

A STUDY OF THE CHEROKEE INDIANS' CLOTHING  
PRACTICES AND HISTORY FOR THE PERIOD  
1654 TO 1838

By

EDNA GERALDINE SAUNDERS

Bachelor of Science

New Mexico State University

Las Cruces, New Mexico

1963

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate College  
of the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
May, 1969

SEP 29 1969

A STUDY OF THE CHEROKEE INDIANS' CLOTHING  
PRACTICES AND HISTORY FOR THE PERIOD  
1654 TO 1838

Thesis Approved:

*Sarah D. D. D.*

Thesis Adviser

*Rich Stinnett*

*D. D. D.*

Dean of the Graduate College

725072

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Miss Dorothy Saville for her help and especially her patience during the writing of this thesis; Miss Sara Meador for her valuable suggestions; Dr. Nick Stinnett for his willingness to help in time of need; and Dr. Donice Hawes for serving as a member of the advisory committee; and Dr. Edna Meshke for the original idea.

Appreciation is also expressed to Patrick Patterson of the Woolaroc Museum; Mrs. Martha Blaine and the library staff at the Oklahoma Historical Society; and to the staff of the Five Civilized Tribes Museum in Muskogee.

The writer also thanks her many friends and fellow students who were interested and encouraging in this undertaking.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Purpose of the Study . . . . .	3
II. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CHEROKEES . . . . .	4
III. CLOTHING MATERIALS AND THEIR USAGE . . . . .	19
Clothing Materials . . . . .	20
Weaving . . . . .	21
Dressing of Skins . . . . .	22
Designs . . . . .	23
Burial Practices . . . . .	24
IV. CLOTHING CUSTOMS . . . . .	30
Men's Clothing . . . . .	31
Women's Clothing . . . . .	34
Children's Clothing . . . . .	35
Footwear . . . . .	36
Headgear and Hairstyles . . . . .	37
Body Paint and Tattooing . . . . .	39
Jewelry and Ornaments . . . . .	40
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	42
REFERENCES CITED . . . . .	44
ADDITIONAL SOURCES . . . . .	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Some Motifs Used in Cherokee Basketry and Beadwork . . . . .	25
2. Motifs Used in Cherokee Pottery and Painting . . . . .	26
3. Other Motifs Used in Cherokee Pottery and Painting . . . . .	27
4. Motifs from Shell Gorgets Found in the Area Inhabited by the Cherokees . . . . .	28

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Thousands of books have been written about the American Indians, but our knowledge of some areas of Indian culture is still limited. For many years during the early history of the United States, the majority of white men looked upon the Indians as savages--men without souls, and as heathens. As savages and heathens, they were also considered inferior beings. There was nothing good about these savages except that they possessed vast areas of rich land which was coveted by the white man. The conflict over land did more damage to relations between the two groups than any other single thing (16).

For some years the idea has been growing that one of our richest cultural inheritances has been overlooked. People have begun to take another look at Indian art, philosophy, theology and customs. Cultural anthropologists and ethnologists have noted the Indians' understanding, appreciation and use of the elements of nature. Within the tribes themselves, there is a trend to revive and strengthen the old customs and beliefs (5). Talented Indian youngsters are encouraged to become artists and craftsmen in the areas of painting, weaving, sculpting, woodcraft and metalcraft.

With the rising interest in aesthetic aspects of Indian culture has come an increased interest in other areas such as home and family life including food habits, clothing customs, and childrearing practices.

A study of clothing customs offers a varied and fascinating picture of Indian life. There were one hundred and thirty-two tribes of Indians in the area known as the United States and Canada when the first sighting of this country was made by Columbus (21). These tribes lived in five distinct cultural areas--the Northeast Woodlands, the Southeast, the Plains, the Southwest and the Northwest (1). Their clothing traditions were as varied as their physical environments.

Because of popular literature, western movies, and television, a sort of Indian stereotype has developed. The Indian male is pictured as a dark-haired, dark-eyed, ruddy complexioned person, with streaks of war paint on his face. He is usually wearing fringed buckskin shirt and trousers, beaded moccasins and a large feather headdress or warbonnet. If he is going off to war, he wears only face and body paint, a breechclout, moccasins and one or two feathers in his hair (19).

The Indian woman usually seems to be wearing a buckskin dress with fringed sleeves and hem, which falls to just below the knee. Black hair is worn in one or two braids and is held in place by a beaded headband, in which is worn one feather. She also wears beads and soft moccasins (19).

Many of the paintings, sketches, and pictures found in museums and art galleries depict the Indian in ceremonial regalia, and this may have helped strengthen the stereotype. Just as our culture dictates a variety of garments for different status levels, professions and roles, so too did the Indian cultures (6).

For a few tribes these stereotypes would be fairly accurate, but one also finds the soft deerskin garments of the woodland Indians with their designs worked in soft, curving lines copied after the flowers,

trees and vines of the world they lived in. In the deserts of the Southwest, the Zuni and Navajo wove their cloth on "primitive" looms, using designs which incorporated the harsh, geometric lines they saw in the rocks and mountains around them.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gather information about the clothing practices of the Cherokee Indians from the time contact was established with the white man until the time of the 1838 removal, with emphasis on the early period. A historical sketch will be given so one may better understand how the Cherokee's culture may have influenced their clothing practices. The Cherokee tribe was chosen not only because the author has some Cherokee ancestors, but also because the Cherokees occupied a rather unique place among the Indians of the United States.

After the removal from the east, the capital of the Cherokee nation was established at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and the town is still the center of activities for several thousand members of the Cherokee tribe. Oklahoma is also rich in fine museums and art galleries, several of which were visited by the author in collecting information for this study.

*Worm* Perhaps this study will lead to others similar in nature which will help to preserve the rich heritage present in the Indian cultures of America. Although there has been a resurgence of interest in all aspects of Indian life, it seems inevitable that much that is most colorful and interesting will be lost as the older generations pass on. The progress of this country will eventually result in assimilation of all the Indian groups.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CHEROKEES

The Cherokee tribe of American Indians was originally found in the vast mountainous region of the Southern Allegheny Mountains in what is today southwest Virginia, western North Carolina and South Carolina, most of Kentucky and Tennessee, northern Georgia and the northeastern area of Alabama. At various times tribal land boundaries fluctuated, and by the time of the removal in 1838, the Cherokees had sold or ceded land in excess of 124,000 square miles to ten states (20).

About 1654, the Cherokees began having fairly regular encounters with the English who were venturing further and further west from the coastal areas on hunting and trading expeditions. Prior brief encounters with the white man had had little or no effect on the Cherokees for their traditions do not record any of these encounters (30).

In 1673 two men were sent out by a trader in Virginia to negotiate a trading path between the Cherokee town of Chota and the Virginia Colony. One of the men wrote in his diary that the Cherokees already possessed guns, which they had probably acquired on raids against the Spanish settlements in Florida (30).

The guns were important to the Cherokee men in pursuing their traditional wars with the Creeks and the Tuscaroras. Many of the wars they provoked themselves, and they were never slow to retaliate when they had been insulted or attacked by an enemy. That war was important to them

is evident by the fact that in the early 1700's the ratio of warriors among the general Cherokee population was one to three (9).

Historians noted that by the late 1600's the Cherokees were a prosperous people, who grew corn, beans, squash, melons, potatoes and tobacco. They were also hunters, fishers, traders and warriors. The women tended the fields, cared for the children, and did the weaving, tanning of hides, embroidery and beadwork, basketry and pottery making.

The eighteenth century brought a drastic change to the Cherokees' traditional way of life. Trading picked up between the Indians and the South Carolina traders. Staple items were coarse cloth, blankets, hoes, axes, brass, kettles, salt, hatchets, guns, knives, powder and bullets, flints, pipes and rum. The coarse cloth was gradually replacing buckskin as the material found in the men's breechclouts. The guns and ammunition were especially appreciated by the Cherokees, and with the rum, were the most popular trade items in 1715 (15).

In 1721, a meeting of thirty-seven Cherokee chiefs with Governor Nicholson, the first royal governor of the Charlestown colony, resulted in the establishment of a boundary line between the Cherokees' country and the South Carolina colony; the appointment of an English trade commissioner to supervise the traders' dealings with the Cherokees; and cession of the first land by the Cherokees to the English (30).

It was important to the English to maintain good trade relations with the Cherokees because of the growing influence of the French on some of the Southern tribes, including the Creeks and Choctaws. To further strengthen the bond between the Cherokees and the English, in 1730, an envoy of King George II accompanied seven Cherokees, two of whom were chiefs, to London to pay homage to the king.

