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SALT PORK AND ROASTIN' EARS: FOOD AND COOKING IN A YUCHI COMMUNITY

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By

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SALT PORK AND ROASTIN' EARS:
FOOD AND COOKING IN A YUCHI COMMUNITY

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. WOMEN AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE	1
Method	3
Research Problems and Questions	5
Theoretical Contexts	7
Pierre Bourdieu – *Outline of a Theory of Practice*	7
Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard – *The Practice of Everyday Life*	17
Food as Practice	22
Food and Society	22
Food and Power	26
Anthropological Significance of this Study	31
Ethnographic Significance of this Study	32
2. YUCHI HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS	34
Historical Contexts	34
Social and Cultural Contexts	41
Kinship Patterns	42
Living Space	42
Subsistence Strategies	49
3. SIX YUCHI WOMEN	63
Contextualizing the Anthropologist	63
Introductions	71
Maxine Wildcat Barnett	71
Josephine Wildcat Bigler	76
Maggie Cumsey Marsey	80
Ella Littlehead Rodriguez	82
Viola John Thomas	84
Mary Barnett Watashe	86
Writing Life Histories	88
Langness and Frank – *Lives: An Anthropological Approach*	90
Watson and Watson-Franke – *Interpreting Life Histories*	97
Cruikshank – *Life Lived Like a Story: The Social Life of Stories*	100
Goldman – *Take My Word*	101

Chapter Page

4. VOICES 104

Powers and Powers – Model of a Food System 104

Born on an Allotment 110

Learning to Cook 146

5. FOOD AND COOKING IN A YUCHI COMMUNITY 152

A Brief History of Yuchi Towns and Ceremonial Grounds 153
Cooking at Polecat Creek 155
Innovations in Material Culture and Cultural Practice 162

A Brief History of Missions in Indian Territory and among the Yuchis 168
Cooking at Pickett Chapel 178

Intersecting Contexts 187

Changes Over Time 189

Yuchi Women and Food Practices 195

6. OBLIGATION, METAPHOR, AND POWER 198

Obligation 199

Symbols and Metaphors 201
Symbolic Cooking Patterns 203
Object as Metaphor 205

Dimensions of Power 209

Prospects for the Future 213

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research 215

REFERENCES CITED 217

ABSTRACT

This study provides biographical sketches of six elder Yuchi women and illuminates their relationship with food and the practice of cooking within the Yuchi food system. Based on ethnographic methods, primarily extensive interviews and participant observation fieldwork, the study takes place in a traditional ceremonial dance ground and a United Methodist Church which was founded by Yuchi people in 1901. The study draws heavily on life histories, revealing a complex of obligations which frame the lives of the participants. In fulfilling these obligations, women engage in symbolic cooking patterns that are carried forward from their childhoods, despite the pressures of contemporary life and their immersion in mainstream American society. The study shows that certain foods act as symbols that support group solidarity, while objects take on metaphorical significance whose meaning is clear to women who participate in communal cooking activities. Taken together, these aspects of food and cooking illustrate dimensions of power which permeate the lives of women as they interact with other members of the Yuchi community and non-Yuchi members of the wider community. Ethnographically, this study contributes valuable insights into the lives of Yuchi women and their role in the maintenance of cultural identity. More broadly, this study contributes to a growing trend toward the consideration of informal, everyday practices which act as integrative mechanisms for perpetuating group identity and cohesion.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE

While open resistance to change is a primary focus for some anthropologists, it has been suggested that the most advanced political maneuver is not always the most explicit one (Raymond Paredes in Goldman 1996:xix). In an effort to maintain social distinction, a fundamental aspect of social life (Bourdieu 1984), women strategize and involve themselves in relations of power on multiple levels (Swartz 1997:6). Identifying the nature of power relations in the context of food and cooking is a primary focus of this study, because food, a ubiquitous feature of any society, plays a number of different roles. In addition to its role as nourishment for members of society, food has an extraordinary power to convey meaning. Food often serves as a means of negotiating social relationships and one's place in society. Everyone eats food and many people cook it, so that food and its associated practices are easily understood and can communicate to more individuals than other objects and practices.

Anthropologically, this project supports the idea that everyday practices convey meaningful cultural information and are important matrices for both maintaining and modifying cultural norms. The project also explores how everyday practices are used in negotiating power differentials between individuals in the community.

Ethnographically, the benefits of the project include a better understanding of the role of women in Native American communities. More specifically, the project supports the claim of Yuchi people that they are a separate group of people, identifiable as distinct from the Creeks, with whom the United States government associates them.[1] The reader will also gain a better understanding concerning the role of historical events in the process of the decline of subsistence agriculture among the Yuchi.

The study is based on the premise that a community can legitimize or resist an ideology by manipulating specific symbols conveyed through everyday practices. I have focused on the Yuchi community situated in and around Sapulpa, Oklahoma to test the validity of this premise. My association with the Yuchi began as a serendipitous opportunity through which their robust cooking traditions came to my attention. Observation of their food and cooking practices piqued my curiosity and led to this study. After much interaction with women of the community, it is my suggestion that Yuchi women's symbolic cooking patterns constitute a type of ethnic marker that allows them to maintain their social distinction from mainstream Americans (Swartz 1997:6) in spite of their interaction with the dominant society.

Focusing on the lives of six Yuchi women, the life histories of these women reveal as much about their ideas of community as about their individual experiences (Cruikshank 1990:ix). One of the goals of the life history approach is to strike a balance between the isolationist "I" and the collective "we" in order to support multiple self-positionings and multiple identities where aspects of identity are organized within the context of power relations (Kondo 1990). Focus is on the individual woman, her strategies, and choices as she engages with social conditions, community affiliations, and historical circumstances (Goldman 1996). A life history approach allows for a retrospective view of women as they narrate their stories and reveal how they have adapted to social, cultural, and economic changes throughout the twentieth century. My study shows that some cooking practices have resisted change despite pressure from outside, while others have been modified to accommodate outside pressures.

When they talk about their experiences with the selection and preparation of food – how they learned as girls, how they practice cooking as adults, how they passed their knowledge down to others – Yuchi women talk about cultural patterns familiar to

community members, but not necessarily to cultural outsiders. The symbolic patterns of behavior expressed by women through the everyday practice of cooking contribute to Yuchi cultural distinctiveness. These everyday practices are components of a web of cultural significance, which play a vital and necessary role in the maintenance of the contemporary Yuchi community (Geertz 1973). Thus, my study shows that everyday practice is a form of communication that conveys meaningful cultural information.

Method

At the outset of this project, I submitted my research plans to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Office of Research Administration at the University of Oklahoma whose responsibility is to ensure that its practices and procedures designed for the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects are effectively applied and are in compliance with the requirements of 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 as implemented by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.[2] Upon review, the IRB found that my research would not constitute a risk to the participants beyond those of normal, everyday life, except in the area of privacy, which they found adequately protected by the confidentiality procedures outlined in my initial proposal.

The six women on whom I focus in this study, Viola, Ella, Mary, Maxine, Maggie, and Josephine,[3] are considered knowledgeable members of the community in regard to traditional foods and cooking methods. Viola, Ella, and Mary represent traditional Yuchi ceremonial underpinnings, and Maxine, Maggie, and Josephine represent a more historically recent Christian orientation. During this research project, I interviewed the six women individually in their homes. In each case, an interview schedule was used to structure our conversations concerning all aspects of

their experiences with food and cooking. In order to explore their experiences, I met with each woman on two or three separate occasions, and the interviews were recorded on audio tape. Interviews ordinarily took place at the kitchen or dining room table in a relaxed atmosphere, although many conversations took place in the car while we were traveling together. Informal conversations also took place at community events, particularly at church or ceremonial grounds.

Despite the fact that these women are considered elderly, they all lead very active lives and are often busy taking care of various family and community responsibilities away from their homes. Coupled with the fact that while the interview process was underway I was teaching a university course three days per week, scheduling interview time with six energetic participants required flexibility on my part. Thus, interviews took place at any time of the day or evening, on weekdays and on weekends as necessary. In order to complete the interview process I traveled between Norman, Oklahoma, and the Sapulpa/Tulsa area two or three times per week over the course of three months during the winter of 2000-2001, which was particularly cold and snowy that year, often making travel hazardous and sometimes out of the question. I often stayed overnight in order to maximize my interview opportunities by meeting with one woman on Friday and one on Saturday. On Sunday, I attended Pickett Chapel, the Methodist church established by a group of Yuchis in 1901. I usually stayed at Maxine's house or at the home of a lady I know who lives in Kellyville, a smaller municipality near Sapulpa.

The women seemed to enjoy remembering past experiences and talking about them. I had already established rapport with the participants working as a research assistant among the Yuchi during 1997-1998. Consequently, the interviews for this project proved to be a positive experience for everyone involved. Participant-

observation and genealogical records are used to support my arguments. Additional data were gleaned through my interaction with several other Yuchi women in conjunction with this study and through interviews gathered during my previous field work with the Yuchis which touch on the subject of food and cooking. All of these sources provide valuable data for the current study. In all I spent more than two years among the Yuchis working on this project and on the previous project as a research assistant.

Research Problems and Questions

In a talk presented at a meeting of the Interdisciplinary Native American Studies Organization, Morris Foster posed the question, "How did the people who self-identify as Indians manage to keep their identity as Indians in the absence of tribal governments during the time period between Oklahoma statehood and the reorganization of various tribal governments in the 1970s and 80s" (Foster 2000)? This question pertains to a time period that until recently has been given little regard in academic literature, but the question is valid and salient. Somehow, tribal groups that ceased to exist in the eyes of the federal government persisted throughout the twentieth century and were able to re-emerge essentially intact in the 1960s and 1970s when the government decided the tribes could reconstitute themselves.

Some scholars have used dependency, assimilationist, or political economic theories to ask why various Native American groups persisted in the absence of federal recognition (Cook 2000; Dombrowski 2001; Sider 1993). The problem with this approach seems to be that such models primarily position Native American groups in relation to the federal government, while failing to consider that the people within these tribal organizations create and maintain various relationships with each other

much like the people of any other American community. In fact the phenomenon of Native American community has been virtually ignored by the recent focus on political economy in which scholars instead put their emphasis on tribal organizations that act as filters for federal funding. Such organizations, sanctioned by Anglo politicians and bureaucrats, are easy to observe, and by virtue of the fact that they are patterned after the model outlined in the United States Constitution, they reflect Euro-American views.

Still the question persists. If a group of Native Americans must be sanctioned by the federal government, and model itself after the United States political system in order to legitimize itself, what was it that allowed these groups to persist during a time when all the trappings of federalism were absent? Foster (2000) suggests that scholars who employ models that focus attention on the formal external structures of tribal governments as they interacted with the government of the United States fail to recognize informal internal structures that directed the interaction of people within the group (Foster 2000). Fortunately, there is a growing trend toward scholarly consideration of some internal, less formal social practices such as ways in which people solidify as a group through the use of racial ideology and a sense of ethnicity, people organize their religious traditions, people organize their local towns, and parents teach language to their children (Blu 1980; Foster 2000, Opler 1972, Schieffelin 1990).

Data show that the everyday practices of women, such as cooking, are based on culturally meaningful patterns of behavior. Thus, the practice of cooking acts as an integrative mechanism for perpetuating an identity that is perceived by Yuchi people as distinctly different from other native and non-native groups. While Yuchi foodways[4] are perceived as being unique, it is apparent, however, that some of their traditional

foodways have been modified to accommodate external pressures from the larger political-economic landscape during the twentieth century.

In order understand these informal structures, we need a different perspective, one that does not deny the relationship between tribal groups and others in the political economic landscape but that also recognizes the relationships that are inherent between individuals within the group. Groups of individuals are bound together not only through their belief systems and economic relationships, but also by their everyday practices that reflect culture. People who practice everyday activities in a way similar to that of their neighbors are more likely to consider themselves and those neighbors as part of the same group or community. Further, a person who conforms to established practices is one who respects the rhythm and pace of those practices (Bourdieu 1994:157). Recognizing that community production and maintenance are grounded in the performance of everyday practices, we seek perspectives that allow us to talk about everyday practice as a mechanism that binds people together and promotes group cohesion.

Theoretical Contexts

Pierre Bourdieu – *Outline of a Theory of Practice*

In his book, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Pierre Bourdieu attempts to complement structuralist perspectives and expand upon them, while not denying the powerful, influential effect of "the system" on events and human social life. But he is also interested in exploring how the system is made and remade in society and how it changes through time. Particularly influential for Bourdieu are the total intellectualism of Sartre (Swartz 1997:36), the structuralism of Levi-Strauss (Bourdieu 1977:4-5,

1990:14-15; Swartz 1997:36-38), and the Marxist perspective of Althusser (Swartz 1997-65-66).

Jean-Paul Sartre represents the subjectivist and engaged humanist perspective, totally committed to political involvement in all areas of life. Interested in issues confronting French society, such as opposition to the Vietnam War and criticism of the French Communist Party, Sartre's mantra was "We must miss nothing of our time" (Swartz 1997:36). In contrast to Sartre's role as the public intellectual, Levi-Strauss offered Bourdieu a chance to reconcile theoretical and practical aims in a responsible, scientific manner (Bourdieu 1990:1-2). These two paradigms, the subjectivism of Sartre and the objectivism of Levi-Strauss stand in sharp contrast, but yet both perspectives are apparent in the work of Bourdieu as he works at the task of bridging the gap between the two. While Sartre emphasizes the individual subject, creative and free to choose, Levi-Strauss represents the objectivist and detached scientist, focusing on the power of structures that molds the choices of individuals who remain largely unconscious of these powerful structures.

Structuralism, a new paradigm developed in the 1960s by Lévi-Strauss, draws on linguistics and communication theory. In her seminal article, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," Sherrie B. Ortner (1994) provides a useful overview of Lévi-Strauss's project. According to Ortner, Lévi-Strauss argues that cultures are based on systems of classification, and that the diversity of social and cultural phenomena demonstrates certain underlying principles that, when identified, can be used to analyze cultural productions and render them intelligible (Ortner 1994:380). In his theory for the universal grammar of culture, Lévi-Strauss uses the principle of binary opposition to explain how elements of culture are created and the rules that structure the arrangement of pairs of opposed terms as they produce cultural phenomena such as

myths, marriage customs, and kinship organizations observed and recorded by anthropologists (Ortner 1994:379-380). Initially excited by Levi-Strauss's scientific approach to intellectual activity (Swartz 1997:37), Bourdieu (1977) soon recognized the limitations of the objectivist mode of knowledge. Bourdieu criticizes Levi-Strauss's structuralism for its failure to address individual will and consciousness (Bourdieu 1977:4-5), for assuming certain objective mental structures in human beings (Bourdieu 1977:27-28), and also for adopting a methodology devoted to discovering those structures objectified in social forms such as myth, kinship, and ritual (Dirks, Eley and Ortner 1994:15; Swartz 1997). From his initial research among the Kabyle in Algeria, Bourdieu found that Levi-Strauss's structuralist analysis of ritual omitted a number of significant social practices. These omissions helped Bourdieu to identify two significant weaknesses in structural analysis – the absence of an adequate theory of individual agency and the limited capacity of formal models to account for action (Swartz 1997:50).

Also profoundly influential to the formulation of Bourdieu's agenda is Marxist social theory with its fundamental conceptual distinction between infrastructure and superstructure with economy at the base of society. Swartz (1997) provides a useful interpretation of Bourdieu's position. Of particular note is Althusser's revisionist approach of structural Marxism, which theorizes that in certain circumstances, superstructural components such as culture, ideology, religion, and politics can be relatively autonomous from infrastructure and play a primary role in shaping class relations (Swartz 1997:39-40). Economy, the social base, is always determinative, however. In response, while sharing Althusser's materialist position, Bourdieu rejects the idea that social existence can be segmented and hierarchically organized into distinct spheres, such as the social, the cultural, and the economic. Consequently,

Bourdieu argues against segregating the superstructure from infrastructure and uses the concept of field to mediate between them (Swartz 1997:40). Bourdieu proposes a general science of practice that combines material and symbolic dimensions, thus viewing social life as a unified whole (Swartz 1997:39-40).

Despite Bourdieu's criticisms, his interest in the relationship between structure and agency as well as the nature of the relationship between symbolic and material aspects of social life stem from his engagement with structuralist and Marxist perspectives (Swartz 1997:39-40, 65). Bourdieu's theory of practices provides a model that allows us to bridge the gap between culture, social structure, and individual agency. The dominant question in Bourdieu's research is how stratified social hierarchies and domination exist and persist over time seemingly beyond the consciousness of the group's members (Swartz 1997:6). He proposes that we answer this question by exploring the cultural resources, processes, and institutions that create and maintain hierarchies of domination between individuals (Bourdieu 1977:159-162).

According to Bourdieu, all cultural symbols and practices function to enhance social distinctions (Swartz 1997:10), whether in the realm of artistic expression, educational achievement, food preferences, choice of marriage partner, or any number of other kinds of practices. Bourdieu's project involves decoding the cultural structures within which people live their lives – the patterns and rhythms of work, eating, sleeping, play and leisure, and companionship. These patterns, in turn, encode the divisions, distinctions and hierarchies of society as a whole (Ortner 1994:398; Swartz 1997:6-7). His aim is to identify as closely as possible the ways in which individual actors embody these cultural structures and take them for granted.

All people employ strategies and maneuvers as they seek social distinction (Bourdieu 1977:8-9), and for Bourdieu, this jockeying for position is the fundamental

aspect of social life (Swartz 1997:6). Everyday practices embody the power relations among individuals, groups, and institutions, while at the same time, through the process of socialization, individuals and groups reproduce the social hierarchy of which they are a part. Culture and its inherent practices, therefore, represent the political relationships expressed by individuals as they interact with each other. Bourdieu's theory of practice accepts the three sides of the Berger and Luckmann theoretical triangle: "that society is a system, that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade [or remade] through human action and interaction" (1967 cited in Ortner 1994:403).

Bourdieu asserts that by adhering to a science of practice, we can reverse the tide of objectivism that has previously been used ad nauseam to describe the social world. He suggests that we recognize a certain degree of knowledge inherent in all practice, whether theoretical practice or everyday practice (Bourdieu 1977:3-4). Through focusing on individual consciousness and will, Bourdieu's theory of practice allows us to explore the theoretical and social conditions that make individual knowledge possible, and thus allows us to develop a practical knowledge of the social world (Bourdieu 1977:4).

Bourdieu has worked in a wide variety of contexts, but it is through his fieldwork with Algerian peasants, where he discards economic explanations for social change in a postcolonial society, that we might find a useful approach to culture and human social interaction (Bourdieu 1977:159-197). For example, Bourdieu observed Kabyle women who "make their contribution to the work and assert their authority in their own way" (Bourdieu 1977:160). The "old women," who are more knowledgeable, measure the flour and go out for a bunch of onions and other vegetables. These older women have the authority to give orders to their daughters-in-law, "whose turn it is to

prepare dinner" (Bourdieu 1977:160), and "[make] good the men's negligence" (Bourdieu 1977:160) by tidying up after them. Why do older women have more authority than younger women in Kabyle society? Experience certainly plays a part in establishing social hierarchy in this context. But what is it that keeps young women from challenging the "old women" when they are "giving their orders" to their daughters-in-law when it is time to prepare dinner? According to Bourdieu there are certain specific mechanisms that structure society and help maintain its cohesion. These mechanisms, *habitus, doxa,* and *symbolic capital*, are discussed in the following sections of this study.

Criticizing the strict structuralism of Levi-Strauss and Althusser, who reduce social activity to the realm of theoretical, atemporal models, Bourdieu proposes that while objective structures certainly exist, individuals develop a practical mastery of those structures in order to function in various social fields, whether they be kinship rules, marriage rules, or the educational system in a post-industrial society. The structure of society is not consciously observed by individual actors. Rather actors act practically, using the cultural and social resources available to them for the purpose of positioning themselves to their best advantage in everyday life (Swartz 1997:67, 69).

Among the Kabyle, Bourdieu considers a society in which social solidarity is based on sentiment and honor rather than on codified rules and regulations (Bourdieu 1977:15). Here, social rules are present in the minds of each individual. *Habitus*, Bourdieu argues, structures the boundaries of individual identity (Bourdieu 1977:86-87). One's sense of "place" or position in society are structured by the organization of space (in houses, in villages, in cities) (Bourdieu 1977:89-91, 160) and time (the rhythms of work, leisure, and holidays) (Bourdieu 1977:165, 232). Such spatial and temporal organizational patterns embody the gender, age, and position of each

individual in the social hierarchy. As the individual grows up and matures, living everyday life within these spatial and temporal structures, he or she embodies the assumptions of gender, age, and social hierarchy. Hence, the social order has been effectively naturalized (Dirks, Eley, and Ortner 1994:13).

Bourdieu explains the phenomenon of a naturalized social order using a concept he calls *doxa* that operates "when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization…the natural and social world appears as self-evident" (Bourdieu 1977:164). Looking back to the Durkheimian roots of social theory, where mental and symbolic representations reflect social structure, Bourdieu adds a political twist proposing that

> The instruments of knowledge of the social world are in this case (objectively) political instruments which contribute to the reproduction of the social world by producing immediate adherence to the world, seen as self-evident and undisputed, of which they are the product and of which they reproduce the structures in a transformed form. (Bourdieu 1977:164)

Hence, if subjectivity provides the possibility for agency, open-endedness and change, then *doxa* is the mechanism that limits these possibilities in the sense that the limits of one's subjective desires are more or less equal to the limits of one's objectivity. *Doxa* is a field "of that which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention…" (Bourdieu 1977:169). As such, Bourdieu is essentially opening a discussion of the limits of subjectivity itself. Bourdieu seeks to show how divisions in the social order become masked through the process of naturalization, and to trace the process as it becomes embodied in the minds and physical beings of humans (Dirks, Eley and Ortner 1994:13-14).

One of the ways in which Bourdieu distances himself from Marxism is through his emphasis on symbolic forms and processes in the production and reproduction of

social hierarchies. Bourdieu recognizes a symbolic aspect to power relations, thus requiring us "to abandon the economic/non-economic dichotomy" (Bourdieu 1990:122) so that we might treat all practices "as economic practices aimed at maximizing material or symbolic profit" (Bourdieu 1990:122). For the Kabyle, symbolic capital might be in the form of fighting strength; the capacity of an individual to mobilize fighters; land, livestock and labor force; or the prestige generated through a favorable marriage alliance (Bourdieu 1990:122).

Through his study of the Kabyle, Bourdieu identified the nature of symbolic capital manifest in kinship ties where a woman is treated as a political instrument, a sort of pledge or liquid asset, capable of generating symbolic profits. As such, her family quite legitimately makes a show of their kinship ties, and thus takes opportunities to invest economic capital in order to extend their kin network and hence, symbolic capital. Therefore, marriage to a stranger who has been disinherited by his kin group and has fled to one's village is denounced. In contrast, marriage to a stranger living with his kin group in a distant land brings prestige, because it acts as a witness to the extent of the prestige of one's lineage (Bourdieu 1977:54).

> It follows that every marriage *tends* to reproduce the conditions which have made it possible. Matrimonial strategies, objectively directed towards the conservation or expansion of the material and symbolic capital jointly possessed by a more or less extended group, belong to the system of reproduction strategies, defined as the sum total of the strategies through which individuals or groups objectively tend to reproduce the relations of production associated with a determinate mode of production by striving to reproduce or improve their position in the social structure. (Bourdieu 1977:70)

As Bourdieu points out, Kabyle matrimonial strategies take us a long way from the realm of the 'rules of marriage' and the 'elementary structures of kinship.' We must remember, however, that these matrimonial strategies use the same kind of logic as strategies designed to preserve or increase symbolic capital in any realm involving

codes of honor, whether it be buying back land or avenging the insult, murder, or rape of a kinsman. There is a dialectic between vulnerability (through land, women, the house) and protection (through men, guns, honor) (Bourdieu 1977:214, n. 111).

Rather than relying on overt coercion, Bourdieu believes that even in technologically advanced societies forms of symbolic manipulation have become the principle mode of domination (Bourdieu 1990:122-34). For industrial societies, therefore, his focus is on the role that cultural process, producers, and institutions play in producing and maintaining inequality in these societies. Therefore, art, science, religion, educational systems, and language are all symbolic systems that should be scrutinized in the context of modern society (Bourdieu 1984).

Bourdieu seems to have two main objectives in his work: to trace the process of naturalization (*doxa*) as it becomes ingrained in people's heads, bodies, and selves; and to show how the divisions in society become masked through this process of naturalization. By observing the practices of people – work, eating, sleeping, leisure – Bourdieu decodes the cultural forms that structure people's lives, thus revealing the patterns and rhythms that codify social divisions, distinctions, and inequalities.

Anthony Giddens (1979) called the relationship between structure and agency one of the central problems of modern social theory. In an effort to answer the challenge of bridging the gap between structure and agency, objectivity and subjectivity, Bourdieu formulated numerous concepts that allow us to conceptualize a bridge between various interrelated aspects of social life. This strong revisionist approach, which began in the 1960s, has broadened its scope into many fields of the social sciences and humanities, such as the study of history, literature, and sociology, thus indicating the diverse ways in which Bourdieu's theory of practice might be applied.

Yet, Bourdieu's model for social interaction has certain limitations that must be addressed. Specifically, his notion of symbolic capital and power seems to include little regard for practices of resistance that occur daily in face-to-face interaction. If Bourdieu's subject is continually engaged in strategic maneuvering in various fields of social interaction and is often the target of symbolic violence in the social hierarchy's power struggles, the question of resistance certainly needs to be considered. At the very least, an active subject will attempt to elude the symbolic violence to which s/he is subjected, and outright resistance is certainly a possibility.

From my theoretical point of view, a model for social interaction should include a subject who is shaped by the constraints of history, culture, and power. In addition, a model is needed that gives the subject freedom to act outside of the cultural rules and norms that shape the members of society. A model that allows history, culture, and power to dominate the configuration of society denies the forces that break down and transform the boundaries of exploitation, oppression, and prejudice in social interaction. Each actor in society comes equipped with his or her own individual pool of experiences, knowledge, and desires, which are often in conflict with those of other actors and the norms of society. Thus, everyday practices are teeming with discontent, defiance, and refusal to buckle under (Dirks, Eley and Ortner 1994:17-18), and we need a model that allows us to address these aspects of social interaction.

In my own field experience, I have observed the kind of resistance that is generated by feelings of jealousy, with hurtful gossip used as a weapon as one person tries to one-up another. We have also been made aware of social actors who use individual agency to practice everyday forms of resistance as described by Scott (1985), where such practices operate as mechanisms to, at the very least, appease the agent's

feeling of powerlessness and exploitation. Similarly, de Certeau (1984) describes an actor who is part of a system where conflicts are made explicit.

Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard – *The Practice of Everyday Life*

De Certeau has been accused of writing in a slippery style, making his points difficult to decipher. He continually shifts his focus so that one cannot identify him within a single genre. He exhibits a wide range of scholarly interests and numerous methods without adhering to just one. He draws on a variety of disciplines, including theology, history, the classics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and linguistics. Trained in theology, de Certeau joined the Jesuits in 1950 and was ordained in 1956. In 1968 he was profoundly influenced by the revolt and strikes prompted by the university reform movement in Paris. Afterward, his intelligent reading of the events of this uncertain time led to jobs teaching history and anthropology for the next ten years. His focus shifted at that time from his former existence as a Jesuit to academic scholarship and a quest to elucidate the events of 1968. Hence, he began to reflect on education, universities, linguistic minorities, and on what constitutes culture in any society. He focused on the individual and asked "how to create *oneself*." He was interested in the "anonymous and perishable creations that allow people to stay alive and cannot be capitalized" (Giard 1998a:xvii). Despite the many uncertainties in our interpretation of de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) is, he says, "part of a continuing investigation of the ways in which users – commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate" (de Certeau 1984:xi). His goal is explicit – "not so much to discuss this elusive yet fundamental subject as to make such a discussion possible; that is, by means of inquiries and hypotheses, to indicate pathways for future" (de Certeau 1984:xi).

De Certeau distanced himself from statistical studies, recognizing the limits of describing cultural practices by dividing them according to age, gender, social class, place of residence, and so on. The things that interested him – individual operations and customs, their sequences, and the changing trajectories (or series of operations articulated in time sequences) (Giard 1998a:xx) of the practitioners – could not be apprehended by using statistical methods. He sought the form, the *bricolage*[5] or artisan-like inventiveness of the individual, and the circuitous nature that combines these elements together. He found that statistics could only identify homogeneous elements and reproduce the system to which these elements belong (de Certeau 1984:xviii).

In French, *L'invention du quotidien* implies 'invention' or 'inventiveness'. This sense of creativeness, unfortunately, is missing in the title of the English translation, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. However, the goal of the book, de Certeau says

> is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and make-shift creativity of groups of individuals already caught in the nets of "discipline" [referring to Foucault (1975/1977)]. Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an antidiscipline which is the subject of this book. (de Certeau 1984:xv)

Here, de Certeau fills the gap left by Bourdieu. The ability of a group or individual to act creatively, manipulating power relationships, using strategies and tactics, reflects de Certeau's optimism that despite the tremendous powers and institutions functioning in society, ordinary people are able to mobilize hidden resources, thus generating a little resistance that results in microfreedoms (de Certeau 1984:35-37). In this way, the hold of political and social powers over people is circumvented at least to a degree. For example, oppressed people, de Certeau (1984:32) says, invert and subvert the force of the colonizers. On the surface they seem to conform to the expectations of the

dominant order, while at the same time, they make the laws of the colonizer function "in another register," within the framework of their own cultural tradition.

In a 1975 report to the agency funding his project, de Certeau says it was a matter of "sketching a *theory of everyday practices* in order to bring out of their murmuring the 'ways of operating' that, as a majority in social life, often only figure as 'resistances' or as apathies in relation to the development of sociocultural production" (Giard 1998a: xx). Rather than discussing the history of practice theory, de Certeau proposes to identify some ways of "thinking about everyday practices of consumers, supposing from the start that they are of a tactical nature" (de Certeau 1984: 39-40). It was at this time de Certeau created the 'first circle' of young researchers to participate in "an engaged observational practice" in a Paris neighborhood (Giard 1998a: xxiv). Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, de Certeau's collaborators for *The Practice of Everyday Life, volume 2*, were among the students chosen to work on the project. They continued working with de Certeau long after the 'first circle' disbanded, and today, Giard is de Certeau's literary executor (Buchanan 2000:9, n. 5).

Giard's work is especially salient for the present project. By 1976, the 'third circle,' a small, stable group of collaborators working on de Certeau's grant, consisted of Giard, Mayol, and Marie Ferrier. In one of their weekly discussions of the project, Giard noted that women were altogether absent from their analysis of concrete practices. It was decided that Giard should immediately define an object, a field, and a method in order to rectify this serious gap in the project. After some discussion, Giard chose cooking "for its primary necessity, its ability to cross over all divisions, and its intrinsic relation to *opportunity* and *circumstance*, two notions that had become central to our understanding of those who practice" (Giard 1998a:xxviii). Open-ended interviews with women of all ages and backgrounds were conducted, and the example

printed in the appendix of volume 2 "bear[s] witness to the richness of speech among ordinary people if one takes the trouble to listen to them and encourage them to express themselves" (Giard 1998a:xxix).

Giard (1998b) situates herself in the study of 'The Nourishing Arts' explaining that as a girl she absolutely refused to have anything to do with the women's work that takes place in the kitchen. Reasoning that she would pursue her education and become a mathematician or a writer with a 'real profession,' she saw no good reason to get bogged down in culinary arts. Besides, no one ever asked her brother to come in the kitchen and learn how to cook. Throughout her career as a student Giard ate her food either at home or in the school cafeteria. It was not until she got her own apartment at the age of twenty and had her own little kitchen that she realized she did not have a clue about how to proceed. There was no way she would stoop to going home to ask for advice. Books were the answer, she decided. Everything could be learned from books. However, with a paperback cookbook in hand, devoid of illustrations and flourishes, to her surprise, Giard found that she had indeed absorbed many of the gestures, sounds, tastes, and smells associated with her mother's activities in the kitchen.

> I thought that I had never learned or observed anything, having obstinately wanted to escape from the contagion of a young girl's education and because I had always preferred my room, my books, and my silent games to the kitchen where my mother busied herself. Yet, my childhood gaze had seen and memorized certain gestures, and my sense memory had kept track of certain tastes, smells, and colors. I already knew all the sounds: the gentle hiss of simmering water, the sputtering of melting meat drippings, and the dull thud of the kneading hand. A recipe or an inductive word sufficed to arouse a strange anamnesis whereby ancient knowledge and primitive experiences were reactivated in fragments of which I was the heiress and guardian without wanting to be. I had to admit that I too had been provided with a woman's knowledge and that it had crept into me, slipping past my mind's surveillance. It was something that came to me from my body and that integrated me into the great corps of women of my lineage, incorporating me into their anonymous ranks. (Giard 1998b: 152-53)

Giard (1998b:157, 159, 202, 209, 220) describes of the practice of learning to cook as "an apprenticeship". Here, an individual, usually a young girl, learns to cook by witnessing her mother's or another elder's gestures in the kitchen, by peeling potatoes, by listening to the sounds of the kitchen, by remembering the tastes, smells, and colors, by *doing-cooking* (Giard 1998b:153).

Delighted to discover the joys of manipulating the raw material of food preparation, the acts of organizing, combining, modifying and inventing, Giard was "surreptitiously and without suspecting it…invested with the secret, tenacious pleasure of *doing-cooking*" (Giard 1998b:153) an internal, embodied practice that gave pleasure that seemed closely related to the "pleasure of the text" (Giard 1998b:153). She realized, though, that for those who came before her, women who were doomed to endless housework and procreation, women excluded from education and public life, gestures, tastes, and combinations of ingredients act as a *silent legend*, a language for recording women's history (Giard 1998b:154). Giard seeks the words that will faithfully record and translate their gestures, recipes, and tastes so that the history of her ancestors will be preserved, but she finds she can best preserve their "nourishing knowledge" (Giard 1998b:154) through a "sophisticated ritualization of basic gestures [that] has become more dear to me than the persistence of words and texts" (Giard 1998b:154).

Culinary practices in the home are situated at very rudimentary levels in the social hierarchy. While most cooking is carried out by women, making them necessary members of their households, women often lack respect from their family members. The importance of providing children with a nutritious diet and the responsibility of women as the primary shoppers and household suppliers are stressed in the media. Yet the work of providing nutritious family meals is devalued.

For Giard, the practice of cooking is embedded with notions of knowledge and power, two important aspects of the current study. *Doing-cooking* is the medium for a basic, humble, and persistent practice that is repeated in time and space, embedded in the history of the family and the relationships of its members. Far from being value-less, women who provide meals for their families are clever and thrifty, stretching a limited food budget while finding creative ways to please everyone at the table. Their dexterous movements as they whip egg whites or manipulate dough for a pie crust are as important as their knowledge of what constitutes a 'good' tomato or the correct amount of leavening for bread.

Yet, many people pay knowledgeable women little attention, while heaping their approval on purveyors of culinary refinement, the great chefs, most of whom are men. People who are not involved in culinary production do not realize that it requires a multifaceted memory – of apprenticeship, of witnessed gestures, and of consistencies, in order to know the exact moment a culinary product is 'done,' for example. A cook must be able to calculate preparation and cooking times while using her sensory perceptions of sight and smell to overrule the theoretical cooking time set by the recipe. In addition, she must use her creative skills to make the most of left-overs or to fill the gap when a particular ingredient or utensil is missing. In short, everyday cooking takes what Giard calls *a very ordinary intelligence* (Giard 1998b: 158).

Food as Practice

Food and Society

Anthropologists have long been interested in food as a research topic. Food can be interpreted from a number of disciplinary perspectives, and because anthropology is a holistic discipline by definition, it integrates meaning-centered approaches,

evolutionary and materialist perspectives, and advocacy-oriented critiques (Counihan and Van Esterik 1997:1). Early studies focused on foodways and the central role of food in various cultures (Du Bois 1941; Firth 1934; Fortes and Fortes 1936; Richards 1932). Pioneers such as Audrey Richards (1939) wrote an early study of food and its relationship with agriculture and the political economy of Africa, and later, Margaret Mead (1943, 1964, 1965) studied food habits and social change in the United States. More recent studies of food employ a range of approaches including symbolic, materialist, and ecological perspectives to explain patterns of food selection and their nutritional consequences (Bourdieu 1984; Douglas 1984; Goody 1982; Harris 1985).

It has been argued that the key theorists in the field of food and eating work from either 'materialist' or 'structuralist' perspectives (Murcott 1988). The major contributor to a materialist approach to the study of food is Marvin Harris (1985). Other important anti-structuralist contributors include Jack Goody (1982) and Stephen Mennell (1984). However, it may be preferable to refer to the latter two as taking a 'developmentalist' approach to food as they are more concerned with how our understanding of contemporary food habits is improved through the examination of historical trends and data (Wood 1995:6).

Key contributors identified with a structural tradition include Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas. The central tenet of the structuralist project is that the structures of society and its institutions can be understood in terms analogous with the relationships that exist between elements in the language of the society being studied. Cultural phenomena are treated as elements in a system of signs and symbols, which signify meaning to social actors. Meaning is not intrinsic but is defined according to a system of social norms (Wood 1995:4-5).

For the purpose of the current study, Mary Douglas provides useful perspectives regarding food and society. Douglas has published numerous books and articles concerning food throughout her career, and an extensive review of her work concerning food and culture can be found in Passariello (1990). In brief, Douglas's early work (1966) is an analysis of Jewish dietary restrictions as enumerated in the Biblical book of Leviticus. Drawing on anthropological work concerning classification, she shows how various animals were deemed inappropriate as sources of food for Jews because they fell outside the system of classification, therefore making them polluting or profane.

Douglas's later work (1975) focuses on food consumption and the composition of the meal in Britain. Here, she argues that food is a code, which reflects hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions in a social context. Douglas rejects the universalist perspective and restricted analytic field of Lévi-Strauss and advocates a bottom-up approach to deciphering the meaning of food (Douglas 1975:250, 1984:8). She considers the meal not just as a series of binary oppositions but also places the meal in the context of other meals consumed throughout the course of the day, of the week and of the year, thus expanding the analytic field. The meaning of the meal is found in a system of repeated analogies.

Douglas is praised for her ability to contextualize the meal as part of a cultural system (Goody 1982:32), while others criticize her for making broad theoretical generalizations (Charsley 1992:2). Yet she emphasizes the symbolic more often than she engages with the writings of 'structuralist' scholars such as Lévi-Strauss. Douglas is structural in that she views everyday life as highly ordered. This order (or structure) permeates every facet of social life, and consequently, she views food as a symbolic system of communication, which reflects relationships with others, especially members of one's family. She says, "Food is here taken as the medium through which a system of

relationships within the family is expressed. Food is both a social matter and part of the provision for care of the body" (Douglas 1982:86).

Food sharing is a topic of concern to anthropologists such as Marcel Mauss (1990/1950) and Marshall Sahlins (1972). These authors show that consumption in a gift economy is not merely the act of eating food. Rather, consumption is a mechanism for establishing and regulating relations between individuals in society. Food events such as feasts encode and regulate key social relations such as the solidarity of a community and political ranking within the community. Thus, food is a medium for building social hierarchies and power relations, and food sharing is the mechanism for creating and maintaining social relations. As Douglas suggests, food may carry symbolic meaning, but at the same time eating is a physical event acting as an inclusionary device, creating the conditions for social life (Douglas 1984:12).

While access to food may be considered a basic human right, the development of capitalism, corporate agricultural conglomerates, and food commodification means that access to food has become one of the most contested aspects of human existence in the contemporary world. The powerful have access to food, while the powerless do not. Several contemporary authors, such as Fitchen (1997) and Lappe and Collins (1997), focus on the relationship between food commodification and scarcity and their links to power.

The foregoing approaches deal primarily with food as an object of consumption. There are, however, other aspects of food that have been largely ignored by scholars. In their article, "Metaphysical Aspects of an Oglala Food System," William K. Powers and Marla M. N. Powers (1984) outline five interrelated components of any food system: procurement, preparation, distribution, consumption, and disposal. The current research project will focus on these five components of a food system with an emphasis

on the preparation of food – how food is modified or maintained in its natural state before serving and being consumed. The main focus of this study, cooking, is included in this component of a food system. Other elements in this component include palatal preferences, symbolic statements about status of the individual engaged in the practice of food preparation, technological considerations such as utensils, nature of the 'kitchen' or place of preparation, techniques, and selected varieties of food (Powers and Powers 1984:45). All are salient aspects of the current study.

Food and Power

In recent years several scholars have linked cooking to issues of power and social hierarchy. Goody (1982:37-38) suggests that since cooking is linked to the mode of production of material goods, one should relate the analysis of cooking to the distribution of economic power and authority. Cooking is described as an arena usually allocated to women rather than to men, and to servants rather than to mistresses. Therefore, a system of the social stratification of labor is explicit.

Micaela di Leonardo (1984:194-95) recognizes the connection between the everyday practices of women, what she referres to as 'women's work' – including housework, child care, planning and cooking – and the maintenance of kinship, an essential element of social organization. 'The work of kinship,' as she calls it, includes a variety of activities such as visits, letters, cards, presents, and telephone calls to kin; services, commodities, and money exchanges among kin; and the organization of holiday celebrations. While housework and child care take place largely within the household, especially in industrial societies, the work of kinship happens between households. Here, di Leonardo privileges the work of kinship, while neglecting to consider the role of food and cooking, considered women's work, as important

ingredients in the maintenance of kin relations and community. It is my view that the everyday practice of food handling and preparation among Native American women can provide insights about the preservation of community, and my ethnography is aimed at exploring this issue.

Through their ability to prepare and serve food, women can gain direct influence over others. For example, the female head of an Ecuadorian household has the ability to assign relative status distinctions to the members of her family based on the amount of soup she serves to each person (Weismantel 1988). Carole M. Counihan (1988) offers a survey of urban Italian women who have experienced changes since World War II, which have affected their sense of identity and power. These women now hold wage-labor jobs while trying to maintain their roles as principle administrators of home and family. Traditionally attained and manifested through their control over food provisioning and their ability to manipulate the symbolic content of food, their identity and status in the household is being threatened.

As discussed above, Giard (1998b) frames food preparation as an everyday practice in terms of power and authority. In her essay "Doing Cooking" Giard describes an aspect of everyday practice relative to power relations that structure the field of knowledge as well as the social field. The cook's ability to appropriate information or knowledge about the preparation of food, to control that information and shape it according to her own taste and needs is equivalent to taking control of the power contained in that knowledge and defeating the imposing power of the "ready-made and preorganized" (Giard 1998b:254).

Giard (1998b:157, 159, 202, 209, 220) describes of the practice of learning to cook as "an apprenticeship." Here, an individual, usually a young girl, learns to cook by witnessing her mother's or another elder's gestures in the kitchen, by peeling potatoes,

by listening to the sounds of the kitchen, by remembering the tastes, smells, and colors, by *doing-cooking* (Giard 1998b:153). For the current research I suggest that we expand Giard's notion of apprenticeship to include aspects of power available to the bearer of cooking knowledge, because according to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) apprenticeship is an asymmetrical relationship of coparticipation between a master practitioner and apprentice. They have coined the term 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP) to describe a highly interactive learning process in which the individual learner acquires the skill to perform by participating in the practice of an activity but only to the degree allowed by an expert. Lave and Wenger's model accounts for improvisation and cases of interaction in which actors' contributions to the social order include negotiation, strategy, and unpredictable aspects of action. Thus, the authors challenge the validity of structuralist theories of social behavior, which rely on universal codes.

While the apprentice may be transformed dramatically in the process of moving from periphery to fuller participation in the community, masters are changed, too. Therefore, it follows that the skill itself changes in the process as well, and consequently, the larger community of practice,[6] while reproducing itself through its apprentices, is also transformed (Hanks 1991:15-16). In this way, masters, the bearers of knowledge, and their apprentices maintain and reshape their cultural traditions.

The goal of apprenticeship, which is neither outmoded nor obsolete (Lave and Wenger 1991:62), is for a novice to learn a skill from a master. But rather than the master tutoring the novice directly, skill is often learned on the periphery more by observing the inner-workings of the workplace and by watching the master at work than by the novice receiving specific instruction. Thus, learning and moving from the periphery to full participation or failure to learn and remaining on the periphery may

be accounted for by underlying relations in a participation framework (Lave and Wenger 1991:63). In other words, learning hinges on access to *practice* as a resource for learning, and access is negotiated by the coparticipants (Lave and Wenger 1991:85).

Lave and Wenger's concept of legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to address the relationship between 'newcomers' (learners) and 'old-timers' (the holders of knowledge) in a community. If learning, as the authors suggest, is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice, then LPP concerns the process by which newcomers learn meaningful cultural information, as they become part of the community. Thus, legitimate peripherality can be a source of both power and powerlessness (Lave and Wenger 1991:29-36). Applied to communicative practice, this perspective shows that we all continually learn new ways of communicating with members of society as we join in as social actors in various settings. We learn by participating in society. At the same time, knowledge acts as a kind of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977) which is often guarded by the 'old timers' who seek to retain their status as bearers of cultural knowledge rather than to distribute knowledge freely to newcomers (Lave and Wenger 1991:122-23).

