

THE CHEROKEE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE:
CAN EITHER SURVIVE?

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Lyde, Judith Ann, The Cherokee Language and Culture: Can Either Survive? Master of Arts (English), August, 1972, 106 pp., bibliography, 37 titles.

One of the problems with which this investigation is concerned is the educational negativism and social alienation of the unassimilated Cherokee Indian. The fact that many Cherokees in eastern Oklahoma have not adapted to the Anglo-American culture and have little inclination to do so is reflected in the studies of anthropologists, social workers, and this writer's personal contact with the Cherokees. A second problem is the disintegration of the Cherokees' written language which had provided for progress and elevation of individuals within the Cherokee Nation.

One of the three-fold purposes of this study is to indicate the relationship between the cultural advancements of the Cherokees and the development and implementation of a written, printable language into their culture. In fulfilling a second purpose, the study emphasizes the influence of literacy on the social values of the Cherokees. The third purpose is to consider the idea of the Cherokees themselves that bi-lingual education, first in Cherokee, then in English, and a renewed national pride and productivity in literacy could go far in solving the problems of social alienation and educational negativism that exist among unassimilated Cherokees.

After the introduction, Chapter Two presents a brief history of the Cherokee people. In Chapter Three, the basic

differences between Cherokee and Anglo-American cultural values are contrasted. Chapter Four parallels their political and social history with the story of the unique production and implementation of Sequoyah's invention of an alphabet. To illustrate the problems of production, a brief description of some of the language patterns has been gleaned from a traditional Cherokee grammar written in 1830. Modern studies on the role of the language in today's assimilation of the Cherokees are considered in assessing the possibility of a renewal of the language as a social and educational tool.

The study produces correlations which indicate that although the influence of literacy was second to the political and social pressures affecting the Cherokees, the written language greatly changed the personality, ambition, and values of the Cherokees who became literate in their own language. Printed newspapers allayed the fears and frustrations that earlier had brought about bloodshed. Thus, literacy and education in their native language were important civilizing forces at work among the Cherokees.

With literacy and education the social values of the Cherokees began a slow evolution toward assimilation into the white man's social and economic system, at first without a loss of the cultural pride of the people. However, governmental action stymied and defeated this gradual assimilation by making demands, based on expediency, that were often a thinly-veiled attempt on the part of the white man to gain

more Indian land. The passive processes of literacy and education were strangled by governmental action designed to hasten assimilation.

This study further demonstrates that without the tribal language, a symbol of the Cherokees' pride in heritage, the Cherokees do not have a tool, acceptable to all, with which to educate and elevate themselves. Being forced to learn English before they accepted it as a needed part of their culture, many Cherokees have alienated themselves socially and educationally.

In conclusion, many people who view the problems of the unassimilated Cherokee agree that, in the right situation, the language might once again perform its historical function as a bulwark against the erosion of values that are at the core of the spiritual existence of the Cherokees and as a bridge over the cultural gap between unassimilated Cherokees and the larger Anglo-American society.

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THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Denon, Texas

August, 1972

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHEROKEE PEOPLE IN MODERN TIMES	5
Cherokee Life Before Removal Formation of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma Disintegration of the Tribal Nation	
III. THE ABORTIVE ASSIMILATION OF THE CHEROKEE PEOPLE	38
Differences in Cultural Values Roadblocks to Success	
IV. THE PRODUCTION OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND ITS ROLE IN CHEROKEE LIFE	62
Linguistic Uniqueness of Sequoyah's Alphabet A Description of the Language The Role of Language in Assimilation	
APPENDIX A	98
APPENDIX B	99
APPENDIX C	100
APPENDIX D	101
APPENDIX E	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The ability of a people to read and write in their own language has throughout history culturally elevated the people acquiring those particular skills. Rich oral traditions could then be permanently preserved and, along with mores and laws, be demonstrated in a native literature. Culture could be preserved through the course of wars, invasions, radical changes, even genocide. The permanent status of the Greek culture in Western history reflects the importance of a written language to the preservation of a culture. Yet, for all that literary history has preserved, there remain the many "lost cultures about which little is known; lost for the lack of means to describe their way of life that it might outlive the people who produced it. However, in instances of a people having some written form of language, vestiges of the oral culture are preserved.

The Cherokee Nation may serve as a modern example of a people who had a strong, orally preserved culture, as had most of the Indian tribes in the Americas. The Cherokees are unique as an example, however, because they were the only American Indian tribe, until very recently, to originate in a short time

a written language to describe their way of life. The Cherokee syllabary, by describing the phonetics of the language, made all who would learn, a literate people in weeks instead of years. Unfortunately, the syllabary came at a time of wide division and frustration in the tribe and only years before the Cherokees suffered what the United States Government termed "removal," but what the Cherokees believe to have been an attempt at genocide. Consequently, the time needed to evolve a strong literary tradition was not afforded the Cherokees. Even after their removal, for three decades, an active press continued to produce the words that helped unify the people. However, culminating events led once again to a division and the resulting frustration brought an end to a national pride in literacy. For lack of continuing literacy in their own language and a new demand on them to learn English in the white man's school, the Cherokee people stumbled quickly from an educated society to a people illiterate in both the languages they were required to speak.

Today, the Cherokee stands, as well as his brothers of other tribes, an enigma of humanity. The attempts of the Anglo-American policy to assimilate him into the "mainstream" of American life have largely failed among the majority of the Indian people. The Cherokee has become a product of the forces of poverty, trusteeship, and ignorance. These forces, joined with the loss of identity to his own culture, have placed the Cherokee, usually the full-blood Cherokee, largely at the

bottom of the socio-economic ladder in most communities where he lives.

A people once considered the most educated per capita of all frontier people now lives for the most part in the poverty and helplessness characterized in many minority groups. This present situation has resulted from the thwarting of a budding literary tradition that would have sustained the culture in the difficult years and the subsequent debilitation of the oral traditions and institutions that united the people. Through attempting to make the Cherokees "wards" of the United States Government, the Indian policymakers committed a cultural genocide and, at one point, almost a literal one.

Paradoxically, the emerging nationalism among all Indians, including the Cherokees, has come primarily from "assimilated" Indians, who are using their knowledge of the English language and the Anglo-American culture and laws to unite their people once again.

The purpose of this study is to relate the historical factors, emphasizing the linguistic tragedy, contributing to a major disintegration of the Cherokee culture and to the destruction of traditional Cherokee institutions, leaving for the posterity of the Cherokees a heritage of ignorance with its resulting poverty and educational negativism. By comparing the historical versus the current aspects of Indian life itself, and contrasting it with the life style of the white man, conclusions can be made regarding the successes and failures in

the assimilation of the Cherokees into the white man's culture. The inherently important role that the Cherokee language did play and could play again in the culture of the people who speak it is revealed and verifies the need for its revival as a functional part of a renewed tribal culture. In view of the facts and opinions presented, the major portion of the paper, therefore, seriously questions the pervading idea among many people that the only way to solve the social and moral problems of the United States is to quickly pour the racial and ethnic differences of its citizens into the fatal "melting pot," thus conforming all men, all races into one single, over-simplified and atavistic pattern. This insipid blend from the melting pot discounts the richness and variety of a multicultural nation which, although in one pot, could still retain its various ethnic identities that contribute their unusual flavor to the whole.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHEROKEE NATION IN MODERN TIMES

Cherokee Life Before Removal

The Cherokees have lived under a tradition-bound society since the earliest known times of their existence. In a speech made in the early summer of 1971, Sam Hider, full blood Cherokee and minister of a Baptist church in the hills of eastern Oklahoma, characterized the historical Cherokee, stating that the Cherokee "never was a 'feathers and warpaint' kind of Indian."¹ When the European colonists first visited the Cherokees, they found an agricultural people who supplemented their crops of corn, beans, squash, and tobacco with hunting and fishing in the abundant forests of the southern Appalachian region of the United States. At this time their only enemies were the Northern tribes of the Iroquois who occasionally created war by encroaching on Cherokee territory. Their ferocious battles with the Iroquois might have belied their peaceful image, but once the battles were over, the Cherokees returned to their simple life.

The Cherokees were organized into a matriarchal society wherein property of the tribe was held communally under the

¹Lecture by Sam Hider, candidate for Cherokee chief, Tulsa, Oklahoma, May, 1971.

leadership of one woman. Following this Indian tradition, the Cherokee man, then and now, takes the clan name of his squaw when he marries. The institutions of marriage and family were at the center of the Cherokee culture. Seven clans carefully regulated intermarriage "to keep the race pure."² If one was of the bird clan, for example, he could not marry another of the same clan, but must choose his squaw from another clan. Even now, at pow-wows or stomp dances or church functions of the Keetoowah, or full bloods, one finds seven benches arranged in a circle. The white man's disdain for or perhaps envy of the Indian male's policy to do the fishing and hunting and let the squaw take the rest of the responsibility for the family has characterized many descriptions of the Indians. However, as head of the family, the woman readily accepted this responsibility. Tribal law was exercised through the matriarch and all property passed from mother to daughter. The daughter of the head woman assumed the position as leader unless she was usurped by a stronger rival.³ Although times since the white man's coming have seen the Indian male assume the position as chief, the matriarchal society was the old way.

Provisions for the poor among the Cherokees were similar to those among the Creeks. Pleasant Porter, a great chief of the Creeks, contrasted the happiness and simple prosperity of the old life with what came after removal of the tribes.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

I say I don't know of an Indian family in my early life that were paupers. In those days the ones that would be paupers if they lived now stayed with their kin folks and they made them work. Now, back of that the custom of the Creeks was that everybody had to work or live on the town, and the town had task masters who took care of him and saw that he worked. There was not a skulker or one who shirked amongst us then; quite different from what it is now. We had a kind of an Arcadian government then. If anyone was sick or unable to work, the neighbors came in and planted his crop, and they took care of it--saw that the fences were all right--and the women took care of the garden, and wood was got for him, and so on. In fact, everything was done under the care of the people--they did everything and looked after the welfare of everything.⁴

Early commentators remark uneasily on the collective enterprise of the communal system which "seemed actually sacrilegious to the individualistic and acquisitive white man."⁵

Along with the age-old institutions of communal government, marriage, and family life, the Cherokees, like other tribes, began to adopt the white man's institutions even before the Revolutionary War in America. Trade with the colonists introduced the Cherokees to the white man's economics and rapidly made them dependent on European traders for the items they were taught to need. This contact helped the Indians, especially the Cherokees, become experts at the diplomacy of playing one European nation against another. This they did frequently.

⁴Report of the Select Committee to Investigate Matters Connected with Affairs in the Indian Territory, Senate Documents, 59th Congress, 2d Session, No. 5013, I, 624-625, cited in Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run (Princeton, 1940), pp. 14-15.

⁵Debo, Waters Run, p. 14.

Chiefly, however, contact with European civilization seemed only to demoralize and degrade the Cherokees, especially through disease and the acquired taste for liquor.⁶

Before the revolution, the Cherokees swayed only briefly to the side of the French in the many skirmishes between the French and British. They sided with the French then because the French were trappers and traders and did not want land for settlement. Then, partly because of the unofficial treaty that six Cherokee chiefs entered into with King George IV when they were shown to London in 1769, the Cherokees remained loyal to the British in the American Revolution. Again, they had chosen the losing side. Each time they chose the side wanting less land. The French wanted less than the British; the British wanted less than the American colonists. The Indians' quarrels were mainly with the ambitions of the westward movement. Because of their loyalty to the British, the government of North Carolina seized the western portion of Cherokee land in the amount of four million acres in 1783.⁷ The land east of the Blue Ridge Mountains was already filled with nearly three thousand white settlers, who were not concerned with securing justice for Indians. The seizure and sale of Cherokee land without compensating the people frustrated and angered the

⁶Susanne Starling, "The Cherokee Indians in the American Revolution," unpublished master's thesis, Department of History, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, 1961, p. 25.

⁷Ibid., p. 125.

Cherokees and thus cost the North Carolina frontiersmen a tremendous toll in human life and property at the hand of the Cherokees.⁸ Continuous treaties and forced cessions of land up to 1785 incited the Indian tribes to retaliation which gave the frontiersmen and white settlers a reason to mobilize an expedition of revenge to Cherokee country. At this point, the new United States Government finally stepped in and late in 1785 negotiated a treaty. Although it failed to return the land east of the Blue Ridge or the western Kentucky area that had been taken, the treaty might have kept peace if the encroachments by the white settlers had stopped.⁹

North Carolina and especially Georgia still continued protests in Congress against "pretended treaties . . . an attempt to violate the retained sovereignty and legal right of this state."¹⁰ From the beginning, the question of states' rights thwarted the Indians. Uneasy peace was often destroyed as white men and Indian renegades retaliated against each other as inevitable foes. With the ratification of the Constitution in 1789, the Federal Government placed the Indian Affairs under the War Department, and Henry Knox, as the Secretary of War, purported a policy to civilize and assimilate the savages. Two opposing Cherokee factions continued to make peace hard to establish, but in 1791, another treaty, the Treaty of

⁸Ibid., p. 127.

⁹Ibid., pp. 135-139.

¹⁰Merritt B. Pound, Benjamin Hawkins--Indian Agent (Athens, Georgia, 1951), p. 49.

Holston, paid the Cherokees for land cessions they had made. However, neither side was content and by 1793 war raged again on the frontier. Time was running out for the renegade Cherokees in this contest, because in 1794 the United States Government decided that no real peace could exist as long as the renegade Cherokees retained any semblance of power. Various expeditions against all Cherokees, peaceful as well as renegade ones, weakened the people until four hundred warriors signed a treaty of defeat at Tellico in 1794. Cherokees were forced to accept the ten thousand white settlers already in Tennessee and began receiving poor American goods and an annual allotment of five thousand dollars. A second treaty at Tellico in 1798 wrung more land from the Cherokees, but guaranteed the Cherokee boundaries forever.¹¹ The Cherokees had learned the futility of armed resistance to the westward surge of Americans and sought thereafter to use the American constitutional guarantees to fight their battles. "They shortly became a nation of farmers armed with plows, carts, hoes, spinning wheels, and looms."¹²

From 1800 on, for three decades, a new life arose for the Cherokees as well as for all Indians. There was no way of stopping the white man from surrounding them, so they sought to live within the white civilization. Both the Cherokees and

¹¹Starling, pp. 161, 175.

¹²W. R. L. Smith, Story of the Cherokees (Cleveland, Tennessee, 1928), pp. 105-106.

the Choctaws invited Christian missionaries to set up churches and schools. They adopted a constitution and legal code and some of their leaders operated large plantations worked by Negro slaves. Their advancement was particularly rapid during the two decades following their final military defeat.¹³

The Christian missionaries brought with their churches and schools the "talking leaves," which inspired the half-breed Cherokee Sequoyah to try to imitate the white man's written words. Sequoyah was amazed that the white man and the Indian trained in the white man's school could make marks on thin "leaves" and someone many miles away could look at these marks and, as if by magic, know exactly what the other man had said. Twelve years of work, ending in 1821, produced by Sequoyah's hand what is commonly called the Cherokee "alphabet." Correctly, the "alphabet" is a syllabary in which each of the eighty-six symbols represents a syllable spoken in the Cherokee language. Within a few months the Cherokees became literate in their spoken language and began, shortly thereafter, to print in their own language.

