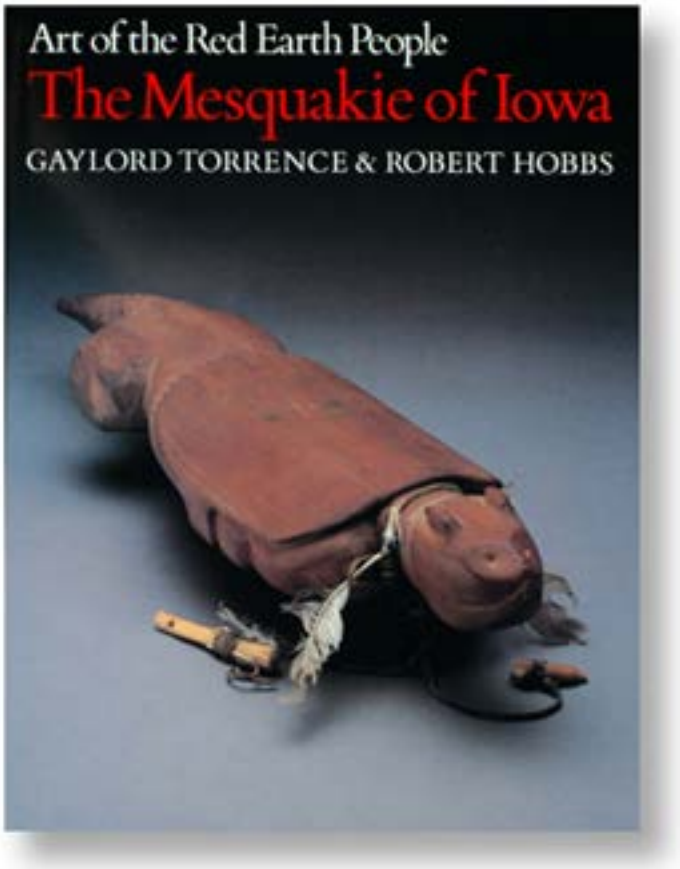

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Constancy, Change, and Cultural Interaction in Mesquakie Art

ROBERT HOBBS

Recently at a flea market, I found a small commercially produced figure of a North American Indian that was made in the past decade (Fig. 11). Although undistinguished, the piece is fascinating because it sums up many current misconceptions about Native Americans. Its overall proportions call to mind ancient Mesoamerican figures, its face African masks, and its headdress the type of eagle-feathered bonnet that Sioux warriors traditionally wore. A composite of misaligned sign systems, this curio seeks to convey ancient lineage by the Mesoamerican proportions, mysteriousness by the African mask, and romance by the Great Plains headdress. Together the components of this object suggest how far removed our general attitudes toward Native Americans are from their actual conditions.

Although misaligned signs are easy to recognize in this figure, they are not so easily discerned in real life. And in the past collectors, art historians, and even anthropologists have not helped, believing as most of them do that North American Indian culture has an unchanging essence that can be described and understood. They assume that Native Americans and their art can be separated from the rest of the world and looked at objectively, as if by a biologist examining a specimen. The situation, however, is not so clear.

This emphasis on an unchanging essence and a concomitant pure vision stems from the dominant white culture's unconscious desire to find Indians uncontaminated by centuries of its opportunism and neglect. Native American purity, then, is an artificial intellectual construct that absolves whites of guilty feelings about the ways Indians have been treated. The psychological motivation for placing Native Americans outside mainstream American culture probably originated soon after the European discovery of America. The failure of Europeans to integrate Indians effectively into their own culture, coupled with the threat of uprisings, which were frequent enough to be a real concern, helped to initiate the deplorable policy of conquering, subduing, and segregating North American aboriginal peoples. In order to allay the resulting feelings of guilt and fear, it became necessary for colonists to view Indians as a breed apart: as irrepressible free spirits, for example, or derelicts unable to handle their liquor. Unfortunately this attitude still prevails. We have done Indians the additional disservice of branding their art "craft" or "material culture," thereby denying it the host of meanings commonly attributed to art. And because we have defined their art as craft, we have been unable to see among their artists discerning minds that have carefully selected aspects of Euro-American culture to enhance their own.

As this discussion will show, Native Americans in general and the Mesquakie in particular cannot be so easily branded an "exotic other." In their art "Indian," as in the Pan-Indian concept of the generic Plains warrior, is a relatively new idea of the second half of the nineteenth century, an idea that Native Americans adopted only after they had been herded onto reservations and forced to interact in new ways with other tribes. They then embraced the romance of the Plains warrior, participated in powwows, and on occasion joined Wild West shows that helped to reinforce this chivalric image. To a people robbed of their land and bereft of the power of an esteemed tradition, the image of a great warrior on horseback who roamed freely at will was particularly inviting, a way to offset the world's contempt or pity with some measure of self-esteem.

The essence that many specialists claim to perceive in North American Indian art is usually traced to a precontact culture, which is partially understood in the few objects and traditions that have survived. No known Mesquakie works of art exist from precontact times, although several traditions do. From objects created by related tribes, however, we can assume a period of relative stability in the time between the collapse of great Mississippian complexes (c. 1500) and the beginnings of regular contact with European explorers some 150 years later. Writing in 1898, W. J. McGee invoked an enduring tradition: "The form of this vessel [a Mesquakie wooden bowl] is of interest too, as conforming to a type much imitated in pottery and often found in the mounds—it is an archaic type . . . long imitated and perpetuated among the woodland tribes of the eastern half of the continent,

Fig. 11. Figurine. Cast material. 3¾" h.
Private collection

and sometimes well out on the plains."[1] This continuity of forms, whereby earthenware vessels became the prototype for wooden bowls that have continued to be made in the twentieth century, does provide a basis for believing that North American Indian art might have an essence.

Yet this long and distinguished tradition did not develop in a vacuum. White culture affected Indians in the Great Lakes area in the form of European trade goods even before those Indians regularly interacted with French explorers and Jesuit priests. In the 1630s, when the fur trade was just getting under way in the upper Mississippi Valley, Hurons and Ottawa, among others, acted as middlemen for a number of tribes, and these two groups continued to assume a leading role in trading European goods for pelts until the Sioux drove them from this position in 1671. Soon thereafter the Sioux faced competition from the Potawatomi, the Sauk, and the Mesquakie. Under the leadership of their chief Kiala, the Mesquakie tried to unify these tribes in an attempt to take over Sioux control on the one hand and prevent French usurpation of the entire fur trade on the other. They also sided with the British in the four wars of 1689–1763 that were known as the French and Indian Wars. The French retaliated for these actions by repeatedly trying to exterminate the Mesquakie. In the early 1730s French pressure forced the Mesquakie to seek refuge with the Sauk. They then retreated to Iowa for a few years, returning to Wisconsin after the French agreed to make peace. Because of continued difficulties with the French, however, they returned south in the 1740s and settled in the area of the Mississippi Valley bounded by present-day Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri.

During most of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, tribes in the upper Mississippi Valley regularly traded for European goods. Rhoda R. Gilman emphasizes that the acculturation of these peoples took the form of adaptation rather than wholesale adoption: that such articles as "fire steels; metal tools; weapons; and cooking implements; firearms; cotton or woolen cloth; and a variety of decorative materials—from vermilion ceremonial paint to glass beads" were prized because they enabled the Indians to perform their traditional tasks more effectively.[2] Yet despite their resistance to wholesale change, Gilman admits that changes took place. The acquisition of European goods necessitated extended hunts covering a greater range of territory. These hunts in turn increased intertribal relations, with the result that Indians in the upper Mississippi Valley both fought and intermarried more frequently with members of other tribes. The fur trade broadened men's roles at the expense of certain women's activities such as making baskets and pottery, which were soon superseded by brass and iron vessels. Although women continued to use tanned animal skins for clothing, they viewed European fabrics as viable alternatives and learned how to make ceremonial and everyday garments out of wool and cotton fabric.

The objects excavated at the early Mesquakie palisaded village known as the "Bell" site in Winnebago County, Wisconsin, are from a transitional culture lasting from about 1680 to 1760. Archaeologists have found many traditional items at this site, including mat needles made from either deer or bison ribs, bowls formed of the carapaces of the painted turtle and Blanding's turtle, remains of fans made from the wings of great horned owls, fragments of traditional clothing, skulls of otter and fisher used as medicine bags, and evidences of ceremonies involving a perforated bear skull and dog sacrifice. But they have also found such European goods as blue, amber, green, white, and red-and-white-striped glass trade beads, white kaolin pipes, brass kettles with lugs, brass hawk bells, an iron Jew's harp, and clear proof that the Indians made clothes of French fabric and even owned French garments. The archaeologists have concluded "that by 1760 or shortly afterwards the Indians of the western Great Lakes region had discarded most of their material culture in favor of new things introduced by fur traders."[3] Although this statement exaggerates their acculturation, tribes of the upper Mississippi Valley—including the Mesquakie, who are usually considered conservative bordering on reactionary—began in the late seventeenth century to embrace new ideas and tools as well as foreign fashions.

Some of the Mesquakies' art forms changed, but others have remained relatively stable over the three-and-one-half centuries of their contact with white culture. Unlike the Sauk, who sold many of their sacred clan bundles in 1922 to representatives of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, the Mesquakie have retained their bundles, the repository of their most ancient and privileged concept of themselves, a concept made manifest in their sacred visions and myths.[4] The power of their bundles is akin to that accorded the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament: just as the children of Israel had elaborate rules for how to approach the sacred Ark, which was regarded as a living being, so also the Mesquakies have elaborate ceremonies requiring one clan to handle physically another clan's bundle. This precaution ensures proper respect for a bundle's awesome power.

Most of the Mesquakie's myths connect

them to their environment. They regard trees, for example, as their grandparents, a concept poetically described in a tale collected by the anthropologist William Jones, a Mesquakie from Oklahoma:

> The murmur of the trees when the wind passes through is but the voices of our grandparents. Often a whole forest hums with talk, and the trees can be heard at a distance. They have joys and trials like us. So we often hear the sound of their laughter and the sound of their lamentations. Hence one should be careful not to hurt their feelings. That is why it is meet to offer a tree tobacco when one is about to cut it down; that is why it is good not to fell trees wantonly.
>
> The trees woo in the spring-time. They yield and refuse, the same as people. They whose tops bend and meet together are such as find each other agreeable; and they that sway apart are not so congenial. Not till later in the summer and fall does one know the trees that have mated; such are these that bear fruit and acorns.[5]

In the mid-1970s Everett Kapayou, a Mesquakie, wrote to the *Toledo Chronicle* expressing outrage that "A quarter of a million dollars worth of SACRED TREES [on Mesquakie land] were cut down and sold close to three years [ago]."[6] Deep feelings still connect the Mesquakies with Woodland traditions.

The close connection with trees no doubt informs the metaphorical use of wood for graveposts, feast bowls, and spoons, all of which, mythologically speaking, are formed from the bodies of their honored ancestors. Their graveposts serve as literal symbols of resurrection and continuity, since they are made of saplings that grow from the stumps of dead trees. And bowls are formed of burls, which appear on tree trunks in enlarged growths that resemble the swelling caused by a human fetus. Since a tree's swelling burl is a metaphor for fecundity, these bowls serve also as an image of hope in the sacred feasts where they are used.

