



Traces of the Feminine: Matriculture in the Traditional Ho-Chunk Life World

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Abstract

The Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) people of the western Great Lakes region of North America possess a culture characterized by patrilineal descent. Anthropologists have long believed patrilineality was a post-European contact phenomenon, and that the pre-contact Ho-Chunks possessed a matrilineal culture. The near destruction of this society by the Illiniwek nations (Illinois Confederacy) in the 1640s and 1650s, followed by the introduction of the fur trade, necessitated a societal reorganization that favored smaller, mobile villages characterized by patrilineal descent in the same manner as the Ho-Chunks' Central Algonquian neighbors. Nevertheless, symbols of the earlier matrilineal culture carried forward into the post-contact era, and the historic Ho-Chunk people retained important matrilineal elements. The Ho-Chunks' oral traditions reflect these elements, all of which became a powerful set of symbols that constituted what Clifford Geertz labels 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms.' Ethnographic and ethnohistoric sources provide evidence for the social processes that resulted from this symbolic system, including the strong avuncular relationship between a man and his sisters' children. Descent, under certain conditions, could also proceed through the female line with children receiving their clan affiliations from the mother rather than the father. Similarly, the possessor of a clan war bundle



could bequeath the sacred object to a male child of his sister rather than one of his own sons. The Ho-Chunk also possessed powerful female deities such as the Moon and the Earth in their pantheon. The best example of the underlying matrilinearity of Ho-Chunk society was the elevation of a woman, Hąboguwiġa (Glory of the Morning), as the leader of the Grand Village of the Ho-Chunks at the head of Lake Winnebago after the death of her father during the eighteenth century.

Keywords: Ho-Chunk, matrilineal system, Oneota, Chiwere Siouan, Hąboguwiġa (Glory of the Morning)

Résumé

Le peuple Ho-Chunk (ou Winnebagos) de la région des grands Lacs occidentaux de l'Amérique du Nord possède aujourd'hui une culture caractérisée par un régime patrilinéaire. Les anthropologues pensent depuis longtemps que ce régime est un phénomène qui s'est mis en place après l'arrivée des Européens et que les Ho-Chunks possédaient avant cela un régime matrilineaire. La quasi-destruction de la société Ho-Chunk par les tribus de la Confédération des Illinois vers 1640, suivie par l'introduction du commerce des fourrures, aurait provoqué une réorganisation sociale favorisant des villages mobiles et plus petits centrés sur des groupes de parenté patrilinéaires, comme ce fut le cas chez les gens de langues algonquiennes voisins des Ho-Chunks. Pourtant, d'importants éléments de l'ancienne culture matrilineaire survécurent durant l'ère qui suivit le contact avec les Européens. Les traditions orales reflètent ces éléments qui sont devenus de puissants symboles, constituant ainsi ce que Clifford Geertz définit comme 'un schéma de sens et signification transmis historiquement et incarné dans des symboles, soit un système de conceptions exprimées sous des formes symboliques.' Les sources ethno-historiques révèlent des exemples probants des processus sociaux découlant de ce système symbolique, y compris la relation avunculaire fortement développée entre le frère de la mère (oncle maternel) et les enfants de celle-ci. Par exemple, sous certaines conditions, le lignage pouvait bifurquer vers la lignée maternelle alors que les enfants se retrouvaient affiliés au clan de leur mère. De la même façon, le propriétaire d'un paquet-médecine pouvait léguer cet objet sacré (et donc transmettre les responsabilités rituelles associées) au fils de sa sœur plutôt qu'à l'un de ses propres fils. De plus, les Ho-Chunks reconnaissaient dans leurs panthéons de puissantes figures divines féminines telles la Lune et la Terre. Le meilleur exemple du système matrilineaire sous-jacent dans la société Ho-Chunk est l'ascension d'une femme, Tcap'osgaga

(Gloire du Matin), au rang de chef du Grand Village des Ho-Chunk du lac Winnebago à la mort de son père au dix-huitième siècle.

Mot-clés: Ho-Chunk, système matrilineaire, Oneota, Chiwere Sivan, Hąboguwiġa (Gloire du Matin)

The Ho-Chunk nation's history in the western Great Lakes of North America extends at least one thousand years into the past. Unlike contemporaneous Native societies such as the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois League) and the Wendat (Huron Confederacy), the Ho-Chunks were sparsely documented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the early French colonizers. Therefore, many questions remain concerning Ho-Chunk history. However, written documents are only one category of sources. The oral traditions of the Ho-Chunks provide a wealth of information that allows scholars to develop an understanding of their social structure and culture, as do the scattered documentary sources penned by French and later British and American observers. Ethnographic and ethnohistoric assessments indicate that by the eighteenth century the Ho-Chunks possessed a patrilineal, exogamous clan structure. However, this was a later phenomenon brought about by the dramatic changes the Ho-Chunks experienced after a series of catastrophic wars in the seventeenth century. Prior to these conflicts, the Ho-Chunks likely possessed a matrilineal kinship system that, along with a strong feminine cosmology, created a set of symbolic systems that resulted in lingering but unambiguous matrilineal elements even as the Ho-Chunks transitioned to a patrilineal society. These matrilineal elements provided the cultural mechanisms by which a Ho-Chunk woman, Hąboguwiġa (Glory of the Morning), became a leader of her people in the eighteenth century.

The Ho-Chunks' symbolic systems provide evidence of their earlier matrilineal society and the cultural store that paved the way for Hąboguwiġa's later ascension to leadership. This is particularly true of Ho-Chunk oral traditions, which provide what Clifford Geertz calls "a set of moods and motivations - an ethos...an image of cosmic order - a world view - by means of a single set of symbols."¹ Symbolic systems, according to Geertz, whether religious, political, aesthetic, etc., perform two functions. They provide a model of reality that allows for "the manipulation of symbol structures so as to bring them, more or less closely, into parallel with the pre-established nonsymbolic system." They also provide a model for reality, or "the manipulation of the nonsymbolic systems in terms of the relationships expressed in the symbolic."² This relationship between the symbolic and nonsymbolic - unlike earlier, more rigid conceptions of culture - is flexible and provides

¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 118 (qtd. 118).

² *Ibid.*, 93, 123-25 (qtd. 93).

cultures with “plans, recipes, rules, instructions,” “a set of control mechanisms ... for the governing of behavior” according to Geertz.³ Marie-Françoise Guédon further argues that Geertz’s definition of a cultural system allows scholars to shift from the narrow understanding of matrilineality to the broader notion of matriculture that “emphasizes the cultural context in which such traits as matrilineality can arise.”⁴ In the case of the Ho-Chunks, the shift to patrilineality did not result in a rigid system but instead constituted a set of flexible practices that allowed for the continuance of important matrilineal elements and thus a discernable, if transformed, matriculture.

