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Effie S. Jackson, Interviewer  
 April 21, 1937.

### Osage Fraternal- Religious Life.

The following article is taken from the files of the late W. E. McGuire. Mr. McGuire's papers are in the possession of his sister, Mrs. W. B. Frederick, 119 North Wheeling, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Few realize the difficulty in securing facts, that are really and truly facts, from the history of a tribe of people who have no written language; of having to depend upon the word of mouth handed down from one generation to another. Very few Indians of the Osage, or any other tribe, know much of their own history. In getting the true history, one must depend upon the older men of the tribe, and those whose forefathers have taken pains to instruct their sons of the true happenings of the tribe. During the writer's acquaintance with the Osage Indians, which has lasted through a period of a little more than fifty years, he has been given a great many conflicting statements, even from prominent members of the tribe. However, there are a few, among whom I would name our present Chief, Fred Lookout and his wife, Baconrind, Ne-Kah-Wah-she-ton-kah, Frank Corndropper, Chief Strikeax, and a few others from

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when the writer has received substantial information from time to time through all this period of years.

The Indians, both Osages and other tribes, generally were divided into two great clans. The Osages applied the words "cheso" and "hunkah" to these two clans. "Hunkah" means an eagle, and not only an eagle, but carries with it the characteristics of the eagle. He is brave, fierce and strong. This clan represents those who were the warriors of the tribe. They kept a sharp lookout for the enemy, and were known as the protectors of the women and children and weaker members of the tribe. "Cheso" had reference to those who were the councilmen of the "hunkah" and were supposed to give council to the "hunkah" before they could go to battle. The two clans were supposed to council with each other on all questions pertaining to the tribal welfare. You can see that they used good reasoning in this respect; as the object was the same as our

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Congress of the United States, to check hasty and unwise legislation or action.

They are also divided into other clans which correspond to the animal and bird kingdoms. The "hunkahs" represent the bird kingdom and their names signify something connected with that kingdom. We have in our acquaintance such men in this clan as Fred Lookout, the Red Eagles, the Blackbirds, and all members whose names are in some way taken from birds. We have in the animal kingdom prominent members, one of whom is Baconrind. Interpreted this means Wah-she-hah, which interpreted, means Wah-she- the dried fat of the bear, Ha-the-skin of the bear. There are many others known to the good people of Pawhuska, such as Yellow Horse, Roan Horse, Little Bear, Big Elk and others. You will notice if you investigate and interpret the meanings of these names, that they are all connected with one or the other of these clans.

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Fraternal Organizations.

When I first came among the Osages, they had an organization that was known as "Taking the Dove". This was a fraternal and religious organization resembling as far as I could judge the fraternal organizations of their white brothers. The members of this were chosen from both the clans of the tribes. Members of the clan would sit in council and pass judgment on the worthiness of the names suggested for membership. Those who were chosen usually had done something of an extraordinary nature for the tribe. Little could be learned of the inside working of the order, as it was strictly a secret organization, consisting of seven degrees. How these degrees were exemplified, the writer has never been able to learn. After having completed the work of the order, they were

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tattooed in such a way as to distinguish them from other members of the tribe. This organization is now extinct, or at least has ceased to function.

Religion.

The Indians have always been religious, having great faith in God, to whom they always refer as the Great Spirit. The headmen seem to always consult the Great Spirit before entering into any transaction of note. They prayed for the Great Spirit to direct them in battle and pursuit of game, and in the affairs of their tribal government, in sickness and in death.

Especially in death would they go to the Great Spirit for relief, as they attributed their loss to some serious mistake that they had made. Usually they attributed their loss by death to the Evil Spirit, which was administered by some enemy, either of their own people or of the white man. So out of this worship

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and relief came their custom of sending out a war party after the death of a friend had occurred, to take the scalp of some supposed enemy in order to appease the wrath of the Evil Spirit by whom they had been afflicted. After the period of mourning was over, which was of different lengths, usually sixty or ninety days, a war party was organized by the chief mourners and it was their order to take the scalp of the first person whom they met.