But established peace and progress were not to continue. As it became evident that the Cherokees were permanently establishing themselves and their institutions and were becoming increasingly powerful in their ability to fight against a new threat called "removal," the states of Georgia, Mississippi,

¹³Debo, Waters Run, p. 1.

and Alabama decided to assert their "states' rights." The question of removing the Indians to a place more favorable to their advancement had become an issue in the 1828 presidential election in which Andrew Jackson, known in history as the "Indian fighter," was brought into office. In the case of the Cherokees, Georgia made the first step toward their disenfranchisement by incorporating a large area of the Cherokee Nation into the territory of the state. The laws of the state were extended over this section and those inhabiting it. The state further directed that all laws, ordinances, and regulations of the Cherokee Nation should become null and void. It became illegal for any man to justify or punish an act under tribal law. After destroying the means by which the tribe regulated and protected itself, the state sought to further debilitate the Cherokees by making it a penitentiary offense to resist removal or influence others to do so. As a final blow, the mandate came "that no Indian or descendant of Indians shall be deemed a competent witness in any court of this state to which a white person may be a party."¹⁴ On the same day another announcement was made to the effect that since gold had been discovered on Indian land, all the land of the Cherokees, including the gold mines, belonged to the state and could be obtained shortly in a free

¹⁴United States Senate Document, 23rd Congress, 1st Session, No. 512, II, "Indian Removal," 290, 235.

land lottery.¹⁵ The subsequent disruption on the gold lands caused the federal government to send federal troops to protect the Indians, but the state of Georgia insisted upon their withdrawal and the demand was granted.

This coercion to remove the Indians was facilitated, if not actually encouraged, by the policy of Andrew Jackson, a relentless exponent for Indian removal. One of the first measures he sought to enact upon election was the Indian Removal Bill, which was finally enacted in 1830 after great difficulties. One of the bitterest debates in the history of Congress against this bill is a credit to the integrity and fairness of some members of Congress at this time. The missionaries and friends of the Indians, who had favored removal for protection of the tribes, became incensed when they recognized that the real reason behind removal was a "land grab."¹⁶

Some Cherokees began to move immediately and became, a decade later, the Old Settlers in Indian Territory. However, the majority chose to remain out of defiance or because of loyalty to a way of life. Those remaining would fight with the constitutional guarantees that the educated men of the tribe and their missionary friends said were their rights. The end result of this hopeful venture was failure once again.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁶Grant Foreman, Indian Removal (Norman, Oklahoma, 1932), p. 21.

Some of the missionaries defied the law of Georgia that forbade any outsider to be on Indian land and went to jail over it. Samuel Worchester, who helped the Cherokees print the Cherokee Phoenix, their national newspaper, was foremost of the white men who fought for Indian rights.

Although several cases were brought up, one case in particular brought about one of the most famous judgments of Chief Justice John Marshall, who declared that the "whole intercourse between the United States and this nation [the Cherokee Nation] is by our constitution and laws, vested in the government of the United States."¹⁷ Consequently, the treaties made with the Indians by the Federal Government could not be legally superseded by any other legislation by a state. Although legally void, the ignoble state laws had already planted the seed of destruction in the heart of Cherokee land. The frontiersmen, eager and acquisitive, continued their oppression of the Cherokees. President Jackson, because of his personal opinion about removal and because the possibility that the issue over states' rights might bring a civil war in 1832, refused to send in troops to enforce the federal mandate that Indians still retained control of their lands. Justifiable reasons for his actions, whatever they were, are overpowered by his peevish comment, "John Marshall has rendered his decision;

¹⁷Jerran Burris White, "The Missionary Work of Samuel A. Worchester Among the Cherokee: 1825-1840," unpublished master's thesis, Department of History, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, 1970, p. 57.

now let him enforce it."¹⁸ The state of Georgia did repeal the specific law judged against in the case of Worcester vs. the State of Georgia, but the land lottery had already flooded Indian land with thousands of whites, eagerly searching for gold and making life unbearable for the Cherokees.¹⁹ What Jackson's Indian Removal Bill had failed to do in disenfranchising the Cherokees and allowing whites to latch onto Indian land, the land lottery accomplished.

Another blow to the Cherokees came as Elias Boudinot, Cherokee translator and editor of the Cherokee Phoenix, felt that the paper should urge the Cherokees to remove for their own safety and good, while John Ross, the great Cherokee chief of this period, felt the paper should encourage the Cherokees to fight to the end for their ancestral homes. In the subsequent quarrel, the press was confiscated by the Georgia State Guard, thus cutting the life line of the Cherokees and resulting in unfounded rumors and alarming frustration among those who depended on the Phoenix as their only reliable source of news. In an illegal treaty in 1835, made while John Ross was away on an unofficial visit to Washington to petition the president to protect the Cherokees from encroachments, Boudinot and other tribal leaders gave up the remaining land in the East and accepted the Western area beyond the bound of the United States in the Treaty of New Echota (See Appendix A, p. 98). Ross

¹⁸Foreman, Indian Removal, p. 235.

¹⁹White, p. 64.

protested that the treaty was invalid because Boudinot did not represent the tribe and was not a full blood. Nevertheless, in 1836, the President declared that treaty a law of the land.²⁰

Boudinot consistently maintained that the treaty was for the good of his people and he paid the price for his opinion with his life after he removed to the West. Whether justly motivated or not, the Treaty of New Echota sounded the death knell for the Cherokee Nation in the East and opened up a great tragedy among the Cherokees, known in history books as "Indian Removal," but to the Cherokees as the "Trail of Tears." Of the approximate fifteen to sixteen thousand Cherokees who began to remove, an average of thirteen to fifteen died each day for the period of the removal to total between four thousand to forty-five hundred Cherokees who lost their lives.²¹ The great mortality rate indicates, even without description, the hardships of the forced march. The trek was begun in late summer during the hottest weather of the Southern climate and, consequently, with so little notice or preparation that the Cherokees were not prepared for the ordeal ahead. With little understanding of the length of the trip and the delays entailed in the moving of so many people, those in charge of removal found themselves with an ill-equipped group of people in a colder climate when freezing and wet weather came upon them in late fall. Although many in charge of the removal proceedings

²⁰Ibid., p. 75.

²¹Ibid., p. 76.

were hard-driving and callous, there were some who grieved for the plight of the people in their charge. However, they were no better equipped than the rest, and there was nothing to be done without money from the government, which was slow in coming and far less than what the venture required for completion.

Upon reaching the western land in what is now the state of Oklahoma, the Cherokees found little at first to convince them that life would improve. The money and goods that the United States had promised to send to help the Indians make their homes and settlements were often months or years in coming. Nevertheless, the indomitable race embraced the richness of the new land and faced its hardships with courage. They had to make a life on the plains and in the hills. They had no other place to go. Oklahoma was the last foothold the Cherokees had on the earth.

Formation of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma

Cast into a fertile, yet harsh and untamed country, alien to the Cherokee before he subdued it with his plow, the Cherokee Nation struggled to its feet. The last large arrival of Cherokee groups came in 1839 to total close to thirteen thousand who made it to Indian Territory alive. It must be remembered that at the same time Cherokees were being removed to north-eastern Indian Territory, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Creek tribes were arriving also in lower parts of the state

(See Appendix A, p. 98). Smaller Indian groups were likewise being transported to the western section of the territory. But the five large tribes of the eastern part of Oklahoma became known once again as the "Five Civilized Tribes."

The hope gradually emerged as the trauma of removal diminished that the Nation would be left alone to stabilize its society through education, through a sound economy and through legal measures. By 1844, the Cherokees had established twenty-eight "neighborhood schools" which were supported by their own funds.²² The Cherokees, according to the treaty of 1835, were to be supplied for over a year with goods necessary to sustain their homes and help them prepare for crops the next year. The contract was held by Glasgow and Harrison, a company that had supplied other tribes through agreements in the past. Poor beef cattle, often sick and dying, short rations, which were often unfamiliar food to the Indians, and inferior dry goods caused the Cherokees to ask for a government investigation late in 1839. However, the investigators arrived too late to prove any criminal charges as the account was hastily closed by the company and those charged left the territory. So, despite the promises of help given in the treaty, the people were left largely to provide for their own material welfare.²³ Although food was poor and many of the Cherokees died from disease and

²²George Dewey Harmon, Sixty Years of Indian Affairs: Political, Economic, and Diplomatic, 1789-1850 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1941), p. 359.

²³Grant Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes (Norman, Oklahoma, 1934), p. 285.

exposure, the people began to build shelters and plant crops immediately upon arrival and in a few years were able to close the gap between starvation and survival.

Also in 1839, the Eastern Cherokees, who were the recent arrivals, met with the Western Cherokees, who had moved to Indian Territory much earlier. A power struggle was imminent. Although much dissention and hostility ensued between the two factions, a majority of the Cherokees set up a government with John Ross, an Eastern Cherokee, at its head. The other faction led by Stand Watie and John Ridge refused to accept the government and the constitution and laws it represented. The Indians were not organized and had few ways of enforcing the laws they made. General Arbuckle, Army commander at Fort Gibson, decided very quickly to declare martial law in 1840 because of the strife between the two factions and because he disliked John Ross. The continued interference of the War Department in tribal affairs led to greater animosity and unrest within the tribe, although four fifths of the tribe had committed themselves to the 1839 government with John Ross as chief. The \$800,000 due the immigrant Cherokees on their arrival in the West to pay for the lands and goods they had to abandon was withheld until they should agree to dissolve their established government and accept the one arranged by the one-fifth minority of the "Old Settlers" and General Arbuckle. As the Ross party would not submit, Arbuckle set about to defame Ross as a murderer and a demagogue. Ross went to Washington with delegation after

delegation to ask for a new treaty that would be fair to all.²⁴

Lacking the stable government that acceptance and enforcement of the 1839 constitution would have afforded, the Cherokees were beset with lawlessness in their own people, but mostly through the provocation of outsiders and fugitives wandering into Indian Territory to get what gain they could from the confusion. John Ross continued with delegations to Washington in quest of a new treaty that would rectify the various grievances that the tribe had against the United States Government and one that would settle the many internal questions of the Cherokee Nation. Ross maintained, however, since he was the only duly elected chief of a republic, he would not negotiate individually with one small faction for a privileged treaty.²⁵

In 1843 the first test of the popular ballot established under the 1839 constitution came, and John Ross was re-elected by a large majority. Yet, unrest and flagrant disregard for the law continued among the minority of Western Cherokees. This group was made up mostly of half-breeds and those seeking land gains by trying to negotiate a new treaty privately. The federal government helped support the dissent by giving ear and, therefore, encouragement to the "Treaty Party."²⁶ A spirit of reprisal filled the country

²⁴Ibid., p. 310.

²⁵Ibid., p. 329.

²⁶Ibid., p. 335.

and many Cherokees of the "Treaty Party" fled into the state of Arkansas when alarmists proposed that the Cherokee government wanted to kill all those opposed to it. In truth, John Ridge and Elias Boudinot had been killed, but John Ross had known nothing of the act before it happened. The murderers committed the act in revenge for the two men's parts in the fraudulent treaty of 1835, which sold the birthright of the Cherokees without their permission. Several of a family named Starr were killed, but again, only because of lawless and murderous acts they had committed. Many of the Ross party were also victims of the time.

In early summer, 1846, a House committee on Indian affairs introduced a bill dividing the Cherokee Nation. One part was to be occupied by the "Old Settlers," or the "Treaty Party." The other part belonged to the "Ross Party," or those living under the 1839 constitution. Although a commission had investigated the affairs in the Nation first-hand and made an exhaustive report stating that the Cherokee Nation could solve its own problems if left alone, the Secretary of War ignored the report and assumed the charges of General Arbuckle against the Ross Party were true. It is a credit to the indomitable statesmanship of the Cherokees that the bill was defeated. Instead, a commission was appointed to hear and investigate the grievances of both factions, and their findings formed a new treaty that was enacted in August, 1846. Ross had been trying to accomplish this since 1839.²⁷

²⁷Ibid., p. 349.

The treaty undertook the settlement of claims and dissensions within the tribe and between the Cherokees and the United States Government. Party distinctions were obliterated and the land was issued to the whole tribe under a patent. A general amnesty for all those accused of crimes against the Nation and its citizens was granted to those returning before December 1, 1846. It was agreed that laws would be passed for the protection of all and "all factions would join in upholding and enforcing the laws of the Nation against all future offenders."²⁸ Peaceful assembly to express grievances and abolishment of all armed police were provided for. Large sums of money were paid to individual claimants for spoliation, and the debts illegally charged against the five million dollars granted the tribe for their eastern lands were removed. Thus, the controversies and claims that had split the Nation with the fraudulent "Treaty" of New Echota in 1835 were settled, at least superficially. Although little remained to quarrel about, "the smouldering heart burnings, bitter memories and jealousies cherished by the politically disappointed minority could not be so soon forgotten, and lived to burst into flame with the outbreak of the Civil War."²⁹

Public notices of the Cherokee Nation reflect the individual character and achievement of many members of the tribe. In 1844, Indian Agent P. M. Butler, who is noted for his first-hand

²⁸Ibid., p. 350.

²⁹Ibid.

descriptions of the Indians, reveals important information about the Cherokees, regarding their communicative powers.

The Cherokees are exceedingly fond of reading and have a very inquisitive mind. They seem to take great delight, too, at present, in the manual process of writing, and take every occasion to employ it in preference to oral communication--not so much among themselves, however, as with the whites and agents of the government. Many of them have a taste for, and some acquirements in, general literature. Much benefit may be expected from their printing-press, lately in operation. The more general diffusion of information will lead to further improvement. Although imaginative, they have nothing that we call poetry; but, as orators, they are conspicuous in some of the essential excellencies of the art. Bold, brief, and earnest, they adapt their ideas and expressions with uniform tact to the nature of their subject and the character of their hearers, and stop when they have done. Their candidates for council follow our example of "taking the stump" upon all questions of public interest. They speak both in Cherokee and in English; the latter being necessary, from the large number of white men, who have been adopted by the nation. Although they are in some instances losing the native tongue, yet, as a written language, it has become in a measure fixed; and the tenacity with which they generally cling to it, as to many other of their national characteristics, renders it improbable that it will ever be entirely abandoned. Although not entirely ignorant of painting, they have had heretofore no scope for the development of any talent in that art, or in sculpture. In music they have a decided taste, and many of them perform well on different instruments.³⁰

In 1849 the Indian Commissioner said that "nearly the whole of the large amount required for the support and maintenance of the school now in operation is furnished by the Indians themselves out of their national funds."³¹ The

³⁰Ibid., pp. 368-369.

³¹Harmon, p. 357.

educational system grew with the population and by 1859, there were twenty-one thousand Cherokees in Indian Territory. The uneducated were diminishing, and at that time there were fifteen hundred pupils attending thirty schools. All but two of the teachers were Cherokees.³² The Arkansas Intelligencer reported largely attended meetings of the temperance society, which later formed the "Cold Water Army" and enlisted the children of the Nation in the fight against "King Alcohol." The temperance movement gained momentum and became famous among all Indian nations and was effective until its disbandment during the Civil War in stemming the flood of whiskey that threatened to drown the Nation. The people were industrious, and over the years their farms had become prosperous. They produced the tools and clothing they needed and took great pride in their stock animals and thoroughbreds. The progress of the people can be noted in their changing attitude toward women, who had come to occupy an exalted position with opportunities given them for cultivation and education.³³ Paul M. Butler attributed much of the Cherokees' progress to the printing press which had been

chiefly instrumental in placing the Cherokees one-half a century in advance of their late condition; providing an easy and cheap mode of diffusing instruction among the people, and stimulating them to further exertion and improvement. . . . It is an object that cannot fail to strike the heart of the philanthropist

³²Foreman, Civilized Tribes, p. 418.

