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CREEK NEGROES: A STUDY OF RACE RELATIONS
A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

Professor William B. Davis, head of the Department of Anthro-
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Negroes mingled with the American Indian Tribes of the southeast "to a degree that Whites usually fail to recognize"¹ and in the case of the Creek and Seminole Indians in particular the relation has been a continuous and close one.²

"Continuous first hand contact" between groups of individuals having different cultures frequently results in "subsequent changes in the original culture pattern of one or both groups."³ The broadest aim of the study just completed has been to discover the nature of these changes and the dynamics of the underlying processes which made them possible.

The process of acculturation, however, may in part depend upon the social pattern according to which the groups accommodate. Especially where an inequality of rank⁴ exists, there may be only partial presentation of the sum total of the donor culture or a deliberate selection of traits

¹ M. J. Herskovits, The American Negro, p. 3.

² F. W. Hodge, ed., Handbook of the American Indians, Vol. I, p. 913.

³ R. Redfield, et al, "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation, p. 149.

⁴ Rank is socially determined higher or lower value.

for presentation on the part of the superordinate group, as well as resistance on the part of the receiving group to culture items presented under forced acculturation.⁵

Therefore any adequate study of acculturation presupposes as a background the race relations between the groups involved. The specific aim of this monograph is an investigation of those race relations as they affected the Creek tribe of Indians and their Negro slaves, later the Creek Negro Freedmen.

Of the various slaveholding tribes, the Creeks were singled out for study because the accommodation patterns^{5a} which regulated their behavior towards slaves and Freedmen were at striking variance with the code of race relations among the other southeastern tribes similarly situated in respect of slaveholding.

The Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw tribes, all slave owners before the Civil War, refused to accept their Freedmen on an equal footing after emancipation, as the Creeks had done,⁶ and when, a generation after the Civil War, it was found that "Creek and Seminole Freedmen enjoy every right that is granted to the native born Indian," Choctaw and Cherokee Freedmen were restricted in their privileges and Chickasaw Freedmen held no civic status by virtue of their former connection with that tribe at all.⁷

⁵ R. Redfield, *et al*, op. cit., p. 151.

⁶ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, p. 283ff.

⁷ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1889, p. 205.

^{5a} Accomodation consists of fitting, adapting, or adjusting to external conditions.

The Creek Indians have had a long history of intimate contact with the Negro, both before and after tribal removal Westward. The adjustments between these ethnic groups have involved differences in social, economic, political, and legal status. They have undergone a constant evolution both external to and within the groups involved. An examination of these changes forms the historical aspect of our problem. A picture of contemporary race relations is then attempted, to indicate the end result of more than a century and a half of interplay of social forces.

Race relations comprises "all those situations in which some relatively stable equilibrium between competing races has been achieved and in which the resulting social order has become fixed in custom and tradition."⁸ This definition is adequate when applied to any given moment in time, but it must be understood that race relations, in common with all cultural phenomena, are not static and in the case of the Creek Indians and their Negroes, have always been in a particularly violent state of flux. Our problem, then, is to trace the shifting patterns of accommodation according to which Creek Indians and Negroes, for over a century and a half formed racial segments of a functioning major community.

Ethnographic reports on the Creek Indians are few in number. Accordingly, the first part of the study consisted in an intensive bibliographical search for references to Creek Indians and for race relations data in particular, in American diplomatic papers, texts of treaties, reports of Indian agents, missionaries, travellers, and traders' accounts,

⁸ R. E. Park, "The Nature of Race Relations," p. 4.

and old newspaper files.⁹ Next, the great mass of archival material covering the period of the existence of the Creek Nation West of the Mississippi¹⁰ was carefully checked for material relevant to race relations problems. Finally, a period of three months was spent in intensive study of the present day race relations between Negro descendants of the former Creek slaves living in Okfuskee County, Oklahoma, and the various groups with whom they came in contact. This represents the first ethnographic field work undertaken by the investigator.

Certain material bearing on this study which could not conveniently be made a part of the body of the thesis has been included in the form of appendices.

⁹Sigmund Sameth, "Bibliography on Creek Indians," unpublished MS. in files of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Oklahoma.

¹⁰Creek Tribal Records in the Indian Archives Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

CHAPTER II

THE CREEK INDIANS AS SLAVE-HOLDERS

"There was nothing that might properly be called a slave system among the Indians of the Southeast,"¹¹ yet "the Creeks were in the habit of increasing the size of their clans by adopting captives, especially young people of both sexes,"¹² and it is likely that such captives were treated menially. The Frenchman, Milfort, who lived in the Creek Nation from 1776 to 1796 noticed that in some towns young men were treated as servants until they had acquired a war title,¹³ and another observer concurs in stating that "young men" remain in a kind of disgrace, and are obliged to light pipes, bring wood, and help cook black drink for the warriors, and perform all the menial services of the public square until they shall have performed some warlike exploit that may procure them a war-name."¹⁴ It is unlikely that a military captive would be in a position to gain such an honor, at least for some

¹¹J. R. Swanton, Social Organization of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy, p. 79.

¹²Ibid., p. 167.

¹³A. S. Gatschet, A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians, p. 158.

¹⁴Caleb Swan, "Position and State of Manners in the Creek Nation," p. 280.

time following his captivity, and accordingly, the humiliating rank of uninitiated youths might be reserved for him. This may have been the status of the "numbers of slaves" which an anonymous French writer described as attending a Lower Creek chief, and who were "busy night and day cooking food for those going and coming to visit him."¹⁵

From Bartram we learn that the captives were "the tamest, the most abject creatures that we can possibly imagine; mild, peaceable, and tractable, they seem to have no will or power to act but as directed by their masters."¹⁶ The Chief of Cuscowilla, a Seminole town, was a great warrior, "having attending him as slaves many Yamasee captives taken by himself when young. They were dressed better than he and served and waited on him with signs of the most abject fear."¹⁷ The inferior garb of the master is explainable in terms of the scanty clothing worn by warriors of which another traveller has left us record.¹⁸

Bartram further records that "the slaves, both male and female, are permitted to marry among them: the children are free, and considered in every respect equal to themselves; but the parents continue in a state of slavery as long as they live."¹⁹ Later he contradicts his statement of the low social status accorded to slaves by stating, "I saw in every

¹⁵ J. R. Swanton, Early History of the Creek Indians, p. 225.

¹⁶ William Bartram, Travels, p. 164.

¹⁷ William Bartram, loc. cit.

¹⁸ James Adair, History of the American Indians, p. 398.

¹⁹ William Bartram, loc. cit.

town in the [Creek] Nation and Siminoles that I visited, more or less male captives, some extremely aged, who were free and in as good circumstances as their masters; and all slaves have their freedom when they marry, which is permitted and encouraged, when they and their offspring are in every way upon an equality with their conquerors."²⁰

This inconsistency may reflect a variation from town to town in modes of treating captives. A present day Creek informant²¹ cites differences in social ranking for certain of the towns themselves,²² which may well have determined the type and degree of participation of the captives in the captor's culture. A low ranking town in the Confederacy might have had less disdain for war captives who might swell its ranks.

It is not known at what exact date the Creeks acquired Negro slaves, although it has been suggested that they came into possession of runaway Negroes soon after the settlement of the country by Europeans and were "quick to perceive their value as servants and we soon find them buying and selling black slaves."²³ We have a record of a Negro being killed along with White men in an attack on a settlement in 1754²⁴ although

²⁰ Ibid., p. 183.

²¹ JB. For the names of informants designated by initial letters, see Appendix A.

²² "Tuckabatchee was the mother. Nobody can play ball with them. They respect them too much for anything like that. Abihka was the messengers. They sends and brings. Cowita was a kind of no count lower class of servants. They was roustabouts." Cf. J. R. Swanton, Social Organization of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy, p. 307.

²³ F. W. Hodge, ed., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 600.

²⁴ James Adair, op. cit., p. 278.

he may have died resisting capture. Not until 1798, however, is there absolute documentation of Negro slaveholding by the Creeks when Hawkins wrote: "Several of the Indians have negroes taken during the revolutionary war, and where they are there is more industry and better farms. These negroes were, many of them, given by agents of Great Britain to the Indians, in payment for their services, and they generally call themselves 'Kings Gifts'."²⁵

Horticulture among the Creeks was carried on in small individual garden patches worked by the women and also by means of large common plantations located as near to the town as possible and cultivated by the members of the town acting together under an appointed overseer.²⁶ The labor of tending the town plantations was largely in the hands of the men.²⁷ At Cuscowilla the common fields were about two miles distant from the town.²⁸ This plantation system was apparently an aboriginal phenomenon, and the "King's Gifts" found a ready place in the culture as agricultural laborers, along with Negro slaves from other sources.

Systematic raiding of colonial settlements by the Creeks may have been partly for the purpose of gaining slaves. Depredations by Indians in the state of Georgia in 1789 include 161 Whites killed or wounded, but only 30 Whites taken prisoner by the Indians, while 110

²⁵ Benjamin Hawkins, A Sketch of Creek County in 1788-1789, p.

66.

²⁶ J. R. Swanton, op. cit., p. 443.

²⁷ William Bartram, "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians," p. 31.

²⁸ William Bartram, Travels, p. 170.

Negroes were taken prisoner and only ten were killed.²⁹ About this time the Creeks had given up their custom of burning captives at the stake.³⁰

Torture among the Creeks was a vengeance rite. Only captured warriors who bore the characteristic body painting indicating the attainment of war honors had been burned at the stake,³¹ which leads us to believe that many, if not all, fugitive Negroes were spared, and adopted into tribal towns during the early years.

Negroes, however, were not as easily assimilated as the youths of native foemen, and "the persistence of this less assimilable body of foreigners and the example of slavery among the Whites had probably begun to affect the older institution [adoption] to some extent. At an earlier date the captives taken in war probably formed a less distinct class and were assimilated more rapidly."³²

In 1790 the United States of America made its first foreign treaty when an agreement was reached at New York with thirty-six delegates of the Creek Nation to end depredations in Georgia and arrange for the surrender of White and Negro prisoners. A secret stipulation of this treaty bound the Creeks to return fugitive slaves in Spanish Florida ~~and~~

²⁹ American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol. I, p. 77.

³⁰ William Bartram, "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians," p. 35.

³¹ James Adair, op. cit., pp. 388-391.

³² J. R. Swanton, op. cit., p. 167.

³³ J. R. Giddings, The Exiles of Florida, p. 23.

for which they were to get an annuity of \$1500 in perpetuity.³³

Shortly after the signing of the treaty of New York, the Creek chiefs sent a "talk" to the "beloved men of Georgia" which read, in part, "The negroes cause great dispute among us, in our land, with respect to returning them, as some are sold and bartered from one to the other, and the property paid for them consumed by those who got it, which makes it a difficult matter for us to obtain negroes under those circumstances; however, there is still some in our land which can be got at, and we, the chiefs, will do everything we can to return them."³⁴ That not many of the captured slaves were returned is shown by Georgia's continued claims for compensation for stolen Negro property. During this lawless period Negro slaves were also stolen by White adventurers from Indian masters.³⁵

H. R. Schoolcraft states categorically that "the Africans were not adopted as members of the tribes, but held as persons in servitude; and, by performing field-labor, enabled these tribes to pursue agriculture without themselves being compelled to engage in manual labor; thus producing the relation, continued to this day, of master and slave,"³⁶

Swan, whose report based on data collected in 1791 Schoolcraft included in his larger work, says: "It appears to have long been a maxim

³³J. R. Giddings, The Exiles of Florida, p. 23.

³⁴American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol. I, p. 603.

³⁵Caleb Swan, op. cit., p. 276.

³⁶H. R. Schoolcraft, Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes, Vol. VI, p. 332, footnote.

of their policy to give equal liberty and protection to tribes conquered by themselves as well as to those vanquished by others, although many individuals taken in war are slaves among them; and their children are called of the slave race, and cannot arrive at much honorary distinction in the country on that account."³⁷

It is probable that following the initial period of contact with the Negroes during which some of them were adopted according to the customs regulating treatment of war prisoners, another set of race relations crystallized ~~and~~ ^{These were based} on a new agrarian economy and instigated by the growing aristocracy of half-breed Scotch and Irish traders and adventurers such as Alexander McGillivray,³⁸ self-styled Emperor of the Creeks, who lived in the manner of the Southern gentry of the period, on a plantation at Little Tulsa cultivated by Negro field-labor.

McGillivray was supposed to possess about twenty-five slaves.³⁹ One half-breed trader in 1791 is mentioned as having not only "about forty valuable Negroes," but "some Indian slaves" as well.⁴⁰ Another half-breed interpreter and trader, Mr. Cornells, one of the chiefs of the Creek Nation, had a farm well fenced and plow cultivated by "nine negroes under good government."⁴¹ In the same town, Efau Hadjo, "one

³⁷ Caleb Swan, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

³⁸ J. W. Caughey, McGillivray of the Creeks, pp. 1-57.

³⁹ B. S. Parsons, "Census of the Principal Chiefs and Heads of Families of the Upper Creek Tribe of Indians."

⁴⁰ Caleb Swan, op. cit., p. 261.

⁴¹ Benjamin Hawkins, op. cit., p. 29.

of the great medal chiefs," and "one of the best informed men of the land," had "five black slaves and a stock of cattle and horses," but the observer adds that "they are of little use to him."⁴² At Talasee, "the head warrior of the town, Peter McQueen, a half-breed, is a snug trader, has a valuable property in negroes and stock, and begins to know their value."⁴³ At Hilibi the trader was Robert Grierson, an inter-married Scotsman. One of his "hirelings" was David Hay, a White man and his other employees were Indians and Negro slaves. According to the agent, Grierson "set up a manufactory of cotton cloth....he has raised a quantity for market but finds it more profitable to manufacture it.... He employs eleven hands, red, white, and black, in spinning and weaving, and the other part of his family in raising and preparing the cotton for them. His wife, an Indian woman, spins, and is fond of it; and he has a little daughter who spins well. He employs the Indian women to gather in the cotton from the fields, and has expectations of prevailing on them to take an active part in the spinning."⁴⁴

The violent acculturative influences which intermarried and half-breed traders as well as Indian agents of the American government brought to bear on Creek Indian life at the close of the eighteenth century is found in a description of the Eufaula town: **in Alabama:**

They have hogs and cattle and the range is a good one ... and they have begun to settle out for the benefit of their stock. This season some of the villagers have

⁴² Benjamin Hawkins, loc. cit.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

fenced their fields. They have some fine land on Hat-che-lus-te and several settlements there, but no fences.... On Woc-cau E-hoo-te, this year, 1799, the villages...have fenced their fields, and they have promised the agent to use the plow the next season. On Black Creek, Co-co-fix-ico has one hundred cattle and makes butter and cheese. John Townsend, the trader of the town is an honest Englishman, who has resided many years in the Nation and raised a numerous family...."⁴⁵

The new economic order was not without its catastrophic effects. Witness the picture of the disorganization of the McGillivray family after the General's death:

"Mrs. Durant, the oldest sister, has eight children. She is industrious but has no economy or management. In possession of fourteen working negroes, she seldom makes bread enough, and they live poorly. She can spin and weave and she is making some feeble efforts to obtain clothing for her family. The other sister, Sehoi, has about thirty negroes, is extravagant and heedless, neither spins nor weaves, and has no government of her family."⁴⁶

The War of 1812, in which the larger body of the Creeks were allies of the British brought renewed opportunities for the capture of Negro plunder, and many fugitive slaves are supposed to have taken refuge with the Creeks.⁴⁷ At the massacre of Ft. Mimms in 1813, where over five hundred Americans were slaughtered by Creek warriors, most of the Negroes were spared and made slaves.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁴⁷ B. G. Brawley, A Short History of the American Negro, p. 90.