The Cherokees became the rage of London and were received and entertained royally wherever they went. They wore English style clothes during most of their stay, but for their presentation to the royal family, one press notice gave the following description of their attire:

The Indian King had on a scarlet jacket, but all the rest were naked except an apron about their middle and a horse's tail hung down behind. Their faces, shoulders, etc., were painted and spotted with red, blue and green. They had bows in their hands and painted feathers in their heads (15).

After the group had spent several months in England, a treaty highly favorable to the English was signed. It provided for exclusive trade with the English; guaranteed white offenders in the Cherokee country a trial in English courts; the return to the colonies of runaway slaves; and bound the Cherokees to the English as allies in any future wars with France or other foreign powers (15).

An event described as "an unspeakable public calamity," an epidemic of smallpox, fell upon the Cherokees in 1738. It was a disease unknown to them, brought in on the slave ships, and they had no knowledge of how to treat it. An estimate of the Cherokee population in 1735 placed their number somewhere between sixteen and seventeen thousand. In a year's time, nearly half of their number was gone, including some who survived the smallpox but committed suicide when they saw their faces and bodies disfigured by the disease (21). The Cherokees tolerated pain in order to apply the body tattoos which they all wore during the early years of their contacts with the white men, but disfigurement as a result of disease was apparently intolerable to some of them.

A significant event occurred in 1740 when a settlement was established at Augusta, Georgia, with a new trading path into the Cherokee country (10). The same year, the Cherokees furnished one thousand

warriors to help the Georgians fight the Spaniards at St. Augustine.

The tribe also supplied one hundred warriors to aid the Virginia colonists during the French and Indian War, but the decade of 1750-1760 saw a series of incidents which led to hostility between the Virginians and the Cherokees, with atrocities being perpetrated by both sides. The Cherokees asked for peace in 1760, but the English military refused the request.

Two thousand English troops were sent to invade the Cherokee country in the spring of 1761. The troops burned fifteen of the Cherokees' Lower and Middle Towns and laid waste to some fifteen hundred acres of corn, beans, and peas. Peace was finally made in November of 1761 (30).

Following this treaty, John Stuart was appointed British superintendent of Indian affairs south of the Ohio River. Two other Scots, Alexander Cameron and John McDonald, were appointed as Deputy Commissioners to the Cherokees. With these three friends, the Cherokees had fifteen years of relative peace during which they struggled to understand and accept the white man's ways. But they were faced with an ever growing white population which gradually began encroaching further and further into the interior and claiming the Indian's land (30).

Superintendent Stuart often advised the Cherokees to cede land to England to avoid conflicts with the English emigrants. It is doubtful that many of these cessions were ever recognized as authentic by all the Cherokees, for to sell or cede any of the land, the chiefs had to have the permission of the whole Cherokee nation.

Some of the chiefs were beginning to despair over the sales of tribal lands. In March of 1775, the Cherokees gathered to negotiate with the Transylvania Company the largest land cession in frontier history.

Leading the opposition against the cession was a young chief, Dragging Canoe, who, in an eloquent speech, told the assembled council:

We had hoped that the white men would not be willing to travel beyond the mountains. Now that hope is gone. They have passed the mountains, and have settled upon Cherokee land. They wish to have that usurpation sanctioned by treaty. When that is gained, the same encroaching spirit will lead them upon other land of the Cherokees. New cessions will be asked. Finally the whole country, which the Cherokees and their fathers have so long occupied, will be demanded, and the remnant of Ani-Yunwiya, 'The Real People,' once so great and formidable, will be compelled to seek refuge in some distant wilderness. There they will be permitted to stay only a short while, until they again behold the advancing banners of the same greedy host. Not being able to point out any further retreat for the miserable Cherokees, the extinction of the whole race will be proclaimed. Should we not therefore run all risks, and incur all consequences, rather than submit to further laceration of our country: Such treaties may be all right for men who are too old to hunt or fight. As for me, I have my young warriors about me. We will have our lands. A-waninski, I have spoken (2).

Despite Dragging Canoe's opposition, the treaty was signed.

To further complicate matters, the colonists were preparing for war against the king. John Stuart was forced to flee to St. Augustine, and from there he tried to counsel the Cherokees through his brother, Henry Stuart. Stuart tried desperately to keep the Cherokees out of any war that developed between the rebels and the Tories. But Dragging Canoe was not to be pacified. For several weeks, war parties scalped, burned, stole and harrassed the colonists (30).

As Stuart feared, these acts brought severe retaliation by the colonists. Contingents of Carolinians and Virginians burned or laid waste to the Lower, Middle, Valley and Overhill Towns. Forewarned of the impending attack, the Overhill Towns were deserted, and so taken without a struggle. Reportedly the invaders found forty to fifty thousand bushels of corn and approximately fifty thousand bushels of potatoes (30).

From that time on, there were two Cherokee factions to deal with, because Dragging Canoe and his followers, subsequently called "Chickamaugans," became a law unto themselves. The conservative element paid dearly for Dragging Canoe's arrogance. Two treaties in 1777 took from the Cherokees 5,264,000 acres of valuable land (20).

Throughout the years of the Revolutionary War, Dragging Canoe and his Chickamaugans continued their hit and run forays along the colonial frontier, only to have their villages and food stores destroyed in retaliation. Each time the Chickamaugans built new towns and continued their raids.

Finally, on November 18, 1785, numbers of Cherokees gathered at Hopewell, South Carolina, where they negotiated their first peace treaty with the United States of America. They were informed of the change of sovereignty that had taken place as a result of the Revolutionary War, and were informed that Congress wanted nothing from the Cherokees, but was willing to listen to their grievances and to see that justice was done concerning them.

It soon became apparent that the Congress was not capable of dealing with the conflicts arising over the encroachment onto Cherokee land by white settlers, and the Cherokees' affairs worsened. The Georgia legislature, on its own initiative, disposed of 3,500,000 acres of land south of the Tennessee River to a Tennessee land company. Dragging Canoe's forces attacked the whites who began settling in the area between 1788 and 1791.

In the summer of 1791 President George Washington summoned the Cherokees to a treaty council at White's Fort (now Knoxville). Twelve hundred Cherokees and forty chiefs were present at the negotiations, and

the treaty proved to be a boon to both the Cherokees and the frontiersmen. In part, the treaty gave the United States exclusive rights in regulating trade with the Cherokees; it defined more definite boundaries; it forbade whites hunting in the Indian lands; it designated by whom persons involved in crimes would be punished; and it provided for people to live among the Cherokees and teach them husbandry and other occupations which would help lead them toward a new way of life (30).

As early as 1789, observers felt that the Cherokees had progressed to the point of being able to absorb the white man's culture. Some of the Cherokees were becoming herdsmen and businessmen. In addition to the necessities of life, many families were beginning to raise small amounts of cotton. Large looms were being brought into the nation, and some women were weaving a coarse cotton cloth which they used in their homes and as a trade item (20). The men and women were gradually adopting other ways of the whites. The men used an imported fabric called Limbourg (25) almost exclusively for their breechclouts, and some were beginning to wear English-made shirts. The women were using a trade cloth called "Stroud" for their skirts and were beginning to wear short "waistcoats" of calico and printed linen (25).

Other forces continued to work against the Cherokees, and Dragging Canoe's prediction would eventually be fulfilled. The growing population of the eastern states needed room for expansion. In the southeast, agriculture was beginning a spectacular growth that would continue until the Civil War. "The cause was not to be found in the subsistence needs of the growing nation, but in improved mechanical devices for handling and processing raw cotton." (9) Cotton exports jumped from 200,000 pounds annually in 1791 to 40,000,000 pounds annually in 1803, and that

was only the beginning (9).

The state of Georgia did more to bring about the removal of the Indians to the west than any other state or individual. The first lands settled by the Georgia colonists were largely the poorer lands of the coastal plain, and these were regarded of little value for agriculture. The colonists looked with covetous eyes toward the Creek and Cherokee settlements further inland, where the soil was dark and rich.

For a number of years following the treaty of Hopewell in 1785 and the final subduing of the Chickamaugans by force in 1794, the Cherokees settled into a period of great significance to them. In 1796, Benjamin Hawkins was appointed "Principal Temporary Agent for the Southern Indians." It was his job to travel through the Cherokee country and report on conditions there.

Throughout the Cherokee territory, Hawkins noticed the mixed bloods, although there were fewer of them in the mountain settlements. Many of these families had completely adopted the white man's ways. They lived in large, well furnished homes with many outbuildings for the animals and storehouses for the foodstuffs. Their children attended schools in the settlements, which were usually mission schools of some protestant denomination. The influence of the children may have hastened acceptance of some new ways, especially in changing clothing practices.