To date, little has been done to apply Lave and Wenger's model to research problems "on the ground." A notable exception is a study by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (1992) in which they focus on the relation between gender differences and communities of practice in which social meaning, social identity, community membership, and the symbolic value of linguistic forms are constantly being negotiated and constructed. For example, their community-based study shows that politeness is not fostered by arbitrary norms that constrain individuals, but by strategies to create social connections and alliances and to subvert institutionalized status advantages (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992:479). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's study shows

that sexual asymmetries are deeply connected to language, and in their application of the communities of practice model, women become active participants capable of mounting an attack against the linguistic forms that subordinate them.

One of the limitations of Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's study is that it deals with the power of spoken language while neglecting the inherent power of silence – language left unspoken. I address a gap in their study by investigating knowledge that is uncommunicated. This study asks whether Yuchi women use silence to enhance their status in the community as Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest, or if at least some cooking knowledge, fry bread-patting, for example, is embodied so much so that the process is difficult to verbally pass on to a novice (Jackson 2000).

Concerning the notion of embodied practice, or 'practical sense,' "social necessity" becomes second nature, expressed by body movements that are unconscious to the agent (Bourdieu 1990:69). Thus, according to Bourdieu, everyday practice is largely unconscious activity for expert practitioners. Therefore, it might be difficult to explain to a novice how a practice is carried out, and consequently, the transfer of knowledge is compromised.

I suggest here that both Lave and Wenger's and Bourdieu's explanations are useful in particular contexts for informing us about silence and situations in which knowledge is left uncommunicated. The reasons women fail to pass down their cooking knowledge vary depending on circumstance. Because cooking is an embodied practice, some women may have difficulty explaining what they do and why, while others believe that their identity as 'an expert cook' will be compromised if they share their knowledge and cooking duties with a novice.

Anthropological Significance of this Study

Pierre Bourdieu attempted to address the tension between "the system" and human agency with his seminal book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) in which he provided a detailed study of matrimonial strategies among the Kabyla in Algeria to explain social production and reproduction. Yet he, too, had a difficult time breaking with the notion of the system as a constraining device (Bourdieu 1977:15). Thus, his theory of practice is primarily concerned with the reproduction and transmission of meaning and how these meanings shape and are shaped by power and economic relations among groups in society. Despite his emphasis on the system, however, Bourdieu set the stage for a new method of inquiry, which reinvigorated anthropology in the 1980s and into the 1990s. Practice emphasizes meaning as a socially negotiated concept and explores the relationship between agent and context, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing.

My research in the Yuchi community adds to the growing body of literature that builds on Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977). By investigating meaningful patterns of cultural identity communicated through everyday practices, I show that, in spite of pressures exerted by outside forces, the activities of women have helped to maintain and strengthen the Yuchi community throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. My study draws on theories of practice embedded with notions of differential sharing of knowledge and builds on Lave and Wenger's model for communities of practice that illustrates the social nature of knowing and learning (Lave and Wenger 1991, 1998). Their model provides important historical and contemporary insights into the connections between everyday practice as a means of communication, the role of everyday practice in the socialization of "newcomers" (whether youngsters or

outsiders), the maintenance of cultural identity, and strategies and negotiations between individuals. This flexible model supports multiple self-positionings and provides explanations for the role of Yuchi women as they engage with social conditions, community affiliations, and historical circumstances on a daily basis.

Ethnographic Significance of this Study

Early ethnographic studies of the Yuchi include a brief ethnology by Speck (1909), and Ballard's (1975, 1978) work on the mythology and Green Corn Ceremony of the Yuchi. More recent studies have focused on various aspects of Yuchi life, including demographic, political, ritual, and language (Jackson 1998; Linn 2001; Wallace 1993, 1998).

While previous studies focus on elements of Yuchi cultural identity, the role of Yuchi women in the maintenance of cultural identity has not been specifically addressed. My project fills this gap in the literature by focusing on everyday practices of women, particularly the practice of cooking with its underlying patterns of meaning, as a mechanism for both conveying patterns of Yuchi cultural identity and for positioning women in the political-economic landscape. The need for full-scale ethnographic research on women and their contribution to the maintenance of Yuchi identity will gain increasing importance as everyday practices obtain recognition as vital components in the process of cultural production and reproduction.

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[1] It must be noted here that there are cultural similarities between the Yuchi and Creek, including foodways, since the two groups live in close proximity to each other and are linked historically, politically, and economically. Other cultural forms, such as language, traditional clothing styles, songs, and ritual practices, are markers of group identity that contribute to the distinctiveness of the two groups.
[2] This study has been subject to annual review by the IRB.
[3] Each of the participants gave written permission for me to use their real names.

[4] "Foodways" is a concept which is credited to folklorist Jay Anderson to describe "the whole interrelated system of food conceptualization, procurement, distribution, preservation, preparation, and consumption shared by all members of a particular group (Anderson 1971, A Solid Sufficiency: An Ethnography of Yeoman Foodways in Stuart England. Ph.D. Diss. University of Pennsylvania, cited in Deetz 1996:73).
[5] Certeau uses the term *bricolage* here to mean "the artisan-like inventiveness" of individuals as they engage in every day practices. While he does not give a reference, the term *bricolage* is attributable to Claude Lévi-Strauss.
[6] "Community of practice" is a term coined by Lave and Wenger as a component of their social theory of learning. A community of practice concerns the "ways in which the community of adults reproduces itself, with the places that newcomers can or cannot find in such communities, and with relations that can or cannot be established between these newcomers and the cultural and political life of the community" (Lave and Wenger 1991:100). It is "the place of knowledge" where newcomers learn and are integrated into the community through social participation (Lave and Wenger 1998:4).

CHAPTER 2

YUCHI HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

This chapter provides historical and cultural contexts as background for the life history descriptions and discussions to follow. In the first section I situate the Yuchis historically in their southeastern homelands. In this context, the Yuchis appear to be a unique and separate group, even as they engage with and make alliances with their neighbors, a trend that prevails even today. In the second section, I discuss some of the environmental factors and Yuchi domestic patterns of the past that continue to influence Yuchis today. This brief sketch is intended to act as an aid to understanding Yuchi women and how they got to where they are today. Contemporary Yuchi women did not acquire their identity as Yuchi in a vacuum. Consciously or not, they are profoundly influenced by the history and lived experiences of their ancestors, and it is important to be aware of some of these factors when considering the following discussion of contemporary Yuchi food and cooking practices. These historical and cultural summaries are based primarily on Euro-American sources, only a few of which are primary. I will attempt to offset this bias in the chapters that follow by presenting the narratives of contemporary Yuchi women.

Historical Contexts

While the Yuchis are not widely known by the general public, several twentieth-century scholars have discussed their origins and political history, which is marked by numerous migrations, making it difficult to document their past. The story of the Yuchis is one of conflict with their neighbors, and it appears that their migrations were

primarily the result of these conflicts. To further complicate matters, early Yuchi bands have been identified by various ethnonyms (Hudson, et al. 1985; Lewis and Kneberg 1958; Waselkov 1989). The historical record indicates Yuchi engagement in a pattern of separation, dispersion, and coalescence as they developed strategies to deal with the British, Spanish, and Americans, as well as other Native American groups in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

The earliest recorded notice of the Yuchis was in 1540 when De Soto was told about a province known as Chisca, whose people were said to mine copper and gold. However, the forbidding trail over rough, mountain ridges prevented De Soto from contacting the Chisca people directly (Lewis and Kneberg 1958:140; Swanton 1946/1979:212-215). For the mid-sixteenth century, Swanton identifies two distinct bands of Yuchis. One band was located in the vicinity of the western flanks of the Appalachian Mountains of present-day Tennessee, while the other lived on the Tennessee River just above Mussel Shoals in what is now extreme northwest Alabama. This latter group seems to have migrated after 1701 up river to an area that is now Meigs County in eastern Tennessee (Swanton 1946/1979:212).

After a subsequent migration, we find Yuchis in the area of the Hiwassee River. Some scholars place them in this area by at least the end of the seventeenth century (Lewis and Kneberg 1958:142). They established a town on North Mouse Creek and another on South Mouse Creek known as Chestowee on historic maps. This town, known as Tsistuyi by the Cherokees, was attacked by them in 1714 and subsequently abandoned by the Yuchis shortly thereafter (Swanton 1946/1979:213). Another Yuchi town in this area was situated on Ledford Island in the Hiwassee River. This settlement was surrounded by a heavy stockade and had a public square and a large ceremonial building. A Yuchi town farther north on the Ocoee River was situated near

the Great Indian Warpath, an important link between northern and southern native peoples. The trail stretched from Creek lands northward with branches leading to the Ohio Valley and New England. With their town in such close proximity to the trail, this band of Yuchis was able to keep tabs on any war or trading parties using the trail. Other Yuchi towns were located on the Tennessee River, in present-day Roane, Meigs, and Rhea Counties, and the site of one small village was known as Euchee Old Fields until recent times (Lewis and Kneberg 1958:145). Some Yuchis seem to have remained with the Cherokees and were gradually incorporated into the group (Swanton 1946/1979:215).

However, conflicts with the Cherokees and Spanish led some of the Yuchis to abandon their mountain homes and migrate yet again. In the seventeenth century some moved to Florida. Swanton describes one group of Yuchis who appeared in 1661 and "probably these" came to live near what is now Augusta, Georgia, before 1670 (Swanton 1946/1979:213). In 1680 this band of Yuchis fought the British and was driven from the Savannah River by a group of Shawnee. As the British continued to encroach on their lands, Yuchis moved to the Ocmulgee River, and then farther west to the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers in west Georgia. They allied themselves with the Lower Creek towns and from this time forward, the federal government began to recognize the Yuchis as one of the entities comprising the Creek Confederacy (Wallace 1998:2). According to Swanton, the main body of Yuchis went to the Chattahoochee River and presumably established the town Bartram describes (Van Doren 1928/1955:312-313), while other Yuchi bands may have joined their kinsmen on the Chattahoochee at a later date. He says, "As white settlement spread westward, the Yuchi withdrew to their main town on Chattahoochee River, whither the Westo had probably gone at an earlier period and possibly the Tallapoosa Yuchi. In 1832 only one

main town is entered in the census of that year, and one branch town called High Log" (Swanton 1946/1979:214). Nevertheless, present-day Yuchis feel an emotional tie with "Yuchi Town," their ancestral town on the Chattahoochee River, and consider the area around Columbus, Georgia their homeland.

Bartram and Swanton both point out that the Yuchis held themselves separate from Muscogean people and were considered a distinct entity (Van Doren, 1928/1955:313; Swanton 1946/1979:214). This idea is supported by events that occurred during the Creek War of 1814, when a man named Timpoochee Barnard, son of a white trader named Timothy Barnard and a Yuchi woman, allied with Andrew Jackson at the battle of Callabee Creek where they fought against the Creek Red Sticks. Severely wounded, Barnard continued the fight and repelled the Creeks.

The Yuchis never signed a treaty on behalf of themselves, although the names of their headmen appear on treaties along with Muscogee Creeks, who agreed to cede their land. In this way, title to Yuchi lands was obtained by the government from neighboring tribes. It was agreed by treaty that the tribes were free to leave "when and as they pleased" (Foreman 1932/1982:142), and in all, about 22,000 Creek people migrated to Indian Territory in several waves. In the earliest migration, Roley McIntosh and his group emigrated in 1827 and settled on the Arkansas River (Foreman 1932/1982:163-64). A detailed account of the Creeks' removal to Indian Territory from Georgia and Alabama appears in Foreman (1932/1982:102-190).

By 1836, thousands of Indians had been left destitute after many were defrauded of their land in Georgia and Alabama. A large number of Creeks and Yuchis were in this category, and they delayed their departure to Indian Territory with assurances from the federal government that the incidents of fraud were being investigated. They hoped they would be able to make their journey with the proceeds

from the value of their lost property. While awaiting disposition of their grievances, many were forced to wander the countryside, stealing food and killing stock to keep from starving to death. Whites in the area were appalled at this turn of events, and many abandoned their homes (Foreman 1932/1982:140-45).

By May 1836, tensions escalated and presumably the white villains who defrauded the Indians in the first place promoted hostilities between the Indians and whites in order to interrupt the progress being made in the fraud case. Dispossessed Yuchi, Hitchiti, and Chiaha bands of Lower Creeks began attacking whites along the Chattahoochee River. Some whites were killed, and still others abandoned their homes in fear. The Indians robbed and destroyed many houses and outbuildings, burned the toll bridge across the Chattahoochee River, and terrorized people in two steamboats near Columbus. Indians in the surrounding area, fearing reprisals, fled to Fort Mitchell in Alabama (Foreman 1932/1982:145-146). In an effort to stem the tide of violence and chaos, the federal government ordered investigators to abandon their efforts to settle the frauds committed against the Indians and to remove all remaining members of the Creek Confederacy to Indian Territory (Foreman 1932/1982:147). After much hostility and suffering, some Yuchis fled to Florida and joined the Seminoles (Foreman 1932/1982:151), but most made the trip to Indian Territory.

In 1836, one contingent of migrants, approximately 1600 men, women, and children, surviving members of the Creek Confederacy, including Yuchis, were chained together as they left Fort Mitchell on July 2. By July 14, in Montgomery, their numbers had swelled to 2,498 after several more bands of militant Creeks were captured. The group of Creeks in Montgomery was comprised mostly of women and children. Nine hundred were Yuchis (Foreman 1932/1982:153-54). The people were packed onto two

small steamboats and barges in tow for the two-day trip south to Mobile, then two more days to New Orleans and the Mississippi River.

After more than a week's voyage up the Mississippi, the weary travelers finally landed at Rock Roe, where they prepared for an overland trip to Fort Gibson in the heart of Indian Territory. Twenty wagons were packed with old women, children, and the ill. The others were forced to walk. They walked from August 8 to September 3, and it was said to be so hot that most of their travel took place at night (Foreman 1932/1982:155). The people carried their possessions on their backs or were forced to leave them behind. The Yuchis, however, had already lost virtually everything and had little to call their own after having been driven from their homes and left destitute (Foreman 1932/1982:156, n. 19).

Upon arrival at Fort Gibson, the head men were met by a nervous Roley McIntosh who was the recognized chief among the Western Creeks, the ones who had emigrated in 1829. In order to shore up McIntosh's authority, the newcomers were told they would lose their annuities unless they agreed to recognize McIntosh as their chief and live under the authority of the established government already in operation. In such a wretched condition, it was obvious that the newcomers had no choice in the matter. The entire group of about 2300 managed to bring only a few ponies, and they had some metal tools supplied to them at Fort Gibson by a sympathetic General Arbuckle so that they might at least employ themselves in building shelter against the approaching winter. Many of the newcomers, however, did not have such luxuries and were compelled to clear land, cut timber, and build their houses virtually without tools (Foreman 1932/1982:157-58).

Along the route to Indian Territory there was much sickness among the emigrants. Bilious and congestive fevers, dysentery, diarrhea, and cholera were the

primary diseases that assaulted the people. By the time they reached Fort Gibson, eighty-one people of the group of 2,498 had died. Fifty of those were children less than ten years old (Foreman 1932/1982:156)

The Yuchis continued west to establish themselves below the Arkansas River. Coming from the southwest where creeks and streams continually drained into larger bodies of water, such as the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers, in their new location they settled along the creek banks as usual only to experience unexpected flooding that destroyed their houses and killed what little livestock they had. Western streams shrunk to breeding grounds for mosquitoes in summer droughts, which led to malaria and fever. One of my consultants told me that the Yuchis originally settled as a group in the area around Duck Creek and Snake Creek but found their surroundings to be unhealthy because of continual dampness. While some remained, within a few years, many of them dispersed to surrounding areas, settling along local waterways: Polecat Creek, Little Deep Fork, and Sand Creek. According to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who traveled to Indian Territory in 1841, there were about 800 Yuchis living there at that time. Settled generally in the northwest section of Creek Territory, Yuchis lived in close proximity to each other but were geographically isolated from their Creek neighbors. They were noted to "preserve their distinctive character more than any other band or tribe" and "intermarry but rarely with Creeks" (Foreman 1930/1996:121).

Yuchis arrived in Indian Territory virtually destitute as they had been driven from their homes with little more than the clothes on their backs (Foreman 1932/1982:156). By strength of sheer willpower they managed to take control of their situation, establish their farms and ceremonial grounds, and reclaim their lives in a new environment. And they thrived even after Oklahoma statehood abolished the Creek Nation in 1907. The federal government has never officially recognized the Yuchi

people as a separate entity, despite the fact that they are not related by language or culture to any other group of people (Haas 1973; Urban 1994). Yet the Yuchi people have managed to maintain their separate identity throughout the twentieth century through a traditional system of local community life and social interaction with neighbors.

Social and Cultural Contexts

The preceding narrative is a brief summary of Yuchi political history.[1] However, in order to ground our discussion of Yuchi attitudes toward food and cooking, it will be useful to consider Yuchi domestic social organization and lived environment, especially in regard to the diffusion into Yuchi culture of foreign technological and social mechanisms. Specifically, how did outside forces affect and/or influence cultural patterns? What were some of the cultural and historical processes that stimulated variation among Yuchis? Such questions have received little attention. Therefore, in this section of the study, the purpose is to briefly describe some of the cultural and ecological changes that influenced Yuchi domestic patterns from early colonial times to the present. The Yuchis are largely shrouded in mystery primarily due to the fact that they were subsumed under the Creek Confederacy from an early date. Euro-American male record-keepers rarely recognized the Yuchis as a separate entity and then only to mention their unique language or their fierceness in battle. There is relatively little historical data that describes day-to-day life that is specifically Yuchi. Many sources characterize the Creeks, but we must be careful not to assume that these characterizations automatically apply to the Yuchis as well. However, after combing numerous sources we can construct a tentative if not complete description of Yuchi domestic life over the past three hundred years.

Kinship Patterns

It has been argued that the Yuchis, like many Native southeastern groups, recognized a Crow-type kinship system of clans in which membership was inherited from the mother (Eggan 1966; Lewis and Kneberg 1958). The change from a matrilineal system to patrilineal system, Eggan argues, was the result of the influence of intermarriage with both the patrilineal Shawnees and the dominant Euro-American society after the Yuchis were removed to Indian Territory. In contrast, Urban (1994), questioning Swanton's statement that "the cultures of all the tribes of this area [southeast] were basically the same" (Swanton 1946/1979:812), proposes an alternative model for the Southeast. His multiparadigm model is based on social organizational diversity. For the Yuchis, he suggests that patrilineal men's moieties "were of great antiquity" and that an Omaha-type pattern for cousin terms was probably the aboriginal form (Urban 1994:174).

From my experience in the contemporary Yuchi community, however, it appears that people do not generally think in terms of clan affiliation, and it is safe to say that most people no longer know their clan affiliation.[2] Instead, western models of nuclear and extended families based on bilateral kinship are the norm for day-to-day life, while traditional ceremonial life is organized around patrilineal men's ritual societies (Jackson 1998:78-79).

Living Space

According to Lewis and Kneberg, archaeological evidence links today's Yuchis to the people who settled along the Tennessee River in Roane and Rhea Counties (Lewis and Kneberg 1958:145). Data show that these people built unusual houses around a pit

about two feet deep and twenty to thirty feet square. As described by Lewis and Kneberg, large, upright logs were spaced about two feet apart and served as the framework for the walls, which were set just inside the edge of the pit. The walls were then covered with cane lathes and clay plaster, and the excavated dirt was used to form an embankment that prevented rainwater from seeping into the shelter. A covered vestibule extended out for several feet from the entrance to further protect the occupants from rain and drafts. A Yuchi house of this type was occupied by a family unit consisting of three to ten or twelve individuals. According to the authors, Yuchis had a strong sense of property rights, thus ensuring that a family retained possession of its house location for many years. This style of house structure is one of the features that provides a possible link between the Yuchis and the people of the Dallas phase (Lewis and Kneberg 1958:145-46).

Little is known about Yuchi dwellings in the colonial period. According to Lewis and Kneberg, when the Spaniards first saw the Yuchi dwellings, they thought they were built entirely below ground (Lewis and Kneberg 1958:146). Another account of Yuchi life during the colonial period is found in the journal of Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck (Hvidt 1980). Von Reck arrived in America in 1736 and settled in Georgia with other colonists from Germany. He kept a meticulous travel diary along with descriptions and illustrations of the flora, fauna, and Indians he encountered, including Yuchis of that time period. Through his journal von Reck provides perhaps the earliest first-hand account of Yuchi life. He says that their towns were usually located on a river (Hvidt 1980:49) and that they made their living from hunting and fishing, and trade in hides and furs which they exchanged for guns, lead, beads, mirrors, rice, rum, and woolen cloth provided by the British (Hvidt 1980:40-41, 48). Von Reck describes their dwellings as

> ...little huts covered with bark or skins, under which they lie around by a good fire. They often change their domicile and consider human life too short for building houses, which would be of more use to the descendants than to the builders. Besides that, they do not wish to rob themselves of the freedom of leaving a place which no longer seems fitting. (Hvidt 1980:41)

Prior to their removal to Indian Territory, family structures surrounded a public square and council building called the *big house*. Today, 'big house' designates the ceremonial grounds, the site of traditional dances, including annual Green Corn ceremonies. The term also acts as a metaphor for the underlying values of community and harmony expected of the participants of the ceremonial grounds (Jackson 1998:69). A town was typically surrounded by a stockade to protect the inhabitants from their enemies, and typically, there was also a deep ditch or moat just beyond the stockade.

A prominent Yuchi town established near present-day Columbus, Georgia, appears on many eighteenth century maps and was visited by William Bartram about 1774. He describes his experience thus:

> The Uche town is situated in a vast plain, on the gradual ascent as we rise from a narrow strip of low ground immediately bordering on the river: it is the largest, most compact, and best situated Indian town I ever saw; the habitations are large and neatly built; the walls of the houses are constructed of a wooden frame, then lathed and plaistered [sic] inside and out with a reddish well tempered clay or mortar, which gives them the appearance of red brick walls; and these houses are neatly covered or roofed with Cypress bark or shingles of that tree. The town appeared to be populous and thriving, full of youth and young children: I suppose the number of inhabitants, men, women and children, might amount to one thousand or fifteen hundred, as it is said they are able to muster five hundred gun-men or warriors. Their own national language is altogether or radically different from the Creek or Muscogulge tongue, and is called the Savanna or Savanuca tongue; I was told by the traders it was the same with, or a dialect of, the Shawanese. They are in confederacy with the Creeks, but do not mix with them; and, on account of their numbers and strength, are of importance enough to excite and draw upon them the jealousy of the whole Muscogulge confederacy, and are usually at variance, yet are wise enough to unite against a common enemy, to support the interest and glory of the general Creek confederacy.
>
> After a little refreshment at this beautiful town, we repacked and set off again for the Apalachucla town...." (Van Doren 1928/1955:312-313)

Unfortunately, from the perspective of the current research, Bartram tweeks our interest while leaving several pertinent questions unanswered. For example, it would be useful to know what kind of refreshment he and his fellow travelers imbibed. Were Bartram and his colleagues served by Yuchi women, or were they served by someone else, slaves or servants, perhaps? In what type of structure did they take their refreshment? The Yuchis I know in Oklahoma generally consider their ancestors as residents of this town, and regardless of whether or not their ancestors actually helped to establish the town, they consider the area around Columbus their ancestral homeland.

After their arrival in Indian Territory, there is little concrete documentation to tell us what type of dwellings the Yuchis lived in. For the Creeks, there were no nails or tools, except for "little tomahawks—hatchets with hollow top and handle for smoking—that were made of steel and sharpened by rubbing a certain way on the rocks" (Debo 1941:109). Presumably, these tools were not widely distributed and certainly were not very efficient for felling trees and trying to build viable structures. Instead, their first shelters were built of deerskins, mud daubing, and elm bark. For heat, they fashioned a stove or hearth of mud or clay about three feet in diameter in the middle of the room. Cooking was done outside. Cooking utensils were also made of mud or clay and then baked (Debo 1941:109). Surely, the Yuchis faced a similar situation, having only the most rudimentary shelters and living conditions at first. But as previously mentioned, we know that upon their arrival at Fort Gibson, General Arbuckle provided axes and other metal tools to at least some of the members of the group. With such tools people would have been able to build log houses after they dispersed from the fort.

One important primary source of information for the early years in Indian Territory is provided by Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who spent four months among the southeastern tribes in Indian Territory in 1841-42 to investigate charges of fraud and profiteering by contractors who handled the Removal on behalf of the federal government. Hitchcock's subsequent report revealed so much corruption and graft that it was suppressed and never brought before Congress. His personal diaries have been published and provide much historic and cultural information about life in Indian Territory (Foreman 1930/1996:240).

In his journal, Hitchcock describes Cherokee log dwellings in much detail. They were of the 'dogtrot' style, commonly found in Georgia at the time of Removal among wealthy Cherokee and Creek planters (Foreman 1930/1996:240). Early Creek settlers in Indian Territory such as Roley McIntosh, principle chief of the Lower Creeks and wealthy plantation owner, and several other Creek families lived in houses of this type (Debo 1941:110). Consisting of two sections with a covered passage or breezeway between them, they had front and rear porches and often were two-story structures

> …with floors, planed, jointed and grooved supported upon dressed joists – with good doors, with iron hinges and locks – glass windows with moveable sashes – the interior of the house neatly white-washed and suitably supplied with needful furniture; good bed-steds [sic] with beds; chairs, tables, and bureaus, with clocks with brass movements; and what is more noticeable than all these, the whole is kept in perfect order by a regular system of habitual and unpretending daily industry…. (Foreman 1930.1996:240)

Hitchcock goes on to note, however, that not everyone he met was so well off. Referring to "the poor" and "the common people," some had a difficult time making the transition from east to west and had suffered greatly for want of an ax to build a house or a hoe to tend their crops (Foreman 1930/1996:240). "In their former homes," he says, "though accustomed to live with but few conveniences, they were not accustomed to live altogether without them" (Foreman 1930/1996:240). One Creek family of eight

or ten had two log houses whose height was quite low, so much so that Hitchcock could place his hand on the roof. There were no windows at all, and doorways, but no doors. The floors were dirt. The houses were chinked with mud "so as to be perfectly impervious even to air" (Foreman 1930/1996:152-53).

While traveling through a fertile region near present-day Eufaula, Oklahoma, Hitchcock provides the following description of his surroundings:

> There appears to be a considerable number of Creeks in this part of the Nation. We passed by a number of houses in our four miles ride this morning. One was a fine double house with a broad plaza; of course, built of logs. Most of the houses are small and are covered, instead of chinked, with earth which is of a red color quite bright, which gives a quite gay appearance to the house as seen throughout the woods a little distance off. I went to the house of the Principle Chief of the upper towns [Opothleyaholo] and was sorry to find it a miserable cabin, without a floor & very small. Mr. Alexander [a local trader] said he was very poor and has been placed at the head of affairs for his honesty, for which he is held in great respect. (Foreman 1930/1996:116)

Those who raised various types of produce such as corn and pumpkins and owned horses, cattle, hogs, and other livestock were considered wealthy and freely shared with the less fortunate "with a kindliness and liberality that have not been learned from the whites" (Foreman 1930/1996:240). The leader at Tuckabatchee made sure widows, orphans, and the infirm were cared for by calling on the people of that town to build a house and plant a crop of corn for them (Foreman 1930/1996:127). Pleasant Porter, chief of the Creek Nation at the end of the nineteenth century, described early attitudes toward the care of dependents:

> …the custom of the Creeks was that everybody had to work or live on the town, and the town had taskmasters who took care of him and saw that he worked. There was not a skulker or one who shirked amongst us then…If anyone was sick or unable to work, the neighbors came in and planted his crop, and they took care of it—saw that the fences were all right—and the women took care of the garden, and wood was got for him and so on. In fact, everything was done under the care of the people—they did everything and looked after the welfare of everything. (Debo 1941:111)

By the 1880s, most houses were constructed of unhewn logs, windowless cabins with puncheon or earthen floors. In cooler weather the logs were chinked with clay, and in warm weather the chinking was knocked out to let the air and light in. A few houses were made of hewn logs. A typical homestead consisted of several buildings – a cabin for cooking and eating, one or more for sleeping, and one for the women for their monthly confinement. During the summer each family typically built a brush arbor in the yard for cooking, eating, and sleeping. Other log buildings served as smokehouses, corn-cribs, and hen-houses. A garden plot and orchards of apple, peach, and pear trees were close by (Debo 1941:302).

Some of the women with whom I spoke vaguely recalled seeing log dwellings. By the time my consultants entered childhood, however, most people lived in frame dwellings, painted white or a pastel color, similar to the typical American farmhouse. One woman recalled two families who had log houses on their allotment property, but they were no longer used as dwellings. They stood as reminders of days gone by and may have been used by the family for storage of personal items.

Many contemporary Yuchis continue to reside on family allotment land. Some of their homes, built a generation or two ago by various family members, are made of finished boards and are usually painted white, while others are compact brick-faced homes provided through funding programs administered by Creek Nation. Other Yuchi families live interspersed with their white neighbors in residential additions or subdivisions in cities and towns such as Tulsa, Sapulpa, Bristow, and Bixby. Some live in apartment complexes and some in mobile home parks. I have visited with Yuchi families who reside together as extended family units, while others are nuclear families with one or two children in the home. Two of the women with whom I worked on this project are widows living alone who stay in close contact with their grown children,

grandchildren, and other relatives and friends. Today, it seems as if there are as many different strategies for survival as there are individuals in the Yuchi community. The common thread, though, is the interaction that takes place between family members.

Subsistence Strategies

During the early colonial period around 1736, von Reck observed that Yuchi possessions were few – "No one has more than a blanket, a pot, a hut and a musket" – and the people were content (Hvidt 1980:42). They subsisted primarily from hunting and fishing, because they considered themselves descended from noble blood and working in the fields for wages was "slavish" (Hvidt 1980:40). Interestingly, von Reck noted that while the Yuchis sometimes "bake small cakes of Indian corn in ashes" this occurs but rarely because they plant little corn (Hvidt 1980:46).

Wild game such as "stags and roebucks" (Hvidt 1980:44) was abundant around the colonial Georgia settlement of Ebenezer, where the Indians came to "shoot game for the sick" (Hvidt 1980:44). In addition, von Reck mentions the availability of sturgeon and catfish in the Savannah River, as well as raccoons,[3] whose "meat is almost like suckling pig" (Hvidt 1980:45), squirrels and flying squirrels, turkeys, which were "up to twenty or thirty pounds, and fatter" (Hvidt 1980:45), wild pigeons, and small parakeets (Hvidt 1980:45). Von Reck observed that the Yuchis subsisted primarily on rice, deer, buffalo, and bear meat, which was boiled, roasted, and smoked (Hvidt 1980:46).

> They stick four forks or forked poles in the ground, on which they place other poles with a piece of meat on top, and lay glowing coals underneath, and roast and turn it over until it is entirely dried, which is called a barbeque. They also stick a few pieces of meat on a stick spitted at the fire, and when one side is roasted, they turn the stick onto the other side. (Hvidt 1980:46)

Pickerel, "dog fish," and several kinds of bass were also significant sources of food among the Yuchi (Swanton 1946/1979:252). Bears were especially valued for their fat.

Wild plants – cattails, grapes, various berries, mushrooms, arrowroot, acorns, walnuts, and hickory nuts – were also used in cooking (Ferguson 1992:94; Swanton 1946/1979:244, 249).

A valuable primary source of information for the period prior to the Removal (1796-1816) is provided by government agent, Benjamin Hawkins. His journal, papers, and letters offer valuable insight into the land, the people, and their relationship with each other. What is interesting about Hawkins is that he actually seems to like the Indians, and his records reflect the Indians' intelligence, emotions, and volition. His records have been searched and surveyed effectively by John R. Swanton (1922/1998) and Florette Henri (1986). Hawkins' residence was situated on the Flint River in Georgia, and although the Yuchis were considered members of the Creek Confederacy, Hawkins singles them out specifically, describing their towns as follows:

> U-chee: is on the right bank of Chat-to-ho-che, ten and a half miles below Cow-e-tuh tal-lau-has-see, on a flat of rich land, with hickory, oak, blackjack, and long-leaf pine; the flat extends from one to two miles back from the river. Above the town, and bordering on it, Uchee Creek, eighty-five[4] feet wide, joins the river. Opposite the town house, on the left bank of the river, there is a narrow strip of flat land from fifty to one hundred yards wide, then high pine barren hills; these people speak a tongue different from the Creeks; they were formerly settled in small villages at Ponpon, Saltketchers (Sol-ke-chuh), Silver Bluff, and O-ge-chee, and were continually at war with the Cherokees, Ca-tau-bau, and Creeks.
>
> In the year 1729, an old chief of Cussetuh, called by the white people Captain Ellick, married three Uchee women, and brought them to Cussetuh, which was greatly disliked by his towns people; their opposition determined him to move from Cussetuh; he went down opposite were the town now is, and settled with his three brothers; two of whom had Uchee wives; he, after this, collected all the Uchees, gave them the land where their town now is, and there they settled.
>
> These people are more civil and orderly than their neighbors; their women are more chaste, and the men better hunters; they retain all their original customs and laws, and have adopted none of the Creeks; they have some worm fences in and about their town, but very few peach trees.
>
> They have lately begun to settle out in villages, and are industrious, compared with their neighbors; the men take part in the labors of the women, and are more constant in their attachment to their women than is usual among red people.

> The number of gun men is variously estimated; they do not exceed two hundred and fifty, including all who are settled in villages, of which they have three. (Swanton 1922/1998:309-310)

Hawkins goes on to describe three Yuchi villages ranging in size from 14 families to "but a few" (Swanton 1922/1998:311). Formerly a large town, the smallest one was "broken up" (Swanton 1922/1998:311) during the Indian wars, thus discouraging the former residents form returning, despite the favorable location for farming and fishing. Residents of the other two towns were increasingly engaged in farm industry and tended some cattle and hogs. However, describing Timothy Barnard,[5] a prominent figure in Yuchi history, Hawkins says, "He is not much acquainted with farming, and receives light slowly on the subject, as is the case with all the Indian countrymen, without exception" (Swanton 1922/1998:311). Hawkins was determined to promote technological advancements to the Indians that would improve their mode of living. New farming techniques and tools such as plows and hoes, improved strains of seed, plants and fruit trees, modern methods of fertilizing and cultivating crops, and domestic livestock all made life more healthy and secure, Hawkins believed (Henri 1986:95).

One of the most interesting of Hawkins' programs involved Native women to whom he introduced cotton culture, the spinning wheel, and modern looms so that they could make their own cloth rather than being compelled to buy it. Cotton was one of the main components of Hawkins' civilization program. While the black-seeded variety did not do particularly well in Georgia, the green-seeded variety matured earlier and thrived throughout the area. Shortly after his arrival at the Creek agency, Hawkins met Robert Grierson, a prosperous Scottish trader and farmer who had married a Creek woman. In 1796 Grierson had two acres planted in cotton. Two years later, he had 11 people in his employ to spin and weave the cotton his family had grown and cleaned. It

was his hope that they would also learn the process of spinning and weaving; to this end, Grierson hired Rachel Spillard at two hundred dollars per year to teach and supervise cotton processing. Hawkins provided cotton cards, used in the cleaning process, as well as spinning wheels and looms. Grierson's cotton processing factory was born (Henri 1986:145-148).

Indian women, always important contributors to society as the ones who fed and clothed their families, recognized the textile industry as an important source of wages in the form of salt, beads, and the chance to learn to make their own homespun cloth. Timothy Barnard became involved in the plan by hiring Rachel Spillard's sister to teach spinning and weaving at his home. Other white women were also employed to teach textile skills to Native women. After Hawkins sent a male weaver through the Creek Nation in the summer and fall of 1797 to demonstrate the craft, women were determined to raise their own cotton and to make their own thread and cloth. Many requests for cotton cards, spinning wheels, and looms flooded into the agency office. Hawkins was ecstatic and felt that the success of the cotton program would convince the men that the adoption of agriculture and technology had advantages over the uncertain hunting lifestyle.

Within just a couple of years, one of the Native women, Hannah Hales, had acquired a black slave, some horses, sixty head of cattle, and some hogs with the proceeds of her cotton production. Others like Hales also acquired property and more independence along with it. Those who had already learned cotton production skills passed them on to others, and the industry spread among the Creeks and to other tribes as well.

While contemporary Yuchi women do not grow and process their own cotton, the tradition of working with textiles is still strong. Growing up, most of their clothes

were homemade, and they tell me that their mothers and grandmothers always had a quilt in progress. The women got together in the afternoons to work around the quilt frame and then raise the quilt, frame and all up to the rafters for storage. Today, many of the women are handy with sewing skills and some, following in their mothers' footsteps, are skilled at designing and constructing quilts. Many continue to make their own clothes, especially traditional-style Yuchi dresses, ribbon shirts, and hunting coats for themselves and family members to be worn in ceremonies and exhibitions. Several women of my acquaintance also produce useful craft items such as pot-holders, tote bags, aprons, pillows, and decorated bath towels that they sell at various events and craft shows. These endeavors continue to give Yuchi women a sense of independence and control over their own lives as they produce articles for sale in the cash economy.

In Indian Territory, numerous entries in Hitchcock's journal indicate that the newcomers struggled to re-establish their farms (Foreman 1930/1996), suggesting that Hawkins' improvement programs were successful, and agriculture had become the primary subsistence base for the Indians prior to removal. Because the newcomers were starting out in Indian Territory with little or nothing in the way of tools, seeds, or livestock, the government promised assistance and hired contractors to administer the program of supplying rations of corn, beef, and salt. However, the provisions due the Indians during their first years in Indian Territory were often inadequate or withheld altogether by contractors purely out of greed. From the information he was able to glean from many informants, Hitchcock deduced that most of the federal funds intended to pay for provisions were pocketed by the contractors instead of being used for the benefit of the Indian people as intended. One woman reported that after arriving in Indian Territory, because of a lack of food, 12 of her party of 31 had perished (Foreman 1930/1996:151). A trader by the name of Edwards "denounces the

contractors in the severest language" after they delivered salt several bushels short. Edwards measured it himself, but a bribed government agent told the Indians to take it or leave it as is. Helpless widows "were left to starve or beg their way as they could, to dig for roots &c" (Foreman 1930/1996:156-57). This seems to contradict his earlier statement that widows were cared for by Creek people who built houses for them and helped them put in a crop, but it must have been difficult to provide for everyone who needed assistance, especially in the early days when almost everyone was struggling. Foreman notes that for the first couple of years in Indian Territory, there were few infants, simply because the health of women was so compromised by the suffering they had endured that many of them were incapable of conceiving (Foreman 1930/1996:157). We can only surmise that the sufferings of the Yuchis upon their arrival in Indian Territory were similar to those of the Creeks.

Indians who migrated to Indian Territory before the forced Removal of the late 1830s were able to bring livestock with them, but later migrants, including many Yuchis were not as fortunate. Under a treaty signed in 1838 at Fort Gibson, the federal government agreed to monetarily compensate the Creeks for their losses and to distribute stock animals among them in proportion to their losses. By 1845 almost every family in the Creek Nation had one or two cows and horses and a few hogs. In a manner similar to Cherokee practice, they fenced their fields and allowed the livestock to roam freely to feed on the produce they found in the woods, such as acorns and hickory nuts. But seven years is a long time to wait to acquire livestock when you do not have much in the way of resources. Therefore, in the early years, hunting was the main source of meat, and since few people had guns and ammunition, they were compelled to brush up on their skills at hunting with bow and arrow (Debo 1941:112). In addition to the game they exploited in the surrounding area, they also took regular

trips to hunt buffalo, which were still abundant about 75 miles to the west (Foreman 1930/1996:155).

At one Creek home, where Hitchcock and his guide were invited to eat, supper consisted of "some meat so fried out of countenance that I could not tell what it was for some time; but at length I spied some bristles of a well known domestic animal, the pride and wealth of the great City of Cincinnati, where more hogs are butchered in the hog-killing season than I dare to say" (Foreman 1930/1996:153). They also had some "native corn bread," four fried eggs, and some "very good coffee with sugar, but there is no milk in this country" (Foreman 1930/1996:153-54). Some of the cooking utensils observed by Hitchcock were made of clay.

An entry in Hitchcock's journal indicates that besides establishing working farms in their new land, the women found ways to put their creative skills to use. While dining with two Creek acquaintances, "a negress belonging to Opothleyaholo's wife came (five miles) with the compliments of her mistress desiring me to buy some bead moccasins of which she sent some eight or ten pairs, the work of her own hands" (Foreman 1930/1996:148). Hitchcock bought one pair for seven dollars. Again, we find an example of women taking advantage of their skill with a needle in order to better their financial circumstances.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, a typical Indian family in Indian Territory worked an average of six to twenty acres, which were fenced to keep the livestock out. They owned a wagon, plows, and other farm implements and tools, and at least one or two mules and/or horses, all necessary for running the farm (Debo 1941:303-04). Wagons and horses provided transportation for most families well into the twentieth century.

Because livestock was not customarily fenced, there were many wild hogs, descendants of domestic strays. Leading up to the twentieth century, despite the abundance of domesticated livestock, hunting and fishing still provided important sources of protein. Wild resources included squirrels, turkeys, rabbits, prairie chickens, and rarely, deer, which had been hunted out in most places. It is interesting to note that when asked if their male family members hunted, the women I spoke to all said yes, but mostly for squirrels or rabbits, not for deer. None of them recall ever eating venison when they were growing up in the 1920s and 1930s. Their primary meat was farm-raised pork.

Corn (*zohtoh*)[6] was the primary agricultural resource for the Yuchis. Every family had a corn pounder (*de thlah*) consisting of a heavy, hand-carved wooden pestle and a mortar made by one of the men by hollowing a log with fire. After pounding dried corn into coarse grits, the corn was sometimes cooked with lye to make *sofkee* (Creek term) or *zo shee* (Yuchi term). Speck describes the process as follows:

> To make this the grains of corn, when dry, are removed from the cob and pounded in the mortar until they are broken up. These grits and the corn powder are then scooped out of the mortar and boiled in a pot with water. Wood ashes from the fire are usually added to it to give a peculiar flavor much to the native taste. Even powdered hickory nuts, or marrow, or meat may be boiled with the soup to vary its taste.[7] It is commonly believed, as regards the origin of this favorite dish, that a woman in the mythical ages cut a rent in the sky through which a peculiar liquid flowed which was found to be good to eat. The Sun then explained its preparation and use, from which fact it was called *tso' ci*, inferribly "sun fluid." (Speck 1909:44)

The Yuchis I know buy lye at the Creek Nation gift shop in Okmulgee, where it is pre-made, the ashes already being mixed with water and then strained out. It is sold in pint or quart Mason jars in the shop. The women purchase dried, cracked corn at the Warehouse Market in Sapulpa and prepare *sofkee* in a large crock-pot, cooking the mixture overnight. The recipe consists of corn, water, and a small amount of lye – just a tablespoon or two to taste. The Yuchis refer to this corn recipe as *sofkee* after the

Creeks[8] and consider it a great delicacy. It can be served cold or hot, sometimes with sugar as a seasoning they tell me, although I have never seen anyone do this. *Sofkee* is a thin, watery mixture that can be eaten as a side dish or enjoyed as a beverage. Some of the old people like to let it sit out a day or two until it becomes sour.

Mixed with wood ash and water to remove the hulls and puff up the whole kernel, corn becomes hominy (*zo toe ah*). Fresh, canned or John Cope's brand dried corn are cooked with chunks of beef or pork to make corn soup (*zotoh wahshee*). These two dishes, hominy and corn soup, are typically served at contemporary communal dinners. Other corn recipes enjoyed by the Yuchis in the past included blue dumplings made of beaten corn and the burned shells of field peas, and *abuskee*, a drink made of parched corn meal stirred into a glass of sweetened water. Women told me about these recipes, but I have never seen them served on any occasion.

Besides corn, Yuchis also raised other vegetables such as pinto beans, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, pumpkins, squash, melons, and cabbage. Beans, pumpkins, and some of the orchard fruits were ordinarily dried for winter use. These products were thinly sliced and usually laid out on a cloth on the roof and covered with another cloth or a piece of screen in more recent times. The produce was left to lie on the roof all day long and then removed at night. It was returned to the roof on successive days until totally dried, and according to my consultants, the process usually took about four or five days. The final product was stored in cloth flour sacks and hung in the rafters of the house for later use. All of the women with whom I talked recall their mothers and grandmothers using drying as a preservation method. For some, canning was also a popular method of preserving produce, but this practice does not seem to be as widespread.

