



# THE KANZA CLAN BOOK

*ONLINE EDITION*

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# THE KANZA CLAN BOOK

## *What is this book?*

This book is designed to quickly acquaint tribal members and other interested readers with some of the traditional cultural institutions of the Kanza tribe, specifically with the tribal clan structure and its organization. Because the clan system was intimately linked to many very important concepts within the Kanza world—such as marriage, kinship, and general social interaction—even a cursory examination of the topic will yield a great deal of cultural material. The book is presented in a format that is both accessible and informative, and great care has been taken to assure that the information presented is as authentic as currently possible. To that end, this book has been compiled by members of the Kaw Nation's own Kanza Language Project and has received the approval of the Kaw Cultural Committee.

## *Who are the Kanza?*

The Kanza, also called the Kaws or Kansa, are a federally recognized Native American tribe officially known as the Kaw Nation of Oklahoma. The tribe consists of nearly 2,600 enrolled members living as close as Oklahoma and Kansas and as far away as Canada. Kanza government includes both a General or National Council, comprised of all enrolled tribal members above the age of eighteen, and an elected Executive Council, consisting of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and four additional elected officials. The tribe has a substantial economic and service base, and administers many programs and facilities near and around its headquarters in Kaw City, Oklahoma.

The Kanza did not always live in Oklahoma. They are members of a much older Mississippi Valley Siouan culture, one that yielded many present-day tribes such as the Sioux, Ioway, and Winnebago (Ho-Chunk). Along with their close cultural relatives the Quapaw, Omaha, Ponca, and Osage, the Kanza are more specifically members of the **Dhegiha** (pronounced: *they-GEE-hah*) branch of Siouan peoples. Following the rivers, these tribes migrated toward the Great Plains probably sometime between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

*Kanza Tribal  
Headquarters  
in Kaw City,  
Oklahoma*



According to a popular account, it is said that the Quapaw split off first. They left the others along the banks of the Mississippi and went southward into what is now Arkansas. For that reason, the name of their tribe is often translated as '*downstream people*.' The Omaha, or '*upstream people*,' turned northward along with the Ponca, and settled in present-day Nebraska. The Osage and the Kanza were the last to part ways. The Osage, or '*middle waters people*,' stayed in the Ozarks, and the Kanza, or '*wind people*,' continued on. Thus, prior to the twentieth century, the Kanza lived on the vast prairie lands the Great Plains, including most of what is now Kansas, one of two states bearing the name of the tribe.

While on the plains, the tribe became more and more distinct from its Dhegiha cousins, gradually developing its own language, culture, and traditions. The Kanza language was no longer intelligible with Quapaw, and was increasingly less familiar to Omaha-Ponca speakers. A uniquely Kanza way of life had arisen, and the tribe subsequently enjoyed a long period of independence and cultural maturity. Unfortunately, it was during this time of traditional self-actualization that the threat of European American invasion first became a reality.

Smallpox, a disease introduced to the continent via European invaders, arrived in 1755. The affliction killed Kaws without mercy for over a century. In the first ten years after exposure to smallpox, for example, one of every two Kanza males was dead. But disease was not the only problem facing the tribe. American bureaucracy and greed had also reached the plains.

Unbeknownst to the Kanza and countless other tribes, all of their lands had been sold to one foreign nation by another one in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Americans pushed deeper into the

interior to take advantage of the wide-open spaces and seemingly endless resources. Many tribes were driven westward during this period of American expansion. Some of these tribes were forced onto Kanza lands, despite drastic cultural differences and the fact that some were openly hostile to the Kaws.

In addition, American squatters settling throughout the Kanza hunting territories demanded more and more land to raise crops and make cities. The U.S. government obliged as often as it could, and busied itself renegotiating treaties, selling off lots, and avoiding commitments. Each new treaty drastically reduced the size of the Kanza homeland, once estimated at approximately 20,000,000-acres. Finally, after nearly 70 years of this sort of bureaucratic warfare, the United States government forced the tribe to cede all lands in Kansas. The tribe was moved *en masse* to a roughly 100,000-acre site in Indian Territory, which the Kaws had to purchase from the Osages with funds from the sale of their former Kansas holdings. This new land was then split up and allotted to individual families. The allotments were of no benefit to the Kanza. This was a tactic devised to break up the tribe into smaller and more easily manageable units, thus silencing the unified voice of the tribe. Nearly 60 years later, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flooded a portion of the Oklahoma lands to make a large reservoir and recreational area. The flooded area housed the Kaw tribal council house, the old town of Washunga, and the tribal cemetery.

It is plain to see that in recent history the Kanza tribe suffered great tragedies and insults to its traditional way of life. But how exactly did the Kaws live prior to this time? Let's look at some of the older ways and examine how they impacted the lives of tribal members on a day-to-day basis.

### ***What is the traditional structure of the tribe?***

It is important to note at this point that before modern times, the tribe's primary means of transmission of important information down through the generations was **oral** instead of **literary**. In other words, the older generations passed things on *by word of mouth* to the younger generations. For this reason, there are no written records of the traditional ways of life of Kanza tribal members prior to the arrival of Europeans on this continent.

Because of this, written history of the tribe begins at a time when the Kanza were already in contact with European and American invaders. Consequently, the Kaws at this time were actually in a state of gross cultural transition between *their traditional ways* and the *ways they adopted* in order to contend with an increasingly foreign presence at home. Furthermore, it was these cultural outsiders who documented the tribal affairs. So, not only is most information from this period biased in one way or other toward European or American invaders, it actually deals more with *Kanza cultural adaptation* than *Kanza culture in general*.

One of the most noteworthy features of this adaptive period is the tribe's shift from a semi-nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary or stationary lifestyle. Prior to contact with the European and Americans, the Kaws were very mobile. The tribe as a whole was often moving in several different directions within its own area of influence, making and breaking camps, following herds, and defending its borders. After contact, the tribe was squeezed into smaller and smaller corners of its homeland, and forced to settle more or less in a few places.

This lifestyle changeover had a radical effect on the tribe, and led to the forced dissolution of many important cultural institutions of the tribe. For instance, the Americans wanted the western tribes to adopt agriculture as a primary source of food because it required much less land than hunting—land which could then be developed for American interests. In a rapidly shrinking world, and with diminished prospects for following herds and hunting for food, the Kanza had to look for other means of sustenance. Agriculture was the logical alternative, and the adoption of agriculture ensured that the tribe would forever lose its relationship with the buffalo and ultimately the land.

Furthermore, as the tribe settled down, bands gave way to villages. Before then, the tribe existed as a number of mobile bands, which may be thought of as towns on the move. When agriculture became the main source of food, these bands were forced to stay put. This perhaps more than anything succeeded in breaking traditional social institutions within the tribe. To understand why, let's examine the band as a principle unit of Kanza identification.

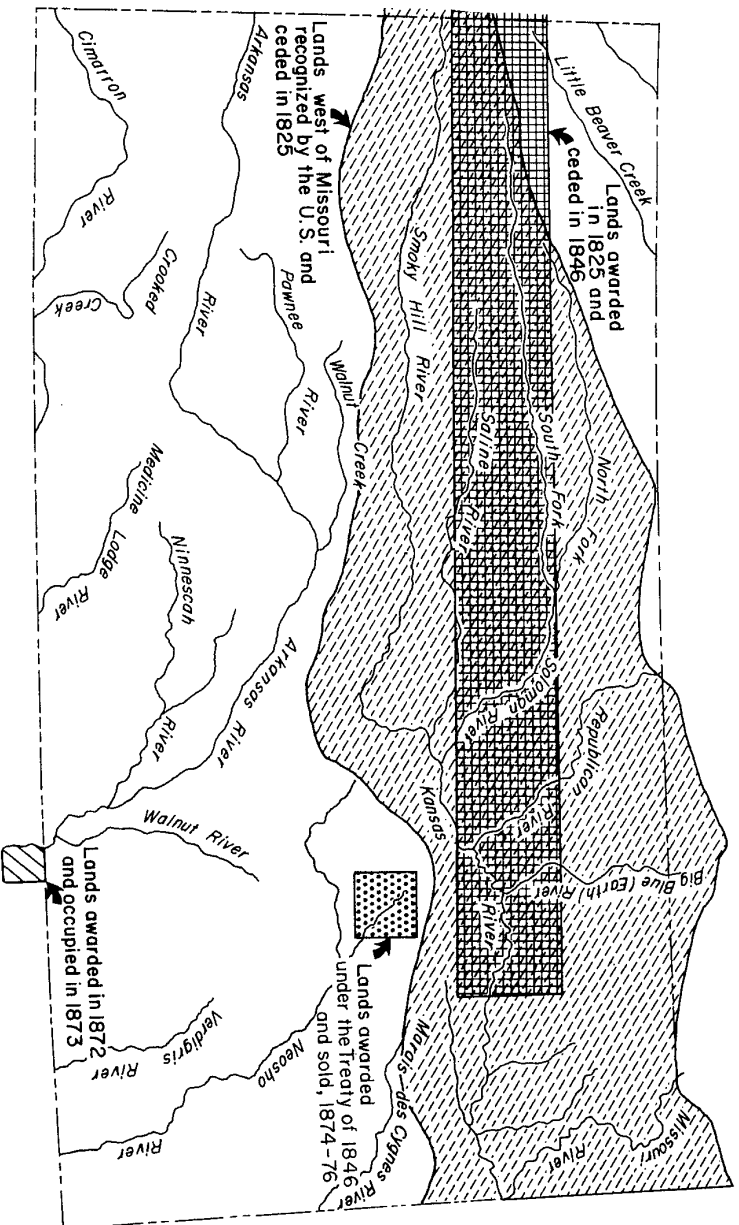
## *What is a band?*

Before contact with outside invaders, the Kanza had to be mobile to survive. Herd animals were the tribe's primary source of meat for food, hides and leather for shelter and clothing, and horn and bone for tools and equipment. The herds of buffalo, elk, and other game migrated with the seasons, and the tribe had to be able to follow them. For this reason, the tribe consisted of a number of more or less independent **bands** sharing a common culture, language, and group identification. Each of these bands was substantially smaller than the tribe as a whole, and could thus move more easily. Moreover, with several bands spread over the entirety of the Kanza sphere of influence, the tribe could more effectively defend its large borders from attack than could a single central unit.