Archaeological and ethnohistorical sources provide tantalizing but often ambiguous information concerning the early history of the Chiwere Siouan Ho-Chunks. Midwestern archaeologists have long asserted that no direct connection can be made between the various archaeological assemblages in present-day northeastern Wisconsin (particularly the region of Green Bay and the Fox River valley, the earliest homeland of the Ho-Chunk people) and the Native societies of the post-European contact era. They have nonetheless cautiously advanced the notion that the Ho-Chunks (or, perhaps more accurately, the ancestral Ho-Chunks) produced the archaeological manifestation known as the Lake Winnebago Phase, a component of the broader Oneota archeological tradition. They also cautiously postulate that other groups or their ancestral populations such as the Chiwere Siouan loways and the Algonquian Menominees might have been associated with the Lake Winnebago Phase and other Oneota assemblages.⁵ The earliest contact between the Native peoples of the western Great Lakes and Europeans occurred in the guise of the French diplomat Jean Nicolet, who arrived in either 1633 or 1634 to negotiate a truce between the Native nations of Lake Huron and those at Green Bay. French Jesuits preserved the details of Nicolet’s mission, but their texts present only the broad contours of his voyage and the barest scraps of information concerning the Native people he met. Later French sources, especially the writings of Nicolas Perrot (edited and published by Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie) and Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, indicate the Ho-Chunks numbered as many as twenty thousand persons before they became engaged in a disastrous series of conflicts with the Illiniwek nations (Illinois Confederacy) and other Central Algonquians, especially the Meskwakis (Foxes), in the 1640s and 1650s. By the 1660s, when Jesuit missionaries entered the region, the Ho-Chunks’ numbered only about six hundred persons, a ninety-seven percent decrease in

³ Ibid., 44 (qtd. 44).

⁴ Marie-Françoise Guédon, “Introduction,” *Matrix: A Journal for Matricultural Studies* 1 (May 2020): 5-6 (qtd. 6).

⁵ David F. Overstreet, “Oneota Prehistory and History,” *Wisconsin Archeologist* 78 (January-December 1997): 251-96; Patricia B. Richards, “I Should Have Dug Red Banks: Winnebago and Menominee Ethnicity, Identity, and Homelands,” *Wisconsin Archeologist* 84 (January-December 2003): 243, 247; Richard W. Edwards IV, *Indigenous Life Around the Great Lakes: War, Climate, and Culture* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 15, 19, 24-25.

population.⁶ Thus, the society that Nicolet met in the early 1630s was dramatically larger and very different from that which later French arrivals encountered from the 1660s onward.

Ho-Chunk translates as 'People of the Big Voice,' or 'People of the Parent Speech' and denotes that other Chiwere Siouans such as the Ioways, Missouriias, and Otos descended from the Ho-Chunks.⁷ The ancestors of these societies likely arrived in the western Great Lakes from the south (possibly the Ohio Valley) between 700 C.E. and 1000 C.E. Later, as groups migrated westward toward the Mississippi Valley and the Great Plains beginning as early as the mid-1200s C.E., they emerged as the Ioways, Missouriias, and Otos. Those communities that remained in northeastern Wisconsin coalesced as the Ho-Chunks. The westward migrations were largely complete by about 1500 C.E. Archaeological and linguistic data indicate the Ho-Chunks, Ioways, Missouriias, and Otos maintained cultural and economic contacts, and the latter nations' oral traditions recognize their common ancestry and descent from the Ho-Chunks.⁸ The physical separation of these far-flung societies was likely the impetus for those communities that remained in northeastern Wisconsin to adopt the name 'Ho-Chunk,' although when they did this is uncertain. The earliest recorded instance of the word is found in a 1721 letter by Charlevoix, but the Ho-Chunks assert their name had a genesis that predated the contact period.⁹ Central Algonquians called them the *Ouinipigou* (anglicized as Winnebago), or 'People of the Foul-Smelling Water,' a reference to their residence along the shores of Green Bay and a name

⁶ Patrick J. Jung, *The Misunderstood Mission of Jean Nicolet: Uncovering the Story of the 1634 Journey* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2018), 34-35, 109-10, 143-45, 161-62; Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie, "History of the Savage Peoples Who Are Allies of New France," in *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, vol. 1, Emma H. Blair, ed. and trans. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911), 293-300; Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America*, 2 vols. (London: J. Dodsley, 1761), 1:286, 2:61-64.

⁷ Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "Winnebago," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, Bruce G. Trigger, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978), 706.

⁸ James W. Springer and Stanley R. Witkowski, "Siouan Historical Linguistics and Oneota Archaeology," in *Oneota Studies*, University of Minnesota Publications in Anthropology No. 1, Guy Gibbon, ed. (Minneapolis: Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota, 1982), 73-75, 80; Overstreet, "Oneota Prehistory and History," 274; Robert L. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul: North American Indian Belief and Ritual* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 152; David Lee Smith, *Folklore of the Winnebago Tribe* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 7, 26-27; Eric Buffalohead, "Dhegihan History: A Personal Journey," *Plains Anthropologist* 49 (November 2004): 334-35; Dale R. Henning and Thomas D. Thiessen, "Summary and Conclusions," *Plains Anthropologist* 49 (November 2004): 591-92; Thomas D. Thiessen, "Traditional and Historical Summary," *Plains Anthropologist* 49 (November 2004): 361-62; Dale Henning, pers. comm., 30 August 2019.

⁹ Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "Winnebago Protohistory," in *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, Stanley Diamond, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 793; Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America*, 1:286, 2:61-64; Smith, *Folklore of the Winnebago Tribe*, 7.

their Central Algonquian neighbors and later white colonizers used well into the twentieth century. The French called them the *Puans* (also spelled *Puant and Puants*), a clipped version of *Les Gens de l'eau Puante*, which had the same meaning as Ouinipigou and referenced the malodorous freshwater along which they lived.¹⁰ The word 'Puans' often has been mistranslated into English as 'Stinkards,' but the French did not use the term derogatorily to describe the Ho-Chunks' hygiene. The term may have been an instance of French word play as 'Puans' is remarkably similar to the generic word for Siouan peoples, *Bwan*, in several Algonquian languages.¹¹ This would not be surprising given that the French first learned of the Ho-Chunks and other Siouans with whom they initially had no contact from Algonquian nations such as the Odawas.¹²

Conflicts with their Central Algonquian neighbors in the years after Nicolet's visit resulted in significant changes to the Ho-Chunks' social structure. While these conflicts had earlier antecedents, they became more lethal in the late 1640s and continued into the 1650s. A French source written in September 1646 described the Ho-Chunks (in the present tense) as 'numerous and sedentary.'¹³ Presumably, the conflicts with the Illiniwek and the Meskwakis began after this date. This was about the same time as the Haudenosaunee began their assault against the Wendats and other Native societies in the eastern Great Lakes, commencing in earnest with a major Haudenosaunee attack against the Wendat village of Teanaostaiaé in 1648. In the western Great Lakes, the Illiniwek's program of expansion was triggered in part by the disorder resulting from incursions by Haudenosaunee war parties.¹⁴ Unlike the well-documented conflicts of the

¹⁰ Lurie, "Winnebago," 706; Frederic Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* (Cincinnati: Jos. A. Hemann, 1853), 91; J.A. Cuoq, *Lexique de la Langue Algonquine* (Montreal: J. Chapleau & Fils, 1886), 77; Jung, *Misunderstood Mission of Jean Nicolet*, 69, 72-75, 92.

¹¹ David Kaufman, a student of Siouan languages, and the Nehinuw (Cree) scholar Keith Goulet of the First Nations University of Canada are to be thanked for assisting in the formulation of this hypothesis concerning the meaning of the French word Puans and its relation to the Algonquian word Bwan. See David Kaufman, pers. comm., 24 September 2019; and Keith Goulet, pers. comm., 26 September 2019. One of the clearest sources for understanding the French meaning of Puans comes from Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, who wrote in 1718, "The Puans derive this name from their river...during the heat of summer, on account of either the quality of the water or the too great quantity of fish, the water...becomes foul and putrid.... It is for this reason that the nation is called that of the Puans, for both in their persons and their habits they are the cleanest among the Savages; and their women...are exceedingly careful to keep their cabins very clean and tidy." See Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, "Relation of Sieur de Lamothe Cadillac, 1718," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, Lyman C. Draper, et al., eds., 31 vols. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1855-1931), 16:360 (hereafter cited as *WHC*).

