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THE WEAPON OF DRESS:
IDENTITY AND INNOVATION IN CHEROKEE CLOTHING, 1794-1838

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Abstract

In the decades leading up to Removal, Cherokees underwent a variety of sartorial changes. This thesis examines these changes, the resulting tensions, and the use of clothing as a weapon of resistance against Removal. Rather than acculturation or selective adoption, these sartorial changes represent indigenous cultural innovation. Cherokees reinforced their culture not through static adherence to "traditional" dress, but through innovation. These changes were indigenous and the result of an internal struggle over sartorial identity. Through narratives of sartorial transformation, Cherokees presented themselves as sufficiently acculturated and "civilized," thus using dress as part of the identity process and as a means of presenting a different identity that emphasized "civilization" and affinity to Euro-American culture. Cherokees used sartorial innovation as acts of identity and as a weapon of resistance against Euro-American encroachment.

Chapter 1: Introduction: Narratives of Sartorial Transformation

The annual green corn festival had always been an occasion of great joy for the Cherokee Nation. Families travelled sometimes fifty miles to gather for a celebration of another year's harvest. It was around 1797, and one little boy, about seven years old, was dressed in a brand new suit made of nankeen, a fashionable cotton cloth. Used to wearing leggings and moccasins like all the other Cherokees, little John stood out from among the other boys his age. Instead of admiring the fancy suit in wonder, John's playmates shouted insults. They would not receive this "white boy" with his white boys' clothing, however fine the garments were. The next day, John burst into tears as his grandmother began to dress him once again in Euro-American fashion. But when his grandmother heard of the previous day's escapade, John's new clothes were replaced with his usual moccasins, calico frock, and leggings. Now he was happy and "at home again," ready to join his playmates.[1]

This little boy was John Ross, who later became the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. As he grew older, Ross put away his leggings and dressed in virtually complete Euro-American fashion. Not every Cherokee experienced a transformation of this extremity, but the multiple layers of meaning in the story of Ross' sartorial transformation shed light on the developments of Cherokee clothing from the mid-1790s through the 1830s. On the surface, it shows the tensions among Cherokees regarding sartorial changes. Ross' family had dressed him in what seemed to be Euro-American clothing. Around the turn of the century, a few Cherokees made dramatic

[1]Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America: Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of Ninety-Five of 120 Principal Chiefs from the Indian Tribes of North America* (Washington: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1967), 440.

sartorial changes, but this engendered tension. Ross' young playmates characterized him as a "white boy" for dressing in his nankeen suit, with the implication that such changes represented acceptance of Euro-American culture. This story, however, also reveals that within just a few decades, Cherokees had accepted many sartorial changes and a greater degree of diversity.

But this narrative of sartorial transformation served a distinct purpose. Cherokees carefully crafted these narratives in order to persuade Euro-Americans that they had become "civilized." Ross' story appeared in Thomas McKenney's and James Hall's *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, a three-volume series of portraits and biographies of prominent Native Americans. In this version of the story, Ross' new suit was "after the style of civilized life."[2] This story, told to a Euro-American audience, interpreted Ross' change as the transformation of a Cherokee into a civilized being. The rest of this narrative describes Ross as an enlightened leader who presided over many changes to the Cherokee Nation.[3]

It is certainly true that Cherokees underwent a great deal of sartorial change. These changes had a far-reaching impact, as they involved more than the clothing itself and were part of a much larger sartorial system that deeply affected Cherokee life. Cherokees shifted away from a hunting economy and began to grow cotton and manufacture cloth. Some even developed large plantations. Sartorial diversity increased as Cherokees developed new styles and a few even began to dress almost entirely like Euro-Americans.

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 439-446.

But the meaning of sartorial change shifted as Cherokees worked through their understanding of clothing and its relationship to identity. Cherokee clothing was a central part of identity and was thus a focus of many tensions as Cherokees struggled to make sense of sartorial change and create meaning through it. Cherokees underwent sartorial innovation, and they did so because they shifted their perceptions of identity. This allowed them to create diversity. Rather than acculturation or selective adoption, these changes represent indigenous cultural innovation. Cherokees reinforced their culture not through static adherence to "traditional" dress, but through innovation. These changes were indigenous and the result of an internal struggle over sartorial identity. Through narratives of sartorial transformation, Cherokees presented themselves as sufficiently acculturated and "civilized," thus using dress as part of the identity process and as a means of presenting a quite different identity to outsiders. Cherokees used sartorial innovation as acts of identity and as a weapon of resistance against Euro-American encroachment.

Sartorial changes created a great deal of tension among the Cherokees, as Chapter Two explores. There were differing opinions regarding sartorial change, as some accepted it while others believed it meant acculturation. Cherokees ultimately changed their conception of sartorial identity from a material to a more abstract vision of identity, thus allowing both diversity and sartorial innovation. As Chapter Three explores, Cherokees made changes in their dress in an indigenous context and drew on their own techniques and styles as they created innovative fashions.

As Cherokees purposefully crafted identity through sartorial innovation, they presented these changes as representing something almost entirely opposite of reality.

Beginning in the mid to late 1820s, Cherokees began crafting narratives of sartorial transformation. These narratives did reflect a reality of change, but Cherokees constructed these for Euro-American audiences in a way that emphasized these transformations as examples of acculturation, rather than indigenous identity construction. While Cherokees created much more complicated views of sartorial identity among themselves, Euro-Americans were creating more racialized views of identity and began to believe that American Indians could not acculturate and become "civilized" in their dress. Chapter Four examines how Cherokees fought against these stereotypes and positioned themselves as sartorially acculturated as part of an argument against Removal.

These narratives of sartorial transformation seem to have had a great effect on historical interpretation, as scholars have traditionally interpreted these changes as examples of either acculturation or selective adoption. Through the 1980s and 1990s, historians often saw a dichotomy between assimilation and traditionalism. Historian William McLoughlin offers a classic example of this in "Cherokee Anomie, 1794-1810: New Roles for Red Men, Red Women, and Black Slaves." McLoughlin tells the story of anomie, assimilation, and cultural destruction that finally gives way to resistance and the revitalization of identity. Due to the many pressures and hardships caused by Euro-Americans following the American Revolution, Cherokees were forced to assimilate in order to survive.[4] Cherokee culture and the traditional aspects of identity disintegrated as Cherokees assimilated, causing much disorder. All this change, according to

[4] William G. McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie, 1794-1810: New Roles for Red Men, Red Women, and Black Slaves," in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861* (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 7.

McLoughlin, destroyed identity. McLoughlin writes, "Anomie at bottom meant for the Cherokees not only a loss of sovereignty and land, but with the breakdown of the cultural order, it also meant a loss of identity."[5] In this model, identity is tied to traditional culture, and change means turning away from identity. But Cherokees eventually discovered that unity and resistance were vital, so they revitalized their culture and identity by rejecting assimilation. Using language reminiscent of Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, McLoughlin writes, "The Cherokee people were reborn, like the phoenix, from the ashes of defeat and confusion."[6] McLoughlin romantically depicts the Cherokees as undergoing violent change, then nobly reestablishing their identity and revitalizing their culture.

Despite its importance to Cherokee identity, historians have not fully explored Cherokee dress. Those who do discuss it often do so as merely one example of acculturation. Acculturation carries the connotation of a change from Native American culture to Euro-American culture, and, by implication, a gradual shift from one static identity to that of another. For McLoughlin, identity and tradition do not easily mix with change. In his view, identity means an adherence to "traditional," steady cultural and societal practices influenced as little as possible by outside forces. This means that too many sartorial changes signals acculturation. McLoughlin applies his ideas of anomie and renascence to clothing, setting up a dichotomy between Euro-American and Cherokee dress, and explaining sartorial change as acculturation.[7] Similarly, Ronald

[5] Ibid., 14.
[6] Ibid., 37.
[7] See, for example, McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie," 14-17; William G. McLoughlin, "The Cherokee Ghost Dance Movement of 1811-1813" in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861* edited by William McLoughlin (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 116-118; William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 61-62.

Satz describes these sartorial change as part of a long list of ways in which Cherokees "adopted … white culture."[8] For these historians, early nineteenth century sartorial changes represent acculturation and, by implication, a gradual erosion of traditional identity.

The acculturation model has had a great deal of influence on other scholars of American Indian clothing. In "From Moccasins to Frock Coats and Back Again," Linda Welters writes that adopting European clothing showed acculturation. As part of the acculturation process, Christian Indians wore English clothing. While she notes that American Indians sometimes wore cloth and other European-manufactured materials in a way that demonstrated Indian identity, she describes the gradual change in clothing as acculturation.[9] Welters writes, "Despite Indian resistance, sartorial changes were inevitable."[10] For Welters, the changes in clothing represent gradual but inevitable acculturation.

Other scholars complicate the binary of tradition and acculturation with the idea of selective adoption. This is the process of picking and choosing aspects of both cultures. In other words, Cherokees changed in some areas and retained traditional practices in others. According to this model, Euro-American influences in clothing were not signs of acculturation; rather, American Indians incorporated these changes into their own clothing systems, carefully selecting aspects of both cultures. In *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*, Collin Calloway

[8] Ronald N. Satz, *Tennessee's Indian Peoples from White Contact to Removal, 1540-1840* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 73-81.
[9] Linda Welters, "From Moccasins to Frock Coats and Back Again" in *Dress in American Culture*, edited by Patricia A. Cunningham and Susan Voso Lab (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 20-21.
[10] Ibid., 16.

writes that "Indians attributed their own meanings and values to the articles of clothing they adopted, and they sometimes wore European clothes in very non-European ways."[11] Adopting certain aspects of Euro-American clothing did not mean adopting the culture and meanings behind them. If Native Americans interpreted these clothes differently and used them in the context of their own clothing systems, then acculturation was simply a fiction.

Supporters of the acculturation model often concentrate on changes in the material of clothing. But in "The English Colonial Impact on Indian Culture," James Axtell writes that these new Euro-American manufactured materials do not represent as much change as some scholars believe. Many of the changes were "simple substitutions for traditional items."[12] For example, Axtell sees cloth as a replacement for deerskin. American Indians were not necessarily assimilating simply by changing the material of their clothing. They were adopting new items into their traditional clothing system. If American Indians used these items in traditional ways, the cultural meaning remained the same, despite the changes in material. For Axtell, it is the meaning of these objects, not the material itself, that is important. Axtell writes, "The form and the function of an object … are far more important culturally than the material from which it is made."[13] Thus, material itself signifies less than form and function. If form and function still carry cultural meaning, then a change in material is not such a weighty matter as the acculturation model supposes.

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[11] Collin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 66.
[12] James Axtell, "The English Colonial Impact on Indian Culture," in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 256.
[13] Ibid.

Axtell's argument is a significant historiographical development in the study of American Indian material culture. It begins to encourage scholars to study the meaning of indigenous material culture without assuming that change always means acculturation. But this argument still carries an assumption that identity can be retained despite, not through, change, and it still upholds the dichotomy that cloth is originally European, while deerskin is Indian. Rather than seeking to understand what changes in material mean, Axtell attempts to break down the acculturation model by ignoring the importance of the material and replacing it with form and function.

Change and identity are central concerns of both of these models. Both try to explain the effect of change on identity, though in markedly different ways. The acculturation model implies that identity is based on a set of static traditions, and that change compromises identity. For example, in McLoughlin's model of anomie and renascence, groups compromise their identity when they change, but revitalize it when they decide to resist change.[14] Selective adoption, on the other hand, implies that identity is negotiated, which is undoubtedly an important conceptual development. According to this model, groups can keep their identity by being selective about what changes to adopt. Proponents of this theory also emphasize the relative importance of certain aspects of change, arguing that certain changes do not matter or that the retention of certain traditions negate certain changes. But while selective adoption allows for a measure of change, it still assumes identity is retained by negotiating between change and continuity. According to this theory, groups can retain their

[14] McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie, 1794-1810: New Roles for Red Men, Red Women, and Black Slaves"; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic.*

identity despite a limited amount of change. There is no implication that change can be a means of creating and sustaining identity.

It is more useful to conceptualize identity as a process, rather than an inanimate entity that simply exists. This allows scholars to give innovation an important place in the creation of identity. As Alberto Melucci points out, collective identity is processual and constructed. Melucci breaks down some of the assumed static nature of identity by emphasizing action as the basis for identity. For him, collective identity is the "process of 'constructing' an action system."[15] Individuals actively define identity based on collective action. This processual conception of identity allows room for some fluidity. Melucci writes, "The process of collective identity is thus also the ability to produce new definitions by integrating the past and the emerging elements of the present into the unity and continuity of a collective actor."[16] If collective identity is a process, then that process can produce change without breaking from the past.

This concept, however, is rarely applied by scholars of Native American history, especially regarding clothing and material culture. Scholars tend to create a dichotomy between change and continuity. But in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Philip Deloria writes that being "Indian" does not necessarily conflict with modernity. Americans in the twentieth century built a set of expectations that Indians would not engage with modernity.[17] Historians, in many ways, have made similar assumptions. Up through the 1980s and into the 1990s, historians built a narrative that change meant acculturation. Scholars have recently complicated this narrative with the concept of

[15] Alberto Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity" in *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 44.
[16] Ibid., 49.
[17] Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Place* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

selective adoption, but this still implies that change itself meant taking on aspects of Euro-American culture. There are some cases where this is true, but historians need to explore what American Indians themselves thought of these changes and how they conceptualized and defined their identity, rather than creating false binaries between Indian and Euro-American worlds.

Tradition is often just as constructed as identity. Eric Hobsbawm discusses the phenomenon of "invented tradition," which he defines as the rituals and practices society creates in order to fulfill the needs of the present by creating a sense of connection with the past.[18] These traditions are not unchanging, ancient rituals that have been in place since time immemorial, but are more recent developments that people invent in order to create a feeling of continuity, often in times of great change when people start to feel disconnected with the past.[19] Thus, traditions are often innovations, rather than conservative practices.

Innovation, rather than stasis, embodies tradition. Euro-Americans often assume that American Indian tradition means a lack of change, but in his study of Iroquoian material culture, Seneca art historian Thomas Hill writes, "Any genuine culture – if it is a living, breathing culture – involves evolution and change."[20] Change can be a sign of cultural strength, rather than disintegration. As Hobsbawm points out, traditions are often invented, which suggests that in the context of dress, diversity and innovation are integral parts of American Indian clothing systems. Dress cannot be considered as

[18] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.
[19] Ibid., 1-14.
[20] Tom Hill, "A Question of Survival" in *All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 186.

static. For example, Joseph Marshall Becker writes that wampum beads were recycled and reused, a process he calls "cannibalization."[21] American Indians constantly remade dress to suit their purposes, even within a strictly Native context. Thus change does not equal acculturation. In fact, the remaking of dress is in many ways an integral part of American Indian clothing systems.

In any society, traditions are apt to change. What is considered to be traditional sartorial identity can be remarkably fluid. For example, "traditional" Cherokee beadwork was avant-garde in the early 1800s. Artists used European glass trade beads and even Euro-American manufactured cloth in constructing innovative forms of beadwork. They were creating something that was new, but also distinctly Cherokee. Rather than opposing identity, innovation was part of the identity process and perhaps did more to forward it than a strict adherence to older styles of dress could have done. Cherokees created innovative new traditions through the process of identity. Through indigenous sartorial innovation, Cherokees themselves defined who they were. Change does not have to mean acculturation or even selective adoption. It can simply be an example of a processual, constructed identity that is vibrant and consciously defined, rather than a static set of "traditions."

Markers of identity are not static, and dress is no exception. People use dress in the process of creating identity, and thus it is important to explore this process rather than simply establish a static meaning of dress that reflects a "traditional" identity. Scholars have recently begun exploring the importance of ritual and performance in sartorial systems. Kathleen Brown notes that one of the reasons many Native

[21] Joseph Marshall Becker, "Small Wampum Bands Used by Native Americans in the Northeast: Functions and Recycling." *Material Culture* 40 no. 1 (Spring 2008): 6;10.

Americans did not wish to adopt Euro-American clothing was the aversion to the rituals and practices that accompanied it.[22] In *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians*, Sophie White also discusses the act of dressing, noting that Native American individuals who adopted Euro-American dress took on the daily rituals of dressing as part of their sartorial transformation.[23] It is clear that performance played an important role in the active construction of identity as well as any decision to change or manipulate it through dress. But if dress is performative, then it is also fluid, and individuals and cultures can use the same articles of dress to create different meanings.

Rob Mann takes the importance of dress to identity creation even further by arguing that sartorial changes can contribute to ethnogenesis (the creation of a new ethnic group). In "'True Portraitures of the Indians, and of Their Own Peculiar Conceits of Dress': Discourses of Dress and Identity in the Great Lakes, 1830-1850," he writes that those in the fur trade society of the Great Lakes region took Euro-American and Native elements of clothing and ornamentation and combined them in new ways as a means of making and remaking identity. During this time period, Euro-Americans sought to portray the way American Indians dressed as savage. Using the portraits of Great Lakes Indians by George Winter, Mann shows the tensions surrounding clothing. Winter attempted to create accurate depictions of American Indians, and his portraits were not as romanticized and stereotyped as others in this time period. But according to Mann, he viewed American Indian use of Euro-American accessories such as parasols

[22] Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 75.
[23] Sophie White, *Wild Frenchman and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 2; 53.

and handkerchiefs as "affectations."[24] But what Euro-Americans dismissed as ludicrous was actually an attempt to communicate something far more complicated.

Identity in the Great Lakes region was quite fluid, especially for Métis Indians. Mann writes that incorporating Euro-American aspects of dress demonstrated a new system of clothing that was more than simply Indian, something that formed a distinct part of the fur trade societies.[25] Rather than simply a sign of acculturation, this represents a reinvention of identity. Mann rejects the dichotomy between "white" and "Indian" aspects of clothing developed by earlier scholars and instead believes this is a remaking of identity as part of ethnogenesis.[26]

Mann's analysis demonstrates how Native Americans and other societies can actively use clothing in identity construction. But his conception of sartorial change as ethnogenesis still presents change as a strong break from existing identity. Sartorial change can be a means of ethnogenesis, but sometimes it is merely part of the continual process of identity. Ethnogenesis does not accurately describe Cherokee sartorial change in the early nineteenth century. Cherokees were not remaking their identity into something completely new altogether, but they certainly were continuing the process of identity. Thus, creating sartorial change can be part of the identity process without necessarily being either a departure from identity, as the acculturation model contends, or the creation of a completely new identity.

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[24] Rob Mann, "'True Portraitures of the Indians, and of Their Own Peculiar Conceits of Dress': Discourses of Dress and Identity in the Great Lakes, 1830-1850." *Historical Archaeology* 41, no. 1 (2007): 43.
[25] Ibid., 43-46.
[26] Ibid., 48-49.

Because identity is processual and constructed, it can often be contentious. As groups actively form identity, individuals often differ over what that identity should be. Individuals can express collective identity in varying ways. But historians of Cherokee clothing often view the diversity of clothing as a sign that the culture was going through the process of acculturation, and some see this as a sign of the diversity and divisions among American Indian cultures. In the classic model, "mixed-bloods" and "progressives" accept Euro-American civilization and culture, including Euro-American clothing, while the "full-bloods" and "traditionalists" resist.[27] William McLoughlin sees a process of acculturation among the Cherokees in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though this process was "slow and uneven," as many full-bloods resisted.[28] He gives one example where mixed-blood parents let missionaries dress their children in Euro-American fashion, while full-blood parents resisted.[29] In this framework, diversity of clothing is a sign of a process of acculturation that is complicated by division. Mary Young writes that as Cherokees went through this process of becoming "civilized," the diversity of clothing and other signs of Euro-American influence represented the variety of choices Cherokees had as a result of the "experiment in 'civilization.'"[30] Though historians complicate the acculturation model with ideas of resistance, agency, and choice, this model still presents diversity of clothing from a Euro-American perspective.

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[27] "Mixed bloods" refer to Cherokees who had both Cherokee and Euro-American ancestry and "full bloods" refer to those with only Cherokee ancestry. "Traditionalists" refer to those who favored a continuance of older or "traditional" Cherokee practices, while "progressives" refer to those who supported change, particularly when it came to adopting aspects of Euro-American culture.
[28] McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 67-70.
[29] Ibid., 76.
[30] Mary Young, "The Cherokee Nation: Mirror of the Republic." *American Quarterly* 33 (Winter 1981): 515-516.

In reality, diversity of clothing was often purposeful and even an important part of American Indian sartorial systems. In *Wild Frenchman and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana,* Sophie White discusses the Illinois practice of cultural cross-dressing. Though this may be counterintuitive, taking on French clothing was in keeping with traditional Illinois clothing practices. White writes that in Illinois society, a woman sometimes formed alliances with other tribes through marriage, and in doing so she left behind her own clothing and completely took on the dress of her husband's tribe. Thus, dress had the ability to transform identity.[31] But this was not simply an acculturation process that gradually transformed the tribe. Rather, specific individuals taking on the clothing practices of the French was part of the Illinois clothing system, and this represented alliance and diplomacy, not acculturation or even adoption. For these individuals were not permanently incorporating French clothing into Illinois dress; they were individually taking on the complete French sartorial identity in consistency with Illinois clothing practices.

Thus, individuals in American Indian cultures taking on Euro-American clothing may not represent acculturation or appropriation. In some cases, this was a purposeful diplomatic statement that did not change American Indian clothing. Individuals who took on Euro-American aspects of dress were sending specific messages to outsiders. They were not causing other American Indians within the tribe to acculturate or change their clothing. It is thus essential to recognize the diversity in American Indian clothing systems, for this was not simply a reflection of the diversity of American Indian

[31] Sophie White, *Wild Frenchman and Frenchified Indians,* 101-102.

opinions regarding acculturation or change. This sartorial diversity had a purpose within traditional American Indian clothing systems.

As Cherokees used clothing to construct their identity, they also used it for diplomatic purposes. They used the same sartorial changes that constructed Cherokee identity to send a different message to Euro-Americans. Even as Cherokees continued to create a separate sartorial system, they diplomatically presented themselves as being a part of the Euro-American sartorial system. Clothing serves multiple purposes, and as scholars have recently begun pointing out, dress can be an important diplomatic tool.

Laura E. Johnson writes that sartorial change has important diplomatic functions. In contrast to James Axtell, Johnson writes that cloth was not simply a replacement of animal skins. Rather, cloth served a distinct function in diplomacy and trade between American Indians and Euro-Americans. Gifts of clothing or cloth created fictive kinship, and thus were important symbols of the relationship between traders and Natives.[32] Clothing and textiles were a means of communication, and Johnson describes them as a "lingua franca."[33] Wearing European clothing showed a close relationship with Europeans. Native leaders and interpreters often wore this clothing during negotiations, and it could serve as a way for Euro-Americans to identify leaders and navigate relations.[34] Johnson writes, "Natives used cloth and dress acquired from European traders to fashion on their bodies a representation of their roles and actions in colonial society."[35] Clothing was used to symbolize American Indians' relations with

[32] Laura E. Johnson, "'Goods to clothe themselves': Native Consumers and Native Images on the Pennsylvania Trading Frontier, 1712–1760." *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 118.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 118; 127-128.
[35] Ibid., 124.

Euro-Americans. Thus, some of the sartorial transformations that politically active individuals undertook had diplomatic purposes.

However, this use of European clothing did not translate into complete adoption. If changes in clothing were not merely replacements of older materials, neither were they examples of acculturation. Johnson discusses the use of both European and Indian elements of clothing, and she writes that these differences served to create a measure of distance between the two groups.[36] American Indians used clothing for the diplomatic purpose of creating relationships with Euro-Americans while at the same time maintaining separateness.

Borrowing from Richard White's concept of the "middle ground," Timothy J. Shannon writes that in the Mohawk Valley clothing helped form a zone of mutual accommodation among colonists and Indians, and inhabitants used it in diplomacy and trade to reinvent themselves by changing their clothing depending on the audience. Analyzing the portraits of Hendrick, a Mohawk diplomat, and William Johnson, a colonial diplomat, Shannon discusses the significance of clothing in "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion." Together, American Indians and colonists created a new system of clothing that was itself a form of communication. This was different from both European clothing and American Indian clothing, and it represented a blend of both cultures.[37] Europeans gave American Indians clothing in order to create a visual language that could be understood

[36] Ibid., 124-125.
[37] Timothy J. Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53 no. 1 (January 1996): 18. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

by Europeans, with their ideas of class and social hierarchy, and American Indians found meaning in it within their own ideologies.[38] Shannon writes, "This blending of European goods with Indian custom enabled each side to interpret the clothing from its own perspective yet still use it as an agent of cultural exchange and mediation."[39] In Shannon's viewpoint, this new clothing used in diplomacy was a middle ground, and both groups could approach it from their own perspectives. In this manner, clothing simultaneously served as a vehicle for identity creation and allowed for multiple interpretations.