⁴⁸ B. J. Lossing, Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, p. 754.

After the treaty of peace at Fort Jackson which supposedly ended hostilities of the Creek War, a party of Creeks, with the approbation of the United States Agent "determined to break up a settlement which has been some time forming among the Seminoles by runaway negroes..."⁴⁹ and to accomplish this, a party of some five hundred Indians, aided by an American gunboat, destroyed the "Negro Fort" at Appalachicola by firing a red hot cannon ball into the powder magazine and routing "nearly one thousand negroes who had taken refuge from their masters" as well as the party of recalcitrant Indians who remained hostile to the American government and who "were in the habit of plundering and committing depredations on all that came their way."⁵⁰ During the subsequent Seminole Wars, a detachment of Creek warriors fought with American troops and captured about ninety runaway Negroes in which seven hundred Indians claimed a share. The American government resolved the difficulty of dividing this booty by taking over the Negroes for public sale and paying into the Creek national funds the sum of \$8,000.⁵¹

The Upper Creeks had never given up the chase as a means of subsistence and during the last years prior to their removal to the West, they were bothered more and more by encroaching White settlers who cleared fields and erected fences.⁵² In 1828, the McIntosh faction or the Lower Creek

⁴⁹ Niles Register, 1816 (Vol. X), pp. 230-231.

⁵⁰ Niles Register, 1816 (Vol. XI), p. 14.

⁵¹ J..R. Giddings, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

⁵² U. S. Senate, Document No. 512, Vol. 3, pp. 463-465.

removed voluntarily to lands set apart for them West of the Mississippi. They were followed by other small parties of self-emigrants until the final forceable removal of Opothleyohola's band of Upper Creeks in 1836.⁵³

Creek holdings in Alabama were liquidated by United States government agents, who arranged for the sale of the reservations of land previously made to every head of family in the Creek Nation.

For the purpose of setting ~~aside~~ the reservations, a census had been made in 1832,⁵⁴ which gives the number of Negro slaves held in the combined Creek towns as only 902, and the total Indian population as 21,762. This enumeration has been carefully checked against other records, and the estimate of Indian population is thought to be substantially correct.⁵⁵ On the other hand, disinclination to admit ownership of Negro slaves in the face of Georgia's repeated claims that the Creeks harboured fugitives may have caused an error in the figure given for the Negroes. An unofficial observer notes that the Creek farms were extensive and well cultivated and that "the Indians, many of them, are working a large force of Negroes."⁵⁶

⁵³E. A. Hitchcock, A Traveller in Indian Territory, p. 119.

⁵⁴T. J. Abbott, "Census of the Principal Chiefs and Heads of Families of the Lower Creek Tribe of Indians."

B. S. Parsons, "Census of the Principal Chiefs and Heads of Families of the Upper Creek Tribe of Indians."

⁵⁵J. R. Swanton, Early History of the Creek Indians, p. 456.

⁵⁶David Holt to Maj. J. S. Hook, Washington, D. C., March 6, 1834, in Grant Foreman, "Copies of Manuscripts," Vol. V, p. 21.

Certainly, there were many Negroes among the Creeks who were not slaves. At the time the census was being made, B. S. Parsons, the agent for the Upper Creeks, advises the Secretary of War that "...there is a number of free black families that seem to be in every way identified with these people, and the only difference is the color." He then inquired whether these free Negroes should be entered in the census as heads of families entitled to reservations,⁵⁷ and he was instructed that "Free blacks, who have been admitted members of the Creek Nation, and are recognized as such by the tribe, if they have families are to be considered heads of families, and entitled to reserves of land under the second section of the Creek treaty."⁵⁸

A contemporary newspaper account,⁵⁹ describing an execution according to tribal law, shows none of the discrimination between Negro and Indian culprits, in either the trial or the method of execution, which we should expect to find if there had been a pronounced status difference.

It is noteworthy that the inquiry concerning the status of "free black families in every way identified with these people" comes from the agent for the Upper Creeks, in a communication dated Tuckabatchee, which was the leading town of the Upper Creeks. The Upper towns in general were less acculturated and the pattern of Negro slavery as practiced by the Whites affected them less than it did the Lower towns which had come

⁵⁷ U. S. Senate, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 498.

⁵⁸ U. S. Senate, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 946-947.

⁵⁹ Niles Register, 1828 (Vol. XXXIV), p. 379.

in contact with White colonists at an earlier date.⁶⁰ The agent for the Lower Creeks, T. J. Abbott, makes no mention in his entire correspondence of problems concerning free Negroes.

According to the 1832 census cited, Negroes of slave status were almost equally divided between the Upper and the Lower towns. During the last years prior to emigration West, it is probable that the demand for Negro slaves increased. In 1817 a cargo of ninety-five Negro slaves were transported direct from West Africa on the Spanish schooner Isabelita only to be captured by a cruiser under a piratical flag commanded by an American, who brought his booty within the borders of the then Creek Nation, for sale.⁶¹ It is unimportant that the slaves were subsequently seized by a United States officer and taken to Georgia. The interesting aspect of the incident is the intended disposition of the cargo. There must certainly have been a market demand for Negro slaves among the Creeks as well as a lesser risk of apprehension.

Creek Indians owned female Negroes⁶² perhaps for concubinage, or other domestic service. Two Indian children whose parents were dead, lived "in full possession and occupancy of the tenement in which they were born," in the care of "an old Negro women who belongs to the child-

⁶⁰The Upper Creeks resided on the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Alabama Rivers. The Lower Creeks were situated on the Chatahoochie and the Flint Rivers. J. R. Swanton, Early History of the Creek Indians, pp. 215-216. Cf. also V. W. Crane, "The Origin of the Name of the Creek Indians."

⁶¹H. T. Caterall, Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro, Vol. III, p. 11.

⁶²Ibid., Vol. III, pp 147.

ren."⁶³ Creeks who were eager to begin farming operations in the new Western Nation, exchanged their Eastern reservations for Negro field-

hands.⁶⁴ When Opothleyohola's band was removed from Alabama by a private contractor under military supervision, the agreement stipulated that there

be removed "occupants of the Creek Nation, ... to wit, men, women, and

children, with their slaves."⁶⁵ Stopping the wagons six or seven times a day to build fires so that the children would not freeze to death⁶⁶ the

last conservative body of Creek Indians began the "Trail of Tears" Westward.

The documentation of the Negro-Indian relations in the old Creek Nation east of the Mississippi is meagre and indicates only the broad outlines of the racial adjustments operative. Creek Indians came into contact with runaway slaves and other Negroes at an early date. Many, if not all, fugitive Negroes captured were spared and adopted into the tribal towns, especially in the Upper Nation. The development of a slave economy among the Lower Creeks was made possible by a pre-existing plantation system and stimulated by contact with White colonists. Half-breeds and inter-married White traders carried on farming and even manufacturing operations with Negro slave labor, yet the institution of Negro slavery was only incompletely integrated even in Lower Creek culture.

⁶³U. S. Senate, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 504.

⁶⁴H. T. Caterall, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 160.

⁶⁵Alabama Emigrating Company, "Articles of Agreement for Removal of Creek Indians," p. 416.

CHAPTER III

SLAVEHOLDING WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

In the Creek Nation West of the Mississippi, the division between Lower and Upper Creeks persisted. Those who had emigrated in 1828, under the leadership of McIntosh had settled mostly on the Arkansas River and seemed "more advanced in intelligence, seem less wild, not to say ferocious"⁶⁶ than the Upper Creeks who resided in the vicinity of the Canadian River and composed the emigrants of 1836-37.⁶⁷

The agent writes:

The Lower Towns, from their greater proximity and intercourse with the whites, exhibit a much greater advance in civilization and manner than their brethren of the Upper Towns. The old custom of settling together compactly and cultivating town fields has been altogether abandoned and they are no longer visible in this portion of the nation; the people are settled out promiscuously throughout the country; many of the farms and residences would do credit to the States.⁶⁸

The Upper Towns, however, still kept up their common fields.

One such field in the Big Canadian bottoms was reported to be "eight miles long by three miles wide, which is a solid mass of growing corn."

⁶⁶E. A. Hitchcock, op. cit., p. 111.

⁶⁷Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1844, p. 472.

⁶⁸Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1845, p. 514.

A contemporary newspaper in Arkansas reports that the Upper Towns were so bitterly opposed to intercourse with the Whites that it was forbidden to adopt trousers under penalty of lashes,⁷⁰

A Western traveller among the Creeks tells us that "most of the labor among the wealthier classes ... is done by negro slaves; for they adopted substantially the Southern system of slavery," some individuals owning fifty slaves apiece.⁷¹ Another traveller reports that is in no

uncommon thing to see twenty or thirty slaves at work on a Creek plantation⁷² and Paddy Carr, interpreter and trader, was supposed to have owned eighty slaves.⁷³

In addition to male and female hands, there were female house slaves who did such tasks as running errands⁷⁴ or acting as "mammy" to Indian children.⁷⁵

The agricultural labors of the Creek Indians were notably successful, "some of them, the wealthy slaveholders particularly, raising large quantities of surplus for sale," and exporting corn annually "for shipment to Ireland and other foreign countries."⁷⁶

⁷⁰Grant Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes, pp. 185-190.

⁷¹Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, Pt. 2, p. 503.

⁷²George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the North American Indians, Vol. I, p. 122.

⁷³W. M. Bryson, "History of Creek Indians," pp. 432-433.

⁷⁴E. A. Hitchcock, op. cit., p. 148.

⁷⁵G. W. Grayson, op. cit., p. 37.

⁷⁶Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1847, pp. 886-887.

The existence of "the Southern system of slavery" among the "wealthier" Creek Indians has reference to the Lower Creeks. A prominent Principal Chief of the Creek Nation, in his memoirs notes that his father's slave, Wilson, was the main economic support for a family of seven members.⁷⁷ A contemporary newspaper tells that the Negroes of the Lower Creeks were expected to support themselves with food and clothing for which they were^h allowed every Saturday to attend their own patches and also from the time in July that the master's crop was laid by until the harvesting time in September."⁷⁸

Slaveholding, while profitable, was not by any means a common practice. As late as 1860 only 267 Creek Indians were listed as slaveholders with a combined ownership of 1,651 slaves. Two owners held ⁷⁹ seventy-five slaves apiece and ten owners held 433 slaves together. Except for a relatively few planters, only about one Creek Indian in a ¹⁰⁰ hundred owned any slaves at all, and the average holding was only four slaves. That more slaves were desired is shown by the fact that the Creeks were in the habit of purchasing Mexican children for that purpose, who were obtained by the Kickapoos and Shawnees from the Comanches.⁸⁰

It is not known with certainty how many free Negroes were in the

⁷⁷G. W. Grayson, op. cit., p. 61.

⁷⁸Grant Foreman, op. cit., p. 174.

⁷⁹Joseph Kennedy, Population of the United States Compiled from Returns of the Eighth Census, p. xv.

⁸⁰Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1851, p. 386.

Creek Nation before the Civil War. The fact that almost seven thousand¹⁰⁰⁰⁰ and names appear on the final Creek Freedmen rolls⁸¹ leads us to believe that their numbers equaled if not exceeded the number of enslaved Negroes. Their social status was particularly high. The opinion of one investigator is that "the Creeks had no aversion whatsoever to race mixture, and intermarriage between negroes and Indians was rather common. The half-breeds resulting from such marriages were accepted as bonafide members of the tribe by the Indians in the distribution of annuities, but not by the United States courts...."⁸²

A government inspector who toured the Creek Nation immediately following the Civil War expressed the view that even those Negroes held previously as slaves were really not slaves at all: "they were only ... voluntary slaves and hence always had a legal right to leave their masters and go anywhere....I am already satisfied that the true course for the government to pursue is to treat these negroes as part and parcel of the tribes to which they belong....These people have been born and raised together and there is no reason why they should be separated by any legal enactment."⁸³

Previous contact with White men on the part of most of the Creek Negroes gave them valuable bilingual ability. It was they who acted in most instances as the interpreters in the dealings between

⁸¹J. D. Benedict, Muskogee and Northeastern Oklahoma, Vol. I, p. 166.

⁸²A. H. Abel, The American Indian as Slaveholder and Se-
cessionist, p. 23.

⁸³A. H. Abel, The American Indian Under Reconstruction, p. 277ff.

full-blood Indians and Whites. In the jargon of the border they were called "linksters" thought to be a corruption of the word linguist, although in popular belief a linkster was a "link" between the Indians and Whites.⁸⁴ A ferry across the Arkansas River, for example, was operated by a Creek Indian whose Negro assistant served as translator and collected tolls from White men who used the ferry.⁸⁵ A merchant in Okemah⁸⁶ recalls his father's statement that "Indians always brought a nigger to the store to do the business and see that the cheating was always on their side."

A contemporary observer tells us that Seminole Negroes "had learned to speak the Indian language, which, together with a knowledge of English and intimacy with the habits of whites soon gave them an ascendancy when the slave becomes the master."⁸⁷ Another writer says that among the Cherokee of Indian Territory slavery was farcial rather than tragical. The negroes, far more intelligent than the masters, did much as they pleased, owning money, cattle and ponies; and as they made all the purchases for the family, often feathered their own nests."⁸⁸ It is probable that this situation prevailed to the same extent in the Creek Nation. We are told that Tulwa Tustunugge lived on the Canadian

⁸⁴J. H. Payne, "The Green Corn Dance," p. 175.

⁸⁵J. H. Beadle, The Undeveloped West, pp; 378-389.

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⁸⁷J. T. Sprague, Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War, p. 309.

⁸⁸A. D. Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi, p. 220.

River and owned many Negroes, although he "had only a small farm of forty to fifty acres,"⁸⁹ which could not possibly have furnished continuous employment to all the "slaves" who probably lived in easy indolence with their master. Among the Cherokee, at least, there was a prestige factor attached to slave ownership.⁹⁰

There were race distinctions in the Creek Nation. It is unthinkable that the rigid caste attitudes of the Whites did not infiltrate to some degree. Davy Grayson, for example, drove a wagon from the Old Creek Nation all the way to Fort Gibson and never received his allowance for self-emigration nor was he compensated for his losses and expenses on the journey. He tells that this treatment was because he had "colored blood in him" yet he could not reconcile it with the fact that Jim Boy who was also part Negro, was a chief.⁹¹

Free Negroes were the first Christian religious leaders among the Creeks as they also were among the Seminoles.⁹² There are many accounts of mixed Negro-Indian gatherings at which slaves predominated.⁹³ White traders tried to persuade the Creeks that the missionaries sought to abolish slavery by teaching the slaves they were entitled to their freedom, but the historian of the Baptist missions assures us that the

⁹⁰ R. C. Eaton, John Ross and the Cherokee Indians, p. 115.

