“Christianizing and Civilizing the Heathen”: Gender and US Policy on the Cheyenne Missions, 1896–1934

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One hazard of publishing is having to eat one’s words. Close to twenty years ago an article published in this very journal contained this phrase: “Among Anabaptists, the critique of the state is not limited to war but is accompanied by a general non-state or even anti-state sensibility. . . . Anabaptist women . . . are likely less enmeshed in the gendered structures of state formation and preservation.”[1] Because of a Quiet in the Land (QIL) identity, my co-author and I were certain that women of Anabaptist traditions eschewed involvement in nation-state policies.[2] Mennonite missionary Bertha Kinsinger Petter’s life and words directly contradict this certainty. Bertha worked for the Mennonite Board of Missions serving Cheyenne missions for nearly seventy years. Her story reveals consistent collaboration between Mennonite missionaries and US government officials as they sought to assimilate Native Americans, or in the words of the day, to “christianize and civilize the heathen.” Mennonite women were not alone in this regard. Writing in their introduction to *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, the editors state, “Yet even when American missionaries operated in environments in which overt American political power was absent, as was typically the case, missionary goals usually supported US political goals.”[3]

Furthermore, because of their QIL identity and mentalities, Mennonite women like Bertha were uniquely suited to carry out the government's assimilationist policies and processes. On the Cheyenne missions, gender mattered.

The Quiet in the Land or *die Stille im Lande* (German is also used) is an evocative phrase referenced by Mennonites and related groups to describe their historic reluctance to engage in the public arena. The phrase is usually applied to the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement when Anabaptists sought to escape religious persecution in Europe. Persecution was so severe that the men and women of the socio-religious movement that shook Europe and challenged popes and reformers alike retreated from universities and cities into small, isolated farming villages. From the sixteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Anabaptist groups including Mennonites migrated from one country to the next in search of religious tolerance, freedom from military conscription, and good farmland.[4] Currently, the phrase continues to be employed as colloquial shorthand that embraces multiple layered meanings. For many who claim an Anabaptist heritage, the phrase has implications for personal identity and comportment, community and church leadership and visibility, and interactions with the nation-state.

Historically, quietude as a personality trait was valued. Both men and women were expected to embody calmness, gentleness, humility, and an unhurried demeanour. Among Amish, the concept of *Gelassenheit* or submission was a primary personality trait to which both women and men were expected to conform.[5] One clearly sees differences in gender expectations at the local community level. Mennonite men were expected to be visible, vocal, and active in church affairs and on decision-making committees. Women were excluded from vocal participation in community, church, and other institutionalized forms of decision-making.[6] Injunctions against women's agency were based on biblical passages, especially 1 Corinthians 14:34–35:

> As in all congregations of God's people, women should not address the meeting. They have no license to speak, but should keep their place, as the law directs. If there is something they want to know, they can ask their own husbands at home. It is a shocking thing that a woman should address the congregation.[7]

Manifestations of QIL in relation to the nation-state applied to men as well as women. Non-participation in the armed services was a result of pacifist religious convictions—again, stemming from sixteenth-century experiences. Today, not voting in municipal and federal elections, which some church leaders still encourage, could also be considered part of the QIL legacy.[8]

Mennonite women kept silent. Their quietude helped define Mennonites as a people apart.[9] But were they? This study starts in 1896. Not unlike their Victorian neighbours of the late nineteenth century, Mennonite values mirrored what women's historians have termed "The Cult of Domesticity" or "The Cult of True Womanhood." White, middle- to upper-class women of this era were, in the words of historian Barbara Welter, "to exemplify four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submission, and domesticity."[10] There are strong parallels between these "Cults" and Mennonite QIL concepts as applied to women. Mennonite women were also to embody piety, submissiveness, and purity.[11] The most obvious outward sign among conservative groups, the head covering, reminded women of these expectations.[12] They were to submit to their fathers and husbands, remain quiet in public settings, including the church, and channel their energies into domestic concerns. Embodying QIL concepts and traits arguably continue to shape Mennonite identity in profound ways, despite assimilation into American culture. This investigation centres on how one Mennonite woman both embraced and challenged QIL gendered expectations and how those fed into her complicated legacy of supporting United States government assimilationist policies regarding Native Americans.

Mennonite missionary Bertha Kinsinger Petter served in Oklahoma with the Southern Cheyenne from 1896 to 1916. After 1916, she served forty-seven additional years among the Northern Cheyenne in Lame Deer, Montana, until 1963, when she retired to a nursing care facility in Billings. She died in 1967. Bertha's voluminous papers and records reveal that the Mennonite missionary agenda was closely aligned with nation-state objectives to "christianize and civilize the heathen," an agenda that many Cheyennes resisted. A careful examination of Bertha's writings shows that at least some Mennonites rejected or forgot their historical critiques of nation-state power and often enthusiastically supported state objectives. In an ironic twist, Mennonite women stood to benefit handsomely from their encounters with Cheyennes, since Cheyenne women were not Cult of True Womanhood adherents—passive and submissive—but instead practiced forms of assertive womanhood that arguably remain alien to many Mennonite women.

Bertha was born in Trenton, Ohio, in 1872, to parents who were members of a self-professed progressive church that emphasized education and missions.[13] She was likely the second American Mennonite woman to graduate from a four-year college, the first being her aunt, Otelia Augspurger Compton.[14] A few months after graduating from Wittenberg College in the spring of 1896, Bertha arrived on the windy, semi-arid plains of Oklahoma Territory. There she stretched and challenged QIL concepts. Bertha became fluent in Cheyenne, a prolific writer, and an enduring and passionate advocate for the Cheyenne mission. Historian John D. Thiesen has called her the most prominent American Mennonite woman of her era, from the turn of the century until the 1950s.[15] Young Bertha pursued missionary work as a lifelong career and was uninterested in marriage. She was, in some ways, a Mennonite New Woman and representative of many women in the Progressive Movement.[16] These women rejected dominant views of femininity—that women were to be submissive, pious, pure, and domestic. But Bertha was complicated. Her records indicate that while she rejected gendered QIL or "Cult" ideas when it came to her own life, she consistently advocated for these ideas when it came to other women, especially missionary "wives of." On the Cheyenne mission, Mennonite gender constructions were key to US government assimilationist policies of which Bertha was certainly a proponent.

Christianizing and Civilizing the Heathen

Mennonites were invited to Oklahoma Territory as a result of President Grant's "Peace Policy" which encouraged Quakers and Mennonites to administer and teach in the defunct US Army schools.[17] President Grant thought that the historic peace churches could reach out to Native American tribes in ways that were closed to the Army, with its history of genocide, and to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with its history of corruption and incompetent management.[18] The first Mennonite mission was started among the Arapaho by the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1880 in Darlington, Oklahoma Territory, just four years after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, as historian James C. Juhnke has noted.[19] The Arapaho were close allies of the Cheyenne. The Mennonites eagerly expanded their mission to the Cheyenne when they accepted the government gift of school buildings in Cantonment, Oklahoma Territory, in 1882.[20] Juhnke argued that in so doing, Mennonites welcomed, perhaps naively, an "alliance with the oppressor." He asked:

> How could Mennonites operate from a place which had served the devastating purposes of the United States Army? Would not such an identification frustrate the very purposes of the mission?[21]

In accepting the US commission to assimilate Native Americans, Mennonites seemed to have forgotten their QIL mentalities and their historical suspicion of nation-state power. Instead, they enthusiastically embraced President Grant's policy. Who would carry out this work of assimilating Native Americans into mainstream American culture? Many of those sent by the home churches to "christianize and civilize the heathen" were single women.

