

QUANAH PARKER AND COMANCHE CULTURE:  
DIVIDED LOYALTIES

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## CHAPTER I

### PREFACE

On December 4, 1910, six miles northwest of Cache, Oklahoma, not far from the Wichita Mountains, several hundred whites and approximately one thousand Indians gathered in a small cemetery to honor Comanche Chief Quanah Parker, at the reburial of his white mother Cynthia Ann. She died forty years earlier and was buried in Fosterville Cemetery near Poynor, Texas. Upon finding her body, bones were all that remained only enough to fill an infant's casket. Parker received an appropriation of one thousand dollars from the United States government to have his mother reburied near his home, two miles to the west. Two hundred dollars of the appropriation was for transportation of the body and eight hundred dollars for a monument. Frank Rush, supervisor of the Wichita national forest, A.C. Birdsong, Parker's son-in-law and sub-agent at Cache, Emmett Cox, an Indian trader, and E.W. Alexander, a merchant from Cache were the pallbearers, notably all white, chosen by Parker.

As the crowd gathered before two o'clock that afternoon, Indian dirges came from around the freshly dug gravesite. A new mound sat in the middle of an open acre pasture, between an Indian cemetery and a Mennonite mission cemetery. This would ensure enough room for the monument Parker ordered. Parker presented the main speech to the crowd, along with Baptist missionary, Reverend E.C. Deyo, and Mennonite missionary A.J. Becker oversaw the burial. Parker first spoke in Comanche and then gave the same discourse in English:

Forty years ago, my mother died. She captured by Comanches nine years old. Love Indian and wild life so well, no want to go back to folks. All same people, anyway, God say. I love my mother. I like white people. Got great heart. I want my people follow after white way, get educate, know work, make living when payments stop. I tell 'em they got to know pick cotton, plow corn. I want them know white man's God. Comanche may die today, tomorrow, ten years. When end comes, then they all be together again then. That's why, when government United States give money for new grave, I have this funeral, and ask white folks to help bury. Glad to see so many white people and so many my people here to funeral. That's all.<sup>1</sup>

Following Parker, Reverend Deyo discussed Cynthia Ann's life and continued to encourage the Indians to follow the Bible and its teachings so they could reunite in the next world. A converted Comanche, Herman Nahpay, translated the words into Comanche for the ones who could not speak English. Immediately after another Comanche convert, Kowena, led the people in prayer. Comanche members of the church sang translated songs from the hymnal.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the aspects of Parker's life are within this ceremony, from his white maternal heritage, to his father's Comanche culture. He refers to Indians as "his people," yet embraces the white way and encourages other Indians to do the same. What we find in Comanche leader Quanah Parker's biography is a person who was able to thrive in two different worlds, maintaining loyalties to both. He was to a surprising degree successful at whatever he tried to do. Parker raided Mexican and American settlements and fought encroachment on his land. Later, he helped bring peace his tribe and became influential in tribal government.

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<sup>1</sup>"Impressive Ceremony Marks Cynthia Ann Parker Funeral," *The Lawton Daily News*, December 6, 1910, microfilm box 48, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

<sup>2</sup>The information for the preceding paragraphs comes from two articles from *The Lawton Daily News*, "Will Honor Memory Cynthia Ann Parker," December 4 and "Impressive Ceremony Marks Cynthia Ann Parker Funeral," December 6, 1910, microfilm box 48, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

Being a Comanche helped him in numerous ways. Comanche culture allowed free movement within social status.<sup>3</sup> Being born the son of a chief did not assure anyone a position of power later on. If the person was not a good leader, no one was compelled to follow based on his paternity. If there were problems between members of a band, they were free to leave and join another band. These are some of the simple things that the Comanches did making them a tribe that allowed people to improve themselves or lose out while being free to come and go as they pleased. While what would have been mainstream society at the time also allowed for some of the same things to occur. In America's capitalistic society, anyone can rise and fall all while making their decisions for themselves. Parker grew up in a society that prepared him for his new life on the reservation.

While there are no clear-cut right or wrong answers as with anything in history, simple observations make it possible to decide what direction to go in the future. Parker's biography is an intriguing example of what frequently gets described as "living in two worlds," in one as a Comanche warrior and in the other as a diplomat-politician after the fashion of Euro-Americans who knew how to manipulate the system and bureaucracy on the reservation. Yet it might be better to suggest that Quanah Parker, as any number of people, lived in a complex world of multiple loyalties. Understanding the world that he came from provides insights into how he became an influential leader. The skills, such as leadership and responsibility, he learned as a Comanche made him more fit to be a leader on the reservation.

Parker advanced his stature and increased his wealth by working the system; but though he prospered, at the same time he fought for what he believed was best for his tribe. While trying to move the tribe into a more harmonious relationship with ever-encroaching "white" society he

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<sup>3</sup> When discussing culture the easiest and most accessible definition comes from Edward Tylor in *Primitive Culture*, "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Edward Tylor, *High Points in Anthropology*, ed. Paul Bohannan and Mark Glazer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 63.

nevertheless managed to secure some of their old ways of living. He also managed to keep more wives than the United States government allowed. He tried to make it an example that it could exist. Peyote use, for religious purposes and vision quests then later with the Native American Church, among tribal members was increasing and through his lobbying, he helped to secure future use by the tribe. The Native American Church owes a lot to Parker and his efforts. He also provided the Comanches with connections to great money through land leases with Texas cattlemen. The way things were progressing within the reservation, such as allotment and the Comanches lack of interest in farming, leasing the excess land made a lot of sense. One cannot overlook the fact that Parker benefited greatly from the leases. His mixed heritage made it easier to communicate with members of his mother's ethnic group. His biographers often stress this; but it did play a role in opening doors to mainstream American culture. His service as a judge on the Indian court also helped him in maintaining largely peaceful relations with non-Comanches. He was also able to try to enforce both the government's version of law, as well as tribal customary laws. This would prove on occasion to be quite a balancing act. Trying to blend two different lifestyles was something he did quite well.

The characterization of the relationship between the Native Americans peoples and the Euro-American government of the United States has been of the doctrine of manifest destiny, power, politics, and money. Few Indians were ever able to master the skills required to be successful in this complicated and occasionally treacherous process. One of the most successful was Quanah Parker, the one and only principal chief of the Comanches.

A simple way to follow Indian policy is to know in which department the Bureau of Indian Affairs was located. While policies may not be as straight forward as they seem, this simple fact makes it easy to figure out where the priorities were. The creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs occurred in 1824. At the time of its creation, it was in the War Department and remained there until 1849, when it found a new home in the Department of the Interior. This shift

to the Department of the Interior represented a desire on the part of the government for the management of the land the Indians occupied. According to its mission statement, the current role of the Interior Department is the protection of America's natural resources and heritage. It also, "honors our cultures and tribal communities, and supplies the energy to power our future."<sup>4</sup> A department that deals with land management and natural resources also handles Indian affairs. This is a clear indication of which direction the government would go with the Indians. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Indian land became the most valuable asset they possessed and the government needed to secure it for the westward expansion of predominantly Euro-Americans.

The expectation for the Plains Indians to ride into the reservation and adjust to their new lifestyle immediately was not realistic. The change the government wanted could not happen that fast. Plains tribes lived what some observers described as a nomadic existence, although that is not a fair assessment. The tribes did not wander aimlessly through the plains of North America; rather they traveled to specific places at specific times of the year, which they repeated. While they might not arrive at the exact date every year it was roughly the same time and they did the same year to year, staying in their own territory. They did fight wars over territory for better grasslands and hunting grounds. They had alliances and ancient enemies. To describe the Plains tribes as nomads does not do them justice.

One Comanche warrior stood out as a prime example of what the United States government was trying to accomplish with their new policy. Quanah Parker progressed quickly in the image of white culture. Whites liked to point out that his progressivism was because of his "white" blood. Even Parker's appearance set him apart from both whites and Indians. He was taller and not as heavily built, his complexion and hair were lighter than what was typical for a

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<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of the Interior, <http://www.doi.gov/> (accessed July 10, 2010).



Comanche. His eyes were gray, while the full bloods had brown eyes.<sup>5</sup> Yet, Parker grew up in typical fashion. He hunted buffalo on the plains and earned honors as a warrior. He had never experienced white culture growing up on the plains. His mother was white, but at a young age, the Comanches captured her and assimilated her into the tribe as any full blood Comanche.

Throughout the work, terms about Parker's heritage or blood appear. While researching, one finds many references to his "blood," this terminology is antiquated. It is not a person's blood that makes them who they are; however, it is their heritage that is influential. As times have changed people began to see these differences. Any reference to blood comes directly from a quotation of the era of Parker's life.

The simple fact that his mother was white made him the logical person, from the federal government's viewpoint, to deal with on all matters concerning his tribe and reservation life. He used the changing times to aid his progression to of primary chief of his people.<sup>6</sup> Parker was born into an Indian world that was rapidly changing. Because of his mother's heritage, the government encouraged him in assuming positions of power and influence. He used his influence and power, as the principal Comanche chief, to advance himself while still trying to maintain some of the old ways. Some other members of tribe liked the style of acculturation or accommodation advocated by Parker.

As many biographers of Parker tend to examine his life on the reservation and work with sources from Fort Sill, but few examine what life was like for the Comanches before entering the reservation. This situation is somewhat troubling as Comanche culture reaches back several hundred years before their time under the government's supervision. To write about Parker without discussing the way in which he grew up is unreasonable. By giving a background,

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<sup>5</sup> William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Iverson, *When Indian Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 90.

although somewhat short when trying to explain what life was like for him as a child, it may become possible to understand the decisions that he makes later in life.

## CHAPTER II

### COMANCHE CULTURE AND HISTORY

To understand the decisions Quanah makes it is important to try to be aware of Comanche culture to comprehend the changes that Parker made during his lifetime. Life on the plains as a Comanche warrior was much different from that of traditional white lifestyle that he would adapt to successfully. The Comanches divided into many small bands that acted independently; but unification could occur if needed. One chief per band governed without one central leader. At its greatest point, there could have been as many as thirty-five bands. Parker belonged to the Quahada (antelope) band, noted as the fiercest fighters of the Comanches. Band camps were the basic social unit. Everyone that belonged to the band shared in the care of the village. Young Comanches were cared for communally. To use the colloquial phrase, it literally took a whole village to raise children. While the fathers were away hunting or raiding it was the uncles and grandfathers teaching the children to hunt and fight. Nephews would address their uncles as father. The role of women within the tribe was to bear and raise children, gather, cook, and clean. Women were in control of the house, down to supervising the erection or disassembly of the family lodge. They had rules for their society that maintained order and served their lifestyle well.

The Comanches were not always a singular entity. They share most of their past with the Shoshones. The Comanches have a name for themselves, as most Indian tribes do, that simply means “The People.” The name the Comanches gave themselves was “Nerm” or “Nim-ma” and

sometimes appears in text as “Neum.”<sup>7</sup> Again, like most Indian tribes though, the tribe acquired a new name, usually from outsiders such as the Spanish or French, a name with which the outsiders are more comfortable. Most of the early explorers in North America that happened to cross paths or hear about the Comanches knew them as the Padouca, their Siouan name. The Spanish made the name of Comanche the accepted one, although the Spanish did take the name from the Utes. According to Wallace and Hoebel, “In Ute, the word is more exactly rendered *Komántcia*.”<sup>8</sup> This name was not strictly for the Comanches in the beginning, but used for the Utes’ enemies. The more they fought with the Comanches the name stuck with them. The change seems to have happened around 1726.

