

The Wah-Zha-Zhi: An Introduction for Museum Professionals

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of History and Geography

University of Central Oklahoma

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

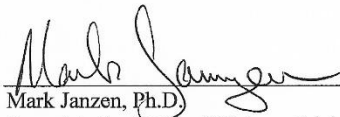
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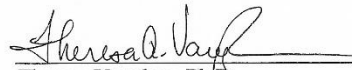
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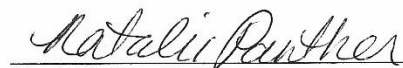
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Chapter 1

OSAGE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Museums have existed for centuries, and policies for the management and display of objects and artifacts have changed over time. The rationale behind these changes can vary drastically depending upon the driving force behind them; in some cases, political or religious powers have significant sway over how objects are to be publically displayed. In others, pressure from social or cultural change can dramatically redefine how objects are interpreted, which in turn forces a change in museum practice. In the United States, one of the most important aspects that museum professionals must consider during the last few decades is how to manage objects that once belonged to the native population of North America, and are now held in collections both private and public. The United States government has, to some degree, defined how such objects are to be managed through the implementation of NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which mandates that institutions receiving Federal funding are required to maintain a list of Native American artifacts, and provide that list upon request to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated tribes. These institutions are then required to return these objects to those individuals if it can reasonably be proven that they are in fact lineal descendants or cultural affiliates.

As with anything involving legal discourse, the definition of cultural affiliation is often determined by courts and legal professionals rather than the individuals directly involved with these cases, and while NAGPRA is occasionally perceived as not doing enough to return artifacts to their respective owners, it is almost universally seen as a step in the right direction by Native American tribes and their representatives. The efficacy of NAGPRA is beyond the scope of this

analysis, as though the legislation makes some decision as to how Native objects are to be managed, it does not actually determine how museums function. Put plainly, how an institution adheres to NAGPRA is typically defined by that institution's policies regarding collection management – NAGPRA does not determine collection management policies. It is those policies that are the true subjects of this study, as the way institutions develop collections policies is the study's primary concern. How and why an institution's governing body determines its policy regarding Native American objects and artifacts are the questions this study intends to answer. Secondly, this study will describe how modern museum practice regarding Native artifacts is problematic, and suggest ways in which it could be improved. Finally, through the guidance of the Osage Nation, this study will put together an abbreviated curatorial guide for Osage objects and artifacts which will adhere to and demonstrate how a collection might be managed if it were to be decided by the Tribe itself.

But before we proceed to an analysis of modern museum practice, we must first look back and examine how other scholars have examined museum policies, as well as the implementation of NAGPRA in those facilities in order to determine how the field has changed over time, and why further adjustments must be made. Native American scholarship saw a surge of popularity in the mid to late twentieth century and has remained a popular topic in academia up to and including the first quarter of the twenty-first century. While earlier texts included problematic notions of savagery, barbarism and lack of intelligence when dealing with the populations they were attempting to study, more recent approaches to the study of Native Americans focus instead on their individual paths to civilization, the technological advances they made and the cultural shifts that took place as they adapted to the unique environment of North America. Studies in recent years generally emphasize that a civilization's technological level is

not indicative of intelligence, barbarism or lack thereof. One aspect of modern scholarship that has still largely failed to reach a point of adequacy, and indeed is the inspiration for this study, is the concept of Native Americans as a singular, homogenous group rather than an extremely diverse set of cultures, beliefs and personalities. Many studies involving museums and NAGPRA, including the most recent variety, continue this trend of homogeneity which has had the consequence of furthering that belief, not just in the minds of scholars but in the public view, as the uniform treatment of Native American artifacts results in them often being presented as a single group of objects in a museum collection. It is relatively rare for an exhibit of Native American artifacts to be defined and separated by their tribal origins rather than being grouped under the single category of “Native American.”¹

The story of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act does not begin in November of 1990, when it was enacted into law, but rather in the decades that led up to it. Instead, it is necessary to examine its origins, which can be found in the American Indian Movement beginning in the late 1960s. Though repatriation was not the basis on which the advocacy group was founded, it brought the issues being faced by Native populations to the forefront and is one of the first opportunities that those populations had to receive significant media attention. This resulted in a resurgence of Native American awareness in both social and political circles, which was and remains the principal goal of the movement. This growing public awareness formed the foundation of the repatriation movements that would follow, as various Native populations rose up to question what was being done with the grave goods of their ancestors, and to reclaim those remains. Progress on that front was relatively slow; although protests and demands for the return of sacred objects can be found as early as the 1890s, it is not

until almost a century later that the United States government legislated the requirement for those same objects to be given back to their respective tribes.²

The government's response was, by the end of 1990, referred to as NAGPRA. Within this Act, the United States government stipulated that public institutions (particularly museums that receive any sort of federal funding), as well as all federal agencies would be required to create an inventory of their collection in order to identify any potential Native American artifacts. These bodies were then required to consult with lineal descendants and/or related tribal organizations in order to identify the origins of the artifacts – it would then be necessary for public institutions to acquire the informed consent of these Native organizations in order to retain possession of the artifacts. These requirements are very specific, and only include lineal descendants and federally recognized tribes. If an object did not fall under those two specifications, NAGPRA does not apply to them. The law also includes provisions for Native descendants to contact any public institution they believe might be in possession of such artifacts, in order to request an inventory and, if necessary, repatriation.³ Since NAGPRA's enactment, scholars have continuously argued its purpose, efficacy and even its necessity. Initially, scholars were primarily concerned by the potential ramifications the Act could have in store for museums, anthropologists and archaeologists; but as the field continued to develop, and scholars of Native heritage began to emerge in the field of academia, the conversation began to progressively shift toward social and cultural analysis after the turn of the millennium. As of the mid to late 2010s, the question of interest in the relevant fields of academia is whether or not NAGPRA has had any impact on the struggles Native populations continue to face today.

Andrew Gulliford and Clement W. Meighan, professors at Fort Lewis College and UCLA respectively, were a pair of scholars who, during the early 1990s, engaged in a series of heated

debates concerning NAGPRA and the dangers it could pose to both anthropologists and historians. While these arguments often took place in correspondence and conference halls, a number of their more influential discussions took place in *The Public Historian*, where the two scholars fiercely defended their respective points of view. The first of these publications was penned by Gulliford, who portrayed NAGPRA as an inevitable consequence of the harsh treatment Native Americans faced at the hands of colonists since their arrival centuries prior.⁴ Chiefly an environmental historian, Gulliford makes use of his professional interest in order to paint an evocative picture of the Native world, and particularly the damage that colonization has caused the Native community as a whole. He reinforces the idea of repatriation as a natural evolution of policy rather than some sort of horrendous nightmare scenario by making a unique suggestion for the time: even though repatriation might occasionally result in objects being removed from institutions, it will aid museums by allowing Native peoples to contribute to the process of public education. Gulliford continues this thought by chiding his unnamed detractors, stating that the apparently commonly-held belief that academics knew better how Native artifacts were made and used than the populations those objects originated from was arrogance in the highest degree.⁵

His arguments are then cemented by his research into policies of various museums, during the late 1890s in particular, which indicate that museum professionals had already begun to create ways for Native populations to get involved with their objects years before it was codified in law. Gulliford claims this is evidence of how museums recognized the utility provided by Native contributions to their education programs long before it was legally required for them to do so. This view is representative of one of the major bodies of scholarship that emerged during this period concerning the evaluation of NAGPRA, and indeed formed the

foundation upon which the field would continue to develop over the following decade.

Gulliford's novel approach, and his specific focus on Native American religious customs became a major point of interest for later scholars, and his influence on the field will be made evident as we turn toward the end of the second millennium. First, however, it is important to recognize that the field of history does not exist in a vacuum, and though Gulliford proves to be a major figure, he faced significant opposition from the likes of Clement W. Meighan.

Meighan, a specialist in anthropology who worked at UCLA for much of the latter half of the twentieth century, was principally interested in maintaining the status quo. While this may initially appear to be a rather mundane position to hold, his objections to repatriation resonated with a wide variety of museum professionals, as well as many in his own field of anthropology. Fear is a powerful motivating force, and although selfish in nature they were not, as presented by Meighan, completely unfounded. The most notable point of contrast between Meighan and Gulliford can be found in the origin of their arguments. While Gulliford has proven to be attentive to social and cultural matters, Meighan's focus is almost entirely upon pressing for continued scientific advancement. His secondary line of reasoning, though less palatable, was not unique in the scholarship of the 1990s, or indeed of the decades prior. In response to Gulliford's claim of academic arrogance, Meighan bluntly states that it is not arrogance since modern scholars do, in fact, know better and can make better use of those artifacts.⁶ Unsurprisingly, he also rails against the growing trend of political correctness. His rhetoric in general is likely familiar to most modern scholars, which itself is evidence that his point of view continues to receive support today.

Though provocative, Meighan failed to gather the support necessary to actually reverse the trends that he was seeing, and despite the relative success of his rhetoric, Gulliford's more

cultural approach proved to be the dominant force in academia. To answer the question of why, one must look at the general academic trends during the 90s and early 2000s. Social and cultural history may have started in the 1960s, but scholars trained in those fields rapidly began to take up teaching positions at universities, replacing influential figures such as Clement W. Meighan, who himself had retired by the time of his published argument with Gulliford.⁷ This resulted in expanded opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students interested in those methodologies, and demonstrates the relative importance of social and cultural history at the turn of the millennium. This, in turn, would eventually lead to a reexamination of the popular American narrative, particularly as it explains the interactions between Native Americans and the colonizers. During the mid to late 1990s, however, the methodology employed by Gulliford continued to be explored by scholars such as Keith H. Basso, while archaeologists more resistant to change found a voice in Douglas Cole.

Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache, written in 1996 by Keith H. Basso, comes to the same conclusions as Gulliford's earlier article, but follows a completely different line of inquiry. Native American culture and religion play a key role in Basso's study, but these topics play second fiddle to his primary line of reasoning which focuses on geography and linguistic development. A specialist in the fields of cultural and linguistic anthropology, Basso spent almost three decades among the Western Apaches in Cibecue, Arizona, which provided him with unique insight into the issues surrounding repatriation. *Wisdom Sits in Places* begins by describing how the naming system developed by Western Apaches shaped their awareness of the landscape surrounding them – as well as how much significance the culture places on the environment.⁸ Basso claims that these named areas or regions had both personal and transient properties; they were given attributes, defined as being

definitively good or definitively evil. These attributes naturally extended to the objects found there, created from resources found in these regions and so on.⁹ This is how he reaches his principal conclusion; that museum artifacts hold enormous cultural and religious significance to the cultures they were taken from. The Western Apaches are only one example of this trend, but it is likely that other Native populations share similar beliefs regarding the landscape.

Basso's study is remarkable not just for the emphasis it places on geography and language, but rather because it shirks a trend that is common in Native American history, as written by academics such as Meighan. Western Apache beliefs are not referred to in the past tense, or regarded as superstitious nonsense as was prevalent in the years leading up to and immediately following the enactment of NAGPRA.¹⁰ Indeed, Basso's study avoids the condescension of Native peoples in general, which is something the field as a whole has yet to completely achieve. The most problematic aspect of his study is not in the content, but rather what is absent from it; through his attempts to be respectful of Native culture, Basso fails to adequately discuss how Native Americans can actually contribute to fixing the problem. He rightly assigns blame to the colonists who stole artifacts from Native lands, but does not explore the notion of Native agency, or lack thereof. While this is, unfortunately, a gap in discourse that would continue for the better part of a decade, the issue of colonial thievery is explored in depth by Douglas Cole in *Captured Heritage*.

