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Sold! The Loss of Kiowa Allotments in the Post-Indian Reorganization Era

Mark H. Palmer

He should have kept his land, but he got his patent out on it and sold it, and it's gone today, and they have nothing.

—Stella Rivera, *Doris Duke Oral History Collection*

The fragmentation of large nineteenth-century reservations resulted in the creation of American Indian allotment geographies in the United States. Federal Indian policy, namely the General Allotment Act of 1887, allowed the US government to break up large reservations, allot land to individual Indians, and sell the surplus to non-Indian settlers. More than ninety million acres of land transferred from Indian to non-Indian ownership during the past 130 years.¹ Reduction of land-allotment areas concerned tribal governments, Indian landowners, and the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934 encouraged the preservation of Indian culture, the development of tribal government, educational opportunities, and the protection of Indian land. Former BIA Superintendent John Collier wrote, “The Indian service and the Indians are struggling to reverse the flood that is eating away [at] the Indian’s land base.”² This suggested that Indian-owned land-allotment areas should have stabilized after 1934. However, many American Indians sold their allotments, and land bases continued to decrease following the passage of the IRA. The purpose of this study is to investigate the allotment problem at a local scale, using

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historical land maps and BIA documents to determine why Indian-owned land bases continued to decline after 1934. The author's tribal affiliation with the Kiowas of southwestern Oklahoma led to the selection of their land base as a subject of inquiry and a geographical focal point.³ This research contributed to a broader collection of literature regarding the dispossession of Indian land in the United States.

THE DISPOSSESSION OF INDIAN LAND

Scholars of Indian land dispossession focused primarily upon "poverty, erosion of sovereignty, the undermining of cultural integrity, and the loss of a land base to federal policies."⁴ One stunning cartographic representation of land dispossession showed the mass movement of North American Indians, over a four-hundred-year period, from their former homelands to what remained of their contemporary land bases.⁵ Historical accounts documented the loss of Indian land to non-Indian settlers. This included the allotment of large Indian reservations that resulted in a significant loss of land between 1890 and 1930. Other scholars focused on the alienation of land, issues pertaining to jurisdiction and law, the downfall of Indian farming, the destruction of tribalism, the dispossession of land to non-Indians, and changes in land-tenure practices.⁶ On a more regional scale, David Wishart showed, in detail, the dispossession of Otoe-Missourian, Pawnee, Ponca, and Omaha lands in Nebraska.⁷ Two geographers examined issues pertaining to resources. Use of water resources by American settlers effectively eliminated Pima and Maricopa farming operations along the Gila River.⁸ Holly YoungBear-Tibbets documented a conspiracy that dispossessed the Anishinaabeg trust lands of valuable timber and natural resources, including the unauthorized public sale and illegal conveyance of trust allotment land by local and federal government officials. These actions resulted in the loss of Anishinaabeg trust land between 1901 and 1986.⁹

Historians provided evidence regarding the dispossession of Kiowa land between 1865 and 1920. The Little Arkansas Treaty placed the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches within defined political boundaries. As a way of making peace with the federal government, Kiowa and Comanche tribal members agreed to give up land claims in Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico, and move south of the Arkansas River to reservation land.¹⁰ At the same time, each tribe retained uninterrupted use and occupation of areas that extended east from the northeastern boundary of New Mexico to the ninety-eighth meridian covering present-day western Oklahoma from the Red River north to the Cimarron River.¹¹ Kiowa and Comanche representatives then signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty on October 21, 1867, agreeing to live within

the boundaries of a defined reservation geographically situated in the south-west region of Indian Territory (Oklahoma). According to historian Mildred Mayhall, "The northern boundary of the reservation began at a point where the ninety-eighth meridian crossed the Washita River, extended up the Washita River to thirty miles east of Fort Cobb, and ran west to the North Fork of the Red River. Boundary on the east was the ninety-eighth meridian, or the western limit of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations."¹² These boundaries marked the entire Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation (KCA), covering more than two million acres, or three thousand square miles.¹³

Federal policy gradually shifted from one that sought the removal of American Indians to reservations to one that advocated assimilation into the dominant society. Enter the Dawes Act of 1887, considered to be the cornerstone of federal Indian land and cultural assimilation policy.¹⁴ Federal allotment policy accelerated in 1892 when the Cherokee Commission negotiated with the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches to accept and sign the Jerome Agreement. Most Kiowas opposed the allotment of the KCA Reservation. However, commission organizers acquired, in a fraudulent manner, 456 signatures out of 562 eligible males supporting the opening of the reservation for allotment. Congress passed the Jerome Agreement in 1901, and the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes sold their surplus land for approximately \$2 million.¹⁵

On June 6, 1900, the US government withheld all of the 2,488,893 acres of land from the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes; allotted 443,338 acres to 2,759 Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribal members; and reserved 11,972 acres for agency, school, religious, and other purposes. The federal government sold 480,000 acres of grazing land to non-Indian settlers and gave the proceeds to the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches for economic and educational development. At the end of the first phase of allotment, the US government withheld 1,553,028 acres of the original 2,488,893 acres of land from the three tribes. On July 4, 1901, President William McKinley signed a proclamation opening all land acquired from the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes.¹⁶