But there was also a great deal of fluidity with this clothing. Both Euro-Americans and American Indians could easily change their clothing, and those adept at its use in diplomacy could acquire power through changing their appearance depending on the circumstance. Shannon writes, "It provided people with constant opportunity to re-invent themselves from one audience to the next, to create new appearances, and to gain influence through participation in trade."[40] Hendrick, a prominent Mohawk diplomat, gained cultural mobility and access to Euro-American circles by wearing clothing that mixed both Euro-American and Mohawk elements of clothing. This communicated gentility without showing submission. Shannon analyzes the many portraits made of him during his lifetime and recognizes that his clothing changed depending on his circumstances.[41] In this way, the fluidity of clothing allowed Mohawks to enter into a middle ground for diplomacy and communication.

[38] Shannon, ""Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier," 25-26.
[39] Ibid., 26.
[40] Ibid., 18-19.
[41] Ibid., 26-32.

The early nineteenth century Cherokees were not creating a sartorial middle ground, but they were strategically using clothing to present different identities to different audiences. Cherokees carefully used differing definitions of identity to simultaneously present opposite interpretations of their dress, depending on the audience. Among the Cherokees, sartorial innovation represented a Cherokee identity because they shifted their definition of identity from being firmly rooted in the material to focusing on abstract meanings of dress that allowed for sartorial change and diverse expressions of collective identity. But Cherokees were also well versed in Euro-American beliefs about dress, and thus they were able to present a completely different view of themselves by emphasizing the "civilized" material, form, and practices of their sartorial system, as these represented a "civilized" identity to Euro-Americans. Partly in response to Cherokee sartorial change, Euro-Americans also began to shift their categories of analysis, developing a racialized system that held little room for identity transformations through sartorial change. Instead of basing a "civilized" identity off of everyday practices, Euro-Americans developed the idea that identity categories such as race, "civilized," and "savage" were static and unchangeable.[42] But Cherokees fought this definition of identity by emphasizing narratives of sartorial transformation. The struggle over controlling the meaning of dress was closely linked to the struggle over the very definition of identity. Cherokees had a thorough understanding of the Euro-American sartorial system, and this allowed them to strategically manipulate Euro-

[42] In her study of Latin America, Rebecca Earle argues that "Until the late eighteenth century, clothing helped create identity, particularly racial identity, while by the mid nineteenth century it had lost much of its ability to do so. Instead, clothing was thought to reflect, more or less accurately, existing class and racial identities." Rebecca Earle, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!' Race, Clothing and Identity in the Americas (17th-19thCenturies)," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 52 (Autumn, 2001): 189. A similar phenomenon happened with Euro-American interactions with Cherokees.

American understandings of Cherokee clothing. Even as they continued to create a vibrant and distinct sartorial system, they used dress to present themselves as acculturated. As Euro-American encroachment and the threat of Removal increased, Cherokees used clothing as a weapon of resistance. In this arena, it did not matter what clothing actually meant to Cherokees if they could create different meanings for Euro-Americans. Thus, Cherokees created narratives of sartorial transformation in order to convince Euro-Americans that they were becoming "civilized." Cherokees had undergone considerable sartorial changes, but the meaning of these changes did not necessarily match the stories they told white people.

Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, experienced his own sartorial transformation reluctantly, at least at first. Samuel Worcester, missionary to the Cherokees, wrote, "He well remembers that he began to feel awkward and ashamed of his singularity, when he began to wear the dress of a white boy. Now every boy is proud of a civilized suit, and these feel awkward and ashamed of their singularity who are destitute of it." When Boudinot was young, Cherokees had misgivings about such sartorial transformations, partly because such changes originally signaled a change in identity. As the height of this tension abated, Cherokees began shifting their ideas about the meaning of these sartorial changes, but many Euro-Americans and Cherokees chose to present these changes as representing a transformation of the Cherokees into a "civilized" society. As Worcester put it, Cherokees now loved wearing a "civilized suit" and "the dress of a white boy." According to this interpretation, Cherokees had changed from their "Indian" dress to dressing in a "civilized" manner, which meant dressing like white people. While the reality was much more complicated, as

Cherokees continually constructed their own identity through sartorial changes and held diverse viewpoints on what these changes meant, Cherokees presented these same changes as representing something completely different.[43]

In the early nineteenth century, Cherokees created diverse sartorial changes. Not everyone chose to make the same changes that Ross and Boudinot did by adopting what seemed to be complete Euro-American dress. Most Cherokees created innovations in dress that were indigenous, and they drew from their own culture as they developed new traditions. Cherokees carefully used sartorial innovations in the identity process, but at the same time, they created narratives of sartorial transformation that told the story of acculturation, rather than identity construction. Cherokees strategically used these narratives as weapons of resistance against Euro-American encroachment, particularly the threat of Removal. These narratives of sartorial transformation presented Cherokees as sufficiently "civilized." Since Cherokees had given up hunting, grew cotton and raised sheep, made their own cloth, and wore Euro-American clothing, they were no longer roaming "savages" but were civilized people who had a right to remain on the land. If Cherokees were still slightly less "civilized" than Euro-Americans and still kept a few vestiges of "Indian" dress, that only indicated that Cherokees were making progress and still needed the benevolent protection of Euro-Americans.

At the same time, there were internal tensions regarding the extent of these changes. Cherokees struggled to make sense of these changes. While narratives of sartorial transformation present these changes as acculturation, in reality, their changes

[43] Samuel A. Worcester to Wm. S. Coodey, March 15, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830.

were part of the process of identity and represent the diversity that flourished as Cherokees began to change how they defined identity. These changes were indigenous, not forced on them by Euro-Americans. Cherokees knew this, and they began to believe they could express identity in diverse ways. It was this that allowed Cherokees to use dress as a weapon of resistance against Euro-American encroachment by telling the world their sartorial changes signaled acculturation, while simultaneously using these same changes in purposeful acts of identity.

Chapter 2: "While My Heart Is Straight": Changing Visions of Sartorial Identity

In 1817, a young Catherine Brown entered the Brainerd mission school. A hard working and precocious child, she soon became a star pupil. But before the end of the year, she became even more of a model student when she converted to Christianity. As proof of her piety, Catherine, who had come to school with "a profusion of ornaments in her ears," decided to give up her finery.[44] As one man put it, "Since she became religious, her trinkets have gradually disappeared, till only a single drop remains in each ear. On hearing that pious females have, in many instances, devoted their ornaments to the missionary cause, she has determined to devote hers also."[45] It was the donation of her jewelry that marked Catherine as a truly pious convert. The missionaries hailed this act as a complete sartorial transformation that proved a much deeper spiritual conversion, and they triumphantly spread Catherine's story. For Euro-Americans, this represented hope that assimilation and spiritual conversion were possible. Catherine, however, continued to wear a single pair of earrings.

As missionaries and other Euro-Americans pressured Cherokees to give up hunting, adopt agriculture, and wear "civilized" dress, they created narratives of sartorial change that presented two extremes. Cherokees were savages who dressed in a barbaric, heathen manner, but Euro-Americans could transform them into civilized beings who could dress in a modest and respectable manner. These Euro-Americans

[44] Rufus Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown: A Christian Indian, of the Cherokee Nation* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1832), 30.
[45] Jeremiah Evarts, quoted in Rufus Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown: A Christian Indian, of the Cherokee Nation* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1832), 32.

saw the sartorial changes Cherokees were making as examples of acculturation. The Cherokees, however, did not always share this viewpoint. As the deerskin trade declined and Cherokees began to adopt cotton agriculture and cloth production, Cherokees underwent a tremendous amount of change, but they did not ascribe the same meanings to this change that Euro-Americans did. Cherokees were not, however, fully united. They struggled to make sense of these changes, and the tensions over this issue caused great division. While Euro-Americans projected ideas of conversion and cultural transformation onto narratives of Cherokee sartorial change, these changes and the tensions surrounding them were part of the process of identity. As Cherokees confronted sartorial change, they constantly struggled to create sartorial meaning, and the resulting tensions created diversity and new understandings of sartorial identity that emphasized the abstract over the material.

In the eighteenth century, clothing carried specific meanings that were directly tied to identity. Historians have shown that clothing not only symbolized identity; it formed an integral part of identity. Clothing conferred tribal, clan, and intertribal identity, and the materiality of clothing was a very concrete part of identity. Thus, sartorial changes meant a change of identity. In *Slavery in Indian Country*, Christina Snyder discusses the importance of clothing, adornment, and hairstyles in communicating tribal identity amongst Southeastern Indians. Each tribe had a distinct way of dressing that was deeply symbolic of tribal identity. Snyder writes that adoption ceremonies of captured slaves in the southeastern region culminated in stripping the captives of their former clothing and replacing them with new clothes, symbolizing the idea that these captives were being stripped of their old identity and being adopted into

a new culture with a new identity.[46] Changing someone's clothes meant changing that person's identity.

Outward appearance symbolized unique tribal identities, and southern Indians recognized each other by the distinct markers found in clothing and hairstyles. One of the reasons for taking enemy scalps, for example, was that any southeastern American Indian could recognize tribal identity in the hairstyle of these scalps. Snyder writes, "A warrior's hairstyle reflected not personal taste, but political affiliation."[47] If outward appearance represented political identity, then the importance of maintaining distinct styles of dress was all the more important.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the material and form of dress symbolized identity. But dress is fluid, and the deerskin trade had a great impact on southeastern American Indian clothing. Southeastern Indians began to obtain more and more of their clothing through the deerskin trade as they exchanged skins for cloth. As Kathryn Holland Braund notes, "The commerce could have been termed the cloth trade as easily as the deerskin trade."[48] These changes did not mean that Cherokees no longer maintained tribal identity in dress, but it did mean that Cherokees had to make sense of these changes. By the 1790s, Cherokees were obtaining a great deal of the materials for dress through trade with Euro-Americans.

After the American Revolution and the subsequent end of hostilities between the United States and the Cherokees, the U.S. began its "civilizing policy," which aimed to

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[46] Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 102-105.
[47] Ibid., 17.
[48] Kathryn Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 122.

transform Native Americans from "savage" hunters into "civilized" farmers who wore "civilized" clothing. The U.S. government brought in people to teach Cherokees to grow cotton, spin thread, and weave cloth. As the deerskin trade declined, more and more individuals began taking up these pursuits, though they did so for different reasons than Euro-Americans believed. In making these changes, Cherokees drew on their own indigenous knowledge and culture.

In 1791, the Cherokees signed the Treaty of Holston, ceding a portion of their lands. The United States promised to give tools for farming, "That the Cherokee nation may be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters." The United States' official policy towards the Cherokees was to "civilize" them. If Cherokees led more sedentary lives and took up agriculture instead of hunting, they would gradually become more like Euro-Americans and would free up old hunting grounds for white settlers, or so the thinking went.[49]

Some Cherokees continued fighting the United States until 1794, and the U.S. did not begin to carry out the "civilizing plan" until the mid-1790s. In 1796, noting that previous white men had failed in this task, George Washington laid out a plan for civilizing the Cherokees. He warned the Cherokees that game was diminishing and that they would not be able to obtain clothing when it failed, unless they began to grow cotton, raise sheep, and learn to spin and weave. In order to accomplish this, Washington appointed Indian agents to oversee the task of teaching Cherokees these

[49] *A Treaty of Peace and Friendship Made and Concluded Between the President of the United States of America, on the Part and Behalf of the Said States, and the Undersigned Chiefs and Warriors of the Cherokee Nation of Indians, on the Part and Behalf of the Said Nation,* 1791, in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties,* ed. Charles Joseph Kappler (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), vol. II, 31.

new skills. He would make sure the Cherokees received the necessary instruction and tools, promising, "Your wives and daughters can soon learn to spin and weave." Washington took concrete steps to "civilize" the Cherokees, and an important part of this plan involved sartorial transformation.[50]

The response to Washington's civilizing plan was not quite what Euro-Americans had hoped. According to one account, when Indian Agent Silas Dinsmoor tried to persuade the Cherokees to abandon hunting and learn to spin and weave like white Americans, his ideas met with universal laughter at the Council meeting. The Cherokees were convinced they "were created to pursue the chase," not Euro-American agriculture and cloth production. Since Dinsmoor failed to win the approval of the Council, he was forced to be content with persuading individuals to adopt the new techniques in hopes that others would soon follow.[51] The response to these new methods was diverse. Many believed that protecting their culture and their way of life meant continuing to hunt rather than growing cotton and manufacturing cloth. At the beginning of this campaign for cotton agriculture, these changes often happened on an individual basis, and they were certainly not automatic. While many rejected the changes outright, others began to respond eagerly. In 1803 Daniel Ross noted, "At first the Indians could not bear the idea of planting cotton, spinning, [and] weaving &c, tho [sic] they now see the utility of the measure."[52] Cherokees struggled over what changes

[50] George Washington, "Talk of the President of the United States to his Beloved Men of the Cherokee Nation," August 29, 1796, reprinted in *The Cherokee Phoenix*, March 20, 1828.
[51] John Ridge to Albert Gallatin, February 27, 1826 in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 8:113, microfilm.
[52] Daniel Ross to Return J. Meigs, October 10, 1803, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.

to make and what these changes meant. Behind the rapid changes was an underlying tension that Euro-Americans did not always see.

Even though Cherokees did begin to plant cotton and weave cloth, they did not give up hunting so easily. In 1801, U.S. Indian Agent Return J. Meigs noted that the Cherokees "raise considerable quantities of cotton for their own use," so much that he could not "supply half the number who apply" for wheels, cards and looms. Yet he also noted that "The raising of Cattle and making Cloth are their principle objects—they are not fond of extending their tillage: but it must increase for their hunting is failing them." Cherokees were planting cotton and making cloth, but they were not ready to completely replace hunting with agriculture. The decreasing game did not make them "fond of extending their tillage," and growing cotton did not seem to interfere with hunting, despite the grand plans of U.S. policymakers.[53] This was because Cherokees were undergoing this transition as part of the process of identity. They were not, as some Euro-Americans hoped, replacing their "traditional" identity with a completely new one.

The important question centered around what these changes meant. Cherokees struggled among themselves to answer this question, while Euro-Americans projected their own meanings onto narratives of sartorial transformation. Like the Indian agents, missionaries also tried to "civilize" the Cherokees. Mission schools provide an intimate look at the tensions between Euro-Americans and Cherokees regarding sartorial identity. In these environments, Cherokee students closely interacted with Euro-American missionaries on a daily basis and faced many pressures to acculturate. Only a

[53] Return J. Meigs to Secretary of War, December 7, 1801, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.

small minority of Cherokees attended these mission schools, and their experiences were in many ways atypical, for they represent much more concentrated and intimate encounters between Cherokees and Euro-Americans. Mission schools provide a close look at Euro-American efforts to change Cherokee clothing, as well as the meaning Euro-Americans ascribed to these changes. [54]

Missionaries did not limit themselves to teaching the three Rs. An important part of their work was teaching Cherokees what to wear, how to wear it, and how to make it. Jedidiah Morse wrote that for the girls, the "plan of education" at the Dwight Mission School was "spinning, weaving, sewing, and the various kinds of labor in a well regulated family."[55] Learning to make clothing was the main focus of female education. One missionary wrote that "even some of the boys have learned to make up their own clothing."[56] Cherokees could not come to school without the proper clothing, and those who did not have it were given it. In the missionaries' eyes, Cherokees could not learn to become civilized without first trading their savage dress for the garments of Christian civilization.[57]

Missionaries used narratives of sartorial transformation as proof of conversion and acculturation, and no one represented a greater proof than Catherine Brown. The first Cherokee baptized convert of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign

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[54] For a detailed look at the tension between Cherokees and missionaries, see William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).
[55] Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs* …, (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822), 216
[56] John Gambold to Secretary of War November 13,1819 in Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs* …, 154.
[57] For examples of missionaries providing students with clothing or otherwise controlling student's clothing, see "Regulations of the Schools, adopted Oct. 1820" in Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs* …, 160; Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs* …, 158; Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown*, 45.

Missions, Brown represented the beginning of a series of conversions among the Cherokee.[58] Her virgin purity, the seemingly fervent nature of her faith, and her early death just four years after her conversion made her the subject of much admiration.[59] So much so, that the Board published a book detailing her life and conversion so that it would "augment the courage, animate the zeal, and invigorate the efforts of the friends of the missions, in their benevolent attempts to send the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations."[60] Brown became an icon for the potential of savage Cherokees and other heathens to acculturate and convert to Christianity.

Central to this story was Brown's complete transformation from a wild, savage Indian to a Christian with all the marks of civilization. Nothing demonstrated this better than Brown's dress. When Catherine Brown first arrived as an unconverted Cherokee, "She was vain, and excessively fond of dress, wearing a profusion of ornaments in her ears."[61] For the missionaries, Catherine's excessive ornamentation and love for clothing represented a heathen sort of vanity. As one missionary put it, "with all her gentleness and apparent modesty, she had a high opinion of herself, and was fond of displaying the clothing and ornaments, in which she was arrayed."[62] More than a mere representation of culture, clothing represented the soul's character. Catherine's uncivilized appearance was due to her heathen desires and lack of true modesty. Thus her change in clothing went deeper than a mere outward demonstration

[58] Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown,* 23; Theda Perdue, "Catherine Brown: Cherokee Convert to Christianity," in *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives,* ed. Theda Perdue (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)., 80-81.
[59] Perdue, "Catherine Brown: Cherokee Convert to Christianity."
[60] Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown,* iv.
[61] Ibid., 30.
[62] Ibid., 17.

of her inner transformation. In the eyes of Euro-Americans, it was part of the inner battle for her soul.

For Euro-Americans, the clothing Catherine wore after conversion demonstrated piety and presented a sharp contrast with her previously heathen ways. Describing her as "modest," Lydia Sigourney, the famous poet who later got involved in the effort to oppose Removal, wrote, "And now no more the gaiety she seeks/ Of proud apparel; ornaments of gold/ She gladly barters for the plain attire/ Of meek and lowly spirits …"[63] Catherine's former dress was vain, Sigourney wrote, but the converted pupil now wore modest and respectable clothing that demonstrated a humble heart. The young lady's sartorial transformation earned her favor and notice from many Euro-Americans. Catherine apparently did not receive a Bible until a visiting doctor who approved of the way she dressed gave her one.[64] It was not simply the purity of her belief, but the purity of her dress that gave her the right to own this sacred book. The missionaries may have successfully transformed Catherine's appearance through religion, and Catherine's piety may have occasioned her changes in dress, but it was her dress, not her piety, that earned her a Bible. Or perhaps the doctor did not see much of a distinction between the two. For these Euro-Americans, true Christians could not dress in an Indian manner. True conformation of a student's conversion lay not only in pious activities such as prayer, but also in outward appearance.

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[63] Lydia Sigourney," Traits of the Aborigines of America," 1822. In *Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catherine Brown, 1818-1823*, ed. Theresa Strouth Gaul (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 157. For a look at the efforts of Sigourney and other women to oppose Removal, see Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the1830s" *The Journal of American History*, 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 15-40.
[64] Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown*, 77.

If Catherine represented the potential for savages to convert and assimilate, the exaggeration of her transformation also reinforced the narrative that Cherokees were savages. The extent of Catherine's purity served as a contrast to other Cherokees. Hers was an unusual case of which missionaries could be proud, but its very difference delineated the supposedly extreme barbarity and heathenism of the Cherokees. One of the characters in an 1819 play about Catherine Brown says, "How vain that young creature appears. If I did not believe there was a Supreme ruler of the universe who has the hearts of all men in his hands … I should have no hope, that she would ever love anything but Indian finery."[65] Only the work of Providence could enact such an unusual miracle. In the eyes of many Euro-Americans, Cherokees were so vain and savage that any change was surprising. In reality, the missionaries exaggerated the extent of Catherine's cultural and sartorial transformation. They said nothing about the fact that the seventeen-year-old was probably already wearing dresses or skirts and blouses like most Cherokee women when she came to the school.[66] The only specific proof of her transformation consisted of a reduction in the amount of jewelry she wore, but as this does not seem very dramatic, the missionaries highly exaggerated the extent

[65] *Catherine Brown, a Converted Cherokee: A Missionary Drama Founded upon Fact* (New Haven: S. Converse Printer, 1819) in *Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catherine Brown, 1818-1823*, ed. Theresa Strouth Gaul (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 132.

[66] In the 1770s, William Bartram described women's dress as consisting of leggings, a wraparound cloth skirt, and "a little short waistcoat, usually made of calico, printed linen, or fine cloth, decorated with lace, beads, &c." He distinguished these "waistcoats" from the type of shirts worn by Europeans. William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, ed. Mark Van Doren (Macy-Masius, 1928), 395. Women gradually began wearing long dresses on a regular basis. For example, in 1812, Meigs mentioned women owning "fine muslin dresses." Return Meigs to William Eustice, Highwasee Garrison, March 19, 1812, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208. In 1830, Samuel Worcester wrote, "I have seen, I believe, only one Cherokee woman, and she an aged woman, away from her home, who was not clothed in at least a decent long gown." Samuel A. Worcester to William S. Coodey, April 15, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830.

of her transformation in order to prove that she was an utter savage who had suddenly been made into a respectable Christian.

The illustrations in the 1832 edition of the *Memoir of Catherine Brown* reinforce the rhetoric surrounding Catherine Brown's exaggerated sartorial transformation. The frontispiece puts Catherine in a wild and romantic scene. She is standing in the forest underneath a tree, watching two deer running through a clearing. The description reads, "Catherine, as a native Indian girl," but viewers would get the idea that this is before her conversion by looking at her bare feet and legs, her unpinned hair blowing in the wind, and a rather vague-looking rag falling off her back, revealing a scrawny frame. A bracelet and necklace complete her dress. Needless to say, this depiction is highly inaccurate, but it offers a glimpse into Euro-American views of Indian dress.[67] The artist depicted Catherine's garment as ragged, makeshift, and unconcernedly careless, but on the other hand, her jewelry also suggests an attempt at ornamentation. Many Euro-Americans saw any such ornamentation on American Indians as gaudy, heathenish, vain, and cheap rather than a way of offsetting beauty as it was amongst fashionable white people. Wearing jewelry with animal skin rags seemed ridiculous and out of place. The clothes American Indians like Catherine wore hardly deserved the respectable title of clothing, and any jewelry or other such ornamentation represented vanity. In this manner, Euro-Americans depicted Indian clothing as simultaneously ragged and gaudy.[68]

[67] See previous note.
[68] *Catherine Brown* in Rufus Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown: A Christian Indian, of the Cherokee Nation* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1832).

And yet there was still something nostalgic, perhaps even romantic about it. While many Euro-Americans criticized Indian clothing, there was a movement toward romanticizing the "state of nature" supposedly occupied by American Indians. This romanticizing was on the surface sympathetic, but it too was a way of arguing for Cherokee inferiority. The engraving reveals Catherine in a tranquil landscape, seemingly at one with nature. After all, she is walking barefoot, flowers in hand, wearing what is probably animal skins as she gazes ahead with her back to the viewer. This scene encourages viewers to long for such harmony from a safe distance. But it also makes viewers aware that such a state of nature entails wearing rags and dealing with hardships. When taken in the context of the text, it is apparent that such a scene was in fact not desirable after all. Catherine's conversion was a good and necessary occurrence, and her life changed for the better when she exchanged her Cherokee rags for more civilized attire. In fact, her position in the dark forest, with an eye on the meadow, foreshadows her turn toward "civilization."[69]

Brown's transition is emphasized in a later illustration, with Catherine once again in the forest, though this time she is dressed head to toe in Euro-American clothing. Her long billowy dress reaches to the ground, just barely revealing a daintily shod foot, and her straw hat covers her pinned-up hair. Her clothing is simple but elegant, revealing a modest and pious nature, but also a beautiful maidenly character. Instead of carelessly looking on as the young Catherine had in the previous illustration, this woman marches forward, knee bent in walking, and body angled forward at an almost unnatural degree. She is no longer part of nature, wearing rags and carrying

[69] Ibid.

vegetation in her hand. She is now charging through nature, dressed in a way that gives a marked contrast to her surroundings, with a mouth wide open in appreciation of nature, rather than passively being one with all that exists around her.[70]

As Catherine's fame spread, an anonymous woman wrote *Catherine Brown, the Converted Cherokee* an 1819 play intended to celebrate the convert. In addition to Catherine's own sartorial transformation, this piece is filled with anecdotes about Cherokee dress. Like many other Euro-Americans, the author interpreted the generational changes Cherokees were making as the younger generation's desire to accept Euro-American civilization and copy their white brethren. In one scene, two mothers come to take away their children because they were not given proper clothing. "Loory," one of the mothers, says, "Boys, you must go home; your fathers took you away, before we fixed you fine. You come here without clothes. They give you them clothes, the missionaries did; but there is no wampum on them." The heathen mothers could not stand the plain clothing supplied by the missionaries. For the writer, wampum represented vain, heathen decoration. These pagan mothers were not satisfied by the respectable charity offered to their children and insisted on adding what they believed to be "fine" additions to the clothing. One of the missionaries calls it "a pity." For him, Cherokee clothing was getting in the way of education and conversion. The children are also devastated, and they "*hang their heads and go out very sober*." They want neither the Indian style clothing nor a trip back home. The boys reluctantly leave, but they soon return with joy after having cried to get their way. In this case, the mothers hang on to the old style of Indian clothing, and the old Indian ways, while the

[70] Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown,* 117.

children wish to wear proper Euro-American clothing and become educated and Christianized. The children demonstrate the missionaries' success, but the mothers present sartorial difficulties that stand in the way of mission work. There is hope in the handful of children at the school, but everyone outside its walls insists on clinging to heathen dress and heathen ways. Here, the clothing represents two opposite lifestyles that could never mix. While this scene depicts some of the resistance missionaries often encountered, it sanitizes the complexity surrounding sartorial changes.[71]

In the same scene, benevolent ladies from the North donate clothing to "our little ragged Indian children," and the response is rapturous. One girl describes the scene thus: "Some are jumping for joy—some are laughing, and some are almost crying, they are so pleased."[72] The children long so much for good, proper clothing that they jump up and down and shriek with laughter. The "ragged Indian children" rely on white benevolence for proper clothing and are extremely grateful for it. In contrast, the two mothers who had come for their children display a laughable ignorance of Euro-American textiles. "Loory" calls the curtains "a fine blanket," and "Mammoo" replies, "How fine that blanket would look on our shoulders."[73] These Cherokees cannot tell the difference between curtains and clothes. They admire Euro-American textiles, but they do not know how to use them properly. For the playwright, the use of cloth is not enough to prove "civilization." A complete transformation is necessary. While the younger generation embraces newer styles, the mothers cannot think beyond the older style of wearing blankets. The author viewed what was in reality a generational style

[71] *Catherine Brown, a Converted Cherokee,* 131-132.
[72] Ibid., 133.
[73] Ibid., 132.

change with multiple layers of meaning as a sartorial revolution that represented complete transformation through religious conversion and education. For her, there were only two extremes: a heathen vanity that was ridiculous in its utter ignorance, and a pious longing for civilized clothing. And the few who embrace the latter show a complete reliance on Euro-American benevolence, as seen by their reaction to the donated clothing. The contrast between the two extremes shows just how unusual the children's piety is. The few Cherokees who do change undergo a complete transformation, while the rest of the Cherokees remain ignorant savages.

