

ACCULTURATION OF THE CHOCTAW AND COMANCHE  
INDIANS: A QUANTITATIVE  
STUDY OF THE FAMILY,  
1900

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## PREFACE

The history of the United States, indeed all of the Americas, owes much of its uniqueness to the relationships that emerged where diverse races and cultures met and mixed. Particularly, as a consequence of miscegenation, the lines between red, white and black began to blurr. However, it was not just the colors of the people's skin which changed hue, but the complexion of the cultures as well. This study concerns itself with the relationship between two groups of North American Indians and the whites with which they came in contact. In particular this investigation will attempt to compare and contrast the experiences of the Choctaw and Comanche tribes and how they chose to acculturate to a society dominated by white Americans. The Choctaws were a strong and powerful tribe among the Indians of the Southeast; while the Comanches were known as the "lords" of the Southern Plains. The culture and experiences of both tribes were similar to those of the other Indian groups in their regions; thus the two present an interesting case study of how distinct Native American cultures approached acculturation. This study argues that the most important element in the successful transition of a society from one cultural system to another is the evolution of a metis or

mixed blood class. Specifically among the Choctaws, a large class of mixed bloods made that tribe's acculturation much smoother by 1900 than that of the Comanches.

This study traces the cultural changes in both tribes from their primitive cultures to the end of the nineteenth century. At that point the United States abruptly abolished the tribal government of both the Choctaws and Comanches. The first two chapters follow the two tribes from their aboriginal condition to the end of the American Civil War. It was during this early period that we see both tribes confronted with the new and strange ways of the white man. It becomes apparent that the lifestyle and environment of the Choctaws and Comanches caused them to take radically different approaches to the process of accommodation. This early period was distinguished from the period after 1865 by the independence and autonomy of both tribes in picking and choosing what they would accept from white society and how they would accommodate to it.

After the American Civil War, the United States implemented its reservation system and became much more actively involved in the acculturation process. This period lasted until 1900 and ended with the allotment of tribal land in severalty and the dissolution of tribal governments. From 1865 until 1900 the two tribes maintained a distinct and separate identity from white society, yet they ceased to function as autonomous groups. While on their reservations both groups were under the scrutiny and discretion of the

United States government, which instituted a series of programs designed to speed up the Indians' acculturation and promote their successful assimilation into the greater white society.

In order to see how far the two tribes had progressed in the process of change, and perhaps even to enlighten us as to key elements in these changes, the study utilized the United States 1900 Manuscript Census schedule. Because they formed the basic social level of both Choctaw and Comanche societies, household units were carefully examined. By studying the size, structure, and membership of the households, as well as some particulars about the individuals who comprised the household, it is possible to discern in what ways the two tribes differed from their primitive states, each other, and white Americans in general as of 1900. The information from the census on literacy, ability to speak English, and occupations as well as information on each individual's age, sex, place of birth and degree of Indian blood gave added insight as to how the Comanches and Choctaws had acculturated as social groups rather than merely as individuals. Instead of providing a traditional portrait of the experiences of a few - usually elite - individuals, the census gives a picture of the entire tribe at one instant in time.

This study represents more than the efforts of just the author. I would like to express my appreciation to the

staff of the Oklahoma State University Library and the Stillwater Public Library. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Smith and Dr. Joseph Stout for reading and giving constructive comments on my work. A special thanks goes to Dr. Richard Rohrs for his extensive and unending assistance in handling the quantification of the census material in this study. In particular, I thank Dr. Baird whose advice, encouragement and personal example got me through this project. And, as always, I am indebted to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Weisend, whose constant love and support has been a necessary part of this and all of my accomplishments.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PRE-CIVIL WAR CHOCTAWS

From their first contact with white men until the American Civil War, the Choctaw Indians underwent a remarkable process of cultural evolution. During the 300 year period they slowly incorporated into their society and culture technology, ideas, beliefs, and even social institutions of white civilization. This selective, unforced mode of acculturation lasted until the close of the American Civil War, when the United States government decided to become more involved in the process. Prior to the United States interference, however, white traders marrying into the tribe, and their metis (mixed blood) offspring provided the guidance for the Choctaw's acculturation. Through the mixing of white and Indian blood the tribe underwent a cultural transformation affecting every aspect of tribal society.

For 250 years the Choctaw's interaction with Europeans was on political or economic levels. While exploring the North American Southeast in 1540, Hernando DeSoto encountered the Choctaws. A bloody military conflict occurred with severe losses for both sides. DeSoto moved on, but the memory of his actions stayed with the tribe,

giving them a taste of white men's diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> French and English traders made intermittent contact with the tribe in the late seventeenth century. But during the next century the Choctaws became involved in the struggle between the French, English, Spanish and later the United States for control of North America. The fur trade and the many other natural resources attracted the European colonial powers into the Choctaw domain. Three main trade routes, extending from north to south through the tribe's territory to Mobile Bay on the Gulf Coast, gave the Choctaws effective control over much of the French commerce moving south from the upper Mississippi Valley. Moreover, the Camino Real, an east to west trail, was famous as the primary land route for Spanish trade between San Augustine, Florida, and Mexico City.<sup>2</sup> Because the Choctaws had a population of some 20,000, the European powers constantly intrigued for military and trade alliances with the tribe until the early nineteenth century when the United States established firm control over the Mississippi Valley and the Southeast.<sup>3</sup>

The Choctaws became deeply involved in the European struggles in the New World in part because they developed a dependency on European trade goods. For a hundred years after the late seventeenth century, they had slowly absorbed European technology into their culture, and experienced major changes in their lifestyle. White traders brought guns and a demand for furs which caused the tribe to deplete

its local resources to such an extent that it was no longer self-sufficient. The loss of hunting forced the Choctaws to become more reliant on agriculture and domestic animals introduced by the Europeans; such changes significantly modified their economy. Horses, cattle, hogs, and barnyard fowl made their agrarian life style much more productive than had their aboriginal farming efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to European contact the Choctaws had lived in small communities scattered over eastern Mississippi and western Alabama. The farming was small scale and heavily supplemented by hunting for meat and furs, fishing, and gathering of roots, nuts and berries. The primary crop was corn, but they also grew beans, melons, and pumpkins. Individual families raised their crops in small gardens near their cabins.<sup>5</sup> The Choctaws built these primitive cabins in clusters, in neighborhoods based on kinship, allowing for greater group effort at planting and harvesting time. Because of their failure to utilize fertilizer on their fields, the soil wore out fairly rapidly, and the Indians continually had to break new soil. The process of tilling new ground was very hard labor, especially so for the Choctaws who lacked large draft animals to work in the fields. All of these factors kept agricultural production too low to allow for significant concentrations of population. The dispersed nature of the Choctaws' economy influenced other social institutions and cultural practices.<sup>6</sup>

The Choctaw's concept of communal ownership of land and resources was a very important factor in the tribal way of life. As the tribe held its entire land holdings in common, it could only be sold by the tribe as a whole. The individual could lay claim only to that property which he was using; he lost claim to the land and its improvements as soon as he left the property. This communalism influenced the economic and social systems by inhibiting the accumulation of wealth needed to create large scale agricultural production and a stratified society. This communal land system helped eliminate much of the individual materialism inherent in Western cultures and may have been a primary reason for the Choctaw's lack of a written legal code. With no sense of property and a simple agrarian economy based on barter, there were few disputes over ownership or contracts which required a well organized, established judicial power in the society.<sup>7</sup>

Simultaneously, the primitive Choctaws had an effective political organization. Power within the tribe was decentralized and dispersed among the communities. The elder warriors within each community formed a council which made decisions affecting the group. The council delegated the day to day decisions to a head chief and his several subordinates. Chosen from among the most successful warriors within the community, the local chiefs implemented the policies or decisions made by the council on such matters as ceremonies, feasts, dances, war parties, or

diplomacy. The headman from each family within the community took part in the council. Every member of the tribe was directly represented on the local level through a family headman.<sup>8</sup>

The Choctaws divided their nation into three geographical districts based on clan divisions within the tribe. Each district also had a council and a chief. These officials directed tribal action on a regional level and also served as delegates to the larger national council, which decided matters concerning the welfare of the entire tribe. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the district officials made most of the decisions affecting their region. But with the large scale warfare introduced by the Europeans and the diplomatic intrigues of the whites, the Choctaws were forced to rely more on their national council to make consistent and effective tribal policies. The districts thus relinquished some of their control over major war parties, tribal alliances and land cessions.

The different councils did not have legislative powers in the sense of a written code of law. The Choctaws conceived council decrees as statements of social customs, to be judged and accepted on an individual basis.<sup>9</sup> The chiefs and council members constituted a non-hereditary aristocracy within the tribe. They had earned respect and esteem by success in battle, by their ability to provide for their families and by their generosity and honesty. Within

the warrior ranks a hierarchy did exist. This hierarchy carried over into the general population and raised the families of renowned warriors to a higher social status. The warrior's prestige, however, could not be passed on to his sons. Although there was no formal body to enforce norms of the tribe, peer group praise or admonishment did cause the warriors to conform to certain social standards.<sup>10</sup>

The Choctaws divided themselves into two moieties the Imoklasha and the Inhulata, and then divided each moiety into six or eight clans. The moiety and clans were groups composed of individuals tracing their descent back to a distant but supposedly common ancestor. Because of their kinship ties, the individuals in the clans were bound by custom to aid and protect one another. The members had collective responsibilities which included the obligation on the part of the group to avenge the murder of one of its members. Members of the same kingroup, however, were not allowed to marry within the same clan or moiety. Besides being exogamous, the two groups utilized a matrilineal descent system; only those individuals on a person's mother's side were considered his blood relatives or part of his clan. The moiety and clan provided each individual with a social boundary. They defined who was a close friend, an ally, or an enemy and how one should act toward them. In this way individuals knew where they stood in Choctaw society and what was expected of them.<sup>11</sup>



In everyday practice, however, the clan served more as a political body than a social one. The tribe selected its political and religious leaders from the principle clans in each moiety. It also protected the rights and property of their members, retaliating as a group if any one of their members was wronged. The clans themselves were not economic units but rather comprised the body responsible for maintaining social order among its members.<sup>12</sup>

The kingroup, as opposed to clans, was the most important association to which individual Choctaws could belong. It consisted of blood relatives only, that is people who could actually trace their relations back to a common ancestor. These relatives usually settled in the same community and worked together as an economic unit which also allowed them to function as a direct and effective means of social control. It was the economic element that distinguished the kingroup from the clan.

Because the Choctaws reckoned descent matrilineally, the children and property of a Choctaw family belonged to the wife's kingroup. If the husband and wife separated or the wife died, the wife's kingroup would assume authority over the couple's children and belongings. Because of the descent system, the importance and independence of the simple family (a couple and their children) was not overly significant. The simple family was merely a small part of a much larger extended family network, held together by the matrilineal descent system. The extended family was

responsible for the care of its sick and elderly, defending its members from attack, and avenging a member's murder. The kingroup was the primary source of identity and security for a Choctaw; without kin support an individual's chances of survival were slim.<sup>13</sup> The kinship and descent systems of the Choctaw were to become the initial and primary focus of change initiated by whites who intermarried later.

Despite the lack of emphasis on the nuclear or simple family, marriage was important in the operation of the kinship and clan systems. The original marriage ceremony was rather simple and lacked in ritual. The eligible men and women had some say in choosing their spouse so long as they married outside of their moiety and clan. After selecting a prospective wife, a man would go to the mother and the maternal uncle of the intended bride and indicate his intentions by offering them presents. If they approved of the match and the intended bride agreed, they would accept the man's gifts and the marriage was official. By this simple act the husband had purchased a bride and created a bond between two kingroups.<sup>14</sup>

The tribe allowed men to have more than one wife at a time. Because few Choctaw men could support more than one family, however, the practice was never extensive. Most parents would not give their daughter to a man as his second wife unless he carried great respect within the community. Since respect usually came with age and leadership, polygamy

was limited to an elite within the tribe. Even then the second wife was generally a sister of his first wife. This arrangement was preferred because the Choctaws believed sisters would get along better than two wives who were strangers to one another. The parents usually preferred such so-called polygamy because it tied the husband's kingroup even more closely to their own.<sup>15</sup>

A marriage could be dissolved by either the husband or wife moving out or by the wife being caught committing adultery. Separation was rare, but when it did occur, the wife and her kingroup maintained custody of the children and control of the property. In the case of adultery, the wife was subject to the punishment of her husband. He usually divorced her, forcing her to either rejoin her family (if they would take her) or to join a class of women living as prostitutes.<sup>16</sup>

Within the Choctaws' primitive agrarian and hunting society, a very distinct division of labor between the husband and wife existed. The man was the warrior, hunter, and tribal leader. The wife, assisted by her daughters, younger sons, and neighboring female kin, attended to all the manual labor.<sup>17</sup> This division of responsibilities generally made life within the Choctaw family very relaxed. Because of the matrilineal descent system and the emphasis on the extended kingroup, the husband was only a nominal figure in his children's upbringing. The wife's brother took charge of his sister's children and disciplined them

when necessary. Thus, the aboriginal Choctaw family was much different from that which existed among the Europeans.<sup>18</sup>

Because of a high infant mortality rate (which got even higher when Europeans introduced new diseases to the tribe), the number of children per household was small. If the children stayed healthy, however, their activities were subject to little restraint by adults. Retired warriors taught the boys the proper techniques of hunting and war while old women helped instruct the young girls in domestic skills. The education of children was by imitation and practice; children used their elders as role models and played games which developed the skills they would need as adults.<sup>19</sup>

Although the Choctaws had developed a dependence on European manufactured goods earlier, it was not until the last quarter of the eighteenth century that European traders actually begin settling among them. According to one observer, the tribe initially feared the impact of intermarriage on its tribal culture.

A white man at an early day, came into their country, and in the course of time married a Choctaw girl and as a natural result, a child was born. Soon after the arrival of the little stranger (the first of its type among them), a council was called to consider the propriety of permitting white men to marry the women of the Choctaws. If it was permitted, they argued, the whites would become more numerous and eventually destroy their national characteristics. Therefore it was determined to stop all future marriages between the Choctaw and the White Race, and at once, ordered the white man to leave their

country, and the child killed. A committee was appointed to carry the decision into execution, yet felt reluctant to kill the child. In the meantime the mother, hearing of the resolution passed by the council, hid the child, and when the committee arrived they failed to find it, and willingly reported that the Great Spirit had taken it away. The mother kept it concealed for several weeks, and then secretly brought it back one night, and told her friends the next morning that the Great Spirit had returned during the night with her child and placed it by her side as she slept. The committee had previously decided, however, that if the child returned it might live; but if it never came back, they then would know that the Great Spirit had taken it. The boy was ever afterwards regarded as being under special care of the Great Spirit, and became a chief of their Nation. The law was repealed; the father recalled and adopted as one of the tribe; and thus continued from that day to this - so affirms one of their ancient traditions.<sup>20</sup>

The account parallels the ancient story of Moses, but it does reflect the concern of the Choctaws at the presence of white men.

Nevertheless, after the 1770's such French and English names as Folsom, LeFlore, Durant, Harkins, and Pitchlynn began appearing among Choctaw families. Their mixed blood progeny would become an aristocracy within the tribe. Besides articles of trade, these Europeans brought with them beliefs, attitudes, and desires typical of a culture that differed significantly from the Choctaws. The matrilineal descent system of the tribe made it natural for the Choctaws to consider the metis offspring as one of themselves. Many fullblood Choctaws might easily dismiss intermarried whites as interlopers, but the mixed blood children were hard to reject out-of-hand.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps the most significant family in leading the Choctaws toward acculturation was that of John Pitchlynn. He married twice, both times to mixed blood women, and he sired a total of ten children. His large family was typical of nearly all intermarried whites, as was his involvement in tribal politics, diplomacy, and in establishing new tribal institutions dedicated to the Choctaws' acculturation. When he first arrived among the Choctaws he established himself as a trader. Through his business dealings as middleman between the Indians and the United States companies, he maintained contact with important government officials. He often acted as a lobbyist for United States policies within the tribe, and he was especially instrumental in helping Chief Pushmataha convince the Choctaws to support the United States rather than Great Britain during the War of 1812. In many instances the United States paid him well for his services, but Pitchlynn never appeared to act against what he thought to be the best interests of the tribe<sup>22</sup>

Pitchlynn's involvement in establishing a school system modeled on those in the United States suggested his important role. When the Presbyterian missionary, Cyrus Kingsbury, appeared among the Choctaws in 1818, Pitchlynn immediately pressed him to establish a mission school near his home, a plea that was implemented within two years. Pitchlynn also used his position and influence as interpreter and lobbyist during the treaty negotiations in 1820 and 1825 to have tribal funds set aside for Choctaw

schools. He believed that young Choctaw and especially his own children must acquire a good Christian education if they were to cope with cultural changes imposed on them by encroaching Anglos. Cyrus Kingsbury and the other missionaries agreed with Pitchlynn and envisioned an educational system that would provide two levels of training; first, a series of mission schools which would begin the process of civilizing the fullbloods, and second, more advanced schools that would prepare the most exceptional children to take over the tribal leadership.<sup>23</sup>

Pitchlynn, along with other intermarried whites also introduced major economic changes to the tribe. Expanding his enterprises from a trading post, he became a farmer and cattle rancher. He and other intermarried whites also brought pigs and domestic fowl to the Choctaws in such large numbers as to reduce considerably the tribe's reliance on hunting to supplement its diet. These men also introduced the use of fertilizers and implements, which if used with a horse or ox, allowed the Indians to expand their fields and production. With the increasing productivity of their fields and growing herds of domestic animals, men such as Pitchlynn introduced the concept of personal accumulation of wealth - an idea quite alien to the Choctaws.<sup>24</sup>

To succeed at large scale agricultural production the intermarried whites needed a large, hard working labor force, which black slaves came to fill. Slavery was not

unknown to the Choctaws prior to the arrival of the white man; actually the practice had been quite common. The Indians, however, traditionally made slaves of those men and women taken as prisoners in war. Servitude was rarely life long, and it was not a hereditary status. The Indians did not look down on a slave as an inferior being, but rather as someone who owed his master labor for having been spared his life. The white men, however, brought in black slaves and the racism that went with the system. Men such as Pitchlynn saw that the fullblood Choctaws had no desire to perform the hard physical labor needed to manage his cattle herds, raise his vegetables, or most importantly, tend his cotton fields. The intermarried whites merely extended the southern plantation system into the Choctaw Nation.<sup>25</sup>

The educational system, large scale agriculture, and slavery as an institution, affected only a small segment of the Choctaw's population. Every member of the tribe, however, was affected by actions of Pitchlynn, the other intermarried whites, and the missionaries that altered the Choctaws kinship system. From 1800 to removal in the 1830's, there was a noticeable shift from matrilineal to a patrilineal descent system, as the white men sought to maintain control of the wealth they had accumulated and to retain authority over their children. The missionaries saw the change as a vital step in converting the Choctaws into a "civilized" and Christian people. Altering of tribes descent system affected more than the inheritance laws and



custody of the children. The organization and foundation of the family, kingroup, clan, and moiety changed, causing great ambiguity for the individual Choctaw trying to define his place in society. Pitchlynn and his cohorts probably had little appreciation for the magnitude of social change they were encouraging.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the Choctaws allowed such a radical alteration in their social structure because they were preoccupied with a much more immediate and visible threat to their tribal existence. As the United States gained an increasingly firm grip on the Mississippi River and the Southeast after 1800, white settlers began surging westward toward the Choctaw Nation. Even though the Choctaws had been allies of the United States in the War of 1812 and had signed a treaty of alliance based on the equality and sovereignty of the two nations in 1818, many Americans still demanded Indian removal west of the Mississippi. The United States began to pressure the tribe to move to lands set aside for them in Oklahoma and Arkansas. In 1820, hoping to preserve their cultural integrity and tribal legitimacy by putting as much distance between themselves and white settlers as possible, the Choctaws signed the Treaty of Doak's Stand with the United States. The United States forced a revision of the Doak's Stand Treaty in 1825, taking back lands in western Arkansas initially set aside for the Choctaws. Together the two treaties required that the Choctaws cede most of their

traditional lands in Mississippi for territory in the southern half of Oklahoma. The tribe was to receive educational benefits, a United States agent for the western reserve, immigration assistance, and funding for the Choctaws' new policemen called "lighthorsemen". Neither the 1820 nor 1825 treaty provided for the forced removal of the Choctaw, but the reaction of the white settlers and the Mississippi government made such removal inevitable.<sup>27</sup>

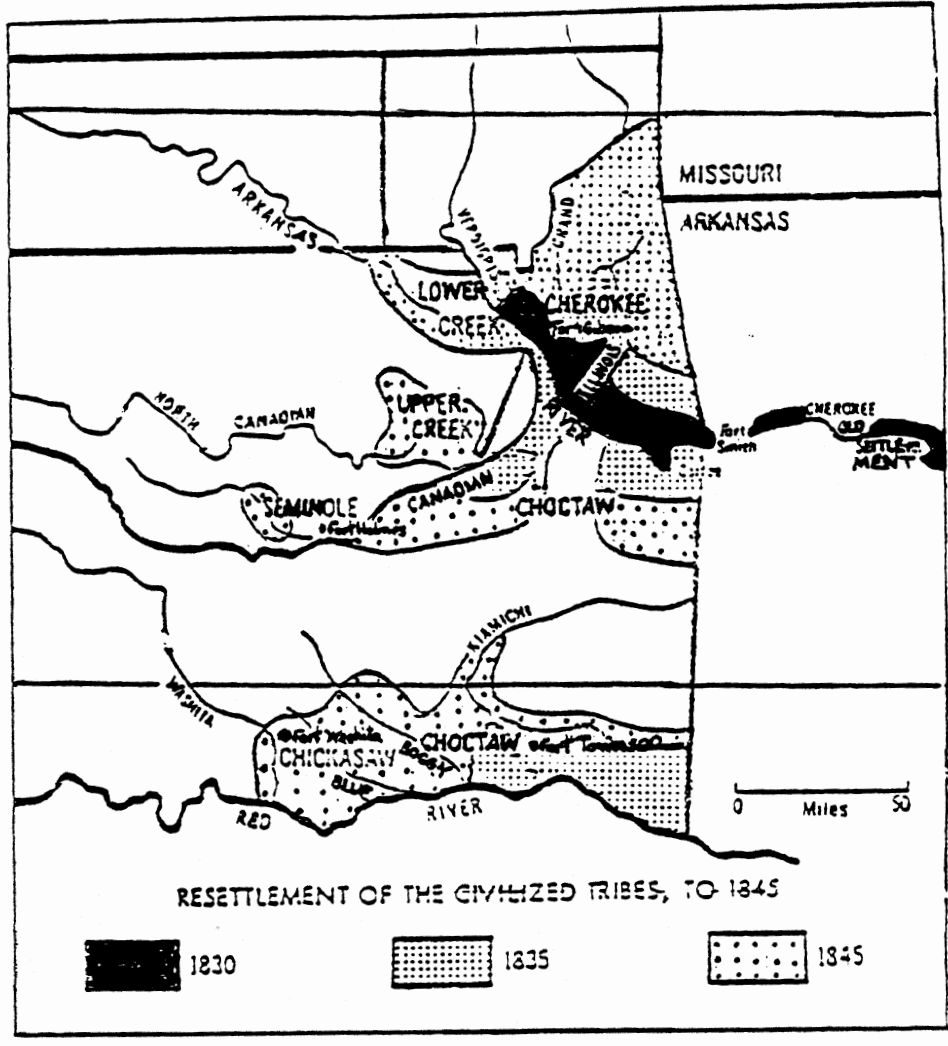
The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830 made forced removal part of official United States Indian policy. The treaty required the cession of all the Choctaws' tribal land in Mississippi, but provided 640 acre allotments to individual Choctaws who wanted to stay. Those Indians who chose to emigrate were to receive transportation to Oklahoma and subsistence for their first three years there. Also annuities were set aside to support the tribal government and schools. Another important clause in the treaty allowed for the establishment of a sovereign Choctaw constitutional government.