⁹¹ E. A. Hitchcock, op. cit., p. 151.

⁹² Lawrence Foster, "Negro-Indian Relationship in the South-east," p. 66.

⁹³ E. A. Hitchcock, op. cit., p. 110.

A. W. Loomis, Scenes in the Indian Country, p. 110.

Isaac McCoy, History of the Baptist Indian Missions, pp. 453-54.

Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858, p. 146.

missionaries "had never meddled with the subject," and Mr. Rollins, a Baptist preacher had been so prudent on this point that he had refused to teach Negroes how to read although they entreated him to instruct them.⁹⁴ An unfortunate indiscretion on the part of a missionary during the first years of the Creek Nation in the West brought a warning from the Indian Agent at Ft. Gibson that it would be unsafe for missionaries to remain.⁹⁵ A great many of them left.

The report of the Creek Agent for 1843 shows aggressive attempts to instill race attitudes of the Whites:

For many years past there has been a decided opposition on the part of the chiefs to ministers of the gospel and missionaries, to public religious observances, and I may add, to education...., a necessary consequence of which was an increased degree of idleness, licentiousness, and immorality, measureably checked by the moral and religious tendencies of a very small portion of the nation, chiefly through the agency of negro preachers.... I soon perceived that religious ceremonies performed by ignorant negroes failed to command their respect as a mass, and suggested to the chiefs the propriety of discountenancing the exercise of religious rites by negroes excepting among those of their own color; represented to them that it was due to the sanctity of religion that it should not be intrusted entirely to ignorant persons and could never be rendered properly respected or diffused among their people urging upon them at the same time the propriety of encouraging among them the efforts of regular ministers and other teachers as the means most surely calculated to give them the most powerful impulse towards civilization and promote industry, happiness and proper ideas and opinions among their people. These efforts have not been entirely unsuccessful.⁹⁶

Homicide among the Creeks was punished by execution, but a traveler reported in 1840 that "If an Indian should murder a negro the law is

⁹⁴Isaac McCoy, op. cit., pp. 507-508.

⁹⁵Grant Foreman, Copies of Manuscripts, Vol. V, p. 334.

⁹⁶Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1843, pp. 423-424.

satisfied with the value of the negro being paid to the owner."⁹⁷ During the decade just before the Civil War⁹⁸ a rigorous slave code was adopted.

The slave code followed the style of the Black Laws of the Southern states by providing a double standard of penalties applying to Indians and to Negro slaves; forbidding miscegenation; stipulating rewards for the apprehension of runaway Negroes; requiring masters who intended to free their Negroes to remove them from the Creek Nation; forbidding slaves to possess property or weapons; curtailing civil privileges generally; and requiring all free Negroes to register and to choose masters before March, 1861.⁹⁹

Between the Creeks and the Seminoles relations were never cordial. At the close of a bitter campaign, the Florida Seminoles were defeated by combined American and Creek Indian troops and removed to the Creek Nation.¹⁰⁰ The Creek faction in power claimed ownership of Negroes who were in possession of the Seminoles,¹⁰¹ and also demanded that the Seminoles disarm their free Negroes, which they refused to do.¹⁰² The government had

⁹⁷ H. R. Schoolcraft, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 277.

⁹⁸ In this connection it is indicative that the Principal Chieftainship of the Creek Nation had fallen to Roly McIntosh, leader of the Lower Creek faction.

⁹⁹ Vide. Appendix B: The Creek Slave Code.

¹⁰⁰ J. T. Sprague, The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War.

¹⁰¹ H. R. Schoolcraft, op. cit.; Vol. VI, p. 534; Niles Register, 1843 (Vol. 64), p. 167.

¹⁰² Grant Foreman, "Copies of Manuscripts," Vol. VII, p. 168.

had attempted to settle the Seminoles on the Deep Fork of the Canadian River, but the Creeks would not allow them to remain in the country assigned to them since they feared the Seminoles in a body would not be "orderly neighbors" because of disputed Negro property. "These negroes, the Creeks allege ran away from them before and during the Florida War.... and are now with the Seminoles having accompanied different emigrating parties." ¹⁰³ In 1856, the Creeks and Seminoles signed a treaty whereby a portion of the Western Creek Nation was given over to the Seminoles exclusively. However, disputes over the boundary persisted until 1891 when the Creek National Council petitioned the Department of the Interior "to establish the Western boundary of the nation by placing on the same, metallic posts firmly set in the ground, one mile apart along the entire line." ¹⁰⁴

In summary, the factional split in the Creek Nation persisted in the new territory West of the Mississippi. The Lower Creeks, who were the first emigrants, settled on the Arkansas River bottoms, made steady progress in acculturating to White patterns, and during the decade just before the Civil War were in control of the National government. The Upper Creeks settled on the Canadian River bottoms and retained to a greater measure their aboriginal culture. Negro slavery on a sizeable scale was a prerogative of only the wealthiest Indians, many of them half-breeds. Only a small part of the Creek Indian population owned

¹⁰³ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1842, p. 451.

¹⁰⁴ Creek Tribal Records, Archive No. 30696.

slaves at all. Negroes were in an advantageous position in dealing with Whites because of their bilingualism. The high social status of free Negroes was jeopardized by aggressive attempts on the part of dominant Whites to instill the racial attitudes of the Deep South as part of the program on Indian acculturation. Just before the Civil War drastic slave laws were enacted by the National Council which aimed at the reenslavement of the entire, not inconsiderable, free Negro population. Because of disputed Negro property, relations with the Seminoles were strained.

¹⁰⁴ J. B. Moore, Social Organization of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy, p. 370.

¹⁰⁵ W. A. Starna, "Seminole," p. 104.

¹⁰⁶ J. B. Moore, "Chief Instructors," p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ J. B. Moore, loc. cit.

CHAPTER IV

THE CIVIL WAR AND AFTER

"As is well known, the Creeks split into two factions on the outbreak of the Civil War and became pretty thoroughly demoralized."¹⁰⁵ The cleavage followed roughly the old animosities of Upper and Lower Creek parties which had disagreed so violently on the question of removal. Sapulpa, a wealthy slave holder, joined the Confederate Army in which he served three years, rising to the rank of lieutenant. He loaned \$1000 in gold to the Confederates and received a note which is still held by the Sapulpa family.¹⁰⁶ Isparhecher, another prominent Creek, transferred his allegiance to the Union when the Confederate cause began to wane,¹⁰⁷ which is cited as a proof that the Civil War "was of no concern to the Indians. They ... usually fought where the supply of rations was the best."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ J. R. Swanton, Social Organization of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy, p. 330.

¹⁰⁶ W. A. Sapulpa, "Sapulpa," p. 331.

¹⁰⁷ J. B. Meserve, "Chief Isparhecher," p. 55.

¹⁰⁸ J. B. Meserve, loc. cit.

Yet the war was fought with great bitterness on both sides none the less. A few wealthy planters such as Sapulpa were trying vainly to safeguard economic interests. The mass of Creeks fought because the War was an opportunity for sparks of old rivalries engendered east of the Mississippi to flare up.¹⁰⁹

The heroic stand of Opothleyohola's loyal band of Upper Creeks who fled to Kansas and later fought in the Union Indian brigade has been recounted at length.¹¹⁰ Many of them owned "large numbers of slaves"¹¹¹ although it can be assumed that greater slaveholdings existed among wealthy Lower Creeks. ✓

After the Civil War a peace council was held at Fort Smith where the Southern Creeks agreed to the emancipation, but violently protested incorporating Negroes into the tribe.¹¹² ✓ Much is made of the fact that Harry Island, the interpreter at the Fort Smith treaties was a shrewd Creek Negro. A present day Indian informant says "the reason

¹⁰⁹ The Upper Creeks always represented the conservative opinion of the Confederacy. The Lower towns were prompter to accede to the White man's demands, as at the Indian Springs treaty of 1825, when lands in Georgia of the entire Creek Nation were given up by William McIntosh, Lower Creek chief, acting extra-legally and under bribe. Conflicting loyalties of the two Creek factions is seen in the following "talk" sent by the Governor of Georgia to the Upper Creek Chiefs on February 26, 1825. (In American State Papers: Indian Affairs, Vol. II, p. 763); "I hear bad things of you. You threaten McIntosh and his people because they listened to their father, the President, and ceded the lands to the Georgians. They acted like good and dutiful children. You opposed yourselves to the wishes of your great father who was doing the best for the interest of his red children, and would not sign the treaty....Now I tell you, take care and walk straight. McIntosh and his people are under my protection..." Subsequently, McIntosh was executed for treason by a party of Upper Creek warriors led by Opothleyohola.

¹¹⁰ Wiley Britton, The Union Indian Brigade in the Civil War.

¹¹¹ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1862, p. 139.

¹¹² A. H. Abel, The American Indian Under Reconstruction, p. 211.

the niggers got equalization was because they had a nigger interpreter who looked out for his own people,"¹¹³ and this interpretation has even gotten into print: "Harry was a sharp as tacks and made the most of his position. He got the government representative to put a clause in the treaty that resulted in the Creeks having to give each colored individual (former slave) and descendants equal shares of their land and money."¹¹⁴

Actually, equalization in Indian Territory was the plan of Secretary of the Interior Harlan, in order to solve the reconstruction problem in the easiest way. We find him instructing his commissioner as follows:

You will impress upon the Indians the justice of admitting the Freedmen to the enjoyment of all the rights of person and property without reference to their former condition... and that it would be especially gratifying to the government if these Freedmen should be admitted to an equal enjoyment of civil rights. With this in view you will explain to them that the Indians will rapidly augment their numbers and power.¹¹⁵

The treaty was signed on June 14, 1886, and provided that slavery should cease to exist and former Negro slaves, "shall have and enjoy all the rights and privileges of native citizens, including an equal interest in the soil and national funds, and the laws of the nation shall be generally binding upon and give equal protection to all such

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114 C. W. Turner, "Events Among the Muskogees During Sixty Years," p. 26.

115 A. H. Abel, op. cit., p. 276.

persons...."¹¹⁶ Several months previously the Commissioner had abolished by proclamation the slave codes of the respective Indian tribes who held slaves.¹¹⁷

After emancipation, a great council was held near Okmulgee and the Creeks reorganized their government and set up one modeled after that of the United States.¹¹⁸ One of the first acts of the council was to admit free Creek Negroes to tribal rolls. In 1896, Judge Adams, Chief Justice of the Creeks, ruled that the council had exercised unconstitutional powers, and this had the effect of striking 1781 Creek Negroes off the citizen rolls.¹¹⁹

In the national councils, the Negro Freedmen of the Creeks were represented politically by three or four towns,¹²⁰ which were admitted on an equal basis with the Indian towns after the Civil War.¹²¹ The Negro towns, however, lacked the entire squareground complex around which Creek

¹¹⁶ C. J. Kappler, ed., Laws and Treaties [Relating to] Indian Affairs, Vol. II, p. 932.

¹¹⁷ A. H. Abel, op. cit., p. 291.

¹¹⁸ J. R. Swanton, op. cit., p. 330.

¹¹⁹ The Daily Oklahoman, August 4, 1896, p. 4, col. 3.

¹²⁰ The Creeks distinguish between the sociological town affiliation and the geographical entity of the town itself. Originally towns consisted of a body of people having their own ceremonial square ground. They actually formed a little state. West of the Mississippi the geographical town was often broken up and scattered. The affiliation, however, persisted. There were about fifty such towns. J. R. Swanton, op. cit., p. 242 et seq.

¹²¹ F. G. Speck, Creek Indians of Taskigi Town, p. 104.

Indian ceremonial life centered.¹²² The three colored "towns" were actually settlements which extended along the river bottoms from which they took their names. There was an Arkansas "town", a Canadian "Town," and a North Fork "Town." It has been explained that these "towns" were really nothing more than election districts.¹²³

Arkansas Town had its greatest population concentration just North of the present location of Muskogee, at a town that was then known as Wybark. North Fork and Canadian Towns were north of the present location of Eufaula at a town then known as Fishertown. All of these towns gradually pushed upstream as farms were exhausted. Canadian Town soon came to have a new focal point, near the present location of Holdenville, then known as Perry Bruner's Settlement. The center of North Fork Town also moved Westward to the present location of Boynton, which was then known as Wellington. Negroes living along the Deep Fork of the Canadian River considered themselves members of the North Fork Town.

All of the towns sent delegates to both the houses of the Creek National Council. In 1890 the population of Arkansas Town was 2,058, Canadian town, 1,337, and North Fork, 833.¹²⁴

¹²²Ethnographic literature dealing with the Creek Freedmen is limited to half a dozen references of a few lines each. The material presented in this monograph, therefore, has been secured almost entirely from aged native informants. Where the informant is not specifically designated by means of initial letters appearing in a footnote, the statement represents a consensus. Informants are designated for all statements representing a typical or questionable beliefs. See Appendix A.

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¹²⁴From the "Dunn Roll," Ben Dwight, "Memorandum re. Creek Tribal Towns," p. 10.

Each of the towns was under the informal leadership of a Town King, who represented them in the Upper House of the Creek National Council. The last Town King of Arkansas Town was either Gabe Marsh or Eli Jacob; of Canadian Town, either Perry Bruner or Henry Reed; of North Fork Town, either Sugar George, Johnny Miles, or Silas Jefferson.

In addition to the three colored "towns" there was a "scattering of Freedmen who met and elected representatives with the North Fork settlement at Wellington."¹²⁵ There were apparently no Freedmen members enrolled in Creek tribal towns, with the exception of Taskigi Town, one mile North of the present town of Edna. Taskigi "was a bunch of half-breeds related on both sides so they hated to leave the colored and they hated to leave the Indians. That's why they settled Taskigi over near Deep Fork."¹²⁶ A recent survey by the Indian Office reveals "that this was originally a Creek town but the negroes predominated numerically and so the Indian members moved away."¹²⁷ A traveller in Indian Territory just after the Civil War tells that the Creek "agency" on the Arkansas was inhabited almost solely by Negroes with a continuous line of patches for ten miles along the river, and a population of a thousand Negroes to only a hundred Indians.¹²⁸

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Ben Dwight, op. cit., p. 49.

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J. H. Beadle, op. cit., p. 374.