Native American artifacts proved to be an exotic attraction, both for colonists arriving in America and the Europeans left at home. They proved to be spectacularly profitable trade goods, and in order to facilitate the enormous demand that these objects generated overseas, the practice of pothunting began to rapidly spread, particularly along the Northwest Coast of the United States, and the Southwest of Canada. Cole's study, originally written in 1985 and revised in

1995, focuses on the interactions that these Native populations had with amateur archaeologists and the collectors who sponsored them. An oddity in his scholarship that hails back to the work of Meighan is that, although he condemns the thievery of Native artifacts, he explicitly avoids supporting repatriation in his updated preface.¹¹ Indeed, he tends to skirt around the issue of repatriation throughout his text as a whole, but his stance on the issue of repatriation is stated thusly, “The great age of ethnological collecting is long over, but the objects collected continue to have lives of variable value, meaning, possession, and even ownership.”¹²

The lack of an explicit stance is still having a stance on the issue, and through his language use throughout *Captured Heritage* he appears to generally disapprove of repatriation. Despite this, Cole demonstrates a general respect for Native peoples throughout the work, and this come most clearly in his conclusion. Though he admits that significant portions of museum collections may be plunder, he claims it is haughty and patronizing to suggest that Native peoples were naïve and unaware of what was going on. Instead, his final point is to indicate that Northwest Coast Indians were experienced traders, who had a deep understanding of economics and with some frequency manipulated the amateur archaeologists that hunted after their artifacts.¹³ This assertion is frankly quite unique among scholars of non-Native ancestry, as even historians with the best intentions have a habit of treating Native populations as diminutive and incompetent, if only by neglecting to discuss the manner in which they resisted colonial interference.

Beyond this, Cole demonstrates a general distaste for postmodernist and Marxist literature in general, bemoaning the turn that the field of history had taken in the decade since he originally wrote *Captured Heritage*.¹⁴ This, on first glance, appears contrary to the trends of the history field during the 1990s until one realizes that Cole considers postmodernist and cultural

history as being the same subject. This is a curious connection for him to make, as while postmodernist methodology can, indeed, be applied to cultural history it is difficult to consider them as being inseparable. Interpretation of terms such as cultural and postmodernist history have changed over time, of course, but there does not seem to be a readily available definition that agrees with Cole's interpretation. Regardless of this, Cole's opinions, and the attention he pays to scientific inquiry cleave more closely to Meighan's earlier arguments than they do to Gulliford's, and *Captured Heritage* is evidence of a continued rivalry between these two methodologies. At the turn of the millennium, multiculturalism began to emerge as a broad social trend, and the approach of mutual cultural appreciation and understanding proved dominant, becoming the most prevalent methodology in the field of public history. As in all things, a monopoly of thought cannot exist indefinitely in the field of academia, and by the early 2000s the field began to shift away from its focus on cultural understanding and instead began to codify itself in legal terms. Museums, archaeologists and historians began to adapt to the new regulations under which they were required to work; people began to learn how to navigate their professions without the risk of legal repercussions. A sufficient number of museums willingly cooperated with NAGPRA, and as people adjusted to their new working environments they began to produce scholarship accordingly.

Devon Abbott Mihesuah's *Repatriation Reader* serves as an excellent example of this transitional period. An edited compilation of essays and reports by historians, archaeologists and museum professionals, *Repatriation Reader* captures a broad array of opinions on NAGPRA for modern scholars to look back to. While the first half of the book deals with the historical background that led up to the compilation's creation, it is the latter half of the work that is of particular interest. Dealing with legal and ethical issues, as well as the resolution to these issues,

is the focus of *Repatriation Reader*'s second half, and scholars such as Kurt E. Dongoske and Larry J. Zimmerman posit answers to those questions in their respective contributions.

Dongoske, his contribution based on a journal article published in the *American Indian Quarterly*, bases his discussion on the interactions taking place between the Hopi tribe and the various academic bodies that claim ownership of that same tribe's grave goods.

“A New Beginning, Not the End for Osteological Analysis,” while serving as the title of Dongoske's article, is also his principle thesis. Having worked extensively with various anthropological and archaeological communities, Dongoske's experience as the Tribal Archaeologist of the Hopi Tribe allows him to provide unique insight into the field as it is viewed through a Native lens. Stemming from his experience, Dongoske documents how contrary to the views espoused by Meighan and his fellows that NAGPRA would bring an end to American museums, and the field of Archaeology as a whole, NAGPRA has instead facilitated an incredible amount of communication between tribal authorities and the scientific fields making use of their remains. In fact, Douglas contends that the Act serves to tie the scientific and tribal communities together, which should be used by both parties to increase their respective understanding of such a complex issue as repatriation.¹⁵ To support this recommendation, Dongoske refers to his own experiences, as well as those of the Hopi tribe, with regional anthropological and archaeological authorities, essentially claiming that his interactions with them resulted in a resurgence of interest among his own people. Additionally, Dongoske spends a significant amount of time discussing the legal ramifications of NAGPRA compliance, as well as the rather lenient requirements necessary for a tribe to claim ownership of any particular artifact.¹⁶ Dongoske's scholarship is most notable for the emphasis he places on Hopi culture and religion – as well as a notable lack of the verbal, scientific focus that was found in earlier

scholarship. Controversy often serves as the motive force for innovation, and the Kennewick Man discovery in 1996 served to spark a resurgence of the debate between repatriation-focused academic and the threatened field of scientific archaeology.

This debate is captured by David Hurst Thomas in *Skull Wars*. Published in 2001, *Skull Wars* deals mainly with a lawsuit filed by eight scientists, the group typically referred to within the text as Bonnichsen et al. Bonnichsen et al. declared that NAGPRA could not be applicable to remains that were so old, as they could not be verified as belonging to any individual tribe or group of tribes. Their secondary argument was that depriving the American public from the knowledge gained from extensive study of the Kennewick Man was a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1866; that access was being denied on the basis of race and ethnicity rather than any legitimate reason.¹⁷ This argument is a restatement of the same issues that emerged when it became apparent that repatriation legislation was inevitable; returning artifacts to Native peoples would inevitably result in the destruction of the archaeological field. As a prominent archaeologist himself, David Hurst Thomas's opinion on the subject carries a substantial amount of weight in the field, but despite his clear attachment to his profession he successfully distances himself from the issue at hand in order to provide a largely objective portrayal of events. *Skull Wars* is a unique addition to the historiography of repatriation because of the way Thomas attempts to address both sides of the argument. His statement of purpose makes this abundantly clear, "From whatever perspective, Kennewick has become a very public fight that no side feels it can afford to lose. This is the five-hundred-year story of its roots."¹⁸

This history, is of course, based entirely on the problematic relationship that has existed between anthropologists and Native Americans for centuries. Perhaps most importantly, however, he discusses several successful agreements that have been reached between the

scientific fields and the Native peoples they fear will soon have control over their field. Thomas in fact justifies some of these fears in his discussion of the Pecos and Jemez Pueblo reburial, which deprived anthropologists of nearly two thousand bodies.¹⁹ Despite the admittance of this scientific setback, the author's language is celebratory rather than recriminatory. By Thomas's understanding, the sort of cooperation evident between the Native peoples and scientific anthropologists is worth any setback, as communication between the two parties is necessary for the centuries-long argument to finally come to a close. This point of view is in stark contrast to his predecessors, who either decisively sided with Native Americans or the scientific community; Thomas suggests that collaboration is not just possible, but necessary.

Unfortunately, while very influential in his field, this notion of cooperation has yet to be fully realized in the realm of academia – instead, the debate continues between Native values and scientific progress, as if the two goals are exclusive of each other. Fortunately, the field has managed to reach consensus in other ways. A pair of compilations were created, the first organized by Nina Swidler of Fordham University in 1997, the second by Thomas W. Killion at the School for Advanced Research in 2008. The purpose of these edited volumes was to determine the efficacy of NAGPRA, how it was regarded in the fields of archaeology and anthropology, as well as whether or not repatriation had caused meaningful harm to those same fields. To answer these questions, the editors of the respective collections requested papers from a variety of museum professionals, anthropology professors and professional archaeologists in order to come to some sort of conclusion on these issues.

The first study, edited by Swidler et al., is a surprisingly ambivalent affair. Drawing primarily on articles originally published in 1995 and 1996, few of the authors that contributed to the text were optimistic about the future of their field, but none seemed to believe the apocalypse

was nigh. Alan S. Downer, one of the few openly optimistic authors and a contemporary of David Hurst Thomas pens the initial entry of the compilation, and writes on the familiar topic of relations between archaeologists and Native Americans.²⁰ Of the numerous issues that stand between these two parties, Downer claims that repatriation and reburial is chief among them. Native Americans view reburial as a natural, human right, whereas scientists view reburial as the destruction of knowledge itself.²¹ NAGPRA, he continues is a victory for Native Americans, as it reverses the power structure that up until 1990 had heavily favored archaeologists in the debate between the two parties. Now, those archaeologists were required by law to return grave goods and remains to the tribes they had been stolen from, and the contentious discourse that existed between scientists and Native Americans resulted in Native peoples being less than happy to negotiate over the bones of their ancestors.

A number of these discussions are examined by David G. Rice in a second article, “The Seeds of Common Ground.” Consultation of tribal authorities by their scientific counterparts formed the cornerstone of NAGPRA, and Rice’s description of the distrust and concern that archaeologists often found themselves faced with are informative.²² Essentially, Rice argues that the continual clash of cultural values results in an extremely unstable relationship between the two parties, but that a benefit of NAGPRA has been that the frequent, mandatory communication between them has resulted in the foundation of what could one day become common ground. In an interesting turn of events, Rice calls back to the words of Gulliford, suggesting that increased Native interaction with archaeologists and museums will result in an expansion of knowledge, rather than the destruction of it.²³ The educational value of these interactions is a point of emphasis in the edited volume as a whole, which is a marked shift from the prior fascination with the more scientific ideals explicated by Meighan and his fellows. Other than the general shift in

academic specializations discussed earlier, the only clear reason behind this trend can be found in the Educate America Act of March, 1994, which ostensibly provided a national framework for education reform.²⁴ By the late 1990s, it was evident that NAGPRA wasn't going anywhere, and scholars began to adjust to its presence. In 2004, the School for Advanced Research began a project to study how and why repatriation had affected the field of archaeology. Published in 2008, the edited volume provided a number of informative articles, but when considering the development of the field Dorothy Lippert's piece is an excellent first place to look.

"The Rise of Indigenous Archaeology" continues where earlier scholars left off, and does not venture terribly far from the beaten path. The most important consideration to take from her article is simple, and barely mentioned in the text itself; Dorothy Lipper is a member of the Choctaw tribe, and works in the Repatriation Office of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Of all of the authors that have been examined prior, this is the first to publically claim Native ancestry, and the fact that she works as a museum professional is remarkable evidence of how the field has changed in mere decades. She does not need, nor does she try to argue for cultural heritage or scientific authorities. Instead, "The Rise of Indigenous Archaeology" is the story of how Native peoples have themselves become involved in scientific anthropology – in fact, her argument is that the contention between scientists and Native Americans needs to stop, because Native Americans are beginning to become scientists!²⁵ Outside of this particular article, the various contributors come to several conclusions regarding the field, largely in agreement with the study that preceded it. Firstly, that NAGPRA has not stunted the development of scientific anthropology or archaeology in any measurable way. Secondly, that communication between Native Americans and museum professionals and scientific authorities has resulted in a significant increase in the scientific community's

understanding of Native American cultural practices and religion. Lastly, the authors conclude that more Native Americans need to get involved in the fields of history and anthropology in order to shape the message that is being presented to the world.²⁶

These studies answer a majority of the concerns held by scientific authorities concerning repatriation, but one issue that has continually risen has yet to receive a satisfactory answer. Who truly has a right to Native remains? This is the subject tackled by Chip Colwell in *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits*. On initial examination, the work appears to be a revisionist history of the efforts made by Native Americans to gain access to the artifacts that had once belonged to them or their ancestors, with a focus on the actions taken by Native Americans rather than treating them as a monolithic, purely reactive entity. While that is, indeed, a component of his work, his most significant contribution to the field of museum studies in general is his willingness to describe the numerous discussions he had with tribal organizations during his tenure as Senior Curator of Anthropology at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Most telling is his willingness to discuss his failures – how he failed to find common ground with the tribal authorities that he met with, and how he witnessed the growing animosity between those Native populations and his colleagues.²⁷ As a museum professional, Colwell's personal experiences are an invaluable resource for future scholars, particularly in the fields of history and archaeology. Every choice he made is a lesson that can be learned, and his very personal delivery of information is rarely found outside the field of autobiography.