Finally, the US government issued land allotments in the amount of 82,059 acres to 513 Indians on June 5, 1906, and 480 acres to three Indians on March 7, 1907. The General Land Office received 395,618 acres, and the US government distributed land by lottery to the general public. A 1902 amendment to the Dawes Act permitted Indians to sell their inherited land allotments and divide the proceeds equally among all the owners. Passage of the Burke Act of 1906 allowed any Indian, judged competent, to receive a patent in fee. This opened the door for the premature issuance of the patents and the sale of land

allotments.¹⁷ By 1907, all of the former reservation had been allotted and the surplus land sold to non-Indian settlers.

In summary, the dispossession of American Indian land equated to approximately eighty-six million acres of land between 1887 and 1934. Issuance of patents in fee to Indian landowners led to the sale of their properties between 1906 and 1933.¹⁸ This was true as well for Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, and Wichita landowners between 1907 and 1920.¹⁹ By 1934, two-thirds of all Indians ended up landless or did not own enough land to survive. For example, approximately 90 percent of the Cheyenne River Reservation had been sold or mortgaged, 90 percent of the Turtle Mountain Reservation patentees sold their land at the first opportunity and drifted back to the reservation to live with friends and relatives, and 75 percent of Umatilla patentees sold their land.²⁰ These studies presented evidence for the dispossession of Indian land. Missing in the research on the dispossession of Indian land was an examination of the reasons why individual landowners sold their property and what impacts these actions had upon local allotment areas in the United States.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A combination of BIA maps, federal government documents, and oral-history transcripts served as sources for this research. The primary sources of information for the quantitative portion of the study (loss of land) included Department of the Interior KCA land maps for 1901, 1933, and 1995; Mid-America Oil and Gas lease maps for the year 1966; US Geological Survey (USGS) 1:24,000 topographic maps of Carnegie, Fort Cobb, and Anadarko West; a KCA geographic information system (GIS) layer showing contemporary allotment locations; US Department of Agriculture (USDA) land-cover data; USGS national elevation data; Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing System (TIGER) hydrology data for Caddo County, Oklahoma; and US Census Bureau and the University of Virginia Library Historical Census data showing changes in population, farming, and economics for Caddo County, for the years from 1910 to 2000.²¹

The primary sources of information for the qualitative portion of the study included justification statements made by Kiowa landowners in regard to land-tenure changes. These statements existed on official BIA documents entitled "Change of Land Tenure Application." The researcher matched cataloged identification numbers with the Kiowa allotment files. Each file held the complete history of each Kiowa allotment including land tenure, mineral rights, agricultural leases, wills, and heirships. Complete applications contained the owner's justification statement for selling his or her land allotment or for taking the

parcel out of trust and/or acquiring a patent in fee. To respect the privacy of the landowners and family members, no traceable identification information was provided in the reference section. Information pertaining to individual Kiowa allotments existed at the BIA Anadarko Agency Office (Oklahoma). The researcher holds photocopy records used in this study.²² During the mid-1990s, BIA officials converted all allotment records to a microfiche format. Some of the applications appeared to be missing or incomplete and were not used in the results. Exemplars found in the Doris Duke Collection of American Indian Oral History backed up primary source findings. Housed at the University of Oklahoma, Western History Collection, the Doris Duke oral histories consisted of 695 tape recordings of members from every federally recognized tribe in Oklahoma including personal and place names, tribal names, allotments, missionary activities, and religion.²³

The loss of Kiowa land during the years 1901, 1933, 1966, 1995, and 2001 was analyzed by first dividing the study area into three regions. Three regions corresponded with three USGS topographic maps (Carnegie, Fort Cobb, and Anadarko West) and served to locate Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache land allotments. A basic GIS overlay technique showed land loss over time (1901 to 2001) and basic spatial relationships among allotments, elevation, hydrology, land use, and land cover.

The second part of this research documented the reasons for the sale of Kiowa allotted land. Land-allotment records, for Kiowa landowners, existed at the BIA Anadarko Agency Office. A total of ninety-seven land-tenure applications made up the sample, representing the majority of all approved land-tenure changes filed between 1933 and 1995 in the study area. Justification statements for each parcel of land sold appeared on each "Change of Land Tenure Application" and were official documents of the US Department of the Interior (DOI) and the BIA. The BIA used the applications for the sale of Indian land and for granting patents in fee. BIA officials required landowners to justify their reason(s) for selling trust land before approval or denial of the applicant's request. The BIA superintendent and several other committee members reviewed all applications before allowing the landowner to sell his or her property or issuing a patent in fee.

It was possible that Kiowa landowners wrote down justifications that would pass BIA inspection. However, this was nearly impossible to verify considering that the majority of applicants have passed away. Also, the use of GIS did not equate to a detailed spatial analysis of KCA allotments. This limited the types of empirical questions that could be asked regarding human and environmental interactions. A comprehensive historical GIS of the KCA was well beyond the scope of this study, but it may be a possible topic for future inquiry. The following results document the loss of land allotments and

the reasons why American Indian landowners sold their property within one North American Indian allotted land area.