Missionaries often emphasized their role in this supposed transformation. At Brainerd, Cherokees were "in considerable part clothed, at the expense of the establishment."[74] This pointed to the charitable aspects of missionary work and underlined the central role redressing played in missionary narratives. But it is not as if these children were destitute of clothing. Cherokees were generally well-provided with their own clothing, but it was often not the sort of dress that missionaries would deem proper. Missionaries had to establish the fact that Cherokees dressed in a heathenish way. Cherokee students were supposedly so savagely dressed that the missionaries had to provide clothing for them. Missionaries vaguely described these Cherokees as having a wild or savage appearance. According to one account, when a young man named John Arch first came to school, "his appearance was so wild and forbidding, that the missionaries hesitated to receive him."[75] In order to show Americans back home that their efforts were worthy, the missionaries had to demonstrate both progress and

[74] "Official Report of the Secretary of the American Board, to the Secretary of War," November 3, 1819, in Jedidiah Morse, A report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs …, (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822), 163.
[75] Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown,* 45.

need. Thus, by making sure they mentioned in letters and publications the fact that the missionaries supplied clothing to the students, they sent the message that these Cherokees were naked and destitute, or at least heathens who dressed in a pagan manner. And by including the change in appearance and dress of Cherokee converts in their numerous publications, missionaries showed that they were making progress.

The wilder a student's appearance, the greater the triumph of transforming the "savage" into a pious convert. It is no surprise, therefore, that John Arch became a star student and went on to conduct evangelical work alongside the missionaries. If this pupil had been dressed in a similar manner as other white young men, his story would have been far less evocative. When Arch came to school, he traded his gun not for a Bible, but for clothes.[76] Before he learned about the ways of God, he had to learn the ways of "civilized" dress. In some ways, this reclothing was not much different than the ceremonial reclothing at captive adoption ceremonies. In order to be accepted into the school, the students first had to change their outward appearance. This outward transformation signified the beginning of an inward change. As the Euro-American missionaries saw it, these students were leaving their former "savage" life to accept what "civilization" had to offer.

In reality, these missionaries often had to work hard to make sure their pupils did not slip back into their heathen ways and start wearing forbidden attire. Catherine Brown may have represented a triumph for the missionaries, but it was the very unusual nature of her story that allowed the Moravians to use her as an icon. At the other end of the spectrum was Robin Vann, the son of prominent Cherokee plantation owner James

[76] Ibid.

Vann. When Robin sneaked out of the Springplace mission school to stay the night with family, he came back with a white feather proudly displayed on his head. The missionaries promptly snatched away the "heathen finery," giving him a sound lecture on proper dress. The Moravians associated the use of feathers with exoticism, immodesty, and heathenism. This stance did not endear them to the Cherokees. When the boy met with such a negative reaction to his feather, "he was insulted and refused to come into [the] house." For the Moravians, the appearance of this feather in the boy's attire represented a return to heathen ways, and they worked hard to keep such occurrences from happening. But this was not easy, for Cherokees did not always want to follow these constraining rules. The feather was an important part of Robin's culture, and he was not ready to give that up.[77]

But this resistance was not simply a matter of a heroic, traditional Cherokee boy fighting against Euro-American oppression. This type of narrative has dominated histories of the Cherokee people. Scholars often perpetuate such narratives and use them to tell stories of Cherokees resisting (or accepting) Euro-American culture. William McLoughlin emphasizes the struggle between Euro-Americans and Cherokees and writes that Cherokee students who accepted what missionaries taught them "had to reject their identity."[78] But while Euro-American efforts to change the Cherokees' sartorial system undoubtedly caused much tension, Cherokees focused much of their resistance against each other as they struggled over sartorial change.

[77] Anna Rosina Gambold, June 24, 1817, Rowena McLinton, ed., *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 2:166.
[78] McLoughlin, Cherokees and Missionaries, 8.

The feather incident was not the only time Robin's temper flared over a dispute about clothing. Robin's mother knitted him a pair of stockings only to find they were too small. The boy must have disliked the prospect of wearing such items, for when his mother tried to take them back so she could remake them into a pair he could wear, Robin "tore the stockings out of her hand" and ran away. When one of the missionaries took the stockings back, Robin "tore into two parts a neck scarf his mother had given him and hid it so that she could not demand it from him." It seemed the mother had more authority over her son's clothing than the missionaries did, and Robin's actions were against his mother, not the missionaries. Robin had strong views about dress, and he did everything he could to avoid wearing too many accoutrements of Euro-American dress. When he lost the battle over the stockings, the only thing he could think of was to destroy some other vestige of Euro-American fashion, so he ripped apart his neck scarf. Robin was so furious that "he sprang with frenzy into the yard and announced finally to his mother that if she wanted to lay her hand on him, he would *fight* her." He would not let anyone, even his mother, stand in his way. This violent reaction to a seemingly simple matter of stockings and neck scarfs demonstrates the importance attached to dress and the resulting tensions and disagreement among Cherokees.[79]

Robin's brother George also got in trouble over clothing. When George left school he went so far as to sell his clothing, including "a new hat." Since turbans, not hats, were the fashion among Cherokees, the emphasis on the hat is not surprising.[80] George was apparently not enthralled with this newer fashion. His mother retrieved the

[79] Anna Rosina Gambold, May 29, 1817, Rowena McLinton, ed., *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 2:163.
[80] For a discussion of the turban, see p. 77-78 of the next chapter.

items of clothing, telling the missionaries that previously "he had been a very *good* boy" but recently "had become completely bad!" "Good" boys wore hats and took care of their clothing, while "bad" boys recklessly disposed of it. The mother wanted her sons to wear stockings, neck scarfs, and hats, and to her, rebellion against these fashions was deplorable. Or at least that is what she told the missionaries. This familial tension over dress demonstrates complicated struggles among Cherokees and the outside world.[81]

This tension was not a simple matter of Cherokees resisting or accepting Euro-American influence. While Robin's and George's actions represent resistance, much of the resistance was directed against their mother. Robin wanted to fight his mother, not the missionaries, and he tore up items of clothing that she, not white people, had given him. These were not simply forced on him by the Euro-Americans. Robin did get angry when the missionaries took away his feather, but such direct uses of force were unusual in Cherokee-white relations. Similarly, George did not sell his clothing until after he left school. A great deal of the tension in these stories was concentrated between a Cherokee mother and her sons, not simply between the Cherokees and the missionaries. The missionaries certainly had their own agenda, but this Cherokee mother was voluntarily using the mission school to her own advantage. She was the one who placed her children in school and gave them stockings and neck scarfs to wear. And it was she, not the missionaries, who complained of George's "bad" behavior. Robin and George were rebelling against the new fashions that other Cherokees were voluntarily adopting. The greatest source of tension was not between Euro-Americans

[81] Anna Rosina Gambold, November 29, 1818, Rowena McLinton, ed., *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 2:252.

and Cherokees, but among Cherokees themselves. Cherokees struggled among themselves over sartorial changes and what they meant, and while these struggles cannot be separated from the context of Euro-American relations, much of the tension was internal.

Cherokees created their own understanding of these new sartorial practices. They found their own meanings that often differed from that of the missionaries, and they used these changes for their own benefit as part of the process of identity. Though some Cherokee pupils may have been the object of white benevolence, the girls at one mission school turned this around and developed their own benevolent society. And of course, it involved making and selling clothing for the benefit of heathens. At first, the girls decided to use the money for the benefit of the Cherokees at Dwight Mission in Arkansas, but they soon switched to provide for the Osage. As one young lady put it, "The Bible tells us to do good to our enemies, and I believe the Osages are the greatest enemies the Cherokees have."[82] This act of benevolence was a way of demonstrating superiority. These girls were making the statement that the Cherokees in Arkansas were not heathen and had no need for charity. But the enemies of the Cherokees did. They needed to hear the gospel and become civilized. By showing benevolence to the Osage, the Cherokees may have been trying to demonstrate superiority over their enemies.[83]

Cherokee girls established a similar society at the Brainerd mission. When the girls first created their society, they sewed in their free time and were paid by the mission board. But one of the missionaries chided their efforts and told them how

[82] Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown*, 65.
[83] For a look at relations between the Osages and the Cherokees, especially regarding the notion of relative "civilization," see Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 217-226.

"charitable societies in civilized countries" raised money on their own for the benefit of the less fortunate. Little Nancy Reece, mortified by such a lecture, decided she too wanted to become more benevolent, so the girls set about sewing and mending for other Cherokee women and gave the profit to the missionary society. But their efforts also had another purpose: one of the missionaries promised to send some of their items up north to show that these Cherokees were becoming educated and civilized. Their little society showed reform-minded Euro-Americans that Cherokees, who previously were in desperate need of Christianity and "civilization," were now on a civilizing mission themselves, and were thus equal to their white brethren.[84]

These societies were not always associated with mission schools. The Cherokee Female Society for Doing Good provides one example, and it raised money for a library by selling various textiles. The secretary boasted, "Since the society began its operations, 20 pairs of socks, 9 yards of cloth, and 8 quilts have been made for its use." Donating clothing and other textiles for benevolent purposes was a mark of respectability and gentility. The very existence of these societies demonstrated to the world that the Cherokee Nation was developed, moral, and in a superior civilized state.[85]

These Cherokee women made very good use of the garments and cloth they produced. The significance of their efforts went far beyond the number of books they were able to purchase or the amount of money they raised. The benevolent use of their textiles was a way of demonstrating the extent of their civilization and thus, their right

[84] Nancy Reece to David Green, in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 8:25-26, microfilm.
[85] "Report of a Cherokee Society," *Cherokee Phoenix*, December 31, 1831.

to remain a nation on their own land. These women were genteel enough to have time on their hands to devote to good works, and they were respectable and civilized enough not only to know how to make their own clothing and textiles, but to have excess and donate it for the "improvement" of society. These benevolent societies showed the world that the Cherokees had a highly civilized nation full of women anxious to use their sewing skills to improve society, and Cherokee women involved in these organizations appeared eager to tell Euro-Americans about them. The Cherokee Female Society for Doing Good voted to send the report of their society that appeared in the *Cherokee Phoenix* to a woman in Philadelphia, and Nancy Reece wrote to multiple Euro-Americans about the society she had joined. In one letter she wrote, "We are trying to make some things as the Northern ladies do in their societies." By thus describing her society, Reece was sending the message that Cherokee women were doing the same benevolent actions that Euro-American women in the North were doing.[86]

Cherokees used sartorial changes for their own purposes. Despite the common narrative put forward by many missionaries, Euro-Americans could not completely transform Cherokees, even in the strictest mission schools. One girl at the Springplace

[86] "Report of a Cherokee Society," *Cherokee Phoenix*, December 31, 1831; Nancy Reece to Thankful Holton, May 14, 1829 in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 8:29, microfilm. See, also Reece to Green; Nancy Reece to Rev'd Fayette Shepherd, December 25, 1828 in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 8:22, microfilm. Some directly used these societies in arguments against Removal. For example, an 1830 editorial in the *Cherokee Phoenix* states, "Many of the people of the United States, who think with Mr. Forsyth that the Cherokee are *poor devils*, may be surprised to learn that among them are several societies for the spread of religion and morality…. They have Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, Sunday School Societies, Benevolent Societies, Book Societies and Temperance Societies." "Mr Forsyth" was a U.S. Congressman who argued for Removal. The author of this editorial was using the presence of societies such as the women's benevolent societies as an argument against Removal. *Cherokee Phoenix*, October 8, 1830.

mission, for example, created a beaded leather purse that the missionaries apparently allowed her to keep.[87] And even the star pupil Catherine Brown kept one last pair of earrings, which the missionaries seemed to accept. While her decision to donate her jewelry was an act of piety and symbol of transformation, continuing to wear one pair of earrings showed that she was not giving up her culture. For Catherine, who had perhaps changed more than any of the other pupils, this was part of the process of identity, not a simple choice between two extremes of either resistance or assimilation. Jeremiah Evarts, the famous writer who spoke often of the "progress" and "civilization" of the Cherokees and other tribes, was satisfied with the results, and one author cast Catherine's decision to keep the pair of earrings as an almost pious act of remembering a friend.[88]

In practice, the missionaries seemed to understand that their students would not give up every vestige of Cherokee culture. In fact, missionaries occasionally accommodated their students in surprising ways. In an 1807 letter to a fellow minister, Moravian missionary John Gambold listed out the clothing made and distributed to various people within the Springplace mission. While Br. Byhan received a pair of trousers, one of the other missionaries bought some cloth at her own expense in order to make "a pair of leggings for our good little Johnny," a Cherokee pupil. This was intended to be a Christmas present for the "very poor but … right sweet and faithful child." Johnny's goodness earned him the reward of a personal gift, but this was not

[87] Martha Berry, "The Rise, Loss, and Revival of Traditional Cherokee Beadwork," in Duncan, Barbra R., Susan C. Power and Martha Berry, *Beadwork Storyteller: A Visual Language.* Cherokee Heritage Press, 2008, 27.
[88] Jeremiah Evarts, quoted in Rufus Anderson, *Memoir of Catherine Brown: A Christian Indian, of the Cherokee Nation* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1832), 32; *Catherine Brown, a Converted Cherokee*, 136.

something meant to transform his sartorial identity. This missionary gave the boy something that fit within this identity system, knowing how strong it was. Leggings were an important part of Cherokee sartorial identity, and Euro-Americans had a hard time getting Cherokees to adopt breeches.[89]

In fact, Euro-Americans were so far removed from being able to erase this fashion that they were sometimes forced to adopt it. In discussing the state of the Cherokees around the beginning of the century, Elias Boudinot told the readers of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, "In those days of ignorance and heathenism, prejudices against the customs of the whites were inveterate, so much so that white men, who came among the Cherokees, had to throw away their costume and adopt the leggings." Though he put this in the context of "ignorance and heathenism," he nevertheless reversed the traditional narrative of sartorial transformation. Instead of the Cherokees transforming their clothing, the Cherokee sartorial system held so much power that white people were forced to yield to it, however "dark and gloomy" this may have been.[90] While Euro-Americans were busy spreading stories of Cherokee sartorial transformation, they hid the fact that they had to undergo their own transformations. The Cherokees' sartorial system was so strong that in many cases Euro-Americans who came into their midst were forced to adopt it, or at least satisfy many of the requirements.

While many Euro-Americans endeavored to portray Cherokee sartorial change as evidence of acculturation, these changes were indigenous and resulted from Cherokees struggling to work out their own understandings of dress. The generational

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[89] [John Gambold] to Revd. Christn. Lewis Benzein, January 3, 1807 in *Records of the Moravians Among the Cherokees: The Anna Rosina Years, Part 1 Success in School and Mission*. Volume 3. C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck, eds. (Tahlequah: Cherokee National Press, 2011), 996.
[90] *Cherokee Phoenix*, January 21, 1829.

changes were not simply a result of missionaries and Indian agents attempting to force Cherokees onto a path of "civilization." When Cherokees used leggings as an important symbol of identity, Euro-American pressure made no difference. In fact, Cherokees succeeded in pressuring Euro-Americans to adapt. The gradual incorporation of breeches and the accompanying tensions were part of an indigenous generational change that was part of the process of identity. For a time, leggings served as an important distinction between Euro-American and Cherokee dress. Many Cherokees made the switch from buckskin leggings to cloth leggings, but they refused to wear breeches. Around the turn of the century, François André Michaux, a traveler in the region, reported that that though the Cherokees sometimes wore Euro-American hats and waistcoats, they never wore breeches.[91] Decades later, J. P. Evans wrote, "Coarse homespun pantaloons are the most common; but some old men disdain their use and wear deer-skin leggings."[92] It was hard for the older generation to adopt breeches. While the younger generation began to make the newer style, many older men were proud of their leggings and refused to give them up.

These generational differences cannot be separated from Euro-American contact, but much of the tension was a result of Cherokees disagreeing among themselves. In 1801, the U.S. gave the Cherokees items such as fine muslin, cambric, lace, morocco shoes, silk stockings, and ostrich feathers as part of the annuity. These were all high quality items, and the unfinished goods could be used to create some of

[91] François André Michaux, *Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains, in the States of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessea, and Back to Charleston, by the Upper Caroline . . . Undertaken, in the Year 1802*, in *Travels West of the Alleghanies*, vol. 3 of *Early Western Travels 1748-1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 264.
[92] J. P. Evans, *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the Cherokees and the Government*, 6:206.

the newer Cherokee styles. For example, ostrich feathers could be added to turbans and fine muslin could be made into women's dresses. Other items, however, such as the silk stockings and morocco shoes had very much of a Euro-American flair. U.S. Indian Agent Return J. Meigs, detecting a generational difference, wrote, "These fine things were pleasing enough to their young people. But not of substantial use; & the old chiefs wish that blankets, strouds, & coating may be sent in preference to such articles."[93] The materials the older generation desired certainly were more practical and had a greater variety of uses, but in some ways they also represent older styles. For example, instead of muslin dresses, Cherokees could make knee-length stroud skirts. Instead of shoes and stockings, Cherokees could make stroud leggings. The older and younger generations disagreed over changing styles of dress, and it was this that created so much conflict. The U.S. government may have had its reasons for sending the "fine things," but the Indian agent paid attention to the Cherokees' wishes. The main source of tension was not Euro-American pressure, but disagreement among the Cherokees.

Despite the many pressures they faced from outside sources, Cherokees ultimately had to make their own sartorial decisions. Missionaries and other Euro-Americans had long seen Cherokees' sartorial change as a matter of acculturation or "progress" toward "civilization" and perhaps Christianity. They attempted to impose their view of change on the Cherokees, and this created a source of tension between Euro-American and Cherokee sartorial systems, but the internal tensions among Cherokees were often far greater, even if relations with Euro-Americans were an important source of the divisions. Cherokees were not simply fighting against imposed

[93] Return J. Meigs to the Secretary of War, March 31, 1802, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.

meaning and an imposed sartorial system; as they continued to create their own sartorial culture, they struggled over what these changes meant. Some feared that these changes represented acculturation, while others firmly supported the newer styles, finding diverse ways of understanding them. The debate over dress was always present throughout the Removal era, but these tensions erupted in the Cherokee Revival Movement of 1811-1812.[94]

At a traditional dance at Oostenali, a man named Charles stood up and told his fellow Cherokees that he had a message from the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit was angry with the Cherokees for wearing the white man's clothes and adopting the white man's ways. For this reason, the game had largely disappeared and the Great Spirit had turned his back on the people. If the Cherokees once again took up their ancient customs, they would enjoy peace and prosperity without white men around to harass them. Charles told the Cherokees to "cut short their frocks, and dress as becomes Indians and warriors. They must discard all the fashions of the whites . . . and all the arts learned from the white people." This called for a complete purge of clothing. The Cherokees could not wear anything that reflected Euro-American influence, nor could they make clothes the way the white people taught them. Charles promised death to those who refused to believe his message. In order to live, the Cherokees needed to

[94] Historians have traditionally called this the Cherokee Ghost Dance Movement. William McLoughlin creates a broad definition of a "ghost dance movement" to include the Cherokee movement, but Michelene E. Pesantubbee labels the movement as a "revitalization movement" arguing that the term "ghost dance" has too narrow a definition to fit the Cherokee movement. William G. McLoughlin, "Ghost Dance Movements: Some Thoughts on Definition Based on Cherokee History," *Ethnohistory* 37, no. 1 (Winter, 1990): 25-44 ; Michelene E. Pesantubbee, "When the Earth Shakes: The Cherokee Prophecies of 1811-12," *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (Summer, 1993): 301-317.

throw away all their Euro-American-style clothes and return to a more traditional style of dress.[95]

Most Cherokees did not want to assimilate. When Charles suggested that these changes meant acculturation, Cherokees were ready to fight it. Not everyone wanted the rapid changes that were taking place, and the Revival Movement brought to the surface profound misgivings. Charles' message had a great effect on the Cherokees, who immediately shouted their agreement. Tensions over these changes had always been strong, so when Charles told the Cherokees to cast aside their Euro-American clothes, many were ready to do so.[96]

There was one man, however, who did not agree with these sentiments. Major Ridge was a prominent man who owned a plantation and dressed in Euro-American-style clothing (see Figure 1). He was, in many ways, a Cherokee dandy. Ridge listened politely while Charles spoke, but when the people began to voice their agreement, Ridge stood up in defiance. Afraid that such a movement would lead to war with the United States, Ridge cautioned the people to reject Charles' message. The Cherokees had suffered for supporting the British during the American Revolution, and many, included Ridge, believed that supporting the newly-formed United States during the War of 1812 was the best strategy. Ridge believed that declaring war on Euro-American dress and material culture could be perceived as a way of declaring war against the United States, which was something he wished to avoid, if possible.

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[95] Thomas McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principle Chiefs, Embellished with One Hundred and Twenty Portraits, from the Indian Gallery in the Department of Washington*, (Philadelphia: J. T. Bowen, 1848-1850), 2:93-95.
[96] Ibid.

Clothing was an important diplomatic tool, and he worried that rejecting Euro-American dress in such a vociferous manner could have disastrous consequences. [97]

According to Thomas McKenney's account, Ridge barely escaped the meeting with his life. The prophecy stated that Ridge, as an unbeliever, would die. But he publically denounced the threat as absurd, saying: "Let the death come upon me. I offer to test this scheme of imposters!" At this, the Cherokees rose up in fury and attacked the man who dared to be so defiant. But apparently Ridge was not the only Cherokee who wanted to keep the newer styles of dress, for several men rallied to his side. The fight was so intense that one of Ridge's friends received a gaping wound, and indeed, Major Ridge himself only narrowly escaped. After quite some time, an aged and respected chief calmed the fury. Such, according to this account, were the extreme passions that haunted Cherokee clothing and acculturation.[98]

The Cherokees were not united on the issue of dress. This movement was a result of the struggle over the meaning of the changes Cherokees had made. Despite all the rhetoric about "progress" and "civilization," Cherokees had many reservations. These tensions created an intense division among the people. Charles claimed that when he had tried to deliver his prophecies to another group of Cherokees living in the mountains (an area that saw less agriculture and cotton production), they were so strongly set against his message that they beat him. If this is true, it demonstrates the complexity of the deep tension that split the Cherokee people. They were not united on the issue of sartorial change, nor was the division always obviously predictable. This movement appealed to Cherokees who had experienced some of these changes, not just

[97] Ibid.
[98]Ibid.

those who had been against Euro-American clothing all along. Charles' claim that the mountain people rejected his message demonstrates that regions that had undergone comparatively less change did not always foster resentment toward Euro-American clothing. Those who now rejected Euro-American-style clothing in such an open way were often the ones who had quietly gone along with the changes. A sense of unease about what was perhaps a rejection of cultural patrimony had been on their minds for quite some time. It only took a strong voice to confirm these doubts.[99]

In response to this and various other prophecies, Cherokees began to take concrete steps to carefully regulate their dress and return to an older style. Many Cherokees burned their Euro-American clothes, which to them were outward symbols of identity. Much of this was done in a public, ceremonious way, for this matter had to be aggressively addressed in a collective manner. Publically destroying such outward symbols of conformity represented an inward, as well as outward, purging. And what was a greater symbol of conformity than clothes? This war of dress was carried out with vengeance. Indian Agent Return J. Meigs reported, much to his sorrow, that "some of the females are mutilating their fine muslin dresses."[100] For the white American who worked so hard to "civilize" the Cherokees, watching women hacking away at their exquisite, beautiful gowns was not a pleasant experience. But these women were committed to retaining their Cherokee identity, thus, when the prophets

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[99] Ibid. William McLoughlin writes that the mountainous areas saw less change towards agriculture due to poor soil, less government assistance, and a greater aversion to acculturation. William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 68. McLoughlin also notes the diversity of participants in the Revival Movement in William G. McLoughlin, "The Cherokee Ghost Dance Movement of 1811-1813" in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861* (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 130.