It is unfortunate then, to report that even the most modern scholarship can only offer a legal definition of ownership. Colwell himself remarks his disappointment, but states that in order to determine whether or not a repatriation claim should be accepted or declined a professional is bound by the word of law, not personal feelings or cultural recognition.²⁸ It is,

therefore, his recommendation that the question of ownership should not be answered by scientists or historians, but rather a matter that should be left for tribal bodies to debate with the United States government – the resulting decision is the only thing that is actually relevant to museum professionals or its associated fields.

The historiography of Native American repatriation is in flux, as though scholars have dug various battle lines over the years, arguments over ownership will continue into the foreseeable future. Museum professionals are still being churned out of schools, and universities are still producing a number of anthropological specialists. The grand narrative has been questioned, but American exceptionalism is alive and well in the modern world, which is a challenge that minority populations will have to continue to face. Native participation in academia has surged in the last few years, but they are not yet a dominant force in telling the history of their own people. Evidence shows that NAGPRA has been a step in the right direction, but no more than a step, and Native Americans continue to struggle for the recognition they deserve.

This struggle for recognition is, in part, caused by the manner in which museum professionals have presented Native objects and artifacts, as well as how public historians have introduced the subject of Native American studies to the public. These weaknesses in scholarship and museum practice perpetuate the problems that modern historians, public and otherwise, have attempted to address. A historiographical analysis of museum policy and practice directed toward Native Americans reveals that these problems have been on display for more than a decade. Despite this fact, they continue to persist today. The question of why this is the case, as well as how it may be resolved, is the next topic we will examine.

Chapter 2

MUSEUM POLICIES AND NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACTS

For more than a century, museum professionals have questioned the manner in which they should store Native American artifacts. While these objects were originally looked at as little more than esoteric curiosities by European colonists, recent social and academic developments have resulted in a resurgence of interest in Native American artifacts and cultural history. This, in turn, has required museums to generate policies for the management and display of Native American artifacts. Since then, museum professionals have faced a constant tug of war. Putting the objects on display is only one of the many steps that these individuals must take in their pursuit of educating visitors. The second is interpreting those objects, defining what they are and what they were used for, occasionally going so far as determining what they may have meant for the peoples who created them. For more traditional, European objects this step is not usually a major challenge outside of the most unusual artifacts, but the general lack of provenance concerning Native American objects makes it remarkably difficult to accurately research them.

That does not, of course, mean that nobody has tried. One particularly thorough attempt at a general care guide for Native American objects was made by Sherelyn Ogden, Head of Conservation at the Minnesota Historical Society.²⁹ *Caring for American Indian Objects* is a wonderful manual for anyone concerned with the conservation of Native American artifacts, but it is also representative of one of the major issues that I hope to address, namely that its goal of

minimizing object deterioration runs counter to the object's presentation. While some objects such as iconographical carvings were created to preserve a story or event, and therefore intended for longevity, many Native American artifacts were created to be used, or displayed for a particular event and then allowed to deteriorate. This practice finds its foundation in Native American culture and religion, though tribes belonging to the Siouan language group are particularly notable for this practice.* Osage beliefs in particular divide the world into three compartments, the Upper World, the Middle World and the Lower World. The Middle World is the realm of humanity, of animals and the Earth, whereas the Upper World is the home of perfect spirits.† Conversely, the Lower World is the realm of destructive, imperfect and malformed spirits that by desire or nature are dangerous to the inhabitants of the Middle World.³⁰ This emphasis on spirits rather than material possessions will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, but forms the basis for the lack of reliance on written word and objects as historical records in Siouan cultures.

Because of these issues, museums must straddle the line between preservation of history and adherence to the religious and cultural requirements of the tribes from which the objects originated, as in many cases the traditional presentation of these objects subjects them to potential damage and almost certain deterioration. This is something that institutions have struggled to cope with in numerous ways, and the manner in which they have done so is the topic of this chapter. This will begin with an examination of larger museums, defined as those museums that hold many tens of thousands of objects and can expect visitation numbers in

* The scope of this study is limited to Osage mythology, which in turn is likely based upon ancient Sioux beliefs. Iroquoian cultures tend to place more emphasis on material culture, though to my knowledge the relation between these ancient cultures and the manner in which their descendants look upon material culture has not been extensively studied.

† The phrase used for perfection in this instance is (Romanized) no'-xecka tha'-gthi-xtsi, which refers to "the harmonious spirit" rather than "the best possible spirit."

excess of one hundred thousand. It will then progress to a study of smaller institutions, which due to a lack of external pressure may approach the subject of Native American objects differently.

Chief among these larger institutions in the United States is the Smithsonian, which as part of its network of museums include the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) which subsequently host two of the most significant collections of Native American objects in the world. As stated in the NMNH's collection's management policy, these institutions have a unique responsibility as their dedication to conservation and education efforts is not just ethical, but federally mandated.³¹ Ethical debates are commonplace among museum professionals, as educating visitors typically requires exposing objects to some amount of wear, which is contrary to the goal of responsible stewardship and conservation to which most institutions are committed. By being federally mandated, the manner in which the NMNH treats objects is not necessarily an ethical quandary, but rather a legal one. In many ways, this simplifies the jobs of curators and conservators by giving them a simple list of requirements that they need to fulfill, but these regulations are also extremely inflexible and difficult to change moment to moment. It also provides certain challenges for the institution's educators, who must somehow align their goals with the legal requirements placed upon them by the government.³²

The Smithsonian's commitment to the preservation and appropriate treatment of Native American objects is made clear in their guidelines. While most of these requirements are fairly standard, such as the inclusion of repatriation requirements, of particular note is the Board of Regent's recommendation of actively seeking out Native American assistance with regard to the storage and presentation of their respective tribal artifacts, and adhering to those

recommendations as closely as possible within the confines of federal law.³³ This guideline itself has the potential to correct many of the issues that museum professionals face with regard to the care of Native American objects, but it leads to the question of how permissive this guideline really is when taking into account the legal restrictions placed upon the institution. The directive under which this recommendation is found refers to the National Museum of the American Indian Act, as amended 20 U.S.C. § 80q.³⁴ The Act places almost all authority for the treatment of individual Native American objects in the hands of the Board of Trustees, who in turn are subject to the demands of the Board of Regents. Of particular interest, the Act mandates a total number of twenty-three Trustees, with the requirement that at least twelve of their number be of Native American descent. This, in theory, provides Native Americans with a majority of control over the Board of Trustees, but fails to address the lack of hegemonic thought among the Native population. Namely, not all Native Americans belong to the same cultural background, and therefore may disagree substantially on the treatment of certain objects. Likewise, the Act does not provide any guidance for the inclusion of tribal members specific to any given object, nor does the Act suggest the tribal makeup of the overall board.

Therefore, the Board of Trustees, while broadly inclusive in the sense of composition and perhaps more sympathetic to Native American interests as a whole, does not guarantee the cultural protection of any given tribe, or the appropriate treatment of any given tribal object. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this notion of Native Americans as a single hegemonic entity is endemic in the United States, and is reinforced by the federal laws that govern the educational bodies of the country. As the NMAI Act is the guiding document for the treatment of Native American artifacts in the Smithsonian network of museums, it is problematic that there exists no clear mandate for how, exactly, Native Americans are to be included in the decision-making

processes of the objects belonging to their tribe. In summary, object care decisions are, by the requirements of the NMNH Collection Management Policy, left in the hands of the Board of Trustees. The decision to consult tribal authorities, as well as whether or not to implement their recommended changes, is subject to the whims of the Board of Trustees rather than being placed in the hands of tribal members themselves, or even the museum professionals responsible for the care of those objects.

Despite these issues, the NMNH provides an excellent foundation upon which the rest of the analysis can be based. As the institution adheres fully to federal regulations, including NAGPRA, it enables other institutions to be compared with the official national standard. Its policies are commonplace throughout the rest of the United States, as the prescribed measures by the federal government are adhered to almost universally with regard to collection management policies, insofar as public institutions are concerned. As many of these institutions are partly, if not wholly reliant on funding from the United States government in order to expand beyond their current boundaries. It is possible for many smaller institutions to subsist on public funding from their communities, as donations and local pride are sufficient to keep the lights on, but activities such as programming, purchasing storage space and more complex exhibitions are typically more expensive than the standard small museum can normally afford. This information is supported by the American Alliance of Museums Salary Survey, last performed in 2017. While its chief purpose was to analyze the salaries of museum employees, the metadata it produced includes operating costs, programming and financial plans of approximately 1,060 institutions in the United States.³⁵ This survey did, however, have some limitations that negatively impact its accuracy when studied for the purpose of providing a full picture of national museum finances, most notably that only institutions representing one of the several museum associations were

included in the report. While this provides a measure of quality assurance for the museums sampled, it disqualifies a number of very small or rural institutions that are either unaware of or unable to achieve membership with the aforementioned associations. Keeping those limitations in mind, the survey does provide an accurate picture of how museums receive their funding in a very broad sense, which includes the ability for smaller institutions to subsist on donations and other forms of local, public support.

The survival of these small museums is a significant issue to their respective local communities, as they provide supplemental educational opportunities in addition to public schooling, while also serving to preserve the history and objects that might not otherwise receive the attention of larger institutions. Native American museums have a tendency to fall into this category for a number of reasons, though one of the most significant is that they are often tribally owned rather than a part of the larger public body that makes up the educational programs of most states. The Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums has studied this aspect of Native American culture, last reporting in 2012.³⁶ Of the 212 institutions that formally responded to and participated in the report, only 34% of these institutions reported receiving funding from their state, city or county government, while approximately 75% of institutions received financial support from their tribe.³⁷ Additionally, 66% of respondents reported that they had received IMLS funding for programming or exhibition planning, but that the inability to use these funds for employee salaries or object acquisition resulted in 58% of surveyed museums lacking any sort of policy for accepting additional objects into their respective collections.³⁸ Lack of storage space additionally plays a large role in this, but has also resulted in a growing trend among Native American museums to focus on language, or other cultural activities rather than involving their collections in their education programs. While 86% of these institutions had the

space for permanent exhibitions, only 70% of museums are utilizing those spaces for their allocated purpose. Instead, those spaces are being utilized as impromptu classrooms for the purpose of language or cultural education, eschewing the uses of objects entirely in favor of lecture-based practices. This ultimately leads to the question of the importance that objects and cultural artifacts have in Native American tribes as a whole, which will be addressed in detail in the following chapter.