There were, even during the earliest years at the first mission station in Cantonment, a number of women. From 1883 to 1901, sixty-one missionaries arrived. Of these, thirty-four (a little over half) were women, but only seven were married. Twenty-seven of the women were single.[22] Another record shows that from 1880 through 1929, 107 Mennonite missionaries served in the Southern Cheyenne mission in Oklahoma. These missionaries served in additional placements, not just at Cantonment. Of these, forty-nine, or 46 percent, were women.[23] According to this record, twenty-three women arrived as single women, though it seems from the notation "became Mrs. . . ." that at least four, including Bertha, were married to fellow missionaries while in service. Mennonites were not alone in their skewed gender numbers. Historians have found that most of the teachers in government schools were women.[24] Furthermore, as Reeves-Ellington et al. note, "By 1880, one in three students in higher education was a woman; by 1890, two out of three missionaries were women; by 1915 women's mission societies formed the largest American women's social movement."[25] Mennonite women's involvement in missions reflected these national trends even though many Mennonites were newly arrived immigrants.

Those sent to assimilate "the heathen" were barely assimilated themselves. The women who served the Darlington and Cantonment schools came from rural Mennonite settlements in Kansas, Ohio, Missouri, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Oklahoma Territory. Many of their home settlements were newly established immigrant communities. For example, several sending Kansas Mennonite churches were founded by German-speaking immigrants from Russia in 1874. Juhnke has argued that the Mennonite immigrants came to America seeking "freedom as the power to maintain their distinctive and severely disciplined communities."[26] He found that Kansas Mennonites did not eagerly seek naturalization and that many did not "take out first papers" or become naturalized citizens until decades after migrating. For many if not most of the young women, including Bertha, Low German was their mother tongue and Mennonite schools taught both Bible Studies and High German.[27] At that time Mennonite church services were conducted in High German. Many early mission reports from Oklahoma Territory to the home churches and the Mennonite Mission Board were written in High German. Bertha wrote to the home or sending churches in a 1919 mission report, "I am German as my grandparents came from Germany. . . . I by no means want to neglect or forget my German."[28] Mennonites were not interested in assimilation themselves and yet they eagerly accepted the task of assimilating Native Americans into American culture, teaching them English, how to farm, and how to maintain a household.[29]

Why would single women leave their quiet homes in close-knit farming villages and travel to Indian Territory? Though just over two hundred miles from the Mennonite farm settlements in Kansas, Native American lands in Oklahoma Territory may have seemed worlds away to young missionary women of the late nineteenth century. Did these women have a sense of adventure? Did they want a "Wild West" experience? Perhaps they wanted a break from the seasons, from the routine of farm work. Perhaps they were swayed by the myth of the romantic noble savage, so prominent in late nineteenth-century culture. More likely, as one finds in Bertha's letters to her cousin Samuel Kinsinger, a missionary in India, the young single women were primarily motivated by deep religious conviction. In the pejorative vernacular of the time, they believed they were called to save the "bunch of stock heathen."[30]

Bertha's letters depict a serious young woman who eschewed dancing and parties and instead devoted her efforts to Bible and language study. At Wittenberg College, she distinguished herself as an excellent student.[31] Bertha started school wanting to become a concert pianist but felt called to the mission field. She studied Latin and Greek, in addition to honing her command of German and English. Near the end of her schooling, Bertha was offered numerous mission placements, both in the US and abroad. She struggled with her decision as revealed in a letter to her cousin Samuel Kinsinger:

> Oh the agony, the suspense, the wrestling of . . . these days. . . . In a week I hope that the final decision will have been made. It may be India, it may be Arizona, it may be Oklahoma. . . . Lead then me on.[32]

Her decision to go to Oklahoma ran her afoul of her family. Decades later recounting her troubles she made only two sparsely worded references to her family's reaction: "It was not self-will that brought me to Oklahoma against the wish of my relatives. 'A college degree and waste it on dirty Indians?' was their comment."[33] In a letter to the Mission Board in 1960 Bertha remembered,

> My grandmother, when approached by my pastor asking help to pay some or all of my salary as a mission offering, flatly refused, "Kein roter

> Cent bekommt die Bertha wenn sie zu den dreckigen Indianer geht" [Not one red cent will come to Bertha if she goes to the dirty Indians]. When I bid her goodbye, she said to me, "Aber nimm Dir einen feinen Kamm" [Take this fine comb].[34]

No doubt Bertha's grandmother reflected the racist mindset of the time, as her portrayal of Indians as "dirty" reveals. Her choice of words "not one red cent" seems more than a little ironic, given the context. Young Bertha defied her grandmother and left for the mission field in Oklahoma Territory, evidently with a fine comb, but with no money and no familial blessings. Defending her decision in 1960, she recounted in a letter to her step-daughter Olga, that she was not following her own selfish desires. She wrote, "God . . . called me from my mother's womb," justifying her decision by asserting that she was responding to a call from God.[35] Bertha's letters to Olga and her cousin Samuel make clear that she was a devout Christian. Beyond responding to a call from God, missionary work was one of the few areas where women with Bertha's gifts could exercise leadership and develop their professional capabilities.

It is well established that missionary work allowed women to engage in the public sphere in ways forbidden to them in their home churches and communities.[36] Historian Wendy Urban-Mead's research on a Brethren in Christ missionary in Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) offers some fascinating parallels with Bertha. H. Frances Davidson, educated and energetic, left her teaching post at McPherson College in Kansas, where she taught German and Greek, to lead a mission station in Africa. According to Urban-Mead, Davidson "had already pressed the boundaries of acceptable female agency and leadership as far as she could go in the North American environment."[37] On the mission stations, women like Bertha and Davidson attained leadership positions and influence not available to them prior to their work as missionaries. As missionaries, they had a platform, both in the mission field and in their home churches. Women from the mission travelled home to the sending churches, wrote reports, and presented publicly during Sunday morning services, in Sunday School classes, and in meetings held in homes, a more acceptable venue for women. They were more active in mission stations and churches than home churches and their numbers alone uphold the argument that on the mission station gender mattered. Whatever their motivations might have been in the late nineteenth century, Mennonite women were like many of their sisters in Catholic and Protestant congregations. While operating fully within church-sanctioned activities, their work crossed cultural boundaries in which they interacted with and learned from people who were comfortable with traditions of assertive womanhood. Doing God's work and spreading the Gospel gave them the freedom to speak up and subvert the biblically-sanctioned ideals of the Quiet in the Land and the Cult of True Womanhood.

When Bertha and her mission sisters stepped out of horse-drawn wagons and onto Oklahoma's red clay soils they encountered a culture uniquely equipped to challenge Mennonite QIL sensibilities. The Cheyenne called themselves the *Tsitsistas*, which translates into "the People." The *Tsitsistas* that Bertha found in 1896 carried in their recent memory not only the Battle of the Little Bighorn, but also the horror of two massacres: Sand Creek in 1864 and Washita in 1868. The tribe had been ravaged first by disease, cholera, and smallpox, and then decimated by the US Army. Forced onto allotment lands and subsisting on inadequate and often-inedible government rations, Cheyennes had faced unimaginable horrors and hardship. Those who survived were caught in an historic moment of uncertainty. Would the *Tsitsistas* remain? How would they survive?