The Plains Indians also offered sign language and the Comanches also have a special sign name. Their sign is the Snake. Parker explained one of the traditions about the name. The Comanches were looking for better hunting grounds and their travels were taking them northwest across mountains. The colder climate began to take its toll on part of the band and they began to question the leader. The leader called a council, but the dissatisfied members decided not to stay and returned to the south. Wallace and Hoebel write, “in a fit of anger the leader compared his followers to a snake backing up in its tracks. From that day the universal sign language for Comanche has been “ ‘snake going backward.’ ”<sup>9</sup> There are other versions of the story, but the one Parker relates may reveal more about his character and the character of his people.

They had a legal system that maintained order for their people. Power and strength was the basis of the Comanche legal system. Their law consisted of contract and ancient property.<sup>10</sup> Common legal features were contract concepts, due process, hospitality conventions, personal property, and truce. Comanches could keep what they could hold. To them life was about

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<sup>7</sup> Rupert Norval Richardson, *Indian Tribes of Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1971), 44.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ancient property consists of the passage of items to other family members upon a person’s death.

obtaining as much power as was possible. They placed no social barriers in front of people who were trying to reach the top or falling to the bottom. Age or any other social factor did not contribute to a person's success or failure within the band. They also did not force anyone to stay in the band. People were free to leave or stay.<sup>11</sup> By obtaining great influence on the reservation, Parker held true to the Comanche way of trying to gain as much power as possible.

The social structure of the Comanches varies from other Plains Indians, but they do share some similarities. They hold family in the highest regard along with simply being a Comanche. Marriage is a vital part of their band lifestyle, but does not follow what many people may think about marriage. The young men of the tribe must prove themselves in some way before being able to take a bride. Cash and Wolff note, "Typically, the young Comanche warrior, having completed his vision quest and achieved his medicine, would go on the warpath with a war party. If he succeeded, his family would honor him with a give-away....At this point he was eligible to marry."<sup>12</sup>

The give-away by the family could be quite costly and even break them. This was technically the final step one needed to take before marriage, but many waited until they had proved themselves by gaining fame through war or hunting. The Comanches did not discourage premarital sex, but they did not encourage the practice either. Once the young man was eligible to marry, he must take gifts to an important member of the young woman's family to which he wanted to marry. The typical gift was horses. If the horses were accepted, the young man sent more gifts to the family through a third party. With the acceptance of these gifts, the marriage could become official. The family did not consult the prospective bride about the suitor and the expectation was for her to do what the family wanted. Suitors normally discussed the issue

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<sup>11</sup> Rennard Strickland, "Wolf Warriors and Turtle Kings: Native American Law Before the Blue Coats," *Washington Law Review* 72, no. 4 (1997): 1053-56.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph H. Cash and Gerald W. Wolff, *The Comanche People* (Phoenix: Indian Tribal Series, 1974), 9-10.

beforehand with the family, so rejection was not typical. After the gifts were accepted, the young man took the woman to his tipi and they were married. It was also typical for the young warrior, as he gained in power and wealth, to receive his wife's sisters as more wives. Multiple wives could also come from among captives, as in the case of Parker's mother, Cynthia Ann. Their treatment was the same as any other member of the band and the young one's treatment did not differ.<sup>13</sup>

‘“This is the Indian that fills our ideal of true savage life – the Arab of the Prairie – the model of the fabled Thessalian ‘Centaur,’ half horse, half man, so closely joined and so dexterously managed that it appears but one animal, fleet and furious. The Comanches are considered the best horseman in the world!”<sup>14</sup> The quotation is from Homer Thrall and appears at the beginning of a chapter in *The Texas Indians* by Mary Atkinson roughly captures, how great the Comanches were with horses. While the wording could be more artful; nevertheless, the idea comes across that the Comanches were a premiere equestrians. They depended upon them and used horses to the best of their abilities.

How many horses one owned was a determining factor in wealth among the tribe. The introduction of the horse significantly changed their way of life. Until they acquired horses, they hunted on foot.<sup>15</sup> The horse replaced the dog as the beast of burden for the Indians. They established breeding programs in their horse herds to raise smaller, quicker horses, which aided in hunting buffalo and raiding enemies. These horses were more efficient for the hunters, making it easier to shoot from horseback and mount and dismount. Horses were the main attribute to the Comanches' success for years along the southern plains.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 10-13.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Jordan Atkinson, *The Texas Indians* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1953), 165.

<sup>15</sup> The Spanish brought the horse to North America in the sixteenth century. The Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortes gets credit for bringing the first horses in 1519, although Indians on the plains did not utilize the horse until the eighteenth century.

The Comanches learned to fight and hunt effectively on horseback. They were considered the supreme horsemen of the plains. From a military history viewpoint, they were the greatest light mounted cavalry. Their style of fighting caused many problems for the army. They did not choose to fight in a direct technique as the soldiers did. The Comanches used guerilla tactics to harass their enemies. The instances when they went in to fight the enemy directly, they still employed tactics that were unconventional for the U.S. army. A report from Captain Robert Carter of the fourth Calvary, describes the fighting style of the Comanches from a battle fought with Parker's band in 1871. He writes,

Their rapid swing out or rush into a V-shape formation, and then fanning out to the front from these two wings into an irregular line of swirling warriors, all rapidly moving in right and left hand circles, no two Indians coming together, and their quick extensions, while advancing, to the right or left, and as rapidly concentrating or assembling on the center, but without any close bunching, and their falling back in the same manner, sometimes in a fan-shaped or wing formation, all was most puzzling to all of our Civil War veterans who had never witnessed such tactical maneuvers, or such a flexible line of skirmishers; all without any audible commands, but with much screeching and loud yelling.<sup>16</sup>

The Comanches needed to employ these types of tactics, due to their small numbers in comparison to the army. This allowed them to make quick attacks and retreat if need be, it could also help to cut down on casualties because they tried to avoid any direct warfare with the enemy. They were able to keep the army away for many years doing this. The major thing the army finally did was to target the Comanches horse herds. With limited numbers of horses, the Comanches could not fight as effectively because the style they used. Fresh horses allowed them to attack and pull back, while still being able to ride long distances to maintain a lead on their pursuers.

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<sup>16</sup> Robert G. Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie, or Winning West Texas from the Comanches* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1961), 289-90.

Jean Louis Berlandier was a French scientist that traveled in modern day Texas and studied Indians. One of the tribes he studied was the Comanches. His journal has been published and translated into English and is titled, *The Indians of Texas in 1830*. While the information antedates Parker's life; nevertheless, it provides vital insights into the history of tribe that would eventually shape him. Berlandier describes two types of soldiers inside of every band. The first kind of soldier he describes as ordinary. These warriors are men able to bear weapons and go into battles to protect and serve the tribe. They are under no obligation to stand and fight if the circumstances turn against them. In fact, the expectation is to get out of the situation and try to save their lives. Their honor is not at stake if they flee from a situation that appears to be lost. While this is not what most people would associate with Indian fighters, it makes sense for a tribe such as the Comanches. Their numbers were small and divided among many bands each life held more value in their system. Berlandier describes two situations that could bring dishonor to the warriors, "To allow themselves to be taken by surprise or to show cowardice should that happen are the only two actions that would merit them the scorn of their fellows and the obloquy of all the tribes."<sup>17</sup> They were not supposed to surrender either; a fight to the death in defense is the honorable way out of surrender.

The other type of warriors described by Berlandier serves an entirely different purpose. The name of this group is the Wolves. This society is a fierce group that had high standards. He writes that not many existed because of the obligations and responsibilities they must uphold. Berlandier explains that the warrior society known as Wolves consists of exclusively elite fighters of great reputation.<sup>18</sup> The group consists of men over the age of thirty or thirty-five. These men are not supposed to run from danger or a fight and must take an oath that they never will. Their job is fight to succeed or fight to the death trying, similar to the well-known Dog Soldiers of the

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<sup>17</sup> Jean Louis Berlandier ed. John C. Ewers, *The Indians of Texas in 1830* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), 70.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



Cheyenne. When the other warriors can try to save themselves from a bleak situation, these warriors must stand and fight. A withdraw from combat is only acceptable with orders from the leader to do so. These traits set them apart from the other warriors. The only difference in their dress from the other warriors is a wolf skin that they let hang behind them. This is undoubtedly, where the name came from. Even in battle they do not ride in with the other warriors, they ride where there is a need whether it is rear guard or flank.

As with any highly respected group, these men enjoy certain privileges others in the tribe do not. A victory raises great celebration from within the tribe upon their return. One such privilege upon return could be a dance where only the unmarried girls of the tribe were invited and urgings to do what the returning warriors wanted. However, if the men acted in an inappropriate manner the repercussions were just as bad as the rewards. Cowardice is the main reason for people within the tribe to insult the men. Berlandier states, “The chiefs goad the women to insult him, to taunt him with being nothing more than a woman like themselves.”<sup>19</sup> The Wolves must also lose no man and if they do, they must fight until they have slain all the enemies or they themselves have died. Failing this, they must not return to the band. The men are free to travel to another band and join with them if there are no relations to the dead warrior. Again, women play a role in public humiliation and even trying to kill them if these types of acts occurred. These warriors appear to be the backbone of the society, serving a purpose much like modern day Marines. It also puts credibility with the Comanches being the Spartans of the Plains.

Parker grew up in a warrior society, the lords of the southern plains, which was the Comanche way.<sup>20</sup> Comanches were not afraid to adapt to changing styles of living and that helped them to become the force they were on the Southern Plains. He grew up following buffalo

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>20</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 7.

herds, raiding Texans, and fighting with tribes that the Comanches were constantly at war with, such as the Utes.<sup>21</sup> The Comanches fought many battles with the Texans because the Texans had moved into the Comanches native territory.<sup>22</sup> Warriors were the protectors of the tribe. They demonstrated ferocity in battle and superb horsemanship skills. The Comanches used bows and arrows with extreme accuracy. When French trappers first arrived and traded guns to them, the Comanches soon realized that they were better off using their traditional weapons because guns were inaccurate and too slow to load. A Comanche warrior could fire his bow approximately twenty times in the time it took someone to reload a black powder weapon. They were efficient with a bow and arrow because young boys had the weapon in their hands from the time they could walk. They developed great skills in handling one.

Morris Foster explains that there is not much information explaining military societies within the Comanche Nation. He does provide a helpful quotation from the Hugh Scott Ledgerbook, ‘ ‘The Comanches have soldier bands that are common to all the Comanches and when they went to war a man took a pipe around to the different bands...When we came together the soldiers had their own dances[.] [E]ach company might have men from every Comanche band in it.’ ’<sup>23</sup> This provides the background for how Parker was able to become a controlling force in the tribe and unite warriors. He gained more recognition after leading his band to the reservation from the federal government. In a statement from an investigator from Washington wrote, ‘ ‘If ever Nature stamped a man with the seal of headship she did it in his case. Quannah

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<sup>21</sup> William T. Hagan, “Quannah Parker,” in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 175.