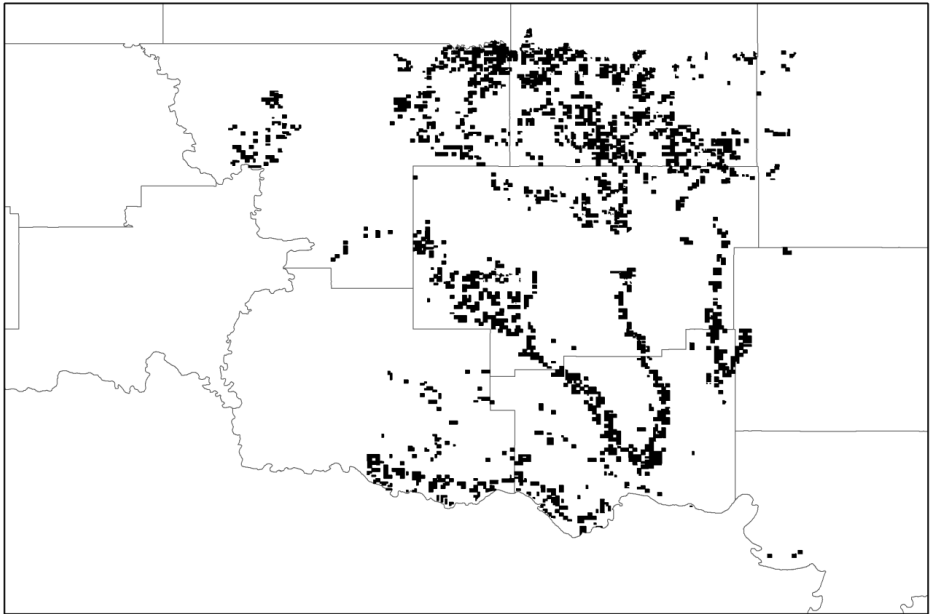
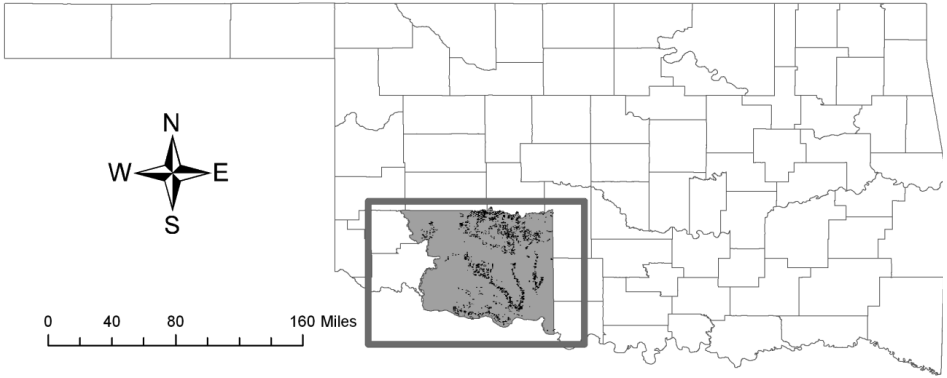
LOSS OF KIOWA LAND ALLOTMENTS

The study area, in southwestern Oklahoma, was within the boundaries of the Fort Cobb Lateral Watershed. This geomorphic region was a part of the larger Washita River Watershed, located within the former KCA Reservation and contemporary KCA allotment area (see fig. 1). Located in south central Caddo County, the main tributaries of the watershed included the Cedar, the Gokey, the Spring, the Two Hatchet, and the Hog Creeks. The Washita River flowed along the northern boundary of the watershed. Much of the study area contained tall-grass prairie and mixed grasslands.²⁴ Some land allotments on the floodplains of the Washita River or larger creeks held scattered woodlands, agricultural fields, and rangeland.

Southwest Caddo County contained the highest concentration of Kiowa trust land in Oklahoma. Most Kiowa land parcels existed within the watershed between the towns of Carnegie and Anadarko. Scattered among the many Kiowa allotments were Kiowa-Apache trust land, Comanche trust land, jointly owned KCA tribal land, and non-Indian land. Most of the Kiowa population lived around Carnegie.²⁵ Contemporary Kiowa communities included in this study were Carnegie, Red Stone, and Hog Creek.²⁶

The results showed a significant loss of allotment land over time. Between 1901 and 1995, Kiowa landowners lost approximately 22,680 acres, or 59 percent of their land base within the study area (see fig. 2). Kiowas took large amounts of land out of trust between the years 1901 and 1933. Land sales slowed down between 1933 and 1955 but escalated after 1957 (see fig. 3). The massive loss of land ceased during the early 1970s following ratification of the Kiowa Constitution. One Kiowa landowner stated that, "After our Kiowa Constitution was ratified in 1970 . . . whenever elders passed away without wills or family members, the tribe was able to collectively take care of land ownership."²⁷ Purchase of allotment land by the Kiowa Business Committee may have decreased the amount of land taken out of trust from the early 1970s to 1995. However, the Kiowas lost 12,570 acres after passage of the IRA. These results support the findings of YoungBear-Tibbetts's Anishinaabeg trust land study and of Terry Anderson and Dean Lueck, who showed that Indian land allotment areas decreased by 15,183,366 acres between 1900 and 1983.²⁸

