THE INDIAN FIGURE IN JAMES FENIMORE COOPER'S
THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS AND WILLIAM
GILMORE SIMMS' THE YEMASSE
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CHAPTER I

SIMMS' AND COOPER'S THEMATIC AND HISTORICAL INDIAN

James Fenimore Cooper in writing The Last of the Mohicans and William Gilmore Simms in writing The Yemassee felt that they were presenting realistic portrayals of the Indian as he existed in America in the early 1700's. However, some critics were quick to attack their portrayals, especially Cooper's, as not being realistic. Other critics came to the writers' defense. The argument has continued through the years. Simms and Cooper admitted they had used a romantic literary form for their narratives but contended that their Indian characters were lifelike and that they had neither imagined nor contrived them just to make a good story. Students of Indian life and ethnologists would seem to support the contention of Simms and Cooper.

The theme of the books, the engulfing of the American Indian by the relentless advance of the white man and his civilization, is presented by both authors within the structure of the historical romance. Both Simms and Cooper defended their use of this literary form by explaining that the epic proportions of their subject demanded a form allowing them to present credibly the Indian as the proud
and admirable character he generally had been before the
white man's arrival. In the early 1800's in the East, the
degraded Indian, obsequious and often sullen, was the prev-
alent image of the Indian. At the same time in the West,
the marauding Indian, savage and cruel, was the familiar
stereotype. Simms and Cooper felt they could romanticize
these current concepts of their day within the structure
of the historical romance, and, at the same time, present
a realistic picture of the Indian as he had been in the
early 1700's. The explanations of the two writers regarding
their choice of the historical romance are very similar.

Cooper states in the preface to the 1850 collection of
the Leather-Stocking Tales,

> It is the privilege of all writers of fiction, more particularly when their works aspire to the elevation of romances, to present the beau idéal of their characters to the reader. This it is which constitutes poetry, and to suppose that the red-man is to be represented only in the squalid misery or in the degraded moral state that certainly more or less belongs to his condition, is, we apprehend, taking a very narrow view of the author's privileges. Such criticism would have deprived the world of even Homer.\(^1\)

Apparently Cooper, realizing that most of his readers had
not known this early proud Indian, felt that he could give
more verisimilitude to his character in the historical ro-

Likewise, Simms in his famous prefatory letter to Professor Samuel Henry Dickson of South Carolina, as printed in an 1853 edition of *The Yemassee*, points out that

The rude portraits of the red man as by those who see him in degrading attitudes only, and in humiliating relation with the whites, must not be taken as a just delineation of the same being in his native woods, unsubdued, a fearless hunter, and without any degrading consciousness of inferiority, and still more degrading habits, to make him wretched and ashamed.\(^2\)

Simms continues, stating that he has been true in his portrayal of the Indians of that early day. He exhorts the reader to judge the merits and validity of *The Yemassee* as a modern romance, a kind of substitute for the ancient epic, and more like poetry than a novel.\(^3\)

In *The Last of the Mohicans* the Indians are introduced as a displaced people, who have yielded to the superior forces of the Europeans but retain their proud spirit. Chingachgook voices his premonition that his race will soon disappear completely when he says, "The blood of chiefs is in my veins, where it must stay forever."\(^4\) Chingachgook's premonition proves true, for his bloodline ends with the death of his son Uncas. Cooper would seem to propose,


\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 4-5.

\(^4\)The *Last of the Mohicans*, edited by W. K. Wickes (New York, 1907), p. 32 (Ch. III).
however, that a defeated Indian people need not completely vanish from the American scene. He hints that the Indian culture might merge with the European through intermarriage. Several times Cooper refers to Cora's mixed blood, at the same time magnifying her admirable qualities. More significant is the suggestion made by an Indian maiden during the couple's burial ceremony that Cora and Uncas will marry in the afterlife. Edwin Fussell, in The Frontier: American Literature and the American West, goes so far as to assert that "miscegenation is a major theme" of Cooper's book, that Cooper promotes the idea, and that Hawkeye's attitude of disapproval is not Cooper's. Notably, in his essay "Civilizing the Red Man," Cooper openly favors intermarriage of whites and Indians.

In The Yemassee the Indians are introduced as a defiant people, verging on rebellion against the inferior role the white man would have them play in American society. Sanutee has not accepted this role, nor is he willing to. He has come to realize, however, that his people are unconsciously being forced to play such a role. Simms explains that Sanutee is wise enough to realize that the two cultures, white and Indian, have great differences. Such differences, 


whether color differences or differences in culture, Sanutee knows will result in establishment of classes. Subsequently, the cultural group which becomes conscious of inferiority (this is inevitable in Sanutee's thinking, as Simms would portray him) will necessarily become subservient as a class to the superior cultural group or be destroyed. Sanutee realizes that his people have become conscious of their inferiority since the Europeans' coming. They have developed a desire for some of the attributes of the white culture: liquor, guns, and trinkets. As they have become dependent upon the whites for providing these items, they have become willing to degrade themselves to obtain them.

In his essay "Literature and Art Among the Aborigines," Simms, approaching Cooper's solution to the disparity of cultures, states that in the early days of English settlement of the country the Indians possibly could have been advantageously absorbed by the settlers through intermarriage with Puritans and Quakers. Thus, according to Simms' thinking, the two cultures might have merged before the cultural differences became intensified and the Indian recognized his own inferiority or the whites recognized

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7 These thoughts of Sanutee are no doubt Simms' thoughts. They are found in Cowie's edition, p. 22 (Ch. III).

their own superiority. In spite of Simms' conjecture about early solutions to the problem, there is no intimation in *The Yemassee* that the Indians should marry the South Carolinian whites. Albert Keiser, author of *The Indian in American Literature*, maintains that Simms was, in fact, against miscegenation.\(^9\) J. V. Ridgely, a Simms biographer, states that "in *The Yemassee* Simms is reading the Indian out of the South's future."\(^10\)

Simms was much concerned with preserving the levels of society, and particularly the levels of Southern society in the middle 1800's.\(^11\) He felt that in the South, the Indian, who had become so degraded and conscious of inferiority, could only belong in the slave class with the Negro.

Matthew W. Stirling, at one time director of the Bureau of American Ethnology, has asserted, however, that the American Indian did not make a good slave.\(^12\) Perhaps Simms realized this. Also, Simms may have felt that the Indian race was unredeemable because of the Indian's seemingly uncontrollable lapses into brutality.\(^13\) Simms, thus, may

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be voicing his own opinion when Hugh Grayson says to Reverend Matthews,

"It is utterly impossible that the whites and Indians should ever live together and agree. The nature of things is against it, and the very difference between the two, that of colour, perceptible to our most ready sentinel, the sight, must always constitute them an inferior caste in our minds. Apart from this, an obvious superiority in arts and education must soon force upon them the consciousness of their inferiority. . . . After a while, they must not only be inferior, but they must become dependant [sic]. . . . It will happen with the diminution of their hunting lands . . . [that] they must become degraded, and sink into slavery and destitution. A few of them have become so now; they are degraded by brutal habits."  

With no solution to the Indian problem, such as miscegenation or slavery, Simms felt the Indian would simply be driven out of the white man's society.  

Cooper's and Simms' concepts of inferiority, as they applied them to their Indian characters, differ. Cooper saw the Indians not as an inherently inferior race but as belonging to a culture that, because of circumstances, was inferior only in certain respects to the white culture. Simms saw the Indians as destined to be inferior to the whites. Did the Indians portrayed by these two writers feel racially inferior? What do the Indians' actions reveal about their attitude?

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14 The Yemassee, edited by Cowie, p. 291 (Ch. XXXVIII).
15 Ridgely, William Gilmore Simms, p. 28.
Cooper's Indians demonstrate no consciousness of racial inferiority. Instead, Magua, a member of the Huron tribe, a tribe related to the Iroquois, displays feelings of contempt and resentment toward the whites. At some time prior to the events in the story, British soldiers had humiliated Magua by publicly whipping him for misconduct. The Huron had vowed revenge, and throughout the story revenge motivates him. His contempt for the British is illustrated by his refusing to talk to the British party he guides through the woods. Cooper explains that his taciturnity is caused not by any unfamiliarity with the language but by his disdain for the language of the English. Cooper's portrayal of the Huron is not inconsistent with reality. Though the Hurons at this time in history were at odds with many related Iroquoian tribes, they were of that linguistic stock and of similar disposition. Stirling supports Cooper's characterization of Magua when he says that "of all the North American tribes none were fiercer, more intelligent, and more independent than the Iroquois."  

Also, Uncas and Chingachgook, Delaware Indians of Algonquian stock, remain proud, admitting no racial inferiority to the Europeans although their tribe has had to retreat steadily as the intruders have encroached upon Indian lands. However, in their pride, they are not bitter like Magua.

17Stirling, p. 31.
Lewis Spence's assessment of Algonquian disposition, in *The North American Indians*, may explain this variation of attitude. Spence states that the Algonquian people were of a milder temperament than the Iroquois. Another reason Cooper's Delawares exhibit no deep-seated hostility toward the whites may be found in Clark Wissler's suggestion in *Indians of the United States* that "defeatism must have had some place in their [the Delawares'] psychology." Ready to acknowledge the futility of resistance, Chingachgook, nevertheless, has kept his self-esteem, for he muses at the end of the story, "But who can say that the serpent of his tribe has forgotten his wisdom?" The self-assurance of Chingachgook and Uncas and the aggressiveness of Magua belie any consciousness of racial inferiority.