Unlike Mennonite and other white women of the late nineteenth century, the Cheyenne cultivated traditions of assertive womanhood. With few exceptions, the early accounts we have of the Cheyenne were written by white men. Relying on depictions and interpretations by white males is, of course, problematic.[38] These accounts point to a common understanding of Cheyenne womanhood, which was not nuanced or even very accurate. Among mid-nineteenth-century white traders and army officers, descriptions of Cheyenne women mirrored Cult of True Womanhood ideals. Cheyenne women were praised for their chastity, cleanliness, and productivity.[39]

The Cheyenne, including women, were the middle-operators of the plains and traded widely along well-established networks.[40] At a time when white married women could not own property, Cheyenne women owned their own "private property," as Bertha observed in her publications.[41] Cheyenne women also formed high-status guilds or Women's Societies.[42] Both men's and women's societies controlled access to status, goods, and labour and constituted a "tribe nation."[43] Unlike Mennonite women, Cheyenne women limited their procreation, mainly through abstinence. Cheyenne women could also divorce without the threat of stigma.[44] Mennonite women, by contrast, were expected to "replenish the earth," and divorce was simply unheard of. The prominent chronicler of Cheyenne life George Bird Grinnell observed that Cheyenne women were often more powerful than the men.[45] Indeed, Peace Chief Lawrence Hart recounted how Cheyenne women freely directed tribal decisions.[46]

Unlike Mennonite women, Cheyenne women were active agents in the public sphere.

Nation-State Objectives and Women's Work

Bertha's first foray into the public sphere was in the form of a small booklet, *Frauenarbeit in Unserer Mission* (Women's work in our mission).[47] Published in German in 1896, *Frauenarbeit* explained life on the mission station to the home, also known as "sending," churches. In the booklet, Bertha supported "civilizing the heathen" through women's work. She wrote that married missionary women with children should be content to serve "indirectly." Clean, orderly homes, primly dressed children, and well-fed husbands were a civilized, domestic, and Christian witness to Cheyennes. In *Frauenarbeit*, she assumed that Cheyennes would view Mennonite domesticity, modelled by "wives of" missionaries, as a superior way of life and, quite naturally, ask to be baptized and convert to Christianity. *Frauenarbeit* reflected Mennonite QIL and Cult of True Womanhood gender constructions of the day: married women were to be pious and quiet, deferential, and supportive of their husbands in the church and at home. The paramount female concerns were orderly households, well-behaved children, and support for their husband's missionary endeavours.

The woman's domestic sphere was foundational for US assimilationist policies. Taming "wild" Cheyennes into proper, productive farmers depended on the soft influence or the "soft imperialism" of respectable, Christian women, both white and Cheyenne.[48] Accordingly, most of the converts to Christianity, especially in Oklahoma, were women and Cheyenne women became leaders in the church. Bertha argued that these women converts would lead their families to the church, convert their husbands, and send their children to the Mennonite schools. As model housewives, they would encourage their husbands to put down the bow and the pipe and pick up the Bible and the plow. Yet as keen as Bertha was for other women, missionary, and Cheyenne, to adhere to domestic femininity, she did not apply these ideas to her own life. It is ironic that Bertha, then newly graduated and single, had no intention herself to marry or to engage in "indirect" mission work. Instead, Bertha engaged rigorously in "direct" mission work, first as a teacher, then as a translator, and later as a preacher and church leader.

Christianizing in the Schools

Like other single women, Bertha initially taught classes in the mission school.[49] She spent three years in the classroom before moving into translation work. Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay argue that white women missionaries were not as closely identified with the nation-state and the army as were the men and therefore were more readily embraced by Native Americans.[50] Cathy Ann Trotta makes a similar point in writing about Pueblo women.[51] However, when serving as teachers, missionary women furthered United States colonialist policies of pacification, subjection, and cultural annihilation, even if the gendered dynamics of women's relationships with Native Americans were presented as warm, friendly, and in contrast to those aims.[52]

The Mennonites who worked with the Cheyenne in the schools and churches were committed to government objectives of Native American assimilation into US society. Based on their activities, the Mennonite preference for being non-statist outsiders in "the Quiet in the Land" tradition seems to have been completely forgotten. During the morning hours, Cheyenne children learned English, reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography, and received forty-five minutes of religious instruction. In the afternoon, girls were trained in the domestic arts of cooking, cleaning, and sewing and boys in animal husbandry and agriculture.[53] Like other denominational schools, pictures of the Mennonite boarding schools in Darlington and Cantonment, Oklahoma, show rows of crisply dressed children in Western suits and dresses, their hair cut, and standing politely. J. van der Smissen, a member of the General Conference Mennonite Mission Board, offered both support and a critique of government civilizing attempts:

> The Government does much in a most praiseworthy manner for the literary education of the Indian; but experience has made it clear that the civilization of these people must be accomplished in an altogether different manner. . . . Our dear mission workers desire to accustom the Indians to work, to get them to love work, to teach them the blessings of labor.[54]

It seems most Mennonite missionaries did not share van der Smissen's caution regarding government education. They, like other denominational missionaries of their time, were enthusiastic about boarding schools, despite the obvious cultural damage which many scholars and Native people have compared not to assimilation but to annihilation.[55] Primary sources produced by missionaries do not reveal strong alternative views to those held by government officials.

For example, Mennonite missionary Anna S. Linscheid wrote how it was thought that through the children educated at the school the missionaries could also reach the parents to "christianize and civilize" them.[56]

Southern Cheyenne scholar Henrietta Mann discusses Mennonite boarding schools as part of a broader study in *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education, 1871–1982*.[57] She found that although Mennonite educators were "sensitive to cultural differences" ultimately their goal was to "Christianize," and that their boarding schools, funded by the US Congress, "were dedicated to the same goals as government schools."[58] Further historical investigation into Mennonite boarding schools, both in Oklahoma and Montana (and also among the Hopi in Arizona), needs to be accomplished. Mann's early treatment posits that Mennonite schools supported government objectives and did not differ significantly from those of other denominations.[59]

Translating Salvation

The assertion that Mennonite women missionaries carried out state assimilationist mandates can seem complicated when one investigates missionary efforts to preserve the Cheyenne language. Here Mann's research is helpful. She found that the only time the Cheyenne language was allowed in the schools and on the mission, by government regulation, was for the purpose of Christian salvation. Teaching in Cheyenne was not allowed. Preaching was.[60]

After Bertha had spent three years in the classroom, missionary Rodolphe Charles Petter and his first wife, Marie Gerber Petter, selected her to assist Rodolphe in his work of writing down the Cheyenne language. The choice likely reflected Bertha's proven facility with languages. At the time she spoke German and English and had studied Latin and Greek in college. Rodolphe Petter, with help from Cheyenne native speakers and Bertha, produced a 1,100-page Cheyenne-English dictionary, published in 1915. They then translated into Cheyenne numerous Christian works such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, portions of the Old Testament, and the entire New Testament. Although never given credit, it is clear from her diary and Rodolphe's notations that Bertha was instrumental in this effort. For example, prior to their marriage Rodolphe wrote, "Sister Kinsinger wrote in long hand my first sketch of the Cheyenne dictionary as a basis for a larger and more thorough work."[61] The translation work also fostered a close relationship with Rodolphe. After Marie died in 1910, Rodolphe proposed to Bertha and they were married in 1911.

After their marriage, Rodolphe and Bertha devoted much of their time to the Cheyenne language. "Christianizing and civilizing the heathen" meant, among other things, to prohibit Native beliefs and culture, including language. The Petters viewed translations of Christian texts into Cheyenne not as cultural preservation but as the path to salvation.[62] Missionaries who followed the Petters did not share their view that learning and preserving the Cheyenne language was important. Few Mennonite missionaries made any attempt to learn Cheyenne. As Bertha proudly noted time and again in her letters to the "Dear Brethren of the Mission Board," she was the only white woman who was fluent in Cheyenne. Here again she set herself apart from other "wives of," this time by virtue of her language skills:

> Of all the missionaries' wives working among the Cheyennes, I am the only one who has an extensive knowledge of this most difficult language. They have not even a working knowledge for use in everyday conversation. None of them has been active in the public and private teaching as I have for twenty[-]four years. It is natural that their homes and their children should have their first attention.[63]

Although English was taught in the schools and Cheyenne children were required to learn it, the Petters led Sunday School classes and worship services in Cheyenne. Both Bertha and Rodolphe had Cheyenne names, Meneha (Doll Woman) and Zessensze (Cheyenne Talker), respectively. Mann argues that only after the Petters learned Cheyenne were they able to connect with adult Cheyennes.[64] John D. Thiesen asserts that despite his scholarly writing and translating activity, Rodolphe was still first and foremost a missionary. Use of the Cheyenne language was fostered by the Petters and may have contributed to cultural retention, but it was intended as a means to "christianize" Cheyennes.

