

STANDING IN TWO WORLDS: SOCIAL CEREMONIALISM AND
CULTURAL EXPRESSION OF THE OSAGE NATION

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STANDING IN TWO WORLDS: SOCIAL CEREMONIALISM AND
CULTURAL EXPRESSION OF THE OSAGE NATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My Arrival

In early June of 2011, I arrived in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, home of the Osage Nation, to study the social ceremonial life of the Osage Native American tribe. I was fortunate to have a long-standing friendship with Louis F. Burns, prominent scholar and elder of the Osage, who had invited me to stay in one of his spare bedrooms while conducting research. The first few days of my trip were spent with Mr. Burns discussing Osage cultural matters, surveying Pawhuska, and introducing myself to various people and places around town.

Progress was going well but slow. Pawhuska is not the stereotypical Indian reservation I had envisioned, and in many ways resembles most of the towns on my drive from San Marcos, TX to Oklahoma. Although much of my time was spent in the Pawhuska library and touring the town, in time I would get to know the hidden “Osageness” of Osage County. Twenty days after my arrival, the second weekend of the *E-Lon-Schka* dance was scheduled in Hominy, a town seven miles south of Pawhuska on Highway 99.

I arrived at the Hominy Indian Village¹ as people and families were

¹ Hominy Indian Village is distinct from Hominy, and is an official reservation recognized by the federal government.

congregating and preparing for the *E-Lon-Schka* dances. I parked my car behind a large structure, observed my surroundings, and reviewed information I had prepared that would inform me about what to expect during the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony. Without knowing anyone there, I left my automobile and ventured around the arbor area as a complete outsider. Pockets of individuals surrounded the arbor under tents and temporarily erected structures. Men, women, and children were busy assembling traditional dance clothes under tents, attaching bells to dancer's leggings along with backed otter skins and head-feathers. The town crier rang the bell, signaling that the dances would begin in fifteen minutes. As I continued my walk around the arbor's perimeter, I noticed cooks preparing large portions of fire-cooked meals, traditional² food like fry-bread, meat gravy, and assorted desserts. I tried to take in the experience all at once, as the community had come alive in preparation, performance, and celebration of its cultural heritage. After I completed a circle around the arbor I returned to my car and jotted some notes. Soon after, the town crier rang the bell signifying that the ceremony would be starting soon. Excited, I left my car and entered the arbor structure.

The arbor is a large covered structure where the *E-Lon-Schka* dance is held. The dance floor proper is approximately eighty-feet by one hundred twenty feet, with a large drum in the center approximately four-feet in diameter. Along the outer perimeter of the dance floor is a row of benches where the dancers sit, and behind the dancer's benches are additional family benches reserved through donations to

² The term "traditional" is used in this thesis in reference to those things which the Osage call "traditional." More specifically, the term references elements in the Osage cultural sphere that have been practiced and learned through the generations. In context of social institutions, it refers to those elements that have been around since Osage society circa 1872.

the dance committees. Behind the family benches is standing room, and to one side of the arbor are bleachers where spectators are allowed to sit. I found my seat there, on the top row, in the center, with my notebook and pencil in hand.

Dancers began collecting at the corners of the dance floor to wait until two men who patrolled the inner arbor guided them to their seats. Based on prior reading I knew these were the Whip-men, the individuals in charge of maintaining order during the dances. As more dancers entered the floor, individuals began filling the family benches and the spectator bleachers. Another bell rang as the town crier signaled the beginning of the dances.

Two concentric circles of chairs surround the drum. Male singers began to fill the inner circle while female singers filled the outer circle. Soon, the room was full with the sound of stringed-bells, each ringing an individual and familiar sound. Within a short time, and after the dancers had found their seats, a hush dominated the arbor. The drummers began the initial beat, a gentle but forceful *thud thud thud thud* that commanded order and balance. The deep male voices began their bellows while the female singers added higher pitches, creating cascading rhythms of tone, depth, and reverberation. A single dancer stood up and began to shuffle while his bells sang, and without hesitation, other dancers rose and began their step dances. They moved counterclockwise synchronously, the sounds of the bells matching the rhythm of the drum, the dance, and the song. I found myself absorbed in the moment, and for a time I was convinced there were no outsiders under that arbor.

As the event progressed, I continued taking notes and asking myself questions about the actions of the dancers, the symbolism, and the meaning of the

dance. Why did the whip-man put that dancer on the East side rather than the West? Why were some individuals standing when others were sitting in one song, but not the other? What does the drum symbolize? What do the specific actions of the dance mean? And finally, what does the dance itself mean? I began to realize that as an outsider, my preparation had not adequately prepared me for the experience, and perhaps most obviously, I had no clear idea of what was going on. So I did what any amateur anthropologist or inquisitive person would do – I began asking questions.

The answers to these questions changed the direction of my thesis, and expanded a mechanistic and functionalist perspective into a meaning oriented approach to understanding the *E-Lon-Schka*. I began to understand the connection that the dances have with the history of the Osage, its impact on identity formation processes, and its relationship to the other major social ceremony, the Naming Ceremony. Furthermore, I began to understand the origins of the *E-Lon-Schka* from an alternative perspective, the power of individual agency throughout the Osage's history, and the relationship between the dances and social capital in Osage social and ceremonial life.

Methods

Initial research for this project began in 2008 under the direction of Louis F. Burns in Fallbrook, California. Mr. Burns has spent the latter half of his life, over 50 years, researching Osage history, lore, and philosophy. As an Osage, Burns has participated in the social ceremonies described in this thesis, and has served as a font of knowledge on all things Osage to those who would inquire. Outstandingly,

the information provided by Burns was commensurate with what I found in the ethnographic and historic literature, and furthermore, was commensurate with much of the information I found from various sources in Osage County. It goes without saying that without Mr. Burns as a mentor, this project may have never been completed. While in Fallbrook, I was invited to review Mr. Burns' collection of materials covering Osage history, lore, religion, and society, and conduct a series of interviews regarding these topics. This experience set the foundation for when I resumed work on the project in 2011, during the first summer of my graduate school career.

In 2009, Mr. Burns returned to Pawhuska, Oklahoma, capital of the Osage Nation. In 2011, he invited me to conduct a series of interviews and continue library research in the White Hair Memorial, a library donated by Mr. Burns and other scholars that maintains the largest collection of books, newsprint, and articles in the United States on the Osage. Also during this time, Mr. Burns invited me to attend the Osage summer dance ceremony, the *E-Lon-Schka*, held in Hominy and Pawhuska. I was also invited to attend a naming ceremony of two families hosted by Osage elder Eddy Red Eagle. These experiences were fundamental to the analysis and results sections of this thesis.

During my time in Oklahoma, there was often little to distinguish Pawhuska from any other small town. According to the 2010 census, Osage County has approximately 47,472 residents, with 3,584 residing in Pawhuska city (U.S. Census 2010). Approximately 1,312 individuals registered with the census department as having some degree of Native American heritage. Approximately 2,387 individuals

registered with the census department as white. Newspaper articles reflect the same concerns as many cities around the United States: the national economic recovery efforts, developments in the United States presidential race, public planning and public works, and so on (Pawhuska Journal-Capital June 8 2011). However, embedded within local newspapers were articles discussing the rich and vibrant culture of many residents in Pawhuska and Osage County; the *E-Lon-Schka* dances, naming ceremonies, folktale bedtime stories, etc. (Pawhuska Journal-Capital June 8 2011, June 16 2011). Many newspapers also discussed issues central to Osage governmental and congressional concerns, including an 11-year United States Supreme Court case to have the Supreme Court consider the Osage County reservation status (Pawhuska Journal-Capital June 8 2011). The frequent occurrence of periodicals that focused on both national and tribal issues indicates ties to both the country in general, and local community in specific.

I found that, by and large, most of the Osage I interacted with wanted to know more about my project and would offer assistance in one way or another. A desk was provided to me at the Pawhuska library, as well as access to the reserve area. Additionally, I was granted access to a workstation at the *Wa Sha She*³ Cultural Center (WCC). I began to form the general idea that the Osage are proud of their history and heritage, which was reinforced as continued interaction with Osage political figures, community leaders, and religious leaders expanded my knowledge of Osage history, religion, and contemporary society.

Although the *E-Lon-Schka* and Naming ceremonies were the primary foci of

³Osage is pronounced “wa-Sha-She” in the Osage language.

investigation during my stay in Pawhuska, a vast majority of time was spent doing library research and conducting structured and semi-structured interviews. In total, I performed 26 interviews with Mr. Burns, running anytime between thirty minutes and two hours. Additionally, I conducted two interviews with Osage Congressman Eddy Red Eagle, each running approximately one and a half hours. Lastly, I recorded an hour-long interview with Vann Bighorse, director of the WCC. The recordings were stored on a protected hard drive to which I had sole access. Additional non-recorded interviews with these and other individuals in Osage County were kept in field personal notes. The research methodology evolved into a cyclical process, which began by conducting library research at the White Hair Memorial or Pawhuska library. My next step was to discuss the information with Mr. Burns and other Osages, then conduct interviews with Osage project contributors, and finally back to library research where the process would start again. This methodology allowed a deep and critical examination of central issues to Osage society and culture from a variety of perspectives, and broadened my own perspective on Osage history and lore. Perhaps most importantly, this method allowed for constant collaboration, feedback, constructive criticisms, and insights from the participants in my project. The ethnographic data was coded and analyzed during the data collection process and months following the fieldwork.

I employed a participant-observation methodology during the Hominy and Pawhuska *E-Lon-Schka* dances, and the Naming Ceremony conducted by Eddy Red Eagle. Being present and participating even in a minimal capacity allowed me to formulate my own perspective on these events. Consequently, I reflexively analyzed

my own biases and assumptions regarding these ceremonies. Without question, subconsciously or not, my biases have shaped the arguments and conclusions of this thesis. However, by taking in a variety of perspectives and information, I have attempted to mitigate the influence of my own biases. I realized that, as an outsider, I would never understand Osage social ceremonies as the Osage do, and that my work and results should reflect my positionality. The arguments presented in the following chapters are a culmination of my analysis.

Theoretical Perspective

My study focused on how the Osage, as a cultural entity, have improvised and maintained an ongoing cultural identity over the past two hundred years amid massive social change. As my research has shown, and as will be presented in the following chapters of this thesis, the Osage were able to mobilize a strong central authority that was effective in negotiating with foreign governments. This was coupled with their ability and willingness to adapt to rapidly changing social contexts. It is commonly said in Osage County that throughout their history, the Osage have never forgotten who they are. The theoretical perspective used to analyze my data draws from agency theory, border theory, and wrestles with issues of assimilation and acculturation.

The agency perspective is drawn heavily from the work of Sherry B. Ortner and her practice theory perspective. Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, and Marshall Sahlins are largely credited with establishing the fundamentals of practice theory (Ortner 2006:2). In slightly different ways, these theorists identified

processes of negotiation between social actors and the structures that constrain their behavior, which are then susceptible to being altered by social actors that further influence social practices. In other words, a key feature of practice theory is that it returns the social actor to the process of cultural reproduction while taking into account the larger social structures that enable and constrain action. As developments of current cultural anthropological theory, these formulations led to questions of power and inequality, which were key to poststructuralist anthropological investigations in the late twentieth century (Ortner 2006:3).

Ortner's practice theory is "a theory of the production of social subjects through practice in the world, and of production of the world itself through practice" (Ortner 2006:16). Social and cultural transformation occurs through rupturing the cultural and social schemas of agent's worldviews, and the constant production and transformation of those schemas (Ortner 2006:18). As Ortner describes, the dialectical relationship between the social structure and individual actors, and how reproduction occurs within a cultural theatre, is the primary target of analysis. The negotiation process between individuals and the social structure allows for cultural identification, transmission, reproduction, and invention. Practice theory does not analyze cultures as objects, but as the products of internal dynamics, like local power relations, and external structural forces such as capitalism (Ortner 2006:9).

Ortner's "serious games" concept is critical to understanding how specific individuals throughout history have negotiated with the social structure in the development and maintenance of cultural institutions. In "Making Gender" (1996),

Ortner describes the capacity that individual agents have to negotiate with a historically and socially contextual environment and how their actions, as products of negotiation, impact the world and society in which they live.

Prior to postmodern and poststructuralist theoretical developments, anthropologists and ethnographers often viewed collections of individuals as having “a culture” that predicted patterns of behaviors, e.g. types of child rearing or a culturally specific ritual activity. This static and bound perspective of culture perspective lends itself toward cultural stereotyping, where this or that culture would be prone to this or that behavior (Ortner 2006:9). The ensuing theoretical debate questioned the validity of culture as a concept, and some anthropologists argued for abandoning the term altogether. Although Ortner does not provide an operationalized or grounded definition of culture (which seems to be the point), her conception of practice theory leaves room for cultural reproduction and identification.

Further critiques of the old culture concept have been numerous since the mid-1980s, and positioned by authors such as Clifford and Marcus, Rosaldo, and Abu-Lughod (Stewart 1999:40). In contemporary literature, culture is thought to be a contextual manifestation of political-economy, ideologies, ethnicities, structural institutions, and individual agency. In a practice theory perspective, culture emerges as something that people *do* rather than something that people *possess*.

Due to the long-term processual environment in which cultural reproduction occurs through practices and reinterpretation, Ortner’s practice theory is essentially a theory of “practice history” (Preito 1998:256). To put it simply, “culture” is a verb

rather than a *noun*. Therefore, in this perspective, individual human agency is critically important for the production, maintenance, and reproduction of cultural institutions. In my research with the Osage, these cultural institutions take the shape of social structures such as the Osage Native American church, the continuation of a culturally relevant kinship system practiced through the Naming Ceremony, and social institutions such as the *E-Lon-Schka* dance committees.

John W. Berry (2009:363) argues that culture can be thought of as both a concrete and symbolic and interpretive phenomena. Through the physical manifestation of dance and ceremony, culture has a concrete aspect that is *on the ground* so to say, where cultural expression can be personified through dress, song, and dance. However, the notion that culture is purely concrete and open to direct observation was challenged in the late twentieth century by notable anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, who pioneered an interpretive and symbolic approach where culture is viewed as a symbolic web that people create for themselves (Geertz 1973:5). Thus, culture is interpretive, not available for empirical observation, and equally non-falsifiable through scientific methodologies.

The theoretical perspective also draws heavily from early and contemporary iterations of border theory. Gloria Anzaldua (1987), although speaking primarily of Chicanas, provides a voice to the marginalized person struggling on physical and conceptual borders. In her writings, the *new meztiza* learns how to juggle culture with a plural personality, turning contradictions into positives and in turn, allowing the construction of a contextually situated ethnic and cultural identity (Anzaldua 1987). Through construction of *la facultad*, the new mestiza is in a position to

protect her identity while at the same time thriving in it. Anzaldua's early works influenced contemporary scholars, who argue that culture, gender, and sexuality are informed by a variety of structural forces, such as socioeconomic status, political-economy, and cultural environments (Gonzalez-Lopez 2005, Zavella 2011). Additionally, Patricia Zavella's (2011) peripheral-vision concept coincides with the perspective of a contextually informed construction of identity. First and second generation migrants may experience the feeling of being "home" in more than one geographic location, and are conceptually seen to have eyes on two sides of the border (Zavella 2011). The analysis suggests that identity is informed by a variety of contextual circumstances that must be considered when analyzing the culture in a given population or group.

Ethnographic research from the early nineteen hundreds reported that many Osage Native Americans saw themselves as having a sort of peripheral vision of standing on a border between two realities (Burns, personal communication). This theme was echoed in my own fieldwork, as many Osage reported the desire to maintain an Indian cultural identity while negotiating with the dominant American politico-economic structure. Many Osage I spoke with in Oklahoma feel the phrase "standing in two worlds" describes how many Osage felt back then, and how some, but not all, feel today.

This thesis also engages issues of assimilation and acculturation of Native American populations. Frederick E. Hoxie (1984) suggests that from Andrew Jackson's presidency until approximately the late nineteen-twenties, the official policy of the United States was to Americanize and assimilate Native America

populations into American culture. With regards to the Osage political organization, this process was in some ways successful. Osage political organization at the turn of the nineteenth century transitioned from a moiety system to a government modeled on Euro-American principles of democratic representation through the election of principle chiefs. In 2004, the Osage Nation drafted and passed a constitution that outlined and established the boundaries of a new political organization (Bighorse, personal communication). However, if the United States sought complete cultural assimilation through sole establishment of a new socio-political organization, it was entirely unsuccessful.

Assimilation implies that a population or group will eventually forego emotional and practical connections with their culture or nation of origin. Essentially, the assumption is that a fully assimilated person is indistinguishable from another once cultural adoption and adaptation has occurred. In practice, this perspective denies structural issues that may inhibit individuals from reaching socio-economic positions that lead to assimilation proper. Assimilation and acculturation theory rest on the assumption that these phenomena are both beneficial and desired by those being assimilated, a point often disputed by critics of assimilation theory and policy (Rudmin 2005). As my research shows, the Osage have maintained an independent and viable cultural entity in the United States, and have not fully assimilated into dominant mainstream American culture.

