed to Osage men working in the fields. When the Harmony missionaries ploughed a field at White Hair’s (Pawhuska) village in the spring of 1822, they marveled that “White-hair, the principal Chief, set an example of industry to his people. He was the first in the field, and assisted with a rake to

⁵⁹Emphasis original; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 206.

⁶⁰"Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 369.

⁶¹"Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 79.

⁶²"Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 208.

clear the ground.”⁶³ Again in 1824, Harmony missionaries Nathaniel Dodge, William Montgomery, and Otis Sprague visited White Hair’s village, noticing “[m]any of the men this season have assisted the women in cultivating corn, a thing which formerly was almost unheard of among them.”⁶⁴ Osage cosmology, however, had always allowed men to assist women in this fashion. Osage rituals revealed a man could assist in preparing the soil or planting corn, but “he must work under the direction of the woman who is the owner of the field.”⁶⁵ Missionaries thought they had encouraged Osage men to cultivate, but in this case, they witnessed typical Osage gendered work.

The Protestants did not limit their missionizing efforts to adults and focused much of their attention on instilling Christian values in children. Only a small fraction of Osage youth attended the Protestant missionary schools and of these only a few stayed for extended periods of time. Osage leaders, including Great Osage leader Sans-Nerf, began asking federal officials for secular, not religious, schools as early as 1819. They hoped schools would teach the Osage new skills to survive in the changing world around them. The Protestants focused on indoctrinating children in Christianity and Euro-American gender roles, which attempted to usurp Osage cosmology and relationship with *Wa-kon-da*. This is not what Sans-Nerf intended.⁶⁶ Limiting student attendance proved a primary

⁶³ "Reports of Societies: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 6 (June 1823): 164.

⁶⁴ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 364.

⁶⁵ La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe: Rite of the Wa-Xo'-Be," 624.

⁶⁶ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 52, 56-57.

method of resisting such changes. At the same time Cherokee attacks discouraged parents from parting with their children. Federal disinterest in intervening in the Osage-Cherokee conflict, precipitated by removal policies, undermined the civilization program.⁶⁷

Though Osage leaders maintained friendly relations with the missionaries they also frequently made excuses about why they did not send village children to the schools. Harmony missionaries appealed to White Hair in December 1821 about their low enrollments, writing in the mission journal that he said “the meddling traders who are among them, will be a hindrance to our success in obtaining their children.”⁶⁸ In May 1822, in the midst of warfare between the Osage and Cherokee, the Union missionaries held a council with various Osage leaders including Claremore and Tally, where they inquired about what prevented the Osages from sending their children to the schools? The Union mission journal quoted the Osage council, “[y]ou must not blame us; but you must blame the people below, (meaning the Cherokees). It is owing to them that our children are not in your school.”⁶⁹ By July the missionaries held growing suspicions that Claremore did not intend to send his children to them regardless of peace with the Cherokee.⁷⁰ Once the Fort Osage trading factory closed, Little Osage chief Walkimain, who appeared supportive of the education programs in the past,

⁶⁷ DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent*, 224-26.

⁶⁸ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 1 (July 1822): 19.

⁶⁹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 4 (October 1822): 141.

⁷⁰ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 5.

became increasingly indifferent to missionary requests for children.⁷¹ Osage villagers frequently visited the missions when traveling or while out on hunts, maintaining friendly relations with the missionaries but rarely leaving their children. In 1822 three hundred children passed through the missions and none joined the schools. Bypassing chiefs or leaders, the missionaries started appealing to individual parents to gain students, but these parents also made excuses about relinquishing their children. Reverend Vaill wrote, “[w]hen they are asked, Do you not mean to leave this child? they reply, after we have got through with this hunt, or after we have seen such and such relations.”⁷² In October 1823, Reverend Vaill told Secretary of War Calhoun in his annual report:

The Chiefs are friends to us, as citizens, and as the representatives of a great nation which they respect; but they cannot as yet be considered as Fathers of the School. They have not realized the benefit of civilization; have many fears lest they shall lose their influence by changing their habits; and have done very little, if anything, to make the School popular among their people.⁷³

In 1825 Claremore confirmed the Union missionaries’ former fears when he openly stated his opposition to the missionary efforts, both at Hopefield and at the schools, as noted in the mission journal, “[h]e now frankly acknowledges that his fathers walked in a good path, and he wishes to tread in their steps.”⁷⁴

The Osage used the missionaries’ education programs for their own benefit. One student, whom the missionaries re-named Stephen Van Rensselaer,

⁷¹ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 2 (February 1823): 45.

⁷² "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 6 (June 1823): 176.

⁷³ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 80.

⁷⁴ "Home Proceedings: Journal of the Union Mission," 215.

left the school to join an Osage hunting party in 1823 taking a gun and ammunition on credit from Chouteau's trading house.⁷⁵ When Van Rensselaer only obtained one deer on the hunt that would not cover the debt, he asked for readmittance to the school. Chouteau accepted the one deerskin as payment for Van Rensselaer's debt as long as he rejoined the school.⁷⁶ Thus schooling served as one way to combat economic difficulty in remitting debt to traders. With physicians at both missions, it appears some Osage parents also sent their children to the schools for medical care. One girl whose father removed her from the school months earlier, returned her to the Union mission in January 1823 with a "scrofulous humour" and he guaranteed "she shall tarry 'till cured."⁷⁷

Irregular attendance hindered the missionary education agenda.⁷⁸ Each mission school never had more than fifty students at any one time.⁷⁹ When missionization began, Superintendent of Indian Trade Thomas McKenney estimated the number of Osage children from all three tribal divisions numbered

⁷⁵ Stephen Van Rensselaer, according to the Union missionaries, was documented as entirely of Osage descent; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 2 (February 1825): 47.

⁷⁶ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 110.

⁷⁷ A form of tuberculosis affecting the lymph nodes particularly in children. *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997); "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 203.

⁷⁸ For examples of students leaving and return to school see: "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 2 (August 1822): 48; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 1 (January 1824): 27-28; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 76; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 213; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 8 (August 1824): 232; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 3 (March 1825): 87.

⁷⁹ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 95.

approximately 4,500.⁸⁰ Two schools with less than 100 total students constituted a small fraction of Osage children.⁸¹ In the midst of war with the Cherokees and continuing encroachment by both Native and Euro-American hunters and settlers, mission schools provided food and shelter possibly supplementing lean months in Osage villages. The missionaries surmised that a mother who committed her two sons and one daughter to the Harmony school in 1823, did so because of her poverty and lack of husband or relatives to provide assistance.⁸² Boys and girls earned wages at the Union mission school likely supplementing family income during difficult times.⁸³ In addition parents may have sent their children to school to learn how to speak, read, and write English, increasingly important skills as the Osage navigated diplomatic relations with the United States.⁸⁴

Beyond the children, Osage adults often visited the missions for extended periods, sometimes for educational purposes. So many Osage individuals visited the Union mission in 1823 the missionaries constructed a lodge specifically for Osage guests and the wage laborers discussed above. Osage women made up the

⁸⁰ "Home Proceedings: Letters from the Superintendent of Indian Trade," *American Missionary Register* 1(August 1820): 54.

⁸¹ Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 109.

⁸² "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 12 (December 1823): 372.

⁸³ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 10 (October 1823): 304.

⁸⁴ See the following for information on boys and girls and their English proficiency, "Reports of Societies: Great Osage Mission," 164; "Reports of Societies: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 6 (June 1823): 162-63; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 10 (October 1823): 305; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 77-78; "Osages," *Missionary Herald* 22, no. 4 (April 1826): 116. For discussion of similar use of schools see Tracy Neal Leavelle, "'We Will Make It Our Own Place': Agriculture and Adaptation at the Grand Ronde Reservation, 1856-1887," *American Indian Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 444.

majority of those who staid long period, primarily so they could learn Euro-American-style sewing. In April 1823, Osage women and girls crafted nine patch-work quilts and “performed nearly as much labour on shirts and other articles.”⁸⁵ Osage women from the Hopefield settlement also joined in sewing and knitting for the mission community.⁸⁶ Osage women and girls unconnected with the agricultural settlements and the school assisted in other aspects of domestic life, including food production for themselves and the missionaries.⁸⁷ In exchange for their labor, these women received shelter, shared in food stores, and developed friendly relations with Americans. These women may have also used the mission as a supplemental home during lean years in home villages.

Some historians dismiss the mission schools as indicative of Osage traditional life because the students primarily came from métis families.⁸⁸ Regardless of ethnicity, Osage gender construction remained evident amongst all the students in the schools. School girls learned Euro-American sewing and clothing construction, already part of Osage female work. Missionaries frequently praised the girls’ rapid “progress” in learning to sew and creating articles of clothing for the mission families.⁸⁹ Harmony missionaries in 1823 started reporting each girl’s specific completed sewing and hemming yardage and

⁸⁵ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 93; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 237.

⁸⁶ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 6 (June 1824): 179.

⁸⁷ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 369.

⁸⁸ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 95.

⁸⁹ "Reports of Societies: Great Osage Mission," 164.

number of days she spent working in the kitchen.⁹⁰ By the end of the year, the mission journal stated “[t]he female scholars had made, in five months, 16 garments for adults, and 61 for children, besides performing their full share of labour in the kitchen.”⁹¹ The missionaries never ceased applauding Osage girls’ ability to quickly learn to “read, write and sew.”⁹²

Although both male and female students received praise for English proficiency, the missionaries did not mention the boys’ progress in learning agriculture. In 1822 Harmony missionaries, while praising the sewing capacity of the girls, simply mentioned that “[t]he boys were also taught to labour in the field,” with no mention of the success or amount of work the boys completed.⁹³ In his annual report to the Secretary of War Calhoun in 1822, Union missionary Reverend Vaill described the “rapid progress” of four teenage Osage boys in reading and writing English, but at the same time he lamented their inability to learn agriculture because the “prejudices of this people, like those of most Indians, are much against the idea of laboring. They identify labour with slavery.”⁹⁴ One of the most transient students at the mission schools was Tally’s son Woh-sis-ter, whom the missionaries renamed Philip Milledoler.⁹⁵ After a few months at the school, Tally withdrew his son (approximately 15 years old) in

⁹⁰ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 207. For more on Osage female students’ yardage completed and days in the kitchen see: "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 9 (September 1823): 275.

⁹¹ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 5 (May 1824): 141.

⁹² Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 89.

⁹³ "Reports of Societies: Great Osage Mission," 164.

⁹⁴ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 3 (March 1823): 74.

⁹⁵ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 142.

October 1822 so they could hunt together.⁹⁶ When he passed through the mission on the way to a bear hunt a few months later, the missionaries implored Woh-sis-ter to rejoin the school. He responded that “it was good for him to be a hunter and a warrior...[because] in these employments he must spend his days.”⁹⁷ Though Woh-sis-ter retained his English reading skills, clearly agricultural pursuits held little value for his future.⁹⁸ The boys the missionaries predominantly complemented for their “progress” learned a trade or served as interpreters. Stephen Van Rensselaer learned blacksmithing, making nails, hinges, and small knives and worked as a mission interpreter.⁹⁹ Abraham Swiss, a French-Osage métis child, apprenticed with missionary Abraham Redfield in carpentry at the Union mission.¹⁰⁰ Learning trades, particularly ones that centered around making weaponry, fit into Osage gender roles much easier than agriculture. Plus this training provided immediate benefit to the boy’s family and the Osage lifestyle of the time.

There is only one missionary reference to male achievement in agriculture at the school. In the Union mission’s annual report, dated October 1, 1822, Reverend Vaill claimed that four Osage boys were “industrious when taken into the field.” One of these boys, Tally’s son Woh-sis-ter, abandoned the mission on

⁹⁶ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 4, no. 5 (May 1823): 136.

⁹⁷ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 235.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 177; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 235; "Osages: Report of the Station at Union, June 1, 1830," 286.

¹⁰⁰ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 11 (November 1824): 331; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 4 (April 1825): 120.

October 23rd. Vaill, six months earlier, described the other three students in his report to Secretary Calhoun, as identifying “labour with slavery.”¹⁰¹ Unlike the girls, missionaries never mentioned specific agricultural work performed in a specific time frame by individual boys. Thus very little evidence indicated that the missionaries made a significant impact on teaching Osage boys how to farm.

Osage parents most obviously demonstrated their disinterest in mission schooling by taking their children, sometimes repeatedly, from the schools. Tally, as an Arkansas Osage chief, particularly struggled with balancing his role of appeasing the missionaries and leaving his son to their care. When Woh-sis-ter initially joined the missionaries in May 1822, Tally hesitated about leaving his son, but his wife insisted her son remain with the missionaries.¹⁰² After reports that the missionaries used the children as slaves, Tally visited the Union mission in July to investigate any mistreatment.¹⁰³ Though the missionaries thought they allayed his fears, Tally returned fifteen days later and took Woh-sis-ter with him to Fort Smith where Osage leaders negotiated peace with Cherokee leaders. The Union Mission journal characterized Woh-sis-ter’s departure stating, “[w]e have consented to have Philip go, both to please the father, and to benefit the child by enlarging his acquaintance with the white people.”¹⁰⁴ Though the missionaries attempted to justify Woh-sis-ter’s absence, Tally wanted to take his son, and so he did. Over a week later Woh-sis-ter had not returned, prompting the missionaries

¹⁰¹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 74.

¹⁰² "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 143-44.

¹⁰³ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 5.

to travel to the village to reclaim him. Tally continued to make excuses about family members criticizing him for giving his son to the missionaries. Reverend Chapman and his wife Hannah described Woh-sis-ter:

We found Philip divested of his clothes, with his hair shaved, and his face painted like an Osage. After some faint excuses, he said he would return with us. But when we were ready to leave the Village this morning, he pleaded for another day, that he might see his grand mother who had been absent.¹⁰⁵

The next day Woh-sis-ter returned to Union. In late October 1822, though, Tally returned to the mission to take his son on a hunt, complaining “that while others had three or four young men to help them, he was alone, was poor, and found it difficult to maintain his large family.” In order to guarantee Woh-sis-ter’s return, the missionaries had Tally sign a written contract agreeing to bring his son back to the mission in thirty days.¹⁰⁶ But in January 1823, Reverend Chapman confirmed Tally had permanently withdrawn his son from the mission school.¹⁰⁷ Woh-sis-ter believed his life’s work involved hunting and warring and after he learned English, he no longer needed a missionary education.¹⁰⁸

Harmony mission faced similar issues with keeping its students. In early 1822, Sans-Nerf (Great Osage leader) convinced his daughter (name unknown) to allow her two sons, ages thirteen and seven, to attend the mission school.¹⁰⁹ But within weeks, the children’s mother came to the mission and,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.: 8.

