

**COLLECTIVE AND COLLECTED MEMORIES:
THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE
OF CHICKASAW IDENTITY**

By

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By

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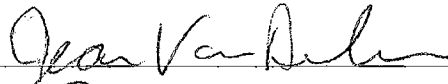
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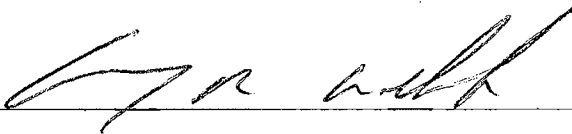
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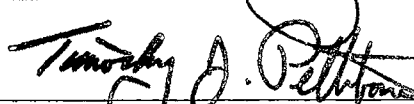
Thesis Advisor











Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Most research begins with the question why? For what reason, cause, or purpose does a social phenomenon exist? This research instead, begins with the question of who? Who are the Chickasaw people and what are the historic, cultural, and personal narratives that mark Chickasaw identity?

Because my concern is the exploration of Chickasaw identity, I essentially seek in this dissertation the following: (1) a general conceptualization of identity, (2) an identification of the various social forms that enable Chickasaw identity construction, and (3) a recognition of the strategies (or frameworks) of “identity living” that maintain Chickasaw identity. Further, I seek to express collectively, why identity is crucial and why Chickasaw identity is important.

I attempt to meet these quires through the exploration and intellectual use of the concepts *collective and collected memory*. By collective memory, I refer to the stories bound in the history, oral, and ceremonial traditions of the Chickasaw people. These are units of knowledge that are passed from generation to generation and which provide a foundation for Chickasaw identity. Speaking broadly of Native memory tales, Wilson (1997:111) writes:

Native history and Native stories have served and continue to serve very important functions: both the historical and mythical stories provide moral guidelines by which one should live; they teach the young and remind the

old what appropriate and inappropriate behavior consists of in our cultures; they provide a sense of identity and belonging, situating community members within their lineage and establishing their relationship to the rest of the natural world; and they always serve as a source of entertainment, as well as a source of bonding and intimacy between storyteller and the audience.

Indeed, as the Native storyteller Leslie Marmon Silko (1977:2) tells us, “You don’t have anything if you don’t have the stories.” And aside from the Native voices which tell us of the importance of these memories, sociology too speaks to the importance of memory, story, and narrative in identity construction. Studs Terkel, the Pulitzer prize winning sociologist, seeks identity (and strategies of living) through what he calls his “memory books” (Terkel, 1970; 1984). These memory books are essentially “stories” that organize individual and collective life and speak to how life ought to be lived. Other sociologists such as Bellah and his colleagues (1985) term group identity a “community of memory,” or “a constitutive narrative... of history and shared love and suffering [that unite us into a peoplehood]” (Bellah et al., 1985:153).

So stated, this portion of the dissertation is principally a macrosociological study. The term macro (sociologically considered) is as Alford (1998:72) writes, “ the aspects of culture and the institutionalized beliefs that create motivations to act in prescribed and expected ways.” Here I define the structured and expected life ways of a group its collective memories. I seek through history and culture the generational (structured) forms that provide the foundation of Chickasaw identity and society.

Particularly among the Chickasaw people this is an important query. What are the structured forms that influence and organize Chickasaw identity? For currently, the “body” of the Chickasaw tribe is quite unique. No longer are the Chickasaw visually,

geographically, or economically identifiable as a separate people. Rather, because of various historical and political conditions tribal persons now constitute multiple racial, spatial, and class orders. This is to say that Chickasaw identity comprises persons “White,” “Black,” and “Indian”¹ across all segments of the social strata.

This poses then an interesting set of circumstances for the sociologist to study. If group membership is diverse regarding race, class, and proximity what serves to bond the Chickasaw into a “peoplehood?” What are the commonalties that mark Chickasaw identity? This work is a quest for such, in that, I again explore the collective memory (the history and myths) of the Chickasaw people to explicate a common framework of identity and action.

But having stated this, an element of this work is also microsociological in intent. By microsociology, I refer to the world of individual choice and behavior in “negotiating,” by acceptance or rejection, the cultural forms available for identity construction (Alford, 1998:72). In other words, I seek also how various Chickasaw individuals live their identity. I seek how they negotiate identity, how they construct it and how they live it. I term these responses the collected memories of the Chickasaw.

Stated more formally, I use the term collected memory to conceptualize the personal experiences and reflections of Chickasaw individuals, that once collected, become part of the broader memory and history of the Chickasaw Nation. Here, I identify

¹ This unique composition is explained in part by the way the Chickasaw Nation recognizes membership. The Nation will grant tribal citizenship to all individuals able to trace family ancestry to the Chickasaw census rolls of 1906. This is to say then, one needs only documented ancestry from an original Dawes enrollee to be considered Chickasaw. Indeed, the rationale for this method of selecting tribal membership is based in part on Chickasaw nationalism. This sense of nationalism holds that the Chickasaw Nation has the right to decide the rules of membership and that no external governing body (such as the U.S. government) has the right to dictate terms of membership.

a sample of the Chickasaw people and offer the individual perceptions regarding what it means to be Chickasaw, as well as the ways in which identity is lived. The collected memories are again, the various strategies of living that maintain and perpetuate Chickasaw identity.

In reiteration, I explore Chickasaw identity from both a macro and micro orientation. Of this study's macro concerns, I seek the collective memories of the Chickasaw. I seek the structured forms of history and culture that serve to influence, guide, and shape Chickasaw identity. In my micro orientations I offer the collected memories of selected Chickasaw persons. From them I investigate the ways by which they negotiate those structured tales and thus conceive and live their identity.

The Remaining Chapters

The remainder of this work is divided into the following sections. Chapter II provides a literature review on works specific to the history and culture of the people of the Chickasaw Tribe. Additionally, chapter II also highlights notable studies that explore Native identity. The goals of this chapter are to orient the reader to existing works on the tribe and to provide a foundation for quires from which my research participants are asked how they organize and live their Chickasaw identity.

Chapter III details the theoretical and methodological guidelines to this study. I begin this chapter with a discussion of identity. Namely, I : (1) introduce the concept of identity, (2) speak to how identities are constructed, (3) identify why identity is important and name selected sociological traditions that conceptualize the formation and perpetuation of group identities, (4) define the perspectives of collective and collected

memories, and (5) address how these two aforementioned perspectives contribute to the study of group identities.

Following this, the latter portion of Chapter III provide my methodological guides. These methodological actions detail my search for Chickasaw identity (the beliefs, values and normative expectations) in the collective and collected memories of the Chickasaw. I search out the collective forms in the history and cultural traditions of the Chickasaw. To garner these forms I rely most firmly within archival and oral traditional modes of data collection. By the archival mode of data collection, I refer to the reconnoitering of the written word (historical texts) for themes that mark Chickasaw identity. While the oral tradition method refers to the collection of spoken memories and personal commentaries that detail events and life experiences. In highlighting the collected forms (the ways in which identity is lived), I too select the mode of oral tradition and interviewing.

Chapter IV offers the historical voice of the Chickasaw people. This chapter presents a brief social and population history of the Chickasaw community, and is (as noted above) reconnoitered for various stories of value and culture that may be used to construct Chickasaw identity. In a fashion similar to the preceding chapter, chapter V relates the various myths, stories, and rituals of the Chickasaw. This collection is compiled for the beliefs and values contained within may too be used to structure identity.

Chapter VI completes the broad portrait of what it means to be Chickasaw by offering the reflections and “frameworks of living” concerning the identity maintenance of selected Chickasaw individuals. In total, these chapters serve as “ethnic foundations” or “structures of memory and experience” that are fundamental to the construction and

maintenance of an ethnic group identity (Menchaca, 2001). From these chapters a general understanding of Chickasaw identity is urged

Chapter VII follows with a broad sociological analysis of the contexts of this study. Specifically, I address “what this study means” and why this study contributes to the field of sociology. In closing, chapter VIII concludes this work with summary statements and reflections from the author.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

As Hoyt (1987:vii) notes in her *Bibliography of the Chickasaw*, “the Chickasaw have been perhaps, the most neglected of the [Oklahoma] Tribes.” In concurrence with these words I, too, argue that the Chickasaw have been neglected in description, study, and social recognition. Such then is the purpose of this project overall. While the specific purpose of this chapter is to offer relevant works highlighting Chickasaw and Native American identity.

Chickasaw Identity

Beginning with the author cited above, Hoyt (1987) offers to date the definitive collection of source material on the Chickasaw. With some 1,636 entries Hoyt provides a wealth of research citations on the social, cultural and political history of the tribe. Indeed, such is an excellent starting point for persons interested in conducting research on the Chickasaw tribe

From Hoyt (1987) I reference multiple works which speak to Chickasaw history, culture, and identity. The first of these is Adair’s (1775) *The History of the American Indians*. As an English trader living among the Chickasaw, James Adair observed and interpreted many aspects of the Chickasaw’s social and ceremonial life. Adair’s work is perhaps the earliest “popular” work which details the history of the Chickasaw.

Such however, is a history and a work that tends to be overlooked by scholars. As Green (1994:5) writes:

[Adair's observations became infused with a religious vision in which he] found many similarities between the Jews and the Muskogean Tribes (Chickasaw, Choctaw and Creek), and which in time, lead him to develop a theory that the tribes were the literal descendants of the Jews... So preposterous was this theory to some scholars that they tended to denigrate all of Adair's work.

Despite this theory, Adair's work is nonetheless viable when considering the ancient customs and structures of the Chickasaw. And it is one that will be explored in latter discussions (see Chapter VI-- The Myths and Legends of the Chickasaw).

Another relevant work regarding the Chickasaw cultural beliefs is H.B. Cushman's (1899) *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*. Cushman, the son of missionaries, lived among the Choctaw and too is responsible for recording legends that account for the history of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez. In the lore provided by Cushman all three tribes were believed "to be one" historically. Cushman notes that the "birth" of the specific tribes were a result of historical conflicts that separated the once collective whole (again, such histories will be explored throughout this work. See especially, Chapter VI).

Having lived among the Choctaw, Cushman's work (like Adair's) is a collection of tales and observations made and recorded "firsthand." As such, they become invaluable sources of inquiry when seeking knowledge about the Muskogean tribes. But, a note of caution is also due, for these collections are infused with a particular bias. Adair (1775) wanted to "see" the Chickasaw as the "chosen people," and Cushman (1899) presents a sentimentally prejudiced work. As Hoyt (1998:42) writes, Cushman resented

the wrongs to his beloved people [the Indians] and he tried to correct the portrayals by prejudiced writers. His accounts, are unfortunately, idealized...”

Here, within this study, I do take a note of caution from the aforementioned works. I do believe that there is something unique (and special) about a people by way of their history and culture. But this work is not an attempt to elevate Chickasaw identity to the level of a positive stereotype. For instance, as Mihesuah (1999:25) writes:

[works of scholars and products of popular culture] have created many American Indian identities... Since contact, American Indians have been romanticized, reviled, admired, feared and hated.”

So stated, I seek not to *create* an identity for the Chickasaw people within this work; rather I hope to relate some of the identities that the Chickasaw have constructed through their history, culture, and collective experiences.

Following Adair (1775) and Cushman (1899), the works of Warren (1904), Malone (1922), and Yarborough (1938) are key. Harry Warren (1904), in volume eight of the *Publication of The Mississippi Historical Society*, offers an insightful account of the social life of the tribe. Warren mixes legend and myth with narrative accounts by European explorers, missionaries, and American dignitaries. In so doing, he provides a work that highlights the social structure of the Chickasaw nation prior to their relocation to Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma).¹

Malone’s (1922) *The Chickasaw Nation, A Short Sketch of a Noble People* is a culmination of the previously cited works. It offers a comprehensive history of the tribe just prior to the date of its publication. Malone’s work begins with the first Chickasaw-

¹ Historically, the Chickasaw were a native tribe occupying the regions of northern Mississippi; northwestern Alabama, and western Tennessee and Kentucky. Today the body of the Chickasaw Nation resides in southern Oklahoma.

European encounter and ends with the tribes removal to Indian Territory. As Hoyt (1987:98) notes, the Malone work “was the definitive history of the tribe,” and as such, an important work in the interpretation of Chickasaw identity.

Yarborough’s (1938) *The Transition of the Chickasaw Indians from an Organized Nation to a Part of a State*, offers a concise history of the Chickasaw Nation from removal to Oklahoma statehood. In particular, Yarborough highlights the institution of law and treaty policies, and the role of such legal forms in the creation and dissolution of the Chickasaw Nation.² Additionally, Yarborough’s includes in his appendix the oral histories and reflections of several Chickasaw individuals.

Other influential studies highlight the works of ethnologist John Swanton (1926; 1928a; 1946). Swanton’s 1926 piece, “Social and Religious Beliefs of the Chickasaw,” (in *The Forty Forth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*) is a most important work. Within this work, Swanton identifies numerous “old world” cultural patterns among the Chickasaw. Included are discussions of social and clan divisions, rites of passage, and marriage and death rituals. This work has, in fact, been used by various leaders of the present-day Chickasaw Nation to reconstruct a knowledge of their own cultural heritage (Chickasaw Nation Pamphlet, no date *Religious Beliefs and Oral Traditions of The Chickasaw Nation*).³

Swanton’s (1928a, 1946) works are also valuable in that they identify many of the shared cultural and social characteristics of the southeastern Indian tribes. In the *Forty*

² With the advent of Oklahoma statehood, Chickasaw self governance was officially dissolved on March 1906.

³ This pamphlet was made available to guests at the 2002 *Chikasah Renewal*. The renewal is a three day summer festival celebrating the preservation of Chickasaw cultural identity and heritage.

Second Annual Report of Ethnology, (1928a) Swanton describes the physical and personal appearances the southeast Indians, as well as other commonalities of custom and language. The *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 137* (1946) is much the same with an overview of each tribe and a sketch of population numbers. For a greater understanding of Muskogean culture see also Swanton (1908, 1911a, 1911b, 1922, 1928b, 1931).

Arrell Gibson's (1971) *The Chickasaws* is the most recent *comprehensive* history of the Chickasaw tribe. Gibson's work has been called "the bible" of Chickasaw history, mainly because of its accessibility in both writing style and in availability. In reality, Gibson's (1971) work contains little more than Malone's (1922) *The Chickasaw Nation*; yet it is still in print, and as mentioned, is an enjoyable read. Gibson (1971) traces the history of the tribe from their first recorded contacts with Europeans in 1540 to the federal dissolution of the tribe with Oklahoma statehood in 1906-1907.

David Baird's (1974) work, *The Chickasaw People* continues the "story of the Chickasaw" where Gibson (1971) concluded. Of specific interest is the history of the grassroots movement by the Chickasaw people to reclaim their political autonomy. Having lost their status as an independent nation with the creation of Oklahoma statehood, Baird traces the (ultimately) successful Chickasaw reclamation movement (see also Green, 1995, 1996, 1997 for this history). Baird's story of the Chickasaw ends in 1971 with of the election of Governor Overton James (the first Chickasaw governor to be elected by the Chickasaw people since Oklahoma statehood).⁴

⁴ The Chickasaw people were not allowed to elect their own tribal leaders till 1963. Prior to 1963, all Chickasaw officials were appointed by the President of the United States.

Published the same year as Baird (1974), the work of Cecil Sumners (1974) *Chief Tishomingo: A History of the Chickasaw Indians, and some Historical Events of Their Era (1737 -- 1839)*, moves in the opposite direction. Inspired by the reclamation movement of the Chickasaw nation, Sumners seeks to capture some of the “old world” culture of the Chickasaw. He offers a work full of Chickasaw legends and histories of prominent Chickasaw individuals. Indeed, Sumners (1974) work is a delight when seeking knowledge on some of the “old ways” of the Chickasaw.

After Baird (1974) and Sumner (1974), one of the most recent works highlighting Chickasaw culture is Hale and Gibson’s (1991) *The Chickasaw*. Intended as a “short history” of the Chickasaw, Hale and Gibson’s (1991) work is, in part, a condensed version of Gibson’s (1971) *The Chickasaws*. This work is valuable as a historical piece overall and its concluding pages are worthy for they offer the history of the tribe from the election of Governor James to the closing years of the 1980s.

Moving into the 1990s and beyond, the process of recording the history of the tribe has been the product of the Chickasaw people themselves. In 1994 the Chickasaw Nation launched *The Journal of Chickasaw History*. The journal is published four times a year and offers oral histories and cultural and historic preservations of “all things Chickasaw” (this includes legends, traditions, and stories of personal experience). The journal is a most helpful collection of Chickasaw experiences and is a necessary component when considering the processes that construct Chickasaw identity.

The *Chickasaw Times: Official Publication of the Chickasaw Nation* is offered as another valuable citation for those seeking insight into Chickasaw history and identity. The *Chickasaw Times* is a monthly newspaper mailed free to all registered Chickasaw

voters (and otherwise interested persons) that details the current actions and events of the tribe. The newspaper series began its run in the 1970s and continues to the date of this publication. It is a necessary source for persons seeking information on the Chickasaw Nation and its people.

Finally, not to ignore modern warehouses of data, several Internet web sites provide useful information on Chickasaw history and identity. Of particular interest are Sultzmänn's (1999) *Chickasaw History* and Loveable's (2002) *The Chickasaw Nation*.⁵ Both offer a collection of Chickasaw legends and a relatively detailed history of the Chickasaw people. Further, both are referenced here (and are considered valid), for the information contained within have been reported in the official web page of the Chickasaw Nation (www.chickasaw.net).

Native American Identity: What Does It Mean To Be Indian? ⁶

Within this work I ask, and seek an answer to the basic question, "Who are the Chickasaw people?" Having offered citations which speak to Chickasaw history and identity, I wish to shift my focus ever so slightly and turn to works that highlight Native American identity more broadly.

In doing this, I ask, "What does it mean to be Indian?" And, "How is Indian identity formed?" Again, I ask these questions in order to better conceptualize how Chickasaw persons construct and experience their identity. I begin with conceptual definitions of American Indian identity.

⁵ The dates listed for Internet data sources identify the year of copyright, or date of revision for those sites.

⁶ Here, I use the terms "Native American," "American Indian," "Indian," and "Native," interchangeably.

The concept “Native American/American Indian” is a constructed category. As noted earlier, Native American identity is one that has been largely determined by non-Indians. As Kaufmann (1993:31) writes:

The idea of ‘Indian’ is a relatively new concept for Indians themselves. The idea of ‘Indian’ first appeared when Christopher Columbus identified the population of North America as ‘los lindos,’ but prior to the late 1960s and early 1970s a unified concept of Indian did not exist. The population referred to as Indian, referred to themselves in terms of members of specific tribes or clans. There is no satisfactory definition; the term is an attempt to classify a diverse race of people.

Indeed, the idea of a “race” itself is a social construction. White, Black, Indian, and “Other” are merely cultural, political, and social definitions. Nancy Shoemaker in “How Indians Got to be Red” (1997) notes:

Undeniably, race (the belief that people can be categorized by observable physical differences such as skin color) flourished with the early European slave trade. Sometime in the eighteenth century, ‘race’... became the primary justification for expropriating the land and labor of others. As a system of categorizing people, race, fulfilled Europe’s ideological needs by creating the illusion that human differences was biologically ordained... this is the standard explanation for how Indians got to be ‘red’ (p. 625)

... [Seeking legitimacy in the African slave trade] Europeans [merged theology with the ‘science’ of race], to place Africans at the bottom of a Godly hierarchy of creation [a hierarchy that conceptualized them as ‘beasts of burden,’ and which justified their exploitation]... But in this process, the existence of the Indian also had to be explained. Were Indians descended from Adam and Eve or were there separate creations? (p. 636)

... The answer lies in the fact that both the Europeans and Indians experimented with notions of biological differences... They both adapted origin beliefs to come up with divine explanations for political, cultural and social divisions. [Some Europeans conceptualized the Indians as a separate ‘red race,’ to legitimate the exploitation that would eventually befall them; while] Indians themselves have used ‘red’ to claim a positive identity and to make a statement about difference (p.643)

... The adaptability of racial categories to fit particular political and social alignments illuminates critical features of the idea of race in general.

People do not believe in race abstractly but instead manipulate racial categories to suit contextualized objectives... And such is evident in the fact that 'red' continues to be contested (pgs. 643-644).

True to Shoemaker's (1997) words, being "Indian" today is still a battle of definition and political context. Take for example two recent arguments (one by a non-Native Oklahoma political representative, and one by the leader of an Oklahoma tribe) over how to define "Indianness." According to Oklahoma Rep. Wayne Pettigrew, an "Indian" is anyone who has an Indian blood quantum of 50 percent or more. He reports, "Any person who has any amount less than 50 percent Indian *heritage* should consider himself 'more of something else' (Dodson, 2002:1A-2A -- italics are mine for emphasis).

Out of this definition, several issues should be noted. First, Pettigrew assumes that "Indianness" is linked directly to blood quantum. He assumes that blood equals heritage. Or, to state differently, that biology determines culture. According to sociological reasoning however, "culture" (which includes a group's language system, as well as its social beliefs and values) is an identity crafted within one's social environment. Identity is not one entirely determined by the dynamics of biology (For substantive works which speak to this issue see: Ryan, 1976; Herman, 1994; Golud, 1996; Eitzen and Zinn, 2000).

Nonetheless, as interpreted through Pettigrew's words, blood is seen to determine culture. Further in this sense, Pettigrew argues that as "Native blood" diminishes through biological assimilation (intermarriage with whites, etc.), so too does one's cultural claim to possessing an Indian identity. He goes as far to say, "You're not a separate nation anymore when you cease to be half Indian" (Dodson, 2002: 2A).

Indeed, such a statement may be rewritten to read, “You’re not an Indian anymore when an outside force (such as the federal government) determines your blood quantum to be less than 50 percent Native American.” My sarcasm aside, non-Indians are not the only ones who try to limit access to Indian identities. In an ongoing debate about “Indianness,” the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma provides a further example of the social construction of race.

In 1866, the Seminole Nation made a treaty with the federal government granting full citizenship rights to the Seminole freedmen (Black ex-slaves of the Seminole Nation) (Schultz, 1999). Always a contested issue within the tribe, the matter festered into a political firestorm in the summer of 2002. In 2002 the federal government withheld federal moneys to the tribe after its elected officials attempted to banish black Seminoles from the nation.

According to Wayne Shaw, chairman of the Seminole general council, “Their is no such thing as a black Seminole” (*The Shawnee News Star*, 2003:1A). Such sentiments are further strengthened by the words of Ken Chambers (the dispossessed leader of the Seminole Nation). He notes:

To be Seminole is to be Seminole by blood... If you want to keep the Seminole Nation alive... you must keep the blood lines pure. If you want to keep the bloodlines going, you got to keep [the races] separate (*The Shawnee News Star*, 2003:1A).⁷

Thus again, “race” and identity are often constructed (and contested) within perceptions of blood. Indeed, to be recognized as an American Indian by the U.S.

⁷ According to Robertson (2002), the Black Seminole (known also as the Seminole Freedman) were an integral part of the Seminole Nation. Historically, the Freedmen held tribal positions, spoke the language, participated in ritual and ceremony, and fought with the Seminole in times of war. Robertson argues that the Freedman were recognized as tribal members in the past, and should thus be recognized today as “being Seminole”).

government an unbroken descent from a historically known tribe must be demonstrated.

As Raymond Fogelson (1998:43) writes:

It is assumed [by the federal government] that there exists a linkage, [an identity] forged by a chain of blood that connects historical tribes and their modern descendants...

Further, individuals enrolled in Native tribes must possess a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (a CDIB card) from the federal government to be (federally) recognized as a Native American. Thornton (1998:29) writes, "The Bureau of Indian Affairs uses a specific degree of Indian blood - generally one fourth degree of Native American ancestry - or tribal membership or both to recognize an individual as Native American."⁸

But is blood really the sole requirement to a claim of Native identity? Is someone who is a "quarter-blood" (or more) Indian, but raised without a cultural awareness of their tribal history truly an Indian? Or is someone who is culturally aware (e.g., speaks the tribal language, etc.), but who has a lesser blood quantum an Indian? Is being Indian, blood and biology, or culture? -- or mixtures of both?

According to Mihesuah (1999:14-15), Indian persons are struggling to determine their own identities both cultural and biological. He writes:

Racial identity is the biological race one claims... a person can be biologically mixed-blood or full-blood and have no exposure to the cultural mores of an American Indian tribe, being connected to their group only by value of genetics. *Cultural identity* reflects the cultural standards of a society to which one subscribes... Indians who practice their specific tribal traditions and who are profoundly affected socially, religiously, and

⁸ Federal definitions of "Indianness" often require an individual to have at least ¼ (25%) Native blood quantum. However, under the 1934 *Indian Reorganization Act* and the 1975 *Indian Self Determination Act*, individual tribes have the right to determine their own membership conditions (see Thomas, et al. 2001 for this history). The Chickasaw, for instance, write: "The Chickasaw Nation shall consist of all Chickasaw Indians by blood whose names appear on the final rolls of the Chickasaw Nation approved pursuant to Section 2 of the Act of April 26, 1906 and their lineal descendants" (The Constitution of the Chickasaw Nation -- Article II). Thus, Chickasaw membership is made available to original enrollees *and their descendants*, regardless of blood quantum levels.

politically by those traditions are often referred to as culturally Indian. [But who is an Indian?] Persons claim both racial background and cultural adherence as the key to Indian identity.

So stated, I explore within this work these fundamental queries. I ask, "What are Chickasaw perceptions of being Indian? Is "being Chickasaw" biology or culture? I detail such themes in Chapter VII -- The experiences and oral histories of being Chickasaw.

If however, Indian identity is more than just biology we need also to explore its cultural components. We need to ask, "What are the cultural processes that maintain Indian identity? According to Champagne (1999) the primary cultural criteria that enable Indian identity are: (1) the ability to speak the tribal language; (2) a firm knowledge of the tribe's history and ceremonial life; (3) community involvement and/or close proximity of living to other tribal members.

Of course, we will need to explore through the Chickasaw people - as established in their own words and through their criteria - what it means to be Chickasaw. But other scholars, Indian and non-Indian alike, claim similar cultural conditions. Mihesuah (1999:15) for instance writes, "Traditional Indians adhere to the culture of the tribe by speaking the language, participating in ceremonies, and living among their tribespeople." Morris Foster (1991) in *Being Comanche* argues that Comanche identity is a process of possessing the correct stock cultural knowledge (knowledge of Comanche language and customs) and communicating that knowledge in interaction. He writes:

Membership in Comanche community has, at least since the early eighteenth century, depended exclusively on communicative competence and has not included other criteria such as birth. Thus Comanches were able to supplement their population in the nineteenth century by incorporating into their community captives who had learned to communicate and interact appropriately. Conversely, those in the twentieth century who have been "born Comanche" (that is, who have a father or

mother who is recognized as a community member) but who have not learned to communicate competently are not considered “real Comanches” by other community members (Foster, 1991:22).

Jack Schultz, in *The Seminole Baptist Churches of Oklahoma* (1999) too finds that Seminole/Indian identity is a process of interaction, communication, and involvement in the community. In fact, Schultz (as a non-Seminole) gained tribal and clan membership through his field work and participation with the tribe. He writes:

After I had spent countless hours within the community, one pastor assigned a clan, his clan, to me: ‘If you’re around Indians all the time, you claim one of them clans...’ After I was assigned *Ahalvhvlke* (“potato”) clan, the people who were gathered around the table announced their clans to me and the accompanying relationship (e.g., “sister,” “brother,” “daddy”) ... One of those present punned that my clan was really *Ahalvhvtke* (“white potato”)!⁹

Other works, such as Kaufmann (1993) and Sanchez (1995) examine Indian identity through various cultural frameworks. Laurel Kaufmann (1993) for instance, explores the creation of American Indian identities through the production of art. Kaufmann notes that through the production of art, the artist is able to explore and express his/her political, social and personal identities. He writes:

I bracket American Indian art into three categories: American-Indian Protest Art-- art that is used as a political tool to address and protest the artist’s perceptions of past atrocities by the dominant culture against American Indians. Traditional Art -- art that uses ‘symbolic’ imagery. This style appears prior to contact with Europeans... and continues in its present form with art that depicts history, ceremonies, and lifestyles of American Indians. Contemporary Art-- art that reflects the more current or recent lifestyles, material cultures, and social functions after Whites’ attempts to assimilate and acculturate American Indians... Indeed, for many, the search for American Indian Identity is accomplished through the creation of art (Kaufmann, 1993:8-9).

⁹ It is interesting to note that Schultz (a white scholar) was welcomed into the Seminole tribe as a member; while today, the Black Freedmen are not seen as “being Seminole” because they are not of “Indian blood” -- see earlier statements made by Ken Chambers.

Victoria Sanchez (1995) makes a similar exploration and examines how Native identity is built through collective dance. Sanchez argues that through the powwow individuals are able to visualize the past and establish their identity through the tradition of the dance. Collectively, dancing the powwow confirms the individual's commitment to the community as well as establishing the community's commitment to the individual. And while Kaufmann (1993) focuses on the production of fine art (e.g., painting, sculpture), and Sanchez (1995) on dance, other scholars identify the similar role that folk art (e.g., cloth weaving, food making) and art of music play in constructing identity (Johnston, 1976; Miewald, 1995; Nagel, 1996).

Others still, such as Hayes (1997) and Partnow (1993), speak of Native identity as a process constructed through oral tradition, myth and memory. They argue, as Wilson (1997) noted in the opening chapter of this work, that story telling provides the link between generations and establishes the cultural sense of what it means to be Indian. Indeed, as argued here, culture (be it the production of language, food, art, music, etc.) plays a significant role in the maintenance of Native identities. As phrased so eloquently by Nagel (1996), "culture is the life blood of identity." She states:

Culture is the heart and life blood of identity. Those ideational and material aspects of social life- language, religion, ceremony, myth, belief, values, folkways, mores, food, housing, kinship, dress, adornment-are the substance of a people. Culture is the magnet that attracts and repels. Its commonalities pull us together; its differences push us apart. It both smoothes and stymies communication, supports and subverts understanding. It cultivates cohesion, yet is the breeding ground of ethnocentrism. Culture underlies both the universal and the unique in human societies. It is the essence of [individual and collective identity] (Nagel, 1996:43).

So stated, I seek through this work, the cultural components, stories, experiences and memories that claim Native and Chickasaw identity? I ask the participants of this study:

- (1). What does it mean to be American Indian?
- (2). Is being Indian, blood or heritage?
- (3). If being Indian is blood, what blood quantum amount is required to be an Indian? At what blood level does being Indian end? What are the unique properties of Indian blood?
- (3). If being Indian is heritage, what are the main cultural components that make an Indian identity?
- (4). What does it mean to be Chickasaw?
- (5). How is Chickasaw identity lived? How is it maintained, and how is it passed on?
- (6). What is the future of the Chickasaw Community?
- (7). What are your stories, memories, or experiences of being Chickasaw?

CHAPTER III

Theoretical and Methodological Guidelines

The central foci of this work is the exploration of Chickasaw identity. I seek specifically the knowledge (again, the histories, memories, and experiences) that construct Chickasaw identity. And because I pursue the Chickasaw experience, this work is primarily descriptive. But, this is not to say that I merely outline the narratives that frame Chickasaw identity. I seek also to lay bare the very foundations of Chickasaw identity. I address theoretically the social forms that enable, unify, and perpetuate the Chickasaw community. Or to state in another manner, I seek through theory, the properties that bind the Chickasaw people to one another and the strategies through which Chickasaw identity is lived.

By theory I refer to what Turner (1986:4) has labeled a “mental activity... a [set] of ideas that allow us to explain why and how events occur.” Here, I organize a set of ideas that help to explain *why* Chickasaw group identity exists, and *how* the Chickasaw live and perpetuate their identity. Within this chapter I specifically: (1) introduce the concept of identity; (2) speak to how identities are constructed; (3) address why identity is important and name selected sociological traditions that conceptualize the formation and perpetuation of group identities; (4) define the perspectives of collective and collected memories, and (5) speak to how these latter perspectives contribute to the sociological study of group identity.

Identity Defined

In the most general terms identity is defined as “who a person is.” Here however, I seek a more definitive conceptualization. Drawing from sociological literature, identity is a code of social recognition and action built in the intersection of group history, culture, and structural position. As Stuart Hall defines it, “identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall 1990:25). To strengthen this conception I reference Linda Alcoff. She (2003:3) writes, “identities are produced through the interplay of names and social roles foisted on us by dominant narratives together with the particular choices families, communities, and individuals make over how to interpret and or resist [those narratives].”

In this manner then, identities are both self imposed and assigned. Identity is a negotiation between the narratives spoken by those external to the individual or group and those that are self organized. Thus as Anderson (1983) composes for us, all identities are “imagined” or constructed within various narratives. And the importance is distinguishing how they are imagined “(e.g., from “within” or “without” the group) and to what ends and outcomes” (Flores, 2003:97).

This is to say, some identities are externally imagined and may take the form of negative stereotypes. While other identities are imagined (constructed) within internal cultural expressions. And to reiterate, it is important to identify both the interior and external perspectives that orient group identity. Identifying both is a necessary step in uncovering how a group organizes its actions (as both a response to stereotypes and as a mechanism of promotion concerning the “desired” behavior among group members).

So far then, identity has been presented as a collection of (and sometimes competition between) various “narratives” and “imaginations.” Essentially, these narratives and imaginations are statements of belief and value. So stated, I take these conceptualizations and offer my own interpretation of identity. I define identity as a warehouse of beliefs, values, and role (normative) expectations that influence human action. Thus, as argued here, one’s identity is essentially a code of action. But having now stated this, from where does this code of action (the beliefs, values and normative expectations) originate?

The Construction of Identity

Identity is both a structure of life position and a process of living. In this first conception, identity is a cultural and historical construction (a matter of being born and socialized into a particular cultural group and historical epoch). The second is a personal manifestation (a set of beliefs and values that one chooses based on individual experience rooted in interaction and cognition). As Cote and Levine (2002:8) state, “[the aspect of identity constructed in history and culture] is termed *social identity*. They continue:

At the level of social identity the individual is most influenced by cultural factors and social roles with varying degrees of pressure to fit into the available identity “molds” created by these influences... social identity is dictated by one’s position in the social structure (2002:8).

Max Weber (1961) argued that identification with a group (a social identity) is a feeling of consciousness of kind that begins first with a commonality of culture. Weber believed that any aspect of culture (e.g., language, religious, secular, and social ceremonies) can be a starting point for the formation of a group identity. Other scholars concur with Weber’s cultural conception of social identity. For instance, Herder (1969)

argued that a group identity is constituted through its language and culture. As Poole (2003:272) writes of Herder, “ He emphasized the significance of the practices, customs and rituals of everyday life, and of stories, folk beliefs and myths in terms of which people make sense of their lives.” Herder felt that identity “was the language in which these stories, beliefs and myths find expression” (Poole, 2003:272). Still others (Elkin, 1983; Nagel, 1995; Poole, 2003; Flores, 2003; Featherstone, 2003), propose that group identity is learned in the course of group activities (e.g., language, religion, styles of living, family celebrations, food customs). Specifically, as Poole (2003:275) writes:

We begin to acquire our national identity on our mother’s knee. We discover our nation - as we discover ourselves - in the bed-time stories we are told, the songs which put us to sleep, the games we play as children, the heroes we are taught to admire and the enemies we come to fear and detest.