Indian Ceremonials and the Nation-State

The most substantive missionary-government collusion came in 1919–1920 on the Montana reservation. In 1918, a revival of Cheyenne religious and tribal ceremonies swept through Cheyenne communities, as Northern Cheyenne Marion Mexican Cheyenne noted in a letter of complaint to "authorities in Washington, DC," about the Sun Dance.[65] According to several testimonies, some of the rituals (not the Sun Dance) involved the "giving of women" to Indian priests also referred to as medicine men.[66] After Rodolphe preached a series of sermons entitled "The Kingdom of Satan" against the revivals, some Cheyennes came forward to confess their "sin" of participating in the rituals. Both Rodolphe and Bertha documented their testimonies and Bertha worked closely with three of the women who had been "given." A lengthy statement by Esevona (Mrs. Scalpcane) is particularly intriguing as Bertha was the interpreter and sender of Esevona's testimony to US government officials. Esevona's testimony included the following statement, in which the tone and syntax seems like an addendum authored by Bertha: "In some [rituals] the women are used several nights in succession. This is what the Indians are defending as their religion, and this I reveal because it is decidedly bad."[67] In addition to the question of authorship, this quote about being "used several times in a row" raises questions about how the women "used" viewed the rituals. Did they see the priests' actions as sexual coercion or did they view the rituals as healing or perhaps a way to advance a cause? Bertha and Rodolphe considered the women to have been raped. Arguably, from the Cheyenne women's perspective, participating in the rituals was consensual.

Although we only have testimony from Cheyenne individuals who renounced their participation in the ceremonies, it seems likely that the Cheyennes who confessed to Rodolphe and Bertha, at least initially, did not share missionary views of the rituals which Bertha characterized as "disgusting in the extreme."[68] Writing in 1920, Rodolphe recalled Cheyenne responses to his questions about Cheyenne sexual practices:

> Many years ago, when I first expressed my surprise to several prominent Cheyenne chiefs concerning their tolerance towards certain immoral doings they laughed and said that no one in the tribe objected to certain practices toward women and girls. When the occasion demanded it it was no wrong for even an honourable chief to give his wife or daughter to a guest[,] a friend[,] or a medicine man![69]

In the 1919–1920 cases, the women who participated in the rituals were mothers of sick children. The aforementioned Esevona had a dying son. Speaking with Bertha a few years later, she recounted that she believed that her son would regain health if she participated in the rituals by having sexual intercourse with a medicine man.[70]

An examination of the testimonies makes clear the ritual's sacred intent. Esevona was ritually prepared by wearing special clothing, by being painted on her face and upper torso, and through prayers and singing incantations. During intercourse, the medicine man wore the teeth and sometimes a mask of a powerful animal, usually a wolf or bear, thus transforming into that animal.[71] The woman was considered to have consorted with the animal and not with the medicine man. It was believed that through the pre-ritual preparations and sexual intercourse the woman, always a mother, was infused with the healing power of the animal. At the end of the ceremony the tribe feasted, a typical conclusion to a celebration or ceremony.[72] In some ways this ritual can be seen as an acknowledgement of maternal power as only a mother could be the conduit of healing power between the animal/medicine man and her sick child. However, in Esevona's case, this power was insufficient, and her son died a few days after the rituals. One wonders if she would have come forward to complain about the priests had her son lived.

Seeking to quash the rituals, both Rodolphe and Bertha wrote to the Mission Board. A letter from Bethel College president and Mission Board member J. W. Kliewer to Rodolphe makes clear Bertha's involvement: "Mrs. Petter's report in *The Mennonite* was a very good way of bringing this matter before our churches and ought to stimulate prayer."[73] The Petters also wrote to several government offices, both locally and in Washington, DC. Not all government officials expressed concern. Their responses to letters penned by Rodolphe and Bertha varied. For example, Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology wrote a measured reply noting: "I was surprised to hear that ceremonies of a phallic character still survive among the Cheyenne to the extent you mention."[74] However, local government agent John A. Buntin was far more forceful.

In her letters to Buntin, a superintendent with the United States Indian Service, Department of the Interior, Bertha reported the testimonies of Indians who came to her. She implored Buntin to intervene.[75] Writing in 1919, Buntin fully supported the Petters' point of view:

> Some of them [Cheyenne] are no doubt at this time in sympathy with certain medicine men but the right kind of teaching, persistently carried out will have much to do with winning over the Indians to the side of right and against the ceremonies and practices of the so[-]called Medicine men.[76]

Buntin also wrote several times to Bertha directly to assure her of his support: "I have also advised them [the Cheyenne] to accept the advice and teachings of you and Mr. Petter."[77]

In addition to her letters, Bertha organized what appears to be a letter-writing campaign from Cheyenne men and women to government officials. Several Cheyenne men spoke against the ceremonies, including Robert Yellow Fox, who wrote to officials in Washington, DC:

> For many years the government had forbidden this old sun dance. It has been but three years since the Government again allowed this performance which brings them no good. It is at such sun dance gatherings, that our people band together against a right observation of Government regulations and instructions."[78]

However, it was only after a second woman, Emma, came forward that Buntin took direct action. He prohibited the religious practices after hearing Emma's verbal testimony.[79] Emma's written testimony explicitly linked government and church purposes:

> I am not teaching my children as my mother taught me because the Indian religious ways in which they raised me is bad. . . . Why does the Government let our Indians turn back to the old things like the sun dance, which leads them backwards. . . . Why(?) [We] do not approve the sun dance. Because it is against the teachings of our Government[,] is against the laws of our country and against the teachings of God.[80]

Buntin wrote, "any one attempting to in any way interfere with an Indian or Indian Missionary or Government employee for opposing such immoral practices will be taken up and prosecuted to the full extent of the law."[81] He and his colleagues at the Department of the Interior brought the full weight of their offices so that the "evil in question may be eradicated at an early moment."[82] Buntin worked closely with Bertha. At Bertha's prodding, Cheyennes who opposed the ceremonies, including the Sun Dance, spoke up and broke the power of the medicine men. Bertha's involvement resulted in the cessation of Cheyenne rituals.

Even after the rituals were banned, Buntin continued to issue directives and write letters to Cheyennes in an effort to stop all Native practices. In 1919, he issued a seven-point "Circular to Indians" absolutely prohibiting healing ceremonies and the practices of Indian doctors.[83] Four years after the scandal, he continued to communicate his opposition to Cheyenne customs and expanded his critique from healing rituals to all other cultural practices, including give-aways:

> I do not want to deprive you of decent amusements or occasional feast days, but you should not do evil or foolish things. . . . No good comes from your give-away custom at dances and it should be stopped.[84]

It seems Buntin used the scandal over the rituals to broaden his agenda with the Cheyenne and attempted to stop all Indian rituals, not just those that offended Christian sensibilities.

