

NATIVISTIC MOVEMENTS AND TRADITIONALISM
IN CHEROKEE HISTORY

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PREFACE

In the recent tradition of "New Indian History" which developed in the 1970s and 1980s, this study centers on the Indians as actors and "makers" of history and seeks to reinterpret "old" histories. Heretofore Cherokee history has been written from the perspective that the "disappearance" of the Indian seemed to call for an explanation if not justification. More recently, however, ethnohistorians have discovered that the cultural processes involved in the so-called "disappearance" requires a more careful investigation. It now appears that Cherokee culture did not simply disappear but has adapted and later resurfaced in different forms.

Nativistic movements have preserved Cherokee culture in ways that made the culture meaningful in particular historical contexts. In the early period of Cherokee-American contact, the Chickamaugans and similar emigrant groups represented a separatist, even militant, nativistic movement. During the early nineteenth century nativism expressed itself in "nationalism" as in White Path's cautious "rebellion" against changes that were perceived as too fundamental and in the tribe's organization of its removal from the East. The use of the Cherokee language in speech and writing was also a nativistic movement. In the nineteenth century Christian fundamentalism and Cherokee traditionalism were almost indistinguishable. Indeed nativistic leadership emerged from both movements. Taskegidi's (Jesse Bushyhead) "temperance move-

ment" instilled a sense of self-confidence in the Cherokee people after the removal, where the Keetoowah Society, of "ancient origin," played a significant role during and after the Civil War as self-acclaimed "defenders of the nation." The late nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the emergence of other nativistic organizations that restored and perpetuated a vital and meaningful Cherokee culture despite allotment and dissolution of formal tribal government. Today Cherokee culture greatly enriches American society.

Anthropological concepts and the theory of "cultural relativism" permit a new interpretation of Cherokee history. My interpretation to this approach was a seminar entitled "Race Theory and Social Thought" taught by Visiting Professor George A. Levesque at the Freie Universitat Berlin in 1984. There, I learned to analyze the Cherokees' experience as inseparable from the history of the American South. A grant from the Fulbright Commission (1984) enabled me to pursue further studies in the United States. I am deeply grateful to Professor W. David Baird, the internationally known Indian and Western historian, for giving me the opportunity to study Cherokee history under his direction. He made me aware of the available historical resources and made sure I used them. I also thank other members of my thesis committee, Professor Donald Brown (Anthropology), Professor Margaret Nelson (English), and Professor Michael Smith (Latin American History), for their comments and advice.

Studying Cherokee history in Oklahoma enabled me to gain access to several archives and collections. My research was facilitated by Dr. Duane H. King at the Tsa-La-Gi Museum Complex in Tahlequah, Delores Sumner at the Cherokee Collection of Northeastern State University in

Tahlequah, and the friendly staff of the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Brian Wood at the Edmon Low Library of Oklahoma State University in Stillwater obtained various materials for me through interlibrary loan and always had a word of encouragement. Professor Ronald D. Petrin at OSU and Dr. Robert K. Thomas at the University of Arizona, both helped me sort out my thoughts on Cherokee history.

I am grateful also to many Cherokee people who shared their views with me and let me get a glimpse of their way of life. Among these were members of the Hogshooter, Thompson, Bird, Wolf, and Jumper families, as well as Sarah Hirst, Charles Gourd, and William Smith of the Keetowah Society, wadan. Without their help and that of others the gathering of information for this thesis would have been less fruitful. I am also thankful to friends in Stillwater, especially to Tanya Davis, who demonstrated to me that it was possible to write a thesis. I owe many thanks to Teresa Tanner who typed the manuscript and set it in the appropriate format. I am also aware that this study would not have been possible without the understanding of my family in Germany, whom I thank deeply.

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CHAPTER I

NATIVISTIC MOVEMENTS AND THE CHEROKEE CULTURE

Until recently there has been an overwhelming consensus among historians that assimilation was the greatest achievement of the Cherokee tribe, one of the Five Civilized Tribes. This view has overlooked the role that traditionalism and nativism have had in the evolution of Cherokee thought over the past two centuries. Historians are beginning to understand that traditional attitudes have had a greater impact than commonly believed. To understand the interaction between traditionalism and outside forces is to comprehend how over time Cherokee culture has managed to retain its essential integrity. This thesis will demonstrate how traditional strategies rather than assimilation promoted cultural survival.

Sadly, too much of the history of the Cherokee people has been written from a truncated acculturationist viewpoint and too little from the traditional tribal perspective. Indeed, scholars have tended to praise the "inevitable" emergence of "progressive white ways" and have overlooked the rich history of the traditionalist Cherokees. As Rennard Strickland points out "such history neglects to note that what emerged from the great Cherokee compromise [with non-Indians] was a uniquely Indian adaptation that survives into the present in unique aspects of culture and government."¹ Generally, the Cherokees have been described as an adaptive monocultural entity, a description that

obscured their cultural diversity and the vitality of discourse on political and social options available to them. Although the eminent historians Grace Steele Woodward, Muriel Wright, Annie Abel, and Angie Debo researched extensively, their use of primary source material predetermined their conception of the "inevitable" demise of tribal identity.² The conclusions of Grant Foreman's meticulous work were also foreordained by the author's dedication to acculturation, Indian allotment, and statehood. Foreman was an advocate of the agricultural, commercial, and industrial development of Indian lands which culminated in the dissolution of tribal governments in Indian Territory. At the same time, he devoted considerable time and money to the praise of the bygone greatness of the doomed Indian nations in his numerous books.³

Certain periods in Cherokee history and aspects of tribal culture have received more attention than others. Anthropologists have generally stressed original political and social organization and attempted to isolate "pure," or unchanged, surviving traits.⁴ Only a few ethno-historical works--notable exceptions in the great body of literature on the Cherokees--have integrated the concept of cultural adaptability with perseverance of traditional values.⁵ Considerable attention has been given to the emergence of a Cherokee state in the early nineteenth century, tribal removal, Civil War factionalism, and dissolution of the tribal governments at the turn of the century. Cultural achievements such as invention and use of Sequoyah's syllabary have also received much attention by "assimilationist" historians but have been shunned by "purist" anthropologists.⁶ Only recently have there been ethnohistorical, integrative attempts to counterbalance the "assimilationist school of thought."⁷

Understanding Indian cultures and how they have changed over time is difficult. Many misinterpretations have occurred because scholars have failed to define their terms clearly. For a better understanding, one has to rely on certain theoretical constructs derived from anthropology. These include "culture," "nativistic movements," and "innovation."⁸

Culture is a creative tool of coordinated human adaptation to the environment. It includes the organization of kin-groups and all social, economic, or political institutions. Culture also defines man's relationship to the universe through religion and art. By means of language and writing, people pass cultural contents on to their descendants. The values by which people live are relative to the particular kind of cultural learning they have experienced. According to anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits, such "'judgments' are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his own 'culture'."⁹ Cultures also change over time.

Tribal societies undergo specific changes only to the extent they are unable to preserve their fundamental structure and character.¹⁰ Resistance to substantial change leads to the formation of nativistic movements. Nativistic movements are unlikely to arise in situations where both societies are satisfied with their current relationship.¹¹ A nativistic movement is "any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture."¹² The revived elements are intangible ideas from the realms of custom and religion. An important consideration in this selective process involves the usefulness of non-Indian culture elements, mostly material objects like tools or rifles. In other words, a nativ-

istic movement may concede to the assimilation of selected material objects, but it remains skeptical of the intentions of those who supply the object. To the amazement of European colonizers enamored with their own superiority, tribal members expected to conduct trade with them as equals not as inferiors. When Europeans used coercive power, the tribes saw this pressure as threatening the very existence of traditional life-styles.

Some nativistic movements became widely-publicized while others did not. Among the former were religious renewals which took place among several North American Indian tribes and often had an intertribal impact. Pontiac, Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh, Handsome Lake, the "Prophet Dance" of the Northwest, the "Dreamer Religion" featuring a Smoholla prophet, the "Shaker Religion" with a Slocum prophet, and the "Ghost Dance" among the Plains Indians were most notable and were all spiritual reactions with political implications in times of severe oppression. The "Cherokee Ghost Dance" has not been as widely recognized. Only the Indian agents and missionaries directly involved with the tribe noticed its occurrence. The threat to non-Indians was minimal. This nativistic movement of the early nineteenth century had a tremendous impact on the Cherokees.¹³

Cultural change begins with the process of "innovation." The formation of a new habit by a single individual which is subsequently accepted by other members of the society constitutes innovations. These innovations can involve the recombination of preexisting ideas into new syntheses, or they can be the introduction of new ideas in the process of cultural diffusion. Cultural borrowing depends on contact, incentive, and social acceptance. As long as the innovator alone

practices the innovation, it is an individual habit and not yet an element of culture. Social acceptance begins with the adoption of the new idea by a small number of individuals from whom it spreads to become part of a subculture until it becomes widely but optionally practiced. An important factor for the acceptance of an innovation is the social prestige of the innovator or subculture. In summary, "innovation is the recombination of previously existing ideas into a new idea..." and it is "closely linked with diffusion and acculturation processes."¹⁴

"Culture," "nativistic movements," and "innovation" are theoretical constructs of great advantage. Among other things, they help differentiate the mechanisms of culture change among the Cherokee Indians. They also make clear that tribal history can no longer be summarized under the nineteenth century notion of victorious "progress" over unenlightened "backwardness." They demonstrate that although Cherokee culture did not remain unchanged, important aspects of its traditional elements did contribute and still do contribute to the history and welfare of the Cherokee people.¹⁵

Over time attempts to sustain basic values intrinsic to Cherokee culture surfaced in organized nativistic movements and traditionalism. Traditional values are not necessarily of ancient origin, although most of them have pre-European contact antecedents. They constitute the "rules" by which people agree to live and which provide a sense of identity and "peoplehood." Among Cherokee traditions of ancient origin are gadugi (community self-help organizations), clan membership, the use of the Cherokee language, and the adherence to common land ownership.

Another very important tradition is the philosophy of the White Path. Which stresses the community bond and "doing right." It is a blend of pre-Columbian temple religion and native Christianity. At different times, various nativistic movements have formed to preserve the White Path and other traditional values.¹⁶

There were three general types of Cherokee nativistic movements, One, was a tendency to physically withdraw from scenes of discomfort. Examples of uncooperative movements included the militant Chickamaugans of the eighteenth century, voluntary emigration to the West and Mexico, and extremist factionalism. These groups withdrew in order to maintain their communal organization, economy, and religion. Unless they pursued their goals aggressively against whites or other Indian tribes, they wished basically to be left undisturbed.¹⁷

A second type were traditionalist Cherokee organizations with revivalistic tendencies. The "Cherokee Ghost Dance," the transport of religious objects over the "Trail of Tears," and the conduct of "stomp dances" were examples. Cherokee political leaders knew of the existence of these adherents to the "old way" and sought to win their allegiance.¹⁸ White Path and Redbird Smith serve as two examples of very charismatic leaders with considerable following.

A third nativistic movement encourages the acceptance of innovations by Cherokee society. Economic innovations strengthened the tribe's cohesiveness and gave it an interested and capable political leadership.¹⁹ Political innovations, specifically new governmental forms, were designed to maintain the tribe's political independence. "Indeed," writes anthropologist Albert Wahrhaftig,

the autonomous Cherokee Nation may have been built by men who received credit from whites for accomplishments demanded

of them by their traditional elders.²⁰

Religious innovations included the popular acceptance of fundamentalist Christianity. Generally, innovations were proven beneficial to the preservation of cultural values before they were embraced by traditionalists.²¹

A most impressive illustration of a successful innovation involved the Cherokee language. According to linguist John Gulick, the active motive behind the Cherokee language's was resistance to the pressures of modern White culture.²² Since language is a device for expressing experience, speakers design new terms for novel items.²³ For example, the automobile in Cherokee was initially "It-stares," but later became "It-runs-on-rubber."²⁴ This example illustrates how language innovates without altering the grammar or the fundamental thought process.

Cherokee literacy represented a nativistic innovation which spanned thousands of miles and over 160 years. Sequoyah completed a syllabary for the Cherokee language in 1821. Although Christian missionaries also made use of it to spread the Gospel among Cherokee speakers, the syllabary's main significance lay in the preservation of Cherokee thought.²⁵ Sequoyah's innovation enabled many Cherokees to communicate with each other in letters, to preserve mental knowledge in manuscripts, to publish a weekly newspaper, to conduct business transactions, and to make all council meetings and laws comprehensible to those who spoke no English.²⁶ A large proportion of Cherokee literature consists of manuscripts, church records, correspondence, and curing formulae written in the syllabary. Obviously, the popularity of Sequoyah's innovation was much greater among Cherokees who were not literate in English.²⁷

The syllabary was and is relevant to and consistent with the interests and values of the native community, or nobody would have bothered to learn it.²⁸ It permitted participation in religious activities, both Christian and Cherokee, and in the practice of Indian medicine. The syllabary also lessened the generation gap where oral tradition was in danger because of too many disruptive removals or family deaths. With its help, traditional knowledge could "skip" generations in difficult times.²⁹

Since nativistic movements among the Cherokees were designed to preserve traditional values, it is necessary to examine the fundamental structure of their pre-contact society to identify those values.³⁰ According to the Cherokees' migration legend, the tribe originated from an island off the coast of South America.³¹ Emigrants from the island constituted a group of discontented people who protested their tribe's break with the morality and purity of life as their Creator had prescribed them. After leaving the island, these mythical "puritan" ancestors of the Cherokees wandered across South and Central America until they reached the Appalachian region where they settled permanently and devoted themselves to a pure life, or the "White Path." The ensuing Golden Age supposedly lasted until the descendants had to contend with the influx of European colonists, beginning in the sixteenth century, which resulted in the abandonment of the pure life and subsequent supernatural punishment in the form of death and misery. Authenticated by oral transition and wampum belts, the genesis legend of the Cherokees reflects a quest for cultural purity, a trend toward emigration, and a tendency for political factionism.³²

Historians and archeologists mention Cherokee origin myths only in

passing reference and usually place the Cherokees' beginnings in the "North" of North America among the Iroquois, with whom the Cherokees share a faint language affinity.³³ Some accounts pay tribute to a legendary origin in the "West" and attribute early Cherokee migrations across the Mississippi to the lingering popularity of this mythical place of origin. Contemporary nineteenth century Anglo-Americans sometimes used this fragmentary knowledge of Cherokee legends to justify a western removal.³⁴ Archeology has established, however, that Indians occupied the Appalachian region continuously from the era of the Big Game Hunters to historic times.³⁵ Surely the Cherokees were there in the 1540s when they encountered a detachment of Spanish explorers under DeSoto.³⁶ Even then among neighboring tribes they were as the "cave-dwelling people", a name that suggests a lengthy occupation of the Appalachian region.³⁷

No adequate documentation exists as to whether the Cherokees built the mounds found in their country, yet their pre-Columbian society was certainly shaped by the influential Mississippian Culture Complex. Political and ceremonial institutions among the aboriginal Cherokees were similar to those of the surrounding tribes, all of whom received cultural stimuli from the last of the great Mississippian civilizations, the Natchez.³⁸ The latter declined and disintegrated completely after its military defeat at the hands of the Spanish and the French in the mid-eighteenth century. Natchez bands invariably joined or intermarried with the Creeks and the Cherokees, among whom they held influential ceremonial and advisory positions.³⁹ Later survivors and refugees of the many tribes (Alabamas, Uchees, Shawanis, Koasatis, Hichitis, Taskigis, Mobilians, Tahomes, Mugulashas, Biloxis,

Acolapissas, and Hoamas) also settled among the more powerful and numerous Cherokees and Creeks.⁴⁰ Linguistic differences notwithstanding, remnants of those small tribes and the larger Cherokee tribe formed political associations.

In pre-Columbian times, and later Cherokee communities played a prominent role in tribal politics. The town was the largest political unit of the tribe. Each was a face-to-face community, where everybody knew everyone else. About 200 to 500 people lived together in permanent settlements, supporting themselves with gardens, hunting, and gathering. There was a division of labor between the sexes that pervaded all aspects of society. As in most societies, more restrictions were placed on women than on men. Women, for instance, were considered "impure" during menstruation and childbirth. While "afflicted" they had to stay away from sacred places, objects, and men. Before organized hunts, war parties, or ritual ball games, men avoided all contacts with their wives and "impure" women. After menopause women could participate in political and religious deliberations more freely, but generally only one outstanding, or "beloved" woman could speak in council. A woman's social position depended upon the accomplishments of her husband, brother, or father.

All social relationships were based on kinship and seven clan affiliation. A person belonged to their mother's clan but knew his or her father's as well as both sets of grandparents' clans. Knowledge of the seven clans was crucial for marriage alignments. Cherokee society was matri- and uxori-local, i.e., a man resided in his mother's or wife's household. Women seldom moved away from the town of their birth. Due to the relatively small size of town populations, men would

sometimes have to look for wives in other towns. They could not marry into their mother's or paternal grandmother's clans. Marriage and residence regulations created a web of kinship relations which essentially held the Cherokees together as one people.⁴¹

Political decisions about sending out war or hunting parties were always made at the town level. Each town had two moieties, i.e., population segments, one "White" and another "Red." The White moiety (peace) based its decisions on consensus, while the "Red" (war) featured a hierarchical form of leadership and lent itself to one-man's-rule, if a war chief was able to attract enough loyal followers. The bond and identification of the young, married men of the Red moiety led to the genesis of a war organization interconnecting towns by affinity and kinship.⁴² The town's "Red" moiety could not stay in power longer than the crisis lasted, after which the warriors distributed their booty among the townspeople, made their deeds public, and ceremonially purified themselves.⁴³ With the reintroduction of the returning warriors to village life, the civil government took over again. The relations between the towns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were informal and cursory.

Certain Cherokee towns were "places of refuge" and "mother towns," serving as loci of collective and religious ritual as well as the foci of local government. When town size outgrew the ecological adjustment and institutional efficiency, groups would form satellite settlements. By 1735 there were approximately sixty-four towns in the Cherokee country. In the center each had a council house, presumably on elevated ground in remembrance of the great Mississippian mound building tradition. In front of this house was a public square, a level area

used for dances, games, and celebrations of all kinds. Near the town house and square were the public food storage facility and community garden. Private homes clustered around these public areas.⁴⁴ All ceremonies took place in public. While the seven clans had members in every town, the judiciary and executive were located only in one. The latter judged and prosecuted criminal offenders whose sentences could be abrogated by respected "mother towns." Some of these "towns of refuge" were Tellico, Chota, Keowee, Kittuwa, and Ustanali. At the main event of the six agricultural festivals of the Cherokee year, all towns undertook ritual purification rites, extinguished and rekindled all household fires, and pronounced a general amnesty for all persons who had successfully fled to one of the "towns of refuge."⁴⁵ This practice later gave way to a court system.

It is apparent that many of the traditional values that Cherokee nativistic movements sought to preserve have pre-contact origins. Among these are making decisions according to consensus rather than majority rule, the selection of a leader on the basis of his skill as a persuader instead of a ruler, the philosophy of the "White Path," the determination to maintain Cherokee economic and political units free from "outside" influence, and the resistance to individualism by which one pulls loose from one's tribal life. At the same time, selective adaptation of Anglo-American ideas like literacy and republicanism allowed the Cherokees to avoid painful culture shock and subsequent culture loss. Finally, cultural affinity with the other southeastern tribes played a significant role in the history of various nativistic Cherokee organizations. In summary, as certain culture elements brought forth revitalization movements, organized responses

also protected and perpetuated these cultural ideas. The process of Cherokee nativistic efforts has spanned the tribe's entire history from initial contact with Anglo-Americans until the present time. The following chapters will highlight the historical development of nativistic movements and traditionalism among the Cherokees.

ENDNOTES

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Ethnology, (Washington, D.C., 1928); Fred O. Gearing, "Priests and Warriors," American Anthropologist 64 (October 1962): 83; James Mooney, Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees (Nashville, 1972).

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CHAPTER II

CHEROKEE INNOVATION AND TRADITIONALISM

IN THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

Between 1670 and 1820 Cherokee-European culture contact centered on trade relations and land transactions. Facing constant pressure to relinquish land claims and renounce tribal culture, the Cherokee response was basically two-fold. The "White" (peace) leaders established a basis of peaceful coexistence with the growing settler population. The "Red" (war) leaders pursued a policy of redness and cultural separatism. The Chickamaugans organized, for example, to defend militarily Cherokee tribal autonomy. After their defeat, emigration to the West became a noble option for cultural separatists. Those remaining in the East experienced a surge of "nationalism" which led to further political centralization on the one hand, and the Ghost Dance movement on the other. The acceptance of Sequoyah's unique syllabary was another example of traditionalist innovative response. Until the end of the century the Cherokees were able to maintain their mixed hunting-horticulture economy, but cultural adjustments were impending due to the loss of territory and the decimation of the people.¹

The English colonies of Virginia and South Carolina rapidly expanded to the west causing great changes in Indian society through trade, warfare, and disease. In the beginning their troops destroyed many Cherokee towns in attempts to drive all Indians across the moun-

tains. Deliberate destruction of crops and the spread of diseases took a heavy toll among the estimated 17,000 Cherokees. After the fortification of Charlestown in 1670, South Carolina engaged in a lucrative Indian slave trade. Trade and warfare were closely associated. Well-supplied traders could sway whole towns from the French to the English side. Traders actively promoted warfare, peace negotiations, and land cessions.² The traders had little reluctance to distribute firearms among the Indians. Once in possession of these effective weapons the Cherokees became useful allies of the English against coastal and interior tribes. After wresting control of it from the Virginians, the Indian trade became the most significant economic factor in Carolinian expansion.³

The colonial Indian trade was not to the liking of the British Crown. Traders had vast, virtually unlimited powers sanctioned by the colonial legislative assemblies. Verner W. Crane concluded from his research that, "among the Indians the traders enjoyed an influence which tempted some to play the petty tyrant."⁴ Crown officials, however, would have liked to make sure that the traders were loyal British subjects and that the Indians understood that the King's rule was the supreme law of the land.

