WAGING THE CONTEST BETWEEN "SAVAGERY" AND "CIVILIZATION": AN EXAMINATION OF THE TENSION BETWEEN ACCULTURATION AND REMOVAL AT THE BRAZOS RESERVATION, 1855–1859

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ABSTRACT

The development of the reservation system between 1849 and the Civil War represents a transition in US Indian policy from removal to acculturation. This case study examines the two conflicting and basically incompatible underpinnings of the reservation system: removal (isolation) from the dominant group coupled with a program designed to acculturate Indians to the norms and values of the dominant group. Despite the efforts made by Indians on the Brazos Reservation in Texas to cooperate with the United States government's acculturation program, the reservation was destroyed by white settlers who refused to allow the Indians to live in their midst. The settlers destroyed the reservation even though it was to their economic benefit to keep it open. Thus, the article increases our understanding of the poorly-known formative years of the reservation system as well as the contradictions inherent in an institution that was designed both to isolate a minority group and acculturate it to the norms and values of the majority group.

INTRODUCTION

Previous studies of the Indian reservation system in the United States have most frequently focused on the post-Civil War period and its assimilation policy (Fritz 1963, Hoxie 1984, Trennert 1988). However, the development of the reservation system between 1849 and the Civil War remains poorly understood (Prucha 1984; Trennert 1975; Wishart 1994). Yet, this period allows one to focus on the tensions engendered by the transition from an Indian policy emphasizing removal to one emphasizing acculturation and eventual assimilation. Exploring this tension between removal and acculturation during the formative years of the reservation period allows one to better understand the enigma posed by the existence of the reservations—physical and social spaces in which American Indians were both separated from the dominant group and encouraged to conform to the norms and values of the dominant group.

In the first years of the nation, an intense debate arose over the fate of the new republic's American Indian inhabitants. The intellectual and political elite of the United States realized that Indians held lands that the European origin people of the United States needed and would eventually claim. Although Indians existed in "savagery," the Enlightenment belief in the perfectibility of humankind led them to hope that they could be "civilized" by their contact with the European world. As a result, they would disappear as Indians. Of course, they could withdraw westward beyond the frontier of European settlement or die out from disease and other natural causes as Anglo-American society and "civilization" approached (Berkhofer 1978; Prucha 1981; Sheehan 1973; Takaki 1979).

However, the westward expansion of the Anglo-American frontier of settlement proved to be much faster than expected, and the Native American response proved to be less tractable than expected. By the 1830s, forced removal of American Indians east of the Mississippi became official policy. By the 1840s, the discourse of savagery versus civilization began to result in the call for extermination or civilization for Indians by many Anglo-Americans (Horsman 1981), though the humanitarian, reformist bent continued to structure official Indian policy in the United States (Prucha 1981). As such, the Indian reservations in the pre-Civil War United States, while rooted in a genuine humanitarian concern for the welfare of American Indians (Prucha 1981), also were influenced by the greater discourse of the contest between savagery and civilization that the West used to frame its imperial expansion and conquest of non-Western people.

Thus, this case study of the Brazos Reservation between 1855 and 1859 goes beyond illuminating a relatively obscure aspect of American Indian–white relations. Rather, it uses historical data, from both secondary sources and primary sources, to focus on a neglected problem in American social science: the development of the Indian reservation as a place where an ethnic minority could be both isolated from the dominant group and encouraged to emulate the norms and values of that group. The Brazos Reservation is particularly well-suited for examination because it was, in the words of Francis Paul Prucha (1984), "strikingly ineffective."