Band members lived in temporary or semi-permanent dwellings that could be easily disassembled and reassembled in another location with a minimum of hardship. Personal possessions were limited by default to that which could be easily carried. In this way, a band was tantamount to a portable town. Since making or breaking camp was no great ordeal, bands were often on the go. Thus, at any one time there could be several such bands moving about in the Kanza territories. The bands kept in contact with one another to insure peaceable movement, to relay news, and to discuss important tribal issues, such as warfare, peacemaking, and large-scale hunts. In short, the bands were semi-autonomous camping units within the larger cultural framework of the tribe.

When a band arrived in a new location, it made camp in a very specific fashion. Camp was arranged in a circular formation, with a wide avenue open at one end, usually the east. Half of the tribe always camped to the left of this avenue, and half of the tribe always camped to the right. The people that camped to the left were called *Yáta* (meaning 'left side') **People**, and the people that camped to the right were called *Ishtónga* ('right side') **People**. Each of these two halves—or **moieties**, as anthropologists label *halves* of groups—were then further divided into roughly eight **clans**, or collections of several extended families. Thus, there were approximately sixteen clans in the camping circle of a Kanza

## SHRINKAGE OF KANZA LAND HOLDINGS



To say that the Kanza once occupied much of what is now Kansas does no justice to the sheer size of their former land holdings. In fact, most of the tribal lands in Kansas were only used for hunting. The rest of the tribe's territory spread well into Colorado, Nebraska, and Missouri, and even penetrated deep into Iowa. Illustration from *The Kanza Indians*, by William E. Uman. Copyright © 1971 by the University of Oklahoma Press. Reprinted by permission.



band, half of which were *Yáta* clans, and half of which were *Ishtóngá* clans.

At one time there were seven bands, corresponding to the seven stars of the constellation Ursa Major, the Big Dipper, called *Wábaha Khe*. Each of these bands was composed of the roughly sixteen clans. As a testimony to the degree of cultural degradation during the settlement period, there were only three proper bands just prior to relocation to Indian Territory. Nómpewaye (Inspires Fear) led the Creek Band, *Gaxóli*<sup>n</sup>. Alink'áwaho (Allegawahu) led the Yellow Cut-Bank Band, *Mo'házoli*<sup>n</sup>. And Washánga (Washungah) led *Píkiu*, the Picayune or Nickel Band, named after the French coin. Furthermore, White Plume led a mixed-blood band. By this time, however, the bands had become little more than tiny villages.

### *What is a clan?*

At the heart of a traditional Kaw's sense of self-identity was the notion of family. This family identity was quite different from that of the modern nuclear family model. Kanza notions of family played out within a rather involved kinship system. In this system no distinctions were made between some of one's cousins and one's siblings, others of one's cousins and one's grandparents (or even children), or some of one's nephews or nieces and one's children. In spite of this seemingly glossed-over approach to extended relation, there were entirely separate words for all of one's elder and younger siblings, and a hierarchy of words for one's children depending on gender and the order of their birth. Surely, it was quite difficult for many outsiders to fully realize just *how* two Kaws may have been related!

From our modern perspective, these family groups were very large, and included a closeness of certain extended relationships that would be hard for many of us today even to comprehend. Thus, every Kaw was considered to be part of a very large kinship group. Often, as many as five of these extended families lived together in the same lodge. The clan consisted of several of these family groups all living and working as one social unit.

The clan structure had strong implications, especially in the area of marriage. When two Kaws married, they had to be from

two entirely different clans, most preferably from opposite sides of the circle. All children were said to belong to their father's clan, but not their mother's clan (a practice called **patrilineality**). Thus, family members on one's father's side were held in a somewhat different regard than maternal family members. Not only were the former actual blood relations, they were also fellow clan members. Incidentally, the term *clan* is usually reserved for matrilineal kinship structures, while **gens** is used for patrilineal kinship. However, due to the familiarity of *clan*, we will use it consistently throughout this work.

Each clan was associated with a traditional ritual theme, social responsibility, or taboo. This association is apparent in the name of the clan. For instance, one clan associated itself with the elk, or *ópha<sup>n</sup>*, as it was termed in the Kanza language. The clan was known as *Ópha<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga*, meaning 'Elk People,' or simply Elk Clan.

The clans were very exclusive social organizations, inasmuch as one clan had certain features not shared by any other clan. Each clan had its own set of personal names for its members, including those that were given to children according to the order of birth within the family. Each clan had a specific ancestor and origin story, both of which set them apart from the rest. Furthermore, each clan had its own sacred bundle.

Often the clan had a specific task or role within the tribe. For example, *Ta Nikashinga*, the 'Deer People,' were tasked with being messengers and camp criers. Sometimes there were certain restrictions placed on members of particular clans. For instance, members of *Waná<sup>n</sup>ye Nikashinga* ('Ghost People') were not permitted to visit the homes of people who were ill or people who were recovering from serious illness or wounds. As their clan role within the tribe involved ceremonies for the recently deceased, it was thought that their presence at the bedside of a sick or wounded loved one could hasten death.

Most clans were further divided into two **subclans**. Unfortunately the names of many of these have been lost, and the known subclans are frequently known by more than one name. For instance, *Ta Nikashinga*, 'Deer People,' included two different subclans. The first of these was known as simply *Táxçi*, 'Real Deer.' However, the second subclan was known by three different

names, *Ta Yačházhí*, 'Eats No Deer,' *Ta Ts'éye*, 'Kills Deer,' and *Wajúta Ts'éye*, 'Kills Animals.' As can be seen from the names, these groups often had more specific tasks, restrictions, or roles than the clan as a whole. The specificity of the subclan unit often inspired a great degree of individual and family identity. Because of this, some tribal members would have considered themselves members of subclans first and foremost.

### ***How were the clans traditionally arranged?***

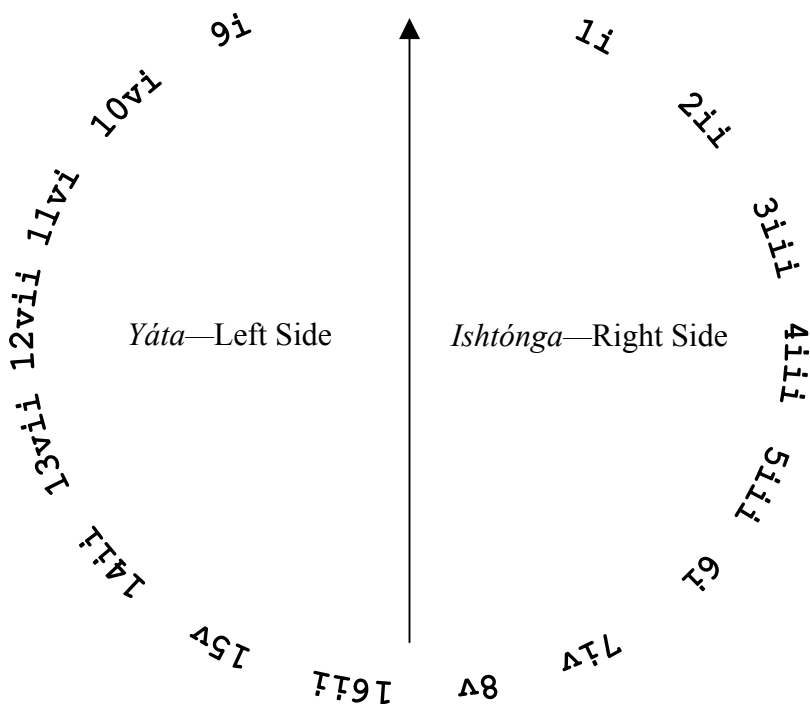
The clans were arranged in a complex fashion. Clans, including their various subclans, were thought of in terms of their location in the camping circle of the band. Of course, this arrangement necessarily implied membership to a particular moiety, either *Yáta* or *Ishtóngá* ('left-side' or 'right-side') depending on which side of the avenue the clans camped in the circle.

Furthermore, each clan was a member of one of seven slightly larger groups called *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>*, meaning 'those who sing together.' These singing groups usually included two to three clans situated at different points all along the circle, even on opposite sides of the avenue. One *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* included only one clan, *Ke K'in Nikashinga*, 'Turtle Carrier People.' The people considered the various clans within a singing group to be distantly related, and so these grouped clans were closely aligned with one another.

In essence, all these levels of social structure played a large part in a tribal member—especially a male—having a particularly wide scope of personal identification. He was first a member of a family, which was a member of a subclan, which belonged to a clan, which was part of both a particular *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* and one of the two moieties, which were the established divisions of a band, which was a semi-autonomous unit belonging to the tribe as a whole. Furthermore, the tribe was closely associated with the land through which it traveled and hunted.