The bowl can also be considered a sacred altar or a liturgical vessel, which women during menstruation are strictly forbidden to touch, lest their touch interfere with the promise of continuity that a sacred feast represents. Like a number of other Native American tribes, the Mesquakie have evolved elaborate proscriptions about a woman's touching not only these bowls but also her own dance garments during menses. Traditionally women retired to small huts or tents during this time so that their infertility would be sure not to contaminate the rest of the tribe.

At the feasts wooden bowls are filled with sacred food that must be eaten; and the remaining bones and gristle are burned to prevent their being consumed by animals, who might then cancel out the power of the feast. In the past, young puppies were the food most frequently reserved for sacred feasts. Dogs were not eaten to satisfy hunger or to please the palate; they were eaten as part of an elaborate sacrificial ritual.

The sacramental character of dog feasts is paralleled by the traditional burial practice of killing a canine, preferably a puppy, and placing it in front of a person's grave with its head facing the setting sun. Jones describes this ritual:

> A shed is quickly erected over the grave, and at the foot just outside is driven a stake pointing westward. It is generally colored red, and from its top a feather or a shred of cloth usually flutters in the wind. In front of the stake is laid a dog that has been choked to death; it lies on its belly with legs extended as if running westward; it is said to be a guide and companion to the soul on the way to the spirit world. It is common to kill more than one dog, and puppies are generally preferred.[7]

In many cultures throughout the world the dog acts as a guide to the dead. We find such dogs in Greco-Roman culture in the image of Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the gate of Hades, in one of Goya's Black paintings, in Robert Motherwell's *Iberia*, and in Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles*, where the hound becomes an apt manifestation of society's fascination with death. By comparison, the Mesquakies' sacrifice of puppies appears a calm if extremely literal way of acknowledging this symbolic harbinger of death.

Similarly, the Mesquakie dog feast is an extremely literal but important representation of a worldwide agrarian myth that ranges from the killing of Dionysus and the planting of his body in ancient Greco-Roman rituals to the symbolic consumption of Christ's body and blood in the Christian act of communion. In the Mesquakie feast this agrarian symbol is layered: the great open bowl, a pregnant form symbolizing continuity with nature and expectancy, enfolds nature's bounty and the soul's guide—the dog—within itself. The Mesquakie carry this twin image of spiritual and bodily sustenance all the way to the grave, for their dead are traditionally buried with wooden bowls. In summary, nature gives birth to the bowl, which the Mesquakie hollow out; this new form in turn gives birth to a series of rituals and feasts dealing with the spirit of the people. This spiritual container then accompanies the Mesquakie on their journey after death.

When a Mesquakie chooses a particular ancestor—a tree with a prominent burl—to become a sacred bowl, he will sometimes wait for several years and even as long as two decades before cutting it down if he wants the burl to reach the size necessary for a great feast bowl. Members of the tribe know when a tree has been claimed by a particular person. The

tree is sacred, and as in the myth of the grandparents cited earlier, its spirit is acknowledged with an offering of tobacco before it is cut down. Just as the Iroquois honor a tree with prayers and tobacco before carving a False Face mask in it, so also do the Mesquakie honor the trees from which they carve their sacred feast bowls. In both cases the wood is a mythic reality that imbues masks or bowls with its living spirit. When Christians speak of Christ being crucified on the tree of life, they are invoking the same mythological principle as the Iroquois and the Mesquakie.

When a feast bowl is joined with a spoon shaped in the form of a turtle (as in the frontispiece), the mythic grandparent becomes a container for the animal associated with the creation of the world. And the Mesquakie's position at the center of existence and the beginning of the universe is assured. The turtle's ability to cope with changing circumstances is the subject of the large turtle in the St. Joseph Museum (Cat. No. 166), which is depicted with head stretched out and propelling legs as if swimming at top speed. Since this animal swims in space rather than in water, it may be a symbol of the human spirit: a reading substantiated by the fact that it probably is an enlarged replica of a turtle from a sacred bundle.

The Mesquakies' belief in the symbolic properties of the materials they work with goes far beyond the truth-to-materials ethos of our own culture's modern-day sculptors, architects, and furniture designers. The Mesquakies believe that an indwelling spirit, a Manitou, imbues a particular material with its force. This conviction resembles Michelangelo's Neo-Platonic visualization of a figure encased in stone, yet it goes beyond Michelangelo in identifying the material as not just a symbol of the divine but an actual manifestation of it.

During a conversation with a young Mesquakie man, Gaylord Torrence remembers the following exchange that conveys the Mesquakie sense of awe for the divine creative force imbuing certain nature forms:

The young man stated, "When the bundle was opened, I saw the lightning."

"Do you mean a carving that represented the lightning?" Torrence asked.

"No, the lightning!" the man replied. "Like when the lightning strikes a tree, and you climb up and cut it out."[8]

In the eyes of this young Mesquakie, the seemingly accidental act of lightning striking the tree so imbued the wood with its supernatural force that its power became part of the wood. In his "Notes on the Fox Indians," Jones writes about the divine nature of fire:

> Our fire comes from the manitous who live in the world under the earth. They created the fire, and it is theirs. All their time they spend watching after and caring for it. The fire that people use first comes from this place under the earth. Even the Thunderers, who watch over the people, obtain their fire from the manitous of the underworld. This is the fire one sees flashing from their mouths when they pass across the sky.[9]

One can imagine the feelings of anticipation, wonder, and responsibility experienced by the person who carved this piece of divine fire. His sculpture would have to be mythic because the material was a sacred fetish before he even touched it. The power of this fetish, which the Mesquakies regard as a living being, would have given the carver the means to reveal its true image. This, in essence, is the Native American equivalent of the Greek Pygmalion myth.

The carved image probably also developed out of a dream or vision predicated on other bundle objects that derived from still other dreams and visions. Sacred material joined with a supernatural vision enlarged the mythic dimension to the point that another miraculous creation could occur. The mental, spiritual, and physical feat of creating this object out of "real" lightning, then, does not partake of the same reality of the truth-to-materials sculptor who wishes to express, for example, the weight and compactness of stone, the tensile strength of steel, or the blockiness of wood. This modern-day sculptor, working within the parameters of materialism, is at a far remove from the Mesquakie, who believes he is creating with and through divine substances.

When contemplating important Mesquakie works of art, one might wonder that a woodcarver, for example, capable of creating such a magical image as the burl bowl and the turtle spoon (frontispiece) did not feel the need to make a great number of similarly inspired objects. In our consumer-oriented culture we are used to creation being confirmed in production; an artist who can do something well is expected to go on doing that thing. Mesquakie artists are different. Their art is not motivated by self-assertion or self-realization, nor is it made for unknown consumers: it is traditionally created for their own community, with which they share common beliefs and prescribed rituals.

There is an important need for the Mesquakie—or for that matter any group of people—to affirm their identity through their art, to become, in other words, distinctly themselves through their creations. If they do not create a viable mythological image, no one else will: the necessity to create is paramount. Once they have objects that affirm themselves and their beliefs, they have no reason to replicate them because the objects they have are sufficient for their needs. Indeed, since the original is formed from the spirit of a tree, as is the case with "real" lightning or an enor-

mous burl, true replications are impossible; and even if they *were* possible, they would be undesirable because they could only serve to diminish the power of the original, a power that is the original's whole reason for being. Replications belong to a different frame of reference, to a secular rather than a sacred world.

A great change for the Mesquakie occurred in 1842, when they experienced the shock of having to sell all the holdings in Iowa that they shared with the Sauk. These holdings included about ten million acres of land, for which they received the promise of 5 percent annual return on $800,000 and the payment of $258,566.34 of their current debt. This figure gains significance when one considers that the minimum selling price for land in territorial Iowa was $1.25 an acre. In 1846 the Mesquakie, together with the Sauk, reluctantly moved to reservations in Kansas, where they became one displaced tribe among many. Their move, which was dictated by the terms of the 1842 treaty, took place the same year Iowa became a state, and the timing of the two events was probably not a coincidence. Although the Mesquakie in Kansas still exhibited great spirit in clashes with Cheyenne, Arapahoes, Kiowas, and Comanches, from which they usually emerged the victors owing to their superior weapons, their concept of themselves as an autonomous people was severely shaken. Thus according to Natalie F. Joffe a victory in a skirmish with warriors of several Plains tribes, far from being a cause for celebration, made the Mesquakie apprehensive about reprisals from the federal government and was a major factor in their decision to return to Iowa.[10]

Some modern-day Mesquakies believe that a few of their ancestors remained in Iowa near their present settlement, where they hid ancient clan bundles and feast bowls except during ceremonies that were attended by a few Mesquakie in the area and others who managed brief return visits from the reservation in Kansas. Whether this actually happened or whether it is a later romantic reconfiguration of events is difficult to say. What is clear is that despite the move to Kansas the land between the Des Moines and Iowa Rivers remained their spiritual center.

After less than a decade in Kansas, the Mesquakie made a decision, unique among North American tribes, to buy land on which to settle. In 1856 they petitioned Governor James W. Grimes of Iowa to act as trustee for the tribe by purchasing 80 acres of land for them. According to newspaper reports and stories collected by Thomas Peter Christensen,[11] several bands of 30 to 40 Mesquakie may have returned as early as June 1849, when whites began to be anxious about rumors that the Indians had come back to kill them and claim their ancestral lands. A number of petitions were sent to the governor asking him to send a militia unit to get rid of these people. He instead ordered an officer, together with a squad of men and an interpreter, to visit the Mesquakie. The officer found the Mesquakie unaware of the scare they were causing among the whites and greatly concerned that the government would force them to return to Kansas.

In January 1856 the General Assembly of Iowa made the Indians' presence in Iowa legal and at the same time urged the federal government to pay them their share of the annuities that were stipulated in past treaties. The U.S. government responded by ordering the Mesquakie to go back to Kansas and by refusing to pay their annuity; significantly, though, the federal government did not back its order with force, but instead allowed the Mesquakie to remain in Iowa. They did not get any annuity payments until 1867; during this time they supported themselves by hunting, fishing, and occasionally begging.

Their decision to stay in Iowa rather than return to Kansas, where they could live on government annuity payments (and eventually move to Oklahoma, as did one contingent of Mesquakies and all the Sauks), underscores their independence. They were able to look beyond the loss of the ten million acres they had shared with the Sauk and settle for a refuge of 80 acres, which they purchased for $1,000 by paying $750 saved from annuity payments and making up the balance in ponies. These people were able to build a new life for themselves because of their resiliency and their incredible determination.

