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# RESERVATION POLICY AND THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF WICHITA WOMEN

CAROLYN GARRETT POOL

Early anthropological studies addressed the economic position of women as one component of women's "status"—a construct used to examine a variety of gender-based social distinctions. These distinctions were conceptualized as the opposing domains of "domestic" and "public." The association of women with the domestic domain was viewed as the critical factor in understanding asymmetrical relations of power and authority. Since status has generally been defined in terms of participation in the public, economic, and political sectors dominated by men, anthropologists have proposed alternatives to the strict association of power with public roles. They used the term "influence" to mean the manipulation of males who had power; "informal power" referred to the domestic sector, which could be viewed as the most significant decision-making

social unit; and "autonomy" denoted power that derived from a woman's control over her own person and activities and those of others.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of status remains inconclusive, and variables that might determine the "high" or "low" status of women have been found to vary independently in comparative studies. The cross-cultural study of women's roles has generated considerable data, however, suggesting that women's relation to productive means is a fundamental dimension of status measured in terms of authority, influence, and power. The following principles have generally been recognized: gender is a factor in political participation and thus the authoritative allocation of scarce resources; the ownership/control of valued resources is a necessary precondition of women's access to power and authority; and the sexual division of labor is an economic category with implications beyond the designation of productive tasks and is directly related to women's access to the means of production.<sup>2</sup>

This article is a specific case study of continuity and change in the economic position of Wichita women during the last half of the nineteenth century. It discusses how Wichita women's economic position changed

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within the context of a developing dependence of the band economy on resources mediated by the state and its reservation system. Reservation policies, in which gender provided a basis for determining access to resources and their distribution, attempted to impose a division of labor consistent with male-dominated agricultural production and a male-headed nuclear household structure. The organization of the reservation system to bring Indian land, rather than Indian labor, under state control, and the inability of the system to enforce administrative directives, however, contributed to the reproduction of many aspects of traditional organization.

This study draws primarily on information contained in records of the Wichita and Kiowa Agencies, organized as Kiowa Agency Files in the Archives Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The identification of women's roles in production, distribution, and exchange is complicated by the under-reporting of women's activities. Since a goal of the reservation system was to "civilize" the Indians

by making farmers of the men, reported statistical information refers principally to cash crop production and wage labor presumably performed by Wichita men. Women's contributions to the development of an agricultural economy were not ignored, however, as reservation policies were developed to provide for the biological and social reproduction of the Indian household. These policies affected women's primary or direct access to government issues, wage labor, and the use and control of tribal property.

"Wichita" is used in this paper to refer to the Waco, Kichai, Wichita Proper, and Tawakoni who shared the Wichita Reservation with Caddo, Delaware, and Penateka Comanche bands. The association of these bands on a common reservation was a consequence of forced migrations south and west from native homelands.<sup>3</sup> In 1859 bands that had been assigned to the Brazos reservations in Texas were removed to the recently established reserve in Indian Territory where they were joined by the Wichita Proper, who had