<sup>22</sup> The Ute translation of Comanche (literally means anyone who wants to fight me all the time). In their own language, it simply meant “the people.” Fighting was a way of life for the Comanches and the boys trained from early on to fight. The job of a warrior was not just to act tough and fight though, it was to provide and watch over others of the tribe who were less fortunate or elderly.

<sup>23</sup> Morris Foster, *Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1991), 62.

would have been a leader and a governor in any circle where fate may have cast him---it is in his blood.”<sup>24</sup>

Parker’s early life can be considered a typical Comanche childhood; however, early in his life started the encroachment of white settlement. With the exception of traders and buffalo hunters, white society, such as permanent towns, had been few in number. Parker had some experience with whites, as he was half. His mother appears to have a profound influence over him, which is evident in examining pictures of his room in the Star House outside of Cache, Oklahoma, where a portrait of his mother is the only picture in his room.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> William T. Hagan, *Unites States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 279.

<sup>25</sup> Etta Martin, interview by Zaidee Bland, Blair, OK, 12 July 1937.

## CHAPTER III

### CYNTHIA ANN PARKER

Parker's father was Peta Nocona, a chief of the Quahada band. His mother, Cynthia Ann Parker, was a captive taken from her family in 1836. The tribe assimilated her fully, as other captives had been, into the tribe. She tattooed a cross on her son's arm and that was how the officials identified him when he came into the reservation. Parker's original name was Tseeta (eagle). His father changed it to Quanah (fragrance/odor) after the capture of his mother.<sup>26</sup> It was 1860 when Cynthia Ann returned, after a trader recognized her as a white woman in a Comanche band. He reported it to the newly formed Texas Rangers and they set out to recover her and other white captives.

To understand Parker fully, one must try to understand the situation that produced him. First, the situation of the capture of his mother needs examining. His mother Cynthia Ann Parker was born in 1827 and moved with her family from Illinois to what was then the Mexican Province of Texas. They settled outside of modern day Groesbeck, Texas, in Limestone County along the western side of Navasota Creek, where in 1834, they built Fort Parker. The fort had a few small log houses and the fortification was made of rough timber. The houses made a circle and logs were set up to make a stockade. There were other family members with families of their own also living inside the fort. In May of 1836, six hundred Comanches warriors attacked Fort Parker. Many of the men were outside of the fort working and warriors killed them. Some of the

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<sup>26</sup> Aubrey Birdsong, "Reminiscences of Quanah Parker" (1965), MS, Fort Sill Archives, Lawton, Oklahoma.

men were able to escape whereas others became captives. The most important captive would turn out to be Cynthia Ann, the future wife of Chief Peta Nocona and mother of Parker. She was only nine years old when the Comanches took her away from her family.<sup>27</sup>

In one report found in the Indian Pioneer Papers located in the Oklahoma Historical Society reports a small variance in the story. In an interview with J.J. Methvin, a local historian and minister from Anadarko, Oklahoma, he states, “For there was a mother who was compelled to lift her nine year old daughter, Cynthia Ann, and her little brother John, up behind a warrior.”<sup>28</sup> Now this report seems out of the ordinary, but reading the remainder of his account, it matches all the others. If his version is true, it adds complexity to the story of Cynthia Ann. The act of her mother handing her and her brother to the Indians could have been her way of trying to save their lives.

The Comanches did absorb numerous captives into the tribe, as did many tribes of the plains. This theory does not seem possible, but when faced with imminent death or lesser living (as many whites would have seen Indian life) her mother may have chosen life. The situation may also provide more evidence as to why Cynthia Ann did not want to return to her family. At nine years old one would remember being handed to an Indian warrior, but would not be able to understand why.

Cynthia Ann was the only remaining captive still not accounted for several years after the raid. There were reports of a blue-eyed girl that rode with the Comanches.<sup>29</sup> During trading, Captain S. Ross of the Texas Rangers, heard the rumors about the girl and tried to purchase her from the Comanches, but the parents would not part with her. Her adopted parents allowed Ross to speak with the girl, but she would not talk to him. Later the rumors about the blue-eyed girl

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<sup>27</sup> Harry Stroud, *Indian-Pioneer Papers*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 374.

<sup>28</sup> J.J. Methvin, *Indian-Pioneer Papers*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 129.

<sup>29</sup> This is addressed by several authors including Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 6-8 and Bill Neeley, *The Last Comanche Chief: The Life and Times of Quanah Parker* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), 11-12.

began to tell about her riding with a Comanche chief, Peta Nocona, who with his band was raiding and creating problems for the settlers in the Staked Plains of Texas.

Sam Houston got permission from the Texas legislature to form a regiment of Rangers to protect settlers in 1860. The captain that would eventually catch up with Peta Nocona and Cynthia Ann was Sul Ross. Ross was in charge of a company of volunteers and stayed on the trail of the Comanches. According to Randolph Campbell, “In November 1860 when a Comanche band led by the war chief Peta Nocona raided settlements as far east as Parker and Jack Counties, leaving behind a trail of theft, rape, murder, and mutilation, Ross pursued them northwestward into the panhandle.”<sup>30</sup> There were about forty Rangers with Ross, along with a supplemental force of twenty-one from the U.S. Second Cavalry. The Texas Rangers pursued Nocona and his band trying to prevent any more attacks on Texas settlers, but without much success. The Rangers finally caught up with Nocona and made a surprise attack on his camp.

One of the first stories about the retrieval of Cynthia Ann involves Captain Ross killing Nocona and goes as follows. The battle of Pease River, also referred to as Mule Creek is the name of the battle between the Rangers and Comanches resulting in the capture of Cynthia Ann and death of Nocona. He and his men came out fighting, while the others attempted to get away. Ross led the attack on the village and supposedly killed Nocona. The Rangers captured what they thought to be an Indian woman, but was in fact Cynthia Ann. The capture of Cynthia Ann was not by Captain Ross, but an Irish lieutenant, named Thomas Kelliher. He chased down Cynthia Ann, at first believing her to a warrior. She must have resembled a Comanche in every way because when Kelliher returned her to Captain Ross he said, ‘ “Captain, I ran me horse most to death and captured a damned squaw.” ’<sup>31</sup> The quotation proves how much she was involved in

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<sup>30</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 205.

<sup>31</sup> Rupert Norval Richardson, *The Frontier of Northwest Texas 1846 to 1876* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1963), 211.

their lifestyle in action and appearance, a Texas Ranger was not able to identify her as a white woman.

In later years, Quanah Parker began to refute the report that Captain Ross killed his father. During questioning on the matter, Parker brought with him the mother of his youngest wife, whom the interviewer described as being “an old gray haired Indian,” the only identification given to her is as the mother of Topaz. She told them that the man killed by Captain Ross during the battle was Yacqua, who was Cynthia Ann’s bodyguard while she was on hunting expeditions. It was not out of the ordinary for wives of warriors and chiefs to command hunting parties.<sup>32</sup> According to this story as well, Nocona died two or three years later of natural causes. The stories from the Comanche elders portray this to be what actually happened. Captain Ross never claimed to know Nocona personally either. Captain Ross believed he had killed Nocona because he had found Cynthia Ann and Prairie Flower with the man he killed.

The girl was Cynthia Ann although she still would not speak English to the men who recaptured her. She also had a three-year-old girl named Prairie Flower, Parker’s younger sister. The Rangers took Cynthia Ann back to her uncle in Texas. The capture of Cynthia Ann was an important event for the Texas Rangers and many white Texans. She would receive many benefits upon her return to her birth family. She was rewarded one hundred dollars a year for five years annually from the state.<sup>33</sup> She tried to escape many times to return to her people. Eventually she lived with her brother in Anderson County Texas. She did not prosper being back with her white family and was bothered by worry about what happened to her other two children, one of which was Quanah. He was one of those who escaped the attack by the Rangers. Prairie Flower died after four years back with her white family. Then in 1870, Cynthia Ann died at the approximate age of forty-five.

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<sup>32</sup> Harry Stroud, *Indian-Pioneer Papers*, Oklahoma Historical Society, 394-96.

<sup>33</sup> Campbell, 205-6.

The recapture of his mother and sister, by whites, struck a change in Parker's life. Parker expressed later in life that after his father's death, his life was not easy. He was of mixed ancestry and that left him open to jeering from others in the tribe. He became dependent on the charity of others.<sup>34</sup> Being half-white would have its benefits later on in his life, but while he remained with the Comanches, he had to fight to receive respect. He received respect by fighting hard on the battlefield and hunting. Parker's medicine became strong at a young age.<sup>35</sup> Medicine was an important part of life for the Comanches. Members of the tribe that possessed strong medicine were leaders. He began to command much respect within his band. However, his rise to power on the reservation was not due entirely to his influence before he came to the reservation. Having mixed ancestry was the greatest contribution to Parker's success on the reservation. Being half-white made him more accessible to officials who wanted to deal with someone they viewed as not as savage as full bloods Parker took advantage of such prejudices.

The capture of Cynthia Ann and putting the Quahadas on the run did not stop the Comanches from raiding in Texas. Not long after this small victory, Texas seceded from the Union. With efforts focused on the Civil War, raiding continued.<sup>36</sup> Tribes such as the Comanches had free reign over the southern plains and took full advantage of the Civil War. They could raid and fight settlers off their lands without much repercussion. The Comanches were successful in pushing back the Texans according to Clyde Jackson, "The frontier settlements in Texas had been pushed back a hundred miles. Ranch homes had been burned to the ground, and livestock abandoned by the settlers on the Comanche frontier."<sup>37</sup> Campbell concurs with a statement of his own, "Disunion and the war that soon followed diverted men and money from

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<sup>34</sup> Hagan, *American Indian Leaders*, 176.

<sup>35</sup> Medicine refers to power over supernatural or natural powers obtained through a vision quest or purchase.

<sup>36</sup> Campbell, 206.

<sup>37</sup> Clyde L. Jackson and Grace Jackson, *Quanah Parker: Last Chief of the Comanches* (New York: Exposition Press, 1963), 57.



the frontier, enabling raiders actually to roll back the line of settlement during the early 1860s.”<sup>38</sup> As the Comanches had done in the past, they were again a force to reckon with, pushing people off their territory. The atmosphere would not allow them to hold on to their lifestyle for much longer though. Parker was the catalyst for the long-term holdouts to the reservation, but in the end, he was not able to sustain the Comanche lifestyle of living on the plains.

While it is difficult to gather exactly how much Cynthia Ann was able to relate to a young Quanah about white ways or culture, here influence is undeniable. Parker’s mother was completely involved in the Comanche lifestyle. After the capture of his mother, Parker would experience difficulty surviving within his band.<sup>39</sup> This event combined with the encroachment of white settlers would lead to changes for Parker. The Comanche landholdings would shrink, thus creating tensions between Indians and whites. Reservation policy and treaties would attempt to settle these problems.

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<sup>38</sup> Campbell, 206.

<sup>39</sup> Gerald Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 4.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESERVATION POLICY AND TREATIES

With the end of the Civil War, the government could place more focus on the west, as westward expansion resumed. With troops actively fighting in the East there were not many available to offer protection to Euro-American settlers and even members of the Five Southern Nations already in Indian Territory. The timing for these ventures into the West to try to settle the Plains tribes onto reservations occurred during the period just after the Civil War. Although, the government would pursue treaties in the hope that the standing armies would not need to fight the Indians in an active war. Not maintaining a standing army would save money and help to restore a country back to normal.