The treaty resulted in a drastic social deterioration of the tribe. Severe internal fighting between those factions for and against removal nearly culminated in a civil war. The presence of the United State's officials, maintained the peace and forced the Choctaws to accept the treaty and the subsequent removal of the tribe which took place from 1831 to 1833.<sup>28</sup>

During the 1830's and 1840's, the physical act of moving and then the process of rebuilding nearly the entire Nation dearly cost the tribe of 19,000 citizens. During this period its population declined to 14,000.<sup>29</sup> Economic, social and political disruption threatened the tribe's very existence. But under the guidance of the ascending mixed bloods, the Choctaws initiated -- or expanded upon -- modifications of their tribal institutions. From removal until the beginning of the Civil War, the mixed bloods implemented a series of reforms which enabled the Choctaw society to meet the demands of an ever expanding and dominant United States.

The Choctaws attempted to rebuild in Oklahoma the economy they had left behind in Mississippi. Between 1831 and 1833 groups along the Arkansas, Red and Muddy Rivers, generally recreated the three geopolitical districts that had existed in Mississippi. The mixed bloods established themselves primarily on large farms and cattle ranches along Red River, which gave them fair access to trade with Louisiana. The fullbloods slowly dispersed into the northeastern hinterland and reestablished their traditional agrarian communities (see Figure 1).<sup>30</sup>

In their new domain, the extended family units of the fullbloods tended their small gardens of corn and other vegetables and utilized for meat the pigs, cattle, and chickens which roamed the countryside. They also hunted and fished to supplement their domestic production. The



Source: Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 80.

Figure 1. Resettlement of the Five Civilized Tribes, to 1845

fullbloods continued the tradition of producing at a mere subsistence level, taking little part in the economic boom which the Choctaw Nation experienced in the late 1840's and 1850's.<sup>31</sup>

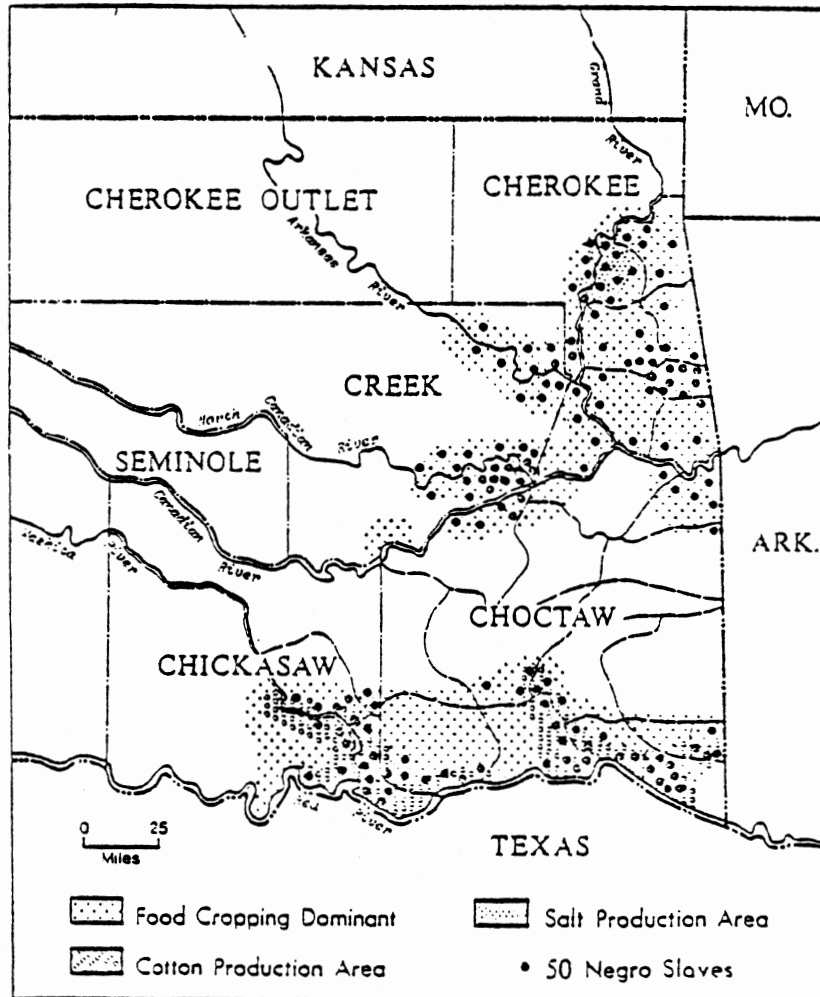
In the fertile river bottoms the mixed bloods depended more than ever on black slaves to operate their cotton plantations and cattle ranches. The slaves' stamina and industrious nature (in comparison to the Choctaws themselves) made the blacks essential to the mixed bloods agricultural activity. By 1860 some 344 Choctaw citizens were slave holders, although this represented only 3 percent of the total Indian population; 84 percent owned ten slaves or less. About 5 percent of the Choctaws, almost exclusively mixed bloods, owned twenty slaves or more.<sup>32</sup> Robert M. Jones, probably the wealthiest member of the tribe, owned over 500 slaves.<sup>33</sup>

Over time the slave's labors shifted from that of a cotton cultivator to that of a cowboy. While they were in Mississippi the Choctaws had direct and easy access to the markets of the lower Mississippi Valley and cotton production was the tribe's most important export. In Oklahoma the industry suffered from a lack of adequate transportation, primarily because the Red River was not a dependable water route. Nevertheless, cotton exports reached 1,000 bales a year by 1840.<sup>34</sup> Thereafter, the relative importance of cotton to the tribal economy declined. The prairie lands of Oklahoma and the

accessability of overland markets made the range cattle industry more significant. Thus the slaves became cowboys, herding and driving the cattle across the Choctaws' communal grazing lands.<sup>35</sup> Figure 2 reflects the population and economic patterns of the Choctaw Nation prior to the Civil War.

Of the total Choctaw population, the slaves formed only 3 percent in 1830 and no more than 8 percent by 1860. Generally intermarried whites and mixed bloods alone had the capital to buy slaves, so the poorer Choctaws turned to hiring white laborers. As early as 1836 the tribe required all white men who wished to work in the Nation to obtain a written permit from the chief or agent. In 1830 only 1 percent of the population was non-intermarried white, but by 1860 some 5 percent fell into this group.<sup>36</sup>

Settled along the river bottoms with the mixed bloods, a sizable majority of the whites were from the upper southern states of Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and the Carolinas. These newcomers were yeoman farmers who fit in well with the agricultural system already existing in the Nation. Many apparently stopped in the Choctaw Nation while moving to Texas, and then decided to stay. No more than 5 percent brought slaves with them, but they did bring an industrious attitude and improved agricultural technology. The combination of slave labor and white tenants, some of whom married into the tribe, spurred the



Source: Doran, "Negro Slaves," p. 343.

Figure 2. Population and Economic Patterns, 1860

Choctaws to increased economic growth which was only cut short by the United States Civil War.<sup>37</sup>

Once a majority of the tribal citizenry had relocated in Oklahoma, the Choctaws tried to devise a new political system. The tribe had written a code of laws in 1820 and had ratified a formal constitution in 1826, but it merely put into writing traditional Choctaw customs and decentralized governmental standards. Led by Peter Pitchlynn, mixed blood son of John Pitchlynn, the Choctaws wrote a new constitution in 1834. They used the Mississippi state constitution (ratified in 1817) as a model, establishing three branches of government and providing a bill of rights. The legislative branch was unicameral; the executive consisted of three elected district chiefs; and the judiciary was composed of appointed judges. The lighthorsemen had responsibility for law enforcement. Four years later, when the Chickasaws settled among the Choctaws, Peter Pitchlynn and the other mixed blood leaders wrote another constitution.<sup>38</sup> To accommodate the Chickasaws' an additional district was added with provision made for a chief and council representatives. This and other changes demonstrated the Choctaws' determination to make their new political system responsive to their constantly changing circumstances.<sup>39</sup>

In 1842 the Choctaws took their first step toward tribal centralization. They wrote into a new constitution a provision for a single supreme court with jurisdiction over



all four districts. This document also established a two house legislature with a Senate and a House of Representatives. Again Peter Pitchlynn was instrumental in writing the new code, and he borrowed from the United States Constitution as well as the state constitutions of Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Additional changes in 1850 were also modeled upon the organic laws of Arkansas and Tennessee.<sup>40</sup> As pointed out earlier, it was the white settlers from the upper south who formed the largest segment residing among and marrying into the Choctaws. Repeatedly the modifications of the tribal political structure reflected the influence of these southerners.

The Treaty of 1855 separated the Chickasaws from the Choctaw Nation and made the need for a new constitution imperative. The mixed bloods attempted to move the Choctaws to a centralized political system based on a constitution virtually identical to the Mississippi constitution of 1834. This constitution, ratified in Skullyville, eliminated the district chiefs and created a single Governor to administer the executive branch. Apparently, the mixed bloods were pushing the political changes too fast, because the conservatives wrote their own constitution in 1858 at Doaksville, calling for the traditional system of one chief from each of the three districts. Near civil war broke out between the progressive and conservative elements. However, they agreed upon a compromise and wrote a new constitution

in 1860.<sup>41</sup> The compromise constitution provided for a new position of "principal chief", but it also retained the district chiefs, allowing them to act as regional executive assistants. The tribal council and judiciary remained unchanged. The Constitution of 1860 was the culmination of the Choctaw's political evolution and lasted until 1906, when the Choctaw Nation was dissolved.<sup>42</sup>

The move toward political centralization corresponding with the decline of the moiety and clan systems in the tribe, was a process begun and perpetuated by intermarried whites and their metis offspring. The earlier switch from a matrilineal to patrilineal descent system had severely crippled the clan system, but the physical act of moving the tribe disrupted traditional kinship and settlement patterns. The moiety and clan quickly receded in importance as the simple family and political districts gained in influence. The three districts within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma were primarily political units and did not have the social importance of the traditional clan.<sup>43</sup>

With the decline of the clan and the altered settlement patterns, many kingroups were split up. The intermarried whites and some mixed bloods used removal as an opportunity to break away from the controlling influences of the clan and their wives' extended kingroup and to establish independent simple households. The authority of the husband became dominant and excluded the maternal relatives from any involvement.<sup>44</sup> As early as 1836 the tribal council passed

an act abolishing any custom prohibiting marriage between members of the same "Iska" (clan).<sup>45</sup> A shift from the traditional Choctaw dependence on the kingroup to simple household units was underway by the Civil War. However, the fullbloods resisted change, continued their preference for an extended kinship system, and settled in groups with their relatives.

While the tribe was undergoing all its economic, political and social upheaval, the mixed bloods still managed to rebuild the educational system they had started prior to removal. Like his father, Peter Pitchlynn placed tremendous importance on the tribal schools to prepare the Choctaws for their uncertain future. With the support of Agent F. W. Armstrong, the Choctaws built permanent log structures for schools which began operation as early as 1833. By 1836, under the direction of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, eleven schools with 228 children were operating in the Choctaw Nation. The tribal government supported five of the schools, while the United States maintained one in each district with funds set aside in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit.<sup>46</sup>

In 1842 the tribal council voted for a comprehensive public school system. This led to the establishment of Spencer Academy in 1844 near Doaksville; Fort Coffee Academy in 1844 near Skullyville; and in 1846 Armstrong in Pushmataha District and New Hope academies near Fort

Coffee. At the same time the council increased its support for the schools run by the missionaries. By 1848 the tribe supported nine boarding schools. By 1860 the Choctaws' public school system also included many neighborhood day schools, which reported attendance of 500 children, and "Sunday Schools" aimed at adult education. In the twenty-seven years following their removal the Choctaws had created a comprehensive educational program.<sup>47</sup>

During this same period a significant degree of social division emerged within the tribe. The intermarried whites and their metis offspring altered the very foundation of the tribe's political, economic and social systems. Under their guidance, it changed descent systems. They introduced institutionalized slavery, began open range cattle grazing, added tenancy to the tribe's economic system, and introduced the new attitudes toward accumulation of wealth reflected in the inheritance laws. The development of the tribes organic law expressed the whites' and mixed bloods' desire for a more centralized form of government, which developed at the expense of the traditional political districts. They also designed a school system to advance fullblood acculturation and prepare the metis children for roles as future tribal leaders.

But the fullbloods resisted most of the changes called for by the members of the tribe with white ancestors. The conservative fullbloods maintained their extended families, settled together and worked their subsistence farms as they

had before removal. Very few fullbloods owned slaves or took part in the cattle industry, and they showed little interest in expanding production or increasing their profits. They also fought the centralization of tribal government and took little part in the Choctaws school system. By 1860 it was clear that the tribe was divided between conservative and progressive factions. But despite the resistance of the fullbloods, part of the tribe was adapting slowly to the demands placed on it, and it was under mixed blood leadership that the Choctaws changed. The United States Civil War would bring the two factions together once again, united in their resolve to save their tribe's existence.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Angie Debo, The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>William Myer, "Indian Trails of the Southeast," Forty-Second Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology (1928), pp. 743, 823-824, 828-830, map opposite p. 748.

<sup>3</sup>Jesse McKee and Jon Schlenker, The Choctaws: Cultural Evolution of a Native American Tribe (Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi, 1980), p. 39; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 24-37.

<sup>4</sup>David Baird, The Choctaw People (Phoenix: Indian Tribal Series, 1973), pp. 20-21, 28; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 24-26; James Morrison, "A Social History of the Choctaws, 1865-1907" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1951), pp. 22-25.

<sup>5</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 10-11; Horatio Cushman, History of Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians, ed. Angie Debo Reprint ed., Stillwater, Oklahoma: Redlands Press, 1962), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Hudson, The Southeastern Indians. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), p. 213; Cushman, History of Choctaw, p. 173; John Swanton, "An Early Account of the Choctaw Indians," American Anthropological Association Memoirs 5(1918), p. 57; John Swanton, "Aboriginal Culture of the Southeast," 42nd Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), pp. 724-725.

<sup>7</sup>Cushman, History of Choctaws, p. 178; Swanton, "Aboriginal Culture," p. 696; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 110; Morrison, "A Social History," p. 139.

<sup>8</sup>J. R. Peterson, Jr., "The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian, Their Recent History and Current Relations" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1970), p. 1; Swanton, "An Early Account," p. 541; Cushman, History of Choctaws, p. 147; Jon Schlenker, "A History Analysis of the Social and Cultural Life of the Choctaw Indians With Emphasis Upon Family Life" (M.A. thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 1974), p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Swanton, "An Early Account," pp. 54-55, 67; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 19-21; Cushman, History of Choctaws, p. 190.

<sup>10</sup>Cushman, History of Choctaws, pp. 140, 198-199; Swanton, "Aboriginal Culture," p. 696; Swanton, "An Early Account," p. 54; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>Hudson, The Southeastern Indians, pp. 184-185; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 14-15; Schlenker, "A Historical Analysis," p. 54; Joseph Aceves and Gill King, Cultural Anthropology (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Company, 1978), pp. 223, 225-226; Swanton, "Aboriginal Cultures," p. 695.

<sup>12</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 15; Swanton, Aboriginal Culture, p. 695; Cushman, History of Choctaws, p. 28; Aceves and King, Cultural Anthropology, p. 54; Schlenker, "A Historical Analysis," p. 54; Hudson, The Southeastern Indians, p. 193.

<sup>13</sup>Hudson, The Southeastern Indians, pp. 185-196; Swanton, "Aboriginal Cultures," p. 695.

<sup>14</sup>Cushman, History of Choctaws, p. 87; Swanton, "Aboriginal Cultures," p. 699; Aceves and King, Cultural Anthropology, p. 227.

<sup>15</sup>Swanton, "An Early Account," p. 61; Swanton, "Aboriginal Cultures," p. 699.

<sup>16</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 16-18; Swanton, "An Early Account," p. 61; Swanton, "Aboriginal Cultures," p. 19.

<sup>17</sup>Swanton, "Aboriginal Culture," pp. 696, 700; Cushman, History of Choctaws, pp. 118, 123, 174; Swanton, "An Early Account," p. 59; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup>Mckee and Schlenker, The Choctaws, pp. 28-31; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 15; Hudson, The Southeastern Indians, pp. 186-187; Cushman, History of Choctaws, p. 156.

<sup>19</sup>Cushman, History of Choctaws, pp. 156, 171-172.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 314-315.

<sup>21</sup>Cushman, History of Choctaws, pp. 343-347; David Baird, Peter Pitchlynn: Chief of the Choctaws (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p. 6, deals extensively with the lives of John Pitchlynn (an intermarried) white and his mixed-blood son Peter. Baird's study presented the different positions intermarried white men took in Choctaw society compared to their metis (mixed blood) children. N. J. Shackelford, "The LeFlore Family and Choctaw Indian

Removal" (M.A. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1967) also studied the role that the intermarried whites and their families played in the Choctaw's development. However, this study only takes the reader to Choctaw removal from Mississippi to Oklahoma. Schakeflord's study, like Baird's, concluded that the intermarried white men were never considered "Choctaws" by the tribe as a whole, and they never considered themselves as such either. Their metis offspring, however, usually considered themselves Choctaws, although the Choctaw fullbloods rarely seemed to accept the metis as being entirely Indian. Both Baird and Schackelford stressed the intermarried white's families in forming the tribal leadership during the nineteenth century. J. A. Peterson, "The People In Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Metis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830" (Ph.D. Dissertation University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981) gave a much more comprehensive analysis of the development of a metis class and its function as a cultural bridge between white and Indian societies than the other two studies.

<sup>22</sup>Baird, Peter Pitchlynn, pp. 12, 17.

<sup>23</sup>Cushman, History of Choctaws, pp. 76-77; Baird, Peter Pitchlynn, pp. 23-24; James Morrison, Schools For the Choctaws (Durant, Oklahoma: Choctaw Bilingual Education Program 1978), pp. 18-30.

<sup>24</sup>M.F. Doran, "The Origins of Culture Areas in Oklahoma, 1830-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1974), p. 37; Baird, The Choctaw People, pp. 20-21, 28; Morrison, "A Social History," pp. 22-25.

<sup>25</sup>Michael Doran, "Negro Slaves of the Five Civilized Tribes," Association of American Geographers Annals 48 (September, 1978), pp. 335-337.

<sup>26</sup>Fred Eggan, "Historical Changes in the Choctaw Kinship System," American Anthropologist, 39 (January-March, 1937), pp. 42.

<sup>27</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 48-54; Baird, The Choctaw People, pp. 30-32; Baird, Peter Pitchlynn, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup>Baird, The Choctaw People, pp. 52-56; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup>Michael Doran, "Population Statistics of Nineteenth Century Indian Territory," Chronicles of Oklahoma, 53 (Winter 1975-1976), p. 498.



<sup>30</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," pp. 50-52, 80; Morrison, "A Social History," p. 30; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 60.

<sup>31</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 113; Morrison, "A Social History," p. 31.

<sup>32</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 59-60; Doran, "Negro Slaves," pp. 337, 347.

<sup>33</sup>Doran, "Negro Slaves," pp. 60, 337, 347, 348.

<sup>34</sup>Laura Graebner, "Agriculture Among the Five Civilized Tribes, 1840-1906," Red River Valley Historical Review, 3 (Fall 1978), p. 45.

<sup>35</sup>Doran, "Negro Slaves," pp. 340-342; Michael Doran, "Antebellum Cattle Herding in the Indian Territory," Geographical Review 66 (January 1976), pp. 49-58.

<sup>36</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 114, 105, 121; Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1836 (reprint ed; Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Research Inc., 1975), pp. 21-22; Doran, "Negro Slaves," pp. 346-348.

<sup>37</sup>Doran, "Population Statistics," pp. 502-504; Graebner, "Agriculture Among," p. 46.

<sup>38</sup>David Baird, "Peter Pitchlynn and Reconstruction of the Choctaw Republic, 1834-1850," from Indian Leaders: Oklahoma's First Statesmen, ed. H. Glenn Jordan and Thomas Holm (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1974), p. 15; Baird, Peter Pitchlynn, pp. 64-65.

<sup>39</sup>Baird, "Peter Pitchlynn and Reconstruction," pp. 15-16.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-18.

<sup>41</sup>Baird, Peter Pitchlynn, p. 64; Baird, "Peter Pitchlynn and Reconstruction," p. 18.

<sup>42</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 74-75.

<sup>43</sup>Eggan, "History Changes in Kinship," pp. 49-50; Mckee and Schlenker, The Choctaws, pp. 98-99; Baird, The Choctaw People, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup>Eggan, "Historical Changes in Kinship," p. 50.

<sup>45</sup>Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1836, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup>Baird, The Choctaw People, p. 44; Debo, The Rise and Fall, pp. 60-62; Morrison, Schools for the Choctaws, pp. 73-76.

<sup>47</sup>Morrison, Schools for the Choctaws, pp. 77-96; Baird, "Peter Pitchlynn and Reconstruction," pp. 18-19.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRIMITIVE COMANCHES

The relationship between the Comanches and the whites never became as intimate as that of the Choctaw until they were permanently settled on their reservation in Oklahoma Territory. The Comanches' nomadic lifestyle, extremely limited diet, and general attitude toward non-Indians, made the possibility of European or Mexican traders settling among them virtually impossible. After they acquired the horse the Comanches were constantly on the move to follow their primary source of food, the buffalo. Unlike the sedentary Choctaw, the Comanches raised no crops, and only occasionally supplemented their diet with roots, herbs, and berries. The only contact these plains Indians had with whites were infrequent visits to trade fairs in New Mexico and through their constant raids on Mexican and, later, Anglo settlements. The captives taken on these raids were usually women and children who were quickly isolated from their companions; they either adapted to Comanche culture or died. Because of these factors, the Comanches lacked the leadership of the intermarried traders and their mixed blood offspring needed to adapt culturally when it became necessary by 1840. Unlike the Choctaw, who underwent a

rather mild acculturation process led by their mixed bloods, the Comanche experienced a forced acculturation under the direction of United States Indian Agents. But from their acquisition of the horse until the buffalo was gone, the Comanches fought the white man wherever they met and time and time again proved how well they had adapted to the Great Plains environment.