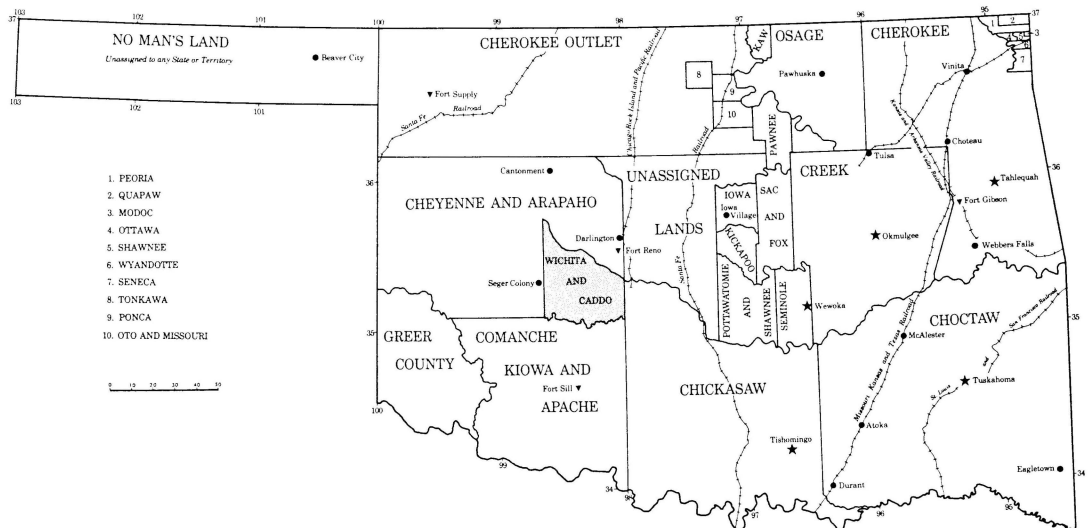


FIG. 1. Indian Territory, 1866-1889. From *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, by John W. Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds. Copyright © 1965, 1976, 1986 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

remained north of the Red River. During the Civil War many of the bands fled to Kansas, returning in 1867 to the Wichita Reservation that they claimed had been reduced by the assignment of lands south of the Washita River to the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache. The Washita River served as the boundary between the two reservations, which were administered by the same agency after 1879.

The Wichita Proper, Waco, Kichai, and Tawakoni, who spoke related Caddoan languages, had been residents of the central and southern Plains since prehistoric times. Population decline and forced migrations contributed to the consolidation of these bands during the early historic period, and on the reservation they became known as the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes. Population statistics reported for the Wichita bands during the reservation era varied from 671 in 1874 to 428 in 1900.<sup>4</sup>

#### CULTIVATION AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR

The viability of the Wichita hunting and horticultural economy depended on a basic division of labor in which women were the cultivators and men the hunters. Upon arriving at the reservation in 1867, the Wichita bands established their villages on the Washita River, and the women began planting gardens in creek bottoms easily cultivated with the hoe. In 1868, Agent Shanklin reported that the men refused to cultivate, saying that they would not make "squaws" of themselves, but that the women and children planted and cultivated an extensive amount of land and, with the assistance of teams and laborers, the women built nearly one hundred houses. When Agent Tatum arrived the following year, he described the work of women who fenced small tracts of land that had been plowed for them "by planting stakes into the ground, and then with bark tying small poles to them. By keeping their ponies away from the fences they raised corn, melons, and pumpkins."<sup>5</sup>

Although the men were encouraged to cultivate the fifty-acre communal fields that were plowed for each band, agents reported that the Wichita women continued to perform most of the labor associated with crop production. It was not until 1874 that the affiliated bands, with more than three hundred Pawnees who were at that time residing on the reservation, cultivated with "assistance" one hundred acres "in the usual way of farming by civilized farmers, besides nearly as much more on the Indian plan of cultivating with the hoe." The statistical returns of farming do not indicate the size or production of vegetable gardens cultivated by the women, but in 1871, 182 acres of corn were reported for the affiliated bands; since the men did not work in the fields, this production must be attributed to the women and/or to labor hired by the agency.<sup>6</sup>

A European observer in the late eighteenth century described the Wichita division of labor as one in which "the women tan, sew, and paint skins, fence the fields, harvest the crops, cut and fetch the firewood, prepare the food, build the houses and rear the children" and the men "devote themselves wholly to the chase and to warfare." This division was essentially maintained into the nineteenth century and the early reservation years. Historically, Wichita grass lodge villages were inhabited from spring until fall while the women were planting, tending, and harvesting their crops. In the late fall or early winter, after crops were harvested, prepared, and stored, the Wichitas left for the winter buffalo hunt, and returned to their villages at planting time in the spring. This pattern was continued on the reservation, where the bands were required to have a military escort for extended winter hunts. In December 1876, Agent Williams reported that five hundred reservation Indians were absent hunting and, having good success, might return with 5000 buffalo robes, or about fifty to each family that had taken part in the hunt.<sup>7</sup>

Despite reservation policies developed to establish an agricultural economy, the tradi-



FIG. 2. *Wichita Grass Lodge, ca. 1900.* Courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

tional hunting-horticulture-herding economy of the Wichitas proved a more effective strategy in providing subsistence and trade goods than did the cultivation of corn or other cash crops. Agency provision of seed and agricultural implements and instruction was inadequate, the climate was ill-suited to agricultural production, and markets for produce were limited. Gardens planted by women in the lowlands were less subject than plowed fields to the drought conditions that continually plagued the reservation, however, and buffalo hides provided clothing and tepee covers and buffalo meat, an important supplement to insufficient beef rations. Market demands for buffalo robes and Indian ponies provided additional access to trade goods, contraband, and cash income.