The problem with reservations and rations from the government did not typically arise when the military was still in charge of Indian affairs. Military officials maintained order while providing the terms of the agreements. The government bureaucracy generally created more problems than it fixed. The system placed people without experience into positions dealing with Indians. Many of the people in charge came from political appointments.

The reservation policy did not help the Indians assimilate into society. By placing them in closer quarters together, they did not learn from the outside as well. In Indian schools, bonds between differing tribes increased. One of the leading processes was sports, as much as any other activity during their time at school in helping to develop bonds between people of different tribes. To get the Indians assimilated into society, they need involvement in society outside of their own

world. The government would eventually try to steps to get Indians assimilated into society, such as providing money and benefits to Indians willing to travel to big cities and to try to find jobs. Again, this policy was flawed and went to the opposite end of the spectrum from trying to assimilate Indians directly into “white” society and slowly assimilating them on the reservation. An integral part missed by the policy makers was the strong family bonds held by Indians. Most people in society live their lives in a concentrated area around their family members. This is no different for Indians. Reservations simply increased activities that the government did not wish them to participate in and shipping them into large cities did not satisfy their need for family.

The government decided it needed to improve the quality of men in the Bureau of Indian Affairs positions of power, such as reservation agents. They turned to religious organizations to help with the selection process during the 1870s. The Society of Friends or “Quakers” became the first group to participate in the process. This is how the policy got its name, the “Quaker Policy.” The outside religious groups did not select the people, but made recommendations for the selection. The problem with many of the Indian Agents before this time was they embezzled money from the government that was for the Indians on the reservation. Trying to find men willing to take these positions was not an easy task. According to Ralph Andrist, “honest man who became an Indian agent could expect little more than that virtue would be its own reward, for the pay was pitifully meager, and living conditions could seldom be called luxurious.”<sup>40</sup> This created a situation that made it hard to find honest men to take the positions. The jobs began to go to men that saw what great opportunity there was to pocket some of the money sent to take care of the Indians. This new selection process, while still not enough, was a major step forward in trying to clean up the corruption present in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In all, one could deem the policy a success when judging it against many of the other policies the government tried concerning the Indians.

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<sup>40</sup> Ralph K. Andrist, *The Long Death: The Last Days of the Plains Indian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 168.

This policy came along about the same time as Grant's "Peace Policy." President Grant put the "Peace Policy" into practice by, "placing all Native Americans on reservations, peaceably or forcibly, in order to 'protect' them and to speed up the policy of assimilation."<sup>41</sup> People with interest in Indian lands supported the policy. It became clear that it was cheaper to try to get the Indians on reservations than it was to fight them. The so-called "Peace Policy" did not turn out so peaceful. Many of the tribes did not wish to go to reservations and put up a fight. These types of policies set in motion what would eventually bring Parker to the reservation at Fort Sill. Trying to live the Comanche life was slowly becoming less of an option. Between the fighting to remain off the reservation and more land and rations opening up by the government, it became easier to accept.

One of the earlier attempts to get the Comanches onto a reservation occurred in October 1865. The meeting took place near present day Wichita, Kansas, on the Little Arkansas River. The tribes in attendance were the Comanches, Kiowas, and the Kiowa Apaches. The Cheyenne and Arapahos were also there and met separately, making their own agreement. Before the conference began, the Comanches and Kiowas turned over five prisoners to the commissioners. In return, the commissioners pledged to give the Indians more annuities such as, blankets, knives, and tobacco.<sup>42</sup> Not all of the bands of the Comanches were able to attend the meeting, only six out of the nine were there. While they not all there, the government committee still reached an agreement with the six band chiefs and it applied to all the Comanches. The new reservation was to be smaller than what they were accustomed to, but it consisted of western Indian Territory and much of West Texas, not a small territory compared to what they were to receive later.<sup>43</sup> The portion of Texas was technically not something they could promise the Indians. Hagan writes,

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<sup>41</sup> James S. Olson and Raymond Wilson, *Native Americans in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 42.

<sup>42</sup> Hagan, *Unites States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> T.R. Fehrenbach, *Comanches: The Destruction of a People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1974), 470-1.

“since it is impossible to conceive of Texans agreeing to give up such a large segment of their state to these Indians, the reservation article of the treaty is difficult to explain.”<sup>44</sup>

The main problem with the treaty was that the Comanches were supposed to give up raiding and all their captives. This posed a problem for the Comanches whose culture and lifestyle basis was traveling the Southern Plains, which was their home, hunting buffalo and raiding into Mexico and Texas. It did not make sense that they would agree to the smaller portion of land because they would have trouble surviving certain parts of year if they were not able to follow the herds of buffalo.<sup>45</sup>

The treaty at Medicine Lodge in 1867 was the treaty that placed the Comanches and Kiowas on the reservation in southwestern Indian Territory at Fort Sill. While Parker was not one of the designated leaders at the Medicine Lodge Creek treaty meeting, he still influenced many of the Indians present. At this point Parker was only a sub-chief leading a small band. He was not on the committee because he would not work with the peace commission about what they wanted. The first meeting between the tribes and the government officials took place on October 19, 1867, in Kansas, just miles from the future state line of Oklahoma.

There were chiefs from the Apaches, Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Comanches, and Kiowas in attendance. The Indian nations present signed three separate treaties during these meetings: the first by the Comanches and Kiowas, the second by the Kiowa Apaches, and the third by the Arapahoes and Southern Cheyennes. Some of the major players for the tribes included Black Kettle of the Cheyennes, Ten Bears of the Comanches, and Satanta of the Kiowas. The government delegation consisted of many parts as well. The person responsible for the bill creating the commission was Senator John B. Henderson of Missouri; he was at the meetings with the tribes as well. Henderson also served as the chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

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<sup>44</sup> Hagan, *Unites States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Fehrenbach, 470-71.

The President of the Indian Commission, N.G. Taylor was there. Five military men were part of the board: Brevet Major-Generals William S. Harvey and C.C. Augur, Brigadier and Brevet Major-General Alfred H. Terry, General John B. Sanborn, and Colonel Samuel F. Tappan. The board was supposed to include three army officers and four civilians, while there were five men with military experience. While the group did consist of former Indian fighters, not all were against the Indians during the proceedings. Harvey, a former Indian fighter who was almost seventy years old during the negotiations, was a noted sympathizer to the Indians' cause. Tappan also had problems with the policy the government was taking against the tribes. Kit Carson was supposed to attend as an interpreter and advisor. He was not able to be there and Augur replaced him as the interpreter.<sup>46</sup>

Henderson opened the proceedings discussing the problems between the Indians and white settlers. Taylor was in charge of the opening meetings. Satanta spoke after several of the other Kiowa chiefs. Jackson describes Satanta as the "orator of the plains."<sup>47</sup> Ten Bears also addressed the council with the hope that they could come to some kind of agreement with the government. He had traveled to Washington D.C., and as most Indians that had made the journey knew, resisting the government would not be good for their tribes.<sup>48</sup> The speech that he gave showed that he was committed to peace. After the talk by Ten Bears, the explanation of the treaty began. The Indians were to retain the right to hunt outside the borders of the reservation until further notice. The army had orders to treat the Indians as friends until there was reason to treat them as enemies, but at the same time, they were supposed to watch over them making sure they did not return to their old ways of raiding while they were out hunting. At this point, the government wished to avoid war with the tribes. To the government the reservation could bring

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<sup>46</sup> Jackson and Jackson, 58.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>48</sup> The government used grand parades displaying military maneuvers, while this was not a policy of negotiation; it had effects on the visitors. The displays typically involved many soldiers and the use of weapons such as canons firing. It was a show to impress visiting dignitaries by showing off the nation's military might.

some form of transformation to the Indians and in the end make them productive citizens. What they did not understand was that the band of Quohadas led by Parker would not submit to the reservation as easily as the others had. The Quohadas did not consider Ten Bears representative of them and did not follow the rules set forth by the treaty.<sup>49</sup>

The remaining Comanches that did not agree to the reservation knew that the buffalo hunters would be disruptive to their way of life and action needed to be taken against them. The buffalo provided the means for their life on the plains. Buffalo hunters could do more harm to the Comanches than the Texas Rangers or Army. Hunters could kill upwards of fifteen buffalo in two hours. In a ten year span buffalo hunters killed over three million buffalo on the southern plains.

General Sheridan knew the impact the buffalo hunters could have. Sheridan said talking about the buffalo hunters, “have done more in the last two years and will do more in the next year to settle the vexed Indian question than the entire regular army has done in the last 30 years.”<sup>50</sup> Sheridan would also say that the hunters should receive a bronze medal with a picture of dead buffalo on one side and a demoralized Indian on the flipside.<sup>51</sup> While this seems to be callous to the Indians, from a military perspective, it makes sense. When one looks at other comments made by Sheridan, it is easy to understand that this was more than a simple observation. There was meaning behind the comment. He would go on to say, about the hunters, “Send them powder and lead, if you will, and for the sake of lasting peace let them kill, skin, and sell until they have exterminated the buffalo. Then your prairies will be covered with speckled cattle and the festive cowboy, who follows the hunter as the second forerunner of civilization.”<sup>52</sup> An enemy that does not have a food supply is an enemy that cannot fight for long. The subject is

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<sup>49</sup> Jackson and Jackson, 64-5.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell, 294.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

just another part of the harsh realities of the West and the relationship between the Indians and Anglo America.

With the reservation policy decreasing the amount of land under Comanche control, confrontations would occur. The Comanches saw their landholdings dwindle from parts of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska in the eighteenth century to just the Texas Panhandle by 1865 in the Treaty of the Little Arkansas. Then, by 1867 of Medicine Lodge had them in southwestern Oklahoma just over five percent of the land they had two years earlier.<sup>53</sup> Parker would become a leader out of these circumstances and participate in battles such as Adobe Walls.

As the reservation policy began to push Comanches onto smaller pieces of land, some bands, including Parker's Quahada band, fought removal to the reservation. Parker and his followers were involved attacks, such as Adobe Walls. They fought buffalo hunters at Adobe Walls because of the devastation left by the hunters on the lifestyle of these Plains peoples. After this final, failed attempt to fight back, Parker and his band were the last to submit to the reservation in southwestern Oklahoma.

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas W. Kavanagh, *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 886-87.



## CHAPTER V

### ADOBE WALLS AND THE SURRENDER OF PARKER

The Indians realized what the buffalo hunters meant for their way of life. Without buffalo, the plains tribes would cease to exist. This is one the reasons for the attack on Adobe Walls. Adobe Walls was a trading post built in the 1840s and at the time of the attack, buffalo hunters were using the buildings. The post is located in Hutchinson County, Texas, along the south fork of the Canadian River. Parker was one of the leaders of the second battle of Adobe Walls, along with Ishatai or Coyote Droppings, on June 27, 1874. Ishatai was a spiritual leader for the Comanches who had a vision and promised his own protection from the whites' bullets to all who took up the fight and that he could bring the dead back to life. There was talk from him that all nations surrendering to the white reservations were declining and would not be the same. A Sun Dance took place before the attack on Adobe Walls.