THE CREATION OF THE BRAZOS RESERVATION

With the annexation of Texas in 1846, the American Indians in the new state became the responsibility of the United States government. In the twenty five years prior to the acquisition of Texas the diverse native peoples of Texas (Newcomb 1961) had been caught in a complex three-way conflict between Anglo-American settlers, Mexico, and the Comanches (Fehrenbach 1968; Reichstein 1989). In addition, new Indian groups entered Texas from the United States during this period as a result of the westward expansion of Anglo-American settlement and Jackson's policy of Indian removal. By 1846, some groups present in 1821, such as the Karankawas of the Gulf Coast, had been virtually exterminated by Anglo-American settler violence (Gatschet 1891; Himmel 1995). Others, such as the Bidais of east central Texas, survived as only a few scattered individuals after being decimated by diseases introduced by the settlers (Sjoberg 1951). The non-agricultural Tonkawas and Lipans sought refuge along the southwestern frontier of Anglo-American settlement (Himmel 1995; Schilz 1987; Sjoberg 1953a, 1953b). Remnants of the Caddo, Hasinai, and Wichita confederacies (Caddos, Anadarkos, Ionis, Keechis, Tawakonis, and Wacos) retreated to the western edge of Anglo-American settlement in north Texas. There, they attempted to rebuild their agricultural and trading economies (Newkumet, Meredith 1988; Smith 1995). In east Texas, only the small immigrant Alabama-Coushatta tribe remained after Republic of Texas President Lamar's wars directed at immigrant Indians in 1839 (Rothe 1963). Farther west, well beyond the line of settlement, the Comanches maintained considerable power. However, the southern "division" of the Comanches, the Penatekas, who occupied central Texas, had come under considerable pressure from Anglo-American settlers (Foster 1991; Schilz, Schilz 1989).

Initially, the United States concluded a treaty at the Council Springs, near present-day Waco, on 15 May 1846, with representatives of the Anadarkos, Caddos, Ionis, Keechis, Lipans, Penateka Comanches, Tawakonis, Tonkawas, Wacos, and Wichitas. By the terms of the treaty, the Indians placed themselves under the protection of the United States and promised to trade only with traders licensed by the United States; to give up prisoners, criminals, and stolen property; and to live in peace with the United States, its citizens, and other Indians who live at peace with the United States. In return, the American Indian nations were to receive additional "presents in goods...to the amount of $10,000" and the "benefits" of blacksmiths, school teachers, and "preachers of the gospel" who might be sent to them "at the discretion of the President of the United States" (Winfrey, Day 1966). The Indians of western Texas received no guarantees that would prevent settlers from taking their lands.

After the conquest of Mexico in the War of 1846–1848 secured United States control over Texas and the Southwest, federal policy aimed to 1) prevent raids into Mexico as required by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 2) protect travelers and trade between Texas and California, and 3) secure the property of the settlers (Trennert 1977). To achieve these goals, the United States established a chain of military posts on the border with Mexico; another line of forts extended along the frontier of settlement. In addition, the military located other forts beyond the frontier of settlement to protect travelers and traders on the two main routes to California.

By 1850, increased travel across the southern plains, a growing demand for meat and hides, and introduced bovine diseases had begun to severely impact the bison herds (Flores 1991). The decline in the game coincided with an increased demand for captives in New Mexico and for horses throughout the southern plains. This led to an increase in raiding activities in Mexico, Texas, and the Southwest by Apaches, Comanches and their allies, and newcomers from the east (Hall 1989). Mixed ethnicity outlaw gangs that had earlier been found largely between the Nueces and the Rio Grande spread westward (Olmsted 1978).

The push of settlement forced the Caddos, Hasinais (Anadarkos and Ionis), Keechis, Lipans, Penateka Comanches, Tonkawas, and Wichitas (Wacos and Tawakonis) farther and farther west. For the agriculturists, it became impossible to remain in one place long enough to raise a crop, and starvation stalked the children and the aged (Neighbours 1973), and, in Texas, dryland farming, as practiced by the Caddos, Hasinais, and Wichitas, becomes increasingly risky (Webb 1936). For all, unfamiliar hunting territories; competition with outlaws, settlers, soldiers, and travelers for the declining game; and exposure to violence and

disease shattered traditional cultures. The entire area from well below the Rio Grande to the Arkansas River, along and west of the line of settlement, became a haven for lawlessness centered around the stealing of captives and horses (Neighbours 1973).