An analysis of smaller institutions and their collections management policies is therefore impractical, as while many of these institutions do, ostensibly, have a set of policies and regulations to which they attempt to adhere, they rarely have the opportunity to make use of them. According to the ATALM, 45% of respondents indicated that they did not have a functional collections management policy, and 69% do not have a functional emergency/disaster plan. Only 28% of tribes report that their collections are maintained as demanded by tribal tradition.^{39‡} The cited reason for this lack of adherence is an absence of storage space and insufficient funding to provide necessary conservation and preservation care, but while not cited as a particular reason there has been a growing trend since the early 2000s for many tribes to consolidate their objects for storage at larger institutions. The Osage Nation Museum, for example, stores its culturally-sensitive artifacts at the Gilcrease in Tulsa rather than the Osage Nation Museum in Pawhuska, and the vault there indicated objects stored from numerous other tribes as well. This almost symbiotic partnership between some institutions, as exemplified by the relationship between the Osage Nation Museum and the Gilcrease, indicates that the most

[‡] This survey was anonymous, and thus it is infeasible to identify which of the responding institutions affirmed that they stored objects in accordance with tribal tradition. I have nonetheless reached out to all of the responding institutions in Oklahoma. In the event that one of them actually has a collections management policy that provides this traditional storage methodology, it will be sourced here in the final copy of my thesis.

critical policies to study are those belonging to the institution storing more sensitive artifacts, rather than the tribal museums that might place a greater emphasis on the cultural traditions at play. It also indicates an unprecedented level of trust and cooperation existing between tribal organizations and institutions that practice public history, as well as anthropological research. As mentioned during the discussion of NAGPRA's inception, part of the pressure behind the Act was a significant distrust that existed between Native American groups, educators and researchers. That groups of Native Americans are now willingly and happily working with public institutions only decades after calling for NAGPRA represents just how open discourse and partnerships have brought museums and Native Americans closer than they ever have been.

The Gilcrease Museum serves as a figurehead of this movement, as its involvement with Native American communities is an example of how partnerships between museums and Native American tribes can be beneficial to both parties, as well as the people that they serve. This is exemplified in their agreement to store culturally-sensitive Osage artifacts, which allows the Osage tribe to make use of the storage space available at the substantially larger museum as well as the more readily available funding to guarantee that the objects will be cared for appropriately. In exchange for this, the Osage Nation surrenders ultimate control of the objects, by allowing them to be cared for and utilized in accordance with the policies of the Gilcrease, rather than what might be dictated at their home institution. As the Gilcrease maintains possession of the artifacts with Osage consent, the tribe itself is ultimately reliant on the goodwill and shared values of the Gilcrease and its employees and researchers to ensure the safety, security and appropriate usage of Osage artifacts stored there. It is interesting to note that despite the number of culturally-sensitive Native American objects cared for by the Gilcrease there is no mention of specific management practices regarding them, outside of those promising adherence to

NAGPRA and other similar federal regulations.⁴⁰ Subsequently, the policy specifically states that no special considerations will be given to any individual object, and that all objects regardless of origin are subject to the same standard of treatment.⁴¹ As written, this would suggest that there are no specific provisions in place to care for or exhibit Osage artifacts as tradition would dictate, though the actual treatment of those items is impossible to determine without personal inspection of every exhibit and storage facility. That this agreement has existed for several years suggests that the Osage Nation is content with the treatment objects receive in the care of the Gilcrease museum.

Combined with earlier revelations, this brings about the question of how Native American tribes actually recommend their objects be cared for, as well as who decides whether or not the treatment of those artifacts is culturally appropriate. Following the example most recently used, the Osage Nation is organized into several familiar branches. Executive, legislative, and judicial.⁴² The final word on whether or not something is culturally relevant is made by the Chief and Assistant Chief, with the assistance of the Osage Nation Congress. Traditionally, very few of these judgments exist in written record prior to 1881, and even after that period precious few documents not strictly related to financial or legal matters exist. Records that determine how objects were treated by the Osage are therefore limited to those written records of European travelers and scholars that recorded what they witnessed living within or around the tribal populations, which by the time of Victor Tixier and Francis LaFlesche had begun to divide into several, smaller bands.* Functioning as early ethno-historians, these scholars focused primarily on social dynamics and cultural rituals rather than material culture.⁴³ For this

* Victor Tixier and Francis LaFlesche were two 19th century scholars that wrote the seminal works dealing with Osage language and culture.

reason, while the modernization of the tribe that took place in the twentieth century has provided scholars an excellent perspective into the social and cultural practices of the Osage, interest in their material culture beyond economic valuations is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Additionally, notions of masculinity and femininity in Osage art have begun to emerge among students of gender studies, but despite a strong interest among museum professionals, there is no standardized manual for the traditional care and presentation of Osage artifacts.⁴⁴ Because of this, museums' lack of effective collection management plans regarding for the Native artifacts in their possession becomes understandable. Training practices for prospective caretakers of these artifacts are only infrequently available by the broader professional museum field, and even more rarely are those practices actually informed by Native authorities. Institutions are often left to their own devices when it comes time to establish connections with Native communities, and there is often a degree of hesitancy involved in the creation of such bonds, on both sides of the prospective agreement. It is not always even obvious who the appropriate point of contact is, or what information should be trusted.

Tribal elders are one such source of information, but their answers are subject to the interpretation of time, the clan to which they belong to and the stories they have learned. The judgment of the elders is not codified, nor is it part of law.⁴⁵ It is merely the advice of a few wise and educated individuals, which while valuable does not produce a single authoritative document. Congress could ratify one such interpretation of tribal practice, and with the support of the Chief and his assistant that could form the foundation of a standardized set of instructions for best practices, but such an event has yet to take place. The obstacles that separate museums from practicing traditional methods is not willingness on the part of museums or tribal members, but rather the simple fact that, like any group of individuals, the Osage Nation is not a single,

unified and homogenous body. Different people have different interpretations of tradition, and the creation of a standardized text to accomplish that goal is impossible. This issue is what my thesis aims to address, not through the completion of a universal guide to the storage and exhibition of Osage Artifacts, but rather by analyzing the presentation of each individual group of objects over time. While there is no one, true Osage tradition, there are similarities that exist in each telling of certain stories. By communicating with tribal elders, museum professionals and the written records of European scholars during the preceding centuries, it is possible to establish a reliable, and culturally appropriate description of how objects have been used, stored and displayed over time.

When it comes to the interpretation of Native American artifacts and how they should be presented in museums, one of the most frequent overgeneralizations is that they should be treated with respect to their culture of origin. Few tribes have an established publication of their myths, or a standardized, written tome that would inform researchers and museum professionals about how such objects should be cared for. Far from an expression of Native arrogance, or willful ignorance of those very same professionals – this is simply the result of most established Nations lacking a written language. The Siouan language group, from which the Osage Nation inherited its spoken tongue, did not have a written script. Instead, cultures that descended from the Siouan utilized oral traditions as well as pictographs to recount their stories and traditions. It was not until Fall of 2003, when the 31st Osage Nation Tribal Council enlisted the aid of Herman Mongrain Lookout to create a standardized Osage orthography.⁴⁶ It was not until more than a decade later that the language was recognized as complete by the Tribal Council, and a request was made to the International Organization for Standardization to officially recognize the

orthography.⁴⁷ Shortly thereafter, it was added to Unicode and made available for public use; for the first time in Osage history, there was a recognized written form of the language.

Despite this, very few documents have been converted to Osage script, and so scholars remain almost entirely reliant on the accountings of individuals such as LaFlesche to interpret cultural values, many of which have been lost even among the Osage in the century since her original collection. It is therefore my desire to codify in writing some of these traditions, as they existed then, and as they exist now among the Osage People, by drawing upon the oral traditions of my elders and the efforts of scholars such as Francis LaFlesche, Louis F. Burns and Carolyn Quintero. It is my intent to create a set of guidelines that might be of aid to my fellow museum professionals in the comprehension, interpretation and storage of Osage objects.

Chapter 3

OSAGE MATERIAL CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

When discussing Native American culture and spirituality, it is important to note that each tribe has its own mythology. Similarities between these mythologies are commonplace, especially those tribes that either neighbored one another or share a language group, but no single set of values can be applied to so broad a subject. For that reason, this analysis will focus specifically on the tribe of my own heritage, the Osage Nation. Though all Osage Indians belong to the same tribe, they were originally divided into fourteen distinct clans; small, patrilineal groupings that were each responsible for ruling over small partitions of territory. These bands fell under the authority of a clan chief, who in turn served beneath the highest governing body of the Osage, the Little Old Men. Even this much is only really known about the Osage because of the stories that have been passed down over centuries, as prior to the arrival of the Jesuits precious few records exist regarding the governance and conduct of the Osage people. Extremely quick to adapt to European colonization, the Osage readily acclimatized to the Catholic Jesuits, and formed close bonds with the French through intermarriage as well as cultural and economic exchange.[§]

[§] This information is summarized from the work of Louis F. Burns, who relies heavily upon Jesuit records to identify the various clans and bands of Osage tribespeople during the 18th and 19th centuries, and rightfully expanded a similar summary into a full book, namely, *Osage Indian Bands and Clans*, as well as his broader *A History of the Osage People*, published in 1984 and 1989 respectively. While less grounded in historical conventions, *Wah'Kon-Tah* by John Joseph Mathers, provides a narrative of Osage relations with “The White Men” during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

This provided a number of great changes to the way the Osage functioned as a tribe, as individual chiefs began to have a greater deal of autonomy within their spheres of influence in order to better manage trade agreements and individual negotiations with the French. Over time, this transition of power away from ancestral tribal leadership eroded the capability of the Osage government to manage itself, and resulted in more and more power being shifted from the tribal council to individual chiefs. The precise breaking point as to when the Little Old Men ceased to be the highest Osage authority is unknown, but it certainly took place prior to the Treaty of Fort Clark in 1808, as by that time the authorities that represented the Osage were chiefs, rather than council elders.⁴⁸ Conflict between the Osages naturally erupted as individual bands began to sign agreements and land cessions that other bands had agreed to. Eventually control coalesced under Chief White Hair I, who in his obituary and in the words of his fellow tribesmen was the Principal Chief of the Osage.⁴⁹ The title of Principal Chief was new with regard to the Osage tribe, and as the term originated with the Cherokee Tribe it is difficult to ascertain how the title emerged in Osage parlance. While it continues to be used today, as exemplified by Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear, the term began to spread throughout the various Native Tribes during the early 19th century and it is unclear as to whether it originated from within the tribes themselves, or was adopted by those tribes during negotiations with the United States government.

Regardless, the rise of a “Principal Chief” figure was a marked departure from traditional Osage practices, and the tribe quickly organized around the new centrally organized executive body. It took only decades for the tribe to present a sufficiently united front so as to guarantee the creation of their own constitution in 1881, stating that the Great and Little Osages had unified into a single tribal unit.⁵⁰ Beyond consolidating the Great and Little Osages into a single body,

the constitution of 1881 holds the last remaining reference to the establishment of a tribal council, though it cements their position as being subservient to the Principal and Assistant chiefs. Mimicking much of the American constitution, the Osage government was divided into executive, legislative and judicial branches, with the tribal council serving as the Osage legislature. In all following reorganizations of the Osage Nation, the legislative branch ceases to be referred to as a tribal council, but rather the Osage Nation Congress, which inherited the same stipulated role and structure within the tribe. The replacement of the tribal council removed the final aspect of the traditional Osage government structure, and left in its place the modern form of government that continues to be practiced today.

While brief, this summary is intended to provide necessary background information as to the current form of the Osage government and the steps that led to its creation. Despite being predominately based upon the United States Constitution, borrowing wholesale the concepts of executive, legislative and judicial separation, as well as the notion of popular sovereignty, God is not mentioned in either the establishing constitution or any of those that followed. Instead, the Principal Chief is uniquely imbued with the right to rule through the Osage people, and also the Great Spirit Wahkontah, who is credited with the creation of those Osage people. Wahkontah's relation to the Osage Nation is a matter of some debate, as the role played by the Great Spirit in that creation varies substantially based on the clan telling the tale and the time of its speaking. Scholars are fortunate in that one of the few extant samples of Osage language are in the stories that they told, principally recorded by the following individuals.