Not many Mesquakie were alive in 1856. Within the generation spanning the 1820s to the 1850s their numbers were reduced from approximately 2,000 to a little over 200, and their remarkable productivity, which had been itemized along with that of the Sauk in 1820 by the United States agent Thomas Forsyth, was reduced in the late 1850s to bare subsistence. Forsyth's list for trade goods in 1820 is as follows:

2,760 beaver skins; 922 otter; 13,440 Raccoon; 12,900 Musk Rat Skins;
500 Mink; 200 wildcat; 680 Bear skins; 28,680 Deer; whole number 60,082—estimated value $58,800

deer tallow—estimated at 286,800 pounds
3,000 lbs feathers
1,000 lbs bees wax
1,000 bushels corn

women make about 300 floor mats each summer
lead mines—mostly men but some women—
4 to 500,000 weigh of this mineral is dug by them in a season[12]

Unfortunately historians and anthropologists have emphasized the fact that the re-

turning Mesquakies did not fit easily into the newly formed state of Iowa. The men did not like farming, which they considered women's work; they preferred uncultivated land and virgin timber, and they continued their yearly winter hunts even though great portions of the state were rapidly being parceled into farms. Although Iowa's white settlers accepted the Mesquakie as part of the state's population, many had little sympathy with the Indians' point of view.

A typical negative assessment of Mesquakie acculturation is the 1889 report of the Honorable A. D. Bicknell, who complained that the Indians were not availing themselves of the new school built for them a mile west of Toledo at great expense to the federal government.[13] His report dwells on the dire living conditions of traditional Mesquakies, which are then contrasted to those of a few westernized Indians such as James Poweshiek. According to Bicknell, most Mesquakies have refused all the advantages that have come their way: "They returned [to Iowa] because the government was teaching them, on their Kansas reservation, some of the rudiments of civilization, such as wearing clothes, raising cattle and living in houses, all of which they stubbornly resisted, and so they broke loose; and during the fifty years since then they have many times proudly boasted that they would be the last tribe in America to yield to the white man's ways."[14] Sol Tax, an anthropologist who worked with the Mesquakie in the 1950s, interprets the Kansas experience differently. He argues that the Mesquakie in Kansas "lived under increasing governmental pressures aimed at enforced Americanization. The most disquieting pressure at the time was the attempt to divide the reservation land and give some to each Mesquakie individual, which the government supposed would result in individualism."[15]

An interesting contrast to Bicknell's report is afforded by a story about cultural interaction in Des Moines County 60 years earlier:

> In the spring of 1839 Stephen Wicher gave a large social party, which event for those days was a novel kind. His guests were composed of the entire *elite* of the town, and about twenty Indians with their squaws, who came dressed in calico breeches, roundabouts, moccasins, ornaments with beads and trinkets of various kinds attached to their persons. The Indians were also rigged out in their best for the party, with painted faces, gay blankets, buckskin breeches, and fantastic wammises ornamented with their trophies, jewels in their ears and noses, brass bands on their arms, long ornamented pipes, weasel and skunk tobacco pouches, war clubs trimmed with feathers, bears' claws and tusks, and strings of highly ornamented wampum.
>
> The first thing on the program of the evening was a war dance by the Indians. The large front room being cleared, and nothing lacking but music, Mrs. Wicher brought out some tin pans, a fire shovel and tongs, which with a few sticks made ample music. Kishkekosh, the noble chief, first stepped on the floor alone, divested of nearly all of his garments, and presenting a fine, well-formed and powerful form, led the dance in a majestic savage style. Soon one and another of the braves joined, until the floor was nearly filled, all of them circling around in all sorts of savage and fantastic shapes and forms, keeping time with the din of the pans and tongs. . . .
>
> As the dance subsided one of the painted warriors suddenly sprang at and kissed one of the fairest of the white ladies who, not appreciating the honor done for her, screamed a scream more piercing and frightful than the howling of the Indians.
>
> As a return for this extraordinary entertainment, the Indians insisted that the whites, especially the 'white squaws' should have a dance. A violin was accordingly procured, and several dances were performed in the most elegant frontier style, which appeared to delight the Indians as much as their performance had the whites.
>
> The entertainment was kept up until the wee small hours, when the parties dispersed to their respective homes and wigwams, thus ending one of the most brilliant and social entertainments in the history of Iowa.[16]

To be sure, in the next 60 years, the Mesquakie lost their land, many of their people, and much of their confidence; Bicknell is no doubt correct in his assessment of their poverty and boycott of the new school in 1889. But despite their many problems they continued to create beadwork and ribbonwork, woven bags, and carved wooden objects that demonstrate their self-respect, their love of beauty, and their desire to participate actively in the newly evolving world around them by assimilating new artistic ideas.

Crucial clues to the Mesquakie's point of view are to be found in the new concepts their art embodies. In the second half of the nineteenth century they participated in a Woodland style, featuring new artistic forms and materials, that can also be seen in the art of the Menominee, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, and Winnebago. This innovative Euro-American-based style began in the 1850s, reached maturity in the 1860s–1880s, and continued to be important well into the twentieth century. In beadwork it appears concurrently in luxuriant curvilinear patterns and involved geometric designs that are conceived in a rich variety of colored beads. In woodcarving it is evident in decorated heddles and stops of flutes, in the new horse-handled spoons of the Mesquakie, and in the horse-shaped pommels on Menominee saddles. And it can be seen in the new colors and involved geometric patterns appearing in twined bags at the end of the century.

This period is marked by a great efflorescence of Woodland and Prairie culture. Although many of these tribes experienced serious hardships because the fur trade was almost over, their food supply limited, and their autonomy severely shaken by the United States' Indian policies, the vitality and range of their

art strongly suggest that this was a period of enormous intellectual and emotional growth for them. During this time, as never before, they were in regular contact with each other as well as with American and European settlers and their stimulating new materials and fashions.

In 1919 Truman Michelson noted the extent to which European folklore had permeated Mesquakie myths:

> . . . the distinguishing features of my collection [of Fox folklore and mythology] are the more numerous animal tales; many stories clearly of European origin. . . . I have previously pointed out some of the European cycles. To these may be added a fox cycle of considerable length and another called "Tiger"; and it may be noted that Cosmic Myth . . . has an enormous number of incidents that are patently European. . . . Skinner's statement that "the Central Algonkin as a whole have not absorbed much folklore that is European" is not justified by the facts of Fox or Peoria tales. . . . It is clear that Fox folklore and mythology is composed of woodland, plains, and European elements.[17]

Surprisingly his finding did not encourage him and others to make similar connections in the visual arts. As we shall see, they do exist.

One reason that settlers from continental Europe had such an impact on Woodland and Prairie peoples was that they also belonged to a special subculture. They spoke English haltingly and with distinct accents; they practiced special customs known only to themselves; they wore traditional clothing on holidays; and they were trying to come to terms with a new country and its customs. These similarities with Woodland and Prairie tribes remaining in the Midwest were balanced by significant differences, notably the fact that many European settlers came from generations of farmers who had grown accustomed to the constraints of living on small plots of land. Nonetheless, in the second half of the nineteenth century the Woodland and Prairie peoples began to compare themselves to the Europeans in the Midwest and to think of themselves as an ethnic group on a par with the European settlers. This redefinition of themselves represents a positive and highly sophisticated response to change.

The Mesquakie had plenty of opportunities to interact with the European groups that had settled around them. A number of Czechs lived in and around Tama, and in Cedar Rapids, some 60 miles to the east. A large group of Norwegians had settled to the northeast, near the Iowa-Wisconsin border, and also to the west, near Des Moines. Danes lived in Cedar Falls to the north and Des Moines to the west; there were Dutch settlers in Pella to the south; and the Germans were represented by Amish in Kalona and by members of the Amana Society, who lived in a number of related villages. These last two groups were approximately 20 miles from Iowa City, the first capital of the state, which is 75 miles southeast of Tama.

All these European groups were settling in Iowa at about the same time the Mesquakie were returning from Kansas. Many Germans came in the 1840s and 1850s; Swedes formed New Sweden in 1845; the Dutch were in Marion County in 1847; the Norwegians arrived in the late 1850s; there were Czechs in Tama County by 1860; most Danes came after 1870. The traditions of many of these transplanted Europeans were so firmly ingrained that the governor of Iowa in 1918 had to issue a proclamation making it illegal to speak a foreign language in public. Many of the groups had newspapers in their own languages. The Norwegian *Decorah-Posten*, for example, was first published in the nineteenth century; and it continued to exist until 1972, when it merged with another newspaper.

The Mesquakie enjoyed amicable relations with whites after their return to Iowa. A historian finds "a remarkable tolerance for the Mesquakie among the growing white population of the state. Even during the panic years of the so-called Spirit Lake Massacre and the Great Sioux Uprising, which occurred within close range of Iowa, the Mesquakie were left in peace."[18] In particular, the tribe's "friendship with the German religious community was long-standing. . . . The Mesquakie traded game and pelts for medical care and the wonderful woolen fabrics woven by the religious colonists."[19]

Before the 1840s the Mesquakie roamed widely on their annual hunts, covering great portions of land between the Des Moines and Iowa Rivers, venturing to their headwaters, and even going occasionally as far west as Kansas. After their return to Iowa, their hunting patterns were largely determined by the availability of game, and they probably kept to river valleys, including areas of wild growth along great stretches of the Mississippi.[20] Even though they lived in a small settlement, Mesquakies still traveled throughout Iowa and had an intimate knowledge of the land; thus the famous Potawatomi medicine man Kepeosutok (John McIntosh), who married a Mesquakie woman and lived on the settlement, knew of special healing herbs growing within a 200-mile radius of Tama.[21] In addition to roaming freely throughout Iowa, Mesquakie men worked as hired hands for local farmers.[22] With these various contacts, the Mesquakie became acquainted with a number of diverse cultures in Iowa.

In addition, the Mesquakie regularly interacted with members of the Winnebago, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi tribes, and through them they became indirectly familiar with the culture of the newly settled European farmers in

Fig. 12. Group of Mesquakie men, c. 1860. *Collection Musée de l'Homme*

their regions. At this same time, the Mesquakie were in regular contact with members of their tribe who had remained in Kansas and later moved to Oklahoma, and they also continued to interact with the Sauk. They came to know the art of the Plains tribes by their interaction with both these groups.

In his analysis of the Mesquakies in Kansas, Torrence suggests that an early form of curvilinear beadwork developed out of a union of Southeastern, Delaware, and Algonquian sources. It is highly possible that this curvilinear style derives from the influence of European folk art and mainstream American culture. The embroidered items made and worn on special holidays by Scandinavian, Czech, German, and Dutch settlers were an important source for Mesquakie beadwork, recalling the tribe's fascination with French and English clothing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An anecdote recounted by William H. Keating, who made an expedition among Midwestern tribes in 1823, emphasizes the delight Native Americans in general took in new styles:

> We scarcely recognized our guide [Winnebea, a Sauk] a few days afterwards, when we saw him with a calico shirt, which he had borrowed from Le Sellier and which concealed his well-formed limbs; on inquiring into the cause of this addition to his usual costume, we were told, that the sun being very hot on the prairie, he had accepted the offer to protect his shoulders, against its influence, by means of a shirt.
>
> This proves how ready these Indians are to abandon their natural manners, and to assume the artificial ones of civilized man. Wennebea wore this garment at first with an apparent air of ostentation, which confirmed us in our opinion, that the Indian is no wiser than the white man in this respect, often priding himself upon the acquisition of a garment, which detracts from, rather than adds to, his appearance.[23]

Although this story is about a Sauk, the Mesquakie also were fascinated by the dress of the whites. Thus we read that Kishkekosh carried a gold-headed cane to meetings with federal government officials concerning the 1842 treaty, twirling it during the proceedings in an effort to cut an elegant figure.[24] And photographs of Mesquakies in the second half of the nineteenth century show some wearing woolen suits with moccasins while others were dressed in traditional outfits (Fig. 12).