In this sense then, the identity process is partly a control system, “a structured set of meanings that serves as a standard or reference to who one is” (Burke, 1991). This formulation views identity as a “code of action” constructed and guided by existing social groups and structures (Burke, 1980, 1991; Stryker, 1968; R.H. Turner, 1978; Hogg, et al. 1995). To state through the words of George Herbert Mead, “the organization of identity reflects the organization of society” (Weigert et al., 1986:12). Thus as Stryker (1980:388) argues, “the [analysis] and prediction of behavior requires an analysis of the social structure.” Within this work, I intend to seek out the structural (historic and cultural) forms that serve to influence and organize Chickasaw social identity.

However having stated this, any valid analysis of the creation of identity need take into account both the social structure (the existing cultural and social patterns) as well as the lived experiences and cognitive choices of the individuals within those structures. As

Howard (1994:210) writes, “Because social structures are negotiated and redefined through individual action, models that facilitate connections between micro and macro levels of analysis are necessary for a comprehensive account of social stability and change.”

The social structure (defined here as the narratives of history and culture) do serve to constrain individuals through preexisting standards of belief and behavioral expectation. Yet, social structures are also continually negotiated through individual thought and action (Blumer, 1969; Garfinkel, 1984; Howard, 1994). Thus, an analysis of contemporary social structure require investigations into human cognition. Sociologists need to examine, “how social structure is represented and sustained by the cognitive and behavioral acts of individuals (Howard, 1994:210). To state differently, though identity is mediated by social structure, it is also a matter of cognition. And to understand individual identity processes (the selection and maintenance of a personal identity), it is necessary to understand how people perceive, evaluate, and negotiate structural information.

Of the identity crafted in the living experience, such is termed *personal identity*. Cote and Levine (2002:8) define personal identity as one’s “learning history,” or set of experiences and choices that the individual makes in the acceptance or rejection of the social identities defined within the social structure. Stated in another manner, one’s personal identity is one’s strategy of living. They are the strategies of acceptance and maintenance (or rejection) regarding the social (group) identities made available to people. In this form then, I seek from my Chickasaw participants their cognitive interpretations and approaches to living a Chickasaw identity.

In summary, identity is both a structured set of beliefs, values, and norms, and a matter of individual choice as to internalize or disavow these forms. Here, I seek the broad structural forms (the social identities) through the Chickasaw collective memories. And I seek the Chickasaw personal identities (the individual interpretations and strategies of expression) within the concept of collected memory. In final, I also wish to state that I do not seek to create here a specific theory that integrates (through formal propositions) the levels of structure and cognition (the social and personal identities). What I do wish to advocate is that both levels of analysis are useful. I hope to demonstrate that identity is a function of both external (social) and internal (cognitive) factors.

Why Identity is Important: Selected Sociological Traditions

Identities are important specifically because they are models of society, social relations, and personal conduct. At the macro level, a group identity may be defined as a common stock of knowledge (a set of histories, stories and experiences) that can be accessed for “core values” that generate a framework of collective action (Featherstone, 1991). In this fashion, social identity has been at the historic core of sociological inquiry. Emile Durkheim (1947) for instance, placed particular emphasis on the collective identity built in ritual and ceremony. Specifically, he noted the central role that collective identity played in creating society, and of the necessity of identity maintenance in perpetuating society. Durkheim (1947:418-419) writes, “It may be said that nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion... born out of the collective [stories] that organize collective sentiments.” And of the necessity of identity maintenance, Featherstone (2003:346) writes, “the use of rituals and [stories] can be understood as acting like

batteries which store and recharge the sense of identity [thus recharging commitment to community and society].”

Following the tradition of thought initiated by Durkheim, the work of Talcott Parsons is key. Parsons (1937, 1966) held that the core of every society is a network of socially shared meanings, beliefs, and values. The beliefs and values that the members of a society are able to create structure the basic ways in which they organize their social life. Parsons, in fact, argued that the central concern of sociological theory should be with the phenomena of the internalization and institutionalization of values. "Sociological theory, then, is for us that aspect of [study] which is concerned with the phenomena of the institutionalization of patterns of value orientation in the social system" (Parsons 1951:552). Parsons (1951:5-6) continues:

Reduced to its simplest terms... a social system consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other... and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms *of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols*.

The cultural system is for Parsons the base of society. “The cultural system [is the place] that ideas, symbols and values exist essential in their own right, and it is on this level that such concepts as ‘collective representation,’ ‘world view,’ and other universal characteristics be analyzed” (Wolff 1975:96).

Thus with Durkheim and Parsons, there exist what Ritzer (1996:233) terms, “consensus theories” or “sociological theories that see shared norms and values as fundamental to the existence of society.” And the tradition of consensus theories continue.

Robert Bellah, as student of Parsons and a proponent of this tradition of thought, defines group identity within a “community of memory” (Bellah et al., 1985:152). A community of memory is “a constitutive narrative... of history and shared love and suffering [that unite the group into a peoplehood]” (Bellah et al., 1985:153).

A community of memory [are] stories of collective history and exemplary individuals... that contain conceptions of character... The communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope. They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and see our own efforts as being in, contributions to a common good (Bellah et al., 1985:153).

Yetman (1999:2) summarizes the community of memory, “as [the symbolic place] where people share an identity rooted in a collective history, tradition, and experience that can be both heroic and painful... [which then helps to spur] patterns of loyalty and obligation that keep the community alive.”

Beyond Bellah and his colleagues, other scholars such as Anderson, 1983; Flores, 2003; Rosaldo, 2003; Poole, 2003, and Featherstone, 2003, hold the consensus tradition firm when conceptualizing social identities. Anderson’s (1983) *Imagined Communities*, speaks to the formation of ethnic and national identities within narratives of history, struggle, and hope. Essentially, reasons Anderson, the social identity of any group is crafted in story. Identities are the “imagined” narratives that create a value context of who “we” are as a people and how “we” should live (Anderson, 1983). Indeed, as Flores (2003:100) writes:

The “imaginary” in this sense does not signify the “not real,” or some make-believe realm oblivious to the facts, but a projection beyond the “real” as [systems of unification and hope] that fashion a unity creatively

on the basis of shared memory and desire [and] congruent histories of misery and struggle.¹

Guided by Anderson's theoretical conception, Flores seeks Latino identity. He (2003:101) finds:

It is important to recognize that the Latino imaginary, like that of other oppressed groups, harbors the elements of an alternative ethos, an element of cultural values and practices created in its own right and to its own ends... Latino identity is imagined not at the negation of the non-Latino, but as the affirmation of cultural and social realities, myths and possibilities, as they are inscribed in their own human trajectory.

Continuing Flores (2003) formulation of Latino identity, Rosaldo (2003) argues too that Latino identity is encapsulated in memory. She offers in a critical manner (as to challenge and inspire a Latino political voice), the following family poem:

Remember who, how, Remember who you are. How did I get here?
Remember your ancestors. Remember your descendants. Remember your language. Remember who you are even when there's prejudice of who and what you are. Remember.

In summary then, Latino identities, like all group identities, are "most prominent as a cultural imaginary... a community of memory and desire" (Flores, 2003:102).

Poole (2003) and Featherstone (2003) approach the creation of national identities in a similar manner. Poole (2003:275) writes, "The resources which are necessary to understand national identity are those provided by the language, history, literature, music and other cultural traditions which form the national narrative." And to summarize and bridge this tradition of thought with collective memories, I cite the work of Featherstone (2003:345-346) who writes:

¹ Regarding memory and "imagined community," Studs Terkel (1970:3) asks, "Are they telling the truth, can this 'memory' be trusted?" He answers in turn, "[They're] telling the truth all right. The truth is for him [in the values and ideals] that guide him." Truly, collective memories, or imagined communities are the ideals contained within the memories and stories; they are the forces that influence and direct social life. Thus, in this sense, memories and imaginations are real.

When we speak of national identity... we should consider the existence of... an integrated set of 'core values' or common assumptions rooted... in emotionally sustaining rituals, ceremonies and collective memories. [From the Durkheimian] ceremonies which reinforce our family, local and national sense of collective identity, it is also possible to draw on collective memories..."

Collective Memory²

The term *collective memory* was introduced by Halbwachs (1980:23-24), who wrote:

In reality we are never alone... The remembrances of a group are with us. Moreover, through collective memory we [are able] to re-enter the group... and adopt their viewpoint... [and in so doing] we can feel the group's influence and recognize in [our self] many ideals and ways of thinking that could not have originated with us and [which] keep us in contact with [them and their ideals].

Indeed, it may be said that our memories remain collective for we participate in the memories of others. Or to phrase in another manner, memories are often made and shared in the presence of others and are thus collective. As Schuman and Corning (2000:914) write, "because knowledge consists of memories of events -- whether directly experienced or learned about from others -- we regard it as collective memory.

And while collective memories are made in moments of experience with others, they are also ageless. They are the "living bond of generations" (Halbwachs, 1980). As Halbwachs (1980: 63) continues, "[Collective memories] are stories [that are] oblivious of the times and which link the past and future together across the present..."

² Why have I chosen collective memory as my framework of investigation over those concepts of "imagined community" or "community of memory?" In truth, while each term is analytically similar, I believe it was the formulation of collective memory that inspired the conceptualization of "imagined community" and "community of memory." Thus, I seek to ground this work in the original voice.

Where Collective Memory May Be Found

It is again the contention of the author that collective memories (stories and experiences of the past) are the primary sources of identity between generations. Ross (1995:1) writes:

Shared notions often form the fabric of our beliefs about ourselves as a collective society-- about our past, our goals, our ideals and our future. In this sense, collective memory can be seen as fundamental to national identity and unity.

Phrased differently, collective memories are shared tales of experience that enable and perpetuate a large group identity. Volkan (2001) for instance, argues that all group identities (be them ethnic, national, or religious) are linked by stories that celebrate the group's joys as well as their persecutions. He writes, "the goal of these mental representations [stories] is to maintain, protect and repair [that group's] identity" (Volkan, 2001:79).

In this same sense, Huyssen (1994) maintains that ethnic identity is shaped largely by the ability to remember the past atrocities that have befallen the group. Huyssen (1994:9) states:

Remembrance as a vital human activity shapes our past, and the ways we remember define us in the present. As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and to anchor our identities and to nurture a vision of the future.

Speaking specifically of the Jewish Holocaust, Huyssen argues that its memorialization (the building of collective remembrance) offers a vehicle of strength and unity for the Jewish people. Tales of the Holocaust (both verbal and visual, such as monuments) offer Jews a story of hope. They "tell" Jews that they have survived the past

and will prosper in the future. Indeed, as Wiggins, Wiggins, and Zander (1994) note, stories of struggle often enhance a group identity:

A common identity is often solidified by a common suffering. For instance Jews have survived as a people *because* of their persecution, not despite it. Persecution highlights a group's boundaries [and] solidifies the membrane that filters out foreign and 'alien' ways... (1994:117).

Truly, the same narratives of struggle, persecution, and hope are found in every ethnic group. Speaking for instance of the African American experience, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) argue that the roots of African American identity are located in musical forms. They write, "songs are texts... and hearing them is hearing history; they are part of a collective memory that when recalled connects the present hearer with the past (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998:75).

Music - from slave songs, to blues and gospel, to rap - relate histories, atrocities, and celebrations. They offer messages of hope, tales of endurance, and direct social and political identities. As Eyerman and Jamison (1998:7) note: "music is a vessel... that relates values, ideals and ways of life... and provides a river of embodied ideas and images between generations..."

And art is no different. Romo (2002) calls art a "ritual of memory." Speaking specifically of the role of visual art in the Chicano experience, she writes:

The visual recounting of stories, myths, and memories... is often a means of documenting and maintaining a community history... [Art works are] visual episodes... which can serve to keep alive the customs and daily practices that give meaning and coherence to Chicano identity (Romo, 2002:29).

In summary, the message I am trying to solidify here is that group identities have their foundation in collective memories (be them stories, musical passages, or visual art

forms). Further, collective memories help to solidify and perpetuate a group's existence in that they serve as a model of community and social relations. As a code of conduct, collective memories carry past traditions and experiences and thus offer moral and spiritual guidance to individuals.

To state differently, the traditions of the past may be used to direct behavior in the present. As a model of social relations, collective memories perpetuate a mode of interaction by offering a structured link between generations. Collective memories carry the ideas and orientations contained within a culture and thus enable persons to relate to one another throughout time. As Schwartz (1996) writes:

Collective memory allows us to engage social life in at least two ways. First, Collective memory is a model *of* society -- a reflection of its needs, problems, fears, mentality, and aspirations. Second, collective memory is a model *for* society -- a program that defines its experience, articulates its values and goals, and provides cognitive, affective and moral orientations for realizing them...

In exploring the collective memory of the Chickasaw, I reference two forms of social narrative: (1) the history of the Chickasaw as told primarily through written texts, and (2) the traditions of the Chickasaw which record their identity through myth, folklore, and cultural artifact (Such are the subjects of focus in Chapters IV and V respectfully).

In summary, I orient the perspective of collective memory in the tradition of Durkheim (1961), Parsons (1937, 1966), Bellah (1985), and other theorists who seek a "consensus theory" to social order. By this, I argue that the framework of collective memories be grouped within the "sociological theories that see shared norms and values as fundamental to the existence of society" (Ritzer, 1996:233). Here, I argue that collective memories provide the "essence" of group identity. I take the words of Schuman

and Corning (2000) (who argue that memories remain alive only so long as the group survives), and turn them on their heads. I argue instead that a group survives only as long as its memories remain. To cite a concluding voice as to why collective memories are important, I reference Kundera (1980:159) who writes:

The first step in liquidating a people.. is to erase its memory. Destroy its culture, its history. Then have somebody manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster.

Collected Memory

But while collective stories of the past lay the foundation of group identity, we must remember that foundations are to be built upon. To state in another manner, I seek to add to the broader history (the collective memories) of the Chickasaw by relating the personal reflections and experiences of Chickasaw individuals today. Such is a framework of *collected memory*.

I draw the concept *collected memory* from Young (1993) who reminds us that memory is both a process of expansion, negotiation, and choice. New experiences constantly shape and add to our framework of thought and action. So too then is the life of a group identity. The group grows and expands as its constituents add their histories to the collective whole. Here then, I seek to add to the collective memory of the Chickasaw community by offering the personal reflections and experiences of Chickasaw individuals. Specifically, under this conception, I seek the influence of the historical and cultural narratives on selected Chickasaw individuals in their identity development. I seek the strategies of acceptance or rejection regarding these broad narratives, and I seek the ways in which Chickasaw individuals frame and live their identity.

Thus, this is to say I seek the social cognition of selected Chickasaw individuals regarding what it means “to be Chickasaw.” Here, social cognition concerns how people make sense of other people and of themselves (Howard, 1996:211). I seek from them their accounts of experience and ways of living a Chickasaw identity (see interview questions at the end of Chapter II).

In reiteration, I explore Chickasaw identity from both a macro and micro orientation. Of this study’s macro concerns, I seek the collective memories (the social identity) of the Chickasaw. I seek the structured forms of history and culture that serve to influence, guide and shape Chickasaw identity. In my micro orientations I offer the collected memories (the personal identities) of selected Chickasaw persons. From them I investigate the ways by which they negotiate those structured tales and thus conceive and live their identity.

Methodological Guides

The term methodology refers to the process, principles, and procedures that guide how one seeks answers (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). It is the term that applies to how one conducts research. Here, I explore the collective and collected memories of the Chickasaw. This is to say I attempt to identify a Chickasaw group identity through an analysis of Chickasaw history, myth, and individual expressions. *Specifically, I try to explicate a group identity by relating textual themes (historical narratives and folklore) that identity belief and value systems among the Chickasaw.* I detail, in the passages below the research format that guided my quest.

Designing a Research Project

There are three fundamental components in any research design: (1) Determining the limits of what and who is to be investigated, (2) Collection of data, (3) Analysis of data (Sanders, 1982).

Determination of Limits

The first concern in designing a study, is of course, “what” or “who” is to be investigated. Here I ask, “Who are the Chickasaw people and what are the historic and personal experiences that mark Chickasaw identity?” Again, I seek to detail the experience of being Chickasaw through their collective and collected memories.

In detailing Chickasaw identity, I explore three primary data sources. **First**, I offer a general history of the tribe. I reconnoiter various texts that explore and detail the history of the tribe (see the literature review in Chapter II). I offer a social history of the Chickasaw for one important reason. Such a history is necessary for understanding the cultural context of what it means to be Chickasaw. History and time have fostered the various experiences that construct the Chickasaw collective memory, and to understand this history is to understand (to a degree) the various perceptions and behaviors of the Chickasaw people. This is to say again, I seek a collection of historical narratives that relate structural elements of belief and value and influence the construction of Chickasaw identity. I then organize, identify and discuss these themes in the data analysis chapter (Chapter VII).

Second, I collect and analyze the various folklore, legends, and stories of the Chickasaw. Such is a history of the Chickasaw as told in their own voices through

tradition. These memories too offer a code of conduct and a knowledge of them is an awareness of the process of being Chickasaw. I conduct this portion of research in two stages. In stage one, I examine the various archival holdings of the Chickasaw. These specific archival sources include: *The Journal of Chickasaw History*, *Chickasaw Times* and the *Oral History Project* (videotaped recordings of Chickasaw Elders).³ These holdings are searched thoroughly for various themes and patterns that detail the folklore (as well as the belief and value) of the Chickasaw.

Of these themes I seek primarily those that relate belief and value, which serve to guide conduct in the social institutions of the Chickasaw. For example, Merrill (1961) argues that a significant way to study a group is through their institutions. Of the institutions considered to be fundamental, Merrill (1961:334) writes:

(a) the socially sanctioned [procedures regarding conduct throughout the course of one's life] including birth and early training of children; (b) group efforts toward physical survival by the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services; (c) propitiation and (possibly) manipulation of the supernatural powers in directions desired by the group; and (d) social control of the members of the group in their behavior toward each other.

To state more generally, these institutions identify family socialization patterns, economic codes, religious forms, structures of government and notions of social control. Thus, in searching the various myths and stories of the Chickasaw I seek to generally identify the following: The legends of origin, religious beliefs, forms of social organization, and family customs (including birth customs, forms of education, marriage, death and burial ceremonies).

³ These archival holdings are located in the library holdings of the Chickasaw Nation in Ada, Oklahoma.

In stage two, I explore these social and ceremonial forms through interviews conducted with Chickasaw persons. Generally in the research design, once it has been determined “what” will be investigated, the next concern is “who” will comprise the subjects. As Sanders (1982:356) writes, “The persons to be investigated are those who possess the characteristics under observation or those who can give reliable information on the phenomena being researched.”

Thus, the sampling techniques I’ve employed here were initially purposive in nature. In contrast to the random sampling that is usually done in traditional inquires to gain a context of heterogeneity, purposive sampling seeks to capture homogeneity. To state in another manner, random sampling is used to capture the variation that exists among individuals in a given population. Purposive sampling, on the other hand, seeks to maximize the similarities and the “range of specific information that can be obtained from and about those under study” (Erlandson et al. 1993:33). I have selected individuals on the basis of what they can contribute to the understanding of Chickasaw culture.

After visiting the Chickasaw Nation’s Internet web page (as of this writing: www.chickasaw.net), I made contact (through phone numbers and e-mail addresses listed on the web page) with the Nation’s designated cultural resource directors, tribal historians, artisans, and story tellers. Said persons were questioned in relation to tribal history and legend. Additionally, specific questions were asked pertaining to knowledge of the Chickasaw social institutions.

Following these initial meetings with Chickasaw tribal officials (the designated historians, artisans), said individuals typically introduced me to their friends and family and subsequent interviews “snowballed” from there. In defining the “snowball

technique,” I reference Babbie (1990:379) who writes, “each person interviewed are asked [or themselves volunteer] additional people to interview.” Regarding my research process, Chickasaw individuals usually introduced me to a peer or family member and this new contact would then introduce me to another friend or family member. It was through this snowball pattern did interviews take shape and come to completion. In total, I “chatted,” discussed, and queried approximately 80 Chickasaw individuals. From these interactions, twenty formal interviews emerged (of which the following paragraphs detail).

Third, and in final, I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty Chickasaw persons for the purpose of strengthening a recognition of Chickasaw identity. Initially, I selected individuals for interview based upon the quality of rapport that we were able to establish with each other. In general, I interviewed individuals with whom I felt comfortable with. These individuals served the primary roles of guide, interpreter and friend.

Next, I sought out individuals who held (or who were recognized by community members as holding) important and symbolic positions of leadership within the tribe. I sought tribal members who held office positions (e.g., Governor, Lt. Governor, Director of Educational Resources) and positions of honor (e.g., elders, artisans). My ability to garner these voices depended greatly upon the coordination of time schedules (mine and theirs), and on my ability to build a relationship of trust to these tribal members. Indeed, numerous introductions and face to face discussions were often the norm before formal interviews were allowed. Further, before direct, formal interviews were conducted, I gave my respondents a written explanation of the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). After

reading and discussing the explanation of study, individuals chose or declined participation.

In total, twenty formal interviews were conducted with persons ranging in age of 22 to 90. All participants are Chickasaw, and most work or hold positions of leadership within the Chickasaw Nation.⁴ To this end, I asked individuals to reflect on what it means to be Chickasaw. I asked these individuals to speak of their family oriented customs, myths, and stories that keep their Chickasaw identity fluid. I inquired about the general context in which one became “aware” or realized that they were Indian/Chickasaw. And I sought how they continue to “live” their Chickasaw identity. In sum, I sought the customs, beliefs, and experiences that build and perpetuate a Chickasaw identity (see Chapter II for a specific interview guideline).

Data Collection

Of the data collection process, I typically videotaped the interviews with the written permission of the interviewee (see again Appendix A for this consent form). All discussions were later transcribed. Further, overall data collection took place between the months of July 2002 and January 2003. During this six month period, I spent (on average) several days a week among the Chickasaw observing, listening, interviewing and writing.

Data Analysis

The third component in the research process is the analysis of the data collected. Sanders (1982) suggests that research accrue over three levels of analysis. The first, is the general *description* of the phenomena being studied. She writes, “[One’s research]

⁴ For concerns of this matter, see the closing section of this chapter for a discussions of reliability and validity.

narratives should identify and describe the qualities of human experience... that give the human being studied his or her unique identity and outlook” (p.357).

The second level is the *identification of themes*, or the commonalties present within and between the narratives. “Themes are identified based on the importance and centrality of accorded to them, rather than on the frequency alone, in which they occur” (Sanders, 1982:357). And third, one must complete the *subjective reflections* of those themes. Or to state in another manner, now that the context of the study has been described and the various themes identified one must ask, “What do these themes signify?” What is the general analysis and meaning of these themes?

Thus, the data presented here are first and foremost descriptive. As Bogdan and Taylor (1975) note, the sociologist should “paint a scene” which captures the detail and experiences of the participant’s “world.” The goal of this descriptive form is to connect the reader to the subject of study and build an “empathic link” between audience and subject (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). As such, I offer (in Chapters IV, V, VI) the descriptions of the social and personal world of Chickasaws. I offer the histories, myths, and voices of various Chickasaw persons in an attempt to “paint a portrait” of the Chickasaw experience.

Second, I note and highlight (in Chapter VII, the data analysis chapter) the themes that are of concern to this study. Namely, I seek the structured social beliefs and values that influence a Chickasaw person's thoughts and identity construction. I again seek the narratives that mark Chickasaw social identity (e.g., history, and folklore). Further, I relate the various personal interpretations, internalizations, and/or rejections of these social forms. I relate the various strategies through which identity is lived.

From these themes of reference, I third, attempt to build an analytical construct of what it means to be Chickasaw. These reflections detail how the “world is to be seen” and how life “ought to be lived” as viewed through Chickasaw eyes. Analytically, such a vision is important, for from it, a greater awareness of Native American culture and Chickasaw identity may be fostered. Finally from these reflections, I hope to identify and highlight the “ties” that enable and perpetuate a collective Chickasaw identity (again, see Chapter VII for Data Analysis).

A Final Note on Methodology: Issues of Reliability, Validity, and the Role of the Researcher

In the abstract, reliability is “a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time” (Babbie, 1990:132). Regarding this research, the concern of reliability is targeted within the following question, “Would another researcher, given the same access to data, come to the same conclusions as the previous researcher?”

In truth, different interviewers will probably get different answers from respondents as a result of their own attitudes and demeanor. To state differently, varied researchers will come to varied conclusions. My reflections, findings, and conclusions will probably be different from another researcher engaged in the same examination. Thus, the reliability of this study is a potential weakness.

Yet having stated this, I note that my interpretations and conclusions were not fostered in a “vacuum.” My interpretations were subject to outside reviewers. To this end, I have attempted to foster a level of reliability (or “dependability” in the data’s worth) through the following techniques:

The “Auditing” of Research Notes and the Technique of Peer Debriefing

Auditing is, in general, a procedure by which a third-party examiner reviews one’s reflections, and research notes. The audit allows a “third-party” member the chance to render judgments about the dependability of procedures used by the researcher and their conclusions and findings (Schwandt, 1997:6). In a fashion similar to the aforementioned, *peer debriefing* too serves as a “check of dependability.” Erlandson et al. (1993:31), describes peer debriefing in the following manner:

Occasionally the researcher should step out of the context being studied to review perception, insights, and analyses with professionals who have enough general understanding of the nature of the study to debrief the researcher and provide feedback that will refine and, frequently redirect the inquiry process.

I conducted, both with my research committee and with the Chickasaw persons of whom I interviewed, sessions in which they reviewed my thoughts and reflections. The purpose of which was to clarify issues of concern, and to keep the data “honest” in its reflection of the field of study.

Ensuring Validity

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the inquiry is conducted in a manner that adequately identifies and describes the social world being studied (Erlandson et al., 1993). Issues of validity ask, “Does the researcher’s findings accurately portray the context being studied?” Personally, I was led to ask, “Have I adequately portrayed the history, culture, and the worldview of the Chickasaw?”

Validity Shortcomings

As noted earlier, I interacted with approximately 80 Chickasaw individuals. From these interactions twenty formal interviews emerged. Of these formal sessions, most were conducted with persons of prominence within the tribe. Many held office positions (e.g., Lt. Governor, Director of Educational Resources), and positions of honor (e.g., elders, artisans).

Thus, this study could be critiqued for potentially being biased within a particular “experiential vision” of Chickasaw identity. This is to say that most of my respondents work for the Chickasaw Nation and may have a worldview and set of experiences that differ from the many Chickasaw who do not work for the Tribe. In the highest form of critique then, this study could be called “representatively biased” regarding the detailing of Chickasaw experience. In future studies, this shortcoming could be overcome by: (1) extending the time spent with the Chickasaw people, and (2) increasing the number of formal interviews with those who do not work for the tribe.⁵

Nonetheless, I have employed several techniques to ensure the validity and credibility of this study. The following are descriptions of such techniques:

Prolonged Engagement and the Use of Multiple Methods

The term *prolonged engagement* refers to the ability of the researcher to spend:

‘enough’ time in the [culture of one’s study]... to understand daily events in the way that persons who are part of that culture... interpret them” (Erlandson et al.,1993:30).

⁵ Concerning my interviews, respondents break down into the following classification: 16 persons who work for the tribe, 4 who work outside the tribe.

With regard to such matters, I spent approximately six months in the field (from July to December 2002), making observations and conducting interviews. Further, during this research phase, I spent at least several days a week among the Chickasaw observing, interviewing and writing. It is within this time frame that I attempted to reach a “contextual understanding” of the processes that construct Chickasaw identity.

Another strategy used to enhance validity, is the examination of *multiple data sources* (often called triangulation, see Singleton and Straits, 1999). As previously mentioned, data was collected from various sources (archival sources, observations, and interviews). The purpose of having multiple data sites is to give the researcher multiple “eyes” and multiple “ports of entry” into the field being studied. These multiple sites strengthen the researcher’s efforts to gain a full understanding of the subject of study. These multiple data sources are investigated for commonalties, and for the purpose of solidifying my understanding of the cultural and social world of the Chickasaw.

The Role of the Researcher

Of the role of the researcher in the data collection process, Alford (1998:24) writes, “You start a research project with a problem: a theme, issue, or concern [and] problems [typically] grow out of a combination of personal experience (your motives, interests, and life history).” Here, my concern with Chickasaw identity does grow out of life history and personal interest. I and my family consider ourselves Chickasaw. Thus, from my “structured” background of history, culture, and experience did this study emerge. Specifically, this study formed in family (and academic) discussions around of the nature of identity and its role in perpetuating commitment to nation and community

life. As a Chickasaw, the search for identity is somewhat a personal quest⁶. And as a student of sociology, the search for the nature and foundation of Chickasaw identity is an academic query. Indeed, I have attempted to bridge both these worlds (the personal and the academic) to formulate a quality work in sociology. To this end however, a related question of validity is posed. Can a Chickasaw individual study Chickasaw life and culture and remain objective?

Babbie (1998:288) writes:

Traditionally, social scientists have tended to emphasize the importance of “objectivity” in research... this would be to avoid getting swept up in the beliefs of the group... There is a danger in adopting the points of view of the people you’re studying. When you abandon your objectivity in favor of adopting such views, you lose the possibility of seeing and understanding such phenomenon within frames of reference unavailable to your subjects... *But, on the other hand* social scientists today also recognize the benefits gained by immersing themselves in the points of view they are studying... Ultimately, you will not be able to understand the thoughts and actions of the members unless you *can adopt their points of view.*”
So can a Chickasaw study other Chickasaws and remain objective?⁷

As Babbie (1998:288) postulates, “there are no black-and-white rules for resolving situations such as these.” I will say this however, I am conscious toward this issue and have taken steps to ensure objectivity (see earlier notes on peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, and multiple methods). Further, in the beginning of this quest, I was stranger to each of the participants of this study. I had to develop a trust with each

⁶ I draw my Chickasaw lineage from my father, who as a youth, lost access to many of the stories and narratives of the Chickasaw when his father passed too early. I have sought the stories and narratives, in one sense, to bring that voice back to my father and to honor my family.

⁷ In the same manner, one could ask, “Can a white ethnic study other white ethnics?” Can a woman study women? Can an African-American study other African Americans? In reality, each individual carries with them a set of social and historic experiences that contribute to their vision of the world. Yet, each are potentially capable of stepping outside of themselves to hear other voices and viewpoints. Particularly, with sociological training, one is taught to be critical of their roles in research. Here, I am aware of these issues and of my role in the research process. Further I have attempted to remain “objective” in my presentation of material.

and come in time to understand each of their worldviews and experiences. This is to say, I was guided more so by my participant's voices than my own.

Summary of Methodological Intent

This work is an attempt to understand the experience of being Chickasaw. Specifically I seek to identify the construction and maintenance of Chickasaw identity. In so doing, I study their history and their folklore and I participate in their lives. By participating in the process of being Chickasaw I hope to achieve a deep and empathetic understanding of what it "means" to be Chickasaw.

CHAPTER IV

A Social And Population History Of The Chickasaw Nation: 1540-1999

The history of the American Indian falls broadly into two periods: the time prior to European contact, and the history thereafter. This chapter details the social and population history of the Chickasaw Indians relative to both. The initial period of the Chickasaw is discussed within tribal stories of origin and myth and is briefly considered. Such accounts, drawn from a survey of the literature of pre-European Indian history, offer a hypothetical beginning to the Chickasaw. This “prehistory” is valuable (both in terms of population size and culture) for it serves to influence and identify modern Chickasaw cultural and social processes. The latter periods of Chickasaw history concern European influence and are divided into the following: (1) the years 1540 - 1763; (2) 1763-1837; (3) 1837-1861; (4) 1861-1907; (5) 1907-2000.

Chickasaw Origin

The origin of the Chickasaw people speak to an ancient membership in a broader Choctaw-Chickasaw unity. In legend, the Choctaw and Chickasaw were identified as one tribe. Specifically, Chickasaw mythology identifies how two brothers, Chacta and Chicsa and their respective clans, came to be the future tribes:

The bothers... on the sacred migration journey lead their Iskas (clans) from the west. Just after the tribe crossed the Mississippi River, the two leaders reconnoitered the country. Chicsa moved first, followed ten days later by Chacta. A heavy snow covered Chicsa’s trail, and the brothers were separated. Chicsa selected a homeland on the Tombigbee (northeastern

Mississippi), Chacta led his people to the south (lower Mississippi and the gulf coast) (Warren, 1904:543-45).¹

In this context, the name Chickasaw itself has a folklore meaning of “those who walked ahead” (Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission, 1992).

Further, outside of these texts of legend, numerous ethnohistorical accounts mark the Chickasaw as a people separated from a larger social entity (Adair, 1775; Cushman, 1899; Warren, 1904; Swanton, 1928a; Jeltz, 1948; Wright, 1951; Debo, 1970; Gibson, 1971; Hale and Gibson, 1991; Sultzman, 1999). These accounts identify the shared language and religious and cultural practices between the tribes. Yet these references number the Choctaw population as four to five times that of the Chickasaw.

The relevance of such folklore and ethnohistorical narratives are as such: The Chickasaw, existing as a smaller and separate body of relationships, created specific modes of survival and adopted purposive social, cultural and political practices that affected their population and broader history overall. As Gibson (1971:4) writes:

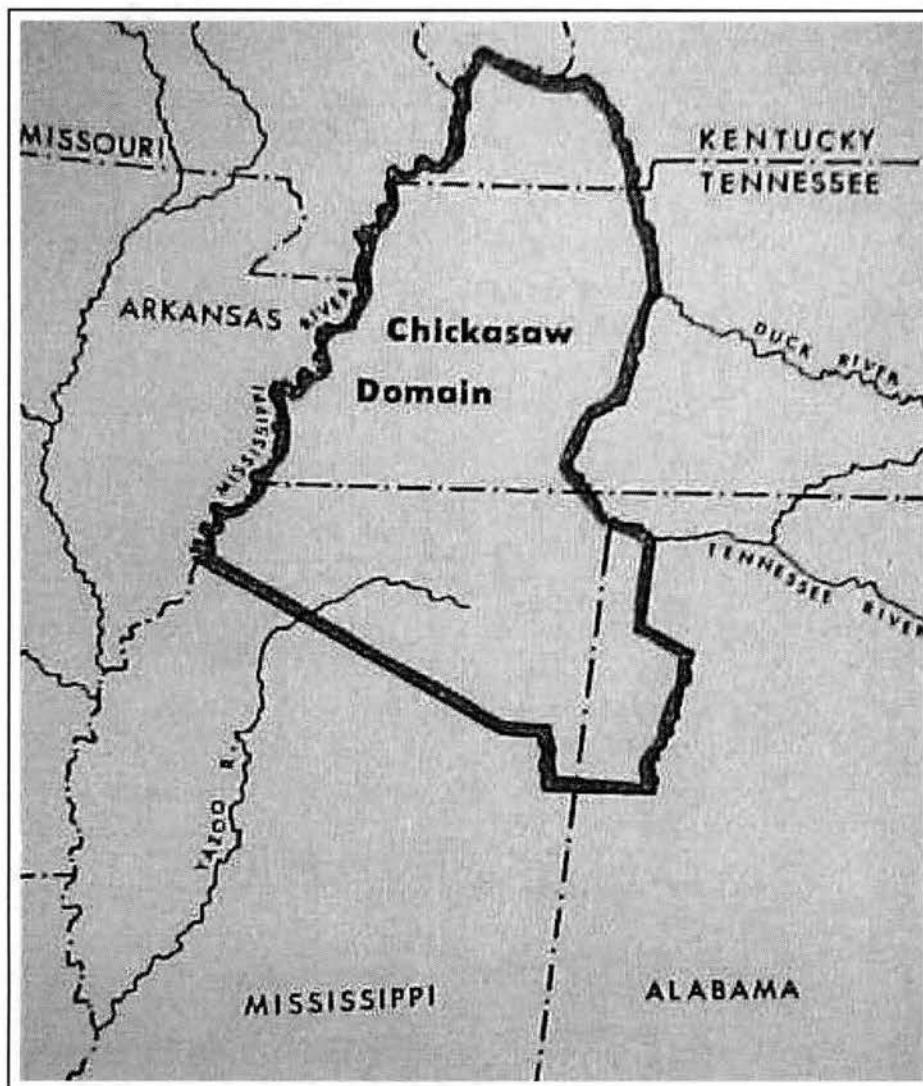
The Chickasaw... as a relatively small Indian community... developed a strong warrior tradition and a propensity for war that has curious effects on the tribe's demographic composition. Population losses in combat were replaced by adoption of captives, absorption of small tribes residing on the periphery of the Chickasaw homeland, and in one case, the reception of a remnant of the formerly populous and powerful Natchez after their annihilation by a French army in 1730.