One of my most surprising discoveries was that Yuchis love rice. It is unclear how they developed their taste for rice, but Swanton discusses wild rice as a food resource for aboriginal people of the Southeast (Swanton 1946/1979:244), and von Reck mentions rice as a staple food for the Yuchis in Georgia in 1736 (Hvidt 1980:46). It is not clear if von Reck referred to a variety of wild rice, *Zizania aquatica*, a characteristic species of the low-lying freshwater areas of the southeastern coastal plain (Larson 1980:22). Larson (Personal communication 04/10/2001) does not believe, however, that the Yuchis' attraction to rice goes back as far as prehistoric times. Rather, he suggests that their engagement with rice is probably a later phenomenon having more to do with Euro-American trade networks.

Ferguson (1992:60, 93) discusses rice introduced to the Carolina low country around the 1690s. By 1700, just thirty years after its founding, the population of the Carolina colony was 7,000, nearly half of whom were Indian and black slaves. It was the West Africans who brought their knowledge of rice production with them from their homeland, and consequently, rice became the most successful experimental crop produced by the large-scale commercial plantations of Carolina. Finding that it thrived in the warm, wet conditions of the low country, planters demanded more and more slaves to work their fields. By 1710, almost one third of the colony's 5,500 slaves were Indians. As village raids and disease depleted native populations, the demand for African slaves increased, and the remaining Indian slaves soon became physically and culturally integrated with the African population. With their practical knowledge of farming, hunting, fishing, and gathering, African and Indian slaves on the frontier made important contributions to the economic success of the colony of Carolina (Ferguson 1992:59-61). Rice quickly became a staple of colonial Carolina's economy

and diet and perhaps of Indians in the region as well. Clearly, the story of rice in the Americas is intertwined with that of at least some of the native southeastern peoples.

I was served rice at a Yuchi communal dinner, but I was not sure what it was. It was cooked with chunks of meat (beef, I think), and the rice was cooked almost to the consistency of cream of wheat with little or no seasoning. After asking what it was, one of the women told me it was rice. Another Yuchi woman told me that one of her brother's favorite foods is rice, and they always serve it at their camp at Polecat during the summer ceremonial dances. In the process of asking about food in my interviews, the women all mentioned rice as one of the staple foods their families enjoyed when they were growing up. They recalled often eating it for breakfast, and they reported that rice was among the products the family purchased at the local grocery store. Other purchased items included sugar, coffee, and flour.

Pork seems to have been a staple in the Yuchi diet from Hawkins' time and remains so today. Men butchered hogs during the fall and winter, and it was common for neighbors to get together to help each other with the work. While men processed the hogs, women prepared a meal for everyone, and children gathered wood for the fires. Sometimes the pork was salt-cured. Another popular preservation method described by some of the participants in this study involved cooking the fresh pork and storing it in large crocks or cans. Preservation was achieved by pouring fat drippings over the meat to seal out the air. When desired for a meal, the cook took the desired amount of meat from the can and fried it up for the family.

My consultants are all familiar with hog butchering, a prominent childhood memory, although today they typically purchase packaged meat in the grocery store. Today, salt pork is harder to find in small quantities suitable for feeding contemporary families. Those who care to do so can order it in large salt-encrusted slabs from a meat

supplier in Tulsa and then it cut up and freeze it for future use. However, many of today's Yuchis are concerned with their health just as any other Americans are, and their consumption of salt pork is largely restricted to special occasions such as the feast associated with the Green Corn ceremony or wild onion dinners in the spring. The women of Pickett Chapel always order their salt meat, about eighty pounds, from the supplier in Tulsa in order to provide enough to feed the crowds at their annual wild onion dinner.

In the early days, salt for preserving meat was produced at a spring near the Yuchi settlements. A kettle was kept there and people came from long distances to boil down water and take the salt home (Debo 1941:303). None of my consultants recalls having to make salt using this process during their lifetimes. Rather it was one of the staple products their families purchased in town. Of course, today, the acquisition of salt is of no concern for contemporary Yuchis. They simply buy it at the grocery store when needed and use it for seasoning their food in cooking and at the table.

Based primarily on an agrarian economy most Yuchis were small-scale subsistence farmers producing food for their own families with a small percentage of production earmarked for use in barter or cash trade. Jackson (1998:52) mentions that "most Yuchi people, both those with and those without land, worked as day laborers on the larger farms held by whites and sometimes by Indian owner-operators." However, this statement cannot be verified, since none of the consultants for the current study have mentioned this kind of participation in the wage labor economy to me.

However, during the 1920s Yuchis became more dependent on the cash economy, as oil and natural gas were discovered on their allotment lands. In fact, several Yuchi families were suddenly quite well off financially as a result of their willingness to lease rights to these resources or sell some or all of their land outright.

For some Yuchis their new-found prosperity was fleeting, while for others it became more permanent. During this time period, many Yuchi people were able to build substantial homes and outbuildings, and to purchase farm equipment, clothing and shoes, and automobiles for their family members. Automobiles had a profound effect on the way people interacted with each other. For the first time, they no longer had to walk or take a horse and wagon to get to their destination. Travel time decreased dramatically, and Yuchis, like other Americans, reveled in their mobility.

World War II also brought profound changes to the Yuchi community as many young men left the farms to serve in various branches of the military. Women, too, were involved in the war effort. Some moved to nearby Tulsa, which had become a manufacturing center almost overnight. Drawn into the system of industrial wage labor, they found that a return to small-scale farming after the war was no longer a viable alternative. These young adults, today's elders, contributed to the growing market economy as teachers and scholars, health-care workers, manufacturing plant workers, and office professionals. Fortunately, the Yuchi community remained relatively intact primarily because their rural allotment lands lay in close proximity to urban Tulsa. Several of my consultants told me that as young adults it was common for them to take the train home to Sapulpa on weekends to spend time with their families after working at their jobs in Tulsa during the week. Today, as Jackson notes (1998:53, 68), the Yuchi settlements are considered "suburbanized regions in orbit around metropolitan Tulsa" thus allowing them to maintain their own community activities, patterns of interaction, and cultural identity.

[1] Also see Wallace 1998 for a more detailed summary of Yuchi political history and Jackson 2003 for a view of contemporary Yuchi ceremonial life.

[2] In Ballard (1975:1) he states that at the time of his field work in 1970-75 the Yuchi had "lost almost all of their clan system."

[3] Perhaps von Reck is referring to an opossum. In one of his illustration of an opossum, he mistakenly labels it "Reckhuhn: or raccoon (Hvidt, ed. 1980:78).

[4] Swanton notes that the Library of Congress manuscript reads "45" (Swanton 1922/1998:309).

[5] Timothy Barnard was a white trader who married a Yuchi woman. It is unclear if Hawkins is referring to Timothy Barnard or his son, Timpoochee, who was considered Yuchi by his contemporaries and still is today by most Yuchis. As a resident in Hawkins' jurisdiction, Timothy Barnard may have been referred to in the context of his "Indian countrymen," and because trade was probably his primary occupation, he may have been a novice at farming like most of the Indians.

[6] Translations for food names were provided by Maxine Barnett. Phonetic transcriptions are the author's and do not conform to those developed by the tribal language program.

[7] These ingredients are not typically added to *sofkee* by contemporary Yuchis. Today, *sofkee* is made with coarse, dried corn grits and lye. Corn soup, which contains meat, is not the same thing as *sofkee*. Corn soup does not contain lye, and is typically made with canned corn or John Cope's brand dried corn, which is sold in a box at the grocery store. It is not clear if the recipe for *sofkee* has changed over time or if Speck is confusing *sofkee* with corn soup.

[8] The Yuchis I know always refer to this corn recipe as *sofkee* (the Creek term) rather than *zo shee* (the Yuchi term). It is not clear why or when this shift in terminology took place.

CHAPTER 3

SIX YUCHI WOMEN

> *"Already, many gestures and processes that were commonplace for my grandmothers' generation, ways of operating that were a part of a young girl's normal apprenticeship and of her (average) savoir faire capital, have been erased from common consciousness and no longer subsist except in the childhood memories of certain people, in the incomplete stories of old people, or, thanks to ethnologists, those city people intent on collecting the last marks of a moribund peasant culture, on preserving the memory and the trace of a past that is near and already distant."*
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> – Giard 1998b:202

Contextualizing the Anthropologist

It was early 1997 when I first visited the Yuchis as a new research assistant. My professor, Morris Foster, picked me up, and we went over to Sapulpa to attend a tribal business meeting. We stopped at Braums, a popular hamburger and ice cream chain in Oklahoma, where Morris ate a hamburger. But I was too nervous to eat. The meeting took place at the Yuchi offices on Independence Street in Sapulpa. At that time, the Yuchis involved in EUCHEE (Euchees United Cultural, Historical and Educational Efforts)[1] were leasing space in a small strip office complex and working on their cultural and language preservation projects. They were in the early stages of their work, and much of it was being funded through their participation in the ELSI (Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications of the Human Genome Project) grant that was also funding my participation in the community.

In fact, I was coming into the ELSI project at the beginning of the third year of the grant. Another graduate student at the University of Oklahoma had worked on the project for two years but was giving it up so that she could devote more time to writing

her dissertation. Morris asked me if I would be interested in replacing her starting in July 1997. Of course I jumped at the chance to get out in the field and get some experience. My job as a research assistant would involve travel to the Sapulpa area on a regular basis, primarily on weekends, since I was still taking classes during the week, and conduct interviews with Yuchi elders and other interested participants who self-identified as Yuchi. I made recordings of several focus groups that took place during that year, and as I got to know people better, I became more involved in community activities as permitted by my class schedule.

When Morris asked me to participate in the ELSI project, I was not particularly interested in turning my participation into a dissertation project with the Yuchis. I wanted to design a research project working with the Cherokees on the eastern edge of Oklahoma. But moving to eastern Oklahoma for an extended stay would be a challenge logistically, because by that time I owned a home in Norman. I sure did not want to sell it, and I was hesitant to rent it out with my furniture in it. I did not exactly relish the idea of putting everything in storage either. As it turned out, the Yuchis were not only easily accessible, allowing me to continue living in Norman and commute, I discovered that after spending a year there, talking to them, and interacting with the Yuchi people, I found many interesting aspects of their lives that piqued my interest. More importantly, in a year's time, we began to form some bonds of friendship, and there was a degree of trust between us. In short, I liked the people and I think they liked me. They certainly made me feel welcome at the various meetings and activities. In the end, I found a project I wanted to pursue with them for my own dissertation project, and the idea of working on a Cherokee project was left for the future.

That first night at the business meeting was truly nerve-wracking. I am basically a shy person, especially in a group setting. Not knowing what to expect and

not wanting to make any missteps, I got through the initial introductions and then stayed quiet and just watched and listened to the people as they discussed their 'business'. Katie, who became a friend, later laughingly described me as looking like "a deer in headlights." I guess my case of nerves was apparent to all.

Pam Wallace, the student I replaced on the ELSI project, took me to the ceremonial ground at Duck Creek in June 1997 for the Arbor Dance.[2] Again, it was an odd situation, not only because I was meeting new people, but also because I was entering a world I had never experienced before. Pam did not seem entirely at ease in this setting either, and her apprehension only enhanced my own. Pam, it seems, was more affiliated with the members of the ceremonial ground at Polecat Creek and did not seem to know very many people at Duck Creek. We did, however, meet up with some people we knew, ones that Pam knew very well and to whom I had been introduced to earlier in the year. The ceremonial season was just getting underway, and the individual family camps were not open yet. Consequently, everyone brought food for a pot-luck supper, and we were invited to eat at the Berryhill's camp. Several acquaintances came by to chat, and it turned into a pleasant evening.

Duck Creek is located in a beautiful, open setting where the sky is fully visible. As the warm, Oklahoma evening turned cool, people settled in to watch and participate in the dances. Pam and I set up our lawn chairs alongside Jerilyn and Elenora (Dee-Dee), who readied her shells for the dance. As the hour grew late, the heat of the day dissipated and the air became cool and damp, and we donned our jackets. The smell of wood smoke, newly mown grass, bug repellent, and cigarette smoke permeated the air. In the background were the sounds of a few evening birds, the laughter of children, quiet conversations taking place nearby, and the distinctive rattle of turtle shells and cans filled with pebbles as young girls stomped their feet in anticipation of the dance.

The musical *ch-ch-ch* of leg rattles worn by the women dancers was a new sound for me, and one I grew to love as the years went by.

That summer of 1997, before I started conducting interviews, I began regular visits to the area, first acting essentially as a tourist, learning my way around the town of Sapulpa, where many of my interviews would take place. I visited the Sapulpa historical museum, which to my disappointment and surprise, all but ignored the rich history of Native peoples in the area. They did have a portrait of 'Chief Sapulpa,' a prominent Creek man for whom the town was named, but that was about it. For information about the Creeks, I needed to go to Okmulgee and the Muscogee historical museum to get a feel for the history of the Creek people, which is intimately intertwined with the Yuchis.

I already knew a white woman, Gloria, who lives in Kellyville, a Yuchi town. Her step-son and I were friends at OU and he and I used to visit her on weekends. She gave me my first tour around the Sapulpa-Kellyville area. She knew where some of the important Yuchi historic sites were in the area, such as the Euchee Mission School and Rock Creek church. She also took me to Pickett Chapel for the first time. It was a Wednesday in mid-July when I first laid eyes on Pickett Chapel, a place that has grown very dear to me. To my amazement, when we arrived there were people out in the church yard. I had not expected to find anyone there mid-week. I was greeted by a woman, who was there with her father and two young grandsons. She told me her father is Creek and her late mother was Yuchi, and she grew up attending Pickett Chapel.

My new acquaintance wanted to know if we had seen the church cemetery, and I said, no we had not. She had her grandsons ride in my car and show us where it is. After crossing a field and taking a walk down a wide path through the woods, one must

cross a narrow foot bridge over a gully. A little ways up the hill is the cemetery. It was rather small and contained perhaps fifty marked graves. There appeared to be some burials on the periphery without markers. In general the cemetery was in need of tidying as it was covered in dried leaves, remnants of past autumns, and the memorials were weathered and faded. Nevertheless, it was very interesting to look at strange names, names I became familiar with as the months passed into years.

Upon our return to the church yard, a very large man was present who had not been there before. My friend, Gloria, introduced me to him as "an anthropologist from OU who is studying the Yuchis." My heart sank. I wanted to re-roll the tape and call for a retake. "This cannot be happening," I thought. Gloria just did not understand that worse than red flags, she was sending up signal flares warning every Indian in the vicinity that they were in imminent danger. Well, the man, we learned, was Jerry Baker, a Creek, and preacher at Pickett Chapel. He cracked a couple of 'anthropologist and the Indian' jokes. One went like this: The typical Indian family consists of a mother, father, two kids, and an anthropologist. Instinctively, I knew he was letting me know to watch my step. After we talked awhile, he seemed okay with my being there, and actually became quite friendly. But I thought, "Uh-huh. Keep your friends close and your enemies, closer, that's what he's thinking." I felt like I had gotten off to a very inauspicious start at Pickett Chapel.

The Yuchi woman we met earlier seemed to get over her surprise about learning that an anthropologist had just swooped into their midst and took us inside the church. She showed us the historic sanctuary, where several generations of Yuchi people had worshipped over the years. It was very small, consisting of ten pews on each side of a center aisle. The room was heated by a wood stove located at the back of the room. Two very life-like banners were painted on the wall behind the pulpit. One was the

flame insignia of the United Methodist Church and the other was dark blue with the Yuchi motto – "Always forward. Never go back" – painted in yellow lettering.

The three of us, the Yuchi woman, my friend, Gloria, and I, sat in the pews and talked awhile. The woman asked me who I was going to work with on the genealogies, and I said, "It's being coordinated through the office in Sapulpa." She hesitated and said, "The people up there are all grounds people." I replied, "Yeah, I know. That's why I'd like to meet some church people." Her response was, "I may have been raised in the church, but I'm Yuchi, too." I agreed with her and said, "I think the family histories are important and the church people have stories to tell, too. They also need to be recorded." She said there are some people in the church, elders, who might be interested in telling their stories.

Later, as we were getting ready to depart, the woman invited us to come back the following week for a gospel sing they were having at the church in honor of a crew of church-builders from Indiana who were arriving that day to build a new sanctuary on the church grounds. The sanctuary we had just toured was built by the same crew years before. It is a ministry that has endured throughout the decades. Now they were coming back to provide the members of Pickett Chapel with a brand new building that would be larger and more accommodating for a contemporary congregation. I later learned that when my friend Gloria and I arrived on the scene that day, we were initially mistaken for church builders, until Gloria made clear our real identity!

I made a point of attending the gospel sing 'Saturday week' (Saturday of the following week, about 10 days later). My appearance was totally unexpected. I phoned Pastor Baker on Friday to make sure they were still going to do it, and he seemed surprised that I was going to come. I am so glad I did. My attendance not only cemented my acquaintance with the woman who invited me, our relationship grew into

a friendship I will always treasure. Also, that evening I met Dorothy Matthews for the first time. She was a lovely Choctaw woman living in Sapulpa who attended Pickett Chapel for a number of years. She also became very dear to me before her passing.

That evening, in celebration of the new church building, we sang unfamiliar tunes from a book printed with shape notes, and familiar ones from the old Cokesbury hymnal we used on Sunday nights when I was growing up in a Methodist church in metro Atlanta. Some people performed 'specials'. There were those who sang, played the flute (classical Western-style, not Indian flute), and played the electric guitar. Others performed as a trio – a soprano, a tenor, and a bass. It was a wonderful evening spent in the new sanctuary building surrounded by the church builders from Indiana, members of Pickett Chapel and visitors alike. I was made to feel very welcome and was invited to come back for worship anytime. I took them up on that offer, and always made a point to stay over on Sunday to attend church at Pickett Chapel before going back to Norman on Sunday afternoon.

Through my association with the Yuchi people at Polecat and Duck Creek ceremonial grounds and at Pickett Chapel, I have had the opportunity to interview many men and women for the purpose of recording their family histories and genealogies. During that period, 1997 to 1998, I also had the opportunity to interact with people in their meeting places, their places of ceremony and ritual, in their homes, and by spending time out and about with them. In the course of this interaction, I observed how women handle food and express their identity as Yuchi through food and cooking.

My interest in Yuchi foodways started during that first summer in 1997 when I observed three adolescent and pre-teen girls cooking for the Green Corn feast at Polecat ceremonial grounds. The food was being prepared for the evening feast which

would break the fast that many tribal members had observed throughout the day. Especially interesting was the girls' preparation of the fry bread, a favorite among Indians and non-Indians alike. The girls didn't exactly know how to prepare the dough, how to manipulate it with their hands, but they had seen older women do it. They had a sense of how to do it. And the older women just sat back and let them try on their own. Nobody told them how to do it. "You should do it this way" was not uttered by anyone present. They commented among themselves about the girls' activities, but no one spoke directly to them. "This is interesting," I thought. I didn't know at the time exactly why it was interesting or what I would do with this observation, but the image of those girls making fry bread on their own stayed with me for several years as a seed, until it germinated into an idea for a research project. Along with other observations I made about how Yuchi women handle and manipulate food, how they use it to define the group, and how they use it to generate social capital for themselves as individuals, I developed a research project that I believe captures an important aspect of Yuchi culture and its uniqueness.

During the course of my first year conducting the genealogy and family history project, I met some extraordinary women. Their dedication to the Yuchi people shines through, and that is what attracted me to them. For this project, I identified several women who seemed to have special knowledge about traditional foods and cooking methods. I asked them to help me with my project, and they agreed. The key participants are three women who are active at Polecat ceremonial grounds, and three women who are active at Pickett Chapel. There are many other women who have special knowledge of food and cooking in the Yuchi tradition, but because this work is modeled after the life history genre, I limited my focus to six key women. I interacted with many others over the course of the five years I spent among the Yuchi people and

they have all informed this project to some extent. Part 2 of this chapter consists of brief introductions to the six women who are the focus of this study. The overviews are not intended to provide complete biographies. My intention is to give the reader a general idea of where the individuals were born, how they grew up, and a feel for what their lives are like. Quotes in the introductions are referenced by indicating the initials of the speaker, date of interview, and page number(s) of the unpublished interview transcript where the quote may be found. Part 3 is a review of recent literature in the social sciences that informs my focus on life histories. In the next chapter, the six key women will tell us in their own words more about the role of food and cooking in their lives.

Introductions

Maxine Wildcat Barnett[3]

Maxine Wildcat was born in Sapulpa, Creek County, Oklahoma on May 9, 1925. Her parents were Maxie Wildcat and Lizzie Bighead, and Maxine was the third of five children. Maxine and her family lived on her father's allotment of 80 acres "up here where Circle Drive is" (MWB 01/12/01, p. 10)[4] about one half mile south of Highway 117. Like many Indians in the area, her father apparently had a little oil money, "but it wasn't a lot" (MWB 12/14/97, p. 1). They had a nice home place, and according to another Yuchi woman I spoke to, the Wildcats were considered "well-off."

Mother, Lizzie Bighead, also had an 80-acre allotment near Mounds that she leased, "but it was real bad land, wasn't even good for farming. She leased the land to a man who used it for running cattle. "I can remember that lots of times we'd go there for the payment, he would give her [Maxine's mother] some meat and maybe some vegetables. That's what he'd pay her with." (MWB 12/14/97, p. 1)

Sometime when Maxine was young, her parents separated. For some reason her mother left the family, and the children stayed at the home place with their father. Eventually, however, Maxine's father took them to live with his mother, Eliza (*A-go-gwen-ah*) on her allotment about a mile west of Pickett Chapel, which lies about five miles south of Sapulpa. Grandma Eliza's household consisted of herself, third husband Johnson Pickett, her son John Snow, her daughter Lucy Snow, her niece Martha Squire, her son Maxie Wildcat, and his children, Maxine, Josephine, and Andrew. Maxie's older boys, Jimmie and Nathaniel, attended Euchee Mission boarding school in Sapulpa. Maxine's Uncle Joe (Josey) Wildcat and his wife, Nancy Bighead Wildcat, were frequent visitors. The children rarely saw their mother after her parents separated, and Maxine was about 12 years old when her mother died.

The community where Maxine's family lived with Grandma Eliza is known as Pickett Prairie. Maxine and her cousin Martha attended nearby Pickett school. Soon, older sister Jo decided to go to Chilocco, a secondary school located in northern Oklahoma, just south of Arkansas City, Kansas. All of the kids eventually followed in her footsteps and received their high school diplomas from Chilocco. Chilocco was a large Indian school serving about six or seven hundred students. Maxine lived in a dormitory with her cousin Martha, two other Yuchi girls, and a Creek girl. By the time she was a senior, she had only one roommate. "To me I liked it [living at Chilocco], because it was safe. Safe, and you didn't have to worry about being in the cold or walking to school or all of that" (MWB 12/14/97, p. 2).

Girls at Chilocco took instruction in math, geometry, English, geography, and domestic skills, such as cooking and sewing. During the summer and on holidays, Maxine worked in the dining room and hospital. Her experience in the hospital would later prove an important step to her professional life as a certified dietician and heath

care professional. Maxine graduated from Chilocco. "And I said I was probably the only one that cried when I graduated. Well, I was…I lost my security" (MWB 12/14/97, p. 3).

Just barely 18 years old, Maxine went to live with her aunt Acie for a short time until she got a job working at an "Indian store" in Tulsa. There, Maxine and some of her friends made jewelry to be sold in the shop. By this time, Maxine and sister, Jo, had gotten their own apartment. Later, Jo went on to college, while Maxine and some friends shared an apartment and continued to work in Tulsa. After work, they took advantage of the bustling downtown Tulsa nightlife by shopping and taking in the new movies at the local cinemas. On the weekends, Maxine always went back to Sapulpa, either to Aunt Acie's, to her grandmother's or to a friend's house. She vividly recalls going to Maggie Cumsey's house where Maggie's mother always treated Maxine like a daughter.

Maxine and her late husband, Harrison Barnett, first lived in apartments and rented houses in Sapulpa. Later, they moved out further to the outskirts of Sapulpa, to the house Maxine lives in today. She says, "Harrison helped me a lot. He was always working around, painting, fixing up, adding something or doing something" (MWB 1/12/01, p. 15).

Maxine's earlier work in the hospital at Chilocco paved the way for employment by Creek Nation for five years as a community health representative. Her job was to visit patients in their homes, assess their needs, and explain the services that were available to them as tribal members. Ultimately, her training was put to the test when her beloved husband, Harrison developed some serious health conditions including incurable cancer. Harrison passed away June 8, 1999 and is sorely missed by family and friends alike.

All her life, Maxine and her family attended Pickett Chapel where her uncle Joe was a minister for many years. "Yeah, oh yeah. There was no questions asked. You just got up and went…The camp houses were used every Sunday. And we'd walk to our own camp and we'd carry our lunch" (MWB 12/14/97, p. 4). The lives of Maxine and her family, the Wildcats, are intimately entwined in the history of Pickett Chapel. Maxine's paternal grandmother, Eliza, was a charter member of Pickett Chapel in 1901 when it was established, and later Eliza married Johnson Pickett, whose family gave the church its name. Maxine's Uncle Joe Wildcat was a minister there for all but a few years between 1929 and 1960 (Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference 1990).

On the local level, Maxine has served Pickett Chapel as president of the United Methodist Women (UMW), chairman of evangelism, and until recently served as adult Sunday school teacher, a post she held for many years. She has represented Pickett Chapel at district, conference, jurisdictional, and national levels in various capacities.

Today, Maxine stays in constant motion with her church work. She is active in the church's Hallelujah project in which a core group of church members get together every Tuesday and serve a hot, homemade meal to senior citizens and handicapped people in the community free of charge. Visitors such as myself are welcome to eat with a donation of $3.50 to help defray the expense of the meal. In addition to her responsibilities at Pickett Chapel as chairman of the evangelism committee and leader of the Discipleship study series, Maxine serves the wider community on the board of directors of the Sapulpa Indian Community and the Cookson Hills Mission, an outreach of the United Methodist Church in the Cherokee settlements around Tahlequah.

Because of her church experience, Maxine was asked to go to New York City with a group from the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) to minister to

victims and traumatized citizens after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Just before her departure, she told me, “Maybe it’s just me, but I’m kind of excited. Maybe I shouldn’t be” (personal communication). Teamed up with a small group from other Methodist organizations, they were able to make a difference to passers-by as they served coffee, hot chocolate, and cookies at a table set up on the sidewalk outside an uptown church. The team was able to greet people, offer them a snack and an understanding ear as they listened to many stories that shared one common element – disbelief at the terrible events that had occurred in their city. The sidewalk table promoted immediate first-hand contact with New Yorkers, rather than the volunteers waiting for them to enter the church building looking for comfort. This arrangement was Maxine’s idea and reflects her willingness to reach out to people in need wherever she finds them.

Maxine is at the forefront of planning and organizing all of the events and dinners held at Pickett Chapel and is often the one that suggests doing a project, and plans how to implement it. Maxine is the one people go to for approval of their plans, especially for activities taking place in the kitchen and fellowship area. Maxine is usually the first one there and the last one to leave, and without her, we would find just how much a burden she is prepared to take on.

With a lineage that clearly links her and her family to the Picketts, her willingness to work tirelessly, and as the most experienced member of the core group of church workers, Maxine enjoys the status that comes along with these distinctions. While claiming Christianity as her guiding power, Maxine is not afraid to embrace the traditions of her elders. She believes in the importance of preserving her Yuchi identity,

> …because I think the Yuchi people, I think we do a lot more than the Creeks [keeping traditions]. Some people say that you know you shouldn't do all these things. Richie told me that. He said, "Well Grandma," he said, "when you become a Christian, and you take Jesus Christ as your lord and savior," he said, "all these other things are not you know…they really shouldn't have that much value to you anymore." I said, "Richie, the Lord made me who I am." And I said, "He made all of us. If we're supposed to all be alike, we would have all been the same color." I said, "There are so many different people, colors." [So he's saying you should give up your traditions?] Yeah, give up some of this stuff. So I told him, I said, "Well, I don't know, but there are some things I don't think I will ever give up and I think they have really helped me." (MWB 01/12/01, p. 17)

Josephine Wildcat Bigler[5]

Josephine Wildcat was born May 24, 1921 in Kellyville, Creek County, Oklahoma. Her parents were Maxie Wildcat and Lizzie Bighead. She assumes she was born in the home, because

> …that's the way our Indian families did. We didn't go to hospitals…I can remember brother being born at home after we moved into our own home. My brother was born at home. My Aunt Nancy came to help mother…It probably was not our own home. It might have been my grandmother or Uncle John's place. (JWB 2/27/98, p. 1).

While Josephine and her sister Maxine grew up in the same household, their lives could not have been more unalike, especially after leaving Chilocco Indian School. While younger sister, Maxine, was home with the family, Jo's early school years were spent at the home of her maternal grandmother, Millie Bighead, where she and two other grandchildren also lived. They all attended a nearby public school for a time. Later Jo recalls that she returned to her parents' home and attended public school in Sapulpa through the seventh grade.

About this time, her parents separated. Jo and her siblings went with their father to live with their paternal grandmother, Eliza Pickett (A-go-gwen-ah). Her home was located south of Sapulpa, about a mile west of Pickett Chapel. Eliza was a devout

Christian woman who had stopped attending the Green Corn ceremonies, yet she kept a traditional Yuchi household. Jo says she learned more about being Yuchi from living with her than she had previously. Grandma Eliza was a good storyteller, especially the traditional stories about how the animals were made. She also told stories about rabbit, the mischief-maker. These stories parallel the Uncle Remus Br'er Rabbit stories recorded by Joel Chandler Harris in Georgia. Several Yuchis have told me they believe these stories originated with the Yuchis and were borrowed by people of African descent, probably during colonial times. Jo recalls playing in the yard one day when Grandma Eliza leaned out the window and told the kids, "As long as you live in my house you must speak Yuchi" (JWB 2/27/98, p. 2). As a result, Jo and her sister, Maxine, are two of only a handful of fluent Yuchi speakers who remain today.

About the time when Jo was a freshman in high school, her father told her and her oldest brother, Jimmy, that they would probably have to leave home and go to government school if they were going to be properly educated. The next year the two of them left home and went to Chilocco, an Indian boarding school in northern Oklahoma, near the Kansas border.

After high school, Jo received a scholarship through the Southern Presbyterians to attend Southeastern State University in Durant, Oklahoma. The Presbyterians recruited Indian girls from throughout Oklahoma, and there were thirty or forty living in the dorms at the time when Jo was there. Jo graduated with a Bachelor in Education degree and did some grade school teaching afterward.

Later, Jo got a job working for the Methodist Youth Fellowship and traveled to various places in the United States visiting youth camps. During this period, two major events occurred that would influence Jo's life permanently. First, she experienced racism for the first time. Sometime in 1950 on her way to Florida, she was bumped

from the white section to the black section of the train. From there, the redcap sent her back to the white section. She was promptly sent back to the black section of the train, where she was allowed to stay for the night. The next morning in the dining car, she was directed to sit at a reserved table. Upon questioning this, she was told it was okay, and only then did Jo realize that the few reserved tables were intended for use by the black patrons. Josephine told the steward, "I'm an American Indian" (JWB 2/27/98, p. 5) and was seated at a table with a white woman. The woman did not seem to mind, but this incident had a profound influence on Josephine's attitude toward others, teaching her to treat others as she would want to be treated. This is a philosophy she carries with her to the present day.

The second important event from this period of her life is meeting and marrying her husband, Clarence. Jo and Clarence served in the ministry in Illinois and Wisconsin. They have three sons. While her young married years were happy for Josephine, she says she missed the Indian people. Indians seemed to be in the minority in the Great Lakes region, and she recalls seeing only a few during this period of her life. "I never saw an ethnic face. No Indians. Of course, this was farm country and lots and lots of corn" (JWB 1/18/2001, p. 4). Consequently, an idea formed in her mind that "someday I would get back to my own community here in Oklahoma" (JWB 2/27/98, p. 6). Before that happened, however, she and Clarence moved to Milwaukee where she was able to get involved in the Indian community made up of Menomonee, Oneida, Chippewa, and Winnebago people who met in a church and formed a service organization interested in health and education issues – concerns Jo still holds dear today.

In 1982, Jo and Clarence moved to New York where they concentrated on ministering to Indians and other ethnic minorities in the New York – Connecticut

urban area. After they retired in the late 1980s, the Biglers left New York and spent their winters in Oklahoma and summers in Wisconsin for the next four years. They moved to Oklahoma permanently in 1994.

Since moving back to Oklahoma, Jo has busied herself with re-establishing her place at Pickett Chapel and involving herself in local church activities. "So now I'm involved in the local church activities and I enjoy it. It puts me back working among my friends and family, relatives, and I enjoy the community at large," she says (JWB 2/27/98, p. 6). She is now an integral member of the core group of workers at Pickett Chapel, active in church projects including the Hallelujah project and in the wider area as a participant in regional projects of the United Methodist Women, such as supporting the work of the Cookson Hills Mission, located near Tahlequah in the Cherokee district of eastern Oklahoma. Every year at Green Corn time, Jo helps her son, Greg, and his wife, Dawn, with the cooking at their camp at the Polecat ceremonial grounds, and Jo is also an active participant in the Euchee language preservation program.

> Well, I think there's just sadness in knowing that the language is rapidly being lost. That there are so few who speak and understand and it means a loss of the beauty of the language, of hearing the language and to hear the stories, the old stories that I heard from my grandmother. There's just a sense of loss that can never be recaptured. And I don't know that we can ever…I don't know. There are too few people making the effort now, so I imagine that one day, not too many years away that the language will be gone. But at one time, at the beginning of the century, it would be, well, a hundred years ago, when it was just <u>the</u> language that everybody spoke and everybody understood the beauty in sharing with one another the total life was spent in the language, expressed through the language. And to have it translated there is a loss in the beauty in not hearing the language. (JWB 2/27/98, p. 9)

Maggie Cumsey Marsey

Maggie Cumsey was born in a house on Pickett Prairie Road, Creek County, near Sapulpa, Oklahoma, on December 3, 1918. Her parents were Lewis Cumsey and Bebe Crow. Their house stood just behind the Lone Star School. The land was 80 acres of her father's 160 acre allotment. The other 80 acres was down around Mounds and it was rented out to someone. Maggie had two sisters and two brothers, but the boys stayed at the Euchee Mission during the school year and were only home during the summers.

Like other rural families with homesteads, theirs was a working farm where her mother maintained a garden and raised a variety of vegetables. The family also had fruit trees. Her father kept livestock, such as cattle, hogs, mules, horses, chickens, turkeys, geese and some guinea hens. The mules were used for plowing and the horses for pulling the family buggy. The girls would also ride the horses – "Ema and I used to [ride the horses]. She was really a tom-boy....I used to ride horses. She was more brave than I was" (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 2).

Maggie's mother was the only one around who had a car in the early days. Maggie explains,

> Back in about '26 I think my mother got some money, her, her mother, and sister, they got quite a bit of money and she bought a car. I think the first car she had was a Model T. Then everybody come around wanting her to take them someplace. Because she's the only one that had a car...well there were a few other people, but they didn't go to them, they came to her....She done quite a bit. [Do you think it was oil money?] Well, it was just land in Cushing. They had oil wells on it. I guess she...they just sold the mineral rights, too, because they got quite a bit out of it. (MCM 02/11/2001)

After marrying Robert Marsey in 1940, Maggie and her husband lived "just northwest of the house where my mother and them lived. He built a little ole house and

that's where we lived" (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 7). Robert and Maggie have one daughter, Judy, and also took in a young niece and nephew who lived with them for several years.

As an adult, Maggie lived a mixture of rural and town lifestyle. They were far enough from the town of Sapulpa to consider it 'out in the country,' but close enough to purchase their meat there. By this time Maggie says she stopped preparing many of the traditional foods, but she always made corn bread, because her husband liked it. Later on they started raising hogs and having them butchered at the local packing house. They rented freezer space and kept their meat there. They would also buy a hind quarter of beef from time to time and have it cut and stored there.

Maggie took a job at the glass factory in Sapulpa when Judy started school. She worked there periodically for 8 years. Part of that time was spent working at Sunshine Laundry and Dry Cleaners.

Besides their natural daughter, Maggie and Robert adopted another daughter, Deborah, when she was just a baby:

> Thelma and I was talking one time and she was telling me Deborah's mother was having another baby and she's not going to keep it. And I asked her 'what's she going to do with it?' 'Leave it in the hospital, adopt her out, I guess,' she said. I told her if she's going to adopt it out, I'll take it. We didn't know if it was going to be a boy or girl, so, I got home and told my husband about it. I said I heard she was going to give the baby away this morning. I'd like to get her. He said, 'yeah, we can.' So that's what we done. [so you got her as a newborn] Uh-huh. We told my daughter about it and she seemed happy about it and she said, 'that would be good' she said. [was Judy still living at home then?] Uh-huh. In high school I believe. She [Deborah] was born with what you call spina bifida. And they [the baby's mother and grandmother] thought that we wouldn't take her after we found out. They were telling me how she was and thought we might get discouraged and not take her. They come out to the house and was telling Robert about it and he told them 'we'll take her just like she is. Everybody wants something real perfect but we'll just go ahead and take her.' She was a month old when she got out of the hospital and I brought her home. [Did you have to give her special care?] Yeah. We took her back to the hospital every week….And I was at the fair one time and I was just walking around and I ran up on the Shriners booth and I was standing there looking at the pictures of crippled children and a guy walked up to me and I was telling him, 'we got a little girl just like that. She can't walk.' He took my name right there and

> address and everything. A day or two later they came out to the house and looked at her, took pictures of her and said we can get her fixed up. It won't cost you nothing. We had to take her to St. Louis, put her in the hospital and they operated on her. They got her leg fixed one time and then later on they fixed the other one. And she got where she could walk. They said she would be paralyzed from the waist down the rest of her life, but she started walking. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 10)

After some time in a nursing home, Maggie's husband, Robert, recently passed away. Today, Maggie stays with daughter Judy and her family in Sapulpa. They share cooking duties, but also eat out quite a bit. Hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken, and barbeque are favorite choices for family dinners. Maggie still drives her big pick-up truck everywhere she wants to go. She is active in church and the EUCHEE organization. Maggie has worked tirelessly on behalf of EUCHEE's efforts to preserve the language and received an award from the United Nations for her efforts in that area of cultural preservation.

Ella Littlehead Rodriguez

Ella Littlehead was born April 5, 1924, the eighth and youngest child of Whiteman Littlehead and Yahlewee Barnett (a.k.a. "Lucy Tiger"). The family lived on a farm near Bristow, Oklahoma where they raised a variety of farm produce, including corn. Ella's father kept mules to plow the fields and horses to pull the family wagon and buggy. In 1928, Ella's father bought a new 1928 "Touring Ford" (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 2). The family spoke the Yuchi language in the home when Ella was growing up, and she is still a fluent speaker. Ella attended school at Mills Chapel where she graduated from the 8th grade. Later, she attended school at Chilocco Indian boarding school for one year.

As far as Ella knows, her father never set foot in a Christian church. The family was raised in the traditional ceremonial ways at the dance ground at Sand Creek near

Bristow, where they maintained a camp for a time. Ella learned to shake shells when she was 14 or 15 and regularly participated in all of the ceremonies with her mother, sisters, and beloved friend and niece, Ruby Littlebear. Later, the family moved their ceremonial affiliation to Kellyville (Polecat) and were assigned a camp there. "So he told her [Ella's mother] that was the only spot they had up there so she took it. And it was…that was the only spot…that's the smallest place. That's the smallest place in the whole campground" (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 6).

When her mother died in 1941, she came home and went to work as a waitress in Sapulpa. After her mother died, she says, "Everybody just scattered. Everybody went on their own" (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 2). In 1944, Ella and her sister, Maggie, moved to Tulsa where they worked in a laundry. Soon thereafter, her other sister, Acie, moved in with them and they were able to live very economically, splitting their expenses three ways. In 1952, Ella married Manuel Rodriguez, a Catholic from Mexico, in a Tulsa courthouse. Shortly thereafter, she took catechism courses so that they could marry in the Catholic Church. Ella continued working at a laundry throughout her married life and did not retire until recently.

Manuel fit right in with the ceremonial ways of the Yuchi, supporting Ella in whatever she did. Together, they raised a daughter, Marilyn, who attended private Catholic schools in Tulsa. Marilyn was raised in both environments – the Catholic Church and every summer at the ceremonial grounds, where she helped with the cooking while Ella danced. Ella and Manuel avidly supported the University of Oklahoma football program and often journeyed to Norman for their home games. Ella still loves all sports today, especially OU football and NASCAR racing. It is not unusual to call her on the phone and interrupt her watching one game or another. After many years away from home, Marilyn has returned to Tulsa and lives with her mother in

Ella's tidy home. Ella stays busy shopping, going out to eat, keeping her great-grandson, Thomas James, when his mother is in school, and occasionally cooking a family meal.

Viola John Thomas

Viola John was born November 20, 1915 near Kellyville, Creek County, Oklahoma. Her parents were McCully John and Alice Fox, and their home was situated on her sister's allotment near the old Kellyville stomp ground. Viola's parents divorced when she was three years old, and she doesn't know much about her father, except that his profession was breaking wild horses. He came to visit from time to time as Viola and the other kids were growing up. Her mother and four children went to live with Viola's aunt, who had some oil money. Viola attended school at Liberty Mounds, where she completed the tenth grade. Her brothers boarded at the Euchee Mission.

Her mother supported the family by cooking Indian foods for people in their homes and at their camps during the ceremonial season. She also worked as a midwife. Up until that time, Viola's mother had her own camp at the ceremonial grounds but gave it up to support the family. They still attended the ceremonials and Viola participated in the Ribbon Dance.

> I used to dance Ribbon Dance when I was little….evidently, I was about 4 or 5 years old, I guess. But maybe older than that, because I remember dancing Ribbon Dance. I never shook shells in the main dances but I shook shells like them half nights they're practicing between Green Corn and Soup Dance. [When the pole boys are practicing their songs.] Now I'd shake shells during that time, and trying to learn. My sister, Fannie, now she could shake shells – Ribbon Dance and the main dances. I guess I didn't know how. I probably didn't know how and probably didn't have no shells. (VJT 09/06/97, p. 1)

After her mother got older and got away from cooking, she began attending a small, struggling church called Snake Creek Baptist church. The church is still in

operation today at the same location. Viola was baptized when she was 21 years old and was there "every time the doors were open" for the next 15 years.

> It was a small church. Sometimes the deacons weren't there. Nobody was there just me and my mom and my nephew and my brother, and sometimes we'd go there, and I'd try to build a fire. We burnt wood then and I didn't know how. And sometimes we'd have visitors and they came. And these visitors were from Bixby…he teased me about the fire and he built the fire for us. And there were many, many times like that. And some people would get disgusted and quit because they'd say, "nobody's coming here." But I never did get that attitude. I was there for one purpose only…for the Lord, for my savior. (VJT 09/06/97, p. 1)

Viola married Homer Thomas, an Anglo-American, in 1940. He owned a used furniture store and later, a refrigeration business in Sapulpa. Viola and Homer had two sons, Rudy and Gary, who grew up attending church with their mother. Viola was 45 years old when Homer died, "and near death myself from a broken heart" (VJT 09/06/97, p. 2). She says when she 'came to' she decided to take care of her boys as if that was the work the Lord had intended for her.

It was during this period when Viola renewed her association with the Polecat ceremonial grounds in Kellyville. The following passage describes how Viola got involved at a camp there. She still runs the same camp today with a lot of help from her friends.

> And I was there, I don't know how many years. And my lady friend, she came down from Pickett Chapel – Ethelene Tiger, and she start coming down there…. and I backed off [from the church], and in the meantime…Awee was a chief then over at the grounds, and Awee was her aunt. [Awee's husband], Jackson, got sick and went to a nursing home and Awee had to take care of him and she told Ethelene…said "Ethelene, go up there and feed the people. I can't take care of the camp no more. Jackson is sick and I have to take care of him." …And Ethelene said alright. So she came one day and said, "Vi, what are you doing?" And I said, "Nothing." "Well come help me at the camp and help me with the camp, will ya?" And I said, "Okay." So I go up there and help her cook and you know what it takes to camp. I help her. And that's where the beginning was. And I've been helping her since. And I said, "Everybody's dead now but the cook is still there." That's how I wound up with the camp, because it belonged to her aunt. (VJT 09/06/97, p. 2)

Today, Viola is a much-loved elder in the community. Although she doesn't get around as much as she used to, she attends as many social events as she can. Her son, Rudy lives with her and often acts as her chauffeur. No event is considered complete without Viola in attendance. One of Vi's favorite hobbies is going to yard sales and looking for interesting finds. She loves to go site-seeing around Yuchi Town, followed by a good meal at a local restaurant.

Mary Barnett Watashe[6]

Mary Barnett was born "about 3 or 4 miles south of Lone Star school," (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 1) Creek County, Oklahoma, on April 3, 1923. Her parents were Wesley Barnett and Louanna Tom. The household was situated on her grandmother's allotment and consisted of Mary's mother and father, her maternal grandparents, and eight children. Mary is the oldest of the eight.