Like women of the adjacent Kiowa Reservation, Wichita women joined men on winter hunts during which they initially processed

buffalo meat and hides. They also prepared buffalo robes for domestic use and trade and made clothing and tepee covers of buffalo hides. Although Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache women were not traditionally horticulturalists, agency records indicate that, as cultivation was introduced into the hunting, herding, and (prior to 1875) raiding economy, it was women—not men—who participated in limited planting and harvesting. Penateka Comanche women had begun cultivating gardens on the Brazos reserve with the agent noting that they knew nothing of planting, “having never planted a seed before.” In 1875 on the Kiowa Reservation, the agent called the Kiowa chiefs together to announce that fields would be prepared for them if men instead of women did the work.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1870s the hunt and trade in buffalo robes afforded a degree of economic autonomy and contributed to the reproduc-

tion of the traditional division of labor among the Wichita. The depletion of buffalo herds by the end of the decade led to increased dependency on agency issues and on the production of crops and stock. Since through regulation or direct issue the agency controlled valued subsistence and trade goods, this dependency fostered efforts to reorganize labor and production on the reservation. The progress of the Indians as well as the success of the agent was measured by the percentage of self-support in "civilized pursuits" defined in terms of male cultivation and stock raising. By 1886 the Wichitas (who numbered 480) were described as making significant progress and Agent Hall reported that with 745 cultivated acres, 588 cattle, and 400 hogs, they were "fair farmers" who did not, like the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches, rely on the women to do most of the work.<sup>9</sup>

The goal of the reservation system, to establish independent homesteads sustained by cash crop production, was not fully achieved, however. As crops were destroyed by drought and cattle were slaughtered as a result of inadequate or discontinued beef rations, the Wichitas took advantage of other economic options that included the leasing of reservation farmland and grassland. Produce from women's gardens remained an important part of the Wichita subsistence economy. J. A. Buntin, who first came to the Wichita Agency as an industrial teacher in 1893, recalled that almost all of the corn raised was for domestic use and that the larger part of the agricultural work was done by women who cultivated with the hoe. Interviews with Wichita women during the 1960s indicate that traditional methods of cultivation, food processing, and storage were handed down from generation to generation.<sup>10</sup>

#### PROPERTY AND DISTRIBUTION

As direct producers, Wichita women had primary access to garden products, and markets for surplus were found among agency traders, military posts, and trading part-

nerships developed with Kiowa and Comanche women.<sup>11</sup> It is possible that, as processors of buffalo meat, hides, and robes, women controlled the products of the hunt only for household provisioning through direct consumption or trade. Women's access to resources through trade must often be inferred since agency records were concerned primarily with the economic transactions of Indian men, who apparently controlled the distribution of surplus robes and the exchange of robes for guns and ammunition. Women's traditional skills did find off-reservation markets that afforded them direct access to cash income. Agency records yield numerous requests from white hunters to bring hides onto the reserve to be tanned by women of the Kiowa and Wichita reservations in return for money and/or a portion of the robes tanned. Later, Wichita women produced lacework for an hourly wage under the direction of Ida Roff of the Episcopal Mission. Although the lacework sold for high prices in the east, Roff reported in 1897 that a total of \$50.00 was paid monthly to fifty-eight women who worked for ten cents an hour.<sup>12</sup>

Although women as band members had direct access to reservation land, their access to agency issues was often indirect; i.e., as wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters, they received issues made to band leaders or "heads of households," who, by Anglo-American definition, were males. Prior to 1875, when agents were instructed to distribute rations (other than beef) to heads of households, rations and annuities were issued to band leaders. Under both systems of distribution, however, rations were divided among women representing each household, and women performed most of the labor associated with receiving and packing the issues. E. E. White, who served as agent in the late 1880s, reported that ration tickets were made out for each head of family then turned over to the women who actually collected the issues. Women of the Kiowa and Wichita reservations also butchered cattle issued as beef rations and divided the meat among the households. This practice was