The creation of a coherent and workable Indian policy in Texas faced additional roadblocks. The state owned the public lands and supported the settlers who saw Indians as nuisances and obstacles to the settlement of these lands. Thus, the United States could not guarantee title to American Indians for lands in Texas (Trennert 1975). Finally, the military tactics used to deal with the massive outlawry on the Texas frontier further contributed to the problem. The military responded with punitive expeditions against the first Indians found (Schilz 1987) and they took no prisoners (Smith 1992).

On 20 March 1847, the United States appointed Robert Neighbors, who had been the Republic of Texas Indian Agent for the Lipans and Tonkawas, as Special Indian Agent for Texas. After his survey of conditions of the Texas Indians, Neighbors recommended the creation of reservations, under federal control, for them. On the reservations, Neighbors hoped the federal government would provide carpenters, blacksmiths, farmers, and teachers to instruct the Indians and furnish livestock, tools, seeds, utensils, clothes, and food until they became self-sustaining (Neighbours 1973).

Neighbors learned upon his arrival in Washington in August 1849, to present his plan, that the change of administration following the election of Zachary Taylor had cost him his job. No longer Special Indian Agent for Texas, Neighbors returned to Texas and found a large body of Indians awaiting his arrival on the Clear Fork of the Brazos. They were eager to "learn of the *wishes and intentions* of the Department in relation to their affairs" and were disappointed that Neighbors was no longer their official intermediary with the United States (Neighbours 1973).

For the next four years, United States Indian policy in Texas floundered as the United States Army pursued its "'no prisoner" policy toward Indians suspected of raiding. Without any decrease in the raids, settlers bombarded the state government with complaints of "Indian depredations" and demands for action. For example, accusations that appeared in the Austin *State Gazette* on 8 September 1849, included the call that "no other alternative remains but to wage war with all our might and carry it into the wigwams and villages of our barbarous foe." Yet, more moderate voices presented the state and the federal governments with a choice. Former Provisional President of the Republic of Texas, David G. Burnet (1849), who had lived among the Comanches as a young man, wrote to Neighbors on 20 August 1847. He called for the removal of the Indians from Texas by the United States as "the only practical substitute for the actual extermination of the Indians."

The reappointment of Neighbors as Special Indian Agent for Texas, following the election of Franklin Pierce as President in 1852, allowed him to pursue his agenda of establishing reservations for the American Indian people of the western frontier of Texas. A pragmatic concern over the persistent violence and a humanitarian concern over the welfare of the "remnant tribes" coalesced. In February 1854, the legislature authorized the creation of reservations from state-owned lands to be placed under federal control, with the stipulation that non-native Indians be removed from Texas and the reservation lands would revert to the state if or when the Indians no longer occupied the reservations.

However, it was to be more than a year before Neighbors and his agents could gather the scattered "remnant tribes" on the Brazos Reservation, located on the Brazos River, below Ft. Belknap, in Young County, Texas, about ninety miles west-northwest of Ft. Worth. The 30 June 1855 Census Roll conducted by Special Indian Agent, G. W. Hill (Indian Office Letters Received, Texas) showed 623 Indians on the Brazos Reservation. The agency personnel settled them into five ethnic groupings—Anadarkos, Caddos, Tawaccaros (Tawakonis), Tonkawas, and Wacos. On 30 August 1855, at the Brazos Agency, representatives of the five "tribes" on the Brazos Reservation and Buffalo Hump's Penateka Comanches from the nearby Clear Fork Reservation signed an amendment to the Treaty of 15 May 1846. They agreed to

> abandon forever a roving and hunting life and...settle down permanently on the lands selected for us...and to devote all of our energies to the cultivation of the Soil and to raising stock as a means of subsistence for ourselves and families. (Indian Office Letters Received, Texas)

In addition, they placed themselves under the authority of the Indian agents at the Brazos and Clear Fork Reservations and "chiefs" appointed by those agents.