British policy toward Indian tribes influenced Indian town politics. In order to circumvent the unruly colonial assemblies, the English government feebly attempted to establish direct diplomatic relations with its Indian subjects. The eccentric English aristocrat, Sir Alexander Cuming, went on a self-appointed mission to find out "who was who" among the Cherokees. Laden with gifts, he travelled from town to town and attended councils throughout the country. Upon his arrival

in the most venerated of the "mother towns," Tellico, Sir Alexander had the impression that this town's civil chief, Moytoy, was fit to be called "Emperor of the Cherokees." Cumming, with his flattering and lordly manners, succeeded at gaining the Cherokees' confidence. "White" leaders from the towns assembled around this royal messenger from England. Although Moytoy himself could not be persuaded, a delegation of seven clan representatives accompanied Sir Alexander to England in 1730. They attended an audience at the Court and went sight-seeing in London. Aside from the entertainment, the Cherokee delegation also undertook serious business. In a treaty it recognized the English King as the Cherokee sovereign and protector, without whose consent the tribe was not to deal directly with the colonies. Although this treaty was merely an affirmation of friendly relations, it had a profound impact on the Cherokees. It shaped their policy toward the Europeans.⁵

The seven chiefs returned to their country with an optimistic message. They had found a benevolent, powerful ally, or so they hoped.⁶ One of the delegates in particular made the most of the trip to England. Attacullaculla (Little Carpenter) set out to convince all influential town chiefs that he was pro-British out of personal experience. Relationships with these Europeans were radically different from the traditional Indian diplomacy, he argued. New fire weapons, diseases, and destruction afflicted the Cherokee people, disconcerting developments with which the English were mysteriously involved.⁷ It was wise and honorable to have them as friends. Obviously, the London agreement of 1730 impressed Attacullaculla very much.⁸

Nativistic resistance stirred among the Cherokee war leaders

against "foreign" domination, and Attacullaculla's policy of peaceful coexistence did not convince the Cherokee "Red," or war chiefs. Led by war chiefs Oconostota, Ostenaco, and Dragging Canoe, Attacullaculla's son, most of these remained skeptical of English professions of friendship. To them it was clear that the English Crown did not hold a firm grip on her colonies, for the pro-British, Cherokee leadership had to make many concessions to colonial governments, even cede land, without the promised supervision from a friendly King in London.⁹ Too many Indians had died in wars and famines. The skeptics urged that the Cherokees take a military stand against the English and maintain their cultural and political independence.

The differing attitudes toward European colonists reflected the Cherokees' perception that they faced a choice in Cherokee-English relations. In 1763 three of the war chiefs persuaded an Englishman to pay the expenses of a journey to England. Ostenaco from Tamali Town wished to see the legendary might of the King, whom Attacullaculla never ceased to praise. This second voyage was incomparably less grandiose, as the King did not even grant the delegation an audience. Ostenaco and his comrades mainly stayed drunk and returned to their homeland with a sense of despair and rejection. Failing to reach an acceptable agreement with the British, Dragging Canoe, from Big Island Town, even entered an alliance with the French and the Spanish against the British. During the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the Cherokees were a people with divided leadership.¹⁰

The old symbolic "towns of refuge" became political and trading centers. Whites and Cherokees came to regard Tellico Town as the capital of the tribe, because important leaders like Attacullaculla,

Oconostota, and Ostenaco attended councils there. The ability to deal with either the English, the French, or the Spanish could make or break a chief. During the French and Indian War, the English army leveled Tellico to the ground, showing little mercy for the anglophile sentiment among the Cherokees. The following decade saw the crystallization of a new capital at Echota in present Monroe County, Tennessee.¹¹

Although a nativistic movement did not form before 1777, the political issues were always culture-related. The Cherokees had a choice between indecisive leaders and warmongers. The followers of Attacullaculla's acquiescent peace policy granted land cessions to the colonies in exchange for annuities and trade supplies. The war leaders, on the other hand, desired trade without any concessions. Another difference between the two was their attitude toward warfare. Whereas fatigue, hunger, and disease weakened the Cherokee tribe enough to justify a feeble bargaining position, thousands of homeless refugees from destroyed towns were potential fighters. Cherokee society had seemingly lost its "balance" as wartime and peacetime economy did not supplement each other any more. After the demise of the fur trade, war leader Oconostota, old-time opponent of Attacullaculla, ameliorated his position and advocated a policy of coexistence too. The traditional cleavage between the "White" (peace) and the "Red" (war) leaders crumbled. Whether somebody was an indecisive peace candidate or a warmonger depended thereafter on his views of the issue, not on his affiliation with one of the two moieties.¹² Culture fundamentals like sovereignty were at stake.

One possible solution to the threat was separatism. It first occurred when the militant Dragging Canoe could not tolerate Attaculla-

culla's and Oconostota's approval of the Henderson Purchase of Cherokee lands in Kentucky in March 1777. Although several other tribes disputed the Cherokees' claim to the land in question, Dragging Canoe detected a considerable weakness of the two most respected Cherokee leaders. They were making a "deal" with eight private men, not with a king. The American colonist greedily claimed power and territory that was not theirs and threatened Cherokee tribal existence. If their rebellion against the King was successful, no authority would force them to deal with the Indians on an acceptable basis. Dragging Canoe and other malcontented Cherokees decided to withdraw and deal with the white settlers.¹³

The secession of the Chickamaugans, as they were called, took place in the Cherokee capitol, Echota. Between 1777 and 1794 the separatists settled in the "Lower Towns" on the Tennessee River.¹⁴ The separatist cause gained additional impetus after American punitive expeditions destroyed dozens of Cherokee towns in retaliation for a suspected British-Cherokee alliance. Having lost their homes and gardens, hundreds of Cherokees fled South or joined the Chickamaugan settlements. Aligned with the Creeks on whose borders they were located, these Cherokee dissidents raided white frontier settlements and refused to honor treaties made with the new American government by other towns. The two giants of the peace policy, Attacullaculla and Oconostota, died in the early 1780s and left the leadership to the moderate Corn Tassel whose brother, Doublehead, had earlier cast his lot with Dragging Canoe and the lower towns.¹⁵

The Chickamaugans were probably the first organized attempt on the part of the Cherokees to halt the inundation of the country with

settlers. A major cause for concern was the great numbers of white settlers entering Cherokee country. The "Henderson Purchase" had provided for exact boundaries, but these settlers deliberately ignored. John Sevier and a group of pioneers established the State of Franklin on the Cumberland River in open violation of the United States constitution and North Carolina law. The Chickamaugans fought the Franklinites bitterly, while Corn Tassel sought redress from the governor of North Carolina for the illegal activities of the intruders.¹⁶ Corn Tassel and the "accommodationists" signed the first official Cherokee treaty with the United States at Hopewell on November 28, 1785. As expected, it provided for the establishment of permanent borders and affirmed everybody's peaceful intentions.¹⁷ Both the white frontiersmen and the militant Cherokees disapproved of the treaty. Consequently white intrusion increased, and in the build-up of tension Americans assassinated Corn Tassel. The situation was so serious that in 1788 the inter-town council abandoned the ancient and "beloved town" Echota for new council headquarters at Ustanali in present northern Georgia.¹⁸

Realizing this shift in regulation and power, the United States government began to recognize the strong-willed militant leaders of the Chickamaugan towns as spokespeople of all Cherokees. The renegades negotiated with the Americans following a series of politically and psychologically disheartening events. The Spanish, the main supplier of arms and household items, did not come around anymore. The Spanish envoy simply gave the Cherokees up, because Spain was too entangled in her European problems to care about remote North American backwoods affairs.¹⁹ The Cherokee women no longer had the time and materials to manufacture many household goods themselves, a circumstance that caused

the Chickamaugans to covet trade relations with Americans. Moreover, the charismatic and hateful Dragging Canoe died in 1782 and the new leadership drifted toward a more conciliatory position in Cherokee-American relations. The United States promised genuine friendship, distributed precious gifts, and gave Indian delegates honorable receptions in the Nation's Capital.²⁰ Having taken a strong nativistic stand and received American recognition, the Chickamaugans felt flattered and took this seemingly favorable opportunity to make agreements.

Without their noticing, the Chickamaugans' formerly strong position had weakened. Entering into treaties proffered to them, they yet sought to enforce militarily the treaty terms to the best of their ability, even policing the frontier. As the white settlers did not have the habit of observing treaty clauses for very long, the retaliatory Chickamaugan "terror" continued. By 1794 their independent behavior was intolerable and caused both state and federal governments to act. Only a few weeks after Doublehead had signed the most recent treaty in Philadelphia the United States Army in a surprise attack destroyed all Chickamaugan towns and "pacified" the frontier.²¹

The possibility of emigration to Western territories seemed increasingly as an option for maintaining tribal independence and cultural autonomy. Under the leadership of Yunwi Usgaseti (Dangerous Man), a portion of the Cherokee tribe crossed the Mississippi River and never returned.²² This withdrawal was not a uniquely Cherokee idea. Large factions of northern and southern tribes had emigrated away from the advancing Anglo-American frontier.²³ Moreover, on occasional visits to trans-Mississippian hunting grounds, young and adventurous

Indian men had identified potential places of refuge. Thus, immediately after the destruction of the Chickamauga towns, The Bowl with a group of friends hurriedly travelled to New Orleans and from there to a region with rich soil and abundant game in what is now northeastern Arkansas.²⁴ Cultural separation and emigration soon became issues with which all Cherokees had to deal.

With the second administration of Thomas Jefferson, United States sponsorship of Cherokee removal became a hotly debated issue. The federal government's benevolent civilization policy for the Indians gave way in 1810 to the practical demands of the frontier states. Its main objective was the extinction of all Indian claims.²⁵ The federal Indian agent to the Cherokees, Return J. Meigs, authored the Cherokee removal proposition. He advised the Cherokees to emigrate as a tribe and not in straggling groups.²⁶ Yet, because of controversy about emigration among the Cherokees, some "Upper Town" chiefs travelled to Washington and asked Jefferson to let them divide the Cherokee tribe. One part would remain in its homeland and perhaps become United States citizens, while the other part would voluntarily emigrate. Oddly enough Jefferson refused this proposal and demanded that the Cherokees unite. Like Agent Meigs, Jefferson favored a total, not a partial, removal of the Cherokees.²⁷

This controversy notwithstanding the majority of the tribe still adhered to the policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States. In the chieftaincy of Unali (Black Fox), a surge of Cherokee "nationalism" redefined Cherokee citizenship as a term related more to cultural identity than to treaty-making powers. For example, James Vann, an influential and extremely wealthy Cherokee citizen, organized a police

force paid for and supervised by the tribal council.²⁸ The council also passed laws that affected the entire tribe. Among these were statutes that substituted clan revenge with tribal police power, that united all geographical regions under the national council, that created a principal and deputy chiefs and that stipulated common land ownership.²⁹

Cherokee nationalism in the early nineteenth century emerged from a context of internal class stratification. The Cherokee economy, population size, and social structure diversified dramatically in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The earlier fur trade had not required the development of new production skills or major changes in social organization, but by 1800 it had become unprofitable. Indeed, the Cherokees had turned their hunting grounds into a "wasteland" in the pursuit of furs. Moreover, the "factory system" of trade sponsored by the United States had got them into high debts, a circumstance intended by Jefferson to force the Indians to accept land cessions to meet the debt.³⁰ The Southern cotton economy took root elsewhere in the Cherokee country. About eight percent of all Cherokee households became slave-holding plantation units which produced cotton and other agricultural products for export.³¹ Most Cherokees, however, remained small subsistence farmers and engaged in occasional ginseng trade for a few luxury items.³² According to Agent Meigs, there were about 12,400 Cherokees in 1809. In northern Georgia with its rich soil fit for cotton plantations some 570 black slaves lived. Cherokee toleration and participation in the cotton market resulted in internal class stratification. The emerging upper class intended to model Cherokee society after Southern cotton capitalism, not after the Northern small

business economy.³³

To simplify matters of great complexity, there were two discernible political programs among the Cherokees at that time. One was based upon the idea of separating the Cherokee tribe into units and allowing for removal. The other sought a centralized Cherokee nation with a firm commitment to remain on the ancestral lands. Supporters of both programs contained "traditionalists" as well as "progressives."³⁴

The separatist solution remained attractive to traditionalist Cherokees for three reasons. First, according to Indian tradition Cherokee men were not "meant" to labor in the fields day in and day out. The Creator had made Indians and Europeans differently if not separately.³⁵ Ideas of the European Enlightenment did not fit to the traditional Indian perspective. The right to make profit from human labor and "progress" were notions nearly incompatible with the tribal attitude toward reciprocal kinship obligations and spiritual equilibrium. The second factor supporting separatism was the lack of sufficient capital on the part of many to invest in large-scale agricultural productions. And finally, white Southern social and legal racism scarcely made voluntary assimilation--the alternative to separatism--attractive. With virtually no assets and much caution the Cherokees thus felt little incentive to enter the American market economy.

The incompatible emigration and coexistence policies resulted in the first removal crisis between 1806 and 1810. The political leadership was divided into the Lower Town, former Chickamauga, and the Upper Town factions. The Upper Town chiefs were James Vann, Pathkiller, The Ridge, and George Hicks. Doublehead's nephew, Unali (Black Fox), was the nominal principal chief of all Cherokees,³⁶ but his

residence and kinship ties in the Lower Towns affiliated him with that faction. The Lower Towns had better access to trade with whites and were thus exposed to more disturbances created by white intruders which made peaceful coexistence very difficult. Aware of this situation, Agent Meigs entered into negotiations with the strong-willed Doublehead concerning a possible removal treaty. He succeeded in generating Upper Town support for the sale of additional land. Once their agreement was made and became public, the sale of "Wafford's Tract" scandalized the whole tribe.³⁷

Between 1805 and 1808 the Lower Towns under Doublehead concluded several controversial land transactions in exchange for annuity money and removal provisions.³⁸ A few hundred Cherokee families emigrated across the Mississippi, where they joined earlier emigrants.³⁹ The tribe as a whole did not consider a general removal. The opposition party worked itself into such a frenzy that it decided in a secret meeting to never cede another foot of eastern land without unanimous consent, and to execute Doublehead for treason. On August 8, 1807, The Ridge and a few other anti-removalists assassinated Doublehead.⁴⁰ Path-killer became principal chief in the wake of this crisis.

By 1811 the Cherokee people had reached a critical stage in their history. The majority had averted the imminent danger of total removal and an optimistic outlook swept the nation, spawning a religious revival with millenarian and apocalyptic predictions. Many Cherokees found an outlet to distinguish themselves honorably by retelling their visions and dreams about the Cherokees' future. So many prophecies, excited meetings, and natural disasters coincided in the years 1811-1813 that scholars have termed this period the "Cherokee Ghost Dance

Movement." ⁴¹

According to missionaries and Indian agents, the prophecies were classic millenarian. They dealt with the rejection of selected European influence, the yearning for a return to the old "beloved towns," and the impending punishment of all those who had betrayed the Great Apportioner. Many Cherokees discarded their European clothes, featherbeds, and tables. Ceremonies and dances became popular again. Wrote one contemporary United States' official:

Some of the Cherokees dreamed and others received in various ways communications from the Great Spirit. All tending to discredit the scheme of civilization [sic]. A large collection of these deluded creatures met at Oostenalee town where they held a grand savage feast and celebrated a great medicine dance which was exclusively performed by women wearing terrapin shells, filled with pebbles on their limbs, to rattle in concert with their wild, uncouth songs. ...The nation must return to the customs of their fathers. They must kill their cats.... ⁴²

Even though the missionaries and Indian agents perceived this movement as anti-civilization, the prophecies in fact contained the message of peaceful behavior and alluded to the permitted use of horses and grist-mills. ⁴³

The Ghost Dance movement took place in a context of fear of reprisals from the Creator. After repeated land cessions some Cherokees had a guilty conscience about neglecting the sites of their oldest and most sacred places. ⁴⁴ They connected their failure to observe the six annual festivals to the occurrence of frightening events such as a severe famine in 1811 and the outbreak of a disease that killed cattle and horses. In the fall of the same year a comet appeared in the nightly skies and lingered there for weeks. In December a series of severe earthquakes also seemed to indicate Mother Earth's wrath. According to extant accounts, there were several "prophets" who pre-

dicted destructive hailstorms and the end of the world.⁴⁵

The content of the visions of and messages to the prophets indicate that the Cherokees were quite aware of the complexity of their situation. They did not accept simplistic answers to their cultural dilemma. "Even the prophets acknowledged that there were benefits to be gained from certain aspects of acculturation."⁴⁶ The movement was nativistic in its refusal of some alien values; it was revivalist in that the people restored old festivals at a grand scale; it was apocalyptic in the predictions of sudden, supernatural transformations of the world; it was messianic as there were persons who claimed divine revelations; and it was millenarian in anticipating an idealized future after the present world's end.⁴⁷

At this point all the eastern Indian tribes experienced similar nativistic movements, which influenced each other to some extent. As Indian Commissioner Thomas L. McKenney noted:

The storm of fanaticism passed on to the Creek Nation, among whom dreams were dreamed and prophets arose who professed to have talked with the Great Spirit. The daring and restless Tecumthe, who had traversed the wilderness for several hundred miles for the purpose of stirring the savages to war against the Americans, appeared among the Creeks.... Besides bringing tidings from the Great Spirit, he brought assurances from the British King and greetings from the Shawanee nation.⁴⁸

The Creek and Shawnee revitalization movements induced many members of these tribes to participate in military resistance against the United States.

It is difficult to say why the Cherokee "Ghost Dancers" did not join the Creek "Red Sticks" and Tecumseh in an all-out fight against the Americans after 1809. Instead the Cherokees sided with the American troops under General Andrew Jackson and helped defeat the

recalcitrant Creeks in the famous battle of the Horseshoe Bend.⁴⁹ The pride with which Cherokee participants referred to this battle even decades after the forced removal to the West demonstrates its significance. Historian William G. McLoughlin suggests that the Creek war of 1812 provided the Cherokee warriors with an outlet for their excitement. They could once more find honor and recognition on the battlefield.⁵⁰ As allies in combat the Cherokees also anticipated favorable treatment by the United States government in the future.

The Creek War ended with the defeat of the "Red Stick's" Creeks and several land cessions to the United States. The American treaty negotiators then descended upon the Cherokee national council and presented them first with praise for bravery in battle, second with the information that white settlers demanded land belonging to Creeks and Cherokees jointly, and third with the unfinished business of the removal of 1810. General Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans and commander-in-chief at Horseshoe Bend, was one of the United States treaty commissioners. Representatives of the western Cherokees were also present. Although by no means a unanimous agreement, the resulting Treaty of 1817 purportedly solved several important issues. The eastern Cherokees had to cede land to the United States in exchange for land grants to the western Cherokees, which is presently in Arkansas. These had only in the previous year consolidated their bands and declared Tallunteskee their capital from where they demanded the solution of problems with Plains tribes rather than adjustment of territorial claims. The United States promised to intervene in the western Cherokees' behalf. In addition to land cessions and promises, the treaty contained provisions for further removal. Each emigrant

would receive a few household implements, free transportation, and cash for improvements left behind. Under this treaty about three hundred Cherokees voluntarily left their troubled homeland. Among these was a man who became an immortal in the memory of his people--Sequoyah.⁵¹

Sequoyah's invention of the Cherokee syllabary was a creative form of innovation. He only borrowed the general idea of writing, an alien culture element, and supplied the specifics by improvisation. After decades of experimenting Sequoyah made his invention public and accessible. Despite initial suspicion, the Cherokee-speaking and -thinking portion of the tribe accepted the writing system and put it to use at once. A native literature was born.⁵²

Sequoyah grew up in Tuskegee Town near Echota in the 1780s. His mother's brother, John Lowrey, educated him, and he never learned English nor attended a mission school.⁵³ Interestingly, the older literature always points out that there was a possibility that Nathaniel Gist, a "high-bred" Virginian and friend of George Washington's could have been Sequoyah's father. This is mere speculation and there are other possible explanations as to why Sequoyah chose English aliases like George Gist, or George Guess. That Sequoyah supposedly was a mixed-blood has been misconstrued as an argument that "white blood" determines success and "progress." This antiquated reasoning constitutes an attempt to minimize the Cherokee' achievements in cultural adaptability and has clouded the impact the syllabary has had on traditionalists among the Cherokees. Moreover, this unproven myth of Nathaniel Gist as Sequoyah's father has made Sequoyah more "respectable" and acceptable as one of early white America's Great Men.⁵⁴

Among the Cherokees themselves Sequoyah was and is a culture hero. Traditionalists in North Carolina and Oklahoma use the syllabary for recording difficult to remember magico-medical formula.⁵⁵ It matters little to Cherokee admirers whether Sequoyah had white ancestry or not, because in addition to his innovative contribution he felt and thought like an Indian. Traditional Cherokees know his clan, his participation in the battle of Horseshoe Bend, his emigration to Arkansas with John Jolly in 1817, and his efforts to reconcile all Cherokees. Sequoyah never rested on his laurels and continued to serve the Cherokee people, a service they have never forgotten.⁵⁶

Obsessed with the idea that it was not only possible but desirable to read and write in the Cherokee language, Sequoyah experimented for several years with language symbols. Initially he produced thousands of pictorial signs to represent each word of Cherokee. For years this remained his main approach, until he proceeded to divide words into syllables, assigning one character for each syllable. Sequoyah used the upper Cherokee as his standard dialect. In the syllabary there is only one sign that stands for an individual sound, namely, the pre-consonant "s". Thus the number of characters was reduced to 86. Sequoyah copied the majority of characters from pieces of printed matter he laid hands on. He assigned syllabic values to alphabetic letters and topographical signs arbitrarily chosen and arranged from English and German type.⁵⁷

Initially Sequoyah's wife and neighbors ridiculed his efforts as they could not perceive of literacy in their own language. Sequoyah's obsession seemed to lead nowhere. He secluded himself from everyday activities of his family and friends. People observing the unsocial

behavior of this Cherokee intellectual either dismissed him as an imbecile or, worse yet, accused him of witchcraft. At one point some suspicious people burned down his study cabin. He escaped with his life only because his alert wife kept him away on some pretense. Sequoyah's syllabary was the end product of some twelve lonely and frustrating years of trial and error.⁵⁸

Sequoyah was a man of social prominence by birth, his maternal uncle being John Lowrey, chief of Echota. By 1817 the Cherokees had ceded Echota and Tuskegee to the United States and Sequoyah's family resided on the upper branch of the Coosa River in present Alabama. Apparently dissatisfied with this situation, Sequoyah was one of the signers of a removal treaty with General Andrew Jackson.⁵⁹ The Sequoyah household emigrated to Arkansas territory where the syllabary was first tried out in its present form in 1821. Taking messages down from western Cherokees in the characters of the syllabary, Sequoyah returned to the East. It took one year in the East before the people acknowledged the usefulness of the invention.⁶⁰

After the initial reluctance to believe that one could actually read and write in Cherokee there was a remarkable speed of acceptance and use of the new device. People suspected Sequoyah of having merely memorized the messages from western relatives, which he pretended to read. English-speaking Cherokees smiled at his attempt to introduce native literacy, because they saw no practical use in it. Many Cherokee speakers at first agreed with this view and were prepared to admit that one could only write European languages. Sequoyah performed several public demonstrations and gradually convinced more and more people that Cherokee was not "inferior," but could be written just like

English, French, or German.⁶¹ The discovery spread swiftly. All accounts mention the ease with which Cherokees seemed to learn the syllabary. Soon eastern and western Cherokees sent letters back and forth. A Moravian missionary noted that, "within a few months thousands of hitherto illiterate Cherokee[s] were able to read and write their own language, teaching each other in the cabins and along the roadside."⁶² The missionary interpreted this development as "invaluable...for the elevation of the tribe," by which he meant the possible use of the syllabary in the Christianizing effort.⁶³ Reading the Christian doctrine in their own language was one, but certainly not the only motivation for the Cherokees to study the syllabary so diligently.⁶⁴

There were four areas in which the use of the syllabary played a significant nativistic role. In the privacy of the home, Cherokees used the syllabary for recording shopping lists, keeping track of "IOUs," and writing letters.⁶⁵ The national council, or congress of the eastern Cherokees, also had all public documents published in both English and Cherokee. After the advent of a printing press featuring Sequoyian letter types, the Cherokee national government even issued a weekly newspaper with subscribers throughout the Cherokee country and abroad.⁶⁶ In 1824 Sequoyah was awarded a medal from the national council in honor of his achievement to make Cherokee speakers literate in their own language.