. . . women were persuaded by mission schooled daughters to accept the voluminous skirts prescribed by the missionary. They had less success with their fathers. The well-to-do might reserve store clothes for great occasions, but the cut and color of white men's pantaloons and waistcoats were too rigid and too drab to appeal to their fluid taste. Long after the womenfolk had learned to please the missionaries, the men clung to their old hunting breeches and homespun blankets draped in classic fashion, over one shoulder and under the other . . . , the men fancied lengths of flowered calico, which they wound around their heads as turbans (23).



The older children often went away to colleges in the northeast, and these youngsters usually made a strong favorable impression on their associates (16).

The beginning of the nineteenth century appeared to hold promise, for the Cherokees continued to flourish. Following the counsel of Rev. Gideon Blackburn, who had established one of the first mission schools, the Cherokee council decided to reorganize its government somewhat on the lines of the United States government. The council adopted a constitution and provided for legislative and judicial powers, and it passed laws for the good of the nation (30).

Various means were still being used by the United States government to pressure the Cherokees into ceding more land. During the Adams' administration land was taken as payment for overdue debts with trading companies or government operated concerns within the nation. This manner of settling their debts irritated the Cherokees, not only because it decreased their land holdings, but because the goods sold to them through the government factory were often damaged or of low quality. The Cherokees asked Presidents Adams and Jefferson to discontinue the factory and permit them to buy their supplies from traders as they had done in the early days, but the presidents refused.

Bribery of the chiefs was a technique employed to gain land. The Indian agents sometimes had a hand in arranging land cessions quietly. Since it was against tribal law to sell land without the National Council's consent, some of those who did so faced death--the punishment for breaking the unwritten but sacred old law (2).

In 1802, the Jefferson administration had made a pact with Georgia in which the state was to cede her western lands to the United States

(for public domain) and receive in payment some \$1,250,000, with a guarantee that the United States would "extinguish" at its own expense, "for the use of Georgia, as early as the same can be peaceably obtained upon reasonable terms, the Indian title to the lands lying within the limits of that state" (15). This pact was the prod which goaded Georgia to try and remove the Indians to the west.

The cultural advancement of the eastern Cherokees was dealt a severe blow in 1813-14, when the United States insisted that they take up arms against the warring Creeks. The war with the Creeks ended in 1814, and the results of the land cession treaty displeased Major General Andrew Jackson, who had led the troops, for it recognized Cherokee claims on some of the land within the Creek boundaries. Jackson was ever afterward an enemy of the Cherokee people and set out to undo the treaty made in 1814 as soon as he could. In 1816, he accomplished it by bribing eight Cherokee chiefs, who agreed to cede the lands to the United States.

As early as 1817, Jackson, Joseph McMinn, and John Coffee were broaching the idea of removal to the Cherokees, suggesting that they exchange their old lands in the east for new lands in the west where they could do as they wished.

Finally the Cherokee National Council appointed a thirteen-member committee to safeguard their nation against future land cessions made without the consent of a full council of chiefs. But the action was too late in coming. In early 1817, Jackson had bribed fifteen chiefs from Arkansas to cede land to the United States in return for the land already settled by 3,700 Cherokee migrants in the Arkansas River country, and to cede their remaining land in the east for lands beyond the Mississippi (30).

When the committee appointed by the Cherokee National Council arrived in Washington to protest the treaty, they were informed that arrangements had already been made to transport the emigrants west of the Mississippi. According to the treaty, each male emigrant would be entitled to receive a blanket, a rifle, a brass kettle and lead. Reportedly, there were some 3,500 Cherokees ready to emigrate.

A terrific effort was made by the Cherokee leaders at this time to push forward a progressive plan for furthering education and acceptance of the Christian religion among their people. The tribal government was altered to more closely resemble that of the United States. The leaders hoped the government would arrange a compromise with Georgia, so that the Cherokees would not lose any more of their ancestral lands.

Between 1819 and 1827 the Cherokees made phenomenal advancement. Elias Boudinot, speaking to a church group in Philadelphia in 1826, reported:

It is a matter of surprise to me, and must be to all those who are properly acquainted with the condition of the aborigines of the country, that the Cherokees have advanced so far and so rapidly in civilization. But there are yet powerful obstacles, both within and without, to be surmounted in the march of improvement. . . . In defiance, however, of these obstacles, the Cherokees have improved and are rapidly improving. . . . At this time there are 22,000 cattle; 7,600 horses; 46,000 swine; 2,500 sheep, 762 looms; 1,488 spinning wheels; 172 wagons; 2,948 plows; 10 sawmills; 31 grist mills; 62 blacksmith shops; 8 cotton machines; 18 schools; 18 ferries; and a number of public roads. In one district there were, last winter, upward to 1,000 volumes of good books. . . . Most of the schools are under the care and tuition of Christian missionaries, of different denominations (16).

Sequoyah had devised his alphabet in 1821, and "on account of the remarkable adaptation of the syllabary to the language, it was only necessary to learn the characters to be able to read at once" (18). Within a period of a few months, most of the nation became literate, and

the nation was now planning to publish a newspaper called "The Cherokee Phoenix," with Boudinot as editor (16).

In 1827 the people adopted a written constitution proclaiming themselves "a sovereign and independent nation." It provided for a principal officer called the "chief," a bicameral legislature, a supreme court, and a code of laws (16).

Despite their hopes that progress would enable them to stay on their lands, progress seemed to be the very thing that strengthened Georgia's determination to effect the removal of the Cherokees as soon as possible.

. . . Denouncing the Cherokees as savages, Georgia abandoned both dignity and ethics and through her government, press and courts began, in 1820, a vicious attack upon the Cherokees that was to continue for eighteen years, or until the Cherokees' final removal west of the Mississippi in 1838-39 (30).

Another reason that Georgia may have fought so hard for removal was proposed by a young Cherokee by the name of David Brown in a letter to the Family Visitor at Richmond in 1825. He wrote:

The natives carry on considerable trade with the adjoining states; and some of them export cotton, in boats, down the Tennessee to the Mississippi, and down that river to New Orleans. . . . Cotton and woolen cloths are manufactured here; blankets, of various dimensions. . . . Almost every family in the nation grows cotton for its own consumption. . . . Nearly all the merchants in the nation are active Cherokees. . . . The population is rapidly increasing; in the year 1819 [the population had been estimated at] 10,000 souls. An actual census taken in 1825 showed, native citizens, 13,563; white men married into the nation, 147; white women married into the nation, 73; African slaves, 1,277. . . . If we judge the future by the past, to what number will the Cherokee population swell in 1856?

White men in the nation enjoy all the immunities and privileges of the Cherokee people, except that they are not eligible to public office. In the above computation of the present year, you perceive that there are some African slaves; they have been from time to time, brought in and sold by the white men; they are, however, generally well treated, and they much prefer living in the nation to a residence in the United States. There is hardly any intermixture of Cherokee and African blood. The presumption is, that the Cherokee will,

at no distant day, cooperate with the humane efforts of those who are liberating and sending this proscribed race to the land of their fathers (16).

Not the growing prosperity of the Cherokees, their adoption of civilized manners of living or their increasing population, but the possibility that the Cherokees might be contemplating the freeing of the slaves must have set many Georgians to thinking that the time had come to take action.

Georgia's insistence on a settlement of the 1802 pact had not been acted on because of the hesitancy of the Monroe and Adams' administrations. The hesitancy ended with the election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828. In his first annual address to Congress in 1829, he announced his intention to initiate and propel through Congress by the following spring, a bill providing for the removal of Southeastern Indians to lands west of the Mississippi.

Encouraged by Jackson's attitude, the Georgia legislature passed a series of laws that seemed outrageous to the Cherokees. These laws provided for the confiscation by Georgia of a large section of Cherokee land; the nullification of Cherokee laws within this confiscated area; the prohibition of further meetings of the Cherokee Legislative Council and all other Cherokee assemblies, within the limits of Georgia; and the arrest and imprisonment of Cherokees who influenced fellow tribesmen to reject emigration west. The laws also declared contracts between Indians and whites to be null and void unless witnessed by two whites; made it illegal for an Indian to testify against a white man in Georgia courts; and forbade the Cherokees to dig for gold in the Cherokees' newly discovered gold fields near and in the area of present day Dahlonega and Dalton, Georgia (30).

