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MULTIPLE AND SITUATIONAL IDENTITY EXPRESSION AS IT RELATES TO CULTURAL CHANGE: THE POST-CONTACT CHOCTAW AS A CASE STUDY

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts	degree in	Anthropology

Major Professor's Signature

May 5, 2003

Date

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By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Anthropology

2003

ABSTRACT

MULTIPLE AND SITUATIONAL IDENTITY EXPRESSION AS IT RELATES TO CULTURAL CHANGE: THE POST-CONTACT CHOCTAW AS A CASE STUDY

By

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This study argues that identity expression is a process that is tied directly to cultural change and that individuals maintain and express multiple and contextual identities based on a system's cultural components such as politics, economy, or religion. Social systems, such as the Choctaw system examined here, persist through time yet experience sufficient cultural change to be radically different fro one point in time to the next. An emphasis on individuals and identity expression allows for a closer examination of processes that result in cultural change. The post-contact Choctaw are used as a case study to discuss identity expression and cultural change because there is clear documentary and archaeological evidence of their participation in multiple contact situations. These situations resulted in the introduction of new social phenomena, the adoption and expression of multiple identities and, ultimately, in changes within their cultural components.

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural change and the reproduction of social systems are two of the primary issues in anthropological theory, and issues of individual agency and identity have become central concerns in many approaches to these topics. Early theoretical approaches to identity generally used social identities for description and classification purposes (see Boas 1896; Binford 1965), rather than for explanation or interpretation. More recent studies (see Jones 1997; Giddens 1984) have attempted to shift the focus away from description, to examine the *how* and *why* of identity formation and to view identity expression, and the associated behaviors, as a process tied to cultural change. While many recent approaches do recognize the explanatory power of social identities, they tend to emphasize the importance of broad, over-arching identities (e.g. "American") over those that are more specific and contextual, such as those based on politics, religion, or economy.

The argument presented in this study recognizes the importance of those over-arching identities and ties them to social systems. The real emphasis, however, is placed on contextual and situational identity expression, cultural change, and systemic reproduction. Social systems, such as the American, British, French or Choctaw systems, persist through time, yet experience sufficient cultural change to be radically culturally different from one point in time to the next. For example, the Choctaw of the twenty-first century are culturally different from the Choctaw of the nineteenth century, yet their social system is still intact, as is its related Choctaw identity. This study suggests that identity expression is a process that is tied directly to cultural change. It is further

suggested that individuals maintain and express multiple and contextual identities based on a system's cultural components such as politics, economy, or religion. These multiple and contextual identities are subsumed within a larger collective identity, tied to the social system, and may be adopted, expressed, rejected, or ignored based on perceived political, economic, or social advantages. Studies that focus on these specific identities, and behaviors tied to identity expression, may provide us with more detailed information about a social system, which in turn allows us to examine cultural change and systemic reproduction more closely.

An emphasis on individuals and identity expression allows for a closer examination of processes that result in cultural change. Change within cultural components is a result of human actions or agency, often at the level of the individual. These actions are tied to identity, and it is through evidence of identity expression that cultural change is visible. Within a given social system, there may be many variations within the associated cultural components (e.g. political parties, religious denominations, economic classes). As individuals make choices, based on perceived advantages, about which variations to accept or reject, they must behave in ways that are appropriate to their choices. These behaviors allow them to legitimately express identities tied to the cultural component variations, and these actions and choices ultimately lead to cultural change.

Using the Choctaw to discuss identity expression and cultural change is appropriate because there is clear documentary and archaeological evidence of their participation in multiple contact situations. These situations resulted in the introduction of new social phenomena and, ultimately, in changes within the system. Each contact situation resulted

in new interactions and relationships that required construction or rejection of new identities based on perceived advantages or disadvantages. It is particularly useful to examine the cultural components and associated identities subsumed within the larger Choctaw social system and to discuss the processes by which these components changed. The adoption and expression of multiple and situational identities will be seen as markers of these cultural changes.

Due to the availability of Choctaw documentary and archaeological material dating from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, this discussion will be limited to that particular time frame. A detailed discussion of the post-European contact history of the Choctaw peoples is necessary in order to view the actions of individuals and understand how those actions contributed to changes within the Choctaw cultural components.

While initial European contact with the peoples of the Mississippi and Tombigbee River valleys occurred during sixteenth century Spanish exploration of the region, archaeological and documentary evidence is not currently extensive enough to fully discuss the contextual identities of the indigenous populations during this period. More evidence is available from the eighteenth century French presence, as well as the later British and American occupations of the area.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, both the French and British were engaged in trade relationships with the peoples of the Tombigbee River Valley. There were approximately fifty villages in the region, creating a loose confederacy of three larger districts. These districts could act collectively in economic and political matters, but more often they acted independently of one another.

Even prior to European contact, the peoples of these districts were expressing and utilizing contextual identities. Each group spoke different dialects and identified primarily with their district. However, in the context of inter-tribal economic relationships, they used a common trade language and identity associated with the confederacy. In political relationships or warfare, the confederacy could act as a collective, or the districts could enter into individual relationships with other groups.

After contact, trade relationships and political alliances remained fluid, with individual districts often loosely allying themselves with either the French or the British. In the 1740's hostilities between French and English traders erupted in warfare. The districts were divided in their alliances, with one district siding with the French, one with the British, and one district split between the European factions.

Because of this division in alliances, the French attempted to impose a collective political structure and identity on the districts. To a certain extent; the "Choctaw" collective identity was an eighteenth century political construct. This collective identity was imposed by the French because the lack of centralized government made political and economic relations difficult for the colonial powers. The people of the districts rejected this imposed political collective and continued to emphasize their separate identities.

In addition to these separate district affiliations, individuals were able to create and express other multiple contextual identities, both in their relationships with Europeans and with other indigenous peoples. Because marriage between districts was not uncommon, individuals could claim alliance with more than one district based on perceived trade or military advantages. A claim to allegiance outside one's home district,

however, did not necessarily mean that an individual identified in any other way with the other district. He or she was simply expressing a situational identity in order to maximize economic or political benefit.

In the nineteenth century, American expansion into the Choctaw homeland brought huge increases in the white population, as well as a new economic system based on plantation agriculture. The various peoples of the Tombigbee and Mississippi River valleys soon concluded that the only way to compete, politically and economically, with the Americans would be to identify and act collectively as *the Choctaw* (see Blitz 1985). This collective identity gave them the advantage of increased territory, population size, and bargaining power in their relationship with the American government.

While a strong collective identity may have been advantageous in the context of Choctaw interactions with Americans, kinship and district affiliations continued to be expressed in intra-tribal relationships, as well as in relationships with other Native American peoples. In the nineteenth century, an additional division occurred within Choctaw society, one that separated traditionalist Choctaw from those who were more progressive in their goals for the Choctaw peoples. Multiple and contextual identities were expressed by members of each of these groups, but this study will focus on several progressive families due to the availability of documentary and archaeological evidence pertaining to this group.

The examples of multiple and situational identities presented in this paper demonstrate the importance of emphasizing individual agency when discussing cultural change. Individuals express and maintain multiple identities which are visible within both the documentary and archaeological records. These multiple and contextual identities are

often subsumed within a larger collective identity, but should not be ignored in discussions of social groups and interactions. The behaviors and actions associated with these identities are the driving force behind change within cultural components. To identify "the Choctaw" as a social system is meaningful on several levels, but our understanding of that system is greatly enhanced when we closely examine the cultural components subsumed within the larger system, and look to individual agency, identity categories and the contextual expression of those identities.

Chapter One of this study discusses the role of the individual in the process of cultural change. Practice theory is presented as a viable theoretical framework on which the study of identity, social systems, and change can be based.

Chapter Two presents the historical background of the Choctaw peoples, from first European contact to the end of European interactions with the Choctaw Nation. Within this historical context, the development and use of multiple identities is explored as they are tied to the introduction of new cultural phenomena and change within the various components. Identity expression is presented as a strategizing tool tied to the long and short-term goals of the individual, as well as cultural change.

Chapter Three examines the nineteenth century and Choctaw interactions with Americans. Again, change within the components is emphasized within this section, but the focus is on specific Choctaw individuals and families. Through documentary evidence produced by these individuals, their behaviors and identities are presented as tools tied to individual goals, and linked to cultural changes.

Methodology

In order to discuss multiple and situational identities and cultural change among the post-contact Choctaw, primary and secondary documents sources were consulted to obtain the historical information and personal accounts required to observe identity expression and cultural change through time. Secondary source material was used in the discussion of Choctaw-European interactions during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, as many comprehensive accounts of the contact-period history of the southeast have already been published.

These secondary accounts discuss European exploration of the region, contact with the proto-Choctaw peoples, trade relations, politics, and religious relationships between the Choctaw and Europeans. The sources used in this study can be categorized by period: Spanish exploration in the sixteenth century, French and English contact in the eighteenth century, and American encroachment in the nineteenth century. While bias and issues of interpretation are always important considerations when using secondary sources, these accounts can provide valuable material for Choctaw ethnohistory during the early contact periods.

The discussion of nineteenth-century Choctaw history, however, utilizes primary documents produced by the actors discussed in this study. These documents include personal letters written between prominent members of the Choctaw community, school records from the mission schools that served the Choctaw, and court records and wills produced by, or pertaining to, the individuals discussed in this study. These records provide examples of multiple and situational identity expression and cultural change in

that they allow us to view and interpret the actions, beliefs and goals of the individual players as they were choosing and expressing identities related to variations within the cultural components, and behaving as rational agents within their social system.

Source material was chosen on the basis of its relation to the individuals discussed in this study. All known letters, records, photos, and accounts that were produced by members of the Choctaw community and provided clear examples of identity expression (e.g. use of two languages in the document text, reference to participation in or association with a particular religious, political, or business groups, etc.) were consulted and collected.

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Background

The reproduction of social systems is one of the primary concerns of modern anthropology, as is the issue of cultural change within those systems. Prior to the 1960's, much of the effort within the social sciences was directed toward the description and classification of human groups and societies. Approaches that emphasized race or culture histories represented human social groups as both static and bounded. They also contributed to assumptions that human societies were ordered and in a state of equilibrium, and that cultural practices tended to be uniform throughout a society. As a result, societies were represented as "homogenous unit[s], unchanging through time" (Jones 1997: 49).

In the 1960's, a growing concern with social process led to new approaches, such as structuralism and processualism, that emphasized the dynamic nature of social and cultural phenomena. These theoretical frameworks allowed social units to be viewed as functioning systems that are heterogeneous and fluid, as opposed to being monolithic and static (Kahn 1989: 14). In later decades, a growing concern with issues of power, dominance and resistance contributed to a greater emphasis on agency and the role of the individual in cultural change. As the role of the individual has gained greater importance in anthropological studies, so has the issue of identity.

In order to avoid relying on static, over-arching identities to discuss human diversity, and perpetuating the tendency to fall back on descriptive categories of difference, it is necessary to examine individual agency as a catalyst for cultural change. In this study, agency will be discussed in terms of multiple and situational identity formation and

expression. Most social interactions, whether on the individual or group level, require some type of identification process in order to establish membership within a particular group, or to acknowledge boundaries between two groups (Hodder 1982: 32).

Identities, and the construction of those identities, reflect the ways in which individuals and societies define themselves and those with whom they interact. Every level of social interaction, from kinship relations to economic and political alliances, is intimately tied to individual and group identities. Identity construction is the process by which "we" create "them" and, through contrast and opposition, create ourselves (Bond and Gilliam, 13). It is this behavioral process of identity construction, social interaction, and boundary maintenance that directly contributes to cultural change and reproduction of social systems.

Social systems can be described as boundaries or frameworks within which cultural components are subsumed. Individual agency and identity expression are directly tied to changes within the cultural components, as it is through the decisions and actions of individuals within the system that cultural change occurs.

Traditionally, anthropological studies have tended to emphasize identities tied to the social system over identities associated with the cultural components when discussing human actions and interactions (e.g. Boas 1896; Steward 1955). While larger systems and group identities do provide descriptive information on group interactions and boundary maintenance, examination of cultural components and their related identities allows us to examine how individuals construct and express multiple identities, and how these identities are used situationally and contextually. It is through the construction and

expression of multiple identities that we are able to examine cultural change and systemic reproduction.

In this study, individual agency and identity expression are presented as the driving forces behind cultural change within the proto-Choctaw and Choctaw social systems. In other words, a number of cultural components are subsumed within the larger social systems. These smaller components include, but are not limited to, politics, religion, economy, and the arts. As a result of European contact, variation at the cultural level occurred in the form new religious choices (Christianity and its many denominations); political options (alliances with one or more of the European groups; nineteenth century choices stemming from Removal politics and slavery issues); economic activities (movement from hunting/gathering to participation in a market economy); and even kinship diversity stemming from marriage ties to European families. Individuals within the proto-Choctaw and Choctaw communities were able to make choices and express identities that would be politically, economically, and socially advantageous to them.

Changes within the cultural components did not occur unless individuals within the society were willing to accept them. For example, Christian beliefs and practices would not have been adopted had there not been a perceived advantage in doing so. The adoption of these changes did not mean that existing cultural traits were abandoned; it simply meant that the components became more diverse and choices were expanded. This enabled individuals to express multiple and situational identities which were tied to variations within the cultural components. The expression of these multiple identities allows us to see the cultural changes that were taking place within the social systems, even as the proto-Choctaw systems became subsumed within the singular, expanded

Choctaw social system during the nineteenth century. This process of change and the creation of a singular Choctaw social system will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

A single Choctaw individual could identify as a hunter or planter, a political traditionalist or progressive, and a Baptist or Presbyterian Christian, depending on the social, political or economic interactions in which they were engaged, and the perceived advantages to expressing one identity over another. The adoption of new political, economic, or religious behaviors, and the expression of identities associated with them, resulted in change within the proto-Choctaw cultural components.

These changes resulted in the creation of a single Choctaw social system comprised of the cultural components of several proto-Choctaw systems. The resulting Choctaw identity continues to exist but, over time, what it has meant to *be* Choctaw has been altered as a result of the cultural changes. The emergence of a singular Choctaw social system reinforced the boundary between the Choctaw and the Euro- American invaders and allowed the people within the system to resist acculturation and assimilation and maintain their separate Choctaw identity.

