

SEEDS OF THE REAL PEOPLE:
HOW CHEROKEE FOLK WAYS CONFLICTED WITH
COLONIAL CULTURE

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Introduction

In 1673 James Needham and Gabriel Arthur set out from Virginia to find new trade partners beyond the country of the Occhonechees. They followed an Occhonechee guide called Indian John, and eventually came to the territory of the Cherokees (a large swath of land in the Appalachians, covering much of present day North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee), who they called Tomahitans.¹ After meeting with the townspeople and chief, and noting their enthusiasm for trade relations, Needham left Arthur behind at a Cherokee town to learn their language while he returned home with knowledge of the new trade path. He traveled with an accompanying group of Cherokee hunters and his guide, Indian John. En route, Indian John fell into an argument with Needham and after a series of threats, shot him in the back of the skull, killing him. The murder dismayed the Cherokee hunters, who feared that the blame would be put at their feet, thus destroying any chance of the desirable Virginian trade. Indian John played on their fears, and convinced them that since war with the colony was inevitable, they ought to return quickly to the town and also kill Gabriel Arthur. Arriving, they found the head man away, and bound Arthur to a pyre of canes, intending to burn him to death. A visiting Weesock Indian apparently took the lead, preparing a firebrand to light the blaze. Just as the deed was about to be done, the head Cherokee returned, and running to the pyre demanded to know who would burn the Englishman. When the Weesock stepped forward, the Cherokee leader shot him dead, and rescued Arthur from death. As a result of this life saving action, the Cherokees and the English established their first regular contact and began trade relations.²

¹ Both Tomahitan and Cherokee are foreign names applied to the tribe. The Cherokees' own name for themselves was *ani yun wiya*, which literally means "the real people."

² Abraham Wood, "Letter of Abraham Wood," in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country 1540-1800*, ed. Samuel Williams (Johnson City: The Watauga Press, 1928), 17-38.

Early in 1716 similar events played out, but on a grander scale. Tensions between Carolina and a coalition of Indian tribes boiled over into the Yamasee war, a conflict which the natives were handily winning. The war was a learning experience for the Carolinians, who discovered that their best hope to avert the colony's destruction was to appropriate the Cherokees as allies. The Cherokees at the time were the most numerous and powerful factions in the region, and had not yet entered the war on either side. Colonel Maurice Moore and a large force of Carolinians went into Cherokee country in order to meet with their leaders and arrange an accord. At the same time, delegates from the Creek tribe to the south also arrived in Cherokee country, and hopes ran high for an alliance between all three parties. The Creeks, however, secretly met with Cherokee head men and proposed a joint massacre of the English to rid the land of the colony. Such a move would have been devastating for Carolina. Instead, much as years earlier a Cherokee leader had rescued Gabriel Arthur, the Cherokee warriors rose up and slaughtered the Creek delegation, cementing their alliance with the English.³

The Yamasee war drove out the coalition Indians from the territories between Charlestown and Cherokee country, opening it up to Carolinian settlements. These two incidents made for a strong foundation for Anglo-Cherokee relations, and through the years the English accorded the Cherokees "most favored nation" status, granting them better prices and access to English trade goods. The two parties entered into a Treaty of eternal friendship, and English Governors made visits to Cherokee towns. A group of leading warriors even traveled across the Atlantic to meet the king of England and confirm the alliance in London. Yet in 1758, in the midst of the French and Indian War, the Cherokees rose up and became one of the British's most dangerous native foes. This sub-theatre to the war, dubbed the Anglo-Cherokee War, was particularly bloody and fueled the fires of colonial anti-Indian sentiment. The war was

³ Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928), 164-186.

devastating for the Cherokee, and they eventually made peace. Relations further unraveled as a result of the Revolution, in which the Cherokee aided the British against the Patriots, and were thus left in a very poor position after the British defeat. The diplomatic deterioration continued unabated through the era of the early republic, culminating in the infamous “Trail of Tears” and forced removal of the Cherokee people from their ancestral lands.

The reasons behind this deteriorating effect deserve analysis. Events and choices played out in a certain way, but at the core of the issue lay divergent cultural values and the conflicts arising from them. Culture groups interact with each other and with their environments in varying ways, resulting in a dance through history of continuity and change. When, in 1492, Columbus “sailed the ocean blue,” he inaugurated an age of cultural collision. Two entirely alien groups of people, European and American Indian, spent the next centuries in a prolonged exchange as they made initial contact and began living in close proximity to one another. The idea of an American “melting pot” is something of a misnomer; particularly during the colonial period it was more of a cultural mosaic, with diverse culture groups staying together, but living side by side, perhaps with a little blurring at the edges over time. Theoretically the Cherokee and other Indian tribes could have been just more stones within that mosaic, but the extreme dissimilarity between their folkways and the European cultures which came across the ocean were too great. In the case of the Cherokees, the clashing values and ways of life created mounting tensions, violent incidents, and ultimately an abiding animosity that an attempt at cultural adaptation in the early nineteenth century proved too late to overcome. The aim of the following work is to examine the key differences between the Cherokee culture and that of their emigrant neighbors, demonstrating why they caused tensions and how those tensions manifested in the events of history. Though any one of many eighteenth century Indian tribes would be

suited to such analysis, the close relationship between the Cherokees and the British, as well as the tragic historical narrative leading to their forced removal in the Trail of Tears make them a uniquely fitting subject for this cultural study.

There are two major historiographical threads foundational to this analysis. The first is the emergence of the “new social history” trend in the twentieth century and a shift from holding a strict focus on the political elites to also including “the common man” (and woman) as worthy of study. Scrutinizing how race relations, labor habits, and a myriad of other basic facets of life characterized a people and affected their actions and reactions brought a whole new perspective to the study of history. Historians could discover or infer broad cultural modes by careful examination of the prevailing beliefs of target demographic groups and available accounts of how people of different categories behaved in certain situations. The addition of statistical data from census records or other observational accounts, or *cliometrics*, enhanced the light of understanding that social history could cast on past peoples.

E. P. Thompson’s 1963 *The Making of the English Working Class* broke new ground in telling the story of the common working class, a story which was as yet only in the peripheral vision of the historical community. Thompson’s prolix work demonstrated a research approach capable of constructing a historical narrative “from the bottom up” which was plausible as well as compelling. A decade later in 1972 John Blassingame planted his flag on similar scholarly territory from a different route with *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. Blassingame sought to illuminate the lives of the lowest members of the social classes, the enslaved. His work delved into the African roots of antebellum slaves, and analyzed how the diverse mix of their cultural ways interacted with the colonial social landscape into which they were involuntarily introduced by the transatlantic slave trade. The emphasis he put on the

transmission and continuity of African cultural ways into the New World, and subsequently how those ways both wrought change and underwent change within that landscape, is extremely important in studying large scale multicultural interchanges.⁴

Concurrently, the French *Annales* School, characterized by historians like Fernand Braudel and his concept of history as a constant flux of change and continuity, increasingly influenced the broader academic world, including historians in America. Blassingame's stress on such themes certainly resembles the *Annales* approach. Braudel's seminal work *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* introduced not only the idea of history's ebb and flow, but also the innovative idea that the Mediterranean acted as a cohesive agent of commercial and cultural exchange, creating a *community* of interacting societies out of what would otherwise have been disconnected parts. This idea of connectivity as an important aspect of historical study spread, and historians began to apply it in what became "Atlantic World history." The model was a novel one, that a *set of communities* or *societies* existed spanning the vast Ocean with a high degree of interconnectedness and cohesion. The key concept that made this true is that of *exchange*. The Atlantic Ocean ceased to be a barrier and became a bridge between continents, creating pathways of communication and commerce which linked this set of societies together. Authors such as Jack Greene, Phillip Morgan, and John Thornton produced works demonstrating the strength of studying individual societies within the context of the larger influencing world around them.⁵

One work emerging from this historiographic soup of particular significance is David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed*. Fischer tackles the problem of continuity and change as it

⁴ John Blassingame, *The Slave Community; Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

applies to various brands of English culture transplanted to North America with a brilliantly organized methodology. Fischer divides each particular culture by *folk ways*, categories of social life under which cultures can be defined and compared. He shows how four distinct cultural hearths from four regions of Britannia became established on the east coast, and he expertly analyzes their individual characters through precise subdivisions such as *religious ways*, *food ways*, *family ways*, etc. The perspicuity and exactness of this analytical method lends it enormous functionality. This present study employs such a methodology, and is thus deeply indebted to Fischer's work.⁶

The second major historiographical thread behind this analysis of Cherokee culture deals directly with the study of American Indian history: the rise of *ethnohistory*. The historiography of American Indians is a long study of neglect bordering willful ignorance by the history profession. Prejudice and ethnocentrism caused something of an amnesia effect, rendering the natives of America static in the eyes of academia to the point of invisibility. This phenomenon obscured the immensity of the entire field of pre-Columbian Indian history, as well as polluted the perspectives and conclusions of colonial, Revolutionary, and frontier historians. If practitioners of history would arrive at the closest possible facsimile of truth it is vital that events be considered from every vantage; it is thus essential that scholars adopt a historical consciousness *without* a major element of the human population left out or thought to be idle. Thankfully the long winter of neglect has thawed, and American Indian historiography has bloomed into a fruitful field of study. The advent of ethnohistory marks a watershed moment when Indian history began to be better understood and appreciated.

⁶ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3.

The “traditional” perspective on American Indians, and their (perceived) non-impact on the North American continent, comes out of the romanticized, nationalistic tradition of history which so pervaded the budding United States. Very early European historians and observers of Indian culture laid much of the groundwork for this perspective. James Adair, for example, supplies us with much valuable firsthand information regarding Southeast Indian culture, but at the same time his bias towards Old World civilizations led him to believe that signs of old, complex societies among them must have been remnants from a migrating lost tribe of Israel in the Indians’ ancestry. George Bancroft exemplified this dismissive perspective in writings such as his *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent*. Bancroft characterizes American Indians as passive savages who would inevitably be displaced by the ‘higher civilization’ imported by Europeans. This “inevitablist thesis” portrays Indians (or at least their culture) as *intrinsically* too ignorant, idle, and enslaved to their passions to be truly dynamic agents in history. Even Frederick Jackson Turner’s *The Frontier in American History* which gave lip service to Indian influences viewed them as peripheral, and only as important in the context of how they informed the development of democracy among whites in the United States. The sum result of this mindset was for these works to ignore American Indian influences in American history.⁷

The corrective to this trend began to emerge around the 1970’s, and can generally be considered a function of the larger turn to new social histories. In the postwar political environment Indian land claim cases created a practical need for better historical analysis in the field, and the result was an array of historical, anthropological, and archaeological scrutiny being

⁷ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1775; George Bancroft, *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1858; Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1920).

brought to bear on the American Indian past.⁸ The initial product of this study was the twenty-three volume *Handbook of North American Indians*, published in 1978. Historiographically, the turn away from inevitablist history resulted in the rise of *ethnohistory*, a somewhat specialized field of multidisciplinary scholarship crafted to be ideal for the study of preliterate societies. The combined use of diverse sources; including written documents, ethnographic data, linguistics, and archaeological artifacts; characterizes nearly all of the deeper studies of American Indians. An important and influential early work in this area is Gary Nash's *Red, White, and Black: the Peoples of Early America*, which gives American Indians and the similarly neglected African Americans the same emphasis as white Americans.⁹

An important aspect of the ethnohistorical paradigm is cultural reciprocity, essentially the application of the types of ideas about mutual exchange and its effects that Atlantic World historians emphasize to Indian-colonial interactions. This is an area where the ethnohistorical methodology really shines, and in stark contrast to earlier approaches, scholars such as Daniel Richter have made an effort to view the exchange from a native point of view. This is the innovation behind Richter's *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America*, which uses the long history of Mississippian tradition and native civilization dynamics as the context of the exchanges, rather than the usual European backgrounds. He has published a more recent volume as well, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts*, which incorporates the backgrounds of both sides for an even more balanced analysis. This area extends the more focused field of American Indian studies in order to remedy the deficiencies of earlier histories on the wider subject of colonial America. In John Demos's recent book *The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic*, he relates how even in situations

⁸ Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, *American History Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 337.

⁹ Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

where Indians were horribly victimized, such as the Trail of Tears, they nonetheless acted with far more agency than they are often credited with.¹⁰

The methodology employed for this study borrows heavily from David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed*, examining in turn each distinct category of Cherokee culture, called *folk ways* or *life ways*, in order to give an idea of what Cherokee life in the eighteenth century was like.

Fischer's work deals with groups of migrating cultural communities, and thus focuses on the degrees of cultural continuity and change which occurred as those movements transpired.

Because the Cherokees represent an indigenous community which had lived in place for many generations the object here is different. Instead of examining continuities over time, this study aims to juxtapose native life ways against European. Special emphasis is placed on demonstrating how the vast differences between the Cherokee folk ways analyzed here, and the colonial folk ways fully explored in *Albion's Seed* caused each group to act and react to each other in particular ways. Because of this organization, the layout is conceptual rather than chronological. It can be extremely helpful, however, to have a chronology in mind as a sort of mental map in order to place these cultural interchanges in the context of the larger interplay of change and continuity in Anglo-Cherokee history. A brief chronology follows, arranging events into three broad phases which characterize the progression of the diplomatic and cultural exchange and evolution.

The first phase began with Gabriel Arthur and the start of Cherokee-colonial trade, and was generally characterized by good relations. These built to a culmination with the diplomacy of a man named Alexander Cuming, and then progressed with mounting tensions as actualized

¹⁰ John Demos, *The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic* (New York: Random House, 2014); Daniel Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

cultural differences caused friction. Both sides benefitted a great deal from the trade in deer skins and European commodities, but as white settlements crept closer to Cherokee towns, sustained contact made cultural incompatibilities more apparent. The major changes in this phase of the interaction were that decentralized Cherokee organization began the process of nucleation, while colonists experienced mounting fear of their “savage neighbors.” The centralizing agent within Cherokee society occurred because the colonists treated them as if they were a nation rather than a loose jural community. In order to keep one independent member of that community from bringing the wrath of the English down on all their heads, the Cherokees had to find some way of effectively policing hitherto autonomous members. On the other side, the libertarian ways of the Cherokee threatened colonial customs of slavery and strict patriarchal restraints, while the Indian way of waging guerilla type warfare was terrifying to frontier settlers. This phase ended with the Anglo-Cherokee War in 1760-1761, which was precipitated because Cherokee attempts to control rogue elements failed. The conflict ended when British army forces marched through Cherokee country burning towns and crops to the ground, forcing them to come to the negotiating table.

The second phase saw increasing white encroachment of Cherokee lands, and increasing attempts by the Cherokees to deal with those settlers. Colonists were unhappy with what they considered were lenient peace terms given to the Cherokees by the British army, and while the fear of Indians remained, it also began to catalyze an ingrained prejudice and militant animosity against them. After the failure of the prewar centralization efforts, Cherokee headmen attempted to do so with even more rigor, and to conciliate the colonists by ceding territory in a bid to buy their favor. Younger Cherokee warriors, however, were not inclined to “go gentle into that good night,” and when the British called for their aid in the American Revolution, they jumped at the

chance to push the interlopers back from their ancestral hunting grounds. In this act they broke with the more peace minded beloved old men, and established the warlike Cherokee town group of Chickamauga near present day Chattanooga. During and after the Revolution, they waged war on the white settlers in a conflict which greatly increased animosity on both sides. Though they had separated from the “peace faction” of Cherokees, both groups remained closely tied together, and though the old towns often tried to pacify situations, their warriors just as often joined Chickamauga raiding parties, and white retaliation did not spare them any more than it did the militant towns. Eventually military campaigns by Anglo-American frontier leaders like John Sevier broke their resistance and brought an end to this bloody phase of cultural interchange.

The final phase began with the Chickamauga surrender late in 1794.¹¹ With armed resistance proving a futile way of dealing with the problems caused by cultural friction, the Cherokees turned to all out appeasement and adaptation. Their new strategy was to Westernize, to accept the United States government’s offer to “civilize” them. This process rapidly changed Cherokee life to resemble colonial cultural values more than their own. It proves difficult, however, to easily annihilate the deep roots of a peoples’ culture, and many of the changes were merely *prima facie*. That being the case, the shift was a dramatic one, and Cherokee life changed forever. They formed a republican government with a constitution, developed a budding plantation economy greatly resembling their neighbors in Georgia and the Carolinas, and began building churches and missionary schools rather than town houses with their sacred fires. At the very least, they did these things *alongside* many older traditions. As a strategy for mitigating the stresses of cultural friction it was an effective one, although it amounted to something of cultural surrender. The timing, however, was too late. Cultural friction had already taken its toll in the

¹¹ John Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West, 1838* (Kingsport: Southern Publishers, 1938), 433.

guise of leaving a deeply ingrained anti-Indian prejudice on their white neighbors. This animosity caused continuing tensions despite the Cherokee acculturation, and culminated in the 1838 tragedy of the Trail of Tears. This ended the final phase studied here, and was the end result of the Anglo-Cherokee cultural interplay of the eighteenth century.

In adopting David Hackett Fischer's patterns of cultural analysis, this work aims to achieve clarity without sacrificing sophistication. Fischer's work is comprehensive and eminently understandable. His methodology is perfectly suited to a systematic study of culture ways, making it an admirable model. Adapting it to the Cherokee does not, however, come without some issues. While *Albion's Seed* examines the continuity of English folk ways as they moved from the Old World to the New, the Cherokees had long lived in one general locale. The tribe *had* moved south into the area in a major migration centuries earlier, but by the eighteenth century it was only vaguely remembered in oral tradition, and lies beyond the scope of this study. Thus, Fischer's emphasis on continuity between homeland and colony is replaced here by a focus on contrasting Cherokee life ways with the colonial cultures they encountered. Thorough treatment of those colonial cultures is not possible while maintaining the centrality of Cherokee folk ways, and in any case would only represent a recapitulation of Fischer's work.

The following chapters examine the many different facets which made up Cherokee culture during the colonial period, and aim to show how they composed a fascinating native society and how their differences with colonial folk ways caused deteriorating relations leading to massacres, wars, and ethnic removal. The organization of the chapters follows a three tiered progression. Chapter one deals with the core beliefs of the Cherokee, the foundational tenets on which the rest of their culture ways were built. This includes their ideas about the nature of the universe, about rights and freedoms, wealth and greed, etc. Chapter two deals with the structural

elements of culture, the way that they organized their society based on the beliefs covered in the first chapter. Good examples are their social/governmental system, kinship and family relationships, and ranking habits. The final chapter covers the overt actions and products of Cherokee culture, the immediately observable elements such as the houses and fortifications they built, how they spoke, and how they made war.

Basic Beliefs	Foundational ideas about the world on which more complex facets of culture are built.
Freedom	Ideas about liberty and the validity or obligation of limiting it within the community.
Power	Beliefs about the proper derivation and use of power within the community.
Religious	Cosmological beliefs extending to the supernatural, and cultural institutions of engaging with those supernatural powers.
Magic	Less formalized beliefs about interacting with the supernatural, usually employed outside of community institutions.
Gender	Ideas about gender differences and the roles appropriate to the sexes.
Age	Attitudes relating to children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. Primarily concerned with their proper roles and interaction.
Death	Customs and attitudes relating to funerary rites and death.
Wealth	Ideas about what constitutes wealth and how wealth is valued socially.
Structural Culture	Cultural structures which shape a community and give it definition.
Social Organization	Patterns of settlement, affiliation, and social interaction. How culture forms towns and regional powers within the population group.
Family	The structure of clan and household, how they function with each other and within the larger community.
Marriage	Ideas about courtship, matrimony, and divorce.
Sex	Attitudes towards sexual acts, both inside and outside of marriage, including community values about adultery.
Child Rearing	Cultural attitudes about the nature of children and how they ought to be best brought up within the community.
Naming	Onomastic ways, including the significance of names as both labels and as more dynamic signifiers.
Time	Ideas about the seasons and the proper use of time.
Rank	Ranking customs, including how rank is determined, what authority it comes with, and how different ranks interact.
Visible Culture	The immediately observable sensory details of culture, including things seen, felt, heard, etc.
Speech	Communication, both spoken and through gestures. Ideas about how to communicate comely, both locally and interculturally.
Order	Methods of keeping order within society, ranging from incentives and verbal censoring to the use of force.
Building	Forms of architecture and building techniques, including homes, religious edifices, and fortifications.
War	Customs relating to warfare, including the decision to go to war, preparation, accoutrements of war, and tactics.
Sport	Recreational pursuits and their place in society.
Food	Culture ways pertaining to attaining, cooking, and consuming food. Includes methods of gleaned provision and customs relating to hospitality.

Chapter One
The Frog who would Swallow the Sun:
The Power of Basic Beliefs

The ancient Cherokees believed that when a solar eclipse occurred, it was the doing of a great frog who had got the Sun in its mouth and was devouring it. They were afraid of this, because if the frog was allowed to finish his meal it would be forever night and they would have to live in darkness for the rest of their days. In order to save the Sun, they climbed as high as they could and shouted ferociously at the frog, brandishing their weapons and firing arrows into the air in an attempt to frighten it away. This courageous method proved so successful that they never failed to shout with all their might and threaten the frog whenever it made an appearance. Early in the eighteenth century a trader from the English colonies, Alexander Longe, settled down in Cherokee country¹ and became a trusted friend of the tribe. When he was confronted with the story about the great frog, he heartily laughed, and told them about the true nature of an eclipse, that it was the brief alignment of the Moon between Sun and earth, not a giant amphibian! Longe had developed a sterling reputation among the Cherokees, and so at the next eclipse, they put his words to the test and abstained from their skyward cries. Sure enough, the Sun reappeared all on its own.² Longe succeeded in convincing them that the great frog was not trying to eat the Sun, but that was the extent of it. They no longer believed in the story, but not because it was silly and unscientific, merely because they had seen that the frog did not *need* to be frightened away for the Sun to survive. Their basic beliefs *underlying* the frog story, that the world was filled with legendary cosmic creatures and opposing upper and lower worlds,

¹ Exact locations are uncertain. Longe co-operated a trade post among the Yuchi Indians at Chestowe (on the Middle Tennessee River), and was partially scalped in a conflict with some of them. In retaliation, he urged the nearby Cherokees to raid the town, and thenceforth lived in exile among the Cherokees. For further detail, see Stephen Warren, "Reconsidering Coalescence: Yuchi and Shawnee Survival Strategies in the Colonial Southeast," in *Yuchi Indian Histories before the Removal Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 168-169.

² Alexander Longe, "A Small Postscript," in *Southern Indian Studies*, ed. David Corkran (1969), 36-38.

remained unchanged. They still believed that great frogs were out there; they had simply been mistaken about the monsters' eating habits. Deeply rooted beliefs about the world and how it works form the bedrock of culture, and are vital to understanding a society.

This initial section pertains to just such basic foundational beliefs in the Cherokee culture, factors such as their religion, ideas about personal freedoms and obligations, their level of materialism, etc. These are the ideological categories which make up any society's essential character and are the underpinnings of its particular details. The wearing down of Anglo-Cherokee relations occurred because of specific incidents and sentiments, at a more "surface level," so to speak. Examples would be such things as arguments with traders which erupted into assault or murder; fears of the Cherokees harboring runaway slaves; or marital jealousies and clerical disapprovals over fort garrisons' dalliances with "loose squaws." These made up the *prima facie* reasons for growing animosity, but would not have existed in such sharp a quality and quantity if it were not for the underlying chasm in foundational cultural values. It was these quintessential folk ways which, more than anything, defined who the Cherokees were in the eighteenth century and explain why their rural society was culturally incompatible with the Virginians, Carolinians, and Georgians who settled and quickly expanded on their borders. The following discussion delves into Cherokee beliefs and just why they conflicted so sharply with those of their colonial neighbors.

Freedom Ways

In 1759 a number of Cherokee raiding parties, angry at certain colonial abuses, attacked settlements in Virginia and Carolina and perpetrated a massacre on the Yadkin River and in the settlement of Long Canes. This was not a national uprising of the Cherokee majority, but rather

an act of blood vengeance by a few towns and clan sections that had lost kin in earlier, smaller, altercations. The colonial response from South Carolina was an ultimatum: turn over the perpetrators of the killings to face English justice, or else face the prospect of colonial military intervention. The most respected Cherokee beloved men, the peoples' *de facto* leaders, would have liked nothing better than to comply and restore the mutually beneficial deerskin trade and peaceful exchange. What happened instead was that those responsible for the massacre elected not to turn themselves over, and none of the rest of the Cherokee population moved to force them to do so. The result was a disastrous war for the Cherokees, as the British army burned towns and crops, forcing countless villagers into flight and starvation. Simple compliance with the governor's demands would have been the easier option, and the Cherokee refusal to do so illustrates their almost fanatical dedication to the idea of individual autonomy and freedom. If the guilty parties chose to do the right thing, all well and good, but if not, then the larger community felt it would violate the ethos of individual liberty to use force in order to *make* them do it.