Simms' Sanutee exhibits no sense of inferiority in his actions. Simms continually seeks, however, to remind the reader that Sanutee does feel racially inferior and that the chief foresees the defeat of his people as part of their destiny. Actually, Sanutee resembles Cooper's Magua in his reaction to the whites. If the Cherokee, a tribe of Iroquoian linguistic stock, were the foundation of the

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20*The Last of the Mohicans*, p. 438 (Ch. XXXIII).
Yemassee Indians, as has sometimes been suggested, then it is not unreasonable that Sanutee should somewhat resemble the Iroquois Magua. Like Magua, Sanutee has come to feel aversion to the whites. He skirts their settlements to avoid meeting them. Like Magua, Sanutee's pride has been hurt by the whites, for the European traders and their liquor have ruined the chief's son, Occonestoga. Also, the whites have so corrupted some of the other Yemassee chiefs that they are willing to accept worthless trinkets for the priceless land of their fathers. Sanutee is resentful of the whites and plots rebellion. Up to the time the story opens, the Yemassee people have tolerated the intruders; but as the Europeans begin to destroy everything the Indians take pride in, their resentment grows. Simms would have the reader believe that Sanutee's consciousness of his people's inferiority underlies his subsequent actions. If Sanutee, described as a "wise and valiant" chief by Simms, had truly felt this alleged inferiority, he would have sought to have his people emulate the white culture or would have despaired and submitted. Instead, the chief chooses to take a stand to preserve the Yemassee way of life. Simms' apparent inconsistency in the portrayal of Sanutee can be understood when Simms' purpose in writing *The Yemassee* is explained.

Simms felt that the South had an ideal society and an uncommon destiny. But the South, as well as the whole of
America, lacked ancient traditions. Simms felt the Indian could be America's or, more particularly, the South's "living link with the past . . . [so that the South] could lay claim to genuine antiquity." What Virgil did for Rome in writing The Aeneid, Simms must have aspired to do for his own land in writing The Yemassee. Keiser, furthermore, points out that, as a consequence of the purpose behind The Yemassee, Simms frequently alludes to the Roman civilization as he seeks to establish a parallel American tradition. Thus, Matiwan is described as a "Roman mother" and Sanutee is portrayed as being stern and austere like a Roman. In Simms' thinking, the noble Indian first of all provided America with a respectable heritage. Subsequently, the Indian's admission of racial inferiority and acceptance of his destiny gave the European invaders sanction to usurp the Indian land. Though a racially inferior Indian suited Simms' purpose, his Sanutee, nonetheless, acts as one proud of his heritage, just as Cooper's Indians act proud to be members of their tribes.

Ignoring the seeming inconsistency in the thoughts attributed to Sanutee by Simms and the chief's actions, the reader is aware of how similar are the Indian characterizations in the two books. Within the scope of the books'....

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22 Keiser, p. 169.
The setting for *The Last of the Mohicans* is near or at Fort Henry in 1757 during the French and Indian War. A high point of interest in the story is the attack of Montcalm, French commander, on the inadequately prepared Fort Henry, which is under the command of Munro (spelled "Monro" in history books), his British opponent. The subsequent defeat of Munro and the Indians' senseless surprise massacre of the surrendering inhabitants of the fort as they withdraw are historically true events. To understand better Cooper's portrayal of the Huron Magua as the evil instigator of this

\[23\text{That Cooper portrays the Delawares as good Indians and the Hurons as bad Indians is the contention of some critics, such as Walker (p. 47) and Grossman (p. 43).}\]
tragedy, one must briefly trace the relationship the Hurons had with the tribes of their own Iroquoian linguistic stock, with the whites, and with the Algonquian Delawares.

Though of Iroquoian stock, the Hurons at some early time became an independent and powerful tribe. Sometime after 1570, however, other Iroquoian tribes, uniting as the Five Nations (later becoming the Six Nations) for purposes of maintaining peace among themselves, came to realize their strength as the Dutch provided them with guns. They began to build an Iroquoian empire, according to ethnologist John R. Swanton.24 Attacking the Hurons, the Five Nations destroyed their towns one by one until by 1649 the Huron strength was depleted. The Hurons did not meekly submit. Increased rivalry between conqueror and the conquered over fur trade probably increased the state of bitter hatred that is known to have existed between them.25 Thus, during the French and Indian War they were allied with opposing forces. In these historical facts there is basis for Cooper's Magua to hate the English, allies of the Iroquois.

Critics have particularly centered their charges of manipulated facts on Cooper's portrayal of the Delawares, especially Uncas and Chingachgook, as being opposed to the


25 Wissler, p. 113.
French when, in fact, history allies the Delaware with the French during the French and Indian War. Some critics contend that Cooper fabricated the alliance of Delawares and English so that he might not offend his English readers and so that he might not make the Delawares seem less admirable. Cooper makes the connection of Uncas and Chingachgook with the English more historically credible when he has the white scout, Hawkeye, explain that "white cunning has managed to throw the tribes in great confusion, as respects friends and enemies." To some critics this explanation is weak. It is true, however, that Indian tribes did not always act in unanimity. Anthony F. C. Wallace, in his biography of Teedyuscung, a Delaware chief living during this period, pictures the chief's vacillation in loyalty to French and English forces. Continually, the whites sought the favor of Indian groups in order to use them as buffers against enemy Indians or enemy whites. The Yemassee also were so used by the whites, as Chapman J. Milling points out repeatedly in Red Carolinians. In the midst of the vying for allies, it was not unusual for a group of Indians within a tribe to become allied with enemies of their tribe. The

26 The Last of the Mohicans, p. 243 (Ch. XIX).
28 (Chapel Hill, 1940), passim.
American Heritage Book of Indians confirms the prevalence of mixed loyalties, stating that "although generally the Hurons considered the Iroquois to be evil people, some groups of Hurons joined with the Iroquois." Cooper's having isolated Delaware groups allied with the English is not beyond belief, contrary to the critics' assertions. Furthermore, the situation was not necessarily created to enhance the goodness of his "good" Indians.

Cooper has equated Hurons and Iroquois as Mingoes, traditionally hated by the Algonquins. Though historically the Hurons came to oppose the Five Nations, as has been pointed out, all these Iroquoian people had been united at some earlier time in a common dislike of the Algonquins. George Bird Grinnell explains in The Story of the Indian that in the midst of the vast Algonquin territory were the Iroquois and that "between these two families there was a deep and bitter hostility." As the Five Nations became a closely allied military force and began empire building, not only Hurons succumbed to their might but also other groups so that by 1690, according to ethnologist James Mooney, "the Iroquois had conquered and destroyed or


incorporated all the surrounding tribes." In 1720 the Delawares became subject to the Iroquois with the status of "women."

Cooper would have his readers feel that the Mingoes in calling the Delaware "women" are using the term in a derogatory sense, as in Magua's last desperate taunt before he falls to his death. If they are, of course the Mingoes would be more credibly portrayed as inimical to the Delawares. Actually there is variance of opinion about the significance of the title as historically conferred by the Iroquois. Warren S. Walker, present-day Cooper critic, contends that the Iroquois had decisively defeated the Delaware and that their making the Delaware "women" was a "magnanimous concession." The Delaware were thereafter to assume a peacemaking role. Wallace, Teedyuscung's biographer, does not go so far as to call the Iroquois' action magnanimous; but he does point out that at the time of the Iroquois-Delaware settlement the term simply meant that the Delaware were non-voting members of the League. He explains, however, that "with the growth of bad feeling between the

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Delawares and the Iroquois after 1737, the 'women' epithet began to come into use as a term of opprobrium, as an insulting nickname.\(^{33}\) Folklorist Daniel G. Brinton verifies Wallace's statement, saying that the Iroquois became arrogant and contemptuous of the Delawares in the middle 1700's and that referring to the Delawares as "women" was the same as calling them "bawds.\(^{34}\) Perhaps the Iroquois were not so villainous as actually to cheat the Delawares out of their lands after the 1720 settlement, as some students of Indian history suggest; but evidently the Delaware position as respected peacemakers in the Iroquoian League had considerably deteriorated by the middle 1700's. Cooper had further historical basis, therefore, for portraying the Mingo Magua as hating Uncas and Chingachgook and the two Delawares as despising Magua.

Just as Cooper equates Hurons and other Iroquoian tribes as Mingoes, so he merges Mahican and Mohegan to coin the name Mohican, at the same time referring to the Mohicans as Delawares or the Lenni-Lenape. Mahicans, Mohegans, and Delawares actually existed as closely related Algonquian peoples; and Lenni-Lenape was the name the Delaware gave

\(^{33}\)Wallace, p. 196.

\(^{34}\)The Lenape and Their Legends, Library of Aboriginal Literature, No. 5 (Philadelphia, 1885), p. 114.
themselves, meaning "true men." Wissler notes that the Delaware called themselves the Lenape and considered themselves superior. Cooper has Uncas display this Delaware attitude when the young chief proudly reveals his identity to Tamenund as the son of the great Unamis and of the race which is "the grandfather of nations." 37

To understand better Cooper's portrayal of Uncas and Chingachgook, one should consider the relationship of Mahican, Mohegan, and Delaware Indians.

Cooper seems to have chosen the name Uncas from Mohegan history. The Mohegans were probably a branch of the Mahicans, at one time associated with the Pequots. The American Heritage Book of Indians relates that these Mohegans, led by their chief Uncas, who was in the service of the English, revolted against the Pequots and caused their ultimate defeat and dispersal in the early 1600's. According to this report, the survivors were put in the charge of Uncas; and "so sweet was the savor of his revenge thereof that the colonies took them back out of his jurisdiction a few years later." 38

Evidently, Cooper uses only the name of this historical

35 Swanton, The Indian Tribes of North America, p. 42.
36 Wissler, p. 70.
37 The Last of the Mohicans, p. 387 (Ch. XXX).
38 Josephy and Gardner, p. 30.
Uncas for his fictional character, for in personality the historical Uncas more nearly resembles Cooper's Magua.

In fact, the Mahican people seem to be the group Uncas and Chingachgook stem from, as Cooper suggests at one point in his narrative. As the two Delaware characters with their white friends are making their way to Fort Henry, they take shelter in an old block-house. Hawkeye and the Indians know the place. Hawkeye tells how it was at this place that a group of Mohicans clashed with the Mohawks and were defeated, only Uncas and Chingachgook surviving. Historically such a confrontation did take place between Mahicans and Mohawks in 1664, at which time the Mahicans were forced to move their capital to Stockbridge, some of the Mahicans later joining with the Delawares at Wyoming, Pennsylvania. The date of the historical confrontation is inconsistent with the time setting of Cooper's narrative, but the event seems to tie Cooper's Uncas and Chingachgook to the Mahicans.