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish and the introduction of the horse on the Plains, the Comanches lived a harsh life of bare subsistence on the eastern foothills of the Rockies in Wyoming. They hunted buffalo, antelope and other small game on the fringes of the plains and gathered nuts and berries in the hills. They were nomadic, but their range of travel was quite limited because they lacked a good pack animal. They had domesticated the dog, which could pull a small travois or carried light loads. But the absence of the horse made it impossible for these primitive Indians to follow the yearly migration of the buffalo or to hunt it with consistency and safety. The best way the early Indians could find to hunt the buffalo was to drive the herd over a cliff, a bluff, or into an enclosed area where the Indians could shoot the buffalo from safety. Whatever the method of procuring food these Indians employed, the tribe barely survived most of the year.<sup>1</sup>

Once the horse appeared on the Plains during the seventeenth century, the Comanches moved steadily southward into eastern Colorado and New Mexico. In their southerly

migration the Comanches came into contact with the Apache who had had early dealings with the Spanish in New Mexico and had acquired the horse. It took the Comanches until the early eighteenth century to obtain enough knowledge about horses and have large enough herds to make the animal a significant part of their culture. Regardless of how and when the Comanches acquired the horse, it brought a rapid and unprecedented change in their lifestyle and culture.<sup>2</sup>

The Comanches adopted the horse into their culture and began moving from the foothills and onto the grasslands becoming the preeminent Plains tribe. The horse and the buffalo coalesced to draw the Comanches into a new environment, forcing them to alter their economic, political, and social life. The horse as a pack animal could carry much larger loads than a dog and pulled much longer tepee poles. This allowed the Comanches to carry more personal belongings and to construct larger tepees. The horse made hunting the buffalo safer and the supply of meat more consistent. Warfare was more exciting and glorified during the horse and buffalo era and became an integral part of Comanche society. The tribes began to use horses as the basic unit of monetary exchange in the plains economy. Individuals accumulated personal wealth and judged social status, in part, by the size of an individual's herd. The impact of the horse on the culture of the Comanches can not be overestimated.<sup>3</sup>

Pulled by the greater supply of horses and buffalo in the Southern Plains and pushed from behind by the influx of the Sioux on the Northern Plains, the Comanche moved from their traditional homeland between the Yellowstone and Platt Rivers constantly southward, breaking up into many bands along the way. After leaving Wyoming in the early eighteenth century and until they finally met stiff resistance from the settlers in Texas around 1840, the Comanches' range constantly drifted southward. Their domain at that point drove a wedge into the heart of Texas nearly to Austin and spread east to west from the great bend of the Arkansas River to the mouth of the Purgatory.<sup>4</sup> The Plains Tribes, however, knew no set boundaries. From any point in their domain the Comanches had a range of 500 to 800 miles -- putting them as far south as Mexico and as far north as the North Platt River.<sup>5</sup>

Within this vast grassland kingdom the Comanches had three general divisions -- northern, middle, and southern -- which were in turn subdivided into several large bands. While the Comanches as a whole shared many cultural similarities, each regional band had several distinguishable characteristics usually reflected in their name. By the nineteenth century whites had identified thirteen major bands, but by the end of the century only five had survived.<sup>6</sup>

The northermost bands of the Comanches were the Yapa-eaters (Yamparikas), the Antelopes (Kwahadies), and

sometimes the Wanderers (Nokoni or Destanayka). The Yapa-eaters maintained the closest ties of any band with their Shoshone kinsmen. They had moved slowly south from northern Colorado and located below the Arkansas River by 1800.<sup>7</sup> The Antelope band move south simultaneously with the Yapa-eaters but however in a more westwardly direction to the Llano Estacado. The Antelope remained aloof from white contact the longest of any Comanche band, retreating into the Tule and Palo Duro Canyons. As their name implied, the Wanderers were constantly moving. They were sometimes classified as part of the central Comanches, but most often considered part of the northern bands. The northern bands were the last to feel the impact of the white man, and they showed the greatest cultural resistance once they were finally forced onto the reservation. From the signing of the Treaty of 1867 it took eight years before the United States was able to force these northern tribes onto the Oklahoma reservation set aside for the Comanches.<sup>8</sup>

The Buffalo-eaters (Kotsotekas) and the Honey-eaters (Penatekas) were the southermost of the Comanche bands and they had the greatest amount of contact with white men. The Buffalo-eaters located primarily along the Canadian River valley, where they had a constant supply of buffalo, and also controlled a major trade route between the United States and New Mexico. The presence of the buffalo and active trading made the Buffalo-eaters a prosperous tribe.

These same two factors however, also drew large numbers of eastern Indians (they had been removed to Oklahoma in the 1830's) and later whites into the area.<sup>9</sup>

The Honey-eaters ranged far south of the Buffalo-eaters, and the two bands lost contact for a considerable period of time. The Honey-eaters established themselves in the Cross Timbers belt of Texas. They were slowly driven north during the 1830's as Anglo settlements expanded under the direction of the Mexican government. Both the Buffalo-eaters and Honey-eaters had considerably more contact with white culture prior to the reservation period than did the other Comanche bands. They were the first bands to move toward acculturation.<sup>10</sup>

The number, size, and territory of the Comanche bands varied greatly over time. They were not a tribe in a political sense because they lacked a central governing body or authority to coordinate band actions and movements. The Comanches were, however, a tribal nation in a social and cultural sense. They all shared a common ancestry, language, and culture. Most of the bands were in constant contact, and intermarriage occurred frequently. Each band lived and moved within a vaguely prescribed area, but no formal boundaries were ever established between them. Because of this free flow of individuals and families from one band to another, the Comanches sustained their sense of nationality even though the bands functioned as independent political bodies. This became a very important and



perplexing problem to those Europeans and Americans who attempted to deal with the Comanches. Merely signing an agreement with one band was insufficient because the other bands were in no way bound by it.<sup>11</sup>

To understand the life of the Comanche people and the social changes they underwent throughout their tribal history requires an analysis of the structure of the band. Within the band the political structure was formalized and yet weak in regard to its authority over the individuals. The political institutions of the band included one or more civil chiefs, a war chief and a council which advised both sets of chiefs -- a system closely resembling the Choctaws. None of these posts were hereditary. The men attained the position of chief or councilmen by common consent within the tribe for outstanding courage and leadership during war. These leaders' authority lasted only so long as their fellow tribesmen were willing to follow them.<sup>12</sup> The Comanches lacked the military societies (tribal policemen) that were prevalent throughout the other Plains Tribes. The individual and freedom of action were supreme in Comanche society. A Comanche would follow and obey the policies and decisions of his leaders only so long as they respected them and trusted their leaders' judgment.<sup>13</sup>

The council theoretically had supreme power in determining the major policies concerning the band. It made such decisions as seeking alliances, making war and peace,

selecting the time and place for the summer hunt, dividing the spoils taken during a tribal war, providing necessities to the poor and widows, and regulating trade with outsiders. The council was a representative body composed of the headmen from each family and the best warriors of the tribe; most of its decisions were acceptable to all the members of the band. But if any members did object to the decision, they could refuse to follow it with no fear of direct reprisal. Because of their strong belief in individual freedom, the majority rarely tried to use overt force on the minority within the band.<sup>14</sup>

The constant splintering of the group weakened the political authority of the band chiefs. Families and individuals frequently joined and left the band for a number of reasons. Because of the time of year, scarcity of food, raiding parties, scattering before a powerful enemy, or any other number of reasons, small groups would break off from the larger band. The chiefs of the band lacked both the necessary system of communications to inform these small groups of the council's decisions and the police force necessary to ensure enforcement. The tribal chiefs lacked the institutional support of any written or established legal code.<sup>15</sup> All of these facts reflected the extremely decentralized political system of the tribe and the ascendancy of the individual's rights over those of the community at large.

The Comanche band was like the Choctaw clan in that both were the most important social grouping in their primitive societies. However, bands were never formed on the basis of kinship as were the Choctaws' clans. The Comanches never traced kinship beyond the extended family. Even within the extended family band, where several related families camped together, the principal of kinship was flexible.<sup>16</sup> In theory, the bonds of kinship were secondary to the individual's inclination to stay or leave the group: there were no rules of residence within the society.

As in most Indian cultures, to be labeled as kin within the Comanche system automatically indicated a much closer relationship between individuals. The individual could count on his kin for aid and support.<sup>17</sup> Being recognized as a part of a kingroup was of vital importance to the Comanches, because surviving alone in the physical and social environment of the Plains was nearly impossible.

The kinship system formed the political and social basis for the entire tribe. By submitting oneself to the authority of a family headman, the individual Comanche became a part of a group which would help protect his health and safety. The kingroup cared for the sick, injured, widowed and orphaned. It was also responsible for protecting its member's rights by avenging any crimes committed against one of its members. Furthermore, each individual was provided political representation within the band by the presence of his family headman in the tribal

council or as a chief. The Comanches' kinship system helped to define the relationships between the individual and Indian society as a whole. It protected the individual so long as he followed the norms of behavior society required.<sup>18</sup>

The extended family comprised the core of the kin group. It usually camped as a unit within the band, or broke away from the band as a group. Each simple family had its own tepee, but it was usually erected near the lodges of their relatives.<sup>19</sup> The relatives generally coordinated their activities with one another, hunting, raiding, or breaking camp as a group. The individual had very little privacy in this type of setting, and it was on this social level that the most pressure came to bear on an individual's behavior. Group harmony was essential for the proper functioning of the family, and could only be achieved if everyone knew his position within the family and what was expected of him. The Comanches had clearly defined, traditional codes of conduct which were enforced through the power of public opinion. Scorn and ridicule were severe punishment within Comanche society.<sup>20</sup>

Within the extended family, brothers generally had the closest and longest lasting relations - a matter of considerable social importance. Brothers usually were close from childhood until death. As warriors they would hunt and fight together. It was even acceptable for brothers to

share their wives with one another, especially when one brother was away from camp. This practice had a significant influence on the marriage customs of the Comanches. Because of their close relationship, brothers tended to camp near each and caused the Comanches' patterns of residence to be patrilocal (near the husband's kin).<sup>21</sup>

The close relationships between brothers and the Comanches' broad range of marriage forms helped to promote the development of extended families and extended families close kinship relations. The tribal custom of levirate dictated that a man should marry his brother's widow. It was not uncommon for brothers to share wives while both were still living, possibly to prepare a man and his sister-in-law for the day when they might have to marry. No matter what the reason, the practice of levirate promoted the extended family system because the husband's brother was very involved in the affairs of his brother's family and they were all potentially members of his own simple household.<sup>22</sup>

Polygamy came to serve an increasingly important function for the Comanches as they adapted to the environment of the Plains. Most warriors had only one wife because few could support more. Another factor limiting the amount of polygyny was a roughly equivalent male to female ratio.<sup>23</sup> The number of wives a warrior had was an indication of his prestige and rank within the community. Often a warrior who proved himself brave and a good provider

for his family was rewarded by the first wife's family with her sister as a second mate. Another fairly common mode of acquiring a second wife was to marry a captive taken in a raid.<sup>24</sup>

Not all the benefits of polygynous marriages fell to the husband. The augmentation of the household with additional wives reduced the work of the women. With the horse, a warrior could kill many more buffalo, and it was the chore of the woman to process the buffalo from where it dropped to the cooking pot or tepee cover. This work was involved, and arduous work which went much quicker with additional help.<sup>25</sup> The women also shared in the work of raising and caring for the children.

The Comanches attempted to promote harmony in their polygynous households by several means. The first and most common practice was that of the husband taking for his second wife the younger sister of his first wife. Because of the traditional patterns of behavior, the older sister was considered the "chief" or boss of her sisters, and she was expected to be chief in the new family. Because plural marriage was usually restricted to successful warriors, who could afford to provide separate lodges for each wife and her children. Finally, the captives who were taken as second wives were usually referred to as "chore wives" and the Comanche wives treated them as subordinates.<sup>26</sup> So, by either establishing a hierarchy within the wives or

establishing a separate residence for each wife, or by doing both, the Comanche maintained harmony in the polygynous households.

The importance of the unions between kingroups by marriage did not escape the attention of the Comanches. A marriage of a daughter to an outstanding warrior could enhance the family's social prestige, and also improve its economic status. By the same logic, the young warriors would wait until they had proven themselves in battle and accumulated enough horses to pay the high "bride price" needed to secure the most desired brides. The demand for women created by the even ratio of men to women and the prevalence of polygyny tended to cause women to marry at a much earlier age than the men. Men waited until they had proven themselves before they married which added to the age discrepancy between men and women at marriage.<sup>27</sup>

The Comanches had well developed divisions of labor between the sexes. The men's work was hard and dangerous, hunting and fighting, and while at camp the men were expected to make and repair all the equipment needed to perform their arduous chores. The women's work was not as dangerous or brutal, but it was hard and never ending. The women prepared the food, made the clothing and shelters, looked after the children, and made any of the tools and utensils they needed for their domestic work.<sup>28</sup>

During their primitive period the Comanches had commonly taken Indian slaves. Later, they took many Mexican

and Texan captives. The slaves and captives however, failed to influence the tribe in a way similar to the intermarried whites and mixed bloods among the Choctaws. The Comanches usually killed all adult males in a raid and took only women and small boys as captives. These captives would either be kept as slaves, sold to another tribe, adopted as children by a warrior, or married to the warrior.<sup>29</sup> The Comanches used captives as trade items, or as bargaining tools in negotiations, or to augment their population. The white captives were quickly isolated from one another and forced either to adapt completely to Comanche culture or die. Because they were so isolated from their native culture and held in such smaller numbers, their cultural impact was slight. The captives formed the lowest level of the tribal society and were usually expected to do much of the household's manual labor. Nevertheless, many captives became so acculturated they refused to leave the tribe when federal troops came to free them.<sup>30</sup>

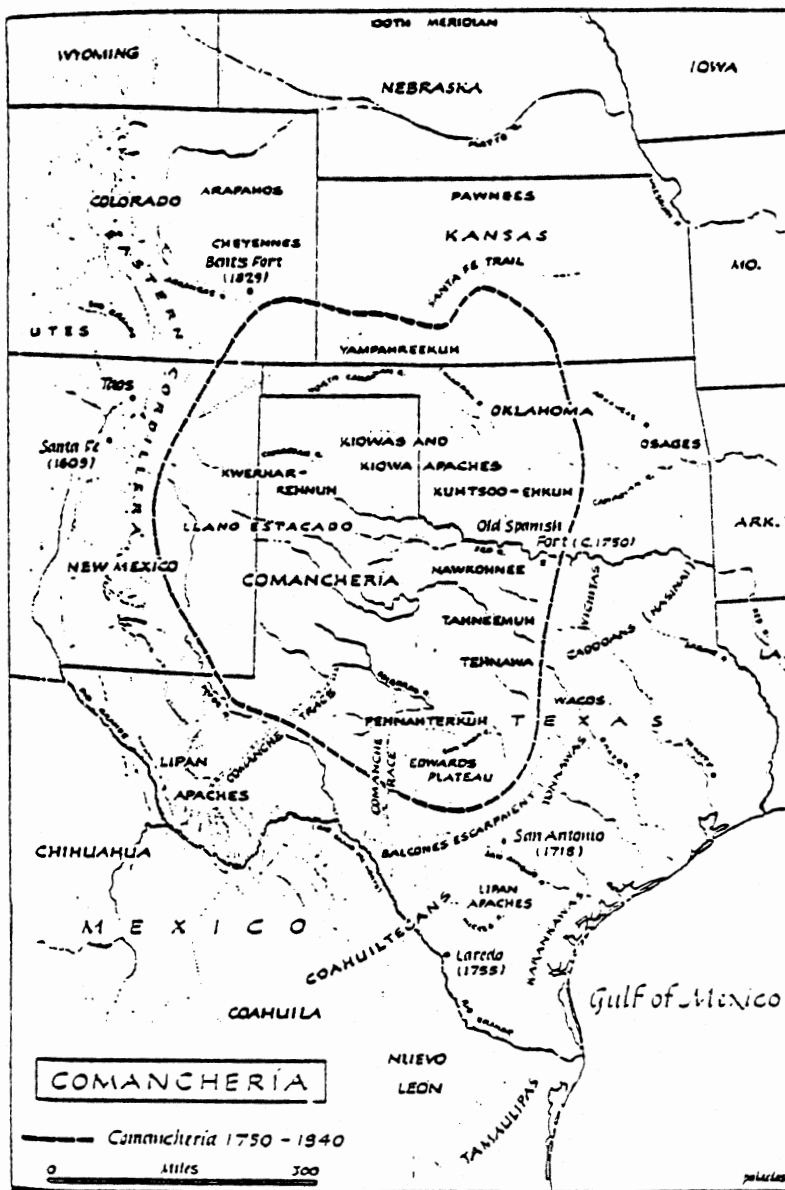
Within the Comanche community, the individual warrior could enhance his prestige and that of his family by his actions and successes in warfare. Comanche life became a glorification of military action. The whole system of rank and status within the society depended on war honors. During war parties and raids, the warrior gained honor by counting coup on his enemy. The coup was a means of according the Comanche warrior distinction within the



community. The ability to gain social standing through coup gave the younger warriors leverage against the older warriors in the council. The wishes of the younger men could not be overlooked, so long as they were capable of counting coup. They could some day gain tribal leadership through war honors and punish the elders who ignored their wishes. Counting coup kept the ranks of society open and flexible.<sup>31</sup>

The overriding principles of generosity and charity also kept social divisions to a minimum within the Comanche community. Greed associated with accumulation of private wealth never predominated. Because of the respect given by the community to those leaders who exhibited their generosity by constantly giving away their personal belongings to the needy and the custom of giving away a deceased warrior's property, it was rare to see any consistent concentration of wealth within the tribe.<sup>32</sup>

There existed between the Comanches and their Indian neighbors a paradoxical relationship (refer to Figure 3). Warfare was an integral and accepted part of all the Plains Indians' cultures. Conflict was caused when one nomadic tribe drifting into the domain of another, and in later periods, by the encroachments of eastern tribes being forced west into traditional Comanche lands. All of these factors combined to create a state of constant warfare. But as the eastern tribes and whites encroached into the Comanche's



Source: T. R. Fehrenback, Comanches: The Destruction of a People p. 143.

Figure 3. The Range of the Comanche "Comancheria," 1750-1840

homeland, the other Plains Tribes served as a cultural shield from the direct influence of whites. The inter-tribal warfare and protection from whites provided by the other tribes allowed the Comanches to carry on their traditional customs until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

The Comanches political, social, economic and belief systems remained relatively unchanged from their first contact with the white man until they were forced onto the reservation in Oklahoma in the 1870's. The Comanche's relations with the governments with which they came into contact usually ended in violence. All attempts to get the tribe to settle down and take up the ways of white man failed until the backbone of the Comanches plains economy, the buffalo, was destroyed. The record of Comanche and white relations was one of conflict and violence.

The first white men the Comanches encountered were Spaniards from the Upper Rio Grande area late in the seventeenth century. Interaction between the Comanches and Spanish lasted until 1820 and Mexican independence. The history of Spanish policy toward the Comanches was one of vacillation between war and peace.<sup>34</sup> The Comanches constantly antagonized the Spanish government by making raids on settlers in New Mexico and Texas. Yet, the Comanche migrations southward had aided the Spanish by effectively cutting off the westward expansion of the French into the Mexican borderlands. The Comanches controlled the

headwaters of the Missouri and Arkansas Rivers which were two of the major trade routes to the Spanish outposts in New Mexico.<sup>35</sup> Initially the Spanish armed and supported the Apaches in hopes that they could control the Comanches. Late in the eighteenth century, however the Comanches' dominance of the Southern Plains was secure, and the Spanish decided to switch alliances from the Apaches to the Comanches. An alliance with the Comanches ensured the defense of Mexico's northern frontier from the French and English at a much lower cost than establishing a series of military posts and missions.<sup>36</sup>

In 1779 the peace policy instituted by the Spanish governor of Mexico, Don Juan Bautista de Anza, was the first plan to begin formalized acculturation of the Comanches. Governor de Anza began his program in 1779 with an aggressive military offensive which forced the Comanche to see the benefits of peace. De Anza refused to deal with only one or two of the Comanche bands at a time, and tried to establish one principle chief over the entire tribe with whom he could work. Murder and bribery were the Governor's principal tools in attempting to secure the title of principal chief for his favorite, Chief Ecureracapa. By 1786 Ecureracapa seemed to have consolidated his authority over the southern bands. The Spanish expended large sums of money to send educators and interpreters among the Indians

to teach the Indians Spanish and to settle the Comanches on farms.<sup>37</sup>

The construction of San Carlos de los Jupes village was the culmination of de Anza's acculturation program. The Spanish constructed the entire village on the Arkansas River for Ecureracapa and his band. They built houses and sent farmers to teach the Indians the art of agriculture. Initially the village was a great success, and provoked the envy of the neighboring Plains Tribes who wanted their own villages. But with the death of an esteemed member of the band, the Indians moved from the village, as their custom dictated, and demanded a new village be built. San Carlos failed, and soon afterward Chief Ecureracapa and the other chiefs appointed by the Spanish fell from power. De Anza's dream for a centralized political system for the Comanches and their acceptance of an agricultural, sedentary life collapsed. It was a bold plan, one which was not to be attempted again until the mid-nineteenth century by the United States government.<sup>38</sup>

The Comanches' policy toward the Spanish and later Mexican governments was one of opportunism. They would make peace if they could get presents or if the governments were becoming too aggressive militarily. Once the troops were gone, however, the Comanches would resume their raids on villages and settlements until more troops or presents were again sent out. This was a pattern which occurred over and over again between the Comanches and foreign governments.

The Comanches did carry on extensive trade with the Spanish and Mexicans, either directly in New Mexico or Texas settlements or through other tribes. The Comancheros (Mexican traders in the Southern Plains), however, never lived and worked within the Comanche Tribe. The trade goods procured by the Comanche during the period of Spanish influence made the tribe's life more comfortable but did very little to alter Comanche society in any significant way.<sup>39</sup>

The same can be said for the influence of the French and English trade and contact with the Comanches. The Comanches did develop a dependence on such trade goods as hard bread, sugar, coffee, firearms, kettles and metal tools. But since these supplies were readily available on either their southern or eastern borders through trade or raids, the Comanches never became dependent on one group or the other. French and English traders never stayed in the Comanche territory for long, and settlers had neither the capabilities nor interest to establish themselves there.<sup>40</sup>

The arrival of Anglo settlers in Texas in 1820 marked a drastic change in the condition of the southern Comanches, although it did not become apparent until the late 1830's and early 1840's. Mexican independence initially weakened the resistance to Comanche raids, but the government officials recruited Anglos to settle in east Texas to build up the population and form a barrier. The Mexicans never

benefited from the policy because the Texas Revolution occurred just about the time the Southern Comanches began to feel the pressure of the Anglo settlements. The Republic of Texas not only brought in a massive influx of white settlers but it also began an aggressive Indian policy which truly put the Comanches on the defensive.<sup>41</sup>

About the same time as the Texas Revolution in 1836, large removals of eastern tribes west of the Mississippi occurred, and started pushing westward. The tribes who had had longer contact with the whites in the east were better armed and usually capable of driving resident tribes west. The Five Civilized Tribes who were settling in eastern Oklahoma drove the Osage Indians westward. The Osages moved into areas previously claimed by the Comanches and began killing buffalo in large numbers. The Comanches and other Plains Tribes attempted to drive the Osages back east but usually failed because they lacked quality firearms.<sup>42</sup>

This combination of white settlements and the destruction of the buffalo herds in the southeast caused increased concern among the local Comanches. The Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho agreed to a truce in 1840 showing the Plains Tribes' unity in opposition to increasing encroachment of the whites and eastern Indians. In 1843, however, the Texans attacked first causing the southern and central Comanche to retreat and finally to negotiate for peace.<sup>43</sup> In the treaty proceedings at Tehuacana Creek, Texas, in 1844, the Honey-eaters chief asked that a boundary

line be drawn between the bands and the Texans, a significant request. The Comanches felt the impact of the Anglo settlers and were unable to drive them back by force.<sup>44</sup>

The period after Texas statehood in 1846 and after the Mexican War witnessed a crisis for the Southern Comanches. Among other things, the buffalo herds were quickly disappearing. The lack of the buffalo, made the southern bands weak with hunger and susceptible to such European diseases as smallpox and cholera. During 1848 and 1849 smallpox and then cholera swept through the Honey-eaters, killing as many as 300 in a week. Counted among the dead were the principal chiefs of the Old Owl and Santa Anna bands. The southern band had no leaders after 1849 and began to disintegrate.<sup>45</sup> Old warriors sought peace, while the young warriors joined the strong and prosperous bands of the north, who were still haughty and making devastating raids on Mexico, New Mexico and Texas.