The family attended services at Rock Creek Methodist church where the sermons were delivered in the Creek language, and she could not understand them (MBW 04/12/1997, p. 1). When Mary was a young girl, there were only two camp houses on the church grounds. The purpose of the camp houses was to provide a place to sleep and prepare food so that church members could arrive at the church on Saturday and spend the night to be ready for Sunday. "Well, we went to church. We'd get ready and go on Saturday and we'd take our bed clothing and utensils to cook with. And then we'd stay all night in order to be there for Sunday morning church" (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 7). They were also used for 'Fourth Sunday' gatherings which lasted all weekend. Mary recalls that one of the camp houses was maintained by her family, and the other belonged to "my grandma's father… She's the one who started that

church…on my dad's side" (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 8). They also attended Pickett Chapel from time to time. In town, at school, and at Pickett Chapel Mary was able to visit with her Yuchi friends.

She attended Lone Star school until the eighth grade when she transferred to the Seneca boarding school in Wynadot. About that time, when she was twelve years old, her father died. His demise is attributed to his being gassed in World War II.

> My dad was deceased. He deceased when I was twelve years old….we lived in town there when he passed away and he was gassed in World War II. He was very sick that one night and my mother told me go get his aunt…in that two story house that was named after her husband, Joe Sapulpa….He [Mary's father] was an orphan. …She took him in and raised him. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 1)

In the tenth and eleventh grades she attended Haskell boarding school in Lawrence, Kansas. She says she liked boarding school, because they were so poor at home, it was nice to have three meals a day and a bed of her own to sleep in (MBW 04/12/1997, p. 1).

Mary married George Watashe when she was 17 and a senior in high school. They had courted for a number of years, starting when George used to pass notes to her in class and go to movies with her and her siblings [sent as 'chaperones'] when they were in Lone Star school together. George was a truck driver and as young marrieds they moved to north Tulsa where their children attended public schools. The Watashes came back to Sapulpa every weekend to visit their families. During her married life, Mary worked "off and on" at various jobs. With a large family of nine children, the older children always looked out for the younger ones and second daughter, Lou, took on much of the cooking duties. Mary says they never had a garden and all their food was bought at the store.

Although Mary maintained her ties to the church, all the while, the Watashes raised their children among the rituals of the ceremonial grounds and peyote meetings of the Native American Church of which George was a prominent leader. The entire family, including Mary, has been involved in these important venues for Indian spiritual expression to some degree. In 1974 the family moved to Kellyville, in the heart of 'Yuchi Town,' so that George could have his own place to hold peyote meetings. About that time the Watashes took over one of the camps at Polecat and Mary has been the 'owner' of the camp ever since. She has also risen through the ranks of shell-shakers and currently holds the distinction of being 'head lady dancer' at Polecat.

Today, Mary's children are all grown with children and grandchildren of their own. She and several of her daughters are very active in community activities. Not only do they help out with EUCHEE projects, they also take part in the annual Kellyville founders' day festival where they operate an Indian taco booth. This activity provides a service to the community by providing some delectable food for the participants and patrons of the event and also provides some much needed funds used for feeding family and visitors at their camp for the Green Corn Festival. Today, Mary maintains a home in rural Creek County near Kellyville. Third daughter, Valetta ("Biscuit"), and Biscuit's youngest son, Cory, live with her. Mary loves watching the University of Oklahoma play basketball on television and calls herself "a basketball freak" (MBW, letter dated 02/27/2003) going back to her school days, when she was a basketball player herself.

Writing Life Histories

According to Langness and Frank, "person-centered" ethnographies are attempts by anthropologists and other scholars to present a detailed and insightful

portrait of the life of an ordinary person who lives in surroundings which are often unfamiliar to the researcher (Langness and Frank 1981:1). The goal is to use a high degree of perceptiveness and detail so that a stranger becomes a friend. For this reason, the life history genre of anthropology has been somewhat successful in mediating the tension between the intimate experience of working with people in the field and the impersonal process of anthropological analysis. Yet while life histories have been popular fodder for research, in some ways, they remain on the fringes of the discipline. They are a kind of embarrassment to academics because of the emotional attachment fieldworkers have for their subjects. In addition, while the literary style of presentation typically utilized in this genre has made life histories popular with readers, the resulting sentimentality is also held suspect (Crapanzano 1984:954). Cruikshank describes the documenting of life histories as an "approved fieldwork *method* in anthropology," but she goes on to say that biographical accounts have been largely regarded as "supplementary material, possibly a corrective to ethnographic description or a way to breathe life into academic writing (Cruikshank 1990:1), thus giving the writer "effectiveness in conveying the subtleties of another way of life" (Langness and Frank 1981:98). Emphasis, until recently, was on the genre as a form of literature rather than a legitimate strategy for collecting data about a subject.

Despite the problems with the literary nature of documenting oral narratives and life histories, recording these forms of data has fascinated anthropologists and other social scientists for many decades (for example, see Aberle 1951; Boas 1914; Crapanzano 1980; Cruikshank 1990; Dyk 1938, 1947; Lewis 1961; Mandelbaum 1973; Marriott 1948; Michelson 1925, 1932, 1933; Nabokov 1967; Niehardt 1932; Radin 1913, 1920, 1926; Shostak 1981). An overview of the literature is not presented here because a comprehensive review of the use of biography by social scientists and other scholars

has previously been provided by Kluckhohn (1945), who criticized the genre for being gender-biased in favor of mature men with little analysis and documentation by the researcher. Another useful review of the literature was produced later by Langness and Frank in their book entitled *Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography* (1981). Langness and Frank provide a comprehensive review of the methodological pitfalls of biography as an anthropological genre. They also include discussions of the importance of biography in early studies of American Indians, during the formative stages of American anthropology, and throughout the twentieth century until 1981 when the book was written.

A more contemporary accounting of biographical research is presented by Anne E. Goldman in her book *Take My Word: Autobiographical Innovations of Ethnic American Working Women* (1996). She responds to the generalizing tendencies of "critical and theoretical accounts of American women's autobiographies that either celebrate "community" across diverse ethnic texts, or else leave out ethnic women altogether" (xvi). The disciplines of ethnography, sociology, and anthropology are equally guilty of conflating a cultural plural with a discrete "I," according to Goldman. Thus, the literature cited by the author reflects post-modern critiques of the social sciences which admonish scholars to avoid ahistorical generalizations by working toward careful examination of textual complexities (Goldman 1996:xvii). A brief overview of Langness and Frank's and Goldman's critique of the genre follows.

Langness and Frank – *Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography*

One of the primary problems associated with recording an individual's life story is the insertion of the anthropologist in the process. According to Langness and Frank the essence of autobiography is a process of self-creation in which the author engages

in a struggle for personal freedom and a right to define and to transform him- or herself (Langness and Frank 1981:963). In general, the intent of anthropologists who undertake writing biographical accounts of people in non-Western societies is to "record authentic autobiographies, just as they might have been written if the subject were literate" (Langness and Frank 1981:90). The authors go on to ask how we can assume that an autobiography collected by a Western anthropologist in the context of another culture actually reflects the subject's authentic perspective. The individual's concept of self, as constituted by his or her culture, may be quite different than that of the anthropologist raised in a Western culture, or they may not conceive of an "inner self" at all.

Therefore, we must be aware that accounts that are presented as autobiographical are often "two voices singing different versions of the same melody" despite the fact that the writer bases his or her interpretations on the subject's own statements and deeds (Langness and Frank 1981:96). Thus, what is presented as autobiographical is often better described as biographical in which the writer's role must be accounted for. The authors (1981:96) explain that the difficulty of distinguishing between the two genres, especially in the early days of anthropological research, led to the categorizing of both genres under a new term – "life history." When life histories are collected with the help of an interpreter or written down by an assistant whose command of the English language is uncertain, or when concepts of chronological sequencing deviate from Western norms, when cultural clichés and stylistic devices are rearranged, omitted, or modified through editorial process, the categories "biography" and "autobiography" become highly arbitrary. Thus, documents become more accurately described as "biographies based upon materials provided by

the subject" (Clyde Kluckhohn 1945:81-82 quoted in Langness and Frank 1981:97) or the genre we now refer to as "life history."

The role of the relationship between the anthropologist and the subject or cultural consultant is another facet of the insertion of the researcher in the process of writing life histories. This relationship is a two-sided coin – the influence of the subject on the anthropologist and the influence of the anthropologist on the subject. On one side of the coin, the anthropologist as biographer consciously attempts to paint an accurate portrait of the subject of the biography. At the same time, the anthropologist's emotional and intellectual experiences generated through association with the subject are documented, thus creating a kind of "double portrait" as Langness and Frank (1981:100) refer to it. Reflexivity, in which the anthropologist boldly faces the other and examines his or her place in the context of the study is a device that has been discussed and tested by numerous anthropologists (for example, Farrer 1991; Kondo 1990; Mead 1958:5; Shostak 1981), and by its very nature reflexivity promotes the use of the pronoun "I" in scholarly writing. As an anthropologist I am affected by association with my subject, and by utilizing a writing style that denies the emotional attachment that is built through this association, I may fail to convey the complexities of my relationship with my subject and the influence of her culture on me. By using a reflexive approach I create a document which reveals a self-portrait composed of my emotions and attitudes. In affirming the importance of the role of my subject in my own life, I declare that she has lasting influence on me and is more than just a character in a temporal, finite research project.

On the other side of the coin, Langness and Frank admonish researchers to consider the moral and ethical dilemmas of participant observation (1981:130). As an anthropologist, I must acknowledge my place in the life of my subjects. The women

who agreed to participate in my study took time out of their busy schedules to talk to me and teach me how to cook Yuchi-style, and my very presence in their lives was disruptive, unnatural, and artificial. Detachment and objectivity became impossible as bonds were formed and cemented. My consultants are women who started out as strangers and became friends, and they trusted me enough to tell me their life stories. They named names, sometimes with hesitation, often without, and they agreed to have their life stories put in print where anyone could read them.

Strong expectations and bonds between anthropologist and consultant are not unusual. One such situation is described by Langness and Frank in which a consultant in Latin America was so dependent on his relationship with the anthropologist that upon his leaving, the consultant became severely depressed and in time exhibited symptoms of a paranoid psychosis (1981:131). Fortunately, my consultants are very sophisticated when it comes to dealing with anthropologists, and there were no similar adverse reactions to my leaving the site of my fieldwork.

However, this leads us to consider moral and ethical concerns that explore the balance between truthful reporting about peoples' lives and the need to protect individuals from harm. In 1981 Langness and Frank implored researchers to indicate ways in which consultants might be harmed by their participation in a research project. As living people, our consultants are subject to public exposure which could be disturbing or harmful in unanticipated ways. Maintaining a person's reputation and privacy while telling the "truth" can be a difficult ethical problem in life history research. Revealing a consultant's identity can cause a myriad of problems, such as putting a job in jeopardy, damaging family relationships, creating social stigma, and countless other potential problematic situations (Langness and Frank 1981:119). The use of pseudonyms, change of location, and other disguises are devices that may protect

participants' identities from the outside world, although concealment within their own community may not be possible (Langness and Frank 1981:123-126). In response to these concerns an official mechanism known as the Institutional Review Board is now in place to protect the interests of research participants. To this end, the Board must approve any research project involving human subject, and it requires an annual report from the researcher concerning the ethical implications of the project and potential harm that may affect the project's participants.

In addition to accounting for the relationship between the researcher and subject in the process of recording life histories, there are other problems associated with the life history as an anthropological endeavor, such as the very nature of allowing an individual and his or her words and actions to 'portray' or 'illustrate' an entire culture or some aspect of it. This question goes to the very heart of what it means to typify one's social group and one's location within that society. Some of my consultants are considered 'more Yuchi than others' by people within the community. Those with the most prestige are perceived by the majority of community members as 'doing things the right way,' yet all, even the ones with the highest levels of overall cultural authority and prestige, have their detractors within the community.

On one level, criticism seems to have its roots in an ability to incorporate other beliefs and folkways into the individual's life. From my observation, a syncretic blending of various spiritual beliefs and religious symbols into the life of an individual is acceptable to the majority of the community members, perhaps because most community members do it to some extent in their own lives. Peoples' status and prestige, overall, does not seem to be tarnished by such practice, and may, in fact, be enhanced. Yet people who incorporate various religious beliefs have their detractors as well. Highly prestigious individuals in the Yuchi community who participate in various

spiritual forms such as ceremonial grounds, powwow, Native American Church, and Christianity are described by their detractors as "confused," not knowing what they believe.

On another level, criticism is grounded in non-conformity and innovation. After all, an innovative person may not be perceived by other group members as 'doing things the right way.' Yet as researchers, we must ask ourselves if non-conformity and innovation make an individual any less Yuchi. A consultant may not cook traditional foods and she may incorporate innovative tools and practices in order to make life easier at the ceremonial grounds, thus arousing criticism. It is not suggested that her membership in the group is jeopardized. Rather, her ability to represent the Yuchis in an authentic way may be questioned. Yet she is a full-blood, a Yuchi speaker, has a long history of membership at the grounds, never accepted Christianity, and photographs of her ancestors as representative Yuchis hang in museums.

Therefore, it is important to remember that not all who are considered members will strictly adhere to the group's norms. To varying degrees, people cobble together a life and a belief system that makes sense to them, picking and choosing from what the past and the present have to offer. Even a consultant on the fringes of the group has his or her own experience and a story to tell, and perhaps this is the most interesting and revealing story of all.

Authenticity and how to authenticate a story is another major consideration in writing a life history. How do you know what your consultants tell you is correct? According to Langness and Frank, the longer a researcher is in the community working with a particular consultant, the more likely it is that the data will be reliable (1981:50). Other practical techniques for checking the reliability of data suggested by the authors include observation, comparing the account of one consultant against that of another

by asking several people the same question, and to ask the same question of the same informant several times over the course of the research (Langness and Frank 1981:50-51). Crapanzano wonders whether a long and intimate relationship with a consultant will increase the reliability and validity of information. Saying Langness and Frank are "hoodwinked here by a naïve empiricism," he suggests that "prolonged association could as easily have the opposite effect" (Crapanzano 1984:955).

Perhaps a more valid point is Langness and Frank's position that if the consultant is indeed reliable, the researcher will be able to predict what he or she will do in a given situation and to understand the events or conversation at hand. They suggest that the consultant, if he or she is a reliable source, will "get around comfortably" and behave in socially acceptable ways (Langness and Frank 1981:50). From my own experience 'proper behavior' does little more than indicate those individuals who conform to the norms of the social group and is not necessarily a valid mechanism for indicating membership in the group.

Addressing the analysis of life histories, Langness and Frank suggest that this is the least developed aspect of the genre (Langness and Frank 1981:63). Considerable emphasis is put on ethnographic background that serves to situate individual consultants within their culture, but they offer little analysis. Life histories are processual and therefore "especially suited to the formulation of dynamic models of social relations and to the testing of theories of social change….By illuminating the individuals' options as well as the constraints on actions, social change becomes the end process of creative new strategies rather than the product of nameless forces" (Buechler and Buechler 1981:vi). Yet Crapanzano questions whether the life history is the best strategy for illuminating an individual's options or whether it can be used in this way at all (1984:959). After all, the life history represents an individual's life in

retrospect, thus it is impossible to analyze "real" options available to the individual at the time of an event. We must recognize our limitations and realize that we are faced with analyzing a text, not a social reality.

Yet the great benefit of the life history genre is that, despite inherent problems with editorial license of researchers, life histories give voice to the voiceless. The women participating in my project have taken the opportunity to inform the reader about the world as they know it, how they experience the material world, and how their experiences intersect with social, historical, and political processes beyond 'Yuchitown'. By telling their stories about cooking and allowing them to be recorded, the participants are empowered to keep their knowledge alive. Rather than producing an ethnography which has a "tendency to hurry the postmortems on those cultures diagnosed as dying or in distress" (Goldman 1996:xxi), I prefer to think that this work will play a small part in giving the participants a voice and enabling them to move ahead. The Yuchi elders have a motto – "Always forward. Never go back." They want the younger ones to look forward to the future, but never forget the past. The women in this study have been very active in helping to teach Yuchi customs and traditions, including foodways, to younger tribal members and to members of the general public who are interested in learning. They do this so that their knowledge will live on after they are gone, and this project is one facet of their endeavor to keep their knowledge alive.

Watson and Watson-Franke – *Interpreting Life Histories*

In their 1985 book, *Interpreting Life Histories: An Anthropological Inquiry,* Watson and Watson-Franke criticize psychoanalytic and structural-functional approaches to the life history which are based on predetermined categories brought to

the field from the anthropologist's own experience. It is their opinion that many well-intentioned life histories fail to contribute as much as they could have to our understanding of individuals in other cultures because of their reliance on these approaches to life history interpretation.

Watson and Watson-Franke draw on phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics, and offer an alternative to etic approaches by suggesting that researchers eliminate prior notions of personality and society. They suggest, rather, that researchers focus on the individuality and subjectivity of lives in a cultural context in order to emphasize life history from an emic perspective. Watson and Watson-Franke urge researchers to consider their own role in the interpretive process as it intervenes between themselves and their subjects, thus incorporating the trend toward reflexivity.

Watson and Watson-Franke also emphasize the specific problems associated with interpreting the life histories of women. For much of its history, anthropology either ignored women entirely, or considered women valuable only for providing supplemental data about men and their lives. Women have rarely been viewed as autonomous personalities having valuable lives of their own. Life histories of women depend on two primary factors. First, the woman who recalls her life must have sufficient self-esteem and a feeling of self-worth to desire her story be recorded. Second, the researcher must respect the woman and share a sense that the story is important (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:163). Apart from a mutual sense of confidence and respect, the authors urge researchers seeking life histories of women to interpret the subjective meanings women give the world, apart from the ways in which men define the world.

The social sciences have long tended toward a strong male bias in which men are viewed as the more interesting and knowledgeable members of society. However, recent interest in identifying and interpreting a variety of cultural practices has led to the study of the activities of women in society. Perhaps by following the guidelines laid out in Watson and Watson-Franke's narrative, the tendency toward male bias may be overcome in the area of interpreting women's life histories. In this study on food and cooking practices, for example, we would have little to gain by relying on men's narratives. Women are the keepers of knowledge concerning all aspects of food, and their knowledge has been sought for the purpose of understanding how food is manipulated, what certain foods mean to individuals in a particular context, and perhaps more importantly, how food is used as an example of human struggle as Yuchi women attempt to make sense of a changing world (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:170).

In order to fill a void in anthropological analysis and move life history research beyond the role of 'unwanted step child,' Watson and Watson-Franke designed a model of life history research which serves as a critique of the "runaway tendency in the social sciences to reduce people to categories and abstractions in the service of model building and model testing" (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:27). The authors support a particularizing *emic-ideographic* (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:26) approach which concerns itself with the specific and unique richness of a particular phenomenon with the goal of bringing to the reader an understanding of an individual life, a life unlike any other (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:26-27). Combining an emic perspective, articulated through the subject's culturally defined world, and reflexivity, in which the interpreter states his or her own role in rendering the other's life, provides the reader with a final document composed of "a complex set of meanings

in the process of its construction that defines its *meaning as text*" (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:2, 21, 25-26).

Cruikshank – *Life Lived Like a Story: The Social Life of Stories*

Concern with autobiographical narrative, including the narratives of women, continues into the twenty-first century, only superficially as a means of uncovering an interesting story about a person's life. Oral narratives and life histories do much more than that. Ongoing interest in life histories is tied to focus in the social sciences and humanities on symbolism, meaning, and text (Cruikshank 1990:1). First, biographical narratives reveal ways in which knowledge is accumulated, maintained and passed on from generation to generation. Second, oral discourse provides a way for people to share cultural meanings and use familiar narrative frameworks to explain the present and to interpret the past. Shared metaphors, understood by a speaker and his or her listeners, are reproduced through oral tradition. Third, the speaker uses oral narrative and its culturally appropriate metaphors to claim legitimacy for him- or herself within the group by imparting particular kinds of explanations in opposition to other kinds of explanations (Cruikshank 1994:152). Like the prophecy narratives Cruikshank refers to, I have found that narratives are utilized to make "intellectually consistent sense of disruptive changes…each is offered as evidence for the legitimacy of local knowledge and discourse" (Cruikshank 1994:156). But beyond that, I have found that it is through the contested nature of narrative and the ways in which people incorporate symbolism and practice that the women who participated in this study enhance their own prestige and authority in their community. This point will become apparent as we hear the women speak for themselves in the next chapter.

Goldman – *Take My Word* (1996)

Influenced by the feminist peremptory that researchers eschew the tendency to create universal theories on women's lives, in her book *Take My Word: Autobiographical Innovations of Ethnic American Working Women*, Anne E. Goldman (1996) responds to the essentializing aspect of ethnic autobiography in which the collective "we" is too easily conflated with the discrete "I." Goldman questions the current emphasis on theory building in the social sciences saying that recent theories tend to celebrate the self-in-relation while they slight forms of subjectivity that emphasize distinctive qualities of the self (Goldman 1996:xvi-xvii). To combat this tendency, she focuses on the "particularizing gestures" (Goldman 1996:xvii) of diverse texts such as cookbooks, collaborative texts, and labor histories, thus revealing the strategies and activities ethnic women use to challenge norms and expectations imposed on them by the dominant society.

Goldman's interest in the politics of accommodation and the ways in which women strategize to develop their voices when they have little access to textual positions of authority (Goldman 1996:xxv) is particularly relevant for the current project, which reveals ways in which food knowledge correlates with acquiring access to power in the Yuchi community. Goldman suggests that the most effective political maneuver is not always the most explicit so that people who are deprived of material goods, sophisticated technology, and I would add, access to resources in general, often rely on their wits to survive in an oppressive society. Goldman approaches selected narratives as "agents as well as effects of cultural change" (Goldman 1996:xxvi after Carolyn Porter 1988:782).

Thus, Goldman provides a useful way of thinking about the politics of accommodation in which oppressed women appear to accept the social norms and

expectations of the oppressor while developing strategies and activities that challenge those same norms. For example, Hispanic cookbooks of the mid-twentieth century are not only collections of recipes (Cabeza de Baca 1954; Jaramillo 1955). These books include not only food, but folklore, memories of holiday preparations, religious events, and family. They describe the communal traditions and cultural practices on which their identity as Hispanic women is grounded (Goldman 1996:xvii). Cabeza de Baca and Jaramillo honor the reader with exquisite detail about their lives as individuals, thus empowering them to claim identities for themselves and craft acts of social resistance in their cultural narratives (Goldman 1996:xviii after Saldivar 1990:42).

In practice, the result of Goldman's approach is more focus on the particular than on the general; a concern less with finding a textual common denominator than with considering the range of rhetorical patterns provided by distinct narratives; and an eye toward the discursive and historical contexts in which narratives are conceived, produced, and read. The present study will reveal how knowledge of food and cooking, considered as text, gives 'voice' to individual Yuchi women. Distinct narratives will reveal a wide range of life experiences, which in the context of food knowledge, lead to varying degrees of prestige and authority in the community.

A life history often takes on the appearance of a memorial to a distant friend (Crapanzano 1984:954), and this is one of the points by which life histories have been criticized. How can this work avoid resembling a memorial? I suppose it will be a little different if I follow the methodology for life history researchers outlined by Watson and Watson-Franke (1985). They encourage the researcher to provide the reader with complete contextual information so that he or she will have an opportunity to evaluate the life history (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:17). By explaining the circumstances

and contexts in which the subject related his or her life history and the various aspects of his or her relationship with the subject may deter sentimentality.

A balanced and complete life history should include the failures and triumphs of individuals as they struggle to create a more satisfying society in the face of adversity (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:184). The women who have participated in this project are ordinary women, yet they are extraordinary in the way they have lived their long lives, not in a vacuum, but with feeling and emotion. As Yuchi women tell the reader about their trials and tribulations, as well as the small victories, a sentimental aspect to this study is revealed that should not be ignored. Our personal relationships with each other are based on a degree of sentimentality, especially now that we are separated and rarely see each other. We started out as strangers and forged bonds that will never be broken. If this work ends up a sentimental memorial to my friends, so be it. They deserve nothing less.

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[1] EUCHEE (The Euchees United Cultural Historical and Educational Effort) was founded in 1989 to address cultural issues. The organization actively sponsors activities such as genealogy workshops, oral history projects, Euchee language classes for adults and children, and an annual Euchee heritage festival. Another project helps members of the group to digitally preserve their precious family photos and allows EUCHEE to produce an annual calendar. The organization has a tax-exempt 501(c)3 status from the Internal Revenue Service (EUCHEE 1997:7).

[2] For a discussion of the Arbor Dance and other dances in the Yuchi ceremonial round, see Jackson (2003).

[3] I spent more time with Maxine than any of the other women who participated in this project. I often slept at Maxine's house, and she was very willing to include me in all of her food-related activities. She was very forthcoming in our interviews. Consequently, I learned more about Maxine and her life than the lives of the other participants. Maxine is an extraordinary woman, and it was difficult to choose among her many accomplishments for the biographical portion of this study. I apologize to the other women if this portion of the narrative seems unbalanced.

[4] References to quotes provided by the participants in this study consist of participant's initials, date of our interview, and the page where it appears in the interview transcripts.

[5] Josephine Wildcat Bigler and Maxine Wildcat Barnett are sisters.

[6] Mary Barnett Watashe and Maxine Wildcat Barnett are sisters-in-law. Maxine's late husband, Harrison, and Mary are siblings.

CHAPTER 4

VOICES

> "*...the old stomp ground, it was on my sister's place. And right across there aways was where I was born. There's a house just across there. A branch – kinda gully-like, there's a house...that's where we were born. That ground* [the old dance ground] *was there when I was born.*"
>
> – Viola Thomas

Powers and Powers – Model of a Food System

During our many hours of discussion, the participants in this study were allowed, encouraged even, to talk about food categories that were meaningful to them. I asked broad, open-ended questions and gave the participants free-reign to talk. Some of the women were more comfortable with this format than others. A few ran with the ball and described their experiences with food in great detail. I was hardly needed to keep their narrative going. Others were more hesitant, and it took some coaxing to stimulate their memories of a time gone by. The overall result, however, is a lively discussion in which Yuchi women have used their own voices to describe the Yuchi food system as it existed in the early decades of the twentieth century. Following the model presented by Powers and Powers (1984) with the Oglala providing examples, a food system consists of several necessary components: procurement, preparation, distribution, consumption, and disposal.

> These five components are augmented by an array of rules, values, and meanings that are associated with food: for example, spiritual, social, economic, political. But we are more concerned with what can be called metaphysical aspects of the Oglala food system, aspects that are considered by the Oglala themselves to be a reflection of their traditional system of belief and ritual, albeit a changed one since the establishment of the reservation. (Powers and Powers 1984:46)

In discussing the components of a food system I will apply them separately in the context of the Yuchi foodways described by the participants in the following section of this chapter. I especially want to explore how Yuchi foodways and the practices of the Yuchi people express each of the five components of the Powers' model of a food system.

Procurement is the manner in which a group of people select and collect food. They may grow their own food in a garden, hunt and gather in the wild, or purchase it in a grocery store. The means of procurement depends on various ecological and technological factors (Powers and Powers 1984:45). In the following section Yuchi women use their own voices to describe several ways in which food was procured when they were young. We will learn that their mothers and other adult women kept gardens, and their fathers and other adult men planted corn. Adults also kept livestock such as hogs, cattle, and chickens. Foods produced right there on the homestead provided the resources which made up the bulk of the Yuchi diet. However, locally produced foods were supplemented with "luxury goods" from the local market. Items such as coffee, tea, sugar, peanut butter, rice, candy, and flour were purchased from a vendor with cash when it became available. Other luxury food items such as milk and butter were occasionally procured through barter or trade. We will also learn that some people made use of the wild foods found in the area, such as small game, grapes, and onions.

An area of procurement which is not addressed by Powers and Powers is eating out in restaurants, an option used occasionally by early twentieth century Yuchis to procure some of their food. While eating out became much more common as the women came of age and left the farms, some families occasionally dined out in local

restaurants or cafés. For example, Ella remembers eating chili and hamburgers in a café with her family on shopping day (ELR 12/02/2000, P. 2).

Preparation is the means by which people modify or maintain the natural state of foods prior to serving and consuming them, including the technological devices that facilitate preparation and people's food preferences. Powers and Powers (1984:45) suggest that food modification runs the gamut from the raw to the cooked. From what the project participants tell us, by and large, corn and pork were consumed more than any other foods. These were served cooked in some manner, and Yuchi women used frying as their primary cooking technique. However, the participants also describe numerous preparation techniques that included various means of drying and canning some foods in order to keep them for future use. Preservation is an aspect of the food system that is not considered by Powers and Powers. Clearly, Yuchi preservation techniques were extremely important in a subsistence economy which did not include refrigeration technology.

Another important facet of food preparation mentioned by Powers and Powers includes technological features such as utensils. Through the voices of Yuchi women we will learn about the tools used for processing corn and other foods – block and pounder, paddle used for stirring large kettles, sofkee spoons – all of which were hand carved by local men. Other utensils included large metal pots and spoons, necessary items for preparing meals for large families. Similar metal utensils are still used by some Yuchi women today and will be discussed in more detail in the concluding chapter, not only for their utilitarian value, but also for their symbolic value.

Distribution is the manner by which people get food from the point of preparation to the point of consumption. A major consideration here is whether food is served by a host or whether people help themselves; whether food is served cafeteria

style or family style; whether or not people sit at a table together or in a circle on the floor to consume their meal (Powers and Powers 1984:45). The women who participated in this project describe various modes of distribution in the early twentieth century Yuchi community, the most common of which was to serve food family style, with everyone sitting together around a table. But self-service from bowls set on a table with children sitting on the floor, because of lack of space at the family table was another means of distribution used in at least one Yuchi household. Whether sitting around a table or on the floor, most food was distributed to a family unit in a home. Variables might include children taking their meals in a public school lunch program or at boarding school. In addition, the presence of visitors in the home to share a meal was not uncommon. Visitors might be present to share the workload associated with butchering or be stopping by to just chat. Visitors were always asked to stay and eat. On other occasions, food was distributed communally, usually at a church or at one of the ceremonial grounds. These communal food systems will be described in the next chapter.

Consumption entails the physical behavior associated with how people eat their food – whether they use utensils or eat with their hands, for example. One should consider what kinds of utensils are used and the setting in which eating takes place (Powers and Powers 1984:45). It must be assumed that these utensils are of a different variety than the ones described in the preparation component. While Powers and Powers did not specifically address the differences between utensils for food preparation and utensils for food consumption, for the purpose of this discussion, I have distinguished between two types of utensils. I consider preparation utensils as those which are used in the kitchen by a cook, specifically for the purpose of preparing food – large spoons and paddles for stirring a sofkee pot, spatulas and scrapers for

turning fried potatoes in a skillet, for example. This category also includes the pots and pans themselves. Consumption utensils, on the other hand, consist of table ware – flatware and dishes – used by individuals to facilitate the consumption of food.

In our conversations, the project participants all agreed that when they were growing up, standard Euro-American eating utensils were used for consuming most foods. Knives, forks, and spoons made of some type of metal were found in all of their households. Some foods, however, were commonly eaten with the hands. Such foods might include breads in various forms, fresh fruits, and some meats like salt pork or fried chicken. Eating these foods with the hands was perfectly acceptable in Yuchi society as it still is throughout the South today. Meals were served on some type of ceramic plates or in ceramic bowls, although metal pie pans might act as substitutes when necessary.

Another aspect of consumption accounts for the times at which people prefer to eat (Powers and Powers 1984:46). Conversations with the study participants revealed some interesting variations in the Yuchi food system as respects the timing of food events. While people generally rose early and consumed a breakfast of some sort, the number of meals consumed each day varied. Most families ate three meals per day, while at least one family felt it unnecessary to eat more than two meals per day. Consequently, those who ate two meals per day timed theirs differently. Instead of eating an early breakfast, lunch around noon, and supper at five or six o'clock, they preferred an early meal and then a large dinner around three o'clock. This variation seems to have been based purely on preference, and was not in any way influenced by inadequate food supplies.

Food disposal, the last component of any food system, consists of the examination of "leftovers" and how they are dealt with. Even more importantly,

Powers and Powers (1984:46) suggest that the most interesting question is why some people "institutionalize" left over foods. Rituals associated with surplus food for the Oglala, to whom the authors apply their model, seem to occur primarily in the context of communal meals, especially memorial feasts, which take place after the appropriate mourning period of about one year. The memorial feast is always elaborate, and the family of the deceased provides a meal of "magnificent proportions" (Powers and Powers 1984:67). After everyone in attendance has eaten their fill and packed most of the surplus food to carry home, a medicine man takes some of the left over meat, fry bread, or other traditional foods and buries it in the ground to symbolize feeding the spirit of the deceased for the last time.

The Yuchis too, have a ritual associated with surplus food in the context of their traditional funeral practices. After a funeral a huge feast is provided by church members or the deceased's family and may take place at the church or in the family home. Some of the women told me that any left-overs are to be buried in the yard. The reasoning behind this practice is unclear, except that Maxine told me that her and Josephine's aunt Nancy said that the food was intended for the feast and should not be taken home (MWB 01/19/2001, p. 5). My observations have provided little evidence that this practice is still followed as part of the funerary ritual.

Consideration of surplus food in a secular context includes the disposal of garbage and other household waste such as food wrappers and containers not intended for reuse. In their definition for 'disposal' Powers and Powers (1984:46) imply that all surplus food is consumed either by people as a late-night snack or by the family dog in the form of table scraps. While both of these modes of surplus food disposal were mentioned by the women, they also told us that although their families left little

unconsumed food, there was some garbage and trash to be disposed of. These were either burned or buried in the yard.

Powers and Powers' model for food systems provides a useful way to loosely structure the open-ended interviews I conducted with the project participants. The five components defined by the authors made it possible to cover roughly the same topics with each woman, and keep the conversation focused on several broadly-based points. The model provides a picture of what Yuchi farm life was like during the early decades of the twentieth century. At the same time, by allowing the women to speak for themselves, we obtain several views of Yuchi farm life which are more specific to the individual participants. Thus, the reader can draw some general conclusions about what it was like to grow up Yuchi in the 1920s and 30s and what it was like for specific families.

Born on an Allotment

With the advent of Oklahoma statehood in 1907, most of the Indian people in Indian Territory were enumerated by the federal government and given an allotment of land, the size of which varied by tribe. Each Creek citizen received 160 acres (Debo 1941:373; Prucha 1976:400). [1] The Yuchi people were party to the division of land into parcels, a system that was alien to their customary communal practice based on the principle of use rights. By the time the women in this study were born in the nineteen-teens and –twenties, however, the Yuchi people had been living under the Euro-American model of land ownership for at least a decade. The study's participants grew up in that system, and by the time they were adults, they had a clear understanding of it.

All of the participants led similar lives on a family member's allotment. Often, the allotment belonged to a parent, but in some cases it belonged to an older sibling or a grandparent. All were operated as rural homesteads or farms. While barter was a common form of exchange, some families had oil or gas leases on their land, which generated cash incomes. As a result, a few families were considered well-off by their neighbors. But it is clear from my conversations with the women, that regardless of circumstances, everyone had plenty to eat. Even a cash-poor family could 'make-do' and keep food on the table with some hard work and an allotment. Viola speaks eloquently for all of the women as she explains how her mother managed with what she had.

> Yeah, Mom always managed to have three meals a day. I don't know how she afforded it but she always managed to have three meals a day and I don't know how she managed it but she did. Of course we had a lot of vegetables. Mom canned and dried food, you know and vegetables and stuff. And she always had chickens, always had chickens, so we had chicken. We had eggs. And she raised onions and she'd tie them up and hang them up and she knew how to store things and put things away. I guess she learned it from her mom. (VJT 01/11/2001, pp. 1-2)

> [The evening meal was] Kind of like…well, it was simple. It wasn't big you know. It was simple. Maybe in those days you always had sofkee and then you fix parched corn…and maybe she'd [mother] cook that in place of rice and maybe corn bread….. it made a meal and it was good really. Everybody ate and I know when Allen and Mary George got her to keep house when they were gone and they came back and she [Mary George] said, "Alice how did you do? We didn't leave much groceries for you." She said, "We managed." They had a garden there. That day she had fixed a cobbler and stuff, and I think maybe fried green tomatoes and stuff like that. She [Mary] said, "You can take things and make something out of them. You sure know how to fix stuff. I never would have thought about that. I just thought we didn't have nothing to eat. And here you have a bunch of stuff on the table to eat." (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 2)

The women recall their mothers or grandmothers having gardens in which they raised a variety of vegetables such as pole beans, pumpkins, summer squash, green peppers, watermelon, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, onions, black-eyed peas, and tomatoes.

> Yeah. We'd plant sweet potatoes, potatoes, we'd plant green beans, we'd plant black eyed peas…all the gardening stuff you get out of the grocery store. It was good. It was organic. I mean, there was no pesticides, insecticides or whatever you want to call it. Wasn't none of that stuff. No chemicals. It was organic, real. We had a real good living. Yeah, that was good. Not like today. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 4)

Fresh vegetables, such as pole beans and squash were generally cooked in boiling water and seasoned with pork grease. Sweet potatoes were baked, while white potatoes were usually fried in grease. Sometimes, they were served mashed. Tomatoes might be dipped in flour and fried while still green or stewed when ripe. They were also used to make gravy.

> Did you ever eat tomato gravy? That's good. All the Yuchis like that. It's a gravy with tomatoes in it. [Start with] drippings. [Fry up some meat and put tomatoes in it?] Uh-huh. Now the way I fix it, I always cook my tomatoes, you know kinda let it sit if it's fresh. Now I'll cook it up and I'll make my gravy and I'll throw it together. That's the way I do it. [Gravy from some kind of beef or pork?] Yeah. Or just ordinary gravy. [What's ordinary gravy?] Like bacon drippings or something. You know, put your flour in there and stir it up and when you kinda get brown, throw your tomatoes in there. I know nearly every summer, Candace says, "Vi make some tomato gravy." [What would you serve that with?] Anything. Just like…a lot of them like it just bread and gravy. (VJT 02/17/2001, pp. 5-6)

In addition to fresh vegetables, the family often maintained fruit trees, such as apple, peach, and pear. These fruits were used fresh and preserved in jars, or dried for future use.

> All the families had orchards. I guess in the earlier days they dried their apples, and they also had grapes. The grapes they probably made …you know like, using for grape dumplings, or my Aunt Lou would make jelly and jam, grape jelly. And Mother used to make peach jam. But Aunt Nancy, her sister would come over and spend the day preparing peaches to can and then when they had apples, I remember they saved the peelings and made apple jelly, boiling the skin and make apple jelly. They didn't waste much. Most families I guess had these types of vegetables and fruits…apples, peaches grapes, pears… (JWB 01/10/2001, pp. 1-2)

> Oh there was lots of plums down in the creek you know and we'd get them. She'd make jelly and plum butter and a lot of stuff like that. And grapes, possum grapes, and we'd gather that, and she'd put that up for grape dumplings. [canned?] Yeah, or dried. Most the time dried and put them up

> dried. And in those days, what do you call them, tote sacks…they'd leave it in that and hang it up so air get to it and she dried it like that. Just hang them up. Seemed like we had a shed. I believe at one time it might have been a carport or something. And she'd hang stuff in there. (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 2)

Fruit in the form of pies and cobblers were, and still are, preferred by many Yuchis. Cakes were rarely consumed, probably because of the unpredictable cooking temperatures achieved in wood stoves which dominated rural households up until the period around World War II, when many households converted to liquid propane gas for their heating and cooking needs.

The most important field produce was corn (*zoh-toh*)[2]. Not only was it a staple food item, corn provides a focal point for the round of ceremonies and rituals surrounding the harvest season. The production of corn was the domain of men who used draft animals such as horses and mules to plow numerous acres of land for larger yields of corn than could be grown in a garden. Women, however, had various ways of preparing corn and using it in their flavorful recipes. One of the most common was to bake it into bread using corn, which had been dried and ground into meal at a local mill. Maggie describes how her mother used to dry corn.

> She used to make dried corn. You cook the corn and after it's cooked, you cut them off the cob and lay them out on the table, spread it out on the table on a cloth and then you stir them around until they're dried. [how long would that take?] I don't remember, probably about 3 or 4 days….She'd dry them in the house. She didn't put it outside. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 2)

Mary's grandmother, on the other hand, liked to dry her corn outside:

> She dried it on top of the house or the cellar and she'd stir that every now and then to keep it you know, evenly dried. So it wouldn't be just on one side or something. And kept the bugs… [Was it taken in every night?] Yeah. Taken in every night and then go back, put it back in the next day to keep, you know dry it for I guess about couple days because it was so hot. It didn't take long to dry. (MBW 01/27/01, p. 1)

Cornbread was a staple food in Yuchi diets and more widely across the South then as it is today.

Hominy (*zoh-toh-ah*), another recipe derived from corn, was made from scratch by Yuchi women in the early decades of the twentieth century. While the complicated hominy-making process is not currently used for day-to-day consumption of hominy, some of the women recall seeing their mothers, grandmothers, or aunts make it on the farm.

> Hominy, you put that in hot, boiling ashes to take the husk off [in ashes and water]. I think you use hard corn with that. The one that's already ripened…let it get ripe [until it dries]. [You put it in the ashes and water to cook it and that's when it puffs up?] Yeah. [And then the skins come off?] Yeah. The husks all come off….Rinse it good. Oh, that's the best stuff. They used to put it in…let it dry you know. Get it dry, not wet, and they put it back in them sacks, hang them up, let the air go through them. (VJT 02/17/2001, p. 3)

> I used to help my grandmother, Eliza, when she added the corn to the big, black pot. You'd have to stir and stir it. It seems like she had ashes in the pot with the corn and you stirred and you stirred corn until, I guess, it reached a certain color maybe, but I remember helping Grandma stir that corn with a big wooded paddle….I can't even recall. I just remember how yellow it looked….It was a big, iron, a big, black kettle. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 5)

> I never did watch my grandmother make hominy. She used to make it. And I know she…I know it was a big job. But she did that in the fall of the year and we were in school then. When the corn was ready, she would do that and it was kind of an all-day thing for her. She'd make a lot to last. It would be dried and put it in bags. We ate it a lot, too. And it wasn't only for us, but also for my uncle and aunt. They would help out. Whatever they would do, they would share, so whatever she did, it was for two families, our family and our aunt and uncle. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 2)

Other recipes for corn were also prepared on the farm. Fried corn was often served and consisted of fresh corn cut from the cob and fried in grease. Another favorite is a form called "roastin' ears." This variety of corn is simply corn on the cob boiled in water and served with butter, salt, and pepper. Corn soup (*zoh-toh wah-shee*) is a contemporary dish made with kernel corn cooked in water with chunks of either pork or beef. While all of these varieties, cornbread, hominy, fried corn, roastin' ears, and corn soup are enjoyed on a day-to-day basis by contemporary Yuchis, the big difference between now and the early years of the twentieth century is that today, few

people grow their own corn. Fresh corn is purchased primarily in local supermarkets or from roadside stands when in season. Canned corn is frequently used for frying or for soup, and hominy is almost exclusively purchased in a can. One explanation for the dependence on canned corn is that contemporary Yuchi women play Supermom, juggling jobs, children, carpooling, and caring for the home, just as many American women do, so convenience has become a major concern.

While several corn recipes are prepared day-to-day, other variations of corn, however, are considered delicacies reserved for special occasions, or are rarely seen today. The women in this study recall seeing these recipes prepared by their mothers and grandmothers and sometimes helped with their preparation. For example, sofkee (*zoh-shee*), once a fairly common, if labor intensive, food in Yuchi households, is now considered a delicacy and is usually consumed only at church dinners and the ceremonial grounds. Served as both a side dish and a drink, the main ingredient, dried, cracked corn, is sold in the gift shop at the Muscogee (Creek) tribal headquarters in nearby Okmulgee, and also in the produce department in a local grocery store in Sapulpa called Warehouse Market. The produce manager apparently buys it in bulk, because it is sold pre-measured in plastic bags, closed with twist ties.

> …and they had regular sofkee corn [*zoh-toh heetlee*], flint corn. In those days they had regular flint corn and they don't have that today unless those Creeks around south might. It's a real hard, white corn….and that was a special corn for sofkee…but it's hard to find anymore. I don't know what kind of corn it is [that they use now]. It's just a kind of field corn, I guess. But it's a white corn. Hardly any Indians have a farm anymore. You buy that in Warehouse Market. Everybody buys that sofkee corn at Warehouse Market. Or at Creek…over at Creek Nation there at the gift shop, they have that. (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 5)

The corn is cooked in water, a tablespoon or two of lye water is added to the mix, and the sofkee is ready to eat. No salt or pepper needed, although some people say they like to sweeten it with sugar, but I have never seen anyone do this. I have also

been told that the old people used to like to let the brew sit out a day or two until it soured, and they would consume it that way. Ella (02/03/2001, p. 3) concurs, "But I don't like sour sofkee. I never eat it. The old people eat it that-a-way, but I don't like sour sofkee. I like fresh. I like fresh sofkee." The consumption of sour sofkee seems to be a practice of the past when sofkee was on hand in a household from day-to-day and there might be some left0vers. Today, as a ceremonial food, it is in somewhat short supply, and whatever quantity is brought to a particular event is usually consumed that day.

