

# ☼ THE OSAGE CREATION STORY ☼

The stories told through the ages by the priests of the WAZHAZHE were the understandings revealed to them by WAKONTAH, the name of God. The story was descriptive but symbolic of the cosmos created by WAKONTAH. The symbols must be understood as necessary to a pre-literate people to understand a unique cosmology that was the WAZHAZHE religion.

It was believed that **WAKONTAH**, the father of the **LITTLE ONES**, as the **WAZHAZHE** called themselves, were sent down as caretakers of the **SACRED ONE**, or earth. Later the Europeans were amazed by the complexity of the cosmology given to them by **WAKONTAH**.

When the **CHILDREN OF THE MIDDLE WATERS**, another term used by the **WAZHAZHE** to describe the People, came down from the stars, they floated down into a **RED OAK TREE**. As they alighted, they loosened acorns that clattered down among the leaves and bounced from the limbs and branches. They descended with the **PEOPLE OF THE WATERS**, or **WAZHAZHE**, leading. They floated down from the sky with their legs outreached to the treetops, and their arms up like the wings of an **ALIGHTING EAGLE**, since it is this great bird's landing that they later imitated in their **CREATION DANCES**. The fringes along the outseam of their buckskin leggings, which they have always worn, were in imitation of the **GOLDEN EAGLE'S TARSAL FEATHERS** that grow like heavy, hairlike mold to the toes.

So these **CHILDREN FROM THE SKY** divided into three groups, which were to be organized and named later after they had walked upon the **SACRED ONE** and sought the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE**. They walked in order: **THE PEOPLE OF THE WATER, WAZHAZHE**, led, then came the **PEOPLE OF THE LAND, HUNKAH**, and the **PEOPLED OF THE SKY, TSIZHO**, last.

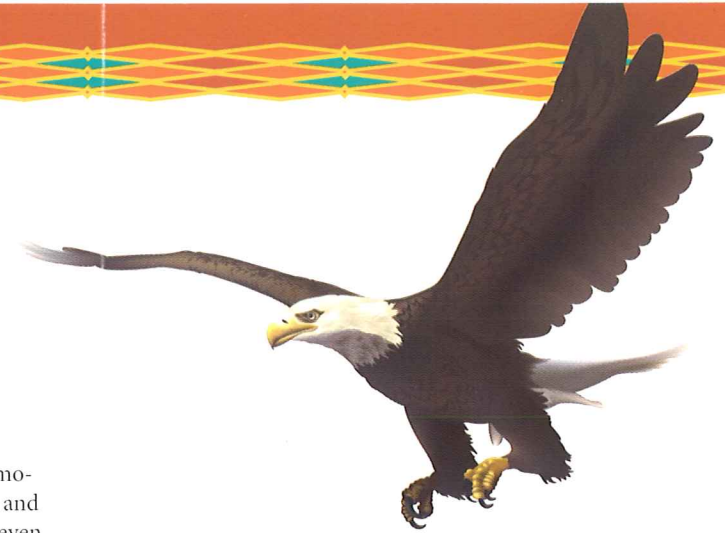
Before the **TSIZHO** had left the sky lodge, they remembered that grandfather the sun had called them to him. He pointed out to them the thirteen rays that radiated from him

in the mornings and again in the evenings during certain atmospheric conditions. He asked them to note their straightness and to note that there were six of these rays on the left side and seven on the right side, and that further there was a glow on the left side that was the shape of the soft under tail-feather of the golden eagle. These things would have great significance in their lives on the **SACRED ONE**, he warned them.

They resumed their wandering – the **WATER PEOPLE** leading, then the land people behind them, and behind them the sky people. But this time they had a definite objective: the finding of the **U-TAH-NO'N-DSI**, the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE**.

One day the **WAH-SHA-SHE** came to a village. The scene, as handed down through generations of little old men, is quite clear-cut and realistic. The story symbolic, like a parable, and never to be understood as literal. The essentials that had to be brought out to characterize these people of the village were startlingly realistic symbols of the disorder that could exist without knowledge of **WAKONTAH** and his teachings.