Segregation of Freedmen and Indians after the Civil War undoubtedly existed, but it may largely have resulted from differences of economic interest rather than racial hostilities. War had laid waste farms and plantations and the Indians moved Westward to parts of the Creek Nation which had never been occupied. The Negroes, however, repopulated the river bottoms and within a few seasons had returned to their agricultural pursuits.¹²⁹ The following extract from letters of the Commissioner for Regulating Relations between the Freedmen in the Indian Territory and their Former Masters, seems to bear this out:

The freedmen are the most industrious, economical, and in many respects, the more intelligent of the population of the Indian Territory. They all desire to remain in that territory upon lands set apart for their own exclusive use. Most of these freedmen have ox-teams, and among them are blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, etc...The Creek nation look upon the freedmen as their equals in rights, and have, or are in favor of, incorporating them into their tribes, with all the rights and privileges of native Indians. The freedmen are the principal producers, and should in all cases touch either the Arkansas or Red river, so that the crops could be run out on flat-boats. The freedmen of the Seminole and the Creek tribes believe that the national laws and customs of their tribes are sufficient for their protection, while the freedmen of the other tribes all feel, and say they know, that there is no security or protection for them, either in person or property, without some power or government superior and above that of the Indian nations to which they belong. These views of the freedmen are, in my judgement, correct....I have the honor to report that the existing relations between the freedmen of the Indian Territory and their former masters are generally satisfactory. The rights of the freedmen are acknowledged by all; fair compensation for labor is paid; a fair proportion of crops to be raised on the old plantations is allowed; labor for freedmen to perform is abundant, and nearly all are self-supporting.¹³⁰

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Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, p. 283 ff.

After the Civil War, missionaries returned to the Creek Nation

and schools began to form. Caste lines appeared:

...the freedmen, particularly, are anxious that their children shall be educated. Hitherto the customs of the country have prevented their enjoying the benefits of the schools, but now that they are placed on an equality with their former masters, they are determined to profit by the position. Already in the districts that have been allotted them, schools have been formed at their own advance, anticipating the assistance of the government. They lack good teachers, and so far have, in many cases, been obliged to engage teachers of their own color, who, though working faithfully to the best of their ability, are still scarcely fit persons for the great work before them.¹³¹

The agent writes that Creek and Freedmen enjoy "every right that is granted to the native born Indian"¹³² including "the right of suffrage and all the rights of Indian citizens,"¹³³ yet the principal of racial segregation in schools was tacitly agreed upon. In 1890 this attitude received official cognizance in the civil laws of the Muskogee Nation, which provide for "fifty primary schools apportioned between the Indian and colored citizens in proportion to population."¹³⁴ Acts of council of the Creek Nation appropriating funds for charitable purposes specify in each instance an apportionment between Indians by blood and Creek Freedmen.¹³⁵ This situation may have been stimulated by increasing White contacts, including a great influx of registered and licensed traders, and also white intruders, many of them railroad construction laborers who had remained

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 319.

¹³² Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1889, p. 205.

¹³³ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, p. 132.

¹³⁴ Muskogee Nation, Constitution, p. 72.

¹³⁵ Creek Tribal Records, Archive No. 24586.

illegally in the Creek Nation.¹³⁶

An old Freedman woman born during slave days¹³⁷ recalls that after the Civil War while she was growing up in the Canadian Settlement, "we live right in amongst them, sometimes a nigger in one side of the house and an Indian in the other...we was next door neighbors...no Jim Crow then...we raise rice, peas, peanuts, potato then, and live good...not all the time chop, chop, chopping cotton like the fool niggers do now."

Ball play, because of its warfare simulations was always more than a purely recreational activity to the Creeks.¹³⁸ The colored towns did not have their own ball teams, yet Freedmen players of unusual ability often played on the teams of Indian towns. Many persons were enrolled as Freedmen who actually had one half Indian blood. This was because the

¹³⁶"Trades in the Creek Nation." This manuscript list, which was compiled probably for taxation purposes, is dated "1890" in faint pencil. It shows White men to be practicing the following taxable occupations: Shoe Maker, Wagon Yard, Telephone, Tombstones, Blacksmith, Abstractors, Banks, Barbershops, Boot Black Stand, Bakery, Bottling Works, Confectionery, Coal Dealer, Cotton Gin, Druggist, Dray, Dentist, Dress Maker, Electrical, Express, Hotel, Hack, Mfr. of Ice, Grist Mill, Gasoline Light Furnished, Insurance Agents, Watch Repairer, Lock Smith, Contractor, Hardware Merchant, Tailors, Tinshop, Pool Tables, Real Estate, Attorneys, Livery Barn, Lemonade Stand, Wagon Yard, Land and Loan, Farm and Loans, Laundry, Dry G. Mer., Grocery Mer., Stationery etc., Grain Hay and Potatoes, Hdw and Furniture, Racket Store, Saddlery and Harness, Lumber Merchant, Meat Market, Milinery, Printing Offices, Physicians, Pea Nut Vender, Photographers, Restaurants, Hydes, Pelts etc. Merchant.

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¹³⁸M. R. Haas, "The Creek Intertown Ball Game" MS.

children "followed the blood of the mother" and a child of a Negro woman and a full blood Creek Indian was listed on the Freedmen rolls. Such persons would usually play on the father's town team during the match ball games. Negroes were among the best ball players in the Creek Nation.

Other fields of ego satisfaction were open to the Freedmen, especially in political life at the National Capitol at Okmulgee. Many Freedmen recollect the days before the end of the Creek Nation (1906) when older friends and relatives were "law makers" in either the House of Kings or the House of Warriors and on a parity with full blood Creek Indians. This freedom in civic activity is reflected in the following newspaper item dated 1876: "Big Jeff" a darcy who weighs 300 pounds was a slave in the Creek country but is now Judge of the highest court in the Creek Nation."¹³⁹ Former Negro slaves also went into mercantile pursuits. In 1878 a Creek Freedman was operating a prosperous hostelry near Cane Creek. He is supposed to have catered "only to White and Indian travellers", but this may be a later interpolation by the author.¹⁴⁰

Towards the close of the century the Dawes Commission visited the Creek Nation to induce the tribe to allow the allotment of lands in severalty. They encountered such opposition to the extinguishment of tribal titles that in June 1898, Congress passed the Curtis Act which exercised the rights of control formerly held in abeyance and gave the Commission authority to allot the lands despite Indian sentiment against the measure.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Cherokee Advocate, May 6, 1897, p. 2, col. 7.

¹⁴⁰ A. M. Robertson, "The Creek Indian Council in Session," p. 895.

¹⁴¹ F. W. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 332-333.

The Freedmen, who had always inclined favorably towards the idea of allotment, since it fitted in naturally with small farming operations, were the first to register for allotments¹⁴² at the Commission offices. They selected their allotments mostly in the vicinity of Muskogee and the northeast portion of the Creek Nation.¹⁴³

White men, in order to retain control of their ranches and plantations, hauled wagonloads of Negroes and Indians to Muskogee, pitched tents across from the Commission headquarters, and supervised the selection of allotments in their own holdings which were later rented for 25¢ per acre. Many speculators bought up allotment deeds for a small sum knowing that it was illegal but counting on realizing profits from crops before having to relinquish the land.¹⁴⁴ Negro Freedmen from other states notably Texas, were also rushed into Muskogee by White men and "filed" for 160 acres apiece. One informant who was interviewed by the investigator, became a "Creek Freedman" in this manner and several other Negroes on the Creek Freedman rolls are known to have been placed there by White men.¹⁴⁵

In 1904 Congress passed an act which removed the restrictions which

¹⁴²The standard allotment was supposed to consist of 160 acres valued at \$6.50 per acre, but since poorer lands in the Creek Nation were appraised as low as 50¢ per acre, either additional acreage or a cash payment for the unclaimed balance was permitted. J. E. Dunn, Indian Territory, p. 76.

¹⁴³U. S. Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, Report for 1889, Map facing p. 63.

¹⁴⁴J. D. Benedict, op. cit., p. 162.

¹⁴⁵JW, Sam Lampkin, Paul Tabb, Silas Tabb, Davis Jackson, to mention but a few.

had formerly prevented Creek Freedmen from alienating their allotment holdings. Most of the Freedmen sold their land for small sums and squandered the money. It was not unusual to see a Negro who had never been able to own a \$50 pony drive down the streets in a new buggy with a team of horses.¹⁴⁶

A certain amount of outright fraud is supposed to have been practiced on ignorant Negroes, but a White lawyer in Okfuskee county indignantly denies this and insists that Freedman land was always secured through due process of law: "Forged deeds and fingerprint deeds are good stories but they are the bunk. If you wanted a Creek nigger's land you didn't do anything like that. You just showed him a few dollars cash money. He'd sell out and drink himself half to death for a week."¹⁴⁷

Dispossessed Freedmen, naturally, claim they have been always cheated, and feel bitter that discrimination was made in removing restrictions from Freedmen allotments and not from Indian allotments. One informant, learning that the investigator was writing a "history" of the Creek Freedmen, submitted a short essay on "How Freedmen lose They land" which he hoped would be published. It is reproduced elsewhere, not for the factual material it may contain, but as an index of the present day attitude.¹⁴⁸

It has been noted that separate schools were set up for Negro and Indian children in the Creek Nation after the Civil War. Separate

¹⁴⁶J. D. Benedict, op. cit., p. 165.

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¹⁴⁸See Appendix C.

churches also were established at the instigation of White missionaries. Some of the Indians who became Christians, however, were converted by freed Negro slaves.¹⁴⁹ Still, many of the Indians remained non-Christians. A frank acknowledgment of missionary aims is given in a statement by Rev. Leonard Worcester: "We trust the day is not far distant when...this people shall become a truly civilized and enlightened nation when the 'busk' the 'stamp dance' and the ball play shall be among the things of the past."¹⁵⁰ Leaders of the Creek National government who "had more white blood in them than they had Creek" tried to "turn the full-blood's heart away from the colored people."¹⁵¹ Chief Sam Checote even had the National Council confer the rights of citizenship on a limited number of White men "so that the nation might have the benefit of their superior knowledge in civilization and leadership."¹⁵²

The infiltration of White ideology was probably one of the causes of strained relations between Indian and Negro after the Civil War. Whereas in 1866 the Indian agent had found little prejudice on the part of Indians toward Negroes¹⁵³ a few years later a traveller tells us that "none

¹⁴⁹Scott Orbison, "A Short History of the Creek Indians," p. 1.

¹⁵⁰Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869, p. 416.

¹⁵¹AA

¹⁵²O. A. Lambert, op. cit., p. 277.

¹⁵³Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, p. 319.

but the poorest and the lowest of the Creeks will live among the Freedmen,"¹⁵⁴ and the Principal Chief of the Creek Nation filed a special protest because colored troops were stationed in the Creek Nation.¹⁵⁵

A "race war" between full blood Creeks and Negroes was mentioned in the newspapers¹⁵⁶ and shrewd White traders used race antagonisms for their own gain.¹⁵⁷ Chief Checote deplored Negro-Indian blood mixture and would have given the Freedmen separate lands where they could have lived apart.¹⁵⁸ Miscegenation, however, if we can believe the report of the Indian agent for the period, existed mostly in the form of exaggerated reports.¹⁵⁹ In the clerical field we find a full blood Indian minister petitioning the removal of a Negro preacher who held "meetings every night for the colored people...teaches them that they ought to have colored teachers, not Indians, also colored doctors, and intends bringing his family in the country."¹⁶⁰ The complainant was found to have full blooded Negro wife himself and the petition was dismissed as a case of "pure clerical jealousy."¹⁶¹

In 1889 a reaction against carpetbagger days in Texas had reverberations in the Creek Nation. The Indian Agent's report for that year describes graphically the situation in the Indian Territory.

¹⁵⁴J. H. Beadle, op. cit., p. 374.

¹⁵⁵Creek Tribal Records, Archive No. 32417.

¹⁵⁶The Indian Journal, Nov. 21, 1889, Col. 4, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷C. W. Turner, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁵⁸O. A. Lambert, loc. cit.

¹⁵⁹Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1887, p. 113.

¹⁶⁰Creek Tribal Records, Archive No. 30950.

¹⁶¹Ibid., Archive No. 30955.

I have received reliable information that there is liable to be an influx of negroes into this Territory which may assume alarming proportions and provoke a racial issue....In Texas an organization composed of white men exclusively has driven the negroes from small towns into the larger ones of that State. The cities revolt at this phase of the matter, and are organizing committees of safety for their own protection. As a result of the réace conflict in Texas, the refugee negroes are selling out their property in that State, and are getting on foot a hegrira to invade the Five Tribes, believing that they can buy land here and find more hospitable surroundings among the Indians. It if be true that such a hope has been excited, it is a false one, and if such an impression prevails it should be disabused or removed. The Indian is not as friendly to the negro as is the white man. This remark especially applies to the full-bloods, among whom a negro rarely resides in the Territory. They would not rent land to him and they can not sell it to him, and it is hoped the unfortunate black man will not come among them.¹⁶²

From other sources we learn that "nothing gets an Indian angrier]
 than when you suggest he send his children to school with Negroes."¹⁶³ A
 group of Creek leaders made a futile canvass of the possibility of removing
 full bloods and half breeds, "excluding the negroe element of this nation"
 from Indian Territory, perhaps to some South American country "where they
 could live in peace."¹⁶⁴ A rumor spread through the Creek Nation that
 Creek and other Negroes intended "to cash all their interests and emigrate
 to Africa," after doing all the stealing that they could.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶²Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1898, p. 156.

¹⁶³Vinita Weekly Chieftain, March 17, 1904, p. 4, col. 4.

¹⁶⁴Creek Tribal Records, Archive No. 32453.

¹⁶⁵Creek Indians: Miscellaneous Letters (Gregory to Starr, Inola, I. T., Feb. 16, 1900).

Racial antagonism also smouldered between Creek Freedmen and Cherokee Indians whose country bordered the Creek Nation on the East. In 1841, there had been a serious slave uprising in the Cherokee Nation which was put down only after United States troops had been called in to intervene.¹⁶⁶ The Cherokee Indians had been hostile to Negroes ever since, and some of the more lawless younger men had made aggressive attacks on peaceable Creek Freedmen who came to such border towns as Muskogee to trade. Two unoffending Creek Negroes were hanged.¹⁶⁷ In 1880, a Cherokee mob made a raid on the home of a colored Creek citizen, burned his house, and attempted to lynch him, which they would have done if he had not been aided in making his escape. The Creek Freedmen submitted a petition to Chief Sam Checote, demanding that steps be taken to deal with the Cherokee offenders according to law. They said:

This state of affairs has been pending for many months. As law abiding citizens we have chosen to be termed cowards rather than return like for like. We can bear it no longer. Already four of our people have been killed and six wounded. Nothing is done. 'Tis niggers. We cry for justice. In one accord, give us justice.¹⁶⁸

In addition to the antagonisms arising among the remnant of the Lower Creek slaveholding aristocracy and the sporadic assaults alluded to in the preceding paragraph, the relations of the Creek Freedmen with Whites often verged on active hostility.

Both Creek Freedmen and Whites operated small stores and businesses in the new towns on the M. K. and T. railroad and the economic

¹⁶⁶J. B. Thoburn and M. H. Wright, Oklahoma, a History of the State and its People, Vol. I, p. 298.