In 1901, an overlay analysis of KCA land allotments showed that most of the land resided at elevations between 1,197 feet and 1,443 feet. At that time, an unbroken chain of KCA allotments extended along the south side of the



Legend

- Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache (KCA) Allotments (2001)
- Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation (1865-1900)
- Oklahoma Counties

Sources: KCA reservation and allotment data provided by the Intertribal Environmental Council; Oklahoma County data provided by the Oklahoma Data Warehouse

FIGURE I. Map of the former Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation area and the 2001 land-allotment geography.

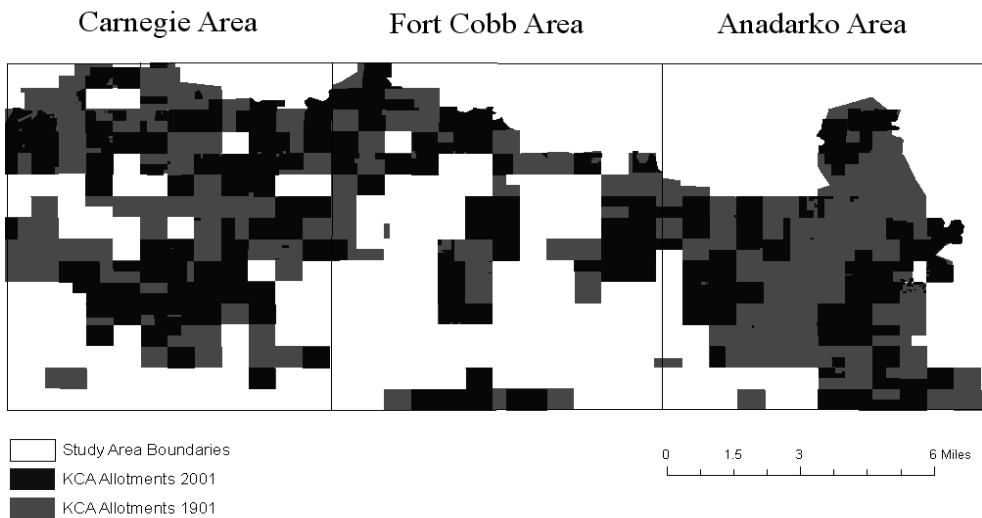


FIGURE 2. Overlay map of the study area showing the loss of Kiowa land throughout one hundred years. Sources: Intertribal Environmental Council 2001, US Department of the Interior, 1901, 1933, and 1995.

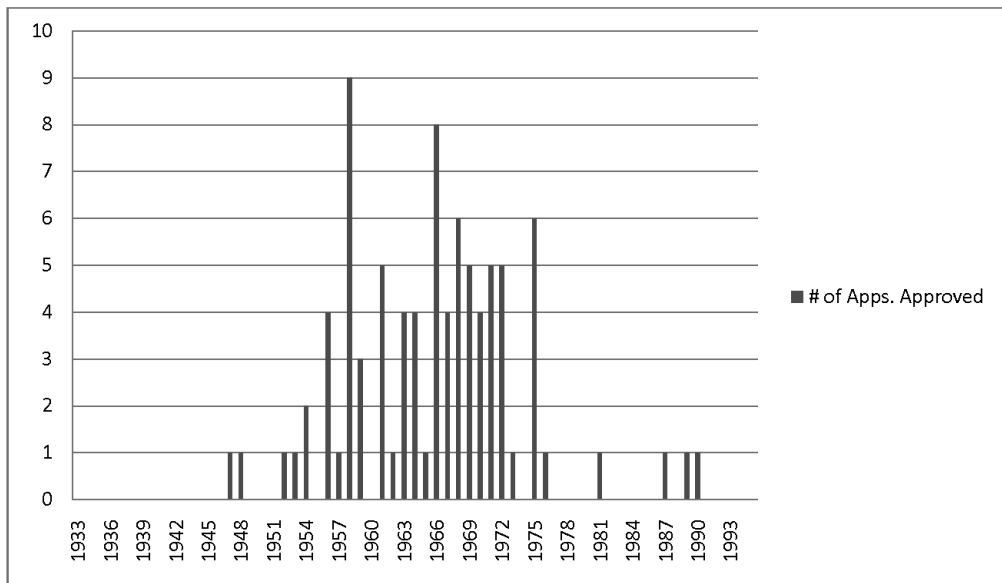


FIGURE 3. Number of land-tenure applications approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs between 1933 and 1995. Source: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anadarko Agency Office, 1995.