¹² Jung, *Misunderstood Mission of Jean Nicolet*, 69, 74-75.

¹³ Marie de l'Incarnation, *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, Joyce Marshall, ed. and trans. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 159-60 (qtd. 159). Also see Jung, *Misunderstood Mission of Jean Nicolet*, 161-63, 165-66, 198n39.

¹⁴ Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*, 2 vols. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1976), 2:723-88; Robert M. Morrissey, *Empire by*

Haudenosaunee, sources that describe the war between the Ho-Chunks, Illiniwek, and Meskwakis are often vague as to dates and places. Nevertheless, all the historical sources - ethnohistoric documents, archaeological data, and Ho-Chunk oral traditions - present a story of catastrophic population losses due to these conflicts. Epidemic diseases might also have contributed to Ho-Chunk population declines even before the wars of the 1640s and 1650s.¹⁵ Thus, it should be no surprise that the society that existed before these cataclysmic wars would be significantly different than that which emerged from remnant Ho-Chunk populations in the post-conflict era.

Paul Radin, a Euro-American anthropologist, conducted extensive ethnographic research among the Ho-Chunks, particularly those in Nebraska, during the early decades of the twentieth century. Radin was the first to posit that before these conflicts, the Ho-Chunks possessed a hierarchical society characterized by matrilineal descent. In his study of Ho-Chunk oral traditions, he argued the *Red Horn Cycle* of narratives that chronicle the adventures of the culture hero Red Horn provide strong evidence for such a society. Radin believed it to be a particularly old narrative as it contained elements found in the traditions of other Siouan peoples, including the Ioways, thus suggesting a distant lineage. In this cycle, Red Horn and his brothers compete for the hand of a chief's daughter by running a race. In the end, Red Horn's eldest brother marries the woman and is elevated to the position of chief. Radin, in his summary of the principal points of the *Red Horn Cycle*, noted:

[W]e are at once struck with the fact that this setting possesses traits different from those we are accustomed to associate with Winnebago [Ho-Chunk] civilization. There is...evidence of the existence of real rank. The chief and his family occupy a very special position. His daughter...sits on a special platform to view the foot race. Captured women are given away as presents. Women, in fact, are everywhere in evidence.¹⁶

Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 32, 34.

¹⁵ Potherie, "History of the Savage Peoples," 294-300; Overstreet, "Oneota Prehistory and History," 283-87; David F. Overstreet, pers. comm., 19 April 2017, 21 July 2021; Lurie, "Winnebago Protohistory," 803-4; William Green, "Examining Protohistoric Depopulation in the Upper Midwest," *Wisconsin Archeologist* 74 (March-December 1993): 290-323. Carolyn Fiscus, a Ho-Chunk elder in Nebraska, is to be thanked for providing a contemporary Ho-Chunk understanding of these conflicts. See Carolyn Fiscus, pers. comm., 18-19 December 2020.

¹⁶ Paul Radin, *Winnebago Hero Cycles: A Study in Aboriginal Literature* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1948), 40, 43-45, 116, 123 (qtd. 45).

Radin went on to write, "Internal evidence, myth, tradition, custom, all point to a period in Winnebago [Ho-Chunk] history where descent was reckoned in the female line, not, as now, in the male line."¹⁷

Radin wrote little more on the earlier culture of the Ho-Chunk people before the conflicts of the 1640s and 1650s, although his work provided a foundation for later anthropologists. John Staeck has done the most in-depth analysis of Ho-Chunk oral traditions, and his work lends support to Radin's earlier assertions. Like Radin, Staeck argues that Ho-Chunk oral traditions reflect elements that were added over the course of many centuries.¹⁸ Archaeologists have identified three discernable periods in northeastern Wisconsin. The Emergent Horizon existed by about 900 C.E. and, according to later Ho-Chunk oral traditions, was primarily a Chiwere Siouan society composed of dispersed homesteads. During the Developmental Horizon beginning sometime between 1000 and 1150 C.E., the oral traditions suggest larger, clustered villages that had increasing contacts with each other. Finally, the Classic Horizon began about 1300 C.E. and continued until the Ho-Chunks experienced their cataclysmic wars of the mid-seventeenth century. Both the extant archaeological evidence and the later Ho-Chunk oral traditions indicate the society of this period consisted of closely allied networks or possibly alliances of populous villages that possessed multiple family lineages.¹⁹

The Classic Horizon was a period of efflorescence of Ho-Chunk society in present-day northeastern Wisconsin. The middle Fox River in particular became densely populated with more than fifty discrete village sites in evidence. Corn agriculture became a significant subsistence strategy, and multiple lineages inhabited these villages. This society likely did not constitute a single polity but instead consisted of an alliance or alliances of closely related Ho-Chunk communities that stretched through the middle and upper Fox River valley northward along the eastern shore of the Door Peninsula of Green Bay. According to French sources, these communities had ties to other Chiwere Siouan communities such as the loways of the upper Mississippi Valley and beyond, stretching westward to the Great Plains.²⁰

¹⁷ Radin, *Winnebago Hero Cycles*, 45 (qtd. 45).

¹⁸ John P. Staeck, "Archaeology, Identity, and Oral Tradition: A Reconsideration of Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Winnebago Social Structure and Identity as Seen Through Oral Traditions" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1994), 18, 302-15, 496, 513.

¹⁹ Staeck, "Archaeology, Identity, and Oral Tradition," 513-20; John P. Staeck, "Echoing the Past: Reconciling Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Views of Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Ethnogenesis," in *Interpretations of Native North American Life: Material Contributions to Ethnohistory*, Michael S. Nassaney and Eric S. Johnson, eds. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 100-4; Overstreet, "Oneota Prehistory and History," 255-87.

²⁰ Overstreet, "Oneota Prehistory and History," 274-87; Staeck, "Echoing the Past," 102-5; Seth A. Schneider, "Oneota Ceramic Production and Exchange: Social, Economic, and Political Interactions in Eastern Wisconsin between A.D. 1050-1400" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015), 358-66; Robert A. Birmingham and Amy L. Rosebrough, *Indian Mounds of Wisconsin*, 2nd

Oral traditions, as mentioned, indicate the matrilineal character of early Ho-Chunk society, although matrilineality likely did not characterize the societies of the earlier Emergent and Developmental Horizons. In addition to the *Red Horn Cycle*, the narrative *Blue Horn's Nephews* indicates matrilineal principles at play in the late pre-conflict period of the Classic Horizon. In these narratives, men, usually esteemed warriors, marry chiefs' daughters and become chiefs themselves by virtue of these unions. The protagonists also practice matrilocality; they reside in their wives' villages after marriage and simply replace the chiefs whose daughters they have married. In *Blue Horn's Nephews*, we also see sororal polygyny, as the warrior of the story marries the daughters of a chief and becomes a village chief himself. In these oral traditions, women have an ascribed status: they are born into chiefly families, and the ascension of a new chief is realized through marriages with them. Descent follows the female line as it does in all matrilineal systems. Men earn the right to marry a chief's daughter through brave deeds in battle and other significant accomplishments such as the foot race in the *Red Horn Cycle*. Therefore, men have achieved rather than ascribed status. In *Blue Horn's Nephews*, the sons of the new chief develop a particularly strong avuncular relationship with Blue Horn (their maternal uncle and the brother of the two sisters), a common attribute of many matrilineal systems. These matrilineal and matrilocal elements are also found in other Ho-Chunk oral traditions such as *The Chief's Daughter and the Orphan*, *The Thunderbird*, *The Man Who Visited the Thunderbirds*, and *The Woman Who Loved Her Half Brother*.²¹