¹⁶⁷Creek Tribal Records, Archives Nos. 30444, 30454.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., Archive No. 30449.

competition for the Indian trade was a constant source of friction.¹⁶⁹ Activities of white land speculators also caused hostilities between the two racial groups. Moreover, many of the Whites in Indian Territory had emigrated from the Southern States after the Civil War and brought with them their own rigid code or race relations to which the so-called State Negroes¹⁷⁰ readily responded with the proper complimentary set of attitudes.¹⁷¹ Into this scheme of dominance and submission, the Creek Freedmen did not fit. Association with Indians had given him a certain measure of independence. It was inevitable that clashes with the Whites would occur. One newspaper account headlined "Race War Feared" reads in part,

There has always been a feeling that a clash would come some day, but within the past few days the Creek Negroes have been selling land rapidly and they have lots of money. A negro with money is insolent. And in the Creek Nation where they were land holders, it did not take money to develop this trait.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., Archive No. 30944. Petition of W. Brown to the Principal Chief of the Creek Nation, Oct. 11, 1878: "I am a Freedman a citosen of the Muskoke Nation, and a resident of the town of Muskoke, a barber by trade and am running a shop in said town Sometime last Spring a white man named - Delfel, a shoemaker came to the place, and opened a shoe shop, then a barber shop, tried to purchase my shop, and after failing tried to employ my barbers and induce them to quit my employ by offering them larger wages and is at this time talking of sending to Texas for a barber to break up my businefs, He has been constantly misrepresenting me and my businefs, and injuring it all he could. I dislike to make complaints, but I am dependent on my shop for the support of myself and family, and having some rights here I ask to be protected in them, and this man removed or confined to his legitimate businefs of shoemaking."

¹⁷⁰ Negroes from the states, e. g. Texas.

¹⁷¹ "It was those state niggers from Texas that spoiled it for us, bowing and scraping and scratching the head. "(JA)

¹⁷² The Mangum Star, May 5, 1904, p. 1, col. 4.

Another newspaper article four years later titled "The Negro Creek: a study in criminology" reports a race riot in Okmulgee on November 15, 1908, decries "the very thin veneer of civilization which overlies too many of the Negro-Creek citizens of the new state," speaks of the Negro Creek as "the most dangerous man on the American continent today," in whom "the barbarity of both races showed up in its true colors," so that "the Negro Creek has all the natural born callousness of the genuine criminal."¹⁷³

The city of Sapulpa, in 1901, went so far as to organize a vigilante committee which escorted Negroes out of town. "The citizens claim, in justification of their course that a number of wives of the railroad men are unprotected a large part of the time, and that the presence of negroes is a constant menace to their safety."¹⁷⁴

Aversion to Negroes and perhaps more material motives as well, guided White land buyers in dealing with Creek Freedmen. Rather than have a Negro as a neighbor, the farmers who had bought 120 acres of land after the first removal of restrictions, usually took a 99 year lease on the forty acre homestead remaining which, until the passage of a second act, was inalienable.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Oklahoma City Times, Nov. 20, 1908, p. 6, cols. 1-4.

¹⁷⁴ The Daily Chieftain, Aug. 20, 1901, p. 1, col. 2.

¹⁷⁵ J. D. Benedict, op. cit., p. 229.

The period from the Civil War to relatively recent times is marked by a further increase in racial hostility between Creek Indians by blood and their Freedmen. This feeling had in part arisen within the culture as a result of traditions of Negro enslavement among a small segment of the most influential Indian leaders, and partly as a result of indoctrination by government agents, missionaries, traders, and other White non-citizens.¹⁷⁶ Freedmen participated on an equal footing with Indians in political life until the termination of the existence of the Creek Nation in 1906, but in other fields they were notably segregated and limited. At the turn of the century, an influx of "State-Negroes" further defined the low caste position of the Creek Freedmen by introducing patterns of institutionalized subservience which became the socially accepted response to White and Indian superordination.

¹⁷⁶In 1904 the population of the Creek Nation included 6,500 full-blood Indians; 3,500 mixed bloods; 5,500 Freedmen; and 42,761 White non-citizens! (J. E. Dunn, op. cit., p. 57.)

CHAPTER V

RACE RELATIONS OF CREEK FREEDMEN TODAY

The Creek Freedmen of today live in "neighborhoods" which are scattered throughout the limits of the old Creek Nation in Wagoner, Muskogee, Okmulgee, Creek, Okfuskee, and Hughes Counties in the present state of Oklahoma.¹⁷⁷ Their total population is probably in excess of five thousand persons although there is no way of being certain of this figure.¹⁷⁸ The Creek Freedmen are not under the jurisdiction of the Office of Indian Affairs. They form only a small part of the total Negro population of the counties in which they reside.

It has been indicated that Creek Freedmen have never been completely culturally identified with the Indians even during territorial years. The extent of this cultural identification today is even less.¹⁷⁹

In Okfuskee County where most of the data used in this study were collected, Creek Freedmen can not escape the stigmatization attending

¹⁷⁷ See Appendix D: Creek Freedmen Neighborhoods.

¹⁷⁸ See Appendix E: Creek Freedmen Population.

¹⁷⁹ A publication on acculturation of the Creek Negroes is planned.

membership in the Negro caste.¹⁸⁰ Typical statements of attitude by White persons are: "All niggers are the same. You can't trust one of them behind your back. The Creek niggers are niggers just like the rest of them. They haven't the mentality of a white man. Maybe they are a little more law abiding. They mostly live in the country. They stick to themselves."¹⁸¹ "Socially they're niggers. They all come out of Africa didn't they? They're taciturn and shrewder than the general run. Their women used to dress more colorfully. That was twenty years ago. You don't see it now. In any mixture nigger blood will dominate and show out."¹⁸² A cafe proprietor said, "An Indian JD had a fight here last Saturday with a nigger who tried to sit next to him at the table. They were both drunk. The nigger tried to pass for an Indian. I ran him out in a hurry. Still, Indians love niggers better than they love a White man."¹⁸³

At summer camp meetings of Indian churches, which are attended by White people as a spectacle, Whites are seated with the Indians. Creek Freedmen also attend these functions but they are seated in a separate section "out of respect for the White folks" as one Indian put it.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰Caste, as used in this monograph is "rank order of superior-superordinate orders with inferior-subordinate orders which practice endogamy, prevent vertical mobility, and unequally distribute the desirable and undesirable social symbols." (W. L. Warner and Allison Davis "A Comparative Study of American Caste," p. 229).

¹⁸¹_E

¹⁸²_{PH}

¹⁸³_{XV}

¹⁸⁴_{JD}

In one way, the difference between Creek Freedmen and State Negroes is recognized by Whites to the disadvantage of the Freedmen. There were three large "ranches," in the area surveyed, which use Negro farm laborers. None of these "ranches" will hire Freedmen, except in absolute crop emergencies. A Freedman told me proudly, "We're too high-natured. They can't kick us around like Alabama or Mississippi niggers."¹⁸⁵

A few Freedmen of light skin color have succeeded in passing for Indians among their White neighbors.¹⁸⁶ This was discovered when it was found impossible to collect certain genealogies. The Freedmen do not resent the fact that some of their members are "getting by." It was felt that a man who was "real bright"¹⁸⁷ and had "pretty hair" would be foolish not to take advantage of those traits. Standards of beauty for both men and women revolve around these two characteristics. They are the tags which label membership in the Negro caste. Their importance is seen in this myth collected from a Freedman, which explains the origin of the races.

God once had a pool of beauty into which the people could dip to become clean and pure. The holy water was very cold. The white man jumped in head and all and when he came out his skin became white and his hair was pretty. The Indian just kneeled down and dipped his head. Thats why his hair is pretty but his body is colored. The Negro came down to the edge of the water. He felt the water with the sole of each foot and then with the palm of his hands, but the water was too cold for him and he didn't go in. That's why he stayed just a Negro.¹⁸⁸

185_{WF}

186
CW, RG, BA, SB

187
This refers to light skin color.

188
WF

Another story tells how the Lord made humans out of dough and put them in His oven to bake. The White man was taken out of the oven too soon and the Negro was allowed to scorch, hence their respective colors. Only the Indian was done just right. This story was told by a Creek Freedman¹⁸⁹ with evident satisfaction at bracketing the White man with the Negro by the elevation of the Indian. In a variant story, there were only Indians to begin with. The Negro became black through disobedience. The White man became white because he was cursed with leprosy. The narrator concluded, "So the peckerwoods needn't be so proud and biggoty over a curse."¹⁹⁰

"Peckerwood" is a term of racial division applied surreptitiously to White men. It supposedly has reference to White salesmen "who are always pecking on your door to sell you something."¹⁹¹ White men are also known as "yapper bills", Scissor bills," and by the Southern Negro term of "buckra."¹⁹² The Creek phrase "isti hutgi" which means simply "white man" is charged with considerable negative effect when introduced by a Freedman into an English speaking conversation.

It has been noted that a few Creek Freedmen have been able to pass for Indians because of favorable physical characteristics. Wealth,

¹⁸⁹ AD

¹⁹⁰ IS

¹⁹¹ Proper etiquette among the Freedmen demands that you enter without knocking unless you are a stranger in which case you are supposed to loiter in the yard or out on the road until somebody opens the door and asks you in. "Peckerwood," however, is not restricted in provenience to Oklahoma, being used throughout the South, with probable similar connotations. C. F. Shield McIlwaine, The Southern Poor White, p. xiii.

¹⁹² "Buckra" has added socio-economic implications. It refers only to poor whites.

also, will sometimes allow a Freedman, especially if he has some Indian blood, to engage in behavior patterns usually withheld from his caste. Johnny Jones who lived near Okemah inherited a large sum of money from a Seminole relative. He went to White cafes and pool halls with impunity, "because the peckwoods wanted to have him around. They knew his pockets were lined with money." Finally he was reputed to have married a White woman and gone to Tulsa to live.

"But isn't that sort of marriage against the law?" the investigator asked naively. "Hell no," he was told. "When you gets as much money as Johnny had you've an Indian not a Negro."¹⁹³ Zeke Moore of Muskogee was a Freedman who also got rich because of oil royalties and became an "Indian," but he "only stayed an Indian until the Whites broke him."¹⁹⁴ Another such "Indian" was the Negro, Peter Micco.¹⁹⁵

The laws of Oklahoma draw sharp race distinctions between Whites and Negroes and, by extension, between Indians and Negroes.¹⁹⁶ Intermarriage between White and Negro is forbidden¹⁹⁷ and punishable by fine and imprisonment.¹⁹⁸ Until 1901, the separation of Whites and Negroes in schools was optional on the part of the county. It was established

¹⁹³_{WF}

¹⁹⁴_{WF}

¹⁹⁵_{PH}

¹⁹⁶ "Colored or Negro shall apply to persons of African descent. The term white shall include all other persons." Constitution of Oklahoma, Art. XIII, Sec. II, in G. T. Stevenson, Race Distinctions in American Law, p. 14.

¹⁹⁷ G. T. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 174-5.

by a majority vote of the qualified school electors. After 1901 separate schools were required by law in the entire territory. In 1907 strict penalties of fine and cancellation of license were imposed on teachers who knowingly permitted "a child of one race to be taught in the school of another race."¹⁹⁹

Impinging White culture has in ~~this~~ way affected both the Indians and the Freedmen. The deculturation of Creek Indians has been stimulated and a premium placed on acculturation along the lines of the dominant White group. Hand in hand with this has come a corresponding pressure on the Creek Freedmen which categorizes him with the state Negro population and limits by caste barriers the strivings towards social self-aggrandizement which were permissible during territorial days.

The Creek Freedmen resents the State Negro and feels that the influx of State Negroes is the prime cause of present day caste distinctions being drawn. State Negroes are called "Watchina".²⁰⁰ Following are some typical statements of Creek Freedmen attitude towards the State Negroes.

My children ain't married no Watchinas and I'm so glad. I never have none of them around me. One daughter-in-law is a Watchina but she's a fine one. She come and do things for me and help me out with house work.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 174-175.

²⁰⁰

i. e. "white man." It appears in Loughridge's vocabulary. (Loughridge, R. M. and Hodge, David M. English and Muskogee Dictionary.) As used by Creek Freedmen it means a Negro who is a White man's negro which, in native speech avoids the cumbersome "isti hutgi imisti," literally, "white man, his man (slave)." The Freedmen call themselves "Freedmen," or "natives" or "isti jardi imisti" literally "red man, his man (slave)." Incidentally, "Watchina" according to Dr. Mary Haas, is a corruption of the English word "Virginia."

²⁰¹

They is South nigger and so we don't mix. They has a lot of poor foolishness. ²⁰²

State people come into this country before statehood. pulling they hats off and kneeling and scurrying down to the White folks. They ruined the country and made a lot of natives leave for the North. Natives won't go to the back door if they has to see a White man. They won't go at all rather than that. If the Southern Negro didn't Uncle Tom²⁰³ so much they never would have drawn the line between the races. The native children are better than the Watchina children and know it even if they do go to school together. You don't see native children out in the yard playing with the others. They stays apart. When I went to Clearview Negro School there was more of them than us. I buddied with my own. Its dying out now. The teachers are bringing them together and the Watchinas don't have those Southern ways so much. ²⁰⁴

The antagonism to State Negroes is also explained in terms of

their use as accomplices to Whites in defrauding Creek Freedmen.

They would take a watchina and dress him up and put him in a big car and have him start corresponding ²⁰⁵ some Freedman girl that had land they wanted. They would tell him who to go after. Then he'd set her to marry him even if he did have a wife of his own in Texas or Arkansas already. It look just like a real license but it never go in the record. The Watchina would sell out to the White man that hired him, Thats the way my sister was done. IS has a daughter, GS. They got her that way. AC lives right across the river. A Watchina and a White man stole 160 acres from her. ²⁰⁶

Hostility towards the Creek Freedman is not expressed by the

State Negroes, but they are jealous of the Freedman's remaining meagre

identification with the Indian. "Those Freedmen are smart as a whip.

They talk around a feller. Its a handy thing to know Creek. I had a

202 IS

203 Institutionalized subservience.

204 WF

205 Courting

206 AA

chance to be taught once but I didn't. They just jabber jabber like the Jews and a feller can't get a word of it."²⁰⁷ Another State Negro said, "We mixes with the Creek colored all right. They is our friends and of our breed. But we don't care to mix with Indians and we don't intermarry them. It won't benefit either of us to cross breeds."²⁰⁸ Obviously, this is pure rationalization.

There is a very real class stratification between the Freedmen and the state Negroes. It shows itself in outright "hoorawing,"²⁰⁹ between members of the two groups. Food habits in particular are the target of ridicule, for the Creek Freedman has been even more conservative than many of the Indians in retaining the old dishes.²¹⁰

In the Creek Freedman neighborhood studied there were a number of State Negroes but they did not participate in the social life of the community. They belonged to colored churches in Boley or to other neighbor church where the percentage of State Negroes was higher, rather than to the local Church whose membership was predominately Creek Freedmen.