³³Ibid., pp. 388-390.

with peculiar emotion to be in the neighborhood of the press on the day the paper is struck off, and witness the eagerness with which it is sought after, particularly by the more ignorant class who neither speak nor read the English language, but who acquire their own alphabet in twenty-four hours.³⁴

Churches and roads were built, and in the Cherokee Advocate praise for achievements elevated the morale, the self-esteem and the hope of the people.

In 1852 there was much rejoicing as the Cherokees were told to assemble to receive the per capita payments of money promised six years before in the Treaty of 1846. As the money was received at Fort Gibson, there were many merchants, tradesmen, and speculators on hand to relieve the Indian of his cash in exchange for the pretty or the tasty or the glittering goods they sold. Therefore, the payments of cash did little to benefit the people of the nation.³⁵ The majority of the Cherokees, as is characteristic of many poor and economically untrained people, had great difficulty in saving money or spending it on necessities in the face of temptations and luxuries.

Although encroachments of authorities from the courts of Arkansas continued in the Indian Territory, which caused much confusion over jurisdiction, peace and order finally seemed

³⁴Cherokee Advocate, April 2, 1846, p. 2, cited in Foreman, Civilized Tribes, p. 390.

³⁵Foreman, Civilized Tribes, p. 407.

to have descended on the Cherokee Nation in 1856.³⁶ Yet, in 1857, the far-sighted John Ross, while praising the accomplishments of his people, voiced a warning that white settlers might once again begin their depredations. "Years of trial and anxiety, of danger and struggle, have alone maintained the existence of the Cherokee people as a distinct community; and such must continue to be the case, if we would live as men ourselves, and discharge the debt we owe to posterity."³⁷ Hardly had the words fallen from his mouth than the strife and contentions began that would lead to the catastrophe of tribal division and provide, as it always did, an opening for the white man to interfere.

As the country was noticeably drifting toward civil war, officials in the Indian Service became desirous of choosing firm ground on which to stand as Indian Territory would certainly be of considerable importance to the side that won control. Judging from the report of Agent Al Rector, a man obviously trying to strengthen the South's position, the Cherokees had overnight become a lawless and ruthless people. He recommended that a post at Frozen Rock on the Arkansas River was desperately needed to control the warring sides. His motive was to provide a needed Army facility for the South when Indian Territory joined the Confederacy. Rector referred to a secret and dangerous association of full bloods,

³⁶Ibid., p. 410.

³⁷Commissioner for Indian Affairs, Annual Report for 1857, cited in Foreman, Civilized Tribes, p. 416.

which were said to be behind all the trouble between the two divisions of the people. What he failed to mention was that the secret society of Indians was trying to hold the tribe at least neutral, if not loyal, to the Union.³⁸

Disintegration of the Tribal Nation

The factions of Cherokees who listened to the agents of the Confederacy did, in their willingness to believe their lot would be better under the South, open the door to the final disintegration of the tribe. Loyalties in the Civil War were sharply divided, and it was not uncommon for skirmishes to break out between Union and Confederate sympathizers in Indian Territory. Although most of the tribal chiefs remained loyal to the Union and persuaded most of their people to remain loyal also,³⁹ the minority of Southern sympathizers gave the federal government the excuse it needed to demand cessions of more land at the end of the war as punishment for alignment with the South during the war. The Five Civilized Tribes surrendered, as their penalty for "rebellion," the western half of their land. "Part of this ceded land was used by the federal government for the settlement of other Indian tribes, and the remainder by a series of 'Openings' from 1889 on was

³⁸Foreman, Civilized Tribes, p. 420.

³⁹Angie Debo, The Road to Disappearance (Norman, Oklahoma, 1941), pp. 142-176.

thrown open to white homesteaders and became the Territory of Oklahoma."⁴⁰

Of the 19,525,966 acres remaining in Indian Territory after the treaties of 1866 had taken the western portion, the Cherokees owned by communal tenure 4,420,068 acres in the northeast. Although the Choctaws and Chickasaws owned the timber and agricultural land, the Cherokee land was destined to produce a large share of the "flowing gold that was to make Oklahoma famous for its fantastic wealth."⁴¹ Although the land was destined to produce such great wealth, the Cherokees as a tribe would benefit very little due to the changing policy of the federal government that would so divide the tribe as to make it practically non-existent as a political unit capable of protecting its interests.

Throughout the troubled half-century ending in 1902, the Cherokees continued to progress educationally, although they were engaged in a fight for survival as a culture. In 1894 the Cherokees had in a trust fund held by the United States two and three-fourths million dollars from which the Nation's schools and civic improvements came. Elementary schools were no more irregular or inadequate than rural schools of neighboring states, and each tribe had a boarding school with highly qualified faculties. Some tribes paid for the college education

⁴⁰Debo, Waters Run, p. 6.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

of their young. With this type of system, there were more educated people among the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, than among the white people of neighboring frontier states. Many children, however, failed to profit from these educational opportunities and many of the educated ones remained illiterate in the English language.⁴² Therefore, the uneducated and many of the educated were without the tool needed to overcome their position as a minority when the state was finally opened completely to white settlement.

Previously, in 1849, the jurisdiction over Indian affairs had been removed from the War Department and made part of the Department of the Interior, first known as the Board of Indian Commissioners, then as the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The United States maintained a protectorate over the Indians during the years preceding the Civil War, but in 1862, Federal policy began to emphasize that the Indians were "wards" of the government rather than a political or cultural body to be reckoned with.⁴³ This debilitating attitude that the United States was responsible for the management of the Indians' affairs continued until 1934 as a policy of the government. Since 1934, although the policy was officially abolished, its spirit has largely pervaded programs designed to help Indians.

⁴²Ibid., p. 6.

⁴³United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, American Indians and the Federal Government (Washington, 1965), p. 2.

Following the Civil War, Congress and, likewise, much of the populace adopted the attitude expressed by Senator Yates of Illinois in regard to Indian ownership of land. He stated that

They never owned a foot of land. They were roving savages. They never owned land and could not own land. They could not understand the title to land. They never claimed land. We treat them as the owners of land. That is all wrong. The Indians cannot be civilized; they will not be civilized; they do not want to⁴⁴ be civilized. . . . We must treat them as savages.

Citizens of neighboring states saw beautiful farm and ranch land lying, in their eyes, in waste from disuse. Public indignation was incited when newspapers reported land monopolies among wealthier Indians, when, in fact, tribal law maintained that any man could use as much land as he wished, but when he stopped using it, the title reverted to the tribe. Certainly, individual enterprise was rewarded by this system, but most full bloods were content with merely a small farm which provided a living for their family and complemented the simple life they loved. Because no tribe, except the Cherokees, would levy taxes for civic betterment, much of the shabby and unimproved appearance of Indian Territory belied its actual wealth and stability.

As the railroad and the gold rush flooded surrounding lands with white settlers, the Cherokees greatest problem emerged. Since federal courts were slow to be set up or were far away

⁴⁴D'Arcy McNickle, They Came Here First (Philadelphia, 1949), p. 255.

in Arkansas and the Indian governments could exercise very little civil authority over non-citizens, white intruders merely seized land, set up improvements, and became impossible to dislodge.⁴⁵ In 1890 the first census of Indian Territory shows that the Indian government was weakening with the onslaught of a great number of white settlers. At this time, the Indian population of the Cherokee Nation was only 39.1 per cent of the total. With such a large percentage of non-citizens, especially the tax-paying ones in the Cherokee Nation, the clamors for statehood, which would empower the whites, was great indeed. Crime flourished in Indian Territory, but little attempt was made to arrest any but the most depraved criminal. Debts could not be collected or land disputes settled except by "shooting it out." Many Indian officials were corrupt and negligent to the advantage of those seeking to usurp Indian control.⁴⁶ All these points were used conclusively to decide in the Senate in 1871 that "all dealings with the red men could be regulated more effectively by law than by treaty."⁴⁷ What one must consider and what was not considered is that the conditions in the Indian Territory were not relatively worse than the conditions in any other remote, frontier country of

⁴⁵Debo, Waters Run, p. 16.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 13, 19.

⁴⁷James T. Lowe, "The Indian Policy of the United States Government," unpublished master's thesis, Department of History, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, 1952, p. 79.

that time. Had the Cherokees been more inclined to enforce laws rather than pass legislation and recommendations and had they been given full authority over their territory, the last half of the nineteenth century might have been a period of growth instead of disintegration. But to the white man, progress for the Indian meant the same as assimilation for the Indian. Progress in their own way was not to be possible for the Cherokees or any other tribe.

Senator Casserly of California was one of the strongest opponents of the appropriations bill of 1871 that, when it passed, empowered the Congress to no longer recognize any tribe as an independent power to be dealt with in any way except by law. Casserly echoed the voice of many, but the voice was too weak. He said

I know what the misfortune of the tribes is. Their misfortune is that they are red men; not that they are a weak race. Their misfortune is that they hold great bodies of rich lands, which have aroused the cupidity of powerful corporations and of powerful individuals. . . . I greatly fear that the adoption of this provision to discontinue treaty-making is the beginning of the end in respect to Indian lands. It is the first step in a great scheme of spoliation, in which the Indians will be plundered, corporations and individuals enriched, and the American name dishonored in history.⁴⁸

Following the passing of the 1871 bill, governmental powers over the Indian tribes manifestly dictated their cultural doom, since the Indians had no rights or recourse under

⁴⁸ McNickle, pp. 256-257.

the law and were no longer dealt with as varied and tribally independent bodies. In 1887, the Dawes Severalty Act made it law that communal tenure could not exist among the tribes and that tribal lands must be allotted to individual members of the tribe. The Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory were exempted from this act, but the ominous and inevitable flood was at their backs.⁴⁹ The lands that had been ceded following the Civil War were "opened" in 1889 and the land rush by white settlers began. As usual, the settlers were not concerned with being positive that their homestead was not an encroachment upon land belonging to the Five Civilized Tribes. The western part of Indian Territory that was opened was made a territory of the United States in 1890. The dreaded legislation for allotment for the Five Civilized Tribes came in 1893. In subtle wording it provided for "negotiations" to make communal tenure extinct and to pave the way for statehood.⁵⁰

A commission headed by Senator Dawes, who had pushed the bill dividing tribal lands, went to Indian Territory to negotiate, but couldn't find a tribe willing to so much as talk as long as allotment remained voluntary. It soon became evident after several years of fruitless attempts to get the tribes to agree to allotment that action would have to be

⁴⁹Debo, Waters Run, p. 22.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 23.

taken "for the Indian's own good." Without any agreement being made, a land survey was authorized in 1895 and the Dawes Commission was instructed to make a roll in 1896 of all those to receive land.

Knowing that allotment was being forced upon them, all tribes decided to negotiate for the best they could get. All tribes, that is, except the Cherokees. An agreement was made with the Seminoles, but when it became evident that the other tribal "agreements" would not be ratified by the tribes, Congress passed the Curtis Act in 1898, thus terminating tribal tenure by law and dictating drastic measures to facilitate allotment for all tribes that would not ratify the "agreements." Most tribes negotiated earnestly for as many favorable conditions as possible and, ultimately, in fear of what might be forced upon them, accepted various terms. The Cherokees, throughout all this time, remained under the unfavorable terms of the Curtis Act, submitting numerous proposals for better conditions, but steadfastly working to be exempted from allotment.⁵¹ The most significant plan the Cherokees proposed was a provision that as many full bloods as desired might hold adjoining land allotments as a corporation for their joint use under communal title, thus preserving their tribal relations. This, of course, was not accepted and after several fruitless attempts for similar

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 24, 32, 34.

proposals, a strained agreement was made in 1902 since the inevitable had surrounded the Cherokees.⁵²

The tremendous task of enrolling the members of the Cherokee tribe began and continued for several years. Problems increased faster than progress could be made. Many of the Indians, especially the Cherokees, resisted enrollment until they were forced to enroll. Still, thousands perhaps were never listed on the Dawes Roll, which has been the last word in deciding who is an Indian in Oklahoma since its infamous beginning. Even after the actual allotment of land began, many full bloods far back in the hills refused to appear to receive their allotment. There were many land companies and white settlers willing to take any left-overs, however. Since the land was first divided into sections of a certain number of acres, it became apparent that in the Cherokee Nation there was not enough land to go around. The people left without land were paid twice its value in money which was quickly spent, leaving a family destitute and homeless. Case after case was carried before the courts as white men, blacks, mixed bloods, and illegitimate children tried to prove their citizenship. Heirship was a tremendous problem since there were many children usually rightfully heir to a small plot of land. Instead of holding surplus land for the coming generations of

⁵²Cherokee Papers, Joint Session United States Commission and Cherokee Commission, cited in Debo, Waters Run, p. 34.

Indians, the government sold excess land to anyone who had the money to buy it.⁵³

A provision to prevent an Indian from selling his allotment for twenty-five years was first part of the allotment procedure, but land-hungry lobbyists pressured a change in this provision. Consequently, most of the Indians sold their allotments or forfeited them because they could not pay taxes when they were finally called on to do so. Indians often leased their allotted lands and chose to live on a paltry income from the lease instead of developing it for themselves. This widespread practice came about because the Indians did not have the capital or the credit or the education to use land under the white man's system of economy.⁵⁴

Whatever the methods used to disenfranchise the Indians, the fact remains that by 1934, all Indians, not just the Cherokees, had not more than 60 per cent of the 138,000,000 acres of land that had belonged to them before allotment began in 1887.⁵⁵ Much of the remaining land is the poorest imaginable, since the best lands were quickly lost. Furthermore, Indians then were considered a dying race, so there was no need to provide lands for their descendants. All remaining lands that were left were purchased by the government at a dollar and twenty-five cents per acre and much of it thrown

⁵³Lowe, p. 138

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Lloyd E. Blauch and staff, Education Services for Indians (Washington, 1939), p. 17.

open to white settlement as it became expedient for the government to do so.⁵⁶

After four decades of the paternalistic policy of the government, an Indian agent said in 1934 what applies appropriately for the most part of Indian affairs.

No mess they can concoct for themselves can be worse than the present allotment system. Suppose they make an awful mess. Both the getting in and the getting out will be educational.⁵⁷

Despite the fears, actions, or words of any concerned person, the short-sighted legislators of 1887 and those of the same sentiments that came before and after, divided and "assimilated" the red man into the white society in Oklahoma largely as a landless, illiterate, disillusioned, and distrustful segment.

⁵⁶Carey McWilliams, Brothers Under the Skin, rev. ed. (Boston, 1951), pp. 73-74.

⁵⁷A. H. Kneale, "We, the People . . .," Indians at Work, Office of Indian Affairs, No. 14 (Washington, 1934), p. 16.

CHAPTER III

THE ABORTIVE ASSIMILATION INTO ANGLO-AMERICAN CULTURE

Differences in Cultural Values

Certain patterns of values that largely determine the character of any one nation evolve from that nation's unique cultural experiences, and these patterns act as catalysts to produce future experiences within the cultural framework called a society. Because these patterns are an integral part of any nation's conscious and subconscious life, they are difficult to separate from the character of a member of that social group who has been educated in a certain cultural pattern. When, because of geographical closeness, two cultures come together, the process of assimilation occurs, or the vast differences become readily apparent and often irreconcilable. In order to fully realize how the process of assimilation could fail, despite so much concern and work to the contrary, one must consider the differences between the Cherokee culture and the Anglo-American culture.