FIG. 3. *Beef Issue, Wichita Reservation, ca. 1900.* Courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

viewed as particularly “savage” by the Indian Office, and in 1890 the commissioner of Indian Affairs forbade women from being present at beef slaughter and ordered that men, not women, were to cut up the beef and distribute it.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the issue of rations and annuities, the reservation agency made improved land, cattle, wagons, and agricultural implements and instruction directly available to males as band leaders, heads of households, or students in agency schools. Wage labor that the agency considered worth reporting was organized for men and included service on the Indian police force and Court of Indian Offenses, lumbering, freighting, construction of agency buildings, plowing, and herding of stock. None of these pursuits was considered appropriate for women, although Field

Matron Ballew reported in 1899 that the women of the Kiowa Rainy Mountain District freighted and cut wood for the school and mission.<sup>14</sup>

The subsistence economy of the affiliated bands was subject to agency regulation of markets for beef hides, cattle, produce, and ponies and was often dependent on agency issue of implements, seed, and breeding and work stock. The theory of federal Indian law that the government “owed a duty of protection to the Indian in his relations with non-Indians” extended to the regulation of trespass on the reservation and attempts to control the leasing of reservation lands by non-Indians. Although it was estimated that favorable agricultural seasons occurred but once in every six or seven years, the reservation was well-suited to grazing.<sup>15</sup> As lands adjacent to the



reserve were opened to settlement, demands for Wichita grasslands increased. In 1892 the Indian Office gave official sanction to the leasing of pasture on the Wichita Reservation, and by the end of the reservation era, the leasing of lands to non-Indians was an important component of the Wichita economy.

In 1894 the commissioner of Indian Affairs provided the agent with instructions for the per capita payment of lease income to the Wichita. Ideally, the husband was to receive his own share and the shares of his wife and minor children. However, the wife could receive her own shares, as well as those of her children, if the husband did not provide for his family, if the husband and wife were separated and the wife had custody of minor children, and if she were not the first wife of the husband. (If a man had more than one wife, he could receive only the shares of the first.)<sup>16</sup> The adult unmarried woman and the Indian woman married to a non-Indian were entitled to receive their own shares.

The patriarchal bias of reservation policy that attempted to exclude women from cash crop production and limit women's direct access to wage labor and agency issues was part of a larger acculturation process. One short-range objective of the process was the "civilization" of the Indian through the imposition of Anglo-American forms of family, labor, property, and production. The long-range objective was the disestablishment of the reservation through allotment in severalty and the opening of "surplus" land (unallotted land) to white settlement.

#### MARRIAGE, HOUSEHOLD, AND FAMILY

Despite agency recognition of a male head of household, the traditional matrilineal residence patterns of the Wichita accorded the "mother of the house" significant control over the activities of female, and to some extent male, residents. Ideally, matrilineal residence required that the groom join the household of the bride, and the matrilineal extended household was composed of women of lineage, their

husbands, their unmarried sons and brothers, and their minor children. In their study of changes in Wichita kinship terminology, Schmitt and Schmitt found that, although actual residence often deviated from this pattern, matrilineal residence remained the ideal throughout the reservation period. Since buffalo hunting continued to play an important role in Wichita economy during the 1870s, it is possible that the practice of maintaining the matrilineal structure during the winter hunt continued. The extended family is described, in ethnographic terms, as camping together with each married woman having her own tepee. In 1880, as village organization began breaking up, extended families established separate camps along Sugar Creek and its tributaries; though settlement became more dispersed, the camps were organized around groups of women related by blood.<sup>17</sup>

Reservation policies encouraged the establishment of the nuclear family as the primary economic unit and undermined the economic functions of the extended family and the band. During the early reservation years, band membership determined the distribution of rations, annuities, communal fields, farm implements, and hunting permits. Later government issues, other than beef, were made to family heads and per capita payments to heads of households and individuals. When the Wichita agent submitted the first roll indicating family members and names of heads of households who would collect agency issues, the commissioner of Indian Affairs responded that the roll was unsatisfactory: only one man should appear for any one family and six, eight, or ten adults were not to be indicated as a family.<sup>18</sup>