One of the patterns of inter-household hospitality is food sharing. Children are sent to neighbors with platters of food which are later reciprocated. Visiting was another social gesture. Well defined

207_G208_{XG}209_G jeering behavior

210_G Several kinds of safki, o:paski, itka, sla:k hanapki, "blue dumplings", soaked corn bread, grater bread, wild grape mush, etc.

paths across the fields connected all the Freedmen and many of the Indian houses. State people did not enter into either of these activities. They were made to feel that they were being excluded from a close in-group. One of them expressed his feelings as follows: "I has nothing against the Freedmen but they're too proud. They Jim Crows their own blood."²¹¹

Pre-marital sexual intercourse as an adjunct to courtship is carried on without social disfavor if both the boy and the girl are Freedmen. Houses are over-crowded and often four to a dozen persons share the same sleeping room. If a boy and a girl are "corresponding" they are permitted to retire earlier than the rest of the household, usually at the girl's home. "No Watchina can have a Freedmen girl that way. They don't trust him. The girl's parents knows that if a native boy gets a girl in a family way and don't want to marry her, his folks will make him marry her to keep her from shame. They couldn't get a Watchina to do that."²¹²

The class line which is drawn between Creek Freedmen and State Colored is noticeably more rigid among the older people. "What do I need to mix with them State folks for," one Creek Freedman told me, "I was eating out of the same pot with the Indians, going anywhere in this country I wanted to, while they was still licking the master's boots in Texas."²¹³

Younger Creek Freedmen who have attended colored rural grade schools in Oklahoma and perhaps have held "town jobs" as well do not show this same hostility. The colored towns of Oklahoma in which a Negro can escape the caste discrimination practiced in White towns are the most

²¹¹HS

²¹²LF

²¹³MM

common theatre of social intercourse between younger Freedmen and State Negroes. Freedmen as well as State Negroes enjoy the ego satisfaction which personal liberty in those towns afford.²¹⁴ It is also possible that a prestige gain accrues from their own ~~elevated~~ class status within the Negro caste.

Another social context in which younger Freedmen of both sexes mingle with the State people are "richbacks" which are held in the Fall as long as cotton picking lasts. Richbacks are parties at which drinking, gambling, dancing, and sometimes illicit sexual unions take place. The person sponsoring a richback does so to make money. His success as an entrepreneur depends on his reputation based on former richbacks. Considerable expense is involved such as that of hiring a band and dance caller, renting a tenant house for one night unless a vacant one is available, purchasing large quantities of food, soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages, some of which may remain unsold. It is usual, therefore, for two persons to pool resources and "throw" a richback together. If a Creek Freedman and State Negro act as joint sponsors a larger crowd, drawing from their respective social circles, will attend.

Creek Freedmen and State Negroes intermarry but there are negative social sanctions among the Freedmen towards such a union. In only

²¹⁴White man, don't let the gun go down! is the ominous warning of a signboard at the entrance of the Negro town of Boley, Creek Freedmen and State Negroes alike have a quaint folk etymology for the town name: "They called it Boley because it was such a 'bol thing to do, to Jim Crow the White man the way he do us." Actually, Boley was named after a white official of the old Fort Smith and Western R. R. who took a friendly interest in the townsite planning.

one case out of a dozen such marriages investigated did a state Negro who had married a Freedman woman²¹⁵ secure equivalent status of a "native" in his wife's culture. This individual was possessed of exceptional personal qualities. He was a notably successful farmer, and soon after his marriage he learned to speak fluent Creek.

Usually "if a native marries a Watchina they stops going with natives. Nobody wants to have anything to do with them. Both of them is outcast."²¹⁶

When JA's daughter, Lizzie, married a Watchina, AM, "her own people wouldn't let her come to visit them," but after they separated, her father "was proud of her and took her back."²¹⁷ The objection to AM was solely on the grounds of the class distinction alluded to.

Many Freedmen have some Indian blood and are of noticeably different type from the State Negroes, in physiognomy, skin pigmentation, and even in hair texture. A painting which appears in the Dawes Commission report for 1902 illustrates the Creek Freedmen physical type, in idealized form.²¹⁸ The hair is shown long and moderately straight, skin color is brownish, the nose is aquiline, the beard is scanty. Creek Freedmen today call attention to these physical characters: "You can tell a "native" from a State man by their beards. Everyone in Boley knows I'm a Freedman and part Indian. They just look at my beard and know."²¹⁹

²¹⁵_{MJ}

²¹⁶_{WF}

²¹⁷_{JA}

²¹⁸ U. S. Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, Report for 1902, frontispiece.

²¹⁹_{WF}

It is with the Creek Indians that the race relations of the Creek Freedmen are most complex, and the superposition of White culture has its most disorganizing effects. The attitude of the older Creek Freedmen toward the Indian is one of indetification, even in the face of rebuff. The bond of language is felt keenly, Freedmen who can speak Creek do so by preference whenever possible.²²⁰

Indians, on the other hand, especially the younger ones, shun the Freedmen and go out of their way to avoid situations in which they would be required to show familiarity to a Freedman acquaintance at the expense of a status loss among White acquaintances. Social usage allows the Indian to straddle both caste groups and the demands of his economic position often as the landlord of a tenant operated farm, frequently require it - yet he is fearful lest his association with the inferior caste jeopardize social standing. Some Indians have frankly thrown their lot with the Freedmen and their behavior will be discussed. Most of the Indians, however, are ambivalent in attitude, or actually hostile to the Freedman. Indians who are "crossed up" with Negro blood themselves are frequently the most aggressive.

The relations between the Indian and Freedman are not understandable

²²⁰ About one half of the Creek Freedmen in the community studied could speak Creek. These included all of the older persons of both sexes. Fewer people between the ages of twenty and thirty could speak fluently and several knew only a few words. Children and adolescents did not speak Creek. Creek, as spoken by Freedmen is not dialectically distinguishable from Creek as spoken by an Indian.

without a knowledge of the relations between Indian and White. Throughout the state of Oklahoma, the Negro intermixture of the Creek Indian is alluded to, and seriously affects the Indian standing in White communities:

A Creek Indian loves a nigger better than he loves a White man. They're all the same. They're all mixed.²²¹

Lots of niggers married in with the Indians. The highest clan [sic] won't allow it but all the lower are tinged terribly with nigger blood.²²²

The old ones mixed pretty freely with Negroes and (dropping voice) you know that a certain element intermarried to some extent. I think that the real reason for that was a too childlike interpretation of the Bible, you know "Love thy neighbor" etc. That's what my observations are. Of course, younger Indians like FB who go away to Haskell don't have that old feeling. They know an Indian is a white man.²²³

Even Freedmen claim that most Creek Indians have colored blood:

There's no full blood Indians. It ain't. You think they has good hair. Even them with long silky smooth hair has real short kinky hair underneath where you can't see it. They'd be mad if they knew I was telling a White man. They tries to high hat us. They eats in the White restaurants and we can't do that but they is as bad as us. You shouldn't try to make people think you ain't a nigger when you is one, should you?²²⁴

White people explain the backwardness of the Creeks in terms of their unfortunate race mixture with the Negro.²²⁵ "Socially the Creek is

221 VX

222 DR

223 HW

224 IS

225

M. E. Opler, "Report of Creek Social Organization," p. 9.

at...much disadvantage. The Whites make much of the Negro admixture among the Creeks, placing the estimate of Negro blood much higher than it could possibly be."²²⁶

In a situation so charged with emotional effect it is almost impossible to determine how great this mixture has actually been. An authority on the American Indian has said, "...the Creeks seem to have most miscegenation, fully one third of the tribe having perceptible negro admixture."²²⁷ There is no technique available to either challenge or substantiate this statement.

Nowadays inter-caste marriage is illegal. In territorial days it frequently occurred. Both Freedmen and Indians agree that such marriages were economically desirable.²²⁸ Freedmen husbands made better farmers than Indians did. They were "good providers". Sometimes they worked for Indian families and then married one of the daughters. Both LF and WC married full blood Indian girls this way.

Freedmen were often powerful sorcerers. They were especially adept in preparation of love magic. I was told by an Indian: "Freedmen married into Creeks by using what they called love powder. Creek did not like it but our power wasn't as strong as theirs was for that purpose."²²⁹

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

²²⁷ F. W. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 52.

²²⁸ AD, AA, JT, DH, BH.

²²⁹ JB

Negro Indian cross bloods have no legal recognition, as such, in Oklahoma, although the biologic fact is inescapable. The final rolls of 1907²³⁰ list separately Indians by blood and Creek Negro Freedmen. Half breeds were assigned to the two lists according to the blood of the female parent. Miscegenation, since made a felony, has theoretically ceased to exist.

Folk belief is, of course, more realistic, not only in admitting the existence of half-breeds, but in assigning to them special power. Plant and animal hybrids are cited as analogies. A freedman native doctor said: "Cross blood means extra knowledge. I can take my cane²³¹ and blow it twice and do the same as a Creek full blood doctor does in four times. Two bloods makes two talents. Two bloods has more swifter solid good sense. I is one of them."²³²

Eighteen persons or about ten per cent of the total membership of the Freedmen Church in the "neighborhood" where much of the data of this study ~~were~~ collected are full-blood Indians. About half of these are active members who take part in all the church events.²³³ A special attempt was made to discover the motivations which directed these Indians

²³⁰ Alphabteical List of Creek Indians and Freedmen, pp. 1-64.

²³¹ A hollow length of bamboo nowadays into which the practioner blows in the preparation of medicinal infusions.

²³² IS

²³³ LW and wife, Ed, AW, CH, PC, EF, WF, RF

to join a Negro Baptist Church, when an Indian Baptist Church was located nearby.

Four of the Indian women were found to have contracted common-law marriages with Freedmen.²³⁴ Two of them explained that they would rather have joined the Indian Baptist Church but that their husbands could not join with them. Therefore they joined the Freedman Church. The Indian Baptist Church, however, does not sanction miscegenation and would not have received any of the women had they applied. One Indian woman left her Freedman husband but continued her membership in the Freedman Church.

Another group of seven Indians who were members of the Freedman Church consisted of an old Indian woman with the three married children and their full-blood Indian spouses.²³⁵ All of these Indians held allotments in the vicinity of the church which were being farmed by Freedmen tenants. These Indians had friends in the Indian Baptist Church but their everyday social contacts were with their Freedman tenants. In at least one case the tenant lived in the house with the landlord.

The remaining Indian members of the Freedman Church were women whose husbands were non-Christian Indians and attended no church at all. It is possible that the stigma attached to having a "heathen" husband was a causal factor in determining the church affiliations of these women.

²³⁴EJ, AW, PC, EF

²³⁵LW and wife, WF and wife; RF and wife; M.

Members of the Indian Baptist Church look down upon the Indian members of the Freedman Church. "Indians has their trash, too, just like the White men," one of them explained.²³⁶

This sentiment is an extreme one, and atypical for the majority of Indians who reside in the "neighborhood." Many of them are cordial to the Freedmen. One of them²³⁷ a member of the Indian Baptist Church, donated a hand hewed water trough for the Freedmen Church well when the new church house was erected last year. This year he slaughtered a beef and shared it with his neighbors, both Freedmen and Indian. Special personality factors underlie his behavior. He is definitely hostile towards acculturation. One of his boasts is that he never wore anything but overalls all his life. He still uses the bow to hunt rabbits, and recently he was talking of getting up a party to "murder" a stream.²³⁸ The censure of White men means nothing to him. Another Indian, member of another Indian Baptist Church, donated about six dollars worth of lumber towards the completion of the new Freedman Church house. Many Indians visit the Freedman Church on meeting day, but the pattern is not reciprocal.

Only AA, the Pastor of the Freedman Church, can visit the Indian Baptist Church, and he is in great demand because of preaching ability.

²³⁶CR

²³⁷DH

²³⁸Fish killing by means of infusion of "Devil's Shoestring" had both economic and social value to the Creeks. It is forbidden by law nowadays.

He preaches one line in Creek and then translates into English. Rarely will he be found for two consecutive Sundays at his own church. Indians call for him in their cars and carry him twenty or thirty miles and back so that he can preach at their churches. His own deacons take care of affairs at the Freedman Church in his absence. He has also acted as advisor in helping dozens of Indians to make transactions with White men.

An undertermined percentage of Creek Indians are still non-Christians and non-English speaking. Many of them live at the Hickory Ground Southeast of Henryetta. Others are scattered throughout the old Creek Nation. With these older, less acculturated Indians the older Creek Freedmen associate freely and on fraternal terms. Such Indians are known as "Snakey" Indians whether they had any connection with the Crazy Snake nativistic movement of 1909 or not.

Most "Snakey" Indians still retain their allotments from which the alienation restrictions have never been removed. Landless Creek Freedmen frequently live with them, not as farm tenants, but as informal permanent guests. Aside from purely social advantages, the symbiosis is desirable to both parties. The Freedman has a place to stay where he can cultivate his own garden patch and make improvements with a reasonable security of tenure. The Indian has the services of a general factotum who is also willing to raise corn and garden vegetables for the table.

A typical arrangement of this sort exists between WM, a Freedman and TX, a full-blood Indian, on whose allotment they live.

TX can not speak English. Neither can he drive an automobile. Last year he bought a second hand truck, WM drives it for him and repairs

it when it breaks down. WM also cuts the wood, feeds the chickens, draws water from the well, raises a home vegetable garden, goes to town to assist in making all purchases, and sometimes even collects TX's check from the local Indian Probate Attorney and has it cashed.

The two families live in separate houses about a hundred feet apart, but they eat together in TX's kitchen. TX's wife was a poor housekeeper and so old K, WM's mother, usually does the cooking. The two men lounge around most of the day, unless WM is working in the field. Although they are non-Christians, both TX and his son compete in the weekly turkey shoots held with bow and arrow at the Indian Baptist Church. WM, because he is a Freedman, does not attend, although he is an equally skilled shot. He does make the arrows which TX shoots, however, using triangular sections of the iron from an oil drum to make heavy conical arrow points. TX has never been able to learn how to make a satisfactory arrow point of this type. WM also goes to a nearby colored town to get whiskey for TX when either of them have any money. They get drunk together. The arrangement under which they have been living has been the same since around 1920 when WM lost his own allotment.

This type of cordial relationship based on genuine companionship and mutual economic advantage is what is referred to when acculturated Indians say, "We Indians have our own trash just like White people do." A full-blood Creek who has a position with an Oklahoma State Department says:

I want to give you a true picture of our affairs out here. This Freedman as he is called is nothing but an African Negro. The reason they have hung on like they

do is the money angle of it. The Creeks have money that is held for them that belongs to the tribe. Under the treaty a part of it goes to all those on the rolls, which includes the Freedmen Roll. If I had my way I'd pay them off quick and be done with it. I want you to get that straight.²³⁹

Another acculturated Indian, CR, made the following statement to an anthropologist connected with the United States Indian Office:

There is a colored church. It is supposed to be Indian, but it is mostly colored. That's one thing I don't like, Mixing with Niggers; they sure mix with these Niggers. It ought to be stopped if it can be stopped some way. They are even intermarrying them. AA Church this one is called. A fellow named AA had some slaves. The slaves went by the master's name. AA, he's the preacher there. He claims he's my brother from the Bird Clan [scornful laughter]. About fifteen families all live around the church. They invite others when they have meetings sometimes, so they have visitors. This church is about 6 miles and a half North and five and a half miles west of town of X. Lots of people of X Indian Baptist Church go over to that church. I don't know what denomination they are. I think they incline to the Baptist, I don't even know whether they have a charter. It is kind of independent.²⁴⁰

The investigator, being forewarned, had an opportunity to come in contact with the Indian who gave this statement without disclosing that his behavior was being observed and recorded minutely. A considerable gap was found between the contempt for Creek Freedmen manifested in the statement and the actual behavioral patterns. CR, in fact, was rather friendly with the Freedman preacher mentioned in the statement, and made a special effort to have him come to preach the burial sermon when TH, a full-blood Indian who was CR's father-in-law, died.