The last party of this kind was led by Bill Connor and three Strikers. I had this story from Bill's own lips. They proceeded to the plains of Western Kansas. The first person appearing to their view was a lone horseman, a white man, riding on the barren plains. The Indians immediately upon spying him, proceeded at great speed, as they always rode their best horses on these occasions. They soon overtook and surrounded the rider. Connor's horse had fallen into a dry hole in the

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prairie and dismounted him, but he was soon astride a splendid horse again and joined the Indians who had the man surrounded. The white man, seeing that Connor had some white blood, fell on his neck and begged pitiously for mercy. Bill's statement was to the effect that he counseled the Osage fullbloods to release this man, as the government was watching very closely acts of this kind and if they took the life of this man, his head would probably be required for the crime. He finally prevailed upon the Indians to take his counsel.

The next man they met was a Wichita Indian chief. One of two of the party, either Connor or Three Striker, severed the head of the Wichita Indian, and brought it back to camp, showing that they had complied with the order of the mourners. This act proved to be quite serious for the Osages as the Wichitas assembled their warriors and came to Pawhuska to demand a settlement.



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They first asked for the head of Connor. Connor, of course, had made himself conspicuous by his absence at this particular time. A war council was called, and a settlement was agreed upon, whereby the Osages were to give the Wichitas three hundred ponies, a considerable sum of money and many blankets. This, as far as the writer knows, was the last war party that went out to carry out the custom that had hitherto been practiced.

The Indians believe that the future haven of rest for them is a great country of "Happy Hunting Grounds", where there will be no white men to destroy their game or to preempt their lands.

It has been said of some of the Indian tribes at least that they are "Sun Worshipers". This is denied by one of our old friends, namely Frank Corn-dropper, who corrected this error by explaining in a splendid way why the Indians look toward the sun when they pray. His statement was to the effect that

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the sun was great, and God was great, and that they felt that God only knew of the movements and functions of the sun. Consequently, when looking at the sun when they pray, it holds their thoughts nearer to God and His works. For the same purpose they look toward the mountains, when they pray, because the mountains are great and make them think of God. They look toward the flowers and trees and hills, all of which reminds them that there is a Great Spirit who directs the creation of all these things. The same man said that the Indian, he was sure, had more faith than the white man, as they had always felt that they must depend upon their God to protect them in their business transactions, as they felt their great weakness as compared with the strength of their white brothers.

#### Home Life.

In many respects the home life of the Indian is superior to that of many white people. Especially as

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to their treatment of their children. In all of my long experiences and observations of the Indians, they have never been known to inflict corporal punishment upon their children. They scold them sometimes, very severely, and it seems to break the heart of the child when the parents berate him or her.

#### Games and Sports.

As has been observed by both new and old settlers of this country, the young Indian men are very athletic. They are very fond of the white man's sports, especially of baseball and football, and excel in these games. Before their advent, games of the older people would amuse them. They played what they called hand-ball. They played this by choosing sides equally of men and women. The women seated themselves on the grasses of the hunting grounds, they then would proceed to contest, guessing in which hand a small ball was held. The women chose

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two of their number who were supposed to be quickest of eye and then the men the same on their side of the line. One of the women who was considered quick in the movement of her hands would be given the ball, and she would pass it rapidly from one hand to the other, concealing it in any way she saw fit, then extending the hands closed. One of the men on the other side was asked to point with a pointer to the hand that he supposed contained the ball. If he guessed rightly, there was a stick or arrow stuck into the ground on the men's side. If he missed, there were no changes made. After three guesses, the ball passed to the line of the men. The most expert of the men were chosen, and the performance continued until seven points were made by one side or the other. There were seven points in the game. The result would be that the winning side could do their dances in the presence of the other and receive presents from them.

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The younger men played a game that we would call basket ball. They had a net on the end of a stick. Two lines stood a certain distance apart. The line which had the ball placed it in the net and threw the ball from the net. The opposite side must catch the ball in the net that was on their end of a stick. So they proceeded to the end of the game, which was similar to that of hand ball. Some of the Young Indians became very expert in both tossing and receiving the ball. These were happy times for the Indian, and if you were in the camps of the old men today, you would no doubt hear them lamenting the fact that such conditions are never to return to them. Their only hope now is in the great future, when the Happy Hunting Ground will be reached and they will dwell in peace, surrounded by the game covered hills and prairies of their hunting grounds.