The Delawares apparently were more closely associated with the Mahicans. Mooney, in fact, refers to the Mahicans as a branch of the Delaware. Though all three groups had names which were interpreted as meaning "wolf," the Delawares were also called the "grandfather tribe." Comprising

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39 Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, pp. 41-42.
40 Mooney, p. 19.
the Delaware tribe were three clans, one of these being the Unami or Turtle clan to which Cooper's Uncas and Chingachgook belong. The turtle figures largely in Indian mythology, particularly in myths about the creation of the world. Perhaps Uncas alludes to this mythological basis of the Unami clan when he claims to belong to the race which is the "grandfather of nations."

The Delaware had early contact with the European settlers. Generally the Delaware were considered peaceable and cooperative, as in their contacts with William Penn; later, however, they became dependent on the white man's guns and trade, solicitous of the white man's favors, and weakened by the white man's liquor and diseases. Brinton states that by mid-eighteenth century, the Delaware had been cheated out of their lands but still remained on them and that the "governor sent secret messages to the powerful and dreaded Six Nations to exert their pretended rights, and paid them for it."

That the Delaware became distrustful of the whites and bitter toward the Iroquois is understandable.

Historically, then, The Last of the Mohicans presents a believable picture of the Indians in the 1750's. Cooper's aggressive Iroquois are disdainful conquerors of the Delawares and allies of the English. Cooper's fragmented Delawares are adopted "women" of the Iroquois, resenting the loss of both.

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41 The Lenape and Their Legends, p. 115.
their land to the whites and their former prestige among Northeastern Indians. Whatever inaccuracies of historical details that may exist in the book do not detract from the authenticity of Cooper's Indians. Similarly, Simms catches the spirit of the historical time he records.

Some critics, while not ranking The Yemassee higher than The Last of the Mohicans in literary skill, praise Simms' portrayal of the Indian as more realistic. J. B. Hubbell, author of The South in American Literature, 1607-1900, contends that Simms' Indians "are less striking than Cooper's but they are closer to the historical Indian."42

The historical background of Cooper's Indian characterization has already been given. A consideration of the historical authenticity of Simms' Indians requires a brief summarization of his historical setting.

Exactly what was the origin of the Yemassee Indians is not known. Some students of the American Indians see a connection between them and the Cherokee, who were of Iroquoian stock. The Yemassee, however, had very close associations with Muskhogetic peoples, such as the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws. Written records show them living among the Guale Indians on the coast of Georgia in the 1600's. It was in this location that the Yemassee came under the influence of the Spanish missionaries. For a number of years

their relationship with the Spanish was good, and it was to the Spanish at St. Augustine that the remnant groups of the Yemassee are believed to have returned after the Yemassee War. Simms concludes his narrative with this suggestion also. For some reason, however, differences arose between the Yemassee and the Spanish in the late 1600's so that the Indians moved across the Savannah River and settled in the vicinity of the Port Royal of Simms' story. The English cultivated their friendship because they wished the Yemassee to be a buffer for them against the Spanish in Florida. After a period of friendly relations with the English, however, the Yemassee became distrustful and resentful. It is at this point in history that The Yemassee begins.

Probably a variety of misunderstandings and injustices caused the Yemassee, along with Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and many small neighboring tribes of the Yemassee, to revolt against the English. Simms states in his History of South Carolina that it was with the Indians' characteristic caprice that the Yemassee suddenly attacked their allies.\(^{43}\) He maintains in his narrative, however, that it was not mere capriciousness but a build-up of substantial reasons that ultimately instigated the attack. Simms suggests at various points throughout the story that the Yemassee had become conscious of what he would consider their inferiority to the

\(^{43}\) (Charleston, S. C., 1860), p. 86.
English and were jealous of English power, that the English were not as generous in their gifts to the Indians as they had once been, that the whites were usurping Indian land and hunting territory, that traders were unfair in their dealings with the Indians, and that the English were ruining the Indians with liquor. Adequate historical support can be found for these reasons of the Indian unrest except, perhaps, the Indian's alleged inferiority consciousness, that idea which Simms wishes to promulgate.

Henry Savage, author of River of the Carolinas: The Santee, considers enslavement of Indians by white traders an important reason for Yemassee resentment. Various injustices of English traders against Indians appear, according to Milling, in the Journal, Commons House Assembly of South Carolina. The American Heritage Book of Indians proposes that the English did not keep their word that they would give the coastal tribes trade preference. Generally, Simms' reasons for the Yemassee unrest seem adequately supported with historical facts.

In the story, the Yemassee leader Sanutee particularly has become disillusioned by the actions of some of the English. Fearing that the Yemassee cannot much longer maintain their land, livelihood, or self-respect, he has turned

to former allies of the Yemassee, the Spanish. In the early events of the story he and Ishiagaska, Simms' completely savage Indian character, plot with Chorley, an English smuggler who serves the interests of Spain. The situation is very plausible since historians believe that Spain at this time was seeking to reestablish her old friendly relations with the Yemassee. Milling states that it is thought that early in 1714 the Indians were making frequent trips to St. Augustine and returning with gifts. 47

The reader can correctly understand the historical situation existing in South Carolina in 1715 through Simms' explanation in The Yemassee. Simms admits that the historical details of the Yemassee War are altered, however. 48 For instance, in the story, South Carolinian hero Governor Craven, conscious of the belligerent mood of the Yemassee, initiates precautionary measures and urges settlers in the Pocota-ligo area to gather in an old block house for protection. As they do, Cravens goes to the Indian town to see what war preparations the Indians may be making. From a place of hiding, he witnesses not only the torture of a white man who is designated as the blood sacrifice but also other evidences of war readiness. Unexpectedly, Cravens is discovered, captured, and imprisoned.

47 Milling, p. 140.
48 The Yemassee, edited by Cowie, p. 4.
Historically, the uprising began in the early morning hours of April 15, 1715, after representatives of the Indian commissioners had met with the Indians the night before to attempt a settlement of differences. After the Indians had entertained the white men at a party, the representatives (some of them well-known traders) retired to the town house, only to be awakened later by war whoops and the attack of the Indians. Two white men escaped. One of them was able to get to Port Royal to raise an alarm. In spite of the last-minute warning, a number of whites were massacred and their homes destroyed.

This incident of the uprising illustrates how little the author’s altering of historical details actually affects his characterization of the Indians. For instance, in both Simms’ version and the historical version of the initial events of the uprising, the Yemassee commit cruel acts. Simms similarly changed other historical incidents of the rebellion without affecting the authentic portrayal of the Indians.

Though it is important to establish the authenticity of Cooper’s and Simms’ thematic and historical Indians, it is more important to show that the writers were accurate in their delineation of the customs, personalities, and thoughts of the Indians belonging to the tribes represented in the

\[49\text{Milling, pp. 141-142.}\]
two books. Studies of the culture of Iroquoian, Algonquian, and Muskogean Indians should reveal how accurately the two writers describe Indian fighting methods, Indian government, Indian family life, Indian religious ceremonies, and other phases of Indian culture and thought.
CHAPTER II

SIMMS’ AND COOPER’S CULTURAL INDIAN

The main Indian characters in The Yemassee and The Last of the Mohicans are leaders of their tribes. They are not, therefore, necessarily representative of all Indians in their tribes; but their behavior and speech do reflect many of the customs, beliefs, and personality traits of their people.

As the reader considers a particular Indian portrayed in one of the books, certain traits in his personality, such as cruelty and tenderness, as found in the same Indian, may seem incongruous to the reader. Cooper anticipates this reaction in his introduction to The Last of the Mohicans. He acknowledges that there exists this antithesis of character in the Indians and explains it by saying that Indians act differently in peace and in war. In effect, Cooper enhances the verisimilitude of his characters in presenting them with personality conflicts. Critics who have asserted that Cooper portrays Uncas and Chingachgook as unbelievably good and Magua as unbelievably bad have neglected to note

1 The Last of the Mohicans, p. 1.
that both good and bad characteristics, as evaluated by a
white culture, exist in all three of Cooper's main Indian
characters.

Likewise, in Simms' Sanutee and Occonestoga there is a
blending of the noble and ignoble. Simms' biographer,
William P. Trent, states that "this ability to hold the
balance [in characterization] . . . is to be noted in all
Simms' work."^2 Surprisingly, however, though critics usu-
ally regard Simms' character portrayal as more realistic
than Cooper's, it is Simms who has two Indian characters
who do not display this blending: Matiwan and Ishiagaska.
Matiwan is motivated entirely by noble impulses, whereas
Ishiagaska is as sinister and diabolical as Herman Mel-
ville's Jackson in Redburn.

Simms and Cooper emphasize particular traits of their
Indians. One of these is the stoicism of the Indians as
they anticipate or endure physical pain. At times the
Indians may be stoical as they inflict pain on others. For
instance, Cooper's Chingachgook sits stoically by the camp-
fire, at ease and apparently indifferent, though he knows a
hostile Indian at that very moment is lurking in the dark
shadows, a death-dealing weapon fixed on him. He is simi-
larly unemotional at another time when he, according to his

^2William Gilmore Simms, American Men of Letters Series,
"gifts," as Hawkeye explains it, steals away from his party and matter-of-factly returns with the scalp of the French guard. The guard had permitted the group to pass, and there was no need to kill him.

Cooper's Uncas, although not as seasoned in composure as his elder, is cool in all conflicts, but impulsive. When captured by Hurons, he must run the gauntlet. Bravely he confronts his tormentors, nimbly eludes much of their punishment, and attains the place of refuge in the village. There he stands, "disdaining to permit a single sign of suffering to escape." The same spirit of endurance is a predominant quality in Magua, who (in an incident previous to the story's action) had even laughed at the blows of his Chippewa tormentors. Disdain and vengefulness combine with Magua's capacity to endure pain.

Simms' Sanutee displays this same vengeful stoicism. With hardness of heart, he refuses all friendly overtures of his former allies, the South Carolinians. Unmoved by compassion, he listens to Matiwan's pleas that he not reject his son for helping the whites acquire more Indian land. Sanutee can even exhibit perfect stoicism at the ceremonies held to banish Occonestoga from the tribe, a fate worse than death to the Indian. Sanutee, on the other hand, can also quietly bear physical pain inflicted by others. When

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3 The Last of the Mohicans, p. 297 (Ch. XXIII).
wrestling with the Spanish agent, the pirate Chorley, Sanutee realizes that he has lost the match; but he stubbornly refuses the mercy offered by the pirate. Beginning his death song, he awaits the fatal blows of the sailor's knife.