The Cherokee people lived in a state of personal freedom which bordered on individual sovereignty. In a world where future revolutionaries such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were still loyal subjects to a king, the Cherokees enjoyed personal liberties that surpassed those which the future United States of America would wrest from the British, and even those touted in "the free world" of modern day. John Haywood noted this remarkable characteristic of their culture and wrote of them, "Their darling passion is liberty. To it they sacrifice everything, and in the most unbounded liberty they indulge themselves through life."³ The fact that they were willing to plunge their tribe into war with their English allies on behalf of reckless raiding parties indeed lends force to the assertion that they would "sacrifice everything,"

³ John Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee* (Knoxville: Heiskell & Brown, 1823), 254.

and this propensity was quite frustrating to imperial powers used to dealing with humble and submissive “lesser peoples.” George Milligen-Johnston observed the Cherokee way of life, and was struck with the contrast between their level of constraint and that which he was used to, reflecting, “Subjection is what they are unacquainted with in their own State, there being no such Thing as coercive Power among them: Their Chiefs are such only in Virtue of their Credit, and not their Power; there being, in all other Circumstances, a perfect Equality among them.”⁴

This equality and freedom to do what one liked, at least up to the limit of blatant and overt conflict, extended to both genders and even to acts deleterious to community efforts and war goals. After war was declared and the British arrayed their forces against the Cherokees, the war chief Willinawaw placed the English Fort Loudoun, which had been built deep in Cherokee country, under siege.⁵ In fact, the fate of the Loudoun garrison was one of the most powerful bargaining chips the Cherokees held during the conflict. This description of some Cherokee women’s exercise of their own individual wills by feeding the garrison in direct opposition to their war chief neatly demonstrates how during the war, just as at its outset, the ideal of liberty prevailed over all else:

Many of the soldiers in the garrison of Fort Loudoun, having Indian wives, these brought them a daily supply of provisions, though blocked up, in order to be starved to a surrender, by their own countrymen; and they persisted in this, notwithstanding the express orders of Willinawaw, who, sensible of the retardment this occasioned, threatened death to those who would assist their enemy; but they, laughing at his threats, boldly told him, they would succour their husbands every day, and were sure, that, if he killed them, their relations would make his death atone for theirs. Willinawaw was too sensible of this to put his threats into execution, so that the garrison subsisted a long time on the provisions brought to them in this manner.⁶

⁴ George Milligen-Johnston, "A Short Description of the Province of South-Carolina," in *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions*, ed. Robert Meriwether (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 185-186.

⁵ Fort Loudoun was built near the Towns of Chota and Tanasi in present day Monroe County, Tennessee. The State name Tennessee itself is derived from the town name Tanasi.

⁶ Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake* (Cherokee: Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, 2007), 35.

These, of course, are all illustrations of the Cherokee cultural ideal. No people always live up to their ideals, and there *were* instances where Cherokees guilty of offenses against the English were turned over for punishment, such as during negotiations between Moytoy of Tellico and Governor James Glen of South Carolina in 1751.⁷ Such concessions were not made without resistance however, and one gets the impression that they left a foul taste in the mouths of the Cherokee headmen who made them. It should be kept in mind that the events around the Anglo-Cherokee War were extraordinary; Cherokee life was not one filled with momentous dilemmas between upholding liberty and facing ruin. This is because there was another facet to the Cherokee ethos which overlaid and synergized with their ideology of freedom to produce a social harmony, and that was a principle against open conflict.

Fred Gearing analyzes the Cherokee propensity against face to face conflict and open aggression. He sums up the prevailing method they used in avoiding such aggression in three parts, “first, by asserting their interests cautiously; second, by turning away from impending conflict; third, by withdrawing from men who openly clashed with their fellows.”⁸ Jockeying for one’s own gain and even against the aims of another was not uncommon, but it occurred in the context of scheming, trickery, spells, or other methods of pushing an agenda without resorting to overt variance. This too was a manifestation of the liberty principle, preferring withdrawal to the use of coercive force, which would have constituted a violation of the opposing party’s freedom. A particularly belligerent Cherokee would soon find himself collectively ostracized and most likely change his ways from such covert social pressures. Just such an occurrence happened to the Mankiller of Tellico in 1757 when he tried to agitate the people against the English and shift

⁷ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: May 21, 1750 - August 7, 1754*, ed. William McDowell (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 189-196.

⁸ Fred Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," *American Anthropological Association* 64, no. 5 (1962), 33.

their political alliance to the French, and met with such disapproval that the resulting jeers and shaming soon had him abandoning his design.⁹

The colonial conceptions of freedom, soon to express themselves rather vividly in 1776, were far more conservative in their sentiments. They constituted a tradition still based broadly around freedom of the elites, not of every common individual, as traced by their heritage in such documents as the coronation charter of Henry I and *Magna Carta*. Strong hierarchical boundaries were an intrinsic part of the colonists' cultural traditions, and the Cherokee concept of universal freedom was an alien one, incompatible with their understanding of how the world operated. Perhaps Captain Demere's impression of the Cherokees, developed after serving as head of the fort garrison among them for quite some time, best reflects the cultural gap between the two peoples,

The Savages are an odd Kind of People; as there is no Law nor Subjection amongst them, they can't be compelled to do any Thing nor oblige them to embrace any Party except they please. The very lowest of them thinks himself as great and as high as any of the Rest, every one of them must be courted for their Friendship, with some Kind of a Feeling, and made much of. So what is called great and leading Men amongst them, are commonly old and middle-aged People, who know how to give a Talk in Favour of whom they have a Fancy for, and that same may influence the Minds of the young Fellows for a Time, but every one is his own Master.¹⁰

Power Ways

Cherokee attitudes towards authority and power flowed naturally from their ideas about freedom. Demere's comment above neatly blends the two, and the emphasis of persuasion in their leading men highlights the communal and consent based character of their political structures. Because the Cherokees conceived every person to be individually autonomous,

⁹ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: 1754-1765*, ed. William McDowell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 359.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 393.

hierarchy and delegated power was virtually (although not altogether) unknown. In their town and national councils, every single member had a place, should they elect to participate, and each voice was equal. It is important not to imagine this equality as a native brand of relativism or political correctness; each person's opinion was equal in its *potential* and *opportunity* to contribute. Opinions were unlikely to gain much support unless they were of great merit or were made appealing by persuasive oratory skill. The absence of hierarchical concerns in political voice extended to gender as well; unlike colonial institutions, Cherokee women were full participants in the council process. While at a diplomatic conference in Charles Town, the Cherokee headman Little Carpenter remarked upon the absence of women in the councils of Carolinian politics. He pointedly noted to Governor Lyttleton that "White men as well as Red were born of women" and inquired as to why their women were not admitted to the discussions. Lyttleton was taken aback, and only responded a few days later that they "Do place a confidence in their Women and share their councils with them when they know their Hearts to be good."¹¹

This equal participation should not be mistaken for a democracy. Nothing so concrete as a record of voting or any such democratic process has come down to us through history, and the Cherokee system certainly cannot be seen as anything close to a tyranny of the majority. Consensus was the goal, and the ideal was to achieve unanimity. Because human nature rarely allows that happy occurrence, Cherokee power ways called for the same conflict avoiding behaviors as reflected in their freedom ways. If a minority could not be persuaded to consent to the majority position, their natural recourse was to remove themselves entirely. Certainly the majority would not use coercion to force them into compliance. At the core of this reality lies the true character of the Cherokee ideology of power: unconstrained consent. Anyone who did not

¹¹ Minutes of Feb. 9-12, 1757, *S.C. Council Journal*, quoted in John Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 69.

approve of the consensus decision was absolutely free to depart or otherwise remain completely unbound by that decision.

Thus, the key to power in Cherokee society lay in the persuasive arts. Lieutenant Timberlake described it this way, speaking particularly of their war parties, “there is no law or compulsion on those that refuse to follow, or punishment to those that forsake their chief: he strives, therefore, to inspire them with a sort of enthusiasm, by the war song, as the ancient bards once did in Britain.”¹² Thus, leaders did rise to the surface. Men with the gift of inspiring speech and plainly wise judgment such as Moytoy, Old Hop, and Little Carpenter became community leaders by virtue of the sway they held over hearts and minds. It was a delicate leadership though, never to be taken for granted or deemed held by right. During the Anglo-Cherokee War, for instance, Little Carpenter found himself out of favor because of his steadfast support for the English over the French. He acted in accordance with Cherokee principles and removed himself from the equation, departing with some warriors still in agreement with him to raid the French.¹³ After two disastrous British campaigns devastated the Cherokee towns, however, his advice to make nice with them overcame angry sentiments and he again assumed a position of leadership.

Naturally full and equal participation in the governing structures of the community was far more attainable on a local than national level. The Cherokee town regularly held councils in each settlement, and they were attended by all. With the advent of the English, the beginning of centralization, and the need for larger scale diplomatic machinery, there emerged the political body of the national council. It only convened when absolutely needed, but it was essentially a town council model enacted on a large scale. Every Cherokee was free to take part, though obviously actual attendance was limited to those either greatly motivated or easily able to appear.

¹² Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 36.

¹³ John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 88.

Though this was not properly a body of representatives, it operated much in that regard. The one unique officer, the Speaker, was representative, and his task was to speak to the English for the whole council. As such, he was severely restricted in what he could say on their behalf. Nothing could be communicated except what was approved by the decision of the Cherokee community in council. When Skiagunta of Keowee¹⁴ spoke to South Carolina's Governor Glen in this capacity, and wanted to discuss a matter of personal interest, he waited until the official matter was finished and very clearly indicated that what he said after was on his own behalf and not connected to the Cherokees as a whole.¹⁵

The Cherokees and colonists eyed each others' power folk ways with equal distaste. English governors found it frustrating and inelegant to have to deal with a whole community of equals rather than with a king or chief who could speak with absolute authority for the whole nation. This sentiment was especially clear in these intergovernmental exchanges, but ideas behind the social differences went beyond mere frustration at its being cumbersome for executing diplomatic tasks. There was a further, culturally biased, sentiment that it was *wrong* for power to be so equally distributed. Aristocracies, both social and religious, were deeply ingrained parts of the English ethos, and the idea of a society that operated without them was somehow repulsive. Common Indians fancying themselves free of hierarchical authority irritated the British upper crust, resulting eventually in the long term goal of "reducing the Indians to civility."¹⁶

Those Indians, for their part, thought the distribution of power they observed among the colonists ridiculous and unfair. Seeing military leaders who purchased their commissions by

¹⁴ Keowee was a Cherokee town situated in present day Oconee County, South Carolina, and gives its name to the nearby Keowee River.

¹⁵ Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation*, 60-61.

¹⁶ For more on this idea of 'reducing' the Indian to civility see James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers : The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 48.

wealth or by prestigious parentage, they scoffed at the practice, finding such men unfit and contemptible. James Adair¹⁷ recorded their opinion of such officers in a telling passage,

They reckon if our warriors had gained high titles by personal bravery, they would be at least in the shape of men, if not of active brisk warriors; for constant manly exercise keeps a due temperament of body, and a just proportion of shape. They said, some were not fit even for the service of an old woman, much less for the difficult and lively exercises which manly warriors pursue in their rough element -- that they could never have gone to war, but bought their beloved, broad paper with yellow stone, or it must have passed from father to son, like the rest of their possessions; and that by their intemperate method of eating and drinking without proper exercise, they had transformed themselves into those over-grown shapes, which our weavers, taylors, and plaiters of false hair, rendered more contemptible.¹⁸

Concerning the high handed way that the aristocrats treated the common people, the Indians berated them for their imperious attitudes and for speaking sharply to them and frowning, and forcing them to stand at a distance with their hats in hand “as if they were black people,” rather than being inspiring and cheerful. Adair’s informants summed up by turning the plantation racism back on their white neighbors, saying, “Such conduct, always a sure token of cowardice, testified with convincing clearness, they were unable to act the part of even an honest black man.”¹⁹

Such strong opinions on both sides tended to form a continuum of negative sentiment, wherein focus on the poor qualities of the other culture drowned out admiration of the good. Where the power values espoused by Cherokees and colonists conflicted it created tension and ill will, while areas which did not conflict were only a net neutral. Non-conflicting cultural ways therefore did not make the problem any worse, but they also did not mitigate the effects of those which *did* conflict. The result was a slow but steady downward spiral in Anglo-Cherokee

¹⁷ James Adair was an English Indian trader who lived and worked among the Southeastern Indian tribes for many years. Unlike the majority of those in his profession, Adair carefully observed the Indians, and recorded what he saw with great detail. The ethnological information he provides is wide ranging and important to any study of the Cherokees and surrounding Indian tribes.

¹⁸ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1775), 433.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 434.

relations as the native ethos of individual freedom chafed against colonial hierarchism. This was one of the cornerstones on which the tragedy of the Trail of Tears would be built.

Religious Ways

One factor with the potential to alleviate the growing animosity was religion, particularly its capability to draw people together and foster brotherly love. Here too, however, incompatibilities in beliefs created problems instead of fixing them. Cherokee religious ideas derived from the material world around them and their attempts to categorize and understand it. This, of course, is true of most basic religious ideas, but it is important to keep in mind with Cherokee beliefs because the way their religious elements worked together represented a logical system through which they could order their world, and the context of their basic beliefs explains the reasoning behind otherwise arbitrary seeming ceremonies and superstitions. The system itself was widespread, representing the beliefs of Indians all across the Southeast. Some particularities must have existed between tribes, but many of the distinctions are unknown. Sadly, historical documentation of the religion is good enough to get a general outline, but not to discern many of the details and differentiations between Cherokee, Creek, Natchez, etc.

Cherokee religion had myths of creation and origins, but they did not necessarily form the basis of the religion; rather, the religious elements came from the natural world the Cherokees observed and out of those elements they formed a mythopoetic corpus of creation stories and ideas of the world's structure. The most basic tenet of the belief system was that there were a small number of categories to which everything belonged, and that the mixing of categories constituted pollution which caused chaos and misfortune. At the heart of these ideas

was an ideology of animism, that each object or animal had a spirit which could bless or curse according to its own whim.²⁰

One major axis of categorization was that of The Upper World and the Underworld, with our own realm making for a threefold division. Animals tended to be associated with these realms, birds with the upper, four footed animals like deer with the middle, and fish, snakes, and perhaps insects with the Underworld. The sun was of the Upper World as well, and so was fire. Water, bubbling up from underground springs, was of the Underworld. Since Cherokees considered it extremely dangerous and taboo to mix categories, and especially directly opposing categories, they would never put out a sacred fire by pouring water onto it.²¹ Both the sun and the river, called respectively “the Apportioner” and “the Long Man” were major deities. That they were opposites did not make one good and the other bad; they were just *different*, and Cherokees called upon them for different reasons. James Mooney concluded, after exhaustive research with Cherokee shamanic manuscripts, “The sun is invoked chiefly by the ball-player, while the hunter prays to the fire; but every important ceremony... contains a prayer to the “Long Person,” the formulistic name for water... The wind, the storm, the cloud, and the frost are also invoked in different formulas.”²² Another important dichotomy was that between male and female. For this reason it was important for Cherokees to be cautious in their dealings with the opposite sex. Men and women became polluted or unclean from engaging in intercourse, and even a husband and wife had to be purified by plunging in a stream to clear themselves from the admixture caused by cohabitation.²³

²⁰ James Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," in *7th Annual Report* (Washington: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1891), 319-322.

²¹ Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: The university of Tennessee Press, 1976) 128; Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 406.

²² Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," 340-341.

²³ John Payne and Daniel Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 64.

The number four was important in Cherokee religious ideas, and was tied to yet another layer of categorizations represented by the four cardinal directions. These four directions had accompanying colors and powers, wielded by their animating spirits called the four winds. The north wind was a black god, bringing cold and death. The east was red and reigned over triumph, power, and success. The south was white and represented peace and good weather. The west was possibly brown²⁴ and helped with bringing rains in the growing season. Variations on this theme certainly existed, and different colors and powers were associated with different directions in iterations from different sources. The scheme here comes from Longe's conversation with a Cherokee priest. Mooney has a slightly different organization deriving from his sources. Most likely the decentralized nature of the Cherokee tribe allowed for many flavors of their religion while the basic ideas remained the same.²⁵

Naturally the Cherokees encountered things which seemed to exist simultaneously in two or more of their cosmic categories. These represented anomalies, and the Indians considered them particularly powerful and dangerous agents within their world. The bear, for example, was an animal that crossed over into the realm of humans by standing on its hind legs. The Cherokees devised a whole myth about the origin of bears from a group of Indians who decided to leave their village behind and live like animals in the woods.²⁶ Bats and flying squirrels bridged the gap between the four footed animals and birds, and the Venus flytrap was a strange "plant-animal." Such anomalies tended to feature prominently in Cherokee myths.²⁷ They were powerful, and could be exploited to great effect if used properly, but one had to always exercise caution when dealing with them because their effects were so strong and often volatile. The

²⁴ Longe's informant called it "the color of the Spaniards."

²⁵ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 12-14; Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," 342.

²⁶ James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 326.

²⁷ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 139.

Cherokees even fabricated new anomalous creatures such as the terrible *Uktena*, an enormous serpent with the antlers of a buck and a brilliant crystal set between its eyes with which it could stun or beguile anyone foolish enough to gaze upon it. This was not a mere story to the Cherokees, but something they firmly believed in. They “knew” exactly where the *Uktena* lived, and avoided that place lest they incur its wrath.²⁸

Categorizing and managing the many different people, objects, and experiences in a Cherokee’s life, even accounting for anomalies, may seem simple but the ceremonies and formulas to properly utilize them to one’s benefit were considered vast and complex. These were the domain of the priests, who jealously guarded their secret knowledge. Such power gave them high status in the community so that the priests were often chiefs or other powerful beloved men. This is not to say that they were charlatans; certainly they believed in what they did as much as the rest of the people in their towns. Training for the priesthood was rigorous in several ways. For one, priests adhered to more stringent taboos in order to avoid pollution than other Cherokees, and in addition priestly acolytes also had to master the lore, medicine, divining rituals, and chants which made up Cherokee priestcraft. This required a sharp memory, particularly in the preliterate Cherokee society.²⁹

In keeping with the Cherokee social ethos of non-hierarchy, the priesthood may not have properly made up a social class. One historian believes that pretty much all males received some training in how to manipulate the spirits and elements to influence the world around them. According to Fred Gearing the role of full priest had to do with extent of training, and was further subdivided into specializations.³⁰ Thus, most grown men *could* act as a priest in some capacity, but those who received more exhaustive training and/or demonstrated exceptional skill

²⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 237-238.

²⁹ Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," 309-310.

³⁰ Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 114.

would be characterized by their “priestliness” to a greater extent. Butrick, however, reported that only specially chosen persons were inducted into the mysteries of the priesthood, and James Mooney encountered much the same thing in his fieldwork among the Cherokees during the early twentieth century.³¹ There is some evidence for an ancient hereditary priesthood among the Cherokee, the *Ani Kutani* or “Physic family.”³² They were said to have been greatly feared and to have become tyrannical, especially in using their power to steal desirable wives from other Cherokee husbands. According to several sources a young brave, finding his wife forcibly violated by the priest, rallied the people and led them in a mass slaughter which entirely destroyed the sect.³³ Longe’s reference to them, from the early eighteenth century, reads as though it was before this destruction, discussing the Physic family as the current priesthood of the Cherokees. Other evidence for their existence at this time is, however, not forthcoming, and accounts of their destruction seem to predate European contact. The paucity of further contemporary information would thus point to an earlier date.³⁴ In any case, if the story is true it may indicate that the religious system of the eighteenth century Cherokees was an improvisation in the aftermath of the event.

Whether or not that is true, the priests of the Cherokee religion who *were* serving during the eighteenth century officiated in a number of important ceremonies, from the personal to those involving the whole community. On the personal level, a man suspecting his wife of infidelity might seek out a priest for divination on the matter, and the priest would likewise officiate at the cleansing and naming ceremony for a newborn baby. During times of war, the priest used a

³¹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 33; Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," 310.

³² John Payne and Daniel Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 16-17.

³³ Dr. J. D. MacGowan, "Indian Secret Societies," *Historical Magazine* 10, no. 1 (1866) 139-140; Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, 249.

³⁴ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 10.

divining crystal and sacrificial meat to determine if victory or defeat would result from an attack. Over the course of the year, priests performed the sacred duties at the center of six major Cherokee festivals. According to Butrick, these six annual events had since eroded and consolidated into one main feast, the Green Corn Dance.³⁵ This was a harvest and renewal ceremony, attended by a purifying fast and then subsequent feast. With great solemnity the priests ordered the people to extinguish all their fires throughout the town, and then re-kindled a new sacred fire to burn in the center of the town house. This was the apex of the year, and together with other dances and feasts it tied the ceremonial Cherokee religion to their everyday lives in the ebb and flow of the seasons.³⁶ Priest and ceremony thus were deeply entrenched features of Cherokee life and culture, far more so than their colonial neighbors realized.

Colonial reaction to Cherokee religion, in fact, was largely to ignore it. While most colonies technically held to a policy of converting the Indians to Christianity, most were far too focused on developing their own economies and cultural hearths to bother about the tedious errand of marching into the hills to spread the divine knowledge to the idle savages. One observer in the mid eighteenth century noted this, lamenting “To the shame of the Christian name, no pains have ever been taken to convert them to Christianity; on the contrary, their morals are perverted and corrupted by the sad example they daily have of its depraved professors residing in their towns.”³⁷ Where the white man did take note of native religion, he often misunderstood it entirely. Oftentimes the significant ministrations of the priests were hand waved away as “mummeries,” and the Indians said to be nearly irreligious, being too ignorant even to hold to pagan doctrines. Other observers, such as Adair and Butrick, interpreted the Indian ceremonies as vestigial Jewish rites, believing the natives to be the lost ten tribes of Israel.

³⁵ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 34.

³⁶ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 105-107.

³⁷ Quoted in Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 38.

This was what Charles Hudson called “a happy choice,” because they viewed such a heritage in a positive light and thus paid better attention to what might otherwise have been ignored as meaningless.³⁸

Cherokee response to the few colonial missionaries they saw were not exactly encouraging. Timberlake relates the disappointing result achieved by one English preacher in Cherokee country,

Mr. Martin, who having preached Scripture till both he and his audience were heartily tired, was told at last that they knew very well that if they were good they would go up; if bad, down; that he could tell no more; that he had long plagued them with what they no ways understood, and they desired that he would depart the country.³⁹

Such resistance to easy conversion certainly did not endear the Cherokees to the colonial population, serving to keep the gulf between Anglo-American and Cherokee cultures as wide as ever. After the failure of the Chickamauga settlements to push the frontiersmen out of Indian country, and the Cherokees settled on the strategy of Westernizing in order to repair relations, missionary activity increased and fell on more receptive ears. Even under these conditions though, missionaries were distressed to find that their new converts did not always perfectly conform to the Christian mold. Indian religion was highly inclusive, making it prone to syncretism. This could result in “conversions” which seemed encouraging to Anglo-European missionaries in the short term, but proved to be disappointing when the Christian God resided alongside rather than wholly replaced the spirits of native religion. Churches and priest-conjurers existed side by side.⁴⁰

³⁸ Charles Hudson, “James Adair as an Anthropologist,” *Ethnohistory* 24, no. 4 (1977), 313-314.

³⁹ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 34.

⁴⁰ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 182-183.

As late as 1888, when James Mooney was working with the Cherokees on the North Carolina reservation, he found sacred papers belonging to Inâ'li, a recently deceased old Cherokee who served as both native conjurer as well as an ordained Methodist preacher.⁴¹ Such syncretism seemed to Cherokee minds perfectly suited to bringing the two cultures together, but in retrospect was somewhat unmindful of their new neighbors' religious heritage of severely disciplining one another over far more minor doctrinal differences.

Different cultural outlooks in regards to religious matters were thus fundamentally divisive. Cherokees were inclusive and flexible in the details, but retained a solid core in their cosmological worldview. Europeans, on the other hand, tended to niggle over the minutest of theological features such as Sabbath laws or notions about the sacraments.⁴² Under such circumstances inevitable Cherokee syncretism was certain to spark tensions, let alone reactions to outright rejection of the Christian faith, such as Timberlake encountered. The effects of divergent religious beliefs take a central role in the unfolding story of Anglo-Cherokee cultural contention.

Magic Ways

Because the Cherokee worldview was intrinsically animistic many of the beliefs and behaviors were in the orbit of magic and superstition while not exactly of a religious nature. The priesthood, with all its rites and divinations dealt directly with the spirits in the big picture, but in a world where spirits or witches could be around every corner it was hardly convenient for a typical Cherokee to have a priest always on hand for metaphysical recourse. On the periphery of

⁴¹ Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," 315-316.

⁴² This applies to numerous European Christian traditions, from Catholic expressions of intolerance like the Spanish Inquisition to Protestant inflexibilities as demonstrated in incidents such as the New England affairs of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. Cherokees dealt mainly with Anglicans and other Protestant sects.

the overtly religious life of the Cherokees, then, lay the fears, wards, and charms employed to deter harm and guarantee success which anyone had at his or her disposal.

One consequence of Cherokee magic ways was a sense of paranoia, as illustrated by a formula undertaken directly after childbirth. After a child was born, the Cherokees believed that the father could control when the couple's next offspring would be conceived by undertaking the following ritual. He would wrap up the placenta from the birth and embark on a journey over the mountain ridges. The number of ridges he travelled would indicate the number of years until he was blessed with another child. Once he made his destination, the man buried the bundle around a foot in the ground while whispering an incantation. The entire episode was done in secret, because if an enemy should stealthily follow him, a counter to the ritual could be done to harm his family. The enemy could rebury the bundle an arm's length deep and cover it with rocks, ensuring that the man would never again have children; or he could discard the placenta in the open, making it so that the father and his wife would lose any control over the process and have more children at random and probably inopportune times.⁴³ Magic ways inculcated this sort of secret and suspicious behavior, and its opposite, a nosy prying into the business of their neighbors.⁴⁴

Dreams and omens were supposed to have great significance. If a Cherokee could learn the different meanings of types of dreams or incidental signs, he would be better prepared to handle any coming disaster or to take advantage of auspicious opportunities. A hunter's dreaming about bread or fruit, for example, was sure to proceed his successfully killing a deer, while dreaming of a broken gun meant that he would catch nothing in the coming winter. Dreaming of a snake presaged sickness, and to dream of someone traveling west was a sure sign

⁴³ Frans Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," *Anthropos* 26, (1931), 28-29.