Washita River. Much of this land was situated on the river's floodplain. In addition, the Cedar, the Gokey, the Spring, the Two Hatchet, and the Hog Creeks all intersected with allotments. Statistically, 44 percent of the 1901 allotment features intersected with creeks and rivers. By 2001, only 19 percent of land allotments intersected with creeks and rivers. This was evidence that most of the bottomland along creeks and the Washita River floodplain sold between 1901 and 2001.

An overlay analysis using land cover and the 2001 KCA land-allotment data revealed that nearly all of the allotments contained grasslands. A little more than half of the land held croplands consisting primarily of winter wheat, alfalfa, some cotton, and other minor crops. Deciduous forest remnants existed on 39 percent of the allotment features. A little more than 6 percent of the allotment features contained eastern red cedar trees along creeks, ravines, and open areas. Approximately 8 percent of the allotments also contained some aspect of high-, medium-, or low-intensity development around the town of Carnegie.

Kiowa land decreased significantly after 1934. Yet little was known about landowners' motives for selling their property or taking it out of trust status between 1933 and 1995. BIA land-tenure documents provided some answers to this problem.

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR SELLING KIOWA LAND ALLOTMENTS: 1933–1995

Most of the Kiowas quoted in this study were born during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They resided within the Carnegie, Red Stone, and Hog Creek communities. Most of the people belonged to three Christian denominations (Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic) and the Native American Church. Christian missionaries also served the community through education. Some Kiowas attended school at the Methvin Institute in Anadarko, the Rainy Mountain School, or Chilocco and attained basic educations. Older students sought higher education opportunities at the Haskell, Bacone, or Carlisle Indian schools. Although exposed to English in schools, most of the Kiowa remained fluent speakers of their Native language. This section documents and explains some of the reasons why Kiowa landowners sold their property within the study area. Justification statements and supporting data fell within four primary categories: farming and ranching, living expenses, relocation, and owner fractionation. In many ways, this was yet another chapter describing the declining economic conditions and population trends in rural America during the twentieth century.



FIGURE 4. Farm owners in Caddo County, Oklahoma, 1910–50. Source: University of Virginia Historical Census Data, 2010.

Farming and Ranching

The 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were decades of declining small family farms for all ethnic groups, increased mechanization of agriculture, and the continued growth of the manufacturing and service sectors of the American economy. The Great Depression of the 1930s stifled economic growth throughout the United States. The economic downturn was particularly devastating to rural communities.²⁹ Historically, American Indians and nonwhites owned fewer farms than whites in Caddo County. The most significant increase in farm ownership for whites and nonwhites occurred between 1920 and 1930. However, the number of farm owners, from all ethnicities, decreased between 1930 and 1950 (see fig. 4). Furthermore, the total number of small farms ranging between 50 and 174 acres decreased significantly after 1930, and farms ranging from 175 to 4,999 acres increased (see table 1). Although the number of small farms decreased, the spatial extent of farm size increased over time. This was a general trend throughout the United States during the twentieth century.

However, very few Kiowas made a living farming and ranching during the twentieth century. Kiowas living between Carnegie and Anadarko farmed and ranched only two hundred acres of land during 1995.³⁰ Factors such as small allotment size, ownership fractionation, trust land regulations/BIA

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF FARMS IN CADDO COUNTY, OKLAHOMA: 1910–1950

| YEAR | NO. OF FARMS: 50–99 ACRES | NO. OF FARMS: 100–74 ACRES | NO. OF FARMS: 175–259 ACRES | NO. OF FARMS: 260–499 ACRES | NO. OF FARMS: 500–999 ACRES | NO. OF FARMS: 1,000–4,999 ACRES |
|------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1901 | 622 | 3,122 | 370 | 520 | 36 | 9 |
| 1920 | 567 | 2,693 | 298 | 392 | 39 | 11 |
| 1930 | 1,372 | 2,714 | 383 | 325 | 30 | 13 |
| 1940 | 739 | 2,136 | 397 | 557 | 125 | 26 |
| 1950 | 344 | 1,396 | 480 | 730 | 160 | 41 |

Source: University of Virginia Historical Census Data, 2010.

consent, insufficient financial resources, and deficient agricultural backgrounds contributed to the lack of farming. This was one of the great failures of federal allotment policy. Beyond policy, various forms of exploitation cropped up within the study area. For example, young Kiowa men who worked for non-Indians often received no payment for their labor.³¹ Furthermore, white farmers who owned wheat threshers often boycotted Indian farmers by not threshing their wheat.³² After World War II, more Kiowa men tried to farm and ranch. However, a combination of drought conditions during the 1950s and agricultural loan debts sank their efforts. During World War II, the federal government provided credit to Kiowas who wished to farm and ranch. The credit association allowed young men to purchase horses, cattle, tools, and wheat seed. Payments usually topped out at \$2,500, and the fledgling farmers had five years to pay their loans back. Drought led to farm failures and subsequently to delinquent loan payments. After the farms failed, the government repossessed farm equipment and left some of the men in financial peril. One elder accused the government of blacklisting men and women who failed at farming, thus preventing them from borrowing more money.³³ Often failed attempts at farming and mounting debts burdened entire families, and they had to release ownership of their land to the government until all debts were repaid.³⁴ This represented the twentieth-century migratory trend of poor, rural residents leaving marginal family farms in search of growing economic opportunities in urban areas.³⁵

Early exploitation of Indian labor, the natural environment, and delinquent loan payments stifled farming ventures among many of the Kiowas in the study area. As a result, not many men or women sold their land in order to buy cattle or farm implements. Only three applicants sold their land to

purchase farming equipment.³⁶ Even though the federal government provided loans for home repairs and farming, landowners had to repay their debts to the BIA. Like many other people in rural America, regardless of ethnicity, the Kiowas had to piece revenue together just to survive.