The story was richly described so that impressionable non-literate people would understand the meaning of the symbols. The story related that the three groups were afraid to approach the village, so they sent out a messenger. He crossed several valleys, stopped on a ridge above the village and concealed himself. He described the scene in repugnant terms. He described the women as wanton in their demeanor and behavior. The messenger went back saying this was the village of the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE**. The leader of the **WAH-SHA-SHE** went on to meet the leader of the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE**, while the land people



and sky people turned away in disgust, walking along holding their noses. Here in the village of the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE** was death, decay, disease, and waste and bones of men along with the bones of animals. In symbolic terms, this represented what one might expect of earth without the influence of the **WAKONTAH**.

But the chief of the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE** sent a messenger to the leader of the **WAZHAZHE**, and he went into the village to smoke the pipe, a very important ceremony, with the chief. When they had passed the pipe between them, the leader of the **WAZHAZHE** said to the chief, "Who are you?" and the chief answered, "I am of the **EARTH PEOPLE** and the **RED BOULDER** is our symbol. It is red like the dawn and it is life everlasting. When they come to it the enemy war parties must divide and pass on each side; all things that move aside for the **GREAT RED BOULDER**."

The leader of the **WAZHAZHE**, the **WATER PEOPLE**, said: "Our bodies are of the **RED CLAY PIPE** which we are smoking. We are the **WATER PEOPLE**, and all things come to us for purification."

The chief of the **ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE** listened to the wisdom of the **WATER PEOPLE**, and moved away from their site to becoming one people. The **CHILDREN OF**



THE MIDDLE WATERS symbolize the universe of SKY-EARTH-LAND-AND-WATER pulling together as one, as was intended by WAKONTAH.

The priests of the WAZHAZHE would sit every day in the shade of an elm tree to consider the teaching of WAKONTAH that were necessary to understand the religion given to them, to organize the buffalo hunt and to organize a war movement and civil government. Soon they were called LITTLE OLD MEN, meaning WISE MEN or councilors. These priests of the clans, together with the great priests who represented the whole tribe, constituted the governing authority of the tribe.

Finally, they met no more under the red oak or elm tree, close to the wayward smoke of the campfires. Instead, respected men gave them permission to meet in their lodge. Soon, this particular lodge was called the LODGE OF MYSTERY and the little old men became respected and esteemed through a long period of time. The recitations began with the word, "It has been said in this lodge."

The symbolism of the story continued. The little old men had begun to believe that the former ISOLATED EARTH PEOPLE, now called the GRAND HUNKAH, had not been influenced sufficiently by its subdivisions, the WATER PEOPLE and the LAND PEOPLE, and might, if not controlled, bring about degeneration of the tribe, perhaps similar to their own degeneracy when people from the sky first came upon them.

The cosmology of the tribe began with 7 clans and as the WAZHAZHE developed their understanding of WAKONTAH it expanded to 24 clans grouped into 2 divisions. One division represented the sky and the other the earth. The earth division was further divided into parts that represented the land and water portions of the earth.

This duality in all of creation was reflected though the WAZHAZHE cosmology. Each of the clans was represented by a symbol or set of symbols taken from nature so that it could be understood by all of the People. But the priests always cautioned that they were only symbols.

The little old men would send out each man to fast for four to seven days, wearing their sacred earth mark on their forehead. On returning each man would then tell of his experiences and his visions, which would enable the priests to discern the symbol to be used as intended by WAKONTAH.

Finally, all the honorable symbols had been chosen. Only one Osage was left without a chosen life symbol. Subsequently, he again went in search of his symbol.



While he was walking he walked into the black spider web. Being annoyed at the spider web he ask the spider "Why did you build your web for me to walk into?" The spider replied "Why don't you choose me as your life symbol?" The Osage covered his laugh, when the spider said "Don't laugh because you came to me, and where I build my home all good things come to he."



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