The earliest version of these stories were collected by James Owen Dorsey, in the year of 1883 according to his records.⁵¹ This collection of Osage traditions and songs is a challenge to verify, as the only named source is "Hada-öülse," translated as Red Corn, belonging to the Tsi-

Zhu group of the Osage Nation. In 19th and early 20th century literature, it was typical to refer to Osage clans as one of three disparate groups; the Tsi-Zhu the Hanka and the Wah-Zha-Zhi.** This suggests that, by the late 19th century, these three clans remained the only significant governmental bodies of the Osage, which shortly thereafter were absorbed by the Wah-Zha-Zhi, creating the modern Osage Nation. This subsequently explains why clan histories, outside of the seven original Wah-Zha-Zhi clans, began to disappear. The author himself purports to be skeptical of Red Corn's account, but comparing those stories against others that were told among the Osage, he found them to be accurate insofar as he judged mythology could be accurate.⁵² His methodology at least remains sound, as his recording of the "Bald Eagle" creation myth can be compared against those that have been catalogued from the Bear and Puma clans.⁵³ In this manner, the accounts of Dorsey compare favorably against those of his more modern peers, the most significant variation being that the number of significance in the "Bald Eagle" creation myth is six, while four is the number that appears most frequently in the latter two. While that itself is a topic deserving of more study, for the purpose of this analysis to important feature to note is Dorsey's record of prominent tattoos, symbols and wooden carvings, which in his view made up a substantial part of the tribe's material culture.

Throughout the last two centuries, Osage tattoos were typically segregated by gender. Among Osage men of the nineteenth century, the six roots of the tree and the spider were the most popularly photographed, typically upon the chest of the subject. The meaning of these tattoos are relatively simple to explain, as they are tightly bound to Osage notions of masculinity.

** I am utilizing the modern spelling for these organizational groups in order to avoid confusion. In the original writings, the Wah-Zha-Zhi is referred to as the Wacace and the Tsi-Zhu is referred to as the Tsicu. While their appearance and purpose is consistent over time, the manner in which they are spelled varies significantly from author to author. For examples, see J. Owen Dorsey and Philip Dickerson, who wrote *Osage Traditions* in 1883 (on page 378) and *History of the Osage Nation* in 1906, (on page 3 of the original version.)

The roots of the tree are representative of life, specifically attempting to draw the water of life into the core of the subject's being. The spider is representative of patience and endurance, two of the traits most celebrated among Osage men. While these tattoos were also found upon the bodies of female members of the tribe, they were typically full-body, spindly creations that were intended to collect the natural energies of the world, so that those vital energies could be passed on to their children. Not constrained to the chest, these images traditionally sprawled from the lips to the fingertips, though some studies have suggested that they may have continued all the way to the toes.⁵⁴ Tattooing was not limited to these specific shapes, and was also frequently used to express military victories or commemorate important events – among the Osage, this was less widespread than in some other tribes due to rulings by the Little Old Men, who declared that in order to have a tattoo placed upon one's body, they must have directly participated in the event.⁵⁵ Those found guilty of misappropriating another's glory, by placing a tattoo upon their body that they did not, according to the Little Old Men, deserve, had the flesh flayed from the limb in order to permanently remove the tattoo from the body. In all, there are more than a hundred symbols utilized by the Osage, of which we still have samples.

Francis La Flesche follows shortly after Dorsey, his study of the Osage beginning approximately in 1906. While his most valuable contribution to the field is his creation of the first Osage dictionary, he also transcribed several rituals and legends that were still being performed at the of his studies. These stories, while not as vital as the creation myths recorded by Dorsey, have an extremely practical purpose when it comes to the study of material culture. They provide explanation and meaning for Osage artifacts, as well as a glimpse into the culture that created them. Similarly, La Flesche provides a recording of clan names that does not exist anywhere else, as even during his own lifetime the separation between clans broke down to the

point that few still paid homage to their ancestry. Stories from the Elk and the Buffalo feature prominently in his writings, but oddly, by the time of his writing it was no longer common practice to separate that disparate Osage Tribes from the clans. In this way, La Flesche's records signify a break in tradition, but more importantly, that the centralization of the Osage Nation into a single, larger tribe had reduced the importance of the Tsi-Zhu and the Hanka in common parlance. Beginning with La Flesche, and continuing until the late twentieth century, scholars stopped differentiating between tribes and clans.⁵⁶ Though, it is important to note that this practice was inconsistent even within La Flesche's own writings, as though he, for example, classifies both the Tsi-Zhu and the Elk Clan with the same titles and language, the stories that he is transcribing specifically differentiate the three Osage tribes from their sub organizations.⁵⁷

There are many possible explanations for why this shift took place, and why the conversation has returned to mentioning multiple Osage tribes in modern discourse, but the most logical explanation for this leap is that even among scholars, the precise organization of the Osage tribe, and Native American tribes in general, was poorly understood. While this may seem like a broad statement to make, it is one that has been commonly acknowledged among those very same scholars, and is one of the issues that has seen the most attention in recent scholarship, culminating in Louis F. Burn's critical work *A History of the Osage People*. One of the most significant contribution he makes is a clear and concise descriptions of how the tribe came to be organized into its three primary groups, as well as how those groups were further subdivided.⁵⁸ Prior to the work of Burns, reports concerning the organization and distribution of the Osage government was fragmented at best, and completely ignored at worst. For earlier works, the simplest explanation is that elements of Osage culture were simply mistranslated or poorly understood – as evidenced by the brief explanations of Osage government that can be found in

the writings of La Flesche, Dorsey and Bossu.⁵⁹ Confusingly, these references often conflict with those of Jesuit scholars who worked closely with the Native population throughout the colonial and early-modern periods. Jesuit scholars such as Fathers Ponziglione and Schoenmakers, emphasize the spiritual and legal role played by the Little Old Men up to and including during the American Civil War, during which they recount stories of the Little Old Men taking direct control of Osage affairs, superseding the authority of both peace-chiefs and war-chiefs as late as 1869 – with a further claim in 1902 that the oft-mentioned secret society was still active and commanding.⁶⁰

If this is true, it casts doubt upon the assertions raised by modern scholars over the leadership of the Osage Tribe as defined earlier in this paper – but these particular accounts are few in number, and while thought provoking, are not sufficient on their own to discount the theories perpetuated in recent years. It does, however, indicate that the issue of Osage tribal organization is not a closed one, and is deserving of further study. For the purpose of this analysis these notions are primarily important for the impact they have on the attribution of material to a particular tribe. While it wasn't frequent, inter-marriage between tribes was not unknown, and property was not so rigidly defined among the Osage as it was among contemporary Europeans. Objects typically remained within a family, but there were many cases where territory, weapons and livestock were communal, belonging to the entirety of the tribe rather than any particular individuals. Indeed, the Hanka tribe of the Osage, a community that spoke the same language as the Wah-Zha-Zhi according to mythology, were likely incorporated to the tribe from the Caddo during the Osage's western push.⁶¹ Thus, there was a measure of cultural interchange at play as the warlike Osage successfully established dominance in southwestern Missouri and Kansas. As they roamed and expanded their territory over the course

of more than a millennium, the Osage came into close contact with a large number of other tribes, some of which were assimilated, while others were simply pushed out of the Osage's loosely-defined borders. Of these tribes, the most significant for the purpose of material culture are the Iowa and the Southern Caddo.

It is typically believed that the great shift in Osage pottery following their Western push is likely the result of their interactions with the Iowa and Caddo people, as they converted to Woodland practices shortly thereafter, in approximately 1680 AD.⁶² While specific aspects of Osage objects are beyond the scope of this introduction, there are important distinctions to be made that differentiate the origin of certain types of artifacts, such as pottery and wood carvings. The chief distinction is the inherent focus that Osage craftsmen place on the unification between the earth and the sky, which according to their mythology is how life came to exist in the first place. For this reason, Osage craftwork often displays wavy lines descending vertically, representing wind or the sky, meeting a flat, horizontal and darker plain, representing the earth. While these symbols are not only utilized by the Osage, their closest cultural neighbors tended to utilize the four cardinal directions in their artwork, spokes pointing toward each in turn. Similarly, the Osage favor angular shapes such as diamonds and hexagons, whereas the Caddo and Iowa trended toward geometric circles, often lined with teeth.⁶³ While these features themselves are not sufficient to determine the precise origin of an object, the basic physical form and shapes utilized by the craftsman can provide a starting point for the interested researcher or museum professional.

A secondary influence upon Osage culture is generally attributed to the Maya cultures that dominated much of central America, but evidence for this is sparse, as the geographic distance between the Maya and Osage suggests that it is very unlikely for them to come into

natural contact prior to the northern Maya migration during the Guatemalan Civil War of the mid-twentieth century. Despite this, there are a number of Osage morning prayers and rituals that bear striking similarities to those found in Maya cultures, and yet are not found in their surrounding tribes, nor are they a part of the Dhegihan cultural group to which the Osage belong.⁶⁴ The Osage depiction of the Sun varies slightly from those of other Woodland tribes of the period in that the Sun is rarely utilized as a singular subject. Rather, the “sun rays,” or small waving lines emanating from a small, solid circle, are the focus of this symbol, as their morning devotions specify those rays as being critical, both for providing warmth and as the Osage representation of life-giving powers and rebirth. Other woodland cultures such as the Caddo and Iowa also utilized Sun-imagery, for a similar purpose, but their depictions typically are dominated by the Sun itself, with no or little regard for the rays. This variance in artistic tendencies can aid in the identification of Native American objects, particularly with regard to pottery and craftsmanship that was common among the Woodland tribes, and therefore easy to mistakenly attribute to the wrong tribe.

Unfortunately, while there are many aspects of Osage culture that are unique, there are just as many more that are commonplace among surrounding tribes, particularly those that share a language and cultural grouping. With regard to the usage of symbols, it is important for a museum professional to recognize that they do not have the same meaning as letters. The typical usage of Osage symbols to tell a story, rather than to create a permanent record for future generations. Important historical events usually found their way into the oral traditions of the tribe – much of what we know about their governmental structure prior to and during early colonization are through the interpretations of those oral traditions in collaboration with their symbols. One of the ways in which the Osage maintained tribal unity was through such a

tradition. Each of the Osage Tribes, the Wah-Zha-Zhi, the Tsi-Zhu and the Hanka were responsible for individual ritual components, guaranteeing that no ritual could be performed by any singular tribe. While only the Hanka were permitted to create and maintain the sacred pipes of the Earth and the Sky people, only the Tsi-Zhu were permitted to fill them with tobacco and light them. Similarly, rituals calling for the bounty of the Earth could only be performed by the Hanka, whereas spiritual matters could only be addressed by the Tsi-Zhu. As people of the Water, the Wah-Zha-Zhi were responsible for naming ceremonies, and were considered the most suitable for the performance of marriage rituals, such as the Mi-zhiⁿ and the Omi-ha.⁶⁵ Indeed, the structure of their settlements also follow consistent trends according to their mythology. All major roads and thoroughfares created by the Osage flow East to West, with the Tsi-Zhu occupying homes on the North side of the road, while the Hanka occupied those on the South.⁶⁶

Little information is provided about the Wah-Zha-Zhi with regard to the roles they played in this societal organizations. Accounts describe them as primarily being peace-makers between the Earth and the Sky peoples, but traditional maps and drawings do not specify where they should be located within a village, while making clear provisions for the Hanka and the Tsi-Zhu. While this is based on supposition, a likely reason for this is that they simply lived outside of this forced dichotomy between the Earth and the Sky peoples, and that while places were reserved for the Hanka and Tsi-Zhu to live in accordance with their traditions, the Wah-Zha-Zhi were free to plant their campfires wherever they wished as long as they did not interfere with the placement of the other two tribes. Additionally, there may have been some element of segregation, as though both the Hanka and Tsi-Zhu contributed tribal chiefs and elders to the Little Old Men, the Wah-Zha-Zhi were typically considered almost a leadership caste, and in accordance with their mythology, were the first to be created. This is supported largely by the fact that when it came

time for the tribes to unify into a single entity, it was under the name Wah-Zha-Zhi that they became joined. This is, however, just one of many explanations for how the Water people may have slotted themselves into Osage society, and for the moment at least, no conclusive answer has been found. In fact, the major difficulty in determining the specific culture of the Wah-Zha-Zhi might be caused by their tribe being the one to survive into modernity, whereas the other two collapsed and therefore made themselves the primary topic of inquiry for historians.