Hierarchy is also evident in the Ho-Chunk oral traditions that relate to the earlier, pre-conflict period. In the *Red Horn Cycle*, Radin noted the elevated position of the chief's daughter on a platform to witness the foot race. In another version of the *Red Horn Cycle*, women present moccasins to the members of a war party, a sign that a woman will marry a warrior upon his triumphant return. The chief's daughter in the story first offers her moccasins to Red Horn, the most prestigious member of the war party, but he refuses. The next two warriors also reject her moccasins, and she is forced to offer them to Turtle, a figure in many Ho-Chunk oral traditions whose foibles make him the warrior with the lowest stock of prestige. He forcibly takes the moccasins from the chief's daughter thus coercing her into marriage, a turn of events that causes the chief's daughter great embarrassment. Red Horn, on the other hand, accepts the moccasins of an orphan girl, a person of lower rank than the chief's daughter. While this tale inverts the social order, it still presents a clear picture of the established hierarchy as orphans were seen to be the

edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), 185-96; Jung, *Misunderstood Mission of Jean Nicolet*, 26-35; James L. Theler and Robert F. Boszhardt, *Twelve Millennia: Archaeology of the Upper Mississippi River Valley* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003), 158-59; Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America*, 2:63.

²¹ Staeck, "Echoing the Past," 96-107; John P. Staeck, "Chief's Daughters, Marriage Patterns, and the Construction of Past Identities: Some Suggestions on Alternative Methods for Modeling the Past," *Wisconsin Archeologist* 74 (March-December 1993): 378-81.

bottommost members of the community while a chief's daughter and the chiefly family to which she belonged were at the top. It also reflects both the importance of ascribed status (in this case, the high social standing of the chief's daughter), as well as achieved status, as the orphan girl becomes an impeccable wife and mother to Red Horn and his sons.²²

Archaeological data provides additional evidence for the matrilineal nature of the earlier pre-conflict society of the Ho-Chunks. Archaeologists note that the Classic Horizon, associated here with the late pre-conflict period, witnessed the increasing importance of corn agriculture in contrast to the earlier Emergent and Developmental Horizons. Similar agricultural societies, particularly the contemporaneous Haudenosaunee and Wendats, were matrilineal, and like most matrilineal societies were also matrilocal. Therefore, husbands resided in the female-centered, extended-family residences of their mothers-in-law after marriage. Residential structures in matrilocal societies tend to be much larger than those in patrilocal societies. This is particularly true with societies that practice sororal polygyny where co-wives tend to live in the same residence. Non-sororal polygyny is often characterized by co-wives having smaller, separate residences. Residential structures from the Emergent and Developmental Horizons at various Oneota sites average 30.5 square meters, quite close to the 28.6 square meters found worldwide for structures in patrilocal societies. Residential structures of the Classic Horizon average 171.3 square meters, again quite close to the worldwide average of 175 square meters for structures in other matrilocal societies. Interestingly, residential structures grew smaller during the later Historic Horizon of the post-conflict era, suggesting a return to patrilocal residence. This phenomenon parallels the known transition of the Ho-Chunks and other Siouan nations that emerged from the Oneota tradition and practiced patrilinear descent and patrilocal residence after European contact.²³

Later oral traditions preserved a record of the large, pre-conflict residential structures well into the twentieth century.²⁴ These and other traditions such as the *Red Horn Cycle* and *Blue Horn's Nephews* created a discernable set of symbols that, even during the post-conflict era, reminded the Ho-Chunks of the important role women played among their ancestors. Also important were the religious beliefs of the Ho-Chunks. Like their oral traditions, their spiritual beliefs and cosmology created a set of symbolic elements that included important feminine figures, particularly Moon and Earth, both of whom (along

²² Staeck, "Chief's Daughters," 381-83.

²³ David F. Overstreet, and Patricia B. Richards, eds., *Archaeology at Lac Des Puans: The Lake Winnebago Phase: A Classic Horizon Expression of the Oneota Tradition in East-Central Wisconsin*, Reports of Investigations No. 280 (Milwaukee: Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center, 1992), 146, 170, 194; R. Eric Hollinger, "Residence Patterns and Oneota Cultural Dynamics," in *Oneota Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future*, Report 20 of the Office of the State Archaeologist, William Green, ed. (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1995), 142-74.

²⁴ Nancy Oestreich Lurie and Patrick J. Jung, *The Nicolet Corrigenda: New France Revisited* (Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2009), 87-89.

with the male figures Earth Maker, Sun, Morning Star, Disease Giver, Thunder, and Water Spirit) were considered major deities of the Ho-Chunks and part of the earliest strata of spirit beings common to many Siouan societies in North America. Earth played a particularly important role in shaping male behavior among the Ho-Chunks. As one Ho-Chunk, Warujáxega (Crashing Thunder, also known as Sam Carley Blowsnake), asserted, "Our grandmother, Earth, is a woman, and in (abusing your wife) you are abusing her."²⁵ This prohibition even extended to the women of their enemies. One nineteenth-century American observer, Indian agent Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, employing Victorian euphemisms, noted, "The Winnebago [Ho-Chunk] warriors say that chastity is, by their tribe, uniformly respected in war. They say that the Great Spirit has told them not to abuse the women."²⁶

The Ho-Chunks' transition from their pre-conflict to their post-conflict society was an ethnogenesis despite the continuities between the two. The survivors of the devastating wars, possibly a mere three percent of the original pre-conflict population, took refuge on the western shores of Green Bay among their Menominee allies, an event recorded in both French sources and Ho-Chunk oral histories.²⁷ Sometime later, the survivors left their refuge among the Menominees, crossed Green Bay, and by 1669-70 resided at Red Banks, a point of high ground on the western half of the Door Peninsula of Green Bay.²⁸ Radin wrote over a century ago that the Ho-Chunks came together from earlier village bands (or remnants of them in the aftermath of the conflicts) that gathered at a single location, and these bands became the basis for patrilineal clans. Radin believed the Wolf clan had been the chiefly clan of the earlier, pre-conflict Ho-Chunk society, whereas the Thunder (or Thunderbird) clan provided civil leadership in the post-conflict era. The post-conflict Ho-Chunk clans were organized into two exogamous moieties, that of the Sky (*wangeregi herera*, literally, 'those who are above') and included the Thunder, Eagle, Hawk (or Warrior), and Pigeon clans. The Earth moiety (*manegi herera*, 'those who are below') included the Bear, Wolf, Water Spirit, Buffalo, Deer, Elk, Fish, and Snake clans. The origin narratives of these clans often include descriptions of their journeys to Red Banks, where

²⁵ Paul Radin, "The Winnebago Tribe," in *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1915-1916* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 170, 285-88; Paul Radin, ed., *The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1920), 455 (qtd. 455).