> My grandma tried to keep [sofkee] on hand most of the time. She'd always try to make fresh sofkee every now and then. [What about sour sofkee?] She'd keep it…some of that would get sour and then she'd pour it out and then she'd mix some more, you know. [Did anyone in you family like it sour?] No. None of us liked it. Just the older ones, you know, the old people. None of us kids liked it. [My grandma] ate it. She liked it. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 5)

It is interesting that while some women made sofkee fairly frequently, even in the early days, sofkee was considered a "special" food in some households. Its preparation required hard work, because dried corn kernels first had to be broken up with a pounder (*dee-thlah*) in a sofkee block to make coarse sofkee grits.[3] Ella explains the process of making a sofkee block and pounder, which she learned by observing her grandfather:

> Okay, we used to use post oaks. Post oak tree. Oh, I couldn't tell you the diameter of the tree, but it would be pretty good sized. [Ella indicates 24-30 inches across]. Pretty good size. An he'd build a fire right in the center, dig out a little place where he'd put some coals in there and that would burn. He'd just let it burn til it got, oh, I can't tell you how deep it is. Maybe…how deep would that be? [Ella indicates 8-10 inches]. Just say one foot. About 12 inches. And it would be about that big around [Ella indicates 6 inches across]. About 6, 7 inches around. It probably could do it, could have been done in 2, 3 days. He had to keep the coals burning in the wood there. Then he'd dig it out. After it was finished, he'd dig all that stuff, stuff you know, where it burned….He had a knife and he'd clean all that out. And just kind of real, did a real good cleaning job down there. [what about the pounder?] The pounder? I think he used the one up there at the museum.[4] I think it's hickory…. [And he carved it?] Yeah. He'd shape it….He used to make them all the time. Made a bunch of them.

> [Would he sell them?] No. [Or as a favor?] Well, yeah, anybody want one. Give them away if he wanted to…But he didn't sell them….it was just something for him to do. (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 1)

> Each one of us had one [a pounder]. My sister had one and I had one…when she [mother] was doing that, pounding corn, making sofkee grits, she always got her sister to come down and help her. Then if we feel like it, we'd go out there and help. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 6)

Then, the sofkee grits required a long period of cooking and stirring over a wood fire. A large, hand-carved wood spoon (*zoh-shee shtee-neh*) was used to serve the sofkee.

> It was, well, I guess it was because it took so long. It was maybe just a special. And because they had…our wood…all our heating was wood. And rather that…if she [grandma] fixed sofkee, it was usually in the fall or summertime where she could just cook them outside and put these logs under the kettle, the big black kettle that she cooked the sofkee in. But she didn't cook it a lot, and I guess that was the reason because it just took so much wood. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 6)

Maybe because they grew up with the idea that sofkee is a special food, either Maxine or her sister, Josephine, can always be counted on to bring a crock pot full of sofkee to special events. Yes, a crock pot of the electric variety that many of us have in our kitchens. A crock pot cooks the dried corn in water slowly overnight, without burning, so that it is the perfect consistency in the morning. Maxine (01/12/2001, p. 6) explains, "But now today we just put it in the crock pot and go to bed at night. But it doesn't taste as good. I don't know. I guess it's just being cooked by electric. It doesn't have the wood taste." It is apparent that the Yuchi value sofkee as a "traditional" food and Yuchi women are willing to use modern innovations, such as crock pots in order to maintain this important link to the past.

The first time I was offered sofkee was at Polecat ceremonial ground in Kellyville, Oklahoma. It was given to me in a small Styrofoam coffee cup with a plastic spoon. I tasted it and thought, "Hmmm, this needs salt," but nobody was salting it, so I didn't either. I later learned that it gets its distinctive flavor from the lye which is made from wood ashes diluted in water and strained. Maxine uses more lye than most

of the women who make sofkee, and hers is a little darker color because of it – more beige than creamy white. The lye can be purchased at the Muscogee tribal headquarters in the gift shop and is sold in pint and quart Mason jars. I think the Yuchis take secret delight in offering sofkee to visitors, because they know how foreign-tasting it is to our palates. They always ask newcomers if they got to try some and what did they think of it. These questions are asked with some amusement and a twinkle in the eye. Some Yuchis have confided to me that they don't really like it that well, but they always eat some when it's available. All of the women in this study ate sofkee at least occasionally while growing up, and while some corn dishes that were commonly consumed on a daily basis when they were girls are rarely seen today, eating sofkee on ceremonial occasions provides an important link with the past.

Another food with corn as the main ingredient which is only occasionally eaten today is sour corn bread. In the old days, the ingredients were mixed and placed in a small crock. The crock was placed on the back shelf of the wood stove where the warmth would generate a fermentation process. But the actual ingredients and quantities seem to be somewhat of a mystery.

> Because the only way I remember, Grandmother had her little crock on back of the stove to have that starter. And always…it was meal…you know just making a little batch of that cornmeal mix, salt…baking powder, I suppose, and just leaving it…and water…and just leave it on the back of the kitchen stove….You know, I have to tell you that I never looked into that little crock to see how much was in there. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 4)

> Well, she [grandmother] used to…she'd always use a crock, jar, and put the…I think it's flour and cornmeal together in there and let it set until it gets real sour….put water in there and let it get real sour. Let it sit for about…I don't know how long. Never paid any attention to that. [Did she keep it on the stove?] Yeah kind of across the stove…uh-huh, warm. So it would ferment…and then she'd take it and get her black skillet and pour it all in there and bake it…on top of the stove….Now Maggie Cumsey, she knows how to do it. (MBW 01/27/01, pp. 5-6)

Maggie is the only person I have encountered who still makes this delicacy. Maxine has tried to make it, but says, "It'll run you out of the house" (01/12/2001, p. 14). She concedes that Maggie's turns out much better. Maggie is widely considered an expert on making sour corn bread and has been video-taped by EUCHEE demonstrating the mixing and baking process in order to preserve her knowledge of this delicious food. I was fortunate enough to attend numerous dinners at Pickett Chapel where Maggie's sour corn bread was served. She makes the process sound easy:

> Yeah, I just get cornmeal and flour. White cornmeal. I like white cornmeal better. Sugar and baking powder and mix it all up with some water. And after I get it all mixed, I…I put it in what you call a crock…about that tall [Maggie indicates 10-12 inches]. I fix it in that and let it sit. Like if I make it before noon, I sit it on the counter, out of the draft, where it's kind of warm, set it there, put a lid on it, and let it sit there all day and all night. The next day I check to see if it's turning sour or not. [So you can tell by the smell that it's getting sour?] Yeah. And put it back and probably wait until evening and check it again whether it's ready. I use a little bit of it. I don't use the whole thing. I stick the rest in the refrigerator. If you make a small one the size of a hot cake you can flip it over [in a cast iron pan on the stove]….But when there's going to be more I use a skillet, bake it in the oven. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 5)

Parched corn is rarely seen today. Also referred to as *abuskee*,[5] parched corn was made with white corn that was allowed to dry so that it could be "shelled" or removed from the cob. After the kernels were parched in hot ashes in a large iron pot over a wood fire, they were sifted, bagged up and taken to the local mill to be ground into meal. The parching process imparts a unique flavor that cannot be duplicated by simply browning cornmeal in a pan. According to Viola (01/11/2001, p. 6), "…I don't think it would have the same taste as parched corn on account of that ashes. That ashes give it a taste….any kind of wood ashes. But blackjack is the best ashes. Yeah, blackjack."

> …Mom used to have an iron pot. Not the big one, but the medium….so you get ashes and sift that and have clean ashes. Get it real, real hot and corn. You get

> that corn when it's just beginning to get hard, not roasting ears, but that corn where you can shell it off the cob and you shell your corn off the cob and then you put so much. Not a whole lot, depends on how much ashes you have. And then you throw that corn in the ashes and you stir with a long…you're parching it. That iron kettle has fire underneath it and them ashes is hot and you have a long wooden paddle….You stir it…you be careful or they'll burn…want it to get real nice and brown and parched….Mom used to have a big sifter she had made [a type of basket]. She'd get in there and sift that corn out and put it over. And we had, in those days, we had flour come in sacks and she put that in those sacks, maybe three-fourths full, about like that. Depends on how much corn we had. And she put them in that and she took it to town to the mill. The old-timers, they used that mallet and beat it. (VJT 02/17/01, p. 3)

Produce of all kinds was generally for the family's use, not for sale or barter, and various means of preservation were used in order to 'put up' the food after harvest. I have already mentioned dried corn, but other produce were dried as well. For example, pumpkins (*chingk-on*) were widely grown and preserved by drying (*chingk-on tsuah*).

> She used to dry them. She…when the pumpkin was round, she'd cut it about that thick around, too, and then get the peel. And after she'd get a lot of them cut up she'd stick it through … oh sometimes she'd use a broom handle and [circles, like a donut shape?] Yes. Scrape out the inside and she'd dry them, put it outside, and then evening comes, gather them up, bring them back in the house. Next day she'd put them back out there again until dry. They'd dry just real thin like that. If it was a good, sunny day it didn't take but 3 or 4 days. If the weather was kind of damp it would take longer. You'd have to wait til a sunny day and put it back out. A long time ago we used to get flour in a sack, cloth, and she'd put them in there and hang them in the pantry and it didn't spoil or anything. She'd cook it later on…break them up into pieces and cook them in water, boiling water. Add sugar to it. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 2)

Maxine (01/12/2001, p. 2) described a drying process that entailed cutting the flesh of huge field pumpkins into strips and hanging them over a clothes line. Her mother later cut the dried strips into small pieces and cooked them in a little water. The pieces swelled up "'til you have a pot full before you know it. And boy it's …I'd rather have dried pumpkin than just pumpkin that you just cut up and cook. I think it [gets sweeter]." A similar drying technique involved sweet potatoes.

> She'd cook them…she'd get the small ones and peel them, she'd peel a bunch of them. And some bigger ones. Boil it and after they're cooked, we used to have them wood cook stoves, had that little old warming place on top…she'd put them in there, put them in a pan, put them in there, kinda stir them around so they'd dry out evenly. When it's dry, it's real hard, it's shrinked up maybe the size of my finger. Then when she'd want to cook them, she would just get them out and put them in hot water and…it used to be good. You can put butter on it, salt. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 2)

Previously mentioned were the abundant fruit trees maintained at many homesteads. After harvesting, some fruits might be prepared as sugared preserves or jams kept in jars. Others were dried for later use in pies and cobblers.

> My grandmother would core the apples and slice them, cut them in half and slice them and what my aunt didn't make in pies, she would dry them. She put them on card board or newspapers and put a net on them and the boys would get up on top of the house and put…lay the paper and net and all that out. Put the apples there and cover them with the net or screen. And they'd leave them up. They'd put them up in the morning and take them down in the evenings. They'd do that for several days until they were dry. Then she would bag them and leave them in the house until we got ready to use them. [Hung from the rafters?]. Or just hang them on nails in the house. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 2)

> She [mother] dried apples. In those days people had a lot of orchards, you know – apple trees, pear trees, and stuff like that. And they would share with you so she would dry apples and peaches but I don't know, I think she cooked up the pears. Made pear preserves and stuff like that. I think she just sliced them and put them, like you dry corn. You put them on a thing and you put them up high. [Like on a sheet up on the roof?] Yeah….It'd have to be real, real dry or if they're moist or anything they deteriorate. [Then when you put them on the roof, would you take them down at night?] Yeah. Then the next day you put it back up, until it's dried out….She'd dry that and then in those days we had flour sacks you know…cloth…and she put it in there and hang it up where air would get to it where it wouldn't mold and that's the way she kept it. (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 1)

Canning was also used as a method of preservation for vegetables, although the use of this method appears not to have been as popular as drying.

> Yeah, Mother and her canned it, canned some of that. The beans especially….I just helped wash the jars out or something like that. Not really helping touch the food or anything. [Did they have you snap the beans?] Oh yeah, yeah. Snap the beans and help wash the jars and stuff like that. But otherwise we didn't touch the other pot because I guess they were afraid we would be burned or

> something. [Did they do that on the stove or outside?] Yeah. On the stove. [did you have a wood stove?] Uh-huh. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 2)

Some Yuchi families kept a dairy cow or two for milk and cream to make butter, while others depended on their neighbors for dairy products or just did without. Judging from my interviews, while dairy products, such as butter, were enjoyed when available, they did not play a prominent role in Yuchi subsistence during the lives of the project participants.

> My mom milked the cows. We just had two. We had two cows. We had…we made our own butter. We had our own butter. [You had to separate the cream from the milk] Yes, my mom did. I didn't, my mom did. [Did you have a cream separator] Oh yeah. No we didn't have one of them. [How did you do that then] We just do it through this…she'd just take the top cream off the top. [Skim it off?] Yeah. [How did you make your own butter] She'd make it in a fruit jar. [How would you do that] Got a gallon jug, like a tea jug. Put all that top cream in there and shake it up. Made the best butter in the world. [Did she salt that butter at all or just plain?] Yeah, she salted it. Yeah. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 4)

> She [mother] used to make her own butter. And then sometimes she'd take the cream off the … and use that. [Did you drink milk?] No, just use it in cereal like oatmeal. That's all. [Did you ever just drink a glass of milk?] We just couldn't drink it. We tried….I don't know just couldn't drink it. Mary and I used to milk the cow. We had one cow. She'd milk it while I'd keep the calf away from the mother and she'd get through milking and we'd turn the calf loose, put it in there with its mother. Then somebody stole it. [stole the calf?] Uh-huh. And the little calf, too. [both of them?] Uh-huh. [did you get another cow after that?] No we didn't. There weren't very many houses back then. Houses were far apart and there was no house north from us and we had the cow in a little ole pen north from the house. And somebody go down the road and park down the road and walked up to them and got the cow. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 7)

> Whatever we bought…we would buy, get milk, and butter. Sometimes our neighbors, they had a dairy. And when the men would go up there and help them, when they butchered a beef or hogs, because they killed maybe 7 or 8 when they butchered. And so they…we used to get milk from them off and on. And butter. But it wasn't something we had everyday. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 2)

> [Where did you get that butter? Did you make it?]
> No, they'd just buy it. Or if they could get the milk, they'd make their own. We didn't have no cows. If they did, it was a long way before my time. We just didn't have no cows. [Did they buy milk very often?] Yeah, they bought it quite a bit. And they'd make butter out of the sour milk. It was good. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 4)

Meat resources included some wild game, such as rabbits and squirrels. The women who participated in this project all had brothers who enjoyed getting out in the woods to hunt or fish. Sometimes their fathers would try their hand at hunting as well.

> We used to have squirrels. [What about rabbits?] Not so many rabbits. Squirrels mostly. [Would your mom fix those?] Skin them. Wash them, soak them in cold water, soak them in cold water and then rinse them off and par-boil them, and then take them out and fry them. [Put flour on them to make a coating?] Yeah. Rolled them in flour like you would chicken. Simple. [How often would you have something like that?] Oh, no, not too often. During the squirrel season. Oh, in the spring. [It seems like they'd be skinny after the winter] No. Well, they're not very big. [So your brothers would go out and get those?] Well, my dad. My dad mostly. He was a squirrel hunter. He was a hunter. (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 2-3)

> I can remember my Grandma Millie…the last time I ever really ate a squirrel …that was in the mid 30's, 1935, 34 and somebody killed a squirrel and she fried it. She cooked the squirrel and made gravy…cooked the squirrel within that. Fried it and made gravy with it, cream gravy. And I think that's where I got the idea. That was the last time I ever ate a wild squirrel. [did you have that frequently up till that time?] Well occasionally, yes. I think we ate more rabbits and squirrels in those days. But nowadays I'm afraid to eat that kind of game. [Because of some disease or…?] Rabies. [so the boys would go out hunting?] In those days, even when we lived with Grandma Eliza, back in the late, in the '40s, my brother Jimmy and cousin Monroe would go out and hunt and bring it to grandma. And she would cook rabbits and squirrels. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 6)

Apparently, deer did not populate the area with any viability during the first decades of the twentieth century. The women do not recall seeing them or ever eating venison.

> [Did you ever have deer?] No, we never did. [Were there deer around?] Maybe we made so much noise, we never saw them. Being active youngsters around, we made too much noise. I never remember seeing a deer….I probably have seen three deer since we moved back, I've seen those at Pickett and I never saw them while growing up. [Maybe they were run out of the area and now they're coming back] I had one run across my path one night not too long ago. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 6)

Wild turkeys were known to roam the region, and even today, they have been spotted in the vicinity of Pickett Chapel. However, they were eaten infrequently, perhaps for Thanksgiving or some other communal dinner. By and large, the main sources of meat were domesticated livestock, such as cattle, hogs, and chickens.

Although beef was not consumed by the Yuchis as frequently as pork, some kept a few head of cattle for meat or trade. Maxine (01/12/2001, p. 13) recalls, "I always remember, we never had those [beef] short ribs any other time, but just on Sunday. And oh, they were so good, cooked on the wood stove, you know, in the oven. Oh, they were good."

Different methods were used to preserve beef. One way was to can it using a process similar to canning vegetables. The favored method, however, seemed to be drying, and here, Josephine (01/10/2001, p. 1) describes the drying method used by her family: "And sometimes that was the way we would get some beef and that was always put up on the…spread a sheet, and put the meat up there to dry on top of house. Keep the dogs and other animals from getting it."

Maggie recalled that dried beef was one her favorite foods during her childhood, and she explained how this food was processed by her father using salt and then cooked by her mother. Again, the meat was dried on the roof of the house:

> My dad used to, when he'd butcher a cow, when he cut up some of the meat, big pieces, [about 1 inch thick, like a slab] and he put salt on it and spread it out on an oil cloth on the roof. And he put the meat up there. I don't know how long it took it, but on a good hot day, it didn't take too long. [He did it in the summertime?] Uh-huh. He used to make one of us go up on the roof and turn the meat over. [More than once a day?] Uh-huh. Yeah. I think it took about 2 days, maybe longer. She [mother] stored them too in the sack. She took it…I don't know if she used the whole piece or cut it up, but anyway, she took it, boiled it down, then after it's cooked, she took it outside where she's got that what you make sofkee out of…that block, wooden block, I guess you heard of that…she'd put them in there, a few pieces at a time and just pound them up and come into little ole pieces, strips. And then she…when she'd get through with them she'd cook it over, cut up some onions and put it in. [She'd boil it first, then pound it into pieces, and then when she cooked it again, how would she cook it?] Boiled. [With onions?] Uh-huh. [What would she do with the liquid she boiled it in?] Just pour it out. And that was all. [Did it taste different from fresh beef?] Uh-huh. It had flavor. It was good…they all used to be good. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 2)

Pork (*wadzah-undee*) was the most popular meat and some Yuchi families kept some hogs for that purpose. Pork was widely consumed, perhaps on an almost daily basis in many households. To supply the family's pork, one or two hogs were butchered at a time during the cool weather of autumn or winter. Butchering was a big task that took many hands, so two or three families might gather together to do the work, and even the children took part in the chores associated with butchering. Those families which did not keep their own hogs were able to acquire a share of the meat by "helping out."

> They used to butcher hogs in the fall when cooler weather came. The maternal grandmother always had one room of the house when winter was oncoming, they would salt down the quarters of the hog that they butchered or then fry down. I guess most families at that time…It was a whole day they spent in butchering, the men heating…of course you know getting preparation the day before. Building, getting fire wood and a huge black pot and water to be drawn. So on the butchering day, then everybody worked…[Were there any chores for the kids to do?] Well, getting wood. And helping with the water or whatever their little trips were from running from the butchering site, maybe to the house. They'd be little "go-fers." [Did you have a well?] Water well. Had to draw the water. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 1)

> Yeah, my brothers used to help. We used to have to scrape the hairs off the hog. [was that after the hog was cut up?] No. When they'd butcher…you know pour hot water on them, he'd sharpen up the knives for us to use to scrape the hairs off the hog. After it was all clean then he'd get one of the boys help him to hang it up on a tree, and he'd cut it open, and I guess that was it. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 3)

Apparently, each family had a preferred method for preserving pork, and several different approaches to preservation were described by the women. Ella was the only one of the participants to tell me about preserving meat in a tin immersed in cold spring water.

> Only way I know how it was preserved, they put it in cans…kinda bucket-like. They just…set it in the water. [Cold water?] Uh-huh. [In a spring house?] Yeah kinda. We didn't have no spring house, but we just… We used to have a…those big old gallon buckets, bout that big around, like a …just empty bucket. [Metal?] Yeah. Metal buckets, about a gallon buckets. Set it in cold water and then heat it up. If you wanted to eat it, you heat it up. (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 2)

Another method for preserving pork involved cooking the meat and layering it with the pork drippings in a large tin can. The fat sealed out the air, thus preserving the meat. I asked Maggie if she ever heard of taking the meat and storing it in a can with lard.

> Yeah. We used to do that. My dad did. We'd keep it in a big ole round can, maybe about that tall and he used to keep some of the meat that was already cooked and when we get ready to eat, we'd have to fish it out of the can and heat it over. [fry it?] No it was already cooked. [so just heat it up a little bit] Yeah. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 3)

> And the women would fry down some of the meat. [what did the frying down involve?] It would be cutting up the meat. Probably the sides or other portions of the hog. They cut them, sliced them and then fried them in big skillets or pot in the house usually. They'd fry these in the house. Then they had a big, a big container, I don't know how many gallons it would be. You've seen the, like the Christmas type of [popcorn tins]…something a little, well, it could be almost that tall. I don't know how many gallons that would be but it was a tall container and they would put the meat in there as they fried it and then later when they were through, they put whatever the drippings, the lard drippings, they just put it in there with the meat. And that was preserving. And later when they prepared meals, they would just dip it out and boil it. That was one way of preparing their meat. Well, I guess it would have it's own [flavor]… it was good, whatever it was. It was more brownish [than a cured ham or fresh ham], because it had been fried. Like a well-done pork chop and then you always boiled it. That was always one of the fares you would find among the grandmothers' generation. That would be going back 3 generations. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 1)

Other popular methods for keeping pork involved the use of salt as a preservative. "Most of the old families would do that in butchering. They salt down some of the meat, the quarters, and then…like a country ham. There'd be one, two, three, four portions" (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 1).

> …salt it down, put a lot of salt on it. He [father] had a box fixed up real thick and he'd put them in there, put in a crib [hang it up?] No, he'd put them in a box [in the salt?] Uh-huh. [Is this like what they call country ham?] Yeah. We used to go get the ham, slice it up and I had to cook it. [Would you cook it in water first to get some of the salt out?] Well, it wasn't so salty. Anyway, I washed it off and then fry it. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 3)

"Salt pork" (*wadzah undee dahbee)* or "salt meat," as it is sometimes called, is a great favorite, even today. Consisting primarily of fat with a "streak of lean," salt pork is sliced about one quarter inch thick and fried like bacon until crisp. It is always served with pinto beans.

> The only way I ever learned was just when you buy the salt meat, it's so salty, just boil it in that water until…for about an hour or so until you think the salt was all out of it. And then you just fry it in you know, your grease. [like bacon?] yeah. Uh-huh. But that's the only way I ever knew. But then my grandma, one time, she used syrup to put in there and made it, it made it real brown. [fried it in the syrup?] Yeah she fried it in the syrup. [would that have been sorghum syrup?] Yeah, I think so. It made it real brown and crisp. [did she do that all the time?] No. She just made it every now and then. But we had it mostly straight. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 5)

Today, salt pork is served primarily on special occasions, probably because contemporary Yuchis have become more health-conscious, and it has a reputation for being one of the least healthy of all the foods favored by the Yuchis. But all of the women remember eating it regularly during their childhoods.

Chickens were important additions to Yuchi homesteads. While chicken meat was a great favorite, it was reserved for special occasions, such as Sunday dinner, rather than being consumed on a daily basis.

> Or maybe they might… might be a time when they fried or boiled a chicken. So often if they had meat, beef or chicken, they'd boil it with rice, chicken and rice or beef and rice. If we had any beef ribs, it was always boiled with rice. So often that was also the Sunday dinner. We'd catch a chicken and have chicken and rice for Sunday dinner. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 3)

Chickens were kept primarily for the eggs they produced. Served either boiled as part of a meal or used in baking, eggs provided some protein in the diet. Josephine and Maxine's family sometimes had eggs for breakfast (Maxine 01/12/2001, p. 1), but Maggie (02/11/01, p. 7) told me her family hardly ever ate the eggs, but she believes her mother used them in baking and sometimes her mother would sell them. Other women traded or sold their eggs as well. Josephine (01/10/2001, p. 2) remembers her grandmother trading her eggs for the kerosene they used to fuel their lamps at the house. Josephine's sister, Maxine, recalls their grandmother selling some of her eggs.

> Because I can remember we had chickens …we had a little grocery store that was real close to our school and I guess it was about 2 miles, maybe a little farther than that, but my grandmother…we could eat eggs, maybe Monday, Tuesday. About Wednesday, Thursday…she'd keep her eggs that she saved and on Saturday we'd have to take those eggs to the store and sell those eggs, and that was her money to give to the church and I can remember, we always had to go to the store to sell eggs. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 13)

Women and children were the primary caretakers of the family's chickens and took their responsibility very seriously. Maxine (01/12/2001, p. 3) recalls. "Oh, she [grandmother] fed her chickens faithfully. That's something else we had to do – feed the chickens." Looking back on her assigned chore of gathering eggs, Mary is not too fond of eggs to this day.

> And my job was to go in there [into the chicken house]…that's why I don't like eggs today too well. The only way I can eat them is scrambled. Go in there…they'd be sitting on them eggs and stink and then you get an egg and maybe there'd be a little chick in there and oh…gosh. That just turned me against them eggs. One time I went in the chicken house…and there was a snake above the door there. A black snake after the babies, and boy, you talk about running out of there. I was scared to death. I run out of there…I used to

> go around and gather the eggs out of the nest. From then on I was always scared to go in there then. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 6)

Some foods grow locally in the wild, and perhaps because they are available for only a short time during the year, they are favorites with the Yuchi people yesterday and today. For example, all of the women remember going to gather wild onions (*zohtee-dah)* as young girls. Each spring members of the family would go on an outing to a nearby creek or bottom land for this tender delicacy.

> I can remember going as a family down to the… what we called the bottom, down the hill, the bottom area to go, look, and dig. It was a very beautiful area because the Polecat Creek was a little farther south of the railroad track, which was still Dad's land and where he had planted corn. And across that Polecat Creek was a suspension bridge and that's …I guess along there too that we would look for onions where the creek was – Polecat Creek. And so it was a real…at that time it would have been a good area for hunting wild onion. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 6)

> Oh yes. A bunch of us get together, maybe my sister, my older sister and her children come over. We'd get together and we'd go down on the creek – Duck Creek. That's when we were living over there by Liberty Mounds and we lived on Duck Creek. Well, the kids and the women were digging wild onions. The boys and stuff, they'd go fishing. And the meantime, we'd cook with gas out there at Liberty Mounds. They had gas out there. We burnt [propane] gas. And I think they must have put the beans on and left a little fire under there. Because when we'd come back we'd be starved, but we'd all get together and clean the onions, do the fish, and I remember we always had beans and wild onions and fish and corn bread and oh, we really had a big feast. (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 2)

Unfortunately, the onions didn't last long, but maybe that was part of their appeal. They were only available in their most tender, delicate form for a few weeks in the early spring. Ella (12/02/2000, p. 3) explained, "You don't eat them in the fall. [You eat them] in the springtime because [later in the year] they get too hard you can't eat them. You can't cook them good. They don't cook good."

> We just have it [wild onions] maybe at one time a week and maybe go back again a few days later, like maybe next week or something. We didn't go constantly. And then we'd go…we'd go like that about maybe two-three times and then they'd start getting tough. [so for a few weeks they're good] Uh-huh. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 3)

Mothers and grandmothers had an intimate knowledge of the onions' availability – when the onions were at their peak of tenderness, where to look for them, and which variety to gather for the best taste. And going back many decades, women have protected their knowledge of where to find the best onions.

> …my grandmother, when I was living out there, we were never asked to go out and dig onions. But she did that. She would go out and dig the onions and then she would also clean them out there. She might be gone all afternoon. She would clean the onions and come back and have them in her apron and then…[she'd go] just out in the woods. They had 80 acres there where we lived. That was her land. And she went out in the woods. See, people know…it's strange to me…when somebody knows where an onion patch is they won't tell anybody. It's just…they won't…I've heard there are…they call them the river onions. Those that are the onions that grow around where it's real kind of a sandy…and where there's a lot of water. (MWB 01/12/2001, pp. 3)

"River onions" or "creek onions" are the varieties that are much sought after. Several people warned me about the perils of eating "cow onions," which may be somewhat toxic, because I was told they can make a person sick. They are larger than the coveted creek onions and don't taste as good. Viola and I had a long talk one day, and she was very informative on the varieties of onions available in the wild.

> And we always liked the creek onions. The creek onions are slim and long…the bottom part's about that deep in the ground. And they're slim and tall and you can really identify them by the way they smell. They really smell like wild onions. [At Mohawk Park, a local site where some contemporary Indians gather onions] I think they're kind of mixed. They're called meadow, I guess. [Meadow onions…then they taste different?] Well, yeah, but they're kind of a little tough. The stem's wider and they're not as tall. And they're kind of on the tough side. And they got the cow onions too. They're more tougher than the meadow onions. Well, they grow just anywhere, on prairie, or wherever…But the creek onions, they're the most popular onions. They're hard to find anymore…and they won't tell you where they find them. But I was told around Ada [Oklahoma] there was plenty of wild onions around Ada, even around the bridges, around the creeks and stuff. You don't have to go on people's property. You can go by the bridge and stuff and get them. And if they're in sandy soil you can pull them up. But I never have made it. And some of them folks toward [?] somewhere, Brown Creek somewhere out in there, but I don't know just whereabouts. But it's not as plentiful as it used to be. I guess they dig them up. Yeah that prairie onions…that cow onions, that's big [the bulb]. It looks like they could tell they weren't…I guess they smell like onion, not like creek onions.

> And that's the one they get over at Mohawk. They're not too tall. They're kind of short and the blade is thick and wider than the creek onions. The creek onions are slim and long, tall. And you can sure smell them, too. [I never knew there was a difference] You didn't? Yeah, there's many people who don't and I know I tell Virgil when he was here, I tell him the difference and he said he didn't know about he cow onions or the meadow onions. And I tell him, I said yeah, there's a difference. So I got him educated on onions. (VJT 01/11/2001, pp. 4-5)

While cleaning and getting the wild onions ready to cook is rather labor-intensive, they are so delicious, and the effort is worth the time it takes to prepare this seasonal delicacy. The onions must be washed thoroughly, because being from the creek bottom land, they are covered in sand. The onions, which resemble the green onions typically found in American grocery stores, are coarsely chopped, both the white bottoms and green tops, and placed in a pot with just a little water and some grease from the salt meat which is always served with the meal. The onions wilt down quite a bit when the liquid gets hot. In the meantime, the cook breaks some eggs in a bowl and beats them up. After the onions cook for awhile, the beaten egg is added to the pot and stirred, rather like making egg-drop soup. Typically, the finished product is a delicious mixture of wild onions with a little egg. However, I learned that not everyone appreciated the addition of eggs to the onions. At least two of the women told me that their mothers sometimes served wild onions plain without the addition of eggs. Mary (01/27/2001, p. 3) told me, "my grandma didn't like eggs and so we had to fix some …leave it plain for her. She didn't like the eggs. That was unusual." Ella (12/02/2000, p. 3) said her mother served wild onions both ways, with or without eggs. When preparing them plain, she would simply fry them.

Today, Indians, including Yuchis, from all around eastern Oklahoma look forward to spring and the appearance of the first wild onions of the year. Unfortunately, they seem to be getting harder and harder to find.

> [Wild onions are] a delicacy for the Indians. Right now, after this snow and everything, it'll [wild onions] be coming up back further south. They usually come up south before they do here. And I know my sister, she used to like to be out and she'd always go out and check them out and see if they're coming up. I know those Littlebear boys does. The Littlebears …they always check them out to see if they're coming up or not. And so it's always been kind of a delicacy for us, for the Indians. [what's the period of time you can dig them?] They get tough or they get old. [so how long are the good ones available? A couple of weeks?] I'd say a couple of months. They'll start seeding, when they start seeding is about the end. It was plentiful then [when Vi was a girl at home]. Right now it isn't. We have to really hunt to find them. They're not easy to find like they used to be. Now a lot of them go out here to Mohawk Park and get them. But they're not the creek onions. They're some different kind of wild onions. (VJT 01/11/2001, pp. 4-5)

Members of the various Indian communities have their favorite spots to watch for the emergence of the tender sprouts, and they gather these for distribution to their friends, neighbors, and family-members. Some of the onions are prepared right away, but they also freeze well, so that they might be put away for future use. The suppliers' efforts are not entirely altruistic, however. Some of this wild onion gathering is performed as an entrepreneurial enterprise, and while the quality of the product varies, a bundle of wild onions can sell for as much as six dollars. In 2001, onions at this price were top grade and came fairly clean from the supplier. Lower priced onions can be very dirty, full of sand and weeds.

Demand for quality wild onions reaches a fevered pitch each spring as most of the Indian community centers and Indian churches in the region host their annual "wild onion dinners" to raise money for their projects and causes. During the season, a person might find two or three dinners on any given Saturday in and around Tulsa. Tulsa is heavily populated by members of the Yuchi, Creek, and other Indian groups originating in the Southeastern United States, all of whom have enjoyed wild onions for generations. While I was in the Yuchi community, Pickett Chapel, Duck Creek Indian Community Center, Concharty Methodist Church, and the Tulsa Indian Community

Center were just a few of the organizations to host wild onion dinners. The participants in this study were fairly certain that the churches were the first organizations to use wild onion dinners as fund raisers. I tried to learn when the practice of wild onion dinners as fund-raisers started exactly, but everyone was unsure. Only Maggie would venture a guess at a timeframe.

> I'd say it was around back in 50s I imagine or 60s. Yeah, it was around about 1950. [Did that start in the churches?] Yeah. [Why do you think they started doing that?] I don't know. It was a pretty good idea, getting out and sell it, see if it would sell, and it did, so we got started doing it. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 6)

Maxine told me the money raised by Pickett Chapel with their wild onion dinner is enough to pay their apportionment to the United Methodist Church organization each year, and she believes the annual wild onion dinner was instituted because of the church's need to generate some cash to satisfy this obligation.

> It's probably been…I would say at least 25 years… I can't remember when our older people, when my grandmother and them…but see, we didn't have apportionments then. And they didn't even really pay the pastor that much. My uncle [Joe Wildcat] got very little money. Just what people would give him and most of the time they gave him groceries. So he was without a salary. So then when they began to send us pastors and we had to support them, then, that's when we began to have fund raisers. They say you got to pay this much money to your pastor. Then we… you know. [did the wild onion dinners start in the churches?] I think so. (MWB 01/12/2001, pp. 4)

The church women purchase their onions, around eighty bundles, from some women from Holdenville, Oklahoma. They pay top dollar, six dollars a bundle, and are happy to do so, because the onions come to them clean, weed-free, young and tender.

> They're not as hard to clean…The ground is moist and they're real tender. But they're clean and when I get them, all I have to do, I just rinse them again, cut them on my cutting board with a knife like this and just chop them up and put them in bags. So it's, to me it's worth $6.00 [because she doesn't have to worry about all the sand and grit] and digging. I used to dig onions. (MWB 01/12/2001, pp. 4)

Regardless of whose dinner one attends, or whether they are purchased by an individual and cooked at home, wild onions are usually prepared with the egg mixture

described earlier. Typical accompaniments include salt pork, pinto beans, and fry bread. Some would say that these foods are absolutely required when serving wild onions. Maxine described Pickett Chapel's dinner for the year 2000 which sold for six dollars a plate.

> We had the wild onions with eggs, pinto beans, sweet potatoes, corn, salad, and your dessert and drink [also fry bread]. We have a lot of these town's [Sapulpa, Kellyville and surrounding area] people. They really come out and support us there. The businessmen from town. Our meat is usually salt pork, ham or chicken. They get their choice of one meat. (MWB 01/12/2001, pp. 4)

In addition to the selections Maxine listed above, the women also provided *sofkee* and grape dumplings for those who wanted to try them. At Pickett Chapel (and most of the other wild onion dinners I attended) the food is served cafeteria-style, with the women passing the guest's plate down the line and loading it up with each delectable food selection. When I attended the dinner in 2001, guests had so much food, they couldn't carry it all to their places at the table. One of my duties was to assist people with all the plates and cups required for their feast. Everyone enjoyed the fantastic spread and needless to say, no one went away hungry. The members of Pickett Chapel have gained a reputation for putting on the best wild onion dinner in the area, and they take their responsibility for upholding this reputation very seriously. Through their hard work and dedication to the annual wild onion dinner as an outreach to the community, they are proud to be able to fulfill their obligations to the United Methodist Church of which they are a part.

Grape dumplings (*shay-ah cah-gon)* are served infrequently at Yuchi gatherings and are considered a great treat. Homemade grape dumplings are made by using wild grapes from the local landscape. After washing them, women stew the grapes, stems and all, in a pot of water until the juice is the desired richness. Reportedly, the stems give the brew a distinctive flavor (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 5). Then

the solids are strained out, and strips of dough consisting of flour, salt, and grape juice are dropped in the hot liquid and cooked until the dough is set. Sometimes the juice is thickened a bit more with some additional flour. In the past grapes were gathered in the wild and used right away or dried and canned for use later in the year (VJT 01/11/2001. p. 2). Nowadays, people enjoy grape dumplings any time of year by substituting canned grape juice for homemade juice.

Many Indians recognize grape dumplings as a food they ate as children and have enjoyed periodically throughout their lifetimes. Here, Maxine relates a story that shows how popular Indian foods are with non-Indians. The occasion was when the members of Pickett Chapel ran a concession stand at the Tulsa Indian Arts Festival.

> I had Clarence to make a big sign up there "Real Grape Dumplings – Made With Real Wild Grapes." And boy people were so curious about that, we just sold out those grape dumplings in no time and that's one time when my grape dumplings turned out real good. I had about 12 quarts and I used every one of them. I made a big old, one of these silver soup…stock pots full. They kept Harrison busy because he was serving the wild grapes. He was taking all the compliments. I guess he told half of them he made it. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 5)

In our conversations, some of the women mentioned some form of sweetened tomatoes or tomato cobbler. This is interesting because I never encountered sweet tomatoes at any of the numerous dinners I attended while working with the Yuchis. In my experience, tomatoes were served sliced raw or fried when still green. Consequently, this repeated mention of sweet tomatoes came as a complete surprise, but it obviously indicates the remembrance of a well-loved childhood comestible. The recipes varied somewhat, but all of the women recalled their mothers or grandmothers combining ripe, red tomatoes with sugar and bread or dough of some sort. Some covered the sweetened tomatoes with a crust to make a cobbler, while others added flour dumplings. Crumbled biscuits were also used.

> Mom used to make tomato cobbler, like peach cobbler…Talk about good. Woo! That's good! [Did it have sugar in it?] Uh-huh. Just like a cobbler. Put spices in it. [In a crust?] Uh-huh. Delicious! Mom used to make good crust. [What kind of spices did she use?] I think maybe all spice and maybe nutmeg or something. Oh man it was good eating. I think about fixing some….She'd cook up the [fresh] tomatoes. [Would she drain them?] No. [So there'd be a lot of juice?] Yeah. I think you can fix it with canned tomatoes. I was planning on doing it, but I never did. (VJT 02/17/2001, p. 5)

> Yeah, she [mother] used to make tomatoes, sweetened tomatoes and dumplings. [I've heard of those] You have? Put dumplings in that, and boy that was good. [I've heard of those, but I've never seen them] Really? [When you make these, would you use fresh tomatoes out of the yard or canned, or what?] Well, I think she used to use fresh tomatoes. [And cook them?] Cook them and get the skin off and you know, mash them all up and then put the dumplings in there. [How much sugar?] I don't know how much she would put in. [Were they sweet tasting?] Yeah, they were sweet. [And then just drop the little dumplings in?] Yeah, just kind of like it was something homemade, you know. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 11)

> Well, we used to fix bread, biscuits, mix it with tomatoes and…sugar. [Tomatoes out of your garden?] Yeah. [And you'd cook them, get the skin off?] Yeah…Put your bread in a bowl, cut it up, you know…crumble it up, pour the tomatoes over it, put your…pour the sugar over it, kind of mix it up and just cook it for awhile. I'd say about 15, 20 minutes, maybe not that long. Call it bread tomatoes… [You called it bread tomatoes?] Breaded tomatoes, yeah. [How much sugar did you use?] Oh gosh, I don't remember. It's according to how much you make. [For a quart, how much sugar?] I'd say about a cup of sugar, maybe. You just kind of have to use your own judgment. I'd say about…a quart….maybe a half a cup or a cup. It's according to how sweet you want it….Well, I'd say about a cup maybe, ¾ cups. [Someone mentioned these sweet tomatoes to me and I started asking. People would say, 'yeah, we used to have those.'] Yeah…we did. (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 2)

Not every consumable foodstuff was produced on the farm. For example, "when things got modern" (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 6), rather than engaging in the back-breaking labor of pounding corn in a wooden block, women began to take their corn to the local mill to be finely ground into meal for making corn bread. A coarser grind produced feed for the family chickens. Commodities such as coffee, tea, sugar, pepper and other seasonings, cheese, crackers, candy, "and a big tin of peanut butter for our school lunches" (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 2) were among the products purchased from local merchants. "Well, it's not much different than what it is today. We'd buy canned

goods when we wanted to, when we didn't have no canned…If we didn't have anything from the garden, we'd buy canned stuff…Green beans, rice, flour, sugar, coffee, butter," explains Ella (12/02/2000, p. 2).

Once or twice a month, two or more adults from the household would take the horses and wagon to the nearest town, Sapulpa, Mounds, or Bristow, and buy food products they could not produce themselves. Starting in the 1920s, some families began to purchase automobiles, thus making the trip to town faster than taking horses and wagons. Either way, children were usually left at home under the care of an adult or more often, an older sibling, although they sometimes went along for the ride.

> They went about, I would say about twice a month. And they went in the wagon [to] Sapulpa… guess the men did this…well, my grandmother used to go, too, because they had a little store there in…in Mounds. And they would take that…they got a big granary there…it' still there and sometimes they would take the corn down there and have it cracked for corn meal and then also for chicken feed…. And they would take corn over to Mounds and have it ground into corn meal and then she would shop, buy her flour and maybe get sugar and other things….But I think most of it was in Sapulpa. We never went with them. MWB 01/12/2001, p. 3)

Rice was another of the commodities that was purchased at a local market. One of my surprising discoveries is the Yuchis' love for rice. In talking to the women, rice was named as a favorite breakfast food served with milk and sugar or with bacon grease, or as a favorite accompaniment for meat.

> Now when we have, sometimes out there we have dinner when we play football and Chief's sister, Gladys, she always manages to bring rice and oh, they really eat that. And sometimes they use salt meat or different kind of meat, but she does bring the rice and they really eat that…She said that her brother liked rice and most of the Euchees did you know. [Do they eat the rice plain?] Well, they cook it plain or you can cook it with meat and stuff. But if I'm going to cook it with meat I cook the meat first and then put the rice in there. You can use beef or pork or chicken. [So you would just boil the rice and then mix the meat in?] Yeah. Uh-huh. I don't like it greasy though. That's why I cook the meat first and then take it out and put it with rice because I don't like too much fat. (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 5)

I never thought of rice as a "traditional" food for any Indians originating in the Southeast and wondered how far back the Yuchis' association with rice might have gone. I thought, perhaps the Yuchis' affinity for rice has something to do with their early proximity to coastal areas of the Southeast and the availability of some type of wild rice.[6] The Yuchis I know all eat the standard, processed, store-bought white rice that is commonly found in American grocery stores. The first time I recognized rice being served at a meal was at Mary's house before a Native American Church meeting being held there. I use the word 'recognized' deliberately, because its appearance was much different than the rice I am accustomed to. Perhaps rice had made an appearance at other meals, but I did not recognize it as such. Rather than exhibiting separate grains, it was cooked as a dish resembling mush and had chunks of meat added to it. It contained little or no salt or other seasonings. In fact, even after I ate it at Mary's house I was not sure that it was rice and I asked someone, and they said it was, indeed, rice.