The Sun Dance for the Comanches was different from what most think about the religious dance. They did not strap themselves to the center pole or drag buffalo skulls through the area strapped to their backs, nor was vision seeking a primary interest for the dancers. The vision was simply a welcome addition. The primary goal for the dance was to bring the different bands of the tribe together; it promoted unity that they would need if they were to fight the encroachment of whites onto their lands. While not all Comanche bands were in agreement with Ishatai, many stayed. The entire Wasp band returned to Texas. There were also members of

other tribes present such as Southern Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Kiowas who agreed with and believed Ishatai. Two days after the Sun Dance, the group attacked Adobe Walls.

The Comanches and their allies numbered over three hundred against only twenty-eight buffalo hunters. While the advantage appeared to be on the side of Parker, the Comanches, and their allies, in reality it was not. The buffalo hunters only suffered three casualties and the Comanches had nine. Facing around a 10-1 disadvantage the buffalo hunters held their ground. The buffalo hunters had a few advantages during the battle. The Indians planned on an early morning surprise attack, but they did not catch the buffalo hunters sleeping. Out of the twenty-eight men (one woman was also there) present at the stronghold, twenty-six were inside housing and the other two were sleeping in wagons. The majority of the men had been working to repair a beam in the roof. The next advantage the buffalo hunters had were their new long-range buffalo rifles. While the Indians must charge to get close enough to attack, the buffalo hunters could sit comfortably inside the fortification and shoot at the Indians from a distance.<sup>54</sup> While there were not many fatalities for what turned out to be an important battle, it did do significant damage to the morale of the Indians. The promise from Ishatai of protection from bullets had not been true and only a small number of buffalo hunters had been able to fend off such a large number of Indians.

The failure of the prophecy to protect to the Indians must have had lingering effects on the tribes. This seems to mark a point where the final armed Comanche resistance took place. The attack on Adobe Walls was in 1874 and by 1875, the vast majority of Comanches had reported to the Fort Sill reservation.

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<sup>54</sup> Wallace and Hoebel, 324-6.

## CHAPTER VI

### PARKER ENTERS THE RESERVATION

Parker's Quahada band was the last to surrender to reservation life. They came onto the reservation at different times to harass other bands that had already surrendered. They called the men squaws and accused them of not having the heart to fight anymore. Colonel Ranald Mackenzie, commander of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment based at Fort Sill, had employed many tactics in trying to get the last band onto the reservation and had one idea left. Mackenzie ordered all of the Comanche horses found shot, to force the Indians into coming onto the reservation. He knew that without horses, the Comanche warriors could not survive. The Quahadas knew Mackenzie's plan and divided their herds, but in time, Mackenzie found many of them. The Quahadas did not have enough food and without fresh horses, they were not able to hunt or raid sufficiently. With the creation of the reservation in 1867, many other Comanches were already on the reservation. In 1875, the Quahada band finally surrendered to Mackenzie at Fort Sill. When Mackenzie received word of the surrender, he sent horses and food to the Quahadas to support them on their trip to Fort Sill. Mackenzie treated them as equals on the battlefield and showed them respect by helping them to get to the reservation.

Mackenzie took an early interest in Parker. Parker was a name that he did not use until his move to reservation lands in current southwestern Oklahoma.<sup>55</sup> The use of his "white" name was at the urging of Mackenzie. He aided Parker in his attempt to find his mother, by writing letters for him to his relatives in Texas. Mackenzie also believed that Parker was due a land

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<sup>55</sup> Neeley, 1.

allotment in Texas that would have been his upon his mother's death. He chose to write a letter to Parker's great-uncle, Isaac Parker. In the letter, Mackenzie stated that Parker wished to get to know his white relatives, and that Parker was worth helping and he was not responsible for his situation. He wrote that if they wished to meet Parker that they should send a small gift to Parker to show that he was welcome to visit and contact them, because it was an Indian custom.<sup>56</sup> Parker never received a favorable letter encouraging any continued efforts to reach his white family. The only response he received was to explain that his mother and sister were dead. Even after the building of his house near present day Cache, Oklahoma, he had but one woman's picture in his room and that was of his mother's.<sup>57</sup> Even though he practiced polygyny and held as many as seven wives at once.

The reservation provided a place for him to show that Indians could progress in ways that the federal government hoped. The agents and government placed emphasis on him to show the way forward. Parker had a great understanding of the new "white" world in which he found himself. He displayed a thought process that enabled him to be successful in two different worlds. In a speech to the Senate, Parker acknowledged that he knew two ways, the white way and the Indian way, that he understood the good. He also went on to discuss the use of peyote among his people and what purpose it served. Parker qualified his statements by comparing the use of peyote to the members of the Senate attending church.<sup>58</sup>

White agency officials wanted to deal with Parker before the other Indian leaders because he was half-white.<sup>59</sup> Upon his arrival at the reservation, many important leaders of the Comanches did not live very long. Such leaders as Horseback, Esahabbe, and Toshaway, whom

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<sup>56</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 25.

<sup>57</sup> Etta Martin, interview by Zaidee Bland, Blair, OK, 12 July 1937.

<sup>58</sup> Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Agency Files. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Microfilm roll 47, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 125.

were all highly respected band chiefs, had died by 1885.<sup>60</sup> These important band chiefs commanded much more influence within the Comanche community than the still young Parker did. He received more favor than the other Comanche leaders from Colonel Mackenzie reportedly because of his fighting ability and resilience, but being half-white gives Parker an advantage over others in the tribe.

The main reason for his increase in power would be his cooperation with white ranchers; Parker also knew how to take the role of inferior to whites. His use of the assimilation policy against itself proves how quickly he adjusted to the new white way of life in which he was thriving. Parker had the ability to adapt quickly in the new situation he found himself in; in addition, this was also one of the qualities that made him a strong leader during his pre-reservation days. The Comanches valued someone that could adjust to changing circumstances.

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<sup>60</sup> Hagan, *American Indian Leaders*, 190.

## CHAPTER VII

### RANCHING ON THE RESERVATION

Parker's cooperation with white ranchers made him a target on the reservation among some of the Indians, while others supported him. There was a strong division within the tribe. Parker made enemies within the Comanche and Kiowa tribes through his pro-leasing views. Pro-leasing and anti-leasing factions would grow among the tribes creating sharp divisions. The primary divisions were Comanches were pro-leasing, whereas Kiowas were anti-leasing. The pro-leasers were in favor of leasing their reservation lands to cattlemen, while the anti-leasers did not want to lease their lands; instead, they wanted to keep it for their own use. Both views presented ways for the tribes to break from governmental dependence.

The factions' main concerns were how they could become self-sufficient. The anti-leasers wanted the Comanches and Kiowas to ranch and establish their own interests without outside interference. Parker's pro-leasing faction made an argument that with the outside money from whites they could pay for many things that the tribe needed. Parker's argument was that the tribes on the reservation were not utilizing most of the land. The anti-leasing view would seem more practical at the time because of the assimilation policy of the federal government. At one point, the anti-leasers even called for a replacement for Parker as the principal chief of the Comanches. The anti-leasing faction could not compete with Parker and the money that he had behind him. While the pro-leasers view of leasing the lands still provided a capitalistic approach to the utilization of the land. This is one strong instance when Parker went against the wishes of the government, much like the strong stance he would take on peyote use and polygamy.

By making the Indians ranchers, they must be self-sufficient and more like their white neighbors. The government was more interested in teaching the Indians a trade or craft as they did in the schools they set up for Indian children. If the government did not allow the Indians to make their own money and decisions, the government could keep them under their control, maintaining a paternalistic approach. The other side of the argument is that by teaching them to be farmers and ranchers, was allowing them to make their own money, which is true. The main factor is the decision making process. Any person that is a United States citizen can make his or her own decisions, whether right or wrong.

Ranching developed on Indian reservations as a part of the federal government's policy of assimilation. The federal government was trying to transform plains Indians into farmers. By making them farmers, they would put an end to their migratory way of life and be able to place them on a smaller area of land. Yet, for the plains tribes the change from nomadic hunter to rancher did not seem as unreasonable as changing them to farmers. The thought of farming was insulting to the men of many plains tribes. The men did not wish to tend crops; it was not their traditional role. This made ranching the only logical choice left from the government's perspective, yet it would not be without its problems. With the reservation land held in common interest among tribal members, ranching proved difficult from the government's point of view. The government purchased cattle and sent them to the Kiowa-Comanche reservation to establish a breeding program. The Indians on the reservation did not know how to raise cattle and the lack of food rations on the reservation encouraged them to kill the cattle for meat. The Comanches used the rationed cattle for replicated buffalo hunts that were sacred to them. The mock hunts were a way for them to stay connected to their pre-reservation days.

On the Kiowa-Comanche reservation neighboring whites, white officials, and intermarried whites saw that profits were available from using the grasslands on the reservation.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Christine Bolt, *American Indian Policy and American Reform: Case Studies of the Campaign to Assimilate the American Indians* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 84.

Those groups began asking to lease the land, only for the Department of the Interior to tell them no because the land was strictly for Indian usage. That answer did not stop problems with illegal use though. The group that caused the most problems within the Comanches and Kiowas was the neighboring Texas cattlemen. With encroachment from cattlemen such as Daniel Waggoner and Samuel Burnett, increasing on the reservation, the Indians began to see ways to make a profit from the situation. The Comanches began to charge the cattlemen to hold their herds on reservation lands.

The tribe also charged when the cattlemen crossed through the reservation on their way to markets in the north to sell the herds. There is a report that as late as June 19, 1889 from someone crossing the reservation that Parker stopped them and asked for a toll. The traveler writes, "Quanah Parker held us up on West cash [sic] creek on Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup> 1889 and demanded \$1.00 for each wagon and 10¢ head for stock. We paid One Dollar and Ninety cents in money and 15 lbs flour and 6 lbs Bacon [sic] also some syrup for traveling on road."<sup>62</sup> Even after Parker was receiving money from the cattlemen and the government, he was still charging people to travel on reservation land.

Waggoner and Burnett were the first of the "Big Five" to see that an opportunity for large profit was present on the Kiowa-Comanche reservation.<sup>63</sup> The cattlemen began to use bribery to acquire allies within the tribes after they found out that they could not continue to use the grasslands. The role of cattlemen in tribal politics while attempting to seize grazing lands occurred on numerous reservations and the Kiowa-Comanche reservation proved to be no exception.<sup>64</sup> Texas cattlemen with herds bordering the reservation had cattle that would stray

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<sup>62</sup> Oklahoma Historical Society Special Collections Letter from W.H. Borton and J.E. Dubose on June 19, 1889, 59.

<sup>63</sup> The "Big Five" was a group of wealthy, large land holding Texas cattlemen with a stake in acquiring reservation lands for their own personal use. They were J.P. Addington, Samuel B. Burnett, C.T. Herring, E.C. Sugg, and Daniel Waggoner.

<sup>64</sup> William T. Hagan, "Kiowas, Comanches, and Cattlemen, 1867-1906: A Case Study of the Failure of U.S. Reservation Policy," *Pacific Historical Review* 40 (August 1971): 334.



onto the reservation or they would move their herds onto the reservation because the ranchers knew that there were excessive grasslands that the Indians were not utilizing.