Osage culture, like all cultures, has more complexities than can be defined within any single document, but there are certain critical elements for museum professionals to be aware of when handling objects or preparing lectures related to it. Tribal mythology defines the Osage as having three tribes, the Wah-Zha-Zhi, the Hanka, and the Tsi-Zhu – the Water people, the Earth people, and the Sky people. Over time, their government evolved from being predominantly led by a group of spiritual elders referred to as the Little Old men, to the Principal Chief system that remains in effect today. Osage spirituality is rooted in the unification of the sky and the earth, with the Sun as the central, life-giving figure. Rituals were divided among the three tribes such that there was a constant mutual dependence between them, and their villages were organized in accordance with this goal. Lacking a writing system of their own until very recently, the Osage maintained their history through the oral tradition which was passed down from elders to tribesmen and tribeswomen, while the symbols they utilized primarily for personal remembrance of events that they took place in, rather than being passed between generations. Tattooing was therefore a significant aspect of Osage culture, as warriors would quite literally wear their victories, and their defeats, upon their flesh. Tattoos were also used, particularly but not exclusively by women, in order to capture the energy from the Sun, as well as the life-giving powers of nature, to strengthen both themselves and their offspring. These aspects of Osage

culture defined everything from the structure of their government to the layout of their towns and villages and are prominently expressed in the objects that they created.

CONCLUSION

The history of the Osage people stretches back thousands of years, though most of what we know about the tribe comes from after 1,200 CE. Arguments are frequent and ongoing regarding how museums as well as public and private institutions should fulfill their duty to protect, preserve and display Native American artifacts for the purposes of cultural enrichment and public education. In a broad sense, the practice of repatriation has received the acceptance of both the academic and public communities, suggesting that it is a process that will continue well into the future as more discoveries continue to be made, and tribes and families are reunited with the grave goods of their ancestors. Despite this trend, it is important to recognize that grave goods and remains, while sometimes ghoulish, are also extremely important in various scientific and anthropologic fields – they are our strongest and sometimes our only connection to our collective past. The study of humanity is broad and necessarily inclusive, the study of indigenous peoples is, for that reason, often conducted by individuals that do not belong to the groups being studied. This outside perspective is extremely valuable both culturally and academically, but it is important that studied populations can also speak and be heard. The precise combination of these practices has yet to result in a singular, defining set of guiding principles that can resolve every problem that relates to museum practice and scientific analysis, but through continuous collaboration, scientific, academic and indigenous communities can come together and continue to improve one another.

Museums are a fundamental part of this collaborative effort, as they often serve as the in-between for Native Americans and academics. Alongside libraries and other educational

institutions, museums connect the public at large with disparate cultures, some of which no longer can be encountered in the modern world. Many indigenous civilizations continue to exist, however, and museums are also a way for Native Americans to inform the broader public about their individual cultures, their experiences and their histories. The management of Native American artifacts is therefore of paramount importance, for indigenous peoples, academics and non-native peoples as well. For topics too specific or too broad to be addressed satisfactorily in the current public education system, museums serve as one of the few bastions of information, vaults in which objects and ideas can be stored for future generations to benefit from. That museums, and museum professionals, take this duty seriously and have the information necessary to make best-practice decisions is critical. The objects stored by these institutions may one day prove to be the only surviving extant examples of certain cultures or beliefs. Their inadequate storage or inaccurate portrayal could have disastrous ramifications that would best be avoided.

While this introduction to Osage culture has been brief, it is my hope that it provides a useful starting point for the interested scholar or museum professional, that they be equipped to proceed in their studies into what few primary source documents still exist. There is much more to be learned about the Osage, and the recent resurgence of Osage language provides an opportunity for all those interested to participate in the community, and come to know those few elders that still have stories to tell. Similarly, it is my goal that this text can be utilized as an introductory summary for those professionals who wish to know more about the Native American artifacts with which they interact, and that it may aid those same educators in their efforts to pass on knowledge to those that will come after. The next and final component of this document shall be describing Osage objects, how they are used, and how they may be

differentiated from other similar objects from neighboring tribes. Subsequently, it will address how to manage and exhibit Osage artifacts in accordance with tradition, as well as attempt to find an agreeable middle ground between traditional purpose and best possible museum practice, which will enable these objects to be exhibited for many generations to come.

¹ Significant portions of this chapter were taken from a pair of historiographical papers that I wrote last year while working on my thesis. Neither of those papers have been published, and both were written for the explicit purpose of later being used for this thesis and with the full permission of Dr. Steineker and Dr. Magnusson of the University of Central Oklahoma.

² Chip Colwell, *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 19.

³ Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C 3001 et seq. (November 16, 1990).

⁴ Andrew Gulliford, "Curation and Repatriation of Sacred and Tribal Object," *The Public Historian* 14, no. 3 (Sum. 1992): 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶ Clemean W. Meighan, "Another View on Repatriation: Lost to the Public, Lost to History." *The Public Historian* 14, no. 3 (Sum. 1992): 39.

⁷ This information is drawn largely from the American Historical Association Directory of History Departments and Organizations. The specific data utilized for this paper can be found at the following citation. Robert B. Townsend, "What's in a Label? Changing Patterns of Faculty Specialization since 1975" *Perspectives on History* 45 no. 1 (January 2007): n.p.

⁸ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscapes and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 67.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Meighan, "Another View on Repatriation," 40-41.

¹¹ Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Victoria: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), viii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹⁵ Kurt E. Dongoske, "NAGPRA: A New Beginning, Not the End, for Osteological Analysis – A Hopi Perspective," in *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns Indian Remains?* ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 265. Google Play Edition.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁷ David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York City, NY: Basic Books, 2001), xxiii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xli.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

²⁰ Alan S. Downer, "Archaeologists—Native American Relations," in *Native Americans and Archaeologists: Stepping Stones to Common Ground* ed. Nina Swidler et al. (Lanham: AltaMira, 1997), 23.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²² David G. Rice, "The Seeds of Common Ground: Experimentations in Indian Consultation" in *Native Americans and Archaeologists*, 218.

²³ *Ibid.*, 220.

²⁴ Goals 2000: Educate America Act, 103 U.S.H.R 1804 (March 31, 1994).

²⁵ Dorothy Lippert, "The Rise of Indigenous Archaeology: How Repatriation Has Transformed Archaeological Ethics and Practice" in *Opening Archaeology: Repatriations Impact on Contemporary Research and Practice* eds. Thomas W. Killion and Darby C. Stapp (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008), 152.

²⁶ Thomas W. Killion, *Opening Archaeology*, 5. Also see Lippert, 153 for further discussion of this topic. Additionally, Ann M. Kakaliouras offers a more negative take on events on 120, which is a fascinating contribution but has little bearing on the historiography of the topic.

²⁷ Chip Colwell, *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 163.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

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- ²⁹ Sherelyn Ogden, ed, *Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004).
- ³⁰ One telling of this story is recorded in the following. Louis F. Burns, *Osage Indian Customs and Myths (Alabama Fire Ant)* (Daphne: Fire Ant Books, 1984), 208. This notion of order rather than moralistic good and evil is addressed on page 209.
- ³¹ National Museum of Natural History, *NMNH Collections Management Policy* (Washington: Smithsonian Board of Regents, 2006), 2. Available online at https://entomology.si.edu/Collections/NMNH_CMP_Sept-18-2006.pdf, last accessed 5/30/2018.
- ³² The *NMNH Collections Management Policy* frequently refers to Smithsonian Directive 600, which is the set of guidelines NMNH staff are required to comply with. This document is available at the following address. <https://www.si.edu/content/pdf/about/sd/SD600andAppendix.pdf>.
- ³³ The Smithsonian, *Smithsonian Directive 600* (Washington: Smithsonian Board of Regents, 2001), 30.
- ³⁴ National Museum of the American Indian Act, 20 U.S.C. § 80q. (1989).
- ³⁵ American Alliance of Museums, "National Museum Salary Survey," 2017. Available online at <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/manage-your-career/national-museum-salary-survey/>. The copy I was provided with did not contain publishing information, but credits the Association of Midwest Museums, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Mountain Plains Museum Association, New England Museum Association, Southeastern Museum Conference and the Western Museums Association.
- ³⁶ ATALM, "Sustaining Indigenous Culture: The Structure, Activities, and Needs of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums," Oklahoma City: ATALM, 2012. Available online at http://www.atalm.org/sites/default/files/sustaining_indigenous_culture.pdf.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁴⁰ Gilcrease Board of Trustees, "Gilcrease Museum Policy Manual," 2008. Updated 2017, in effect as of April 2018.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.
- ⁴² The Constitution of the Osage Nation, Article V, Section 1.
- ⁴³ Willard H. Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 11.
- ⁴⁴ Bruce Miller, "Contemporary Tribal Codes and Gender Issues," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18 no. 2 (1994): 44.
- ⁴⁵ Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2004): 39-40.
- ⁴⁶ Osage Nation Legislature, ONCR 15-24, ONCR 15-25 "A Resolution commending Herman "Mogri" Lookout for his leadership, dedication and service to the Osage People and the Osage Nation in preserving and passing on our language; and directing distribution." September 14, 2015.
- ⁴⁷ ISO/IEC N4619, September 21, 2014.
- ⁴⁸ Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People*: 152, 154.
- ⁴⁹ N.a. "Died," *Columbian Centinel*, August 30, 1809.
- ⁵⁰ Authorized Committee of the Osage, *Constitution and Laws of the Osage Nation: Passed at Pawhuska, Osage Nation, in the Years 1881 and 1882* (Washington, D.C., R. O. Polkinhorn Printer, 1883): 1.
- ⁵¹ J. Owen Dorsey, *Osage Traditions* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institute—Bureau of Ethnology, 2006), 378.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 377.
- ⁵³ The Bear Clan's creation mythology was transcribed by Louis F. Burns in *Osage Indian Customs and Myths*, pages 58 and 145. The Puma clan variant was transcribed by George Sabo III, in *Paths of Our Children*, though the excerpt is available through the University of Arkansas at [http://archeology.uark.edu/indiansofarkansas/index.html?pageName=Creation%20of%20the%20World%20\(Osage \)](http://archeology.uark.edu/indiansofarkansas/index.html?pageName=Creation%20of%20the%20World%20(Osage))
- ⁵⁴ Images of these tattoos have been captured and collected by James R. Duncan and David H. Dye, who both contributed chapters to *Drawing with Great Needles: Ancient Tattoo Traditions of North America*, pages 198 and 245, respectively.
- ⁵⁵ Jean Bernard Bossu, *Nouveaux Voyages aux Indes Occidentales* (Paris, Chez Le Jay, Libraire, Quay de Gêvres au Grande Corneille, 1768), 95.
- ⁵⁶ Francis La Flesche, *A Dictionary of the Osage Language*, 372.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 371.

⁵⁸ Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 5.

⁵⁹ La Flesche, *A Dictionary of the Osage Language*, 28, also see 222, 393 and 395 for further examples over the confusion of Osage organization. Dorsey, *Osage Traditions*, 378 and 397 contain the clearest difficulties with translation, and the subsequent confusion with titles and organization. Bossu, *Indes Occidentales*, Seconde Partie, 31 and 35, though Bossu does not write specifically about tribal organization, and outside of when referring to a Chief, uses the words "Indien" and "sauvage" interchangeably.

⁶⁰ W.W. Graves, ed., *Life and Letters of Fathers Ponziglione, Schoenmakers and Other Early Jesuits at Osage Mission* (St. Paul: W.W. Graves, 1916), 136.

⁶¹ Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 6.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Examples of each are found in Burns, *A History*, 8 as well as being the complete focus of *Art of the Osage* by Garrick Bailey and Daniel C. Swan. For comparative analysis, a similar compilation of Caddo artifacts was produced by Jack Bonds and Jeb Efirm in *Art of the Ancient Caddo*.