In comparing the religious structures of the ethnographic Osage to contemporary times, the theoretical perspective used to examine the data also involves the concept of religious syncretism. Religious syncretism often takes place

when foreign beliefs are introduced into an indigenous belief system, where the religious teachings are blended over a period of time. Critiques of early syncretism theory cite the assumptions that the merging religious complexes themselves are essentially “pure” and unmodified by prior interaction with other religious systems (Stewart 1999:40, 41). Contemporary definitions refer to the combination of religious knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Khan 2004:166), and present researchers with an overwhelming collection of analytical tools and distinctions, such as synthesis, harmonization, absorption, amalgamation, evolution, and so on, for delimiting and describing syncretic observable implements of religious systems (Stewart 1999:58).

George C. Barker (1958) noted this phenomenon among the Yaqui Indians in the American Southwest, wherein the indigenous beliefs fused with the missionary’s Catholicism. This new religious system manifested itself within the cultural theatre and resulted in religious intensification of a new religious structure (Barker 1958:450). To this day, the Yaqui celebrate patron saints in context with traditional beliefs. I argue that the Osage Indian’s iteration of the Native American Church, now named the Osage Native American Church, arose as a syncretic manifestation between Christianity and traditional beliefs, and allowed some Osage to maintain and reproduce ideological elements of their cultural past. Through a syncretic representation that combined elements of their “traditional” belief structure with the Native American Church, some Osage were given an avenue to explore and recreate facets of their cultural heritage, many of which survive, in one form or another, in contemporary Osage society.

It is important to reiterate that in the aforementioned examples, syncretism occurred in rapidly changing social and environmental landscapes. With the Yaqui, cultural, politico-economic, and environmental contexts were shifting in the immediate years post-contact. With the Osage, the social and political atmosphere was changing in the aftermath of the American Civil War, as homesteaders and entrepreneurs ventured to Oklahoma in search of political and economic opportunities and their own identities as Americans. Ethnographic research from the early nineteenth hundreds reported the desire of many Native Americans maintain an Indian cultural identity while negotiating with the dominant American politico-economic structure.. Through hybridized religious expression and traditional and new belief structures, these groups have been able to maintain facets of their ethnic and cultural heritage. As a result, many traditional Osage ideological implements have survived in contemporary society in improvised and reimagined form.

Researchers note that syncretic occurrences are often paired with a discourse termed metasyncretic, referring to the commentary and registered perceptions of actors negotiating with religious structures and complexes on whether or not syncretism has occurred in religious contexts (Stewart 1999:58). Aisha Khan posits that groups and communities evaluate mixing according to their own perception of the degree of loss in their own distinctiveness within a larger national area (Khan 2004). In her ethnographic fieldwork with Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians, Khan analyzed conversations and discourses to document how Trinidadians perceived syncretism religious practices. Her work also showed how

religious iterations influenced identity on a national and transnational level.

Influenced by Khan's work, I recorded the expressions and feelings that members and religious leaders in the Osage community felt about the mixture and syncretic between the Native American Church, which is in itself a mixture between Christianity and indigenous beliefs, and its influences of the traditional Osage religious structure.

In each of these examples, ethnographic methods attempt to reconstruct the lived experiences of individuals living in societies where syncretism is occurring or has occurred at the religious level. Research shows that these syncretic religious manifestations were critically important to cultural and ethnic identity formation. Through analyzing the contextual⁴ environments and subsequent processes that lead to syncretic iterations of religious complexes, researchers better understand processes of negotiation between individual agency and social structures. Therefore, by using religious mixture and syncretism perspectives as models for understanding cultural change and hybridity, researchers may better understand the Native American experience in terms of perceived acculturation and assimilation. With an increased cultural understanding, public policy may change to better suit both the dominant culture and Native Americans through support of bicultural initiatives.

Lastly, my research has revealed a few key individuals that were keenly influential to the current state of Osage ceremonial and religious life. John Wilson, a Native American church roadman and preacher, brought the Native American

⁴ The term contextual refers to the myriad of social interactions individuals have in their daily lives, and can include economic, political, and cultural structures.

church in the waning years of the 19th century, and was responsible for providing a mechanism in which Osage ideology could survive in changing social, political, and ideological landscapes. Francis La Flesche's immense scholarship and detailed accounts of Osage society in the early 20th century provided the history by which modern Osage construct and manufacture imaginaries in society and culture. Louis F. Burns, who I had the pleasure of working with over the past few years, has been vitally important in documenting the kinship and lineages that Osage require to receive kin-affiliated names during the naming ritual. I argue that without these and many other situated actors of the Osage theatre, Osage culture and cultural identity may not be as vibrant and viable as what was explained to me, and what I experienced, in my fieldwork during the summer months of 2011. These individuals and their influence on Osage culture are discussed in later chapters.

The aim of my research was to understand how the Osage have managed to maintain strong links to their cultural heritage since European contact. I began to understand the negotiation process between the Osage people and the dominant social structures in which they live. The Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* are linked as the two primary social ceremonies of the Osage, and I argue that they are directly responsible for the maintenance of Osage cultural heritage.

Layout and Thesis Organization

Chapter one has discussed the assumptions and theoretical perspective used to analyze the ethnographic research data collected in the summer months of 2008 and 2011, and has also provided a general background of the topic.

Chapter two discusses Osage history in North America, dating from the seventeenth century when first contact was documented by Marquette and Joliette (Burns 1989:46). The purpose of this chapter is to set the stage for the introduction to two premier foci of Osage ceremonial expression, the Native American church, and the *E-Lon-Schka* dance. Like many Native American groups, the history of the Osage is a history of rapidly changing social atmospheres. The introduction of the Native American Church and *E-Lon-Schka* dances are important historic events that provided many Osage with an avenue for maintaining and reproducing their cultural and ethnic identities.

The third and fourth chapters of this thesis focus on data collected during my 2008 and 2011 fieldwork. The discussion of contemporary Osage ceremonial and religious expression brings to focus larger issues of community and ethnic identity, border culture, and cultural performance. Chapter three primarily deals with the historical and contemporary iterations of the Osage Naming Ceremony, its meaning in contemporary Osage society, and its impact and influence on identity formation processes.

Chapter four focuses on historical and contemporary iterations of the *E-Lon-Schka*, the premier ceremonial dance performed by the Osage during the summer months of June and July. This chapter focuses on data collected during my 2011 fieldwork in Pawhuska, and in particular my experiences and observations at the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony. This chapter continues the discussion from chapter three concerning identity and the *E-Lon-Schka*.

Chapter five provides the concluding remarks and reiterates the arguments

of this thesis. Primarily, this thesis argues that through the maintenance and reproduction of social and cultural institutions, the Osage have maintained a viable cultural entity in the United States. Additionally, chapter five considers methodological considerations, where I reflect on how my positioning influenced my research, as well as methodological issues that arose during the data collection process.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY

*Tribal ancient beliefs are no longer told.
Indian language forgotten.
Beaded moccasins not used.
Braided hair no longer in style.
Silver jewelry sold.
Buckskin clothing discarded.
That was the proper way to be civilized,
I was told.
Yet! Between two worlds I stand.
My imprisoned Indian nature yearns to be free.
My disciplined new being does not understand.*

Jacob Kenneth Hunt, Osage, 1983

The contemporary Osage Nation is a product of a tumultuous history that coincides equally with a tumultuous history of the United States. In this chapter, I chronicle the historic locations of Osage occupied territory, their social organization, and those religious beliefs as documented by ethnographers, historians, and foreign government officials. My goal is to detail the interaction and relationship between social circumstances and historical context, and the effect on Osage social and ceremonial life that these relationships engendered. Although the Osage experienced an extensive period of Euro-American contact and have endured major socio-cultural change over the past two hundred years, the communities that Osage culture is built upon in Pawhuska, Grayhorse, and Hominy Oklahoma have

maintained strong ties to their tribe's ethnic and cultural heritage.

Contemporary Osage cultural and ceremonial expression cannot be understood without a contextual background of Osage history. First, I discuss the removal and displacement events suffered by the Osage tribe throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Next, I present a brief summary of Osage social and religious organization as documented by ethnographers and historians, some of the ethnographers and historians themselves, and the nuances that stimulated both cultural and ideological change in Osage society. Last, I discuss the introduction of the Native American church and *E-Lon-Schka* dances as important historical events in Osage cultural history.

Reduction of a Great Nation

Although accounts of exactly where the Osage were situated during the 17th century are often disputed, some generalities regarding geographic location can be made. Osage scholar Louis F. Burns argues that during the eighteenth century, the core villages of the Osage were located in central Missouri (Burns 1984:2). The natural environment offered by the Ozark Uplift¹ provided a suitable living area as well as a "natural fortress" for protection against invaders. Burns describes the greater Osage hunting territory as stretching from the Mississippi river to the Rockies, with a southern boundary just north of modern day Texas (Burns 1989:27). The Osage often encountered Athabascan tribes to the South, and Siouxian tribes to

¹ The Ozark Uplift, also known as The Ozarks, Ozarks Mountain Country, Ozark Plateau, and Ozark Highlands, is a geographic highland region of the central United States and covers large areas of southern Missouri.

the North and East. Their central position in the United States afforded the Osage a plentiful supply of natural resources used to maintaining their society. However, these favorable conditions were not enough to stall permanently stall inevitable European contact and interaction (Burns 1989:25).

In 1673, French explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet were amongst the first explorers to add the Osage to the written record (Wedel 1959). The Marquette Map of 1673-1674 shows Osage villages south of the Missouri and east of the Kansas rivers. A 1728 map credited to Dumont de Montigny locates the Osage on the south side of the Missouri river, where they remained until approximately 1794 when the tribe returned to the Osage River. Continued contact with foreign governments brought war from the Spanish and a small pox epidemic that spurred the move away from the Missouri River.

By 1795, the Osage had experienced nearly 150 years of political and economic contact with the French and Spanish. Their subsistence patterns were beginning to change in the wake of increased European interaction (Berry, Chapman, and Mack 1944:3). Material remains found at two Osage village sites in Vernon County, Missouri, the Brown and Carrington Site, suggests that the Osage became dependent on economic transactions with European traders for hides and fur. The Brown site was occupied approximately between 1700 and 1775, while the Carrington Site was occupied from approximately 1775 to 1818 (Chapman 1982:20). These sites show an abandonment of fire-clay pottery manufacture, and a reliance on imported coppers, brassware, and iron cooking vessels. Taken as a whole, these socio-cultural changes signal a shift towards the Euro-American trade

economy (Chapman 1982:22). It is important to note that Osage villages and settlements are not limited to these areas, as material remains from large parts of Arkansas, Kansas, and Oklahoma suggests other pockets of villages as well (Berry, Chapman and Mack 1944:1).

Spanish control of the Upper Louisiana territory began in 1769, and pressured Osage bands still on the Missouri River to migrate westward as relations between European polities flared into an all out war in 1793. Between 1796 and 1825, Osage settled in a village north of the Osage River. Once again, foreign governments interested in economic development and trade involvement spurred another change in location. In 1802, brothers Auguste and Pierre Chotaeu² lost a trading monopoly to Manuel Lisa due to a change in Spanish governors (Nasatir 1952:592). This caused a split in the Osage band, and one group of the Osage moved towards the Arkansas River drainage to continue trading with the Chouteau organization that retained trading rights on the Arkansas (Chapman 1982:22).

The establishment of Fort Osage on the Missouri River in 1808 was coupled by nearby Osage settlements that were continually populated until the fort was abandoned in 1827. Their first treaty with the United States released all Osage and claims east from a line drawn from Ft. Osage to the Arkansas River (Barry, Chapman and Mack 1944, Chapman 1982:22). Monetary compensation paid to the Osage through the treaty was coincidental to the general welfare and national interest of the United States. From the United State's perspective, the fort was established to promote commerce and block British expansion along the Missouri (Burns

² Members of the Chouteau family were prominent economic entrepreneurs, specifically in fur. They had a great impact in the American West in the 18th and 19th centuries.

1984:152). Some Osage bands had refused to move and others opted to move back to their villages west of the Missouri.

In 1828, a young French scientist Jene Louis Berlandier joined a Mexican scientific expedition in central Texas for the purposes of collecting biological and ethnological specimens in a survey of the area. The Osage are described as living in a perpetual state of war with the Comanche, who were located north of Texas since the mid 18th century (Berliander 1969:141). However, large staged battles between the Osage and the Comanche were a rarity, and smaller raiding parties and minor confrontations were constant. Some Osage resided around the headwaters of the Arkansas, and would conduct excursions into Texas and where they harried the Choctaw and Caddo alike. American President Thomas Jefferson succulently describes the territorial dominance of the Osage in 1804:

The truth is, they are the great nation South of the Missouri, their possession extending from thence to the Red river, as the Sioux are great North of that river. With these two powerful nations we must stand well, because in their quarter we are miserably weak (Ambrose 1996:342).

Jefferson also noted the general physique and behavior of the Osage representatives, and was specifically impressed with their abstinence from alcohol and spirits (Ambrose 1996:342). Archaeologists Brewton Berry, Carl Chapman, and John Mack (1944) argue that the Osage were the sole occupants of the region near Vernon County until 1822, when they ceded all claims to Missouri, and were moved to Kansas along the Neosho River.

Although the Osage remained in Kansas for many years, they were eventually forcibly removed after continued pressure from foreign governments. After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Osage lands were continually reduced through a series

of treaties with the United States, in 1808, 1818, 1825, 1865, and 1870 (Callahan 1993:8). In 1872, with funds acquired through trading and treaties, the Osage bought back a portion of the Cherokee Outlet between the 96th Meridian and the Arkansas River (Burns 1994:161).³ Chapman describes the Osage migration to Oklahoma as voluntary and brought on by a variety of circumstances and events that began in the mid-seventeenth century (Chapman 1982:19). However, as an Osage phrased it, “forced” may be a

better word than voluntary. The period between 1700 and 1888 was rife with contention and cultural change from lands beyond Osage territory. Incursions into the center of the continent by England, France, and Spain beginning in the eighteenth century caused Indian displacement and forced migration

to new territories (Chapman 1981:19).

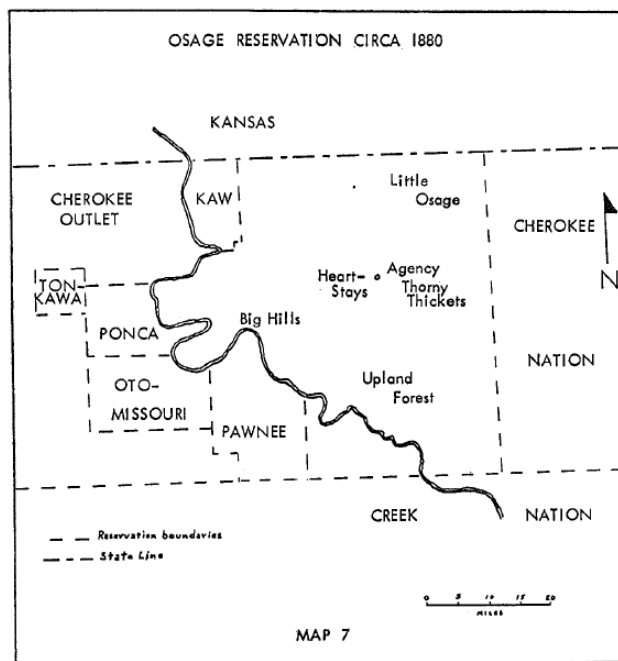


Figure 1: Osage Reservation circa 1880 (Bailey 1972:77)

Although many Osage live all over the world, the three Osage Indian Camps are located in Pawhuska, Grayhorse, and Hominy in Osage County, just south of the Kansas state line. These camps were established through three Osage groups that

³ For further reading on the topic, David Parson's dissertation *Removal of the Osages from Kansas in 1872* provides an exhaustive examination of the social conditions and ramifications of the Osage removal episodes.

moved to Osage County after the 1872 purchase of the Cherokee Outlet.⁴ Later, the Osage Allotment of 1906 provided portions of land to Osage families, which became fundamental in the explosion of wealth as a product of oil refining.

After numerous displacement and removal episodes, Osage culture survived as a fragmented representation of its former self. Mixed-blood populations continued to rise as traditional tribal rites and customs were continuing to disappear. In a time of shifting social realities, the Osage were busy staying alive. These were a lost people, and preserving traditional rites was a secondary imperative to any semblance of cultural survivability. It is in these social and environmental contexts that Francis La Fleche began ethnographic work with the Osage. Undoubtedly, La Flesche's work on the Osage is the most substantive ethnographic work written by a Native American, about any Native American population, in the United States.

Of Francis La Flesche

For a comprehensive study on Osage religious beliefs pre-1890, one would be best served by reading Francis La Flesche's collection of the Osage.⁵ La Flesche's work is the backbone of any study into the ceremonial and religious life of the Osage pre-1880, and is often referenced by such contemporary Osage scholars as Louis F. Burns and Garrick A. Bailey.

At the turn of the 19th century, American anthropology was beginning as a

⁴ The "Little Osage" settled in Pawhuska, the "Heart Stays" settled in Grayhorse, and the "Dwellers on the Thorny Thicket" settled in Hominy.