Simms suggests that Occonestoga at one time had much the same stoical endurance as his elder. The weakening influence of drink, however, has made him vacillating and lacking in composure. Ishiagaska, in contrast, can look down upon the sleeping Beth, guileless and beautiful, and not waver from his intention to murder her.

Students of Indian life confirm that Indians often exhibited notable stoicism in their attitude toward pain and suffering. Wallace asserts that the normal personality of the Delaware and other Indians of the northeastern woodlands was "remarkable for equanimity in the face of physical misfortune." William W. Canfield, who has investigated Iroquoian Indian culture, explains that this composure grew out of the Indian's realization that he could not control many of nature's forces which gave him pain or discomfort. Not only did he learn to endure them, but he learned not to speak ill of any of these forces nor even to give the appearance of ill feeling. Canfield further explains


the Indian's stoical attitude toward suffering:

It was wrong to complain of pain of any kind or show by any act that pain was experienced. Both pain and suffering were caused by bad spirits, and surely one would not give their enemies the pleasure of knowing that their attempts had in any measure caused discomfort. The Great Spirit was trying with all his power to relieve those who suffered pain, and to complain when your friend was doing his best to aid you would make him think that his efforts were not appreciated. Beside this, after the first shock of a wound, none of the animals betray by their cries the presence of pain. . . . The Indians learned many lessons from the animals and were taught to be as brave and uncomplaining as their brothers of the forest. 6

In many ways Indian societies implanted in Indian youth the idea that endurance of pain was admirable. Bravery was the supreme virtue to attain, and a youth gained status in the tribe by accomplishing certain acts of bravery and by enduring certain tests of his physical stamina. 7

Cooper's Indians display calmness in making decisions, a trait compatible with their stoicism. Cooper's Hawkeye points out to the British soldier Heyward that Indian leaders never make an important decision without a period of consultation with the other leaders. The elder leaders voice their views first and then may call upon younger leaders for suggestions. After consideration of the various viewpoints, the elders usually decide the course of action. Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye often informally use this method of decision-making. Cooper's book also depicts a

6 Canfield, pp. 173-174. 7 Wissler, p. 57.
more formal practice of this custom in the tribal gatherings and council meetings of the Hurons and Delawares. In fact, Indians ordinarily did not act in haste. Ethnologist Frederick Hodge states that the Indians regarded it as being bad manners to act in haste, especially during ceremonies and council meetings. Consequently, no one interrupted one speaking in council. Those who have witnessed the Indians in council have emphasized the deliberateness of the proceedings, interspersed oftentimes with periods of silence and meditation.

In The Last of the Mohicans there are two impressive council scenes. One is in the Huron camp. There Magua's artful eloquence sways the chiefs to agree to kill Uncas by a death of torture even though he has successfully run the gauntlet. This accomplishment often, according to Indian custom, saved the captive's life. There is much quiet smoking of the calumet at this meeting and a half-hour period of silent smoking and meditation before the council disbands. The other council is a gathering of the Delaware nations. The venerable Tamenund presides, listens to both Magua's contention and the protests of his white adversaries,

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9 Wissler, p. 270.

10 Hodge, p. 146.
and gives careful judgment. The judgment of such a deeply respected patriarch is the judgment of the tribe.

In *The Yemassee* Simms describes only one council meeting, a meeting of the Indians with the English land commissioners. It is not true, however, to the usual council procedure. First of all, Sanutee commits a breach of etiquette by abruptly entering the meeting, interrupting the proceedings, and immediately beginning to speak. He protests that no one notified him that there was to be a meeting. As various chiefs speak, Sanutee learns for certain that he and three other Yemassee leaders are in the minority in opposing the council's sale of land to the whites. When the drunken Occonestoga rises to defend the English, Sanutee becomes enraged and threatens his son's life. The white commissioners hurry Occonestoga out of the council, but Sanutee's fury again erupts as Huspah, titular chief of the Yemassee, offers the commissioners a bag of earth, symbolic of the transfer of land. Sanutee hurls the bag to the ground; and after a last oratorical plea not to sell the land, he and his cohorts quit the council. Shortly, after arousing the populace, the four return with the people. Led by Enoree-Mattee, Yemassee prophet and ally of Sanutee, the people demand that the tribal totem
be removed from the offending chiefs.\textsuperscript{11} The chiefs are forced to submit to the will of the people, who believe they are yielding to the will of Opitchi-Manneyto, Yemassee deity. Sanutee's coup is a success.

Obviously, Simms' council meeting can only be regarded as extremely unusual and contrary to the usual Indian practice. Possibly such a coup could have occurred, but this precipitate action of a few chiefs is extraordinary.

Both writers frequently use the word \textit{dignified} or a synonymous word in describing their main Indian characters. The word seems fitting as used in conjunction with stoicism and deliberateness. Possibly the Indian's bearing made him appear dignified. Even Occonestoga, deteriorated in spirit, retains much of his proud carriage. Ethnologists describe the members of such Indian tribes as are portrayed in the two books as having been tall and erect and as appearing dignified. Wissler reports that, generally, the Indian walked in a dignified manner.\textsuperscript{12} Milling points out that "almost without exception the old chroniclers describe them [the Indians] as well proportioned and handsome in appearance."\textsuperscript{13} According to Wallace, the Delawares regarded

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Such action deprived the victim of all rights and immunities of kinship as accorded him within his totemic group. See Hodge, p. 42.
\item Wissler, p. 270.
\item Milling, p. 5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Teedyuscung as a misfit because he was bumptious and self-assertive.\textsuperscript{14} He violated the Delawares' image of themselves as dignified and quietly deliberate.

A character trait emphasized by both authors is the cruelty displayed by their Indians.\textsuperscript{15} The supreme example of Indian cruelty in \textit{The Last of the Mohicans} is the Hurons' massacre of the surrendered whites during their retreat from Fort Henry. One Huron, infuriated when a young white mother does not immediately relinquish her colorful shawl to him, dashes her baby's head on a rock and then tomahawks the mother. Within the white moral code, this action is completely barbarous, as is Chingachgook's needless and cruel scalping of the French guard. In the incident concerning the gauntlet Cooper pictures Indians of all ages delighting in the physical discomfort of Uncas. Another time Cooper compares Uncas to a "hungry lion" as the young brave disposes of the Hurons who are harrassing Cora and Alice. Cooper suggests cruelty that is not physical when Cora's selfless pleas for her sister's safety do not touch Magua's

\textsuperscript{14}Wallace, p. 222.

\textsuperscript{15}Value judgments expressed in this discussion of the moral behavior of the Indians will be made within the white man's moral code unless stated otherwise. Hodge warns that "it is difficult for a person knowing only one code of morals or manners to appreciate the customs of another who has been reared in the knowledge of a different code." See Hodge, p. 441.
hardened heart nor deter him from his intention to abduct Cora from her loved ones. A high point in cruelty comes in the concluding events of Cooper's narrative when the Huron companion of Magua avidly plunges his knife into Cora's bosom while Magua's attention is diverted. Infuriated by the action of his companion, Magua turns and sinks his knife into the helpless form of Uncas, who has fallen on the ledge beside Magua.

The feeling of horror that Cooper's scenes of violence stimulate in his readers is more than equaled by Simms. The detailed description of the torture and death of the man selected for the war sacrifice, the Irish settler Macnamara, is intensified by the Irishman's defiant retorts and gallant attempt to escape from his hopeless situation. Vividly Simms describes the torture: young boys shoot arrows so that they pierce the body but miss the vital organs, warriors hurl tomahawks to graze the victim's head and barely to miss his limbs, old women press burning clubs against the Irishman's bleeding wounds. Finally Macnamara, a blazing human torch, escapes his thongs only to stumble over a log and have an Indian dash out his brains against a rock.

Less horrible in The Yemassee from a physical standpoint but nevertheless cruel are the totem-taking ceremonies, intended to exile forever the Yemassee council chiefs and Occonestoga. In another incident, Gabriel Harrison, like
Cooper's Uncas, experiences jabs and cruel taunts of derision from unfriendly Indians when he is led as a captive through the camp. Already mentioned, but illustrative of Indian cruelty, is Ishiagaska's attempt to murder Bess.

Have Simms and Cooper been realistic in their portrayal of cruelty in their Indian characters? It would seem so, at least within the period portrayed by the authors. In the preceding discussion of the historical Indian, examples of cruelty in the two books have already been verified. Other reliable records describe massacres, scalpings, and physical tortures by Indians. Living in societies that used exploits in war and warlike deeds as a means of attaining rank, Indians were bound to regard physical violence as a badge of honor under certain circumstances. Also, in the philosophy of many Indians, the motivation for revenge, referred to by both Cooper and Simms, was strong. Surely the vengefulness of Cooper's Indian characters must have repelled many of his readers (and subsequent critics) who, as Christians, had abandoned the Old Testament teaching of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." To Christians, the vengefulness of the Indians made them seem not only cruel but even wicked. One can understand, however, if not condone, the vengefulness of Indians as Spencer explains it. Spencer states that the basis for the Northeastern Indians' seeking
revenge was in the Indian social structure with its strong ties of kinship which demanded sib members to assist each other and avenge a member's death.\textsuperscript{16}

Strong ties of kinship, in fact, strengthened the bonds of affection within family and clan. Even the Iroquois, considered excessively cruel by some reporters, felt like brothers toward Indians in their confederation and were considerate and gentle among themselves.\textsuperscript{17} Cooper and Simms portray this affection and concern that the Indians felt for others.

In The Yemassee Simms pictures the affection existing between husband and wife in the Indian home. Sanutee, though stern at times, speaks with obvious tenderness to Matiwan. She is solicitous of her husband's needs and apparently subservient to him. She does, however, act against Sanutee's wishes in regard to Occonestoga. That he does not chastize her in any way is evidence of his high regard for her. Actually, although women did much of the menial work in Indian society, they were much more than drudges. Often they acted very independently and even controlled the actions of the council chiefs. In a tribe with matriarchal social structure, such as the Iroquois, this fact was especially true, for usually the women in the clan chose


\textsuperscript{17}Spence, p. 227.
the clan's representative for the council. Sometimes women went to war and fought as men. In picturing Matiwan, Simms demonstrates this strange mixture of submissiveness and independence in some Indian women.