¹⁰⁶ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 136.

¹⁰⁷ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 202.

¹⁰⁸ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 235.

¹⁰⁹ "Reports of Societies: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 2, no. 12 (June 1822): 474.

...requested permission to take the youngest home, alleging that he was yet too young to learn, and promising to return him when his age would admit. She was heedless of the opinion and advice of the Family; and the boy was accordingly stripped of his comfortable suit, wrapped in a tattered blanket, and taken from the school.¹¹⁰

A few days later, the older boy, whom the missionaries named “George,” left the mission on his own to return to his mother. Once home, “George’s” mother cut up the majority of his mission clothing. When Sans-Nerf brought back the salvageable clothing, he told the missionaries that his eldest grandson was unwilling to return to school and “he thought it best not to compel him at present.”¹¹¹ When the missionaries threatened to withhold the value of the clothing from federal annuity payments, Sans-Nerf responded that the Osage gave the missionaries “a great piece of land, and had not asked any thing for it” and if the missionaries wanted more land, he would return another piece of “George’s” clothing.¹¹² It appeared neither “George” nor his brother ever returned to the mission school.

Osage settlers at the agricultural settlements, supposedly committed to “civilizing,” avoided leaving their children at the mission schools for extended periods too.¹¹³ In December 1824, Reverend Vaill complained about the Union mission school losing students, including the son and daughter of Pau-hunk-sha,

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 49.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ The métis Swiss family worked for wages at the Union mission. Abraham Swiss, the métis child learning the carpenter’s trade, along with his twin brothers (Isaac and Jacob) and one sister, repeatedly left the Union mission school. "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 273; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 120; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 5, no. 4 (April 1824): 109.

one of the original Hopefield settlers. Vaill commented on Pau-hunk-sha's actions, "[w]e had some confidence in him, but he has again disappointed us, for this is not the first time he has taken his children from the school."¹¹⁴ Another Osage Hopefield farmer, Waushingah-lagena, (known as "Beautiful Bird"), had a son who came and went at the Union mission school several times, once leaving with his grandmother to return to an Osage village.¹¹⁵ Of the forty-one children at the Hopefield settlement in May 1825, only seven attended the Union mission school.¹¹⁶ Certainly some of them may have been too young for school, but inconsistent attendance indicated the Hopefield settlers also lacked a commitment to missionary education. In 1830, on the eve of discontinuing the Protestant mission to the Osage, the Union mission report credited the school's failure to the "instability of the parents, in taking them away."¹¹⁷

Those who joined the agricultural settlements or sent their children to the schools faced widespread criticism from other Osage people. Hopefield residents in particular suffered extensive ridicule from their village counterparts.¹¹⁸ When disease spread through Hopefield in the summer of 1824, debilitating many and killing a few, mission farmer William Requa noted in his journal that the Hopefield residents "were so credulous as to believe what their *sahka shingah*, or old men [Little Old Men], told them, that their living among white people was the

¹¹⁴ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 87.

¹¹⁵ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 243.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 244.

¹¹⁷ "Osages: Report of the Station at Union, June 1, 1830," 286.

¹¹⁸ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 207; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 104-05, 18.

cause of the sickness and deaths among them.”¹¹⁹ Parents of school children experienced similar reproach. The Harmony mission journal for December 1824 noted, “[t]he mother of Jane R. Montgomery and Robert Finley took these children from the school, alleging ‘that the Osages laugh at her, and call her a fool for keeping them where they are made slaves.’”¹²⁰ Tally too feared his son’s enslavement and said that his “people laughed at him, and called him a man of no sense, for giving his son to the Missionaries to become a white man.”¹²¹

Perhaps one of the missionaries’ largest obstacles to changing Native lifeways lay in the Osage language. For one, even though several missionaries devoted sizeable time and effort studying the language, they never achieved fluency and found it challenging to learn.¹²² Reverend Pixley summed up the difficulty, “I am now more fully convinced than ever, that there is no alternative for me, but to abandon the thought of ever learning the Indian language to any useful purpose...[t]he difficulties of learning a language, not written, full of *dialects* and *contracts*, and altogether irregular, is not easy to be conceived.”¹²³ The Osage language “being almost entirely destitute of words by which to convey

¹¹⁹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 244.

¹²⁰ "Home Proceedings: Harmony Mission," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 5 (May 1825): 147.

¹²¹ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 4; "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 144.

¹²² Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 80-81.

¹²³ Emphasis original; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 117.

moral sentiments,” meant the Osage worldview had no conception of sin, guilt, or forgiveness.¹²⁴

The missionaries primarily relied on interpreters, presenting another set of problems. Intermarried Frenchmen constituted the majority of the men with a suitable knowledge of Osage. They had a limited knowledge of English, though, while the missionaries had a limited knowledge of French.¹²⁵ Missionaries complained the Frenchmen’s knowledge of the Osage language primarily related to trade or “domestic business” rather than spiritual or religious beliefs. The missionaries’ most vehemently opposed using French interpreters based on the version of the Osage language these men could speak. As Reverend Chapman demonstrated in March 1822, “[t]he language which the interpreters have acquired is generally such as is used by women and the most degraded of the community with whom they have associated, and theirs is a different dialect from that which is used by the majority, and the most respectable part of the nation.”¹²⁶ It is unclear if Chapman believed the degraded status of all Osage women presented the language problem, or if the problem resulted from the Frenchmen who, by Osage standards, illegitimately cohabitated with Osage women in a *gashon’the migthonge* marriage. Either way, the language barrier presented a sizeable obstacle in “civilizing” the Osage.

¹²⁴ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 77; "Osages: Miscellaneous Communications Respecting the Mission," 123-24; "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 3, no. 5 (November 1822): 186.

¹²⁵ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 272.

¹²⁶ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," *American Missionary Register* 2, no. 12 (June 1822): 490.

The Protestant missionaries knew they failed in “civilizing” the Osage. As early as January 1823, Reverend Vaill reported to the United Foreign Missionary Society, “[a]lready have we had cause for humiliation in not being able to accomplish the views of the Society, and our own views also.”¹²⁷ In September 1824, the Union missionaries provided lengthy responses to questions about why missions to groups such as the Cherokees and Choctaws supposedly garnered immediate success while the Osage missions struggled. They pointed to the lack of “laboring white men” and the comparatively few “half-breed children” among the Osage in preventing their “witnessing the blessings of civilization and of the Gospel.”¹²⁸ Continued success in hunting, agriculture, and trade prevented a “sense of their wretchedness,” limiting Osage interest in changing their lifeways.¹²⁹ The missionaries also blamed federal Indian agents and the Chouteau family for the failure, saying the Osages “for many years, have had no *resident* agent, and they were never favoured with one who did not make it his principal business to derive his wealth from their trade.”¹³⁰ In the summer of 1830, missionaries complained the Osage were “as regardless of the advantages of education, religion, and civilization, as ever, and that the chiefs taught their children to believe their old ways.”¹³¹

One of the primary obstacles for the missionaries resulted from the Osage interconnected view of the world and spiritually sanctioned gender roles.

¹²⁷ “Home Proceedings: Union Mission,” 176.

¹²⁸ “Home Proceedings: Union Mission,” 48.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Emphasis original; Ibid.

¹³¹ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 159.

Reverend Montgomery of the Harmony mission wrote in 1831, that the mission's failure resulted in part because the Osage believed "the arts, government, and religion of white people are viewed as a whole, inseparable from one another."¹³² This presented problems because the missionaries "always found that much pains are requisite in order to prevent them from confounding farming with religion."¹³³ Cornelia Pelham also noted that it was "extremely difficult for any of the missionaries to make an Osage man discriminate with any thing like clearness between religion and farming, if he ploughs and plants, and wears clothes like white men he seems to think himself a christian as a matter of course."¹³⁴ For the Osage, women cultivated because *Wa-kon-da* favored them with creative power. Thus Osage men adopting farming constituted a spiritual act they correlated with Christianity.

Though the missionaries viewed their work as a failure, the Osage had other uses for the missionaries. They attempted to use missionaries as another source of goods to bolster the Osage economy and regional authority. The Osage traded for, stole, or requested livestock as gifts from missionaries. With Osage wealth throughout this period still measured primarily in horses, additional domestic animals served as food or trade goods without reorganizing gender roles.¹³⁵ In 1831 Reverend Montgomery wrote about the difficulty in missionizing the Osage, and related Claremore's remarks on this issue, "you do

¹³² "Osages: Extract from a Letter of Mr. Montgomery, Dated Union, Dec. 27, 1831," *Missionary Herald* 28, no. 8 (August 1832): 258.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 165.

¹³⁵ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 93.

nothing...but talk about books; you have never given me a plough, an axe, or a bake-oven; these are the things which I value...Do you think the Cherokees who send their children to your school took books first? No. I suppose they first received cattle, etc, and afterwards schools.”¹³⁶

Osage leaders also wanted the missionaries to build mills for Osage corn. The missionaries believed the mills would decrease female labor in agriculture and encourage men to take it up. In reality, a mill simply eased the female workload without restructuring gender. As the Harmony Mission journal noted in December 1822, “[t]he first corn for an Osage was ground at our mill to-day. Soon may this important engine of civilized man be the means of relieving the Osage females from the fatiguing task of making their corn soft by means of manual labour.”¹³⁷ Within the week, Osage women brought 10-12 bushels of corn at a time to grind in the mission’s mill.¹³⁸

Osage leaders also wanted to use missionaries as intermediaries between themselves and federal officials, particularly concerning the on-going conflict with the Cherokees. Not only did mission students acquire a working knowledge of English, benefitting government and trade negotiations, but the Osage also relied on missionaries to compose correspondence. In August 1821, three months after Harmony Mission’s founding, Sans-Nerf came to the mission requesting the missionaries “aid him in preparing a communication for the Government,

¹³⁶ "Osages: Extract from a Letter of Mr. Montgomery, Dated Union, Dec. 27, 1831," 258.

¹³⁷ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," 205.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

requesting that all white men, who have not been suitably authorized, might be kept from trading with his people.”¹³⁹ In 1823, when federal officials required Claremore to relinquish members of his village suspected of killing Cherokees, he responded by soliciting Reverend Chapman to come to the village and write a letter to Colonel Arbuckle at Fort Smith. Reverend Chapman’s letter maintained the Osage only responded violently to Cherokee attacks, thus declaring Osage innocence.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, encroaching white settlers increasingly stole Osage horses and property, prompting Claremore and his villagers to start leaving property with the missionaries when they traveled on hunts.¹⁴¹

In the 1820-1830s Protestant missionaries tried to change Osage culture and gender roles. In order to confront one aspect of federal policy – eastern removal – the Osage accommodated the other aspect – the civilization program. Leaders like Sans-Nerf wanted education, but they did not want Christianity. Missionaries tried to teach men to farm, but Osage women already excelled at this, and sometimes had to feed the starving Protestants. Mission schools attracted very few students and those who attended did not stay long. Osage subsistence and trade supported families and while they continued to garner *Wakon-da*’s favor by unifying the dual cosmic forces in their daily lives, the Protestants had nothing to offer.

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¹³⁹ "Home Proceedings: Great Osage Mission," *American Missionary Register* 2, no. 12 (June 1822): 494.

¹⁴⁰ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 201-02.

¹⁴¹ Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 94.

In the nineteenth century, Osage life involved continuity, change, and colonization. The Osage remained in tribally-selected village sites in their historic territory. Subsistence practices continued and they remained commercial hunters. But Euro-American populations grew and federal Indian policy forced eastern and northern Native peoples into the Missouri and Arkansas river valleys undermining Osage hegemony. The Cherokee constituted an unprecedented threat to Osage authority and economic security. As warfare with the Cherokee increasingly disrupted Osage life, they had to maintain peaceful relations with the United State in order to survive.

Peace with the U.S. translated into missionization. Protestant missionaries, despite their best efforts, could not alter Osage gender construction. They opened schools and founded agricultural settlements but they could not motivate Osage men to wholesale abandon hunting for farming. The spiritual connections between men, women, and work remained. Yet, the missionaries provided support to Osage communities facing extensive disruption. The schools provided children with a working knowledge of English, medical care, and temporary food and shelter. Missionaries participated in Osage exchange and served diplomatic roles in Osage-U.S. relations.

Missionization may have failed, but U.S. expansion eventually culminated in Osage removal. In 1825, the Great and Little Osage left home villages dating back to at least French contact. In 1839 the Arkansas Osage abandoned villages they selected nearly 80 years earlier based on the Three Forks regions'

agricultural, hunting, and trade productivity. Osage men and women would seek *Wa-kon-da's* favor for tribal perpetuation in Kansas.

Chapter 5

Living in Kansas, 1830s-1870s

In the midst of this very distressing state of affairs, prevailing especially in the northeast portion of our territory, the Osages and those in particular residing near to our mission were the only ones who really did enjoy themselves and were happy. For being well housed in their winter towns with an abundance of fuel to keep themselves comfortable, having plenty of dry meat for daily use, and being most all well supplied with a large amount of buffalo robes for trade, they had nothing to envy of their white neighbors, and winter found them all prepared for it.¹

—Father Paul Ponziglione

The removal treaties in 1825 and 1839 reflected federal policy to use the Louisiana Purchase as an Indian Territory for eastern Indigenous peoples. At the same time, federal policy tried to transform the Osage from hide traders into Christian farmers. Both treaties supplied log houses, plows, and large herds of livestock, as incentives to keep the Osage in their villages and not out on hunts. The treaties also set aside land for Christian missions and schools to educate Osage children on the habits of “civilized” life. But as Father Paul Ponziglione described, Osage subsistence and trade, well-suited to the Kansas environment, continually undermined attempts to change their lifeways and gender roles²

In Kansas, Catholic missionaries hoped to succeed where their Protestant predecessors failed. Beginning in the seventeenth century, Catholic missionaries periodically visited Osage villages. After the Osage started intermarrying with French traders, they had increasing contact with Catholics and métis marriages

¹ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 163.