In order to explore cultural changes and multiple identity expression, we must first understand how cultural components are formed, and the role of individual agency in the maintenance and/or change of those components. Practice theory provides an appropriate framework for understanding the process of change, and places an emphasis on the role of the individual within social systems and their components.

Practice Theory and Identity

Within anthropology, a movement toward a theory of practice began in the 1970's as part of a reaction against approaches such as structuralism and political economy, which tended to explain social and cultural phenomena by referring them to bounded social structures. Beginning in the late seventies, following the publication of the English translation of Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), calls for an approach which focused on the individual, agency, action, and interaction became more prevalent (see Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1977; Jones 1997; Ortner 1984; Lightfoot 1998).

Practice approaches seek to explain the relationship between human actions and cultural components. Practice, as defined by Ortner (1984: 393), is "anything people do". Practice theory attempts to explain the manner in which cultural components are formed and how human agents, through their actions, serve to produce, reproduce and change those components. Unlike earlier approaches, however, "the system" in which these components are subsumed is not viewed as a bounded, historical unit imbued with explanatory power. As Giddens (1984) has asserted, the system has no actual goals; it does not *do* anything. It is through the actions of individuals within the system that the cultural components change and the social system is reproduced.

Practice Theory defines certain terms differently than other theoretical approaches. For the purposes of clarity, these terms will be defined as follows, except where specifically noted in the text.

Social systems – patterns of social relationships across time and space, often tied to geography or kinship, that create a boundary between human groups and a framework for cultural components (see Giddens 1984). They are systems because change within one component will often result in change within another component (e.g. changes within the economy may result in changes in the political component) (see Handel 1993).

Cultural component- a term that is used much like Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural field" in that it refers to "a series of institutions, rules, conventions, categories, designations, and appointments which constitutes an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities" (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 1993). In this study, cultural components will include, but not be limited to, politics, economy, religion, and the arts.

Disposition - a particular perspective or understanding of practices that allows an individual to participate within a cultural component and to express the historically constituted values of that particular component (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 1993). In other words, the ability to "walk the walk and talk the talk" of a particular cultural component or its variations.

Structure- rules and resources, traditions, institutions, moral codes, and established ways of doing things. These can be changed when actors choose to ignore or replace them (Giddens 1984).

Systemic reproduction – boundary and identity maintenance over time, despite changes within cultural components. The Choctaw social system continues to exist as a social boundary and identity, despite dramatic changes within the cultural components over time.

Cultural change – alterations or variations within cultural components, often occurring when new cultural phenomena are introduced to a system through contact or invention.

The role of individual agency is a key element within most approaches to practice theory. Generally, the acting units are defined as individual actors or small social groups, and actions often take the form of either short-term moves (Bourdieu 1977: 15), or long-range plans (Sahlins 1985; Jones 1997; Lightfoot 1998). Actions are seen to be conscious, intentional, and oriented toward the goals of the individual. These same actions may also result in *unintentional* changes to the cultural components, of which the individual may be unaware.

For example, Sahlins' (1985) discussion of Cook's arrival in Hawaii illustrates that unintended large-scale changes occurred within the Hawaiian cultural components as a result of reproductive choices that were made by individual Hawaiian women. Many of these women believed that children fathered by European men would be imbued with specific power or prestige. These actions, however, resulted in unintended changes to the existing marriage and kinship components which, in turn, resulted in changes to the Hawaiian religious, political, and economic components.

But what informs agency and determines appropriate behaviors? Most practice-oriented approaches view actions as patterned and routine forms of behavior which have a recursive relationship with the cultural components and the social system as a whole. Structures are sets of rules and resources which are informed by the components and system, but also act to reproduce the system and its components. These structures exist "only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability" (Giddens 1984:

377). According to this approach, cultural rules are learned and reinforced in the course of cultural interactions, whether these interactions take the form of the behavioral conditioning of children at the household level, or the social, political, and economic relations of adults. These internalized rules or structures then inform actions and behaviors, which are conscious, intentional, and tied to pragmatic choice and individual strategizing (Giddens 1982: 9).

In Bourdieu's theory of practice, cultural components inform and constrain action and take the form of *habitus*, which he defines as "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules" (Bourdieu 1977: 72). In other words, *habitus* provides individuals with a subjective model of reality. It is a culture-based system of internalized structures, modes of perception and action that are common to all members of a group or class, and constitutes the "collective unconscious" of those in similar positions because it provides guidelines for behaviors and actions. According to Crossley, "An agent's *habitus* is an active residue or sediment of his past that functions within his present, shaping his perception, thought, and action and thereby molding social practice in a regular way" (2001: 83).

Actions, then, are dictated by internalized structures and rules that are common to all members of a particular social system. These actions then serve to produce cultural changes and are motivated by pragmatic choice and strategizing by individuals. According to Ortner (1984), the issue of domination is central to many practice

approaches. These arguments emphasize forms of practice that have intentional or unintentional political implications. Motivation is then explained through interest theory, which holds that actors are "essentially individualistic, and somewhat aggressive... self-interested, rational, pragmatic, and perhaps with a maximizing orientation as well. What actors do, it is assumed, is rationally go after what they want, and what they want is materially and economically useful for them within the context of their cultural and historical situations" (Ortner 1984: 395). Individual actions are then treated in terms of long-range goals or projects (see Geertz 1973; Giddens 1982; Sahlins 1985; Lightfoot 1998), as opposed to short-term, single "moves". An emphasis on these "projects" illustrates that "action itself *has* (developmental) structure, as well as operating *in*, and in relation *to*, structure" (Ortner 1984: 394, emphasis in original).

Most practice approaches, then, agree that a recursive relationship exists between cultural components and practice in that the components dictate and constrain behavior, while those behaviors result in cultural change. Cultural change through practice is an area of particular interest to many adherents of this approach. Change is often thought to occur in response to new phenomena within the components. Sahlins asserts that "change occurs when traditional strategies are employed in relation to novel phenomena, which do not respond to those strategies in traditional ways" (1985: 50), as when Cook arrived in Hawaii.

Archaeological studies by both Jones (1997) and Lightfoot (1998) also show change occurring in situations of contact in which new cultural phenomena are introduced and individuals either accept or reject elements of these variations. In Jones' study of the Romanization of Western Europe, Celtic peoples adopted many "Roman" stylistic

patterns in their material culture, but also often modified these styles. These modifications may have been made to assert their distinct Celtic identity, or to indicate their participation within a new or integrated system (Jones 1997: 134).

Lightfoot's study of cultural pluralism at Fort Ross, California examines the development of a multi-ethnic community in nineteenth-century America. In this case, change is seen in the context of identity formation and expression within a community composed of Native Californian women and Native Alaskan men at a Russian fort in northern California. When these groups came together and began to interact as a blended community, a new social system was created and variations of existing cultural components developed. In this context, individuals began to express multiple and situational identities that were tied to both the cultural components and the social system. The plural nature of this settlement allowed for the creation of Creole identities which served to assimilate individuals "into other ethnic classes or estates for perceived social, political, or economic advantages" (Lightfoot 1998: 205).

In each of the previous examples identity has been seen as a marker for cultural change. In contact situations, cultural components change or offer new variations, and new options are created for identity expression. Individuals either accept or reject elements of the new components, and express multiple identities according to perceived advantages. In order to successfully express a particular identity, however, individuals must be able to exhibit the behaviors or actions appropriate to the component or system to which the identity is attached. In other words, they must be able to "walk the walk, and talk the talk". If Native Californian women wanted to be recognized as Native Alaskans by the Russian-American company, they were required to present themselves as such

through behaviors associated with Alaskans. They acquired the necessary dispositions and practices through interactions with their Native Alaskan spouses and neighbors (Lightfoot 1998: 205).

The same is true of individuals in any society who wish to express multiple identities. If one wishes to become engaged in a marketplace economy, one must exhibit behaviors appropriate to the marketplace. If an individual wants to identify as a Christian, he or she must understand what that identity entails. The rules and resources associated with each cultural component must be acquired through social interactions, either within the context of blended households, or through regular contact and instruction (e.g. boarding schools, missions, long-term immersion within a community). The expression of one identity over another is a conscious action on the part of the individual, and is often tied to perceived advantages and long-range plans.

It is important to note that identity expression is not what creates cultural change; the behaviors associated with those identities create change. When new cultural phenomena are introduced, through contact, trade, or invention, into an existing social system, individuals choose to accept or reject the new phenomena. Certain behaviors will be exhibited that are appropriate to a given component. These behaviors are the catalyst for cultural change. In the case of Choctaw contact and interactions with Europeans, we can see multiple identity expression in their material culture, as well as their documentary record. This indicates that members of the Choctaw peoples were accepting elements of new cultural phenomena, including new political, economic, and religious variations, and doing so according to perceived advantages.

The goal of this study is to explain identity formation and expression through a practice-oriented approach. According to this approach, as it will be used in this study, structure or *habitus* dictates behaviors which are appropriate to cultural components, such as political, economic, religious, or kinship components. These components then inform social system boundaries. Identities tied to cultural components become strategizing mechanisms and are expressed or repressed according to perceived advantages or disadvantages (e.g. political or economic). In this way, multiple and situational identities tie into the long-term goals (project) of the individual. The behaviors, actions and choices required to achieve these goals lead to cultural change and boundary maintenance. In what follows, the Choctaw of the North American southeast will be used to exemplify the process of identity formation and expression as it relates to individual long-term projects, cultural change and reproduction of the social system.

CHAPTER 2

European Contact and Identity

Very little evidence exists to describe the early history and formative years of the Choctaw peoples. Archaeological data suggests that the prehistoric peoples who would comprise the Choctaw migrated into the historic homeland in the wake of the Mississippian decline (see figure 1). Over time, these groups came into contact with one another and constructed new social systems. This process of contact and conglomeration laid the groundwork for the social structures and dispositions that would be necessary to accommodate the introduction of European phenomena and radical change that would occur within the late-historic, post-contact Choctaw social systems.

Choctaw Prehistory

Based on the archaeological data that has been obtained to date (see Galloway 1985, Blitz 1985), the east-central Mississippi homeland of the historic Choctaw was relatively devoid of human occupation during prehistory. In order to trace the origins of the peoples who would later comprise the Choctaw Nation, researchers have tended to focus on the early inhabitants of the surrounding Mississippi and Tombigbee River valleys.

According to Galloway (1994a: 393), the historic Choctaw were successors to the Late Mississippian cultures which developed in the Southeast around A.D. 800-900. During this period, Woodland horticulturalists in the region gradually turned to maize agriculture, possibly as a result of increased population pressure. This shift in subsistence strategies led to more sedentary settlement patterns characterized by dispersed farmsteads

surrounding a local center. Along with the adoption of agriculture and more permanent settlements, the populations of the Southeast likely became more socially complex, developing from egalitarian bands or tribes into ranked chiefdoms.

When these chiefdoms became too large, suffered catastrophic crop failure, or military conquest, they may have broken into smaller social units, or "tribes", based on kinship lineages, and begun the cycle over again (Galloway 1995: 31-4). Thus, at the end of the Mississippian period, with the first European contact in the region, the Southeast may have been a "patchwork of societies at various stages in this cycle and more or less dependent on increased social integration as they were more or less dependent on agricultural production" (Galloway 1995: 42).

It should be noted that this picture of the prehistory of the Southeast is based on the available archaeological evidence from the region, as well as analogies to past and present social organizations as observed by ethnologists. The evidence is arranged in a cultural evolutionary sequence which is based on models developed by Sahlins (1968), Service (1971), and Fried (1967). While the utility of these models is certainly open to debate, most studies of the prehistory of the region are based on them and they will suffice for this study, as the greater emphasis will be placed on the post-contact period.

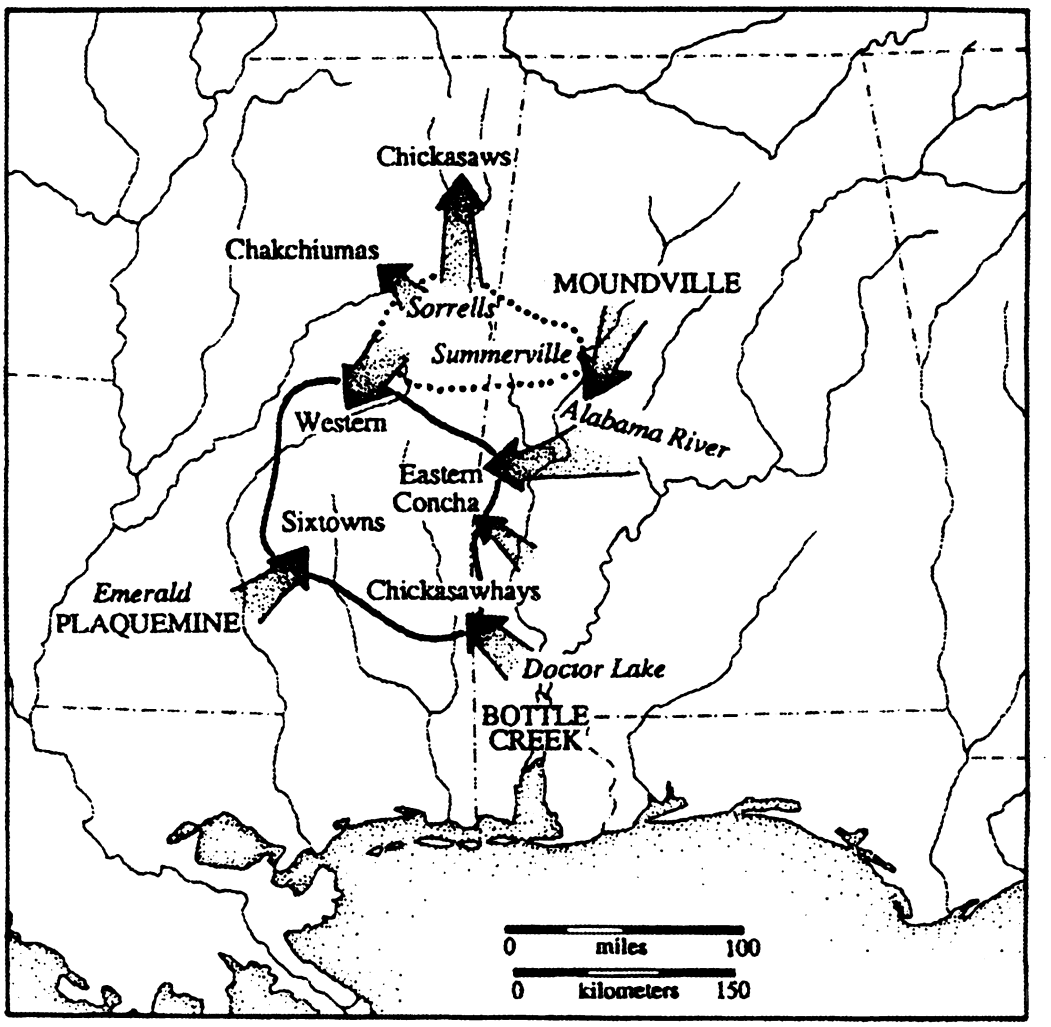

Figure 1: Choctaw Tribe Formation, 1500-1700. Reprinted from CHOCTAW GENESIS, 1500-1700 by Patricia Galloway by permission of the University of Nebraska Press.©1995 by the University of Nebraska Press.