To consider all the differences in Anglo-American culture and the Cherokee Indian culture, it would be necessary to compare at length many cultural patterns. However, for the purpose of

showing the difficulty the Cherokees had during attempts to assimilate them, only one aspect of the different cultures, their value orientations, will be discussed. A view of the disparate cultural values must foreshadow the sometimes irreconcilable problems in other patterns such as symbols or beliefs. In describing and comparing value orientations, it will be necessary to use a classification that will be general enough to cover individual idiosyncrasies among both cultural groups. The five value orientations often used to make such comparisons are as follows: (a) achievement vs. ascription, (b) affective neutrality vs. affectivity, (c) universalism vs. particularism, (d) specificity vs. diffuseness, (e) collective orientation vs. self-orientation.¹ The value orientations ascribed to the Cherokees were clearly evident to a greater extent before 1830, for thereafter, during removal and the establishment of the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory, the Cherokees were changing socially and, likewise, their values were being modified, although not with the speed and completeness that proponents of assimilation would have.

Achievement vs. ascription. In the primitive Indian societies, as well as primitive and medieval European and Asian societies, people were rewarded more in their own lifetime for who they were than for what they achieved. There was and still is a strong tendency to carry this value of ascription, wherein

¹Arturo and Genevieve DeHoyos, "The Universality of the Gospel," The Ensign, I (August, 1971), 12.

each man has an assigned rank in life, over into modern societies. Yet in America, a revolution and new government in the late eighteenth century established in writing, if not always in fact, the equality of man under the law. Out of this grew the cultural orientation toward achievement as an important value to Anglo-Americans. Likewise, the ascription-orientated Cherokee culture began slowly moving toward an achievement-orientated society as the Eastern Cherokee Nation was confronted more and more with white settlers and as some Cherokees began accepting the values of the whites. This slow move was not as advanced as the achievement-orientation of the Anglo-Americans, because the whites had more than a fifty year headstart before the Cherokees began their slow change. It was only from 1800 on, after their last major military defeat, that "the Indians, especially the Cherokees and the Choctaws, began to adopt white man's institutions."²

With these cultural institutions came a slow infusion of achievement orientation. The Cherokees established a system of law under which achievement had some value. They invited churches to bring their traditional achievement-orientated schools. It was their proximity to the whites that caused the change, because other Indian tribes, geographically alienated from thick white settlements, maintained the social value of ascription even up to the latter part of the nineteenth century.

²Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run (Princeton, 1940), p. 3.

Most Indians, including the changing Cherokees, naturally reacted with distrust if a tribal member sought achievement beyond his accepted role. Although personal achievement eventually came to be regarded more highly after removal, it has never gained the prominence in Cherokee society that it has in Anglo-American society. It is interesting to note that Sequoyah received his commendation and medal for his great work many years after the alphabet was instituted in the culture. Many Cherokees clung tenaciously to ascription as a cultural value, as evidenced by their reaction when the Ross party took the reins of the new government of Indian Territory, because they were the majority. The political upheaval resulted as the Old Settlers stood in the way of the constitutionally-elected chief because their ascribed positions were threatened. The constitution that Ross was elected under was an instrument to endow any qualified Cherokee with the right to become chief, thus producing fuel for rebellion within the Nation as a traditional value was challenged. Ross, even with his white blood, had fought and won for the Cherokees more than anyone thought possible against the prevailing spirit of the times. His ambitious plans for an educated Cherokee Nation shows the infusion of the achievement factor. And with education, wealthy men began to emerge in the nation because the communal land system provided means for the acquisition of wealth.

Under most governments of the Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma, an Indian could use as much surplus land as he needed, but once it fell into disuse, the title reverted to the tribe. Yet most of the Cherokees were content to live on and manage what had been ascribed to them. To be much wealthier than their relatives or friends required a degree of selfishness that the easy-going, generous Indian did not understand.

This contentment with what one had was understood least by the white man, who overlooked completely the fact that the Cherokees themselves were slowly becoming more achievement-orientated. The 1887 Allotment Act was an attempt to make a drastic value change that the Cherokees were not yet ready for. As an argument for allotment of land in 1887, Senator Dawes, who would later head the dreaded Dawes Commission, exemplified the white man's blindness to the advantages that existed in a society in which personal achievement was minimized. He said,

The head chief told us that there was not a family in the whole nation that had not a home of its own. There was not a pauper in that nation, and the nation did not owe a dollar. It built its own capitol, . . . and built its schools and its hospitals. Yet the defect of the system was apparent. They have got as far as they can go, because they own their land in common. It is Henry George's system, and under that there is no enterprise to make your home any better than that of your neighbors. There is no selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization. Till this people will consent to give up their lands, and divide them among their citizens so that each can own the land he cultivates, they will not make much progress.³

³Debo, Waters Run, pp. 21-22.

Yet, contrary to Dawes' theory, the Cherokees did make progress under the communal land system, because it was a stewardship. The ambitious among them were becoming wealthy by using the land allotted them under tribal ownership. If anything, the Cherokee land system prevented the monopoly of land, for when a man died, his sons had to continue to use the land or lose their temporary possession of it. There was no way to hold the land until it increased in value and then sell at an extended profit. Furthermore, as the tribal population increased, the surplus land would go to new families and, eventually, the wealthy would have to make money in other ways than by the use of land. The wealthy would remain wealthy only by individual enterprise and not because of the disenfranchisement of another man's birthright. There would be no paupers because each man would have possessed a home and land by which to feed his family in an agrarian society.

In the Cherokee Nation, as seen by the ambitions of many Cherokees to make money and become important, value orientations were definitely changing as the Nation in Oklahoma emerged and as a slow assimilation of the achievement factor into the society was occurring. Yet, the conflicts produced when the social and economic system of the Nation were precipitated suddenly into an achievement-orientated structure could not be overcome in a short span of time. This lack of time for natural evolution was a contributing factor in the deterioration of the tribal society into lawlessness, poverty, and educational negativism.

With their emerging system of constitutional law and republican form of government, the exploitation that often accompanies unbridled freedom in a virgin land could have been held in check by the economic system that ascribed a stewardship of land to each man. Even the poorest Cherokee could have had manly dignity because he securely possessed his own home and a place in society. Contrast this integrity with the human shame left as a result of a paternalistic welfare system.

Today, within the Cherokee tribe, there still exist the two conflicting values. Those Cherokees who have assimilated their value system into the white man's pattern achieve by learning the English language and gaining education or training in some skill or profession which may conform to Anglo-American economic and social aspirations. The conflict between achievement and ascription orientation can be noted in full blood Cherokee school children who, by their shy actions and apologetic manner, play the ascribed role of a backward minority, no matter what their real ability may be. All the time they play the role, they express aspirations for a life that only achievement can gain for them. The junior high Cherokee boy who never speaks a word in class and expresses his timidity with an uncaring or defiant facade may convey in his English theme the desire to get a good job and buy a red sports car.

Affective neutrality vs. affectivity. The white man's society greatly values the affective neutrality that emphasizes

self-control, working for long-term goals, and evaluating one's alternatives on the basis of consequences.⁴ Oftentimes, to the Cherokees, the white man possessing this foresight seems calculating and deliberate. Although the Cherokees greatly reward patience and tolerance within their society, there are basic differences that place the two cultures in opposition.

The Cherokees are an emotional people with fierce loyalties and even fiercer hatreds. This emotional nature is even further emphasized when pressures are brought to threaten them. The great emotionalism of the people when they have resolved something in contrast to the inhibited silence that is usual when they are around a white man gives the impression that they are acting on impulse, suddenly becoming uncontrollable without provocation. The Cherokees are not so impulsive as that. In truth, though they exhibit astounding powers of reasoning, they will not, however, allow reasoning to interfere with a heart-felt emotion.

For example, as it became more and more evident that the Cherokees would be driven out of the East by force if they did not go willingly, several groups removed to the West, reasoning that they should leave or be obliterated. Yet, the majority of Cherokees with the deep conviction that the East was their homeland forever vowed to fight to the end of life. Some, in light of this conviction, retreated to the hills and today form the group on the Qualla Reservation in North

⁴DeHoyos, p. 12.

Carolina that never left their country. Those who were finally removed were driven to leave in utter helplessness against a far-stronger force. Where the white man weighed consequence against action, the tribal Cherokees plunged headlong with emotional fervor to fight for old beliefs with little regard for the consequences. Had the Cherokees begun their removal when the Old Settlers did, their lot would have been easier. Yet compromise in the face of injustice was unthinkable for most of the Cherokees.

Universalism vs. particularism. Since Indians tend to view the world subjectively rather than objectively, they look upon laws, rules, and principles as something to be applied in a particular case as it arises whereas Anglo-Americans, with their universal view of the world, are more inclined to respond to a given problem according to the laws or principles set down for the good of all.

It has never been the nature of the Indian people to set down in detail the needs of the tribe as a whole. Rather, it has been their tendency to follow symbols, customs, and traditions according to the wisdom of past generations. Complicated leadership qualities and traditions of the greatest value were expressed in terms of particular stories, different figures, color codes and other cultural patterns that were passed on from generation to generation. The concept of tribal leadership, for example, was to establish the general needs of a tribe without specific paths set down to follow. Then, as a

particular need was being solved, the person who knew best how to handle the situation in this particular case was called to be the leader.⁵

Goals were generally achieved through personal invention rather than through rules. Sequoyah, who originated the syllabary, spent years alone in an old shack, alienated from his family and community through their derision and malice. His small daughter was his only colleague and the only linguistic rules he had were those that he invented to apply in this particular case.

Because of this particularized viewpoint, the Cherokees, as legislation, treaties, and laws piled one on another, found it increasingly difficult to remember the current policy or to care about things of so little importance as laws. Furthermore, the Anglo-American most often passed blanket laws covering all Indian tribes without consideration of the particular differences, not only among different tribes, but also within the specific clans or factions in the tribes. Along with the long and confusing policies, the emotional nature of the Indians rebelled at the injustices of some laws and no power short of force could induce them to obey, objectively at least, laws that were designed to destroy them.

During allotment days a good example of this disregard for white man's rules was evidenced. When the Cherokees were

⁵Stan Steiner, The New Indians (New York, 1968), pp. 309, 310.

called in to sign their names for their allotments of land, many refused to put their name on paper, because, in the past, every time they had signed something, they had lost something. Many who did sign under pressure simply returned to their homes and allowed the corrupted leasing companies to squabble over a mass of rules that were too involved for them to bother to understand.

The Cherokees' tendency toward viewing their fellow men subjectively and particularly caused what the white man saw as inconsistencies in the Cherokee judicial system. Rules applied to some when others were exempt. And, in one notable case, the Cherokee militia killed several members of a family simply because everyone knew they were bad, a trial would be too long and involved, and, furthermore, the family had committed so many crimes against so many people that it was senseless to try to find evidence to prove one crime in court. Others could have trials under the legal code, but in this particular case, channels were too costly and too long to follow.

Collectivity orientation vs. self-orientation. When a white man wants to attain a community goal, he calls together a committee or a congress, and together, after much deliberation, the whole group shares responsibility for the political or social decisions made. Yet until the early twentieth century, the Anglo-American had generally not developed the social conscience that caused him to be concerned with the welfare

of others outside his immediate family. His collective behavior was usually directed toward politics, while community welfare was more self-orientated.

In direct contrast, prior to the twentieth century, the Cherokee Nation was collectively-orientated as a communal society, but Cherokee politics were largely orientated toward the individual. Their problems of poverty, illness, the aging, education, and finances were largely solved by the structure of their community. Relatives cared for the ill and aging and put their poor kinfolk to work. They did this because it was a social more that was very strong in their culture. When the syllabary was introduced, those who could read and write taught those who could not. The finances of the tribe were collectively-orientated since money received from the forced sale of land was used for the building of schools and the production of the newspaper.

Yet politics, a more sophisticated function of a culture, remained largely self-orientated despite efforts within the tribe to promote cooperation between groups or factions. In keeping with the emotionalism of the people, a man that was totally committed to a political belief could hardly be moved to compromise. Many times, this failure to compromise or cooperate dealt the Nation much distress. The more the Cherokees fought and argued among themselves, the stronger the position of their enemy became. In some cases, this self-orientation benefited the Cherokees, as in John Ross' determined

fight for a legal treaty to supplant the fraudulent Treaty of New Echota that had destroyed the eastern Cherokee Nation. The Cherokees had been a strong nation when they were in competition with tribes that were as diverse and disorganized as they, but their political diversity was no match for the concerted efforts of frontiersmen and expansionists in Congress. It is evident that the selfish political differences between the two strong factions of the Cherokees caused the great fissures that hampered the Cherokee Nation throughout its existence.

The cultural value of a self-orientated leader is easily traceable to the ancient system of government where the chief (or, earlier, the head-woman) had the ultimate and final decision in all matters. Modern chiefs of the Cherokee Nation were possessors of the same trust from the people. The people trusted that the chief's final decision would be in the best interest of the people. Not only with the Cherokees, but with so many tribes in America, this political individualism and independent action of the head chief brought about great suffering when men of little vision, intelligence, or integrity held the trust and the future of his people in his incompetent hands. So in one respect, the collective spirit of the Cherokees was too great to be compatible with the white man's individualistic economic and welfare system. And, in the political respect, the self-orientated leadership of the Cherokees often made exploitation by the white man easy.

Specificity vs. diffuseness. In a culture where values are orientated toward diffuseness, a person is responsible for his total kinship, and family obligations are unlimited. In the Anglo-American culture "the range of responsibility is quite narrow and includes few people beyond the immediate conjugal family."⁶ When diffuseness is the rule, a man must feel it a privilege and obligation to help his kin. He must be remorseful if he cannot help and is generally required to offer tangible proof of his inability to aid his family, no matter how distant a member they might be. The Cherokee, with his system of values emphasizing diffuseness, may find the white man's culture seemingly ungenerous to relatives and friends. On the contrary, the white man may see the Indian as one foolishly squandering his small resources on some unworthy relative or on too wide a basis to be effective or appreciated. As these two values conflict within the Cherokee tribe, an assimilated Cherokee may suffer from guilt feelings because he cannot support his family when called upon to do so. This familial relationship is one aspect of "Indianness" that is first lost as the Cherokee becomes assimilated.

The conflict between the value system of the Cherokees and the Anglo-American value system is only one of the multitude of obstacles that a Cherokee must overcome if he is to become an assimilated Indian. Because of the closeness of the Cherokees to their culture, many have resented the fact that their value

⁶DeHoyos, p. 12.

system must be discounted in favor of the Anglo-American value system. They have reasoned that just because one culture is dominant over another, this dominance is not conclusive evidence that another culture is superior in every respect to their own. The Cherokee values evolved from the needs of their primitive culture and would have altered successfully to meet the new demands that civilization had placed upon them. Their history indicates a gradual change in values to meet the new physical, political, and social environment, if they had only been allowed to use the tools of assimilation that were already greatly developed in their culture. Yet, the irrational forces that aborted the Cherokees' land base economy, their education in their own language, and their social and legal institutions did so in an untimely debauchery of the basic values of the Cherokees. The reactions of the Cherokees, therefore, could have been nothing more than discouragement, resentment, and a negative retreat from the natural pressures of a society so different from their own. The generations since the debauchery was begun have seen the open resentment dissipate to leave the descendants only confused as to why they can identify neither with their people nor with society as a whole.