Although Cooper describes no husband-wife relationship, he does portray an Indian warrior's attitude toward women. Heyward, having observed that Indian men usually exhibit little outward show of affection toward women and do not wait on them, is amused at Uncas' concern for Cora. Writing about the Northern Indians, Spencer states that Indian men customarily did not make an outward show of love for a woman. Uncas, however, often hovers near Cora, ready to perform some service for her.

Readers of Cooper's novel could be led to believe that the Indian warrior had little regard for Indian women and sought to disparage them. Male Indian characters, for example, sometimes refer to the female Indian characters as prattling and being overly curious. Actually it was an expression of Indian humor to speak of women this way. Hodge says that the Indian delighted in making jokes, especially "at the expense of the weaker sex and its peculiarities." He particularly notes the Algonquin sense of humor.

18 Spencer, p. 387. 19 Hodge, p. 915. 20 Spencer, p. 400. 21 Hodge, p. 578.
In both books, parent-child relationships illustrate the affection existing among family members. Indians, however, usually disciplined their young children very little and let them play with little restraint. In *The Last of the Mohicans* the Indian children’s cavorting near the Huron village, as Heyward and Hawkeye approach, illustrates this custom. This lack of discipline, however, should not suggest lack of parental love and concern for the child. Reverend Increase Mather, clergyman living in the early 1700’s, has recorded his impression that the Northeastern Indian was affectionate toward his child. Cooper’s Uncas and Chingachgook exemplify a particularly close father-son relationship. Uncas deeply respects his father, and never a harsh word passes between the two. At Uncas’ death, Chingachgook is stricken with grief. A scene revealing the nature of their relationship shows them enjoying gentle repartee with each other. Uncas carefully stays within bounds, however, so that he does not violate the respect that he owes his father.

In *The Yemassee* the father-son relationship is not characteristic. Proud Sanutee has cut off his ties with Occonestoga because he feels that Occonestoga has betrayed the Yemassee. Sanutee seems abnormally harsh with his son;

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22 Josephy and Gardner, p. 30.
in fact, he initiates the action of the tribe to remove the sacred totem from Occonestoga. In a fit of anger he attempts to kill his son. Only after Occonestoga’s death and as Sanutee faces his last battle, does the chief commend Matiwan for saving their son from banishment.

The bitterness between Sanutee and Occonestoga seems unusual, but the mother-son relationship is normal. Hodge maintains that maternal love was strong in the Indian family. Matiwan loves her son deeply. Unable to influence Sanutee to forgive Occonestoga, she risks her husband’s displeasure and performs the deed that is Occonestoga’s last hope. She kills her son and prevents the totem’s removal. Thereby she saves his soul for the afterlife.

The actions of Simms’ and Cooper’s Indians suggest that the Indians were kind and considerate much of the time. For example, Indians usually respected age. Canfield, writing of the Iroquoian moral code, states that neglect of the old was a sin. In the council, elders sat in places of recognized importance and spoke first. In fact, Hodge explains that when a delegation visited a tribe, only the older men spoke. Also, the term grandfather, even when it was not referring to a blood relationship, suggested

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23 Hodge, p. 239.
24 Canfield, p. 180.
25 Hodge, p. 442.
respect and honor. Historically, the title was applied to the Delaware with this meaning. Related to this showing of respect for the old is the fact that the Indians revered the graves of their ancestors. This veneration for the ancestral graves is an important attitude in the narratives, for the whites' usurpation of lands where Indian ancestors are buried has roused the Indians' resentment of whites even before the stories unfold.

Cooper and Simms allude to other attitudes of humanity. The Hurons tolerate Cooper's Gamut, the grotesque English music teacher, and allow him to accompany Alice and Cora to the Indian camp because he appears to the Indians to be mentally deficient. Canfield states that it was not only a sin for an Iroquois to neglect the old but also a sin for him to deride the blind, lame, or insane.  

Indian codes of hospitality evince the charitableness in many Indians. Such a code allows Cooper's Magua a period of grace to escape from his Delaware pursuers, as he quits the Delaware camp with Cora still his prisoner. Earlier in the story, a Huron chief refers to this code in speaking to Uncas, who has just successfully run the gauntlet. He says, "I would give you food, but he who eats with a Huron

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26 Canfield, p. 180.
should become his friend."

Milling states that "it is well known that the Indian was exceptionally charitable to his fellow tribesmen, as well as hospitable to strangers." Also weakening the "cruel savage" concept are the attitudes of tolerance and honesty found in many Indians. According to Wissler, Indians were tolerant of ways not their own. In Cooper's story, therefore, the Indians respectfully allow Gamut to conduct a Christian burial for Cora as part of their own burial ceremonies. Honesty, too, is an important part of the ethical thought of Cooper's and Simms' Indians. Hawkeye, in fact, idealizes the Delaware to such an extent that he believes that only they practice the highest form of honesty. Certainly honesty was a tenet of the ethical code of the Delaware. Canfield points out, however, that the Iroquois, as well as the Delaware, felt that it was a sin to lie. Hodge emphasizes the importance of honesty to some Indians when he says that "there are many instances of Indians keeping their word even at the risk of death." 

That drinking had a debilitating effect on the Indians is well supported in studies of Indian life. Wallace

27 The Last of the Mohicans, p. 300 (Ch. XXIII).
28 Milling, p. 32
29 Wissler, p. 279.
30 Wallace, p. 43.
31 Canfield, p. 180.
32 Hodge, p. 441.
suggests that, as the white man intruded on the Indian society, the Indians felt displaced and sought security in the white man's guns and liquor. He says that "rum gave [the Indians] momentary relief from anxiety." Both Cooper and Simms portray main Indian characters as victims of drink: Magua and Occonestoga. Magua's revengefulness toward the English is pronounced because the English soldiers, in events prior to the story, introduced Magua to liquor. Under its influence, he disobeyed Munro's orders and endured public disgrace by being whipped for his error. Conscious of no longer having the respect of his own people or the English, he is bitter and vengeful toward the English for causing his degradation. Occonestoga, on the other hand, is not bitter toward the English for his fallen state. He recognizes that he has become "a dog" to the Yemassee; but he centers his resentment on his father, who has repudiated him.

In this preceding discussion of the traits of personality found in Cooper's and Simms' Indians, some Indian customs have been referred to, particularly those related to the council meeting and the family. How accurate were Cooper and Simms in portraying other aspects of Indian culture? Two features of Indian government, in addition to

33Wallace, p. 5.
the council, are important since Simms and Cooper emphasize them: chiefs' titles and the oratory of leaders.

The title "chief" itself in the books is not significant since there were many levels of civil chiefs and war chiefs in the Indian governments. Cooper, however, distinguishes Chingachgook from other Delaware chiefs by calling him "Sagamore." Hodge explains that a sagamore was the elected chief or ruler of a tribe who was head of an important clan. In this case, Chingachgook is head of the Unami clan of the Delaware. Similarly, Simms distinguishes Sanutee from the other Yemassee chiefs by calling him "Beloved-Man." There seems to be some confusion among Indian-life students as to how these Beloved-Men of the Southeastern Indian tribes exactly ranked in the council. Spencer describes them as being leading warriors who could be chosen from any clan and who acted as counsellors to the chief of the tribe. In Creek government these Beloved-Men also served the tribe in a diplomatic capacity, greatly influencing the relationships of the tribe with the Europeans. Simms portrays Sanutee as such a counsellor and diplomat. Possibly Simms used the Creek government as a basis for his Yemassee structure of government, for records show that these Beloved-Men figured largely in Creek

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34 Hodge, p. 408.  
35 Spencer, p. 429.  
36 Josephy and Gardner, p. 218.
government. Also, "Miko" was the Creek title for the titular leader of the tribe. Simms calls Huspah, titular leader of Yemassee Indians of Pocota-ligo, by this title.

It is important in supporting Simms' and Cooper's realistic portrayals of the Indians to verify the nature of Indian speech, particularly its metaphorical quality. Some critics have contended that Cooper idealized the Indians by having them speak unrealistically. John F. Frederick states in "Cooper's Eloquent Indians," however, that when Cooper recorded Indian speech, he "neither invented imaginatively nor imitated European writers, but followed his sources with extraordinary fidelity."37 Students of Indian life, such as Wissler, Swanton, and Hodge, all attest to the imagery used in Indian speech. Hodge asserts that symbolism was an inherent quality in the attitudes of the Indians toward nature and that the Indians reflect this attitude in their speech, enhancing their words with their bearing and appropriate gestures.38 Simms' Sanutee illustrates the metaphorical quality of Indian speech as he says to Matiwan, "Has Matiwan been into the tree-top today, for the voice of the bird which is painted, that she must sing

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38 Hodge, p. 144.
with a foolish noise in the ear of Sanutee?" 

Illustrating the imagery in Indian speech in *The Last of the Mohicans*, a Huron chief says to Magua, "The Delawares have been like bears after the honey pots, prowling around my village." 

Much of the action of the two narratives focuses on Indian fighting. Since the Indian tribes which the authors portray lived in the war-oriented society of the early 1700's, it follows that battles, skirmishes, and ambushes should dominate the stories. That Indians sought glory in war to gain status has already been mentioned. Mooney reports that at one time the Cherokee, having the opportunity to be at peace with all their neighbors, refused to make peace with one last inimical tribe, saying that "they [the Cherokee] could not live without war." 

Council members decided whether or not the tribe would make war. Once they had made the decision, warriors participated in rites that often lasted for several days. Simms describes such preparatory war rites, led by the Yemassee prophet Enoree-Mattee. Indians put great faith in the interpretation of dreams and visions; the shaman (prophet), consequently, often induced a dream-state in himself until he had a vision or could interpret certain signs

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39 *The Yemassee*, edited by Cowie, p. 77 (Ch. IX).
40 *The Last of the Mohicans*, p. 308 (Ch. XXIV).
41 Mooney, p. 379.
foretelling the future. Thus, Enoree-Mattee, using the flame from the fire built on the sacred tumulus at Pocotaligo, foresees success for the Yemassee because the flames leap up. He interprets this sign as indicative of Manneyto's favor. According to the custom of Southeastern tribes, the Indian warriors usually took an emetic and fasted for several days before going on the warpath. Neither writer mentions this custom. Cooper does emphasize, however, the war paint used by the Indians.