Fifteen years later, Bertha was once again fighting religious rituals and cultural practices. This time, however, the government was not on her side and no amount of letter writing changed the situation. In 1935, *Missionary News and Notes* contained this notice:

> The Mennonite Mission . . . is at present facing peculiar problems because of the new policy of the government to liberalize the life among the Indians. They are to be permitted to return to their former tribal customs and to become "good old Indians" again. This seriously interferes with the educational and and [*sic*] religious work which has been done by the missionaries.[85]

Bertha and her fellow missionaries were deeply opposed to the new policies of Harold Ickes, the secretary of the interior, who decriminalized Native religious ceremonies in 1934, as a part of the Indian Reorganization Act. In a series of letters, she complained about the governmental policy shift. For example:

> Then the changing policy of the government, when authorities gave the Indians to understand that as far as they were concerned, the Indian religions were as sufficient as the Christian, has bewildered even the best of them. "Why listen to missionaries, when white people in high authority find our native expressions for religion so fascinating and glamorours [*sic*]."[86]

Mennonite missionary Anna Linscheid also complained about the new policy:

> The present policy to let the Indian do as he pleases, to give him a so-called "square deal," is proving to be the undoing of many a one.[87]

If the mission had been successful (success was measured in terms of converts), Mennonite frustration directed at the Interior Department in the 1930s might be better understood. However, low rates of conversion over the previous decades revealed significant barriers to missionary efforts and suggest Cheyenne resistance to Mennonite outreach.

Muttering and Sputtering: Cheyenne Resistance

Censuses conducted by missionaries Gustav "G. A." and Anna Linscheid are testimony to this limited success of the Mennonite mission. Despite many church plantings and programs, the numbers of converts remained low. Among the few converts one finds a slim majority of women. In 1916 and 1919, the Linscheids documented every Northern Cheyenne by male head-of-household on the Tongue River Reservation. The census is sorted into family groupings and includes births, deaths, those who were baptized into the church, and those who were received into membership (former Catholics). In 1916, the Linscheids counted among a population of 1,467 persons 140 baptized members and 21 who were received into the church's membership (transferred from other churches) for a total of 161 members. Of these 92 were women.[88] In 1919, of 1,416 individuals, 170 were listed as members of the Mennonite church, of whom 102 were women and 68 were men.[89] Many of the baptisms were conducted along family lines with husbands, wives, and children above the age of thirteen receiving baptism together. More daughters than sons were baptized as were more single female heads-of-household than single male heads-of-household, thus accounting for the gender imbalance.

By 1920, the Linscheids had been transferred to Oklahoma. There, they continued their record-keeping, noting baptisms and memberships since 1897. In 1940, they conducted a census encompassing three churches, Cantonment, Fonda, and Longdale, that together counted 253 members, of whom 153 were women. Unlike the Montana (Northern Cheyenne) records for 1916 and 1919, the 1940 records did not sort the members into family groups. One cannot determine the family position of the individual or if they were baptized with other family members. These records only list full English names, a Cheyenne name, date of baptism, the last initial of the person who baptized them, and "Remarks," usually the date of death. It seems either Gustav or Anna went back and pencilled in a birth year. The Linscheid record starts with six baptisms in 1897. The high years were 1908, with fourteen baptisms, and 1940, with twelve baptisms.[90] These census records show that Mennonite proselytizing was not particularly successful. It was not documented how many of the baptized members participated actively in church life. However, because of the low membership numbers, it seems that Cheyenne women did not just passively allow white missionaries to "christianize and civilize" them without some form of resistance.[91]

There is very little documentation of Cheyenne women's reactions to the Mennonites. Some Cheyenne women welcomed Mennonites and worked closely with them. One finds in the records mutuality and reciprocity that drew on both Mennonite and Cheyenne traditions such as sewing circles, visiting, and feasting.[92] The latitude with which Bertha operated outside gendered expectations on the mission field extended to Cheyenne women converts. When

Cheyenne women preached and led worship and Sunday School, they filled highly visible ministerial roles in the mission church. But not all Cheyenne women welcomed the Mennonites. Some raised their voices in protest such as in this incident described by Bertha:

> At one of the meetings when he [Rev. Petter] touched many forms of the ceremonial life, it created such a stir that several women arose from their seats and muttering and sputtering left the room. While the situation was a serious one, it rather amused Mr. Petter and myself, and we have commented since that no doubt in the early church, Paul had such women like our "Hevesa," the leader in all of this commotion who likes to take things into her own hands, though being otherwise a very zealous church member, and he made the rule that henceforth the women keep silent in the churches.
>
> After the women had gone out, and quiet was restored, the husband of one of them arose and reproved the first speaker for creating such a disturbance, and thus bringing the church to disrepute among the heathen.[93]

Bertha and Rodolphe also wrote of situations in which Cheyenne women took offence at preaching against "heathen" practices such as the Sun Dance. Some of these women stood up and walked out during church services. Rodolphe noted how the wife of the Arrow Keeper, the highest-status woman in the tribe, walked out of a church service never to return.[94] Other women challenged missionaries by refusing to send their children to missionary schools and by not attending church services and celebrations.

Heathenizing the Christians

If Bertha and other missionaries failed to "christianize the heathen," it is possible that the Cheyenne were at least marginally successful in "heathenizing the Christians." Bertha may have been "Indianized," a term used by literary scholar Craig Womack who wrote,

> I reject, in other words, the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction, that white culture always overpowers Indian culture, that white is inherently more powerful than red, that Indian resistance has never occurred in such a fashion that things European have been radically subverted by Indians.[95]

Anthropologist Deborah Gordon has argued that some "prominent female ethnographers and writers" searching for "different ways of being white and female . . . looked to Native Americans and Native American women for the reconstruction of themselves."[96] Did

Bertha look to Cheyenne women to reconstruct herself? Was she "Indianized?"

Bertha had a history of challenging QIL traditions. She came to the Cheyenne mission as a young woman who had already broken with convention when she went to college. Her grandmother did not support her when she decided to pursue her missionary career in Oklahoma. There is no evidence in Bertha's writings that the rift with her family was ever healed and an interview with her step-granddaughter, Amy (Petter) Guernea, further confirmed this.[97] From the many examples of Cheyenne women's assertiveness found in Bertha's writing to the home churches, it seems she admired and sought to emulate these women. Typical are these descriptions of Hevesa and Menohevosta, "two Cheyenne Christian women" who, though converts to Christianity, were nonetheless proudly noted by Bertha to be leaders on the mission:

> She [Hevesa] had considerable force of character, which easily made her a leader. "I am the bell sheep of the flock" she once said as she took her place on the front benches of the church, expecting the rest to follow. . . . At the birthday celebration of Missionary Petter in 1945, Hevesa was one of the speakers. Our new superintendent on the reservation said her speech was the best thing on the program. She knew very definitely what she wanted to say and said it.
>
> Menohevosta also has individuality. She is a good story teller. She knows all the Indian tales. I love to listen to her recitals . . . She brooks no interruptions, no questioning until the tale is finished.[98]

These were not meek, submissive, and silent women. It seems likely that the examples of Hevesa and Menohevosta's assertiveness, leadership, and public speaking made it easier for Bertha to pursue active, visible leadership.

Bertha also had the support of her husband, Rodolphe, whose conclusions, gleaned from his Biblical study and his observations about women in the tribe, resulted in support for Bertha's leadership. In a letter written during the 1930s, Rodolphe made these comments about women and independence:

> From all past history and what the Bible tells us we cannot boldly say that the "status["] of woman has been little above that of the slave. Think of the Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, even German women of great renown. . . . I found that even among primitive tribes the woman was not the slave we think she was. Among the Cheyenne the woman, wife, and daughter were quite independent. Their daily work was light and they delighted in it.[99]

Thiesen wrote that Rodolphe in later years “became the facade behind which Bertha Petter could exercise leadership that would have been unacceptable coming directly from a woman.”[100] In 1947, Bertha very publicly announced her support for the ordination for Emma Hart (Hasseoveo), a Northern Cheyenne woman. In an article published in *The Mennonite*, a church-wide monthly publication, she wrote,

> One Indian had just said to me recently, “Why not ordain Hasseoveo for the ministry [*sic*]. Altho a woman, she is as able as the men. Her life is consistent. She knows the Word and speaks well. We all love her.”[101]

Bertha wrote this article well before the 1970s, when the ordination of women was finally accepted by some progressive Mennonite churches. As of this writing there are still several Mennonite conferences where the ordination of women is prohibited.