⁴⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, vi.

that they would soon die. Similarly, startling a fox at the start of a journey was bad, and meant a family member would soon pass, while a bird flying into a house was a sign of visitors in the near future. If an owl perched on trees within the town, particularly peach trees, and sang it meant that enemies would attack a few days hence.⁴⁵

Witchcraft, in fact, played a big part in Cherokee superstition and magic folk ways. Lacking any other meaningful cause or purpose, they often attributed random tragedy to witches living in or around the community. The Cherokee word for the long-eared owl was the same as for “witch,” and man killing witches were said to be able to appear as animals and to favor the form of an owl.⁴⁶ The owl had particular significance as it was one of the more anomalous creatures the Cherokees encountered. It was a bird, yet was strangely nocturnal and resembled a wizened old man. One such witch from Cherokee myth was the Spear-Finger, a dreadful old woman who could appear in any form, had skin hard as rock that could not be harmed by weapons, and a deadly piercing finger used to kill. She would impersonate family members, and strike when one was at ease or asleep, stealing human livers for her food. Another class of dreaded witches was the Raven-Mockers, who visited the bedsides of sick persons and stole their remaining life, so that they would suddenly perish instead of recovering.⁴⁷

The Cherokees thus feared witches greatly, and devised a number of methods to ward them off or combat their deadly attentions. Tobacco smoke was said to be effective, as it would eventually cause a witch to sneeze and depart; for this reason a house sheltering a recuperating person would often be filled with smoke against the possibility of Raven-Mockers or the like. A kind of ash made by burning a particular species of small mouse was rumored to allow one to perceive invisible or disguised witches when rubbed on the eyes, seven days after which the

⁴⁵ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 102-104.

⁴⁶ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 141, 175-776.

⁴⁷ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 316-319, 401-403.

discovered interloper would die.⁴⁸ Another ward was to attach the feather of a buzzard over the doorway of a house. The buzzard was considered to be immune to any sickness or witchcraft, as evidenced by its feeding continually on dead carcasses and thriving on the diet rather than falling ill. As such, its feathers were said to have protective properties such as stopping witch attacks and even watching over a home to keep things from being lost or stolen.⁴⁹

Witches were said to be the result of purposeful creation rather than a natural occurrence. The mother of a new born infant (or *infants*, it was rumored that witches were typically made when twins were born) was to abstain from feeding them milk for the first twenty-four days, which was a period during which the mother generally kept secluded as she was ‘unclean’ from childbirth. Instead of milk, if she fed the infants a liquid hominy concoction, then they would become witches with the power to know what you were thinking and to make things happen through the power of thought alone. Olbrechts tells the story of a Cherokee priest who thwarted an attempt at making witches in this manner by secretly feeding them food prepared by a menstruating woman. Such fare was always considered unclean, so the remedy was considered to have ruined the attempt at witch-making.⁵⁰ Most likely no one ever *actually* attempted so heinous an act as attempting to purposefully create one of the feared witches, but at the core of the belief in witches is a certain level of irrational suspicion, fueling the occasional accusation.

Witchcraft and magic ways were not foreign concepts to the Cherokees’ colonial neighbors. Many different superstitions and witch traditions abounded in the various forms of Christianity brought over the ocean from Europe. Where the two peoples would have agreed on the need to guard against witches or even perhaps the significance of signs and wonders, the

⁴⁸ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 240-241.

⁴⁹ Wahnenuahi, "The Wahnenuahi Manuscript," in *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, ed. Jack Kilpatrick and Anna Kilpatrick (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 187.

⁵⁰ Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," 31-33.

deeper assumptions about the source of these things were entirely different. For the Cherokees, omens and dreams were the work of unseen spirits of different sorts, which naturally sprang from the plants, animals, and even the stones around them. Christians, on the other hand, interpreted such signs as either divine insight from God or as the deceptions of demons. In the same way, witches were the Cherokee human counterpart to the *Uktena*; they were anomalies who only partly lived in the human realm. They were dangerous and troublesome, but not *evil* in the same way Christians viewed witches who were persons “in league with the devil.”

Gender Ways

Often enough in history writing the analysis of gender devolves simply into “women’s history,” but in the case of Cherokee culture it must reach broader horizons and explain the differences they perceived in the two sexes. Certainly both were accorded equal autonomy, as is clear from their ideologies of power and freedom, but their religious ideals also dictated that the two were of differing categories and thus had to play different roles. Despite European shock at the level of independence the Cherokee women held, their society preferred strong, culturally dictated gender roles. They were not the *same* roles found in European culture, but they were certainly distinct. There was not an equalist notion that “men can do anything women can do,” or vice versa.

One of the most defining of Cherokee gender role divisions had to do with provisioning. Men provided for the community by hunting game, and women by tending to crops. This is a distinction which was deeply imbedded in the culture, and manifested in a number of different places. The seminal Cherokee myth of Kana'ti and Selu demonstrates the fundamental ideas on which these roles were based. Kana'ti and Selu (whose names mean exactly what they represent,

“the lucky hunter” and “corn”) were a husband and wife with two mischievous sons. Selu always brought out corn and beans from her storehouse for supper, and Kana'ti went out every day and brought back game. The core of the story involved the two boys trying to solve the mystery of where their father got his game, and where their mother got her corn. They found that Kana'ti kept the animals penned up in a cave, and let them out one at a time to hunt them. The boys opened the cave and accidentally let them all free, thus making hunting a much harder task. Likewise, they found that Selu produced her agricultural goods magically from her body, and taking her for a witch they decided to kill her. She instructed them to drag her body seven times in the ground once she was dead, and they would always have corn. They did this, but only twice instead of seven times, and thus corn only grew sparsely instead of everywhere. The entire myth is very similar to parallel legends of paradise lost, such as Pandora's Box, but of particular interest are the gendered lines drawn which established lasting boundaries in Cherokee culture.⁵¹

The game/corn division of labor was reflected in many of the Cherokees' rituals, such as symbolic wedding offerings of meat and corn to each other representing what they would bring to the union, or seasonal festival dances associated with the hunt and with the harvest. These, discussed in the next chapter, demonstrate structural forms built upon the basic gender ideas spelled out here. As in all cultures, Cherokee gender roles likely developed out of necessity and natural aptitude dictated by biological gender distinctions. The hunt was naturally suited to the physical capabilities of Cherokee men, and the time it required that they spend away from the town made cultivating the fields a task to be taken up by the women out of necessity and convenience. The task of actually clearing the fields, which required a greater measure of strength, was one in which the men joined in. Similarly, the major undertaking of planting the

⁵¹ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 242-245.

first crop of the season was large enough that the whole community, men and women, participated equally.⁵²

Marriages were matrilineal, that is, the husband moved into the home of his wife, and it belonged to her. Again, this was a natural occurrence due to the fact that the masculine occupation of hunting (and later trading as well) meant that he spent the bulk of his time away, and so the home was a female space simply because women were overwhelmingly the ones who were there. As a man grew older he was likely to hunt less and be in town more of the time, but the trend was for men to congregate at the town house rather than spend time at their wives' homes. Even younger men who were not abroad were often known to spend but few hours of the night in their wives' houses.⁵³ As with clearing fields, however, building houses was a labor intensive task which required masculine assistance and fell under the purview of the whole community.⁵⁴ Such a practice was alien to the European patrilineal tradition, and meant that women "owned" their homes⁵⁵ (and, of course, the associated farmland) to a greater degree than European women, which also translated into more autonomy.

Going on the warpath was a gendered activity, so much so that the warriors practiced full separation from female contact for a period prior to going out. This was another Cherokee religious ideal of not mixing unlike categories; war was a masculine undertaking, and to pollute a warrior with female contact was thought to spell disaster.⁵⁶ As with the hunt, the basis of thinking war to be masculine in nature derived from physical strength. In the rare instance of a woman courageously taking part in war, such as defensively when the town came under attack,

⁵² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 406-407.

⁵³ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 45.

⁵⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 417.

⁵⁵ Note that Cherokee notions of land ownership were far less legalistic or permanent than their European counterparts. Distinctions between who owned what land were much more of a serious affair to Europeans than they were to Cherokees.

⁵⁶ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 23.

she was accorded a particularly honored status as “war woman,” and thereafter took the lead in pardoning or condemning prisoners brought back by raiding parties.⁵⁷

While the actual business of war was men’s work, the instigation of warfare was often at the behest of women. Native war was usually retaliatory, and because women bore children they were thought to be more deeply wounded by the loss of their offspring in battle than the fathers. Thus it was frequently a woman who urged the warriors to go out against some enemy who had taken one of her children and revenge them. This same rationale held true for the prominent role of women in torturing and killing captives taken in battle; since they were the ones most deeply hurt by the initial loss, they took out their sorrow and rage on the enemy captives.⁵⁸

Priestcraft was an exclusively masculine role. Priests were described as men by all observers without any explanation as to why. There is one possible rationale, however, which presents itself. Priests served as the go-to leaders and authorities in the community. These characteristics seem to have been masculine traits in Cherokee culture, so that even in their matrilineal clan structure the task of disciplining children fell not to the mother but to her brother. Overall, the Cherokee system was egalitarian with patriarchal tendencies. This did not mean that women were excluded from important religious experiences; indeed, because gender differences were so emphasized in Cherokee beliefs, the presence of women in necessary positions was essential. During religious dances the women performed crucial roles, acting as counterparts to the men. Because of the belief that male and female were intrinsically different in nature, neither could fill the part of the other in important ceremonies.⁵⁹

Cherokee beliefs about overabundant male-female mixing, as exemplified in their warmaking ways, would have reinforced the division of roles as women associated largely with

⁵⁷ Wahnenuhi, "The Wahnenuhi Manuscript," 185.

⁵⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 391; Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 363.

⁵⁹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 36-37.

women, and men with men, so that gendered responsibilities and skills were perpetuated.

Hunting, agriculture, and war are only convenient examples of the gendered nature that attached itself to many and sundry tasks and behaviors in Cherokee society. Men, for example, were the chief craftsmen of their structures, canoes, weapons and ceremonial pipes, while women made pottery, clothing, carpets, and baskets.⁶⁰

Cherokee gender roles may have been distinct from each other, but they were not sufficiently identical to colonial ways to earn the approbation of their neighbors from across the ocean. The Cherokee ethos of gender was one of balance and division of responsibility; men provided for the community in areas where they were strong, and women did the same. Those areas were complimentary, and so there was a balance of mutual support. Euro-American gender ways tended more towards hierarchy than balance, and even though the Cherokee leadership was headed by their beloved men, there was a lack of strong gendered authoritarianism which made colonial elites apprehensive. This was not a distinct cultural dissonance, it was simply another subset of the incompatibilities between colonial hierarchy and Cherokee egalitarianism.

Age Ways

How a society acts in regard to the aged among them usually correlates to how well they esteem the characteristics usually associated with age, such as wisdom and experience. Even in communities which exalt the physical above the mental, the elderly are often venerated as those who have succeeded at life and triumphed over the hardships which ended the lives of those who did not survive. For the Cherokees, age represented a state of refinement. They held that there was an ideal character to which a man or woman ought to aspire, and deemed the older generations among them to have drawn closer than others to that goal. Thus, the Cherokees

⁶⁰ William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram* (New York: Facsimile Library, 1940), 401.

looked up to the elderly in their society, and they often held positions of influence due to their perceived wisdom and judgment. This was not an instant transformation, but a lifelong aspiration. Once, when confronted with insulting news, Dragging Canoe responded, “I suppose I am looked upon as a boy, and not a warrior.”⁶¹ Though he was yet a young man, he expected a measure of respect in accordance with his middle status of warrior, between boy and beloved man.

At around fifty-five, Cherokee men were usually of an age to stop going on war parties, and they graduated to the status of “beloved man.” These beloved men were predominantly the ones who the community looked to for guidance and leadership. In their town councils, the beloved men made up a singular group of moderators and directors, headed by the chief priest and his attendants. Even out of council, the beloved men were often available to give advice or mediate. Butrick describes them as congregating generally near the central town house of the settlements, “there were certain elders, or old men residing at or near the council house, whose influence and authority were considerable, especially among boys and young people.”⁶² In council, the beloved men were accorded a certain deference by the younger community members, and they deliberated separately when inter-clan conflicts of interest demanded the highest level of council attention.⁶³

Women also gained status as they aged, though they played different roles than the beloved men. Each of the seven clans selected one of its beloved women to join with the beloved men in a sacred dance at their religious festivals, officiated over by the chief priest.⁶⁴ The beloved women seem to have been looked up to as guardians of Cherokee moral behavior,

⁶¹ John Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West, 1838* (Kingsport: Southern Publishers, 1938), 168.

⁶² Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 35.

⁶³ Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 41.

⁶⁴ Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, 235.

keeping a watchful eye lest the indiscretions of the more youthful tribe members should cause religious impurity and harm the town as a whole. Adair recorded the instance of a drought, upon which the priest divined that the cause was their “going to the women in their religious retirements,” (i.e. during menstruation). The reaction of the older women was to take up an instantly disapproving and vigilant posture. In Adair’s words, “The old women, as they go along, will exclaim loudly against the young people, and protest they will watch their manners very narrowly for the time to come, as they are sure of their own steady virtue.”⁶⁵ Some years later, William Bartram and his companion encountered first hand this role of the beloved women when, after weeks of travel, he encountered a group of fetching young Cherokee women picking strawberries. As Bartram tells it,

Now, although we meant no other than an innocent frolic with this gay assembly of hamadryades, we shall leave it to the person of feeling and sensibility to form an idea to what lengths our passions might have hurried us, thus warmed and excited, had it not been for the vigilance and care of some envious matrons who lay in ambush, and espying us gave the alarm, time enough for the nymphs to rally and assemble together.⁶⁶

During the Revolutionary era, Dragging Canoe and the majority of young Cherokee warriors defied the leadership of the beloved men and chose the path of war against the white colonists rather than appeasement. Dragging Canoe founded the Chickamauga town group, and from there he and his followers began a drawn out campaign of raiding to push away encroaching settlers. It is tempting to see this as a subversion of the normative Cherokee age folk way, but in reality it was more nuanced than that. Because the respect given to elders was based on an expectation of accumulated wisdom and virtue, the tradition was not arbitrary but rather a form of loose meritocracy. The Chickamaugan “secession” was based on the fact that its members thought the current group of elders had failed in demonstrating wisdom, and followed

⁶⁵ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 85.

⁶⁶ Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, 289.

what they saw as a better path. Dragging Canoe himself remained leader into old age, and throughout the Chickamaugas continued to respect the aged, participating in a limited fashion even with the towns they had left and their national council.⁶⁷

Death Ways

Age, however honored, eventually gives way to death. The way in which a culture handles imminent death by age or sickness, and the following inevitable funerary rituals, reflects the peoples' beliefs about what comes, or does *not* come, after this life. In the case of the Cherokees, they believed that death was to be faced without fear and without flinching. This was especially true of their warriors, and was an important part of the virtue of courage in the face of peril. This was a martial characteristic shared by the whole of the Southeast Indian tribal group, and often found opportunity for expression in the frequent torture of war prisoners. One observer described it as, "an indifference to life or death, pleasure or pain... and their dying behaviour did not reflect the least dishonour on their former gallant actions. All the pangs of fiery torture served only to refine their manly spirits."⁶⁸ If an aged father believed he was nearing his end, he would commonly call his children to him in order to prepare them, and to pass on his sage advice and any ancient customs he thought they needed to know. His relatives would stay with him until his end, never letting their countenances be downcast lest they speed him too quickly on his way.⁶⁹

One prominent Cherokee scholar has interpreted their religion as being entirely concerned with the present, devoid of any afterlife: "[the Cherokee] had no Great Spirit, no

⁶⁷ Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West*, 1838, 330-332.

⁶⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 385.

⁶⁹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 184; Longe, "A Small Postscript," 26.

happy hunting ground, no heaven, no hell, and consequently death had for him no terrors and he awaited the inevitable end with no anxiety as to the future.”⁷⁰ A Cherokee priest in the early eighteenth century, however, told Alexander Longe quite a different story when asked where he thought the soul went after death. According to the priest, four days after burial the soul rises from the grave and goes towards the rising Sun, until reaching a fork at which a narrow path leads to the Sun and a wide path off to the left. Good souls are directed straight ahead to “one of the finest countries that it is past the apprehensions of men to imagine the felicity that is there.” Wicked souls, however, who murdered, stole, lay with other men’s wives, etc. were directed to the left, to a land of serpents, briars, and thorns where venomous creatures torment him for eternity.⁷¹ The parallels to heaven and hell in Abrahamic religions are striking.

Perhaps even as early as Longe’s experience this could have been a belief borrowed from Christian missionaries, as some might suggest. The ancient tradition of burying the personal belongings with the deceased for use in the hereafter, however, certainly belies the notion that pre-Columbian Cherokees had no thought for an existence beyond death. Whether or not it was similar to the concept of heaven and hell is not clear, but one can be sure that it impacted their rituals surrounding death and burial. One curiosity to note about the burying of personal property with the dead is that this practice dropped away fairly rapidly after regular trade with the English commenced. The trade introduced a heretofore unknown level of consumerism to their society, and soon it became common for personal goods to be inherited rather than interred. This represents one of the quickest instances of Cherokee acculturation to English folk ways.⁷²

⁷⁰ Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," 319.

⁷¹ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 8-10.

⁷² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 179.

After death, the Cherokees mourned for either four or seven days.⁷³ Men maintained a stoic composure, but female relatives lamented continually in what was described as “a doleful wailing.” The period of mourning was a solemn time, during which no one joked about, or expressed anger, nor any other strong emotion save sorrow. The family fasted for the entire four or seven days, and the women neglected their dress and their hair adornments in order to look the more aggrieved. At the conclusion of this interval the priest came to conduct the burial of the body. The deceased was buried facing east towards the rising sun. The Cherokees accorded beloved men the honor of being buried in the town house, under the seat in which they were accustomed to sit in council. Others were interred under their houses, most commonly directly beneath the place where they died.⁷⁴ Archaeological investigation shows that men not buried in the town house were often buried in small cemeteries near the houses rather than directly under them as was the case for many women and children. This may be because the matrilineal and matrilocal system of Cherokee marriage gave possession of the house to the wife and her clan, so men may have been buried instead in plots belonging to their own clan holdings.⁷⁵

Death was another anomalous event in Cherokee belief patterns, and as such it was polluting. After the burial, the mourners and their house needed to undergo ritual purification. A priest gathered all food and furniture, as well as any belongings of the dead not buried with him (while that practice was still in use), from the house, and burned them. He set a purifying fire on the hearth and boiled a sort of medicinal herbal tea for the family to drink and anoint themselves. They then washed in the river, plunging in seven times, after which they let their old clothes

⁷³ Butrick says both in his notes, possibly contradicting himself. Both 4 and 7 were important numbers in Cherokee religion though, so there may have been conditions in which one or the other was true, as also happened with the ceremony of purifying and naming a newborn infant.

⁷⁴ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 184.

⁷⁵ Lynne Sullivan and Christopher Rodning, "Residential Burial, Gender Roles, and Political Development in Late Prehistoric and Early Cherokee Cultures of the Southern Appalachians," *Archeological papers of the american anthropological association* 20, no. 1 (2011), 89.

wash away before returning to the town in new clean apparel. The priest then performed a divination sacrifice, and afterwards the family prepared food and the whole community joined them at the town house for a “consolation feast.”⁷⁶

Although they were fairly elaborate, Cherokee funerary ways were not very visible to colonists. The details given here are supplied by particularly astute observers, but others were not so perceptive. Timberlake, for example, wrote that, “They seldom bury their dead, but throw them into the river.”⁷⁷ He was entirely wrong, so perhaps they kept this intimate part of their ceremonial life away from prying colonial eyes. A long time Indian trader reported that, “they will not associate with us, when we are burying any of our people, who die in their land: and they are unwilling we should join with them while they are performing this kindred duty to theirs.”⁷⁸ This notwithstanding, as seen with the burial of grave goods, there was acculturation between colonial and Cherokee death ways. Another instance was the practice of bundle burials, in which Cherokees would disinter the bones of their relatives and take them to a new burial site when they relocated their towns, thus carrying their ancestors with them. This custom was also abandoned after long contact with the colonists.⁷⁹

Wealth Ways

Although colonial trade introduced a new element of consumerism to Cherokee society, the level of materialism in native culture remained comparatively low. Cherokee ideas about wealth and the accumulation of possessions followed a different script from the European model. The communal basis of their jural townships made the wellbeing of every member a more visible

⁷⁶ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 229-230.

⁷⁷ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 67.

⁷⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 181.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

and thus higher priority, and thus personal enrichment was rarely elevated. This is not to say that they lacked the greedy among them, but the cultural context and value system they held made possessions of less value. Their ethos of material goods was functionalist, valuing things as far as they were immediately useful and deeming them worthless if they were not. A parallel they drew from nature illustrates this principle; something of a metaphor recorded by James Adair,

They say, they have often seen a panther in the woods, with a brace of large fat bucks at once, near a cool stream; but that they had more sense than to value the beast, on account of his large possessions: on the contrary, they hated his bad principles, because he would needlessly destroy, and covetously engross, the good things he could not use himself, nor would allow any other creature to share of, though ever so much pinched with hunger.⁸⁰

High hospitality was instead the rule, and nearly every foreign visitor commented on the generosity with which they were received. The custom was to freely provide food and rest, as well as good and attentive company, to all who journeyed through. William Bartram⁸¹ was so moved by their treatment of him that he fairly broke out in verse in his description, “O divine simplicity and truth, friendship without fallacy or guile, hospitality disinterested, native, undefiled, unmodified by artificial refinements!”⁸² This free sharing, especially of food, was not limited to strangers. The structure of their communities made providing for the poor among them a matter simply taken for granted rather than a remarkable charity. It was said of them that “the expression, I have only enough for myself, and none to share, is unknown to the Cherokee among each other.”⁸³

Even in cases where Cherokees expected to gain something, such as when warriors went north to Virginia at the request of the governor to lend military aid early in the French and Indian

⁸⁰ Ibid., 431.

⁸¹ Bartram was a botanist who traveled extensively through the colonies recording his experiences. He visited the Cherokees not long after the Anglo-Cherokee war, and wrote about their way of living in his journal, which was later published.

⁸² Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, 284.

⁸³ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 102.

War, they freely shared their goods with each other. Because the expedition took them away from their usual winter hunt, and they were essentially acting as hired mercenaries, Virginia provided “war presents” to the warriors who helped them defend their borders. They did not only share their bounty with each other, but also with the colonial soldiers who fought beside them. It must be noted that this was not an extraordinary show of virtue, but rather a general behavior based on what they assumed was the universally accepted and normal conduct. It carried with it the expectation of reciprocity; some colonial soldiers reported that Cherokees would help themselves to meat from game the soldiers had killed without even asking permission.⁸⁴

Another common metric of wealth to Euro-Americans was land. With headrights and land speculators running wild, acres joined hogsheads and pounds sterling as a measure of success. To the Cherokee however, land was not, and had never been, at a premium. In fact, land ownership was practically an alien concept to them. The major tribes had their territory, and occasional disputes over hunting rights in areas, but nothing like the real estate system of Europe ever developed. Some farm plots and the locations of houses might be said to have been “owned” by the women who lived and tended crops there, but this was a matter of convenience rather than legality; it never resolved into a state of crisis requiring strict private property rules to be created. Indians would not have said they owned the land, but that they were using it at the moment. This also impacted their “land sales,” which were not understood by Cherokee negotiators as the permanent transfers Euro-Americans understood them to be.⁸⁵

A focus on material goods and land is thus something of a distraction. Just because Cherokees were free with their possessions and placed little value on them beyond necessity does not mean that they had no concept of wealth. Instead, one must look to social connections and

⁸⁴ David Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier: Conflict and Survival, 1740-1762* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 66-67.

⁸⁵ Wahnenuhi, "The Wahnenuhi Manuscript," 194

honorary status as the currency of Cherokee wealth. Warriors, for example, were extremely jealous of their reputations and what a colonial elite might have called his *honor*. Rather than accumulating material goods, they accumulated war names, which conferred recognition and status. Here again, one can see the ethos of personal growth and achievement at play.⁸⁶ Also of value were social and kinship connections. In fact, it is in this area that Cherokee and colonial concepts of wealth intersected, albeit at opposite ends. Debt, which was the reverse of wealth to a colonist, could be seen as a valuable *connection* conferring shared interests and even friendship to a Cherokee. The nature of an ongoing transaction itself, regardless of who was debtor or creditor, was deemed a boon; it represented the creation of a relationship valuable for its inclusive utility.⁸⁷ Over time, the actual terms of the original agreement were even felt to be inconsequential as the relationship was now the main thing. In fact, the phrase “an old debt” was even a Cherokee idiom for “nothing.”⁸⁸ A parallel from modern society might be the maxim that “it’s not what you know, but who you know,” and the idea of the value of networking in a business environment.

An interesting example of this concept occurred in the run up to the French and Indian War, when Cherokee head men petitioned to colonial authorities to build garrisoned forts in their territory. There was the *prima facie* military application of the forts as a protection against enemies, but a second value placed on them was equally important, that they represented a permanent connection with mutual relational value. The overhill town of Chota desired *two* forts for this reason, one built by Virginia and the other by South Carolina.⁸⁹ A single fort, jointly built, would have served the military purpose just as well, and perhaps even better, but separate

⁸⁶ Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West*, 1838, 168; Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths : Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 133-134; Longe, "A Small Postscript," 46.

⁸⁷ Hatley, *The Dividing Paths : Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution*, 208.

⁸⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 429.

⁸⁹ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: 1754-1765*, 132-133.

forts emphasized multiple connections. Chota, in line with the Cherokee concept of wealth, was accumulating valuable relationships.

Cultural friction caused by the drastically different concepts of wealth held by Cherokees and colonists occurred largely on the Cherokee side. Both parties evaluated each other using their own standards, with opposite results. Colonists saw native generosity as remarkable deviations from the normal, while in reality it was simply common practice. They thus viewed Cherokee wealth ways favorably, seeing them as uncommonly, if perhaps naively, generous. The Cherokees, on the other hand, did not understand the cultural priorities of colonial wealth ways, and considered their white neighbors' comparatively large stores of personal possessions to be a sign of greed and poor virtue. Adair recorded the general feeling they had, which is far from flattering,

They frequently tell us, that though we are possessed of a great deal of yellow and white stone, of black people, horses, cows, hogs, and every thing else our hearts delight in -- yet they create us as much toil and pain, as if we had none, instead of that ease and pleasure, which flow from enjoyment; therefore we are truly poor, and deserve pity instead of envy: they wish some of their honest warriors to have these things, as they would know how to use them aright, without placing their happiness, or merit, in keeping them, which would be of great service to the poor, by diffusing them with a liberal hand.⁹⁰

This caricature became cemented into the Cherokee idea of what a white man represented, and surely contributed to deteriorating relations. On the colonial side, the generous Cherokee would not have been derided for their greed except by the meanest of rogues, but Cherokee pridefulness was certainly noted and resented at times. This was what really represented the flip side of Cherokee greed, greed for status and acknowledgment, but colonists would not have recognized it as the wealth issue it truly was.