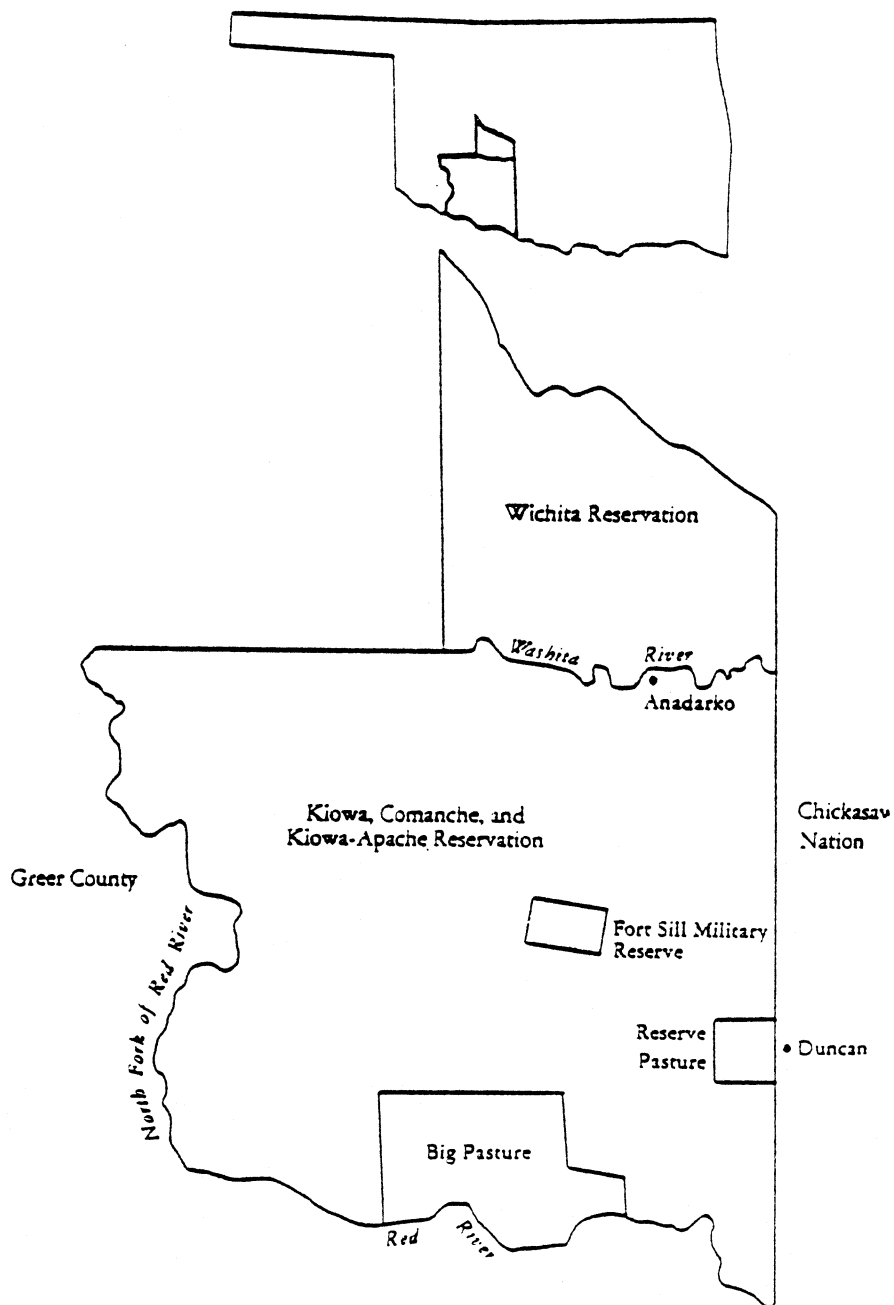
The United States federal government assumed control of the Indian situation in Texas after 1846 but it did little to improve the situation. The early and mid-1850's saw the implementation of the United States peace policy with the Treaty of Ft. Atkinson in 1853, and the establishment of two small reservations in Texas in 1854.<sup>46</sup> The reservations were small, barren and in the end proved failures. The Comanches, who were almost entirely from the Penatekas band,



did settle on the land set aside on the Clear Fork River. The Indians who settled there tried to adapt the ways of civilization by raising crops and sending their children to school. But the proximity of the free Comanches to the north, the unpredictability of agriculture in the region, and an inconsistent supply of annuities and rations made it very hard for Agent Robert S. Neighbors to keep the Indians on the reservations.

Despite the progress of a few Honey-eaters and their peaceful relations with their neighbors, the Texas legislature of 1858-1859 demanded the removal of all Indians from its borders. Because of the intense hostility of the Texans, the federal government felt it wise to remove the reservation Indians from Texas to lands set aside in western Oklahoma Territory (see Figure 4). In 1859 the Federal government removed 384 Comanches; this small number shows how few had actually settled on the Clear Fork reservation.<sup>47</sup>

The off-reservation Comanche bands felt the direct impact of the whites by 1850. Federal and Texas troops made penetrating raids into northern and western Comanche sanctuaries in New Mexico, Colorado, and Oklahoma. By 1858, the Americans had defeated them three times north of the Arkansas River. The Comanches had no place to hide.<sup>48</sup> The northern bands still maintained their distance from the whites, but they could no longer ignore the impact of white



Source: Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 41.

Figure 4. Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa - Apache Reservation and Wichita Reservation According to the Treaty of October 21, 1867

hunters and eastern Indians who reduced the numbers of buffalo or the presence of the United States military.

By 1860, the federal government had realized that force was necessary to make the Indians accept and remain on reservations. The Civil War, however, interrupted the governments plans for military action, and the Comanches received a brief respite. White immigration slowed, destruction of the buffalo herds declined, and the rival American governments vied with each other for influence over the Plains Indians. The Comanches, not fully understanding the difference between the Confederate and Union governments, negotiated with both. Comanche raids on Mexican and Texan farmers increased, consequently large areas of Texas were depopulated of whites. The Civil War only gave the Comanche a brief chance to recuperate before the final onslaught of whites.<sup>49</sup>

The period following the Civil War was one of rapid decline for the Comanches. The federal government immediately turned its attention back to the Plains and began a major push to confine the Indians on reservations. In 1867, most of the Southern Plains Indians signed the Treaty of Medicine Lodge and it included several of the Comanche bands. The Indians agreed to accept reservations within Oklahoma Territory between the 98th and 100th meridians and between the Canadian and Red Rivers lands recently ceded by the Five Civilized Tribes (see Figure 4). The Indians also agreed to cease their attacks

on the whites and to permit the construction on their lands of roads, railroads, military posts and an agency. The government was to provide agricultural implements, seeds, and instruction for farming, as well as annuity goods for thirty years.<sup>50</sup> This treaty was the last ever signed between the Comanche and United States and served as the basis for their relationship for the next thirty years.

The reservation assigned to the Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa Apache in 1867 contained 2,968,893 acres of land which was to become their permanent home. For a brief period between 1867 and 1875, however, the reservation merely served as a base for Comanches who hunted buffalo or raided Texas and Mexican settlements. Out of a total population of 2,416, approximately 1,500 Comanches lived outside of the tribal reservation. The 1,500 were the northern bands who still had sufficient herds of buffalo to hunt or cattle to steal to maintain a prosperous life style. And, as long as these bands roamed freely on the Plains, it was impossible to keep young warriors of peaceful bands on the reservation from leaving to join them. From 1869 to 1874 the Comanches, primarily the Antelope band augmented by the young reservation warriors, made devastating raids into Texas and stretched the United States "peace policy" to its breaking point.<sup>51</sup>

The year of 1874 brought tensions between the Plains Tribes and the federal government to a head as both sides

flagrantly broke stipulations of the treaty made in 1867. The whites were pressing in on the reservation and killing off the buffalo at an astounding rate, and the government failed to send adequate annuities.<sup>52</sup> The Indians on the reservation were starving and had an extremely hard time finding enough game outside the reservation to meet bare subsistence. Consequently, the reservation Indians joined the northern bands on their raids to the south. Violence broke out on the reservation in the Spring of 1874, and the agent called for federal troops. In panic, many of the Comanches fled into the Plains. The military campaigns of 1874 were not exceptionally violent, and none of the Comanche braves were captured. But, the herds and supplies of the bands were so exhausted from constant flight that the last of the Comanches had to surrender at Fort Sill in June of 1875.<sup>53</sup>

The struggle for military dominance over the Comanches ended in 1874, but the cultural battle continued. Despite the devastation of their tribal population, the disappearance of the buffalo and the end of their free and roaming life, many aspects of the Comanche culture survived. Unlike the Choctaw Indians, any cultural adaptation on the part of the Comanches was forced. The Comanches were shielded from the whites by a barrier of powerful and militaristic tribes. The hard lifestyle of the nomadic plainsmen also lacked the appeal for the white traders that the sedentary and civilized Choctaw held. The traders and

their mixed blood offspring gave the Choctaws the tribal leadership to accommodate gradually to changes required by the white men. The Comanches only extensive contact with the white cultures came through the taking of captives on raids, but their policy of killing the men and isolating the women and children from their native cultures nullified the captives' influence on the tribal society. The white traders were able to infuse into the Comanches' culture implements and technology which the tribe adopted, but the more abstract and fundamental concepts, beliefs, and customs of the tribe remained virtually unaltered by white influence. By 1875 the entire tribe was located on the reservation, and it was then that the Comanches began to make fundamental cultural changes under the orders of the United States and the direction of the Indian Agent.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Rupert Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1933), pp. 24-25; Alice Kehoe, North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), p. 287; Stanton Tefft, "Cultural Adaptation: The Case of the Comanche Indians" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1960), pp. 30-44.

<sup>2</sup>James Mooney, The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 280-281; Kehoe, North American Indians, p. 278; Arell Gibson, The American Indian: Prehistory to the Present (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1980), p. 243; Tefft, "Cultural Adaptation," pp. 12-125.

<sup>3</sup>Gibson, The American Indian, p. 243; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 26-27; Ernest Wallace and Adamson Hoebel, The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), pp. 241-242.

<sup>4</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 15, 19, 47; Tefft, "Cultural Adaptation," pp. 122-15.

<sup>5</sup>Mooney, The Ghost Dance, p. 281.

<sup>6</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 25-29; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 24; Mooney, The Ghost Dance, p. 281.

<sup>7</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 24, 27-28; Mooney, The Ghost Dance, p. 281.

<sup>8</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 20, 21, 308; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 22; Mooney, The Ghost Dance, pp. 281-282.

<sup>9</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 25-27.

<sup>10</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 18-19; Mooney, The Ghost Dance, p. 282.

<sup>11</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 22-23; Kehoe, North American Indians, p. 295; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 17, 23.

<sup>12</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 33-35; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 210.

<sup>13</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 35-36; William Hagan, Indian Police and Judges: Experiments in Acculturation and Control (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 13-15.

<sup>14</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 213, 214.

<sup>15</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 23, 34-35; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 22, 209.

<sup>16</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 22-23; T. R. Fehrenbach, Comanches: The Destruction of a People (New York: Knopf Press, 1974), p. 577. Both works indicated that very few Comanche nuclear families exceeded three children, most only had one child. Throughout this paper nuclear, simple, and primary families refers to households consisting of only a couple with or without offspring.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas Gladwin, "Comanche Kin Behavior," American Anthropologist 50 (1948), p. 81.

<sup>18</sup>Gladwin, "Comanche Kin Behavior," p. 81; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 210.

<sup>19</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>Hagan, Indian Police, pp. 11, 16; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 23-132.

<sup>22</sup>Adamson Hoebel, "Comanche and Hekandika Shoshone Relationship Systems," American Anthropologist 41 (July 1939), p. 447; defined "polygyny" as a marriage where one man had more than one wife; "polyandry" as a marriage where one woman had more than one husband; leverate was the custom of a man marrying the widow of his brother.

<sup>23</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 31; Fehrenbach, Comanches, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup>Hoebel, "Comanche Relations," p. 447; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 188.

<sup>25</sup>Gibson, The American Indian, pp. 243-244; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 141; Fehrenbach, Comanches, pp. 97, 103.



<sup>26</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 138, 141, 142; Hoebel, "Comanche Relations," p. 447; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 16, 132, 134. The study gave an estimate of the average age at marriage for squaws as sixteen years old, while the warriors averaged between twenty-five to thirty years old.

<sup>28</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 92; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 147-148; Fehrenbach, Comanches, pp. 97, 103.

<sup>29</sup>William Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 9; Norman Heard, White Into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indian (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1973), pp. 1-6, 25, 44.

<sup>30</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 209-210; Heard, White Into Red, pp. 25, 35, 36-39, 40-42, 107, 124-125, 127, 139-140, 142.

<sup>31</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 35, 216, 245, 246-247. The Plains Indians counted coup by making physical contact with an enemy in battle.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 122, 124.

<sup>33</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 52, 276-277, 285-287, 299; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 48-52, 59, 85; Fehrenbach, Comanches, pp. 190-191, 60-61, 121-122, 130-139, 190-191.

<sup>34</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 8-9; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 55; Fehrenbach, Comanches, p. 177.

<sup>35</sup>John Bannon, Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), pp. 150-151.

<sup>36</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 58-59; Fehrenbach, Comanches, p. 177-179.

<sup>37</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 60-67.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>39</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 13; Kehoe, North American Indians, pp. 287-288; Bannon, Bolton, p. 154; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 254, 288; Gibson, The American Indian, p. 245.

<sup>40</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 13; Kehoe, North American Indians, p. 288; Fehrenbach, Comanches, pp. 177-191.

<sup>41</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 290; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 10; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 170-172.

<sup>43</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 101, 126.

<sup>44</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 296.

<sup>45</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 158; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 299.

<sup>46</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 140, 183; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 13, 15.

<sup>47</sup>Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 214-222, 228-233, 257; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 302.

<sup>48</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 302.

<sup>49</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 267, 306; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, p. 267, 290.

<sup>50</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 16-17; 27-43; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 309-310; Richardson, The Comanche Barrier, pp. 296-305.

<sup>51</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanche, pp. 311-313, 316, 329.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 314-315.

<sup>53</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 3, 316-319, 320-36, 327; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 104-109.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHOCTAWS AFTER THE TREATY OF 1867

From the Choctaws' first settlements in Oklahoma until the Civil War the tribe underwent economic revival and political and social reconstruction. The same can be said for the period after the war, for it too was a period of reconstruction. After the war the Choctaws were no longer a sovereign nation; they were rather, wards of the United States. The federal government's involvement changed little, and the leadership of the tribe remained in the hands of the mixed bloods, who provided direction for their people's acculturation. Although fullbloods resisted change, miscegenation slowly broke down the cultural barriers.

The war set in motion events which the Choctaws, despite all their diplomatic skills, were unable to stop. The flood of white immigrants into their domain in the 1890's were drawn by the country's tremendous resources and sparsely populated lands. They posed a severe threat to the tribe's political and economic control. Hoping to slow the rate of change to a point where the tribe could control it, the tribe took measures to restrict immigration and intermarriage. The Choctaws saw the need to adapt, but they

wanted to do so at their own pace. By allowing too many whites into the tribe too quickly the Indians could lose control of their nation.

The Choctaw leaders made many hard concessions to the United States in the Treaty of 1866, but considering the circumstances, the tribe fared well. The Choctaws had supported the Confederacy throughout the war, and refused any Union overtures for peace during the conflict. Because of this firm loyalty to the South, the tribe's position for negotiation was weak and the federal government was not in a forgiving mood. The Choctaws' diplomatic skills, however, saved the tribe from immediate dissolution. The tribe was able to maintain its communal land system, and kept its pre-1861 trust fund, and continued to receive annuity payments. But in turn it had to give up control of the "Leased District"<sup>1</sup> in Western Oklahoma, and its slaves, and it had to pay restitution to the Choctaws and traders who had remained loyal to the Union.<sup>2</sup> Other concessions to the United States included the establishment of a federal court in Arkansas which had jurisdiction over the whites in Indian Territory and granting of the right of way for two railroad lines through the Choctaw Nation. The last two concessions severely diminished the sovereignty and integrity of the tribal government and cost the Choctaws partial control of their political and economic destiny. The treaty left in question the adoption of the Choctaws' freed slaves into the tribe allotment of the tribal lands and the settlement of

10,000 Kansas Indians in the Nation. The Choctaws lost much in the treaty, but they still retained their tribal government, communal land system and identity.

After the United States Senate ratified the Treaty in 1867 the Choctaws began reconstructing their devastated country. Only in a social sense did they remain essentially unscathed by the war. Their unity throughout the conflict made rebuilding their government and economy a much easier task. The Choctaw farms and cattle herds were nearly ruined in the attempt to feed the thousands of Indian refugees and support the Confederate units stationed in the Nation. The Choctaws' economy was in a shambles, and nearly one third of the Nation's citizens were destitute. A lack of funding during the war caused the Choctaws political system to deteriorate rapidly, and the United States further weakened the tribal government by usurping much of its authority. It took the Choctaws nearly twenty years to rebuild their political and economic systems to comparable pre-war levels.<sup>3</sup>

Due to insufficient funding the tribal government had to shut down during the war, and it did not resume normal operation for several years thereafter. It had never instituted a system of personal taxation before or after the war and relied exclusively on the annuity payments to run its government and its schools. The United States had stopped payment of annuities at the beginning of the war,

when the Choctaws signed a treaty with the Confederate government. The South never made the promised payments, and the Choctaws had no means of financial support until the United States resumed payment of annuities in 1867. During the interim, the Choctaws went without effective government or schools.<sup>4</sup>

After the Civil War the United States shifted from a policy encouraging Indian-white intermarriage as a means of promoting tribal acculturation. Earlier in the century the United States Indian policy had included miscegenation as a key component in transforming red men into white. By the 1870's, however, the government's acculturation program emphasized agriculture, religion, vocational education, allotment of tribal lands in severalty, the abolishment of tribal government, and, finally, Indian assimilation into the greater white society. Rejecting the slower process of miscegenation, the humanitarians, philanthropists and government officials promoted external stimulus to force the Indian to adapt.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than sit passively by and wait for the Choctaws to begin "civilizing" themselves, as they had done prior to the war, the United States government officials tried to take a more active role and assumed authority in areas hitherto reserved to the tribal government. After the Treaty of 1866, the tribe was no longer treated as a sovereign nation, and the United States claimed final authority over major decisions made by the council. During

the 1870's and 1880's, the federal government pushed for the development of the railroads and the coal industry. In the 1870s the United States also usurped much of Choctaw courts' legal prerogative, by assuming jurisdiction over the non-citizen whites and blacks living within the Nation. The United States transferred control of the Indian Police force (the lighthorse) and the tribal courts from the tribal government to the Union agent.<sup>6</sup> In 1895 two federal courts began operating within Indian Territory, reducing tribal sovereignty even more.<sup>7</sup> The Curtis Act of 1898 signaled the end of tribal authority as the United States assumed control of the Choctaws' educational system and resources. By slowly breaking down tribal authority, the federal government intended to force the Choctaws to function as individuals and to integrate into the mainstream of American culture.<sup>8</sup>

The Choctaws' economy expanded tremendously once the tribe recovered from the war. They developed new resources, and improved production in others. The communal land system remained intact, and agriculture continued as the Nation's principal occupation. The cattle herds, once the most important commodity of the tribe's economy, never regained their economic importance after the War. The mixed bloods began to lease the tribe's grazing lands to Texas cattlemen, a practice which left them free to increase their cultivation of corn, wheat and hay.

The development of coal and timber industries in the 1870s and 1880s added diversity to the Nation's economy. The coming of the railroads to the Choctaw Nation opened new markets for agricultural production as well as coal. The railroad workers created a domestic market for the tribe's resources and products as well. The building of railroads and towns created a large timber industry which quickly grew in significance. This explosion in economic growth brought wealth which further accentuated class divisions between the rich mixed bloods and the poorer fullbloods, and the rapid growth opened the door for the white invasion.<sup>9</sup>

Because of the fullblood families' apathy towards farming beyond a subsistence level and the mixed bloods' apparent aversion to manual labor, white and black tenants became essential to the Choctaw's agricultural growth. Before the Civil War, there had been only a few hundred white tenant farmers in the Nation. By the turn of the century, however, tenants operated nearly three quarters of all farms in the Choctaw domain.<sup>10</sup> The transition to a tenant farm system began with the emancipation of the slaves in 1867 and the need for a labor supply to work the fields. Before and after the war, Choctaw men at all social levels performed as little farm work as possible; the women worked the fields if the family owned no slaves. The Choctaws discovered, however, that immigrant whites and free blacks were willing to work the fertile tribal lands as tenants. The expansion in agricultural production from the 1870s to



the 1890s reflected the growing influence of white tenant farmers who brought greater acreage under cultivation and employed better agricultural technology.<sup>11</sup>

Gradually, the Choctaws' sharecropping system was abused as more and more Choctaws began leasing lands to whites or blacks on the basis of cash payments without paying permit fees. Another type of tenancy was the leasing of unused tribal land to white farmers. No cash or crop payment was expected, however, at the end of a set period, usually five or ten years, the tenant was expected to move on, and the leasor or a family member would take up residence on the farm.

Choctaws at all social levels established themselves as landlords and exploited the communal land system for personal gain.<sup>12</sup> Southerners constituted the largest proportion of the white settlers moving into the Choctaw Nation before and after the Civil War and probably had the greatest cultural influence on the tribe. These men and women came from small farms in the upper southern states or less frequently from plantations of the deep south. The tenants settled along the Canadian, Arkansas, and Red River basins in the same areas dominated by the mixed bloods. The fullbloods occupied the interior counties of the Choctaw Nation, where very few whites chose to settle.<sup>13</sup> The benefits of tenancy for the overall economic growth of the Nation were apparent, although the tenants often failed to

pay the Choctaw owners as agreed.<sup>14</sup>

Tenancy served to open the door for the main thrust of the white invasion into the Choctaw Nation. The railroads, however, carried in many more and it was the coal industry that drove the trains. The first train to cross the Choctaw Nation was the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas, or "Katy" in 1872.<sup>15</sup> An intermarried white James J. McCallester and several mixed blood families started the coal industry. The operation of the mines and railroads rarely affected the daily life of most Choctaws, but it did have a major influence on the development of the Nation's economy.<sup>16</sup> In the 1880s the railroads established large mining communities such as McAlester, Krebs and Colgate. Prior to the development of these coal towns, whites and blacks had generally settled in the same areas as the Choctaws. These new coal communities, however, became white enclaves within the Nation.<sup>17</sup> These large bodies of whites developed a sense of independence which they would later turn against the tribe.<sup>18</sup>

As tenants, miners, railroad workers and lumbermen poured in the racial composition of the Choctaw's domain changed drastically. Indeed, by 1890 the Indian was a minority in his own land. In 1860 the Choctaw Nation had a population of nearly 14,000, of which only 5 percent were whites and 18 percent slaves. But by 1890 the whites constituted 65 percent of the Nation's population while the blacks dropped to 10 percent.<sup>19</sup> During the last decade of

the century, the whites numbered 80 percent of the total population; blacks and Indians comprising the remaining 20 percent. By 1900 the Choctaw Nation claimed almost 100,000 inhabitants, most of them whites clamoring for change and progress at the expense of their Indian hosts.<sup>20</sup> The influence of these immigrants in causing the demise of the Choctaw's tribal government was significant.