In contrast, Cheyennes have a history of assertive womanhood. Women exercised authority and their voice in tribal structures. The values gleaned from the centrality of Cheyenne women’s work and status in tribal life likely influenced Bertha. One does not find in Bertha’s writings any suggestions that Cheyenne ideas influenced her thinking about women’s place. Yet, at a time when Mennonite women were not encouraged to operate in public spheres, Bertha’s assertiveness, independence, and leadership was encouraged on the mission. Her life among Cheyennes very likely helped her to reject QIL Mennonite constructions of gender as she embraced her work as an outspoken missionary who furthered nation-state objectives.

Conclusion

The exploration of Mennonite Quiet in the Land mentality, that is, non-statist or even anti-statist mentalities, is not merely an academic exercise, limited to a small group of scholars. Among some Mennonites, QIL remains a potent identification marker even as recent scholarship challenges the mindset. To offer one example: A few months ago, seated around a restaurant table in Washington, DC, friends of Mennonite extraction talked about *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era*, Benjamin W. Goossen’s book about Mennonite collaboration with Nazis.[102] Goossen’s argument surprised them. Most agreed that because of centuries of persecution by the state, Mennonites were not inclined to involvement in nation-state building. It was a classic Quiet in the Land identification. Yet scholars have shown that a more nuanced approach is needed.[103] The Quiet in the Land trope is not universal, applicable to all times and places. This paper examined how constructions of gender found in Mennonite Quiet in the Land mentalities and Victorian ideas about womanhood enhanced state objectives on the mission field and how one woman negotiated her way through this tangled ideological web. At times, Bertha worked closely with QIL ideas, especially when it came to the "wives of" missionaries, but for herself she adamantly rejected the role of submissive wife and helpmeet to her husband. Nonetheless, her story reveals how QIL constructions of gender were a key component of Mennonite support for US assimilationist policies.

Notes

[1] Kimberly D. Schmidt and Steven D. Reschly, "A Women's History for Anabaptist Traditions: A Framework of Possibilities, Possibly Changing the Framework," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 18 (2000): 40.

[2] In this article "Anabaptist" refers to those present-day churches and communities that trace their spiritual heritage to the Anabaptist phase of the Reformation movement of the sixteenth century. This article focuses on women from "ethnic" Mennonite communities in the United States, meaning those that come from the historic European churches and not the more recent international or global churches. A follow-up research project should include how women who are not "ethnically" Mennonite relate to concepts of silence. Perhaps for them this is cultural baggage and easily discarded. Some scholars have noted that Euro-Mennonite women can also engage within the public sphere but must do so without seeming to seek recognition. Self-promotion in any guise is frowned on. Diane Zimmerman Umble addresses some of these concepts in "Who Are You? The Identity of the Outsider Within" in *Strangers at Home: Mennonite Women in History,* ed. Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Steven D. Reschly (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 39–52.

[3] Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo, eds., *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 7.

[4] It is important to note that some historians are challenging the version of Mennonite history which emphasizes their reluctance to engage outsiders and state entities. Mary Sprunger's work on seventeenth-century Mennonites shows how well integrated Mennonites were in Dutch Golden Age economy and society. See in particular "A Mennonite Capitalist Ethic in the Dutch Golden Age: Weber Revisited," in *European Mennonites and the Challenge of Modernity over Five Centuries: Contributors, Detractors, and Adapters*, ed. Mark Jantzen, Mary S. Sprunger and John D. Thiesen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2016), 51–70, and "Deaconesses, Fishwives, Crooks and Prophetesses: Mennonite Image and Reality in Golden Age Amsterdam" in *Sisters: Myth and Reality of Anabaptist, Mennonite, and Doopsgezind Women, ca 1525–1900*, ed. Mirjam van Veen, Piet Visser, and Gary K. Waite

(Leiden: Brill, 2014), 169–85. Recent work on Mennonites and the Nazi party in Germany can be found in John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite and Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933–1945* (Kitchener, ON.: Pandora Press, 1999) and Benjamin W. Goossen, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in the Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[5] For a discussion of the Amish personality see John Hostettler, *Amish Society*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993),186, 306.

[6] Kimberly D. Schmidt, "Women's Outside Work and Insider Dress" in *Strangers at Home*, esp. 223–24.

[7] The New English Bible.

[8] For example, John D. Roth, "Polls Apart: Why Believers Might Conscientiously Abstain from Voting," in *Exiles in the Empire: Believers Church Perspectives on Politics*, ed. Nathan E. Yoder and Carol A. Scheppard (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006), 243–251.

[9] Much of the limited scholarly work on the women's histories of Mennonite, Amish, and related Anabaptist groups has focused on the dynamic relationship of women to silence. It might be, as historian Marlene Epp commented, the major concept that has engaged scholarly attention in the small field of Mennonite women's history since the late twentieth century. For the latest scholarship that addresses women and their relationship to the Quiet in the Land refer to articles in Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast, eds., *Mothering Mennonite* (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2013). Liz Wittig, an undergraduate at Goshen College, also addresses Quiet in the Land concepts in her senior thesis on peace activist Marian Franz (undergraduate thesis, Goshen College, 2015), 3.

[10] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18:2, part 1 (Summer 1966): 152.

[11] Beth E. Graybill, "'To Remind Us of Who We Are': Multiple Meanings of Conservative Women's Dress" in *Strangers at Home*, 53–77; Schmidt, "Women's Outside Work."

[12] Ibid.

[13] Rev. W. H. Grubb, *History of the Mennonites of Butler County, Ohio* (privately published by author, 1916; repr., Walnut Creek, OH: Carlisle Printing, 2001), 11.

[14] Otelia Augspurger Compton deserves historical investigation. She was declared a "Mother of Geniuses" and awarded the "American Mother of the Year" distinction from the Golden Rule Foundation in 1939. Three of her four children served as college presidents, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and her youngest son, Arthur Compton, won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1927. For more information on Otelia see Milton S. Mayer, "Mother of Comptons," *The Scientific Monthly* 47:5 (Nov. 1938): 548–461, or contact the Chrisholm Historic Farmstead in Trenton, OH, where staff and volunteers are conducting research on Otelia and her extended family, of which Bertha was a member. Bertha referenced Otelia as an inspiration in her writings which are found in the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) at Bethel College in North Newton, KS.

[15] John D. Thiesen, "Rodolphe Petter and The General Conference Missions," *Mennonite Life* 40:3 (September 1985): 4–10.

[16] For a discussion about Progressive New Women and their participation in the missionary movement of the late nineteenth century see Jane H. Hunter,

"Women's Mission in Historical Perspective: American Identity and Christian Internationalism" in *Competing Kingdoms*, 27–31.

[17] James C. Juhnke, *A People of Mission: A History of the General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions.* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1979), 11.

[18] Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians,* vols. 1 and 2 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 30–72. See also Mary Stockwell, *Interrupted Odyssey: Ulysses S. Grant and the American Indians* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2018).

[19] Juhnke, *People of Mission*, 11.

[20] The tribes have combined to become the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes with headquarters in Concho, OK.

[21] Juhnke, *People of Mission*, 12.

[22] Mrs. G. A. Linscheid (Anna Sidonia Hirschler), *Album: General Conference Mennonite Mission Oklahoma, 1880–1935,* MLA-MS-13, Box 6:13. Given that over half of the early Mennonite missionaries to Oklahoma were single women, and that many urban churches were started by single women, might one suggest that historians of Mennonites reconsider histories of institution building based on male leadership?