⁹⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 431.

In this way, misunderstandings between Cherokee and colonial ideas of wealth and value caused friction and animosity. There were two levels to the confusion, the first being that neither side fully comprehended what the other believed, and the second that those beliefs contradicted each other. The underlying conflict could easily result in unintended slights as well as fundamental disagreement. Change could occur, but core beliefs were resilient. Cherokees did come to value trade goods to a greater degree, and some colonists learned to value native respect, but foundational cultural values served as anchors so that the shift was both slow and limited in extent.

Just as Cherokees might be convinced that giant frogs were not in fact trying to eat the Sun, yet still believe that the universe was such that the idea was far from ridiculous, they could also grow to value material goods more greatly, but would never value them above status and glory. Colonial cultural patterns acted the same. Over time it became of some value to be honored in Cherokee country, yet when gold was discovered there in 1830, desire to possess it overshadowed any thought of retaining native respect.⁹¹ This sort of “half way” cultural conformation characterized eighteenth century Indian acculturation, and reveals the great significance of basic beliefs. As long as deep foundational ideas were at odds, superficial changes meant little in the long run. Accommodation to foreign folk ways only went so far, and was often at a surface level which easily disintegrated under pressure.

⁹¹ Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West*, 1838, 490.

Chapter Two A Man's World, or a Petticoat Government? Questions of Structural Culture

Contemporary wisdom among eighteenth century colonists held to two utterly conflicting views about how Cherokees managed their families and households. According to one popular sentiment, the men treated their women like slaves, forcing them to do all the hard labor of tilling the fields, cooking the food, and pretty much every other tedious chore, all the while lazing around enjoying their own days in endless leisure.¹ Up against this was the equally prominent idea that Cherokee men suffered under a “petticoat government,” in which women dominated their husbands with promiscuity and even physical beatings.² In truth, neither of these extremes were the case. European colonists simply did not understand Cherokee cultural structures, and misapplied what they saw in Cherokee country to their *own* structures instead.

Thus, these structures are important to understand. With the basic beliefs in chapter one as a foundation, Cherokees then organized their society along lines which were consistent with those ideas, and which optimized their lives according to those presuppositions. Their governmental systems, kinship ways, etc. make up the second tier of Cherokee culture. These are the institutions which were not always immediately apparent to casual observation, but came into view after sustained analysis by contemporaries who lived among them. As illustrated by the confusion about the state of Cherokee gender relations, colonial and Indian structures did not match up any more than their basic beliefs did. Colonists saw Cherokee women doing the agriculture work, and mistakenly thought that they were mistreated because that was the kind of hard labor *European men* were expected to do. They also saw women with far more liberties

¹ John Payne and Daniel Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 22.

² James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1775), 146; Alexander Longe, "A Small Postscript," in *Southern Indian Studies*, ed. David Corkran (1969), 30.

than their own wives enjoyed under European style patriarchal structures, and so the conflicting myth of the “petticoat government” was born. The same kind of confusion occurred across the board with these social structures, and many of them contributed to the deterioration of Anglo-Cherokee relations.

Social Organization Ways

In many ways Cherokee culture was a product of its physical environment. Centered in the Blue Ridge and Smokey Mountain chains of the southern Appalachia, the Cherokees occupied some of the most defensible territory in the region. It has been noted that mountain based cultures often defy outside domination and develop non-centralized, highly egalitarian social structures. Fernand Braudel pointed out this strong predilection in his magisterial work on the Mediterranean world,³ and such is certainly the case with the Cherokees. The rough terrain of the highlands they inhabited gave some measure of security as well as creating the conditions for a highly decentralized system of regional and township autonomy. In the eighteenth century there were four distinct regional bases of Cherokee society, divided along geographically dictated lines. The lower, middle, valley, and overhill town regions comprised the core of populated Cherokee land, though they claimed much larger swaths of territory around those areas as hunting grounds. These four regions of towns, though connected as a people, carried important distinctions. Diplomatically, they faced challenges from different directions. The lower towns, for instance, faced their most consistent military threat from the nearby Creek Indians, while the overhill towns were more concerned with aggressors from the north, such as the Iroquois. Regions rarely, if ever, joined together to face these challenges, tending instead to

³ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 34-35.

deal with them individually. When European trade became a major concern for the tribe, regions found themselves rivals for trade goods, and political prestige often went hand in hand with the ability to secure sufficient access to merchants. Distance and travel time between regions even caused divergent dialects to develop, so that a Cherokee might have been identifiable by his home region or even hometown.

In fact, decentralization extended beyond the tribe as a whole to apply to regions as well. While towns within a region may have shared more with each other than with those from the outside, they were far from cohesive units. They did not always act in concert, and individual towns usually acted independently of the rest. This is particularly clear in the case of warfare, in which each town tended to have its own war leader and would choose when and where to go to war without need of consulting any regional or national authority. Such an authority, in fact, was nearly non-existent. Each town grew its own crops, hunted its own meat, performed its own religious ceremonies, and chose its own leadership. They tended not to sprawl, but were composed of homes and buildings closely nucleated for defense.⁴

Average towns had populations of 350-600 people, and were usually linked to smaller settlements nearby. People living in smaller settlements usually did so in order to be in closer proximity to resources, but they remained functionally a part of the nearest town. A Cherokee's town was one of the most important defining features of his identity, and many used it as a marker in their dealings with outsiders, such as identification on official documents. Sometimes someone would relocate from the town of his birth to a new area, often through marriage, in which case he became affiliated with both. Skiagunta, for example, addressed the governor of South Carolina on behalf of his people and emphasized that he once was a warrior of Keowee

⁴ Tyler Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation : Town, Region, and Nation among Eighteenth-Century Cherokees* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 11.

but now lived at the Sugar Town. As such, he was qualified to speak with authority on events pertaining to both those towns.⁵

Despite the transitive nature of town affiliation demonstrated by Skiagunta and others, town identity was tied to its own unique community rather than to its location. In fact, towns were known to periodically move from one place to another, probably in reaction to farmland yielding less over time as it was continually used. The defining feature of a town was its town house, a large structure in which the community would regularly meet in council to make decisions of local importance. The presence or absence of a townhouse was what differentiated a town from a minor settlement, and those smaller settlements always affiliated with the nearest town in matters of council and polity. The town council, a gathering of all the town members organized along clan lines and guided by the beloved men and high priest, made up the chief component of Cherokee town polity.

Clan sections made up the factions of the town, advocating for their own interests in council. The elders seem to have assumed the role of leaders and mediators, keeping the young men in line and also to some degree divorcing themselves from clan affiliation in order to make up a body which put town needs as a whole above family interests. The historical record is quite clear that the council was not a coercive body; open conflict was ideally avoided and the goal was to achieve consensus. Clan sections deliberated independently on issues, and after coming to initial positions their beloved men would then assemble as the “body of elders” to communicate inter-clan sentiments and themselves deliberate before reporting back to the clan sections. This cycle could repeat many times until a mutual accord emerged. Parties that would not accede to

⁵ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: May 21, 1750 - August 7, 1754*, ed. William McDowell (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 163. Both Keowee and Sugar Town were nearby present day Salem, South Carolina. The site of Keowee is now submerged under a lake formed by the damming of Keowee River during the twentieth century.

the consensus, however, were not forced into submission. Dissenters were expected to withdraw but were also free to do as they liked, unconstrained by any decisions made in council.⁶

One intriguing case which highlights the distinct character of townships as communal rather than local entities is that of Great Tellico and Chatuga. These two overhill towns existed so close to each other as to be not merely side by side, but actually intermingled, the homes of each intermixing so that the whole area appeared as one town. Nevertheless, the two each had their own townhouses and every person knew which town he was affiliated with. In 1756 Tellico made overtures of peace to the French against the current English alliance, and agreed to the French proposal that they relocate westward and receive French trade and presents. Although the issue affected everyone in the area, the two towns met separately about the matter, and came to differing conclusions. Tellico residents chose to move, while those of Chatuga all remained and continued their intercourse with the English. Despite long being the closest of neighbors, the two towns retained their distinct communal characteristics and autonomy.⁷

This lack of centralized authority was a major source of frustration for the English colonialists who attempted to make the Cherokees into a lucrative and useful trade and war partner. Dealing with such a politically separated group was particularly alien to the elites of Carolina and Virginia, coming from their highly hierarchical and national backgrounds in Caribbean plantation society and England's cavalier culture. In fact, early diplomatic efforts in Cherokee country were focused on creating a more European style government structure there with a single "king" who the rest of the nation would obey. Colonel George Chicken, for example, made an extensive journey through the region in 1725 concerning regulation of trade.

⁶ Fred Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," *American Anthropological Association* 64, no. 5 (1962), 39.

⁷ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: 1754-1765*, ed. William McDowell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 302-303.

At that time the English had persuaded the Cherokees to accede to following two such “kings,” one based overhills, and the other in the lower towns. Chicken found it very difficult, however, to get them to assemble in one place for his conference and was frustrated by the apparent lack of authoritarian order. At the lower town of Nocochee he informed them that “as Crow was their King and made by them and Approved off by the English, that [Chicken] Expected they would look upon him as such, otherwise they would be no people, and that the head men in all their Towns would take care to keep their Young Men under them and make them obey them in everything.”⁸

In 1730 the eccentric Scotsman Alexander Cuming set out into Cherokee country with ambitious designs. He was not a man for doing small things, and his audacious manner of charisma worked equally well on American Indians as on the elites of Charlestown. In his journal, Cuming noted that at that time the Cherokees had seven mother towns with elected kings, and many towns had “princes” besides. He wrote that each town also had a head warrior who often had greater power than the king. Cuming traveled among them, and charmed them immensely. At Keowee and again at Nequassee he gave a “big talk,” and convinced or overawed the Cherokees into making Moytoy of Tellico their emperor with unlimited power. Perhaps more impressively, they also pledged their submission to Cuming and to King George II. Interpreters and traders who witnessed the spectacle could hardly believe their eyes, and admitted that if they had known the demands Cuming was to make of the Cherokees beforehand, they would not have attended, expecting the proud warriors to turn to murder rather than relinquish any of their freedoms.⁹

⁸ George Chicken, "Journal of Colonel George Chicken's Mission from Charlestown," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Mereness (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 109.

⁹ Alexander Cuming, "Journal of Sir Alexander Cuming," in *Early Travels in Tennessee Country*, ed. Samuel Williams (Johnson City: The watauga Press, 1928), 129-132.

There are two points attending Cuming's seemingly overwhelming success which act as mitigating factors. First, Cuming himself records that according to Moytoy, the Cherokees were *already* planning to make him "emperor" before the Scotsman's visit. While this could have been simple grandstanding by the warrior of Tellico, it could equally be that the Cherokees were making moves of their own to streamline colonial trade relations by having a common representative. Second, the "unlimited power" of the emperor and total submission to England never actually materialized. Cuming, for all his success, was acting as a free agent without official directives, and the Crown seems never to have intended pressing suzerainty on the Indians. Nevertheless, this episode was the first step in the Cherokee people beginning a process of coalescing into a more "national" form, but it would be a long process.

The role of emperor proved to be less about rulership than traditionally held by the European conception, and more one of mediator between the English and the Cherokee people. There is little historical data on the details of how the Cherokee emperorship was organized or operated, but it persisted for around twenty years. During that time a number of incidents occurred which necessitated the emperor's intervention to smooth relations. In 1734 and again in 1746 violent altercations between Cherokees and English traders resulted in diplomatic tensions and the stoppage of trade. Although individual Cherokees of individual towns perpetrated the offending actions, it was the whole of the Cherokee people which suffered the trade embargoes with which South Carolina responded. Because the English were treating them corporately, the Cherokees began to feel the need more than ever for a centralized mediator as well as a method of control so that single troublemakers acting independently could not cause problems for the whole tribe. During the period of the emperorship Moytoy, and his son Amouskositte after his

death, managed to successfully diffuse several of these diplomatic incidents.¹⁰ Although this was the case, it must not have suited the Cherokees liking because in the early 1750's Amouskositte's influence waned and the position of emperor became overshadowed by a new political force based in the overhill town of Chota and its chief beloved old man named Old Hop.¹¹

The shift in diplomatic representation from Great Tellico to Chota began a second phase of the Cherokee people's nucleation. Old Hop did not assume the mantle of emperor which Moytoy and Amouskositte had been handed by Cuming; in fact for a brief time the two towns vied for influence over the nation. According to Fred Gearing, the emperorship had operated with an amorphous structure modeled on the native war party ways, while Old Hop's ascendancy marked a change to diplomacy based on the priest-centered town council tradition.¹² Tribal councils representing all of the towns as a whole began to be held in which issues important to the still forming "Cherokee nation" would be discussed. In keeping with the egalitarian nature of the Cherokee culture, any members of a Cherokee village were free to attend the council, along with the village priest and other elders who went to Chota for the meetings. The political challenges facing the Cherokees were complex. Many of their towns were at war with the Creeks to the south,¹³ both the English and French were courting their military allegiance in the Seven Years War, and Carolina settlements close to the Cherokee border sparked tensions as they encroached on hunting grounds. Like the town councils after which it was modeled, the tribal council headed by Old Hop had no actual authoritarian power, relying instead on consensus and persuasion for results. Old Hop was not able to speak for the council without its input, so colonial officials were often obligated to wait for the chief men to be assembled rather than

¹⁰ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: May 21, 1750 - August 7, 1754*, 189-196.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 434, 486.

¹² Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 89.

¹³ The Creek (or Muscogee) Indians inhabited a large portion of territory south of Cherokee country, including land in present day Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama.

simply receiving decisive answers from one ruler.¹⁴ This set the stage for a major incident with enormous impact on Cherokee-Anglo relations and the evolution of Cherokee polity.

In 1758 large numbers of Cherokee warriors went north at the behest of Virginia to assist them in operations against the French and their Indian allies. Things were mutually frustrating, as the Cherokee did not understand the colonial way of war, and the Virginians poorly handled war presents to the warriors and diplomacy in general. On their way home, tensions came to a head and conflict erupted between them and some Virginian settlers. Several Cherokees were killed, and the rest returned to their villages, grieved and outraged. In retaliation, several lower towns sent raiding parties to exact vengeance from the English colonies, killing settlers in both Virginia and Carolina. Although such retaliation was in accordance with the Cherokee way for dealing with such matters, colonial officials saw it as an unlawful escalation to massacre. Governor Lyttleton of South Carolina demanded that Old Hop and the tribal council turn over the offending raiders to the colony for prosecution. This presented a major problem, because although the council certainly wanted no conflict with the English and would have preferred to acquiesce to their request, it did not have the coercive power to do so. The Cherokee raiders were unwilling to voluntarily turn themselves over, and so Lyttleton seized the Cherokee's diplomatic delegation and held them hostage in order to force the tribe to submit. The incident exploded into a full scale conflict, the Anglo-Cherokee War, which lasted for two years and ended with a Cherokee surrender after two devastating campaigns by the British army in which entire towns and their crops were burned and countless villagers starved out.

The failure of the tribal council to prevent the Anglo-Cherokee war revealed the weakness of its structure. It was apparent that in order to forestall such incidents there needed to be some measure of control over the actions of individual war parties from the many independent

¹⁴ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: May 21, 1750 - August 7, 1754*, 38.

towns. In order to facilitate this, the council adapted and integrated a new “warrior arm” into its organization. Formerly the beloved old men who made up the tribal elders were chosen without regard for their past war experience, but after the Anglo-Cherokee War each town made sure that a prominent ex-warrior was included in their delegation so that their warriors would be properly represented. These old and famous warriors, moreover, no longer sat as simply a part of their town’s delegation, but formed a separate part of the council with a tribal war chief at their head. Between 1761 and 1768 Oconostota, known as the “great warrior” even became head of the council. In the period from the Anglo-Cherokee War until the American Revolution the warrior class practiced a degree of control over the people, keeping troublemakers from inciting any major diplomatic incidents.

The American Revolution acted as a catalyst for change, and mounting tensions from the younger and more headstrong warriors, which had been kept under control by the council, broke out.¹⁵ Little Carpenter and Dragging Canoe, father and son, made up a visible expression of what became a continuum between appeasement and aggression. Little Carpenter was an old statesman who had seen his tribe greatly reduced over a lifetime and was fully cognizant of the dangers of direct confrontation with the colonies. Dragging Canoe, on the other hand, eagerly took up the tomahawk against the Cherokees’ white neighbors when given the opportunity. At first he did so as war chief of the Cherokee tribe as allies of the British in the war, but after the American forces took out their wrath on Cherokee lands the council decided to make peace, and Dragging Canoe refused to comply. In keeping with the Cherokee ethos of individual autonomy, he led whoever would follow him away. A sizeable portion of the population, including the

¹⁵ The Revolution was not the cause of the disruption, but merely an accelerant. Earlier indications were seen, particularly the outrage of Dragging Canoe and other young warriors at the Henderson purchase in March of 1775. See John Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West, 1838* (Kingsport: Southern Publishers, 1938), 13.

majority of young warriors, went with him to the south and established a new group of Cherokee towns named *Chickamauga* after the creek where they settled.¹⁶ From there he continued to wage war against the white settlers, particularly those who were encroaching on ancestral Cherokee hunting grounds. This split represented a large step backwards in the nucleation of Cherokee comity.

The final phase of Cherokee social evolution before the Trail of Tears debacle was heralded by the eventual subjugation of the Chickamaugas at the hands of American back country forces. This precipitated the Cherokee nation's turn to accept the "civilizing" efforts of the United States in an effort to become more acceptable to their dominant neighbors and prevent further erosion of their lands and rights. They reluctantly abandoned their traditional lifestyle for the hard and laborious farming economy imported from Europe. Washington sent ploughs, spinning wheels, and other implements of the Western domicile for their use, and missionary schools sprouted in order to convert them religiously and culturally. The effects were far more successful than might be expected; Cherokee society began to transform, and plenty of Cherokee plantations in the early nineteenth century resembled Anglo-American ones in nearly every way. It was, however, too little too late. Anti-Indian prejudice was already firmly ingrained in American frontier society; full removal of the Cherokees, no matter how "civilized" they had become, was the ultimate result. The path of cultural adaptation and appeasement might have worked had it been adopted earlier, or if cooler heads than the likes of Andrew Jackson had prevailed at critical junctures, but it is impossible to know.

¹⁶ This is near Chattanooga, Tennessee. The well known Civil War battle of Chickamauga also occurred nearby, and is called after the name of the creek.

Family Ways

If geography and strong town identity acted to keep the Cherokee towns and regions from centralizing, it was the familial bonds of their clan system that held them together as one people. Like most of the other southeastern Indian tribes, the Cherokees followed a matrilineal clan arrangement which, on the whole, Europeans did not understand or even investigate until long after the American Revolution. Because a Cherokee belonged to the clan of his mother, not his father, his greatest family loyalty always held to that clan. His father and father's family may have been close, but matrilineal clan membership was the basis of Cherokee social structure and even legal matters. Men often lived in the households of their wives, but their clan loyalties remained unchanged. Children were raised by their mothers, and traditionally their closest familial authorities were their maternal uncles and aunts. Timberlake noted this maternal priority in particular as it applied to the children of English soldiers garrisoned at forts in Cherokee country and local women, saying, "When they part, the children go with, and are provided for, by the mother."¹⁷ A Cherokee's mother's brother was the traditional mentor and disciplinarian, filling many of the roles played by a father in Western patrilineal family structures. This divergence in cultural standards may have contributed to the misunderstanding of the father-son relationship as a political metaphor in diplomatic proceedings. As they sought to assume a more liege-like role over the Cherokees, the English shifted from calling themselves "brother" to "father" in their dealings with the Cherokees.¹⁸ The intended message might have been better communicated had they used "mother's brother" instead.

¹⁷ Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake* (Cherokee: Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, 2007), 35.

¹⁸ For more detail on kinship metaphors used in Indian diplomacy, see Nancy Shoemaker, "An Alliance between Men: Gender Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi," *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 2 (1999).

The clans acted as social glue, binding together the otherwise disparate regions and towns because every town had some people from all seven clans living there. Everywhere a Cherokee might go in Cherokee country he would find members of his clan family, and he had the right to live among them as kin. This trend was so obvious that although he did not fully grasp the matrilineal clan system, Daniel Butrick commented on it, noting, “Family connexions generally settle together, so that it frequently occurs that a whole settlement is made up of near relatives.”¹⁹ The clan system supplied much more than a sense of belonging and support, it was the basis of Cherokee society itself. Someone who was a part of a clan derived from that their importance and legitimacy as a part of society. This is reflected in the Cherokee’s own name for themselves, *Ani-yun-wiya*, which translates to “the real people.” The clans supplied much of the structure traditionally filled by governments. For instance, if one Cherokee were to murder another there was no central authority to which he must answer, but the victim’s clan would be sure to exact vengeance. Someone outside of the system simply had no rights or protections. Outsiders could be incorporated into the system through ritual adoption, oftentimes by taking war prisoners to replenish lost population. There was a sharp distinction, however, between war captives who were incorporated and those who were not. Captives chosen for adoption acquired all the rights and privileges of tribal membership, becoming fully incorporated into the kin group, while other, less fortunate captives, were relegated to the role of slaves. They had no rights, even the fundamental right to life; any infraction was reason enough for a clan member to end their lives:

When a Shawnee captive refused to accompany his Cherokee master Black Dog, he was killed immediately with a tomahawk. Black Dog did not act out of wanton cruelty but rather from the fact that his slave did not possess the right to live. The captive who was not adopted, the *atsi nahsa’i*, simply existed outside the kinship system from which one’s personal and legal rights stemmed. Consequently the

¹⁹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 180.

atsi nahsa'i faced a painfully uncertain future with his continued existence depending solely on his master's protection and good will.²⁰

The extended family of the clan system thus accorded a Cherokee his status as a member of society as a whole.

Another area where the English patrilineal and Cherokee matrilineal systems caused confusion occurred with children of mixed parentage. Almost always these were the result of white traders or frontiersmen coupling with Cherokee women. These Cherokee, in keeping with their system of kinship, considered these children to be full members of their people, while the colonists expected them to be loyal to their father's country. In most cases this did not present much occasion for problems, as the European denigration of bastards (as they were often considered) did not accord them much social importance. A few cases did arise however, when the Cherokees wished to assign or sell land to these individuals and the English interpreted the act as violating proclamations against private purchase of Indian land. Both Alexander Cameron and Richard Pearis, for example, were the recipients of large tracts of land from the Cherokee leadership. Both men were traders and the fathers of Métis Cherokee children, and the land gifts were probably intended to create a buffer territory owned by Cherokee families which were equally respected by whites, thus preempting further colonial encroachments. Colonial officials did not consider the gifts legitimate, perceiving them as an attempt at the Indians relieving debts to the traders through land rather than skins; they failed to realize that the children these men had by Cherokee mothers tied them closely into the kinship system. People of mixed parentage could find it a double edged sword, granting a high degree of intercultural fluidity while at the same time being pulled in two directions at once and never truly belonging in either camp.

²⁰ Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 12.

Marriage Ways

Matrimony proves to be a very difficult concept to nail down in eighteenth century Cherokee culture. Western ideas of a solemn contract with spiritual and even political significance simply did not apply. James Adair recorded that the Cherokees freely wed and divorced in a fluid manner: “their marriages are ill observed, and of a short continuance; like the Amazons they divorce their fighting bed-fellows at their pleasure, and fail not to execute their authority, when their fancy directs them to a more agreeable choice.”²¹ The union between man and wife seems to have been impermanent and merely for convenience. Indeed, divorce seems to have been so easy and free of consequences because marriage itself supplied very few meaningful ties. Neither man nor woman changed clan allegiance because of marriage, and any attachment that children retained to their fathers was purely sentimental. A man might provide for his wife and children, but then again he might not; there was no contractual obligation involved. Missionaries in the early nineteenth century wrote that marriage “was formerly but little known. The Cherokee once took as many wives as he pleased but did not support them or have command of the children.”²²

The question of *who* one could marry was a function of clan. Incestuous unions were avoided by a prohibition from marrying within a Cherokee’s own clan or the clan of their father. With seven clans making up the Cherokee people, this meant that there were five clans to which any Cherokee could look for a mate. It is worth noting that because of how the clan system worked, marriage between a man and his father’s daughter by another wife of a different clan would be allowed; they were not reckoned clan relatives. There *were* favored clans into which a Cherokee might marry, those being the clans of his maternal and paternal grandfathers. Man

²¹ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 182.

²² Ann Paine, quoted in Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 174.

referred to all females from these clans as their “grandmothers.” Social conventions made Cherokees related in this manner particularly close and socially unrestrained, such that it could often lead from relaxation and carousing to a sexual relationship or marriage.²³

The Cherokee marriage ceremony in which the groom presented a piece of venison to his bride, and she an ear of corn to him as pledge that they would supply food for the family may point to an incongruity with what the missionaries recorded. It is worth noting, however, that this was only one of several Cherokee marriage ceremonies observed by whites; the historian John Reid believes that western visitors expected to find an “official” and solemn marriage ceremony similar to those in their own culture, and observing a number of incidental practices simply saw what they expected to see. Lieutenant Henry Timberlake, who traveled among the Cherokee towns in 1761 and 1762, corroborates this opinion,

There is no kind of rites or ceremonies at marriage, courtship and all being, as I have already observed, concluded in half an hour, without any other celebration, and it is as little binding as ceremonious; for though many last till death, especially when there are children, it is common for a person to change three or four times a-year.²⁴

Nonetheless, hunting for meat was the task of men, and tending the cornfields that of women, and it is likely that husbands and wives did provide for each other, though it was not strictly required of them by marriage. In an extreme example, the Cherokee wives of English soldiers under siege in Fort Loudoun during the Anglo-Cherokee War defied the war leaders of their own town to supply their white husbands with food during the crisis.²⁵ William Butrick reported that a Cherokee warrior, on returning from war, “delivered his spoil to his wife, or nearest female

²³ Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knocksville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 193.