This is why the settlement period of the tribe was so culturally devastating. Not only did the tribe have to adapt to a whole new way of life in terms of mobility and sustenance, but it also had to abandon the camping circle tradition. Once this important social institution was lost, the other levels of

# CAMPING CIRCLE DIAGRAM



## KANZA CAMPING CIRCLE

A camp was set up with two distinct halves, the *Ishtónga* and the *Yáta*, or Right Side and Left Side, respectively. The sixteen clans oriented themselves in the camp according to the chart at left. The seven *Wáyo<sup>m</sup>da* groups, meaning “those who sing together” (denoted by small Roman numerals), consisted of a number of clans that associated themselves with one another. Note that several of the *Wáyo<sup>m</sup>da* are situated such that some members are *Ishtónga* people and some are *Yáta* people.

### ISHTÓNGA (Right Side)

- 1 *Ma<sup>y</sup>yinka*—Earth
- 2 *Ta*—Deer
- 3 *Pánka*—Ponca
- 4 *Kaá<sup>z</sup>e*—Kanza
- 5 *Wasábe*—Black Bear
- 6 *Waná<sup>g</sup>e*—Ghost
- 7 *Ke K<sup>i</sup>n*—Turtle Carrier
- 8 *Mink<sup>i</sup>n*—Sun Carrier

### YÁTA (Left Side)

- 9 *Opha<sup>n</sup>*—Elk
- 10 *Xuyá*—(White) Eagle
- 11 *Ha<sup>n</sup>*—Night
- 12 *Íba<sup>h</sup>e*—Holds the Firebrand to the Sacred Pipes
- 13 *Hánga Tángá*—Black Eagle
- 14 *Čedóngá*—Buffalo (Bull)
- 15 *Čízhó Washtáge*—(Čízhó) Peacemaker
- 16 *Lo*—Thunder (Being)

identification—including the connection to the land from which they were forcibly removed—were jeopardized, and ultimately whittled away piece by piece. This insidious cultural degradation in conjunction with intermarriage, disease, constant external pressure to assimilate to American society at large, and a wide range of other factors (some of which were internal) led the tribe headlong into the saddest period in its existence.

This is what the present-day Kaws have had to overcome. It has taken perseverance, hard work, and fierce determination for the tribe to survive. And the tribe has accomplished so much more than merely survival—they *have succeeded*. However, despite all the achievements of the Kaw Nation these days, some tribal members may not be fully aware of this rich heritage of culture and tradition. So let's look even deeper, down into the very fabric of the clans themselves for the important truths they contain.

## ***What are the clans?***

### ***Introduction to the Material***

Before we get started, it is imperative to reiterate that there is some dispute about the number and names of the clans. But this should not pose too great a problem. The number of clans was most likely in a state of flux just prior to the settlement period. This is an attested fact in some of the other Dhegiha tribes, as well, so it is really not too big an issue. Furthermore, the clans and subclans may have been known by several names, but this would not have been a point of consternation within the cultural framework of the time in which the clan system was actively practiced. We need not delve deeper than our modern world to see similar examples. The Republican Party is also called the GOP, people from Indiana are often called Hoosiers, our country is known as the U.S., USA, America, etc. Within the context of the clan system the different names would not have posed a problem.

The clan names really only become confusing upon their rendering into the English language. Many of the translations provided in the source documentation are very good, but some are fairly hard to follow. A few may just be bad. For instance, *Íbačhe Nikashinga*, is translated 'Holds the Firebrand to the Sacred Pipes People.' This is more a description of a traditional role of the clan than an actual translation of the word *íbačhe*. Although this

word's direct translation has been lost, it may have something to do with stoking or tending a fire, or simply refer to a coming together. At any rate, the name only relates to firebrands and Sacred Pipes within the original cultural context. The important thing to remember is that the English translation is not the real issue. *These are Kanza clans; they were not originally known by English names.* The translations can help, but they can seem somewhat artificial at times.

### ***Source Documentation***

Though the sources of the material presented herein are varied and numerous, preference has been given to information specifically pertinent to the Kanza tribe whenever possible. There are three principal sources for this kind of material. The first, and most organized, is the account of James Owen Dorsey, an American missionary and ethnographer in the plains in the mid to late nineteenth century. He dealt extensively with the Dhegiha tribes, but worked a great deal with the Siouan peoples in general as well as other unrelated Native American peoples. His corpus of work is as voluminous as it is comprehensive, and most if not all of his Kanza documentation is generally considered to be the research standard. The moieties and *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* groupings below come exclusively from Dorsey, as do the individual clan descriptions.

The second is the sizable body of work of Francis La Flesche and his perennial colleague and adopted Anglo mother, the pioneering ethnographer Alice C. Fletcher. La Flesche was an Omaha who led a very interesting life. From his childhood in a boarding school to his adult years as an “inside” ethnographer, La Flesche earned his special place in history and wrote many books along the way. His works on Omaha and Osage language, culture, and tradition are of great interest. There is some Kanza material among the volumes of Dhegiha information collected by either or both members of this unique duo.

Finally, two modern university professors deserve special recognition for their contributions to the growing body of Kanza material. Wichita State University Professor William E. Unrau is the author of several books on Native American history and culture—including three substantial volumes on the Kanza. His work is very well researched and his bibliographical notes are

among the most comprehensive available. The work of Dr. Robert L. Rankin, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Kansas, is also of particular merit. His tireless efforts to preserve and document the Kanza language speak for themselves. Without his body of work, this book could not have been written.

Several secondary sources of Kanza material have also been utilized in the compilation of this book. Chief among these are the personal accounts of a number of modern tribal members. Some of the writings of Alanson Skinner were also of value. In addition, The Kansas State Historical Society also maintains much relevant Kanza information, as do many, many others. Each of these is very useful and important in its own way. These sources were secondary only for the purpose of drafting this particular text, and should not be thought of as second-class sources of important Kanza material.

On the occasions when Kanza material was lacking or when more cultural perspective was called for, we turned to the comparison of closely related tribes. Three authors were particularly helpful in this area. Again, both Dorsey and the team of Fletcher/La Flesche have been very useful. But we also appreciated the work of Louis F. Burns on the Osage band and clan structures. None of the Kanza material presented in this document was taken from these non-Kanza works, but the perspective and arrangements were compared for more insight and cultural context.

### ***The Clans***

Due to the complexity of the arrangement of the clans, we will first list them by the two most immediate categories, by moiety and by *wáyo<sup>m</sup>ni<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>*. We will then discuss them at length one by one. Attempts have been made to explain any discrepancies between sources. In the list immediately below, clans mentioned by both Dorsey and Fletcher/La Flesche will be left unmarked. Clans mentioned by Dorsey but not by Fletcher/La Flesche will receive an asterisk (\*). Clans given different names by Dorsey and Fletcher/La Flesche will receive a pound (#). There are two clans mentioned by both the Fletcher/La Flesche team and Skinner but not by Dorsey. We will speak more about these two clans later. On the charts below, the word ***Nikashinga***, (variant form ***Onikashinga***,) meaning ‘Man, Person, People, or Clan,’ has

been omitted from the clan names for the sake of text space. Spellings of Kanza clan names appear in the present orthography, regardless of systems used by other authors.

## KANZA CLANS BY MOIETY

### Ishtónga—Right Side

*Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka*—Earth  
*Ta<sup>#</sup>*—Deer  
*Pánka*—Ponca  
*Kaá<sup>n</sup>ze*—Kanza  
*Wasábe<sup>\*</sup>*—Black Bear  
*Waná<sup>n</sup>ye<sup>\*</sup>*—Ghost  
*Ke K'í<sup>n</sup>\**—Turtle Carrier  
*Mínk'í<sup>n</sup>\**—Sun Carrier

### Yáta—Left Side

*Ópha<sup>n</sup>*—Elk  
*Xuyá<sup>\*</sup>*—(White) Eagle  
*Ha<sup>n</sup>*—Night  
*Íbačhe<sup>#</sup>*—Holds the Firebrand...  
*Hánga Tángá*—Black Eagle  
*Čedóngá*—Buffalo (Bull)  
*Čízho Washtáge*—(Čízho) Peacemaker  
*Lo<sup>\*</sup>*—Thunder (Being)

\* Dorsey lists the above sixteen clans. Fletcher and La Flesche list only twelve, including ten of those above and two more, *Wazhínga* and *Če*, which we will discuss later.

# Fletcher and La Flesche list *Ta* as *Wazházhe* and *Íbačhe* as *Hánga Zhínga*, both of which Dorsey lists as alternate names of these clans.