² Fausz, "Becoming 'a Nation of Quakers': The Removal of the Osage Indians from Missouri," 38.

and baptisms appear in records all across Missouri.³ When the Osage moved to Kansas, Jesuits operated missions amongst the nearby Kickapoo and Potawatomi.⁴ The first sustained Catholic missionary effort to the Osage began in April 1847 when Father John Schoenmakers arrived and “took formal possession of the two log houses put up by the Indian Department for the use of the mission.”⁵ On May 10, 1847 he opened the Osage Manual Labor School for boys.⁶ And on October 10, 1847, the Sisters of Loretto opened the female branch of the school.⁷

The volatile southern Kansas environment, involving droughts, floods, and grasshopper plagues, made sedentary agriculture tenuous for both Osage and Euro-American farmers. In this climate, traditional Osage hunting and trade constituted a more reliable income and prolonged their resistance to federal Indian policy and efforts to change their culture. After the 1850s, the Euro-American population expanded and demanded access to Osage land. Settler violence and theft also encouraged Osage reliance on kinship networks and hunting to maintain subsistence. Thus the civilization program amongst the Osage in Kansas completely failed.

³ Gilbert J. Garraghan, *The Jesuits of the Middle United States, Vol. 2* (New York: America Press, 1938), 493-95.

⁴ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 11-12.

⁵ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 81.

⁶ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, August 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1848-1849), 166.

⁷ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, August 1848," in *Ibid.*

Once in Kansas, the Osage adapted to plains life.⁸ Although historic clan identities remained, the dual hereditary chieftain political organization no longer existed and the Osage continued to separate into smaller band communities, led by individual men based on war, hunting, or trading success. The *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* (priesthood) still existed, but shared power with warrior councils, similar to the warrior societies of other plains peoples. On the new reservation, Osage families primarily settled into seventeen villages along the Verdigris and Neosho river valleys. The Great and Little Osage and numerous métis families settled along the Upper Neosho, while the Arkansas Osage lived in villages roughly sixty miles to the southwest along the Verdigris River (Figure 4).⁹

In the 1830s-1840s, the Osage maintained a sizeable and profitable trade economy. Bison robes gained value and the Osage used hunting and hide processing to supply this market. Between the 1830s-1853, the Osage supplemented their economy by serving as middlemen between U.S. trading houses and the Comanche and their allies on the western plains. The Comanche needed access to Euro-American goods and peace with the Osage facilitated this. In 1853 the United States established trade relations with the Comanche, discontinuing the need for Osage middlemen and significantly diminishing Osage

⁸ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 123.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 123-24; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 277.

trade wealth. The Comanche, no longer willing to share hunting territory, frequently attacked Osage hunting parties, inhibiting access to bison herds.¹⁰

The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed for legal American settlement completely surrounding the Osage reservation and the promise of profitable Kansas farmland attracted many settlers. The controversy of slave versus free-state brought in even more people, hoping to influence the outcome of popular sovereignty. All these settlers quickly encroached on Osage land and demanded removal. The \$20,000 annuities, subsidizing Osage agriculture, buffalo hunting, and trade for twenty years, ended in 1859. The Civil War destabilized both the economy and village life in southern Kansas. Thus in the mid-1860s, Osage leaders consented to land cessions in order to renew annuity payments and reduce settler intrusion. In the Treaty of 1865, the Osage sold the eastern portion of their reservation to the United States and moved to their “diminished reservation” in western Kansas. Settler encroachment and violence continued, though, until the Osage officially relocated from Kansas to Indian Territory in 1870.¹¹

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¹⁰ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 150-51.

¹¹ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 162-67; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 69-73.

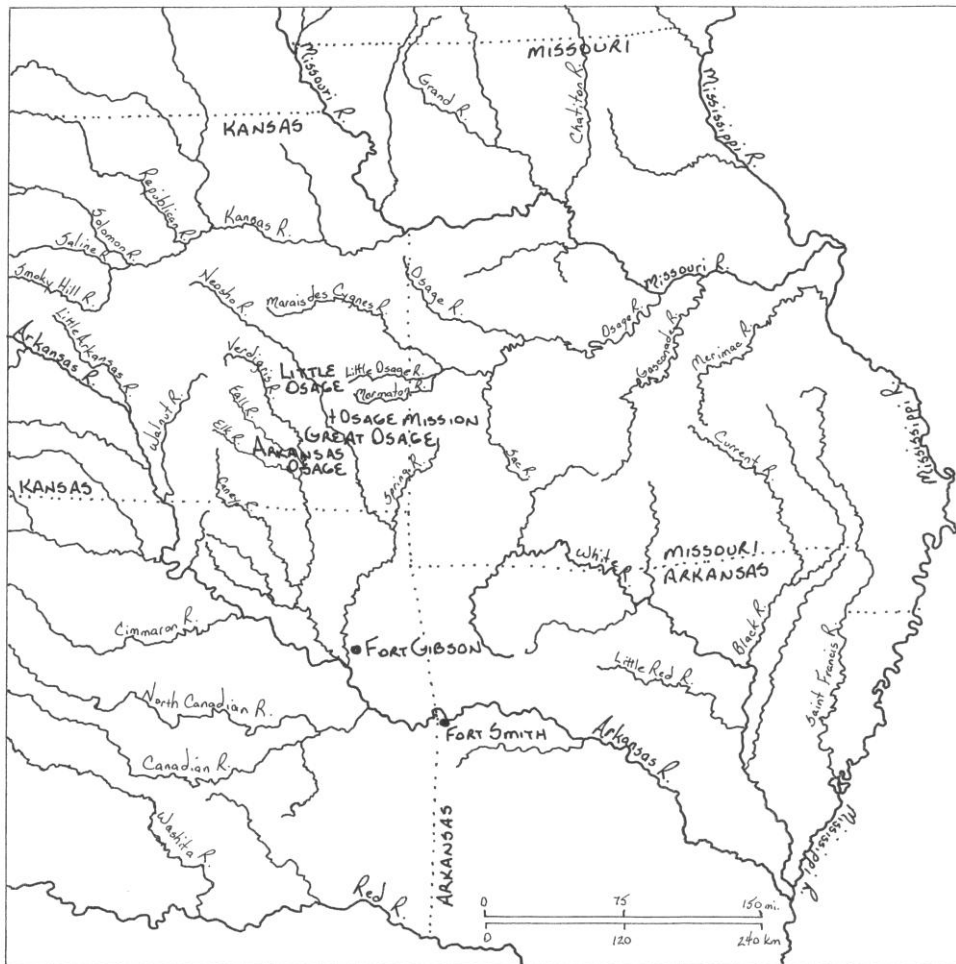


Figure 4. Osage village locations, 1830s-1870s (Artist, Denise Gerhart, 2010).

In Kansas, many aspects of Osage spiritual and physical life remained intact. Women still built lodges and homes from historic materials. Osage appearance, although increasingly incorporating manufactured items, largely retained Osage styles and symbolism. Kinship, including marriage and polygyny, helped to sustain families and villages in the new environment and amongst the rising Euro-American population. Spiritual understanding, including gender complementarity, and ceremonialism continued to define Osage relationships with one another and the world around them.

In the new reservation, women continued to construct lodges both in the villages and on hunts.¹² Bark, mats, and buffalo skins covered wood pole framed, rounded roof lodges with fire pits dug into the ground, roughly fifty feet long, twenty feet high, and twenty feet wide.¹³ Watson Stewart, a settler in Kansas in 1856, marveled at how Osage women fashioned boards, wood poles, and skin mats to create their large lodges. Stewart and his neighbors so admired the boards, they hauled off “wagon loads” from an “abandoned” Osage village to use

¹² Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 170-71; Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 52, 170.

¹³ Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Part I of Farnham's Travels in the Great Western Prairies, Etc., May 21-October 16, 1839*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 28, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1904), 132; Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 117, 34. "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to G.W. Manypenny, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 3, 1853," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853," in *Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the First Session of the Thirty-Third Congress* (Washington D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 379. "Annual Report, Isaac T. Gibson, Neosho Agent, to Enoch Hoag, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Central Superintendency, October 1, 1870," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 483.

in their own houses.¹⁴ Victor Tixier, a French traveler who spent part of the summer of 1840 on an Osage hunt, described women gathering twelve-foot branches they “planted” in the ground, bent into arches, and covered with buffalo skins. Hunting lodges were nearly five feet tall, fifteen feet long, and seven feet deep. “The architects of these lodges, the Indian women, never deviate from a fundamental principle which makes them expose the front of the structure to the east, however hot the sun. Their aim is to protect them from the rain, which is always brought by the west wind.”¹⁵ Father Paul Ponziglione, who joined the Osage Mission in 1851, witnessed women weaving the mats used for these structures through the 1860s, “the squaws occupied in weaving the flags they have just been gathering from the ponds...making their new stock of mats for the next winter.”¹⁶

Osage dress during this period demonstrated continuity in style, with changes in some of the materials. Throughout the early part of the century, women continued to produce the majority of Osage clothing. As Thomas Nuttall observed in 1819, “[t]he use of calico or shirts is yet unknown among them, and their present fashions and mode of dress have been so long stationary, as now to be by themselves considered characteristic.”¹⁷ Men wore buckskin leggings and

¹⁴ Watson Stewart, "Personal Memoirs of Watson Stewart," in *Miscellaneous Collections: Watson Stewart* (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Historical Society, 1904), 24.

¹⁵ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 159-60.

¹⁶ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 163-64, 201.

¹⁷ Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory During the Year 1819. With Occasional Observations on the Manners of the Aborigines.*, 186.

moccasins, all made by Osage women.¹⁸ Women wore moccasins, belted buckskin skirts or tunics, and leggings in cold weather.¹⁹ George Catlin visited Fort Gibson, near the Arkansas Osage villages in 1834, painting and describing Osage dress. He noted they “dressed in skins of their own dressing.” Yet when painting Claremore, his wife, and child Catlin indicated the woman was “richly dressed in costly cloths of civilized manufacture, which is almost a solitary instance amongst the Osages.” In the painting Claremore’s wife still wore such fabric in the Osage tunic-style. A marriage ceremony Father Ponziglione witnessed in 1854 also documented the bride, Tawagla, wearing a calico tunic and cloak.²⁰ Catlin also indicated the primary alteration in Osage male dress involved exchanging the buffalo robe cloak for a wool blanket.²¹ Kansas settlers in the 1860s noted similar styling, including moccasins, leggings, breech cloths, and tunics, made out of wool, calico, flannel, and muslin.²²

In many ways, men maintained their traditional appearance. When the newly appointed vicar apostolic of Indian Territory, John Baptist Miede, came to visit the Osage Mission in 1851, Father Ponziglione recorded the following male appearance:

¹⁸ "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 13; "Osages: Their Character, Manners, and Condition," 80; Tuttle, *Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions*, 47.

¹⁹ Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 343-44. "Home Proceedings: Union Mission," 115.

²⁰ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 147.

²¹ George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, Third ed., vol. 2 (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1844), 40-41.

²² Eliza J. Wyckoff, "Reminiscences of Early Days in Kansas," in *Miscellaneous Collections: Jane Baude* (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Historical Society, March 1, 1918), 7-8, 10.

George White-Hair, the great chief of the Osages, accompanied by 15 of his principal braves comes to pay his official visit to R. Rev. Bishop... Their heads are clearly shaved to their very top, and in the small bunch of hairs left on them they wear a large bold eagle feather decorated with small red streamers. All along their scalp they have a set of stiff bristles standing up like the crest of a helmet. Long precious wampuns hang from their ears, and on their breast one could see beautiful silver medals of Spanish and French Monarchs as well as of U.S. presidents, which their grandfathers had received on the occasions of signing treaties with them. Their body is bare to the waist and painted all over with bright colors. Their arms and wrists are shining with brass and silver bracelets. Elegant scarfs of variegated hues richly embroidered enclose their loins, and their buck-skin leggings as well as moccasins are nicely adorned with colored beads. Finally their herculean limbs are partially wrapt in the folds of an ample red blanket...²³

Eliza Wyckoff and her husband settled in southern Kansas in the late 1860s and received frequent visits from local Osage men. Her visitors completely exemplified Miego's physical description.²⁴

Male ornamentation, with earrings, necklaces, bracelets, beads, and feathers, indicated a man's achievements. Tixier stated that men wearing eagle feathers had stolen at least one horse and those wearing little bells and war hatchets had killed an enemy man.²⁵ Louis Burns, Osage tribe member and historian, wrote that a distinguished warrior wore a small, round shield on his back, made of rawhide, painted with symbols of his achievements, and ringed with eagle feathers.²⁶ Beads and metal ware of this period primarily came from trade rather than Osage production. John Hunter, a Euro-American captive adopted by an Osage family in the late 1700s, described men, particularly in

²³ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 129.

²⁴ Wyckoff, "Reminiscences of Early Days in Kansas," 7-8, 10.

²⁵ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 138.

²⁶ Burns, *Osage Indian Customs and Myths*, 132.

preparing for religious or festive occasions, devoting extensive time and energy to perfect their physical appearance.²⁷ Men also continued using red, green, yellow, and white paint, also primarily obtained through trade, in decorating their bodies for war, marriages, and other public events.²⁸

Women wore ornaments and paint, but in far less flamboyant ways than their male counterparts. A woman primarily continued to use the red dot at the part of her hair, denoting observance of daily prayer vigils. At her wedding, Tawagla wore silver and purple silk ribbon earrings and a necklace with a single pearl shell.²⁹ There is some discrepancy on women's hairstyles. It appears likely that married women wore their hair, as Tixier called it, "long and flowing." Unmarried women ornamented their hair with a ribbons and silver rings, either tied or braided it at the nape of the neck, or in curls in front of each ear.³⁰

Osage men and women also had tattoos well into the Kansas period (Figure 5). Tattooing required an expensive Tattoo Ceremony, performed by a man specially trained in this art and ritual.³¹ A specific *wa-xo'-be* (portable shrine) dedicated to this ritual contained large pelican wing quills used in

²⁷ Shen-thweeh and his wife Hunk-hah adopted John Hunter to replace a son recently captured by other Osage enemies; Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 43, 343.

²⁸ Thomas Nuttall, *A Journal of Travels into the Arkansa Territory During the Year 1819. With Occasional Observations on the Manners of the Aborigines*. (Philadelphia: Thos. H. Palmer, 1821), 185-86; Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, 41; Tixier, McDermott, and Salvan, *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 137.

²⁹ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 147.

³⁰ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 138; Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 147.