²⁴ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 35.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

relative, who took it home, while warriors continued their march to the council house.”²⁶ This at least hints at shared provisioning.

Cherokee marriage was matrilocal, with husbands usually making their home in the abode of the wife. Women owned the house, and in the case of divorce retained it. Oftentimes if a man moved from one town to another, as was the case with Skiagunta, it was as a result of marrying a woman from another area. Because men spent much of the year abroad hunting or at war, however, “home” outside of town affiliation was less of a defining part of their identity. Such regular absences may have accounted for the fluidity of marriage and divorce; Adair noted a striking lack of emotional attachment, or at least emotional display, between Indian spouses after being long parted:

If the husband has been a year absent on a visit to another nation, and should by chance overtake his wife near home, with one of his children skipping along side of her; instead of those sudden and strong emotions of joy that naturally arise in two generous breasts at such an unexpected meeting, the self-interested pair go along as utter strangers, without seeming to take the least notice of one another, till a considerable time after they get home.²⁷

Cherokee custom also allowed for polygamy, though by most accounts it was not particularly common. When it did occur, the matrilocal character of Cherokee marriage made it likely that it would be a case of sororal polygyny, the union of one man to two or more sisters who often lived together. Adair even reports that they did not scruple against marrying a woman and her daughter by another man at the same time.²⁸ Plural wives may have been a rarity due to the difficulty in providing for them as Charles Hudson suggests,²⁹ though as noted such provision was not necessarily a husband’s strict marital duty. Perhaps more likely is that the

²⁶ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 24.

²⁷ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 144.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁹ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 199.

common irregularity of permanent marriage and the general sexual permissiveness of Cherokee society simply made polygamy unnecessary and more of a hassle than not.

If marriages were often of short duration and affection not always enduring, it does not mean that such was the ideal towards which Cherokee lovers strove. As quoted by Timberlake above, a good number of couples stayed attached until death. Affection formed the basis of Cherokee marriage, as opposed to contractual duty which ruled over unions of the European sort. This is no more apparent than when Adair relates the reaction of an Indian beloved man to hearing about a white man being fined for the crime of infidelity within an unhappy marriage. The beloved man's reply was, "as marriage should beget joy and happiness, instead of pain and misery, if a couple married blindfold, and could not love each other afterwards, it was a crime to continue together, and a virtue to part."³⁰ Certainly long and affectionate marriages did occur in Cherokee country, perhaps one of the best examples being Moytoy of Great Tellico and his wife. Upon being made the first Cherokee emperor by Alexander Cuming, Moytoy chose to remain at home nursing his ill wife rather than making the prestigious voyage overseas to London to have an audience with King George.³¹ This selfless display illustrates at least one case of ideal marital love winning out over self interest.

Sex Ways

While colonial America was far less prudish than the stereotype of the New England Puritan portrayed in popular culture, Cherokee attitudes towards sex did strike their white neighbors as far too free and promiscuous. The social egalitarianism which contributed to a less permanent tradition of marriage also resulted in a less restrained attitude towards sex in general.

³⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 432.

³¹ Cuming, "Journal of Sir Alexander Cuming," 127.

There were no constraints on fornication for either men or women. This was a cultural feature shared with most other Southeastern Indian tribes, but the Cherokee carried it even further in that they also allowed full sexual freedom to a married woman. James Adair noted that they “are an exception to all civilized or savage nations in having no laws against adultery... and allow their women full liberty to plant their brows with horns as oft as they please, without fear of punishment.”³² This was seemingly well known and even exploited by nearby tribes. In 1750 a diplomatic move by Governor Glen of South Carolina to the Creeks in an effort to make peace between them and the Cherokees found broad based support, especially among the young Creek men. In a letter to the governor, Indian trader William Sludders wrote “[T]here is no [Cherokee] law for meddling with their women... which fills all the Young Fellows Hearts with Joy.”³³ Apparently Creek men wanted peace with the Cherokees so they could indulge in affairs with married women without fear of censure and punishment.

This state of affairs was not necessarily always the case, and may not have been ubiquitously embraced, particularly by Cherokee religious leaders. In 1738 a devastating smallpox epidemic swept through Cherokee country, and the priests attributed it to the recent adulterous behavior of their young people who, “had, in a most notorious manner, violated their ancient laws of marriage in every thicket.”³⁴ Certainly the lack of laws against adultery did not mean that a scorned spouse was free from jealous emotions, and in at least one case a man’s family exacted revenge upon his wayward wife in a violent and shaming way.³⁵ The Payne-Butrick Papers record divination ceremonies performed by jealous husbands who suspected their wives of unfaithfulness. In one example, a priest released flies which, if she were guilty, would

³² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 146-147.

³³ Letter from William Sludders to James Glen, July 11, 1750, Minutes of Sept. 5, 1750, *S. C. Council Journal* [5], quoted In John Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 115.

³⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 233.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

stir, fly to her, and burrow into her body causing her to die in seven days. Butrick wryly comments that, “whether the fly received any assistance from the husband or the priest is not reported.”³⁶

Husbands were not the only ones subject to jealousy. Longe reported that oftentimes when a man took a mistress, she and his wife would have a bloody battle over him, with the victor keeping him as her mate! This could cause lifelong feuds. In Longe’s words, “If these two women were to live a thousand years in the same town, nay, next door, they never will have any communication together, nor so much as speak the one to the other.”³⁷ Besides such temporal consequences, there may have been longer reaching religious concerns about adultery as well. One Cherokee priest, when questioned about the afterlife, described a heavenly realm for the righteous dead, one qualification of which was honoring marriage, “But it is such peoples as do not steal, nor lays with other men's wives, nor tells lies, nor cause quarrels nor bloodshed...”³⁸ These suggest that though there may have been no law against promiscuity, it was still deemed a social ill and was probably not flaunted openly. Nonetheless, promiscuity did seem to be the prevailing norm in Cherokee country, at least within certain cultural bounds.

One particular social boundary involved separation of the sexes in ritual purity. Men abstained from sexual intercourse for a span before and after going to war in order to avoid having their vigor polluted by such contact. Butrick reports that after being purified by the priest in preparation for war, “none must have any further intercourse with women till the war was concluded.”³⁹ Similarly, women secluded themselves during their monthly period, as it was seen

³⁶ John Payne and Daniel Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 30-31.

³⁷ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 32.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 23.

as a time when she was particularly feminine and unsuitable to be around the men.⁴⁰ These customs reflect the Cherokee philosophy of keeping like with like and not mixing opposed elements. It was considered detestable, for example, to put out fire with water, its opposite, or to wash a carcass in the stream mixing blood and water. In the same way, the feminine and the masculine were separate natures and it was considered taboo for them to come together during a particularly masculine time (such as war or a ball play) or feminine time (such as a woman's period or childbirth).⁴¹ The Indian trader Alexander Longe reported that mothers would bar their husbands from their beds during the first year of nursing a child "for fear that it should spoil the child's milk and cause it to die."⁴² Constraints on sexual activity of this kind were stronger than those stemming from traditions of faithfulness to a marriage partner.

Cherokee sex ways were alien and alarming to white colonists. Adventurous individuals such as traders might have enjoyed the sexual liberties to be had in Cherokee country, but colonial society as a whole frowned upon the customs and feared their corrupting influence. Priber John, a French agent who planned to create an anti-English Cherokee empire based around Cherokee culture and a government of his own devising, wrote about the Cherokee social customs he planned to adopt in his nation. The English later captured him and confiscated his book, and a Georgia woman named Frederica wrote scathingly to the *South Carolina Gazette* of its revelations,

He enumerates many whimsical Priviledges and natural Rights, as he calls them, which his Citizens are to be entitled to, particularly dissolving Marriages and allowing Community of Women, and all Kinds of Licenciousness... it is extreamly wicked, yet has several Flights full of Invention; and it is a Pity so much Wit is applied to so bad Purposes.⁴³

⁴⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 125-126.

⁴¹ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 148, 260.

⁴² Longe, "A Small Postscript," 34.

⁴³ "Extract of a Letter from Frederica in Georgia.," *South Carolina Gazette*, Auguas 16, 1743 .

Over the course of the eighteenth century colonial sentiment increasingly viewed sexual immorality as a defining characteristic of Indian women. Tom Hatley documents the growing use of the appellative “squaw” as a derogatory descriptor. In the early half of the century “wench” was the preferred term, and applied to a broad base of sexually loose women without racial connotations, but as time progressed, “squaw” became a synonymous label, and all Indian women became saddled with that reputation.⁴⁴ Cherokee men were not immune either, as reflected in a satirical piece published in London during the visit of three Cherokee chiefs with Henry Timberlake which bemoaned the attraction they held for the women of the empire, “Ye Females of Britain, so wanton and witty / Who love even Monkies, and swear they are pretty / The Cherokee Indians, and stranger Shimpanzeys / By Turns, pretty Creatures, have tickl'd your Fancies...”⁴⁵

Attempts to reform the Cherokees of their “licentious savage ways” were rarely successful. One such instance concerned the marriage of a colonial gentleman to a Cherokee woman named Dark Lanthorn. In order to make her a proper and faithful wife, he gave her lengthy instruction in Christian doctrine, including a thorough questioning and catechism by an Anglican priest. They were married in both Cherokee and English traditions, and the priest proudly entered her into a list of converts in the Church at Congarees. Cultural mores did not prove so easily molded however, “afterward to his great grief, he was obliged on account of her adulteries, to erase her name from thence, and enter it anew in some of the crowded pages of female delinquents.”⁴⁶ This trend continued into the early nineteenth century which saw a concerted effort by the United States to “civilize” the Cherokees. Customs of polygamous and

⁴⁴ Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths : Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 152.

⁴⁵ Henry Howard, "A New Humorous Song, on the Cherokee Chiefs Inscribed to the Ladies of Great Britain, 1762," Collection online, London.

⁴⁶ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 130.

open relationships were too deeply entrenched to be easily abrogated by Anglo-American cultural values. Missionary endeavors to Christianize the Cherokees faced this stiff yet covert resistance with questionable results. Even highly acculturated natives, such as members of the Brainerd mission school, were apt to be suspended from Church membership on charges of prostitution or “criminal intercourse.”⁴⁷

Child Rearing Ways

In line with the Cherokee matrilineal kinship system, mothers and maternal aunts and uncles primarily raised the children. Cherokees considered childbirth and early child rearing a particularly feminine event, strictly separate from male involvement. A woman’s own mother or grandmother would typically attend her in a secluded tent and provide every needed assistance. The rare exception was a prayer or divination given by a priest in the case of a particularly hard labor, though likely from a distance.⁴⁸ New mothers remained secluded away for two to three days after giving birth, and then purified themselves in the river and rejoined the community. The child itself was carefully looked after throughout, and various omens were deemed significant. Sometimes a newborn was passed before a fire and a prayer addressed to the element on its behalf to ensure an auspicious life. Four, or sometimes seven days after birth (both ritually

⁴⁷ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 180. The Brainerd Mission was a Christian missionary school which operated in Chattanooga from 1817 until the removal of the Cherokees in the Trail of Tears.

⁴⁸ Frans Olbrechts reported in 1931 that a male practitioner was sometimes present in cases where the mother was ill or the labor was expected to otherwise be particularly difficult, though this may have been a more recent development from eighteenth century custom. Frans Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," *Anthropos* 26, (1931), 25.

significant numbers to the Cherokees), a priest took the infant and performed a ceremony in which he prayed and dipped the child seven times in a river or creek.⁴⁹

Children belonged to their mother's clan, retaining no real connection to their father's family other than for purposes of marriage (marriage into one's father's clan was prohibited to avoid incestuous relationships). Sons looked to their maternal uncles for masculine role models, and such uncles served as mentors and disciplinarians much as fathers did in Europe. This is not to say that fathers and their children shared no feelings or emotional investment, but much like marital sentiments it was not built into the kinship system. In fact, there is plenty of evidence for fatherly affection, and even cases of fathers proudly taking on their own son's names if they achieved some great honor.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, a father's part in his children's lives was relatively minor. John Haywood reported that a Cherokee mother had the right to punish her children even with death in extreme cases, while a father who killed his child, even by accident, was held liable by the mother's clan and was himself put to death for the offense.⁵¹

Some infant sons were dedicated to the priesthood, and at their very birth were attended by a priest who fed them a purifying drink before they were given to their mother to nurse. Such children lived strict lives, being watched over not only by their mothers but also by a selected older matron and the town priest who stringently kept them from any activity which might introduce ritual pollution. Such circumstances were rare from infancy, but not unheard of. More common was for such dedication to take place at around nine to ten years of age. From this point on, these acolytes were the understudies of the priest, who would often take them to some secluded place and instruct them in the mysteries, rituals, and divinations of the Cherokee

⁴⁹ James Mooney, "The Cherokee River Cult," *The Journal of American Folklore* 13, no. 48 (1900), 2; Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1* 256; Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 66.

⁵⁰ Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation*, 119.

⁵¹ John Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee* (Knoxville: Heiskell & Brown, 1823), 259.

religion. This did not seem to preclude other pastimes such as the more typical practice of hunting and going to war, but probably made for a more strenuous upbringing.⁵²

Boys and girls were treated differently from birth. Charles Hudson writes that boys were wrapped in cougar skins and their female counterparts in deer or bison, the significance being a metaphor for gender roles in courtship as men “hunted” women like a cougar might hunt a deer.⁵³ Frans Olbrechts describes the continuing activities of young children along gender lines, with little boys of four to five years of age “making their first attempts at making bows and arrows and in a few weeks become remarkable marksmen. Little girls, at just as tender an age, fall into line and assist their mother and elder sisters with the household cares.”⁵⁴ Haywood’s report of mothers being able to discipline their children with death notwithstanding, parents were, on the whole, very fond of their children and often excessively permissive in their rearing. Butrick was of the opinion that they indulged them “to a degree which often proves their ruin.”⁵⁵ The harshest punishment that was actually likely to be incurred was “scratching,” in which a small comb like implement often made of garfish teeth was drawn across the skin leaving marks while not drawing blood. This punishment may have been painful, but the real censure in it was the marks which were left. They could persist for days and perhaps even weeks, and were a visible reminder of the wrongdoing which all could see and chide the young person about.⁵⁶ Indeed, one of the foremost methods of disciplining wrongdoing among the Cherokee was to publicly and sarcastically tease the wrongdoer on the particulars of their misdeeds until they changed their ways out of sheer shame.⁵⁷

⁵² Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 109-112.

⁵³ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 322.

⁵⁴ Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," 31.

⁵⁵ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 66.

⁵⁶ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 324.

⁵⁷ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 430-431.

The general tendency towards leniency, however, was likely a result of the Cherokee affection for liberty and free spiritedness, characteristics they wanted to instill in their children, particularly their sons.⁵⁸ The men most useful to the community were strong hunters and warriors with powerful spirit and autonomy. It may have been felt that overbearing discipline would result in a subdued and therefore weak man who would be more of a liability than an asset to the town and to his clan. Instead, children were encouraged to learn by doing, and in due course to learn proper behavior by experiencing the consequences of poor behavior for themselves.

The boys specially chosen to be brought up in the priesthood faced more restrictions in an effort to keep them ritually pure. A young conjurer in training had far less contact with women, including his own mother, lest he be polluted by her monthly courses. The town's chief priest would spend many days and nights with him fasting and instructing him in the ceremonies and divinations of the people. One peculiarity was a winnowing process, wherein the priest had his young ward stare at the sun from its rising to its setting, never turning his eyes away. This was supposed to imbue the child with supernatural sight and the ability to perfectly execute any priestly duties throughout his life. It is not reported whether anyone ever actually accomplished the feat. Of paramount importance was the instruction in the use of the divining stone, offering of sacrifices, and the purifying "going to water" in which the Cherokees would plunge into the river to wash away uncleanness. Priests could have as many as seven such students, and typically bequeathed one of them with his office and his divining stone when he neared death.⁵⁹

The baseline ethos of Cherokee child rearing was intrinsically different from that of European colonists, particularly strict religious communities such as the Quakers or Puritans.

⁵⁸ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 323.

⁵⁹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 110-112.

They rooted their reluctance to enforce overbearing discipline in their beliefs about autonomy and judgment. Haywood realizes this when he writes, “They are rarely chided even in infancy, and never chastened with blows. Reason, they say, will guide their children, when they are come to the use of it, and before that time they cannot commit faults.”⁶⁰ Where they observed the most concrete limits tended to be in the area of ritual purity and other such strictures which likely would be termed “superstitious” by any outsiders looking in. Curiously this shows that Cherokee habits in this regard were as tightly tied to their religious beliefs as colonial ones, but those beliefs themselves were separated by the wide gulf between Cherokee animistic tendencies and the Christian emphasis on moral correction. Both had the ultimate purpose of rearing their children to be the best people they could be, but had different ideas of what that looked like.

One interesting manifestation of this is to compare the upbringing ways of the Virginian elite “cavaliers” with those of the Cherokee. At first glance, the two seem incredibly similar; according to David Hackett Fischer, “young Virginians at a very early age were actively encouraged to exercise their wills. Parents took pride in their youngsters’ childish acts of psychic autonomy.”⁶¹ What seems like a harmony between the two cultures, however, turns out to be the opposite; Cherokee autonomy was based in a belief in liberty and near personal sovereignty, while Virginians held to a strict social hierarchy. The purpose of the cavaliers’ indulgences was to prepare their high ranking children to exercise their wills *over the wills of their inferiors*. This sort of institutionalized coercive power was unheard of in Cherokee culture, and such disagreement on foundational philosophies could cause tensions. Virginian elites would not have approved of the “lower status savages” employing the same autonomy that they enjoyed, and Cherokees would have chafed at being looked down upon by the Virginians, who they

⁶⁰ Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, 254.

⁶¹ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 311.

considered their equals. This is just one way that the child rearing customs of the Cherokees and the colonists reflects the issues the created tensions and conflict. Differing cultural standards mattered in ways which are not always readily apparent.

The emigrants who settled closest to the Cherokees were the borderlanders, bringing a slightly different set of cultural traditions with them from the north of England. Their child rearing ways were also similar to native practice in emphasizing boldness, self-assertion, and autonomy. The aim for these colonists was not to reinforce a strict hierarchy like the Virginians, but to promote fierce honor defending fighters according to their warrior ethos. Tough, stubborn, and volatile personalities resulted from this upbringing, exemplified by men like Andrew Jackson who was known for his prowess in battle and propensity to engage in violent duels at the least provocation.⁶² The bent towards frequent violence was not tempered by the tradition of seeking harmony among men as with the Cherokee. Furthermore, the fact that both the borderlanders and the Cherokees promoted autonomy and a strong warrior tradition, yet still differed in so many other regards, made that particular similarity itself a problem. Like two alpha wolves in the same wilderness, clashes were almost inevitable. This was a frequent pattern with these two groups. Their close proximity caused both friction and acculturation, but immediate friction outweighed the potential gains of acculturation over time, and the peace was regularly shattered when tensions reached a critical mass. Such examples characterize how seemingly innocuous life ways such as child rearing could cause significant cultural friction.

Naming Ways

Cherokee onomastics, or naming practices, were more complex than the colonial name and surname method. It was more of an ongoing process, and a Cherokee Indian's name was

⁶² Ibid., 687-690.

more indicative of his actual characteristics and personal identity than names are in modern American culture. One might well be justified in rhetorically asking, like the poet, “what’s in a name?” of a European Romeo, or a John Smith. Even descriptive epithets such as Innocent, or Chastity, so popular in New England probably reflected parental aspirations more than stark reality. Cherokee naming ways were not entirely different, at first, but such a practice served as the beginning of a far more intricate process which never really ended. A Cherokee’s name might change, be supplanted, or be added to over his entire lifetime to reflect his deeds and identity.

A child’s initial name was given soon after birth, four or seven days after according to Butrick.⁶³ This probably indicates that the naming was a part of the river purification ceremony performed by the priest during those same intervals, as discussed earlier.⁶⁴ The name itself was not given by the parents, but by an elder of the community. Olbrechts reported that it was one of the prominent old women, and Longe clarifies that in the case of a male child the grandfather or another older paternal relative, or in the case of a female the grandmother, chose the name. This is a curious instance of the father’s clan having a role in the life of the child in a matrilineal kinship system.⁶⁵ Regardless of where the name originated, it was a first designation for the individual only. Even these initial names, however, were descriptive rather than expectant. According to Adair, “They give their children names, expressive of their tempers, outward appearances, and other various circumstances.”⁶⁶ In addition to this, it seems, the elder would also add some inherited name from a significant ancestor, such as “captain bird” or “war king”

⁶³ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 184.

⁶⁴ Mooney, "The Cherokee River Cult," 2.

⁶⁵ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 32; Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," 29. It is possible that Longe was mistaken, and the child’s name was given by an elder uncle of his own clan, but it is impossible to know for sure and is fairly immaterial.

⁶⁶ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 191.

for a boy or “lovely girl” or “the dance leader” for a girl.⁶⁷ It seems that this served the same lineal purpose as the surname did in European practice. Even as an infant then, Cherokees’ names reflected both their physical or temperamental character as well as their ancestral heritage. This was a foundation on which further names would build up a “name form” of the individual’s experiences and identity.

Subsequent names arose from particularly striking physical features, memorable events, or arresting mannerisms and capabilities. In Olbrecht’s words,

To this first name another name could be substituted later on; this name, that usually clung definitely to the individual for the rest of his life, was usually descriptive of one of his physical or moral qualities, or reminiscent of one of his feats on the war-path, while hunting, &c.⁶⁸

The most prominent outworking of this was seen in the significant effort Cherokee men put into striving after ever more prestigious war names. The accumulation of these titles was a major occupation of the warriors, especially the first of them for any one individual, since before he earned such a title he was relegated to doing the menial tasks associated with childhood while on the warpath.⁶⁹ After a successful raid the town chief and his second would ceremoniously give out war names along with substantial gifts of beads and deer skins stored up especially for the occasion. The gifts were something of an added bonus, but the name was the real prize. Titles served as rank during war as well as conferring prestige, with “war king” being the highest honor to be bestowed. So great was the lure of these names that some warriors were known to accumulate twenty or more during their lifetimes.⁷⁰ Buttrick reported that killer was the highest title, followed by raven, owl, wolf and fox. Warriors wore special skins of these animals as badges of the rank they carried in the war party. Raven, owl, wolf, and fox were distinguished as

⁶⁷ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 32.

⁶⁸ Olbrechts, "Cherokee Belief and Practice with Regard to Childbirth," 29.

⁶⁹ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 325.

⁷⁰ Longe, "A Small Postscript," 46.

the scouts, or spies, of the army. The great chief Raven served the position of forward spy, and was even sometimes deemed to have supernatural abilities to become invisible and silent.⁷¹

In addition to their birth names and earned names, the Cherokees were fond of applying nicknames to each other which had the tendency of sticking, probably not always to the appreciation of the recipient, in the case of a less than complimentary sobriquet. Adair recorded a few such names, like *Sooreh*, which meant literally “the turkey-buzzard” and was applied to a “dull stalking fellow.” Another such was *Kana Cheesteche* meaning “the wasp” and given to someone with an ill temper likely to lash out if annoyed. Someone with a hoarse sounding voice might be saddled with a name meaning the bullfrog. Nicknames were not always at the person’s expense however, and could sometimes be a source of pride in the same way a war name could. One example given was “the grasshopper,” which referenced its quick movements and celebrated quick wit and oratory skill.⁷² The most insulting of epithets Adair spoke of was *Hoobuk Waske*, meaning a “known eunuch.” In 1750 the Iroquois and Cherokee were joined together in a war against the Catawba tribe, and were so enraged at having been called *Hoobuk Waske* by them that they composed a letter to South Carolina’s governor imploring him to not try to mediate the conflict as they were firmly resolved to exact vengeance for the slight.⁷³

Where Cherokee and colonial cultures intersected, the use of names was different enough to cause some confusion. Their white neighbors typically had only a single name, perhaps one or two titles if he were an elite nobleman, where most Cherokee warriors would have several compounded names and was likely to hold multiple war names as well. These names were not merely descriptive in the native mind either. According to James Mooney, “The Indian regards his name, not as a mere label, but as a distinct part of his personality, just as much as are his eyes

⁷¹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 252.

⁷² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 194.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

or his teeth, and believes that injury will result as surely from the malicious handling of his name as from a wound inflicted on any part of his physical organism.”⁷⁴ Interestingly this is similar to ancient superstitions in European folklore and occult practices, as immortalized in such folk tales as the Germanic story of *Rumpelstiltskin*, but belief in such things on a practical level was certainly not normative in the colonies, even where witchcraft was still a public concern. The Cherokee insistence, though, had the curious effect of obscuring their actual names from written history in part or in whole. Mooney goes on,

This belief was found among the various tribes from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and has occasioned a number of curious regulations in regard to the concealment and change of names. It may be on this account that both Powhatan and Pocahontas are known in history under assumed appellations, their true names having been concealed from the whites until the pseudonyms were too firmly established to be supplanted.⁷⁵

One consequence of this was that Cherokees were often known to the English by names such as Little Carpenter, Old Hop, or Judd’s Friend; names which followed the Cherokee descriptive paradigm but were entirely English language constructions, not even direct translations from the Cherokee tongue. These renderings are somewhat evocative of the oftentimes farcical names given to slaves by their masters in the plantation societies of the Caribbean and the Carolinas.⁷⁶ It is certainly not outside the realm of possibility that such connotations may have planted a latent animus against Indians in those societies, particularly as Indian slaves themselves were fixtures on plantations alongside black bondsmen for some time. The colonists did not link a name with the person’s life achievements and personality, where the Indians did. Where colonial

⁷⁴ James Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," in *7th Annual Report* (Washington: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1891), 343.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 343.