⁶⁴ Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 6, 8.

⁶⁵ These terms for marriage do not appear to have been used beyond the 1920s, as their last recorded usage was by La Flesche in 1912. Francis La Flesche, "Osage Marriage Customs" *American Anthropologist* 14, no 1 (Jan-Mar., 1912): 127.

⁶⁶ This evidence was put together by George Sabo III in his series of short lectures on the Native Americans of Arkansas, some of which have been maintained online by the University of Arkansas at <http://archeology.uark.edu/indiansofarkansas/index.html>.

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Appendix A

Museum Project: Osage Objects and Material Culture

There are numerous objects that make up a collection focused on Native American history and culture, many of which are not unique in construction to any one tribe. When it comes to any given Native American object, other than its authenticity, there are several important questions that a museum professional must ask him or herself about it prior to putting it on display. This short manual is intended to help those professionals answer those questions. The format of this chapter shall begin with an example form that could be used for accessioning an object, minus unique institutional requirements such as collection names and numbering systems. What will follow will be applying that form to an array of Osage artifacts, including their purpose, method of construction, potential cultural aspects that may not be immediately visible, as well as specific storage and exhibition concerns. Objects will be alphabetized by their English name.

Object Name: Arrow

Object Osage Name: Moⁿ (arrow in general) Moⁿ-ça (the arrow's shaft)

Common Materials: Wood, plant matter (shaft), rock, bone, metal (head), feathers.

Common Period of Production: Arrows have existed in the Americas for more than ten thousand years, though the earliest artifacts specifically linked to Native Americans originate from approximately 500 CE.

Method of Production: Early arrows, prior to the Osage westward trek, were typically made from grassy reeds such as rivercane, whereas later examples are usually whittled shoots. These reeds or shoots would then have a notch carved into one end, where the arrowhead would later be attached with sinew. Arrowheads were traditionally made from materials such as flint or obsidian, that could be broken down into smaller pieces and then roughly shaped into what we commonly recognize as an arrowhead. Following European arrival, some Osage arrowheads were made from various metals, but were predominately rock and bone. As for the fletching, turkey feathers were the preferred material, but various other birds were utilized depending on the location of the tribe at any given time and the availability of materials.

Physical Description: Osage arrows are typically between twenty-five and twenty-seven inches in length, though a substantial amount of variety is found in arrowhead construction. Contrary to popular belief, smaller, pointed arrowheads were not for hunting birds, but rather other small game such as rabbits. Large, blunt arrowheads were utilized for bird hunting, whereas the stereotypical triangular shape was utilized for hunting larger game, such as buffalo.

Material Culture: While Native Americans receive a lot of attention for their usage of the bow as a weapon against both each other and European colonizers, bows and their construction was primarily for the purpose of hunting. For inter-tribal conflicts, the capture of prisoners and livestock was paramount, actually killing other tribespeople was a secondary concern for a majority of Native American conflicts. Bows were more commonly utilized against European forces, as the usage of guns precluded the close quarters combat that was favored by Osage warriors.

Storage Concerns: Standard recommendations for wood and stone objects also apply to Osage arrows. Feathers always provide an additional challenge due to their propensity for attracting dust and insects, as well as how dust and insects accelerates their deterioration. Plant and animal matter that was used as binding would most likely have already decayed, but all that remains should be treated in accordance with guidelines for biological matter.

How to Learn More: For Native American arrows generally, *Encyclopedia of Native American Bows, Arrows & Quivers* by Steve Allely and Jim Hamm is a fantastic resource.

Object Name: Banner / Tabard

Object Osage Name: Ha-çka' Wa-xthe-xthe

Object Physical Description: Banner: Almost always made out of strips of deer or buffaloeskin, variable in length, red, orange and yellow are the most common dye colors used, made from Sumac, Coreopsis and Yarrow. Other, less common dyes used are purple and brown. Banners created after 1730 almost always contain some form of ribbonwork when intended to be hung. Post-18th century banners are usually made of a variety of cloth rather than hide.

Tabard: Tabards were a common use for silk that the Osage traded for with the French. Like European tabards, they were traditionally worn over shirts or dresses, but some clans wore them over bare chests. Several variants were used from the early 18th to mid-late 19th century, when the Osage in particular made an almost complete shift to typical Western stylings. This term was applied to most silk and cloth shirts made by the Osage – a different term was used for clothing with a European or American source.

Object as Material Culture: Banner: Unlike what is found in the European tradition, the Osage did not use banners for identification or emblematic purposes. Prior to European colonization, what the Europeans referred to as banners were often multi-purpose animal hides, typically carried by bison-hunting clans to be utilized as an entrance flap for a tipi, and spare hide for patching damage to their clothing or to be used as cordage. Supposition for how this came to be referred to as a banner includes that it was hung from poles before having the dust beaten out of it by switches. During the eighteenth century, firearms and horses purchased from the French provided the ability for tribesmen to range farther and return faster, resulting in the obsolescence of this seldom-used object. Few Osage made use of the tipi, as by the time they ranged far

enough West for it to be commonplace, they had already begun transitioning to Westernized housing structures. Even less economically comfortable Osage typically lived in near-permanent habitations, and few had the need for shelter that could be brought with them.

Following its obsolescence as a hunting tool, and even during the late 18th century, the word banner began to refer to decorative wall-hangings, dyed in a variety of colors. These banners would typically feature vertical ribbonwork. Common symbols sewn into these banners were the tree, the spider, and a variety of geometric shapes that are inconsistent with any specific symbol or purpose.

Tabard: Despite being Osage made, tabards were not usually worn as part of Osage ceremonial rites. They were typically worn by wealthier Osage to accentuate their wealth and dominance during the early-mid 18th century.

Specific Storage and Exhibition Considerations: While ribbons were often used for ceremonial garb, they distinguish between ceremonial and mundane objects linguistically. Determining whether a banner or tunic was used for ceremonial purposes is a difficult process. Ceremonial garb tends to employ beadwork in addition to ribbons and tassels. Very few examples of non-ceremonial clothing exist, as more than a century has passed since it was commonplace for Osage to be wearing Western clothing.

How to Learn More: Osage clothing is not a frequent topic of scholarship. While focusing on modern design elements, “Native Designers of High Fashion: Expressing Identity, Creativity and Tradition in Contemporary Customary Design,” (Ph.D Dissertation) by Jessica RheAnn Metcalfe is an excellent place to look for more information.

Object Name: Beadwork, Bead Necklace (Glass)

Object Osage Name: Hiⁿ-çka', wa-noⁿ-p'iⁿ (necklace)

Common Materials: Cordage, both plant and animal, glass

Common Period of Production: Began in the sixteenth century

Method of Production: Small holes would be drilled in glass beads purchased from European colonists, and then threaded with a variety of types of cordage in order to link beads together, or join them

Physical Description: Glass beads would be colored and ornamented, then linked together on a string or otherwise attached to an object for decorative purpose. Beads came in a variety of colors and could represent numerous things. Glass beads would typically be joined with other, pre-colonization materials, such as feathers, quills, bones and shells.

Material Culture: Beads served several purposes in Osage culture. Primarily, they were decorative, worn to demonstrate individual and tribal wealth and vitality. In other cases, beads were utilized as an aid for the memorization of oral tradition, with each individual bead representing a specific story or event that would be repeated. Lastly, beads served an economic purpose, and were not exclusively traded between Native Americans and Europeans – they were also utilized for inter-tribal agreements and exchanges.

Storage Concerns: The plant and animal materials are far more fragile than the beads themselves, and should be prioritized over the beads in order to maintain the object's overall stability. In

Osage culture, the object as a whole has relevance, but the beads themselves do not.

Specifically, a bead itself does not carry cultural or spiritual significance and must be combined with something else to actually serve a purpose.

How to Learn More: *North American Jewelry and Adornment: From Prehistory to the Present* and *The History of Beads: From 100,000 B.C. to the Present* by Lois Sherr Dubin are both excellent references for the practice of beadwork and the symbolic purpose those beads might have served.

Object Name: Bow

Object Osage Name: Miⁿ-dse

Common Materials: Wood (Ash, Cedar, Oak and Osage Orange commonly), bones and horns (stave) animal sinew, plant fibers, (string), leather, hide and bone (grip).

Common Period of Production: Bows have existed in the Americas for more than ten thousand years. As used by Native Americans specifically, objects dating back to 500 CE have been identified.

Method of Production: The shaft of the bow would typically be comprised of a whittled length of flexible wood, the grip would be wound around the center of the stave and would usually be made out of animal hide. Sinew would be taken from animals and prepared into long, twisted and rolled strands that would serve as the bowstring.

Physical Description: The Osage used bows of different lengths for different purposes, ranging from a stave of approximately five feet to those of approximately three. Shorter bows were traditionally used from horseback and for smaller game, while larger bows were utilized for hunting larger creatures such as the buffalo. While there are other variations, most varieties of Osage bow can be defined as either a self bow or a composite bow. Self bows have staves comprised of a singular element, almost always wood, whereas composite bows have multiple varieties of wood and sometimes bone laminated together into a single stave. Prior to the invention of the modern compound bow, composite bows were referred to as compound bones – an important distinction, if one is looking at older texts.

Material Culture: The Osage were proud hunters, best known for their never-ending pursuit for buffalo. For much of Osage history, hunting and foraging were the primary ways in which the

tribe was fed, and so hunters and gatherers hold a special, vital place in Osage culture.

Traditionally a male occupation, women were also involved in the practice of hunting through the preparation of meat, the preparation of skins and participated in the construction of arrows and other hunting necessities. Early Osage communities were largely nomadic, and broad parts of the population would participate in hunting activities – only the young children and the truly elderly remained near the campfire. The protection of hunting grounds was a leading cause of conflict between Native American tribes, though inter-tribal relations sometimes demanded wealth to be shared between adversaries, as it was seen as dishonorable to permit even your enemy to starve to death.

Storage Concerns: Heat and sunlight are the primary issues that arise when storing bows. Bows should not be stored strung, nor should they be strung at all if it can be avoided, as wood can lose its flexibility over time and the act of stringing may cause the stave to snap. Naturally made bowstrings are subject to decay and should be handled in accordance with an individual institution's collection management policy. Otherwise, there are no specific storage concerns that apply to bows that do not apply to wooden objects in general.

How to Learn More: For Native American bows generally, *Encyclopedia of Native American Bows, Arrows & Quivers* by Steve Allely and Jim Hamm is a fantastic resource.

Object Name: Cushion

Object Osage Name: I'be-hiⁿ (to be used for sitting upon) and Iⁿ'-be-hiⁿ (to be used as a pillow).

Common Materials: Early productions were simply leather bags stuffed with down, feathers or plains grasses. Later, the Osage adopted the same pillows and cushions as their European neighbors.

Common Period of Production: Actual existing examples are not readily available beyond the nineteenth century, but given the technological capabilities of Native American peoples and the historical prevalence of cushions and pillows in other cultures, it is reasonable to assume they were used by Siouxan cultures well into antiquity.

Method of Production: Early variants of Osage cushions were constructed out of animal hide folded around a filler material, and then stitched closed with animal sinew. Over time, cloth became the dominant material of construction, and cushions were either fashioned from cloth purchased from European settlers or purchased already constructed.

Physical Description: Almost universally, pillows prior to colonization were simply repurposed leather bags or satchels, constructed the same way out of the same materials. Ribbonwork, beadwork and dying were traditional components of Osage craftsmanship, and are the only meaningful difference between later Osage pillows and those used by European colonists.

Material Culture: Pillows and cushions were not typically utilized to record pictographic histories of events, unlike tapestries, tabards and tipis themselves. Photographs taken of tipi interiors during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries usually display several pillows and cushions, often with beadwork and geometric patterns inscribed upon them, suggesting that they were used decoratively rather than strictly for their utility. Satchels and cushions were easily

converted into one another, and created from common materials, and so were commonly available among the Osage.