³¹ Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 221.

tattooing. This bird revealed the mysteries of tattooing to the Osage and supplied the necessary implements. Francis La Flesche wrote in 1914 that one of the most difficult parts of his Osage research involved gathering information on this ceremony. Prior to the twentieth century, La Flesche said “only the warrior who had won war honors was entitled to have the ceremony performed and have the war symbols tattooed upon his body.” Male tattoos symbolized war and included the sacred ceremonial knife, sacred pipe, and thirteen rays of the sun symbolizing the thirteen types of *O-don* (war honors).³² When Father Ponziglione witnessed Tawagla’s marriage, he noted her husband Nivale’s appearance, including how “his body is all tattooed with such symbolic figures as chiefs alone are allowed to be marked with.”³³ Reverend Vaill, at Union mission, witnessed tattooing in 1827, also remarking it designated virtue and honor.³⁴

If a man could afford it, he would also have the tattoo ceremony performed for his wives and daughters because “the woman, upon whom depends the continual existence of the tribe, was no less honored than the warrior who risks his life for the people.”³⁵ Women’s tattoos depicted the sun, stars, and earth representing her creative role. Lines tattooed from her shoulder to her wrist symbolized “life descending from the sun and the stars to the earth, represented in

³² Francis La Flesche, "Researches among the Osage," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 70, no. 2 (1918): 112.

³³ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 146-47.

³⁴ "Osage Indians: Account of Their Conditions, Manners, Etc," 147.

³⁵ Francis La Flesche, "Ceremonies and Rituals of the Osage," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 63, no. 8 (1914): 66-69.

the conventional design of a spider pictured on the hand.”³⁶ In 1840, Tixier noted that nearly all Osage females had blue tattoos on “their necks, chests, backs, arms, the backs of their hands, their stomachs down to the hips, the lower part of their thighs, and their legs are marked with indelible blue lines.”³⁷ The prevalence of tattooing on both men and women demonstrated the complementary role of men and women in warfare.³⁸



Figure 5. “Chief Bacon Rind, Chief of the Osage Indians.” This photo, taken between 1870-1890, shows Osage men’s tattoos. Courtesy KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

Similarly the Osage continued to acknowledge women’s role in war success through the scalp dance. In this ceremony, conducted when men returned

³⁶ La Flesche, "Researches among the Osage," 112-13.

³⁷ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 138-39.

³⁸ For more images of male and female tattoos see: La Flesche, "Researches among the Osage," 111-13.

from battle, women dressed, danced, and acted like men while listening to their husband's and male relatives recite war achievements.³⁹ In the nineteenth century, travelers and Protestant missionaries witnessed Osage women performing scalp dances.⁴⁰ Reverend Vaill attempted to go on a "preaching tour" in 1833, but he found several Great Osage villages celebrating the scalp dance, thwarting his intentions.⁴¹ Tixier witnessed a scalp dance in 1840:

Then the women and the girls, wearing the costumes of the warriors and carrying their weapons, perform the dance of the scalps. They are naked down to the waist, and the space between the lines of tattooing which cover their bodies is painted red or yellow. Armed with tomahawks and making contortions and faces, they dance around the red pole to which the scalps are hanging. They are challenging the Pawnee.⁴²

In the ceremonial understanding of warfare, Osage men and women maintained their gender complementarity well into the Kansas reservation period.

Daily prayer vigils also remained paramount in Osage ceremonial life.

Josiah Gregg, like many visitors to an Osage village, reported "I was awakened at the dawn of the day by the most doleful, piteous, heart-rending howls and lamentations."⁴³ Tixier documented men and women's lamentations, and while traveling with a hunting party, he too was awakened by the sound of wailing, "[t]his religious song was addressed to the Great Spirit (*Oua-Kondah*) to ask of him a good hunt and to avert the wrath of the Evil Spirit. This supplication was

³⁹ Dorsey, "An Account of the War Customs of the Osages," 127-28.

⁴⁰ Bradbury, *Bradbury's Travels in the Interior of America, 1809-1811*, 61; "Osage Indians," 271.

⁴¹ "Osages: Journal of Mr. Vaill, During a Preaching Tour," 368, 70-71.

⁴² Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 227.

⁴³ Gregg, *Part 2 of Gregg's Commerce of the Prairies, 1831-1839*, 339-40.

accompanied by abundant tears.”⁴⁴ Father Ponziglione recorded how at day-break, noon, and sunset, Osage men and women daubed their faces with mud or covered their heads with dust and ashes and made their “daily supplications to the Great Spirit” through pitiful cries and lamentations for their lost family members.⁴⁵ In 1868, Eliza Wyckoff wrote, “[a]t day-break, every morning, they made a hideous singsong noise lasting a half-hour, mourning for their dead.”⁴⁶

Polygyny and matrilocality remained prominent through the reservation period. Father Schoenmakers called it “common” in his 1854 annual report.⁴⁷ Nivale and Tawagla’s marriage in 1854 eventually included two of Tawagla’s sisters.⁴⁸ Plenty of other polygynous examples exist, including among métis families well into the late nineteenth century.⁴⁹ During Tixier’s summer stay with the Osage, he stayed in a guest lodge, under Ouichinghêh’s care. Tixier marveled

⁴⁴ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 164-65.

⁴⁵ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 15, 112-13.

⁴⁶ Wyckoff, "Reminiscences of Early Days in Kansas," 7.

⁴⁷ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," ed. Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1854), 126.

⁴⁸ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 169.

⁴⁹ Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 240, 51. "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Charles W. Dean, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 4, 1856," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1856: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1856," (Washington D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1857), 134. "Annual Report, Isaac T. Gibson, Neosho Agent, to Enoch Hoag, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Central Superintendency, October 1, 1870," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871," 488. Paul Mary Ponziglione, "Kansas. Letter from Father Ponziglione, July 2, 1883," *Woodstock Letters* 12, no. 3 (1883): 292; Burns, *Osage Indian Customs and Myths*, 73.

at her husband Chabé-chinka's commitment to alternating each night sleeping in this lodge and that of his second wife.⁵⁰

Continued sexual freedom and availability of divorce prevented polygyny from subordinating Osage women. John Hunter wrote that women could become mothers out of wedlock without suffering a ruined reputation or limiting her chances of subsequent marriage.⁵¹ Tixier claimed Osage men repeatedly asked him about sexual interactions with Osage women, volunteering to set Tixier up with their wives or other women.⁵² In addition, he noted, "a couple may divorce by mutual consent, in which case the husband takes back what he has given to his father-in-law."⁵³ John Hunter also wrote that divorce involved no social stigma, could be affected by either party, and did not impede marriage opportunities in the future. Women often retained their lodges and the children, except for adolescent sons who often hunted or assisted their father's in some capacity. In some instances, Hunter stated a woman would move to the lodge of another relative

⁵⁰ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 183.

⁵¹ Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 203.

⁵² Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 182, 84, 258; Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac, to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices*, 71.

⁵³ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*.

after divorce.⁵⁴ The frequency and ease of divorce inhibited missionary efforts to teach monogamous life-long Christian marriage.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, in some instances infidelity and divorce led to domestic violence. Several travelers reported men hitting their wives supposedly because of adultery, and Tixier claimed men could kill their unfaithful wives, though he did not witness this.⁵⁶ Tixier also wrote that after Majakita, an Osage village chief, abandoned his first wife to marry Vitimé, his first wife struck Vitimé with a spear.⁵⁷ Reverend Pixley observed a similar incident in 1825, where an ex-wife made lacerations on the head of her ex-husband's second wife. Though the second wife's kin attempted to exact revenge, the first wife's determination to fight to the death halted their retaliation.⁵⁸ It seems both men and women perpetrated domestic violence. It is unclear if polygyny or colonization prompted or increased this behavior.

Osage women did not go to war, but they could certainly protect themselves. When men left on hunting or war expeditions, women defended their lodges and families. It is likely women became increasingly adept at self-defense during the widespread Cherokee violence lasting through the 1820s. Victor Tixier

⁵⁴ Hunter, *Manners and Customs of Several Indian Tribes Located West of the Mississippi: Including Some Account of the Soil, Climate, and Vegetable Productions, and the Indian Materia Medica: To Which Is Prefixed the History of the Author's Life During a Residence of Several Years among Them*, 253-55.

⁵⁵ Ponziglione, "Kansas. Letter from Father Ponziglione, July 2, 1883," 292.

⁵⁶ Featherstonhaugh, *Excursion through the Slave States, from Washington on the Potomac, to the Frontier of Mexico; with Sketches of Popular Manners and Geological Notices*, 71; Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 182-83.

⁵⁷ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 234.

⁵⁸ "Home Proceedings: Journal of Mr. Pixley," *American Missionary Register* 6, no. 7 (July 1825): 217.

claimed Osage women could scalp their attackers as efficiently as warriors.⁵⁹ In 1846, four white men from an emigrant caravan moving through southern Kansas surprised several Osage women gathering firewood. Brandishing cloth, pocket knives, and metal ware, the men seemingly wanted to trade, and approached the women. Once within arm's reach the men seized the women and attempted to rape them. The men hid their guns prior to advancing on the women and remained unarmed during the subsequent retaliation:

In the melee that follows, two of the boys succeed in making their escape; the other two on the contrary, being over-powered, are tied, each one to a separate tree. Having now a sure hold of their victims, the furious Amazons leave free course to their revenge! In less [time] than one can tell it, they tear off their clothes, scalp them and flay them alive! Next, gathering around them a pile of dry sticks and brushwood, put an end to their life by fire.⁶⁰

Though not associated with death, women had the emotional and physical capability to defend themselves.

Continuity in the ceremonial and physical aspects of Osage life corresponded to continuity in subsistence and trade activities. On the Kansas reservation the Osage primarily subsisted through hunting and small-scale agriculture, far better suited to the environment than sedentary agriculture.⁶¹ The Osage spent the winters in forested areas along small streams, providing pasture for their horses, fuel, and protection from winter weather. Once spring

⁵⁹ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 219.

⁶⁰ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 79-80.

⁶¹ "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, August 31, 1857," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1857: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1857," (Washington D.C.: William A. Harris, 1858), 206.

commenced, they moved to higher ground to escape periodic floods along these water courses. Along the fertile creek banks, women planted corn and pumpkins and once these made a good start, the community left on the summer hunt.⁶² To encourage grass growth for their horses and the deer, elk, and bison herds, the Osage burned the prairie in the early spring and late fall.⁶³ In dry weather, they set fire on the plains to drive game, particularly deer, towards streams; Father Ponziglione noted, [d]eer seem to be very much afraid of fire, and as soon as they notice smoke arising on the plains they start for the timber land along the river courses, where they fall an easy prey to the Indian hunter.”⁶⁴

The Osage still “measured their worldly wealth in horses.”⁶⁵ Horses gained even greater value as the Osage adjusted to plains life and traveled greater distances to access game. In 1850 Osage Sub-Agent Henry Harvey estimated the Osage had nearly 10,000 head of horses.⁶⁶ Neosho Agent P.P. Elder reported in 1863, “[t]he property of these Indians consists mostly in horses, ponies, and mules, of which they have large numbers, and of a superior quality.”⁶⁷ Both Osage men and women rode horses and learned it at a young age. On the plains,

⁶² Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 200-01.

⁶³ "Osage Indians," 267. Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 111, 19.

⁶⁴ Paul Mary Ponziglione, "Kansas. Letter from Fr. P.M. Ponziglione, Dec. 31, 1881," *Woodstock Letters* 11, no. 2 (1882): 164-65.

⁶⁵ James Edwin Finney, "Reminiscences of a Trader in the Osage Country," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 33, no. 2 (1955): 146.

⁶⁶ "Annual Report, Henry Harvey, Osage Sub-Agent, to D.D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, October 23, 1850," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," ed. Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington D.C. 1850), 37.

⁶⁷ "Annual Report, P.P. Elder, Neosho Agent, to W.G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 20, 1863," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1863," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 188.

young boys cared for the horses and trained them .⁶⁸ Victor Tixier noted the Osage horses were well-kept, well-groomed, and watched with extreme care.⁶⁹

Although the Osage adopted some aspects of a nomadic plains lifestyle, in selecting their village sites, agriculture remained a primary concern. In the 1830s “the valley of the Neosho and that of the Verdigris, being considered to have the best farming soil of the whole reservation, were chosen in progress of time for the principal Osage villages.”⁷⁰ Women’s agricultural production remained central to subsistence and the cosmological understanding of Osage life. As Father Ponziglione noted, between the Hickory and Lightning creeks, “[t]he Indians looked on the country irrigated by these two streams as their richest agricultural soil. In fact the squaws were in the habit of coming here every spring to make their little gardens and small corn fields.”⁷¹

Osage women continued agricultural production through the entire Kansas reservation period. The records of federal agents, travelers, missionaries, and settlers repeatedly document Osage women cultivating corn, pumpkins, squash, beans, and melons with hoes.⁷² Certainly the different environment, more prone

⁶⁸ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 167-68; Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 63, 201.

⁶⁹ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 184.

⁷⁰ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 49.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷² Farnham, *Part I of Farnham's Travels in the Great Western Prairies, Etc., May 21-October 16, 1839*, 132. "Annual Report, R.A. Calloway, Osage Sub-Agent, to W. Armstrong, Acting Superintendent, Western Territory, August 1, 1841" in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1841: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress, 1841-1842," (Washington D.C.: Thomas Allen, 1841), 94-95. "Annual Report, R.A. Calloway, Osage Sub-Agent, to D.D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, September 1, 1843," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1843: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session

to drought, and periodic flooding along creeks and tributaries sometimes ruined these fields, but the spiritually sanctioned work persisted.⁷³ Osage Sub-Agent John Richardson noted the success Osage agriculture enjoyed prior to removal, “these Indians not only raised corn, beans, potatoes, etc., to an extent equal to the home consumption and demand, but generally produced a surplus.” And though women continued Kansas cultivation, he admitted it was far less successful and secure.⁷⁴ Even still, in some years an agricultural surplus allowed for continued cache storage for winter consumption.⁷⁵ Eliza Wyckoff documented Osage farming and caching in 1869:

of the Twenty-Eighth Congress, 1843-1844," (Washington D.C.: Alexander & Barnard, 1843), 132. "Annual Report, Henry Harvey, Osage Sub-Agent, to D.D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, October 23, 1850," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," 35; Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 163-64, 201. "Annual Report, Isaac T. Gibson, Neosho Agent, to Enoch Hoag, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Central Superintendency, October 1, 1870," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871," 483-84.

⁷³ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 156-57. "Annual Report, John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to John Drennen, Acting Superintendent of the Western Territory, October 25, 1849," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1849," in *Message from the President of the United States, to the Two Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the First Session of the Thirty-First Congress* (Washington D.C.: 1849), 1134. "Annual Report, Henry Harvey, Osage Sub-Agent, to D.D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, October 23, 1850," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," 35.

"Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to T. Murphy, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Central Superintendency, September 8, 1868," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1868," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 272.

⁷⁴ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 156-57.

⁷⁵ "Annual Report, R.A. Calloway, Osage Sub-Agent, to W. Armstrong, Acting Superintendent, Western Territory, August 1, 1842," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1842: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Third Session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress, 1842-1843," (Washington D.C.: Alexander & Barnard, 1842), 127.

Indians had planted only half of their squaw patches the previous year but this year they planted them all to prevent the settlers from cultivating them...The squaws made little hills three or four feet apart with hoes, then planted two or three hills of corn on each knoll. When it got up ten inches high they cut the weeds out between the hills, then all went west about eighty miles on their summer buffalo hunt...They planted early squaw corn. They got back while some of the corn was still in roasting ears, and some harder. About a hundred came into our grove to dry their corn. They put forks in the ground and poles across with trammels, and hung large brass kettles over fires and boiled the softest ears and sometimes cut a pumpkin in two and lay on the corn and perhaps a hunk of dried buffalo meat in the same kettle. After the boiled corn was cold they shelled it with a mussel shell. They shelled the harder corn in the same way and spread it on cat-tail flag carpets or rawhides to dry. They made graters by driving something sharp through the bottom of a tin pan. We saw them turn the pan bottom side up on a rawhide and grate soft corn and put it in the skillet to bake. They put the dried corn in sacks and when they went on their fall hunt they left the corn with the old settlers for fear it would be stolen if they left it in their wigwams.⁷⁶

Likewise men continued their work “protecting the fields where women worked,” by preventing horses or cattle from grazing where Osage women planted their crops.⁷⁷

Women continued their agricultural work every year (except during grasshopper infestation, as discussed below), but the volatile Kansas environment increasingly jeopardized this as a reliable food source. Flooding along the Kansas

"Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in "Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 325. "Annual Report, Isaac T. Gibson, Neosho Agent, to Enoch Hoag, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Central Superintendency, October 1, 1870," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1871," 483-84.

⁷⁶ Wyckoff, "Reminiscences of Early Days in Kansas," 5.

⁷⁷ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 54.

water ways periodically washed away their crops.⁷⁸ But hunting remained successful,

[l]iving in close proximity to the settlements on Spring river, one of the most agricultural sections of Missouri, where they could barter a buffalo robe for twenty or twenty-five bushels of corn, and purchase flour for one dollar and fifty cents per hundred, the inducement was strong and the argument weighty to them, that a life by the chase was more preferable than a reliance (under such circumstances) upon agriculture and labor for a living.⁷⁹

The tenuous nature of reservation agriculture forced Osage communities to depend more and more on hunting for subsistence and trade, preserving a primary aspect of the male gender role and the Osage economy. Missionaries and Indian agents frequently described how the Osage subsisted “entirely from the chase.”⁸⁰ The whole village continued to travel together on the hunt.⁸¹ And

⁷⁸ "Annual Report, Joel Cruttenden, Osage Sub-Agent, to T.H. Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, September 1, 1845," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1845: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Twenty-Ninth Congress, 1845-1846," (Washington D.C.: T. Barnard, 1846), 98. "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 156-57. "Annual Report, John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to John Drennen, Acting Superintendent of the Western Territory, October 25, 1849," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1849," 1134. "Annual Report, Henry Harvey, Osage Sub-Agent, to D.D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, October 23, 1850," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," 35.

⁷⁹ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 157.

⁸⁰ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in *Ibid.* "Annual Report, W.J.J. Morrow, Neosho Agent, to John Drennen, Superintendent Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, October 1, 1852," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1852: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852," (Washington D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1852), 106. "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, August 31, 1857," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1857:

Osage hunters continued using bow and arrow. According to Elijah Sells, Southern Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Osage hunters justified this because “the smell of gunpowder stampedes the buffalo, and they would soon become so wild that their hunts would prove failures; hence these primitive weapons are still in favor with the wilder Indians.”⁸²

In a climate with variable weather, the Osage lifestyle provided more stable subsistence than the sedentary farming white settlers attempted in this region. On the Kansas reservation, federal officials and missionaries wanted the Osage to abandon hunting for sedentary agriculture. But the climate did not consistently support agriculture and hunting provided a more reliable income. Many early Kansas residents also did not prepare for the frequently harsh Kansas winters. In the winter of 1855-1856, discussed above, Father Ponziglione noted how the Osage fared far better than their white neighbors in the difficult weather.⁸³ Periodic droughts, devastating to Euro-American settlers, sometimes

Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1857," 206. Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 200-01.

⁸¹ "Annual Report, R.A. Calloway, Osage Sub-Agent, to W. Armstrong, Acting Superintendent, Western Territory, August 1, 1842," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1842: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Third Session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress, 1842-1843," 127. "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in "Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867," 325. "March 14, 1870," in "Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 2: Jan. 4, 1869 - Jan. 9, 1871," ed. Eugene Grabner (St. Louis, Missouri: Midwest Jesuit Archives, Unpublished Manuscript), 28.

⁸² "Annual Report, Elijah Sells, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to D.N. Cooley, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 16, 1865," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865," in *Message of the President of the United States and Accompanying Documents to the Two Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 442.

⁸³ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 163.

proved advantageous for the Osage.⁸⁴ During the 1860 drought, the majority of Osage hunting bands abandoned the plains and instead sought game along the Arkansas and its tributaries:

In so doing, to use a western expression, they struck a real bonanza, for the dry season having compelled most all kind of game to come down to quench their thirst in the waters of the big rivers, the Osages had an excellent hunting season, they procured an abundance of meat and had an unexpected harvest of rare furs. Hence this drought which proves so ruinous to the new settlers as well as to the emigrants then on their way to Pike's Peak, was rather I might say beneficial to the Indians.⁸⁵

The Osage Kansas reservation occasionally suffered from grasshopper plagues. Again, the Osage withstood these infestations far better than their Euro-American neighbors. In the summer of 1854 grasshoppers descended on southern Kansas – the first time in Osage tribal memory this happened – devouring dried meat, cached produce, and devastating the settler's crops. So the Osage packed up and left immediately for their fall hunt, with some bands headed to the Platte River and the others towards Turkey Creek's junction with the Cimarron River. The latter hunting ground in particular had plentiful wood, water, pasture land for horses, and large bison herds yielding a successful hunt.⁸⁶ Back near the Osage Mission, Euro-American settlers who already lost their 1853 harvest due to drought, suffered similarly dry weather in 1854, when grasshoppers finished off

⁸⁴ For example, during the 1860 drought, Father Ponziglione noted, the majority of Euro-American settlers "had to live on a half ration, for they had raised no crops of any kind...[m]any of them had to travel over 2 miles to procure a barrel of water;" Ibid., 194.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 194-95.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 150-51.

the surviving crops.⁸⁷ In the spring of 1855, grasshoppers started hatching, forcing Osage women to abandon planting their crops so the village could commence hunting and escape the infestation. In this year again, the Osage had a successful hunt, obtaining a large amount of game, and rare peltries that brought high trade prices.⁸⁸ When another grasshopper swarm arrived in August of 1866, the Osage immediately departed on another hunt to avoid the plague.⁸⁹

Throughout the reservation period, Osage hunters continued to bring in tens of thousands of skins for trade every year. In late 1847, Osage hunters had a “bad hunt” limiting trade and yet they still brought in over 16,000 robes and skins amounting to \$28,000.⁹⁰ In the 1850s, Father Ponziglione stated the “buffalo were as yet numerous and [the Osage] used to kill every year an average of at least 20,000 of them for whose robes they sometime receive more than 5 dollars a piece. So their revenue arising from the sale of the same was a great one, to say nothing of the extra of money they were getting for small furs of which they always had a great variety.”⁹¹ As late as 1874, on the Indian Territory reservation, Osage hunters killed over 10,000 bison.⁹²

⁸⁷ Ibid., 149-50.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 155, 59.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 260.

⁹⁰ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 161-62.

⁹¹ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 182.

⁹² "July 1, 1874," in "Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 5: July 1, 1874 - Dec. 13, 1876," ed. Eugene Grabner (St. Louis, Missouri: Midwest Jesuit Archives, Unpublished Manuscript), 89.

Women on these hunts continued to tan the hides and cure the meat.⁹³ Tens of thousands of skins only became valuable trade items if thoroughly processed by Osage women. Trader James Edwin Finney noted, “[i]n addition to curing the meat and caring for their camp duties, the Osage women spent much time and effort in the work of tanning and dressing the skins of buffalo and making them into robes for domestic use and for barter with the traders.” Traders evaluated skins “according to size, condition of the hair, thickness and texture of the skin, [and] care used in tanning.”⁹⁴ Men and women continued extensive labor killing, curing, and trading these skins, maintaining their complementary roles in the Osage economy.

Exchange rates frequently benefitted traders rather than Native families, but Osage individuals knew the value of their goods and found ways to thwart trader’s profiteering. Victor Tixier recorded that trading was “a very lucrative business” because traders primarily bartered in goods, worth \$.20-.30, for each buffalo robe, worth \$3-4 in St. Louis.⁹⁵ Osage Sub-Agent John Richardson reported in 1848 that the previous three decades of Osage trade generated wealth valued at “eighty to one hundred thousand dollars a year, and amounting in thirty years to one million two hundred thousand dollars...this vast amount of peltries has been purchased by the trading community with goods, the original cost of

⁹³ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 184. "Annual Report, Elijah Sells, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to D.N. Cooley, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 16, 1865," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865," 442. Finney, "Reminiscences of a Trader in the Osage Country," 148-49.

⁹⁴ Finney, "Reminiscences of a Trader in the Osage Country," 149.

⁹⁵ Tixier et al., *Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairies*, 120.

which did not exceed five hundred thousand dollars.”⁹⁶ After a particularly successful 1860 hunt, illegal traders from Kansas and Missouri attempted to barter for some of the rarer pelts.⁹⁷ One trader in particular exchanged a wash pan full of low-quality flour for each rare pelt. While he was throwing peltries under his wagon’s canvas covering, Osage men on the other end pulled them back out. So once the trader departed he had less than a dozen raccoon skins.⁹⁸ Tallow constituted another highly valued item the Osage frequently exchanged with Missouri residents for other foodstuffs.⁹⁹ In 1861, Little Osage hunters acquired a sizeable amount of meat, hides, and tallow on their hunt. They exchanged much of their surplus tallow with Henry Chardon. After unloading his freight in Kansas City though, he discovered he had 3,500 pounds of tallow and 1,000 pounds of limestone slabs. He had exchanged liberally with the Little Osage, knowing the high prices he would receive in the city, but neglected to check the entire load, to his own detriment.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 161-62.

⁹⁷ Rare pelts included wolves, wild cats, badgers, foxes, minks, muskrats, panthers, coyotes, skunks, otters, and beavers

⁹⁸ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 198-99.

⁹⁹ "Annual Report, John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to John Drennen, Acting Superintendent of the Western Territory, October 25, 1849," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1849," 1134.

¹⁰⁰ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 208-10.

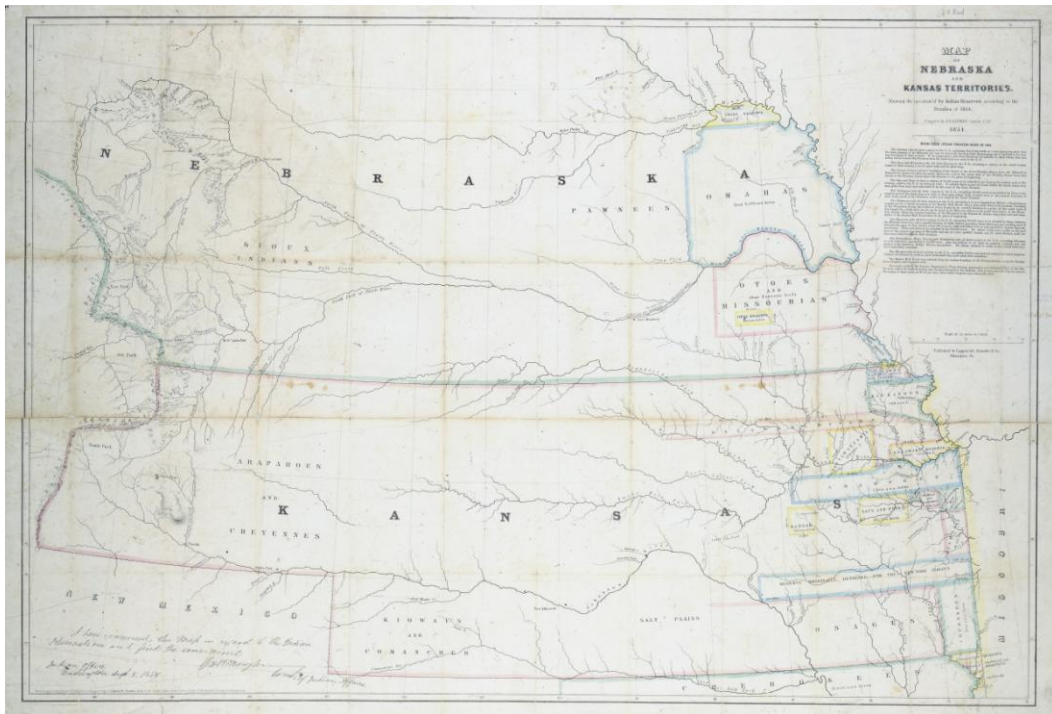


Figure 6. “Eastman’s map of Kansas and Nebraska Territories, showing the location of the Indian Reserves according to the treaties of 1854.” This map, made between 1854-1856, shows the Osage reservation situated between the state of Missouri and Comanche and Kiowa territories. Courtesy KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

The Osage expanded their economic opportunities in Kansas through peaceful trade with the Comanche. The Comanche and their Kiowa allies had long excluded Osage hunters from accessing the sizeable bison herds west of the Arkansas River along the Salt plains. In the 1830s Comanche and Kiowa warfare with the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Texas settlers limited their access to Euro-American trade goods. Thus the Comanche and Kiowa sought peace with the Osage in order to open trade. The Osage then served as middlemen between the lucrative Comanche trade system and U.S. traders. The Osage would take their annuity goods or purchase merchandise from U.S. traders often including kitchen

utensils, blankets, guns, powder, and lead, and exchange these for Comanche mules, horses, or pelts. In 1847 alone, the Osage exchanged \$24,000 worth of goods for 1,500 head of Comanche livestock, worth \$60,000.¹⁰¹ With this trade, the Osage gained undisturbed access to large bison herds, providing another avenue to profitable trade.¹⁰² This trade ended in 1853, when a treaty between the U.S. government and the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache provided the first annuities and direct provision of American goods to these tribes. The Comanche no longer needed the Osage as trading partners, eliminating this critical trade income and renewing competition over the western bison herds. In 1858, the Comanche resumed attacking Osage hunting parties on the plains limiting access to game and undercutting Osage economic stability.¹⁰³

While Osage trade flourished, Catholic missionization commenced (Figure

7). In 1847 Father John Schoenmakers opened the Osage Mission, the Manual

¹⁰¹ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 159-60. The Comanches also had large numbers of white and Mexican slaves, likely obtained through raids on Texas communities, whom they sometimes traded with the Osage. Joel Cruttenden, Osage Sub-Agent, found a teenage "Mexican" boy adopted by the Comanches, ran away to escape his supposedly demanding Comanche mother, and was subsequently adopted by an Osage family. A woman, named Antonia Garzia, told Father Ponziglione she was among a group of children kidnapped by the Comanches and traded to the Osage for rifles. She grew up amongst the Osages, married an Osage man, Tanassa, and had children. "Annual Report, Joel Cruttenden, Osage Sub-Agent, to T.H. Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Louis, September 1, 1845," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1845: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Twenty-Ninth Congress, 1845-1846," 98; Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 187-88.