## KANZA CLANS BY *WÁYO<sup>N</sup>MI<sup>N</sup>DA<sup>N</sup>*

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> i*

*Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka*—Earth  
*Waná<sup>n</sup>ye*—Ghost  
*Ópha<sup>n</sup>*—Elk

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> iv*

*Ke K'í<sup>n</sup>*—Turtle Carrier

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> ii*

*Ta*—Deer  
*Čedóngá*—Buffalo (Bull)  
*Lo*—Thunder (Being)

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> v*

*Mínk'í<sup>n</sup>*—Sun Carrier  
*Čízho Washtáge*—(Čízho) Peacemaker

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> vi*

*Xuyá*—(White) Eagle  
*Ha<sup>n</sup>*—Night

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> iii*

*Pánka*—Ponca  
*Kaá<sup>n</sup>ze*—Kanza  
*Wasábe*—Black Bear

### *Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup> vii*

*Íbačhe*—Holds the Firebrand...  
*Hánga Tángá*—Black Eagle

## *The Clan Descriptions*

For ease of comparison to the camping circle diagram, the clan descriptions are numbered from 1—16 in terms of their position in the circle. Numbers 1—8 are *Ishtónga* clans and 9—16 are *Yáta* clans. Furthermore, they are numbered i—vii corresponding to the seven *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* singing groups. Each clan





Maudie McCauley Rowe

Clara Mehojah Littlewalker

Ralph Pepper

## THE LAST KANZA SPEAKERS

*By the mid to late 1970's, there remained only a handful of people who could still fluently speak the Kanza language. These remarkable individuals included Maudie Rowe, Clara Littlewalker, and Ralph Pepper (all three shown above), as well as about three others. It was during this time that a linguistics professor from the University of Kansas arrived in Kay County. Dr. Robert L. Rankin tirelessly worked with several of these last speakers in an effort to preserve the language. He worked most closely with Maudie Rowe. The two met as often as possible for several years, going over older texts, talking and laughing, and sharing a substantial body of information on the Kanza language. Hours and hours of these interviews and conversations were recorded for the sake of preservation and later analysis. These tapes make possible continued study of the language by anyone who so desires. Even now, more than 20 years after the deaths of the last fluent speakers of Kanza, Dr. Rankin's work on the structure and use of the language goes on. The recordings are so much more than simple documentation; they are a precious gift to future generations of Kaws.*

is listed by its Kanza name with some English translation(s) provided. Kanza words are written in *italics*, and translations are written in single quotes (''). Beneath the clan name is a short description, including some cultural information and a list of possible subclans. Alternate names for clan and subclan are listed beneath the first.

(1i) **Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka Nikashinga, 'Earth People'**  
**also Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka Gáxe, 'Earth Maker(s)\*' or**  
**'Earth-Lodge Maker(s)\*'**

\* No distinction is made between singular and plural nouns in Kanza.

This clan was responsible for announcing the breaking of camp before moves, and was allowed to camp first at the new location. As a trade off, they were last in the tribe to eat roasted corn. As the earth lodge was so important to the plains lifestyle, it is not surprising that there are clans of the same name in the Osage, Omaha, and Quapaw tribes.

The Earth Clan was closely associated with *Ópha<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga*, 'Elk People.' Both are members of the same singing group. The two clans sit on opposite sides of the avenue at the entry into the camp. There is some comparative evidence of the linking of these two clans in the Osage tradition, as well. In an Osage creation myth, the elk is euphemized as 'Big Earth Maker.' In addition, both clans are members of the same subdivision, the Osage equivalent to the Kanza *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>*.

Also included in the singing group with Earth People and Elk People is *Waná<sup>n</sup>ye Nikashinga*, 'Ghost People.'

Subclans:

- A. Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka Tánga, 'Large Earth'
- B. Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka Zhínga, 'Small Earth'

(2ii) **Ta Nikashinga, 'Deer People'**  
**also Wazházhe, 'Osage'**

This clan was responsible for relaying messages and heralding news. At different times there were two such herald officials, a camp crier called *wajípha<sup>n</sup>yi<sup>n</sup>*, and later a spokesperson or speaker called *íekíye*. While the former was a hereditary title, passed primarily through the Deer Clan, this was not always the

case with the latter. In fact, of the first two *iekiye*, one was of the *Kaá'ze Nikashinga*, or Kanza Clan. Deer Clan members were also part of the group responsible for deciding the band's moves to new locations, along with the Earth People and the Buffalo People.

This clan is alternately called Osage, the name of a related tribe. In fact, there are three clans known by the names of Dhegiha tribes—Osage, Ponca, and Kanza. But this is not a unique feature of the Kanza clan system. These clans or their names appear in some form or another among most of the five Dhegiha tribes. It has been theorized that these names are very old, and belong to a tradition dating back to before the five separated. Perhaps the names refer to early divisions of the older pre-separation group.

The Deer or Osage Clan is in the same singing group as *Mink'in Nikashinga*, 'Sun Carrier People' and *Čedónga Nikashinga*, 'Buffalo (Bull) People.'

Subclans:

A. *Táxči*, 'Real Deer'

B. *Ta Yačházhi*, 'Eats no Deer'

also *Ta Ts'éye*, 'Kills Deer'

also *Wajúta Ts'éye*, 'Kills Animals'

### (3iii) ***Pánka* (or *Pónka*) *Nikashinga*, 'Ponca People'**

Like Osage and Kanza, this clan is named after a tribe of the Dhegiha group. It is also found as a clan among the Ponca, and the Osage tribes. The corresponding clan in the Osage tradition is called Ponca Peacemakers. There is a strong possibility that this clan is or once was a peacemaking clan among the Kanza, as well.

There is one established Kanza peacemaking clan, *Čízho Washtáge Nikashinga*, 'Čízho Peacemaker People.' The untranslated term *Čízho* refers to one of the moieties in the Osage tribe (the Osage moieties are *hcízo* and *hąka*, rendered as *Čízho* and *Hąga* in Kaw), though it seems not to refer to any known institution of the Kanza tribe other than the Peacemaker Clan. However, *Hąga* does show up in three names of Kanza clans. It also shows up in the name of one of the Omaha moieties.

It could be that the general 'right-side' and 'left-side' moiety terms *Ishtónga* and *Yáta* may once have been *Čízho* and *Hąga*. The fact that there is a *Čízho* peacemaking clan would lead one to believe there was once a peacemaking clan on the other

side of the avenue, as well. If this is true, there is a strong possibility that the Ponca People were the peacemaker clan on the side opposite the *Čízho Washtáge Nikashinga*. In other words, the Ponca People may once have been the designated *Hánga* peacemaker clan, if one did in fact exist.

Ponca People are in the same *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* as *Kaá<sup>n</sup>ze Nikashinga*, ‘Kanza People,’ and *Wasábe Nikashinga*, ‘Black Bear People.’ Note that two of the three clans bearing the names of Dhegiha tribes are members of the same singing group.

Subclans:

A. *Pank Onikashinga*, ‘Ponca People’

This subclan is spelled differently than the clan in the Dorsey account, yet the translations would be roughly the same. This could have been a misprint, or it could be that the clan and the subclan simply have an identical or similar name.

B. *Xo<sup>n</sup>jála<sup>n</sup>*, ‘Wear Red Cedar Fronds on Their Heads’

The translated name of this subclan can be somewhat misleading. The Kanza word for cedar (or red cedar) is *xó<sup>n</sup>je*, and *ála<sup>n</sup>* refers to putting something on something else. Both combine to form one word, *xo<sup>n</sup>jála<sup>n</sup>*, a straight translation of which simply amounts to putting cedar on something. This is one of the many occasions in which the cultural context must be known for the word to make sense.

(4iii) *Kaá<sup>n</sup>ze Nikashinga*, ‘Kanza People’

also *Číhashi<sup>n</sup>*, ‘Lodge in the Rear (of the Camp)  
or ‘Last Lodge’

This clan bears the same name of the tribe. Furthermore, not only are Kanza clans found among the Omaha and Osage, but the dialectical equivalent of the alternate clan name *Číhashi<sup>n</sup>* is actually the name of a subdivision or kinship group among the Osage—but not the one that contains the Kanza Clan! Such a degree of intertribal usage would tend to make one think that the word *kaá<sup>n</sup>ze* or its equivalent is very old indeed. This is true of the words *pánka* and *wazházhe*, as well.

The popular thinking is that the word *kaá<sup>n</sup>ze* has something to do with the wind, more specifically with the south wind.

Unfortunately, neither ‘wind’ nor ‘south wind’ is a particularly good translation of the word *kaá<sup>n</sup>ze*. Instead, it is more likely to assume that the wind reference is only especially valid within the original cultural context of the usage. It is important also to note that both ‘wind’ and ‘south wind’ are represented by the relatively undisputed Kanza words *táje* and *ák’a*, respectively.

The lodges for the Kanza Clan are located on one of the cardinal directions of the camping circle of a band, positioned most generally due south. This is most likely why the clan is known as living in the ‘last lodges,’ or the ‘lodges in the rear’ of the camp.

Kanza Clan is in the same *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* as the Ponca Clan and *Wasábe Nikashinga*, ‘Black Bear People.’

Subclans:

A. *Táje Onikashinga*, ‘Wind People’

also *Ák’a Onikashinga*, ‘South-Wind People’

also *Číhashi<sup>n</sup>xči*, ‘Real *Číhashi<sup>n</sup>*,’ or ‘Camp Behind All’

Notice that while the first subclan name reiterates the connection to the wind in general, the second specifically relates to the south wind. The different translations of the third arise from the use of the suffix —*xči*, meaning ‘real, principal.’ As *číhashi<sup>n</sup>* refers to the last lodge, a ‘real *číhashi<sup>n</sup>*’ would camp behind the entire tribe.

B. *Táje Zhínga*, ‘Small Wind’

also *Ma<sup>n</sup>náhije*, ‘Makes a Breeze near the Ground’

Note again the connection to the wind. Dorsey also mentions a *wawéshkaje*, or ‘conjurer’ subclan for Kanza People, but provides no further information.

### (5iii) *Wasábe Nikashinga*, ‘Black Bear People’

There are two well-known words for bears in Kanza. *Wasábe* literally means ‘something black.’ It is opposed to *mi<sup>n</sup>čho*, specifically referring to grizzly bears or any lightly colored—even white—bears of greater size.

This clan name, or a derivative thereof, appears in all of the Dhegiha tribes. It is probably a very old social division. Among

the Omaha, members of the black bear-oriented subclan of the tribe gathered with those of another clan at ceremonies involving the first thunder of springtime. The Osage members of the Black Bear Keepers kept a war lodge with members of another clan. Members of the Black Bear Clan within the Ponca tribe were closely associated with both thunder and war. Black Bear People in the Kanza tribe had a special privilege on the warpath involving the touching of fallen enemies.