Sixteenth Century European Contact

The structures and dispositions, connected to social contact and cultural variations, which had begun to develop during the prehistoric period would become directly related to multiple identity expression and cultural change after European contact. By the time the first Europeans arrived in the Southeast, the peoples of the region were well accustomed to contact situations and cultural exchange with other indigenous groups. The behaviors required for dealing with contact were known to them, and they appear to have reacted to Europeans as just one more foreign group with whom they would have to interact.

Documentary evidence suggests that the Europeans were less than welcome and may have been met with a certain amount of indifference or hostility. The Spanish were the first Europeans to encounter the peoples of the southeastern interior, and they were on a mission of conquest and exploitation. The peoples of the region may have seen little or no advantage to participating in social interactions with the invaders, and sought to move the Europeans out of their homeland as quickly as possible, either through war or diplomacy (Galloway 1995: 78). The limited nature of the Spanish interactions with the indigenous peoples did not result in dramatic changes within the existing cultural components or social system, at least not through individual agency and strategizing. The changes that did occur were less intentional and related to the spread of European diseases. The population decimation that resulted from disease epidemics led to widespread population movements and new contact situations which, in turn, contributed new structures and dispositions which informed behaviors that led to cultural changes. In other words,

populations and social systems were in flux during the post-contact period, enabling individuals to develop and express multiple identities and engage in strategizing behaviors that would lead to dramatic changes within the social systems.

By the time of the first European explorations of the southeastern interior, many of the complex Mississippian cultures had experienced a redistribution of peoples due to increased population size and a depletion of lands available for full-scale agriculture. These smaller groups often moved into areas that had previously been used exclusively for hunting due to the lack of arable soils. When the Spanish first entered the interior of the southeast, they encountered a number of smaller populations that had most likely splintered off from more complex societies once they were in decline (Johnson 1997:295). Many of these groups had moved into a geographic region that had been largely unoccupied during prehistory, but was now sufficient for supporting smaller, less complex societies engaged in less intensive agricultural practices.

The region that is now considered the homeland of the historic Choctaw was bounded by the Pearl River to the west and north, the Tombigbee to the east, and the Leaf-Pascagoula system to the south (Galloway 1995: 267). The constituent peoples of the Choctaw settled in different parts of this region, with the "prairie" peoples (later referred to by Anglo-Americans as the "Western Division") settling on the headwaters of the Pearl; two more groups, associated with Moundville and the Bottle Creek chiefdom of the upper Mobile delta, settling on the southwestern tributaries of the Tombigbee. These peoples would come to be known as the "Eastern Division". A fourth population, consisting of Natchezan peoples from the abandoned Pearl Mounds chiefdom, occupied the headwaters of the Leaf and western branches of the Pascagoula. These Natchezan

groups are those later referred to as the "Six Towns" or "Southern District" peoples (Galloway 1995: 353).

The first European exploration of the interior of the Southeast was undertaken by Hernando de Soto and his men. The existing textual sources regarding this expedition are limited to five accounts written by various members of the Soto group, either written as diaries at the time of the expedition, or as accounts published in subsequent years. While many of these accounts vary in certain details, all of them agree that the party landed on the western coast of the Florida peninsula in May 1539. They then moved north and west, reaching the present-day Tennessee-Georgia-Alabama border by July of that year (see Hudson, Smith and DePratter 1984).

The Indians who were encountered during this phase of the expedition had encountered Europeans before, and generally reacted by fleeing from their villages and waging guerilla warfare on the intruders or, according to the Spaniards, by making alliances with the Europeans in order to dominate more powerful neighbors. Regardless of initial reactions, many of the indigenous groups eventually played on the obvious Spanish greed and told them of much greater riches further on in attempts to get them to leave (Galloway 1995: 88).

During July 1540 to June 1541, the Soto expedition passed through the Alabama-Mississippi region. Throughout this journey, the Spaniards invaded villages, took captives to act as bearers for the party, stole food stores and, ultimately, spread disease. As did the Indians to the east, those in the interior fought, fled, or used diplomacy or deceit to get the invaders to move out of their territory (Duncan 1995: 353-5).

While the Soto expedition was the first direct European contact for many of the peoples of the Southeast, they were not completely taken by surprise when the Spaniards appeared in their homeland. European contact had been made previously on the Gulf Coast and the Florida peninsula, and word of these intruders certainly would have reached the peoples of the interior long before Soto's arrival. The earlier explorations of Florida and the Gulf had left the Spaniards with the desire to establish an *encomienda* system in the Southeast, just as they had done in Mexico (Galloway 1995: 110).

The *encomienda* system entailed granting an individual conquistador rights to the production of a native political unit, which could range from a single village to an entire province. Chiefs and populations remained in place, and tribute and labor that would have gone to the chief was instead passed by him to the Spanish grantee. If labor and profit could be extracted from the Southeast in this way, the region could be of use to the Spanish. What was needed, however, were sizable populations and centralized chiefdoms that could be controlled (see Simpson 1950).

Soto and his men soon discovered that the small, dispersed populations and "simple" chiefdoms or tribal confederations of the Tombigbee-Mississippi region would be difficult, if not impossible, to govern. Also, the region seemed to be completely lacking in the precious metals and gemstones sought by the Spanish. For these reasons, Soto moved through the Southeast and continued his explorations to the west until his death (Avellaneda 1997: 216).

Later Spanish explorations of the region, under Tristan de Luna (1559-61) and Juan Pardo (1565-67), made similar unsuccessful attempts to colonize the Alabama-Mississippi interior. The accounts of these expeditions indicate that the peoples of the

region were continuing to deal with the European invaders in a variety of ways, from hospitality to evasion to open hostility. They also indicate that European diseases were beginning to take their toll on native peoples, resulting in population movements and, more importantly for this study, integrated populations made up of peoples from various decimated groups throughout the region (Smith 2002: 4).

Unfortunately, the group names used by the Spanish for the indigenous populations were generally names imposed by the Europeans. We have no real way of knowing by what terms these peoples identified themselves. We do know, however, that the populations had changed enough between the Soto and Luna expeditions as to be virtually unrecognizable to Spaniards who had been in both parties. When the Pardo expedition left the Tombigbee-Mississippi region in 1667, it was essentially the last European contact in the area for a century. While European trade goods entered the interior from the East and West, Europeans were not again physically present until the French and British arrived in the early eighteenth century (Galloway 1993: 164).

Eighteenth Century European Contact

In contrast to sixteenth-century Spanish contact with the peoples of the Southeastern interior, the eighteenth century was a period of permanent European settlement in the region, and more complex social interactions with the indigenous groups. The French and British who entered the region may have been less concerned with conquest, and more intent on commerce (White 1983: 36). They were there to exploit the natural resources of the area and to create trade relations with the Native Americans. These objectives led to the introduction of variations within the existing economic and political components, as well as within the traditional kinship networks as a result of European/Indian unions. As the native peoples acquired the dispositions necessary to accept and participate in these cultural variations, they behaved in ways that would work toward their individual goals. These dispositions and behaviors led to the acquisition and expression of multiple identities and, ultimately, to cultural change.

During much of the seventeenth century the indigenous populations of the southeastern interior had little or no direct contact with European intruders. The fact that Europeans were not physically present in the region did not, however, mean that the Indians were unaffected by colonization further east and west. Diseases introduced by Europeans were beginning to decimate the populations of the interior during the seventeenth century, resulting in population movements and amalgamations. By the end of the century, the chiefdoms that Soto had described had evolved into the tribes and confederacies that would be known to the British and French in the next century (Galloway 1995: 164).

Although there is no existing documentary record of official French contact with the Choctaw during the seventeenth century, it is probable that the Indians of the Alabama-Mississippi region were at least aware of the French presence further west and north. By the middle of the century it is certain that fur traders, or *coureurs de bois*, had made illegal journeys southward from the Ohio and trans-Mississippi regions to engage in trade in the South. The *Jesuit Relations* of the 1670's contain several passages that describe contact between Europeans and Indians in the Southeast, most likely based on reports from fur traders (Galloway 1995: 165).

In 1673-74, when Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet descended the Mississippi River, the party had likely been informed, via the *Relations* and communications from the south, of the lands through which they would pass and the peoples they would encounter. By the time the party reached the Arkansas River, they had encountered many indigenous peoples, most of whom were already in possession of European trade goods. Many of these peoples reported receiving these goods through trade with other Indians to the north and east, others reported direct contact with Europeans. At the confluence of the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers, the Quapaws warned Marquette's party against traveling further south, as they would be met by hostile peoples armed with European weapons. Marquette believed this to mean that the lower river was in possession of the Spanish and, as he now felt he had achieved his goal of determining where the Mississippi ended, his party returned north in 1674 (Galloway 1995:166).

The next major French expedition into the South was led by Robert Cavelier de la Salle and Henri de Tonti from 1682-86. The goal of this journey was to determine

whether other Europeans had control of the lower Mississippi and, if not, to establish a chain of forts down the Mississippi to its mouth. Finding that the lower river was not under the control of other Europeans, La Salle returned to France to obtain permission to establish his forts. He received permission for the forts and intended to return to Illinois, where he had left Tonti, via the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi. Before he could reach his destination, however, he was killed by members of his own party. Henri de Tonti heard of La Salle's success in France, but not his death, and descended the river in search of the new colony. When he was unsuccessful in his search, he returned north and established a trading house among the Quapaws on the Arkansas to reinforce the French claim to the Indian trade in the region (Galloway 1982: 148).

The importance of the La Salle expedition to this study lies in the fact that, despite extensive exploration and contact in the lower Mississippi, there is still no mention of the Choctaw in the French documents. The reports from this expedition speak of the Chickasaws and several smaller tribes of the Lower Mississippi, but there is no indication of a growing and powerful inland tribe. It is possible that the French were aware of the people of the Alabama-Mississippi region but knew them to be smaller, discrete groups rather than a confederacy. They may also have referred to them by names we no longer associate with the Choctaw. The Spanish, however, were aware of this growing inland power and it is through them that we find the first documented reference to this group.

It was not until the late seventeenth century that the first possible European reference to the growing Choctaw confederacy appeared in the documentary record (Swanton 1922: 421). During the second half of the seventeenth century, the Spanish attempted to establish missions along the southern Atlantic coast and the Florida peninsula. One

attempt was made in 1660 to establish a mission further west in the interior but the contact party, led by officer Pedro de Ortes, was turned away by local chiefs who claimed a shortage of food (Galloway 1995: 166).

The 1660 meeting was not officially documented until 1687, but the report made reference to the "Chata" peoples with whom Ortes had met. It should be noted that the term "chato" is Spanish for "flat" or "roman-nosed", with "chata" being the feminine form of that adjective. Many peoples of the Southeast practiced cranial deformation, so it is possible that when Ortes referred to the "chata" he was simply identifying a group, or groups, by obvious physical characteristics (Galloway 1995: 168).

Another Spanish document, produced by Bishop Calderon in 1675 after a visit to the missions, also mentions the "Chacta" (note the slight change in the name). Calderon had not directly met with these peoples, but his informants had reported a large, powerful population living in the Mobile delta region and inhabiting at least 107 villages (Galloway 1994a: 404). Tristan de Luna's expedition in 1559-61 had been the last to pass directly through the region and had made no mention of any such people, though the area was certainly not devoid of inhabitants. Therefore, it is likely that the "Chacta" peoples reported in 1675 were either new to the region, or known peoples with a new name (Galloway 1995: 170).

The fact that the Choctaw were not mentioned by two of the three European groups present in the region is intriguing because it begs the question of when the Choctaw Confederacy developed. It is apparent that the Spanish were the only European intruders to identify and name the peoples of the Alabama-Mississippi interior in their official documents. As previously mentioned, the French had made no specific mention of these

peoples during the seventeenth century. There was also no mention of the Choctaw in British documents from the same period. This is surprising since British traders had, since the 1690's, armed the Chickasaw and Creeks and encouraged them to engage in slave raids against their neighbors. The peoples who would become the Choctaw would have been particularly affected by these raids, and this undoubtedly was one reason why confederation began to look more attractive (Carson 1996: 80).

By 1699, when Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville established Fort Biloxi, the first permanent French settlement on the gulf coast of Mississippi, the British-supported slave raids had been plaguing the peoples of the interior for nearly a decade. The French had finally made direct contact with the Choctaw peoples and had mentioned them in their official documents by 1699. The Choctaw hoped that the French would supply them with firearms and other supplies necessary to defend themselves against the invading forces from the east and north. The French realized that the Choctaw, with a population of at least 15,000, would be of great economic and political importance to their colonial plan as consumers and producers of material goods, as well as a protective force against the British colony of Carolina to the east (Galloway 1982: 148).