⁷⁶ Clearly ludicrous names such as “Pickle” or “Taffy” joined more sarcastic selections from the classical world like “Plato” or “Minerva.” The renaming served to cement a slave’s place as owned property, and put them on a lower tier in Europeans’ social perceptions. Cf. Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008).

names were static, Cherokee names grew over time. This was not the only way the two cultures differed in their ideas and perception of time.

Time Ways

Just as the Cherokees' religious and supernatural beliefs were derived from their observations of the world around them, so was their basic conception of time and the way they ordered it in their lives. The ebb and flow of the Cherokee year revolved around their hunting and agricultural seasons and lunar cycles, and tied in with their ideas about gender roles. The two ideas were metaphorically connected, as the Cherokees believed the Moon and Sun to be a male and a female deity connected with love and fertility.⁷⁷ Women in Cherokee culture tended to do most of the agricultural work, and fertility also has strong agricultural connotations. Minor festivals at each new moon set the regular rhythm of the Cherokee year along the lines of the lunar calendar. In addition to these, they also celebrated six major annual festivals which characterized how they ordered their communal activities through the seasons.

The Cherokees called the first of these "The Great Moon Festival," and it occurred at the first new moon of autumn. This signified their new year, and the timing lined up with their traditional account of the world's creation, as it was supposed to have happened in autumn.⁷⁸ It usually fell somewhere around the month of October, and was followed in quick succession by two other festivals, the "Propitiation" or "Friends Made" festival, and the festival of the Exulting. These set the tone for the whole year, and emphasized cleansing and mended relationships. Sometime around March was the festival of the "New Moon of Spring," something of a halfway point in the year. In late June or early July was the first agricultural festival, that of

⁷⁷ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 126-127.

⁷⁸ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 42.

the “New Green Corn.” It was signaled by the year’s corn crop first being fit to eat. Around forty-five days later, around September, came the concluding feast of “Ripe Green Corn,” which signified a successful harvest and the corn being hard and perfect. No major celebrations were made during winter, which was an important hunting season for Cherokee men, when most of them would be absent from the towns, off in the hunting grounds to find game. During the festival of the “First New Moon of Spring” the people feasted on meat brought back by the hunters from their winter expedition.⁷⁹ Superimposed onto the Western calendar, the Cherokee ceremonial year would look something like this:

January	
February	
March	First New Moon of Spring
April	
May	
June	
July	New Green Corn
August	
September	Ripe Green Corn
October	Great New Moon Propitiation Exulting
November	
December	

The concentration of communal celebrations at the cusp of autumn, four all in rapid succession around September and October, and especially the last three, marked an important part of the year for the machinery of Cherokee town society. Nearly all of the festivals placed some emphasis on personal and corporate purifying, and that of Propitiation or “Friends Made,” was specifically for the purpose of renewing friendships and laying rivalries to rest. The weeks between the festivals themselves were politically important, as the major council meetings of the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 35.

year were held and any pressing issues hashed over. It created a serendipitous time for this, as all the people from smaller settlements attached to a major town would congregate there for the festivities, and therefore a maximum of the population would be able to participate in council. The harmony promoting religious nature of the festivals would also have helped the council process, particularly as the Cherokee system of consensus governing required near unanimity for successful results.⁸⁰

The festivals add some detail to what was, in a broader sense, a binary annual cycle of cold and warm seasons, the cold running from around October to April, and the warm from there on to October again. As can be seen, the New Moon feasts of autumn and spring marked the general transition times between these two seasons. The cold season, or *gola*, might be thought of as having a male character, as the men often spent most of the time ranging far off (sometimes as far as 200 miles) to hunt and provide food for the community. Likewise the warm season, or *gogi*, was the feminine counterpart, during which the women tended to the fields in order to provide a harvest of corn for the town. Thus, the celebration at the New Moon of Spring represented the bounty of the hunt, while the Green Corn celebrations in July and September may be conflated to represent the bounty of the fields.⁸¹

On a more day-to-day level, Cherokee time ways were fairly casual. More casual, in fact, than colonists tended to be comfortable with. The native mindset urged him to use his time to do what was necessary for a felicitous life, but not more than that. Adair said of them, "They are a very dilatory people, and noted for procrastinating every thing that admits of the least delay."⁸² Antoine Bonnefoy was a Frenchman who gained firsthand experience of this. A Cherokee war party captured him in 1741, and subsequently adopted him into the tribe. According to his

⁸⁰ Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 4-5.

⁸¹ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 270.

⁸² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 417.

journal, he was treated in all ways like a kinsman after the adoption process, and beyond the need to hunt from time to time, he found his days free of responsibility and readily spent in leisure.⁸³ To the Cherokee, time was equally suited to needful productive activity and to enjoying life in relaxation and sport. This certainly did not accord with the cultural traditions of a society obsessed with making every moment pay for itself. Some of Benjamin Franklin's famous maxims neatly illustrate the difference, such as "since you are not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour," or "up sluggard, and waste not life; in the grave will be sleeping enough."⁸⁴ This dichotomy compounded with the fact that even the hunt, that most important of a Cherokee man's occupation, was considered by many sectors of European society as more of a sport than a proper method of "making a living." Perhaps the best reflection of colonial sentiment in regard to Cherokee time ways is summed up in a crude proverb which became popular among early traders to their country, "an Indian is never in haste, only when the devil is at his arse."⁸⁵

Rank Ways

Cherokee egalitarianism and non hierarchical gender ways might lead one to believe that they would eschew any form of ranking in their society, but that is far from the truth. Eighteenth century Cherokees had a very clear idea of what made a good man or woman, and they ranked themselves according to how well they approached the ideal goal. Clear and wise judgment, harmony with ones fellows, courage in combat, and meritorious achievement were all factors which contributed to an individual's ranking in society. Great deeds conferred esteem on those who could perform them, and were most admired if they benefitted the community as a whole.

⁸³ Antoine Bonnefoy, "Journal of Antoine Bonnefoy's Captivity among the Cherokee Indians, 1741-1742," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Mereness (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 246.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, 160.

⁸⁵ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 417.

Achievements which were difficult or heroic might be admired greatly, but the true test of whether they merited rank preference was in how they helped Cherokees. George Washington, for example, was fairly well admired by all during the years of the early republic. Bob Thomas, a settler who incorporated himself into Cherokee society, met the accomplished general as part of their delegation to Philadelphia, and was asked if he was not thrilled to meet so great a man. "I've seen a greater," was his reply, "Occanastota!"⁸⁶

Cherokee attitude to age clearly was a large factor in their ranking system. The beloved men as a group were held in high respect for their wisdom and moral character. Circumspection and persuasion were highly valued character traits perceived to be refined and perfected throughout one's life, so that by the time a warrior joined the beloved men he was thought to be a great boon to his town, and the tribe as a whole.⁸⁷ This, of course, was an expectation not always met. Ranking in Cherokee society was ultimately based on actual results, and someone who tried to ride expectation to a place of honor without supporting his ambitions with deeds would be subject to ridicule, and put in his place by the community. One observation of their seating according to rank in council noted, "Every one takes his seat, according to his reputed merit; a worthless cox-comb dare not to be guilty of the least intrusion -- should he attempt it, he is ordered to his proper place, before the multitude, with the vilest disgrace, and bears their stinging laughter."⁸⁸

Ranking in the Cherokee war party system was similar. Military organization was relatively loose; certainly it bore little resemblance to the highly complex regimented systems of European armies. Native warfare, which prior to European colonization had never been used for

⁸⁶ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 88-89. Occanastota was a highly esteemed Cherokee war chief.

⁸⁷ Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 42.

⁸⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 421.

large scale annexation or by a nationalist level of ambition, did not develop the need for such intricate controls.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, they did use rudimentary rankings, and those tended to be highly functional. Some ranks, such as “Raven” were earned war titles and attached to specific war roles which required a high level of skill. The Raven was a forward scout position, requiring stealth and good judgment, and as such it also often translated into an esteemed place in non-war ranking as well. Such connections were likely not systematized, but naturally occurred as deemed by the admiration of the community.⁹⁰ Mankiller was another war title which was earned by killing an enemy in combat, and carried a certain level of respect and an upper place in the war party pecking order. The position of war chief, and his officers, on the other hand, were elected rather than earned. The fate of the whole war party rested on their good judgment, and no warrior wanted to have that burden fall on the shoulders of a man who might be good at killing but poor at strategy.⁹¹

Cherokees and colonists tried to act appropriately according to rank when they interacted, albeit with many misunderstandings. Since the Cherokee system of ranking was based on ability and achievement rather than birth or wealth, they tended to view the colonial lower classes as inept and incapable. Henry Timberlake took note of this, writing, “They are extremely proud, despising the lower class of Europeans; and at some athletick diversions I was once present at, they refused to match or hold conference with any but officers.”⁹² This being the case, however, it was perfectly possible for foreigners to earn their respect by proving their mettle. On one occasion a group of colonists ventured into Cherokee territory to rescue some captives of another allied tribe that a Cherokee war party had taken. The would-be rescuers were surrounded in the

⁸⁹ Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 53-54.

⁹⁰ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 113.

⁹¹ Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," 67.

⁹² Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 53.

home of a trader, and the first response of the Cherokees was to beat their war drum, “singing, dancing, and pouring the utmost contempt on the English name.” When they finally attacked however, the colonists and rescued captives put up such a spirited defense that they were unable to get through. The result was earned respect, “The gallant behaviour of those gentlemen gained the applause of the Cheerake -- and each soon returned in safety, without any interruption, to their respective homes.”⁹³

Colonial elites at first expected Cherokee ranking ways to mirror their own, and much confusion was maintained as they sought to treat with the Cherokee king and his dynasty. As they became more acquainted with the cultural differences, they found Cherokee meritocracy threatening to the prevailing European system of ranking by birthright. This was especially so in that the old dynastic system was already somewhat under siege by the new merchant classes, and wealth based status symbols were being undermined by a spreading consumer culture.⁹⁴ The vigilante movement of the South Carolina Regulators, for example, was in part an attempt by the backcountry elites to curtail the spread of “idle, loose, and disorderly” Indian cultural ways into the colonial population.⁹⁵ Such fears and misunderstandings on both sides acted to further advance the deterioration of Anglo-Cherokee relations.

The structural forms taken on by the English and Cherokee cultures differed from each other dramatically. Though they sometimes had similar presuppositions, as in the case of gender roles, the ways those manifested as social forms were nearly always unique and far from compatible with each other. Slow acculturation was one reaction to this dissonance, but it was attended by stresses and friction which had more immediate effects. The net result was that though over time the two cultures grew to be less alien to each other, the mounting pressures

⁹³ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 344.

⁹⁴ Thomas Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), i-vii.

⁹⁵ Richard Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1963), 47.

caused by cultural discontinuity outpaced acculturation and led to violent breaks in the peace. Such breaks and their immediate catalysts tended to occur on the level of visible culture, which builds directly off of the structures discussed here.

Chapter Three Thundering Bullets, Silent Arrows: The Impact of Visible Culture

Early in the annals of Euro-Indian contact in North America, in the summer of 1609, the French explorer Samuel de Champlain accompanied his native Huron allies to battle against a group of Mohawk warriors. Far from the stealthy and savage ambushade that has become synonymous with Indian style warfare, the combat on that day was formal and ritualistic. The Mohawks issued a challenge the preceding evening, and the two parties agreed to fight on the next morning. The night was spent performing war dances and exchanging boasts and insults at one another. At daybreak, the two war-bands approached each other slowly and deliberately, adorned with wooden armor and shields, and wielding primitive weapons. Champlain, and a few other Frenchmen with him, fired on the Mohawks with arquebuses, a technology entirely alien to the Mohawks. The thunder of the firearms and the gaping wounds caused by the musket-balls horrified the Mohawk warriors, who turned and fled for their lives. They may not have realized it at the time, but warfare on the continent was about to change forever. This was an instant in time when first contact between the old and new worlds would prove emblematic of how disruptive such cultural collisions could be.¹

The Iroquoian Hurons and Mohawks of the far north were not unique in fighting ritualistic battles with massed ranks of warriors. The colonists at Jamestown observed much the same among the Powhatans, and years earlier the expedition of Hernando de Soto reported similar ways all throughout the southeast.² The mode of conflict was designed to allow war in which warriors earned renown, captives could be taken, but casualties kept to a minimum.

¹ Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel De Champlain*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1922), 99-101.

² Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando De Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 19-24; William Strachey, *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania (1612)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), 109-110.

Shields and armor were extremely effective in curbing the lethality of war clubs and stone tipped arrows, and disabled warriors were often captured rather than killed. The introduction of gunpowder and lead bullets shattered the status quo, and forced the native tribes to adapt.³

There is no extant record of the moment that this jarring new technology first intruded upon the lives of the Cherokees, but that it happened is certain. When Gabriel Arthur and James Needham encountered the Cherokees in 1673 they were already in possession of European made muskets through barter and raiding with Indians closer to colonial settlements.⁴ The important cultural lesson is in how they changed their behavior due to the new weapons. Heavy wooden shields and ritualized battle fell away in favor of stealth and ambush.⁵ Warriors adopted guns for their power, but also retained the bow and arrow for its silence. Contact with European culture catalyzed change in native behavior, but the Indians did not simply begin to fight in the same way Europeans did. Their aims in war – to earn prestige, take captives, and avoid mass casualties – remained the same. Stealth, ambush, and quick limited raids became the Indian way of war, not the regimented advance of massed armies like European nations practiced. Their *visible culture* changed, but through adaptation rather than acculturation. Once again surface level life ways proved malleable, while the deeper foundations and structures which shaped them resisted change.

The reference to visible culture draws attention to the directly observable details therein. It is composed of the overt facets of a society which are derived from the more foundational beliefs and organizational structures already discussed. Direct actions, habits, and tangible

³ Roger Carpenter, "Making War More Lethal: Iroquois Vs. Huron (1) in the Great Lakes Region, 1609 to 1650," *Michigan Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (2001).

⁴ Abraham Wood, "Letter of Abraham Wood," in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country 1540-1800*, ed. Samuel Williams (Johnson City: The Watauga Press, 1928), 34.

⁵ This was not a direct replacement of one tactic with another. *Both* modes of battle existed before the introduction of firearms, and the change represents the slow ritualized combat fading away in favor of stealth as conditions altered.

objects characterize it, and so it is at once more accessible, more initially authentic, and also more problematic to understand. Visible culture encompasses the aspects of Cherokee culture that European colonists observed and interpreted, often applying only superficial judgments and thus misunderstanding the true meanings behind them. For this reason, visible culture is addressed last even though it is the first observed grouping of folk ways. Doing so is the reverse of how observers actually explore culture, but also helps to avoid the difficulties of assessing them before understanding the tenets they are based on.

Speech Ways⁶

The Cherokees were distinguished from their Southeastern Indian neighbors by a number of features, and one of the most important was their speech ways. Linguistic unity has long been conjured as a basis for national identity. The Cherokee were an Iroquoian speaking people surrounded by linguistic Muskogean. The fact that their language had more in common with the five nations far to the north likely points to a migration to the area where Europeans found them. The move must have already been long in the past by the seventeenth century, as evidenced by the sharp differences between the two tongues developed over years of separation. Archaeology also confirms that while relatively speaking the Cherokees might have been newcomers to the region, they had inhabited the land for centuries by the time they encountered Europeans.⁷ Culturally speaking, the difference in linguistic stock from their closest neighbors acted to unify the Cherokees as a people. At the same time geography, once again, caused subdivisions within

⁶ Speech is, of course, not technically visible on an ocular level. The term *visible culture* refers not only to that which is seen with the eye, but also to auditory, tactile, olfactory, and other facets of culture which are directly observable via sensory experience.

⁷ Duane King, *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 9-11.

the Cherokee territory in the form of regional dialects. At least three distinct dialects developed, corresponding to the overhill, middle, and lower town regions.⁸

If internal communication was characterized by dialectical differences, external communication proved a more daunting challenge. Where members of different linguistic stocks met, often a kind of “middle ground” language developed, using key words from both and even a heavy dose of gestures to derive basic meaning. Termed “jargons,” these improvisations acted as a way to easily exchange ideas but lacked the deeper nuances that make up sophisticated speech ways. Throughout history most trade languages have been, or at least began as, jargons.

Cherokee country was in a central position relative to other tribes in the Southeast, so intertribal traffic was common through the area. The fact that the Cherokees lived in the midst of peoples who spoke a completely different tongue combined with the central location of their lands to make jargon a common linguistic tool in their lives. It is entirely natural that when white Europeans began to deal with the Cherokees that they too communicated primarily through a form of jargon. While useful for simple exchange and conveying general ideas, trade languages were a poor fit for anything more complex and proved a fertile ground for misunderstandings and even derision. Europeans, once familiar with the jargon, tended to think of themselves as well acquainted with the native language and imagined that the Indians were intellectually deficient for having such a poor tongue, or else that they purposefully obscured their language from the white man in order to better deceive him.⁹

One area where Cherokee speech ways differed markedly from those of the various European emigrants to America was in their everyday manner of speaking, particularly if a

⁸ One noticeable differentiation when reading transcriptions is the l-r substitution between lower and overhill speakers. The overhill town of Tellico, for example, is often written “Terrico” when the speaker was from the lower towns in accordance with his pronunciation. See James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 189.

⁹ *Narratives of New Netherland* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 128.

contentious issue became the subject of conversation. With the Cherokee ideal of consensus and avoiding non-essential confrontation, silence was their way to be non committal in an argument rather than to forcefully offer rebuttal. Silence was a form of censure, or at least of passively demonstrating disagreement. This could be frustrating for both native and colonist because the white man often took such silence as assent and the Indian felt he was being ignored. Body language ways were also at odds. According to Henry Timberlake, “they seldom turn their eyes on the person they speak of, or address themselves to, and are always suspicious when peoples' eyes are fixed on them.”¹⁰ Cherokees thus often saw colonists as far too garrulous in manner, and the colonists thought the Indians cold and closed.

This being the case, it was disconcerting for a white man to be told by a normally taciturn Cherokee that he was a liar, a discourtesy certain to herald a duel in many circles back in polite European society. Such an occurrence was not the result of actual rudeness or of an uncharacteristic bellicosity, but came from actual conceptual discordance between Cherokee and Anglo-American speech ways. In this case, where white men drew a sharp distinction between an intentional untruth, or lie, and simple misinformation, the Cherokee did not, and “lie” was the word used by the Indian for both. One Anglo-American complained of this, saying, “As there is no alternative between a falsehood and a lie, they usually tell any person, in plain language, ‘you lie,’ as a friendly negative to a reputed truth.”¹¹ Small scale verbal confusion like this could cause minor individual incidents and generally widen the gulf between Indian and colonist, but more consequential misunderstandings would prove divisive in Anglo-Cherokee relations. By far the most impactful of these was the difference in conceptual frameworks surrounding land ownership and property rights.

¹⁰ Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake* (Cherokee: Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, 2007), 30.

¹¹ James Adair, *The History of the American Indians* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1775), 104.

Both the Cherokees and the colonists were familiar with the idea of purchasing land, but what they meant by that were two very different things. Wahnenuhi's manuscript, part of a collection of Cherokee cultural values compiled by the Bureau of American Ethnology, provides a crucial insight. According to Wahnenuhi, "It is an established principle with the Cherokees, in common with all Indians, that Air, Water and Land is the free gift of the Creator to all men, and when Land is traded it is always understood that only the right to use it is meant."¹² This explains why land sales to colonists, especially early ones, were so easily obtained. Both Cherokees and emigrants agreed to the sale, but they understood it to mean different things. Thus, both sides were liable to feel betrayed when disagreements inevitably arose as white families settled and expected the Indians to keep away permanently.

These examples illustrate how the language barrier was even more difficult a challenge to overcome than just learning new grammar and vocabulary. Indian and colonist alike had to cope with the mismatching concepts and thought patterns they held, and how those caused misunderstandings when translated into speech. Often enough the sum result was confusion at best, and insulted sensibilities (which could escalate to open hostility) at worst.

Order Ways

Cherokee speech ways also had a surprisingly strong part to play in how they kept social chaos at bay. Any society requires a set of mechanisms to keep order, and the Cherokees were no different. Though their strong adherence to the ethos of individual liberty and the non-use of coercive force made keeping order a somewhat complex undertaking, they nonetheless tackled it in their own unique manner. As in nearly all of their culture ways, the Cherokees based their

¹² Wahnenuhi, "The Wahnenuhi Manuscript," in *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, ed. Jack Kilpatrick and Anna Kilpatrick (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 194.

peacekeeping methods in the foundational structures of kinship and community. Because force was eschewed, they required an instrument of a less blunt nature to keep the masses of individuals from breaking out in anarchistic confusion. The chief tool they settled on was well suited to the prestige minded Cherokee ego: public ridicule.

Even in verbal shaming, however, a delicate touch was applied rather than ham-fisted rebuke.¹³ The ideal of harmony meant that Cherokees avoided even mere verbal confrontations when possible, and they softly approached efforts to keep unpopular behavior at bay. This is not to say that they were ineffective or even pleasant, merely subtle. A cutting sarcasm was leveled against wrongdoers with what have been called “sweetened darts” of verbal correction. This process was described thus:

There are many petty crimes which their young people are guilty of, -- to which our laws annex severe punishment, but their's only an ironical way of jesting. They commend the criminal before a large audience, for practising the virtue, opposite to the crime, that he is known to be guilty of. If it is for theft, they praise his honest principles; and they commend a warrior for having behaved valiantly against the enemy, when he acted cowardly; they introduce the minutest circumstances of the affair, with severe sarcasms which wound deeply. I have known them to strike their delinquents with those sweetened darts, so good naturedly and skilfully, that they would sooner die by torture, than renew their shame by repeating the actions.¹⁴

This form of correction was especially effective because Cherokees were so bound to their communities and because power was attained only through goodwill and communal approbation. This combined with the higher priority Cherokees put on esteem and prestige to make for a powerful deterrent against acting inappropriately. The disapproval of highly venerated beloved men in particular was to be avoided. Butrick reported that at their festivals a single word from an honored priest was enough to curtail any rowdiness, “if, by chance, any conversation took a cast

¹³ John Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee* (Knoxville: Heiskell & Brown, 1823), 254.

¹⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 429-430.

they thought objectionable, even the highest among the priests gave no reproachful check, but simply remarked ‘Yay-lee-quawh,’ ‘That will do,’ or ‘That is enough’; and never without effect.”¹⁵

The one instance in which the Cherokees *did* embrace the use of force was in the punishment of murderers. Even in this, however, one cannot find a central policing authority other than the kinship systems. The laws against murder were enforced by, and incumbent upon, the clans. The murder victim’s clan served justice on the offenders, and punishment took the form of “an eye for an eye.” Interestingly, the affair was clan wide on both sides, so an avenger could justly kill any member of the murderer’s clan in payment for the crime, theoretically leaving the perpetrator himself untouched.¹⁶ This aspect lent a strong peer pressure factor to the system’s preventative side; a would-be murderer who was unconcerned with his own life might think twice if his crime might endanger the lives of his family members.¹⁷ Long tradition deeply ingrained the right to retaliation in Cherokee society, and so such a killing was considered justified.¹⁸ This meant that clan members never retaliated against a justified killing in turn, which prevented a vicious cycle of blood feuds.¹⁹ Because vengeance came at the hand of the victim’s clan members, *not* belonging to a clan was an extreme liability. Unadopted slaves, such as the *atsi nahsa’i*²⁰ were at risk because there was no deterrent to killing them outright. Foreigners travelling through Cherokee country faced the same dangers, relying on the promise of

¹⁵ John Payne and Daniel Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 58.

¹⁶ John Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 80.

¹⁷ Those at risk were *clan* members, so a Cherokee’s father and other paternal relatives were not at risk because of the matrilineal clan structure.

¹⁸ This may seem harsh, and it was, but common sense was never far from Cherokee order ways. Though it does not appear to have been the norm, in some cases gifts of skins and beads could be offered to the aggrieved clan in substitution for a life, and bloodshed averted that way.

¹⁹ Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation*, 78.

²⁰ Literally: “one who is owned.”

retaliation by their own people as protection from any bloodthirsty rogues. Many of the wars between tribes, in fact, had their origin in just such incidents.

Relations between the Cherokees and English were complicated. Their close trade relationship and the “chain of friendship” between them acted almost as a *de facto* adoption.²¹ Cherokee leaders tended to treat the English colonies like a clan, fully invested with the right to justified vengeance, but neither side fully understood the other’s system of justice which led to massive misunderstandings and ill will. Governor Lyttleton of South Carolina, for example, wrote to the head men of the Middle Towns that he was sorrowful over the murder of some of their people by colonists, but that they had escaped and might not be found. He continued, stating that it was impossible for them to punish the innocent for the guilty, and that in that case the Cherokees would have to be satisfied with no retribution at all.²² This made no sense to the Cherokees, with their expectation that the whole clan (or in this case, colony) be held liable for the actions of the murderers. Mirroring that, the immediate cause of the Anglo-Cherokee War was that the English demanded that the perpetrators of murders against settlers be turned over, and would except no substitutions except the guilty parties themselves. This was clearly stipulated in the written demand Lyttleton gave to the Cherokees.²³

In cases less serious than murder, where the Cherokees were apt to use their “sweetened darts” instead of physical force, more covert forms of deterioration accumulated from the differences between Indian and English order ways. For the Cherokees, correction was an informal matter judged and dealt with by common sense. This stood in stark contrast to the

²¹ This relationship was always a bit shaky and was never very well defined. Cherokee behavior vacillated between treating the colonies in ways appropriate for separated clans and foreign peoples. It may be that adoption was intended by various leaders and councils, but never took root within the tribe as a whole.

²² *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: 1754-1765*, ed. William Mcdowell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 480.

²³ A copy of the document can be found in "Treaty of Peace and Friendship, Concluded by His Excellency," *South Carolina Gazette*, January 8, 1760 .

formalized and unbending legal system of the British Empire. To the Cherokees, the huge collection of almost indecipherable laws signaled corruption rather than justice. One Indian trader described their attitude this way, “They say, if our laws were honest, or wisely framed, they would be plain and few, that the poor people might understand and remember them, as well as the rich.”²⁴ Both Cherokee and English saw each other as holding to unjust practices. Clearly this had the potential to cause immense animosity, and the negative stereotypes it spawned of both peoples greatly contributed to the deterioration of friendly Anglo-Cherokee relations.