The Black Bear Clan is part of the same *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* as the Ponca People and the Kanza People. It is the only clan in this group not named after a tribe.

Subclans:

- A. *Wasábexči*, ‘Real Black Bear’  
also *Saká<sup>n</sup> Wayáche*, ‘Eats Raw Food’
- B. *Sí<sup>n</sup>jale*, ‘Wears Tails (Locks of Hair) on the Head’

This subclan is wholly separate from the Black Bear People within the Osage tribe, to the point of the two even being part of different subdivisions or kinship groups.

**(6i) Waná<sup>nye</sup> Nikashinga, ‘Ghost People’**

This clan was once associated with rituals involving the recently deceased. Members generally prepared a meal for the grieving family, and could lead the burial procession. Their services often required the gift of a horse. Ironically, in the most detailed account of a Kanza mourning ceremony—which occurred after removal to Indian Territory—there were no Ghost People present for the any of the documented rituals. It could be that the clan’s role in the lengthy and multifaceted ceremony was simply not explained. Furthermore, some tribal members considered excessive dealings with the Ghost Clan to be bad luck (especially if there were any sick or injured persons within the household). It could be that the role of the Ghost Clan was simply not mentioned.

This clan was part of the same singing group as the Earth Clan and the Elk Clan. If any subclans were associated with the Ghost Clan, they were never recorded.

**(7iv) Ke K’i<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga, ‘Carries a Turtle on His Back People’ or ‘Carries Turtle’ or ‘Turtle Carrier’**

Turtle groups are found in the Quapaw, Omaha, and Osage traditions, as well. This clan is unique in that it is the only member of its singing group. If there were any subclans associated with this clan, they were never recorded.

(8v) **Mink'i<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga, 'Carries the Sun on His Back People,' 'Carries Sun' or 'Sun Carrier'**

The words for 'sun,' and 'moon,' are the same in Kanza, *mí'omba* or *míomba*, often shortened to just *mí<sup>n</sup>* or *mi*. This contraction happens to be the same word for 'blanket' as well as the indefinite singular article equivalent to the English 'a (an).' There is a possible connection here to an idiom found in the Black Shoulder Clan among the Omahas. The term 'black shoulder' is said to be indicative of the wooly shoulder of the buffalo bull, an area from where blankets were derived. It may be that the term *mí'k'i<sup>n</sup>* is not 'carries the sun on his back' but possibly 'carries a blanket on his back,' which would be referential to the buffalo bull. This is reinforced by the fact clan was occasionally known by the name Buffalo Hide Carriers. There are related clan and/or subclan names found among the Osage and the Quapaw.

*Minki<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga* is a member of the same singing group as the *Čízho Washtáge Nikashinga*, 'Čízho Peacemaker Clan.' Curiously, these are alternate names of the same clan in the Osage tradition. No subclans of the Kanza Sun Carrier Clan were recorded.

(9i) **Ópha<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga, 'Elk People'**

The Elk People and the Earth (Maker) People sat opposite one another at the entrance to the camping circle. The historical bond between these two clans is great (see above), and they are part of the same singing group, along with Ghost Clan.

Subclans:

A. *Ópha<sup>n</sup>xči*, 'Real Elk'

also *Má<sup>n</sup>sa<sup>n</sup>ha*, referring to the color of the elk's fur.

B. *Sá<sup>n</sup>hange*, meaning unknown.

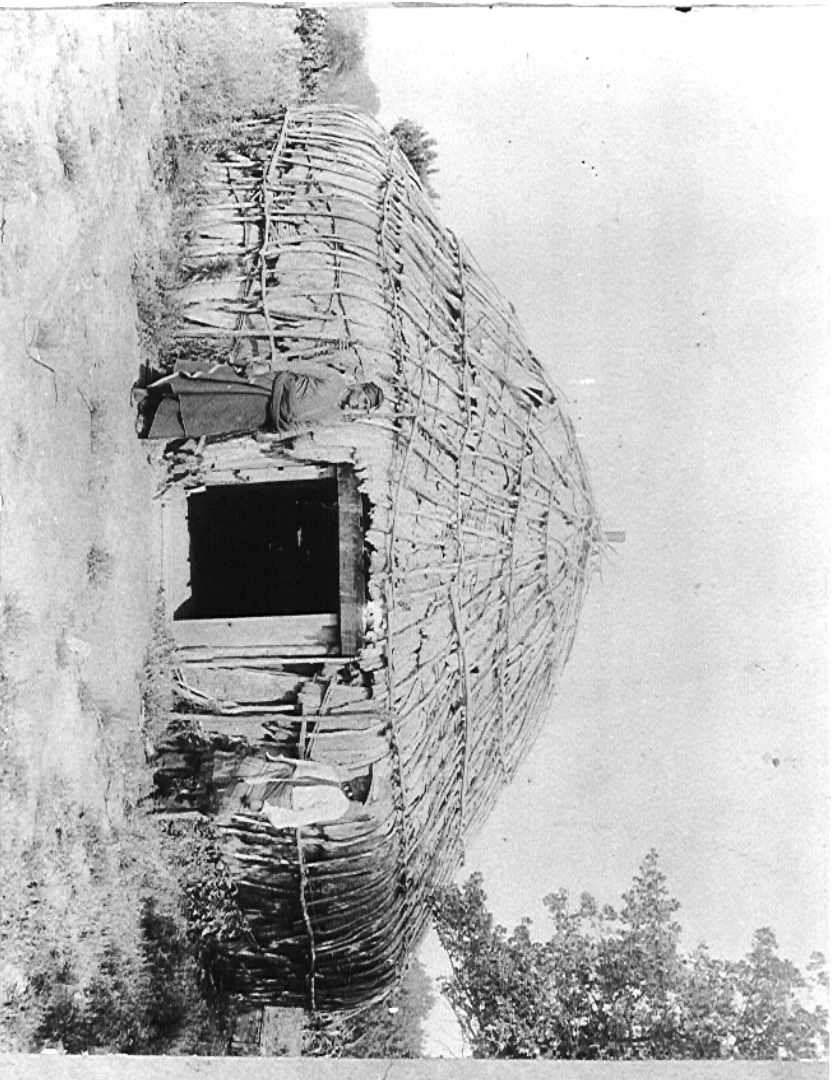
(10vi) **Xuyá Onikashinga, '(White) Eagle People'**

This is one of two Kanza clans associated with the eagle. Although it is generally known as White Eagle People to

## THE EARTH LODGE

The earth lodge (or bark house) was one of the principal dwellings of the Kanza. These semi-permanent circular structures were constructed using a sturdy timber skeleton supporting layers of thatching, sod, and bark. The dirt floors were tamped down, soaked, and then burned dry. This created a very hard surface that could be swept clean. Some of these homes were large enough to house several families. Shown here are Nompewaye (inspires Fear), chief of the Gaxólin<sup>1</sup> Band, and his wife Pah-Kah-Shu-Tsa (meaning unknown) in front of their lodge near the former site of Washunga, Oklahoma, several years prior to statehood. Photo courtesy of National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian

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distinguish it from *Hánga Tánga Nikashinga*, ‘Black Eagle People,’ the word *xuyá* is generally taken to mean ‘golden eagle’ or simply ‘eagle.’ There is a clan bearing a similar name found among the Osages. The Eagle Clan shares a *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* with *Ha<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga*, ‘Night People.’

Subclans:

- A. *Húsada*, ‘Legs Stretched Out Stiff’  
also *Xuyá Oníkashinga*, ‘White Eagle People’

A subclan similar to *Húsada* exists within the Ponca tradition. The word is said to refer both to legs outstretched while running and the stiffened legs of a dead animal.

The words *Nikashinga* and *Oníkashinga* are both found in the names of clans and subclans. At first glance, the former resembles ‘little man’ or ‘little one,’ but is actually used to mean ‘man,’ ‘person,’ ‘people,’ or even ‘clan.’ The latter is indicative of that which makes a group of people into a clan. In other words, the white eagle is the thing that makes this group of people into a bona fide clan or subclan.

- B. *Wabí<sup>n</sup> Izhóphe*, ‘Wade in Blood’  
also *Wabí<sup>n</sup> Oníkashinga*, ‘Blood People’

### (11vi) *Ha<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga*, ‘Night People’

Night Clans are found in both the Kanza and Osage traditions. From the names of the subclans in the two tribes, it can be seen that this clan has a strong connection to the stars, perhaps most importantly with *Mikák’e Tánga*, the ‘Large Star.’ The Large Star—actually the planet Venus—was traditionally thought of as a *Waká<sup>n</sup>da*, or deity. In Kanza mourning and war ceremonies involving the use of the Prayer Chart, Venus and its ceremonial songs are symbolized as a circle with a cross inside it ⊕.

The Night People are part of the same *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* as the White Eagle People.

Subclans:

- A. *Ha<sup>n</sup> Nikashinga*, ‘Night People’  
B. *Dáka<sup>n</sup> Má<sup>n</sup>yi<sup>n</sup>*, ‘Walks Shining’ (Star People?)

The word *dáka<sup>n</sup>* refers to light. *Má<sup>n</sup>yi<sup>n</sup>* means ‘walk(ing),’ ‘he/she/it walks,’ or simply ‘walker.’ This

‘walking light’ is perhaps referential to the stars. Dorsey took this subclan name to be the Kanza equivalent of ‘Star People.’ There are such star clans or subclans among most of the Dhegiha tribes.

