

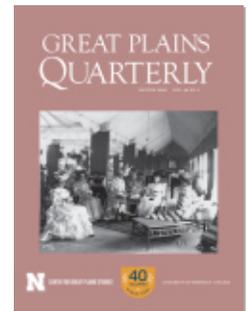


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Osage Women and Empire: Gender and Power by Tai S. Edwards
(review)

Jean Dennison

Great Plains Quarterly, Volume 40, Number 1, Winter 2020, pp. 111-112 (Review)



Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/gpq.2020.0011>

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in 1885, but those outside Cherokee Nation were told by unscrupulous newspapermen that he was among the West's most notorious outlaws. Largely a case study on Gilded Age print media, Mihesuah painstakingly dispels the inaccurate reports, exaggerations, and fabrications of journalists and novelists, while trying to explain why Christie's story became so distorted. "There needed to be some excitement about the vanishing frontier in the news and Christie provided it," Mihesuah reasons. She also criticizes the "deliberately deceptive" twentieth-century writers that continued to present imagination as fact.

Mihesuah reconstructs a more realistic picture of Ned Christie and his life as a Keetoowah Cherokee, the traditionalist and strongly nationalist Cherokee band. Despite her intense research into Christie, his family, and his nation (using family oral histories, hundreds of newspaper reports, Cherokee and US government records, among others), Mihesuah admits that Christie, and his innocence or guilt for the murder of Maples, remains a mystery. She believes that Christie refused to appear at court in Fort Smith because he was afraid that he would be wrongly accused and hanged ("it was the U.S. laws he feared," she writes), but she does not fully explore the possibility that Christie simply would not acknowledge the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the US government and its courts. Unfortunately, understanding Christie's motivations is complicated by the many erroneous reports about his life and by the fact that, even though he was literate in both English and Cherokee, his own thoughts do not survive. Nevertheless, Mihesuah connects Christie's history to the challenges faced by other Native Americans in the southeastern Plains during the late nineteenth century, their struggles for sovereignty, white encroachment, racism,

and the persistent violence in that borderland region, which makes it a useful resource for historians of the Great Plains.

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Osage Women and Empire: Gender and Power.
By Tai S. Edwards. Lawrence: University Press
of Kansas, 2018. vii + 199 pp. Illustrations, maps,
bibliography, index. \$24.95, paper.

Tai S. Edwards's *Osage Women and Empire* is a strong example of reading against the archival grain to challenge common narratives. Her book weaves together core texts in Osage Nation history, including Francis La Flesche, James Dorsey, Willard Rollings, mission registers, expedition reports, and historical journals, to construct a picture of the contributions Osage women made to building and maintaining an empire during the nineteenth century. She argues that Osage women's contributions as creators, that is, through childbirth, farming, and preparing animal hides for clothing, offered them equal status, despite being part of a "warrior" society. She describes this gender complementarity, "where men and women performed typically separate but equally valued tasks" (3), as existing throughout Osage society, including in the "priesthood," as well as spanning hundreds of years and extensive colonial impositions.

In addition to her discussions of historical gender roles, Edwards's book also challenges some common stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. Her depiction of an Osage empire as relying on territorial occupation, diplomacy, land cultivation, and trade powerfully chal-

lenges narratives of *terra nullius*, which continue to prevail in American popular culture and are enshrined in US constitutional law. Furthermore, her discussion of Osages' ability to continuously adapt yet maintain both a core sense of themselves as a people, and a core set of values, is a powerful blow to colonial narratives of erasure and assimilation.

While Edwards's book is a compelling read in its narrative cohesion, such a singular account creates an overly simplified narrative of who the Osage were during this period. The work does glean a great deal from the archives, but it relies too much on refuted secondary sources and includes material that needs far more context and analysis. Furthermore, it does not appear to include any oral history with living Osages. Oral histories could have provided Edwards with additional insight not only into a broader set of historical practices and values, but also into contemporary Osage women's dances, which have taken place in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Edwards's book does ultimately contribute to Osage survivance, as she fundamentally demonstrates how colonially imposed "changes did not indicate the elimination of Osage identity or nationhood" (130).

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Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War.

By Kendra Taira Field. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. ix + 216 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$38.00, cloth.

Drawing on her own family history, contextualized among countless other primary sources,

including (but not limited to) oral histories, photographs, archived letters, and newspaper stories, Kendra Taira Field offers a fascinating story of migration by "freedom's first generation" (2) in *Growing Up with the Country*. Focusing on the multigenerational stories of three families after the Civil War, Field persuasively argues that the dominant understanding of the Great Migration as an event that took African Americans from the rural South to the urban North in the early twentieth century is incomplete. Instead, Field contends, we should understand the Great Migration as part of a larger movement by newly free African Americans in search of what Nell Irvin Painter called "real freedom" (1). In Field's analysis, this movement was transnational and multiracial, and it took black people west to Indian Territory and across the Atlantic to Africa—as well as north to the urban centers traditionally associated with the Great Migration. Crucially, Field demonstrates that we must see all these movements in relation to one another, rather than as unrelated movements in response to distinct impulses.

Field's analysis begins with an examination of black movement to Indian Territory and early Oklahoma. Illustrating a range of connections between black, Indian, and black Indian people, Field helpfully undermines the racial categories on which the United States relied, even as she chronicles the construction and imposition of those categories on people in Indian Territory and early Oklahoma as well as more broadly in the US. The book's final chapter examines the Chief Sam movement, an effort to transport African Americans from the US to Africa's Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), where Sam was from. In many ways, this chapter demonstrates the payoff of Field's method: her focus on specific individuals allows her