¹ Cushman [1899] (1999) offers a similar history of origin. In his account however, the two brothers are named Chickasah and Chahtah. He writes: “The ancient traditional history of the Choctaws and Chickasaws claims for them a Mexican origin, and a migration from that country at some remote period in the past, under the leadership of two brothers, respectively named Chahtah and Chikasah...” (pg. 18).

Jeltz (1948) extends the legend of origin concerning the Chickasaw and Choctaw. He writes: “The Choctaws and Chickasaws [are] descendants of a people called the Chickenmacaws, who were among the first inhabitants of the Mexican empire; and at an ancient period wandered east, with a tribe of Indians called Choccomaws” (pg. 25).

Considered today, I argue that Chickasaw identity is encapsulated within the particular ability of the Chickasaw people to adopt, absorb, and integrate social units into *their* history. It is to this history which I now turn.

Figure 1: Ancient Chickasaw Domain



Source: Gibson (1971:5)

1540-1783: The “Spartans” of the Mississippi Valley

In December 1540, the Chickasaw witnessed and encountered their first European face. A Spanish force headed by Hernando De Soto had reached the southern banks of the Tombigbee River. And unwelcomed by the 4,000 or so Chickasaw, they nonetheless accommodated the Spanish with food, shelter, and other gifts (Malone, 1922; Gibson, 1971). With De Soto holding the power to demand curiosity (as well as a number of tribal members hostage), the Chickasaw provided he and his men shelter and substance for the winter.

By March 1541 however, with winter having passed, the Spanish were ready to continue their march across the “new land.” For their journey De Soto demanded much from the Chickasaw -- two hundred soldiers and women to bear baggage and “other desires” (Malone, 1922; Gibson, 1971; Baird, 1974). Outraged by these demands the Chickasaw fell upon De Soto’s party setting fire to their dwellings and killing a number of it’s members and horses. By April 1541 the Spanish, having been defeated in battle, left the Chickasaw.

The following 140 years passed for the Chickasaw without direct contact to any European. Yet, the four month confrontation with the Spanish proved to be the beginning of “an international contest for the control of the lower Mississippi valley” (Baird, 1974:14). The next European political entity to make a claim on the land were the French. In 1682 a French expedition party encountered the Chickasaw while traveling to what is now known as the Gulf of Mexico (Gibson, 1971). The Chickasaw were presented with gifts and a message of peace for safe travel. The message was apparently well received and the French party passed without harm through Chickasaw lands. In history this

meeting is to be considered ironic for it offered none of the future conflict that would come to exist between the French and the Chickasaw.

The British arrived a short time after, and by 1685 a permanent post had been established from which trade with the Chickasaw commenced (Sultzman, 1999). By 1690 trade between the two were entrenched. To the Chickasaw guns and ammunition were bartered for deerskins and captured slaves. Baird (1974:14-15) describes the implications of the Chickasaw-English trade network:

On the one hand, the demand for deerskins changed the hunting practices of the Indians. Where they had hunted for food and clothing, they now hunted for profit and power. Where once the region adjacent to their villages had supplied their economic needs, they now pushed beyond that area to intrude on the hunting ranges of their neighbors. Similarly, the demand of the British colonists for slaves intensified the warlike character of the tribe, for only in war could captives be secured for sale into bondage... [Concerning the British], through the slave trade was less profitable economically, it was just as significant strategically... The Chickasaw slave traffic... was beneficial largely because it broke down barriers to Anglo advance.

The westward expansion of Britain was not in isolation however. France had already “claimed” the Mississippi basin and was making political moves to realize their claim. In 1702, the French invited the Chickasaw to engage in trade talk. They demanded that the Chickasaw terminate the slave exchange and end relations with the British. If refused, the French threatened to arm Chickasaw enemies. If accepted, trade and protection were promised.

Initially accepting the French pact, influence was nonetheless swayed by a growing British presence. Gibson (1971:36) writes:

[The Chickasaw] waited for the French to establish a trading station convenient to their villages. And they waited for the French to protect them from attack by other tribes. All the while the number of English

traders in their villages increased. Their presence and their goods galvanized the Chickasaws and revolutionized their economy... When an occasional French trader turned up in their towns, The Chickasaw noted ... his prices were higher, sometimes twice that of [the English]. The English were making serious attempt to win the Chickasaw to something more than a commercial alliance by regularly distributing gifts among them.

Urged by British influence Chickasaw-French relations deteriorated and regional hostilities abounded. In fact, the French-British rivalry for control of the Mississippi Valley fostered a near century of conflict for the Chickasaw: a several generation conflict with the French allied Choctaw, 1690-1763; battles with the Shawnee in 1715 and 1745; the Yatasi (Caddoan) in 1717; the Cherokee in 1768; and the Creek in 1793-98 (Wright, 1951:86).

With renewed Chickasaw allegiance, the British grew more determined to expand their trade throughout the region. Baird (1974:18) states:

They [the British] planned to make their villages entrepots for trade goods to be introduced to tribes allied with the French... The British plan worked beyond all expectations. Operating surreptitiously, the Chickasaw traders so influenced the Natchez Indians that on November 28, 1729, warriors of that tribe fell upon the French garrisons at Fort Rosalie and Fort St. Peter on the Mississippi River. At least 250 Frenchmen were killed and 300 hundred women and children were taken captive.

Aware of the role of the Chickasaw in instigating the attack, French officials declared that, "The entire destruction of [the Chickasaws] ... becomes everyday more necessary to our interests and [we] are going to exert all diligence to accomplish it"² (Baird, 1974:20). And so a war against the Chickasaw began. In February 1736, a French army numbering 400 attacked the Chickasaw town of Chocolissa (what would today be

² So were the words of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville -- The first governor of French Louisiana.

northeastern Mississippi). Reports record that only twenty members of the French army survived the Chickasaw counterattack³ (Malone, 1922; Gibson, 1971; Baird, 1974).

Unaware of this defeat a second French army of 1,200 (600 or so Frenchmen and 600 Choctaw mercenaries, all led by Bienville) entered the eastern portion of the Chickasaw Nation in May 1736. Attacking the town of Akia (near modern Tupelo, Mississippi) the French army was drawn into a crossfire and too declared defeat. After three hours of fighting the French withdrew to the safety of the Choctaw Nation.

The French defeat at the battle of Akia however only intensified France's determination to destroy the Chickasaw. In the autumn of 1739 a third invasion party settled on the northern portion of the Chickasaw Nation. This new army had been charged with restoring the "honor of France" by "accomplishing the destruction of the Chickasaw Indians" (Gibson, 1971:53). Pressure from the king of France procured the development of a force of 3,600 troops-- the largest military force ever made before an Indian adversary (Gibson, 1971). To this end however, the force would never invade the Chickasaw homeland. An unusual and sustained rainfall halted the French attack. Held under rain and mud, and unable to advance inland, the French began to reconsider their assault (Sultzmman, 1999).

With the French now "bogged down" (and with growing concern that their Choctaw allies would open British trade exchanges while the French were putting their resources to war), they invited the Chickasaw to end hostilities. Thus, in February 1740, negotiations ordered the removal of the French army from Chickasaw territory. In the end, the Chickasaw had inflicted upon the French three decisive defeats, two in battle and

³ Known commonly as the defeat of d'Artaguette. Major Pierre d'Artaguette lead the charge and he too died in battle. It is said that the Chickasaw burned him alive.

one in the realm of honor. The effect of such victories served to (1) foreshadow the end of French occupation in America, and (2) engender for the Chickasaw the lore of the “Spartans” of the Mississippi valley.⁴

Though the French were now removed from Chickasaw territory nothing truly came of the Chickasaw peace pact. When a British naval force built a blockade to stop the sale of French goods (The King George’s War, 1744-48) the Chickasaw were again called into conflict. Moving to end the blockade, the French once more invaded Chickasaw tribal domain. In 1752 a force of 700 French army regulars and a number of Indian auxiliaries made their way up the Tombigbee river (Malone, 1922). The route was that used by the French in 1736, and as in 1736 the outcome of battle was similar. The French were unable to penetrate the Chickasaw defenses and made retreat (Malone, 1922).

The long struggle for the “new world” ended for the French in 1763. Outdone by the more populous British on the Atlantic and by the superiority of King George's navy, the French withdrew from North America. Gibson (1971:57) writes:

By the terms of the [Peace of Paris treaty, 1763] the British received Canada, the Illinois country, and the rich prize of the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley... [To the Spanish] the French made cession of Louisiana.

The Peace of Paris marked for the Chickasaw an end to a sustained period of war. Yet the treaty was not the end of conflict for the Chickasaw. The American Revolution was on the horizon, and so too for the Chickasaw, a new relationship of command.

⁴ The Spartan-Chickasaw analogy is twofold. First, it identifies the “warlike” nature held in common between the two ancient societies. Second, the analogy speaks to the strategic ability of both in matters of military defense. Specifically, reference is made to the battle of Thermopylae (480 BC) in which a small force of 300 or so Spartans and 1,100 other Greeks held off a Persian army of over 180,000 for three days. The analytic connection made to the Chickasaw concern their defeats over larger invading French forces in the 18th century (See Gibson, 1971).

1763-1837: Revolution and the Americans

When the British signed the Peace of Paris they gained most of the French empire in North America as well as the frustration of dispossessed French allies. Concerned with British expansion in Indian lands, western tribes countered by capturing nine of the twelve British forts west of the Appalachians (Sultzmann, 1999).⁵ To quell the rebellion, the British responded with military force (of which the Chickasaw took part), and political negotiation. Seeking to avoid further conflict with the western tribes, the British issued the proclamation of 1763 halting future settlement into lands beyond the Appalachians.

Leading to the proclamation, American colonists were most assuredly supportive of British activity in the new world. However, as a result of this proclamation support for the “mother country” and her activities began to wane. When the British tried to enforce this order as well as other policies of control the colonists revolted.⁶

In the suppression of the American uprising, the Chickasaw were expected to play a major role. Speaking of the Chickasaw, British officials declared, “[They] have always been very good friends to the British and... we may rely [in case of war] that they will join us (Gibson, 1971:71). Amazingly however, only one major Chickasaw campaign against the Americans occurred. This took place in 1780 when Fort Jefferson was erected in Chickasaw territory. Intended as a base from which incursions into the British southwest were to occur, it fittingly drew attack. Of this action, Gibson (1971:72) writes:

⁵ This refers to “Pontiac’s Rebellion.” Named for the Ottawa Indian Chief whose attack on Fort Detroit sparked a series of raids against the British. (See Peckman, [1947] 1961).

⁶ For a more detailed history of the events leading to the American Revolution see: Middlekauff, 1981.

For nearly a year Chickasaws 'swarmed around the fort, cut off its supplies, killed and captured stragglers from the garrison and at one time subjected the fort to such a close and protracted siege that only the timely arrival of reinforcements saved it from destruction'... Fort Jefferson [was nonetheless, abandoned] in 1781.

Chickasaw involvement in the war became more pronounced however when the Spanish entered the fray. As Gibson (1971:73) continues:

[After the Spanish declaration of war on Great Britain, the Chickasaw] did their deadliest work... closing the Mississippi river to Spanish shipping between New Orleans and St. Louis... of which the Spanish responded by inspiring raids of the Illinois and Kickapoo tribes against the Chickasaw... and while destructive, [they] simply stirred the Chickasaws to more vicious retaliatory strikes against the Spanish settlements and shipping on the Mississippi.

Thus, at wars end with Britain suffering defeat to both Spain and the united colonies, the Chickasaw were left as enemies to both. Yet, in irony, the Chickasaw were also sought by both as an ally to be made in ousting the other. Baird (1974:29) writes:

The era following American independence saw the continuation of international intrigue among the Chickasaws. Left in control of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast by the Treaty of Paris, Spain was determined to protect her possessions from unfriendly forces, especially restless American frontiersmen. For its part, the United States saw the control of the Mississippi Valley as vital to its economic growth and prosperity. Both governments hoped to woo the Indians to their respective ambitions by promises of protection and commerce.

Dependent upon such commerce, the Chickasaw accepted alliance but were "divided over which new power could best provide the goods required" (Baird, 1974:29). Choosing between the Spanish and the Americans splintered the tribe. In fact, treaties of alliance were made to both the Spanish and the Americans.⁷ In 1784 a Chickasaw-Spanish treaty pledged fidelity to the king of Spain and accepted Spanish

⁷ The Chickasaw were split among two factions: The leaders, Piomingo (Mountain Chief) who allied with the Americans, and Wolf's Friend who negotiated with the Spanish.

traders only. And in 1786, the Treaty of Hopewell was signed marking the beginning of official relations with the Chickasaw Nation and the United States of America.

Of this division the Chickasaw might have engaged in civil war had it not been for several factors. First, the influence held by the Spanish-Chickasaw party became marginal when Creek warriors began selectively killing Chickasaws of the American faction (Sultzmnn, 1999). In summary: The Creek Nation, facing the increased settlement of white traders upon their tribal lands (along with the disruption that this brought to a standing Creek-Spanish trade pact), urged the aid of the Chickasaw in expelling the Americans. When the Chickasaw refused to respond, the Creek began a campaign of harassment against Chickasaw traders. Hoping to end American influence among the Chickasaw, the violence forced by the Creek only served to strengthen the Chickasaw-American link⁸ (Sultzmnn, 1999).

Of the second factor which made the Chickasaw-American union possible were the number of white and mixed-blood Chickasaw families living in the nation.

[During the latter stages of the American Revolution] the Chickasaw Nation... served as the last British stronghold. Many Britishers... took refuge in the Chickasaw Nation... increasing the size of the Anglo community there... [And] Just as the mixing of Indian bloodlines continued during the period of British... there was also an acceleration of the blending of Indian and white. The growing mixed-blood community in the Chickasaw Nation had far-reaching effects on the tribe's economic, social and political life. The mixed bloods, more like their Anglo fathers than their Indian mothers, better understood the ways of the British, Spanish, and later the Americans... By 1800 the mixed bloods had completely taken over the management of Chickasaw tribal affairs. (Gibson, 1971:64-5, 73).

⁸ A key figure who urged this violence was Alexander McGillivray -- a mixed-blood Creek leader who was extremely anti-American. When he died in 1793, the loss of leadership forced the Spanish -Indian alliance in the southeast to begin to fall apart.

This similarity of "manner" appealed to the Americans, and as such, helped obtain for them aid in their emerging war with the Creek Nation. This if not to say however, that the impact of the mixed blood leadership was without grief and social change. Baird (1974:27) writes:

The one hundred years of intimate European contact... significantly changed traditional patterns of conduct. Once self-sufficient and independent, the Chickasaws had come to dependent on manufactured implements... Furthermore, the coming of the Europeans brought the introduction of customs hitherto unknown. Especially significant was the [debauchery] of brandy and rum... [Also], now producing large mixed-blood families [many Chickasaw families] opted for a European style of existence, establish[ing] plantations and introduc[ing] Negro slaves... adversely affecting ancient and traditional Chickasaw patterns.

Further, of this relationship to the Americans, the mixed bloods perhaps overestimated their influence among them. Such is hinted at by Gibson (1971:79) in his writing of the first Chickasaw-American treaty:

An ominous clause in the Treaty of Hopewell -- its awesome possibilities probably little understood or appreciated at the time -- stated that 'for the benefit and comfort of the Indians' the United states government was authorized to manage all their affairs in such manner as it might 'think proper.'

With the support of American arms and ammunition, both war and peace was made on the Creek Nation during the years 1793-1798 (Sultzman, 1999). In victory, the Chickasaw not only ended Creek raids against American traders but also the Spanish position of strength in the east. With the loss of their "Indian buffer" against the Americans, Spain negotiated the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795. Its provisions included, "an acknowledgment by Spain of United States title to all southern territory north of thirty one degrees and west to the Mississippi River" (Gibson, 1971:90).

The withdrawal of Spain from the Mississippi Valley served to be a turning point in American-Chickasaw relations. And that "ominous clause" in the Treaty of Hopewell was now coming to fruition. For instance, Baird (1974:33) writes:

[Spanish] presence had served as a counterpoise to the expansive designs of the United States. Now that Spain had gone, little remained to check the desire of restless Americans for more land. For the Chickasaws, these circumstances prior to 1818 meant four treaties by which their boundaries were either redefined or reduced. An 1801 agreement drew borders for the tribe, while one in 1805 secured a cession of that land north of the Tennessee River. An 1816 treaty extinguished tribal title to lands between the Tennessee and Tombigbee Rivers. Then the demanding treaty of 1818 deprived the tribe of its remaining domain in eastern Tennessee.

To gain these cessions, Chickasaw tribal leaders were often bullied or bribed. Baird (1974:33-4) continues:

In the treaty of 1805, for example, [prominent tribal leaders] were paid \$1,000 each, while [the King] was granted \$100 a year for life. To secure the accord of 1816, United States commissioners surreptitiously distributed \$4,500 to influential Chickasaws, while \$100 to \$150 was paid to each chief in 1818. [In] these treaties of cession, government representatives also feted, threatened, and withheld annuities previously pledged by the United States.

Outside of these tactics however, land appropriation was truly made an American excuse in the Creek rebellion of 1812. Encouraged by the powerful Chief Tecumseh and his anti-American Indian coalition, a Creek faction (known as the Red Sticks) began a series of devastating raids against white and mixed-blood settlements (Gibson, 1971:96).⁹ Tecumseh's doctrine of Indian resistance appealed to the Creek Red Sticks, but not to the Chickasaw. Rejecting Tecumseh's message, a reported 350 Chickasaw warriors (along with "loyal" Creek, Cherokee and Choctaw) rode with U.S. Army General Andrew

⁹ Here, the title "chief" concerning Tecumseh is analytic. Though a great leader of his people, Tecumseh was never a chief in the Shawnee Tribe. Please reference Eckert (1992); Sugden (1997) for a more complete history of Tecumseh and the details of the Creek and larger American-English War of 1812.

Jackson to meet the Creek in war (Gibson, 1971). The eventual defeat of the Red Stick Creeks made for Andrew Jackson his military and political reputation-- for in the treaties to follow, Jackson was able to extort some 23 million acres (Sultzman, 1999).

Of this "ceded" land however, much belonged to Jackson's allies (the larger Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw and Chickasaw). Concerning the Chickasaw land loss, Sultzman (1999:25) writes:

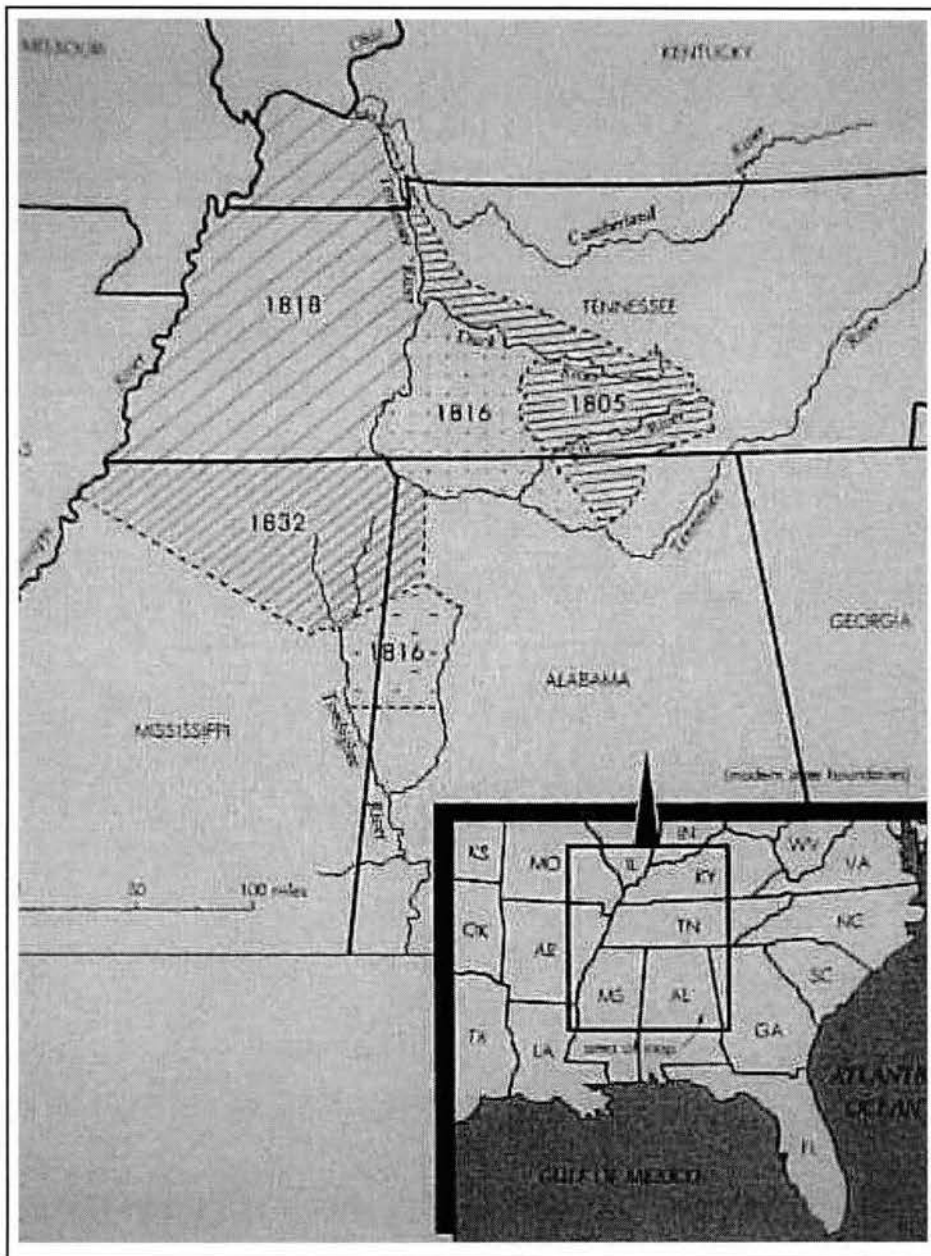
The Chickasaw reward for serving in the Creek War was the treaty they signed with Jackson in 1816 which cost them their remaining lands north and east of the Tennessee River. Mississippi entered the union... in 1817 and immediately began demanding the removal of the Chickasaw and Choctaw to west of the Mississippi River. It was in this hostile atmosphere that Andrew Jackson and other American commissioners arrived to negotiate further land cessions from the Chickasaw in 1818. [The Chickasaw] found it difficult to fend off both Mississippi's call for removal and Jackson's demand for land cessions. Forced to choose, they decided to keep their six million acres in northeast Mississippi and cede their lands in western Kentucky and Tennessee.

In accommodating the Americans with treaties of cession, the Chickasaw hoped to be done with them and their ambitions. This however was not the case. In 1830, a now President Andrew Jackson, pushed through congress the Indian Removal Act. As Thomas, et al. (2001:293) write:

The Indian Removal Act... put teeth into the policy [Jackson's] predecessors had long advocated -- the 'voluntary' exchange of lands by eastern Indians for territory that the federal government would acquire for them west of the Mississippi. Jackson gave the policy immediacy and an assertion that existing Indian treaties did not constitute federal recognition of Indian sovereign rights to the soil of their homelands. The Indian Removal Act enabled the president to implement such assertions, putting congressional support and appropriations behind the tragedies to follow.

By 1837 the Chickasaw, under removal policies, began the exodus of their ancient homeland.

Figure 2: Chickasaw Land Cessions, 1805-32



Source: Hale and Gibson (1991:43)

1837-1861: Removal and Life in the West

With relation to removal, the Chickasaw were among one of the most difficult southern tribes to bring to terms.¹⁰ Removal treaties were signed by the Choctaw in 1830, the Creek and Seminole in 1832, the Cherokee in 1835, and the Chickasaw in 1837 (Gibson, 1971). In fighting the pressure to relocate the Chickasaw made battle their spiritual and economic concerns.

The remaining territory [held by] the Chickasaw [marked] their traditional homeland. To certain orthodox full bloods this core area of the once vast Chickasaw Nation was the bounty of the Great Spirit, granted to the Chickasaws by sacred ordinance. To part with it was unthinkable blasphemy... [Concerning] the mixed bloods [many] had developed substantial farms and plantations and prospering businesses in the reduced Chickasaw Nation... Thus federal officials... [found] this group as determined as the orthodox full bloods not to surrender the Chickasaw homeland (Gibson, 1971:158-9).

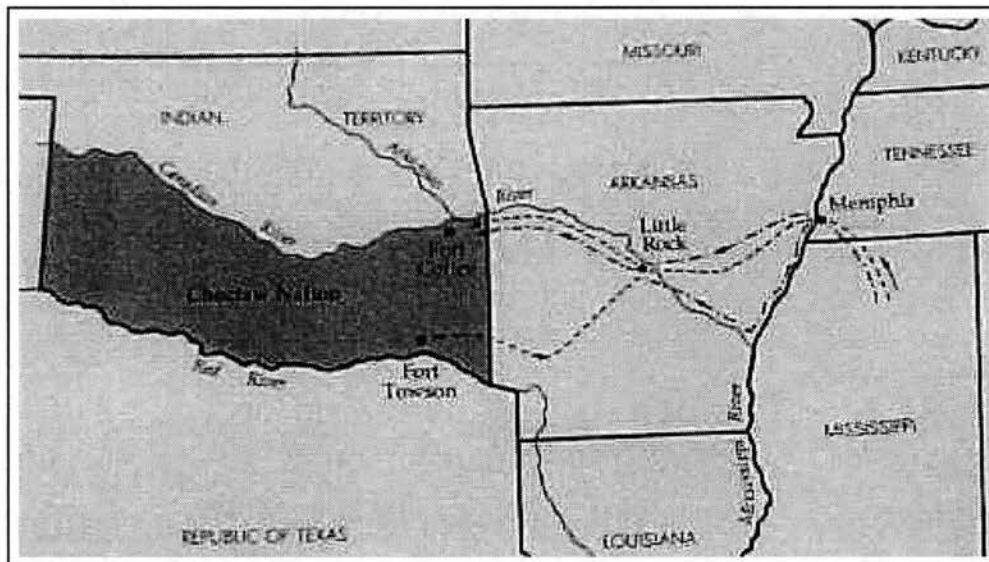
In time however, the Chickasaw --if they were to exist as a separate people -- had to submit to relocation. But, even in arranging their own removal the Chickasaw were able to delay American interests. Of this Baird (1974:38) writes:

The diplomacy precedent to physical removal began at Franklin, Tennessee, in August, 1830. There the Chickasaws agreed to cede their homeland for one in the west. Each person was to receive a specified land allotment in fee simple, which would be sold if [they] emigrated, and taxable if [they] remained. The United States agreed to pay an annuity, the expenses of removal, and subsistence for one year. The treaty, though, would be operative only if the Chickasaws found a suitable home in the west. *The latter proviso proved the undoing of the Franklin accord, as an exploring party [to the west] reported no land satisfactory to the needs of the Chickasaws.* (Italics mine).

¹⁰ While the Chickasaw were the last to sign removal treaties, the Seminole were truly the most difficult to relocate. The Seminole signed a removal treaty in 1832, and part of the tribe removed. But other Seminoles refused to recognize the treaty and fled into the Florida Everglades. As a result, the U.S. Government fought a war with the Seminole to enforce the treaty. Such was known as the "Seminole War proper" (1835-1842). A "nominal" end to the hostilities arrived in 1842, and though no peace treaty was ever signed, most of the Seminoles were relocated to Indian Territory. Indeed, the Seminole say they are the only tribe never to have surrendered to the United States.

With the strategic “inability” to find a suitable western home, the Chickasaw thwarted removal in 1830 and again in 1833 and in 1834. Growing weary of this strategy the federal government finally “proposed” to the Chickasaw the sale of western Choctaw holdings in Indian territory. Unreceptive at first, the Chickasaw and Choctaw nonetheless agreed to these proposals in 1837. With a federally enumerated census identifying 4,914 Chickasaw and 1,156 slaves, the tribe began removal (Baird, 1971). And although not complete until 1850, the majority of the tribe had been relocated in only two years (1837-1838).

Figure 3: Removal Routes of the Chickasaw



Source: Hale and Gibson (1991:56)

Concerning the removal process, Sultzman (1999:27) reports:

Of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Chickasaw seemed to have been better prepared for removal and fared better. There seems little doubt that they had the advantage of the money they had acquired for their lands, but there was [nonetheless] considerable hardship from disease, accidents, and the loss of livestock and property.

Writing of these ills, Gibson (1971:184-4) states:

The first Chickasaw emigration party [was] found straggling, some days progressing only three miles and on others making no advance... explained [by the Americans] as suffering from fatigue... The most melancholy reason for the slow march was a daily increase in the number of burials. Whereas during the early phases of the migration only an occasional death, burial, and extended family mourning had occurred, by early August the number of daily burials had increased to as many as four or five in a single day.

Further:

[Whatever] compassion [existed for the Chickasaw] was submerged by the determination [of American emigration officials] to achieve an 'efficient and orderly movement.' Each day [officials] pushed them harder, and the Chickasaws responded by moving even slower. [Patience was exhausted to the point in which] the Chickasaw were warned that in less than six days [American] troops would arrive. The Chickasaws 'would be compelled to march at the point of the bayonet' (Gibson, 1971:185).¹¹

Sadly, the journey to Indian Territory would be the least challenging aspect of relocation. Of the hardships facing the Chickasaw the most disruptive were the suffering made in community fragmentation. Upon entry into Indian Territory, the Chickasaw were separated across five relocation camps-- some of which were one hundred miles apart (Gibson, 1971). Little consideration had been made by relocation officials to maintain clan and family networks. Thus, in this sense the Chickasaw ceased to exist as "a people"-- the one thing that removal was supposed to ensure.

Other factors perpetuating the social disorganization of the Chickasaw were the financial losses forced by removal and the hostilities present in the region. Speaking first of these financial woes:

¹¹ The relocation of the eastern Indian tribes is often known culturally as "The Trail of Tears." With reference to removal, the Cherokee "trail of tears" is perhaps best known. According to Thornton (1984) the Cherokee may have lost half of their 20,000 population. See also Thornton (1987) for information regarding population losses among the other eastern tribes along their own "trail of tears."

All five Chickasaw emigrant camps were in the Choctaw District. Choctaw leaders had graciously received the Chickasaws and were willing to permit temporary residence... Certainly they did not contemplate the entire Chickasaw community taking up more or less permanent residence there... [As] the months and years passed [the Chickasaw] made no move to settle their district... Chickasaw reluctance to settle and develop their district had the principle cause of tribal and personal wealth... As a part of their removal agreement, the Chickasaw were to pay their emigration expenses... This drained the funds accumulating in the Chickasaw account to the extent that it was not until 1844 that the Chickasaws received their first annuity payment... seven years after removal... [thus impeding Chickasaw reunification and territorial development] (Gibson, 1971:217-8).¹²

Now of hostilities: many Chickasaw also refused to relocate out of fear of attack. Several eastern tribes had already established settlements in Chickasaw territory, and others such as the Kiowa and Comanche counted the area as part of their traditional hunting grounds. Truly, the development of Chickasaw territory did not begin until these concerns were alleviated.

In time, annuity payments were made available to the Chickasaw, thus reducing tribal debts and offering financial mobility. But while this problem appeared met there was still the issue of safety. Facing increased pressure and frustration from both Choctaw and Chickasaw leaders, the U.S. government finally agreed to offer protection. Baird (1974:46) writes:

[The] federal government acted to enable [the Chickasaw] to take possession of its new homeland. In 1841... Fort Washita [was constructed] just southeast of modern Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Ten years later... Fort

¹² There is the argument which suggests that annuity payments actually deterred Chickasaw territorial development. Some (Gibson, 1971; Baird, 1974) argue that the inundation of wealth fostered a sense of laziness among the Chickasaw. To be sure, this cultural condition played a role in the aforementioned situation. However, considered structurally, wealth is argued to promote production, not retard it. Thus, as argued here, the key factor that explains the lack of territorial development was the fragmentation of tribal organization and a loss of community made in relocation.

Arbuckle [was established] northeast of the older post near Byars. These two posts significantly reduced the threat of attacks by frontier tribes, thereby encouraging the Chickasaws to drift into the district assigned them.

These new institutions of wealth and security helped to foster a stability within the Chickasaw tribe that had not been there since before removal. Indeed, the Chickasaw decline (concerning both population and communal identity) appeared to be checked.¹³ In 1844, for instance, a tribal census disclosed a population of 4,111 persons. By 1853, a count identified 4,709 persons (see Table 1 for a summary of the Chickasaw population history).

The Chickasaw were now able to attempt the reconstruction of their society.

Establishing an economic base came first:

Holding the land in common [the Chickasaws turned primarily to agricultural commerce]. The full-bloods usually engaged in subsistence agriculture... [While] some mixed-blood Chickasaws operated large plantations cultivated by slave labor... So proficient were agricultural operations that the tribe frequently produced a surplus -- 40,000 bushels of corn in 1843 alone (Baird, 1974:47).

Additionally, with the establishment of livestock ranching and the opening of commercial markets to whites, the Chickasaw did build a thriving economy (Baird, 1974). More significant than this however was the sense of community made in economic development.

In "struggling collectively," the Chickasaw revitalized various cultural and political identities. Of those primary, the Chickasaw sought the return of an independent Chickasaw Nation. In 1855, with the cumulation of a sustained campaign for

¹³ Again, although removal was less harsh on the Chickasaw than on other eastern tribes, they nonetheless suffered a heavy physical loss in death and disease, and a tremulous social loss in the fragmentation of community (See Gibson, 1971).

independence, Chickasaw and Choctaw leaders met to dissolve their "negotiated" compact. The treaty of 1885 made the political separation of the two tribes and established the boundaries of the new Chickasaw Nation. On August 1, 1885 the Chickasaws met in mass to assemble a constitutional convention, and by the 30th of that month a constitution was proposed and ratified. In the fall of 1856 the Nation organized its first democratic government with the election of its inaugural governor.