In 1702, Iberville dispatched Henri de Tonti to both the Choctaw and Chickasaw peoples to try to persuade them to attend a conference in Mobile with the goal of ending the slave raids and creating a French alliance with both groups. Representatives from both the Choctaw and Chickasaw attended the meeting and were presented with guns, gun powder, bullets, and other goods. The French failed to convince the Chickasaw to turn against the British and ally themselves with France, but the Choctaw, who desired more European weapons, were more than willing to do business. With the backing of the

French, the Choctaw were then able to drive back the Chickasaw and Creek raiders and restore the balance of power in the region (Carson 1996: 82). It was this period, when the French made contact and allied themselves with the Choctaw, that Patricia Galloway considers "the culmination of Choctaw emergence as a confederation" (Galloway 1995: 183).

By the time of the Mobile conference, the Choctaw were socially, politically, and geographically divided into three districts, several villages, and two possible moieties. The Eastern, Western, and Southern districts each contained several villages, with the Imoklasha and Inholahta "moieties" represented throughout both the Eastern and Western district villages. Some scholars have postulated that the moieties identified by many researchers (see Swanton 1931; Hudson 1976; Debo 1934, Galloway 1994b) were actually the names of ethnic groups that formed in the Eastern and Western districts (Carson 1996: 96). Several French documents support this idea by referring to the Imoklasha and Inholahta as "races" among the Choctaw confederacy (Swanton 1931: 78).

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Western peoples were closely related to the Chickasaw and had lived in central Mississippi for centuries. During the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, the effects of European contact further east and west had resulted in population movements throughout the South, and the Western peoples were joined by the "Eastern Choctaw", a large group of peoples from the middle Tombigbee region who were related to the Alabama and were possibly descendents of the complex Moundville chiefdom (Galloway 1994a: 514).

The Southern district was home to a number of small chiefdoms which had joined the Choctaw sometime during the seventeenth century, including the Conchas from the

Tombigbee-Alabama region, Chickasawhays from the Mobile delta, and Natchez-related Sixtowns from the Pearl River region (Galloway 1994b: 514). There is no indication that these southern peoples were members of either of the "moieties", probably because they were late-comers to the Choctaw homeland, pushed into the region through population pressures and warfare (Galloway 1982: 294).

The district divisions were clearly based on geographic territories associated with the watersheds of the Pearl, Tombigbee, and Pascagoula rivers (Galloway 1982: 295). Cultural differences between the districts were evident in distinct patterns of dress and speech associated with each division, as well as by the external alliances each district maintained: the Western division with the Chickasaw and Chakchiuma, the Eastern with the Alabama, and the Southern district with some of the smaller coastal tribes (Swanton 1931: 55-57).

To the French, the Choctaw political structure appeared confusing, at best. They could not identify any centralized power structure or primary chief among the Choctaw peoples. In fact, the early Choctaw political system remains a source of confusion. It appears that each village had a "white", or peace, chief, as well as a "red", or war, chief. The Europeans did not record exactly how these leaders functioned in Choctaw politics, so it is difficult to understand their specific roles in Choctaw society. Because there was no overarching political organization represented by a single Choctaw chief, the individual villages were free to pursue their own interests (Carson 1996: 86).

The French found this system difficult to deal with and attempted to impose a more centralized system of government on the Choctaw peoples. The proposed European institution of representation involved recognition of division chiefs, referred to as "medal

chiefs", who would be granted large quantities of presents in order to increase their influence (Galloway 1982: 295). Bienville also created the office of supreme chief of the Choctaw Nation, a post which was meant to satisfy the French need for hierarchical governance, but one that carried no weight among the Choctaw peoples (Blitz 1985: 15). It appears that the Choctaw tended to play along with the French and adhere, at least in official interactions, to this new system, but among themselves and other non-European peoples they continued to function as multiple independent chiefdoms.

The fact that the villages functioned as independent polities allowed the Choctaw peoples to take advantage of political and economic relationships with the French, British, Spanish and Americans in a sort of play-off system that they could exploit to their advantage. This system required them to express multiple and situational identities in order to reap the most benefit from these relationships, but this must not have been new to people who had existed in a plural society for some time.

A long history of population movements and amalgamations, as well as intermarriage between groups, had resulted in a blended society comprised of individuals who could express multiple identities. These identities were tied to kinship, village, district, dialect, and political affiliations, and they allowed people to engage in a variety of interactions that would ultimately benefit their short-term and long-term goals. Initially these goals may have involved acquisition of firearms, ammunition, and other trade goods. Later, as European-Indian relations, as well as relations between the indigenous groups themselves, grew more complex, these goals were tied to political and economic strategies that involved land ownership and commerce, including plantation agriculture, slave ownership, and mercantile concerns.

Throughout much of the eighteenth century, the Choctaw maintained relations with both the French and the British. Even during the years of the slave raids some of the Choctaw peoples, particularly the Chickasaw-related Western Choctaw, had maintained a relationship with the British. Some even went so far as to participate in the raids against the other Choctaw (Galloway 1995: 201). The Eastern Choctaw maintained close ties to the French, while the Southern peoples divided their interests between the Europeans. Of course, the fact that a district was allied with one of the European factions never prevented individuals or villages from splitting their interests.

The play-off system the Choctaw developed between the French and British began when French prices for trade goods became too high. British prices were lower and, in many cases, the goods were of higher quality. This fact enabled the Choctaw to threaten the French with a change in allegiance if trade prices were not lowered. The play-off system that ensued continued to benefit the Choctaw until the nineteenth century and the end of the European presence in the territory.

It should be noted that the alliances that were formed between the Choctaw peoples and the Europeans were of an official nature, established between the European governments and the districts of the Choctaw confederacy. The Choctaw villages and individuals continued to trade with whichever party would offer them the goods they wanted at the best price, regardless of official alliances. This often required individuals to express contextual identities in order to carry out business, since the Europeans preferred to think that they were engaging in solid diplomatic relationships (Galloway 2002: 243).

In other words, if the French were allied with the Eastern district, individuals expressing an Eastern identity would receive the highest quality goods at the best prices,

as a sort of reward for loyalty (Carson 1996: 92). On the other hand, in times of war, the French may have been interested in persuading British allies to defect to the French cause. In this case, trade incentives would have been offered to those expressing identities tied to a pro-British district or village. The fact that most Choctaw could, through kinship, marriage, and other alliances, legitimately claim a number of identities, facilitated their actions. In any case, the fluid nature of Choctaw-European relations worked to the benefit of the Choctaw a great deal of the time, but the inability of either European power to impose their will on the Choctaw peoples soon became a point of contention and eventually led to a Choctaw civil war (White 1983: 64-5).

The civil war that broke out among the Choctaw in 1746 was fully supported by both the French and British. By the middle of the eighteenth century, two of the three Choctaw districts had established solid relationships with one of the European groups. The Eastern Choctaw were officially engaged in an exclusive alliance with the French, the Western peoples with the British. The Southern peoples were divided in their support of the two groups. Tensions had begun to mount between the Eastern and Western groups, a situation that was encouraged by the Europeans. Both the British and French had a desire to foment civil strife in the hopes of bringing the entire Choctaw confederacy under the rule of one colonial government (Carson 1996: 93-4).

In the 1730's there had been a number of French-backed campaigns against the British-allied Chickasaws. The pro-French Eastern Choctaw had participated in these raids, as did a number of Western Choctaw warriors hoping to gain favorable trade relationships with the French. One Western warrior in particular, Red Shoes, attempted to parlay his success in the Chickasaw wars into a favorable relationship with the French,

while maintaining an alliance with the British at the same time. In 1738, the British recognized him as supreme chief of the Choctaw and awarded him with a medal. He had already been awarded a French medal for a successful raid he had led against the Chickasaws in 1731. His general strategy for gaining power was to lead raids against the Chickasaws in order to secure his French present, while at other times he attempted to establish peace with the Chickasaws to encourage British trade (Galloway 1982: 305).

Red Shoe's tenuous loyalty angered the French, and in 1740 Bienville withheld his annual presents. In an attempt to regain favor, Red Shoes led yet another raid against the Chickasaws. Bienville rewarded him by restoring his presents, but warned his successor, Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, that Red Shoe's loyalty to the French was not to be trusted. When Vaudreuil later withheld his presents for not attending a conference in Mobile, Red Shoes sought to establish an exclusive alliance with the British (Carson 1996: 97). Many of the pro-French Eastern chiefs resented Red Shoe's actions, viewing them as a threat to their relationship with the French. Two influential Eastern chiefs, as well as one Southern chief, openly supported the French in their opposition to Red Shoes, the Western villages, and the Southern district Six Towns (Swanton 1931: 57-8).

Neither the French nor the British wasted any time in exploiting the tensions between the Choctaw chiefs. Both European factions urged their Choctaw allies to wage war against each other. The Choctaw, however, were hesitant to engage in open conflict, citing kinship ties between the three divisions. They attempted to satisfy the Europeans by raiding outside parties, just as the Choctaw and Chickasaws had been doing to each other for years (Johnson 2000: 92). But the French and British were not satisfied, and the Choctaw unwillingly went to war against each other (Carson 1996: 101).

When the war ended in 1750, the result was not what the Europeans had intended. The Choctaw were no more willing to come together as a single nation than they had been four years earlier. Neither colonial faction could claim an exclusive relationship with the entire confederacy, nor could they dominate the Choctaw peoples (White 1983: xv). The Eastern Choctaw resumed their relationship with the French, the Western peoples with the British, and the Southern division remained split between the two (Debo 1934: 28). The Choctaw continued to play the Europeans off one another until the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1755.

According to the treaty that ended this war in 1763, the French ceded to England all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi River, which was organized as West Florida under the British (Eccles 1990: 226). Spain, also defeated during the conflict, ceded the Florida peninsula to the British, but received all of Louisiana west of the Mississippi, as well as New Orleans, from France. The British hoped to establish relations with all of the Choctaw in the aftermath of the war, but the Eastern and Southern peoples were hesitant; they intended to continue the play-off system between the British and Spanish (Carson 1996: 109).

Many of the Choctaw chiefs of the Eastern and Southern divisions were able to establish trade relations with the Spanish by promising to engage in attacks against the British. They may have had little interest in driving the British out, especially as they were a crucial part of the play-off system, but these promises were enough to bring medals and presents from the Spanish in New Orleans. During the American Revolution, both England and Spain had reasons to enlist the Choctaw as allies. The contest for West Florida resulted in a majority of the Choctaw siding with Spain, except for a few of the

staunch pro-British Western villages. In 1779, Spain captured Natchez, Mobile and Pensacola with the help of Choctaw warriors. The Paris treaty which ended the war recognized Spanish control of West Florida, and the withdrawal of the British meant that relations would have to be established with the Americans if the play-off system was to continue (Carson 1996: 114).

Relations with the United States could hardly be avoided, and throughout the final decade of the eighteenth century the Choctaw continued the play-off game with the Spanish and Americans. It proved to be a very lucrative game, as both parties needed Choctaw support if they were to maintain or expand their territories. The 1786 Treaty of Hopewell was the first official treaty between the United States and the Choctaw. This treaty, signed by representatives from all three districts, established the boundary between the Choctaw lands and the Mississippi Territory of the United States. The treaty also provided for a road to be built, by the Americans, through the Choctaw country to the edge of the Chickasaw territory. In return, the Choctaw received the protection of the United States in any aggression against the tribe (Hopewell 1786: art. 1-3).

No mention was made of trade relations between the two groups, but the establishment of an American built road through the territory clearly implied that the United States meant to dominate trade within the region, as well as provide access to the territory for military purposes and white settlement. The Hopewell Treaty was not actually ratified until 1802, and never served as a deterrent to the Choctaw play-off system. In fact, the only reason representatives from the pro-Spanish Western and Southern districts agreed to the treaty was to establish trade relations with the Americans in order to continue the play-off system.

In 1792, the Americans invited the Choctaw to a conference in Nashville with the hope of establishing exclusive trade and military relations between the two peoples. William Blount, American governor of the territory south of the Ohio River, sent two representatives to the Choctaw homeland to convince the district chiefs to attend the conference. The chiefs of the Eastern district agreed, but the chiefs of the Western villages declared their support for the Spanish and refused to attend the conference (Carson 1996: 130).

On August 7, 1792, the Nashville conference opened, with two dozen chiefs from the Eastern towns in attendance. William Blount presented the headmen with gifts and expressed the American desire to establish lasting relations with the Choctaw. After this conference, the Eastern Choctaw began to trade regularly with the Americans, while the Western towns continued to interact with the Spanish in West Florida. A conference held by the Spanish at Natchez in 1793 was attended by representatives of the Western Choctaw towns, as well as members of the Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks, Tallapoosas, and Alabamas. In return for continued trade with Spain, the Indians pledged to defend Spanish Louisiana, as well as each other, from American encroachment (Carson 1996: 134).

Both the Spanish and American governments were under the false impression that their treaties with the Choctaw placed them in positions of dominance over these indigenous peoples and solidified their hegemony over the region. The Choctaw, however, continued to engage in the play-off system and recognized the authority of no one but themselves. While the Eastern and Western districts may have officially pledged support for either the Spanish or the Americans, villages and individuals continued to

interact with both groups, according to perceived political and economic advantages. The Southern district maintained dual alliances throughout the eighteenth century. As discussed previously, the expression of multiple and situational identities was essential for reaping the most short-term and long-term benefits from these relationships.

In 1795, the United States negotiated with Spain to establish formal boundaries between the American and Spanish territories. The Treaty of San Lorenzo mandated that Spain relinquish West Florida to the United States, as well as guarantee the Americans free navigation of the Mississippi River. The Spanish were confined to New Orleans and a small portion of their former territory on the Florida peninsula. The United States reorganized the Lower Mississippi Valley into the Mississippi Territory, with full expectations of promoting American settlement of the region. With the loss of the Spanish presence in the Choctaw homeland, the play-off system came to an end. The Choctaw were no longer able to manipulate the two groups, and the Americans were less inclined to treat favorably with them in the hopes of gaining their support.