Living Expenses

The postallotment period was economically difficult for the Kiowas. Many families had trouble feeding their children, paying off debts, and paying land taxes; they just needed income to survive. Historical evidence suggests that a clear division of labor existed between Kiowas and whites in the study area. Many young Kiowa men and women lacked a high school education, and most did not have agricultural or industrial skills, forcing them to accept low-wage, unskilled labor jobs in Carnegie and Anadarko during the 1930s through the 1960s. White farmers often hired Kiowa men as temporary laborers for harvesting fields, picking cotton, hauling hay, and working at the Carnegie peanut-processing plant.³⁷ By 1970, the median household income for the American Indian population in Caddo County was \$3,953 for males and \$2,079 for females, and 22.1 percent of the total population of Caddo County lived below the poverty level.³⁸ Sparse incomes and the lack of decent-paying jobs contributed to Kiowas selling their land allotments as a source of revenue. A total of thirty-nine Kiowa applicants sold their land and used the proceeds for home improvements or living expenses (see table 2). Some applicants needed to construct water wells and propane gas systems.³⁹ Landowners also needed revenue to purchase household goods.⁴⁰ Other applicants wished to purchase furniture, remodel, make repairs, or build additions onto their existing homes.⁴¹ Debt, such as paying off utility bills, homes, medical expenses, legal fees, and loans, led to land sales.⁴² At a very basic level, some landowners simply needed money to provide food and everyday necessities for their families.⁴³ In some cases, the BIA gave the landowners a check for the total amount of the sale. In other cases, the BIA distributed the proceeds in increments as they deemed some Indian landowners too incompetent to manage their own money.⁴⁴ The BIA also provided home-repair loans. However, loans had to be repaid, which resulted in debt.⁴⁵

Entire families depended upon their property for survival. Clearly, poor economic conditions pushed some Kiowas out of the study area, and new employment opportunities pulled them to urban areas. Limited by rural isolation and sparse job opportunities, American Indians, Hispanics, and poor farmers sought stable lifestyles in cities.⁴⁶

TABLE 2
JUSTIFICATION FOR SELLING OR TAKING KIOWA LAND OUT OF TRUST STATUS

| REASONS FOR SELLING LAND | NO. OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED BY BIA, 1933–65 | NO. OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED BY BIA, 1966–95 |
|---|---|---|
| Purchase home | 8 | 13 |
| Living expenses | 21 | 18 |
| Sold land to co-owners | 2 | 5 |
| Farming/ranching equipment | 2 | 1 |
| Medical expenses | 2 | 1 |
| Education expenses | 1 | 3 |
| Payment of loans | 0 | 1 |
| Multiple-heirship problems | 1 | 1 |
| Received patent-in-fee through independent sale | 5 | 6 |
| Gift deed | 1 | 4 |
| N/A | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 44 | 53 |

Source: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anadarko Agency Office, “Change of Land Tenure Applications,” 1933–95.

Relocation

A postwar economic boom occurred between 1946 and 1956, contributing to an increase in rural-to-urban migration and the growth of suburban America.⁴⁷ Evidence found on the land-tenure applications suggested that some Kiowas participated in this migratory trend. Of the ninety-seven applications examined, twenty-one showed that landowners sold their property and used the proceeds to purchase a home.⁴⁸ Some people migrated outside the study area to places like Hominy, Oklahoma, and even Montana.⁴⁹ Some elders sold tracts of land and used the proceeds to move closer to relatives in nearby towns such as Anadarko, Carnegie, and Weatherford, Oklahoma.⁵⁰ Two applicants moved to towns but did not specify their geographical locations.⁵¹

Rural poverty, for people of all ethnicities in the United States, was more severe than for urban residents.⁵² In addition to general rural-to-urban migration, which went on between the 1950s and 1970s, the US Congress established a voluntary relocation program in 1952. The program encouraged Indians to move away from reservations and seek employment opportunities in urban areas. Statements found on land-tenure applications revealed that some Kiowa landowners sold their property in order to relocate to urban

areas. The urban migration of landowners was more evident between 1966 and 1995. A relocation study concluded that Indians from the Anadarko Agency (the study area) jurisdiction tended to migrate to Oklahoma City through the BIA Employment Assistance Program offered between 1967 and 1971.⁵³ The change of land-tenure documents showed that some Kiowas moved to Oklahoma City, and one of them started a business.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Kiowa landowners sold the greatest number of allotments between 1958 and 1975, which may have been influenced by BIA relocation policy (see fig. 3). It was difficult to assess the impact of the BIA relocation programs on Kiowa migration patterns. However, it was clear that economic opportunities, or at least the perception that economic opportunities existed in urban areas, led to the migration of American Indians during the latter half of the twentieth century.⁵⁵