[100] Return Meigs to William Eustice, Highwasee Garrison, March 19, 1812, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.

declared that doing so meant giving up their Euro-American-style clothes, they were quick to comply.

Not everyone participated in this movement, however. Like Major Ridge and his followers, many of those who had gone through a great many changes refused to give up what they had gained. Mother Vann, who often talked with the Moravian missionaries and eventually became a convert, thought the prophecies were absurd. She deplored the idea of throwing away her Euro-American clothes and she even offered to buy some of the discarded items to show others that she did not believe any of the "lies."[101] The Cherokee Revival Movement had ties to the old Cherokee religion, and this went against Christian beliefs. While the woman probably had many reasons for wanting to buy up the discarded items, her rejection of the movement and her acceptance of Euro-American-style clothing may very well have been a symbol of her growing interest in Christianity.

For many Cherokees, clothes were integral to identity. Clothing was such a major part of identity that Cherokees were buried with all the clothing they had possessed in life.[102] For the Cherokees, clothing was a part of themselves, an instantly recognizable symbol that showed others who they were. One of the prophecies warned the Cherokees to throw away their Euro-American-style clothes "so that God would not mistake them in the darkness." According to this prophecy, God would recognize a Cherokee as such by his or her clothes: "All the white people and also those Indians who had clothing or household items in the style of the white people would be carried

[101]Rowena McClinton, ed., *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 1:478-79.
[102] Ibid., 2:316.

away along with their livestock." Both white people and Cherokees who dressed like them would be destroyed. If the Cherokees adopted Euro-American dress, much of their identity would be lost. For many Cherokees, the materiality of clothing was more than a symbol of identity; it formed an integral part of identity.[103]

But for others, clothing was much more complicated. At one meeting, a Cherokee man threw his hat into the fire and told another young man to do the same. This man, however, refused, declaring, "it is no matter what cloaths [clothes] I wear while my heart is straight." For him, an inward, not outward, purging was important. He accepted a greater diversity of clothing because he believed this was compatible with being Cherokee. There were multiple ways to wear Cherokee identity, and what truly mattered went far beyond outward appearance. The young man made sure that everyone knew his refusal to burn his hat did not mean a rejection of Cherokee identity, but a belief that identity could be maintained in a variety of ways. His heart, after all, was "straight." For him, clothing was only a symbol of identity, and thus did not need to have such rigid boundaries. Clothing did not have to remain static in its materiality, for as long as the motivations for change and meanings behind it were good, then the newer styles did not necessarily represent a break from identity. While Ridge may have been attacked for rejecting the Revival Movement, Cherokees at this meeting seemed to accept the young man's refusal to burn his hat. Describing the man's actions, Meigs wrote, "This was sufficient to silence further importunity." It does not appear that the other Cherokees were visibly angry at this young man and his beliefs, even as they

[103] Ibid., 2:478-79.

continued to discard their Euro-American-style clothing. Tensions were high, but Cherokees accepted a certain amount of diversity.[104]

The young chief was not the only one to express a belief that sartorial change was not necessarily wrong. One young woman responded to the Revival Movement by prescribing a moral code. She told the Cherokees that discarding their clothing was not what really mattered. Instead of throwing away the outward symbol of clothing, she believed they should concentrate on the inward character. Rather than "throw away the habits of the white people … she told them that was nothing that they ought to become good people & leave off stealing horses & drinking whiskey instead of destroying their clothing." Being "good" and concentrating on behavior rather than the materiality of clothing was the important thing. For her, rejecting dress merely because it was similar to white fashion was paltry. Cherokees should concentrate on being "good people," and the rest would follow. Clothing was material, and destroying it would not change anything. Good behavior and a good heart was much more important.[105]

For many young Cherokees, clothing was only an outward symbol of identity. Its materiality was not as important as it was to many of the older generation. Many of the younger generation were not afraid that God would "mistake them in the darkness." For them, clothing was more material than spiritual. As a symbol, it was still important, but the inner identity was becoming less material. The material was only symbolic of a much deeper reality, and as long as the "heart [was] straight," Cherokees could allow changes. Refusing to destroy their clothing did not mean an acceptance of assimilation,

[104] Return Meigs to William Eustice, Highwasee Garrison, March 19, 1812, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.
[105] Ibid.

but a different idea of what sartorial change meant. It did not mean assimilation, because identity was not tied to an unchanging materiality. Clothing was symbolic of identity, and as long as it symbolized a Cherokee identity, the new generation could accept it.[106]

Euro-Americans interpreted this movement as a pagan outburst against civilization. Thomas McKenney described the movement as a "storm of fanaticism" and wrote that Charles' talk was "artfully framed to suit the prejudices of the Indians, and to inflame the latent discontent of such as were not fully enlisted in the work of reform."[107] McKenney believed this movement opposed civilization. Burning clothes was a superstitious effort against everything that Euro-Americans stood for. The Moravian missionaries believed that this was the work of the devil trying to deceive the Cherokees and keep them from following Christ. According to them, "This deceitful spirit does not mean the outer clothing, but rather the change in intention of the poor Cherokees. He wants to warn them against the teaching of the poor people."[108] The Moravians knew that there was much more at stake than the material aspect of clothing. They believed dress was merely the "outer" means of accomplishing a much deeper spiritual reality. For them, this was a movement to turn the Cherokees against Christianity and to reverse all the changes toward "civilization" the Cherokees had undergone.

Despite the fact that the Cherokee Revival Movement temporarily reversed a great deal of change, Agent Meigs believed that the movement would accelerate acculturation in the long term.[109] Though his perspective was somewhat biased and

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[106] Ibid.; McClinton, 2: 478-79.
[107] McKenney and Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, 2: 95.
[108] McClinton, 1:479.
[109] Meigs to Eustice.

exaggerated, it is true that in the long run, the movement did not stop the rapid growth of cotton and wool cloth production. But this was because Cherokees' shifted their understanding of what sartorial change meant, not because they converted to a Euro-American view of "progress" and "civilization."

In some ways, Cherokees began to emphasize the abstract over the material. The young man who said "it is no matter what cloaths I wear while my heart is straight" pronounced a viewpoint becoming increasingly common. [110] For this man, the clothes themselves were not as important as the abstract identity behind them. Even as the struggle over meaning continued, Cherokees allowed and sometimes even purposefully created these changes and the resultant diversity. Tensions surrounding clothing would always remain, but Cherokees could accept change and diversity as long as it fit within the identity process.

[110] Ibid.

Chapter 3: "In the Indian Stile": Cherokee Sartorial Innovation

After living with the Cherokees for two years, John Marrant, a free black, came home to find that no one recognized him. When he was adopted into the tribe, he was given Cherokee clothing, and it was this that marked him as a Cherokee. As he traveled back to South Carolina, he came across a family just sitting down to dinner. But they were so frightened that they ran away, so after devouring their dinner, John went in search of them. After many hours, and a prolonged fainting spell, he finally persuaded them to come back to the house, though it was two full days before they "became sociable." He explained this extraordinary behavior by a description of his clothing: "My dress was purely in the Indian stile, the skins of wild beasts composed my garments; my head was set out in the savage manner with a long pendant down my back, a sash round my middle, without breeches, and a tomahawk by my side." John's Cherokee clothing inspired fear and marked him as "savage." It was not his racial phenotype that engendered this fear and idea of savagery, but his clothing. So much so, that even his own friends and family did not recognize him. Marrant wrote, "The singularity of my dress drew every body's eyes upon me, yet none knew me." No one could look past his clothing to recognize who he really was, because clothing, more than anything else, was the ultimate marker of identity.[111]

For Cherokees and Euro-Americans alike, this had been true for some time. Clothing, not race, formed a seminal focus of communicating identity. But it is the perception of dress, not simply clothing itself, that forms society's way of seeing. John

[111] John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black, Taken Down from his own Relation* in *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836*, ed. Richard VanDerBeets (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1973), 193-196.

Marrant may have manipulated his identity by changing his dress, but as Cherokees continued to innovate in their clothing, some Euro-Americans began to adopt racialized views of dress. Identity could not simply be taken on and off with a change in clothing. In the previous decades, Euro-Americans focused on the differences between clothing itself and believed "civilizing" Cherokee dress could civilize the people, but in the early nineteenth century, especially the 1820s, Euro-Americans began to question this view.

This shift in Euro-American perception took place alongside changes in Cherokee clothing. The young man who refused to throw his hat in the fire, saying, "It is no matter what cloaths I wear while my heart is straight," announced a viewpoint increasingly common with the younger generation, but this statement is much more complicated than it appears on first glance.[112] For him and many other Cherokees, sartorial identity was not based on a static adherence to older forms of dress, but on a much more abstract, dynamic view that allowed material changes in clothing, as long as these changes were part of the identity process. Cherokees drew on indigenous practices in creating these changes, and thus, the abstract view of identity allowed for dynamic innovations in the material.

Cherokees continued to undergo many changes in dress, but they did so in an indigenous context. These changes were part of the identity process as Cherokees used them to construct a distinct sense of who they were. In the early nineteenth century, the changes in Cherokee clothing represent an innovative tradition, not acculturation or even selective adoption. Euro-Americans reacted to this change by beginning to adopt an increasingly complex and often racialized view of clothing. These two sartorial

[112] Return Meigs to William Eustice, Highwasee Garrison, March 19, 1812, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.

systems became even more oppositional, not because Cherokee and Euro-American clothing were polar opposites, but because these changes complicated the lines between the two cultures and created the need for new and antithetical beliefs about dress.

The changes that began in the late 1700s intensified in the early nineteenth century. The internal tensions exemplified in the Cherokee Revival Movement of 1811-1812 never fully went away, but the generational shift continued. Cherokees actively chose to make the transition to cotton textile production. As early as 1801, the Indian Agent reported that Cherokees were asking for more spinning wheels and cards than he could provide, and they continued to do so as they increased cotton agriculture. They did not, however, rely upon the United States to furnish all the tools of textile production. Cherokees constructed their own looms and spinning wheels and set to work making cloth. The constant requests for and increased domestic production of these tools demonstrates that cotton textile production was by no means forced upon them.[113] Cherokee women actively sought to cultivate cotton, and their decision to do so was not the result of white men coercing them into assimilation.

Cotton and wool cloth manufacture kept increasing in decades leading up to Removal. As the cotton industry grew, the American pattern of slavery began to make

[113] Return J. Meigs, January 1803, "Journal of Occurrences in the Cherokee Agency in 1802," in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs to Secretary of War, December 7, 1801, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs, 1801, "Journal of Occurrences &c relating to the Cherokee Agency," in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs to the Secretary of War, January 11, 1802, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs to Wm. H. Crawford, November 4, 1816, in the Penelope Allen Collection, Hoskins Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville, Tennessee; Charles Hicks to John C. Calhoon, in Jedidiah Morse, *A report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs …,* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822), 169.

its way into the nation.[114] Some families owned plantations, but the vast majority of Cherokees had smaller improvements.[115] Individual families planted cotton and made their own clothes from it. Some made quite a bit of money off selling their cotton, but most planted it for their own uses.[116] Between 1809 and 1825, the number of spinning wheels and looms in the nation increased by slightly over sixty percent. By the mid-1820s, there were enough spinning wheels in the nation for almost every family to own one.[117] In 1835, the average number of spinners per household was 1.51, and the average number of weavers per household was 0.92.[118] Close to 90% of all households had at least one spinner or weaver.[119]

Women were perhaps most affected by these changes. In Euro-American society, women did the spinning, weaving, and sewing for the family while men worked in the fields, but the Cherokees had always delegated most of the agricultural work to women. Thus women were generally in charge of the whole process of cloth production, from growing the cotton to weaving the cloth, and a great part of their everyday lives was spent in these pursuits. Colonel Meigs reported that the women

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[114] For a detailed look at slavery and the Cherokee Nation, see Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979).
[115] For a detailed look at one plantation, see Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
[116] John Ridge to Albert Gallatin, February 27, 1826 in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 8:104, microfilm; Hicks to Calhoun, 179.
[117] Elias Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites" in *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, ed. Theda Perdue (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 72; "Statistical Tables of the Several Districts Encompassing the Cherokee Nation," *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate,* June 18, 1828; William McLoughlin and Walter H. Conser, Jr., "The Cherokee Censuses of 1809 1835, and 1835," in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861*, edited by William McLoughlin (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 240, table 1-A.
[118] McLoughlin and Conser, "The Cherokee Censuses of 1809 1835, and 1835," 250, table 9.
[119] Ibid., table 6-B. McLoughlin and Conser separate households into "Families in Less Full Blood Communities" and "Families in More Full Blood Communities." According to these numbers, 89.6% of the former and 87.2% of the latter could either spin or weave.

spent most of their time "raising cotton, indigo, spinning, dyeing yarn and weaving and taking care of family household affairs."[120] Women undertook the greater portion of the work in manufacturing wool and cotton clothing, and they actively chose to make this transition.

This was not a transition into something European, for this was part of the process of identity and thus affirmed Cherokee culture. Cherokees were reaching into their culture, not away from it. While men had previously brought home the deerskins used to make clothing, women were the ones who traditionally made the clothing. Women already raised crops, so in some ways raising cotton or flax was simply another addition to their duties. Cherokee women already had considerable experience with weaving. In her study of basketweaving, Sarah Hill writes, "gender and labor interwove to create identity." [121] Like basketweaving, textile weaving, as a quotidian task specifically performed by women, was an essential part of women's gender identity. It made sense in Cherokee gender culture for women to be the ones to weave cloth, for weaving was part of Cherokee women's identity. Labor is an important part of the identity process, because action forms the backbone of constructing this continual process. If, as Alberto Melucci writes, collective identity is the "process of 'constructing' an action system," then these everyday actions of weaving are part of this process.[122] Learning to spin and weave on looms may have represented a very important

[120] R. J. Meigs, August 3, 1817, "Answers to Inquiries relating to the Cherokees," Penelope Allen Collection, box 1 file 91, Hoskins Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville, Tennessee.
[121] Sarah H. Hill, *Weaving New Worlds: Southeastern Cherokee Women and their Basketry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 66. Theda Perdue also notes "the centrality of task to the construction of gender," Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998),24.
[122] Alberto Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity" in *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 44.

and radical change towards "civilization" and away from "savagery" in the Euro-American perspective, but Cherokees fit these changes into their culture. Since Cherokees were already wearing cotton and wool cloth, it made sense for them to learn to make it.

Theda Perdue writes that this transition gave more power back to women. While women were involved in the deerskin trade, men were usually the ones who obtained skins through hunting, and thus they obtained cloth, clothing, and other items. Thus, when women began to raise their own cotton and produce their own cloth, they were taking back power that had diminished during the deerskin trade.[123] William McLoughlin goes even further by viewing men's reluctance to engage in cotton production as frustration over the loss of the power they had achieved in the deerskin trade. He writes, "The great difficulty now was that she, not he, was providing the clothing for the family while he could contribute almost nothing."[124] While these statements undermine the role women had played in the deerskin trade and the control they had over clothing throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is certainly true that men gave women control over cotton and cloth production because these tasks fit women's traditional gender role. Women embraced these developments because it fit their gender identity, not because they wanted to reject traditional culture.

While Cherokees saw these changes as being connected to indigenous practices, they knew Euro-Americans would never understand this. Cherokees framed the changes they made in terms of the civilized/savage binary, turning increasingly oppositional

[123] Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 115-134.
[124] William G. McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie, 1794-1810: New Roles for Red Men, Red Women, and Black Slaves," in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861* edited by William Mcloughlin (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 17.

Euro-American views of clothing to their advantage. According to one story, a chief who was fiercely opposed to Euro-American acculturation returned from a long hunting trip, only to find that his wife and daughters had learned to spin, weave, and manufacture cloth while he was away. The chief completely reversed his former opinion and realized that the new ways were better and more lucrative than the traditional occupation of hunting.[125] This however, was told in 1826 to a Euro-American audience who was beginning to believe that Cherokees were naturally averse to "civilization." Cherokees began adding stories of reluctant acculturation to the earlier discourse of paternalism in order to explain to Euro-Americans how a supposedly savage race could become "civilized."

In addition to adding reluctant acculturation to the narrative of progress, Cherokees controlled perceptions by appealing to Euro-American ideas of gender. Men did not want to take up agriculture because it belonged to women, but they framed this stance by telling Euro-Americans that women were the civilizers. By doing so, Cherokees framed gender as much more important than race. John Ridge wrote that "to the [f]emales we may always ascribe the honor of effecting the civilization of man."[126] Women across cultures and races were the civilizers of all societies, and could therefore transform any society regardless of race.

While Ridge used the story of the formerly antagonistic chief transformed by the actions of women to explain Cherokee progress in "civilization," it is still possible to uncover a deeper reality by going past the layers of meaning meant for a Euro-American audience. The truth underlying this story demonstrates more than a

[125] Ridge to Gallatin, 113-114.
[126] Ibid., 112.

reluctance to change or tension between the genders. The simple reality was that women, not men, held the decision power in agriculture and cloth production. It was not within Cherokee culture for men to interfere with women's activities. Thus, Silas Dinsmoor went to the wrong place when he turned to the Council to introduce Euro-American methods of weaving. He should have gone to the women. What Euro-American men saw as opposition and laziness on the part of men was actually the cultural norm of leaving agriculture and clothing production to women. In this light, the old chief's initial opposition and subsequent approval of growing cotton makes sense. The man was not about to grow cotton himself because doing so went against his identity, but he was pleased when his wife did so, because this feminine labor was quite productive and completely compatible with women's gender identity.[127]

Similarly, Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins made no progress in trying to persuade the men to adopt "civilization." Frustrated, he abandoned these efforts in favor of working with the women, and this tactic brought much greater success. Hawkins taught several women how to make thread and cloth from raw cotton, and many began to produce clothes using the materials they created. Hawkins believed it was his "soothing arts" and "kind treatment" that persuaded the gentler sex to adopt these new methods, but in reality, women had always been in charge of making clothing. These women were simply fulfilling their traditional gender roles, not advancing civilization amongst the stubborn and backward men.[128]

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[127] Ibid., 112-113.

[128] Samuel L. Mitchell, "The Progress of the Human Mind from Rudeness to Refinement: Exemplified in an Account of the Method Pursued by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, under the Authority of the Government of the United States, to Civilize Certain Tribes of Savages under their Territory," *The American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review*, 5, no 3 (September 1818), 359, microfilm.

But women did have great power over sartorial identity, and they used this power to influence men's clothing. In 1818, Samuel L. Mitchell related one way in which the young ladies gave men an incentive to adopt more "decent" attire. The women made themselves dresses according to Euro-American fashion and began to take up country dancing, but only the men who wore proper clothes could join the festivities. For the young men, this provided an incentive to change, and Mitchell believed it was instrumental in civilizing the Cherokees.[129] Though his interpretation of women's civilizing mission is biased, women drove many of the sartorial changes of this period.

By transferring their knowledge of textile production to cotton and wool materials, Cherokees were able to maintain control and pour out their identity into the clothing they themselves made. John Ridge wrote that though some Cherokees were beginning to consume imported fabrics and clothes such as silk, the Cherokees demonstrated a strong preference for domestically manufactured cloth.[130] Most accepted cotton and wool cloth, but only if it was Cherokee. It was not simply the material clothing was made from that was important, but how the clothing was made and who made it. This was not merely a patriotic act to support domestic manufacture. Controlling the manufacture of clothes meant controlling identity.

The backlash against perceived Euro-American influences began to focus more and more on differences between imported fabrics and cloth made by the Cherokees. When one young man left town without settling his accounts at the local store, the storeowner described him as "one of those Broad-cloth coat gentlemen" who often neglect settling their accounts. He warned the readers of the *Cherokee Phoenix* to

[129] Ibid., 362.
[130] Ridge to Gallatin, 105.

beware of such people, for though they might have dressed in fancy suits made of imported cloth, in reality they were only "swindlers."[131] Such stereotyping demonstrates the negative associations Cherokees had towards imported cloth and clothing. According to the storeowner, those who wore such items were condescending deceivers who wanted to gain at the expense of the Cherokees. Rather than being awed by the supposedly superior products Euro-Americans had to offer, the Cherokees viewed such items with suspicion and took pride in the cloth they themselves made.

Even the weave structure of Cherokee cloths was important. In a letter to John Calhoun, then Secretary of War, Charles Hicks wrote, "There are ten families within twenty or thirty miles of this place, who weave coverlets and double twilled cloth."[132] Double twilled cloth was quite complicated to make, and it required special looms and a good amount of skill. In Euro-American society, those who had these looms often made the cloth and coverlets for others in the community on a professional basis.[133] Thus, the specific mention of this particular kind of cloth showcased the skill and sophistication of the Cherokees. It also points to the popularity of this particular type of fabric and its importance to the Cherokees. Three Cherokee deerskin coats in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian are trimmed with red twill cloth.[134] John Ridge also mentioned twill, and one writer declared, "Their dress is

[131] Geo. M. Lavender, "Information Wanted," *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate*, October 28, 1829.
[132] Hicks to Calhoun, 168.
[133] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun* (New York: Alfred A, Knopf, 2001), 194-5.
[134] "Man's Coat," National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 050770.000; "Man's Coat/Jacket," National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 020353.000; "Man's Coat/Jacket," National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 021206.000. In the latter, some of the red cloth trimmings are plain weave, and some are twill weave.

principally made of Cotton cloth of a variety of texture and colors."[135] Since twill creates a variety of geometric textures, it is probable that some of these cloths the writer referred to were twills. With plain weave, stripes, plaid, and gingham are easy to produce, but any other patterns require either complex looms or prints. Twill weave, however, is characterized by diagonal lines, which can produce geometric patterns in the texture such as diamonds and herringbone.

Such patterns are common throughout Cherokee and southeastern Indian material culture. It is very easy to make certain types of geometric patterns in twilled cloth that resemble Cherokee doubleweave baskets and fingerweaving. Southeastern fingerweaving, which predates contact, often produces diagonal lines. For example, a late eighteenth-century southeastern fingerwoven sash in the collection of the University of Aberdeen showcases a common diamond pattern (see figure 2).[136] Other patterns, such as the chevron pattern, also use diagonals. Similar patterns could easily be produced using twill weaves. In addition, Cherokee doubleweave baskets are often twill woven, and make frequent use of diamonds and diagonals. Anyone familiar with creating these types of baskets would have seen similarities between twill cloth and twill baskets.

But perhaps most importantly, there is evidence to suggest that Cherokee twill cloth predates European Contact. Writing of Southeastern Indians, James Adair described an old method of weaving cloth from plant fiber. "When the coarse thread is prepared, they put it into a frame about six feet square, and instead of a shuttle, they

[135] Ridge to Gallatin, 105; "Cherokees: History, Habits, and Language," 14. Ayer MS 3041. Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago Illinois.
[136] "Finger-woven sash," University of Aberdeen, Human Culture Collection, ABDU 5511.

thrust through the thread with a long cane, having a large string through the web, which they shift at every second course of the thread."[137] This seems to be describing a type of twill weave. Thus it comes as no surprise that Cherokees specifically mentioned weaving twill cloth. If James Adair was aware of this practice when he travelled through the southeast during the mid-eighteenth century, then the switch to weaving cotton and wool cloth was merely a continuation of traditional weaving practices.

Women were reaching back to older practices of weaving that had continued to influence Cherokee dress. Indigenous weaving technologies persisted long after Euro-Americans introduced cotton and wool cloth. These technologies seem to have had an impact on how Cherokees created these cloths. Cherokees made cloth long before Euro-Americans came on the scene, and these indigenous practices continued for quite some time. Even in the 1830s, John Howard Payne was able to record extensive knowledge of indigenous textile technologies, including materials and weave structures.[138] These indigenous practices, though undergoing change as part of the identity process, were acts of identity that were far more important than the material switch to cotton and wool. This switch, in fact, allowed these acts of identity.

The increase in cotton and wool cloth production was part of the identity process, as it allowed them to continue older practices and take more control over the manufacturing process, while at the same time sending a message that Cherokees fit the Euro-American definition of "civilization." Americans were not content to see Cherokees wearing Euro-American clothing. In order to earn the title of "civilized,"

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[137] James Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, edited by Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1930), 453.
[138] *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 4:24; 3:84, microfilm. See also Adair, 453-5.