Like Winnebea and Kishkekosh many Native Americans were ready to try out new clothing styles. Since their own garments were imbued with the spirit of the animals that provided the skins, the power of the prayers said over them, and the magic provided by special charms and amulets seen in visions, they may well have wondered about the power of whites and wished to participate in it by wearing their clothing. To judge from *Captured by the Indians*,[25] a Dover anthology of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts, one of an Indian captor's first acts was to take his prisoner's clothing. In this way Indians may have wished to rob their prisoners of power; and since many of them immediately donned these garments, they may have wished to make this power their own. Alternatively, of course, they may simply have liked the garments and wished to wear them.

The style of moose-hair embroidery taught to Huron and Iroquois girls in the eighteenth century in convents at Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal by French nuns familiar with the European tradition of woolen and silk crewelwork may also have influenced Midwestern tribes in the mid-nineteenth century when they began to use floral beadwork patterns. Certainly their beadwork follows the format of crewel designs. And the loss of Huron and Iroquois refinement in Woodland beadwork made after 1850 may be due to the fact that the sophisticated techniques taught by French nuns were in some ways not suitable for beadwork, which can never achieve the precision of moose-hair embroidery. What this beadwork lacks in refinement, though, it makes up for in vitality.

The semi-abstract designs of Huron and Iroquois beadwork, coupled with European folk art patterns, may well have appealed to Midwestern tribes, which were used to the abstract patterns of quillwork and just coming to terms with the range of colors provided by glass beads imported from Eastern Europe. In the early nineteenth century Native Americans had been slow to accept the great range of colors available in glass beads. Many early pony-beaded pieces are conceived in blue-and-white or red-and-white combinations, and still earlier small white seed beads were the norm. One might hypothesize that attitudes formed by quillwork and wampum determined Indian artists' preference for a limited range of color, and that they did not use elaborate color schemes until their outlook on the world changed.

To be sure, blue, amber, white, and red-and-white-striped glass trade beads have been found by archaeologists at the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mesquakie village known as the Bell site, but most of these beads would have been used for necklaces. Most likely the blue-and-white combinations of the first half of the nineteenth century were regarded as an improvement on costly wampum: the beads were clearer, purer, and more regular than the shells used for wampum. When the American Indians' world changed at mid-century owing to white expansion, wampum no longer had great value, and these peoples were then ready to experiment with new responses to different material, social, and spiritual conditions. Broadly speaking, Mid-

western tribes turned at this time from restricted abstract geometric styles conceived in a limited range of colors to elaborate geometric and curvilinear patterns employing many different colors.

Not surprisingly, considering their proximity to a number of different European folk cultures and to mainstream Americans, Native Americans' beadwork began to approximate embroidered designs found on the traditional and modern clothing of those peoples. In a study of the Ojibwa of northern Minnesota during the 1930s and 1940s, Sister Bernard Coleman found that a number of native women who were then 50 to 60 years of age used embroidery and cross-stitch patterns for beadwork, patterns taught them by white teachers in fancy-work classes at government schools.[26] According to Sister Coleman another possible source for beadwork patterns after 1887 may be pieces of lace, which Native American women of the Episcopalian missions of northern Minnesota learned to crochet. Several of Sister Coleman's informants pointed out beadwork designs that represent lace.[27] If these patterns proved so important, Sister Coleman then wonders "to what extent Ojibwa women copied patterns on chintzes and calicoes brought in by traders."[28]

Just as Ojibwa women were influenced by lace-making and embroidery and cross-stitch patterns, so the Mesquakie could have undergone similar influences, whether directly from European settlers and mainstream Americans or indirectly through the agency of other Native Americans. Their embracement of European items testifies to their adventurousness and intellectual curiosity. Some Mesquakie designs follow European prototypes so closely that they almost surely derive from direct connections with European immigrants, and perhaps also from a desire to assert equality with these ethnic groups. Designs on embroidered skirts from Søgn and Sunnmøre on the west coast of Norway, for example, served as the basis for Mesquakie beadwork patterns that first appeared in the late nineteenth century and continue to be popular today (Fig. 13; Cat. No. 74). Norwegian settlers brought more of their traditional clothing and special household items than Swedes or Danes, who were mostly craftsmen and tradespeople planning to settle in towns and thus prepared to come totally integrated into mainstream American culture. Because the Norwegians paralleled the Mesquakie by farming in the summer and going on extended hunting trips in the winter, in addition to hiring themselves out during this season to lumber companies, the Mesquakie may have found both them and their culture particularly appealing. The Norwegians who settled near Des Moines in Story City and Thor were from western Norway, where they made mangle boards and ale bowls with horse images that no doubt influenced, as we shall see, Mesquakie horse-handled spoons and horse-figure stops on courting flutes.

During their winter hunting trips the Mesquakie would have had numerous opportunities to come in contact with Norwegians as well as with Swedes and Danes. Among immigrants to the United States, the Norwegians were particularly proud of their European traditions; in 1875, only a little more than 20 years after they settled in this country, a group of Norwegians established a museum at Luther College in Decorah, which today houses one of the outstanding Norwegian collections in the United States. Because of their pride in their traditions, the Norwegians would have dressed on special holidays in native costumes, and some would have continued to wear the elaborately decorated heavy knitted socks, sweaters, and mittens that had begun to be popular in Norway in the 1830s.

The new patterns on Mesquakie yarn bags point to the general influence of Scandinavian designs, particularly those found on knitted socks, sweaters, and mittens (Fig. 14). In these bags there is a blending of mythic Indian designs with a new prosaicness that comes from European folk art patterns. The Mesquakie had depicted closely aligned rows of mythic human and animal figures in their early bags and on graveposts, but in the second half of the nineteenth century the fundamental character of these figures changes: no longer supernatural, they have come down to earth. This change almost certainly comes from European folk art, where it echoes and embodies the standardization and repetition that had been important to the livelihood of European farmers for centuries. This new way of depicting human figures by Mesquakie women points to a flexibility that developed out of new cultural contacts.

One could argue that this line of thought is too speculative, since weaving is necessarily repetitive and demands that realistic images be transformed into abstract equivalents. Yet how else are we to explain why the animals and human beings appearing on earlier Mesquakie bags are more frequently mythic beings whereas the family groups and horses on later bags are more related to folk art? Surely the most plausible explanation is that the two styles express the Mesquakie's lifestyle and sense of themselves before and after their Kansas experience.

Some mythic elements still appear in Mesquakie bags in the second half of the nineteenth century, occurring most frequently in the small beaded bandolier charm bags that were made only by the Mesquakie. Because beaded bandolier charm bags deal with people's most sacred and private aspects—their personal medicine from which they derive

Fig. 13. Traditional Søgn costume; black skirt with red and white embroidery. *Collection unknown*

Fig. 14. Traditional knit stockings from Selbu, Norway. *Norsk Folksmuseum*

Fig. 15. Rigid heddle loom for making belts. Initialed and dated "M.J.D.A. 1864." Wood. Norwegian immigrant origin; collected in Locust, Iowa. *Vesterheim, Luther College Collection*

power—such bags would appear to require mythic images. Part of the power of the charm bags comes from their size: they are small enough to be worn under ordinary clothing, and thus they become an extremely personal way of ensuring a Mesquakie's identity in any circumstance, even the times toward the end of the century when he was dressed like a white settler in felt hat, woolen clothing, and boots.

In a study of fiber bags of the Great Lakes Indians, Andrew Hunter Whiteford wonders why full-turn twining, banded designs of geometric forms, and the use of European wool all appear at the same time, a sudden change for which he finds no close Native American precedents.[30] The reasons may lie outside Native American traditions. The designs of the new full-turn twined bags look amazingly similar to designs of Scandinavian woven tapestries and sashes, embroidered and cross-stitched borders in clothing, and knitted sweaters, socks, and mittens. Both the patterns and the new color schemes of these Native American bags look Scandinavian, and the new prosaic but charming animals and human figures appearing on them resemble European folk art designs. Although bags depicting underwater panthers and thunderbirds continued to be woven, a great deal of energy seems to have gone into the new designs. Many intriguing bags with human figures as well as horses—particularly those pieces made by A Ski Ba Qua—epitomize this new Mesquakie genre.

Because of the Mesquakies' rapidly changing world, the distinction between the old art and the new is not always clear. There are a number of hybrids, among them a woven bag in the collection of the Fort Wayne Military Museum, which resembles a section of a Norwegian mitten except for the two rows of mythic thunderbirds across its center. Although the design is strong and the piece is carefully thought out, it remains on the cusp of two identities: seminomadic, aboriginal North American Indian and settled ethnic group.

The latter group is more clearly evident in the Putnam Museum bag (Cat. No. 8), which pictures a wagon and its contents. The bag shares affinities with the beaded pictographic pipe bags made by Plains women living on reservations in the late nineteenth century: both bespeak a lifestyle of repetition and conformity, and both emphasize shared experiences over individual visions. This bag at the Putnam differs from the early pictographic drawing by Wacochachi (Cat No. 188), which presents quivering interconnecting lines of force that join man and animals. What is lost in the Putnam bag is the sense of awe and the grandeur of a single unifying power that is conveyed by the Wacochachi drawing; what it presents, instead, is delight for its own sake. The Putnam bag, then, has lost wonder as it gains a partial anecdote: it rejects poetry in favor of prose.

Mesquakie-carved wooden heddles are closely related to European prototypes—the Danes call them "weaver's reeds"—used in making woven belts and sashes (Fig. 15).[31] Following European tradition, many Mesquakie heddles bear the names and dates of their owners: some are even labeled "Tama, Iowa." A number are decorated with trailing plant forms and hearts, which parallel the decoration of Norwegian heddles in the Vesterheim Museum. Because most Northern European groups used heddles, the Mesquakie could have been inspired by Danes, Norwegians, or Swedes living in Iowa, or they could have picked up the use of heddles from other Midwestern tribes.