¹⁰² Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 66-67; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 271-72.

¹⁰³ "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 9, 1858," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858," in *Message of the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Thirty-Fifth Congress* (Washington D.C.: William A. Harris, 1858), 489.

Labor School for boys and a female department, staffed by the Sisters of Loretto, to educate the girls. Much like the Protestants, the new missionaries hoped to educate the Osage on Christianity, individualism, and agriculture. The Catholic missionaries established more hospitable relationships with the Osage than the Protestants. For one, the priests and nuns came without families or any other responsibilities. Father John Bax, one of the original Jesuit missionaries, wrote in 1850, “[t]he Indians are attached to us, principally, say they, because we have no wives and children, ‘if you had,’ they say, ‘you would do like the missionaries (the presbyterians) who preceded you, you would think too much of your families, and you would neglect the red-man and his children.’”¹⁰⁴ This speaks to the reason the Osage wanted missionaries, Protestant or Catholic, in the first place – to assist them interacting with the United States and to provide material aid as the Osage learned to live in a new home.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ "John Bax to Pierre-Jean de Smet, June 10, 1850," in Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters* (New York: James B. Kirker, Late Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1863), 368.

¹⁰⁵ The Jesuits served as buffer in terms of food provisions as Osage individuals frequently killed mission hogs and cattle for food. "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, July 6, 1859," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1859: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1859," (Washington D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860), 171.



Figure 7. "Catholic Church at Osage Mission." This photograph, taken between 1865-1875, shows the church at the Osage Mission (now St. Paul, Kansas), the center part is the original mission building, erected in 1847. Courtesy KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

The Jesuit Fathers noted the maintenance of Osage gender constructions, and mistakenly associated the female role with slavery and the male role with laziness. Father Schoenmakers informed federal officials in 1854 that Osage parents "bring up their daughters under heavy burdens and in entire ignorance, to become, I might well say, slaves to their future husbands."¹⁰⁶ Father Ponziglione reported that "among our pagan Indians, woman is as yet the wretched slave she used to be in ancient times."¹⁰⁷ In describing the daily routine in an Osage

¹⁰⁶ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 126.

¹⁰⁷ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 16.

village, Ponziglione wrote, “[t]o the poor squaws is left all the drudgery of the camp...they are, miserable contemptible slaves.”¹⁰⁸ Father Ponziglione, in describing men, stated that “hunting has so far been and is yet their only occupation. When not engaged in it, they spend their time playing cards or idling around with their friends.”¹⁰⁹ Sometimes he acknowledged the work of men, “if the old men are allowed to pass their time in “dolce far niente” it is not so with the young braves, for everyday parties of them starting at day light make short excursions on the plains to get fresh meat for their families and friends.”¹¹⁰

Successful trading through the 1840s inhibited the civilization program. The Treaty of 1839 guaranteed the federal government would build houses for 22 Osage leaders, as part of an effort to encourage nuclear family households and sedentary farming.¹¹¹ In 1848 federal officials finally finished constructing the houses, built on high ground, far enough away from one another to allow for farming, and supplied with furniture and agricultural implements. Though Father Schoenmakers tried to encourage the leaders and their families to live in these homes, very few even tried because they did not want to live at such a distance from their family and friends. In addition, these homes presented specific challenges for women, “[t]he poor squaws could neither supply wood for the wide fireplaces built in them, nor could they stand the labor of running up and down from the houses to the river for water; moreover, it was almost impossible for

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 114.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “Dolce far niente” is Italian for “the sweetness of doing nothing.” Ibid., 201.

¹¹¹ Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. 2 (Treaties)*, 526.

them to keep such dwellings warm and clean.”¹¹² Osage families abandoned these houses for their villages and sold the furniture to western Missouri settlers.¹¹³

Catholic missionaries also tried to start an Osage agricultural settlement, three miles south of the mission.¹¹⁴ In 1849 Brother Thomas O’Donnell, one of the teachers at the Manual Labor School, surveyed 40 acres in an attempt to mark off individual family farm plots.¹¹⁵ Osage women joining this settlement rearranged all of the plots and Brother O’Donnell acquiesced to their changes and conceptions of proper field organization.¹¹⁶ He successfully persuaded Osage men to conduct the planting in this settlement, but he could not persuade them to till or weed the fields. The Osage typically left on summer hunts while their crops matured, thus these settlers did not see much need to tend the fields. After weeds took over and a drought dried out the soil, Father Ponziglione acknowledged the “total failure of their farming enterprise discouraged the Osages and they came to the conclusion that such a kind of work was not for them, and that the Great-Spirit had made them to be hunters, not farmers. Hence, as long as there was plenty of buffalo on the plains, they would be big fools if they would go to work.”¹¹⁷ All the Osage farmers abandoned this settlement.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 111.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹¹⁵ Garraghan, *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*, Vol. 2, 530.

¹¹⁶ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 118.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 118-19.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 119.

In the 1850s, loss of the Comanche trade, diminishing access to the bison herds, and the end of previous treaty annuities, motivated some families to attempt mission farming and reordering gender roles. In 1855, 25 families lived in the settlement.¹¹⁹ But successive droughts led to four consecutive years of crop failure.¹²⁰ To preserve the settlement, Father Schoenmakers supplied the residents with seeds, “let them have whatever they needed, free of all charges... and he would purchase from them whatever they could spare, paying them regular market prices.” With this aid the settlement grew to 50 families by 1859.¹²¹ Even with these subsidies, the Osage settlers continued hunting just to survive.¹²² The unstable Kansas environment undermined sedentary agriculture, forcing these Osage settlers to continue historic subsistence practices to support their families.

The 1860s provided the final blow to this agricultural experiment. A drought in 1860 made the ground too hard for plowing and the settlers dispersed to join their kin out hunting.¹²³ In 1861, after the Civil War began, the settlers saw “their houses and their improvements destroyed by roving incendiaries; their oats and corn fields [were] turned into pastures for cavalry horses, their hogs and

¹¹⁹ “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Indian Agent, August 30, 1855,” in “Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1855: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-Fourth Congress,” ed. Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1856), 176.

¹²⁰ “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, August 30, 1855,” in *Ibid.* “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, August 28, 1856,” in “Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1856: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1856,” 135.

¹²¹ Ponziglione, “The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers,” 187.

¹²² “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, September 6, 1867,” in “Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867,” 326.

¹²³ Ponziglione, “The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers,” 194-95.

cattle [were] butchered by unruly troopers.”¹²⁴ Again, they joined their kin, depending on hunting for subsistence.¹²⁵ Throughout the rest of the war, soldiers and “desperadoes” burned the Osage settlers’ fields and homes.¹²⁶ After the land cessions in 1865, all the Osage moved over 40 miles from the mission, and these settlers abandoned Euro-American-style agriculture altogether.¹²⁷

Throughout missionization, the priests named various things as their greatest obstacle in “civilizing” the Osage. One challenge Father Bax noted was “the mode of life that the Indians are obliged to lead...[t]hey commonly pass six months of the year in the chase, which forces them to remove from us, and exposes the morality of those who would wish to live as exemplary Christians, to great temptations and dangers.”¹²⁸ In 1867, when additional land cessions moved the Osage onto the “diminished reservation” and further from the Jesuits, the mission journal noted “the instability of the Indian Character, and their continual moving from place to place renders very difficult to do any permanent good among them.”¹²⁹ Father Bax also acknowledged the problems he and other priests

¹²⁴ Ibid., 220.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ “May 9, 1876,” in “Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 5: July 1, 1874 - Dec. 13, 1876,” 104. “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to P.P. Elder, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1864,” in “Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864,” (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 318.

¹²⁷ “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, September 6, 1867,” in “Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867,” 326.

¹²⁸ “John Bax to Pierre-Jean de Smet, June 10, 1850,” in Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters*, 370.

¹²⁹ “March 14, 1870,” in “Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 2: Jan. 4, 1869 - Jan. 9, 1871,” 31.

encountered with the “Catholic” métis Osage, who knew virtually nothing of their “religion” and could not aid in converting and educating their kinfolk.¹³⁰

The Osage language, just as the Protestants found, presented a significant obstacle in “civilizing” and Christian conversion. Father Bax stated, “[t]he greatest obstacle for us is in the difficulty that we experience in acquiring their tongue. It contains few words, and those quite inconvenient for expressing abstract ideas.”¹³¹ Father Bax devoted an extensive amount of time in studying the Osage language and eventually, according to Father Ponziglione, “had an almost perfect mastery.”¹³² Several of the Jesuit missionaries learned to speak Osage and translated parts of the “New Testament, a Catechism of the Christian Doctrine, and a few of the most important Chapters of Ancient History,” to use in their sermons.¹³³ Unlike the Protestants, the Jesuits could communicate easily with the Osage métis because they all spoke French.¹³⁴

The Catholic missionaries devoted the majority of their attention to educating Osage children. The Osage Manual Labor School for boys and the affiliated female department operated from 1847 until the Osage moved to Indian Territory in the early 1870s, after which it catered primarily to Catholic Euro-American settlers in the region. When the male department opened, several métis

¹³⁰ Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters*, 369. “April 3, 1872,” in “Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 3: Jan. 16, 1871 - July 1, 1872,” ed. Eugene Grabner (St. Louis, Missouri: Midwest Jesuit Archives, Unpublished Manuscript), 68.

¹³¹ “John Bax to Pierre-Jean de Smet, June 10, 1850,” in Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters*, 367.

¹³² Ponziglione, “The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers,” 125.

¹³³ “May 9, 1876,” in “Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 5: July 1, 1874 - Dec. 13, 1876,” 104.

¹³⁴ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 150.

children joined the school, but only three so-called “full-bloods” attended. Father Bax traveled to Osage villages to personally appeal for students. He found:

...[the] parents, full of prejudices against a ‘school,’ gave for excuse, that the children who had been confided to the former missionaries (the Presbyterians), had learned nothing, had been whipped everyday, made to work continually, and at last ran away. These reports spread far and wide. The most efficacious correction that a father could employ against a child, was to threaten it with being sent to school.¹³⁵

Though Father Bax claimed to have changed some parents minds, the actual ratios of Osage and Osage métis children in the school is unclear.¹³⁶ Osage Sub-Agent John Richardson maintained that half of the enrolled student body included Osage “full-bloods.”¹³⁷

Regardless of the school’s ethnic makeup, both male and female students received instruction in English reading, writing, and arithmetic. Father Schoenmakers repeatedly complimented the “rapid progress” students made in these subjects.¹³⁸ “They read fluently, understand the rules and operation of

¹³⁵ John Bax to Pierre-jean de Smet, June 1, 1850,” in Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters*, 358.

¹³⁶ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 151-52.

¹³⁷ "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 162-63. And "Annual Report, John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to John Drennen, Acting Superintendent of the Western Territory, October 25, 1849," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1849," 1139.

¹³⁸ See: “Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to W. Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 14, 1848,” in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 165. "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 162-63. “Annual

arithmetic, and love to study it.”¹³⁹ The opportunity to learn English drew students to the mission school and parents often permanently withdrew their children after they could speak English, using them as family interpreters.¹⁴⁰ Joseph Pawnee-no-pah-she, who became principal Osage chief in 1869, learned English at the Osage Mission. Yet he rarely spoke in English with whites and preferred using an interpreter.¹⁴¹ Concealing his knowledge of English proved a useful strategy in discerning the motives of federal officials and other Euro-Americans.

Catholic schooling made very little impact on Osage gender construction. In the school’s first two years, both missionaries and Indian agents commented on the boys spending three hours, outside of regular class time, learning “the use of agricultural implements.”¹⁴² But thereafter, agricultural instruction became

Report, John Schoenmakers to John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, August, 1848,” in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 166. "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Henry Harvey, Osage Sub-Agent, October 1, 1850," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," 38-39. "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1853," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853," 381.

¹³⁹ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 125.

¹⁴⁰ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁴¹ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 275.

¹⁴² "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, August 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 166. "Annual Report, John Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to W. Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 14, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 165. And "Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of

increasingly difficult and de-emphasized in the curriculum because “the soil on which our establishments have been located is, perhaps, the worst soil in the Osage country, which tends to discourage the energy of our young beginners.”¹⁴³ In 1853 Father Schoenmakers thought the majority of the boys were “too young to give any material aid in farming business” and instead used their out of class time in other pursuits.¹⁴⁴ He admitted the missionaries’ struggles in providing agricultural instruction, “[w]e have had regular work hours for the boys, and give them instructions in farming and gardening, occasionally trusting the oldest youths with our oxen and horse teams. We have tried to form among them the habits of industry, but experience has taught us that manual labor not only distracts their minds, but diminishes the application of studies.”¹⁴⁵ After all this schooling, the early mission graduates primarily gained employment in the trading posts, not in establishing their own individual farms.¹⁴⁶

Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 162-63. And in "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Henry Harvey, Osage sub-Agent, October 1, 1850, in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," 38-39.