Cherokees had to make their own clothing in Euro-American fashion. Some Euro-Americans who were seemingly more sympathetic to the Cherokees saw Cherokee cloth production as progress, but many Euro-Americans tried to find ways to portray Cherokees as a "savage race." Cherokees continued to engage in Euro-American discourse over the relative "acculturation" of their clothing in order to influence Euro-American perceptions, but within the Nation, these changes reinforced Cherokee culture and were part of the identity process. Clothing can carry not only multiple meanings, but opposite meanings as well. What signaled acculturation to outsiders simultaneously signaled a Cherokee identity to those who understood Cherokee culture.

Partly because of this discourse of acculturation that both Euro-Americans and Native Americans participated in, historians have continued to hold to many of these binaries, such as the traditional dichotomy between European cloth and Indian animal skins. Historians such as William McLoughlin have seen the adoption of cloth as a sign of acculturation.[139] More recently, ideas such as selective adoption have altered the acculturation narrative. In this framework, Native Americans incorporate selected elements of Euro-American culture into their own societies. James Axtell has written that the material is not as important as the way in which it is used.[140] In this line of reasoning, Indians use European cloth in Indian ways. But there is still an underlying assumption that cloth itself is European, not Indian.

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[139] See, for example, McLoughlin, "Cherokee Anomie," 14-17; William G. McLoughlin, "The Cherokee Ghost Dance Movement of 1811-1813" in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861* edited by William McLoughlin (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 116-118; Ronald N. Satz, *Tennessee's Indian Peoples from White Contact to Removal, 1540-1840* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 73-81; William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 62-64.

[140] James Axtell, "The English Colonial Impact on Indian Culture," in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 256.

Europeans may have introduced new types of cloth, but that does not mean they remained exclusively European. Cotton itself did not even come from Europe, and it is Eurocentric to view cloth as exclusively European. Cloth was indigenous to the Cherokees, and even in the Cherokee Revival, it does not appear that Cherokees were out to burn every scrap of cotton, wool, and linen cloth. They were to "cut short their frocks," not throw them out altogether. The definition of "tradition" should not be based on a strict adherence to ancient, static customs. Culture and tradition are fluid and sustained by innovation. A perfect example of this is Sequoyah, a man who played a great role in the process of identity through the invention of the Cherokee syllabary. Sequoyah's peers described him as a man who dressed in traditional fashion, and they confirmed that "in dress he adheres to the old costume of the nation." Sequoyah may have worn leggings and moccasins, but his robe and tunic were made of cloth (see figure 3).[141] What made his clothing "traditional" and distinctly Cherokee had nothing to do with whether or not he wore cloth.

It is true that there was a time when a few Cherokees appeared to feel they were losing something by adopting wool, cotton, and linen clothing. But at this time in the Cherokee Nation, it does not appear that cloth made of materials such as cotton, linen, and wool were thought of as somehow not Cherokee. While some types of cloth may have been looked down on, cloth itself was not un-Cherokee. In fact, some cloths were considered to be very much Cherokee and not European.

One Cherokee even referred to the new cloth made by Cherokees as "Cherokee cotton cloth" in order to distinguish it from calico (most likely of foreign

[141] Major Lowry, "The Life of George Gist," in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 2:78, microfilm.

manufacture).[142] For Nancy Reece, this cloth was not Euro-American, but distinctly Cherokee. This reverses the usual association of cloth with acculturation and Euro-American culture. Nancy Reece was not the only one to make such a distinction between Cherokee and Euro-American cloth. John Ridge, even when writing to a Euro-American audience, wrote that Cherokees preferred their own cloth to that of Euro-Americans, and he distinguished the types of cloth they made from "New England domestic plaids."[143] By manufacturing their own cloth and continuing to give it a place in their culture, Cherokees claimed it for their own. They were creating something fully Cherokee, something different from European and Euro-American cloth.

There is thus no reason to automatically assume cloth is Euro-American while animal skins are Cherokee or "Indian." Cherokee use of cloth was not in any way Euro-American. And it was not simply how this cloth was used that made it Cherokee. It was Cherokee in its very materiality. Cherokees created it in acts of identity and ascribed meaning to it that was compatible with abstract conceptions of what it meant to be Cherokee. This particular cloth was never even Euro-American in the first place, and thus did not have to undergo any transformation to make it Cherokee.

It is partly due to the success of Cherokee participation in the discourse of "civilization" that this has remained so long in the historians' canon. Cherokees presented themselves as satisfying the Euro-American definition of "civilization" in their dress. This was especially important as Euro-Americans were beginning to believe Cherokees were incapable of becoming fully "civilized." While many Euro-

[142] Nancy Reece to Rev. David Green, in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 8:26, microfilm.
[143] Ridge to Gallatin, 105.

Americans interested in the Cherokees remarked on the industriousness of the Nation and discussed the great extent to which Cherokees produced cotton and cloth, there was often an underlying assumption that Cherokees did not quite match the United States in terms of "civilization." Often these proponents of Cherokee progress gave the details of Cherokee "improvement" in a way that relegated them to the status of children deserving praise for accomplishments that were never quite mature. In the eyes of many, Euro-Americans were still unquestionably superior to Cherokees. The civilization plan by definition involved the supposedly superior Euro-Americans teaching Cherokees to become model citizens. Thus there was an underlying condescension in this plan even for those who believed Cherokees were capable of becoming "civilized."

This attitude often manifested itself in hypocritical ways. Colonel Meigs, agent for the Cherokees, reported over and over again the progress of the Cherokees in terms of their production of cotton and cloth. But yet these same people were still "savages" in his own words.[144] Silas Dinsmoor, another agent who thought of the Cherokees as "savages," believed that they needed to be civilized and that the influence of good white people would go a long way in accomplishing this goal. He wrote, "You know my

[144] See, for example, Return J. Meigs, January 1803, "Journal of Occurrences in the Cherokee Agency in 1802," in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs to Secretary of War, December 7, 1801, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs, 1801, "Journal of Occurrences &c relating to the Cherokee Agency," in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs to the Secretary of War, January 11, 1802, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return J. Meigs to Benjamin Hawkins, February 13, 1805, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Return Meigs to William Eustice, Highwasee Garrison, March 19, 1812, in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*, (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208; Meigs to Crawford; R. J. Meigs, August 3, 1817, "Answers to Inquiries relating to the Cherokees," Penelope Allen Collection, box 1 file 91, Hoskins Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville, Tennessee.

opinion respecting the admission of white people among the Indians, that the admission of such as are habitually industrious, proud of cleanliness and personal neatness, & exemplary in their manners and deportment, would have a direct tendency to promote the civilizing plan."[145] In other words, the Cherokees needed these white people to show them the way because Indians were neither industrious nor clean and neat in their appearance. Dinsmoor believed Cherokees needed to be taught how to make clothing and how to dress and present themselves in the proper manner, and white people, as the superior race, would be best able to accomplish this task.

Yet Dinsmoor wrote these words in a letter discussing the deplorable conduct of a white woman and her father who proved to be the opposite of a good example to the Cherokees. Doublehead apparently hired them to keep house in exchange for room and board and all the cotton they could spin from the tools he provided. Describing the pair as "criminally lazy," Dinsmoor went on to say that these two white people accomplished absolutely nothing, despite all the opportunities afforded them. Their behavior was in direct contrast with the Cherokee women, who "have generally been making cloth." The white people who were supposed to be such good examples in civilizing the Cherokees were in reality much less civilized than the Cherokees. Even worse, in Dinsmore's mind, this pair provided a bad example in terms of the proper and civilized mode of dress. Dinsmoor wrote, "They sometimes outrage decency by changing their sexual dress, and commit such excesses as make even savages ashamed!" But despite the fact that Dinsmore was tempted to burn them at the stake, it was the Cherokees, not these white cross-dressers, who were the "savages" and

[145] Silas Dinsmoor to Colonel R. J. Meigs. July 31, 1802, in in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835* (Washington: National Archives, 1952), microfilm, M208.

"children of hell." Even when the stereotypical roles of "civilized" and "savage" were completely reversed, race trumped the discourse of "civilization."

While Dinsmoor may have seen the purpose of any white person amongst the Cherokees as calculated to civilize the supposed savages, it seems that Doublehead did not see it this way. The Cherokees in the area did not need to learn the arts of industry. The people of Doublehead's town wove thirty-two pieces of cloth in a fourteen-month period between 1800 and 1801, which was quite a prodigious quantity.[146] And Doublehead did not hire the Adamses to teach him how to make cloth. This chief apparently had more than enough cotton and thread if he allowed these two people to use as much as they wanted. He had simply hired a couple of housekeepers. This reversed the usual hierarchy of Euro-American society, for white people were now the servants of Indians. Doublehead was the gentleman, not the white people. While Dinsmoor deplored the Adamses' bad character, he could not admit that the Cherokees were civilized, much less ladies and gentlemen. Dinsmore spent his energies trying to manipulate the discourse of "civilization" to exclude the Cherokees. He emphasized the extreme laziness and licentiousness of the two Euro-Americans rather than the industry of the Cherokees. It was the very reversal of the traditional order that prompted Dinsmore's anger and his desire to latch onto anything that would explain its failure.

As Euro-Americans developed increasingly racialized ideas about Cherokees, they attempted to explain the "progress" these supposed savage had made toward "civilization" by attributing it to differences between "mixed bloods" and "full bloods."

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[146] "1801 Journal of Occurrences &e Relating to the Cherokee Nation" in *Records of the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, 1801-1835*. Washington: National Archives, 1952. Microfilm, M208. While it is unclear exactly how many yards were in these thirty-two pieces, a piece of cloth could possibly have been 20-40 yards in length, which would make 640-1280 yards of cloth.

Agent Meigs wrote, "It seems as if the giver of time had fixed the savage character so deeply in the Indian I mean those who have arrived at manhood that it cannot be effaced: but when the blood is mixed with the whites, in every grade of it there is an apparent disposition towards civilization." According to him, most "full bloods" were not capable of becoming civilized. He even claimed to see a formula that described the relative acculturation associated with blood quantum: "This disposition is in proportion to its distance from the original stock."[147] For Euro-Americans like Meigs, race was what caused any apparent "civilization" of the Cherokees.

But for Cherokees, clothing, not race, had always been the strongest marker of identity. During the Cherokee Revival Movement, Cherokees were supposed to discard any Euro-American clothing and dress in a more Cherokee style "so that God would not mistake them in the darkness." It was their clothing, not their race, that distinguished them from the white people.[148] Clothing was not a sign of racial identity, but a way of performing their cultural identity in a manner that had nothing to do with race.

Cherokees did begin to develop a sense of Indian ethnicity in order to distinguish themselves from African Americans and Euro-Americans.[149] But this was far different from Euro-American ideas of racial pedigree, and Cherokees used the idea of race to reinforce their culture. Agent Meigs wrote, "Many of the Cherokees believe

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[147] Meigs to Hawkins.
[148] Rowena McLinton, ed., *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), Ibid., 2:478-79.
[149] Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 159-163; William G. McLoughlin and Walter H. Conser, Jr. "'The First Man was Red'--Cherokee Responses to the Debate over Indian Origins, 1760-1860," *American Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (June 1989): 243-264; Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 625-644; Fay Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 8-12.

they are not derived from the same Stock as the Whites, that they are favorites of the great Spirit and that he never intended the people live laborious lives of the whites."[150] Cherokees used ideas of separate creations and separate races as reasons for their cultural distinctions from Euro-Americans and African Americans, not as a sign of racial inferiority. What Meigs interpreted as a lazy avoidance of labor was probably an adherence to Cherokee forms of labor, where women, not men, were in charge of agriculture. For Cherokees, the idea of separate races reinforced cultural practices such as their gendered form of agriculture and methods of clothing production.

Even with increased racialization, Cherokees did not think in terms of blood quantum. As Theda Perdue writes, Euro-Americans imposed terms such as "mixed bloods" and "full bloods" on Southeastern Indians as a justification for Removal, even though this did not at all describe reality.[151] For Cherokees, dress was a performance of identity, not a measure of blood quantum. But Euro-Americans did not think about dress in terms of cultural identity; they thought of it in terms of gradations of race. People dressed in a civilized or savage manner due to racial superiority or inferiority. For Euro-Americans, the fundamental distinction between their dress and that of Native Americans was based on binaries that supposedly went much deeper than culture.

These oppositional views surrounding clothing occurred not because Cherokee and Euro-American clothing were so incredibly different, but because Euro-Americans were uncomfortable with the fact that Cherokees and even Euro-Americans just might be capable of manipulating their identities through dress. Cherokees had actually begun

[150] Meigs to Hawkins.
[151] Theda Perdue, "Race and Culture: Writing the Ethnohistory of the Early South," *Ethnohistory* 51 no. 4 (Fall 2004): 716-717.

to fit Euro-American definitions of "civilization" through their sartorial system, prompting Euro-Americans to develop increasingly racialized views of clothing as a way of minimizing the recognition of these changes. Euro-Americans also tried to minimize the reality that sartorial change went in both directions.[152]

Decades after John Marrant came home in Cherokee dress, the Euro-American response to Sam Houston's adoption of Cherokee clothing was much more complicated. When Sam Houston was adopted by the Cherokees, his transformation was signified by exchanging his Euro-American clothing for Cherokee dress. Similar to the captive adoption ceremonies of earlier years, the reclothing of this Euro-American is what both affected and signaled this change. In 1829, when Sam Houston went to live a second time with the Cherokees, the *Raleigh Star* reported, "He says he never wishes to see the face of a white man again—that when he gets to Red River, his cloth coat which he now wears, is to be destroyed, and he assumes the Indian costume throughout."[153] The destruction of his Euro-American clothes lent credence to Houston's declaration that he was forever giving up his white culture. What would seem an idle threat was made concrete with this change of clothing, for a change in clothing meant a change in identity.

Sam Houston's style continued to be influenced by Cherokee dress even after he left the Cherokee Nation. Some Euro-Americans viewed it as eccentric, theatrical, and

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[152] For a discussion of Euro-American fears of cultural cross-dressing and the link between racialization and clothing, see Sophie White, *Wild Frenchman and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic." The William and Mary Quarterly 56, no. 2 (April 1999): 243-272; Shane and Graham White. *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

[153] "Governor Houston," *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate*, July 29, 1829. Reprint, *Raleigh Star*.

vain. William Carey Crane spoke of Houston's "strange freak of dress" and Alfred Mason Williams described it as "theatrical and sensational," "bizarre and fantastic."[154] It was difficult for many Euro-Americans to understand why Houston kept wearing such clothing in "civilized" society. Williams ascribed his habits of dress to "his personal vanity and his tendency to histrionism" and wrote, "it was almost childish in its manifest purpose to attract attention, and only his magnificent physique could have carried off his draping himself in an Indian blanket or a Mexican poncho, and the other bizarre eccentricities of his attire, without ridicule."[155] In other words, only the heroic Houston could get away with wearing such ridiculous clothing. If it was anyone other than Houston, Euro-Americans would have seen this as a sign of wildness or even savagery. But Euro-Americans saw American Indians as both savages and noble, romantic creatures, and this is reflected in Williams' statement. Because Houston was such a hero, Williams painted the Native American influences of dress as highly eccentric but romantic instead of savage.

Conflicting views of Houston's dress emerged as Euro-Americans struggled to place his attire into a context they could understand. It appears some saw Houston's attire as a rejection of dandyism. Reportedly, Andrew Jackson declared that he "thanked God there was one man in Texas who was made by the Almighty and not by the tailor." Crane, Houston's dress in the context of Jackson's comment, wrote that Houston "continued to cherish a free and courageous spirit under cover of an Indian blanket." Houston's dress may have been "strange," but in this case it represented a

[154] William Carey Crane, *Life and Select Literary Remains of Sam Houston of Texas* (Dallas: William G. Scarff & Co., 1884), 55; Alfred B. Williams, *Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 33.
[155] Williams, 392.

positive, independent quality of character.[156] Not everyone, however, attributed Houston's choice of dress to the "courageous" qualities that could be co-opted from the noble savage. As noted in the previous chapter, many Euro-Americans believed Indians were vain lovers of gaudy apparel, so Houston's dress was sometimes chalked up to the same vanity that supposedly existed among American Indians. Williams, discussing Jackson's famous statement about Houston's dress, wrote, "This remark, if made, was as affected as Houston's costume, for Jackson knew as well as anybody that Houston's Indian dress was only part of his theatrical vanity, and as much a piece of dandyism as if it had been the most ultrafashionable civilized costume."[157] In this view, "Indian dress" was certainly not "civilized," but white Americans struggled to make sense of what Houston's dress actually meant. The result was a variety of conflicting theories, but each one tried to explain away any real change in identity or complete affinity with Cherokee culture.

According to one account, even the Cherokees made fun of Houston's dress. Reportedly, at a council meeting some Cherokees convinced an African American to dress like Houston as a way of making fun of his eccentric attire. All the other Cherokees thought it was hilarious, but Houston took the joke in a calm but serious manner, prompting the Cherokees to never make fun of his clothing again.[158] Though this episode may or may not have happened, it represents an attempt by Euro-Americans to show that Houston was not quite able to achieve Cherokee fashion, and that his adoption of Cherokee dress was actually a highly individualistic and eccentric

[156] Crane, 55-56. See also Williams, 118.

[157] Williams, 118.
[158] Ibid., 39-40.

fashion of his own, rather than an acceptance of "savage" clothing. Many Euro-Americans could not stand the idea that white people were capable of descending into that "savage state" represented by Native American dress.

According to this philosophy, Euro-Americans were never very successful at imitating American Indians. Just as Sam Houston was apparently ridiculed by both Cherokees and Euro-Americans for the peculiarities of his dress, one rather strange man's attempt at passing as a Cherokee did not quite seem to work either. In the summer of 1828, a man entered the town of Bunker Hill. He was dressed, according to one account, "in the costume of an Indian," but his appearance presented such a diverting sight that his true identity was questioned. The man claimed to be William Ross, son of "chief" Daniel Ross, and he apparently spoke Cherokee very well.[159] Whether or not he was actually an emissary of the tribe was another story.

The first clue to his deceit was the strange way he dressed. The author of a newspaper article wrote, "His dress is, red inexpressibles of some thin material, with shoes, a gown of wide-striped calico, a red ribbon and a considerable quantity of wax beads round his neckhandkerchief, a kind of open-worked vandyke, a wig of black, coarse hair, an ordinary hat trimmed fantastically, and tin bracelets round his wrist." This was not simply exotic, as "the true Indian" would appear, but fantastic, bordering

[159] The man claimed to be the son of Cherokee chief Daniel Ross, but in reality, Ross was not a chief but a white trader who had married a Cherokee woman. Daniel Ross was the father of John Ross, Principle Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Apparently, the imposter had tried to get money from Ross and once even said, "'he had been imprisoned at Circleville on the charge of being a slave' and pretended he 'wanted money to enable him to carry on a suit at law.'" It is unclear who this man was, or whether or not he was a runaway slave, but Ross was incensed by this con man. Ross called the man a "vile wretch" and a "vagrant" and even went so far as to say that "Should this imposter gain credence with the credulous, so that they become losers by his acquaintance, I can have no objection (by way of atonement) to the hanging of this 'Gen. Wm. Ross," if merited." Daniel Ross to Mr. Boudinot, July 8, 1826, in *Cherokee Phoenix*, July 21, 1828.

on the ridiculous. Whoever this person was seems to have known something of the way Cherokees dressed, for the striped calico gown seems to refer to a hunting shirt, and Cherokees did wear beads, neckcloths, and metal bracelets. But even the Euro-Americans could see through his coarse wig, boatload of wax beads, tight pantaloons, and extraordinary combination of fake "Indian" clothing.[160]

It was not simply his fantastic outfit that gave away his deceit, however. He had "nothing of the true Indian in his form or gait."[161] Even if this man had been capable of dressing in "true Indian" style, his body was not "Indian," leaving him incapable of imitating a savage race. Neither Houston nor this unknown imposter were able to dress in a "true" Cherokee manner. Euro-Americans viewed Cherokee clothing as rather exotic, but any attempt to imitate it was even more fantastic, because to do so would break down the cultural barriers that separated the races. The fact that white people who came amongst the Cherokees adopted many elements of Cherokee clothing, such as leggings, did not make it into this narrative because it was anathema to the view that Euro-Americans, as a superior, civilized society, dressed in the proper manner, and that any other clothing system represented savagery.[162] While in previous decades non-natives such as John Marrant could be perceived as native by wearing Cherokee dress, by the early 1830s this was no longer true, at least according to what Euro-Americans wanted to believe. In this viewpoint, Euro-Americans and Native Americans could never change their identity through a change in dress, because doing so would not change their race.

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[160] "An Imitation Indian." *Cherokee Phoenix*, July 2, 1828. Reprint, *Bunker-Hill Aurora*.
[161] Ibid.
[162] *Cherokee Phoenix*, January 21, 1829.

But even the increasingly racialized ideas regarding Cherokee clothing did not keep Euro-Americans from collecting it. One of the most ironic examples of Cherokee dress is a meticulously decorated bandolier bag (see figure 4). Embroidered on the inside are the words, "To Gen'l Jackson From Sam Houston." The same man who pushed so hard for Indian Removal received one of the most valuable and meaningful gestures of friendship and diplomacy in Cherokee culture. Perhaps the same woman who embroidered Houston's hunting jacket also created this exquisitely embroidered and beaded bag.[163]

This bag was an acceptable gift from the perspective of both cultures. For Euro-Americans, it was "civilized" enough to represent Cherokee "progress," yet it was exotic enough to satisfy the Euro-American desire to own a piece of the Other's culture. Examples of southeastern beadwork and fingerweaving in the University of Aberdeen's collections were acquired by a Scottish trader who took several pieces back with him to Scotland.[164] Cherokees specifically chose to use these articles of clothing to represent their culture because of the multiple meanings projected onto them. For Euro-Americans, these items represented an exotic yet "civilized" culture. Cherokees used their innovation in beadwork and other art forms to construct identity while at the same

[163] "Shoulder Bag/Bandolier Bag," National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 179690.000. Cherokee National Treasure Martha Berry describes this piece as "One of the most famous, or some would say infamous, pieces of Cherokee beadwork." Martha Berry, "The Rise, Loss, and Revival of Traditional Cherokee Beadwork," in Duncan, Barbra R., Susan C. Power and Martha Berry, *Beadwork Storyteller: A Visual Language.* Cherokee Heritage Press, 2008, 21. For a brief description of Houston's hunting jacket, see Williams, 39.

[164] ; "1700s Beadwork of Southeastern Tribes." Neil Curtis, Head of Museums, University of Aberdeen. Temporary Exhibit, Chickasaw Cultural Center, Sulpher, OK.

time represent their culture to outsiders in a way that demonstrated an acceptable combination of "acculturation" and "Indianness."[165]

The American missionary Samuel Worcester saw such distinct markers of identity as mere anomalies in an otherwise "civilized" group of people. One example he used was the turban, a colorful, vibrant headdress used as an expression of Cherokee identity. Even young men who otherwise adhered almost completely to Euro-American dress wore eye-catching turbans. Worcester spoke of the practice as an exception to the general rule that Cherokees were copying Euro-American dress.[166] He called it a "substitution" for the Euro-American hat and believed that such differences would soon be remedied.[167] But examples of turbans in the works of George Catlin and Charles Bird King reveal that turbans were not just makeshift copies of Euro-American hats. They had bold colors and patterns and sometimes included decorative elements such as feathers and fringe.[168] There are hardly any similarities in form between Euro-American hats and Cherokee turbans, but the "civilized" aspect of the cloth and the

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[165] Lois Sherr Dubin writes that beadwork was a way to record spiritual teachings "in an acceptable Western format". Lois Sherr Dubin, *North American Indian Jewelry and Adornment: From Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 196. For more information on beadwork, see *Beadwork Storyteller: A Visual Language*. Cherokee Heritage Press, 2008.

[166] Samuel A. Worcester, *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate,* May 8, 1830.

[167] Samuel A. Worcester, "Present Condition of the Indians," *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 1, 1830; Worcester, *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830.

[168] For visual depictions of Cherokee turbans, see George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of North American Indians* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1973), 2: plate 218; Charles Bird King, *Tah-chee*, in Thomas McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principle Chiefs, Embellished with One Hundred and Twenty Portraits, from the Indian Gallery in the Department of Washington* (Philadelphia: J. T. Bowen, 1848-1850), vol. 1; Charles Bird King, *Se-quo-yah*, in Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principle Chiefs, Embellished with One Hundred and Twenty Portraits, from the Indian Gallery in the Department of Washington* (Philadelphia: J. T. Bowen, 1848-1850), vol. 1; Charles Bird King, *Tooan-tuh*, in Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principle Chiefs, Embellished with One Hundred and Twenty Portraits, from the Indian Gallery in the Department of Washington* (Philadelphia: J. T. Bowen, 1848-1850), vol. 2.

seemingly marginal status of these items as accessories could be acceptable to Euro-Americans when paired with clothing that met with Euro-American approval. For Worcester, these accessories added a touch of exoticism to an otherwise "civilized" appearance.