Through their interactions with Europeans, and their acceptance of cultural variations introduced by the intruders, the Choctaw peoples made choices that furthered their own personal goals, but ultimately resulted in changes to the proto-Choctaw cultural components, as well as their social systems. Indeed, boundaries between the proto-Choctaw groups began to blur and a new social system that included all of the proto-Choctaw groups started to emerge with the formation of the Choctaw confederacy, which would be solidified later with the creation of the Choctaw Nation. Individuals became involved in religious, political, and economic relations that required them to express multiple identities and allowed them to pursue personal goals. The choices and behaviors

required to do so led to changes within the existing cultural components, which are evident in the play-off system that developed.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was obvious that the Americans had an agenda that included extensive settlement of the Choctaw homelands, which would require Choctaw land cessions and eventual removal. It became clear to the people of the Choctaw villages and divisions that maintaining a loose confederacy would no longer be to their advantage (Galloway 1994b: 530). The time had come to act collectively in the face of American demands, and the opening of the nineteenth century marked the transition from the Choctaw confederacy to the Choctaw Nation.

CHAPTER 3

The Choctaw in the Nineteenth Century-American Encroachment, Identity Expression and Cultural Change

The largely economic and political nature of European/Indian relations during the eighteenth century changed with the American encroachment in the next century. Americans were less interested in exploiting natural resources and maintaining trade relations with the indigenous peoples. Instead, they were determined to expand their landholdings and establish permanent settlements in the interior. At first, this plan was intended as a protective measure to keep remaining European troops out of the fledgling republic. Later, the growth of plantation agriculture and an increase in population size required an expansion of American territories (Guice 1985: 157).

During the eighteenth century, the Choctaw peoples found it advantageous to maintain a loose political confederacy and social structure. The French and British had less interest in acculturating or assimilating the native peoples, and therefore the threat to their social system was less immediate. They were free to pursue their economic, social, and political interests, accept variations in their cultural components, and express multiple identities without having to worry about their identity as Choctaw or Indian. The American expansion program, however, relied on the systematic acculturation, assimilation, or removal of Native Americans, and participation in cultural variations and multiple identity expression suddenly became tools with which they could protect their Choctaw identity (Carson 1996:145).

Variations within the Choctaw cultural components occurred with the introduction of plantation agriculture and a market-based economy, as well as political variations which would ultimately lead to the formation of the Choctaw Nation. The introduction of new Christian denominations and mission schools altered religious and educational practices for some, and provided new structures and dispositions that informed the behaviors of the attending students. The children of mixed-heritage families acquired these same dispositions within the household. The introduction of these cultural phenomena was intended to acculturate the Choctaw and ultimately lead to their assimilation within the larger American society (Kidwell 1995: xiv). Many Choctaw, however, felt that acceptance of, and participation in, these cultural variations would allow them to both pursue their own goals, as well as enable them to compete with Americans and resist assimilation or removal.

After the removal of the Choctaw to the Indian Territory, there was a continued collective effort within the community to maintain their Choctaw identity. Individuals continued to express multiple identities and pursue personal goals, and these behaviors and strategies are clearly visible in the documentary record they created. In the following discussion, the changes within the Choctaw cultural components are examined in the context of individual behaviors and strategies, and the resulting reproduction of the larger Choctaw social system is made evident.

The early nineteenth century was characterized by major transitions within the cultural components of the Choctaw social system. During the previous two centuries, the Choctaw peoples had adapted to the European presence and engaged in political and economic relations with the intruders, but their lifeways had not dramatically changed. This is not meant to minimize the contact experience nor to ignore the realities of post-contact disease and population movements, but merely to suggest that the peoples of the Southeast continued to live in the post-contact world in much the same way as they had before the arrival of Europeans (Smith 1987: 127-8).

Prior to the European invasion, the indigenous peoples of the region had inhabited dispersed villages populated largely by matrilineal, kinship-based groups. Their political system was based on multiple small chiefdoms, divided into districts and allied in a loose confederacy. The traditional subsistence pattern consisted of small-scale horticulture for personal use and limited trade, supplemented by hunting and gathering (Coleman 1985: 29). They engaged in trade for prestige goods with neighboring peoples, and intermarriage with outside groups was not unusual. Population movements and amalgamations had occurred in the region even prior to the arrival of the Europeans, so many of the Southeastern tribes were already plural societies at the time of contact. Intermarriage and population mergers allowed for the expression of multiple identities, and extensive trade networks and inter-tribal politics made them necessary well before the Europeans had arrived.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these traditional lifeways persisted despite interactions with Europeans. The early French, British, and Spanish colonists were primarily explorers and traders. Unlike the American expansion of the

nineteenth century, the early European colonial presence was oriented toward exploitation of natural resources and economic gain, rather than permanent settlement. Consequently, there was little interest in acculturating or assimilating the native peoples. As long as they could act as producers of raw materials and consumers of finished European goods, there was little reason for the Indians to alter their lifestyles.

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, dramatic changes were beginning to occur in the lifeways of the Southeastern peoples. With the emergence of the United States as a permanent and powerful entity, the cultural components and social systems of the Choctaw peoples had to adapt in order to avoid the loss of their sovereignty, as well as their identities. The most dramatic change occurred with the formation of the Choctaw Nation as a singular social system. Economic and other cultural changes had also become evident, but these did not have the same immediate impact as the systemic transformation.

Some Euro-American cultural institutions had begun to filter into the interior during the late eighteenth century, introduced largely by traders and other whites who settled in the region, did business with the Choctaw, and often married into local families. Both cattle and cotton were introduced into the region in the latter years of the century, but ranches and large-scale agriculture were not yet viable pursuits for most inhabitants of the Choctaw homeland.

The first two decades of the nineteenth century marked a period of transition for the Choctaw peoples. Cattle ranching and plantation agriculture became more common, especially among the mixed-heritage families, and prompted a change in traditional settlement patterns. Because large tracts of land were necessary for cattle and cotton,

nuclear families began moving out of villages and away from their extended families to single family homes and plantations. Agricultural pursuits were traditionally considered part of the Choctaw feminine domain, and the introduction of slave labor allowed the male family members to stay out of the fields and maintain their masculinity.

As the planter class became more fully involved in the market economy, they also became politically active. Many members of the economic elite became involved in district and tribal politics, as well as in Choctaw interactions with the United States. Some members of this class felt that a Western education was the key to resisting American policies, and invited Protestant missionaries into the Nation to educate their children.

It is important to note that while many of the mixed-heritage, planter class families were prominent in Choctaw politics and the economy, they did not completely dominate these arenas. Many studies of the Choctaw peoples (see Debo 1934, Coleman 1985, Spring 1996, Faiman-Silva 1997) have emphasized a full-blood/mixed-blood dichotomy that, based on the documentary evidence, was not often emphasized within the community (see Pitchlynn n.d., Folsom 1860, Jones 1857). It is true that the Choctaw were a divided people, but those divisions were based on kinship, district and, later, approaches to dealing with the American encroachment. Throughout the nineteenth century it was this last issue that created the most enduring division within the Choctaw community.

Historian James Carson (1996) uses the terms "traditionalist" and "progressive" in his discussion of the two camps that developed based on this issue. Both groups were concerned that the Choctaw were facing the possible loss of the Nation's sovereignty, as

well as their Choctaw identities, and each had definite ideas regarding the best way to defend themselves against these possibilities.

Traditionalists were those who advocated adhering to the "old ways", including a political structure involving multiple district chiefs, a subsistence pattern based on horticulture, hunting and gathering, settlement in matrilocal kinship-based villages, and maintenance of traditional religious practices, sexual divisions of labor, and systems of education. The progressives believed that involvement in the market-based economy, a unified political structure with one principal chief, conversion to Christianity, and an educational system based on the American model were the best options for the Choctaw in the nineteenth century. Both groups firmly believed that their approach to dealing with American encroachment was the only way to ensure their political and social autonomy (Carson 1996: 233).

Both the traditional and progressive factions had full-blood and mixed-heritage adherents (Carson 1996:234). This division in Choctaw society added one more identity individuals could express and use to their advantage, along with those based on kinship, village, district, religion, and economic standing. While the expression of multiple identities had been common among the Choctaw peoples throughout their history, the major upheavals and cultural changes of the nineteenth century created even more situations where multiple and situational identities would be advantageous. The expression of these identities, and the cultural changes to which they were related, would result in the reproduction of the Choctaw social system. The remainder of this discussion will examine multiple identity expression and cultural change within Choctaw society, but it will pay particular attention to the progressive members and their actions simply

because they produced so many written documents in which their identities are clearly evident.

The Choctaw Progressive Community

By the time Mississippi achieved statehood in 1817, the Choctaw peoples had witnessed dramatic changes within their communities. One of these changes involved the increase of white men and women who settled in the region and intermarried with the Choctaw. While the presence of whites was certainly not new to the territory, the trappers and traders of years past had largely been a transient population, with the majority of permanent white settlers restricted to regions outside the Choctaw homeland. As more permanent trading houses were established in the region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the number of mixed families increased considerably (Spring 1996: ix).

The patriarchs of most of these mixed families tended to be of English, Irish, or Scottish descent, and were traders who settled in the region following the American Revolution. Families such as the Jones, Folsoms, Pitchlynns, and LeFlores became prominent in Choctaw politics and commerce during the nineteenth century, and they relied heavily on their multiple identities in their interactions with other Choctaw, as well as in their dealings outside the Nation.

Nathaniel Folsom was born in North Carolina in 1756, to Scotch-Irish parents, and came to the Choctaw country as a trader sometime in the 1770's. He followed the Choctaw custom of plural marriage and wed two women, cousins of district chief

Mushulatubbee, who produced a total of twenty-four children. His son David, who would later become a district chief himself, was born in 1791 in an Eastern District village. David spent six months at school in Tennessee, but then was tutored at home. He later served with Pushmataha, a Southern District leader, in the Creek War of 1812-13. David married Rhoda Nail, the daughter of Revolutionary War hero Henry Nail who, along with his son Joel, was influential in Southern District politics (Kidwell 1995: 18).

David Folsom's cousin, Rhoda, married John Pitchlynn early in the 1780's. Pitchlynn was the son of a British trader who had died en route to the Choctaw territory in 1774. John was left in the care of the Choctaw, who raised him as one of their own. He became a valued interpreter and trader in the territory, and was very much involved in Eastern District politics. After his wife Rhoda died, leaving three children, John married Sophia Folsom, the daughter of Nathaniel. She bore him eight children before 1825, one of whom was Peter Pitchlynn. Peter was born in 1806; he was educated outside the Nation, and became involved in politics at a young age. He signed many of the treaties with the United States, and eventually became principal chief, as well as a Choctaw representative in Washington (Baird 1972: 6).

The Leflore family descended from Jean Baptiste Leflore, a French soldier stationed in Mobile in the mid-eighteenth century. He married Marie Jeanne Girard, who gave birth to their son, Louis, in 1762. Louis became a trader in the Choctaw country, and married Rebecca and Nancy Cravat, who were of mixed English-Choctaw heritage and nieces of Southern District chief, Pushmataha. Rebecca gave birth to their son, Greenwood, in 1800. Greenwood would later become active in politics, eventually rising to chief of the

Western District, where his father had settled and opened a trading station (Perry 128: 75; Kidwell 1995: 19).

The family history of Robert M. Jones is not as well known as that of other progressive Choctaw, despite the fact that he was a wealthy planter and prominent politician during his adult life. Records indicate that he was born in 1808, but no mention of his parents or birthplace has yet been found. He first appears in the documentary record as a student at the Choctaw Academy in Blue Springs, Kentucky in 1827. His tuition was listed as having been paid by an unnamed "patron". He graduated from the school in 1830, and received a letter of recommendation signed by the superintendent of the school, Thomas Henderson, as well as the governor of the school, Richard Johnson (Young 1997: 281; Foreman 1932: 88).

In 1830, Jones was granted a section and a half of land in the Mississippi Territory under a supplement to the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the Choctaw removal treaty (Dancing Rabbit Creek supplement, 1830: art. 2). These land grants were made to several individuals not provided for in the original treaty document, most of whom had fathers or uncles listed as original signers. The treaty was signed by three men named Jones, but there is no direct evidence to link any of them to Robert.

In 1831, Jones was appointed by the United States government to act as an assistant agent in the removal process (Bruce 1989: 295). In later years, he played a prominent role in Choctaw politics and served as the Choctaw delegate to the Confederate Congress during the Civil War. In addition to his political career, Jones also became a wealthy merchant and planter.

Due to the blended nature of these families they, like other mixed families, tended to adhere to both Choctaw and Western traditions. The white men had married into matrilineal families and often did not object to the prominent role their wives families took in childrearing. In most Choctaw households, the maternal uncles were expected to see to the education of the boys and act as primary disciplinarians. The girls were under the care and guidance of their mother and her sisters. Traditional educations included instruction in hunting, religion, and sports for the boys; horticulture, food production, ceramics, and basket making for the girls (Swanton 1931: 124-5). The progressive families, however, seemed to deviate from this pattern once the sons passed through childhood. Once the boys had reached their teen years, their fathers took a more prominent role in their lives by becoming involved in additional education, as well as the guidance of their sons into politics and commerce (Choctaw Academy Roll 1826:1-3; Henderson 1829: 4).

Most of the children from these mixed families were bilingual, but personal letters indicate that Choctaw was the preferred language between family members and friends, while English was spoken in politics and business (see Jones 1830; Folsom 1819; Folsom 1821). Traditional Choctaw religious practices may have been common in these households, as mission school records indicate that members of these families "converted" to Christianity after entering school (Henderson 1828: 3). Another indication of the blended nature of these families is seen in the bestowal of both Choctaw and Euro-American names on many of the children (Baird 1972: 19).

Throughout the nineteenth century, many mixed-heritage Choctaw played key roles in politics and the economy. The families discussed above were particularly active in both

arenas, and often relied on their multiple identities to benefit themselves and their people. Their acceptance of, and participation in, cultural variations led directly to changes within the cultural components, which ultimately contributed to the reproduction of the Choctaw social system. Some of the earliest records in which these identities and behaviors are in evidence are related to the subject of Choctaw education and the role of missionaries in the Choctaw Nation.