¹⁴³ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to W.J.J. Morrow, Neosho Agent, September 15, 1852," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1852: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852," 111.

¹⁴⁴ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1853," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853," 381.

¹⁴⁵ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 126-27.

¹⁴⁶ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Indian Agent, September 1, 1858," in W. W. Graves, *Life and Letters of Rev. Father John Schoenmakers S.J.: Apostle to the Osages* (St. Paul, Kansas: The Commercial Publishers, 1928), 66. Also in "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1858," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858," 490.

The female department struggled to gain students and had lower enrollment than the male department for all but one year.¹⁴⁷ Beyond English and arithmetic, the girls spent their additional time learning skills already associated with traditional Osage gender roles, namely gardening, sewing, knitting, and embroidery.¹⁴⁸ Father Schoenmakers remarked that the girls “are more industrious than the boys, always manifesting a willingness to do any kind of work required by their teachers.”¹⁴⁹ And by 1856, the female students manufactured all of the clothing used at the school.¹⁵⁰

Catholic missionaries also paid wages to students.¹⁵¹ In an effort to attract more students to the school, the missionaries sponsored a public performance

¹⁴⁷ In 1858, Father Schoenmakers noted in his annual report there were 47 Osage males and 48 Osage female students at the mission; in "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1858," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858," 490.

¹⁴⁸ “Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to M. Rutherford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Western Territory, September 1, 1848,” and “Annual Report, John M. Richardson, Osage Sub-Agent, to W. Medill, April 14, 1848,” in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1848: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress," 162-63, 65. “Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Henry Harvey, Osage Sub-Agent, October 1, 1850,” in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1850," 39. "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1853," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853," 381.

¹⁴⁹ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 126.

¹⁵⁰ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, August 28, 1856," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1856: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1856," 135.

¹⁵¹ Like the Protestants, the Catholic missionaries also paid wages to Osage laborers for work done to assist the mission. From the Osage perspective, labor remained a valuable exchange item, particularly as trade and agriculture declined. Father Schoenmakers paid Osage men and women to fell trees and split rails in order to fence in 40 acres for an agricultural settlement. During the disruption of the Civil War, Father Schoenmakers exchanged food provisions with Osage men and women who cut firewood for the mission. Father Schoenmakers paid \$5.00 for every one thousand rails. Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 117, 235-36.

where parents, relatives, and even strangers came to watch the students demonstrate “the improvements in learning.” Father Schoenmakers stated the students were “stimulated to exert themselves by making an honorable monthly show. We moreover, encourage emulation by the distribution of premiums.”¹⁵² While struggling to encourage agricultural labor in the male department, Father Schoenmakers similarly reported that “we use every scheme to keep them from vice and to encourage them to industry by paying them liberally.”¹⁵³ Employing several of the oldest boys at the mission, Father Schoenmakers indicated the importance of wages in hopefully altering gender roles, “by remunerating them liberally, they have continued to labor and act manly throughout the season.”¹⁵⁴ Wages certainly helped the missionaries in their short term efforts to encourage Osage boys to farm. The long term impact is less certain, particularly with the missionaries’ difficulty in retaining students.

The Jesuits complained less than their Protestant counterparts about family distractions and students leaving the school, but they experienced the same problems. Teachers preferred times when the majority of the Osage left on hunts, because the students devoted themselves more earnestly to coursework without

¹⁵² "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 126.

¹⁵³ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in *Ibid.*, 126-27.

¹⁵⁴ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, August 28, 1856," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1856: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1856," 135.

family members visiting and distracting them.¹⁵⁵ In reporting enrollment data to federal authorities, Father Schoenmakers started in 1853 differentiating the students in “constant attendance.”¹⁵⁶ In 1854 Father Schoenmakers wrote, “we opened the school seven years ago, but on account of the inconstancy of their relations, and increasing pride and independence of these children, few have the perseverance of giving their youthful years to education. Of those now at school [50 boys and 31 girls] only ten have attended regularly these four years.”¹⁵⁷ As discussed above, students often returned to the “savage life” after learning English. In one notable example, Principal Chief George White Hair’s nephew Nivale (whom the missionaries renamed Anthony Nivale), learned to read, write, and speak English. But, as Father Ponziglione wrote,

As long as Anthony was at the school with us, he was proud of wearing tidy clothes, but now continually being flattered by his friends who kept telling him that he should quit school and stay with them, for he was in age to be a brave, he gives way to temptation! To please his friends he leaves us, puts off the white man’s clothes and resumes the Indian custom.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 115.

¹⁵⁶ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1853," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853," 381. "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, August 25, 1857," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1857: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1857," 207, 09.

¹⁵⁷ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 125.

¹⁵⁸ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 144.

Eventually Father Schoenmakers appealed to federal officials, hoping they would withhold annuity payments for students in school until they completed their education, but this plan never came to fruition.¹⁵⁹

Catholic mission schools thus had little long term impact on changing Osage lifeways. Enrollment in the male department never exceeded 130 students, while the female department never reached 100 students.¹⁶⁰ The number of children in the Osage population for the corresponding period ranged between 800 and 1600 children, meaning the missionary education only reached a small fraction of the population.¹⁶¹ Joseph Paw-nee-no-pashe summed it up well, “[i]t took Father Schoenmakers fifteen years to make a white man out of me, and it will take just fifteen minutes to make an Osage out of myself.”¹⁶² The mission journal documented one couple, both educated at the Osage Mission, trying to individually farm, but living in poverty. “If both of them would [throw] away

¹⁵⁹ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Major Andrew Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1854," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Third Congress, 1854," 127.

¹⁶⁰ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, September 1, 1860," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1860," in *Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Thirty-Sixth Congress* (Washington D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1860), 345. "Annual Report, P.P. Elder, Neosho Agent, to William G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 30, 1861," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1861: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1861," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1861), 37.

¹⁶¹ "Annual Report, W.J.J. Morrow, Neosho Agent, to John Drennen, Superintendent Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, October 1, 1852," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1852: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852," 105. "Annual Report, Elijah Sells, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to D.N. Cooley, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 16, 1865," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865," 441.

¹⁶² James Edwin Finney, "The Osages and Their Agency During the Term of Isaac T. Gibson, Quaker Agent," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 36, no. 4 (1958): 424.

their French clothes (as the Osage call our way of dressing) and would return to the indian blanket, their friends and connections would give them plenty. But they prefer to labour hard and suffer rather than to act against the promises they made in baptism.”¹⁶³ Living on a small family farm in southern Kansas led to poverty and starvation. Whereas living in an Osage village provided communal support and food production better suited to the environment.

Overall, Catholic missionization failed. The mission journal in 1870 admitted, the goal of the mission was “the instruction of the Osage Indian in all that concerns religion and civilization, so from the very first day we came here [and] tried all the means in our power to succeed in this work [and] we must acknowledge that we did not do much.”¹⁶⁴ In 1872, Father Ponziglione visited the Osage, now settled on their Indian Territory reservation, commenting “they listened to my instruction, but I doubt very much they will follow my advises: their will I think is good, but their nature is weak, and the power of old habits is very strong.”¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, removal to Kansas disrupted Osage life on an unprecedented scale, allowing diseases to ravage the tribe. Although epidemic diseases had entered Osage communities at other times, mortality rates did not reach epidemic proportions until the 1830s with repeated attacks from influenza, cholera, and measles. Through the 1840s, Osage hunting parties traded with encampments of

¹⁶³ “July 27, 1869,” in “Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 2: Jan. 4, 1869 - Jan. 9, 1871,” 21.

¹⁶⁴ “March 14, 1870,” in *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ “December 31, 1872,” in “Journal of the Western Missions, Vol. 4: Dec. 31, 1872 - Dec. 31, 1873,” ed. Eugene Grabner (St. Louis, Missouri: Midwest Jesuit Archives, Unpublished Manuscript), 78.

Euro-American emigrants passing through the region, sometimes leading to disease outbreaks. After Kansas territory opened to settlement, smallpox, typhoid fever, and whooping cough also plagued the Osage, killing hundreds at a time. Missionaries annually distributed \$100 in medicine and in 1832 federal officials provided smallpox vaccinations for roughly one third of the Osage.¹⁶⁶ The most effective strategy the Osage employed in fighting disease involved disbanding and moving away from infected areas, individuals, and emigrant trails. At first, the Catholic missionaries appeared to hold spiritual power that protected them from disease, but outbreaks at the mission school eventually dispelled this notion. Osage parents who reclaimed their children during epidemics accused the missionaries of keeping the children indoors and limiting their access to fresh air.¹⁶⁷ Disease contributed to population decline from an estimated 9,000 in the early 1820s to less than 2,800 in 1865.¹⁶⁸ Displaced by other removed Indigenous nations, increasingly surrounded by settlers and squatters, and economic decline weakened the Osage in the face of disease.

In the 1850s, in addition to the loss of Comanche trade and annuities, the Osage faced rapid Euro-American settlement with the opening of Kansas territory in 1854 (Figure 6). Demand for land and conflicts over popular sovereignty

¹⁶⁶ "Annual Report, John Schoenmakers to A.J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, July 6, 1859," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1859: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1859," 171; Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, 277-79; Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 162.

¹⁶⁷ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 77-78, 120, 35, 54-55; Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters*, 368-69.

¹⁶⁸ Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 109-10.

motivated increased settlement that threatened Osage survival in Kansas. After 1854, Father Ponziglione documented settlers daily coming into the region,

though it was well known that the Osage reservation was not as yet opened, squatters were not very particular about keeping in the lines and would pick up claims wherever they liked, intruding frequently on the Indian lands, putting up houses, and opening fields wherever they got a notion, not caring about the limits of the Osage reservation.¹⁶⁹

In 1860 Osage leaders demanded federal agents remove the squatters by force, and although the Indian agent sent his employees to do this, it had only a marginal impact.¹⁷⁰

The Civil War significantly disrupted Osage lives and “civilizing” efforts. Osage leaders remained well-informed on the U.S. political situation and at the outbreak of the war retreated across the plains to the mountains, before settling in temporary villages in Indian Territory along the Cimarron and Washita rivers.¹⁷¹ After completing a successful hunt in late 1862, the Osage returned to the region surrounding the Osage Mission.¹⁷² Situated in a borderland between the warring factions, the Osage reservation attracted roaming regiments and robbers who plundered or burned villages, agricultural fields, homes, and horse herds throughout the war.¹⁷³ Thus hunting expeditions became exceedingly dangerous,

¹⁶⁹ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 142.

¹⁷⁰ "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 18, 1860," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1860," 345.

¹⁷¹ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 221.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 220, 22, 33-35. "Annual Report, P.P. Elder, Neosho Agent, to William G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 30, 1861," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1861: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1861," 37.

and many Osage families dispersed to live in and around their métis kin during the war.¹⁷⁴ In 1863, an Osage hunting party led by an Osage métis man Alexander Biette, with the assistance of warriors sent by Joseph Watcie-cahikie, (chief of Big Hill Town) killed between twenty and thirty Confederates traveling through their reservation.¹⁷⁵ After this, William G. Coffin, Southern Superintendent of Indian Affairs, distributed nearly \$3,000 worth of goods to Osage leaders in return for their “loyalty” to the Union.¹⁷⁶ Over the course of the war, various Osage bands and individuals served both for the Union and Confederate armies.¹⁷⁷ It seems the Osage remained relatively neutral during the Civil War, concerned primarily with subsistence rather than taking sides. The war interrupted funding for Indian policy, federal agents, and missionaries, hampering the civilization program, and encouraging Osage families to rely on kin networks and small-scale hunting to survive.

¹⁷⁴ Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 235.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 236-40. "W.G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, to W.P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 10, 1863," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1863," 207.

¹⁷⁶ "W.G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, to W.P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 10, 1863," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1863," 207.

¹⁷⁷ Union service: Ponziglione, "The Osages and Father John Schoenmakers," 221, 54. "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to E. Sells, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 25, 1865," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865," 477. CSA service: "Annual Report, P.P. Elder, Neosho Agent, to William G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 30, 1861," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1861: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1861," 37. "Annual Report, W.G. Coffin, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, to William P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 24, 1864," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864," 306.

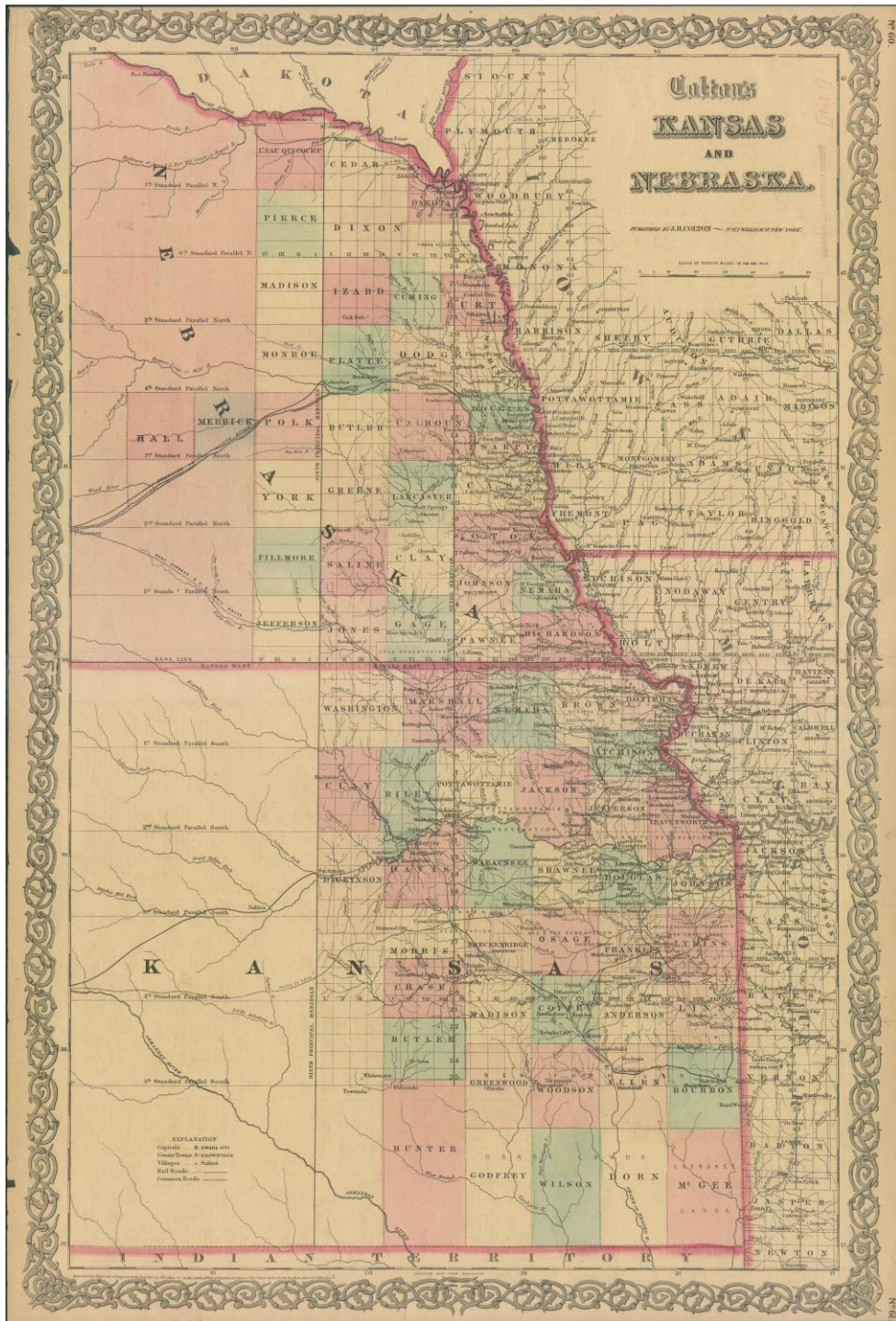


Figure 8. "Colton's Kansas and Nebraska Map." J.H. Colton's 1863 map shows the eastern portions of Kansas and Nebraska and the settlement surrounding the Osage reservation. Courtesy KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

