

University of Louisville

## ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository

---

Faculty Scholarship

---

Spring 2018

### Rock Island Revisited: Black Hawk's Life, Keokuk's Oratory, and the Critique of US Indian Policy

Frank Kelderman

University of Louisville, [frank.kelderman@louisville.edu](mailto:frank.kelderman@louisville.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/faculty>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

---

#### Original Publication Information

Kelderman, Frank. "Rock Island Revisited: Black Hawk's Life, Keokuk's Oratory, and the Critique of U.S. Indian Policy." 2018. *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 6(1): 67-92.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact [thinkir@louisville.edu](mailto:thinkir@louisville.edu).

Rock Island Revisited: Black Hawk's *Life*,  
Keokuk's Oratory, and the Critique of US  
Indian Policy

**Frank Kelderman**

University of Louisville

In 1848 American newspapers announced the death of Keokuk, a tribal leader of the Sauk Nation who had established a reputation as one of the finest American Indian orators. The American painter George Catlin had painted his portrait several times and found that there was “no Indian chief on the frontier better known at this time, or more highly appreciated for his eloquence.”<sup>1</sup> Historians, too, frequently praised Keokuk’s skills as a politician and orator: Caleb Atwater called him “a shrewd politic man, as well as a brave one,” Benjamin Drake celebrated his “eloquence” and “sagacity,” and Thomas McKenney commented on his “courage, prudence, and eloquence.” Keokuk was, in McKenney’s words, “in all respects, a magnificent savage.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, good reputations have a way of eroding, and more than a century later the historian Donald Jackson described Keokuk more skeptically as a “smooth talker and a politician” who had aimed “to co-exist with the Americans.” By contrast, the Sauk warrior Black Hawk—who challenged Keokuk’s status as civil chief and mounted an important campaign of resistance against the United States—stood out as a “bull-headed fighter who chose a bitter last stand against extinction.”<sup>3</sup> In critical commentary Black Hawk and Keokuk typically present a clear opposition. As Thomas Burnell Colbert notes, while Black Hawk is remembered as “a noble Native American leader trying to save his culture,” Keokuk is typically dismissed as “a self-seeking sycophant” to the American government.<sup>4</sup>

Such appraisals undoubtedly have historical roots. At the conclusion of the Black Hawk War in 1832, after settler volunteers had decimated Black Hawk's band of followers, the American government reaffirmed Keokuk as the official liaison between the United States government and the confederated Sauk and Meskwaki nations.<sup>5</sup> This appointment rewarded him for having tried to keep peace with the settler population flooding into the Mississippi River Valley, and for signing off on land cessions in exchange for annuities. By the time Black Hawk's conflict with white settlers came to a head in the late 1820s, Keokuk's influence among the Sauk had "cut deeply into the number of Black Hawk's followers," and a majority of the nation did not pursue military action.<sup>6</sup> When Black Hawk published an account of the war in his autobiography *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kià-kiàk, or Black Hawk* (1833), the story of his lost campaign also presented a narrative about the loss of community coherence, due to the accommodationist influence of Keokuk.

To complicate what Alvin Josephy once named "the rivalry of Black Hawk and Keokuk," this essay situates Black Hawk's autobiography in the context of Keokuk's oratory and the workings of Indian diplomacy at the Rock Island agency, in present-day Illinois.<sup>7</sup> A critical emphasis on print publication has meant that literary studies have accessed Keokuk almost exclusively through Black Hawk's representation of him in his memoirs, rather than through the manuscript records of his own oratory. Yet Black Hawk's *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kià-kiàk* was but one of many collaborative publications from the Sauk Nation during this time, which also included the oratory, petitions, and treaty councils in which Keokuk participated.<sup>8</sup> When seen alongside Black Hawk's *Life*, Keokuk's speeches and councils challenge the tropes by which scholars have made sense of how both tribal leaders rhetorically engaged federal Indian policy and Sauk removal. Against critical interpretations that have placed Keokuk and Black Hawk on opposing sides of a cultural-political spectrum, I suggest that their respective publications critique in overlapping ways the network of agents and traders who administered Indian affairs in the Rock Island area. As both of them navigated communication circuits that included Native and non-Native coauthors, amanuenses, and translators, Black Hawk and Keokuk took part in textual collaborations that integrated oral performance, translation, manuscript writing, and print publishing. These performances were embedded in the diplomatic structures of the Indian agency at Rock Island and the Superintendency of Indian Affairs in St. Louis, but they also

recorded sustained critiques of Indian policy as it was carried out by American administrators.

Starting from this premise, this essay develops three related claims. In the first section I argue that Black Hawk's *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kiâ-kiâk* was a collaborative publication that both enlisted and intervened in a network of traders and administrators at the Rock Island Indian agency. Second, I argue that Keokuk's speeches and petitions, addressed to administrators in the Office of Indian Affairs, constituted a similar attempt to both employ and critique existing colonial networks, by establishing a record of the policy failures of the imbricated networks of white traders and US administrators. Finally, in the third section I argue that while Keokuk is often understood as accommodating American traders and settlers while boosting his own influence, his oratory articulated a sustained response to the economic pressures that accelerated settler expansion and Indian removal in the Midwest. While Keokuk's speeches were shaped by forms of collaboration and mistranslation that shaped Indian diplomacy, they should nevertheless be taken seriously as important public discourse on the consequences of land encroachment and indigenous displacement during the era of removal. Rather than a mere extension of US administrative networks, Keokuk's councils and speeches offered moments of institutional critique and intervention. At stake in this argument is not a desire to restore Keokuk's reputation or to recuperate his historical agency but rather to offer a perspective on removal-era indigenous oral performance beyond tropes of resistance and accommodation.<sup>9</sup> Writing and publishing are always acculturated activities, taking place, as Richard Brodhead puts it, in concrete cultural situations and a "landscape of institutional structures."<sup>10</sup> Black Hawk and Keokuk both critiqued the colonial bureaucracy by enlisting its communication circuits: as they navigated the technologies of the Indian Office they used collaborative forms of publication to intervene in its operations.<sup>11</sup> Seen together, their publications offer a fuller understanding of indigenous writing that engaged with Indian removal in the Old Northwest, as it was elaborated and contested at the Rock Island Indian agency.

#### **"Bad Management": Black Hawk's *Life* as Policy Critique**

In his 1833 memoirs *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kiâ-kiâk*, the warrior Black Hawk (1767–1838) presents a corrective reading of the history of treaty-making that led to the war that came to bear his name. He recounts

how in 1804 the US general William Henry Harrison had made a dubious agreement with a Sauk delegation led by the tribal leader Quàshquàmè: the Sauk delegates were brought to St. Louis under false pretense and pressured to sign a treaty even though they “had been drunk the greater part of the time” (28–29).<sup>12</sup> The resulting treaty ceded to the United States large territories in present-day Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin and profoundly shaped US-Sauk relations in the decades that followed.<sup>13</sup> After the War of 1812, Black Hawk looked to England for protection from the United States, and his “British Band” of followers continuously challenged the fraudulent land seizure and resisted the encroachment of white homesteaders in the region. When in 1832 Black Hawk went back east and re-crossed the Mississippi to find the Sauk village of Saukenuk occupied by white settlers, this ushered in a fifteen-week war between settler volunteers and Black Hawk’s followers from the Sauk and Meskwaki nations, as well as allies from several other tribes. William Clark, who served as the superintendent of Indian trade in St. Louis, showed no tolerance for the British Band and defended what he called a “war of extermination” against Black Hawk and his followers.<sup>14</sup> The Americans ultimately defeated Black Hawk’s forces in the Battle of Bad Axe on August 2, 1832. It was more a massacre than a battle; volunteers shot dozens of Native men, women, and children as they tried to go back west across the Mississippi. Although estimates vary, the Sauk and their allies suffered between 450 and 600 casualties, opposed to 77 on the American side.<sup>15</sup>