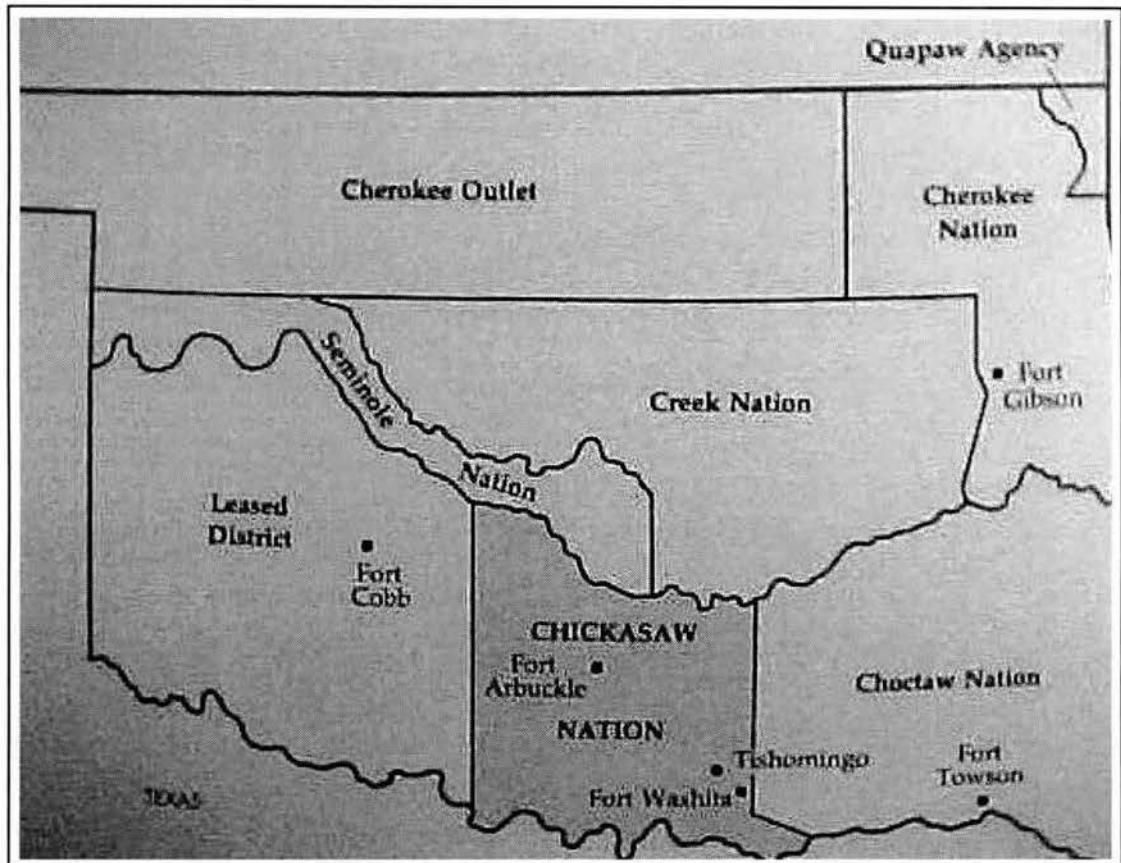
With the mark of political self determination the Chickasaw remade their ethnic and communal identity and gave testament to their resiliency as a people. But, although now emergent, the strength of the Nation would soon again be tested. The struggles and successes made by the Chickasaw after relocation were about to be undone in the American Civil War.

1861-1907: Rebellion, Statehood and the Death of a Nation

In the spring of 1861, the American Union had partially dissolved. Eleven southern states had seceded from the broader Union to form the Confederate States of America. A civil war was at hand, and for both the Americans and Indians a time of great turmoil. With the American Nation now divided the Chickasaws would be forced to make allegiance to the Union or the Confederacy.

For the Confederacy, Indian Territory was prize. Its strategic location could made a base of attack into Union Kansas, and serve as a buffer in defense of Confederate Texas and Arkansas. In fact, much negotiation was made by Confederate officials to win the support of the tribes occupying Indian territory (Baird, 1974).

Figure 4: The Chickasaw Nation, 1855



Source: Hale and Gibson (1991:76)

Concerning the Chickasaw, Confederate negotiations called into question the "fruitfulness" of their prior relationships with the United States. Sultzman (1999:28) explains:

The black slaves that the mixed bloods brought west with them in 1837 had preordained which side the Chickasaw chose in this conflict. [But, further contributing to this conflict was the resentment felt by the Chickasaw toward the federal government]. With the outbreak of fighting in the east, federal troops abandoned Forts Arbuckle and Washita and were replaced by Confederate soldiers from Texas. [This broke the U. S. treaty promise to protect Chickasaw territory from foreign troops. The federal

government had left the Chickasaw to fend for themselves against enemy soldiers occupying their land]... [Compounding this issue was the fact that] the Chickasaw were still angry with the federal government for removal, the corruption accompanying the sale of their lands, and [funds] still owed them [in annuities and land sale]. They also felt threatened by Republican support of the Homestead Act which would open the plains to white settlement. [In Exploiting these matters, the Confederacy won the support of the Chickasaw]. In May of 1861 the Chickasaw Nation declared its independence from the United States. In July, treaties were signed which joined them to the Confederacy.

For the Chickasaw the war was devastating. More so than loss of life, the war made its impact upon the Chickasaw social structure. At wars declaration, several hundred Chickasaw families asserted neutrality and left the Nation, leaving too, the social and communal bonds held within (Gibson, 1971). Additionally, with the majority of the Chickasaw men away at war, the Chickasaw Nation lost its production of harvest and much of the community starved (Gibson, 1971). Of other ills influenced by war, Baird (1974:57) writes:

After 1862, the tribal domain became the haven for Confederate exiles fleeing federal troops. The Chickasaws took effort to feed the refugees but resources being limited such a task was impossible. The exiles formed marauding bands and took what was not given. The war therefore, not only fostered an era of lawlessness but stymied economic development. It brought a halt as well to educational efforts and deterred any effective governmental operations. Indeed, all elements of national life were seriously disrupted.

Of military action itself the Chickasaw played only a minor role. They participated mainly in defensive movements (Baird, 1974). But when the war ended in 1865 the Chickasaw were granted the distinction of being the last Confederate unit to lay down arms against the Union.¹⁴

¹⁴ The symbolic capitulation of the Confederacy occurred on April 12, 1865; the Chickasaw capitulated on July 14, 1865. (See Davis, 1991; Baird, 1974).

In late June 1865, Union officials arrived in Indian Territory to sign treaties of truce with the Confederate allied tribes. By April 1866, a peace treaty had been reached with the Chickasaw, wherein: the Chickasaw agreed to abolish slavery, allow two railroads -- one running north to south and one running east to west -- to be built through their territory, and to participate in discussions concerning the "possibility of forming one government for all the tribes living in Indian Territory" (Hale and Gibson, 1991:81).

The concessions made by the Chickasaw were indeed more liberal than those enforced on the seceding southern states. But, these concessions nonetheless, prophesied the future to come. In opening up lands to the railroad, the federal government was essentially advancing white settlement. Further, in the hope of establishing one Indian Nation in which to negotiate, the United States professed its desire to see the demise of Indian sovereignty.

After the Civil War the face of the Chickasaw Nation looked markedly different. By 1893, the Chickasaw Nation held some 40,000 non-Indian settlers (Baird, 1974). Though alarmed by the influx of whites into tribal lands there was little the Chickasaw Nation could do.¹⁵ In 1887 the U.S. Congress passed the General Allotment Act (also known as the Dawes Act) which authorized the breakup of communal Indian land. By mandate of the act, individual tribal members were to be allotted specific parcels of land. After allotment, surplus land would be made available for sale on the open market (Thomas, et al., 2001).

¹⁵ To a degree, the Chickasaw participated in their own demise. The tribe had fractionalized during this era, with some Chickasaw actually encouraging settlement. These Chickasaw grew wealthy in procuring land and business development and created an aristocracy within the tribe. This led to "class" and political divisions within the Chickasaw.

Fighting their national demise, the Chickasaw entered into negotiation and were able to reject allotment treaties in 1893, 1896 and in 1897. In 1898 however -- with the passage of the Curtis Act -- the Chickasaw would come to accept allotment. The act consolidated previous laws aimed at dissolving the tribal government. In addition, it called for increased concessions to be made by the Chickasaw for delaying allotment. Baird (1974:72) comments, "as procrastination seemed only to elicit harsher demands, the Chickasaw accepted the inevitable and voted... to approve tribal liquidation."

By January 1906 the Chickasaw allotment roll was complete. It listed 1,538 full bloods, 4,146 mixed bloods and 635 intermarried whites. Each entitled to approximately 320 acres of land (Gibson, 1971). The Chickasaw freedman, numbering 4,670 persons, were to receive 40 acre allotments each (Gibson, 1971). With every piece of land allotted (1903-1910) the demise of the tribe became more a reality. And when Oklahoma entered the Union in 1907, the Chickasaw Nation ceased to exist. The Chickasaw people were now members of the United States of America, a nation that had forced their obliteration.

1907-2000: Into the Twenty-first Century

For the Chickasaw, the twentieth century began in despair. Allotment had forced tribal termination and with it the loss of identity for many Chickasaw. The two great Chickasaw institutions -- a representative tribal government and the practice of holding land in common -- were now notions of the past.

Not a phenomena lost to time however, were the ruthless actions of the land-hungry. Under pressure from Oklahoma officials Congress removed all restrictions on whites, blacks, and mixed bloods of less than one half Indian blood permitting them to

sell their entire 320 acre allotment (Baird, 1974). Chickasaws of between one-half and three quarters were enabled to sell all but their 160 acre homestead (Baird, 1974). The general effect of this act urged exploitation, for many allottees now "confused and impoverished" sold off their inheritance (Hale and Gibson, 1991).¹⁶

In the years following allotment, poverty immersed the Chickasaw people. Land-less and facing the discrimination of local whites, many were unable to make a living. Such was the situation when the economic collapse of the 1930s made it only more desperate (Hale and Gibson, 1991). Seeking opportunity, the political and economic "salvation" of the American Indian came with the Presidential election of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Debo, 1970). Recognizing the need to aid Indian tribes, Roosevelt's administration offered innovative economic and social programs. Of the most fundamental was the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Debo (1970:338) writes:

This act prohibited further allotment of land still held under tribal tenure, extended the trust period on restricted allotments until further legislation by Congress, and authorized the appropriation of two million dollars a year for the acquisition of land for Indians. It permitted the organization of tribal governments with control over tribal funds and the expenditures of the Indian service and of tribal corporations for the management of communal property. It authorized a ten-million-dollar revolving loan fund for the use of tribes and individual Indians.

And although this law did not apply to Oklahoma -- because of the termination of tribal governments prior to statehood -- Congress did pass the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act in 1936. This act, "an adaptation of its principles to the tribeless Indians of that state,

¹⁶ Land sale restrictions -- for members of all blood quantum levels -- were removed in 1953 (Baird, 1974).

permitt[ed] them to organize as corporations and form cooperatives and authorized a special revolving loan fund of two million dollars for them" (Debo, 1970 :339).

Numerous Chickasaw gained from these. Some received loans to start farms and like-nature operations, whereas others obtained loans and grants for college (Hale and Gibson, 1991). Of greater impact however was the fact, that in tribal reorganization, the Chickasaw could pressure the U.S. Government for treaties lost. The Chickasaw had long complained that the United States had not fulfilled treaty promises concerning profits of receipt in land and mineral sale (Hale and Gibson, 1991). With this, and with matters concerning other treaties, the Chickasaw went to court. Appearing before the Indian Claims Commission (a special tribunal organized to hear Indian groups' complaints against the federal government) the Chickasaw won several of their court suits in 1950, and again in 1951 (Hale and Gibson, 1991).

But as the Chickasaw were celebrating their court victories (and because of the court victories that the Chickasaw and other tribes were allowed to claim in reorganization) the U.S. government developed a new policy of relation with the Indians -- one of termination (Debo, 1970; Hale and Gibson, 1991). Speaking of termination, Debo (1970:352) writes:

[Termination] began with House Concurrent Resolution 108 adopted August 1, 1953, [which stated] -- 'the policy of Congress... to make the Indians.. subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as... other citizens... and end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all the rights and privileges pertaining to American citizenship' -- sent the Indians throughout the country into a state of shock. They knew that the resolution simply meant that Congress intended to break up the tribal communities authorized by the Reorganization Act to manage their affairs, and in effect throw their land on the market by abolishing its trust and nontaxable status.

As a result of termination, Indians would no longer be recognized as Indians in federal, state, or local governments. In response to this however, many tribes emerged with a collective voice of protest. As Thomas, et al. (2001:429) account:

With its denial of the very idea of being Indian, termination sent psychic shock waves reverberating across Indian country. Indians nervously watched the progress of... termination... and began to formulate political responses... On a national level [the shape of many national Indian organizations took form] speaking against termination, arguing for a dual Indian identity that encompassed *both* tribal membership and American citizenship. [In the face of protest] Congress decided not to terminate any tribe against its will.

Indeed, in the attempt to terminate Indian tribal holdings and Indian identity, the federal government fostered an emergent and collective Native American voice. The policy of termination helped build an aggressive nationwide Indian movement. Truly, this was the last thing the federal government wanted to do (Josephy, 1999).

In 1970, President Richard Nixon repudiated termination. Such was a policy that Indian protest had declared dead (Josephy, 1999). In its place Nixon offered a policy of "self-determination." As Thomas, et al. (2001:434) continue:

Self-determination emphasized tribal control over social programs, law enforcement, education, and other services traditionally controlled by the federal government. Now, *when tribes deemed themselves ready*, they were to take over or administer contracts previously supervised by the [federal government].

Under the policies of self-determination the Chickasaw began to rebuild their tribe and their sense of "peoplehood." In 1971, tribal members elected their own governor for the first time in more than 60 years (Hale and Gibson, 1991). In 1983, the tribe approved a new constitution making the Chickasaw Nation a political entity yet again (Hale and Gibson, 1991).

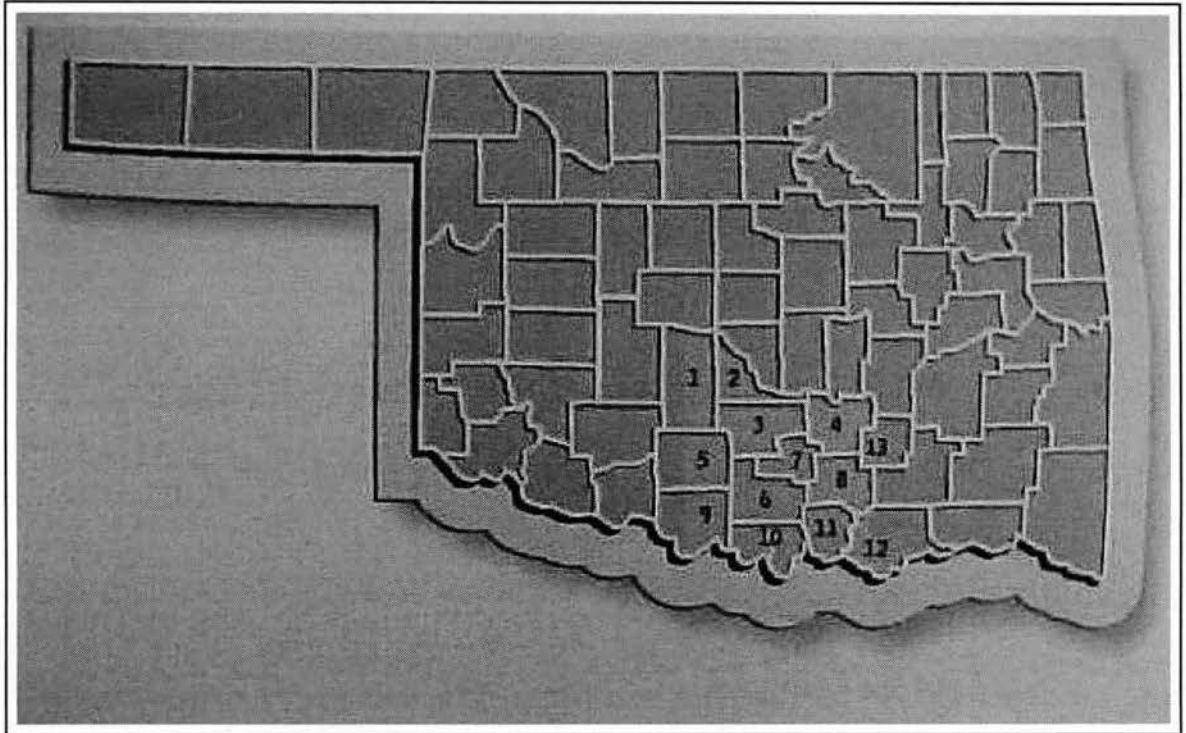
Although never a large tribe historically, the Chickasaw are now among one of the fastest growing tribes in America (Aguirre and Turner, 1998). In fact, population numbers have nearly doubled in two consecutive ten year periods, from 10,317 to 21,522 persons in 1980-90, to 39,000 persons in 2000. In accounting for this, several explanations are offered: First, as impacted by an emergent nationwide "Indian movement," public policy toward Native American have changed. Once defined by fear and hate (Szasz, 1977; Hoxie, 1984), federal Indian policy has now become one of increased responsibility. Improved health care and economic opportunities have lowered infant mortality rates and increased life expectancy for adults (Aguirre and Turner, 1998).

Additionally, in explaining the Chickasaw population growth, there are perhaps an increasing number of persons engaging in an "ethnic switch" -- that is, the purposive change of one's ethnic identity (in this case from "white" or "other" to "Indian") (Nagel, 1995). With the increased ethnic awareness of Native Americans, the term "Indian" no longer carries the historic fervor of stigma and discrimination (Snipp, 1992). Today the Chickasaw are so completely intermarried that their racial complexion have come to reflect the aforementioned phenomenon. Namely, Chickasaw identity has become primarily symbolic. It is an identity that people are *choosing*. This is not to say however that Chickasaw identity is not real, it very much is. Rather, what is suggested by this is such: identity exists less in blood quantum, than in the social interactions and cultural expressions that construct Chickasaw personhood.

To state in another manner, Chickasaw identity has always been more communal than genetic. From the tribe's earliest history - - with the absorption of the Natchez, to the intermarriage of whites -- being Chickasaw has meant, more than anything else, the

investment of self in the memories and the social ties of the Chickasaw community. As such, the increased identification of "persons Chickasaw" speak to an increased security in the social, cultural and political institutions of the Chickasaw. To this end, as long as there are institutions enabling social interaction - - and as long as the memories and stories of the Chickasaw are told -- so will exist the Chickasaw.

Figure 5: The Boundaries of the Modern Chickasaw Nation



Source: www.chickasaw.net

Counties identified:

1. Grady
2. McClain
3. Garvin
4. Pontotoc
5. Stephens
6. Carter
7. Murray
8. Johnson
9. Jefferson
10. Love
11. Marshall
12. Bryan
13. Coal

Table 1: Population of Chickasaw Tribe: 1540 through 2000

Year	Population	Interpretation of Population	Source
Year 1540	3,500 to 4,500	--	Gibson, 1971
Year 1700	3,000 to 3,500	a century of war	Wright, 1951
Year 1780	2,290	end to a century of war	Wright, 1951
Year 1837	4,914	period of white influx	Baird, 1974
Year 1844	4,000	the hardships of removal	Gibson, 1971
Year 1853	4,709	social and economic stability	Gibson, 1971
Year 1861	5,000	start of the civil war	Wright, 1951
Year 1865	4,500	end of the civil war	Wright, 1951
Year 1871	6,000 (4,500 of white or mixed blood)	--	Baird, 1974
Year 1890	6,400	--	Wright, 1951
Year 1906	*6,319 = 1,538 full blood 4,146 mixed blood 635 intermarried whites **4, 670 Chickasaw Freedmen	numbers created by allotment	Gibson, 1971
Year 1919	6,304 = 5,659 Chickasaw by blood 645 intermarried whites	era of social stigma (persons unwilling to identify Indian tribal membership)	Wright, 1951
Years 1920- 1930	--	same as above	--
Year 1944	5,350	same as above	Wright, 1951
Years 1950-1960	--	nationwide ethnic renewal movement	
Year 1973	6,050	tribal reorganization (1971)	Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1973
Year 1980	10,317	current Chickasaw constitution (1979)	U.S. Census, 1994
Year 1990	21,522	strong ethnic identity	U.S. Census, 1994
Year 1992	26,000	growing Chickasaw self-enumeration	Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission, 1992
Year 1995	34,000	same as above	Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1995
Year 1997	37,000	same as above	Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1997
Year 2000	39,000	same as above	Chickasaw Nation, 2000

* Official tribal rolls from which persons trace their Chickasaw ancestry

** The Chickasaw Freedmen have never been granted citizenship in the Chickasaw Nation.

CHAPTER V

Collective Memories: Myths, Legends, and Folklore of the Chickasaw

Within this chapter I relate the various experiences of the Chickasaw that have been offered to me. I share these experiences, for as told to me by a Chickasaw storyteller, “the stories I share with you are now yours to hold and share with others.”

In relating the myths, legends, and stories of the Chickasaw, I offer a history of the Chickasaw as told through their stories. As Locke (2001:55) writes:

As the Old Testament is both the Judaic religious base and the history of the ancient Jews... and as the New Testament is the history of the first Christians... Native myths and legends are the Indians’ version of their own history.

Indeed, the word “myth” is derived from the Greek “mythos” meaning a legend or story (Philip, 1999). And as Phillip (1999:8) relates:

Sometimes the word myth is used to mean something that people believe is not true... But mythology is not a collection of lies; it is a collection of truths. Every human culture makes stories about the creation of the world, the origins of humankind, and the meaning of life. These stories are myths. In one sense mythology is religion in story form. But in another sense, mythology is also history and sociology... this is because myths are stories that explore rather than just explain. They show the human mind searching to balance the forces of life and death.

In the myths that follow, I attempt to trace a history of the Chickasaw as offered in their own words.¹ Further, I hope to highlight the Chickasaw institutional forms (the social, moral, and ceremonial codes) that identify the experience of being Chickasaw.

¹ The stories and commentary included within this chapter come from Chickasaw communal myths, tales from Chickasaw individuals, and personal reflections.

I present the Chickasaw myths by way of the following categories: religious and spiritual origins; legends of migration; stories of nature and of the animals; Chickasaw social organization; and ceremonies of the life cycle.

RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL ORIGINS

The Story of the Creator

The story of how the creator came to be is unknown: The creator simply was.

In ancient times the creator was known as Aba' Binni'li' (sitting or dwelling above). Aba' Binni'li' is the maker of the worldly elements including warmth, light and all human, animal, and vegetable life.

It was believed the Aba' Binni'li' lived above the clouds-- at first alone. But then growing lonely, Aba' Binni'li' created a host and a village of beings who dwelled with the creator in the sky.¹

Earth Diver: The Creation of the World

Among the clouds, before the world was made, lived a community of people whose village center bloomed a large beautiful tree with white flowers. When these flowers opened they gave light to the people of the village, and when they fell, the sky grew dark.

In the passage of time, a women in the village received a dream and a message: "The tree must be uprooted." After much council, the cloud people agreed to pull up the tree. But when they did, the tree sank below the clouds and disappeared. The villagers, angry with what had happened,

¹ It is important to highlight a core component to this tale. Namely, we must recognize that in this story the creator became lonely. When I sought a "theological" interpretation to this conception, Native individuals told me that God needs you just as you need God, and that you must always remember that you should never feel alone or lost in this world.

took the messenger women and pushed her through the hole into the sky below.

As the woman fell and fell, she looked down and saw the lower world -- the world as we know it. But the form of the lower world was not yet finished. The earth was incomplete.

As the woman fell, all she could see was water. Swimming on the water and flying above it were a number of creatures. Some had wings and could fly, some had shells and could swim.

As the woman continued to fall through the sky towards the water, the flying animals cried out: "How shall we make a resting place for this falling being." Answering back, the animals of the sea cried: "Below the depths of the water lay earth. But only a great diver can reach it and bring it to the surface."

The powerful fliers, such as the crow and the eagle had not the skill for such a task. So in this, they called for a contest of the water creatures to become earth divers. The swan went first, diving far but falling short. In the descent, swan entered a dream and died. Duck followed, but too failed. Floating to the surface they were revived by the magic of the powerful fliers.

The contest continued, until the smallest of the creatures -- crayfish -- took turn. Believing crayfish to be insignificant, the other creatures mocked him. But crayfish soon returned with sand in his claws.

Celebrating crayfish's success, the powerful- and now humble- creatures took the sand and shaped the earth onto turtles back. When the woman arrived through the air, the air and sea creatures laid her on turtles back. Through her and the animals did the earth complete its form.²

² From this tale, three messages are to be found. First, the story of the messenger women is interesting in its parallel to the Judeo-Christian story of the fall of humankind. In that theological tradition, the first humans (Adam and Eve) were punished (particularly, the woman Eve was punished) for "eating" from the tree of knowledge and thus expelled from paradise. In the Chickasaw tale, the woman was "told" to uproot the tree, and was thus "chosen" to lead humankind. In the Chickasaw tradition, the "Chickasaw Eve" is celebrated. Whereas, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Eve is often stigmatized for initiating the downfall of human kind.

Second, this tale offers us that all creatures (regardless of size or appearance) are important. Remember, it was the "insignificant" crayfish that created the earth.

Third, and related to the above point, there is the sense that human beings were created as the companions, not the masters, of all other creatures.

The Creation of Love and The Children of the Earth

In a place above the sky lived a being so lost and lonely that he was prone to forever wander the cloud tops blind. One night, this being, unaware of the path that fell below his steps, wandered into a hole in the clouds and dropped into a deep sleep.

Some mornings after, this being awoke in a new world-- a place below the clouds. Yet, even in this new world he had a consciousness of utter loneliness. Who was he? What was he? Why was he alone in this vast solitude?

In this new place, the being continued to wander, searching for answer to his loneliness. Forever he wandered, until one day, he heard a tiny voice speaking to him. The voice sounded like his, yet it was different. It questioned like his, yet it was different. It called out like his, yet it was different. It had longing like his, yet it was different.

The man now followed the voice. He followed it through the fields, through the valleys, and forests. Forever he followed it.

Finally, one day, this being, saw the voice he pursued. In the tree before him sat mocking bird. It was mocking bird who carried the voice the man had followed.

But as we know of mocking birds, it carries the voice of others it has communicated with... and mocking bird had not yet talked to man... mocking bird carried the voice of another.

Calling out, mocking bird took flight, rising up to the mountain that lay before it and man.

Man followed. He raced up the mountain, now following the sight and sound of mocking bird. Forever he raced up the mountain side. Day and night, night and day, he followed. He followed, until reaching the mountain's crest, the vision of mocking bird disappeared into the mist.

Man continued to follow the voice of mocking bird, but now the voice sounded different. As man broke the mist, he saw before him another being -- woman.

Instantly, as the eyes of woman and man met, both fell to their knees. Their hearts were now overjoyed... They had found the aching in their hearts... Each now knew who they were... each had purpose and were no longer lonely.

Reaching their hands to one another, tears fell from both sets of eyes. As their tears reached the ground, so grew in the place the elements of life. Where the tears of love fell, so grew rivers of grass, and children of flowers, corn, fruit and nut. In time, and out of love, did man and women fashion the beings of this world. So became love and the children of the earth.

The Emergence and Population of the Earth

Common to native folklore is a three tiered vision of the universe. Such is a structure which holds an Upper, Middle and Lower World. In the tales that have preceded, humankind comes to inhabit the Middle World through passage from above. There is however, an alternative story explaining the emergence of human kind. In a popular southeastern tale, the people of this world emerged from below the earth. This legend is as follows:

A very long time ago the first creation of men was in Nanih Waiya³ (“Leaning Mountain”) and there they were made and came forth. The Muscogeans (Creeks) first came out of Nanih Waiya, and they then sunned themselves on Nanih Waiya’s Earthen Rampart, and when they got dry they went to the east. On this side of the Tombigbee river, there they rested and as they were smoking tobacco they dropped some fire.

The Cherokees next came out of Nanih Waiya. And sunned themselves on the earthen rampart, and when they got dry they went and followed the trail of the elder tribe. And at the place where the Muscogeans had stopped and rested, and where they had smoked tobacco, there was fire and the woods were burnt, and the Cherokees could not find the Muscogean’s trail, so they got lost and turned aside and went towards the north and there toward the north they settled and made a people.

³ Nanih Waiya or Nanih Waya (Pronounced = Nah - Knee Way- Ah) is a sacred mound site near Philadelphia, Mississippi where many tribes of the southeast hold their origin. In one Chickasaw tale, the surface of the earth is believed to be the body of a woman, with Nanih Waiya her navel -- or the center of her body, and of the earth. As the navel is the “bridge of life” (umbilical cord) between woman and child, so is Nanih Waiya the bridge or tunnel of humankind’s emergence.

And the Chickasaws third came out of Nanih Waiya. And then they sunned themselves on the earthen rampart, and when they got dry they went and followed the Cherokee's trail. And when they got to where the Cherokees had settled and made a people, they settled and made a people close to the Cherokees.

And the Choctaws forth and last came out of Nanih Waiya. And they then sunned themselves on the earthen rampart and when they got dry, they did not go anywhere but settled down in this very land and it is the Choctaws home.

The Children of Aba' Binni'li': The Relationship of the Elements to Humans

The Moon, Sun, Wind, Rainbow, Thunder, Fire and Water came to visit with Aba' Binni'li' along with one human. Thunder asked Aba' Binni'li' if he would make the people of the world his children. Aba' Binni'li' told him, "No, they can't be your children, but they can be your grandchildren. If anything arises which is heavy on the people of the world, you can be their sinker for those things."

The Sun asked the same question and Aba' Binni'li' answered this way, "No, they can't be your children, but they can be your friends and grandchildren. You can be only for the purpose of giving them light to lead them through this life."

Then the Moon asked if they could be his children. Aba' Binni'li' said to him, "No, I can't do that but they can be your nephews and friends." You must protect them in their sleep and guide them in their dreams.

Fire then asked if the people of the world could be his children, and Aba' Binni'li' replied saying, "No, the people of the world can't be your children, but they can be your grandchildren. While they are growing up, you can keep them warm and can cook their foods so they can eat well."

Now Wind asked Aba' Binni'li' if she could have the humans as her children, but again, Aba, Binni'li' said, "No, they can't be your children, but they can be your grandchildren so you can remove the unclean air and all kinds of diseases."

Next, Rainbow asked for the people of the earth to be hers. Aba' Binni'li' replied saying, "No, they can't be your children, but you can prevent

floods and rainy weather when it is not needed. You can honor yourself that way.”

Then Water asked if he could be father to all the people of the earth. “No, the people of the earth can’t be your children. What you can do is wash them clean so they can live long and healthy lives.”

Aba’ Binni’li’ concluded, “I have told you all how to guide yourselves and what to do. You must remember that these children are *my* children.”

Raven and the Legend of the Flood

The story of a great flood that consumed the earth (a flood that only a few chosen people survived) is one of the most widespread of all myths. Almost every ancient people, from the Greek to the Chinese to the Inca, have their own version of the destruction of the world by water (Philip, 2000). Here, I present four variations of the Chickasaw flood story. But, common to all stories is the introduction and interplay of Raven. In some tales, Raven is a jealous being, who calls upon the destruction of the world. In others, Raven is the creature who brings salvation to those that survived the flood, and still in others, Raven is a neutral character who could have helped humankind, but choose to do nothing.

The mythical presentation of Raven is often somewhere between good and evil. And this dual portrayal of Raven may be due to several factors. First, the real bird is both “good” and “evil” as interpreted through human eyes. The Raven is intelligent, and at times playful, and thus imbued with positive human characteristics. Yet, the same bird is also a “scavenger” who feeds on easy prey (e.g., infant birds or chicks) and dead carcasses, and thusly seen as dark and evil.

Further, outside of the natural actions of the real bird, the Raven also represents human moral choice. This is to say that the dual nature of Raven (as both good and evil) may serve to remind humans of the moral path that they can choose within themselves.

The Jealous or Trickster Raven

The world was made twice over. The first world was a paradise and life for humans was without toil. But Raven - a powerful spirit being- thought the world was too easy for humans. Raven convinced the Elements to this belief and thus oversaw the destruction of the world. In so doing Raven created hardship and woe. And those humans that survived the destruction, would forever know pain and suffering.

The Raven and the Prophet

In process of time, after many generations of humankind had lived and passed, the race became so corrupt that brother fought with brother, and cruel wars frequently covered the earth with blood. The Great Spirit saw all those things and was displeased. A terrible wind swept over the wilderness, and the people knew they had done wrong, but they lived as if they did not care. Finally a stranger prophet made his appearance among them, and proclaimed to every village that the human race was to be destroyed, lest they change their ways. None believed his words, and they lived on in their wickedness as if they did not care, and the seasons came again, and went.

Then came the autumn of the new year. Many cloudy days had occurred, and then total darkness came upon the earth. It was very dark and very cold. The people laid themselves down to sleep, but were troubled with unhappy dreams. They arose when they thought it was time for the day to dawn, but only to see the sky covered with darkness deeper than the heaviest cloud. The moon and stars had all disappeared, and a constant thunder rumbled in the upper air.

It was a most unhappy time indeed, and darkness reigned for a great while. The grain and fruits of the land became moldy, and the wild animals of the forest became tame and gathered around the watchfires of the people.

A louder clasp of thunder than was ever before heard rolled through the sky, and a light was seen in the north. It was not the light of the sun, but the gleam of distant waters. The waters made a mighty roar, and in billows

like mountains, rolled over the earth. They swallowed up the entire human race and destroyed everything that had made the earth beautiful.

Only one human being was saved, and that was the prophet who warned of destruction. He had built a raft, and on this, did he float above the deep waters.

A large black bird came and flew circles above his head. The prophet called to it for aid, but the bird shrieked at him, and flew away -- never to return to him.

A few days latter a smaller bird, of a bluish color, with scarlet eyes and beak, now came to hover above the prophet. He spoke to it and asked if their was a place of dray land where he might rest. It fluttered its wings, and flew with a soft voice to a place where the sun sank below the waters.

Following the bird, the prophet landed upon a green island. Here he slept, and when he awoke, the prophet found the island covered with every variety of animal.

The prophet saw too the identical black bird which had abandoned him to his fate on the waters, and as it was a wicked bird, he called it Raven, or bird of the evil one.

He also saw, and with great joy, the bluish bird that guided him to safety. Because of its kindness and beauty, he called it soft-voiced pigeon.⁴

In time, the waters finally passed away, and that bird of kindness became a woman and a companion to the prophet, from whom the people now living on the earth are all descended.

Raven and the People of the Boat

In the ages of the past, the people of the creator, became so wicked that the Creator resolved to sweep them from the earth, except Oklatabashih (People's Mourner) and his family, who alone did that which was good.

The Creator told People's Mourner to build a large boat into which he and his family, and a male and female of every living animal would enter.

People's Mourner did as he was commanded, and went into the world collecting the animal pairs.