²⁶ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Information Respecting the History, Conditions and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1854), 53 (qtd. 53).

²⁷ For the French sources, see Potherie, "History of the Savage Peoples," 300; and Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 44:247, 55:183. For Ho-Chunk oral traditions recorded in the first half of the twentieth century, see Radin, "Winnebago Tribe," 55-58; and Lurie, "Winnebago Protohistory," 803-4.

²⁸ Arthur C. Neville, "Some Historic Sites about Green Bay," in *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1905* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1906), 150-56.

these Ho-Chunk clans first gathered. The Warrior and Buffalo clans, for example, claim to have come from certain lakes far to the south of Green Bay. Only the Thunder clan asserts its origin was at Red Banks.²⁹

The residence of the Ho-Chunks with the Menominees in the immediate aftermath of their calamitous wars resulted in the Ho-Chunks adopting aspects of Central Algonquian social organization, particularly patrilineality and patrilocality. The Menominees appear to have also adopted elements of Ho-Chunk social organization. The Menominee moieties bear a striking resemblance to those of the Ho-Chunks, more so than to the moieties of any other Central Algonquian society. Also, the Thunder and Bear clans traditionally have provided the most significant leadership positions among both nations.³⁰ For the Ho-Chunks, there existed a dual system of leadership whereby civil chiefs came from the Thunder clan and members of the Bear clan provided chiefs who directed the police functions within Ho-Chunk villages. The privileges of these two clans, and the ranking of lineages within them, provide evidence of continued, if diminished, stratification among the largely egalitarian Ho-Chunks of the post-conflict period. Moreover, all Ho-Chunk clans became patrilineal on the Central Algonquian model. In addition to the Menominees, the Ho-Chunks also became more intimately engaged with other Central Algonquian nations, and this also exerted influence. Perrot noted that the Illiniwek made captives of many women and girls in their war against the Ho-Chunks, and these captives, after many years of residence among the Illiniwek, returned to their people. Perrot also noted increased intermarriage between the Ho-Chunks and the Central Algonquians and wrote, "Some of the Pouteouatemis [Potawatomis], Sakis [Sauks], and Outagamis [Meskwakis] have taken wives among them [Ho-Chunks], and have given them their own daughters."³¹

The Ho-Chunks' population remained small for the next century and did not exceed one thousand persons until the middle of the eighteenth century. As the population slowly recovered from the cataclysms of the seventeenth century, the Ho-Chunks moved south from Red Banks and expanded into regions formerly occupied by their pre-conflict ancestors and other Chiwere Siouan populations such as the Ioway. These regions included the Fox and Rock River valleys and the Wisconsin and Mississippi River valleys. By the 1820s, at least forty Ho-Chunk villages dotted the landscape throughout present-day Wisconsin and northern Illinois, and each retained the dual system of chieftainship established earlier. Euro-American observers noted that sororal polygyny remained a

²⁹ Radin, *Winnebago Hero Cycles*, 45; Paul Radin, *The Social Organization of the Winnebago Indians, An Interpretation* (Ottawa, Ont.: Government Printing Bureau, 1915), 13-19; Radin, "Winnebago Tribe," 57, 65, 213, 217, 220, 242, 245, 249, 327; Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "A Check List of Treaty Signers by Clan Affiliation," *Journal of the Wisconsin Indians Research Institute* 2 (June 1966): 50; Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America*, 1:286, 2:61-64.

³⁰ Richards, "Red Banks," 245; Robert L. Hall, "Red Banks, Oneota, and the Winnebago: Views from a Distant Rock," *Wisconsin Archeologist* 74 (March-December 1993): 31.

³¹ Lurie, "Winnebago," 693-4; Potherie, "History of the Savage Peoples," 300-1 (qtd. 301).

common practice into the early nineteenth century. One of these observers, federal Indian agent Charles C. Trowbridge, noted the particularly strong warrior ethos of Ho-Chunk men. He also asserted Ho-Chunk women accompanied the larger war parties and were “found to be very brave, and always take part in the battle.”³²

Also important to the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal kinship was the advent of the fur trade in the western Great Lakes and the establishment of French Jesuit missions. The fur trade necessitated smaller, more mobile villages over larger expanses of territory, and this favored patrilineality and patrilocality. The missionaries also contributed to the shift toward patrilineality. French Jesuits believed male-centered households to be a cultural norm, if not a biblical mandate. The fur trade had a much greater influence than the Jesuits among the Ho-Chunks, and it dramatically changed the roles of Native women in the western Great Lakes. Carol Devens summarizes these changes and writes:

The orientation of many female tasks began to shift from the creation of a useful end product, such as clothing or tools, to assistance in the preparation of furs. Awls and bodkins that otherwise might have been used for sewing coats or breechclouts instead enabled a woman to stretch more furs and stretch them faster. Women were undeniably vital to the production of the furs that Europeans sought so eagerly - their scraping, stretching, and tanning of skins was essential to the process. No longer, however, did they participate as producers in their own right; rather, they were becoming auxiliaries to the trapping process.³³

However, this seemingly thorough-going transition to patrilineality was never complete. Nancy Oestreich Lurie (like Radin, a Euro-American anthropologist), began her fieldwork among the Ho-Chunks in the 1940s and greatly added to the extensive ethnographic work of Radin a generation earlier. Lurie, more so than Radin, discerned traces of the earlier matricultural elements in the post-conflict Ho-Chunk society. She noted the Ho-Chunks had a robust avuncular tradition whereby a woman’s brother often had a stronger relationship with his sister’s children than with his own, a common characteristic of matrilineal systems. Lurie also explained anomalies that Radin attributed to cultural

³² Jeanne Kay, “The Fur Trade and Native American Population Growth,” *Ethnohistory* 31 (1984): 278; Lurie, “Winnebago,” 692-93; Samuel Mazzuchelli, *Memoirs Historical and Edifying of a Missionary Apostolic*, Mary B. Kennedy, trans. (Chicago: W.F. Hall Printing Co., 1915), 56, 100; Charles C. Trowbridge, “Comparison of the manners, Customs and international laws of the Winnee-baá-goá nation of Indians with those of their neighbors, the Munnoáminnees,” [1823], pp 120-21, 125-27, 131 (qtd. 127) in C.C. Trowbridge Papers, box 15, folder I4Me, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.

³³ Lurie, “Winnebago,” 692; Hollinger, “Residence Patterns,” 155-58; Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 3, 13-20 (qtd. 17).

deterioration caused by the Ho-Chunks' later reservation experiences as elements of an earlier matrilineal system. She noted that while the Ho-Chunks were patrilineal, descent could, and often did, go through the female line. In cases where a mother's clan could better afford the cost of a naming feast, a child often assumed the clan identity of the mother rather than the father. The same was true of war bundles, important sacred objects among the Ho-Chunks. While the inheritance of war bundles went through the male line, a woman could inherit a war bundle if there was no qualified male heir. In the cases of both clan affiliation and war bundles, descent could follow the female line in special circumstances, but thereafter descent went through a woman's sons. Lurie argued this was the dynamic by which Hąboguwiġa (Glory of the Morning) assumed leadership among the Ho-Chunks during the eighteenth century.³⁴