Following the war, the tribal leader Keokuk (ca. 1780–1848) was among the signers of a new treaty that was to shape their history for years to come. Made up in the presence of the generals Winfield Scott and John Reynolds, the 1832 treaty stipulated a cession of all Sauk lands east of the Mississippi, including the principal village of Saukenuk, near present-day Rock Island, Illinois. While a four hundred square-mile tract of land on both sides of the Iowa River was to be kept as a reservation, the treaty proclaimed the remaining Sauk lands opened for settlement beginning in June 1833.<sup>16</sup> Black Hawk, meanwhile, was taken to the East Coast along with four other allied Sauk and Meskwaki leaders. The War Department held them in Virginia for several weeks before taking them on a widely publicized tour of major cities, during which they became popular figures through public events and newspapers coverage.<sup>17</sup> When he was brought back to Rock Island and Keokuk had negotiated his release, Black Hawk entrusted the story of his life and the war to the government translator Antoine LeClaire and the newspaper editor John

Barton Patterson. First published in Cincinnati in 1833, Black Hawk's *Life* was widely popular in eastern American cities and was reprinted many times over the next decade.

Although the *Life* was published for American readers in eastern cities, the book is also a record of US-Indian diplomacy, and its collaborative authorship extended an intertwined networks of tribal leaders, traders, and government administrators. Black Hawk's memoirs constitute a translated and transcribed account of an oral performance, and Timothy Sweet reminds us that the "immediate audience" of this performance was the American government, "as represented in the person of the interpreter LeClaire and the physical space of the Rock Island Agency."<sup>18</sup> Situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Rock River, Rock Island was the site of the US military outpost Fort Armstrong, where the trader Thomas Forsyth served as Indian agent to the Sauk and Meskwaki people. Forsyth worked closely with George Davenport, who operated a trading house for the American Fur Company (AFC) on the island.<sup>19</sup> Black Hawk's editors, Patterson and LeClaire, were part of the overlapping network of traders and administrators on Rock Island: Patterson became a clerk for Davenport's company around the same time he began publication of the *Life*, and LeClaire worked not only as the US government interpreter but also as a trader for Davenport and the Chouteau Company.<sup>20</sup> Traders such as Davenport and LeClaire represented what Francis Paul Prucha calls an "influential and sometimes dominating third party" in the relations between tribal nations and the United States government.<sup>21</sup> White settlement put pressure on Indian nations to make large land cessions in exchange for annuities, which diminished their access to hunting grounds and animal populations during their seasonal hunts. The increasing dependence on trading houses for goods—and the diminishing profits of the fur trade—led Indian nations into debt, and they often paid traders directly from the annuities they received in exchange for land cessions. By 1825 it became standard practice for the American government to pay traders directly on behalf of tribal nations, which incentivized traders to become more and more involved in US-Indian treaty negotiations.<sup>22</sup>

Reconstructing the events that led up to the war of 1832, Black Hawk's *Life* offers an institutional critique of the imbrication of traders and Indian agents at Rock Island, implicating LeClaire, Davenport, and Thomas Forsyth in the mismanagement of Indian affairs. Black Hawk suggests that although he had long held the door open for negotiations with the American government, he was never taken seriously as a

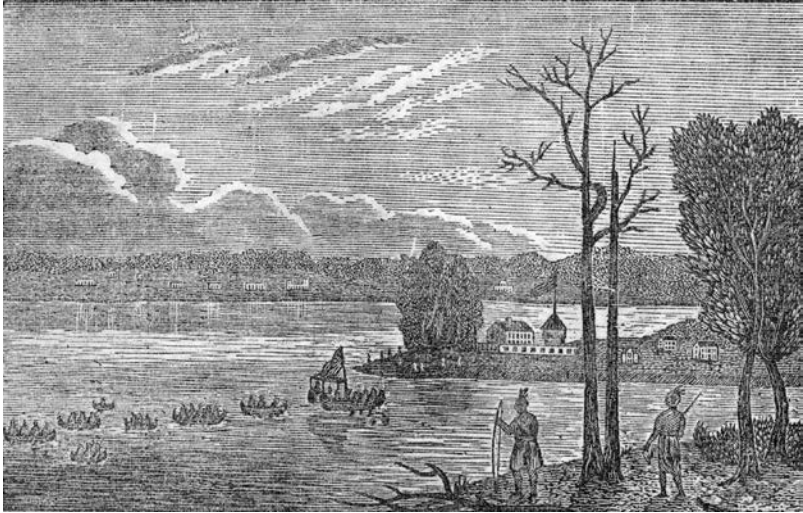


Figure 1. *Treaty at Fort Armstrong*. Artist's impression of Fort Armstrong on Rock Island. In Benjamin Drake, *The Great Indian Chief of the West: Or, Life and Adventures of Black Hawk* (Cincinnati: H. M. Rulison, 1855). University of Louisville Special Collections and Archives.

partner in dialogue. Instead, his conversations with Forsyth, LeClaire, and Davenport only offer a space for the promotion of removal policy:

I visited Rock Island. The agent [Forsyth] again ordered me to quit my village. He said, that if we did not, troops would be sent to drive us off. He reasoned with me, and told me, it would be better for us to be with the rest of our people, so that we might avoid difficulty, and live in peace. The *interpreter* [LeClaire] joined him, and gave me so many good reasons, that I almost wished I had not undertaken the difficult task that I had pledged myself to my brave band to perform. (99)

Black Hawk calls on Davenport, who had “long been my friend, but [was] now amongst those advising me to give up my village” (99). As he is prepared to listen to his “friend,” Black Hawk proves himself less intransigent than his interlocutors, all of whom see Sauk removal as the only viable option. Davenport inquires whether Black Hawk would consider a sum of six thousand dollars to “remove to the west side of the Mississippi” if it were authorized by William Clark, the superintendent of Indian trade at St. Louis. Yet before Black Hawk can make a decision, news

from St. Louis arrives that Clark “would give us *nothing!*—and said if we did not remove immediately, we should be *drove off!*” (100–101).

Black Hawk’s critique suggests that the war was not inevitable but that the conflict deteriorated due to a structure in which the shared rhetoric of these different actors (trader, Indian agent, interpreter, and superintendent) did not offer any space for serious dialogue. As Neil Schmitz has pointed out, in the narrative the trader, agent, and interpreter are unnamed and “spoken of almost as a single identity, because what they say to the Sauks is always the same.”<sup>23</sup> Even the replacement of the Indian agent Thomas Forsyth did not bring about any changes in the entrenched rhetoric within this network. In the spring of 1830, having served for eighteen years, Forsyth was dismissed from his service after voicing criticisms of Clark and was replaced by Felix St. Vrain, a sawmill operator who was only thirty-one years old.<sup>24</sup> Black Hawk initially imagines that Forsyth’s dismissal might bring about discursive change at Rock Island: “About this time our agent was put out of office. I then thought, if it was for wanting to make us leave our village, it was right—because I was tired of hearing him talk about it” (101). Black Hawk, however, finds only a continued lack of dialogue: “The interpreter, who had been equally as bad in trying to persuade us to leave our village, was retained in office—and the young man who took the place of our agent, told the same old story over, about removing us” (101). In other words, despite the appointment of a new Indian agent, the change in personnel does not bring about any discursive change.