As a curious aside, in the Osage Night Clan, there is a birth name referring to walking at night, *Hámaqđi* (compare to Kanza *Ha<sup>n</sup> Má<sup>n</sup>yí<sup>n</sup>*), from which the town of Hominy, Oklahoma, takes its name. This name is given to the first-born son within an Osage Night Clan family. Little information exists on the Kanza birth-names, but it is possible that the same name or a similar one was used in the Kanza Night Clan.

(12vii) ***Íbačhe Níkashinga*, ‘Holds the Firebrand to Sacred Pipes People’**

also *Hánga Zhínga*, ‘Small *Hánga*’

This clan name is somewhat misleading. As mentioned above, the word *íbačhe* is not translated as ‘holds the firebrand to the sacred pipes,’ but probably relates to a coming together or a stoking of the fire. This clan is also known as *Hánga Zhínga*, a name appearing in all of the cognate tribes except the Ponca. A quick translation of this word can be given as ‘chicken hawk,’ but it means so much more than just that.

There are three instances of *hánga* as the name of a clan. Besides this one, there is *Hánga Tánga* and its alternate name *Hánga Otána<sup>n</sup>je*, meaning ‘Large *Hánga*’ and ‘Separate *Hánga*,’ respectively. These same distinctions are present in the Osage clan structure, too. But what does this word mean? It has been theorized that at one time the various Dhegiha tribes called themselves Honga or some derivative thereof. It is possible that the name of the original group that spawned the Dhegiha tribes was called Honga. Furthermore, the word can mean ‘first,’ ‘leader,’ or ‘world,’ and can also refer to eagles. In this case, *hánga zhínga* most immediately refers to a smaller bird resembling an eagle, such as the chicken hawk, but clearly connotes the others, as well.

Both of the *Hánga* clans are part of the same singing group, and similar subdivisions exist in the Osage, Omaha, and Quapaw traditions.

Subclans:

- A. *Xuyégohinga*, Hawk that Has a Tail Like a ‘King Eagle’ or ‘Little One Like an Eagle.’

Again, the bird referenced here is most likely a chicken hawk.

- B. *Miká Oníkashinga*, ‘Raccoon People’  
also *Miká Xla Zhínga*, ‘Small Lean Raccoon’

**(13vii) Hánga Tánga Níkashinga, ‘Large Hánga People’ or ‘Black Eagle People’**

also *Hánga Otána<sup>n</sup>je*, ‘Hánga Apart from the Rest,’ or ‘Isolated (or Separate) Hánga’  
also *Ta Sírje Xáje*, ‘Stiff Deer Tail’

The word *hánga tánga* refers to a black mottled eagle with dark spots. Again, the word *hánga* means much more. Like the Kanza, the Osage and Omaha tribes are divided into clear moieties. In these other tribes, some derivative of the word *hánga* is used to refer to the moiety associated with the earth. The name of the other moiety is different in these two tribes, but has some relation to the sky in both instances. Among the Osage, the word is a cognate of the Kanza word *čízho*, found in the name of one of the clans. As was previously mentioned, it is quite possible that the names *Ishtónga* and *Yáta* were once *Čízho* and *Hánga*.

Both the members of the *Hánga wáyon<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* figure prominently in the latter day mourning ritual recorded by Dorsey. Both of these clans took their seat at the back of a specially constructed lodge in which elaborate ceremonies were conducted following the death of a tribesman. If there were any subclans, they were not recorded.

**(14ii) Čedónga Níkashinga, ‘Buffalo (Bull) People’**  
also *Si Tánga*, ‘Big Feet’

Though the word *čedónga* refers specifically to the bull buffalo, it can also be used to mean simply ‘buffalo.’ This has caused some confusion as to the possible existence of another clan, *Če Níkashinga*, ‘Buffalo People,’ discussed below. Due to the importance of the bison in the plains, it is no surprise that all of the Dhegiha tribes have clans associated in some way with the animal.

### **FIRST HUD HOME?**

*Government-built homes like this one near Council Grove, KS, were so small that they were used as livestock barns. Families opted to build traditional lodges on the property for their private dwellings instead! Photo courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.*



The term ‘Big Feet’ is most likely a euphemism referring again to the buffalo.

The Buffalo Bull People are part of the same singing group as the Deer or Osage People and *Lo Nikashinga*, ‘Thunder People.’

Subclans:

A. *Čedónga*, ‘Buffalo (With Dark Hair)’

B. *Yóxe*, ‘Reddish-Yellow Buffalo’

Both of the subclans refer to different varieties of bison. Though translations of the names are rendered in terms of color, the distinctions are more cultural than linguistic, as no word for ‘dark hair’ or ‘reddish-yellow’ is actually present in the Kanza equivalents. The word *yóxe* appears in Ponca as *núxe*, in Osage as *óóxe*, and Quapaw *ttúxe*. This word is often translated as ‘ice,’ presumably because of similarities in the two words arising in the cognate languages. In Kanza, it is easy to distinguish *ná<sup>n</sup>ye* (or *náye*), meaning ‘ice,’ from *yóxe*, meaning ‘reddish-yellow buffalo.’

**(15v) Čízho Washtáge Nikashinga, ‘Čízho Peacemaker People’ or ‘Peacemaker People’**

Dorsey believed this clan to be alternately called Red Hawk People, though he gave no translation of this form. Skinner translates the name as Never Do Wrong People. Still, the popular translation is Peacemaker People. As the name implies, this clan probably had much to do with peacemaking, an important activity among the Kanza. In fact, there were seven dedicated peacemaking chiefs of the tribe at any one time. Although there were fewer peace chiefs than the twelve dedicated war chiefs, the fact that so many great minds shared the responsibility of making and keeping the peace stands as a testament to its importance within the tribal worldview.

There is also a *Čízho* Peacemaker Clan among the Osages. The untranslated word *Čízho* is the probable name of one of the two Kanza moieties earlier in history. The Osage equivalent of this word is said to refer to the sky in contrast with the earth.

This clan is part of the same *wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>* as the Sun Carrier People. Interestingly, these are alternate names of the same clan in the Osage tradition. No subclan information was recorded.

**(16ii) Lo Nikashinga, ‘Thunder Being People’**  
**also *Ledá<sup>n</sup> Oníkašinga*, ‘Gray Hawk People’**

There is some confusion about the name of this clan, due in no small part to a lack of agreement of names and competition between forms of the word ‘thunder’ in Kanza. Let’s have a closer look. Dorsey lists the clan name as one word, *Loníkašinga*, and translates it as ‘Thunder-Being People.’ Skinner lists it as *Loníkašana Nikashinga*, translated as ‘Thunder People.’ Not only do the names differ, but also their translations. So what is the Kanza word for ‘thunder?’ ‘Thunder’ can be either *lo* or the slightly longer *lo hótá<sup>n</sup>*. As we shall see, this is just as tricky.

The word *lo* may be used in this instance simply for ‘thunder,’ making the name of the clan Thunder People in the *Lo Nikashinga*, example. But this seems to contradict Dorsey. A curious feature of the alternate ‘thunder’ word *lo hótá<sup>n</sup>* is that the *hótá<sup>n</sup>* component generally refers to the characteristic sound of something. For example, *shóhinga hótá<sup>n</sup>* (where *shóhinga* means ‘dog’) could be translated as ‘bark.’ *Lo hótá<sup>n</sup>* then may be indicative of the characteristic thundering sound of a ‘thunder-being’ simply called *lo*. In that case, the name *Lo Nikashinga* might be Thunder-Being People. Or perhaps the ‘thunder-being’ is called *Loníkašana*, as in the Skinner example. Whatever the case, it is clear that the name of the clan refers to thunder. However, at least one of the possible meanings may have deeper connotations of cultural understanding.

To complicate matters further, Skinner counts Thunder People and Gray Hawk People as two separate clans, a distinction Dorsey does not make. The clan is totally absent from Fletcher/La Flesche. Some tribal members know this clan by several other names, such as Weather, Lightning, Storm, or Big Cloud People.

This clan is part of the same singing group as the Deer Clan and the Buffalo Bull Clan. If subclans once existed, they were never recorded.

***Could other clans have existed?***

The simple answer is yes. The comparison of the Kanza clan system to those of the other Dhegiha tribes show that many of these clans exist across the board, while many are exclusively one

tribe's or another's. Clearly there is great flux within the Kanza clan structure, even historically. Thus, there is no way to *deny* the possibility of other clans. But due to the small number of reliable sources of information, there is no way to *confirm* their existence.

That said, several reports include one or two more clans, among these are *Wazhinga Nikashinga*, 'Bird People,' and *Če Nikashinga*, 'Buffalo People.' Both of these clans are attested in rituals and clans within other Dhegiha tribes, and both are very plausible additions to the clan structure. Although it would be great to confirm these testimonies, more helpful information is needed regarding the nature and existence of these groups, including their arrangement in the clan circle, connections to singing groups, clan tasks and responsibilities, possible taboos, names of various members, etc.

Remember that knowledge of the Kanza clan structure was passed by oral tradition and through voluntary practice, as was the custom in earlier times. Once tribal members no longer practiced certain traditions, fewer and fewer details of these were passed by word of mouth to younger generations. Furthermore, reliance on oral testimony also declined along with other cultural practices. Despite this fact, the oral tradition is responsible for preserving much of what could have been lost. In fact, all cultural features that can be remembered were preserved in this manner. Thus, the collective memory of the tribe is probably still the best record of all for such questions.

What makes collective memory so useful? Individual human minds are susceptible to suggestion and forgetfulness. Despite the best of intentions, memories can become distorted over time, especially if they are not reinforced. Thus, the oral record when removed from its cultural environment has at least the potential for yielding misleading or even incorrect information. This fallible quality of human nature can lead some to question the validity of relying on individual personal testimony. To counter this potentially negative quality of the individual, it is best to consider the collective memory of many individuals. That way, collective strengths can work to minimize individual weaknesses. This produces a much stronger overall oral record that can be trusted for the transmission of important information with few errors.