William C. Orchard, in his important study *Beads and Beadwork of the American Indians*, suggests that the heddle "was probably introduced to the Indians by Jesuits or early French settlers,"[32] and the French may well have introduced it to the Micmac and Great Lakes tribes because heddles were in use in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the popularity of heddles with Great Lakes / Woodland tribes after 1860, and particularly with the Mesquakie, points to other, more immediate sources and strongly suggests the importance of Scandinavian groups in the area. A Mesquakie walnut heddle in the collection of the Chicago Historical Society (Cat. No. 156), inscribed "March 13, 1809" on one side and "George Mogan" on the other, would seem to refute any notion that names and dates on Scandinavian heddles encouraged the Mesquakie to use similar identifying labels on their own. But Anglicized names were not used by the Mesquakie in the early nineteenth century, and "Mogan" may well be a misspelling of "Morgan." A photograph of George Morgan with his wife and three young children, part of the Ward Collection of Mesquakie photographs collected and taken in 1905, shows this man to be in his thirties. Even if the photograph was taken a decade prior to Ward's summer in the Mesquakie settlement, Morgan could not have been born before 1860–65; thus the date on the heddle, if it refers to George Morgan, is incorrect.[33] Elaborately decorated heddles were prized objects in Mesquakie households; and some, like the John Young Bear heddle with two mountain lions crouching on a pedimented top, were carved in highly original ways.

At about the same time that the Mesquakie began to make heddles they also began decorating spoons, crooked knives, and courting flutes with images of horses. Their interest in

horses was paralleled by the contemporary appearance of this animal in the art of several Great Lakes tribes, particularly the Ojibwa and Menominee. One possible source for the image of the horse could be the spectacular dance sticks of the Sioux; but since the Mesquakie were bitter enemies of this tribe until the late nineteenth century, that source seems unlikely. Besides, a close comparison of the two tribes' conceptions of horses shows marked differences. The Mesquakies' horses are more stylized and archaic; and they exhibit a marked preference for the blocky resistance of the wood they carve. The carvers obviously saw wood not as something to be transcended but as a substance worthy of contemplation and reverence—an attitude entirely consistent with the Mesquakies' regard for trees as their mythic ancestors.

A more likely source than Sioux dance sticks is the Scandinavian mangle board (Fig. 16), which was used in conjunction with wooden rollers to press damp linens. Chip-carved mangle boards with stylized horses serving as handles were important betrothal gifts for various Sandinavian groups from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Although mangle boards were replaced in the late eighteenth century by irons, they continued to play an important ceremonial role and thus new ones continued to be made.

The archaic horses on Scandinavian mangle boards, which appear Viking in character, share affinities with horses on flutes of the Mesquakie and other Great Lakes tribes. The Mesquakie horse is of course much smaller than its Scandinavian counterpart, since its function is to serve as a stop on a flageolet, but it is as robust, as archaic, and as stylized as its European prototype. In addition, since a courting flute parallels the mangle board's role as an invitation to marriage, both the form and the ceremonial function of the Scandinavian horse were preserved by the Mesquakies. Traditionally Mesquakie flutes were played at maple sugaring time, a festive period that took place in the early spring and an excellent time for courting, since the entire tribe assembled then after the winter hunt.

Mesquakie horse-handled spoons appear also to derive from Scandinavian horses found on mangle boards or ale bowls (Fig. 17). Such spoons may well preserve the residual feelings of reverence for the pagan Scandinavian horse, which was thought to be a creature with supernatural powers, for they accord great power to this animal. The horse became an evocative image for the Mesquakie in the second half of the nineteenth century, perhaps in part because their ponies had enabled them to buy the original 80 acres of their settlement, but primarily because horses symbolized freedom, autonomy, and wealth. The images of horses probably appeared as spontaneously in their art as the World War II German Luger pistol did in the mid-twentieth-century Mesquakie spoon in the collection of Harriette Lubetkin.

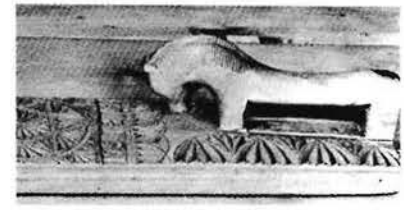
At times the Woodland peoples synthesized a number of very different traditions in their art. Their ribbonwork skirts may have originally resulted from the glut of silk ribbons on the European market that occurred in late-eighteenth-century France when the elaborately beribboned Rococo style was abandoned first for simplified revolutionary garb and then for the understated Neoclassic style of the Napoleonic era. In an effort to unload surplus ribbons, traders shipped them to North America to sell to the Indians. At first ribbonwork consisted of small, discrete geometric decorations, but in the second half of the nineteenth century it became increasingly robust, and by the early twentieth century it was characterized by a preference for foliate patterns.

Late-nineteenth-century Mesquakie ribbonwork may well be a response to European peasant costumes, notably Scandinavian skirts and jackets and German Black Forest bridal gowns, but it also acknowledges the prevailing Victorian fashions for women, which beginning in the 1860s included tiered skirts, patterned geometric borders on both skirts and jackets, and braided decorations. Native Americans approximated the effect of these braided decorations on their skirts and robes by embellishing their ribbonwork with beaded appliqué and rows of German silver brooches and rings. Mesquakie men as well as women went in for decoration, the men wearing beaded bandoliers and choker necklaces, the women elaborate necklaces and richly designed ribbonwork shawls.

Mesquakie clothes, then, were eclectic mixtures of European peasant folk costumes and high-fashion Victorian outfits, mixtures that expressed and reinforced their own Native American penchant for elaborately decorated garments. They would have seen fashionable Victorian dress in Iowa City, Des Moines, and Cedar Rapids, which had close connections with the East. In addition they purchased printed cottons, which they used for both women's blouses and men's shirts.

Although Native Americans made embroidered patterns with seed beads as early as the eighteenth century, the efflorescence of their beadwork occurred soon after beaded decorations became fashionable among whites. In the mid-nineteenth century in both England and the United States beadwork became enormously popular. In England the craze reached a peak in 1845 and lasted another decade; in the United States it lasted even longer. Beadwork was used on table mats, urn rugs, the flat surface of tea trays, and lambrequins.

Fig. 16. Norwegian mangle board, early nineteenth century. *Collection unknown*



Detail.

Fig. 17. Norwegian horsehead ale bowl, 1840. 14" l. *Collection unknown*

Fig. 18. Ha Na Wo Wa Ta (James Onawat), a Mesquakie leader in 1896. *The Duren Ward Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa*

Cat. No. 83. Moccasins, c. 1900.

Women's ball gowns and tea dresses were beaded; they wore sets of beaded jewelry consisting of a matching necklace, bracelet, hair ornament, and brooch; they carried beaded nosegays or wore beaded corsages; and a beaded purse or reticule was considered as *de rigueur* as a paisley shawl. Victorian women owned beaded pincushions, hair-tidies, change purses, needle-holders, scissor cases, tiebacks for curtains, napkin rings, and quill pens. And men owned beaded tobacco pouches, cigar cases, carpet slippers, and occasionally long, slim knitted bead purses. Thanks in part to this craze, Native American beadwork was soon being used to cover everything from pipe bags and hair wraps to moccasins, sashes, and garters. Many Plains and Plateau tribes even decorated ration card cases, awl containers, and knife sheaths with beads.

It would of course be foolhardy to attribute this explosion of Native American beadwork solely to a Victorian fad. By way of comparison, one might consider the French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters who slightly later in the century became fascinated by Japanese art. These painters were not slavish copiers of the Japanese; rather, they were creative artists who used Japanese techniques of oblique perspective, silhouetting of figures, and reliance on striking and unusual color combinations to describe their changing world. Similarly, North American Indians used Victorian beadwork as a springboard for distinctive works of art that approximated the new felt tone of their radically transformed world. If beadwork expressed a kinship with their neighbors' European folk culture and with mainstream Victorian culture, it also asserted their own cultural stature.

In past times the sacred in Mesquakie culture had known no bounds. But after resettling in Iowa the Mesquakie began to experience the fragmentation of their world into private/sacred and public/secular spheres of human existence as they came in contact with Euro-American culture. Although they paid lip service to the traditional status quo, their art shows that in actual fact they wished to bridge the gap between the traditional world and the new situations they were facing. Unlike their close neighbors the Sioux, they strove to remain on good terms with the whites. Perhaps their devastating confrontations with the French in the early eighteenth century had taught them to seek a middle course of realistic compromise that would preserve their sacred core.

Their experience with the French had taught the Mesquakie to see themselves at times as an exotic and alienated other, a self-image they began to express about 1810 by wearing turbans, a style that persisted throughout the nineteenth century (Fig. 18). This curious change occurred also in the dress of a number of other tribes, including the Seminole and Cherokee. Although these tribes were surely unaware that turbans were worn first by such literary lions as Alexander Pope and then by Romantics like Lord Byron, who wished to indicate his sympathies with the people of the East, they might have seen European prints that pictured American Indians wearing turbans. Or they might have picked up the style from men like the Scotsman John Caldwell, who put together a collection of Native American finery when he was a young soldier in the King's Eighth Regiment stationed in Detroit. Caldwell obviously had his own idea of what a true American Indian headdress should look like, as indicated by the foofaraw of quill-covered wood strips, silver brooches, tinkling cones, and ostrich and rare feathers that he donned for a full-length portrait displaying his North American aboriginal collection.[34] Whatever the specific source of this custom, it seems to have been generally occasioned by the eighteenth-century European view of the American Indian as an exotic and noble savage.[35]

The Mesquakie, then, did not think about remaining pure aboriginals true to some hypothetical essence. They did wish to retain tribal unity and a sense of themselves as a distinct people, but they were eager to try out new styles that seemed likely to increase their dignity and keep them abreast of a rapidly changing world. An especially poignant instance of this effort is seen in the design of beaded flaps on a pair of late-nineteenth-century moccasins included in this exhibition, which approximates the arbitrariness of images printed on piece goods (Cat. No. 83). Unlike the fully rendered thunderbirds on early woven bags, the more prosaic songbirds on the front edge of these moccasin flaps are cut in half to emulate birds on a random piece of printed fabric. Although a woven bag in the University Museum in Philadelphia does terminate the top of four rows of thunderbirds with the necks, omitting the heads, the mythic presence of these birds differs markedly from the folk art quality of the songbirds: the thunderbirds appear to transcend the limits of the bag in their flight to nether realms. Objects like the moccasin flaps are a telling indication of new values, similar to Amish women's present-day preference for polyester fabrics (much to the horror of museum professionals, dealers, and collectors). People change with the times. Ideas about the proper manner and the true essence of a particular group of people underrate their vital interest in their own times, their ability to embrace new materials and ideas and in the process redefine their culture.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Iowa ceased to be a newly settled land of pioneers with distinct ethnic differences and became more homogeneous, with only the

Mesquakie and several European religious groups living outside the new norm. (The Germans in the Amanas and at Kalona had lived for some time in the United States before coming to Iowa and had worked to maintain their distinctive religious ways of life, which were closely tied to their German heritage.) So the Mesquakie at the end of the century were faced with a new population mix that consisted mostly of mainstream Americans but also included colonies of Euro-Americans, small separatist religious groups, and members of other Native American tribes whom they met at powwows or traveled to see.