Indians painted themselves at other times besides at time of war. The war paint of the warrior, however, was distinctive. Cooper's Hawkeye claims to be able to identify the tribe of an Indian by his paint. Spence, citing J. G. Koh's Kitchi-gami: Wandering Round Lake Superior, suggests that an Indian's paint might identify his tribe. Koh also explains that black paint was symbolic of mourning; and red paint, which was a favorite color, was symbolic of joy.

42 Hodge, p. 400.

43 Milling refers to this custom (p. 27) as well as Spencer (p. 30). Josephy and Gardner include the "furious vomiting" of the warriors as part of their description of the Choctaws' and Natchez' preparations for war (p. 152).

44 Although this citation by Spence (p. 61) suggests red as symbolic of joy, red was the dominant color in ceremonies connected with preparations for war as described in the next paragraph. Savage's account of the Yemassee uprising (p. 84) describes the attacking Indians as being painted red and black. Creek war towns were called "Red Towns" (Josephy and Gardner, p. 146). These facts would seem to indicate that the Indian associated the color red with the idea of war.
Chingachgook, described by Cooper as adept in applying body paint, paints himself black and white. Uncas paints one side of his face black before he goes on the warpath to rescue Cora from Magua.

To indicate warring intentions, many Southeastern tribes sent tribal allies a token, usually painted red and decorated with red objects. Simms indicates that the Yemassee use a club for this symbolic purpose. In reality, tribes sometimes used a stick; sometimes, a war pipe. As a rule, the Creek, Choctaw, and other Southeastern tribes erected a pole, painted red, on the public square. Here, after the people had been put in the mood for war by the oratory of leaders, the warriors struck the war post, danced around it, and sang the tribe's war song. Cooper's Uncas, although he does not belong to a Southeastern tribe, leads his warriors in such a ceremony centered around the war post as they prepare to pursue Magua and his Huron allies. Simms' Yemassee Indians observe the ceremony as part of the preparatory war rites, which also include the sacrifice of the Irishman. Usually human sacrifice before going to war was not included in war rites. Simms may have been aware of this fact because he portrays Sanutee as agreeing only reluctantly to Ishiagaska's demand for such a sacrifice.

\[45^\text{Milling, p. 27.}\] \[46^\text{Hodge, p. 369.}\]
The reputation of the Indians for being cunning (the two writers most often apply the term to Magua and Ishiagaska) may have become established in the minds of the whites as they observed Indian fighting methods—the dawn attack and the ambush. Whatever the Indians' fighting methods, in warfare their aim was to destroy. Indian war ethics did not require that a warrior be any respecter of women, children, or the aged when he was confronting the enemy.

The war party set forth with one designated leader, a warrior whose orders must be obeyed during that specific foray. Yet each Indian fought, in a sense, independently. There were no collective maneuvers similar to the European methods. The Indians did not fight openly, as did the whites, but from cover. In fact, the Choctaw considered that fighting in the open showed lack of military skill. To maintain the strength of the tribe or clan, Indians could not afford to lose members in war. The war leader felt that he was disgraced if he lost a man.

The attack customarily came at dawn, the object being to surprise the enemy. In The Yemassee Simms explains that

47 Hodge, p. 914.


49 Grinnell, p. 133.
this tactic originated from the Indian's feeling that he had inferior means for overcoming his white enemy and must, therefore, resort to the advantage he had in surprise. Spencer explains, however, that the surprise attack at dawn enabled the Southeastern Indians to shoot fire arrows into palisaded villages, whether Indian or white villages, and thus gain an early advantage. These methods of Indian fighting are faithfully presented by Simms and Cooper. In regard to the methods of fighting, Hawkeye reflects the views of his Indian friends in his disparagement of English tactics. He disapproves of the unnecessary exposure of troops in open fighting and the rigid observance of certain formalities in war ethics. In History of South Carolina Simms explains that the Carolinians wisely adopted many of the Indian tactics and thus became successful against the Indians.51

Scalping played an important part in Indian warfare during this historical period, and so it is presented in both books. Cooper dwells more upon the act itself than Simms. In the incident in which Chingachgook kills and scalps the French guard, Cooper may have been expressing his own bewilderment at the Indian's motivation for such an act when Hawkeye tries to justify it as one of the Indian's

50 Spencer, p. 430.
51 Simms, History of South Carolina, p. 88.
"gifts." As a matter of fact, Indians regarded the hair as being particularly sacred, as many primitive people have. To destroy a person's hair was to injure or destroy his spirit. When Europeans began offering bounties for scalps, the significance of the act probably changed as Indians practiced scalping on a larger scale. Even before Europeans offered bounties, scalping had added to the warrior's glory in his own culture, but not according to the number of scalps obtained. Rather, glory in scalp-taking had come from the extent of the dangers met in obtaining the scalps.

Treatment of captives, as presented in the two books, is generally true according to records. Treatment varied since it depended on the conditions of capture. Hodge's discussion of the Indians' treatment of their captives supports both Simms' description of the torture of Macnamara as well as Cooper's description of Uncas' running the gauntlet. Captives other than war captives had a greater chance of being adopted into the tribe and not being mistreated than those taken in war. Actually, captives were sometimes welcomed since they could replace tribal members who had been lost in war.

The woodcraft of Indians when pursuing their enemies, as well as at other times, is frequently mentioned in The

52 Hodge, p. 438. 53 Spencer, p. 431. 54 Hodge, p. 204.
Last of the Mohicans. Mark Twain in his well-known "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" derides the woodcraft of Cooper's Hawkeye and Indian characters. Cooper may have magnified the Indians' woodcraft ability. Perhaps, however, Hawkeye's marveling at the woodcraft of his friends, as if the ability were almost supernatural, causes the reader to get a false impression of it. That the Indian developed a keen sense for interpreting signs in the forest is doubtlessly true. For instance, H. B. Cushman, historian, describes the Choc-taw as having an unerring sense of direction when traveling to some place they had never visited before. He reports that they could travel through completely strange country and go directly to their destination. Simms does not dwell on this ability of the Indians. In fact, at one point when Occonestoga uses his woodcraft ability in escaping his pursuers, Simms hastens to explain that the Indian's education causes him to have this ability.

The religious practices of the Indians are dealt with only in an indirect fashion, for the most part, in both books. The totem-taking ceremonies, however, in The Yemassee reveal some religious attitudes of the Indians as does the burial ceremony at the conclusion of The Last of the Mohicans. At other points in the stories there are suggestions of Indian religious thought.

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, the term *Great Spirit*, as used by the Delawares, suggests to many readers that the Delawares believed in one God. Chingachgook remarks in the opening pages of the story that the Mohicans worshipped the Great Spirit even before the coming of the white man. Hodge contends, however, that before the coming of the white man, the Indians actually believed in many spirits whose actions could be helpful or harmful to them. Furthermore, the Indians believed that their own attitudes and actions toward the spirits could influence how the spirits might react. Cooper, then, may have been putting words into Chingachgook's mouth that a Delaware Indian really would not have spoken. Chingachgook could have said, more believably, that after the coming of the white man, the Delawares worshipped the Great Spirit, for missionaries converted many Indians. Even so, there is some doubt that the Indians truly conceived of the white man's God as did the white man himself. Erminnie Smith, ethnologist, explains that the Indians' Great Spirit was the Indians' concept of the Europeans' God, but that, having accepted this idea, the Indians continued "to retain their former gods as his attributes."

It is interesting that at times in Cooper's narrative Chingachgook uses the Algonquin term *Manitou*, which was

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56 Hodge, p. 284.

the name for supernatural power or spirit in the universe. Of Uncas' going to the happy hunting ground, Chingachgook says, "The Manitou had need of such a warrior, and He has called him away." Is this Manitou the same deity as the Europeans' Great Spirit who created the universe, besides giving life and taking it away? The fact that the Delawares credited Micabo with the creation of the world, and not Manitou, would suggest that this Manitou, even though he takes Uncas' life, is not the same deity as the whites' Great Spirit. It appears that Cooper presents Indian religious concepts only as his sources understood them and recorded them.

Simms avoids the confusion of the term Great Spirit by using Indian terms for Indian concepts. The term Manneyto may be related to the Algonquin term Manitou, for Manneyto is to Simms' Indians the supernatural power causing good fortune. The Yemassee honor Sanutee by calling him "well beloved of the Manneyto," as well as "Beloved-Man," a tribal title. On the other hand, Simms portrays Occonestoga as working for Opitchi-Manneyto, the supernatural power that brings bad fortune. As Occonestoga flees from his Yemassee pursuers, he prays to Opitchi-Manneyto, seeking protection.

58 The Last of the Mohicans, p. 438 (Ch. XXXIII).
"I will burn feathers, thou shalt have arrows, Opitchi-Manneyto. Be not wroth with the young chief of the Yemassee."

Simms seems to have been truer than Cooper in presenting the Indians' religious concepts, at least in regard to the concept of one or many gods.

That the Indians believed in an afterlife of some kind is generally accepted, although the concept has variations from tribe to tribe. Burial ceremonies usually suggested belief in an afterlife; for example, the Indians often buried weapons and implements with their dead, for the spirit of the dead one might need the items later. Such a custom Cooper includes in his account of Uncas' burial. Also, Cooper indicates the Indians' belief in immortality when he describes the maidens' chanting about the reunion of Cora and Uncas in the afterlife. In The Yemassee Simms emphasizes the importance of the concept of the afterlife to the Indian as he relates how Matiwan kills her own son to save his soul for the happy hunting ground.