⁵ La Flesche 1913, 1925, 1927, 1930, 1932, and 1939 (posthumously).

serious discipline. American anthropologists commonly stressed the importance of their collaborators and informants, and in turn, some of these informants became anthropologists in their own right (Mark 1983:498). La Flesche's introduction to anthropology and ethnography occurred in a similar fashion.

Francis La Flesche was born in 1858 on the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska to an Omaha mother and a half Ponca half White father, Joseph La Flesche. Joseph began to abandon traditional Omaha ways early in Francis' life, and by late 1866 had fully conceded his position as an Omaha tribal chief and began following Christianity (Mark 1983:498). Francis was the eldest son of his father's second wife, and in a socially marginal position that was exasperated as his mother's social role in the family became increasingly precarious. La Flesche's home life was culturally split between Indian and white lifeways, as certainly was the case for other children born to mixed blood families. Joan Mark (1983:498) argues that the familial and cultural environments that surrounded La Flesche resulted in his "salvage anthropology" approach. This methodology was largely concerned with recording the vanishing customs, songs, and beliefs of Native American populations.

During the late 1880s, Frederic Ward Putnam had become curator of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. Putnam's anthropological approach strayed from Lewis Henry Morgan's social evolution and the teachings of his mentor, Louis Agassiz. Instead, Putnam adopted a scientific perspective that was concerned with mankind's natural history and the collection of empirical data, such as songs, customs, clothing, traditions, and so on (Mark 1983:501). Eventually, this perspective became the thrust of American

anthropology at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Around 1878 Putnam met Alice Fletcher, a notable public speaker who had just begun a career in anthropology. After noticing her intensity and dedication to native cultures, Putnam encouraged Fletcher to conduct ethnographic fieldwork rather than merely popularizing native cultures through public speeches (Mark 1983:501). Perhaps unknowingly, Putnam began a tradition of promoting and supporting women in anthropology, and encouraged other notable female anthropologists such as Zelia Nuttal, Erminne Smith, and Cordelia Studley. Future American anthropologist Franz Boas continued Putnam's tradition, training women anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict (Mark 1983:501).

In 1878, Bureau of Ethnography founder and director John Powell sent linguist James Owen Dorsey to conduct fieldwork with the Omaha Indians. La Flesche, who was at the Omaha reservation at the time, was one of Dorsey's primary collaborators and served in the capacity of interpreter and informant (Mark 1983:500). Together, Dorsey and La Flesche documented the cultural traditions of the Omaha tribe. Dorsey took interest in La Flesche's salvage methodology, and described La Flesche as energetic and insatiable in his desire to document rapidly disappearing customs and traditions (Mark 1983:500). Dorsey went on to record two Osage traditions in 1883,⁶ but was largely unsuccessful in recording more than a fragmentary view of Osage culture (Dorsey 2006:1).

La Flesche met Alice Fletcher on a trip to Boston in the late 1870s, and soon joined her ethnographic excursions serving in a familiar capacity of interpreter and

⁶ See Dorsey 1884 and 1902.

informant. During the 1880s, La Flesche and Fletcher were quite a team. La Flesche had access to cultural knowledge and Indian contacts as well as a drive to collect and document increasingly endangered customs, while Fletcher had contacts in academic circles, connections to politicians, and access to upper social levels (Mark 1983:503). La Flesche became so instrumental to Fletcher that in 1983, she wrote to now Director of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology F. W. Putnam to include La Flesche's name on her upcoming publication's title page (Mark 1983:498).

Although their collaborative relationship lasted for many years, La Flesche felt disparaged in that he was never regarded seriously as a social scientist. The cultural milieu of American anthropology simply was not easily accessible by a Native American ethnographer in the 1890s. La Flesche's writings were difficult to understand and sympathize with for individuals that believed in the inevitable assimilation of Native American populations (Mark 1983).⁷

In 1892, La Flesche graduated from the National University Law School and earned a master's degree from that same institution the following year (Parins and Littlefield 1995:xi). Finally, in 1910, Francis La Flesche was appointed to the Bureau of American Ethnology, and thus began an official career as ethnologist. Over the course of twenty years, La Flesche would go on to publish two works on the Omaha tribe and seven works on the Osage tribe. Four of his Osage publications were included in the Bureau of American Ethnology's annual reports.

La Flesche was in a unique and advantageous position in studying the Osage.

⁷ During this time, United States liberal policies concerning Native Americans concentrated on tactics of assimilation and acculturation rather than absolute domination and annihilation.

As an Omaha Indian, he was able to understand and converse with the Osage on cultural and social matters through a mutually intelligible language.⁸ The relationship between La Flesche and his principle informant, Saucy Calf, reversed the then hegemonic anthropological relationship between ethnographer and informant. Rather than serving only as an informant, La Flesche treated Saucy Calf with respect and affection, and together they actively collaborated in the documentation of Osage customs and traditions (Katanski 2005:110). Saucy Calf was La Flesche's key source of information, and although they only worked together for a little over a year, Saucy Calf's death in 1912 was a large blow to La Flesche's research (Bailey 1995:21).

La Flesche also established relationships with other Osage, such as Puma Clan priest Charley *Wah-hre-she*, Gentle Sky priest Shunkamolah, Fred Lookout, Author Bonnecastle, Bacon Rind, and others who were instrumental in the development of his Osage ethnographies (Bailey 1995:22). These relationships were not easily forged. By 1910, as a product of the oil exploitation from lands acquired through the 1901 Allotment, the Osage were considered the wealthiest people per capita in the, so buying the ceremonies was not always the primary option. When cooperation could not be purchased, La Flesche relied on former priests to cooperate with his research goals (Bailey 1995:21). Consequently, La Flesche's work with the Osage also brought him into contact with supporters and practitioners of the Native American Church, a movement that grew in popularity after 1890 and that continues to command a strong religious presence today (Katanski 2005:111).

⁸ La Flesche spoke Omaha, while Saucy Calf spoke Osage, both of the Dhegian Southern Siouxan Language Stock.

Amelia Katanski (2005) argues that La Flesche's support of the Native American Church is commensurate with his perspective on the nature of culture and identity. La Flesche conveyed his progressive perspective through his writings, endeavored to undermine preconceived notions of the nature of identity and culture, and strove to represent the complex and multivariate phenomena of the Omaha and Osage traditions and religious expression.

One drawback of La Flesche's approach is that he did not spend a great deal documenting Osage society-at-the-time. During the years he spent with the Osage, La Flesche was largely concerned with documenting the vast amount of rapidly vanishing cultural knowledge. By the time of La Flesche's earliest publication in 1921, the Osage had all but abandoned the traditional ways. Although La Flesche had gathered invaluable information on the Osage from tribal leaders, the information was primarily culturally relevant before ethnographic contact by La Flesche and others. Although La Flesche only documented a small percentage of Osage culture, his contributions to Native American studies in general and the Osage in particular are long fundamental to contemporary understanding of Native American beliefs (Hall 1997:xiii). As it stands, La Flesche's collection of Osage traditions, customs, and songs remains one of the largest collections of ethnographic works of any Native American tribe in the United States.

Osage Social and Religious Organization

Since their introduction to the historical record, historians have noted that the relationship between Osage social and religious organization cannot be

underestimated. The political and religious organizations were so intermeshed that to speak of one necessitates speaking of the other (Bailey 1972:18). La Flesche, writing in the early 20th century, described that Osage tribal organization was ordered and found upon a theological concept that separated the people into two distinct divisions: the *Hun'ga*⁹ (representing the Earth, the Sacred One) and the *Tsi-*

zho (representing the sky, the Household). In order to protect the world they had created, meaning the land, women, animals, and all the difficulties and dangers that beset human existence, their

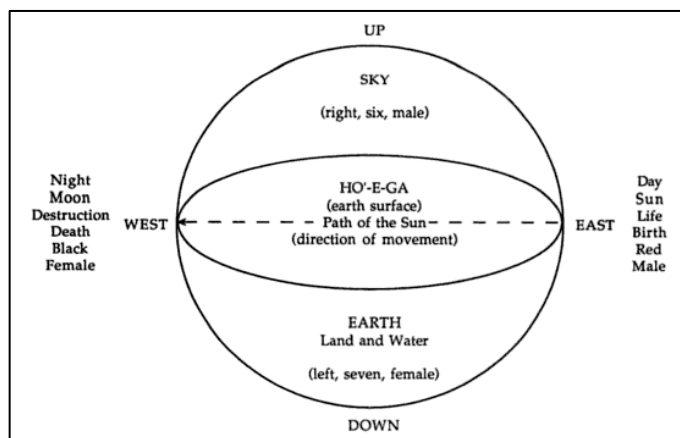


Figure 2: Osage Cosmology (Bailey 1995:33)

protective thoughts were conceptualized in the figure of a man physically perfect and intellectually capable, appropriately named the Symbolic Man (Burns, personal communication). In times of peace, this man was thought of as standing facing the east, where the sun, the great emblem of life, rises. In times of war, this man was thought to have turned away from peace, and standing south to face the west (Burns personal communication). The place of the Tsi-zhu was on the north and formed the left side of the man, while the place of the Hun'ga was on the south and formed the right. La Flesche documents the Osage Cosmos to be organized in the same manner, with a distinct symbolic separation between earth and sky. Figure 2 displays Osage cosmological organization as described by Garrick Bailey (1995).

⁹ Variant spellings include *hun'ka*, *han'ka*.

*Image credited to Garrick Bailey 1995

Bailey has done considerable work displaying the connection between Osage ideology and social-organization. The social and religious organizations illustrated in *fig. 3* and *fig. 4* represent the theoretical and ideological foundations underlying Osage religious and social organization.

Osage religious and ceremonial life revolved primarily around clan-organization and a group of religious leaders named the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga*.¹⁰ Members of this society come from clans and sub-clans of the Osage tribe. At one time there could have been up to 24 clans with 84 sub-clans, but the exact number of clans is unknown (Burns 1994). La Flesche documented that to complete a tribal ceremony required all clans present to participate their partial part of a ceremonial rite. However, with the increasing encroachment of European homesteaders in

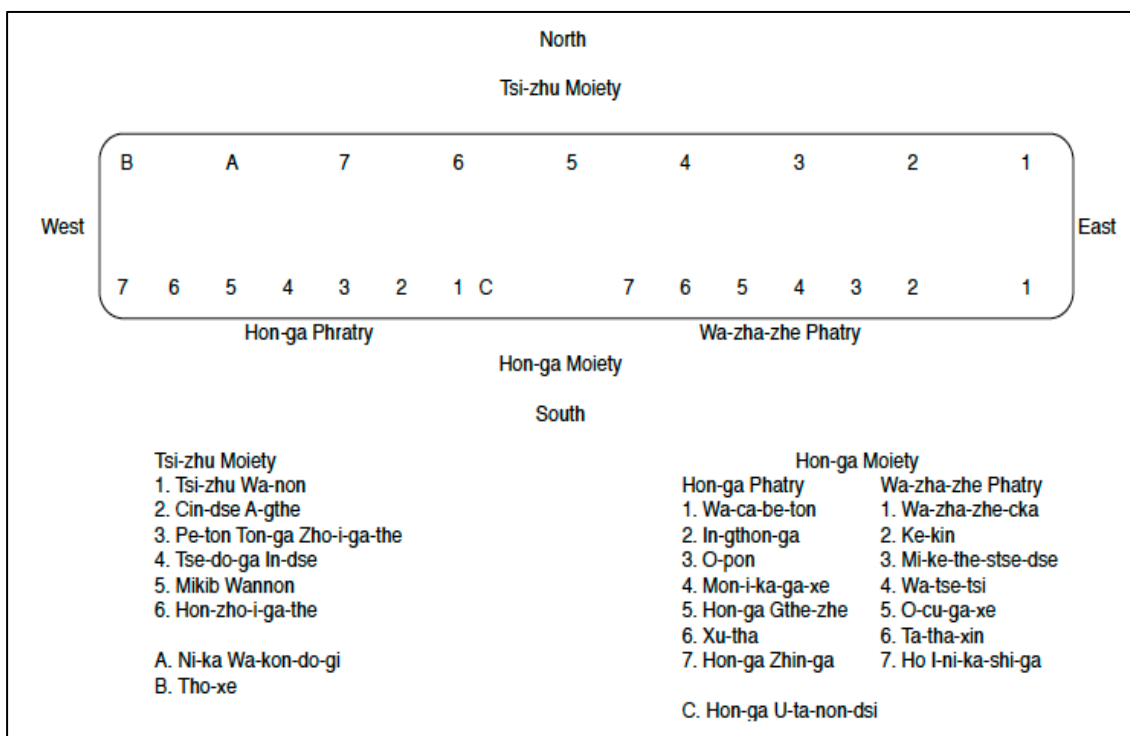


Figure 3: Reconstructed Osage Social Organization (Bailey 1972:12)

¹⁰ While the direct English translation is Men of Mystery, women were not precluded to join the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga*

search of their own identities, the social and religious organizations were challenged in rapidly changing social contexts.

Historians (Bailey 1972:85, Burns 1989) have attributed religious abandonment to rapid population decline, the aftermath of the Civil War, and the complete rupture of their economic, environmental, and religious realities. As Bailey discusses in his 1972 dissertation *Changes in Osage Social Organization 1673-1906*, the Osage began to suffer an intense population decline in the waning years of the nineteenth century. Between 1882 and 1887, the full-blood aspect of the population dropped from 3679 to 1064 individuals with 312 adult males. In 1887, the number of adult males was reduced to around 13 individuals per clan (Bailey 1972:86). National acts like the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Dawes Act of 1887, although not aimed directly at the Osage, caused a migration of other Native American tribes westward and indirectly threatened Native American land rights. These acts also reflect the pressure on congress to open more lands for white settlement and the consequence of the manifest destiny philosophy.

There were three basic elements to Indian Policy in the United States during the nineteenth century: land use and concepts of ownership, cultural differences, and dealing with diverse populations and groups of Native Americans (Burns 1989:199). These factors are inherently interrelated and reflected the United States' position of acquiring land for exploitive purposes, while attempting to assimilate Native populations into functioning members of American society and ideology. Lands from Texas through Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri were opened cattle drives, while missionaries attempted to Christianize Osage full bloods to Catholic

ways. However, the Osage defied the “assimilate or perish” stigma and still cling to customs and practices of their traditional culture (Burns 1992:205).

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Northeast Oklahoma experienced an increased number of white settlers vying to create a new life with a perceived notion that the land was for the taking. In 1889, nearly 50,000 white homesteaders settled in Oklahoma (Burns personal communication, Bailey 1972:84). In 1893, whites occupied land adjacent to the Osage reservation when the Cherokee Outlet and Pawnee reservation were opened for white settlement. As early as 1885, large numbers of whites illegally settled on the Osage reservation under the guise of farmers, rangers, and laborers, although in truth many were whiskey peddlers and gamblers (Bailey 1972:84).

Overall, between the years 1879 and 1892, the amount of mix-bloods increased substantially, and soon after the full blood Osage were a minority on their reservations (Bailey 1972:84). The rapid population decline resulted in a reduction of the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* religious leaders and overall clan participation. Considering a tribal rite required participation from numerous clans, the Osage could no longer complete their traditional ceremonies. Although members of the *Non'-hon-zhin-ga* were trained into the 20th century, the efficacy of these tribal rites were no longer able to cope with the political and economic realities of the late nineteenth century.

Bailey estimates that the last full tribal ceremony occurred around 1890 (Bailey 1972:86). No records indicate whether or not acceptance of the recently introduced peyote church had a factor in the continued or discontinuance of the tribal ceremonies. Historians and anthropologists have found that peyotists did not

participate in any traditional Osage rites, a factor that might have sped the religious transition along a few years. Nonetheless, clans became nearly extinct with or without interference from the peyotists (Bailey 1972).

As late as 1889, Osage Agents reported “in religion, the full-bloods nearly all cling to a creed of their own and a large portion of the summer months is taken up by many of them in the observance of their forms of worship” (Bailey 1972:85). Just a few years later, Bailey notes that in spite of the agent’s report, the adherence to the “old ways”¹¹ was all but abandoned by 1906 as evidenced by the disappearance of the clan structure and traditional ceremonies, and most of the Osage were making a conscious effort to forget the old ways (Bailey 1972:85).

Tribal organization in the wake of Euro-American interaction changed to cope with the introduction of Euro-American settlers and official governmental representatives. Social and political organization had shifted from a moiety system of governance to a model patterned in the American style. Government officials would look to the powerful moiety for Osage representation, and consequently, the opposite moiety chiefs lost power. This triggered a governance shift to democratic organization complete with elected principle chief. Although the clan and kinship system remained, the dual moiety system of government became ineffectual.

The continuous pressure of the manifest destiny philosophy, expansion of the railroads, and boom of the cattle industry pinned the Osage into isolated lands. Ranchers began closing grasslands and prairies in Osage territory, and as cattle drive moved from Texas northward, the Osage continued to lose exploitable land for

¹¹ Like “traditional,” the term “old ways” refers to the period surrounding the 1872 religion and political organizations documented by La Flesche.

subsistence or resources. By the end of the 1800s, the environmental landscape had shifted entirely. The social organization and religious system were so intricately woven together that to unravel one necessarily unraveled the other. Perhaps an inevitable consequence, the sweeping changes in economic, political, and environmental spheres pressured spurred social, political, and ideological change.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Osage culture was a shade of its former self. The social and environmental contexts at the end of the eighteenth century set the tone for the introduction of two new cultural institutions in Osage society: the Native American church and *E-Lon-Schka* ceremonial dance.