Storage Concerns: Common filler materials for Osage pillows and cushions include feathers and plains grasses. Wood and stone has also been used as filler material, but less commonly. For these reasons, insect infestation is the primary concern. The surrounding temperature should be maintained at around seventy degrees Fahrenheit, and relative humidity should be kept as close to 50% as reasonable.

How to Learn More: *Indian Clothing Before Cortez* by Patricia Reiff Anawalt is an excellent historical resource, while *Fingerweaving Basics* by Gerald L. Finley serves as an introductory guide to the production of Native American textiles in general.

Object Name: Knife

Object Osage Name: Moⁿ-hiⁿ (also the term used for ritual knives), Moⁿ-hiⁿ-pa-çi-ço-be (a long knife, purpose-made for military use), Moⁿ-hiⁿ-u-he (the sheathe for a knife).

Common Materials: Stone, primarily flint, iron.

Common Period of Production: Stone knives were used by Native Americans for millennia, specifically Osage examples emerge in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE. The Osage did not traditionally utilize copper weaponry, unlike some other tribes, and until European arrival only very rarely used metal weaponry. Much of that weaponry was traded for rather than made.

Method of Production: Stone knives were carved, usually from flint, and hammered into a leather-wrapped wooden handle before being further secured with cordage. Osage metalworking did not really begin prior to European arrival, and while the Osage were quick to adopt new technologies, never really became renowned for metallurgy. Most metal tools were therefore purchased or otherwise acquired from other tribes, or the Europeans themselves.

Physical Description: The Osage and Native Americans in general favored short blades, and the blade length could be anywhere from three to eight inches. Knives outside of this range do exist but are relatively rare. The handles are almost universally hide-wrapped wood, and are occasionally adorned with beadwork or ribbon.

Material Culture: Knives were commonly used tools in Osage culture, though they also served a military and ritual role. Knives were not particularly common militarily, their short length and lethality made them poorly suited for the type of combat utilized by the Osage. The goal of conflict was usually to drive a people away from a certain region, or to capture goods and belongings, especially livestock. It was relatively rare for the Osage, or Native Americans in

general, to engage in combat for the sole purpose of killing their opponent. Captives served several roles in Native American society – as slave labor, to be traded back to their tribe of origin, or ultimately to be adopted into the tribe by which they had been captured. It was therefore a poor economic decision, in most circumstances, to actually kill one's enemies.

In rituals, knives served several purposes. Human sacrifice was not commonplace among Native Americans, but blood sacrifice by both people and animals was a component of several ceremonies, and the Moⁿ-hiⁿ was the tool utilized for these events. Knives are also not representative of masculinity in Osage culture – stone clubs, instead, were viewed as the primary tool of war.

Storage Concerns: Ritual knives can usually be identified by the excessive ornamentation upon them, which would make it difficult to handle for everyday tasks or military encounters. These knives, if they can be positively identified, should be stored separately from other knives and clearly marked. It is traditionally improper for ritual tools and household tools to be stored in the same place, though this is not always feasible in a storage environment. Otherwise, there are no particular considerations beyond the base materials involved.

How to Learn More: *Ritual and Honour: Warriors of the North American Plains* by Max Corocci is a brief introduction to how Native American weapons were utilized both militarily and ritually.

Native American Weapons by Colin F. Taylor is an illustrated guide demonstrating the appearance and usage of numerous varieties of Native American weaponry, including the knife.

Object Name: Costume (Ritual Garb)

Object Osage Name: We'-ki-gthi-wiⁿ

Common Materials: Various plant and animal materials

Common Period of Production: Approximately 1500 to ~1850 CE.

Method of Production: Variable based on the piece; most pieces of the traditional Osage ritual garb were made from stitched animal hides, decorated with feathers, beads, bone and ribbons.

Physical Description: Traditional Osage male ritual garb consisted of three pieces. Firstly, ornamented deerskin leggings – if a dance was involved, bone rattles or bells would be stitched to the material or strapped to the shins and thighs. The second component was a sash, usually made of twisted cordage and fur, decorated with bones, claws and quills. The third component was the shawl, or blanket, a long length of hide richly decorated with bead and ribbonwork. Of female ritual garb, little is known and few examples remain, though women played a vital role in Osage ceremony. From modern examples, it is likely that Osage women wore deer-skin dresses during the colder months along with similarly decorated shawls – during warmer months, Osage nudity taboos did not prohibit women from wearing only a skirt. Both men and women might also wear feathered headdresses or other hair ornaments, depending on the ceremony being performed

Material Culture: In Osage culture, clothing often represented a shield for the wearer against spiritual threats. In this way, ritual clothing was uniquely imbued with symbols and decorations in order to bolster those spirits that were friendly to the tribe, while protecting the wearer from hostile spirits, or frightening them away. Ceremonies and dances were commonplace in Osage society, and took place at most social gatherings within the tribe. For this reason, ritual garb was

frequently used and stored in such a way as to be readily available – among the Osage, it was not unusual to only have two sets of clothing, one for daily use, and the other for rituals and dancing.

Storage Concerns: Osage ritual garb was designed for display – only the headdresses have notable storage concerns, in that it is traditionally inappropriate for someone other than the individual the headdress was intended for to wear it. Spiritually, it would be commonly acceptable for such things to be publicly displayed if the purpose was to further the Osage cause, or spread Osage culture.

How to Learn More: *Dress Clothing of the Plains Indians* by Ronald P. Koch is one of the few purpose-built studies on this particular topic. For female clothing specifically, *Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dress* by Cecile R. Ganteaume is an excellent resource, though it focuses primarily on the latter half of Osage history.

Object Name: Medals, Military Honors, Trophies

Object Osage Name: O' doⁿ

Common Materials: Stone, particularly porous varieties such as limestone, wood, bone, leather.

Common Period of Production: There are potential examples from as far back as the thirteenth century, but the earliest confirmed examples of Osage military honors are from the sixteenth.

Method of Production: Highly variable based on the material and purpose. Stone discs and medallions would be chiseled, a hole drilled through them and then secured around the neck with a length of cordage. Bones would be secured with cordage in a similar way, while hides, leather and other materials would simply be sewn or otherwise secured onto the front of shields or banners.

Physical Description: Highly variable. Trophies are normally easy to identify, as they are almost always made up of animal bones from successful hunts – more successful hunters would have long strings of bones that were worn as necklaces, or in the case of the extremely successful, draped over the front of their ritual garb. More grisly trophies such as scalps or skulls from human opponents were occasionally taken, but rarely featured in the personal belongings of an individual. Such trophies were usually publicly presented or ritually cremated in order to drive away further hostile incursions, to satisfy the spirits of the slain or misdirect those same spirits to another location. Stone medallions would, according to tradition, be constructed from materials found near battlefields, but it would be nearly impossible to discern this from physical examinations.

Material Culture: O'doⁿ played a vital role in the Osage culture. Beyond just being a record of successful hunts and military victories or defeats, O'doⁿ were also worn during most ritual gatherings. They would be utilized by tribe elders to preserve the oral traditions of the tribe, and according to Osage beliefs, their presence in rituals would both honor the spirits of their ancestors, and drive away the disharmonious spirits of the slain, especially those that might have been sent by a tribe with whom the Osage were warring. O'doⁿ were communal belongings, and the Little Old Men had the power to prevent members of the tribe from wearing them as a punishment, and could confiscate them indefinitely for particularly grievous offenses.

To claim an O'doⁿ improperly, without the consent and approval of the Little Old Men, was a grievous offense. Improper trophies would be destroyed, while tattoos demonstrating an unearned honor would be flayed from the flesh of the perpetrator. O'doⁿ were therefore the most visible examples of the tribe's success, and strictly regulated as a result.

Storage Concerns: O'doⁿ were designed for public display, and there are no particular guidelines for the manner in which they should be stored or presented. To most strictly adhere to their purpose in Osage culture, an effort should be made to determine what the O'doⁿ was intended to represent, and for that information to be included in the description, though in the centuries since the practice was commonplace much of that information has been lost.

How to Learn More: For a specific O'doⁿ, the Wah-Zha-Zhi Cultural Center should be able to put the interested professional in contact with an elder that might know more. For O'doⁿ in general, *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians* by Richard J. Chacon and David H. Dye is an excellent resource for the taking and usage of trophies

by Native Americans generally. While specifically dealing with human remains, the work also details other trophies and their purposes.

Object Name: Pot, Pottery

Object Osage Name: (singular) Moⁿ-i^{n'}-ka) (general, plural, Moⁿ-i^{n'}-ka tse-xe)

Common Materials: Clay, rock.

Common Period of Production: Native Americans have been producing pottery for thousands of years – surviving Osage examples are from approximately 1,500.

Method of Production: Traditionally, Osage pottery is hand-built using the coiling method and does not involve a potter's wheel, and were fired openly, though following the arrival of Europeans kilns became popular. Traditional Osage ceramic-making still does not involve a potter's wheel, however.

Physical Description: Extremely variable. Osage pottery was usually made for specific purposes rather than serving a ritual, historical or spiritual purpose. Fired ceramics would be used as containers, and were often very decorative, displaying symbols of fish, trees, the sun or the spider. They would also be colored, both via painting and through the application of a slip prior to firing.

Material Culture: Ceramics played minor ceremonial roles – the bowl that carried herbs, tobacco and other components were almost always earthenware. The Osage, unlike several other Native American cultures, did not and do not typically create effigies out of pottery. Instead, the Osage principally utilized wood, stone and bone.

Storage Concerns: Fired ceramics are generally quite resilient. If possible, maintain a low, stable humidity.

How to Learn More: “The Mesoamerican Pottery Collection” by Inga E. Calvin from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies is likely the largest collection of resources for Native American pottery that is readily available online.

Object Name: Quiver

Object Osage Name: Moⁿ-zhu

Common Materials: Hide, plant materials, bone (body), beads, hide, sinew, plant and animal materials (decorative).

Common Period of Production: For Native Americans specifically, quivers were commonly produced from 500 CE to the late 19th century, though some continue to be made today.

Method of Production: Traditionally, some form of animal pelt or the leather taken from it would be folded upon itself at the bottom and the sides, leaving a pocket open at the top. These folded edges would then be sewn together to keep it from unravelling. Cordage would be used to produce the strap or loop that held the quiver in place on the wearer's body. Less commonly, quivers were formed from wood, or even bone, through a substantial amount of carving rather than folding and sewing. Regardless of the material used, quivers would be richly adorned with beadwork, fingerwoven imagery and trophies taken from kills.

Physical Description: Both belt and over-the-back quivers were utilized by the Osage during their period of activity. While some contemporary accounts suggest that these quivers were large enough to hold hundreds of arrows, the average surviving example appears to be prepared to hold between ten and twenty.

Material Culture: Quivers were relatively commonplace among Osage hunters due to the availability of animal hides to construct them and the importance of archery and hunting in Osage culture, generally. Hunting tools, such as the quiver, as well as secondary military equipment such as shields, typically carried most of the ornamentation that the average Osage person would carry during day-to-day activities. Imagery from battles won and heroic feats

would be sewn into the quiver, while trophies taken from successful hunts would dangle from numerous loops. Beadwork and other ornamentation techniques were also widely applied to quivers in order to demonstrate the prestige of the wearer.

Storage Concerns: Animal hide generally poses the unique challenge of being remarkably attractive for insects and depending on the variety and condition of the hide, may require additional attention from a conservator in order to remain stable. By the time of beadwork, most Osage fingerweavers were utilizing cloth rather than animal sinew, and so quiver ornamentation tends not to be particularly fragile. Generally, keep quivers dry, out of direct sunlight and out of extreme heat in order to maintain their condition in the long term.

How to Learn More: For Native American quivers generally, *Encyclopedia of Native American Bows, Arrows & Quivers* by Steve Allely and Jim Hamm is a fantastic resource.