Teaching Wichita children tasks appropriate to the division of labor that would support the nuclear family homestead became an important part of the acculturation process. Instruction at Riverside School, the agency boarding school attended by Wichita children, concerned preparing the boys to farm and raise stock and the girls to cook, sew, and do



laundry. The superintendent reported in 1901, however, that it was impossible to provide regular class instruction for the girls since the cook and laundress had to supervise these activities for the school residents. In addition, instruction in dairying and in raising poultry (tasks considered appropriate for women) was also unavailable. The superintendent complained that the work of the students, particularly that associated with laundry, left them exhausted and unable to concentrate on study. He concluded that "many of the ways of doing work as taught at these schools will be discarded just as far as possible by our pupils when they return home, just because they have been so hard and monotonous at school."<sup>29</sup>

In 1893, the commissioner of Indian Affairs reported that although some measure of in-

struction in "civilized" pursuits had been provided to the Indian man and to Indian children in the schools, the Indian woman was "left to work out as best she could the problem of exchanging a tepee or wigwam for a neat, comfortable, and well-ordered home according to civilized standards." The commissioner conceded that the open fires and ventilation of traditional housing were being replaced by log houses that were closed, overheated, and equipped with leaking roofs, but concluded that "civilized" standards were not maintained in the new homes. The Indian Office organized the field matron service to provide instruction to reservation women. In defining the duties of field matrons, the Office indicated what was appropriately "women's work": the care of the house, the sick, and small children; household cleaning, sewing, and the proper preparation



FIG. 4. *Riverside Indian School, 1901.* Courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

of food; the keeping and care of domestic animals, the use of milk, the making of butter and cheese, and the keeping of bees. Women were also to adorn the home "with pictures, curtains, home-made rugs, flowers, grassplots, and trees," and walks, fences, and drains were to be constructed. Men were to be instructed "as to the chores and heavier kinds of work about the house which in civilized communities is generally done by men."<sup>20</sup>

Although tasks related to the preparation of food and clothing and the care of children and household did not conflict with the traditional roles of Wichita women, the economic role defined for women by the reservation system emphasized reproductive labor associated with an agricultural economy. This role reduced women to dependence on men as direct producers of crops, cattle, or cash income. On the reservation, where government issues and lease payments were distributed primarily to male heads of households, this role would further exclude women from the production of exchange value. Unlike the traditional matrilineal structure in which a woman maintained access to resources through her natal household, it made the adult Wichita woman dependent on the status of "wife" for access to productive means.

Wichita marriage practices, like the matrilineal extended family and the household division of labor, were considered impediments to acculturation. The rules adopted in 1892 for the federally organized Court of Indian Offenses (a tribunal composed of judges from the Wichita and Kiowa reservations) named as "offenses" plural or polygamous marriages, paying or offering to pay money or other things of value to a woman or to her friends or relatives for the purpose of living with her, and receiving payment for the same. Among the Wichita, a man might have more than one wife and customary procedures for formalizing marriages included gifts of horses and buffalo robes to the bride's father or brother and gifts of clothing to the bride. If a woman left her husband for another man the husband might take property from the man,

thus relinquishing his rights to his wife, and if the bride's parents disapproved of their son-in-law, they asked their daughter to send him home, which constituted "divorce."<sup>21</sup>

Efforts to impose Anglo-American customs of marriage and divorce on the reservation were unsuccessful. Agency records suggest that the Kiowa-Wichita Court of Indian Offenses often recognized traditional forms of organization in the settlement of domestic disputes. When a defendant was found guilty of influencing a woman to leave her husband, he was ordered to give up the woman, who was to return to her husband and live with him until her sister, who was also a wife of the husband, had recovered from her illness. For the offense of having "cast off" a wife and marrying a second woman, the court ordered that the defendant pay the first wife a pony and the sum of \$10.00. Court orders did not require that marriages and divorces be formalized according to Anglo law. Agents' hand-written reports also indicate that customary practices were continued: in 1895 five marriages were solemnized under Anglo law, and in 1900 ten marriages were recorded for the combined Kiowa and Wichita reservations.<sup>22</sup>

Traditional marriage practices were not simply a moral issue. The marriage relation was fundamental to the establishment of the nuclear family and to a household division of labor in which the woman was dependent upon her husband for access to productive means and a man assumed responsibility for the support of his wife and children. In addition, the licensing and recording of marriages and the maintenance of family records were essential to the allotment of reservation land, the disposition of tribal trusts, and the inheritance of tribal property under Anglo law.