This conclusion stands in marked contrast to that of Radin, who, as a male anthropologist in the first decades of the twentieth century, reflected the gender biases of his time. As a student of Franz Boas, the father of American cultural anthropology, Radin rejected older ethnocentric notions of unilineal cultural evolution, and, like Boas, sought to understand cultures on their own terms by determining their historical contexts through evidence internal to the cultures. Radin also firmly rejected overtly racist theories that linked cultural variation among human populations to racial and biological differences. Yet, despite his progressive and even radical notions concerning race and ethnicity, Radin was, according to his recent biographer, Jack Glazier, conservative in his assumptions about gender. Glazier writes, "Radin built strong relationships with several of the Winnebago [Ho-Chunks] with whom he worked, but none of those relationships was with women. His viewpoint was highly gender-constricted. He had little to say about Winnebago women, as informants or otherwise."³⁵ Thus, it should come as no surprise that in his assessment of Hąboguwiġa, Radin dismissed the idea that she exercised any real leadership and argued instead that her status could be explained by "the fact that she married a Frenchman named Decora [sic]. She was not the chieftainess of the tribe nor were any of her children, strictly speaking, chiefs of the tribe. In any case her position had nothing to do with female descent."³⁶

Examining the details of Hąboguwiġa's life illuminates the cultural forces that led to her position of leadership among her people. Ho-Chunk oral traditions assert she was born in 1711 to a Ho-Chunk civil chief who was a member of the Thunder clan. At the time, the Ho-Chunk nation, still in the process of recovering from the disasters of the previous century, lived principally in a single village location at the entrance to Lake Winnebago on

³⁴ Lurie and Jung, *Nicolet Corrigenda*, 141-46; Lurie, "Winnebago," 694-95.

³⁵ Lurie and Jung, *Nicolet Corrigenda*, 142; Jack Glazier, *Anthropology and Radical Humanism: Native and African American Narratives and the Myth of Race* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2020), 1-9, 46, 168-69 (qtd. 46).

³⁶ Radin, "Winnebago Tribe," 193 (qtd. 193).

Doty Island (present-day Neenah, Wisconsin). Upon the death of her father in 1729, Hąboguwiąa became the chieftess of the Ho-Chunk nation. Two versions of the oral tradition present different reasons for her ascension. The first, provided by the late Ho-Chunk elder and scholar David Lee Smith, asserts she was an only child. Another version recounted by the Ho-Chunk elder Carolyn Fiscus states instead that Hąboguwiąa had brothers, but none were deemed worthy of succeeding their father. Both traditions agree that Hąboguwiąa possessed a great deal of wisdom and a strong character, and that she exercised real leadership among her people. As archaeologist Roger C. Echo-Hawk reminds us, different versions of oral traditions do not undermine their value as historical sources, particularly when those traditions share core elements (in this case, Hąboguwiąa becoming a chieftess) and mesh with documentary and archaeological data.³⁷

Hąboguwiąa's assumption of leadership caused some controversy among the Ho-Chunks as many rejected the idea of a woman assuming such a position. About half of the nation went westward to the Mississippi Valley in protest of the decision, although the rift ended, most likely by the early 1750s, when the dissenting faction reconciled with those who supported Hąboguwiąa's role as chieftess.³⁸ She married a Frenchman, Joseph Sabrevoir Décarrie, who had resigned his commission as an officer in the French army in 1729 and became a trader among the Ho-Chunks. Hąboguwiąa and Décarrie had two sons and a daughter. After seven or eight years, Décarrie returned to the colony of Quebec. Hąboguwiąa insisted that their sons stay with her; their daughter accompanied Décarrie, who died in 1760 in one of the final battles of the French and Indian War. Ho-Chunk oral traditions maintain that Hąboguwiąa exercised real leadership, which is evidenced by the fact she led her people in their campaigns against the Meskwakis in the Fox Wars during the early eighteenth century and against the British and their allies in the later French and Indian War.³⁹

A skeptic like Radin would argue that Native oral traditions imperfectly record empirical knowledge of the past, and the assertion that Hąboguwiąa exercised leadership as a chieftess stands as little more than a metaphor in the Ho-Chunk narratives that preserve knowledge of her career. Radin believed that any significance Hąboguwiąa possessed was the result of her marriage to a French trader. Certainly, such nuptial unions had important

³⁷ Smith, *Folklore of the Winnebago Tribe*, 155-57; Carolyn Fiscus, pers. comm., 10 August 2021; Roger C. Echo-Hawk, "Ancient History in the New World: Integrating Oral Traditions and the Archaeological Record in Deep Time," *American Antiquity* 65 (April 2000): 267-90. Carolyn Fiscus's version is also recorded by Richard L. Dieterle. See Richard L. Dieterle, "The Glory of the Morning," 2005, par. 2, in *The Encyclopedia of Hočąk (Winnebago) Mythology*, Richard L. Dieterle, ed., accessed at <https://hotcakencyclopedia.com/ho.GloryOfMorning.html>.

³⁸ Smith, *Folklore of the Winnebago Tribe*, 155-57; Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 28; Lurie, "Winnebago," 694-95; Dieterle, "Glory of the Morning," par. 2, 14.

³⁹ Smith, *Folklore of the Winnebago Tribe*, 156-57; Dieterle, "Glory of the Morning," par. 2-3, 14.

diplomatic and economic dimensions for Native communities in the Great Lakes, as historians have long argued.⁴⁰ However, are we to believe this was the only source of Hąboguŵjga's renown?

The best contemporaneous description of Hąboguŵjga comes from the writings of Jonathan Carver, a Connecticut Yankee who traveled in the western Great Lakes from 1766 to 1768 in the service of the British Crown. He arrived at Hąboguŵjga's village in late September 1766 and wrote, "Here the queen [Hąboguŵjga] who presided over this tribe instead of a Sachem [male chief], received me with great civility, and entertained me in a very distinguished manner."⁴¹ Carver remained among the Ho-Chunks for four days and sat in one of their councils. His description leaves little doubt that Hąboguŵjga occupied the office of chieftess with all its incumbent obligations and perquisites. Carver stated:

The Queen sat in the council, but only asked a few questions, or gave some trifling directions in matters relative to the state; for women are never allowed to sit in their councils, except they happen to be invested with the supreme authority, and then it is not customary for them to make any formal speeches as the chiefs do.... Having made some acceptable presents to the good old queen, and received her blessing, I left the town of the Winnebagoes [Ho-Chunks].⁴²

We should view skeptically Carver's assertion that Hąboguŵjga gave only 'trifling directions' and that, despite the authority she wielded, her gender occasioned limits on her office, such as speaking in council. Ho-Chunk scholar Angel Mae Hinzo argues instead that Carver created "a narrative that imposes a settler lens of women's roles in leadership without an in depth understanding of Ho-Chunk society. From his description, Glory of the Morning [Hąboguŵjga] stands more as a figurehead to be impressed and entertained for settler access to Ho-Chunk territory."⁴³

Carver later expanded on his meeting with Hąboguŵjga and described the cultural conventions by which she became a chieftess. He wrote:

On the death of a chief, his sister's son sometimes succeeds him in preference to his own son; and if he happens to have no sister, the nearest female relation assumes the dignity [chieftainship]. This accounts for a woman being

⁴⁰ Radin, "Winnebago Tribe," 193; Murphy, *Gathering of Rivers*, 28-29.

⁴¹ Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North-America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London: J. Walter, 1778), 32 (qtd. 32).

⁴² Carver, *Travels*, 32-33, 38 (qtd. 32-33, 38).