The Introduction of the Native American Church

John Wilson, colloquially known as Moonhead, is largely responsible for bringing the Native American Church to the Osage. Although Wilson was one-half Delaware, one-fourth Caddo, and one-fourth French, he claimed Caddoan heritage and was fluent in the Caddoan language (Stewart 1987). In 1880, Wilson had become a peyote roadman¹² and had attracted a considerable following. In the 1890s, he had ventured to Osage County, Oklahoma and encountered the Osage.

Wilson was commonly thought of to have spiritual power. In 1968, Osage researcher Leonard Maker interviewed Katherine Maker to discuss the coming of John Wilson and his impact on Osage culture. Katherine's maternal grandfather was very ill, possibly with pneumonia, when he heard of John Wilson's arrival. The following is a synopsis of the interaction:

¹² A peyote roadman is a priest of the Native American church.

Her grandmother was sick and he wanted Moonhead to come pray for him and administer peyote medicine. They went to where Moonhead was staying at the time, and Moonhead gave a blessing to a baby, young Ms. Russell saying that the baby would grow up a great and beautiful woman, and she did, and she later contributed all of her greatness to the blessing she received from Moonhead.

(Katherine Maker Interview, White Hair Memorial Archive File).

This story is one of many similar stories told those Osage who interacted with Wilson. His impact on the Osage was primarily done through spiritual guidance and as a roadman. Although Wilson is credited with the introduction of the Native American church, he did not participate as an activist for continued peyote use and is not solely responsible for bringing peyote to the Osage. Owen Dorsey noted peyote usage among the Osage his 1904 work *Traditions of the Osage*, a collection of tales and oral histories told by elder members of the tribe. In the preface, Dorsey (1904) notes the increased use of the peyote button and mescal bean in rites and ritual.

By 1904, some religious services had already transitioned from the traditional ways to a hybridized amalgamation of Christianity and Osage beliefs. Edward Spicer described this social phenomenon in Native American populations in the 1950s, and is defined as the reconciliation or fusion of different belief systems. Syncretism often takes place when foreign beliefs are introduced into an indigenous belief system, where religious teachings thus become blended. As a result, the new heterogeneous religion takes on a shape of its own.

Dorsey (1904) noted that peyote use and fireplace consecration rituals were already present amongst the Osage by the time Wilson came to Osage County. It may have been the case that the presence of similar rituals made the transition from

traditional to new ways manageable and feasible. Consequently, the Native American Church's intensified peyote usage in Osage County brought scrutiny and unwanted attention by the United States Government.

In 1918, in a petition posted to the Senate and House Committees on Indian Affairs, Fred Lookout, Eves Tall Chief, Edgard McCarthy, and Author Bonnecastle representing the Blackdog, Claremont and Local Lodges, petitioned the United States government to avoid enacting legislation that would ban peyote use amongst the Osage (United States Senate 1918:162). At the time of the petition, various members of the tribe had been using peyote for nearly twenty years, and praised the medicinal and beneficial properties of the peyote religion:

The peyote as used in our worship have been the means of making stronger and better men and women of our tribe: it has given us higher ideals of duty toward our country and Government and a greater respect for our wives and children. We have never known or heard of a single instance in which the use of peyote in our religious worship has resulted in injury to either the mind or body. There is a great fear among the members of our tribe that if the use of peyote is prohibited that our people will return to strong drinks and evil habits. Under such conditions we think that it would be unwise to prohibit the use of peyote in our religious work at this time (United States 1918:161).

This passage indicates the prominent position that peyote had in Osage culture, not only as a ceremonial instrument but also as a means to maintain and regulate behavior of Osage involved in the Native American church, which strictly forbids alcohol use.

Almost twenty years later, when pressure from the United States on Native American groups to drop the use of peyote once again came to a head, prominent Native Americans, scholars, and anthropologists came to the peyote church's defense. Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, Ales Hrdlicka, and Osage Chief Fred Lookout

were among those to provide statements on behalf of peyote and its role in the tribe.

I have been a constant user, as also many other older men of the Osage Tribe, for more than 30 years, and prior to this time I was converted to the peyote faith I did not always follow the straight path, and this statement also applies to other Osages who follow the teachings of the peyote faith. Members of the peyote church do not use intoxicating liquor, and as a result, are the most dependable in their relations with white people and further advanced in their material welfare than those who do not praise this faith and are users of intoxicating liquor (Senate Response 7:1937).

Once again, the focus is on the beneficial aspects of peyote to the Osage.

As previously discussed, the social, political, and economic climate at the turn of the 19th century was highly unstable due to a number of pressures on Osage lands. Fragmentation of the social organization and tribal political system crippled the efficacy of the traditional religious beliefs and rituals. As a result, the introduction of a new religion in the Native American church arrived as an avenue for many Osage to reclaim and recapture their cultural identity through re-inventing elements of their cultural heritage.

The transition from the traditional ways to the Native American church was a serious matter to the Osage while La Flesche was collecting his ethnographic data. On one occasion and after great reluctance, La Flesche had secured one of the rituals and songs of the *wa-xo-be A-wa-thon* from his informant, *Wa-thu-xa-ge*. This rite forms the first of seven degrees of the Osage war rites. Even though many songs and ceremonies were in imminent danger of vanishing entirely, *Wa-thu-xa-ge* was initially hesitant to provide songs to La Flesche. First, he feared the supernatural punishment that comes with making a mistake during the rite. Second, the man who introduced the new religion forbade its practitioners to put any thought to the old ways, as they strayed from the path of God. Lastly, he suspected the man who

introduces him to La Flesche had not gone through the necessary protocol for collecting ritual (Smithsonian Institution 2012:79). It is interesting that even though the tribal rites were “on the way out” so to say, they continued to command respect and recognition from the Osage.

It should be noted that although the Native American church eventually became an influencing factor some Osage’s religious identity, not all Osage became members of the Native American Church. This is the case even today in Osage County. Jones et al. (2002) documented seven primary religious organizations in Pawhuska alone, each with a sizeable congregation.¹³

As stated before, the rapidly changing social contexts engendered a period of “trying to forget” in future generations (Burns, personal communication, Bailey 1972:85). The implication is that the old ways brought memories of a fragmented and lost people that had no home (Burns, personal communication). During the 1920s and beyond, as Osage oil money created new problems in Osage County,¹⁴ the Osage were in the process of rebuilding their ceremonial life. Ultimately, the Native American church was able to fulfill the spiritual and religious needs of the Osage in ways that the traditional beliefs were not; however, through continued practice of the Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* dances, I argue that ideological elements have survived into contemporary times in re-imagined and re-invented forms.

¹³ These religious congregations include Southern Baptist Convention, Assemblies of God, United Methodist Church, Catholic Church, Christian Church and Churches of Christ, and an Other category that includes the Disciples of Christ, Church of the Nazarene, National Association of Free Will Baptists, and Churches of Christ (Jones et al. 2002).

¹⁴ For further reading on this topic, review Burns’ *A History of the Osage*, specifically *Part Six: Standing in Two Worlds*.

The Purchase of the Osage Ceremonial Dance, the *E-Lon-Schka*

Around the time the Native American Church was introduced to Osage County, Osage social and ceremonial life¹⁵ was also rapidly changing. In 1884, the *E-Lon-Schka* came to Pawhuska, Greyhose, and Hominy Indian Villages from the Ponca and Kaw Native American tribes. After the Osage purchased the dances and songs, they created and added their own songs to this ceremonial dance. It is not unheard of for Plains Indian groups to trade and buy each other songs; however, the actual items of exchange are often misunderstood from the Euro-American perspective.

Although there are no ethnographic reports detailing the purchase of the *E-lon-schka*, the term purchase may be misleading. Lee Cronk (1989) argues that in the Euro-American paradigm, *purchase* implies the giving up of an object or set of ideas with the assumption of monetary or economic compensation, where all ties with that object are thus severed. Cronk argues that in Native American cultures that are firmly based on concepts of reciprocity and gift giving, purchase may have another meaning altogether (Cronk 1989). This statement from Eddy Red Eagle exemplifies this concept:

We were given the impression that the E-Lon-Schka came from the Kaw. We always said this dance, this ceremony, came from the Kaw. We got their drum, they showed us the songs and dances, and then we paid for it. It became ours. That kind of gave an origin to it. But I don't believe that's the whole story. I'm getting to where I think that, because the Osages, Kaws, Ponca, Quapaw, and Omaha were all one once people, that that particular ceremony had to have its origins back when we were all one people.

Some Osage argue that the dances and drums were purchased with the notion and

¹⁵ The terms social and ceremonial are used to describe a ceremony that does is not necessarily religious. For some, the *E-lon-schka* is an important ritual activity firmly set in a religious context; for others it exists purely as a social activity; and for others, it is a mixture of both.

responsibility to carry on the functions, values, and ceremonies to the following generations (Bighorse, personal communication). Vann Bighorse argues that the Ponca iteration of the *E-lon-schka* may have been suffering in participation from a similar decline in the population as well. Under these circumstances, the Ponca were willing to “sell” the *E-lon-Schka* with the understanding that the Osage were in a position to carry on the ceremony (Bighorse, personal communication).

These descriptions of the *E-Lon-Schka*'s purchase are consistent with Cronk's notion of gift giving not predicated on Euro-American conceptions of purchase, absolute ownership, or economic transaction, and is instead concerned with the circulation of meaning and continuity of the ceremony (Cronk 1989). Considering the Kaw, Ponca and Osage all share a common language stock, they were presumably all members of a much older culture where these ceremonies were originally established. The implication is that the Osage were responsible for keeping the dance alive. This would be quite a responsibility given that the obligation of continuity stretches through time beyond Osage cultural borders.

In a speech given at the Osage Tribal Museum in Pawhuska, Professor of Anthropology at University of Oklahoma Daniel C. Swan argued that the old way's inability to keep up with the rapidly changing cultural landscape created a ceremonial void in Osage cultural practices (Swan 2010). In the decades immediately following the Osage's removal from Kansas, the tribe was in the midst of losing their tribal heritage. The introduction of the Native American church and purchase of the *E-Lon-Schka* as ceremonial and cultural devices filled the void left by the absent ceremonialism of the Osage prior to the 1890s.

Alice Callahan's *The Osage Ceremonial Dance I'n-Lon-Schka* (1993) is currently the only ethnographic work on the *E-Lon-Schka* dance. The *E-Lon-Schka* and its contemporary iteration will be further explored in chapter four. In general, it can be said that the dances are a focal point of the cultural community and a major factor in Osage identity formation processes. The dance teaches responsibility, respect, cultural history, kinship, social relations, ideology, and other values important to the Osage community. In Pawhuska, Hominy, and Greyhorse, the dances are an annual celebration of Osage culture, where ideological themes of acceptance and community are reproduced and reimagined in the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony.

This chapter has been largely concerned with briefly overviewing the dynamic and extensive history of the Osage, as well as the introduction of cultural institutions that have been largely responsible in the re-invention of Osage culture. Although the Osage had experienced centuries of interaction and influence from neighboring governments, two social ceremonies survive in similar form as when they were first documented. The following chapters are dedicated to a discussion of the contemporary social ceremonies of the Osage nation, first, the naming ceremony, and second, the *E-Lon-schka* dances.¹⁶

¹⁶ As a tribe, the Osage have been fortunate in receiving attention from historians, scholars, and anthropologists. The breadth of knowledge on the history and developments of the Osage is one of the most thorough of any Native American population. Scholars such as Louis Burns, Francis La Flesche, Alice Callahan, and Garrick Bailey have been instrumental in documenting and preserving Osage cultural past and present.

CHAPTER III

THE NAMING CEREMONY

As a cultural institution, the Naming Ceremony is ideologically linked to the *E-Lon-Schka* summer dances, and is the ticket by which an Osage is granted to dance under the arbor. Together, these cultural institutions are the cornerstones of Osage social ceremonialism, and have provided many Osage with avenues to re-create and re-invent aspects of their identity and community since their introductions. As a result, their importance to Osage culture cannot be overemphasized. First, I briefly describe the naming ceremony as conducted by Eddy Red Eagle held in July 2011. Next, I overview the Child Naming Rite as documented by Francis La Flesche during the late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds.

This chapter argues that the Naming Ceremony continues to be a central facet of contemporary Osage ceremonialism since the late nineteenth century. The ideological themes woven into in the naming ceremony are diffused in many other aspects of Osage ceremonialism. These analyses were formulated through discussions and interviews regarding the naming ceremony in contemporary and historical contexts. A discussion of themes that emerged from content analysis of the recorded ceremony and interviews follows a brief description of the child-naming rite as documented by Francis La Flesche.

Speaking the Name

Around two o'clock on a Saturday morning in July, I arrived at the Wa-Sha-She Culture Center (WCC) to attend and record a naming ceremony of two families. Eddy Red Eagle, Osage elder and congressman, invited me after our initial interview regarding the naming ceremony and summer dances. Upon my entrance, Eddy greeted and introduced me to Barry,¹ George, and their father, as well as their wives and families. Barry and George were to have both of their families named during the ceremony. In total there would be eight namings: Barry and George, their wives, Barry's daughter and two sons, and George's third son. Having been raised by a Roman Catholic mother and attending Mass on the longer holidays, I must admit, the thought of a laborious extended ceremony seemed rather daunting. As it turned out, my experience was far different than my preconceived notions of a contemporary Native American ceremony.

The room was bustling with excitement as the friends of the families arrived at the WCC and prepared for the beginning of the ceremony. Individuals from both Osage and non-Osage families spoke amongst themselves and caught up on old times. Even with all the excitement surrounding the ceremony, the atmosphere was relatively relaxed. I counted 24 individuals including myself when I initially walked in, and 31 individuals when the ceremony had officially finished. Eddy introduced me to other Osage elders that were interested in how my project was progressing, and after introducing myself to the cooks, the rest of the families, and other guests, we sat down at a long table as Eddy began the ceremony. By the day of the

¹ All English names of those-to-be-named are pseudonyms.

ceremony I had read La Flesche's 1928 Child Naming publication a number of times and had a fair understanding of the rite in general. Now the opportunity presented itself to observe the ceremony in practice.

In terms of ceremonial action, there was very little physical activity. We listened as Eddy spoke at length about the importance of family in context with society, the naming ceremony's history and its contemporary purpose, and its close association with the Osage tribe. He discussed why the Osage continue to name, the value naming serves for future generations, and from where the names originate. Eddy discussed both English and Osage interpretations of each name, how these interpretations relate to the person to-be-named, and what the name represents in a familial context.

Eddy spoke of the religious aspects embodied in the Naming Ceremony and drew allegorical comparisons to stories in the Bible, such as Jacob wrestling with the angel. Eddy's emphasized the importance of the ceremony in terms of maintaining the continuity of the Osage community and ceremonial life. The discourse exposed the centrality of the ceremony in terms of his identity as a community leader, an elder, and an Osage Indian.

Once the family members had received their names, we began to feast. The selection of food included barbeque brisket, traditionally cooked fry-bread, traditionally cooked *hominy* corn, bread rolls, and a medley of assorted vegetables. Surrounding the dinner were conversations of history, of family, of community, of the Osage, and of self. Individuals shared their life stories, what it was like to be named, and how this event shaped and influenced how they grew as individuals. It

became readily apparent that at this moment, the sharing of bread and meat was just as important as the ceremony itself. The communal and social importance embodied through feasting is a functional representation of the ceremony that promotes social and cultural cohesion. After the feast, Eddy, the families, cooks, and event planners engaged in a gift exchange, primarily gifting Pendleton Blankets, which is the standard gift in an Osage ceremony.

Observing and participating in the naming ceremony at an intimate level allowed me to compare Eddy Red Eagle's version of the Naming Ceremony with the Child Naming Rite as described by La Flesche (1928). This experience shaped the theoretical approach used to voice research questions regarding contemporary Osage social ceremonial life, community organization, and the factors that influence identity formation. The analysis presented in this chapter is based on interviews and discussions with Osage and non-Osage persons who have experienced these ceremonies in one-way or another.

I preformed a content analysis on La Flesche's ethnographic reports as well as three discreet interviews with Osage elders during the June, July, and August months of 2011. Additionally, I preformed content analysis on a recording of the aforementioned naming ceremony. These analyses revealed topics and themes central to the Naming Ceremony, and were commensurate with the interpretations of my project collaborators. These themes represent the basis of my understanding of the contemporary Osage Naming Ceremony and its relevance to Osage culture.

Child Naming As Documented By Francis La Flesche

The consequences of dwindling populations and a decrease in clan-ritual participation after the mid-1800s left only two recorded child-naming rites. La Flesche (1928) provides detailed accounts of the *Puma* and *Tsi-zhu Wa-shta-ge* clan's child naming rite. The rite itself is a ritual in which individuals are initiated into the Osage tribe through kin-affiliation. The contemporary naming ceremony contains specific ceremonial and ritualistic elements that survive from La Flesche's ethnographic work.