This is due to the Euro-American conception of clothing as based off of a dichotomy between "civilized" and "savage." For some, these accessories merely added an exotic flavor to a "civilized" dress, but for others, like the missionary who reacted to a student's feather by snatching away the "heathen finery," such accessories were completely savage. [169] As Euro-Americans increasingly brought racial views to this discussion, the only way they would see Cherokees as anything other than savages was to prove that Cherokees were already civilized. Cherokees presented their differences as simply makeshift substitutes soon to be remedied.

These accessories could fulfill this role because of their seemingly marginal status in Euro-American culture. Accessories could easily be taken on and off in public, and did not have the same close relationship with the body that other garments such as shirts had. Kathleen Brown writes that Euro-Americans perceived items such as white collars to be respectable because these were close to the body and had to be cleaned often to maintain the white color, demonstrating both cleanliness and wealth.[170] Cherokees often paired items usually associated with the height of Euro-American respectability, such as stark white shirts, collars, and cravats, with items representing Cherokee culture. In 1836, George Catlin painted a Cherokee who wore a printed calico

[169]Anna Rosina Gambold, June 24, 1817, Rowena McLinton, ed., *The Moravian Springplace Mission to the Cherokees*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 2:166.
[170] Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 88, 31.

shirt, a mantle created in an older style, strings of beads, and a feather headdress. But underneath these recognizably Cherokee elements were a stark white collar and even a cravat (see figure 5). [171] A painting of David Vann shows a man with a high collar and exquisitely ruffled cravat any dandy would have been proud of. Yet he wore a red belt and what appears to be the strap of a beaded bandolier bag with a geometric design that marked him as Cherokee.[172]

Of course, there was no reason why collars and cravats could not be just as Cherokee as feathers and beadwork. *The Cherokee Phoenix* even printed a short fashion prescription describing these collars in a humorous vignette. "A rough wag of a fellow from the blue ridge lately met a dandy" with a "strange appearance" and told him, "'Gouge me, my hero, if I don't believe you've got *your shirt on wrong end upwards*.'" While the author described the stiffness, size, and position of the collars to anyone who wished to follow the latest Euro-American fashion, the humorous story was a way of subtly poking fun of Euro-American dress and emphasizing the masculinity of the mountain man at the expense of the dandy, even if it was under the guise of exposing the roughness and ignorance of the man from the blue ridge. Cherokees both claimed these new fashions for themselves and made fun of the extremity of Euro-American fashion. Most wore these collars and cravats very differently from Euro-American dandies, but even those who did wear collars "three inches broad above the cravat, and stiff and sharp as a butcher knife" sometimes paired them with specific signs of Cherokee culture that could not be mistaken for Euro-American fashion. Cherokees could now wear collars and cravats and still hold to an abstract Cherokee identity. Who

[171] George Catlin, *The Black Coat,* 1836, National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, DC.
[172] Charles Bird King, *David Vann,* 1825, Thomas Gilcrease Museum.

was to say that a hat or a collar was not Cherokee? As long as the "heart [was] straight," whatever Cherokees chose to wear would be Cherokee. By pairing these collars and cravats with bandolier bags and stings of beads, Cherokees claimed these fashions as Cherokee and at the same time used them as a way of presenting themselves as similar to whites, perhaps even subtly making fun of Euro-American fashion in the process. Cherokees used their knowledge of Euro-American culture to their advantage in order to carefully manipulate perceptions, which is why the future president ended up with a Cherokee bandolier bag, and why Elias Boudinot chose to disseminate Worcester's view of Cherokee clothing and accessories.[173]

These shifts in material culture and the understanding of material culture demonstrate Cherokees participating in the process of identity. In the late eighteenth century, accessories such as beadwork were a physical manifestation of Cherokee identity. Even as Cherokees obtained more and more of their clothing through the deerskin trade, their beadwork flourished. In the late eighteenth century, William Bartram, a traveler in the region, wrote that while the Cherokees purchased many of their goods from Europeans, they still made certain items such as belts and moccasins.[174] It was these accessories that remained absolutely important to Cherokee identity, especially in the late eighteenth century when Cherokees emphasized the material nature of sartorial identity.

But this beadwork did not remain static. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Cherokees innovated in this art form in profound ways. Women

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[173] *Cherokee Phoenix*, August 13, 1828; Meigs to Eustice. See also "Novelties in Gentlemen's Dress, &c," *Cherokee Phoenix*, November 12, 1828. Reprint, *Gentlemen's Magazine of Dress and Fashion.*
[174] William Bartram, "Miscellaneous Writings," in *Travels and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 542.

often used trade beads, stroud cloth, and other materials to create elaborate forms of art. But though this beadwork represents change, there is no evidence to suggest that anyone, not even Euro-Americans, saw it as acculturation or somehow a compromise of tradition. This innovation was Cherokee in every way.

One story illustrates this quite nicely. Lucy, the wife of George Lowrey, not only spun, wove, sewed, and quilted, but also took up "fancy work" such as embroidery. For Euro-Americans, fancy work denoted civilization and even gentility. But it did not necessarily mean acculturation, for Lucy also excelled in creating Cherokee beaded belts that were highly sought after by Cherokee men, particularly the warriors. She and her sister-in-law "so improved and embellished these belts, that they generally sold for twenty five dollars apiece."[175] Their innovation demonstrates that change did not always mean acculturation. These two women used new techniques and materials, but Cherokees did not believe these changes compromised their culture. These "improved" articles of dress served to enhance and reaffirm a sense of Cherokee-ness in ways that strict adherence to an unchanging past never could. These items had long traditions in their culture, but Cherokees such as Lucy and her sister-in-law used new techniques and materials in innovative, artistic ways. Culture and "tradition" are never static, and Cherokees participated in the process of identity through innovation, not stasis.

Beadwork is not the only art form that demonstrates cultural innovation. Cherokees were also adept at creating beautiful silver ornaments. Most famously, the

[175] Wahnenauhi, "Historical Sketches of the Cherokees, Together with Some of their Customs, Traditions, and Superstitions," edited by Jack Frederick Kilpatrick. Anthropological Papers, No. 77. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 196 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 200.

much celebrated Sequoyah learned to work with silver and became quite accomplished in the art.[176] When Cherokees worked with silver, they did not simply copy Euro-American goods. According to one account, silver ornaments such as armbands, hatbands, and gorgets were continuations of older types of ornamentation.[177] An examination of shell and silver gorgets reveals that this is true. Openwork seems to have been common in both shell and silver ornaments, and some of the designs are similar.[178] Cherokee silverwork was deeply tied to cultural traditions, and Cherokees focused on creating articles of dress according to indigenous aesthetics. In 1816, Colonel Meigs wrote that the Cherokees "make the rich Hatbands, Arm bands, & other ornaments of dress and silver spurrs equal to any I ever saw." No one could surpass the skills these Cherokees had. They were not only artistic masters, but apparently quite prolific. In Colonel Meig's opinion, "they have too many silver smiths." In contrast, Meigs wrote that only five of the fifteen blacksmiths working under the Agency's eye were actually Cherokee. [179]

Why would Cherokees be so overly interested in silversmithing, but more reluctant to translate their talents to blacksmithing? Euro-Americans like Meigs could not understand this. Cherokees, due to their "savage" state, were supposed to be

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[176] Major Lowry, "The Life of George Gist," in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 2:71;84, microfilm.
[177] *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 4:25-27, microfilm.
[178] For example, the designs in the silver earrings and nose ring in Edward Troye, *Cherokee Woman (or Cherokee Squaw)*, Gilcrease Museum and *George Lowrey*, Gilcrease Museum, are similar to the shell gorgets Phillips and Brain classify as "geometric." Jeffrey P. Brain and Philip Phillips, *Shell Gorgets: Sytles of the Late Preshistoric and Protohistoric Southeast* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum Press, 1996): 38-43. Openwork shell gorgets are seen throughout the southeast.
[179] Meigs to Crawford. These numbers only represent those working under the Agency. In 1826 Elias Boudinot proclaimed there were sixty-two blacksmiths. The 1835 census lists fifty-five silversmiths, and the 1809 census lists forty-nine. Mcloughlin and Conser, "The Cherokee Censuses of 1809 1835, and 1835," 240, table 1-A.

concentrating on improving in the "necessities" of civilization by doing tasks such as creating agricultural implements. Showing so much artistry in silversmithing challenged the dominant discourse of "civilization" and "savagery." Silversmithing was highly skilled, artistic work, and societies were only supposed to accomplish these higher achievements after they fully mastered the "arts of civilization," such as blacksmithing. Instead of viewing the Cherokee creation of complex and artistic silver ornaments as an example of "civilization," Meigs almost seemed to view it as yet another example of backwardness.

Meigs' complicated outlook demonstrates the changing attitudes surrounding Cherokee sartorial identity. As Cherokees increasingly fit Euro-American definitions of "civilization," Euro-Americans had to bend these definitions to try to exclude them. Those dealing with the Cherokees were often surprised at many of their accomplishments that Euro-Americans associated with "civilization," such as silversmithing and cloth production. Like Meigs, they jumped through intellectual hoops to try to depict these people as "savages." Even the continual discussion of Cherokee "progress" often denoted the idea that Cherokees had not yet become "civilized," and perhaps would never quite make it. By juxtaposing the Cherokees' continued state of "savagery" with examples of their "progress," Euro-Americans forwarded the idea that no matter how Cherokees dressed and acted, they would never be able to become fully "civilized" due to an inherent, not simply performed, state of "savagery."

Cherokees continued to make some articles of clothing out of deerskin, such as moccasins. The deerskin trade may have declined, but men still continued to hunt and

women never stopped making articles of dress out of deerskin. Cherokees presented themselves to Euro-Americans as having given up hunting and making clothes from deerskin, but in reality they had always kept deerskin in their wardrobes, and even now they continued to make moccasins, as well as the occasional hunting jacket and pair of leggings out of this material. Sometimes they even lined these exquisite coats with cloth, demonstrating that these coats were not simply last vestiges of an older lifestyle, nor was cloth in opposition to "traditional" Cherokee sartorial identity. Cloth and deerskin were both fully integrated into Cherokee sartorial culture.[180]

Cherokees also began to make other items that Euro-Americans deemed more civilized, such as saddles and shoes. The Cherokee agent viewed this as progress, and had the condescension to write that "many of them now tan their own leather," as if Cherokees had not for quite some time been well versed in the art of tanning skins.[181] For the most part, Euro-Americans did not deem the Cherokees' deerskin clothing to be an accomplishment in any sense of the word. The Cherokee use of deerskin was barbaric, but learning to make and use leather in Euro-American ways was worthy of notice. The word "leather" differentiated the sophisticated and civilized Euro-American practices from the supposedly savage Cherokee use of "animal skins."

Despite the fact that both were made from animal skins, there remained a distinction between moccasins and shoes. Euro-Americans could depict the Cherokees as destitute by declaring that they had no shoes, since moccasins represented an entirely

[180] Boudinot, 72; Ridge to Gallatin; Samuel A. Worcester, *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate*, May 8, 1830; Editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix,* February 21, 1828; Samuel A. Worcester, "Present Condition of the Indians," *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 1, 1830; Editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate,* April 21, 1830; Editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate*, May 1, 1830; John Howard Payne Letters, 6: 206. For an example of a hunting jackets lined with cloth, see "Man's Coat," National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 050770.000.
[181] Meigs to Crawford.

different category. This was a way of trying to prove an implicit, racial "savagery" of Native Americans. In a supposedly benevolent gesture, the United States offered shoes to the Cherokees shortly before the Trail of Tears. The Cherokees answered by declaring that shoes would give them blisters.[182] They were not barefoot, as Euro-Americans implicitly tried to suggest, but clad in their own moccasins. In fact, these moccasins were superior to Euro-American shoes, and would not hurt their feet. No wonder so many Cherokees continued to wear moccasins.[183] Shoes represented Euro-American ideals of superiority and civilization, while moccasins demonstrated a Cherokee identity.

The opposition between these two sartorial systems increased in the years leading up to Removal. Cherokees found their own meanings in their rich and innovative clothing traditions. Euro-Americans had rigid categories based on "civilization" and "savagery," but Cherokees constantly broke these down. While Cherokee innovation represented a deep cultural identity process rooted in a modern engagement with tradition, Euro-Americans could only conceive of two different types of sartorial systems. Thus Cherokees presented their innovation as a sign of "civilization." They knew Euro-American perceptions were shifting, becoming increasingly based on race, but they were deeply engaged in the discourse of civilization and turned it to their advantage. Cherokees were finding ways to satisfy the Euro-American definition of "civilization" in their clothing, but they knew the importance of

[182] Lewis Ross to John Ross, Cherokee Agency, February 18, 1837, in the Penelope Johnson Allen Cherokee Collection, 1775-1878, box 1 file 24, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, microfilm.

[183] Moccasins remained quite popular. For example, John Howard Payne wrote that though some were beginning to wear shoes, "Moccasins are yet extensively used by both men and women." John Howard Payne Letters, 6: 206.

constantly proving it. Some Euro-Americans began to shift their conceptual boundaries of clothing to find new ways of excluding Cherokees, and race was the key focus of these changes. In the 1830s, the Removal debate began to center even more firmly around controlling perceptions of Cherokee dress, and these shifts only accelerated.

Chapter 4: The Weapon of Dress: Cherokee Clothing and the Fight Against Removal

Abraham Birdwell's story does not leave much to the imagination. As he neared the blazing fires, Birdwell heard the shouts of five dozen Indians. This was no ordinary fire. A peaceful white settlement was up in flames, maliciously set on fire by a large group of warriors. The Indians exulted in this moment of destructive revelry, yelling and screaming around the hungry blaze. It was truly horrendous. The leader of this wild group wore a frightful-looking buffalo headdress with horns sticking out, a devilish costume that somehow seemed to fit the man who led these barbaric warriors.

Being so outnumbered, there was nothing Birdwell could do. So he left. Turning his back on the terrible frenzy, his heart sunk at the sight of a woman fleeing the scene in a rambling cart. She had just given birth four days before, and now this delicate female was running away from a violent and unjust Indian attack. But nothing could prepare him for what he saw next. Another homeless woman on the road was actually in labor, and her midwife was desperately trying to manage a severe medical crisis. These savagely-dressed Indians were so brutal they would kick out a woman giving birth and destroy her home. This tragedy would leave a terrible mark on Birdwell's mind that would remain vivid for quite some time. Since other men were running for help, Birdwell went as far away as possible, but the Indians staid on the warpath until the thirst for blood left one man murdered.[184]

[184] Abraham Birdwell, "Certificate of Abraham Birdwell," February 9, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee lands: Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting the Information Required by a Resolution of the House of Representatives of the 22d Ultimo, in Relation to Intrusions on Lands Claimed by the Cherokee Tribe of Indians, &c. &c.* 21st Cong., 1st session, April 2, 1830, H. Doc. 89., 30-31.

This account is not entirely accurate. But according to the only eyewitness testimony admitted in the official U.S. executive report, this is exactly what happened. In response to the Cherokees' sophisticated use of print culture to defend their rights and present themselves as civilized, pro-Removal Euro-Americans spread lies and rumors of the supposedly savage clothing and behavior of the Cherokees. Cherokees and Euro-Americans alike took advantage of every opportunity to discuss the relative civilization of the Cherokees, and dress played an important role in this debate.

In the 1830s, the relationship between Euro-Americans and Cherokees regarding clothing no longer confined itself simply to identity and perceptions of difference. It became all about using Cherokee clothing as a rhetorical weapon, and creating and controlling perceptions of Cherokee clothing, whether accurate or false, that supported each side's argument about Removal. Cherokees used print culture and other forms of communication to send a clear message to Euro-Americans that they had adopted "civilized" dress. When engaging in Euro-American discourse through letters, newspapers, and periodicals, Cherokees presented a partial view of their dress that emphasized acculturation while subtly hiding the deeper reality. Within the Nation, some encouraged this supposed acculturation process, while others communicated a much more complicated view of the importance of sartorial identity. Many southern Americans, particularly Georgians, used print culture to spread lies and stereotypes about the way Cherokees dressed, but anti-Removal activists, influenced by the Cherokee use of print culture, engaged in this discourse by declaring Cherokee dress to be sufficiently acculturated. While Cherokee clothing had always been important, the

control over public opinion of Cherokee dress became a crucial part of the Removal debate.

In 1830, Congress debated and then passed the Indian Removal Act. Much of the discourse regarding clothing came during this time, as Cherokees and Euro-Americans alike used clothing as a reason either for or against Removal. Petitions, memorials, Congressional debates, newspaper articles, and letters all attest to this public discourse. Cherokees used their newspaper and other forms of communication to influence the American public, and Removal advocates increased their efforts to portray Cherokee clothing as "savage."

What lay behind this outburst was a hunger for Cherokee land. Many Georgians and other pro-Removalists were desperate to force the Cherokees off their homeland. Historians have often focused on the discovery of gold in the Cherokee Nation as the major cause for the final push for Removal, but this ignores the importance of land and cotton.[185] One of the greatest reasons for Euro-Americans' incessant hunger for Indian land was due to the desire to expand cotton plantations and slavery. As scholars have shown, the mobility and expansion of slavery into new lands was essential to the whole slavery system.[186] More and more land was constantly needed, and this land had to be

[185] For examples of the focus on the discovery of gold, see Kenneth Penn Davis, "Chaos in the Indian Country: The Cherokee Nation, 1828-35," in *The Cherokee Indian Nation*, edited by Duane A. King (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 129-131; William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 430-437; Marion L. Starkey, *The Cherokee Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 110-114. William L. Anderson puts gold and the desire for land together as two of the many reasons for removal in *Cherokee Removal, Before and After* edited by William L. Anderson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), ix.
[186] Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014). Edward Baptist argues that the mobility and expansion of slavery into new lands was essential to the whole slavery system. Chillingly, slaves were the most liquid asset available, and credit depended on having slaves that could be sold if needed. Thus, a market for slaves, which depended on the continuing expansion of slavery and the mobility of slaves, was an important bedrock for the economy. Adam Rothman also discusses the mobility of slavery in Adam Rothman,

taken from Native Americans. The Cherokees had some of the best land for cotton, and anything that stood in the way of U.S. expansion of territory and slavery threatened the system. Thus Indian Removal and slavery were intimately connected.

One brave petitioner placed this connection out in the open. Sherlock S. Gregory of Land Lake, New York wrote several letters to the House of Representatives regarding these two evils. In one, he wrote, "Your petitioner thinks that the cause of slavery has probably been entailed on this country in part for its treatment of the aborigines. That it will be found to have increased very nearly in proportion to the encroachments upon these people."[187] Gregory saw a direct connection between slavery and Indian removal. Whenever Indians were forced to give up land, slavery expanded almost in direct proportion to the amount of land given up. Gregory knew that the pro-Removal advocates wanted this land for more than simply small farmers who were running out of independent plots back east. Slaveowners and would-be slaveowners wanted more room to expand their system of slavery. They wanted more and more land for plantations to continue squeezing riches off the backs of slaves.

If that was not temptation enough, white southerners had noticed the "progress" of the Cherokees, whether or not they were willing to admit it. Many Cherokees experienced success with cotton, and while the vast majority did not own large plantations, the American pattern of slavery had already made its way into the Nation; 7.4% of families owned slaves. Some of the more prominent Cherokees did own large

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Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South (Harvard University Press: Cambridge and London, 2005).

[187] Sherlock S. Gregory to the Senate and House of Representatives, January 21, 1838. Committee on Indian Affairs, 25th Congress, HR 25A-G7.2. The National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

plantations, and these remained visible to Euro-Americans.[188] Cotton seemed to grow quite well in the Cherokee Nation, and this provided greater incentive for Removal. One Indian agent, discussing the phenomenon of white intruders on Cherokee land, wrote, "those plantations ready made, offer a strong temptation to settle down on the Indian lands."[189] The Cherokee practice of growing cotton and producing clothing provided many white southerners with greater desire to take the land. These people spread ideas of Cherokee backwardness as an excuse for Removal, all the while hypocritically feeding their desire with the reality of Cherokee prosperity.

But advocates for Removal had to contend with a highly effective and organized enemy. Cherokees were not about to give up their land, and they made effective use of print culture to show the world that they had become civilized. While Americans had previously embraced the civilizing policy in hopes that Cherokees and other tribes would become absorbed into the United States or need less land when they gave up hunting, pro-Removal advocates now found that the civilizing policy seemed to have the opposite effect. Cherokees used it as a tool with which to defend their rights, and many pro-Removalists changed their mind about the policy. As John Howard Payne put it, "Georgia has hated them the more because of their civilization."[190] The Cherokee

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[188] William McLoughlin and Walter H. Conser, Jr., "The Cherokee Censuses of 1809 1835, and 1835," in *The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861,* edited by William McLoughlin (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1984), 245, table 5. For a detailed look at slavery and the Cherokee Nation, see Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979). For a detailed look at plantations in the Cherokee Nation, see Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Jennifer Elliott, "Ga-ne-tli-yv-s-di (Change) in the Cherokee Nation: The Vann and Ridge Houses in Northwest," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 18 (Spring 2011): 43-63.

[189] Colonel Montgomery to Colonel McKenney, April 23, 1825. In *Intrusions on Cherokee lands,* 2.

[190] [John Howard Payne], October 11, 1835, Committee on Indian Affairs, HR 24A-D9-4. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Nation was not going to melt into the United States, and with a strong political government, Cherokees refused to give up another foot of ground. As it became clear that it was not possible for the United States to destroy the national identity of the Cherokees, many Americans, particularly in the southern states, began to increase their demands for complete removal of the Cherokee people.

Despite all the information spreading among the Americans regarding the state of the Cherokees, the pro-Removalists began to depict the Cherokees as savages who depended solely upon hunting for a living. Since much of the game was largely disappearing, these Americans argued that the Cherokees should be benevolently taken to the West where they could obtain plenty of game. As one congressman put it, "It would be impossible for them long to subsist, as they have heretofore done, by the chase, as their game is already so much diminished.… In their present destitute and deplorable condition, and which is constantly growing more helpless, it would seem to be not only the right, but the duty of the Government, to take them under its paternal care."[191] With the emphasis put on the supposed need of the Cherokees to find more game in order to survive, pro-Removalists had to show that the Cherokees actually did survive on hunting. Consequently, they falsely claimed that the Cherokees were really savages who wore uncivilized clothing obtained from hunting.

The Cherokees were quick to refute such caricatures. In the years leading up to the Removal Act, Cherokees were already active in dispelling stereotypes. In 1826, Elias Boudinot told a Euro-American audience in Philidelphia that the Cherokees "have

[191] *Register of Debates in Congress, Comprising the Leading Debates and Incidents of the First Session of the Twenty-First Congress*, House of Representatives, May 19, 1830, 1089. *University of North Texas Digital Library*.

gradually and I could almost say universally forsaken their ancient employment [of hunting]. In fact, there is not a single family in the nation, that can be said to subsist on the slender support which the wilderness would afford. The love and practice of hunting are not now carried to a higher degree, than among all frontier people whether white or red."[192] According to Boudinot, no one among the Cherokees hunted for a living. They no longer hunted because they had to, but because they wanted to. And they certainly did not hunt any more than white people did. By linking "white" and "red" together as "frontier people," Boudinot fought against racialized visions of Indians as savage hunters and whites as civilized, rational beings. There was common ground between the two races, and Cherokees were just as civilized as their white neighbors. Boudinot even gestured towards the fact that some Euro-Americans were borrowing from American Indian cultures, taking up hunting and wearing deerskin coats. According to Boudinot, any differences between Cherokees and Euro-Americans living in New England towns or eastern cities merely stemmed from the fact that Cherokees, like many whites, were living on the frontier. Boudinot's message to Euro-Americans was that these differences had nothing to do with Cherokee culture or any perceived racial inferiority.

Other Cherokees sent similar messages to Euro-Americans. In 1826, John Ridge wrote, "I take pleasure to state, tho' cautiously, that there is not to my knowledge a solitary Cherokee to be found that depends upon the chase for subsistence and every head of a family has his house and farm." Ridge made sure he mentioned that the products of these farms included food staples such as corn and wheat as well as cotton,

[192] Elias Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites" in *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, ed. Theda Perdue (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 72;

which Cherokees widely used to make their own clothes and sometimes even to sell as a cash crop. Cherokees no longer depended on hunting for survival, but obtained both food and clothing from agriculture. Both Boudinot and Ridge emphasized that no one hunted for a living. As the Removal debate increased, the pages of the *Cherokee Phoenix* began to fill with articles supporting this message and denying that the Cherokees depended on hunting for survival.[193] In 1830, Samuel Worcester wrote: "As to the wandering part of the people, who live by the chase, if they are to be found in the nation, I certainly have not found them, nor ever heard of them, except from the floor of Congress, and other distant sources of information."[194] Worcester, referring to the debates over the Indian Removal Act, made clear that the lies spread in the highest institutions of the United States were unfounded. The Cherokees made their clothes from the cotton they grew, and they used this fact as a defense against Removal.