Educational opportunities encouraged some Kiowas to leave the study area and to “live modern.”⁵⁶ Four applicants claimed educational expenses as a justifiable reason for selling their land. The BIA developed an off-reservation education program during the 1960s that provided financial incentives to Indians. This incentive, combined with the BIA Employment Assistance Program, resulted in a migration of Indians from reservations to towns and cities. In 1969, the BIA provided \$3 million in college financial assistance to 3,500 Indian students. This increased to \$47 million in 1974, enabling 13,500 Indian students to attend college.⁵⁷ Statements contained in the land-tenure applications showed that some Kiowas sold their property to help pay for educational expenses.⁵⁸

The US rural population grew very slowly between 1930 and 1970. It grew by 16 percent during the 1970s, slowed down in the 1980s, and rebounded during the 1990s.⁵⁹ Figure 5 shows that the American Indian population of Caddo County has increased steadily since 1970. Caddo County gained 4,488 American Indians between 1970 and 2000. In comparison, the white population increased between 1970 and 1980 but steadily decreased between 1980 and 2000. Whites have only gained 598 people since 1970. At the same time, the median incomes for the overall population of Caddo County increased steadily from \$17,561 per year in 1980 to \$23,297 in 1990 and to \$27,347 per year in 2000.⁶⁰ A reduction in land sales occurred during the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (see fig. 3). Will there be enough land to support the growing American Indian populations in allotted land areas in the future? An increased number of family members living on a parcel of trust land encountered the bureaucratic problem of owner fractionation.

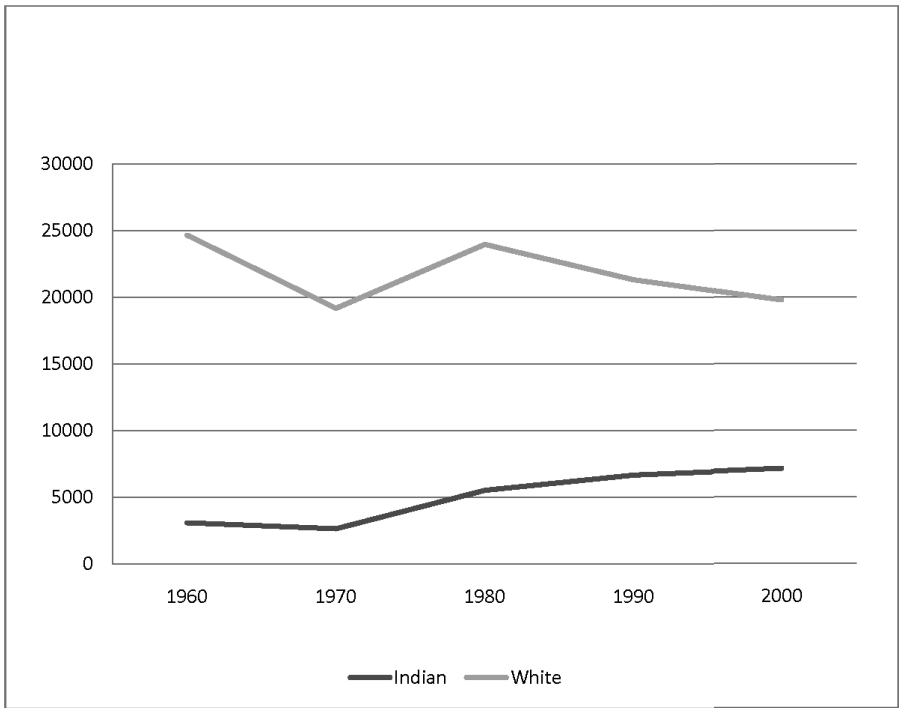


FIGURE 5. General population trends in Caddo County, Oklahoma, for the years 1960 to 2000. Source: US Census Bureau, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000.

Owner Fractionation

Non-Indian agricultural and ranching leases were primary and supplementary sources of income for Kiowa landowners. One Kiowa elder stated, “What we get from the lease is what we use for our income.”⁶¹ Historically, this was done through cash rent, but some Kiowas opted for crop rent in which the farmer shared a portion of the crop with the landowner. Fluctuating wheat prices made this kind of financial arrangement risky.⁶² Yearly incomes generated from leases varied. Cropland and grazing leases fetched \$1,000 per year between the years of 1933 and 1966.⁶³ By 1995, grazing and agricultural leases generated between \$1,500 and \$12,000 per year, per 160-acre allotment.