The naming ceremony itself, especially to an Osage child, was an important event for the tribe. Louis F. Burns argues that child naming was not a matter of vanity, fashion, or social status; it was part of the fabric of tribal organization (Burns 1984b:43). In terms of social-organization, tribal unification was predicated upon family relationships. Clans were constituted of unified families. In turn, clans unified with other clans to form sub-divisions, and related sub-divisions formed formal divisions of the tribe. Unity between clan-divisions brought unity of the Osage tribe (Burns 1984b:43). The Osage practiced band exogamy, wherein it is forbidden by social convention (as well as for biological reasons) to marry within a clan or sub-division. This social organization was predicated on the gentile² system under which the Osage tribe was socially and politically organized (Burns 1984:29).

The child naming ceremony was fundamental to the individual's introduction and acceptance into the Osage social system. Individuals, specifically children, were

² The gentile system was the social organization of the Osage, consisting of bands, clans, and moieties. Each clan in the tribal organization was considered a "gens," and part of the overall gentile framework. In simple terms, the gentile system was the bond that gave unity to the Osage tribe.

not part of a clan based on merit of birth; they underwent the child naming ceremony to achieve their kin-affiliated names and subsequent social networks. Individuals without a name were unable to participate in Osage ceremonies, and can be said to be a nobody or non-person of the tribe. Receiving the name provided the bond that unified the individual to the tribe through clan-relationships and clan-affiliations (Burns 1984b:29). The individual became officially part of the Osage tribe and could participate in Osage ceremonial matters. This practice continues today and serves a similar function; contemporary Osage are not able to participate in some tribe-related ceremonies without an Osage name.

The Child Naming Rite is not the only naming rite of the historic or contemporary Osage. Individuals who join the tribe later in life are able to participate in an adoption ceremony, granted there is a family willing to adopt the individual. Adopted names typically fulfill or refer to some office or function that the clan performed within the gentile organization. Over time, with increased contact with Western civilization, Osage names became less and less prominent in society (Burns 1984b:29). As an example of the United State's assimilative tactics, traditional Osage names were often difficult to pronounce or spell in schools, and teachers would ascribe names from textbooks to avoid using Osage specific names. This is how names such as William Penn, Louis, or Edward were introduced to Osage societies and passed down to subsequent generations (Burns 1984b:29).

It is important to note that La Flesche's recorded versions of the Child Naming Rites are not the only versions of "naming rites" in general. Burns argues that stories and rites were typically clan-dependent, meaning that the rites

remained thematically conservative but were expressed in vigorous and various styles across clans (Reilly, personal communication). The Child Naming Rite, as observed by La Flesche from the *Tsi-Zhu Wa-shta-ge*³ clan, proceeds as follows.

A father of the individual to-be-named contacts a *sho-ka*, or messenger, to petition the other clans and inform them that there is to be a naming ritual held at a specified time and place. Once the groups meet, there is a petitioning to the spirits concerning the power of names:

1. The people spake to one another, saying: Lo, the little ones have nothing of which to make their bodies,
2. Take heed, O, younger brothers, and see what can be done.
3. Then to the youngest of brothers they spake, saying: The little ones have nothing of which to make their bodies, O, younger brother.
4. Hardly these words were spoken,
6. When the young messenger stood before the God of Day (the sun), to whom he spake, saying:
7. O, my grandfather!
8. The God of Day replied: My grandchild!
9. The messenger spake: The little ones have nothing of which to make their bodies, O, Grandfather
10. The God of Day spake: I am a person of whom the little ones may well make their bodies,
11. I am a god who has power to resist death.
12. When the little ones make of me their bodies,
13. They also shall have power to resist death, as they travel the path of life.
13. Even among the gods
15. There is not one who is able to see my path.
16. When the little ones make of me their bodies,
17. Even the gods
18. Shall not be able to see their path, as they travel the path of life.

La Flesche 1928:60-61

Depending on the clan, this phrasing is repeated numerous times as the ceremony approaches the Goddess of Night (the moon), the Male Star (Morning Star), the Female Star (Evening Star), the Litter (Ursa Major), Three-deer (Orion's belt) and

³ English translation: The Sky Mottled Eagle Clan. Additionally, this version of the Osage Child Naming Rite is examined in comparison to the contemporary *Tsi-zhu Wa-shta-ge* child naming rite.

Double-Star (Theta and Iota in Orion) and ask of them materials to make the people's bodies. After the long simultaneous recital of the naming rite, the *sho-ka* and principle organizer are taken to the house of the family for a feast. Afterwards, the two go home.

The next morning, the *sho-ka* journeys back to the house of the child to complete the naming rite. The child participates in another set of recitation where they are bestowed the powers granted through the naming ritual that will help the child reach old age. In this case, the animal totem is a mottled eagle:

- 65. The folds of skin on my knee,
- 66. I have made to be the sign of old age,
- 67. When the little ones make of me their bodies,
- 68. They shall live to see the skin of the knee gathered in folds.

And later,

- 81. The stripes on my forehead
- 82. I have made to be the sign of old age.
- 83. When the little ones make of me their bodies,
- 84. They shall live to see the sign of old age on their forehead.

Lastly,

- 89. I have been able to bring myself to old age.
- 90. When the little ones make of me their bodies,
- 91. They also shall be able to bring themselves to old age.
- 92. I have been able to bring myself to the calm and peaceful days.
- 93. When the little ones make of me their bodies,
- 94. They also shall be able to bring themselves to the calm and peaceful days, as they travel the path of life.

La Flesche 1928:71

With these rites complete, the child is taken to the head of the *Tsi-zhu Wa-shta-ge* clan who ceremonially dips them in a vessel of water and red cedar fronds. The child is then taken by the *sho-ka* to the heads of all the other clans, blessed again with water and cedar fronds, and finally taken to his or her own clan. When all of the

participating clans have blessed the child and the mother has spoken to the ceremonial leader, the child has officially been named and is a formal member of that gens.

The child could be said to have crossed the three primary stages of ritual: the child is first separated from their families, transitioned and given cultural knowledge through the sayings of the ceremonial leaders, and re-incorporated into the society proper with a new name (Turner 1967:81). Thus, the individual also has a recognized kin affiliation and can participate in public and esoteric ceremonies as they age. In short, the child has formally become Osage.

Tribal unity through clan structure, kin-affiliation, and acceptance into the tribal gentile system reflects the manner in which the Child Naming Rite, as recorded by La Flesche, is a cultural performance that promotes social solidarity and group cohesion. Consequently, the child is allowed to attend hunts, receive a clan-affiliated haircut, and act as a formal member of the specific clan. Had La Flesche been aware of contemporary anthropological terminology and theory, he may have used the terms “social capital” and “cultural capital” to describe the manner in which the child-naming rite legitimizes a person’s actions in many important cultural aspects of Osage social organization. Without the social capital that a name provides, an individual was essentially a non-person in Osage society and did not have an Osage identity. The name provides the basis of one’s position in the tribe, and one hundred years after La Flesche’s fieldwork, the social function that the Child Naming Rite represents continues to be relevant in contemporary Osage society in modern contexts.

The Power of the Name

This section describes and analyzes the contemporary naming ceremony through the use of recorded interviews and an audio recording of a naming ceremony. The primary argument is that ideological elements from Osage ideology as depicted by Francis La Flesche have been recreated through continued practice of the Naming Ceremony, and that as a cultural institution, the naming ceremony is the beginning of an individual's formal introduction to the Osage tribe.

Identity

The naming ceremony in contemporary Osage society is a cultural institution that provides Osage like Eddy with a cultural framework that helps in formulating an ethnic identity. Raised in a traditional house, Eddy participated in cultural activities as desired by his parents. Eventually, Eddy left his traditional home to pursue a degree in business administration with minors in accounting and economics. After college he met his future wife and has been married for almost 47 years, with three children and seven grandchildren. Eddy went to work for Citgo Petroleum in 1952, and stayed with the company for 32 years before retiring in 1984. Since then, he has previously served as Director of the *Wa-Sha-She* Cultural Center, on the Osage County Industrial Authority Board, and on the Osage County Council Board. Currently, Eddy serves as congressman for the autonomous Osage government, an elected position.

Recently, Eddy has begun a personal quest to uncover the history of his tribe through activities such as researching the old writings, discussing history with other

elders, setting up community events, and facilitating naming ceremonies. Eddy's research began during a period of Native American revitalizations as a form of resistance against the oppressive and assimilative United States policy toward native populations.⁴ Through repeated practice of the Naming Ceremony, he sees what he is doing as a benefit for the tribe of the future.

Eddy: I've been doing a lot of work around the county in preparation for what I feel is the emergence of the tribe as they come into another era. We're [the Osage] going to have to be more collaborative. We're going to have to partner up on everything. I'm just trying to get the groundwork around the county for this generation to see how this all works. I'll probably continue to do that after I get off the tribal council, and still stay active in tribal and cultural matters.

Although Eddy had participated in cultural activities early in his life, he shied away from learning the traditional ways of the Osage. This was due in large part to the older generation's resistance to teach the old ways and ceremonies.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Osage ceremonial life was far different than the traditional ways as documented by La Flesche. The *E-Lon-Schka* was still a large part of the social organization, but religiously the Osage tended to join the Catholic or Native American Church. The older generations emphasized the teachings of the new ways over the old, and left some Osage searching for a place to reclaim their identity.

Eddy: Our people said you don't want to go back there. Whatever's back there, you don't want to go back. They put it in certain phrases like, you can't handle that. You can't live that way. You can't handle what they did.

The resistance that Eddy faced when trying to learn the traditional ways of his

⁴ Civil and Ethnic Rights movements during 1960s and 1970s introduced legislation such as the 1972 Indian Education Act and organizations such as the American Indian Movement in 1968, which focused on strong leadership, revitalization of traditional Native American culture, the expansion of Native American legal rights, and sovereignty.

ancestor's generation was echoed by other Osage with whom I had similar discussions. Many Osage during this period, and many of the generations before, were raised in homes that kept them away from learning their traditional Indian heritage. As Mr. Burns phrased it to me during our initial discussions of the Native American church, the old generations were nestled in a period of "trying to forget" the past religious ways. In the new political and socio-economic climate, the old ways were no longer effectual in providing spiritual and healing guidance. Additionally, the resistance against teaching the old ways was in some ways a defense mechanism against the oppressive social policy of the United States that pressured native populations to assimilate rather than re-create and re-invent their cultural identities.

As Mr. Burns and Eddy put it, the disconnect between wanting to keep their Indian heritage as well as functioning in mainstream Western civilization brought a stress in identity. Eddy expressed to me a concept that I had frequently heard when speaking other elders:

Eddy: In my crossroads of life, I had to ask [God], ok here I am. I have all this Osage knowledge, but I'm also a degreed person. I deal in word processors, I deal in economics, I deal in all these others things and live in both worlds. I hit a kind of crossroads. I tried to jump back and forth, to carry back and forth, and I told the lord, "these don't mix." They can't mix. While the non-Indian world can't understand us, the Indian world can't understand them, and here I am working in one and living in another.

As this statement suggests, there was a period in which Eddy was struggling with the two sides of himself – the Indian and the non-Indian. A common phrase disclosed to me for this kind of phenomenon is "standing in two worlds."

Mr. Burns: My grandfather was standing in two worlds. Literally. He was standing in two worlds. Western civilization wanted him to socialize [assimilate]

and his nature wanted him to come back to the Indian. He was literally standing in two worlds at one time.

Mr. Burns expressed that before he began to research Osage history and religion, which started roughly in the 1970s, he felt the pressures of a similar phenomena. For a time, Mr. Burns and Eddy were respectively experiencing the feeling of living in two worlds at the same time – the desire for Western civilization’s materialism and individualism juxtaposed with the traditional upbringing which focused on the family and community as organizing principles.

Mr. Burns and Eddy negotiated the conflicting nature of their identities by juggling the Indian and non-Indian aspects of their lives. Their identities have been influenced by social and cultural structures. In turn, my informants have participated in measures that reclaim and perpetuate the naming ceremony for future generations. For instance, Louis F. Burns’ Osage Bands and Clans (1984) was specifically designed to provide contemporary Osage families with genealogical references that are at the crux of the Naming Ceremony. Additionally, Eddy was bestowed the privilege to name by his father, and participates in the naming ceremony to share cultural knowledge and bestow cultural capital on those-to-be-named. These actions have had a direct result on the longevity of Osage culture by negotiating with social structures in the re-invention of Osage heritage.

Naming, or having a name, for Mr. Burns, Eddy, and many Osage in Osage County is a central aspect of their identity. Naming reaffirms familial and clan-relations, solidifies individuals as formal members of the Osage tribe, and provides a conceptual space of solace from the pressure of standing in two worlds (Anzaldúa 2003). Vann Bighorse expressed the importance of the naming concept similarly:

Vann: It recognizes you through your clanship. You see your clan members or clan people and they know who you are. It's an identity really, to me. I always thought when I was younger, how would the people know who was who? But when you start getting older and learn people, and learn who the families are, then you really get to know them.

Nathan: Once you know who this person is, who their uncle is, et cetera.

When I asked Vann about his specific naming, he replied:

Vann: Yeah, and you know what clan they come from. So to me it's an identity, and to me it makes you complete. To me, it makes you Osage. You carry it all the way through your life.

Nathan: What was that like, going through the naming?

Vann: It helped make me complete. To me, that naming is just as big as a baptismal naming. They say when you get to heaven, that's the first thing you're going to hear. When your people see you, they're going to call you by that name. Your name. Your Indian name.

Naming, then, emerges in contemporary Osage society as more than a simple name.

It is an identity. The basis of the tribe's social organization revolves around kin and clan affiliation. As the name provides the formal basis of one's clan identification, it also forms the basis of one's tribal identity. Once named, the individual is now formally Osage.

Family, Continuity, and Responsibility

Eddy described the feeling of carrying on the naming ceremony to future generations as a social obligation. According to Eddy, if the naming ceremony's customs and meanings were important enough to be passed down to him, then there should be a reason to pass the cultural knowledge to future generations.

Eddy: I also had to believe that if we're doing things, the E-Lon-Shcka, Namings, cradleboarding, funerals, et cetera. If we're doing these things, then it's going to have to be founded on something that says it's worth handing off. If it's worth handing off to us, then it's worth handing off to the next generation, so you better know about it so you can explain why you participate in these activities.

And later, when discussing the continuity of naming,

Eddy: Why do it for your children? Why put this there for them? That's why I always say this is all about family. What I come to see in naming is that, you and I are limited. We only have so much power and ability with our tangible, physical, and mental capacities. We can only see so far. In your lifetime and in my lifetime, we try to see as far as we can into the future, and set it to be the way we want, as best we can, for future generations.

Naming teaches future generations about their heritage and cultural past, and helps to establish the Osage in a current social context. Through these measures, Eddy provides social and cultural capital to those-to-be-named that they may not acquire otherwise. By receiving a name, the individuals are not only a part of the tribe, but are charged with the task of perpetuating the same cultural knowledge for future generations. With the name comes a responsibility, not only to your clan affiliation, but to the tribe as well.

The continuity of Osage cultural heritage and knowledge is reproduced for future generations through the Naming Ceremony. Although the form, words, and ritualized contexts may change over time, the Naming Ceremony has remained thematically conservative in reference to traditional Osage ideology, and stresses solidarity and responsibility to the group.

In La Flesche's ethnographic reports, names would often refer to roles that fulfill some aspect of that clan's responsibility in the gentile organization (Burns 1984:29). Naming was a central feature by which the Osage organized their social and political roles, and although those roles do not apply to contemporary society, emphasizing the strength and unity of the tribe through clan and kin affiliations. The meaning of the names and roles have been reinvented to fit contemporary use.

Throughout the naming ceremony, Eddy referred to the link between the

roles of today and the social organization of the tribe in the pre-1872 organization structure.⁵ In this, he sees continuity between then and now. Although contemporary Osage society is far removed from the Osage culture as described by La Flesche, the specific names given to specific positions in the family have remained a constant in the ceremony:

Eddy: Your name then is a second-girl name, you're the second daughter of your father as you follow that miracle of life. The second daughter is more spiritually inclined. The name that you're getting translates to Sacred Arrow Staff. They say it in Osage, Ma-se-sek-he. The best way to describe it is that you carry the true meaning for us. You understand the spiritual needs of the family, of yourself, your husband; you're capturing that need and you keep that at your beck and call. In the ancient times, the Osage would give this particular woman the Ma-se-sek-he, the charge of preparing the ceremonial bundles.

The mention of ceremonial bundles in this context is quite important. In Native American belief systems, ceremonial bundles typically hold and house the religious or ceremonial fetishes of a particular ceremony (Reilly and Garber 2007). Although bundles were not used during this ceremony, they are typically trusted to the most caring of individuals. The statement is symbolic of the importance and responsibility embodied in the name, and thus, to the individual in Osage society as an extension of Osage ideology.