Missionaries and Choctaw Education

By 1818, when the first Protestant mission was established in the Choctaw territory by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the Choctaw peoples had long been familiar with the tenets of Christianity (Kidwell 1995: 6). Both the Spanish and French had sent Catholic priests into the Choctaw homeland, but the effort to convert the peoples of the Southeast was never as strong as it had been in Mexico or New France. Few records from these early missions exist to explain the low rates of conversion, but it is possible the Choctaw peoples simply were not interested in adopting a new religion.

Little is know about the traditional religion practiced by the Choctaw peoples. This may be due to the fact that the Choctaw were an amalgamation of several separate groups, each with their own beliefs and practices. It appears, however, that there were a few rituals that were shared by all the groups, including marriage ceremonies and funeral rites (Carson 1996: 269). A belief in witchcraft was also common among the various peoples.

Most of the Choctaw also believed in one of two origin myths: one in which the Choctaw peoples emerged from Nanih Waiya mound and populated the surrounding territory; another in which their ancestors were driven out of lands to the west and were guided by a pole which leaned in the desired direction of travel until they reached Nanih Waiya mound, where the pole remained upright. It was this story that was most often recorded by observers as the "official" origin legend, possibly because it reflects the fact that many of the Choctaw peoples had moved into the region from other areas (Swanton 1931: 5-15).

Aside from the origin myths, the religious rituals most often recorded by Euro-American observers were those associated with death and funerals. All of the Choctaw peoples practiced platform burials, as well as funeral rituals which required bone pickers from a district other than that of the deceased to remove the rotten flesh from the bones, and bundle the remains so that they might be placed in the village bone house. A feast was then prepared by the bone pickers to end the period of mourning, and an annual "feast of the dead" was held each November as a general day of ancestor remembrance (Carson 1996: 274).

Little is known about Choctaw marriage laws and ceremonies, outside of the fact that they practiced polygamy, but there is evidence that the rituals were common to all the Choctaw peoples (Swanton 1931: 127). These common religious practices acted as unifying agents in an amalgamated society that contained so many points of separation. During the nineteenth century, however, religion became a divisive issue among the Choctaw in the face of American encroachment.

In 1818, ABCFM missionary Cyrus Kingsbury established a Presbyterian mission among the Choctaw, which was followed in 1821, by a second mission headed by Cyrus Byington (Coleman 1985: 13). The purpose of these missions was to convert the Choctaw to Christianity, as well as to "civilize" them by providing an American-style education, introducing American methods of farming, and promoting Western notions of sexual divisions of labor. Choctaw families were encouraged to abandon their matrilineal descent patterns in favor of patrilineal families, and men were encouraged to take over farming, while women were to be relegated to the home (Byington 1852).

Some Choctaw families initially embraced the missions, and attendance at the mission schools was quite high, with more than 1,500 students enrolled between 1819 and 1830 (Kidwell 1995: 144). Both Kingsbury and Byington, however, were disappointed with the low rate of conversion and church attendance, as only 360 Choctaw belonged to churches by 1831, and only 244 children had been baptized (Kidwell 1995:145). It was apparent that the Choctaw were eager for an American education, but had little interest in the Christian religion. Members of the "progressives", including Greenwood Leflore and Peter Pitchlynn, believed that an American education would be the best weapon against American policies (Kidwell 1995: 69). If Choctaw were on equal footing in terms of education and economy, they would be better equipped to maintain their social and political independence (Carson 1996: 271).

The "traditionalists", including Pitchlynn's uncle Mushulatubbee, who was the Eastern District chief, and Southern District chief Nittakaichee, did not share this opinion, and openly opposed the missions. They felt that any adoption of American ways would compromise their Choctaw identities. Women were particularly vehement in their

opposition to the Christian efforts, perhaps because of the threat that was posed to their status in Choctaw society. Chief Greenwood Leflore's own mother stormed a Christian religious meeting in order to forcibly remove her daughter (Carson 1996: 293).

The arguments of the traditionalists were overshadowed by the uncertainty and upheaval of the early nineteenth century. Ever since Mississippi had become a state in 1817, efforts to remove the native peoples to territory in the west had intensified. When two principal chiefs, David Folsom and Greenwood Leflore, converted to Christianity large numbers of Choctaw rushed to convert. Religion and education were seen as keys to dealing with the Americans in ways they could understand.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the progressive leaders invited the ABCFM to establish schools in the Choctaw territory (Spring 1996: 66). The first school was opened at the Elliot Mission on April 19, 1819, followed by a second school at Mayhew in 1821. Both schools were established and operated by Presbyterian missionaries who believed that their goal was to convert and civilize the Indians. The Choctaw, however, were primarily interested in the political advantages associated with American education and conversion to Christianity (Axtell 1981: 84). If Americans believed them to be a Christian nation, perhaps they would treat more favorably with the Choctaw than they would with "heathen" Indians. As several scholars have observed, "conversion" may not be an appropriate term for what actually took place (see Axtell 1981; Carson 1996). While some Choctaw undoubtedly did embrace the Christian faith, it is likely that most people ultimately combined Christian beliefs with those of the traditional Choctaw religion.

The blended nature of their religious beliefs was also evident in their approach to education. Most Choctaw families in the early nineteenth century educated their children in the traditional manner until they reached the middle teen years, and then sent them to the mission schools for instruction shortly before they reached adulthood. Both traditional and progressive families followed this pattern in educating their sons and daughters, although traditional families tended to send their children to schools within the Choctaw territory, while the children of progressive families were often sent to boarding schools in other states. There may have been some economic prestige associated with American boarding schools, or perhaps this was a reflection of the more prominent role that progressive fathers played in the education of older children.

The territory schools tended to emphasize a curriculum of religious instruction, English language, reading, writing, and mathematics. The missionaries developed a written form of the Choctaw language and had textbooks printed in it so that the students would learn to read their own language. These books were completely rejected by the Choctaw, who were only interested in being educated in English. Cyrus Kingsbury complained: "Of late there have been few calls for Choctaw books. Almost none can be sold, & very few can be given away, with the hope that they will be used. The Choctaw are very changeable in their notions...Most of those seeking an education wish for a knowledge of the English as the first thing. If they cannot get that, they do not care for any" (Kingsbury 1837).

The territory schools also bestowed Christian names on students who enrolled under their Choctaw titles, a practice that was of benefit to the schools as supporters of the school were encouraged to submit names for the students, along with an annual twenty-

five dollar donation for the recipients support (Coleman 1985: 107; Kidwell 1995: 64). Historian Michael Coleman has suggested that the adoption of Christian names symbolized "the total change in their cultural and personal identity" (1985: 108). It is more likely that these names were used by the students at school, and later in public life, but traditional names continued to be used in the context of the family and Choctaw community (see Jones 1830, Folsom 1819). Rather than indicating a "total change" in their identity, these names simply became an additional identity which could be expressed in appropriate situations.

Boarding schools differed from the territory schools in that they tended to be secular, and there is little indication that they attempted to bestow Christian names on their students. However, it should be noted that the majority of students who attended the Academy arrived with Christian names, even though many of them had traditional names, as well (Baird 1972: 1). The schools offered a classical education, and often included courses in Latin, literature, philosophy, science, and civics in addition to the basic curriculum (Henderson 1829: 2). Two boarding schools became particularly popular among the progressive families. The Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut educated the sons of many progressive families until 1825, at which time the second school, the Choctaw Academy, opened in Blue Springs, Kentucky.

The Choctaw Academy quickly became the school of choice among progressive Choctaw because they were able to dictate the educational and labor programs (Kidwell 1995: 61). They demanded a secular, Western curriculum, and that is what the school offered. When the school attempted to teach agricultural practices to the boys and employ them in farm labor, many Choctaw families threatened to remove their sons from the

school. The school's superintendent never accepted that the Choctaw considered agriculture women's work, but the school eventually backed away from that particular program and employed slaves to run the farm (Spring 1996: 57-8).

The issue of slavery eventually became a point of contention between the Choctaw and missionaries. Many of the missionaries were firmly abolitionist and complained that most of the first Choctaw converts were slaveholders. When the Choctaw were removed to Indian Territory, the number of slave holders increased as more plantations were established. The missionaries who followed them to the new territory were vehemently opposed to the slave culture which was growing among the Choctaw peoples. A debate ensued over whether the slaveholders should be excluded from the church, or if they should be required to emancipate their slaves (Kingsbury 1847).

The emancipation of their slaves was not a viable option for most Choctaw slaveholders, and many of them were more than willing to sever relationships with abolitionist denominations. In 1848, Isreal Folsom wrote to Peter Pitchlynn: "I do not wish to have any thing (sic) to do as a church member with the church which is under the support & control of the abolitionists of the North" (Folsom 1848). By the late 1850's, the issue of slavery had become so problematic that the abolitionist ABCFM terminated its affiliation with the Choctaw (Faiman-Silva 1997: 55). The Cumberland Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, which was not adamant about abolition, took over operations of the mission schools in the Choctaw Nation (Coleman 1985: 13).

The approach that the Choctaw took toward Christianity and American education was indicative of their conscious use of multiple identities to benefit their short and long-term goals. To a certain extent, they adopted Christianity in order to appear less "savage" to

the white government, while reaping the benefits of the educational system offered by the missions. Perhaps they felt that educated, Christian Indians would present less of a threat to white settlers, and therefore be more likely to maintain their existing lands. Perhaps the impetus for adopting white religion and education was to prepare the Choctaw to interact with the American government and resist that government's policies, particularly policies concerning removal.

But the Choctaw were also adamant about maintaining their social-system identity. They clearly placed more importance on education than conversion; education would be of greater benefit in economic and political relations. They resisted any attempt to establish a written form of the Choctaw language because it would be of no use to them in foreign policy and commerce. There had never been a written form of their language, and they did not see the need for one in the nineteenth century. When the Christian denominations that had long served them began to espouse abolition, the Choctaw simply changed their religious affiliations. The economic benefits of slavery far outweighed their attachment to a particular church.

The efforts to use Christianity and American education to preserve their Choctaw identity also allowed them to develop many new contextual identities tied to cultural components. They became Methodist, Presbyterian, or Baptist. They were students of the Choctaw Academy or Mayhew Mission School. They were pro-slavery Southerners; they were traditionalist or progressive. They adopted and used Christian names in certain contexts, but did not abandon their traditional names. The multiple and contextual identities that were adopted and expressed as a result of missionization and American

schools would ultimately be used to their advantage in the political and economic turmoil of the nineteenth century.

Politics and the Economy

The religious and educational identities that emerged among the Choctaw during the early nineteenth century became advantageous in the complex political and economic relationships that developed as a result of American encroachment and the desire for Indian removal from the state of Mississippi. As the issue of removal shifted from a state concern toward a federal policy, the long and short-term goals of many Choctaw began to change in response to the impending loss of their homeland.

Initially, most Choctaw vehemently opposed the idea of removal and their leaders refused to enter into treaty negotiations with the United States. When the state of Mississippi began passing laws that placed the Choctaw under state jurisdiction, many traditionalists began to support removal as the only way to preserve their Indian identities and remain a sovereign nation. Progressives, especially those who had established ranches, plantations, or trading houses in the territory, continued to oppose removal and the possible loss of their economic concerns.

The first real discussion of Choctaw removal came shortly after Mississippi achieved statehood in 1817. An influx of white settlers created a demand for more land to support the growing Southern plantation economy, and much of the Choctaw territory contained lands appropriate for growing cotton. Choctaw resistance to removal was very strong, but

the decade between 1820 and 1830 would end with the loss of their Mississippi lands and a mass removal to the Indian Territory in the West.

In 1820, despite Choctaw opposition to removal, the United States government initiated a series of treaty negotiations aimed at acquiring Choctaw territory through land cessions (Debo 1934: 49). By this time, some traditionalists had begun to promote removal as a way to preserve Choctaw sovereignty. John Pitchlynn wrote to his son, Peter: "I find that Indians nor Indians friends can not live with white people...you might as well try to mix oil and water as to mix Indians and whites. Therefore I have advised my children to go to their own country" (Pitchlynn, undated).

The progressives continued to oppose land cessions, and one Eastern District chief, David Folsom, campaigned hard against American efforts to acquire Choctaw lands. His efforts failed to halt negotiations, and the Treaty of Doak's Stand was signed on October 18, 1820. Under this treaty, the United States acquired almost half of the Choctaw territory in Mississippi in exchange for a larger parcel of land in the Arkansas Territory and voluntary Choctaw removal to the new lands (Carson 1996: 242). The treaty was signed by leaders from all three districts, with the exception of David Folsom.

In addition to land, the United States government also promised to fund schools in the Indian Territory. The goal was to acculturate the Choctaw and eventually grant them citizenship, but at the government's discretion (Kidwell 1995: 48-9). This government program to "civilize" the Indians appalled both traditionalists and progressives and, since removal was voluntary under the treaty, most of them simply refused to move.

In 1825, the federal government became aware that there was already extensive American settlement in portions of the land that had been ceded by the United States to

the Choctaw, and it began negotiations to regain the land. A delegation of Choctaw leaders, including chiefs Mushulatubbee, Pushmataha, and Puckshunubbee, as well as John Pitchlynn, Robert Cole, and David Folsom, set out for Washington in October 1824. Puckshunubbe was killed in an accident en route to the capital, and Pushmataha died from a severe cough after they arrived, but the other delegates signed a treaty on January 22, 1825. This treaty provided the Choctaw a cash settlement for the retro-ceded lands, as well as a rewrite of the Doak's Stand provision that permitted the federal government to decide when the Choctaw were sufficiently "civilized" and worthy of citizenship (Carson 1996: 248).