⁴ In other versions of this particular story, the "kind bird" is also known as "Lost Pigeon" or Turtle Dove.

But of the Raven, he found them impossible to catch. Raven, with sharp mind, eluded all of People's Mourner traps; and with strong break and claw escaped his nets.

People's Mourner eventually gave up the chase and returned to the boat. The door closed, and the rain began to fall in increasing numbers for many days and nights, until thousands of peoples and animals perished.

Then the rain ceased, and utter darkness covered the land for a long time. Silence claimed the earth... then a growing rumble was to be heard and a light appeared from the north. But this light was not the sun, it was the glimmer of mountain of water rushing inland.

All earth was once overwhelmed with water, except the great boat, which rolled safely along the water's waves. For many cycles of the sun and moon did the boat drift...

But now of the fate of the Ravens: When the great flood came, they flew high into the air. And as the waters rose higher, so too did the Ravens soar. Higher and higher did the Ravens go, fearful they would fly beyond the world. And so they did, into the clouds.

The Creator, impressed with the skill that the Ravens showed in eluding People's Mourner, made them messenger birds. Forever, they would carry his warnings and serve as signs of approaching danger.

For their skill, the Creator too gave Raven an ear of corn to give to the family of People's Mourner.

Leaving the Sky Kingdom, Raven found the people of the boat and gave them the gift of corn.

In time, the great boat found land, and the people planted the corn and prospered there. After a great while, the people of the boat re-peopled the earth, and it is from those whom all people now exist.⁵

Messenger Raven

Long ago, perhaps in the days when the Chickasaw still resided in the land of the setting sun, their Great Spirit, Aba' Binni'li', sent rain. Soon water covered all the earth. Some Chickasaws made rafts to save themselves. Then, creatures like large white beavers cut the thongs that bound the rafts.

⁵ And so in this story (and in the one the follows) we are also offered the story of corn. Corn, as presented within these tales, is a mystical creation; a gift of the Creator.

All drowned except one family and a pair of each of all the animals. When the rain stopped and the flood began receding, a raven appeared with part of a ear of corn. The Great Spirit told the Chickasaw to plant it. The great Spirit also told them that eventually, the earth would be destroyed by fire, its ruin presaged by a rain of flood and oil.

THE MIGRATION LEGENDS

The Chickasaw hold their social origins within their legends of migration. Such is a collection of tales highlighting struggle, hope, faith and joy. Specifically, the migration stories recount the journey of the ancient people - who guided by the creator- seek their promised land. I proffer these stories below.

Chi-ka-sah: "Those Who Walked Ahead" (Version One)

In a time of the ancient past, the "people of one fire"⁶ dwelt in a land beyond the setting sun; and being oppressed by a more powerful people sought a place of peace and fruitfulness.⁷

⁶ According to legend, the Muskogean tribes (Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek) were believed to have been one tribe historically. The individual tribes were a result of political and social factions throughout the ages.

⁷ In history and in legend, many believe that the continents of North and South America were settled by small groups of people who crossed from Siberia and the Aleutian Islands into Alaska. In this ancient time, people crossed the narrow channel of water separating Asia from Alaska, and migrated southward into Mexico and Peru -- and from this, the "people of one fire," who battling oppression, left the lands of Mexico and migrated to the North American southeast.

A great council was sought in which to decide the fate and direction of the people. After many days of deliberation, the people found themselves ready for the coming journey.

And to lead them: two brothers known for their bravery and skill in war and wisdom in council -- the brothers, Chahtah and Chikisah.

The evening before their departure, "Iti Fabussah" (the leaning pole)⁸ was placed in the center of their village. The Great Spirit had revealed that the Iti Fabussah would indicate the direction they must travel day by day until the promised land was reached. For on that day, the leaning pole would remain erect.

Inspired by the Great Spirit, and led by the brothers, the people found themselves moving east. And so, bearing the bones of their ancestors, the long journey across mountains, deserts and turbulent waters began.

In time, the people reached a mighty body of flowing water -- known today as the Mississippi.⁹ Let, the leaning pole instructed then to continue east.

But such an arduous task was this, that Chikisah and a small band of the people set out as scouts to make safe this portion of the journey.

Crossing the mighty water, and searching the land that lay beyond it, Chikisah had made the way for the people to follow... yet on their return, the people of Chikisah became trapped by a winter storm.

Unable to return to his brother, Chikisah was forced to turn north to escape the winter snow.

In time soon after, the people of Chahtah made it beyond the mighty river, but by action of the winter weather, lost the path of Chikisah. Unable to trace his brother's steps, the people of Chahtah sadly moved south and made their promised land there.

And so the people of Chahtah became the Choctaw. And the people of Chikisah became the Chickasaw -- or "those who walked ahead."¹⁰

⁸ In the numerous versions of the migration stories, the sacred pole is identified as the Magic Pole; the fa-bus-sah (leaning pole); or kohta falaya (long pole).

⁹ According to Chickasaw legend, the Mississippi River is said to derive its name from the Chickasaw (and Choctaw) words: "misha" (beyond - in space in time) and "sipokni" (old). The Mississippi River inspired such reverence and astonishment that the "people of one fire" named it "Misha Sipokni" --"Beyond all Age." The name "misha sipokni" was later corrupted by whites to "Mississippi."

¹⁰ According to Wright (1951), "Chikisah" is a mnemonic for the Choctaw phrase "chikih ashachi,"

**Chi-ka-sa: "Those Who Walked Ahead"
(Version Two)**

In ancient days the ancestors of the Choctaws and Chickasaws lived in a far western country, under the rule of two brothers, named Chahta and Chikasa. In the process of time, their population becoming very numerous, they found it difficult to procure subsistence in that land.

Their prophets thereupon announced that far to the east was a country of fertile soil and full of game, where they could live in ease and plenty. The entire population resolved to make a journey eastward in search of that happy land. In order to move more easily to procure subsistence on their route, the people marched in several divisions of a day's journey apart.

A great prophet marched at their head, bearing a pole, which on camping at the close of each day, he planted erect in the earth in front of the camp. Every morning the pole was always seen leaning in the direction they were to travel that day. After the lapse of many moons, they arrived one day at Misha Sipokni.

As the parties crossed the great river, the prophet planted his pole on the eastern shore. Still east it lead.

Chikasa's party traveled first, followed days later by Chahta's. On Chikasa's departure a great rain fell, and it rained for several days. In consequence all of the low lands were inundated with water and rendered impassable.

After the subsidence of the waters, scouts were sent to find Chikasa's party. But with the rain having washed all traces of Chikasa's march from the grass, the scouts returned to Chahta.

And so in their separation, the clans of the two brothers eventually became separate nationalities: The Chickasaw and Choctaw. In this way, the name Chickasaw means: "those who walked ahead."

literally translated to mean "they left as a tribe not a very great while ago."

Chickasaw: The Name “Rebel”

Some time in the ancient past, the ancestors of the Chickasaw and Choctaw became restless in their old home. Disturbed by continuous harassment of their neighbors, they began to seek a new home where they could find peace and contentment. A great council was called by the leaders of the ancestors, who under decision of the elders, agreed to make search for a new homeland.

For the migration, everything of the ancestors was left behind except seeds for planting, the sacks of bones of their dead ancestors, and a snow white dog that was a gift of the Great Spirit.^{11 & 12}

Appointed by the elders for their skill in battle and intellect of peace, the brothers Chikasah and Chahtah led the ancestors on their new path.

The journey started each day by direction of a “Magic Pole.” Each nightfall, the brothers Chickasah and Chahtah alternately planted the pole into the ground -- and then by the morning, the travel for the next day was determined by the direction the Magic Pole had leaned during the night.

By putting their faith in the holy guidance of the Magic Pole, the ancestor’s direction was toward the land of the rising sun.

In time, the journey reached the western banks of the Mississippi River. Amazed at the sight of the river, one of the oldest and wisest prophets was the first to speak. He uttered: “Misa-sipoki,” meaning literally- “beyond the ages,” and figuratively meaning of all its kind- “father of waters.”

Having reached this spectacular sight, camp was made for the night. The next morning, the Magic Pole continued to point to the east. It was decided

¹¹ Again, according to legend, this migration is said to have taken many decades. James Adair (1775) writes that the migration took 43 years. But, as Green (1994) notes, James tried to make parallel the journey of the Chickasaw to the exodus of the Hebrews and the journey of Moses (which is also said to have taken about 40 years). Thus, the span of migration, is too a legend that is open for self reflection and critical investigation. Nonetheless, Chickasaw authorities believe that the ancestors began their migration somewhere in Old Mexico (sometime around 200 to 400 A.D.), and traversed parts of Texas, Louisiana (and perhaps Arkansas) and eventually settled in parts of Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee.

¹² The Snow White Dog or Great White Dog, is a incomplete legend in itself. The White Dog is mentioned in several versions of the migration story, yet its story is never fully expounded. In general, the Snow Dog is a gift of the Great Spirit who is offered as a scout, protector and companion to the ancients. In various stories, the White Dog warns of danger and offers tremendous healing power to those who have fallen ill. In other stories the dog is named Panti, who gathers and kills wild game for the tribe to eat and drives away menacing forces.

that the ancestors would camp for a time, while rafts and canoes were made for crossing.

The crossing was finally attempted and it is said that the Snow White Dog was the first to be placed on a raft and set adrift in the water... But the raft was cut up in the strong current and washed downstream.

The ancestors expected to find the dog on the opposite shore, but when they arrived on the east bank of the great river, they failed to find the Snow White Dog -- he had been taken back by the Creator, his mission as protector complete.

Upset and fearful over the loss of the White Dog¹³, the people placed the Magic Pole into the ground... It acted strangely by turning in many directions.

Eventually, the Magic Pole stood erect. But because of the confusion over the pole and with the grief over the White Dog, the people became divided. One group, wanted to terminate the journey and settle at that location. After making a decision to stay, the small group pulled away from the others who continued their journey eastward.¹⁴

The ancestors continued to travel toward the east, but all along there were small deflections of groups that branched off. The larger group continued to follow Chickasah and Chahtah until after an epidemic of some magnitude¹⁵, Chickasah desired to go north in search of an area of abundant game, fish, and good water.

When Chickasah and his clan started to leave, his brother Chahtah attempted to prevent their leaving, believing their promised homeland was about them. Chickasah traveled onward, to which Chatah threw up his hands and exclaimed: "Hamonockma, ikia ahnishke, Chickasha!" (Halt,

¹³ In another version, the great dog fell into a large sink hole, and their remained. It is said that the Chickasaw could hear the dog howl just before the evening came. Additionally, whenever, any of the warriors gained scalps, they would give them to the boys to go and throw into the sinkhole where the dog was. After throwing in the scalps, the boys would run of in great fright, and it was believed that if one should fall while running off, that boy would be taken prisoner or killed by enemies.

Still other story fragments of the great dog exist: Through now dead - or in spirit form- the great dog continued to protect the Chickasaw. As one story goes: When they were fighting another tribe, the Chickasaw were guarded by two dogs, one white and one yellow, which were invisible to the Chickasaw but visible to the enemy. They would run among the latter and knock them over so that the Chickasaw could kill them more easily. When the Chickasaw started to fight out to fight, they could hear the noise made by these dogs, which was like that of a thunderstorm, but they could not see them

¹⁴ According to legend, the small group that decided to stay became known as the Natchez tribe.

¹⁵ This epidemic is believed to have been a smallpox outbreak.

follow then not, they are rebels!). As so from there on the Chickasaw were to be named and known as -- Rebels.

The Twin Brothers Chahtah and Chikasah

In the ancient past, when the ancestors were troubled by famine and war, Aba' Binni'li' contacted the people.

Aba' Binni'li' spoke to an old medicine man, instructing him to make preparations for journey. Inspired by Aba' Binni'li', the medicine man selected the twin brothers Chahtah and Chikasah to lead the people to peace.

He told them to make a sacred pole from a sweet gum tree. Then the old medicine man painted the pole with red and white strips; the red symbolized war and the white represented peace and admonished them to never make war if they could make peace. Finally, he told them to go in the direction that the pole leaned.

And so the journey began. To the east the pole leaned, and to the east the people went, until one day, they came to a great river. Believing the river to be a sign that their journey was near an end, the people consulted the sacred pole -- still it urged them to travel east.

Having traveled beyond the great river, the sacred pole did something it had not done before: it wobbled wildly than stood erect.

The brothers disagreed over the interpretation of the actions of the pole. Chikasah believed the pole commanded them to travel on. Chahtah believed the pole commanded them to remain.

Reaching an impasse, the brothers suggested an action of fate: They would each take hold of the straight pole and drop it. The direction in which it landed would guide Chikasah --for Chahtah was firm to remain in the present location.

The brothers stood facing each other, one to the east and one to the west, and in between them stood the pole in an erect position with one end resting on the ground. Grasping the pole in each hand, the brothers let go at the same instant...

The pole fell to the north. And thus the two were divided, Chikasah would take the northern portion of the country and Chahtah the southern. They became two separate and distinct tribes, each of who assumed and retained the name of their respective chiefs.

The Big White Dog and the Sacred Pole

In a time long since past, there lived somewhere in the west a tribe of ancients who were constantly warred upon by a powerful enemy. Because of the never ending attacks, the people of the tribe enjoyed little peace.

In time, the families of those who fell under constant attack, became so weary and heavyhearted that they appealed to their prophets to find a solution to the problem.

These men of wisdom held a special council. They sought guidance from Aba' Binni'li' - the creator of all things- who sat above the clouds and directed the destiny of all.

At, last the prophets concluded - under the influence of Aba' Binni'li' - they the people would seek a new homeland where they could find peace and happiness.

Their guide to the new land would be kota falaya (long pole). This long pole, though, was no ordinary pole. It was something sacred, for it was made by Aba' Binni'li'.

At the end of each days journey, the prophets explained, the sacred pole would be stuck into the ground so that it stood perfectly straight. Each morning the pole would be examined, and in whatever direction it was leaning, that would be the direction of travel.

The prophets told them that the people should be spilt into two groups to make traveling safer and easier and that the brave young chief called Chickasaw would lead one party and his equally brave brother Choctaw, also a chief, would lead the other.

The evening before departure, the long pole was placed in the ground. In the morning it was found to point east.

So with chief Chickasaw at the head of one of the parties and Chief Choctaw heading the other, the two bade farewell to the old lands and set out in the direction of the rising sun.

Far in front of this procession ranged a large white dog. The people loved the big creature very dearly. He was their faithful guard and scout, and it was his duty to sound the alarm should enemies be encountered.

Travel was slow and laborious. Each days walk took the people farther and farther from their old homeland until in time they found themselves passing through the homelands of other people.

Sometimes the ancestors were allowed to pass unmolested through these foreign domains, but more often than not they were set upon by jealous guardians and forced to fight their way through.

Sickness was a constant companion of marchers, and the tribal doctors stayed busy attending to the people. But when sinti -the snake- struck any of them, the big white dog was quickly summoned and had only to lick the wound to make the victim well again.

Yet, even with the extraordinary healing powers of the medicine men and the beloved white dog, the ugly hand of death reached down into the double headed colony and took away loved ones at will.

Days turned into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years. And then one day the ancestors came upon a scene beyond their imagination. It was a great river, and the unexpected sight overwhelmed them.

The people stood on the riverbank and stared in awe at the mighty watercourse. They called the giant river misha sipokoni (beyond all age); today, that great river is known as the Mississippi.

That night the families sat around their campfires believing they had reached the promised land. But at sunup the next day, the ancestors saw that the long pole still leaned toward the east.

The tribesmen set about constructing rafts and soon the crossing was underway. Almost immediately a serious mishap occurred which left the people very sad. The raft carrying the beloved white dog came to pieces in the middle of the river. And though the people were quickly rescued, the big dog, which managed to climb onto a piece of broken timber, could not be rescued. The people could only watch helplessly as he was swept downstream and out of sight. That was the last the ancestors ever saw of their faithful guard and scout.

Many days were required to ferry all the people and their belongings to the opposite side, but in time, the difficult crossing was completed.

The families rested for several days, then packed up and continued eastward. Some weeks later they camped at a certain place, which later became known as Nanih Waiya (Leaning Mountain).¹⁶

At daylight the following morning, the first people found the long pole wobbling around crazily, leaning first in one direction and then another.

The people became somewhat excited and uneasy, for they had never seen the sacred long pole behave in such a strange manner. At last the long pole grew very still and stood perfectly straight.

At this point, Chief Choctaw and some of the prophets were quite satisfied that the erect pole was a divine sign from Ana' Binni'li' that their new home had been reached.

Chief Chickasaw, on the other hand, was not at all pleased with the way the sacred pole had wobbled around, and he felt certain the promised land lay farther north toward the rising sun.

Discussions on the matter were held by the two chiefs and the prophets, but at the end of several hours, opinions remained unchanged. Seeing that talking was getting them no place, Chief Chickasaw pulled the sacred pole from the ground and commanded all those who believed the promised land lay further east to pick up their packs and follow him.

That was the beginning of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indian Nations. From that day on, Chief Chickasaw's followers were referred to as Chickasaws and those who stayed with Chief Choctaw were called Choctaws.

After leading the Chickasaws farther eastwards to various parts of what are now states of Alabama and Georgia, the long pole reversed its direction and guided the people westward to a place in the vicinity of the present day towns of Pontotoc and Tupelo, Mississippi. And there, less than a hundred miles north of where the Choctaws had settled, the sacred long pole stood straight as an arrow. The Chickasaw people then knew with certainty that at last they had found their new homeland and that their long journey was at an end.

¹⁶ Nanih Waiya is located in what is now known as Winston County, Mississippi. Nanih Waiya is considered a sacred site, for in Choctaw legend, the ancient people are said to have emerged out the mountain from the world below. "From clay the people were made, and emerging out of Nanih Waiya, did the sun dry them and form them." (Choctaw Legend).

Nanah Waya: The Home of the Muskogee People

From the land beyond the setting sun came the Muskogee people bearing the bones of their ancestors and following a sacred leaning pole.

Oppressed by their circumstances, the people yearned for a new land in which to grow their corn. Inspired by the Great Spirit who provided them with a sacred pole, they began a journey to the new land following the "Pole" as it pointed the way to the Northeast.

For perhaps forty-three years, they followed the pole as it pointed the way. They planted their corn in the new ground along the trail tarrying long enough to harvest the life-sustaining grain. The arduous trail led them across mountains, deserts and turbulent rivers. They encountered fierce animals and warring tribes.

They found fertile valleys along the way, but it was not their home land and the pole continued its compelling lean, always to the Northeast.

The "Beloved Warriors" as the people called those who went beyond, carried and protected the pole. At evenfall, the bearer drove the sacred pole upright into the ground on which they stood. At first light the following morning, the chiefs, captains and mingos gathers around the pole. When the light of the fully risen sun struck the sacred pole, they saw the direction of its lean and they called the people to follow. These were the Chickasaw, "those that went beyond" and as they led the way, the people followed.

At last they came to a great river who far bank they could not see. Undaunted by the father of all rivers, they built rafts and fashioned a canoe for the pole bearer. For many weeks they ferried the people across the mighty Mississippi. Exhausted from their labor, they rested, but at evenfall they implanted the sacred pole on the top of a low nearby hill.

The chiefs, captains, and mingos gathered around the pole at the first light the following morning, and when the light of the fully risen sun struck the pole, it danced and sparkled in the morning light. The pole drove itself deeper into the ground and stood erect.

Nanah Waya! The Pole bearer said, "The Leaning Mountain," and the cry echoed throughout the gathered tribe.

Nanah Waya! Nanah Waya! The Muskogee people were home.

True to their nature, the Beloved Warriors went beyond Nanih Waya before they settled in the forks of three rivers. They were the Chickasaw, the haughty rebels who chose to live apart from the people. They buried the bones of their ancestors in the new ground and claimed the land for their own.

STORIES OF NATURE, ANIMAL, AND EARTH

Tales of the natural world often have a three fold function. First, they offer explanations for why and how the objects of this world came to be. These stories urge us to question the world around us and to reflect upon our roles within it.

Second, such stories are often moral folkways, or codes which direct and internalize desired modes of social conduct. And third, they are forms of entertainment which strengthen the bonds between those with whom we share said tales. In the forms that follow, one may find one or all of the above functions expressed.

Ghost of White Deer

A brave young warrior for the Chickasaw nation fell in love with the daughter of a chief. The Chief did not like the young man, who was called Blue Jay. So the chief invented a price for the bride that he was sure Blue Jay could not pay. "Bring me the hide of a White Deer, : said the chief.

The Chickasaws believed that animals that where all white were magical. "The price for my daughter is one white deer." Then the chief laughed. The chief knew that an all white deer, an albino, was very rare and would be very hard to find. White deerskin was the best material to use in a weeding dress, and the best white deer came from the albino deer.

Blue Jay went to his beloved, whose name was bright Moon. "I will return with your bride price in one moon, and we will be married. This I promise you." Taking his best bow and his sharpest arrows, Blue Jay began to hunt. Three weeks went day, and Blue Jay was often hungry, lonely, and scratched by briars. Then, one night during a full moon, Blue Jay saw a white deer that seemed to drift through the moonlight. When the deer was very close to where Blue Jay hid, he shot his sharpest arrow.

The arrow sank deep into the deer's heart. But instead of sinking to his knees to die, the deer began to run. And instead of running away, the deer began to run toward Blue Jay, his red eyes glowing, his horns menacing. A month passed and Blue Jay did not return as he had promised Bright Moon. As the months dragged by, the tribe decided that he would never return. But Bright Moon never took any other man as a husband, for she had a secret. When the moon was shining as brightly as her name, Bright Moon would often see the white deer in the smoke of the campfire, running, with an arrow in his heart. She lived hoping the deer would finally fall, and Blue Jay would return... To this day the white deer is sacred to the Chickasaw people and the white deerskin is a favorite material for the wedding dress.

The preceding tale, initially for me, always seemed incomplete. I often asked what this story was meant to evoke. In response to my queries, Chickasaw persons reminded me that Native tales often ask more questions than they answer. Such stories are meant to make the hearer "think" -- to question, reflect and find an answer within one's self.

So stated, I offer my particular interpretations: First, with regard to ancient hunting rites, it was widely thought that the animals- and their spirit owners- sacrificed themselves willingly to hunters who accorded them the proper "respect" (Lowenstein and Vitebsky, 1997). In this story however, the hunter did not offer the proper "respect," for he hunted not for food but pride. Deer was a precious, and life sustaining food commodity, and not something to be hunted frivolously.

Second, this tale is offered as a love story, and a message of endurance-- for it may be interpreted to mean that love endures even beyond death. And third, this tale

resonates as a “ghost story” used primarily for entertainment purposes. But, as I have stated, these are my interpretations, and are no more accurate than those of another.

The Story of Eagle Feathers

In the beginning, the Great Spirit showed himself through the birds and the animals. One creature particularly loved by the Great Spirit was the eagle, for the eagle tells the story of life.

The eagle, as you know, lays only two eggs in her nest each year. All living things in the world are divided into two's: man and woman, hot and cold, joy and sadness.

All things also have children of two kinds so that life may continue. People have two eyes, two hands, two feet, a body and a soul, substance and shadow. Through our eyes we see pleasant and unpleasant scenes, through

the nose, we smell good and bad odors, and with our ears, we hear joyful words and sounds and noises that make us sad. Our mind is divided between good and evil. We have light and dark, night and day, summer and winter, peace and war, life and death.

The right hand is often used for evil such as war, or striking a person in anger. The left, the one nearer the heart, is always full of kindness. The right foot may lead us on the wrong path, but it is the left that brings us back and keeps us on the right way. And so it is with the eagle. The eagle feather is divided into light and dark, representing daylight and darkness, summer and winter. The white tells us of summer, when all is bright; the dark reminds us of the dark days of winter.

It is you who will choose the path in life you will follow - the right way or the wrong way. When you are confused, breath your prayer on the eagle's down¹⁷ and send it to the Great Spirit. He will listen.

When you earn the right to wear the eagle's feather by bringing honor to yourself by good work and showing respect, wear them with pride and dignity. They represent life itself.

¹⁷ The “down” is the fine, small, soft feathers underneath main feathers. They are often found on the breast.

How Dog Got Its Bark

A long time ago when the animals were like people, most dogs were great talkers and liked to tell everything they knew.

And they did. The dogs gathered at night and tattled and gossiped-- telling everything their families did.

So embarrassed and outraged became the village members with having their secrets told, that they pleaded with dog to quit gossiping.

But every night the dogs gathered and gossiped and let their family's secrets be known.

Frustrated, the villagers asked the Great Spirit for help. "Help us with the gossiping dogs. Keep them from telling our secrets."

And so the next morning, Man found dog sleeping outside his door as he always did. Man approached dog. And nudging him with his foot, asked, "What stories did you tell on me last night?"

Dog made no answer. So Man nudged him again. "What stories did you tell on me?"

Again, no answer. This time Man kicked dog, "What stories did you tell?"

Receiving the kick, Dog opened his mouth and let out a "Bark."

"What did you say, asked Man?"

"Bark, Bark, Bark" went Dog.

And so the prayers of the people were answered. No more secrets to tell.

And that's the story of how Dog got its bark.

Baby Rattlesnake

There used to be a village of rattlesnakes and in this village there was a baby rattlesnake, and more than anything in the world he wanted a rattle. He did not..

All of his brothers and sisters had one. His momma and daddy had one. But he did not. Every day he would go to his momma and ask, "Can I have my rattle today?"

"No baby rattlesnake, you can't have it today, you will have to wait till you're older" she would say. And he would ask the next day, and the day after that, "Can I have it today?"

And so would say, "No baby rattlesnake. You are much too young. You'll have to wait till you are older."

Baby rattlesnake was heart broken when his momma told him that, and he left crying. He cried all day and all night. He cried so much, he kept the whole town awake.

So the whole town had a meeting and said "We have to do something with baby rattlesnake, he's keeping us up all night." And one of the older snakes said, "Well, give him his rattle. He won't know what to do with it because he's too young. Maybe he'll get in trouble with it but at least he'll be quiet."

So they decided to give it to him.

The next day he went to his momma and asked, "Can I have my rattle today?" And she said "Okay baby rattlesnake, I'll give you your rattle, but you must be very careful how you use it, it's not a toy." And he said, "Oh I will."

Well the first thing he did was shake it -- sh sh sh sh sh. Oh he loved that noise, he'd never been able to make it before, so he shook it again -- sh sh sh sh sh.

Later that day he went out to the big open prairie and he found a rock laying on the ground-- so he coiled up next to it waiting for someone to walk down the trail.

Skunk was the first to walk by, and when he did, baby rattlesnake jumped out at him and shook his tail -- sh sh sh sh sh -- and it scared skunk off, running home.

Well baby rattlesnake thought that was funny. So he went home and told his momma what he had done. Upset with baby rattle snake she said, "I told you to be very careful how you use your rattle, its not a toy. Somebody is going to get hurt."

So he went back to that rock a waited for badger to come by -- and when badger got close, baby rattle snake jumped out and shook his tail -- sh sh sh sh sh. It scared him and he ran off.

Well again, baby rattlesnake thought that was funny and he went home and told his momma. "Be careful how you use that rattle, it's not a toy. Somebody's going to get hurt," she said.

So he left for a while to think on this, but when he came back he asked his momma, "How do you know when you see a beautiful Indian princess?" And so said, "Oh! baby rattle snake, she is confident and proud of who she is. Why do you ask?" "Because I want to scare her," replied baby rattlesnake. And she said, "Oh! baby rattlesnake, that's not how you use your rattle. It's not a toy. Someone is going to get hurt."

So he went by to the rock and waited for a beautiful Indian princess to walk down the trail. He keep waiting and waiting and just when he was ready to give up and go home, her saw her. He saw this proud, beautiful woman walking down the trail and he said, "that has to be her."

So when he got to that rock baby rattlesnake jumped out and shook his tail -- sh sh sh sh sh. Oh! she screamed and she stomped her foot and when she did, she crushed baby rattlesnake's rattle into many, many pieces. The rattle was broken.

So he went back home crying, and told momma what had happened. She and the rest of the rattlesnake family comforted him and momma said, "It's not a toy and somebody was going to get hurt. And look what happened, you lost yours."

So baby rattle snake asked for another one. His momma told him, "No, not now. But, yes, in time. You will have to wait till you get older and know how to use that rattle. For know, listen and learn from your elders, and in time you will gain your rattle."

**How Opossum Got a Big Mouth
(or why we don't laugh at the misfortunes of others)**

Long ago when the animals were able to speak to one another, there were two particular animals that were very good friends, Deer and Opossum. They went everywhere together. You rarely saw them apart.

One day, as the two were walking around, Deer had noticed that Opossum was looking a little more plump than he was, and he couldn't figure out why. So Deer asked him, "Why are you so much plumper than me? I go everywhere you go and see everything you see and eat everything you eat. So why are you fatter than me? And Opossum just told him, "Well you see that hill over there?"- pointing way in the distance. "Yes," answered Deer. "And you see that persimmon tree at the bottom of that hill?"- asked Opossum. "Yes," answered Deer.

"Well I get on top of that hill, run as fast as I can down the hill and crash into the persimmon tree and make all the ripe persimmons fall off so I can eat them. That why I'm fatter than you."

So Deer thought about that. And the more he thought about it, the more he craved those ripe persimmons. So that's what Deer did. He got on top of the hill and ran all the way down it as fast as he could and crashed into the persimmon tree. He hit the tree so hard that all the ripe persimmons did fall of but killed Deer instantly.

Opossum was watching from a distance and saw what happened to Deer and found the whole situation funny. And Opossum laughed and laughed. He laughed so hard and so much that his mouth stretched out. And in the end when Opossum finally stopped laughing, he discovered that he mouth never went back to the size it was.

The Embarrassment of Opossum (or why a lie comes back to haunt you)

There was once a very pretty girl whom all the animals wanted to marry. On his way to see her, the opossum picked up all the pieces of paper he could find and ut them into his pocket. When he got to her families house, he made a big show of examining these papers, causing everyone to wonder what these papers were.

He explained he had been a warrior and these papers were his pension money. The trick worked and the opossum got the girl. This angered all of

the unsuccessful animals and one night they put a hair-eating caterpillar into the bushy tail of the opossum while it was asleep. At daylight, the opossum awoke and discovered his hairless tail and feeling so utterly terrible, he climbed up to the top of a nearby tree.

When the beautiful girl awoke she could not find the opossum, she went outside to look for him. Spying him in a tree, she asked him to come down. He ignored her. She became angry and threatened to shake him down. Then she began throwing stones and sticks at him. One struck him on the head and this dislodged him from the tree. As he was falling, his tail wrapped around a limb and he hung suspended in the air.

That is how opossum came to have a hairless tail, how he could hang from tree branches and why he is embarrassed by his looks.

Terrapin's Thread

“Hoh ah-che mah-ut,” (So they say), there lived a terrapin near the wild strawberry patch under some old leaves from a large oak tree which stood by a river. On one warm and beautiful morning, the terrapin had just finished a breakfast consisting of large, juicy, red strawberries.

As he was returning to his favorite napping spot near the river, two young boys who had been fishing, saw the harmless little creature. The young boys through down their fishing poles and began wrestling, running, and pushing one another, as they both tried to pick up the terrapin.

The terrapin was so frightened by the boys he could not move. The boys then picked up the terrapin and began laughing and pulling the terrapin's tiny legs, and in their struggle, the terrapin was soon dropped to the ground.

The boys then picked up sticks and began hitting the terrapin. The terrapin was beaten until his beautiful smooth shell was cracked in pieces. They left the terrapin in great pain, unable to move, and crying softly.

While the gnats played tag with one another among the sweet fragrance of the spring flowers, they heard the mournful cries of the shattered terrapin. “What can we do to help you back to health, my friend,” they asked.

The gnats began to look around and found an orange colored thread spread over some weeds nearby. They picked the thread and began to sew the terrapin's wounds together. Soon the terrapin's wounds began to heal, as the gnats watched anxiously.

Until this day, the terrapin carries thirteen cracks on its back, and the orange thread that is spread over the weeds is known by the Chickasaw as the Terrapin's Thread. In the Chickasaw language, the orange thread is called, "lok-se ehn poh-loh-nah."

How the Day and Night Were Divided

Back in the days when animals would talk to one another, they held a meeting with Nita' (the bear) presiding. The question was how to separate day from night. Some wanted the day to last all the time; others favored the night.

After much talking and arguing, Fani' (the ground squirrel) said: "I see that Shawi (the raccoon) has rings on his tail divided equally, first a dark ring then a lighter colored ring. I think that day and night should be divided like the rings on Shawi's tail." The other animals were surprised but pleased that Fani' was so wise.

It was unusual that the ground squirrel spoke up at these town hall meetings. They decided to use his plan and divided the day and the night equally just like the rings on Shawi's tail-- in regular order, one after another.

Nita' was so jealous that he scratched the back of Fani'. This left some long marks on his back, and because of it, all ground squirrels to this day have stripes on their backs.

How Fire Came to this Side of the World

Long ago, there was fire on one side of the world but not on the other.

The animals had heard about fire, but had never seen it. They were curious about its shape, its size and what it was used for. Thus, they wanted it.

So all the animals had a meeting to choose who was going to bring back fire. Owl was the first to step up, and said "I will go. Let me go and bring back fire."

The other animals agreed-- and so went owl to the other side. When he arrived, he found all the coals that were burning and tried to bring them back.

But owl had no hands or pockets; so how was he to bring fire back? With his feet.

As owl started to come back, with his feet wrapped around the burning coals, the coals began to smoke. And smoke got into owls eyes and he dropped the coals. And to this day if you look at the owl he still has the smoky rink look around his eyes.

So the animals had another meeting. And this time snake came to the front and said, "I'll go. Let me go bring fire back."

So they let him. But how was snake to bring back fire? He had no hands, no pockets.

With his tail, snake carried the burning coals. But as he too was coming back, the coals started to burn him and he dropped fire, and it turned him into the black snake we have today.

So again the animals had a meeting and they said "who is going to bring back fire?"

So spider came up and she said "let me do it. I know I'm small, and I look like I can't do much, but let me try."

So they agreed to let he go over there and try to bring back fire.

And she found the coals, but she too has no hands, no pockets. So how was she going to bring back fire?

With her web. She made a web and she made it into a bowl and she put all the coals she could fit in there and she carried back the web.

And when she came before all the animals she dumped it out and this big flame of fire came up.

And it was the small spider that brought fire back to this side of the world.

The Story of the Chickasaw Tie Snake

There are many versions of this particular legend. However, at the core of each is a warning (particularly a warning for children), which reads: beware the tie snake and sitting pools of water. As Swanton (1928c:492) writes:

The tie snake is an inch and a half in diameter and short, but is very strong. It is white under the throat, but black over the rest of its body, and its head is crooked over like the beak of a hawk. It lives in deep water, usually in deep water holes from which it makes excursions into the woods, drawing its prey down into the water to its den... it is responsible for drownings and vanished animals and people.

I relate the following tale:

Two men went to war, but after they had some encounters with the enemy, one of them fell sick and decided that they better return home.

One the way home, the two men found an uprooted tree and a hollow filled with water. In this small pool of water was a fish. The sick man said, "That is what I have been wanting, and plucked it from the water.

The other man said, " There may be something wrong about a fish found in a tree that way." But his companion cooked and ate it anyway. The sick man offered his companion some of his fish, but his friend declined.