The role of the blacks in tribal affairs and the Choctaws' acculturation contrasted sharply with that of the whites. Enough black freedmen resided in the Choctaw Nation throughout the last half of the nineteenth century to pose a real dilemma for the tribal and federal governments. The Choctaws and Chickasaws freed their slaves according to the Treaty of 1866, but the issue of the tribes adopting their freedmen became bogged down in litigation over terms of the treaty.<sup>21</sup> Both the Choctaws and Chickasaws expected the United States to remove the freedmen from their Nations. The federal government failed to do so, however, and the tribes refused to adopt them. Consequently, the freedmen lived in the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations for nearly twenty years without any official status or rights.<sup>22</sup> The Choctaws made several attempts to adopt their freedmen and collect funds promised them by Washington during the late 1870s, but the Chickasaws, who had to be a part of any such agreements, refused. The Chickasaws had a greater percentage of blacks living among them and possibly saw the freedmen as a greater

threat.<sup>23</sup> Not until 1883 did the Chickasaws finally agree to adopt their freedmen; each freedman received 40 acres of land and limited educational and political privileges.<sup>24</sup>

The social interaction between the Choctaws and the blacks living within the Nation was very limited both before and after the adoption of the freedmen. The General Council declared intermarriage between the two races illegal in 1885, and it was a law rarely broken.<sup>25</sup> As late as 1900, less than 1 percent of the marriages between Choctaw citizens involved blacks and Indians. Prior to the War, the slave system had forced the two races to live in close proximity to one another, but the blacks quickly moved into segregated communities after their emancipation. For the following seventeen years, blacks lived in near isolation and played no part in the political, economic, or social life of the tribe. Adoption as citizens into the tribe made little difference for blacks, as the tribal leadership passed laws forbidding blacks to hold public office or attend school with Choctaw children. While the full bloods showed less animosity toward the freedmen than the mixed bloods, they too maintained social distance.<sup>26</sup>

The Choctaws did not underestimate the impact that the large numbers of immigrant whites and the black freedmen would have on the tribe. The whites in particular, because of their overwhelming numbers and ability to marry into the tribe, threatened the Choctaw's cultural and political integrity. The fullblood Choctaws as well as the mixed

feared the internal threat of the white immigrants to the tribe. The fullbloods feared further dilution of their traditional culture and customs as more and more whites married into the tribe. The mixed bloods and those whites who had already acquired tribal membership by marriage feared the loss of their control over tribal politics and thereby the loss of their favorable economic position. Beyond the economic and political dimensions, many mixed bloods had a genuine desire to retain and protect much of the traditional culture retained on by the fullbloods. The greatest and most immediate threat the whites posed, however, was an outright invasion of the Choctaw nation. Once a sufficient number of whites were within the tribal boundaries, they could demand the United States dissolve the Choctaws' tribal status and allot the tribal lands. The outcome was inevitable. The tribe took what measures it could to resist the white invasion from without and within.<sup>27</sup>

The Choctaws used a permit system to control the entry of whites into the Nation. As early as 1836 the General Council required that all white laborers obtain a work permit.<sup>28</sup> According to the treaties of 1855 and 1866, the tribe had the authority to regulate the entry of everyone but federal employees, railroad personnel and travelers into the Nation.<sup>29</sup> By 1867, a "work" permit carried a \$5 fee for each laborer hired. In 1875 the Choctaws raised the fee for

a work permit to six dollars.<sup>30</sup> By 1883 approximately 12,000 whites holding work permits resided among the Choctaws, while more than 10,000 whites were working in the Nation without permits (see Table I).<sup>31</sup> The United States agents and the tribal police and courts had an impossible task in finding and removing illegal laborers and squatters. The Choctaws' permit laws proved too difficult to enforce and were not effective in controlling the white invasion of their territory. The mixed bloods were unwilling to give up their legal and illegal laborers and tenants. The tribe thus failed to develop an effective immigration policy.<sup>32</sup>

By regulating marriage between Choctaws and whites, the tribe tried to protect itself from cultural dilution. Between the Choctaws' removal from Mississippi and the Civil War the influence of intermarried whites actually declined. By 1850 these whites constituted only a small part of the tribe's population. At that time the tribe required only that any white man living with a Choctaw woman had to be legally married before he was considered a citizen. Despite the liberal laws, few such marriages took place until the end of the Civil War. But between 1865 and 1869, 30 percent of the marriages consummated within the tribe were between whites and Choctaws while from 1870 to 1874 the percentage of such marriages rose to nearly 40 percent (see Table II).<sup>33</sup>

In response to the rise in intermarriages the tribal government passed a much more restrictive law in 1875. A

TABLE I  
 CHANGE IN RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE  
 CHOCTAW NATION FROM 1830-1900

	1830		1860		1890		1900	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Indians	17,963	96	13,666	81	10,017	24	16,000	16
Whites	151	1	804	5	28,345	66	79,531	80
Blacks	512	3	2,349	14	4,406	10	4,250	4
Total	18,626	100	16,814	100	42,768	100	99,781	100

Source: Doran, "Negro Slaves," pp. 346, 347; Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 159; Report on the Indians Taxed and Not Taxed in the United States (except Alaska) at the Eleventh Census: 1890, pp. 254-255; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 104. The figures were estimates drawn up by the Union agent.

TABLE II  
 THE PERCENTAGE OF MARRIAGES TAKING PLACE  
 BETWEEN CHOCTAWS AND WHITES OF THE  
 TOTAL NUMBER OF MARRIAGES TAKING  
 PLACE IN WHICH A CHOCTAW  
 CITIZEN WAS INVOLVED,  
 1841-1900

Year in Which the Marriages Took Place	Choctaw- Choctaw		Intermarriages		Total For Period
	No.	%	No.	%	
1841-1849	1	100	0	0	1
1850-1859	1	100	0	0	1
1860-1864	4	100	0	0	4
1865-1869	7	70	3	30	10
1870-1874	14	60.9	9	39.1	23
1875-1879	19	86.3	3	13.6	22
1880-1884	29	64.4	16	35.6	45
1885-1889	31	54.4	26	45.6	57
1890-1895	95	72.0	37	28.0	132
1896-1900	91	67.4	44	32.6	135
Total	292		138		430

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.



white man was allowed to marry into the tribe only if he paid a fee of \$25 and had ten Choctaw citizens testify to his character before a tribal official. If the white man ever abandoned his Choctaw wife, he forfeited his tribal citizenship. If his wife died, he kept his citizenship unless he married another white.<sup>34</sup> The stricter marriage laws reduced intermarriages by 25 percent over the next four years. The benefits of marriage into the tribe, however, must have outweighed the costs, because during the period between 1880 and 1884, the percentage of such marriages reached 36 percent, a number just below the pre-1875 permit level.<sup>35</sup>

From 1885 to 1889, the tribe experienced the highest level of intermarriage yet, 46 percent.<sup>36</sup> The Choctaw government responded in 1878 with a law much stronger than the one from 1875, raising the marriage fee for white men to one hundred dollars. The tribe did, however, consider marriages between white men and Choctaw women conducted outside of the Choctaw Nation as legal. In such cases, however, the husband had no claim to tribal citizenship although his wife and children did.<sup>37</sup> After 1887 the number of intermarriages as a percentage of the total number of marriages dropped considerably. In the last four years of the century, the number of whites marrying into the tribe began to rise once again.<sup>38</sup> The marriage figures and marriage laws passed during the last half of the century indicate the Choctaws' cognizance of the threat of white men

to their culture and tribal systems. Through legislation the tribal leadership made a conscious effort to control intermarriage and the pace of acculturation.

White females marrying Choctaw men was of little concern to the leadership. Even though the number of white women marrying into the tribe was nearly equal to that of white men, the tribe took no legislative steps to limit the marriages. The marriage laws of 1875, and 1887 did not restrict the marriage of white women into the tribe in any way. The only restrictions on the women's citizenship were limited to the event of her abandoning her Choctaw husband or if she remarried a white man after her Choctaw husband's death. That the leaders did not impose restrictions upon women suggests that the tribe did not perceive white women as a threat to their economic, political or social way of life.<sup>39</sup>

The strict marriage codes implemented by the tribe kept the intermarried whites a small, albeit influential, minority. In 1885, white citizens composed 3 percent of the tribal population. By 1898 the number of white citizens rose slightly to 5 percent. Even as late as 1906, on the eve of the tribe's dissolution, the whites constituted only 9 percent.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of these whites on the basic social unit, the family, was much greater than their percentage of the total population would indicate. By 1900, a white partner was present in 30 percent of the

households listed.<sup>41</sup> The cultural influences of each white spouse was multiplied by the number of their mixed blood offspring. These children carried elements of both cultures, blending and meshing traits, attitudes and aspirations of both parents.

As stated before the Choctaw were primarily an agricultural people who lived on farms and in homes which because of their communal land system, they owned outright. But apart from these general similarities, the fullbloods and mixed bloods showed a growing cultural divergence.<sup>42</sup> The fullbloods maintained small land holdings, usually less than a quarter section. They chose isolated spots away from towns or major public thoroughfares to establish their homes and carry on their traditional Indian way of life. Their ambitions seldom extended beyond raising enough food to get by from one season to the next.<sup>43</sup> In 1890, special census taker Robert Lane wrote: "It is notorious that the Indian [fullblood] man will not work. Most of the labor performed is by the female members of the family, while the boys and men spend much of their time hunting and fishing."<sup>44</sup> The houses of the fullbloods were little more than log cabins which were so poorly constructed that during inclement weather residents were highly susceptible to sickness. The fullblood's diet rarely consisted of anything more than corn, meat, and coffee. His lifeways were reminiscent of the Choctaws' aboriginal state; he lived from one day to the next and did not worry about or plan for the future.<sup>45</sup>

The mixed bloods and a few full bloods adapted readily to the American concepts of progress and the accumulation of wealth, although the mixed bloods showed as great a dislike for manual labor as did the full bloods. The metis relied heavily on immigrant laborers and tenants to exploit the tribal resources. Some mixed bloods developed into an aristocracy -- a landlord class -- who administered large land holdings and led a life of leisure similar in many ways to the plantation system of the South. To be sure many mixed bloods did not achieve great wealth, but it was a goal to which a majority aspired. It was the economic ambition of the mixed bloods which distinguished them from the full bloods; the economic attitudes reflected the white influence which helped to alter several of the Choctaw's basic social institutions.<sup>46</sup>

Choctaw families and households with a white spouse present showed variations in size and structure from the families with two Choctaw spouses. The size and structure of the intermarried couples household often more closely resembled the size and structure of white American families (see Table III). The intermarried couples had larger families than the fullbloods -- 5.1 persons per dwelling as compared to the fullbloods average of 4 individuals. The average for the United States was 4.7, but the South Central United States averaged 5.4<sup>47</sup> Several factors were apparently involved in determining the size of both the

TABLE III  
 RACIAL COMBINATIONS OF MARRIED COUPLES  
 (CHOCTAW CITIZENS) AS OF 1900  
 EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE  
 OF THE TOTAL NUMBER  
 OF MARRIAGES

Race or Tribe		Number	Percent
<u>Husband</u>	<u>Wife</u>		
Choctaw	Choctaw	350	67.0
White	Choctaw	82	15.6
Choctaw	White	70	13.5
Choctaw	Chickasaw	7	1.3
Chickasaw	Choctaw	4	0.8
Choctaw	Cherokee	1	0.2
Pottowatomi	Choctaw	1	0.2
Choctaw	Black	1	0.2
Black	Choctaw	4	0.8
Total		522	99.9

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

family and the household. The mixed blood's higher standard of living made supporting a large family more feasible, and their use of modern health practices kept their infant mortality at a rate lower than the fullbloods.<sup>48</sup> These factors would help to explain why 25 percent of metis households had seven members or more as compared to the 12 percent for fullbloods. The number of families with seven individuals or more for the United States was 21 percent, while the South Central United States averaged 24 percent.<sup>49</sup> In establishing household, the fullbloods relied less on large nuclear families and more on extended kinship than did the mixed couples (see Table IV). The Choctaw tradition of the family being a part of the larger kinship and clan system persisted. Nearly 25 percent of the fullblood families had non-nuclear family kin living in their household, as compared to the intermarried couples' 15 percent. The fullbloods tended to show greater variety and flexibility in household membership, especially with much more lateral extension than the mixed bloods did. That is, the simple family might be joined by a brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin or nephew of the head of the household or his wife's relatives.<sup>50</sup>

The children living in the Choctaw households were of a greater variety than those in an intermarried couple's household. Eighteen percent of the Choctaw couples had children living with them other than or in addition to their own. This occurred in only 8 percent of the mixed

TABLE IV  
 A COMPARISON OF CHOCTAW HOUSEHOLD TYPES  
 BETWEEN HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH  
 ONE HALF INDIAN BLOOD OR MORE  
 AS TO THOSE WITH LESS THAN  
 ONE HALF INDIAN BLOOD

Family Type	Fullblood	1/2 to Full	Less than 1/2	None
Solitary <sup>a</sup>	5.3	3.1	2.3	0.0
No Family <sup>b</sup>	2.0	2.8	0.0	0.0
Simple <sup>c</sup>	58.3	59.6	63.1	66.3
Quasi-Extended <sup>d</sup>	3.7	1.2	1.8	3.4
Extended <sup>e</sup>	19.0	18.7	13.8	12.4
Simple/Aug. <sup>f</sup>	7.7	11.5	17.9	6.9
Extend/Aug. <sup>g</sup>	2.7	1.7	0.0	0.0

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>a</sup>An individual living alone constituted a "solitary" household.

<sup>b</sup>Two individuals living together (either related or not) who are not married and with no children present. This could include brothers and sisters, cousins or any relatives of the same generation.

<sup>c</sup>A couple with or without offspring constituted a simple family.

<sup>d</sup>Quasi-extended households consisted of grandparents and grandchildren (or grand nieces and nephews) living in the same household without the children's parents present.

<sup>e</sup>An extended household consisted of the nuclear (simple) family with additional kin residing in the same dwelling.

<sup>f</sup>A simple-augmented household included a simple family with additional individuals residing in the dwelling who were not related to the couple in any way.

<sup>g</sup>An extended-augmented household included the simple family unit; additional kin, and individuals outside the kin group residing in the same dwelling.

marriages. Fullblood families frequently incorporated the children other than their own their kin into their own households. In 4 percent of the cases, the only children present in the household were offspring of the couple's relatives, and adoption of children from outside the kingroup occurred in another 4 percent. In all instances the mixed marriages had considerably less augmentation of their siblings by kin or non-kin children.<sup>51</sup> The tradition of adopting orphaned children, whether related or not, appeared to have persisted in the fullblood households.<sup>52</sup>

The mixed couples generally lived in "simple" families (66 percent), although 16 percent augmented their households with non-related residents listed as "boarders" or "servants". Preferring to augment their families with relatives, only 11 percent of the Choctaw couples incorporated non-kin into their homes. The 1890 and 1900 published census shows that most Anglo-American families augmented their households with non-related individuals in a manner very similar to that in the households of intermarried couples. The exact implications of this divergence in family types in affecting group behavior is difficult if not impossible to determine. However, the fact that differences between mixed blood and fullblood households did exist was important because it showed that change was occurring within the family unit, and primarily along lines of Indian and white blood presented in the household.<sup>53</sup>



The tribal educational system also gave an excellent indication of the importance that miscegenation made in the Choctaws' acculturation. Education, in the formal Anglo-American style, began as early as the 1820's among the Choctaws and received economic and moral support from the tribal council and the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions until the Civil War. By 1860 the system gradually expanded from the mission schools to a public school network that included both neighborhood and boarding schools as well as limited opportunity for college education in the "States".

That the tribal leadership placed greater amount of emphasis on the boarding schools and the sending of a few select students (primarily attended by metis) to college than they did on neighborhood schools (primarily attended by fullbloods). The funding going to the schools reflected this. The boarding schools received the largest share of the annual education appropriations even though the students attending the boarding schools never comprised more than 20 percent of the total enrollment. In 1895 the tribe set aside 60 percent of its revenues collected from annuities and royalties for the operation of the elite schools. While the growth of the boarding schools was constant, attendance at neighborhood schools was erratic largely due to insufficient funding which often caused schools to close down during the year.<sup>54</sup>

Consequently the tribal school system was effective in reaching and educating the mixed bloods of the Nation as well as a select few of the fullbloods. Using literacy (in any language) and the ability to speak English as the two primary indicators of education level within the tribe, it becomes apparent that the fullbloods were not as literate nor were they nearly as capable of communicating in English as were their metis counterparts. Literacy was more apt to indicate a person's schooling while the ability to speak English was a talent more often acquired at home or among friends. The fullbloods appear to have had little need or desire to send their children to school to learn about white culture.<sup>55</sup>

As Table V indicates, the mixed blood men and women constituted by far the most literate portion of the Choctaw citizenry. The degree of racial intermixture appears to have affected the men's and women's literacy differently. Half of the fullblood men were literate, while almost 80 percent of the fullblooded women were not. However, once started down the continuum of Choctaw and white intermixture the women's literacy rate jumped from 20 percent for the fullblood women to 75 percent for those women claiming some white ancestry. The literacy rate of women with less than one half Choctaw blood was almost 100 percent. Seventy percent of the intermarried white women were literate, a figure considerably below that for women with one half Choctaw blood or less. The number of literate men climbed

TABLE V  
 THE ABILITY TO READ AND/OR WRITE IN ANY LANGUAGE  
 OF THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND SPOUSE  
 ACCORDING TO THEIR DEGREE OF  
 INDIAN BLOOD

Skill	Blood Quantum													
	Fullblood <sup>a</sup>		$3/4 \leq x < 1^b$		$1/2 \leq x < 3/4^c$		$1/4 \leq x \leq 1/2^d$		$1/8 \leq x \leq 1/8^e$		$0 < x < 1/8^f$		None <sup>g</sup>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Head of Household														
Literate <sup>h</sup>	135	44.9	29	69.0	36	69.2	22	84.6	17	94.4	13	92.6	71	82.6
Can Read <sup>i</sup>	17	5.6	3	7.1	3	5.8	1	3.8	0	0.0	1	7.1	2	2.3
Illiterate <sup>j</sup>	49	49.5	10	23.8	13	25.0	3	11.5	1	5.6	0	0.0	12	14.0
Total	301		42		52		26		18		14		86	
Spouses														
Literate	47	20.2	25	75.6	27	69.2	15	93.8	6	100.0	15	100.0	51	78.5
Can Read	14	6.0	3	9.0	4	10.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	6.2
Illiterate	171	73.7	5	15.4	8	20.5	1	6.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	15.4
Total	232		33		39		16		6		15		65	

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1890 - Indian Territory.

TABLE V (Continued)

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<sup>a</sup>Fullblood - all individuals claiming to be of pure Indian descent.

<sup>b</sup> $3/4 \leq X < 1$  - all individuals claiming at least three-quarters Indian blood, but having some white ancestry.

<sup>c</sup> $1/2 \leq X < 3/4$  - all individuals claiming at least one-half Indian blood but less than three-quarters.

<sup>d</sup> $1/4 \leq X < 1/2$  - all individuals claiming at least one-quarter Indian blood but less than one-half.

<sup>e</sup> $1/8 \leq X < 1/4$  - all individuals claiming at least one-eighth Indian blood but less than one-quarter.

<sup>f</sup> $0 < X \leq 1/8$  - all individuals claiming some Indian blood but less than one-eighth.

<sup>g</sup>None - all individuals claiming to have no Indian blood.

<sup>h</sup>Literate - the ability to read and write in any language.

<sup>i</sup>Can Read - the ability to read a language.

<sup>j</sup>Illiterate - the inability to read or write in any language.

steadily from 45 percent for fullbloods to 94 percent for the second lowest degree of Indian blood. Like the women, the men claiming less than a half but some Choctaw blood had a higher literacy rate than did the intermarried whites.<sup>56</sup>

Literacy is one means of judging the educational system of the Choctaws, but the Choctaws' ability to speak English reflects not only the Indians' educational level but also the degree to which the individuals interacted with white society. Speaking English was one of the best indicators of acculturation, while it was a skill acquired primarily in an individual's home environment, all the schools stated proficiency in English as one of their prime objectives as well. As Table VI shows, only 37 percent of the Choctaw fullbloods could speak English at the turn of the century. This data provides ample evidence of the schools' failure to achieve meeting this goal. Just 30 percent of the fullblood women could communicate in English, while only 42 percent of the men could. So, therefore, the fullblood men and women remained isolated from the white community and lacked even the ability to converse with whites. The dramatic rise in the women's ability to speak English from 32 percent for fullbloods to 54 percent for those women with any white blood and corresponded to a rise from 42 to 95 percent for the men. This data indicates that the mixed bloods (of any degree) were much more involved with the white society around them than were the fullbloods.<sup>57</sup>

In a report to the Office of the Census in 1890, John

TABLE VI

THE ABILITY OF THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND SPOUSE TO SPEAK  
ENGLISH ACCORDING TO THEIR DEGREE OF INDIAN BLOOD

Ability to Speak English	Blood Quantum													
	Fullblood		$3/4 \leq X < 1$		$1/2 \leq X < 3/4$		$1/4 \leq X \leq 1/2$		$1/8 \leq X \leq 1/8$		$0 < X < 1/8$		None	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Head of Household														
Yes	125	41.8	40	95.2	50	96.2	25	100.0	19	100.0	14	100.0	85	97.7
No	174	58.2	2	4.8	2	3.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.3
Total	299		42		52		25		19		14		87	
Spouses														
Yes	73	31.5	31	93.9	40	100.0	16	100.0	6	100.0	15	100.0	65	100.0
No	159	68.5	2	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	232		33		40		16		6		15		65	

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1890 - Indian Territory. For symbols on blood quantum see Table V.

Lane assessed the progress made by fullbloods in acculturation:

In the language of a Choctaw residing in Sugar Loaf County, educated in the states, 'the full-blood Indian seems to have no future, intellectually, or morally, He has no plans for developments. He gives no thoughts to such subjects, only as the white blood is made to course his veins. He cares but little for education of his children, and says that education makes rascals, judging by the tricks he sees performed by the white men, who are here to take advantage of the unsophisticated Indian.' My visits to the full-blood homes convinces me that the pure blood Indian has made but little advancement.<sup>58</sup>

The quote reflects as much about the educated Choctaws' views toward acculturation as it does about the fullbloods' and demonstrates a great divergence in the two groups beliefs and lifestyles.

Only with the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887 were the two groups once again unified in thought. The Choctaws had barely avoided the allotment of their tribal lands in 1867, and the Dawes Act brought the nightmare back to life. Gradually, however, the demands of philanthropists, railroad companies, white settlers inside and outside of the Nation, as well as protests by the freedmen, forced the federal government to push the Five Civilized Tribes into allotment. The Dawes Act did not apply directly to the Five Civilized Tribes, but it did establish the Dawes Commission which began the process of alienating the tribal lands. By the Atoka Agreement of 1897 and the Curtis Act passed by Congress in 1898, the Choctaws agreed to allot their tribal

lands in severality and dissolve their tribal government. The Dawes Commission did not finish allotting tribal lands until 1903, and the tribal government did not dissolve until 1906. The mixed bloods and intermarried whites worked closely with the Dawes Commission to see that only tribal members appeared on the final tribal rolls and received allotments.<sup>59</sup>

The last half of the nineteenth century saw the Choctaws fight a losing battle against the territorial expansion of the United States. The Treaty of 1867 had helped to accelerate the pace of the Choctaws' inevitable decline by reducing the tribal governments' sovereignty. The Choctaws could not control white migration. Once the whites firmly established themselves as a majority within the nation they were able to force the federal government to shut the tribe down. Prior to allotment and tribal dissolution, however, many whites chose to marry into the tribe thereby speeding up the process of the Choctaws' acculturation through cultural dilution.