Later in the ceremony, when speaking about the roles of the family and the names associated with the roles, Eddy spoke to the first daughter about her name:

Eddy: For [the first daughter], there's only one [name] in our clan. All our first daughters have that same name. Wha-ho-ete. The way it translates in English is "Looking at the Eagle." I always say it's a people looking at the maiden that's looking at the eagle. So if we've aligned our thought processes, we don't worship the eagle, we worship the power that created the eagle. Therefore that eagle then is that intercessor, or agent, or element of god that facilitates the

⁵ "Pre-1872" refers to the period before the Osage were removed from Kansas and placed in Oklahoma.

communication from god to her.

Similarly, when it came time to name the first daughter in the second family,

Eddy: Again, first daughter, automatic; it's hers, she is, she will be, that first daughter. You've got no choice in the matter. You will be that strong first daughter, and she will guide those parents, and she will demand, and she will correct, and she will get, and... wow. We all come to appreciate you as first daughter.

The names for first-daughter and second-daughter have remained the same, as well as the function and role as interpreted by Eddy. He has taken the names from the traditional environment and transplanted them into modern society, thus re-creating and re-manufacturing the importance of the name and in contemporary contexts. In both contemporary and traditional iterations, extreme importance is placed on roles and responsibility that are centered in the grouping of family.

All three key participants, as well as other members of the Osage community, expressed some degree of anxiety at the potential loss of customs and the disappearance of Osage culture. Thus, they stressed the importance of continuing the ceremonies for future generations. In the Osage of La Flesche's time, naming was an important cultural ritual that was fundamental in providing individual Osage with a range of social and cultural capital, allowing them to participate in Osage ceremonial dances, and legitimizing their identity in the tribe. In contemporary Osage society, the symbolic meaning is very similar. Naming provides the individual with a clan and tribal identity, which is passed on to future generations through repeated practice of the ritual. The circulation of meaning of the names is a cornerstone of Osage heritage, and is representative of the re-invention and re-creation of Osage ideological constructs in contemporary use.

Religion and Spirituality

La Flesche's ethnographies discuss the traditional religious ways of the Osage in extensive detail. A close reading of the origin stories as described by La Flesche reveals similar thematic concepts of acceptance, self-actualization, and awareness as found in his accounts of the *Tsi-zhu Wa-shta-ge* Naming Ceremony. Similar themes paralleled contemporary iterations of the Osage naming ceremony.

In the *Tsi-zhu Wa-shta-ge* genesis story, the Osage are said to have descended from the fourth realm of the heavens. Existing only as spirits or ghosts, the Osage descended from the fourth level to the third to receive a sense of a soul. From the third to the second level, the Osage are said to have developed the ability to communicate. From the second to the first level, the Osage are said to have acquired true bodily form; and finally, from the first level to the earth, the Osage are said to have acquired personhood, intelligence, and being (Burns, personal communication, Burns 1984a). In one version of this story, the Osage land on seven Red Oak trees; in another version, the Osage are said to land on seven red rocks. Ultimately, the stories converge on the transition from a non-person or nobody to a fully recognized Osage person. The genesis journey is a journey to personhood.

Numerous allegorical comparisons were drawn with excerpts from the bible during Eddy's version of the naming ceremony. While not all Osage namers necessarily draw religious comparisons, religion commands an important position in Eddy's iteration of the naming ceremony.

Nathan: Let me ask you, when you give someone a name, what do you feel like you're giving them?

Eddy: I'm giving them something they already have. I'm making them aware of it.

Eddy expressed that he feels he is providing something to someone that they already have, though they have not yet realized it. As shown here, Eddy details the connection with the spiritual realm:

Eddy: (Referencing the Catholic God) He brings us into this world and that name catches up with you. You carry that name all the way through life. You take it back with you, and that name returns to the tribe. That's the touch of the divine. Therefore, it's not the name being given to you; it's the name you are coming into. You are coming into the name, and the purpose and the placement of it.

And a little later,

Eddy: The power of names in mankind has always existed. It exists in a lot of religious practice today and in other nationalities. Our people, they say, "when you have your name, you live your life, and when it's time to move over to the other side, and you step across, the first thing you'll hear is your name." What that tells me, all of that example, is that God has a divine hand on names. The names have certain elements that are real and tangible. Otherwise, if it did not have the touch of the divine, when you step over, you wouldn't know where you are. When someone calls out and you step across and someone says "Follow me if you want safety!" You say wow someone over here knows me. I'm not alone.

For Eddy, the spiritual component of the naming ceremony is just as important as the name itself. Eddy draws inspiration and validation through the spiritual comparison. His version of the naming ceremony appears as a hybridized manifestation between his Catholic upbringing and traditional teachings. Exactly where the Catholic inspiration stops and traditional inspiration begins is not important; rather, the emphasis on the individual as a part of a larger unit, as formal members of the Osage tribe, is important. Once the soul passes from the mortal realm arrives at heaven's gate, it awaits the calling of its name and recognition by its people. This is the theological foundation of Eddy's naming ceremony.

The Osage origin stories as recorded by La Flesche, the Naming Rite as

recorded by La Flesche, and Eddy's contemporary version of the naming ceremony all share the theme of awareness and acceptance on behalf of the tribe. The naming introduces individuals as formal members of the Osage tribe. The same statement used before to describe how a name provided Vann a sense of identity, can be used to understand the spiritual and religious connection.

Vann: It helped make me complete. To me, that naming is just as big as a baptismal naming. They say when you get to heaven, that's the first thing you're going to hear. When your people see you, they're going to call you by that name. Your name. Your Indian name.

The name itself is the gateway to heaven. The individual is reconnected to their tribe as the soul wanders through the gate proper; thus, the power of the name extends past the physical realm and into the spiritual and supernatural. As Eddy phrases it, the power of the name is equal to the gift of heaven (Eddy Red Eagle, personal communication).

Another aspect in which La Flesche's ethnographic descriptions coincide with contemporary versions of the Naming Ceremony is the ritualized use of speech. When as La Flesche documented the rituals of the Osage, he paid special attention to the form and manner in which words and discourse were recorded. This example is taken from the Child Naming ritual of the Puma gens:

1. Verily, at that time and place, it has been said, in this house,
2. The people spake to one another, saying: With what shall the little ones decorate their faces, as they travel the path of life?
3. With the symbol of the god who never fails to appear at the beginning of day (the sun),
4. The little ones shall decorate their faces, as they travel the path of life.
5. When they decorate their faces with this symbol,
6. They shall be difficult to overcome by death, as they travel the path of life, O, younger brothers.
7. Verily, at that time and place, it has been said, in this house,
8. They spake to one another, saying: What shall they use as a plume?

9. There is a god who never fails to appear at the beginning of day,
10. At whose right side
11. There stands a plume-like shaft,
12. Which the little ones shall use as a plume,
13. And they shall become difficult to overcome by death.
14. When the little ones use this plume,
15. They shall have a plume that will forever stand, as they travel the path of life.

La Flesche 1928:35

The structure and style in which La Flesche recorded the ceremony implies a level of deeply formal and ritualized activity, and rightly so. As La Fleche and other historians have documented, the Osage were among the most religious and spiritual tribes encountered by explorers and settlers (Burns 1992:208). The constancy of formal ritual is a cornerstone of La Flesche's description of Osage ceremonial life, and appears in contemporary instances of Osage ceremonialism such as the *E-Lon-Schka*. However, not all instances of Osage ceremonialism are as formal as was portrayed by La Flesche.

Contrast the rigid formality with an excerpt of Eddy's naming ceremony.

Here, he also discusses the power of the sun and spirituality, but in a different style:

Eddy: In a sense, we were even classified as sun worshipers. We didn't worship the sun then, we don't worship the sun today. What we worship is the power that created the sun, and the loving kindness to do that so that the sun brings not only life and heat, but also the energy for growth and the perpetuation of life. That's what we worship. The almighty God.

In both of these instances, the sun is mentioned as a source of power for individuals to harness as they transverse the path of life. At the same time, the children are presented to the gods as a means to acquire personhood. La Flesche's text seems rigid and formal, while Eddy's version is a more relaxed reading that still carries the same power and ceremonial importance. La Flesche's and Eddy's ceremonial words,

although stylishly vigorous, remain thematically conservative (Reilly, personal communication). Eddy has effectively improvised the meaning of the Naming ceremony on his terms, creating a method to give capital, and a font of cultural capital through the name.

The Name

As the Osage continue to exist as a family and community orientated society, naming continues as an important aspect of the Osage community. In La Flesche's ethnographic writings, namings were primarily predicated on consanguinity. However, contemporary Osage society is not able to operate under the same mechanism. Instances where a family has a child or person they want named often do not have a namer of their own clan to conduct the ceremony. In these cases, and if the namer agrees, the namer will adopt the child or person into their clan and provide them with a name related to that clan. In these instances, the Osage community is emphasized in just as much detail as during a child naming.

Eddy Red Eagle, Vann Bighorse, Louis Burns, and Francis La Flesche all emphasize that naming is built on the premise that the society is larger than the self. The naming ceremony is a mechanism of social cohesion and grants numerous benefits to an Osage. Names provide a formal induction to the Osage tribe, and social and cultural capital in Osage political and ceremonial matters. Perhaps most important in contemporary Osage society, having a name allows Osages to participate in the Osage ceremonial dance, the *E-Lon-Schka*. The *E-Lon-Schka* and its implications and influence on Osage culture are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV
THE *E-LON-SCHKA*

The *E-Lon-Schka*¹ ceremonial dances held in June and July are the most important cultural events in the Osage community. In contemporary Osage society, the committees that organize and facilitate the summer dances are the cornerstones of the community. Although the dances are only held twelve days out of the year, the importance of the ceremony extends far beyond dances themselves. To quote a common phrase used in Osage County regarding the *E-Lon-Schka*, “You could raise your family in there.”

You Could Raise Your Family In There

Alice Callahan’s *The Osage Ceremonial Dance I’n-Lon-Schka* (1993) is the only comprehensive study on the Osage ceremonial dances. Callahan argues that after the Osage left Kansas in the 1880s, they settled in three locations, Hominy, Grayhorse, and Pawhuska, and purchased *E-Lon-Schka* drums from the Ponca and Kaw tribes (Callahan 1993). Although there are no ethnographic reports of a transaction that details the items of trade, it is common knowledge in Osage County that the Greyhorse district received the dances and the drum from the Ponca, while the Hominy and Pawhuska districts received their drums from the Kaw. Over one

¹ Variant spellings include *I’n-Lon-Schka*, *Inlonshca*, *En-Lon-Shka*, and *I-Lon-Schah*.

hundred years after its purchase, the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony continues to play a central role in Osage ceremonial life as a symbolic performance of the strength and vitality of the tribe.

An Osage elder related to me that the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony is a multi-faceted and multi-layered phenomenon. The *E-Lon-Schka* is a dance that requires a year long preparation for the participants to complete. Preparation consumes everything and everybody in the community, from the drum keeper who organizes the dance committee, to the cooks who organize the food and meals, to the singers who make the music for the event; everyone in the participating community has a role to play. The actual ceremony is but a public and physical manifestation of the year's work. What an individual sees in June and July in Osage County is the culmination of the community's efforts brought together in cultural performance.

Callahan argues that although the *E-Lon-Schka* bears a resemblance to the Omaha-Ponca-Kaw Grass Dance, it is also distinctly Osage. The dances blend Osage qualities, traditions, and culture with those tribes who had previously practiced the dance (Callahan 1982:30). In English, *E-Lon* translates to "eldest son," and *Schka* is part of the verb *scatse*, which means, "to play." The full translation into English is "playground of the eldest son," and although some Osage agree with the direct translation, many suggest the interpretation does not fully encapsulate the meaning of the phrase.

Vann Bighorse, director of the *Wa-Sha-She* culture center answered a series of questions regarding the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony. Born in 1958, Vann has been participating in the dances for almost forty years. Vann spent most of his life

growing up in Pawhuska. Before receiving his name at the age of twelve, Vann attended the *E-Lon-Schka* dances as a spectator, watching as his friends and relatives participated in the social ceremony. Having worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for over twenty years, and currently working with the Osage Nation as director of the cultural program, Vann has spent a majority of his life researching and experiencing life in Osage County. His insights into Osage culture, naming, Osage spirituality, and the *E-Lon-Schka* dances, provide a lens with which to analyze the nuances of the social ceremony.

The primary objective of this chapter is to describe the *E-Lon-Schka* as an ideological and ceremonial construct of the Osage Nation. As a cultural institution, the *E-Lon-Schka* is a central mechanism that maintains and reinvigorates Osage culture and identity every year, drawing Osages from around the world back to Osage County in a celebration of identity, community, and heritage. First, I present a basic description of the roles and positions occupied by individuals within the *E-Lon-Schka* dances, as well as the mechanics of the dance proper. Next, I present and discuss themes that emerged through analyzing recorded interviews with three Osage elders regarding the meaning, purpose, and significance of the Osage dance. This chapter concludes with a discussion on cultural performance, manufacture, and identity.

Playground of the Eldest Son

An Osage council established the official rules and regulations of the *E-Lon-Schka* in the 1880s. Any change or alterations to the rules were decided through

additional council meetings. These rules outlined the roles and responsibilities that members in the community had to fill before the ceremony could start, and were passed down orally from generation to generation (Callahan 1993:34). Callahan received the rules from Joseph C. Mason, who was given the information from his mother and father who participated in the *E-Lon-Schka* in the 1880s (Callahan 1993:34). In the 1880s, the roles were:

- Drumkeeper
- Chairman of the Dance Committee
- Seven Dance Committeemen
- Two Advisors
- Two Tail Dancers
- Two Whipmen
- Two Waterboys
- Head Cook
- Three Assistant Cooks
- Smoker

(Callahan 1993:34)

In comparison, Callahan also noted the 1974-1975 *E-Lon-Schka* roles and organization:

- Drumkeeper
- Chairman of the Dance Committee
- Eleven Dance Committeemen
- Five Advisors
- Six Tail Dancers
- Two Whipmen
- Three Waterboys
- Head Cook
- Seven Assistant Cooks
- Drum Warmer
- Head Singer
- Nine men singers
- Six women singers
- Town Crier¹

(Callahan 1993:35)

Although the size, number of positions, and people in the original positions had increased over 90 years or so, the basic organizational structure had remained

¹ Much like the Smoker position in the 1880s rules, the Town Crier position is not decided by the drumkeeper but is a permanent role. Partly for health reasons, the Smoker is no longer a role at the *E-Lon-Schka*.

relatively consistent (Callahan 1993:35). An increase of interest or participation throughout the twentieth century may explain the differences and variations between the two descriptions. Considering the dance was a new social ceremony, it is possible that initial membership and participation was quite low, as practitioners of the old ways may have viewed the incorporation of a new social ceremony into the tribe as a step in the wrong direction. While the exact reasons of change and variance are unknown, the organization in contemporary Osage society is virtually identical to the 1974-1975 organizations, with small concessions made as far as the number individuals within each role.

The drum is literally and figuratively the center of the *E-Lon-Schka* dance, and is taken care of by a drumkeeper from that drum's respective district (Callahan 1993:57).² Typically, the drumkeeper is the eldest son of a family that has agreed to take on the responsibility of the drum, but this is not always the case.³ Regardless, the drumkeeper is expected to take the burden of responsibility for at least one year before passing the drum to another family and drumkeeper. The process to give and receive the drum involves a lengthy ceremony, wherein the family taking on the responsibility is honored for their contribution to perpetuate the *E-Lon-Schka* dances. When the drum passes from one family to the next, the "paying of the drum" involves various families paying tribute in the form of promised meats, assistance with dance organization, money, blankets, and an assortment of other items used in the next year's *E-Lon-Schka*. The responsibility to take care of the drum is quite vast, and cost has been a prohibitive factor regarding one's decision to fulfill the role of

² The three Osage districts are Pawhuska, Greyhorse, and Hominy.

³ Historically, drumkeeper ages have ranged from very young children to elders in the community.

drumkeeper.

In order to facilitate preparation for the dances, the drumkeeper's first task is to appoint a head committeeman, also known as a Dance Chairman, and a dance committee comprised of additional committeemen and advisors (Callahan 1993:33, Burns, personal communication). Considering that each committee hosts the *E-Lon-Schka* in their respective arbors, preparations can be quite arduous. Preparations include appointing and organizing the cooks, appointing the two tail dancers, appointing the head singer, appointing the committee waterboys, as well as administering a host of other responsibilities involved with organizing the dances. To be considered or chosen to participate in the dance committee in any capacity, as a waterboy, an advisor, or even a seventh cook, is a great honor that comes with its share of responsibility (Callahan 1993:34).

The drum has been referred to as both "grandfather" and "grandmother" in Osage society, and although a direct association to a specific gender is not critically important, the recognition of the drum as a *person* is both ceremonially and socially important to the Osage⁴ (Burns, personal communication). At all times, a district's drum is to be treated as a person and with the utmost respect (Callahan 1993:52). The reification and personification of the drum extends into other aspects of Osage life as well. For instance, when an elder of a district passes away the drum is said to be in mourning until a ceremonial feast has occurred, which signifies that the drum can be used again (Callahan 1993:53, Burns, personal communication). In this way,

⁴ Although this is primarily conjecture, the fact that some Osage refer to the drum as strictly male and others as strictly female may be a projection of gender dualism, in which female and male attributes imply the drum is conceptually and ceremonially complete.

the drum is an entity with personality and property, and is the fulcrum around which the *E-Lon-Schka* is structured.