Following the 1820 and 1825 treaties, a period of political upheaval plagued the Choctaw. Prior to the treaties, all three districts had been under the leadership of traditionalist chiefs. After agreeing to two land cessions, many of them began to lose power in their districts and progressive leaders took the opportunity to gain control. In the Eastern District, Mushulatubbee was replaced by David Folsom. Mushulatubbee had originally been opposed to land cessions and removal, but he changed his position when he thought the federal government would put him in charge of the removal process, and grant him financial awards (Carson 1996: 311). Mushulatubbee was also strongly opposed to the presence on missionaries in the Choctaw territory, a position that made him even less popular among his people. He was forced to resign, and David Folsom, who was pro-mission and anti-removal, became the Eastern district leader in 1826 (Carson 1996: 251).

After Folsom was appointed Eastern District chief, he called for the removal of traditionalist chiefs Robert Cole, from the Western District, and Tappenahooma, from the

Southern District. Cole was replaced by Greenwood Leflore, but the traditionalists maintained control in the Southern towns. In August 1826, Folsom and Leflore agreed to bring their districts together in a constitutional government which would replace the traditional district divisions and create the official Choctaw Nation. The progressives adhered to a platform of opposition to further land cessions and removal, and promised a revitalization of Choctaw society (Carson 1996: 257). In 1828, Tappenahooma sent a scouting party to the Arkansas territory with the expectation of moving his people west. The peoples of the Southern district opposed this and he was ousted as chief. He was replaced by progressive leader John Garland, who brought the Southern District into the Choctaw Nation that same year (Carson 1996: 263).

Despite the union of the three districts into one Nation, each division maintained a traditional chiefdom hierarchy with both peace chiefs and war chiefs. Talking Warrior was the war chief in the Eastern District, Hashaushahopiah in the Western division, and Nittakaichee in the south. With the 1828 election of Andrew Jackson to the American presidency, and the passage of a Mississippi law extending state jurisdiction first over Choctaw lands and, later, over the Choctaw peoples themselves, the district chiefs agreed that a more unified front was necessary. Both Folsom and Garland resigned in 1830, and Greenwood Leflore was appointed, by the district chiefs, the sole chief of the Choctaw Nation (Carson 1996: 314).

When it became apparent that the Choctaw would lose their sovereignty if they remained in Mississippi, the progressives resigned themselves to the necessity of removal. The progressive leaders had long envisioned a Choctaw society "based on stockraising, cotton cultivation, and political autonomy" (Carson 1996: 314). This society

would just have to develop in the Indian territory, rather than in their homeland. Leflore entered into removal negotiations with the Federal government in early 1830, but word of his actions angered the Nation. Mushulatubbee, once again, changed his position on the subject and denounced Leflore as a traitor to the Choctaw peoples. Leflore's ally, David Folsom, also suffered public denunciation in the scandal that ensued (Debo 1934: 53).

Mushulatubbee and other traditionalists, who had earlier supported removal, now came out in opposition to the loss of their lands. However, many of them did not really object to removal, they only hoped to get the progressives removed from power so the traditionalist chiefs could set the terms of the treaty (Carson 1996: 315). In fact, the federal government promised Mushulatubbee he would be named chief of the Choctaw Nation once they were in the Indian Territory if he could convince the rest of the Nation to remove west (Carson 1996: 316).

Leflore countered the traditionalist coup attempt and ultimately unseated Mushulatubbee (Jones, 1830). Shortly after, federal negotiators entered the Choctaw territory to begin treaty proceedings at Dancing Rabbit Creek. According to the final treaty, which was signed September 27, 1830, the Choctaw would cede all of their remaining lands in Mississippi and remove west over the following three years. In return, the federal government would provide funding for the move to the Indian Territory, defend the Choctaw against foreign invasion, provide certain individual Choctaw with land reservations, and provide funding for Choctaw schools. Choctaw who had established ranches and plantations in Mississippi would be allowed to sell their land, and any livestock they owned would be replaced once they were in the Indian Territory (Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, 1830).

The political upheaval of the pre-removal years did not end with the Dancing Rabbit Creek treaty. In the Southern District, Nittakaichee, who had come to power in the traditionalist revolution, was replaced by Joel Nail. When Mushulatubbee resigned, his nephew, Peter Pitchlynn succeeded him as chief of the Eastern Division. In the Western District, Greenwood Leflore was replaced by his nephew, George Harkins. The concept of one dominant chief had not lasted long, and the tripartite form of government was maintained even after removal.

Just as the introduction of missions and American education at the beginning of the century had allowed for the adoption and expression of a number of cultural identities, the political turmoil of the 1820's and 1830's created situations in which new identites were formed and expressed. District affiliations remained a primary form of social and political identity, but association with either the traditionalists or progressives became an even more important form of political identification. As the removal issue became more complex and immediate, members of both groups tended to alter their positions.

Essentially, those who promoted removal risked the wrath of the Choctaw peoples, but stood to receive financial rewards and political favors from the federal government after they arrived in the Indian Territory. Leaders who opposed removal remained popular leaders and hoped to retain their property in Mississippi. Eventually, most of the Choctaw chiefs recognized that removal was inevitable, but they continued to express either a pro-removal or anti-removal identity based on the perceived political and economic advantages to either position.

The Choctaw politicians were not the only ones who were expressing multiple identities. Many younger members of the Nation saw political and economic advantages

to being flexible. Robert Jones and Peter Pitchlynn were young men, recently out of boarding school, when the issue of removal was reaching its peak. Both were from the Eastern District and entered the debate as supporters of Mushulatubbee, which would imply that they considered themselves traditionalists. However, both of them claimed to be against removal, which would indicate a Progressive stance. Perhaps they expressed one or the other identity, depending on the situation, until it became clear that they could benefit from supporting the treaty, at which point they showed support for removal.

In a letter dated August 6, 1830, Jones wrote to Pitchlynn: "I am determined to oppose the treaty if there be an attempt to hold one and I shall not care a fig who differs with me on this point". One month later, the Federal government appointed him an assistant agent in the removal process (Bruce 1989: 295), and he was specifically granted a parcel and a half of land in the Mississippi Territory by the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek (Dancing Rabbit Creek supplement, 1830: art. 2). The proceeds from the sale of this land allowed Jones to establish trading houses in the Indian Territory.

Pitchlynn stood to gain political benefits from showing support for both sides of the debate. Two of his sisters had married into Western and Southern District families, so he had familial ties outside his own district. He seems to have shown support for both John Garland, the anti-removal traditionalist chief of the Southern District, as well as George Harkins, the pro-removal progressive chief of the Western division. His father, who was white but often identified as Choctaw, was in favor of removal and was employed as the United States interpreter for the treaty negotiations (Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, 1830), but he himself never did leave Mississippi. Instead, he chose to settle in the Chickasaw Territory until his death in 1835 (Baird 1972: 51).

Pitchlynn was able to express multiple district identities, had a familial tie to the federal government, and claimed support for both sides of the removal issue. Ultimately, he favored removal and, according to the treaty, he received two sections of land in Mississippi. He later used the proceeds to establish a plantation in the new Territory. In later years his decision not to maintain a single position on the removal issue paid off when he ran for, and was elected, principal chief of the Choctaw Nation (Baird 1972: 136).

According to the removal treaty, Choctaw wishing to remain in Mississippi were required to become citizens of the United States, but would also maintain their Choctaw citizenship. Those who chose not to remove were allotted one section of land for the head of household, half that quantity for each child over the age of ten, and a quarter section for each child under the age of ten. If they remained on the land for five years after the signing of the treaty, they would be granted ownership in fee simple (Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, 1830: art. XIV). Those who took advantage of this provision were primarily ranchers and plantation owners who did not wish to give up their land. Most Choctaw, however, chose to remove to the Indian Territory.

Once the Choctaw had settled in the Indian Territory, politics continued to provide many opportunities for the expression of multiple identities. Cultural identities that had been important in Mississippi continued to be expressed in post-removal interactions, but new social, political, and economic situations gave rise to additional opportunities for identity formation and expression. Politics remained a major arena for situational identities, but economics began to play an even larger role in identity formation and expression than had been the case in the old Choctaw territory.

Prior to the arrival of the Choctaw peoples, the district chiefs had agreed to a division of the new territory according to old district lines (see figure 2). The people of the Eastern District would populate the new Mushulatubbee District in the north, those from the Western division would settle the Apukshunnubbee District north of the Red River and east of the Kiamichi River; the Southern District received the land north of the Red River and west of the Kiamichi, which was named the Pushmataha District (Baird 1972: 43).

In the early 1830's, most people settled in the new territory according to their home district. Within five years, however, families including the Pitchlynns and Jones' began moving outside their districts in search of better plantation lands, as well as opportunities to expand their political and commercial interests. Progressive families such as the LeFlores and Folsoms also moved into new districts for similar reasons. They remained fully involved in the market economy, establishing cotton plantations, cattle ranches, and trading houses. Many of these families had been involved in these areas prior to removal and merely continued their interests in the west. Members of the Leflore and Folsom families remained active in politics through the Civil War, but they were never as prominent as they had been in Mississippi. Involvement in the growing economy became a primary concern for these families, and a source for their identities as ranchers, traders, and plantation owners.

Many families saw the benefit to involvement in the larger economy. In 1833, the Pitchlynn family moved from the Mushulatubbee District to the Apukshunnubbee District, which had better soils for cotton. They founded a plantation, purchased slaves, and tried to establish themselves within their new community. The plantation was never a

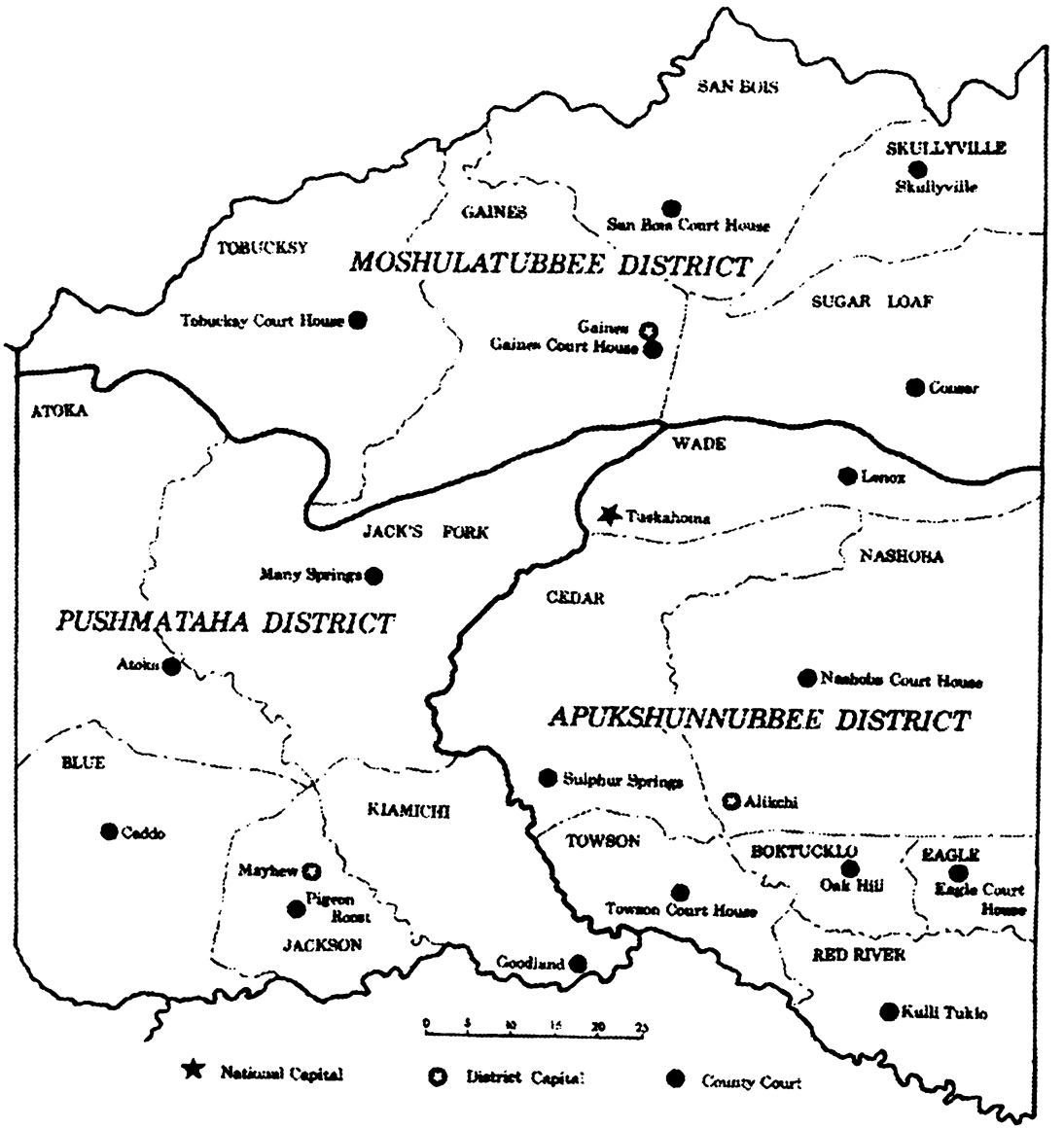

Figure 2: Old Choctaw Nation districts and important towns, Indian Territory, 1830s. From *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, by John W. Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds. Copyright©1965, 1979, 1986 by the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. Reprinted by Permission.

financial success, however, and Pitchlynn devoted himself to politics as a source of income. Despite the failure of his farm, he continued to identify himself as a plantation owner and cotton farmer until the end of the Civil War (Faiman-Silva 1997: 53).

Like many other progressives, Peter Pitchlynn soon became involved in district and tribal politics. In 1834, he was involved in the formation of the first official Choctaw government in the Indian Territory, but as a representative from the Mushulatubbee District. In 1840, he chose to express an Apukshunnubbe District identity to justify a run for chief of that district. He was defeated because most of the population still associated him with the Mushulatubbee District, but this new identity was eventually accepted and aided him in his successful 1864 campaign for principal chief (Baird 1972: 55).

During the Civil War, Pitchlynn once again chose to express multiple identities to further his economic and political interests. When the Choctaw proclaimed allegiance to the Confederacy, Pitchlynn initially chose to support the United States. Since his father had been employed by the federal government, and Peter had done a great deal of work in Washington on behalf of the Choctaw, he had established a number of important political relationships he did not wish to lose.