⁴³ Angel Mae Hinzo, "Voicing Across Space: Subverting Colonial Structures in Ho-Chunk/Winnebago Tribal History" (Ph.d. diss., University of California-Davis, 2009), 21-24 (qtd. 24).

at the head of the Winnebago [Ho-Chunk] nation which, before I was acquainted with their laws, appeared strange to me.⁴⁴

Interestingly, this passage is very similar to Lurie's description of how war bundles and clan affiliation often followed the female line in special circumstances:

The occasional inheritance of war bundles in the female line was attributed to lack of qualified male heirs, and the naming and claiming of children by the mother's clan supposedly rested entirely on the mother's clan being better able to afford the cost of a naming feast. However, when a Winnebago [Ho-Chunk] woman married a White man, the traditional procedure used when a husband belonged to another tribe was required: the children were adopted by the mother's clan but thereafter clanship continued through her male descendants.⁴⁵

Carver's text parallels much of what is recorded in the Ho-Chunk oral traditions, and while documentary sources must be handled in the same critical manner as oral traditions, the broad agreement between these two very different categories of primary sources cannot be cavalierly dismissed as mere coincidence. Carver's description in particular - the only contemporaneous description of Hąboguwigą - indicates she exercised real leadership. Civil chiefs of the Thunder clan among the Ho-Chunks lacked coercive power and governed largely through persuasion and moral example. Major decisions were made through national councils that included the heads of all the clans, and women, unless they were 'invested with the supreme authority' as Carver noted, did not participate. Hąboguwigą's participation clearly indicates she possessed such authority. Also important is the fact Carver was only allowed to proceed deeper into the Ho-Chunks' country after receiving the 'blessing' of Hąboguwigą. Thus, it is difficult to accept the assessment of Radin and other scholars who have argued Hąboguwigą was only a figurehead among her people.⁴⁶

Moreover, Hąboguwigą's two sons went on to assume positions of village leadership and thus, as described by Lurie, reestablished descent through the male line after inheriting their Thunder clan identities from their mother and subsequently passing this clan affiliation to their children. Hąboguwigą's eldest son, Čugiga (Spoon or Ladle), became a village chief of one of the new villages in the Ho-Chunk domain at present-day Portage, Wisconsin. Her younger son, Čap'ósgaga (White Breast or Buzzard) established a village

⁴⁴ Carver, *Travels*, 259 (qtd. 259).

⁴⁵ Lurie, "Winnebago," 694 (qtd. 694).

⁴⁶ Carver, *Travels*, 33, 38 (qtd. 33, 38); Hinzó, "Voicing across Space," 21-26. For works that assert Glory of the Morning was a "figurehead," see Radin, "Winnebago Tribe," 163-65, 193, 209-10, 318; and Norman Gelb, ed., *Jonathan Carver's Travels Through America, 1706-1768: An Eighteenth-Century Explorer's Account of Uncharted America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1993), 21 (qtd. 21).

near present-day La Crosse, Wisconsin. Later American settlers as well as French Métis residents who knew the two sons agreed both men were chiefs by virtue of their mother's lineage. Their descendants became numerous among the Ho-Chunks. Décarrie - spelled variously as Decora, DeKaury, DeCora, and Decorah - became a surname among the Ho-Chunks and remains one of the most common family names among both the Wisconsin and Nebraska branches to the present day. In some cases, Ho-Chunks with French ancestry, even if they could not trace their lineage back to Joseph Sabrevoir Décarrie, adopted one of the various spellings as family names.⁴⁷

Hąboguwiąa's life provides an excellent vehicle by which to apply Geertz's definition of culture to the Ho-Chunks and specifically examine how matriculture - or, more accurately, matricultures - became manifest throughout their history. Hąboguwiąa was born into a society that had a wealth of symbols from which she and her people could draw. They had stories such as the *Red Horn Cycle* and *Blue Horn's Nephews* that indicated the matrilineal nature of their pre-conflict ancestors and how chiefly prerogatives descended through the female line. Of course, in none of these oral traditions did a female ever become a chief during the pre-conflict period. Nevertheless, a chief's daughter in the earlier oral traditions enjoyed an elevated social status, as did the entire family of a chief. That idea carried over into the post-conflict period as the Ho-Chunks built a new cultural configuration on the foundations of their earlier, pre-conflict society. If the oral traditions and cosmology did not provide a precedent for female leadership, they still provided what Geertz calls 'recipes': possibilities based on the extant symbolic systems. This included the passing of clan identities and sacred war bundles through the female line in special circumstances and important feminine deities such as Moon and Earth. The Ho-Chunks, confronted with the unique circumstance of a chief of the Thunder clan dying without a male heir (or unqualified male heirs, depending on which oral tradition is referenced), manipulated their various symbols (or 'ingredients' according to Geertz) and elevated a strong daughter to a position of leadership. We should also heed the observation of Guédon that elements of matriculture such as matrilineality and matrilocality are often not rigid cultural rules but serve instead as less formal, *de facto* practices. Guédon urges scholars to be aware of "those components of culture that sustain, express, and welcome women's participation in the socio-cultural fabric, whether it sustains a matrilineal kinship system or not."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Lurie, "Winnebago," 694-95; James H. Lockwood, "Early Times and Events in Wisconsin," *WHC*, 2:178; Augustin Grignon, "Seventy-Two Years' Recollections of Wisconsin," *WHC*, 3:286; John T. de la Ronde, "Personal Narrative," *WHC*, 7:347; George Gale, *Upper Mississippi: Or, Historical Sketches of the Mound-Builders, the Indian Tribes, and the Progress of Civilization in the North-West* (Chicago: Clarke and Co., 1867), 81.

⁴⁸ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 14, 44, 131 (qtd. 44, 131); Guédon, "Introduction," 5-7 (qtd. 7). Also see Linnéa Rowlett, "Blind: The Western Gaze at Matricultures, Historically, Part I," *Matrix: A Journal for Matricultural Studies* 1 (May 2020): 18.

We should also remember that such elements do not always produce unanimity within cultures that share symbolic systems. As Geertz notes, individuals within cultures can interpret symbols and manipulate them in different ways, thus accounting for ideology. In other words, members of a culture may share common symbolic systems (which provide a model of social reality) but seek to apply them in divergent and often contrasting fashions (models for social reality). Certainly, the Ho-Chunks faced an unprecedented situation when their chief died with only a daughter as a potential successor. Some Ho-Chunks supported the idea of a female chieftess; others rejected this solution. Geertz writes “ideology is a response to strain...a loss of orientation that most directly gives rise to ideological activity, an inability, for lack of usable models, to comprehend the universe of civic rights and responsibilities.”⁴⁹ This accounts for why part of the Ho-Chunks agreed to the elevation of Hąboguwiąa to chieftess, while others initially did not.