Again, written sources are very useful, but not without their downfalls. People not fully practicing the Kaw way of life were the ones who penned the few surviving written records. And as we have seen, these sources can be contradictory. Thus, most of our answers to questions like these must come from educated guesses and scattered eyewitness reports. Furthermore, comparison to related tribes can help, but cannot give us definitive answers. In the end, the best that can be done is to present as much information as possible and allow others to come to their own conclusions based on the information.

### *How do I pronounce these names?*

One of the surest ways to confuse a reader's pronunciation of unfamiliar words is to represent them in an alphabet that is neither **phonetic** nor **consistent**. *Phonetic* alphabets are used to reproduce the *speech sounds* used in the formation of words. For example, phonetic alphabets make clear distinctions between consonants that are formed in conjunction with a puff of air (called *aspiration*) and those formed without it. The Kanza language has both a 'k' sound with an aspiration, and one without an aspiration (written as 'k'). To preserve this distinction, it is probably best to represent these two different 'k' sounds as differently. Thus, the aspirated one is written as 'kh,' and the other is written as simply 'k.' This is a phonetic approach. With a *consistent* alphabet, a word looks the *same* each time it is written. This makes a word immediately recognizable upon subsequent readings. When using an inconsistent alphabet, the various non-standard spellings of a particular word can be difficult to identify as being representative of just one word. For instance, the word for the Kanza tribe has been written countless ways, from the somewhat identifiable *Kah* or *Kansies* to the almost ridiculous *Escanjaques*!

Despite a fairly rigid standardization of word spellings, the English alphabet as a whole is neither phonetic nor consistent. If proof of this claim is needed, try to count all the ways the 'ee' sound (as in 'bee') can be spelled in English. Here are a few: *e*, *ea*, *ee*, *ei*, *eo*, *ey*, *i*, *ie*, *oe*, *y*, etc. This shows inconsistency. Next, ask what function or role each letter in the above example is serving in order to produce the desired sound. This demonstrates a lack of phonetic representation. It is easy to see very quickly why





## THE LAST FULLBLOOD COUNCIL, 1916

### *BACK ROW:*

*Forrest Chouteau, A. R. Miller (Agent), Silas Conn, and Albert Taylor*

### *FRONT ROW:*

*Little Jim, Jim Pepper, Jesse Mehojah, Sr., and Roy Munroe*

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## THE LAST KANZA FULLBLOODS

*It is hard to imagine, but less than 80 years after this photograph was taken, the number of Kanza fullbloods had dwindled to just five. Of these, Edgar Pepper died in January of 1994, then Clyde G. Monroe in October of 1995. Jesse Mehojah, Jr., died less than three months later, followed by Johnnie Ray McCauley in February of 1997. In April of 2000, William A. Mehojah, Sr., passed away. He was the last fullblood Kaw.*

spellings of Kanza words should not be trusted to the English alphabet.

To remedy this situation, the Kaw Nation has devised an easy-to-learn alphabet that is both phonetic and consistent for the express purpose of reproducing Kanza words. Most of the letters of this alphabet are familiar to all English speakers, a group that includes the target audience for this publication. (Notice here that this book was written in English and not in Kaw). Careful study of the letters and the descriptions of their sounds will lead to fairly accurate pronunciation of the Kanza words used in this document. For the Kanza alphabet and rules on its usage see pages 36 and 37.

### ***Where can I learn more?***

The W. A. Mehojah, Sr., Resource Building at Kaw Nation tribal headquarters in Kaw City, Oklahoma, is a very good place to begin deeper examination of these and other cultural issues. There you will find a catalog of Kanza language CDs, a cultural literacy library containing many interesting books and films, a microfilm/microfiche reader with several sets of informative reels, a computer workstation for viewing the Kanza language multimedia lessons, and several knowledgeable employees with helpful attitudes. The media room can support a classroom-style environment for upwards of twenty students. Furthermore, the Resource Building is adjacent to the Kanza Museum and tribal administrative offices.

If the tribal headquarters is too far away, you might try looking at the official website of the Kaw Nation, <http://www.kawnation.com>. Not only is the site chock full of useful information about the tribe today, it is also a very good place to begin online study of the Kanza language and culture.

Furthermore, several resources may be available at your local library. For a good list of books on the Kanza tribe and Dhegiha culture in general, see the short bibliography at the end of this publication. And please remember that elder family members may have many memories and interesting perspectives on cultural issues, as well.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Several of the following books and articles were used as sources in the drafting of this document. Others are useful general reference aids that may be helpful to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the Kanza people and their customs. More extensive Dhegiha-oriented bibliographies can be found in some of the texts below, namely those of Burns and Unrau. The latter more specifically pertains to the Kanza. The Koontz website is also very informative.

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## GLOSSARY

**Band**—semi-autonomous mobile camping division of the tribe

**Clan**—social structure made up of groups of extended families; lower level than moiety

**Consistent**—agreeing with oneself; having no contradictions, as in *consistent alphabet*

**Če**—buffalo (or bison); name of a possible clan, perhaps extinct

**Čedónga**—buffalo (or bison) bull or buffalo in general; name of a clan

**Čizho**—possible name of a Kanza moiety

**Čizho Washtáge**—Čizho Peacemaker or just Peacemaker; name of a clan

**Dhegiha**—Mississippi Valley Siouan branch; Quapaw, Omaha, Ponca, Osage and Kanza tribes

**Gens**—patrilineal social structure; replaced by CLAN in this work; see CLAN

**Gaxóli<sup>n</sup>**—Creek Band of the tribe

**Ha<sup>n</sup>**—night; name of clan

**Hánga**—first; leader; world; eagle; possible name of a Kanza moiety

**Hánga Tángá**—black eagle with dark spots; name of a clan

**Íbačhe**—holds the firebrand to the sacred pipes; name of a clan also called *HÁNGA ŽHÍNGA*

**Ishtóngá**—right side; name of a Kanza moiety

**Kaá<sup>n</sup>ze**—Kanza; Kaw; name of a clan; name of the Dhegiha tribe commonly called Wind People

**Ke K'í<sup>n</sup>**—(s)he carries (or packs) turtle(s) on the back; name of a clan

**Literary Tradition**—transmission of information through written documents

**Lo**—thunder or thunder-being; name of a clan

**Ma<sup>n</sup>yínka**—earth; name of a clan

**Mínk'í<sup>n</sup>**—(s)he carries (or packs) sun (or moon or blanket) on the back; name of a clan

**Moiety**—social structure consisting of half of a tribe

**Mo<sup>n</sup>házoli<sup>n</sup>**—Kanza Yellow Cut-Bank Band

**Nikashinga**—man; person; clan; people; see *ONÍKASHINGA*

**Onikashinga**—indicative of that which makes a group of persons into an organized people

**Oral Tradition**—transmission of information by word of mouth, practice, and collective memory

**Ópha<sup>n</sup>**—elk; name of a clan

**Pánka**—Ponca; name of a clan; name of a Dhegiha tribe

**Patrilineality**—kinship system in which family/clan membership passes through the father's line

**Phonetic**—specifically dealing with speech sounds, as in *phonetic alphabet*

**Pikiu**—Kanza borrowing of the name of a French coin; Kanza *Picayune* (or Nickel) Band

**Subclan**—social structure smaller than the clan consisting of a few extended families

**Ta**—deer; name of a clan, also called *Wazházhe* or Osage

**Waná<sup>n</sup>ye**—ghost; name of a clan

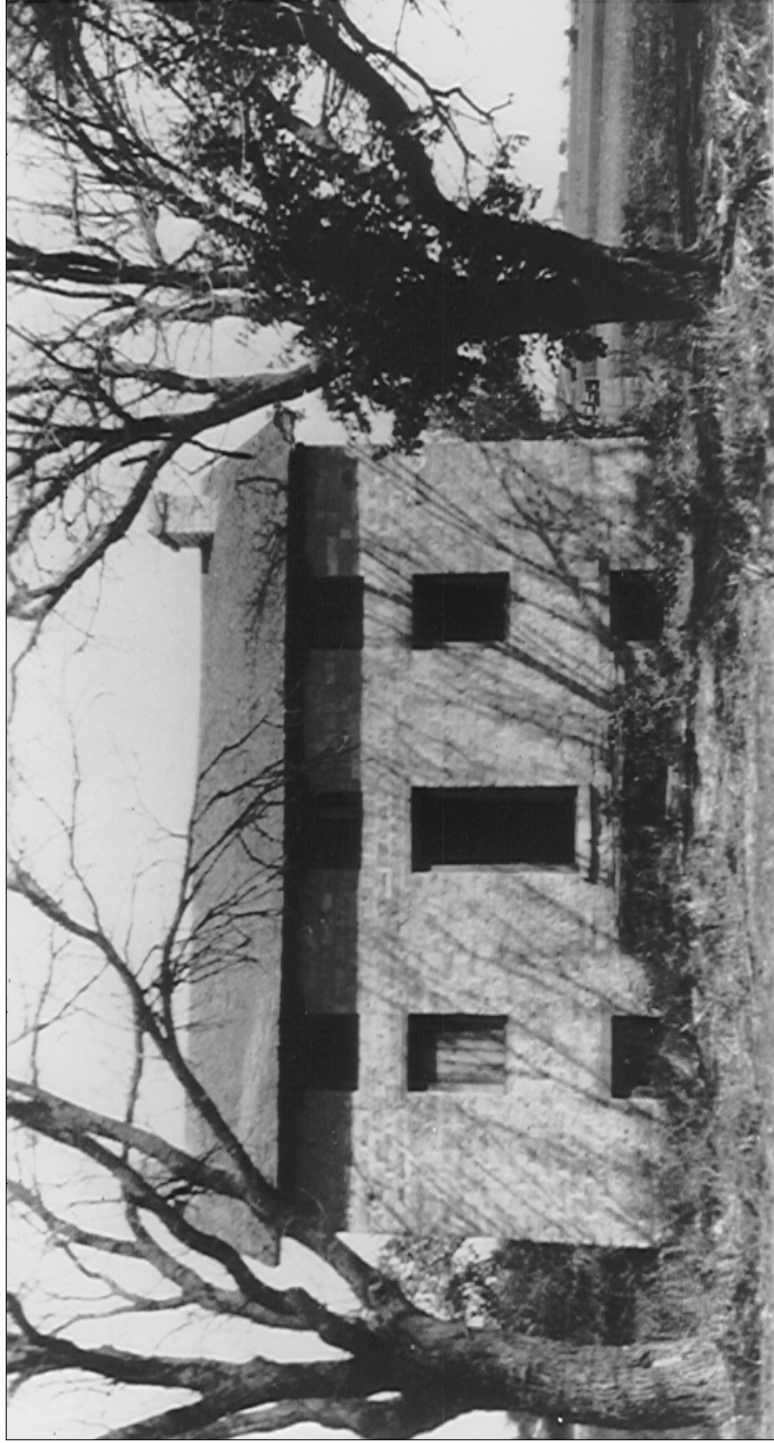
**Wasábe**—black bear or bears in general; something black; name of a clan