They were deeply affected by the waves of Pan-Indianism that swept across the Plains when it became apparent that the frontier was gone and that reservations controlled by United States government agents were a permanent way of life. The stage for Pan-Indianism was set by the Ghost Dance. In the 1880s the Ghost Dance became popular with many Plains peoples, including the Sioux, ultimately serving as a cause of Sitting Bull's death and a factor in the slaughter of Indians at Wounded Knee in 1890. Begun in the 1880s by Wovoka, a Paiute prophet living on a Nevada reservation, the Ghost Dance was predicated on ideas of renewal and rebirth. Adherents of this creed—it has also been called a religion—believed that massive buffalo herds would return, that dead Native Americans would be resurrected, that true practitioners of the Ghost Dance dressed in special decorated garments would be impervious to the white man's bullets, and that whites would be eradicated. The Ghost Dance joined aspects of Christianity with Native American spiritual concepts; its greatest impact was to demonstrate to diverse tribes—even to traditional enemies—that they shared the common bond of being Indians.

Even though the Mesquakie did not follow the Ghost Dance, they did participate enthusiastically in Pan-Indianism. Two important manifestations of Pan-Indianism were the rising popularity of powwows, which encouraged tribes to meet regularly and celebrate their Indianness, and the popularity of Wild West shows, which transformed Native Americans into romantic generic Plains warriors. Like many other tribes, the Mesquakie developed a new world view characterized by wishful thinking, a sincere nostalgia for the past, fellow feeling with other Native American tribes owing to the shared experience of loss, and a belief that Plains warriors—thanks to their courage, their nomadic way of life, and their heroic resistance to the demands of the United States Army—epitomized North American culture. Such feelings were not codified: diverse and exhilarating, they were regarded as a true picture of the American Indian that any tribe could embrace. In the late nineteenth century, one way the Mesquakie expressed their Pan-Indianism was by wearing Plains leggings and Cheyenne moccasins, which they obtained by trade. Although they may also have preferred Cheyenne moccasins for their technical refinement, the style had the added advantage of associating the Mesquakie with the romance of the Plains.

Incipient Pan-Indianism actually began for the Mesquakie during their Kansas sojourn. Although Pan-Indianism may seem at odds with the new Euro-American identity these people were forging, it took hold just prior to the Euro-American influence and continued from that time to be an important cultural force. These two opposite cultural strains represent the kind of contradiction that frequently occurs in life, but that historians and others try to eradicate in the interests of clarity. The two strains served the Mesquakie well by assuring them of a separate Native American identity while allowing them to participate in the ethnic culture surrounding them: in other words, by allowing them to be traditional and innovative at the same time. In addition, both offered generic, free-wheeling image clusters that gave the Mesquakie sustenance without making the strenuous demands of an orthodox system of belief.

The Mesquakie in the twentieth century continued to admire Plains culture. They made versions of Sioux beaded vests (Cat. No. 90) and wore them at powwows and small Wild West shows. The beautifully constructed Sioux-style feathered headdress in this exhibition, which may have been put together for such a show, is an amalgam of eagle feathers attached to an old Mesquakie beaded garter. At this time the Mesquakie were not so intent on reviving their own traditions as they were on adopting Pan-Indian ideas and using them as a means to express their commonality with other tribes and with the West in general. Hybrid objects such as the headdress are neither fine art nor folk art: they belong to the new realm of curios, which were to become of great interest to tourists. Sometimes the Mesquakie and other tribes developed particularly fashionable variations on Pan-Indian garments such as the flapper-styled beaded headband with an asymmetrically placed tassel that women wore to powwows and celebrations in the 1920s (Fig. 19).

Contemporary with the woman's headband, although not quite so high-style, is the pair of beaded cuffs that picture heroic eagles resembling the American emblem (Cat. No. 91). These cuffs represent the confluence of cowboy, military, and Indian ideas (Fig. 20). Indian beadwork is here used to glorify the traditional Cavalry cuffs that once formed part of a soldier's riding gloves. The eagle may unconsciously celebrate the unity of the

Fig. 19. Billy and Elsie Jones, c. 1930.
Tama County Historical Society

Fig. 20. Young Mesquakie men, c.1890.
Tama County Historical Society

Fig. 21. A Mesquakie dancer in 1912 whose costume combines traditional items, such as a roach, a ribbon shirt, and a beaded breechcloth, with Plains Indian moccasins, feather bustle, and pipe bag. *Tama County Historical Society*

United States government, which transforms cowboys, Indians, and military personnel alike into good patriotic citizens. This patriotic message was a staple of Wild West shows.

Residual aspects of Pan-Indianism persist today in the powwow costumes worn by dancers (Figs. 10, 21). Known as fancy dancers, these male performers dress in costumes that combine Woodland beaded vests, breechcloths, and horsehair roaches with free interpretations of Plains bustles, consisting of feather wheels fastened to their backs and arms. In addition, they adorn themselves with generic Plains-style beadwork ensembles that include headbands, chokers, armbands, harnesses, and cuffs. The powwow outfit is completed by a set of bells worn below the knee, a pair of beaded moccasins, and a feather fan or whistle held in one hand. The bright plumage and bells come alive as the fancy dancer becomes involved in intricate steps that are accented by deep bows and spins. This costume, which is thought to have developed in Oklahoma, is the image of the American Indian that most twentieth-century whites have come to know at first hand.

Pan-Indian sentiments also initiated a climate favorable to tribal revivalism, and in the early twentieth century many tribe members took a renewed pleasure in being Mesquakie. A contributing factor may have been the smallpox epidemic of 1902, during which medical authorities quarantined the settlement for six months, ordered Mesquakies to burn their homes, belongings, and clothes, and required them to build their new homes throughout the settlement rather than in a cluster. Although the Mesquakie apparently hid their sacred bowls and bundles and also their beadwork, many wonderful pieces of ribbonwork and other articles of clothing were no doubt destroyed in the fire. Afterward people naturally needed new dance costumes, so Mesquakie artists had to produce more finger-woven sashes, deer-hair roaches, beaded moccasins, ribbonwork skirts, and robes than they were accustomed to producing, as well as more yarn bags and possibly bear claw necklaces and wooden objects. John Young Bear (Fig. 9) excelled in carving wooden bowls and spoons, and also in weaving elegant roaches of dyed and natural-colored deer hair. He probably learned a great many techniques from his maternal grandfather, Te-ba-shi. He made the great bear claw necklace that is now in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming; a Mesquakie woman, probably a member of his family, did the beadwork for this piece. He also wrapped pipe stems and quills of eagle feathers with horsehair in a decorative geometric style that had been popular with Midwestern tribes a century earlier. Other notable Mesquakie artists of this time were Willie Johnson, George Blackcloud, and Mrs. Bill Leaf.

In addition to coming to maturity after the first wave of Pan-Indianism, these artists created at a time when the Mesquakie were being asked a great number of questions about their history, religion, lifestyle, organizational structure, and material culture. Between 1881 and 1897 the folklorist Mary Alicia Owen spent time with Mesquakie women, talking to them about their traditions, the special meaning of their beadwork, and their legends. Her detailed study of her own collection of Mesquakie art, which she donated to Cambridge University and which was published by the Royal Folklore Society in 1904, was soon followed by the investigations of the Harvard-trained anthropologist William Jones, who, as we have seen, was himself a Mesquakie. His intimate knowledge of tribal lore enabled him to ask questions that might not have occurred to other anthropologists. And his accomplishments, in-depth understanding of white culture, and sincere interest in his own native traditions served the important function of dignifying Mesquakie culture for the entire tribe.

At about the same time Jones was visiting the settlement, Duren J. H. Ward, an Iowa City minister, was documenting the Mesquakie in 1905 through extensive interviews and photographs. Subsequently Edgar R. Harlan, M. R. Harrington, and Truman Michelson, among others, scrutinized many aspects of Mesquakie culture. Harrington made a major study of Sauk and Fox bundles, and compared the Mesquakie in Iowa with their Oklahoma counterparts and also with their old allies the Sauk. Michelson was especially adept at languages, and he became involved in a painstaking comparative analysis of Woodland myths and the etymology of specific words.

All these studies had the net effect of convincing the Mesquakie that their culture was special and important, that they were subjects worthy of extended investigation. The impact of these studies on the Mesquakie parallels a similar impact made on the Hopi in 1895 by J. Walter Fewkes's anthropological-archaeological investigation of a fourteenth-century Sikyatki site. His work had the indirect effect of introducing the Tewa/Hopi woman Nampeyo to early earthenware and thus encouraging her to initiate a Hopi revival style of pottery based on Sikyatki designs.

Even if the information given anthropologists and folklorists by their Mesquakie informants is not entirely correct, as many tribal members began to attest in the 1930s and continue to assert today, and was purposefully falsified so that the power of the legends and myths would remain in Mesquakie hands, their sincere interest in Mesquakie culture and

religion provided an important alternative focus to the Pan-Indian movement by reminding the Mesquakie of their uniqueness and importance.[36] Most likely, as Harrington believed, the carved wooden objects collected by some of these scholars are not sacred objects but variations of originals still in Mesquakie hands,[37] variations designed to ensure the integrity and power of the original sacred relics still used in the settlement.

As we learn from Torrence's essay, the swimming turtle at the St. Joseph Museum (Cat. No. 166), the figure of the man at the Putnam Museum (Cat. No. 167), and the buffalo at the Museum of the American Indian in New York (Fig. 6)[38] are most likely all enlargements of actual Mesquakie carvings. Although these carvings were probably made especially for whites and therefore are not actual ritual objects, they do exhibit a number of Mesquakie stylistic qualities. Thus the swimming turtle (discussed earlier) joins observed detail with an overall abstracted form to symbolize a concept rather than merely picture an individual figure. And for all his presence, the carved figure of a man at the Putnam is a type rather than a specific person; his heavy proportions and intense gaze are Mesquakie characteristics that are readily apparent in early photographs.

These sculptures made for sale, then, in the early twentieth century, when the Mesquakie were juggling aspects of Euro-American culture, Pan-Indianism, and traditional culture, manage to manifest enduring characteristics of the Mesquakie, particularly their intensity and their understanding of the particular qualities of the materials they work with. (The carvings of other Woodland tribes tend to be less robust and animated and more concerned with generating an illusion.) These characteristics are also evident in the wooden horse-handled spoons carved by Mesquakies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the horses resemble those on Norwegian mangle boards and ale bowls, these objects exhibit two central characteristics of Mesquakie art: they emphasize the whole at the expense of individual parts, and they favor the inherent nature of the material over the illusion the carving creates.

In the early twentieth century the Mesquakie began to rediscover aspects of their own culture. Their discovery, however, was neither a self-conscious revival nor a labored survival. Instead it appeared as a healthy new sense of self, which is evident in the composite nature of an art that brought into play images and practices of the old pre-settlement Mesquakie culture, Northern European influences, elements of Pan-Indianism, and aspects of Victorian culture. Their ability to blend these varied traditions into an art that they regarded as distinctly Mesquakie is a key to their success. This art neither glorified nor negated European folk influences, Pan-Indianism, or mainstream Victorian culture. It simply overlaid them with a renewed confidence in the Mesquakie and in their destiny as the Red Earth People of Iowa.