Flour, another of the commodities purchased by the Yuchis at local markets, was a very important addition to the repertoire of cooking ingredients in a typical household. Many of the households consisted of numerous mouths to feed and flour provided a way for women to stretch the foods they had available to them, so that every member of the household could go to bed feeling full, even though the family might be economically challenged. For example, flour was used to make inexpensive dumplings that acted as a filler. By simply mixing flour, water, and a little salt, a woman rolled out a tender dough that was cut into strips and dropped in hot liquid. Mary (01/27/2001, p. 11) remembers that after her father died, she went with her mother and eight siblings to live with her grandmother. There, the two women needed to get creative in order to feed everyone. Mary says they often added dumplings to "stretch

out" various types of foods, such as stewed chicken, wax beans, sweet tomatoes, and of course, the wild grapes discussed previously.

Besides dumplings, flour provides the foundation for a number of foodstuffs, such as pie and cobbler crusts, gravy, and breads such as fry bread and biscuits. I have already discussed the popularity of using fresh and dried fruits in pies and cobblers. Gravy seems to have been an important addition to the dinner table. Maxine (01/12/2001, p. 2) says, "It was just flour. We always had the grease, the lard from the meat, pork. We always had that, so we made a lot of gravy. Just flour, lard, and water. We had water gravy. We didn't have milk gravy, because we didn't have cows."

Fry bread is an interesting case, because as popular as it is today among Indians, including Yuchis, only a few of the women recall eating it in their homes when they were children. Viola (01/11/2001, p. 2) remembers having fry bread quite often and considering it a delicacy. Ella's family also used fry bread as a staple of their daily diet, because it provided an inexpensive way to feed a large family.

> Yeah, put it [the dough] in her hand like this-a-way and spread. She'd make big ole pie size [8 or 9 inch?] Yeah, and then she'd…see, there were 5 of us girls, a lot of us and she had to make quite a bit. Pie size and then cut in quarters to serve them. There was 5 girls and 2 boys. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 1)

Maggie recalls eating fry bread as a child and associating it with certain foods.

> When we'd have red beans, she'd make fry bread. Or pumpkin, when she'd fry pumpkin, we'd have fry bread. Sometimes corn bread, sour corn bread with it. [So, the fry bread seemed to go with certain foods?] Uh-huh. Yeah. Them's about the only two that we'd eat fry bread with it. Beans mostly. [You're saying that the fry bread goes with beans?] Yeah. And [wild] onions, too. Later on they started eating fry bread with it. It seems like most of them they [ate] corn bread with it. [With what?] The onions. Then they started having fry bread with it later on. (MCM 02/11/01, p. 6)

It is ironic in a way that this entire project began with watching some young girls make fry bread at Viola's camp that first summer spent among the Yuchis and thinking about

how Yuchi girls learn to cook. That simple observation planted a seed that grew into my inquiries about all aspects of food and cooking among the knowledgeable women who participated in this project. Yet fry bread was unknown to some of the women until relatively late, the 1940s or 50s, "probably after the war period, World War II" (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 5).

A far more prevalent use of flour was as the primary ingredient in biscuits, which everyone ate regularly with their meals. Sometimes biscuits and gravy provided the main components of a meal. Typically, Yuchi families started their day with a breakfast which included biscuits. "We had breakfast, mostly gravy I guess. I really don't remember. Maybe eggs and gravy. In those days you didn't have bacon everyday. We always had biscuits" (VJT 01/11/2001, pp. 1). Josephine agrees that biscuits were a staple in their home.

> Always biscuits. In those days we didn't have the grocery store. We lived in the country and it was always biscuits…biscuits, and probably gravy and I don't know, it might have been some meat. [How did she make the gravy?] If we had salt pork, maybe they'd fry the salt pork and use the drippings for the gravy. It was water gravy. We never had milk….Gravy and biscuits, or maybe even rice. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 2)

Besides biscuits, other foods found at the breakfast table included eggs, oatmeal, fried potatoes, and less typically, some meat such as salt pork or side meat. Mothers and grandmothers were the primary cooks, but in some households, young girls were responsible for cooking the morning meal for the family.

> My mother even got up early in the morning, fed us before we even went to school. [What kind of food would you have for breakfast?] Oh, she'd cook maybe hot oat meal and cook us some eggs or make us some biscuits or maybe if they had light bread we could have that. But mostly biscuits…and gravy. That's about our usual meal. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 3)

> We had fried potatoes for breakfast. [Anything else with that?] Gravy, meat. [What kind of meat?] Well, sometimes we'd have side meat or pork, salt pork.

> [Side meat is like bacon?] Yes, it's like bacon or it's like…well, it's a side meat. It's pork. Yeah, it's kind of like bacon. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 1)

> My job was…even when we were going to school…I fixed breakfast. We'd have eggs sometimes, and we also had oatmeal. We always had…they always bought oatmeal in a great big …it was in a box. See some of these dishes here…those came in those oatmeal, so those are probably about 60 and 70 years old … Mother's Oats was the name of that oatmeal. But an old Euchee man gave me those. He had those plates at his home, so he gave me those. But I remember fixing the oatmeal and sometimes when we got tired of oatmeal, we'd have rice, and rice…we'd cook a big pot of rice and it would be used again for lunch or the evening meal. And in the mornings it was with sugar, at noon it would be with salt and pepper and that's the way it was in the evening. It might be cooked with beans, something like that. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 1)

Typically, meals were home-cooked. Farm families rarely ate out in the early decades of the twentieth century, although Ella (12/02/2000, p. 2) recalls going occasionally to a cafe in Bristow on shopping days with her parents, where they would eat chili and hamburgers. By and large, however, meals were eaten at home and the fare consisted of farm produce and the staple items purchased in the local grocery stores. Most of the participants mentioned having three meals a day, while some ate two larger meals.

> [For your three o'clock meal, what would you eat then?] We'd have more fry bread, have beans, cooked potatoes, mashed potatoes. [Pinto beans?] Uh-huh. Maybe rice. Just whatever we wanted to have. [Some kind of meat also?] Yeah. We had beef, kind of like…I don't know. My mother would fix it. She'd fixed that beef and she'd kind of fry it and cut it in bite sizes I guess you'd call it. She'd fry that. We had meat that-a-way, beef. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 1)

> She [mother] used to have [the meal] ready when we got home from school. We always ate before 5:00 I think. Oh, sometimes she cooked beans, beans and rice, maybe sometimes corn, dried corn, things like that. Baked potatoes. If we still had some ham left then she'd fry some of that. [It sounds like your family always had plenty to eat.] Yeah we did. We always had hogs and cows… [And your garden.] Uh-huh. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 5)

> We'd have maybe beans or some… payday maybe pork chops or something like that. And then sometimes we'd have stew and goulash and stuff like that….I'm talking about my grandma's payday. I don't know how much they got or what. It was just monthly, you know. I think it was for royalty, oil royalty. And just once a month. That's when they'd all go to town and buy a month's supply of groceries. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 3)

Seasonally, when the harvests were brought in or the hay was mown, men pooled their labor and pitched in to help one another get these big jobs done. During those periods a large mid-day meal was served to accommodate their efforts.

> Our big meal could have been at noon. It depended on…well, if the men were working out in the field, they were doing heavy work. Then the meal would be heavy at noon, because if the men went out to help somebody else, and they were doing heavy work, maybe the families, women would prepare food and go over there, take the food over. It was like a potluck, so they put all the meal together, and feed the men, especially like when they were doing the haying or if they were picking cotton, they would have their heavy meal at noon. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 3)

Local schools at Lone Star and Pickett Prairie had lunch programs where the children could eat their noon-time meals. Sometimes they brought sandwiches to school though. These usually consisted of meat or peanut butter in a biscuit left over from breakfast. The girls had chores such as bringing in kindling for the home fire, feeding the chickens, gathering eggs, cleaning chimneys for the kerosene lamps, and assisting with the cooking.

> And we'd help fix the evening meal. Sometimes my grandmother would have it started, but we'd help. Then after the dishes were put away at night, you know…then we'd have to get our lessons for school and we always had jobs, too. Like some had to bring in wood, some of us had to clean the lamps, the chimneys, and fill the lamps. And the boys would bring in wood chips to start the fire in the morning. And they had to bring in the water, because we carried water from a little well. Mine was mostly helping in the kitchen and washing up the dishes and then cleaning the lamps. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 3)

Typically, women rose early and started cooking breakfast before getting the kids up for school. Cooking was done primarily on wood stoves until the 1930s and 40s

when most people converted to liquid propane or natural gas. Wood stoves proved a challenge to cook on. They required that wood be supplied continually to fuel the fire, and the heat could be uneven and unpredictable. And they were unbearably hot in the summertime. For this reason, it was not uncommon to find women cooking in the yard in the Oklahoma heat. Outdoor cooking was accomplished on an open fire over which a grate was placed or on a cast iron stove that had been placed outside for that purpose.

> [Did your family ever do any cooking outside?] Oh, yeah. We'd have, kind of like a weenie roast or something like that, and she'd [mother] get some corn. It would be in the summertime when corn was kind of in season and we'd…she'd get some corn and we'd roast it. That was good. [How would she do that?] She just put it on…with the shucks still on it and just turn it…lay them on there until it get kind of brown on that one side and just keep turning it. Kind of brown on all sides… [Were you cooking on a fire similar to what we had out here that day?] Yeah. [Some cinder blocks covered with a big grate and a wood fire?] Yeah. [You'd do that when it was real hot outside?] Yeah. When it's hot outside, when it's warm. [Would the weenie roast be for some special occasion?] No. We'd just wanted to get out, cook out and just get outside. [You'd buy the weenies at the store?] Yeah. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 6)

> When it got real hot in the house, summertime, my dad made a brush arbor outside and he set the cook stove out at the… [He'd move the wood stove out of the house and put it outside?] Uh-huh. Through the summer. While it was hot. And when it started getting cooler, he'd move it back in the house. (MCM 02/11/2001, pp. 6-7)

Family meals proved to be a varied experience, primarily dictated by the number of individuals present and the furnishings of the house. Some tables simply were not large enough to seat everyone, while others accommodated household members and guests alike. Those who had difficulty seating everyone 'made do' by having the children sit on the floor to eat.

> Everybody'd sit at the table, but the older folks all sit at the table like my mama, grandpa and grandma, and maybe if it got…there was one old man used to stay with us, that was my grandma's nephew. He didn't have nowhere to go, so she always kept him. And his name was Tom Davis. He'd sit at the table, but the rest of us kids would all have to sit on the floor and eat out of pie pans. [There were just adults at the table?] The adults at the table, and us kids had to sit on the floor and eat. [How many adults were there at the table?] Grandparents, mother, this cousin… [So four of them] We just had to get up and get our own,

> dish our own out. [The food was in bowls on the table?] Yeah. Bowls on the table [And the kids would just get theirs?] Yeah. Get theirs out of the bowl. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 6-7)

Those with more accommodating facilities served family style and everyone had a place at the table.

> [When the family sat down to eat together, how many people at the table?] Okay, there would be Uncle John, Aunt Lu, Grandma, Dad…there'd be about 9 or 10 of us…the long table. There would be Uncle John, Aunt Lu, Grandma, my dad, myself, Maxine, Jimmie, Nathaniel, Andrew, and cousin Martha. Martha Wildcat Squire. [10 people all around a big table.] Yes. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 5)

> Most of the time, you know when Mom fixed food and put on the table, everybody ate at the table you know. We ate at the table. I guess I'd probably say 5 most of the time [was the most that were there to eat]. Four of us kids and Mom. And if my older brother was there with his family, well there would be 7 or 8, I guess. Everybody shared. It seems like we had chairs. A lot of people had benches in their home. But seems like we had chairs and probably had to be a pretty good sized table. But we all ate at the table. (VJT 01/11/2001, pp. 6-7)

I asked the women if any wooden implements were used, and they all agreed that the only examples would have been handmade wooden spoons used for stirring large pots of stew or *sofkee* or paddles used in making hominy.

> [When your mom was cooking a stew or something in a big pot on the stove or outside, what kind of utensils did she use?] Wooden…wooden spoons. [Were they hand made?] Yes, they were hand made. My grandfather made them. My grandfather made spoons, then, I call them *shi-lay-lee*, but it's things you stir…stir stuff with… [They were carved by hand? Did you ever see him doing that?] Yes. A bunch. [He used to do that a lot?] Yes. Made some pretty ones. Made some pretty wooden spoons. [Do you still have some of them?] No. They got away. That's one that got away…Oh yeah, he made a lot of wooden stuff. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 6)

> [Did your mother have any cooking utensils that were hand carved?] A spoon, yeah. Jim Snapp made some for her. And then Josephine's grandpa, Joe Barnett, he used to make spoons. [Josephine Keith's grandfather?] Uh-huh. [The hand made things were mostly cooking utensils?] Uh-huh. We had a thing…shaped like this, a paddle…that's what they used to stir when they fixed that hominy outside in a pot. That's what they…made about that long… [About four feet long?] Or three. That's what they used to stir the stuff with outside. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 7)

In most cases dishes were made of stoneware or china, but as Mary told us, in her household, the children used tin pie pans, because there were not enough dishes to go around. Eating utensils were metal of some sort, purchased in a store, similar to the ones used in typical American households today. Pots and pans were large to accommodate the quantities of food required to feed substantial households. They were often made of cast iron or some other thick-walled metal suitable for diffusing the uneven heat generated by wood stoves.

> [Did you have wooden utensils?] No they were just those heavy iron skillets…skillets and big chicken fryers they call them…We had wooden spoons that the men would make especially for the *sofkee*. They would make those big cups, make wooden spoons. But we had just ordinary utensils, just like…[store bought]. But you know, you can't hardly find those now. You can't find those big, heavy spoons like we used to have. Everything is tin now. Seems like they were a little heavier. You can't find good spoons like that now. Jean Dale used to always rummage around in Tulsa and she would go to different places where they had big flea markets and she found a lot of those real heavy…so she told me one time where she found hers so I went over there and got 2 or 3. But the kind you buy in Wal-mart and different stores [are flimsy]. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 7)

Leftovers and trash disposal are important components of any food system and need to be considered (Powers and Powers 1984). Asking the women about these aspects of the Yuchi food system was interesting, because I don't think they had ever thought much about them. Upon discussing these matters with the participants, it became apparent that there was very little waste in early twentieth-century Yuchi households. Most of the food was eaten at any given meal, because in most cases, there were many hungry mouths to feed. If there were leftovers in Maggie's house, they might be saved for short lengths of time in a warming oven and eaten as a bedtime snack (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 7). In Ella's house they were "Pretty much eaten up. We didn't have a whole lot of leftovers. [If you had anything left, what did you do with them?] Put them in the icebox. We had an icebox. Not like this [electric refrigerator]. A real icebox" (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 6).

Further, since most of the food products were produced right there on the farm, there were not huge quantities of packaging to dispose of like we have in contemporary industrial societies, where most everything we consume is purchased in a store. We have already heard the women talk about how their mother's reused flour sacks to store dried foods. Such reuse was typical, but when there was some trash needing disposal, it was often burned or buried on the property.

> We had dogs [they ate the leftovers]. We didn't have that much trash, because see we didn't go to the store. We had…what she used was flour sacks [for storage; they were used over and over]. We never had any trash because we didn't go to the grocery store and that's about the only thing they bought in bags was flour and of course they would bag the corn meal for her when they made it, when they grind it. But she used those. That's what we put our pumpkin and our apples and all those in those sacks. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 7)

> [Did you have garbage to get rid of ?] Sometimes we did. We had dogs. They used to eat it. [Back in those days were there very many things that came in wrappers that you had to throw away?] Not that I recall…maybe just light bread. Sometimes she'd get a loaf of bread. [What happened to those?] Well, she… when she was gonna make fire, start fire in the stove, that's what she'd use…paper. She had a big ole box sitting behind the stove, keep the wood in it and then she'd put the papers on one side and that's what she'd use to start the fire with. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 7)

> Our household garbage? We buried it. My dad used to dig a hole and buried it….We didn't let it pile up. He just dug a hole and buried the garbage …probably about once a week. We never let the garbage pile up. It would stink….If it was paper and stuff, we'd burn it. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 6)

Learning to Cook

Typically, Mother or Grandmother did much of the cooking unless she had other work to perform or was feeling poorly. Then it was up to the girls to cook.

> When I was very young, maybe 10 or 11, we moved with my grandmother – my father, and my sister and brothers. And we were in an entirely different environment. And so I learned, I had to learn how to cook because we moved to a farm and there the men did all the farming. Everything that was cooked was raised all except the flour and cornmeal for bread. And I had to learn to cook to relieve my grandmother and my aunt who at times went to the fields or went out into the woods to pick berries and do other things. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 1)

> ...but I really didn't cook until I guess I was 14 or 15 when my mom got sick. And she was sick and I had to cook and that's when I learned to cook chicken. Nobody showed me how and I tried to cut it and oh, it was a mess. Any way, I got it cut up and I talked to myself then, "You should be learning..." I didn't even know how to make biscuits. [Were you cooking for the whole family?] Just her and my brother. My brother was there at home and that was the time my sister had gone and got married and was gone. Just one of my brothers and I and Mom. And Mom was sick. (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 3)

From Viola's narrative above we get the impression that she learned to cook by trial and error. Yet, she admits to having a sense of how her mother prepared food because, "I watched what she'd do. I watched all the time" (VJT 01/11/2001, p. 2). She admits to never helping her mother cook, because her older sister was there to lend a hand up until the time she married and moved away from home. But Viola watched and learned, and when her mother got sick, she managed to step in and prepare food in her stead. Similarly, Giard (1998b) rebelled against the idea of learning to cook and avoided any engagement with food preparation. It was not until she moved into her own apartment and was compelled to cook for herself that she realized that she had learned the sounds, smells and gestures associated with cooking.

All of the participants were asked how they learned to cook. Surprisingly, their responses are similar.

> But most of my learning was just by observing, just watching. And I never had anyone stand in the kitchen and say you do it this way, never had a recipe, even all of my cooking the Indian way...I wanted to learn....So most of my cooking I learned just by observation...watching my grandmother and my aunt. And so from that I guess I learned to be a good cook, because my uncles and my dad they all wanted me to make biscuits. My grandmother and my aunt...we'd get in the kitchen, they'd always say, Maxine, you make the bread. And so I learned to cook that way. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 1)

> And so it was learning...I guess a lot of learning cooking came from living with Grandmother, because I had to help, being the oldest of our family, five children, I helped a lot in preparing the food and watching Grandma as she prepared different kinds of foods. She would pound the corn or we'd grind the corn for chicken feed and making cornbread. Or when she made sour cornbread....I think it was just by watching. I don't know that she actually...Lu

> probably was the one that maybe…she might have you know taught me or told me. Aunt Nancy was the one that did some teaching. Aunt Nancy Wildcat taught me how to cut a chicken. She showed me how to cut a chicken for frying and that's where I learned that. I may have been 14, 15. So I think a lot of it was just by watching and maybe their telling me the quantity. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 4)
>
> By watching my mother. And she'd tell me how to fix certain things. I guess I was nine. I just helped around. I asked her if I could do certain things. And she'd tell me "Well, you can do this." Like peeling potatoes, maybe cook beans… [You say you watched your mom cook and learned a lot that way. Did she also show you how to do things?] Uh-huh. Make bread – showed me what to do. [Corn bread?] She used to make light bread, too, yeast bread. She used to make that. I watched her how she'd make it. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 1)
>
> Yeah, by watching my mother. I started cooking about…I started help cooking about, oh I'd say about 10, maybe 12 or 13 years old. [What kinds of things did you start with?] Well, I helped her with the… frying, like frying potatoes, peel potatoes, frying potatoes. And helping her with her fry bread when she made fry bread on an open fire…. Yes, we'd go outside and cook. Or of the evenings, you know, we'd go outside and she'd make fry bread. I'd hold the pan for her or something; you know where she could put the fry bread in the pan or things like that. [So did she actually show you what to do or did you just learn it by watching] I learned watching. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 1)
>
> Oh, I started learning how watching my grandma and my mom cook and sometime I had to cook. I already knew how to cook a little bit when I got married. [When you were growing up did you ever have any real cooking responsibilities?] No not really. I didn't really have that kind of problem. My grandmother or my mom was always there….I'm surprised, these girls nowadays, they don't even know how to boil water. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 4)

Here we have evidence from all six participants that learning cooking skills is based primarily on observation and by relying on their senses, which in Giard's words provided her with "a woman's knowledge…that crept into me, slipping past my mind's surveillance. It was something that came to me from my body and that integrated me into the great corps of women of my lineage, incorporating me into their anonymous ranks" (Giard 1998b:153). Reliance on the senses to find the correct balance of color, appearance, smell, and flavor is reflected in the following passage as Josephine explains how she learned to make sofkee.

> You know, you had to be very careful, the amount you put in. If the liquid looks light, then you…it's just by looking after you add a little at a time and stir it, and the color…sometimes even just by the smell….A little at a time, stir, look at color and smell. Then taste and you can tell. [How did you learn to do that?] It just comes by doing it. [Over the years?] Yes. You just learn by doing it. Trial and error. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 4)

Today's girls are little different as evidenced by my observations of the young girls learning to cook at Viola's camp my first summer at the ceremonial grounds. "They all fix tables and make drinks, fix drinks and all that kind of stuff you know. And of course, every little bit helps. They learned how to fix fry bread…" (VJT 02/17/2001, p. 7). They learned by doing as the women sat back and watched without giving direction.

Mixing and patting out the dough for fry bread does not lend itself to simple verbal expression. The correct texture of the dough cannot be explained in words. The maker learns the feel of it. Readying the dough for frying in the correct shape and form is accomplished through various practical techniques – a kind of embodied practice which is unique to each woman. A woman's knowledge of her own technique is probably more unconscious than conscious. It is a technique that has been inscribed on her body (Foucault 1977) through years of practice. Thus, the girls learned to make fry bread by watching an experienced woman and trying to copy her gestures. The girls were the inspiration for this project, and it occurs to me now that they are a modern-day reflection of their elders who also watched and experimented with the tastes, smells, textures, and sounds of food – the experience of *doing cooking*.

While young girls seem to learn how to cook primarily by watching and helping out with small chores in the kitchen, relying on little if any verbal instruction, on occasion experienced cooks share their cooking knowledge with one another.

> I was at church one day and our pastor's wife was in the kitchen and she made real good chicken and dumplings and also she made good grape dumplings. I

> was standing in there and I said, 'Lucille, how do you make such good chicken and dumplings?' She said 'there's a catch to it. You use that chicken broth. A lot of people use water and that makes their dumplings kind of hard and tough. You use the chicken broth. Hold out a cup of that chicken broth and put a little water with it. Don't have it hot, but warm because it will kill the flour. It won't rise.' And so she was telling me that, because she was standing there making the dumplings and I was watching her and I saw what she was doing. And so I couldn't wait to get home the next day so I tried it. And it really works. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 1)

Here, we again find that while narrative instructions are helpful, Maxine also depended, perhaps more so, on the visual cues she received as she watched the pastor's wife make the dumplings. I have observed such exchanges taking place in the church kitchen while women are engaged in preparing a communal meal for one occasion or another. In such a setting they are more likely to share their food knowledge not only because visual cues flow freely, but also because they are among "insiders" – fellow church women.

In other situations, however, food knowledge is more closely guarded. Maxine told me about an occasion when a woman from one of the "downtown" churches in Sapulpa asked Maxine to give her a recipe for fry bread. Maxine believed that she wanted it because members of the Sapulpa church knew they could make money by selling fry bread, especially as a component of Indian tacos. Thus, Maxine was guarded and did not give the woman the information she was seeking. Here is a situation in which an outsider requested a certain recipe and was refused, because Maxine felt that the woman tried to unfairly appropriate knowledge that by rights belongs to Indian people. Had the woman been a member of Pickett Chapel or of the larger Yuchi community, I do not believe the request for the fry bread recipe would have been refused. While I was actively participating in the Yuchi community as an apprentice in conjunction with this project, several women gave me suggestions about making fry bread and other Indian foods. I found, however, that watching master fry bread

makers and trying to mimic their gestures was more beneficial to my own progress in acquiring this particular skill. More broadly, as a coparticipant in the learning process, I watched how women practiced food preparation and provisioning and tried to mimic them as closely as possible, sometimes on the periphery of activity and sometimes closer to the center of the participation framework, but always a legitimate peripheral participant at various levels of skill development interacting with masterful cooks (Hanks 1991:15-19).

In the next chapter we will discover some of the changes that took place as the study participants approached womanhood. Historic events such as the Depression and World War II had a profound affect on their daily lives, including their relationship with food. Perhaps even more influential to their relationship with food were the deaths of their mothers and grandmothers. Various changes in Yuchi foodways will be explored in the context of a traditional ceremonial ground known as Polecat, and Pickett Chapel, which is affiliated with the United Methodist Church and is widely identified as a Yuchi congregation.

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[1] For general discussion of the Dawes Act and the allotment process, see Kelly (1988); Prucha (1976); Prucha, ed. (1973); as respects the Creek Indians and other tribes of the Southeast, see Debo (1940; 1941); from the Indians' point of view, see Nabokov, ed 1991.

[2] Translations for food-related items were provided by Maxine Barnett (10/26/2001).

[3] Sofkee blocks and pounders are similar to a large mortar and pestle. The block sits on the ground and a woman throws the pounder into the block with considerable force to break up the corn. A similar device has been observed in African cultures where corn is a staple. Ella and I saw a feature on TV one night at her house in which African women used a block and pounder. Ella concluded, "Yeah, it was a sofkee block." We wondered if enslaved Africans may have brought this technology to American where it was borrowed by the Indians, or vice-versa. Or perhaps both groups invented this technology independently.

[4] Ella donated her corn pounder to the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

[5] *Abuskee* is a term borrowed from the Muscogee.

[6] See chapter 2 for an earlier discussion of Yuchi consumption of rice.

CHAPTER 5

FOOD AND COOKING IN A YUCHI COMMUNITY

"…evidence of distinctive Southeastern Indian foodways can only be found in the kitchens and camps of Southeastern Indian cooks."
– Jackson 1998:181

Yuchi dance grounds and churches[1] serve as ceremonial spaces, each of which provides a locus for extended family gatherings as well as a space in which families and individuals reach out to members of the wider community "through acts of hospitality, particularly [with] the gift of food" (Jackson 98:173). Sharing food is a symbol of kinship, trust, and friendship. Alexander Spoehr (1944:145) noted that "the offering of food is…a much-used social mechanism for maintaining friendly relations among the Indians." Further, hospitality and food sharing act as a medium of exchange and as modes for incorporating outsiders, thus facilitating social bonding. These qualities are generated by offering everyone a bite to eat whether it is meal time or not (Gillespie 1984:148). Hospitality and food sharing are important features of Indian life today, and the Yuchis are no exception. From my experience, food sharing is an integral part of nearly every community gathering.

The previous chapter explores Yuchi foodways in the context of early twentieth century home life. There, we discovered, Yuchi cooks organized the components of their food system in culturally unique ways. Today, we can find evidence of Yuchi foodways including cycles of eating events and prescribed patterns of feasting and fasting in the ceremonial ground camps and churches of the Yuchi people. Just as hospitality was extended to visitors in the home, hospitality, particularly with the gift of food, is extended to guests in contemporary ritual contexts as well. And it is through

the gift of food that Yuchi women generate a degree of honor and prestige for themselves as they work to give all they can to their guests. In his research among the Haida and Tlingit of the Northwest coast Marcel Mauss (1950/1990:37) indicates that in a potlatch, a person must hold nothing back and spend all that he has. In a similar manner, Yuchi women have high expectations for themselves to "go all out" as they compete with each other for status and prestige through food provisioning in social contexts. In this chapter my goal is to show how Yuchi foodways and hospitality combine to enrich women's sense of self and value in the community. Again, as in the previous chapter, the voices of Yuchi women will make a critical contribution to telling this chapter of the story.

A Brief History of Yuchi Towns and Ceremonial Grounds

After their removal to the West in 1836, members of the Creek Nation[2] in Indian Territory reconstituted their towns and ceremonial organizations following a pattern similar to the one that had existed in the Southeast before removal. The towns retained much of their social, political, and religious functions with one major exception. In Indian Territory, Creek and Yuchi households were distributed across the landscape, so that towns no longer functioned as residential complexes (Jackson 2003:36; Opler 1972:16). Yet most Creek and Yuchi people continued to claim membership in a "town" or ceremonial center for their social identity. Even after the state of Oklahoma was established in 1907, and the Creek Nation was terminated, most Creek and Yuchi people continued to maintain their identities with a town (Opler 1972). Today's towns, or stomp grounds[3] as they are referred to by most participants, provide communal ritual spaces located in rural seclusion where a sense of shared cultural identity is reinforced.

One of these Yuchi towns, Polecat, is named for a creek flowing through the area near the municipalities of Kellyville and Sapulpa. The central focus of Polecat is its ceremonial ground,[4] which is historically significant as the mother ground for all Yuchi people (Ballard 1978:2).[5] The first time I visited Polecat ceremonial ground was July 16, 1997 for the Green Corn Ceremony, one of the annual rituals taking place there each year. I arrived in late afternoon and parked my car at the bottom of the hill so that I would not get blocked in later that evening when the arrival of many spectators was expected. I was new to the community and didn't know many people, so I decided to sit by myself as a visitor. I carried my lawn chair[6] to the top of the hill where the square ground is located and set it up in a little patch of shade created by a cluster of trees. It was a very hot Oklahoma summer day and I sat still for quite some time listening to the chirping of birds, children laughing, and quiet conversations going on around me. The air smelled of wood smoke and cigarettes. As I sat there languishing in the intense heat, feeling somewhat out of place and unsure of myself, a woman I knew came by and invited me to join her at her camp. It was there I began to learn about Yuchi camp life, the role of women, and the foods that are central to notions of Yuchi hospitality.

There are seventeen camps at Polecat, making it the largest of the Yuchi ceremonial grounds and one of the largest Woodland ceremonial grounds in Oklahoma (Jackson 2003:52). The Green Corn Ceremony takes place on a designated Saturday in July.[7] Fasting is a primary component of the rituals as participants abstain from eating or drinking all day Saturday.[8] Men spend the day on the square ground performing rituals and special day dances, including jumping the hill and Feather dance. Women socialize among themselves, and in early afternoon, begin cooking a variety of foods which will be eaten by participants and visitors that evening. In late afternoon a large contingent of women and young girls create a colorful spectacle by performing the

Ribbon dance. The Ribbon dance is followed by the Buffalo dance, which is performed by men and women. These special dances are a highlight of the day, and many spectators come out to see them.

After the special dances are complete, each camp provides a huge feast in the evening to break the fast of the community members. Ceremonial participants eat at the camp of a relative or friend. Camp members indicate their sense of hospitality and willingness to take responsibility for feeding the visitors by going out into the spectator area surrounding the square to ask people to come and eat. The invitation is repeated until the spectator area is cleared and everyone has a place to share the meal.

Jackson (1998) describes normative ceremonial ground life in which camps are places where "all come together as family" (180). He explains that "family camps, domestic and social spaces maintained by particular families belonging to the community" (175) are located around the periphery of the ceremonial space. Jackson's model for Yuchi camps is based on the idea that "extended families serve as a key organizational group within the stomp ground community" (177). Further, Jackson's model for Yuchi camps embraces the idea that, "A family, usually led by an older couple or individual, is at the social center of a camp" (177). Jackson paints an image of an extended, multi-generational family consisting of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren as well as "various collateral relatives, spouses, partners, and family friends" (177-178) who gravitate around the older couple or individual who "runs" the camp.

Cooking at Polecat Creek

In Jackson's scenario, each camp consists of an extended family headed by a senior woman who coordinates all of the cooking activities and takes care of the family, while men build and repair the camps, make the large wooden tables and benches used for food preparation and dining, and cut firewood. Camps are locales where children play and are socialized into family life. There, girls learn to do specific tasks associated with food, such as shucking corn or toting water buckets. One significant aspect of the Saturday evening food event associated with the Green Corn Festival is the process of

sorting out the diners at the edge of each camp in situations where there is more than one table full of diners, which "there almost surely is" (Jackson 1998:185).

According to Jackson (1998:186) from the perspective of the women who take responsibility for procuring, preparing, serving the food, and cleaning up afterward, while these tasks entail a lot of work, it is a labor of love, because the central objective is to bring family members together. While there is no doubt that Yuchi women take pride and comfort in bringing their families and friends together for reunion and fellowship, the women I interviewed for this and previous projects also expressed a sense of duty in regard to organizing and carrying out the activities associated with the camps. For example, one woman told me "I feel like it's part of my life, a duty. It's a part of the duty that I understand. I'm very respectful of the requirements and what we're all out there to do, why we support it" (Anonymous 3/9/1998, p. 3). Viola articulates a similar sense of duty.

> I heard Simon [Simon Harry, chief at Duck Creek ceremonial ground] say different times, "When that ball goes up in the air, that's when you start looking forward to all commitment 'til the end, 'til after the Green Corn. And you don't make no changes and stuff and you know what our commitments are." ...You get prepared and you be doing things, look forward to what's coming ahead"...and like I told Candace the other day, I said, "I'm already getting ready for my Green Corn dance." She said, "I am too." (VJT 02/17/2001, p. 7)

Ella took over her mother's camp when she passed away in 1941. None of her older sisters indicated a desire to do so, even though they had been helping out with the cooking for many years. Ella was the only one of the five who showed a willingness to take on the responsibility of organizing and running the camp (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 4). In the past, she and her daughter, Marilyn, cooked for as many as 105 guests (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 7), but Marilyn moved away and the crowds dwindled as prominent elders passed on. Ella continues to bring her supplies and groceries 'up the hill' each year despite the dwindling number of family and friends associated with her camp. By

their very absence it becomes apparent that Ella's dedication to the work involved with camp life goes much deeper than a desire to organize an annual reunion of her family. Conversations with Ella and other women reveal a sense of duty which is indicative of their desire to carry on the ceremonial ground traditions despite the ebbs and flows of attendance. By their dedication to the hard work of organizing their camps, these women mirror the reflections of Yuchi elder Newman Littlebear, as recorded by Jackson (2003:2-3). This passage clearly outlines the obligation Yuchi people feel to perpetuate their ceremonies and the practices that give them a distinctly Yuchi identity.

> …Now if you think…if you think what…Today what has the Yuchi got that pertains such as this [gesturing toward the ceremonial ground]? Is there anything besides this that our Yuchis have? I think if we just really think, there really isn't…there isn't nothing. There isn't nothing [else] that our old elders had. And we're still trying to…trying to go by it and continue on with what we've learned in our lifetimes. That's the way it is and that's the way it is supposed to be. (Littlebear 07/16/1997)

Despite the shortcomings associated with the creation of normative models of behavior, the Watashe camp fits Jackson's model for camp life as closely as any. Mary Watashe is the elder at the social center of this particular camp. As a girl, her family attended Rock Creek Methodist Church in Sapulpa, and her involvement at the stomp grounds was a result of her marriage to her late husband, George. Mary explains, "…when I was going with him, we'd go [to the ceremonial grounds]. That's how I knew he was involved in that. Because we'd go up there when they had dances" (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 12). The Watashes acquired their camp about 30 years ago when another family moved their ground membership to Sand Creek, and Mary has been recognized as the head woman of the camp since that time.

The food is organized and tended primarily by Mary, although her daughters, sister, and several nieces pitch in to help. She says, "It's always mainly my responsibility. They'll help when the time comes. Yeah, they will help the main day, or

on the day before, they'll ask to help" (MBW 01/17/2001, p. 13). At the forefront of Mary's assistants is one of her older daughters, who helps Mary plan the menu and do the cooking. Mary does most of the shopping for the Green Corn feast on the day of the event because of the challenge of keeping the food cold and fresh. The Oklahoma heat is intense and there is always the possibility of food poisoning if care is not taken. "It's hard to keep that stuff real cold, you know, and your meat will really spoil…you know like, chickens and all that pork. It's hard to keep it. It spoils so easy…" (MBW 01/17/2001, p. 13).[9] Mary fills up two carts at the grocery store and spends at least two hundred dollars for the Saturday meal. To help cover the expense, Mary and her daughters sell Indian tacos at the Kellyville founders' day celebration in the spring. They are well-known at the event, and many people seek out their food stand each year.[10]

Mary has several grandsons and other young male relatives who help out with the manual labor involved in maintaining the camp, such as mowing the grass and weeds that grow up during the spring and early summer. The tarps they install over the framework of the camp structure protect participants from the rains which invariably fall during hot, humid Oklahoma summer afternoons. The boys and young men also cut wood used for cooking. All of the food at Mary's camp is cooked using wood in fireplaces.[11]

Numerous family members and friends are attached to Mary's camp, and consequently, the women feed at least fifty individuals for the Green Corn feast. Food is served 'family style', and because of the large crowd, diners are fed in several 'shifts' around a large table surrounded by benches for seating. When asked how the diners are organized, Mary explains

> Well, that Saturday meal, that's when the…all those that participated during that all day without eating, they get to sit first. And after they get through, then all the visitors come in next. I have a nephew come in from Arkansas every year, brings a bunch. I'd say we serve around 50 or more. [How many times does it take to get everyone fed?] Let me think about it. About three times….Well, I always want to treat my visitors like I want them to treat me, so that's why. I never could just stand around and eat. Seems like you don't eat good that way. So I like to seat my people and my visitors at the table where they can feel more comfortable. (MBW 01/17/2001, pp. 14, 15)

Jackson's description of ceremonial ground camps and foodways of the Yuchi Indians is fairly accurate if one takes a generalized look at the camp life of Yuchi families. While Mary and perhaps even the majority of ceremonial ground participants are representative of Jackson's model, some of the camps at Polecat exhibit patterns of organization which are quite different. For example, like Mary, both Viola and Ella are widows. However, neither Viola nor Ella has children or grandchildren who participate in the ceremonial grounds, yet by the creativity of their own innovations, they continue to maintain their camps year after year. Instead of following the pattern illustrated by Mary's camp organization in which "extended families serve as a key organizational group within the stomp ground community" (Jackson 1998:177), Viola and Ella are examples of women who innovate and adjust to the pressures of age and twenty-first century change while managing to maintain their identity as traditional Yuchi women.

The ceremonial grounds have undergone many changes over the years. Foremost in Ella's mind is the fact that her old friends and family are not there anymore to share the annual camp experience with her. After Ella inherited her mother's camp, she, her sisters, and their husbands worked as a team. The women prepared the food, and the men provided the manual labor for maintaining the camp structure, thus giving Ella the freedom to 'shake shells'[12] as a dancer. Later, after the passing of her sisters, Ella's daughter, Marilyn, took charge of the cooking. Despite the fact that Ella runs the smallest camp at Polecat, she recalls when there were "a lot more

people….We used to have a lot of visitors" (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 5). In the 1950s and 60s, the grounds were crowded with people, but by the late 70s participation started dying off as the old-timers passed away. By and by, Ella's sisters and their husbands passed on, their families scattered, and even Ella's daughter moved away.

Consequently, rather than serving fifty visitors as she did three or four decades ago, today, there may be only a handful of visitors eating at Ella's camp. I recall the Green Corn feast in 2001 when diners at Ella's camp consisted of Ella, me, my parents, Amy Tiger and her daughter Denise, and four visitors who wandered over from two of the larger camps, because they didn't want to wait to eat. Despite the slim numbers of diners in her camp, Ella continues to prepare a vast quantity of food each year just as she always has. When asked if she feels saddened by the small numbers of people at her camp she replied, "Sort of. It's not the same. People are gone. No telling [if the young people will keep the grounds going]. I don't know what's going to happen. Can't make no predictions" (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 5).

Yet in the absence of 'blood' relations, Ella has cobbled together a small circle of friends who play the role of extended family. Amy Tiger has been a prominent member of Ella's camp for more than thirty years, since Amy was a young girl of seven. She wanted to learn to 'shake shells', so Ella and her friends took the youngster under their wings and taught her how to do it. Today, Amy holds a prominent place in the line of women dancers,[13] and her daughter, Denise, is following in her footsteps. As members of Ella's camp, Amy and Denise focus primarily on their duties as dancers. They also assist by providing food for the feast, by participating in some of the food preparation and clean-up, and with camp maintenance. For example, the summer of 2000 brought heavy storms through Oklahoma, and several of the camps were damaged, Ella's among them. Some of the wood structure was blown down, and when it fell, one of her work

tables was broken. Consequently, several of us met at Ella's camp the following spring in order to make the necessary repairs. It would have been a struggle for Ella, Amy, and I to complete the repairs on our own, but luckily Amy brought a male cousin along, and he helped us make short work of the project.

In contrast, Viola, a widow with two sons who don't participate in ceremonial ground life, acquired the camp next to Ella's from Awee Jackson a number of years ago. Mrs. Jackson's husband was sick and she needed to stay home to take care of him. At that time, Mrs. Jackson asked her niece, Ethelene, to take care of the camp and feed the people. She said alright and asked Viola to come help her.

> And I said okay. So I go up there and help her cook. And you know what it takes to camp. I help her. And that's where the beginning was. And I've been helping her since. And I said everybody's dead now, but the cook is still there. That's how I wound up with the camp, because it belonged to her [Ethelene's] aunt. (VJT 09/06/1997, p. 2)

Today, Viola doesn't get around like she used to, so it is vital that she have help with food preparation and maintenance in order to ensure the success of her camp. Everyone attached to the camp has something to contribute. Some come to help prepare the camp at the beginning of the season by doing repairs and providing fire wood. Some bring raw food and help with the cooking. Others bring dishes of food prepared beforehand at home, perhaps a pot of beans, sofkee, or a cake.

Candace Thompson is a prominent member of Viola's camp. Not only does she help Viola with the cooking, she brings her daughter and two nieces to help. A fourth young girl, whose single father is an active participant at Polecat, also helps with the cooking. Consequently, after spending several years around the camp, the girls have grown into young women and have valuable experience in food provisioning for a large group. Viola is very thankful to have their help.

> Oh yes, they're the best little old things….they clean up the kitchen and they cook. …See how things work? I've been telling you the good Lord always sees to me, do things for me, when things look so dark….see, He just brought Candice's name into my mind and I thought about Candice and I just…I was going out the door and I just wheeled around, went back and called her and she come up there and help me all through that. And like I said, I knew her before, but not that close. And so everything went well and she said, "Vi, you're not running me off here." I have a cook stove. I cook with propane…she said, "you can stand here and work, and cook and watch the dance, too. You've got everything here. I enjoy it. It's work but I enjoy it." (VJT 09/06/1997, p. 4)

Viola has managed to cobble together a circle of friends to take on the role of extended family at her camp, although hers encompasses a wider network than Ella's. My second summer at Polecat was spent at Viola's camp. There I observed a wide variety of people interacting within the camp space. Several men attached to Viola's camp were otherwise engaged in the men's rituals taking place in the square ground. Several women were there to help out with the cooking, and others were there to socialize as visitors. Most had strong church backgrounds, and apparently, like Viola, their families had not been involved in the ceremonial grounds for many years. Therefore, their ties to the extended family network of the grounds were tentative at best. Yet, the current trend is toward exploring traditions and taking pride in one's social and cultural heritage. To that end, many Yuchis have either left the church entirely or creatively combine Christian practices with the ritual practices of the ceremonial grounds. Viola's 'open-door' attitude provides an attractive option for those who have no camp to call home.

Innovations in Material Culture and Cultural Practice

Jackson began visiting the ceremonial grounds at Polecat and Duck Creek in the early 1990s and noted that while the general configuration of the camps remains the same, the use of newer, innovative building materials and construction techniques was

in evidence (1998:178). "The center of each stomp ground contains three perfect reminders of the old Yuchi camp structure. They provide each family with a model of the old-time oak and willow camp arbor. Modifying this model, each family improvises within the limits of a collectively developing building tradition" (Jackson 1998:179). The project participants have all maintained their camps for many years, and consequently have witnessed many changes in material culture and cultural practices in and around the camps. In fact, they claim to have been the innovators behind some of the changes.

For example, the majority of today's camp structures consist of a framework made of treated two-by-four lumber covered by one or more tarpaulins. This was not always the case. In the past, post oaks gave vertical support to a roof constructed of willow branches. These traditional brush arbors were built by men and needed annual renewal using materials available right there around the stomp ground. Ella explains why things changed.

> Well, we went modern. We got tired…Manuel [Ella's husband] didn't want to cut poles or anything…so we just put up lumber. 4 x 4s, 2 x 4s…just made a little frame and put a tarp over it….I was the first one to start that modern stuff. [What did people say about that?] They probably didn't like it, but it didn't matter to me. [It didn't become a big issue?] No. Nah. And then they did it. I mean, you know, it was something that my husband didn't want to do it no more, because it was work, so he just…I told him, said, "Well, we'll just start the modern thing." And that's what we did. We put the treated poles up, just made a frame. We went modern in 1963. (ELR 02/03/2001, p. 4)

In the past, all of the food at the ceremonial grounds was cooked on wood fires in fire pits. Food was served on household dishes, and metal tableware was used by diners. These practices entailed substantial labor for gathering wood, transporting dishes and tableware to the camp, and cleanup. Pots used on open fires had to be scrubbed to remove the soot, and dishes had to be washed by hand in water hauled from the creek.