Nevertheless, Black Hawk does not divest from diplomacy altogether, even as he begins to consider military action. At a key moment in the book, the tribal leader Neapope informs Black Hawk that British and Potawatami forces will come to his aid against the settler volunteers, as foretold by the Winnebago prophet Wabokieshiek. Keokuk, however, tries to convince Black Hawk that he has “been imposed upon by *liars*, and had much better remain where I was and keep quiet.” Keokuk proposes that they ask William Clark for permission to “go to Washington to see our Great Father” and have their “difficulties settled amicably” (111–12). It is only when they hear “nothing favorable from the great chief at St. Louis” that Black Hawk mobilizes his warriors. He notes that “the *peacable disposition* of Ke-o-kuck, and his people” has been “the cause of our having been driven from our village” and proceeds to “recruit all my own band” (112).<sup>25</sup> Here the narrative seems to present a clear binary: Black Hawk is action-driven, leaning toward military options, and swayed by Native informants, while Keokuk is passive,



“peacable,” and persuaded by the information from American officials. Yet even when Black Hawk first decides on military action, he does not reject the notion of further diplomacy. Once more he reminds his audience that Keokuk urged Davenport to request a diplomatic trip to Washington, but they “received no answer” from his superiors. As interpreted by Patterson and LeClaire, Black Hawk notes that “every overture had been made by Ke-o-kuck to prevent difficulty, and I anxiously hoped that something would be done for my people, that it might be avoided. But there was *bad management somewhere, or the difficulty that has taken place would have been avoided*” (112).<sup>26</sup> Black Hawk’s diagnosis of “bad management” obscures individual accountability, but it also blames the escalation of the conflict on the Indian Office’s management of information between its different administrators. Black Hawk points out a systemic inefficiency in the communication circuits that linked Keokuk and Davenport at Rock Island to Clark in St. Louis and the “Great Father” in Washington. In spite of their shared rhetoric of removal, the disconnect between the traders and administrators leaves no space for Black Hawk, Keokuk, or even Davenport to meaningfully influence policy.

Besides its critique of the Black Hawk War, then, the *Life* reveals how the entrenched rhetoric of removal policy worked in tandem with what Ronald Satz terms the “remarkable diffusion of power and decision making authority from Washington to the field.”<sup>27</sup> In its administration of Indian affairs, the federal government did not represent a far-reaching hegemonic power but rather a weak imperial node within the triad of colonial government, settlers, and Indian nations.<sup>28</sup> This is not to suggest that Indian removal happened in the *absence* of federal policy: indeed the violence of the Black Hawk War was a coordinated exertion of military power. But the Indian Office’s emphasis on local decision-making also placed the administration of Indian affairs with locally stationed individuals who were poorly connected to federal overseers and other agents.<sup>29</sup> This administrative decentralization meant that Indian removal not only depended on federal policy directives but was refracted through local and regional interests. Rather than a monolithic settler state, Black Hawk engaged a decentered Indian policy that was filtered through the face-to-face negotiations among tribal leaders, William Clark, Indian agents, and traders. The *Life*, then, does not resist diplomacy but inefficient diplomacy; not the management of Indian affairs but the “bad management” of a range of problematically connected agencies. It is in these spaces that Black Hawk offers a co-

gent critique of the administrative disconnect that marked federal Indian policy in the early nineteenth century.

### **“Our Wants and Our Wishes”: Keokuk’s Oratory as Institutional Intervention**

In its critique of the administration of Indian affairs, Black Hawk’s *Life* sees the oratory of the tribal leader Keokuk as a key factor in the Sauk Nation’s removal from Saukenuk. According to Black Hawk, Keokuk used his rhetorical skills to discredit him and to foment dissension among the Sauk: “Ke-o-kuck, who has a smooth tongue, and is a great speaker, was busy in persuading my band that I was wrong—and thereby making many of them dissatisfied with me” (98–99). Keokuk’s “smooth tongue” thereby plays an active role in the formation of Sauk factionalism, acceding to pressures from American treaty negotiators to abandon the village of Saukenuk.<sup>30</sup> “We were a divided people,” Black Hawk reflects, “forming two parties, Ke-o-kuck being at the head of one, willing to barter our rights merely for the good opinion of the whites; and cowardly enough to desert our village to them” (97–98). In light of Black Hawk’s refusal to remove, Keokuk’s legitimacy as tribal leader is compromised by his complicity in the decision-making of Indian agents, traders, and treaty commissioners. It is no accident, then, that where the *Life* is widely read today, Keokuk’s oratory has all but disappeared from critical review. In studies of Black Hawk’s *Life*, Keokuk has emerged alternately as a “nonwarrior who repeatedly violates Sauk traditions,” an “unreliable indicator of popular assent to US claims,” and as one of many “puppet leaders” who falsely assumed tribal leadership and worked at the behest of the United States government.<sup>31</sup>

The lack of critical attention to Keokuk’s oratory, however, risks overlooking a body of texts that inform us about the role of tribal leaders within bureaucratic discourses during the removal era. His performative interactions in US-Indian councils asserted the presence of a Sauk political voice within the loose networks that constituted the Indian Office. Phillip Round has argued that Indian nations’ participation in public discourse as a *political* presence depended on the bureaucratic structures of the Indian Office. The communication networks of the Indian Office revealed the “efforts of indigenous nations . . . to construct and perform a public, political *Indianness*” and constituted what Round calls a “mixed audience of Native and non-Native auditors in the public sphere of the early Republic.”<sup>32</sup> As a diplomat with frequent access to colonial administrators, Keokuk had intimate knowledge of the



Figure 2. Thomas M. Easterly, Chief Keokuk aka the Watchful Fox. Daguerreotype, 1847. Courtesy of the Missouri History Museum, St. Louis.

workings of the Indian Office and the protocols of Indian diplomacy. During the War of 1812 a Sauk tribal council had first appointed him as war chief, after which he became “a spokesman for the tribe with the United States government” and engaged in treaty councils with Thomas Forsyth and William Clark as early as 1816.<sup>33</sup> In 1824 he took part in a tribal delegation to Washington, where he contested the Osages’ sale of lands in Missouri, arguing successfully that these lands belonged to the Sauk “by the same right by which the United States claimed its land, by right of conquest.”<sup>34</sup> And in the summer of 1830 Keokuk secured a thousand dollar payment of trade goods to compensate for the death

of several Meskwaki men who had been killed by a Sioux war party. On this occasion Keokuk brought about two hundred warriors to the grounds of William Clark’s office in St. Louis, staging a public bodily performance of Sauk sovereignty to remind Clark that Native nations still had the capability to insist on the conditions of Indian diplomacy.<sup>35</sup>

Keokuk’s role in the Indian Office, however, depended on fraught collaborations with colonial administrators. Like Black Hawk’s *Life*, his councils with US administrators were oral performances that were transcribed and translated by government interpreters—most frequently Antoine LeClaire—and shaped by the colonial logics and limited options of US Indian policy.<sup>36</sup> One of his most frequent interlocutors was William Clark, the superintendent of Indian trade in St. Louis. Clark’s influence in this capacity ranged widely: he controlled Indian agents, issued licenses and passports, provided payments for injuries and injustices, arrested and punished lawbreakers, surveyed boundaries, distributed annuities, and conducted treaty councils.<sup>37</sup> As Jay Buckley observes, Clark’s importance in the region was such that American Indian leaders often deemed treaties invalid unless they were conducted with Clark

personally.<sup>38</sup> Keokuk's councils with Clark negotiated between the need to assert a politicized Sauk voice, and the Indian Office's ideological translation of his speech acts. In the spring of 1830, while conflicts between Black Hawk's "British Band" and white settlers intensified, Keokuk met with Clark to propose a delegation of Sauk leaders to Washington.<sup>39</sup> Clark had recommended the delegation to the US War Department, but he informed Keokuk that his superiors wished "to know more about it." Keokuk, however, refused to give Clark further details until he could meet in council with other Sauk and Meskwaki leaders. His silence pushed Clark to enumerate Keokuk's goals in his place:

You want peace among yourselves with your neighbors . . . You want to be settled . . . and to be by yourselves, that you may rise as a Nation. You want an enlargement of your annuities, so that you may be enabled to help yourselves in your new establishments. You are harassed with debts & you wish to be extricated from those which are now hanging over you. You are dissatisfied with the sale made of your lands many years since because it was not understood by the nation. You want it well understood by everyone. You also want to do something to unite the British party with your own & to bring both Tribes of Sacs & Foxes together, so as to be strong and respectable as a Nation. And you think if you could get rid of spirituous liquors from among you, your happiness & comfort could be effected . . . Have I not guessed pretty nearly your wants?<sup>40</sup>

Signing off on this list, Keokuk responded that Clark "described exactly our wants & our wishes."<sup>41</sup>

Keokuk's silence indicates that he occupied a position where he was not purely suppliant to Clark: he effectively forced the superintendent to adopt a Sauk political perspective and enumerate the many problems and crises that indigenous nations were facing. Still, with Keokuk assenting to Clark's projection of his political motivations, this stylized speech act also elaborated an American bureaucratic interpretation of Keokuk's demands. For instance, Keokuk assented to Clark's proposal to "bring both Tribes of Sacs & Foxes together, so as to be strong and respectable as a Nation." This controversial move to treat with the Sauk and Meskwakis as one nation (reaffirmed in the Treaty of 1832) streamlined Indian diplomacy but also ignored the Meskwaki's sovereign status as a separate nation.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, in a separate council, Clark recommended to

Keokuk the strategy of paying off their tribal debts through land cessions:

As we are now in private council, I will give you my opinion (my private opinion, & that from the Govt) of what you should do. You should offer to sell to the Government a piece of your land on the Mississippi for the purpose of enlarging your annuities, to enable you to pay your debts, & to assist you in farming . . . Should it succeed it will be the only means of keeping together all your people, by applying with effect for the general benefit whatever means the nation should possess.<sup>43</sup>

Clark's projection of Keokuk's "wants" and "wishes," then, was also an act of colonial translation, making Keokuk's politics legible in a situation that was shaped by the superintendent's own political projects. Furthermore, he capitalized on the interpersonal dimensions of Indian diplomacy, reiterating that these were his "private opinions, as your friend, not being authorized thereto by the Government."<sup>44</sup> But what made the council "private" all of the sudden? The interpreter was still there, the talk was written down and circulated (and archived) in the Indian Office, and Clark advised Keokuk on matters of public interest. Indeed, the categories of "public" and "private" fail to describe the context of these diplomatic interactions: the Indian Office was a loose network of indigenous and settler participants in councils and treaties, and the reliance of Indian diplomacy on face-to-face communications allowed administrators like Clark a significant measure of autonomy.<sup>45</sup>

Through the intimate dimensions of Indian diplomacy, however, Native leaders also claimed a significant measure of institutional agency, and Keokuk took up collaborative forms of writing to inflect US policy. He repeatedly charged the Indian Office with a failure to uphold the agreements made in treaties and outlined the ripple effects of white settlement in the Mississippi River Valley. In 1830 Keokuk criticized the Indian Office's failure to uphold the agreements of the treaty council at Prairie du Chien five years earlier. At the 1825 treaty council commissioners had negotiated peace and a reconfiguration of tribal borders with representatives from the Sioux, Sauk, Meskwaki, Menominee, Ioway, Winnebago, Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi nations.<sup>46</sup> In subsequent years, however, white settlement put pressure on the neutral hunting

grounds, which led to frequent violent conflicts between hunters from the Sioux and the Sauk and Meskwaki nations. At a council with William Clark in the summer of 1830, Keokuk therefore voiced his refusal to attend a new upcoming treaty council at Prairie du Chien in July of that year, due to the recent murder of Peahmuska, one of the Meskwaki signers of the 1825 treaty. Peahmuska had been invited by an Indian agent to come to Prairie du Chien on official business but was killed by an enemy war party on the way:

My Father: We have never before refused you anything, you have always said true (ever had your own way) but now we cannot go . . . I am firm and immovable in my determination not to go to Prairie du Chien . . . My Father: I now tell you from the bottom of my heart that I cannot go to Prairie du Chien & hope I will say true, and have my way in my turn, for once. I am done.<sup>47</sup>

Keokuk's decided tone signals a moment when the conversational back-and-forth of his councils became an uncompromising statement of an absolute position. Keokuk asked, "How is it possible for our people to go to P. du Chien? When [Peahmuska] went to Washington the President gave him a Flag, a medal & some other things; when he was going to P. du Chien he took these things with him to show who & what he was, but he was fallen upon by murderers, and his flag, Your Flag, the Flag of the United States was trod under foot & then burned."<sup>48</sup> Keokuk's rhetorical question directly communicated a political situation that was no longer tenable. By evoking the flag and medal that Peahmuska had received in Washington, he challenged the meaning of such symbols in light of the inability of the United States to provide the protections that it had promised.

In his own way, then, Keokuk, too, offered a critique of the treaty system, questioning the legitimacy and practical use of Indian diplomacy if the agreements they established had little meaning on the ground. In doing so he maneuvered Clark into a response that laid bare the limitations of the Indian Office. Clark explained that the death of Peahmuska resulted from what he called the "bad management" of Indian affairs around Prairie du Chien. He explained that the Indian agent who had invited Peahmuska "was ignorant of Indian affairs," thinking that "one or two chiefs could make a peace for both your Tribes." Moreover, he explained that Peahmuska was "killed at an unfortunate time for his people

& by bad management they were deceived.”<sup>49</sup> As in *Black Hawk’s Life*, the lack of specificity in this “bad management” registers a bureaucratic discourse in which agency and accountability were muddled. But Keokuk’s intervention did push Clark to explain that the invitation leading to Peahmuska’s death was “from a different power than that of a Sub Agent,” coming from a French fur trader of the Mackinac Company at Prairie du Chien.<sup>50</sup> As Clark acknowledged his own office’s inability to control the opaque roles of Indian agents and traders in a world of intertribal and imperial rivalries, Keokuk’s performative interactions identified the mismanagement of Indian affairs on the part of colonial administrators.

Over the following years, as conflicts with the Sioux intensified, Keokuk repeatedly addressed the failures of the reorganization of Indian country, but he did not see the issue addressed by Clark or other administrators. In 1832, along with seven other Sauk and Meskwaki tribal leaders, he collaborated on a letter to Clark that outlined recent conflicts with the Eastern Dakota, identified in the Indian Office records as the “Sioux.”<sup>51</sup> Pointing out that the Sioux “advanced within our boundaries seventy miles,” they insisted the US government “take such measures as will oblige the Sioux to keep within their own limits, for without this, it is impossible for a peace to last.”<sup>52</sup> Two years later Keokuk sat in council with General Henry Atkinson, the military commander at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. He implicated the Sioux agent’s involvement in the deterioration of intertribal relations, arguing that the “Sioux Agent and trader . . . advise the Sioux to go on the Sac land and hunt.” He argued that whereas the Indian agent and trader to the Sauk went “the straight road” and advised them “to keep back on our own land,” the trader and agent of the Sioux told them “to go any where they can find game.”<sup>53</sup> Settler expansion and Indian removal thus played out in a complex intertribal geography; Keokuk found himself caught between, on the one hand, the demands of Sauk and Meskwaki warriors who wanted him to enter into battle with the Sioux, and on the other hand, directives from Clark to preserve peace—but without any commitment from the Indian Office to make that attainable.