**Wáyo<sup>n</sup>mi<sup>n</sup>da<sup>n</sup>**—sing together, (those who); social structure made up of one to three related clans

**Wazhínga**—bird; name of possible clan, perhaps extinct

**Xuyá**—golden eagle or eagles in general; name of a clan

**Yáta**—left side; name of a Kanza moiety



**THE OLD KAW AGENCY AT COUNCIL GROVE, KANSAS, CIRCA 1920**

Photo courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

## THE KANZA ALPHABET

<i>A, a</i>	like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> or like <i>u</i> in <i>but</i>
<i>A<sup>n</sup>, a<sup>n</sup></i>	nasal <i>a</i> , a little like the <i>aun</i> in <i>haunt</i> , but the <i>n</i> is not pronounced fully <sup>†</sup>
<i>B, b</i>	like English <i>b</i>
<i>Č, č</i>	like <i>ch</i> in <i>roach</i> *
<i>Čh, čh</i>	like the <i>ch h</i> in <i>beach house</i>
<i>D, d</i>	like English <i>d</i>
<i>E, e</i>	like <i>e</i> in <i>echo</i>
<i>G, g</i>	like <i>g</i> in <i>got</i>
<i>H, h</i>	like <i>h</i> in <i>hot</i>
<i>I, i</i>	like <i>i</i> in <i>piano</i>
<i>I<sup>n</sup>, i<sup>n</sup></i>	nasal <i>i</i> , a little like <i>in</i> in <i>think</i> , but the <i>n</i> is not pronounced fully <sup>†</sup>
<i>J, j</i>	like English <i>j</i>
<i>K, k</i>	a little like <i>kk</i> in <i>bookkeeper</i> or <i>k g</i> in <i>look good</i> , but not like <i>k</i> in <i>kill</i> *
<i>Kh, kh</i>	like <i>k h</i> in <i>look healthy</i>
<i>K', k'</i>	like <i>k</i> , but pronounced by itself, and followed by a catch in the throat <sup>°</sup>
<i>L, l</i>	like English <i>l</i>
<i>M, m</i>	like English <i>m</i>
<i>N, n</i>	like English <i>n</i>
<i>O, o</i>	a little like <i>o</i> in <i>robe</i> , or in British <i>or</i> , and sometimes like <i>oo</i> in <i>pool</i>
<i>O<sup>n</sup>, o<sup>n</sup></i>	nasal <i>o</i> , a little like <i>on</i> in <i>don't</i> , but the <i>n</i> is not pronounced fully <sup>†</sup>
<i>P, p</i>	a little like <i>p p</i> in <i>soup pot</i> or <i>p b</i> in <i>jump back</i> , but not like <i>p</i> in <i>pill</i> *
<i>Ph, ph</i>	like <i>p h</i> in <i>top hat</i>
<i>P', p'</i>	like <i>p</i> , but pronounced by itself, and followed by a catch in the throat <sup>°</sup>
<i>S, s</i>	like English <i>s</i>
<i>Sh, sh</i>	like English <i>sh</i>
<i>T, t</i>	a little like <i>t t</i> in <i>at times</i> or <i>t d</i> in <i>let down</i> , but not like <i>t</i> in <i>till</i> *
<i>T', t'</i>	like <i>t</i> , but pronounced by itself, and followed by a catch in the throat
<i>Ts', ts'</i>	like <i>ts</i> in <i>cats</i> , but run together and followed by a catch in the throat <sup>°</sup>
<i>U, u</i>	like <i>u</i> in <i>pure</i> , or like <i>ee</i> in <i>feel</i> , but with lips rounded for <i>oo</i> in <i>fool</i>
<i>W, w</i>	like <i>w</i> in <i>wash</i>
<i>X, x</i>	a little like <i>h</i> in <i>hue</i> , somewhat like clearing the throat <i>To approximate, form and hold English k, then exhale very forcefully through the mouth.</i>
<i>Y, y</i>	like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i>
<i>Z, z</i>	like English <i>z</i>
<i>Zh, zh</i>	like <i>s</i> in <i>measure</i>
<i>γ, γ</i>	like Kanza <i>x</i> , but softer and with gargling or rattling vocal cords <i>To approximate, form and hold English g, then hum through the mouth.</i>
<i>' , '</i>	like the pause between the syllables in <i>uh-oh</i> , catch in the throat <sup>°</sup>

## NOTES ON USING THE KANZA ALPHABET

† NASAL VOWELS: The vowels *a*<sup>n</sup>, *i*<sup>n</sup>, and *o*<sup>n</sup> change slightly depending on what letter immediately follows them. Before the letters *g*, *k*, *kh*, and *k'*, the superscript <sup>n</sup> is written as a normal *n*. For example, in the word *a<sup>n</sup>sčéje* ('I am tall'—*a<sup>n</sup>+sčéje*) the vowel is written with a superscript <sup>n</sup>. But in the word *angóta* ('our'—*a<sup>n</sup>+g+ota*), the vowel is written separate from the normal *n*. Something else happens to the superscript <sup>n</sup> before the letters *b*, *p*, *ph*, and *p'*. Here it becomes a normal *m*, as in the word *zhómbe* ('you plural use'—*zho<sup>n</sup>+be*). These phenomena occur because English speakers already produce nasal vowels before English *ng*, *nk*, *nx* (think of as *nk+s* in English), *mb*, and *mp*. So there is no need to mark the nasals in these cases. This is not to say that writing the nasal in all cases is wrong. On the contrary, accuracy is preserved, but reading ease may decline slightly, especially near other unfamiliar letters.

\* TENSE CONSONANTS: The consonants *k*, *p*, and *t* are **not** produced the same in Kanza as they are in English. In Kanza, these three letters and the letter *č* are made almost twice as long, without any accompanying puffs of air, and with a little more voice. They come out sounding a little more like *kg*, *pb*, and *td*, but run together. For example, *itá*, 'egg,' sounds almost like *eat-dah*. The letter *č* sounds almost half way between the English *ch* and the English *j*.

○ GLOTTAL CONSONANTS: The ' element in the consonants *k'*, *p'*, *t'*, and *ts'*, which is simply the Kanza letter ' , can be thought of as just a slight pause, or catch made in the throat. This can sometimes sound like silence, or sometimes as just a tiny *uh* sound. In older texts, the ' is sometimes written as a question mark ?. For example, the *k'* in the word 'dice' may appear as *k?óse* instead of *k'óse*, both pronounced almost like k-oseh

Vowels receiving stress are marked with accent marks in most words of more than one syllable. Primary stress is marked with an acute accent going up and to the right, as in the word *zha<sup>ní</sup>* ('sugar'). Secondarily stressed syllables are a little less accented than those stressed primarily, and are marked with a grave accent going up and to the left, as in the word *niskúwe* ('salt'). Most words of more than one syllable have primary stress, but only a few have secondary stress marked. Secondary stress can sometimes fall on a separate word in a common phrase containing only one primary accent, such as in *moká<sup>n</sup> sàbe* ('coffee'). Some phrases of more than one word contain words with no particular stressed marked, as in *má<sup>n</sup>hi<sup>n</sup> tanga* ('long knife' or 'American'). Vowels are occasionally held twice as long in speech. These long vowels are written twice. Any diacritics and/or nasalizations on a long vowel are written only on the last one in the pair, such as in *Kaá<sup>n</sup>ze* ('Kanza'). The underlined letters in this example mark an 'a' that is long, stressed, and nasalized.

**DISCLAIMER:** The information presented herein is accurate given the research materials currently available. As research continues and the information base expands, future editions as well as other Kaw Nation publications may become necessary to preserve cultural and historical accuracy.



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Kanza Language Project  
Kaw Nation of Oklahoma  
Drawer 50

Kaw City, OK 74641

Office: (580) 269-2552

Fax: (580) 269-2301

E-mail: [language@kawnation.com](mailto:language@kawnation.com)