[23] G. A. Linscheid and Anna Linscheid (Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Linscheid), "Employes [*sic*] of the General Conference Mennonite Mission in Oklahoma" (private papers, Canton, OK: 1937), MLA-MS-13, Box 1:3. The final page of this report contains two lists of names of "Native Helpers." The listing of Euro-Mennonites stops in 1929. The list of Native Helpers goes from 1900 to 1936, though Mennonites continued to serve in Oklahoma well past 1929.

[24] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

[25] Reeves-Ellington et al., *Competing Kingdoms*, 2.

[26] James C. Juhnke, *A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of Kansas Mennonites* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1975), 2.

[27] Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms,* 37.

[28] Bertha Petter, "Dear readers of the Kinderbote," (Mar. 12, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[29] Juhnke compiled a table of naturalization records for Mennonites from the four counties with the heaviest concentration of Mennonites in Harvey, Reno, Marion, and McPherson counties, Kansas. *Two Kingdoms*, 32.

[30] Letter from Bertha Petter to J. W. Kliewer, Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 29, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 4:28, 2.

[31] Letter from C. G. Heckert, Wittenberg College, Springfield, OH, (Apr. 16, 1894), MLA-MS-31, Box 2:19.

[32] Letter from Bertha Kinsinger to Samuel Kinsinger, Trenton, OH, (Aug. 16, 1896), MLA-MS-31, Box 2:17, 6.

[33] "Dear co-workers," an address given to the Workers Conference at Lame Deer in which Bertha argues against forcing her to retire. (Feb. 4, 1948), MLA-MS-31, Box 11:89.

[34] Letter from Bertha Petter to "Dear Members of the Mission Board," Petter Collection Correspondence, MLA-MS-31, Box 10. An anonymous reader of an earlier draft of this article suggested that "feinen" may also refer to a "fine-toothed" comb, good for combing out lice.

[35] Letter from Bertha Petter to Olga Petter Schroeder, (Feb. 4, 1959), MLA-MS-31, Box 2:14.

[36] Reeves-Ellington et al., *Competing Kingdoms*; Jane H. Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1984). Two early treatments of Mennonite women's history, short biographical sketches, emphasize how early female leaders often placed their activism within the context of a religious calling. God called them to lead and they followed God's call in spite of family, church, and community restrictions and negative reactions. See Mary Lou Cummings, *Full Circle: Stories of Mennonite Women* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1978) and Ruth Unrau, *Encircled: Stories of Mennonite Women* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1983).

[37] Wendy Urban-Mead, "An Unwomanly Woman and Her Sons in Christ: Faith, Empire, and Gender in Colonial Rhodesia, 1899–1906" in *Competing Kingdoms*, 97.

[38] Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy discuss interpreting Native women's history using male sources in *Native Women's History in Eastern North American before 1900: A Guide to Research and Writing* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), xxxi; Barbara Cook, "A Tapestry of History and Reimagination: Women's Place in James Welch's *Fools Crow*," *American Indian Quarterly* 24:3 (Summer 2002): esp. 243–4; Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, eds., *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983); Sherry L. Smith, "Beyond Princess and Squaw: Perceptions of Indian Women" in *The Women's West*, ed. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987): 63–75. Carolyn Niethammer in *Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and Legends of American Indian Women* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977), xiii, notes that like nineteenth-century observers, modern anthropologists continue to relegate women to the sidelines seeing their activities as "uninteresting and irrelevant."

[39] Observations of Cheyenne women during the late nineteenth century include artist Frederic Remington, *On the Apache Indian Reservation and Artist Wanderings Among the Cheyennes* (Palmer Lake, CO: The Filter Press, 1974), 22; Colonel Richard Irving Dodge, *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Personal Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West* (Hartford, CT: A.D. Worthington & Co., 1882), 345; George Bird Grinnell, "Cheyenne Woman Customs," *American Anthropologist,* n.s., 4:1 (Jan.–Mar., 1902). More recently, Tribal historian Virginia Giglio wrote, "Historically, Cheyenne women were noted for their dignity and chastity, and wielded strong moral influence within the tribe." See *Southern Cheyenne Women's Songs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 11. For a lengthier discussion of early male observations of Cheyenne women see Schmidt, "The Selected Ones: Uncovering the Peaceful Women's History of the Southern Cheyenne," *Mennonite Life* 61:3 (September 2006), online.

[40] John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation: A Social and Demographic History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); Elliott Coues, ed., *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson*, vol. 1 (repr., Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1965), 360.

[41] For example, Bertha K. Petter, *Two Life Sketches of Vxzeta and Vohokass* (Lame Deer, MT: Petter, n.d., likely 1936), 57.

[42] Rodolphe Petter, "Historical Sketch of the Northern Cheyenne Mission Field," (no date), MLA-MS-31, Box 13:120.

[43] See "Tribes and Nations" and "The Structure of Cheyenne Society" in Moore, *Cheyenne Nation*, 1–25 and 177–204.

[44] George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Ways of Life*, 10th ed., vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 156. Grinnell devotes three chapters in his two-volume series to Cheyenne domestic life and women's culture. See "The Boy and the Girl," 102–126; "Woman and Her Place," 127–158; and "Women's Societies," 159–169. Grinnell is particularly interesting to this study as notes in Bertha's papers reference his scholarly research among the Northern Cheyenne. Also of interest is Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Lifeways*, an illustrated volume that contains photographs, leger art and illustrations, ed. Joseph A. Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2008).

[45] Grinnell, *Cheyenne Indians*, 1:127.

[46] Interview with Lawrence Hart by author, 2005.

[47] Bertha Kinsinger and Agnes Williams, *Frauenarbeit in Unserer Mission, Bilder aus Unserer Mission, Wohnung der Schwestern Kinsinger and Williams, Cantonment, Okla.* 2 (Berne, IN: Mennonite Book Concern, 1896), MLA-MS-31, Box 13:125.

[48] Reeves-Ellington et al., *Competing Kingdoms*, 2.

[49] Treatments of women who worked with Native American children at government and mission schools at the same time as Bertha are found in Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); E. Jane Gay, *With the Nez Perces: Alice Fletcher in the Field, 1889–1892*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie and Joan T. Mark (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); Kay Graber, ed., *Sister to the Sioux: The Memoirs of Elaine Goodale Eastman, 1885–1891* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

[50] See Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, *The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity and Indian Hymns* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 58–59.

[51] Cathy Ann Trotta, "Mennonite Missionary Martha Most Voth in the Hopi Pueblos, 1893–1910" in *Strangers at Home*, 182–207.

[52] For an account of white women's maternalism in relation to Native Americans and government schools see Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother*.

[53] Theda Perdue makes the point that among Cherokees, traditionally women were the farmers while men were hunters. White observers neglected to appreciate women's gender-specific agricultural roles. The process of "civilizing" Cherokees, turning them into farmers, was more readily embraced by women—who already farmed. Although not the focus of this article, it should be noted that Cheyenne women were also engaged in agriculture, gathering, and planting. "Women, Men and American Indian Policy: The Cherokee Response to 'Civilization'," in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Schoemaker (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1995), 90–109.

[54] J. van der Smissen as quoted in H. P. Krehbiel, *The History of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Canton, OH: self-published, 1898), 297.

[55] The literature on government schools, both in the US and Canada is extensive. Some general treatments include Adams, *Education for Extinction*, and

Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishers, 2004). For Cheyenne-Arapaho schools see Henrietta Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education, 1871–1982* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1997). Mary Crow Dog's autobiography *Lakota Woman* paints a stark and powerful picture of the violence she endured while attending a Catholic school. With Richard Erdoes (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 31–41.