The tribe was much more careful in granting tribal citizenship than it was with controlling legal and illegal aliens in the Nation. The series of intermarriage laws passed between 1836 and 1887 showed the leadership's growing concern over the implications of widespread intermarriage and miscegenation. As Table II indicates, each time there was a rise in the number of Indian-white marriages the General Council responded with more restrictive marriage



laws. The impact of the legislation usually achieved only short term success.

Despite their small percentage of the entire membership of the Nation, by 1900 the intermarried whites were present in one-third of the Choctaw households. The whites' influence could be seen in the types of households established with a greater preference for the simple family, or augmented homes. These intermarried whites and their metis offspring were quickly diffusing into the social fabric of the tribal community and breaking down the traditional Choctaw values and ways of life.

By the late 1800's the division that had grown between the fullblood community and the mixed bloods was obvious to visitors to the Nation such as S. C. Armstrong and Robert Lane. The data obtained from the census provides a striking picture as well. The difference in household types was only one indication of the growing divergence between the two groups and the important influence of white intermarriage and miscegenation. That only 20 percent of the fullblood wives and 45 percent of the fullblood husbands could read or write (in any language), and that the literacy rate for mixed bloods and whites of both sexes was at or above 80 percent (see Table V) shows the different emphasis the two groups placed on education and acculturation. The corresponding differences in the ability of the two groups to speak English serves to substantiate further the two

groups' differing involvement in white America. Acculturation of the tribe was primarily the outcome of intermarriage and miscegenation. The Choctaws had realized this and struggled manfully to control the influx of white blood.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The leased District was an area which originally comprised the western third of the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribal reserve. The two tribes leased the property lying between the 98th and 100th meridian to the United States, who in turn set the land aside for reservations for the Southern Plains Tribes. Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 71-72.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Kappler, Laws and Treaties, pp. 918-931.

<sup>3</sup>Debo, Rise, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>S. C. Armstrong, Report of a Trip Made in Behalf of the Indian Rights Association to Some Indian Reservations of the Southwest (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1884; microfilmed Glenn Rock, N.J.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1974), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Bieder, "Scientific Attitudes Toward Indian Mixed-Bloods," The Journal of Ethnic Studies 8 (Spring, 1980), pp. 17-30; T. M. Holm, "Indians and Progressives: From Vanishing Policy to the Indian New Deal" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1978), pp. 164-165.

<sup>6</sup>Hagan, Indian Police, pp. 4, 22, 42; U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, 1890, p. 98; Holm, "Indians and Progressives," p. 99.

<sup>7</sup>Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 105, 107.

<sup>8</sup>Paul Pruka, American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900 (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1976). This study is an excellent analysis of the development of the United States attitudes and policies toward handling the American Indian during the last half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>9</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 92, 116, 131.

<sup>10</sup>Graebner, "Agriculture Among Tribes," pp. 48, 59; U.S. Interior Department, Bureau of the Census. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, 1:8; Graebner, "Agriculture Among Tribes," p. 60.

<sup>11</sup>Morrison, "A Social History," pp. 138-139; Armstrong, "Report of a Trip," p. 23-24. Originally a Choctaw citizen would allow a white or black family to cultivate his land for a portion of the produce (known as sharecropping or share tenancy) or for a cash payment (cash tenants). Sharecropping was the most common form of tenancy and the Choctaws used the tenant's payment to supplement income from their own crops. The amount Choctaw owners charged their tenants varied from one-quarter to one third of the total production.

<sup>12</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 110; Doran, "The Origins of Culture," pp. 135, 139, 140.

<sup>13</sup>Doran, "Population Statistics," pp. 506-507, 52, 513; Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 159; Report on Indians Taxed and Not Taxed in the United States (except Alaska) at the Eleventh Census: 1890, 10:236, 305.

<sup>14</sup>Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 227. The "Katy" was the only railroad constructed under the provisions of the 1866 Treaty, the rest of the railroads were chartered by Congress. The granting of railroad franchises became a central issue in tribal politics with the mixed bloods lobbying hard to secure favorable agreements for themselves and the tribe. By 1902 over 780 miles of track ran through the Choctaw Nation, exporting Choctaw corn, cotton and coal.

<sup>15</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 117-125; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 238.

<sup>16</sup>Baird, Choctaw, pp. 62-63, 67; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1876, p. 62. By 1900 Colgate's population numbered nearly 3,000 but with no Indians present. South McAlester claimed only 24 Indian residents out of 3,300 person, while Durant reported only 5 percent of its population of 3,000 as Indian.

<sup>17</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1891, pp. 140-141; 1899, p. 195; 1900, p. 117; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, 1:616; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890, 15 Vols: Special Report on Indians Taxed and Not-Taxed, pp. 256, 305.

<sup>18</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, 1:794.

<sup>19</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," pp. 159, 192; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, Report on the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890, 15 vols., 1:254-255.

<sup>20</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 154; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, 2:482-483, 537.

<sup>21</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 88-89.

<sup>22</sup>Armstrong, "Report of a Trip," p. 23; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 88-89.

<sup>23</sup>Report on the Indians Taxed and Not Taxed in the United States (except Alaska) at the Eleventh Census: 1890, 10:254-255; Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 192.

<sup>24</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 114; Baird, Peter Pitchlynn, p. 188.

<sup>25</sup>Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1885, p. 156.

<sup>26</sup>Armstrong, "Report of a Trip," p. 23; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 99-109; Morrison, "A Social History," pp. 117-118.

<sup>27</sup>Morrison, "A Social History," pp. 138-139.

<sup>28</sup>Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1836, pp. 21-22.

<sup>29</sup>Kappler, Law and Treaties, pp. 918-931.

<sup>30</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 135; Graebner, "Agriculture Among the Tribes," pp. 51, 55.

<sup>31</sup>Armstrong, "Report of a Trip," p. 3; Morrison, "A Social History," p. 185.

<sup>32</sup>Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 10; Doran, "The Origins of Culture," pp. 148-150.

<sup>33</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 77; Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1840, pp. 27-28. The statistics on the percentage of mixed marriages in the tribe as well as statistics used hereafter were derived from the Twelfth Census of the U.S. Population, 1900 - Indian Territory. This was a microfilmed copy of the original manuscript schedules.

<sup>34</sup>Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1875, pp. 171-172.

<sup>35</sup>Twelfth Census of the U.S. Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1887, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup>Twelfth Census of the U.S. Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>39</sup>Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1875, pp. 171-172; Laws of the Choctaw Nation, 1887, p. 17; Twelfth Census of the U.S. Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>40</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 221-222; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1898, p. 159; 1900, p. 610.

<sup>41</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Graebner, "Agriculture Among the Tribes," p. 50; Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 138; Twelfth Census of the U.S. Population, 1900 - Indian Territory; John Lane, "Conditions of Indian - Indian Territory, Choctaw Nation," Report on Indians Taxed and Not Taxed in the United States (except Alaska) at the Eleventh Census: 1890, 10:308.

<sup>44</sup>Lane, Conditions of Indians, p. 308.

<sup>45</sup>Conditions of Indians, pp. 307-308; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1876, p. 62.

<sup>46</sup>Doran, "The Origins of Culture," p. 138; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1876, p. 62; Lane, "Conditions of Indians," pp. 307-308; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory; Morrison, "A Social History," pp. 33, 274; Armstrong, "Report of a Trip," pp. 22-23.

<sup>47</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, 2:clx. A family was defined as a group of blood relations living in the same dwelling while a household included all individuals residing in the same dwelling whether related or not.

<sup>48</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory; Horatio Cushman, History of Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians, ed. Angie Debo (First Published in 1899, reprint ed., Stillwater, Oklahoma: Redlands Press, 1962), pp. 174-175; Lane, "Conditions of Indians," p. 307; Debo, Rise and Fall, p. 233.

<sup>49</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, 2:clviii, clxxvi, clxxxii.

<sup>50</sup>Schlenker, "An Historical Analysis," pp. 103, 118, 129.

<sup>51</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>52</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 16-17; Cushman, History of Choctaw, pp. 400-401.

<sup>53</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory. The prevalence of non-related kin in American households at the turn of the century is discussed in depth by Tamara Hareven, "Modernization and Family History: Perspectives and Social Change," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 2(November, 1976), p. 190.

<sup>54</sup>Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 146-147, 236, 237.

<sup>55</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory; Lane, "Conditions of Indians," p. 308.

<sup>56</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Lane, "Conditions of Indians," p. 308.

<sup>59</sup>Pruka, American Indian Policy; Debo, Rise and Fall, pp. 277-278.

CHAPTER IV  
COMANCHE CULTURAL CHANGE ON THE  
RESERVATION, 1867-1900

Unlike the Choctaws it was not until 1875 that the United States was able to finally corral all the Comanche bands onto the reservation set aside for them eight years earlier by the Treaty of Medicine Lodge. At that point the Comanches ceased to exist as an autonomous cultural group. The United States restricted the movement of the tribe, forbidding members to leave the reservation without specific permission. By 1880 the buffalo were gone, and the Comanches had little reason to venture from the confines of their prison. Subsistence no longer depended on the horse, the bow, and the buffalo; instead survival depended upon the agent and the issue of rations. Wanting more than the Comanche land, however, many whites felt a moral obligation to "civilize" the Indians. Within the isolated confines of the reservation, the American officials attempted to strip the Indian of his native culture and adorn him in the attire of the white man. The Comanches did much the same with the white culture as they did with the ration clothing given them by the reservation agent -- they either threw it away or they altered it to meet their needs. The twenty-five



years of reservation life changed the Comanches significantly but rarely as United States officials intended.

Immediately following the Civil War American Indian policy entered a new phase of development. The open and sparsely populated Plains were at first a barrier and then the last frontier for thousands of whites migrating westward. The federal government was unable to check the progress of these whites. Recognizing the settlers' conquest was eminent and to minimize the loss of life for both the Plains Indians and whites, many federal officials and eastern philanthropists espoused a reservation system as the salvation of the native American people.

Once isolated from the whites on their reservations the Indians were to undergo cultural transformation from stone age nomads into self-sufficient agriculturalists. Government officials believed that to facilitate this change they should reduce the importance of the Indians' tribal structure and stress the importance of the individual. To break down the band structure of tribes such as the Comanches, these officials replaced or subverted the power of uncooperative chiefs. At the same time the bands were being reduced, Comanche children were to learn the arts of civilization at reservation schools. The schools would teach the Indians to speak, to read and write English, and inculcate the skills necessary to run a small farm. All of these programs ultimately sought to prepare each individual

Indian family for the day when it would receive its allotment of tribal land and establish a homestead. The Indians would then be able to join white society and assimilate into the progressive masses of small farmers.<sup>1</sup>

The reservation upon which the United States chose to settle the Comanches contained nearly three million acres, a domain the tribe would share with the Kiowa and Kiowa Apache Indians.<sup>2</sup> According to the Treaty of Medicine Lodge, the Kiowa-Comanche reservation was bounded by the Red River on the south, the north fork of the Red River on the west, the Washita River on the North and the 98th meridian on the east (see Figure 1). The reservation's topography ranged from level valleys to rugged hills. The Kiowa and Kiowa Apaches settled in the northern part of the reserve, while the Comanches clustered in their bands throughout the reservation south of the Wichita Mountains. In 1869 the government built the Agency headquarters on a site three miles north of Fort Sill on Cache Creek.<sup>3</sup>

It was to the new agency that Laurie Tatum came in 1869 as agent to "civilize" the Comanches. Tatum was a Quaker with no previous experience with Native Americans and little experience in administration.<sup>4</sup> He served for four years, but he was able to accomplish little during his tenure. This was due to because the hostile bands who refused to settle on the reservation and kept matters in constant state of chaos. Pledged to a policy of peace in dealing with the

Indians, he used his power to issue or withhold rations rather than military force to punish or reward. One band of Comanches, the Honeyeaters Penetakas, attempted to establish small farms as they had done on their reservation in Texas during the 1850's, but their hostile brethren trampled their crops and stampeded their animals. Despite this harassment, by the end of Tatum's term in office, the Honeyeaters had 240 acres under cultivation and had produced 7,200 bushels of corn, 20 bushels of potatoes, and 75 tons of hay.<sup>5</sup>

The development of agriculture on the reservation was very erratic over the thirty years following Agent Tatum's inauspicious start. The environment of the reservation retarded and limited the expansion of agriculture. The soil was poor and rain was inadequate even in "wet" years. Agriculture also suffered because the federal government failed to supply the reservation with the seeds and farming equipment promised. When James Haworth replaced Tatum as agent in 1873, the government was still intent on forcing the Comanches to become farmers. By 1875, under Agent Haworth's direction and the aid of a white farmer, the Indians of the reservation were raising nearly 10,000 bushels of corn and 195 bushels of other vegetables on 450 acres. But even with his success Haworth tempered his optimism and tried to explain to the officials in Washington that "... of this reservation, but a small part is adapted for agricultural purposes . . . on account of its alkaline soil and waters." After after two more years of drought,

Haworth advocated stock raising rather than farming for the Indians.<sup>6</sup>

But the advice of Agent Haworth went unheeded. Federal officials kept pushing farming, and by 1880 the number of acres plowed rose to 3,360 acres and yielded some 40,000 bushels of corn. The decade of the 1880's showed how unpredictable farming could be on the Plains. In 1885 the reservation Indians produced 52,500 bushels of corn on 3,520 acres of land, but in 1890 the Indians harvested only 17,500 bushels on 4,445 acres. The farming program continued throughout the 1890's despite droughts in 1890, 1893, 1895, 1896, and 1899. In 1900 the reservation produced 243,000 bushels of corn, 36,145 bushels of wheat, oats and barley, 4,500 bushels of vegetables, and 3,200 tons of hay. Although impressive, growth production levels were far from placing the Indians on a level of self-sufficiency. (See Table VII.)<sup>7</sup>

Agent Haworth was merely the first in a long line of Indian agents who saw how much better the Plains environment and the temperament of the Indians were adapted to stock raising than to farming. In 1875, with rations late in arriving and very slow progress in farming, General Mackenzie used \$22,500 to purchase cattle and sheep for the reservation Indians. Between 1875 and 1880 the number of cattle increased from 250 to 3,600 head. The Indians showed little interest in the herds of sheep and by 1880 only 50 of

TABEL VII  
 AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE KIOWA, COMANCHE,  
 KIOWA APACHE RESERVATION

	1872	1875	1880	1885	1890	1895	1899	1900
Number of Tillable Acres	---	---	200,000	346,600	3,712,503	---	---	---
Number of Acres Cultivated	240	450	3,360	3,520	4,445	5,000	15,800	8,065
Number of Acres Under Fence	---	---	---	4,050	13,835	200,000	350,000	53,207
Number of Bushels of -								
Wheat, Oats, and Barley	---	---	---	---	8,500	2,300	5,800	36,145
Corn	7,200	9,875	40,800	52,500	17,500	100,000	60,000	243,000
Vegetables	20	195	---	580	750	1,250	1,000	4,571
Tons of Hay	75	---	50	120	300	5,000	1,000	3,228
Number of -								
Horses	---	6,000	9,250	9,200	10,302	9,732	12,410	23,236
Mules	---	500	250	200	203	*	*	*
Cattle	---	250	3,600	7,500	19,983	8,991	10,000	18,599
Swine	---	250	3,000	4,000	911	2,679	500	1,843
Sheep/Goats	---	---	---	50	50	---	75	65
Value of Skins Sold	---	---	---	\$2,000	---	---	---	---
Income From Grazing Leases	---	---	---	\$55,000	---	---	---	\$232,000

TABLE VII (Continued)

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Source: Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872, pp. 404-405; 1875, pp. 273, 277-278; 1880, pp. 252-263; 1885, pp. 84, 384-385; 1890, pp. 187, 474-475; 1895, pp. 588-589; 1899, pp. 287, 590-591; and 1900, pp. 668-669.

the original 3,600 were still alive.<sup>8</sup> Haworth's successor, H. B. Hunt also stressed cattle raising and by the time he left office in 1885, the cattle herds numbered 7,500. Not only did Agent Hunt try to increase the size of the herds but he also attempted to improve the quality of the stock. In 1883, he used \$30,000 to purchase 875 Texas cows and 31 graded bulls. He would have purchased more had he been able to get financial support from Washington. White farmers often bought cattle from the Indians (an illegal act in itself) for extremely low prices, while other whites merely rustled them. Harsh winters, frequent droughts, and Texas fever hindered significantly the natural increase of the herds. Another factor limiting the growth of the herds was the necessity of using the cattle to supplement the Federal government's inadequate rations.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1870's, whites married into the tribe frequently used their wife's claims to tribal grazing land to begin their own herds. George W. Conover had the largest herd of cattle, numbering in the thousands, on the reservation by 1878. The activities of the squaw men and subsequent purchases of new beeves increased the tribal herds. In 1890, Agent Charles Adams reported that the tribes owned 20,000 head of cattle, but the estimate was probably high because the counts made during 1895 to 1899 never numbered above 10,000 head. Despite the hesitation of Washington officials, by the turn of the century the herds had become a very important part of the tribal economy.

Yet much of the growth could not be attributed to the care and industry of the Indians themselves but, rather, to the work of agency employees and squaw men.<sup>10</sup>

During the Comanches' reservation era, the government rations became the basis of the Comanche economy. Although no mention of rations was made in the Treaty of 1867, even the officials in Washington recognized the need to feed and clothe the Indians while they made the transition from a hunting to an agricultural society. Congress thus authorized in 1869 a ration schedule meant to provide what the Indians could not grow and could not obtain by hunting.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the supplies usually arrived late and were insufficient in quantity and of very poor quality. Even the distribution of the goods was inconsistent because the agents quickly seized upon the distribution of rations as a means of rewarding or punishing the Indians.<sup>12</sup>

The issue of rations actual perpetuated many of the very cultural traits the "civilization" program sought to destroy. The agent usually issued rations every two weeks and the day became a festive affair. In many ways it resembled the traditional buffalo hunt. The Indians would receive live cattle for their beef issue. These would be released and several warriors on horse back would kill the cattle using bows and arrows. The women would then rush out and butcher the cattle as they had the buffalo; some even consumed many of the organs of the freshly butchered



animals. By the 1880's the ration issue included canvas for the Indians' tepees because buffalo skins were no longer available. The reservation agent therefore, had replaced the buffalo as the provider of tribal necessities. Rather than developing into independent farmers, the Comanches became dependent wards of the United States.<sup>13</sup>

The annuities promised the Kiowas and Comanches in the Treaty of Medicine Lodge included an annual issue of clothing. Like the food rations, however, the clothing often arrived late, was of poor quality, and sometimes only came in one size to fit all. Most of the clothing was unsuited for the reservation environment and was discarded by the Comanches. The Indians cut the sleeves off shirts and coats to make vests, and many women simply wrapped the cloth around themselves rather than make dresses. Only a small percentage of the reservation population were reportedly wearing white dress as late as 1900.<sup>14</sup>

Another element in the development of the Comanches reservation economy was the leasing of tribal grasslands to Texas cattlemen. During the 1870's, white ranchers whose property bordered on the reservation their cattle wander onto Indian lands and graze there for free. The proximity of the reservation to cattle trails running between Texas and Kansas made trespassing profitable and easy. The agents tried to keep the trespassers out, but the task was too great. It was under Agent Hunts' administration in the early 1880's that the government officials finally started

leasing the lands to the cattlemen. The first payments were made in kind; bevees to replaced overdue rations. In 1885 the cattlemen made their first cash lease payment of \$15,000 for six year permits. By 1892 the lease payments rose to \$75,000 and peaked in 1900 at \$232,000.<sup>15</sup>

The federal government was unsure of the legality of the grass leases and in 1891 ordered the removal of all cattle not owned by the Indians from the reservation. Cries of protest rose from many quarters. The agents insisted they needed the revenues to expand the farms, herds, and housing. The squaw men and Comanche chiefs who sold their influence to the Texas cattle firms saw future profits in jeporady. The Texas cattlemen used their influence in Congress to renew their leases and even hired such prominent Comanche chiefs as Quanah Parker to lobby on their behalf. A conservative Indian faction made up of some Comanches but mostly Kiowas, who opposed the leases and charged that the cattlemen had bought off the progressive Comanches and abused their grazing privileges. The Eastern philanthropists and reformers claimed the grass revenues impeded the Indian's progress in acculturation by inducing them to lease their lands rather than learning how to manage their own farms or ranches. Also, the issue of grazing leases tied up the tribal lands so they could not be allotted. The pro-leasing faction won out, and in February, 1891, Congress legalized grazing leases The Secretary of

Interior, however, stipulated that they be renewed annually.<sup>16</sup>

The Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of 1899 and 1900 showed that many of the eastern philanthropists' fears were justified. Earlier Annual Reports presented a picture of steady Comanche and Kiowa progress toward acculturation (see Table VIII). The percentage of Indians obtaining subsistence from "civilized pursuits" rose from 12 percent in 1880 to 65 percent in 1895; Indians subsisting on government rations declined from 75 to 22 percent by 1900. The figures implied many Indians were indeed becoming independent farmers, freighters carpenters, or agency clerks. In 1899, however, the Annual Report listed 40 percent of the Indians as living off cash annuities or lease money; the total rose to 70 percent in 1900. The percentage of Indians listed as obtaining a living from civilized pursuits correspondingly dropped to 35 percent in 1899 and to 8 percent in 1900. The Indians were far from becoming the independent agriculturalists the eastern reformers and philanthropists had hoped for. Instead, they merely changed bread lines -- from the government to the cattlemen.<sup>17</sup>

The Comanches had begun to make the transition to an agrarian lifestyle, but they were far from self-sufficient by the turn of the century. By 1900 only 6 percent of the Comanche households received no rations at all, 84 percent

TABLE VIII  
 PERCENTAGE OF INDIANS LIVING ON THE  
 KIOWA, COMMANCHE, WICHITA  
 RESERVATION

	1880	1885	1890	1895	1899	1900
Percent of Indians engaged in civilized pursuits	12	20	35	65	35	8
Percent of subsistence from government rations	--	75	50	25	25	22
Percent hunting, root gathering	--	5	15	10	--	--
Percent cash annuity or lease money		--	--	--	40	70

Source: Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, pp. 242-243; 1885, p. 83; 1890, p. 187; 1895, p. 566; 1899, p. 287; 1900, p. 648-649.

received supplemental rations, and 11 percent were still entirely dependent on the government for subsistence. Nearly all the Comanches (97 percent) listed their occupations as agricultural. Sixty-two percent of these agriculturalists were farmers. Heads of households labeled as cattle and horse herders constituted 20 percent of those employed in agriculture, while farm laborers comprised the other 16 percent. Ten of the 13 heads of households not receiving government rations claimed to be farmers and/or ranchers. The majority of the individuals not receiving rations were those men (Anglo-whites and Mexicans) who had married into the tribe. The United State's obligation to distribute rations to all the Plains Tribes ended in 1897; yet two years later nearly 90 percent of the Comanches were still dependent on the government.<sup>18</sup>

In 1900, the Indian police force was the leading nonagricultural employer on the reservation. Authorized by Congress in 1878, it was to consist of one captain, two lieutenants, four sergeants, and twenty-two privates. Initially, the Indians scorned the occupation of policemen, partly because of their traditional distaste for authoritarianism and partly because the pay was so poor and the job so rough. Nevertheless, the agents still managed to recruit young Indians and by 1885 the force numbered 30. Despite being understaffed, underpaid, and underequipped the Indian police did an effective job in reducing crime on the

reservation. The agent not only used the police to maintain order, but he also used them to improve his communications with the many bands scattered throughout the reservation. Congress failed to provide adequate salaries for the policeman, so many reservations reduced the number and raised the salaries of those left. At the turn of the century the Kiowa Comanche reservation had 2 officers and 19 privates, 9 of whom were Comanches.<sup>19</sup>

In 1886, after witnessing the success of the Indian police on reservations across the Nation, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs created the Court of Indian Offenses. The establishment of an Indian court system was a natural outgrowth of the Indian police system. The agents on the reservations and the officials in Washington believed the Indians would pay greater respect to decisions rendered by other Indians. The Court of Indian Offenses heard minor cases arising on the reservation. Three judges, appointed by the agents presided over each case. Quanah Parker was presiding judge for the Kiowa Comanche agency during the court's formative years and apparently handled the position well. The court alleviated the agent and the Indian police of involvement in the many petty and time consuming arguments which arose on the reservation. It met twice a month and heard cases involving illegal dancing, theft, polygamy, and destruction of a deceased person's possessions. The position of judge must have carried with it great prestige, for such men as Quanah Parker served on it for a salary of

only \$1 a month.<sup>20</sup>

Both Indian police and judges acted not only as an arm of the agent in establishing law and order on the reservation, but they also served as excellent agents for the promoting of Indian acculturation. The concept of a judicial branch of government with written codified laws by which all members would abide and be held accountable was alien to the Comanches. But by involving the men of influence within the tribe as judges and police, the Indians could associate the power of individuals such as Quannah Parker with the post they held. The tribal judiciary and police system transcended the individual and even the individual tribes, drawing judges and policemen from all the different groups living on the reservation and placing all tribes under their jurisdiction. The Indians who filled these positions were usually the progressives within the tribe, and they were required to obey the laws they enforced on others. They were expected to live with only one wife, wear "civilized" clothing, cut off their braids, and forsake any other outward manifestations of their Indian heritage. It was their job to break up tribal dances and to force parents to send their children to school. By the alien techniques of fining, withholding rations, and imprisonment the Indian judges and police introduced the Plains Tribes to the Anglo-American version of justice.<sup>21</sup>

While attempting to remodel the Comanches' economic structure and trying to indoctrinate the Indians to the concepts of private property and written laws, the agent took every opportunity to weaken the band structure of the tribe.<sup>22</sup> In 1880 Agent Hunt described his tactics in his annual report to the Commissioner.