The Cherokee leaders, even before Jackson took office, had been convinced that unity was the only thing that would hold them together in the face of the threat of removal. They felt this even more deeply in 1830 when the Choctaws, betrayed by three of their chiefs, signed a removal treaty. The Chickasaws signed one on October 20, 1832; the Creeks on March 24, 1832, and the Seminoles on May 9, 1832 (30). Only the Cherokees fought to retain their independence, but in spite of advice of 626 emigrants, who had left in April, to "remain where you are" because of the perils of the trip west, some of the leaders were weakening in their resolve.

A faction soon emerged which was favorable to the removal. Sometime between 1832 and 1835 a secret alliance was made by the Treaty Party with the Jackson-Georgia "removal machine," which resulted in the "final removal of the Cherokee Nation by a fraudulent treaty signed at New Echota on December 29, 1835, by less than one hundred Cherokees (30)." The United States Senate, by a single vote, ratified it, and on May 23, 1836, President Jackson proclaimed its validity. The ratification set the deadline for the final removal for May 23, 1838.

Some three thousand Cherokees joined those already in the west during the next two years, while Chief John Ross worked unceasingly to halt the removal. But finally, in early 1838, the army began rounding up the Cherokees and placing them in stockades in preparation for the forcible removal that followed in the late fall and early winter of 1839.

In 1835, in the states of Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, and Tennessee, the Cherokee Nation totaled 18,335--15,542 Cherokees, 1,592 slaves, and 201 intermarried whites (20). Of that number some four thousand died--either in the stockades or on "the trail of tears."

For three hundred years there had been intercourse between Indians and whites. They had traded. They had made presents to each other. They had profited from their contacts. So long as they were not in direct competition for a piece of earth, they were able to live together. But once they were in conflict, the Indians never had more than one choice: either they gave way, or they were destroyed (16).

## CHAPTER III

### CLOTHING MATERIALS AND THEIR USAGE

Before discussing the clothing customs in detail, a little further background information about the Cherokees as people will be given. Physical descriptions of the Cherokees are readily available, and surprisingly, most of them are in agreement. The Cherokees, both men and women, were always referred to as being of middle to tall height (21, 28, 30, 8, 25). The body build was described as thin, delicate and slender in both male and female and the extremities were rather small.

The man is also described as having been tall and lank, athletic and sinewy. His lips were thin, his cheek bones high, his hair straight and dark, his beard scanty, and his eyes dark. Gilbert (8) notes that the ancient Cherokees wore beards, but these were discarded with the coming of the white man in order to distinguish between them.

The Cherokee women are variously described as "tall, slender, erect and of a delicate frame; their features formed with perfect symmetry, their countenance cheerful and friendly, and they move with a becoming grace and dignity" (25); and "the young women are often beautiful, and the women in general, are mild, amiable, modest and industrious" (21).

The Cherokees' complexions are listed as cinnamon brown (21), light yellow and burnt coffee (8), "bright. . . . of olive cast," (25) of olive color (28), and "much of the colour of the orange that's painted for a Sign to your Toy shops especially after it's a little dirtied black" (30).



As far as the Indian stereotype is concerned, the Cherokees fit the dark-haired, dark-eyed picture, but as will be seen later, both their hairdos and clothes were quite different from the stereotyped picture.

### Clothing Materials

A variety of materials were on hand for the Cherokees to use in making the garments they wore. These materials were of both plant and animal origin, with more animal materials being used, probably because they were the most abundant.

The Cherokees used buffalo, bear, deer, and probably some opossum, otter, beaver, and panther skins (6, 21). Feathers were used in various ways. Porcupine quills were used for decorative purposes.

The southeastern cultural area (including the states in the southeastern quadrant of the United States) was one of only three areas in North America where large garments of woven wool or hair were found. The most common animal fiber in use in the late 1600's was buffalo hair, although opossum hair was used to some extent. These "robes" were woven in rectangular shapes of different sizes. In addition to the robes, small articles, such as bands worn around the head, neck, waist, arms, and legs, were woven of the hair fibers (6).

The Cherokee women made turkey feather blankets from the neck and breast feathers. They twisted the inner ends of the feathers very tightly into a strong double strand of hemp, or the inner bark of the mulberry tree. The fibers were twisted to form a sort of netting on the base side, and the work was done from the bottom of the blanket upward. The feathers were long and shiny, therefore, the blankets were not only warm and water repellent, but decorative as well. Some of the more

elaborate feather blankets had various designs worked into them. This was accomplished by using a variety of colors and types of feathers from other birds and fowls (10).

Porcupine quills were used as a means of decorating hide garments. The quills were dyed a variety of colors and were sewed onto buckskin with deer sinews. They were also woven into bands which could be attached and removed from costumes as a unit (6).

The most prevalent plant fiber was bast or inner bark. The majority of it came from the mulberry tree, but some also was taken from the slippery elm (10). Fabrics of this fiber were mistaken for cotton by the Spaniards because of its light color. Unwoven grasses, rushes, nettles, and mosses were also used for clothing by the women. The grasses and rushes were used to make a grass skirt similar to those worn today by Polynesian women. The mosses and some types of leaves were attached temporarily to belts and used that way (6).

### Weaving

Woven fabrics were not as important to the Cherokees as they were to some other tribes because hides were so readily available to them. But the Cherokees were doing some weaving when they began to have contact with the whites. The materials used were both animal and vegetable fibers. They used simple looms of the vertical type (10).

They did not weave piece goods to be cut and sewed. Instead, each garment or part of a garment was woven as a separate unit, and in a variety of sizes. Most of the woven garments used by the Cherokees until the middle 1700's were of the mantle, shawl, or cloak type (10). Their weaving was usually rather coarse in appearance, because the yarns they

used were large.

Some of the garments were made with a free hanging warp, so the method of weaving was that of twining the yarns together, and working from the top of the garment to the bottom. This method would usually leave a fringe across the bottom of the garment.

Holmes (10) quotes Adair as saying that the Cherokees and other southeastern Indians made very handsome carpets, and it can be assumed that their techniques for weaving garments were much the same. Adair's description is quoted here.

They have a wild hemp that grows about six feet high, in open, rich, level lands, and which usually ripens in July: it is plenty on our frontier settlements. When it is fit for use, they pull, steep, peel, and beat it; and the old women spin it off the distaffs, with wooden machines, having some clay on the middle of them, to hasten the motion. When the coarse thread is prepared, they put it into a frame about six feet square, and instead of a shuttle, they thrust through the thread with a long cane, having a large string through the web, which they shift at every second course of the thread. When they have thus finished their arduous labour, they paint each side of the carpet with such figures, of various colours, as their fruitful imaginations devise; particularly the images of those birds and beasts they are acquainted with; and likewise of themselves, acting in their social, and martial stations. There is that due proportion and so much wild variety in the design, that would really strike a curious eye with pleasure and admiration.

#### Dressing of Skins

The process used for dressing skins or hides apparently varied only in small details throughout the eastern area of North America. Swanton (25) gives several descriptions of dressing hides, and ends with this general procedure:

The skin was first separated from the flesh by means of sharp stones, and in later times with knives and hatchets. Then it was hung on a framework of poles to dry, and afterward taken down and soaked in water for about two days. Then

it was put back in the frame and scraped on the outside so as to make it smooth, the implement used being either a knife or a two-handled scraper like a drawshave. . . . Then the skin was again allowed to dry. After that, they put water and dried deer brains into a pot and heated the mixture without letting it come to a boil. The skin was immersed, the liquid allowed to soak up into it and it was then squeezed out again, the process being repeated many times, for perhaps an hour. It was again stretched on the frame to dry and was then found to be soft. Next, they scooped a hole in the ground, built a fire in it, and put corncobs upon this so that a thick smoke was produced with little flame. The hide was fastened down over this pit with the outer surface down and left until it was smoked yellow. They then procured red oak bark, boiled it for some time in water, and allowed it to cool. Into this the deerskin was plunged and allowed to remain for perhaps a day, after which it was taken out and hung up for a final drying.

The skins were sometimes dressed with the hair remaining on one side, and these were treated exactly the same way. In some cases where animal brains were not available, ground corn was used instead. The Indians were able to obtain a variety of colors in their buckskins. The red oak bark produced a yellowish-red skin, and wild peach bark gave a red color. Other colors reported include white, gold, and black (25).

Both the tanning and the weaving processes, particularly the latter, were done largely by the women, for the men felt that such work was beneath their station (10).

### Designs

The American Indians used design in many ways, and the Cherokees were no exception. They decorated their pottery and their baskets, as well as their blankets, robes, clothing, and bodies. In some instances, they decorated the inside walls of their homes with gaily colored paintings of birds, animals and flowers (30).