Building Ways

Another very visible part of culture has to do with the actual physical structures a society builds. Cherokee building ways and architecture were intrinsically tied to their communal town structure. Their methods were extremely functional and suited to the needs of a tight knit community. The relatively recent availability of iron or steel tools through European trade made procuring building materials much easier in the eighteenth century even though materials were usually more roughshod and primitive than those of refined European tastes. Logs, bark, clay, and dry grass were their chief stock, excluding more processed materials such as planed lumber or dressed stone. This may well have better served their propensity to shift town sites on a semi regular basis as farmland was depleted and renewed, requiring less labor to rebuild at a new location. In 1761 Lieutenant Timberlake noted the great number of tools English trade introduced to the nation, and predicted that they would soon become quite proficient in their use.²⁵ He was quite correct, in that many Cherokees adopted western building ways and built

²⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 434.

²⁵ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 32.

large colonial style plantation houses in the early nineteenth century. For a long period, however, native architecture persisted, and colonial visitors often noted its ingenuity and peculiarities.

Cherokee households built two primary living structures, one for warm weather and another “hot house” for the winter months. William Bartram described the summer house as oblong, constructed of logs notched at the ends and fixed together, much like the iconic log cabins adopted by white frontiersmen. They were plastered for insulation with clay and grass. According to Bartram the preferred roofing was bark or shingles from the chestnut tree. Inside, the Cherokees divided their houses into three rooms connected by doors, which Bartram noted was different from the layout used by their southern Creek neighbors.²⁶ The construction of the roof limited the houses to around 16 feet in width, but they could be quite long, often approaching around 60 feet. The hot houses were smaller and built to retain heat. They were circular with a conical roof, having an aperture at the top to let out the smoke from a low burning fire built in the center of the chamber. Clay insulation was applied far more liberally to the hot houses. A low narrow door permitted entrance, and the interior was described as “full of hot, smoky darkness.”²⁷

By all accounts Cherokee homes served as a space primarily identified with the female, belonging to her in case of divorce within the matrilineal marriage context of Cherokee culture. Many men often preferred spending time in the common area of the town house even when in town, and may often have only made nocturnal visits to their wives’ houses.²⁸ Even for women, however, the house does not appear to have been as important in determining identity as the European style “homestead.” Part of this may have been a consequence of the less materialistic

²⁶ William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram* (New York: Facsimile Library, 1940), 296.

²⁷ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 421.

²⁸ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 46.

culture the Cherokees held to in relation to the colonial custom. Less material goods and therefore less need of a place to store and treasure them would make one's house less important as a defining characteristic. Lack of land inheritance and the fact of periodic town relocation no doubt also contributed. This does not mean that houses served little purpose for the Cherokees, even for their men. Archaeological evidence points to a wide array of activities assigned to different areas of homes, both male and female.²⁹ Food preparation, tool making, rest, and storage were all major roles filled by Cherokee houses.

The town house, which formed the central edifice of the Cherokee town in structure and civics, was built much like the hot house, but on a grand scale. Often Cherokees built the town house on the foundation of a far older ritual mound, and from a distance it resembled a small mountain, conical in shape and covered in earthen clay. The structure was built of three concentric circles of support pillars, the outer ring starting at a mere six feet tall, but growing taller to the center of the great rotunda where a very tall central pillar reached up to the pinnacle of the roof. This point was typically fifteen to twenty feet high according to Butrick.³⁰ Bartram described a ring of stepped seating surrounding a central fire, which he said was kept at an optimal size to provide light and heat yet little smoke.³¹ Timberlake described the town house interior at Chota as having the appearance of an ancient amphitheatre, and being large enough to contain 500 persons. He found it uncomfortably dark and said the ventilation was so poor that the smoke settled mostly in the roof of the house.³²

The town house served as the social and political center of the community. It was the gathering place for councils and celebrations as well as the common area for public intercourse

²⁹ Ramie Gougeon, "Household Research at the Late Mississippian Little Egypt Site (9mu102)" (University of Georgia, 2002), 145-172.

³⁰ John Payne and Daniel Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 436.

³¹ Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, 297-298.

³² Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 17.

and entertaining guests. In accordance with its civic purposes, many Cherokee town houses were not actually circular, but seven sided so that the aligned seven tiers of seating sections corresponded to the seven clans which made up their social structure.³³ The town house was open as a shelter and sleeping area for any travelers passing through or for townspeople who were destitute and in need of support. As such it reflected the Cherokee ideal of high hospitality, by which very often the town house was not necessary as a lodging place, especially for infrequent guests, as such visitors were apt to be invited to stay in the home of the chief or some other resident.³⁴

Perhaps another architectural evidence of Cherokee largess was the “treasure house” Butrick reported to stand just west of the town house, where the people would deposit meat and produce for public feasts and for the priests. William Bartram also noted this building, and described its use in some detail,

But previous to their carrying off their crops from the field, there is a large crib or granary, erected in the plantation, which is called the king’s crib; and to this each family carries and deposits a certain quantity, according to his ability or inclination, or none at all if he so chooses... to which every citizen has the right of free and equal access, when his own private stores are consumed; to serve as a surplus to fly to for succour; to assist neighbouring towns, whose crops may have failed; accommodate strangers, or travelers.³⁵

Another important aspect of Cherokee building ways was their fortifications and corresponding defensive techniques. Cherokee fortifications were greatly influenced by ancient Mississippian palisaded townships of the sort encountered by Hernando De Soto in his early expedition through the continent.³⁶ An early visitor to the Overhill town of Chota described its fortifications “the cliffs of the river on the one side being very high for its defence, the other

³³ Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 106-108.

³⁴ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 180.

³⁵ Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, 401.

³⁶ Wayne Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation," *The Journal of Military History* 68, no. 3 (2004), 748.

three sides trees of two foot over, pitched on end, twelve feet high, and on the tops scaffolds placed with parapets to defend the walls and offend their enemies which men stand on to fight.”³⁷ In 1725 Colonel Chicken visited the adjacent towns of Little Tellico and Great Tellico, and described their condition as “both Enforted and the houses which they live in all Muskett proof.”³⁸ In the town of Chagee he found a substantial fort built *inside* the town around the town house, with a “slight ffortification” around the town proper.³⁹ At Estatoe the Colonel reported even more substantial defenses, including a fort around the town house as at Chagee, as well as the town itself being “well ffortified all round with Punchins and also ditched on the Outside of the sd Punchins (wch Ditch) is Stuck full of light wood Spikes so that if the Enemy should ever happen to fall therein, they must without doubt receive a great deal of Damage by those Spikes.”⁴⁰

The Cherokees did not universally fortify their towns so strongly. Border towns which could expect more frequent attack from an enemy were typically palisaded, while settlements closer to the interior of Cherokee territory were left without such walls.⁴¹ This pattern applied to the armored houses Chicken saw at Tellico as well, which were further described by later visitors. In such “barrier towns” the Cherokees cut what Adair called portholes into the walls of the houses in order to shoot at any enemies who penetrated the palisade and got within the town.⁴² This defensive structure directly mirrors the pattern used by the Mississippian natives of

³⁷ Wood, "Letter of Abraham Wood," 28.

³⁸ George Chicken, "Journal of Colonel George Chicken's Mission from Charlestown," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Mereness (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 112.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 150. Chota and Tellico were in the mountains of Tennessee, not far from North Carolina. Chota was located on the Little Tennessee River, and Little and Great Tellico south of there, halfway to the Hiwassee River. Both Estatoe and Chagee were in the Lower Town grouping, near where the present day borders of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia meet.

⁴¹ Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation," 756.

⁴² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 419.

Mabila against De Soto in 1540.⁴³ As the eighteenth century progressed, the Cherokees adapted to European style warfare and the diminished effectiveness of their fortifications by turning the relative disposability of their homes into a defensive feature, choosing to leave the structures behind and adopt a strategy of avoidance and wilderness mobility rather than risking all-or-nothing last stands.

Building ways are a refreshing facet of culture where Cherokee and English folk ways were different without causing significant tensions. It is true that colonists looked down on primitive Indian building ways in comparison to their own, seeing the contrast as a sign of their own cultural superiority.⁴⁴ Because life ways are so interconnected however, many of the features seen in Cherokee buildings reflect other cultural trends more troublesome for harmony. Aspects of Cherokee homes relating to matrilineal family culture, for example, reveal cultural differences with the English which were not necessarily divisive on their own, but built on deeper differences which *were* contentious. Likewise, the features of their defensive building ways serve as a portal into understanding Cherokee war ways, which proved to be the source of particularly sharp cultural conflict.

War Ways

The prominence of fortifications in even pre-Columbian Cherokee town designs points to a developed war tradition. Indeed, the southeast Indians were no strangers to conflict. War was a constant threat, as well as a constant opportunity and occupation for gaining glory and captives. In the early eighteenth century, when colonists tried to broker peace between the Cherokees and the Tuscaroras, they were rebuffed on the grounds that, “we cannot live without war. Should we

⁴³ Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando De Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms*, 238.

⁴⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 418.

make peace with the Tuscaroras with whom we are at war, we must immediately look out for some other, with whom we can be engaged in our beloved occupation.”⁴⁵ This need for warfare was driven by the warriors’ hunger for status and war names rather than by ambitions of conquest or empire.⁴⁶

Such motivations may well have been in operation during earlier eras of Indian history, but post-Columbian North America saw a much depleted native population and war served different ends.⁴⁷ Those ends were, as mentioned, acclaim and social prestige, but that was merely a starting point. Once an attack was made, war continued in a vicious cycle of vengeance and retaliation. Women played a large role in the continuation of wars, as any person killed by an enemy, whether defending or attacking, was likely to be mourned by their female relatives who would usually call for the town’s warriors to retaliate in kind. Their grief could be eased in three major ways through war. The first, and most straightforward, was merely “an eye for an eye,” or in this case, “a scalp for a scalp.”⁴⁸ The Cherokee ethos of hospitality and that of seeking harmony within their society was mirrored by a dark thirst for bloody revenge against their enemies. War captives provided a second, and perhaps even more satisfying reprisal in ritualized torture, humiliation, and death by burning. Finally, war captives could sometimes be adopted into the tribe, “replacing” the lost son or daughter. This was particularly utilized after periods of heavy losses in order to replace vital population levels. In all three cases women instigated and reaped the final results: warriors offered up scalps to mourning wives and mothers, and it was

⁴⁵ Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, 237-238.

⁴⁶ Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation*, 153-154.

⁴⁷ The population dense settlements encountered by De Soto in 1539 consisted of diverse chiefdoms and “paramount chiefdoms” which extended pseudo-suzerainty over their neighbors through military might. Extreme depopulation from European diseases in the following century vastly changed this social situation.

⁴⁸ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 150.

women who played the lead roles in both torture and in adoptions.⁴⁹ For men, the attraction of warfare was in proving their prowess and covering themselves in glory.⁵⁰

The Cherokee accoutrements of war changed over time. In pre-Columbian years a warrior's weapons were chiefly the war club, the bow and arrow, and at times a knife, spear, or sling. The absence of metals meant that arrowheads were usually of flint, and the blunt war club predominated over edged weapons. Such armaments were countered by armor stitched together from thick buffalo hides, and shields of tough wood or leather to protect the face against arrows.⁵¹ After contact with Europeans was well underway, new martial technologies introduced into native culture made thick leather armor and cumbersome shields nearly ineffective. Bullets and gunpowder, of course, completely bypassed any protection they might have offered, but so too did metal arrowheads which were adopted even earlier than muskets by Indian tribes.⁵² Before colonists were willing to trade guns to them, Cherokees and other tribes began making brass and iron arrowheads by breaking down metal pots and kettles acquired through trade. The result was an evolution in Indian warfare to a mode favoring lightly equipped, fast moving, and stealthy ambush over *en masse* confrontations. During the eighteenth century the war club gave way to the metal tomahawk, and warriors added the musket to the bow and arrow for range. They eschewed cumbersome armor in favor of light leathers, or even near nakedness for ease of movement. The power of the gun was balanced by the useful silence of the bow, and so very often Cherokee warriors carried both in order to widen their range of martial options.⁵³

Preparing for offensive war was an involved process. As stated, men often took to the warpath at the instigation of a town's women, but ultimately the decision of whether or not to

⁴⁹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 53.

⁵⁰ Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, 239.

⁵¹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 40-41.

⁵² Carpenter, "Making War More Lethal: Iroquois Vs. Huron (1) in the Great Lakes Region, 1609 to 1650,"

⁵³ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 18-19.

form a raiding party fell to the individual warriors.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most important of these were the war chief and his lieutenant, who consulted together when war was proposed to make a decision; at their call, many warriors were likely to rally.⁵⁵ Raiding parties could certainly form without their consent, but were likely to result in small scale actions rather than the all out war which these respected war leaders could inspire. Once the decision to march out was made a great war whoop ensued, and warriors from all over the town and surrounding settlements began to muster at the town house. At this point, they began a period of ritual fasting and prayers in order to purify themselves, along with abstinence from sexual intercourse, all of which they believed would result in certain victory. Success in war was always connected in the Indian mind with ritual and moral purity,

They have no such phrase as the "fortune of war" They reckon the leader's impurity to be the chief occasion of bad success; and if he lose several of his warriors by the enemy, his life is either in danger for the supposed fault, or he is degraded, by taking from him his drum, war-whistle, and martial titles, and debasing him to his boy's name, from which he is to rise by a fresh gradation.⁵⁶

Thus, praying, sacrificing, and fasting prior to treading the warpath was of preeminent importance to the Cherokees. They chose one of their priests to serve the expedition as war priest, and he prepared a sacred "war ark" of either a wood or earthen container and covered by seven deerskins to carry with the war party. In it, the priest stored some of the "holy fire" that was kept burning in the town house, as well as other implements which must have been of religious significance. When the war party set out, the priest made a sacrifice of a deer's tongue in the fire to secure the protection of the spirits. Divinations were often made as well, to determine how successful they would be in the coming battle.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 36.

⁵⁵ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 243-244.

⁵⁶ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 388.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 120, 161-164; Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 144-145.

Their devout adherence to keeping pure continued on the warpath. Each warrior paid close attention to his dreams while out to war, and at the slightest sign of ill omen in his dreaming he was apt to return home, feeling that it was a warning from some spirit. His fellows, both in the war party and at home, did not look upon this as any form of cowardice or shame, but as prudence and the correct course of action. In addition to this precaution, the warriors practiced a strict form of asceticism to maintain their purity while *en route* to whatever town they were attacking. They were prohibited from speaking about any common or trifling matters, and especially about women. If anyone trod on a stick or branch and broke it, he was obliged to carry it with him until they encamped for the night. Food and drink was distributed by one warrior, the "Etiffu," or "waiter," and was often scanty at best, making for a kind of semi-fasting to better maintain purity.⁵⁸ James Adair once accompanied a war party, and carried a hollow cane filled with drink in order to quench his thirst when no one was watching.⁵⁹

The Cherokee method of war reflected a wider paradigm which spanned all of the North American Indian tribes. This was that nationalism never really developed among them, and warfare for the purposes of annexation and political control was unknown. War was a means to gain vengeance, to attain prestige, and occasionally to capture and adopt new tribe members in order to replace lost population. As a result, Cherokee war parties were not tightly regimented and did not wage war in a way familiar to European militaries. This is because their aims were different.⁶⁰ Instead of massing together and waging systematic campaigns to destroy their enemies' capability to resist and in order to secure land, Cherokee war parties attempted to stealthily cut off individuals from their fellows and kill or capture them without risk.

⁵⁸ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 147.

⁵⁹ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 383.

⁶⁰ Fred Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," *American Anthropological Association* 64, no. 5 (1962), 53-54.

A raid on an enemy town relied on stealth and a quick strike; if the enemy was forewarned the attack was likely to be abandoned as a lost cause. Sieges in the European sense were unknown.⁶¹ Sometimes attackers would stay “skulking” in the woods around a town, hoping that the defenders would drop their guard or that someone would venture out to a vulnerable position.⁶² When a war party did elect to fight another force, their preferred tactic was that of ambush, sending out a few members ahead as bait, and the rest laying in wait in an acute V formation to catch their enemies in a deadly crossfire.⁶³ Though savage against its individual victims, this method of warfare did not result in gratuitous slaughter, and on the attacker’s part any losses were considered very bad. For this reason war parties traveled near swampy terrain when they could, to better afford escape if they were discovered, and war leaders preferred calling the retreat to risking any likely loss of their warriors’ lives (even when facing an inferior force).⁶⁴

The cultural disconnect between colonial and Cherokee war ways was a major source of friction. The Cherokee war objective of killing or capturing nearby vulnerable individuals meant that white settlers near the borders were at considerable risk. European armies, more concerned with securing strategic locations and fighting other armies, might harass nearby households by confiscating food and supplies, but were far less likely to subject them to violence. Such would not contribute to European style war aims and would be contrary to the ethos of “gentlemanly war.” Cherokee war parties, on the other hand, operated in an exactly opposite manner, which

⁶¹ The Cherokees did learn about European style siege in the Tuscarora War, but almost universally adhered to their own style of warfare thereafter, even with the adoption of European weaponry. Only out of absolute necessity did they attempt a more European kind of siege in dealing with Fort Loudoun (which was dangerously deep in their core territory) during the Anglo-Cherokee War.

⁶² Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation," 720-721.

⁶³ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 1*, 255.

⁶⁴ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 386.

sowed terror in the hearts of colonial settlements. As long as the Cherokees adhered to this style of combat they were an obtruding threat on the diplomatic map.

Cherokees held colonial war methods in contempt. Since they did not value political lordship, European methods of attaining it seemed wasteful and pointless. In 1758, for example, large numbers of Cherokee warriors flocked to Virginia to honor the call to war against the French by their English allies. General John Forbes was in command of the campaign to retake Fort Duquesne, and at the time it was very much a matter of “hurry up and wait.” The English used Cherokee warriors for scouting and as auxiliary soldiers, but delays kept the whole army in place for months at a time. This extended inactivity was a ludicrous state of affairs to the Cherokee mind, and many of them abandoned the field in contempt of the English martial tradition. Forbes recounted as much in his correspondence, writing, “We had very nearly lost all our Cherokees... for the want of artillery did not afford us to show any design to attack the enemy or defend ourselves.”⁶⁵ Virginian authorities eventually cajoled more Cherokee warriors into service, but as the conflict dragged on things continued to deteriorate. Forbes met the Cherokee distaste for his style of warfare with contempt of his own. He sought to bring them to heel with an iron fist, and even thought he had been successful four months later when he wrote, “our Indians I have at last brought to reason by treating them as they always ought to be, with the greatest signs of scorning indifference and disdain.”⁶⁶ The ill wisdom of this approach was proven just months later, as such treatment catalyzed the chain of incidents which led to the Anglo-Cherokee War and cost numerous colonial and Cherokee lives in South Carolina. War ways thus strained the relationship between the two peoples even when they were fighting on the same side.

⁶⁵ John Forbes, *Writings of General John Forbes Relating to His Service in North America* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 109.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 244.

Sport Ways

Cherokee sport ways are best considered as a smaller, localized, nonlethal (usually) iteration of their war ethos. Outside of warfare, sport was one of the main ways Cherokees had to earn prestige and acclaim, and stiff competition existed between rival towns on the regional level, as well as between individuals within a local town. Sport was physical, and emphasized the skills used in warfare, making it a kind of proving grounds where young warriors could train for “the real thing” with minimal risk. Their chief sport, termed “ball play,” was even sometimes called the friend or companion of battle, being considered something like its smaller sibling. For this reason, ball play could be used as a metaphor or euphemism for war, as illustrated by part of the previously mentioned Cherokee Kana’ti myth where the primordial father arranges for the wolf men to kill his two sons for their crime in slaying their own mother,

When the Wolf chief asked him his business, he said: "I have two bad boys at home, and I want you to go in seven days from now and play ball against them." Although Kana'ti spoke as though he wanted them to play a game of ball, the Wolves knew that he meant for them to go and kill the two boys.⁶⁷

Ball play was the precursor to the modern sport of lacrosse, and was played using a leather ball and hickory ball sticks. Goals were placed at either end of a large field by setting up a pair of stakes, and the game was played to twelve points. Competition was fierce, and play proceeded with little precautions taken against injury. Indeed, broken and dislocated bones were not uncommon. The areas chosen for the games were suited to accommodate many spectators, as these were big community events.⁶⁸ Though the players carried the greatest weight of potential earned or lost prestige, the pride of both towns as a whole was also on the line. Spectators further

⁶⁷ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, 245.

⁶⁸ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 62-63.

brought that back down to their own individual persons by placing large bets on the outcome of the play, often even wagering nearly all they owned.⁶⁹

When the men of a town wished to have a ball play, they sent messengers to the town they wanted to play against, and the head men with respect to ball plays arranged a time and place. Because the stakes were so high, and the whole affair so closely approximated actual warfare, the preparations for a match also closely resembled those for a war party. The players sequestered themselves for seven days prior to the match, during which they abstained from contact with women, ate a restricted diet, and participated in ritual washings, dances, and divinations in order to ensure their success on the field. As in actual battle, the Cherokees believed that the side which attained the best purity would be victorious. According to Butrick, “anciently ball players must be men of good character, who play honorably, without fraud or deception. They were famous, men of renown.”⁷⁰

In addition to these large, inter-town games, the Cherokee played a variety of other more casual sports, some using the leather ball and others not. Though women did not participate directly in the ball play described above, they may have played the same game on a smaller scale among themselves, as well as in other active pastimes, sometimes with other women and others along with men.⁷¹ Lieutenant Timberlake greatly enjoyed the spectacle of ball play, including those by men and women, writing, “I was not a little pleased with their ball-plays (in which they shew great dexterity) especially when the women played, who pulled one another about, to the no small amusement of an European spectator.”⁷² Another popular game was called chunky, in which one or two players, rolling a smoothly carved stone disk (called a chunky stone) along a

⁶⁹ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 400-401.

⁷⁰ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 43-44.

⁷¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, 181-182.

⁷² Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 41.

well prepared play area, threw eight foot long poles with the object of striking the ground nearest to where the stone would come to rest. The game could go on for hours, and was partially a test of endurance. It was of ancient origin, and the stones themselves were prized by the town almost as religious artifacts, specially carved instruments handed down by their ancestors.⁷³

Admiring European observers of Cherokee sport ways such as Timberlake did not reflect the prevailing sentiment among colonial settlers. Colonists tended to spend most of their efforts working the ground and less on honing their militia skills, so having nearby Indians whose leisure practices were tantamount to military drills in disguise was disconcerting. While appreciation of the physical prowess and ability of Cherokee sportsmen may have existed, nearby settlers certainly would have preferred that their native neighbors pass the time doing something that looked far less like practice for the next bloody raid on their villages! The Anglo-Cherokee War only intensified such sentiments, particularly as local militia proved unable to hold back the Cherokee warriors, and required the intervention of imperial military regiments to win the conflict. A significant aspect of the fallout from this was the increasing aspiration among white settlers to “reduce the Indian to civility,” so that Cherokee men would spend the bulk of their time plowing the fields rather than playing ball or chunky, or, worse yet, actually on the warpath.

Another cultural conflict arising from sport ways came from the Cherokee use of horses. After the Anglo-Cherokee War, horse stealing became a popular diversion for warriors, and a major complaint against them from the settlers and traders they targeted. While this may have resembled a game in some sense, the stealing itself was not really a part of the Cherokee sport tradition, and troubles arising from theft cannot be wholly laid at the feet of cultural differences. Sport *does* enter the picture however, on the colonial side of things; horsemanship was

⁷³ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 402.

considered by the European higher classes as a part of their own exclusive sport ways, an elite pastime not to be enjoyed by their inferiors. Cherokees stealing common farm horses was a minor irritation, but backcountry elites (often “newly minted,” so to speak, and with a chip on their shoulder) could not countenance low savages appropriating their horses or taking up horsemanship as their own sport.⁷⁴ Reducing the Cherokees to civility meant not only keeping them from warlike sports, but also keeping them *out* of the exclusive sport ways of the noble class.

Food Ways

The Cherokees subsisted on both plants and meat from a variety of different sources. On the main, providing meat was a task which fell to the men of the tribe, and was fulfilled by hunting and fishing; grains, fruits, and vegetables were largely provided by the women who tended to the fields and gardens as well as foraged for wild produce. This fourfold provisioning was a gender balanced affair, composed of farming, foraging, hunting, and fishing. The hunt was especially important during the cold season, and farming during the warmer months, but the Cherokees preserved all their foodstuffs by drying or other methods so that their diet would remain balanced throughout the year.

Cherokee agriculture focused on three main crops, colloquially known among the southeast Indian groups as “the three sisters:” corn, beans, and squash. These three fulfilled an important part of the Cherokees’ dietary needs, particularly corn, as evidenced by the prominence of corn in their religious ways. Nutritionally, corn and beans complement each other particularly well, combining to provide complete proteins. To these two they added squash,

⁷⁴ Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths : Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 182.

which was a productive crop, and easily preserved for leaner months. Pumpkins and summer squash were sometimes dried in strips for travel provisions, but even unprocessed they would keep for long periods if kept in a cool location. The “three sisters” were grown together in the same plot, with the vines of the beanstalks often twining around the corn.⁷⁵ They did not have vast sweeping fields of single crops like Europeans, but rather smaller plots tended by single families in which, as noted, the crops were all grown together. Bartram observed such fields during his visit in 1776, describing them as “little plantations of young Corn Beans, &c, divided from each other by narrow strips or borders of grass, which marked the bounds of each one’s property, their habitation standing in the midst.”⁷⁶ This arrangement greatly lengthened the lifespan of the farmland, since the beans, which replace soil nitrogen, balanced the corn, which drastically depletes it.