Roadblocks to Success

Although through the natural pressures of society, assimilation has been successfully completed in many cases, this writer has found that great difficulty usually accompanies the

processes of assimilation for several reasons. The primary reason established by this writer, for difficulty in assimilation would be a lack of time for the adaptation to take place. Without sufficient time, the natural social pressures cannot blend the two cultures to the satisfaction of either. A second reason for difficulty, usually a result of the primary one, is the lack of education that keeps the vision of a member of either culture too narrow to include anything but the familiar. A third reason for difficulty in assimilation lies in the fear and self-debasement that comes from being in a minority culture, which the minority member feels is being destroyed by the stronger culture. Likewise, the majority culture may fear that the strange ways of the other culture will corrupt what they have established. This stubborn loyalty on the part of both cultures, because of ignorance and fear, freezes the uneducated minority member in the accompanying level of poverty. Often, the minority group is further debilitated by becoming dependent on some kind of welfare program, which, set up to help, does so in the framework of the very culture which the minority member neither understands, trusts, nor is able to operate in.

Thus, assimilation is thwarted and a subculture develops, one which cannot operate successfully within the framework of the larger culture for the reasons mentioned above. Then, because of the poverty of the subculture and the inability of either group to accept the other, the larger society makes the

assumption that their culture is the best and the minority must assimilate into the larger and more powerful culture, leaving behind their strange ways. If a minority member does conform, he finds it easier to be accepted and to succeed financially. He may, however, lose much of his identity in the process.

Among some of the ethnic groups from Europe and Asia, there has been a great amount of assimilation. To mention a few examples, for the sake of contrast, the Jewish, the Italian, the Irish, the Polish, the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Germans have allowed time to erase many lines of demarcation that once separated them socially from the main body of Anglo-Americans. Perhaps because they came from established ideologies that historically have some relation to the Anglo-American heritage of the United States, there were not so many differences to make assimilation as difficult as it was in a culture that was totally unrelated historically and one that had as primitive a background as the Cherokee culture.

The natural pressures of the Anglo-American society could work more easily upon these groups because they had in their backgrounds similar values. The pressures of securing a better job for more pay, giving their children a richer life and better education and moving them socially upward, were embedded in the value systems of these groups. Thus, with such familiar ground on which to work, the natural pressure of marriage into the dominant culture would result in a changing culture for

their posterity. The pressure of ambition, resulting from the knowledge that fulfillment of wishes meant adapting to the economy and the culture of the majority, helped to hasten assimilation. Also, geographic alienation from their homeland and from the structure of the previous society that they themselves had chosen to leave made it easier for some ethnic groups to assimilate.

The social struggle for equality took time to be accomplished, but these ethnic groups have seen prejudice lessen as their groups became more and more capable of securing their rights of equality. As the society of the majority began to accept the less obvious ethnic differences of the minority, these immigrant groups found it easier to adapt and become a part of the mainstream of American life. The minority group embraced the borrowed culture entirely or learned to live in it effectively while retaining their own ethnic differences. Therefore, the Irish national, who came to America as a poor and exploited immigrant, finds that two or three generations later, his posterity is considered American and can be socially and economically on the level with Americans of other ancestry. The new generations may have retained their national culture in part or none at all. They are, nonetheless, part of the "mainstream," whether they exhibit any ethnic differences or not. Once assimilated, their culture differences become interesting instead of dangerous to the major culture and, sometimes, it becomes fashionable for the assimilated and

inbred members of the majority to flaunt their foreign-born ancestry and to calculate with pride the amount of foreign "blood" they have.

In viewing the changed culture and rise from overall poverty of some minority groups who have successfully become assimilated, and in doing so, have adapted or retained their national culture in part, serious questions loom out from that speculation. When so many groups have been assimilated without complete cultural disintegration, why would the Cherokees, who feel the same natural pressures as other groups, fail to enter into the flow of American life? Having had more time than any immigrant group or any slave or exile group, why have the Cherokees found that time is not the answer for them?

The tools with which any different cultural group must work in reorganizing and reconstructing their culture within the framework of another are indispensable. This writer has found that the Cherokees who enter into the Anglo-American culture encounter great difficulty unless they are educated in their own culture, have an educational system with which to pass their culture on, have a written language to use as a basis for communication and education, are able to perform in the dominant economy, maintain the rights and responsibilities for their own welfare, and are free from the helpless fear of being exploited and destroyed without legal redress. Not all of the tools are naturally part of all cultures, for some must be acquired. But, if they are denied entirely to a

large portion of people in a culture, that culture is doomed as far as maintaining any ethnic identity is concerned.

From a survey history of just one tribe of American Indians, it can be readily judged that overwhelming governmental restraint and a highly diverging system of values that is, oftentimes, irreconcilable with Anglo-American ideals, are the main obstacles that the Cherokees have had to contend with in their struggle to assimilate. Even while other minority "problem" groups have made monumental strides in the past decade and have caused such aroused reexaminations of human equality, the paternalistic policy of the government toward the Indians has changed little during the history of the relations between white men and Indians. Such policies have wreaked such havoc on Indian life prior to 1934 that most efforts since then have failed because the Indians have been robbed of the tools they needed to repair their dilapidated world.

The Cherokee Nation, as subject of this paper, cannot serve as an example of the plight of the reservation Indians, who are more fully dominated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and, thereby, kept lacking in tools for assimilation. The Cherokees are atypical for two important reasons. First, the history of the Cherokees reflects a full possession of these tools by the leadership and many of the members of the tribe. Secondly, the Cherokees, by the time the Cherokee Nation had blossomed in the West, had every inclination to adapt to an

economic, political, and social structure harmonious with the inevitable flood of white settlers. Unlike most Indian tribes, they had developed a written language and were refining it continually by means of the printing press. The leadership of the Cherokees, as well as the leaders of other of the Five Civilized Tribes emphasized the importance of education, and many of the tribes, with the Cherokees in the lead, formed an advancing educational system on their own in the young nations of the 1830's. The Cherokees, along with a few other tribes, were not nomadic wanderers like the Apaches, the Cheyennes, and the Sioux. The Cherokees, probably because of their lengthy contact with white men in the East had, long before any attempts to assimilate them, adapted their villages to be permanent "towns" and had established farms and ranches that were individual family enterprises. Before their contact with the white man, individual ambition was not the communal way, but as is evidenced by the wealthy and ambitious Cherokees in Indian Territory between the 1840's and the 1880's, the natural pressures of the white man's economy were quickly becoming a part of life in the Five Civilized Tribes, and the Cherokees remained the most progressive and changing of the tribes. One reason for their fast assimilation could be the mixed blood of their leaders. John Ross was only one-eighth Cherokee and Sequoyah was half Cherokee. White ways were becoming inbred in the blood lines of their posterity, although the desire to keep their "Indianness" remained.

A fact that can well be surmised from a study of the history of the Cherokee Nation is that with their own ability, according to their own culture and based on their own needs, the Cherokees, prior to 1860, were in an advanced state of assimilation. For a time, their ethnic dignity had been restored and, as is the dream of any people, they were seeking a better life. Other tribes, trailing them closely, were the Choctaws, the Chickasaws, the Creeks, and several Eastern tribes. Many other tribes, because of geographic alienation from the white man, were still deeply steeped in their old ways and, had they been left alone, would have taken only a few decades to revise their ways, because the natural pressures of a dominant society affecting the upcoming generations would have been a slow but inevitable path toward an assimilation with tribal dignity still intact. However, gold fever, land lust, the spirit of manifest destiny and the division caused by wars could not afford a people several decades of time. On the contrary, a deep resentment of the white man's culture and a disillusionment with his religious, governmental, and social institutions did occur. The roadblocks to the path of natural assimilation were white man's treachery and broken promises, governmental interference and its subsequent restraint, inequality under the law, and the short-sighted selfishness of some of the Cherokees themselves. Although good intentions marked the surface of every action taken toward the Indians, the real reason for almost every action of the white man toward the Indian prior to 1934 was to take Indian land. Paradoxically,

the greatest wealth of the tribes was the stimulus for their disintegration. Their primary problem was that they stood in the way of the spirit of "manifest destiny" which was accomplished at tremendous costs amounting to the cultural disintegration of hundreds of thousands of human beings and the rape of the fruitfulness of the continent itself.

Therefore, it is not a stubborn clinging to an old way of life that prevents the advancement of the Indian tribes today. Granted, they may wish to cling more tenaciously to their original culture than other groups because huge differences between their culture and the European and Anglo-American cultures exist. However, few peoples, including the Indians, fail to adapt to a new, integrated life when assimilation is a privilege rather than an enforcement. Education in their own language and trust in the honesty of the white man would have done more to bring minority groups like the Indians to a position in their own culture that could be successfully integrated into the dominant culture than all the treaties, laws, and governmental or private programs could ever do. One educated in his own language can objectively view another culture and successfully weave himself into it even when it means learning a new language. He can, without fear, choose to change and modify his own culture or, perhaps, impose on the new culture certain of his values, beliefs, and customs. The uneducated of any nationality, who fail to see life outside their immediate environment, are fearful and over-protective of

their familiar way of life. If this fear is compounded by overt dishonesty in most of the dominant culture, then the road to assimilation is filled with too many obstacles for any but the giants or the snakes to travel. The giants step over the issues of culture because of their ability, talents, and vision. The snakes slither through and avoid any confrontation either with the culture of their people or the culture of the white man; that is to say, they identify with nothing, are satisfied with anything, and, consequently, are the embodiments of life without the spirit. Those who are powerless to assimilate are the deeply spiritual ones who must cling to the only culture they are educated in to retain their spirituality, yet, who are debilitated by having only common ability, common talents, and common vision. Such is the case of many uneducated, unassimilated, full-blood Cherokees in Oklahoma.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE CHEROKEE CULTURE

The Linguistic Uniqueness of Sequoyah's Alphabet

Written languages have a unique charm, a mystery about them, because even the most primitive can be analyzed to reveal the systems of human speech, the intricacies of human thought, and the universal need for an enduring form of self-expression. Written languages are codes which can be deciphered. They are puzzles in which each part is related to another. In all their varieties, they are alike in that they must express universal needs and feelings and, often, must describe objects and actions which are a part of all cultures. Yet even with all this allure, it is difficult to realize that one man could possess the perseverance and determined effort to devise, without example, a written language with all its intricacies in a matter of years rather than centuries. This is especially remarkable when the inventor is known to have been illiterate. Furthermore, it is interesting to observe the change in the character of a people once they had a tool with which to express, to protect, and to elevate themselves. The story of the Cherokee alphabet is unique and improbable; nevertheless, it is true.

One of the realities of the frontier, a white man leaving an Indian woman with child, produced another of the growing number of half-white, half-Cherokee Indian children. Young Sequoyah was the son of a man called Gist or Guess. It is not known whether his father was George Guess, a German trader, or Nathaniel Gist, a soldier and friend of George Washington. The Blair family of Washington, who were related to Nathaniel Gist, considered Sequoyah to be a relative once he had become famous, but a doubt remains as to whom his birth might be attributed. Nevertheless, the father of Sequoyah left Tennessee prior to his son's birth near Fort Loudon, Tennessee, between 1760 and 1770. Some years later the boy and his mother moved to an Indian settlement in Alabama, where he was reared among the more uncultured Cherokees.¹

Sequoyah possessed both mechanical and artistic ability and was a blacksmith and silversmith who made most of his own tools. He was married and had a family when he began in 1809 the written form of the language which would become a syllabary.

An interesting story is told by Cherokees of why Sequoyah began his investigation. Sequoyah could not speak English and even though there were rumors that later on in life he learned to understand the language, this inventor refused to utter an English word as long as he lived. Yet, paradoxically, it was

¹Charles Banks Wilson, "My Search for the Real Sequoyah," Oklahoma Orbit, The Magazine of the Sunday Oklahoman, VI (September 5, 1965), 4.

his inability to understand English that prompted his first endeavors at written Cherokee.

Sequoyah traded his hand-wrought tools and jewelry with the frontier tradesmen, who fascinated this inquisitive thinker by entering marks upon white leaves. These marks seemed of great value to the white man because he carefully recorded and kept them. Occasionally, the man would send the leaves to another white man and the leaves would talk to the second man, telling him exactly what the first man had wanted to say. These "talking leaves" seemed to possess a strange power to communicate.²

In his analytical mind, Sequoyah determined that the marks were not super natural as some supposed, but merely pictures of what was said. He failed to recognize the sound-symbol relationship and set about to produce a drawing for every Cherokee word. His drawings numbered close to one thousand when a discouraging, but ironically fortunate incident occurred.

Sequoyah's wife had become dissatisfied with his neglect of their home and farm. The children were nearly grown, but still the management of the farm needed a man's hand. Sequoyah had become so absorbed in his work that he rarely came out of the small cabin he had built apart from the rest of the house. He spent most of his waking hours marking on pieces of bark or scraps of paper with charcoal lines that made strange configurations. So completely obsessed was he by this strange

²Grant Foreman, Sequoyah (Norman, Oklahoma, 1938), p. 6.

compulsion that it was rumored around the neighborhood that Sequoyah was under the spell of evil spirits and that his markings were the work of the devil. Likewise, Sequoyah's wife suspected the same and felt bitter because he was bringing the condemnation of the tribe upon his family. She continually pleaded with her husband to forsake this strange work. Gaining nothing from her pleas, she arranged for her husband's cabin and its contents to be burned while he was away trading one day. Thus, over two years' work on picture drawings was completely destroyed.³ Beset with discouragement and condemnation, Sequoyah, nevertheless, began his work again. Yet, this time he began in a new direction.

He had suspected long before the fire that his picture drawings were futile, but the destructive flames were the final evidence to bring this path to a halt. Faced with the awesome task of recreating the pictures, Sequoyah found it much easier to follow a new path when he did not have to personally cast away the fruits of two years' labor as being useless.

How he came upon the idea of sound symbols is unknown. Linguists could speculate limitlessly on this aspect of his invention. Whether he was informed by someone of the sound-symbol relationship in writing or whether he figured it out by looking at an English primer or whether he invented the system through his own analytical and systematic thought processes, the fact remains that, quite without formal guidance,

³Wilson, p. 4.

he devised a syllabary of two-hundred sound symbols during the next few years following the destruction of his pictures. However, he was not satisfied with the complexity of the syllabary and worked for several more years after this first syllabary was evolved. After a total of twelve years, Sequoyah successfully reduced his syllabary to eighty-five sound symbols representing the combining syllables of all Cherokee words.

Because he kept no notes on his trial and error experiments, Sequoyah's methods for revision are unknown. He had access to an English primer from which he copied designs in the form of English and Greek letters. His knowledge of either English or Greek was evidently nil as shown by his uninhibited use of letters to represent sounds in Cherokee that had absolutely no relationship to the sound they represented in English or Greek. For example, the Greek theta was used to represent the Cherokee sound syllable na (See Appendix B, p. 99). The symbols found in the primer were merely convenient to copy. The likeness of some of his letters to English letters, sometimes inverted, was a source of much derision from Cherokees who were educated in the English language. Without being informed of Sequoyah's system, they thought his alphabet looked like a madman's attempt to imitate the English alphabet.