John Young Bear's maple bowl and spoon (Cat. No. 134) exude the confidence of the Mesquakie revival style. The bear on the spoon is simplified to an amazing degree. Young Bear has rejected the elaboration of the earlier horse-handled spoons in favor of smooth contours and an animated face whose force depends on its open mouth and eyes of metal nailheads that would glow in the firelight of the sacred lodge. The idea of using nailheads for eyes may come from the custom of employing metal buttons for otters' eyes in the otterskin bags used in the Midé society, which had a number of Mesquakie adherents; but this particular bowl and spoon were not used in Midé ceremonies.

The bowl unfortunately is not of the same quality as the spoon, even though the two belong together. As indicated above, the magic and mystery of the burl as the generative seat of Mesquakie culture was a primary motivating force for earlier pieces in this exhibition, which were laboriously made through a process of carving with a metal or stone knife and burning, scraping, and finally polishing the surface with sand. These older bowls are carved to an amazing thinness, as if the artist, by way of tribute to his material, had challenged it to its very limits. They perch on one point: as Torrence has pointed out, they rise up from the earth magically, like the prows of ships.[39] John Young Bear's bowl, by contrast, belongs to the earth. He has known iron pots and granite ware too long to appreciate the aesthetic and metaphorical values of a vessel that barely rests on the ground. Thickly carved, moreover, with only a small projection, his bowl bespeaks the times in which it was made. By contrast, the superb quality of the spoon may suggest that the act of participating in the feast by eating consecrated food is now far more important than the food itself and the vessel it is served in.

Although Pan-Indianism helped to create the stage for Mesquakie revivalism, the Mesquakie's renewed interest in themselves as a distinct people in turn fueled an intensified Pan-Indianism; if they saw themselves first as Mesquakie, they saw themselves second as Indians. This is apparent from the annual corn festivals that were formalized into yearly powwows on the Tama settlement in 1913 and in the special Fort Armstrong Centennial and Tri-Cities Celebration that was held for Rock Island and Moline, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, in 1916, a precursor of the yearly Rock Island powwows that began in 1939 at the Black Hawk State Park.

These formalized powwows differed from earlier congregations in their attempt to attract white audiences. The Tama Powwows have been described as a combination of homecoming, fiesta, Mardi Gras, convention, and county fair. Prizes were given for the best corn and needlework, and greased pig contests were held. But what is most surprising is the manner in which the Indians anticipated, and acted out for white audiences, clichéd notions about American Indians, no doubt learned at Wild West shows. At Tama the Indians regularly staged a scenario that included attacking a stagecoach and capturing, scalping, and burning a white girl at the stake. At the opening night of the Fort Armstrong Centennial in 1916, "Friend Indian himself" made an appearance, as the advertisement promised; his opening act was to celebrate his downfall by posing as a victim of the "Burning of [an] Old Indian Village" that followed the introduction of the event's special guest, President Woodrow Wilson. In both of these situations, then, Indians not only allowed themselves to be used but advertised their degradation.

At their powwows the Mesquakie dressed as generic Indians. Huron H. Smith in "The Red Earth Indians" recalls the powwows at Tama in the 1920s:

> At this time, they dress up in the most fantastic manner possible, chiefly to attract the attention of the whites. They wear feathered bonnets and many articles of apparel which they buy from other Indians all over the country. This serves the purpose of making an impression on the white man, although the ethnologist knows that there is not a single Indian dressed in the true Mesquakie costume. The children are adepts at learning the Indian dances and songs. These dance steps and songs though are not borrowed for the occasion, but are their genuine heritage.[40]

Over time, their repertory was expanded to include dances of Plains groups and Southwestern tribes, as well as new steps created especially for the powwow circuit.

The ad for the 1918 Tama Powwow billed this event as the "only chance to see real Indians, living tribal life of old. Worth driving miles to see. Indians will give 5 per cent of net proceeds to American Red Cross." In this ad the word "real" obviously conforms to audiences' expectations of authenticity and is not a true image of how the Mesquakie view themselves. The rest of the ad confirms this reading: "Mesquakie Will Appear in Tribal Dances, Indian Songs, Foot Races, Shooting Matches, La Crosse Games and Other Tribal Customs. Music by Indian Band." In 1951 the Tama Powwow featured 24 family souvenir and food concessions, old dances and songs, as well as a guitar group singing cowboy songs. During this decade powwows were attended by Sauk, Ponca, and Quapaw from Oklahoma reservations, Winnebago and Ojibwa from Wisconsin reservations, Sioux from Chicago, and some Mesquakie from central Kansas, thus making it clearly a Pan-Indian event.

The public loved the paraphernalia of Pan-Indianism, as early-twentieth-century mainstream depictions of American Indians show. The Indians represented on Rookwood pottery and in paintings by members of the Taos School were a healthy and noble lot. They provided a saccharine and romantic image of Native Americans that paralleled Helen Hunt Jackson's popular heroine Ramona, later played in the film *Ramona* by Loretta Young. The contemporaneous film *The Indian Love Call* was a hauntingly sweet, tenderly tragic, and utterly false conception of the North American Indian predicated on Indians seen at powwows and Wild West shows.

The Indians themselves, as we have seen, helped to create and perpetuate this romantic image. As late as 1968, for example, the program for the powwow at Black Hawk State Park opened with the following statement: "As the leaf-falling moon approaches, the throb of the tom-tom and the chant of the Indian can be heard once again, for it's powwow time on the Rock River and the Sauk and Fox have reassembled at the Black Hawk State Park—momentarily recapturing the era when their ancestors lived here." The triteness of this introduction was sustained in the John Deere advertisement on the back cover of the program: "Once again, a spiral of blue rises from the campfire of the Sauk and the Fox. The beat of the ceremonial drum awakens the countryside, and the great hills mimic the chant of the tribal braves." The ad concludes with John Deere praising the American Indian's "just pride in a noble lineage."

Indians, like whites, seem to have preferred this soft-focus image to its alternative: painful memories of savage battles in which whites and Indians alike had been both villains and heroes. Its cloying simplicity became a defensive and perhaps necessary armor that made possible later interactions between the two groups and allowed them to get on with their lives. It is surprising that the Mesquakie, who had behaved so responsibly in the nineteenth century, should embrace this image; but they too, like their white and Native American compatriots, needed to be comforted and assuaged. What could be more effective than a false vision of the noble, idealized Red Brother to cloak over the troubles they continued to endure in their effort to bridge several different identities?

In the twentieth century, Mesquakie culture has increasingly been bifurcated into public and private faces. Its religious side went underground, with ceremonies held far from the prying eyes of almost all whites. Although John Young Bear and Mrs. Bill Leaf, like

other artists of the Mesquakie revival, might go to powwows and create Mesquakie and Pan-Indian costumes for themselves and others, they maintained both public and private modes of expression that sometimes overlapped but often remained separate. Like other tribes, the Mesquakie have safeguarded some sacred traditions while allowing others to become partially or even totally secular. Thus the woman's dance costume, for example, is used for both traditional Mesquakie feasts and powwows. However, the sacred qualities of the costume remain paramount; and a woman during menstruation, as mentioned earlier, would not wear it lest she contaminate it with her temporary infertility. A fancy dancer's outfit, in contrast to the traditional male outfit, is a secular creation that would not be worn at a sacred feast.

Although many Mesquakies no longer practice their traditional bundle religion—some are Christian, a few are adherents of the Drum Religion, a small number belong to the Native American Church—most of them today still wish to be buried as traditional members of their tribe. The dead are outfitted in traditional clothes, which include Mesquakie moccasins, finger-woven sashes, ribbonwork shirts for men and skirts for women, and breechcloths and leggings for men. They are buried with a carved wooden bowl and spoon. If they have practiced traditional ways, sacred objects, even heirlooms, will be buried with them.

The old customs of a nomadic people who transformed dress into a high art form and who buried or gave away surplus goods are still practiced by these people. Many contemporary works of art such as ribbonwork shirts and skirts are made especially to accompany the dead, and thus are seen only at funerals. Frequently talented tribal members will stay up all night to complete a garment for a funeral. Mesquakie art still continues to be vital—for example, women continue to create distinctly original color combinations and patterns for their ribbonwork skirts—but individual works of art appearing at funerals quickly enter the realm of the mythic and partially remembered. Although some people continue the old ways during their lives and regularly wear traditional dress at feasts and ceremonial adoptions, others see it only at powwows or funerals, where it serves to remind them of who they have been. To these people it becomes a reassuring symbol of an identity that is accepted but sometimes not fully understood.

The most traditional Mesquakies still know the ancient, religious form of the language, which is reserved for sacred ceremonies; and these people are probably the most secure in their identity as Mesquakies. For the rest, as is true of so many other ethnic groups in the modern world, their traditional culture is a living relic; they belong to the tribe without understanding the special relationship formed through membership in a particular clan, the continuity of observing seasonal rituals, and the sense of integration that comes from being a people with a traditional spiritual and social center. Realizing how important the ancient ways are, many Mesquakies are now making efforts to understand the past in order to help their children deal with the future.

Because museums have collected little contemporary Mesquakie art and because a large percentage of what the Mesquakie make has been used to clothe and accompany the dead, Torrence and I have experienced difficulty in finding large numbers of truly representative works of art of the past 50 years. We have been able to borrow a number of fine pieces, including dance skirts, whose attractions range from the beautiful folk art pattern of the piece in the Gerald Svacina collection, which probably dates from the 1930s, to the refined color combinations of the skirt made and danced in by Susie Poweshiek. And we have examined beaded robes of the past decade that continue to reflect the designs of Norwegian peasant clothing.

Some important pieces of contemporary Mesquakie art are Arthur Blackcloud's box elder spoons with the heads of foxes and bears carved on them. Although Blackcloud uses a grey ceramic salt shaker in the form of a bear as his model, this ceramic bear has little in common with his spoons, which have the smooth contours of John Young Bear's art and also hark back to a still older tradition of Mesquakie spoons that developed out of Scandinavian prototypes. The animal heads on Blackcloud's spoons have the strong profile characteristic of Scandinavian carvings of horses. His spoons, then, belong both to the Mesquakie revival style of John Young Bear and to the much older style of the Tama artists first influenced by European folk art. They are at once traditional and modern.

Torrence and I talked at length with Adeline Wanatee, who is renowned in the settlement for her finger-woven sashes and ribbonwork. She discussed with us various curvilinear patterns used for ribbonwork skirts and almost immediately plunged into the metaphysical meaning of these garments, which whites have traditionally regarded as only decorative costumes. In reference to a skirt that combines alternating dark and light panels, she said:

> The dark honors the night. The central line is the life line. We are the roots; these are the trees [she pointed to the organic shapes]. If people wish to know what the plants are in this piece, all they need to do is to look outside. Some people call them weeds; we know they are plants—they are listed as plants in your books—but the design is not a specific plant but many of them. This design is taken from a pattern of my Aunt Mary, but I have

made changes in it. I learned to do ribbonwork from my Aunt Mary, not from my mother, who did baskets, mats, and beadwork. My aunt, she did not teach me. I learned by watching her work; then I did it myself.[41]

When I repeated in current art-historical language that the light side provides a necessary contrast to the darker one, which symbolizes the night, she repeated calmly, "The dark honors the night." Her choice of words bespeaks an orientation to this design that removes it from the decorative and imbues it with sacred meaning. To Adeline Wanatee the skirt was emblematic of a special, mythic orientation to the world.