#### POLICY AND POLITY

Federal Indian law and administrative policies reflected an Anglo-American bias that governed gender relations. The bias was ad-



FIG. 5. *Wichita Women, 1900.* Courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

dressed by the commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1892:

Under the rule upon which a family is constructed among civilized nations the predominant principle is descent through the father. The father is head of the family. When a man marries, his wife separates herself from her family and kindred and takes up her abode with the husband, assumes his name, and becomes subordinate, in a sense, to him. In social and political arrangements the relationship through the father is the dominant one.<sup>23</sup>

This principle, which was in conflict with accepted practices of marriage, residence, and inheritance among the Wichitas, was adopted as law when the western part of Indian Territory was organized as Oklahoma Territory in 1890. The law, which held that the husband was the head of the family and that he might choose any "reasonable place or mode of living and the wife must conform

thereto,"<sup>24</sup> was retained when Oklahoma became a state in 1907 and was not repealed until 1988. For the Indian woman, the principle of male dominance made her status as a tribal member subordinate to that of "wife," which affected her access to and control of tribal realty—the primary resource of the Wichitas.

The Dawes Act of 1887, which authorized the allotment in severalty of Indian lands and the opening of "surplus" lands to white settlement, excluded the married woman from rights in tribal property. The act allotted 160 acres to each head of family, eighty acres to each single person over eighteen years of age, and forty acres to persons under eighteen years. The Indian wife was to be provided access to land through her husband. Noting the problem of the "cast off" Indian wife, the commissioner of Indian Affairs recommended in 1890 that the Dawes Act be amended to provide allotments to married women. The 1891 amendment provided for equal allotments to all tribal members, made provision for the leasing of allotments, and recognized

the legitimacy of children of Indian men and women married according to tribal custom.<sup>25</sup>

The Anglo concept of household and division of labor implied that an Indian woman without an adult male in the household could not cultivate land or otherwise provide for herself and her children. Since the ideal of the nuclear family household and the stable marriage was not always a reality, "protective" policies were adopted that allowed the Indian woman access to male labor. Prior to allotment in 1901, widows or "divorced" women on the Wichita Reservation who could not secure male Indian labor were allowed (with the aged and infirm) to hire white farmers to work their land. The 1891 amendment to the Dawes Act included a provision that if "by reason of age or other disability" an allottee were unable to work his allotment, he could rent all or a portion of the land. The following year the commissioner of Indian Affairs announced that "other disability" referred to all unmarried women, to married women whose husbands or sons were unable to work the land, to the chronically ill or physically defective, and to "native defect of mind or permanent incurable mental disease." (In 1894, the word "inability" was inserted, allowing Indians "unable" to cultivate their allotments to lease; in 1897, "inability" was eliminated, but was restored in 1900.)<sup>26</sup>

Although such policies allowed Indian women economic alternatives sometimes unavailable to Indian men, they also discouraged women's participation in the production process. Other federal legislation threatened to deprive women and their children of tribal membership, and thus of tribal property. In 1888 Congress drafted legislation making Indian women (with the exception of the Five Civilized Tribes) who thereafter married white men citizens of the United States. Under the statute, citizenship did not impair women's rights to tribal property; the question then became: Were the children of such marriages entitled to rights of tribal membership? The situation was further complicated by an 1896 assistant attorney general's opinion that nei-

ther Indian women married to white men nor their children were entitled to allotments.<sup>27</sup>

Federal intervention in the determination of tribal memberships—a sovereign right of tribal governments—followed Anglo common law that recognized the affiliation of the wife with the husband and the acquisition of rights through the father. In 1892 the commissioner of Indian Affairs challenged this criteria for tribal membership. He pointed out that the children and often their white fathers were recognized as tribal members by tribal authorities and that, although "civilized" nations recognized the principle of descent through the father, many Indian tribes traced descent through the mother, who was often considered head of household.<sup>28</sup>

As tribal members Wichita women had access to reservation lands. Women were denied the prior access to resources accorded men who held positions of authority recognized by the agency, however, and were excluded from participating in public policymaking that affected the use and disposition of reservation lands. Women did not serve as agency-recognized band leaders, reservation police, or judges of the Court of Indian Offenses, and there is no indication in agency records that women participated in councils, served as emissaries to Washington, or signed agreements relinquishing tribal land. Although women may have exerted a strong influence on the actions taken by band leaders and headmen, their authority was not recognized by the agency or the Indian Office.