Over time, more and more people inherited shares of the original allotment. Fractionated ownership of land created a condition in which there were too many landowners of one piece of property, and it greatly reduced the amount of annual revenue received by each owner.⁶⁴ In addition, fractionation created a bureaucratic mess and an accounting nightmare for BIA realty specialists. One BIA soil conservationist explained that “land owner fractionation made it hard

to get a land lease signed.”⁶⁵ According to BIA regulations, each landowner had to consent to a lease or land-use practice. Increased output by a single landowner did not automatically increase his or her net share of the profit. Property owners shared equal profits. For example, a quarter section owned by thirty individuals and leased for \$2,000 per year generated a yearly income of \$66.67 per owner. A single 160-acre allotment could not adequately support multiple landowners. Anderson and Lueck found similar results in their study of allotment land.⁶⁶ Thus selling tracts of land and dividing the profits among the landowners produced more revenue in a very short period of time. Selling land allowed owners to share the profits and purchase materials considered to be worthwhile.⁶⁷

Other Kiowas received patent-in-fee titles to their property and sold their land independently.⁶⁸ Land taken out of trust was taxable.⁶⁹ Motivated landowners often bought out other family members’ interests, or all of the owners agreed to put their property up for sale and share the profits. However, each landowner had to agree to sell his or her share of the property. Disagreements regarding land sales often erupted into tense family negotiations, although land transactions did not always result in family disputes.⁷⁰ Five applicants gave or deeded a portion of their land to a relative.⁷¹ This inner-family transaction of land was called a gift deed and was a common practice among Kiowas in the study area. One applicant stated, “I wish to convey to my son the above described track of land with full mineral surface rights to be used by him as a home site.”⁷² Most gift-deed parcels retained their trust status after application approval by the BIA.

CONCLUSION

Geographers, historians, and economists showed the extent of Indian land dispossessions that took place in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Particularly relevant to this study is American Indian allotment land. Studies range in scale from nationwide to local case studies. However, very few studies tackle questions pertaining to exactly why American Indians sold their land. Very few studies focus on the study of land-allotment geographies during the post-IRA era. The author hopes to remedy some of this problem by presenting a study of the Kiowa allotted land area and its resident property owners. Allotment of the 2,480,893-acre KCA Reservation began in 1901 as impacts of federal Indian policy, initiated by the Dawes Act of 1887, ate away at the Kiowa land base. Liquidation of the reservation concluded in the spring of 1907, and the surplus land was sold to non-Indian settlers. Over the next thirty-three years, the Kiowa land base decreased in

area, and landowners received patents in fee and sold their land. As a result, land tenure decreased and non-Indian landholdings increased. By 1934, it was evident that the federal allotment policy had failed, leading to the creation of the IRA. Adoption of the IRA gave Indian nations more governmental power, increased educational opportunities, and was supposed to stop the massive erosion of American Indian land resources in the United States.

Kiowa trust land decreased by 59 percent from 1901 to 1995 within the study area. This study concluded that Kiowas sold their land, after 1934, because they needed revenue to purchase basic necessities like food, furniture, propane fuel, and firewood; to pay the rent or pay off debts; to improve their homes or to purchase another home; or because they migrated to urban areas or had too many heirs per allotment to generate sufficient income. Younger heirs to property began to question the entire trust process and the management of land by the BIA, and brainstormed about possible alternative land-use options to generate revenue and perpetuate tribal sovereignty. What might the future hold for Kiowa allotment land? One Kiowa landowner suggested that Kiowas needed to take a more active role in managing their land, instead of acting passively and succumbing to the standards of others.⁷³ Another landowner agreed that it was time for Kiowas to address land issues and even change tribal government structures to meet the needs of future generations.⁷⁴ Some families did take an active role in planning for the future. At least one Kiowa family planned to develop an inherited quarter section of land as a location for a wind farm, a field of solar panels, or a gaming operation.⁷⁵ However, federal Indian land regulations should be revisited and modified to address contemporary issues in Indian country. This is in light of the fact that more than sixty American Indian reservations and allotment areas are ideal candidates for renewable energy resources. Indian country, as “the Saudi Arabia of Wind,” is an exciting and realistic goal for Indian landowners and tribal governments to pursue in the future.⁷⁶

Chronic rural poverty in the United States impacts the Deep South, the Ozark Mountains, the Appalachian Mountains, and American Indian reservations.⁷⁷ Further research should be conducted on contemporary American Indian land-allotment areas. These studies may be regional or local in scale. Research might investigate the perspectives surrounding allotment issues such as land sales, owner fractionation, subsurface versus the surface land-tenure geography, land use and economic development by American Indians on their own land, and a historical geography of several American Indian allotment areas. The National Archives II in College Park, Maryland, houses many BIA cartographic products. These were a great source of information about the dynamic changes that occurred within allotted land areas throughout the twentieth century. American Indians living within the boundaries of allotment

land areas could be very important players in determining whether their land bases expand or decrease in area during the next fifty years. Conservation issues pertaining to renewable resources could become important in determining the future of American Indian allotment land. Thus future studies may identify biomass, wind, and solar energy resource locations on Indian allotments. Furthermore, American Indian communities must play an active role in shaping the direction and future of their land resources.

NOTES

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