I asked if she knew of the French artist Matisse, because Mesquakie ribbonwork has the clarity and force of his paper cutouts. She did not know his work, but my question caused her to think of an old Mesquakie definition of art: "When two different patterns join together to form a third, we call that 'art.'" In ribbonwork skirts this third pattern is apparent in particularly successful designs; it becomes a transcendent overlay whereby the sum is greater than the individual parts. If we extend this idea of art to embrace symbols that are greater than the objects manifesting them, we have an excellent means of understanding Mesquakie art in particular and Native American art in general. Feast bowls and spoons are Mesquakie sculpture because they provide a means for understanding their traditional identity: far more than eating implements, they are liturgical vessels that symbolize this tribe's orientation to its mythic past. Ribbonwork is not just decoration; it is a sacred collage that connects these people to natural forms, to abstract sacred meanings, and to the folk art of the Northern Europeans who settled the newly formed state of Iowa. The Wacochachi drawing is not just a warrior's narrative; it is a statement of being in the world that connects the hunter to his prey and also to the life force that imbues them all. And the beaded sashes, garters, bandolier bags, and charm bags are not just accessories made with Eastern European beads; they manifest the Mesquakies' connections to wampum, to Scandinavian loom weaving, to Victorian beaded bags, to Plains Indian vests, and to the Wild West show images of the generic American Indian.

At the beginning of this essay, I referred to a small ersatz object that purported to present a true image of the American Indian in a composite of ancient Mesoamerican, Plains Indian, and African elements. Even though this object panders to current notions of the ancient, romantic, and mysterious core of the North American Indian, its composite nature is not that far removed from the truth, for the American Indian is an amalgam of many different traditions and ideas. In the nineteenth century, after a period of defeat and suffering, the Mesquakie looked at new artistic forms, questioned their meaning, borrowed some forms while rejecting others, and in general adopted aspects of a more technologically advanced culture and made them fit in with their traditions. Their deep spirituality enabled them to adopt elements from many alien cultures without totally annihilating their own. They faltered for a time under the influence of Pan-Indianism, trivializing their heritage and themselves at powwows and forsaking their artistic tradition to create trinkets and curios for tourists. But their independence and reticence enabled them to survive that time, and to be themselves even as they have acceded to the demands of a changing world.

NOTES

1. W. J. McGee, "A Muskwaki Bowl," *American Anthropologist* 11 (March 1898), p. 89. In "Representation and Symbolic Forms in Great Lakes–Area Wooden Sculpture," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 62, No. 1 (1986), Evan Maurer presents a lucid discussion of this stylistic continuity.

2. Rhoda R. Gilman, "The Fur Trade in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1630–1850," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58, No. 1 (Autumn 1974), p. 4.

3. George Irving Quimby, *Indian Culture and European Trade Goods* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 140.

4. According to Leo Keahna, a ceremonial leader and a member of the tribal council, in conversation with the authors in 1986.

5. William Jones, "Notes on the Fox Indians," *Journal of American Folklore* 24, No. 92 (1911), p. 215.

6. Ronald L. Neff and Jay A. Weinstein, "Iowa's Indians Come of Age," *Society* 12, No. 2 (1975), p. 25.

7. Jones, "Mortuary Observances and the Adoption Rites of the Algonkin Foxes of Iowa," *International Congress of Americanists, XV Session* (1907), pp. 267–68.

8. M. R. Harrington, *Sacred Bundles of the Sac and Fox Indians*, University Museum Anthropological Publications, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Philadelphia: University [of Pennsylvania] Museum, 1914), p. 239. Harrington questioned the authenticity of some fetishes offered him: "One of the supposedly new fetishes, the turtle figure . . . is so good that I am not really sure to get whether it is new or not. Several Fox Indians told me that if it is not as old, it is at least a good model of a class of 'powerful things' still existing in the tribe and supposed to be the protectors of health." Harrington may have been referring to the turtle in the St. Joseph Museum, which appears to manifest the aesthetic power of a bundle object even though it is not a real fetish.

9. Jones, "Notes on the Fox Indians," p. 214.

10. Natalie F. Joffe, "The Fox of Iowa," in Ralph Linton, ed., *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1940), p. 288.

11. Thomas Peter Christensen, *The Iowa Indians: A Brief History* (Iowa City: Athens Press, 1954), p. 65.

12. "Letter to Reverend Dr. Jedidiah Morse, by Major Morrell Marston, U.S.A., Commanding at Fort Armstrong, Ill.; November 1820," in Emma Helen Blair, ed., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes* (Cleve-

land: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1911; reprinted New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), p. 151.

13. A. D. Bicknell, "The Tama County Indians," *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd Series, 4, No. 3 (October 1899), pp. 196–208.

14. Ibid., p. 197.

15. Sol Tax, *The Mesquakies of Iowa: A Summary of Findings of the First Five Years [of] The University of Chicago–State University of Iowa Mesquakie Indian Project* (Published by The Federal Women's Club of Iowa, 1953), p. 4.

16. Christensen, p. 49.

17. Truman Michelson, "Part III: Phonetics, folklore and mythology," *Washington Academy of Science Journal* 9, No. 7 (October 19, 1919), p. 527.

18. L. Edward Purcell, "The Mesquakie Indian Settlement in 1905," *The Palimpsest* 55, No. 2 (March-April 1974), p. 36.

19. Ibid.

20. Harrington (p. 217) wrote, "The Sauk and Fox still maintain the practice, well known to their ancestors, of separating into familiar or small parties for the hunt, at certain times, usually in the fall." Since the focus of his research was the Sauk of Oklahoma, he may not have been describing the Mesquakie at Tama; but he may well have been thinking of them, since they were more conservative than the Oklahoma group. Bicknell (p. 203), on the other hand, states that the Mesquakie in 1899 no longer made their extended winter hunts: "Formerly it was the custom of the tribe to make frequent and long excursions for the purpose of hunting and fishing. But the game laws and the barbed wire fences have entirely cut off these industries."

21. Huron H. Smith, "The Red Earth Indians," in S. A. Barrett, ed., *Yearbook of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee 1923*, 3 (April 27, 1927), p. 34.

22. Purcell, p. 46.

23. William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnepeck, Lake of the Woods* (Philadelphia: H. S. Curey & I. Lew, 1824), Vol. 1, p. 191.

24. Bruce E. Mahan, "Making the Treaty of 1842," *The Palimpsest* 10, No. 5 (May 1929), p. 175.

25. Frederick Drimmer, ed., *Captured by the Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750–1870* (New York: Dover Publications, 1961).

26. Sister Bernard Coleman, *Decorative Designs of the Ojibwa of Northern Minnesota* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), p. 94.

27. Ibid., p. 96.

28. Ibid.

29. Andrew Hunter Whiteford, "Fiber Bags of the Great Lakes Indians, Part II," *American Indian Art Magazine* 3, No. 1 (Winter 1977), pp. 44–47, 90.

30. Conversation with Marion Nelson, Director of Vesterheim: The Norwegian-American Museum, July 1988. Dr. Nelson remembers reading a letter written by a Norwegian immigrant who stated that "the Indians do beadwork like us" (Fig. 22). Although the Vesterheim owns few mittens, sweaters, and socks belonging to first-generation immigrants, Dr. Nelson has affirmed that these garments were part of the Norwegian's daily wear. He notes that the decorations served the very practical function of joining two color yarns to make insulated knitted garments.

31. It is also possible that the elaborate design of Czech Easter eggs, which are more pictorial than Ukrainian and Russian eggs, impressed the Mesquakie, who also used hearts, flowers, trees, butterflies, and mushrooms in their art. An example of the Mesquakie's use of this imagery is the embroidered beaded child's vest in this exhibition. Czech immigrants in the Tama area may have given Easter eggs to the Mesquakie in accordance with the Czech custom of giving away eggs to friends and acquaintances.

32. William C. Orchard, *Beads and Beadwork of the American Indians* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1972), pp. 113–14.

33. Conversation with Gaylord Torrence, June 1988, who made the connection between the heddle and the photograph. Andrew Hunter Whiteford, "The Origins of Great Lakes Beaded Bandolier Bags," *American Indian Art Magazine* 11, No. 3 (Summer 1984), pp. 32-43, illustrates the earliest dated bandolier bags of 1850 and 1851.

34. Two copies of this portrait exist. One is in the City of Liverpool Museum; the other belongs to the family estate of F. E. G. Bagshawe, a descendant of Caldwell.

35. In 1819–20 the second chief of the Fox nation, Ty-ee-me, who was then about 40, collected a variety of maps of the world. (Letter to Reverend Morse from Major Marston, p. 155.) He may have owned maps that presented, with the legends, the European image of the American Indian as an idealization of a maharaja, complete with turban.

36. See "An Original Study of Mesquakie (Fox) Life," *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd Series, 19, No. 3 (January 1934), pp. 224-25. This article is a transcript of a talk between Dr. Melvin R. Gilmore, E. R. Harlan, Young Bear, Jim Poweshiek, and George Young Bear. Dr. Gilmore was employed by the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York City, and Harlan was curator of the Iowa Historical Department. Young Bear told Gilmore and Harlan that whites had been misled by certain Indian informants: "We have various classes of Indians. Some live, just according to their own way, and of course they will do anything, when some white man comes along they expect to be compensated by the white man, and so the white men are misinformed, but if the white man would go to the thinking Indian, the Indian who tried to do what is right they cannot, by giving money or presents —they cannot get the information and so the records that you get are something entirely wrong. Your people have been misinformed."

37. Harrington, p. 239.

38. Meeting with Mesquakie tribal leaders, Tama, Iowa, March 30, 1987. Notes recorded by the author. At this meeting several council members stated that the buffalo in the Museum of the American Indian is a bear.

39. In conversation with the author, October 1984.

40. Smith, p. 32.

41. Conversation with Torrence and Hobbs, September 1984.

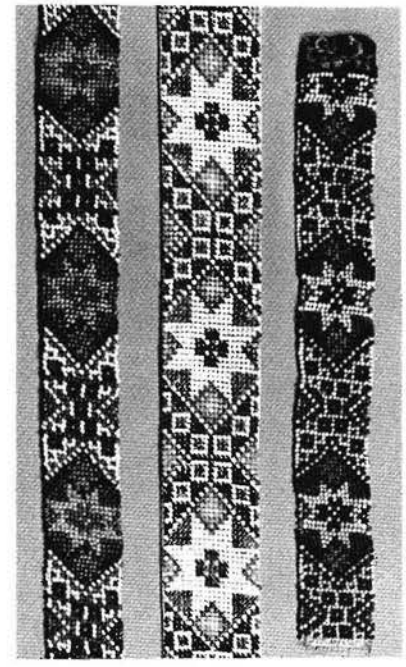


Fig. 22. Belts from woman's costume, c. 1880–1900. Beading on linen. Harlanger, Norway, origin; collected in the United States. *Vesterheim, Norwegian-American Museum*