In 1863, when he chose to run for principal chief, many Choctaw were against him because of his support for the United States government. He shrewdly decided to publicly express his plantation owner and slaveholder identities, and declared himself to be a true Southern man. This was enough to win back the trust of his constituents and he was elected chief, despite the fact that he never identified himself as a Confederate supporter (Baird 1972: 126). After the war, the Choctaw faced the task of rebuilding their relationship with the federal government. Because he had maintained a pro-Union

identity in Washington, Pitchlynn was chosen to lead the delegation sent to renegotiate their status with the government (Baird 1972: 148).

Like Peter Pitchlynn, Robert Jones acquired and expressed several new identities after he arrived in the Indian Territory. Shortly after removal, Jones settled in the Mushulatubbee District and used the money he had received from the treaty provisions to establish a trading house. By 1835, however, he had developed an interest in plantation agriculture. He moved to the Pushmataha District, began growing cotton, and began to establish himself in a population that was primarily from the old Southern division.

The following year, Jones became a partner in the Berthelet, Heald, and Company trading post at Doaksville, in the Apukshannubbee District. Advertisements in the *Choctaw Telegraph* newspaper indicate that by 1849, Jones had bought out John Heald, and the firm became known as Berthelet and Jones. That same newspaper (Oct. 11, 1849) praised the firm because it had "not fraudulently speculated off of the Indians" and could be trusted as the company had been in "residence among us of some ten or twelve years". The article does not mention that one of the partners was actually a Choctaw, which suggests that Jones may have chosen to express his white identity over his Choctaw in the course of business.

There is evidence to suggest that it may not have been unusual for Jones to express his white identity in business situations outside his home district, as well as outside the Choctaw Territory. Throughout the years preceding the Civil War, Jones entered into partnerships with several white men and established trading houses and cotton brokerages in New Orleans and Texas (Hellier's, 1860: 17). During the nineteenth century, it may have been difficult to establish Indian-owned businesses outside of the Indian Territory,

particularly if they were aimed at white commerce. According to Moore, there is little evidence of Indian cotton factors in the South during the nineteenth century. There was, however, fierce competition between the established white-owned cotton commission houses of New Orleans, and planters selling their product had a large number of factors from which to choose (1998: 236-7). Given the prejudices that were common among Southern whites in the nineteenth century, it is likely that white planters would have preferred to do business with other white men.

The cotton house Jones operated in New Orleans was one of many similar businesses in that city. While it is true that Jones was acting as a broker for several Choctaw planters, he would have had to receive a fair amount of white business to successfully compete with other New Orleans firms. Given the attitude many white Americans held towards Native Americans in the nineteenth century, it is reasonable to believe that it would have been to Jones' advantage to express his white identity in the course of business.

In addition to his trading houses, Jones established a number of plantations throughout the three districts. He became one of the wealthiest men in the Choctaw Nation, and was said to own several hundred slaves (Choctaw Herald, 1911). During the 1850's and 1860's, he also established himself as a prominent Choctaw politician. In 1857, the Choctaw were in the process of writing a new constitution. Several of the Progressive leaders wished to eliminate the three district chiefs in favor of one chief for the entire Nation. Traditionalists opposed this proposal as one more step towards the loss of their Choctaw identities.

Jones, who identified as a Progressive in many situations, chose to support the traditionalists on this particular issue. Since much of his business inside the Indian Territory came from Traditionalists, perhaps he felt it prudent to support their cause. He also had strong political ambitions, and may have felt that he could attain greater success in the traditional system of government, rather than one that required fewer leaders. The traditionalists eventually won the debate, but the constitution of 1860 was something of a compromise: it introduced the office of Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation, but also retained the three district chiefs, who would preside over their respective divisions (Baird 1972: 115).

On the eve of the Civil War, the Choctaw were in the midst of a debate over which side to support. Many Traditionalists, as well as some Progressives, felt that the Choctaw Nation should remain loyal to the Union. The federal government had not yet paid the tribe the proceeds from the land that had been retro-ceded to the United States in 1825. Since the money was to benefit the tribe as a whole, many Traditionalists feared it would be lost if the Choctaw supported the Confederacy. Most Progressives, however, felt that the Nation should declare for the South. Many of them were deeply ensconced in the Southern plantation economy, and did not wish to loose their property and markets if the North won the war. Jones was a very vocal supporter of Choctaw allegiance to the Confederacy and eventually served as the Choctaw Delegate to the Confederate Congress from 1862 to 1865 (Confederate Correspondence, 1995: 1).

After the war, Jones served as a member of the delegation sent to reestablish relations with the United States. During the proceedings, he learned that some of his property in the Indian Territory had been confiscated by Union troops (Baird 1972: 148). He was

able to secure the return of his property, and it is probable that he used his former identity as an assistant agent to the United States as a bargaining tool.

From the end of the war until his death in 1873, Jones remained active in politics and commerce. During the course of his life, he had expressed a number of identities. He was a merchant, planter, and politician. He was a Confederate and an agent for the United States government. He claimed membership in both the Presbyterian and Baptist churches. He had homes and businesses in all three districts, so he was able to identify with each of them, depending on the situation and perceived advantages. He also could claim to be both a Traditionalist and a Progressive; an educated Christian man, fully participant in the market-economy, who also supported the preservation of the Choctaw identity.

The preservation of this larger identity had been an issue among the Choctaw ever since the earliest European contact. During Reconstruction, the United States government embarked on a mission to integrate Indians into American society and open the Indian Territory to white settlement and statehood. Like other Native American peoples, the Choctaw were violently opposed to these measures. The 1866 treaty that had reestablished Choctaw relations with the United States contained provisions meant to entice the Choctaw into accepting lands in severalty. Progressive Chief Allen Wright was in favor of this plan, but the Traditionalists disagreed. Peter Pitchlynn and Robert Jones sided with the Traditionalists on this matter, as well as in their opposition to the establishment of a territorial government (Debo 1934:121; Baird 1972: 182).

In 1871, Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act which terminated the treaty process by forbidding recognition of tribes as nations or independent powers. The federal

government would no longer negotiate with tribes before taking over their lands (Miller and Faux 1997: 22). The Dawes Severalty Act was ratified in 1887 and divided the Indian Territory lands among the inhabitants. In 1889, the Indian Territory was opened to white settlement and it became necessary to establish a territorial government. By 1895, the entire Indian Territory had been placed under federal control. By 1906, the lands had been divided, and Oklahoma officially became a state in 1907. It was at this point that the Choctaw Nation ceased to exist as a sovereign political entity. The Choctaw social system, however, continued to exist and thrive. The actions and choices of individuals within the Choctaw community resulted in extensive cultural changes, but also contributed to the preservation of the Choctaw social system and the identity associated with that system.

Through the actions and behaviors of individuals over time, the Choctaw cultural components experienced dramatic changes. In the nineteenth century, individuals continued to strategize and express multiple identities, while struggling to maintain the collective identity of their people. The influence of mixed-heritage families and the introduction of new cultural phenomena provided individuals with the necessary dispositions to successfully participate in new component variations. Participation in these component variations allowed them to maintain and express multiple identities, which are evident in the documentary record and can be seen as markers of change within the cultural components.

CONCLUSION

The opening of the Indian Territory to white settlement and the official absorption of the Choctaw peoples into American society did not signal an end to either their cultural components or their social system. Just as they have done for centuries, the Choctaw of the twenty-first century continue to maintain and express multiple forms of identification. Today, the Choctaw are a divided nation, with those remaining in the old homeland identifying as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw, while those in Oklahoma identify as the Choctaw Nation. Each group claims to be the "true Choctaw", yet they are both members of the same social system. Those who remain in Mississippi claim descent from the Choctaw who refused to leave their homelands. The Oklahoma peoples emphasize that their ancestors left the homeland to preserve their Choctaw identities. In addition to identities based on this ideological separation, the modern Choctaw peoples express a multitude of identities based on religious beliefs, political affiliations, kinship ties, and the linguistic variations that persist to the present time.

Many studies of the Choctaw peoples miss the dynamic and complex nature of this society because they emphasize only the static social system framework and its related identity. This is a problem that plagues many anthropological studies today. Approaches which continue to use such over-arching concepts tend to be vague exercises in description and classification. They place an emphasis on large group categories, and tend to ignore cultural change and the role of the individual in human societies.

The argument presented in this study suggests that a move away from broad descriptive categories toward an emphasis on individual agency and identity expression

would allow for much more thorough and dynamic studies of human populations and cultural change. Identity formation and expression should be approached as a cultural process, tied to context, group relationships, and cultural change. A view of identities as subjective, negotiated, and situational allows us to look at the *how* and *why* of identity formation and move beyond static classifications and descriptions.

Practice theory has been suggested as a framework within which to examine identities and the dynamic nature of cultural components. Practice, as it is used in this study, allows us to view identity formation and expression as a tool which is used by individuals to go after what is politically and economically useful for them in the context of their social and historical situations. This approach describes actors as pragmatic and rational, while the expression of multiple and situational identities is a conscious product of their individual agency and awareness. The behaviors which are tied to identity expression result in change within cultural components and the reproduction of social systems.

Practice theory attempts to explain the manner in which social systems are formed and how human agents, through their actions, serve to produce and reproduce those systems. The system, however, is not viewed as a unit imbued with explanatory power. The system's cultural components are dynamic and changing, and it this process of change that should continue to be a primary concern within the social sciences. The argument presented here suggests that many approaches to social theory perpetuate the tendency toward descriptive and bounded views of social systems, and do not allow for adequate study of individual agency and cultural change. An emphasis on cultural components, individuals, and individual agency brings these processes into much better focus and allows for more detailed discussions of human interactions and cultural change.

The post-contact history of the Choctaw clearly illustrates the formation and expression of multiple identities, their use as strategizing mechanisms, and the resulting changes to the cultural components. With the break up of the complex Mississippian societies, smaller groups moved into new territories due to population pressures and changes in subsistence patterns. New social systems were born from the amalgamation of previously separate peoples, but these peoples did not abandon their established set of identities. They adopted and maintained new cultural identities, and a plural society provided situations in which these identities could be utilized.

By the time of first European contact in the sixteenth century, the Choctaw may not yet have come together as a recognizable entity. At least the Spanish made no mention of them in their early documents. It is possible that the people who would become the Choctaw inhabited the regions surrounding their future territory, and came together as a result of population decimation and movements stemming from the introduction of European diseases.

The eighteenth century French and British presence in the Southeast provided the first long-term interactions between the Choctaw and Europeans. By this time, the peoples of the Mississippi interior had come together in a loose political confederacy, but did not yet identify collectively as "the Choctaw". The three districts could act collectively in foreign relations, but more often opted to act independently.

Individuals also tended to act independently of their districts. They adopted and expressed identities associated with other divisions and outside groups. These identities were often products of marriage or other kinship ties to peoples within the Choctaw confederacy, as well as with other groups in the region. In the political and economic

play-off system that developed, individuals expressed various district, family, or political identities according to perceived advantages. It does not appear that kinship or marriage alliances served to bring the Choctaw districts together. Instead, district divisions often superceded family ties, and the plural nature of their society was actually reinforced through the strategizing behaviors of individuals and the pursuit of their personal goals.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the American encroachment and loss of the play-off system, the Choctaw began to adopt and express additional identities, and their cultural components continued to change. As the possibility of their removal from Mississippi became more real, individuals reacted in ways that created new divisions within their society, and yet brought the districts closer to becoming a unified political whole. Choctaw society became divided based on reactions to American policies, with the Traditionalists espousing the maintenance of the "old ways", while Progressives promoted the adoption of American institutions and characteristics. Both sides believed that they held the key to resisting acculturation and the loss of their political sovereignty.

The introduction of Protestant missions, American education, and the market economy stimulated the adoption and expression of multiple identities. The long-term goals of individual Choctaw varied, but most of them were tied to politics and the economy. Families such as the Pitchlynns, Folsoms, Leflores, and Jones produced members who became prominent politicians and wealthy planters. While these men always claimed to be working toward the preservation of Choctaw social and political sovereignty, they never hesitated to present the situational identity that would best serve their personal goals.

They were Choctaw and they were white. They claimed multiple district affiliations, and were involved in the politics of all three divisions. They were planters, tradesmen, and politicians. They were both Confederates and federal employees. They maintained multiple religious affiliations, and did not hesitate to switch denominations according to perceived advantages or disadvantages. By expressing multiple and situational identities, these men attained the political and economic success they desired, while their actions served to transform the Choctaw confederacy into the Choctaw Nation and reinforced their social system boundaries.

It is clear that an emphasis on multiple identities and the role of the individual in society provides much more detailed accounts of social interactions and cultural change. This approach is not limited to studies of one particular region or set of social interactions, and further research will focus on its applicability in comparative contact situations. Its use is not limited to contact situations, however, and it certainly could be applied to any study that strives to understand internal interactions, as well as systemic reproduction and cultural change.

At present, it is unclear whether this approach is suited to prehistoric studies, or others that lack historic documents. Documentary sources have provided the evidence needed for this study, but archaeological materials could contain ample evidence of multiple identities and associated behaviors. According to Lightfoot's study of cultural pluralism and change at Fort Ross, California, trash middens should be recognized as "contextually rich deposits that often accumulate through routinized behavior". An understanding of these behaviors would allow us to "critically evaluate the nature and magnitude of culture

change and persistence in contact settings" (Lightfoot 1998: 217) More research is clearly warranted.

The examples of multiple and situational identities presented in this study demonstrate the importance of emphasizing individuals and identities tied to cultural components in discussions of social process and group relationships. The contextual identities that are expressed by individuals are often subsumed within a larger collective identity, but should not be ignored in discussions of social groups and interactions. While larger group identities remain meaningful on many levels, an understanding of individuals and their actions deepens our knowledge of the whole society. To describe an individual or group as Choctaw provides us with some understanding of the peoples in question. However, if we look to individual behaviors, contextual identity expression, and cultural change, we are better able to understand the dynamic nature of social interactions and the phenomenon of systemic reproduction.

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