Given this difficult diplomatic position, Keokuk’s oratory displaced the more fundamental problem of white settler expansion onto the crisis of their conflicts with the Sioux. He explained to Atkinson that his long-standing request—for American administrators to regulate a changing world of intertribal borders and relations—had systematically been ignored by various colonial administrators:

Our Great Father the President had us all gather together at Prairie-du-Chien three different times to talk to us—and every time I expressed my wish that the Commissioners sent by the President could make known to the Sioux's that they were not to come on our land . . . last fall a year ago when Genl Scott made a treaty with us I requested him to tell the Sioux's to keep off our land—last spring I came to see Genl Clark and repeated the same words to him—and came here and repeated the same words to you.<sup>54</sup>

Keokuk documented the discrepancies between the promises made in treaties and the repeated failures to address the social upheavals caused by the reorganization of Indian country. By 1834, however, he also came to directly critique the encroachment of white Americans onto Sauk lands. That year he collaborated with three other tribal leaders—Pashpahoh, Wawk-kum-mee, and Pia-tshe-noay—on a letter to William Clark to protest the presence of white hunters in Sauk country. Since they had received “no satisfactory answer” from the Indian agent about this matter, they took “recourse to this paper”—and to the interpreter Francois Labussier—to inform Clark that there were “white people hunting on our land since last fall and their intention is to remain all this winter and the next spring.”<sup>55</sup> Again they critiqued the lack of accountability in the networks of the Indian Office, noting that they had “informed our father the Agent of our Tribes of it. But we received no satisfactory answer.” Appealing to Clark’s sense of “justice” and “benevolence,” they insisted the Indian Office “remedy our right that is violated by the White peoples.”<sup>56</sup>

Keokuk, then, was a more vocal critic of US Indian policy than his dismissal as a “puppet leader” allows. This does not mean, of course, that Keokuk undid the colonial logics and policies of these networks; by the same token his consistent participation in these diplomatic interactions reflects how the Indian Office co-opted the work of tribal leaders to accommodate American policy goals. Keokuk’s speech acts were constrained by the political projections of US administrators—Clark, Davenport, Street, and LeClaire—and ultimately did not resist the Indian Office’s promotion of Sauk removal. However, as the Sauk and Meskwaki nations faced the pressures of land encroachment and the erosion of their political sovereignty, these fraught collaborations also reveal an important attempt to find new routes within colonial governmental networks, to secure a critical, politicized Native voice within them.



### **“White Hard Money”: Economic Policy and Tribal Futures in Keokuk’s Oratory**

Seen alongside Black Hawk’s *Life*, Keokuk’s speeches are a reminder that Sauk removal was not limited to the events of the Black Hawk War, as they point to a longer history of land theft and bureaucratic mismanagement that eroded the Sauk and Meskwaki’s claim to place. Beyond the direct physical violence of the war, they dealt with the limitations of a diplomatic apparatus that tried and in many ways failed to manage the upheavals caused by white settlement.<sup>57</sup> If Indian nations were not, strictly, “internal” to the US settler state, Indian diplomacy was nevertheless shaped by the actions of a settler government that sought to secure Indian “pacification” by means of financial policy and the remapping of borders.

As Keokuk navigated this bureaucracy to secure a political Sauk voice within it, it is worth noting that his oratory expressed little distrust of the translated and written word. Rather, Keokuk recognized that the Sauk Nation had moved into a new situation where the written word was now central to the negotiation of US-Indian relations, and he embraced translation and transcription as techniques to prevent the inauspicious manipulation of spoken language. He repeatedly insisted that his words be written down on paper, to be sent to the American president in Washington. In council with General Henry Atkinson in 1834, Keokuk explained that “in shaking hands with you we shake hands with the Great Father the President. What we say to you now we wish you to put down on paper, so that the president may know what we have said to you.”<sup>58</sup> And at a council with the Indian agent Joseph Street, Keokuk requested he “send this talk to the President of the US and ask him to send us an answer by you in the Spring.”<sup>59</sup> Imagining that the written record of his oral communications would reach the “Great Father” in Washington, he saw written documents as holding the potential to be passed on in a reliable, routinized way. Relying on the pen as much as his own “smooth tongue,” he believed that “when you make treaties, you put them on paper and the paper cannot lie.”<sup>60</sup>

His investment in the constancy of the written word was an implicit criticism of Americans’ disregard for treaties. For Keokuk, only the complementary use of oratory and writing could make any council politically valuable, and he saw the potential of written documents not as deception but accountability. Although his own words were subject to colonial mistranslation, creating these written documents meant

establishing a material record of the failures of (oral) communications within the Indian Office. But to do so he had to rely on the available resources and collaborators within the US bureaucracy. For instance, the work of the government translator Antoine LeClaire was key in establishing this written record, and when in August 1834 an act of Congress threatened to reduce his pay, Keokuk protested the move:

This Man is our Interpreter, we have long used him, he speaks our language well, and when we want to speak to our Father we know he will get all say correctly, and that that what is said to us will be truly repeated. We have great confidence in him for he never deceived us. He now tells us you have reduced his pay so much that he will not be able to Interpret for what you offer him any longer . . . We are very sorry for this. For we can have no other Interpreter but this man.<sup>61</sup>

Keokuk's statement reflects the duality of his position. On one level, he was working in the interest of the Indian agent, traders, and translator at Rock Island; on another level he defended the need for the Sauk Nation to retain a voice in the negotiations between tribal leaders and the Indian Office. Yet he emphasized the importance of placing Sauk national interests above US financial considerations, arguing, "We have no confidence that our talk, and yours, would be truly understood . . . if this man is not by to talk between us. We hope our Great Father will consider this and . . . not deprive my Nation of their interpreter to save a little money."<sup>62</sup> Keokuk's support of LeClaire reflected his dependence on existing resources in these bureaucratic settings to retain a measure of control over their representation within scenes of Indian diplomacy.

Keokuk's diplomacy, then, did not only critique the workings of the Indian Office but sought to continue its operations to make them work positively for tribal-national economic and political goals. In the course of the 1830s Keokuk tethered this to the question of how annuity payments were made to the Sauk and Meskwaki nations. By 1834 there had emerged disagreement among tribal members and chiefs over whether annuities should be paid to tribal leaders to redistribute them or directly to individual families. As Michael Green explains, prior to that year there had not been a fixed policy: some annuities were paid in money and some in goods; some were made to the chiefs and others were made to the heads of individual families. In 1834 Congress investigated a new organization

of Indian policy regarding annuity payments: while it recommended payments to the chiefs, it was still possible to authorize individual payments if the tribe wished it.<sup>63</sup> Keokuk had argued in 1833 that payments to tribal leaders were already sanctioned by the principal chiefs. He asked, "When any thing happens between us & the whites or between us & other Indians, to whom do you apply? . . . When difficulties are to be settled, treaties to be held, or any business of consequence to be transacted, you apply to the Chiefs . . . The annuities should be paid in the old way—all concerned will be benefitted by it."<sup>64</sup> For Keokuk this prior practice—rooted in the traditional role of tribal leaders as redistributing goods—legitimized the disbursement to the civil chiefs, and the practice continued to be followed throughout the 1830s.