Many of the designs used by the Cherokees were geometric in nature as illustrated by Speck (22) in Figure 1. These geometric designs were incorporated into porcupine quill embroidery. This type of embroidery was used on the moccasins, belts, pouches, and bags. Speck (22) states that none of the designs seem to have any symbolic interpretation. They are very much like the designs found in use by many of the other tribes.

The designs shown in Figures 2 and 3 (22) recovered from pottery sherds, and presumably also used in painting, are curvilinear in nature, characterized by curves, scrolls, and coils. These designs were painted on buckskin robes with vegetable dyes, and sometimes painted or embroidered on fabric with sinews or plant fibers (10).

The designs in Figure 4 found on the shell gorgets, or breast ornaments, of the early and prehistoric Cherokees, seem to be limited to certain subjects as cited by Covarrubias (3). These include woodpeckers, other birds, spiders, rattlesnakes, scalloped circles, human faces and figures with a strong Mexican character (5).

Information on Cherokee designs is limited. Decorative art was used in the ways mentioned here, but it never reached the development among the Cherokees that it did with other less war-like tribes.

#### Burial Practices

The Cherokees apparently buried their dead with a great many of their possessions. Thomas (26) describes the artifacts found in one tomb as follows:

. . . Under the head of this skeleton was a large engraved shell gorget. . . . Around the neck were a number of large-sized shell beads, probably the remains of a necklace; at the sides of the head, near the ears, five elongate copper beads, or rather small cylinders, varying in length from one and a