It is part of the Sequoyah legend that even after development of the final syllabary, he was still derided, persecuted, and, at one time, tried for his life for dealing in black magic. His

execution was postponed, however, until he could teach his alphabet to his accusers.⁴

Sequoyah took a second wife in 1815, and it is not clear whether the separation from his first wife was by her death or by his choice. The second wife was more inclined to accept his strange actions, but never actively participated in his work. They moved to Arkansas in 1822.⁵

Sequoyah's only colleague during his work was his small daughter. She was the first beside Sequoyah himself to learn the alphabet and to be able to write Cherokee. The child was also part of Sequoyah's first recorded demonstration of written Cherokee. All the head men of the tribe in the area where Sequoyah lived were invited to a demonstration and gathered to see once and for all if this man were mad or if there was something to his "talking leaves." The child left the room and Sequoyah sent the same written message to her that he had spoken to the headmen. Upon receiving it, she read the message which corresponded verbatim to Sequoyah's spoken message. A protest that some prearrangement had been made caused Sequoyah to write the messages that those present quietly began to dictate to him. Exactly and with great ease from another room, the girl repeated what they had said after she read it in Cherokee.

So great was the amazement that such a thing could happen that the headmen demanded they, too, be taught immediately.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Refusing the charcoal and bark that Sequoyah provided for their practice, the men took out hunting knives, and their first lessons were carved on the tabletop. Of course, some progressed more rapidly than others, but the system was not hard at all for those who spoke the language. However, those Cherokees who were educated in the white man's school found the syllabary very difficult because letters in it had the same form as some English letters. There was no connection between the two different sounds represented by the one letter, so the acquisition was hampered by a knowledge of English. To the delight of the "ignorant" Cherokees, their educated brothers experienced great frustration during the learning process.

After this, Sequoyah traveled about for several months teaching the language to all who wanted to learn. The acquisition of the written language became a family and community affair in many cases. Cherokees took every opportunity to write, and it was not uncommon to see trees alongside the road with Cherokee words carved in them. The more illiterate the Cherokee, oftentimes, the greater was his desire to acquire the language.

In 1824 Sequoyah received an invitation to journey eastward from his Alabama home to North Carolina and teach the syllabary to Cherokees there. It was officially adopted by the Cherokee Council in 1824. By 1826, the Missionary Herald, a newspaper published by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, commented that this new alphabet was

"likely to exert [sic] considerable influence on the national intelligence."⁶ In 1828 the paper reported an interview with George Guess through an interpreter. Guess, the English name that Sequoyah used, said that his reason for developing the alphabet was to preserve ideas on paper to keep them from being forever lost to mankind. He remarked that putting ideas and words on paper was like "catching a wild animal and taming it."⁷

In 1829 Sequoyah moved with his family from Arkansas over into the Skin Bayou District, Indian Territory.⁸ He became, because of this early removal, one of the Old Settlers, or the Western Cherokees. Through the stormy years of the infant Cherokee Nation, Sequoyah took very little part. However, in 1839 he led the Western Cherokees in the endeavor to reunite the tribe under a new government. As president of the convention, he signed his name to the Act of Union, a document coming from that meeting. In 1842 Sequoyah, at the age of eighty, journeyed into Mexico to try to find a colony of Cherokees who had migrated there and to persuade them to return with him to Indian Territory. His plans were never carried out because he became ill and died, reportedly being buried in San Fernando in 1843 in Mexico.⁹

⁶Missionary Herald, February, 1826, p. 48.

⁷Ibid., pp. 133-134. ⁸Wilson, p. 4.

⁹Foreman, Five Civilized Tribes, p. 372.

When Sequoyah did not return within several years, a group was sent to locate him. Upon meeting the returning party on the Red River, the Cherokee leader sent a message to the Cherokee agent, P. M. Butler, to notify the people of Sequoyah's death. Recently, modern Cherokee searchers have been looking for the gravesite of Sequoyah, but an older Cherokee, while posing for a portrait of Sequoyah for the Oklahoma State Capitol, told the artist, Charles Banks Wilson, "No man could do for us what Sequoyah did unless sent by God to do it. When he was finished, God took him back. They won't find our Sequoyah in Mexico."¹⁰

A Brief Description of the Language

The interest of white scholars in the Cherokee alphabet was strongly manifested as news of the syllabary spread from Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina to the attention of missionaries and linguists in the upper Eastern states and foreign countries. The interest of many such men culminated in attempts by them to study and record what they could of the Cherokee language (See Appendix C, p. 100). Their reasons for studying the language varied from religious or political interest in the people, to appreciation of the Cherokee accomplishments, to intellectual curiosity about the structure of the language. Their descriptions were often incomplete or failed to reveal pertinent relationships in the language, because cases and paradigms were "formed on traditional models,

¹⁰Wilson, p. 9.

and the phonetics of the language accommodated to a virtually inflexible Latin alphabet."¹¹ Other men, instead of writing about the language, devoted their time to producing works written and printed in Cherokee, which served a purpose similar to the written descriptions of Cherokee in that the printing stabilized the oral language.

Early work in Cherokee. The first printers in Cherokee helped to stabilize the language and, through the material they produced, linguists were able to begin rudimentary examinations of Cherokee. It was only nine years from the introduction of the eighty-five symbol syllabary in 1819 that printing began. Between 1828 and 1835 the press of the eastern Cherokee Nation published a weekly newspaper, The Cherokee Phoenix, in English and Cherokee.¹² Elias Boudinot, later to be murdered for his part in the destructive Treaty of New Echota, was the Indian editor of the paper. Boudinot was a Cherokee educated in a mission school who worked closely with the Reverend Samuel Worchester, a political and educational crusader for the Cherokees.¹³ Worchester rendered Cherokee into as complete a grammar as his linguistic ability and Boudinot's assistance

¹¹H. C. von der Gabelentz, "Kurze Grammatik der Tscherokesischen Sprache," translated by John R. Krueger, Anthropological Linguistics, V (1963), 1.

¹²John K. White, "On the Revival of Printing in the Cherokee Language," Current Anthropology, III (December, 1962), 511.

¹³Grant Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes (Norman, Oklahoma, 1934), p. 293.

would allow. The grammar was not definitive by any means, but was beneficial to Worcester in his continued publication of Cherokee materials. Later in the Indian Territory, Boudinot and Worcester worked on the translation of the Gospels until Boudinot's death in 1839. Boudinot also published a prose selection, Poor Sarah or the Indian Woman, in 1833.¹⁴

Also printed on the press at New Echota, the Cherokees' eastern capital, were

a number of portions of the Bible, copies of the laws passed by the National Council, various political pamphlets, four editions of a Cherokee Hymn Book, temperance tracts, and religious documents. Copies of correspondence between the Cherokee nation and the United States Government were always printed in the newspaper. Thus, the Cherokees were kept informed of current affairs to a degree not often found in that day and age.¹⁵

This period was the great upheaval time in the Nation when the United States Government was trying to force the Cherokees to emigrate to the West. The valuable function of the press at that time is readily apparent.

In 1830 John R. Pickering began publishing papers entitled A Grammar of the Cherokee Language. His papers were discontinued after four appeared, because he felt his informant was deficient in his knowledge of the language. From a reading of Pickering's papers, one tends to feel that, perhaps, it was Pickering's own unyielding grammatical framework that bogged

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵White, p. 511.

down the language analysis, rather than or along with the incompetency of his informant. Nevertheless, this publication and another general work on languages of the North American Indians by this same American grammarian opened the door for further inquiries by later linguists.¹⁶

Between 1835 and 1861, the Cherokee press in western Cherokee country printed 13,980,000 pages of "books, tracts, pamphlets, and passages from the Bible."¹⁷ Part of this extensive publication came from another national newspaper set up in 1843 and entitled the Cherokee Advocate. This paper was discontinued in 1853 due to a lack of funds, but was resumed in 1870 and published with slight interruptions until 1906.¹⁸ With the re-establishment of this national press in 1843 in Indian Territory, Cherokee literature flourished as did the people before the Civil War.

An annual Almanac was published for many years in English and Cherokee. The Cherokee Messenger, a bi-monthly religious magazine, was printed, as well as numerous tracts, primers, spelling books, arithmetics, Bible passages, a complete New Testament, hymn books, and other miscellaneous publications. The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation were printed in various editions. Resolutions of the National Council, messages of the Chiefs, even current acts of the legislative council were printed and promptly circulated among the people. As a result, the Cherokees became better informed of their laws and actions of their public servants than members of any other Indian tribe.¹⁹

¹⁶ von der Gabelentz, p. 2.

¹⁷ White, "On the Revival of Printing," p. 511.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 511-512.

It was in the middle of this period of flourishing, around 1850, that a German linguist, H. C. von der Gabelentz, wrote his "Kurze Grammatik der Tscherokesischen Sprache." Von der Gabelentz, according to one source, knew eighty languages and could speak thirty of them fluently. He published material on a wide variety of languages, but made no travels or expeditions. His knowledge came from published materials, and in the case of Cherokee, from Bible translations and copies of Cherokee newspapers.²⁰ Gabelentz felt that Cherokee was especially deserving of study over all the other Indian languages because "it is spoken by a people which has rapidly absorbed the advantages of European culture, raised its tongue to a written language, and has printed books and newspapers in a not inconsiderable quantity."²¹

Yet, when the Civil War broke out in 1861, this flowering nation wilted as warring factions, killings, and destruction caused all progress to cease. Although the capital at Tahlequah was burned, the national press was saved and in five years began once again to print the Cherokee Advocate. Accompanying the re-introduction of the press, the Nation began a revision of the school system to include bi-lingual education, and work started on a series of textbooks in the Cherokee language.²²

²⁰John R. Krueger, "Two Early Grammars of Cherokee," Anthropological Linguistics, V (March, 1963), 2.

²¹von der Gabelentz, p. 3.

²²White, "On the Revival of Printing," p. 512.

With all this fervor and ambition toward improving their nation, the plight of the Cherokees in the last half of the nineteenth century can only be termed pathetic. Their pride, their culture, and their language were destroyed by the overpowering spirit of "manifest destiny." It is easily realized why the last publication of the Cherokee Advocate, one of the voices that had distinguished the Cherokees, preceded Oklahoma statehood by only a few months. After 1907, the Cherokee Nation, despite its physical presence, no longer existed.

Nevertheless, from this relatively brief foray into printing, several important benefits to the Cherokees are revealed. (1) Culturally speaking, a large class of literate citizens was produced, many without a day of formal schooling and others with college degrees. (2) A functional literature in the form of political and religious pamphlets, governmental documents, an almanac, and Bible translations emerged. (3) A small amount of prose in short story form was also initiated. (4) Many Cherokee citizens became acquainted with the English language, because many works, especially the newspapers, were bi-lingual. Yet considering the trend of events that culminated in the destruction of the language as a functional institution of Cherokee society, the large amount of printing had one supreme historical and linguistic benefit. That is, (5) the widespread interest in Cherokee printing, at the time it flourished, led to the grammatical analysis of the language by men such as Worcester, Pickering, and Gabelentz.

These works have preserved the early forms of the language and are as important to a modern study of Cherokee as the Old English works of Bede or Beowulf are to English scholars. The relatively large amount of printing and these early works on Cherokee grammar may likely form the backbone of future studies and publications in Cherokee. Like ghosts from the past, these early works may possibly lure the modern Cherokee into a study of his heritage and thus give him the identity he may lack in Anglo-American society.

An adapted grammar of Cherokee. To illustrate the complexity with which an early publisher, translator, or linguist had to contend as he tracked the elusive Cherokee language, the work of Pickering, A Grammar of the Cherokee Language, was used by this writer as a basic text in an adapted description of selected parts of Cherokee grammar. The description is in no way complete, nor is it verified by any modern study of Cherokee. It is merely based on the description of Cherokee that Pickering awkwardly tried to fit into traditional grammar. Thus, this adaptation of his grammar can claim only to be somewhat less confusing to the modern reader in the way it is formulated. The correctness of the word forms and structures used are entirely dependent on the correctness of the same in Pickering's original publication.

The sounds which compose the Cherokee language are present in English with minor exceptions. The deeply melodic and

rhythmic language achieves those qualities through the song-like vowel ending of each syllable. Hence, the roundness and smoothness of do, re, mi is echoed in Cherokee do, ge, mi, which are spelling approximations of symbols in the syllabary.

By using the reproduction of the Cherokee syllabary as seen in Appendix B, p. 99, the following phonetic description may be noted.

Cherokee has six vowels: a, e, i, o, u, y. The following words indicate the comparable sounds of the vowels in English and French:

a as in father
e as in where
i as in antique
o as in bought
u as in rule
y as in hunger, or as in French, un.

There are fifteen consonant sounds: g, k, h, l, m, n(hn), qu, s, d, t, dl, tl, ts, w, y.

G is pronounced hard, almost like k; before e, i, o, u and y sometimes quite like k.

D is a sound midway between d and t; sometimes before o, u and y the pure sound of t.

Tl before e, i, o, u and y is sometimes pronounced as dl; likewise ts as ds, which are usually rendered ch and dg, but so closely as to hardly be distinguishable. L sometimes sounds like hl.

The pronunciation of the remaining consonants is as in English.²³

One of the difficulties that prevented Cherokee from being easily set down in a permanent grammar is that the Cherokee language cannot be described with the terms used by grammarians for their traditional descriptions of English. Whereas English phrases are made up of words that can stand alone as independent units, the Cherokee noun or verb phrases are usually one word made up of inseparable parts. These inseparable parts, which have meaning, but are not considered words, can be labeled linguistically as morphemes. Because of the great number of morphemes in Cherokee phrases, the language defies attempts to structure it with the traditional subject-verb-complement relationship of English. Perhaps a brief examination of sentence patterns and the noun phrase in Cherokee can illustrate the complexity that the whole language involves.

Sentence Patterns. Cherokee does not fall into the relationships expressed by English sentences, because Cherokee does not have many of the basic elements of English existing in a form that would allow similar rules for analysis. For example, person, whether it be possessive, nominative, or objective, is determined in Cherokee by morphemes added to

²³John R. Pickering, "A Grammar of the Cherokee Language" (1831), Boston, reprinted in Anthropological Linguistics, V (1963), 1.

the noun or verb. So, to write my house in Cherokee, one would have only one word. Likewise, to write I wrestle, only one word is needed. A Cherokee sentence pattern for I will wrestle an alligator Saturday /N¹ V N² (adv)/ would be alligator I wrestle Saturday with the person and verb as one word. Thus, the pattern would be /N² N¹+V (adv)/. The use of the transitive verb usually produces that sentence pattern with the object of the action of the verb being placed at the beginning of the sentence in the first N slot. Thus the syntax of some common sentences would be as the following:

Somebody/ you are looking for
 Clock/ somewhere/ I have lost
 15 money/ I want
 Snow/ It will/ tomorrow

In sentences with a Be verb, the same order for nouns is followed as in English, but the difference is in the verb. For example, The hummingbird is a fast flyer /N¹ Be (adj) N¹/ in Cherokee becomes hummingbird fast flyer, or /N¹ (adj) N¹+Be/. In other words, the Be verb form seems to be lacking in Cherokee, but it is present in a Be morpheme that attaches to the noun that renames the subject. That morpheme in Cherokee is phonetically written hi.