Night fell and the two friends lay on opposite sides of their camp fire. During the night, the sick man repeatedly called out to his friend until he was able to waken him. "What is the matter?"

"I feel strange" replied the man. "Look at me and see what is wrong." His companion found to his astonishment that the sick man had become a snake from the hips down.

The snake man said, "I wish to see my family; will you bring them to me?" Now completely a snake, he slipped in into the water, and as he did so, the sides caved in about him, so that the surface became a big water hole. The snake disappeared below the surface.

The companion soon returned with the snake man's family. The water hole was still there, only bigger and bluer. The man called to his friend, and the snake emerged in the middle of the pond. He know had blue horns. After circling about in the pond he came to land near them and laid his head in his mother's lap. His relatives had brought his belt and other ornaments he had used in his life as a human being and they draped these things on his blue horns.

Then he circled the pond again and coming back, took his youngest sister and carried her down into the water, out of sight, gone forever...

Ever since that time, people are cautious around sitting bodies of water, which they say are full of snakes of all kinds. To this day, Chickasaw children must not go near the water without their mother's permission.

The Tree

"Che-hoh-wa" (God) planted a tree under which we may gather. This is where we find healing, power, wisdom and safety. The roots of this tree spread deep into the body of Mother Earth. The branches reach up like hands praying to Father Sky. The fruits of this tree are the good things "Che-hoh-wa" gave us, such as love, caring for others, generosity, patience, wisdom, fairness, courage, justice, respect, humility, and many other wonderful gifts. Our elders taught us that the life of the tree is the life of our people. If our people wonder too far away from the safety of the tree, or if we forget to eat its fruit, or if we should tun against the tree and destroy it, great sadness will fall on us.

That many will become sick at heart. We will lose our power. We will stop dreaming dreams and seeing visions. We will begin to argue among ourselves over little things. That we will no longer be able to tell the truth, or be honest with each other. We will forget to respect and how to live in our own land. Our lives will become filled with anger and sadness. That little by little we will poison ourselves and everything we touch. The location of this tree and its fruits have been carefully preserved in the

minds and hearts of our elders. These humble and loving souls have left us these symbols to guide us to the path leading to the fruits of this tree.

The Story of Reelfoot

Once there was a Chickasaw Chief named Kaolpin. He was young and handsome, but he had a twisted foot, so his people called him Reelfoot (again, Kaolpin or translated to mean -- “reel-footed person”).

In his journeys he came to meet a Choctaw princess named Laughing Eyes. Laughing Eyes was the only person not to show scorn to Kaolpin for his physical defect. The two soon fell in love and decided to be married. When the princess’s father refused to give Reelfoot his daughter’s hand in marriage, the chief and his friends kidnapped her and began to celebrate their marriage.

The father demanded her return, but Reelfoot refused. In revenge, the unhappy father called upon the Great Spirit to bring her return.

A famine was sent upon the area and the woods became dry, the game left for survival, and Reelfoot felt he was being punished for his wrongful ways -- for in the ancient way, the suitor had to obtain permission from the perspective bride’s parents in order for the two to be married.

But both Reelfoot and his bride continued to live hidden deep in the forest caring for nothing except their own love.

Drought and famine could not convince the two to return... together always, they decided to be. So with this, the Great Spirit stomped his foot causing the Mississippi to overflow its banks and swallow the area where Reelfoot and his bride were hidden-- thus forming Reelfoot Lake¹⁸

There is nothing that remains today except this monumental lake to perpetuate the legend of this love story and their disobedience.

¹⁸ Reelfoot Lake lies in the state of Tennessee, near the Mississippi River.

Lover's Leap

In legend, there was a beautiful Chickasaw woman who loved a handsome young warrior, and that fearing her father's wrath they met in secret for sometime. Too soon however, her father found out about the love affair and put a stop to it. Pining for her lover and in seeking revenge against her father, the woman one day jumped to her death on the rocks below. As she jumped she said, "One day up in the opening of the sky above the world she would live forever with her warrior forever and forever never to depart again."

The Chickasaw chief, in his grief and in order to try to make amends to honor his beloved daughter, declared that from that day on the rock from which she jumped would be known as Lover's Leap -- a living memorial to his daughter and to the everlasting bond of love.¹⁹

Of Drought, Storm and the Disappearance of the Elk, Buffalo, and the Mastodon

In the history of the Chickasaw there was once a great drought in the old homeland of the Chickasaw. In this time, not a drop of rain fell for three years. It is said that the Noxubee and the Tombigbee Rivers dried up and a lot of the forest perished. And so the elk and the buffalo migrated beyond the Mississippi River and never returned.

After three years of drought, the land received rain for "two moons" and a terrific amount of thunder and lighting. The great mastodon was struck several times by lighting, and as the lighting struck him, the bolts glanced off his head.

After a while he became annoyed. Fearing for his life, he fled to the Chickasaw Bluffs (near Memphis, Tennessee), and in one mighty jump cleared the Mississippi River and made his way to the Rocky Mountains. So explains the disappearance of the mastodon.

¹⁹ Located, as Sumners (1974:84-85) writes, "in Tishomingo County, Mississippi ... across Mackey's Creek at Bay Springs on State Highway No. 4. Located at this place is a large rock on the west bank of Mackey's Creek.

CHICKASAW SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Within this section I introduce the clan system of the Chickasaw. I do so for several reasons. First, the clan system is an ancient form of social and communal identity; and knowledge of this system is knowledge of the Chickasaw.²⁰ As Barbour (2001:3) writes:

For centuries the Chickasaw people were ruled by a highly complex structure of matrilineal clans. This system of family relationships created the social and governmental fabric by which the Chickasaw Nation identified itself and operated. Every aspect of Chickasaw life, from birth to death, was filtered through clan associations and responsibilities to family and nation.

And second, while the Chickasaw clan system no longer exists as a *formal* structure of social or governmental organization, many Chickasaw individuals have an interest in recovering the knowledge of their clan. Barbour (2001:3) continues, “There is still the need to connect to that which identifies them as Chickasaw.”

Thus, the information I present here, is meant to be a point of reference to those who seek a link between clan affiliation and Chickasaw identity. As such, I offer here: (1) an origin story (and discussion) of the Chickasaw clans; (2) a general description of the structure of ancient clan and political organizations; (3) a framework for tracing clan affiliation.

²⁰ Through the U.S. Federal policies of removal, allotment and assimilation, Chickasaw clan associations have virtually disappeared. Yet, having stated this, I must report that a recent cultural movement to reclaim clan identities and affiliations is underway (of which this work attempts to highlight; see also *The Journal of Chickasaw History*, Vol. 7: Number 1, for more information of this movement and of clan affiliations).

The Origin of the Animals (Clans)²¹

The old-time beings were gathered together. They began acting in different ways and showing different qualities. "Master-of-Breath" observed them.

Some of these beings began jumping upon trees and running about. Someone asked, "What sort of beings are those?" "They are like panthers," someone answered, "Henceforth they shall go about as panthers," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, some began leaping and running. "What are they like?" someone asked. "Like deer," it was said. "Henceforth they shall go about as deer," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, some went hopping high among the leaves of trees and alighted on the branches. "What are they like?" asked somebody. "Like birds," someone answered. "They shall be birds," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, some were very fat and when they walked they made a great noise on the ground. "What are they like?" asked someone. "Like bears," was the answer. "They shall be bears then," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one started to run off but could not run fast. When he came back he had black stripes near his eyes. "What will that be?" it was asked. "It is like a raccoon," said one. "That kind shall be raccoons," said Master-of-Breath.

Then one was so fat and round bodied that when he started to walk off he could hardly walk. "What is that kind?" "It is like a beaver," someone answered. "They shall be the beavers," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one kind was fat and could not run very fast. when this one had gone off to distance and returned, someone asked, "What is that like?" "Like a mink." "They shall go about as minks," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one was very swift when he started to run. He darted back and forth very quickly. "What is he like?" was the question. "Like a fox," came the answer. "That kind shall be foxes," said Master-of-Breath.

²¹ This tale is not specifically identified as being Chickasaw, but is a southeastern legend claimed by several.

Then again, one was very strong and could pull up saplings by the roots. He went off to a distance and returned. Then someone asked, "What is he like?" "Like the wind," was the answer. "That kind shall be wind," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one started off into the mud. When he had come back out of it, someone asked, "What is he like?" "Like a mud-potato," it was answered. "Such shall be mud-potatoes," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one had short legs, and his back was covered with ridges. When he started out and returned, someone asked, "What is he like?" "Like an alligator." "That kind shall be alligators," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one with strips on his back went running off, and when he came back, someone asked, "What is he like?" "Like a skunk," was the answer. "That kind shall be skunks?" said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one went away jumping, and when he came back to the starting place, someone asked, "What is he like?" "Like a rabbit," was the answer. "That kind shall be rabbits," said Master-of-Breath.

Then again, one went off squirming along the ground. When he returned, someone asked, "What is he like?" "Like a snake," was the answer. "that kind shall be snakes," said Master-of-Breath.

Master-of-Breath, after he had given them their forms on the earth, told them not to marry their own kind, but to marry people of other clans. All the people know what clans they belong to and do not marry in their own clan. If they did they would not increase.

In the above story, fourteen clans are made evident; and indeed the ancient Chickasaw could have held these as family and communal units. Truly, it is unknown how many specific animals, or entities, the Chickasaw recognized as clan totems.

So stated, we can nonetheless gain insight into this number and animal type through the writings of the ethnologist, John Swanton. As previously noted (see Chapter II), Swanton made the southeast tribes his life's study. Recording the ancient social patterns of the Chickasaw and of the Choctaw, Swanton (2001:77) reports:

[By legend]... when the creator had provided the means of the [Chickasaw and Choctaw] subsistence, he proceeded to give them their civil regulations. By his direction the [tribes] before their dispersion from *Nanih Waiya*, were divided into two great families, or great clans, embracing the whole tribe, or nation... Each of these great clans is again divided into three subdivisions, or smaller clans making *six* in all. All of these clans intermix and live together in the same town and neighborhood, yet they preserve a knowledge of the clan, and of the particular subdivision to which they belong.

Through the Northern Choctaw (whom Swanton, 2001:79 believes may have adopted the Chickasaw system), one identifies the following six clans (*iska*): Wind (*mahli*), Bear (*nita'*), Deer (*issi'*), Wolf (*nashoba*) Panther (*kowishto' losa'*), and Holly Leaf (*foshiyyi' hishi'*).

And while Swanton's work is often the definitive source material on this subject, other clan groups have been identified. Charles Copeland, a missionary among the early Chickasaw (published in Morgan, 1878), offers the following clan organization:

I. Panther Moiety (great half)

1. Wildcat (<i>kowishto</i>) or Panther (<i>kowishto' losa'</i>) clan	2. Bird (<i>foshi'</i>) clan
3. Fish (<i>nani'</i>) clan	4. Deer (<i>issi'</i>) clan

II. Spanish Moiety (great half)

1. Raccoon (<i>shawi'</i>) clan	2. Spanish (<i>osh-paa-na-nom-pa'</i>) clan
3. Royal (<i>minko'</i>) clan	4. Hush-ko-ni ? -- possibly <i>hoyo'kni'</i> (toadfrog) clan
5. Squirrel (<i>fani'</i>) clan	6. Alligator (<i>acho' chaba'</i>) clan
7. Wolf (<i>nashoba</i>) clan	8. Blackbird (<i>chalhha'</i>) clan ²²

²² Other possible clan entities include Skunk (*koni*), Beaver (*kinta*), Fox (*chola*), Red Fox (*chola homma'*), and Crawfish (*shakchi*) and *haloba?* -- possibly *halowa* (soft shelled or snapping turtle) or *hala'bosha'* (bat animal) (Swanton, 1926).

Several points are worth noting about this model. First, it holds true to Swanton's original two tier structure of Chickasaw society (a point to which I will return shortly). Second, it is evident that "clans" are not static; clans emerge and are incorporated into the social structure over time.²³ For instance, while the origin of the Spanish clan is unknown, it is reasonable to suggest that their totem significance has links to the first encounter with De Soto, or in the political associations with the Spanish after the Revolutionary War (see Chickasaw history in Chapter IV).

What is evident is the fact that the Spanish were accorded enough respect to be taken as a clan totem. Such is possibly due to their warlike nature, and/or skills in battle. Or it is possible that the Spanish clan or moiety identified a trading or commercial group among the Chickasaw.²⁴ Indeed, the same function names the squirrel clan, who welcomed White, English traders into its family (Summers, 1974). As the squirrel gathers (or hoards) nuts, so too, in analogy, do traders gather and hoard products.²⁵ Thus, as

²³ It must be remembered that such clan lists are both a product of time and a product of those who record their existence. Thus, such lists may be incomplete.

²⁴ It has been suggested (see again, Swanton, 1926) that the division of the Chickasaw into two great moieties holds a particular purpose. This being specifically: a division of labor. One moiety exists as a unit of war and battle (or trade and negotiation); while the other provides the agricultural and social needs of the tribe. Swanton (1926) writes (through an informant) that the ancient Chickasaw were divided into two groups known as Tcukilissa (empty or abandoned house) and Tcuka falaha (long house). He states, "I was told that the Tcuka falaha were warlike and lived on a flat or prairie country, while the Tcukilissa were peaceful people living in the timber" (from Barbour, 2001:10). Indeed, if one recalls the migration legend, the "people of one fire" were guided by the sacred pole adorned with red and white paint; with red representing war and white representing peace. And the tribe was admonished to group into such categories of organization.

²⁵ Clan totems seem to identify a tribal division of labor and group functions. Indeed, through scholarship and interview, the following clan functions are suggested: the squirrel clan appears to name "international traders" or "ambassadors;" while the panther or wildcat clans mark warriors and hunters; the fish clan being fishermen and traders in fish; the bird clan being "keepers of knowledge;" Deer being messengers, or runners; the beaver and raccoon identifying warriors, and the skunk clan being hunters. Unfortunately however, these, and other clan totems and functions are "historical speculation."

previously noted, the Chickasaw clan structure was somewhat emergent as the Chickasaw grew in size and in political allegiance²⁶.

Returning to the discussion of the Chickasaw clan structure, a further organizational model is offered by Frank Speck (an ethnologist among the Chickasaw in 1904 and 1905 -- see Barbour, 2001 for this information). Speck writes:

[The Chickasaw] are arranged in two groups, each of which has its own religious ceremony of a shamanistic nature. The tribe is thus broken up into two distinct parts with quite different interests. The groups are named *Imosktca*, "their hickory chopping,"²⁷ and *Intcuk-walipa*, "their worn out place."²⁸ The former are warriors inhabiting substantial lodges, while the latter were people who lived in the woods (Barbour, 2001:6).

Regardless of the differences in named moieties or clans, similarities do exist in each of the aforementioned models.²⁹ Specifically, each structure names: (1) a dual division of labor-- perhaps with one division designed to deal with conflict and international affairs (war and trade) and one designed to serve intra-group functions (such

²⁶ It is reported that the Chickasaw would adopt the clans of emigrants and refugees (i.e., victims of war, such as members of the Natchez tribe when the French tried to destroy them (see Chapter IV).

²⁷ Meaning: a large house or dwelling; to live in a large house requires much hickory chopping.

²⁸ Believed to mean, wooded or forest dwelling.

²⁹ One final model presented by Henry Schoolcraft (a U.S. Indian agent overseeing the Chickasaw removal from Mississippi) offers a varied Chickasaw structure. He writes:

The government of the Chickasaws, until they moved west from Mississippi, had a king, whom they called *Minko*, and there is a clan of family by that name, that the king is taken from. The king is hereditary through the female side... The highest clan next to the Minko is the *Sho-wa* (skunk clan). The next chief to the king is out of their clan, the next is *Co-ish-to* (big frog). Next is *Oush-peh-ne* (Spanish or Mexican)... then *Min-ne* (fish); and the lowest clan is called *Hus-oon-na* (?). Runners and waiters are taken from this family. When the chiefs, thought it necessary to hold a council, they went to the king, and requested him to call a council. He would then send one of his runners out to inform the people... When they convened the king would take his seat. The runners then placed each chief in his proper place. All the talking and business was done by the chiefs. If they passed a law they informed the king of it. If he consented to it, it was law; if he refused, the chiefs could make it a law if every chief was in favor of it. If one chief refused to give his consent the law was lost (Barbour, 2001:5).

as agriculture and food disbursement); and (2) totemic subdivisions or clans that carry out said divisions of labor.³⁰

And again, while the clan system is no longer a former structure of social and political organization, it is still a system of identity among the Chickasaw. Thus, I close this section with information on how one might research clan lineage. The directions that follow are the words of Jeannie Barbour, Chickasaw historian. Barbour (2001:37) writes:

Step 1: Find the Chickasaw Name: Every Chickasaw family has a Chickasaw name associated with it. The Chickasaw name is key to finding out what clan the family belonged to. It is important to understand that Chickasaw clans are matrilineal in nature. This means that researchers must trace family history through their mother's side of the family tree. Once you have found your mother's name, look for her mother's name. You continue this process of following each mother's name until you come upon a name, that is in the Chickasaw language. This name usually appears as one word.³¹

Step 2: Translate the Chickasaw Name: Once you have acquired your matrilineal Chickasaw name, it is necessary to translate the name into English. Each Chickasaw family name expresses a function. This function corresponds closely to the function of the clan it belonged to. Each clan provided a skill or service to the tribe as a whole. The key to understanding the identity of your clan is finding out what your family name means.³²

Step 3: Correlate Translation with Clan: The last step of the process involves understanding how your family name corresponds to a particular clan. Taking the translated name to those persons within the tribe who have studied clan associations extensively will achieve this goal. Matching a family name to a clan is a fairly simple process. Most commonly, clans provided functions for hunting, healing, war, and leadership to the tribal

³⁰ A third layer of Chickasaw social organization needs to be identified. This form includes local groups or "house names" (intucka hotcifa'). Such are identify family units and/ or town names. Thus the Chickasaw structure names: (1) two grand moieties, (2) clan subdivisions, and (3) local house names.

³¹ For genealogy research, a good source is the 1818 Census of the Dawes Commission Rolls. Both are located at the Chickasaw nation library in Ada, Oklahoma, or the Chickasaw Genealogy department in Tishomingo, Oklahoma.

³² Native speakers and translators are available through the Heritage Preservation Division of the tribe. Contact the Chickasaw Council House Museum in Tishomingo, Oklahoma.

town they belonged to. Determining clan associations can be achieved by contacting the museum manager at the Chickasaw Council House Museum, Tishomingo, Oklahoma.

CEREMONIES OF THE LIFE CYCLE

Here, I identify some of the ancient ceremonial customs of the Chickasaw as related to the life course. By the life course, I refer to the major social events that occur throughout the “course of one’s life” (e.g., birth, marriage, death). By identifying and celebrating the events of one’s life, we celebrate one’s human social and communal identity. Thus, in celebrating the Chickasaw accounts of life, we celebrate and identify Chickasaw social identity. And while much of these specific customs have been lost to history, I nonetheless relate those memories that have survived. Of these memories that remain, I reflect upon: (1) child rearing; (2) friendship; (3) courtship and marriage; (4) humor; (5) death and burial.

On Child Rearing and Family Ties:

No “Lost” Children: A Chickasaw Legend (or, the power of a parent’s love and direction)

So well taught and so much a part of the land and wilderness were the children of the Chickasaw, that parents never worried about the children going out into the woods and hills alone. The little children roamed at will from at village to village, or in the woods.

They would be gone all day and the mothers were not uneasy about them. The Chickasaw went quietly through the “wilderness” taking note of every

bush, tree and rock, so that the children would always know their way back. Their sense of direction was so good, they never became “lost.”

The above tale is an allegory speaking to the fostered love between parent and child. As offered to me, if a parent instills in their child a knowledge of their love for them -- then that child will never be lost (aimless, hopeless) in the broader world.

Essentially, the family is the core and primary institution of any society. It is the family that provides the initial socialization and “training” for children, as well as that which offers psychological, social, and material support for its members. And the Chickasaw family is no different. Indeed, much of Chickasaw family tradition and socialization urges respect and love for the family³³. Even today, when it is asked what it “means” to be Chickasaw, many Chickasaw individuals respond in words similar to the following: “To be Chickasaw is to be a member of a family... [it is] to know that you have been cared for and that you will return provide care” (a greater discussion of such matters will follow in the next chapter).

Thus, the point to be taken from this is that Chickasaw child rearing and family dynamics are not singular events marked by individual expressions of ceremony. It was told to me that, “when loved, everyday is a celebration... love is not offered just on days when you get cake and balloons...”

³³ Here, the term family identifies persons beyond the traditional nuclear conception. In the course of this research, I often witnessed individuals elevate or decrease their companion’s family title to offer respect, status and build a “closeness” to that individual. For example, cousins, or childhood friends, were known as bother or sister. Elder brothers or sisters were identified publicly as mother, or father. And more extended (and somewhat distant) family members, such as uncles and aunts, became cousins. Indeed, in this sense, “family” is a social construct built within networks of respect and exchange, and is not solely a biological conception.

On Friendship

In a *formal* manner, when one wishes to engage another in friendship (or when one seeks information or an introduction), the visitor engages the one with whom they wish to interact, first with a gift and then with a brief discussion detailing the nature of the desired interaction.

If the nature of interaction is pleasing to the one receiving the gift, then a friendship is introduced.³⁴ In the future, few interactions are accomplished without the presentation of a gift. One must always bring a present to honor the friendship.³⁵ Thus in such a manner are ties and friendships made a conscious matter.

On Courtship and Marriage

In ancient tradition, the Chickasaw male would offer a gift to the parents of the female he sought courtship with. After some time the male would then seek the permission of the parents for courtship. If the parents approved, then the daughter was then given their permission to see her suitor³⁶.

³⁴ This is especially true among the elders of the tribe. Typically the nature of the gift does not matter (This is to say that a large and expensive gift does not gain one more favor). What does matter, is the form of introduction and presentation; one must offer respect and be sincere in said matters.

³⁵ Gifts do not always have to be material in nature. Jokes, stories, and “kind words” (as long as they are sincere) are considered gifts among friends.

³⁶ With some of the more traditional Chickasaw (particularly the elders) this sequence of etiquette and action (of gift bearing and asking permission) is still desired.

In the same fashion was the process of marriage conducted. The male would present the female's parents with a gift, then after allowing some reflection, ask the parents for their daughter's hand³⁷.

Humor

Among the Chickasaw, as in all groups, humor is used to solidify and mark group social boundaries. I offer here one particular aspect of Chickasaw ethnic humor. And while it is a joke on a true incident, it nonetheless reveals aspects of identity. Namely, it reveals the desired proximity and value of being Chickasaw. Further, I offer this story to show that tales of group life are continual; they are not objects solely of the ancient past. This tale is as follows:

The Day the Chickasaw Became Creek Indians

The Chickasaw people are nationwide. And a large number live in California. Annually, the Chickasaw Nation of Ada, Oklahoma hosts a cultural renewal festival. But because of the distance, many California Chickasaw can't make it. So the California Chickasaw sought permission to host their own renewal festival. The Governor of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma gave his acceptance, and even sent delegates by bus to California.

The California Chickasaw made camp in the designated woodlands and waited for the arrival of the Oklahoma delegation. We waited most of the day, and no sign of the bus. Dusk began to fall, and still no sign of the delegation. We were getting worried.

³⁷ Again, please note this process of gift exchange. Such is a formal procedure used to foster communal and familiar ties -- and to foster the act of being Chickasaw (which too many Chickasaws is defined as being an active and reciprocal member in family and communal matters).

Soon after this, we decided to search for them. As we traveled further and further down the path we started to hear noises... voices. Then, we started to run... We saw the bus high-center in the water, and beside it people in the water.

We thought a terrible accident had happened. We thought people were dead, floating in the water. But as it turned out everyone was ok. The bus failed to make a turn and slipped into the water. The Oklahoma delegation was in the water trying to push to bus back onto the road. No luck however, the bus was stuck.

We made our greetings there in the water, and because the bus was stuck, we moved our camp to the water's edge. There we bonded. We played, ate, talked ... in the water all night long.

Eventually, a tow truck came the following day to pull out the bus. But that night we were all in the water. And because we were in the water, we joked that we were no longer Chickasaw, but "Creek" Indians.

Death and Burial

The ancient custom of the Chickasaw held always to keep family members close -- be them alive or departed. For as told in the old stories of migration and removal, the Chickasaw "gathered the bones of their ancestors and carried them on their journey."

Indeed as Jeannie Barbour writes:

[Common to the Chickasaw] was the practice of burials under a home. This is a common practice among most of the Five Tribes... In our belief, life is a journey, there isn't really a death... In order to complete the journey and to keep these people close to home, it was believed that you had to bury them under the foundation of the floor of their dwelling where their families still lived (in Green, 1999:34).

This practice continued until the early 1900's when an Oklahoma law outlawed this custom. After this however, people started building miniature little homes, or houses

on top of the graves in the cemetery³⁸ (see figure 6). Such houses serve a symbolic and spiritual purpose. As miniature frame houses, they provide a spiritual place of rest and comfort for the spirit on its journey. Further, the houses offer a symbolic location where the families of the departed may gather and be close to their ancestors.

Figure 6: Chickasaw Burial Houses



And while burial customs vary among individual families³⁹, ancient rituals hold that the departed family member be buried with their favorite possessions. Today, Chickasaw custom still urges the placement of objects significant to the deceased within the casket before burial.

³⁸ According to Adair (1775) the ancient burial practice of the Chickasaw had the body buried in a sitting position and facing always “the land of the setting sun” (the east). The sitting position was made so that the departed may rise quickly to help their descents in need, and the body always faced east so the dead could continue the journey that began long ago.

³⁹ Traditional burial houses like the ones illustrated in figure six are rare. Today, most Chickasaw burial sites are marked with a tombstone.

Other objects of honor may be placed on the grave during days of visitation or memorial. These items might include food, beverage, a change of clothes, blankets, etc. (said items are those that the departed ancestor might find comfort with, e.g., a blanket for warmth, a favorite food). Of this ceremonial practice, the ethnocentric views and behaviors of outsiders are often joked. Such actions and jokes are documented in words similar to the following:

An Indian man leaves a can of beer and a pack of cigarettes at the grave of a departed friend. A white man next to him scoffs and calls out, "What a waste, you think your friend can taste that beer and smoke those cigarettes." "I honor my friend and you jest in the presence of yours" replied the Indian man. "Besides," the Indian man continued, "This beer will be tasted and those cigarettes smoked in the same fashion as your friend will smell the flowers you bring to his grave."

I heard the above joke while conducting interviews among the Chickasaw people; and by this joke, I mean to say that native ceremonies tend to be viewed by outsiders (those unfamiliar with said ceremonies) as alien and infantile. What they are however, are ways of bringing honor to the dead while keeping the memory and the wisdom of the departed with the living. Thus, in death as in life, the family is always to be honored and respected.

In closing, I offer the following generalized and symbolic statement: the Chickasaw individual is surrounded by family (and the memory of family) throughout the course of one's life. So stated, Chickasaw identity is grounded not only in the memories of "things Chickasaw" but also in the ties that celebrate a *social* existence. For when we celebrate the memories of our ancestors- and when we make new memories with our families- we do two things. We, (1) reference "how to live" as provided by the memories of those that came before us; and (2) we perpetuate the existence of a social group and an

identity through social interaction. I seek in the following chapter to expand this statement and to further highlight the properties that mark Chickasaw identity.

CHAPTER VI

“Collected Memories”

Within this introduction, I offer three points of information. First, I note that the intent of this chapter is to relate the memories and reflections of the Chickasaw who participated in this research. In particular, I address the research questions posed in Chapter II. I ask what it means to be Native American, and within this I seek how Chickasaw identity is constructed and lived.

Second, regarding a methodological stance, I note that the proceeding pages interlace dialogue and discussion with small vignettes. To take from Harper (1992), vignettes are stories that include the give-and-take between myself and the participants of this study. As Harper (1992:11) writes, “vignettes work as short stories: presenting characters.. and the story of the community [or the group being researched].” I have included such passages in order to retain the voice-- and the nuances of experience-- of those under study.

And third, I have placed the title “collected memories” in quotations to highlight several notions. First, I do so to remind the reader that I hold memory to be the cornerstone of group identity. And second, I emphasize that memories are emergent and always subject to collection. Or, to state differently, memories, like identities, can be built upon. Thus, the information provided here is not the final statement on Chickasaw identity-- it is merely a collection of recent reflections that layer its history and change.

“What Does It Mean to be American Indian?”

“What does it mean to be an Indian? Well it depends on who’s doing the defining” responded Jason, a Chickasaw tribal historian and genealogist. “To many non-Indians, an American Indian is a stereotype or a romanticized image. What people know of Indians is what they see in *Dances with Wolves* and stuff like that. To them, an Indian is someone who wears a feathered headdress and beads, and looks Indian.”

“What do you mean ‘looks Indian?’” I inquired.

Jason replied, “Like what most people imagine when they close their eyes... dark skin, long black hair, covered in turquoise jewelry... stoic, brooding... all the stereotypes.”

“And why do you think that is?”

“Well, I suppose that the only history that people learn of Native Americans is through movies, media. Few know any ‘real history’... because it is rarely taught in schools and/or because people don’t care.

In truth, the “popular” culture that depicts Native America is often inundated with illusions. For instance, as Bordewich (1997:17) writes:

[American] culture... is [about] fictional Indians with no interest to living Indians at all. We drive ‘Cherokees,’ ‘Winnebagos,’ and ‘Pontiacs.’ During the Gulf War, American troops flew ‘Kiowa’ and ‘Apache’ helicopters and shot down Iraqi planes with ‘Tomahawk’ missiles. Sports fans, in the nation’s capital, think nothing of cheering for a team called the ‘Redskins,’ while Atlantans wave foam rubber tomahawks for the ‘Braves.’ School children write on ‘Big Chief’ tablets... In imagining that we see the ‘Indian,’ we often see little more than the distorted reflection of our own fears, fancies, and wistful longings.

Indeed, it may be argued that we as Americans are really not familiar with the realities of the American Indian experience. Rather we know the non-Indian presentations

of that world. And these presentations of often demeaning and distorted. As Jason, and several others, related to me:

I'll get a phone call from someone doing research on the tribe. But, they will ask me stuff like what I wear to work- 'like is it deer skin or a loin cloth' - or, if I ride my horse to work, or how I get my food. When I tell them Wal-Mart, that really blows their mind. They want to hear that I hunt or grow my own food." And when I tell them this, they act as if I'm not really Indian.

"And then they said," 'Here come the real Indians,' offered Lori, a Chickasaw storyteller and dancer. "You see, we the Chickasaw Dance troop, were invited to this regional powwow. And we danced in our 'late traditional' clothing -- clothing established after European contact, our ribbon shirts for the men, dresses with the turtle rattles for women -- and we danced, and the media took pictures. And they seem interested until the southwest tribes showed up. You know, like the Navajo fire dancers, with the face paint and the feathers. Then the media all said, 'Here come the real Indians,' and 'poof,' the media disappeared... So we all joke. We say to one another that we are not 'real Indians.' But in one way that seems to make us more real - because they want to dismiss us. I get such stereotypical statements all the time, but that too is good. Because once those statements are made, I can address them and try to educate them on Native issues and Chickasaw history. We can try to reverse some of these stereotypes."

So who then is a "real Indian?" Centuries ago, Natives identified themselves through tribal, clan, and family associations. Today, that identity is routinely negotiated within stereotypic and political frameworks. And often those frameworks are "assigned" to Indians by society's power majority. As Bordewich (1997) points out, being Indian has always meant being different than whites either in appearance or custom. He writes:

[Take for instance the Pueblos]. In 1869, the Supreme Court of New Mexico Territory declared that the Pueblos were not actually Indians,

since they were ‘honest, industrious, and law-abiding citizens’ and exhibited ‘virtue, honesty and industry to their more civilized neighbors.’ A few years later, the United States Supreme Court held that the Pueblos could be considered ‘Indians only in feature, complexion and a few of their habits.’ However, after receiving agents’ reports of drunkenness, dancing, and debauchery, the Court reversed itself and declared that the Pueblos were Indians after all (Bordewich, 1997: 66).

Indeed, Bordewich is right. Being Indian has always meant being different and as noted above this difference is often a label of others. Of the most prevalent labels are the attachment of race. Indians were (and continue to be) labeled within the boundaries of race. But is race a justified concept?

“Race,” is a construct or a perception of belief that human beings can be bundled into meaningful categories based on skin color and other physical features. And analogous to this is the attached supposition that shared physical traits identify a commonality in attitude and behavior. To state differently, such is a belief that race or biology and blood influence thought and action.

Thus, many believe that being Indian is having the specified biology or the specific quantum of “Indian Blood.” But is it?

Does “Indian Blood” Make An Indian Identity?

Race and blood are tricky subjects. In one sense there is no such thing as a “race.” Indeed, as Kornblum (1994:428) notes, “ Because the races are open and gene flow has taken place among them for millennia, no race has exclusive possession of any gene and there are no ‘pure races.’” And among Indians, generations of intermarriage and genetic assimilation make race a flawed tool of categorization. Yet race, or the perception of race, is still a factor in defining who an Indian is.

“Blood still matters,” says Jennie, director of Chickasaw Educational Services. “For the most part, an individual with a higher blood quantum probably looks more Indian -- and thus faces more discrimination than someone who doesn’t look as ‘Indian.’ And that has a link to rates of poverty and access to education.”

“How so,” I ask.

“Discrimination,” responds Jennie. “Racism and prejudiced views often weakens the options that an individual has.” “If someone believes that you are inferior based on your race, they’re not going to open any doors for you.” “People that look less Indian can probably pass through those doors more easily.”

So yes in one sense, blood is a marker of social identity. Through perceptions of blood distinctions of social value are made and these distinctions then can limit or enable one’s access to institutional power. Indeed, as one of my participants informed me:

At least for the time being, it is still necessary to link who is an Indian within categories of blood and race, because they correlate to economic and class disadvantages. The higher the blood quantum, than more likely the greater disadvantages to overcome. And we still need to have this correlation so to make sure that people who most need our resources, get them.

But while “blood” quantum is often used to distinguish need and disperse aid, it is not necessarily a requirement for tribal identity.¹ In the minds of most Americans, “Indianness” has long been correlated to the belief that blood is fundamental to identity. In such perceptions it is as though “blood” urges one’s spiritual, moral, and behavioral

¹ Many Federal programs and financial aid packets for Native Americans (e.g., scholarships, grants) have blood quantum limitations. Indeed, for most higher forms of aid, one must have a quarter of more of “Indian Blood.” Again, the intent of which is to allot aid to those who “statistically and correlatively” need it most.

actions. As Lindsey and Beach (2003:235) state, “It is the belief that [blood] is the key determinant of human behavior.”

However, it is somewhat of a misnomer to believe that “blood” allows one to see the world from an Native mind set; nor is it sensible to suggest that “blood” enables particular mental, moral and behavioral abilities. Argued here, what most influences behavior and identity is the community into which one is invested. One’s behavioral, cultural, spiritual and moral codes are most often a product of socialization, or the personal investment in the interactions and words (and memories) of those whom surround us. This is why as Mihesuah (1999:27) writes, “A biological mixed blood, or full blood [who has] no exposure to the cultural mores of an American Indian tribe [are] connected to their group only by virtue of genetics.”