The years of expansion into the Kiowa and Comanche reservation took place during the mid-1880s. The movement began in 1881, when a drought forced the cattlemen to push the cattle farther north, closer to the Red River. Burk Burnett led the group of cattlemen interested in expanding into Indian Territory. He had become friends with Parker and this made him the prime candidate to lead the expansion into the expansive grasslands that the reservation held. He even had a Comanche name, *Mas-sa-suta* Burnett, which means “Big Boss” or “He says so.”<sup>65</sup> Burnett and his group were able to obtain a lease for three hundred thousand acres. This was a major increase in the number of acres held by Burnett and the group. He also received help from his father in law, M.B. Loyd, who was a banker in Fort Worth. The cattlemen would meet and discuss what they wanted to accomplish with the leases. After these types of meetings, Burnett would then go and talk with Parker.

The cattlemen would meet near the present day city of Burkburnett, Texas, the headquarters of the Four Sixes ranch owned by Burnett. There are reports from Tom Slack, an employee of Burnett’s father-in-law describing the process of making the payments. He accompanied Burnett from Fort Worth to the Four Sixes headquarters and then to Fort Sill. Slack went during the late 1880s. The men simply carried two satchels full of money out of the bank at Fort Worth and traveled to meet the other cattlemen. Once the payment money made it to the Red River, escorts from Fort Sill met the delegation and made sure they had safe passage through the reservation. When the men made it to Anadarko, the location of the agency, Indians were waiting to receive their part of the money. The price was ten dollars a head per year. The Indians that came to get their share of the money got ration tickets from the government and could get money based on how many tickets they received. According to Slack, the process took three days. This process was beneficial to both parties. The cattlemen could get the extra land they

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<sup>65</sup> C.L. Douglas, *Cattle Kings of Texas* (Austin, Texas: State House Press, 1989), 353.

wanted build a reputation with the Indians by personally handing out the money. The benefit to the tribes was that the payments could go directly to them and did not have to go through the government. There was still a problem with the Indians on the reservation because they did not wish to lease their land to the cattlemen. They would not accept the payments and the cattlemen had to leave the payments in a trust with the government.<sup>66</sup>

Texas cattlemen began to place influential chiefs on their payrolls; arguably, Parker was the most significant.<sup>67</sup> The cattlemen were acquiring allies in agency officials and intermarried whites as well.<sup>68</sup> The bribes from cattlemen to Parker would strengthen his material wealth and power, while Parker worked to uphold the cattlemen's interests on the reservation. The cattlemen helped finance Parker's two story, ten-bedroom house that he wanted built. Living in anything less to Parker was not suitable for the primary chief of the Comanches. Parker even went as far to have letterheads made that had "Principal Chief of the Comanche Indians" written on them. The first time that Parker appears on the Texas cattlemen's payroll was after he protested their holding cattle on the reservation and using the grass without compensation to the tribe around 1881.<sup>69</sup>

The cattle industry proved to be Parker's greatest ally in his ascension to the one and only primary chief of the Comanches. Parker received numerous gifts from the cattlemen. He would receive gifts and more if the cattlemen were able to get the leases they wanted. The Francklyn Land & Cattle Company promised him five-hundred head of cattle if they received 600,000 acres of reservation land to lease in 1884.<sup>70</sup> Parker's wealth grew because of promises such as that one. The offers were coming in from many of the cattlemen wanting the reservation lands. Some of

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 353-4.

<sup>67</sup> Todd Leahy, "Beef Instead of Bayonets: Cultural Mores and the Failure of Assimilation on the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 83 (Winter 2005-2006): 496.

<sup>68</sup> Intermarried whites or "squaw men," a derogatory term used to insult the men, were white men who had intermarried with Native Americans, many for acquiring lands that they could not get otherwise.

<sup>69</sup> Hagan, *American Indian Leaders*, 182.

<sup>70</sup> Lester Fields Sheffy, *The Francklyn Land & Cattle Company: A Panhandle Enterprise, 1882-1957* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 109.

the more important gifts he received include an engraved .45 caliber revolver, a diamond stickpin, and numerous junkets to Dallas, Fort Worth, and Washington D.C.<sup>71</sup>

Burnett and his friend and fellow cattlemen Tom Waggoner made sure to keep Parker happy by giving him gifts. Occasionally the gift was a trip into Fort Worth, sometimes just to see the city or to a cattlemen's convention. During one of the trips, Parker barely avoided death and serious trouble with the tribes. Yellow Bear went with Parker to Fort Worth in December 1885. Yellow Bear is either the father or uncle of Parker's second wife Weck-e-ah, depending on the account. Parker came in from traveling around Fort Worth with an employee of Daniel Waggoner and proceeded to get ready for bed. The journey about town was, according to one Fort Worth reporter, ' "to search for a fair innamorata with whom he had been long acquainted.' ”<sup>72</sup> This late night return to his room, which he was sharing with Yellow Bear almost killed both of the men. After finishing getting ready for bed Parker blew out a gas light in the room without shutting of the gas. Parkers awoke during the night due to the smell of the gas and collapsed, but close enough to fresh air to remain alive. Yellow Bear, who had been asleep when Parker had come in for the evening, never woke up again. The clerk in the hotel finally discovered them the next afternoon when he noticed they had not come down during the day. It took Parker two days to recover enough to travel back to the reservation and he still had to receive assistance from reservation agent Hall. Hall aided Parker and collected Yellow Bear's body, taking them on a train to Harrold, Texas, which was the closest station to the reservation. Comanches met the train at the station while mourning in their traditional way. They had cut their hair and had bleeding cuts.

The news about the death of Yellow Bear beat Parker back to the reservation and people were questioning the circumstances surrounding the death. Parker knowing that problems could arise from the situation and attained a death certificate from the coroner explaining what had

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<sup>71</sup> Hagan, "Kiowas, Comanches, and Cattlemen," 348.

<sup>72</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 49.

happened.<sup>73</sup> According to another report, a few of the Texas cattlemen came to the aid of Parker. The cattle took two bottles of ammonia with them to the reservation to prove to the Indians that “bad air” does exist. The Indians were having trouble believing a person could simply blow out a flame and die from doing so. This example of foul smelling air helped to alleviate some of the suspicions surrounding the death of Yellow Bear.<sup>74</sup> The reservation Indians would have had trouble understanding the cause of death simply because they had no experience with that type of death. Carbon monoxide poisoning can still be a problem today and there is more knowledge in trying to prevent it from occurring. Between the coroner’s report and the help from the cattlemen people on the reservation seemed to accept the death was purely accidental and there do not appear to be any harsh feelings toward Parker.

Some tribal members did not like Parker’s involvement with the cattlemen and began to view Parker as only interested in representing the needs of the cattlemen. Parker attended as attending a picnic in Hobart, Oklahoma, arranged by Congressman Bird McGuire. During the picnic, he gave a short speech. He said how he loved the white man, but the Comanches were fearful of their success. He also said that the country is pretty and the only thing that it is good for are red ants, coyotes, and cattlemen.<sup>75</sup> He was always on the side of the cattlemen no matter where he was.

Later in life, Parker remained in contact with members of the Big Five, particularly Burnett. There are surviving letters that are from Burnett to Parker. Two letters in particular, one from 1908 and the other from 1910, note Parker wanting to stop by Burnett’s ranch on his way home from traveling. Burnett replies by informing Parker that if he was not home when Parker comes by that he will plan on going to Parker’s house to spend a few days with him. The letters discuss hunting trips that Parker has arranged in Texas. The letter from 1908 has Burnett asking

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>74</sup> Douglas, 355.

<sup>75</sup> L.H. Colyer, interview by Ruth Lee Gamblin, Frederick, OK, 22 April 1937, Fort Sill Archives, Lawton, Oklahoma.

Parker if he has made the proper arrangements for Parker and other Indians to participate in the Fat Stock Show. Burnett tells Parker that the Indians need not worry about paying for anything on the trip and the only thing that they need to bring are their saddles.<sup>76</sup> They were to serve as Indians in a Wild West Show at the stock show. The letters demonstrate a personal and business connection between the two men that lasted until Parker's death in 1911.

Parker was able to gain more power and money from the ranchers wanting to use reservation lands as grazing lands. While both factions, leasing and anti-leasing, make valid points about self-sufficiency, Parker's influence helped the leasers win the debate for several years. The leasers did provide money to all people with reservation land, but Parker did receive many more benefits than the average Indian on the reservation. Parker also tried to use his new authority to sway tribal laws and protect some of the traditional ways of the Comanche through the Court of Indian Affairs.

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<sup>76</sup> Samuel Burnett to Quanah Parker, 24 October 1908 and 21 July 1910, Fort Sill Archives, Lawton, Oklahoma.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LAW-MAKING AND PARKER'S JUDGESHIP

Parker had an interest in the laws that affected his people and their lands. In a council held on the reservation by Captain Frank D. Baldwin, acting Indian Agent, on July 17, 1897, Parker wanted to discuss making a law that would prevent anyone besides an Indian marrying an Indian woman. He said that there were not many of his people left and they did not want to marry any other kind. Baldwin agreed that not much good comes from intermarriage of Indian women, with outside men. He does mention that not all intermarriage was bad, but could only name a few instances when good came from the marriages. Baldwin stated that as long as he was the Indian agent he would not approve any marriage that was not an Indian man and Indian woman.<sup>77</sup> Parker had an ally with Baldwin. This action would attempt to prevent any outsiders from obtaining reservation lands. By keeping land in the possession of Indians, he would be able to secure larger land leases for cattlemen, which would result in more money for himself and the tribe.

Later in that same year, Parker showed his understanding of white government in a letter to Baldwin, in which, he addresses a meeting that council members held in opposition to himself and Baldwin. Parker states that he would like to replace the council members that participated in the meeting with new members. He also mentions that he needs to speak with Baldwin about the matter of grass.<sup>78</sup> Parker realized the importance of committees to maintaining power within the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Letter from Quannah Parker to Frank D. Baldwin, 10 December 1897.

new tribal laws. He understood how to maintain control in the white style of government. The mention of the grass shows that he knew how important it was for him to maintain his control over leases to cattlemen.

Parker received an appointment to be a judge for the Court of Indian Offenses for the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita Agency. Secretary of the Interior Henry M. Teller started the court because he opposed certain aspects of reservation life. The main reasons he started the court were the prevalence of “heathenish dances,” polygamy, and medicine men. Agent Lee Hall organized the court on the reservation in 1886. The agent on the reservation was the only person that could call the court into session and assign cases. The heaviest sentences any of the courts could hand out were up to six months in prison and up to one-hundred dollar fines.

Parker served, except for short intervals, from July 1888 until June 1898, and for the majority of the time he had the title of “presiding judge.” The judgeship did not pay much (as much as twelve dollars per month to as little as eight dollars per month), but for Parker it was an opportunity to gain more respect and solidify his place in the Comanche nation.<sup>79</sup> As with everything Parker did, he was looking for his share of the honor, which must be the biggest.<sup>80</sup> He became the leading judge, but faced opposition from the government and agency officials because he kept too many wives and his use of peyote, the very offences the court wanted to stop.

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<sup>79</sup> Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Agency Files. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Microfilm roll 48, 1-2.

<sup>80</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 44-45.