Shamans and priests were the religious leaders of the Indians. Shamans had an unusual capacity for having dreams and visions that revealed the will of the spirits. Priests were in charge of religious rituals. Oftentimes the two

59 The Yemassee, edited by Cowie, p. 147 (Ch. XIX).
60 Spence, p. 58.
61 Wissler, p. 204.
offices were combined, and such must have been the case of Enoree-Mattee. Simms vividly pictures the contortions of the shaman-priest in the ceremony for removing the totem and the rites performed before war. Cooper, however, presents a shaman as a healer of illness. At least Heyward masquerades as such a shaman in an attempt to find Alice, who is hidden in the Huron camp. A chief calls upon the disguised Heyward to heal the chief's daughter. The chief explains that an evil spirit has caused her illness. Indians, in fact, did believe that evil spirits could cause illness and that shamans could conciliate the evil ones. 62

One can find these same religious concepts woven into the mythology and folklore of Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Muskhogean Indians. 63 The myths and tales of these peoples would seem, therefore, to confirm that these religious concepts were held by them. In the same way it may be possible to confirm many personality traits, attitudes, and practices of Simms' and Cooper's Indians and, thus, substantiate the writers' portrayals of the Indians. Also, there is folklore itself in the books that, if authentic, should make the

62 Grinnell, p. 175.

63 It has been noted previously that Delawares, Hurons, and the Yemassee are tribes within these linguistic groups. In the next chapter, folktales and myths of Indian tribes within these groups will be the basis of the discussion of the folkloric Indian. When possible, tales of these particular tribes will be used.
authors' portrayals of the Indians more realistic. Simms' and Cooper's folkloric Indian will be considered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III

SIMMS' AND COOPER'S FOLKLORIC INDIAN

The Indian storyteller, like other storytellers, often sought simply to entertain his listeners. Anthropologist Marius Barbeau indicates, however, that the narrator also might intend to transmit religious notions, codes of behavior, and historical traditions of his tribe.\(^1\) Recounting the myths and folktales of the North American Indians accomplishes these purposes and, in so doing, reveals the spirit and nature of the Indian people as a race as well as members of a tribal group. For instance, folklore authority Stith Thompson, pointing out the unique independent development of the tales of the Northeast Woodland Iroquois, has been impressed with the predominance of cruel characters in the tales.\(^2\) Such a characteristic of the tales would seem to suggest that this Iroquoian group had a propensity for inflicting pain.

Similarly, the tales and myths of the tribes represented in *The Yemassee* and *The Last of the Mohicans* should confirm


or weaken the authors' presentation of the customs, personalities, and attitudes of their Indian characters. Folklore and mythology that are part of the books, if authentic, should make the characters seem more real. Critics have especially noted Cooper's emphasis of Indian folklore. Walker states that "no other writer in his own time and few since have used folklore as extensively or as effectively as Cooper did."

Critic Robert E. Spiller, writing about *The Last of the Mohicans*, maintains that "in no other of his novels do we live so intimately with the folk ways of the red man." Simms' book also is rich in folklore but not with the detail of Cooper's story. Cowie, in *The Rise of the American Novel*, notes that Cooper believed that numerous descriptive details made imaginative literature more effective.

Much of the folklore and mythology of the Indians is bound up in their observation of nature, particularly their observation of animals. Indians frequently derived their names from animals. Their mythological cultural heroes were often godlike beings in the form of animals, as in the case of the Delaware Michabo, the giant rabbit credited with

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3 Walker, p. 27.


creating the world. In Delaware thinking, it was Michabo who put the animals on the earth; provided the Indians with corn, beans, and squash; and taught the Indians how to fight and hunt. Delawares and other Algonquins believed that some of their people sprang from dead animals and became tribal totems.

Realizing that Indians felt this closeness to the animals, one can understand why they were eager to learn the animals' ways. The Iroquoian legend "Why Animals Do Not Talk" suggests that at one time the animals visited the great Indian council and gave red men their knowledge of wood and stream. The beaver, for example, taught the Indians how to build houses that would withstand rain and frost. Cooper emphasizes the woodcraft of the Indians as acquired from the animals perhaps even to the point of exaggeration, as Mark Twain has asserted. Cooper, nevertheless, has correctly represented the Indians' awe and respect for the animals and their ways. From the animals, therefore, Chingachgook gets his name "Big Serpent" because, like the snake, he silently observes his enemy and strikes when the enemy least expects it.

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6 Brinton, *The Lenape and Their Legends*, p. 130.
8 Canfield, p. 103.
Perhaps because of their belief that some members of their tribes originated from animals, the Algonquins regarded the animals not only as brothers but also as mediators between the Indians and their gods. Grinnell, writing of a common Indian practice, explains that "if a war party passed any place which is sacred, presents were offered to propitiate the animals or spirits which gave the place or object its sacred character." The Indians hoped by this act to gain favor with the animal spirits of the place and, thereby, to please the powers that could give them victory in war. In The Last of the Mohicans, one of the Hurons in Magua's war party wears the beaver totem. When the group passes a beaver community, the Huron pauses to address his "cousins." He promises to protect them from the greedy traders and asks that the beavers, in turn, give him some of their wisdom. Grinnell reports that, to the Indians, the beaver was symbolic of wisdom.

Because animals often are sacred to Indians, Indians also indicate their respect in other ways. Simms' Occonostoga, after killing a rattlesnake to prevent its striking Beth, begs the snake's pardon as he removes the rattle to keep as a fetish. In the Cherokee myth "Orpheus," the storyteller explains that the Cherokee do not kill the

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9 Grinnell, p. 88.
10 Ibid., p. 206.
rattlesnake because he will not strike them if they do not bother him.\textsuperscript{11} Even in the twentieth century, folklorists Anna G. Kilpatrick and Jack F. Kilpatrick have found Cherokee in Oklahoma retaining this idea. One of the Cherokee Indians whom they interviewed remarked, "When I meet one [a rattlesnake] on the path, I just tell it go away."\textsuperscript{12} Respecting the snake for his behavior, the Indians also venerated him for his supernatural powers. According to Hartley Burr Alexander, authority on Indian mythology, the snake not only was closely associated with underworld powers but also was endowed with medicine-powers (mysterious powers).\textsuperscript{13} This medicine-power is apparently the same strange mesmerizing power of the rattlesnake that transfixes Simms' Beth so that she is unable to move, nor even able to scream for a time, when she encounters the snake in the woods.

Indians showed their high regard for their animal brothers in other ways. They imitated their cries. Simms' Matiwon echoes the song of the mockingbird, the chirp of the cricket, and buzz of the bee in order to lull the Indian guards to sleep. Cooper's Mohicans use the call of the owl and the hiss of the serpent to communicate with each other.

\textsuperscript{11} Thompson, p. 146.

\textsuperscript{12} Friends of Thunder (Dallas, 1964), p. 153.

On the other hand, it was the feather of the eagle which the Indians considered emblematic of the honor that they accorded him and emblematic, therefore, of the honor bestowed on one who wore the eagle feather. In *The Last of the Mohicans* Chingachgook wears a white eagle plume, symbolic of his high rank among his people. Stirling explains that the eagle feather and the way it was worn indicated an Indian's prestige. Birds, in Indian thought, were particularly close to the heavenly powers, just as the serpent was close to the underworld powers. Indians may have reasoned that, because the bird could fly, it could get closer to heaven than the Indians and thus could serve as an intermediary between the heavenly powers and men. The Plains Indians often ascribed the cause of thunder and lightning to a large bird. Just as the bird seemed to link heaven and earth, so did the thunder and lightning. The Micmac (Algonquins) thought that a bird caused the wind to blow by the flapping of its wings. Such is the explanation of the wind in the Micmac myth "The Bird Whose Wings Made the Wind." Alexander further suggests that the white feather, like the feather Chingachgook wears, was also symbolic of the breath of life. One can see here

14 Stirling, p. 48.
15 Mooney, p. 442.
16 Thompson, pp. 48-49.
the mingling of several related ideas in the thinking of Indians: of the heavens as the abode of supernatural powers, particularly the sun with its light and warmth; of the soaring bird, a link between man and the supernatural powers; of the wind, an unseen force, not only likened to the stirring air created by the movement of the bird's wings but also likened to the life-maintaining force of man—his breath. Keeping in mind these ideas about the feather, one can understand why Chingachgook, anticipating the possibility of being scalped by a Huron, removes from his scalp lock the sacred eagle feather that represents his breath of life so that the feather may not fall into the hands of the enemy. It has already been noted in this paper that Indians regarded their hair as containing their "spirit."

Canfield records an Iroquoian tale suggesting these concepts about the hair and the eagle feather. In "The Hunter," when a friend of the animals has his scalp lock taken, the animals band together to help him. The crow finds the scalp lock; and an eagle gives one of his breast feathers, dipped in dew, to restore the scalp lock. In this tale, the eagle feather, possessing the power of life, restores the "spirit" of the man. In fact, the kind act of the animals saves the man from becoming taboo and from existing thereafter as a sort of disembodied spirit.

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18 Canfield, p. 135.
19 Alexander, Manitou Masks (New York, 1925), p. 93.
The Indians' admiration of animals is reflected in their often choosing an animal figure for the clan totem (the totem of Simms' Yemassee Indians is the curved arrow, however). As already noted, Cooper's main Indian characters are members of the Unami, or Turtle, clan. The heritage of the clan is evident in the Algonquian creation myth in which a turtle bears the world on its shoulders.\(^{20}\) Henceforth, the Algonquins depicted the turtle as symbolic of the earth.\(^{21}\) The Turtle clan, regarded as having such an ancient heritage, also acquired the title of "grandfather of nations." Similarly, the Iroquois had a Turtle clan and revered the turtle. In the Iroquoian creation myth, which is very much like the Algonquian creation myth, the Iroquoian power for good, the twin Ioskeda, teaches the Indians the art of making fire. The source of his knowledge is the turtle.\(^{22}\)

Thus, there appear in the two books many allusions to actual folkloric and mythological concepts held by Indian tribes which the two authors portray. In addition, however, Indian myths and tales may suggest that Indians should emulate the very personality traits which Cooper and Simms' fictional Indians display; or tales may explain, at least, the presence of certain traits in the fictional as well as the real Indians.


\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 133.

In the Iroquoian legend "The Turtle Clan," a wise old turtle who forms the Turtle clan teaches his children to be carefully deliberate in all important matters, to listen attentively to their elders, and to cooperate with each other.23 Herein one can see the Indians' philosophy of slow deliberateness in council meetings, their ethical concept of respect for the aged, and, particularly, the guiding principle of the Six Nations--unity of action. The Iroquoian folktale of the Cherokee, "The Tlanequ' and the Turtle," emphasizes the methodical movements of the turtle as he whittles out a bow and arrow so that he can kill a huge bird who has stolen another animal's cub. The old turtle refuses to be hurried by his excited fellow animals, and he successfully rescues the young animal.24 One can see the theme that one should act with deliberateness in this tale also.