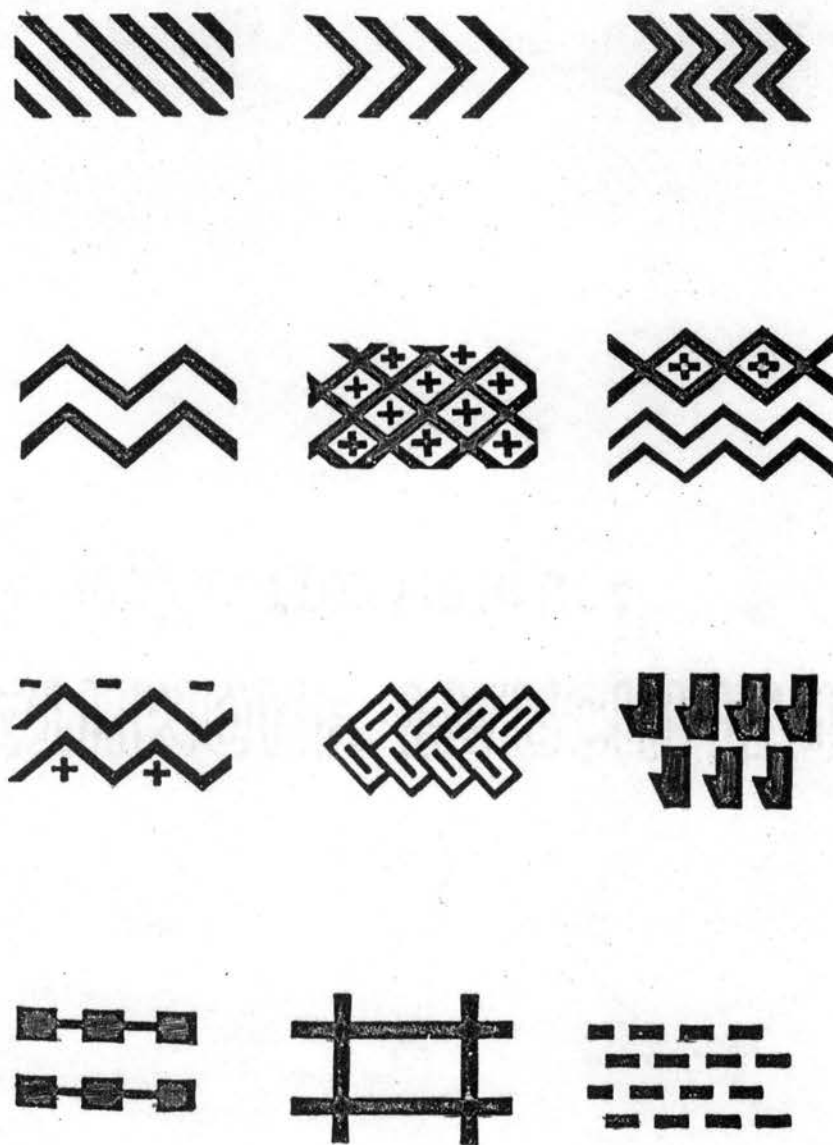


Figure 1. Some Motifs Used in Cherokee Basketry and Beadwork

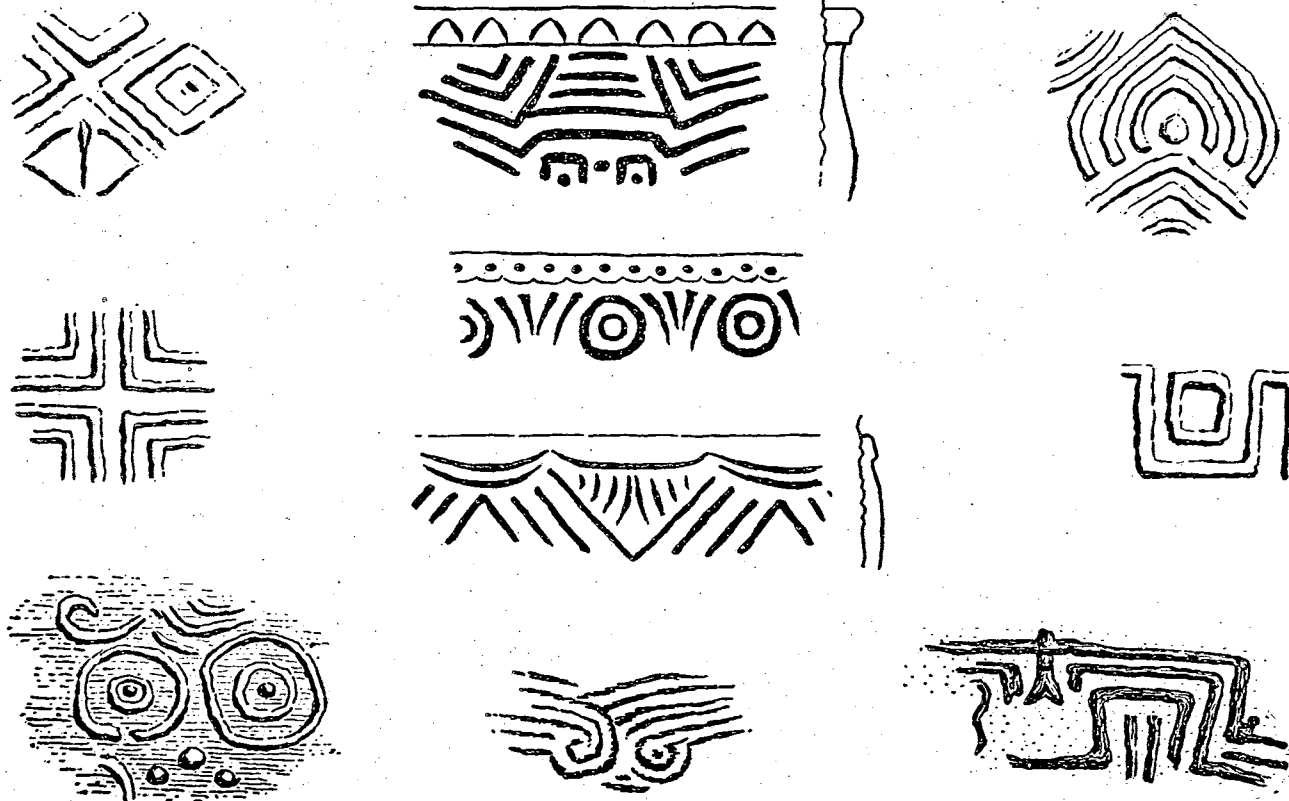


Figure 2. Motifs Used in Cherokee Pottery and Painting

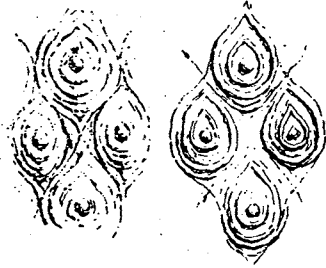
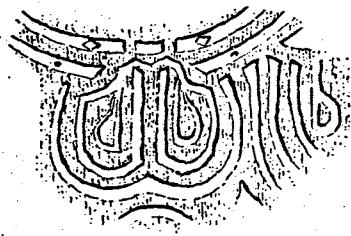
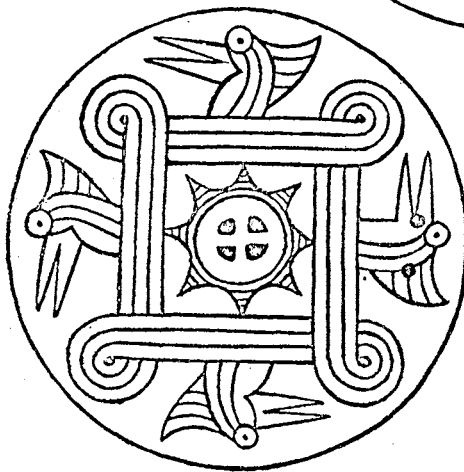
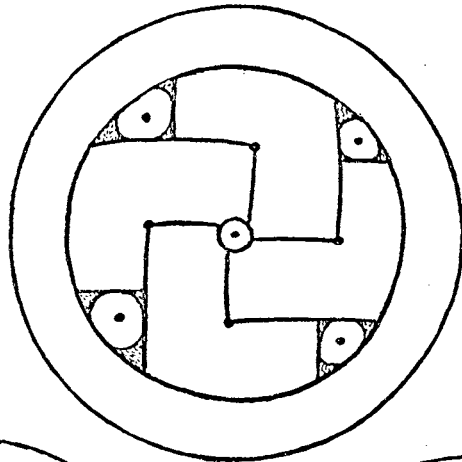


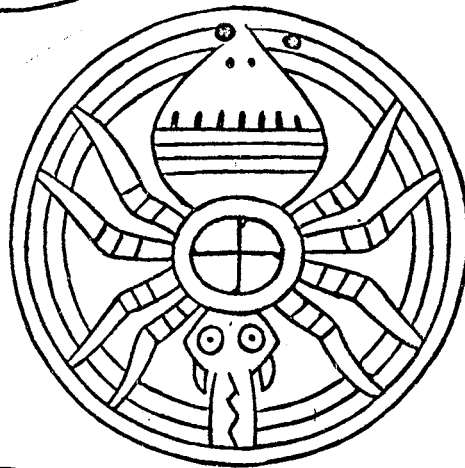
Figure 3. Other Motifs Used in Cherokee Pottery and Painting



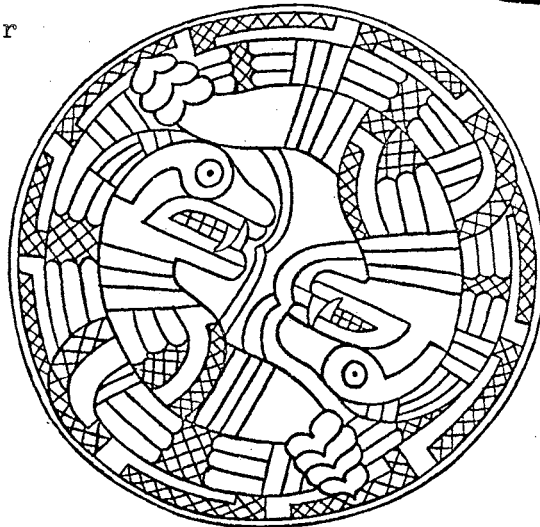
Swastika



Woodpecker



Spider



Rattlesnake

Figure 4. Motifs from Shell Gorgets Found in the Area  
Inhabited by the Cherokees

This is copyrighted--used by permission from the author.

half to four inches, part of the leather thong on which the smaller ones were strung yet remaining in them. These beads were made of thin copper cut into strips, and then rolled up so as to bring the edges together on one side in a straight line. The plate out of which they were made was as smooth and even as though it had been rolled. Under the breast of the same skeleton was also a piece of copper. . . . About each wrist were the remains of a bracelet composed of alternate beads of copper and shell.

Smith (21) writes of Adair, in the middle 1700's, witnessing a chief's burial in his best and finest apparel, with all his valued and most serviceable possessions beside him.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CLOTHING CUSTOMS

It should be remembered, in referring to the Cherokees' early encounters with the white men, that both cultural and geographic influences were present. The climate in the southeastern United States is fairly mild, with warm, humid summers, and relatively easy winters. Therefore, the heavy type of garments worn by the Eskimos and other Northern Indians was unnecessary. Because of the protection offered by the forests, the Cherokees did not need the hard-soled moccasins nor the more covered-up garments adopted by some Southwestern Indians as a protection against the sun's glare and the desert's floor.

Any of the materials which were available to them and which could be adapted to clothing were used, including the tree bark, shells, animal pelts, bird feathers, and porcupine quills previously mentioned. Gradually these items were replaced by manufactured trade goods, such as fabric, beads, and ribbons. Even where earlier practices were retained, adaptations were made. The shell gorgets were replaced by silver ornaments, but the silver ornaments were shaped like the shell ornaments. Like many other Indian groups, they adopted those things from the whites that they liked or found a use for, and ignored those they did not care for.

Before discussing some of the clothing practices in more detail, some general comments can be made. Any differences in the ornaments worn

by men and women were confined to small details. Men more often wore metal and shell gorgets, as well as headdresses of dyed hair. The men also used paint and feathers more than the women did (25).

It was in their clothing practices that the Cherokees really deviated from the Indian stereotype. In the total group of North American Indians, the Cherokees could be described as moderate in their use of clothing. They wore more clothes than some tribes, but less than most groups. Their garments were not cut and sewn to fit, as some of the northern Indians' garments were. The men usually wore only a breechclout and the women wore only a skirt. Moccasins were worn infrequently, although women of higher status wore moccasins more often than women of lower status (6).

#### Men's Clothing

The breechclout was the one article of dress worn constantly by all adult Cherokee males. Swanton (25) says that:

It was the first to be put on and the last to be laid aside, and when we read of an Indian stripping himself naked for war or the ball game, we may confidently assume, even when it is not specifically stated, that this particular article was excepted.

Originally, the breechclouts were made of deerskin. After contacts with the whites became regular, deerskin was gradually replaced by an imported fabric called "Limbourg." The breechclout is described as usually being about twelve to eighteen inches wide and a yard or so long, and was held in place with a belt fastened around the waist. The ends hung down in both front and back, giving the appearance of two aprons (6). In some cases, the ends of the breechclout were decorated with quill or sinew embroidery or with fringe formed by slashing the ends of

the breechclout (25).

The belts used to hold the breechclout in place, were probably no more than strips of hide originally, but gradually came to be very much prized as ornaments (13). Some of them were woven sashes (10). Others were braided of fiber or yarn with beads incorporated into the design, and were sometimes several yards long and could be wrapped around the body many times (13). Quill embroidery was also used to enhance the belt's appearance (6).

When traveling, men usually wore full-length buckskin leggings which were attached to their belts (6). Garters, made to match the belt were sometimes tied over the leggings below the knees, and sometimes worn over the bare leg only (13).

The men wore untailed robes or mantles over their shoulders during the winter, or on formal occasions. These were the robes made of furs or hides, either of a whole buffalo hide, or a patchworked piece of several smaller animal hides. The feather robes, or those woven of bark fiber and decorated with embroidery or painting were also used on ceremonial occasions. The robes might be worn to cover both shoulders, but usually they were worn under the left arm and knotted on the right shoulder (6). These robes were also called "match coats."

Several sources (7, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21) make reference to the Cherokee "hunting shirt." Prior to the coming of the white man shirts were not worn by the Cherokee men (The old people informed Timberlake [28] that before they had access to the white man's goods, "they had but little dress, except a bit of skin about their middles, mockasons, a mantle of buffalo skin for the winter, and a lighter one of feathers for the summer."). Kilpatrick (13) describes it as a buckskin shirt usually

deeply fringed that was worn wrapped tightly around and folded over the chest and fastened with a belt around the waist. Timberlake (28) notes that by the time of his visit in 1761-62, the men were beginning to wear shirts of English manufacture.

As trade goods became more available, some of the men adopted the use of a turban-like wrap for the head. This was usually fashioned of flowered calico (23). Previously, little or no headgear was worn by the men (8).

In games, as in war, the men ordinarily did strip down to the breechclout and moccasins, so that they would not be hindered by any unnecessary items.

Generally, the men's garb was gaudier than the women's. On ceremonial occasions costume ranged from near nakedness (for war and game ceremonials) to elaborate regalia (for the Friendship and Corn dances) (15). A chief, in performing a ritual dance, might be clothed in a gold-dyed buckskin shirt and leggings with a matching golden feather headdress (30).