The syllabary, moreover, played a role in the Cherokees' reception of Christianity. Even before the printing press arrived indigenous Cherokee preachers translated Bible passages and Christian literature into Cherokee, circulating these manuscripts among the Cherokee people.

In this process the Cherokees became more familiar with Christianity and skillfully related it to their experience. The teachings were less foreign and more meaningful in the Cherokee language; translations from the Bible were never literal, allowing for some syncretism and adaptation to Cherokee thought.⁶⁷

Although the conversion rate of Cherokees was notoriously low, native Christian preachers like Jesse Bushyhead and David Brown provided the Cherokee towns-people with news and information from the non-Cherokee world. By using their education, their knowledge of Cherokee culture, and the syllabary these churchmen created informal organizations, some of which even survived the strenuous "Trail of Tears" and budded into small Baptist and Methodist congregations in the new homeland.⁶⁸ Many Cherokees and native preachers gave Cherokee literacy their active support, believing in its desirability.

Finally, the syllabary became indispensable in an area which, according to ancient traditions, was supposed to change as little as possible, namely the closely intertwined Cherokee religion and medicine. The eminent chronicler of the Cherokees, James Mooney, wrote:

What is perhaps strangest of all in this literary evolution is the fact that the same invention has been seized by the priests and conjurers of the conservative party for the purpose of preserving to their successors the ancient rituals and secret knowledge of the tribe, whole volumes of such occult literature in manuscript having been obtained among them by the author.⁶⁹

Medicine men recorded formulae, prescription remedies, and rituals necessary for large religious gatherings or just for individual treatments. Writing their knowledge down was not necessarily done with the intention of making the information public or even accessible to any-

one. The syllabary merely served as a mnemonic device to facilitate the memorizing of archaic and difficult words and gestures. The manuscripts remained in family possession unless at a later date a medicine man could be trusted with the use and translation of such treasures.⁷⁰ Thus, Cherokee religion lived on in the minds and texts of traditionalists dedicated enough to study the syllabary.

In times of crisis these four areas of Cherokee writing practices seemingly clashed. For instance, even though the national newspaper, The Cherokee Phoenix, or Tsa La Gi Tsu Lehisn Unhi (The Cherokees Will Rise Again), was bilingual, the editors did not report favorably about traditionalist political dissent.⁷¹ In religious matters the missionaries liked to use the syllabary but frowned upon continuing "heathen practices."⁷² Secular critics demanded that the missionaries send no more English teachers, as this subject had become superfluous if all Cherokees became literate in their own language. Instead, they insisted on an adequate supply of paper and ink.⁷³ In the political and social turmoil of the 1820s Cherokee literacy provided a means of expression to rival groups, who held deliberate and fairly peaceful discourse among each other in Cherokee. The process of social stratification in Cherokee society did not result in the disappearance of traditional responses. Between 1670 and 1820 nativistic attempts at cultural separatism and political independence took place in the context of initial Cherokee-American culture contact. After the military phase, separatists sought to emigrate to new lands in order to maintain tribal lifestyle. The majority of Cherokee traditionalists, however, participated in a wave of Cherokee nationalism, or "Cherokee Ghost Dance," which culminated in political centralization. The disruptive

potential of various competing political and religious factions was averted by the widespread acceptance of Sequoyah's syllabary. By the means of a native writing system, Cherokee-speakers maintained cultural identity and saved much traditional knowledge for posterity. The extent of acculturation remained a disputed topic among Cherokees. The rise of the Cherokee nation and its transplantation to the West counterbalanced White Path's cautious rebellion and the self-conduct of the Cherokees on the "Trail of Tears."

ENDNOTES

- 1
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- 2
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- 3
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Crane, Southern Frontier, 125-6.
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Grace Steele Woodward, The Cherokees (Norman, 1963), 61-67.
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Richard White, Roots of Dependency (Lincoln, 1983), 315; Crane, Southern Frontier, Chapter 5.
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Charles C. Royce, The Cherokee Nation of Indians: A Narrative of thier Official Relations with the Colonial and Federal Governments, in 5th Annual Report of the BAE (Washington, D.C., 1887). See treaties of 1755, 1756, 1760, 1761, 1767, etc.
- 10
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David H. Corkran, The Cherokee Frontier: Conflict and Survival, 1740-1762 (Norman, 1962); Mooney, Myths, passim.
- 12
Crane, Southern Frontier, Chapter 5.
- 13
Royce, Cherokee Nation, 146-149.

- 14 Royce lists the original five Chickamaugan towns as Running Water, Nickajack, Long Island Town, Crow Town, and Lookout Mountain Town.
- 15 Mooney, Myths, 48-52.
- 16 Woodward, Cherokees, 103.
- 17 Royce, Cherokee Nation, 153.
- 18 Woodward, Cherokees, 109.
- 19 James Leitch Wright, Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America (Athens, Georgia, 1971), 152
- 20 Woodward, Cherokees, 110-115.
- 21 Ibid., 115-6.
- 22 These became the legendary "lost Cherokees." See John R. Swanton, Indians of the Southeastern United States (Washington, D.C., 1946), 112-113.
- 23 Edwin C. McReynolds, The Seminoles (Norman, 1957), 11; Mooney, Myths, 99-100.
- 24 In 1817 this group moved into present Texas. Although they held a land grant from the Mexican government, they were driven out by the Republic of Texas in 1839. The Cherokee refugees went into Indian Territory or farther south into Mexico. See Grant Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes (Norman, 1934), 171; Swanton, Southeastern Indians, 113.
- 25 These western lands comprised the area west of the Chattahoochee River to the Mississippi, as the royal charter provided. Through abtuse land speculations and the scandal of bribery in the Georgia legislature, a controversy arose about these lands, known as the Yazoo Frauds of 1789-1802. In the "Compact of 1802" Jefferson agreed that the federal government would pay off all Yazoo claims against the state and extinguish all Indian land titles within the boundary of that state.

26
McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 97.

27
Ibid., 93-4.

28
Ibid., 53.

29
Ibid., 77.

30
Said President Jefferson on the Factory System: "We shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good influential individuals among [the Indians] run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individual can pay they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands." Quoted in Arthur DeRosier, Jr., The Removal of the Choctaw Indians (Knoxville, 1970), 28.

31
R. Halliburton, Red Over Black: Black Slavery Among the Cherokee Indians (Westport, 1977), 14-20; William McLoughlin and W. H. Conser, "The Cherokees in Transition," Journal of American History 3 (Dec. 1977), 680-690, 697-700.

32
George Rockingham Gilmer (1790-1859), Sketches of some of the First Settlers of Upper Georgian of the Cherokees, and the Author, (Americus Book Co., 1926); Douglas C. Wilms, "Cherokee Land Use in the state of Georgia, 1800-1838" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1972).

33
The more traditionalist Valley Towns contained 3,648 Cherokees out of 12,395, five out of 583 black slaves, and 72 out of 341 whites in the Cherokee land. See William G. McLoughlin, "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," American Indian Quarterly 26 (1974): 367-385; McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 18-19.

34
McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 107; Mooney, Myths, 121.

35
McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 53.

36
Treaty of Tellico Blockhouse (1794) created the position of principal chief, see Royce, Cherokee Nation.

37
Mooney, Myths, 84-85.

38 Royce, Cherokee Nation, 64-65.

39 After Tallunteskee's emigration in 1810, the removal faction was quiet until the second removal crisis erupted in 1817. See McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 109.

40 McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 63.

41 Ibid., 111-151, referring to Mooney's terminology.

42 Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, The Indian Tribes of North America: Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes Reprint; Edinburgh, 1972), 191-192. Thomas L. McKenney became superintendent of the Office of Indian Affairs in 1824.

43 McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 63.

44 See Mooney's collection of myths referring to specific geographical sites in the mountains, Myths, passim.

45 Ibid., 113-4; McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 124.

46 Ibid., 129.

47 Ibid., 127.

48 McKenney and Hall, Indian Tribes, 192; see also Wallace, "Revitalization Movements" on the Handsome Lake religion.

49 Mooney, Myths, 93-96; Thurman Wilkins, Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of A People (New York, 1970), 51-78.

50 Famous Cherokees in this battle were Charles Hicks, The Ridge, John Ross, Sequoyah, Yonaguska, and many more. They certainly did not fight out of sympathy for Andrew Jackson. McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 134.

51 Moulton, John Ross, 18-9; Mooney, Myths, 102; Royce, Cherokee Nation, 202-204; Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., Indian Affairs:

Laws and Treaties Vol. II, (Washington, D.C., 1903-1929); 140-144; Robert Cotterill, The Southern Indians, The Story of the Civilized Tribes Before Removal (Norman, 1954), 203-210; Grant Foreman, Sequoyah (Norman, 1980), 5.

52

Kilpatrick, Sequoyah; Foreman, Sequoyah, 10-11; Mooney, Myths, 108; Woodward, Cherokees, 143; George E. Foster, Se-Quo-Yahm the American Cadmus and Modern Moses (Philadelphia, 1885), 47; Marion L. Starkey, The Cherokee Nation (New York, 1946), 79.

53

Mooney, Myths, 109.

54

Mooney noted as early as 1900 that "the story contains other elements of improbability and appears to be one of those genealogical myths built upon a chance similarity of name. See Myths, 109. Many historians saw fit to perpetuate this myth of Sequoyah's Virginian lineage as if there was a tremendous significance associated with it. See Woodward, Cherokees, 4; Wardell, Political History, 4; Althea Lah Bass, Cherokee Messenger (Norman, 1936), 384; Traveller Bird, Tell Them They Lie, (Los Angeles, 1971); McKenney and Hall, Indian Tribes, I, 45; Starkey, Nation, 78-9.

55

John Gulick, Cherokees at the Crossroads (Chapel Hill, 1973), 110-118; interview with William Smith, Marble City, April 13, 1985.

56

Mooney, Myths, 97; Starkey, Nation, 80-83; Woodward, Cherokees, 131; Kilpatrick, Sequoyah, 3-8; Foreman, Sequoyah, 3-4.

57

Mooney, Myths, 219-220; Jack F. and Anna G. Kilpatrick, "Explanation of the Sequoyah Syllabary," in New Echota Letters (Dallas, 1968), 5-9.

58

Starkey, Nation, 83; Foreman, Sequoyah, 5; Walker, "Notes on Native Writing System," 149.

59

Mooney, Myths, 109-110.

60

Foreman, Sequoyah, 7.

61

Mooney, Myths, 351; Foreman, Sequoyah, 10.

62

Quoted in Theda Perdue, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866 (Knoxville, 1977), 102.

63

Ibid.

64

Many scholars have pointed out the speed in learning: Foreman, Sequoyah, 11, 38; Perdue, Slavery, 101; Mooney, Myths, 110; Starkey, Nation, 85 ff; Woodward, Cherokees, 143.

65

Kilpatrick, Shadows, passim; Walker, "Notes on Native Writing System;" Mooney, Myths, 110.

66

A prominent subscriber in Berlin was Baron Alexander von Humboldt. See Starkey, Nation, 89-97; Cullen Joe Holland, "The Cherokee Indian Newspapers, 1828-1906," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1956), 10-99.

67

Mooney, Myths, 111; Starkey, Nation, 89; Bass, Messenger, 101-102; Hugh R. Awtrey, New Echota, Birthplace of the American Indian Press (Washington, D.C., 1941), Chapter one.

68

About nine percent were converted according to McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 258. See also O. B. Campbell, Mission to the Cherokees, the Story of Dwight Mission (Oklahoma City, 1973); Robert Sparks Walker, Torchlight to the Cherokees, (New York, 1931), 41-58, 69-70; Edward Spicer, A Short History of the Indians of the United States (New York, 1969), 61.

69

Mooney, Myths, 112; Perdue, Slavery, 104.

70

The Kilpatricks have translated enough material from Cherokee manuscripts to English to fill several books, which are invaluable primary sources on Cherokee thought. Personal information from Sarah Hirst, Cherokee and heir to such manuscripts; Stilwell, Oklahoma, March 19, 1985.

71

Holland, "Cherokee Newspapers," 1-99; Theda Perdue, "Rising from the Ashes: The Cherokee Phoenix, an Ethnohistorical Source," Ethnohistory 24 (Summer 1977): 211 ff.

72

William G. McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839, (New Haven, 1984), 204-5.

73

McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 186, 194.

CHAPTER III

TRADITIONALISM ALLEVIATING THE HARDSHIPS OF THE YOUNG CHEROKEE REPUBLIC

In the context of social stratification, economic diversification, and political centralization the only identifiable organized nativistic movement was Nunnestunega's (White Path) "rebellion." Protesting not "state-building" itself but some far-reaching measures of the council, White Path's peaceful "rebellion" was but one of many ways in which traditionalists influenced tribal affairs. When removal could no longer be averted, traditionalism ameliorated the impact of forced emigration and the adjustment to the western territory. In order to understand nativistic activity during this time it is necessary to consider the context from which it originated.

American pressures for Cherokee removal coincided with cultural issues within the tribe. The nation's political leadership was in the hands of forty-two "elite" families who were interrelated and owned most of the "improvements." They farmed in plantation style predominantly and resided in northern Georgia.¹ This oligarchy tended to control all relations with the United States and other tribes, as they had vested interests in government affairs. They tried to please the whites by inviting missionaries to educate Cherokee children. Many of the "elite" had a bi-cultural background which enabled them to communicate with Euro-Americans and Indians alike. Whereas factionalism did

not follow racial lines, it invariably centered on economic and cultural issues. Most of the well-to-do wanted to protect their private property, slaves, and "improvements." The majority of Cherokees, however, aspired to free access to trading centers, fishing, and hunting areas. The upper class encouraged the establishment of mission schools, while common Cherokees preferred a better supply of tools. There were those who for various reasons blamed the Americans for all trespasses and illegal acts. Advocates of this faction still considered removal. None of these differences were insurmountable, however, as long as the various groups talked to each other.²

Cherokee politics in the 1820s were remarkably conciliatory. Only with the approval of all town councils could the leadership enforce decisions and retain power.³ Particularly young aspiring leaders like Cooweescoowee (John Ross) had to prove their integrity to the majority. An ardent and eloquent defender of Cherokee nationalism, Ross' early accomplishments included the refusal of a bribery attempt,⁴ and a tour of the countryside. His speeches informed the Cherokee people about his opinion and leadership qualities.⁵ Although some historians assume that Ross felt "uncomfortable" speaking Cherokee, there is contrary evidence showing that he probably had a good command of the language. Whether he spoke English or Cherokee depended on the context of the speech. Among traditionalists he spoke Cherokee, in "official" addresses he impressed American observers with his elaborate oratory and refined English manners. Ross was a man with a bicultural background.⁶ Therefore he appealed to various factions within the tribe and was a capable politician.

Traditionalists recognized the importance of tribal unity and

strength vis-a-vis white pressures for removal. They supported the oligarchy and bi-cultural leaders like Pathkiller, Charles Hicks, and John Ross, mainly because these men effectively managed all dealings with the Euro-Americans and were devoted to maintaining the tribe's political autonomy and cultural separateness. Traditionalists furthermore accepted so much political centralization and seeming acculturation as was needed for economic self-sufficiency and national unity.

Cherokees were united in opposition to further land cessions, but they disagreed among themselves about the role and rate of acculturation. One case in point was the "disruption" by a missionary in Etowah (Turniptown). He disturbed the conduct of politico-religious town meetings by advising his congregation to stay away. The disapproving traditionalists immediately complained to the second principal chief, Charles Hicks, who mediated the case. His suggestion was to separate religious and government concerns. Generally in letters and speeches directed toward the American public, traditionalist concerns were never voiced for fear of alienating northern sympathizers from the "Cherokee cause." The presence of the missionaries was a concession to Euro-American public opinion, but it resulted in an agreeable situation for traditionalists as well, who approved of some acquisition of Euro-American skills like the printing press. Separation between church and state was too rapid a step, however.⁷

Much has been written about the political evolution of the Cherokees in the years of 1818 to 1827. Scholars point out that the development of centralization culminated in the adoption of a republican constitution but fail to give attention to the role of traditionalists in this area. Aboriginal cultural elements like polygamy seldom

came to the knowledge of whites, who interacted with a portion of the Cherokee population that knew white America would disapprove of such practices and consequently never admitted to them. These elements did not disappear but went underground. Official statements by Cherokee politicians were carefully worded praises of assimilation. Traditionalists notably constituted two-thirds of the general council and went along with appraisals of the benefits of centralized political institutions and general "civilization."⁸

Neither the American states nor the federal government solicited the traditionalists' participation in treaty making or policy affairs. The southern states showed no inclination to incorporate tens of thousands of Indians in their boundaries.⁹ Secretary of War John C. Calhoun reformed the War Department by creating the Office of Indian Affairs in 1824. He attempted to transform the "piecemeal Indian policy into an organized program," as Charles Hudson remarked.¹⁰ The tremendous amount of paperwork and expenses seemed a waste to many congressmen at the time, who were under pressure from their constituents to have all Indians removed from the southern states. The federal "Civilization and Education Fund" of 1819 came under attack, probably because it did not produce any results. It even had unpleasant side effects. Historian Michael D. Green poignantly states,

As native people became more educated according to Anglo-American standards and grew more and more interested in participating in the market economy of their white neighbors, they also became more sophisticated in resisting the dictates of the War Department. "Civilized" Indians, as it turned out knew the true value of their lands and refused to part with them.... While the [Indians] had adopted certain Anglo-American legal concepts, they had welded them to their own assumptions of political independence and used them to serve decidedly [Indian] purposes.¹¹

Pragmatic state politicians defended the wide-spread opinion that Indians who were outside the law and therefore had no right to use it to their advantage.

The Indians' insistence on sovereignty did not normally bother plain white folks so long as this claim was theoretical. As soon as there was a discovery of gold in the Cherokees' hills in 1828, however, the white residents of Georgia became intently interested and authorized their state politicians to extend state law over the disputed area.¹² The conflict between the southeastern tribes and the southeastern states worsened.