In return, the United States agreed:

> ...to protect and maintain all the members of the Tribes...in their lives and property against injury and molestation from citizens of the United States while on said Reservation,...[to provide] farmers to assist and instruct them...a Blacksmith and tools,...stock cattle and other domestic animals,...and to furnish them regularly with rations...to enable them to support their families, until they can subsist themselves by their own exertions; and the General Government is hereby pledged to pursue that course of policy with the settlers on these reservations, deemed best calculated to advance them as a self-sustaining people. (IOLR, Texas)

At last, many of the surviving Indian people of Texas, in the face of extermination by violence or starvation, relinquished their freedom and accepted the "fruits of civilization" offered by the United States.

With the creation of the reservation system, any Native American off the reservations without a pass became a "hostile", subject to the military's "no prisoner" policy and to settler violence (Klos 1994). Those who chose to live on the reservation and become stock farmers remembered the next three years as a cycle of crop failures due to drought and grasshoppers (Newkumet, Meredith 1988). However, the government rations and protection from settlers, outlaws, and American Indian enemies gave them security and the means for survival.

THE ACCULTURATION PROJECT AT THE BRAZOS RESERVATION

Visitors to the Brazos Reservation came away enthusiastic about the "progress" being made by the Reserve Indians. They tended fields, gardens, and stock; built "American-style" houses; and went to church and school. The Reserve Indians even planted 800 peach trees given to them by a former Indian agent (Ross to Neighbors, 1/1/1856, IOLR, Texas). On 15 August 1856, Colonel Middleton T. Johnson, reported to the Dallas *Herald:*

> ...the feeding policy of Uncle Sam is succeeding admirably....The Indians in the reservations are becoming sleek and fat, and it is said that the wild Indians from the prairies can be distinguished from the domesticated Indians from his lank and lean appearance. (Dallas *Herald* 1856)

On 4 October 1856, the Dallas *Herald* enthusiastically commented:

> The domestication, civilizing, and evangelizing the wild Indians of Texas...will constitute a not unimportant evidence of progress and onward march of the age of humanity and religion. (Dallas *Herald* 1856)

In the fall of 1857, one of the farmers employed to aid the Reserve Indians, Samuel Church, supplied the following account of the year's harvest to Indian Agent Shapley Ross at the Brazos Agency:

> They have also a very large crop of peas and beans, an abundance of pumpkins and squashes, which they are now engaged in cutting and drying for their winter use. They also raised a large crop of melons....Their stock look very well, and their women milk cows and make butter for their own use....A number of these Indians have purchased themselves hogs and are endeavoring to follow in the footsteps of the white men, and are economical with their crops; and it is believed that they will make breadstuffs enough for their subsistence for the coming year. (Ross to Neighbors, 31/10/1856, IOLR, Texas)

In addition, the Reserve Indians harvested 8,000 bushels of corn and 1,240 bushels of wheat in the summer and fall of 1857 (Neighbors to Denver, 16/9/1857, IOLR, Texas).

The following year, the government established a school on the Brazos Reservation. The teacher, Zachariah Coombes, was so proud of his charges that he took two of his students to Dallas for display. According to the *Herald*:

> The little red-skins learn more readily and more rapidly than one would have supposed, and are altogether tractable and manageable. (12/15/58)

The Reserve Indians seemed to be rapidly making the transition from "savagery to civilization."

Yet, some of the Reserve Indians resisted the demands of "progress" and "the onward march of humanity and religion" more than

others. In his diary, Zachariah Coombes persistently complained of drinking, gambling, and immorality on the reservation by both the Reserve Indians and the white staff.