This practice became highly controversial and led to accusations of undue control over tribal funds, and Keokuk laid out several defenses for his decision. First, he insisted that the annuities should be paid to "one or two" of the principal chiefs to ensure social security for those in need:

Sometimes a considerate Indian comes to the Chiefs, and states that a poor family are suffering for Provisions or clothing, the Chief then has to buy and give to them. Old men who cannot hunt, old women who cannot work, or find support have to be fed & clothed by the heads of the nations, and if the Chiefs have no more means to afford the required relief, than others, the helpless and miserable must suffer.<sup>65</sup>

Second, Keokuk argued that the centralized payment would be a means to preserve peace with other Indian nations, as it enabled the chiefs to pay off warriors who might otherwise go to war in retaliation. He explained to William Clark, "In case of the deaths of a brave . . . the Chiefs can buy the necessary articles to bury him. It is also the only means which the Chiefs have of turning back a war party of young men—by paying them."<sup>66</sup> Keokuk found himself managing a transition from an older political economy—shaped by the redistribution of goods and the political agency of young warriors—to a new reality that was shaped by the economic relations among tribal nations, white settlers, and traders. Envisioning the annuity payments as a collective resource for a measure of social stability, Keokuk held that one of the most immediate problems facing the Sauks and Meskwakis was the economic assault on Indian country. By working through the Indian Office he elaborated

an economic policy that was aimed at “tribal economic solvency through small land cessions,” in an attempt to avoid the complete loss of Sauk and Meskwaki lands and removal from Iowa.<sup>67</sup> Managing tribal debts was key in this effort. Ever since Thomas Jefferson’s administration, US policymakers had pushed the idea of leading Indian nations into debt to make them “favorably disposed to extinguishing their debts through land cessions.”<sup>68</sup> To secure a future place for Indian nations therefore demanded a coherent vision of economic exchange and financial policy; receiving the annuity payments on a collective basis was a potential means to retain control over economic policy, reduce tribal debts, and prevent future land cessions.

But besides his arguments for centralized distribution to the chiefs, Keokuk also insisted that the annuity payments be made in specie, as was stipulated in their treaties with the United States. In 1837 Keokuk sat in council with the Indian agent Joseph Street and Captain Edward Hitchcock, the disbursement officer to the governor of Wisconsin Territory, and he addressed the rumors going around that the annuities were going to be paid in goods instead of what Keokuk called “white hard money.” Since the tribal leaders had promised to pay their traders in cash, receiving the annuities in goods would have put them in a difficult position. Similar to his insistence on a written record of US-Indian negotiations, Keokuk’s call for “white hard money” was materially linked to the American government’s obligations as written down in treaties:

I have been present at every treaty made with the Sac and Fox Nations, and they promise to pay for our lands in white hard money. Since we came here, we are told we are not to get money, but goods. Our promise to our trader is to pay money, and goods will not pay one money . . . When you bought our lands, we did not ask what you would do with them, they were yours to do what you pleased with them. We are told you have no more white hard money and can’t pay money. We want money to pay to different people to whom we have given our promises, and we desire to be faithful.<sup>69</sup>

It may be easy to see why Keokuk is not as widely read as Black Hawk, but his criticism was clear: Keokuk’s object was US accountability for the agreements they had made. “We sold you one land, and you promised to pay us hard money for it,” Keokuk reminded the Indian agent. “We moved off the land, and will abide by our Treaty, and so we hope will you.”<sup>70</sup>

Of course, Keokuk's critique failed to disrupt the colonial logics behind the treaty system, which translated Sauk and Meskwaki lands into a salable commodity. And his insistence that tribal leaders receive the annuity payments in cash has been dismissed by adversaries as a means to pocket the annuities to pay his "friends" at the trading houses, the American Fur Company and the Chouteau Company.<sup>71</sup> Yet the trading houses were a problematic but necessary component of a tribal economy that was based in a combination of trade, horticulture, and the winter hunt, or "seasonal round." Keokuk's catering to the traders reflected his people's slide into dependency and perhaps even the opportunism of tribal leaders, but it was also vitally important to keep up these trade relations. Removed from their homelands and experiencing rapid historical change, the Sauk and Meskwakis depended on the trading houses for a constant access to information, goods, and credit. The decline of the bison and game population had made their winter hunts less lucrative than in the past, and the encroachment of white settlers led to fewer neutral hunting grounds, making it harder to hunt without great risk of conflict.<sup>72</sup> In the midst of these disruptions, the traders represented crucial access to a variety of goods. Keokuk was perhaps naively dependent on them—all the more since American expansion thrived on promulgating tribal debts—but to maintain positive relations with traders was an important link in their economy. The trading houses extended credit for the necessary supplies to continue the seasonal round and keep the traditional economic organization alive into the end of the decade.<sup>73</sup>

Rather than only an opportunistic catering to traders, Keokuk's insistence on cash payments mattered especially in 1837, when a financial panic drastically changed economic relations. In May that year banks in New York had suspended specie payments at full face value, leading the United States into a long-term economic depression. The panic halted the influx of settlers in the west, and coins became virtually impossible to come by in the western territories.<sup>74</sup> As specie flooded out of the territories, Indian nations receiving cash payments became the only entities for miles around that had access to specie in a "nearly cashless world."<sup>75</sup> Susan Gray has argued that the panic of 1837 and the ensuing economic depression made the reassertion of economic exchange with white settlers a key factor in Native people's attempts to "claim a social and physical place" in the Midwest.<sup>76</sup> The crisis made it more appealing for settlers to keep Indian nations around longer, and their treaty-stipulated access to specie meant leverage in a society that was

economically being reconfigured by the panic. Seen in this light, Keokuk's insistence on cash payments could be important for establishing the Sauk and Meskwaki nations as a permanent presence in Iowa: their access to cash allowed for the possibility that they might become an economically stable influence in the region, making Indian removal an unattractive policy to white settlers in a region where coins were few and far between. Seeing the centrality of debts as a key factor in the vulnerability of Indian nations, Keokuk projected a situation beyond tribal debts, in which commercial relations with American traders would help tribal nations to carve out a less fragile position in a region that had been opened up for white settlement.

Unfortunately, Keokuk's vision proved to be a long shot. The annuity controversy was resolved without creating lasting political divisions: the annuities to the Sauk and Meskwakis were paid to the tribal chiefs as usual in 1840, split between the chiefs and families in 1841, and paid entirely to heads of families in 1842. But as divisive as the annuity controversy had been, the various factions united in 1841 over the political question of removal.<sup>77</sup> At the 1841 payments US commissioners pushed for the Sauk and Meskwaki nations to remove to present-day Minnesota, and Keokuk was widely supported in halting this scheme. But as the nations did not manage to achieve tribal solvency, and their tribal debts started to exceed annuity payments by 1842, they were forced to remove to western Iowa in 1843 and to Indian Territory four years later.<sup>78</sup>

The history of Sauk removal thus extended well beyond the crisis of the Black Hawk War, to the prohibitive pressures of white settlement and removal policy to bureaucratic mismanagement and tribal debts. Within this history Keokuk's oratory played an ambiguous part. On the one hand, he tried to make the colonial legacy of the treaty system work toward securing a more permanent presence for the Sauk and Meskwaki nations, in a region that was undergoing rapid historical change. On the other hand, Keokuk's participation in this diplomacy also perpetuated the problematic workings of US bureaucratic networks. It would be easy, therefore, to see Keokuk as the anti-Black Hawk—the accommodationist tribal leader who sold out to the settler state and white traders. After all, his oratory presents something that is often seen as a problem for literary and historical scholarship: the idea that agency can also mean the effort to keep things going as they are. But for Keokuk, maintaining the status quo also meant a political voice within settler networks, and the continuation of a traditional economy based in redistribution