General Andrew Jackson's election to the presidency was a victory for the states claiming Indian lands. He pursued a vigorous removal policy. No sooner had he assumed office than the states almost simultaneously extended their jurisdiction. Georgia held a land lottery selling 21 half-acre lots at a very low price to American squatters and prospective settlers. The U. S. Supreme Court ruled that Indian nations were to be considered "domestic dependent nations" implying a guardian-ward relationship. The Indian nations could not sue states. Although the Supreme Court declared it illegal in 1832 for Georgia to annex Cherokee land, President Jackson refused to enforce this decision.¹³

Jackson favored Indian removal over a strong presidency and weak states. He considered the annexations, land lotteries, and American vigilante activities in Indian land "state affairs." According to the Supreme Court, Indian land was under the jurisdiction of Congress, but Jackson did not press the matter in order to avoid alienating southern states any further. By minimizing the Indians' cultural achievements

and calling them "wanderers" Jackson justified his denial of their sovereignty. His advocacy of Indian removal was out of concern for national unity of the United States, which he felt prohibited the existence of independent foreign nations in its boundaries.¹⁴

States' rights, gold discovery, and land lotteries were the issues which stimulated heated debates during the 21st Congress. Indian removal along with the Second National Bank, and internal improvements essentially became party questions. Anti-Jacksonians opposed the Removal Bill while aspiring Jacksonian Democrats voted in favor of it for purely political reasons.¹⁵ The Senate and House debates revealed misconceptions about the people involved and the nature of the land to be set aside for them.¹⁶ A substitute bill calling for more careful investigation and delay was turned down. The Senate passed the Indian Removal Act by a margin of 18 to 19, while the House of Representatives' final vote was 102 to 97, the voting pattern was overwhelmingly along party lines.¹⁷

Among the Cherokees the position of principal chief underwent changes which resembled the strengthening of the presidency under Jackson. From the first removal scandal in 1810 to the articles of 1817, the office of the principal chief had become weak. In the critical years leading up to the final removal crisis there was a counter movement bolstering the powers of the principal chief and creating a form of government unmistakably modelled after the example of the United States Constitution. Its advocates called for a strong executive branch. There is no record of opposition among the Cherokees to centralized authority until the ensuing debate about the drafting of the tribal constitution in 1827.¹⁸

In the system of local control checking the executive, the contribution of traditionalists to national politics was most apparent. A set of articles adopted in 1817 provided for a thirteen-member executive committee, later to be called the national committee. Its actions were subject to review by the general council, which consisted of town representatives. In 1820 the principle of town representation had to be amended, as towns disintegrated due to land cessions, emigration, and American intrusion. The general council upheld the principle of local representation in the government by creating eight districts.¹⁹ Each house of the council had veto power over the other. All land and annuities were public property by Cherokee law. Only the Cherokee lower house, i.e., the general council, could dispose of public property. Cherokee citizens had permission to use "improvements" as they pleased, provided they did not sell them to non-Cherokees. The general council acted as a court. In this manner the national council adhered more closely to the traditional notion of a town council than to the Anglo-European concept of a legislature. Traditionalists found a forum in this political set-up.²⁰

The executive council called for a constitutional convention in 1827. The intention was to formalize existing political practices. Many conservatives were apprehensive. Their disquietude increased when the two moderate principal chiefs, Pathkiller and Charles Hicks, both died within two weeks in 1827. A council member and traditionalist from Etowah (Turniptown), and Nunnatsunega (White Path) attempted to obstruct the passage of thirty-one laws which dealt with commercial fencing of the public domain and other issues vital to basic values of Cherokee society. These laws took away some powers from the town and

lan organizations, ostensibly to the benefit of entrepreneurs and traders among the Cherokees. White Path launched a "rebellion" after his expulsion from the general council for misconduct. In response he organized a "rebel council" protesting the proposed constitution. The apprehension reflected in the missionaries' records indicated that White Path's influence was immense. The missionaries regarded him and his followers as people not favorably disposed towards Christianizing efforts.²¹ Missionaries endorsed the political changes creating favorable circumstances for capitalistic enterprise and the breakdown of traditional economic ties among town residents and kin groups. The outcome of this crisis was exemplary for the conciliatory nature and the strong traditionalist's influence at the time.

The traditionalists tolerated the drafting of a constitution if it left out any reference to socio-economic assimilation. John Ross and other members of the bicultural Cherokee "elite" had to be careful to offend the majority who still adhered to traditional beliefs. They sought the traditionalists' votes by attending ball plays and all-night dances, which shocked the missionaries.²² Tribal unity was an urgent matter and John Ross in particular willingly compromised with traditionalist demands. The council restored White Path to his seat. The wording of the constitution contained reference to a "Sovereign Power of the Universe," not a Christian God, and did not contain any provisions describing the nature of private business transactions. Traditionalist leaned toward a weak central government with no reference to the private business sector. Shying away from a strong pro-business government prevented the Cherokee nation from having a sound fiscal policy. The central government was politically strong in external

affairs, but it could not regulate internal business effectively. Thus the nation continued to be dependent on the United States' annuities.²³

The Cherokee Constitution of 1827/28 impressed white Americans with the degree of acculturation it seemed to indicate, but it also appealed to the Cherokee traditionalist majority because it proclaimed the sovereignty of their tribe. The tribal printing press printed the text in English and Cherokee. Viewed at close range, the constitution presented no startling novelties. It merely comprised the laws written after 1817. A new feature was that the Cherokees had a nominally sovereign republic with a powerful principal chief who could veto council decisions. The nation lacked a national currency or fiscal policy, a deficiency nobody pointed out at the time. The administration's main source of income was the annuity paid by the United States of about \$7,000.²⁴ Whether this lack of regular tax income actually prevented the occurrence of political favoritism and corruption, which was so rampant in the United States, is difficult to say. It certainly represented the pretext of upcoming hardships for the Cherokee people.

After passage of the Removal Act in 1830, the Jackson administration successfully pressured the large southeastern tribes into signing removal treaties.²⁵ Jackson accomplished this by bribing influential individuals among the Creeks and Choctaws, by undermining the authority of tribal governments by distributing the minute portion of annuities to each Indian per capita, or by withholding the annuities from the Indians altogether. As a consequence, the United States alienated the Indians even more, who turned to their traditional leaders. While it is hard to imagine why a wealthy man with all the racial features of a "white man" like John Ross would voluntarily assume political respon-

sibility for a despised people, it remains indisputable that he did. He identified himself with his people, and other light-complexioned Cherokees did the same. White Path and the traditionalist majority of Cherokees, many of whom incidentally were mixed-bloods also, supported John Ross.²⁶

The Ridges and Boudinots harbored the same dedication to the Cherokee people, even though they differed with Ross over the means. At an important council meeting at the "emergency capital" Red Clay in May 1833, the split in the Cherokee leadership became pronounced. Economic sanctions and constant harrassment by the federal government, American vigilante groups, illegal squatters, and gold seekers created intolerably chaotic conditions in the land of the Cherokees. In the brand new capital of the Cherokee nation, New Echota in present northern Georgia, around Christmas time in 1835, United States treaty commissioners finally succeeded in obtaining the signatures to a removal treaty from some prominent Cherokees. To the Ridges and their friends exile was more palatable than submission to turmoil. The Cherokee removal treaty was the last of these signed by southeastern tribes.²⁷

Although spokesmen of all southeastern Indians protested these treaties, the United States Congress ratified them nonetheless. In the case of the Cherokees the execution of the treaty was turned over to the military.²⁸ Traditionalists had few options; they could either legally emigrate or illegally stay behind. A few Oconaloftee Cherokees had the option to take up individual allotments, but their number was insignificant. Several hundred Cherokees chose to hide and later became known as the North Carolina band. Some traditionalists among

the Creek and Choctaw tribes decided to stay and led an economically depressed life as sharecroppers in a Southern society, where everybody was legally either "white" or "black." These remnant groups numbering a few thousand remained unrecognized by the federal government until the twentieth century.²⁹ The great majority, however, went on the infamous "Trail of Tears."

The "Trail of Tears" has received much scholarly attention in terms of the traumatic experience it represented for all participants. However, the loss of the motherland and the horrible conditions before and during the exodus did not constitute an irreparable psychological shock that destroyed traditional Indian culture. The headmen and medicine people took great care that the sacred fire kept burning all the way to the new land and that the people transported sacred objects like pipes, wampum belts, divining crystals, and clay disks. Even manuscripts accompanied the Cherokee people on their sad march. The memories of the old homeland did not die. Dedicated and faithful fundamentalist missionaries, native preachers, and medicine men lent their services to the emigrants during and after the long "Trail." The exodus from the East was not a catalyst for instant culture loss.³⁰

At the height of the removal misery, U. S. Army General Winfield Scott permitted John Ross and the Cherokees to conduct their own emigration. Removal and Indian affairs in general had become a haven for party patronage. Contractors and removal agents were unqualified.³¹ Indian agents frequently combined their office with the position of contractor, land speculator, merchant, and local politician. During the removal of approximately 60,000 southeastern Indians this malfeasance in the Indian Office led to much suffering among the Indians, who

died in large numbers from inferior food rations and insufficient health care.³² Because of the experience with previous removals of the Choctaw and Creek tribes, the U. S. Army had been put in charge. Yet due to the obstinate refusal of the Cherokee people to acknowledge the treaty of 1835 the object was difficult to achieve. John Ross' petition to the military for the Cherokees to control their own removal was heeded. The Cherokees formed thirteen detachments of about 1,000 persons each under trusted Cherokee leaders who led them to the new country.³³ The roughly estimated twenty-five percent loss of lives on the "Trail of Tears" and the trauma experienced by the survivors were but one side to the coin. The other side was the continued strength of kinship bonds and the people's determination to keep the Cherokee spirit alive.

Having scarcely escaped a country that was inundated with white profitseekers, the Cherokees faced many of the same problems in the West. Hardship did not end with the "Trail of Tears." Grant Foreman's discussion of the situation in the West illustrates the difficulties the emigrants encountered. He described the frauds committed on those who had to subsist on "cattle of all descriptions" and "short measures of corn."³⁴ Foreman goes on:

The most common form of fraud arose out of the custom the contractors evolved of issuing to the Indians certificates entitling them to certain amounts of rations. Their hirelings then purchased these certificates for a fraction of their face value and using them as evidence of satisfaction of the claim of the Indians they hugely increased their profits and the Indians were deprived of their just claims on the Government.³⁵

Concerned Cherokees undermined the all-too-powerful position of American contractors by establishing distribution centers in the homes

of prominent Cherokees. The Ridges did so on Honey Creek, Taskegidi (Jesse Bushyhead) distributed goods in Westville, later known as "Breadtown," and W. A. Adair dispersed on Wauhilla "Rocky" Mountain near present Stilwell. The Cherokees formed new settlements around revered leaders in suitable locations. Most of the self-contained traditionalists settled in the hilly areas faintly resembling the Appalachian mountains, whereas the more enterprising Cherokees took up land for large cultivation operations. The small farmers, or traditionalists, coordinated the planting of crops and formed community organizations largely unnoticed by American contemporaries. In order to avoid fraud most Cherokees continued their way of life according to the traditions and remained undisturbed for a long time.³⁶

That in this situation of lurking fraud and alcoholism no utter demoralization took place was the accomplishment of religious men, both Christian and non-Christian. They determined to turn the new homeland into a spiritually "pure" place to live. The most notable organized attempt to battle negative influences on the morale was the Cherokee temperance movement. As far as Christian missionaries were involved, this movement received much publicity. It is more probable, however, that the missionaries merely "jumped on the bandwagon," as a remark by Indian agent Pierce M. Butler suggests,

Temperance... has been a Godsend to the Cherokee nation. Its progress has been marked by a suppression of vice, and a happy subjugation of the turbulent and depraved passions.... Private associations among themselves... produce a favorable effect, working, perhaps a more lasting and permanent reformation, from the fact that they pride themselves on their undeviating adherence to a promise [not to drink], and their fidelity to this pledge.³⁷

Taskegidi (Jesse Bushyhead) was a prominent leader in the temper-

ance movement. He was a Cherokee Baptist convert and protege of Reverend Evan Jones who arranged Bushyhead's ordination as Baptist preacher. The temperance movement united Christian and non-Christian Cherokees against a common foe of demoralization. Cherokees fought the social evil of "mental escapism," or alcoholism, with much success until the outbreak of the Civil War. The agitation against whiskey strengthened the bond among the distressed Cherokee people, and it gave the missionaries a meaningful task. It is noteworthy that simultaneously a similar movement occurred among the Cherokees in North Carolina.³⁸ Christian and non-Christian Cherokees, as well as American missionaries, were able to provide much needed moral support at a time of crisis.³⁹

The removal plunged the Cherokees into political turmoil. Contemporary American observers identified three rival positions but failed to notice that traditionalists were among all three factions. The "old settlers" were the early emigrants who had established their capital in Tallunteeskee and elected three chiefs. In 1839 the three chiefs were John Brown, John Looney, and John Rogers. Their form of government dated back to 1828 when the Arkansas Cherokees had exchanged their land for a vast territory farther West in present eastern Oklahoma.⁴⁰ Although two western Cherokee representatives had actually signed the removal treaty at New Echota in 1835, the "old settlers" were infuriated by the arrival of so many Cherokees from the East. The "old settlers" feared that the newcomers might again give in to American demands and sell western land as they had sold their homeland in the East. Especially among the traditionalists, whom Grant Foreman like contemporary Indian agents called "the ignorant Indians," such rumors

circulated and resulted in threats of death against traitors willing to sell to the United States.⁴¹ The early emigrants also held grudges against John Ross whom they correctly suspected of wanting to transplant of the eastern Cherokee government to the West.⁴²

The second faction of the "treaty party," had to bear the stigma of having opted for the treacherous wholesale removal. Many of them emigrated a few years prior to the general exodus and accommodated themselves to the existing government of the "old settlers." Nevertheless feelings of animosity remained. The American missionary and fund raiser for the bilingual printing press, Samuel A. Worcester, arrived at Park Hill, Indian Territory, in 1838. Observing the unpopularity of the Cherokee editor and translator for the newspaper, Galagina (Elias Boudinot), he commented:

The great trial we have at present is in relation to my translator. Mr. Boudinot whom I employed in the old nation arrived last fall, and returned to his labor with me here. But in the mean time his extreme anxiety to save his people from threatening ruin had led him to unite with a small minority of the Nation in forming a treaty with the United States, an act, in my view, entirely justifiable; yet in his case dictated by good motives. This has rendered him so unpopular in the Nation that they will hardly suffer me to continue him in my employment.⁴³

A year later, Elias Boudinot, The Ridge, and John Ridge--leaders of the treaty party--were assassinated. Although the extant records do not reveal the identity of their assassins, it seems likely that they acted in accordance with a secret agreement made at a joint council of "old settlers" and the Ross party in Takatukah (Double Springs) on June 20, 1839.⁴⁴ Several "treaty party" members escaped execution, but their position was so insecure that they actually asked the United States to intervene. About one hundred of them preferred to emigrate

to Mexico, where they joined previous emigrants from their tribe.⁴⁵ The remainder of this unfortunate "party," most of whom were relatives, quickly sought out more popular issues than the old removal dispute. In Degataga (Stand Watie), son of The Ridge and uncle of Elias Boudinot, the "treaty party" found a young and forceful opponent to John Ross.

The third faction, the "Ross party," consisted of all his relatives and the majority of the recent emigrants. He advocated the recreation of the constitutional Cherokee nation and considered himself still principal chief. Several years of meetings and councils were required before the "old settlers" agreed to unite under the constitution the Ross party drafted in 1839.⁴⁶ This document appealed to those who aspired to unity, peace, and tribal sovereignty.

The constitution's ultimate postulations were virtually the same as traditional goals, namely the reconciliation of disputing factions, local authority, and tribal independence. The Cherokees in the West continued to hold all land in common; only Cherokee citizens could own "improvements," and it was the government's prerogative to determine citizenship. If a Cherokee moved out of the limits of the nation and became a citizen of another government, he or she automatically lost all rights and privileges of Cherokee citizenship. All descendants from unions between Cherokee men or women and white Americans were entitled to citizenship if they resided in the nation. All Cherokee men could vote at public elections. The nation was divided into eight administrative districts which exercised local control. Prospective members of the national committee or the national council had to take an oath of allegiance to the Cherokee nation. Whereas the constitution

made no direct reference to Cherokee religion, it also failed to make Christianity the "state religion." Article VI, Section 2, states:

The free exercise of religious worship... shall forever be enjoyed within the limits of this Nation: Provided that this liberty of conscience shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this Nation.⁴⁷

The preamble summarized the objective of the Cherokee nation, this "one body politic," as the establishment of justice and tranquility, "acknowledging, with humility and gratitude, the goodness of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe in permitting us to do so."⁴⁸ Cherokees who valued their tribal traditions agreed with the general provisions of the constitution.

The constitution's singular weakness, again, was in fiscal matters. Neither the traditionalist self-sufficient, small farmer nor the well-to-do plantation owner were willing to finance their government out of their own pockets. The Cherokee nation continued to depend on annuity payments from Washington. There were numerous attempts of varying success to tax non-citizens, but these taxes contributed little to the treasury. The annuities were sufficient enough to operate a bilingual national newspaper, the Cherokee Advocate, which was the successor of the Phoenix in New Echota.⁴⁹ During the 1840s and 1850s the national council passed appropriations for learning academies, which predominantly served the children of the Americanized Cherokee "elite" and those Americans who had attained citizenship by inter-marriage. The common people did not benefit from the expensive Cherokee Male and Female seminaries at all.⁵⁰ In 1856 the traditionalist-dominated Cherokee legislature discovered that the maintenance of the seminaries had become unaffordable and closed them down. The

nation continued to support twenty-one public schools throughout the eight districts and funded an orphan asylum. These institutions, though costly, never came under attack by traditionalists.⁵¹

There were unexpected expenses which also strained the national treasury. In 1844 an immense flood washed away corn fields and brought the subsistence farmers among the Cherokees to the brink of starvation. In the following year the Cherokee government established depots and issued corn to the needy.⁵² Also, whenever the national council held its sessions the people expected a table with free food to be available in the capitol square. The town of Tahlequah, capital of the Cherokee nation, boasted a fancy capitol building and a national prison. These Americanized features attracted commerce from the United States but required as well that costly American standards of town life be provided.⁵³ From time to time, the government expended money at occasions when the chief had annuities paid out per capita. In summary, the Cherokee nation had many regular and unexpected expenditures beyond administrative costs which forced it to cut its services or lower administrative costs. In any case, the national income depended on treaty arrangements with the patronizing United States.⁵⁴

The removal did not change the fact that the Cherokees were proud to be Indians and that the mixed-bloods felt their Indian ancestry made them as much Cherokee as full-bloods. While they did not pretend to be "white," many of the latter had a bicultural upbringing and outlook.⁵⁵ John Ross, for instance, participated in Indian social events like ball plays and dances, but he also felt obliged to remember the victims of the potato famine in Scotland and Ireland, the distant countries of his forefathers.⁵⁶ He felt comfortable in entertaining white American

visitors, even married a non-Cherokee Quaker girl, and generally participated in pasttimes characteristic of southern plantation culture.⁵⁷ Not all mixed-bloods belonged to the Cherokee "elite," however, or were bicultural. Whereas the well-to-do were overwhelmingly of mixed descent, there was an even larger number of Cherokee people with white ancestry who were culturally Cherokee and made their living with subsistence farming and hunting.⁵⁸

Those who lived by the old Cherokee traditions valued family and kinship harmony over personal or material gain. To be sure there were changes in religious views, especially the shift toward religious pluralism, but the adoption of certain Christian beliefs did not necessarily contradict Cherokee traditional practices. For instance, the Cherokees had a ritual called "going to the water" which resembled the ceremony of baptism. Cherokees made the transition from tradition to fundamental Christianity smoothly. They continued to speak Cherokee, to marry among themselves, and to let the national council know where they stood on political issues.⁵⁹

The bicultural Cherokee politicians who had been educated in the United States dedicated their efforts to the prevention of the incorporation of their nation into a United States territory. The tribal newspaper, the Cherokee Advocate, and its editor W. P. Ross, the Princeton-educated nephew of Chief Ross, published news about numerous territorial bills in the United States Congress.⁶⁰ When the cordon of the United States drew more closely and surrounded the five Indian republics, the Cherokees were instrumental in holding intertribal congresses, protesting territorial schemes that aimed at "sectionizing" the Indian land and abolition of Indian governments. Indian protests

were vehement. Too busy with the Mexican War and the acquisition of new territory, the United States Congress took the subject of territorial government in Indian land off its agenda for the time being.⁶¹ The Advocate, meanwhile, changed editors several times before its publication was discontinued in September 1853 for pecuniary reasons. Subscription for those who only read Cherokee had been free. This newspaper had achieved its objective of "dissemination of useful knowledge among the Cherokee people."⁶² The motto of the newspaper expressed its editors' sentiment toward the Cherokee nation: "Our Rights--Our Country--Our Race."⁶³

The period between 1820 and 1850 included White Path's "rebellion," the self-conduct of the Cherokee Removal and its aftermath. The Cherokee government in the West united the contending political factions. Although there were few organized attempts exclusively aimed at maintaining Cherokee culture, nativistic endeavors nevertheless influenced most social and political parties of the time. Moreover, these efforts prepared the Cherokee people to survive culturally. Indeed, the conciliatory attitudes of Cherokee traditionalists in the 1820s led to the rise of a syncretistic nativistic movement in the decades ahead.

ENDNOTES

1

McLoughlin, "Cherokees in Transition." Of the forty-two "elite" families identified by McLoughlin, twenty resided in Georgia, fourteen in Tennessee, eight in Alabama, and none in North Carolina.

2

McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 224 ff.

3

As late as 1817 the town councils had to ratify all national council decisions one-by-one. V. R. Persico, Jr., "Early Nineteenth Century Cherokee Political Organization," in The Cherokee Indian Nationa, A Troubled History, ed. Duane King (Knoxville, 1979), 99.

4

William McIntosh tried to profit by ceding Creek lands against the majority decision in the Creek council. He accepted payments from United States treaty commissioners and offered a share to John Ross if he followed suit. Ross, however, made McIntosh's proposal publicly known to both the Creeks and the Cherokees. Soon thereafter Creek traditionalists assassinated McIntosh in his home: Mooney, Myths, 216.

5

Marion L. Starkey, The Cherokee Nation (New York, 1946), 102.

6

Moulton assumes from John Ross' papers that Ross spoke very little Cherokee. There is contrary evidence, however, in the writings of John Howard Payne who visited with John Ross for extended periods of time in both the East and the West. See Starkey, Nation, 262; Grant Foreman, Five Tribes (Norman, 1934), 314.

7

McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 386.

8

See John Ross' appeal to Congress in McKenney and Hall, Indian Tribes, I, 311-313; "Memorial of the Cherokee Nation," in The Removal of The Cherokee Nation (Lexington, 1962), No. 7; McLoughlin, "Cherokees in Transition," table 15.

9

Mary E. Young, Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860 (Norman, 1961), 73 ff; Francis Prucha, "Andrew Jackson's Indian Policy: A Reassessment,"

Journal of American History 56 (Dec. 1969), 71 Indians were also victims of the doctrine of white supremacy. See McLoughlin's essay "Red Indians, Black Slavery, and White Racism," in Ghost Dance, 161, 274; Tennessee denied Cherokees allotments and citizenship. See Royce, The Cherokee Nation, 104-105.

10

Hudson. ed., Four Centuries, 453.

11

Michael D. Green, The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis (Lincoln, 1982), 48, 97.

12

Lumpkin, Removal, passim; Starkey, Nation, ch. 7; Woodward, Cherokees, 158-9; Mooney, Myths, 114-9.

13

Filler and Guttman, Removal, nos. 1-14.

14

Prucha, "Reassessment;" George Dewey Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs (Chapel Hill, 1941), 212.

15

Ronald N. Satz, American Indian Policy on the Jacksonian Era (Lincoln, 1975), 1-28.

16

The Senators and Representatives obviously did not read the great mass of documents available to them on this subject. There were thousands of documents and floods of petitions, all of which only resulted in the perpetuation of vague myths about what Indians were like and the nature of the "Great American Desert" U. S. Congress, House Report No. 227, 21st Congress, 1st Session, 1830.