Regarding Chickasaw identity, Jeannie Barbour (2001:3), a Chickasaw Historian states:

Interestingly enough, blood ties weren’t always the determining factor in whether or not a person was considered to be Chickasaw. Historically a small tribe, the Chickasaw Nation frequently adopted other tribal peoples into its citizenry (i.e., Natchez Tribe)... It was more important for tribal members to understand their associations and responsibilities [to the tribe] than it was for them to prove their blood relationships.

“I’m not a ‘full blood’,” says Tom Phillips, an internationally renowned artist of Native and Southwest cultures.” “But I am Indian and I am Chickasaw. And when I’m with some of the more traditional tribes of the west they often sneer at me and tell me I’m not Indian” “But you know what, I just sneer right back at them.” “Who are they to tell me I’m not ‘enough’ Indian”... “I’ve dedicated my art and my life to promoting and educating people on Indian history and Native issues” “You know,

when I was really young, my father sat me down and told me of our Indian heritage. He told me to always be proud of that heritage and to remember who I am.” “I am my father’s words... I am Chickasaw.”

To reiterate, for many Chickasaw individuals, blood is less a requirement of tribal identity than is the notion of responsibility to self and community. As Cindy, a Chickasaw, and an educator reports:

Blood is symbolic ... Its not necessarily the ‘blood’ itself that makes Indian identity, but the blood ties; the family. To be Indian is to be a member of a family and a community to which you are responsible ... Blood is symbolic. Its not what you look like that makes you who you are; it’s what you carry inside you that makes you who you are.

Can someone be both Indian and something else... like ‘white’?” I ask.

“That’s a very complex question,” responds Nicole, a Chickasaw student. “I believe that identity is something crafted from within. I suppose a person can be both white and Indian ...’White’ and ‘Indian’ are often terms that other people label you You can be labeled ‘white’ in appearance... have ‘white blood’ ... but have the heart of an Indian... that is to say, you can have the outlook, or the ‘worldview’ of a particular tribal culture.” “I think that’s what it means to be Indian.”

Today, approximately three-fourths of those who claim membership in the Chickasaw Nation hold a quarter or less of “Indian blood.” Thus in repose, we need to reinvestigate the factors that enable Native identity and community affiliation. I ask, “is Native identity blood or something else?” As Haskell, the director of Chickasaw cultural preservation, asserts and questions: “Blood does not automatically link people together in

a union. If a full blood has no knowledge of their past, are they any more an Indian than someone who is not 'visibly Indian' but knows the culture?"

Indian Identity, a Knowledge of Culture and Tradition?

"There are tribes and people across this country that say that if you're not one fourth - or some specific degree of Indian blood - than you're not Indian. I don't subscribe to that theory," states Jefferson Keel, Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation.

"What do you believe?"

"I'll tell you this. The original Chickasaw people adopted non-Chickasaw persons into the tribe... be them Europeans, persons of African ancestry... But when the Chickasaws adopted someone, they didn't care about degree of Indian Blood. When you adopt someone, you make them a member of your family. This is how I feel... To me, if a person sees it, feels it, knows the culture of the tribe, then that person is an Indian."

For many Native Americans, what it means to be "Indian" is less a stereotype and a matter of blood, than it is a process of holding a particular worldview. N. Scott Momaday, the Pulitzer Prize winning Kiowa author, writes:

An Indian is someone who thinks of themselves as an Indian. But that is not easy to do and one has to earn the entitlement somehow. You have to have a certain experience of the world in order to formulate this idea. I consider myself an Indian; I've had the experience of an Indian. I know how my father saw the world, and his father before him (Momaday, 1990:7).

A worldview then, is a collection of experiences and cultural forms (e.g., beliefs, values, norms) that organize how one conducts themselves in the world. It is a framework of action and identity. For most, this worldview is a knowledge of the ancestors.

“I’m a member of the beaver clan,” says Cochise, a Chickasaw storyteller. “But I didn’t always know this. I grew up without any knowledge of myself, or of my people When I was older, I began to question who I was and search out this knowledge. I taught myself the language; learned the stories and the history; found my clan. The Chickasaw are an ancient people, and that gives me strength. As a member of the beaver clan, it was my people who confronted De Soto when the Spanish arrived at the Tombigbee River... and my people live through me. That knowledge and history keeps me and them alive.”

Indeed it may be argued that when the knowledge of the ancestors, or the memory of them passes, so too do a people. One participant told me:

The Federal Government’s efforts to assimilate Indians cost many of us our heritage. I went to an Indian boarding school and they would wash out your mouth for speaking Chickasaw.... My father told me [at this time] that ‘it’s the white man’s world now... you must learn to be white.’ So in doing, we lost our language, our heritage... but dad was trying to protect us. Not ‘being Indian’ was a matter of survival.

For this participant language is central to heritage. But today for the Chickasaw (as it is for countless tribes), the language of the ancestors is rarely spoken. Abandoned to history and circumstances of survival, the Chickasaw Native language is known but by a fraction of the Chickasaw population.

“Hopefully that will change,” states Haskell. “We have a language program... language tapes and CDs that teach Chickasaw. Soon we will have video and Internet feeds that will teach the language. Before long all Chickasaw will speak the language.” In closing Haskell urges the following, “Language is central to a people. When you speak Chickasaw, you speak to the ancestors.”

For others, communicating with the ancestors is accomplished through other forms. Tom Phillips, for instance, reminds us, “Art is a voice.” He states, “ my paintings

tell histories of the Indian tribes... they are an effort to educate others of that history. This is how I connect to the ancients.” Indeed the production of artful forms, from storytelling, to painting, to dance, to food, are prevalent among the Chickasaw.

“In creating art one produces a living culture,” reports a member of the Chickasaw Dance Troupe. “I dance the traditional dances of the Chickasaw to show that the Chickasaw are still here. We are a living culture... dance brings the ancestors back to life.” For others, this “living culture” is accomplished in more daily, but no less ceremonial, fashions.

“I’m the guy that people ask to cook pashofa for events and gatherings,” reports Charles, a respected voice of the Chickasaw people.

“Pashofa (Pa’-SHOW-fa’), I inquire?”

“The traditional food of the Chickasaw,” responded Charles. “Made with corn, slow cooked with meat -usually pork.” “You slow cook it for hours, stirring in the meat ... “I’m full blood, but till recently I didn’t know anything about Chickasaw history. I didn’t know there was such a thing as a ‘Trail of Tears.’ Back then Indian history wasn’t taught . I didn’t really know any Chickasaw history... but I knew pashofa. It was taught to me by my mother. And cooking it [gave me] a closeness to my mom - and I suppose - an Indian identity, because not everyone knew how to do it. Now people ask me.^{2 & 3}

² Charles offers the following recipe: To make Pashofa you need hominy and meat. Boil at least a quart of coarsely cracked corn until tender -- for about two hours. Add fresh pork - or some other meat- equal to half the amount of the boiled corn, and cook for about two more hours. Make sure you stir - you don’t want to scorch the corn.

³ Pashofa is usually cooked at social gatherings. “Traditionally, after church in the 1950’s- says Jefferson Keel, Lieutenant Governor of the Chickasaw Nation - we would all cook and take pashofa.” “It was a way of ensuring community and celebrating each other.” In history, a pashofa dance was called when a person got sick. The community gathered near the sick person’s home and cooked. Socially, the pashofa ceremony showed the strength of ties in the Chickasaw community. Spiritually, the force of gathered friends, was intended to provide the sick person with the energy necessary to overcome the illness that befell them.

Still others say they communicate the ways of the ancestors simply by living as a Chickasaw. So stated, I now ask :

What Does it mean to be Chickasaw?

“Being Chickasaw means acting in ways that honor yourself,” says Matthew, an Education Specialist at the Chickasaw Tribal Museum. “In being Chickasaw, I expect a little more from myself... I have a social conscious and a responsibility to others.”

“A responsibility to...?” I ask.

“To family and to the extended tribal community... it means looking out for each other. When I was a kid, and doing things that I probably shouldn’t have been doing - being rowdy at a softball game- my uncles or other family members would pull me aside and ask what I was doing. They told me they expected more from me.”

“And their influence on you?”

“Its the same with my children. I tell them to act with pride and honor. I expect a great deal from them. I know its a burden for them to bear, but it will good for them in the long run ... we’ll know if it was too much of a burden, when they decide whether or not to put me in a [nursing] home,” laughs Matthew.

Indeed, for many, living a Chickasaw life is one that urges social responsibility. “It’s a matter of family and community” responds Jason and his father Mike. “Chickasaw is family. It’s really just always been that way. It’s knowing that in your heart that someone will be there for you.”

“My brother was much that way,” continues Matthew. “In my early 30’s life got really rough for me. At some of my lowest points I would find him. He would be there, and was really confusing for me at first. Because he was gone for much of my life; it was as if we were brothers by title only. But he was there. And he wasn’t pushy, but he was there to see if I wanted or needed anything To me, he was the quintessential modern Chickasaw. He did what ever he could to help Chickasaws in specific and Indians broadly my brother was the instrument of my Chickasaw awareness. He has now passed. His name was Lee Cravatt Jr. “

While family and community responsibilities require a “present-time” orientation or a sense of “being there” for family members, a “future-oriented” sense of responsibility is also central to Chickasaw social identity. “We have to remember that what we do today will impact future generations,” offers Nicole. “I believe our Chickasaw ancestors did what they did to ensure a place for us. Not to sound too stereotypical, but this is part of the Indian way... it’s a concern for the those yet to come.” Indeed, as the Lt. Governor jokes, “In the Chickasaw family tree, we are responsible to whomever falls out down the line.”

“Being Indian is a matter of responsibility,” states Kelly, a Chickasaw historian. “As Indians we are family members, community members, and people that have dual citizenship. We are both Citizens of the Chickasaw Nation and of the United States When we were young we were taught that the ancestors lived a life with us in mind... that their actions were always future oriented... to ensure a place for us. This, is how we must live.

“Live how?” I ask.

“Indian philosophies and perspectives can still teach people quite a bit. Our values are the cornerstone of our society. Generally, we hold community first. Community over [individual] greed. Our people are guaranteed political voice, health care, housing. Our actions must be to

ensure these values and the rights of future generationsWe are responsible for ourselves, our families, fellow citizens, and the future generations ... that's a lot of eyes looking at us, urging our responsibility.

And while such a sense of responsibility is crafted within cultural norms and patterns of socialization, the necessity to squash stereotypes is also a factor perpetuating social responsibility. "If for nothing else, living an honorable life battles the negative stereotypes that are associated with being Indian," states Julie, a director of Chickasaw educational services. "You know, their are always stories or jokes of the lazy, drunk Indian... Unfortunately, in being Indian there is always someone who will want to hold you to those stereotypes.

"Being Indian, in the past (the 40's, 50's, 60's) meant protecting your family from those would label you '*Indian*,' stated Matthew. My father for instance, would always keep our house and our lawn immaculate. He was a police officer, and when we came home he took pride in cleaning the house. The old black and white photos in the house were always pristine. And the yard always trimmed. He even made sure the grass didn't intertwine with the base of the fence, which is not easy to do. He never wanted the neighbors to claim we were 'lazy Indians.'"

Outside of these community frameworks however, being Chickasaw is also a private endeavor filled with individual codes of thought and action. For the majority of the participants of this study, Chickasaw identity is a personal form of strength. For some, this strength comes as a tool used to urge achievement and success. "To me, being Chickasaw is a personal call to arms," offers one of my respondents. "It is a matter of self respect and pride ... Being Chickasaw gives me the strength to live and fight for what I

believe in. No one is going to tell me I can't do, or be somebody." Indeed, as Nicole says:

Being Chickasaw is about a strength of survival. Our tribe, it seems to me, has an amazing ability to adapt to changing social conditions... To survive we have to adapt. But we adapt, not conform. Take for instance Te Ata⁴, she lived in the "White" world, and adapted to it, and thrived. But she did not conform, she didn't give up "being Chickasaw." Instead she brought Chickasaw to the world. She brought those social values and incorporated them into her working efforts.

"And that's what we should do," offers Alexander. He states:

As a Chickasaw, you should master whatever field you take interest in, computers, math, medicine. Outside of the Chickasaw Nation, there is the belief that when you adapt, you're less Indian. That's not true. You can be these things [a doctor, a computer expert], and still be Chickasaw."

Further, as the Lt. Governor voices, "There is nothing, no job, no endeavor that is beyond the realm of the Chickasaw people. Yesterday we were on the verge of extinction. Today we have a Chickasaw in space. That's the strength of a people."⁵

"My heritage is who I am," states Commander John Herrington, the first Native American, and Chickasaw to enter space. "I know who I am, and I'm proud of who I am. [And] this flight is about breaking certain stereotypes about Native Americans... If there's one child out there or somebody that says, 'Hey, because that person's in that role. I never

⁴ As Green (1995:13) writes:

Te Ata was born a Chickasaw named Mary Frances Thompson, near Emet, Indian Territory in 1895... She graduated from the Oklahoma College for Women in Chickasha and later moved to New York City and became the most acclaimed interpreter of Indian folklore in the U.S. and Europe. Te Ata was inducted into the Oklahoma hall of fame in 1957... and became in 1987 Oklahoma's first official state Treasure. She died on October 26, 1995, just 37 days short of her one hundredth Birthday. (See also Green, 2002 for a complete history of the life and accomplishments of Te Ata).

⁵ On November 23, 2002, the space shuttle Endeavor carried Chickasaw Indian, Comdr. John Herrington into space. Herrington became the first Native American in space.

realized I could do something like that,' and it motivates them to achieve something they might not have done, then that's great. That's what it's all about."

For others, Chickasaw identity is a strength called upon to combat perceptions and feelings of inferiority. One of my participants told me that he references the history of "his people" in times of personal turmoil. "We are an ancient people and I am part of that lineage," he states. "And that gives me the strength to continue," he continues. "We have survived this long and it's not gonna to end with me."

"It's not that I act like I'm better than anyone else, but being Chickasaw gives me an identity that's different from most, and I take pride in that," states one of my interviewees. "I know that I don't conform to [white] society's standards of female body image. I'm not skinny, or blonde, but I can walk into a room and feel that I'm above their eyes and their judgments. I'm of an ancient people, and that gives me the strength to cancel out their judgments. My personal worth is more than how people perceive me and my body. My heritage gives me the right to be proud."

Truly, for these individuals Chickasaw identity is a form by which personal strength and social solidarity are achieved. Stated in another manner, this sense of solidarity is a connection, or a sense of belonging, that resides within the individual and links them to the group. "We all feel lonely or unwanted at times," states John, a Chickasaw Citizen. "But if I reference my Chickasaw heritage... I see the faces of the old Chickasaw and I feel connected to something larger than myself. I feel safe, like someone is watching out for me."

Thus, even when separated in physical proximity to the group, this social connection endures -- and helps to keep these individuals psychologically 'fit.' "I think

that all people really want is to belong, to fit in. I know that I have a place and a people that will always accept me... And that keeps me 'safe,'" states Julie. "Sometimes, when you're away from family, it's the voices in your head [the memories of family] that *keep* you from going crazy," continues John.

As J., an employee in the Chickasaw Tribal Records Office, offers:

That's often the problem with 'American' culture," It's so individualistic, individually orientated... lonely. And that's why I think so many people today want to be Indian. Others call them 'Wannabes'... In their head perhaps, 'being Indian' gives them a connection to a tribe... it eases their loneliness... We turn away quite a few people who just simply don't have the records or the history to show they are Chickasaw.

Jennie, Director of Chickasaw Educational Services, agrees. She says:

Today, a lot of people want to be Indian, and for some, this quest is to gain some perceived financial benefit... some don't have any kind of health care, and try to become Indian so that Nation will take care of them... some have money, but think that [in] being Indian they won't have to pay taxes. You know, all kinds of stuff. But, for most, I think they just want to belong to something so badly.

Indeed, Indian identities, like all ethnic identities, hold a powerful emotional charge for their processors. Such an identity ties the individual to a collective origin, a history, a culture, and a "sense of belonging." As Yinger (1984:162) notes, "this identity gives us a 'name' [and enables us to declare], 'I am somebody.'" Further, these identities are a way to combat one's feelings of loneliness and alienation from the larger society. As Yinger (1984:161) continues:

Not only is [ethnic identity] felt as a primordial sentiment, an emotional attachment to 'my people,' and a valuable tool for the protection and enhancement of status. It is, in addition, a way of trying to deal with the experience of anomie and the feeling of alienation.

“I would just die, if someone told me I wasn’t Chickasaw,” Matthew accounts.

He states:

I know who I am, but if the Federal or Chickasaw government someday declared I wasn’t, I would die.⁶ So yes, this emotional attachment, this notion of personal and collective identity, is quite important to people. That’s why *I have to* respect others’ rights to claim and express Native identity.

For Matthew then, there is little room for the “wannabe” label. If that person holds a firm sense of themselves as Native, and has a respect for that identity and for the identity of others, than he or she is Native. But this of course, is an identity of self -- an identity constructed and held internally. And there are other frameworks of thought regarding how Native and Chickasaw identity is lived.

Frameworks of Indian and Chickasaw Identity: How Identity is Lived

Thus far, the following identity frameworks have been identified: First, identity is lived, and often combated, through a *stereotypical framework* (often used by non-Natives), which roots Native identity within mythical and popular culture features, i.e. “savages,” “warriors,” “beads and feathers.” Reiterating the words of Bordewich (1996:17), “when we see the ‘Indian’ [in this manner], we often see little more than the distorted reflection of our own fears, fancies, and wistful longings,” and thus, we use these frameworks to calm our fears and play to our longings. Mihesuah (1999:16) adds:

Because individuals are not taught any details about tribal life... they often romanticize Indian culture as monolithic and inherently good [or bad], but they know nothing about tribal politics, health statistics, poverty levels, or other realities of tribal life.

⁶ The Chickasaw Nation has the legal right to enforce, adapt and change its citizenship requirements. Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Chickasaw Nation reads, “The Tribal Legislature shall have the power to enact ordinances governing future citizenship and loss of citizenship in the Chickasaw Nation.”

Indeed, in utilizing this framework, we often fail to see the Indian at all.

Second, there are *the frameworks of blood* that orient an Indian identity by manner of “race” and physical appearance. But as noted earlier, race and blood are troublesome concepts. Truly, there is no “cookie cutter” image as to the physical categorization of all Native Americans (unless encapsulated by stereotypical notions). As the field of anthropology informs us, there is actually a greater diversity of physical features within the so called races as there are between them (Smedley, 1999). Today, among the modern Chickasaw, persons range from having blond hair and light skin to dark skin and black hair. Moreover, the increasing rates of intermarriage that exist between persons “Indian” and “other” have eroded the ancient and predominate racial differences that once existed among the Chickasaw.

More significant however are the perspectives within this framework that blood equates to perception, ability and behavior. There is no credible evidence that “blood” (of any race or quantum) is “innately different from each other in any significant way, either in temperament or in mental or physical abilities” (Lindsey and Beach, 2003:235). Thus, the perspectives of race and appearance make for flawed tools of identity recognition. And among the Chickasaw, “blood” is not the main requirement of tribal identity. Such requirements fall more to:

Three, the *Community and Family frameworks* that invokes an individual’s responsibility and social contribution to family and to the larger Chickasaw community. These forms include the general context of positive social interaction both with Chickasaws and non-Chickasaws, as well as the maintenance of affectual⁷ ties to family

⁷ To show affection; to have ties of affection

and community members. By “positive” social interaction, I refer generally to the urging of Chickasaws- towards their membership- to offer respect to other Chickasaws, and to “act with dignity” in the presence of non-Chickasaws. Affectual ties are also maintained by participating in the living community. Knowing and caring for community members is held to be more of a necessity (and a requirement) in one’s claim to a Chickasaw identity than is a recognition of one’s self in the two earlier frameworks. As many Chickasaw individuals have expressed to me, “when one offers love to the Chickasaw people, this claims for them membership in the Chickasaw community.”

Other, more community oriented bases of Chickasaw identity include, four, *the cultural frameworks* of identity. “Culture” defined simply, is a society’s way of life. It includes the values, beliefs, and norms that persons learn and act through-- thus perpetuating the existence of that society. As Nagel (1996) offered us earlier, “culture is the heart and life blood of a community, of a people. She states, “The language, religion, ceremony, myth, belief... food, housing, kinship, dress and adornment are the substance of a people” (Nagel, 1996:43). Here Chickasaw culture includes all of these notions, as all are ways of communicating the ways (the values, norms, and beliefs) of the ancestors. Some keep this culture alive, and identify as Chickasaw, by speaking the language of the ancestors. Others maintain identity and propel this “living culture” through storytelling, visual art, dance, dress, and food. But whatever the creative form, in this framework, identity is constructed and held through the internalization *and passage* of the life ways of a society.

Related to the above and noted in the preceding pages, “being Chickasaw” is also identified through framework five, *the personal solidarity framework* of identity. This

refers to an individual's self concept, one's conceptualization of themselves as a person (one's thoughts regarding their own self worth, social value, etc.). Here, in the personal solidarity framework, an individual internalizes a group's culture, as well as their behavioral expectations and then constructs part of their self concept around these notions. By taking on the cultural proscriptions and behavioral expectations of a group, one links him or herself symbolically to the group. Through such actions, the individual is able to achieve a form of solidarity with that group.

Indeed, it is argued here that such a personal sense of solidarity is necessary to the individual and is a central feature of psychological well being. Having such a link or a tie to a group provides the individual with a code of individual and social conduct. The individual may "reference" the group culture and worldview as examples of how to live one's life. Additionally, the psychological link provides for the individual "a place to reside," even if it is merely symbolic in action. Lindsey and Beach (2003:93) iterate:

We derive pleasure [and comfort] from a sense of community; the feeling of belonging and having things in common with each other... Social identity is linked to what biologists and psychologists say is a human need for affiliation, the desire to belong. We suffer great psychological anguish if this need is denied...

Truly then, a Chickasaw identity is one that links the individual to much larger historical whole. It is as one of informants noted earlier, "Being Chickasaw, confers upon you the ability to never be alone."

But, having stated this, there is still another a framework of identity that has yet to be expounded upon. Such is six, *the political framework* of identity. To most Chickasaw, participation in community (as well as holding faith within cultural and personal frameworks) identifies most what it means to be Chickasaw. Indeed, the

credibility of an individual's Chickasaw identity is judged most within these frameworks.

Yet it is the political framework that is perhaps most important to the survival of the Chickasaw as a Nation.

In 1970, the words of President Richard Nixon spawned a new direction in Federal Indian Policy, and a new framework for examining Indian identity. He stated:

Both as a matter of social justice and as a matter of enlightened social policy, we must begin to act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us... The time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions... We must assure the Indian that he assume can control of his own life... (from Bordewich, 1996:83).

“And with this so began the policy of Indian Self Determination or Self Sovereignty,” stated Matthew. “Before this, the Federal Government took the role of paternalism -- as a parent telling it's children what not to do and who they are.”

Paternalism seems a fitting word to describe Federal Indian relationships prior to self determination. The sociologist and Cherokee Indian R.H. Red Owl (1998:2-3) writes of these relationships and of Indian identity:

In the development of American Indian policy, first came the boundary line approach. From contact until 1830s, Indian policy in the British colonies and later in the new United States was based on the idea of coexistence, facilitated by a clear boundary line separating the Indians from the new Americans... Next came the removal policy. In 1830, when it was apparent that there was not enough land in the east for both Indians and the new Americans... Congress passed the removal act, calling for the transfer of Indians from the east to the new territory in the west... Indian identity during the removal years was clear. if one had a single drop of Indian blood, he or she was an Indian and was subject to removal at the will of the Federal Government.

Red Owl (1998:3-4) continues:

Then came the reservation policy. Beginning in about 1850 and continuing through 1872, the U.S. Government made more than 350 treaties with Indian nations, creating hundreds of reserves for us on land taken from us and held in trust.... Again, Indian identity was not a problem. if one lived on a reservation, he or she was an Indian... In 1887, with the passage of the Dawes act, Federal Indian reservations were broken up into small plots, called allotments, which eventually were deemed to individual Indian families... [thus being Indian] meant having a land claim. [But this too was a problem for] many of our ancestors avoided being on the rolls, and many non-natives bribed the census takers and became instant Indians with rights to free land... [The allotment] rolls created by the special census during allotment were used to determine who was an Indian or had direct lineage. Those whose families had avoided being included on the rolls were no longer legally Indians, and those non-native families whose ancestors had brought their way onto the rolls were “legally” Indians without Indian heritage.

And in closing:

Next came the policy of Indian termination and urbanization. In 1948, the Hoover Commission on Economy and Efficiency in Government reported that the nation’s “Indian problem” could be solved easily if there were just no more Indians. The Commission recommended that the U.S. Government de-recognize Indian tribes, cease to offer any special consideration or benefits to their members, and encourage Indians to move into mainstream non-native cities and communities... But was such a policy flawed [that it led to the emergence of a powerful Red Power Movement which made Indians a political and social force]... So finally [partly in response to native protest], we come to the current period and today’s policy of Indian self determination... Indian identity today is linked to Federal recognition of one’s tribe. There are now more than 500 Federally recognized tribes whose members have identity cards (called Certificates of Degree of Indian Blood) with enrollment numbers issued under the authority of the Interior Department (Red Owl, 1998:4-5).

So muddled as it is, Indian identity is also a political conception. And is one that still carries considerable controversy. “It’s strange to think that we [Indians] have fought long against outsiders trying to label and define us,” voices one of my respondents. She continues, “And now we all depend upon, and fight for that Federal recognition... You know all those ‘outsider’ labels.” Another of my respondents comments:

Just because you have Federal recognition, or a CDIB card (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood) doesn't make you Indian, and visa versa. There are many Indians, who can't get Federal recognition because their ancestors weren't placed on the [allotment] rolls. Some of these people are full blood or so. My family is like this. Politically, in the eyes of the government, we are not Chickasaw... Socially and culturally? That's another matter, we see ourselves as Chickasaw. Its just very frustrating that we are not recognized [politically].

"Unfortunately that is true," states a Chickasaw representative. He notes:

Politically, as a way of determining identity, that's all we have... The allotment rolls. Individuals must be able to trace their lineage to an ancestor on the roll of [1906]. To be recognized [by the Federal Government] as a Chickasaw, one must have an ancestor on that roll. But, at least we have this. Under the policies of sovereignty, we have the right to claim descendants of the original enrollees as Chickasaw. Before this, one had to be a least one fourth 'Indian Blood' to be Chickasaw. Under that distinction, I wouldn't Be Chickasaw.

As noted above, U.S. policies of sovereignty do enable Federal recognition of Indian identity. These policies, in particular, encapsulate: The Indian Self Determination Act of 1975, and American Indian Policy Review Commission ruling of 1977. Under the Self Determination Act of 1975, Indian governments were afforded increased power to determine their own futures. Bordewich (1996:84) writes:

Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to help tribes in contracting to administer federal grants and programs for financial management, construction, maintenance of tribal facilities and... the development and management of health services.

The American Indian Policy Review Commission of 1977, carried the concept of sovereignty one step further by allowing tribes to claim their own membership criteria.

The commission asserted:

The relationship of the American Indian tribes to the United States is founded on the principle of international law... that Indian tribes are sovereign bodies, having the power to determine their own membership

and power to enact laws and enforce them within the boundaries of their reservations (from Bordewich, 1996:84-85).

In 1983, with a reclamation of political sovereignty, the Chickasaw ratified its current constitution and determined their own requirements of membership. Article II, Section 1 and 2 of the Chickasaw Constitution reads:

This Chickasaw Nation shall consist of all Chickasaw Indians by blood whose names appear on the final rolls of the Chickasaw Nation approved pursuant to Section 2 of the Act of April 26, 1906 and their lineal descendants. The Tribal Legislature shall have the power to enact ordinances governing future citizenship and loss of citizenship in the Chickasaw Nation.

With this current constitution membership in the Chickasaw is quite unique when considering other tribe's criteria for identification. Take for instance, the White Mountain Apaches of Arizona, the Uintah-Ouray Tribe of Utah, and the Seminole of Oklahoma. All require, or are taking steps to require, a blood quantum of fifty percent or higher for membership.⁸ Most other tribes, like the Apache tribe of New Mexico, require one-quarter Tribal blood. In other cases, one-eighth, or one-sixteenth is the standard.

But with such high blood requirements, a tribe could in this scenario become extinct. Thus, with political sovereignty, the Chickasaw tribe is able to ensure their own future. By determining their own criteria for membership they ensure the physical and contextual existence of the Chickasaw Nation. "We assume that heritage and culture is thicker than blood," offers one of respondents. She continues, "It is our culture and political abilities that make one a Chickasaw."

Indeed, in the near future many tribes will have to reexamine their membership requirements and their philosophies of identity. As Bordewich (1996:78) writes:

⁸ The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, is taking political steps to extend membership eligibility only to persons who have blood quantum's of fifty percent or more.

The biological future of American Indians [may become] ethnically ambiguous... as Indians, nationally continue to marry people of other races far faster than any other ethnic group in the United States. In 1970, more than 33 percent of all Indians were married to non-Indians (compared to just 1 percent of all Americans who married outside their race); a decade later, the number had grown to 50 percent, and it continued to climb. A 1986 congressional study estimated that the percentage of Indians with one-half or more Indian blood would decline from about 87 percent in 1980 to just 8 percent by 2080.

But as noted for the Chickasaw their criteria for membership rests not entirely on blood, but on a lineage of culture and heritage. It is their political sovereignty which protects their heritage and ensures their national identity. Kelly, a Chickasaw Historian, states:

It is this sovereignty that we must always strive to protect. A political identity is perhaps the most important feature to the survival of the Chickasaw Nation, she urges. "It ensures by law the right for the Chickasaw Nation to exist as a political body [and it] ensures for the citizenry of the Chickasaw Nation the right to organize their society within Chickasaw values.

Another offers, "We assume that we can best direct the future of our people, and sovereignty allows us to take care of our people within our cultural voice... A political identity assures that the Indian voice will remain."

How is Chickasaw Identity Maintained, or Passed On?

"You say that memory and culture is the heart of a people, and that is probably true," states a Chickasaw storyteller. "But political sovereignty is also very important. We must be vigilant to ensure sovereignty, for it ensures our culture."

"How so," I inquire.

“Allotment and Oklahoma statehood, killed the Chickasaw Nation. When we lost our political body, we lost touch with each other and with our culture.” He continues, “[Allotment] took the culture away from so many of us. Being a Nation, prevents that, prevents our culture from disappearing. Passing on Chickasaw heritage, is accomplished by protecting our political heritage.”

“But it’s reciprocal,” adds Kelly. “By gaining political strength, we can focus inward and reclaim our culture. And having a strong cultural sense maintains the drive to be politically conscious.”

“How do you ensure this,?” I ask. Kelly responds:

My child. She’s very very important to me. What’s important to me is her learning... everything that I can teach her. My parents and grandparents missed a lot. What I want of my daughter is to learn directly from me. To learn the value of Indian and [Chickasaw] history, and for me to teach her everything... be it art, dance... she’s a great shell shaker... From very early, we took her to the dances. And from very early I would ask, “Who’s an Indian?” She would respond, “I am.” So from me she gains an appreciation of being Chickasaw and is able to teach others. Its my daughter’s generation that will grow up with the stories, the language and the culture. Young people are very important... they will ensure the future of the Nation.

In this sense, Matthew concurs. It is the youth that carries on what is means to be Chickasaw. He voices, “In our house we have different bed time stories than most. My children hear the ‘old’ stories... stories of migration, and so forth. This is how we pass on Chickasaw Heritage.” Another respondent offers:

“I had a family friend tell me once, ‘seek out your identity.’ This friend was Indian.... I did not know his tribe, but he knew I had Chickasaw heritage. He told me to seek out my identity. He said: ‘go home and ask questions... have people tell you of our heritage.’ ‘Seek out everything...

every bit of information you can... have others teach you so that you can pass it on'... 'Do this,' he would urge. 'Take your history as something special - because it is. It tells you who you are...' "Eventually, through his words, I sought out my identity. He was my first teacher. I learned to be Chickasaw -although indirectly- through him."

"Yes, its about getting people inspired to know their history... and yes the youth are our future. But I hope that all [the young and old] will take a renewal in their heritage," states Alexander.

"I have a dream that one day at our annual renewal festival, everyone will be able to speak to each other in Chickasaw," continues Alexander. "It's about getting people inspired about their Chickasaw heritage and making the information available to them..."

"How do we do this," I ask?

"Through education," continues Alexander. "You know today, we have elders that won't participate in the stomp dances because a fire is present. Through missionary influence [and the passage of those beliefs] many believe that dancing around a fire is worshipping Satan. Traditionally, we viewed fire as a gift from God, not something as evil... I'm Christian, but I know how important the dances are spiritually as well. I was taught that our stomp dances [are sacred]. Just as they were taught that this element of our culture was something to fear... Its about education. The future of the Chickasaw Nation is cultural education... making it available to all Chickasaw."

"Perhaps it should be more mandatory for citizenship... I'm speaking of a cultural education" states one of my respondents. He continues:

Perhaps membership in the Chickasaw Nation should also be based upon education... Maybe people who are eligible for membership in the Nation be required to take a Chickasaw history class and a Chickasaw language class before membership is conferred. The Nation does offer these classes now, and they are taught by Chickasaw... I just feel that it is the knowledge of ourselves as a people that will allow us to continue... Too many people

claim to be Indian without any real sense of what that means. I believe that a cultural education - as a requirement and a precursor to membership - would allow that heritage to be expressed and the [Chickasaw] Nation to prosper.

What is the Future of the Chickasaw Nation?

“As we have discussed, the future of the Nation rests both with the youth and with the adults and elders,” states one of my interviewees. “We hope that as adults and elders, we pass down the knowledge of [being] Chickasaw to the youth. And that the youth will continue to grow strong within this heritage and build their own futures with our guidance.” Another voice adds, “The future of the Nation is strong as long as we remember who we are.” But another interjects:

Historically, at times we have forgotten, either by will or by force, and we lost our Nation. Our future is not as strong as we think... We can't be overly optimistic if we continue to let our language and our culture slip away. We can't move into the future and be a Nation if we don't [remember] who we are.”

In the conclusion of Schultz's (1999) examination of the Seminole Nation, Jack Schultz (1999:219) pondered: “[Because] most Seminoles no longer live in Seminole County, Oklahoma, perhaps ‘Seminole’ identity will give way to a more generic ‘Indian’ identity... [full of] teepees, Indian tacos, fancy dancers, Plains-style lazy-stitch beadwork.” Further, he pondered: “Will there be another generation of Seminoles?”

Indeed, the same may be asked of the Chickasaw: “Will there be another generation of Chickasaw?” “Will Chickasaw identity fade into a more generic Indian identity.” Today, many Chickasaw do live beyond the historic boundary of the Chickasaw Nation and those who do reside within these boundaries live as a numerical and cultural minority among a larger non-Chickasaw population.

But having stated this, the current physical and social structure of the Chickasaw Nation appears steadfast. Politically, the Chickasaws celebrate their sovereignty and fight to ensure their right to construct their society within their values. Today, the government of the Nation hosts a long standing governor, as well as an established legislative and judicial framework that serves the Chickasaw people.