Cherokees appealed to the paternalistic rhetoric of their time. As Joshua Nelson has noted, when men such as Elias Boudinot and John Ross used the language of "civilization" and "savagery," they did so not necessarily because they were opposed to Cherokee "tradition," as some historians have previously assumed, but because it was expedient to use the language with which Euro-Americans were familiar.[195] Cherokees thanked Americans for teaching them new methods of cloth manufacture and agriculture, preferring to let these "benevolent" men and women believe that the

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[193] Editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix*, February 21, 1828; Samuel A. Worcester to William S. Coodey, April 15, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830; Editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate,* April 21, 1830; Editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate*, May 1, 1830; Samuel A. Worcester, "Present Condition of the Indians," *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 1, 1830; "The Cherokee Indians," *Cherokee Phoenix*, August 12, 1829.
[194] Samuel A. Worcester to William S. Coodey, April 15, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830.
[195] Joshua Nelson, *Progressive Traditions: Identity in Cherokee Literature and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 165-200.

changes Cherokees had made were the result of acculturation. One article in the *Cherokee Phoenix* stated, "In times past, your compassions, yearned over our moral desolation, and the misery which was spreading among us though the failure of game our ancient resource. The cry of wretchedness reached your hearts; you supplied us with implements of husbandry, and domestic industry, which enabled us to provide food and clothing for ourselves."[196] Not everyone would, of course, characterize their past as a "cry of wretchedness," but this Cherokee was addressing his article to Euro-Americans. Showing the past benevolence of Euro-Americans was a method of trying to get these Americans to continue their benevolence and take the civilization plan to its obvious end by allowing the now civilized Cherokees to remain. This author, like so many others, was using the rhetoric and mindset of Euro-Americans for his own benefit. The Cherokees would get nowhere by claiming that their culture had always been one that should command respect. So they used the rhetoric of "savagery" and "civilization," only they did so in a way that demonstrated the respectability of their current culture and society. They may have had to seemingly denigrate their past, but they did so in order to fight for their present rights.

Euro-Americans sympathetic to the Cherokees followed suit. Thanks to the many efforts on the part of the Cherokees, it was a well-known fact that they had made considerable progress in Euro-American "civilization." Many Americans, particularly in New England, often praised the Cherokees, though often condescendingly, for their efforts at "civilization." Americans and Cherokees alike defended the right of the Cherokees to remain in their land based on the extent of acculturation. Under the

[196] *Cherokee Phoenix*, September 11, 1830.

pseudonym of William Penn, Jeremiah Evarts wrote a number of essays defending the Cherokees. One of his main arguments was based on the civilization of the Cherokees. Because they had given up hunting as an occupation, made Euro-American clothes on their looms, and generally acculturated, the Cherokees had a right to stay on their land. Evarts wrote that Cherokees could answer the Georgians' argument that Cherokees should be removed because they are "a vagrant, hunting and savage people" by pointing out, "As to our wandering about, we have not the time. … Not a family within our bounds derives its subsistence from the chase…. We have herds of cattle, farms and houses, mills and looms, clothing and furniture. We are not rich; but we contrive, by our industry, to provide against hunger and nakedness."[197] The Cherokees grew their own cotton and used their own tools to make their own clothes which, despite certain differences, possessed the qualities of civilization according to Euro-American standards. Due to this, some Americans believed the Cherokees deserved to remain on the land. The Cherokees had succeeded in developing styles of clothing that satisfied some Euro-Americans, and this remained an important argument against Removal.

Cherokees told the world that Removal would not only stop their progress in civilization, but would reverse it. Cherokees would be forced to abandon their well-established fields of cotton and corn, their looms and spinning wheels, and their comfortable, civilized life. They would be forced into the wilderness to once more take up a life of hunting. They would have to rely on the chase for their food and clothing. Reminding the government of "the progress which under your auspices we have made,"

[197] William Penn, "No. XV," *Essays on the Present Crisis in the Condition of the American Indians; First Published in The National Intelligencer, Under the Signature of William Penn* (Philadelphia: Thomas Kite, 1830), 55-56, microfilm.

one memorial of the Cherokee Nation stated that consenting to remove meant "abandoning the high road by which they had been advancing from savagism."[198] Removal was a great evil because it would completely undo all the "progress" the Cherokees had made as a result of following the Euro-Americans' example.

Cherokees carefully constructed Euro-American perceptions of their clothing in a way that reflected not simply a desire for the truth to be known, but a sophisticated presentation of themselves that focused more on political expediency than the reality of Cherokee sartorial identity. Cherokees carefully depicted the changes in clothing they had undergone as evidence of acculturation. Cherokee identity was undeniably present in their dress, but they carefully emphasized the apparent Euro-American aspects.

This was so successful that many Euro-American picked up on it, emphasizing the supposed Euro-American quality of Cherokee dress, and perhaps even misinterpreting Cherokee intentions in the process. In 1830, Samuel Worcester reported that he had found only two very old women who were willing to appear in the older style of dress. He had seen "three or four, only, who had at their own houses dressed themselves in the Indian styles, but hid themselves with shame at the approach of a stranger." Though a few might have been comfortable wearing such clothing at home, they apparently were not comfortable wearing it around anyone else. According to Worcester, Cherokees, especially women, wore clothes influenced by Euro-American standards, and they were ashamed to do otherwise. But this hesitation to wear the older style of clothing may have been due to the fact that Worcester was a Euro-American. These few older Cherokees Worcester saw were apparently quite willing to wear older

[198] "The Memorial and Petition of the Undersigned a Delegation Appointed by the Cherokee Nation in Full Council," February 22, 1837, 25th Congress, HR 25A-G7.2

fashions at home among their own people. Of the two women who, in Worcester's eyes, exhibited no sense of "shame" regarding their dress, one was away from home, and thus, by implication, was perfectly willing to present herself in the older style of dress. The other woman was at home, but Worcester contrasted her with the women who hid by noting that "she appeared willing to be seen in original native dress." These women, both "aged" were the exception. The other women Worcester had seen wearing the older style of dress hid when Worcester, a white man, came to visit. These women were apparently not "willing to be seen" in such attire. The supposed shame of being caught wearing these garments by a white man may have actually been due to a general cultural desire among the Cherokees to present themselves in a particular way to Euro-Americans. In fact, it is entirely possible that a great many more Cherokees adhered to an older style of clothing than Worcester believed. It certainly appears that Cherokees presented themselves as more acculturated in dress than they actually were.[199]

This exaggeration may in part be due to a long history of traditional diplomatic protocol that created fictive kinship ties. Laura E. Johnson writes that during the colonial period the indigenous adoption of cloth served specific diplomatic purposes. Gifts of clothing or cloth created bonds of fictive kinship, and thus were important symbols of the relationship between traders and Natives.[200] Wearing European clothing showed a close relationship with Europeans. Native leaders and interpreters often wore this clothing during negotiations, and it could serve as a way for Euro-Americans to

[199] Samuel A. Worcester to William S. Coodey, April 15, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830.
[200] Laura E. Johnson, "'Goods to clothe themselves': Native Consumers and Native Images on the Pennsylvania Trading Frontier, 1712–1760." *Winterthur Portfolio* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 118.

identify leaders and navigate relations.[201] Clothing was thus used to symbolize American Indians' relations with Euro-Americans.

But in this period, there was an even deeper political reason for presenting a more acculturated picture of their clothing. Cherokees were not merely trying to establish or maintain good relations with colonial powers, but endeavoring to prove their right to remain based on their extent of acculturation. Clothing was an important tool for communicating this. Borrowing from Richard White, Timothy J. Shannon writes that clothing can help form a "middle ground," where inhabitants use clothing in diplomacy and trade to reinvent themselves by changing their clothing depending on the audience.[202] While the concept of the "middle ground" does not quite apply to this situation, it does appear that Cherokees were careful to manipulate Euro-American perceptions of themselves by the clothing they wore. They used clothing to seemingly transform their identity.

It is thus possible that a lot of the anti-Removal rhetoric was not always accurate when it came to Cherokee clothing. Cherokees and anti-Removal Euro-Americans often emphasized acculturation at the expense of Cherokee identity, because Cherokees understood the importance of dress in diplomacy. What mattered was presenting themselves in the best possible light in order to control Euro-American perceptions. Thus, Cherokees such as the women who hesitated to appear before a white man in more traditional Cherokee clothing may have done so because of a desire to control how

[201] Ibid., 118; 127-128.
[202] Timothy J. Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53 no. 1 (January 1996): 12-42; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Euro-Americans perceived their sartorial identity. They were apparently perfectly comfortable wearing much more traditional clothing around other Cherokees, but did not wish to do so in front of Euro-Americans. Worcester interpreted this hesitation as modesty and a sense of shame in the older style of dress, but this was most likely related to diplomatic policy. These women may have even wished to communicate a supposed sense of shame in this style of dress, and they certainly did not want to represent themselves to Worcester in such clothing. The women's reaction most likely lay not in an abhorrence to the older style of Cherokee dress, but a desire to present a different sartorial identity to Euro-Americans than they did to fellow members of their Nation.

This manipulation of outward identity may also shed light on the narratives of sartorial transformation told by prominent Cherokees such as John Ross and Elias Boudinot. Cherokees did not need to simply demonstrate the civilized aspect of their dress, but the change from savagery to civilization. Due to increased racialization and the narrative that Indians were naturally savage, Cherokees had to prove that they had changed out of a savage state, and these men's stories of the difficult transformation from traditional Cherokee clothing to supposedly complete Euro-American dress helped to accomplish this.[203]

In the inaugural issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Elias Boudinot laid out the purpose of the newspaper. One of the reasons for the paper was to show the world that Cherokees and other tribes were capable of civilization and did not need to be removed.

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[203] Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America: Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of Ninety-Five of 120 Principal Chiefs from the Indian Tribes of North America* (Washington: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1967), 440; Samuel A. Worcester to William S. Coodey, April 15, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians Advocate*, May 8, 1830.

The paper would correct any misinformation about the "present state of the Cherokees." The Cherokees had made a great deal of progress and had come out of a state of "ignorance" to become a civilized people. Boudinot wrote, "There was a time within our remembrance … when it was thought a disgrace, for a Cherokee to appear in the costume of a white man. We mention these things … to shew to our readers that it is not a visionary thing to attempt to civilize and christianize all the Indians, but highly practicable." Cherokees purposefully used print culture to fight against Removal by showing the world that they had become civilized, and their transformation in dress was an important part of their argument. While most Cherokees would not consider themselves to be dressed "in the costume of a white man," they used print culture to present themselves in exactly this manner. Cherokees had transformed from wearing savage clothing to dressing just like white men, they argued, and it was this transformation that played such an important role in the Removal debates.[204]

Cherokees were so successful in presenting themselves as "civilized" that advocates of Removal were forced to expend great efforts attempting to counteract Cherokee print culture. With all the information about Cherokee progress spreading throughout the United States, they had difficulty in depicting Cherokees as savage. Essentially, Removal advocates had three options. They could argue that Removal would make the Cherokees more civilized and would be a way of avoiding unstoppable Euro-American encroachment. They could also argue that all Indians, including Cherokees, were the same, and were not capable of becoming civilized. This involved rather vague descriptions of all Indians feeding and clothing themselves off "the chase."

[204] "To the Public," *Cherokee Phoenix*, February 21, 1828.

The third option was to spread specific, outright lies of Cherokee savagery. Removal advocates used all three of these options, and all involved portraying Cherokees as dressing in an uncivilized manner.

In order to present Cherokees as uncivilized, pro-Removalists had to clothe them with savage dress. Nothing demonstrates this more than the events surrounding the 1830 eviction of a group of white intruders on Cherokee land, made famous by Abraham Birdwell's "eyewitness" account. Cherokees and Euro-Americans fought over the depictions of the dress of specific Cherokee individuals in order to influence particular events. This was much more than vague accusations of general backwardness or descriptions of relative civilization. In this case, the debate had moved to precise, detailed accusations, and dress formed a central role in the controversy over Cherokee land rights. While anti-Removal activists easily saw through Abraham Birdwell's description of events, many historians accepted the supposed buffalo headdress as fact.[205] A closer examination of the Cherokees' use of print culture, however, reveals a different story.

What really lay behind the reason for the fires Birdwell described was simply an official removal of white intruders in Cherokee territory. The Cherokees had complained to the U.S. government about the intruders, and the government promised multiple times to solve the problem, even going so far as to warn the intruders to leave

[205] *Voices from the Trail of Tears*, ed. Viki Rozema (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2003), 47, Thurma Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 204-5. While Marion Starkey hesitated to accept as fact Birdwell's version of events, he believed there was likely truth in them. Starkey, *The Cherokee Nation*, 115. John Ehle, in a highly imaginative narrative of this event, described Ridge as "trying to look fierce" in a quite astonishing way; John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 226-7.

by December 15.[206] The Indian agent, however, hesitated to comply with these orders, citing the need for troops to successfully accomplish the mission, and thus nothing came of the promises.[207] The Cherokees waited until well after the date the intruders were supposed to leave, and then decided to remove the intruders themselves, stating they had a legal right to do so according to the Treaty of Hopewell.[208] According to John Ross, when a party of Cherokees went to remove them, they burned down the houses in which the intruders were squatting –houses, incidentally, which belonged to the Cherokees, despite claims to the contrary—for the simple reason that they believed the intruders would not leave otherwise.[209] The Georgians were infuriated at this, and the sheriff of Carroll county invaded the Cherokee Nation with a party of approximately twenty-five men. They found four of the men who had accomplished the removal of intruders, and after taking them prisoners, the posse murdered one of them and severely wounded another.[210]

Anticipating the storm that happened as a result of these events, the *Cherokee Phoenix* published their own story as a preventative measure for false reports about the

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[206] Hugh Montgomery, "Notice," April 2, 1829 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Land*, 9; Cherokee Deputation from the Nation East &etc. to the Secretary of War, February 11, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 27; The Secretary of War to Colonel H. Montgomery, Indian Agent &c., October 9, 1829 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 18; The Secretary of War to Colonel H. Montgomery, Indian Agent &c., October 13, 1829 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 19.

[207] Colonel Montgomery to John Ross, September 3, 1829 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 17.

[208] Cherokee Delegation to the Secretary of War, February 25, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 33.

[209] John Ross to Elias Boudinot, February 13, 1830 in in *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), Volume 1, 184-187; George R. Gilmer to John H. Eaton, February 15, 1830. In *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 29; H. Montgomery to the Secretary of War, February 18, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 30; Cherokee Delegation to the Secretary of War, February 25, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 34.

[210] John Ross to Elias Boudinot, February 13, 1830 in in *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), Volume 1, 184-187. While John Ross puts the number at about twenty-five, Colonel Montgomery stated that according to Alexander Birdwell, the number of men the sheriff had with him was twenty. H. Montgomery to the Secretary of War, February 18, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 30.

eviction of intruders. John Ross wrote a letter describing what really happened, "With the view of preventing erroneous impressions from growing out of the various reports which will no doubt be circulated," and Elias Boudinot, anticipating "much ado about 'Indian troubles,'" printed a copy in the *Cherokee Phoenix*, trusting that "the reflecting part of the community" would take the Cherokee side of the matter after reading Ross' account. In appealing to Euro-Americans even before the pro-Removalists could effectively spread their version of events abroad, the Cherokees were already one step ahead of the Georgian newspapers.[211]

But pro-Removalists seized the opportunity to capitalize on this incident. If they could depict Cherokees as savage warriors leading an unprovoked "Indian attack," against the defenseless white settlers, then what heralded potential disaster could be turned into yet another reason for Removal. So it happened that the only eyewitness account of the incident accepted by the U.S. government described the Cherokees in savage clothing, and Abraham Birdwell was not afraid to give vivid details.

While Birdwell contented himself with generalities about the dress of the other warriors, he delved into the specifics of Ridge's costume: "Ridge himself was clothed in all the garb of Indian warfare, viz: his head dress was a buffalo's forehead & horns, &c."[212] Besides the fact that Cherokees did not wear buffalo headdresses into battle, the inaccuracy of this report becomes clear in considering the highly Euro-American style that seemed to characterize Major Ridge's wardrobe (see figure 1). While it is unclear what Ridge was actually wearing, he may have been dressed more like a Euro-

[211] *Cherokee Phoenix*, February 17, 1830; John Ross to Elias Boudinot, February 13, 1830 in *Cherokee Phoenix*, February 17, 1830.
[212] Birdwell, 30.

American gentleman than anyone else present, including the white intruders, who, after all, seemed to have occupied a low position in Georgian society.[213] But rendering an accurate account of clothing would have pointed Euro-Americans to the idea that this was a lawful, peaceful, and even "civilized" expulsion of worthless vagrants. Instead, Birdwell had to depict the leader of the group, the one who had the greatest official sanction, as savage. Dressing him in barbarous clothing was the only way to confer savagery on this man, for no one dressing as a Euro-American gentleman could be capable of such an act.

Birdwell was not the only one to use dress in this battle. Colonel Hugh Montgomery, U.S. Indian Agent, accepted the testimony of Alexander Birdwell, writing, "It would seem that the conduct and very dress of the Indians was of the most terrific kind." Though he was careful to note that this did not justify murder, Montgomery still believed the Cherokees had acted savagely, and he used their supposedly "terrific" dress as evidence.[214] Even the Governor of Georgia weighed in on the situation, describing the Indians as "painted and armed," two things which apparently went together in the eyes of this man. He had not, of course, seen them with his own eyes, but claimed to be repeating what others had said. Outraged at this event, the governor did his best to portray the Cherokees as the savage wrongdoers, and tried

[213] Colonel Montgomery to Colonel McKenney, April 23, 1825, in *Intrusions on Cherokee lands*, 2; John Ross to Elias Boudinot, February 13, 1830, in *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 184-187. For visual examples of Major Ridge's attire, see *Major Ridge, Portrait of Cherokee Indian*, Smithsonian American Art Museum; Charles Bird King, *Major Ridge*, in Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principle Chiefs, Embellished with One Hundred and Twenty Portraits, from the Indian Gallery in the Department of Washington (Philadelphia: J. T. Bowen, 1848-1850), vol. 2. Major Ridge was a prominent man who owned a plantation. As noted in chapter 2, Ridge opposed the burning of Euro-American clothing in the Cherokee Revival Movement.
[214] H. Montgomery to the Secretary of War, February 18, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 30.

to capitalize on the situation by attempting to protect the supposedly innocent white citizens. He believed the white intruders deserved to remain on the Cherokee land, and he used the supposedly savage dress and conduct of the Cherokees in an attempt to convince the president to bring in the U.S. army and change the balance of power in favor of the intruders.[215]

Newspaper editors were quick to pick up on this incident. Many newspaper articles described the fire and assigned blame to the Cherokees, sometimes mentioning the murder of Cheewoyee without informing readers that armed white intruders, not the Cherokees, were responsible, and quite often questioning the accuracy of the Cherokee reports.[216] The author of one article described Ridge as "dressed in his Buffalo's head and horns, brandishing his tomahawk over suffering females and children," and suggested that a portrait be made of this "enlightened leader of the Cherokee nation." This is exactly the scene Birdwell's description was meant to conjure up. Euro-Americans associated this "Indian" headdress with savage violence, and the frightening description of dress showed that this supposedly "enlightened" man was a savage after all, at least according to the author.[217] It was clothing that marked the difference between "savages" and "civilized" people, so proponents of the Georgians' rights to Cherokee land used it to depict Cherokees as violent savages, all the while depicting

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[215] George R. Gilmer to John H. Eaton, February 15, 1830 in *Intrusions on Cherokee Lands*, 29.
[216] *Rhode Island Republican*, March 11, 1830, *America's Historical Newspapers*; "Indian Hostilities," *Georgian*, February 20, 1830, *America's Historical Newspapers*; "Indian Hostilities," Augusta Chronicle, February 24, 1830, reprint from the *Savannah Georgian*, *America's Historical Newspapers*; "Georgia and the Cherokees," *Daily National Intelligencer*, February 25, 1830, *America's Historical Newspapers*; "Indian Hostilities," *Alexandria Gazette*, March 1, 1830, reprint from the *Savannah Georgian*, America's Historical Newspapers; *Evening Post*, March 1, 1830, *America's Historical Newspapers*; "Georgia and the Cherokees," March 2, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; "Cherokees," *Evening Post*, March 5, 1830, reprint from *The Washington Telegraph*, *America's Historical Newspapers*.
[217] "Indian Affairs," *The Georgian*, April 17, 1830.

intruders as innocent victims who had a right to the land. It did not matter what the Cherokees actually wore; what mattered was controlling what people believed the Cherokees wore.

Clothing thus played a role in deciding Cherokee land rights, and Cherokees were quick to refute the lies spread by Georgians. They presented their own version of what happened, using print culture and their political connections to set matters straight. When Abraham Birdwell's version began to circulate, Cherokee leaders began contradicting it. The *Cherokee Phoenix* printed part of the report of the Secretary of War, responding with a vehement contradiction of Birdwell's account and Montgomery's response. The editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* described Birdwell's statement as "made up of falsehoods" and made sure the readers knew Major Ridge was not dressed in a buffalo headdress. In fact, Boudinot knew his readers would see that this was preposterous, and he wrote that anyone present on the fateful day in January would answer the question, "Was Major Ridge dressed in the manner he is herein described?" by giving a much different account than Birdwell did.[218]

The Cherokees were adept at the use of print culture as well as political diplomacy, and Boudinot was right in supposing that "the reflecting part of the community," or at least those sympathetic to the Cherokees, would accept the version of events printed in the *Cherokee Phoenix*. The Cherokees may not have won everyone to their side, but they were certainly not uselessly running up against a stone wall when they sought to control Euro-American perceptions of Cherokees and their dress. Many newspapers around the country reprinted articles from the *Cherokee Phoenix* describing

[218] *Cherokee Phoenix*, May 8, 1830

these events, and while some suggested that this version was biased, others accepted the Cherokees' side of the story and criticized the Georgians' actions.[219] One newspaper editor, seeing the ways others were using this event to justify Removal, printed John Ross' description of events that appeared in the February 17th issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix* in order to influence the political situation. He directly connected this episode to Indian Removal and discussed the possible effects on government policy. "The manifesto of John Ross bears all the marks of a simple tale of truth. But … we fear it will be made a mere party question on the floor of Congress, although we can but hope for a different issue." While this editor worried that public opinion would not be enough to sway Congress, the Cherokees' effective use of print culture had certainly convinced him and many others to enter the fray.[220]

As visible as this incident was in print culture, it remains unusual in that most Removal advocates generally had to content themselves with spreading much vaguer accusations of Cherokee savagery. In fact, Cherokees were so successful in presenting themselves as "civilized" that pro-Removal advocates had to address this. They were often forced to accept the Cherokee terms of the debate, and even tried to use Cherokee progress as a reason for Removal. At the same time that many pushed the idea that

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[219] "Cherokees and Georgians," *New York Spectator*, March 9, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; "Cherokees and Georgians," *Brattleboro Messenger*, March 19, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; for examples of articles reprinted from the Cherokee Phoenix, see *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, March 8, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; "The Cherokees and Georgians," *Commercial Advertiser*, March 6, 1830. America's Historical Newspapers; "Georgia and the Cherokees," *Daily National Intelligencer*, February 25, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; *Evening Post,* March 1, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser,* March 4, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; "Indian Affairs," *Spectator*, March 5, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; *Boston Courier*, March 8, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers; *Georgian,* February 27, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers.

[220] "The Cherokees and Georgians," *Commercial Advertiser*, March 6, 1830. America's Historical Newspapers; "The Cherokees and Georgians," *New York Spectator*, March 9, 1830, America's Historical Newspapers.

Cherokees hunted for a living and therefore needed to be removed to a place where game abounded, others purported that Removal would civilize the Cherokees. One report of the Committee of Indian Affairs, for example, emphasized the fact that the Cherokees who had removed to Arkansas had made considerable progress in civilization. While they had removed for the purpose of continuing the life of the chase, they had undergone substantial improvement, and dressed in a very civilized manner. As the authors state, "They are settled in their habits, generally employed in agriculture and live and dress comfortably, after the American costume." The proof of their civilization lay in their "American" clothing and the pervasive practice of growing cotton, harvesting wool, and spinning and weaving. The commissioners went on to write, "Nearly all their females know how to spin and weave the cotton and wool produced by their people, and are furnished with the means of doing so. In all these respects their improvement has been great, and is growing every year." As a sign of the high degree of civilization attained by the Arkansas Cherokees, they had not only transitioned from hunting to agriculture, but had taken up cloth production.[221]

Ignoring the same "progress" of the eastern Cherokees, the Committee chose to focus their efforts on praising those who had removed. Silence is often just as important as what people actually say, and this case is no different. The silence concerning the accomplishments of the eastern Cherokees was meant to implicate that these Cherokees were savages, and actually more "backward" than their counterparts who had removed. The commissioners portrayed the Arkansas Cherokees as civilized

[221] "Report of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of War," February 18, 1837. Committee of Indian Affairs, HR23A-D8.3. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

by focusing on their clothing, and implied that the eastern Cherokees would also become civilized through the process of Removal. They too would learn to wear "the American costume."