17

Ibid.; Satz, Indian Policy, 25.

18

Persico, "Political Organization," in King, Cherokee Nation, 101.

19

Ibid., 100.

20

Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation, Vol. 5 (Wilmington, Delaware, 1973) "Articles of 1817," laws of 1823 and 1825, Article III of the Constitution of 1828.

21

Theda Perdue, "Traditionalism in the Cherokee Nation: Resistance to the Constitution of 1828," Georgia Historical Quarterly

66 (Summer 1982): 166-7.

22

Ibid.; Starkey, Nation, 75-6.

23

Constitution and Laws, Vol. 5, "Constitution of 1827."

24

Ibid., Starkey, Nation, 103-4.

25

The sheer number of removal treaties is awesome. Foreman, Removal, passim.

26

Malone, Old South, 82-83; McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 102; Moulton, John Ross, 6.

27

Woodward, Cherokees, ch. 9; Mooney, Myths, 120-5; Starkey, Nation, 238-267; Royce, Cherokee Nation, no. XIV.

28

Foreman, Removal, 319; Mooney, Myths, 125-133.

29

On the remaining Cherokees in North Carolina, see John Finger, The Eastern Cherokees (Knoxville, 1985); Gulick, Crossroads; William Harlan Gilbert, The Eastern Cherokees, BAE Bulletin 133, (Washington, D. C., 1943). On Indians remaining in the Southeast see Hudson, Southern Indians, last chapter; Young, Ruffleshirts; James F. Corn, "Removal of the Cherokees from the East," Filson Club History Quarterly 27 (1953): 37-51.

30

Benny Smith, "The Keetoowah Society of the Cherokee Indians" (Master's thesis, Oklahoma Northwestern State University, 1967), 24 reports the transport of a sacred pipe from Tennessee to the West. Howard, "Ceremonial Complex," implies the unbroken tradition dating back to the Mississippian Mound Culture. Foreman, Removal, 251-312, illustrates the destruction and death toll on the "trail of tears," which according to this historian resulted in a "broken spirit." Mooney, Myths, 147, denies this as does William Smith in an interview near Marble City, May 23, 1985.

31

One of the Indian agents recently appointed to his position admitted his incompetence: "The business of removing the Indians was entirely new to me, and I have found it very laborious and troublesome, owing to the great opposition to the treaty throughout the [Cherokee] Nation; to obtain their consent to remove occasions me much more trouble than to provide for them after they have consented." Nathaniel Smith to Secretary of War, August 3, 1838, in U. S. Congress, Senate

Document 120, 25th Congress, 2nd session, 877-882.

32

Satz, Indian Policy, 186.

33

Starkey, Nation, 300; Foreman, Five Tribes, 281-2; Mooney, Myths, 133; Royce, Cherokee Nation, 292.

34

Foreman, Five Tribes, 284-5.

35

Ibid., 286.

36

Janey B. Hendrix, Redbird Smith and the Nighthawk Keetoowahs (Park Hill, OK, 1984) 1-4; Foreman, Five Tribes, 285; Mooney, Myths, 147.

37

Gilbert, Eastern Cherokees, 308.

38

King, Cherokee Nation, 167.

39

Foreman, Five Tribes, 386 and ch. 29; Albert L. Wahrhaftig, "The Tribal Cherokee Population of Eastern Oklahoma," Current Anthropology 9 (Dec. 1968): 510-518; McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 338 ff, "Cherokee Newspapers," 359-364.

40

Kappler, Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties. Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C., 1904), 206-9, 238-85, "Treaty of 1833."

41

Foreman, Five Tribes, 289 ff.

42

Wardell, Political History, ch. 11.

43

As quoted in Foreman, Five Tribes, 297.

44

In the SW 1/2 of NW 1/4 of NE 1/4 of Section 12, T 17 N, R 21 E, four miles north of Tahlequah. See Gerard Reed, "Post-Removal Factionalism in the Cherokee Nation," in King, Cherokee Nation, 151; Wardell, Political History, 18.

45

Daniel F. Littlefield, "Utopian Dreams of the Cherokee Fullbloods: 1890-1930," Journal of the West 10 (1971): 404-427;

Royce, Cherokee Nation, 302.

46

For a detailed discussion of the family feuds and the factional struggle preceding the Act of Union in 1846, see Foreman, Five Tribes, 281-337.

47

Constitution and Laws, Vol. 6, Constitution of 1839, Art. VI, sec. 2.

48

Ibid., preamble.

49

Wardell, Political History, 51.

50

McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 473-500; Woodward, Cherokees, 251.

51

McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 473-500.

52

Foreman, Five Tribes, 381.

53

Ibid., 369-370 ff; Woodward, Cherokees, 245; T. L. Ballenger, Around Tahlequah's Council Fires (Muskogee, 1935), 103 ff.; Wardell, Political History, 245 ff. "Tahlequah" is a variation of the old town name "Tellico" in the East.

54

There were also unsuccessful attempts to sell the "Neutral Lands" to the United States in order to replenish the nation's treasury. Wardell, Political History, 87-8.

55

The literacy rates in English and Cherokee are indicators of cultural affiliation. McLoughlin, Ghost Dance, 235.

56

Holland, "Cherokee Newspapers," 347 ff., 380 ff.

57

Woodward, Cherokees, 247-9; Moulton, John Ross, passim; Rudyard Halliburton, Jr., Red Over Black: Black Slavery Among the Cherokee Indians (Westport, Connecticut, 1977), 108.

58

Emmet Starr, History of the Cherokees (Oklahoma City, 1921), 18 ff; interview with Duane H. King, editor of Journal of Cherokee Studies and director of Tsa La gi Museum, Cherokee Historical Society in Tahlequah, March 29, 1985. An interview with Wilma Mankiller, Deputy

Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma at the time of the interview, March 29, 1985. Mrs. Mankiller pointed out that the mixed-blood Cherokees have been misrepresented, with the majority of them having received little attention by chroniclers and historians. The location of residence determines cultural affiliation over generations more than any amount of particular "blood." Telephone conversation with Robert K. Thomas, professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona, October 15, 1986.

59

McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 8.

60

Holland, "Cherokee Newspapers," 291 ff.; Wardell, Political History, 104-111.

61

For intertribal councils, see Foreman, Five Tribes, 188-190, 203, 367.

62

Constitution and Laws, Vol. 6, laws of 1843; Holland, "Cherokee Newspapers," 206.

63

Holland, "Cherokee Newspapers," quotes the Cherokee Advocate from Nov. 17, 1858, 208.

CHAPTER IV

TRADITIONALISM IN THE CIVIL WAR AND

POST-BELLUM YEARS

The most notable of all Cherokee nativistic movements, the Keetoowah Society, was formed during the years just before the Civil War. It was a "syncretistic" movement in that it combined Christian and non-Christian ideas about the sanctity of life and morality. The Bible and the "White Path" were compatible teachings. The political goal of the Keetoowah Society was autonomy for the Cherokee Nation. Some of the Society's members became influential in Cherokee politics after the Civil War. They sought to maintain Cherokee political and cultural independence and cooperated with other tribes in the creation of an "Indian state." This effort and the organization of the Keetoowah Society were conscious attempts to perpetuate tribal sovereignty.

In the 1840s abolition became an issue in Indian affairs. The federal Indian agents were southerners and expressively pro-slavery.¹ The large Christian denominations which maintained missions among the tribes split over the slavery question into northern and southern branches. The Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries among the Cherokees were mildly pro-slavery under the pretense of "neutrality," while the Baptists became outspoken crusaders against the institution.²

Yet slavery was not a great issue among the Cherokees. Only a

small fraction of the population owned black slaves, and these slave-owners were politically divided against each other. Prominent families were comfortable with the institution of slavery but the poor, who lived in more isolated parts of the country and supported slave-holder John Ross, cared little for slavery. Wrote the anti-slavery Baptist missionary Evan Jones in 1850:

In my own sphere of labor, however, and that of our native brethren, lies chiefly among that class the poor and full-bloods who speak the Cherokee language and who constitute the great body of the population, and among whom there is not much difficulty to be apprehended on the subject of slavery.³

In 1840, slavery mattered little to most traditionalists.

In the following decade the influential Welsh Baptist, Reverend Evan Jones became politically involved in Cherokee internal affairs and abolitionism. His most famous pupils among the Cherokees were Taskegidi (Jesse Bushyhead), Lewis Downing, and Oochalata (Charles Thompson), the latter two becoming principal chiefs after the Civil War. There were ten to twelve Baptist congregations within the nation with approximately 600 members, most of whom were Cherokees "from the hills," or the poor. These characteristically conservative people liked Evan Jones because he and his family lived among them, spoke their language fluently, and intermediated for them. More so than his father, John Jones was an ardent abolitionist who preached against the "Slavocracy" of the plantation owners. Indeed, the Joneses tried to sway their congregations' consensus towards abolitionism.

This political agitation caused much consternation among pro-slavery Arkansas border towns, which feared the political impact of Cherokee traditionalist and anti-slavery sentiment on the Cherokee government.⁴ The Baptist Missionary Board in Boston pressured Evan

Jones to rid his church from any affiliation with slaveowners. One must consider this demand in the context of the debate over slavery within the various Christian denominations. The Northern Baptists decreed that slavery was a "sin." As early as the 1840s, before the great schism among the Baptists, the Cherokee convert and preacher, Jesse Bushyhead, was censored for owning slaves! The controversy subsided after Bushyhead's death in 1844.⁵ Yet after the Baptist schism of 1845 the Boston board insisted that Jones disassociate his mission from slavery with no ifs or buts. Although there were only a few slaveowners in the Baptist congregations, Evan Jones hesitated to alienate them by taking such a radical public stand against slavery. He complied with his board's wishes only because he feared the loss of funds from Boston.⁶

Feeling secure in his position among the Cherokee traditionalists, Evan Jones' son, John, was even more brave. In 1852 he required slave-owning members of the Baptist church to either free their slaves or leave the church. Several left, yet others who were about to inherit slaves from deceased relatives refused to accept their inheritance and chose to stay in the Baptist church. The former Baptist slave owners, however, complained to the federal agent and Arkansas newspapers rallied against the missionaries' "subversive" actions. The Cherokee council reacted similarly by passing a bill to give the trouble-making Joneses notice to leave the nation. John Ross, however, close to the voting majority's sentiments as always, vetoed this bill and the national council, controlled by traditionalists, sustained the veto. Evan and John Jones had powerful allies among the traditionalists.⁷

In 1859 John Brown attacked Harper's Ferry and "Bleeding Kansas"

emerged just north of the Cherokee nation. With emotions so high, other missionary boards found it politically infeasible to prohibit slaveholding in their mission churches and decided to close them.⁸ The southern sympathizer and federal agent to the Cherokees, Robert J. Cowart, realized John Jones' abolitionist leanings and exiled him. Evan Jones' age and respectability probably rescued him from similar eviction.⁹ The Baptist mission was the only antislavery institution in the Cherokee nation until the Keetoowah Society formed. The Keetoowah Society was a nativistic movement with religious undertones. Historians have dated the formation of the Society to 1859 and credited Evan Jones with its organization. His influence, however, must not be overstated. The objective of the organization was to channel conservative reaction to demoralization, military defeat, and economic dependency against the United States. The Keetoowah Society was nativistic as it provided its members a controlled environment in which they could follow Cherokee cultural patterns. Conservative Cherokees lived in physically clustered settlement patterns unlike the white American practice of scattered homesteads. The Cherokees maintained communal organizations that went beyond the scope of Baptist meetings. As anthropologist John Gulick hypothesizes, "conservative behavior is defined, then, not as an entity in itself, but as a series of failures to conform to standard American expectations."¹⁰ The "defect" of the unassimilated Keetoowahs was their uncaring attitude towards slavery, which set them apart from "standard American expectations" in the South. Yet there was more to the Keetoowah Society than abolitionism. Conservatives farmed differently, spoke Cherokee, knew their clans, and attended Indian dances and stickball games. They were subsistence

farmers. The slavery question interested them only in the context of whether their life-style was in danger. By 1859 the Reverends Evan and John Jones convinced them that this was the case.

There are records in Cherokee and a living oral tradition about the history of the Keetoowahs. All documents emphasize the "ancient origin" of the Society, the strong bond of comradeship among its members, the dedication to mutual aid, and the commitment to neutrality in external affairs. The Keetoowahs attempted to stay out of the slavery controversy until circumstances no longer permitted neutrality. A certain secrecy shrouded their different meetings in mystery. There were fire ceremonies, "taking to the water," pipe rituals, funerals, and all-night dances. The non-Cherokee Baptists Evan and John Jones disapproved of continuation of aboriginal heathen practices but tolerated ceremonial get-togethers if the sinfulness of slavery was on the agenda. More important, however, was the Keetoowah's concept of themselves as "defenders of the Nation," a view that instilled a profound sense of self-esteem. The Keetoowahs were, one of their chroniclers and twentieth-century members, Benny Smith, writes, "very proud of their innate character."¹¹ In the 1850s they expressed this pride by concluding their formal organization with a provision that all records were to be kept in the Cherokee syllabary only.¹²

A defense of the Cherokee nation became necessary when the southern states seceded from the Union and the Civil War erupted. The United States made little effort to fulfill treaty promises and protect the "Indian Territory." Significantly most Americans residing among the Indians were pro-Confederacy. Indian agents exerted tremendous pressure on the tribes to side with the Confederacy, threatening to cut

off annuities. Finally on May 7, 1861, John Ross signed an agreement of mutual support between the Cherokee Nation and the Confederate States of America.¹³ Despite Ross' weak bargaining position, this treaty marked an improvement in the Cherokee-American relations. It guaranteed the integrity of tribal boundaries, acknowledged Cherokee sovereignty, promised aid-in-kind, and generally lacked the paternalistic tone so typical for the treaties with the United States. These advantages notwithstanding, the anti-Ross faction among the Cherokees selected Degataga (Stand Watie) to act independently. Watie conducted his own diplomatic relations and to raise two Cherokee regiments for the Confederate Army.¹⁴ The Keetoowah Society, on the other hand, became the nucleus for the secret order of "Pin Indians," or the "Loyal League," that advocated a return to the ante bellum conditions.¹⁵

By signing the Confederate treaty John Ross played into Stand Watie's hand. Only Ross' dedication to the "good of the common people" saved him from public disgrace. He received severe criticism not only from his old foes in the "treaty party," who slandered his actions as they always did, but also from the Keetoowahs who did not wish Cherokee treaties with the United States abrogated. Criticized from all sides and in constant danger of losing his life, Ross left his plantation home at Park Hill and went into exile in Philadelphia and Washington.¹⁶

He left the nation to various political factions contending for supremacy. The Watie faction attempted to gain popularity among the traditionalists by declaring the constitution and laws of the nation as valid despite the war. It occupied Tahlequah and elected Stand Watie principal chief. The "loyal" Keetoowahs, meanwhile, formed their own

interim government in the North of the nation and elected Thomas Pegg as chief.¹⁷ They renounced the Confederate agreement and proclaimed the validity of the old treaties. Upon Lincoln's Proclamation of Emancipation the "loyal" Keetoowah government announced the abolition of slavery. These "loyal" Cherokees fought the Watie men with words, deceit, and arms.¹⁸

Even though Indians were notoriously hesitant fighters, the Civil War was destructive and devastating in the Indian Territory. Notes one source:

The amount of effort and profanity expended by their white officers trying to keep them in line at the front...probably overbalanced the total value of their services; so that, if they chose to depart for their homes soon after the close of the battle, it is not probable that any strenuous efforts were made to detain them.¹⁹

Contending factions ravaged the countryside in order to obtain food for themselves and to spread terror. Discipline in Stand Watie's army was somewhat better. He tyrannized the Cherokee country so effectively that the Confederate government rewarded him with a commission to general.²⁰ Indian troops, overall, were inclined to desert quickly and were difficult to command in this fratricidal war. About 6,000 men, women, and children died in the Cherokee nation during the Civil War. The civilian losses were more severe than the military casualties. Generally it was a badly fought and ill-equipped war.²¹

The exact number of civilians killed, murdered, or dying of starvation, is difficult to estimate, because hundreds fled the scene south into Texas or north into Kansas. Families affiliated with the Confederate anti-Ross faction took their slaves and other moveable belongings to Texas.²² Hundreds of the "loyal" pro-Ross Cherokees joined with the

great number of "loyals" from the Creek and Choctaw tribes. Under leadership of the notable Creek traditionalist Opothleyohola a large trek of Indian refugees made their way into Kansas.²³ It took several years before they returned home. After conferring with the Keetoowahs in these refugee camps, Reverend Evan Jones once more became politically active.²⁴ He commenced a letter writing campaign as a "character witness" for John Ross' integrity and the praiseworthy consistency of the "loyal" Cherokee's. In Jones' correspondence with the United States War Department, he recited the circumstances that forced Ross to an alliance of convenience with the Confederate States. He also pointed out the heartbreaking hardships endured by the "loyal" refugees in Kansas.²⁵ The Cherokees rewarded Evan Jones and his whole family for this support by formally adopting them as Cherokee citizens. Acting principal chief as well as Keetoowah member and Baptist preacher, Lewis Downing, signed the Joneses' citizenship act on November 7, 1865.²⁶

In the meantime in Washington John Ross and several Cherokee delegates negotiated the agreement under which a revalidation of the old treaties would be possible. The resultant Treaty of 1866 stipulated that the Cherokee nation had to extend its citizenship to all former slaves as well as "friendly" Indian tribes whom the United States chose to settle on Cherokee land. Furthermore the Cherokees lost the "Neutral Lands" for the low price of \$1.25 per acre, and they had to grant two railroad companies the right-of-way to cross their domain.²⁷ Significantly, these treaty provisions were cloaked in terms of patronizing benevolence. The Cherokees were aware that the railroad companies had already received their land grants from the United States

government long before the Indians gave their consent to the Treaty of 1866. It was a humiliating document.²⁸

There were two ways the Indian leaders sought to deal with the railroads. Some prominent well-to-do Indians caught the "railroad fever" and believed their tribes could exert enough control over the railroads to profit from them. For example, Cherokee Principal Chief William Potter Ross, successor and nephew of late John Ross, introduced a bill in the Cherokee national council which authorized stock subscription of \$500,000 in the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company. The Cherokees would have two directors on the railroad company's board and regulate freight and passenger rates. The company declined the offer and remained independent from the Cherokee government.²⁹ W. P. Ross did not give up. He proposed a Cherokee-owned and -chartered railroad company. Presumably, it would produce a handsome income for the Cherokee government and make it financially less dependent on the annuities from the United States. The attempted Cherokee railroad did not materialize because no funds were made available. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ely S. Parker recommended the denial of the Cherokees' intention to use annuity payments for a railroad company. Parker feared that this would lead to "the [detestable] perpetuation of semi-civilized customs and forms of society, to the detriment of public interest," which demanded the end of tribal rule and common landownership.³⁰ Indian governments were not supposed to become railroad entrepreneurs.

A second approach to the railroad question was one tainted with suspicion but widely spread among the traditionalists. Interim Principal Chief Lewis Downing was a staunch opponent of the railroads. He

called for a firm policy to protect the Indians from "that industry, habit and energy of character, which is the result of the development of the idea of accumulation."³¹ Along with conservative Creeks, Choctaws, Seminoles, and Chickasaws, Cherokees protested all attempts by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to assimilate them into the industrial economy of the Gilded Age. Downing correctly foresaw the potentially disastrous impact of individual capitalistic enterprise on tribal society.

The railroads were a constant source of trouble. In June 1870 the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad and the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad crossed into the Cherokee nation. They had received respectively the right to the North-South and the East-West right-of-ways, a land grant of twenty feet in width.³² According to the Treaty of 1866 railroads were subject to the Cherokee trade and intercourse laws. Nonetheless, railhead depots, cutting embankments, turnouts, engine houses, warehouses, water stations, eating houses, hotels, and saloons accompanied the construction of the railroad tracks. There were timber deprivations, trespassings, and thefts of horses, cattle, and other property.³³ The busy concentration around railroad stations brought immigrants from Wales, Cornwall, Czechoslovakia, and Italy. Uncontrollable disease took a heavy toll, especially among the Indians in the backcountry. The Indians realized that railroads brought with them the disturbance of the tranquillity of tribal life.³⁴

Despite Federal and Cherokee laws against the introduction of liquor into Indian lands, whiskey peddling was a sad fact. It took place mainly in the northeast section of the Cherokee nation and involved the repeated disregard for Indian treaty rights on the part of

railroad employees, cattle drovers, traders, and squatters.³⁵ The president of the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad Company sought exemption from the federal law forbidding the introduction of liquor because customers in North Texas had ordered "bulk liquor" through his railroad company. The alternative would have meant an extra shipment on a "circuitous and more expensive route by water."³⁶ As the railroad tracks had not been completed, this "exceptional" whiskey shipment crossed the Cherokee nation in wagons owned by the railroad company. The transport of liquor was also a clear violation of the Cherokee trade and intercourse law, which supposedly applied to the railroad companies too.³⁷

The strength of the Cherokee leadership lay in its skillful negotiations, its weakness in the nation's inability to enforce its gains. Through determined negotiations the Cherokees had achieved the amelioration of the 1866 treaty's harshness. The follow-up Treaty of 1868 reaffirmed the Cherokee nation's jurisdiction and its boundaries, and contained an assurance that the United States would give full faith to all public acts when "properly authenticated."³⁸ The treaty contained a definition of who was an "intruder," a decision which ultimately rested within the Cherokee Nation's jurisdiction.³⁹ If a white person illegally resided within the nation, a Cherokee district attorney would report him to the "proper authorities," i.e., the executive department of the nation, which turned the case over to the Federal troops for the final eviction. The offender risked the loss of his property and treatment.⁴⁰ In reality most intruders escaped this fate because the Cherokee response was too weak.

Part of the problem was that by the mid-1870s Cherokee citizenship

had become a very complex issue. There were Indian full-bloods, mixed-bloods, intermarried whites, adopted persons, and black freedmen. It was difficult to obtain a certificate of citizenship, as the applicant had to get the approval from "ten respectable Cherokee citizens by blood" who had been acquainted with him for at least six months. In addition, each applicant had to renounce his previous citizenship, swear an oath of allegiance to the Cherokee nation, and maintain a permanent residence in the nation.⁴¹ Despite these measures, the number of citizenship claimants was great.