²³⁹ JD

²⁴⁰ Morris E. Opler to W. Z. Park, Jan. 20, 1940.

CR, however, is known as a "high collared" or "biggoty" Indian by the Freedmen. A Freedman informant²⁴¹ said that men like CR don't think any more of a good natured Indian who is friendly to us Freedmen, than a white man thinks of a Negro." The comparison is an apt one. It illustrates the cleavage caused among Creek Indians by the Negro problem.

In summary, the contemporary state of race relations in Okfuskee and adjoining counties may be phrased as follows:

The State Negroes recognize the class elevation of the Creek Freedmen within the Negro caste. They also recognize the legal conceptualization of Indians as members of the socially superior White caste.

Creek Freedmen are hostile towards State Negroes because of the status loss they have suffered since introduction of the caste system. Yet the younger Freedmen mingle with and identify themselves with the general Negro population. Creek Freedmen utilize their claim of partial Indian ancestry in attempts to make a status gain among Indians and Whites.

Acculturated Indians have adopted substantially the White attitudes towards all Negroes. Such Indians identify with the White group as far as is socially possible. "Snakey" Indians, however, are unaffected by White disapprobation and keep up relations of social equality and extreme cordiality with older, Creek speaking, Creek Freedmen.

White persons, in the main, fail to recognize the class distinction between Freedmen and State Negroes. Where the distinction is made, it is to the disadvantage of Freedmen. Creek Indians are despised because of alleged intermixture of large amounts of Negro blood.

CHAPTER VI

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Southeastern Indians are not the only tribes of North America marked by Negro mixture. Many of the Algonquin tribes of New England had Negro blood dating from the existence of slavery in the Northern states. These include the Gay Head Wampanoag, the Narragansett, the Pequot, Paugusset, Shinnecock, Montauk, Nanticoke, and probably other tribes which escaped documentation. The Pamunkey and Mattaponi tribes of the Powhatan Confederacy of Virginia also intermarried with Negroes, as did the Shawnee and Chippewa to some extent. Negro intermarriage is also found among the Canadian Tuscarora, the Piegan, the Kainah, the Caddo, and even the Skidegate Haida.²⁴²

In some cases especially on Long Island the mixture has been particularly complete. We learn that "At the present day not a pure blood Narragansett exists; and if any of the tribe remain the Indian blood has been so mingled with that of the negro that all trace of the original Narragansett has vanished."²⁴³

²⁴² F. W. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 51-53.

²⁴³ Cyrus Thomas, The Indians of North America, p. 177.

Negro-Indian intermixture has also been noted through observations on Negroes. Herkovits made anthropometric measurements on a series of over five thousand Negroes and found that "there is no reason to doubt the statement of 29% of the persons measured who claim to have partial Indian ancestry."²⁴⁴ Another investigator found "visible effects" of Indian mixture among the Negroes of Alabama and Georgia.²⁴⁵

That intermixture should have occurred is not surprising. During the colonial period in America, legislation and attitudes of dominant Whites placed the Negro and the Indian in the same category.²⁴⁶ "The two races had some common basis for sympathetic association, the barriers to social equality between them have not been formidable."²⁴⁷ Among the Creeks at least, there is a tradition that when the White man came they were afraid of him, but the Negroes which he brought were familiar and evoked no fear.²⁴⁸

A newspaper editorial of 1829 demanding that the full status of citizenship be granted to the Creek Indians indicates their low social rank:

The prejudices ... of the people of the South ... are hardly less strong as to Indians than to blacks; and without the full admission of the Indians into citizenship

²⁴⁴ M. J. Herskovits, Anthropometry of the American Negro, p. 279.

²⁴⁵ Lawrence Foster, "Negro-Indian Race Relations in the Southeast," p. 16.

²⁴⁶ vide. A. W. Lauber, Indian Slavery in Colonial Times.

²⁴⁷ E. B. Reuter, "The American Race Problem," pp. 122-123.

²⁴⁸ JB, SB

they would not lose their caste or advance their position....They would only have the rank of free persons of color, which is less esteemed in the slave status than that of the slaves themselves.²⁴⁹

The existence of this inferior status received added confirmation from Thomas L. McKenney who adopted two Creek youths in the early nineteenth century with the intention of removing them to Philadelphia to be educated as his own children. Before the journey the children were bathed, given a haircut, and clothed "in a handsome manner." Nevertheless, in Alabama, strenuous objections were made to allowing the boys to eat at public tables.²⁵⁰

Conditions of low Indian status together with the presence of free elements of the Negro population and a lack of barriers of caste endogamy made possible the formation of mixed Negro-Indian communities which are scattered throughout the Atlantic States. Several of them have received more than passing study by sociologists and anthropologists.

The Virginia "Wins" consist of the progeny of freed Negroes and half-breed Indians.²⁵¹ The cultural isolation of this group is based on the fact that freed Negroes were looked down upon by the slaves because of their entire divorce from White patronage. The reasons why more complete fusion with full-blood Indian groups did not occur is unknown. Perhaps assimilation in this direction was hindered by widely

²⁴⁹Niles Register, Vol. 37 (Oct. 3, 1829), p. 81.

²⁵⁰T. L. McKenney, Memoirs Official and Personal, p. 189.

²⁵¹A. H. Estabrook and I. E. McDougle, Mongrel Virginians, pp. 14-15.

divergent cultural bases. The physiography of the region may well have contributed to the perpetuation of a "racial island."

The Delaware "Moors", a group of probable Negro, Indian and White ancestry, have received more intensive study.²⁵² We learn that before Reconstruction they were listed with the population of colored people. Public provisions for them, including schools, were with the Negroes. Many of them resented this and through the efforts of one of their energetic men they achieved the status of "Indians." They called themselves the "Warwick Indians" or simply the "Indian River Community," formed a "Nanticoka Indian Association" to exercise collective protection of their interests. They do not mix with Negroes. Another group of the Delaware "Moors" however do mingle and intermarry with light skinned Negroes. These are called the "Harmonia People." Less data were collected concerning them. Possibly they represented that segment of the total community more easily identified with the Negroes by caste tags of physical characteristics. It is noteworthy, however, that exogamy is sanctioned light-skinned Negroes. The rank value attached to the possession of this trait among American Negroes is well known.²⁵³

Another group of Indians by fiat are the Croatans of Robeson County, N. C., and the allied Melungeons and Redbones across the state borders of Tennessee and South Carolina respectively. "During the period of slavery the original nucleus, which may have been White and Indian, was

²⁵² F. G. Speck, Nanticoke, pp. 2-9.

²⁵³ M. J. Herkovits, "Social History of the American Negro," p. 253.

augmented by runaway slaves, free Negroes, remnants of Indian tribes, and all sorts of White adventurers."²⁵⁴ In 1835, when the North Carolina state constitution was revised, the Croatan were deprived of suffrage along with free Negroes and barred from White public schools, which resulted in their prompt organization of separate schools rather than admit social equality with Negroes. In 1885, as the culmination of years of petitioning, the legislature designated them as Croatan Indians and provided state maintained separate schools. The Croatan Indians are regarded as social inferiors by the Whites and permitted only the prerogatives of the Negro caste. They do not enter homes of Whites by the front door, they are not addressed by the term Mister, they sit with Negroes or by themselves in theatre audiences. Yet the Croatans do possess a certain increment of status elevation over the Negroes, for they are extremely hostile to potential Negro interlopers, and through their efforts the state legislature passed a law prohibiting marriages between Croatans and Negroes. On occasion Croatans have driven out people of dark skin color whom they suspected of having large amounts of Negro blood. The Croatan Indian's aim is "to have as little to do with White people as possible. He thereby reduces his chances of being insulted. His economic outlook is greatly restricted because he will not engage in various menial tasks which Negroes are engaged in. His ideal is to own a farm and be his own master."²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴G. B. Johnson, "Personality in a White-Indian-Negro Community," p. 518.

²⁵⁵Ibid., p. 521.

Assimilation rather than isolation is evident in another mixed Negro-Indian group at Indian Mound, Tennessee.²⁵⁶ Originally, we are told, "there had been opposition on the part of the Indian Mound people towards marriage with Negroes."²⁵⁷ The Indian Mound people attended the White church. A minister of the White church is supposed to have made a slighting remark about "dark people attending the church," which resulted in an immediate cleavage. The mixed bloods established a church of their own with their own cemetery. Through contacts at Negro schools which their children attended, "these people did not share the feelings of the older generation against Negroes but regarded themselves simply as colored people. In fact, the process by which the family is gradually merging with the Negro community shows how families from these isolated communities of mixed blood have gradually filtered into the Negro population....through contacts in the urban environment."²⁵⁸

The Seminole Freedmen have mingled with their Freedmen to perhaps an even greater extent than the Creeks. The enrollment list made by the Dawes Commission for the Seminoles included both the Indians by blood and the Seminole Freedmen instead of separating them as was done on the enrollment lists of the other "civilized tribes."²⁵⁹

A recent survey of Seminole Freedmen and Seminole Indians²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶F. E. Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States, pp. 220-221.

²⁵⁷F. E. Frazier, loc. cit.

²⁵⁸F. E. Frazier, loc. cit.

²⁵⁹U. S. Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, Index to the Final Rolls.

²⁶⁰Lawrence Foster, op. cit.

however, shows factors of caste distinction modifying the former fraternal relations. The situation is similar to that existing between the Creeks and their Freedmen. The law giving Oklahoma Indians the status of White men

...curtailed most of the social relationship which had formerly existed between the Negroes and the Indians. The law gave the Negroes separate schools and churches and provided for segregation in all forms of public services:....Age long friends kept up their contacts but very few new ones were formed.... It is observable today that an aged Seminole, although he does not detest the Negro, does not fraternize with him as did his forefathers.²⁶¹

A further parallelism to the race relations of Creek Negroes is apparent in the class distinction which sets off State Negroes:

The Seminole Negro feels himself better than or different from the "State Negro"....At least twenty aged Seminole Negroes have given the author testimony to this effect. Such an attitude may be partly expressed in the fact that of 73 marriages of Seminole Negroes in Seminole, Wewoka, and Lima, Oklahoma, only eleven have been consummated between "State Negroes" and Seminole Negroes."²⁶²

Descendants of Seminole Negro refugees who fled to Bracketville, Texas, to escape enslavement at the hands of a party of Creek Indians also prefer in-group marriages. They would rather that their children wed Seminoles than "American Race" Negroes. In 1930 only twelve members of fifty-nine families had married State Negroes. "Color and economic advantage do not seem to have significantly influenced" these twelve aberrant marriages.²⁶³

²⁶¹Ibid., p. 67.

²⁶²Ibid., p. 68.

²⁶³Ibid., p. 49.

In tracing the course of race relations of the Creek Negroes three main stages have been discerned. First was the period dating from the original Creek contact with Negroes, which must have occurred around the beginning of the eighteenth century, up to the time of the American War for Independence. During that period, captured or runaway Negroes were received on an equal footing with the war captives of hostile aboriginal tribes and a large proportion of them must have been adopted into the towns which made up the Creek Confederacy and participated to an undetermined degree in tribal life. We have no way for estimating how many Negroes intermingled in this way, but the number was probably considerable.

The second period marking the race relations of Creek Indians and Negroes dates from the American Revolution, at which time Negroes who were actually used as slave field-hands were introduced to the Creeks by the British. This second period terminates only with the Civil War. The emigration of the Creeks to their new lands west of the Mississippi is interposed during the years of this period, but does not interrupt the pattern of race relations which was crystallizing. An imitation of the example of Negro slavery as practiced by the Whites marks the race adjustments which were being made. This newer pattern was found to be more advanced among the so called Lower Creeks who consistently composed the more acculturated forefront of the Creek Nation.

The most recent stage in the evolution of a pattern of accommodation between Creek Negroes and Creek Indians began after the emancipation and equalization of Creek Freedmen in 1866. White cultural intrusion stimulated the adoption of patterns of race antagonism such

as those which regulate relations of Whites and Negroes in the Southern states. Legislation forbidding miscegenation set up, for the first time, caste lines which had previously been recognized by only a portion of the Creek Indians. A close correlation was found to exist between degree of acculturation among Creek Indians and lack of hostility in race relations with Creek Freedmen.

Race relations are but a portion of the total cultural content of any society. As such, they are affected by the same conditions which govern other aspects of culture change. The hostility of Creek Indians towards Creek Negroes has been a concomitant of White patterning of culture. Even today, the most cordial relations with Creek Negroes are maintained only by the unacculturated fringe of non-Christian Creek full blood Indians.

The complimentary pattern among the Freedmen, a determined opposition to bracketing with State Negroes and an expectation of continued status of social equality even in opposition to the color lines drawn by the Whites, is found among the older Creek Negroes almost exclusively.

But White acculturation has not affected the Indians alone. Whereas older Creek Negroes draw strict among themselves and the State Negroes, the younger Creek Freedmen, two or three generations removed from the days when Creek Negroes were in a position of social equality with at least a large segment of Indians by blood, fraternize on equal terms with non-Creek Negroes and intermarry with them.

Assimilation with the general Negro population will eventually resolve the anomalous status ranking of the Creek Freedmen. It is likely

that within another generation or two the merging will take place and obliterate completely all but traces of the former class distinctions between the two Negro groups. Already the language is being lost. White categorization of the two Negro classes has acted to prevent Creek Negro culture from perpetuating itself as a separate entity. Social sanctions among the older Creek Negroes have made it impossible, except in sporadic instances, for State Negroes to gain entrance into the Creek Negro in-group. Status mobility exists, but in a downward direction only. The community of Creek Negroes may become depleted by cultural renegades, but it cannot be expanded.

In the mixed Indian-Negro societies introduced by way of comparison, the guiding principle regulating personal behavior has been a desire for economic self sufficiency in order to avoid the personality clashes attending an anomalous social status in the dominant White community. The social gains of partial Indian ancestry or alleged Indian ancestry were jealously guarded.

To some extent, Creek Negroes have attempted the same thing. They have stigmatized associations with State Negroes which were thought to be degrading. Yet, insofar as class barriers have been disregarded by younger Creek Negroes in favor with complete identification with the general Negro population, the Creek Negro attitude closely parallels that of the small group in Tennessee cited. It also anticipates the adjustment which must eventually be made in any similarly situated inter-racial community where social pressures of a dominant group forces a categorization along caste lines recognized by that group to the disregard of caste or class distinctions of subordinate groups in the major community.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMANTS

Older persons of both sexes naturally made the best informants on matters connected with the earlier days. Freedmen such as AD, AA, JT, IS, CB, SI, SJ, JA, LT, MM, AB, KM, remembered vividly the years before Oklahoma's statehood.