Before, during, and after the Civil War, white settlers stole hundreds of Osage horses, consequently devastating their hunting prospects.¹⁷⁸ Sometimes Osage men would reclaim their livestock, after which the squatters complained to state and federal officials that they were victims of Osage violence. Neosho Agent G.C. Snow reported in 1867,

Since the war, horse stealing has been carried on to an alarming extent. There is not a horse lost by these new settlers but what the "Osages have got it." The people of Neosho, Labette, Wilson, Greenwood, Woodson, and Allen counties claim that they have lost about 80 head of horses this spring and summer. A large portion of these "horses" were Osage ponies, bought of irresponsible traders, renegade Indians, and thieving white men for a mere trifle. Many of these 'horses' stray away from their pretended owners and go back to the Indians. Most that are stolen are taken by white men who go to the Indian camps, so the theft may be charged to the Indians.¹⁷⁹

This was incredibly destructive to the Osage economy, as bison hunting – the primary method of subsistence – required horses.

¹⁷⁸ "Annual Report, W.J.J. Morrow, Neosho Agent, to John Drennen, Superintendent Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, October 1, 1852," in "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1852: Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852," 107. "Annual Report, Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, to Charles E. Mix, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 26, 1858," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858," 485. "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 9, 1858," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858," 489. "Annual Report, Andrew J. Dorn, Neosho Agent, to Elias Rector, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 19, 1859," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1859: Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1859," 169-70. "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to E. Sells, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Southern Superintendency, September 25, 1865," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865," 477. "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in "Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867," 325.

¹⁷⁹ "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in "Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867," 325.

During the Civil War, federal and state officials repeatedly tried to persuade the Osage to relinquish their Kansas reservation and move to Indian Territory. In 1863, the Osage needed additional economic support to survive and agreed to cede the eastern portion of the Kansas reservation and move their villages farther west onto the “diminished reservation.” This treaty promised renewed annuity payments to compensate for the increasing difficulty they had subsisting during the tide of Euro-American settlement. The treaty languished in Congress and in 1865 the Osage agreed to another version of the treaty, finally ratified in 1866.¹⁸⁰

The delay of the official treaty to 1865 and funding for Osage removal until 1867 only aggravated settler encroachment, which rapidly increased after 1863 (Figure 8).¹⁸¹ In 1867, Agent Snow reported that settlers also squatted on the diminished reservation. He visited the nearly 70 families and ordered them to leave, but they said they would not remove until he had sufficient arms to force them, rightly arguing that state officials supported this settlement.¹⁸² By 1869, 500 families made illegal claims on the diminished reservation. These squatters built houses, began farming, stole Osage crops, allowed their livestock to graze in Osage fields, and prevented Osage women from gathering timber on their

¹⁸⁰ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 164-66.

¹⁸¹ "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in "Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867," 325.

¹⁸² "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in *Ibid.*

“claims.”¹⁸³ Hostilities reached such proportions in 1867 that “four companies of ‘militia’ have been organized on the border by the State authority, who are threatening the Indians with ‘extermination.’”¹⁸⁴

Beginning in 1867 federal and state officials agreed the Osage needed to leave Kansas altogether and in a series of illegal negotiations involving bribery and threats, the Osage agreed to a treaty that transferred all their Kansas reservation land directly to a railroad company. Heated debates erupted in Congress over political control of public lands preventing treaty ratification. Finally in July 1870, Congress simply added provisions to the Indian Appropriation Bill to buy the Osage land and provide for their removal to Indian Territory. The new reservation, situated inside Cherokee lands, required an additional three years of negotiations to ensure Osage title. In spring of 1872, the majority of Osage villages moved to the new reservation.¹⁸⁵

* * *

In Kansas, many aspects of Osage spiritual and physical life remained unchanged. Personal appearance, homes, villages, marriages, and ceremonies largely resembled their predecessors from earlier times. The Osage adapted their culture and economy to suit the plains environment, primarily increasing hunting.

¹⁸³ "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to E.S. Parker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 24, 1869," in "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Made to the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1869," (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870), 380-81.

¹⁸⁴ "Annual Report, G.C. Snow, Neosho Agent, to J. Wortham, Superintendent of Southern Superintendency, September 5, 1867," in "Report on Indian Affairs, by the Acting Commissioner, for the Year 1867," 325.

¹⁸⁵ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 166-68.

Women continued planting corn, beans, and squash, but frequent droughts, floods, and grasshopper infestations decimated agricultural production. Women and men spent increasing amounts of time cooperating in acquiring bison meat to subsist on and hides to trade. Missionaries again opened schools and founded agricultural settlements but could not motivate the Osage to abandon hunting for farming in such an unpredictable environment. Therefore, the spiritual relationships between men, women, and work determined Osage behavior.

Nevertheless, the loss of Comanche trade, end of annuities, opening Kansas territory, the disruption of the Civil War, and the increased Euro-American settlement and encroachment eventually threatened Osage subsistence and trade. At the same time, constant theft and depredations committed by intruding whites further discouraged Osage families from abandoning hunting for sedentary farming. And, while the Osage economy followed these historic patterns, so did the gender roles that made it successful.

Chapter 6

Epilogue

Many recent works are inspired by our perceptions of the landscape; I am intrigued and inspired by our beliefs and our repeated return to our customs of the past, a continuum of thought forever connecting us to the earth and sky. These works are symbolic of a contemporary landscape built upon the remarkably rich foundations of previous cultures. Each tier contributes to the overall makeup of landscape. Each layer overlaps and begins to mesh with the next – all the while transferring relevant secrets and mysteries of the past. Contained within the mounds of earth are the knowledge and relics of the cultures and peoples of the past. Past cultures contribute to the present by relinquishing light, knowledge and fullness.¹

—Text accompanying the sculpture “Landscape” by Anita Fields, Osage sculptor, piece displayed at the Osage Tribal Museum

Anita Fields’ artwork and the Osage Tribal Museum clearly demonstrate how historic cultural values remain central to Osage identity in the present. The Museum, opened in 1938, is the oldest tribally-owned and operated museum in the United States. It was founded by John Joseph Mathews, but his sister Lillian Mathews, an archivist and tribal historian, served as the first curator. This gender complementarity remains central throughout the museum’s exhibits documenting everything from the masculine and feminine cosmic forces, to gendered work in the early eighteenth century, to the equal allotments for male and female tribe members. Though Osage lifeways have changed extensively during European

¹ “Landscape” sculpture by Anita Fields, on display at the Osage Tribal Museum, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, 2-12-2010.

and American colonization, historic gender construction remains part of cultural continuity even to this day.²

From French contact through the Kansas reservation period, Osage women created children, food, homes, hides, and clothes. At the same time, men provided women with raw materials and protected everything women created. Maintaining gender complementarity proved one of the most fundamental aspects of Osage cultural continuity during colonization. United States expansion in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, however, more profoundly altered Osage lifeways than anything in the preceding two centuries.

In 1872, the Osage built their villages in Indian Territory.³ Father Paul Ponziglione visited the new reservation in July 1874, reporting “the majority of this nation still depend on the buffalos which they hunt on the far western plains. This last winter they had a very good hunt, killing over ten thousand buffalos; so that altogether their condition is not bad.”⁴ Though men continued hunting through 1876, the bison herds dwindled and warfare between plains groups and the U.S. army disrupted Osage parties.⁵ In the 1870s, women also continued cultivation, though drought and grasshoppers repeatedly devastated this food

² Osage Tribal Museum, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, visit 2-12-2010.

³ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 171.

⁴ Paul Mary Ponziglione, "Osage Mission, July 1, 1874," *Woodstock Letters* 4, no. 1 (1875): 70.

⁵ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 173-74; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 79.

source. By the 1880s, the subsistence and trade activities that sustained Osage life since at least the early eighteenth century no longer existed.⁶

These drastic changes coincided with dramatic population decline. During Kansas removal, Indian agents documented the Osage population at nearly 4,000. In 1887, the population barely broke 1,000.⁷ Prior to this, Osage villages functioned as ceremonially independent communities, containing *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* from all 24 clans, each cooperating in order to perform tribal rituals. Population decline devastated this system. As many *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* passed away, so did the clan *wi'-gi-e* and the cosmological knowledge contained therein. As both villages and specific clans lost members, multiple communities combined to provide the full clan representation necessary for rituals.⁸ At the same time, these rituals – which secured *Wa-kon-da's* aid in warfare, hunting, and agriculture – held no relevance in Osage life.⁹ In this context, the Osage made another “move to a new country,” with many adopting Big Moon Peyotism, or joining Catholic, Quaker, or Baptist congregations. Such conversions eventually allowed Francis La Flesche to gather clan *wi'-gi-e* and the Osage cosmological information described earlier in this text.¹⁰

⁶ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 174; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 79-80, 82.

⁷ Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 86.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁹ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 182-83.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 185; Garrick Alan Bailey and Daniel C. Swan, *Art of the Osage* (Seattle: St. Louis Art Museum in association with University of Washington Press, 2004), 138.

Unlike many other Indigenous groups of the time, the Osage entered the twentieth century with sizeable financial wealth. By selling, rather than ceding, their Kansas reservation lands, each Osage individual received quarterly cash payments from these land sales beginning in the 1880s. At the same time, granting grazing leases to Texas cattlemen also produced annual payments to each tribe member. Despite this wealth, Indian agents kept trying to “civilize” the Osage, hoping each man would take a “claim” and adopt ranching or farming. But with a sizeable Euro-American population surrounding and encroaching on Osage lands, sharecropping and tenant farming emerged. In 1889, an Indian agent reported that whites conducted nearly all the ranching and farming on the Osage reservation.¹¹

This wealth certainly made the Osage experience unique in comparison to that of other Indigenous communities confined to reservations at the same time. Nevertheless, this prosperity came at a price, as virtual carnivals sprang up around Osage payment days when all manner of swindlers and thieves descended on the reservation. The discovery of oil only amplified these problems, as murders, crime, and fraud became commonplace.¹² Passage of the Dawes Act (1887) and settler encroachment aggravated these issues, eventually leading to Osage allotment in 1906. But Osage allotment followed an unusual trajectory, in part because the Osage nation maintained collective mineral rights, creating an

¹¹ Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 174-75; Bailey, *Changes in Osage Social Organization: 1673-1906*, 80-83.

¹² Rollings, *Unaffected by the Gospel: The Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion (1673-1906): A Cultural Victory*, 181-82.

“underground reservation.” And instead of dividing the reservation between allotments and surplus land, the Osage retained all of their land, with all tribe members, including women, receiving equal allotments.¹³

In the late-nineteenth century, the scope of United States colonialism significantly disrupted Osage life. Parents had successfully avoided long-term schooling for their children through the 1870s. On the Indian Territory reservation, all school-age children attended boarding schools. English replaced Osage as the most commonly spoken language. By the turn of the century, most Osage individuals wore western-style clothing and cut their hair based on fashionable trends. Wood-frame bungalows or two-story brick homes replaced lodges. And food primarily came from local stores.¹⁴

Yet, fundamental aspects of Osage culture and gender construction continued to play important roles in tribal life. In the late-nineteenth century, the Osage adapted a dance from the Ponca and Kansa, called the *I'n-Lon-Schka*, which even into the twenty-first century, serves as the most significant ceremonial and social activity for the Osage nation. As most of the Osage adopted Peyotism and Christianity, various *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* adapted the *I'n-Lon-Schka* as a way to preserve and perpetuate Osage religious beliefs and ideals in familiar prayers, songs, and rituals. This annual ceremony embodied tribal oral history and maintained tribal identity and solidarity. The *I'n-Lon-Schka* began as a warrior society dance, but after World War II, Osage women joined the dance. Not

¹³ Bailey and Swan, *Art of the Osage*, 138.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 143, 46, 48.

surprisingly, the roles played by women in the *I'n-Lon-Schka* replicated historic gender construction. This multi-day ceremony accompanied feasting and the female Head Cook instructed and organized the “committee cooks;” hence the “preparation of the food as well as the cooking is all a part of the ceremony.” Women taught and trained the dancers, thus women’s attitudes, ideas, and understandings of the dance directed its form and meaning. The *I'n-Lon-Schka* required dancers to wear mid-nineteenth-century Osage-style clothing, still manufactured by women, sustaining the associated artistic skills.¹⁵

Preservation of Osage gender roles proved one of the primary obstacles to colonization. Men protected women, the children they bore, the homes they built, and the fields they cultivated. Therefore, men protected the continuity of Osage culture. The French, Spanish, and especially the Americans attempted to alter Osage lifeways, but instead the Osage people controlled adaptation to the changing world around them, while maintaining fundamental cultural values.

¹⁵ Ibid., 143, 48, 57-58, 61; Alice Anne Callahan, *The Osage Ceremonial Dance I'n-Lon-Schka* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 20-21, 29, 127, 29, 39.

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