The determiners in Cherokee are the numbers, cardinal and ordinal, with squo (one) functioning as a number and also in a similar way as one in the English form one day, i.e. some day. Hiah means this and these; pagi or na means that or those. When determiners in Cherokee are used with

plural nouns, they do not change from the form that is used with the singular nouns. They are, however, translated to agree with the noun. Thus, to make the plural of hi-ah tsa-tv-lv meaning this mountain, one would say hi-ah tsi-tsa-tv-lv meaning these mountains.²⁴

The plural morpheme added to the noun is the only indication of the change in number. The formation of plural nouns will be discussed in more detail later.

Nouns. The two general classes of nouns are (1) ones which designate animated beings and (2) ones which cover all inanimate objects. Morphemic additions to "the nouns and verbs are made with reference to this fundamental distinction."²⁵ There are no generic names for beasts or birds, although there is a generic name for fish, but one that never expresses sex. There is one general generic name which "nearly corresponds to the English word animal, and includes all the animal creation except man."²⁶

The gender of a noun in Cherokee is denoted by a word for male or female, but this word must be considered to be a morpheme since it is never used alone and has no meaning unless used with a noun. The words for woman and man (the gender of persons) are, respectively, a-ge-hv-v and as-ka-ya and these may stand alone. However, the word used to denote female and male

²⁴Xrueger, p. 33.

²⁵Ibid., p. 34.

²⁶Ibid., p. 35.

animals are morphemic and cannot be used if detached from the species name. The words are a-gi-si and a-tsv. For example, si-kwa a-tsv (a male hog, or boar) and si-kwa a-gi-si (a female hog, or sow) demonstrate the usage of these gender morphemes. There are some exceptions in which general names are given to a sex within a species and the female-male animal morphemes are not used. In this case, the exact meaning is always made known by the context. Inanimate objects, unlike many Latin languages, carry no gender.²⁷

Plural nouns are formed by the addition of a plural morpheme to the singular form of the noun, to its accompanying adjective, or, in some cases, to both the adjective and the singular noun. In the Cherokee noun phrase, the adjective usually, but not always, precedes the noun. The plural morphemes are t, te, ti, ts, ani and uni. These may be resolved into four: t, ts, ani and uni; the vowel phonemes e and i in the other two being added for euphony. The two morphemes ani and uni are used almost exclusively for the animate class of nouns, while the others are used for the inanimate class. This rule is not without variation, however. Names of certain kinds of vegetation may be either always singular (pumpkin) or always plural (peas).²⁸

Pronouns. There are some pronouns used as separate words in Cherokee, but the meaning we usually denote as a pronoun

²⁷Ibid., p. 34.

²⁸Ibid., p. 35.

is most often attached to a noun or a verb as a morpheme. The "inseparable pronouns" that Pickering discussed could be better classified as morphemes because of the necessity of varying or declining them in order to describe their use. The morphemes are always combined with the noun or verb to denote whether the noun belongs to one person, to two people, or to many people. It denotes whether there is one person, two people, or many doing the action of the verb or existing as the object of the action of the verb. These "inseparable pronouns" shall hereafter be referred to by a more accurate name---"person morphemes." Their number shall be indicated by the terms singular, dual, and plural.

Some of the changing morphemes carry one more meaning in addition to number. This meaning denotes whether the person in question is present or absent. These two meanings shall be represented by the words here and there. Appendix D indicates the declension of the person morphemes that attach to Cherokee nouns and verbs.

When placed with a verb, the person morpheme indicates the person of the noun, whether or not the subject noun is named. Therefore, a sentence might read Charlie/ he came. If the subject noun is not named, then the person morpheme is the only indication of what the subject might be.

When a person morpheme is combined with a noun to indicate possession by a pronoun (my, our, their), the morpheme is the only indication of person. For example, kiniwaka means our cow

(belonging to you and me), whereas akiniwaka means our cow (belonging to him and me).

If a noun is modified by another proper or common noun in the adjective position, such as Adam's or man's, then a form derived from the third person morpheme (singular, dual, or plural, as needed) combines with the noun being modified. The proper or common noun acting as modifier comes in the first position of the noun phrase and does not have a morpheme attached to it. To illustrate this, two nouns are considered. A man, awinv, has a son, we-tsi. So to write a man's son, one must render the phrase thus: a man/ his son or awinv uwetsi.²⁹

Another way to indicate possession by a proper or common noun is to place that noun in the objective case in the sense of the English prepositional phrase of + N. For example, instead of saying a man's son, one could indicate the same relationship by saying the son of a man. One way to indicate this relationship is to use a form of the word utseli after the noun. So to say the canoe (tsi-yu) of ours, one must use a form of utseli that corresponds with the correct number of persons, tsi-yu kinutseli, meaning the canoe of you and me. When the person changes, so does the form of utseli, as shown by Appendix E. Furthermore, if one wishes to indicate that the person is in possession of more than one object, the plural

²⁹Ibid., p. 40.

morpheme t, ts, ani or uni must prefix the already joined person morpheme and utseli. In this case of N + Adj (adjective being the prepositional phrase), the N remains in the singular form even though it must be translated as plural. The plural sense is carried by the addition of the plural morpheme to the adjective, which is one of the variations permissible as indicated in the discussion of the plural morpheme on page 81.

If the meaning of the form of utseli is not clear, that is, if it is not clear exactly who of his refers to, then the proper or common noun can be used, but utseli must be retained to show this prepositional phrase pattern. For example, to indicate the chief of the soldiers, instead of the chief of them, the noun in the objective case (soldiers) would precede the utseli form. Literally, one says chief/soldiers/of them. Chief is a singular noun, soldier is a singular noun, and utseli carries the plural as well as the objective sense of the phrase.

Example: chief/those soldier/ one possession (tuna)
of them (utseli)
Ukvwiyuhi/na aniyawiski/tunatseli

The last slot of this NP pattern may be analyzed by reference to Appendix E.

The Role of Language in Assimilation

The inherent power of a written national language to produce confidence, progress, and cultural continuity during a social upheaval is evidenced by looking at the comparative events between the cultural history of the Cherokees and the history of their written language. From its stormy beginning, through its courageous struggle for survival, to its tragic dwindling away, the Cherokee written language sustained the morale and pride of a people and played an important role in binding up the wounds a young nation suffered at the hands of persecution, expulsion, and war. When the cultural unity of the Cherokees was completely destroyed over years of legislation that eroded the structures of their society, the written language followed other of its cultural counterparts underground. And there they remained, alive, waiting for the time when life would once again center around a pride in the Cherokee heritage.

Since the written language played an obvious role in the history of cultural elevation among the Cherokees, it is reasonable to judge that in the right situation, literacy in Cherokee could once again be of great benefit to the Cherokee people. The right situation could exist only if those working with the Cherokees in administrative positions can rid themselves of what appears to this writer as wrong assumptions that have formed the basis for the aborted assimilation of most full bloods in the past.

These assumptions have been a part of most work done with the Indians up to the 1934 reorganization of the Indian Bureau and still exist in fact, if not in theory, in the administration of most programs dealing with the Indians. It is assumed that because the Indians are in a minority group, because they are poor, and because they are uneducated and generally ill-equipped to "assimilate" into the "mainstream of American life," they must be encouraged, cajoled, or, if all else fails, simply pressured into schools, training, and experiences that will equip them for the world outside their society. Sociologists have gathered information, purported theories, and exercised them on the hapless occupants of reservations and backwoods Indian communities in America. At times, there have been many theorists and idealists working concertedly on one group of Indian guinea pigs. Though expressing views against paternalism since its revamping, the Bureau of Indian Affairs remains basically the same in its action toward the Indians.

Previous to 1960, the open, considered opinion, it seemed, of anyone connected with the Indians was that "we must do something for the unfortunate state that the Indian is in." With each new presidential election, lip service is given to the same humanitarian idea.

The assumptions on which this "do-something-for" attitude has been based are basically wrong for practically every tribe. It is falsely assumed that (1) the Cherokees had to be quickly

and totally assimilated for their own good, (2) they were incapable of achieving assimilation on their own, and (3) broad generalized programs and experiments of the Bureau of Indian Affairs should be applied to Indians as a whole.

Although much has been written recently to the contrary by Cherokees and other Indians, and although governmental agencies dealing with Indians have paid lip-service to the contrary for several years, these wrong assumptions still operate to a great extent in governmental policies and in individual thinking regarding the Indian minority.

From a survey of the history of the Cherokees, it has been demonstrated that the first assumption was not only wrong but that quick "assimilation" was a disguise on the part of many American citizens and governmental officials to bring about a wholesale "land grab" for the benefit of the white Anglo-Americans alone. Furthermore, this "assimilation" that discounted the Cherokees' own cultural and spiritual background, instead of bringing the Indians into the "mainstream," actually negated most of the steps toward assimilation that the Cherokees had made in over eighty years as a literate people. Assimilation to the white man simply meant a complete change with total disregard of tribal government and culture.

The second assumption is reflected in the first. To determine that the Cherokees were incapable of achieving "assimilation" on their own is to deny the vast strides that they made during

a brief sojourn in self-government, self-education, and self-assimilation. Granted that it was an economic necessity to absorb some of the cultural values of the Anglo-Americans, it was wrong to assume that Cherokee values, social mores, and institutions absolutely could not exist within the larger framework of society.

Albert H. Kneale, an Indian agent for many years, remarked that the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the policies it follows demonstrate little consideration for the vast differences between tribes "in mental capabilities, in ways of making a living, in religion, in ways of thinking, and in natural physical surroundings."³⁰ To judge all tribes as incompetent because of the backwardness of some is the destructive generalization that stood in the way of the Cherokees achieving assimilation on their own terms. Programs and projects of the Bureau of Indian Affairs today still tend to generalize their work too much to cope with tribal and inter-tribal differences. These wrong assumptions have served only to counteract any culture-elevating processes that literacy and public education had begun among the Cherokees.

Besides questioning the commonly held idea that the way to solve America's racial and ethnic problems is to "assimilate" all cultures into one, a study of the Cherokees corroborates the thinking that a people's educational negativism is a result

³⁰A. H. Kneale, "We, the People . . .," Indians at Work, Office of Indian Affairs, No. 14 (Washington, 1934), p. 16.

of the loss of educational institutions that are acceptable to the people and provide for a continuation of their culture. A large majority of the over twenty-one thousand³¹ Cherokee inhabitants of eastern Oklahoma could be termed functional illiterates. Their schooling may have gone on for several years, but the basic skills of reading and writing are not developed to a degree that will allow a complete acquisition of Anglo-American culture. Although a huge amount of money is directed into educational programs for all Indians (\$263 million in 1969³²), the Cherokees have some of the poorest schools in the country.

Reasons for this educational negativism come from various sources but each usually points in the same direction. These reasons fall in the following general categories: (1) English instruction vs. bi-lingual instruction in the classroom, (2) the conflict between Anglo-American culture and Indian culture, (3) identity crises on the part of the Cherokees themselves.

Evelyn Bauer states that since the middle of the last century, Indian children of all different tribal groups with diverse cultures and languages have been instructed in school in English. Until recently, the efforts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in English instruction have not been entirely successful, if one judges the achievement of Indian students

³¹Albert L. Wahrhaftig, "The Tribal Cherokee Population of Eastern Oklahoma," Current Anthropology, IX (December, 1968), 517.

³²Commissions of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, Bureau of Indian Affairs (1968), p. 6.

on the basis of comparison with academic achievement for non-Indian students in the United States.

On all standardized tests, the Indian children seem to rank low and fall behind progressively as the child finishes school. Yet, with a basis of non-verbal, culture-free intelligence quotient tests, their performance is on par with non-Indian students.³³

A. D. Fisher supplements Bauer's statements with results from the California Achievement Test which indicated that young Indians start out ahead of their white peers, but then gradually trail off in achievement usually by the fifth or sixth grade.³⁴ Because what the Indian child learns at home often differs widely from what he learns at school, he is many times forced to separate the two learning experiences. A "successful" Indian once said:

I have to think about some things in my own language and some things in English. Well, for instance, if I think about horses, or about the Sun Dance, or about my brother-in-law, I have to think in my own language. If I think about buying a pickup truck or selling some beef or my son's grades in school I have to think in English.³⁵

The two languages are kept completely separate. One is used for thinking of basic cultural elements while the other

³³Evelyn Bauer, "Teaching English to North American Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools," The Linguistic Reporter, X (August, 1968), 1.

³⁴A. D. Fisher, "White Rites Versus Indian Rights," Transaction, VII (November, 1969), 32.

³⁵Ibid.

is for Anglo-related functions. The English-speaking schools have been and remain inappropriate to the Indian student because of the wide diversity in his thinking.³⁶ He must communicate information of vital importance in a language in which he cannot think rapidly. This problem by itself inhibits the bi-lingual speaker.

Yet the problem is not isolated, for another looms just as large. This is the inability of the teacher of bi-lingual students to organize ideas and deliver them in a way not offensive to the culture of the frustrated bi-lingual speaker. The problem of language-learning for bi-lingual speakers is a matter for study by linguists and researchers, but this problem of cultural response can be solved in the classroom by a sensitive, professional teacher.

To deal with the cultural conflicts in the classroom, any bi-lingual teacher must enhance intra-personal communication with students to achieve the following goals: (1) development of a sense of individual worth, (2) development of a sense of cultural pride, (3) awareness of aptitudes and interest, (4) and awareness of student aspirations.³⁷

Many people, such as A. Bruce Gaarder, Chief of the Disadvantaged Youth Section, United States Office of Education, feels that little distinction is to be made between the linguistic

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Barbara Brillhart, "Oral Communications for the Indian Student," English Journal, LX (May, 1971), 630-631.

problem and the cultural frustration. Gaarder feels there are important cultural reasons for adding the mother tongue as a teaching medium. The reasons are to (1) avoid or lessen scholastic retardation in children whose mother tongue is different from the language of the school, (2) strengthen the bond between school and home, (3) avoid alienation from the family and linguistic community that is the common price of rejection of one's mother tongue and complete assimilation into the dominant group, and (4) develop strong literacy in the mother tongue in order to make it a strong asset in adult life.

Gaarder makes the point that English spelling being what it is, it is much easier for a child to learn to read an Indian language with a scientifically developed phonemic alphabet than to learn to read in English. The student would, in fact, have an advantage even over the native speaker learning to read English.

Gaarder remarks, "There is little doubt that the use of sound techniques for teaching English as a second language has upgraded the quality and results of language teaching in our schools." All the results are not known yet but, based on experiences in countries around the world and the feelings of those working closely with non-English speaking students, using English as the medium for teaching non-English speaking children, at least in the early years of schooling, has caused academic retardation in most cases.³⁸

³⁸Bruce Gaarder, "Organization of the Bilingual School," Journal of Social Issues, XXIII (1967), 110.

An identity crisis is imminent when the connection between a child's home environment, his first identification of himself, and the identity to which he aspires in school is not clearly evident to him. Even though Cherokee children are no longer scourged for speaking Cherokee in Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools, there are very few attempts to give a Cherokee child, as Gaarder suggests, a strong literacy in his mother tongue so that the language might be a means of acquiring not only the English language but knowledge in other disciplines. An inept knowledge of Cherokee precludes any gain of knowledge by reading until the second language of English is learned.