The drum rests in the center of the dance floor. A circle of male singers led by a head-singer surround the drum, who are themselves surrounded by a circle of female singers. The singers are responsible for setting the tone of the dance. Each song typically lasts thirty to forty seconds and begins with one singer, with the rest of the singers joining in cadence and rounds. The head-singer holds a primary drumstick that sets the drumming and tempo of the dance. The additional singers hold secondary drumsticks, and follow the rhythm set by the head singer.

The *E-Lon-Schka* dances are performed at arbors located within each Indian Village.⁵ Arbors are large structures with high ceilings and fans that provide shade, and are large enough to support 300 or more dancers at a time with twice as many spectators. Along the perimeter of the arbor are rows of benches for dancers and spectators. The rows



Figure 4: Outside Pawhuska Arbor on the South West Side

closest to the drum are reserved for dancers, while the benches behind the front rows are for spectators and specific families. As dancers from each district arrive, they are ushered to their respective district's benches by one of the two Whip-Men,

⁵ Pawhuska, Greyhorse, and Hominy Indian Villages are located within each of their respective towns, and are federally recognized Indian territories.

who are also in charge of keeping order during the dances and collecting the bits of ceremonial regalia that may fall off during the dance. Dancers are expected to have single dollars while they dance to pay the Whip-Men for each fallen article of clothing. Consequently, the Whip-Men are also in charge of removing individuals who disrupt or negatively interfere with the dances.⁶

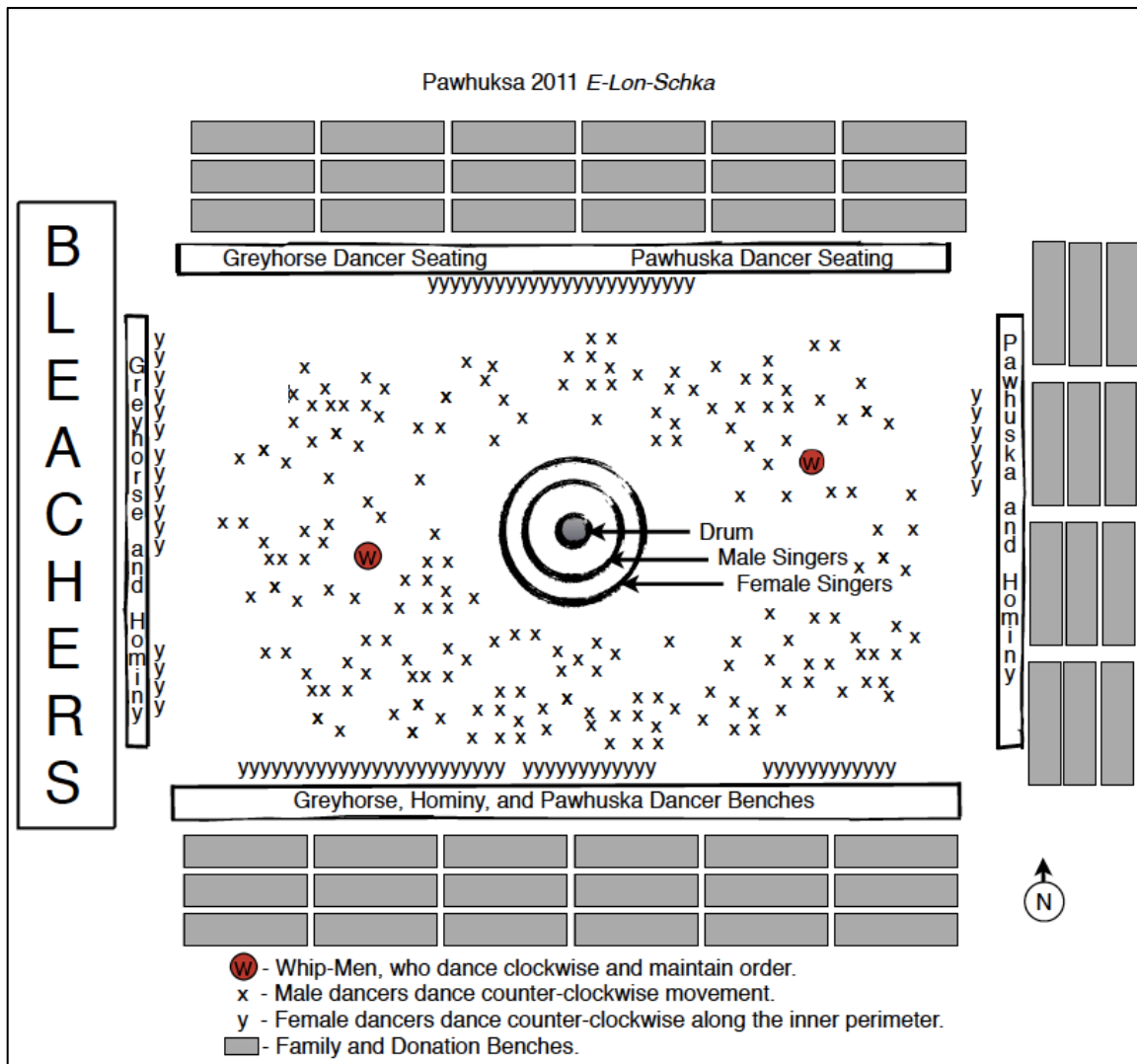


Figure 5: Pawhuska 2011 *E-Lon-Schka*

The standard dance is a two-step light-stomp that varies in speed and tempo.

The dancers move around the drum in a clockwise fashion, while the Whip-Men

⁶ This can include forcibly removing individuals for taking pictures, which are strictly forbidden when under the dance arbor.

walk counter-clockwise. As each song ends, the dancers retreat back to their respective benches. Typically, but not always, tail dancers finish each song after the rest of the dancers return to their seats. On occasion, the head-tail dancer for that district's *E-Lon-Schka* signals for the assembly to join the tail dancers in completing the song with a coup stick (Callahan 1993:70). The tail-dancers are said to be the district's premier dancers, and exhibit great enthusiasm and vigor in their dance. It goes without saying that it is a great honor to be nominated to serve as a tail-dancer⁷ (Eddy Red Eagle, personal communication).

Men and women both participate in the dance, but only men are allowed to dance close to the drum. Women dance just along the inner benches and rest between songs in the corners, or entrances, of the arbor. Every third or fourth song, Waterboys run pails of water to the dancers and singers. As temperatures often peak in the high ninety's and low hundreds, maintaining hydration is heavily stressed under the arbor. Also, on especially hot days, dancers sometimes receive drinks from family members or friends who sit behind and watch the event.

Dances occur in two sessions. The first dance starts around three o'clock and ends around five o'clock, and the second starts around eight o'clock and ends around ten or later. Between each of these sessions, each district prepares a large feast for the dancers, participants, and others who are invited to join.⁸

E-Lon-Schka dance clothes are very specific and can be very costly. If an

⁷ I was told that the tail-dancer is a symbolic representation of the last-group of warriors who arrive after a battle to kill the remaining enemies. The vigorous stomps that the tail-dancers perform are said to be kicks and signals back to the tribe to return to come finish off the enemies; however, this interpretation is not shared by all. Many Osages view the *E-Lon-Schka* as a peace dance rather than a war dance. Regardless, songs are typically ended by the tribe's collective tail dancers.

⁸ Much like in the Naming Ceremony, feasting is an important communal event.

Osage were to buy an entire set outright they could easily spend up to five thousand dollars (Burns, personal communication).⁹ Due to the enormous cost of the men's dance regalia, many aspects of the dance clothes are personally made or are provided as gifts to the dancer from relatives or friends. Women's dance clothes can be much less elaborate, and can require as little as a wrap to cover the shoulders. As a general comment, the creative work and craftsmanship expended in creating the dance clothes for both men and women is a sight to behold. It is often the case that once an individual receives their name, it takes almost a year to acquire all of the required materials for the dance clothes (Burns, personal communication). Once the individual acquires the dance clothes and arrive at the arbor, the Town Crier introduces them to the *E-Lon-Shcka* community by their Indian name, which is the only name they are to be called under the dance arbor.¹⁰

In each district, dances continue from Thursday to Sunday night, with each night building on the passion from the last. In 2011, the Pawhuska Saturday night *E-Lon-Schka* dance easily topped three hundred participants with an equal amount of spectators; however, Sunday dances deviate from Thursday, Friday, or Saturday's. On Sunday, the singers are provided committee and family songs to sing in honor of the hosting committee members, past relatives, and important tribal leaders. A presentation of gifts from specific families to different members of the community follows each song. The typical gift is a Pendleton blanket, and considering each family gives around four or five blankets out to different members of the

⁹ Appendix A contains a list of all the required dance clothes (courtesy Louis F. Burns).

¹⁰ It should be mentioned that all three Osage districts use the same Town Crier.

community, this can get quite expensive.¹¹ The Sunday dance is colloquially referred to as “honors day” or “giving day.” There are undoubtedly other names for the Sunday dances that convey the same meaning (Burns, personal communication).

As one of the few remaining tribal ceremonies, the *E-Lon-Schka* dance is the principle cultural institution of Osage culture (Bailey 1999:18). All roles described in this thesis, as well as the many roles that are not described, are fundamental to the execution and completion of the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony. The Osage ceremonial dance is the ideological touchstone used by the Osage to interact with and participate in their cultural past, present, and future. The *E-Lon-Schka* provides the cultural framework that is reinforced and solidified under the dance arbor. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of themes regarding the *E-Lon-Schka* dance.

The Dance that Teaches

Identity

The *E-Lon-Schka* ceremonial dance stresses the importance of the tribal community, and the individual’s relationship with that tribal community. In many ways, the manner in which the Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* build a cultural framework are very similar as specifically applied in their cultural functions. In both ceremonies, the individual is transitioned from a non-person to a person; from personal isolation to a place in the community.

The Osage make it very clear that you are not allowed to dance under the arbor if you do not have a name. For some of my project participants, the Naming

¹¹ While most Pendleton blankets cost approximately 100 USD, they can cost up to 200 USD or more.

and *E-Lon-Schka* ceremonies act as formal introductions to the Osage tribe. As Vann explained:

I was born in '58. I was about twelve when I got started, sometime around then. I feel like it's just a way of life. I mean, it's something that is just part of your life, you know? You see your folks being a part of it, and you know you're going to be a part of it. I got friends whose folks put them in at four or five years old. So to me, it's just a part of the tribe. Something that's part of life. Part of being Osage as far as I'm concerned.

For Vann, growing up in Pawhuska and watching the *E-Lon-Schka* every year until he was named, the *E-Lon-Schka* existed as a dominant Osage cultural institution. He knew that one day he would join his relatives and friends in the *E-Lon-Schka* dances. More importantly, joining the dances is a central part of his Osage identity. For Vann, not participating in the *E-Lon-Schka* was simply out of the question. Thus, the buildup to receiving his name and joining the dances created a cultural framework for Vann to look forward to. The dominant cultural ideology pointed toward the *E-Lon-Schka* as the way to be Osage.

The centrality of "Osageness" to the *E-Lon-Schka* extends past the individual participant as well. As Vann described, receiving his name and participating in the dances was also important to his family:

Nathan: Once you got the name, and you were able to participate, how did that feel?
Vann: I felt complete. This is what I wanted. This is what we wanted to do. And I think it even made my dad feel complete. This is what he wanted too.

The *E-Lon-Schka*'s central message of community and solidarity reinforces the bonds that hold the Osage community together. Vann's introduction into the *E-Lon-Schka* provided a sense of completeness, not only to himself, but to his father as well. In this instance, the meaning and power of the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony

transcends a generational gap and strengthens that familial bond. Considering the strong focus on family and community, it is likely that other Osage families share similar sentiments about their relatives as felt by Vann and his father.

When discussing the E-Lon-Schka dances with Eddy, he expressed that the ceremony can be an individually enlightening experience. For Eddy, the *E-Lon-Schka* dances provide a clarity of mind and self that creates peace and order in an otherwise unstructured world.

Eddy: Sometime during that ceremony, for everyone that goes in with a clearness of mind and heart, the spiritual man and the natural man come together.

Nathan: They fuse?

Eddy: They fuse. And when that happens it could be on a Thursday afternoon, on a Sunday afternoon, it could be a Saturday afternoon or Friday evening, but sometime, when all that connects, that happens for you. You feel that. You feel that continuity of self. And you know who you are. You find out who you are.

Eddy further explains this as a way of arriving at peace with yourself as an Osage, as well as recognition of your responsibility to the community and to the tribe. The *E-Lon-Schka's* emphasis on social organization reinforces his tribal identity, and the recognition that as an Osage he is a part of something bigger than himself. In discussing Mr. Burns' participation in the *E-Lon-Schka*, he put it quite simply.

Mr. Burns: I hadn't missed an E-Lon-Schka since I started going, nearly thirty years. Even in my old age I used to be up there, dancing with my cane. I wouldn't have it any other way. It's part of who I am.

Just as the *E-Lon-Schka* reinforces and emphasizes the community, Mr. Burns contextualizes the *E-Lon-Schka* at the personal level. As much as Mr. Burns is part of the *E-Lon-Schka*, the *E-Lon-Schka* is a part of him. The same could be said for Eddy and Vann. To separate out one's personal identity and the cultural practice is not possible. Identity, community, tribe, and culture are intertwined and personified in

the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony.

Cultural Knowledge and Capital

As a cultural institution, the *E-Lon-Schka* acts as a primary method for the Osage to gain access to cultural knowledge and capital. Many Osage children get their start in the *E-Lon-Schka* at or around age nine or ten. Over the course of their *E-Lon-Schka* careers, participating Osage may hold numerous jobs and positions (Burns, personal communication). For instance:

Vann: Yeah, I've had different positions in the dance. I was a waterboy, I was a committeeman, I was a taidancer at one time, I was a whipman at one time, I was a drumkeeper at one time, and I even got to sing one time.

Nathan: So you've been –

Vann: I've been around the dance a little bit in my thirty years, but I still consider myself fairly young, you know.

Vann's case is not unique. Many Osage that participate in the dances have held numerous positions over the course of their lives. For instance, the roles that Vann has held each carry their share and weight of responsibility to the community. Each role within the dance is an integral part of the functioning and greater efficacy of the ceremony. Additionally, each role has its own relative level of social status. Although each role in the dances are just as integral as the next, a committeeman or an advisor commands more respect than other roles. As an individual transitions from position to position, they acquire symbolic and social capital in a cultural framework that is reinforced through responsibility and respect toward the group. The *E-Lon-Schka* exposes individuals to the underlying mechanics that tie the community together. Each position within the *E-Lon-Schka* structure can be thought of as a brick on the cultural wall, constantly shifting and changing through social practice.

In Osage County, it is sometimes said that the *E-Lon-Schka* teaches you how to be Osage (Bailey 1999:5, Burns, personal communication). According to Vann:

It's a teaching experience. That's why I say you could raise your family in there. They're being taught something. There's more going on than just dancing. It teaches you and your children respect, and to be good to one another, and to be good to your fellow people.

The cultural knowledge learned in the *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony extends to all facets of an Osage's life, teaching respect for yourself, your family, and your fellow people (Bighorse, personal communication). The ceremony reaffirms an Osage's kinship affiliations that extend from the individual to the entire tribe. Thus, the *E-Lon-Schka* positions the participating Osage to act as the support structure for a successful *E-Lon-Schka* event. Without the individual, the *E-Lon-Schka* would cease to function; likewise, without the *E-Lon-Schka*, the losses to Osage social, cultural, and ceremonial life would be monumental.

Although not every Osage son has the opportunity to serve as drumkeeper, every Osage son may be presented and inducted to the *E-Lon-Schka* (Callahan 1993:136). In some ways, the introduction at the dances represents the end of one journey and the beginning of another. The individual has completed his ceremonial dress and already received his Osage name, and now is formally recognized by his elders and peers as part of Osage ceremonial life. The individual shares the responsibility of participation and continuation of the dance. Thus, the pillars of Osage culture are fortified with each introduction to the *E-Lon-Schka*. The dances and the individual are in constant negotiation as they work toward the re-manufacture and continuity of Osage culture.

Continuity and Community

The importance of children has been a historic attribute of the Osage, especially the eldest sons (Callahan 1993:136). Just as in the Naming Ceremony, in the *E-Lon-Schka* the eldest sons and daughters are held in high regard. Vann referred to their role and position in the family unit as analogous to the European idea of royalty, discussing the importance of the dance in terms of legacy and continuity:

Vann: For the old (historic and ethnographic period) Osage, the children were the biggest things in their lives, especially the oldest children. The oldest daughters and oldest sons were real royalty within a family unit. So when we got that dance, that's who that dance was modeled for. That's who that dance was focused on, the oldest son.

The eldest son of a family was an important position, and was charged with representing the family and clan, and with setting an example for future generations. The first son and daughter were expected to be respectful and treated respectfully, and fulfill the roles and responsibilities of leaders in the society (Eddy Red Eagle, personal communication). The dance's English translation, playground-of-the-eldest son, is a recognition that this individual has the potential to be a leader in the tribe, one who will carry the responsibility with dedication in perpetuation of Osage culture. The emphasis on continuity and participation is a primary facet of the *E-Lon-Schka* and is vital to the continuity of the ceremony.