and the seasonal round, a social system that was closely embedded in Sauk cultural and political life, however difficult it proved to maintain.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Keokuk got it “right.” His policies did not stave off further removal, he assented to treaties that signed away Sauk lands, and he took a side in the annuity debate that kept tribal funds out of reach from individual families. In this sense, the critique of Keokuk in Black Hawk’s *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kià-kiàk* logically invites critical reflections along the tropes of resistance and accommodation, casting Black Hawk as the conquered warrior-hero and Keokuk as the opportunistic sycophant to whites. As Thomas Burnell Colbert reminds us, “Americans traditionally have focused their attention on Native American leaders who opposed federal officials through armed resistance, glamorizing ‘war chiefs’ who led brave but futile military actions against the United States.”<sup>79</sup> Yet the conceptual clarity of Keokuk as a “puppet leader” at the behest of the United States government obscures the critical work that his oratory also performed. Neither Black Hawk’s nor Keokuk’s publications can be fully understood outside the context of US-Indian diplomacy and its complex overlay of policy, trade, and indigenous critique—these were the institutional contexts of Native writing and oratory. Critical attention to the ways indigenous writing was shaped by the protocols and idiosyncrasies of Indian diplomacy will help to understand the rhetorical and intellectual work of tribal leaders who operated in compromising colonial situations. As Matt Cohen writes, “Indigenous media worlds have always been multifaceted, multiformal, multimedia worlds of meaning-making,” and the publications of Black Hawk and Keokuk extended a long tradition of cross-cultural communication into new institutional domains.<sup>80</sup> These compromising textual collaborations both critiqued and sustained a bureaucracy whose structural mismanagement exacerbated the fragile position of Indian nations in a region that was undergoing dramatic change. Their critiques reflect the limited choices imposed by settler expansion and the treaty system, but to claim a place in the networks where policy was made and contested mattered then as it does today.

## Notes

I am grateful to Michelle Cassidy, Gregory Dowd, Sophie Hunt, Timothy Johnson, Stephen Schneider, Christie Toth, and Joseph Turner for their helpful suggestions.

1. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, vol. 2, 4th ed. (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1842), 210.

2. Caleb Atwater, *Remarks Made on a Tour to Prairie du Chien; thence to Washington City, in 1829* (Columbus: Isaac N., Whiting, 1831), 73; Benjamin Drake, *The Life and Adventures of Black Hawk: With Sketches of Keokuk, the Sac and Fox Indians, and the Late Black Hawk*

War, 7th ed., 1837 (Cincinnati: George Conlin, 1849), 126; Thomas McKenney, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America: With Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principal Chiefs*, 1836 (Philadelphia: D. Rice, 1872), 348.

3. Donald Jackson, "Introduction," in *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, ed. Donald Jackson, 1833 (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 31.

4. Thomas Burnell Colbert, "The Hinge on Which All Affairs of the Sauk and Fox Indians Turn: Keokuk and the United States Government," in *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest*, ed. Russell David Edmunds (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 55. Historical scholarship on Keokuk is relatively scarce, but Colbert's chapter offers an excellent discussion of his life and political career. Also worth noting is Thomas J. Lappas's account of Keokuk's political leadership in the events leading up to the Black Hawk War. See Thomas J. Lappas, "A Perfect Apollo: Keokuk and Sac Leadership during the Removal Era," in *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750–1850*, ed. Daniel P. Barr (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 219–35.

5. The Sauk and Meskwaki nations were culturally related and politically allied, although they still existed as separate nations. The Meskwakis (referred to as the "Foxes" by French traders and, later, American administrators) had their own government, but the Office of Indian Affairs dealt with the Sauk and Meskwaki nations in concert, eliding the cultural and political separation between the two.

6. Michael D. Green, "The Sac-Fox Annuity Crisis of 1840 in Iowa Territory," *Arizona and the West* 16, no. 2 (1974): 142.

7. Alvin Josephy Jr., *The Patriot Chiefs: A Chronicle of Native Resistance* (1958; New York: Penguin, 1976), 209–54.

8. For relevant discussions of publication as oral performance, see Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Sandra Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2009). On the question of authorship in Black Hawk's *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kiâ-kiâk*, see Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Joshua David Bellin, "How Smooth Their Language: Authenticity and Interculturalism in the Life of Black Hawk," *Prospects* 25 (October 2000): 485–511; Michelle Raheja, "I Leave It with the People of the United States to Say: Autobiographical Disruption in the Personal Narratives of Black Hawk and Ely S. Parker," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 30, no. 1 (2006): 87–108; and Krupat, *That the People Might Live: Loss and Renewal in Native American Elegy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

9. Walter Johnson identifies the limitations of the scholarly mode of "redress," which is hinged on the idea of the scholar who recuperates the previously unheard expressions and protests of a subaltern voice. His discussion argues against linking the concept of agency only to a universal human capacity of "resistance" and instead highlights people's theorization and strategizing of agency, even when it does not offer "resistance." Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 119–21.

10. Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

11. I use the abbreviated phrase "Indian Office" to refer to the Office of Indian Affairs in the remainder of this essay.

12. Black Hawk, *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kiâ-kiâk, or Black Hawk, embracing the tradition of his nation; Indian wars in which he has been engaged; cause of joining the British in their late war with America, and its history; description of the Rock River village; manners and customs; encroachments by the whites, contrary to treaty; removal from his village in 1831: with an account of the cause and general history of the late war; his surrender and confinement at Jefferson barracks and travels throughout the United States*, ed. J. B. Patterson (Cincinnati: J. B. Patterson, 1833), 28–29. All subsequent parenthetical references are to this first edition.

13. Roger L. Nichols, *Black Hawk and the Warrior's Path* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1992), 27–28; J. Gerald Kennedy, "Introduction," in Black Hawk, *Life of Mâ-ka-tai-me-she-kiâ-kiâk, or Black Hawk*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (1833; London: Penguin, 2008), ix.

14. Qtd. in Jay H. Buckley, *William Clark: Indian Diplomat* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 209.



15. Patrick J. Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 172.

16. Treaty with the Sauks and Foxes, 1832, in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2, ed. Charles J. Kappler (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 349.

17. For a discussion of the prisoners, their confinement, and their tour of the East Coast, see Donald Jackson, "Introduction," *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, 1–15; and Tena L. Helton, "What the White 'Squaws' Want from Black Hawk: Gendering the Fan-Celebrity Relationship," *American Indian Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 498–520.

18. Timothy Sweet, "Masculinity and Self-Performance in the Life of Black Hawk," *American Literature* 65, no. 3 (1993): 478.

19. The government recognized Davenport's residence as the Rock Island post office in 1825, even though Davenport himself was not sworn in as postmaster. See H. P. Simonson, "History of the Rock Island Post Office," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 9, no. 3 (1916): 292–93.

20. See John Lee Allaman, "The Patterson Family of Oquawka," *Western Illinois Regional Studies* 11 (Spring 1988): 57; Charles Snyder, "Antoine LeClaire, the First Proprietor of Davenport," *Annals of Iowa* 23, no. 2 (1941): 85–93. Allaman notes that Patterson was related to the Davenport family, although it is not clear what the family connection was. At Fort Armstrong Patterson also met Addison Philleo, the editor of the Democratic newspaper *The Galenian*, who asked Patterson to temporarily take over the position of editor while he was fighting in the war. Patterson was recruited to join the Twenty-Seventh Regiment of the Illinois Volunteers, working as the regimental printer during the war.

21. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 92.

22. *Ibid.*, 92–93.

23. Neil Schmitz, *White Robe's Dilemma: Tribal History in American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 71.

24. Kerry Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York: Holt, 2007), 89. St. Vrain fell sharply in line with Clark and (like Forsyth before him) advocated strong government intervention in the conflict with Black Hawk. St. Vrain's appointment had a hint of nepotism to it. Kerry Trask notes that St. Vrain had "almost no experience" in Indian affairs but belonged to a "politically important" family in St. Louis and was a good friend of the senator who recommended him for the position to William Clark.