As an Indian child identifies with his old ways from the start, Anglo-American values are often in direct conflict. The Cherokees value cooperation over competition; hence an Indian child might actually try not to "appear better" than his classmates. Success for the tribe is never unpopular, although it may not always be the typical middle-class American concept of success. However, the Anglo-American type of personal success is never very popular among full bloods.³⁹ When the child's identity with his concept of achievement is threatened by an insistence to accomplish, a crisis occurs. In schools where education is compulsory, a student often reveals his negative response by becoming a trouble-maker in order that he may be "kicked out" and delay this crisis which

³⁹William Brandon, "Indians Today," The American Heritage Book of the American Indians, edited by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. (New York, 1961), p. 410.

he must inevitably face because of the conflict in cultural values.

Schools for instructing Indians, Cherokees included, must change before the uneducated Indians can ever overcome the negative aspect of gaining an education. Although many theories have been tried on the Cherokees since their negativism has become a problem, everything from a forced silencing of their language in schools to a displacement of them into a large city, the Cherokees themselves are the ones who can truthfully give the answers.

Their answer has been that obstacles in the way of the re-establishment of tribal institutions must be removed. One of the first priorities is related to the dissemination of their native language.

In 1962 a group from the University of Chicago with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation came to study the Cherokee settlements in poverty-stricken eastern Oklahoma. The one inroad they found to be most acceptable to the wary and skeptical Cherokees was an emphasis by the project on the native language. The group helped to set up a Cherokee-English newspaper, they published a primer which instructed natives in their language by a picture vocabulary, and they helped the Cherokees set up a weekly radio program delivered completely in Cherokee. Although the project lasted for only five years, vestiges of their efforts existed for several years and their

influence continues today in the learning of Cherokee by
Cherokees.⁴⁰

Because of the interest generated by these researchers and workers in the language, classes in Cherokee began to spring up. Usually they were part of a Cherokee Baptist church, but much of the instruction occurred in the home and in small individual groups led by one instructor. Several Cherokee-English short stories were published. Frequently, the stories dealt with cultural conflict situations.

One class of full bloods, half breeds, whites of Cherokee descent, and interested persons of any descent has met regularly since 1968 as a part of the Tulsa City-County Library program called Fride in Heritage. The number in the class ebbs and flows, but at the first session of the 1971 fall class, there were sixty students present. The class is conducted by Reverend Sam Hider, the Baptist minister quoted on the first page of this paper. Reverend Hider ran for chief of the Cherokee tribe in the summer of 1971 and came in second behind W. W. Keeler, a Cherokee who is an executive for Phillips Petroleum Company at Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

One of the strong points of Hider's campaign was emphasis on his ability to speak both the native tongue and English. He argued that his bi-lingual skill would make him capable of knowing and working with the native culture within the framework

⁴⁰ Sol Tax, "Education 'For' American Indians: Threat or Promise?" The Florida FL Reporter, VII (Spring/Summer, 1969), 19.

of an English-speaking government. Because of the wealthy backing and expensive campaigning of his opponent, the grass-roots movement that supported Hider was defeated. Yet his contribution has not been in politics but as a proponent for a renewed Cherokee culture to be taught through the medium of the native language.

Sol Tax, director of the Carnegie Institute project, first publicized what Hider has since found to be true. There is very little and infrequent individual advancement to be expected from the broad group of Cherokee full bloods. The learning of the language, as it is with most projects, cannot be advertised as an "accomplishment" or even as a "tool." The non-competitive nature of the people will accept the language only as a peer-approved, community operation. Tax found also that distrust of the white man caused even the most eager Cherokees to be wary if the language-learning is proposed to be "for the good of the Cherokees." Their experience has been that anything done "for them" is usually nothing more than a psychological itch of the white man for a reward, either in praise or in money.⁴¹

The belief of many Cherokees who have come to a realization of the problems of their people is that the only way to ever truly assimilate their people is to renew the cultural confidence of the people and let them progress, as they once did, on their own terms and according to their own values.

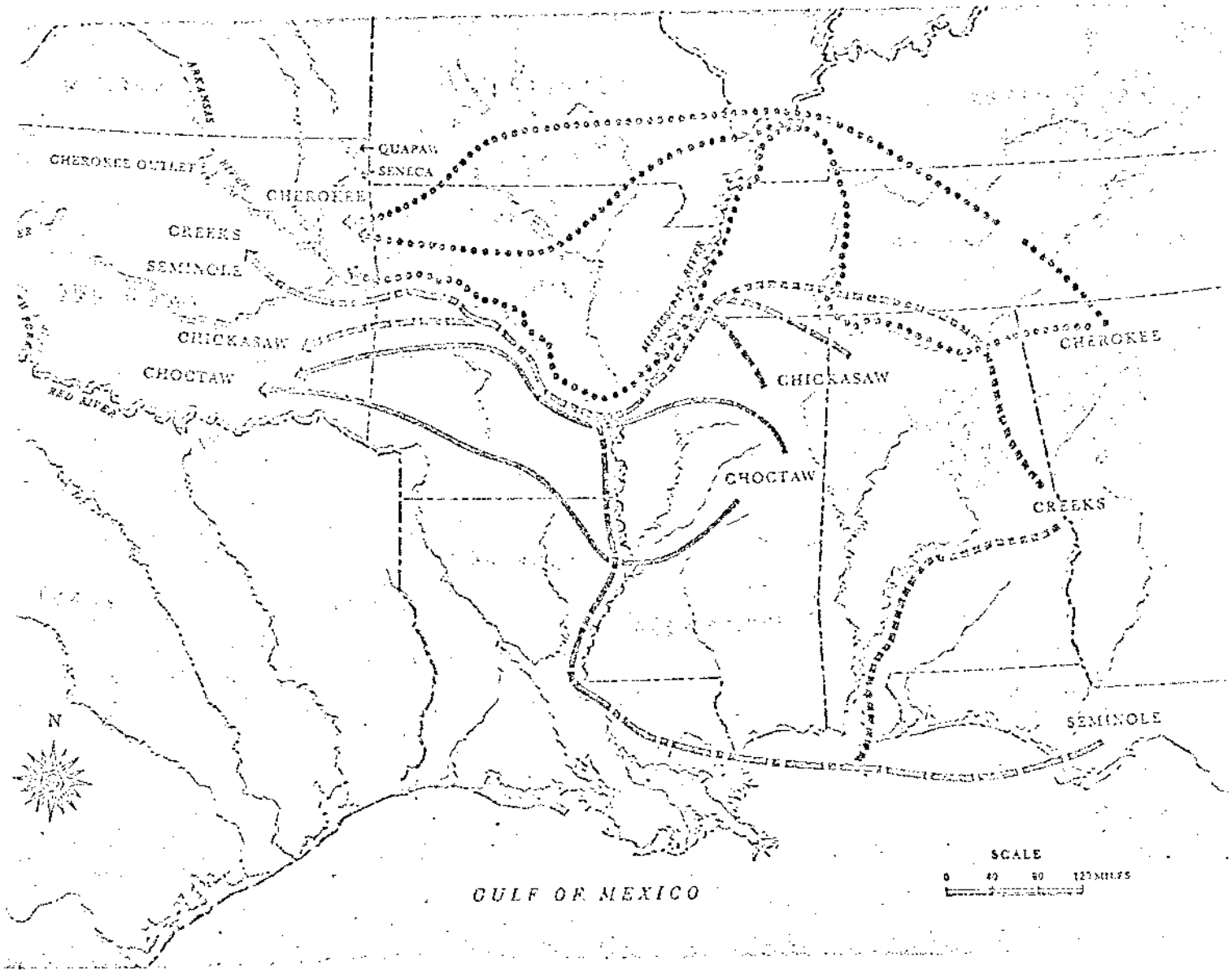
⁴¹Ibid.

And as a basic tool for this assimilation, many of these culturally-aware people see literacy in the Cherokee language as the first step to be taken. To many Cherokees, the language is a symbol of the initiative and emotion needed to begin this cultural renewal. The accomplishment of this goal to reinstate the Cherokee language in the process of assimilation might be the answer to the question "Can either the culture or the language survive?"

The Cherokee language, as a symbol of an active Cherokee culture, must assume its old role in the life of the people before progress and the accompanying renewal of pride in the accomplishments of the Cherokees can come about. The language must release the unassimilated Cherokee from his educational negativism. It must aid all Cherokees in adapting their frustrated value system to become compatible with the value system of the dominant culture enough to allow them to become economically successful. But as its most important role, the Cherokee written language must be a bulwark against the erosion of values that are at the core of the spiritual existence of the Cherokees. Where attempts at assimilation have aborted any real value system and so infused and thwarted it as to produce a limbo state of directionless existence, the Cherokee language must reach out and give directions to its people in a voice that will be heard. The people will listen in Cherokee, because there are no cultural hurdles to cross as they can identify the written message with the spirit of their nation.

APPENDIX A

TRAILS OF INDIAN REMOVAL FROM THE
EAST TO INDIAN TERRITORY



THE CHEROKEE ALPHABET

	a	e	i	o	u	ʌ
	D	R	T	ᄁ	ᄂ	ᄃ
ka	ga	ge	gi	go	gu	ga
ᄄ	ᄅ	ᄆ	ᄇ	ᄈ	ᄉ	ᄊ
	ha	he	hi	ho	hu	hʌ
	ᄋ	ᄌ	ᄍ	ᄎ	ᄏ	ᄐ
	la	le	li	lo	lu	lʌ
	W	ᄑ	ᄒ	ᄓ	ᄔ	ᄕ
	ma	me	mi	mo	mu	
	ᄖ	ᄗ	H	ᄙ	ᄚ	
hna nah na	ne	ni	no	nu	na	
ᄛ ᄜ ᄝ	ᄞ	ᄟ	Z	ᄠ	ᄡ	ᄢ
	kwa	kwe	kwi	kwo	kwu	kwa
	ᄣ	ᄤ	ᄥ	ᄦ	ᄧ	ᄨ
s	sa	se	si	so	su	sa
ᄩ	ᄪ	ᄫ	ᄬ	ᄭ	ᄮ	R
	da	de	di	do	du	da
	ᄯ	ᄰ	ᄱ	ᄲ	ᄳ	ᄴ
	ta	te	ti			
	ᄵ	ᄶ	ᄷ			
dla	tla	tle	tli	tlo	tlu	tla
ᄸ	ᄹ	ᄺ	C	ᄻ	ᄼ	P
	tsa	tse	tsi	tso	tsu	tsa
	ᄽ	ᄾ	ᄿ	K	ᄾ	ᄾ
	wa	we	wi	wo	wu	wa
	ᄿ	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ
	ya	ye	yi	yo	yu	ya
	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ	ᄾ

APPENDIX C

A War Chant Recited by Shaman

White: PRINTING CHEROKEE LANGUAGE

<p> L O O J A V M A A O S A P L A A O O A B L L A A H A I ! G I W H Z E O B A P G D L E Y S F T A H W L H S . O B A P S L O V O O A H L A I H F R O . S L O V R W O H T B L D L E J E O F T S E O P L A A A I . D A K H O O A T A I H F R O . H I O A P S . D L E S S W L O A I H F R O . H I O A P S . R W O H T B L D L E I O F O E F S I O F F E L P S L W H S O O S Y . O O A H L A I H F R O . O A P S . </p>	<p> O B A P G J O L O V S P Y A J S A W J B T T B L D L O V U S B A L L A I . J O L O V J P S P A I H F R O S S H L A I . O B A P S H I R P S S A W A T B L O S P V A A I L A I . D L E Y S F T S A L E A A H S . J O L O V J L A S H P L A I H F R O O A P S . J O L O V S A W A T B L O L I L A I . J O L O V D H T M Y Y S F T E G O L E A A I L A I . Y O H O S A A H F R O O B A P G . G I </p>
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WHAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TO WAR DID TO HELP THEMSELVES.

Hai! Yu! Listen! Now instantly we have lifted up the red war club. Quickly his soul shall be without motion. There under the earth, where the black war clubs shall be moving about like ball sticks in the game, there his soul shall be, never to reappear. We cause it to be so. We shall never go and lift up the war club. We cause it to be so. There under the earth the black war club and the black fog have come together as one for their covering. It shall never move about. We cause it to be so.

Instantly shall their souls be moving about there in the seventh heaven. Their souls shall never break in two. So shall it be. Quickly we have moved them on high for them, where they shall be going about in peace.

You have shielded yourselves with the red war club. Their souls shall never be knocked about. We cause it to be so. There on high their souls shall be going about. Let them shield themselves with the red war whoop. Instantly they shall never become blue. Yu!

This was a war formula obtained from the Cherokee Shaman Awanita by Mooney (Seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D. C., 1891). It was recited by the Shaman for up to 8 men for 4 consecutive nights prior to their going off to war. The purpose was to make sure the Cherokees would be successful by weakening the enemy and strengthening their own warriors.

Although some of the ancient formulas are now obsolete, there are a great many still in use among native Cherokee medical practitioners.

APPENDIX D

PERSON MORPHEMES

Person	Nominative	Possessive	Objective	Explanation	Cherokee
SINGULAR					
1st person singular	I	my	to me		E R
2nd person singular	you	your	to you		Tsa C
3rd person singular + here	he, she, it	his, hers, its	to him (present)		Tu S
3rd person singular + there			to him (absent)		U O
DUAL					
1st person dual ¹	we	our	to you and me		Kini y h
1st person dual ²			to him and me		Akini Dyh
2nd person dual	you	your	to you two		Isti Tɔɔ
3rd person dual + here	they	their	to them two (present)		Tuni Sh
3rd person dual + there			to them two (absent)		Uni Oh
PLURAL					
1st person plural ¹	we all	our	to us all	(you + me + him or them) ¹	Iki Ty
1st person plural ²			to them and me	(not you) ²	Aki Dy
2nd person plural	you all	your	to you all	(not me)	Itsi Th
3rd person plural + here	they all	their	to them all (present)	(not you)	Tuni Sh
3rd person plural + there			to them all (absent)	not me neither of us)	Uni Oh

APPENDIX E

Pattern for Use of Definite and Indefinite

Objects of a Prepositional Phrase

Person	Morpheme	Objective Case	One possession of (person + utseli)		Many possessions of (plural + person + utseli)	
E	R	of me (mine)	akwatseli	DZVL	tikwaseli	ITL
Tsa	G	of you (yours)	tsatseli	GVL	titsatseli	ITVL
Tu	S	of him (his)	tuseli	S+L	tituseli	ITSL
U	O	of him (his)	utseli	OTL	tsutseli	JVL
Kini	yh	of you and me (ours)	kinutseli	yqVL	tikinutseli	JyqVL
Akini	Dyh	of him and me (ours)	akinutseli	DyqVL	tsakinutseli	GyqVL
Isti	TəD	of you two (yours)	istutseli	TəDSTL	tistutseli	JəDSTL
Tuni	Sh	of them two (theirs)	tunatseli	SəVL	titunatseli	JŠəVL
Uni	Oh	of them two	unatseli	OəVL	tsunatseli	JəVL
Iki	Ty	of you all + me (ours)	ikutseli	TJVL	tikutseli	JJVL
Aki	Dy	of them all + me (ours)	akutseli	DJVL	tsakutseli	GJVL
Itsi	Th	of you all (yours)	itsutseli	TJVL	titsutseli	JJVL
Tuni	Sh	of them all (theirs)	tunatseli	SəVL	titunatseli	JŠəVL
Uni	Oh	of them all	unatseli	OəVL	tsunatseli	JəVL

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