It was more difficult to approach older Indians because of the language barrier, and fewer were interviewed. Of these, JB, BA, TX, GR, SB, YB were the best.

A great many younger persons were interviewed more or less informally during the course of the field work, including so-called "State Negroes", D, RD, G, LK, PM, P, JS, HS, T, JW, XG; Creek Freedmen, WF, LF, EF, JF, RG, BG, BM, TS, CW; Indians, BB, JD, AE, WX, LH, BH, M, AN, WI, PY; and White persons, FB, DU, E, GH, EL, FM, PH, DR, MR, OS, GT, HW, BW, and XB.

A directory listing the full names of all informants used in this study has been placed in the permanent files of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Oklahoma.

APPENDIX B

THE CREEK SLAVE CODE¹

Be it enacted that if any negro kills an Indian he or she shall suffer, and if an Indian kills a negro, he or she shall pay the owner his value otherwise suffer death.

Be it further enacted that should one slave kill another, the slave killing shall receive one hundred lashes on the bare back, and the slave killed shall be valued by disinterested men and the owner of the surviving negro shall pay the owner of the deceased negro one half of his value.

All negroes who have been freed by citizens of the Nation shall pay an annual head tax of three dollars, except those recognized as citizens, and also a tax of twenty five cents a head on all cattle, sheep, or horses in their possession, and five dollars annually for each and every wagon in their possession in the Nation.

Be it further enacted that should any negro, bond or free, have intercourse with a Creek woman, upon conviction before an authorized tribunal of the Nation he shall be striped with one hundred lashes on the bare back, and should any Creek woman be guilty of a violation of the above, she shall be striped with fifty lashes.

And be it further enacted that it shall not be legal for any Indian man citizen of the Creek Nation to take a negro woman to wife, and any citizen who shall be guilty of violation of this law shall be punished as provided for above.

Be it further enacted that if any negro, slave or free, can abuse any man citizen of the Creek Nation, upon conviction shall receive one hundred lashes on the bare back.

¹"Record Book of Chief Sam Checote including General Laws of the Creek Nation", pp. 9-30

Be it enacted that should any person apprehend a runaway negro and deliver him to his owner, who shall be a citizen of the Creek Nation, he shall receive twenty five dollars; but should said owner not reside in the Creek Nation, he or she shall pay fifty dollars.

Be it enacted should any citizen of this Nation wish to free his or her negro it shall be lawful for them to do so provided they take them without the limit of this Nation.

Be it enacted that no slave shall be permitted to own or possess horses, cattle or guns, and should any slave or slaves be found in the possession of any property above described after the passage of this law, it shall be the duty of the Light Horsemen and Law Makers to proceed and dispossess of same.

Resolved, that no slaves shall without a written pass be found over two miles from the premises of his or her owners.

Any slave who shall be found guilty of the violation of the above law shall receive twenty five lashes for every such offence.

No slave shall be found away from his or their master's premises without a pass during the hours of night, and any negro or negroes who shall be found guilty of the above law shall receive twenty five lashes.

It shall be unlawful for any slave to have or carry any weapons of any description and should any slave be found guilty of violating the above law after the first day of March A.D. 1861, he or she shall receive twenty five lashes.

It shall not be lawful for any slave to engage in any mercantile business, when the goods and chattels are his or theirs. They shall be taken and sold to the highest bidder, and all monies so realized shall be paid into the National Treasury, except twenty five percent which shall be divided between informer and Light Horsemen acting, informer getting one half.

No negro or negroes shall preach to an Indian congregation.

Negroes may have religious worship within two miles of owner's premises when in conformity to the regulations that there shall be some few persons not of negro origin to watch over the proceedings.

That it shall be the duty of all free negroes in this Nation who are here legally, to choose owners between this and the 10th. day of March A.D. 1861 and should any negro fail to do this he or she shall be sold to the highest bidder by the proper authorities. No negro shall be allowed to choose any white person or persons for an owner or master, nor will a white person be allowed to bid for a free negro.

APPENDIX C

"HOW FREEDMEN LOSE THEY LAND"²

Here is a few fax on how the Freedmen lose they land. In 1908 the land come taxable on the Freedmen. They have not claim they land up yet large enough for farms so they couldn rais enough to pay tax. So the white man was lending money to every Freedman that was of age with large interes in short terms or take a morgage on they surplus which is 120 acres. When the note come due they force to pay or accep little money an give up the deed to they propty. Or they would include home- stead when they deed is given so they take in all they have, 160 acres.

Here is JA story about losing his propty: I had agree to sell a 40 acre of my land for \$600 to the cashier of the bank in X. When I sine the deed he wouldnt give me but \$150 and I ask him for the res of my money but I didnt got my money. So I hired a lawyer an he took a 80 acres of land from me to get my money for me. Then I didnt get no money so I lose 120 acres of land for \$150.

Freedman like buggy and waggon for it was a new thing buggy and waggon those days so the white man would drive a new buggy or waggon out to the contry to those that had land left and say that they credit was good. When they accep the b. or w. they would have a morgage all redy made up and a notry publik with them so they would say sine this an pay me later. But the morgage would come due in a short whil an they would come to call an if he has no money they have a nother white man with him would offer to pay their morgage off and pay some diffrents to get a deed. Those days the salemen and land grafers wd. carry a notary publik with them every way they went. Now you see how the Fr. lose they land.

²Submitted by WF, a Creek Negro Freedman.

APPENDIX D

NEIGHBORHOODS

The "neighborhoods" of the Creek Freedmen are social rather than political entities. A neighborhood consists of a group of Freedmen who live in the same vicinity, belong to the same church, and visit together. Sometimes a neighborhood has no church of its own and is named after a school, a natural geographic feature, or the surname of its leading family. Change of neighborhoods results often because of shifting farm tenancy, yet inter-neighborhood visiting on church meeting days keeps up old contacts.

In addition to the neighborhoods listed below, four of the Negro towns of Oklahoma have a predominating Creek Freedman population. These are: Taft, Redbird, Grayson (also known as Cat) and Lima. A few Creek Freedmen live in the other Negro towns of Oklahoma, Boley, Booker Tee, Charlesville, and Vernon. Freedmen do not live in Clearview, which is a "solid State Colored town."

The following neighborhoods are in Okfuskee and adjoining counties. All of them keep up mutual social relations:

PRARIE SPRING is four miles west and one half mile south of Okemah. The leading Freedmen are Aaron Grayson and Jack Johnson. Freedmen population is 50; State Negro, 20; Indian, 20; many Whites.

I EXCELL is two miles north of Castle. The leading Freedmen are Sam Lampkin and Butler Anderson. Freedmen population is 10; State Negro, 200; Indian, 1; no Whites.

GOOD WILL is one mile east and two miles north of Castle. The leading Freedmen are Mooty Cudjo and Aaron Jackson. Freedmen population is 10; State Colored, 30; Indian, 5; no Whites.

ANDERSON CHAPEL is one mile north, one mile west, two miles north, one mile west, three miles north, one half mile east of Okemah. The leading Freedman is Tom Anderson. Freedman population is 25; State Negro, 15; Indian 50; a few Whites.

BUCKEYE is one mile north, one mile west, two miles north, one half mile west of Okemah. The leading Freedman is Aaron Grayson. Freedman population, 4; State Colored, 50; Indian, 5; many Whites.

ST. MANUEL is three miles west of castle. The leading Freedman is Lucky Jefferson. Freedman population is 20; State Negro, 100; Indians, 4; a few Whites.

WHITE OAK is five miles west and two miles south of Okemah. Leading Freedmen are Rogers Garden and Jim Mitchell. Freedman population is 30; State Colored, 50; Indian, 10; a few Whites.

ROCK HILL is one mile north of Bearden. Leading Freedmen are Jim Carolina and Buddy Carolina. Freedman population 100; State Negro, 10; Indian, 7; many Whites.

OFTEN GROVE is nine miles south of Bearden. Leading Freedman same as above. Freedmen population, 50; State Colored, 15; Indian, none; many Whites.

ST. PAUL is two miles south of Bearden. Leading Freedmen same as above. Freedmen population, 100; State Colored, 15; Indian, none; a few Whites.

RUST is two miles west and three miles south of Boley. Leading Freedmen is Jim Barnett. Freedman population, 1; State Colored, 300; Indian, none; no Whites.

SALT CREEK is one mile West of Clearview. Leading Freedman is Sam Grayson. Freedman population is 20; State Colored, 20; Indians, none; no Whites.

CLEARVIEW is at the town of Clearview. Leading Freedmen are Delilah Lovitt and Sampson Tecumseh. Freedman population is 20; State Colored, 300; Indians, none; no Whites.

ABIHKA is two miles north and one mile east of Sylvain. Freedmen population, 20; State Colored, 50; Indian, 15; many Whites.

PLEASANT HOPE is five miles south and one and one half miles west of Castle. Leading Freedman is Dave Bruner. Freedman population, 15; State Negro, 50; Indian, 10; many Whites.

VALLEY GROVE is four miles east of Okemah. Leading Freedman is Rogers Garden. Freedman population is 5; State colored, 50; Indian, 75; many Whites.

GRASSY LAKE is one mile south, one quarter mile east, and one mile south of Clearview. Leading Freedmen are Chilly Barnett and Mary Mohorn. Freedmen population is 50; State Negro, 50; Indian, 10; no Whites.

DEEP FORK is five miles east of Newby. Leading Freedman is Cleveland Henderson. Freedman population is 15; State Negro, 100; Indian, 10; many Whites.

NEWBY is at Newby. Leading Freedman is Mrs. Wilson. Freedman population is 50; State Negro, 350; Indian, 50; many Whites.

JIM BOY is one mile east and one mile south of Pharoah. Leading Freedmen are Sip Barnett, Annie Barnett, Adam Grayson. Freedman population 20; State Negro, 30; Indian, 60; many Whites.

SPRING HILL is one mile south and one half mile west of Pharoah. Leading Freedmen are Caesar Holmes and Cooper Paine. Freedmen population is 30; State Negro, 50; Indians, none; lots of Whites.

RENTIE is one mile east, three miles north, and one mile east of Pharoah. Leading Freedmen are Island Smith, Jim Rentie, Morris Rentie. Freedmen population, 100; State Colored, 15; Indian, 150; many Whites.

GREENLEAF is four miles West and one mile south of Okemah. Only Freedman is Willy McGirt. Freedman population is 1; State Negro, 2; Indian, 200; many Whites.

BEARDEN is one mile west of Bearden. Leading Freedman is Gene Gilbert. Freedman population, 20; State Negro, 10; Indian, 50; many Whites.

MCKERN is one half mile North and three miles west of Castle. Leading Freedman is Ethel Johnson. Freedman population is 15; State Negro, 50; Indians, none; a few Whites.

APPENDIX E

CREEK FREEDMAN POPULATION

At the time of removal from Alabama in 1832, the Lower Creeks owned 457 Negro slaves and the Upper Creeks owned 445 Negro slaves.³ There were also a number of free Negroes among the Upper Creeks.⁴ In 1839 a traveller estimated the Creek Indian population to be 22,500, which "included 393 negro slaves".⁵ This estimate is obviously faulty.

By 1860 the number of slaves held by the entire Creek Nation was 1,651,⁶ and there had probably been added increments of free Negroes as well. After the Civil War an unofficial estimate of the number of Freedmen in the Creek Nation was 4,000.⁷ In 1890 the United States census reports 4,621 Negroes in the Creek Nation, but some of these may have been Freedmen from other states.⁸ In 1904, the number of Creek Freedmen was given as 5,550.⁹

³T.J.Abbott, op.cit., B.S.Parsons, op.cit.

⁴U.S.Senate, Document 512, Vol.III, p.498.

⁵Joseph Kennedy, op.cit., p.xv.

⁶T.J.Farnham, Travels in the Western Praries, p.121.

⁷J.H.Beadle, op.cit., p.386.

⁸L.F.Schmeckebier, The Office of Indian Affairs, p.127.

⁹J.E.Dunn, op.cit., p.57.

In 1867 Major J.W.Dunn, U.S.Indian Agent, had made a roll of the Creek Freedmen. This roll could not be secured by the investigator at the present office of the Agency for the Five Civilized Tribes in Muskogee. It is supposed to list around 5,000 names.

Congress, in 1896, instructed the Dawes Commission to make a roll of the Creek Freedmen entitled to citizenship in the Creek Nation¹⁰ and by a later act, the congress confirmed the old Dunn Roll on the recommendation of the Dawes Commission.¹¹ The names of persons appearing on the Dunn Roll and the names of their descendants were transferred to the Creek Freedman Roll of the Dawes Commission, which appears in the annual reports of that commission. In 1899 the progress of enrollment was reported as follows:

Particularly difficult is the enrollment of the Creek Freedmen whose rights thereto are dependent upon their names or the names of their ancestors appearing on the roll made by J.W.Dunn (U.S.Indian Agent) prior to March 14, 1867, or upon admission to citizenship by proper authority since that time. The chief difficulty in this regard lies in the fact that the Dunn Roll was made immediately after the abolishment of slavery, at which time surnames among slaves was practically unknown. When anything more than a given name was necessary, the names of the former masters were assumed, and it was by this method that Major Dunn enrolled the Creek Freedmen in 1867. Since that time, however, a very large percentage of the freedmen have changed their names, and indeed many are known equally well by several names. After a period of forty years it is not an easy matter to identify those whose names appear on the roll in question.¹²

¹⁰C.J.Kapler, op.cit., Vol. I, p.81.

¹¹ibid., p.98.

¹²United States Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes (Dawes Commission), Annual Report for 1899, p.13.

Negro applicants for citizenship in the Creek Nation were required to submit to investigation before their plea would be heard by the Dawes Commission. A typical citizenship application scrawled in pencil on ruled notepaper reads as follows: "We hereby makes applications for citizen Jeff and William Brown in the Muskogee Nation by I propose to prove I have been raise in this Creek Nation and have drawn in every payment, My father belonged to or was owned by Crabtree. I belongs to Canadian Colored Town."¹³

The population figures of the U.S. Indian Office for the Creeks and their Freedmen indicate that in 1900 the number of Freedmen was supposedly 6,000. In 1901 many Negroes were stricken from the rolls and the total for that year was only 5,000. In 1903 there were 4,954 Creek Freedmen listed; in 1904, 5,473; in 1905, 5,738; in 1906, 6,365; in 1907, 6,807. Since 1907 there have been no changes in the Freedman rolls.¹⁴

The concept of "Creek Freedmen " is one of legal status. Persons are Creek Freedmen by virtue of their names or the names of their ancestors appearing on certain census lists of former Creek slaves. Negroes from other states who were rushed into the Creek Nation by White men and "filed" for allotments, are also enrolled as Creek Freedmen. On the other hand, some descendents of Creek slaves never did come in to "file" until the rolls were closed. They are known today as the "Lost Freedmen and are culturally identified with the main body of Negro Creeks, except that they do not hope to share in any per capita payments which may at some future date be made to enrolled Creek Negroes.

¹³Creek Tribal Records, Archive No. 25063.

¹⁴J.R.Swanton, Early History of the Creek Indians. p.445ff.



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