Faced with a growing influx of intruders, the Cherokees accused the United States of failing to carry out its treaty obligations, namely the removal of unwanted persons from the midst of the Indians. According to Enoch Hoag, the new head of the Central Superintendency of Indian Affairs, "a principal obstruction to our regaining their confidence arises from our failure in promptly carrying out our treaty stipulations."⁴²

The obvious weakness of the Cherokee nation with regard to the annoying intruder problem prompted the United States toward a policy of deciding the exigency upon which the removal of intruders rested. An inspector from the Department of the Interior found that many intruders had "strong ex parte evidence of their right to Cherokee citizenship."⁴³

The United States interpreted this as a favorable circumstance to undermine the Cherokee nation's sovereignty and to establish the United States' authority by encouraging claimants to make their complaints to federal agencies instead of using the Cherokee court system. To this end the office of Indian affairs established a new agency in the railroad town of Muskogee, Creek Nation, in 1877.⁴⁴ Chief Oochalata

(Charles Thompson) demanded to know why the United States refused to remove intruders: "If 'A' claims citizenship, that is no reason why 'B,' an intruder, should not be put out of our Nation."⁴⁵ The United States' position, of course, was that "the United States were never bound to regard simply the Cherokee law and its construction by the council of that nation...."⁴⁶

The Cherokees went to great lengths to defend their policy against attacks from the United States' agencies and Congress. Territorial bills were presented with such frequency that the Cherokee nation maintained a permanent delegation in Washington, D. C. to oppose them. Attached to appropriation measure, territorial bills were sometimes difficult to detect. The delegations hired attorneys.⁴⁷ In an editorial, the Cherokee Advocate compared the territorial bills to the fabled serpent which grew two heads each time one was chopped off.⁴⁸ The delegation's main objective was the prevention of the "overthrow of our Indian Government and the substitution, in lieu thereof, of a Territorial form of government, in which the Indian would soon cease to be known.... There is danger - yes, great danger."⁴⁹ Using interpreters, the Cherokees conducted all negotiations in very refined diplomatic language - English, which was a foreign language to most of them. Despite their efforts the Cherokees often found that their diplomatic antagonist, the United States, considered itself a superior "guardian and trustee," although this "guardian" has little sympathy or understanding for the Cherokees.⁵⁰ Chief Oochalata's (Charles Thompson) statements expressed his eloquent and steadfast insistence on political self-determination. He repudiated the United States' interference in Cherokee matters and referred to their occurrence as "dictate."⁵¹

The Cherokee nation was too weak to object when Congress undertook to enact programs of culture change and force them upon tribal peoples. Underlying the territorial bills was the United States' assumption of the tribe's cultural inferiority.⁵² The Quaker or "Peace Policy" optimistically assumed the possibility of transmuting "this now discordant and weakening element [i.e., the Indians] into an element of strength."⁵³ Tribes needed to reform according to the "superior" values of the emerging industrial civilization.⁵⁴ The concepts of property and happiness in the Gilded Age justified the blatant disregard of treaty rights with "backward" and "inferior" Indians. The Quaker policy, after all, aimed at the tribes' "advancement in civilization, thrift, and comforts of life."⁵⁵

There were points of friction developing among various Cherokee groups. The constitution and laws resulted from compromises for the sake of national unity. Provisions relative to representation in the National Council had controversial implications. The United States government had forced the Delawares, Shawnees, and some smaller tribes to settle in the northeast of the Cherokee Nation under a provision of the Treaty of 1866, specifying that these tribes were to have a voice in the Cherokee government. These people chose to remain distinct culturally and politically rather than merge with the host group.⁵⁶ Other special interest groups were the "Old Settlers,"⁵⁷ recent Cherokee emigrants from North Carolina,⁵⁸ the so-called "Southern Cherokees,"⁵⁹ and some Creek Indians who had resided with the Cherokees for some time. The constitution of the Cherokee nation did not violate any of these groups' rights; it even created a new district for the "Southern Cherokees" as a concession to their demand for political autonomy.⁶⁰

These compromises forced all of the groups to coordinate their actions for the benefit of the whole nation. In the historical literature the differences among the Cherokees have generally received more attention than they deserve. After all, Oochalata stated, "our National council has always been largely composed of full blood Cherokee," whose task it was to represent the silent majority.⁶¹

An innovative movement was the attempt at intertribal cooperation in response to the common problems created by aggressive railroad companies and hordes of intruders. In these intertribal meetings Cherokee traditionalists as well as Delaware, Shawnee and other tribal representatives participated as members of delegations throughout the 1870s. John Sarcoxie, for instance, a full-blood Delaware Baptist preacher and councilman in the Cherokee national council was among the Cherokee delegates at the intertribal Okmulgee Council.⁶² People like Sarcoxie, powerful community leaders, saw beyond their particular people's immediate needs.⁶³ According to Chilly McIntosh, a Creek statesman, the issue at stake was to "see the different nations represented...to make peace with each other...and no white man will dictate our deliberations."⁶⁴ The time seemed opportune to form a peaceful confederacy of tribes in the "Indian Territory."

The Grand Council meetings in Okmulgee had to produce results both realistic and amenable to all tribes and to the United States. Under Article XII of the Cherokee Treaty of 1866 the tribes met annually starting in September 1870. The conduct of the councils was very formal. Each delegate had to prove his "credentials" of election or appointment by presenting the attest of the respective United States Indian agent. Presiding at the council of 1870, United States Superin-

tendant of the Central Superintendancy Enoch Hoag oversaw the procedure of admitting delegates, secretaries, interpreters, occasional official visitors, and the formation of committees. The United States had a strong presence, sending three commissioners to represent the "general interest" of the Indians. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Eli S. Parker travelled all the way from Washington, D.C., to deliver a "message of hope" that the "civilized" agriculturalists Indians would unite with the "uncivilized" nomadic Indians. The United States wished, he stated, that the Indians' political efforts would eventually lead them to share the materialistic values of the American industrial civilization. By fashioning the proceedings of the Grand Council of 1870 after an American model of procedure, the Indians hoped to submit to Congress a constitution for a politically independent state with distinct tribal economies.⁶⁵

The meeting in June the following year shattered all hopes for an Indian territorial government. Only the Creek Nation ratified the constitution. The majority of the Cherokees and Choctaws felt confident about the "sovereign" nature of the proposed Indian government. The president of the United States had suggested certain alterations of the "Okmulgee Constitution," which would have replaced the elective governorship with an appointive position - appointive by the President of the United States.⁶⁶ The smaller tribes had complaints about "unequal" representation in the proposed all-Indian state government. The quarrel over the Seminoles' representation aligned the numerically small Plains tribes with the small Seminole and Chickasaw nations, both of which had long-standing histories of grudges against the large Creek and Choctaw nations. The debates about the representation issue

quickly deteriorated when delegates from the large nations referred to Plains Indian tribes as "parcel[s] of wild men."⁶⁷ Unable to reach a compromise, the tribes left the constitution unchanged and unratified. No tribe was able to make a unanimous or otherwise politically binding decision, which would have led to successful coordinated action among the tribes.

After this failure the tribes resumed their relations with the United States on a one-to-one basis, but these relations were not always peaceful ones. The 1870s were years of fierce Plains Indian warfare. Among the Five Civilized Tribes the struggle for cultural survival involved nonviolent techniques like eloquence in appeals and claims. The "national" newspapers were full of well-worded, sometimes nostalgic, accounts and pleading.⁶⁸ The United States had demonstrated its willingness to interfere with the Indians' political activities; militarily the United States also intervened, when it deemed it necessary. Political unrest in the Indian Territory would be a sure invitation of American intervention. In October 1871 a discontent Creek faction of six hundred armed men encountered United States troops from Ft. Gibson. Creek discontents under the leadership of Locher Harjo and Isparhecher continued to bring the Creek Nation into the danger of a full-scale United States Army invasion. Harjo's political opponents among the Creeks therefore turned to the Cherokees for help, which they received as a bulwark "against any interference by the Government of the United States with our rights of Self Government [sic]."⁶⁹ By and large every tribe hoped that the United States would not violate its treaties. As long as the treaties remained inviolate, the tribes felt safe.

With remarkable absence of hostility the Cherokees modelled their institutions after American examples, but only with modifications. Schools and education had a high priority and were "to be in a highly progressive and prosperous condition."⁷⁰ Despite the Indian agents' advocacy of American boarding schools "to consign the care and instruction of their children to us [*italics mine*],"⁷¹ the Cherokees preferred to have their own national schools supervised by the National Council. In the post-bellum years 35 percent of the Cherokee annuities went to the general school fund; 15 percent financed the Cherokee orphan asylum.⁷² The nation also appropriated funds to the creation of female and male seminaries in Tahlequah.⁷³ By 1876 there were 71 public schools enrolling 2,270 students.⁷⁴ There was a three-year long mandatory school attendance policy which provided for two twenty-week sessions each year, free tuition, and supplies.⁷⁵ Unlike American boarding schools, Cherokee schools admitted both boarding and day scholars in an effort to disrupt family life as little as possible.

The existence of official bilingualism provided an impetus for Cherokee nationalism. The Cherokee constitution and laws of 1870 required all public acts, resolutions, motions, speeches, and treaties to be published in both Cherokee and English print.⁷⁶ It further provided for a national newspaper, the Cherokee Advocate, in Tahlequah, which was bilingual and carried news of national significance as well as purely entertaining matters. The subscription to the Advocate was free to all Cherokee readers and cost all bilingual or English readers one dollar annually.⁷⁷ The Cherokees were a politically informed people.

Chief Oochalata (Charles Thompson) was the last traditionalist to

hold the office of principal chief. He had come over the "Trail of Tears" from Georgia to Brush Creek in present Delaware county, Oklahoma. His interest lay in "spiritual" as well as political matters when he joined the Baptists and the Keetoowahs in the 1850s. Oochalata represented three-fifths of the Cherokee population, who "speak, think, and reason in the Cherokee language only."⁷⁸ Like them he had little "white man's training" and even conducted his speeches in Cherokee. Elected to the Cherokee senate, Oochalata assumed his predecessor's English name "Charles Thompson." A prominent member of the "Downing party," Thompson became principal chief in 1875.⁷⁹ Traditionalists like Thompson communicated with the non-Cherokee speaking portion of the tribe and with outsiders with the help of skillful interpreters. This became increasingly necessary, as by 1890 the non-Indians outnumbered the Cherokees nine to one. The traditionalists' influence in national politics decreased accordingly.

The Keetoowah Society of the 1850s experienced a turbulent period of growth during and after the Civil War. Prominent members like Lewis Downing and Charles Thompson attempted to realize the Keetoowahs goals politically. Cherokee sovereignty and cultural integrity, however, had become part of a larger context. Other tribes in the Indian Territory were undergoing the same turmoils and struggles over intrusion and gradual acculturation. Groups like the Keetoowah Society became vocal only in times of great danger of inundation from outsiders.

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54 Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915 (Philadelphia, 1944), 29, 40; John H. Brodley, Victims of Progress (Menlo Park, California, 1975), 30, 86; Miner, Corporation, 79.

55 Annual Report of 1870, 254.

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57 The "Old Settlers" had removed from the East in 1807, 1819, and 1828 prior to the U. S. Removal Act of 1830.

58 About two hundred North Carolina Cherokees joined the Western Cherokees in 1868.

59 Most of the "Southern Cherokees" had been adherents of the Confederacy during the Civil War. They constituted the largest minority group. Another name for them is the "Ridge-Watie Party."

60 Namely the Canadian District, Royce, Cherokee Nation, 343.

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CHAPTER V

RESURGENCE OF CHEROKEE NATIONALISM

The period after the Civil War was one of disquietude and threat to tribal autonomy. The Keetoowah Society reorganized to defend the Cherokee form of government and tribal economy. Movements with similar goals appeared among the Creek and Choctaw tribes. Although the inevitability of allotment finally resulted in a split among the Keetoowahs, the policy met with much resistance among traditionalists. Many Keetoowahs abandoned politics for religion. Their absence from public affairs meant that few were left to oppose the drift of Cherokee society from its traditional communal economy toward capitalistic enterprise.

The events surrounding the resurgence of Keetoowah activity affected the whole of Cherokee society. In 1873, 73,000 acres were under cultivation. Maize was the most important crop and stock raising the second most common source of an Indian's livelihood.¹ The task to keep law and order was very difficult. The Cherokee Light Horse Guard, originally established in Georgia in 1809 and again in the Indian Territory in the 1840s, was not capable of keeping out all whiskey peddlers, to whip all offenders of Cherokee law, or to tear down all illicit fences.² There was a restless and ever-growing number of illegal intruders, who by the end of the century outnumbered Cherokee citizens by far.³ Maintaining order in the Cherokee nation became an

exceedingly fruitless endeavor, comparable to the efforts by the cursed Sisyphos in the Greek Underworld.

Referring to the great number of industrial companies, lodges, and Christian denominations, a traditionalist exclaimed, "the name of the Cherokee Nation is about to disintegrate. It seemed intended [sic] to drown the Cherokee Nation and destroy it."⁴ The yearning for the re-establishment and purification of Cherokee fundamentals led to an upsurge in the popularity of the Keetoowah Society. Comments Cherokee chronicler and contemporary Emmet Starr: "During the period from 1859 to 1889, the Keetoowahs flourished and were strongly united."⁵ Indeed the society continued to be a "political organization in character" and still conducted its meetings in Cherokee only.⁶ While the members of it cherished Cherokee culture, they had to face the determination of the United States government "not to tolerate any retrogradation."⁷ Inevitably the Keetoowahs became the nucleus for resistance to the allotment policy and dissolution of tribal governments.

In 1876 Cherokee council member Budd Gritts reorganized the Keetoowah Society for the purpose of counterbalancing what he regarded as detrimental influence from non-citizens among the Cherokees. A declaration of February 15, 1876, explicitly stated the Keetoowahs' main objective: "The intention is...we should never become citizens of the United States."⁸ Other resolutions concerned mutual protection of property and aid to relatives of deceased members. All members received a "certificate" for being a "defender of our government." Stressing everyone's "dependability...and loyalty to our Nation," each Keetoowah stood for "love," "peace," and the conviction that it was wonderful to be a Cherokee.

We must love each other and abide by the treaties...
and [love] other races of people. We must abide by our
Constitution and the laws and uphold the name of the Cherokee
Nation.⁹

The Keetoowah Society expressed a popular response to post-bellum problems.

Ned Christie was a prominent man in the nation and a Keetoowah. He represented the Goingsnake district in the national council from 1885-1887. His angry speeches against intruders and American encroachment made him famous among Cherokees. Six feet and three inches tall with long hair, he was an imposing figure with a bright future. However, on one of his trips to the Cherokee capital, Tahlequah, Christie got into trouble apparently without his doing. On May 4, 1887, United States Deputy Marshal Dan Maples rode into Tahlequah in pursuit of an "outlaw" wanted by the Federal Judge Isaac Parker of Fort Smith. According to the Cherokee historian Janey B. Hendrix, Christie had been in town but after consuming a bottle of whiskey he had fallen asleep on the embankment of the Tahlequah creek. Someone ambushed and shot the marshal on a footbridge across that creek. The Cherokee Light Horse Guard found out that Christie had been in the vicinity and his known animosity toward the United States made him a likely suspect in the fatal shooting.

All of northwestern Arkansas was up in arms and Judge Parker issued a summons for Christie's immediate arrest. Christie knew that Maples had been the 64th marshal to be killed in the Indian Territory and that Judge Parker was likely to set an example with him. In the spirit of the "Red" or war society of old Cherokee times, the Keetoowahs rallied around Christie, just like they had assisted Zeke Proctor in

the Cherokee court house affair fifteen years earlier. Ned Christie went into hiding and became a guerilla fighter, or "outlaw," against American involvement in Cherokee internal affairs.¹⁰ Keetoowah resistance came at a time when Washington was in the process of taking care of lawlessness in the "Indian Territory" once and for all.

Although the Dawes, or General Allotment Act of 1887 did not apply to the Five Civilized Tribes, the later organized Dawes Commission negotiated agreeable terms with them. The Curtis Act of 1898 effectively abolished all tribal jurisdiction and called for the speedy allotment of Indian's lands in "severalty." All "surplus" land was to be sold as a final act of the tribal governments, which thereafter were to be superfluous, as the region would become a state. The execution of the allotment policy and the preparation for statehood resulted in feverish land speculations and the attraction of thousands of prospective settlers and attorneys. The discovery of mineral resources only added to the "boom town" atmosphere across the "Indian Territory."¹¹

The traditionalist or "real" Indians did not share the capitalistic values of the newcomers from the United States. The majority of the Indians lived near the subsistence level on no more land than they used immediately. The Cherokees supplemented their grain diet of "canhania" (hominy grits) with game and fish from the woods held in common. Commodities like flour, sugar, and coffee were scarce. Cherokees raised stock animals for their own use and the local market. A contemporary described the attitude as one of "let every day provide for itself."¹² The federal Indian agent at the Union agency in Muskogee reported in 1886 that the "full-blood people" owned small fields from 5-150 acres and raised cattle, hogs, corn, and vegetables.

The full-bloods are very liberal to each other and are quite willing to lend. This willingness to give and this willingness to receive presents a serious obstacle to the utilization of nature's great labor lesson, hunger. They get along reasonably well in a humble way, rather to the disappointment of their more ambitious brothers [and, obviously, of this United States government official]..., in order to become more industrious, they should be compelled by actual want to greater exertion and a more active and energetic life.¹³

Idealistically the allotment policy aimed at the transformation of the Indians into model capitalistic individuals.

This atmosphere so hostile to communal land ownership and subsistence farming provided the background of revivalistic movements among all of the Five Civilized Tribes. The best known movement was Chitto Harjo's (Crazy Snake). Its origins dated back to the days of Opothley-ohola and Ispahcher.¹⁴ Crazy Snake was from a prominent Creek family and an excellent orator who voiced the traditionalists' concerns about impending allotment, statehood, and the "sanctity" of the treaties with the United States. He and his followers simply did not want to become citizens of the United States and lose claim to all their land, which they were using jointly. With their refusal to enroll voluntarily, the "Snake Indians" sparked off a hysteria of fear among the great numbers of Americans residing among them. Vigilante groups and the National Guard from Oklahoma Territory searched Indian homes for suspicious evidence and engaged Indians in skirmishes which terrorized the Indian population unspeakably. Contemporary newspapers took the side of the vigilantes and the (American) law. Editorials deliberately distorted the scope of the "Indian uprising" in order to enhance the commercial appeal of the headlines.¹⁵ The Creek "Crazy Snakes" attracted nationwide attention, but their concerns were ignored.

Nativistic movements among the other civilized tribes like the

"Crazy Snake rebellion" grew out of similar cultural backgrounds, crossed tribal boundaries, and influenced each other. Traditionalists from the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, and Choctaw tribes had cultivated cordial relationships among each other. In her biography of Dotsuwa (Redbird Smith), Cherokee historian Janey B. Hendrix points out that

There was a deep bond of unity between the fullblood Creeks and the fullblood Cherokees who lived in the districts bordering the Cherokee Nation, as well as with the remnants of the Natchez tribe who had settled in with both the Creeks and the Cherokees after their own tribe had been destroyed forever as a unit by the French in 1730.¹⁶

The Natchez were known for their knowledge of religious practices of the southeastern Indians before the removal. These intertribal relationships deepened during Opothleyohola's trek to Kansas during the Civil War. In 1866 Sequaneda (Pig Smith), a prominent Cherokee traditionalist, gave his son Dotsuwa (Redbird Smith) into the apprenticeship of Creek Sam, a Natchez Indian, who instructed the boy in the "old ways." Redbird Smith was to become a charismatic leader of another nativistic movement in the near future.¹⁷

The Four Mothers Society was another revivalist movement with intertribal significance. Participants in this religiously oriented society were Chitto Harjo (Creek), Johnson Bob (Choctaw),¹⁸ the Christie family (Cherokee), and Jim Wolf (Cherokee). This intertribal organization addressed the same concerns that all traditionalists shared, but it provided little to alleviate the problems or to attract a large following. Mainly concerned with "spiritual matters," the meetings of the Four Mothers Society at the turn of the century provided the leaders of Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw movements with a forum of exchanging views and strategies.¹⁹

The Keetoowah Society vacillated in its strategies to deal with the allotment and dissolution of their tribal government. The Keetoowah Rabbit Bunch, who served as assistant principal chief with Dennis W. Bushyhead (1879-1887), advised the Cherokee people to seek voluntary enrollment for adjacent allotments. This plan would allow the continuing of tribal relations by preserving a land base without fences.²⁰ At the height of its popularity, the Keetoowah Society organized meetings in all parts of the nation. The gatherings had a particular pattern; there would be a Baptist service during the daytime and Indian ceremonies and dances at night. Rabbit Bunch's moderate political views and the conciliatory nature of the meetings did not satisfy all Keetoowah members who were angry that federal marshals hunted reluctant Indians and forcibly enrolled them. Political dissent was treated as a crime.²¹ Aside from submissive accommodation, some Keetoowahs thought there were other options.

Some remembered the voluntary emigrations from the East beyond the Mississippi in the early nineteenth century. Physical withdrawal, or emigration, was an alternative worth considering. There were lands where the Cherokees would be free of the "white man's laws and ways of living."²² In 1895 Bird Harris negotiated with the Mexican government to buy a tract of land in the thinly populated state of Sinaloa. He and his friends also considered another site in an area of Colombia, where the population was largely Indian. Cherokees visited these regions, but the plans to establish communities there did not materialize, probably because of the lack of funds, but maybe because the land in question was not suitable.²³ The Keetoowahs made an unsuccessful attempt to reach an agreement with the United States to exchange their

land for territory in Mexico.²⁴ Although none of the emigration schemes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were successful, relocation remained an alternative. Even in 1932 several Cherokee, Creek, and Natchez families contemplated colonization in Mexico.²⁵ The strategy of emigration remained a theoretical possibility in the twentieth century.²⁶

In 1901 the Keetoowahs split over the appropriate reaction to allotment and dissolution of the tribal government. Redbird Smith directed a group of discontented Keetoowahs in the erection of a ceremonial ground near his home on Blackgum Mountain in the Illinois district. Within a year there were twenty-three such ceremonial meeting places throughout the Cherokee country. The meetings included not only revived Cherokee ceremonialism, but also the revitalization of the "White" town organization. The Keetoowah council consisted of seven clan representatives. A participant told anthropologist Robert K. Thomas, "We got the rule back, God's seven clan laws, by gaining knowledge and better interpreting our wampum belts."²⁷ This splinter group of the Keetoowahs opposed scattered individual allotments decidedly. Federal marshals arrested Redbird Smith and several of the group, which came to be called the "Nighthawk Keetoowahs."²⁸ Under pressure from the American authorities, many of the Nighthawks enrolled and gave up their resistance.