According to the white man's ethical code, the high regard that Indians had for bravery may seem overstated in the Iroquoian legend "The Confederation of the Iroquois." In this tale, which also has cooperation of tribes as a theme, is a statement by a Seneca chief that "young men should never be punished for deeds of bravery, even when they have forgotten the wise counsel of the old men, lest they become

23Canfield, p. 87.  
24Kilpatrick, pp. 71-76.
In another Iroquoian legend, a young man who does not dare to pursue his lover's abductor is given over to the care of women because of his cowardice. Though these are Iroquoian legends, they probably reflect much the same attitude as that of the Algonquian and Muskhohean Indians in Simms' and Cooper's books. For instance, the degradation of being considered a coward would have been more unbearable to Uncas than any pain inflicted by the Hurons. Simms' Sanutee, likewise, is more willing to perish under Chorley's knife than to seem afraid to die.

There are many Indian tales depicting animals coming to the aid of one another. Perhaps these tales arose that Indians might impart to their children the clan's principle of mutual assistance to clan members. Among the Cherokee folktales recorded in *Friends of Thunder* is a story of a bird who helps a wolf to see. In appreciation the wolf helps the bird change his color to a beautiful red. In another tale of the Cherokee, a turtle shoots arrows at a charlatan buzzard who, instead of having healed the turtle's friend, has eaten him. Helpfulness and hospitality to strangers is the theme of the Iroquoian legend "An Unwelcome Visitor." Canfield explains that Indians told the tale to their children so that the children might learn to welcome any stranger.

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25 *Canfield*, p. 32.  
28 *Kilpatrick*, pp. 28-29.
and give him shelter. Cooper portrays the Delaware camp as exhibiting both types of helpfulness, help for kin and stranger. The members of the Turtle clan, when they recognize Uncas' status, warmly welcome him. At the same time, they maintain their rules of hospitality in regard to Magua even though they become aware of Magua's enmity to Uncas.

Basis for the fact that Simms and Cooper sometimes describe their Indian characters as cunning is evident in the numerous Indian tales and myths in which the trickster figures prominently. Many versions of the Indian tale of "The Rabbit and the Image," as the Kilpatricks entitle their Cherokee tale, exist among the Indians. In American folklore, this tale is the well-known Uncle Remus tale "Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby." Spence suggests that, because the Algonquins admired trickery and cunning, they must have thought that the name of their demiurge Glooskap (meaning "The Liar") was an admirable name.

Other customary Indian behavior, as portrayed by Simms and Cooper, is evident in Indian myths and tales. Grinnell relates a story of an Indian woman who violates the taboo of eating the first fish caught by a fishing party. This first fish was supposed to have been sacrificed by the priest and only a small piece given to each one in the party. The woman is turned to a rock because of her wrongdoing. This

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29 Canfield, p. 219.  
30 Spence, p. 141.  
31 Grinnell, pp. 68-69.
tale could have a two-fold significance to the Indians: that he should be honest in his dealings and that he should propitiate the animal spirits before taking the life of one of their kind. Simms' Sanutee is honest in his leadership of his tribe. He demands the same treatment for his son for selling Indian land as he does for the other guilty chiefs. Another incident in The Yemassee illustrates the other aspect of the tale. Occonestoga, performing an act of propitiation similar to that of the fishing party, asks the rattlesnake's pardon after killing it and taking the rattle.

The spirit of humor in the repartee of Chingachgook and Uncas seems more realistically portrayed by Cooper after one has read some of the humorous Indian tales recorded in Friends of Thunder. A suggestion of humor oftentimes is present in the numerous trickster tales in Indian mythology and folklore.

Curiosity as an Indian trait is often ascribed to the "weaker sex" in Indian tales. Consequently, a warrior who is too curious is not as manly as he should be. Thus, the word curiosity is often preceded by the word womanish in Cooper's book. Many Indian tales contain instances of an Indian's becoming so curious about what is in a container that he opens it and suffers the consequences. A Micmac myth suggests that Glooscap taught the Indians that unbridled curiosity brings unhappiness.³²

³²Thompson, pp. 5-8.
Indian attitudes toward the land and toward war, as related in the two books, gain significance as one reads Indian folktales and myths. For example, the Indians in Simms' and Cooper's narratives resent the Europeans' taking permanent possession of the land on which the Indians have allowed the white man to settle. They further resent the settlers' expanding their activities beyond assigned limits. In the council meeting with the English land commissioners, Sanutee pinpoints the conflict of Indian and white ideas concerning the land. He contends that the English want to buy the land but that the Indians have no right to sell it because the land belongs to Indian generations to come. George S. Snyderman, ethnologist, explains that the Indian believed that his Maker gave the land to him for his use. Thus, no part of the land entrusted to the Indian's care was to be regarded as belonging to him as an individual. The Indian was supposed continually to thank his Maker for the use of the land and for the plants and animals it sustained.  

In Indian creation myths, the earth usually is the source or the foundation of life, or both. In Choctaw mythology the Choctaw came from a hole in the earth.  

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34Swanton, Source Material for the Choctaw, p. 7.
Seneca creation myth depicts the animals diving into the sea and bringing up earth from the bottom to make the earth on the Turtle's shell.\(^{35}\) Thus, the Indian, who regarded anything vital to his existence as containing a mysterious power, viewed the land as sacred. Notably, the Indian, when he smoked the calumet in council gatherings or during ceremonies, oftentimes pointed the calumet to the earth as well as to the sky and the four quarters of the earth in an act of obeisance to their indwelling powers.\(^{36}\)

One can glean some understanding of Indian attitudes toward peace and war from reading Indian tales. Simms and Cooper suggest that the tribes they portray were generally peaceable in their reception of the European settlers in the period previous to the time covered in their narratives. Yet in the stories, the Indians engage frequently in warlike pursuits, fighting with or against Europeans and fighting with or against other Indians. Historically, Indians living in the early 1700's were often on the warpath. Had these Indian peoples always been warlike? Were fighting and killing just part of their nature? The story "Creek Migration Legend" relates how the Creeks, as they travel across the country, encounter many different tribes. With some tribes the Creeks wish to make friends, but they will

\(^{35}\) Thompson, pp. 14-17.  \(^{36}\) Spence, p. 131.
not be friendly with the Creeks. Finally the Creeks settle down with a peaceable tribe, but the Creeks cannot seem to control their inclination to fight. They again get involved in war. The narrator of this tale describes the Creek state of mind as not being able to "leave their red hearts, which are, however, white on one side and red on the other. They now know that the white path was the best for them." This legend seems to suggest that the Creeks preferred peace; but, because of circumstances and past experiences, they became involved in war.

Some tribes were traditionally more warlike than others. The Iroquois had this reputation, as has been previously noted. The Choctaw, on the other hand, were brave but not fighters like the Chickasaw, according to Swanton. He points out that the Choctaw "seldom left their country to fight but when attacked defended themselves with dauntless bravery." There can be little doubt, also, that, in the historical situations which form the backgrounds of the two books, whites encouraged whatever inclination that the Indians might have had for war in using them to fight the white man's enemies.

This cursory examination of some of the myths and tales of the Indian tribes (or closely related tribes) portrayed in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Yemassee* reveals themes

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and details that are consistent with the two authors' portrayals of the cultural Indian. Similarly, actual studies of the cultures of these Indians by competent scholars show that Cooper and Simms have captured the dispositions of the Delaware, Huron, and Yemassee Indians in the early 1700's and have committed them to their narratives. Reliable accounts and studies verify, for the most part, the customs Simms and Cooper describe. Just as there are some inaccuracies in their historical portrayals of these Indian tribes, so there may be some inaccuracies or some omissions in their descriptions of customary procedures. These errors in a few details, such as an apparent omission by Simms of the Southeastern Indians' custom of taking an emetic before going to war, do not detract from the larger portrayal of the activity, in this case, the rites performed before war.

In portraying the personalities of their Indians, the authors present traits, such as stoicism, deliberateness, and affection for family members, which are consistent with the reputed behavior of these Indians. A weakness, however, in their portrayals is the fact that at times the authors tend to apply the white man's ethical code to their Indians' behavior, for example to their committing acts of physical violence. Cooper minimizes this weakness, however, by having Hawkeye recognize and point out that the Indian acts according to his "gifts;" that is, he acts according to his own culture's ethical code. Cooper even suggests that the
day may be coming when the Indian will adopt certain features of the white man's code which have caused the whites to censure Indian behavior. In Uncas' personality, for instance, apparently a metamorphosis is taking place, as revealed when he openly shows his attraction to Cora and breaks Indian rules of etiquette by performing services for her.

Cooper has a larger vision of the Indian in the American white society than does Simms. Cooper's narrative may locate Indian characters in the state of New York during the French and Indian War, but he is not concerned simply with recording the story of the Indian in that particular place at that particular time. Cooper, aware of the condition of the Indian of his day, is musing in The Last of the Mohicans about the Indian's role in the America of the future.

Simms, however, admiring the Indian as he existed in South Carolina in the early 1700's, is simply recording in The Yemassee an episode in South Carolinian history as it contributes to the Southern heritage. Since Simms considers the Indian racially inferior to the whites and bound by a code that encourages physical violence, he believes that the Indian can never acquire the same moral values as the white man. It is difficult to ascertain whether Simms ever truly felt that the Indian was racially inferior or whether he simply adopted this attitude because it was convenient to do in the South Carolinian class-conscious society of Simms'
day. Again, it is interesting to note in *The Yemassee* that Sanutee, in spite of Simms' assertion that the chief feels racially inferior to the whites, does not act as if he feels that way.

In spite of the aforementioned flaws, Cooper's and Simms' portrayals of Delaware, Huron, and Yemassee Indians living in the early 1700's are remarkably consistent with studies of historians, ethnologists, and folklorists. The authors may have chosen to write about a period of time, a situation, and uncommon individuals that are potentially romantic; but Simms' and Cooper's Indians appear to be real Indians.
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