I have endeavored to destroy the tribal relations as much as possible, and also to destroy the influence of certain chiefs. I have allowed relatives to band together and would appoint one of their number a chief and suggest him to take his people off to some good locality and make permanent houses. Of course every band formed this way weakens the influence of some chief in proportion as it took individuals from his band . . . The advantage to the [head]man appointed by me was that he became more prominent and controlled the funds derived from the sale of buffalo hides.<sup>23</sup>

During the next five years of his service as agent, Hunt used the tribal police, the court system and the distribution of rations to break the bands into ever smaller and weaker groups. In his final report in 1885 Hunt was proud to boast:

Segregation among the tribes has continued and very little is left of the old tribal system. The chief has no longer his old time influence and indeed, except as chief of the band which was organized for convenience in issuing the ration of beef, the position is almost nominal.<sup>24</sup>

Later agents carried on Hunt's policy and in 1891 Charles Adams began encouraging families to build permanent houses with their lease money. He also broke away from past policy and distributed out the farm annuities promised in the Treaty of Medicine Lodge directly to Comanche families



rather than to the band chiefs. This policy, aimed deliberately at destroying the tribal bands, resulted in deterioration of traditional tribal structure and a decline in the power of the conservative chiefs.<sup>25</sup>

The Comanches' social order was also placed under great stress because of the tremendous population decline since the 1850's. Any census of the tribe taken before the 1870's was primarily guesswork and as Table IX shows, the estimates vary dramatically. Because of the vast area over which the Comanches ranged, and the constant splitting and recombining of the bands, projecting their numbers was made very difficult. Between the census of 1786 and the census of 1849 there appears to be fairly general agreement that the Comanches numbered around 20,000. Yet in 1867, government officials at the Treaty of Medicine Lodge projected the total Comanche population as 2,800. Such a decline in population would obviously have tremendous disruptive effects on the entire social fabric of the tribe.<sup>26</sup>

Between 1867 and the final days of the last Comanche bands on the Plains, the tribe's population declined by 50 percent. The constant harassment of the Texas and United States troops combined with the rapid decline of the buffalo kept the hostile bands weak and hungry. In such physical condition the Comanches were very susceptible to the diseases introduced to them by the whites. Cholera and smallpox seemed to have been the most deadly. By the time the United States took the first complete census of the

TABLE IX  
POPULATION CHANGE OF COMANCHE, KIOWA, AND  
AFFILIATED RESERVATIONS OVER TIME

Date of Census	Comanche Population	Change in Population	Kiowa Population	Change in Population	Reservation Population	Change in Population
1690	7,000	---	---	---	---	---
1786	20-30,000	+13-23,000	---	---	---	---
1830	15-20,000	-0-20,000	---	---	---	---
1845	19,200	---	---	---	---	---
1849	20,000	---	---	---	---	---
1867	2,800	(-)17,200	--	---	---	---
1875	1,521	(-)1,279	1,070	---	3,180	---
1880	1,568	(+)47	1,139	(+)69	4,123	(+)943
1885	1,544	(-)24	1,169	(+)30	4,147	(+)24
1890	1,592	(+)48	1,140	(-)29	4,121	(-)26
1891	1,598	(+)6	1,624	(+)484	4,166	(+)45
1895	1,624	(+)26	1,037	(-)587	3,268	(-)898
1897	1,504	(-)120	1,105	(-)32	---	---
1898	1,526	(+)22	1,126	(+)21	3,833	1,565
1899	1,553	(+)27	1,074	(-)52	---	---
1900	1,499	(-)54	1,136	(+)62	3,733	(-)100
1901	1,409	(-)90	1,115	(-)21	3,626	(-)107

Source: James Mooney, "The Aboriginal Population of America North of Mexico", vol. 80, No. 7, Washington, 1928, p. 13; Wallace and Hoebell, The Comanches, pp. 31, 32; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867, pp. 378-379; 1875, p. 277; 1880, pp. 2432-243; 1885, p. 83; 1890, p. 187; 1891, p. 352; 1895, p. 566; 1897, pp. 484, 490-491; 1898, p. 236; 1899, p. 287; 1900, pp. 648-649; and 1901, p. 320.

entire tribe in 1875, the Comanches only numbered a little over 1,500. Apparently however, not all of the population decline occurred within the hostile camps roaming the Plains. Some portion of the decline also occurred on their new reservation. Once all the bands were on the reservation, the tribal population did stabilize around 1,500 persons.<sup>27</sup>

The reservation was an unhealthy environment for the Indians, exposing them to more diseases of the white man while they were trying to cope with a new life style and diet. Agent Tatum expressed his problems and concerns in his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1870:

Soon after my last report many of the Indians were taken sick of bilious complaints. This arose from two causes: 1st. It had been a wet season, which in new countries is apt to cause malaria and bilious complaints. 2nd. All the Indians had green corn in abundance, and many had a great many kinds of vegetables new to them . . . vegetables were eaten much sooner than they ought to have been. Before the melons were gone they began to get sick, and many of them died. The idea that the sickness was caused by living in this locality [around the Agency] generally prevailed among them; consequently they nearly all moved away.<sup>28</sup>

The Treaty of Medicine Lodge provided the reservation with a physician but the doctor faced an impossible situation. The pay was poor and the environment so hostile that hiring good doctors was difficult. The physicians who did come were responsible for the care of nearly 3,000 Indians (4,000 when the Wichita and Kiowa Comanche reservations combined in 1878) scattered over 5,800 square miles of roadless terrain. To further complicate the physician's task, he had to compete with the still powerful

medicine-men of the tribes for care of the sick.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently most of the reservation doctor's patients were the officials from the Agency, their family members, and other whites residing nearby. However, during the course of a year he did treat some Indians, statistics of which were occasionally reported in the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The statistics for 1880 and 1890 showed a broad range of diseases with which he and the Indians had to contend. Malaria, dysentery, influenza, tuberculosis, and other respiratory and digestive disorders were all very common ailments on the reservation. Every few years an epidemic of malaria or smallpox would sweep the agency and take a number of lives.<sup>30</sup>

The natural increase of the tribe was not only slowed by a high death rate but it was also handicapped by the infertility of the Comanche women and a high infant mortality rate. The average Comanche woman gave birth to three children, two of whom could be expected to survive childhood. While the average was low in comparison to the Choctaw women's average of four children born and three surviving, the primitive Comanches rarely had more than two children. The Comanche women carried on the tradition of having few children. Agent Hunt noted the high infant mortality rate among the Comanches and he also attributed the factor to a lack of natural increase in the tribe.<sup>31</sup>

The marital status of the heads of the Comanche

households reflected social disruption within the tribe, even as late as 1900. An indication of the high death rate was the 25 percent of households headed by widows or widowers. That 35 percent of the married couples had no children reflected the low fertility or high rate of infant mortality. Several Comanche traditions survived on despite the social disruptions of the reservation years. Men still were getting married at a much later age than were the women, generally at an average age of 27 while the woman was 22. The Twelfth United States Census reflects that 25 women had married between the ages of 14 and 19, while only 4 men were married during the same age period.<sup>32</sup> Some attributed the women's earlier marriage during the reservation period as a ploy to keep the Comanche girls out of the reservation schools.<sup>33</sup>

But the most striking marital institution among the Comanches, polygamy, persisted despite the consistent assaults of the reservation officials. Quanah Parker led the eighteen men living in polygamy with a total of five wives (six according to several accounts). This distinction cost Quanah his position as presiding judge on the Court of Indian Claims and even his title as Principal Chief of the Comanches. Despite the severe punishment, Quanah kept all his wives, as did the other men. As in the pre-reservation era, polygamy was restricted to those men carrying great influence within the tribe. Only 5 percent of the Comanche marriages listed in 1900 were polygamous. Obviously very

few could afford to support more than one wife (especially so, when it was the practice of the agents to withhold rations from those men who did). Only men such as Quanah who had large land holdings and cattle herds as well as steady payments from Texas cattlemen, could support several families.<sup>34</sup>

It was through the institution of marriage that several white men attempted to gain access to tribal membership and the resources that went with it. The practice was not unknown before the reservation period, but it was unusual. Traditionally, the tribe adopted women and children captives into the tribe, but rarely were men so included largely because the Comanches usually killed them in the course of a battle. Nor did traders live among them as had been the practice in the east. Not until the Honeyeaters band settled on their reservation in Texas did white men have the opportunity to marry into the tribe. Perhaps even more than the Comanches themselves, officials in Washington had a very poor opinion of such marriages. Most saw the white men as trying to exploit the Indian women in order to use the tribal resources (in the case of the Comanches, grazing lands) to enrich themselves. In order to protect the Kiowas and Comanches from such whites, the United States added a stipulation to the Treaty of Medicine Lodge limiting access of whites to the reservation.<sup>35</sup>

The Washington officials still faced a dilemma,

however, in staffing the agencies of the reservations. Very few married men would take their families to the harsh environment of the reservation. Thus, young, single men comprised the majority of agency personnel. Once on the reservation and quite isolated from any white settlements these personnel often took up residence with Indian women. There was little that the government could do to stop it.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the strict stand taken by the federal officials and a lack of extended contact with whites, the "squaw men" never became a significant factor in the Comanches' social evolution until after the reservation period. In 1878, only one intermarried white, Willaim Chandler, was affiliated with the Comanches.<sup>37</sup> By 1885, Agent J. Lee Hall reported fifteen squaw residing on his agency. Four of the fifteen were Mexicans and two others were agency employees. The Mexicans worked only a total of 140 acres the help of with five laborers. The two employees were strictly limited to working at the agency. The other nine squaw men had land holdings of nearly 1,500 acres and cattle numbering 4,500 which required thirty employees. Though few in number, the intermarried whites were significant in the economics and politics of the reservation.<sup>38</sup> Congress passed a law in 1888 prohibiting whites from making any claims to tribal rights or privileges. The men, however, could still use the resources available to his wife and their children. The law had the desired effect and at the turn of the century the Comanches

intermarried whites numbered but thirteen, eight of whom were Mexican.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike the Choctaws, the Comanches' intermarried whites were never a significant element in the modifications occurring in the tribal kinship system and social structure. During the reservation period, the bands broke up and the extended family began to replace the traditional system as the primary social, economic, and political group in the tribal structure. The band was well adapted for life on the Plains, but once on the reservation its major functions were lost. The Comanches no longer needed large groups to hunt the buffalo. Either the agents provided them with what they needed or they would grow it themselves. The extended family was adequate for small scale farming, so the economic need for the band was gone. The tribal courts and police replaced the band structure as a source of authority and security. The rapid decline in tribal population witnessed the extinction of many bands and the recombining of others. Factionalism split the traditionally strong bands as progressive and conservative parties developed and contested with one another for authority and influence. All of these factors combined to curtail severely the power of the bands; the extended family supplanted most of the band social functions.

The Comanche family unit had always been an amazingly flexible and adaptive group which practiced sororate



polygyny, polyandry, and the custom of levirate. During the reservation period some of these traditions survived, and the Comanches displayed a wide variety of household types. As in the case of the Choctaw families examined in the previous chapter, the simple family was the most common household type found among the Comanches, but to a much lesser degree (See Table X). Ten percent of Comanche households were listed as solitaries as compared to only 1 percent for the Choctaws.<sup>40</sup> Most of these individuals were probably widows carrying on the Comanche tradition of living alone for a year or more after the death of her husband. The widows maintained the custom of establishing their residence near other widows thus forming clusters of single unit households.<sup>41</sup> The addition of relatives (non-nuclear family members) to the simple family in the same dwelling occurred in over a third of the Comanche households -- more than twice as high as the percentage of extended households found among the families of the Choctaws with intermarried whites.

Because of the high mortality rate of the Comanches, they were forced to rely more heavily on non-simple households (labeled as No Family Unit on Table X) than did the Choctaws. These households contained coresident siblings or cousins living together but with no spouses or children present. The Comanches practice of polygamy added even more complexity to family forms found among the Choctaws. Eight Comanche families lived in multiple extended households, meaning that two simple families were

TABLE X  
HOUSEHOLD TYPES BY THE ETHNICITY OF THE  
MARRIED COUPLE FOR COMANCHE-COMANCHE,  
CHOCTAW-CHOCTAW, AND CHOCTAW-WHITE  
MARRIAGES AS OF 1900

Family Type	Comanche- Comanche		Choctaw- Choctaw		Choctaw- White	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Solitarie <sup>1</sup>	36	10.3	1	1.3	0	0.0
No Family Unit <sup>2</sup>	17	4.9	3	0.9	1	0.6
Simple Family <sup>3</sup>	173	49.7	221	63.7	113	66.9
Quasi-Extended Family <sup>4</sup>	7	2.0	8	2.3	3	1.8
Extended Family <sup>5</sup>	88	25.3	71	20.5	21	12.4
Multiple Family <sup>6</sup>	10	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Augmented Family <sup>7</sup>	6	1.7	32	9.2	29	17.2
Quasi-Extended/ Augmented <sup>8</sup>	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Extended/Augmented Family <sup>9</sup>	2	0.6	11	3.1	2	1.2
Extended Multiple Family <sup>10</sup>	8	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	348	100.0	347	100.0	169	100.0
Combined percentages of all households containing:						
Extension <sup>11</sup>		38.3		26.8		16.2
Augmentation <sup>12</sup>		2.6		12.3		18.4

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>1</sup>Solitarie are those households which contained only one individual.

<sup>2</sup>No Family Unit are those households which contained no married couples or offspring, but several related individuals, i.e. coresident siblings, or perhaps cousins.

<sup>3</sup>Simple Family households contained married couples and their own children if they had any.

TABLE X (Continued)

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<sup>4</sup>Quasi-Extended Families contained a married couple and their grandchildren or nieces and nephews without the children's parents present.

<sup>5</sup>Extend Families comprised those families containing relatives in the same dwelling beside the immediate simple family members.

<sup>6</sup>Multiple Family units comprised those households composed of two or more horizontally related simple families, i.e. a brother and sister, both with their own simple families living in the same household. For the Comanches polygamous marriages were included in this group.

<sup>7</sup>Augmented households contained an non-related individual living in the same dwelling as a simple family.

<sup>8</sup>Quasi-Extended/Augmented families contained a non-related individual beyond the immediate Quasi-Extended Family unit.

<sup>9</sup>Extended/Augmented Family units were combinations of the Extended and Augmented households described above.

<sup>10</sup>Extended Multiple Family units were combinations of Extended and Multiple Households and described above.

<sup>11</sup>Extension included Quasi-Extended Families, Extended Families, Quasi-Extended Augmented Families, Extended/Augmented Households, and Extended/Multiple Families, and Multiple Families.

<sup>12</sup>Augmentation included Augmented Families, Quasi-Extended/Augmented Families, and Extended/Augmented Families.

residing together with other members of the kingroup present as well. It was this type of versatility and complexity of household types which usually distinguished the Indian families from those containing a white spouse.<sup>42</sup>

The Comanches, however, also showed much less inclination to include non-related individuals in their households than did the Choctaws and their intermarried whites. (See Table XI.) The Comanches had 2 percent of their households augmented, as compared to the Choctaws' 12 percent and the Choctaws' intermarried whites 18 percent. This might reflect a difference in purpose of the household units. The Choctaw household was developing into more of a economic unit, while the Comanche family was still primarily a social unit serving to protect the rights and privileges of its members in the larger community. The Comanches had little need for servants (1.2 percent of their households) or boarders (2.5 percent), as compared to the Choctaws. Non-kin augmentation of households -- in large part reflects the influences of Anglo-American culture.<sup>43</sup>

Several factors other than a lack of Anglo influence helped to create the diversity and complexity of Comanche family types. The Comanches high mortality and low fertility rates kept their simple families (even extended families) small and very unstable. Thirty percent of their households had only one generation represented, with 35 percent of the households listed did not having any children present. The households were also kept relatively small

TABLE XI  
NON-KIN AUGMENTATION OF COMANCHE AND  
CHOCTAW HOUSEHOLDS IN 1900

Number in Household	Comanche				Choctaws			
	Boarders		Servants		Boarders		Servants	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	341	97.7	345	98.8	506	90.0	547	97.3
1	5	1.4	2	0.6	40	7.1	13	2.3
2	3	0.9	1	0.3	12	2.1	2	0.4
3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0
4	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.3	0	0.0
5	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2	0	0.0
Total	349	100.0	349	100.0	562	99.9	562	100.0
Total combined number of households with boarders and servants	8	2.5	4	1.2	56	9.9	15	2.7

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

because many of the Comanche families (30 percent) were still living in tepees in 1900. The number of individuals capable of living in a tepee was much smaller than in a house. The Comanche families appeared to be a consolidation into one or several clustered dwellings of whatever relatives were left of a kingroup. The group would then look after one another as best it could.<sup>44</sup>

Where the Comanches were able to collect enough relatives together to form an extended household, many of the traditional relationships between members continued. Census Agent Scott noted this on his tour of the Kiowa Comanche Reservation in 1890:

The children are the constant companions of the old, who are treated with as much tenderness and kindness as the young. From the old squaw the girl learns . . . to sew and embroider with beads, . . . while the grim-visage old warrior teaches the coming chief to fashion the bow and arrow. . .

The relationship between the husband and wife continued as well with the wife performing most of the chores in the house and even in the fields.<sup>45</sup>

In attempting to break down the bands and promote the importance of the family, the agents emphasized permanent houses rather than tepees. The tepee was well suited for life on the Plains, provided the Indians with adequate protection from the elements, and also allowed them freedom to roam about. In 1875 the agent's housing program got under way when five houses were constructed. The number of new houses grew slowly over the next fifteen years, with 21

in 1885 and 194 in 1890 serving the entire reservation population. It was not until the money from the grass leases became available in 1892 that Agent George Day could convince many of the Indians to give up their canvas covered tepees for wooden houses. By 1895 there were 350 houses on the reservation; by 1900 725. Of the latter, 263 were owned by Comanches who constituted 75 percent of the tribe's households.<sup>46</sup>

As impressive as the building figures may seem, a considerable portion of the Comanches still clung to the tepees and their roving ways. The housing figures for the 1890's may also be misleading. A rise in the number of white laborers on the reservation accompanied the boom in housing construction. Many Indians apparently hired whites to work their fields or leased them their land to farm and rented them their houses as well. In some cases, the Indians reportedly used their new houses as storage for farm equipment or as a barn for their animals. The Comanches utilized the houses provided them but in many instances not as the agents or other federal officials had intended.<sup>47</sup>

The United States based much of its Indian civilization program on educating the Indian youth to the ways of white culture. The government established reservation schools and off-reservation schools (such as Carlisle) to instruct the Indian children. The Indian education system was hampered by a lack of government funding and the resistance of Indian parents. On the Kiowa Comanche reservation, Agent Haworth

used his military control of the agency to enroll 60 students in the agency school, half of whom were Comanches. The 60 students constituted only 5 percent of the reservations school aged population. By 1880 the enrollment rose to 230 students (51 percent of the school aged children). Quaker teachers staffed the early reservation schools and taught the young men and women reading, writing, and mathematics. Nearly all instruction was presented in English. Beyond this basic curriculum the schools stressed vocational skills necessary for the boys to run a farm and the girls to manage a home.<sup>48</sup>

Low enrollment figures caused concern for the agents, and many resorted to coercion to force the Comanche parents to surrender their children. A high mortality rate among children at schools caused many of the parents to fear for their children's safety. In 1885 only one-half of the available seats in the reservation schools were being used. Of all the reservation tribes, the Comanches proved to be the most resistive. Much of their resistance was caused by their contempt for having to place their children in the same classroom with children from other tribes -- whom the Comanches felt were inferior. Agent Hall reported in 1886:

These people [the Comanches] feel and know their superiority to the Apaches, with whom they are allied, and treat them upon all occasions with the utmost contempt, and will have no intercourse with them . . . This antipathy extends to the children in the schools, where I can induce to attend the schools, keep separate and in groups to themselves.<sup>49</sup>



Agent Hall requested a separate school be built for the Comanches as early as 1885, but action was not taken until 1890, and the Comanches school at Ft. Sill was not completed until 1893.<sup>50</sup>

While the government was building the schools on the reservation, several religious organizations erected mission schools. Between 1885 and 1893 six groups acquired 160 acre tracts of reservation land to build schools. By 1895, the reservation Indians filled the five mission schools in operation and many children could not be accomodated even in one of the four government schools. By 1900 58 percent of the Comanche children attended school at least one month a year. Fort Sill accomodated 154 children, while another 58 students attended three of the mission schools. By 1900 the reservation school system was on firm footing.<sup>51</sup>

The educational level of the Comanches after twenty-five years of reservation schooling was not very high (See Table XII). Only 9 percent of the Comanche heads of households and only 6 percent of their wives were literate in 1900. Most of these individuals, however, had grown up before the reservation schools had been built. Perhaps a better indication of what impact the schools had was what percentage of the male and female members of each household were literate. Of the Comanche househods with males over ten years old 16 percent of the homes had at least one literate male; only 8 percent of the households had all

TABLE XII  
 THE LITERACY AND ABILITY TO SPEAK  
 ENGLISH OF THE CHOCTAW AND  
 COMANCHE HEADS OF  
 HOUSEHOLDS AND  
 THEIR SPOUSES

Skill	Head of Household by Tribe				Spouse by Tribe			
	Choctaw No.	%	Comanche No.	%	Choctaw No.	%	Comanche No.	%
Literate <sup>1</sup>	328	59.5	32	9.2	195	44.5	14	5.5
Semi-Literate <sup>2</sup>	27	4.9	1	0.3	26	5.9	--	0.0
Illiterate <sup>3</sup>	195	35.4	313	90.5	202	46.1	239	94.5
Can Speak English	369	66.5	79	22.8	259	60.9	42	16.6
Cannot Speak English	182	32.8	265	76.6	166	39.1	211	83.4

Source: Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>1</sup>Literate - the ability to read and write any language.