In addition, this same report held out the promise that the Western lands had great potential for sheepherding. Cherokees would benefit from removing because the land would be already cleared for planting, and any land that was not good enough for cultivation could be used for grazing sheep. Cherokees could then clothe themselves and harvest so much wool that factories in the East would start buying wool from the Cherokees, creating enormous potential for profit for these poor Indians. The Committee even promised that "they will yield two fifths more *per capita* than they can in the East."[222] In other words, the western lands were a veritable promised land for wool and cloth production, and Cherokees would finally would finally become civilized and perhaps even rich by producing wool.

One of the more common strategies Removal advocates used was to lump all Indians together, describing every single Indian tribe as savage and uncivilized. During the Removal debates, one Congressman, for example, said that all Indians "are essentially hunters, fed and clothed from the products of the chase." If all Indians could be portrayed as savages dressed through such a lazy and "disgraceful employment," then the Cherokees would be included, despite the fact that they made much of their clothing from the cotton they themselves grew.[223]

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[222] Ibid.

[223] *Register of Debates in Congress, Comprising the Leading Debates and Incidents of the First Session of the Twenty-First Congress*, House of Representatives, May 19, 1830, 1092. *University of North Texas Digital Library*.

This willful act of ignoring reality was part of the process of racialization, as these Euro-Americans purported that all Indians were by definition "savage" and could not become civilized. As another pro-Removal congressman put it, it was not only impossible for any Indians to give up the chase and take up agriculture, but "it would be worse than Algerine slavery."[224] As these men argued, if a few of the "mixed bloods" bettered their situation, it was only because the white blood in their veins had given them a propensity towards greed. Another Congressman purported that progress among the Cherokees was only confined to the few whites or descendants of whites in the country, and that these "lords and rulers" used the government annuities to feed and clothe themselves while the "real Indians" still lived in savagery.[225] Thus, any example of "civilized" clothing was a result of white people enriching themselves off of the government, rather than an example of Cherokee industry.[226]

There was danger in these assertions, because if they gained ground, then Cherokees, no matter how "civilized" they actually were, would still be considered "savage." So Cherokees worked hard to counteract these arguments, not simply by listing their accomplishments, but by comparing themselves to other tribes. Kathleen DuVal discusses a similar phenomenon in *The Native Ground*. She writes that Native Americans were able to control Euro-American perceptions of themselves, and that this played an important role in sustaining their political power. Cherokees in Arkansas used this tactic to portray themselves as more civilized than their Osage neighbors in

[224] Ibid., 1109.
[225] Ibid., May 17, 1830, 1022.
[226] Alexandra Harmon writes that Euro-Americans often viewed the wealth of Native Americans with suspicion, and that many believed Cherokee economic prosperity was the result of a few men gaining riches by exploiting the "real Indians. Alexandra Harmon, *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 92-132.

order to get the U.S. government to take their side.[227] Though the Osages were often the specific target of this argument, as they were a direct challenge, Cherokees used the same argument against other tribes.

As Removal efforts increased, Cherokees endeavored to position themselves as more civilized than the other tribes in an effort to show that they, at least, were worthy of remaining on their land. Some even applied this argument to the other "five civilized tribes," stating that Cherokees were so much more civilized they did not even bear comparison. One article in the *Cherokee Phoenix* discusses "the degraded state" and "rapid decline" of the neighboring Creeks. Admitting the supposedly uncivilized nature of the Creek Indians, the author refused to accept that the Cherokees were in a similar state. Cherokees were well aware of the rhetoric that portrayed all Indians as "savage," and some believed it was politically expedient to accept the savagery of most Indians while showing themselves to be different. As this author stated, "We protest against associating the Cherokees with them under the general name of 'Southern Indians,' as we have noticed in some of the northern prints." Even some of the New Englanders were guilty of lumping all Indians together, and Cherokees did not appreciate this. One of the strengths of their position was the highly visible nature of their particular tribe. Many anti-Removal activists concentrated on the "civilized" nature of the Cherokees, arguing that Cherokees had a right to remain because they were more civilized than the other tribes. Cherokees and whites alike used this same argument, and Cherokees went so far as to "protest" those who refused to do so.[228]

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[227] Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 217-226.
[228] *Cherokee Phoenix*, July 23, 1828.

As always, dress played a role in this argument. Even with his mind on the immediate threat of Removal, John Ross took time to criticize a group of Plains Indians he encountered in Washington, D.C. as he advocated for the Cherokee people in the fall of 1837. In a letter to George Lowrey, assistant principle chief, Ross stated, "These people are more in the primitive state than any tribe of Indians I have ever before seen, excepting the Osages. Paint, Feathers & Skins are their principle dress, and their bodies generally bear [sic]."[229] It was their dress that made these Indians "primitive" in the eyes of John Ross. When Ross described them as "primitive," he did so with the understanding that Cherokees dressed in a civilized manner. He did not deny the idea that Indians generally dressed in a "primitive state," but by exhibiting shock at the way these Indians dressed, he positioned himself as a "civilized" man. "Civilized" people, after all, not only wore "civilized" clothing, but also criticized anyone who did not. These acts of criticism were the Cherokees' way of positioning themselves among the civilizers, not merely the civilized. They not only dressed in a civilized manner, but knew how to recognize who was civilized and who was not.

Knowing the political nature of "civilized" dress, Ross was still careful to point out that the Osages were more "primitive" than the Indians he saw in Washington. Ross did not merely use the political categories of "civilized" and "uncivilized" as a tool to position himself in the most "civilized" manner he possibly could. He knew the full meaning of these categories, and thus exploited them in the fullest possible way. Ross carefully worked to manipulate everyone's perceptions, trying to persuade both Euro-

[229] John Ross to George Lowrey, October 1837, in *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), Volume 1, 529. For a similar description, see John Ross to James C. Martin, November 5, 1837 in in *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), Volume 1, 536.

Americans and Native Americans of the relative civilization of the Cherokees and other tribes. After all, Ross was writing this letter to a fellow Cherokee, not a white man. He also knew who his enemies were, and was careful to describe them as the most "primitive" of all. This was not merely about fighting Euro-American oppression, but seeking political domination and ascendency over other Native American tribes. Ross knew that clothing was a political tool even for this, and he did not let the larger problem of Removal distract him from this purpose.[230]

In 1835, a handful of Cherokees illegally signed the Treaty of New Echota. Many of them believed their best strategy was to accept Removal on the best terms they could get, and thus the U.S. government gained a piece of paper that ostensibly provided for the forced migration of the Cherokee Nation. Cherokees continued to protest Removal, and both sides used clothing in their arguments. But shortly before and during the Removal process, those in charge of Removal attempted to use clothing as an incentive (or threat) to remove, and they increasingly concentrated on trying to use it as a way of making Removal seem like a benevolent action.

The debates over clothing continued all the way through the Removal process. As Removal drew near, Euro-Americans continued to push the idea that Cherokees were destitute of clothing and would jump at the chance to exchange their land for a blanket, a rifle, and a bit of food. On June 12, 1838, Congress appropriated $100,000 for supplying clothing, blankets, and medicine to the poor Cherokees.[231] This sent the message that Cherokees were incapable of providing clothing for themselves. While

[230] Ibid.
[231] *Cherokee Indians: Message of the President of the United States*, 30th Congress, 1st session, May 20, 1848, Ex. Doc. 65, 6. Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/cherokeeindiansm00unit (accessed February 9, 2017).

Cherokee desperately needed items of clothing on the Trail of Tears, this need was a result of the inhumane actions of Euro-Americans, and many in charge of the Removal process used these "gifts" of clothing paint Euro-Americans as benevolent and Cherokees as desperate savages who needed to be removed.

Those in charge of the Removal process tried to use clothing as an incentive. In the official orders for Removal, Winfield Scott wrote, "By early and persevering acts of kindness and humanity, it is impossible to doubt that the Indians may soon be induced to confide in the army, and instead of fleeing to mountains and forests, flock to us for food and clothing."[232] Because of the poverty of these poor savage Indians, they would easily be won over by a little food and clothing; or at least, that is what Scott wanted the public to believe. Cherokees needed clothing, and the United States was being kind by offering it to them. This was yet another attempt to make Removal look benevolent. Time and time again, pro-Removal Americans argued that Removal was a kindness because the Indians were savage and poor, desperate for food and clothing, and only fighting for their land because the few rich elites in the Cherokee Nation were deceiving them.

In 1837, John E. Wool, trying hard to get the Cherokees to voluntarily remove, wrote, "If you apply to me or my Agents, I will cause rations, blankets and clothing to be furnished to the poor and destitute of your people." Wool tried to use the promise of clothing for the supposedly "destitute" Cherokees as an incentive for Removal. The U.S. government would clothe all the poor Cherokees who could not clothe themselves, and who the other Cherokees were apparently incapable of helping. Wool also held this

[232] Winfield Scott, Order No. 25, May 17, 1838. *Correspondence of the Eastern Division pertaining to Cherokee removal, April-December 1838*, microfilm, National Archives and Records Service.

promise out as a threat: if the Cherokees did not remove voluntarily, they would be forced out, without any of the promised blankets and clothing. Their condition would be "Deplorable in the extreme!" Three times in the same handbill Wool held out the promised clothing and blankets as an incentive or threat to try and get the Cherokees to voluntarily remove.[233]

It is difficult to know whether or not Scott and the others actually believed that Cherokees would respond to these "acts of kindness" and be induced to leave their land for a little food and a few pieces of clothing, but these Euro-Americans certainly did their best to persuade both Cherokees and other Americans that Removal was benevolent. Again and again they sent the same message that the U.S. government would clothe the poor Cherokees, but this did not attract very many.

Agents of the U.S. government tried to give food and clothing to individual Cherokees in hopes they would remove. It appears there was often deception in these transactions, and many of the Cherokees who had accepted these items refused to remove and accused the agents of having lied to them. Evan Jones wrote that one man had worked for a whole year to try to enroll the people of the Valley Towns and had given out rations, but in the end, only two remained to be seen from all his effort. One man, in finding out the purpose of these efforts, took out his knife and refused to remove, accusing the agents of deceiving him.[234]

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[233] John E. Wool to Cherokees, March 22 1837. the Penelope Johnson Allen Cherokee Collection, 1775-1878, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, microfilm.
[234] Evan Jones to John Ross, November 10, 1837 in *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, edited by Gary Moulton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), Volume I, 547.

At a meeting with Cherokee leaders, the U.S. government offered the Cherokees shoes and blankets as part of the Removal agreement.[235] This focus on shoes and blankets was not random. For Euro-Americans, being barefoot was a sign of both poverty and backwardness, and thus giving away shoes to "poor and destitute" Cherokees was a way of depicting them as languishing in a savage and desperate condition, despite the fact that Cherokees found moccasins to work quite well. Euro-Americans considered blankets to be characteristic of Native American society, and thus a sign of backwardness and savagery. At this point some Cherokees still wore blankets, but fashion had changed, and men generally wore hunting jackets, while shawls were becoming more common for women. But the idea that "savages" wore blankets persisted, and Euro-Americans often depicted Native Americans as wearing these items in an effort to show their inferiority. Thus, giving Cherokees blankets to wear made the statement that these Cherokees were savages just like all the other tribes, and that they were so poor they did not even have enough to go around.

Of course, the need for items of clothing during the desperate march on the Trail of Tears did not result from general Cherokee poverty and ineptitude. U.S. soldiers forcibly removed the Cherokees from their homes, and some only had the clothes on their back. They were generally allowed to take only whatever possessions happened to be at hand, and only what they could carry.[236] This removal from their homes happened in the summer, and thus many Cherokees were without adequate clothing and blankets

[235] Lewis Ross to John Ross, Cherokee Agency, February 18, 1837, in the Penelope Johnson Allen Cherokee Collection, 1775-1878, box 1 file 24, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, microfilm.
[236] Evan Jones, Camp Hetzel, near Cleveland, June 16 in *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, eds. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green (Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995), 165.

to survive the winter. Evan Jones described many of them as "but thinly clad" in weather that was "exceedingly cold."[237]

Unfortunately, the articles of clothing promised to the Cherokees were offered as an incentive to remove or, in many cases, an effort to entrap the Cherokees through deception. They were given out in the years before the Removal, not during the during the difficult months when the Cherokees needed them most. Undoubtedly many of the few Cherokees who did receive these items were not allowed to take them on the journey. Thus Cherokees suffered greatly for want of clothing during the journey.

Many white southerners, particularly the Georgians, plundered the possessions the Cherokees were forced to leave behind.[238] James Mooney wrote that they even resorted to robbing the graves of Cherokees to obtain the valuable silver ornaments worn throughout the Nation.[239] These Euro-Americans may have claimed the Cherokees wore savage dress, but it was apparently not savage enough to keep them from desiring it.

Cherokees had enough clothing, blankets, and moccasins, but many were forced to leave these behind. In effect, the United States stole these items from the Cherokees and then accused them of being poor, impoverished people who needed the benevolent U.S. government's help in order to survive. They offered a few blankets and shoes to

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[237] Evan Jones, December 30, 1838, in *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, eds. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green (Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995), 167.
[238] Evan Jones, Camp Hetzel, near Cleveland, June 16 in *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, eds. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green (Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995), 165.
[239] James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (1900; repr., Nashville: Charles Elder, 1972), 130.

the Cherokees to show how good the government was to provide for these helpless people in exchange for giving up their few tired-out acres for a supposed promised land.

The Cherokees saw what lay behind all this supposed benevolence, and when the U.S. soldiers offered them blankets, shoes, and clothes, many took time to eloquently refuse. Shoes would give them blisters, Cherokees argued, and they were perfectly capable of providing for themselves. They neither wanted nor needed any clothing from the Euro-Americans. White Path, a man who had fought hard to retain Cherokee traditions, said that because he was so old and had so much to carry already, a blanket would be too heavy for him.[240] These Cherokees insisted on wearing their own clothes, not those given by the hand of a condescending nation who tried so hard to make barbarous acts look benevolent. As they walked the Trail of Tears, they wore their own shoes. They wore their own hunting shirts, their own leggings, their own dresses, coats, and turbans. They wore their identity.

The debate surrounding clothing did not end with Removal, for it went much deeper than a struggle over land. On June 6, 1917, the newest edition to the U.S. Statutory Hall was unveiled. The state of Oklahoma had chosen a statue of Sequoyah, one of the most iconic figures of Cherokee history, and a man who, according to his contemporaries, dressed in traditional Cherokee dress.[241] But when the plans for the statue were announced, the Cherokees were incensed to find out that the designer had depicted Sequoyah in a blanket. One described this depiction as "a slur on our

[240] Lewis Ross to John Ross, Cherokee Agency, February 18, 1837, in the Penelope Johnson Allen Cherokee Collection, 1775-1878, box 1 file 24, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, microfilm.
[241] Major Lowry, "The Life of George Gist," in *John Howard Payne Letters Concerning Missions and the Relations of the-Cherokees and the Government*, (Chicago: Newberry Library), 2:78, microfilm.

kinsman," and another wrote, "No, the Cherokees will never accept the statue of Sequoyah without vigorous protest" if he was dressed in such a manner.[242] Cherokees remembered the importance of dress, and a veritable debate occurred about what clothing the statue of Sequoyah should feature. Various opinions appeared in Oklahoma newspapers, just as clothing had been a feature of the Removal debate. Cherokees were still fighting for sartorial identity and were concerned with how to present themselves to Euro-Americans. Many wanted to make clear that Cherokees at this time were no longer "blanket Indians," but wore hunting jackets instead.[243] When the protests became vociferous, the artist brought in the famous ethnographer James Mooney as a consultant.[244] Mooney, insisting he had carefully researched the manner and looked into all the appropriate sources, wrote, "All are unanimous that the Cherokees, like every other tribe east of the Rockies, wore the blanket as an essential part of full dress."[245]

The Cherokees did not agree. Black Fox wrote, "The Cherokees were never a blanket-wearing Indian and in Sequoyah's day they were far enough advanced in civilization to adopt the ways and costumes of the white man."[246] The issue of pre-

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[242] Black Fox, letter to the editor, *Muscogee Times-Democrat*, July 2, 1915.
[243] See, for example, Black Fox, letter to the editor, *Muscogee Times-Democrat*, July 2, 1915; "Picturesque National Costume of Cherokees is now Obsolete," *Tulsa World*, October 24, 1915, America's Historical Newspapers; "Was Not a 'Blanket Indian': Want Statue of Sequoyah Garbed in his Accustomed Habit," *Tulsa Daily World*, February 23, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers; "Question Garb of Sequoyah: Oklahomans Say Statue of Cherokee Should Not Be a Blanket Indian," *Dallas Morning News*, July 10, 1915, America's Historical Newspapers; S.W. Ross, "Question of Whether Sequoyah Was Full-Blood Indian Has Been Raised as Sculptor Chisels for Memorial Hall," *Tulsa Daily World*, July 25, 1915, America's Historical Newspapers; Mrs. Tom McSpadden, letter to the editor, *Muscogee Times-Democrat*, July 22, 1915.
[244] "Sequoyah Blanket Indian Says Authority on History," *Muscogee Times-Democrat*, July 15, 1915.
[245] James Mooney to Emmett Starr, November 12, 1915, in *Data Relating to Cherokee Costume and to the Costume of Sequoyah, Particularly the Matter of Wearing the Blanket*. MS3548, National Anthropological Archives.
[246] Black Fox, letter to the editor *Muscogee Times-Democrat*, July 2, 1915.

Removal Cherokee clothing still remained important to the Cherokees. They were still combatting racism and discrimination, and thus they again used print culture to try and change Euro-American perceptions of their dress. They had worn "civilized" clothing long before Removal and took care that everyone knew it. The Removal period remained an important part of their identity, and thus they reacted strongly against any attempt to defame the memory of Removal-era dress. As one person put it, Sequoyah "was not a blanket Cherokee at all, but a wearer of the national costume."[247] Cherokees had always been proud of their "national costume," and they continued to use print culture in their effort to enforce this vision of their dress. Their "national costume" had always been an essential part of who they were as a nation and as a people.

Even today, many contemporary Cherokee artists focus on pre-Removal Cherokee clothing as the epitome of traditional Cherokee dress. Reenactors such as the Warriors of AniKituhwa wear eighteenth-century-style clothing.[248] Martha Berry, credited with the "revival" of Southeastern Cherokee beadwork, has described the Removal Era as the "Golden Age of Cherokee and Southeastern appliqué beadwork."[249] Frustrated with the preponderance of generic Plains style beadwork, Berry worked hard to research and revive what she considers to be the traditional form of Cherokee beadwork, the style that dominated in the decades before Removal.[250] Other artists such

[247] "Picturesque National Costume of Cherokees is now Obsolete," *Tulsa World*, October 24, 1915, America's Historical Newspapers.
[248] Barbara Duncan, *Cherokee Clothing in the 1700s: With Information from Previous and Following Centuries* (Cherokee, North Carolina: Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, 2016), 1-4.
[249] Martha Berry, "The Rise, Loss, and Revival of Traditional Cherokee Beadwork," in Duncan, Barbra R., Susan C. Power and Martha Berry, *Beadwork Storyteller: A Visual Language.* Cherokee Heritage Press, 2008, 14-17.
[250] Ibid.; Will Chavez, "Berry Leads Revival of Southeastern-style Beadwork." *Native Times*. December 21, 2009. http://www.nativetimes.com/culture/art/2781-berry-leads-revival-of-southeastern-style-beadwork (accessed March 15, 2016).

as Lisa Rutherford and Tonia Weavel also continue to make clothing and accessories inspired by this period. Even the Cherokee Tear Dress grew out of a desire to create an official traditional Cherokee style, and this design reportedly came from a dress that had survived Removal.[251] The Removal period continues to resonate with Cherokees because of its centrality to identity.

John Ross, who exchanged the traditional style of clothes he had so loved for a style of dress that fit the very definition of a Euro-American gentleman, represents the Cherokees' effort to fight for their rights with the weapon of dress. In many ways, he was the face of his Nation for Euro-Americans. His sartorial transformation showed the world that Cherokees had become "civilized." But beyond this seeming acculturation was a process that served only to reinforce identity. Ross, as the external face of the Nation, may have continued to wear Euro-American-style clothing, but though acts of identity, most Cherokees wore clothing that directly reinforced their culture. Even Ross' clothing served as a weapon for identity. Cherokees created a vision of themselves as a "civilized" nation that adopted "civilized" dress, but behind that was an intense, innovative identity process that continued to sustain Cherokee culture. It was this process that showed just how powerful a weapon Cherokee clothing could be.

Cherokees had struggled inwardly over the changes made in their clothing, and the tensions surrounding the meaning of dress never quite stopped. But Cherokees had sustained and even reinforced their cultural and national identity through their clothing. The tensions in dress reflected just how important clothing was to the identity process. Cherokees continued to create and recreate identity in their dress, purposefully

[251] Duncan, *Cherokee Clothing in the 1700s*, 139-140.

innovating in diverse ways that originated in their own culture. They created sartorial identity that was simultaneously rooted in what it meant to be Cherokee while at time could be used to present a quite different picture to Euro-Americans. The Cherokees did not assimilate, as Euro-Americans thought, but they used various changes in clothing to present themselves to the world as acculturated, all the while using these exact changes as part of the identity process. In both ways, Cherokees used clothing as a weapon to fight for identity and political and cultural survival. It was this innovation and diversity, seen by Euro-Americans as acculturation, that reinforced what it meant to be Cherokee. With all the many changes that occurred, Cherokee clothing never stopped being Cherokee.

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"Man's Coat/Jacket," National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 021206.000

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Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1. ***Major Ridge, Portrait of Cherokee Indian*****. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.**

Figure 2. Finger-woven Sash, University of Aberdeen, ABDUI 5511

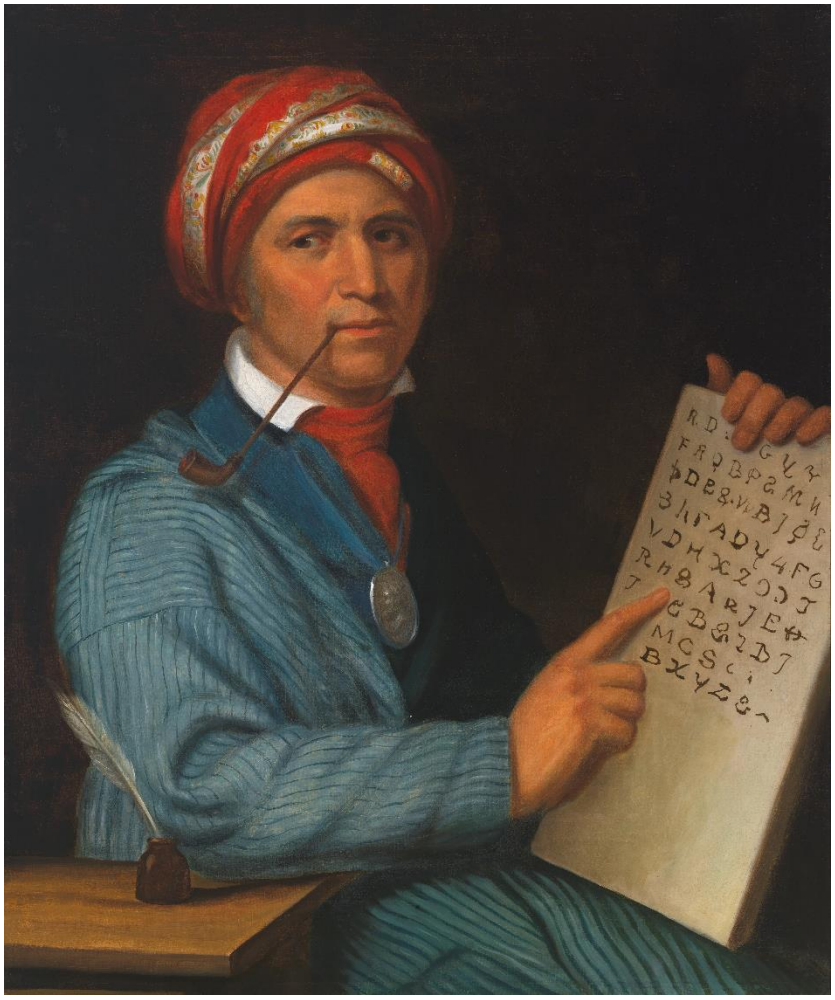

Figure 3. ***Sequoyah***
by Henry Inman
Oil on canvas
c. 1830
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Figure 4. "Shoulder Bag/Bandolier Bag." National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. 179690.000. Photo by NMAI Photo Services.

Figure 5. George Catlin, *Téh-ke-néh-kee, Black Coat, a Chief.* 1834. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.