Redbird Smith realized that his political effort to resist allotment had failed. Yet his vision went beyond the reaching of a merely political goal:

After my selection as chief [in 1910] I awakened to the grave and great responsibilities of the leader of men. I looked about and saw that I had led my people down a long and steep mountainside, now it was my duty to turn and lead them

back upward to save them. The unfortunate thing in the mistakes and errors of leaders or of governments is the penalty the innocent and loyal followers have to pay. My greatest ambition has always been to think right and do right. It is my belief that this is the fulfilling of the law of the Great Creator. In the upbuilding of my people it is my purpose that we shall be spiritually right and industriously strong.²⁹

With this apologetic speech Redbird hoped to calm down those members who feared that the Nighthawks were too radical. The Americans certainly pictured them as an "Indian uprising." After 1916 the membership of the Nighthawk Keetoowahs began to wane. Many members had become disenchanted about the slight political impact they had had in the State of Oklahoma. Those Keetoowahs who gained spiritual strength from the ceremonials remained faithful. Along with many others, Redbird Smith's eight sons and two daughters have carried on the traditions revived by him.³⁰

The Nighthawks had strict rules. Every member had to know his or her clan. A "fire," or ceremonial ground, could only exist if members of all seven clans were present. If there was no such representation, the "fire" would have to consolidate with another. Before a night of ceremonies and dances, the "fire chief" had to prepare a white chicken sacrifice to "feed the fire." Various ritual observances were essential to the "working" of the ceremonies. Yet the meetings were occasions of fun, too. While the stern council gathered, the people enjoyed themselves at the stomp dance, the bar-b-ques, hog-fries, and stick-ball games. Every July 19 people came from far and near to celebrate Redbird's birthday with a communal dinner and a night of stomp dancing.³¹ Within the strict framework of traditional rules there was plenty of room for merriment.

In 1917, one year before his death, Redbird Smith wrote the Indian

agent in Muskogee in the Cherokee syllabary:

I have endeavored in my efforts...for my people to remember that any religion must be an unselfish one. That even though condemned, falsely accused and misunderstood by both officials and my own people I must press on and to the work of my convictions. This religion as revealed to me is larger than any man. It is beyond man's understanding. It shall prevail after I am gone. It is growth like the child - it is growth eternal. This religion does not teach me to concern myself of the life that shall be after this, but it does teach me to be concerned with what my everyday life should be. The Fires kept burning are merely emblematic of the greater Fire, the greater Light, the Great Spirit. I realize now as never before that it is not only for the Cherokees but for all mankind.³²

The Cherokee visionary who had dared to combine his fundamentalist belief with the political demand for justice for his people had completed the circle and returned to religion. Redbird's religious revitalization has had a significant impact on the history of the Cherokee people.

The religious aspect of the Nighthawk Keetoowahs centers on the concept of the "White Path," or peace. Traditionalist Cherokees referred to "The Peace," which is not merely an interlude of quiet between wars but a transcendental state of mind. They view the Cherokees' troubles as a direct result of their "misbehavior," or the "downfall of the Indian." One of Thomas' informants, a Keetoowah, said, "the Indians got so mean God turned from them and then the white people come [sic] over and took over the country. Now it looks like the whites are getting plumb mean with all these wars. Maybe someone else will take over this country." However, according to another Keetoowah informant, "if the Indians get back on the White Path their trail will turn toward the East [the direction of Good] and they will come up again."³³ The "White Path" is synonymous with "God's Rule" or the "Seven Clan Rule."

The Keetoowahs believe that it is essential to re-establish this peaceful state of mind and purity of heart. One of Redbird Smith's sons told Thomas of his friend's visionary dream:³⁴

One time Alex Deer-in-Water died and went to heaven. When he got up there he saw a big building with seven stories. God was sitting on the seventh story with my father [Redbird Smith] at his right hand. Alex went into the ground floor. It was nothing but cells with preachers in them. Them preachers was in heaven all right, but they was in jail. He asked to see God, but they told him he couldn't do that because he was going back [come alive again]. They went up and got my father for him though. My father shook hands with him and he said, "God wants you to go back down to earth and enforce his law, the Seven Clan Rule." Then Alex come to.³⁵

The Keetoowah religion is a syncretistic and nativistic religion with an optimistic message.

In order to practice the "ancient" religion a Cherokee must disclose his or her clan and Indian name. To let others know one's clan is a matter of trust, because this knowledge could be misused in "sorcery." The fear of black magic is rampant in Cherokee culture.³⁶ Once this fear was overcome, the Keetoowahs could practice their religion openly because all prayers address the clan. A similar significance is attached to the Indian name of a person. The eminent scholar of Cherokee folklore, James Mooney, found that "the Indian regards his name not as a mere label but as a distinct part of his personality, and believes that injury will result as surely from the malicious handling of his name as from a wound inflicted on any part of his physical organism. In many of the formulas...the shaman mentions the name and the clan of his client."³⁷ In personal magic, conjuring, and communal Keetoowah ceremonies, the clan (Ani, meaning "people") has great significance.

The main event of the revitalized Cherokee religion is the "stomp

dance." A day prior to the ceremony the Keetoowah elders fast and pray in preparation of the coming events at the Gatiya (stomp ground).³⁸ In the center of the ground is a round earthen mound of about two feet in height and seven feet in diameter. Four round logs on the mound are permanent features, pointing in the four cardinal directions. Seven log "arbors," one for each clan, surround the mound in a circle, leaving the west side open. The ball play pole is about fifty feet west of the fire mound. The ceremony takes place at least once a month and has several parts. In the hierarchy of the Keetoowah organization there are various ceremonial offices, such as "chief," clan medicine man, "fire keeper," secretary, treasurer, "little captain," "score keeper" for the ball game, and several others.

These officers perform the rituals in orderly fashion. The pipe ceremony is the first part. Then the fire keeper lights the fire with specially selected wood and two flint stones. He "feeds" the fire with a sacrificial offering. New members are initiated by the smoking of the pipe and being led around the fire in a counter-clockwise fashion. The general dance begins when the fire keeper and the other elders decide to call on a certain clan member to lead the first dance. At certain occasions the Keetoowahs use a water drum, but generally there are no instruments other than the human voice and the terrapin shells worn by Keetoowah women. The dancing begins at nightfall and often continues all night. At dawn the people share the "black drink," a herbal concoction. The recipe for this drink antedates European contact with the Cherokees.³⁹ Stomp dances are social events bearing a religious meaning, which not all dancers fully understand.

The stickball game frequently is an early morning activity for the

young and old. The participating men play it with two wooden "sticks," which have "cups" to hold and throw the fist-sized ball. Among the Oklahoma Cherokees the game is played between men and women. The women must use their hands, which only superficially appears to be an advantage. The players wrestle with each other in order to grab and throw the ball. The objective is to hit the top of the pole and score a number of points. The score keeper scratches the score points in the sandy ground with a particular branch normally kept near the fire mound. The significance of each procedure during a stomp dance ceremony goes beyond the scope of this study. It must be noted, however, that the ball play and stomp dance are revitalized cultural features of the Eastern Band of Cherokees as well and have their counterparts among all of the southeastern tribes, both among the "remnants" east of the Mississippi and those in Oklahoma.⁴⁰

A special "treat" during a Keetoowah ceremony is the public exhibition and interpretation of the wampum belts. Thomas' Keetoowah informants pointed out that "in the old days it was the custom for the wampums to be kept by the [principal] chief.... The Keetoowahs just let John Ross keep the wampums."⁴¹ After John Ross' death one of his grandsons inherited the wampums. In order to "get back what the Keetoowahs had lost" [namely the White Path, or spiritual tranquility], the organization appointed a committee to "recover" the wampum belts from Robert Ross, John Ross' grandson. Dekinney Waters was the chief agent in obtaining the belts from Ross after a brief struggle.⁴² The Keetoowahs felt more "complete" and fully authorized to revive the old religious doctrines associated with the belts--the dogma of the "White Path."

To the present day the wampum belts have been the code of the message of "travelling [on] the White Path." The interpretation is a public appeal to the old Cherokee moral code of peacefulness and neighborliness. Early travellers among the Cherokees attested to the importance of these beaded artifacts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴³ In the early 1900s the belts symbolized "eternal peace with the white man" and the "sanctity" of the treaties with the United States.⁴⁴ The wampum belts are still in possession of the Nighthawk Keetoowahs.⁴⁵ The Keetoowah religion is a holistic world view, which in the 1910s combined resentment toward allotment with the effort to live according to Cherokee beliefs.⁴⁶

After the Nighthawks' split, the remainder of the Keetoowah Society reassembled under the leadership of Richard Wolf, Levi B. Gritts, and Rabbit Bunch. Wolf was elected Keetoowah chief in 1905, the year of the society's incorporation. The political platform was moderate, accepting the inevitability of allotment and statehood. Yet the Keetoowah Society, Inc., demanded new tribal elections and opposed the freedmen's equal access to Cherokee allotments. Price Cochran succeeded Wolf as Keetoowah chief. During his time in office he challenged the validity of William Charles Rogers' claim to the seat of principal chief. In fact, the president of the United States appointed Rogers to the post of principal chief at various times between 1903 and 1917 in order to supervise the final business of the doomed Cherokee nation, i.e., the sale of "surplus" land. Frank J. Boudinot was the Keetoowah's candidate in a tribal referendum, but Washington refused to recognize Boudinot's election. Rogers stayed in office. Most members of the Keetoowah Society, Inc., withdrew from active politics into

communal organizations.

In the post-Civil War era the Keetoowah society was at its zenith. It was a popular movement which addressed the issues of Cherokee autonomy and common land ownership. Traditionalists from the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw tribes responded in very similar ways to the threat of inundation from intruders and allotment. The Four Mothers Society was a temporary intertribal nativistic movement. After allotment and Oklahoma statehood, most Keetoowahs and members of the Four Mothers Society turned to communal organizations. These became the nucleus of twentieth century nativistic movements.

ENDNOTES

1
"Journal of the Adjourned Session of the First General Council of the Indian Territory," Chronicles of Oklahoma 3 (June 1925): 120-140; Annual Report of 1870, 297.

2
Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "The Light-Horse in Indian Territory," Chronicles of Oklahoma 34 (Spring 1956): 17-43.

3
Donald Ralph Englund, "A Demographic Study of the Cherokee Nation," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma), 1974, 150.

4
Proclamation of 1860, "Keetoowah Minutes," Shleppy Collection, University of Tulsa Library (hereafter UTL).

5
Starr, History, 480.

6
Ibid.; Law of 1860, "Keetoowah Minutes," Shleppy Collection, UTL.

7
Annual Report of 1870, 298.

8
Resolution of February 15, 1876, "Keetoowah Minutes," Shleppy Collection, UTL.

9
Ibid.

10
Hendrix, Redbird, 36-39.

11
Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run (New Jersey, 1940), 66; Edward Everett Dale and Jesse Lee Rader, Readings on Oklahoma History (Evanston, 1930), chapters 15 and 16.

12
Quoted in Theda Perdue, Nations Remembered: An Oral History of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1865-1907 (New Haven, 1980), 61.

13
Annual Report of 1886, 147-149 and 154-157.

14
 See page 86 on Opothleyohola.

15
 An excellent account of Crazy Snake's "rebellion" and the contemporary press coverage is Mel Hallin Bolster, Crazy Snake and the "Smoked Meat Rebellion" (Boston, 1976). See also Debo, Still the Waters Run, 54-58, 135, 290-297. The Historical Museum in Holdenville displays handmade Seminole baskets which were used around the turn of the century to hold the Indian household's silverware. Provided with two chambers and a handle these baskets were easy to grasp when the family made sudden escapes at the appearance of "vigilante" groups, who sometimes merely burglarized Indian homes in this time of turbulence.

16
 Hendrix, Redbird, 8.

17
 Sequaneda (Pig Smith) was president of the Cherokee senate in 1868, Constitution and Laws, Vol. 3, 29. Dotsuwa's (Redbird Smith) apprenticeship to Creek Sam is documented in Hendrix Redbird, 11.

18
 Johnson Bob was Crazy Snake's "Choctaw connection" when the Creek traditionalist made his escape after receiving a severe wound at the skirmish at Hickory Ground Bolster, Crazy Snake, 53.

19
 The Four Mothers Society disintegrated as an intertribal organization. However, it continues to exist among the Cherokees on Wauhilla Mountain. The monthly meetings take place at the Wolf stomp ground. The present Cherokee principal chief, Wilma Mankiller, is a participating member. Personal information and attendance at stomp dance, August 2, 1986.

20
 Tyner, "Keetoowahs," 68; Debo, And Still the Waters, 32; Robert K. Thomas, "The origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement," (Master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1953), 153.

21
 The fear of Indian "insurrections" seemingly haunted American residents in the Cherokee nation at the turn of the century. Hendrix, Redbird, 65-66.

22
 Littlefield, "Utopian Dreams," 419.

23
 Ibid.

- 24
Hendrix, Redbird, 74-75.
- 25
Littlefield, "Utopian Dreams," 419
- 26
Telephone Conversation with Robert K. Thomas of the University of Arizona, October 16, 1986.
- 27
Robert K. Thomas, "The Redbird Smith Movement," in Symposium on Cherokee and Iroquois Culture, ed. William N. Fenton and John Gulick (Washington, 1961), 159-167, especially page 165.
- 28
Tyner, "Keetoowahs," 71-75; Thomas, "Redbird;" Fenton and Gulick, Symposium, 164.
- 29
June 20, 1917, "Keetoowah Minutes," Shleppy Collection, UTL.
- 30
Starr, History, 479-487; Hendrix, Redbird, 77.
- 31
Hendrix, Redbird, 73-77; attendance at stomp dance on July 19, 1986. July 19 is still a day of celebration among the Keetoowahs.
- 32
Hendrix, Redbird, 79.
- 33
Tyner, "Keetoowahs," 86; The "Certificate of Incorporation" by the United States Court of the Indian Territory at Tahlequah, law #592, on September 20, 1905, "Keetoowah Minutes," Shleppy Collection, UTL.
- 34
Quoted in Thomas, "Origin," 150-151.
- 35
Ibid.
- 36
Ibid., 94, 104, 176, 181; Mooney, Myths, 383; Leonard Bloom, "The Cherokee Clan: A Study in Acculturation," American Anthropologist 41 (Spring 1939): 266-268.
- 37
James Mooney, "Cherokee Theory and Practice of Medicine," Journal of American Folklore 3 (1880): 44-50; Mooney, Myths, 343. There are examples in great abundance; a prayer shall illustrate the importance of clan and personal name:

Now! White Path way will be lying before me!
 Now! These are my people [is my clan]: _____;
 this is my name: _____.
 Now! I will not be standing about in loneliness.
 Now! Very quickly I gather spiritual Wisdom.
 I am unsurpassingly beautiful!

Kilpatrick, Walk In Your Soul, 79.

38

Information about the conduct of "stomp dances" is ample, but scattered. Hudson, Southeastern Indians, 475-477; Mooney, Myths, 230, 262, 422, 425, 471; David H. Corkran, "The Sacred Fire of the Cherokees," Southern Indian Studies 5 (October 1953): 21-26; T. L. Ballenger, "Keetoowah Dances," Chronicles of Oklahoma 2 (1983): 212-223; Smith, "Keetoowahs," 29.

39

Ibid.

40

Ibid., Mooney, Myths, 146, 170, 262, 384, 433, et passim; James Mooney, "The Cherokee Ball Play," American Anthropologist 3 (1890): 105-132; Raymond Fogelson, "The Cherokee Ballgame Cycle: An Ethnographer's View," Ethnomusicology 15 (1971): 327-28; Marcis Herndon, "The Cherokee Ballgame Cycle: An Ethnomusicologist's View," Ethnomusicology, 15 (1971): 339-52.

41

Thomas, "Origin," 120.

42

Ibid.

43

Ibid., 125-134.

44

Ibid., 124.

45

Interview with William Smith, Marble City, August 31, 1985.

46

Tyner, "Keetoowahs," 88.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: TWENTIETH CENTURY COMMUNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MODERN NATIVISTIC MOVEMENTS

According to the theoretical model of culture change, nativistic movements occur in times of cultural or economic hardship. Therefore the context of a revitalization movement is essential in the understanding of its ulterior motives. In the twentieth century, when the political question of Indian "nationhood" and "sovereignty" seemed to be settled in Oklahoma, nativistic movements among the Cherokees still appeared and functioned as a forum in which the Indians addressed their economic and cultural desires. Cherokee culture had not simply disappeared like the Cherokee nation with the stroke of a pen. Initially the focus of twentieth century nativism shifted from political to economic issues. National policy changes and intellectual trends like the New Deal have had a great impact on modern Indian movements. As soon as the historical context seemed favorable for political assertion, Cherokees revitalized political institutions and aspirations in addition to addressing issues. Twentieth century Cherokee movements need to be considered in the context of "what was feasible," economic or political change in order to secure Cherokee culture.

The impact of allotment on Indian farming has been analyzed by Leonard A. Carlson in a statistical analysis of the allotment policy in

eleven states, including Oklahoma.¹ As the title of his book suggests, his data confirm the hypothesis that fewer Indians were independent farmers after allotment than before. The number of acres under cultivation by Indians was highest in 1900 and then declined. "By 1930 Indians were farming fewer acres than in either 1900 or 1910."² Carlson correlates the decrease in Indian farming with the increased opportunities to leave or sell the land. According to his research, about eighty percent of the Indians who had patents in fee sold them or had them sold on account of delinquent mortgage or tax payments.³ Indians did not respond by entering the urban labor market in large numbers. Agricultural and outdoor occupations remained the primary occupation of Indian men. In 1930, most Indians were unskilled agricultural laborers with few prospects for the future.⁴ The Meriam Report of 1928 arrived at the conclusion that allotment as a means of promoting self-sufficient farming among Indians was a failure.⁵ It had the opposite result in many cases. Indians reduced the amount of land they farmed and remained relatively isolated from the market economy.

Before allotment large parts of the Cherokee land were unoccupied except along the streams. The people farmed in river bottoms and used the woods for hunting. After allotment the Cherokee-speaking people tended to live on mountain tops, in "hollers," or other remote and marginal areas. Part of this phenomenon was the Indians' preference. Robert K. Thomas mentions that "the [Redbird] Smith family, for instance, traded in a rich farm in the Arkansas River bottom lands to retreat farther back in the hills."⁶ Not all Indians retreated voluntarily. The greed of the "grafters," who often misused the law to lay their hands on Indian land, is a story that has been written.⁷

The Cherokees preferred situations where they could live undisturbed away from too much traffic and strangers. Even after statehood traditional Cherokees did not abandon the idea of unfenced land held in common. Late in November 1921 the members of the Brush Creek and the Yellow Locust "fires" of the Nighthawk Keetoowahs moved from their homes near Jay to the extreme southeastern corner of Cherokee County. They intended to revive the old customs and live according to their values in a communal setting. Every member was expected to participate in the work chores for the common good. This form of communal labor, "gadugi" in Cherokee, antedates the European contact period, and has continued to exist among the North Carolina Cherokees as well.⁸ The land consolidation plan in Cherokee County was a financial failure.⁹ The people of the region around Jay, however, succeeded in launching a tribally funded cattle ranch which is still in operation.¹⁰

Traditionalist Cherokees who are community-oriented and non-acquisitive have tended to meet outside threats by organizing. After the Civil War and well into the twentieth century they formed community organizations such as the Keetoowah Society, the Nighthawks, the Cherokee Baptist Association for rural Cherokees, and the Cherokee Corporate Society. The Corporate Society unsuccessfully attempted to appeal to the federal government to create a reservation for Cherokees with common land ownership. The economic program of this Long Valley-based organization found no support among the federal authorities. Consequently the members abandoned the idea and withdrew into the local Cherokee Baptist church. Local Indian churches have served as meeting places with no outside interference.¹¹ Like the Keetoowahs, the churches are organized communal responses to political or economical

hardships.

The "social engineers" of the 1930s recognized and strengthened the tendency toward spontaneous community organization among Indians.¹² The philosophy of the New Deal was matched with the concern of traditionalist' Cherokees, who viewed the situation after statehood with disapproval: "If we don't do anything, we're going to lose out. All the chiefs that we know of have been appointed over yonder, in Washington, some place up there. We don't know anything about it. We don't know what goes on."¹³ The traditionalist were eager to have a say in communal, even tribal affairs.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1935, an outcome of "social engineering" in the 1930s, was very controversial both in and outside Oklahoma. The IRA, or Wheeler-Howard Act, as the measure is also called, allowed for the incorporation of tribal groups for the purpose of establishing an economic base of tribal self-sufficiency. The method of creating sound corporate economies among the tribes was novel. The federal government for the first time in the twentieth century actually discouraged "rugged individualism" and encouraged the Indians to revitalize tribal, or communal structures. This marked a radical turn in the United States' Indian policy. The Indian target population displayed a wide spectrum of reaction to the New Deal policy. Like all policies before, this one was created in the minds of non-Indian politicians. Therefore the IRA received automatic mistrust from many Indians.¹⁴ Others gave it considerable attention and approved of its provisions.