Vann: So that's what scares me [losing the E-Lon-Schka], and that's why I'm glad we're doing language preservation and cultural preservation. For our children, and their grandchildren, and their grandchildren, because we want them to carry this on as best they can.

As Vann describes, the perpetuation of the *E-Lon-Schka* is a vehicle through which other aspects of the culture are revitalized. The process is cyclical; the dances focus on the next generation so that the next generation can continue the dances.

Although there have been minor changes over the years, the basic structure of the ceremony has been virtually kept the same.¹² The *E-Lon-Schka* is one of the last surviving Osage cultural treasures. As stated before, during the period in which the dances were introduced, cultural and ideological frameworks were disrupted in the wake of monumental environmental and political change. The *E-Lon-Schka* arrived just in time as an avenue for the celebration and continuation of the Osage cultural heritage. The cultural lessons taught under the arbor today are the same lessons taught by previous generations, and are the same lessons that brought the tribe through a physically and culturally traumatic period in their history.

Vann: There's one thing I hope you heard in that dance, and that you heard from these other people you've talked to, is what we say about that dance. We don't want to add anything, and we don't want to take anything away from that dance. We want to try to keep it the way that it is, the best we can.

Presumably, one reason the Osage are concerned with preserving the dance is because the dance provided them an avenue for revitalization and celebration. If the dance could sustain the Osage for one generation, perhaps it could do the same for the next.

Many Osage stress the importance of community in all aspects of the *E-Lon-Schka*; they see dances as a source of reunion that allows them to reconnect with their heritage and family.

Vann: The community comes alive. If you drive out there right now all you'll see is an arbor. You'll see some empty benches at the other camps too [Hominy and Greyhorse Indian Villages]. But when the people come and they start setting up their camps and start the dance, then they really become alive. It's kind of a homecoming to a lot of folks. I've seen it happen. I've seen a lot of people that say, "We're going go home to the dance; we're going meet our family there."

¹² Some of the small changes include the numbers of individuals in each position, positions added or taken away, and cameras ruled forbidden in the 1950s.

During the dances, and especially during the meals, communities are rejoined in cultural celebration. Someone returning to the dances after being introduced to the dance society is said to be returning to their family, and in another sense, returning to the tribe.

Individuals I spoke with regarding their first experience in the *E-Lon-Schka* recall the feeling of being part of the Osage ceremonial atmosphere, a formal member of society, and the acknowledgement that they are now a part of something bigger than themselves. Many Osage began dancing in the *E-Lon-Schka* at a very young age, starting as water boys and other roles, and in some cases serving as committeemen. The dances are the focal point of the cultural community, and thus command a major presence for Osage culture and heritage. The community is sustained by the dances, and thus, the dances maintain and unify the community.

Spirituality

Although it is not necessarily a religious ceremony, the *E-Lon-Schka* has often been described as a deeply spiritual event (Burns, personal communication).

Nathan: So probably about a month ago, it's interesting, someone told me exactly what you had told me earlier. He said that the E-Lon-Schka won't get you into heaven, but the Native American Church will.

Eddy: Right. There's a difference. The E-Lon-Schka shows us all the attributes of Wa-Hoin. How you treat each other, how you deal with problems, how you work with your family, how you support each other, how to aid one another. The E-Lon-Schka shows you that.

As Eddy describes, there is a difference between the spiritual connection with a religious system and the spiritual connection to the *E-Lon-Schka*. When the Osage were first wrestling with the realities of a new religious system in the Native

American church, and a new social ceremony in the dances, they were often told that the *E-Lon-Schka* will not get you into heaven, but the church will. However, the dances teach you something different. It teaches you how be spiritually connected to your family, your community, and to your tribe (Eddy Red Eagle, personal communication).

I asked Mr. Burns to clarify one night after pondering the question laboriously, trying to figure out if the dances were religious or social in nature. As usual, he answered concisely:

*Nathan: Would you say the E-Lon-Schka is spiritual or social in nature?
Mr. Burns: Well... Why can't it be both?*

In the context of the *E-Lon-Schka* dances, the social nature of the ceremony is of paramount concern, and can be a spiritual activity in its own right. The basic underlying belief is that the tribe should live in harmony with nature (Burns, personal communication). For the Osage, the *E-Lon-Schka* occurs in June each year in celebration of the community and the natural world (Callahan 1993). The Osage celebrate two kinds of growth through the dances, in the natural world in the form of corn and grasses, and in the ceremonial realm in the form of sons and daughters who participate in the dances (Callahan 1993:135).

The *E-Lon-Schka* provides structure in an otherwise unstructured world. At the turn of the nineteenth century, through tumultuous periods of relocation, oppression, and United States interaction, Osage ceremonial life was a fragmented shade of its former vibrancy. As stated before, the religious order was challenged by the political and economic policies of the United States, and in many ways, the entirety of Osage culture was on the brink of devastation. The Native American

Church and *E-Lon-Schka* emerged as cultural institutions that provided the Osage with a path to re-claim and re-create a sense of order in a time of chaos.

Vann: I think there's a lot of spirituality to it. Then again, I think there's a lot of structure to it too. This is what keeps our people together, and I don't know any other way to say that.

For Vann and many other Osage, the dances provide a method to unify and solidify the community as a single tribe. The continuity of the tribe's cultural heritage depends on the formal lessons and rules that guide the arbor. The dances are a time to reconnect spiritually and socially to the larger tribal structure, and thus, is the principle ceremony of the Osage.

Cultural Performance

In summation, as a celebration of cultural heritage, the *E-Lon-Schka* is a ceremonial dance that is uniquely Osage. Experiencing the dances revealed a new realm of society and culture, one that is fundamentally rooted on kinship, ceremony, and community. The *E-Lon-Schka* has been instrumental to the survival and continuity of the Osage tribe. As it was described to me, the dance teaches responsibility, respect, and values important to the Osage community, such as cultural history, the importance of kinship, social relations, and ideology. In Pawhuska, Hominy, and Greyhorse, the dances are an annual celebration of Osage culture. The ideological themes of acceptance and identity that is provided in the naming ceremony are reproduced in *E-Lon-Schka* ceremony.

The *E-Lon-Schka* is more than a dance. It is the symbol of the Osage people personified in ceremonial and cultural performance. The Osage put on these clothes and dance for themselves, for their ancestors, for their community, and for the next

generation. They dance to fortify and reinforce the social structure and to teach the importance of the community and tribe. The dance provides cultural reference points for individuals to construct aspects of their ceremonial life and cultural heritage. Ultimately, the Osage do this dance because the dance is what makes them Osage.

After just over a century, although small changes have occurred in the dance structure, the basic structure has remained relatively unchanged. As a result, the summer dances remain as the premier social ceremony in the tribe. Over time, individuals have negotiated with the dance as an ideological complex, and have re-imagined and reproduced aspects of their cultural and individual past to fit contemporary usage. The *E-Lon-Schka* emerges as a ceremony that the Osage put on for themselves to perpetuate their cultural heritage for generations to come.

CHAPTER V

SYNTHESYSING MEANING

The I'n-Lon-Schka supports the people in times of joy and tragedy and goes on in spite of them. It passes on traditions and gives them a feeling of belonging and properness from generation to generation. There is a belief [in] that dance because the I'n-Lon-Schka will go on, and the spirits and memories of those who went before are still there and prepare the people for another world.

Archie Mason, Jr. (Callahan 1993:136)

We do not come here dressed like this just for appearance. We have come here in our traditional dress to dance in the way of our people, our ancestors – parents and grandparents – since 1884.

Ed Red Eagle 1976 (Callahan 1993:136)

So those three things, the Jesuits, the E-lon-schka, and the Native American church did one thing. They brought hope. That's all they brought. And then the consciousness and the dynamics of the Osage carried it from there. That's all they needed was hope.

Eddy Red Eagle Jr., June 15 2011

The specific aspects of Osage culture described in this thesis have focused on the importance of dance, ceremony, and community. As I have discussed, the naming ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* have remained an integral part of the Osage community since the late nineteenth century. Since that time, the tribal teachings and ceremonial activities have been passed down from generation to generation in the perpetuation and re-invention of their tribal culture.

The introduction of the dances in 1884 provided the Osage with a social and cultural touchstone, a place for individual Osage to negotiate with larger social structures. The introduction of the Native American church provided many Osage

an avenue of continuity and celebration of their cultural heritage and ceremonies that allowed them to survive a tumultuous period in their history. Once these institutions came to the cultural theater, the consciousness and dynamics of the Osage carried it from there (Red Eagle, personal communication).

This thesis has three main points. First, that the maintenance and reproduction of Osage social and cultural institutions such as the Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* has culminated in a vibrant cultural entity. Secondly, that ideological elements from historic and ethnographic records have been transformed and reincorporated in contemporary Osage society in the form of ceremonial expressions. Finally, that these social ceremonies are fundamental to cultural identity formation processes, and provide individual agents the power of cultural knowledge and cultural capital. These points are briefly reviewed in order.

As cultural institutions and social ceremonies, the Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* dances are the entrances to Osage ceremonial life. The expression of community, solidarity, and unity is an outstanding achievement of cultural performance and social cohesion. Acceptance and entrance to the ceremonial life occurs at two levels. First, when an Osage receives their name, they are brought into a clan and a set of tribal affiliations that are larger than an individual. The second level of tribal introduction occurs with an individual's introduction to their district's *E-Lon-Schka* dance society. This initiation completes the journey into the social ceremonial life, and begins those individuals on a new path, charged with the responsibility to continue the ceremony and heritage for future generations. The vibrancy and energy that flows through the *E-Lon-Schka* not only brings the

community together in ecstatic cultural performance, but also has been a fundamental aspect of their cultural survivability. Perhaps most importantly, these social ceremonies provide the tribe an avenue for cultural preservation and revitalization.

As has been shown, ideological elements from early ethnographic accounts are reproduced and reconstructed in the Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* dance. As Francis La Flesche (1928) noted, Osage genesis stories focus on the themes of acceptance, initiation, and community solidarity. The Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* reproduce similar themes through intense and organized ceremonial expression. Although the Osage purchased the drum and dances from the Ponca and Kaw tribes, they have re-manufactured and re-invented a ceremonial dance phenomenon that is culturally meaningful and ceremonially exquisite. Some Osage view the *E-Lon-Schka* as a ceremony that the tribe possessed in the distant past, and when they received the drum and dances from the Ponca and Kaw, the Osage had simply rediscovered the ceremonies. Through continued ceremonial practice, the Osage have re-incorporated elements of their traditional religion into the dances, specifically the themes of acceptance and community. Although the *E-Lon-Schka* might have had another meaning at one time, the Osage have made the dances their own, and through its continued practice and reinvigoration, have manifested a cultural heritage that is uniquely Osage.

Lastly, the research embodied in this thesis argues that these ceremonies are fundamentally vital to the cultural identity formation. The Naming and *E-Lon-Schka* ceremonies provide individuals with a cultural education based on history, tribal

lore, and the importance of the community. Having an Osage name and joining the *E-Lon-Schka* completes the incorporation of the individual to Osage society.

Furthermore, by traversing multiple positions through the dance society, one earns an amount of social respect, dignity, and cultural capital. The recognition of responsibility to perform in the *E-Lon-Schka* is coupled with the responsibility to continue the ceremony for future generations.

Future Research and Conclusions

This research revealed a few areas rich for future investigation. First, Louis F. Burns' Osage Mission: Baptisms, Marriages, and Internments 1820-1886 (1992) can provide a healthy data set for statistical analysis on trends of social practices, such as transitions to new religious or social practices through generations. The results may add historical context to the period surrounding the introduction of the Native American church, and uncover the nuances regarding the level of religious blending through a societal lens.

Additionally, Daniel C. Swan of Oklahoma University at Norman recently cataloged the recognizable Native American family church altars in Osage County (Swan 2010). A comparison and contrast between other iterations of the Native American Church family altars in other cultures, specifically fireplace consecration, may add yet more historical context to the introduction of the Native American church. Considering that Francis La Flesche and James O. Dorsey documented fireplace consecration rituals in Osage ceremonialism before the introduction of the peyote based faith, there is a possibility of social and ceremonial overlap that better

explains the ideological shift toward Christianity and the Native American church.

Lastly, further research may be conducted through the use of ethnographic literature on Osage stories, beliefs, and social practices. Specifically, comparing the *E-Lon-Schka* dance clothes and regalia with imagery from Mississippian cultures and may uncover a deeper depth of time as to the longevity of these ritualized practices. The connection made in this thesis between the Naming Ceremony as described by La Flesche, and the themes of acceptance and community as represented in the contemporary Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* dance, is a testament to the type of investigation wherein the present is connected to the past. Through continued comparison of ethnographic material and use of similar techniques, archaeologists and iconographers may uncover ritualized themes and connections with the Mississippian era.

It is important to note that I, a non-Native American, formulated these arguments in collaboration with many Osage individuals and Osage scholars. Although I received assistance from members in the community, I have no personal history of experience with these dances, and certainly, I cannot generalize or speak for all the Osage. However, these interpretations were formulated with the help of various individuals whose continuous contribution and collaboration mitigated the influence of my own biases, and revealed elements of Native American ideology of which I was completely unaware. My hope is that, through the constant collaboration with project contributors, the results of this thesis strengthen and help to preserve present the rich and vibrant cultural heritage of the Osage Nation.

The information presented in this thesis was provided at the discretion of

individuals who shared life histories and information regarding their relationships to Osage social ceremonies. These results are, in no way, a final statement on Osage ceremonial life; there are undoubtedly individuals that fulfill the role of namer and participate in the summer dances who may regard my interpretations as incorrect or nonfactual. I have not intended to generalize for all members of the Osage Nation that participate in these ceremonies, and I welcome criticisms and corrections of any individual who reads this thesis and finds any errors. Additionally, I wish to thank these individuals beforehand for their suggestions and contributions.

As a final comment, the beauty of the Naming Ceremony and *E-Lon-Schka* combines the splendor and brilliance of regalia and ancestral dance with the community's dedication to persevere. These ceremonies help to create the webs of meaning and frameworks of thought that individuals interact and negotiate with in the continual re-invention of social practice. Undoubtedly, the actions of the dancers reverberate through the generations, as the Osage are witnessing the movements of their ancestors paired with the movements of generations to come. Ultimately, this thesis has shown that without these social ceremonies, the Osage both individually and collectively would lack those cultural institutions that have allowed them to recreate themselves.

APPENDIX A. *E-Lon-Schka* dance clothes

1. Roach feather—Eagle
2. Roach
3. Roach spreader
4. Drops or brows (Hawk feathers or owl feathers preferred but any two feathers will be all right. These are often fastened to a small beaded medallion. Since this is a peace ceremony do not use crow feathers.)
5. Tennis sweat band for forehead or use a cotton handkerchief
6. Beaded, four row choker with shell disk in center
7. Neck scarf with two matching fascinators.
8. Scarf slide (This may be plain or with a design; designs are usually the morning star or an eagle.)
9. Shirt (It is a good idea to have at least two cotton shirts and a dress shirt.)
10. One pair of arm bands (These are commonly made of German silver but any silver colored metal is acceptable).
11. At least one four row bandolier (The four rows represent the four stages of life, each bandolier represents one of the two divisions. If only one is worn it should be worn from the left shoulder for the sky division or the right shoulder if you are from the earth division. These are symbols of tribal unity so they are worn crossed over each other.)
12. One backed otter skin (These are usually worn with a beaded strip at the top and three medallions with war honors worn from the middle medallion. War honors are eagle feathers.)
13. One latigo belt (These are usually three to four inches wide harness leather with beaded design stitched to them. An alternative is to use silver conches on the belt.)
14. Shorts, bicycle pants, or breech clout (If a breech clout is not used one must wear a set of back and front aprons.)
15. Tail or drag
16. Two plaited tie belts (It is common practice to use one tie belt for the apron and a conventional leather belt to tie the pants on.)
17. One pair of Osage pants, “leggings”
18. One pair of finger woven sashes
19. One pair of finger woven garters
20. Two strings of bells
21. One pair of moccasins
22. One fan (Fans vary greatly. Traditionally, the eagle wing tip fan is used although the “paint brush” tail feather fan is very popular. While feathers of raptor birds are traditional, non-raptor feathers are sometimes used).
23. One blanket (These are traditional handmade Osage blankets or Pendleton “Indian blankets.”)
24. One carry (When dancing one usually carries their fan in one hand and something in the other hand. The carry may be a mirror or in recent years a coup stick is often carried.)
25. Miscellaneous (One should keep several items with their dance clothes. A packet of large safety pins is almost a must. Commercial sinew should also be in one’s kit. Leather thongs and shoelaces should also be in the kit. Carry extra cotton handkerchiefs. Beaded fan handles should be wrapped in a handkerchief to preserve the thread; sweat rots the threads. Also dance with several one dollar bills; you are not allowed to pick anything up from the dance ground when beads break, etc. and you must pay a fine to have one of the whips pick it up for you)

As a final note: You will need some sweet smelling dried herbs to tie in a small ball where your fascinators fasten to the bandoliers.

*Courtesy Louis F. Burns

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