The historic record of the early nineteenth century provides scattered references to Ho-Chunk women that reinforce much of what can be seen through the life of Hąboguwiąa. One American observer, Caleb Atwater, observed in 1829 that the Thunder clan remained something like royalty among the Ho-Chunks, and chiefs’ daughters retained a strong sense of their social position. Atwater wrote, “The daughter of a chief, never marries into a family below her’s [sic] in dignity. The pride originating in birth, is as deeply seated in the hearts of those who are nobly descended, among the natives of the Northwest, as it is among the petty princes of Germany.”⁵⁰

One of the most prominent Ho-Chunk chiefs of this period was Hujopka (Four Legs), who was the chief of the same village where Hąboguwiąa had lived a century earlier. Schoolcraft described Hujopka as “a stern chief at the outlet of Winnebago Lake, assumed to be the keeper of the Fox River Valley, and levied tribute, in some cases, for the privilege of ascent.”⁵¹ We do not know the name of Hujopka’s wife; we do know that, while she may not have been a chieftess in the manner of Hąboguwiąa, she still exerted significant influence among the Ho-Chunks, and many Ho-Chunk men respected her opinions. In 1827, Hujopka was part of a treaty council at nearby Lake Buttes des Morts. During this council with federal treaty commissioners, Ho-Chunk communities along the Mississippi River attempted a revolt against the United States and its settler colonial policies. Other Ho-Chunk communities debated whether to join the rebellion. Hujopka’s wife argued against supporting the revolt, and the chiefs of the Fox River Ho-Chunks listened to her entreaties and did not join what became known as the 1827 Winnebago War. One of the treaty commissioners later recounted, “I saw one woman, the wife of the Chief, Four Legs

⁴⁹ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 123, 219 (qtd. 219).

⁵⁰ Caleb Atwater, *Remarks Made on a Tour to Prairie du Chien; Thence to Washington City in 1829* (Columbus, Ohio: Isaac Whiting, 1831), 100 (qtd. 100).

⁵¹ Henry R. Schoolcraft, *History of the Indians of the United States*, vol. 1, Francis Drake, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1884), 375 (qtd. 375).

[Hujopka], at our council...who followed the Chiefs like a shadow, dissuading them from going to war with the United States. The reason of her fears, I found on inquiry, was in her knowledge of our power. She had been as far as New York.”⁵²

In the wake of the 1827 Winnebago War and the 1832 Black Hawk War, the federal government began an aggressive campaign to remove the Ho-Chunks to the west side of the Mississippi River. Many Ho-Chunks resisted. In the end, the United States removed about half of the Ho-Chunk nation westward; other Ho-Chunks resisted removal and remained in Wisconsin. The removal faction ultimately came to reside on a reservation in Nebraska. The anti-removal faction took up forty-acre homesteads in the 1870s and 1880s as a means of forestalling removal, and their homesteads functioned as reserved lands for the Wisconsin Ho-Chunks. The removal era brought about new challenges for the Ho-Chunk people, both men and women. Ho-Chunk historian Amy Lonetree, employing Gerald Vizenor’s notion of ‘survivance,’ asserts that the Ho-Chunk people not only survived this period of settler colonial violence but actively repudiated it. In a powerful statement, Lonetree writes, “The word ‘survival’ does not sufficiently encompass the great strength, courage, and perseverance that it took for our people to remain intact as a tribal nation in the face of violence, colonial oppression, and policies of ethnic cleansing.”⁵³

A comprehensive examination of the removal and reservation periods is beyond the scope of this essay, but several works illustrate directions for future research. Feminist anthropologists have proffered novel approaches for conducting gendered analyses of the roles of Ho-Chunk women. In her 1961 edited autobiography of Xehačiwiŋga (Mountain Wolf Woman), a Wisconsin Ho-Chunk, Lurie largely focused on the socio-economic roles of Ho-Chunk women and how these provided a foundation for a unique matriculture that lent an element of stability to their society. Women like Xehačiwiŋga displayed a sense of equanimity that often eluded their male counterparts. According to Lurie:

The sense of personal adequacy displayed by Mountain Wolf Woman [Xehačiwiŋga] can be attributed to more than the greater continuity and stability of female roles. Cultural change has indeed affected the lives of Winnebago [Ho-Chunk] women, but in contrast to men, they have benefited

⁵² Schoolcraft, *History of the Indians*, 376; Lurie, “Winnebago,” 697; Thomas L. McKenney to James Barbour, 24 January 1828, Letters Sent by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Microfilm Publication M-21, reel 4, vol. 4, p. 267 (qtd. 267), Record Group 75, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵³ Lurie, “Winnebago,” 698-700; Amy Lonetree, “Visualizing Native Survivance: Encounters with My Ho-Chunk Ancestors in the Family Photographs of Charles Van Schaick,” in *People of the Big Voice: Photographs of Ho-Chunk Families by Charles Van Schaick, 1879-1942*, Tom Jones, Michael Schmudlach, Matthew Daniel Mason, Amy Lonetree, and George A. Greendeer, eds. (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011), 13-22 (qtd. 14).

by the change to some extent. Their socially humbler roles have acquired greater economic power at the expense of the more prestigious male roles.⁵⁴

In a recent historical assessment of her grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth Cloud, Ho-Chunk anthropologist Renya K. Ramirez provides two additional concepts by which to assess the roles of Ho-Chunk women. Henry Cloud was the first Native graduate of Yale University in 1909 and had a distinguished career in the service of Native people, as did his Ojibwe wife, Elizabeth Bender Cloud. Ramirez rejects the notion that the Clouds' engagement with the settler colonial culture rendered them 'inauthentic' as Native people, a common theme in earlier assessments. Ramirez asserts that such arguments are "based on static notions of identity in which one cannot be modern, Christian, and Native all at the same time."⁵⁵ Ramirez introduces the idea of 'doubleness,' a strategy employed by Ho-Chunk people in their battle against settler colonialism. Ramirez writes that "doubleness of speech was absolutely essential to speak the unspeakable without the colonizer's awareness. Thus, they must have learned how to tell stories embedded with criticism."⁵⁶ Elizabeth and Henry Cloud employed this strategy in various capacities, including their leadership roles in the Society of American Indians, an advocacy group organized 1911; and the American Indian Institute, an education institution founded in 1915. These and other organizations served as Native hubs, which, according to Ramirez, allowed the Clouds and other Native people to:

maintain their tribal culture, community, identity, gender, and belonging in urban areas both in geographic space, such as through meetings and powwows, and virtually, not based in space, such as through phone calling, writing letters, reading tribal newspapers, and storytelling.... [T]he Clouds maintained connections to their tribes, tribal identity, community, and gender as well as developed Native-oriented strategies to challenge the U.S. and settler colonialism, away from their tribal homelands in Native hubs.⁵⁷

In the case of her mother, a woman of Ho-Chunk and Ojibwe heritage, Ramirez notes Woesha Cloud North joined the Native occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay from 1969 to 1971. Ramirez writes, "I now realize that she was following her parents' example by joining a Native hub on Alcatraz Island and fighting for Native American rights."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Nancy Oestreich Lurie, ed., *Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 100-1 (qtd. 100-1).

⁵⁵ Renya K. Ramirez, *Standing Up to Colonial Power: The Lives of Henry Roe and Elizabeth Bender Cloud* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 4 (qtd. 4).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-8 (qtd. 6).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-5, 72-73, 98-120 (qtd. 5).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 231 (qtd. 231).

The works of Lurie and Ramirez illustrate the changing nature of matriculture - and the development of various matricultures - over long expanses of time. The Ho-Chunk people provide a microcosm and template by which other Native nations can be examined to determine the various forces that shaped matricultures. Certainly, contact with Euro-American colonizers had a dramatic effect on all American Indians, but so did interactions, both peaceful and violent, with other Native societies. The matricultures established during the various epochs of Ho-Chunk history were unique, and each provided new sets of symbolic elements from which later generations could draw. Certainly, the dynamic nature of matriculture among the Ho-Chunks and other Native societies offers abundant scholarly possibilities. Hopefully, students of Native cultures will take up this challenge during the course of the twenty-first century.

About the Author

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