The opponents of the measure voiced their almost irrational fear of "Communism" in anticipation of an attack on the fundamental values

of American society, i.e., individualism and capitalism.¹⁵ The seemingly unintelligible reversal of Indian policy from allotment to corporacy even caused anger among those Indians who had just made the transition from tribal corporacy to economic individualism. Joseph Bruner, a Creek fullblood, was a representative of this group, who in his mistrust and fear of "Communism" demanded "justice" for the Indians. He thought continuation of the allotment policy was preferable to any new scheme.¹⁶ Indians were reluctant to accept services for their welfare, because those usually entailed another way of life, a loss of identity. Allotment had not been a matter of choice for the Indians. The New Deal possibly imposed a new set of rules on the tribes, whether they were called "Communism" or something else. If they had a choice, the Indians would reject it, Bruner exclaimed. No more change was his battlecry.¹⁷ Opponents labelled the New Deal provisions as undeserved "hand-outs," thus trying to give this legislation a bad name among the weary like Bruner. Non-Indian opponents to the IRA were often owners of former Indian land who feared strong Indian corporations and their lawsuits.¹⁸ Some Oklahoma Indians were willing to use federal means to reinstitute tribal organizations. Oklahoma presented a "special case." Barely after the dissolution of tribal governments, Oklahoma politicians were not willing to accept the uncalled-for reinstitution of tribal corporacy. After a long struggle over the protection of Indian property, the Thomas-Rogers bill summarized Oklahoman concerns and incorporated some of the provisions of the IRA. People of one-half or more Indian ancestry were declared "incompetent" in the eyes of the law. It mattered little that the blood quantum was an inaccurate way to measure a person's cultural affilia-

tion and "competence," or desire, to be a property manager. Racist terminology has never ceased to imply cultural meaning. The bill provided for the possibility of tribal incorporation under the IRA. The Oklahoma law was titled "Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act" (OIWA), a title which was very unpopular among Indian traditionalists from the start.¹⁹

Among the Cherokees, a group of Keetoowahs did not feel ashamed of taking advantage of the "welfare" clause enabling them to incorporate in a body corporate. They became the "United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma."²⁰ This organization received the right to participate in the \$10,000,000 credit fund under the IRA.²¹ The United Keetoowah Band was a party of traditionalists who opposed federal appointments of Cherokee chiefs throughout the 1940s and 50s. Politically weak, the United Keetoowahs were nevertheless a forum for traditionalists to express their concerns about the situation among the Cherokee tribal people who needed better health care and education without a loss of self-esteem. The IRA was a framework for a resurgence of traditionalist community help projects. The "chief" of four regional Cherokee organizations, Levi B. Gritts, advocated the usefulness of the IRA and the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act to recreate the old system of communal lands tenure and tribal autonomy.²²

Political and cultural revitalization is not possible without an economic base. In fact, economic hardship often serves as the catalyst for vitalistic movements.²³ In this context, Cherokee revitalization movements of the twentieth century always entailed an economic program in addition to cultural revitalization. For outsiders it sometimes seems that the economic concerns take precedent over the cultural, but

traditionalists assure that this is a wrong impression. However, a culture by definition has to provide material as well as abstract means for survival. In an economically impoverished population a nativistic movement necessarily has to address economic needs.²⁴

Among the Oklahoma Cherokees the economic wants were great in the 1930s. Most culturally-Cherokee people lived in the five northeastern counties of Adair, Sequoyah, Cherokee, Mayes, and Delaware. Many of these lived in the rural areas where the local church and stomp ground was the only entertainment and communal center. The average yearly cash income in 1934 for a family was \$950, as workers for the Indian Service established.²⁵ Most of the tribal Cherokees made their living by sharecropping for non-Cherokees often on former tribal lands.²⁶ The promotion of Indian crafts was a means by which Cherokee women during the New Deal hoped to earn extra income and preserve the traditional arts.

Between 1936 and 1953 the Sequoyah Indian Weavers' Association (SIWA) organized under the OIWA. The Association had several hundred women members and became a profitable cooperative business. Each weaver utilized traditional Cherokee weaving patterns for clothes, rugs, and pillows. Weavers received pay "by the piece" and all profits from the sale went to the opening of new centers, the expansion of membership, and the purchase of materials. In the mid-1950s the association operated without the aid of Bureau of Indian Affairs personnel.²⁷ When the main center was burglarized in 1954 the organization received a heavy blow. SIWA lost much money and merchandise; most women were too discouraged to continue the operation. Handicrafts were an activity traditionally done in the home, where it has continued to be appre-

ciated as useful and culturally relevant. The knowledge taught in the SIWA cooperative was not lost. Many younger women had enlarged their weaving repertoire and used it for the generations to come.²⁸

Nativistic efforts often express themselves in community organizations which last a short time only. After an organization has at least partially achieved its purpose, often economic, it may turn into an informal gathering. Associations of this informal kind are difficult to document. A few examples will illustrate this point further. In 1964 the Echota Indian Baptist congregation in southern Adair county reached a consensus to have the Cherokee syllabary taught to the children in Sunday School. The church members also wished to utilize the Cherokee Bible more than the English version. By threatening to withdraw from services and Sunday School classes taught by a non-Cherokee, the Indian congregation achieved its goal.²⁹ In another case members of the Illinois River Indian Baptist Church in northern Adair County and the Seven Clan Society, a non-Christian traditionalist society near Chewey, opened a cooperative grocery store with the little money they could raise. They even envisioned establishing a local credit union. During the meetings Cherokees addressed various concerns about other aspects of community life. Although the economic hopes failed in the long run, the community bond was existent and provided an environment for mutual assistance and social interaction.³⁰

Anthropologist Albert L. Wahrhaftig optimistically called a recent nativistic movement a "resurrected state."³¹ The movement to which he referred encompassed roughly five northeastern counties in Oklahoma, forming the Five County Northeastern Oklahoma Cherokee Organization. It originally started in response to a dispute over Cherokee hunting

and fishing rights. State officials insisted that Cherokees purchase licenses and enforced seasonal restrictions by impounding game, confiscating firearms, and levying fines. The affected Cherokees in vain sought redress through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The tribe's federally appointed business manager privately said to Wahrhaftig in 1964; "the Cherokee tribe is controlled essentially by non-Indians.³² They don't do anything that will harm non-Indians. In fact, they go even further. They don't do anything that will not benefit [sic] non-Indians." In this context the Five County organization formed.

The issue of hunting is at the core of Cherokee traditional life, even in the twentieth century. Hunting affects the men who find male proficiency in the activity, the women who understand the need for game protein as a crucial supplement to the family's diet, and the old people who relish memories of unrestricted hunting and fishing.³³ The formation of the organization depended on the cooperation with ceremonial leaders. Fines Smith, a son of Redbird Smith, advised the malcontented hunters to exercise caution in the formation of the Five County movement.³⁴

It was a nativistic movement because the chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, and the Cherokee- and English-language secretaries were chosen by consensus and were Cherokee ceremonial specialists. Fines Smith and Andrew Dreadfulwater were leaders of a branch of the Keetoowahs and the Seven Clans Society respectively.³⁵ The Five County Cherokees inaugurated a newspaper in English and the Sequoyah syllabary and collected an archive with documents pertaining to allotments and land losses. In addition to these efforts the organization provided a forum for the discussion of grievances of all kins. People consulted

each other about land losses, welfare, hunting and fishing rights, the old treaties, and new legislation. There were discussions about the acquisition of literacy in Cherokee. Finally the active members denounced the inadequacies in the determination of tribal enrollment, which relied on the incomplete Dawes rolls.³⁶ By addressing a variety of issues, the movement spread fast and became a political force in the late 1960s.

The meetings were loosely-structured and open to anyone, as tribal custom prescribed. The Five County Cherokee organization roused many Cherokees in remote settlements from political apathy. Comparable to the eighteenth century White moiety, this modern-day movement vaguely resembled, according to Wahrhaftig, "a village council headed by Beloved Men who, presiding over a body of Cherokees organized by clans, used their powers of persuasion to achieve unanimous decisions."³⁷ A similar bifurcation of responsibility between the White and the Red moieties of aboriginal society appeared between the older and the younger men among the Five County Cherokees. The younger men were more radical, secretly preparing for possibly violent clashes with anti-Cherokee ruffians, which never took place. The whole organization had a resemblance with Fred O. Gearing's description of an eighteenth century "voluntary Cherokee state," which had its origins in the joining of independent face-to-face communities.³⁸

Characteristically purpose-oriented, the official, or "state-like" Five County movement disappeared after most of the issues had received the attention of federal, state, and appointed tribal officials. The Five County Cherokees went back home and participated in their communal organizations only. The last of the federally appointed Cherokee

chiefs, W. W. Keeler, however, realized the Cherokees' desire for a tribal organization with as little "outside" influence as possible. With Keeler's approval the position of Cherokee principal chief became once more elective in the Cherokee Nation, Incorporated, which emerged in the early 1970s.³⁹

Chief Keeler supported Cherokee traditionalism. Born on April 5, 1908, in Dalhart, Texas, Keeler was the son of enrolled Cherokees. After attending the public schools of Bartlesville and the University of Kansas, he worked himself up within the Phillips Petroleum Company in Bartlesville. Keeler became vice-president of the company's executive department and a member of the board of directors. Aware of Keeler's credential as a successful Cherokee, President Harry S. Truman appointed him principal chief in 1949. He was reconfirmed in this position by presidents Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson.⁴⁰ Keeler always maintained close contact with traditional Cherokees and their economic and cultural concerns. He employed Boyd Pierce, the Cherokee attorney, who had also worked for the United Keetoowahs since 1938. Crosslin Smith, a Cherokee traditionalist, accepted Keeler as "kin," presumably because the chief was very sympathetic to the concerns of the Keetoowahs.⁴¹ In the first tribal election since statehood in 1971, Keeler was elected principal chief for four years.⁴²

Although there still is a great deal of controversy around the Cherokee nation as to its purpose, the Cherokee Nation, Inc., has managed to become involved in a number of programs beneficial to its members. Membership is the most disputed feature, as anyone with verifiable ancestors on the Dawes Roll can join. This provision natur-

ally includes a large number of people who may not be culturally Cherokee.⁴³ Traditional Cherokees have often regarded these distant relatives as "outsiders" and dismissed the Cherokee Nation as not representative. However, the organization has provided many services for Cherokee people.

The Nation's services expanded tremendously with Ross O. Swimmer's administration from 1975 to 1985 and under the current chief, Wilma Mankiller.⁴⁴ During President Richard Nixon's Indian self-determination policy, the Cherokee Nation provided legal counsel for individual Cherokee allotment cases and pursued the large claim for Indian ownership of the Arkansas Riverbed.⁴⁵ The issues did not meet with equanimous support from all Cherokees and the Nation's administration of projects is often severely criticized by Cherokees and non-Cherokees. However, many individuals and communities take advantage of the Nation's programs and even attend social events as well.

As the Cherokee Nation supports and provides many cultural events, it is close to being a revitalization movement. The modern Nation has revitalized nineteenth century traditions, including the "Annual Message" of the principal chief and the "National Holiday," which dates back to the September council that drafted the Cherokee constitution in 1839. Besides a few changes and addition of new laws, this constitution was valid from 1839 until Oklahoma statehood. The new constitution of the Cherokee Nation is its modern successor. It significantly bears the date of September 5, 1975.⁴⁶ The annual messages and national holidays draw Cherokee people from all over the United States to Tahlequah. These week-long activities represent a cultural festival with a variety of Cherokee favorite pasttimes. A few of these date back to

pre-contact Cherokee culture, such as the cornstalk shoot and the blowgun competition. Others indicate the changes Cherokee culture has experienced, as the Indian fiddlers' contest, the various team sports, the pow-wow, and the crowning of a "Miss Cherokee." The free meal for all present at the festival is reminiscent of the cherished Indian hospitality. Personal relationships with North Carolina Cherokees have received additional impetus from the reunions of the two Cherokee governments first held at the ancient Red Clay council grounds in Tennessee on April 5 and 6, 1984. This event was rich in ceremonial significance. The two subsequent annual reunions have been held in Tahlequah (1985) and North Carolina (1986). These "official" friendship meetings recognized that the two Cherokee groups are still related by kinship, culture, and history.⁴⁷

The language barrier between culturally Cherokee people and non-Cherokees has had an adverse effect on the employment and achievement of the farmer in the non-Cherokee world. Cherokee speakers often experience a sense of alienation and low self-esteem. That the language has survived is a nativistic phenomenon.⁴⁸ According to Wahrhaftig, Oklahoma Cherokees use the language widely:

In Hulbert, only Cherokee is spoken in 53% of the houses, both Cherokee and English is spoken in 30% of the houses, and only English is spoken in 17% of the houses. In Cherry Tree, only Cherokee is spoken in 59% of the houses, both Cherokee and English are spoken in 34% of the houses, and only English is spoken in 6% of the houses. In Marble City only Cherokee is spoken in 72% of the houses, both Cherokee and English are spoken in 17% of the houses, and only English is spoken in 11% of the houses. In Bull Hollow, only Cherokee is spoken in 85% of the houses, both Cherokee and English is spoken in 11% of the houses, and only English is spoken in 6% of the houses.⁴⁹

In North Carolina, perhaps a third of the Cherokee population speaks Cherokee fluently, and many of the older people can read and write

their native tongue in the syllabary.⁵⁰ Native literacy has been found to have a beneficial influence on achievement in the use of a second language. Literacy in Cherokee has also enhanced the self-image of the native speaker. The Bilingual Education Center in Tahlequah operates on these presumptions and provides printed material in both English and Cherokee.⁵¹

Although the Cherokee Nation makes an effort in utilizing and preserving Cherokee culture elements, it has been criticized by the older and smaller United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. The United Keetoowahs regard themselves as a political organization in the tradition of the Keetoowah Society of the late nineteenth century. They criticize the enrollment requirements of the Cherokee Nation, because,

you could almost say that most anyone in northeastern Oklahoma could join [Ross Swimmer's] tribe--everyone except the older generation of fullbloods who don't have birth certificates and don't have the patience to cope with the complex and some not too useful rules issued by his [Ross Swimmer's] empire--because if time could be had in tracing one's decent, one half of the people in northeastern Oklahoma could trace their lines directly to the Dawes Roll. Ross Swimmer and his Council don't have the initiative to lead the way in amending the Constitution to make the Cherokee tribe selective, representative, and meaningful.(...) So many fullbloods and near fullbloods do not approve the idea of being classed as blood brothers to those blonds and blue eyes--lower [blood quantum] factions, those with less than one quarter degree of Cherokee blood.⁵²

The United Keetoowah Band specifically forbids absentee voting, which according to it is the greatest evil of the Cherokee Nation, which has an enrollment of 67,000 members mostly residing out-of-state. The United Keetoowahs only have 8,000 enrolled members from northeastern Oklahoma.

They refused to be "dominated" by "outsiders." Their administra-

tive units coincide with the old Cherokee Nations's nine districts, disregarding present county lines. According to their statements, the United Keetoowahs are a politically revivalistic movement.⁵³

The vehemence with which Cherokees debate their political differences is a clear indication that the underlying cultural issues are still of vital importance in the 1980s. Further supporting this impression are the facts that the Cherokee nation employs a grandson of Redbird Smith, Crosslin Smith, as cultural advisor and supports stomp dances with meat donations. Spokespersons of the United Keetoowah Band speak highly of the religious Four Mothers, the "Ancient" Keetoowahs, and the Seven Clans societies. Anyone who spends a prolonged time among Cherokees in eastern Oklahoma finds references to Cherokee beliefs and mythology in all aspects of everyday life.⁵⁴

The persistence of Cherokee culture elements has gone unnoticed by outsiders unless it surfaced in a nativistic movement. The objective of political and economic movements has always been the reinforcement of existing Cherokee values. Nativistic movements could not have occurred without the framework of the culture which presents a steady undercurrent throughout the times. The syllabary has been an important instrument for cultural retention. The more widespread acceptance of rituals and ceremonies during the "open-minded" 1970s and 80s has led to an upsurge in the number of participants among the various Keetoowah, Four Mothers, and Seven Clan groups. Local Cherokee churches are still vibrant community organizations and cultural focal points.

In the arts, southeastern Indians and the Cherokees have produced a unique style of expression. Artists use the media of paintings, wood

and stone carvings, jewelery, and T-shirt printing in order to create an immediately identifiable sensation or image, which relates the Cherokees to the similar tradition and culture of the southeastern Indians.⁵⁵ A visitor may get the impression by noticing the Cherokee women's "tear dresses," the men's ceremonial hats, the old hunting jackets in pictures, and the peculiar men's fashion of half-long hair and moustache. Certainly the pan-Indian movement has made inroads on the fashions and styles popular among Cherokees as the non-Indian world has also. Nevertheless Cherokee culture has remained identifiable and noteworthy. The mosaic of cultural activity would not have been possible without organized efforts as in nativistic movements at crucial moments in Cherokee history.⁵⁶

Cherokee nativistic movements present a special case in the revitalization model. At a very early stage of culture contact Cherokee society was already highly differentiated, a prerequisite for state-building societies.⁵⁷ Nativistic responses to the acquisitiveness of Anglo-American culture ranged from militarism, emigration, political dissent, to religious revivalism. All of these movements were eclectic, i.e., they condoned certain innovations while rejecting others. Herskovits' concept of "cultural relativism" greatly enhances the understanding of culture as an innovative tool of human adaptation. Thus acculturation and nativism were two factors of Cherokee state-building.⁵⁸

After the initial militaristic response, Cherokee nativism of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries soon assumed the quality of cautious, selective acculturation. Emigration from the East seemed to promise liberation from American encroachments. Attacullaculla's peace

policy and the Chickamaugans' fight accomplished little. The tribe continued to make treaties and land cessions. The first two removal crises of 1809 and 1817 indicated that a small portion of the tribe considered withdrawal as the ultimate solution to problems with the Americans.

Political centralization was a gradual development toward state-building among the Cherokees remaining in the East. This policy of "peaceful coexistence" did not go over equally well with all Cherokees. The tension between Cherokee and American culture built up during the Cherokee Ghost Dance in the 1810s and found its release in the Creek War of 1812-1814. Sequoyah's invention of the syllabary and the nascence of a native literacy indicated the surge of a native literacy of Cherokee "nationalism" which at times worried American missionaries and federal Indian agents. The superficial solution of Cherokee-American dissonances over land management and intrusions was the rapid bureaucratization of the Cherokee central government.

The emergence of a Cherokee republic in the East was only possible with the support and input of traditionalists. White Path's "rebellion" of 1828 must be interpreted in this light. His movement had millenarian aspects and addressed a wide range of issues. The movement subsided, but the issues of cultural preservation did not disappear. Throughout the forced removal and its aftermath many Cherokee traditions were upheld. The Cherokees organized the removal parties themselves, and transported sacred objects and manuscripts to the West. In the new homeland the Cherokees organized local "temperance societies." Their centralized form of government continued in the West, allowing the growth of a diversified, pluralistic society. Traditionalists were

always "on the guard," however, and remained influential until the end of the nineteenth century.

The continuation of the Cherokee language, customs, and values surfaced again just before the outbreak of the Civil War. The Keetoowah Society supposedly is of ancient origin and self-acclaimed "defender of the Cherokee government." Cherokee traditionalists formed this "puritan" society with rigid membership regulations and behavior codes in order to counterbalance what they viewed as the detrimental dissolution of tribal values. The Keetoowah's "foreign policy" was strict observance of the treaties with the United States.

There were similar groups among all of the Five Civilized Tribes, who influenced each other. Notable personalities like Pig and Redbird Smith were personal friends of Opothleyohola, Ispahcher, Johnson Bob, and later Chitto Harjo. Traditionalists did not encourage concerted intertribal actions; their movement for an Indian state was a failure. After the Civil War the Keetoowahs were very active and influential in Cherokee politics. They as well as the corresponding Crazy Snake movements among the Creeks and Choctaws, opposed assimilation allotment, and intrusion. These organizations were political in character but had strong religious overtones.

After allotment the Keetoowah Society disintegrated into regional groups with little cohesion. The most notable of these were the Night-hawk Keetoowahs, who increasingly became religiously oriented. Cherokees who were concerned about speaking their language and upholding family traditions also congregated in isolated rural Baptist churches. Many Cherokee traditions have survived because of the strength of these local community organizations.

The 1930s and 1960s in particular witnessed the appearance of several Cherokee revivalistic institutions. Always concerned with the people's material needs, community organizations like the SIWA, the Five County Cherokees, and the United Keetoowah Band also addressed emotional and other "intangible" issues. To many non-Cherokees, some of the modern-day issues like the question of fishing and hunting permits, the ownership of the Arkansas Riverbed, the usefulness of bingo and smoke shop operations, etc., may seem unrelated to "intangible" or cultural issues. In fact, all of those are strongly connected. Cherokee traditionalists even today depend on supplemental game and fish in their diet and the tribe wishes to attain economic self-sufficiency. Only a well-nourished, well-clad, well-housed people can enjoy tribal festivities and excel in the traditional arts.

In the past two decades the Cherokee nativistic movements have found outlets in the Cherokee Nation, Inc., the United Keetoowah Band, the Keetoowah Society, the Four Mothers Society, and various other regional organizations. Relations with the North Carolina Band, while never totally cut off, have received new impetus. The use of the Cherokee language and syllabary suggest continued relevance in the modern world. Traditional styles, dress and hair fashions, have become "in" again. Nativistic movements like the modern-day Nighthawk Keetoowahs under William Smith merely reflect the vitality of Cherokee culture today.

Cherokee nativistic movements have had some common overriding features. They generally stressed peacefulness, provided community service, preserved Cherokee heritage, and instilled in their members a sense of pride in the tradition. The question of cultural purity, so

important to each one of the nativistic organizations, is difficult to answer by an outsider. Double and triple membership in various organizations is common, if unaccounted for. Cherokees don't act dogmatically, they hold individualism in high regard. This does not imply that they are nonconformists. They have taken pride in the tribal nature of their separate identity. United by actual kinship, co-residence, and constant person-to-person interaction, Cherokee tribal society has a particular system of collective habits and social heritage. These have provided the fabric of nativistic movements in order to preserve Cherokee culture.

As the Cherokee example shows, Indian response to American society has been varied and covered a wide range of issues. There is a need for cultural studies on Indian intellectual trends in the United States. In order to pursue this direction, future scholarship will have to include the development of Indian Christianity and the impact of pan-Indianism on specific tribal cultures.

ENDNOTES

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- 10
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