It probably took the Cherokee men longer to accept trousers than any other clothing item. They had a great aversion to trousers which they felt restrained free action. Even until the time of the removal, many of the men wore trousers only when they were engaging in the white man's business.

#### Women's Clothing

Although the same things are commonly alike used or disused by males and females; yet they distinguish their sexes in as exact a manner as any civilized nation (21).

The Cherokee women's typical garment was quite similar to the man's breechclout. It was a wrap-around skirt which reached from their waist to their knees. It was usually made of buckskin, woven inner bark, or woven bison hair (6). In a few instances the skirt was made of grasses or mosses. In the case of the buckskin skirts, to make use of the smaller hides, or pieces of hides, the skirts were sometimes laced together at the side using strips of buckskin. Other times, the pieces would be sewed together with bone needles or deer sinews (21). The skirts were sometimes fringed and decorated, either with paint or embroidery, just as the men's breechclouts were. The decoration was placed on the sides and bottom of the wrap-around skirt. Quill or sinew embroidery was used in a border design placed just above the fringe. The skirts fastened about the waist and were drawn up with an inserted cord or looped over a belt (10).

The women usually went naked above the waist, at least until they began to have regular contact with the whites. Then they acquiesced somewhat to the influence of the whites, by sometimes using a "short waistcoat" (30) or a toga-like garment (29) which was tied in the same manner as the men's robes. Kilpatrick (13) describes a short jacket "fastened in front with silver broaches."

Woodward (30) quotes William Bartram as saying that Cherokee maidens, when picking strawberries, wore little or nothing, "disclosing their beauties to the fluttering breeze, and bathing their limbs in the cool, flitting streams."

Bartram also related that when these same maidens were performing in the friendship dance at the Town House, they were dressed in chaste robes of white buckskin which were totally unlike their habitual dress.

The white robes consisted of short skirts, with buskins reaching to the midcalf of the leg, and short jackets secured with silver broaches exposing several inches of midriff (30).

The ceremonial dress of one woman chief (the women chiefs were called "Beloved Women," and enjoyed great prestige among their people) was described as "a knee-length skirt woven from feathers and edged at the bottom with down plucked from the breast of a white swan" (30).

The women occasionally wore buckskin leggings and when they did, they came only to the knee and were held in place by a garter just below the knee (6).

Like the men, the women wore the fur, feather or woven robes when the weather or the occasion demanded it (6).

Bartram traveled among the Cherokees in the late 1700's. In 1792, he notes that some of the women were adopting the short waistcoats, and that these waistcoats were made of calico, printed linen, or fine cloth (25). The buckskin skirts were being replaced by an imported fabric, "Stroud" cloth.

It wasn't until the Cherokees began sending their children to the mission schools that the Cherokee women seemed to accept the fashions of the day as their own. Then they did accept them more fully than the Cherokee men. The women in the more readily accessible areas were also faster in adopting changes than the women who lived in the more mountainous regions.

#### Children's Clothing

The young children seldom wore any clothes at all and were allowed to do more or less as they pleased. Female children, usually upon



reaching the age of ten, began wearing garments similar to those their mothers wore (30). A youth frequently went unclad until the age of fourteen or fifteen (30, 25), although Swanton (25) believes there was probably some kind of rudimentary breechclout worn prior to the attainment of puberty.

Smith (21) notes an interesting practice--that of having the male child sleep under a panther skin so the animal's strength, cunning and agility would pass to the child.

Once the children began attending the mission schools, and came under the influence of the missionaries, they began wearing English style clothing and were instrumental in persuading their parents to adopt the same types of garments.

#### Footwear

According to Driver (6), there were as many different types of moccasins as there were tribes to wear them. They were basically of two styles: the soft-soled, which was made from a single and continuous piece of buckskin for both the sole and the upper; and the hard-soled consisting of a buckskin upper sewed fast to a heavier and stiffer piece of hide for the sole. He also noted that where the cut of the moccasin was not distinctive, the decoration, whether of quill or fiber embroidery, usually indicated a particular tribal style.

The Cherokees, when they were not going barefoot, wore the soft-soled moccasin. They were worn alone or in combination with the leggings or buskins.

Gilbert (8) and Malone (15) mention cloth boots, but give no description of them, nor was any information on them found in general

references on Indian clothing.

The women's buskins (30) were mentioned previously in connection with their ceremonial dress. They were a type of legging which laced from the bottom to the top, instead of being held in place by a garter.

The men's moccasins were frequently made of beaver skin because of its suppleness (21), and along with the breechclout the moccasins were one of the last items to be given up for the white man's boots or shoes, and that was never completely accomplished.

#### Headgear and Hairstyles

The Cherokees did not habitually wear any sort of headgear, but they frequently used other types of ornamentation. However, chiefs or priests would sometimes wear distinctive headdresses that indicated their authority (6).

Most authors comment on the unusually long, black and coarse hair of the Cherokee men and women. It is sometimes finer and lighter in the children, having red or brown tones (8).

Timberlake (28) describes the man's usual hairstyle:

The hair of their head is shaved, tho' many of the old people have it plucked out by the roots, except a patch on the hinder part of the head, about twice the bigness of a crown-piece, which is ornamented with beads, feathers, wampum, stained deers hair, and such like baubles.

Most other references (6, 8, 13) agree with this description.

Gilbert (8) also mentions that in more recent times, the hair has been allowed to grow long, and been confined in a turban. Feathers have always been favored decorations for the hair.

Driver (6) mentions a wiglike ruff of animal hair that was popular among southeastern Indians and Swanton (25) describes the Cherokee deer's

hair "crown" as a wig that was sometimes worn.

Swanton (25) quotes both Timberlake and Bartram on hairstyles, and there is quite a difference in the description given by Bartram:

The men shave their head, leaving a narrow crest or comb, beginning at the crown of the head, where it is about two inches broad and about the same height, and stands frized upright; but this crest tending backwards, gradually widens, covering the hinder part of the head and back of the neck; the lank hair behind is ornamented with pendant silver quills, and then joined or articulate silver plates; and usually the middle fascicle of hair, being by far the longest, is wrapped in a large quill of silver, or the joint of a small reed, curiously sculptured and painted, the hair continuing through it terminates in a tail or tassel.

John Haywood describes the Cherokees' hairdressing in wartime:

When going to war their hair is combed and annointed with bear's grease and the red root, Sanguinaria canadensis, and they adorn it with feathers of various beautiful colors, besides copper and iron rings, and sometimes wampum or peak in the ears; and they paint their faces all over as red as vermilion, making a circle of black about one eye and another circle of black about the other (14).

Timberlake also gives the most complete description of the women's hairstyle:

The women wear the hair of their head, which is so long that it generally reaches to the middle of their legs, and sometimes to the ground, club'd, and ornamented with ribbons of various colours (28).

Kilpatrick (13) says:

Their hair, they combed smooth and close, then folded into a club at the back of the head, and tied very tight with a piece of dried eel-skin, which was said to make the hair grow long.

Except the hair of the head and the eyebrows, all the other body hair of both males and females was either plucked with tweezers made of clam shells (6), or shaved with a sharp scraper.

In later times, most men began allowing a full head of hair to grow, and seldom used feathers or headdresses except on ceremonial occasions.

The women continued to dress their hair in the traditional manner, as this was not much different from the hairdos worn by the white women.

### Body Paint and Tattooing

Painting in a wide variety of color and design was used over most of the body, most often by the men. Body paint was used particularly in preparing for war and ball games, and was part of a man's make-up on all official or semi-official occasions. Red was the color used most often. Swanton (25) says the color was obtained by heating ochrous earth, while Haywood (14) mentions the plant Sanguinaria canadensis as the source.

Black was the color used most after red, perhaps because it was used extensively in mourning. A wide variety of other colors were available, including yellow, blue, and russet (6).

What the women lacked in body paint, they made up for in tattooing, which was very elaborate. The men were also tattooed (6).

To apply the tattoos, their skin was pricked with some kind of a heated, sharp object, and then soot (6), gunpowder (8), or dye (25) was rubbed into the wounds. Once the wounds were healed, these tattoos were permanent. The designs are described variously as elaborate (25), "very pretty figures" (28), and for the men "it recorded their valorous deeds in this symbolism" (6).

Swanton (25) offers Bartram's description of tattooing of the Creeks and Cherokees as one of the best:

Some of the warriors have the skin of the breast, and muscular parts of the body, very curiously inscribed, or adorned, with hieroglyphick scrolls, flowers, figures of animals, stars, crescents, and the sun in the centre of the breast. This painting of the flesh, I understand, is

performed in their youth, by pricking the skin with a needle, until the blood starts, and rubbing in a bluish tint which is as permanent as their life.