[56] Mrs. G. A. Linscheid [Anna Sidonia], "Cantonment," MLA-MS-13, Box 1:1, 1.

[57] Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education*.

[58] Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education*, 76, 71.

[59] This article focuses on Bertha's experience. She spent only three years in the schools before moving into translation work. Government support of the Mennonite schools in Oklahoma was withdrawn in 1896 and the Mennonite schools closed in 1898 (Darlington) and 1901 (Cantonment). The MLA has extensive records of schools, not only among the Northern and Southern Cheyenne, but also among the Hopi in Arizona.

[60] Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education*, 78.

[61] Rodolphe Petter, *Reminiscences of Past Years in Mission Service Among the Cheyenne* (privately published, n.d., likely 1936), 45.

[62] Bertha Petter address at the dedication of the Petter Memorial Church, June 11, 1950, Lame Deer, MT, afternoon service. Housed in the MLA.

[63] Letter from Bertha Petter to Mr. Eben E. MacLeod, Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 15, 1920), MLA-MS-31, Box 4:28, 2.

[64] Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education*, 82.

[65] Letter from Marion Mexican Cheyenne to "the authorities in Washington, DC," (Jan. 1, 1918), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[66] Letter from Robert Yellow Fox to "the authorities in Washington DC," (Jan. 1, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[67] "Statements made by Esevona (Mrs. Scalpcane), Interpreted by Mrs. Bertha K. Petter," (May 9, 1922), MLA-MS-31, Box 12:111. An additional testimony, handwritten in Bertha's pen, is also available. "Exovona's testimony," (Apr. 25, 1923), MLA-MS-31, Box 12:111. Please note that Esevona and Exovona are presumed to be the same person. In the second document, presumably Exovona but perhaps Bertha notes that the famous anthropologist George Bird Grinnell was "present all the time but he failed to know what [had] been done at night."

[68] Letter from Bertha Petter to "Members of our Board," (Jan. 9, 1918), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[69] Rodolphe Petter, Letter to Superintendent O. M. Boggess, Lame Deer, MT, (Nov. 23, 1920), MLA-MS-31, Box 4:28, 2.

[70] "Exovona's Testimony."

[71] "Cheyenne Ceremonial," MLA-MS-31, Box 12:111.

[72] "Statements made by Esevona (Mrs. Scalpcane)."

[73] Letter from J. W. Kliewer to Rodolphe Petter, (April 21, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[74] Letter from J. Walter Fewkes to Rodolphe Petter, (Feb. 13, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[75] See testimony, letters, and statements by Emma, Esevona (Mrs. Scalpcane), Frank Littlewolf, Marion Mexican Cheyenne, and Robert Yellow Fox, MLA-MS-31, Box 12:111.

[76] Letter from John A. Buntin to Reverend R. Petter, Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 22, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[77] Letter from John A. Buntin to Bertha K. Petter, Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 7, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[78] Letter from Robert Yellowfox to "To Whom It May Concern," (June 17, 1921), MLA-MS-31, Box 4:29.

[79] A letter from Bertha K. Petter to "Dear readers of the Mennonite," summarizes Emma's testimony. See Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 13, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[80] Emma provided a one-page testimony. See "Emma's testimony," (no date), MLS-MS-31, Box 12:111.

[81] Letter from John A. Buntin to Rodolphe Petter, (Feb. 15, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[82] Letter from E. B. Merritt, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of the Interior to John A. Buntin, (Mar. 1, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[83] Letter from John A. Buntin, "Circular to Indians," Tongue River Agency, Lame Deer, MT, (May 8, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27. This circular notably predates "Circular 1655" issued by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Burke in 1921. See Margaret D. Jacobs, "Making Savages of Us All: White Women, Pueblo Indians, and the Controversy over Indian Dances in the 1920s," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 12:3 (1996): 183.

[84] Letter from John A. Buntin "To All Indians," Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, (Feb. 24, 1923), MLA-MS-31, Box 4:31.

[85] No author cited, *Missionary News and Notes* 9:7 (Mar. 1935): 4.

[86] Letter from Bertha Petter to Rev. G. E. E. Lindquist Lawrence, Kansas, Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 25, 1937), MLA-MS-31, Box 6:46. Mennonites were not alone in their opposition to government policies. In Bertha's papers is a 1934 article penned by Elaine Goodale Eastman, the well-known writer, Indian reformer, and educator, "Does Uncle Sam Foster Paganism?" to which John Collier, the outspoken Native American advocate and Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1933–45) responded in "A Reply to Mrs. Eastman." *The Christian Century,* Aug. 8, 1934, 1016–1020, MLA-MS-31, Box 27:4.

[87] See Mrs. G. A. Linscheid, Letter to "Dear Mission friends," Canton, OK, (June 20, 1938), MLA-MS-13, Box 1:1, 2.

[88] Gustav A. Linscheid and Anna Sidonia Hirschler Linscheid, *Census of the Northern Cheyennes, June 30,* MLA-MS-13, Box 1:3.

[89] Linscheid, *Census.* These carefully notated records list "English Name," "Cheyenne Name," "Relation," "Birth [by year]," and "Remarks," which includes the year of death for many. Since individuals are listed in nuclear family groups (although there were a few records that looked like a husband may have married a second wife) those interested in Northern Cheyenne genealogy will find these records helpful.

[90] Gustav A. Linscheid and Anna Sidonia Hirschler Linscheid, "Membership[:] Cantonment, Fonda and Longdale Churches, Cheyenne," (n.d. assume 1897–1940 since the records notate date of baptism), MLA-MS-13-Box 1:3. These numbers correspond to the Office of Indian Affairs Report found in the MLA which shows 1,417 Cheyennes in the Tongue River Agency in 1923. See "Bulletin 23, Indian Population of the United States, 1923," MLA-MS-13, Box 1:13.

[91] Kent G. Lightfoot writes about Native American agency and resistance among the Native Americans of Northern California in *Indians, Missionaries and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California*

Frontiers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). See esp. the chapters, "Native Agency in the Franciscan Missions" (pp. 82–113) and "Native Agency in the Ross Colony (pp. 154–179)."

[92] Kimberly D. Schmidt, "Moneneheo and Naheverien: Cheyenne and Mennonite Sewing Circles, Convergences and Conflicts, 1890–1970," *Great Plains Quarterly* 31:1 (Winter 2011): 3–21.

[93] Bertha K. Petter, "Disclosures at Lame Deer and what became of them," Lame Deer, MT, (Mar. 13, 1919), MLA-MS-31, Box 3:27.

[94] R. Petter, *Reminiscences,* 32–33.

[95] Craig S Womak, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 12.

[96] Deborah Gordon, "Among Women: Gender and Ethnographic Authority of the Southwest, 1930–1980," in *Hidden Scholars: Women Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest,* ed. Nancy J. Parezo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 129–130.

[97] Interview by author with Phillip and Amy Guernea, née Petter, Feb. 2, 2018.

[98] Bertha Kinsinger Petter, "Here are Hevesa and Menohevosta, two Cheyenne Christian women," (no date, likely 1947), MLA-MS-31, Box 12:107.

[99] Letter from Rodolphe Petter to Rev. H. P. Krehbiel, (Feb. 22, 1937), MLA-MS-31, Box 6:46.

[100] Thiesen, "Rodolphe Petter," 10.

[101] Mrs. Rodolphe Petter, "Hasseoveo, a Beloved Christian," *The Mennonite*, Nov. 25, 1947, 3.

[102] Benjamin W. Goossen, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[103] Melanie Kampen, in "The Spectre of Reconciliation: Investigating Mennonite Theology, Martyrdom, and Trauma" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2019), analyzes Mennonite participation in the cultural genocide of Indigenous people in Canada through their participation in residential schools.