> To civilize a savage requires a firm and decisive course.... [However] it seems to me that to eat, to sleep, to drink and be merry, also to race, gamble and cheat are the most striking and in fact are the examples which are daily and hourly set before them. And in addition to all this there are continually among the Indians a most degraded set of libertines who make it a boast that there is not nor has been any Indian female on this Reserve with whom they have not had or may not have illicet [*sic*] intercourse, precisely at their own will and pleasure. (1962)

In particular, the Tonkawas, who were hunters and gatherers rather than farmers and who had a reputation among other Indians of the southern plains as vicious and depraved cannibals (Foreman 1968), seemed to resist the advances of "civilization." They frequently disrupted the planned activities of the staff (Coombes 1962). Ford recounted an incident in which the other Indians of the Brazos Reservation accused the Tonkawas of interfering with their rainmaking ceremonies:

> The infernal Tonks, always bent on mischief, had stronger medicine than his [the rain king] and turned the cloud away. The Tonks were the black beasts of the agency and were made responsible for many such happenings. (1963)

In addition, Webb (1965) noted that they were disinclined to farm or garden, attend church, send their children to school, or live in houses because "their religion forbade it."

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BRAZOS RESERVATION

However, the civilizing project at the Brazos Reservation came to an early end in conflict with that deep-rooted attitude toward Native Americans—Indian-Hating (Drinnan 1980). Throughout 1857 and 1858, horse stealing and murder plagued the northwest Texas frontier. The settlers, orchestrated by the recently dismissed Indian Agent at the Clear Fork Reservation, John Baylor, blamed the Reserve Indians for the "depredations." This occurred despite strong evidence that the thefts and murders were the work of the mixed ethnicity gangs of outlaws that preyed on residents of the frontier. By 1858, public opinion demanded that Governor Runnels of Texas call up a company of Rangers to defend the frontier settlements. The Ranger company, commanded by Captain John S. (Rip) Ford, accompanied by a number of men from the Brazos Reservation, traveled across the Red River and attacked a large Comanche camp. Despite the decisive victory of the Anglo-Texans, the raiding continued on the frontier of northwest Texas (Klos 1994; McConnell 1933; Neighbours 1973).

However, in the aftermath of the service rendered by the Indian men from the Brazos Reservation, public opinion toward the Reserve Indians softened. The Dallas *Herald* (24/7/58) reported that on 26 May 1858, Gov. Runnels stated that the "brave Indian allies... will be held in grateful remembrance by the people of Texas." The same issue of the *Herald* contained a reprint of an article that had appeared earlier in the Austin *State Gazette* urging the state to reward Placido, a Tonkawa leader who had served Texas militarily for over twenty years, with "a present of a small number of cows" for his invaluable service to the state:

> He is faithful and industrious.... He has done much by his example and by his conversation to encourage his countrymen to abandon their wild pursuits of the chase, and follow those of civilized life, and he has had, and continues to have much to contend against in the indolence and improvidence of the Indian character. (Dallas *Herald* 24/7/58)

Although men from the Brazos Reservation followed the young Sul Ross, son of Shapley Ross, on a second expedition, commanded by Major Van Dorn of the United States Army against the Comanches in the fall of 1858, the "grateful remembrance" did not long persist on the northwest Texas frontier. On 23 December 1858, at least six white settlers, led by Peter Garland, attacked a hunting party of Indian men, women, and children, off the Brazos Reservation with the permission of the agent. They murdered seven people, including three women, in their sleep. In the ensuing fight, two Indians died, a man and a woman, as did one of the settlers (U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs 1860).

After the murders on Keechi Creek, the anti-Indian sentiment on the northwestern frontier of Texas flared in anticipation of Indian

reprisals. For example in a letter to a local newspaper in January of 1859, C.B. Underhill charged the agents and the "rascally reserve Indians" of plotting to kill a delegation of settlers sent to the reservation to resolve the dispute. In addition to the usual complaints of theft, harassment, and murder, Underhill accused the "red and white horse thieves" on the reservation of "debauchery, drunkenness, and abandoned conduct...unfit to be put in print." Finally, playing on settler distrust of and dissatisfaction with the United States government, Underhill decried the government for supplying the Indians with arms, while neglecting frontier defense (USBIA 1860). Despite open acknowledgment of their actions by the murderers, Major Neighbors could not arrest them or indict them in this climate of hatred (Neighbours 1973).