## CHAPTER IX

### POLYGYNY AND GAMBLING

Polygyny was a major concern, as early as 1890, of the white officials for not allowing Parker to retain his judgeship. At one point, the officials said that he must only keep one wife and dismiss the others, although it never happened. Government officials saw his “much married condition” as a hindrance to the progression of the Comanches and made them question whether he was truly committed to federal policy.<sup>81</sup> A white official about dismissing his extra wives approached him. He told the white official that he should choose for him because he did know which one he loved more, or which one loved him more. Parker told the white official that he should also notify the other women after the decision. After that incident, there is no more discussion of his polygyny.<sup>82</sup>

Part of Comanche culture that became more prevalent during the reservation period was gambling. They had always gambled, but with more time and money, it happened more often. This was especially true during their gatherings for the semi-annual grass payments. The main types of gambling they participated in were horse racing and a card game called Monte. In an interview by R.B. Thomas, the interviewee describes the Comanches as loving the sport of horseracing. He also says that, “From 1901 to 1915 they had a great many race horses and some

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<sup>81</sup> A comment by Agent Charles E. Adams in a report that he made to Indian Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan concerning Parker’s marital status.

<sup>82</sup> Neeley, 223.



still participate in this great sport.”<sup>83</sup> During this time, it was normal for gambling as a means of social interaction. The purpose was not to gain great wealth, but to share the time and enjoy the competition. The interviewee said, “There was no unfair play. The best horse won.”<sup>84</sup> The betting on the horses was not a small thing as they were not afraid to bet all they had on their horse. The card game of Monte was another form of gaming they participated in together. By 1882, this game was more common.

For the most part the gaming took place between Indians only, while in some instances whites were involved the reservation would open up during these times, so white traders could sell their goods to the tribes.<sup>85</sup> This did not guarantee they were involved in the gambling, although they seem to be more involved in the horseracing than the card games. The white interference in these activities begins the movement for peyote meetings to become more widespread, it gave them a ceremony or time to gather that was strictly for their people. The meetings were good for relations between the Comanches and the whites, but this did not allow the Indians their own gathering. During these times, the agency gatherings appear only to be for their gaming. Maroukis writes, “It was under these circumstances, then, that peyote became the basis for a new form of social gathering.”<sup>86</sup> He goes on to explain, “Public gatherings centered on peyote rituals became the primary means by which the Comanche social organization was maintained during the reservation period.”<sup>87</sup>

This caused problems with the agents, who did not like the Indians gambling their annuities and grass money. Hagan writes, “J. Lee Hall claimed that when he came to the agency in 1885 the gambling was carried on openly around the traders’ stores and in arbors erected for

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<sup>83</sup> R.B. Thomas, 238.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Constantine Maroukis, *The Peyote Road: Religious Freedom and the Native American Church* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 81.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

the purpose.”<sup>88</sup> The Indians did not have a problem with the practice, but gambling was a vice the Indians did not need, from the view of the agents and missionaries, much like drinking. From a perspective of trying to ensure unscrupulous traders, bankers, or loan sharks did take advantage of the Indians, keeping these things away from them was important. Hagan also states, “The Indians expressed perplexity that a white man would try to stop an activity which the Indians had learned from other whites.”<sup>89</sup>

Gambling was only one the problems with the Indians receiving this additional income. Another difficult situation from the additional income provided the tribe from the land leasing and government money was outsiders trying to get their hands on the money and land. While gambling did help to create circumstances for easier removal of the Indians money, making extreme purchases fueled the problem as well. During a payment in 1904 in Lawton, there were reports of Indians purchasing ice cream sodas to expensive cars.<sup>90</sup> While the government protected their lands, nothing else was. There might be months without payments so these types of things became necessary for their survival if they did not put any of their money away for that type of situation.

Accepting credit at local stores or loans from local bankers could still create problems. Some bankers began to charge unreasonable interest on the loans to the Indians. Agent Randlett tried to put an end to these corrupt practices and was able to get a few arrested and did not allow some back on the reservation to do business. Some of the bankers even attempted to sneak back on the reservation by dressing as Indian women, wrapping themselves in blankets and shawls. In 1905, one such banker from Kiowa County had to pay a fine of one-thousand dollars because he had been charging Indians interest rates ranging from 150 to 3,360 percent.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hagan, *Unites States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 184.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

The government and many white officials had problems with the polygyny and gambling on the reservation. Parker continued to serve as a judge on a court that was supposed to be ridding the reservation of pre-reservation day practices of the tribes, yet he continued to keep multiple wives and use peyote. Gambling does not appear to be a major issue and polygyny, besides Parker's, seems to be a minor issue as well. Yet, where Parker has his greatest sway on the court and with local officials is on the use of peyote.

## CHAPTER X

### PEYOTE

The spirituality of the Comanches was not lost when they entered the reservation at Fort Sill. One of the major changes to occur with the tribe was the use of peyote. Their worship leads to another problem that they would encounter on the reservation, missionaries trying to convert them to one religion or another. The tribes tried to keep some of their old ways while mixing them with the new. This was not a new concept to the Comanches, as they would continually evolve and look for new and better ways to do things. The main concern of many of the missionaries was peyote use. Peyote was seen as a drug and not suitable for usage in religious ceremonies. Parker was a strong advocate for its use.

The Comanches had indifference toward religious ceremonies, such as the Ghost Dance, but this could have been due to their participation in the Peyote religion. People from the era of the Ghost Dance also state that Parker had a great influence in the Comanches non-participation in the dance. Since the Comanches had been on the reservation, there had been peyote use. In June of 1888, Special Agent White issued an order to cease the use of peyote for any purpose. If the Indians did not comply, they could lose their government annuities. The Comanches agreed to stop the use of peyote after they used up their remaining supply, but the religion continued to spread throughout the other tribes of the area.

With the spread of peyote use continuing, there was an attempt to use the Court of Indian Offenses to stop the practice. Missionaries also wanted to put an end to peyote use. Several denominations were present at the reservation, but many of the Comanches did not live close

enough to Anadarko to feel the effects of the missionaries. The missionaries typically stayed close to the agency headquarters. Agent Adams was to use his police force to stop the spread and take the offenders to court. During the entire time Parker was a judge for the court, no records appear for any trial involving peyote offenses. Yet, one of the court's main objectives was to combat and stop the use of peyote. Parker maintained involvement with the Peyote religion, which made it even more difficult for the courts and police to enforce the mandate. Another helpful trend for the sustained use of peyote was the white settlers' fear of the Ghost Dance.<sup>92</sup>

The federal government did not allow use of hallucinogenic Peyote buttons as sacraments in religious observances by Indians.<sup>93</sup> Parker was influential in the rise of the peyote movement within the Kiowa and Comanche nations. He was as the unofficial leader of the peyote cult in Oklahoma. The peyote religion began in Mexico with the Apaches and spread to other southern plains tribes. Peyote replaced such religious observances as the Ghost Dance for many plains tribes because they were not able to perform the ceremonies. Agency officials did not allow the dances because they saw the ceremonies as pagan and detrimental to the Indians assimilation into white society. Indians that used peyote suffered from the loss of annuity goods, rations, and money from land leases. Parker even reported that nearly all peyote use had seized because it was what they wanted to hear at the agency office. White official viewed peyote as a drug similar to opium or morphine.<sup>94</sup>

The peyote ritual is a formal and complicated religious ceremony to the Indians that actively participate in the ritual.<sup>95</sup> Traditional regalia were customary for the leader of the ceremony. It held them in connection with their pre-reservation days. A few priests observed the peyote ceremonies and announced there was no problem with the observance. Nevertheless, he still faced much resistance from agency officials and many local religious leaders.

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<sup>92</sup> Hagan, *Unites States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 191-3.

<sup>93</sup> The buttons are taken from the top of a Peyote cactus. They produce reactions in the brain similar to effects of LSD. It is used as a sacrament of the Native American Church.

<sup>94</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 54-55.

<sup>95</sup> Neely, 157.

While the government did not approve of the use of peyote, it had its grip on the people. The reservation was not a place that Indians wanted to be. The lives they had been living for centuries were no longer there. The alternative to the new harsh life was finding new hope in the Peyote religion. The movement began to incorporate a new set of values and became known as the “Peyote Road.” According to James Olson and Raymond Wilson, “By the early twentieth century an ethical code known as the ‘Peyote Road’ had developed in the religion, emphasizing brotherly love, honesty, marital fidelity, hard work and economic self-reliance, trustworthiness, family responsibility, and strict avoidance of alcohol.”<sup>96</sup>

The reservation created new problems that Indians were not used to dealing with before. This movement offered some alternative to the reality of reservation life. This new religion, as many other religions of the world was trying to offer peace to people in uncertain times. Any religion should offer hope and promote a higher standard of living through good deeds. All of the things the “Peyote Road” offered were values that the missionaries were also trying to convey through Christianity. The government should have also been pleased with the movement because of the emphasis on “economic self-reliance and hard work.”

By trying to make the Indians “productive” citizens and assimilate them fully the code should have been no problem to the government and others that did not want the Indians to use peyote. There was protest from many people over the new religion. There was opposition from Indians that were Orthodox Christians as well as many other peoples in America. While the values matched up, the practice did not. Olson and Wilson also state, “To most non-Native Americans who were intent on eliminating the ‘bizarre’ elements of Native American culture altogether, peyote use was an especially dangerous aberration.”<sup>97</sup> They go on to quote from the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1912 about how peyote would affect assimilation, “making the Indian contented with his present attainments...cutting off from him

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<sup>96</sup> Olson and Wilson, 89.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 89.

the possibility of healthful aspirations.”<sup>98</sup> This quote exemplifies what most thought of the practice. Indians had a tough road ahead of them to secure the right to worship this way. Parker became the unofficial leader of the movement and made a lot of progress to help Indians be able to worship through peyote.

The freedom of religion approach became the primary tool of peyote advocates. Anti-Peyote laws had been in place since 1899 in Oklahoma. The desire of the delegates was to make sure that the anti-Peyote law did carry over from the territorial law to state law. The Indian delegation won out and no anti-Peyote law carried over. Some opponents of peyote use compared the effects of it to opium, while others saw possibilities of the movement being as powerful as the Ghost Dance. There was a bill introduced in 1909 to the state legislature to ban peyote, but with Parker’s testimony, the bill did not survive.<sup>99</sup> With no state law in place or potential bill, the opponents turned their attention to federal lawmakers. This was a major blow to the anti-Peyote movement as Oklahoma was home to so many different Indian tribes who had adopted the peyote religion. The reservation system was a key factor in spreading the Peyotists message from tribe to tribe. The forcing of many different Indian nations together in Oklahoma created a desperate situation for many. They looked for something new that could return them to their former ways of living. Just as the Ghost Dance promised resurgence of the old ways, the Peyote religion offered some autonomy as well.<sup>100</sup>

His connections and numerous trips to Washington combined with his oratory abilities made him a perfect representative for the continued use of peyote in religious ceremonies. In 1907, he and twenty-six other leaders of the peyote movement attended the Constitutional Convention of Oklahoma and met with the Medical Committee. The main argument Parker used during meetings with legislative bodies was the First Amendment. Parker stated, “I do not think

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>99</sup> Hagan, *Unites States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years*, 292.

<sup>100</sup> Maroukis, 33.

this Legislature should interfere with a man's religion.”<sup>101</sup> It is also worth noting here that Parker's son, White Parker, became a Methodist Minister.