<sup>2</sup>Semi-literate - the ability to read but not write any language.

<sup>3</sup>Illiterate - the ability to read or write in any language.

literate male residents. The households had at least one literate women in 8 percent of the households with 5 percent of the homes having all the females as literate. Like their Choctaw counterparts, the Comanche women were considerably less educated than the men. The overall figures show that the Comanches were still essentially an illiterate people.<sup>52</sup>

Another indication of the Comanches slow progress in education and acculturation in general was their inability to speak English. Only 23 percent of the heads of households could speak English, while their wives fared much worse with only 17 percent. The schools must have had some impact on the children because 31 percent of the households did have at least one male member who could speak English as compared to 20 percent of the homes with an English speaking female. The figures showed that a significant minority of the Comanches could communicate in English, but that the tribe as a whole had a long way to go.<sup>53</sup>

An assessment of the reservation schools is difficult. Prior to the reservation period, most Comanche bands did not have even one member who was literate or who was English-speaking. Underfunding and parental resistance kept Comanche enrollment low until the 1890's when of the Fort Sill school worked to arouse some interest. And unlike the Choctaw fullblood, the Comanches had much less exposure to whites and therefore were far behind to begin with. By 1900, however, nearly one Comanche family in five had a literate member, and nearly one in three had one who could

speak English. Working under extremely limiting conditions, the Comanche children were acquiring the rudiments of an Anglo-American education which had little or no relation to life as they knew it. The Comanches had made some progress with a minimum of resources and with very little contact with the culture they were supposed to emulate.<sup>54</sup>

The ultimate goal of "civilizing" of the Indians was to prepare them for the day when he would be forced to join the greater white society of the United States. Allotment of the tribal lands in severality was the final step in that process, and the Dawes Act of 1887 gave the President the power to begin its implementation. The President preferred to reach a negotiated settlement with the individual tribes rather than dictate the terms. To that end, Congress established the Cherokee Commission, headed by David Jerome, a senator from Michigan, in 1889 to begin negotiating with the tribes in Oklahoma Territory. The commission did not reach the Kiowa Comanche reservation until 1892. After months of heated debate and intriguing, the tribes signed the allotment agreement (known thereafter as the Jerome Agreement). Congress, however, Congress did not ratify the agreement until 1900.<sup>55</sup>

According to the Jerome Agreement, each Indian would receive a 160 acre allotment of tribal land of his or her choosing. The land was deeded in fee simple and could not be alienated or taxed for 25 years. The tribe was also to keep

480,000 acres of grazing land for leasing purposes. The funds from the leases were to aid the Indian in starting individual homesteads. In addition, the tribes would receive at least \$2 million for the sale of surplus land left after all the allotments were made. The government would then open the surplus land for white settlement.<sup>56</sup>

Allotment began in July of 1900, after Congress ratified the Jerome Agreement; the process was finished by the end of the year. In 1901 the surplus land was opened for white settlers, who won their homesteads through a lottery. Almost as soon as the first homesteaders settled down, new agitation began among whites to open up the remaining tribal pasture lands for settlement as well. Once again the Comanches and Kiowas resisted with the aid of the Texas Cattlemen who were leasing the pastures. But in 1906, Congress passed the Stephen's Bill, which opened the remaining lands of the reservation to white settlement. The final land opening marked the end of the Comanches' reservation period and started them on a new course of cultural development.<sup>57</sup>

The Comanches underwent a radical period of acculturation on the reservation. Stripped of their political sovereignty and placed under the direction of government officials, they Comanches had no choice but to change. The disappearance of the buffalo, the end of Plains warfare, and the restrictions placed on their movements destroyed the basis of the tribal structure -- the band

system. Yet during the early years on the reservation, the bands held on, usually due to the power and prestige of the band chiefs. The federal government's program of acculturation and assimilation was aimed directly at destroying the power of the band chiefs, dismantling the band structure, and changing the Comanches from stone aged nomads of the Plains into "civilized" farmers. The government, through the agents' use of ration goods and tribal police and courts succeeded in destroying the power of the chiefs. Once the power of the chiefs was eliminated natural forces began tearing the bands apart. The extended family stepped in and assumed many of the social functions the disintegrating bands left unprovided.

The government policies, however, failed to reshape the Comanches into independent, self-sufficient, civilized agriculturalists ready to make their way in the mainstream of American culture. While statistics in agricultural production, cattle herding, houses construction and school enrollment rose significantly during the reservation period, they were often misleading and misinterpreted. Even with government aid and instruction, the Indians could not achieve self sufficiency in farming when drought struck nearly every second or third year. Much of the production attributed to the Indians was actually the work of agency employees, white laborers, or white tenants. Cattle herding had proved successful but generally it was restricted to a

small percentage of the tribal population, mostly to the 25 or so intermarried whites. The fact that in 1900 only 8 percent of the tribal population was listed as receiving their income from "civilized pursuits", and 92 percent were surviving on either rations issued by the government or money from grass leases, reflects the inability of the Indians to care adequately for themselves on their own. That 50 percent of the reservations school aged population was enrolled in school was a sign of progress. But the educational system had not received adequate funding or time to "civilize" the Indians sufficiently to be able to function in white society. The Comanches' inability to read, write or speak English reflect how ill prepared the tribe was to face allotment of its lands and assimilation into white society.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Prucha, American Indian Policy in Crisis, pp. 169-226.

<sup>2</sup>From here on the Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa Apache Reservation will be referred to as the Kiowa Comanche reservation or the Reservation. The Wichita and Kiowa, Comanche Reservations were combined in 1878 under the same agency and the headquarters shifted to Anadarko. From 1878 on all references to the Kiowa Comanche Reservation using statistics for the Kiowa Comanche Reservation will include the Wichita Agency unless stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 311-312; John Morris, et al., Historical Atlas of Oklahoma, 2nd ed., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), map 26.

<sup>4</sup>Agent Laurie Tatum was the result of a series of major reforms instituted in the federal government to reduce corruption and improve the efficiency of the Indian Administration. In 1868 Congress created the Board of Indian Commissioners, to oversee the purchase, transportation, and distribution of all rations and annuities for the Reservations. President Grant then instituted a new policy in the appointment and administration of Reservation Agency personnel by asking various religious denominations to provide the staff for the reservations. Because the first group he approached were the Quakers, Grant's new policy became known as the "Quaker Policy" or "Peace Policy." The Quakers nominated Tatum because of his honesty and piety, not because of any interest he had shown in Indians or any ability he had displayed as an administrator. For an excellent account of the reforms made in United States Indian Policy after 1860 see Prucha, American Indian Policy in Crisis.

<sup>5</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869, pp. 384-385; 1870, pp. 255, 261; 1872, pp. 404-405.



<sup>6</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1875, pp. 266, 277; 1877, pp. 226-227. Two thorough studies of the development of farming among the Indians of the Kiowa Comanche Reservation are William Pennington, "Government Policy and Farming on the Kiowa Reservation: 1869-1901" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1972); and John Stahl, "Farming Among the Kiowa, Comanche, Kiowa Apache, and Wichita" (Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Oklahoma, 1978).

<sup>7</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, pp. 356-357; 1885, pp. 380-381; 1890, pp. 187, 475-476; 1895, pp. 588-589; 1896, p. 253; 1900, pp. 668-669; Stahl, "Farming Among the Kiowa," pp. 105-121; Pennington, "Government Policy and Farming," pp. 130, 202.

<sup>8</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1875, p. 273; 1880, pp. 356-357.

<sup>9</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 193; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1885, p. 85.

<sup>10</sup>William Hagan, "Squaw Men on the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation," The Frontier Challenges, ed. John Clark (Lawrence University Press of Kansas, 1971), p. 177; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 81; Armstrong, "Report of a Trip," p. 21; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1896, p. 253; William Hagan, "Kiwias, Comanches, and Cattlemen, 1867-1906: A Case Study of the Failure of U.S. Reservation Policy," Pacific Historical Review 40 (August 1971), p. 355.

<sup>11</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 67; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 329-330.

<sup>13</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, pp. 384-386; 1900, p. 648.

<sup>15</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 150-151, 218; Hagan, "Comanches and Cattlemen," p. 338.

<sup>16</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 151, 176, 181; Hagan, "Comanches and Cattlemen," pp. 338-339; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 346-348; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, pp. 333-334. For the best summary of the cattlemen's role in the development of the Reservation see Hagan's, "Comanche and Cattlemen."

<sup>17</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, pp. 75, 263; 1885, p. 360; 1890, p. 459; 1895, pp. 572-573; 1899, pp. 566, 572-573; 1900, p. 648-649.

<sup>18</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>19</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 148-150; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 340-341; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 686; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>20</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 341; Hagan, Indian Police, pp. 108-109; Eleventh Census of the Population of the United States, 1890: Report on the Indians Taxed and Not Taxed, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup>Hagan, Indian Police, pp. 69-70, 79, 81, 120.

<sup>22</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 133, 153-154; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 338.

<sup>23</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. 1885, p. 84.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 1891, p. 351.

<sup>26</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 32; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867, pp. 378-379.

<sup>27</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 13; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1875, p. 277.

<sup>28</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1870, pp. 260-261.

<sup>29</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 220-221.

<sup>30</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, pp. 275; 1890, pp. 186-187, 482-487.

<sup>31</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 142; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, pp. 71-72; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 219; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>32</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory .

- <sup>33</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 161.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 186; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1890, p. 459.
- <sup>35</sup>Hagan, "Squawmen," pp. 173-174.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-176.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-177, 179.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 181.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 184; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>40</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>41</sup>Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 152.
- <sup>42</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., Hareven, "Modernization and Family History."
- <sup>44</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>45</sup>Julian Scott, "Report of the Special Agent on the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita Agency, Oklahoma, August and September 1890," U.S. Department of the Interior; Eleventh Census of the United States Population, 1890: Report on the Indians Taxed and Not Taxed, pp. 539; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>46</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 128-129, 181; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1875, p. 109; 1885, pp. 24, 343; 1890, p. 458; 1900, pp. 648-649; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>47</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1880, p. 73; 1885, p. 84; 1890, p. 186; Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.
- <sup>48</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 133-135, 162-163.
- <sup>49</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1886, p. LXXVI.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, p. 161.

<sup>51</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1885, p. 86; 1895, p. 252; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 194, 222-224.

<sup>52</sup>Twelfth Census of the United States Population, 1900 - Indian Territory.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 166, 201, 203-215.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-269; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, pp. 349-350.

<sup>57</sup>Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 332; 1901, p. 320; Hagan, United States - Comanche Relations, pp. 262, 266-268, 284-285; Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 352.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The Choctaws and Comanches provided two distinct case studies in how Indian groups responded to acculturation. The Choctaws' cultural experience was similar to that of the other Southeastern tribes, while those of the Comanches' were indicative of the fate shared by the Plains Tribes. The Choctaws and its sister tribes generally took a more gradual and receptive position towards adaptation to the culture of the Europeans and Americans. The Comanches presented a stark contrast, accepting little of the white's culture until quite late. Even then the changes made were generally forced. The respective cultural modifications made by both tribes followed a fairly consistent time sequence.

Before the Europeans had established a firm foothold on the North American continent both the Comanches and Choctaws were strong and independent cultural groups with several striking similarities. Both were militaristic societies and constantly at war with their neighbors. The Choctaw and the Comanche societies focused enormous attention on their warriors and both had evolved weak but visible social divisions based on a warrior's rank. The chiefs and leading

warriors were those men who best emulated the virtues revered by their tribesmen - honesty, bravery, and generosity. Because generosity was such an important ethic, accumulation of wealth occurred, but rarely to excess, and wealth as well as tribal leadership was never hereditary. Individual sacrifice for the community was common behavior in both tribes. Comanche bands and the Choctaws clan and even the basic family units expected personal sacrifice from the individual to benefit the group. The kinship systems were the basis on which the rest of the tribes' social order rested.

The primary differences between the two tribes during their primitive periods were economic. The Comanches Southern Plains economy depended on following and hunting the large herds of buffalo. The arrival of the horse allowed the Comanches to move out on the Plains and follow the migrating buffalo. The constant migration and the inconsistency of the buffalo's availability over the seasons forced the Comanches to be very flexible in their social groupings. Bands were constantly splitting up and then regrouping. In contrast, the primitive Choctaws relied on agriculture for a major portion of their subsistence and were, therefore more sedentary. Their immobility allowed them to evolve a more rigid social structure. The Choctaws' clan membership was much more restrictive than that of the Comanches' bands.

For a short while it appeared as if both tribes might begin a parallel course of acculturating to the ways of white man. Both became involved in the affairs of Europeans because several major routes passed through their domains. They also had developed a dependence on the manufactured articles of the whites. White traders began settling among the Choctaws in significant numbers during the 1760's and 1770's at about the same time de Anza, Governor of Mexico, became involved in the Comanches' affairs. Governor de Anza saw the benefit of having the Comanches as an ally and worked diligently to earn their respect and their allegiance. His experiment with the Comanches at the San Carlos de los Jupes mission during the 1780's was one of the earliest organized programs aimed at civilizing an entire tribe. For a short while the mission appeared to be working; the Southern Comanches lived in permanent dwellings, planted crops, attended church, and consolidated into a rigid political structure. But within a year the project fell apart, and the Comanches once again followed the buffalo across the Plains.

The Choctaws' start towards acculturation was much less dramatic, yet it became a long and continuous process of change. The Choctaws became much more reliant than the Comanches on European manufactured goods, and by the late eighteenth century were economically dependent on the Europeans. During the same period, the white traders began to settle among the Choctaws, marry their women, and produce

metis children. The tribe became increasingly dependent on farming as the basis of its economy. The efficiency of the gun over the bow and arrow in hunting caused the Choctaws to deplete quickly the local game and forced the Choctaws to expand their agriculture production to offset the decline in hunting.

The Choctaws passively accepted this early acculturation because their agricultural economy was closely akin to the whites' and because their sedentary lifestyle made it impossible to flee from the white man's presence as the Comanches did. From the 1790's through the 1820's, the whites marrying Choctaws introduced the institution of black slavery, cattle herding, an educational system, and the Christian missionaries. Very few fullbloods took an active role in any of these activities, yet the innovations did provide the nation with a strong economic base and an educated leadership to carry the tribe through its periods of crisis.

The first crisis was the forced removal of the Choctaws from Mississippi to Oklahoma, which caused major social disruption within the tribe. It not only damaged several major social institutions beyond repair, but the removal also cost the tribe nearly one half of its population. The moiety and clan systems of the Choctaws had already declined prior to removal as the intermarried whites, mixed bloods and missionaries launched an attack on the system of



matrilineal descent which was the basis of the tribe's kinship organization. Instead it promoted a patrilineal descent system whereby the husband could maintain control over his children and over the family's possessions in the event of his wife's death. The clans were little more than political divisions by the time of removal, and they failed to survive the move west.

The process of removal promoted the growth of slavery and cattle herding and led to greater class stratification as the whites and mixed bloods settled in areas apart from most fullbloods. It was during removal that the educated mixed bloods such as Peter Pitchlynn rose to tribal leadership and gave renewed impetus to such acculturation as the development of the Choctaws' constitutional form of government. From removal until the Civil War, the Choctaws established the patterns of acculturation that would continue until tribal dissolution.

While the United States was forcing the Choctaws to remove to Oklahoma in the 1830's, the Comanches' southernmost band, the Honeyeaters Penetekas, began to feel the presence of Anglo settlements in Texas. The Comanches began concentrating their raiding to the south on Texas and Mexico. During these raids they would take white captives to augment their population. Unlike the intermarried whites of the Choctaws, however, the captives had little if any significant cultural impact. The Comanches' practices of taking only women and children prisoners, dispersing them

throughout the band, and then keeping the prisoners isolated from any further contact with their native culture forced the captives to acculturate to Comanche society or die.

By the 1840's the Republic of Texas was making life very difficult for the Comanches, especially the Honey-eater band. The white settlements continued to expand and drove the buffalo herds away from the Honeyeaters' traditional range. The disappearance of the buffalo and constant harassment by the Texas Rangers brought poverty to the tribe; diseases transmitted by the whites caused a serious decline in the band's population. In 1854 the Honeyeaters became the first group of Reservation Comanches and began the process of change from hunters to farmers. The transition was difficult, but the Honeyeaters experienced some success.

The United States Civil War was a blessing for the Comanches but a blight for the Choctaws. The northern and central Comanche bands experienced a period of cultural resurgence as the migration of whites across their nation slowed to a trickle and the armies of Texas and the United States were too involved in their own conflict to harass the Plains Tribes. The Choctaws, however, became entangled in the American conflict and suffered considerably for it. The Civil War wiped out the tribe's economic gains and disrupted its political and educational systems. Of even greater consequence was the conclusion of the war which found the

Choctaws on the losing side. In the Treaty of 1866, the United States ended the tribe's political autonomy. The Treaty of Medicine Lodge signed a year later had equally serious implications for the Comanches. Until all the bands were located on the Oklahoma reservation, however, the Comanches continued to function as an autonomous cultural group. When the northern bands finally capitulated in 1875, the Plains culture of the Comanches officially came to an end.

The reservation period represented radical cultural surrender for the Comanches, whereas the Choctaws really conceded only a measure of their political and economic autonomy. Because the individual Choctaws were able to maintain their economic independence from the United States government, they were also able to retain their social structures the way they wished. The fairly high degree of unity within their tribal government and leadership allowed the Choctaws to resist outside influence in a manner the untrained and highly factionalized Comanches could not. The Kiowa-Comanche agents often exploited the political and economic weaknesses of the tribesmen to force cultural change upon them. The rapid decline in population and the agents' deliberate actions caused the Comanches band system to collapse.

The Choctaws' prosperity in the post Civil War period did cause them difficulties. The economic growth of the Choctaw Nation spurred immigration of thousands of whites as

tenant farmers and laborers. The benefits of tribal citizenship and the presence of a large, wealthy, and well educated metis class made intermarriage into the Choctaws attractive to many whites. The Choctaws were cognizant of the threat of becoming a minority within their own nation and perhaps a minority even within their own citizenry. The Choctaws employed legislative measures to control the white population entering their nation and membership, but had little success. By the 1880's they were a minority group in their own nation and by 1900 the intermarried whites participated in nearly one-third of the Choctaw marriages. The social impact of these intermarried whites altered the basic social institution of the tribe.

The Comanches' poverty and the lack of a well developed and educated metis class made it much less desirable for whites to marry into the tribe than for the Choctaws. The federal government helped to check those whites who wished to marry into the tribe and exploit the resources of the reservation open to use by tribal members. The number of intermarried whites among the Comanches never numbered more than thirteen, and only six of these whites were of Anglo descent. In the case of the Comanches, these white men were significant in the economics and politics of the tribe, but they had little impact on the social and cultural changes the tribe was experiencing.

The United States government took a much more active

role in the Comanches' acculturation than they did with the Choctaws'. The government was unwilling, however, to invest the necessary funds required to make the reservation farms, schools, and housing programs work. It was not until the 1890's, when the Comanches began receiving lease money, that housing starts began to increase. Education on the reservation started slowly as well and the Comanches, because of their bigotry towards the other tribes, were the most resistive of all the tribes. It was not until the government built a separate school for the Comanches near Fort Sill in 1893 that education began to make headway within the tribe. Finally the economic and political power of the reservation agents reduced the significance of the band chiefs and the bands in the tribal framework.

By 1900 the Choctaws and Comanches both had signed agreements with the United States putting allotment of tribal lands into effect. Allotment of tribal lands in severality meant an end to the tribes as political or economic bodies. According to the federal government's plans, the Indians of both tribes would become independent farmers and assimilate into the greater white society. While both tribes had modified their cultures radically from their primitive state, there were factions in both that were far from being red-faced white men who would integrate easily into the social fabric of the United States. The 1900 census reflected how far the two tribes had come and how far many of them still had to go.

According to the information gathered from the census the Choctaws as a whole were much better prepared to face assimilation than the Comanches. The Choctaws had a much higher literacy rate, a greater ability to speak English, and the ability to provide their own subsistence without government aid. Yet the overall figures are deceiving in that the Choctaws contained a large fullblood element of whom only a few could read or write, speak English, or handle their affairs in white society. For several generations the mixed-bloods and a few progressive fullbloods had served as a cultural gate between the fullbloods and the whites. The metis leadership of the tribe dealt with the political and economic affairs of the tribe. Accordingly, they themselves practiced cultural behavior attributed to both groups. But while the metis were personally accomodating to white culture and accepted much change, they often tried to protect the fullbloods from the aggressive acculturation policies of the federal government. The fullbloods for the most part remained traditional in their outlook. They maintained their language, small farms, and communal lifestyle centered upon the extended family.

The Comanches' plight was similar to that of the Choctaw fullbloods; their family structure, literacy rates, and the abiliy to speak English were similar as well. Both groups showed greater flexibility in family types and a

significantly greater preference for extended households than did the mixed bloods and intermarried whites' households. They also showed less interest in augmenting their households with individuals who were not related. The Indians clung to their traditional emphasis on the individual's tie to the kinship system. The simple family was merely a dependent part of a larger kinship group. The mixed bloods and whites showed a preference for independent simple families which, if augmented, usually contained an individual from outside the kinship group.

The literacy rates for the Comanches reflected a pattern similar to the Choctaw fullbloods. The men showed considerably higher rates of literacy and ability to speak English than did their women. This probably reflected the women's close ties to the home and that they married at a considerably younger age than did their husbands. The women were kept out of schools in order to start households. The dwellings of the fullbloods were generally isolated from whites, thereby further reducing the women's exposure to English-speaking people.

The census material clarified and substantiated many scholarly conclusions previously drawn about the Comanches' and Choctaws' cultural development. The differences between the Choctaws and Comanches aboriginal cultures and even their geographical location made drawing valid comparisons difficult. To make more concrete and specific observations about the process of cultural change using the United States

Census as a tool will require either a study of change over time, by using several consecutive censuses, or by comparing tribes with more similiar cultures and histories. Perhaps comparing the family structures, educational, occupational and demographic features of two of the Five Civilized Tribes, or two of the Plains tribes on the same reservation at 1900 would permit greater insight into cultural change among the tribes and the effectiveness of United States policy in bringing it about.

A comparison of the Choctaws and Comanches at the turn of the nineteenth century does reveal that the Choctaws had three key factors working in their favor in acculturating and assimilating into white society. One was that their primitive economy was agriculturally based and was capable of changing to accomodate a white life style. Second, the Choctaws had the opportunity to implement extensive social, political and economic changes over a broader span of time. These first two factors allowed the Choctaws to develop the third and key factor, the evolution of a large, well-trained and educated metis class which served as a bridge between two cultures. The Comanches were not guilty of being culturally less flexible than the Choctaws, indeed the speed and efficiency with which they adapted to the horse and buffalo culture of the Plains showed they were capable of accomodating to change. They were, however, the victims of their environment and their economy. Their lifestyle and



homeland was not conducive to interaction with whites, and they therefore did not develop a strong metis class. Their dependence on the buffalo cost them dearly when the great herds were finally destroyed and the tribe had to rely on the government for subsistence. The Comanches acculturation was more forced than the Choctaws. Yet the results of both were strikingly similiar. With rare exceptions, it was only the metis elements of the tribes who had acculturated into a lifestyle closely adapted to white society. The fullbloods, while undergoing radical change from their primitive lifestyles, even as late as 1900, still retained many of their traditional beliefs, attitudes and preferences.

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