On 5 May 1859, E.J. Gurley, special counsel to prosecute the murderers of the Reserve Indians, disclosed to Neighbors a settler plot to interfere with the possible removal of the Reserve Indians to Indian Territory: "They do not intend that they shall escape; but intend to kill them either at the reservation or before they get to the Red River" (USBIA 1860). Gurley also informed Neighbors that the settlers were planning to exploit the rifts between the Tonkawas and the other groups on the reservation and use them in their plot for a promise of safety (USBIA 1860).

John R. Baylor once more came to the fore as the leader of the anti-Indian faction. On 23 May 1859, Baylor took 250 mounted settlers into the Brazos Reservation, with the purpose of breaking up the reservation and driving out its inmates. A detachment of the United States Army, commanded by Capt. C.C. Gilbert, met Baylor's vigilantes. Baylor and his men retreated, but they murdered two elderly Reserve Indians, including a woman tending her garden, during their foray (Klos 1994; McConnell 1933; Neighbours 1973).

In the aftermath of Baylor's raid, the people on the reservations were in fear of their lives and unable to hunt, roundup their stock, or farm. Neighbors despaired: "The reserves may be considered virtually broken up, all work is suspended. The Indians will not even cultivate their small gardens." With the Native Americans and whites on the reservation confined to close quarters in fear of attack, Neighbors found: "many sick, with three or four deaths per day, and the whole camp, both Indians and whites seriously threatened with an epidemic" (USBIA 1860). Earlier, the tensions engendered by the settler demands of removal and the threat of violence apparently led the acculturated Reserve Indian, Notchicorax, to kill himself and his family (Coombes 1962).

The prospect of armed conflict between the United States Army and Anglo-Texan settlers over the safety of the Indians on the reservations forced Governor Runnels into action. On 6 June 1859, Runnels appointed a board of peace commissioners to investigate the violence (Winfrey, Day 1966). In their report to the Governor, the peace commissioners implicated white accomplices in the raiding, with only a few Reserve Indians involved. Yet, they recommended removal:

> We believe it impracticable, if not impossible, for tribes of American Indians, scarcely advanced one step in civilization, cooped up on a small reservation and surrounded by white settlers, to live in harmony for any length of time. (USBIA 1860)

Governor Runnels called up 100 state troops to be commanded by John Henry Brown to separate the settlers from the Indians on the reservations (Klos 1994; McConnell 1933; Neighbours 1973).

Yet, the fear, hysteria, and anti-Indian rhetoric continued, as the following newspaper account reveals:

> We call upon you fellow citizens, in the name of all that is sacred, in behalf of suffering women and children, whose blood paints afresh, from the Red River to the Rio Grande, day by day, the scalping knife of the savage foe; in the name of mothers whose daughters have been violated by the 'reserve Indians,' and robbed of that virtue which God alone can give—come, come, fellow citizens; arouse, and take action before the deaths of tender infants, mothers, fathers, and aged grandsires is swollen to a more frightful extent by our sluggish action or supine indifference! ("Extra," *Frontier News* 24/6/59, quoted in USBIA 1860)

However, a debate emerged. George B. Erath and Middleton T. Johnson, respected figures on the Anglo-Texan frontier, traveled tirelessly and without regard to threats to their personal safety across northwest Texas to calm the fears of the settlers (Klos 1994; Neighbours 1973). On 12 May 1859, a large group of settlers in Young County gathered at

the courthouse in Belknap to condemn the violence and urge restraint in the confrontation with the Indians on the reservations (Neighbours 1973). The anti-removal argument had centered on concerns that Indian removal would leave the frontier defenseless, if United States troops stationed near the reservations left with their Indian charges (Dallas *Herald* 3/7/58,17/7/58,19/1/59,9/2/59).