The Cherokees, and other North American Indians for that matter, do not appear to have made use of any fertilizers, popular stories about Squanto and burying fish with corn seeds notwithstanding.⁷⁷ Although planting corn and beans together did prolong field use, the Cherokees were obliged to periodically relocate in order to keep their crops productive. In doing so, they developed a circulating pattern of slow town migration, giving fields from ten to twenty years to lie fallow, replenishing their nutrients. The rich soil and easy irrigation of the riverine terrain in Cherokee country made this process viable.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, Cherokee agriculture was insufficient to feed the tribe by itself. The other three methods of provision were needed to

⁷⁵ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 406, 409.

⁷⁶ Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, 284.

⁷⁷ Squanto lived for many years among Europeans before returning to the American continent for his encounter with the New England Separatists. It is likely that he learned this particular method of fertilization abroad from white men, before teaching the European technique back to the unprepared European colonists. See Lynn Ceci, “Fish Fertilizer: A Native North American Practice?,” *Science* 188, (1975), 26-30.

⁷⁸ Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, 288; Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 290-291. Cherokee country (largely the Appalachia region where the Carolinas, Georgia, and Tennessee come together) was riddled with rivers and creeks which supplied ample irrigation and laid down fertile soil deposits.

supply a comfortable existence; as noted when Wahnenuhi recounts that plentiful game meant there was no lack of food.⁷⁹

The hunt was primarily a winter affair for two reasons. First, it was needed to bridge the gap in the growing season, as crops were not being harvested and a new source of food was necessary. Second, game proved to give a particularly rich yield of meat during the winter. Adair commented on this. “The deer are very fat in winter, by reason of the great quantities of chesnuts, and various sorts of acorns, that cover the boundless woods.”⁸⁰ Venison probably made up the majority of the meat in their diet, but it was joined by bear meat, as well as that from a variety of lesser game animals. Turkeys, geese, ducks, and other birds provided a significant source of meat, and were often hunted using a blowdart. According to Timberlake, the children rather than men commonly hunted such small game:

...partridges, pheasants, and an infinity of other birds, pursued only by the children, who, at eight or ten years old, are very expert at killing with a sarbacan, or hollow cane, through which they blow a small dart, whose weakness obliges them to shoot at the eye of the larger sort of prey, which they seldom miss.⁸¹

Fish were another plentiful source of food for the Cherokees. On a small scale, they used spears and fishhooks made of deer and turkey bones to catch them from the streams, sometimes setting up elaborate “trot lines” spanning from bank to bank supporting multiple hooks which could be checked several times a day. Spearfishing from canoes was another method often employed, for which the Cherokees made implements from bamboo like cane, sharpened to a point and hardened in the fire. Their manner of spear fishing was described as being done “with much pleasure and ease.”⁸² For a larger take, the Indians were known to sometimes poison whole pools of fish using buckeye or “devil’s shoestring” root, which killed the fish without corrupting

⁷⁹ Wahnenuhi, “The Wahnenuhi Manuscript,” 193.

⁸⁰ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 415-416.

⁸¹ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 23.

⁸² Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 404.

their meat.⁸³ Another method of catching large amounts of fish at once was the use of funnels or dams, which was, again, described by Timberlake,

Building two walls obliquely down the river from either shore, just as they are near joining, a passage is left to a deep well or reservoir; the Indians then scaring the fish down the river, close the mouth of the reservoir with a large bush or bundle made on purpose, and it is no difficult matter to take them with baskets, when inclosed with- in so small a compass.⁸⁴

The wilderness environment of Cherokee country itself served as a final source of food for the tribe. A vast number of nuts, roots, berries, canes, and wild fruits were readily available for gathering by a diligent forager. Timberlake was delighted by the richness of the produce the forests contained, but mistakenly thought that the Cherokees made little use of it, “The woods likewise abound with fruits and flowers, to which the Indians pay little regard.”⁸⁵ Butrick however, who lived among them for a longer span, was more thorough in his observations. He published a list of eleven major ingredients the Cherokees gleaned from the wilderness, from cane wheat, to various roots, to persimmons.⁸⁶

The meals they produced from these ingredients were varied and well made, much to the delight of European visitors expecting poor and primitive fare. One Indian trader remarked “It is surprising to see the great variety of dishes they make... They can diversify their courses, as much as the English, or perhaps the French cooks: and in either of the ways they dress their food, it is grateful to a wholesome stomach.”⁸⁷ They made great use of corn, of which they had three different varieties for different purposes. From it they baked bread, made hominy, and even soups and beverages. They baked their bread in both large loaves and in thin cakes, and dipped it in oil for eating. They flavored and preserved food with salt, which they processed from moss

⁸³ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 281.

⁸⁴ Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake*, 22.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 134-136.

⁸⁷ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 409.

gathered from creek beds. Oil was their chief condiment, and they used both hickory nut and chestnut oil, which they obtained by boiling the nuts and skimming the oil off the top of the pot, as well as bear oil.⁸⁸ They also ate Bear's meat with relish, and many colonial visitors to Cherokee country were said to begin their stay very squeamish of the offering, but ended up with voracious appetites for bear ribs and bacon.⁸⁹

The Cherokee manner of eating was casual, utilitarian, and hospitable. In most instances there was no real set mealtime, but rather cooks prepared food and made it available to be taken from throughout the day as needed. They regarded food something not to be withheld, and it was unheard of for a hungry Cherokee, or visitor to Cherokee country, to be refused board if it was available. Customarily such provision was an everyday part of life in a Cherokee household: "on rude side-boards, in their camps or cabins, prepared food was always kept, and any persons coming in, were at liberty to help themselves, food was always offered to visitors or strangers stopping, and a refusal to partake of it was considered an insult."⁹⁰ In many towns an invitation was not even considered necessary for one to take and enjoy the food from a house's stores.⁹¹

For drink, the Cherokees were quite ingenious in making a number of sweet beverages from honey locust, hickory, and grape clusters, which were esteemed as extremely delicious by natives and colonials alike. Cherokees did not know of alcohol before contact with Europeans, but by the early nineteenth century they had adopted the making of beer, fermenting it from persimmons.⁹² Alcohol itself was one of the more negative food way imports from European culture. The inhibition loosening properties of liquor had a very strong effect on Indian behavior, particularly as they did not have a developed concept of drinking moderately. Intoxicating

⁸⁸ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 136-137, 181.

⁸⁹ Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 415.

⁹⁰ Wahnenuhi, "The Wahnenuhi Manuscript," 192.

⁹¹ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 433.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 138; Wahnenuhi, "The Wahnenuhi Manuscript," 192.

substances in traditional Cherokee culture were used religiously for enlightening purposes, often connected with communing with animistic spirits or becoming ritually pure. As a consequence, alcohol, when available, was often consumed without restraint, and the resulting violent tendencies were often blamed on the liquor itself rather than on the drunken imbiber. In 1756 Little Carpenter, usually a calm and astute Cherokee statesman, became drunk on rum and threatened Captain Raymond Demere with a broken bottle. Afterwards he apologized, but in a way which deflected blame, claiming that “there were three persons engaged in the difficulty, and not two only; that I [Demere] was the first, himself [Little Carpenter] the second, and Rum the third.”⁹³

Though disruptive, alcohol was not the chief cause of cultural friction from food ways between the Cherokees and colonists. Instead, tensions arose from misunderstandings and differences in methods of obtaining food, particularly in cultivation of the land. As discussed above, the Cherokees derived a large majority of their nutrition from the wilderness itself, both through abundant game and abundant forageable produce. Early European visitors were amazed at the richness of the North American wilderness, its forests were vast and relatively clear of underbrush, and full of nuts and berries, yielding large herds of deer as well as edible plants. They saw this as a lucky break for the natives who had the good fortune of living in such a fruitful country. Their failure was in thinking this to be virgin forest, uncultivated and naturally suited to hunt and harvest. In truth, the Indians purposefully cultivated the wilderness to make it so ideal to meet human needs by their method of limited riverside agriculture and extensive annual woodland burnings.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: 1754-1765*, 146-149.

⁹⁴ W. M. Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (1992), 371-372, 375.

Because this large degree of Cherokee cultivation remained invisible and unrecognized by the colonial population, many saw instead a band of primitives lazily and unproductively living off of particularly fortuitous land. To their own thought, active and rigorous stewardship of real estate was a requirement for continued possession, and in their eyes that meant European style fields of neatly ploughed furrows and fenced in livestock. Since these qualities were absent in Cherokee country, there was a mounting sentiment that the Indians were unworthy to own it, and that the land was thus “up for grabs.” This feeling was possibly best demonstrated in Judge David Campbell’s statement, “No people are entitled to more land than they can cultivate. People will not sit still and starve for land when a neighboring Nation has more than it needs.”⁹⁵ Under the auspices of such justifications settlers increasingly encroached on Cherokee territory over the course of time, and eventually the government embraced a policy of full blown Indian removal.

The Cherokees were not immune to prejudicial thought either, though perhaps in this case its result was somewhat less dramatic. The animistic and sympathetic character of Cherokee thought extended to their food ways, and as a result certain foods were preferred or avoided at certain times because of the qualities they were thought to possess. Sinews, for example, were avoided because to eat them was believed to cause cramps and trouble running.⁹⁶ Similarly a pregnant woman would avoid eating speckled trout for fear that her child would be marred with birthmarks, and a young man training for ball play would not eat rabbit because it was easily frightened and confused and might corrupt him in the same way during the match.⁹⁷ Because of their appearance, the Cherokees regarded the European domesticated livestock of the colonists such as cattle and hogs as slovenly and disgusting, and they consequently felt that the colonists

⁹⁵ John Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West, 1838* (Kingsport: Southern Publishers, 1938), 197.

⁹⁶ Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers Volume 2*, 52.

⁹⁷ Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 321, 411.

themselves were brought to such a contemptible level by their keeping and continually consuming them.⁹⁸ During the time of Dragging Canoe's Chickamauga offensive against white settlers, Cherokee raiders delighted in killing the penned cattle, using bows and arrows for the purpose because they disdained of wasting powder and bullets on them.⁹⁹ Food way inconsistencies between the two cultures caused mutual dislike, of the "lazy, unproductive Indian" on one hand, and of the "slovenly hog-like and cow-like white man" on the other. These sorts of attitudes made for constant erosion in goodwill, and eventually paved the way for crisis points where Anglo-Cherokee relations would break down altogether.

There are two sides to the way these more visible aspects of culture interacted between the Cherokees and the colonists. On the one hand, acculturation was far more possible in this realm, as opposed to the deeper structures of social life and fundamental beliefs. Cherokees readily adopted, for example, European trade goods and even building practices. Over time, Europeans and Indians learned to communicate more clearly and became somewhat less alien to each other. On the other hand, the immediacy of the differences that visible culture made apparent created the contact point where tensions and animosity began. These facets of the two cultures were at once their most flexible, and were also where the most jarring of conflicts manifested. The irritations which rippled out from the collision of cultural ways on this level resulted in bloody raids on settlements, wars of revenge, and greedy land-grabs. This was the arena in which the two peoples clashed and their mutual peace shattered.

⁹⁸ Gary Goodwin, *Cherokees in Transition : A Study of Changing Culture and Environment Prior to 1775* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Dept. of Geography, 1977), 135.

⁹⁹ Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West*, 1838, 212-213.

Conclusion

Cultural values, even within a community, are not always consistent, and thus do not always dictate consistent behavior. Cherokees believed in promoting harmony among men, and yet many individual warriors robbed and murdered from colonial settlements. Euro-American Christians preached strongly against avarice and dishonesty, yet this did not stop rogue traders from using false weights and measures to cheat Indians out of their hard earned deerskins. What cultural ideologies *did* do was to color how these people felt about each other, and as cultural discontinuity cumulatively created hostile sentiments such disruptive incidents occurred with increased frequency. In 1733 corrupt traders caused friction by abusing the Cherokee in their own towns.¹ In 1734 those tensions came to a head when Cherokee warriors responded by seizing the property of a South Carolina trader for his actions.² In 1746 a trader was instead murdered, reflecting the escalation of incidents. A major crisis was averted when some Cherokees killed and mutilated the murderer in order to appease the angry Carolinians.³ Over the next decade colonial settlers on the Carolina border further upped the ante by encroaching on Cherokee lands, refusing to vacate when the natives complained to their government. This, in turn, invited more violence such as the murder of several settlers in Rowan county, North Carolina in 1759.⁴ These are only a few of the attested altercations which culminated in the major diplomatic breaking point of the Anglo-Cherokee war. As these conflicts became a history of continued disputes, this pattern only repeated itself with even more bitter iterations as the two

¹ "To Printer of the Gazette, Sir," *South Carolina Gazette*, April 21, 1733 .

² Fred Gearing, "Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century," *American Anthropological Association* 64, no. 5 (1962) 86.

³ Neither the town nor the name of the victim are recorded, but an otherwise detailed account of the incident survives. See John Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina : From the Earliest Periods to the Close of the War of Independence* (Charleston: S.G. Courtenay & Co., 1859), 457.

⁴ "Charles-Town, Sept. 22," *South Carolina Gazette*, September 22, 1759 .

alien cultures clashed in the Revolutionary War, and then with Dragging Canoe's extended Chickamauga offensive against white settlements. By the early nineteenth century Cherokee military might was vastly overpowered, and it was not long after the United States crushed the Cherokee ability to resist that it expelled them from their ancestral lands altogether in the Trail of Tears.

These were the results of the deterioration of Anglo-Cherokee relations, and in many ways they were a function of demographics. The superior military technology used by Europeans did play a role in the outcome of colonial conflicts with the Indians, but population levels were a far more vital factor. The introduction of European diseases to America, and the fluke that those diseases proved to be devastating to the Indian population without a reciprocal effect on colonial lives, meant that once large masses of settlers began emigrating from the Old World denizens of the New were quickly outnumbered. Thorough study of similar colonial ventures in Africa, where new diseases did *not* reduce the indigenous population, demonstrate that more sophisticated technology was not nearly enough to establish colonial dominance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵ This was not a problem the Cherokee were blind to. Judd's Friend, a prominent Cherokee warrior and diplomat who visited London after the Anglo-Cherokee War, stated in 1763 that "our women are breeding children night and day to increase our people."⁶ Already outnumbered, and with epidemics still running rampant, it proved impossible to stem the tide of colonial advance. Perhaps a concerted effort at united resistance on the part of North American Indians might have been of some use, but by the time any such

⁵ For a full treatment of this subject see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 98-125.

⁶ Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths : Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 163.

undertaking materialized it was too little too late.⁷ Euro-Americans pushed the Cherokee and other Indians out of their territory and assumed sovereignty over the continent.

In drawing conclusions it is important to separate such results from the cause of the conflict itself. It is easy, looking back with a sympathetic eye from plush armchairs in the twenty-first century, to cast all the blame at the feet of the “greedy and ruthless” white man. To do so pollutes the analysis by allowing the tragedy of the final result to overwhelm objectivity. Effect does not determine cause. A more perspicuous vantage reveals that cultural differences caused both sides to develop mutual animosity, and the resulting friction created breaks in the peace. The effect of these cultural differences might have been mitigated by more tolerant attitudes on either side, but that cannot be known because both colonists and Cherokees were strongly ethnocentric and lacked the cultural flexibility for such toleration to prevail. This is a charge often leveled against the colonies, but rarely applied to native tribes because the eventual results of the conflict victimized them to the extent that they act as analytical blinders. That the Cherokee were ethnocentric should, however, not come as a surprise: they were after all the tribe who called themselves *ani yun wiya*, “the real people.” The myriad of cultural factors discussed in the preceding three chapters demonstrate that misunderstandings and disagreements between the two foreign peoples caused friction and ill will which prompted aggression on the part of both colonist and Cherokee.

Certainly some folk ways were more contentious than others, and the key facet as to which were more so has to do with flexibility. The three tiered approach to cultural ways,

⁷ Pan-Indianism, often correlated with Tecumseh and his efforts at Prophetstown, actually saw its greatest successes in the 1780s and 1790s when Shawnee, Chickamauga, Creek, and other native forces came together. American military successes against the Chickamauga Cherokees in 1794 brought this endeavor to an end. For a detailed treatment of the subject, see Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance : The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 111-112.

identifying basic beliefs, structural culture, and visible culture ways reveals that the least flexible culture ways most responsible for causing tensions are those at the foundational level. Structural culture is slightly more malleable and ready to accommodate new ideas, and surface level culture ways are the most susceptible to adaptation and acculturation. Cherokees and colonials alike readily accepted all sorts of material culture, such as firearms, textiles, moccasins, and tobacco. Social structures adapted to foreign influence over time, but factors such as wealth and gender ways were slow to change and created a great deal of friction in the meantime. Deeper levels of culture were far less penetrable, such as customs relating to religious beliefs and freedom ways.

Three different cases of conflict and acculturation can illustrate this. In the case of townships, both Cherokee and colonial deeper cultural foundations rested on similar beliefs about living in harmony with one's fellows, responsibility to the community because of common ancestry, and the veneration of elders because of their accumulated wisdom. These basic beliefs created the space for family and town structures which emphasized community. In these broad categories the two cultures shared much common ground. On the surface level, however, technological and cultural variations resulted in far different styles of physical buildings and layouts between English and Cherokee towns. Cherokees lacked refined building materials such as lumbered wood and dressed stone, and had the peculiar habit of building separate houses for summer and winter. These differences were minor, and thus caused very little cultural friction.⁸ Acculturation was easily accomplished, and once the Cherokee acquired and mastered the use of advanced metal tools, they quickly adopted building styles very similar to colonial building ways. Where cultural discontinuity occurred mainly on the plane of visible culture, little friction occurred.

⁸ At the most, Euro-Americans could perceive primitive native building ways as signs of their own superiority over the Indians, and thus magnify an arrogant bearing which could be abrasive.

Both Cherokees and colonists believed in fundamental differences between men and women. They drew strong distinctions between the two, and held to strong taboos regarding behavior and gender roles firmly based in their religious traditions. On a structural level, however, the two cultures differed in what exactly the proper roles for the sexes were, and also in what the suitable accompanying taboos ought to be. Conflicting family (matrilineal versus patrilineal) and labor (women versus men as primary agricultural workers) folk ways are a testament to this. These differences caused significant conflict on the surface level, where colonists severely disapproved of Cherokee men and their lazy lifestyle of hunting while forcing their women to work the fields, and also equally despised the autonomy they observed in Cherokee women as a result of the seven clans' matrilineal living patterns. Even in the early nineteenth century when the United States government's program of "civilizing" the Cherokee was in full swing, acculturation on this level was slow.⁹

The most divisive of cultural clashes occurred in areas where all three tiers were in conflict. Cherokee and Anglo-American disagreement about the nature of the world around them made for a foundational cultural divergence with far reaching consequences. The animism of the Cherokee religion caused them to see the land itself as possessing a multitude of spirits with which, for good or ill, the tribe had to contend. They could be appeased or avoided, but never discounted. This combined with their conception of wealth to arrive at a communal structure of land use. The land properly belonged to the spirits which inhabited it, so while it may be used by one person or another at certain times, it was always on a temporary basis and never true ownership. This, of course, clashed directly with colonial beliefs based on a long tradition of feudal hierarchy, the right of kings, and religious belief in sovereign stewardship handed down

⁹ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 189-190.

by God. On the level of visible culture, this resulted in land sales perceived as permanent rights of ownership by colonists, but only as temporary permission to use the ground by Indians. It also led to colonial opinions that the Cherokees were not acting as proper stewards of the land, and therefore could be justly removed in favor of proper owners (i.e., themselves). In this case, all three tiers of culture were in disagreement, and the resulting clash of values eventually tore amicable relations apart.

There are a number of other factors which contributed to this mix of culture and diplomacy, either mitigating or exacerbating the effects of the cultural discontinuities. One of these is the existence of substantially influential third parties, such as the French and the other surrounding Indian tribes. The English and French were engaged in a struggle for colonial dominance in North America, and the allegiance of powerful native communities was a key facet in the competition. The English considered their alliance with the Cherokee (who commanded around 3,000 gunmen) to be the cornerstone in their strategic defense of the southern colonies. Governor James Glen of South Carolina noted these impressive numbers, calling them “a bulwark at our backs, for such numbers will always secure us on that quarter, from the attempts of the French.”¹⁰ For this reason, colonial authorities were often reluctant to act aggressively against the Cherokee when cultural tensions stressed relations, preferring instead to put balance of power ahead of social sentiments. Similar considerations occurred on the Cherokee side of the equation as they relied on English trade for arms to keep up their wars with the Creeks, Iroquois, and other native enemies. On occasions where violent incidents caused minor diplomatic breaks,

¹⁰ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: May 21, 1750 - August 7, 1754*, ed. William McDowell (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 52.

such as in 1751 when a series of thefts and killings resulted in South Carolina embargoing trade, both parties worked to repair diplomatic relations as quickly and expediently as possible.¹¹

The French were, as suggested by Glen's concerns, not just a common enemy but also a competitor for Cherokee alliance. French diplomacy was more attuned to Indian folk ways and cultural sensibilities, which gave them an edge in amassing native allies. They were more generous with gifts and less overt in showing a snide, superior attitude in their dealings. For this reason, the English had to rely on their ability to supply better trade goods in larger quantity in order to keep the Cherokee aligned with them. Henry Timberlake noted just this in his memoirs, commenting that they were off put by English arrogance and, "much more inclined to the French... but trade primarily make the English a better choice for alignment."¹²

Yet another factor which impacted cultural interchange over the course of the eighteenth century was the wider perception of race as a relevant differentiator. The Seven Years War in particular was a time when colonial sentiment turned against Indians as a whole. French Indian allies attacked English border settlements, and widespread reports of Indian massacres during the conflict triggered hysteria and anti-Indian propaganda. Though most colonists did not actually experience Indian war personally, the terror of the savage threat spread like wildfire. The ensuing consolidation of fear and animosity with already chaffing cultural differences led to increasing racism against native tribes among the English colonies. The fact that racism against Africans was already becoming normalized in plantation colonies only made adding Indians to the list of feared and despised races that much easier. This affected the Cherokees in particular due to their close proximity to the southern plantation colonies of Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. Both

¹¹Ibid., 189-196.

¹²Henry Timberlake, *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake* (Cherokee: Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, 2007), 37.

brands of racism appear to have been purposefully utilized to unify the diverse white emigrants into a politically viable whole.¹³

Racism was not solely a Euro-American sin however. Among the Cherokee and other Indian tribes there was growing sentiment that the white man constituted a corrupt race which should be driven back to the continent of their origin. Native “revitalization movements” preached that acceptance of colonial cultural ways and trade goods had removed Indians from their former “pure” ways and brought disaster on their heads. Much akin to how Cherokees blamed losses in war or in ball play on ritual impurity, they blamed their decreasing population levels and the increase of colonial encroachment on their hunting grounds on *cultural* impurity. The popularity of this line of thinking led longtime enemies such as the Cherokees and Creeks to unify in solidarity against the whites, greatly contributing to the Pan-Indian movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Curiously, this created a nationalistic sentiment among the Indians which had never before existed, and was more similar to European structures than they would have liked to admit. Brand new religious ideas were invented to accommodate the movement such as *polygenesis*, the idea that Indians and whites were created separately and ought to live separately. Cultural conflicts thus eventually created strong racist animosity on both sides, which then served to further increase cultural tensions even more. The temporary solidarity Pan-Indiansim created in the Cherokee community eventually gave way as their ability to resist colonial encroachment deteriorated, and the people fractured into nationalist and accommodationist factions which only weakened them in the run-up to the Trail of Tears.¹⁴

¹³ For a detailed analysis of increasing anti-Indian racism during the Seven Years War see Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). For how slavery and anti-African racism increased see Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975).

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of Pan-Indianism and anti-white racist sentiment see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815*.

The diplomatic relationship between the Cherokee and English colonists (and later the United States) was complex and affected by many variables. Chief among them were the cultural differences between the two peoples and how those differences interacted. Because the two groups were from long separated and isolated continents, their cultural ways were almost entirely alien to one another, with only the shared nature of the human condition to give them any common ground. Initially they had much to offer each other, with trade and military alliance becoming the foundation of their relationship. As the two communities grew closer together, however, and their incompatible folk ways collided more and more frequently, good relations deteriorated into bad. Plenty of individuals on either side were willing to bridge the gap, but were too few to resist the destructive inertia of the ongoing cultural collision. On the whole, both Cherokee and Anglo-American communities in aggregate were ethnocentric and unwilling to live in close proximity with toleration. Huge demographic imbalance gave colonists the advantage and allowed them to encroach on Cherokee territory with increasing success. The Cherokee responded in two natural ways, with armed resistance and with acculturation. Both recourses were unable to surmount the rising tide of animosity. Armed resistance failed when American frontier armies crushed its power base in Chickamauga. Acculturation failed because by the time it began to bring Cherokee folk ways into harmony with Anglo-American ones, anti-Indian animosity was already too deeply rooted in colonial culture to overcome before the United States took decisive steps. Those steps culminated in 1838 with the removal of the Cherokee Indians from their ancestral lands and over the Mississippi River.

Extreme cultural diversity in close proximity proved to be a recipe for tragedy. Perhaps the greater tragedy is that this need not have been the case. Neither Cherokee nor colonial cultures were inherently contentious, and both in fact held to traditions for peace and harmony

among men. The Cherokee chief Drowning Bear , after hearing passages translated from his Euro-American neighbor's Bible, remarked, "It seems a good book; it is strange that the white man, who has had it for so long, is no better than he is."¹⁵ Much the same might be said of Cherokee raiders who massacred English traders for deerskins despite the ancient teachings of their priests. In the history of the Cherokee and the colonies, baser aspects of both cultures won out over their virtues. One might wish that the population at large had followed the lead of the Cherokee beloved man of Tellico who espoused that it was "good to be at peace with all kings,"¹⁶ as well as the Christian teaching, "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."¹⁷

¹⁵ Quoted in John Brown, *Old Frontiers; the Story of the Cherokee Indians from Earliest Times to the Date of Their Removal to the West, 1838* (Kingsport: Southern Publishers, 1938), 495.

¹⁶ *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs: 1754-1765*, ed. William Mcdowell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 214.

¹⁷ Romans 12:18 (King James Version).

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