Eventually the practice of tattooing was discarded, and like many of their other practices, body paint was used only on ceremonial occasions or for the games.

### Jewelry and Ornaments

People the world over use jewelry or ornaments of some kind, if it is no more than feathers or leaves. The Cherokees used beads, gorgets, bracelets and armbands, earrings, and nose ornaments (25).

The beads worn by the early Cherokees were not the Indian bead of today. They were hand made, either of bone, small stones, shells, seeds and nuts, or metal (25). The making of these beads was tedious and took many hours. They were used in various ways: strung as necklaces or bracelets, used as earrings, or used in decorating the buckskin or fabric mantles.

The shells which were used in making jewelry were the conch shell, Busycon perversum (20), and shells of the Marginella and Olivella species (25). These shells were obtained in trade with the coastal tribes.

The conch shell was the one used for the manufacture of the gorgets. In 1700, Lawson (20) states:

They oftentimes make of this shell (a certain large sea shell) a sort of gorget, which they wear about their neck in a string, so it hangs on their collar, whereon is sometimes engraven a cross or some odd sort of figure which comes next in their fancy.

Both men and women pierced the ears and wore ear ornaments of shiny stone, pieces of shell, or feathers. All of these items were eventually

replaced by metal (6).

The men were also given to wearing nose ornaments, of shell, semi-precious stones, and later of metal. Another practice of the Cherokee men was the wearing of an ear ornament. The ear lobes were split, and either labrets were inserted to stretch the opening, or larger earrings of different types were used to keep the slits from growing shut (21).

On ceremonial occasions, women wore small turtle shells containing pebbles and bunches of deer hooves on their legs to produce a rhythmic rattle when dancing. Several of the turtle shells were attached to buckskin leggings, and the women would wear one of these on each leg.

Adair commented on the men's love of ornaments:

From the time we supplied them with our European ornaments they have used brass and silver earrings and finger rings; the young warriors now frequently fasten bell-buttons or pieces of tinkling Brass to their moccasins (20).

As the Cherokees took on more and more aspects of the white man's culture, some of the men gave up wearing their ornaments completely except for ceremonial occasions, while others chose to wear them just as they always had.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of the Cherokee Indians' clothing practices and the changes that occurred from the time the Cherokees began having sustained and prolonged contact with the white men, about 1654, until the time of the removal in 1838. An historical sketch gives background information on why some of these changes in their clothing practices may have occurred.

In 1654, the Cherokees were a prosperous tribe, with a well-established way of life. The major occupations of the men were war and hunting. The women did most of the field work, cared for the children and their homes, did the weaving, most of the tanning of hides, and made the baskets and pottery needed for cooking and storage. The women employed various techniques--weaving, braiding, embroidery, beadwork, and painting--in the making of their garments, but the decoration of garments never attained the significance with the Cherokees that it did with other less warlike tribes.

As contact with the white man increased, there were gradual changes in the Cherokees' clothing practices. First, imported woven fabrics replaced the traditional buckskin in the breechclout and skirt. By the middle 1700's, the men had adopted English-style shirts, and the women were beginning to wear short waistcoats of various fabrics. As these trade goods became more accessible, weaving and decorating of garments

died out as general practices and were carried on by only a small number of the women.

The late 1700's found the men using fabrics for turbans and buying trade blankets to replace the match coats. Game was becoming scarce, so hides were no longer plentiful. Missionaries, through the Cherokee children, influenced the women to adopt the long, voluminous dresses and skirts of current fashion of the period.

During their last fifteen years in the east, the Cherokee leaders made dramatic efforts to encourage the whole nation to adopt completely the white man's ways, as a means of staying in their ancestral lands. Many of the people did this, especially in the communities near white settlements, or where schools were located. Presumably, in the more remote areas of the nation the changes in clothing practices were not so complete, and various adaptations in styles were made to suit the individual.

A study of this type makes one aware of the fact that clothing is so much a part of our lives that it is taken for granted. Many authors do not even mention clothes when writing about the early Indians in North America, or they add only a little information as an afterthought.

cond  
at



#### REFERENCES CITED

- (1) Appleton, LeRoy H. Indian Art of the Americas. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.
- (2) Brown, John P. Old Frontiers. Kingsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers, Inc., 1938.
- (3) Covarrubias, Miguel. The Eagle, The Jaguar, and The Serpent. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954.
- (4) Corkran, David H. The Cherokee Frontier. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.
- (5) Douglas, Frederic H. and Rene D'Harnoncourt. Indian Art of the United States. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1941.
- (6) Driver, Harold E. Indians of North America. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961. Chapter 9.
- (7) Foreman, Carolyn Thomas. Cherokee Weaving and Basketry. Muskogee, Oklahoma: The Star Printery, 1948.
- (8) Gilbert, Wm. Harlan. The Eastern Cherokees. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133. Washington, 1943, pp. 169-415.
- (9) Hoffman, Walter James. The Menomini Indians. Bureau of American Ethnology, Fourteenth Annual Report. Part I. Washington, 1892-93, p. 33.
- (10) Holmes, Wm. Henry. Prehistoric Textile Art of Eastern United States. Bureau of American Ethnology, Thirteenth Annual Report. Washington, 1891-92, pp. 3-46.
- (11) Indians of North Carolina. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966.
- (12) Indians of Oklahoma. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965.
- (13) Kilpatrick, Jack Frederick. The Wahnenuhi Manuscript. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 196. Washington, 1966.
- (14) Mallery, Garrick. Picture Writing of the American Indians. Bureau of American Ethnology, Tenth Annual Report. Washington, 1888-89, p. 631.

- (15) Malone, Henry Thompson. Cherokees of the Old South. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1956.
- (16) McNickle, D'Arcy. They Came Here First. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1949.
- (17) McNickle, D'Arcy. The Indian Tribes of the United States. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- (18) Mooney, James. Myths of the Cherokees. Part II. Historical Sketch of the Cherokee. Bureau of American Ethnology, Nineteenth Annual Report. Washington, 1897-98, pp. 14-182.
- (19) Patterson, Patrick. Director, Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Personal Interview, July 21, 1967.
- (20) Royce, Charles. The Cherokee Nation of Indians. Bureau of American Ethnology, Fifth Annual Report. Washington, 1883-84.
- (21) Smith, W. R. L. The Story of the Cherokees. Cleveland, Tennessee: The Church of God Publishing House, 1928.
- (22) Speck, Frank G. Decorative Art and Basketry of the Cherokees. Milwaukee: The North American Press, 1920.
- (23) Starkey, Marion L. The Cherokee Nation. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946.
- (24) Starr, Emmett. History of the Cherokee Indians. Oklahoma City: The Warden Company, 1921.
- (25) Swanton, John R. The Indians of the Southeastern United States. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 137, Washington, 1946.
- (26) Thomas, Cyrus. The Cherokees in Pre-Columbian Times. New York: N. D. C. Hodges, 1890.
- (27) "Traditions of the Cherokees," Sturm's Statehood Magazine. December, 1905, pp. 93-96.
- (28) Williams, Samuel Cole. The Memoirs of Lieut. Henry Timberlake. Marietta, Georgia: Continental Book Company, 1948.
- (29) Wissler, Clark. The American Indian. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1957.
- (30) Woodward, Grace Steele. The Cherokees. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1963.

#### ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Cherokee Village, "A Living Museum," Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Five Civilized Tribes Museum, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Frank Phillips Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Philbrook Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

University of Tulsa Library, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

VITA

E. Geraldine Saunders

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Science

Thesis: A STUDY OF THE CHEROKEE INDIANS' CLOTHING PRACTICES AND  
HISTORY FOR THE PERIOD 1654 TO 1838

Major Field: Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Las Cruces, New Mexico, August 28, 1935,  
the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie G. Duncan.

Education: Graduated from Albuquerque High School, Albuquerque,  
New Mexico, May, 1953; attended New Mexico State University  
from 1953-1957, received the degree of Bachelor of Science  
in General Home Economics in September, 1963, completed  
requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma  
State University in May 1969.

Professional Experience: Home Economist for Public Service Company  
of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, July, 1962 to May,  
1963; Extension Home Economist for New Mexico State University,  
September 1963 to September 1966. Graduate Teaching Assistant  
in Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising, Oklahoma State  
University, September 1967 to June 1968.

Professional Organizations: New Mexico Association of Extension  
Home Economists, National Association of Extension Home  
Economists, American Home Economics Association, New Mexico  
Home Economics Association, American Association of University  
Women.