In 1891, 152 men of the Wichita Reservation (including the Caddo and Delaware) signed the Jerome Agreement, which provided for the allotment of reservation land and the opening of unallotted lands to white settlement.<sup>29</sup> Delays in ratifying the agreement and in settling disputed land claims postponed allotment until 1901. During this ten-year period the Wichitas maintained a subsistence economy that included the leasing of grassland to non-Indians. Although the leasing of reservation pasture to white cattlemen was a rational response to capitalist market de-

mands, it contributed to a form of self-sufficiency that was incompatible with the opening of these same lands to white homesteaders. "Self-support" on the reservation was defined in terms of capitalist relations of production which precluded the leasing of tribally owned pasture—as well as the pasturing of Indian herds on lands owned and controlled by the tribe. Tribal organization was considered synonymous with tribal ownership of land and both were considered antagonistic to the "civilization" of the Indian. The federal government and the Territory of Oklahoma mistakenly assumed that with the dissolution of the reservation the tribe would no longer exist as a political entity.

The objective of reservation policies adopted to reorganize land tenure, family structure, and division of labor among the Wichitas was to impose forms of organization that supported the principle of private property. On the reservation, private property was translated as individual ownership of 160-acre allotments (at least half of which was grazing land). During negotiation of the terms of allotment and land cession, band leaders offered a counter proposal: a line would be drawn north and south through the reservation, setting aside enough land for 160 acres per person, and the land would be held in common by the tribe. Although they argued that this would allow them access to sufficient pasture, they were informed by the Jerome commissioners that the assignment of lands in severalty was not negotiable.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Although little research has been done comparing the economic positions of Native American women from different tribes during the nineteenth-century reservation era, the data that do exist suggest important parallels in the effects of administrative policies on the lives of women. In her study of Dakota Sioux women, Patricia Albers found that reservation policies denied women access to resources and that the ideology of "male providers and

female dependents" deprived women of the autonomy and influence that they had had in the past. Women maintained control of the products of their labor, however, and the domestic skills of women in food and textile production were of major importance in an economy organized around kinship and the creation of use values. The policies of the Quaker administration of the Seneca Reservation had similar consequences for women. Diane Rothenberg describes how Quaker programs to reorganize labor, production, and property led to women's loss of political and economic power exercised through the control of land and the distribution of surplus goods. Although Seneca women were disfranchised and denied access to market production, they maintained their economic autonomy through subsistence production, trade, and cash productive activities.<sup>31</sup>

Albers calls attention to the Dakota subsistence economy, characterized by the domestic sector of production, that evolved under federal regulation of tribal political economy. Under conditions similar to those on the Wichita Reservation, Dakota women had been relegated to the domestic sector by agency policy and, in an economy maintained on the margins of the capitalist market system, women were an important source of support for the household. As Albers points out, the material conditions that separate reproduction and production in capitalist societies were not developed under federal administration of the reservation. The household retained its productive functions by providing goods and services through kin and community support networks. Women's reproductive labor—child care, household maintenance, the processing of goods for household consumption—was not separated from their roles as producers of goods and services that provided family subsistence.<sup>32</sup>

The existence of these parallels suggests a need for further comparative research on the changing economic position of American Indian women. Such research would help us to understand better the role of Indian women in

history and the effects of incorporation on women's labor and economic alternatives. Studies that have examined the consequences of colonialism and "development" indicate that incorporation has had varying effects on women's economic roles cross-culturally.<sup>33</sup> The reservation system, which represents one form of incorporation by the expanding capitalist world market, is distinguished by a combination of factors: the location of tribal societies on or within the borders of the state; state regulation of the political economy of sovereign Indian nations; and a local economy in which labor was not proletarianized. These factors have had important consequences for Indian women's access to and control of valued resources and consequently, for their status.

#### NOTES

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