Today, however, for most women, convenience is an important consideration in the areas of food preparation, consumption, and cleanup. While cooking food on wood fires is still a common practice, one generally does not find household dishes and metal eating utensils in the camps. Most contemporary Yuchi women have replaced these articles with disposable Styrofoam and plastic tableware. Dish-washing is usually limited to pots, pans, plastic serving bowls, and cooking utensils, such as large spoons and forks. An exception to the modern innovation of using disposable tableware is found in the camp of Josephine Bigler's son and daughter-in-law. Because of their environmental concerns, they use metal flatware, china dishes, and glassware, all of which must be washed by hand after use (Josephine Bigler, personal communication 7/13/2004).

While wood fires are valued for the special taste wood smoke imparts to the food, several women are turning to the convenience of cook stoves fueled by liquid propane gas for much of their cooking. Ella was one of the first to use propane for cooking. While she still burns wood for some foods, most of her cooking is done on a portable, three-burner propane stove, because the bottoms of the pots stay clean and the heat is easier to regulate. Mary, who currently cooks exclusively on a wood fire, is entertaining the idea of using propane at her camp. She explains, "Yeah, I'm sure thinking about buying one of those… in case it rains or something, it really knocks you out. I want one of them that folds out and it's got about two burners on there. [Like a camp stove?] Yeah, regular camp stove" (MBW 01/17/01, p. 13).

Even some of the practices surrounding the ceremonial cycle have changed in recent years. According to Viola, she and her friend, Willis, used to 'sneak' food up there to the ceremonial grounds during the football games that precede the Arbor Dance.

> …We start playing football on Easter Sunday. Well, we used to didn't eat lunch and because they have rules and regulations there that you don't cook food there and serve until the fourth game and then you cook and eat and dance that night. And so we're not supposed to serve food over there until the fourth game. And then we cook and eat and dance. And me and Willis, we go up there kind of early, because I like to hang out up there. And we will take Kentucky Fried Chicken up there to eat and I said, "We better hurry up and put this trash in the trunk before somebody sees us eating up here." So we put our stuff…and then finally somebody said, "Duck Creek, they eat every time they play football. They eat all the time, and don't think anything about it." But our rules are different. And so one day, I said, "You know, I don't know why we can't do like Duck Creek does. They bring lunch up here and put it together and eat and socialize." "Oh, that would be good." The women got to talking and stuff….Anyway, when the game was over, there was talk you know. And so somebody mentioned that to the chief. Chief Brown was living. And Chief Brown said, "Well, some of the people suggest that it would be nice if we bring our lunch up here and eat together and socialize." …And since then, we take stuff up there and put them together and eat. We don't cook. They make coffee is about all. And Sonny Brown, he brings his little camper thing, a stove, and they make coffee. That's about it. But as far as cooking, we don't cook up there. And so, but we do now eat together. (VJT 02/17/2001, p. 6)

These innovations – arbor construction, disposable tableware, cook stoves, and bringing food to the grounds during the football games – have not been embraced equally by all participants. In fact, some of the changes have revealed a divide between the participants and the meaning of tradition. While some participants eschew change in the name of tradition, women who pioneer innovative practices seem to be more interested in convenience than in appeasing the sensibilities of other campers. For these women, the essence of tradition lies in the ceremonies themselves and the ability of women to gather together and do the work required for maintaining Yuchi identity in the context of ceremonial ground life. The kinds of camp construction, cooking apparatus, or tableware are not nearly as important as getting together as a body and asserting their Yuchi identity through ritual songs, dances, clothing style, and food practices.

There is another area of ceremonial ground life which further emphasizes members' willingness to innovate and perhaps cross the boundary of that which is

considered 'traditional'. From the previous discussion, the reader has some awareness of the expense involved in maintaining a camp and providing food for family, friends, and visitors. Access to resources is variable and expenses can create hardship for some families. In order to alleviate such hardship, the members of Polecat voted to host a 'winter dance' each year at a local Indian community center in order to raise funds for the following summer's activities. The winter dance is a recent innovation which has not been embraced equally by all of the members of the ceremonial ground. Most participate and view it favorably as a way to help finance the following summer's activities at the grounds. But a few do not believe that stomp dances should be conducted indoors in the winter, because "it's not traditional." Yet the majority is in favor of the winter dance as a means to an end. Not only does it generate much needed income for the group, it also provides a social occasion that breaks the monotony of bitter Oklahoma winter nights.

A winter dance is held on a Saturday evening and may begin with a pot luck dinner in which each family brings a dish of food to share. Selections may include fried chicken, ham, salt pork, pinto beans, green beans, butter beans, hominy, fried corn, sofkee, yams, macaroni and cheese, boiled or mashed potatoes, potato salad, tossed salad, loaf bread, biscuits, corn bread, fry bread, and a variety of desserts. In the spirit of fundraising, even though everyone brings some food to the table, there is a nominal charge for the meal. There is usually a cake walk for the children and a raffle in which participants purchase chances to win cakes, pies, and grocery baskets. All of the prizes are donated by members of the ceremonial ground and their families. The community also hosts a concession stand where they sell a variety of soda pop, candy, and snacks.

I came to the Yuchi community in the summer of 1997, but by the following winter, I didn't feel like I had made any great inroads to building a rapport and being

accepted by individuals in the community. My instincts told me that in order to be accepted by the members of the community, sitting around and observing are not at all beneficial. Besides, it is not in my nature to let others do the work, so I decided to 'help out'[14] whenever possible. I had a chance to do just that in early 1998 at Polecat's winter dance. I recall asking one of the core women if I could do anything to help, and she put me to work in the concession stand. Visitors began to arrive from other ceremonial grounds to help out by participating as dancers and by purchasing drinks and snacks at the concession stand. The crowd grew throughout the evening and we concession stand workers were very busy. It was a good kind of busy, though, where people work shoulder to shoulder to get a job done, having breaks between the rushes of customers to watch the dances and enjoy short snatches of conversation amongst themselves.

Eventually, the hour grew late and business slowed enough so that I was left to mind the stand by myself for awhile. I knew at that moment that this was my breakthrough with some of the core women of the Polecat community, because they trusted me enough to leave me alone with the money. Wow! I felt good that night, knowing that I had managed to make a good impression on the women. From then on I felt more at ease encountering people in the community and sensed that the Yuchis did with me, too. This experience, more than any other in the Yuchi community, underscored that one of the secrets to belonging is to show a willingness to 'help out'.

The foregoing narrative points out two primary considerations for Yuchi women in the context of the food system: showing hospitality and caring for visitors; and whether or not an individual is willing to help out and share the work load. These are recurrent themes that operate on two levels. They not only serve to structure the preceding narrative, but in a very real sense, they structure the lives of women in the Yuchi community. Women of the ceremonial grounds at Polecat Creek take their

responsibility toward visitors seriously and strive to show hospitality through food sharing on a grand scale. A large portion of their food-related tasks revolve around their desire to show a proper degree of hospitality. The task is often far beyond the capability of an individual woman, so she depends on help from family and friends to get the job done. By showing willingness to work, a woman gains respect and acceptance from those around her. I have outlined how hospitality and helping out operate in the lives of women at the ceremonial grounds, but these principles are not confined to that venue alone. Hospitality and helping out are also recurrent themes in the lives of Yuchi church women.

A Brief History of Missions in Indian Territory and among the Yuchis

Soon after the Louisiana Purchase opened up lands west of the Mississippi River, Methodists established a mission at Jonesborough on the southern banks of the Red River. The first Protestant service held in Indian Territory was preached by Reverend William Stevenson at Pecan Point in 1818. At the same time, the Tennessee and Mississippi Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church were working among members of the Five Civilized Tribes who dwelled east of the Mississippi River and were under pressure from Euro-Americans to move west. In 1821 Dr. William Capers was appointed missionary to the Creeks, but his work was difficult. Not only did the Creeks have a law which provided a penalty of fifty lashes on the bare back for those who held religious services in the Creek Nation (Babcock and Bryce 1937:47), but the Creek Nation also stipulated a penalty of thirty-nine lashes on the bare back for those Creeks who professed Christian faith or who became members of a church (Clegg and Oden 1968:21). Yet, there were a few who chose to suffer the consequences of their faith. One of these devoted followers of Christ was Samuel Checote, who went on to

become an ordained pastor and influential member of Creek Nation in Indian Territory.

In 1835 missionaries of three Christian denominations worked among the Creeks – Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians (Hinds 1939:51). While work among the Indians progressed, the Creeks were largely ambivalent toward missionaries of all denominations. After the Creek council ordered white teachers and missionaries out of the nation, Checote and fellow convert, James McHenry, are given credit for reversing the council's action (Clegg and Oden 1968:27), and a period of negotiation between the council and missionaries of various denominations commenced. By this time there were a number of prominent Creeks who supported the idea of allowing missionaries to work among them (Hinds 1939:53). Dr. Robert Loughridge, a Presbyterian missionary to the Creeks, recalled that the Creek council wanted him to work among them to establish a school, but they were not interested in any preaching. He told them that if he was to come into the Creek Nation they would have to let him preach, because he was a preacher. The council members decided to allow preaching only at the school house. Loughridge agreed to these terms, and the Coweta Mission was established in 1843 (Loughridge n.d.:2-3).

In 1844 the General Conference of the Methodist Church authorized the organization of the Indian Mission Conference, which covered a huge territory north to Montana, west to the Rocky Mountains, east to Arkansas and Missouri, and south to Texas (Clegg and Oden 1968:24). The first annual conference held in Indian Territory took place on October 23, 1844 at Riley's Chapel in Tahlequah in the Cherokee Nation. Later that same year, leading up to the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal Church divided into two churches: The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This division persisted until 1939 when these two entities

united with the Methodist Protestant Church (Stewart 1962:331). Although the Indian Mission Conference passed a resolution deploring the division in the Methodist church, delegates elected to become members of the Southern branch.

By 1846 missionaries of all denominations were allowed by the council to preach freely throughout the Creek Nation, although some encountered opposition from their constituents. However, increasing numbers of Creek and other Indian people converted to Christianity, and some became teachers and preachers in their own right. Baptists, who had no white missionaries in the Creek Nation, were particularly successful in gaining converts through their reliance on Indian preachers (Hinds 1939:55-56). For the Methodists, conditions had improved by the 1850 annual conference as reflected by E. B. Duncan, Presiding Elder of the Creek District, in his report to W. H. Garrett, Creek agent for the United States:

> We have 12 societies, besides some four other places which we visit regularly when we are out, besides preaching at night, examining members every round, looking after every member, besides visiting and instructing the children according to the policy of our church; and I am happy to inform you there has been, and is, a very good state of things in our societies. Some 50 have joined this year. Our meetings have been very interesting, lively, animating; congregations good all kinds of weather, for they all come; besides they hold weekly meetings in every society. The [Indian] nations this year have put up some meeting houses that would do honor to the state—good, hewed logs. Our people are improving in industry and domestic life. (Babcock and Bryce 1937:108)

In the period between 1850 and 1853, several native people were admitted on trial to the conference, Samuel Chcote among them. In 1854 Checote was ordained a deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Babcock and Bryce 1937:114).

After weathering the storm of opposition against them from within the Creek Nation, the next trial for Methodist missionaries in Indian Territory was the Civil War when "the patient toil of more than a quarter century had nearly all been swept away. Churches were destroyed, membership killed or scattered, schools closed" (Babcock

and Bryce 1937:149). After the war, Methodists worked to reorganize and rebuild churches and schools while using their influence to reestablish law and assuage tribal conflicts (Stewart 1962:332). Their work was bolstered by a migration of white preachers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church from the north after the war. By 1889, this influx of white Methodists made necessary the organization of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (for white churches) and the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (for Indian churches) (Babcock and Bryce 1937:248). Since 1889 the conferences have undergone several periods of change and reorganization, yet Methodists in Indian Territory and Oklahoma (after 1907) have continued to meet annually, and the work of Methodists in Oklahoma has progressed.

In 1972, the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (as it was called by this time) became a "Missionary Conference because of its "particular mission opportunities, its limited membership and resources, its unique leadership requirements, its…language considerations, and ministerial needs" (paragraph 659, *Book of Discipline*, quoted in Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference 1990:1). The Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) is an official voting body which gives Indian people their own annual conference and self-determination (Clegg and Oden 1968:446). As members of the OIMC, Indian churches can license and ordain their own ministers and officially function as an Annual Conference, thus having charge over their own affairs. Church women I talked to approve of this arrangement with the United Methodist Church because it allows the Indian churches a degree of autonomy and the freedom to practice their languages and traditions within the church organization. For example, as part of a typical service at Pickett Chapel it is not unusual to sing native hymns in languages such as Yuchi, Creek, Kiowa, Choctaw and

Cherokee. Several of the women have told me that native languages have been preserved more effectively within the churches than outside them. Following a funeral at Pickett Chapel one might also participate in "washing," a traditional purification ceremony, after returning from the cemetery to the church for the communal meal.

> I've been asked a lot of times why our OIMC did not go with the Oklahoma conference and we could just be one conference [with the white churches]. Because we were struggling so much. It seemed like our pastors were paid such lower salaries than the white ministers and they wondered why we didn't just join with them and not even have an Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. And I told them we've thought about that. We've talked about that but we've said we're mighty into the time now where our people are beginning to want to know their traditions and their cultures. People are beginning to become more aware of that now than we did in the last 10 or 15 years. And so if we went into the white conference, we would probably lose our identity. We couldn't sing our songs, and tell our stories. And you'll see the difference when we come to our annual conference. When that big group of Indian people get together there is so much joy. To me, it's just like homecoming. Because some of these people we never see until annual conference. But you have been friends with them, you've worked with them. (MWB 12/14/1997, pp. 10-11)

Today, according to the OIMC website (http://www.gbgm-umc.org/oimc) there are approximately 7200 members distributed among eighty-nine churches in the states of Oklahoma (83 churches), Kansas (5 churches), and Texas (1 church). Thirty-nine different tribes are represented by church members. Currently, forty pastors and eight Lay Missioners serve the churches of OIMC. Of those forty, twenty-one are Elders in Full Connection and five are retired ministers. Fourteen pastors are female.

Throughout the nineteenth century, most of the work of Methodists focused on the Five Civilized Tribes. Of particular significance to the participants in this study is an individual by the name of Noah Gregory, born June 1, 1861 in Bristow, Oklahoma to a Scotch father and Yuchi mother. Gregory was brought up speaking the Yuchi language before being orphaned. At the age of twelve, he was placed in the Asbury Mission School at Eufaula, where he learned to speak English. At the age of 18 Gregory converted to Christianity and was baptized at Asbury (Greenwood n.d.:1) and received

as a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Gregory showed great promise as a Bible scholar and because he was Yuchi and could speak the language, he began to preach among his people. In 1890 Gregory was appointed by the Indian Mission Conference to serve as "Supply to Sapulpa," meaning that he served as a circuit rider, a preacher who could perform some church sacraments (Personal Communication – Christina Wolf, archivist, Delaney Brown Library, Oklahoma City University, 02/22/2001). Circuit riders divided their time between four congregations, conducting services with one congregation each Sunday before moving on to the next congregation. Thus, he met with a particular group of worshipers every fourth Sunday.[15] In 1894 Gregory was named the first superintendent of the Euchee Mission School in Sapulpa, where he and his wife served for two years, until Gregory went back out on the circuit. In 1900 Gregory was ordained a deacon, and later, in 1909, an elder.

Gregory's fledgling Yuchi congregation first met in people's homes. While serving the Yuchis, Gregory appointed the first exhorters: Kepponney Snow, Konzie Tiger, William Campbell, Charley Marshall, Maxey Simms, Sam Cooper, John Cooper, Eklarney Cahwee, Coley Wildcat, and Joseph Wildcat.[16] Their duties were to fill the role of lay speakers and visit and talk with people about attending church. Gregory also selected the first class leaders. Early class leaders included Johnson Barnett, Joe Barnett, Ben Hagie, Tom Brown, Micco Behen, and Lewis Cumsey.[17] These men bear names that are dear to the members of Pickett Chapel, not only because they and their families founded the church, but also because many of today's members are direct descendants of these men. They are remembered as dedicated, hard-working individuals who led by example and provided a firm foundation for the contemporary congregation.

Somewhere along the way, members of Pickett Chapel adopted the motto "Always forward, never go back." This sentiment is the pillar that supports the congregation even today and is reflected in the words of Sarah Lou Felix Whinery, then president of the United Methodist Women, who presented the message on Women in the Pulpit Sunday, March 25, 2001.

> A seed was planted years ago, here, to build a church. Our elders worked together, prayed together to get the church started. They may not have had many members or workers to help, but they pushed forward….So here we are almost 100 years since that seed of determination, enthusiasm and passion was planted. A lot of prayers, tears, hard physical labor experienced to get us here today. We're now in the 4th church building, continuing to grow in the Lord's work. It's been proven that a few can accomplish a lot. (Whinery 2001:1)

Significantly, in her talk, Sarah acknowledges the women, along with the men, who are remembered for their hard work and dedication to their little congregation and to the Lord's work. Rosanna Snapp, who visited Sarah's mother at her camp house and brought candy on Easter, Nancy Wildcat,[18] who taught vacation Bible school with Sarah's mother, and Eliza George "with her apron on, always eager to feed and to share with anyone in need" (Whinery 2001:2) are just a few of the women who made an impression on young Sarah. Others mentioned are Bebe Cumsey,[19] Sawena Sims, Sagie Bighead, Lallie Cahwee, and Melissa Fox. These women "did their share of sowing seeds of kindness [and] love. Showing, setting a pattern for younger ones to follow. These women served the Lord in their own way, encouraging thru [sic] testimonys [sic] of their belief in God. Showing love to one another. They planted seeds of Love" (Whinery 2001:2).

In 1901 as more Yuchi people converted to Christianity, the congregation built a permanent meeting place and called it Snow Chapel after a Yuchi family. Despite its inauspicious origins, the congregation of Snow Chapel grew, and the people decided to move to a nearby site on land donated by Konzie Tiger and the Katie Warren family

(Bigler n.d.:1). In 1915 the present grounds were cleared and construction was begun on the church that was renamed Pickett Chapel after another prominent Yuchi family.[20] Joe Wildcat, Kopeheney Tiger, Ben Hagie, Eklarney Cahwee, Sam Cooper, and his brother John all had a hand in the construction of the new church. They cut the trees, cleared the land, and with Joe Barnett's expertise as a carpenter, they commenced to build the first church structure (MWB 01/19/2001, p. 6). Before long, the hard working members of Pickett Chapel moved into their new church building, hand-made by the members themselves. In those days, virtually all of the members and visitors were local Indians, mostly Yuchis, and some Creeks. On Sunday mornings, the members were called to worship by the church bell which remains in the church yard today.

> [Joe Barnett] would come early. He would build a wood stove, get it going. He would go out and he would draw the water, have fresh water in there, and then he would sweep the church. He would do all of this before anybody arrived. And then I guess about 8:30 or 9:00, then he would go out there and ring the bell. …And we could even hear the bell out there where we lived. We lived about 2 miles and a half. We could hear that bell…it's so quiet [in the morning]. Sometimes we'd be half way to church and we'd hear that bell ringing. (MWB 01/19/2001, p. 6)

In 1929 the Indian Mission of Oklahoma held its annual conference at Pickett Chapel. Maggie recalls what it was like to take care of all the visitors that attended as conference delegates.

> And all the people who came brought their tents and put up tents and they'd sleep in it. And sometimes the church furnished quilts…to the people came who didn't have enough quilts, the church would let them use their quilts because they had…oh, it was for that purpose. They had a bunch of quilts and they'd put them up for you know when we're gonna have annual conference and we'd let visitors use our quilts. One year we had annual conference and there was so many people, one family didn't cook enough and they couldn't feed anymore people and they had to latch the screen door so the people wouldn't come in. They sure had to cook a lot to feed all the people. (MCM 02/16/2001, p. 13)

Despite any food shortage that may have occurred, in their minutes of the meeting a "Resolution of Thanks" is recorded, underscoring the high regard in which the founders of Pickett Chapel are held, not only by their own descendants, but also by their contemporaries.

> We, the members and guests of the Indian Mission, assembled at Pickett's Chapel, wish to express our deepest and most sincere thanks to the Entertainment Committees and members of Pickett's Chapel who have served us so tirelessly and well, night and day, in supplying our every need. You have proved yourselves to be most generous and most gracious hosts and hostesses and we shall ever esteem you in grateful memory and hold you up to a throne of grace in our prayers that heaven's richest blessings may ever be showered upon you and your families. We pray that Pickett's Chapel, the only church in the Euchee Nations, may be so richly endowed with divine grace and spiritual blessings that she may wisely lead every member of the tribe into the way everlasting. (Indian Mission of Oklahoma 1929:25)

Later reports, such as the following, further underscore the hard work and dedication of the members of Pickett Chapel.

> Pickett's Chapel is the only Church in the Euchee Nation and the hope of the salvation of this tribe rests in this church. They have a splendid plant and under the consecrated and wise leadership of their young pastor, the Reverend Joseph Wildcat, a new spirit of devotion has come among them and fine progress has been made this year. The membership is large and composed of as fine a group of citizens as may be found anywhere. (Report of W. U. Witt, Superintendent, Indian Mission of Oklahoma in The Indian Mission of Oklahoma 1940:31)

Joseph Wildcat served as pastor of Pickett Chapel for almost 30 years from 1929 to 1960. Records indicate that he served at Pickett Chapel exclusively during this time period except for 1934, 1935, 1937, 1940, 1952, and 1953 (Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference 1990). Maxine and Josephine remember him fondly as "Uncle Joe" but also have a keen understanding of his contribution to the people of the church.

> [Joe Wildcat] was a…I can say for him, he was a preacher. We had very few like him now. He was no salary and where he went, he walked. I know whenever he heard of anyone being sick or anything, he would go. Sometimes he'd be gone all night and then he'd come back the next day. And he'd tell my aunt [Nancy] what was going on. Lots of times, she would have to go with him. She'd clean the house, she'd cook or do whatever needed to be done or she'd ask someone to go help her. And they were always doing this for people. They lived…that was

> my dad's camp house that they lived in on the church ground while he was the minister. (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 4)

Services were presented variously in three languages – Yuchi, Creek, and English. Lewis Cumsey served as interpreter for some of the services, but several consultants have told me that as children they only knew English and could not understand what was being said in church.

> They used to speak mostly in Creek [even at Pickett Chapel]. …Mose's dad [Eklarney Cahwee] could speak Yuchi, Creek and English. My uncle Joe, I don't think he could speak in Creek. But …when he …really got in the spirit, he would start out English, but he would end up in Yuchi, because that's our first language. And when he started in Yuchi, you knew he was really in the spirit. (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 5)

Church services consisted of much preaching, personal testimonies and singing.

> [The services would consist of songs and preaching] and testimonies. And there might be more than one speaker. I can remember…If the spirit moved them, some people would get up to speak. I remember Bebe Cumsey, Maggie's mother, one time. She was a small kind of petite little woman. She began testifying, two or three of her sons, they were never really very active in church after they were adults. She was lamenting that they were not as active in the church as she would like them to be. This is the way we'd often go…the people would get up. One section in the old church was always grandmas, the elder…women elders. Men always sat over on the left and women on the right side. But that changed after 1950 when I married. I was married in the church in 1950, the old church. Uncle Joe married Clarence and me. But we…after we left, sometime, I don't know when, they changed so that families sat together, men and women sat together. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 2)

Songs were "native hymns" – hymns written by native people in their own languages or standard church songs translated from English into a native language.[21] Native hymns are still sung regularly at Pickett Chapel, and the members especially enjoy singing them for visitors. I recall on one occasion when I brought my parents to Pickett Chapel for the first time, the members went out of their way to welcome them and added several native hymns in various languages to the order of worship for their benefit. On one occasion Maxine told me, "Yeah, I think that's real important [to greet the visitors]. To recognize them and tell them you're glad they're there. And invite

them back" (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 15). Clearly, the actions of the church congregation reflect this spirit of hospitality.

The church members are proud of their heritage and their ability to preserve the Yuchi, Creek, and other Native languages in song. While there are numerous Creek language songs, many of which are familiar to Creek and non-Creek church people, for years there were just two hymns in Yuchi, known as "Euchee Hymn One" and "Euchee Hymn Two." These were translated early on by Eklarney Cahwee (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 5). Later, Maxine, Josephine, and Maggie decided to try their hands at song translation.

> And seems we only had those two Yuchi songs. Those were the only two Yuchi songs they ever sang there. And then we, Maggie, Josephine and I, were the ones that interpreted the "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus." We did that. We interpreted that from English into Yuchi. And so now we've finally got "Jesus Loves Me." And we've got another one I've never tried, but we've got it down. Josephine did it. It's "This Little Light of Mine." But most of the singing was in Creek [at Pickett Chapel during their youth]. (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 5)

Cooking at Pickett Chapel

The early church grounds were patterned after the ceremonial grounds with an enclosed sanctuary building, a small, open air arbor, and a large open air tabernacle in the center of the grounds surrounded by camp houses. The sanctuary is where services were typically held, but when the weather was very hot church meetings were moved outdoors to a brush arbor. Later, the brush arbor was replaced by a more permanent pole barn-type structure called a tabernacle. This structure was used in hot weather and for big church meetings such as annual conference (Maxine Barnett, personal communication 06/10/2004; MCM 02/16/2001, p. 14). The Sims family built the first camp house in 1925 (Bigler n.d.:1), and soon thereafter, thirteen more were built.[22] Camp houses were used each Sunday by at least some of the families.

> We just went to church on Sunday mornings. But then my grandmother…she would walk then….When we went to church we always took our lunch….Every Sunday we went to church, we took our lunch, because we were there all day….That's where she used to fix these…short ribs….You put the short ribs in a pan and put them in the oven. I can remember, short ribs and rice, and apple pie was always our lunch. I think it was cooked there in the camp. No, some of it…it would be cooked, because I can remember Dad and sometimes Grandma carrying stuff. When we got big enough we helped carry stuff. We might carry bread. She would even fix her biscuits at home. [After the morning service they'd eat their lunch, and then there'd be more preaching]. All afternoon. And we'd eat again [the leftovers]. Sometimes people would come, and somebody might give you something….We seemed always to have plenty to eat. I always remember…we never had those short ribs any other time but just on Sunday. And, oh, they were so good…cooked on the wood stove, you know, in the oven. Oh, they were good. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 13)

Camp houses were a beehive of activity during Fourth Sunday services which lasted all weekend. In those days, on Fourth Sunday, the family came to church on Friday and brought supplies with them, or sometimes they went to Sapulpa for provisions on Saturday. Families stayed at the church grounds until Sunday evening or Monday morning before dispersing to their respective homes. Camp houses provided each family with shelter and a place to cook meals during the long weekend.

> The camp houses were used every Sunday. And we'd walk to our own camp and we'd carry our lunch. And on Fourth Sunday, just like today, they would come in on Friday. And I can remember my uncle Joe, he was the minister also, but he would come out to our house and he would hitch up the horses, because grandma had to bring all her cooking stuff. So he'd come out there and hitch up the horses to the wagon and sometimes we'd ride the wagon, but we didn't mind walking. My grandmother and Lucy and my uncle…and my dad, he never did ride the wagon. He walked….They'd take all of our bedding and our cooking utensils, because we were going to be there until Monday. But then they'd have church then Friday night. Saturday morning they'd get up early and they'd come to town and buy our groceries for Sunday. They'd come back and we'd eat in the evening and they'd have church again Saturday night. …everybody would be there. Everybody would come. They'd be in their camps…. They'd make us go to bed Saturday night because they would be up cooking. They'd cook until about midnight for Sunday, because Sunday would be all day and they would have church even Sunday night. Then everybody'd go to bed. And those that had a car would go home. Like the Cahwees – William Cahwee and his dad, he used to drive for them. They'd go clear back to Depew Saturday night, but they had a car. The rest of us always stayed there. The Cumpseys, they had a car, so they'd go home. But all of us that didn't have cars, very few had cars, they all stayed in their camps. (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 4)

> In the old days…some people had to come from a distance…they might come in on a Friday and they'd have to bring, you know, their groceries, food with them, and they'd have to prepare it…usually cooked on Saturday to be ready for Sunday….My Aunt Nancy and Uncle Joe, who was later pastor at Yuchi, at Pickett… they came from Beggs, near Beggs…northeast of Beggs. That was where her farm was, so they would come on Friday…Friday or Saturday and camp in …so that way they had to prepare everything…and they'd stay over probably until Monday morning, and then you'd go home. My uncle Jack Bighead, his farm adjoined Aunt Nancy's, so probably Jack took care of their farm and animals while they were gone. They'd go home on Monday morning, because often in those days, they would have services all day, and some of the families stayed and they had worship services in the afternoon and evening. That's the way it was, so they would have…food that they would have to prepare. (JWB 01/18/2001, p. 2)

> Every fourth Sunday, [on Saturday] we'd have a service maybe until 9 or 9:30 [at night], and then Sunday morning …we had Sunday school and then the regular service. But after lunch, after everybody ate, then they'd have preaching all afternoon….But Dad would take us home, because we had to go to school. But my grandma and them, they wouldn't load up and come home until Monday. They'd be home when we got there [after school]. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 12)

And in a manner similar to the ceremonial ground camps, visitors were provided for at the church camp houses. "They would eat in their own camps, but they would feed any of the visitors that came, just like they do on the stomp grounds" (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 12).

> Our family, the Wildcats, had a camp and Grandma Millie camped with us. Grandma Eliza had her own camp. In the camp you always had just the basic furniture – table, chairs, always had a wood stove to prepare your meals…often it would be [chicken and rice]. We prepared it at home and then just reheat it. Any baking we'd do on Saturday … it was all prepared, and we'd just carry it. The bread we probably made…biscuits, cornbread, we probably made that in the camp house. So there always had to be wood gathered and water drawn. Cleaning, wiping up. If we had company or visitors, we'd invite those people to come and eat at our camp. (JWB 01/10/2001, pp. 3-4)

According to Maggie, visiting another church's Fourth Sunday services was common.

> They were from different churches and they'd just come visit. Other church's Fourth Sunday, we'd visit. And they didn't belong to our conference. They were mostly independent church. There used to be a church out on South Hickory there. It was an independent church. They used to call it Rock Creek Church….It burnt down, I believe. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 14)

This spirit of hospitality was emphasized when the annual conference of the Oklahoma Indian Mission was held at Pickett Chapel on at least three occasions before the conference center was built in Preston, Oklahoma. During annual conference, delegates from all over the region would come to the church and stay for several days. It was up to the members of Pickett Chapel to welcome them and feed the visitors. As Maggie explains, sometimes this was a daunting challenge.

> And all the people who came brought their tents and put up tents and they'd sleep in it. And sometimes the church furnished quilts…to the people came who didn't have enough quilts. The church would let them use their quilts because they had…oh, it was for that purpose. They had a bunch of quilts and they'd put them up for you know when we're going to have annual conference and we'd let visitors use our quilts. One year we had annual conference and there was [sic] so many people. One family didn't cook enough, and they couldn't feed anymore people, and they had to latch the screen door so the people wouldn't come in. They sure had to cook a lot to feed all the people. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 13)

Responsibility toward visitors is still an important consideration for at least some of the members of Pickett Chapel. Maxine explains, "I think you should go and talk to them….Yeah, I think that's real important – to recognize them and tell them you're glad they're here. And invite them back" (MWB 01/12/2001, pp. 14, 15).

Over the years, as times changed and people "went modern" church members adopted the "fellowship hall" concept as a more desirable means of accommodating the needs of congregation members and visitors. It is unclear when the first fellowship hall was added to the church structure at Pickett Chapel, but it is apparent that over the years, as camp houses fell into disrepair, the idea of adding a fellowship hall to the church property gained favor with the members. But actually using the fellowship hall rather than the camp houses was difficult to get used to.

> I don't know the exact year that we quit using the camp houses. Ours was getting old. The roof leaked and the floor, they were warped…. They said well, we're just going to have to tear it down. So my sister and her husband, I think,

> went down there and tore it down. [Was yours the first to be torn down?] No, there was [sic] a few others. I think that Behen, he's the one. He either tore [his] down or moved it.... It was kind of hard to get used to [eating in the fellowship hall].... [We'd] take [food] to church and then have to take it in the church house and...some [would] just dish out what they want and just stayed in the camp house and ate and took the rest in the fellowship hall [for others to eat]. Kind of hard to get used to at first. [In the fellowship hall, it started being the pot lucks then?] Uh-huh. Yeah. [Everybody shared the food?] Yeah. (MCM 02/11/2001, pp. 15, 16)

One by one the camp houses were torn down until in 1997, when I arrived at Pickett Chapel for the first time, there was only one left standing. I was fortunate to see this artifact of the past before it was torn down. Long unused, the small, white frame house was in disrepair but still contained the furnishings used by the family in days gone by – a 1950s-style tubular metal kitchen table with a Formica top, padded, vinyl-covered kitchen chairs, a gas stove, and a few cooking utensils.

Today, despite the absence of camp houses, Fourth Sunday services are still significant events in the life of Pickett Chapel. Women of the church keep track of the weeks and calculate on which day the next Fourth Sunday will fall. On these special days, the regular church service is followed by a communion service and a pot-luck dinner for members and visitors. A meal may consist of delicacies such as ham, turkey, fried chicken, "roast" (a beef roast similar to what I grew up calling pot roast), meat loaf, corn soup, pinto beans, baked beans, macaroni and cheese, green beans, fried corn, potato salad, tossed salad, fry bread, loaf bread, sour corn bread, and many other selections, including numerous desserts such as pies, cobblers, and cakes. The food is always delicious and abundant. Most of the food is prepared by women at home and brought to the church on Sunday morning before or during the Sunday school hour prior to the worship service. Dishes are heated on a stove or in an oven in the church kitchen which is located in the fellowship hall in a building adjacent to the church sanctuary building.

One or two of the core church women leave the church service early in order to lay out the dishes of food on three long tables that are placed end to end on the north side of the fellowship hall. By the end of the communion service, everyone is famished and ready to partake in the huge feast while enjoying the good company and fellowship among members and visitors. The meal is consumed in the fellowship hall by diners seated at long tables placed in three rows perpendicular to the tables on which the dishes of food are placed. On some days when the crowd is especially large, the overflow room is the "old church" sanctuary which is located in the same building up a ramp and down a hallway. Extra tables are set up in that room so that everyone has a place to sit and enjoy their meal.

Core women move back and forth between the kitchen and serving areas of the fellowship hall making sure that all of the food is on the table and that everyone has iced tea or coffee, a dessert, or anything else they may need. As the meal is completed and people prepare to leave and return to their homes, core women package the left-overs and begin washing pots, pans, and casserole dishes so that everyone can take home a clean dish. One industrious member of Pickett Chapel, Danny Cahwee, can always be depended on to take out the trash, sweep up the room, and generally help out where needed. Going a step further, Danny has made it his personal ministry to clean the fellowship hall each week. Consequently, on February 29, 2004 he was honored with "Danny Cahwee Appreciation Day" for his dedication to Pickett Chapel (Pickett Chapel 2004:1).

Fourth Sunday services memorialize circuit riders, such as Noah Gregory, who met with the fledgling Snow Chapel congregation (later Pickett Chapel) every fourth week. In those heady days of spiritual transition from traditional ceremonial beliefs and practices to Christian ceremonial beliefs and practices in the Protestant tradition,

Christianized Yuchis looked forward to meeting every fourth week with fellow converts. Symbolically, a parting handshake or hug signified the love shared between Christians. According to a former Pickett Chapel pastor, these gestures also signified the hope that the congregants would all meet again in four weeks and the knowledge that this was never a sure thing in a time when hazards abounded in a country fraught with hardship and outlaws (Anonymous, personal communication n.d.).

The above description of Fourth Sunday communal meals underscores the central place of church women in the care of members and visitors. An organization of the United Methodist Church known as United Methodist Women (UMW) provides a support structure for the women of Pickett Chapel. This organization has a long history in the Indian churches of Oklahoma dating back to 1929 (Clegg and Oden 1968:150). The purpose of UMW is to encourage Christian growth, to promote an atmosphere of community and fellowship, and "to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church" (United Methodist Women website, http://gbgm-umc.org/umw). A core group of Pickett Chapel women[23] takes responsibility for embracing these ideals and upholding the reputation built by their mothers and grandmothers. For example, in addition to the 1929 "Resolution of Thanks" cited earlier, a 1952 report specifically recognizes the women of Pickett chapel for their "splendid work of the past year," noting that **"**Where ever [sic] a church has an active Woman's Society of Christian Service[24] we are assured the church is alive and growing" (Report of Evelyn Green, Deaconess in The Methodist Church 1952:31). Today, UMW remains a vital organization in the life of Pickett Chapel.

Besides spearheading the preparation and service of the Fourth Sunday communal meals, other food events are organized by the women of Pickett Chapel. These include dinners on Easter, and after the Veterans Day service. The Fourth

Sunday falling in November is recognized as the churchwide Thanksgiving dinner. On these and other special days, such as the Centennial Celebration held Sunday, September 30, 2001, the church expects a large crowd with many visitors. In order to ensure that there will be plenty of food for everyone in attendance, women prepare extra dishes, and church funds may be used to pay for meat such as ham or turkey.

As members of the United Methodist Church (UMC) and OIMC, the members of Pickett Chapel, like all other UMC churches, are expected to contribute to church administration and mission outreaches through an apportionment program, which is based on the number of enrolled congregants in each church. Every third year the annual conference of the OIMC is held in Preston, Oklahoma, where members of Pickett Chapel and their sister church, Mutteloke UMC[25] maintain one of the camp houses where conference delegates take their meals during the course of the four-day conference. Maxine explains some of the details that go into planning for the conference which is held in June.

> …our camp is in pretty good shape. We'll just need to go probably paint the floor and …probably in March we'll start working. …I think we're going to have another taco sale to buy our groceries. Because see there are two churches in our camp –that's Mutteloke and Pickett …they [Mutteloke] don't have very many members. And we've got $900 in the bank, but that will be split. They'll get four and a half and we'll get four and a half. But then we have to pay for our port-a-potties and then we have to pay so much for something else…anything that they do to the grounds. We have to put in some money for that. And then our trash. Well last year we paid $75 and we got two of them so it was $150 [for port-a-potties]. That was three years ago. So I told them with the price of groceries going up, we'll need more than 200 or 300 dollars for groceries. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 16)

The members of Pickett Chapel take their responsibilities very seriously. Apportionments and feeding approximately 350 meals to conference delegates requires funds that are not covered by the congregation's tithes and offerings. Undaunted by the financial challenges that face them, groups of dedicated members, led by the core

group of women, take action each year to generate the resources they need to meet their obligations. Such action might take the form of a yard sale, where they have raised as much as $700 (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 9), but more typically, the women organize fundraising dinners at various times throughout the year. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 4, Pickett Chapel is known far and wide for their wild onion dinner in the early spring. At other times they may have an Indian taco sale, or a harvest dinner in the fall. Each of these fundraisers is capable of generating a substantial amount of cash money for the church, due largely to the women's reputation for putting on a good spread. They charge an average of five to seven dollars per plate and people in the neighborhood know they will be served more delicious food than they can possibly eat.

Indian tacos are a great favorite and are widely known in Oklahoma. This popular concoction draws a crowd wherever it is served. Each taco consists of a large piece of fry bread mounded with the diner's choice of various toppings, including ground beef seasoned with taco spices, pinto beans, shredded cheese, chopped tomatoes, chopped onions, sliced jalapeno peppers, and hot sauce. While toppings are optional, knife, fork, and napkin are definitely required! In addition to Indian tacos, grape dumplings and beverages fill out the menu. Members of Pickett Chapel have found Indian taco sales to be a very effective means for raising money. Most of the ingredients are donated by the members, so the income is almost pure profit.

> Because we had a big benefit in '97 with the arts fair in Tulsa through my brother….So we ran the food stand over there and we made $4000, almost $5000. It was hard work. I was up at 6:00 in the morning making fry bread and had 2 or 3 other people doing the same thing. And then we take all that bread over there [in Styrofoam containers.] And then we took our microwave to make sure the bread was hot. We made Indian tacos. I'm telling you we had to start with about 200 fry breads and we could barely keep up at the end of the day. But people were just standing in line, but we made the money. (MWB 12/14/97, p. 9)

This particular food event at the Tulsa Indian Arts Fair generated a huge amount of income for Pickett Chapel, but it was an arduous undertaking and has not been repeated in recent years. More recently, Indian taco sales have been held in the church fellowship hall with attendance primarily by local residents from the surrounding neighborhood.

Another strategy for generating income is a harvest dinner held in the fall, also at the church. Typically, the menu for the harvest dinner includes ham, sweet potato casserole, green beans, corn, pinto beans, rolls or biscuits, pumpkin pie, and other desserts. While the income generated by these dinners provides much needed cash for the church, by the time members go to the store to purchase the food in order to donate it to the cause, spend all day preparing and selling the food, then purchase their own meal on the day of the sale (no free lunches) and cleaning up afterward, "you're giving three times" (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 14). The trend may be toward collecting donations from individual members in order to meet the church's obligations toward the OIMC and UMC. This strategy has been used from time to time, and Maxine admits that Pickett Chapel does not hold as many fundraisers as some churches (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 14). However, there is no doubt that everyone looks forward to the annual wild onion dinner, and many would be severely disappointed, distressed even, if the women decided against having it each year.

Intersecting Contexts

The foregoing narrative shows that hospitality and helping out are key considerations for most Yuchi women who participate in food events, whether taking place at one of the ceremonial grounds or churches, such as Polecat Creek and Pickett

Chapel. Communal meals on the scale I have observed take much planning, provisioning, and preparation. Special events attract many members and visitors for participation and fellowship, and the goal of Yuchi women is to make people feel welcome and comfortable, and to feed them well. For this reason, it is not unusual to see women who are not ordinarily affiliated with the grounds or the church lending a hand and helping out. For example, for special events when extra hands are especially valuable, Mary and one or two of her daughters might be seen in the kitchen of Pickett Chapel pitching in. Mary is not a member of the church, but she has close family ties there. Maxine's late husband was Mary's brother. Conversely, Josephine is not considered a 'grounds person', but one of her sons maintains a camp at Polecat, so it is not unusual for her to go out there for Green Corn and help out.

The overlap between the two ritual venues – ceremonial grounds and church – is remarkable. Some of my acquaintances are members of either Pickett Chapel or one of the other local Indian churches while at the same time actively maintaining membership and participating in the activities of one of the ceremonial grounds. Almost everyone I know in the Yuchi community has been affiliated with both church and ceremonial ground at some point during their lives, either simultaneously or at different stages in life. A perusal of Pickett Chapel's membership records (Pickett Chapel 1953-1954) bears this out. Certain individuals add participation in powwow, Native American Church, sweat lodge, and/or gourd dance to their personal spiritual repertoire. Such a combination of affiliations is not looked upon favorably by all members of the community, however. One woman told me that these people are just "mixed up. They don't know what they believe in" (Anonymous, personal communication). Yet she seems to be an exception. From my observations, the exploration of various native expressions of spiritual belief and changing affiliations

with various ritual venues is accepted and practiced by many members of the Yuchi community. Indeed, as one woman explained it to me, the ceremonial grounds are the one place where she can truly worship God and celebrate both her Yuchi heritage and Christian beliefs (Anonymous, personal communication).

Changes Over Time

As I have tried to clearly point out in the foregoing narrative, attention to providing hospitality and the spirit of helping out when needed are key concepts in the lives of many Yuchi women. These concepts appear to be two abiding traditions linking women of today securely to their mothers and grandmothers, whose lives, it was noted in the previous chapter, were also shaped by notions of hospitality and helping one's neighbor. While these traditions endure, it is apparent that some aspects of Yuchi material culture and cultural practices have changed over time. Perhaps the most fundamental change in the lives of the women who participated in the project is the transition from their farm upbringings to life in a relatively urban setting today. Ella and Viola live in metro Tulsa, and Josephine, Maxine, and Maggie live in and around Sapulpa. Mary lives in rural Kellyville. While Mary's residence is rather isolated from services and retail outlets, she is by no means situated on a farm. All of the women in the study drive their own cars and have access to goods and services such as retail outlets, including a large mall in Tulsa, restaurants, movie theatres, hospitals, and world class museums. For all of the women in the study, their livelihoods have been gained through work outside the home as noted in their biographies in chapter three. Thus, their lives are dramatically different today than they were as girls.

As a result of my conversations with the women, it appears that transitions in material culture and cultural practice are intimately connected to certain historical

markers – technological innovation, the Depression and the United States entering World War II. For this final section of the chapter I wish to explore these historical markers from the women's viewpoint.

In the early twentieth century, life on the southern plains moved at a slow pace. A train went through Saplupa, but none of the women I interviewed rode it until they were practically adults and then only to get to Tulsa and back. Day-to-day transportation was by foot or by horse-drawn wagon. The 1920s were a time of plenty in Creek County. Farms were productive and many people, including Yuchis, found natural gas and oil on their land and were able to lease the rights to these resources. They used the money to improve their homesteads and purchase luxury items such as automobiles, which changed their lives dramatically.