In a meeting with officials in Washington D.C. to discuss peyote use Parker was able to address the Senate about the issue. The chairman gave Parker a solid endorsement when he introduced him. The chairman talks about where he lives and how he knows Parker. The description of Parkers' home is as a “large plantation.” He goes into detail, “This plantation has about in its center a mansion, and the plantation is dotted over entirely with modern buildings in which reside the members of the family and the tenants of what I believe to be the greatest Christian real Indian that modern civilization has produced.” The next comparison of Parker is to a king, when the chairman says, “This man is a veritable king among his people.”<sup>102</sup> This is another example of how much influence Parker had within the government, at every level. It proves that he may have even more power within the national government than local. The chairman also tells about Parkers' children going to white schools, but did not like the arrangement. He then reports that Parker paid to have a new schoolhouse built on his property, which Parker maintains, teaches white and Indian students, and employs a white teacher.<sup>103</sup>

It becomes evident that Parker was quick to talk about his white mother when addressing this type of crowd. He mentions the fact that he is white and Indian in back to back sentences during his address. He says, “I have white – my mother was white woman, my father an Indian. I know two ways – white way and Indian way, and I understand the good.”<sup>104</sup> These words are at the beginning of his speech to the Senate. He wants to make it clear to them that he is white and Indian, making him the best person to help make decisions about what is best for both parties. He seems to want the best of both worlds and does a fine job of convincing people that he can be the moderator they are looking for.

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<sup>101</sup> Maroukis, 33.

<sup>102</sup> Kiowa Agency Records National Archives and Records Administration, RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



Parkers' discourse on peyote use is persuasive. He provides a short history of how the Comanches got peyote and how long they had been using. He explains that the Comanches have been using peyote for over fifty years and that it came from the Apaches in Mexico. Parker also tells that he has been using Peyote for over forty years. After this is when he discusses his mixed heritage. The speech then describes the type of peyote the Comanches use, he does mention that there are three types, but only describes the type they use, which is the bean. He draws the line between the mescal bean and the peyote they use. He goes on to say the government had sent inspectors before and they had no problem with the Indians using peyote in their ceremonies. One of the inspectors even had Parker sent a letter from the Secretary of the Interior saying they could keep peyote. In the last line of his speech, he proclaims that Indians use peyote to show their commitment to God, just the same as going to church. Parker makes it clear that he encourages the Indians not to use or make medicine all the time, but to try to live like the white people.<sup>105</sup>

The peyote movement would come to fruition after Parker's death. In 1918, Oklahoma chartered the Native American Church. Richardson notes the purpose of The Native American Church, "In religion many Comanches found satisfaction in the peyote cult...Its purpose was 'to establish a self-respecting and brotherly union among the men of the native race of Indians and to foster and promote their belief in Christian religion with the practice of peyote sacrament as commonly understood among the Indians.'"<sup>106</sup> The peyote movement undoubtedly benefitted from Parker's influence and abilities as an orator. He pushed forward on the subject and was able to obtain an audience that was influential enough to make a difference. While the agency and missionaries may not have liked the use of peyote, the chartering of The Native American Church made it standard for Indians to worship how they saw fit.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>106</sup> Richardson, 65.

## CHAPTER XI

### REBURYING CYNTHIA ANN

The reburial of Parker's mother shows that his influence was great among government officials. He was able to get one thousand dollars allotted for a monument and transportation of the body of his mother, Cynthia Ann Parker.<sup>107</sup> The inscription on the monument that Parker designed for his mother reads: Cynthia Ann Parker, Mother of Quanah Parker, Chief of Comanche Indians, 1827-1870. Parker lobbied for a monument to his mother, but turned the project into a monument to his status as the one and only primary chief the Comanches ever had. He used his mother's own grave to glorify his position throughout history.

In a newspaper article released on December 9, 1910, there is a discussion of the services and celebration of the reburial of Cynthia Ann. Parker provided an abundance of food for the ceremony. Both whites and Indians attended the ceremony, the article states that it was the largest gathering ever held at the mission. He delivered a speech in both English and Comanche about his mother. The newspaper article discusses Cynthia Ann's capture and recovery. It also briefly mentions Parker's brother and sister, but never names them in the article. The author of the article only mentions Parker by name, showing how he held a higher status, even over his own siblings, because of his accomplishments within "white" society.<sup>108</sup>

By getting his mother's body moved and getting the government to pay for it shows how much power he had with government officials. Parker knew how to work the bureaucracy and

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<sup>107</sup> Letter from F.H. Abbott to Ernest Stecker, Superintendent of Kiowa Indian School, 17 December 1909. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Microfilm roll 47, 4-5.

<sup>108</sup> "Most Pathetic Burial," *Indianapolis Champion* 9 December 1910. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Microfilm roll 47, 55.

use his status to get what he wanted. Knowing when and where to discuss his white mother had benefits for him. He became astute at mentioning he was half-white in appears in front of important officials. This no doubt contributed to his fame. Parker's celebrity would show in many different instances, including false accusations of his death.

## CHAPTER XII

### FAME AND REMEMBERING PARKER

In 1897, a great example Parker's fame and importance appears. A story from the "Fort Smith Elevator" on August 6, 1897, told that Parker was dead. The article is short, but for a paper in Fort Smith, Arkansas, to report on the death of Parker and it is not even true, is telling of the celebrity of Parker. The article is as follows:

#### "DEATH OF A NOTED INDIAN"

A dispatch from Guthrie says that Quanah Parker, chief of the Comanche Indians, was recently killed near the mouth of the North Fork in that county.

It is said that Parker was on his way with about 300 of his tribe to the cowboys' reunion at Seymour, Tex., and was killed by an outlaw.

Parker was one of the most noted Indians of the southwest, was very wealthy and lived in a fine mansion with seven wives.

He was half white, his mother being a white woman who was captured in childhood and raised among the Indians.<sup>109</sup>

While this article is false and the newspaper could be one that is not very reputable, this same type of thing happens today. A major problem is that an outlaw could kill Parker while three hundred Comanches accompany him. There are stories about celebrities today that are not true, but they help sell magazines. Even if the report was simply a mistake and thought to be true, it shows peoples' attitudes toward Parker. They take the time to describe how he died and where he was going. They mention how he was "very wealthy and lived in a fine mansion," being sure to show how progressive he was and how well he fit into mainstream society. The only mention of anything that would detrimental to what people of the time would have thought about him is the

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<sup>109</sup> "Death Of A Noted Indian," *Fort Smith Elevator*, Fort Smith, Arkansas, August 6, 1897, Grant Foreman Collection, Box 32, Folder 7, 1, Newspaper Article, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

mention of his seven wives. They identify him as an Indian, but before the end of the article, they make sure and mention that his mother is white. The last line identifies what a person of the time thought was important. Being half white, wealthy, and living in a mansion make him special and not just another Indian living on the reservation.

Parker did help to delay allotment on the reservation. The negotiation of the Jerome Agreement was in the fall of 1892, but would not become law until 1900, for the Kiowa-Comanche reservation. That proved to be beneficial for the tribe, in that they were able to retain their lands longer. Parker, in a general council held on October 10, 1899, confirmed what other Indian leaders had said about being deceived into signing the Jerome Agreement. He said that the Indian leaders were told that if they did not sign the Jerome Agreement that the Dawes Act would be used instead, resulting in even less land per Indian. He told the council that he told all the Secretaries and Commissioners that the land was not suited for farming; because of the condition of the reservation land bigger allotments were necessary. The Indians on the reservation would have to depend on ranching to meet their needs.<sup>110</sup> These statements again appeal to the fact that Parker was interested in maintaining his relationship with the Texas cattlemen.

The unveiling of a monument for Parker in Post Oak Mission Cemetery, according to a local newspaper, had “5000 red and white men gathered.”<sup>111</sup> The monument is made of granite and came from the Wichita mountains that are near the cemetery. The placement of his monument is beside the memorial to his mother. The Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives at the time, Jim Nance, was present and delivered a speech. Another important speaker gave a speech, Colonel McNair of Fort Sill. Both of them told of Parker’s role in getting the Comanches to give up their old ways and adapt to the new.

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<sup>110</sup> Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Agency Files. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Microfilm roll 48, 160.

<sup>111</sup> United Press, “Unveil Monument To Quanah Parker, Leader of Comanches,” Alvin Rucker Collection, Box 7, Folder 119, Newspaper article, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

The newspaper reports that Nance discussed, “The work which Quanah did in persuading his people to lay down their bow and arrows for the plow in order that they might adapt themselves to a civilization that advanced unrelentlessly a generation ago.”<sup>112</sup> McNair talked about Parker’s advice to his people, “Because he advised his followers—the same braves he had led in a ruthless warfare against the whites—to “get educated and know work.”<sup>113</sup> Two of Parker’s grandchildren lifted the veil off the monument. The ceremony shows what how Parker would be remembered. His power and influence with the government was enough to have a monument built in his honor after his death. A representative from the state government and a representative from the army show that both sides of the reservation operation respected him. It is unique to have enough influence to include respect from military and government leaders. Parker could reach his own people and the outside world, making him a qualified representative for his tribe.

Parker found himself in a unique situation to be the mediator between two cultures. His life was lived in two completely different ways. He was a plains warrior of the Comanche Nation in his youth. When he reached the reservation, he became a statesman politician. Parker did well advancing himself, no matter what culture surrounded him. His contributions to the Comanches cannot be denied, yet his contributions were not done out of selflessness. He enabled some of the old Comanche ways to remain alive, such as peyote use. Peyote and polygamy were the two things that the Comanches did not want to surrender.<sup>114</sup> He was also able to obtain full United States citizenship for his people long before other chiefs were able to do the same. He was able to enhance his status along the way.

He always demonstrated that his white connection set him apart from others on the reservation, and from the government’s viewpoint, he was different from other Indians on the reservation. Parker is a conservative and progressive, but his actions and words remind all, that

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief*, 54.

such labels of the time were somewhat insignificant.<sup>115</sup> Parker's celebrity never stopped growing, from the reservation until his death. He was in numerous parades late in his life and was still friends with many of the cattlemen. However, with all his fame and one time wealth, he died three hundred and fifty dollars in debt. After his death, the government did not allow the Comanches to have a principal chief and to this day still have a committee of three tribal members.<sup>116</sup>

By the government not allowing another single Comanche to govern, illustrates what an exception Parker was from the government's point of view. He had an understanding of his situation and his people. In modern society Parker would be a great capitalist, advancing his status by any means necessary, however he took full advantage of the times and his mixed ancestry. It is worth mentioning he died broke and while he did live an extravagant lifestyle for his time and place, he was generous and giving to anyone in need. Without his half-blood status the many opportunities that he had would have never occurred. Parker would simply be remembered as an Indian warrior that plagued the United States western expansion, not as the great statesmen politician.

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<sup>115</sup> Iverson, 91.

<sup>116</sup> Daniel A. Becker, "Comanche Civilization with History of Quanah Parker," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 1 (1921-23), 249.

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APPENDICES



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<sup>117</sup> Parker standing in front of his home. Oklahoma Historical Society photo archives collection.



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<sup>118</sup> Parker riding in a parade in Lawton, Oklahoma. Oklahoma Historical Society photo archives collection.

VITA

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Scope and Method of Study: The study incorporates primary and secondary research dealing with Comanche culture before and after entering the reservation. Quanah Parker is the focus of the thesis and it tells his story, while trying to understand what life was like for him before surrendering at Fort Sill. The study is more thorough for the period involving his stay on the reservation, as there are more resources available.

Findings and Conclusions: Quanah Parker provides an example of the changing times in which many Native American tribes lived and how they were able to adapt.

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