25. The italics appear in the original text.

26. The italics appear in the original text.

27. Ronald Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).

28. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer who has helped me to clarify this point.

29. See Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 111. Rockwell pushes back against Ronald Satz's argument in *American Indian Policy* that the role of the federal government in removal was that of an "incorrigible bungler." Rather, Rockwell argues, the decentralization and inefficiency of the Office of Indian Affairs was a more knowing assertion of power. The role of local and regional interests in removal in the Midwest are dealt with sensitively and critically in John P. Bowes's *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017); Bowes, "Indian Removal beyond the Removal Act," *NAIS* 1, no. 1 (2014): 65–87; and Susan E. Gray, "Of Two Worlds and Intimate Domains," in *Beyond Two Worlds: Critical Conversations on Language and Power in Native North America*, ed. James Joseph Buss and C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 161–80.

30. Both Joshua David Bellin and Mark Rifkin have noted that Keokuk's "smooth tongue" echoes Black Hawk's earlier reflection on his interactions with white Americans: "How smooth must be the language of the whites, when they can make right look like wrong, and wrong like right." See Bellin, "How Smooth Their Language": Authenticity and Interculturalism in the Life of Black Hawk," *Prospects* 25 (2000): 494–95; Mark Rifkin, "Documenting Tradition: Territoriality and Textuality in Black Hawk's Narrative," *American Literature* 80, no. 4 (2008): 695.

31. See Sweet, "Masculinity and Self-Performance," 485; Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of US National Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 100; Bellin, "How Smooth Their Language," 486. Of these critiques, Mark Rifkin is most careful to suggest the probability that Keokuk's status as a "puppet leader" is an effect, at least in part,

of Black Hawk's rhetorical strategy in the *Life*. Rifkin recognizes Black Hawk's challenging of Keokuk's leadership as a wider critique of the "republican logic of the treaty-system," seeking an "alternative, decentralized vision of Sauk politics."

32. Phillip Round, "Performing Indian Publics," in *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603–1832*, ed. Joshua David Bellin and Laura L. Mielke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 251.

33. Colbert, "Keokuk," 55–56.

34. *Ibid.*, 56.

35. Minutes of a council with the Sacs & Foxes, March 27, 1830, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, roll 728, Sac and Fox Agency, 1824–33 (hereafter "Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs" is abbreviated to LR-OIA). See also Colbert, "Keokuk," 58.

36. In this light, Keokuk's oratory may be seen as what Scott Richard Lyons calls an "x-mark": a signifier of Native assent in a context in which possibilities and choices are severely limited in light of colonialism, federal Indian policy, and other pressures on tribal nations. Lyons argues that although such signifiers of assent are problematic and circumscribed by colonial dynamics, they also should be taken seriously as expressions of Native agency. See Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 1–34.

37. Buckley, *William Clark*, 147.

38. *Ibid.*, 148.

39. Minutes of a council with the Sacs & Foxes.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. For a longer history of how this colonial logic played out in the Great Lakes region, see Michael Witgen's history of the Anishinaabe in *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

43. Minutes of Council with the Sacs & Foxes.

44. *Ibid.*

45. As Stephen Rockwell writes, before the increased bureaucratization of the Office of Indian Affairs in the second half of the nineteenth century, its operators were typically "more innovative, more independent, and more autonomous" than in later times, wielding a bureaucratic autonomy in which interpersonal communication was still central to exerting political influence. Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

46. In the records of the Office of Indian Affairs, the name "Sioux" refers to people of the Dakota tribes, the easternmost groups of the larger Sioux confederation.

47. Council with the Sacs & Foxes, June 14, 1830, LR-OIA, roll 728, Sac and Fox Agency, 1824–33.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. The interpreter was the French-Sauk interpreter Francois Labussier, who frequently interpreted Keokuk's words in council. See Trask, *Black Hawk War*, 152.

52. Petition to General William Clark, December 19, 1832, LR-OIA, roll 728, Sac and Fox Agency, 1824–33.

53. Minutes of a talk held at Jefferson Barracks, March 27, 1834, LR-OIA, roll 729, Sac and Fox Agency, 1834–37.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Keokuk et al. to William Clark, January 28, 1834, LR-OIA, roll 729, Sac and Fox Agency, 1834–37.

56. *Ibid.*

57. As Kate Flint suggests, for American Indians—as for other groups—an important upheaval of the modern age was a new "role, as subjects, rather than agents, in the formations and development of a huge nation-state and their subjection to externally imposed bureaucracy." Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 84.

58. Minutes of a talk held at Jefferson Barracks.

59. Substance of a talk made to Gen. Joseph M. Street, Indian Agent, August 19, 1934, LR-OIA, roll 729, 1834–37.

60. At a talk held with the confederated Tribes of Sac and Fox Indians, June 24, 1837, LR-OIA, roll 729, Sac and Fox Agency, 1834–37.

61. Substance of a talk made by the principal chiefs of the United Tribes of Sac & Fox Indians, August 19, 1834, LR-OIA, roll 729, Sac and Fox Agency, 1834–37.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Green, “Sac-Fox Annuity Crisis,” 143.
64. Extract from talks of Keokuck, March 25 and 27, 1833, LR-OIA, roll 728, Sac and Fox Agency, 1824–33.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. Colbert, “Keokuk and the United States Government,” 64.
68. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs*, 62. See also Rockwell, 88, 94.
69. At a talk held with the confederated Tribes of Sac and Fox Indians, June 24, 1837.
70. *Ibid.*
71. This, indeed, was the view later espoused by the Sauk leader Hardfish, a follower of Black Hawk’s, and Robert Lucas, the first territorial governor of Iowa Territory. See Robert Lucas, “Indian Affairs of Iowa in 1840,” *Annals of Iowa: A Historical Quarterly*, third series, 15, no. 4 (April 1926): 255–80; Lucas, “Third Annual Message, November 3, 1840,” in *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, ed. Benjamin F. Shambaugh (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1903), 147–55. Also see the discussion in Colbert, “Keokuk and the United States Government,” 62–63.
72. Hagan, *Sac and Fox Indians*, 206–8. In addition, the administration of Indian affairs was marked by a woeful lack of continuity: the Indian agent Thomas Forsyth had been forced to resign in 1829, his replacement Felix St. Vrain was killed during the Black Hawk War, his successor Joseph Street typically resided in St. Louis the greater part of the year until he too died in 1840, and William Clark fell ill and died in 1837. Also, US territorial mappings had transferred the Sauk homelands from being located in “Indian country” to Wisconsin Territory in 1836 to Iowa Territory in 1838, changing the local administration of Indian Affairs each time.
73. *Ibid.*, 206–8. In addition to selling supplies, traders were a problematic but potentially powerful ally, and they typically tried to delay removal out of personal interests, as “each new treaty could be another bonanza” for the trading houses. Prucha, *Great Father*, 93.
74. Peter L. Rousseau, “Jacksonian Monetary Policy, Specie Flows, and the Panic of 1837,” *Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 2 (2002): 457–59.
75. Susan Gray, “Limits and Possibilities: White-Indian Relations in Western Michigan in the Era of Removal,” *Michigan Historical Review* 20, no. 2 (1994): 81.
76. *Ibid.*, 78.
77. Colbert, “Keokuk and the United States Government,” 65–66.
78. *Ibid.*, 66.
79. *Ibid.*, 67.
80. Matt Cohen, “‘Between Friends and Enemies’: Moving Books and Locating Native Critique in Early Colonial America,” in *The World, the Text, and the Indian: Global Dimensions of Native American Literature*, ed. Scott Richard Lyons (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 108.