> Back in about '26 I think my mother got some money. Her, her mother, and sister, they got quite a bit of money, and she bought a car. I think the first car she had was a Model T. Then everybody come around wanting her to take them someplace. Because she's the only one that had a car…well there were a few other people, but they didn't go to them, they came to her. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 9)

Not only did the automobile make visiting friends and family quicker, it also made church attendance easier.

> And [today] we don't have to walk. If we had to walk to church, we'd never make it. …If there was snow then [Grandmother] didn't go. But [the rest of the family] did. I said I guess one of the reasons is we never went anywhere else and so it was really a privilege for us to get to go to church, to get to go somewhere. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 13)

The acquisition of automobiles also preordained the decline of the church camp house. In the days of the horse and wagon, people camped in for the long Fourth Sunday weekend. They acquired cars, however, and facilitated their comings and goings so "they didn't hardly go there [church] on Saturday anymore, because they had better ways of getting around, faster way. Wait until Sunday morning and go" (MCM

02/16/2001, p. 12). Thus, camp houses became obsolete at Pickett Chapel, fell into disrepair, and were finally abandoned in favor of the fellowship hall.

While the 1920s brought dramatic change to the lives of some Yuchi people in the form of the automobile, the following decades were equally dramatic for different reasons. Josephine recalls how the Depression affected her and her family.

> I finished seventh grade here in Sapulpa when our family moved to live with the paternal grandmother, Eliza. So I was about 12 probably. We went to live with her. But we had…it was a nice home but that was also during the Depression years and I …my dad always subscribed to the local paper and through the local paper, I kept abreast of what was happening in the outside world. And I knew in our town that we had soup lines and people would take their lard buckets to go and get soup. And maybe there were times when we might have liked to have had some. But we never did go down to get soup. And I don't know at what time we no longer had cows, no longer had horses, or chickens. And I don't know why maybe…maybe my dad just gave up. But I remember other families like Grandma Millie and Grandma Eliza, that they always had food, food on the table, raised their own food. But maybe when the men were no longer around, war time maybe had something to do with it, or death. Then they could not handle the farm work. The women couldn't do it, so that meant the end of the subsistence lifestyle. They became dependent. This would have been in the 40s, I think, about the beginning of World War II that…when the men, the young men were called away, or maybe the older men died. And Uncle Joe, I remember, went to what they call the 'Triple C' camp. He went to Colorado. And then there were other people, I guess, it must have also been Depression years…they went to… it was like what our immigrants now do. You know coming from Mexico, other countries, to work in the fields. These men would go and work in beet fields, sugar beet fields or whatever needed to be done…. [Where were the sugar beet fields?] I don't know. Whether in Colorado or the South, I don't know where they were. But I remember some of the men who went with such groups to work. Depression – the 30s to 40s was a time of big change. I think from our subsistence to welfare state. And more people began…oh and they left their…they would leave and go maybe to the city and changing or selling their lands, allotments. (JWB 01/10/2001, p. 4)

In her mind, the Depression and World War II seem to be intertwined, and in a way, they were. Together they brought social upheaval and cultural change to the people of Creek County. Fortunes waned, men went to war, and women were left behind to fend for themselves. Families dispersed, and as young women, most of the participants in

this study found themselves joining the war effort by moving to Tulsa, sharing an apartment with their sisters or girl friends, and finding jobs.

> [I think you told me one time that you and your sisters lived in an apartment together?] Yeah, when we left the country, when we left home. [How did your cooking change then?] Well…it's just like I told you while ago, it's just all American way. When we went to work, we changed our cooking. Why, let's see. How can I put this? The cooking, it wasn't much different. We still had potatoes, we still made mashed potatoes, made gravy. Not much difference. We had hamburgers. We had pork chops. [Did you start buying all your food in the grocery store?] Yeah. Where else would we buy it if we didn't go to the grocery store? [You might get it from your folks] No. No, that's when everybody left. We left country when my …mother passed away [in 1941]. Everybody just scattered. Everybody went on their own. My sisters and I, we rented an apartment together. We came to Tulsa in 1944. We got us an apartment and we worked in a laundry, and we all pooled our money together and bought groceries. One person would buy meat, one person would buy staples and the other one would buy toiletry stuff and things like that. There were changes. [Everybody was pitching in?] Yeah everybody. Everybody. We just…like me, if I wanted to buy the meat, I'd buy the meat. Then my sister would buy the staples, like canned goods. Then my other sister would buy the toilet goods and stuff like that. [There were 3 of you living together?] Yeah. There was three of us. (ELR 12/02/2000, pp. 1-2)

> It had to be in the 40s. WWII is going on. [Life in Tulsa] was nothing like it is now. I think everywhere we went, we walked. You know it's not even safe to be driving now. Tulsa was so different. So many of the buildings and the stores were…everything was right in town. But now, everything…all of the department stores and all those things have moved out, and there's nothing but law offices and things like that in town now. But it was different. They had all the department stores in town and there was just always a lot of people on the street [in what's now the downtown area]. Lyon's Indian store was on 7th and Main. …we'd get off of work, there were several of us and we'd go [downtown] to shop. One night you could go down one street, and the next night you'd go down another one. There was just a lot of things to do, movies right there in town. They don't have any movies there in town now. …but I always came back home on …Sundays. If I didn't make it back Saturday, I'd always come back Sunday. (MWB 12/14/1997, p. 3)

> We had no problems during the war. We didn't have no problems. We still worked, …we made a lot of money. We made a lot of extra money. [What do you mean extra money?] Working. Well, they didn't have anybody to work. There were a lot of people went into the service. A lot of [women] went to work. We got a lot of work. …they paid us better, put it that-a-way. Better pay. [So that they could keep you?] Yeah. They needed a lot of people to work. They paid people better during the war. They had rationing. Rationing never affected me no way. [After the war was over and people came back and started

> looking for jobs, did your pay go down?] It stayed the same. (ELR 12/02/2000, p. 3)

The Depression and wartime eras brought technological innovations that had a profound impact on the lives of women and their relationship with food, especially the transition from wood stoves to the use of propane and natural gas for cooking. Ella already gave us an idea of how convenient propane is for cooking at the ceremonial ground. But imagine the need for a constant supply of wood for day-to-day cooking compared to the difference a woman's first gas stove must have made in her life.

> Well, you got better things to cook with. Cooking with gas. Yeah. Gas stove, you just turn it on and you don't have to adjust it or nothing. But wood stove, it burns down and you have to keep putting wood in it trying to keep it even temperature. [How would you ever bake a cake or bread in a wood stove?] Sometimes you used to have a temperature on the door, oven door. That's what we used to go by. But we go ahead and keep putting the wood in to keep it hot. (MCM 02/11/2001, p. 10)

Other modern appliances also made an impression on the women by changing their relationship with food. While home-canning vegetables and fruits was common in their youth, as young adults, refrigeration allowed them to purchase a wide variety of foods at the grocery store and keep them fresh at home for several days or weeks. The need for a home garden and the raising of livestock dissipated. Mary reflects on various appliances that are found in her kitchen today.

> …electric oven, I mean the oven right up next to the stove. …That was something. Washer and drier and all that. All that. Appliances. That was a great help. [Do you remember when you got a microwave?] We didn't have a microwave at that time [when her children were growing up]. [Not until much later?] Yeah, much later. [Do you use your microwave a lot?] Yeah. We do. [Do you actually cook food in it?] No, I don't like it when it's cooked in there….Just heat up some stuff, coffee, frozen food. Cooking? I don't like…Because I cooked some baked potato, shee, I didn't like it. I'd rather have it cooked in the oven you know….Yeah, I use it [crockpot] all the time to cook beans in. Put it on and leave it on all night, and they're done the next morning. (MBW 01/27/2001, p. 9, 16)

While everyone is thankful for at least some of the modern conveniences, Maxine still enjoys cooking for her son and grandson, who drop by frequently, and other family members who come over to the house. She rarely takes the shortcuts that have become so prevalent in contemporary kitchens.

> Well, I guess [modern conveniences were] helpful, but I have never gone to the store… very rarely have I ever gone to the store and bought a pie or cake. Now Patty's [Maxine's daughter] a cake maker. If I need a cake, the church wants cake, I tell her and she makes the cakes. But I make the pies. And I have never bought frozen pie crust. My sister buys them all the time. But I like to bake. …I bought a big old bag of bananas yesterday and I thought I'd make banana bread. I'll have time tomorrow. Believe it or not, I don't have anything to do tomorrow. …I still cook a lot. Sometimes I get so hungry for fried potatoes. And I'll peel a couple of potatoes and Dennis [Maxine's son] will walk in and say, "I smell those potatoes." (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 9)

We are reminded by Maxine that there is a downside to modern conveniences in the context of food and cooking.

> We said, my generation now, people my age who are out there in the kitchen now, that when we're gone, I think that fry bread and all this stuff that we cook, it's going to be gone, it's going to go with us. Because these younger ones will not get in the kitchen and cook. And it's sad because they have microwave and all this prepared food and everything and it's just so much easier for them. But you know Saturday [at a church food event], we had one chocolate pie that was bought. No one touched it. It was still there Sunday. And I made those three pies and they went just real fast. But Dorothy is about the only one that makes cobblers, and her health is getting so bad and she just can't stand in the kitchen and do those things. … [You don't think some of the middle-aged women might step in?] Now Pat, my daughter, can make fry bread. But she's not that active in the church. [What about those girls that come with their elderly mother?] They don't help that much. They wouldn't make fry bread. I don't think they would…a lot of people cook their beans in the crock pot. That's fine, but I'd rather put mine on the stove and cook it. Dennis said, "I can really tell the difference. I can tell. Your beans get thick and they're darker." And of course I always have to put a big hunk of salt pork in it. [The younger women are all taking short cuts?] Short cuts and it's just like the language. The language is gone now. And so the traditional foods are going. … sit down with a pot of beans. It's going to keep you home at least a couple of hours. And when I put on a pot of beans, I usually put it on about 8:00 in the morning. Plus, I'm going to be doing other things before…by noon, and the beans will be ready by noon. Then I can turn them off you know. And if I'm going to take them to church then I cook them Saturday night, because I'm here getting ready for Sunday anyhow. I have to read my Sunday school [lesson] and get ready for that. So my beans are cooking while I…but I just don't like them cooked in the slow

> cooker. I mean I think you get a better taste when you cook them [on the stove]. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 7)

Yuchi Women and Food Practices

In this chapter I have outlined Yuchi food systems as they appear in the context of ceremonial grounds and churches. Using Polecat ceremonial ground and Pickett Chapel as examples, I surveyed the foodways of Yuchi women as they procure, prepare, distribute, consume and dispose of food. I have shown that the structure of Yuchi foodways is based on a foundation of hospitality and 'helping out'. These are the guiding principles that most influence the ways in which Yuchi women organize their food practices. Helping each other care for families, friends, and visitors is the main objective of any food event in the Yuchi community.

In the next chapter I will analyze the data in terms of women, food, and notions of power. Why is it advantageous for women to extend hospitality to visitors? How does 'helping out' benefit a woman in the Yuchi community? Conversely, does she place herself in a disadvantageous position by not adhering to these guiding principles? I will explore these questions and draw conclusions based on my conversations with the participants and my own observations and interactions with community members.

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[1] Of the Yuchi ceremonial grounds I am most familiar with Polecat, named for its proximity to Polecat Creek. Of the Yuchi churches, I am most familiar with Pickett Chapel United Methodist Church. The data presented in this chapter was gathered in these settings.
[2] Politically, the Yuchis were and still are members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.
[3] "Stomp grounds" refers to stomp dancing, the music and dance genre performed there.
[4] See Jackson 2003 for a detailed discussion of Yuchi town organization, ceremonial grounds, and the annual rituals that take place there.
[5] The notion of "mother ground" or "mother town" relates to the sacred fire maintained at each ceremonial ground. It is believed that embers were carried from the East to start the new fires in Indian Territory. These embers were used to start the sacred fire at Polecat. The fires at Duck Creek and Sand Creek were derived from the fire at Polecat, thus making it the Yuchis' mother ground (Jackson 2003:42-43).

[6] In Oklahoma, a lawn chair which is used by a spectator or participant at any Indian gathering is often referred to as a "powwow chair."

[7] The three major ritual events, the Arbor Dance, Green Corn Ceremony, and Soup Dance take place at Polecat on three consecutive weekends in July. Activities take place primarily on weekends in order to accommodate contemporary work schedules, and some members remain at camp throughout the three-week period. The Green Corn Ceremony is scheduled to coincide with the full moon as closely as possible.

[8] Fasting is a sacrifice to show thanks to the creator for the gift of corn. The act of fasting is viewed as a spiritual cleansing, a process of emptying oneself in preparation for eating corn. Traditionally, fasting (*e-o-peh-neh*) took place over the course of four days to coincide with the ceremonial cycle which lasted four days. Today, fasting (*go-deh-u-tuñ*) lasts for only one day (Bigler, personal communication, 07/13/2004).

[9] Ice is procured on Saturday morning of the Green Corn Ceremony from a vendor who drives his truck up the hill to deliver and sell fifty pound bags of chipped ice and sometimes ice blocks. Women stand in line to purchase the ice, which is hauled to the camps with men's assistance. Ice is installed in old refrigerators which are recycled for use as ice boxes at almost all of the camps, thus keeping fresh food cool until ready for use later in the afternoon.

[10] Creek Nation contributes some money each year to support the activities of each ceremonial ground. Polecat also sponsors at least one winter stomp dance, which is secular in nature and raises funds for the ground. For the occasion of the Green Corn at Polecat, these moneys are divided up by the grounds chief and his assistants, and each camp receives a nominal stipend to defray their expenses.

[11] A fireplace is generally constructed using stacked cinder blocks. One end is left open and the other is enclosed with additional blocks or a movable sheet of metal. The fireplace is topped with a steel grate which is strong enough to hold several large cooking vessels.

[12] Shell-shaking refers to the rhythm of the stomp dance created by the leg rattles worn by the women dancers. Leg rattles are made from nine to twelve turtle shells which have been cleaned and filled with small pebbles. The shells are fastened in rows with leather thongs to a wide section of leather (the tops of old cowboy boots are often used for this purpose). A pair of rattles is then wrapped around the legs of the dancer. Today, evaporated milk cans are often substituted for turtle shells. The rhythm created by experienced shell-shakers helps to move the dancers and songs forward through a long night of dancing.

[13] In 2001, Amy Tiger held the fourth position in the line of women dancers for the Ribbon dance. Women dancers line up roughly in order of seniority and experience. This order is especially evident in the Ribbon dance, which is performed by the women alone on the Saturday afternoon of the Green Corn Ceremony. A young girl dancing for the first time is positioned at the back of the line. She holds this position throughout her life, and as she ages, she moves up the line as more experienced women retire or pass away. The head dancer is thus the oldest active woman in the ceremonial ground. Consequently, she is afforded a high degree of deference and respect (Jackson 2003:78).

[14] 'Helping out' is a key concept among Yuchi people. It connotes sharing the work load and promotion of a sense of community. By helping out, one shows that he or she is willing to work and participate in the life of the community, thus generating a degree of respect for the individual. Schultz (1999) observed a similar phenomenon among Seminole Baptists in Oklahoma referred to as 'doing the work'.

[15] Fourth Sundays are still recognized in some Creek and Yuchi churches. At Pickett Chapel, each Fourth Sunday is commemorated by the sacrament of communion at the end of the church service and a pot luck dinner after the service.

[16] Coley Wildcat and Joseph (a.k.a. Josey or Joe) were brothers to Maxie Wildcat, Maxine and Josephine's father.

[17] Cumsey was Maggie Marsey's father.

[18] Nancy Wildcat was married to Maxine and Josephine's Uncle Joe Wildcat. Together, they served in the ministry of Pickett Chapel for almost 30 years.

[19] Bebe Cumsey was Maggie Marsey's mother. By all accounts, the Cumseys were well respected and much loved members of the Yuchi community.

[20] Josephine and Maxine's paternal grandmother, Eliza, was considered "mother of the church." She had a special seat among the elder women of the church, and upon her death "all during that time, they had a black shawl over where she sat. And that shawl was there for about a month and nobody ever set in that chair" (MWB 01/19/01, p. 6).

[21] Today, a core group of fluent Yuchi speakers get together weekly to work on translations of well-known church songs into the Yuchi language. They also create new words in the Yuchi language to describe modern phenomena such as computers. Mary Linn, a linguistic anthropologist from the University of Oklahoma, has recently been awarded a grant to work with this group of speakers to create a Yuchi dictionary.

[22] Family heads who maintained camp houses included Maxie and Joe Wildcat, John Cooper, Joe Barnett, Andrew Johnson, Rosanna Snapp, Ben Hagie, Micco Behen, Eliza Pickett, Maxey Sims, Johnson Barnett (passed on to Eklarney Cahwee), Joe Davis (passed on to Irene Parkinson), and Lewis Cumsey.

[23] The core group of women consists of five or six Yuchi and non-Yuchi women who organize and implement food events at the church. These women can always be depended on to get the job done. They are usually the first to arrive and the last to leave.

[24] The Methodist women's organization was known as Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) until 1972 when the name was changed to United Methodist women (UMW) (United Methodist Women. http://gbgm-umc.org/umw).

[25] Mutteloke United Methodist Church is located in Bristow, Oklahoma. The church was organized in or about 1953 (The Methodist Church 1953:26) and is named for a Yuchi family by the name of Mutteloke. The church was organized in order to provide a worship place for Yuchi families so that they would not have to travel far to get to church. Many of the first members came from Pickett Chapel.

CHAPTER SIX

OBLIGATION, METAPHOR, AND POWER

> *"Conflicts between masters and apprentices (or, less individualistically, between generations) take place in the course of everyday participation. Shared participation is the stage on which the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the established and the hopeful, act out their differences and discover their commonalities, manifest their fear of one another, and come to terms with their need for one another."*
>
> – Lave and Wenger 1991:116

The previous chapters provide a biographical sketch of six Yuchi women and illuminate their relationship with food and cooking practices within the Yuchi food system. For this study I rely on a handful of elder women. These are not the only women who participate in the Yuchi food system, nor are they the only ones with knowledge of it, but the fact that they take responsibility for keeping the knowledge and leading the practices surrounding the Yuchi food system is the key reason I asked them to participate in this study. I exclude certain Yuchi perspectives: voices of men, voices of children and younger women, and voices of non-Yuchi women who participate in the work surrounding the Yuchi food system at both the ceremonial grounds and the church.

The voices of the women who worked with me on this project reveal some broad patterns that define Yuchi life and what it means to identify as Yuchi. First, from our conversations, it becomes apparent that a complex of obligations frames the lives of the six women. Next, the women engage in symbolic cooking patterns that are carried forward from their childhoods, despite the pressures of contemporary life and their immersion in the wider mainstream society around them. Further extending the

pervasiveness of symbolism in Yuchi food and cooking practices, my observations reveal that certain foods act as symbols that support group solidarity, while objects take on metaphorical significance whose meaning is very clear to women who participate in communal cooking activities. Last, dimensions of power permeate the relationships of Yuchi women in the context of food and cooking.

Obligation

The women who participated in this project are committed to maintaining and perpetuating Yuchi cultural forms and social organization. They feel a sense of obligation – obligation to their families, obligation to other Yuchi people, obligation to their ceremonial grounds and church. Jackson (2003:276-277) describes a similar set of obligations that provides a "central life focus" for many Yuchi people. While Jackson is primarily concerned with ceremonial ground people, his focus on the seriousness with which they approach their obligations certainly applies to church people in the Yuchi community as well.

These obligatory precepts are clearly reflected in the words of Maggie, Viola, Mary, Maxine, Ella, and Josephine in the preceding chapters. Maxine once told me that they were taught how to work as an integral part of their upbringing (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 15), so that it appears to this observer as if helping out and doing the work of the ceremonial grounds and church are second nature to the women of her generation. The work is often hard and takes long hours of standing in the kitchen or under the arbor toiling over steaming pots and pans on the hot stove. Chickens must be cut up, dredged in flour and salt, and fried in huge iron pots of oil, with all the splatters that operation entails. Pots of pinto beans with the requisite hunk of salt pork are cooked for long hours. Gallons of tea are prepared, and cobblers are baked. Tables

are set, and guests are served. Then the meal is over and those same pots and pans must be scoured, the floors mopped, and the trash taken to the dumpster. But many hands pitch in to lighten the load, and the work gets done. The hour has grown late, and after many hours of work, aching backs and feet are ready for a good soak in a hot tub. These women were brought up to work, and work they do.

The foregoing narratives express women's sense of obligation toward visitors through displays of hospitality. Ceremonial grounds women, Ella, Mary, and Viola, clearly indicate their dedication to people from other ritual communities in the context of dances associated with the Green Corn Ceremony. Church women, Maxine, Maggie, and Josephine express a similar dedication to people from other churches and the surrounding community who visit Pickett Chapel. It is clear that Yuchi women do their best to feed visitors well and to make them feel comfortable. Guests often express amazement at the quantity and quality of food and beverage offered by Yuchi cooks. It is at the point when Yuchi women feel a sense of obligation to visitors that the lives of Yuchi people intersect with the lives of their non-Native neighbors as they invite members of the wider community to exhibitions of their cultural patterns through the annual Euchee Heritage Festival, Pickett Chapel's Hallelujah Project, and community Indian taco sales. It is not surprising that the primary focus of each of these events is the food prepared and served by Yuchi women. Indeed, the food may be the overriding reason many visitors decide to attend these events in the first place.

As Jackson (2003:277) suggests, obligation to the Creator and the ancestors may be the primary motivational force in Yuchi life, and it is intimately tied to the perpetuation of Yuchi culture. From the viewpoint of ceremonial ground people, obligation to the Creator and their Yuchi ancestors centers on performing the necessary rituals to facilitate the annual renewal of the world. Church people, too, feel obligation

to their Creator and to their ancestors, as reflected each Sunday when the congregation lifts up songs of praise to God in their native languages, including the Yuchi language, or when they honor God and their ancestors as they celebrate the founding of Pickett Chapel. The women with whom I worked on this project are actively engaged in projects encompassing music and dance, language, sewing, oral history, photographic preservation, and of course, food and cooking. Such projects bring interested Yuchi people together in a give-and-take relationship in which cultural knowledge is passed between elders and younger members of the community. These projects and events help to perpetuate Yuchi cultural patterns and in the process, honor the ancestors who came before.

Symbols and Metaphors

My research project reveals a pattern of symbolic meaning embedded in certain foods and cooking practices. Symbolic food and cooking patterns compose one aspect of Yuchi cultural practice, and taken together, these symbols work to support group solidarity in a community of practice (Brown and Mussell 1984:8; Lave and Wenger 1991). Some of these symbolic patterns are carried forward from childhood, despite the pressures on women to conform to mainstream models of social behavior. In other situations, a particular food may have been infused with symbolic meaning more recently. Either way, strong symbolic statements about identity are expressed through ritual foods and cooking practices as women use them to conjure up what it means to be members of the Yuchi community (Powers and Powers 1984:40).

For example, in the realm of foods that have symbolic meaning for the Yuchi, fry bread is one that was rarely consumed when the women were young girls growing up on the farm. From the interviews I conducted with the participants, it is apparent

that corn bread and biscuits were more commonly found on the family table. Today, however, fry bread is considered a delicacy, and everyone looks for it at communal dinners. Of course, it tastes good, but a woman who takes the time to fry up forty, fifty, or more pieces of bread for a food event is noted for her outstanding achievement. But I think high esteem for the fry bread maker goes deeper than appreciation for her effort at provisioning community members with a tasty treat. Consider that fry bread is not unique to the Yuchis and is relatively widely available to Indians throughout the Southern Plains and beyond. Its significance seems to encompass a deeper symbolic meaning that represents Yuchi inclusion in the wider Native American community. Non-Native people generally do not know how to prepare fry bread and think of it as an "Indian food" as evidenced by the woman who wanted Maxine to give her a recipe for fry bread.

Certain foods, such as wild onions, grape dumplings, sofkee, sour corn bread, and salt pork, have persisted from the women's childhoods. These foods are components of a complex network of foods that "take on a metaphorical meaning as members of the out-group discover the item[s] and try to consume [them]" (Brown and Mussell 1984:8). Native and non-Native residents in the surrounding community flock to food events at Pickett Chapel, such as their annual wild onion dinner and Indian taco sales. Similarly, many attend the annual Green Corn Ceremony and Euchee Heritage Festival. One of the main attractions of these events is the chance to consume delicious foods that are not ordinarily found on the tables of non-Yuchi people. As Brown and Mussell suggest, members of the Yuchi community take special pride in these foods and consider themselves the only ones who know how to prepare and eat them 'correctly.' In general, members of the out-group, especially non-Natives, do not know how to acquire the ingredients for 'special' Yuchi foods and do not know how to prepare them

as evidenced by the 'run' on grape dumplings at the Tulsa Indian Arts Festival. Thus, by preparing these special foods for widely publicized annual events, Yuchi women use foods from their childhood to create a sense of unique identity for the group. Taken together, these special foods become a metaphor for Yuchi identity from the perspective of the Yuchis themselves as well as from the perspective of people outside the Yuchi community. [1]

Symbolic Cooking Patterns

One of the most interesting aspects of this study, I think, concerns the ways in which traditional foods and cooking techniques act as mechanisms for binding the community together, while at the same time, also providing a point of contestation. This irony occurs on different levels. From the perspective of outsiders, both Native and non-Native, those attending a communal food event hosted by the Yuchis look for perceived "traditional" Yuchi foods. The presence of these foods brings status and prestige to the group, and along with the presence of other cultural markers, helps to identify them as uniquely Yuchi in contrast to other Indian groups. At the same time, the presence of traditional foods is a source of prestige for the individual women who prepare and serve them. Women who provide traditional foods are admired and appreciated by visitors.

From the perspective of insiders, the presence of traditional Yuchi foods at various events is expected and appreciated, but not all women prepare time consuming, labor intensive traditional foods. Such situations become a source of disparaging remarks from other Yuchis and diminished prestige for individual women who cut corners by using convenience foods in a social setting. Consider the following quote:

> And it's sad because [the younger ones] have microwave and all this prepared food and everything and it's just so much easier for them. But you know Saturday, we had one chocolate pie that was bought. No one touched it. It was still there Sunday. And I made those three pies and they went just real fast. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 6)

I have identified two major justifications for a woman's failure to provide traditional foods at a food event. For some, convenience foods are necessary as women participate in a wider political-economic setting as wives, mothers, and workers inside and outside the home. They, like mainstream American women everywhere, are pressured by the need to 'do it all' in a limited amount of time. So for a typical Fourth Sunday dinner, a young working woman with a family might bring a pot of franks and saur kraut, macaroni and cheese prepared from a box-mix, or a bought pie rather than a more traditional food that takes hours to prepare. Others have a different practical reason for not preparing traditional foods in certain settings. Some women are getting up in years and have little help with the chore of cooking. At the ceremonial grounds an elderly woman may have a small camp and little help with the chore of cooking. In the context of cooking traditional foods, few hands make heavy work. And even if labor intensive foods were prepared by one or two women for a particular meal, there are often not enough people associated with the small camp to consume it all. Therefore, a woman may ask herself, "What's the point of going to all the trouble to cook?" In such cases, convenience foods, such as pizza, hot dogs, or take-out fried chicken may be a more practical alternative. Cooking time-consuming traditional foods in large quantities is then reserved for the most special ceremonial days such as the Green Corn Festival. Women who choose to take this route generate comment from other members of the group and certainly forfeit a degree of prestige and authority. Metaphorically, choosing not to prepare time consuming, labor intensive foods may be taken as an

indication that a woman is not willing to participate in the work of building and maintaining group identity and cohesion (Williams 1984:122).

The use of modern conveniences at the ceremonial ground has generated controversy over the years as well. Whether it is the use of two-by-fours to construct a family arbor, tarpaulin roofs for shelter, or propane to fuel a cook stove, these and other conveniences are adopted as improvements by some and condemned as sacrilege by others. For most participants, innovations in cultural form and practice do not threaten the integrity of the Yuchi community. For a handful of others who are at odds with those willing to adopt innovative practices in the name of convenience, the alternative is to withdraw from participation with the community in order to maintain a sense of harmony for the group as a whole (Jackson 2003:275).

Object as Metaphor

In her work with the Kodi of Indonesia, Janet Hoskins (1998:2) was able to obtain more introspective, intimate, and personal accounts of people's lives when she asked them about their possessions. She found that ordinary household objects were given special significance by the people who used them, because they are integrally incorporated in the events of a person's life and used as vehicles for a sense of selfhood. In a similar fashion, certain material objects associated with cooking have metaphorical significance in the lives of Yuchi women who participate in communal cooking activities.

For example, aprons generate strong metaphorical associations. I came to this realization – it was a revelation, really – after four hard days of cooking at Pickett Chapel's camp house at the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference Center in Preston, Oklahoma. The occasion was the 2001 Annual Conference, where members of each

church in the district provided three meals a day for delegates participating in the conference. I worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the women of Pickett Chapel over the course of the conference. After the four day weekend, I returned to my home in Norman and was washing my clothes and aprons, when it hit me. Aprons are metaphors for a willingness to help out with the real grunt work of cooking a communal meal. Those who are willing to work hard and do the 'dirty work' of cooking for long hours – peeling potatoes, frying pork, washing dishes, and scrubbing pots and pans – signal their willingness to work by arriving at the food event with apron in hand. Also significant is the fact that even with an apron, on most occasions serious workers wear casual clothing such as t-shirts and jeans or other house clothes while engaged in the practice of cooking.

Those who arrive at a food event without their aprons indicate to the group that they will not be doing too much to help out, perhaps filling drink cups with ice, laying out the flatware on the table, or greeting visitors. No doubt, these tasks are necessary components of the food event, but it is clear that the woman will not be engaged with the behind-the-scenes labor of cooking a large meal which takes place in a hot kitchen. Even worse is arriving at a food event in nice clothing, such as a white tailored blouse and decorative jacket. This is a sure sign the individual is present for little more than providing moral support, thus inviting negative comment from workers in the kitchen and loss of prestige for the well-dressed individual.

The symbolic significance of aprons as metaphors for a willingness to help out with the labor intensive work of cooking is underscored by the fact that a prominent aspect of Yuchi sewing practice revolves around the creation of decorative aprons. Some are crafted from a variety of stylized Indian print fabrics and decorated with creative appliqué figures depicting the rear view of Indian men and women with long

flowing braids crafted of black yarn. Some are decorated with quilted designs passed down by mothers and grandmothers, while others are decorated with fabric diamonds pieced together in a manner similar to Seminole patchwork. Besides aprons, Yuchi seamstresses also handcraft matching potholders, hot pads, and decorative dishtowels to be used in association with their food and cooking practices both at home and in communal settings.

After my revelation in the laundry room led to the realization that 'real' cooks come to a food event with apron in hand, I began to think about other objects associated with Yuchi cooking practices and realized that cooking utensils seem to take on metaphorical significance in a similar way. Earlier in this discussion, I mentioned some of the food processing and cooking utensils that are important components in the Yuchi food system. The traditional corn pounder hand crafted of post oak hardwood, the stoneware crock used in making sour corn bread, large wood paddles for stirring sofkee and other corn recipes in large iron pots all were necessary objects for early twentieth century cooks. A few women today still possess such objects handed down by their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts. One woman I know owns a hand-carved wooden spoon used for serving sofkee. She loaned it to me in the autumn of 2001 to use as part of a display of Yuchi food and cooking practices I put together for an exhibition at the Euchee Heritage Festival. The spoon was very old, perhaps upwards of 100 years or more. I was honored and a little bit nervous that she entrusted it to me and gave me permission to take it home as I created my display. Perhaps the spoon held more significance for me as a very old historical object than it did for her. After all, she grew up seeing such objects on a daily basis, and it had been hanging on the wall of her kitchen for a considerable length of time. I never asked her how she felt

about that spoon, but I certainly was happy to include it as a significant part of my exhibit.

While the sofkee spoon and other old cooking and food processing utensils are historically important, other objects in everyday use seem to take on a high degree of symbolic significance. Again, like aprons, they are linked metaphorically to work and something more. Two kinds of objects stand out – pots and pans and specialized cooking utensils. When I talk about cook pots, I mean large, heavy aluminum stock pots designed for cooking large quantities of food. Pans are even heavier – huge vessels of cast iron, some weighing ten pounds or more without their contents. The size and strength of cooking utensils corresponds to the size and strength of the cook pots. Women obtain such objects in various ways. Some pots, pans, and utensils are passed down from one generation to another, while others are given from one woman to another as gifts. Some women scour yard sales and flea markets looking for old cast-offs which are usually substantially heavier and stronger than any utensils they can purchase new.

A symbolically significant cast iron pan I observed is owned by Mary Watashe. It is round and measures about thirty inches across and four or five inches deep. It is generally used for frying bread. The pan is so big that the cook uses a specially crafted fork for turning the bread so that she doesn't have to get too close to the wood fire. The fork is a standard two-prong cooking fork welded to the shaft of a golf club. One time at Mary's house, that pan and fork were used to fry bread for a large group. The amazing size of the pan and the facility of the long golf club-fork generated much favorable comment from women in attendance who had not seen these objects before. In fact, the women were quite amused that such objects exist at all.

Another cast iron cooking vessel worthy of comment is owned by Maxine Barnett and was given to her by her nephew's wife. It is a large, oval-shaped pan with handles at either end. It measures about twenty inches long, twelve inches wide, and six to eight inches deep. It has a lid, also with handles at either end, which is decorated with an embossed scene of ducks in flight over an autumn landscape. I have seen Maxine use this pan to cook a large quantity of salt pork the day before a wild onion dinner. This example of cast iron workmanship is very unique, and I must admit that when I gazed upon it for the first time, I envied Maxine her beautiful object.

Few cooks possess objects of such size and strength. While these qualities make the objects special, it is not only their unique beauty, size, and character that are noteworthy. These objects, through their uniqueness, possess symbolic meaning that goes deeper than mere visual qualities might suggest. Utensils such as these are used by serious cooks to provision large numbers of people in communal settings, and only serious cooks possess utensils of the caliber I have described here. Thus, these cast iron pans, specially made cooking fork, and similar utensils are metaphors for Yuchi cooks' dedication and service to the community. By extension, cooking objects such as these are symbolic of the Yuchi community itself and women's work that contributes to its production and maintenance.

Dimensions of Power

My investigation in the Yuchi community of cooking practice indicates that participation by newcomers is welcomed and encouraged, and the willingness and ability to perform well enhances one's status in the community. From the forgoing narratives and from my own observations, I have tried to show that learning is facilitated primarily through observation. Learning hinges on *access* to practice as a

resource for learning (Lave and Wenger 1991:85). People learn by participating in society, by *practicing* a skill. Yet, there are mechanisms in place that may limit an apprentice's access to practice, and consequently, her ability to learn.

First, certain cooking duties are carried out only by expert practitioners, often ahead of time in the practitioner's home or otherwise removed from the gaze of the apprentice. In such cases time and convenience may be a factor. It may be easier for a woman to cook certain foods in the comfort of her own home the night before than to arrive at the location of a food event early and have to bring all her cooking apparatus with her. Women rarely bake cobblers in the church kitchen, for example.

Another mechanism that may set limits on the transfer of cooking knowledge from master to apprentice concerns the notion of embodied practice, or 'practical sense,' in which 'social necessity' becomes second nature, expressed by body movements that are unconscious to the practitioner (Bourdieu 1990:69). Thus, a cooking practice such as making corn soup, chicken and dumplings, or fry-bread is a largely unconscious activity for a woman who is an expert cook. After a lifetime of preparing traditional Yuchi foods, a woman knows which utensils to choose, the ingredients, and the quantities. The feel of the dough is inscribed on her body (Foucault 1977/1995). Her actions are largely unconscious after years of practice. Therefore, it might be difficult to explain to a novice all of the steps involved and just what to do in order to properly prepare traditional foods and organize a communal food event. Consequently, the transfer of knowledge is likely compromised to some degree.

At the same time, knowledge acts as a kind of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977) which may be guarded by the 'old timers' who seek to retain their status as bearers of cultural knowledge rather than distributing knowledge freely to newcomers (Lave and

Wenger 1991:122-23). There are times when skilled women seem to closely guard their right to perform cooking duties and the knowledge of how to carry them out properly. One young woman with whom I am acquainted once told me about her frustrations with trying to gain a foothold in a cooking hierarchy that seemed to be "keeping her down" and relegating her to menial duties such as putting ice in drink cups, pouring the tea, placing the paper goods and plastic ware on the pot luck table, and washing dishes. She dearly wanted to work among the more experienced cooks and felt that she had earned a place in their ranks. This is interesting because an expert cook often bears the lion's share of the work – planning the menu for the food event, shopping for the ingredients, spending long hours on her feet over a hot stove – and one would think she would gladly accept any assistance that might relieve her heavy burden. Yet it seems as if by holding on to her burden a woman validates herself as a hard worker, a quality that is highly valued in Yuchi society. At the same time, by choosing not to share her cooking burden, a woman also chooses not to share her cooking knowledge, thus retaining her status as culture bearer, a source of great prestige and authority.

Either way, these mechanisms almost surely limit a newcomer's access to the practice of cooking, consequently limiting her ability to learn and become an expert practitioner herself. As a consequence of this incomplete learning, particular skills are modified as the apprentice improvises in her attempt to move from periphery to legitimacy in the community. While apprentices engage in the process of moving from the periphery to fuller participation in the community, transforming cooking practices along the way, it follows that the larger community of practice, while reproducing itself through its apprentices, is also transformed (Hanks 1991:15-16). In this way, masters, the bearers of knowledge, and their apprentices reproduce and reshape cultural traditions while negotiating access to cooking practice. Consequently, through their

symbolic relationship with foods, cooking practices, and objects, Yuchi women are infused with the power to reproduce and transform a community of practice[2] as they distribute and withhold food knowledge in their association with young girls and newcomers, apprentices in the community. Thus, Yuchi women hold the key to maintaining and reshaping the cultural practice of cooking.

It is apparent that apprentices and newcomers need masters to demonstrate the proper performance of cooking practice, while on the other side of the coin, masters need apprentices to carry on the work and reproduce the community of practice. Access to practice is negotiated, the community of practice is transformed in the process, and ways of doing things change over time. Recipes and techniques for preparing certain foods may be forgotten. For example, several women mentioned how much they loved eating sweet tomatoes as children, but none could recall exactly how they are prepared. Knowledge about how to prepare hominy is almost completely gone. Some of the older women can talk about some of the steps in making it, but it has been many years since any women in the Yuchi community actually practiced its preparation from start to finish.

As knowledge surrounding certain common foods fall into decline, new kinds of foods and cooking techniques are introduced. Fry bread has grown in popularity in recent years as it has become more acceptable and advantageous to self-identify as Native American. I have already mentioned the popularity of convenience foods such as hot dogs, macaroni and cheese from a box, and fast food. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, and McDonald's are all popular places to eat. Eating out in restaurants – including Chinese, Mexican, Italian, and other ethnic cuisines – are widespread now that Yuchi women are busy members of mainstream American society. New cooking techniques used by today's Yuchi women may include bar-b-que grilling, use of crock

pots, and microwave ovens. No doubt some of today's Yuchi households are even equipped with a George Foreman grill. These cooking techniques were unheard of in their mothers' and grandmothers' days.

Prospects for the Future

From the perspective of the participants in this project, the future of traditional Yuchi cooking looks rather grim. Maxine pretty much sums it up for everyone when she says, "We said, my generation now, people my age who are out there in the kitchen now, that when we're gone, I think that fry bread and all this stuff that we cook, it's going to be gone, it's going to go with us. Because these younger ones will not get in the kitchen and cook" (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 6). However, Maxine admits that younger women like her daughter know how to make certain dishes, but her daughter is not active in church where she can put her knowledge to use for the benefit of the group. Ella has experienced the same dilemma with her daughter who used to be the principle cook for Ella's camp at the ceremonial grounds but then moved away, taking her expertise with her. The elder women are sad about these kinds of situations and the general trend toward cutting corners, reliance on convenience foods, and shirking the sense of duty that was instilled in them from a young age.

> Younger women "don't help that much. They wouldn't make fry bread. I don't think they would....A lot of people cook their beans in the crock pot. That's fine, but I'd rather put mine on the stove and cook it.... [They rely on] short cuts, and it's just like the language. The language is gone now. And so the traditional foods are going. ...I think there are very few people...would sit down with a pot of beans. It's going to keep you home at least a couple of hours.... I just don't like them cooked in the slow cooker. I mean I think you get a better taste when you cook them [on the stove]. (MWB 01/12/2001, p. 6)

Yet the elders still tell their children and grandchildren about the old ways, hoping against hope that the young people will hear and want to carry on with at least some of

the traditions and cultural practices that are on the decline and perhaps revive some that have fallen into disuse.

> I talk to my daughter and the grand kids and I tell them, "This is how it used to be." I said, "Now we don't do it anymore." And I said, 'Trying to keep our language, maybe y'all can keep some of the ways, keep that too." (MCM 02/16/2001, p. 21)

I have asked myself if Yuchi ancestors through the ages had the same concerns for their future that the women in this project express. Did early twentieth century women worry that Yuchi foodways might fade into oblivion as they watched their daughters go off to boarding school and return with new ideas and ways of doing things? I believe this was a likely concern for them. Yet, their daughters had watched what their mothers and grandmothers did in the kitchen. They paid attention and remembered how their mothers' hands moved as they went about their chores in the kitchen. They remembered the sounds and smells of food being prepared. Some cooking practices were improvised, and Yuchi culture was transformed in the process. Some recipes have been forgotten, but much remains.

If it is true that "real Yuchiness is located not in genealogy but in engagement with other Yuchi people in public settings" (Jackson 2003:275), then it is safe to say that as long as people who self-identify as Yuchi gather together to do the work of being Yuchi, Yuchi foodways will remain intact, although transformed without a doubt. As elders pass on and younger women take their place, a uniquely Yuchi food system will be reproduced. Simply put, the key component of the Yuchi food system is not the particular foods that are included in that system. Rather, it is the underlying patterns of obligations, symbols, and metaphors that are significant and enduring because of the meanings attached to them. Therefore, a woman who cuts corners by serving hot dogs or pizza at a communal event is considered no less Yuchi for doing so. While her choice

of food may be a topic for comment, her identity as a Yuchi woman participating in the work of maintaining a camp and tending to visitors remains uncompromised. Thus, the meaning attached to certain foods and cooking practices is far more crucial than the foods themselves for perpetuating a food system that is recognized as part of the Yuchi cultural complex. I hope the women who participated in this project and all Yuchi women will take heart. I hope they will view the evidence presented in this study and rest assured in the belief that their unique food system will go forward into the future. Today's elders have instilled a sense of obligation in their daughters, the same sense of obligation their mothers passed on to them decades ago. Daughters are watching their elders cook even now, and whether consciously or unconsciously, the age-old cycle continues in which bearers of knowledge pass that knowledge on to their daughters. That is how Yuchi foodways will be produced and reproduced just as they have been for generations.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Readers of this research are likely to be both Native and non-Native. Many will be scholars who understand that ethnographic research merely introduces a topic, and that its true value lies in revealing directions for future research. My hope is that while providing an incomplete view of Yuchi life, this study adds to the existing ethnographic literature concerning the Yuchi. On its own, no ethnography can address Yuchi life and culture as an organic whole, but yet taken together, recent literature, focusing on various aspects of Yuchi life such as religion and ritual, political organization, and language and its preservation, begins to create a snapshot of Yuchi life and what it means to self-identify as Yuchi, thus providing the reader with the basis for better understanding this interesting and diverse group of people who call themselves Yuchi.

I am content if this study concerning Yuchi women and their food system contributes in a small way to creating wider view of Yuchi life. More importantly, my primary goal in conducting this study and recording my findings in this paper is to honor all the women who 'help out' with the work of being Yuchi, and to give them a sense of hope that Yuchi foodways will endure through the ages.

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[1] Other cultural forms, such as language, traditional clothing styles, songs, and ritual practices are effective markers of identity that contribute to group distinctiveness. As was noted earlier there are similarities between Yuchi and Creek foodways since the two groups live in close proximity to each other and are linked historically, politically, and economically. A similar linkage also applies to the Yuchi and other Native southeastern groups. Members of Yuchi, Creek, and other Indian tribes of southeastern origin all enjoy eating wild onions and salt pork, for example. Because of the popularity of wild onions in eastern Oklahoma, members of Southern Plains Indian organizations have tried to duplicate the success of springtime fundraisers centered on wild onions. I attended one of these wild onion dinners in Norman, where the wild onion concoction consisted primarily of scrambled eggs with a few wild onions mixed in. It was a far different recipe than the one Yuchi women prepare. This difference may have had to do with availability of the onions, but Yuchi women at Pickett Chapel undoubtedly have the contacts necessary for acquiring abundant quantities of wild onions and the knowledge of how to prepare them 'correctly.'

[2] A community of practice is characterized as a unique set of relations among persons, activities, and world over time (Lave and Wenger 1991:98).

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