Economically, the Nation has a diverse base of fiscal development. For example, on January 14, 2002, the Chickasaw Nation acquired ownership of a bank (Bank2). With this acquisition the Chickasaw are among only three other bank holding companies wholly owned by Native Tribes: Bay-Bancorporation of Wisconsin (Oneida-owned as of 1995), Mille Lacs Bancorporation in Minnesota (1996), and Native American Bancorporation in Denver -- formed by a consortium of tribes in 2001 (First Nations, 2002:5).

Further, the Chickasaw Nation has developed a number of businesses including: travel plazas, a chocolate factory (Bedre Chocolates), KADA radio station, Chickasaw Lodge and Restaurant, tobacco shops, gaming centers, the Chickasaw Tribal Utility Authority, and a pair of trading posts (First Nations, 2002:6). Indeed, the economic development of the tribe is steadily progressing and expanding into new markets.

Socially, the Chickasaw are recognized as an enduring people. Current and historic voices, like those of astronaut John Herrington, artist Tom Phillips, and storyteller Te Ata, testify to the strength of an “unconquered and unconquerable” people. And culturally, the Chickasaw have initiated language and cultural programs to reinvest members into what it means to be Chickasaw.

Thus, offering an answer to the question posed by Shultz (1999)-- Yes, there will be another generation of the Chickasaw, at least politically and economically so. The tribe has created an emerging political and economic base from which the sovereign and financial needs of tribal members will be addressed.

But as to the social identity of the Chickasaw, that is another query. Shultz (1999) argued that for there to be another generation of "Seminole identity," the community must engender face-to-face social interaction. In considering the future of the Chickasaw, I agree with Shultz's assessment. The Chickasaw must maintain institutions of face-to-face social interaction. But I also offer that social interaction is engendered through a collective mode of thought and action; and that this collective mode of thought and action must too be maintained.

Phrased in another manner: while society is held and perpetuated in interaction; interaction too, is initiated and fostered through a collective system of belief and action. And this collective mode, as described here, identifies the shared memories, stories, and experiences of persons Chickasaw.

So to redress the aforementioned question: The Chickasaw will always be, as long as interaction is engendered in the memories, stories, and experiences of the Chickasaw. To be Chickasaw then is to live as an individual, as a member of a family, and as a participant in community -- and to carry, gather, and offer the collective and collective memories. Stated differently, to be Chickasaw is to live in these roles as guided by the cultural knowledge of the Chickasaw. Offered a final time then, the Chickasaw will remain as long as their history, mores, and values are shared, taught, and expressed.

CHAPTER VII

Data Analysis

The words data analysis refer generally to statements of finding. Phrased colloquially these words ask, “what does this dissertation find?” “What does it mean?” And more formally, “How does it contribute to the field of sociology?”

In addressing these questions I first restate this study’s initial research focus of who? Who are the Chickasaw people and what are the historic, cultural, and personal experiences that mark Chickasaw identity? Guided by this inquiry this work exists primarily as a descriptive account of the Chickasaw people. Here, I have attempted to capture the Chickasaw experience from a number of perspectives (e.g., historical, cultural, and personal). Yet having stated this, this work also addresses a fundamental query in sociology. Namely, “what are the social factors that enable group identity and solidarity?”

At the macro level of analysis, it is the contention of this work that Chickasaw social identity and solidarity are embodied in the collective memories of the Chickasaw people. By the macro level of society I refer to the “embedded cultural symbols that help to define personal identities and shape boundaries of action” (Alford, 1998:85). And by collective memory, I refer to the history and oral traditions of the Chickasaw people that are passed from generation to generation and which unify the Chickasaw people in a commonality of belief, value, and action.

In this sense, I link the perspective of collective memory within a chain of reasoning that makes collective belief and value the heart of society. From classic voices such as Durkheim (1961), Weber (1961), Herder (1969), and Parsons (1966) to contemporary sociological voices such as Anderson (1983), Bellah (1985), and Featherstone (2003), collective memory seeks social identity. The perspective of collective memory models the phrase “consensus theory.” It is “a sociological perspective that see shared norms and values as fundamental to the existence of society” (Ritzer (1996:233) Within this tradition of thought then, I am led to seek a Chickasaw social identity within narratives of history and tradition

Chickasaw Social Identity: Structured Themes Bound by History and Tradition

Why have I dedicated chapters of this dissertation to collections of history and tradition? The Chickasaw use both the written narratives of history and their own oral traditions to frame their social identity.¹ And specifically, I have offered these chapters to explicate a group identity bound within textual themes of history and folklore.² As I noted in the methodology section, I will now use the following passages to *identify and reflect* on the themes of belief and value among the Chickasaw.

Prominent Themes

Noted many times throughout this work is the argument that embedded cultural symbols influence personal identities and help to shape action. So I ask now what are the

¹ In my fieldwork, stories of history and lore were often shared in the presence of others to frame and strengthen group identity.

² I also offer these chapters: (1) in description (to describe empathetically the social world of the Chickasaw), and (2) to allow the reader to frame their own thoughts regarding the structured-cultural world of the Chickasaw.

prominent value themes that emerge in the history and myth of the Chickasaw, and what crafted them socially?

Theme One: Family

Among the Chickasaw the social theme that is most infused in myth and cultural expression is that of family. As I stated earlier, the Chickasaw individual is surrounded by family (and the memory of family) throughout the course of one's life. And, in life as in death (see chapter V), the family is always to be honored and respected. So stated, Chickasaw identity is guided by social forms that stress responsibility to family members and to the relationships within. Indeed, it is often through family that a Chickasaw identity is expressed and lived. As a core value many Chickasaw individuals express, "To be Chickasaw is to be a member of a family."

Being (and defining one's self) as Chickasaw appears to be an internalization of family responsibilities, specifically those of affection and protection. As expressed in the Chickasaw legend *No Lost Children* (Chapter V), "[Chickasaw] children should always know their way back home... So well taught their sense of direction was so good, they never became "lost." Indeed, such is an allegory to family and the sense that one may always turn to family for need and affection. Further, as I previously stated, the link to family does not end with death. Chickasaw individuals often celebrate and recall the memories of their ancestors for the social purpose of referencing "how to live" as provided by the memories of those that came before us.

Theme Two: Community

Following family responsibilities, commitment to community is a central value among the Chickasaw people. By commitment I refer generally to participation in the social world of the Chickasaw (e.g., voting in tribal elections, building and maintaining affectual ties to others in interaction). Historically such commitment is stressed in the expression of narratives that detail affronts to the community. Stories of removal, allotment, and reconstruction (stories that detail the destruction and subsequent reclamation of community-- See Chapter IV) are often referenced in interaction with other Chickasaws. Indeed such stories serve as reminders and points of commitment to the Chickasaw community. As one of my interviewees stated:

Removal and Allotment killed the Chickasaw Nation. When we lost our political body, we lost touch with each other and with our culture... we must not forget these stories... The future of the Nation is strong as long as we remember who we are and what is important. The stories help to ensure that the past does not come back.

Indeed, identity construction among the Chickasaw is strongly based on the remembrance of, commitment to, and service of positive roles within the Chickasaw community. Jeannie Barbour (2001:3), a noted Chickasaw Historian states, “[Historically] the determining factor in whether or not a person was considered to be Chickasaw [depended more] in tribal members understanding their associations and responsibilities [to the tribe].”

Having stated this I now ask, “why is family and community so important to the Chickasaw culture?” In one sense the family and community are the core social institutions in any social group, and are thus respected and protected. But the Chickasaw are somewhat unique in how they recognize family and community membership. In most

Native societies blood quantum is still recognized as being a major right to membership. But historically in the Chickasaw social world notions of blood have always been distant. Why? Perhaps the answer lies in an ancient demographic trend. The Chickasaw historically, existed as a relatively small tribe (See Chapter IV). And thus existing as a smaller and separate body of relationships, they had to create specific modes of survival. They had to adopt purposive social, cultural and political practices that affected their population and broader culture overall. As Gibson (1971:4) writes:

The Chickasaw... as a relatively small Indian community... developed a strong warrior tradition and a propensity for war that has curious effects on the tribe's demographic composition. Population losses in combat were replaced by adoption of captives, absorption of small tribes residing on the periphery of the Chickasaw homeland, and in one case, the reception of a remnant of the formerly populous and powerful Natchez after their annihilation by a French army in 1730.

Considered historically and demographically, the Chickasaw people had to adopt a vision of identity based less in blood and more in service. I argue that this demographic form inspired the core cultural values of the Chickasaw today. I argue that Chickasaw identity is encapsulated within the particular ability of the Chickasaw people to adopt, absorb, and integrate social units into *their* history.

Theme Three: A Sense of Universal Order

Chickasaw social identity (as all group identities do) tell the Chickasaw people that they are special and unique in this world. Crafted in history and myth, a prominent sense of place and universal order surround the Chickasaw. By universal order I refer to the symbolic codes that tell the Chickasaw people they are not alone in this world, that they are strong, and that they are chosen. Readers may note that many of the stories

offered here present a positive stereotype of the Chickasaw (the Chickasaw as a chosen people or as being special and unique). And indeed this is true. It is true because these stories are crafted and passed down as social ideals. And like all ideals they are positive stereotypes. But in their “ideal form” they are important socially for they relate codes of conduct. They tell the people what to strive for and how they should live.

An example of this universal order is the Chickasaw national motto, “The Unconquered and Unconquerable People of the Chickasaw Nation.” In the historical and oral narrative of the Chickasaw it is told that the Chickasaw, in times of war, never lost a battle. Thus analytically today, such is a saying that directly recalls narrative, history, and strength. In this sense the Chickasaw people are saying, “We have not succumbed to history. We will always be.” In an additional example of history, the Chickasaw “remember” that they were the last confederate force to capitulate during the civil war. And while the Chickasaw do not particularly celebrate their relationship with the Confederacy, they do celebrate the story and values of resilience, fortitude, and being “headstrong” in that relationship.

And in myth the Chickasaw are told that they are not alone. Particular stories relate how the creator crafted the ancestors out of love and for the purpose of easing the creator’s loneliness. Thus, in this sense the Chickasaw people are told that they are needed; needed by the creator himself and should never feel lost or without hope. Indeed, the values crafted within historical narrative and myth tell the Chickasaw to be strong, to fight, and to survive. Further they tell the Chickasaw that they belong to something larger than themselves and this offers hope and urges endurance. These social codes tell people what to strive for and how they should live.

Collected Memory: A Micro-Sociological Analysis

While a large portion of this work is the search for structured narratives of belief and value an element of this work is also microsociological in focus. By microsociology, I refer to the world of individual choice and behavior in “negotiating,” by acceptance or rejection, the cultural forms available for identity construction (Alford, 1998:72). In other words, I also seek how various Chickasaw individuals live their identity. I seek how they negotiate identity, how they construct it, and how they live it. I term these responses the collected memories of the Chickasaw.

Indeed, any valid analysis of the creation of identity need take into account both the social structure (the existing cultural and social patterns) as well as the lived experiences and cognitive choices of the individuals within those structures. Social structures do serve to constrain individuals through preexisting standards of belief and behavioral expectations. Yet, social structure is also represented and sustained by the cognitive and behavioral acts of individuals. Thus, “models that facilitate connections between micro and macro levels of analysis are necessary for a comprehensive account of social [order and identity].” (Howard, 1994:210). So stated, I identify the set of experiences and choices that my participants made in the acceptance or rejection of the social identities defined within the social structure.

Significant to this study, I and my Chickasaw participants, identified six frameworks regarding how Chickasaw identity is interpreted and lived. These frameworks are presented first in Table 2. and then within the textual descriptions that follow.

Table 2: Frameworks of Native Identity: How Identity is Lived

Category Type:	Perspective used most by:	Description:
Stereotypical Framework	Non-Natives	Frameworks most often used by “outsiders” to Native communities. Often equates Indian identity to that of a “positive stereotype” (e.g., the “Noble Indian”) or a demeaning image (e.g., “the Savage”). These frameworks are employed to ignore true Native concerns and issues.
Frameworks of Blood	Non-native and Native	A framework which identifies Indian identity within blood quantum (particularly high blood quantum). Most “outsiders” frame Indian identity within this (though this framework is prevalent among many Natives). Those who urge this identity framework often ignore community and cultural responsibilities as a component of Native identity
Family and Community Frameworks	Natives	Frameworks which orient Native identity within family and community responsibilities. Here, identity is held by having and maintaining affectual ties between community members.
Frameworks of Culture	Natives	Within this framework, “being Indian” is the result of holding and expressing a particular Native or tribal “worldview” -- a system of beliefs, values, and norms that is relative to the social group. Here, Natives express their worldview through language, artful expressions, and routine ritual forms
Frameworks of Self (Personal-Solidarity Framework)	Native and Non-Native	Here, being “Indian” is a personal construct, or a sense of self, built to insulate one’s self from anomie and alienation. In this framework Indian identity is an individual expression, and thus varies greatly.
Political Frameworks	Non-Native and Native	U.S. Federal Government definitions of “Indianness” which change by historic epoch and within political policy.

In the first category, *the stereotypical framework* of Native Identity is conceptualized. This is a structural framework that roots Native identity within mythical elements and features of popular culture. Further, this a framework most often used by

non-Natives which influence the organization of perception and behavioral acts toward Natives. Indeed, because most individuals are rarely taught any real Indian history or details about tribal life, Native culture becomes romanticized or demonized.

As such, Indian culture is framed structurally and culturally as a stereotypical image and many of the realities of tribal life go ignored. Truly, many of my Chickasaw participants have related that substantial daily energies go into combating this framework of identity. Thus, the stereotypical framework is best described as a non-Native vision of Indian identity that has become integrated into American culture. It is a vision of reality, and a structured set of beliefs and values, that Chickasaw individuals firmly reject. For as I noted earlier, when we utilize this framework we often fail to see the Native at all.

Second, there are *the frameworks of blood*. In this perspective, Indian identity is a biological determinant defined too within a structured cultural perception. Historically (and often a non-Native political conception) “being Indian” has meant having substantial quantities of Native blood. However, having identified this perspective, the validity of this argument begs examination. Among all U.S. Indian tribes, their biological future (regarding blood quantum) is uncertain. Nationally, Indians continue to marry people outside of their ethnic group far faster than any other ethnic group in the United States. To reiterate the scholarship Bordewich (1996:78):

In 1970, more than 33 percent of all Indians were married to non-Indians (compared to just 1 percent of all Americans who married outside their [ethnic group]); a decade later, the number had grown to 50 percent, and it continued to climb. A 1986 congressional study estimated that the percentage of Indians with one-half or more Indian blood would decline from about 87 percent in 1980 to just 8 percent by 2080.

Indeed, Bordewich is making the point that “blood” and “race” are flawed concepts of identity recognition. In sarcasm he holds, “If blood quantum remains the key requirement to determining Indian identity, the Indian will soon not exist.”

Today, among the modern Chickasaw, the rates of intermarriage that exist between persons “Indian” and “other” have eroded the ancient and predominate racial differences. Yet, the Chickasaw people remain. They remain, because they do not consider “blood” to be the main requirement of tribal identity. Thus, while identity frameworks based in blood are quite entrenched in the broader social world, it is an identity framework typically rejected by most Chickasaw. In particular, Chickasaw persons identify more within *family and community frameworks* of identity.

These frameworks speak to the core codes of value among the Chickasaw. They are codes embedded in the ancient Chickasaw social structure. Particularly, these frameworks involve one’s willingness to participate in family and community duties. They require an individual’s responsibility and social contribution to the broader Chickasaw Nation (e.g., voting in tribal elections, showing respect for elders). Moreover, these forms include the maintenance of affectual ties to family and community members. Affectual ties are maintained by participating in the living community. Knowing and caring for Chickasaw members is held to be more of a necessity (and a requirement) in one’s claim to a Chickasaw identity than is a recognition of one’s blood quantum. Indeed, as a Chickasaw individual offered, “to be Chickasaw is to be a member of a family, whether this family is by birth or by community.”

Other communal and structured forms of identity exist within a *cultural framework*, or the life ways of a society. For many, this form of identity is articulated in

the expression of a “Chickasaw worldview,” the system of beliefs, values and norms that guide social action. Stated simply, this worldview contains the ways of the Chickasaw ancestors. Phrased in another manner, Chickasaw cultural identity is made by communicating the ways (the values, norms, and beliefs) of the ancestors. Some keep this culture alive and identify as Chickasaw by speaking the language of the ancestors. Others maintain their identity through storytelling, visual art, dance, dress, and food. But whatever the creative form, in this framework, identity is constructed and held through the internalization *and passage* of the life ways of the ancestors.

“Being Chickasaw” however, is also identified through frameworks of self (identified also as *the personal solidarity framework*). Such is a construction of self, a personal and psychological image of one’s self worth, social value, and sense of place in the universe). This is an personal identity influenced by a group’s stories (it’s origin, history, and culture). Indeed this framework is more of a psychological framework urged to create a sense of belonging and to combat feelings of loneliness and alienation. Further because this identity is constructed within individual life experiences, it is an individual expression and thus varies greatly in this formation. As a side note, one may find similarity between the identity frameworks of culture and the frameworks of self. Truly both are linked. But the frameworks of culture speak to the broad social codes that influence individual action, while the codes of self are the psychological frameworks that speak to how individuals interpret and make use of their identity. The frameworks of self are the cognitive attributions individuals make in expressing what being Chickasaw means.

Finally, there are the *political frameworks* of identity. To most Chickasaw, a community oriented and cultural identity captures most what it means to be Chickasaw. Yet “being Chickasaw” is also a matter of federal recognition. Politically and historically, Chickasaw identity has been defined within the statutes and policies of the U.S. federal government. As history goes, these policies have defined the Chickasaw as the “other,” the “inferior,” the “nonexistent,” and the “politically sovereign.” And the social effects of these political labels are drastically felt. For example, in the political era of the “inferior,” the Chickasaw people their culture and their nation were removed and allotted. Then, during the period of “nonexistence” the federal government decided the best way to assimilate the tribe, was to declare that “Indians no longer existed.” As a result, Indian concerns and realities of identity, health, and poverty symbolically disappeared as well.

Even today, under the new title of sovereignty, Native political, communal, and self identities are emerging from (and struggling to overcome) the effects of these earlier governmental rulings. Thus, these varied federal classifications suggest that Indian identity (in this form) is not a product of Indians themselves. It is a label given to them by another. Yet, ironically it is also one that Native tribes seek and seek to express. It is one that tribes fight for so that they can have federal recognition (and monies) to organize their society within their own values and beliefs.

And this then has been part of the great debate regarding Native identity, for “Who is a Native American?” In my opinion, the only unchallenged answer lies in the notion that Native Americans and Native identities are not monolithic. Being Native and being Chickasaw is a negotiation among many voices. In one sense, being Chickasaw or Native is the battle to negate particular voices (especially those that reference

stereotypical features of Native culture). While, in another sense, being Chickasaw and Native is the attempt to raise one's own voice among many competing others (the attempt to bring cultural and communal concerns to the broader public). And still yet, being Chickasaw/Native is at times hearing others tell you that you are not Native (because you don't have the "blood" or the federal recognition), but hearing your internal voice say different.

Being Native and Chickasaw (depending upon who is doing the defining) is a result of external, communal, and personal-self factors. By law and custom, Indian identity is defined within genetic blood quantum. By community and culture, identity is expressed in the reciprocal acts, affectual ties, and life ways of history. And by personal decree, if one considers himself or herself to be Native, than they are Native.

But one thing seems clear. Native Identity is something that is lived. Being Native and being Chickasaw is the act of living, and as such, Native and Chickasaw identities will grow and change with the passage of time. But having stated this, I also believe that being Native and Chickasaw is *knowing how life is to be lived*. I maintain that the act of being Chickasaw (and the knowledge of how life is to be conducted) "lives" in their collective (and collected) memories.

Here I have attempted to collect these "frameworks of life" in both the collective and collected memories of the Chickasaw. To offer in summary then, I believe that Chickasaw identity is both a structured cultural framework and a matter of life experience. Chickasaw identity is structured in the historical narratives and oral stories of the Chickasaw and in the cognitive maps of individuals themselves.

Thus, I center this work firmly in the sociological tradition of Durkheim, Parsons, Bellah (1985), and Featherstone (1991) who argue society to be a common stock of knowledge (a set of histories and stories) that can be accessed for “core values” that generate a framework of collective action (Featherstone, 1991). I consider these voices valid and I seek to make this study a contribution to their mode of thought. Yet, having stated this, I also “make room” for the individual and his/her cognitive abilities in choosing, expressing, and/or negating these structured forms of identity narrative. I argue that the analysis of identity need take into account both the social structure (the existing cultural and social patterns) as well as the lived experiences and cognitive choices of the individuals within those structures. Here I have attempted to demonstrate that identity is a function of both external (social) and internal (cognitive) factors.

Finally, in the end, I have attempted to foster a greater understanding of what it “means to be Chickasaw” and to highlight the forces that perpetuate Chickasaw identity. I maintain in closing that as long as the memories and stories of the Chickasaw are told and lived, so will exist the Chickasaw.

Chapter VIII

Summary of Research and Reflections of Limitations and Contributions

In the introduction to this work I wrote that I sought the following information:

(1) a general conceptualization of identity, (2) an identification of the various social forms that enable Chickasaw identity construction, and (3) a recognition of the strategies (or frameworks) of “identity living” that maintain Chickasaw identity. Additionally, I sought to express collectively, why identity is crucial and why Chickasaw identity is important.

In the completion of the first part of this pursuit, I define identity as a warehouse of beliefs, values, and role (normative) expectations that influence human action. Here, argue that identity (a code of action) is both a structure of life position and a process of living. In this first conception, identity is a cultural and historical construction (a matter of being born and socialized into a particular cultural group and historical epoch). The second is a personal manifestation (a set of beliefs and values that one chooses based on individual experience rooted in interaction and cognition).

In seeking the second form noted in the introduction (the social aspects which enable identity construction), I collected various historical narratives and ceremonial traditions of the Chickasaw. I argue that these forms are structured codes of value and belief that guide Chickasaw social action. In a textual analysis of the history and tradition

of the Chickasaw I identified the following value orientations: commitment to family, commitment to community, and a value of universal order (values crafted within historical narratives and myths which tell the Chickasaw people to be strong, to fight, and to survive). In other words, to be considered Chickasaw (as socially crafted) is to hold strong ties to family and community relationships and to organize individual action within a particular code of history and tradition.

Of the third form, I identified numerous frameworks through which individuals make sense these structured narratives. In particular I offered how selected Chickasaw individuals “negotiate,” by acceptance or rejection, the cultural forms available for identity construction. I identified both the Chickasaw and non-Chickasaw structured forms that influence Chickasaw identity construction. This is to say, some structured forms were externally crafted in the form of negative stereotypes. While other forms were constructed and lived in Chickasaw history and tradition. And to reiterate, it was important to identify both the interior and external perspectives that orient group identity. Identifying both was a necessary step in uncovering how Chickasaw individuals organize their actions (as both a response to stereotypes and as a means of living the culturally “mandated” behavior).

Concerning the above, I note that there are many voices and perspectives concerning of Native identity. Here I have identified six frameworks of Indian identity and voice. These include: (1) stereotypical frameworks, (2) perspectives of blood, (3) family and community relationships, (4) cultural, (5) political, and (6) personal orientations (see chapters VI and VII). I have identified, in selected Chickasaw individuals, their voice and their cognitive actions in choosing, expressing, and/or

negating these structured forms of identity narrative. In the end, I argue that the analysis of identity need take into account both the social structure (the existing cultural and social patterns) as well as the lived experiences and cognitive choices of the individuals within those structures.

Finally, in addressing why identity is important, I offer that they are models of society, social relations, and personal conduct. At the macro level, a group identity offers a common stock of knowledge as well as a set of “core values” that may be used to generate a framework of collective action. At the micro level identity is a personal construct (a psychological model which eases anomie and alienation) and a personal code that influences individual action. In this sense then, identities are who we are. Identities construct us at the personal, national, and global level. They tell us who we are and how we should live. And concerning Chickasaw identity, being Chickasaw is important for it orients the Chickasaw individual within an ancient social order. Chickasaw identity orients the Chickasaw person within a particular set of beliefs and values that transcends the generations and which enables them to live and communicate with the ancestors.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Because this research was designed to be descriptive in content, it identifies numerous aspects of the broader Chickasaw portrait without focusing on any one piece in particular. Phrased in another manner, the many contexts of Chickasaw history, life, and identity are highlighted in brief. I have pursued the “Chickasaw experience” through history, myth, and personal account. And each avenue of exploration could be expounded upon to create a study in its own form.

In chapter IV, I provided a general historical framework of the Chickasaw experience. In truth, each of the main subheadings of the Chickasaw historical experience could be made a substantial project. In particular, I feel that a more thorough account of the Chickasaw in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century is necessary as this aspect of experience is neglected in the broader academic literature. Such considerations should be given to the exploration of the socio-historical effects of Native political sovereignty (as well as the political implications regarding the future of Native identities and nations).

Chapter V takes the form of a socio-anthropological study. By this, I mean to say I examined Chickasaw identity and history through the various ancient beliefs and customs of the Chickasaw. My intent was to show how these ancient forms still urge a Chickasaw collective identity and solidarity. In making this argument, more detail could have been placed on the collective forms and ancient practices. For example, this chapter lends itself to several studies, focusing perhaps on each of the following: the folklore of the Chickasaw; the dance, art and other ceremonial forms, the social forms such as clan and family structure, and the examinations of the social institutions (e.g., the economic, political, and health structures) of the Chickasaw.

In the final analysis chapter (Chapter VI), personal accounts regarding how individuals construct and live their Chickasaw identity were recorded. I and my Chickasaw participants identified six frameworks of identity construction and six avenues through which identity is lived. Each of these identity frameworks (stereotypical, blood, community, culture, personal, and political) would be worthy of further investigation, and each could be a point of invitation regarding future research.

Further, regarding this chapter, a potential weakness lies within the number and context of those interviewed. I met with approximately 80 Chickasaw individuals and from these interactions twenty formal interviews emerged. Of these formal sessions, most were conducted with persons of prominence within the tribe (e.g., Lt. Governor, Director of Educational Resources, elders, artisans). Since most of these individuals work for the tribe it is possible that they carry a worldview and set of experiences that differ from the many Chickasaw who do not work for the Tribe. Thus, in the highest form of critique this study could be called “representatively biased” regarding the detailing of Chickasaw experience. In future studies, this shortcoming could be overcome by: (1) extending the time spent with the Chickasaw people, and (2) increasing the number of formal interviews with those who do not work for the tribe.

In summary then, the greatest limitations of this research lie in its general approach. This study was intended, primarily, as a descriptive account of the Chickasaw people, and thus was broad in focus and in detail. However, with certain details left unexplored or unfinished future examinations are possible.

Contributions of Research

Having focused on the limitations above, it should be noted that features of importance have emerged from this study. First, since this work is a descriptive account of the Chickasaw experience, it serves to give a voice to those too often overlooked. As Hoyt (1987:vii) noted, “the Chickasaw have been perhaps, the most neglected of the [Oklahoma Native] Tribes.” In concurrence with these words, I too argue that the Chickasaw have been neglected in description, study, and social recognition. Such then

was the purpose of this project overall to highlight Chickasaw history, community, culture, and identity.

Second, a continuation and expansion of classic sociological reasoning is articulated here. Specifically I contribute to an understanding of the formation and perpetuation of group solidarity. As suggested by the frameworks of collective and collected memory, group solidarity and identity is maintained in the collective stories, experiences, and reflections of a people. To restate the words of Ross (1955:1):

Shared notions often form the fabric of our beliefs about ourselves as a collective society-- about our past, our goals, our ideals and our future. In this sense, collective memory can be seen as fundamental to national identity and unity.

Indeed, it is the contention of this work that Chickasaw social identity and solidarity are embodied in the collective stories and experiences of the Chickasaw people. By collective memory, I refer to the history and oral traditions of the Chickasaw people that link the Chickasaw people in a commonality of belief, value, and action. In this sense then, collective memories are ageless. They are shared tales of experience that enable and perpetuate a large group identity. By collected memory, I refer to the personal stories and experiences that detail how individuals “live” their identities.

To restate, I consider the frameworks of collective and collected memory to be fundamental to group identity (both Chickasaw and non-Chickasaw). Thus, I center this work firmly in the sociological tradition of Durkheim (1961), Parsons (1937, 1966), Bellah (1985), and Featherstone (1991) who argue society to be a common stock of knowledge (a set of histories and stories) that can be accessed for “core values” that generate a framework of collective action (Featherstone, 1991). I consider these voices

valid and I seek to make this study a contribution to their mode of thought. I offer, with collective and collected memories, a model for exploring ethnic, class, and other group identities

Third, this dissertation emphasizes the fact that Native identity is dynamic and multifaceted. This work challenges the belief that Native identity is monolithic and unchanging. Instead, Native identity is lived through many voices. Some of these voices seek to negate Native identity, others attempt to strengthen it. But all intertwine to construct Native American identity. Here, I have identified six such frameworks of identity. Additionally, I offer examples of how life is experienced and lived through each of these frameworks. In the end, I argue that these frameworks will strengthen constructive debate regarding the nature and context of Native identity. Further, I hope that these frameworks enable others to see and to seek out the many voices and experiences of Native America.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Collective and Collected Memories: The Construction and Maintenance of Chickasaw Identity

Explanation:

You are being asked to participate in a research project designed to investigate contemporary Native American identity. Specifically, you will be asked to detail your thoughts regarding Chickasaw identity. As a member of the Chickasaw Nation, you may be asked questions similar to the following: What does it mean to be Chickasaw?; How do you maintain ties to the Chickasaw community?; What are the concerns or conflicts regarding your Chickasaw identity?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked a series of questions which may require an hour or more of your time.

Participation:

Your participation is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation at any time after notifying me. You may reach John Paul at (405) 332-0436 or (405) 744-6105, or by e-mail at: paulokstate@hotmail.com

You may also contact Dr. Charles Edgley, Chair of the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State University, should you have any questions or concerns about this study. He may be reached at: (405) 744-6105

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

The information you provide may be available for public consumption. However, should you wish to keep your name - or any information you provide - confidential, I will keep said information in strict confidence.

Informed Consent:

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____
(Please Print)

Signed: _____ Degree of Blood Quantum: _____

APPENDIX B

**Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board**

Protocol Expires: 5/20/03

Date: Tuesday, May 21, 2002

IRB Application No: AS0269

Proposal Title: "BEING CHICKASAW" THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF CHICKASAW
COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

Principal
Investigator(s):

John Paul
006 Classroom
Stillwater, OK 74078

Richard Dodder
012 CLB
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR.46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

Photos taken at Chikasha Renewal and Fall Festival, Summer and Fall 2002



Matthew Cravatt and friends at Fall Festival, Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Fall 2002.



Chickasaw artist Tom Phillips with Son and artwork, Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Fall 2002.



Dixie and Pat, Kullihoma. Spring 2002.



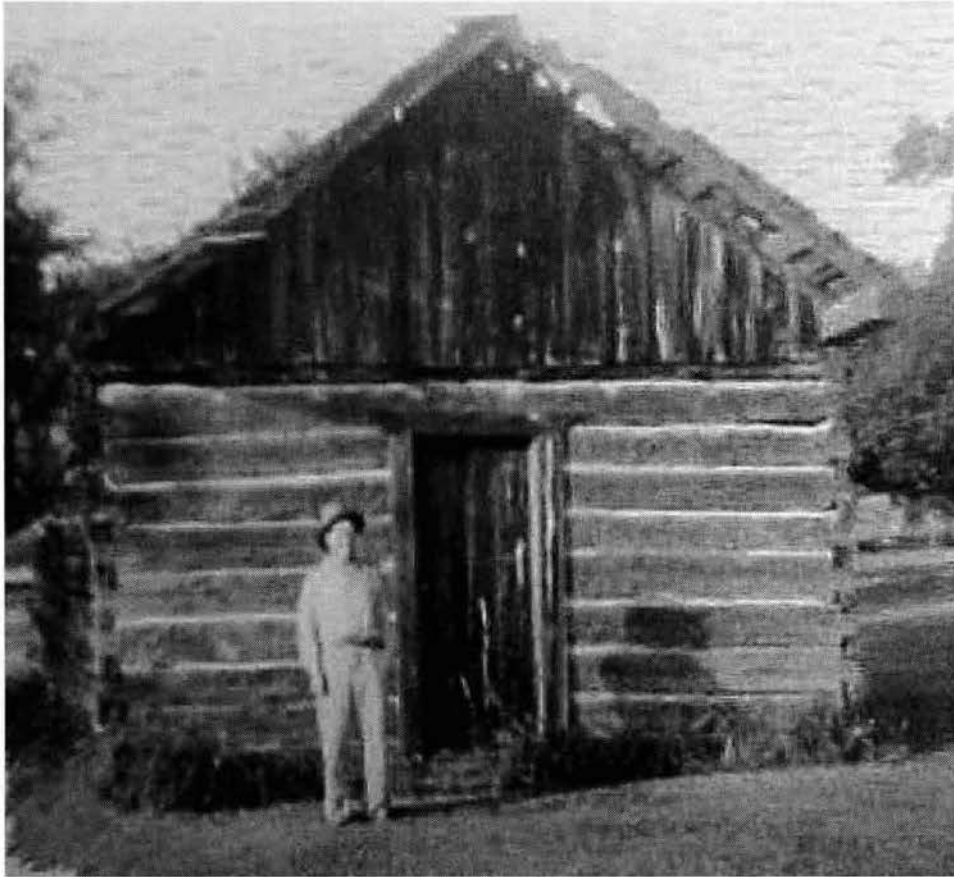
“Joking Around”: Members of the Chickasaw Honor Guard.
The Chickasaw Honor Guard are comprised of military service veterans.



Chickasaw Youths Playing Stickball, Kullihoma, Oklahoma. Summer 2002.



Reconstructed Ancient Council House, Kullihoma. 16th century design.



The First Chickasaw Council House built in Indian Territory.
The Structure is a twelve by twenty four foot log house built in 1854 or 1855.
(The Council House still stands in Tishomingo, Oklahoma).



Old Chickasaw Council House, Tishmingo, Oklahoma 2002. Built in 1898.



Chickasaw Nation Headquarters, Ada, Oklahoma. 2002.

#2

VITA

John Michael Paul

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: COLLECTIVE AND COLLECTED MEMORIES: THE CONSTRUCTION
AND MAINTENANCE OF CHICKASAW IDENTITY

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Shawnee, Oklahoma, On July 28, 1975, the son of
William David Paul and Glenda Kay Rose.

Educational: Graduated from Tecumseh High School, Tecumseh, Oklahoma in
May of 1993; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology and
Psychology from East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma, May of 1997;
and a Master of Science degree in Sociology from the University of North
Texas, Denton, Texas, May 1999. Completed requirements for the
Doctorate of Philosophy degree with a major in Sociology at Oklahoma
State University in May, 2003.

Experience: Employed as a teaching assistant from 1999 to 2003 at the Oklahoma
State University and from 1997 to 1999 at the University of North Texas.

Professional Memberships: Alpha Kappa Delta, Southwest Social Science
Association, Mid-South Sociological Association, International Visual
Sociology Association