In addition, the reservations and the troops furnished a substantial economic boon to the northwest Texas frontier. For example, in a single week, 5 December to 13 December 1857, the United States government bought 11,400 lbs. of beef, 500 lbs. of flour, and 105 lbs of salt at a cost of $570.91 for the use of 1,010 Indians at the Brazos Agency (Statement of Provisions Issued by S.P. Ross, IOLR, Texas). The fact that the Brazos and Clear Fork Reservations and associated military posts underpinned local prosperity was not lost on the people of the area. The Dallas *Herald* (24/7/58, quoted in Neighbours 1973) noted that land in Belknap has "risen 150–200 per cent, and you can hear nothing now but contracts for building houses... *Vive la Belknap*..." As late as 9 February 1859, the Dallas *Herald* argued that if the United States government removed the Indians on the reservations to Indian Territory and closed the associated military posts:

> We lose the large amount of public funds disbursed in maintaining those posts, the money disbursed by the Indian Agents in subsisting the Reserve Indians—an amount in the aggregate that has been sufficient for several years past to furnish a market for surplus produce in the frontier counties that could not have been found elsewhere, and that has put dollars into every man's pocket, who has a bushel of corn, or a bale of oats, a rack of hay or a beef to sell. (Dallas *Herald* 9/2/59)

The pro-Indian argument continued to be advanced along humanitarian lines as well. The *Herald*, on 25 May 1859, described a recent meeting with Placido:

> Placido, the old chief asks, 'Where am I to take my little band! No friends, no money, no home, no hunting grounds: he says his only friends are Texians and that he does not wish to leave the country.' It is painful to hear him talk, he manifests so much feeling, and rarely speaks of the matter without shedding tears. He says that it makes him sorry to hear that the Texans are anxious to murder his little tribe, after they fought so hard for their country. (Dallas *Herald* 25/5/59)

On 11 June 1859, Neighbors received orders from Washington to move the Reserve Indians across the Red River to the Indian Territory. Indian-Hating had triumphed over security, economic, and persisting humanitarian concerns. Despite the feuding between Neighbors and Brown (Winfrey, Day 1966), the state militia maintained order. On 1 August, the Reserve Indians loaded their portable personal property into ox-drawn wagons for the trek north. They were escorted by agency personnel and United States Army troops commanded by Major George Thomas. A week later, they safely crossed the Red River into Indian Territory.

DISCUSSION

The rapid westward political and economic expansion of the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century overwhelmed Indian peoples beyond the Appalachians. By the late 1840s, the government of the United States and the Anglo-American majority in the United States faced the question of how to deal with its beleaguered American Indian minority. In line with contemporary Western conceptions about savagery and civilization, the choice wavered between a harsh policy of removal or extermination and a more benevolent civilization program. The reservation system inaugurated by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, after 1849, was to be the cornerstone of the civilization program, while incorporating elements of the removal program by isolating Indians from the dominant group.

Authorities created the Brazos Reservation out of humanitarian concerns that camouflaged the massive seizure of American Indian lands. The acculturation program at the Brazos Reservation failed miserably. Not only did some Indians, particularly the Tonkawas, resist acculturation, but white Americans demanded and achieved the dismantling of the reservation and the removal of its inmates to Indian Territory. They did so in the face of compelling security and economic interests that supported the continued existence of the Brazos Reservation and its acculturation program.

The debacle at the Brazos Reservation

points out the inherent incompatibilities in a program that involves isolation based on race hatred and forced acculturation. On the Brazos Reservation, most of the Indians responded to the demands of the acculturation program by farming, going to school, attending church, and adopting customs of the majority group. Yet, the white settlers refused to accept the Reserve Indians as anything but "savages," in spite of the efforts made by most of them to accommodate to the demands that they live in the same manner as their settler neighbors and compelling security and economic advantages for many of the settlers to support the continued existence of the Brazos Reservation. In addition, even the most ardent and sincere advocates for a humanitarian acculturation program opted for Indian removal once the prospects of violence became real with the attack on the Brazos Reservation.

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